

Wonderful! 408: My Record With Lactose

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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: This is Wonderful!

Griffin: Welcome to Wonderful! It's a podcast where we talk about things we like, that's good, that we're into. It's hosted by me, Griffin McElroy, and Rachel McElroy. And every week—

Rachel: I'm his wife.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: We're not brother and sister. It's not like a Jack White, Meg White situation, where it's like—

Griffin: Well, that is also not—

Rachel: Are they married, or are they siblings?

Griffin: Where did we land on that, by the way?

Rachel: [laughs] I think they were married?

Griffin: Pretty sure, yeah.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: That speaks to me of like a way simpler time in the internet.

Rachel: [chuckles] Yeah.

Griffin: Where it's like, we have no way of confirming this information, no one knows how to really check up on this stuff.

Rachel: Yeah, that's true. Everyone's like, "Well, they look alike..."

Griffin: We're like—we are—in so many ways, we are post folklore, I think—on this level, on this exact type of level of stuff. Gosh, what a weird—what a weird time, huh?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I have had "Icky Thump" stuck in my head. Now that was Jack White post—I think that was Raconteurs era Jack White. But that's my Small Wonder. Hell yeah, I found it.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I was struggling before we started like, what am I gonna talk about? And then I remembered, I've had "Icky Thump" stuck in my head.

Rachel: I don't know if I know that one. I mean, obviously I can't figure it out from the title.

Griffin: Sure! So, it goes like this, Jack White's like, "Icky thump, gonna get—gonna—" [starts scat singing].

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: And then it has a guitar that's like—[sings a guitar riff]. Do you know it?

Rachel: I mean, I—maybe I—I don't want to insult your version of it, but I may have to listen to the original to know for sure.

Griffin: I mean, I could play it for you right now, but it would really sound so much like what I did with my instrument just now.

Rachel: [chuckles] Yeah. Well then I haven't heard it, no.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: You know what I've had stuck in my head?

Griffin: What have you had stuck in your head?

Rachel: And it can be my Small Wonder.

Griffin: Yeah, what?

Rachel: The other day, we watched Waiting for Guffman.

Griffin: Oh my god...

Rachel: And I've had stool song stuck in my head. [chuckles]

Griffin: [sings] Stool boom!

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: From the—oh, man...

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Guys, we don't watch a lot of old movies, but like obviously when Catherine O'Hara passed, like—

Rachel: Netflix has like a whole row now of like Christopher Guest movies with her in it.

Griffin: That one fucking hits on such a sort of seismic level for me. Like it hits so, so very hard, having grown up in a small-town community, theater community. It like, I don't know, man, it really is a—it's almost a hard watch in some ways.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Because it like makes you really look in that deep, dark, truthful mirror a little bit. But I haven't seen that movie in probably over a decade, and gosh, it's such a—it's such a masterpiece.

Rachel: It's timeless, man! It's timeless. There's nothing in it that I feel like doesn't hold up or like, or is—would be hard to understand for a like new viewer.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: It's not like they're making calls on a rotary phone.

Griffin: Well, I think you need to kind of know what like those Christopher Guest like mockumentary style movies are like.

Rachel: But I would argue that it's kind of like, it's kind of good to enter a Christopher Guest movie not really knowing what you're watching for a while.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Rachel: Because I mean, that's the experience I had. Because it's so straight, it's so sincere that you're like, wait, is this supposed to be funny, or am I just thinking it's funny?

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And that's why like—the cast is always so valuable, because you're like, oh, no, this person is a genius. [chuckles]

Griffin: Just so good.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I go first this week.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: I feel a little, I feel very vulnerable discussing what I'm about to discuss.

Rachel: Okay?

Griffin: You look excited for me to be vulnerable.

Rachel: I am excited!

Griffin: My Big Wonder this week is... having a little cheese.

Rachel: [chuckles] How is this vulnerable?

Griffin: Having a little cheese.

Rachel: What is vulnerable about this?

Griffin: Because I'm not like a cheese guy!

