

## Wonderful! 328: You Told Me About Stetson

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[theme music, "Money Won't Pay (feat. Augustus)" by Bo En plays]

**Rachel:** Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

**Griffin:** Hi, this is Griffin McElroy.

**Rachel:** And this is Wonderful!

**Griffin:** Thanks for listening to Wonderful. It's a show where we talk about things we like, that's good, that we're into. We know you have lots of choices when it comes to podcasts about things people like, that's good, that they're into. You could listen to Awesome!

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** That one's done by another married couple, Bob and Susan Jen... Jenkins.

**Rachel:** Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** That show is way bigger than ours. And for good reason. They're great.

**Rachel:** I would love like a supercut of McElroys coming up with fake names on the fly.

**Griffin:** I don't know why I can do first names so easy. As soon as I hit the surname, it's like a wall forms after the first syllable.

**Rachel:** And that is a common trait I think between you and all of your family members.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** I listen to a lot of McElroy products. Because I'm very loyal and I'm the biggest fan.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And you know, I have lots of time. [titters]

**Griffin:** [snickers]

**Rachel:** And that is one thing that is common across all shows, is that if you are asked to come up with a name, it's like—

**Griffin:** First name easy. Just a straight over-the-plate Christian name.

**Rachel:** Usually Jeremy.

**Griffin:** Jeremy and Megan Ram... bulin... Ramblin.

**Rachel:** Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** See? It's not—I don't know why the surnames are such an issue for me. I've met lots of people, like so many people.

**Rachel:** Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** I've met like 100 people.

**Rachel:** Wow. Probably more, I would think.

**Griffin:** Hm... I don't know. But anyway—

**Rachel:** Name them all right now. [laughs]

**Griffin:** Well, let's see. There's Franklin and Samantha Trail... f. Trailf.

**Rachel:** [titters] Yeah.

**Griffin:** There's Philip and Elizabeth.

**Rachel:** Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** Cranch... tin. Cranchtin.

**Rachel:** You don't have to name their last names. I would be happy with first.

**Griffin:** Oh, then that's easy! Stetson. David. John.

**Rachel:** You did actually know a Stetson, didn't you?

**Griffin:** Fuck yeah, I knew a Stetson.

**Rachel:** Yeah, no, you've told me.

**Griffin:** I don't mean to brag, but he was pretty popular.

**Rachel:** You've told me about Stetson.

**Griffin:** And I was sort of his friend, grandfathered in from like elementary school. When we had like the same nanny, the same like after-school babysitter for a while. So like when middle school rolled around and Stetson was the coolest dude in town, you know I got in there.

**Rachel:** Did he have any nicknames? Did people call him Stet and/or Son?

**Griffin:** No, just Stetson for the most part. That's a tough one to truncate, I believe. Do you have any small wonders?

**Rachel:** I could talk about Stetson for like an hour.

**Griffin:** So could I! His dad ran a candy store.

**Rachel:** Oh my god.

**Griffin:** Can you fuckin' believe it?

**Rachel:** This seems like a book that you've written.

**Griffin:** It's not a book! It's real. His dad ran a candy store. It was right next to the movie theater downtown, before the Pullman Square one opened. And so we would hit that up, I would get myself a big bag of chocolate stars, and I would go and you know, watch a flick.

**Rachel:** Wait, what are chocolate stars?

**Griffin:** It's just what they sound like. They're little stars that are made of chocolate.

**Rachel:** Are they like individually wrapped?

**Griffin:** Nope. Just, you get a big ol' bag of loose chocolate stars. I don't see why you're struggling with this, it's stars. You know how you can have different—

**Rachel:** I'm just picturing like your chocolatey paw reaching in the bag over and over again.

**Griffin:** Yes. Uh-huh.

**Rachel:** This is maybe where—

**Griffin:** While I'm watching the Scorpion King.

**Rachel:** Where your chocolate popcorn combination started.

**Griffin:** Maybe. It's possible.

**Rachel:** And you just like reaching your hand and a big bag of melty chocolate.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Okay, small wonder.

**Griffin:** Yes!

**Rachel:** Oh, gosh, banana pudding. Have we talked about it?

**Griffin:** Fuckin' hell, man!

**Rachel:** I do a lot of the grocery ordering. And a lot of times we have groceries delivered because, well, we have two small children that we don't like to bring to grocery stores, unless we have to. And I will say that I noticed banana pudding was an option.

