

Wonderful! 314: Style Ombudsman

Published February 21st, 2024

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[theme music, "Money Won't Pay" by bo en and Augustus plays]

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hello, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is *Wonderful!*

Griffin: Welcome to our podcast, *Wonderful!*, a show where we talk about things we like, that are... pretty much across the board good, and all the way across the board we are into these things.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: We don't do things that... We're not phoney. Like we get— Sometimes we get comments and they're like, "There's no way that you guys like Korean reality competition shows as much as you—"

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: "— pretend to." And to that I would say look at our fuckin' Netflix watch history.

Rachel: Oh. Oh, for sure. We don't get on here and talk about something that we heard other people like.

Griffin: Yeah. A lot of people say, "You've never watched one St Louis Blues hockey game front to back." And to that I would say false.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I—

Rachel: We definitely have.

Griffin: I've watched at least seven or eight of them.

Rachel: A lot of times we don't watch the whole thing, and that's only because they're playing badly. [chuckles]

Griffin: Or so good that they're squishing the other team, and it's like not even sport—

Rachel: No, no we stick around. [laughs]

Griffin: No, we watch those games. We love those games, don't we.

Rachel: Those are good fun.

Griffin: Those are good ones. This is— I'm excited to be here. The Blues are keepin' us guessin' this year, talkin' about the sweet blue notes.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. Hey, you sports fans, this is our sports podcast.

Griffin: Hey sports fans, this is our quick sports podcast. That's my small wonder is the St Louis Blues, they keep you guessing!

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It's always fun 'cause you never know... when they get on that beautiful ice called the rink.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: What kind of performance they're gonna put out.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Sometimes they're playin' a huge just like champion of the league and they'll beat them soundly.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: And then they'll play against a division rival, who they very badly need to beat in order to clinch the wildcard spot, or at least stay in it for the playoffs, and they'll get their asses handed to 'em.

Rachel: Mmm.

Griffin: And it's like, "Cool! Like, cool."

Rachel: I get the vibe that sometimes when they're playing poorly, they decide to start thinking about the sandwich they're gonna have after the game.

Griffin: Possibly.

Rachel: Instead of actually trying to win the game.

Griffin: Yes, there was a fun stat for the first half this season, I don't know if it's still true, where if they did not score first, they lost.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: They would lose the game. Which is funny because like back in like 2019, I feel like even part of 2020 before the season got all weird, they were like the comeback kings.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: They had like the most come from behind victories of like any team in the league. [chuckles] And then that was— That's not true no more.

Rachel: No. It's not.

Griffin: But still. Keep it goin' guys. Keep it up. Proud of you. Do you have a small wonder?

Rachel: I do, and I bet you know what I'm gonna talk about.

Griffin: What?

Rachel: Glassblowing.

Griffin: Yeah, baby.

Rachel: Griffin, in a very like prescient... decision was like, "You know what I'm gonna get Rachel for Christmas is a... a spot in a glassblowing class," like an introductory "Discover Glassblowing" is what it was called.

Griffin: Yeah, inspired by I think we talked about it on the show.

Rachel: I think it was *The Amazing Race*.

Griffin: *The Amazing Race* had a challenge where they had to blow glass. And we were both like, "That looks fuckin' great!"

Rachel: And we had watched some of the Netflix show too.

Griffin: Yeah, *Blown... Blown Up?*

Rachel: *Blown Away*.

Griffin: *Blown Away*.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: *Blow it Up*. Yeah.

Rachel: And I don't know. I probably never would've done it, like I never would have signed up.

Griffin: Definitely would have never have done it.

Rachel: For a class. But what was great is that there were only six of us and the instructor was pretty committed to all of us like leaving with stuff.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: So, he would kind of let us do something, and then tag in and do some of the more complicated stuff, and then let us do another thing. And it as great.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: It's just so nice to take like, a creative class where you like leave having made something.

Griffin: Sure, yeah. I mean you used to be— You used to do a— quite a bit of pottery before we had kids, I think.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: When we had some spare time. I think you actually took one class after Henry was born just to like get out of the house a little bit.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But that was cool, 'cause you would come home and you'd be like, "Here's some bowls and stuff."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: This was like another— This was like a— I don't know why I rank glassware above like pots and cups—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: — and stuff like that in terms of like, I don't know, it's wild that people— that humans can make that stuff. But you came home with like, a beautiful vase.

Rachel: [giggles] Mm-hmm.

Griffin: And a really rad-looking paper weight. And that's like sick that you made that stuff.