Rachel: [laughs] I really thought you were gonna get into some kind of deep personal thing when you said—

Griffin: This is deep and personal for me! I've had a mixed track record with cheese, and I don't know much about it.

Rachel: [chuckles] I guess it is vulnerable in that you have a lot of signs suggesting that maybe you should—

Griffin: I shouldn't have a little—

Rachel: You should leave cheese behind.

Griffin: Well, that's the thing, that's what's... I swear, folks at home, if you're thinking, "There's no way he's gonna get a whole segment out of having a little cheese," I could do a whole episode by myself! And you could save your topic for next week about having a little cheese.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Because it's really kind of amazing. I am not talking about cheese, the subset—like, I'm not bringing, as my topic, cheese. Because like—

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: That's too big. That's too much.

Rachel: So, that's still on the table if later I want to do cheese.

Griffin: Later, if you want to do cheese, that's fine. I'm talking about the act of just having a little cheese. Like when cheese is on a pizza, that's obviously very good, but I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about when you have yourself just a little bit of cheese, a little bit of what Justin McElroy calls raw cheese.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Or uncooked, unmelted cheese, just straight up cheese. I do not have a particularly refined taste, I think, for most foods and beverages. And you know, my record with lactose has received some criticism from physicians in the past.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: But god help me if I'm offered the opportunity to have a few pieces of nice cheese, just a few, whether that be in a sort of charcuterie arrangement or otherwise, I'm gonna leap for it.

Rachel: Can I let our readers in on something?

Griffin: We have readers?

Rachel: [chuckles] Sorry, our listeners.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: You have notes right now. You're looking at notes right now.
[laughs]

Griffin: I have a lot of notes. These notes are like, I didn't research myself, I just wanted to have an organized—because I knew there would be some haters who are like, "This is fucking nothing."

Rachel: [chuckles] I'm just saying, you're talking about how you like a little cheese, and you're looking over your phone—

Griffin: I like a little bit of cheese.

Rachel: [chuckles] You're looking over at your phone to make sure like, wait, how much cheese?

Griffin: I just want to hit everything!

Rachel: "I said a little cheese, okay. [chuckles] Did I—wait, what word did I use specifically? I used 'little' Okay, little."

Griffin: I don't want to get mixed up and then start talking about eating a lot of cheese. I'm talking about just having a little bit of cheese.

Rachel: Did you do research, out of curiosity?

Griffin: No.

Rachel: Okay, but you have notes.

Griffin: Because I'm not doing cheese! I could—

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I could get on here and be like, "Oh, you see, it was Franciscan monks in the—in the 12th century." No, I didn't research this, it's coming from the heart. I just organized my thoughts. And don't make me feel bad for wanting to do a good job for this show.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: We recently found a very nice butcher shop nearby. It's like a butcher shop/grocery sort of store.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: And they sell just a—

Rachel: Can I say that it's in the magical land of Bethesda?

Griffin: It is in the wonderful, magical kingdom of Bethesda. They sell a lot of just like, just like a thousand delicious little special somethings, across many categories.

Rachel: So tiny!

Griffin: Tiny little shop.

Rachel: I didn't go to the like, the counter where you get meat, because the line was long.

Griffin: Yeah. The line's really long.

Rachel: And I felt like I didn't want to take up that much space in this tiny store.

Griffin: Yeah, because there is a sense of "I don't belong here." They are selling a lot of nice meats and—

Rachel: You see like a person walking around with like a basket of leeks and like a very specific kind of oil that you've never seen before, and you're like, they belong here. [chuckles]

Griffin: They belong there, I definitely do not. I have clearly just stumbled in here. But they sell like little artisanal ice cream sandwiches and imported tinned fish. But they also sell some cheese. And there is a long line at this shop like pretty much all the time--

And they will come through with plated little cheeses and they'll say, "Here, try a little bit of this cheese." And I'll say, "You got me." I'm a fucking captive audience. I will, of course, like I said, hop at this opportunity to gobble up a little bit of cheese. And then I'm like, well, I gotta get the home game version of this cheese.

