

Wonderful! 418: Not One John

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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 the—aboard the crazy train! [sings a guitar riff] Aye! Aye! This is Wonderful, a podcast where we talk about things we like, that's good, that we're into. I don't know why I just did that. I don't know why I just did that.

Rachel: What was—

Griffin: I do not know why my brain made me just do that. It freaked me out.

Rachel: What is the—didn't Gus...

Griffin: Gus did—that's right. We were on a car ride the other day and our five year old did request "Crazy Train."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And I was like so confused because it's like, who gave you crazy tr—like who put "Crazy Train" in your—

Rachel: Same.

Griffin: In your brain? I know it's on the Trolls 2 soundtrack, but my man has not sat through that whole film.

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Despite how important it is to me—

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah.

Griffin: And him, I think, his legacy and everything. What a weird song.

Rachel: Oh, you do—you still don't know how he pulled it?

Griffin: I don't know, no?

Rachel: I just assume you had played it for him?

Griffin: No way, dude. That's not like—that's not like heavy in my rotation. It's a weird track, because it's like—starts out and it's like *aye-aye*. [spoofs a guitar riff] But then it turns into like this fun kind of like, I don't know, like a Springsteen romp.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Anyway, this is a podcast called Wonderful.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: It's a show where we talk about things we like, that's good, that we're into. The guitar part on that song is pretty lit, but it is far from my favorite. Do you have any Small Wonders? Before we get into those sort of proceedings here? This is a part of the show, if you're a new listener, where we talk about maybe something that couldn't be a full topic, but you know, is something that we're actually kind of feeling, vibing with at this—

Rachel: Have you been encouraged to talk more about the premise of our show in each episode?

Griffin: I take for granted that new people will learn about us or the stuff we make.

Rachel: Oh.

Griffin: I just kind of assume everyone is an old head, who's been a part of the scene for over a decade.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And in my defense, that is largely true. We do have a lot of old heads who have been a part of the scene for over a decade. My road dogs, you know I appreciate them, but just for the occasional sort of one or two stragglers who wonder in, you know, it's good to set up the—

Rachel: When we have our celebrity guests.

Griffin: Yeah! Please welcome to the show... John... I can't think of one—

Rachel: Malkovich.

Griffin: Malkovich. Fuck, I couldn't think of—

Rachel: he would be a good quest.

Griffin: One John.

Rachel: A lot of Johns.

Griffin: I know, babe, but it was this—I was spoiled for choice. I couldn't think of one John.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Cusack!

Rachel: Okay. That is a John.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I... you know, we try not to talk about how great our kids are.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: But—

Griffin: Do we try not to do—

Rachel: I don't—well, we just—I feel like we try not to talk about our kids too much. We don't want to be like those parents.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Rachel: You know? But I wanted to say my Wonderful thing is that Big Son, when he helps us with Small Son.

Griffin: Oh, yeah.

Rachel: It's just the absolute best.

Griffin: Small son's had, very recently, some pretty intense nightmare issues, which we did go through with Big Son when he was around this age. So, we—I—you know, we feel somewhat ready for it. But it's a tough thing, because you can't just say like, "Oh, it's an idea you had. Don't be scared, it's just a—it's just a crazy thought you had while you were unconscious."

Rachel: Yeah, "And you might have another one tonight."

Griffin: "And you might—yeah, we can't tell you—"

Rachel: "And tomorrow, probably."

Griffin: "There's nothing we can do about it—"

Rachel: [chuckles] Yeah.

Griffin: "But be chill." And Big Son stepped in last night and was like, "I'll cuddle him and read to him." And oh, man, it was—it was peak shit, guys.

Rachel: Yeah. And I will say the other thing I realized is that Big Son will like confidently say things that he can't guarantee, and so we don't have to. So like last night he was like, "Oh, yeah, you can only—you can only have like maybe one or two nightmares a year." So...

Griffin: I actually thought that was pretty accurate? I don't—I feel like I don't have a—

Rachel: I don't think that's true at all. [laughs]

Griffin: No, I don't have like a ton of nightmares.

Rachel: Like I would never confidently say that.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: But he did.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And I was grateful for it. [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah. I am too. Having two kids is somehow 30 times harder than having one kid. I don't know why the—it's sort of exponentially—

Rachel: I mean, they're people? They're two people—

Griffin: They're people—

Rachel: That are—

Griffin: They are two people. But it is—

Rachel: Unique.