Rachel: Yeah. Yeah. It was really great, and now I'm thinking about continuing to do it. The class was just a one off, and then you can sign up for what is like a five-week class.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Which feels like a big commitment for me.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: So I'm still mulling it over. But it was great, I loved it.

Griffin: I'm glad. I'm so glad.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Crushed it. You go first this week.

Rachel: I do.

Griffin: For your big wonder. And I can't wait to hear what that is. You've got devices on your— just flanking you, like an old western sharp— quick draw artist.

Rachel: That's what they call me.

Griffin: Yeah. What do you got? She's jackin' in.

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: She's plugging her... cyber cord into the mainframe.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: We're in.

Rachel: My thing... is... no longer in existence.

Griffin: Oh, okay.

Rachel: But I'm sure you'll know it, and that is the WB.

Griffin: The channel?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Okay man. [chuckles]

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Whatever you say man. Hey, you remember that p— Quick aside, just for the listener, don't listen to this Rachel.

You remember the part at the beginning of the show where we said we don't talk about things that we actually don't actually care about all that much? WB. '90s kids won't `member this, it was not a very good channel, with very much good programming on it.

Rachel: [gasps] How... dare you.

Griffin: We're you a big *Seventh Heaven* fan? Or...

Rachel: Honey.

Griffin: What was your flavor of choice?

Rachel: You're gonna eat your words.

Griffin: I can't wait.

Rachel: Let's return to this at the end of the segment.

Griffin: Okay, I can't wait.

Rachel: The thing about the WB is that it had a lot of teen programming.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: They really doubled down on teens.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Which if you think about it now is kind of crazy in a way. Like that's not something that really happens these days. It seems like television is largely targeted to people like over 45. [chuckles]

Griffin: Well teens don't watch TV.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Like teens don't watch—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: — television channels.

Rachel: Yeah. And I think— I mean, and that's, you know, technology.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: But just to be a teenager to have a channel that you could go to, and like pretty much every show in the evenings was for you was like kind of a cool moment in time.

Griffin: Yeah. Alright. This is a— Sorry, I'm discovering with this segment that there is just a wild divergence in our like media consumption as kids, 'cause I never watched the WB. I never, ever, ever watched it.

Rachel: Interesting. We'll talk about that.

Griffin: But we had like, you know, a premium package. So, I had access to—

Rachel: Oh, you had no need for network television.

Griffin: Had no need for it.

Rachel: Uh-huh. [chuckles]

Griffin: I could, you know.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: I could watch some Disney Channel sometimes.

Rachel: Okay. The WB. [chuckles]

Griffin: Warner Brothers, yes?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Do you remember the mascot for the WB?

Griffin: It was that fuckin' frog.

Rachel: Michigan J. Frog.

Griffin: Michigan J. Frog, the— One of my favorite jokes from *The Simpsons* was... Or shit, was it *Family Guy*? Uh-oh.

I hope it was *Simpsons*, was they turn on the TV and it was that frog, and it goes, "Hey look at that, it's the WB. It's another bad show that no-one will see-ee." He had like a little routine.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. There was— Okay, I will say, there was a lull for the WB.

Griffin: Okay, cool.

Rachel: There was like a golden era, and I will name the shows and you will remember them.

Griffin: I can't wait to be— eat my words.

Rachel: And then in the last few years of it, it kind of diminished—

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: — in popularity. So, 1995 is when it hit the scene.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: And when it first started, we're talking about *The Wayans Brothers*, we're talking about *Sister Sister*.

Griffin: Oh shit, that was WB?

Rachel: Beginning in, yes, 1995.

Griffin: Did that get consumed by Disney? 'Cause I feel like I remember *Sister Sister* being a Disney—

Rachel: *Sister Sister* ends up on ABC.

Griffin: Okay, which— yeah.

Rachel: After...

Griffin: WB.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: After Michigan J. Frog—

Rachel: I think so— I mean—

Griffin: — dies. [chuckles] In a car accident.

Rachel: I didn't research the history of *Sister Sister*, so I can't tell you—
[chuckles]

Griffin: Right. [cackles]

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: [claps] What was the movie we just watched that— Oh, *Yes, Chef Christmas*. [cackles]

Rachel: Oh yeah!

Griffin: And we never—

Rachel: And one of 'em was in it!

Griffin: We never talked about *Yes, Chef Christmas*!

Rachel: Yeah...

Griffin: Aw shit. Okay, next week. Next week I'm gonna talk about a Christmas movie.

