

Wonderful! 299: There's Always Gonna be a Bryce

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[theme music plays]

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hi, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is Wonderful!

Griffin: [spooky voice] Ooooh!

Rachel: Oh, is it a spooky?

Griffin: This one is gonna be pretty spooky.

Rachel: I guess it's our last one before Halloween.

Griffin: Yeah, before we get all holiday-ee.

Rachel: You're looking very autumnal today.

Griffin: Thanks. We just did MBMBaM and I wanted to look autumnal on it.

Rachel: Yeah, that's a great sweater.

Griffin: This sweater—thanks. It shranked.

Rachel: Oh...

Griffin: I went to great lengths to keep this sweater from shrankin' but it is the type of sweater—I won't say where I got it from, 'cause I'm not gonna put 'em on blast. It was not a cheap sweater, and first time I put it on I was like, "I'm gonna shrink this bad boy no matter what I do."

Rachel: Did you put it in the dryer?

Griffin: No, I didn't! I air dried it, thank you very much.

Rachel: Oh.

Griffin: Yeah, so it was just—

Rachel: That's the only tip I have in my toolkit. [laughs]

Griffin: That's all you have. I knew you were ready. I saw you—

Rachel: "Don't put it in the dryer!" [laughs]

Griffin: I saw you, like, poised to strike.

Rachel: "I'll bet he put it in the dryer," is what I thought.

Griffin: [crosstalk] and it just got smaller. Or I got bigger, is also possible.

Rachel: Oh, are you still growing?

Griffin: Well, I've been hittin' the iron church, and gettin' gains.

Rachel: [laughs] Hey, you're pretty swole.

Griffin: So I am—well, I'm pretty—I am more inflamed, 'cause of how badly I've injured my shoulder. Goin' to the iron church, praying a little too hard, we'll say, there. And it hurt my there rotator cuff. So I'm gonna go ahead and say small wonder, get it right out of the way, ice packs and, um, ibuprofen. Uh, thank you so much.

Rachel: Ice packs come in a lot of shapes and sizes these days.

Griffin: They do. I have one for my rotator cuff now that makes me look like a cool future centurion.

Rachel: Yeah, it looks like you could pull a weapon right out of that thing.

Griffin: Yeah, like I have a hidden shoulder... blade. Wait! I d—I do!

Rachel: A shoulder blade!

Griffin: That's why they call it that!

Rachel: Huh.

Griffin: Do you have a small wonder, I wonder? [pause] I bet you do, somewhere. Squishin' around in that beautiful brain of yours. [pause] Just a morsel of gratitude.

Rachel: [laughs] Um... I... got a pumpkin bread mix.

Griffin: Holy crap.

Rachel: Uh, from an establishment. Uh, it's one of those, like, just add eggs, oil, and water kind of things.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I did that. And I added chocolate chips.

Griffin: It... I just ate it. I just finished it, actually. Well—

Rachel: Oh, did you finish the whole thing?

Griffin: I finished the whole thing. Downsta—as—

Rachel: Good for you.

Griffin: When I went downstairs I was like, "I'm gonna go take some ibuprofen for my sore shoulder." And you're like, "Okay, babe. Let's record right after." And I was like, "Sure thing."

I went down, and I did have the medicine, and also some of that good pumpkin bread and chocolate chips.

Rachel: For whatever reason our children are not particularly into this loaf, but Griffin and I have been tearing it down.

Griffin: I'm all about that loaf. Um, but now that loaf is gone, because of my actions, mostly. And I'm... pretty sad. Pretty sad about it. Pretty torn up.

Rachel: I can get more.

Griffin: I would love that. So much.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: You're being very cagey about where you got it from, though. I'm wondering if this is—like, you got a guy. You got a pumpkin guy.

Rachel: Oh, no. It is—it is a large establishment that has many products, and I am confident, I think, that they will still have this product.

Griffin: Did you perhaps exchange it with Joseph? Is that where you got this mix? At Joseph's Exchange... Area? [pause] [whispering] Trader Joe's.

Rachel: Oh, no.

Griffin: Oh, okay. Then that's fine.

Rachel: No, I haven't been to Joseph's establishment in a while.

Griffin: I thought you were just, like, not wanting to give publicity to Trader Joseph.

