

Wonderful! 56: Frememies

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[theme music plays]

Rachel:

Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin:

[in a silly voice] Hello, I'm—my name—my name is Johnny Cash.

Rachel:

And this is Wonderful.

Griffin:

I did sort of a mixture of like, Johnny Cash but also Borat. Did you like that? 'Cause of my voice sounds so wild, and I started to talk and I realized hey, this is kind of not a bad Johnny Cash. But then it turned into a Borat, but then I saved it with going back to Johnny Cash.

Rachel:

Most things with you turn into a Borat, I've noticed.

Griffin:

That does happen.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

But that's because of my affliction, and you know what I'm talking about.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

Borat-us.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

I got it, I went to the movie theater and I saw it, and uh, you know, let's just say a curse was laid upon me that day, and I talk about Borat a lot. I apologize, my voice sounds like, um, like a trash compactor trying to compact another trash compactor, I think is what I would—

Rachel:

Ooh, that's goo—yeah, that's apt.

Griffin:

Yeah, it sounds like um, it would uh, a bunch of broken glass rolling down a mountain side—

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

... is what I think it kinda sounds like.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

And I apologize for that. But we're here, and we're gonna do an episode of wonderful for you, like we are contractually obligated—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... to do. No, that's not true, we do it because it's fun and we love each other, innit that right?

Rachel:

That is um, both—both are true.

Griffin:

Do you still love me even though I sound like Tom Waits, sort of coarser, older brother Ron Waits?

Rachel:

[laughs] I do.

Griffin:

Uh, his like, deep, even more baritone brother Ron Waits?

Rachel:

Yeah, I do actually.

Griffin:

Do you think uh, he ever says "Tom Waits for no man!" Like if somebody is like, running late for like um—

Rachel:

Oh, that's good.

Griffin:

... like a—like was supposed to meet him at a move, and he goes "Tom Waits for no man!" He says, and everybody loves it?

Rachel:

[laughs] Yes, I do.

Griffin:

I'm high on DayQuil.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm. It could also be like, um, "Oh, excuse me, are you waiting for this?" He's like "No, I'm—I'm Tom Waits for this."

Griffin:

Yeah, and then they'll be like "No, I know, what are you waiting for?" There's a lot of really good, sort of, comedy there.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

[laughs]

Rachel:

But I think we should go back to Borat because that's really—

Griffin:

Yeah, that's where I really operate...

Rachel:

... your core competency.

Griffin:

... uh, wizard sleep. Do you wanna tell me about a small wonder that you have?

Rachel:

I do, actually.

Griffin:

Go for it.

Rachel:

Uh, so on the YouTube—

Griffin:

Yeah?

Rachel:

... um, Wired? Are you familiar with Wired?

Griffin:

Sure.

Rachel:

They have this auto-complete interview series. It's like 80+ videos, and it's usually one or two celebrities promoting a movie. And they get on and they type their name, or somebody types their name into Google, and so it'll be like, "Tom Hanks is..." and then they'll rip off the little thing, and it'll complete what the—

Griffin:

That's very fun!

Rachel:

... the filter is. And so the celebrity is there, and they are responding to a lot of questions. And a lot of the questions are like, "Mila Kunis is vegan?" Or uh

"Where is Mila Kunis now?" And so you get to see these like, celebrities answer these fun queries about them, and I enjoy it.

Griffin:

That sounds fun.

Rachel:

It is fun.

Griffin:

Uh, I wanna say uh, Stardew Valley's on iPhone now, and I'm just, that's it, that's all you get of me, usefulness.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

That's all the sort of, productivity you get out of me. You've gotten—this is the last podcast, sort of, thing you're gonna get, I think, out of me, Griffin McElroy. I hope you've enjoyed my career, thank you for sticking along for the ride.

Rachel:

If you were going to a desert island...

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

And it came down to Stardew Valley or Animal Crossing...

Griffin:

Oh damn.

Rachel:

Which do you bring?

Griffin:

Probably ah, mm. Hm.

Rachel:

Hm. I know.

Griffin:

Which Animal Crossing? Because there's been like nine out. Like my favorite, the best one?

Rachel:

Yes.

Griffin:

Shoot. Well, here's the thing, if I'm living on the island, I'm basically already doing Animal Crossing, so I'm gonna say Stardew Valley.

Rachel:

Oh, that's fun.

Griffin:

Yeah. Hey, do you wanna let me talk about my first thing?

Rachel:

I do.

Griffin:

Okay. My first thing is, jumping in a big ole pile of leaves.

Rachel:

Oh, that's nice.

Griffin:

I can see my sound waves while we record, I've never quite seen mine so spaced this far apart before. It's like my microphone is picking up the individual clicks that my vocal cords make as they slap together like two big, wet pieces of meat.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

But anyway, I wanna talk about jumping in a big ole pile of leaves. We uh, went on a fun trip together with our son, up to Ely, Minnesota. It's like, four hours north of Minneapolis, and had a fun little cabin weekend. And when we came back, all the leaves had fallen, there's a nice leaf pile, and Henry just

played around in those leaves, and it was so majestic. So wonderful, it's such a fun, cute time and a really great photo op.

Rachel:

It was—it was adorable to watch him figure out kind of, what one does with leaves.

Griffin:

Yes. He had never really played with leaves before, and seeing him be like, oh yes. These are great. This is like fun confetti that um—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... the earth makes. It's just good, man. Jumping in a pile of leaves just sort of concentrated good. Um, it's remarkable that essentially tree hair turns into a stunt cushion once a year. Do you know what I mean?

Rachel:

A stunt cushion, okay. Okay, I see what you're saying.

Griffin:

Like, it's wild.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

And that's—that's—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

If you really abstractly think about it, like, you're having fun with this big pile of leaves, and the tree just made those.

