

## **Wonderful! 401: Rachel and Griffin's Favorite Oprah's Favorite Things**

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

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

**Griffin:** Hello, this is Griffin McElroy!

**Rachel:** And this is Wonderful!

**Griffin:** Happy Honda days, everybody! It's Wonderful, a podcast where we talk about things we like, that is good, that we're into. Was there a marketing sort of ploy more effective than happy Honda days? I can't think of anything that has co-opted sort of a... I don't know, such a big—

**Rachel:** I mean, Coca Cola did a lot of stuff.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** But it wasn't like catchphraseable, you know?

**Griffin:** Yeah. I mean, obviously, they've got like—they got too much shit. Like they've got the polar bears...

**Rachel:** Mm-hm.

**Griffin:** They got this new ad that's all AI, and it's got like Coca Cola trucks driving through nature, and all these like AI animals are like *squeak-squeak*.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** And the trucks also change between every shot, like how many tires they have and shit.

[both chuckle]

**Griffin:** Because it is made by a computer, and lacking in holiday spirit. But happy Honda days, I mean, damn, man, they get it right in there. And it's stuck forever.

**Rachel:** No, that's true.

**Griffin:** It seems like you don't want to talk about happy Honda days?

**Rachel:** Well, I think this is something that was maybe really meaningful to you.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** But maybe not to everybody.

**Griffin:** You never owned a Honda, did you?

**Rachel:** No.

**Griffin:** I can tell. You have the—I never did either.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** This week, happy Christmas Eve, I believe the day that this comes out. This is gonna be our last episode of the year, we are taking next week off. And so, we thought we would take a look back, a retrospective, if you will, on some of our favorite stuff of 2025. I thought for a second it would be fun to title the episode "Rachel and Griffin's Favorite Oprah's Favorite Things," but that doesn't make any sense. That doesn't really make much sense at all.

**Rachel:** Well, and it also suggests that we have gone through the history of Oprah's Favorite Things.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And picked our favorites among her favorites.

**Griffin:** It's a lot of pajamas, I've noticed.

**Rachel:** She does do a lot of pajamas.

**Griffin:** She'll do a box that has like artisanal like nuts or whatever in there.

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** That's big for her. A lot of aromatherapy stuff. None of this is really stuff I want to talk about. I want to talk about stuff we've talked about on this here television—television show?

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Sorry, I was looking at my list, and there's like a thousand television shows—on this here podcast, some of the stuff we talked about this year. And sort of take a—take a look at some of our favorites.

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** How would you—how would you like to begin?

**Rachel:** I don't know. So, Griffin and I did this independently, and we didn't really discuss the format or our individual approaches. So, I think there's going to be a lot of surprises along the way.

**Griffin:** Oh, boy!

**Rachel:** I don't know if you want me to start, or you want to start?

**Griffin:** I'll start, because I think I have more stuff than you. I have mine kind of busted out into superlatives.

**Rachel:** I also did superlatives.

**Griffin:** Okay, great. I think there's gonna be a lot—I think there's actually gonna be a lot of crossover here.

**Rachel:** Sure.

**Griffin:** I have, for best music in general, of 2025, for me personally speaking, Boys Go To Jupiter.

**Rachel:** Yes. I had them down as best new artist.

**Griffin:** We I feel like maybe found them late last year, maybe? But we went to see them in concert together in like January-February, here—

**Rachel:** And when I say we found them, I will say that Justin McElroy sent me a text out of the blue that said, "Hey, this is an artist I think you would like. Here's a song." The song he sent me was "Virginia." And then I instantly like dove into everything they had.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** They had an album come out in that timeframe that I listened to constantly. That album is called Meet Me After Practice.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And yeah, and then we saw them twice. Or at least I saw them twice.

**Griffin:** You saw them twice, I saw them once.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** But holy shit, what a great show. Seemed like super nice folks. And I've just listened to them nonstop. I'll say runner-up, The Beths had a new album out this year, Straight Line Was a Lie. This was my second most listened to album, behind Montaigne's new album, it's hard to be a fish, which is also one of my top musicians, top music things of the year. I also have a breakout here for favorite song, and this is maybe a recency bias situation, but I can't stop listening to Lake Street Dive's cover of "You're Still The One." Holy shit.

