

Wonderful! 348: Jeff the Dragon from Poetry School

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

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hi, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is *Wonderful!*

Griffin: Booo! This episode has a hundred ghosts in it, and we put—

Rachel: Last Halloween episode that we did last week.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: 50 ghosts.

Griffin: Last week was a rehearsal.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: This show we do is a production.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: It is artistic endeavor that we perform, it's a performance, and with a performance, and I don't know if you like know about this stuff.

Rachel: Probably not, no.

Griffin: 'Cause I know that like performing arts were not like your cup of tea, but you must rehearse, you must practice, 'cause if you go out there, if you're like, "Hey, what's up everyone? We're going to put on *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, here's the ju— here's the roles you have, and we're doin' it tonight." It's simply not the way it works.

Rachel: This is a dream that you have maybe once a week. [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah. I think yeah, that's a good way of putting it also. I have the bad actor's nightmare a lot.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: And so to get around that sometimes when you do an episode of your podcast, you do it as a rehearsal for the next episode of the podcast.

Rachel: You intentionally don't look at the calendar to see whether or not this is actually the day of the production.

Griffin: Right. Yeah and a lot of people, we get reviews on the show sometimes that's like, "How come every other episode is weird and unpolished?" and it's like, 'cause those are the rehearsals.

Rachel: [chuckles] Oh, so this is the real one?!

Griffin: This is the real one.

Rachel: Now I'm nervous.

Griffin: [in a Southern accent] "It's the day of the show, y'all."

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: How have I not done *Waiting for Guffman* on this— Actually, now that I say that, I don't know 100% that I haven't done *Waiting for Guffman* as a segment on this show.

Rachel: Yeah, not 100% either. I will say that the whole process of those films is mysterious to me.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: I don't know that there's a lot of information out there.

Griffin: Yeah, it's a good point, I don't— It seems like they stay pretty tight knit.

Rachel: Whenever anyone is interviewed about participating in a Christopher Guest film, they're just like, "Well you know, like there's not really a script." [chuckles]

Griffin: That is true. Yeah, they say, "Christopher Guest just shows up, he does his voice that he does."

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: "Eugene Levy rolls up, last minute." That's one that they don't rehearse actually, that is the exception that proves the rule, I suppose.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Anyway, do you have any small wonders?

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: For this most spooky episode?

Rachel: Wait, now is everything gonna be spooky themed?

Griffin: No, not really.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: My topic isn't scary.

Rachel: [chuckles] Okay, good.

Griffin: I was just embarrassed, 'cause you called me out so hard last time.

Rachel: Well I just— I— Well, I was trying to create a through line.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Because in our last episode we realized this is not actually the Halloween episode, the next one is.

Griffin: You realized.

Rachel: So I didn't wanna leave everyone hanging.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Rachel: Like, this one should be the Halloween episode, then.

Griffin: No, this is the— We're one week ahead on— here on *Wonderful!* so it's already early November on this one. And... we know the results.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: And we're not tellin', though!

Rachel: [laughs] God, I don't even wanna joke about that.

Griffin: No, Jesus Christ.

Rachel: I don't even want that responsibility.

Griffin: Me neither.

Rachel: I don't want anyone to think, like, they can come to us for counsel.

Griffin: Yeah, no.

Rachel: On that.

Griffin: Yeah, please.

Rachel: Okay. [sighs] My wonderful thing. Alright, you know what I'm gonna say?

Griffin: What are you gonna say?

Rachel: For a long time, I put pressure on myself to not use pre-packaged mixes for baked goods.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: I— When I made the pumpkin bread, I used the canned pumpkin. When I made the chocolate chip cookies, like I measured out, you know the flour and the sugar.

Griffin: Absolutely.

Rachel: I have liberated myself.

Griffin: You're free.

Rachel: Yeah, and now— Because I feel like a baked good in this house is always welcome.

Griffin: Of course.

Rachel: And it still— there's still kind of a therapeutic benefit to me.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: I like sit down and put together a sweet baked good.

