

Wonderful! 399: We Keep You Warm With Our Coat Show

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

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hi! This is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is Wonderful!

Griffin: This is a podcast where we talk about things that we like, that's good, that we're into. Keep you warm in these cold winter months, like a big, puffy coat, full of goosey down and...

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Wool and cotton, and all the fabrics. It's an amazing technicolor dream coat, that you listen to. And scientists are so confused, they say, "How come listening to a podcast makes you warm and hot?" And we say, "It's hot stuff, I don't know."

Rachel: Yeah, the spicy love between these two lovers.

Griffin: Yeah, that's what we say. We always know when scientists are talking shit about our show, and we will call them up and we'll be like, "Maybe it's the spicy love between two lovers."

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: And they say, "There is no scientific evidence for anything that you just said. How did you get my home phone number? Why are you calling—it's 11 o'clock at night, why are you two podcast hosts calling me in my house?"

Rachel: [chuckles] I bet if we surveyed Wonderful listeners against maybe some other podcasts—

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Obviously not on the Maximum Fun Network, our listeners would be happier and spicier.

Griffin: Yes! Call me Daddy, call me sad... sadly.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [chuckles] This is the only podcast—

Rachel: And that is our competitor, that's our main competitor.

Griffin: It's us and it's Call Me Sadly. And we're doing our—we're doing our best out here. Losing quite a bit of market share, but that's okay, because we keep you warm with our coat show. Do you have any Small Wonders to start off things with our Coat Show here?

Rachel: I mean, we've been watching Stranger Things.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Which is, it's such a wild show, right?

Griffin: I got made fun of for talking about it on Besties.

Rachel: Oh, really? What, did they fall off the wagon? Because everybody was watching that show years ago.

Griffin: I think it's just that, you know, everybody there, they bring like cool, pop-cultural sort of stuff, and I brought—Justin made fun of me and said, "I only heard about it from the Gushers that my kids eat." The special Stranger Things brand of gush—

Rachel: [chuckles] That's not really making fun of you, though. That's just on-brand.

Griffin: It felt like make—it felt like making fun of me.

Rachel: Well, he does, he—does he know that you like Gusher so much?

Griffin: No, he doesn't, actually.

Rachel: Yeah. So, it's just him knowing about the cross-promotions that's happening between brands, which is very much his—

Griffin: Very much.

Rachel: Wheelhouse.

Griffin: Yeah, you're right. Maybe it was a nice compliment.

Rachel: I will say, the show—the show is at its best when it gives me like real Goonies vibes.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: There's a lot about the show that is not peak television, but like, I'm always entertained.

Griffin: Super nasty! Super gory!

Rachel: Yeah, real gory. Like, a lot of people I think have kids that watch this show, because it's about kids. But whew, this is season—

Griffin: It's TV 14, and a man's head gets turned into a bowling ball, like real bad stuff.

Rachel: Yeah, it's gross.

Griffin: I'm gonna just say, Small Wonder, just to—just broadly speaking, Candenights was so lovely.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It was—it was this past weekend, and it was really wonderful just to have everyone, you know, in our hometown come out and come to the show. The turnout was amazing. And the show ended up being like a big two and a half hour, three-hour long affair.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: We had a lot of—we had a lot of stuff prepared, and so it ended up being a truly enormous amount of programming.

Rachel: We did—we did a walk through and kind of an estimate on time. And what were we thinking? We were thinking it was going to be like—

Griffin: Like a clean two hours, in and out, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah, like an hour 45.

Griffin: *Nope.*

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: So, hopefully folks who came to the show knew what they were getting into. But there was so much fun stuff in there, and we're going to be able to put it up to watch on demand starting December 19th. We're going to be putting it up streaming. Originally, the plan was December 19th, at 9PM, we were going to like put it up—

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: And then be in the live chat. We may end up moving the time, because—

Rachel: Up? Or—

Griffin: Sooner—

Rachel: When?

Griffin: Because—

Rachel: Sooner? Oh, because it'll be ready sooner do you think?

Griffin: Well, no, because it's quite a long sort of program, and starting it at 9PM would be—

Rachel: Oh, so then starting—yeah. [laughs]

Griffin: Would be challenging, but—

Rachel: Good point.

