

Wonderful! 58: Ya' Gotta Eat

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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:

Go. Begin.

Rachel:

Well—

Griffin:

Begin listening.

Rachel:

Welcome. Welcome.

Griffin:

Welcome, you've done it. Now begin. Enough waiting around. It's time for you to grab your life by the hall, the horns. Uh, and, just really make it your own thing. Go, do it. What if I became a sort of more of an inspirational sort of self-help bent?

Rachel:

Ooh. That would—

Griffin:

Would you like that?

Rachel:

That would be rough for me.

Griffin:

Why's that?

Rachel:

Oh, I, uh, I don't know what advice I would offer people, I guess.

Griffin:

Well, just tell 'em to do how you do it. 'Cause you're living your best life, you grab life by the horns every day and, um, you're just, you—you're living your best self and so, how do you do it? And tell them how to do it, and then we get 500 dollars.

Rachel:

[laughs] Oh, okay.

Griffin:

Yeah, that's how it works. So, go ahead. How do you do it the way that you do? The things you do? Make me wanna shoo?

Rachel:

Uh... you make good choices.

Griffin:

Make good choices.

Rachel:

Just be thoughtful about your choices.

Griffin:

Now expand on that.

Rachel:

Uh, so, I think every day, there are a series of choices in front of you.

Griffin:

Oh.

Rachel:

And, I would just be—

Griffin:

Do I wanna wear my blue tie or my red tie?

Rachel:

I would just be thoughtful.

Griffin:

Well, my boss hates red.

Rachel:

You gotta wear that blue tie, there, huh?

Griffin:

Gotta wear the blue. Boss is scared of the color red. So scared of it. He's like a reverse bull.

But, um, hey. Thank you all for tuning in. It's been a hell of a week, huh? A real fuckin' hell of week, I think, for me, personally speaking.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

And, um, I was commenting on this to Rachel all last night. I was, I've gotten sick again, which is great. This is just sort of my default state of being now. But, I kept getting alerts on my Apple Watch. And I can actually scroll through my notification history, and it's hysterical, 'cause it's like 14 of the alerts that are like, "Hey, you haven't been moving but your heart rate's over 120 beats per minute. And it's like, "Yeah, there's a pretty good freaking reason for that one, my Apple Watch."

Um, but we're here, and I'm glad to be talking to you about things we're enthusiastic about for our friends.

Rachel:

Yes.

Griffin:

At home. Do you have any small wonders?

Rachel:

I do.

Griffin:

Go right ahead.

Rachel:

How 'bout all those ladies in the house?

Griffin:

Ladies in the house. Ladies in the house, LGBTQ people in the house, it's all fuckin' awesome.

Rachel:

People that are not white in the house.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Which is refreshing.

Griffin:

Real refreshing. What is it, the first time that a hundred, uh, women have been in, in Congress?

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

It's like, fuckin' buckwild and so good and so cool.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Mine is election-related too. Mine is when Beto O'Rourke said, "fuck" on live TV.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

So choice. You are my dog.

Rachel:

I love how the, like, media outlets were all prepared to, like, "Oh, this is juicy." And everybody's like, "That's awesome."

Griffin:

That's really good, guys. Like—

Rachel:

That's awesome, thank you—

Griffin:

Th—they're not—

Rachel:

—for sharing that clip with me, media

Griffin:

You're not gonna get a rise out of me. It's fuckin' so good, he's so legit and good. Um, yeah, election week, man. It was stressful, but it's over now. And now we can move ever onward. Ad astra, as they say.

Rachel:

Yeah, I mean, I think a lot of us here in Texas were a little bummed, but I am choosing to look at the big picture.

Griffin:

48.9% of us, I think.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

It's what it boiled down to. Which is a lot.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Um, but yeah. Lot to be happy about.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

So, who goes first this week?

Rachel:

I don't know.

Griffin:

Well...

Rachel:

I never do.

Griffin:

Me. Me first.

Rachel:

Okay.

Griffin:

Me go first.

Rachel:

Okay.

Griffin:

My first thing is Tetris. Is Tetris. The video game—

Rachel:

Tetris.

Griffin:

Tetris. The video game, Tetris, and all of its ilk. Because I was thinking about it. There's a new Tetris game that comes out, uh, on Friday, that I'm very excited about. I'll talk more about it in a little bit. But it had me thinking about sort of my life, and how Tetris weighed in on, weighs on my soul.

Rachel:

Yeah?

Griffin:

And, uh, I love it. I love it. It occupies a very singular space in my heart. I'm not big for, like, puzzle games, I feel like. That's more your dominion. Like, especially on the iPhone, I feel like you get your—

Rachel:

Oh, yeah.

Griffin:

Your, your teeth sunk into a, a puzzle game when you really go for it.

Rachel:

See, you are really big into puzzle games, but like, more complex, I think, than—

Griffin:

Kinda.

Rachel:

Tetris, typically.

Griffin:

I mean, is, like... is Obra—Return of the Obra Dinn game, the boat game that I talked about last episode, is that a puzzle game? Maybe, kind of...

Rachel:

Remember that puzzle game where you, it was like, I—it had like, a Seventh Guest quality, where you walked into a room and you had to—

Griffin:

Oh, yeah.

Rachel:

—turn a box around and, like—

Griffin:

What were those? I forget what those were called.

Rachel:

I don't know.