Rachel: It's a little out of season at this point.

Griffin: Maybe a little bit, maybe I'll wait 'til next Christmas season for *Yes, Chef Christmas*.

Rachel: Mm, mm-hmm. Okay. Now.

Griffin: [chuckles]

Rachel: The time period where it really blew up was 1997, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

Griffin: Was WB?

Rachel: Yes sir.

Griffin: Wow.

Rachel: This is what I'm telling you, like a lot of these shows maybe you watched when they were streaming.

Griffin: Or on DVD, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah, but this was on this network.

Griffin: I— And I feel like a lot of these shows also got ate up by other channels when the WB went down.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: And so, like, I would watch them in syndication when it was on other channels.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: I had no idea *Buffy* was on WB.

Rachel: This is why I wanted to let you discover with me.

Griffin: Okay, cool. Did you watch W— Did you watch *Buffy* when it was on like TV?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: When it was like happening on the air?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Okay cool. I only got into it on DVD.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I was a very late comer to that whole universe.

Rachel: I never watched the whole series of what was on TV, but I watched parts of it while it was on TV, and then—

Griffin: Well, it was fuckin' impossible to watch the whole series of any television show while it was on TV.

Rachel: [laughs] I know. I know, 'cause it would move around, be at different times, and then like—

Griffin: Well, and then episodes wouldn't air like in order sometimes.

Rachel: Yeah, that's true.

Griffin: Like you would have to catch re-run— My dad had this whole like insane catalogue of VHS tapes—

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: — and like a card— Like his own Dewey decimal system—

Rachel: Oh...

Griffin: — just for this exact purpose.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: He'd be like, "I wanna watch season three, episode 11 of *Star Trek: Enterprise*. Oh that's on V1081."

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Really, it got up into the four-digit numbers. He's a madman.

Rachel: I'd love to talk to him about that, at some point.

Griffin: Yeah. Me too.

Rachel: Okay, so it debuted March 1997. It debuted with the highest Monday night ratings in network's history, attracting not only new teenage viewers but new advertisers. Inspired by *Buffy's* success, the WB intentionally shifted the focus of its programming.

Griffin: Okay, I'm starting to figure out exactly where this is going to go now. 'Cause was *Charmed* a WB jammer also?

Rachel: It was.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: It was, and the other one, which debuted January 1998, *Dawson's Creek*.

Griffin: [whispers] Was a WB product?

Rachel: Yes sir.

Griffin: That's so fascinating.

Rachel: Who feels silly now? [giggles]

Griffin: I feel extremely silly!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I had no idea. I think that this—

Rachel: You didn't watch *Dawson's Creek* though.

Griffin: I think this speaks slightly to the small age gap—

Rachel: The age gap. Mm-hmm.

Griffin: — between us, because it— when that was happening, I would've been like 10 years old.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Which is too young for—

Rachel: 1997, I was in high school.

Griffin: I mean.

Rachel: And I was like freshly in high school, I was like a freshman.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: [chuckles] In high school. So.

Griffin: People using that information can backwards— [chuckles] reverse-engineer our age gap.

Rachel: [chuckles] I think we've talked about it before.

Griffin: I mean, yeah.

Rachel: It's quite large. [giggles]

Griffin: It's five years, who gives a shit?

Rachel: I know, it's not. It's not. Okay, *Dawson's Creek*. Enormous hit. Most of you will probably know what it is. [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: It's— But pretty much every actor that was on that show as a lead would continue to have a successful career after.

Griffin: Yeah. Yeah.

Rachel: I mean define "success."

Griffin: Pacey took a break. Pacey took a— Pacey dropped off for a minute.

Rachel: Wasn't *Fringe* right after?

Griffin: Nooo.

Rachel: No?

Griffin: *Fringe* was a min— a bit.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: 'Cause I remember [chuckles] hearing Sydnee talk about how stoked she was to see...

Rachel: The return of Josh.

Griffin: The return of Pace— What is his name?

Rachel: Joshua Jackson.

Griffin: Joshua Jackson.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Sorry for forgetting that extremely memorable name.

Rachel: The popularity of *Dawson* helped—

Griffin: And his creek. His excellent creek.

Rachel: [giggles] And his creek. His related creek, helped boost the network's other shows, such as *Buffy*, which served as its lead in on the WB's new night of programming, which launched January 1998, branded as "new Tuesday."