Rachel: Can I ask you the—when I was there, they were sampling a Stilton, which is like a kind of soft, smelly cheese.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: I don't know how you feel about like smelly cheese?

Griffin: Oh, I also don't know how I feel about it.

Rachel: Oh, okay.

Griffin: That's one of the one—

Rachel: Are you open?

Griffin: Of course, of course.

Rachel: Are you cheese open?

Griffin: I'm gonna get—I'm gonna cover everything. You're asking me now to jump around where I am in my notes, and if I start doing that—

Rachel: I'm sorry, I thought on this show we had a conversation. [chuckles] It wasn't scripted.

Griffin: It's not—okay, there's—this is one of the fun things about having a little cheese, is sometimes it's the funkiest shit you've ever tasted and you hate it. That's what makes it a fun like surprise. Whenever I get brought a charcuterie board with a selection of a little cheese on it, it's like I've opened a—I've been gifted a little advent calendar.

Rachel: True.

Griffin: Only behind some of the panels of the advent calendar is the funkiest shit I've ever tasted.

Rachel: True.

Griffin: Sometimes I hate it! Sometimes I don't fuck with it so hard. Like, I know—I know very little about cheese. I know myself enough to know that like blue cheese is not for me.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: That to e, feels like there's like a—you know, whenever you're making cheese, you're turning a bunch of dials like, oh, the sweet dial's here, the creamy—for me, blue cheese is like they turn up the funky dial, and then they break it off, and then they break up all the other dials—

Rachel: [chuckles] Yeah.

Griffin: And it's just the funky stuff.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: So that's like not for me. But like sometimes, like that—we got a Gouda that we brought home, and I taste it, and I was like, this is so sharp, that's crazy!

Rachel: I loved that gouda.

Griffin: But then I wanted a little bit more of it, even though my initial reaction was this is bad.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And it's—and I think it is the littleness of the delivery of the cheese that kind of makes that okay, right? Because if you have yourself a little bit of cheese and it's bad and gross, then you can just say like, well, it's just a

little bit of it. Like you're not over committed to like eating a big pound of funky, gross stuff. It's just like, it's just a little bit of it.

I made a little cheese mistake, and I don't have to beat myself up about it, because it's just a little bit of cheese. The element of danger that sometimes cheese provides, not from a gastrointestinal fortitude element, but like sometimes it's the funkiest shit, is, I don't know, it makes it feel kind of dangerous and kind of exciting.

And it also makes me appreciate when I eat a little bit of cheese and it tastes fucking incredible, because I know how far it can go in the other direction. And the other direction is like blue cheese or funky stuff. Stilton? Gosh, gun in my head, I couldn't even tell you if I've had a Stilton before. Probably.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Probably. Did you have some of it at the shop?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Was it good?

Rachel: I liked it, but I am more comfortable I think with funky than you are.

Griffin: Yeah. I like it as a little, just toss it in there with cheese that I like. Like, if I go over a charcuterie board and I have a little bit of like funky stuff, I might come back to it later, just to like mix up the experience.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But like I don't—I don't like—I don't enjoy it. You know what I mean?

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: Now I'm all mixed up in my freaking notes.

Rachel: I'm sorry I did this to you.

Griffin: Cheese has just never like been a thing that I have craved, necessarily. It's not like a—like I have a salty craving, I go for the—I go for some potato chips. I have a sweet craving, I will—maybe I'll go for a cookie or two. Now cheese I feel like is starting to scratch this new kind of thing for me where, I don't know, I know we have a couple little wedges down in the fridge, and I feel excited about that. I feel excited for the opportunity to eat that cheese in a—just a little bit, to eat that cheese.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: And also, it does make me feel grown up! Like I would be lying if I said like—if I omitted the fact that when you eat a little bit of cheese, like there's this feeling of sophistication that comes along with it. Not because it's expensive, because like it's not hard to have a little cheese on the cheap, but because it's such an unorthodox kind of craving that you're satisfying.

