

Wonderful! 368: A Business Can't Sustain Itself on Smiley Face Alone

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

[group chuckle]

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hi, this is Griffin McElroy!

Rachel: And this is Wonderful!

Griffin: Love to start it off with a laugh!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Don't you love to start it off with a laugh? Maybe we should explain because folks can't see us. My laugh, I'll explain my laugh first—this is Wonderful, a show where we talk about things we like, that's good, we're into. And we're married. You were both a little under the weather, and I feel like to kind of like psych yourself up for this, you're making a very intense sort of Jack Nicholson face.

Rachel: [chuckles] Yeah, uh-huh.

Griffin: And I found that—I found that to be a really fun energy to like bring into the studio to like start it off with. This like, hah! Like face poking through the axe wound in the door.

Rachel: I mean it kind of feels like a stretch for my face.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: When I bring those eyebrows all the way up.

Griffin: Hey, sure. I mean, that's how Jim Carrey readies up before he does any of his like big characters.

Rachel: I believe it, man.

Griffin: I believe it too. Man's face is made of rubber, and that's real. That's a real condition he has to live with every day. Do you have any small wonders that we can sort of like start off the show discussing? It's this new idea I had, which is like we do like little ones.

Rachel: Yeah, you know, it seems like that's something we've been doing, and you'd think because we've been doing it, I would be—

Griffin: Ready for it?

Rachel: More prepared to do it.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Do you have one?

Griffin: Yeah, I'll go ahead and say it's our son's birthday. I guess by the time this comes out, little son has—

Rachel: Will have turned four.

Griffin: Has turned four, which is fucked up.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: And we brought donuts to his class this morning. And it was very, very cute. But I want to talk about the donuts, they were tiny. They were mini donuts. Not donut holes.

Rachel: Yeah, they had like little ones.

Griffin: They had like little donuts. And it was perfect because just one box covered the whole class. Because the donuts were just perfectly little. Just perfectly little! Wow! I loved the size of these guys.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I could crush four or five of those, no problem. So, yeah, I guess that's it, the small donuts.

Rachel: Yeah, I like the fact that he asked for strawberry donuts too.

Griffin: Yes, he really wanted strawberry donuts. I like that. I like that outside choice.

Rachel: Yeah, for sure. Like, as a child, I feel like it was always vanilla or chocolate.

Griffin: Yes. Well, not vanilla, right? For a donut? That's not—

Rachel: Well, no, not for—no, I'm talking about generally, when you had a choice of flavors.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: It's like one or the other, there was no—like strawberry would have never occurred to me.

Griffin: Yeah. Do they still make Neapolitan ice cream? I feel like you don't see that so much anymore.

Rachel: I'm sure they do.

Griffin: But I don't see it?

Rachel: We don't really buy ice cream is the thing.

Griffin: That's a good point. That's a good point.

Rachel: We went hard on that during the pandemic, and I think it shook us up a little bit. [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah, I did too much.

Rachel: It was like, I have become somebody that makes this a part of my day every day, and maybe I don't want to continue doing that. And then now I think we're scared to go back, I feel like.

Griffin: We were sort of like a... I mean, like a cream king and a cream queen like... just how badly we like had to have it every—

Rachel: You know, in our most recent episode, you talked about—

Griffin: Muscle daddy, muscle mommy?

Rachel: Yeah, right?

Griffin: I'm a muscle daddy and I'm a cream king! And I don't think—

Rachel: Whew!

Griffin: And I own that! This is not something I'll be embarrassed about saying later. All it means is that I lift up some hand weights sometimes. And I like to eat ice cream. Not so much any anymore. So, I'm a muscle daddy now. Used to be a cream king.

Rachel: I just want you to know, sometimes you complain about what your brand has become attached to.

Griffin: Exactly.

Rachel: But sometimes you stumble in and then you double down. [titters]

Griffin: Dude, if my brand became muscle daddy? That would be so fuckin' wild and uncharacteristic, like I think I would actually celebrate that.

Rachel: Yeah, no, it is better than some of the associations that you've had—

Griffin: Of course, of course.