Rachel:

If I asked you to describe it a different way—

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

... do you got another one in the chamber?

Griffin:

Um, it's like um, forest dandruff that turns into jump zone.

Rachel:

Okay.

Griffin:

Anyway, um...

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

I just, seeing him splash around in those leaves really took me back to just simpler, better times.

Rachel:

Uh-huh.

Griffin:

It's just such a classic autumnal activity, that I used to enjoy quite a bit, because growing up in West Virginia, there are tree for days. Trees for days I say!

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

And they would all shed, and I would jump right into them.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

I did so much leaf pile jumping. I was not a very outdoorsy kid, or teenager, or young adult, or adult.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

I will not be—I will not be an adventurous, outdoorsy grandpa, I bet.

Rachel:

I would like to raise an outdoorsy child, though.

Griffin:

This is a good city to do that it, but I did do leaf-pile jumping.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

Because it was so fun, and it was so rewarding. There are also... So there's—it's a controversial topic, there's a lot of controversy about this topic. Because a lot of people say "Don't jump in the leaf pile." Because if it's wet, it can get moldy, and also you don't know if there's bugs in there—

Rachel:

Oh man.

Griffin:

... and also you don't if there's debris in there.

Rachel:

Oh man.

Griffin:

And here's the thing...

Rachel:

Can I tell you, I was stifling those instincts as he was doing it.

Griffin:

I know, I know. Me too.

Rachel:

I was thinking like, this might end up being gross for him. But I was like, you know what, don't be that person right now.

Griffin:

Don't be that person. I feel like this ca—there was a buzz, like 2016—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... there was a lot of buzz, as if we needed more things to be buzz-y about in 2000 and fucking 16-

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... that was like, no more leaf piles. I remember seeing an article that was like, do a scarecrow instead. Shut the f—shut—shut the front door, with that kind of dookie garbage.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Are you kidding me? That's a completely different thing. You're like, making a fake guy, to scare off birds.

Rachel:

Unless you lay the scarecrow down on the ground—

Griffin:

And jump on him.

Rachel:

... and jump on it.

Griffin:

I don't wanna scare birds, internet. It's like, take care of your young ones, but scare the shit out of birds. They didn't do anything either. But anyway, I was trying to find scientific reasons for why jumping in leaf piles is good. I had some trouble, as you might imagine.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

I'm sure there's some sort of like, psychological benefit. It's fun, it gets the endorphins pumping, blood pumping, good activity, good exercise.

Rachel:

The crickly-crackly sound.

Griffin:

The crickly-crackly sound, it's like ASMR. What I found though, the scientific reason to do it, crushed leaves decompose faster than whole leaves, which leaves less time for those leaf piles to develop mold and diseases and stuff in them. 'Cause they decompose faster because you've crushed them all up with your bod. And that's—and that's science right there.

Rachel:

And that is a reason to run into your neighbor's yard and say, "I'm gonna jump in these." Just to—just to save you from some mold.

Griffin:

Well, you shouldn't—the only reason you shouldn't jump into a leaf pile is if the person who just sorted it into a pile asks you specifically not to do it, but even then, come on. I don't think they can blame you, right? It's a good leaf pile.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

One time I went down a slide into a leaf pile when I was visiting my Nonnee's house, a spider bit me right on the hand. It got so big and fat, and I will admit, I got out of the game a little bit, for a while after that.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

But it's been long enough that now I can say, leaf piles are good, just keep your hands out of them.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

'Cause spiders love these guys.

Rachel:

So when you jump in—

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

... you're suggesting hands up over the head?

Griffin:

Hm. Yeah.

Rachel:

Like straight up?

Griffin:

I mean, you're—you should be doing that anyway, because you're having a fucking great time jumping into the leaf pile.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Uh, anyway, I love leaf piles. What's your first thing?

Rachel:

My first thing is friendship.

Griffin:

Okay, we are really getting—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... really, really, very, very abstract.

Rachel:

I was surprised we hadn't talked about friendship, because I feel like I distinctly remember you making a lot of Friends goofs, when we were on the show, and I assumed it came from us talking about friends.

Griffin:

Friends the TV show?

Rachel:

Yes.

Griffin:

Oh. I talk about Friends a lot on the show?

Rachel:

I feel like you make a lot of Friends references, just in your day-to-day.

Griffin:

I found out that I don't know how to... I'm sort of a Daywalker, to make a Blade reference—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... when it comes to Chandler, I say Chandler sometimes, I say Shandler sometimes.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

And I'm not entirely sure which is the correct one even though I've seen every episode of friends, I bet.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

I don't know if it's Chandler or Shandler. This is like the um—

Rachel:

It's Chandler.

Griffin:

This is like the Bernstein Bears, like uh—

Rachel:

Oh my gosh.

Griffin:

The Mandela affect. I don't know!

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

Is it Chandler or Shandler? Take a poll!

Rachel:

It's Chandler baby.

Griffin:

It could be Shandler! [laughs]

Rachel:

There's Chandelier.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Which is a real thing.

Griffin:

I want to swing from the Shandler!

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

I still got it, even when my pipes are really bad, I can still open them up and get some Sia out of them.

Rachel:

Ah, uh, so I bring this up—

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

... because while we were in Minnesota, we were with some dear friends of ours, uh, and I just felt very grateful to be at our age, uh, when it becomes harder to have friendships as an adult, I think.

Griffin:

I think starting at like, 24 it starts becoming a lot harder to make friends.
[laughs]

Rachel:

Yeah. When- when you finish any kind of schooling that you're-

Griffin:

Sure.

Rachel:

... you're pursuing, and all the sudden your only, you know, adult contact is in the workplace—

Griffin:

Right.

Rachel:

... it becomes difficult. Uh, there's a lot of benefits to having friends.

