

## Wonderful 416: Sleepytime Mix of Tender Tenor Voices

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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:** Welcome to Wonderful! This is a podcast where we talk about things we like, that's good, that we're into. The podcast is in and of itself a wonderful thing that we're glad to make. Do you ever think about that?

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Do you ever think about this sort of recursive nature of the podcast that we love making it so much—

**Rachel:** Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** And that is—that is wonderful. But if you like acknowledge that for too much, it kind of sucks itself in and implodes, doesn't it?

**Rachel:** Uh-huh. Yeah, I mean, I guess one of us could bring that as a topic one week.

**Griffin:** And then the other one could bring that the other one brought it as a topic the following week!

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And we could fully disappear up our own buttocks.

**Rachel:** [chuckles] Go back and forth forever.

**Griffin:** Go back and forth of our buttoles.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Talking about how much we love making this show. And it's true. And if you enjoy listening to it, guess what? You can help us make it right now, by going to [maximumfun.org/join](http://maximumfun.org/join). That's right, it's week two of the Max Fun Drive, where we come to you and ask for your help to make all of the stuff that we make and, you know, hire the team of people that we have put together. This team of crack shot sort of producers and editors and just brilliant folks to make all this stuff, you're the one who makes that possible, by supporting us, at just as low as five bucks a month. If you do that, thank you so much. Holy crap.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** You help us make all the stuff. You also get access to hundreds of hours of bonus content. This year is our mummy—our mummy watch.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** It's been about four weeks now since we did that. How has it settled into you, The Mummy? Because I warned you it could get—

**Rachel:** I like it more now.

**Griffin:** Interesting.

**Rachel:** It's really like my memories of it are positive.

**Griffin:** Yeah. You see the news about four?

**Rachel:** No? There's a four?

**Griffin:** The quatro, baby!

**Rachel:** Did we bring that?

**Griffin:** I think—I don't know, we talked about The Phantom on MBMBaM and then like two weeks later they're like, yeah, they're making a new The Phantom TV show, and that's crazy, because no one fucking cares about that—

**Rachel:** [chuckles] Uh-huh!

**Griffin:** Lots of people care about The Mummy, so I don't know that we had as big of a splash impact on it.

**Rachel:** Was this like just announced, though?

**Griffin:** I mean, it was like announced that they're still doing it, still out there cranking.

**Rachel:** Oh, okay. [chuckles] Still a thing!

**Griffin:** But don't even—listen, instead, count your rosebuds while ye may—while ye—while ye may, I think is what it says in the Bible. And this show can be your rosebud, because it used to be called that sort of.

**Rachel:** Because it used to be. [chuckles]

**Griffin:** We are—we are not doing so hot in this drive. We are about, at the time that I'm recording this, about halfway to where we were kind of hoping to be at this point. We are lagging behind quite dramatically. And that is to be expected, it is an immensely scary, challenging economic sort of climate. And we do this drive year in, year out, regardless of sort of what's—what else is going on in the world! So, we could really, really, really use some help, helping us to sort of reach our goal and hit our—hit our budget numbers and, you know, just make all the stuff that we make. And you get bonus content.

There's other pledge gifts, too. And you get to—you get to feel good! Because you're supporting something like Maximum Fun, which I think is an amazing, one of a kind network that respects its creators and empowers its employees, and is the change I want to see in the world.

**Rachel:** Those of you that have worked at a nonprofit, or are kind of familiar with how a donor supported organization works, you have to kind of set your budget based around the amount of money you think you'll be able to fundraise.

**Griffin:** Yes. It's a precarious position.

**Rachel:** Yes. And so, we are no different at Max Fun in that they have kind of built a plan for the network and for us around a certain goal. And it's—

**Griffin:** Yeah. We've fallen short of that goal so far, so—

**Rachel:** Yeah, it's become very important that we meet that goal.

**Griffin:** If you're already a member, if you've been doing five bucks a month for a while, and you're—maybe watching more of our streams, maybe you're listening to more of our shows—

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Maybe you're just like doing—you're in a bit more of a stable position financially speaking than when you joined, you could upgrade to the next pledge level. 10 bucks a month, you get a dope keychain of your choosing, and all the other sort of gifts.

You also get access to ad-free feeds for most of the shows on the network, for the ones that you directly support there. But if you're not willing to do that, even if you can bump it up one buck a month from what you're already doing, boosting it in that manner, that also gets us closer to that goal, and supports us financially. I know that we're sort of hitting it pretty hard, I would say, this year—

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** But it's becoming increasingly apparent that we sort of have to, so...

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Please, please, please help us out. [Maximumfun.org/join](http://Maximumfun.org/join). We'll talk more about the other like bo-co and pledge stuff later on. Do you have any Small Wonders? Hm?

**Rachel:** Hmm, I, you know, have been returning to our local library.

**Griffin:** Amazing!

**Rachel:** At least at our library, if you have a card for more than three years, it like lapses and you have to go in and show up and say, "Hey, I'm still here at this address and I would like to have a library card again."