Griffin: It is *fully* worth it in those times where they like do stuff for each other, or play to—ah, man, that's good stuff.

Rachel: It's like—it's like a celebrity endorsement.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: It's like you have this person in your house whose opinion, the small one really respects and values.

Griffin: Sure, sure.

Rachel: And when he's in line with your thinking, it is very useful.

Griffin: And they both do say the darndest things!

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: I think I'm ready to talk about Battle of Fates, if—

Rachel: Okay!

Griffin: You're comfortable with it.

Rachel: Okay, we're not finished with the season yet.

Griffin: Not finished with the season, but I did talk about it on Besties a little bit, and it felt like I was... I don't know, it felt like an inf—a screaming infidelity that I wouldn't—

Rachel: [chuckles] To not talk—

Griffin: Talk about—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: So, our buddy, Lin, texted us about two or so weeks ago like, "Hey, there's—here's the new shit for you."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And it is a show called Battle of Fates, which we're watching... I forget, on Disney? I think it's on Hulu.

Rachel: Yeah! It's Hulu—

Griffin: Or something.

Rachel: Which we're watching via Disney.

Griffin: It's a—it's—yeah, I remember it was an app that we don't use very often—[chuckles]

Rachel: Yeah, like I would—

Griffin: Because our queue is like—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I don't know—

Rachel: It's like Only Murders in the Building—

Griffin: Yeah! [chuckles] That's basically it. But here's the—here's the pitch. It is a Korean reality show, survival format, in the vein of a Physical: 100, which you know we're all about.

Rachel: There is a panel, but no host.

Griffin: There is a—there's a panel, but no host. There is a disembodied sort of omniscient narrator voice, who I believe is the moon? Anyway—

Rachel: Oh? I never thought about that!

Griffin: There's a big moon in the center of the—

Rachel: Yeah! [chuckles] Okay.

Griffin: The sort of... arena? I don't know what you would call it. It's like a winding river path with these little stones, that each—

Rachel: Well, and that was only the first—

Griffin: Of the contestants are positioned on. Yeah, I guess they do—

Rachel: Challenge.

Griffin: Change it up. So, this is a show about divination and fortune telling and fate reading, as they call it. And I'm—I know that I think a lot of people have a certain way they feel about that concept, whether it is sort of for or against.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: I think the show does an admirable job of at the very top of every episode saying like, "Hey, listen, we don't tell these people anything. This is entertainment."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: "And this is not meant to substitute sort of advice from a professional of like whatever sort of field—"

Rachel: And I will say, like it's very respectful I think of like the cultural heritage that a lot of these people are bringing to the table.

Griffin: Yes!

Rachel: So, in a—in a way, you are getting access to a lot of information about like the different spiritual beliefs.

Griffin: It's very, very—that is my—the highlight for me, right?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Like, I don't know... I don't know much about like sort of Western, I guess, fortune telling stuff, or fortune telling practices that are exercised in the West, because I'm so not confident that I know about them that I would say they even started here. But like, I think Tarot is very cool, but I don't really know a ton about it. I think I may have done a segment on it or something like that, because I find it very fascinating, but I don't know a lot—

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: But then like they also have—they do Tarot on this show. They also have Saju, which is a birth date sort of fortune telling, where there's different charts that they plug sort of your birth date and time into, and then they give readings based on that. There's a name reader who does stuff like that. And there's—

Rachel: A lot of shamans.

Griffin: There's a lot of shamans.

Rachel: [chuckles] Yeah.

Griffin: Which is like a part of, I don't know, the culture that I just literally have zero idea—like I didn't even know anything about. But literally sort of like mediums for different... for different spirits.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: Typically, they will have like one or two spirits that is like their sort of a patron or their granny or—

Rachel: Yeah. And I think if we lived in a different part of the country, we might have more familiarity with it.

Griffin: Oh, sure.

Rachel: Because I know that this is definitely something that is, you know, present in like, you know, a lot of different groups here in the US.

Griffin: Of course, yeah.

Rachel: But we are not familiar with it. And obviously in Korea, it has a very different quality to it.