Rachel: In the past. [titters]

Griffin: Was that long enough for you to think of something small you like?

Rachel: Man, you'd think so, wouldn't you?

Griffin: Wow.

Rachel: No, I will say... gosh... I feel like I've said a lot of things, is the problem.

Griffin: Yeah, we have...

Rachel: I mean, I will say—okay, this will cover my bases.

Griffin: Great.

Rachel: The durability of sidewalk chalk. [titters]

Griffin: This fucking thing. A nuclear bomb could drop on a box of like Crayola washable sidewalk chalk and you would still be able to use most of it.

Rachel: We have left these pieces of chalk out in the rain for *months*. Like literally, the summer season ended, we just left the chalk out there. And now here we are at Spring, and it is still there in a little pile, still just as effective.

Griffin: Unbowed, unbent, unbroken.

Rachel: I mean, a little bit more fragile, for sure, but I was like straightening up because we're going to have a little birthday party for small son. And I just like picked those up and put them in a little bucket—

Griffin: No problem.

Rachel: And felt like, wow, this still works.

Griffin: I love that.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: You go first this week with a big wonder. What have you got warmed up for us?

Rachel: So, my big wonder this week—

Griffin: Yes?

Rachel: Is... the smiley face.

Griffin: [titters] Yeah, man.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Man, yeah. The iconic sort of image of a smiley face, or just like in general when you see a smiling face?

Rachel: [laughs] The iconic image.

Griffin: Okay. All right.

Rachel: Yeah, I—

Griffin: You a big watch—a big Watchmen fan?

Rachel: You know, I saw that reference in a lot of the things. I don't really know it though.

Griffin: Do you want me to recount the whole plot of Watchmen for you?

Rachel: Can you just tell—eh... no.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: [titters] Can you just tell me how the smiley—

Griffin: There's a character named the comedian, and he's like a superhero. It's about a bunch of former superheroes and—

Rachel: Is this a play on the Joker?

Griffin: Yes. No, no. Definitely not a play on the Joker. Anyway, the Comedian gets killed at the very beginning of the book and he has the little smiley face pin, and some blood gets on it. And that becomes sort of the symbol for Watchmen. And a bunch of other crazy shit happens. That's about it.

Rachel: Is there an enemy that is some kind of animal man?

Griffin: Is there an enemy that is some kind of animal man? No... no.

Rachel: Okay, I'm just trying to figure out if it really does in fact have connections to—

Griffin: The enemy is—it's complicated. The enemy is like us and the government, maybe even?

Rachel: [titters] So, right up my alley.

Griffin: And it's like how—the enemy is like complacency and the government and stuff.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: We should watch it later, the movie, not the book. Who's got the time?

Rachel: [titters] The thing I like about the smiley face, other than, you know, the fact that it is like a lovely emoticon to use when you are trying to communicate to somebody—

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: That what you're saying is meant in good spirits.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: But also, the fact that it is like kind of the first dip a child takes into like making a person, you know?

Griffin: Oh, that's very interesting!

Rachel: Like with Gus, like he started doing that smiley face before he was doing bodies.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: You know? Like he was not doing stick men, he was just doing like a circle with two dots and a... and a loopy guy at the bottom.

Griffin: Yeah, that's true.

Rachel: And I kind of love that. Like it's, you know, because your kid scribbles forever and then you're always like, oh! There's a lot of colors. But then when they got the smiley face you know like, oh! That's a person.

Griffin: Yeah. That's—

Rachel: And we're there already.

Griffin: Can we say definitively or authoritatively that the smiley face emoji has not picked up some like ulterior meaning, some sinister meaning, that us people, you know, Millennials, Gen Xers don't actually know about. Like if you use—

Rachel: Ooh.

Griffin: Like if you use—I didn't know about the different—the heart, different color hearts meaning different things. Like there's a platonic sort of friendship heart and then there's a love—

Rachel: I still don't, man.

Griffin: Well, you gotta fuckin' be careful, because the stakes could not be higher!

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: If you send someone one color heart it's like, "You're my pal and I'm looking out for you." And then you send them another color heart and it's like, "Are you DTF *tonight*?" And that's not acceptable.