**Rachel:** Wow.

**Griffin:** This did not come out this year, I believe this track is a couple years old, but we found it this year. And man alive, it's just so good.

**Rachel:** I have a lot of those kind of like, hey, this didn't actually come out this year.

**Griffin:** That's fine.

**Rachel:** I wanted to highlight, if we're talking about music, best musical debut in 2023, discovered in 2025, and that is Quinnie's album, Flounder.

**Griffin:** Oh, yeah!

**Rachel:** Which I listen to constantly.

**Griffin:** That is a great one.

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** That is a really, really good one. I have some stuff here—book. Favorite book. I don't know if you have any books up in there?

**Rachel:** I mean, I got poet, of course, but no, I don't have book.

**Griffin:** My favorite book, it came out this year, is A Drop of Corruption, the second in the—in the mystery fantasy series.

**Rachel:** Did you talk about this on the show?

**Griffin:** I did, yeah!

**Rachel:** Okay.

**Griffin:** As a—as a Small Wonder. It's the second in the series of the Shadow of the Leviathan series, which is like the sort of kaiju fantasy world

where everybody has weird kind of plant powers. And it's about a guy who can remember everything, helping out a detective who has like insane powers of her own. And it's just such a cool world and such a cool series and such a great mystery. It's by Robert Jackson Bennett, my favorite fantasy author. Cannot recommend it enough.

Start with The Tainted Cup, it's the first book in the series that came out last year, so I'm hoping the third part of the series will come out next year. But yeah, my favorite—that was my favorite book of the year. I didn't read a ton of books. Rarely do I like really chomp through a billion books in a year, but that one sticks out. What else you got? What was your poet, you wanna do that?

**Rachel:** Yeah. And I actually—the poem is short enough that I can read it again.

**Griffin:** Oh, yeah!

**Rachel:** Okay, so I titled this category best poet and poem to get you through this shit year. And it is Ellen Bass, The Thing Is.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And the poem, The Thing Is, goes: To love life, to love it even when you have no stomach for it, and everything you've held dear crumbles like burnt paper in your hands, your throat filled with the silt of it. When grief sits with you, its tropical heat thickening the air heavy as water, more fit for gills than lungs. When grief weighs you down like your own flesh, only more of it, an obesity of grief, you think, how can a body withstand this? Then you hold life like a face between your palms, a plain face, no charming smile, no violet eyes, and you say, yes, I will take you. I will love you again.

**Griffin:** Really good. I love the line to take—

**Rachel:** So good.

**Griffin:** Take life like a face between your hands. That hits so right.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** I remember that poem, that was a really, really good one.

**Rachel:** Yeah. I feel like—I feel like that one just like helps me just like exhale a little bit, you know?

**Griffin:** Yeah, for sure. You brought a lot of banger poems. This was a good year for the Poetry Corner.

**Rachel:** I really—it was good—it was a good year for the poetry corner.

**Griffin:** I have in here food, favorite food. I don't know if we talked about this on the show, but it was a thing I learned how to make this year, and it is spam musubi.

**Rachel:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** I really feel like Prometheus seizing fire from the gods.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** And having my liver pecked out by eagles on like a mountain face because I've become too powerful. It's like so good. We saw a commercial for spam where they were like having a fun musubi party with friends.

**Rachel:** Yeah, they get it.

**Griffin:** They get it, man, they understand it.

**Rachel:** No, when we were in Austin, we had a place that we would get like take out or delivery from. But we moved here, and there was kind of only one option, and it was really far away from us.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And so, Griffin took it upon himself and really, really crushed it.

**Griffin:** It's not that hard, you do get to use some specialty tools. I love that in our house, we have a musubi press, which is just like a little plastic frame you put rice into, and you squish it on down with a big paddle.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** But there's also, one of my favorite tools we just have in our kitchen is a spam slicer. It's perfectly sized for a brick of spam. And you put it in and it's got like a dozen sharp wires—

**Rachel:** You could probably put other stuff in there. Maybe like a soft cheese?

**Griffin:** A soft cheese you could probably get nice even—but man, when you get those nice even slices, slop it in the bag with the marinade? Damn, I love musubi! Wow! What a turbo meal. I love that.

