

Wonderful! 387: Whoops Wong Wondies

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[theme music plays]

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hello, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is *Wonderful!*

Griffin: Thank you for joining us for another installment of *Wonderful!*, a podcast where we talk about things that we like that's good that we are into. Our recommendation carries with it a certain amount of weight. Our endorsement is meaningful. This show means things to lots of people, and sometimes we recommend things, or we talk about things in a small wondies segment before, maybe, we've finished that season of *Bachelor in Paradise*.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And then, maybe in a later episode, we feel like maybe we wanna walk back some of the big statements that we made.

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: This is a new segment called— And maybe we should call it “un-wondies.”

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Where you can takesies-backsies a wondie that you did...

Rachel: A whoops wong wondies.

Griffin: Whoops wong wondies is pretty good.

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: Is a pretty good name for it. Um...

Rachel: I mean, the ending was kind of disappointing, but we enjoyed the season. It was nice to see...

Griffin: Yeah, the season was fine. It's just, they wrote such a big check when they were, like, halfway through the season. They were like, "Boom! It's *Bachelor Pad* now. Gotcha, suckers!"

Rachel: Yeah...

Griffin: And then they didn't really have any sort of good ideas for how to do that.

Rachel: Yeah. Here's the thing we realized, is they thought, "We're gonna bring in some game mechanics. We're gonna go back to the *Bachelor Pad*, where they're gonna have to play games together." But then they didn't actually bring in anyone that knew anything about [amused] designing games. So all of their— [bursts out laughing]

Griffin: Y'all, it's fuckin'— It's so— I'm going to spoil the ending of this season of *Bachelor in Paradise*. If you care about that, then please skip forward.

Rachel: At this point, you've had a lot of time to catch up.

Griffin: You've had plenty of time. The season ends, right? And they do the thing that they used to do at the end of *Bachelor Pad*, except that there's *two* final couples instead of *one* final couple, which is a wild thing that is so convoluted, but whatever.

Rachel: True!

Griffin: They go ahead and they split the prize pot from— What was it? It was gonna be \$500,000, or something?

Rachel: Was it?

Griffin: No, that's too much money.

Rachel: I thought it was always gonna be \$250.

Griffin: I don't know. Anyway, they get it down to two couples. And then they get one person from each couple to come up to this podium at the beach, where Jesse's like, "Love or money? What's it gonna be?" And the idea is if you pick money, and the other person picks love, they go to the fantasy suite, while you run off with the \$250K.

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: "Hahaha. Got you, sucker."

Rachel: Like, Hamburglar style. The way they have it set up, it's like, you're at the top because you've chosen love. And then down on the beach, there's a big barrel of money.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And the idea... [laughs uncontrollably]

Griffin: You have to watch your partner take the money, and roll it out like a fuckin' oil baron.

Rachel: Like, twirl their long mustache, and escape off into the...

Griffin: But he's like, "If you both choose love, you won't be *guaranteed* the money."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Or something like that. And it's like, "Oh, okay. That's really weird." But everybody of the final two couples chose love. Love, love, love, love, love. Love across the board. And then they get to the fantasy suite, and they hug. There is a proposal, that's nice.

But then Jesse walks out, and he's like, "So, you chose love..."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: "Now, you get to pick from one of these three envelopes, which will have an amount of money *up to* \$250,000 dollars on it."

Rachel: They have a—

Griffin: "Take your pick!"

Rachel: A literal silver tray with some roses on it, to make it look festive. And then it's just three envelopes!

Griffin: Three envelopes. And then they don't say what's on the envelopes, they don't say the amount of money that's written on the envelopes. So you don't know what— The first couple that goes up, they pick one, it's \$125,000 dollars. And they're like, "I'll— Yay? Objectively, great, but..."

Rachel: It felt like we were at the school auction for our children's elementary school. It felt like they got down to the last episode, and they were like, "Oh, shoot."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: "We forgot how to do this."

Griffin: How to end it, how to do it.

Rachel: "Uh..." [laughs]

Griffin: So this couple picks love, and then they are penalized \$125,000 dollars, ending up with a total of \$125,000 dollars. When they could have just said, "Listen, you pick money, I'll pick love, and then we'll hook back up after this, and then take the \$250K and fuckin' run with it, dog."

Rachel: My theory, when they announced the, "Either you pick love or money," is that they sequestered the two individuals, and did not allow them to check in with each other.

Because if they did, certainly somebody would have said, "I'm gonna pretend..."

Griffin: So easy to game this.

Rachel: "I'm gonna pretend I pick money, and then we're gonna get back together, and I'll split the money with you."

