

## Wonderful! 353: We Might Get a BAFTA

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[theme music plays]

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

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

**Rachel:** And this is Wonderful!

**Griffin:** Welcome to Wonderful, a show we talk about things we like that's good and into! And it's beginning to feel a lot like... holidays. Did you see what I did there?

**Rachel:** Yeah?

**Griffin:** I'm learning.

**Rachel:** The woke police got you and now you can't say Christmas anymore?

**Griffin:** I've been in woke jail for over a decade now, and it's finally sinking in that it's holidays.

**Rachel:** Can I tell you, I have been trying to put together a holiday card.

**Griffin:** Okay, cool?

**Rachel:** Uh, I've been doing it for the past few years. Feel pretty proud that I'm continuing to do it.

**Griffin:** You're very good.

**Rachel:** I've spent a lot of time looking at these templates that these websites offer, and all of 'em that are not explicitly Christmas feel so transparently, like, not saying Christmas that I, like, can't bring myself.

**Griffin:** That's interesting.

**Rachel:** Like, "Merry Everything!" And I'm like, this—I—this feels bad!

**Griffin:** Right. The sentiment—

**Rachel:** I don't like saying, like—like, "Best holidays to you!" But then the, like, graphics are all, like, holly leaves and snowmen? [laughs]

**Griffin:** So the sentiment is obviously good. The sentiment of "There's more than just Christmas" is good. You're saying it's gone all the way around the bend where it's like, did you—unironically, "Did you notice how I didn't say Merry Chris—"

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Yeah, sure.

**Rachel:** Like, it's very intentionally not saying Merry Christmas, which I appreciate. But it's also like, "Fa la la," and there's, like, a present under a tree.

**Griffin:** [laughs loudly] Yeah, sure.

**Rachel:** I'm like, okay? And then, yeah. So—

**Griffin:** Jesus is in the corner just winking. Like, "You know. You get it."

**Rachel:** "The main one, though. Right?"

**Griffin:** "The main big one!"

**Rachel:** Uh, yeah. So I haven't pulled the trigger on it. I mean, it's still early enough I don't feel bad. These postcards go out pretty quick when you use one of these websites. But man, it's really stumped me.

**Griffin:** I got to explain to Gus what Hanukkah is, a holiday he has celebrated twice before? Three times?

**Rachel:** Yeah, but I mean, he's three and a half, so.

**Griffin:** He's three and a half, so he doesn't quite get the—I mean, he—in our defense, he probably doesn't know much about most holidays, or anything.

**Rachel:** Yeah, no. He keeps being confused that it's not Christmas.

**Griffin:** Or his birthday.

**Rachel:** Or his birthday.

**Griffin:** So angry when someone else had a birthday that wasn't him.

**Rachel:** He thinks that his birthday should be Henry's birthday, and that he should be five years old. [laughs quietly]

**Griffin:** He always lies about his age, like he's trying to get cast in something.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** "I can play five."

**Rachel:** Or like, compete in an athletic event for which he would not otherwise be eligible.

**Griffin:** I'm feeling it—I feel like the, um—

**Rachel:** What did you say about Hanukkah, by the way?

**Griffin:** You know, the whole deal. Uh...

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** I, you know, the Maccabees and, like, the whole deal.

**Rachel:** Oh really? You got into that?

**Griffin:** No, I didn't quite get into the Maccabees with our three-year-old.

**Rachel:** I was gonna say, usually I'm just like, "Oh, it's a miracle, and there's a bunch of nights, and you light candles."

**Griffin:** Uh, that's—I gave him the sort of brass tacks version.

**Rachel:** That's honestly about my level of understanding. [laughs]

**Griffin:** Oh, okay. Interesting! Uh, yeah. My spirit—I feel like the world's trying to keep me from having it. But I do feel—I do feel—I honestly think it's putting together the Candlenights stuff, like, really gets my noodle goin', my holiday noodle.

**Rachel:** That's true, but you do it early, and then you have this kind of...

**Griffin:** Burnout.

**Rachel:** Limbo.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Also. Where it's like, I started thinking about this in November. And now...

**Griffin:** I know. It's still gonna be—December 14th, 9 PM, get your tickets now. [Bit.ly/candlenightstickets2024](https://bit.ly/candlenightstickets2024).