Griffin: It's just instead of dumping, you know, five things into a bowl, you're just dumping one thing into a bowl.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I think you've done baking mix as a segment here on *Wonderful!*

Rachel: Yeah, I think I talked about cake mix maybe.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: But...

Griffin: In this very pumpkiny time of year.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It's— There— You have—

Rachel: I started buying like the pumpkin bread mix, and like a like a cookie mix, and... Gus is actually somewhat interested in kitchen things.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: And so he will stir for me, and it just feels like an activity, and um...

Griffin: It wears him out.

Rachel: And well, sort of.

Griffin: Well no.

Rachel: [chuckles] Nothing.

Griffin: He is inexhaustible.

Rachel: Nothing does.

Griffin: Nothing does.

Rachel: [chuckles] So.

Griffin: We have to basically have an amateur rave in our living room pretty much every night—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: — to get this kid to go to bed. As we've talked about on the show so many times before. I'm gonna say two things, one, *Love Village* season two?

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Coming to Netflix this Friday? Are you sure?

Rachel: I imagine a lot of our listeners didn't get pushed this...

Griffin: This trailer.

Rachel: This announcement, yeah, but we opened up our Netflix, and right away [chuckles] Netflix was so excited to tell us. [laughs]

Griffin: “Hey, you dirty dogs. Time to return.” *Love Village* is the Japanese dating show where a bunch of like middle to older aged.

Rachel: They’re like 30s to 60s, I wanna say.

Griffin: Which is a wild fucking range, live together in a ramshackle house that they fix up.

Rachel: They say like, “Looking to find the last love of their life.”

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Which at— as a woman who is now in her 40s, I feel— [chuckles] felt a little hostile.

Griffin: A little bit.

Rachel: Towards the idea that like, “This is it for you. If not now, when?” [chuckles]

Griffin: We talked about this show on this show before. It’s the one with the bell, you ring the bell when you’re ready to make your proclamation of love when you leave the house.

Rachel: Yeah, when you wanna confess.

Griffin: Fucking great.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Also, Soccer Mommy’s got a new album out today, and— The day I’m— we’re recording this. And I’ve been listening to singles off of it, and they’re all so strong, really looking forward to it.

This morning I saw in the *Wonderful!* Facebook group a music video of a song off the album called “Abigail,” which is a song about the character Abigail from *Stardew Valley*. And the music video, released by Soccer Mommy, is basically a machinima of *Stardew Valley*, and—

Rachel: Which one is Abigail?

Griffin: She is the purple haired girl, who is the shopkeeper's daughter. She is sort of goth, a little goth around the edges, and like to, you know, explore in the mines and play that one video game over and over again.

Rachel: Ohhh, yeah okay.

Griffin: Crazy. Just crazy how much my worlds collide.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It was— It truly took my breath away.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I listened to some of it this morning, and it's a very, very good album, I'm very glad that there's new Soccer Mommy out there. I go first this week.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: My extremely not scary topic is central heating. And air conditioning. But I wanna focus mostly on central heating.

Rachel: [in a spooky tone] Oooo!

Griffin: [in a spooky tone] Oooo! [normal] Sometimes the— when the furnace come on, it make a scary noise. Clank. What's that? Comfort.

Rachel: What's that mysterious smell?

Griffin: When the temperature— We're in the middle of a sort of weird—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: — fifth summer spike here in DC, it's finally starting to drop back down, but it's started to get colder a couple of weeks ago and we came to alarming realization that our heater just like wasn't working. Luckily our HVAC guy, who I think I talked about last week.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Was able to get up here, fix it real quick, but it was enough to remind me of how grateful I feel to have a functioning central air system, because that has not always been true for me in my life.

The house I grew up in, I may be misremembering but I'm pretty sure didn't have central air. And if it did, it wasn't largely— it was just ineffective, because every room also had an air conditioner.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Like air conditioner, window unit, and every room like we had these—

Rachel: I think—

Griffin: — space heaters in the wintertime.

Rachel: I don't know if this is true or not, but I have a similar memory in that like everybody's first floor had central air, and then every other part of the house was just like the Wild West. [laughs]

Griffin: [chuckles] Maybe that's what it was, yeah, 'cause we had a thermostat, right? But I don't know that it really did much of anything.