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** And ever since then, it's pretty much all I can think about when I order groceries.

**Griffin:** It's our secret little... well, not secret anymore, huh? You're telling the whole dang world about it. Did you get more today? Is there—

**Rachel:** No.

**Griffin:** Oh, fuck...

**Rachel:** Not yet, but it's on my mind.

**Griffin:** I cannot tell you the thrill I get when it's like nighttime, we just got the kids to bed, we're watching TV or something. And you're like, "I got banana pudding!"

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** It's like such an exciting moment.

**Rachel:** I think we could probably make it ourselves?

**Griffin:** Probably. Yeah. It doesn't seem that tough.

**Rachel:** But yeah, I don't know.

**Griffin:** I'm going to say, we have been—we're in a bit of a drought in terms of like, TV stuff. Like all of our jammers are kind of off the air. Perfect Match starts back up today, which you know we're gonna—

**Rachel:** Yeah, we're recording this in advance.

**Griffin:** We have been exploring the offerings of Dropout, which is the former sort of college humor streaming service.

**Rachel:** I'm glad we're talking about this, because I feel like all we get on social media is people recommending—

**Griffin:** Like recommending it, yes.

**Rachel:** Yeah. Like, "Hey, have you watched Dropout? It seems like you would like it." And they are correct. [chuckles]

**Griffin:** They're right, yeah. I mean, obviously we did a season of Dimension 20 called Tiny Heist. I've been a Dropout subscriber for a while and I've sort of watched stuff here and there. Whenever I like see a clip of something that's very, very funny, I will like dip in. But Rachel and I, as we have hit this sort of TV drought, I've been watching a lot of specifically Game Changer. And man, that goes down so fuckin' Smooth.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** So funny. So like ambitious and just high-touch production. They are doing a—they're in the middle of a finale right now, of Game Changer for this season. Which is basically The Circle with like a bunch of very, very, very funny comedians.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Everybody is playing fake personas.

**Rachel:** Yeah, they have to create a character and then answer as that character. But the whole goal of it is that these are all people that work together regularly and they have to try and guess who is playing what character.

**Griffin:** Right. And so there's layers of deception, like Brennan is playing a bug with a big ass. Which he modeled after sort of the comedic sensibilities of Rekha.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** To like try and trick people. It's very, very good.

**Rachel:** And Ally Beardsley is playing Brennan.

**Griffin:** Brennan Lee Mulligan, yeah.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** They are absolutely hysterical too. It's fuckin' great. It's a great platform. I'm so like, I don't know, I'm so happy it exists. Because it's like people making stuff that is very good, that they're very into. And are you know, seemingly succeeding quite a lot with it. So, I love that. It makes me very happy. You go first this week, for the big show. The big wonder. What are you cooking up in the lab? I wonder. As you open your laptop.

**Rachel:** You... eh... [titters]

**Griffin:** I do this every week.

**Rachel:** We have someone that edits the show. [chuckles]

**Griffin:** I know, but—

**Rachel:** You don't have to—is it the silence between us? Does it make you anxious?

**Griffin:** Not just us. Silence between me and any other human being—

**Rachel:** [titters] Anybody.

**Griffin:** I just feel like someone should be talking right now.

**Rachel:** Okay, to be honest, I can't remember really how I came up with this topic.

**Griffin:** Hell yeah.

**Rachel:** I came up with it though several days ago.

**Griffin:** In a dream.

**Rachel:** And like prepped several days ago.

**Griffin:** Okay?

**Rachel:** So if you had to ask me where did this come from, I couldn't tell you, because it's been several days.

**Griffin:** I love that. Who can remember something several days ago?

**Rachel:** But I can tell you how I found out about it. My topic is Secret Service code names.

**Griffin:** Yeah, sure.

**Rachel:** This is not anything I knew about until we watched The West Wing.

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** Do you remember any of their code names?

**Griffin:** Let's see, there was Backpack, was a I believe Zoe's—

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Name?