Griffin: Yeah! And there's so many... there's so much of the kind of like ritual of it and all that, that I find so immensely fascinating!

Rachel: Like the clothing and the accessories—

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: And then the like—

Griffin: Like the b—

Rachel: Sound and—

Griffin: The belief that the spirits come and go with wind and sound, and so they, the shamans, when they are like doing a reading, will like have this big fan and bells that they sha—like there's cool stuff there, but then it gets really fascinating when—like the first challenge, there's 49 fate readers, and they will have some topic that they are meant to sort of divine. Like for instance, five people will walk out and they'll say, "One of these people won the lottery, one of these people was struck by lightning. You gotta tell me which one's which."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And so then everybody does their different stuff to like try and figure that out. And watching the different techniques that like a shaman, you know, approaches the question with, versus a Saju reader who is dressed like a businessman with a la—with a fuckin' laptop!

Rachel: And has a laptop. [chuckles] Yeah.

Griffin: This person's got like divination sticks, like some really old-school shit. And this guy's got, you know, Excel. Like it's really, really interesting! They of course do not show—I—to this point, like any of the readings that are like so off base. So, just kind of law of large numbers, it really seems like everyone is fucking crushing it 100% of the time. And you're like, [sings] "Wa-oh, it's magic!" But that is—

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: You know, it's—

Rachel: And—

Griffin: Entertainment sort of production—

Rachel: As they—

Griffin: And I think that it is hard.

Rachel: As they winnow down the contestants. And I think we're at the point where there's like, what?

Griffin: They're about to—

Rachel: 20?

Griffin: Winnow down to the final...

Rachel: Are we at 10 or 20?

Griffin: I think we are at 20, winnowing down to—

Rachel: 20, and they're gonna be 10.

Griffin: Yeah, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah. You really get to know like each individual—

Griffin: Oh, no, we're at 12 getting down to 6. We're getting pretty close to the end, yeah.

Rachel: You really get to know like each individual and kind of their backstory, and how they were like called to this profession, and kind of the sacrifices that they make to do this.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: And I don't know, it just becomes very intimate at a certain point, where you like, you feel a lot for these people who, you know, have this talent. And a lot of them kind of came into it grudgingly.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Like recognizing like, "This is a hard life I am making for myself." A lot of them like drop out of school and like dedicate their lives to this craft that a lot of people are skeptical of and, you know, doesn't have as much of a place in society maybe as it used to.

Griffin: Yeah, some of their like rights are... originated in sort of like North Korean culture also, which is, you know, I don't know—

Rachel: We don't know anything about—

Griffin: Anything about!

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And I don't know, I am finding it so interesting and so educational, and also sort of at its core, a competition about... telling—like fate reading or whatever is like pretty wild. That's a pretty wil—and a lot of it, it does come down to sort of like showmanship a lot of the time. And a lot of it does come down to like the persona, or whatever. But it's really fascinating. It's really fascinating. I've never watched like a competition show even remotely like it, and I feel like I'm learning a lot. And of course, it's a Korean reality competition survival show, so the production value is like absolutely through the fuckin' roof.

Rachel: And it's like Physical: 100 in that all the different like people that are competing become close to each other.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: And they kind of cheer for each other, and they have, you know, commentary that they provide that is exciting. And I don't know, it's—

Griffin: I will say, there's a part that is a tough hang, which is like the very, unfortunately, the very first sort of fate reading they're all challenged to do, is to discern an actual person's cause of death.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And that to me sort of like crosses the—and apparently there were more of those that the families of the actual disease were like, "Hey, this is not what we thought this was going to be for." And so I think they just wholesale cut the rest of that stuff out. It's a tough hang, and it is the first thing they kind of give you right out the gate. The rest of this stuff is a lot more, I would say, innocuous. "Here's a picture of a toddler. Who do they turn out to be?"

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Like stuff like that. But yeah, it's an interesting, interesting show. And it's been—it's been filling in the gap for us since hockey season ended. I go first this week!