Rachel: I just always use red because I feel like it communicates I don't know anything about the other ones.

Griffin: Yeah. And like I love talking about cooking aubergines. And whenever I use the emoji for those, people start all of a sudden thinking that it's like a penis.

Rachel: Give me an example of when you have used that in the cooking context.

Griffin: Sure, sure. So it's like... I'll send like—

Rachel: And tell me the eggplant dish that you enjoy so much.

Griffin: Right, so, I'll... I send, you know, a message to Tyler, my best friend.

Rachel: Uh-huh?

Griffin: And I'm like cooking up a mean... "Cooking up a mean eggy parm tonight." And he's like, "Hell yeah, brother. I'll be there at 3:00." And I was like, "That's a weird time to have eggy parm. But maybe you bring your own—" And then I'll send like the eggplant emoji.

Rachel: Love it.

Griffin: And then Tyler will be like, "I don't think we should hang out anymore." And all of a sudden I'm like, "I'm just talking about aubergine?" I'm just talking about—I don't see anything wrong with that.

Rachel: I'm sorry that I don't like eggplant, and that stops you from making this dish for—

Griffin: Can I be real a second?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: For like a millisecond. I do not enjoy eggplant.

Rachel: See, I knew that! I was doing my improv technique, which is... which is to say no. [chuckles]

Griffin: Is "uh, sure."

[group chuckle]

Rachel: Yeah, I don't either.

Griffin: Yeah, no.

Rachel: I imagine it can be... delicious. I just have not found the way that it is delicious to me yet.

Griffin: Too squeaky.

Rachel: Pretty squeaky, yeah.

Griffin: Pretty squeaky—

Rachel: Good point.

Griffin: Stuff for me, yeah.

Rachel: So, if I were to ask you about the invention of the smiley face, does anything come to mind immediately?

Griffin: The invention of the smiley face, I mean, I feel like the—I—the yellow smiley face, right? Like, that's what we're talking about? Two black dots and the black smiley curve.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: I mean, I feel like—it's hitting me 1960s, it's hitting me around peace time. Like the peace symbol—I feel like the peace symbol and the happy face symbol came up at—like, they were probably made by the same person.

Rachel: Yeah, I mean, the image was created in 1963.

Griffin: Perfect.

Rachel: So, you're right about that. I thought for sure you were gonna say the 1994 Robert Zemeckis film, *Forrest Gump*.

Griffin: You thought that I was going to say that the smiley face was invented in *Forrest Gump*?

Rachel: There's a point where Forrest Gump is running across the country and somebody's like, "I'm a designer and I'm trying to come up with a new design." And he's got mud all over his face and he presses it against the T-shirt?

Griffin: But that took place in the '60s? Like, I understand what you're saying, but Forrest Gump is a historical docudrama...

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: About things that happened in the 1960s, right?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: So like, I wouldn't think... that scene didn't take place in 1990s in Forrest Gump time, it took—in FGT.

Rachel: Yeah, yeah, no, no, I know, I know.

Griffin: In FGT, that was in 1963, you know?

Rachel: It's just, I was thinking first thing that comes to mind, for me, anyway, is that.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Like I don't have any connection to the actual—

Griffin: And for me, it's Watchman. I guess I'm more of a books guy after all.

Rachel: [chuckles] Here's the thing that surprised me, because, you know, like sometimes stuff has been like invented and you're like, what were people doing before that?

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: Right? Like the fact that our kid sits down and draws a smiley face, like... I don't think he's drawing it because he saw a smiley face. You know, like when people—like kids have an instinct to draw people.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: Were they not doing two dots and a curvy line?

Griffin: I think they were probably doing two dots and a curvy line. I think the thing that you get with the traditional yellow smiley face emoji smiley face is, you know, color and you know, ratio. The golden ratio of eye size to mouth size to face size, like all that stuff.

Rachel: Okay, so here's the guy. So, Harvey Ross Ball was a graphic artist and ad man. He came up with the image in 1963 when he was commissioned to create a graphic to raise morale among the employees of an insurance company after a series of difficult mergers and acquisitions.