Rachel: I think that's why with a larger houses now, they have multiple HVAC units.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: 'Cause I think everybody had the realization of like, "Wait, this isn't working for the whole house."

Griffin: Right, but I remember the first time I lived in a place where just like you would set the thermostat and that is the temperature it would be.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: And like being like fucking blown away by this. When I say central heating I'm talking about any system where there's just one source of heat, a furnace or a boiler in most cases, which gets pumped by forced air through, you know, ductwork throughout a building to keep the whole building a relatively similar temperature throughout.

And you might think that that is a somewhat like modern innovation, or like a byproduct of like the Industrial Revolution, but actually like the core concepts behind central heating date all the way back to like antiquity.

Rachel: Huh.

Griffin: I— I looked it up, in North Korea there was this Neolithic age archeological site, dated back to like 5000BC, and it had what's called an ondol system.

And in this system, they would basically have a big sort of like sunken spot in the home where they would have this big wood fueled fire. It would just burn in this little like trench, and it would usually kind of like double as like a cooking fire.

But then coming off of that trench, there was a flue that would run basically like horizontal to the flame. And so all of the heat and all of the smoke would get channeled sort of horizontally across this flue, and then above that flue would be like a stone or clay floor.

Rachel: Ohhh.

Griffin: That would be heated by the smoke, and at the far end of this system there was a vertical chimney that would sort of keep airflow going and keep smoke out of the house. This was 7000 years ago that basically someone figured out like, "Yeah, we could have just the one fire, and then like warm up our whole house with it."

In Ancient Rome, they had a similar system called "hypocausts," which were basically like the same idea, flues beneath the floor heated by a furnace, but they also included pipes connected to those flues called "caliducts," that ran into the walls and would dispense the heat sort of more like evenly across a larger space.

And this— it wasn't used like everywhere, but like in the ruins of these giant temples, you can see like these very clear remnants of these hypocausts and caliducts. Such cool fucking words.

Rachel: [chuckles] Yeah.

Griffin: Such incredible words they had back then. From that sort of innovation, builders across the Arabian Peninsula went to kind of like modify that design to do more like pipes beneath the ground that would be a little bit more efficient than just having a huge hollow chamber under your house. But when Ancient Rome collapsed, folks across like Europe basically forgot about this idea.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: For like a millennium. Like no-one got into central heating, basically everyone kind of was like, "Well, we'll just— You know fires, just one fire in one room of the house is probably okay for us."

So just like an interesting sort of like technological innovation that disappeared when this civilization collapsed. And it wasn't until like the 13th century that central air started to become a somewhat common thing throughout larger buildings.

It especially got picked up in monasteries across Northern Europe, where it would get so cold, and you would have a bunch of robed dudes, you know, all cloistered up.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: They sort of revived these primitive central air designs out of necessity to like efficiently heat their enormous parishes and, you know, what have you.

And then by the 19th century, you know, like technology did start to advance and you had iteration on central heating that went sort of lightning quick as like steam power and electricity became—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: — things that existed. Which like you know, and then you can probably imagine kind of the... the chain of events that brings us to like the modern systems that we have today. I thought that was very interesting, I never— I just assumed like everyone was basically like rockin' like a big fire.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: In one room of their house, and then if you got cold, you just put a bunch of blankets on.

Rachel: Well, and also like people used to live in such closer quarters back then.

Griffin: Mm.

Rachel: You know, like you lived with your whole extended family, so I always imagined that like body heat was doing a lot more. [chuckles]

Griffin: Just a lot of cuddling with the fam.

Rachel: Just like *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, like bed full of people, you know?

Griffin: Yeah, they don't talk about it, they didn't have central air in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Those grandparents would've died without that bed.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Everyone wants to get on them, say they're so lazy. They would've died because of coldness.

Rachel: Yeah. When his grandpa like hops out of bed, it's like, "Hey, be careful, man."