Griffin: But the couple that picks \$125,000 dollars, I don't think they know how to react. Because I think they think they picked the lowest amount that's in the envelopes. Which is evidenced by the fact that the second couple that goes and picks an envelope, their cash prize for *Bachelor in Paradise* is \$190,000 dollars.

Rachel: [through laughter] 100—

Griffin: What the fuck, *Bachelor in*— What are you guys doing!? \$190,000 dollars!?

Rachel: My theory was that they went over their alcohol budget by, like, \$10,000. And so, they were like, "Well, we'll just take it out of the prize pod at the end, so we can break even. So, let's give them \$190 instead of \$200."
[chuckles]

Griffin: But they didn't know what was in the other envelopes.

Rachel: Yeah. True.

Griffin: So, I made the point of, it's like being on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Except it's *Who Wants to Win Some Amount of Money?* And Regis Philbin is like, "Alright. For the next question..."

Rachel: [laughing hard]

Griffin: "You've banked some amounts of money! But this next question is a hard one. You can drop out now, and take, ehh, some money home."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: "That's correct! You've got more. It is more. I can't tell you exactly how much, but it's more." It's fucking crazy, man.

Rachel: “Do you wanna drop out now, and maybe lose *some* amount of money, of do you wanna risk it for *some* amount of money?” [laughs]

Griffin: I know I sound like a snob so often when I talk about reality TV, but it’s so hard to spend so much time watching so many finely-crafted, intricate, usually South Korean reality competition shows where the shows are so fuckin’ finely-tuned.

Rachel: I know. I *know*!

Griffin: To have them go on a show where it’s like, “Everybody? You’re gonna stand outside of this circular room, and answer questions. And, um, if you pick the same questions as another person, you go in the middle. And maybe you kiss, or something? I don’t know, go for it!”

Rachel: “We’re gonna do a challenge that is entirely walkie-talkie-based, and we are going to not purchase good walkie-talkies.” [laughs]

Griffin: Guys, no fucking joke, there’s this challenge where one of ‘em gets in a box and relays instructions to the other person. But they bought the shittiest walkie-talkies ever; nobody could hear anything!

Rachel: So, there must have been one pair of walkie-talkies that actually worked, because some teams seemed to have no problem communicating. And then the other teams could not understand each other at all.

Griffin: It’s crazy to me. It is crazy to me.

Rachel: Can you imagine if the creators of *Devil’s Plan* sat down and watched [through laughter] this season of *Bachelor in Paradise*?

Griffin: Heartbreak. How challenging that would be for them to get through.

Rachel: [laughs] They’d be like, “Wait. So *that’s* the game? So, they— That’s all? That was the whole game that they did?”

Griffin: We don’t get nasty here on *Wonderful!*, as a rule, usually.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: This was so flagrant. This was so flagrant, and it's— Fuckin' shame on me! Charlie Brown with the football. We watched *Perfect Match*; I'll stand ten toes on that shit.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: That show has become what *BIP* aspires, now, to be. But this, it's so crazy the number of huge whiffs!

Rachel: They were trying stuff out. This season...

Griffin: You know, you gotta.

Rachel: It was a growing year. Isn't that what they say in sports?

Griffin: A rebuilding year, yeah.

Rachel: A rebuilding year for *Bachelor in Paradise*, assuming that the franchise [through laughter] stays around.

Griffin: Who knows, man?

Rachel: Who knows?

Griffin: Do you have a small wonder? I guess we can do small wonders real quick. That... usually is where those go.

Rachel: [bursts out laughing]
Um, my small wonder— Do you have one?

Griffin: I mean, new *Hollow Knight*. *Hollow Knight: Silksong*.

Rachel: Oh, yeah.

Griffin: Been in the works seven years. I know that you don't know— Have much religion there, but it's [strained] really fucking good. It's really good.

You're like a little bug, and you're exploring this little bug world, and it's all dark and moody. But it's really fun to explore.

Rachel: Yeah...

Griffin: And it's so big, and—

Rachel: Big son seems very delighted by it.

Griffin: Big son has taken a swing at it. He's eight, folks, and this game is hard as fuck.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It's hard for me, and I played the hell out of the last one, and I am still getting my butt kicked. So, there's a lot of coaching, but he beat his first boss last night. And the triumph on his face was...

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Oh, God, so good.

Rachel: Yeah, he's very determined.

Griffin: He is.

Rachel: It's in his blood, you know.

Griffin: He beat *Tears of the Kingdom*. Largely by himself. It was...

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I mean, come on.

Rachel: So proud.

Griffin: I am very proud.

Rachel: I mean, I wanna say, like... I don't know, I'm back on that pumpkin bread.

Griffin: Mm-hmm.