Griffin:

Yeah, I imaged that was true—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... before you listed off some facts.

Rachel:

But, some of them are health benefits.

Griffin:

Oh, okay.

Rachel:

Uh, in a 2010 meta-analysis that combined data on more than 300,008 people across 148 studies, researchers found a strong connection between social relationships and lifespan.

Griffin:

Huh, wow.

Rachel:

The size of the effect rivaled that of better known health-related behaviors such as smoking and exercise.

Griffin:

Does that count like, twitter followers? Because I got a quarter million of those.

Rachel:

No.

Griffin:

I am Zuul! I will live—I will outlive you all!

Rachel:

No babe.

Griffin:

They're each my friend, I know them all by name. I have not tweeted in a month.

Rachel:

Do you wanna name just like, I don't know, like 100 of them that you know?

Griffin:

Oh, yeah, there's Doctor Pepper Dick 420.

Rachel:

Yes.

Griffin:

He is always cracking me up.

Rachel:

Yes.

Griffin:

Uh, there's uh, ChimChimCher00.

Rachel:

[laughs] Is the 'roo' zeros?

Griffin:

Yeah, it's all zeros, and they're all—

Rachel:

Okay, so I'm friends with the one that has the letters and not the zeros.

Griffin:

Oh, that one sucks!

Rachel:

Hey, it's my friend.

Griffin:

Nah, the zeros one is where it's at. He's got the best—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... sort of like, political stuff going on there.

Rachel:

Uh, a 2015 analysis that compiled data's on more than 3.4 million people across 70 studies uh, found that the absence of social connections carried the same health risk as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.

Griffin:

Okay, science, I'm all about you—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... but sometimes you do shit that is so wild, 'cause it's like, I lived in Chicago and I didn't really have any friends, well I had a cou—I had the people I lived with, but I didn't really make a lot of friends—

Rachel:

And you smoked a little bit.

Griffin:

[laughs] And I smoked a bit.

Rachel:

It was a dangerous time for you.

Griffin:

And I guess so, I guess at that point, you can either have friends and smoke, or not have friends and not smoke?

Rachel:

Can I say, when I met you—

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

... after you moved here from Chicago, you did seem a little unhealthy.

Griffin:

Yeah, but then I made friends!

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

There you go.

Rachel:

And now you're a—a vital, vigorous man. [laughs]

Griffin:

Now I'm a fucking vision of health, look at me. Look at me, I'm fucking—

Rachel:

This is your healthy voice. [laughs]

Griffin:

This is my health-some voice. The rest of the time I've been sick. I get very high- high pitched and nasally when I'm sick, this is the- the- the low baritone is kinda where I operate. I haven't been able to sing with my barbershop quartet for, like, fucking, eight years now.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm. What are the names of the people in your barbershop quartet? I haven't met them yet.

Griffin:

Yeah, there's Skillet, and—

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

... uh, uh, Busy Bill.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

Uh, and Scrote.

Rachel:

What's the name of the alto in there?

Griffin:

The alto is Al-tone Brown.

Rachel:

[laughs] That's nice.

Griffin:

Yeah, he thinks it's funny, I do not. I tell him every time, I was like, "Your name sucks, dude." It really is Alton Brown.

Rachel:

Uh, so, as Griffin mentioned, it is hard to make adult friends, uh, as a study published in 2006—

Griffin:

Sorry y'all, there's a boil notice going on, [laughs] we all have to drink bottled water. I don't know how to do it quietly.

Rachel:

[laughs] They're a lot of things you don't know how to do quietly, Griffin McElroy.

Griffin:

Wuh-whoa!

Rachel:

People had an average of about three friends they felt they could discuss important things with in 1984, by 2005 the average number of confidants had dropped to about two.

Griffin:

There's not— [laughs] There's not much more it can drop!

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

I feel like this is the countdown to the end of civilization, if it hits zero, it's—

Rachel:

At the end of the study, close to 25% of respondents said they didn't have anyone they could trust.

Griffin:

Oh my god!

Rachel:

Triple the proportion from two decades earlier.

Griffin:

It is so bad!

Rachel:

It's bad out there, guys!

Griffin:

But we have—we have each other, I think we're lucky enough.

Rachel:

We have each other, and we have wonderful friends!

Griffin:

We have wonderful friends.

Rachel:

That we've had for a very long time now.

Griffin:

We've had for a very long time. It's so important to have- and I think that like, I give internet a lot of shit, um, and a lot of that I think is pretty well deserved, but I also think that it is an incredible way of, like, finding the—finding the communities that give you this kind of support. Um, and, I don't know, I think that... I don't know. I was very, very antisocial in my like, sort of, traveling, wondering days. But if I'd had something like that, I don't know, probably would've been a lot easier.

Rachel:

I have always been lucky to have a decent group of friends.

Griffin:

That's true.

Rachel:

Uh, but I will say that not all of them were especially decent. [laughs]

Griffin:

[laughs]

Rachel:

But I am lucky uh-

Griffin:

More frenemies, right?

Rachel:

Frenemies? Frenemies?

Griffin:

Mm-hmm. [laughs]

Rachel:

Leah Frenemies.

Griffin:

[laughs]

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Damn you! Oh.

Rachel:

It wasn't even that funny, I don't think.

Griffin:

It was! It was really fucking funny!

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Gotta take my fucking hoodie off for that.

Rachel:

[laughs] Um. Uh, so I just wanted to bring it up because one thing um, I've noticed when you develop like, a real good lasting relationship, is that you can just check in every once and a while. You don't have to be all on the ball.

Griffin:

That's true.

Rachel:

You know? Like our friends that moved to Minnesota that we were visiting, we don't get to see very often, we don't get to talk to very often, but it, you know, just a few kind words here and there really make it last. I like to, because I'm uncomfortable a little bit, with sincerity face to face.