**Rachel:** Technically Bookbag.

**Griffin:** Bookbag, sorry. Eagle I think is always sort of the president, right? Isn't that always the case?

**Rachel:** No, not at all. But it is the case on West Wing.

**Griffin:** Okay, CJ was something like... Flamingo?

**Rachel:** Yeah! That's exactly right.

**Griffin:** Was that exactly right?

**Rachel:** Wow. Yeah.

**Griffin:** I don't remember any of the other ones.

**Rachel:** Sam Seaborn had one.

**Griffin:** Sam... I don't know. All I remember is Flamingo, because CJ was so upset—

**Rachel:** [chuckles] Yeah.

**Griffin:** Because she's a very, very tall woman.

**Rachel:** Sam Seaborn was Princeton.

**Griffin:** Princeton is awesome.

**Rachel:** Which seems right.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Most political figures of like significant import, like enough to have Secret Service—

**Griffin:** Right.

**Rachel:** Have code names. This is not actually anything the Secret Service chooses. The White House Communications Agency maintains a list that candidates choose from, often choosing ones that resonate with them personally.

**Griffin:** Interesting. Oh, that's so good!

**Rachel:** Mm-hmm.

**Griffin:** That's so cool. So wait, is it—what's the bar, right? Is it just like... does the Secret Service just serve the executive branch? And so it's like higher-ups in the sort of presidential line of succession? Or like senators and—

**Rachel:** So, in the article I read, presidents, vice presidents and their families aren't the only people who get code names. The Secret Service also uses them for other prominent people.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** Such as some top government officials, dignitaries and celebrities.

**Griffin:** Celebrities?

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Why do they get Secret Service?

**Rachel:** It made me really wonder though, like wait, wait, wait, wait, what celebrities? But I didn't have time to look into that. So this apparently has been around. If you look at Wikipedia, the first entry is Woodrow Wilson's wife.

**Griffin:** Woodrow Wilson's wife? That's fun to say. What was her...

**Rachel:** So Woodrow Wilson was president from 1913 to 1921. And Woodrow Wilson's wife was Grandma. [titters]

**Griffin:** [guffaws] That's the first one that they came up with?

**Rachel:** That's—yeah, I mean, that I have here in front of me.

**Griffin:** That's rough, man. I wouldn't like that.

**Rachel:** It was really with Harry S. Truman that it became like the norm, and that every president and their spouse had a code name. And then often the children, anybody—like any family member that lived in the White House had one.

**Griffin:** Right.

**Rachel:** And it started following a convention pretty early, I think with Lyndon Johnson, that they would use the same first initial for every code name. So like if a family was in there—so for example, Lyndon Johnson was Volunteer. Ladybird was Victoria, Lynda Bird was Velvet, and Lucy Baines was Venus. So they all use the same letter for their code name.

**Griffin:** Victoria's a weird one. I don't feel—

**Rachel:** I know, that's just like a name.

**Griffin:** That's just a name. That's just a regular name, that would get very confusing.

**Rachel:** One of the ones I found that was kind of funny, so Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, who was Gerald Ford's vice president—

**Griffin:** I was gonna say, I've never heard of this fuckin' dude in my life.

**Rachel:** I looked that up, I did not know that. I mean, obviously Rockefeller is...

**Griffin:** Yeah, I mean, sure.

**Rachel:** Rockefellers wife's name was Happy.

**Griffin:** Aw. Wait, her—hold on, her—

**Rachel:** No, her real name.

**Griffin:** Okay. So that's—okay.

**Rachel:** Wait, let me confirm that actually, because it's a little hard to believe.

**Griffin:** Happy Rockefeller?

**Rachel:** Maybe that is what her code name became.

**Griffin:** Secret Service code name was? I mean, you can have the name Happy, I'm sure. I've never met any Happys, but—

**Rachel:** Okay, no, I think her code name became Happy.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** Because at one time, it was Shooting Star. Which as you can imagine, was a challenge.

**Griffin:** Yeah, I bet if you are on comms and you hear your Secret Service buddies like, shooting—

**Rachel:** Yeah, with the word shooting.

**Griffin:** Yeah, not great.

**Rachel:** And then she became Stardust. So maybe her nickname was Happy?

**Griffin:** Oh, that's cool. Stardust is cool. I want that one. We live in DC now, what do you think the odds are that I could get myself a Secret Service code name? Specifically Stardust.

**Rachel:** I mean, can we start with you getting Secret Service? Because I feel like that would be the first step.

**Griffin:** I don't want to do—

**Rachel:** You just want a code name?

**Griffin:** Yeah...

**Rachel:** So I mentioned that it can also be people that are of importance. Some of them are funny to read. So presidential candidate and former Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich in 2012, chose the name T-Rex, because of his fondness for dinosaurs.