Rachel: Got that pumpkin bread in there.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: We had a few cool days. I mean, it's back into summertime weather, but we had a few cool days there, and I made some pumpkin bread. And I felt like, really, I was leaning in. And that's kind of— I don't know, that's September, man.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Rachel: I love it.

Griffin: I got another small wonder that we haven't really talked about! 'Cause we didn't have an episode last week; apologies for that. We were on tour, and then everyone in our family got sick, as you can probably tell from my baritone. We went to see Chris Fleming, live, here in DC.

Rachel: Yeah! Oh, and—

Griffin: And he was fucking hysterically funny.

Rachel: Yeah. So funny.

Griffin: Probably the hardest I've laughed at a live comedy show...

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: ... in this decade.

Rachel: Griffin was laughing so loud. And I think loud in a way that, when we finished watching the show, there were fans that spotted him of the McElroy podcasts. And probably knew he was there, because they [through laughter] had heard him laugh.

Griffin: 'Cause of my shrill...

Rachel: [laughs uncontrollably]

Griffin: ... witch-like cackle that I— Yeah. I mean, I think he is one of the funniest to do it today.

Rachel: Unbelievable.

Griffin: And just the extent to which he can keep a bit going, and keep building on it, is really genuinely masterful in its craft. I think he's just a genius.

Rachel: Yeah. And also do the crowd work. Like...

Griffin: The crowd work is so fucking funny.

Rachel: I don't know if every crowd is as rowdy as the crowd in DC was— And not to say that DC was rowdy, but people were...

Griffin: It was a 3:00 PM show that we saw him at.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: The wiggles hour, as he called it.

Rachel: [through laughter] The wiggles hour, as he called it.

Griffin: But he read DC so well, and doing that kind of local comedy is so hard. But his only observation is, like, "The number of tucked-in shirts per capita here is through the roof."

Rachel: [laughs] And people were just kind of occasionally shouting things out. And he would stop his incredibly complicated program that he was doing, engage with that person, and then hop right back into where he was.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And also notice the anxiety that people felt when he would [holding back laughter] hop out of his incredibly-complicated program.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: That, I really appreciated. He's like, "Woah. You guys are really nervous that I'm not gonna be able to get back to my [through laughter] story."

Griffin: Really transparent in that way, in a way that it feels risky, but I don't know. The more that someone can pull that off, the more you feel like, "Okay. We're in good hands here."

Rachel: Yeah. No, that was fantastic.

Griffin: Go see Chris Fleming, if you...

Rachel: He's still on tour.

Griffin: He's still on tour, and I think he's just one of the best, man.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: You go first this week.

Rachel: I do.

Griffin: What have you got for me?

Rachel: Okay. The person I wanna talk about, I am like 99% sure you will have heard of.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: But I am not sure that you are actually familiar with their work, and that is the children's author Beverly Cleary.

Griffin: Beverly Cleary wrote *Ramona*?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: And... That's all I can remember. But I do know that, so where's my prize?

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: You drop so many literary references on this show, and I think I've clocked— This is the second one, so I would like a reward, please. A little candy treat.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: A sticker. A little ball. Perhaps a grape.

Rachel: [laughs] I mean, the one you're forgetting is *The Mouse and the Motorcycle*.

Griffin: Damn it.

Rachel: I don't know if you realized that was Beverly Cleary, though.

Griffin: I didn't realize that.

Rachel: 'Cause it was kind of a departure from form, a little bit.

Griffin: Well, I don't think I read *Ramona*, so I'm not sure I know what the form is.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: So, I wouldn't have clocked that, either way.

Rachel: The book that brought me to talking about Beverly Cleary was another book she had written that you might be familiar with called *Dear Mr. Henshaw*.

Griffin: Hmm. I don't think I know— I've heard that one. I don't know of it.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. *Dear Mr. Henshaw*, I was thinking of this book today. It is a book where a young boy writes letters to his favorite author.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: And the book is totally written just as the letters, and it is just from his side of the exchange.

Griffin: I love that. What's that called? There's a word for... Epis... Epistomolo...

Rachel: Oh, gosh, you're so close!

Griffin: Epistolary?

Rachel: I think you're right. Because I had never— Yes. "A juvenile epistolary novel by Beverly Cleary."

Griffin: Epistolary. Fuck yeah, I'm so glad I remembered that!

Rachel: Wow! Griff, I'm so impressed with you.

Griffin: I mean, I remembered it mostly from Bible stuff.

Rachel: Oh.

Griffin: Because there's a lot of—

Rachel: You always get me with that Bible stuff, man!

Griffin: Well, what can I say? I had a well-rounded... [wheeze-laughs]

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: ... upbringing. [gasping laughter] Runs the gambit.

Rachel: [holding back laughter] The thing that struck me... So I was thinking about that book. 'Cause it was one of my favorite books when I was a kid. And I

didn't realize – and this is something that happens a lot, I think, when you are a child, is that what the book was really about...