**Rachel:** Yeah, we also talked about the stroopwafel.

**Griffin:** Stroopwafel, yes!

**Rachel:** Yes. Which I have a great fondness for now.

**Griffin:** I still feel like we need to find a great source for those. Maybe there's a local delicatessen that slings those—

**Rachel:** Probably not a delicatessen.

**Griffin:** Maybe there's a local Belgian sort of... you know, patisserie? What is—what's the—what would you call a shop that makes—a bakery, I guess.

**Rachel:** Yeah. I mean, or like an ice cream place. I mean, they have all the things in front of them at an ice cream place.

**Griffin:** You would think.

**Rachel:** You would think they would be able to—I don't know, we haven't really looked into it.

**Griffin:** Yeah. I started to come up with what my favorite movie of the year is, and it made me realize we saw like two movies.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Like really—and this is, I think, something that we have really fell off of since Gus was born, and we can't even stay up late enough at night to like consume a whole film. We got through the whole new Knives Out movie the other night, but that was only because we were having a romantic getaway away from our home.

**Rachel:** [chuckles] Yeah.

**Griffin:** Where we could plop down and watch all—it was a good flick. I had Sinners as my favorite film of the year.

**Rachel:** This is the thing, you've seen significantly more than me.

**Griffin:** Well, Sinners and Weapons are my two—

**Rachel:** Yeah, and I haven't seen—

**Griffin:** Two of my top ones.

**Rachel:** Either of those.

**Griffin:** You didn't see either of those. I went on a sort of solo mission. Well, no, actually, I went to see Weapons with good friend and tour manager, Paul Sabourin, which was a really lovely evening. Yeah, great horror movie year, but I didn't see a ton of them, didn't see a ton of flicks. So, maybe next year. I don't know, I feel like every time the Oscars nominations come out, I'm always like, I feel so guilty.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Because I consume a lot of media, and I used to watch a lot of

movies. I guess we also went to see, weirdly, I think the only movie you and I went to see in theaters this year was the new Naked Gun film.

**Rachel:** Yeah, that's what we did!

**Griffin:** Which feels pretty out of pocket, but also like, I don't know, it makes sense. It tracks that that's—

**Rachel:** Yeah, I don't know, I got really excited about going to see it. I think it's just there aren't a lot of good comedies that come out now.

**Griffin:** Sure.

**Rachel:** And I felt really optimistic about that one. And it delivered.

**Griffin:** Yeah, it was a really good, really fun time. You got anything?

**Rachel:** I wanted to highlight one of your topics. I gave the category the name best emergency responder, and that is the 415 'Super Scooper' firefighting airplane.

**Griffin:** Yes! I had a—I had a superlative that was favorite thing I learned about. That was—that was runner up behind the anatomy of the human ear.

**Rachel:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** But I—god, I love the Super Scooper. In theory, the Super Scooper is just such an achievement, such a marvel.

**Rachel:** I know.

**Griffin:** God dang, that thing can eat up so much water.

**Rachel:** I think—I think about that a lot, because there are so many things that happen in this country that it feels like we just don't have the capacity or tools to address.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And I feel like that was kind of the perfect machine. And clearly, it doesn't solve the problem, but it makes a significant dent in the issue, and it's just very impressive.

**Griffin:** Isn't the Super Scooper from Canada? I think it is. I think it's a—yes, it's the—it's the Canadair CL-415 'Super Scooper.' So, as much as I would love our country to claim credit for that—

**Rachel:** Well...

**Griffin:** They did let us use it, which was nice.

**Rachel:** That is a good point.

**Griffin:** But yeah.

**Rachel:** Another good thing we talked about that came out of Canada is Last One Laughing.

**Griffin:** Yes. So, I had a—I have a whole big freakin' rock block of television shows.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Because this was, I think—I don't know, man, looking at the list, probably my favorite year of television maybe ever.

**Rachel:** Wow?

**Griffin:** Last One Laughing Canada, obviously, kick-ass. The show—the final showdown between Tom Green and Colin Mockery, just like two folks kind of at the top of their game, at the height of their power, kind of squaring off, was very, very good.