**Griffin:** Fucking shit head.

**Rachel:** [chuckles] Dude just liked dinosaurs?

**Griffin:** I guess. I mean, yeah. I mean, credit where credit's due. That's a pretty strong choice.

**Rachel:** Air Force One can be known as Angel or Cow Puncher.

**Griffin:** Cow Puncher?

**Rachel:** Cow Puncher, that must be like slang for a plane in the old days. I don't know. I don't know.

**Griffin:** What were we doing with planes that that became—obviously, you gotta crack a few eggs to make an omelet and discover the secrets of flight. But if I learned that the Wright brothers were secretly smashing their planes into lots and lots and lots of cows? Then maybe it wasn't worth it. You know what I mean?

**Rachel:** Uh-huh. No, okay. So, a cow puncher means a hired hand who tends cattle, and performs other duties on horseback.

**Griffin:** Again, I gotta check the Yelp review of that particular ranch hand, if I gotta go—

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** I gotta go on Glassdoor and check out who's punching cows, because I don't actually want that energy at my ranch. Thank you so much.

**Rachel:** The presidential state car is called Stagecoach, which I enjoy. And then the US Capitol is often called Punchbowl. And the White House is often called Castle.

**Griffin:** Now, code names for folks I kind of get, right? Like, is the intention that your like communication about this very obviously like sensitive thing that you have to protect, like a misdirect of anyone who might be like within earshot? They don't know who Stardust is?

**Rachel:** I think that was originally part of it.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** I will say it's also brevity, because obviously, when you're referring to the president, there's certain ways you should do it. And sometimes you're in a situation where there are multiple presidents.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And then also, yeah, I mean, kind of what you're mentioning, like the secrecy of it.

**Griffin:** I guess I don't understand why one would need to be secret about like a building. Like, you know what I mean?

**Rachel:** Well, because it's faster in order—it's faster to—

**Griffin:** I guess so.

**Rachel:** You know, if you're talking about the White House, it's faster to just say, what is it, Castle.

**Griffin:** I do like Punchbowl for Capitol building a lot, actually. I think that's—

**Rachel:** Yeah, I know, isn't that fun?

**Griffin:** I think that's kind of good.

**Rachel:** Some of my other favorites...

**Griffin:** I wonder what Rudy Giuliani's Secret Service name was. It says here 'Fat Ass?'

**Rachel:** [titters]

**Griffin:** Can that be right?

**Rachel:** Let me see. Let me see. Most people that run for president, you know, they get Secret Service and they get code names because of that.

**Griffin:** Yeah. So wild. It says here...

**Rachel:** Yeah, I can't find that.

**Griffin:** Goey Giuliani was his code name?

**Rachel:** Oh, wouldn't that be nice.

**Griffin:** That doesn't make any sense?

**Rachel:** Okay, so, some other ones that I enjoyed. One of the things that I thought was kind of funny, so George H.W. Bush was Timberwolf. Barbara Bush was Tranquility. And then the Bush children. At the time, George W. Bush, who was kind of known for his antics, related to his—

**Griffin:** And continues to be known for that, I would say, largely.

**Rachel:** Related to his drinking in particular, was called Tumbler. But when he became president, changed it to Trailblazer. [chuckles]

**Griffin:** That's so peak Bush. That's like peak Bush. Timberwolf was H.W?

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** Damn it. I mean, that's pretty good, too. Damn it.

**Rachel:** Donald Trump was Mogul.

**Griffin:** Fuckin' hell, man!

**Rachel:** Perhaps even worse, Melania was Muse.

**Griffin:** [laughs] Oh my god! I thought the douche chills of that whole situation had like reached the zenith point. I did not know that there was more road to hoe in that category. That's rough stuff.

**Rachel:** I will say, some of the funnier ones—so like obviously there's some ego involved when you choose.

**Griffin:** Oh, it sounds like it may be a little bit.

**Rachel:** Paul Ryan, for example, chose Bow Hunter.

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Rachel:** Because that's what he really—

**Griffin:** Okay, I just—there's a degree now, this is crossing a threshold into like LARP territory.

**Rachel:** Yeah, I know! [laughs]

**Griffin:** That I wasn't necessarily anticipating. But like, maybe that's Paul Ryan's vibe that he's always wanted to sort of embody. You know what I mean? And now he has this opportunity. It's like when I make a character in Baldur's Gate 3, I'm going to spend a long time trying to pick one out. The idea that this is happening on such a high, important, exceedingly douche level is really, really fascinating.