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And the reason that she wrote it was that she had gotten a prompt from one of her fans, to write a book about a child dealing with their parents' divorce.

Griffin: Oh, wow.

Rachel: And I was like, "Wait, *what!?*" [laughs]

Griffin: Is that, sort of, the subject matter of the letters?

Rachel: "I don't remember that at all about *Dear Mr. Henshaw!*" [laughs]

Griffin: Is that what the letters are about, to Mr. Henshaw?

Rachel: There is a point where he talks about having to move.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: And, like, what they can afford when they move, and the change in his environment.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And I don't think I ever really connected that it was... a result of a divorce? I would have to look at the book again, honestly.

Griffin: Mm.

Rachel: Does this cover do anything for you?

Griffin: That's just a boy writing a—

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: That was my attempt to see if maybe you did actually remember this book.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: Anyway, it was one of my faves. But I also, of course, loved the *Ramona* books. Beverly Cleary—

Griffin: Was she a detective in those books?

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Or am I getting my [simultaneously] *Harriet the Spy*—

Rachel: That's [simultaneously] *Harriet the Spy*.

Griffin: Thank you.

Rachel: Another one of my favorites.

Griffin: That wasn't Beverly Cleary, though.

Rachel: No.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: No.

Beverly Cleary— So the thing that is kind of incredible about Beverly Cleary, I mean, first of all, she lived to 104 years old.

Griffin: Jesus *Christ*!

Rachel: [chuckles] Which is... You know, kind of remarkable, I would say.

Griffin: Yeah, man.

Rachel: And the thing that, I mean, is extra super amazing, is that the books

really hold up. I was reading some of the books before we started recording today. 'Cause I was just thinking, like...

Part of why— The reason I was thinking about this is that we're always kind of struggling to find books that Henry will like.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And a lot of the books that we read as kids just don't feel appropriate, because they feel dated in some way.

Griffin: Boring! Yeah.

Rachel: [laughs] Um... I feel like either pacing, or the voice is wrong, or the subject matter. I— I don't know. When I was reading her books, I kind of felt like— I don't know, I felt like maybe there was a shot.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I might be wrong about that.
But anyway, so she was born [laughs] in 1916.

Griffin: Wow!

Rachel: Yeah. She went to junior college, then went on to library school, and was a librarian. And the first book she wrote was in 1950, and it was called *Henry Huggins*, which was about an eight-year-old boy finding a dog. And that was what made me— Maybe our Henry Huggins would like that book, I don't know.

Griffin: Maybe.

Rachel: I don't know. But in that book, there were side characters of Beatrice, or Beezus, and her little sister Ramona.

Griffin: So this is a spin-off situation.

Rachel: Which, yeah, turned into spin-offs. So she wrote into the 50s and 60s. *Mouse and the Motorcycle* came after she had her own kids in the 60s. She had a little boy who did not enjoy reading, and she basically sat him down and was like, "What kind of books would you be interested in?"

And he was like, "A book about a motorcycle."

Griffin: Cool!

Rachel: And so that's how she... [laughs uncontrollably]

Griffin: Man, that's a good idea.

Rachel: [through laughter] So that's how she came up with *Mouse and the Motorcycle*.

Yeah, I mean, Griffin, if you're thinking about writing children's books, maybe you should...

Griffin: Yeah. I mean, I'm between projects right now. It's a good time for me to sit our kids down, and say, "What do you guys like? What can I write a whole book about?"

Rachel: But yeah, what's wild is that— So *Henry Huggins*, 1950. *Henry and Beezus*, 1952. The *Ramona* books didn't show up until the late 1960s. So she kind of walked away from those characters for a long time, and then brought them back. And those, by far, are most popular characters.

The thing that was so great about those books is that she was so in touch with, kind of, that experience of being a kid. And it was written in this way that felt very true— I don't know. It felt very true to how you experience your world as a kid. I was reading this section of one of the books...

[page turning noise]

Griffin: What was that?

Rachel: [laughs hard] I have the— I have the eBook up on my computer, and it has page-turning noises. [laughs]

Griffin: Oh, man, that was crisp, babe!

Rachel: I was reading a section of *Ramona the Pest*. 'Cause I was trying to remember, "What is it all about?" Because I don't really remember the subject matters of the book. And she's talking about walking to school on her first day.

And she says, quote, "Then Mary Jane arrived. 'Miss Quimby, would it be alright if Beezus and I take Ramona to kindergarten?'

"'No,' said Ramona instantly. Mary Jane was one of those girls who always wanted to pretend she was a mother, and who always wanted Ramona to be the baby. Nobody was going to catch Ramona being a baby on her first day of school.