Griffin: But hopefully folks will—you know, grab your streaming ticket, bit.ly/candlenights2025, and you can watch it anytime you want through like I think January 4th. And all of the proceeds go to benefit Harmony House, which, again, could really use the help. And it's just a ton of fun! And I hope folks will grab a streaming ticket so they can be part of the—of the wave.

Rachel: You can see my fancy dress.

Griffin: Rachel wore the most beautiful, most fancy dress.

Rachel: I wore a fancy dress, and I wore like a—like a little coat accessory.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And I had heels that match the dress.

Griffin: And you brought shame to your social media presence.

Rachel: Well...

Griffin: Some shame to your—

Rachel: Spoiler? Do we want to bring a spoiler into this?

Griffin: I mean, I was thinking less a spoiler and more of just like a little teaser. Like just to whet their appetite.

Rachel: Yeah, nobody has commented on that, by the way. [chuckles]

Griffin: That's great, I love that. I love that for you.

Rachel: And it like speaks to the like, I don't know, the Midwestness experience of like, let's just be polite about this strange thing that I just saw, that I think is embarrassing.

Griffin: A lot of fun stuff in that show. Hey, you go first this week.

Rachel: I do.

Griffin: What would you like to—I love your vest, by the way.

Rachel: Thank you!

Griffin: You're rockin' a vest with a little Oxford underneath situation. It's really—

Rachel: I always feel like I look a little bit, I don't know—

Griffin: Preppy?

Rachel: Or like a 14-year-old boy?

Griffin: *No.*

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: No...

Rachel: Okay, good. So, my topic this week was inspired by something we did on our trip home to Huntington, which was to watch cheesy Christmas movies.

Griffin: Yes!

Rachel: We watched Champagne Problems and we watched Christmas at the Catnip Café.

Griffin: That one was largely just kind of on in the—that one just kind of—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Washed over us.

Rachel: I couldn't really tell you the plot, other than there were obviously cats.

Griffin: Yeah. Champagne Problems was all right. That's, I guess, the new Netflix one. Minka Kelly—

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: Is a champagne business woman, who goes to a champagnery in France, and falls in love with a bookstore owner/champagnery heir.

Rachel: Champagnery. [chuckles]

Griffin: Heir to a champagne empire.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It's really accessible stuff for everyone, I think.

Rachel: [laughs] Griffin and I were talking a lot about how this kind of new phenomenon in film where—like, I mean, I haven't seen Emily in Paris, but this idea that like this woman gets this opportunity to do this incredibly luxurious, elite thing, and you're watching it knowing that you will never have that experience, or know anyone that has that experience. [chuckles]

Griffin: Sure, yeah.

Rachel: So, I want to—I also want to clarify, a lot of times, these episodes get billed as like, "Rachel's favorite X." These are not my favorite Christmas movies. [laughs]

Griffin: No?

Rachel: These are like, my favorite like guilty pleasure at the holiday time. Because like, obviously, there are movies that have Christmas as a central piece that are really enjoyable and I would recommend.

Griffin: Of course.

Rachel: These are just kind of goofy and fun, and they have like certain tropes that go across all of them that are kind of fun to look for.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: They kind of feel a little like seek and finds, you know? [chuckles]

Griffin: Sure! I mean, I'll say like the number of Christmas classics like movies that I watch has been whittled down pretty dramatically, year to year. Like, I feel like Elf is usually in there, and It's a Wonderful Life has got to be up in there. And then other than that, like there's not much else sacred. What's great about these is that they're making infinite of them always, and they're at least funny. They are at least—they're new, and they are funny. And sometimes like completely unbelievable.

Rachel: Yeah. And if you go—so, New York Times has a like holiday movie decision tree—

Griffin: Okay?

Rachel: For these. And it's like... it really like goes—it starts it at Christmas time, and then to a female. And then you can choose lawyer, CEO, real estate developer, reporter, and like go down from there. And like—

Griffin: Reporter's like half of 'em, huh?

Rachel: Yeah, mm-hm.

Griffin: Reporter's gotta be about—I mean, that's princess—what is it? Christmas Prince? Christmas Prince, I believe, is about a reporter—

Rachel: Yes, yes. We watched another one that was about a reporter too.

Griffin: Is chef one—was chef one of those?

Rachel: Yes, chef.

Griffin: Yes Chef Christmas.