Griffin:

Oh yes.

Rachel:

I like to send a good email every once and a while that just says "Hey, here's some things that I appreciate about you, and I miss you."

Griffin:

Yeah, when me and Scrote had the big fight, uh—

Rachel:

Mm.

Griffin:

... we didn't talk for 26 years. But then I wrote him a really nice email, we were six when we started the group.

Rachel:

Okay, in your barbershop? You were six when you started your barbershop quartet! How much do I love the idea of six year olds—

Griffin:

A six year old named Scrote? I'm not crazy about that.

Rachel:

No, no, no. Doing a barbershop quartet together, with the little red and white vests.

Griffin:

Yeah, sure.

Rachel:

Just harmonizing.

Griffin:

That could be fun. It's definitely a lot more innocent than what I was suggesting. Friendship is great! Can—can I steal you away? I could see how low I can go with this voice.

Rachel:

Yeah, I think—I think you should take a crack at it.

Griffin:

Let me see, I've been working on my scales in piano class, let me start with the lowest I can do and then I'll work down from there. [singing] Okay. [singing] What's that doing for you?

Rachel:

I mean, I wanted to say it was good.

Griffin:

[singing]

Rachel:

But that would imply that I liked it.

Griffin:

It was—you can—it can be good and you not like it.

Rachel:

Okay.

Griffin:

Um—

Rachel:

That's what it was then.

Griffin:

It was like uh, Tree of Life for me, when I saw that flick. I was like, yeah, good. Never again though.

Rachel:

Mother.

Griffin:

Mother.

Rachel:

Father.

Griffin:

Fa fa.

[ad break]

Rachel:

Hey Griffin.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

I got some uh, personal messages.

Griffin:

[laughs] Oh, you hacked into their accounts and you're gonna read all their... and just leak all their dirty laundry?

Rachel:

Mm-hmm. This message is for Bruce, Hillary, Cheyenne, Zoe, Lilly, and Caroline.

Griffin:

Oh, you got the dirt on all them, juicy.

Rachel:

It's from Donny. "Hey, this is Donny. Bruce, Hillary, Cheyenne, Zoe, and Lilly, y'all are like family to me, and the best of people I could have around. I love you all, just thought you should know. Caroline, it's been a wonderful six months, at the time of this writing, just wanted to let you know how much I love and appreciate you. Love you blady, beautiful lady."

Griffin:

Well, and also she has retractable blades coming out of her fingernails.

Rachel:

Ooh.

Griffin:

Yeah, like the Wolverine, or the Deathstroke? Deathstrike? There's another sort of X-Man character who... Anyway, do you have another message?

Rachel:

I do have a snotner message. [laughs]

Griffin:

I am so sorry that my—my DayQuil mush mouth is so offensive to you.

Rachel:

This message is for Jeffery, it is from Lindsey. Oh, this is gonna be fun.

Griffin:

Oh, good.

Rachel:

"Jeffery? Do you wanna go look at houses with me, Jeffery? You are my sweet peach, and my favorite boy. I'm so grateful to have you in my life with maritime bus as my witness. Just know that I'm sending you smooches, and shooting you double finger guns. Oh, and Jeffery? We should do this again some time."

Griffin:

It's a sweet message.

Rachel:

It's a My Brother, My Brother, and Me reference.

Griffin:

If—it's an old school one too.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Is it bad I can't even see the word peach without thinking about "I could eat a peach for hours"?

Rachel:

I thought you were gonna say the Mario brothers.

Griffin:

No, I was doing the—

Rachel:

The Nicholas Cage?

Griffin:

... the other—the other one. "I could eat a peach for hours."

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

This voice makes that fun to say, doesn't it? "I could eat a peach for hours."

Rachel:

Wait, let me try it.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

"I could eat a peach for hours."

Griffin:

Dammit, that's really good too.

Rachel:

Hmm.

[Maximum Fun ad]

Griffin:

Do you wanna know my second thing?

Rachel:

Yes.

Griffin:

My second thing is Alien. And I'm not being like—I'm not doing like um, weird speak when I say that, it's literally the movie Alien.

Rachel:

Oh, do you mean Alf?

Griffin:

No. [laughs] No. Yeah—

Rachel:

Okay, Alien.

Griffin:

Yeah, that's—did they ever make an Alf movie? 'Cause if not, they're leave—they left... They did make a cartoon movie.

Rachel:

They did, and they made, like, a TV special that was like, movie length.

Griffin:

It was like, how to keep kids off drugs, and it was like, Bugs Bunny was it, fucking Alf was in it, like everyone was in it. It was a free rental at Block Buster. I watched that fucking tape a lot.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

No, I wanna talk about Alien. Alien the movie.

Rachel:

The Sigourney Weaver?

Griffin:

The Sigourney Weaver movie, and I res—I wanted to bring a spooky movie! This is our last episode before Halloween, so I wanted to bring some autumnal ass stuff. And I wanted to bring a scary movies, and I was trying to think, like, what's a good one that holds up well, and you know, is fun, and important, I guess, to talk about. And when I think about it, man, I think Alien is like the best of them.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

It's certainly among the best of them. I struggled with whether I wanted to bring Alien or Aliens, 'cause I enjoyed both of those movies.

Rachel:

They're both good.

Griffin:

... very, very much.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

... in the same way. If you've never seen them, Alien is a very slow burn uh, sort of survival horror story.

Rachel:

Yeah, the first half hour of it, if I remember, is—is kinda—

Griffin:

It's a lot of set up.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... and a lot of uh, a lot of like, hard sci-fi. And then it's a story of just like, uh-oh, there's an alien on our ship, what are we gonna do? The second one is, let's get the big, big guns and go and kill all the fucking aliens, hoo-rah. And it's fun too, like it's still like a really, really good flick. But it's—it is a lot different.