**Rachel:** I think you're gonna like what you see.

**Griffin:** You're gonna like what you see from the Wonderful, uh, representatives.

**Rachel:** Griffin and I collabed in a way we never have before.

**Griffin:** We collabed... it's huge, gang. It's the hardest we've ever worked on anything.

**Rachel:** We might get a deal out of this, and...

**Griffin:** We might get a BAFTA out of this!

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Um, do you have any small wonders?

**Rachel:** You know what? I'm gonna say your hair.

**Griffin:** Oh, wow. That means a lot to me, today of all days.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Um, Griffin has been trying some new approaches to hair.

**Griffin:** True.

**Rachel:** I think he always kind of put it on the back burner. But—

**Griffin:** That's an interesting way of thinking about one's hair.

**Rachel:** Well, I just feel like—

**Griffin:** Of like, I can't worry about you, hair.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Kind of, right?

**Griffin:** Yeah, sure.

**Rachel:** Like, you would wait till the last minute to get a haircut. You would see whoever was available. You would just buy the same product—

**Griffin:** That's not true. Shout outs to my, uh—

**Rachel:** Oh, your new—

**Griffin:** Marly—no. I mean my old—

**Rachel:** Oh, well, Austin, yeah.

**Griffin:** —my old hairstylist back in Austin, who I saw for years and years.

**Rachel:** Although I will say, I like your hair better now.

**Griffin:** Well, that's not her fault as much as it's I'm trying some new stuff out.

**Rachel:** He's got some new products.

**Griffin:** True.

**Rachel:** And it's more shapely. It's softer.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Um...

**Griffin:** I mean, it's that—I use that Moroccan oil. I get deep down in there. I do have some pretty severe dandruff right now, but that is not... the argan oil's fault. That's nature, and genetics, and climate. And so I did go to the dermatologist today to get some special shampoo for my hair. And it's gonna—I'll be honest, baby. It's gonna compromise—

**Rachel:** Oh no!

**Griffin:** —it's gonna compromise my output somewhat.

**Rachel:** Did you talk to him?

**Griffin:** I did. I stressed—

**Rachel:** Like, "Hey, I just got a good thing going."

**Griffin:** And he gets it. He is a beautiful man. He understands.

**Rachel:** [through laughter] He is a very beautiful man.

**Griffin:** He gets the importance of it. But it shouldn't disrupt the flow for too long.

**Rachel:** Okay.

**Griffin:** I wanna have it shining and gleaming for you on our anniversary, um, coming up real soon.

**Rachel:** Really? It's gonna happen that quick?

**Griffin:** I hope so.

**Rachel:** You just get in and out that—like, a couple days and then bam?

**Griffin:** A couple days. It's special hair medicine. I don't know, man! I'm gonna say, um... hmm. I just finished another big Lego build that I was pretty proud of.

**Rachel:** Yeah, where is it?

**Griffin:** It's behind me.

**Rachel:** Oh, it's behind you.

**Griffin:** It's the Great Deku Tree from Zelda. It's great. When you get the box there's two different versions, so you can make it look like the Great Deku Tree from Breath of the Wild, or you can do it like the Great Deku Tree from Ocarina of Time on the Nintendo 64.

**Rachel:** Whoa.

**Griffin:** It's like a choose your own adventure Lego set.

**Rachel:** So was the book, like, 100 pages?

**Griffin:** The book is... uh, the book is gigantic.

**Rachel:** Oh my god!

**Griffin:** It's a phone book.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Yeah. 'Cause, like, halfway through it's like, "And then do this if you wanna do the—" anyway. Uh, proud of it. Happy with it. I have now a few of these sets that I have put together. Oh, Rachel and I collabed on a set that Henry wanted for his birthday, and it is like a pixel art sprite of Super Mario World of Mario with a cape on, riding on Yoshi's back. And it moves! And there's, like, eight different parts of it that move. And it's so satisfying to put that shit all together.

What are you doing? Are you looking at a picture of how beautiful it is right now?

**Rachel:** No. That reminded me, um, there is a text chain between all of the ladies associated with Christmas that Carol started.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** And she was going through talking about the different things. And one of the things I put on there was that, um, piranha plant?