Rachel: Was she like a food critic? Or like an actual—I think she was actually a chef for—

Griffin: I think she was a chef. Hence the name, it wouldn't be called Yes Food Reporter Critic.

Rachel: [chuckles] So, these exist on a lot of different channels. I did a little research specifically on the Hallmark Channel, just because I was curious. And that's kind of like the leading—

Griffin: I mean, that's the OG, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah, that's like the leading edge. So, Hallmark Channel was officially launched in August, 2001. And I will say its highest ever broadcast premier ratings was 2014, the original movie, Christmas Under Wraps, starring Candace Cameron Bure.

Griffin: Ooh, yeah.

Rachel: Which was watched by 5.8 million viewers.

Griffin: Holy shit, man!

Rachel: [chuckles] Now, they have what they call a countdown to Christmas, which usually begins mid-October and runs through the end of the holiday season.

Griffin: Mid-October?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: I guess it's a countdown—I mean, I guess, yeah, sure, we're counting' down!

Rachel: So, in 2013, Hallmark started releasing a large number of original movies. 2013 had 12 original movies. In 2024, they set a record with 47 new movies. [laughs]

Griffin: Yes, dude! Fuck yeah!

Rachel: It was especially to celebrate the countdown's 15th anniversary.

Griffin: Yeah, you gotta make 47 of 'em for that. That's a—that's a tremendous number of motion... just feature films.

Rachel: yeah, yeah, just like constantly. As I understand it, a lot of them are set in like Vancouver, and I think they just crank 'em out.

Griffin: Yeah, it's—I mean, yeah, I can't imagine the production costs on those are—

Rachel: 2025 only has 24 new movies. [chuckles]

Griffin: Wow.

Rachel: And it is estimated that around 80 million people turn into the channel at some point during the holiday season.

Griffin: Yeah, you got to. And then approximately zero tune in to the channel when it is not a holiday season, I assume.

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah, I honestly don't even know, and didn't look into what they do the rest of the year.

Griffin: I imagine it just kind of fades into the mist.

Rachel: [chuckles] It's just like those old-timey like screens where there's just nothing playing, it's just like an American flag.

Griffin: Just a Brigadoon, just vanishing slowly.

Rachel: I wanted to hit some of the 2025 titles, just to get everybody psyched—

Griffin: Please.

Rachel: If we haven't started yet. Of course, we got Lacey Chabert, who has been, by the way, in more than 40 Hallmark Channel films.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Most of them holiday-themed.

Griffin: And some Netflix—I mean, she was in Hot Frosty, I have to imagine she's been in other Netflix Christmas originals as well.

Rachel: So, her 2025 hit is called She's Making a List, and it is—and this is difficult to figure out, so you may have to watch just to even understand what this concept is.

Griffin: Oh, cool.

Rachel: "A naughty or nice inspector evaluating a girl's Christmas status falls for her widowed father, making her question the strict rules of her consulting firm and forcing her to choose between protocol and love."

Griffin: Wow! Sounds like we're getting into sort of a Calvinist interpretation of Christmas and some of the classic Christmas lore.

Rachel: The way I'm envisioning this, and let me know if you're having a different thought, is that she's like official North patrol like—North patrol. [chuckles] North Pole staff.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: And she is sent down to really look into, I guess, undecided cases of naughty or nice.

Griffin: Right. But then it's also like, I have to imagine, it gets into a deeper examination of like free will and predestination.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: And a lot of like really, really kind of heavy, heavy stuff, with Lacey Chabert as kind of like the locus of that—of that—

Rachel: And if anybody can do it—

Griffin: Philosophical debate. Anyone can—

Rachel: They probably start putting together more complicated plots, just because they know she can handle it.

Griffin: Yeah, absolutely she can. What a talent.

Rachel: The other one I wanted to mention was Oy to the World.

Griffin: Okay?

Rachel: "When a Synagogue's pipes burst, a church offers space. As choir directors prepare a joint Christmas-Hanukkah service, old rivals Nikki and Jake must overcome their competition to unite their communities through song." [chuckles]

Griffin: Will—

Rachel: Challenges—

Griffin: Can they—

Rachel: Challenges, one, Hanukkah does not fall on or particularly near Christmas this year. I mean, we get close, but we're not—we're not even on Christmas Eve. So...