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: I'm gonna go first this week. Mine is sort of a double header. Mine's sort of a two for one deal. Originally, I was going to do a topic on this neat fact about Japanese lawyers, which is that they get to wear special lapel pin badges.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: They're little badges that are—go their lapel, like the size of a lapel pin. And they are issued to them by an official board, it's the Japan Federation of Bar Associations. They get these special little lapel pin badges that are called Bengoshi Kisho. And I thought that was neat, that there's this profession, a very common profession, that gets badges in Japan, that we don't get, that we don't even give badges to our lawyers at all. That's wild! I also found it sort of tough to prepare a conversation about this topic without sort of talking about why I know this fact—

Rachel: Exactly.

Griffin: Which is the video game series Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney.

Rachel: Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay.

Griffin: Which is a game series I'm almost certain you've never touched, but I would be surprised if you had not heard of at least, you know, through cultural osmosis.

Rachel: Say it again?

Griffin: Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney.

Rachel: I've maybe heard you talk about it.

Griffin: Yeah, you've pro—Henry, I think, made him in Tomodachi Life. And so you've probably heard his name spoken a lot fairly recently. It's very interesting. Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney is a series of visual novel courtroom dramas, made by Capcom, who makes like a ton of stuff. And you play almost always the titular character, Phoenix Wright, who's this young rookie defense attorney, who tackles a handful of sort of increasingly outlandish cases, seeking a not guilty verdict for his clients. And usually in the games, there's like an investigation part where you go around like the scene of the crime that your client's accused of and look for clues, and interview a lot of people. There's so much reading in this game, because it is sort of a visual novel. Do you know what that genre means? The visual novel? It's not like a very, I don't know—

Rachel: I assumed it was—

Griffin: Commonplace sort of—

Rachel: Graphic novel adjacent.

Griffin: Sort of. It's just sort of like a video game with a lot of reading in it, and not a ton of interactivity, basically.

Rachel: Oh, okay?

Griffin: There's a lot of—in Japan, I would say, sort of the format really kind of originated. And Phoenix Wright is one of the reasons why like it came to the States in the first place. So, it's a lot of reading as you interview people and get to the bottom of what happened at this crime scene. And then there's a courtroom side of things, where you take the evidence you've gathered and you use it to kind of poke holes in the testimony of the prosecution's witnesses, as you're cross-examining them. So, you're reading the witness's testimony and you think like, wait, I have something in my evidence box that says that that's bullshit.

Rachel: Oh?

Griffin: And then you present it, and then you just kind of keep poking holes in the prosecution's case until you ultimately sort of topple their witness and save your client.

Rachel: So, let's say you like get to the big show, and you haven't collected a piece of evidence yet that would be useful, do you like pause that and go out and then come back and pick up where you left off?

Griffin: So, almo—no. Most of the time like you can't move on—

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: From the investigation part, until you've found everything that the game has for you.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: That is, I think, sort of part and parcel of the visual novel format, where it's not... there's so little interactivity, that you don't have a ton of input on like where the thing ends up sort of going.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: There are some visual novels that have like branching endings or whatever, but Phoenix Wright is very much like, go, talk to everyone, find everything, then you go to the courtroom. You know you have everything, there's never like an instance where, you know, someone is talking and giving testimony about how your client was found at the scene of the crime with the weapon or whatever, and you're like, "Oh, shit. I don't know, man." [chuckles]

There's like always a way to kind of like turn it around. They call the cases turnabouts for that—for that reason, because they are almost always like the odds are stacked against you. You don't have anything, the prosecution's case is like bulletproof, you're going to lose your license and—but then like, you find that one little thing, and then you turn it around.

Phoenix Wright is known for like over the top presentation of courtroom proceedings. Whenever you present evidence to sort of counter witness testimony, Phoenix Wright just screams, "Objection!" Which shows up on the screen in like big sort of spiky speech bubbles.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And then this hype techno music starts playing. But when you sort of really break a witness's composure, they have this like crazy animation where they like melt down and lose bas—it's like you've beaten a boss or something like that.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Like it's very—that feels very, very video gamey. But there's been a ton of these things, they started on the Game Boy Advance in Japan, in

2001, and then came to the US in 2005 on DS. Since then, there've been like a dozen of these games, including one that is Professor Layton versus Phoenix Wright, another former Wonderful topic. The puzzle—

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Solving gentleman and—

Rachel: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I remember that.