**Rachel:** I know. There are tons more. They're all available on Wikipedia. I also found articles that kind of get into the story. So for example, Ronald Reagan was known as Rawhide, because he was a known rancher. And was in a lot of Westerns. But yeah, you can find a lot of the stories, it's really good. It's really good. And it's fun to think about kind of these like comic book personas.

**Griffin:** Yes. Belonging to these oftentimes monstrous human beings.

**Rachel:** [chuckles] Exactly.

**Griffin:** Yeah. Can I steal you away?

**Rachel:** Yes.

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

**Griffin:** This one is a bit out of left field, I will confess. I want to talk about poker. I have talked in the past about playing poker for Halloween candy, I believe like four years ago.

**Rachel:** Oh, wow? Okay.

**Griffin:** But I don't think that was really necessarily about the game, as much as it was a good way to kind of distribute candy between kids who maybe aren't excited about the candy that they got. There is a game that came out this year called Balatro, which is like a... it's like a very complicated card game that is sort of based on poker rules. But it throws like all these crazy like modifiers and stuff into it to turn it into like this big, complex—

**Rachel:** Are you guys all still playing that? Or has that moment passed?

**Griffin:** Not so much anymore.

**Rachel:** Okay.

**Griffin:** But I mean, for a good month and a half, it's like all—

**Rachel:** Yeah, it was all you talked about, yeah.

**Griffin:** Anyone played that I know. And so, but playing that has gotten me to like realize that I do kind of miss playing poker. And then it got me to think about the fact that like there was a period in my life, and in sort of the consciousness of the globe, where poker was like really popular for a while.

**Rachel:** Oh, yeah. Yeah.

**Griffin:** And that was such a strange little bubble that i feel like popped. And so I wanted to like kind of like learn a little bit more about it. There is a name for it, it is the poker boom. That peaked between 2003 and 2006. So I'm gonna talk about that. Specifically like I'm talking about Texas hold 'em, which is kind of the most popular form of the game—

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** On Earth.

**Rachel:** I remember, I was in college during those early days. And it was like everybody I knew it was playing poker online.

**Griffin:** Just everyone.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And I was a freshman in college in 2005, everyone was like crazy about poker. I knew a lot of people who are doing like the Poker Stars like

online thing. I had multiple different groups of friends who like put together poker nights. And it was on TV like constantly.

**Rachel:** I remember. I used to watch it. It was on at like 1 in the morning or something.

**Griffin:** Yes. What was the other—not... I never really watched that much of like the World Series of Poker, mostly because like the big personalities in there sent absolute shivers up my spine.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** But what was the celebrity poker tournament thing that like I think Dave Foley was a host of?

**Rachel:** Yeah. I don't know.

**Griffin:** I don't know. I watched a lot of that also. I think the last time that I've played poker was like 2015, with our group of friends back in Austin, before any of us had kids. But I do still have like a deep fondness for the game. I think that deep down, it kind of scratches that itch that like Werewolf and other kind of like hidden role games scratch for me. Of like, you know, deception and like risk assessment and like straight up kind of luck. Texas hold 'em is, like I said, the version that kind of popped off. That's due to a few factors. I think that it's probably the simplest form of poker.

There's lots and lots and lots of other types where like it gets kind of confusing who goes when. Texas hold 'em, if you're not familiar, everyone gets two cards facedown. There's a round of betting. Then there's three cards laid up on the table that everyone kind of uses with their two cards to build the best five card hand. There's another round of betting. Fourth card comes out. Another round of betting. Fifth card comes out, and the final round of betting, and then everyone reveals. I think what I always really, really loved about playing poker with my friends is that I am not the type of person who like lies a whole bunch to my group of friends. Nor do I like constantly keep my head on a swivel for like deceit.

**Rachel:** So you're a good person?

**Griffin:** Well—

**Rachel:** [titters]

**Griffin:** I guess, but I don't know, that idea... I usually take people at face value if they are like—if I am friends with them, right? I don't have that... maybe this is a luxury of like the sort of experience I have had in my life, but like I don't look at people and think like, are you telling me the truth right now, like very often. If it is somebody who I am like close with.