Griffin: Fuckin' mission accomplished, dude.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: You crushed the brief so fucking hard. That's insane.

Rachel: I mean, I don't have an interview with this man, but I like to think this was a little bit of an act of defiance. Of just like, "You think I'm gonna draw something and it's gonna raise morale? All right, here you go."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And they were like, "Ooh! We like that."

Griffin: Yeah. It's also, I mean, deeply fucked up and Orwellian that it's probably just like, you know, a raise would probably—there's lots of other ways of sort of like improving the quality of your workers' lives, other than generating an iconic sort of emoji.

Rachel: [chuckles] It's just such an example. I mean, we have definitely just finished a season of Severance, so we are maybe more in that mindset.

Griffin: The second one of them.

Rachel: Yeah, of like weird efforts in like corporate climate to try and improve things.

Griffin: It probably costs them, you know, four and a half million dollars to commission this guy to make the smiley face.

Rachel: No, no.

Griffin: Oh, you have the price tag?

Rachel: Yeah, I have it. So, this is a Smithsonian article I'm looking at. It said that he finished the design in less than 10 minutes and was paid \$45. [chuckles]

Griffin: Oh, okay. That's much less.

Rachel: So like, you know, probably right amount of effort. And I mean, \$45 in 1963 was probably pretty significant.

Griffin: It's like 70 bucks now, probably.

Rachel: Yeah. [titters]

Griffin: I have no way of knowing. For me, I get a lot of... when I was like working in games press and like covering like, "This is how much a game costs in 1990, it was like \$60. Which today is like \$412." Like, holy shit.

Rachel: Yeah...

Griffin: Got that big that fast, huh? That's wild.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Someone should do something about this.

Rachel: So, the company made posters, buttons and signs with the face on it, attempting to get their employees to smile more. [chuckles]

Griffin: That sucks, man.

Rachel: I know! Neither the artist or the company tried to trademark the design. And what ended up happening is that in the 1970s they brought the design back. These brothers, Bernard and Murray Spain, who were owners of two Hallmark shops in Philadelphia, added "have a nice day" to the image.

Griffin: Cool. Yeah.

Rachel: And then copyrighted it 1971. [chuckles]

Griffin: You got to. Way to go, bros.

Rachel: [chuckles] By the end of the year, they had sold more than 50 million buttons. And they publicly took credit for—

Griffin: For the smiley face?

Rachel: For the smiley face itself, yeah.

Griffin: Yeah, I mean... pay artists what they are owed. And I guess that one dude did get his beak wet to the tune of \$45.

Rachel: [titters]

Griffin: That said, a yellow smiley face is... I don't know, I could see that being sort of an independent invention sort of moment, but... I wasn't alive then, so it's not on me to decide.

Rachel: Today—so in 1996, there was a... somebody in France who took over the family business and transformed it, and called it The Smiley Company.

Griffin: Okay?

Rachel: They make more than 130 million a year, one of the top licensing companies in the world.

Griffin: For just the smiley face?

Rachel: I mean, if it's called The Smiley Company, I can't imagine they're doing much else, right?

Griffin: Babe, that's one of the wilder suppositions I feel like you have offered up on this show. I don't think that there can be a company whose entire business is smiley face. I don't think that is—obviously like there's a need for it, there's a demand out there. I do not think a business can sustain itself on smiley face alone.

Rachel: I mean, if you go to smileycompany.com, it kind of seems like that's their whole thing. Just based on—

Griffin: Now, that smiley face is interesting! That mouth is considerably lower, I feel like, than you see it—

Rachel: Yeah! So, that is another thing about the original design by Harvey, is that—

Griffin: Harvey Ross Ball?

Rachel: Well, I'm trying to be more familiar with him.

Griffin: Yeah, yeah. No, I just remember his name because it's fun. Harvey Ross Ball.

Rachel: Is that the one eye is a little bit bigger.

Griffin: Whoa, I like that!

Rachel: Than the orig.

Griffin: That's like Nirvana. That's like cool.

Rachel: For sure! Yeah, for sure.

Griffin: That's like grunge.