Griffin: Phoenix Wright got together for a—for a game, which is—I don't know, I don't—the games play out like sort of like mystery novels. And I don't usually go for—I don't watch like Law and Order, or that type of thing.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It's never really appealed to me. But I love—I love this shit. Which brings me back to the pin.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: So, every game Phoenix Wright's inventory includes a golden lapel pin, which proves he's a licensed attorney. And I always thought like, well, that's a... that's made up—like that's made up. That's wild. Why would a lawyer have like a badge that says—that's the size of a lapel pin that says I'm a—but no, it's very real, I realized, because I was watching a Japanese TV show, and I saw a defense attorney character on the show flash the badge and I was like, oh, wait, shit, this is a real thing.

So I looked it up, it is indeed a real thing. So, when you pass the bar in Japan, you are issued a kisho, a bengoshi kisho, which is a little golden pin, by the Japan Federation of Bar Associations. It has a unique ID number on it, and technically you are lent the pin. You don't own it. So like if you're disbarred or accused of a crime, or if you die, you're supposed to return it, or I guess your next of kin.

Rachel: Oh? Interesting!

Griffin: You can't give it to someone else or anything like that.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Just sort of like I imagine a police badge kind of works. And there's actually different designs, so the one that Phoenix Wright has, the more sort of common one, is for trial lawyers. And it is a golden sort of sunflower with a set of scales right at the center of it. And it's very small, it's a lapel pin, so it's like the size of a button.

And then there's one for prosecutors called shuso retsujitsu, which is sort of a cross of white chrysanthemum petals over gold leaves, with like a red gemstone at the center, which is meant to represent the blazing sun. Sort of suggesting the intensity of like the punishment that they—that they deal out. And these badges are like actually made of sort of a silvery metal that is coated in gold.

And so there's a thing of like if your—if your badge is like looking silvered instead of gold, it represents like you have a lot of experience, and therefore are sort of more deserving of respect. Anyway, that's a lot of kind of topics all in one thing. I just think it's neat that lawyers get special little lapel badges in Japan.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And I think more jobs should ha—I think doctors should have special little badges. Maybe a ring? Maybe a doctor ring. Or a—

Rachel: Yeah, I imagine different schools, like different academic institutions may have different, you know, traditions.

Griffin: I want one board that gives doctors their doctor rings.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And then if you—like a doctor comes in and is like, "I'm gonna fix your... legs." But you see their ring, you're like, "Okay, I'm in good—" [chuckles]

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah! This guy—

Griffin: "I'm in good hands, you have—"

Rachel: Knows legs!

Griffin: "Your doctor ring, that's cool. You must know your—you must know your stuff." Can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Thanks.

[theme music plays]

[ad read]

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: Okay?

Rachel: My thing this week...

Griffin: Yeah? Oh, you've got a devilish sort of look in a sort of a way about you, like a scoundrel.

Rachel: No, I'm trying to think about how to introduce it. I guess I'm gonna say... the title, Ms., M-S, Ms.

Griffin: The title Ms.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: Not the wrestler Miz.

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: M-S.

Griffin: M-S.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Paint?

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: DOS.

Rachel: Like the magazine.

Griffin: Oh, I get you, I get you.

Rachel: Which, you know, it's—I'm gonna—it's gonna be tricky to dive into, but I will say, when I was a young person—

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And I don't know if you have this memory, you may not. But you know how in just like our grandparents' generation, people used to introduce themselves as like Mrs. and then their husband's name. You know how they like—

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Rachel: Like my grandma would say her name was like Mrs. William. You know like—

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Like would introduce her—you know, like in letters and stuff, like it would say—like the letter would say, "To—"

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: You know, "Mrs. William," whatever.

Griffin: I don't know that I had any exposure to that. I don't know, I never—but I don't know—me and my grandmas didn't really—

Rachel: [laughs] Didn't hang?

Griffin: Chop it up about like that shit, I guess.

Rachel: Well, I think if you received like a car—maybe you didn't notice, but if you received like a card or whatever, and then it would say—the return would some—

Griffin: Well, both of my grandmas were also divorcees, so—

Rachel: [chuckles] That's true.

Griffin: They probably had a certain way about them.

Rachel: Anyway, there's been like a lot of very slow, incremental progress, because I would say from that, then it was like, oh, Mrs., you get your own name. Like—

Griffin: Cool, cool, cool!