So, to be placed in a situation where that is all that I'm doing feels kind of like taboo. And it feels kind of like exciting and fun. It is taboo in kind of a like harmless way. Because now it's like, oh, I'm getting to see what my friends are like when they're being a little sneaky. When my friends are maybe not on the level right now. And then trying to figure out what that looks like for each individual person. I always found that to be like intoxicating.

**Rachel:** Yeah. I think once you know enough about poker, you're really able to play that way.

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** I will say for me, like watching it on television, there were a lot of times where I was like, I don't know, is that good? Like is a 3 and an 8 good? Is there a reason that I would want the 3 and the 8? Trying to figure out like, is this person bluffing or is this some hand I don't know about?

**Griffin:** Yeah, I mean, there is... Poker kind of occupies like a weird space in the like world of games of chance or like casino games, or anything like that. Where it's not a situation where the game is inherently weighted against you in favor of the house, right? It is just a game of like looking at the cards on the table, trying to figure out who has which hands. And that really is predicated on you kind of like knowing what the hands are, like what you are possibly shooting for and what everybody else can possibly be shooting for.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** In that sense, I think it is a much more accessible game than, for instance, a blackjack. Which has a codified like, here's what you're supposed to do if you have these cards and the dealer is showing this card. Like here's the flowchart that you follow. I've never really vibed with blackjack for that reason. But poker is much more about like, you know, guessing.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** What other people have, based on their sort of social cues. I have never played for like a great deal of cash. That is not my—I am not a big into sort of gambling in general. And so I don't want this whole segment to come off as a full-throated endorsement of gambling, because—

**Rachel:** Yeah, it's a legitimate—like when this was popular, there were a lot of people who were really becoming addicted—

**Griffin:** Just horror stories.

**Rachel:** To like online gambling.

**Griffin:** Right. So, to get into that a little bit—that is to say, I just like the game. I'm not saying that I like the you know, wagering your livelihood on it. So, Texas hold 'em has been around since like the 1950s, I think. But there was this poker boom between 2003 and 2006. Before 2003, the game had been growing in popularity, largely because the internet made things like you know, online poker rooms possible. There was a movie that came out in 1988 called Rounders, which I adore—

**Rachel:** Yeah. Of course you did.

**Griffin:** On a deep and unironic level. It's got Matt Damon and Edward Norton as like poker hustlers. It's got John Malkovich as Teddy KGB, in maybe my favorite role of John Malkovich's whole career. I think like most dudes who I was like going—who I went to college with were like, "Oh, fuck you, man. Rounders, baby!"

**Rachel:** Of course. Yeah, of course.

**Griffin:** It was very much that type of movie. So in 2003, online poker sites were like a big thing. There was a guy named... and this is his real last name, Chris Moneymaker.

**Rachel:** So that was his real name?

**Griffin:** Real name is—

**Rachel:** No...

**Griffin:** Yeah. And it's—

**Rachel:** He didn't legally change it?

**Griffin:** I don't think so. I think that was just his name. I'm not going to google it because I want to continue living in a world where that was the man's real name.

**Rachel:** I remember seeing him on those like poker tournaments.

**Griffin:** Yeah! And the way he kind of like made his big splash is he was playing in this online satellite tournament of the World Series of Poker that like you know, you could join in. The buy in was 86 bucks. And you get to join this qualifier, basically, this online qualifier. He won that and made it to the World Series of Poker. And then he won the World Series of Poker in 2003. And he won \$2.5 million off of his \$86 buy in online tournament thing. So, that is the reason most people attribute—it's called the Moneymaker effect, where people learning about this, watching the World Series of Poker at home are like, "Well, if this fucking guy can do it—"

**Rachel:** I know, it could be me.

**Griffin:** That led a lot of people down a primrose path, that I imagined was not... was bad for them, right? But it also led to an explosion of this sport. Also, during this period, I think was 2004, was when the NHL lockout

happened. And so all of a sudden, like ESPN had huge scheduling blocks open up that they started to show more and more poker.

**Rachel:** Oh. Interesting. Okay.

**Griffin:** So there's like a number of sort of things that contributed to poker becoming this like huge explosion of things. And then things like PokerStars and various online poker gambling services just sort of grew and flourished. Which like, there were local and state gambling regulations that these online platforms just kind of like ran roughshod over. Because it's like, it's the internet! The internet's not in a state. It's up in the sky.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** It moves through and around us all. How can you regulate this?