Griffin: "Be careful, dude." I always get nervous about that scene.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: When Willy Wonka walks out and he like has his cane, and he like does the little— he like looks like he's gonna fall down, but then he rolls and hops up, I always wish it would cut back to Grandpa Joe, who would be like, "Alright man."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Like, "Cool dude. Great. Great you're so spry, Gene."

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: So obviously heating systems for residential and commercial buildings do have a pretty sizable environmental impact. In 2019, they accounted for 12% of global CO2 emissions.

That includes like electric systems that pull from, you know, fossil fuel powered power plants, which are— You know, you lose a lot of energy and heat just from, you know, electricity coming from those places into your house, and then turning into heat.

But there are, you know, there are innovations, there are folks working on improving that in the form of like— I was reading about geothermal heating pumps, which go like into the ground to pump heat and like hot water—

Rachel: Ohhhhh.

Griffin: — up from the ground, which has a, you know, a much more minimal kind of like—

Rachel: Huh.

Griffin: — requirement, power requirement. And is apparently a very efficient system. Obviously doesn't work everywhere, you kind of have to be in a place that has a— a vent or whatever, like has hot land beneath you.

Rachel: [chuckles] Yeah.

Griffin: But I thought that was really cool. And then there's also like just sort of like improving efficiency and reducing like the loss of heat and power within a system. And also just like advancing sustainable energy in all of its forms to power all of our heating systems, like there are new things that are being done.

And then there's also like personal steps that you can take to like improve your efficiency and therefore reducing your environmental impact, like you know, better insulating your home.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: To like keep heat trapped a little bit better.

Rachel: Those new windows.

Griffin: Those new windows, yeah absolutely. Just something as simple as like maintaining your HVAC system, keeping it running efficiently so it's not like chugging through power and wasting power and heat. There's also like, you know, most modern like smart thermostats.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Allow you to have a lot more granular control over like when the system runs to keep it out of certain temperature, which all, you know, has— have— There are ways to kind of like make yourself not feel so shitty.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: For like having this— this one convenience. But I don't know, we're in the midst of a warm spike here in DC, but I know that winter is coming, to quote the *Game of Thrones* people. And—

Rachel: The— Now what is that?

Griffin: So in *Game of Thrones*.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: They had this big thing where it was gonna get very cold.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: And they were all like really, really scared of it.

Rachel: They were all meteorologists.

Griffin: They all wore— Well they had meteorologists, they called them wizards, but like everyone in King's Landing wore shorts and T-shirts. And it's all they had. And so they were afraid if winter came, they would all die from it. And so they would all be like, "Winter's coming."

Rachel: There was this big campaign.

Griffin: Yeah. To actually like destroy the world with carbon emissions, 'cause then it would get a little bit hotter, and be like, "Let's— Try me now, winter. Let's see what you got." Anyway, I feel ready for the wintertime. Also because we still have all of our old snow shit that we bought last year, which I'm also very excited for.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Now we got this nice heating system. And air conditioning too. But it's, you know, it's not air conditioning weather right now. Is it? Can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Thank you.

[*Home Improvement* transition music plays]

[ad break]

Griffin: Whatcha got cookin'?

Rachel: I am going to take you with me to the Poetry Corner.

Griffin: Oh thank god! Thank god.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: [improvises a jazzy intro] [in a gruff voice] "Yeah."

Rachel: [giggles] The Poetry Dragon.

Griffin: [in a gruff voice] The Poetry Garden.

Rachel: Now a guardian of poetry.

Griffin: [in a gruff voice] "Bring me an offering."

Rachel: [chuckles] I like that.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I like that.

Griffin: If it's a good poem, it gives you a scale.

Rachel: Let's—

Griffin: The scale gives you a wish. One dragon scale equals one wish, but it's gotta be a really good poem.

Rachel: Whoa.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: So now when I finish my segment.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: You— Are— Am I gonna— Are you...?

Griffin: No, I'm not gonna do anything.

Rachel: But the dragon—

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Okay. [chuckles]

Griffin: [wheezes] And if he's— He's not my— Like he actually also went to poetry school, like you did.

Rachel: [chuckles] Yeah, uh-huh.

Griffin: And so he like knows his shit.

Rachel: Wait, is this Jeff?