**Griffin:** Sure.

**Rachel:** And I did that recently. And now I'm back at it, man. Been there twice this week.

**Griffin:** Hm.

**Rachel:** This week!

**Griffin:** That's crazy.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** I don't go in there that often, because when we first visited this neighborhood before we even moved here, we went in that library and we're checking it out, and you went to the restroom.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** And I was just kicking it sort of like outside the restroom, waiting for you to be done. And a librarian came up to me and was like, "You can't be here." And I was like, whoa? That's super-duper harsh.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** But then I realized it's because the area outside the restroom that I was sitting in was like the children's book section.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And they're like, "You can't... you can't sit in the children's book section if you don't have a childrens."

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** And I was like, "That's actually fair."

**Rachel:** Fair. Fair, yeah.

**Griffin:** "Adios. I'm out of here." But do support your local libraries.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** That's important. I'm going to say Fuser. Did I do this last week? Did I talk about Fuser last week maybe?

**Rachel:** Maybe.

**Griffin:** It's just, I've really—I've really, I don't know, hit my stride with that game. And it's got me thinking that I should—that I need to get like—I need to learn how DJs do it.

**Rachel:** Yeah, I think so—

**Griffin:** Because it feels like what Girl Talk does. If I can figure out how Girl Talk does all that, it seems super complicated.

**Rachel:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Griffin:** I watched a video once, it was just him on his MacBook, just chip-chopping away. And then he was like, "And here's a—here's a banger." That seems cool. I wish I did know how to do that.

**Rachel:** Your usage of Rafi's song, Bananaphone, is inspired, and it really makes me think that you should invest the time.

**Griffin:** Well, throwing a swing ragtime rhythm into any song actually makes it sort of interesting. It does make it sonically interesting, if it—no matter what you're chopping it with, Doechii, Daft Punk, if you do put in a little ragtime swing here and there with those vocals—

**Rachel:** What is that line? The—

**Griffin:** [sings a tune] That one?

**Rachel:** No, no, no, no, no, I'm talking about lyrics, where he talks about like modulars... cellular—

**Griffin:** Cellular, modular... I don't know, I'm not going to be able to pull it.

**Rachel:** I don't know, anyway.

**Griffin:** He's a—he's a more gifted lyricist than myself.

**Rachel:** Yeah. Some props to him, too, for just a wonderful song.

**Griffin:** Yeah. Two new one hour sets for this drive are up on The McElroy Family YouTube channel.

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** If you like bangers, I'm really, really proud of the work we've done. I'm really proud of the work we've done this drive.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Sonically and musically, I guess. I go first this week!

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** Speaking of positive sonic experiences, Sonic and Knuckles, the—no, I'm just kidding.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** People probably would get fuckin' stoked if I talked about positive—

**Rachel:** Oh, for sure.

**Griffin:** Sonic the Hedgehog experiences. I think we've talked about the Blue Hedgehog from time to time. I'm talking about music, though. I'm talking about chill, nice music that makes you feel good to listen to it, musical artists I've been listening to for a long time—that's Gary Jules.

**Rachel:** Yeah, did you have this on like a playlist or something?

**Griffin:** Probably, man! I probably had a few of his songs on multiple playlists. I still—

**Rachel:** When I was listening, particularly the first song you sent me—

**Griffin:** Yeah!

**Rachel:** I was like, this sounds really familiar to me.

**Griffin:** Yeah! So, it was very much, I started listening to him in high school, but it was very college era sort of stuff for me.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And so like, I think I still have like a Spotify playlist that's like music I listened to in college, or like played at our college radio station.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And his tracks are like absolutely all over that. So, that's Gary Jules. If you—if you recognize his name, but you're like, "I don't think I know any of his music," chances are you do actually know one of his songs, because

everyone's heard it. It's the cover of Tears for Fears' "Mad World," that was on the Donnie Darko soundtrack. It was on—it was in Gears of War 3. It was in like so many television shows. And I'm not going to play that cover of "Mad World" here, partially because it's like not even in my top like 30 favorite songs of his. It's very, it's nice, but it's also—

**Rachel:** It's not his song either.

**Griffin:** Yeah, no, for sure! And it's really interesting to me how... his career is very interesting to me, because he has this really solid kind of catalog of like nice, lovely, folky music that he recorded in sort of the late '90s or early to mid aughts. And then those aren't as popular as this one song he has, which is the cover of Tears for Fears.

I was—I was—while I was researching this topic, I was looking at his 2001 album, *Trading Snake Oil for Wolf Tickets*, on Spotify, and it has 10 tracks on it. And those 10 tracks average about 300,000 plays or so on Spotify. And then at the very end is "Mad World," which has 315 million plays. So literally like a factor of like a thousand, he has this one song in his catalog that is just immensely more popular.

But his other songs have been featured on lots of TV shows for whatever reason, even though he has not had huge sort of crossover success, broad mainstream success. His music has been featured on *General Hospital*, *Without a Trace*, *The O.C.*, *Smallville*, *Jericho*, *CSI*, *House*, *Riverdale*, a lot. Really, really hitting a lot—splitting the uprights on a lot of those kind of cable dramas.

**Rachel:** Maybe I'm recognizing it from *The O.C.* also.

**Griffin:** Possibly. There are so many good Gary Jules songs. The one I want to play right now to showcase his sort of non-Mad World vibe is a song from his 1998 album, his debut album, *Greetings from the Side*. The song is called "Blue Fish."