Rachel: [chuckles] Anyway, so The Smiley Company then kind of took over the design themselves. And then kind of argued, well, it's so basic, it can't be credited to anyone.

Griffin: Okay. Seems like a double edged sword, because now your entire business can be lifted by somebody else, because you've said that it can't be a thing.

Rachel: Apparently, I haven't looked at the website closely, but they have what they claim to be the world's first smiley face, which is a stone carving found in a French cave that dates to 2500 BC.

Griffin: Okay... I don't know, living in a French cave... I don't know if you would be like the smiliest person around. But maybe it was aspirational.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: "Wouldn't this be nice?"

Rachel: Maybe. I mean, maybe we're all wrong about, you know, the early humans.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And they all just looked like that.

Griffin: The early humans of 2500 BC.

Rachel: Yeah... I mean, if there's cave paintings, there's people, and maybe they all look like that.

Griffin: 2500 BC does not strike me as cave painting time.

Rachel: No? I mean, that's what they said? They said they found like a painting and a stone carving.

Griffin: For me, I'm feeling like, and I don't know fucking anything, but for me it's giving like Mesopotamian sort of like, you know... they discovered the pillar or something in 2500 BC, you know what I mean? Like, I feel like we were post-cave then. But who am I to come at The Smiley Company for—

Rachel: Yeah, I'm making assumptions on the fact that this was found in a cave.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And so in my head it's like, oh, well, that must have been where they were all hanging out all the time. [titters]

Griffin: I'm just thinking, we're 2000 years post-Jesus now, and we don't look like that different. So 2000 years pre-Jesus, I feel like there's not like a lot of—

Rachel: I see what you're saying.

Griffin: Stuff going on there. That's... that's a good one, babe. I have never thought about the smiley face since I saw Forrest Gump, you are right. He wipes his—he wipes his—doesn't he wipe his dirty face, and he pulls it off and it looks like a smiley face. That always fuckin' bothered me! If you're sweating and you lift up the bottom of your shirt to your face and dab it, it's not going to produce a perfectly circular shape with little holes for the eyes and mouth. My mouth and eyes get sweaty also.

Rachel: That is the only complicated and unbelievable part of that film too, which is what's wild. Everything else tracks.

Griffin: I mean, let me think back... yeah, the rest of it's good!

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Thanks.

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

Griffin: This show is, at its core, service journalism.

Rachel: Okay?

Griffin: And it's been a while since we've brought a scoop to our listeners as fucking hot and as fucking ready to go as this one that I am proud to present today. New show. Got a new show for you, gang. A new reality dating show up on Netflix. And I'm just chomping at the bit to talk about it. It's a Japanese reality dating show, a 10-part limited series called Offline Love. The concept, Rachel pointed out as we started watching, is strikingly similar to the like ideal dating reality show that we kind of brainstormed in one of our final episodes of Rose Buddies.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Do you remember like sort of what we set up when we—

Rachel: I mean, the concept was that people would kind of test out their compatibility through travel.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: And so it would be kind of Amazing Race, but the idea was that these people were like trying to match with each other.

Griffin: Yes. This is a much more chill, I would say, version of that, but it is very much a show about people in a country where they do not—well, some of them actually do live there—but people living in a country that they don't usually live in. And just finding each other and going on dates. It's five men, five women, they travel to Nice, France. Am I saying that correctly?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And they stay there for a 10 day vacation. 10 episodes, 10 days. When they arrive, they head to this one sort of central location individually. This location is a café called Maison Margaux. And once they get there, they have to lock up their phone and other sort of like online devices that they might have in a little lock box.

Rachel: They give 'em a map.

Griffin: And then they—yeah.

Rachel: And like a little guidebook.

Griffin: They have a—they have their own little mailbox where they get a map and they get some money, and they get a credit card. And they get this guidebook that—everybody has the same guidebook, it is kind of how they can identify each other. And that is important, because this is the fun thing about the show, these 10 people aren't living in the same house. They're not living in the same hotel, they're not seeing each other constantly.

Rachel: Yeah, there seem to be some hotels where there's like a couple cast members, but for the most part, people are pretty spread out.