Rachel: Yeah, I mean, it is—it is almost by definition like a luxury item.

Griffin: Yes!

Rachel: Of just like, you know, I could have just gotten like a cheddar.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: Because that's easy to find, and every store has it.

Griffin: And I know what it's gonna—I probably know what it's gonna taste like. But when you have a little bit of cheese that's—you don't know what it's gonna taste like, it's a wonderful surprise every time.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: Sometimes it's gross.

Rachel: How is your body doing with this experiment, by the way?

Griffin: My body hasn't been doing so great lately.

Rachel: Yeah. [titters]

Griffin: I don't want to pin it on the little bits of cheese that I'm having, though.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: Because it really, guys, we're talking about just like inconsequential amounts of cheese.

Rachel: Well—

Griffin: Little tiny, tiny amounts of cheese.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: Small amounts of cheese!

Rachel: Well, you eat several portions of those little amounts. You know, like you—

Griffin: Over a week.

Rachel: You like, you, you know, cut off like a little it, and you put it on a Wheat Thin, and then you do it again—

Griffin: Now, I'm glad you mentioned Wheat Thins.

Rachel: Do it again.

Griffin: I'm glad you mentioned Wheat Thins.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: I feel nascent in this journey, where I'm starting to get excited about cheese, having a little bit of it.

Rachel: Uh-huh. [chuckles]

Griffin: But I feel like I don't know anything about sort of little cheese vehicles, because like right now, I just kind of swear by Wheat Thins.

Rachel: You like a Triscuit, don't you?

Griffin: I do, that feels a little too...

Rachel: A little too much?

Griffin: I mean, it just feels like I'm having Triscuits with cheese and not cheese with—cheese with crackers. You know what I mean?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But the problem is that like I swear by Wheat Thins, but I also love Wheat Thins straight up. I could eat a whole fucking bag of those guys. So like, maybe I'm coloring my impressions of the cheese.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: I'm not gonna eat it—I'm not gonna have it straight up! I'm not just gonna eat a little piece of cheese. Maybe a little piece of—maybe a little bread—maybe a little bread? Like a tiny, little bread.

Rachel: Oh, yeah. You know, they sell baguettes at this shop.

Griffin: That is one I struggle with. I struggle with a baguette, because sometimes it's so fuckin' hard. It's so, so, so, so hard and so, so crusty. I don't like when you buy a little piece of baguette and the like crust of it is sharp. And it goes between your teeth and it's like, yowza. And that hurts.

Rachel: It's also the pressure of like, how am I going to store this thing?

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Like, I'm not going to eat this whole thing all at once.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Even if I have a significant portion, it's still too big for like a Ziploc bag. And then like putting it in my fridge?

Griffin: I also feel like having baguette with cheese is like, you—I would be like cosplaying at that point. Like I am—

Rachel: Oh, yeah.

Griffin: Like, you know what I mean? Like I am... I don't know, somehow kind of like a cool, like I've been to Europe a few times and like, a kind of cool like that.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And that's not, I mean, I have been to Europe a couple times. Just Germany, though. So like, I'm—is cheese like a big deal there? Probably. I don't know. I didn't—I mostly focused on their sort of pork offerings, if I'm being 100% honest.

Rachel: [chuckles] Yeah.

Griffin: But I feel very vulnerable, because I feel like everyone knows their way around a cheese board who like fucks with cheese already. It's hard to be a new cheese guy. And like, if I roll up to the function like fucking Monterey Jack from the Rescue Rangers, like following—and I take a bite of something and I go, "Whoof! That's funky stuff!" Like, I would be chastised for not being like mature enough for it, for not being like ready for it.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I would also never bring cheese to a function, because again, I don't know what the fuck I'm doing. I don't know what anything means or what

it's gonna taste like, and I don't want to bring something and have it be like the funkiest shit ever. And they look at me like, "Wow, you must be into some wild stuff."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: "And we'd like to watch you eat the rest of this wedge now." And then I have to eat the whole wedge of funky cheese while they're looking at me?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Like, I don't know, I just—

Rachel: Can I say though, you're 38 years old.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Soon to be 39.