[*"Blue Fish"* by Gary Jules plays]

**Griffin:** So, I got really into Gary Jules in college, around 2005, when I was like a tender freshman who just wanted nothing to do but like listen to gentle-voiced sweet tenors play folk guitars.

**Rachel:** I was going to say, this reminds me of like your Tallest Man era, for sure.

**Griffin:** I even think Tallest Man came in a little bit later than this. Tallest Man, I think, and Whale, right? Tallest Man's voice is like crazy.

**Rachel:** True, yeah. Yeah.

**Griffin:** This is to me like... I used to have like a sleepy time mix of gentle-voiced folk tenors.

**Rachel:** Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** That I would genuinely put on my Zune most nights in order to help me fall asleep. And then we're talking about—we're talking about Gary Jules, we're talking about Iron and Wine, we're talking about Damian Rice.

**Rachel:** Whoa.

**Griffin:** We're talking about Nick Drake.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And we're talking about Gary Jules, to round things out. Because that song "Blue Fish," it's my favorite of his songs. It's one of my favorite songs maybe ever, because it really, really hit all the right notes for me in that very tender period of my life. Just, it's full of lovely kind of layered acoustic guitars and high harmonies and sort of singing about this like strange period of your life that follows like your childhood, into adulthood. There's a line in the song that's "19's Fire in the Lighthouse is Burnout at 22," which like, I don't know, felt so silly when I was listening to it now like, yeah, right, man, I'm going to party forever!

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** But looking back, I don't know, it feels like there is a perspective to that song that I—has only kind of gotten richer with time.

**Rachel:** It feels like... it feels like one of these songs would always be good on like a mixtape.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Because I feel like these are the kind of songs where, as a woman who has often been attracted to men that have musical interests and, you know, aptitude, the mixtape is powerful—

**Griffin:** Sure. These are huge mixtape songs.

**Rachel:** And I feel like if you had give me a mixtape with this on here, I would be like, "Griffin is—he's thoughtful. He's poetic. He's deep."

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** You know? He's sensitive.

**Griffin:** This is what's really interesting to me about Gary Jules, like setting aside "Mad World," which is like its own sort of monster success story, kind of like freak hit.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** His music was on a fuckin' lot of TV shows! Like a lot—an outsized number of television shows.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Scrubs, Friday Night Lights. Like all of the dramas of that kind of like 2000s sort of era had a Gary Jules song on the soundtrack at some point. But he was never like a household—like anytime I would talk to my friends about him, nobody really knew who he was. And I was always so

interested in that. Like, why is it that—what is it about his music that makes it so immensely licensable?

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** But like people aren't, I don't know—at least I'm sure he has a huge following. But just like, I don't know, like he was never as famous as the TV shows and movies that his work was being featured in. And that always felt so strange to me because I, I don't know, I think the—I think the world of his music. He was born in Fresno, California. His dad was a famous SEC investigator and whistleblower.

**Rachel:** Huh?

**Griffin:** Named Gary Aguirre. And according to his website—I couldn't find a lot of details about Gary Jules either.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** But according to his website, he grew up in the surf culture of San Diego and started to write and perform music in the late '90s, which is when he released this debut album, *Greetings from the Side*, which is my favorite, I think, of all of his. It's just very, very sweet and gentle the whole way through. But almost immediately, he got dropped from the label that produced the record.

A&M Records went through a merger and like just got rid of him. So, he... I don't know if he was living with his longtime friend and collaborator, but he recorded his next album sort of in his basement, a guy named Michael Andrews. And Michael Andrews, while they were sort of recording *Trading Snake Oil for Wolf Tickets*, his second album, Michael Andrews, who was a film composer, got asked to do music for *Donnie Darko*.

**Rachel:** Oh!

**Griffin:** And so, in Michael Andrews' basement over the course of like, I think they said 90 minutes for like 50 pounds or something like that, they just recorded "Mad World." And it wasn't a smash hit at first, but then when

Donnie Darko achieved kind of like cult classic status when it hit VHS and DVD, it started to get like a lot of radio play. And then it just went fucking supernova.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And it was the Christmas number one single in the UK for 2003. That song, "Mad World."

**Rachel:** Christmas?

**Griffin:** Yeah, that's like a, from what I understand, like a big kind of... you know, song of the—most popular song—

**Rachel:** Oh, okay.

**Griffin:** Of the year, kind of like—

**Rachel:** Because it isn't—it's not a jolly song?

**Griffin:** Oh!

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Gary Jules and Michael Andrews cover of Tears for Fears' "Mad World" is one of the unjolliest tunes I could ever imagine.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** But then he actually re-released that album, since he had this one song that went like super massive. He signed back up with a label then—

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** A couple more albums, and then that was it. He hasn't released anything since 2006.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** I think he's out there streaming, and like playing music and shit. I've seen him doing that, which is always like really, really nice to see. But I don't know, man, I—if you are in a tender mood, I think you'd be hard pressed to find a voice that is sort of more fitting for the moment than Gary Jules. I think he's—I think he's really, really, really fantastic. And also just sort of an interesting case study in like soundtrack, drama soundtrack bangers sort of in his—in his milieu, I've always found really interesting. I want to leave off with one more bit of a song from Greetings from the Side, which is called "Ghosts."