I landed on just talking about Alien, 'cause I think it's- I think it's a really—I think it's a really incredible movie. It came out in 1979, uh, it was Sigourney Weaver's like, first starring role and kind of launched her career. Uh, so it is important in that sense. [laughs] What I find so fascinating, I love horror movies. I have seen them... I've seen many, many, many of them.

Uh, what I like about Alien is like, it set up this whole franchise, right? They've—they've made a million Alien movies at this point, and I think Alien also sort of created its own, or not created, but sort of populated this sci-fi horror genre that, you know, uh arguable like, The Fly was a part of, and all this.

Really, Alien is a very like, by the book horror movie. If you—if you compare it to like, uh, Friday the 13th, or Halloween, or any, like, it is kind of the same where it's like, here's the character, here's the protagonist, here's the setup for what the monster is. Now that's the first half of the movie, second half of the movies is now that we've made this like, sandbox, let's—let's see what happens, folks.

Rachel:

Yeah, it's just like nonstop after that.

Griffin:

Um, and it's so fascinating, like, it doesn't really break from that tradition at all, so in that sense you kinda know what's gonna happen next but it's still like, extremely tense, and really, really, really scary.

Rachel:

Well, and the aliens themselves are like, unlike anything really that's been—that was seen before, you know?

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Like most... I feel like most monsters were kind of very obviously people in suits—

Griffin:

Sure.

Rachel:

... in previous horror movies, and that's not really the case with Aliens. I don't even know how they put those folks together.

Griffin:

It was—it was still a person in a suit, yeah.

Rachel:

Yeah, it just didn't seem like it.

Griffin:

It was just a really expertly made suit.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

So the aliens are sort of the highlight of this whole franchise, right? And uh, what is—what is really fascinating is, there's a lot of things that are fascinating about them. First of all, like, this movie spends a lot—this movie and *Aliens*, spends a long ass time like, teaching you the physiology of these aliens, in a way that I think is really fascinating. It's like you're taking like a biology class on these aliens while you're watching a movie. It's like here's their—their blood is made out of acid, here's their whole reproductive cycle. Like, every movies adds a new step—

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... to their reproductive cycle. Like, and now you know all of this, uh, and it sets you up for what's about to happen in the—

Rachel:

I feel like *Jurassic Park* got a lot from *Alien*, when you think about it that way.

Griffin:

Yeah, I think so too.

Rachel:

You spend a lot of time discussing, like, how the dinosaurs work before you see the dinosaurs.

Griffin:

Yeah, for sure. Um, but as for like, the aesthetic of the alien, because I agree, like, you look at movies any—everything in the past, like, nothing holds a candle to *Alien*. Uh—

Rachel:

In the first Alien do you see like, the little alien that comes out of the mouth of the bigger alien? Does that happen in the first movie?

Griffin:

I think so?

Rachel:

It's such like an iconic thing, and it's like—

Griffin:

I think it does.

Rachel:

... fascinating to me.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

I like thinking about like, a little Griffin coming out of the mouth of—

Griffin:

You like thinking about that?

Rachel:

... of just like, just like a little Griffin with little glasses coming out of your mouth. So like you lean in to smooch me, and then like a littler Griffin comes out and smooches me first.

Griffin:

You would enjoy that, you're saying?

Rachel:

I'm just exploring.

Griffin:

Once.

Rachel:

I'm exploring that idea.

Griffin:

Oh, you wanna—you wanna play? [laughs]

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

What are we doing? Well let's save—let's save—

Rachel:

Which one of us is on the DayQuil? That's what I'm wondering.

Griffin:

Yeah, let's save this pillow talk for later. What do you say?

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

So they were designed by H. R. Geiger, uh, who—

Rachel:

Oh!

Griffin:

Yeah, so I don't know if—how much you know about his work. He's a Swiss artist, uh, who basically just like, who does a bunch of fucked up shit.

[laughs] Like, the—I don't know how to describe his art except for like, deeply, deeply, deeply unsettling. Uh, actually, the alien was largely based off of this one painting that he had, I cannot remember the name of it. Uh, I'll see if I can find it, hold on.

Okay, he had this series of illustrations called uh, Necronom. There's one called Necronom Four that he uh, put out in 1976 that was sort of just this like, surrealist monster, essentially, and if you come over and look at it real quick.

Rachel:

Oh, yeah. It's got like, the head, and the big eyes, and the whole—the whole structure.

Griffin:

I mean, it does—it's more dick-like [laughs] I would say.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Way more, way more pee-pee like, for sure. But that's a Xenomorph essentially. Uh, which is what the alien's called. Uh, and like, that why—that's why it looks so different, right? Like you tagged in this like, surrealist Swiss artist to design your shit? Like, that's incredibly wild for you to—

Rachel:

That is incredibly wild.

Griffin:

That is a wild thing for you to do, um, it's just like a wild investment, but it so clearly paid off, right, because it established this thing as like a new thing to be scared of. Which is something that like, horror movies still like, struggle with and I think they always will, is trying to say like, here's the—here's the new thing to be scared of. It Follows was so great because it's a new thing to be scared of. It's a source of terror that's never been in a movie.

Rachel:

Yeah, and like, aliens got really hot after that movie. I fell like into the '80s all the sudden, like everything was alien-related.

Griffin:

Ah, yes. Space Balls.

Rachel:

Well I'm talking like, E.T.

Griffin:

E.T. for sure.

Rachel:

... the aforementioned Alf.

Griffin:

Uh, Alf is definitely inspired by Alien in so many ways, I feel like.

Rachel:

Um, and then you know, Alien Autopsy, you remember that one?