Griffin: [sings] I am 38, going on 39.

Rachel: [chuckles] These seem like your prime cheese years.

Griffin: I do agree with that. I do think it's time. I think it makes sense. Is this my midlife crisis?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I hope not.

Rachel: How much are you spending on cheese right now?

Griffin: I'm not spending much money on cheese at all.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: I'm buying a wedge of cheese every couple weeks or so, maybe, tops. And it's not even like, you know, fancy top shelf shit. It's the shit they come through with the sample basket at the butcher shop, you know what I mean?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But man, it's good! And it's good and it's, I don't know, I've never had a period in my life like this. I remember when I was living in Chicago, I started eating sushi from Hot Woks Cool Sushi, is the name of the restaurant. And I was like, damn, I guess I like sushi now. And it's like I discovered this new part of myself.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I don't know, I feel like I'm doing that with cheese a little bit right now. And it's exciting, but it's also so new and so vulnerable.

Rachel: Yeah, when I lived alone, before we moved in together, I used to buy myself some fancy cheese.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: On occasion. Because it did—it felt like I was—I was really getting to sow my oats out there.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And indulge in the foods that I knew that I liked.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And then when we moved in together, and I learned about your kind of caution with dairy—

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I stopped doing it.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: But I'm excited, maybe we can go on this journey again together.

Griffin: I never really—I feel like I have spent my entire life doing dairy a great disservice, of not really sitting down with it and really studying what its effects are on my body. I, in the past, have not eaten wisely in at least a dozen different vectors, and I feel like I pinned that all on cheese. I pinned that all on—I pinned that all on dairy. You know what I mean?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I don't have the kind of willpower to do any kind of elimination sort of testing to see kind of what's up with me and cheese. But as I see it... having a little bit is bulletproof logic. It's because it's really not, it's really—guys, I promise you, it's not very much. It's just a little bit and it's exciting and it's new.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And it's fun and it's fresh and exciting and dangerous and... scary.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: But good for—good I think overall.

Rachel: Did we get through all of your notes?

Griffin: I don't know, baby, I really fuckin' jumped around 'em pretty good.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: No? Oh, man, that was gonna be a good point.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Hey, can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

Griffin: What have you prepared? If you say a lot of cheese, I'm gonna freak out.

Rachel: [laughs] No. No, I'm nervous because we don't have access to wonderful.fyi now.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: But I know that I haven't talked about this as a Big Wonder. I may have mentioned it as a Small Wonder at some point. Let me know if you've talked about it—and that is the thesaurus.

Griffin: Hm! I actually do have access right now. It looks like we're in the clear. Do you want me to see if we've done rhyming dictionary in the past?

Rachel: I feel like you've done rhyming dictionary?

Griffin: Hm... no, I think we're okay!

Rachel: Oh, okay.

Griffin: I think we're—I don't know that we've done any reference books. So...

Rachel: [laughs] So it occurred to me, and this was literally, I was—I was walking back from the train, and I was like, you know, somebody had to invent the thesaurus.

Griffin: What a job.

Rachel: Like—

Griffin: What a—what a Herculean task.

Rachel: Like a dictionary, you feel like probably the beginning of time people were like, "We should write this word down and what it means."

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: The thesaurus is a little bit fanciful.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I have always loved it, as somebody who used to write poetry. And also like any paper you write, when you're trying to say the same thing over and over again but make it sound a little different. [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: It's always helpful to look up—look it up in the thesaurus. I will also say, one of my pet peeves, and I was talking to Griffin about this, when we watch a show like Love Is Blind, is when somebody says the same thing over and over again. Like, oh, you know—

Griffin: "You're smart and brilliant—"

Rachel: "And intelligent."

Griffin: "And intelligent."

Rachel: "You're so beautiful and pretty. Like, she's so nice and kind." That's an example of poor use of a thesaurus. But I really enjoy it when you're like—this happens to me a lot as a like person that writes grants.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I already said community, so what—how am I going to say that again later?