Rachel: Because—here I go. But they don't have a delivery option, so—and most of what we do now is we get our groceries delivered, because we have two small children who keep us busy 24 hours a day, and so I like getting my groceries delivered, but Trader Joe's—

Griffin: And you don't have to explain why we haven't hit up Trader Joseph's.

Rachel: They don't offer that. And I hate it.

Griffin: Let's—let's make a date of it. No, that would be sad. Let's just do it.

Rachel: That would be sad. [laughs]

Griffin: You go first this week.

Rachel: I do!

Griffin: What do you got for me?

Rachel: Okay. Um... the topic I have this week actually came from that pumpkin bread. Because I was—

Griffin: Wait a minute, what?

Rachel: Because I was eating it, and it whispered to me.

Griffin: What?!

Rachel: No, I didn't. But it tasted—

Griffin: There was a little slip of paper inside.

Rachel: It tasted to me a lot like a cake donut, and I wanted to talk about cake donuts.

Griffin: Cake donuts, yeah! We've almost certainly done donut donuts before.

Rachel: I didn't see it!

Griffin: Really?

Rachel: And I checked both spellings.

Griffin: Wow.

Rachel: I checked the D-O and the D-O-U-G-H.

Griffin: I always do U-G-H.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: 'Cause it's dough, is the root word there. I'm not gonna shorten it to do-nuts. There's a place in Austin called Shipley's Donuts, which always confused me.

Rachel: Hmm. What did you think it was?

Griffin: Well, Rachel, maybe they make some sort of nut-based treat.

Rachel: [laughs] Okay.

Griffin: Do you know what I mean? Like, that's a thing already, guys!

Rachel: Yeah, that's true. I just like the ease of it. The shortness. I can spell it—

Griffin: [simultaneously] But what kind of life are you living?

Rachel: —and get on my way.

Griffin: What life are you living where you don't have time to drop a U-G-H in there? You know what I mean? Like, we are busy. We have two children that keep us fuckin'... on call 24-sev.

Rachel: I guess I'm just in support of the evolution of language.

Griffin: Xmas or Christmas? Which do you...

Rachel: Depends, man. Depends if I'm in a hurry. I like having both!

Griffin: Okay. Alright. Not what I believe, but...

Rachel: [laughs quietly] So I—this one's interesting for me because I don't really like a yeast donut. I don't really like a traditional yeasty, like, flaky donut.

Griffin: That is true, and strange.

Rachel: I find it very unsatisfying. I feel like you will eat one of those regular guys in, you know, a few minutes, and then it will feel like you haven't eaten anything. Uh, and that's frustrating for me.

Griffin: I understand that. But also, sometimes I want to eat a donut and not feel like total shit right afterwards.

Rachel: You feel like a cake donut is too much?

Griffin: I feel like if I eat, just to simplify the language here a little bit, a lot of cake, my body does not respond so great to that. If I eat... just a glazed donut, an airy pocket of wet sugar, it's not—you know, it's gonna psych me up in a way that's going to burn very, very quickly, but it's not gonna load me down, so to speak.

Rachel: I feel like a yeast donut is kind of like cotton candy. Like, to me it's like—

Griffin: And that's great to me. Yeah, I agree.

Rachel: Yeah, see? I like to have an experience when I eat, and I feel like a yeast donut doesn't offer that to me.

Griffin: M'kay.

Rachel: Uh, so there is unsurprisingly a Bon Appetit article from 2016 that is called You're Either a Cake Donut Person or a Yeast One.

Griffin: I'd push back against that too! Because it's delightful to have a lovely little mix in it. Stop trying to, like, you know, put me in a box!

Rachel: See, now you're saying both. Before you were like, "I would never shorten the word doughnut." But now you're saying I want both—both kinds.

Griffin: That's different.

Rachel: Is it?

Griffin: We're talking about food instead of words, yeah. And I think even you know that.

Rachel: Yeah, I do. [laughs] Um, apple cider donut also, big thing this time of year. It's basically the whole reason that I have been considering going to a pumpkin patch establishment.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: They are very far away from where we are located, which seems to be universally true no matter where you're living.

Griffin: Well, yeah. I mean, if you live in a metropolitan area—

Rachel: [simultaneously] Urban area, mm-hmm.