Griffin:

Um, what?

Rachel:

It wasn't a movie, it was like a television show where they dissected alien.

Griffin:

And it's a TV show called Alien Autopsy?

Rachel:

Just Google it real fast. I think it was on Fox, and the suggestion was that it was an autopsy of a real alien.

Griffin:

[laughs] This was a TV movie from 1995. Rachel, you can't reference TV movies from 1995 starring Jonathan Frakes in it, babe.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

That's a really deep, deep cut. That may be the deepest cut that's ever been made on—

Rachel:

I was thinking it was a television show.

Griffin:

It was a TV movie.

Rachel:

Oh.

Griffin:

That's a really deep pull.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Uh, anyway, this movie rules. The aesthetic of like, the whole movie, uh, the uh, the ship in the first movie like, also looks really cool. Like, they didn't try to like, sci-fi it up, it looks very much like if there were spaceships in the 1980s, what they would like. Like it was 1979 when this movie came out, it was like they said what if there were spaceships in 1989, and let's see what that's—

Rachel:

Yeah, exactly.

Griffin:

It looks very like, uh, it looks—there are parts of the ship that look like, really comfortable, and like lived in.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

... and that make it like, all the scarier when that place is sort of violated by this- you know, by this—by this terrifying, uh, unkillable monster.

Rachel:

That's very true. And also, I mean, can we mention, like, how awesome Sigourney Weaver is? Like her—

Griffin:

Oh, she's fucking awesome!

Rachel:

Like the character of Ripley, and like the performance. So good.

Griffin:

Yeah, uh, this movie is like, top to bottom like, uh... I always feel shitty talking about, like, horror movies this way, um, where it's like, well, it's not just a good horror, it's like a good movie because that suggests that like, we rate horror movies on a different scale. But I also think that Alien is maybe one of the best movies ever made, and also is like, very, very scary and I wanna watch it 'cause we haven't this spooky season.

Rachel:

Yeah, we haven't dipped into spooky, but I'd be into watching Alien.

Griffin:

Let's do it.

Rachel:

All right.

Griffin:

What's your second thing though, first?

Rachel:

My second thing, playgrounds.

Griffin:

All right.

Rachel:

I have been really excited to have uh, Henry be at an age where he appreciates a playground because I have always loved them.

Griffin:

I have too. Did you have one growing up that was like, your spot?

Rachel:

I mean, there was a church near my house that had a playground that I used to like to walk to, and like hang out with friends when they came over.

Griffin:

Nice! And they were cool with that?

Rachel:

The church?

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Well, as far as I know.

Griffin:

Okay.

Rachel:

I mean, you know, I didn't like, knock on the door and ask them if I could use their playground.

Griffin:

Okay.

Rachel:

Uh, I like always get excited to go to one? I don't know if you have that experience. Like when we take Henry to the playground, I'm like, legitimately psyched to be there.

Griffin:

Uh, yeah. I do, for sure.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

Uh, especially like going to a new one, seeing what kind of playground innovations, 'cause there certainly are some playground innovations.

Rachel:

That's very true, they're actually much safer now. Uh—

Griffin:

Well, I don't know, there's a zip line at my old playground now, which wasn't there before. [laughs] So—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... that seems demonstrably unsafe.

Rachel:

Uh, so playgrounds actually uh, started in Germany in 1850. Um, the founder of kindergarten Friedrich Froebel, uh, promoted the importance of

free play as well as nature play for children. His model kindergarten plans emphasized the need for opportunities for contact with natural materials. The kindergarten movement spread the use of sandboxes in German schools and homes.

Griffin:

Interesting, so that was like, the touching natural materials idea.

Rachel:

Sandbox is like—is like where it all started. Uh, the introduction of "sand gardens" to America was prompted by Dr. Marie Zakrsewska, who while visiting Berlin in 1885 observed children's playing in heaps of sand. Uh, she wrote a letter to the Massachusetts Emergency and Hygiene Association, which resulted in a large heap of sand being placed near the uh, West End nursery in Boston.

Griffin:

[laughs] Could you imagine all those Bostonian—

Rachel:

Just like a—

Griffin:

...kids just like—

Rachel:

... big ole pile of sand.

Griffin:

... so we're um, we're just supposed to—

Rachel:

Just get in there?

Griffin:

... jump in? [laughs]

Rachel:

Get in there?

Griffin:

We're just supposed to jump in the sand?

Rachel:

I mean, is it any better or worse than a leaf pile?

Griffin:

It's probably a lot uh, worse, 'cause it's a lot harder. It's sand.

Rachel:

Well, you can build stuff with sand.

Griffin:

That's true.

Rachel:

Uh, so she uh—

Griffin:

I wanted to do a Boston accent there, but I complete—I've forgotten how a Boston accent sounds.

Rachel:

Um—

Griffin:

[in a Boston accent] Harbor. Yeah, you ju—you just want me to jump in the sand?

Rachel:

Ah, it'd be so terrible if you couldn't have remembered that.

Griffin:

[laughs]

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

[in a strange accent] You want me to jump in the sand?

Rachel:

Okay, you're getting in a weird place now.

Griffin:

Boston. Baked beans.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Boston baked beans. Oh, rad times.

Rachel:

So by 1899, there were 21 sand gardens.

Griffin:

[laughs]

Rachel:

Uh. [laughs]

Griffin:

It's just like, Wikipedia is just like, we know exactly how many [laughs] sand boxes there were in existence—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... 119 years ago.

Rachel:

So shortly after, in 1905, Henry S. Curtis, who was the director of the D.C. playground system, and Luther Gulick, who was the director of physical education in the New York City school system joined together to form a national playground association. Uh, which uh, was officially formed at the YMCA in D.C. Uh, and it was designed to promote ideas of playgrounds to communities, including benefits, construction, layout and design, and the conduct and activities to occur on the playgrounds.