Griffin: New Tuesday?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: And *Seventh Heaven*— Okay, so *Seventh Heaven* was the year before. So, it started in 1996, *Buffy* came in 1997, and then they all got smushed together as part of New Tuesday, and *Seventh Heaven* enjoyed a massive 81% increase in viewership, 'cause the teens were there, the TV was on.

Griffin: Yeah, you already had it on.

Rachel: You've stumbled into *Seventh Heaven*. [giggles]

Griffin: I grew up in the faith.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And even I, whenever I would catch a few frames of *Seventh Heaven* while swapping between channels, would be like, "This show seems so shitty and bad."

Rachel: I started so many episodes of *Seventh Heaven*, and then—

Griffin: Accidentally—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: — because it was—

Rachel: I never finished, 'cause you would, you would start and you'd be like, "These are young, attractive people. This must be for me too."

Griffin: Nope.

Rachel: And then it was just like the stakes are so low. [giggles]

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Okay, so. Also on WB, you mentioned *Charmed*. *Felicity*.

Griffin: Wow, okay.

Rachel: Was also WB.

Griffin: Was *Gilmore Girls* on there?

Rachel: It was.

Griffin: Jesus Christ.

Rachel: We're not there yet. *Smallville* came out October 2001.

Griffin: Okay, I did watch that.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Interesting.

Rachel: I didn't watch *Smallville*.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: 2001 I think was a little late for me, then I'd kind of moved on. 1999 to 2000, we had *Roswell*, *Popular*, *Angel* hit the scene.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: And I want to say, even *Angel* premiered with 7.5 million viewers.

Griffin: That's a grip of people for that time.

Rachel: I know.

Griffin: For the year.

Rachel: For context— Oh another one I will say... The highest ratings the WB ever saw was February 1999, 12.5 million viewers. So for context, the 2024 Golden Globes had 9.4 million viewers.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And that was up 50% from last year. So like—

Griffin: Well and the population of Earth in that 30-year gap.

Rachel: [chuckles] I know.

Griffin: Quadrupled.

Rachel: Okay, and then *Gilmore Girls* 2000, as you mentioned. Also 2000 was *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*. Which was another very popular show.

Griffin: God, I would've sworn on a stack of bibles that was TGIF. That was on ABC.

Rachel: Also 2001, not applicable to us but maybe some of our peers watched it, and that was *Reba*. [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs] I bet I could name you two to three of our peers who watched *Reba*.

Rachel: [chuckles] Okay, so what you were probably thinking of when I first mentioned the WB was the 2003 to 2006 era.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And that is when WB had a significant decline, because of some poor choices I believe they made. First, in 2005 they retired Michigan J. Frog. Not that I—

Griffin: You think that was a bad choice.

Rachel: [giggles] No, here's what I'll say.

Griffin: This vaudevillian frog guy.

Rachel: [giggles] I don't think the loss of the frog contributed. But I will say the reason behind the loss of the frog was WB's president at the time said, quote, "Michigan was a symbol that perpetuated the young, teen feel of the network."

Griffin: What the fuck?!

Rachel: “That’s not the image we now want to put to our audience.”

Griffin: This is a frog that tap-danced and wore a top hat—

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: — and had a little cane. And—

Rachel: It’s like, “We’re gonna move onto serious adult things,” and what they moved onto was *One Tree Hill*, which was pretty popular.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Also *Beauty and the Geek*.

Griffin: Oh, Jesus!

Rachel: Not a great show. And I will say *Supernatural* has a cult following.

Griffin: Oh shit.

Rachel: With a lot of people.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: I have not watched the show.

Griffin: Alright.

Rachel: But this was kind of in the period where they were like, “We’re not really for teens, we’re gonna try some new stuff out.”

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Didn’t work.

Griffin: I’ve gotta say, I appreciate now, seeing the full context of it, the WB’s commitment to... the like occult and supernatural elements I television shows.

Rachel: Yeah, true. Yeah.

Griffin: It is wild the streak they went on of like, "Alright, magic, aliens, vampires, monsters."

Rachel: [laughs] I mean, that was the thing, like *Buffy* and *Charmed* were kind of like, "Hey, look some—"

Griffin: I guess that, yeah.

Rachel: "Some crazy stuff happens in this show."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And teens loved it, and they were like, "Alright, let's keep doin' it."

Griffin: I did watch more WB Kids at the time, because WB Kids had *Pokémon* in syndication.

Rachel: Ohhh.

Griffin: And they would show that shit non-stop. If you wanted to catch *Pokémon* on whatever it was, I think like Fox or something, when it as first airing in the States, you had to be like at your TV.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: At like 2:45pm, exactly on—

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: So I'd have to sprint home from school—

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: If I wanted to catch like the back half of it. And I— But WB Kids just ran that shit constantly.