Rachel: Mrs. Rachel McElroy. And it was like very clear indicator of whether or not you were married, for really no reason at all. I mean, obviously, the reason was maybe more significant back then. But like there wer—in just casual conversation, it did not seem necessary that somebody knew you were married.

Griffin: Confusing, too! I would be so confused if I was at a party and I was like, "Hey, what's your name?" And they were like—

Rachel: "Missus."

Griffin: "Well, I'm Mrs. Jim Halpert." Why did I say Jim Halpert?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And it's like, "Do you mean Pam?"

Rachel: That's a good example, because everybody—

Griffin: Everybody knows them, yeah.

Rachel: Loves The Office. Anyway, I just always thought that was weird, as a young person. I just thought this is so strange. And when I found out about the Ms. option, I was like, I'm gonna use that one forever.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Like even when I get married, because it's nobody's business!

Griffin: Do you say 'miz' or do you say 'miss?'

Rachel: Miz. 'Miss' to me is M-I-S-S, which is for like a young person.

Griffin: Interesting!

Rachel: And that like, appare—when I was doing my research, a lot of like the early instances of M-S stood for like "mistress," which was like a—

Griffin: Whoa!

Rachel: Was like the long form of Ms.

Griffin: Yeah, I guess.

Rachel: Before people started saying Ms.

Griffin: Yeah, that's wild that mistress means what it means, because master isn't like a term used for—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: That's—yeah.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Babe, I'm starting to think that maybe... things haven't always been so great for women.

Rachel: [chortles]

Griffin: Dang.

Rachel: Dang.

Griffin: I gotta think—I gotta—I gotta really think about some of this stuff.

Rachel: I know. So, what's interesting is kind of trying to figure out when this started. Because a lot of times, M-S was used just as an abbreviation.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: So like in a newspaper headline, to kind of save a character, or you know, whatever.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: They would do M-S. Not from any like particular stance, just kind of like, this is how we abbreviate it.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: When I was doing research, the thing that kept coming up is the early example—or the earliest example of M-S period was on the tombstone of Ms. Sarah Spooner, who died in Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1767.

Griffin: Okay?

Rachel: Her marital status is unclear, but—

Griffin: It's comp—it's complicated.

Rachel: [laughs] But the M-S on the tombstone is just a shortening of "mistress," is what they're kind of assuming.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Like and that's why it was appearing kind of when it was.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: And there's just a lot of like newspaper examples when you started to see the M-S like in—like an introduction of a woman, but it was not clear whether or not it was kind of done—

Griffin: And it's possible it was an abbreviation of an abbreviation, is what you're saying.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: The first marriage neutral proposal for Ms. pops up in the Springfield Republican, on November 10th, 1901, with the suggestion that Ms. blends Ms. and Mrs. And somebody had written a letter to the paper saying, "There is a void in the English language, which with some diffidence, we undertake to fill. Everyone has been put in an embarrassing position by ignorance of the status of some woman. To call a maiden Mrs. is only a shade worse than to insult a matron with the inferior title Ms. It is not always easy to know the facts."

Griffin: I would argue that there's so many vac—there is a—there is a vast galaxy-sized vacuum of honorifics that we could probably make use of, for so many different people.

Rachel: Yeah. Yeah. I think what I thought was interesting is that in 1901, it's like the guise of like politeness.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Like, how am I going to show respect to this person if I don't know their marital status? [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah, exactly, right? So it's like, "Okay, with the honorific here, we need to know whether or not... potentially how you identify, whether you are married, or if you have an advanced degree of some sort. That's the only shit we care about!"

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: "I don't give a fuck about your age or your relation to me as the speaker or—I don't care about any of that stuff!"

Rachel: Yeah, I mean, if you think about foreign language, a lot of times like you will see kind of in the spelling, you know, will suggest like, you know, different forms of the person you're talking to.

Griffin: Sure!

Rachel: But you know, we don't really do that over here all the time.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: So, 1914, there was a letter, or an article in the New York Times by the suffragist Fola La Follette, recommending Ms. as a general title for women, both before and after marriage. She said, "It was unnecessary to label spinster and matron, that if a woman was single or married, or had children or none, husband or none. It was her concern and no one else's. Society didn't ask a man first of all whether he was married and had children or not. What was good for the gander was good for the goose," she asserted. [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah! Give me a bachelor version of mister, please.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Mitter.