Griffin:

They were neat.

Rachel:

But you were into that.

Griffin:

I think it was called The Room. Uh, yeah, I guess that's fair. Tetris, though, is like, so stand—apart in my mind because of how, like, zen-like it is to play it for me. Uh, it is, it has not always been that way. I used to not really enjoy Tetris. Uh, it was mostly Travis' thing. And Travis was like, the good one at Tetris in our house, and it was sort of stressful—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

—to play in the same room as him. Uh, I remember we used to go to Vero Beach, Florida. And, uh, there was, uh, a family we were close with at our church uh, at the time who had, like, a lil', tiny little modest lake house down there and they had, like, an old, like, CRT tiny TV with an NES hooked up to it.

Rachel:

Uh-huh.

Griffin:

And because we're indoor kids, we spent a lot of time just playing, uh, like, Punch-Out. But we also played a lot of Tetris. And I remember Travis just, like, sitting down, and four hours later he'd still be on the same game. But, I feel like, uh, in, in recent years I've gotten into it. And it's, it's just really...

Rachel:

It's just so satisfying, right?

Griffin:

—fun, and nice.

Rachel:

Like, that's what I love about the puzzle games, is that when things, like, fit together, or you have, like, a little row that disappears because you did something right...

Griffin:

Right.

Rachel:

It's just like, it's like cleaning up. You know how some people like to clean?

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Not so much me, but I like a puzzle game. For similar reasons.

Griffin:

It is satisfying watching the blocks disappear when you complete a line. A little bit about the history of it. Uh, it was invented by, or created by, uh, Alexey Pajitnov, who is a Russian game designer. Uh, and he first sort of, like, finished the first prototype of Tetris in 1984. Um, he w—er, uh, he was mostly, like, doing it to sort of test the capabilities of this computer hardware that he was messing around with. And he's like, "Oh, okay, I'll, I'll make a game that I can play on it just to sort of see how, uh, just to sort of stretch its legs." And what he made was Tetris. The first, like, design, he really liked playing with uh, like puzzle shapes when he was younger. Like, um, y—wha—shit. What are those things called where you have to—

Rachel:

Tanagrams?

Griffin:

Holy crap, you got that so fast.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Uh, playing with stuff like that, and, and, uh, y'know, stacking blocks and stuff like that. And so, uh, he wanted to make this game with tetronimos, which is what the shapes in Tetris are called.

Rachel:

Ah, oh yeah.

Griffin:

Uh, originally, it was going to be... what's, what's pen—pentonimos? I forget.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

But, like, one step up. But there were, I think, 12 configurations of what those could be, and the computer, I guess, couldn't run it. So tetronimos, there's only seven configurations of what it can be, so that's why they are that shape. Uh, and also the game used to originally be just, like, fitting these shapes in together. Uh, but the computer would, like, run out of memory. And so, that's why he got...

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

He invented the, like, and now they'll come disappear, uh, when you make a whole line. And with those two things he made Tetris.

Rachel:

I love this idea of him just, like, making it, and then playing it a few times and being like, "This is a really good game."

Griffin:

"This is fucking good."

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Well, I mean, he showed it to, like, all his friends, right? All of the, the co-workers at the, uh, the organization he was working with. And they were like, "Uh, bud? This is fuckin' great."

It sort of spread like wildfire across the globe. And back then, like, uh, copyright on, uh, software was, like, a tough thing to, to track. So, there were all these different game publishers that licensed it for, uh, y'know, typically PC release in their individual countries. Uh, so there was like a... a, a version that was popular in Russia, and then there was a version that came State-side. And then there was a, a y'know, a version in the, in the Ukraine that became sort of popular. Uh, and so it was kind of tough to like, track the sort of legal ownership of Tetris at any given time.

Um, where the game really took off was 1989. It came out packaged with every Game Boy.

Rachel:

Oh, yeah.

Griffin:

If you got a Game Boy, you got Tetris. There was a great, uh, McElroy home video of the year that we got the Game Boy. It must have been, I think must've, was 1990. Of just, like, Justin just disappearing, standing under a lamp, because it was the original Game Boy, so it wasn't illuminated. And just like, that was it. Bye, Justin.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Uh, and that is sort of credited with, like, Tetris made the Game Boy.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

The Game Boy made Tetris. Like, it was such a, like, symbiotic relationship between those two. It established Tetris as this, like, cultural phenomenon. It had, like, been on PC and some people had, like, known about it, but with Tetris, like, everybody knew about it. And that's true today. Like, everybody knows what Tetris is, and I feel like I can say this pretty definitively, 'cause I've, you know I worked in the games industry for over a decade, like... that's not true for a lot of things, right? Like, uh maybe, like, Mario. Like, people can recognize him, he's got—

Rachel:

Yeah, but not everybody's had a lot of time playing Mario.

Griffin:

Um, not everybody's had a lot of time playing Tetris, but, like, it's hard to forgive that because it's been out on every imaginable platform.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Whether it's on calculators or, uh, iPods, or uh, y'know, little key chain, uh, tiger games.

Rachel:

Did you ever get Tetris on graphing calculator?

Griffin:

I think so. Not a very good version of it—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

—but you could get some version of it. Um, it is like a culturally, like, important game for that very reason. Like, it is a, for a lot of people, like a touchstone for what games are. Uh, and while it's kind of a, maybe a primitive touchstone, like... it's still a great game, and it still uh, has lights, 'cause there are new versions coming out.