"'Why not?' Mrs. Quimby asked Ramona. 'You could walk to school with Beatrice like a big girl!'

"'No, I couldn't.' Ramona was not fooled for an instant. Mary Jane would talk in that silly voice she used when she was being a mother, and take her by the hand, and help her across the street, and everyone would think she was a baby."

[giggles]

Griffin: That's really, really, very, very... Really, very good.

Rachel: [laughs] Just very straightforward, and very honest, and—

Griffin: Gets at something that kids feel, and maybe don't have the best skills to vocalize. Or, I don't know, expound upon.

Rachel: Yeah! And it's a very memorable feeling.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: Like, you're much more perceptive as a kid than adults realize. And kind of being able to speak to that— And, I mean, that was written in 1968.

Griffin: Yeah. It's incredible.

Rachel: There's nothing dated about that. They're not talking about playing "kick the can." [chuckles]

Griffin: Right, yeah. As so many books from the era do.

Rachel: Um... [laughs]

Griffin: You read a *Hardy Boys* book, and it's like, half can-kicking.

Rachel: [laughs] *Boxcar Children*, again.

Griffin: *Boxcar Children.*

Rachel: A lot of can content. [laughs]

Griffin: A lot of cans, a lot of rubella.

Rachel: She said, in an interview with her alma mater where she went to library school, she said, "As a child, I disliked books in which children learn to be better children." [laughs]

Griffin: Hell yes!

Rachel: Which I thought was a nice way of putting it! She said she didn't really like reading as a kid, and a lot of it was because she just didn't find the material particularly interesting.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And she worked really hard, I think, to speak to that experience. And she said that she felt very lucky to have such a strong memory of her own childhood.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: And to be able to kind of draw on that so precisely, when she wrote her books.

Griffin: I'm always really impressed by people who have such, I don't know, coherent memories from their childhood. I feel like mine is so patchy, and people who are able to conjure that and *use* it in their writing and stuff, it feels like a superpower.

Rachel: In the book, Ramona and her father, her dad loses his job. And then she hears, later, him talking about some kid making a bunch of money being in a television commercial. And so, she decides she's going to make a television commercial to earn money for the family. So, she goes out, and makes a crown for herself out of the burs in the field near their house. And then her dad has to pick all the burs out of her hair.

And I was just like, "God. It's just so... specific." [laughs]

Griffin: And brutal, yeah.

Rachel: She said that when she was a kid, she always wondered, quote, "Why didn't authors write books about everyday problems that children could solve by themselves?" Which I feel like is such a precise, again...

Griffin: That's really— Yeah.

Rachel: Like, "Why weren't there more stories about children playing? Why couldn't I find more books that would make me laugh? These were the books I wanted to read, and the books I was eventually to write."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: So yeah, I just found it really inspiring to kind of read about her, and kind of remember her experience, and read those books again, too. I'm always scared to show stuff to big son, and have him not like it.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And that was my one shot. [laughs hard]

Griffin: Yeah, right.

Rachel: But I just felt like it's a good reminder that there are some books out there that are, in fact, timeless.

Griffin: That can hang, yeah. For sure.

Rachel: And I feel like her books definitely are.

Griffin: Yeah. Can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

[ad break]

Griffin: It's a weird one. There's a few reasons I wanted to do it, though. And I'll

tell you about those after I introduce it. I wanna talk about how crazy the insides of our ears are.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I was gonna do a whole segment on the inner ear. 'Cause it's, like, crazy how much stuff is going on in just your inner ear. But honestly, there's so much stuff happening throughout the ear that is just batshit wild that I decided, "I'm gonna try to tackle the whole kit and caboodle."

Rachel: Go for it, man! I would love to learn more about the ear.

Griffin: I feel like I have learned a lot about the ear, through my own ENT journey, and through Henry's— especially his ENT journey.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: The number of ear, nose, and throat doctor visits that we have done in the last eight years is, between my nose stuff and his ear— If one of us had throat stuff, we'd really have the whole gamut of ear, nose, and throat.

Rachel: [laughs] We'd get a real punch card.

Griffin: Yeah, exactly.

Rachel: And then a free sandwich.

Griffin: But I've learned a lot. Because every time you go to an— What is it, otolaryngologist? That sounded right.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: They always have models and diagrams of the ear.

Rachel: Yes!

Griffin: And every time I am confronted with that, I am just fucking blown away at the construction of this thing.

Rachel: It *is* bonkers.

Griffin: It is bonkers, 'cause there's stuff in there that doesn't look like any other stuff in your body.

Rachel: Well, and it explains why, too— 'Cause we just watched that *Final Draft* show.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: And there were a lot of fighters on there whose ears had just been *devastated* in various boxing matches. And there's not a lot you can do to repair those guys, 'cause they're so complex.