**Rachel:** Yet not really at the height of their career.

**Griffin:** Not at the height of their career—

**Rachel:** Remotely. [chuckles]

**Griffin:** At all. But just like the deep well of respect they had for each other—

**Rachel:** Yes!

**Griffin:** As they got, if memory serves, completely shit-faced, drinking like a fancy brandy that they had in the Last One Laughing room. I think I prefer the UK version of Last One Laughing, which had Bob Mortimer and—

**Rachel:** Yeah, that was a good one.

**Griffin:** I'm blanking on literally everyone else that was in that season. But Jesus Christ, Bob Mortimer doing his magic show on stage, trying to—if you didn't listen to that episode, it's a show where you try to make people laugh. If you laugh, you're out. Bob Mortimer's presentation where he gets on stage and does very, very rudimentary magic tricks, and just continues to go, "Shh, it's only magic."

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Just a man alive, there's really, really, really, just so much funny stuff. Do we want to do TV? Maybe we should take a break. Let's take—

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Let me steal you away, and then let's get into what a hot shit year for TV this was. Can I steal you away?

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** Thanks.

[theme music plays]

[ad read]

**J.Keith:** Say, what's the trivia show where dreams come true?

**Helen:** It's got to be Go Fact Yourself!

[applause]

**J.Keith [live]:** Legend in the house!

**J.Keith:** We quiz celebrity contestants about topics they love!

**Helen:** Then bring out surprise experts!

**J.Keith:** To delight and amaze!

**J.Keith [live]:** And then finally, tell us why you know and love the lyrics to the song "Knockin' Boots," by Candyman.

**Helen [live]:** Joining us tonight is a rapper and producer, it's Candyman!

[applause]

**Guest 1:** Oh, Candyman!

**Guest 2:** This is among the greatest moments of my life.

[audience laughs and cheers]

**Guest 3:** This is one of mine too. I love it.

**Helen:** That's Go Fact Yourself!

**J.Keith:** Twice a month, every month.

**Helen:** Here on Maximum Fun!

[break]

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[break]

**Griffin:** I was—I was—I had a lot like ready to go for TV, because I can remember a lot of the stuff. But when I looked at like the year's best shows on TV, on like lists online, it like blew my mind that all this stuff came out this year. I think my favorite, pound for pound, is Offline Love.

**Rachel:** Wow!

**Griffin:** I had such a good time watching that show. That is a Japanese dating show where 10 singles go to Nice, in France, and don't have their phones. And the only way they have to communicate is either by finding each other, which they represent with a big sort of map, where you can kind of see everyone's locations and see these like chance encounters, whether or not they see each other or not as they pass each other on the street. Or they can send each other letters in their little mailboxes. Such a simple idea for a show, but executed so well with so many like, so many wonderful little meet cutes and nice little relationships.

**Rachel:** It is—it is something that we recommend to everybody.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Because there are a lot of shows, for example, like *Terrace House*, that people have a real like hole in their heart where *Terrace House* was.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And I feel like offline love kind of did its—did its part to fill that a little bit.

**Griffin:** That and The Boyfriend, which I thought season two was supposed to come out this year, but I think it's currently slated for early—

**Rachel:** I don't remember The Boyfriend. What was The Boyfriend?

**Griffin:** The Boyfriend was the gay Japanese dating show.

**Rachel:** Oh, yeah!

**Griffin:** Kind of the only one that I can think of that—where they worked in a coffee truck. [chuckles]

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Where they were, I'll say it, some of the worst employees of the—of the restaurant service industry I've ever seen.

**Rachel:** Yeah. And they would like choose who they wanted to work with—

**Griffin:** Yeah. But it wasn't really about the business, which is good, because they would come home with like, "We made \$60 today, guys."

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** What's great also about Offline Love is there was a guy on that show that then was also a contestant on Final Draft, one of my runner-ups.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Which was the sort of Japanese take on Physical: 100, featuring retired athletes.

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** Really, really, really great and you get to meet a lot of really fun characters in that show. Who in turn are featured in Physical: Asia, another one of my runner-ups, and probably my favorite kind of like competition show of the year. We've talked at length about Physical: Asia, but they're doing a spin off, right? Of the Mongolia team?

**Rachel:** Are they? I don't know about this.

**Griffin:** I think they're making a show just about the—like a special that just focuses on the Mongolia team, because it featured—

**Rachel:** It sounds—

**Griffin:** So many—

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Really, really, really huge characters. Both in terms of the scope of their personality, and also the sheer tonnage of their enormous, powerful bodies. And then, I mean, Severance season two was this year?