We most recently played, on the Switch, Puyo Puyo Tetris, when blends Puyo Pop and Tetris.

Rachel:

Oh my god, I was so into that.

Griffin:

We were both into that, 'cause you could play either one or you could play, like, a mix of them. You were big into the Puyo Pop side, uh, I was big into the, uh, Tetris side.

Rachel:

Yeah. The, the Puyo are like little beans.

Griffin:

They're like little beans you can match up.

Rachel:

It was like Tetris-shaped, but they were beans.

Griffin:

Uh, it was really, really good. Um, so, Tetris is great, not just because it's a fun game. There are a lot of, like, psychological effects attributed to Tetris. Some of which are like, actually very positive, some of which are just kind of weird. I pulled, like, a lot of stuff, uh, that I'm going to summarize on the fly, uh, pretty quickly.

There was a study that showed that prolonged Tetris activity can lead to more efficient brain activity during play. So, they measured, like, your brain and how it's, y'know, firing the first time you start playing Tetris. And then it figures out, like, how it's firing after you've been playing for a while. And the efficiency of your, uh, brain... what is it?

"As Tetris player become more proficient, their brains show a reduced consumption of glucose, indicating more efficient brain activity for this task." Uh... "Moderate play of half an hour a day for three months boosts general cognitive functions such as critical thinking, reasoning, language, and processing."

Rachel:

Really? That's fascinating.

Griffin:

And it has like, uh, physiological effects, that it increases cerebral cortex thickness, from Tetris! Um, there are other, like, psychological benefits, too. There have been studies, um the one with Oxford University where they were showing people sort of, like, traumatic material and then making them play Tetris. And they found that, like, it was harder for people to form sort of like these sticky memories about the traumatic stuff that they had seen because of Tetris sort of like, rewiring their brains not to focus on it. Um, and so they, like, they have a, they theorize that, like, this could be used to, a—as a sort of intervention to reduce, like, some of the effects of PTSD, which is so wild.

Rachel:

Oh my gosh, wild.

Griffin:

Um, there was a study at Plymouth University, that showed that Tetris could have a, quote, "Quick and manageable fix for people struggling to stick to diets or quit smoking or drinking."

Um, there was a, uh, Canadian study shown that, uh, older adolescents with, uh, amblyopia, which is a l—the scientific term for lazy eye. Uh, it is a way to sort of, like, train your eyes to work better and work faster. Um, uh, they said, this is a quote, "It's much better than patching. Much more enjoyable. It's faster and seems to work better." Uh, they tested this in the, in the United Kingdom to some success.

Rachel:

Can you imagine going to the doctor and having your doctor be like...

Griffin:

Prescribe you some Tetris? [laughs]

Rachel:

"You need to play an hour of Tetris every day."

Griffin:

I could totally do that. Um, so the new game that, uh, comes out this Friday is called Tetris Effect, which is a reference to another sort of phenomenon that isn't explicitly just about Tetris, but it's kind of where it gets its name, obviously. It's a phenomenon where your mind, uh, pictures, like, Tetris blocks long after you stop playing Tetris. Especially in your dreams. I get this so much.

Rachel:

Yes, yes.

Griffin:

I get this so much.

Rachel:

Yes.

Griffin:

I've been playing, uh, Diablo on Switch, lately.

Rachel:

Uh-huh.

Griffin:

And, like, last night, of course, I was feverish and like...

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... sleeping on the couch and on, like, eight different medicines. But like, in my mind, I was just like, playing Diablo, because I've been playing it a lot.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Uh, but like, with Tetris, it is, it is, uh, it is the most sort of visceral, I feel like... 'Cause it's so simple. Your brain only has to remember these simple shapes.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

Uh, and so the game is like, kind of, focuses on that, and tries to, it's made by a, uh, the designer is a guy named Tetsuya Mizuguchi, who makes, like, rhythm games. Especially, like, trance-like rhythm games. Uh, he has one called Rez, and the whole design aesthetic for that was, uh, he was into the idea of synesthesia. The idea of like, your, your senses detecting things other than what they should explicitly be able to detect. That was very, like, long-winded way of explaining synesthesia and was very bad.

But like, he's very big into, just these, like, trippy, just like, trance-like games, and that's what Tetris is. So, like, I'm fuckin' so stoked to see, like, what he does with Tetris. But, yeah. I just love Tetris. It's so, it's a, a special game that even like, other puzzle games aren't really like. Um...

Rachel:

I'm always fascinated to watch people play Tetris, too, because it, like, says a lot about, uh, them as a person, I feel like.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Like, Griffin will develop these, like, 15-row strategies, where he is just waiting for that long single piece. And I will watch him build up along the walls and I will think, "This is a man who is determined."

Griffin:

It's also a man who's just waiting on one long block, and if he doesn't get it, he'll lose.

Rachel:

[laughs] Yeah.

Griffin:

We have to mention, we've been watching this series of stand-up specials from, uh, James Acaster...

Rachel:

Oh my gosh, yes.

Griffin:

...who, I only recognized from, um, uh, I don't know a lot of, like, stand-up people. He was on The Worst Idea of All Time and was hysterical. So we saw him on Netflix—

Rachel:

I re-listened to his episodes, recently—

Griffin:

So fuckin' good.