Griffin: Pretty spread out around the city. With very few exceptions, they are not given like an itinerary. There's no daily challenges and like rewards.

The idea of the show is that, without the use of phones or texting or social media, they have to rely on, first of all, fate or luck or whatever. And also rely on like making plans either in person or through writing letters that they can leave for one another in their different little mailboxes.

Rachel: Yeah. it didn't even occur to me, I thought the mailboxes were like follow-up correspondence. But there are some people who take real initiative to say like, "Hey, I'm just gonna choose that mailbox, I'm gonna put a note in there and I'm gonna see if they show up."

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: "When I tell them to meet me at this fountain."

Griffin: And like immediately, I feel like I'm gonna get really scattershot talking—there's like a million things about this show that I think are really, really, really interesting. And one of the big ones is that it is actually a pretty fascinating study in how things have changed. How we socialize now, compared to how we did 30 years ago, following, you know, the rapid unchecked advancement of communication over those three decades.

Rachel: Yeah! When you meet somebody, it's very easy to do a little research on them, typically.

Griffin: Sure, but it's also like, it is the follow up, it is the making plans and keeping them that is so interesting. Because once people get there and they, you know, haven't met anybody for a whole day, they're like, "Okay, I'll just send a random person a letter."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But then like when do I tell them to meet me? Because like I can't say like meet me in 10 minutes, because they might not even come to check the mail today.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: So they'll say like, "Okay, on day four—"

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: "At three PM, please meet me by this fountain." And the person who receives it's like, "Okay, but if I'm dating someone else by then, I'm probably not going to."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Or also, what if you get two letters from two different people asking you to come to the same place?

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: You can't go to both of them and be like, "Hey, I'm sorry, I'm going with Ricky on this one, so don't wait up."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Obviously, it's a pretty extreme example, right? Like we had phones growing up, so—or at the very least landlines, so we could call and leave a message for whoever.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But they don't even have that, right? They have to rely on running into each other and writing letters. And that is... that is fully, fully it. Obviously, there's no way to gage like how much producer intervention takes place here. Obviously some, I am assuming.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Because Nice is a pretty big city, and they do eventually start running into each other.

Rachel: Well, if you think about it, like they are the ones that are creating this guidebook.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: You know? So I am sure they are putting like landmarks on the map in like a very strategic way.

Griffin: That's what you see, is like... for one day, for the first day, like only a handful of people actually run into each other, and everyone else doesn't. So you start to see people adopting these strategies like, "Okay, there's that big touristy 'I heart Nice' sign overlooking the ocean."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: "I'm just gonna fucking kick it there and wait for someone carrying the guidebook, so I know that I can go and finally talk to someone." And then they start to kind of network a little bit where it's like, "Oh, man, have you met—have you met this guy? You should—you should totally meet Hutsushi, he's great. You're gonna really like him. Let's make plans to all meet up for dinner later."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It makes it so that when they do finally start running into each other, it is genuinely very, very, very exciting. They track sort of where everyone is on this like map where they show, you know, the locations of each cast member.

Rachel: Oh, and there's a panel, we should say.

Griffin: There is a panel, yeah, I wanted to talk about the panel in a bit. But you see them on this map, and once they start to get close, this moment of like will they or won't they? Like, are they going to meet or are they going to just kind of walk by each other? Because that happens, I would say, a majority of the time.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Is that they do not—they fully do not see someone else carrying the same blue guidebook, and they just do not meet and do not talk.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And so those moments of people meeting, it's always really exciting. One of the—I think the first two people that meet each other are two dudes. And they are like, "Let's just go hang. Like, let's just go chill." And then they like go and they talk like, "What kind of—you know, who are you trying to meet? Like, what kind of person?" They have like sort of the like shoot the shit like bro talk. And then like a day later, they make plans and they go out and they get chocolate together. They're like, "Yeah, man, we gotta go to this candy shop." And they just spend the whole day just fucking... just broing out.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I assume platonically, but I guess I shouldn't assume anything.

Rachel: Yeah, we've haven't finished the season.