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Maybe they set this in a year where those coincide more?

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: But a lot of potential with that one.

Griffin: I mean, we get—what is it? December 14th to the 22nd is Hanukkah this year, so—

Rachel: Yeah, yeah, so you're—

Griffin: Yeah, I mean, it's close-ish.

Rachel: You're fresh out of Hanukkah when Christmas gets here. [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah, you've done run out.

Rachel: The one that we watched recently, that I don't know that we've talked about much, is the spirit of Christmas.

Griffin: Have we not talked about The Spirit of Christmas on the show?

Rachel: So, not as a formal topic.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: We have probably mentioned it. This is a 2016 movie, was featured on How Did This Get Made?

Griffin: And this was a Hallmark film? Or—

Rachel: It's hard for me to tell.

Griffin: I don't think it was, I think—

Rachel: Was it?

Griffin: Because we had to like buy it on Apple TV or some shit, like—

Rachel: Well, now it's on YouTube.

Griffin: Oh, hell yes, dude. [chuckles]

Rachel: That actress, by the way, because I had a vibe, and I'm sure you did too, like she's been in a lot of these—

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: That was actually kind of the beginning of her Christmas run. Since then—

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: She did something called Mingle All The Way, in 2018.

Griffin: Amazing.

Rachel: Royally Wrapped Christmas, 2021.

Griffin: Great.

Rachel: A Paris Christmas Waltz, 2023.

Griffin: Shit, man, that's good.

Rachel: [chuckles] And this year, A Chrismystery.

Griffin: A Chrismystery?

Rachel: Yes. [chuckles]

Griffin: Rachel, we must!

Rachel: Now, this is a—

Griffin: Does Chrismystery have as many supernatural elements as The Spirit of Christmas?

Rachel: There's not a lot of—in the description. So, this one is actually on the Great American Family channel, which you may have heard about.

Griffin: No?

Rachel: So, it used to be Great American Country, and then in—

Griffin: That sounds so sinister.

Rachel: I know.

Griffin: To me. It has sinister undertones.

Rachel: I know. In... in 20—what was the year, 2022? It made news because they kind of set themselves up as a more... I mean, I don't know what I want to say, Christian Network?

Griffin: Sure. Unsecular.

Rachel: [chuckles] Hallmark—

Griffin: Faith-based.

Rachel: Hallmark like got some backlash for airing ads that featured a lesbian couple, and so Candace Cameron Bure like took it upon herself to like really align herself, instead of with the Hallmark Channel, with the Great American Family Channel. She became their chief content officer and

announced she would develop, produce and star in original romantic comedies and holiday content for the network.

Griffin: Cool, cool, cool!

Rachel: She said that she left Hallmark, quote, "Because it was a completely different network than when she started."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And wanted to, quote, "Tell stories that have more meaning and purpose and depth behind them, including those with stronger faith-based themes."

Griffin: I mean, there's a lot of those Christmas movies where the lady reporter does have a gay best friend.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: And I think Hallmark Channel saw that and was like, "I can't. I can't go this way." Well, that's a shame.

Rachel: The Great American Family Channel has 18 movies on its 2025 Christmas slate.

Griffin: Okay, so pirate those if you are gonna watch them.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Is Spirit of Christmas one of those?

Rachel: I mean, so Jen, that actress from Spirit of Christmas, is in a lot of these new ones.

Griffin: I see, I see, okay.

Rachel: Yeah, Jen Lilley, that's where we find A Chrismystery.

Griffin: The spirit of—

Rachel: And it has Jen Lilly in it, so—

Griffin: The Spirit of Christmas espouses so many dark, supernatural elements that I can't imagine it fitting in what—it's about—it's about a ghost romance.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And that doesn't feel particularly biblical to me, for my money. It is also a murder mystery—

Rachel: No, and then the like—and like romantic lead was like a bootlegger and had like a fraught relationship with his brother, and—

Griffin: And also, he can only manifest during the 12 days of Christmas, but then also maybe some other times too. And he can't leave the premises of the BNB that he haunts. But sometimes—unless he can—

Rachel: Until maybe he falls in love?

Griffin: Maybe he does? And also, his wife is there as a ghost, but is she there in a ghost? And is she ready for him to move on?

Rachel: And will he choose his wife or this new woman that he just met, question mark?