Rachel:

—because I love his stand-up so much.

Griffin:

He has a special on Netflix, this is another small wonder, called Repertoire. It is four stand-up specials in one thing. So like, the amount of content this dude is making is like, out of control. And there are some bits in each of them that, like, had us on the floor cackling so good. He had a bit about

Tetris where he talked about how nobody, like, he wanted a fresh start in life, like in Tetris, because like, the first time that you put a block down and it goes wrong, you just hold the down button and just...

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

And I do that. Like I'll stack up—

Rachel:

This is how Griffin plays, yes.

Griffin:

Yeah, I stack up the towers, and if I don't get a long block for like, th—the straight block for like, y'know, 20 blocks, I'm just like, "Well, that's it. Bye."

Rachel:

I never had seen somebody so recklessly just abandon video games until I met Griffin.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Uh, what's your first thing?

Rachel:

My first thing is Tank and the Bangas.

Griffin:

Tank and the Bangas. You sent me a clip of the song that you're gonna talk about, and it's fuckin' so good. I'm so excited to play it.

Rachel:

This is a band that I have had recommended to me a lot recently. And I think it's because in 2017 they won NPR's Tiny Desk Contest.

Griffin:

I didn't know that that was—

Rachel:

Remember how I talked about, uh, how that's like a thing for NPR?

Griffin:

Oh, I love Tiny Desk. I didn't know that it was competitive.

Rachel:

They have a contest where people send in their own lil' Tiny Desk videos, and the winner got to be on it.

Griffin:

That's so good!

Rachel:

Uh, and that's how everybody got really familiar with them. Um, and, and the Bangas have a vibrant blend of R&B, Funk, Hip-hop, Gospel, and spoken-word poetry. Uh, Tarriona "Tank" Ball is the lead vocalist, and she first gained attention as a slam poet.

Griffin:

I can see that.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

I mean I only listened to that one song that you sent me, but it was slammy.

Rachel:

Uh-huh.

Griffin:

It was slammin'.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Do people ever say that at, like, the slam poetry things you went to? Where they'd be like, "Slammin'!"

Rachel:

You did that like Jim Carrey in The Mask a little bit.

Griffin:

Slammin'!

Rachel:

[laughs] Uh, so the group formed in 2011, so they've been around for a while, uh, in New Orleans. Uh, and they, um, released their debut album Think Tank, followed by the 2014 live set, The Big Bang Theory, live at Gasas Gasas.

Griffin:

[laughs]

Rachel:

Isn't that great? [laughs] Um, apparently their live shows are just, like, incredible.

Griffin:

Oh, dog, I can believe that in a heartbeat. There's what, there's like, seven of them, right? And that song is so, like, larger than life. I didn't watch the tiny desk concert, but I bet it's amazing.

Rachel:

There are f—well, I think there are five official members.

Griffin:

Okay.

Rachel:

Yeah, at least according to what I found. But, uh, but yeah. Tank has said that she, quote, uh, "Kind of feels like they take church on the road." Um, and so I wanted to share a little bit of a song. So, they have a new album that's set to come out in 2019. And, one of the songs I really liked, they just released a single, Spaceships, in September, which you can check out. But the song that I wanna play is Smoke, Netflix, Chill.

Griffin:

That's so good.

Rachel:

Which came out in April.

Griffin:

Here it is.

[‘Smoke, Netflix, Chill’ plays]

Rachel:

You know what I was thinking? I was trying to like, think about, like, obviously there's a lot that I like.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Like, I like that kind of, like, New Orleans bounce sound.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

You know? Um, those kind of, like, soulful, but, like, super dance-able. But then I realized Tank kind of reminds me of like, a funky Nicki Minaj.

Griffin:

Okay.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

I was gonna say like a funky, like, Regina Spektor.

Rachel:

Ooh, okay.

Griffin:

Only in, like, the way that she like, uses her voice and it's like, changing like to line.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Like, what kind of delivery it is. I am so... I adore shit like that. That is so good when you never really know what the next line of song is going to sound like, even though it's sung by the same vocalist.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

And that was this, like, all over. I was instantly in love with this song. As soon as I heard her voice, I was like, "Oh, shit, yes."

Rachel:

[laughs] Yeah.

Griffin:

"I am so down."

Rachel:

I know. Uh, I... I, again, this is like, and I think it's because I've had friends see the band live. But I've just had this recommended to me over and over again and I finally just checked it out this week, and I was like, "Oh, this is really, really great."

Griffin:

It's so fuckin' good.

Rachel:

And then unique, and positive, and exactly the kind of thing I like.

Griffin:

Yeah. I just had a big goofy grin on my face as soon as I started listening to it.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

It was, it was an amazing pick-me-up. Uh, should we steal us away?

Rachel:

Mm-hmm. [singing] Bwuh?

Griffin:

You can also do... [makes strange noises]

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

[singing]

Rachel:

That's so good.

Griffin:

Um, you can do that. There's a lot of Ace of Bass songs you could kinda... well, there's actually not a lot of Ace of Bass songs.

Rachel:

[laughs] There's only like, three.

Griffin:

There's just the three, I guess. Man, they really sort of defied expectations, in that they were a three-hit wonder. Which is strange. Usually three hits is enough to get you, get you over, as they say in wrestling.

[ad break]

Rachel:

You want some personal messages, Griffin?