Griffin: We have not finished the season at all. And it is very, very exciting every time it happens. It also gets over this hump that I think it exists in a lot of reality dating shows. I would say maybe less commonly in sort of Western reality dating shows, but certainly on stuff like Terrace House. When people meet each other, there is this—there is this long, drawn out period of kind of discomfort where you're like trying to feel this person out.

Maybe you are shy or like unaware of like which societal norms you are expected to kind of—what level of formality you're expected to kind of conduct yourself with this person. And so there's like a little bit of warm up time before you start to really open up to the other person. In Offline Love, when two people meet each other, they're so fucking excited, they vault right over that and just immediately are just like enthusiastically getting to know each other.

Rachel: Yeah. No, that's a really good point. It's kind of like almost like a summer camp kind of friendship.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Where it's like you're all in this kind of unfamiliar circumstance, you know you have a limited time. And you know the big thing you have in common is that you are doing this thing.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: That is maybe a little bit uncomfortable for everybody.

Griffin: Right, yeah, and it is... on that note, like the virtual tourism element of it is like so on point. The vibes of this show are so fucking on point.

Rachel: Yeah! It's, I mean, man, talk about like Before Sunrise vibes.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: It's like people walking around in this kind of romantic environment.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Like at least from, you know, our perspective. Just kind of having those like first exciting conversations and like sharing an umbrella. Oh, God, it's good!

Griffin: I don't have a lot of affinity for like French culture or like... I don't have, you know, anything against it, it's just like not a part of the world that I have—has ever like hooked me. That I've ever felt like, oh, I gotta get there. Watching this, watching like people walk around Nice, like it looks pretty fucking cool.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Like, I think I would actually enjoy spending a little bit of time there.

Rachel: Yeah, it's real beachy.

Griffin: It's very beachy! Apart from just the tourism side of things, though, just like from a tone and pacing standpoint, it is very... chill. It is very candid. Maybe Terrace House is like a clumsy comparison, but like that sort of... ineffable sort of vibe of like, it's just kind of pleasant to put on and watch. It is kind of wholesome and enjoyable to view. Which, like after finishing a season of Love is Blind, is like such a...

Rachel: Yeah, no kidding.

Griffin: Just an exquisite palette cleanser. The panel. The panel is really good. It cuts in, obviously, between sort of like scenes. And it's just three people. It's two dudes, young comedians, Kuruma Takahira and Kemuri Matsui. And they are joined by a woman, 59 year old pop idol named Kyoko Koizumi.

Rachel: Yeah, I'm glad you did research on this, because I was—they were all kind of like... they showed a lot of deference to her.

Griffin: Yes, when they introduced themselves, they like introduced their comedy duo. Like, "You know us, we're here. And, of course, as always, we're joined by... 59 year old pop idol Kyoko Koizumi." [titters]

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Who, you know, making the joke of like this is such a weird—this is a strange pairing.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Because they are—they are completely different generations. But there is a cross generational kind of conversation that takes place that is

very, very fun. And also like provides so much context. Because she is able to kind of like provide some context to them of like, yeah, this is kind of how you had to roll. Obviously, this is an extreme version of it.

Rachel: Yeah, that's true.

Griffin: But this is... and they are able to kind of like explain to her like, this is kind of modern norms. This is kind of how things—this is how dating works kind of these days. And it's just really... it's really, really great. It's such a... it's a breath of fresh air, honestly. And I don't think that I have watched a show that has kind of like hooked me in this way with the, you know, the emotion of it, the feeling of it.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: The vibe of it. I don't think anything's hooked me this hard since, you know, since Terrace House.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Maybe The Boyfriend. The Boyfriend hit pretty good too, but—

Rachel: That's true, yeah. It just has this very like calm vibe of like, you know, nobody's competing for money. You know, you can tell the people on the show are people that just like travel and get excited about travel.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: You know? And they're hoping for some kind of romance.

Griffin: The fashion is insane, dog.

Rachel: Fashion is pretty great.

Griffin: The fashion is wild. There is one woman on this show who is never without shoulder pads. Big ones!

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Big, big 1980s stockbroker shoulder pads.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Really, really excellent shit. Anyway, it's called Offline Love, it's on Netflix. It's just 10 episodes. I don't really get my hopes up for like renewals of these types of like short run reality shows, especially ones on Netflix. Because I feel like more often than not, you don't get that, but...