**Rachel:** And yeah, that's why a lot of states had to come out I think and make their own legislation. Because it—

**Griffin:** Well, no. What happened was that in 2006, the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act of 2006 was passed on a federal level. And all of a sudden, like PokerStars' stock fell like 60% over night.

**Rachel:** You know when you see an advertisement for online gambling, and then they like have to list every state and their specific—

**Griffin:** Yeah. So because of this, right, because of this act, after this happened, PokerStars and other services still kept like going.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** But in I think 2011, there was a huge crackdown on this. And most of those services then moved overseas and continued to operate, but on like an overseas platform. It's a mess, right? It's a huge mess. And again, I recognize that this is for so many people like a very, very harmful thing. And I don't want to make light of that. I just, I don't know, I find it very, very fascinating. I can't think of too many things like this in my life where there was like a game that just exploded in popularity. And literally everyone I

knew was playing it. And I was playing it like a couple times a month, in like group settings.

**Rachel:** Mm-hm.

**Griffin:** And having just a good-ass time. I don't think I played for anything more than like a \$10 buy in for like a, you know, an \$80 pot. Which you know, when you're in college is a fuckin' huge amount of money. But it's not, you know, I wasn't losing my shirt. I just, I always really liked it. I found it cool to play. It is a fun, I think, way to spend an evening with like a group of people. Because like you can make it last as long as you want to make it last—

**Rachel:** Didn't you have a poker table briefly?

**Griffin:** I did have a poker table! Yeah.

**Rachel:** When you were in Chicago, right?

**Griffin:** I'm trying to remember, I think so, yeah.

**Rachel:** I feel like I remember you trying to sell that thing before you moved to Austin.

**Griffin:** I feel like I inherited it. I think it was maybe Travis'? I don't remember. I remember we got it off like Craigslist for like 30 bucks or something like that. Spoiler alert, we mostly used it for like Last Night on Earth and other like nerd-ass board games that we played with our friends.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** When we were in Cincinnati. I think very little poker was ever played on that table. Really, after college, like my poker playing completely fell off the face of the earth. And again, it's been nine years since I have played this game. But playing this Balatro game has really kind of like, I don't know, scratched that itch and made me remember like, with some fondness, this weird time in my life where me and everyone I knew was like

playing poker all the time. And now they don't. And that's... kind of cool, I think.

**Rachel:** Yeah, I don't know if you know this about yourself, but you are a person that loves games.

**Griffin:** I do love games.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Yeah. And I do love—

**Rachel:** So it's not surprising to me that poker would be one of those games.

**Griffin:** I do love social games, too. I remember when we did the JoCo Cruise, the game I only ever want to play his craps, because it's just a bunch of people standing around a table yelling and cheering.

**Rachel:** That is fun.

**Griffin:** And that's fun! That's all I give a shit about. I do not think I'm going to make money. In fact, I'm 100% sure I'm going to lose money. Here's the other thing about poker. I'm not very good at it. I don't think I ever won a poker night ever in my life, because I don't—because for the reasons I outlined earlier, I am not a particularly—

**Rachel:** Because you have such an expressive face every time you look at the cards, you'd be like, "Wah!"

**Griffin:** [in a silly voice] Wuh!

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** No, I think it's more that like I'm bad at being kind of like insightful about deceit, right? Like I'm bad at reading people.

**Rachel:** I know.

**Griffin:** Well, that's terrible.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** So I'm not good at it, but I still really enjoy it.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Here's some small wonders from our friends at home. I'll save the name on this one until I read it. "My small wonder is when toddlers first start saying names. They always get part of it slightly wrong and you never know what fun, new nickname you'll have temporarily until they can say it correctly." That's from Cassie, or Sassy, Cashy or Kassa.

**Rachel:** Aw, I love that!

**Griffin:** That's how Nonnee got her—

**Rachel:** Yeah. And to this day—

**Griffin:** To this day—

**Rachel:** Still Nonnee.

**Griffin:** I forget her real name.

**Rachel:** I always spend an unreasonable amount of time trying to decide how to spell Nonnee at Christmas time.

**Griffin:** N-O-N-N-E-E, baby.

**Rachel:** Do you remember how that was decided?

**Griffin:** No?

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** The spelling was never that big a deal, but it was—Justin tried to say Donna, which is her name, and it came out Nonnee. And the rest was history.