Rachel: Okay, I don't remember WB Kids.

Griffin: *Yu-Gi-Oh!*

Rachel: Again, this is— [giggles] Alright.

Griffin: I never watched *Yu-Gi-Oh!*

Rachel: I'd like to say it's our age difference.

Griffin: [chuckles]

Rachel: I don't know if we had been the same age we would have—
[laughs]

Griffin: [chuckles] No, I don't think so.

Rachel: The WB aired its final night of programming on 2006. [chuckles]
And then... [chuckles] To like close out the station, which I've never really
thought of before.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: But like there's a point where the station ends.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: And something else begins.

Griffin: Mr. Feeny just like turns the lights off, I think. In the WB
broadcast room.

Rachel: No, they aired like a bunch of like well-known stars and like clips
and stuff from their previous shows.

And then... they said, "For 11 years, you brought us into your home. We
made you smile and tugged at your heart, and now we say goodbye.
From all of us at the WB, thank you."

The final image seen in the montage was former network mascot
Michigan J. Frog.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Who was shown as a silhouette, due to the animated character being retired as the WB's mascot, taking his hat off and bowing, thanking the audience for watching the network.

Griffin: Silhouette, he re— They can't— Show the frog,

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: "We can't show you the frog—"

Rachel: "We're done with the frog, we're gonna give you a hint of frog."
[giggles]

Griffin: Guess what? You're done with fuckin' everything, WB, 'cause you made a lot of bad choices. Show us the frog. What's wrong with you?

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: "We can't show you the frog 'cause we don't use the frog anymore." You don't use anything anymore.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: You died because of you— the bad choices that you made.

Rachel: And then what happened, we're talking the CW.

Griffin: Oh yeah.

Rachel: Very similar, took a lot of the same shows over.

Griffin: I don't know what the "CW" stands for.

Rachel: I don't either.

Griffin: The Cool... Wetwork. It's like, "network."

Rachel: "Cool Warner."

Griffin: "Cool Warner." [giggles]

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: "What's up, teens? We're Cool Warner."

Rachel: What a—

Griffin: "What frog? Fuck that frog."

Rachel: [giggles] "We're not the brothers."

Griffin: "We have vapes now."

Rachel: "We're not the Brothers, we're the best brother."

Griffin: "We're the cool."

Rachel: "Singular, Cool Warner."

Griffin: [chuckles] "My name is cool James Warner." That was a wonderful—

Rachel: And so that's the WB. What a journey I took you on.

Griffin: What a wonderful journey that was, Rachel.

Rachel: Now you understand, right?

Griffin: Now I get it.

Rachel: It was a golden moment for teens.

Griffin: Yes, it's wild— I just missed— I missed it by that much. By about five years.

Rachel: It's so rare that I can completely change your mind.

Griffin: I know!

Rachel: In the course of a segment.

Griffin: I don't think there's that many cultural... moments that are— were that like bubbly, that one of us could pick it up like completely and run with it.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And the other one's just like fuckin' not— I'm not doing it.

Rachel: Like what I will say, do these shows hold up? No, not necessarily.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: [chuckles] Would I recommend them to people now? Maybe not.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: But at the time, as a teen.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: It felt powerful.

Griffin: Yeah, absolutely. I could see that, for sure.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Cool.

[Home Improvement transition music plays]

[ad break]

Griffin: I really enjoyed researching my topic today. Because it is something that I use a lot, and I didn't know about sort of the history or applica— like proper application of it. It is my favorite punctuation mark, and it is the em dash.

Rachel: Oh, you're one of those.

Griffin: What does that mean?

Rachel: I feel like this is like a thing in journalism, people talk a lot about the em dash.

Griffin: Okay. Yeah, I'm not actually sure if AP style is like em dash focused.

Rachel: I'm just saying like when I was comin' up, it's not like you really learn about the em dash in school.

Griffin: No. You do not.

Rachel: You just start seeing it in articles all the time.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: And then you're like, "Oh, I get it."

Griffin: This is very much a learned... like habit of mine that started when I started working at Joystick, back in 2008.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: So I don't write like... 10% as much as I used to write.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Like back in the day, when I was on the news beat for Joystick and then Polygon.

Rachel: You do write some very popular graphic novels though, I will say.

Griffin: I do do that, but I do not employ the em dash—

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah.

Griffin: — terribly much in those.