["Ghosts" by Gary Jules plays]

**Griffin:** Just lovely. Just nice stuff. You know what else is lovely and nice stuff?

**Rachel:** [chuckles] What?

**Griffin:** Supporting art and artists whose work you enjoy, which we are asking you to do right now by going to [maximumfun.org/join](http://maximumfun.org/join).

**Rachel:** I would encourage you—there are a lot of our listeners who have probably in the past become members.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And hey, guess what? If you haven't logged back in in a while to check on your membership, which is something you can do at [maximumfun.org](http://maximumfun.org), you—

**Griffin:** Slash join.

**Rachel:** Slash join. You can have the opportunity to update your credit card information—

**Griffin:** That's huge.

**Rachel:** And your address, which is really important.

**Griffin:** Inside baseball, we lose a lot of people every year.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Just to expiring credit—it's not even like maybe you cancel it because you—like credit cards expire and then that's it. Like that's... I know that doesn't sound like the biggest threat in the world, but it's a lot of people over the course of a year. So, if you—if you think you have a membership, you can always just kind of go check.

**Rachel:** Yeah. Yeah. You don't even have to worry about remembering the password. You put your email in and Maximum Fund will send you a link, and then you can check and make sure. You can also look at the shows that you at the time said you listened to, and maybe add more shows too, if that's applicable.

**Griffin:** And you can boost or upgrade your membership if you're able to do so. Just another two bucks a month, you know, from enough people is enough to—

**Rachel:** Can I tell you I did exactly that today?

**Griffin:** Ah, babe, that's great!

**Rachel:** I have been pledging at a certain level, and I, one, thought today, well, my credit card probably expired. [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And then also I was like, yeah, I'm going to add \$2 to that.

**Griffin:** Do you just send that direct—and you send that directly to Stop Podcasting Yourself? Or how does that—

**Rachel:** [laughs] I select other shows on there too!

**Griffin:** Oh, good, okay.

**Rachel:** This was the first year where I selected our show. [laughs]

**Griffin:** Hey, man, we—

**Rachel:** That's how nervous I am. [chortles]

**Griffin:** [guffaws] That's very vulnerable, and hopefully it's enough for people to know kind of what the situation is on the ground here. I know times are so bad, so fuckin' bad. And this stuff that we do brings me a lot of comfort and... genuine sort of peace.

Just sort of doing this show with you is an opportunity to focus on kind of nothing but good stuff for a while and talk to my favorite person in the world. And if the show is anything remotely like that for you at home, or any of the work that we do, if you—if you do enjoy it, seriously, we could use some help getting slightly back on track, because we are way, way behind in the drive this year.

So, [maximumfun.org/join](http://maximumfun.org/join) is where you can go. And we're not just going to ask you for cash and not give you anything back, there's so much bonus content. Not only did we do The Mummy this year, we've done so much other wonderful things. Like for instance, do you remember when we watched Dharma and Greg after referencing it so, so much?

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** And then talked about which one of us is Dharma and which one of us was Greg?

**Rachel:** That's what our keychain is based on this year, is Big Greg Energy.

**Griffin:** That is true! If you go with \$10 a month and choose our show for the enamel keychain, you get—you get the Big Greg Energy keychain, which I think is fuckin' strong!

**Rachel:** [chuckles] Yeah.

**Griffin:** I think that looks cool, dangling out of like a big truck like ignition. That's awesome. We've done—last year was Hockey Talk Badakadak speaking of Stop Podcasting Yourself. We've had, you know, Rose Buddies bo-co I think is still up in there.

**Rachel:** For sure!

**Griffin:** Our interview with the Canadian Bachelorette, which was so much fun. There's so much stuff over there for you to check out. And then also, you know, at \$10 a month, you get the ad-free feeds, which I know is an important quality of life thing for a lot of folks at home.

And then there's other pledge levels too. But honestly, even just \$5 a month, that is like the rate that a lot of people kind of like start in at, it truly... it adds up and it is the reason why we are doing this still after 16 years of podcasting. And I'm so grateful, I'm so immensely grateful. Not just for the financial support, but just for the like life—like the life that I live.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** I work a lot and I'm... work with my family a lot. And all of that stuff is true because there are people who pay to make it feasible. Like, I realize that's a mealy-mouthed way of sort of describing it, but that's what—that's what you're supporting for me, very personally speaking—

**Rachel:** I literally can't—

**Griffin:** And I can't tell you how much I appreciate it.

**Rachel:** Imagine you doing anything else. You know?

**Griffin:** Oh, god, no, yeah.

Rachel: Like, there's something, and this is true—for those of you that have creative friends or people that make things in your life, and you just recognize like this is them at their best.

**Griffin:** Sure.

**Rachel:** This is—this is a lot of what they were built to do. And I definitely feel that about you and, you know, our family. This is so fulfilling.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And so kind of the sweet spot for all of us.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And we're just really grateful that we get supported.

**Griffin:** Unless you're driving right now—you have a pass if you're driving, but if you have had the thought, "Oh, I should do that, I should help them out," do it now! [Maximumfun.org/join](https://Maximumfun.org/join), before you forget. It truly takes like two minutes to set up, and you get access to the bo-co immediately. There's a new bo-co back end—bo-co back end!