Griffin:

Yup.

Rachel:

This message is for Darcy. It is from Deidre. "Happy birthday to my little sister, Darcy. What I think is wonderful is the time we've gotten to spend together listening to podcasts and even traveling across state lines to see our faves live. I hope we get to listen to Wonderful! on another tubing trip,

or on another long, aimless drive. Maybe even way out to the wind turbine farm. Happy birthday."

Griffin:

Do they grow wind turbines...? This is stupid.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

I was about to say something really stupid.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

I was gonna say something like, sometimes I say stupid stuff, and play like I'm a child, but that was a bridge too far, I feel like.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Tubing trip sounds good right about now, though, doesn't it? These long, November months, getting in a tube. Splish-splashing around.

Rachel:

Oh, see I'm already into winter. I'm, I'm psyched about winter now.

Griffin:

And maybe it's because I didn't get to go on a tubing trip this year.

Rachel:

Yeah, sorry about that.

Griffin:

It's all right.

Rachel:

This next message is for Phoebe. It is from Tuva and Sharnie:

"Hey, massive shout-out to Phoebe for being the most wonderful friend anyone could ask for. We even made a poem for you: Without Phoebe, Parappa the Rapper is crapper."

Griffin:

I'm not going to hear any of this badmouthing Parappa the Rapper.

Rachel:

"We forgive you for moving to Melbourne, and please know that we love you and hope that the cuteness of Rachel and Griffin continue to make every week better."

Griffin:

I'm not gonna be cute right now. You just came at my dog friend Parappa the Rapper. He's so good.

Rachel:

I was not at all familiar with him until I met you.

Griffin:

Do you want me to do the whole...

Rachel:

No.

Griffin:

... song from level two?

Rachel:

No.

Griffin:

He has to get his driver's license, and there's a moose, I believe, a moose, uh, police officer who teaches him how to drive a car.

Rachel:

It sounds a lot like Sam and Max to me.

Griffin:

Well, except it's all through the beautiful lens of rapping.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

So, it's like, press and turn the signal to the right. Now turn to the right.

[singing]

Rachel:

I do like that.

Griffin:

It's so good.

Rachel:

It does sounds like fun.

[Maximum Fun ad]

Griffin:

Can I tell you about my second thing?

Rachel:

Yes.

Griffin:

My second thing is a song. Can you guess where I found it?

Rachel:

Spotify.

Griffin:

Spotify Discover Weekly, yeah.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

They g—they got my number on this one. Uh, it is the song Yeoman by Baths. Uh, Baths, if you are not familiar, is the stage name of, uh, Will Wiesenfeld. Uh, who is an electronic musician from L.A.. Uh, I actually became sort of uh, aware of his, his presence and his work through the late, great platform of Vine where he had some real good, some real good jammers.

Rachel:

Oh, that's funny.

Griffin:

Uh, a few, a few viral smash hits.

Rachel:

Didn't you tell me Vine was coming back?

Griffin:

It's gonna. And I've been thinking a lot about it. Because there's so many people, like Will Wiesenfeld, that I, that I found on Vine, and knew from Vine. And still do.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

Is there gonna be some sort of reunion...?

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

...When Vine 2 launches? Are all those people gonna come back on? I don't know. But anyway, he performs as Baths. Uh, I, I knew some of his songs. I was, like, familiar with Baths. Uh, he has, uh, a song called Animals which was off of his first album, that, uh, was kind of a smash hit. That album came out in 2010, and I feel like I hear that song everywhere.

Uh, and it's a good track, but I wanted to talk about, uh, this song, Yeoman, which is uh, Y-E-O-M-A-N, like the, I don't know, boat job? What does a Yeoman do?

Rachel:

I don't think I've ever known that.

Griffin:

I've heard the word before.

Rachel:

Oh yeah, no. No, I know the word and I know exactly how it's spelled, but I could not tell you what it does.

Griffin:

I, it's a type of sailing boat. It's also, "A man holding and cultivating a small landed estate; a freeholder," "a servant in a royal or noble household, ranking between a sergeant and a groom or a squire and a page."

Okay, I guess I have no fucking idea what Yeoman means.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

But the song is called Yeoman and it's a, it's super good. It's off his latest album that came out, uh, just about a year exactly ago, called Romaplasm. Uh, and I love this album so much. Every song is, like, really musically fascinating, which is, like kind of his style. Um, I try and fail so much to describe music like this, as being just like really sort of, um, dense, in terms of like, the instruments being used in it. Like, no measure is the same, and there's, you know, weird samples and modulations happening in every millisecond of the song, and it's very, like, there is not a, a wasted second of like, repeated music throughout the whole thing.

Uh, and Yeoman is, is totally like that as is, like, the rest of the album. Um, but there's also, on this album, just all these themes of like, lighthearted fantasy that really warms my soul to hear. Uh, so to give you, like, an idea of what that is, here's, uh, here's a clip from Yeoman.

[Yeoman plays]

Griffin:

It's like, a love song about an airship. About an officer on an airship, and the person singing the song, sort of dancing on the deck of the airship with the Yeoman over the world that they both left behind.

Rachel:

I was so excited that there was, like, a story. Because I feel like a lot of the electronic music that you're into, there isn't like, a story the way this one has.