**Griffin:** Oh, sure.

**Rachel:** 'Cause I thought Henry would like that.

**Griffin:** Yeah, sure. Did Carol say "This looks too intense"? Or...

**Rachel:** No, she called it something funny and I wanted to look that up.

**Griffin:** Oh, I must know what Carol called it.



**Rachel:** Uh, she said "I got the Lego idea book and fly-eater Lego thing for Henry."

**Griffin:** Fly-eater Lego thing for the piranha plant. I do like that.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Um, I go first this week.

**Rachel:** Okay.

**Griffin:** Um... I'm gonna do a very special television program that has meant a lot to me as of very recently. You can count on them, they're the Numberblocks.

**Rachel:** Whoa! I would love to know more about the Numberblocks. I'm glad that you're talking about this.

**Griffin:** The Numberblocks—in our house more than ever, I am grateful for any television programming that does not feature toilet men, or like, beat boxing undead monsters.

**Rachel:** Yeah. Now we're past toilet men, which is great, but we're into Sprunki, which is...

**Griffin:** We're into Sprunki, which is horrible.

**Rachel:** As bad, if not worse.

**Griffin:** Way worse. Especially—like, Gus has been to school maybe three times in the last three weeks.

**Rachel:** Yeah. [sighs]

**Griffin:** Been home a lot. And, uh, I am so grateful for Numberblocks. I sing songs of great praise for Numberblocks for keeping us company during this trying time.

**Rachel:** And it's, like, pretty effective.

**Griffin:** It's wildly effective, and good at teaching numeracy in a way that I've never seen before.

**Rachel:** It seems like the kind of thing—it is so on the nose. Like, they are literally, like, blocks stacked in, like, a tens format, like [[Unix?]] cubes, if you remember that.

**Griffin:** Thank you for telling me the name of what those were.

**Rachel:** Yeah. They're, like, literally the shape of Unix cubes, and it matches the number that they are, and each number has its own color and character. And they're very literal of like, "We've got a three here, and he's gonna join with a two, and what's that gonna make?"

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** But for whatever reason, man, it works.

**Griffin:** It works. So Numberblocks is a British educational animated show about the Numberblocks, which are blocks... that represent different numbers. And every episode focuses either on a number, or as the series goes on, focuses on increasingly complex mathematical concepts? So season one, episode one is titled "One," and it's about the number one. That's where we start.

And then an episode in the most recent season is called "Now in 3d," and it explores the concept of, like, cubed numbers in 3d space.

**Rachel:** Whoa!

**Griffin:** It's the one where you get, like, a 9x9—er, 3x3x3, and a 2x2x2 is [unintelligible]—

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** It gets really, uh—I mean, it's designed for three-to-six-year-olds, so pretty complex for that age group. Um, and it really is brilliant how much—the great lengths this show goes to to characterize these numbers, right? Like, One is bold and independent, because they're one. And Three thinks it's, like, the most important magic number of all time, wears a little crown.

**Rachel:** [simultaneously] He's got a little crown.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And Seven is rainbow colored and very lucky, because it's seven. And Eight has tentacles, 'cause it's eight, like an octopus. Ten looks like a tall rocket or something. And then when you get numbers bigger than ten, it's just like, the big Ten stack with, like, the other Zero through Nine characters, like, attached, or I guess One through Nine characters. Although there is a Zero block too, which is just...

**Rachel:** There is a Zero block.

**Griffin:** ... a floating zero with no block whatsoever. And so there's episodes that kind of explore that concept. And, like, these shows are exploring, like, fairly basic mathematical concepts for us, right? Adults that know all this shit already. But man, it really—by taking Unix blocks, which was the way that, like, I feel like I really cracked what math and numbers were, and I think that's true for a lot of kids.

Unix blocks, if we're saying this thing—

**Rachel:** Cubes, Unix cubes is what they're called.

**Griffin:** Unix cubes. Is just like, you get little blue cubes, and those are ones. And so if you get seven of those, you have seven cubes, and you know that's seven. But then there's a—

**Rachel:** And you can, like, interlock them.

**Griffin:** You can interlock them to make, like, a stack, and that's 10. Or there can be, like, a square of them that's 100. And, like, being able to see and touch that stuff was how I figured out numbers. And, like, that's what Henry's doing now in second grade, as they get into, like, headier stuff.