Griffin: Yeah, of course.

Rachel: Like, the ear is a very complicated thing.

Griffin: The ear is a super complicated thing. So, there's three parts of the year. I'm gonna try not to get too middle school science class, but I don't know. I definitely learned this stuff at some point and then immediately was like, "I don't need to remember this," and then forgot it.

Rachel: I mean, it's just outer, middle, and inner.

Griffin: Outer, middle, inner, right?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And the outer ear is also called the *auricle*.

Rachel: Ooh!

Griffin: A-U-R-I-C-L-E, the auricle. Which is just your visible— What you can see, right?

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: And the ear canal leading up to the ear drum, right?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It's not especially spectacular. It is cool that those can be different. Like, the fact that some look—

Rachel: Super different.

Griffin: Some lobes connect, and some don't. And some point forward, and some— Like, that's cool. I think that's pretty neat. It's also kind of wild that your outer ear just makes wax that it is constantly pushing outward, to get stuff— Like, you have a conveyor belt inside your ear of wax that is just always trying to get stuff out of there. That's fucking cool!

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: When you get to the middle ear— This is where shit gets wild. You got your eardrum, right? And as you hear sound waves hit that, it vibrates. Right behind that, there's an empty, hollow— Not empty, but a hollow chamber, like a pocket. And in that pocket are the *ossicles*, which sounds like I'm saying obstacles...

Rachel: Or popsicles.

Griffin: Or popsicles.

Rachel: Like, in a toddler way.

Griffin: And it's like a three-part machine that translates the vibrations of your eardrum into vibrations in your inner ear. That moves the fluid in your inner ear around, which is what creates the signals that go to the brain that is noise, that makes sound that you hear.

One of those ossicles, the last one in the machine, is a tiny little wishbone-shaped guy— Do you know the name of it? Do you know the name of any of the inner ear bones?

Rachel: Oh...

Griffin: I could only remember this one.

Rachel: I did. I don't.

Griffin: *Stapes*. It's the stapes.

Rachel: Oh. No, I didn't know that one.

Griffin: The stapes is the smallest one. It's at the very tip, and it connects to a little, tiny, oval membrane of the inner ear that it gently, gently, so gently wiggles around, to create the signals.
It is three millimeters long! It is a three-millimeter-long *bone* in your body.

Rachel: [whispering] Wild.

Griffin: And I saw a picture of the middle ear bones just on someone's fingertip, which is crazy...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I don't know how they got 'em. Probably some way that is unpleasant to think about, but like...

Rachel: [through laughter] Yeah.

Griffin: Seeing the— If you stacked up two pennies, the height of that is three millimeters. That's how big the stapes is.

Rachel: *Wow*.

Griffin: It's so, so, so, so, so little.

Rachel: [exhales]

Griffin: And it is like a bottleneck of all sound, and how it goes into the ear.

Rachel: Jesus.

Griffin: That's fucking *wild*, that you got this tiny little baby bone in your ear that connects the outside world to your brain— Like, that's *so*—

Rachel: Man.

Griffin: That is *profoundly* strange to me.

Rachel: You're really making a case for why people pursue the ENT profession. 'Cause it *is* kind of amazing.

Griffin: It's so incredible—just in the middle ear, too.

Rachel: [snorts]

Griffin: And I haven't even gotten to my favorite part of the middle ear, which is the Eustachian tube.

Rachel: Oh, yeah.

Griffin: You know about the Eustachian tube.

Rachel: I know about that one.

Griffin: We've had to learn about the Eustachian tube.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: What with the number of ear infections we have weathered in this house. You got a backdoor to that little pocket in your middle ear, right? Where all the ossicles are. And it's a tiny little tube called the Eustachian tube that connects down to the back of your nose. And that tube is closed by default. By default, it is fully shut. It is squinched closed, right?

Any time you chew, or yawn, or swallow, any time that you feel your eardrums pop, it's not actually your eardrums popping. It is a regulation of the outer air pressure and the pressure of the air inside of your middle ear, that is regulated by that Eustachian tube opening. And letting the air sort of... normalize, right?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: That is mostly why I wanted to talk about this. I had an experience— When we were at Dragon Con, we were doing a thing in a hotel. And we went up to the *47th floor* of this building in this inward-facing elevator. So you could look down into the lobby for [chuckles] 47 stories below you, which was really freaky.