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** For like finding bo-co for like the shows that you—that you've been supporting and that you want to listen to.

**Rachel:** Yeah. And you can listen—here's the thing, like, it's any bonus content.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** You know? So a lot of there—you can find a lot of new Maximum podcasts that way, because it is always kind of the funniest, most exciting, like new ideas are back there.

**Griffin:** And if you're—you know, obviously things are really bad right now. If you are not financially able to—if you're not in a position where you can do that, like we of course understand that. If you can spread the word about the drive or about the show, then, you know, anything like that also helps us a whole lot. But yeah, we're banging the drum real hard because it's—the situation kind of calls for it. And we are hoping to sort of get back on the

grind set this week and get some of those numbers or else, you know, the big man, Jesse, breathing down our necks—

**Rachel:** Well, hey, Max Fun is a co-op now, so everybody will—

**Griffin:** I know! But—

**Rachel:** Everybody will breathe down our necks. [laughs]

**Griffin:** No, Jesse breathing down my neck is a different thing. I told him once that it helps calm me down sometimes.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** And now he'll just like show up and I'll be like, "What are you doing? You're on the wrong coast of the country, like why did you fly out all the way down?" And he was like, "You seem stressed out." He's a good friend!

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Do you want to talk about something?

**Rachel:** My Wonderful topic this week?

**Griffin:** Yeah. One last time, [maximumfun.org/join](http://maximumfun.org/join). Thank you so much.

**Rachel:** So, you know, April is poetry month.

**Griffin:** I didn't. Cool, though, cool!

**Rachel:** The notification on your phone, I guess you probably didn't get it when April started. Or you thought it was like an April Fool's Day thing, and so you dismissed it.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** You were like, "Ha-ha, that's really funny."

**Griffin:** Ha-ha, it's not April.

**Rachel:** "A month for poetry."

**Griffin:** Who would need that?

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Poems are so short. You do not need a month. That's crazy.

**Rachel:** [chuckles] Anyway, I would like to, in honor of that, take a trip to the Poetry Corner.

**Griffin:** [sings a tune] Poems!

**Rachel:** [chuckles and sings] Rising up... back... back of the stanza.

**Griffin:** Hm?

**Rachel:** [sings] Take my ch—[chuckles]

**Griffin:** [sings] Take my chanza.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Take my chanza? Is that what you were going to say? That's cool! Backing up, rise on this stanza... take my luck, take my chanza. I think that's—

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Is that the poem? That's a—did you just write that? Are you doing your own stuff now on the Poetry Corner? That's crazy.

**Rachel:** No, I... some people think because this show is largely improvisational, that I might have some kind of improv ability, and that is actually not—

**Griffin:** Your brain works in meter and rhyme, and yet—

[both laugh]

**Griffin:** When challenged—

**Rachel:** I know!

**Griffin:** When challenged to produce it—

**Rachel:** Oh, I notoriously can't rise to the occasion.

**Griffin:** [chuckles]

**Rachel:** I feel like I'm one of those people when we're playing a game with our friends, and it's like, "It really counts right now, Rachel, here's your turn," like every time—

**Griffin:** You're so—you're so brilliant at so much, and so many creative endeavors—

**Rachel:** Choke city. [chuckles]

**Griffin:** But you, if someone's like, "Do a rhyming joke right now," I feel like it's like those fainting goats.

**Rachel:** Uh-huh. [laughs]

**Griffin:** Where they like just lock up and something like untethers from their brain, and they just kind of fall over.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** It's really charming.

**Rachel:** I'm glad that you like it.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** I wanted to talk about a poet, and largely an author of kind of children's and teen literature.

**Griffin:** Cool.

**Rachel:** Kristen Tracy.

**Griffin:** Okay!

**Rachel:** This is somebody who has published all of one book of poetry.

**Griffin:** Oh, interesting?

**Rachel:** But she has over 20 books for children and teens, going all the way back to, from what I can tell, 2007. And then books for children planned for later this month. But she has one book of poetry that I found really exceptional, called Half Hazard.

**Griffin:** Hm.

**Rachel:** And it was the winner of Emily Dickinson's first book award from the Poetry Foundation.

**Griffin:** I didn't know she was still giving those out?

**Rachel:** [chuckles] She actually won it, from what I can tell, the last year it was awarded.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** But what it used to be is, if there was a poet over 40 that had not published a book of poetry, they could be eligible for this prize.

**Griffin:** Oh, okay!

**Rachel:** Which would lead to them getting their first book of poetry.

**Griffin:** Sort of like a 40 Over 40?

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** How come Forbes never explores that? Like budding entrepreneurs who are, you know, nearing retirement age. That's cool!

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Not that 40 is near retirement age, but—

**Rachel:** Yeah, no, I really, I like the idea of it. I was actually a little disappointed to see that this is not something they do anymore. I believe she won it in 2017.

**Griffin:** Emily Dickinson is like from old times, right? Emily Dickinson is like from old times? Like from history times?

**Rachel:** Yeah. Yeah, honey.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** Do you wanna know—

**Griffin:** Emily Dickinson is not giving a—didn't have a hand in these awards?

**Rachel:** No, no, I think it's—

**Griffin:** Because she's like from old-old times.

**Rachel:** It's in honor of the fact that she was a very prolific poet that was not widely published until after her passing.