**Rachel:** It's so smart. It's the kind of thing—like, if I was given a thing like—like, 13 plus, like, I don't know, 8. Like, all of a sudden I'm like, "Uh-oh. That's complicated for me to do in my head." Um, but—

**Griffin:** 13 plus 8 is complicated for you to do?

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** I know you were just trying to think of an example and you shot way, way low.

**Rachel:** Okay, I'll say, uh, 13 plus, uh, 48, let's say. That's a little more complicated, right?

**Griffin:** That is tough. That is tougher.

**Rachel:** But, like, thinking about it in terms of tens, and then what you have left over and how you add that in, like, so much easier. I wish that had been more part of it. 'Cause we were very much the "carry the one" kind of generation.

**Griffin:** Oh yeah. And like, more than any other subject I think math is the one that once you know it you really take for granted, like, how abstract a concept it is, and how hard it is for kids to really begin to grapple with. And so, these visual ways of representing it, these tangible ways of representing it are, like, the silver bullet.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** This show takes that concept and also makes each of the cubes a character. Right? And so you can start—so, man. That really is the secret sauce that kind of makes everything make sense.

**Rachel:** It's so, like, approachable.

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** It's, like, not as abstract. It's, like, friendly. It doesn't feel like this kind of scary, intimidating thing.

**Griffin:** No. Gus was home from school for a whole week with walking pneumonia, and we just watched Numberblocks, usually with him sitting on one of our laps, usually Rachel's lap.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** The whole time. And he was... measurably smarter!

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** At the end of the week! Like, he was doing sort of basic—we, like, would not be paying attention and it would be like, "[British accent] And then the Three block matches with the Four block—" and Gus would just be like, "[loudly] Seven."

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** We'd be like, "Holy shit!" Uh, like, it's—there's something happening that is really—it's kind of difficult to describe, but it is taking these mathematical principles, these educational principles that work, and enhancing them in a way that seems like bigger than an educational television show has done before. This is not supplemental in a way where it's like, "Yeah, and you feel good about having your kids watch it because it's kind of educational, too."

It's not supplemental. It is, like, transformational, in a way. I don't even know if that's a word. It's transformational in a way where it's like—transformative? That's probably the word that I'm—

**Rachel:** I think they're both words.

**Griffin:** Where it's like, this is a different way of teaching this subject, and it works remarkably well!

**Rachel:** Yeah. It's very smart. Because, I mean, for me and for a lot of people, I'm very visual. It is so much more helpful for me. Like, reading a word problem was challenging because I had to really, like, okay. Picture everything and slot it into its category, and try and understand what was being asked. But these little blocks stack on top of each other, and I'm like, oh, I can see what has happened. That that Four and Three have joined together, and now I understand what has happened [crosstalk].

**Griffin:** And it's also—it scales really well, too. There's an episode, a recent one about the Step Squad, which is, like, exploring triangular numbers, right? Like One plus Two plus Three plus Four plus Five. Where they basically, like, One through Ten ask, like, what—what are we all added up?

There's some sort of like Olympic event that it's tied to. I forget what the lore, what the fiction of the Numberblocks episode is. But then they start adding up, like, One and Two match together and make Three, and then Three hops on to make Six, and then Four hops on to make Ten. And they're like, "Okay. We have a Ten stack. Let's start a new stack!"

So Five gets in, and then Six gets in, which makes another Ten stack with One left over, so that One hops off to make a new Ten stack. And then, you know, Seven hops on, and—

**Rachel:** And there's songs, too.

**Griffin:** There's songs. The songs are absolute bangers.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Uh, and each episode, like, has its own song that kind of explores what that episode talks about. There's one called Peekaboo that really, really—" [singing] Peekaboo, I'm hiding behind you."

Uh, and that song is like, it's like, you know, two Twos can hide behind one Four. Uh, but a Five can't fit through the Four door. It's like comparisons. It's exploring the concept of comparisons through song and character. And it's so fucking brilliant. It's so, so smart. Uh, the show's made by Blue-Zoo Animation Studio, which is based in Essex, and they have won, like, a billion children's BAFTAs. Because they also created Letterblocks. And Letterblocks is sort of a similar concept where it's like blocks, but each one represents a letter, and they get together to make shapes.

It pales in comparison, I think, to what Numberblocks is capable of.