Griffin: This is Jeff the Dragon from Poetry School.

Rachel: Oh my god.

Griffin: Yeah, yeah yeah yeah.

Rachel: He was a year behind me, but I was real impressed with where he was goin'.

Griffin: Yeah, he's got a good head on his sh— on— well not shoulders, but like long, scaly neck.

Rachel: Mm.

Griffin: Anyway.

Rachel: I'm really caught up in this lore right now.

Griffin: Yeah, we tend to do that here.

Rachel: [chuckles] The poet I wanted to talk about this week is Warsan Shire. She is a poet that was born to Somali parents in Kenya, and grew up in London. And she is a poet that I think a lot of people know but maybe don't realize they know.

Griffin: Oh, interesting.

Rachel: At least that was what happened to me.

Griffin: 'Cause I— Can I just say? I really feel like I don't know who this is.

Rachel: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Griffin: I deeply, hugely feel like I don't know who this person is.

Rachel: So, the reason a lot of people may know her is Beyonce's visual album *Lemonade*.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: So there— if— For those of you that are a little bit familiar, like myself, they're—

Griffin: Not a true— Not a drone of the Bey-hive.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: [chuckles] No, on the outskirts I would say of the Beyhive.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Rachel: I have a great respect for it, haven't really gotten my—

Griffin: You're not a soldier bee.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Is what you're saying.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: There are some spoken word elements in which Beyoncé recites poetry, and that is the poetry of Warsan Shire.

Griffin: That's so interesting.

Rachel: Yeah. And this— what— What is extra crazy about this is that she did not have a full-length book of poetry available in the US until 2022.

Griffin: Well after *Lemonade*.

Rachel: And— Yeah, and Beyoncé's *Lemonade* was in 2016.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: She had published what— that Brits call "pamphlets," but in the US we call "chapbooks," which are these like 25 page like staple-bound poetry collections, that a lot of poets will put out before they have their full— like their first full-length book.

Griffin: Like— This is like a—

Rachel: It looks kinda like a zine.

Griffin: — a zine, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I was gonna say.

Rachel: It looks kinda like a zine, it's pretty common though for poets because, you know, it's almost like a standup comedian in that when you've got like a good 15 minutes and you're trying to like spread the visibility, like you need something. To like showcase.

Griffin: That's so— I— Like can we talk about this for a second?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: 'Cause I'm very interested in it, like the idea that poetry is a form necessitating this particular medium is something that I find fascinating that it's not like— It's easier to have an impact with something tangible like that than just like having a poem that you put on the internet.

Like I think that there's some— as somebody who doesn't know fucking anything about this whole world, like I find that interesting that like if you see a poem online, you— it is harder to ingest it, I guess, thoughtfully—

Rachel: Well.

Griffin: — than having this little pamphlet.

Rachel: And the nature of it being a poet too is that often you are getting one or two poems published in a literary magazine.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: You know, or maybe a print publication. You know, but the— it's scattered all over the place.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: You know, and a chapbook is a way to say kind of "This is what I'm offering," and potentially get like a bigger book deal.

Griffin: That's very cool.

Rachel: From it. But anyway, Beyoncé. So she has also contributed poetry to the Disney *Black is King* film.

Griffin: Okay. Yeah.

Rachel: And what happened, apparently, is that she was just approached. Her— Beyoncé's company reached out to her and they met in California to listen to some of the early recordings for *Lemonade*.

Griffin: That must be the wildest cold call.

Rachel: Yeah. Yeah.

Griffin: To see on your caller ID. I mean it probably doesn't say like, "Beyoncé's people are calling."

Rachel: She was— I mean she was kind of a big deal in London.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: Already at that point. But obviously this was totally unexpected.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: Yeah, so her first like chapbook came out in 2011, and then yeah, and then five years later, Beyoncé's like, "Hey, will you work with me on this?" [chuckles]

Griffin: That's so cool. Why is it called a chat book?

Rachel: A li— It's like I mentioned, it's not a full-length book. Like a poetry book is usually like, I don't know, 60, 70 pages at least.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: A chapbook is like 25.