Griffin:

Oh, for sure, yeah. There's, that's, it's definitely, uh, I can actually think of a couple artists, but they're, like, very obscure on, like, SoundCloud. Electronic artists that I like who, who do a lot of sort of, like, vocal storytelling work over, over their music. But it's super not, like, common. And I just love, I love this song for that exact reason. Like, it's about an airship love story, uh, with this, like, incredible hook, uh, just that really fast poppy synth. And by poppy I mean like, it sounds like pops, and not that it is pop music. Uh, but also it's so full of, like, nautical terminology. It's so good. Here's, here's, uh, some lyrics, uh...

"Let me bore you here under the Moon
Robed in the armillary room"

An armillary room is, like, a spherical star-chart kind of thing.

Rachel:

Oh.

Griffin:

The fact that the word armillary is in this song. Anyway, uh...

"Inert for all my years

And then fell into you

These routes that you just so ornately improvise

they're always wild

and I don't seem to mind."

I just, man, I just love every—

Rachel:

Ooh, that's nice.

Griffin:

I love every second of this song. It is, uh, it is fantastic. And, uh, there are so many songs on this album, uh just like that. So, uh, I will say that, uh, I also kind of wish I could play just like whole song on the show, or eight different clips, because it goes to so many different places.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

There's like, two or three bridges. One of which is, like, this wild, like, uh, full, hook full of, like, horns and strings that come in over the synths that is

so extra and it just rules. Um, I'll also say I sort of was, um, uh, brought into this album this week because it was on my Spotify Discover list and like, it was nice to have these nice, chill, upbeat tunes yesterday while my heart was racing for most of the day. It was nice to have this to fall back on. What is, uh, what's your second thing, though?

Rachel:

My second thing actually came to me yesterday. For those of you that follow me on Twitter, you may have seen my, my poetry crusade that I went on.

Griffin:

You bit off so much more than you could chew.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

I don't know what you thought that that was sustainable.

Rachel:

Ah... I invited people that voted on that day to send me a picture of them in their voting, uh, sticker. And I would—

Griffin:

And just their fucking sticker.

Rachel:

[laughs] No, Griffin. Uh, and I would send a few lines of poetry. And—

Griffin:

Immediately, you were underwater.

Rachel:

[laughs] I know, I was inundated. Well, and then I felt like I couldn't say no to people that were like, "Oh, I voted absentee." or "I early voted." And I was like, "Well, I don't really want to split hairs." And so then, and that kind of became, like 24 hours of work for me.

Griffin:

I didn't post a sticker image yesterday, um, because every—

Rachel:

We early voted, also.

Griffin:

I early voted, and whenever I get a voting sticker, I stick it on the inside of my underwear drawer. So I have, like, a nice little collection of...

Rachel:

Oh really? I didn't know that.

Griffin:

Yeah, and, uh, so I didn't feel like peeling it off. 'Cause I was afraid it would lose its stickiness.

Rachel:

Well now I wanna see a picture of that underwear drawer.

Griffin:

Yeah. Anyway.

Rachel:

[laughs] Uh, and so the... I was trying to think of poets that I felt like conveyed a real, like, kind of inspirational tone. Or poets that could be excerpted real easy.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

And, uh, one of the poets that I went with immediately, very first, was Maya Angelou.

Griffin:

Oh, for sure.

Rachel:

Which I imagine everybody has heard of.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Um, and, uh, was maybe the first poet I ever really liked. I mean, as I became an adult.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

You know, like obviously I was a big Shel Silverstein fan. But as I got older, Maya Angelou was my go-to, like, as early as high school. Um...

Griffin:

It's probably not good, I also love the work that, I, and it's, y'know, not a whole lot, but the work that she has that I am familiar with is obviously fantastic.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

But the thing that makes me the happiest is Tracy Morgan's impression of her that he would do on Saturday Night Live.

Rachel:

[laughs] Griffin and I will sometimes...

Griffin:

Holy shit.

Rachel:

We will sometimes just re-watch that video.

Griffin:

The one of him doing the different Hallmark cards that Maya Angelou wrote.

Rachel:

Uh-huh.

Griffin:

His... fucking slays me. It's the same joke, basically, three times over.

Rachel:

[laughs] I know.

Griffin:

Which is such a, like, Weekend Update style of doing jokes.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

Even Stefan, whom I love, but come on.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Uh, and shit. It kills me.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm. I always think of, uh, "Crispity..."

Griffin:

"Crunchy..."

Rachel:

"Crunchy..."

Griffin:

Well that was David Alan Grier, I think.

Rachel:

Oh, was it?

Griffin:

I think that was David Alan Grier.

Rachel:

Oh...

Griffin:

Would be when we was guest-hosting. But I remember that, too. Yeah. It's not good. It's not good that that's my touchstone.

Rachel:

She's just got such a distinct voice.

Griffin:

So distinct.

Rachel:

It just makes you want to, like, try it out in your own mouth.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Uh, so she has published seven autobiographies, three books of essays, several books of poetry, and a list of plays, movies, and television shows spanning over 50 years. She received dozens of awards and more than 50 honorary degrees.

Griffin:

Jeez.

Rachel:

Can you imagine?

Griffin:

That's a lot of honorary degrees.

Rachel:

That's a lot of honorary degrees.

Griffin:

How many honorary degrees does it take to make up one real degree?

Rachel:

I don't know, Griffin. That's a strange question.