**Rachel:** Wow, yeah.

**Griffin:** Isn't that kind of wild? That seems like it came out a long time ago.

**Rachel:** It does feel like a long time ago.

**Griffin:** But man, that was—what a terrific sci-fi series of TV. As was Andor, the last season of Andor, which I know you didn't go for, but probably my favorite Star Wars story kind of like ever told. One that I would totally go back and watch someday. I had two other TV shows that we watched together, which—Devil's Plan season two was also this year.

**Rachel:** Oh, yeah.

**Griffin:** Really, really enjoyed a lot of the games featured in that one. I think a lot about the—that was the season that had a format where they would play like one big game, where they could sort of earn immunity from

the death match that then players would compete in. And those death matches were shit-hot, brilliant games.

**Rachel:** They were good. I will say, I don't know if I liked the second season as much as the first.

**Griffin:** Yeah, this—I—it's funny, I was talking to my barber about this, who also watches a lot of Korean reality programming. Which, god, fuckin' jackpot in terms of conversation topics that you can—

**Rachel:** We I don't know have ever met anybody—

**Griffin:** No!

**Rachel:** Who also watches these shows.

**Griffin:** No, but like—

**Rachel:** Like in the wild. [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Shootin' the shit about like, "Man, Siren. When's that new season—they need to make more Siren." Like—

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** But like, I was talking to him about how what really worked about Devil's Plan season one is it was so surprising, and like you didn't really know what to expect.

**Rachel:** Exactly.

**Griffin:** And this time, it's like everybody who loses this challenge goes into the jail. And immediately you're like, "We gotta find the secret puzzle challenge!"

**Rachel:** Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** Not quite as exciting, but—

**Rachel:** It's kind of reminiscent of Survivor in the way that like everybody understands immunity idols now.

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** And so like, it's kind of changed the experience of it.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Because like, it's, I don't know it's not like they spend all season trying to find it, you know?

**Griffin:** Yeah. But Devil's Plan season two had like the time auction, where you just held in a button and you had 10 minutes of time. And you would let go of the button to kind of like submit your—

**Rachel:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** Your bet. And if you didn't win, you just lost that time. But if you won, you won the round. And you had to win like a certain number of rounds to progress. Thrilling to watch people hold in a button for 10 minutes!

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** There was also the poker, the sniper hold 'em, where they were just playing pretty much straight up Texas hold 'em, but if you could guess what hand your opponent had, you could eliminate them from that round. So, it was like, I don't—there was layers of—it was like, I want to watch a show that is just this, that is just this Texas hold 'em.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** And also, Perfect Match this year was phenomenal! This was the first season where they brought in folks from other reality universes.

**Rachel:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** So, they have Bachelor and Bachelorette contestants, and Love Island—and was so fucking sloppy-messy, but like really, really good and nasty—

**Rachel:** It was good.

**Griffin:** Nasty food for us. Do you have any other stuff?

**Rachel:** Yeah. So, I wanted to talk about something I realized, which I called the hidden theme of 2025.

**Griffin:** Ooh?!

**Rachel:** I noticed that topic over topic, we had one thing that kept showing up.

**Griffin:** Okay?

**Rachel:** And that is the ocean.

**Griffin:** Mm-hm!

**Rachel:** Just like everything aquatic. Because you talked about damselfish, I believe.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** I talked about ocean sunfish. The poet Ellen Bass. [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** I talked about the artist Sea Lemon. Quinnie's album was called Flounder. You've talked about lighthouses. One of the poems I talked about, Maya Popa's "Dear Life," was just an extended fishing and open water metaphor.

**Griffin:** Amazing.

**Rachel:** And I just realized like, oh, wow, we just kind of kept hitting that deep water over and over again.

**Griffin:** I love that deep water! I have one of my—my favorite event of the year was the JoCo Cruise. The JoCo Cruise 2020—

**Rachel:** Jo-coo-coo!

**Griffin:** JoCo Cruise!

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** We went on back in—

**Rachel:** God, that feels like forever ago.

**Griffin:** It does feel like forever ago.

**Rachel:** I mean, it was—it was March? Or was it—

**Griffin:** March, yeah.

**Rachel:** March. March?

**Griffin:** I believe it was early March. A lovely time. We only did half of it because—

**Rachel:** Yeah, it was—

**Griffin:** We had to pull the boys out of school, which was a bummer. I would have loved to have—

**Rachel:** It was. Yeah, because it ends up being this really kind of cohesive, bonding experience for everybody that does it.