Griffin: Why is it called a chat book though?

Rachel: Chap.

Griffin: Chap book?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Oh, I thought you were saying "chat book."

Rachel: Yeah, so this is interesting, I didn't actually know like the etymology of this. So it is typically a inexpensive book or booklet date—and it's got a history dating back to 16th century Europe.

Griffin: I'm assuming it's short for "chapter?" Like it's—

Rachel: So chapbooks were so called because they were sold by peddlers known as "chapmen."

Griffin: Okay, I was—

Rachel: “Chap” comes from the old English for “trade,” so a chapman was literally a dealer who sold books. Chapmen would carry boxes containing the conveniently sized editions either in town or on street corners, or travelling through the countryside.

Griffin: I— You learn somethin’ every day on this fucking podcast, man.

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: That’s so interesting.

Rachel: Yeah. So anyone, she played her a few songs and then kind of sent her away with the album.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And then kind of told her to write to it.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Which was not unusual for this poet because she was already somebody who wrote to music, just in her practice.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And so she was kind of like, “Okay, I can probably do this.” And I think, you know, it was super nerve-wracking for her, but Beyonce was always just super supportive, and they collaborated very successfully.

Griffin: I love that.

Rachel: So I wanted to read a poem of hers that was actually published in *Poetry Magazine* in 2014.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: It is—

Griffin: So you’re not going to read one of the Beyoncé poems.

Rachel: No.

Griffin: 'Cause it actually— Our lawyer is sitting in the room with us.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And he is sweating profusely right now.

Rachel: No. I am reading a poem called *Backwards*.

*"The poem can start with him walking backwards into a room.
He takes off his jacket and sits down for the rest of his life;
that's how we bring Dad back.
I can make the blood run back up my nose, ants rushing into a hole.
We grow into smaller bodies, my breasts disappear,
your cheeks soften, teeth sink back into gums.
I can make us loved, just say the word.
Give them stumps for hands if even once they touched us without
consent,
I can write the poem and make it disappear.
Step-Dad spits liquor back into glass,
Mum's body rolls back up the stairs, the bone pops back into place,
maybe she keeps the baby.
Maybe we're okay kid?
I'll rewrite this whole life and this time there'll be so much love,
you won't be able to see beyond it.*

*You won't be able to see beyond it,
I'll rewrite this whole life and this time there'll be so much love.
Maybe we're okay kid,
maybe she keeps the baby.
Mum's body rolls back up the stairs, the bone pops back into place,
Step-Dad spits liquor back into glass.
I can write the poem and make it disappear,
give them stumps for hands if even once they touched us without
consent,
I can make us loved, just say the word.
Your cheeks soften, teeth sink back into gums
we grow into smaller bodies, my breasts disappear.
I can make the blood run back up my nose, ants rushing into a hole,
that's how we bring Dad back.
He takes off his jacket and sits down for the rest of his life.*

The poem can start with him walking backwards into a room."

Griffin: [exhales heavily] Fuck, man.

Rachel: Isn't that amazing?

Griffin: Once... Yeah. Yeah.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Man, I feel like I need a minute to like sit.

Rachel: Yeah. It's helpful if you're looking at it on the page.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I had thought about when I knew I was gonna read it is like, "I don't know if people will get the pivot," you know? Like where—

Griffin: I thought I was— I thought you were glitching out for a second.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And then once I kind of realized like what was going on, I was sort of... I don't know, I was ensorcelled, but I kind of already was just from the obviously very difficult [chuckles] challenging sort of subject matter.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But Jesus Christ, what a like... remarkable way of putting that on a page.

Rachel: Yeah. Yeah. It's—

Griffin: You bring poems to this show sometimes... I think the— First of all, I think that this is a dragon scale poem, so congratulations.

Rachel: [laughs] That was to be concerned. "What's the dragon gonna say?" [laughs]

Griffin: Sometimes you bring poems to this show that make me wish I knew more about poetry. 'Cause like sometimes—

Rachel: That's the whole point, dude.