Griffin: God, but you—folks in the nonprofit space have access to the most exciting words, I feel like. Just the most exciting terminology.

Rachel: That is—that is true. I was telling Griffin today about how one of our big words lately is "catalyst." And you see it everywhere. I promise you, right now, if you look up, you know, like a nonprofit in your area, and you look up their mission statement or their values or whatever, they'll have the word "catalyst" in there. Everybody's—

Griffin: That's so cool, so exciting.

Rachel: Everybody's trying to be a catalyst.

Griffin: I love that.

Rachel: Mm-hm. So, I wanted to know about, you know, the thesaurus, how it came about.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: And I saw a name that made me realize like, oh, of course. It's Roget.

Griffin: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah!

Rachel: Have you seen like the Roget's thesaurus?

Griffin: Yeah, of course.

Rachel: Peter Mark Roget. And this is kind of incredible, this man was born in 1779.

Griffin: Good lord.

Rachel: He did not die 'til 1869. He was 90 years old.

Griffin: Dude!

Rachel: In that time period.

Griffin: How did you—dude, was he the oldest man alive?

Rachel: [laughs] I don't think so. He did study medicine, so maybe he like, you know, knew a lot about healthy living before anybody else did.

Griffin: Yeah. It makes sense, though, when you're 90 you're like, "I've already said everything. I need new ways to say it. If only there was a book for me."

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: He probably didn't write it when he was 90 though, huh?

Rachel: No, but he did it towards the end of his life.

Griffin: Okay?

Rachel: So, he retired in 1840, and that is when he started working on the thesaurus. There are reports that he struggled with depression and that the thesaurus arose because list making was one of his coping mechanisms at the time.

Griffin: "My friend, my brother."

Rachel: [chortles]

Griffin: Hell yes.

Rachel: So, he started working on this soon after he retired, and the first one was printed in 1852. And listen to this title, *Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases: Classified and Arranged So as to Facilitate the Expression of Ideas and Assist in Literary Composition*. [chuckles] Isn't that beautiful?

Griffin: Takes my breath away.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It's like... it's like—it's like a Sufjan Stevens sort of title of a thesaurus.

Rachel: Or like Fiona Apple's When the Pawn album.

Griffin: Oh, yeah. Can you—do you—do you—can you recite that off the top—

Rachel: No.

Griffin: When the turning of this—when the turning of the... time screws.

Rachel: [chuckles] I mean—

Griffin: And the mocking jays—

Rachel: It's about like a pawn going into battle.

Griffin: Oh.

Rachel: It's like a story.

Griffin: Isn't there one about a screw—like a turning of a—the turning of the clock is the...

Rachel: Maybe it gets there. Do you want me to look it up right now? Is this important?

Griffin: No, it's okay, no.

Rachel: Okay. [chuckles]

Griffin: I'm just gonna be sitting here thinking about it.

Rachel: Okay. So, one thing I didn't know a lot about—obviously, I know what a thesaurus is, but I didn't really know about how it started. So that

title gives you kind of a hint that it was like—it was not just supposed to be a reference guide. It featured 15,000 words.

Griffin: Good lord!

Rachel: Organized conceptually, rather than alphabetically.

Griffin: [chuckles]

Rachel: Into six categories; abstraction, relations, space, matter, intellect, volition and affections.

Griffin: Babe, this is huge.

Rachel: I know.

Griffin: This feels—this feels revolutionary to me. This feels like a, I don't know—that you've just categor—was the idea that he's just categorized all words into six broad sort of categories? Give them to me again, space?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Relations.

Rachel: Abstraction, relations.

Griffin: Abstraction, relations.

Rachel: Space, matter, intellect, volition and affections.

Griffin: Volition is the one that I'm most sort of interested in.

Rachel: Yeah, I know! You can apparently like view one of these originals at this place called the Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum. But he only printed a thousand copies of this one.