**Rachel:** Yeah, why is that, I wonder?

**Griffin:** Well, you've seen that before. You've seen, you know, anthropomorphized letters that can get together and make—

**Rachel:** [simultaneously] That's true. I guess so.

**Griffin:** You know, if you put these letters together and it makes a word. That makes sense, right? We've taught that. We've seen that taught before. But having a heist that Twelve goes on where, uh-oh, we have to walk across these three wires. That's okay, Twelve can split into, uh—into three groups of Four. But uh-oh! Now it has to walk across six wires. That's okay, 'cause Twelve can turn into six Twos to walk across six. It's, like, insane!

**Rachel:** That's an interesting point, because I think for me, like, math is so much easier to understand visually.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Where as crazy as language is, and how inconsistent it can be, like, sometimes you put a bunch of letters together and they say different things over—you know?

**Griffin:** Right, yeah.

**Rachel:** It's—visual doesn't always help. [laughs]

**Griffin:** No, yeah. The Letterblocks are doing their best.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** I think Numberblocks is just the—is incredible. I think it is, uh—I think it is so, so brilliant. And it is a testament to the quality of the show that, like, Gus wants to watch it. He does not feel like he is being tricked by it. Like, he enjoys the songs and the characters and the colorful animation and everything.

Um, I think it is a capital I Important television program. And I'm very, again, so glad for it, because—I don't know. At least the music is catchy enough that when we hear "[singing] Peekaboo, I'm hiding behind you," uh, that it, like, doesn't get on our nerves after a while when we're stuck at home with him for a week.

**Rachel:** Yeah. You have to be careful, though. There's a lot of fake Numberblocks products and accounts on YouTube.

**Griffin:** Oh, sure, sure.

**Rachel:** A lot of times people have recognized the popularity and they've created their own version of Numberblocks that is not the real one.

**Griffin:** Yeah, not— [crosstalk] There is a detailed Numberblocks wiki where, like, I found the lyrics to Peekaboo on it. But the wiki, like, goes through each mathematical problem that the song addresses and then, like, shows in parentheses, like, you know, comparison, or segmentation or whatever. So the wiki gets pretty detailed, too.

That's Numberblocks. Watch it! If you got kids, or if you just need to brush up on your basic mathematical understanding.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

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

**Rachel:** Yes.



**Griffin:** Thank you.

[ad break]

**Rachel:** Okay.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** My topic this week...

**Griffin:** Sure.

**Rachel:** ... is sister cities.

**Griffin:** Sister cities.

**Rachel:** What do you know about this?

**Griffin:** Uh... hmm. I feel like I... it's one of those pieces of, like, errata that I, like, looked up at some point. Like, why does that happen?

**Rachel:** Yeah, right?

**Griffin:** I think it was when Cincinnati is like—Cincinnati has a crazy sister city. I forget what it is. I—I'll—

**Rachel:** I can look it up for you in a second.

**Griffin:** Yeah, please. Uh, yeah. So I guess nothing.

**Rachel:** [laughs] So what I am talking about specifically are the international version, where you have a different city in a different country that is your sister city. I will say... [laughs] one of the delightful things that I found when I was researching this is that in Europe they call them town twins.

**Griffin:** That's way better.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Um, so the first, uh, sister city in the US was Toledo, Ohio in 1931, entered into a partnership with Toledo, Spain.

**Griffin:** Okay! So that makes a lot of sense.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Yeah. Um, it started really as a, uh, a cultural exchange. President Eisenhower hoped that future world conflicts would decrease through the implementation of sister cities. It was this idea that people would learn more about other communities, they enter into student exchanges, business partnerships, global cultural exchanges across the world. So this idea—and especially in that time period, you know, where it was difficult to really learn about other places.

**Griffin:** Yeah, of course!

**Rachel:** This was kind of a tremendous opportunity. There are a huge number. Now, here's what I will say about sister cities. I love the concept. I think it's really fascinating.

**Griffin:** Cincinnati has nine sister cities.

**Rachel:** Oh, you cheated!

**Griffin:** Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't realize you were gonna quiz me on it. I should've known.

**Rachel:** Yeah, I wasn't necessarily gonna quiz you. I just—I was going to detail you with all of the surprising things. So that's what I was gonna say. Like, I love the concept of it. I think it was tremendously useful and relevant.