Griffin: —they don't usually have sort of pumpkin patch zones.

Rachel: I could probably get an apple cider donut at the Joseph's Trader.

Griffin: I think Mr. Joseph actually would be able to help you out with that. He deals in, uh, cidered snacks.

Rachel: Uh, so the whole composition of a cake donut, unsurprisingly it's basically cake batter. It's got baking powder and/or baking soda. Uh, so it is more like cake in that sense, where a yeast donut... relies on yeast, see? See how easy that is?

Griffin: That's the mnemonic device I usually use, so the rule for me is cake is cake and yeast is yeast.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: That's sort of the...

Rachel: I don't know how I'm gonna remember that.

Griffin: I know, right?

Rachel: Um, so yeast donut came first, because unsurprisingly, like, it is frying, which, you know, society has done for hundreds of years. People, as long as there has been oil that you can get hot, people have dunked stuff in it.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Cake involves—

Griffin: Took 'em a while to figure out... like, what is good to dunk in the hot oil. Like, a book is not. Like...

Rachel: No, you can't eat a book.

Griffin: A hand. Hurt.

Rachel: I always say that. You can't eat a book.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, but with a cake donut, when we talk about baking soda, baking powder, we're talking about chemical leaveners, which, uh—leav—leaveners.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Leaveners.

Griffin: You okay?

Rachel: It felt weird to say!

Griffin: I think it's okay. I think you did a good job, actually.

Rachel: Uh, cake donuts first appeared in the US in—

Griffin: Unsurprising.

Rachel: In 1830's, around the same time that baking soda and baking powder first became commercially available.

Griffin: God bless whoever that was that was like, "These round guys are good. What would be better, though, what if cake? What if we did [crosstalk]?"

Rachel: What if cake?

Griffin: What if cake, though?

Rachel: Uh, cake donuts I guess became exceptionally popular during World War I. The Salvation Army set up canteens in France during World War I where women served soldiers freshly fried donuts. Uh, with this donut period in our history, the Salvation Army donuts were so popular that the YMCA and the Red Cross quickly followed suit, and the cake donut earned its place as a distinctly patriotically American snack. So maybe I just love my country more than the average person.

Griffin: I am always saying that shit about you.

Rachel: Yes. [pause] [chanting halfheartedly] U-S-A. U-S-A.

Griffin: Yeah. Do another one?

Rachel: [chanting halfheartedly] U-S-A.

Griffin: Oh. I meant like another, like, Ameri—like a thing an American [crosstalk] would say.

Rachel: Ohh. Umm...

Griffin: "[singing] I'm gonna buy me a Ford truck and cruise it up and down the road."

Rachel: No, no. Uh, "[singing] I'm a Yankee doodle dandy."

Griffin: Whew boy, yeah.

Rachel: "[singing] Yankee doodle doo—" What is Yankee doodle, anyway? I don't actually know. What's that about?

Griffin: It's like a jerking it joke? But they, like—it went on for way too long. And so they had to—like, they just were too embarrassed to change it.

Rachel: Is this that patented Griffin McElroy blue humor.

Griffin: Umm... I don't think so.

Rachel: You think what you're saying right now is a true fact?

Griffin: If you had never heard the term "Yankee doodle" before...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And someone said, like, "I'm—I'm Yankee doodle," you would probably assume that it was some sort of jerking it joke. So—

Rachel: I mean, you know there's a whole section of the country where people are referred to as Yankees, right?

Griffin: Yeah. But are they referred to as doodles?

Rachel: No, that's true.

Griffin: Okay. Or doodle dandies?

Rachel: Clearly you've proven your point. [laughs quietly]

Griffin: Thank you.

Rachel: Uh, another benefit of the cake donut, um, while some people complain that it is dense and heavy, uh, you have the option of inserting flavors in there.

Griffin: That's true.

Rachel: Most yeast donuts get their flavor from the glaze.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: But a cake donut, like a blueberry cake donut—

Griffin: Blueberry cake donut slaps ass.

Rachel: Oh my god. So good.

Griffin: And I love how... every donut chain has, like, a variety of donuts that they offer, but all of 'em do fuckin' blueberry cake donuts, 'cause they recognize, like, whoever did this one is on some next level shit.