Rachel: Not a lot of space in those bubbles.

Griffin: Yeah, that's right.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: The— In graphic novels, every drop of ink that goes on the page is— requires a detrimental amount of effort from a lot of people.

Rachel: [through laughter] Yeah.

Griffin: And so an em dash is just like a luxury.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: That like a lot of publishers cannot afford. But when I do write sort [chuckles] non-graphic novel format, I for still use the em dash a lot more than sort of its similar contemporaries. The dash family, if you are not like, I don't know, a nerd. [wheezes] I guess.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: The dash family has three members. You have the hyphen, which is just pathetic in terms of width. And power.

Rachel: But has a very specific purpose that is valuable.

Griffin: It has a very specific purpose of like hyphenating words and like, you know, if you can't—

Rachel: And names, sometimes.

Griffin: And names, and if you like can't finish a word in one like line in a book, you can use a hyphen to like say like, "Hey, catch me on the flip side for the rest of this word. You're gonna fuckin' love it." The en dash, E-N dash, which is alright. And then the em dash, the triple hyphen.

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: That can just break a sentence down into as many chunks as you need and just interrupt the flow of a reader's journey as you will it.

Rachel: I am hoping that you will distinguish for me the difference between an em dash and a comma, because a lot of times—

Griffin: Oh sure.

Rachel: — I'm not entirely sure.

Griffin: Yeah. Well one goes like woop! And is kinda curvy.

Rachel: [unimpressed] Okay...

Griffin: One goes to side to side and is—

Rachel: Don't get cute with me.

Griffin: — wicked fuckin' long. So it was at Joystick I learned about the existence [chuckles] of the—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: — of this punctuation mark which is fuckin' wild, because they should at least show you in school like, "By the way, you know about the hyphen, it's time—"

Rachel: Especially 'cause you went to journalism school.

Griffin: Right, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It just was not— It was just not a think that was really taught there.

Rachel: I guess you were broadcast. They were like, "He's just gonna be saying what's written for him."

Griffin: I mean, yeah.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I did write for the paper for at least one year. Anyway, so early on in my tenure there, while being copyedited, I posted up just a weak, terrible hyphen in the middle of a sentence to break it up, and Ludwig who was our— the style ombudsman for Joystick showed me the error of my ways.

Rachel: Awww.

Griffin: Because the style guide there was use an em dash. Some— I think it varies from outlet to outlet. Some folks use an em dash without spacing on either side between the words, but there and therefore every other time I would use the em dash, it would be, you know, “Words words words words space em dash space rest of the words.”

So after learning about the em dash I went fuckin’ em dash crazy. I was incapable of like writing a full sentence without the constant use of like aside or like fragmentation. Just slipping this big ass line in there with aplomb. It changed my writing style.

Rachel: Yeeeah.

Griffin: The like power of this punctuation mark.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Because like I— I realized that I enjoyed, in this like blog format, like a very informal style of writing.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: That the em dash really lends itself to.

Rachel: True.

Griffin: And so like it did make my writing fairly disjointed at times, particularly when I was reviews editor there, I would still use em dashes a lot, which was— I posted up some real bricks in that regard.

I think I've reined it in a bit since then. The em dash is great because it can be used to substitute four different punctuation marks, depending on how you employ it.

So in lieu of a comma, or a pair of commas, that separate out an aside or additional information. Such as "Garfield – a cat who loved lasagna – was a very good comic strip." The best thing about using that—

Rachel: Why is that better than commas?

Griffin: Well, let me tell ya. [whispers] I was just about to say that.

Rachel: Sorry, I just don't understand.

Griffin: That best thing that that is used for is a sentence where commas have already been used, right?

Rachel: Ohhh.

Griffin: And especially once you get it into like Oxford commas, like if you need to—

Rachel: Yeeeeeah.

Griffin: — break out the list of three things.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: All of a sudden, like, your shit is just riddled with commas.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But with the em dash, like you have options in terms of like mixing it up, it makes the sentence actually way more readable.

Rachel: Yeeeeeah.

Griffin: And it also— Again like it is— The em dash is typically used for a more informal style of writing.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And so like I find the em dash to be an incredibly clear— I mean by design, like way of separating shit—

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: — from other shit in sentences.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: Whereas a comma like, there's a few different ways to read a comma, because a comma's used for a lot of different things.