**Griffin:** What about Virginia Woolf, when was she? Was she old times too? Or she was newer times. In history.

**Rachel:** Newer times, I think, barely. Do you want me to google these things?

**Griffin:** No, no, no, no, I was just thinking out loud.

**Rachel:** Yeah, 2017 was the last year that the Poetry Foundation gave it out, and it was the year that she won.

**Griffin:** Oh, good.

**Rachel:** Which led to the book that I found and liked so much. So, I wanted to read a poem from there.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** I have an actual physical copy of the book, because again, went to the library.

**Griffin:** Look at that. I love how annotated that book is, holy crap, babe.

**Rachel:** [chuckles] Yeah!

**Griffin:** You annotated the shit out of that book.

**Rachel:** So—

**Griffin:** Guys, if you can't see this thing, it looks like a peacock! It's got tabs on tabs on tabs on tabs coming out of it.

**Rachel:** So, I have three classifications of tabs right here.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** Green is like, hey, I like this poem.

**Griffin:** Cool.

**Rachel:** Pink is like, should I read this poem on Wonderful? And then blue is, I for sure wanna read this poem on Wonderful.

**Griffin:** Wow.

**Rachel:** Now, I do have three tabs here.

**Griffin:** Wow, okay.

**Rachel:** So, it's not gonna be all three.

**Griffin:** No.

**Rachel:** But, you know, I thought I would make—

**Griffin:** It's nice to see there's—

**Rachel:** Kind of a game time decision.

**Griffin:** For just one book that she has written, that's a—that's a pretty good hit rate, man.

**Rachel:** I know, right? Part of what I realized when I was trying to pick a poem is like what I really recommend is just reading this whole book. Because they all fit together really nicely, like in a way that I feel like kind of improves the whole experience. So anyway, I'm going to read, of my three blue tabs, I'm going to first read a poem called Local Hazards.

**Griffin:** Cool.

**Rachel:** Outside Yellowstone, I see them, these bears, lumbering like fathers through backyards, ravenous for whatever we seal inside our trash. "Do not feed the bears," the signs say. "Even this vague, they are animals," my mother warns, holding her hands out the distance of a loaf of bread.

"Beneath the fluff, they are killing machines," add my father, raising his arms, curving his fingers to produce mock paws. Season after season, they carry on, moist snouts, sharp claws, hind flanks glistening under moon and

sun. I am too young to deal with them. Led by hunger to my doorstep, to my dreams, they wildly arrive almost every day.

And I close my eyes, starving in my own ways, breadcrumbs in my pockets, trout in the refrigerator, the deep smell of myself on my fingertips. Unwitting hazards do not come close, despite your puffed cheeks, playful gallop, the lovable way you corral your young. I must keep my distance. No, I cannot, cannot give you what you want.

**Griffin:** Fan-fucking-tastic!

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Really, really great. Excellent. If the others in that book are that strong, if there all—if all the blue tabs are like that, that's a—that's a damn success right there. I like that poem a lot. There seemed to be a lot of metaphor happening in there.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** That I feel like you can also just kind of not worry about, and then it's just a cool poem about bears.

**Rachel:** Yeah! [chuckles]

**Griffin:** I like that about poems someti—I mean, all poems are like that, where it's like, for me, a lot of that poem was about bears.

**Rachel:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** And then there were some parts towards the end that I was like, that's maybe not so much about bears, but about other stuff that I could interpret this way or the other.

**Rachel:** And listen, like, you'll notice whenever I do Poetry Corner, I don't spend a lot of time telling our listeners like what they should be getting out of it.

**Griffin:** Yeah, no, never.

**Rachel:** Like I am very much of the camp that even if you are not getting all of the possible like intended allusions or metaphors, like if you are enjoying it on any level, I think that is a successful poem.

**Griffin:** Hell yeah.

**Rachel:** And I definitely felt, you know, that with a lot of the poems in this book, because she writes a lot about animals and nature. And that is because she grew up in kind of a small farming community in Utah.

**Griffin:** Is that a bear on the pict—on the cover of the book?

**Rachel:** Yeah, it's a bear like standing on a ball, like a circus bear.

**Griffin:** I like that.

**Rachel:** Yeah, small farming community in Utah, she was raised Mormon, went to Brigham Young University, which is kind of the more famous university for Mormon people in Utah.

**Griffin:** Utah!

**Rachel:** Utah.

**Griffin:** [spoofing the cadence of "yee-haw"] *Utah!* Do you think people say that there?

**Rachel:** [chuckles] I don't know.

**Griffin:** Hey, Utah people, you should totally say it that way. *Utah!* It feels cool.

**Rachel:** [chuckles] Wow, you really threw me off my game there in that moment.

**Griffin:** I'm so sorry, you just said it—you said a lot of words in a really poetic kind of fascinating way. I wanted to do my own little Poetry Corner on the way that you said that sentence.

**Rachel:** No, I appreciate that. I appreciate that I still inspire you after all these years.

**Griffin:** Every day.

**Rachel:** So anyway, before this book of poetry came out, she'd already published four young adult books, but she collaborated on this collection that she said took her over 20 years to write.