Griffin:

Honorary degree is like a...

Rachel:

It's a degree that an institution will award as, like, recognition for your talent.

Griffin:

Yeah, so if you get, like, 30 of those, does it count as, like, you got you Ph.D from Johns Hopkins, or something?

Rachel:

I don't know, babe.

Griffin:

You should be able to trade 'em in. Like, I'm not saying they're not good, I'm just saying what's the economy of 'em?

Rachel:

[laughs] Uh, so she, uh, part of what makes her so unique and so, um, translatable to so many different people is not only was she a poet, she was also a singer, she was a civil rights activist. Uh, she has experience working as a fry cook, a sex worker, a nightclub dancer and performer, a cast member of the opera Porgy and Bess. Porgy and Bess.

Griffin:

Meh.

Rachel:

Uh, a coord—

Griffin:

It's agree to disagree.

Rachel:

A co-coordinator for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and a journalist in Egypt and Ghana.

Griffin:

Jesus Christ.

Rachel:

She just kind of le—

Griffin:

Jesus Christ, Maya.

Rachel:

—led an incredible life.

Griffin:

That's ins—I had no fucking idea.

Rachel:

Uh, in 2011 she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, from President Obama.

Griffin:

That was the best.

Rachel:

Rightfully so. Uh, and...

Griffin:

That was post-humus, right?

Rachel:

No, she was still alive.

Griffin:

In 2015?

Rachel:

2011.

Griffin:

Oh, 2011. I thought you said 2015.

Rachel:

No. Uh, no, there's actually pictures of her accepting it.

Griffin:

Okay.

Rachel:

So I'm pretty sure she was alive.

Griffin:

Yes.

Rachel:

Um, and I think she gets dismissed a lot, again, because she's one of those poets who's really accessible, really recognizable.

Griffin:

For sure.

Rachel:

Um, when Bill Clinton was inaugurated, she, um read the poem there, during his inauguration. Actually, I have the last few lines of it, if you want to hear it.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Uh, 'cause it, for me it's really recognizable. I don't know if you'll remember. Uh, the poem was called On the Pulse of Morning. It was this very long, sweeping poem about, like, the rock and the river and the animals and coming together across the Earth. And then at the very end, uh the last stanza was:

"Here, on the pulse of this new day
You may have the grace to look up and out
And into your sister's eyes, and into
Your brother's face, your country
And say simply
Very simply
With hope—
Good morning."

Griffin:

Gah...

Rachel:

Isn't that perfect for an inauguration?

Griffin:

Yeah, it's a really good.

Rachel:

Ah, it just gives me chills even reading it.

Griffin:

Was it written specifically for the inauguration? 'Cause it sounds like it was.

Rachel:

I have to assume so.

Griffin:

Maybe.

Rachel:

I don't actually know the answer to that.

Griffin:

I don't know either.

Rachel:

Um, but the poem I was sending around to, uh, people yesterday is, uh, Still I Rise.

Griffin:

Mm-hmm.

Rachel:

Uh, and the reason I was sending it around is there's like, it's, it's a poem, like, all about persistence and courage in the face of adversity. And there are just these great little stanzas in it. And so I wanted to share a few of 'em. Um, there's kind of a mix in thereof, of triumph and also kind of just some really, like, good burns.

Griffin:

[laughs]

Rachel:

Like, she's kind of speaking to her adversaries a little bit in the poem. And so there's just these great lines. So let me just read one stanza:

"Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room."

Griffin:

[laughs]

Rachel:

What a great burn is that! Isn't that so nice?

Griffin:

That's so fucking good.

Rachel:

She, uh, she also wrote this poem that she's really famous for, called Phenomenal Woman.

Griffin:

Mm-hmm.

Rachel:

But its' just this, like, this like, confidence and just like, brassiness and, like, sexiness. Ah, it's so good. Uh, and then so here's how the poem ends. And this is, like, I think, universal. And this is like that triumph that I was speaking of:

"Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide."

Griffin:

She's the best.

Rachel:

She's the best. It, she just, you can see why she just became such a spokesman for poetry. Uh, and for women, and for African—American women. Like, she, she is to the point and accessible and fearless. And, uh, inspirational in a big way.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

And I just, like... I'll, I'll walk away from her for a while, especially like when I started to be more academic in my approach to poetry. But when I was lookin' through her stuff yesterday, I was just like, "Oh, no. This, this, man. This really holds up."

Griffin:

The—there's a reason why everybody—

Rachel:

It's great.

Griffin:

—knows who she is—

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

—and what her poems sound like, I feel like.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Like, I'm not familiar with her, a lot of her work. There's like a, there is a, a, the kind of imagery she includes in her poems is so distinctly Maya Angelou, that I feel like if I just heard, heard that read out loud on a street I could be like, "Oh, that's Maya Angelou."

Rachel:

Yeah, so I would encourage you to check out those poems, Still I Rise, uh, you can easily find it on the internet. And same with On the Pulse of Morning.

Griffin:

Hey, do you want to know what our friends at home are, are all abuzz about?

Rachel:

[laughs] Yes.

Griffin:

Cameron says:

"I just wanted to drop in and say that something I find wonderful is fall—scented candles. The scents of pumpkin and cinnamon and baked holiday treats are perfect in candle—form to help me calm down after a long day at work. I even dabble in making my own scrap wax now, even if I'm not very good at it."