Griffin: I can't get enough of that stuff—I can't get enough of that stuff.

Rachel: I know.

Griffin: It's genuinely... it's so entertaining to me. It's so enjoyable to me, especially when they hue really close to the format—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And have some fun with it. Like in Hot Frosty, I think is like the most fun one of these that has been made in a long time.

Rachel: Yeah. Well, and A Clüsterfünke Christmas.

Griffin: Clüsterfünke Christmas was like parody—

Rachel: Is like intentionally.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Very, very fun one with Rachel Dratch.

Rachel: Though one might say Hot Frosty was too.

Griffin: Hot Frosty toes the line, doesn't it? Hot Frosty has its cake and eats it too.

Rachel: There's some winking, and there's some like dead-serious like moments.

Griffin: Yeah, yeah.

Rachel: But yeah, these are fun just because it's like you kind of know what the tropes are, you're looking for them the whole time. They always—

Griffin: You don't always pay super close attention.

Rachel: They really hit Christmas hard, just to like make sure that you don't forget that it's a Christmas movie.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And so, it is kind of fun. There's always a lot of like scenery and merriment.

Griffin: I do love scenery and merriment.

Rachel: Yeah, I know that.

Griffin: Can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

[theme music plays]

[ad reads]

Griffin: Welcome back to Animal Planet. Today, I'm going to talk about an animal for Wonderful, and I'm gonna do a really offensive Australian accent the entire time that I do this.

Rachel: What about the brothers?

Griffin: Oh, yeah, the Kratts.

Rachel: What about Wild Kratts?

Griffin: I'll be the third Wild Kratt brother.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: He's less wild than the others, and his name is Jeremy Kratt, and he's less enthusiastic. They wouldn't let him on the show.

Rachel: [chuckles] They just cut to him sometimes and he's like on the couch and he's like—

Griffin: "Oh, yeah."

Rachel: "Hey."

Griffin: "Yeah, a rhesus monkey? Cool." I'll talk about beavers.

Rachel: Oh, all right?

Griffin: And let's be mature. Hm?

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Even laughing at that I think is... A lot of the times, when I talk about, or either of us talk about animals on this show, it is from like a perspective of like, this one species of animal is like really cute or really unique. And like beavers, sure, like they're the second largest rodent. They got those big buck teeth, they got the crazy long, scaly paddle tails. Like, that's kind of cute, I think, to some.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But I think they're also maybe nature's most important animal? I guess bee. But bees, is it—

Rachel: Bees, pretty important.

Griffin: A bee is a bug, not an animal, and I'm not interested in getting into a discussion about whether or not bees are animals. So—

Rachel: Okay, well, all right. Withdrawn. [chuckles]

Griffin: Beavers are what's known as a keystone species, which is a term for like an animal that has a sort of outsized impact on their ecosystem compared to their population.

Rachel: Oh, I like that.

Griffin: They impact a lot of other species of animals, and also the entire sort of like ecology of their environment.

Rachel: We're kind of like a keystone creature, although probably mostly negative.

Griffin: Yeah, no, I mean, we have a *huge* impact, I will say.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: I don't know that we necessarily support the ecosystem of other creatures. Although, I guess we support ecosystem of each other? But even that, no, not sometimes. So, beavers are better than humans.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Part of the reason like that they are—have an outsized impact is because their population never really recovered from the beaver fur trade, which kind of exploded during the—

Rachel: Wow.

Griffin: The 19th and early 20th centuries. It's estimated that the North American beaver population is roughly 10% what it was before—

Rachel: Wow!

Griffin: The sort of trappers hunted them nearly into extinction.

Rachel: Man, these little guys used to be everywhere!

Griffin: They did! And I mean, the other reason that they are a keystone species is that the impact they have on their environment is truly profoundly wild. They change their surroundings in a way that is fuckin' visible from space, so like—and they do that with their dams and their lodges. And both of those structures are ways that beavers have of creating a sort of more habitable environment for themselves, with dams.

Everyone kind of already knows this, but they use their teeth to chew through—to chew through trees, and I read a fact that they can chew through a tree that's like six inches wide or less in less than a minute, just alternating one side of their teeth to the other side, just kind of moving their heads around.

Rachel: What are lodges?