**Rachel:** He knew what he was doing.

**Griffin:** He knew exactly what he was doing. Huge into branding back then.

**Rachel:** [titters]

**Griffin:** Dee says, "I'm a librarian and my small wonder is setting up a display and then later seeing that books from it have been checked out. It makes me so happy to see people resonate with the books I've chosen and that those books are getting use." I bet that's nice.

**Rachel:** Aw, I love that.

**Griffin:** I that real nice. I always wanted to do this when I work at GameStop. I always wanted to like get this thing going where it's like, let's put out like—

**Rachel:** You didn't?

**Griffin:** No, they wouldn't let us.

**Rachel:** Oh...

**Griffin:** Yeah, they were very, very intense about following the—

**Rachel:** I always loved that at like video like rental stores. Just like these are all themed or these are all my favorites.

**Griffin:** Yeah, no.

**Rachel:** It was always fun to get a little window.

**Griffin:** It was fairly buttoned-up kind of by the book environment.

**Rachel:** [snickers] Video game store.

**Griffin:** Yeah, no kidding.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Thank you so much for listening. Thanks 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. We've got some new merch over at [mcelroymerch.com](http://mcelroymerch.com), including a choice new Fungalore poster, if you're living that life. Go check that out. We got a bunch of shows that we just announced.

**Rachel:** Yeah! More. More.

**Griffin:** So, so, so many shows. And I'm going to tell you all about them in exactly 10 seconds.

**Rachel:** A lot of them are cities, located in different places.

**Griffin:** Thank you so much, yes.

**Rachel:** What you'll do is you'll buy a ticket and you'll see the show in that city.

**Griffin:** It feels better, right, to vamp?

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** And you're like really good at it. Next week, or perhaps—when is this coming out? Yes, next week, we are going to be in Kansas City, Missouri, June 21<sup>st</sup>. St. Louis, Missouri, June 22<sup>nd</sup>. And Tyson's Virginia on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. All those are going to be MBMBaMs. We're going to be doing Wonderful at the St. Louis show.

**Rachel:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** So that'll be fun.

**Rachel:** Or Chesterfield, as it is sometimes called.

**Griffin:** Or Chesterfield, as they call it sometimes. But we're also going to be doing a mixture of My Brother, My Brother and Me and TAZ. July, we're going to be in Detroit and Cleveland. August, we're going to be doing a bunch of stuff at Gen Con. September, we're going to be doing Orlando and Atlanta. October, we're going to be in Denver and Phoenix. November, we're going to be in Indianapolis and Milwaukee. You can go to [bit.ly/mcelroytours](http://bit.ly/mcelroytours) for tickets and more information.

**Rachel:** Whew!

**Griffin:** I know!

**Rachel:** That's a lot of...

**Griffin:** It's a big year.

**Rachel:** A lot of time on the road.

**Griffin:** *A lot* of time on the road. But, you know...

**Rachel:** Somebody's got to do it. [titters]

**Griffin:** Someone has to do live podcasts. If you don't have someone out there doing live podcasts, then... terrorists win.

**Rachel:** You know how like 20, 30 years ago, everything was terrible? And then there was podcasts and then everything got much better?

**Griffin:** Wait... wait a minute. Wait just darn tootin' second. I think the opposite is true.

**Rachel:** [chuckles] Well, I'm not blaming podcasts.

**Griffin:** It sounds like maybe you are a little bit. Back when it was just poker and no podcast, everything was fucking great.

**Rachel:** Podcast buys the shoes for people in this house.

**Griffin:** That's true.

**Rachel:** I'm never gonna complain about podcasts.

**Griffin:** That's true. But only the shoes. It's weird the way that we have set up our finances.

**Rachel:** No, we're not able to spend it on anything else.

**Griffin:** No.

**Rachel:** That's what we've heard from our financial advisor.

**Griffin:** Jesse pays us in what he calls shoe bucks.

**Rachel:** Yeah, which actually sounds realistic based on the style choices of Jesse Thorne. I believe he would really appreciate shoe bucks.

**Griffin:** You know, I bet you he's got a line on like very cost effective, like affordable, stylish shoes.

**Rachel:** Probably involves a flea market purchase, I'm guessing.

**Griffin:** Probably. We're really spiraling.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** As we try to find the offramp—

**Rachel:** Our podcast about shoes. And of course, we would end it talking about shoes.

**Griffin:** Of course. Bye!

[theme music, "Money Won't Pay (feat. Augustus)" by Bo En plays]

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