Rachel: Yeah. If I see that in a dozen, that is what I go for immediately.

Griffin: Every time. 100% of the time, yeah.

Rachel: Uh, finally I will say this is not something I have participated in, but the coffee dunking.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: If you dunk a yeast donut, Bon Appetit says it will, quote, "Have the texture of a wet sandwich."

But a dunked cake donut...

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Incredible.

Griffin: I would disagree with that. Although, god, I used to fuck up those, like, Little Debbie coffee sticks. Which were, like, little, um...

Rachel: Ohhh yeah.

Griffin: ... rectangular beauties that I would have with my coffee every morning, and I would dunk. And sometimes it came off in the coffee, and for whatever reason it would render it all disgusting to—like, as soon as I saw free-floating cake material in the coffee I'm like, "I'm out."

Rachel: What time in your life was this?

Griffin: I mean, I was not probably at the top of my game health-wise. [pause] With my daily morning Little Debbies.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But, um, I don't know, like, college, post-college?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Whenever I had throwin' around money for Little Debbies, so maybe not college, where I had no money to speak of whatsoe'er.

Rachel: What was your grocery cart like in your early 20's?

Griffin: I mean... so... like—

Rachel: If you purchased a fruit and/or vegetable, what would those fruit and/or vegetables be?

Griffin: [blows raspberry]

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Potato—is potato...?

Rachel: I think we can count potato.

Griffin: Potato.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: I learned how to bake a potato and I felt like I was... fuckin', like, fancy—fancy Ratatouille chef all of a sudden.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, so potato, hot dog.

Rachel: Fruit?

Griffin: Uhh... [blows raspberry] Naw.

Rachel: Banana, you were doing banana for a while I thought.

Griffin: When I traveled. Banana was a special luxury for me. It was—'cause when you're on the road—

Rachel: [holding back laughter] A trip to the islands.

Griffin: A trip to the—[laughs quietly] Yeah.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: No. Mostly, uh—I mean, so stereotypically, like, ramen and hot dogs.

Rachel: Oh, babe...

Griffin: Um, and, um... but, I mean, fruit—fruit... roll-ups.

Rachel: [laughs] I don't consider myself the pinnacle of healthy eating by any means, but when I was in the world, I understood, like, I should buy a fruit and/or vegetable.

Griffin: Yeah. Just for to keep up appearances.

Rachel: Yeah. Just to, like, put in my house to—to display.

Griffin: Yeah. No, they didn't, uh—there was no judgment at the, I believe, Jewel-Osco where I bought my shame—shame dogs. Uh, on, like, a monthly basis.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Can I... stop talking about this and steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Thank you.

[ad break]

[music plays]

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[music and ad end]

[music plays]

Kira: It's the final week of Co-optober. I'm Kira Gowan, ad operations specialist, and I'm here with...

Daniel: Daniel Baruela, technology and data specialist. To cap off national coop month, we're sharing how worker-owned coops can benefit their communities. Read about it in our newsletter or on social media, at Max Fun HQ.

Kira: We're also trying to do our part. We're volunteering at our local food bank this week, and we encourage you to volunteer in your area, too.

Daniel: On Friday, we're announcing the donation that you helped raise in the post Max Fun Drive sticker sale, going to five food banks across the US.

Kira: And we want to make sure you know that this is your last chance to get our limited edition coop launch crew merch.

Daniel: Grab a pin, hat, shirt, or hoodie before they disappear at the end of the month.

Kira: Details on merch, resources for volunteering, and all things Co-optober can be found at Maximumfun.org/cooptober.

Daniel: That's C-O-O-P-T-O-B-E-R. Thank you so much for your support, and have a great Co-optober.

[music and ad end]

Griffin: Can I tell you about my topic?

Rachel: Yes!

Griffin: Okay. Here I go. It's our last episode before Halloween, and so I'd like to talk about frightening stuff. Um, I like to be a sort of weaver of... terror, and nightmares for our listeners. They know me as, uh—they call me Dr—Dr. Scary.

Rachel: Or the Ghoulmaster.