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** And we kind of missed out on that part, because we only stayed for like three days. But it was—it's just always such a nice vibe.

**Griffin:** It's the best! I really—it's the only cruise I've ever been on. And like, I think I love cruises, and not from a like bougie standpoint, but just it's cool to be on a big boat in the—like that's the thing I like the most, is just being out on a—and I thought that was the thing I was gonna hate, is looking all around me and not seeing land. I thought I was going to experience, you know, thasalophobia, or whatever they call it.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Like being very, very—but it's just cool. It's just cool to be out there. And then sometimes, when you disembark off the ship early because you can't let your kid miss too many days of school, because the DCPs will track you down like a Blade Runner—

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Sometimes when you do that, you get to also disembark with John Linnell of They Might Be Giants, and have a conversation about mutual fandom there. And that was a—that conversation was a real fuckin' highlight.

**Rachel:** [chuckles] I do—yeah, I do think about that.

**Griffin:** I think about that *a lot*.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Very, very, very special, wonderful—

**Rachel:** Yeah, I will say, I was surprised, you know, because it is primarily a cruise for adults.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And we bring our children because, you know, we have to. And there is something nice as a parent just knowing like, this is all we're doing.  
**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Like, we can't do anything else. But there is a lot of space to be in.  
**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And the novelty of it works.

**Griffin:** For sure.

**Rachel:** And so like, it's surprisingly stress-free, which is not typical when you're traveling with children. [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Yeah, absolutely. Can I do games? Can I have like a few minutes—

**Rachel:** Of course!

**Griffin:** To just like blast through some games? Because I know that this is not something... I don't think we played any games together this year.

**Rachel:** It's been a long since we've played games together.

**Griffin:** It's been a really, really, really long time.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** But, man, it was a weird, good year for games. My favorite was probably Blue Prince, which was the sort of mystery roguelike kind of game where you're going through a house and solving all kinds of little puzzles, but you're building the house every day that you play it.

**Rachel:** Does this come up in The Besties?

**Griffin:** So, it doesn't! It's funny, this was my game of the year. But so many of the puzzles, almost all the puzzles, are really kind of themed around color.

**Rachel:** Oh, yeah, you told me about this.

**Griffin:** And as much as I love the game, it's kind of criminal, the lack of kind of accessibility options. And you know, our dear friend, Russ, and co-host of *The Besties*, just like fully can't play. Like fully—could play it, but would be missing out on such an enormous sort of piece of the—of the literal puzzle.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** That we kind of punted it and said we'll maybe weigh it next year, if they get those options in. But it felt weird to talk about a game that one of the hosts of the show was kind of prevented from playing. So, that is a real shame. *Deltarune* has been a fun one. It's the sequel to—sequel kind of to *Undertale*.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Which is one of my favorite games, and Henry's like so into that world.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** It's like a weird thing because it's an episodic game, it's supposed to be I think seven chapters. And this year, chapter three and four came out, and I think five is coming out early next year. But it's such a sweet, like heartfelt, cool game, that is just hysterically funny and one of my favorites.

Absolum is a beat 'em up with like cool RPG roguelike elements that me and Henry also got really into. *Death Stranding 2* is a game where Norman Reedus explores a sort of death apocalypse with a little baby on his chest, and drinks his own piss. [chuckles] And that's cool.

Clair Obscur: *Expedition 33*, a French JRPG. Excellent, excellent game. There is one that came out this year that I think you would like called *The Roottrees Are Dead*, which is a sort of detective game where you are trying to piece together the genealogy of this kind of family of—that's like a candy empire.

**Rachel:** Uh-huh?

**Griffin:** And when the game starts out, the surviving members of the family have passed away in a plane crash. And so, you are going through a computer that has like a full fictional search engine version of the internet, and you're just kind of like looking for terms. So, you'll like learn someone's name and you'll look for that, and you'll find like an internet article that's like, "In this interview with this magazine—" And you say like, oh, shit, okay. So, now I know the name of that magazine and I can search for that. Now I have this whole other search engine that I can—it's basically a game about being kind of nosy on the internet.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** It's like if you're the type of person that thinks like, "I wonder what happened to that person I went to high school with. I'm gonna try and find out everything about them on Facebook."