Rachel: MTR.

Griffin: M-R—well, no, I guess MR is—

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Mrrr. "I'm Mrrr Griffin—" Well, no, I'm married, so—

Rachel: He also sounds remarkably close to Merv Griffin.

Griffin: I'm Mrrr—[guffaws]

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It does sound a lot like Merv Griffin. That was one of the first other Griffins I was ever really exposed to.

Rachel: Yeah, the Blake Griffin.

Griffin: That was way later. That was way—Blake Griffin was way later than Merv Griffin! Holy shit.

Rachel: True. And it's still on forms! It's always so wild to me—

Griffin: I know.

Rachel: When you fill out forms and you have to like choose, you know, whether or not you want this like... what is—they call like salutation?

Griffin: Right—

Rachel: I guess?

Griffin: When you—when you book a... like a Disney thing, and you're like putting in who the guests are so you can like register magic bands and shit.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Everyone, regardless of age—

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Must have a salutation.

Rachel: So strange.

Griffin: It's so weird.

Rachel: So, as a kind of like a feminist call to arms, it didn't really happen until the '70s. And it started kind of gaining momentum in the '60s, when Sheila Michaels, a 22-year-old civil rights worker in New York, which one day spotted on a piece of mail her roommate received "Ms." for the first time, and she took it as kind of a typo. But she was struck by it as like a feminist alternative to Ms. and Mrs., and she kind of started to become the spokesperson of Ms. as kind of another option, I guess.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: She didn't really get a lot of momentum. And then she was interviewed on a progressive New York radio station in late 1969 or 70. The program, *Womankind*, invited her on, and other members of a radical group known simply as 'The Feminists.' And during a lull in the show, she plunged into like a plea for Ms. And then the following August, when women's rights supporters commemorated the 50th anniversary of suffrage with the Women's Strike for Equality, Ms. became recognized as a calling card—

Griffin: Okay, cool.

Rachel: For the feminist movement. Just days before the national demonstration, Gloria Steinem registered her approval in her column in *New York* magazine. She said, "Personally, I'm all in favor of the new form and will put it on all letters and documents." But at the time, people were still like, "How am I—how am I supposed to say this? Like, am I saying 'miss,'

am I saying 'miz?'" And eventually 'miz' kind of took off. Partially I think with the magazine, which began publishing in 1971.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: I will say one thing that is interesting, is that the New York Times didn't formally okay Ms. until 1986. [chuckles]

Griffin: I thought you were gonna say like until 2018.

Rachel: [laughs] But yeah, I just... it's one of those kind of small victories that I felt was kind of my first brush with like... yeah, I'm a person, just like anyone else.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: And I should get to decide whether somebody knows I'm married. And also, Mrs., you know, just feels very kind of like matronly in a way.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: Like Ms. still feels kind of youthful and—

Griffin: [chuckles]

Rachel: Which is also appreciated. But yeah, I just felt like... especially when you decide to take your husband's name, which I did, it felt like this salutation was kind of a way of me expressing my opinion. And I think a lot of people kind of use it in that way too, of just saying like, I get this choice and I'm gonna take it.

Griffin: I think that's right. There's a lot of history there that I did not know about.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Why does Janet Jackson suggest that if you are nasty, you could refer to her as Ms. Jackson?

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: I never understood that. And I still don't.

Rachel: I mean, that I think is more—

Griffin: It's Janet. It's Janet. It's Janet.

Rachel: Is more about you kind of ingratiating yourself to her.

Griffin: Why is that nasty, though?

Rachel: Well, 'cause you're—there's something kind of like suggestive of like, "I want you to be in charge, ma'am."

Griffin: Just tell me what to call you. Like, what do you—what do you prefer?

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Do you know what I mean? Like—

Rachel: You said it was nasty, so is it okay or not?

Griffin: I'll probably stick with Janet.

Rachel: [chuckles] I think you would say Ms. Jackson.

Griffin: I think I'll probably—I think I'll probably be safer if I just stick with Janet.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

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

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Micah says, "I think it's wonderful that the brother from Durry, the cool folk punk band you mentioned last week, also makes kick-ass Bionicle remakes."