Griffin: Or the Ghoulmaster. So I—I—we have talked about Goosebumps before. I was gonna do Goosebumps, but then I realized that we did that during a virtual live show once. And so that series is, you know, fantastic and very formative for a lot of us. I want to talk about Goosebumps's, like, way less acceptable, almost illicit-feeling brother in arms, which is Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark.

Rachel: Ooh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Griffin: You know about Scary Stories? I didn't know how much of a generational thing Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark was.

Rachel: No, that was a thing. It was I think largely memorable just because of the design of the cover.

Griffin: Yes! Very scary covers, very scary illustrations.

Rachel: But I don't honestly remember any of the stories, although I might if you describe the [crosstalk].

Griffin: I'm gonna say some, and I bet you will—

Rachel: [simultaneously] Okay, okay.

Griffin: —remember some of them. So, Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark was a series of three books, each one a compilation of a couple dozen very genuinely terrifying, uh, short stories, accompanied by equally terrifying illustrations.

The books were written by Alvin Schwartz, and they were originally illustrated by Steven Gammell. Um, which provided a lot of the nightmare fuel that those books are known for.

The books were re-released in 2011 in reprints, and the illustrations were updated by Brett Helquist, and those illustrations were largely decried by fans of the original books. Uh, but they presented things in a more sort of, like, gothic, less, like, visceral kind of style that the original books are known for.

Um, the first book, Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark, was published in 1981, which was way earlier than I thought it was.

Rachel: Wow!

Griffin: Uh, and it contained 29 stories from just a wild array of genres. Uh, so the kind of stuff included in that first book included—I'm reading off Wikipedia here 'cause there's a list. Uh, jump stories, stories that end with a jumpscare. Ghost stories, including a retelling of the Suffolk Miracle. Folk music, including the Hearse Song. A story involving voodoo death. A witch story. A story of a man who shapeshifts into an alligator. Awesome. A couple of stories of omens of death. A retelling of Algernon Blackwood's novella, The Wendigo. A game called The Dead Man's Brains. A boogeyman story. A number of urban legends, including the legends of the hook, the poison dress, the killer in the backseat, and the babysitter and the man upstairs, and a selection of jokes and humorous folktales.

Just a wide selection.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: This is what I remember most about these books is each one included at least one story, and many illustrations that scared the shit out of me. But they would be sandwiched between, like, a goof, or a game, or, you know, song lyrics. Like, parody song lyrics.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: They—you never really knew which way Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark was gonna come at you, which was part of the appeal to me.

Rachel: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, I had forgotten they were—that they were kind of a, like, a... a hodgepodge.

Griffin: Like an Uncle John's Bathroom Reader of terror.

Rachel: Yeah. [laughs]

Griffin: Um, so the second book was called More Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark, dropped in 1984. It had 28 stories in it of a similar sort of mix of genres. And then there was a bit of a gap before the final book, Scary Stories **Kira:** More Tales to Chill your Bones, which hit Scholastic book fair shelves in 1991 with 25 stories in it. That's the one I remember being the most sort of scarring for me.

Rachel: Yeah. See, I don't remember that release, and this may be speaking to our age difference.

Griffin: Maybe.

Rachel: Because I may have moved out of the Scholastic category when that was out.

Griffin: That's a fair point. No, this was very much, like, on Scholastic book fair shelves, which I think we've talked about on this show.

Rachel: Oh yeah.

Griffin: They would come to your school and sell books there, 'cause where else are you gonna buy books? Uh, and it was always kind of wild to me that they were allowed to be there. Because there was a lot of sentiment at this time in the 90's to try and get these books banned. Uh, because—I can't stress this enough. It's not—the stories that were in this book were not, like, "[goofy voice] What if your teacher was a mummy?" Or, uh... they weren't, like, bog-standard sort of, like, "Are You Afraid of the Dark?" tales. Like, some of these stories were quite fucked up.

Um, there's one called Harold from Scary Stories 3, uh, about two farmers who build this scarecrow effigy of another farmer that they hate named Harold, which, long story short, comes to life and skins one of them alive!

Rachel: Oh my god.

Griffin: And then there's The Red Spot, which is the one I remembered the most, which I'm not gonna get into the details about in case people are squeamish, but a young woman has a very personal encounter with a bunch of baby spiders that is...

Rachel: Oh, god.