**Griffin:** Holy shit.

**Rachel:** She started writing poetry in college, was lucky enough to take a writing workshop. And poetry has always been something that's been kind of foundational for her, but she had really focused on, you know, these other genres that she also really enjoys.

**Griffin:** Right.

**Rachel:** And then, yeah, and publishing and literary magazines, like very much an active poet, but not really—

**Griffin:** I fuckin' love that, man.

**Rachel:** Putting her back behind a book until she won this prize.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Which, I mean, says a lot about being a poet in the world. Like, if you are going to put out a book, like you need some momentum behind you. And often, that is an MFA degree or getting selected for a prize, like this one, to just kind of show your worth and demonstrate that you've got a whole book in there.

**Griffin:** Well, and to just grind on it for that long is so genuinely, hugely inspiring.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** I feel like I don't read a lot of poetry, really at all, but I do have like authors whose work I've read who put out like, "And here's some poems—here's a collection of short poems I wrote." That I will read and be like, well, that wasn't very good. [chuckles] You kind of just seem like you wanted to get those—get those out. To do it for 20 years and make something that is that sort of, I don't know, dense and interesting and cool—

**Rachel:** That used to be the advice in like, in the writing workshops that I took, of like, don't send anything out to be published like the same year you write it.

**Griffin:** Right.

**Rachel:** Like really sit on it, go back and go back and go back. Which feels like a crazy luxury when you're like, you know, 20 years old—

**Griffin:** Right, yeah.

**Rachel:** And you're like, "But this is important!"

**Griffin:** Sure.

**Rachel:** But that is, I mean, that's how you get like you know, your kind of most distilled stuff.

**Griffin:** Yeah, for sure.

**Rachel:** So, going back to her kind of experience in like small town Utah as a Mormon person, she—part of her book is also kind of writing about the experience of leaving that community.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And kind of finding who her more like urban worldly self is. And so I wanted to read, because it's Max Fun Drive, one more poem.

**Griffin:** Okay!

**Rachel:** Called Stamps. Back when I was nearly blameless and could visit the zoo and admire the tigers, not for what they actually were, but as monstrous man-eaters that deserved to be caught, back when I thought I had already tasted life's worst disappointment because I'd fallen in love right after college and it hadn't worked out, back when every attractive man, gay or straight, it didn't matter yet, getting off the bus caught my eye, I was a Republican.

And I went to work in Washington DC, and met all the suited villains I'd been warned about. Still reading about Goldwater's Conscience, thrilled by the idea of bombs, strangling themselves in Limbaugh's neckties, certain our own country needed to stage a coup. Clinton in the White House doing what Clinton did. One day, I set off to buy a thousand dollars' worth of stamps. The stuffing of envelopes would soon follow.

The best way to get money is to send a letter and ask for it, they said. Halfway to the post office, a breathless boy chased me down, red-faced, panicked, his dizzying tie slung over his shoulder. He told me what my boss had forgotten to say. We can't use stamps with women or black people on them. The world toppled me that day in a business park, so young and dumb. I left in an instant to become who I really am.

**Griffin:** Jesus fucking—holy shit, man!

**Rachel:** Isn't that powerful?

**Griffin:** That's crazy!

**Rachel:** These are the kind of poems that like I feel like are really motivating if you are a creative person not writing poetry, but would like to, is like, finding those moments that are so significant for you, and like focusing really on the details that like will always stand out.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And then kind of turning that into a poem that is going to really connect with a lot of people!

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Like, and we've talked about this before, like if you grow up in an environment that, you know, kind of keeps you from hearing a lot of different viewpoints, and then you have that moment where you get that kind of lens, it's very significant.

**Griffin:** Oh my god, yeah!

**Rachel:** And you can always kind of point to those moments in your life where you're like, "Oh..."

**Griffin:** Oh, I remember conversations.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** I remember conversa—because I grew up in the Southern Baptist Church and like that sort of tradition. And I remember having conversations with friends and them being like, "Eh, what?" And me being like, oh, yeah, wait, that's—

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Like lacking in sort of basic human decency and like not especially sort of thoughtful or nice, which is kind of what I would like to be, kind of like what I would like to go for. And this is—

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** All this shit is actually like really not aligned with that even a little bit, at a—those moments I—are crystallized in my mind. That is a—that's a—that's a wild one, man.

**Rachel:** The poem really stuck with me.

**Griffin:** I felt like I was up in the—I was up in the air that whole poem.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Like, oh, god, what's about—

**Rachel:** I know.

**Griffin:** What's coming?

**Rachel:** I know! It's kind of like the poem I think she had to write and put in this book because, I mean, and she talks about this in interviews too, of just the experience of kind of leaving that environment for her and kind of figuring out who she was going to be outside of it. I don't know, this one—this one really stuck with me. And I—and I almost didn't read it because it is political.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** But I feel like the message of it is so relatable of just that experience of becoming an adult and realizing, like, oh, I didn't know this, not because, you know, I was not interested, it just wasn't available to me 'til now.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Yeah. What was the—what was the poet's name again?