Is that a, some kind of new street drug?

Rachel:

[laughs] Scrap wax? [laughs]

Griffin:

I assume it's like when you take the scraps of candles and blend... it can't possibly be that, right?

Rachel:

Like, maybe, yeah, you take leftover candles and combine 'em together? I don't know.

Griffin:

But multiple scents would be strange, huh?

Rachel:

I don't know, but I love a good, like, fall leaf candle.

Griffin:

Oh, for sure. Um, yeah. I feel like a lot of summer candles smell like laundry detergent, which is okay. But it can be a little overpowering.

Rachel:

And, and spring too, for that.

Griffin:

Spring especially, yeah.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Fall, though? Mm...

Rachel:

Fall, and a winter candle? Mm...

Griffin:

A winter candle can also, I don't love like a really stinky pine one. A little pine is okay.

Rachel:

Griffin has a lot of strong opinions about smells.

Griffin:

Well, I used to have a sensitive nose before it stopped working for two fucking months.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Uh, here's one from Erika, who says:

"I just had my second baby three weeks ago..." Congratulations.

Uh, "And one thing I forgot about is that..." uh, "that is completely wonderful is that full-body stretch that infants do when they're waking up sometimes. They put both tiny arms over their heads and pull their knees up to their bellies and just stretch and groan in that tiny way. It's wonderful."

Rachel:

Oh, I'd forgotten about that too!

Griffin:

I've forgotten everything about the first six months of Henry's life.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

But I do remember this good stretch that babies do.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

It's so choice.

Rachel:

It's very good.

Griffin:

Uh, Adrian says:

"Something I find wonderful is mise en place. When I'm cooking, the last thing I wanna do is have to scramble to make a seasoning or chop a vegetable. So before I start, I make sure I have everything I need ready to go."

I only cook like this, like, very rarely. If it, especially for like a super ambitious dish with, like, lots of little components that, y'know, if, y'know, you're searing something off in a frying pan and you only have like a minute to do it, you don't have time to y'know, chop up that garlic and y'know, smash that arugula.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Or whatever. It's a gross recipe I've just done.

Rachel:

Is that a street truck?

Griffin:

Yeah, I smash that arugula.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

So like, getting a bunch of little uh, uh, what are they called? Colanders? No, not colanders. Uh...

Rachel:

Oh, ramekins?

Griffin:

Ramekins. Just fill 'em up with all your, your materials.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

I feel like a warlock doing some sort of potion spell.

Rachel:

Yes, yes, yes.

Griffin:

So good. Um, that's it though.

Hey, thank you all for listening. 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. Uh, what else?

Rachel:

Thank you to maximumfun.org...

Griffin:

Oh, yeah.

Rachel:

...for hosting our podcast. Uh, if you like Wonderful!, you might wanna check out other shows like Bullseye and Can I Pet Your Dog?

Griffin:

Flophouse.

Rachel:

And Flophouse.

Griffin:

Those good boys. Um, yeah, there's a lot of great shows on Maximum Fun. We're very grateful to, uh, be on their network. If you wanna hear other stuff that we do it's at mcelroyshows.com. Uh, we have a mailing list, also, for the whole, like, McElroy family of products that we just launched, where we're doing like most of our announcements now these days so we don't

have to do 'em all on the show every time. Uh, you can find that at, I believe, bit.ly/mcelroymail. M-A-I-L.

Rachel:

I was thinking I might sign up for it.

Griffin:

You probably... Eh, so you don't—

Rachel:

I feel like it's the only way I really know when you're going somewhere.
[laughs]

Griffin:

That's not entirely fair.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

But, anyways, it's a good, uh, newsletter and it's got, uh, it's got fun stuff. I was trying, I was talking to uh, Amanda and them, like, "Hey, can we put a, like, a crossword puzzle or a word search or a junior jumble in the next one?"

Rachel:

Ooh, that's good.

Griffin:

And I'll even, I'll even make it. Um...

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

So, yeah. Look forward to those great puzzles. And, I think that's it, huh?

Rachel:

That is it. Oh, for those of you who are getting mail items returned to you, we still do not have a P.O. Box.

Griffin:

I promise we're gonna fix it soon.

Rachel:

It is not personal. We did not reject your items.

Griffin:

No, we—

Rachel:

We simply do not have a place for you to send it right now.

Griffin:

Yeah, we moved, and moved far away from our last post office and it lapsed, and we are, um, failures. But we'll get it fixed.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Okay. I think that's it.

Rachel:

That's it.

Griffin:

Time to, uh, shut 'er down. How can we end our show this time?

Rachel:

Um, I could try out some of my new catchphrases.

Griffin:

Yeah, Rachel's gonna take us out with some of her great new catchphrases.

Rachel:

That's peppermint.

Griffin:

No... [laughs]

Rachel:

That's like something you would say, y'know? That's peppermint.

Griffin:

Are there more? Or can we end on that?

Rachel:

Keep it in the frying pan.

Griffin:

Okay. That's fun. 'Cause it's like, "Out of the frying pan and into the fire," and you're just like, "No, keep it in the..." Yeah, I like that.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm. Are you in a cave, or are you on a ladder?

Griffin:

That one's confusing too. You know what I have to say about that one?

Rachel:

[laughs] What?

Griffin:

That's peppermint.

Rachel:

[laughs]

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