Now, I couldn't tell you—like, I was surprised by every single one of them.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Like, when I looked at the cities I was familiar with I was like, okay. I don't remember that. So, you know, for example I grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, as everyone who listens to this podcast knows. Uh, and if you go to

the Wikipedia you can see it organized by state. And so when I looked at St. Louis I was like, I wonder if any of these will seem familiar to me.

There are a lot, by the way. At least there are in St. Louis. There's, uh, Bologna in Italy. There's a city in Indonesia.

**Griffin:** Pronounced Baloney, actually.

**Rachel:** Hmm, that's—

**Griffin:** In the proper Italian.

**Rachel:** Hmm, thank you, thank you. Uh, city in Ireland, in France, in Russia, in Mexico, in Japan. It's kind of amazing. Now, part of the reason I brought this up is I was curious, like, maybe this is more prevalent, um, in other places. So I was gonna ask you about, uh, in West Virginia if any of this seemed familiar to you. Because I know West Virginia for example has a lot of festivals.

**Griffin:** True!

**Rachel:** Uh, so I thought, oh, well maybe he would be familiar with his sister cities because there would be a festival dedicated to that city. So... I'm not seeing any for Huntington. [laughs]

**Griffin:** I was just about to say, I don't think Huntington has one. I think it should be—I think the joke I made on the MBMBaM TV show about Huntington's sister city is the moon, I think should be official.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** I think we should find a way to ratify that.

**Rachel:** Um, yeah. So there is a city, Charleston's sister city is in Slovakia. Morgantown has sister cities in Mexico and China. Princeton, West Virginia? Are you familiar with this?

**Griffin:** Sure. It's where the p—prestigious, uh... university is located.

**Rachel:** There's a city in Russia that is associated. So the process for getting a sister city...

**Griffin:** I was just thinking about Washington DC. Are we even allowed to have sister cities here? 'Cause it feels like all of them—for a city where every nation has embassies represented here, it feels like we invited all our sisters to come live with us, sort of. We have, like, 160 sisters.

**Rachel:** That's a really good point. Uh, it's difficult, right? 'Cause I am seeing Washington state. Um...

**Griffin:** It's hard to look through a list of states for our poor, forgotten—  
[holding back laughter] our forgotten city.

**Rachel:** Oh, here we go. District of Columbia. We have a city in Ethiopia, in Turkey, in Greece, in Thailand, in China, in Belgium, in Senegal, in South Africa, in South Korea, El Salvador, and in the UK.

**Griffin:** Okay. So a lot!

**Rachel:** [laughs] I mean—and so here's—okay. There's a lot to unpack here.  
[laughs]

**Griffin:** Yeah, please.

**Rachel:** Okay. So, back to Eisenhower. So in order to establish these relationships, the United States sent a delegation to the World Conference of Mayors.

**Griffin:** The World Conference of Mayors?

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** Do other countries and cities have the same structure where they have mayors?

**Rachel:** You know, I can't answer that question. I didn't do a—[laughs]

**Griffin:** Do they have mayors in, like, China? I don't know. I don't know how local government works basically in our own country. I do understand how local government works in our own country. I can't pretend to have any idea how it works in any other country.

**Rachel:** There is an organization called Sister Cities International.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** That now kind of houses the whole process. Um, you can also find out a lot about, uh, the history of what they do.

**Griffin:** I imagine it has to be... an agreed-upon decision by representatives from the two cities. You can't just say, like, "And now, Paris is our sister city," without Paris saying "Sounds good to me."

**Rachel:** [laughs] Yeah. So it says "A relationship is officially recognized after the highest elected or appointed official from both communities sign off on an agreement to become sister cities."

**Griffin:** Okay. So, like, mayor.

**Rachel:** Yeah. I mean, I think mayor is probably the best example for us. But, you know, they say here, you know, uh... highest elected official, so.

**Griffin:** Sure.

**Rachel:** You know, in some places it wouldn't be mayor. What happens is, uh... it used to be—in my research, it used to be built around kind of similar, like, population size, like, similar focus on industry. Some sister cities were developed because they shared an enthusiasm for, like, biotechnology, and they would develop a sister city partnership because they had a similar industry.