Griffin: Yeah, and sometimes I just sit back and appreciate like, "That was a really good poem," and then sometimes it feels like a... I don't know, there's something to unlock there.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And this feels like one. That was really, really, really somethin' spectacular.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. Yeah she— I mean a lot of her poetry is difficult. She grew up, you know, with kind of a really difficult kind of refugee experience, and had a lot to kind of go through, kind of feeling... you know, other in a lot of spaces.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Like growing up in London, and now, you know, living in Los Angeles. And a lot of what she writes about is that experience, of these people either from her own life or from other lives that are really working through challenges. She talks a lot about how poetry for her is kind of sorting through a lot of anger that she had.

And she's been always kind of private. After the, you know, *Lemonade* phenomenon of, you know, 2016, she kind of disappeared. And a lot of people were really surprised by that, 'cause she just had this huge exposure.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: And was being approached about all of these opportunities and she just kind of stepped back.

And so I read this 2022 interview in *Vogue* where she said, "Long before the *Lemonade* project, I had begun to feel really terrified about posting anything online. It had gone from my having a few hundred followers on Tumblr to suddenly having thousands.

After a while I just felt like, 'Who am I? What am I doing here? Is there any intention behind what I'm posting? I'm a writer, yes, but why do I have to share my every other thought with the internet?'

So I thought about the authors that I truly respected and how I discovered them. I mean, I found Toni Morrison in a library and she changed my life forever. She never had to post a selfie to remind me that she existed." [chuckles]

Griffin: Wow.

Rachel: "In our generation, we're constantly told that we've got to have a social media presence, and a lot of it is bullshit. Just because you have a platform doesn't mean you have anything important to say. So I just stepped away until I had something worth posting about again, and hopefully other people will realize it's okay to do the same."

Griffin: [clicks] First time snaps in the Poetry Corner, this is a groundbreaking—

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: — installment.

Rachel: Yeah, she is... You know, she's still a very, very young poet, she's... 30— She's born in 1988, so she's 36?

Griffin: Six, yeah.

Rachel: She was the first young Poet Laureate for London in 2014. I think it was just people started reading her work and realized how important and... how much promise was behind it. And she just started getting a lot of attention really early.

Griffin: Sure. And then the Beyoncé thing, probably. [chuckles]

Rachel: Yeah. Yeah.

Griffin: Escalate that somewhat.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: So the book that I mentioned that came out in 2022 is called *Bless the Daughter Raised By a Voice In Her Head*. It was published by Penguin Random House in 2022.

You can find it anywhere, and I would— I would really recommend it. It's— She's got such a like— such a strength and like vulnerability at the same time. And her— All of her poems are just really impactful.

Griffin: Cool.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I feel like the energy in the— like the air in the room shifted after you read that poem. Not in like an unpleasant way, but in like a, I don't know. It really—

Rachel: Doesn't— I mean can't you see? Like let's say I'm Beyonce.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Like and I'm putting together this visual album unlike anything else anyone has ever seen before.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: And I think "I want some poetry."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Then she's like the right pick.

Griffin: Yeah, obviously. Like yeah, clearly.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Hey, you wanna know what our friends at home are talking about?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Marin says, "I'm a teacher who shares a classroom. I'm also pregnant with twins. When my principals realized there was nowhere to rest between classes, they took an hour to move furniture and build me a nap pod. Having bosses who care is the best small wonder right now."

That is nice. I'm wondering if it's like an official nap pod. Like I feel like this is a thing in some like, I don't know, more modern offices.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Or if it's just— by the— by— Saying they "moved furniture" makes me think that they like put four folding chairs together.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And hung a little sign on it that just said, "Marin's Nap Pod."

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: I hope it's more sort of comfortable, the nap pod.

Rachel: I have to imagine if it was four chairs, she wouldn't write in.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Kevin says, "My small wonder is Craig Berube. I know it's still very early in the season, but as a Leafs fan who has been subjected to some rough seasons, I lost watching them play now with him as the coach." Listen.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Listen. It's Friday when we're recording this, last night we did watch the Blues just sort of stomp the Leafs.

Rachel: Stomp. Yeah, there was stomping.