Rachel: [chortles]

Griffin: "It's cool that someone can be so immensely talented in one area and also make music on the side. Sent a link to a TikTok, it's the Durry music TikTok account." And every other video is them playing fuckin' rad music and shredding. And then the other half is the brother from Durry recreating... action figures of the Lego Bionicle sort of set—

Rachel: I had no idea.

Griffin: With his own modifications. It's fucking rad!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: He's so good at it! And like, it's insane to hop into the comments of their shit and see like people talking about his Bionicles, and then like in the comments of the music side of things be like, "Is that the Bionicles guy?"

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Fuckin' so rad. Absolute double threat powerhouse.

Rachel: Thank you so much for writing in about that—

Griffin: Micah, I could have not known.

Rachel: I'd never—I would have never known.

Griffin: It's filled me up inside. It's filled up my heart and—

Rachel: Yeah, such texture to that group.

Griffin: Such texture to that realization. Summer says, "My Wonderful thing is Justin McElroy's They Might Be Giants playlist on Spotify. I was looking for a complete discography playlist, minus kid stuff, although I won't turn away from "Hot Dog." And who else could save me in my search but Justin, with a playlist from their new album already included. Hats off." I also have one that I have not updated in like eight years or so, but Justin is a much better steward of a TMBG fandom. I will say, do not sleep on those kid albums.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Here comes—Here Comes Science has some—

Rachel: Here come the ABCs.

Griffin: Club bangers. Here Come the ABCs.

Rachel: Here Come the 123s, is that a separate?

Griffin: I think that's—yes, that is a separate one.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Great. Just great shit. Hey! Thank you so much for listening to our show. Thanks 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 maximumfun.org for having us on the network. You can go to maximumfun.org, which I'm sure you did during the drive. Again, a huge thanks to everybody who came out in support of our show and all the shows on the network. But give something a listen that you've never checked out before! Rachel and I are big Stop Podcasting Yourself fans.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Triple Click, you know, JJ Go—

Rachel: Yeah, Jordan, Jesse, Go.

Griffin: For the old heads.

Rachel: Bullseye.

Griffin: Bullseye. There's so many amazing shows on there, and we're so proud to be a part of the network. We got some merch over at mcelroymerch.com, including a new My Brother, My Brother and Tea, along with two different commemorative mugs. One that says, "Don't talk to me 'til I've had my podcasts." And the other says, "I like all butts and no government," which is a quote from I think Justin? I forget this stuff as soon as it leaves my mouth. But it's really great.

Rachel: I will say, My Brother, My Brother and Tea sounds like a fan site dedicated to discussing McElroy gossip. [chuckles]

Griffin: Oh, no, this is just like a tasty—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: A nice, tasty tea.

Rachel: No, that sounds nice.

Griffin: Yeah, so that's all over at mcelroymerch.com. And hey, it's been a while since I've plugged a book, but The Adventure Zone graphic novel, Story and Song, the final installment in the TAZ: Balance graphic novel adaptation comes out in July. And you can pre-order your copy now at theadventurezonecomic.com. I got my copy in the mail, and it's absolutely beautiful, and thick.

Rachel: Thick!

Griffin: Thick as fuck. And I haven't read it yet, because I'm nervous to.

Rachel: Yeah, of course!

Griffin: But I'm very proud of it, even if I'm a little bit trepidatious about sort of reading it. And that's a deep, emotional sort of vulnerability that is— I'm really pouring it out here. So—

Rachel: Yeah, thank you.

Griffin: The Adventure Zone—you're welcome.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Theadventurezonecomic.com, please, pre-orders help us out so much. And you can—you can chip in and you can get this great book! That's it, I think. Did you have anything else?

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: I always ask that and like you're gonna be like, "I got a standup set—"

Rachel: Guess what? Check out my SoundCloud!

Griffin: Yeah...

Rachel: Fam.

Griffin: The boys have wanted to listen to my SoundCloud a lot lately, which is... a great source of shame, because I haven't been uploading. I haven't been making as much TAZ music, largely because of the time and energy investment—

Rachel: They just have no context. For all they know, everybody's dad has a SoundCloud.

Griffin: That's true. [chuckles]

Rachel: And so for them, they're just like, "Well, yeah, let's listen to this—"

Griffin: Everybody's dad should have a SoundCloud!

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Bye, everybody.

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

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