Griffin: So, lodges are like their houses. And both are kind of made up of the same stuff, right? It's just like a different construction. They chew through trees, they use the timber with like rocks that they can also carry, patches of mud and grass, and they sort of stick that all together. With a dam, they use it to, you know, stop up the flow of rivers.

Which, you know, it doesn't completely stop it, but it does kind of allow the water to spread beyond the banks of, you know, the river and form a patch of wetlands. Which then becomes a, you know, a whole different ecosystem for different animals and for themselves to inhabit.

Lodges are their homes, which they can build either along like the bank of a river, or sort of free-standing inside of the water, out of like submerged stones and sticks. Regardless, either way, the architecture is similar, regardless of where the lodge is, the entrances are accessible only underwater.

And then there's like small holes near the roof of the lodge, which is like for air ventilation and stuff. And those lodges are pretty safe for like in terms of like if a wildfire goes through the area, and I'll talk about that a lot here in a bit. But like, it creates a perfectly sort of safe little, you know, panic room for them to go and chill in.

Rachel: Wow.

Griffin: I think, more than any other animal, beavers are known for like their infrastructural sort of aptitude, but they're not just like making a home, they are reshaping the natural world around them. And this has become like especially kind of important with the increase of wildfire activity, specifically across North America, because the wetlands that beavers form when they dam up, you know, the flowing water are like insanely effective at stopping wildfires. They form natural fuel breaks, where all of a sudden, there is no dried wood for the wildfire to consume, and so it will stop—

Rachel: Wow.

Griffin: At the borders of a beaver wetland. There's tons of like satellite images and images taken from like helicopters and of, you know, forests that have been ravaged by wildfires, with just these belts of lush greenery surrounding by a dam-adjacent wetland. And it's not just wildfires that beaver wetlands like can prevent, they also are important for like storing and managing water tables year-round.

So, they support the watersheds of specifically the western US, is where most of this work gets done, by kind of, you know, stopping the flow of like spring water and sort of spreading it out into the surrounding landscape, so that it kind of enriches the soil.

And instead of it just kind of like flowing past and eroding like the banks of a river and, you know, draining super-duper quickly, so that it is a dry, you know, a drier land in the late summer and fall. By sort of like spreading it out and slowing the flow, and like embedding it in the—in the soil and creating like a more, you know, pond-like wetland, it makes it so that the water table can last a little bit longer.

Rachel: Can I ask, I don't know if this is anything you found in your research—

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: But whenever an animal is capable of doing something so complex—

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I always wonder like, is this just in their DNA? Like, if you raised a beaver in captivity and it had nobody to show—like show them how to make a dam, like would they just kind of do it instinctively?

Griffin: I don't know. I think that instinct absolutely plays into it, right? Like, I guess maybe if you're a baby beaver and you watch your parent beavers like make you a lodge—

Rachel: That's what I'm figuring, like it's a trade—

Griffin: And you're like, "Damn, that's cool." Yeah.

Rachel: Like that they you pass down to like the generation after you of like, "This is how our family always created dams."

Griffin: I like that.

Rachel: But I also wonder, you know, if you—if you took them like out of their community, if they could still kind of figure out how to do it. Like—

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: It just seems like every time a beaver sits down to make a dam—

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Like you kind of wonder like, how much are they just kind of winging it?

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Well, I mean, another thing is, part of their diet for big chunks of the year is like the bark of certain types of trees.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: So, maybe it starts out as like, "Hey, that willow tree looks pretty yummy." And then they eat it, and the tree falls down and they're like, "Oh, shit..."

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: "Well, I may as well pull it into this—"

Rachel: "How else can we use this thing?"

Griffin: Yeah, right? Like, "I don't want to eat the whole tree, Jesus."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: "But maybe I can put it in this river." So like, beavers are really effective at sort of managing these like watersheds and making sure that they don't dry out. They are so effective that human beings, like land managers for big, you know, national parks and forests and what have you, have begun building their own sort of structures to fulfill the same purpose, called Beaver Dam Analogs, or BDAs.

Which like, obviously, humans know how to like manipulate the flow of water via building huge like infrastructural things. But when you are trying to rehabilitate like an ecosystem or you're trying to entice, you know, certain animals to come back to a certain type of ecosystem, or whatever, bringing in heavy machinery to build a dam or whatever is not always an option. So, these BDAs typically are built by volunteers using natural resources that beavers would use, like willow branches and stakes.