**Griffin:** Okay. That makes sense.

**Rachel:** Um, if you want to create a new sister city, uh, you contact your sister city organization locally.

**Griffin:** Okay. So there's local chapters.

**Rachel:** Yes. And a group will contact the mayor to see if they are open to the possibility of a new relationship.

**Griffin:** This sounds like you're trying to have a sleepover with another city.

**Rachel:** [through laughter] I know!

**Griffin:** "My mom said it was okay. For—for me to get—to sleep over with you, Munich."

**Rachel:** There's also something called a friendship city.

**Griffin:** Now, that rules!

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** That's great that there's a less committed version of it.

**Rachel:** Yeah. It is less formal. Uh, it is often used as a first stage in the relationship, and after it is strengthened, the partners are sure [through laughter] they want to be in a long term relationship.

**Griffin:** All sisters start as friend. I always say that.

**Rachel:** [laughs] "I'm not ready to commit to you as a sister city. Let's be a friendship city for a while, see how it goes."

**Griffin:** We should call them married cities. We should—and then you should only get one. And you should say "Our city is married. Our city is married to Munich. And because of that, I'm allowed to go there and I get, you know, 25% off hotel fare and all that stuff."

**Rachel:** [laughs] Discounts at Subway.

**Griffin:** There should be benefits! You should roll up to your sister city—

**Rachel:** Buy one get one free sandwich.

**Griffin:** —and have some people recognize. Like, "Oh shit! It's someone from—from—from Cincinnati! What's up!"

**Rachel:** There are—so, there's a whole—like, Sister Cities International has a whole structure. There are, like, membership dues. There is, like, access to other benefits as a sister city. Um, there are resources and discounts.  
[laughs]

**Griffin:** Okay, great!

**Rachel:** But it's like, travel insurance.

**Griffin:** I love this concept. I love the concept in abstract, and I can see how, uh, useful it probably was back in the day. But I don't really understand why—why one would pursue this now. Uh... to pursue the creation of a new pact, a new bond between cities.

**Rachel:** Uh, so as I mentioned, there are exchanges focused around arts and culture, business, community development. It's kind of structured depending on what you want to get out of it?

**Griffin:** Sure.

**Rachel:** Um, you know, it can be musical performances, art exhibits. It can be, you know, as I mentioned, like, international travel for exchange students.

**Griffin:** I mean, it's kind of like how DC got all the cherry blossoms from Japan.

**Rachel:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Griffin:** When that guy came and visited and was like, "Here's a bunch of che—" I remember seeing this, um, immersive art thing. And it was in Ireland, and I think New York City or some other city. And it was like a live webcam, attached to a big screen, like a portal. So you could just see what was happening on the other side of the planet. That would be cool.

**Rachel:** Whoa, that is cool!

**Griffin:** I would love a portal for each city. A portal, please. For each city you're sister cities with.

**Rachel:** Okay. So you walk into the museum...

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** ... and you enter a room.

**Griffin:** This isn't even museum. This is like, on the city street.

**Rachel:** Oh!

**Griffin:** You walk in the streets of Cincinnati, you see a portal to Nancy, France, a city that is a sister city of Cincinnati. And you—and maybe the tech isn't here yet. You should be able to step through it, though, and be in Nancy, France. That's too far. Like, but having a just sort of constant AV connection.

**Rachel:** So—[laughs] so you're not suggesting, um, like...

**Griffin:** Teleportation.

**Rachel:** Teleportation. Yeah, okay.

**Griffin:** No, 'cause that's not possible. But we should have at least a live web feed, uh, from the sister city. I don't think that's asking too much.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Uh, so, um, in 2006, they hit their 50th anniversary. Sister Cities International did, so I guess now we're at... uh, what? Like, 70... something.



**Griffin:** Going strong.

**Rachel:** I need the Numberblocks.

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Rachel:** To figure that one out.

**Griffin:** "[British accent] It seems like you're trying to figure out what's the difference."

**Rachel:** [laughs] Um, but I just—I think it's really cool. Obviously I mentioned, like, it's a lot easier to access information about other countries and cultures now that we have the internet, and all sorts of stuff. But I like the idea of it. I like that it still exists. If you go look up your sister cities, I would be interested to know if some people feel like they have more of a connection to their sister city than I, perhaps, do. But I love that it's a thing.