Griffin:

This is so alien to me, this idea of just like, we need people to gen up playgrounds.

Rachel:

I know.

Griffin:

It seems so like, what if we had toys that like, kids could come and play with um, as a community? Yeah, it seems like—

Rachel:

Yeah! I think people didn't really see the benefits of play, uh, until much later in history.

Griffin:

I guess that's true.

Rachel:

Uh, so the next kind of big moment in playgrounds, we in the 1940s and '50s. Uh, that's when uh, adventure or junk playgrounds were started.

Griffin:

Oh.

Rachel:

Uh, so it was a large lot stocked with building materials. Um, this was started um, it was actually started in Denmark, but then moved to London in 1946, uh the concept was that there would be puddles, kills, grass, and no asphalt. The main features were to be one, enough pipes, ropes, bricks, lumber, hammers, and nails—

Griffin:

Uh, uh, uh, uh—

Rachel:

[laughs] Where with very little supervision children could build and paint playthings that they wanted, like swings, tree houses, and forts.

Griffin:

Oh god. Okay.

Rachel:

So I'm—

Griffin:

You're almost there guys.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

You almost got there.

Rachel:

On one hand, it's kind of beautiful, right? Like, kind of like Legos. Like give the kids opportunities—

Griffin:

Ain't no nail Lego.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Ain't no sharp Legos, ain't no sharp Legos.

Rachel:

But yes, also—also very dangerous. The other key tenant was a central pavilion for children to get in out of the rain, to hold meetings. [laughs]

Griffin:

[laughs] To hold about the—all of their injuries where they would do triage on each other. Well, he's got seven nails, you've only got four nails in your hand, so we're gonna take him to the hospital first.

Rachel:

I think we should stop throwing the hammer at each other. Jimmy, what do you think? Well, I don't know, it's pretty fun.

Griffin:

Seconded.

Rachel:

[laughs] Um, the first adventure playgrounds were staffed by workers called "wardens." [laughs]

Griffin:

Oh my god.

Rachel:

Their job was to unlock the tool sheds at the playgrounds, and uh, observe the children of play, assisting them only as necessary so as not to lead activities.

Griffin:

Like Jeff Probst on Survivor.

Rachel:

Exactly. [laughs]

Griffin:

You gotta let them get hurt.

Rachel:

The workers uh, eventually became known as play workers, in—

Griffin:

It's a lot better than wardens, for sure.

Rachel:

... instead of wardens. [laughs] Uh, the 1950s through '70s—

Griffin:

Play workers though is very, uh, very uh, it's very 1984.

Rachel:

Oh.

Griffin:

Innit? Like, I do play work.

Rachel:

I guess, a little bit.

Griffin:

It's go—it's double good.

Rachel:

To me it makes me think more of, you know, kind of the arbitrary name, like, retail employees are given, too.

Griffin:

Yeah, sorry. It took me while to remember what the year was from the big book.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

[laughs] I'm—it's so bad in here.

Rachel:

Like at Barnes and Noble, you're not like a cashier, you're a book seller.

Griffin:

Yeah, for sure.

Rachel:

It's kind of like you're a play worker.

Griffin:

I was a sales associate at GameStop.

Rachel:

Oh, yeah. That's what I was at uh, Sally's Beauty Supply.

Griffin:

It's a garbage term. It doesn't mean anything.

Rachel:

[laughs] So in the 1950s through '70s, that's when you started to see novelty playgrounds, which were the things with like, rocket ships, and animal shapes, and tunnels all made of metal.

Griffin:

And no hammers?

Rachel:

No hammers this time.

Griffin:

That's some bullshit.

Rachel:

[laughs] But everything was made of metal, so you could still hurt yourself.

Griffin:

Okay, good.

Rachel:

And then the '70s and '80s is when started to see more of the rounded edges, and hard plastic equipment. Um, 1980s to the present is when you saw more of an emphasis on safety.

Griffin:

Yeah, I would say so.

Rachel:

Um, so yeah, so I remember from my youth, we had the wood chips, um, which you still see today.

Griffin:

Mm-hmm.

Rachel:

You also see a lot of that kind of, springy, rubberized ground.

Griffin:

Yeah, I remember when they replaced the gr—so I grew up next to a park, uh, in Huntington.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

I was very lucky to grow up, uh, you know, a three minute walk from that park, and it had a big, beautiful playground. And they have- they have renovated that playground [laughs] so many times since I lived there, adding that springy ground, adding a—like a zip line, there was a huge, huge, like sand pit—

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

... uh, for kids to play in, uh, and there was like a uh, like, cement, like, tunnel you could go in underground, there was just so much stuff. It was a dope playground.

Rachel:

Yeah. I just like, I love the spirit of it, I love the kind of, adventure element.

Griffin:

Mm-hmm.

Rachel:

Um, I—I kind of really appreciate. You know, it's kind of where you—you build a little ninja warrior.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

And I like that.

Griffin:

Did you have a playground, sort of, activity you were fond of in school?

Rachel:

Uh, I mean, I liked a lot of hot lava, don't touch the ground, in those little mazes.

Griffin:

Okay.

Rachel:

Uh, that was fun. Uh, you know, crawling to the top of the slide where the little thing is and just reading all the graffiti. [laughs]

Griffin:

Oh, that's fun. I remember elementary school—

Rachel:

Oh, and the tire swing, natch.

Griffin:

Oh, you got to.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

I remember in middle school, um, I did a LARP with my friend Taylor for Final Fantasy IV.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

Uh, on the—on the big toy, which I've said before and you've chastised me.

Rachel:

I actually Googled that, so that is actually like the—the official name of those—

Griffin:

Oh.