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** It's kind of a video game about that.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And that is so novel and so fun. And that's the end of my video game segment. Do you have any other big superlatives?

**Rachel:** I just wanted to call out what I called the best celebration of nostalgia, and that is the Used to Be a Pizza Hut—

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** Website and movement. I really enjoy when a community kind of gets around this like, this element that was pretty significant, you know, from your childhood. And everyone kind of joins together to kind of like identify in their community how it was represented. And I don't think I ever watched the documentary about that.

**Griffin:** We should, man! I would totally watch that.

**Rachel:** We totally should!

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And yeah, it just—that was particularly delightful.

**Griffin:** Yeah. Do you want to know what our friends at home were talking about?

**Rachel:** Yes!

**Griffin:** Seth said, "My Small Wonder is the Light Keeper Pro, a tool that fixes Christmas tree lights. I had a whole strand not lighting, and couldn't find a burned-out bulb, but this thing, with the push of a single button, reset something, and the strand lit up. There's a version for LED bulbs too." Thank you, Seth, for—

**Rachel:** Wait, what is it? Like a—like a tool that you buy?

**Griffin:** I think it's probably a little magic wand. I don't know, I didn't google it, but Seth is really providing some service journalism here, because I did talk about—

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Maybe this is something that could revive our sweet, beloved, three-year-old artificial Christmas tree.

**Rachel:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** It's called the Light Keeper Pro. Thank you, Seth, for the—for the pro tip. And one last one, Sherry says, "My Small Wonder is books that have an attached ribbon bookmark. I just got a book of poetry as a gift, and it is such a beautiful convenience." Yeah!

**Rachel:** I do love that. I wish that was just kind of standard.

**Griffin:** Yeah, I think I've only had it in Bibles?

**Rachel:** [chuckles] They like, in like, you know, artistic like reprints of like old books, you know?

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** I feel like I had like a Wizard of Oz book when I was a kid, that was like green and had gold pages and came with like a little ribbon.

**Griffin:** I do like that.

**Rachel:** Like, they will do like special editions that have that, but yeah, it's obviously not common.

**Griffin:** Yeah. Folks, that's going to do it for us for the year 2025. Thank you so much for listening. Thank you to Bo En and Augustus for the use of our theme song, "Money Won't Pay." You can find a link to that in the episode description. Thank you to maximumfun.org, as always, for having us on the—on the network. Maximumfun.org is the link you can go to find a bunch of really, really great shows covering any interest you could conceivably harbor.

And everyone's just really firing on all cylinders, if you ask me. Some merch up in the McElroy Merch Store, over at [mcelroymerch.com](http://mcelroymerch.com), including a Candlenights poster and ornament designed by Scott Hoch. And 10% of the proceeds for all merch sales this month go to Harmony House. And also, speaking of Candlenights, you can now watch on-demand the Candlenights 2025 Spectacular! Filmed live in Huntington, West Virginia, at the Keith-Albee theater. It is a *huge* show, a huge program, with all of us. And—

**Rachel:** It's a real peek inside the McElroy's brains, because the whole thing, start to finish, was basically developed as a team effort, from scratch. And so, you really get a window. [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Yeah, you sure do. And you can go to [bit.ly/candlenights2025](https://bit.ly/candlenights2025), and the ticket sales for the video on demand version, which is available 'til January 4<sup>th</sup>, 100% of those proceeds go to Harmony House. Which is an amazing organization we've worked with for a long time, that provides a lot of different services to folks experiencing homelessness in Huntington, West Virginia, who need a lot of help.

So, again, [bit.ly/candlenights2025](https://bit.ly/candlenights2025). Ring in the—ring in the season, ring in the new year with us. And that's going to do it for us. We are off next week, as our sort of entire staff takes a well-earned break. [titters] And we'll be back next year with new stuff! So, have a happy holidays, have a happy Honda days, have a happy new year. And take care of yourselves and each other. Because, after all... [chuckles] how—

**Rachel:** As we always—

**Griffin:** How we always—

**Rachel:** Say.

**Griffin:** Say! How the hell are you gonna love yourself if you don't love—

**Rachel:** No.

**Griffin:** Somebody else?

**Rachel:** That's not ours.

**Griffin:** Goodbye, everybody!

**Rachel:** Bye.

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

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