But in the elevator, around floor 25, everyone at the same time was like, “Ugh! Ah!” as our ears all popped at the same time, which is sort of a wild thing. This is the most mind-boggling part of this. And this is something I recently learned, and it kind of... It freaked my bean a little bit, so this is like a bean-freak warning, if you don’t wanna know this.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Let me ask you a question. And this question is tough to verbalize, and it’s tough to understand. But think about what I am asking.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: Can you voluntarily— I’m not saying, like, “Is it possible?” I’m asking if you, Rachel, can voluntarily, without yawning or chewing or swallowing, can you regular the pressure in your Eustachian tube, just with the muscles in your jaw? Can you “click your ears,” is another way of putting it?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Everybody at home, I hope you’re doing it too, just to see if you can.

Rachel: I don’t... *think* so.

Griffin: This thing, this phenomenon, is really, really tough to describe. I can do it, and I’ve always sort of been able to do it without realizing it’s a thing that my body can do.

Rachel: I can— If I move my jaw, I can feel it in my ears.

Griffin: But it's not— Nothing moves. That is the wild part about the clicking of the ears. Like...

Rachel: You're just thinking about it?

Griffin: Well, no, I'm not thinking about it. There's a muscle I am flexing. I forget the— It's, like, "timpanic" something.

Rachel: *Oh.*

Griffin: Muscle that you flex. This is how Wikipedia phrases this, okay?

Rachel: Huh!

Griffin: "Some people learn to voluntarily click their ears together or separately, performing a pressure-equalizing routine by opening their Eustachian tubes when pressure changes are experienced, as in ascending or descending in an aircraft, mountain..." driving? That's probably— "Mountain driving?" Oh, yeah, I guess.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: "Elevator lift, drops, et cetera. Some people are even able to deliberately keep their Eustachian tubes open for a brief period, and even increase or decrease air pressure in the inner ear. The clicking can actually be heard by putting one's ear to another's while performing the clicking sound." Babe, I didn't know that last part, and I took a voice memo of my ear, and I did it.

Rachel: [through laughter] Oh, no!

Griffin: And I can fucking hear it. And I was like, "What!?"

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: "There's a thing my body can do that I didn't know was a thing!"
Do you wanna hear it?

Rachel: Okay...
[pause]

Griffin: Can you hear that?

Rachel: [laughs] Maybe?

Griffin: You wanna hear the other ear?
[pause]

Rachel: Oh, my God! [laughs] Wow, it sounded like blinking.

Griffin: Yeah, it's sort of a—

Rachel: It sounded like your eyes blinking, but like a loud...

Griffin: I'm not gonna do it into the microphone, 'cause I don't gross people all the way out.

Rachel: Like a loud blink.

Griffin: It sounds like a loud blink. That's a really good way of putting it.

Rachel: Huh! Um—

Griffin: It's just a thing I can do.

Rachel: Yeah. Now, I'm wondering— 'Cause I feel like I'm trying to do it right now, while I'm thinking about it, but I don't know if it's actually doing it.

Griffin: It's sort of a back-of-the-throat feeling, but it's a m—

Rachel: It feels like I'm raising the eyebrows of my ears.

Griffin: That's a really good way of putting it.

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: That's, like, crazy. That's crazy. And everything that I found about this thing, every thread that I would find about it, would just be people going, "Holy

shit. I didn't know this is a thing people could do. I didn't know this is a thing."
But apparently, it's not a thing that everyone can?

Rachel: Yeah. You describing it as flexing helped me kind of get my head around it.

Griffin: I don't even know what's going on in there when I do it!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It's crazy, but it makes a sound. And sometimes, it feels okay, when my ears are experiencing quite a bit of pressure.
Anyway, um...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Inner ear, it just looks like some fucked up Junji Ito shit. You have— First of all, it's in a part of your skull called the *bony labyrinth*.

Rachel: Wild.

Griffin: That's pretty good! And you have that spiral thing, the cochlea, which has all the fluid in it. And that handles the hearing side of things. And then you have three semicircular rings that join at right angles, that have fluid in it. And those three rings – if you think about sort of an X, Y, and Z axis situation – that handles your balance. Those have the fluid in them, too.

Rachel: Oh!

Griffin: So, you have three levels, tools in your ear, that are...

Rachel: Wild. This should be a video game.

Griffin: How would that work?

Rachel: Just traveling through the ear.

Griffin: Yeah. That would be cool.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: That would be— *Magic School Bus* it.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: There's just— There's a lot to talk about, with the ear. I have barely scratched the surface. But it's fucking wild how much stuff it handles, how much stuff it can do.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: How super intricate— Like, how *preposterously* intricate a machine it is. And I don't know, we've become very familiar with the ears' workings because of tubes, and surgeries, and what-have-you that you and I have both had, and our kids have experienced. But it is frustrating how finicky it can be, at times, certainly. But I'm just blown away by the hardware that's going on in there, 'cause it's really, really, really insane.