Rachel: Oh, cool.

Griffin: And poles and reeds. And they form their own beaver dams to form wetlands, with the goal of, you know, making the area more inviting to wetland creatures, and specifically beavers, who can then take over kind of the process. It's very labor-intensive, right? Because like humans are having to go out and cut these, you know, stakes down and—

Rachel: Yeah, and we don't have the big teeth and the tail.

Griffin: We don't have big teeth or the tail. Thank you, babe, we don't. We do have cool tools, but like they usually are just using the stuff around them so that they don't have to haul a bunch of stuff with a bunch of trucks out into a river. But it's like a really effective way of helping the ecosystem grow or recover without bringing in like, you know, big trucks or other things that would scare off the creatures that they're trying to entice.

I think I just, I really like learning about symbiotic relationships between animals and the ecosystem that they inhabit. And I don't think there's like a cleaner, more kind of dramatic version of that than beavers, who very famously like make a thing that changes the flow of mother nature to create like a whole different biosphere. I just think it's really, really very cool. And the fact that human beings have kind of like learned how to do what they do also with their own Beaver Dam Analogs—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Which is a really fun terminology.

Rachel: I like that.

Griffin: I think is super neat. Do you want to know what our friends at home are talking about?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Katie says, "My Small Wonder is the children's music artist, Caspar Babypants. He's the alter ego of Chris Ballew, the lead singer of the Presidents of the United States of America, and he writes children's songs that are lyrically and musically interesting, a change of pace from the constant, repetitive nursery rhyme songs. His target audience is zero- to six-year-olds, but "Sleepy Snail" and "Speedy Spider" and "Chicken in the Cornbread" don't get skipped, even when my daughter isn't around."

Rachel: We love Caspar Babypants.

Griffin: I love Caspar Babypants. I'm trying to remember the Caspar—I'm gonna look it up now, because it's probably gonna be like in my top Spotify listens.

Rachel: We really tried to push this with Henry in particular, because—

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: You know, we kept trying to direct him towards the stuff that we also liked.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: And this was one of those.

Griffin: "Run Baby Run."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: [sings]. Run, baby, run. And "Stompy the Bear." Ooh, that's a good one.

Rachel: Oh, that one's a really good one.

Griffin: [sings] Here comes stompy the bear. I think he retired the Caspar Babypants persona a few years back. But, I mean, there's—the discography is there and it's—

Rachel: Yeah, I imagine—I mean, I don't know for a fact that he had young children, but I imagine it seemed really relevant and useful when you have kids around you that are young, and as they get older, you're like, what—who am I doing this for?

Griffin: Yeah. Maybe it's just that he conquered the realm of adult rock and roll with Presidents of the United States of America, which absolutely shreds. Hey! Thanks for listening so much. 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, check out all the great stuff they've got going on over there. We again have streaming tickets available for the Candle Nights 2025 live show.

All proceeds go to benefit Harmony House, an organization that works to end homelessness in our hometown of Huntington, West Virginia through a myriad of supportive service programs. Those tickets are over at bit.ly/candlenights2025. There's also some merch in the McElroy Merch

Store, including some Candelights ornaments, that also go to support Harmony House. There's, I think, some Death Blart stuff up in there too, that's over at mccelroymerch.com. And I think that's just about it for this week's episode.

Rachel: Pre-order Griffin's book, if you haven't already.

Griffin: Yeah, if you want to! It's a Choose Your Own Adventure book, a sci-fi story called The Stowaway. Bit.ly/GriffinStowaway, is where you can go to get that.

Rachel: You can always—you can always do the thing where you like print out the receipt and put it in a card, and give it to somebody as a present.

Griffin: Oh, that's nice.

Rachel: For the holiday season. Like, "Hey, don't even worry about it, I got you this book, it'll come when it's out."

Griffin: Yeah. Yeah, that would be so rad of you. There's also, I mean, the last Adventure Zone graphic novel also comes out next year, and it's also available for pre-order at TheAdventureZoneComic.com. Okay, that's it, thank you so much. Please have a wonderful, warm week... weekend, buddy.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: And we'll come at you—

Rachel: As we always say.

Griffin: And we're gonna come for you. We'll come for you next time.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: So, keep—better watch out!

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

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