Rachel: Yeah, I will say I have definitely... written some emails and had sentences that had way too many commas.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And I just thought like, "Well, they all need to be there, but I don't like how many there are." [chuckles]

Griffin: There's not a lot of way to substitute commas either, right?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: You can either like just change the sentence dramatically and just make a new sentence so you can sometimes use the semicolon, but the semicolon is the fuckin' Riddler of the punctuation mark world.

Rachel: [giggles] I like a semicolon.

Griffin: You would think it's a question mark, but no.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: The semicolon is like, "Is this right? I don't fuckin' know."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: "Nobody knows how to use a semicolon."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Instead of parenthesis, when you're adding commentary or interruption. So "Garfield – my beloved orange friend – has tragically died."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: This is probably like the most common use case for me, 'cause it basically allows for jokes. Like everywhere.

Rachel: Yeeeeeah.

Griffin: Like you're in the middle of writing a sentence about some new video game announcement or some like, you know, dumb thing some director of a game said, and then like you wanna make a great joke? Bang, you don't even have to finish the sentence to get to your joke! "Em dash joke em dash rest of the sentence."

Rachel: Yeah, you know, I think sometimes in that case I would use parenthesis.

Griffin: Sure. That's also fine. I think that—

Rachel: But it doesn't have the urgency of an em dash. I think.

Griffin: It doesn't. I feel like an em dash is more powerful than a parenthesis.

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: 'Cause a parenthesis to me feels like you're tellin' a little secret. "Shh shh shh. [whispers] Garfield's dead."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Whereas as an em dash is like, "Boom, he's my beloved orange friend."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It can be used instead of a colon, for additional information at the end of a sentence. “Finally, Garfield learned the truth – Odie wasn’t real.” So you don’t— it doesn’t always have to come in pairs, you can use it as a sort of checkpoint to say like, “Here it comes.” [chuckles] “Here comes the drop of this sentence.”

Rachel: Yeeeah.

Griffin: Or it can be used instead of a semicolon to connect two distinct sentences. “Garfield buried the knife in the garden – the knife would never be found.” So that—

Rachel: Wait, you can use it not in a pair?

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Ohhh.

Griffin: You can use it as a— You can use one of them in a sentence to like separate out two sentences.

Rachel: Huh. I don’t know that I’ve ever used it not in a pair.

Griffin: You can use— Right, it’s basically like a colon or a semicolon in the use case that a colon or a semicolon could be used.

Rachel: Huh. Okay.

Griffin: You seldom have need for any other punctuation marks when you have the em dash in your quiver. And it’s really good at catching the reader’s attention and providing a sort of like pacing through the sentence that you’re writing.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: All while maintaining a like super informal tone, that was very prevalent in the blog world, and also... it can be kind of lazy and easy to use them a lot. Because you don’t have to think so hard about how you’re structuring your sentence, because you got that em dash that you can use to like change the sentence in any one of like—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: — a handful of ways, as you need to. There's not a lot of like— When you're writing 180 blog posts a month, like you don't have a lot of time to say like, "Let me look critically at every single thing that I'm writing here to see if it like grammatically hits and is as like powerful as it can possibly be."

The em dash can get in there like your little friend, to help you do whatever it is that you need it to do.

Rachel: Yeah, okay.

Griffin: And I really, really like that. Okay, so the name. I saw so many... trusted sources explaining what the name "em" and "en" dash was, which is that the em dash, spelled again E-M, this is confusing, is the length of a capital "M." Whereas the en dash, E-N dash—

Rachel: Oh.

Griffin: — is the length of a capital "N."

Rachel: Is that true?

Griffin: No.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: That's apocryphal. And I was surprised, 'cause there were some pretty big names puttin' up this false information.

It does come from typography, the etymology of the em dash and the en dash. The em, E-M, and the E-N are units of measurement for typography. So I found one source that said old print shops [chuckles] used to use the term "mutton" for the em and the "nut" for the en, to make things less confusing, because they're also, you know, printing a lot of actual letter Ms and Ns.

So the mutton, or the em, is the height of the point size of whatever font that you're using. And the en is half of that. So in digital terms, think of it

this way. If you write an upper case I, that is the em. That is the height, the bottom of the I to the top of the I, is the em of that— that font.

So that is just a vertical em dash. Turn that I on its side and that's an em dash. It is— An em dash is as long as a capital letter is tall.

Rachel: Yeah, so it's not the width, it's the length.

Griffin: That's right.

Rachel: Yeah. Okay.

Griffin: It's— Or the height, specifically, yes.

Rachel: Okay, yeah.