Griffin: ... no god. And then there's The Haunted House, which is a pretty right-over-the-plate, very scary story about a priest going into a haunted house to sort of exorcise it. Uh, and it is notable mostly for the horrific illustration of a living corpse that is, uh, part of the subject of the story. Which there's a 2019 documentary about these books where a commentator referred to this image as "The picture that shat a thousand pants."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I have it pulled up here. I wonder if it will jog your memory [crosstalk].

Rachel: Oh, yeah. I do remember this picture.

Griffin: It's very, very, very—it's a desiccated... corpse. It is very, very scary for a child to see.

Rachel: It's interesting, though, the instinct to ban a book like that.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: Because I understand, like, "Hey, I don't want my kid to read that. Like, I don't even want my kid to see that."

But, uh, I don't feel like it needs to stop existing in bookstores. [laughs]

Griffin: That's good that your brain works like that, because there's a lot of people who, uh, who do not. The American Library Association says that the series represented the most challenged books from the 90's, and then in the 2000's they were seventh most challenged books, despite the fact that some of them were 20 years old at that point.

Which is not to say that, like, classics don't end up on banned book lists across the country but, like... horror short story compilations usually don't.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: And the fact that this series can hang on that list I think says something about their sort of longevity and genuine terror that they, uh—that they introduced to people who, uh, were maybe not accustomed to that genre. I certainly wasn't. I never owned one of these books myself, because I felt weird about, like, bringing them into the house. Like, my parents never said, like, "Hey. This book series is no good!"

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah. "No smoking, no drinking, no Scary Stories."

Griffin: "No Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark."

But it sure looked like something that I should not have my hands on, but my neighbor Bryce did.

Rachel: Oh, Bryce. [laughs]

Griffin: And so I would go over to Bryce's house, and we would do sleepovers, and trade some Pokémon. And then I would grab Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark and just tear that shit down.

Uh, and... it really, uh—every time I did that I remember I would hit a point where I'd read some story or reach some illustration where I'd be like, "That's it for tonight, Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark. I will catch you next Bryce sleepover, and we will pick up from where we left off."

Rachel: [laughs] That is the thing, right? Like, you could ban it at a library, but there's always gonna be a Bryce, you know? Like, you can't keep your kids from all the Bryces.

Griffin: Yeah. There's a lot of stories of people, like, sort of trading this book around in this, like, underground sort of exchange to spread it around.

Rachel: [laughs] Taking, like, a Highlights Magazine and wrapping it around the outside.

Griffin: Around the—yeah! Right.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And I love that. Um... it is scary—the thing is, like, I get the instinct—I would not want Henry to read this book.

Rachel: No! No, no, no.

Griffin: 'Cause it would really—I think I know him well enough to know, it would really mess him up. Maybe middle school age kids is sort of where this is targeted.

Rachel: Although I will say, like, the ki—it just varies so much, right? Like, we know kids that are Henry's age or younger that would not be scared by this, you know?

Griffin: Yeah, I guess that's true.

Rachel: Not, like, disturbed in the way that Henry would. And I feel like people need that choice.

Griffin: Yeah, absolutely. I now, I love horror movies and games and—and books. Like, I—it is a genre that I love and I am very enthusiastic about, and I know there's a lot of people who don't. And so I can't help but wonder if, like, my enjoyment of Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark sort of inoculated me, in a way, to this genre, right? Where it doesn't, uh, have any sort of long-lasting psychological effect, unless that shit is real scary. It doesn't have this,

like, big impact on me that I think a lot of people are, like, afraid they will experience when they have—you know, when they watch a scary movie or play a scary game or something like that.

Rachel: Well, and there's also something to be said for the difference between reading words on a page and, like, seeing a challenging image, you know?

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Like, I feel like I can close the book, and it might mess with my dreams a little bit, but I am not actively afraid to be in the room I am in.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Whereas a lot of times if you're watching a movie by yourself, like, it—it'll... it'll getcha a little bit.

Griffin: Um, so that's Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark. It is a—for the fact that there were only three of these books, and the last one came out in 1991, I think it is kind of incredible that they are still somewhat relevant.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: They made a movie about it in 2019 that Guillermo del Toro, um, was involved in.

Rachel: Ooh, I would like to see that.