Rachel: Yeah. I really— I have so many questions about the ear. Because it just seems like some people are more predisposed to challenges than others. Some people will go most of their life and almost never have, or never have, an ear infection. You know?

Griffin: Yes, sure.

Rachel: Just 'cause their ears drain so dang well. You know? Or if they get sick, it just never settles in their ear or something. I don't know.

Griffin: Some people, whenever they get sick, they also get a bonus ear infection.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Which has been the case, honestly, at this house, [crosstalk].

Rachel: I feel like the architecture of my head, and I guess of big son's head— or

ear in particular is such that if either of us ever gets water in our ear, it instantly turns into some kind of infection.

Griffin: It turns into Mood Slime from *Ghostbusters 2*.

Rachel: [laughs] And I feel like it's something about the way that they are built!

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And I just think it's interesting. And I wonder if it has been narrowed down by science.

Griffin: It's maybe your bony labyrinth is really hard to— It's *Pan's Labyrinth*.

Rachel: I did have a doctor tell me once that I have very narrow ear canals.

Griffin: Wow.

Rachel: And I felt like maybe I should be flattered? But maybe that's why stuff can't get out of there.

Griffin: What tone of voice did he have when he said that?

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: 'Cause, do I have to go kick this guy's *ass*?

Rachel: [laughs hard]

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

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: [Ance?] says, "I love to put a hook in the wall, and hang up a tool or other useful object right in arm's reach, where I'll need it. Screwdriver? Hook. Hairbrush? Hook. Shopping bag full of new hooks? Hook."

Rachel: [bursts out laughing]

Griffin: I do like that.

Rachel: That is really great. I put little hooks up to hang our kids' little jackets from.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And it does make me very happy.

Griffin: It is great. Every time you use the hook. And you're like, "Where's the kid's jacket? Oh, hook. Right there, awesome."

Rachel: On the hook, where it's supposed to be.

Griffin: Noah says, "My girlfriend and I have found a YouTube series called Kasso." That's spelled K-A-S-S-O. "It's basically *Ninja Warrior* on a skateboard. It's wonderfully obscure, lighthearted, and everyone involved is just so genuinely happy to be doing this weird thing. Beating the clock events are of course the standard, but my favorite are any event where it's just simply, 'Who can get the furthest on this crazy obstacle?'"

It's a Japanese— I don't know if it's a show that is airing on TV overseas, or if it is just strictly a YouTube thing. Evan Minsker actually sent me a link to this a long time ago.

Rachel: Oh!

Griffin: I watched a clip, but I didn't know it was a recurring thing. But they will set up, like how on *Ninja Warrior* they have courses, obstacle courses, going over big pools of water.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: This'll be like, "Grind this winding rail that goes over this pit of water." And people just try to balance on their skateboards as they go...

Rachel: Oh, that's cool!

Griffin: It is *Ninja Warrior* on a skateboard. It's very fun; we should watch some sometime.

Thank you so much for listening. Thanks to bo en and Augustus for the use of our theme song, "Money Won't Play." You can find a link to that in the episode description.

We got some new merch up at McElroyMerch.com. We've got a new shirt modeled after Garyl from *The Adventure Zone* – it was designed by Lin Doyle – that I'm just wild about. It looks really, really good. It's just a nice shirt, folks. Stop grilling me about this, okay?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It's just a nice shirt, with a cool picture of a two-horned horse on it.

Rachel: "Why do you like this shirt, Griffin!?"

Griffin: Hey, calm down. I love it. 10% of all merch proceeds this month will be donated to Equality Florida, which is dedicated to securing full equality for Florida's LGBTQ community.

Got some live shows coming up. This week, we're gonna be doing *MBMBaM* and *TAZ* in San Antonio and Austin. And I think at our Austin *MBMBaM* show, we're gonna open with *Wonderful!*

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: As the two prodigal children, who is us...

Rachel: We're coming back, guys.

Griffin: ... come on back home. So if you're coming to the *MBMBaM* show, and you have a question you want read, go ahead and shoot your email to MBMBaM@MaximumFun.org, and put your city in the subject line.

I guess, also, if you're gonna be at that *Wonderful!* show, send in your own audience submission. Something you love about Austin, if you're gonna be at that show.

Rachel: Oh, that's fun!

Griffin: That'll be fun. Maybe we could read one of those on stage.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: That's it, folks. Thank you so— Oh, bit.ly/McElroyTours is where you can go for ticket links. We're also coming to Utah and California later this year. Thank you so much for listening. Hope you enjoyed, and I think hopefully, we'll be able to stand by all the stuff we talked about this week.
[theme music starts playing in background]

Griffin: And we won't have to un-wondie...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Un-wondie next time, you know what I mean? That should be a sometimes food.

Rachel: [laughs]

[theme music plays]

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