Rachel: This one seems like—I mean, there's the—they could go to different locations. They could like change the number of contestants.

Griffin: The core concept, it may sound tacky to you listening at home, this idea. Like it is not... it is not presented in a tacky way where it's like, "We take these Gen Z'ers phones and make them navigate—"

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It's really not that. It is... it is almost, it is a very wholesome like, they are re—they are learning in real time how to like coordinate and communicate with people. How to undergo a courtship without these guarantees of communication or contact. And that idea is really great. That idea is I, yeah, I think could be bigger than just this one 10 episode season of this show. But yeah, Offline Love, really, really excited about it. First like great reality dating show I feel like I've seen in quite some time.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Do you want to know what our friends at home are talking about?

Rachel: Please.

Griffin: Amber says, "My small wonder is that today was my first run of 2025 where the weather was warm enough to wear shorts. I love spending time outside in the sunshine. It feels so darn good to be able to do so

without having to do so without having to bundle up and fend off the cold. Knowing that warm, sunny days are coming soon makes everything in my day to day feel a little bit more joyful."

Rachel: That's so true. We talk about that a lot, particularly with the boys. Because when you know that you are limited to indoors, there's this feeling of kind of like being stifled.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: You know? But to know that you can just open your door and go outside and not have to brace for any kind of inclement weather is—

Griffin: Gorgeous!

Rachel: Amazing.

Griffin: Eileen says, "My small wonder is the..." I gotta learn how to say the name of this fucking plant. Ger... gerbera? Jerbera? Gerbera? Jerbera? Jgerbera?

Rachel: I think it's 'guh'.

Griffin: Gerbera? "Daisy plant that lives in my kitchen window. It was a housewarming gift that blooms with bright orange flowers in the spring. Last year, it took a break from blooming. But this year, there are five buds coming up! I'm so excited to see them." I gotta get down on plant life, honey.

Rachel: Hold on, I'm Googling how to say it.

Griffin: I mean, we're so far past it. And the audience has already forgiven. I mean, crank it up if you're on pronunciation.

Rachel: Oh, Gerbera.

Griffin: Gerbera?

Rachel: Yeah, it's kind of like Barbara. Gerbra.

Griffin: Gurbruh. Gerbera daisy. Anyway, thanks, Eileen. Maybe this is—maybe this is the plan I should get down on. Thank you all 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. Thank you all who came out and supported us in the Max Fun Drive—

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: These past couple weeks. It is truly humbling and truly wonderful that you all came out in droves the way that you did to help us continue growing and continue making these shows. And be financially stable in doing so. You all are the reason we're able to do this, and we appreciate you so, so much. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Rachel: And I will say, it is genuinely surprising every time.

Griffin: Sure, yeah.

Rachel: We never anticipate the like volume of people that we receive. It is amazing.

Griffin: MBMBaM and TAZ are sort of mid tour right now. If you're hearing this on Wednesday, April 2nd, when it comes out, we're going to be in Richmond, doing MBMBaM. Charlotte, North Carolina, doing MBMBaM. And Raleigh, North Carolina, doing TAZ, April 2nd, 3rd and 4th. So, come out and see us if you want. We got some other tours we've announced, also over at bit.ly/mcelroytours. And some new merch over at mcelroymerch.com that we would love you to go check out as well. That's going to do it for us, we will be back next week with a new episode. Keep it locked and keep it loaded.

Rachel: Okay?

Griffin: And—but it's not a gun. It's important that you know it's not a gun.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: What you're loading is the... dishwasher.

Rachel: Uh-huh?

Griffin: And you need to lock that also.

Rachel: Yeah, or else it just—

Griffin: So the kids don't get in there. C

Rachel: Comes right open and—

Griffin: It'll come right open, and your—

Rachel: It would get sudsy everywhere.

Griffin: Mom trip on it. All of a sudden, 20 years later, you're coming back to the Garden State. And you're having a really rough, rough, rough relationship with your daddy and home.

Rachel: [chuckles]

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

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