Griffin: That's... that's, I mean, I imagine it's a hard book to print. It's got 15,000 words in it.

Rachel: Yeah. Now, I mean, now you just go to thesaurus.com and you just enter in like "beautiful," and it gives you—like it spits out. But that like really captures a time period in which like real great thinkers would sit around and think about how words were impacting their daily life and the potential of them.

Griffin: I will say, I do think young writers should have to possess some sort of license that represents the fact that they have taken tests before they are allowed to use their first thesaurus. Because otherwise—when I—

Rachel: That's true.

Griffin: When I look back on some of my writing, when I discovered the thesaurus, I want to wedgie myself up and hang myself up on the door by my butt, like at the end of Home Alone. Because of how just—the overuse of a thesaurus is, I think, one of the more kind of cringe worthy hallmarks of a young writer's career. Myself absolutely included.

Rachel: There was a poem I wrote where I was talking about adding cream to a cup of coffee, and like the various shades of brown that it turned as more cream was allowed into it. And I looked up like all these different kinds of brown, and just used a lot of them.

Griffin: I got in an intense argument with a professor in college because I got like a D on like a report I had written about a bear at some zoo that was like bringing in like crowds. And I called the bear an "earth sign ambassador."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And he said, "What is—what does that mean?" And I was like—

Rachel: I love that!

Griffin: I was furious! I was like, this not a—I feel like that's—

Rachel: That very precise to me!

Griffin: Sure. I thought so too. That's why we're married.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: That's why you and I are betrothed.

Rachel: Yeah. That's true.

Griffin: But I lost—I did lose—I did end up getting a bad grade.

Rachel: Well, I'm sorry that happened, that's totally unfair.

Griffin: It's alright.

Rachel: I'm glad that you argued it.

Griffin: I did need to learn that sometimes people don't like that. Sometimes people don't like it when you use a big, big word when you absolutely did not need to.

Rachel: I know. I understand that. But there's artistry. Like that for me feels like artistry.

Griffin: Sure. It's like cheese!

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: When you're using a big, big word, it's okay to do like a little bit of it, I think, because—and you don't know how people are gonna react. Maybe it's funky. But if you do too much of it, it's gonna make you—it's gonna make you feel sick to your tummy.

Rachel: Using too many—

Griffin: Too many big words.

Rachel: Too many big words is gonna make you sick.

Griffin: So, where did the word "thesaurus" come from?

Rachel: Oh, good question. So, there is a website called Book Riot that I am pulling this from. Thesaurus came from the Greek "thēsauros," meaning treasury or storehouse.

Griffin: Okay?

Rachel: Those in the Middle Ages use the word "thesaurer" to refer to a treasurer. The word "thesaurus," back then, referred to places that stored the treasure we call words.

Griffin: That's amazing. I love that!

Rachel: I know. I know. I mean, there's—this guy is really fascinating. There's like—he's had many careers, I mentioned he had a medical career, he also studied philosophy, he was a professor of physiology. Gosh, there are so many things here. He was a member of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, and a Fellow of the Royal Society. I don't know, there's so much about this man that is fascinating.

Griffin: He made it to 90! Back then.

Rachel: And he made it to 90!

Griffin: So like, yeah, he was in probably a bunch of clubs.

Rachel: Here's something that I don't know enough about this, he claims that he invented—oh, gosh, a word that I can't say, fanacistiscope?

Griffin: Fanactiscope? Fanactis—

Rachel: Fanacisco—I need to—

Griffin: Fanacistiscope.

Rachel: It's... do you want to look at it?

Griffin: Oh, wow! Whoa! Cool!

Rachel: Well, I was hoping you'd help me pronounce it.

Griffin: Phenakistoscope.

Rachel: [chuckles] Okay, that's what I—that's what I tried.

Griffin: Phenakistoscope?

Rachel: It was the first widespread animation device. And it's like kind of a zoetrope kind of situation.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: He claimed—he claimed to have invented it in the spring of 1831, almost two years before it was introduced publicly.

Griffin: Phenakistoscop. Phenakistoscop?