Griffin: But it's really good to see Craig Berube.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It's really— I've missed his disappointed facial expressions.

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: Drew Bannister's facial expressions are fine.

Rachel: They—

Griffin: But they don't look like they're actively— like he's actively like trying to scare the shit out of me.

Rachel: They cut to Drew Bannister at one point during the game, and the Blues were winning.

Griffin: Five one, yeah.

Rachel: And he was smiling.

Griffin: That was wild.

Rachel: Behind the bench.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And I don't know that I'd ever seen a hockey coach smile.
[chuckles]

Griffin: Only when Darren Pang interviewed Craig Berube every game.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: He— Craig Berube would look at him at the end of every interview and be like, "No problem, Panger."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: “Eh.” But yeah.

Rachel: It was. It was nice to see Berube again, very intense, scary man, but just a tenacity.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Just total respect for him.

Griffin: I mean the Leafs also, I don’t know, they played very greasy and rough—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: — in a way that I have become accustomed to seeing Craig Berube coach, and... yeah, it was nice.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It’s fun to know some things about a sport.

Rachel: [laughs] I know! I know, and all we have is each other, really.

Griffin: All we have is each other and this one thing. I know the names of two hockey coaches, Drew Bannister and Craig Berube. [chuckles] Both were Blues coaches, one currently is.

Anyway, thank you so much for listening. Thank you to bo en and Augustus for the use of our theme song “Money Won’t Pay,” you can find a link to that in the episode description. I feel like we haven’t talked much about that song in a while, and if you— I still— Like it still shows up in my like Spotify liked songs playlist, and I still fucking—

Rachel: It’s a bop, man.

Griffin: — bop to it every time.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: There's so much in that song that is not in our theme song version of it, it really goes places, and I adore it. I'm so glad it's— we were given permission to use it.

Thanks to MaximumFun too, of course, for havin' us on the network. Go to maximumfun.org, check out all the great shows they have over there. And we got some shows, one last leg of live shows.

In Indianapolis we're gonna be doing *TAZ* and *MBMBaM*, and in Milwaukee we're gonna be doing *MBMBaM* first week of November. I think. First week of November. It starts on the fifth, which I remember because it's—

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: [chuckles] It is Election Night. If you are gonna come to that show, you should vote ahead of time.

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: Don't skip voting to come to our fucking show, I will never, ever forgive you.

Rachel: Or sneak out halfway through.

Griffin: Or sneak out.

Rachel: Uh-oh.

Griffin: I would rather you sneak out halfway through—

Rachel: I guess so.

Griffin: — to go and vote. It is gonna be the wildest like *MBMBaM* live show energy I can imagine, but we'll get through it.

Rachel: Are you gonna get Carnacky to like—?

Griffin: We're not gonna get fucking anybody.

Rachel: Are you gonna get somebody with a map to—

Griffin: We're not gonna get a map or nothin'.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: We're gonna have some fun on a stage, and then we're gonna go home and it— whatever happens happens. But yeah, all— Go vote, yeah? Hey, go vote, yeah. Lot of places are doing it early.

Rachel: Lot of places you can do it now.

Griffin: You can do it in the mail. Just do it. Thank you. Oh and bit.ly/mcelroytours is the link you can go to get tickets for that. We got merch over at mcelroymerch.com. That's it.

Rachel: And thanks for the new appearance by the poetry dragon.

Griffin: Yeeeeeah.

Rachel: I'm really excited about that now.

Griffin: Yeah, he— Bad news, he did burn down your office.

Rachel: Oh.

Griffin: He burned it up really good. When you heard him talking earlier, fire comes out every time that happens.

Rachel: Oh...

Griffin: And that was in your office.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: He put it out.

Rachel: [chuckles] So courteous.

Griffin: He is nice, and you do have the dragon scale, so you could wish for a new office, or a better office. So.

Rachel: What if I want this one?

[theme music fades in]

Griffin: You could wish for that. Are you gonna do that?

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Oh, okay. Thank you. All my shit's in here, so.

Rachel: [chuckles] Yeah.

Griffin: Bye, everybody.

[outro theme music plays]

[ukulele chord]

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