**Griffin:** Yeah. Me too. Um, do you wanna know [haltingly] what our friends love that it's things?

**Rachel:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Griffin:** Laura G says, "My small wonder is headlamps! This past summer I got very into solo camping, and when you're camping by yourself there isn't anyone to hold the flashlight for you, except when you make friends with the raccoons and bears. Headlamps make it so you can always have light pointed exactly where you want it to go, while leaving all of your hands free for activities. Headlamps really are the light of my life."

I love a headlamp.

**Rachel:** What did you get that for? Oh, it was like our attic crawlspace situation, right?

**Griffin:** Yes. There was something going on up there.

**Rachel:** With our HVAC unit or something?

**Griffin:** I think it was the roof was leaking. And so I went to—I had a Lowe's trip where I went and got, like, gloves and knee pads and a headlamp. Like, I really decked out, uh, like I was some sort of attic warrior. But we still use that headlamp! It's useful when we're doing, like, a booger intervention on our youngest son.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** It is very helpful. Lucas says, "My small wonder is how leftover brownies that are crusty and rock hard get soft and gooey again with just a few seconds in the microwave."

Gimme 'em crusty and rock hard, is what I'm sayin'.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** I love a corner—

**Rachel:** You are always saying that about everything.

**Griffin:** I love a corner—a corner crust.

**Rachel:** Yeah. Oh, me too.

**Griffin:** God, it's so choice. The middle's great too. I don't eat a lot of brownies these days. We used to be brownie people. Now we're not. We'll get a naughty little cookie from a restaurant from time to time.

**Rachel:** The boys don't seem particularly—I mean, they're interested in Cosmic Brownies. They're interested in a brownie goo. [laughs]

**Griffin:** That is fudge.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** I'll go to the mat for the fact that they should call that Cosmic Fudge.

**Rachel:** Yeah. I think that's what it is. They've been confused about what a brownie actually should be, and so now when we try and give them they're like, "This is not a brownie."

**Griffin:** "This is not a brownie." And it's like, Little Debbie has lied to you.

**Rachel:** Mm-hmm.

**Griffin:** Thank you 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. Thank you to Maximum Fun for having us on the network. Go to [Maximumfun.org](http://Maximumfun.org). Check out all the great shows that they have poppin' over there.

Again, Candlenights is coming up. December 14th at 9 PM. It's premade, but we're gonna be streaming it live. And there's, like, a whole chatroom, and you get to join in and talk about it with everybody at the same time, and we'll be in that chat too. Just talkin' about it, having a great time.

It's a great way to boost those holiday spirits. And all the proceeds for that, and the special merch which includes a special Candlenights ornament, all go to Harmony House, which is an amazing organization we've been lucky enough to support in Huntington. They work to end homelessness in the area through a number of just, like, wonderful services they provide.

So, [bit.ly/candlenightstickets2024](https://bit.ly/candlenightstickets2024) is the link to go to to come watch me and Rachel do our Wonderful segment, and everyone else do their thing, too.

Um, we also have merch over at [mcelroymerch.com](http://mcelroymerch.com) that you can go check out. If you are interested in Fungalore and his ways, uh, I would suggest going now, before the end of the year.

**Rachel:** Do you have 2025, like, bakin' in your head already?

**Griffin:** I've had a few seshes where it's, like, inspiration has struck me. Um, I don't have—I don't have— [crosstalk]

**Rachel:** It's gonna be hard to follow Fungalore, man.

**Griffin:** Yeah, no, for sure. That's sort of, you understand, the constant problem of this.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Is hey, make one joke... that for a whole year is gonna—you're gonna cruise on.

**Rachel:** But Fungalore is the first time that you have, like, birthed an entire creature.

**Griffin:** No, it's really, really good! Like, I'm agreeing with you.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** I don't know how we're gonna do it in 25, but we'll see. Um, anyway, thank you so much for listening. We'll be back next week with a new episode, so stay tuned. And take care of yourself. And... um...

**Rachel:** May your days be merry and bright.

**Griffin:** I guess. Probably not bri—like, bright, I could—merry, yes. Bright I could give or take. Like, I don't want it to be too bright. You know?

**Rachel:** Uh-huh? [laughs quietly]

**Griffin:** I don't want there to be, like, a glare. Like super bright, like, headlights from, like, a big truck behind you. That's too bright. You know what I mean?

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** [loudly] What's the deal with these headlights?!

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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