Rachel: Maybe?

Griffin: I'm looking at a phonetic—phenakistoscop. I don't know. By the way, The Idler Wheel Is Wiser Than the Driver of the Screw and Whipping Cords Will Serve You More Than Ropes Will Ever Do. That was the Fiona Apple title that I couldn't remember.

Rachel: Oh?

Griffin: It's her 2012, fourth studio album.

Rachel: Oh.

Griffin: Phenakistoscope.

Rachel: [chuckles] Anyway, I don't know, I think I would really recommend anytime that you have to write something more than two paragraphs, to really check out the thesaurus.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I feel like it's Reading Rainbow now and I'm telling you like, but you don't have to take my word for it.

Griffin: Oh, yeah, for sure. This has been, I would say, probably our most unrelatable episode to date.

Rachel: [laughs] A little bit of cheese and a thesaurus.

Griffin: Just a little bit of cheese and a thesaurus, yeah, absolutely. Do you wanna know what our friends at home are talking about?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Alex says, "One of my favorite wonderful things is when you're ordering food and show up at the perfect time to miss the rush. You walk away with your food feeling like you're the luckiest person alive." I do love that. It's, there is a—

Rachel: That is good. I mean, we get a lot of that because we go out to dinner at 5:30 now.

Griffin: Yeah, absolutely.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: But you know, you go somewhere and you pick up your order, and then like there's like—but there's a big line behind you and you're like, wow.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It makes you feel like the wise grasshopper who stowed away all of his nuts for the winter. And the ant wanted to like party, but the grasshopper was like, "No way, man." You know, that old one.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [chuckles] Joey says, "My Small Wonder is the giant billboard I pass by while riding the train to work that says, 'Joey, Joey, Joey' is back. It's for a hockey player from the Seattle Kraken, but five times a week I feel like it's Seattle welcoming me back to their city."

Rachel: [chuckles] I love that.

Griffin: I do too.

Rachel: I thought it was like a reboot of the spin-off of Friends.

Griffin: Oh, god, I forgot about that.

Rachel: Was that just called Joey?

Griffin: Yeah, I think it was just called Joey. I believe this is in reference to Joey Daccord.

Rachel: Oh?

Griffin: Who is a Seattle Kraken player.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: Thank you so much for listening to our show. 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. And thank you to Maximum Fun for having us on the network. Maximumfun.org is where you can go to check out all the shows on the network.

You're gonna find a bunch of stuff there that's gonna be your new jam, I guarantee it! We got some merch up in the merch store! Got a Miggy

Mackerel hoodie, a "Fish Death" hat for Miggy Mackerel. If you're a fan of the McElroy Family Clubhouse, which you should be following us on YouTube, The McElroy Family.

We do The McElroy Family Clubhouse the last Tuesday of every month, and every other Tuesday we play games together. We're doing a bunch of gaming streams, like four days a week now. And. You can follow @McElroyEntertainmentSystem on Instagram to find out when all that stuff is coming. Hey, I've got a book coming out in like a couple weeks, March 10th.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: It's a Choose Your Own Adventure book, a real Choose Your Own Adventure book from the Choose Your Own Adventure company, and it's called The Stowaway, and it's an outer space adventure survival tale.

Rachel: We got a big ol' box of them and it was very exciting.

Griffin: I've got a huge, huge box of 'em. I'm very proud of it. It is \$10, and you can pre-order it at bit.ly/griffinstowaway. For books, pre-ordering stuff is important because it is how they know how many to make and send to stores to sell. So it is a huge help, if you would do that. Bit.ly/griffinstowaway.

Rachel: It's for like, what, like middle—

Griffin: Middle grade, is what they say, ages eight to 12. But you know, it's—I don't think there—it's not as mature as a lot of the stuff that I make, and so I think it's got broad crossover appeal.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: That's it. Thank you so much for listening to our program. We'll be back with a new episode of Wonderful next week, so keep it locked and we'll talk to you then! Bye!

Rachel: Bye!

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

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