Griffin: Um, I—I, uh... I think it's incredible that, like, a short story horror compilation can have the kind of long lasting impact that these books have had, and I think a lot of that is due to the legacy of people trying to destroy these books. Um, but I think they also kind of [crosstalk].

Rachel: I would really want to see that documentary, too. Because I also wonder about the author who was like, "No, this is for children. Like, I am writing this book, and it is for children."

Griffin: So, his, uh—his daughter had a quote that I don't have on hand here. He passed away in, like, '92 or '94, something like that. It was shortly after the release of the last book. And he was fully, like, in support of middle schoolers reading the book. Like, it's targeted for them and it can be helpful to kind of, like, put a face on these, like, scary ideas that maybe they're struggling with. But he also celebrated the fact that his books were as challenged as they were, and he said that he wanted his obituary to refer to him as, like, one of the most banned authors of all time, which was a big part of his obituary when it did come out which is, you know, it's cool to live the kind of life you want to live, uh, in that case.

Um, can I tell you what our friends at home are talking about?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Courtney says:

"My small wonder is when you're out for a walk and make it home just as it's starting to rain."

Rachel: Oh, I love that.

Griffin: I love that so much. I don't like being in the rain when it happens.

Rachel: Also, we are—it is very difficult to use an umbrella as a family.

Griffin: Oh my god, yes.

Rachel: Um, and so, you know, you could bring one somewhere, but it is not gonna be particularly useful. So if you can get home and avoid that altogether, that is ideal.

Griffin: We have this big umbrella that I love using, 'cause it keeps my ass dry completely, H to T, regardless of the ferocity of the storm. And I love it. I look like a cool, hip, little metropolitan... guy.

Rachel: [laughs] Do you?

Griffin: Zoomin' around. Um, but then, uh, as soon as another person has to be under it, especially a person whom I have a three foot height advantage over, it is all of a sudden rendered completely useless to me.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Greg says:

"My small wonder is honeyed frothed milk. I just bought a Breville milk heater/frother to prepare for the chilly months by making chai and matcha lattes, and the mild sweetness that comes from adding just a teaspoon of honey to a bit of milk being frothed is simply revelatory. Quick, easy, and cost-effective coziness in a cup."

Does sound pretty good.

Rachel: That does sound really good.

Griffin: Maybe not milk for—maybe a—can you froth almond milk? Or what is it... does something bad happen to it?

Rachel: Well, it's just—it needs enough fat in it. That's kind of the thing. As my—my time as a barista, the thinner the milk, the harder it is to get a good froth going.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Uh, so almond milk might be a challenge. But I bet a soy would work.

Griffin: A soy would definitely do me. Um, 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. And thank you so much to Maximum Fun for having us on the network. Why do you go on over into Maximumfun.org, check out all the great stuff that they've got on offer for you. Um, you're gonna love the way you hear the jokes, I guarantee it.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, we got some merch over at mcelroymerch.com that you should go and check out. That would be awfully cool of you. And, um, if you want to send in your small wonders, we do not get many of them on a weekly basis, so I will say the odds of yours being chosen for the show are probably pretty good. Uh, you can go ahead and send us an email over at wonderfulpodcast@gmail.com.

Rachel: Just a few sentences.

Griffin: Just a few sentences, please. No more than that. Um, that's it. Let's hit the brakes. And... I gotta hit the ice bath, with my—with my boys.

Rachel: Oh, we should get a plunge pool!

Griffin: We should get a plunge pool like I'm an MLB pitcher.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Who definitely didn't just, like, fuck up half of his body by trying to lift one weight once.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Fucking Cal Ripken over here.

Rachel: Name another pitcher.

Griffin: Um... [pause] No! Randy Johnson.

Rachel: Nolan Ryan!

Griffin: Randy Johnson blew up the—I don't even know if Cal Ripken was a pitcher. Randy Johnson was, though, 'cause he exploded that bird right good, didn't he? With the pitch.

Rachel: I didn't know that till I met you.

Griffin: And now you definitely know it 'cause I talk about every time.

Rachel: I know, I do. Mm-hmm.

Griffin: We mention baseball, or even a ball.

Rachel: You've changed my life.

Griffin: Thank you, baby.

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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