Griffin: So yeah, and then the en is half that size. A lot of that comes down to like old printing press, like the actual size of the, you know, different type pieces that they would put in, the height of it would be the em, half of that would be the en, and so an em dash would be the height of the thing. The type that they're doing.

Rachel: I mean, aren't all capital letters the same height?

Griffin: Yeah. They are. But, not all dashes are that long, right? So— I used the "I" as an example because it's literally a vertical em dash.

Rachel: Okay. Okay.

Griffin: If you turn it on its side.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: I should— You're right, I should say any letter, but the I is just perfect, especially if you're looking at it in like a Google Doc, it's just one vertical line and you turn it on its side, and it's an em dash. Whatever.

Rachel: Uh-huh. Okay.

Griffin: So yeah, I've learned over time that the em dash is a sometimes food.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: That you should sprinkle [chuckles] in your writing, because if you use it too much it becomes completely unreadable.

Rachel: I do think some of your earliest emails to me were full of em dashes, and I remember thinking like, "Who puts em dashes in their emails?" [chuckles]

Griffin: I mean I was working at Joystick—

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah, I know.

Griffin: — when we started courting, and so that makes a lot of sense, 'cause that's why I was fuckin' em dash just wild about these things.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: I still really like them, they are still by go to punctuation mark.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: You hit the hyphen button— key three times and it makes one, or you can do I think like Option + Shift + Hyphen will just spit out a big, long em dash real quick.

Rachel: I love the idea that you would get an em dash tattoo and everyone would be like, "A line," and you'd be like—

Both: "No no no no no no no."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It would be hard to disti— I don't want people to see that and be like, "Oh, you have a hyphen."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: 'Cause without the context of other shit around it, people aren't gonna tell that it's a big, strong—

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: — virile em dash.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh-huh. You'd need like, a ruler underneath your tattoo.

Griffin: Exactly.

Rachel: Also tattooed.

Griffin: Right, but like showing font point size. Anyway.

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: That's the em dash, I love the em dash. I used to use it way too much and you should use it if you write, 'cause it feels good.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: 'Cause you can just make— you can make jokes, you can write quick, and it does a lot of different thing.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: And I like the flexibility of it.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Anyway. Here's some stuff from our friends at home. We didn't get a ton of submissions in this week, so please, send us your small wonders, just a sentence or two about something you're really into, at wonderfulpodcast@gmail.com.

We have one this week from Jolie who says, "My small wonder is subway poetry, specifically an initiative in Toronto called 'Poems in Passage.' I love looking up at a place where an ad would usually be and instead seeing a poem from a local poet."

Rachel: Aww.

Griffin: Kind of in the vein of your street art segment from last week.

Rachel: Yeah, I was going to say that's what it reminded me of, of just like seeing unexpected like art in regular places.

Griffin: Yeah. Subways have so many opportunities for cool art shit.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I was watchin' some video that Henry had on that was showing a... What's it called? A zois— zoetrope? Of like a subway train that as it goes down a tunnel, the way that like these pictures printed on the wall pass by the windows—

Rachel: Ohhhhh.

Griffin: — makes it look like it's like animating and stuff.

Rachel: Cool.

Griffin: So way. Anyway. And like when they turn the steps out of a subway station into a piano, so like as you go up it like plays notes. It's a fun interactive environment!

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Thank you to bo en and Augustus for the use of our theme song "Money Won't Pay." You'll find a link to that in the episode description. Thank you to MaximumFun for havin' us on the network. I feel tired— I feel worn out from talking about the em dash. And also we just went to the gym. [chuckles]

Rachel: [chuckles] Yeah, we did.

Griffin: [chuckles] Right before we recorded, so maybe that's more of the issue.

Rachel: If you've noticed a certain amount of like hype energy, it's because we still got those— that adrenaline and the endorphins and the—

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: — and the lats and the...

Griffin: My lats and delts are fucking pumping right now.

Rachel: And delts. And...

Griffin: Yeah. My— I got a— I've got just strong...

Rachel: Traps.

Griffin: My traps are like a gorilla.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: We have merch over at mcelroymerch.com, including a "Sometimes it Rains in Trav Nation" shirt that I'm absolutely smitten with, and some great Fungalore stuff over there. And I think that's it. Again, wonderfulpodcast@gmail.com. Let us know what your— what's in your heart. What's in your heart today?

Rachel: [chuckles] I don't think we want necessarily that.

Griffin: Yeah, what's in your heart today? No, we don't want that. Specifically, we need content. But what— I mean, I hope your heart is good.

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: But we need the content.

Rachel: [chuckles]

[outro music plays]

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