Rachel:

... big structures, is the big toy.

Griffin:

Oh, good.

Rachel:

Yeah. We just—

Griffin:

Then I—then I chastise you.

Rachel:

We just never called it that where I grew up.

Griffin:

Um, and we would play Final Fantasy up there, and I had like, I had a Ring Pop, this—I remember this very clearly, I had a Ring Pop, but it was like, a magic ring that could shoot fire out of it. It was fun to have uh, I guess I burned him in the game. That's not as fun.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

But anyway, I liked to—I liked to play, sort of in my own mind.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

So, this is sort of going back to the friendship segment, and explaining why I didn't have very much of it.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

But now it's getting hard to think about, so let's—is that it?

Rachel:

The—that was my trip to the playground, yeah.

Griffin:

It was fun.

Rachel:

Uh-huh.

Griffin:

I think going to the city museum in Saint Louis reminded my of like—

Rachel:

Yes.

Griffin:

... how much I love like, playing around on big objects.

Rachel:

Yeah, just climbing and sliding, and like, being up high and—and getting to kinda use your muscles in ways you don't normally.

Griffin:

It's good for you.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

I feel like uh, that's what I always want hiking to be, but then hiking, it's never planned out, is it? There's always like, that one route on the ground that gonna like, bop, pop your ankle a little bit. And it's like, that would never happen on a playground.

Rachel:

Well, it definitely would happen on a playground, I think.

Griffin:

No, because I would—it's all flat and safe. It's safe fun—safe, flat fun for adults.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Um, thank you so much for listening to Wonderful, um, and—

Rachel:

Can I hear what the listener sent in?

Griffin:

Yeah, we skipped it last week because we just were completely—

Rachel:

Did we really?

Griffin:

We really did, I felt terrible. But yeah, the listener sent in some... I don't know if it was last week, recently we—I know we recently skipped it. Uh, yeah. So Catherine says "I love watching experts at work. It's truly satisfying and inspiring to watch a master chef or craftsman uh, do the thing that they're really, really good at." I agree with this wholeheartedly.

Rachel:

Yes, this is kind of our whole thing with reality competitions, I think.

Griffin:

Sure, and I mean I'll also watch like, YouTube videos of just like, you know, people who put the pizza boxes together super good, or like, street food people.

Rachel:

Or if you go to like a silver dollar city, and watch somebody blow glass.

Griffin:

Oh, so dope.

Rachel:

That's also nice.

Griffin:

Uh, Carina says uh "Taran Killam's Robin tribute on YouTube. I was listening to Robin's new single when I remembered uh, that this, and then it's a link to that—that Teryn Kilam video, uh, happened in 2011. Simpler times. Teryn in a cropped jacket and tight pants busting a move to Robin's Call Your Girlfriend while Bobby Moynihan shines a flashlight in the doorway. Bonus wonder, the song is still a bop." I don't know if you've seen this video.

Rachel:

Oh, I forgot about that.

Griffin:

The—the original, like, the song is fucking great. The music video is great, and then basically Taran Killam, when he was on SNL in 2011, and like a whole big room full of SNL uh, like cast people, it was a writing night, and so it was like, 4:30 AM and they just recreated the whole music video, shot for shot, in kind of perfect uh, uh, synchronicity.

Rachel:

I was... Do you remember the Halloween that I was Robin from that video?

Griffin:

Oh yeah, that's true.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Uh, yeah, it's a really, really good video.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

Uh, I love it very much. Tessie says, "You know when you're hiking in the woods—" Uh-oh. [laughs]

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

I definitely copied and pasted this into my document earlier, I guess I forgot. "You know when you're hiking in the woods, and you notice that the tree roots have grown in a certain way so that it looks like stairs? When I was a little kid I went on hikes and I used to think to myself that they were magic trails made by fairies or something. When I see them nowadays I just think it's really cool, like the trees just wanted you to have an easier time climbing that hill. Thanks trees, just wonderful work you're doing out there ladies."

Rachel:

Oh my gosh, that's really nice.

Griffin:

That's really nice, I'm sorry I talked shit about tree roots.

Rachel:

And it like—it really conjures like, a very specific visual for me.

Griffin:

Yeah, me too.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

Um, really back to that same park that I grew up next to. I don't think I give that park enough credit, it was formative, just like your church.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

I think that's it. Uh, 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. Um, let's say a few words about Maximum Fun.

Rachel:

Maximumfun.org is home to wonderful, positive podcasts that can teach you a lot and make you laugh. Uh, I always turn to that website every single day, just looking to see what's going on.

Griffin:

I'm constantly refreshing it—

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

... looking for new podcasts and new lessons. Um, they have shows like Tights and Fights, and Stop Podcasting Yourself, and—

Rachel:

Oh, I've been wanting to listen to the new Tights and Fights, 'cause Open Mike Eagle—

Griffin:

Oh yeah.

Rachel:

... actually participated in a wrestling match.

Griffin:

That's awesome.

Rachel:

I'm very curious about it.

Griffin:

It's all at Maximumfun.org, we have other stuff at McElroyshows.com, um, pre—go buy the Sawbones book, go to bit.ly/sawbonesbook now, it's really, really great, and um, you're just gonna love the hell out of it. Uh, I think that's is, huh?

Rachel:

That is it.

Griffin:

There any other deep voice songs you want me to cover for you?

Rachel:

Oh my gosh, uh, can you sing uh, Barbie Girl by Aqua?

Griffin:

[singing] Wow, that's so low. I cannot believe how frickin' low that is.

Rachel:

That's incredible.

Griffin:

[singing] That's fucking great baby! I have to record this right now, it's never gonna be like this again. [singing] Oh wow, that song is problematic as hell.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Goodbye! [laughs] [singing]

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