**Rachel:** Kristen Tracy.

**Griffin:** Kristen Tracy.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** With an I or an E? At the end of Kristen. I'm sorry, I should have—

**Rachel:** [chuckles] Kristen.

**Griffin:** There's a lot of ways to do—

**Rachel:** One I, one E.

**Griffin:** Perfect. That's my favorite way to spell Kristen.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** Sorry to all the double I Kristins out there.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** I just, I like a sort of vow—like vowel... mix up—mix 'em up.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** I like to have all the vowels kind of covered.

**Rachel:** Uh-huh.

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

**Rachel:** Please!

**Griffin:** Anton says; "I'm a florist and my Small Wonder is when I'm wrapping a bouquet and I cut the ribbon to the perfect length. I use a lot of ribbon every day, and it's so satisfying when I tie a bow just right. My other Small Wonder at the moment is getting to wear my favorite sweaters for the first time all year, as we head into winter in New Zealand." Anton, writing from New Zealand. The fact that it's winter there now is still wild to me. Still really wild. Cool! Like awesome that the world works—that the planet works that way.

**Rachel:** [chuckles] Yeah.

**Griffin:** That's cool, but it's... I don't know, that's wild, man. But I bet that is very satisfying, what with the ribbons and all.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Also, a ton of people sent in pics of their kitties, which you know I appreciated.

**Rachel:** Oh, yeah!

**Griffin:** A lot of people also pointed out that I didn't say anything about how cats purr, and how good that is, and that—you got me dead to rights on that.

**Rachel:** That is very good.

**Griffin:** I did forget that. Hey, one last time, [maximumfun.org/join](http://maximumfun.org/join) is where you can go to support this show. When you go to that link, you pick whatever level, you know, of support works for you. 5 bucks a month, 10 bucks a month, whatever. And then you pick the shows that you listen to, and then some of the money goes to Max Fun to help with the like administrative stuff that we do not have the knowledge or time or staff to kind of like deal with.

And the rest goes right to the shows that you pick. It is a very direct way of keeping the lights on for this show, and all the shows on the Max Fun Network. So, for our last time for this drive, because again, this is our second and last week for this year, *please* help us out. Please help us out if you listen—if you're listening now and you are a routine listener to the show, it only kind of exists and is getting made because of the sort of support systems that we've built around it using Max Fun Drive money from people like you.

**Rachel:** Yeah, it is not easy to be a member of an organization that you can feel really good about top to bottom. And I feel like this is one of those.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** You know? So, I would encourage you to do it.

**Griffin:** And you'll get great stuff, all the bonus content, other pledged sort of gifts and stuff. We're—

**Rachel:** Can I talk about my streaming?

**Griffin:** Yes! Rachel—

**Rachel:** So, if you are listening to this the day it comes out, this afternoon, I will be streaming a live Poetry Corner on the YouTube channel.

**Griffin:** The McElroy Family YouTube channel.

**Rachel:** Yes. So, keep an eye out for that. If not, it'll be on demand later, I believe, on the McElroy Family YouTube channel.

**Griffin:** Yup.

**Rachel:** And I'm really excited to do that.

**Griffin:** I am, too! I'm very, very excited. We're streaming multiple times a day this week!

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Last week, it was every day. And then this week, it's like two or three times a day.

**Rachel:** [chuckles] Yeah.

**Griffin:** Because we are pretty—

**Rachel:** It's a real telethon! Real telethon energy.

**Griffin:** It really has sort of Empire Records, like save the—

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** Save the...

**Rachel:** Your stream this morning—

**Griffin:** Rec center.

**Rachel:** Was so powerful for me. And it felt like—it really felt like, you know, I was watching like a battle of the bands, like this is everything you got.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And I found myself very inspired.

**Griffin:** And when you say the stream was powerful, it is worth clearing up that that was one of the DJ Fuzer sets. And you are talking about a stream where I like mixed together Awolnation's "Sail" with "Bananaphone" by Raffy.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** And you're like, "It's so moving." You sent me a text message of you crying, a picture of you crying. And I was like, wow.

**Rachel:** [laughs] I said I was "awestruck."

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And that was true. A lot of passion for you behind those eyes.

**Griffin:** That's it for us. Thank you all 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. And we've already thanked Max Fun.

**Rachel:** Thank you to our listeners.

**Griffin:** Thank you so much to all of our listeners. If you want to send in a Small Wonder, wonderfulpodcast@gmail.com is where you can go to do that. Keep it tight, one sentence or so is ideal.

**Rachel:** And just keep it tight generally.

**Griffin:** If the—if you are so moved by the lord.

**Rachel:** [chuckles]

**Griffin:** And if you are so moved by the lord, maximumfun.org/join. Our last time promoting it, because it's our last week doing it, so thank you all so much! Have a good week. We'll talk to you soon. Next week, specifically. I don't know why I'm being sort of vague. We have a—we have a standing—

**Rachel:** Sometimes we like to be coy.

**Griffin:** Yeah. I mean, sometimes all our kids get sick at the same time and we don't meet them at the—

**Rachel:** Yeah, also that.

**Griffin:** We stand—we straight-up stand up the listeners. But I think we do have a pretty good track record of not doing that.

**Rachel:** Yeah, I think so too.

**Griffin:** Bye, everyone!

**Rachel:** Bye!

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

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