

Wonderful! 424: Fun Cream Works Better

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[theme music "Money Won't Pay" by Bo En and Augustus 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. Who are we? And why are we in any position to sit here and tell you—

Rachel: [chuckles] What an antagonistic start!

Griffin: Things we like. Well, it's not us, babe, it's them!

Rachel: Oh—

Griffin: They're the ones who asked the question! This is me, I'm being the audience surrogate.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: Carrying to term the question from the audience, which is, who the hell are we?

Rachel: They decide to listen to this podcast and immediately they're like, "Who do they think they are?"

Griffin: They did. They saw a link on their MP3 player.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: And they saw the premise of the show. They said, "Wonderful." They crossed their arms, they said—

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: "We'll see about that." And then they come at us with these questions—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And I'm like, dude, I'm just trying to make a—make my living, to support my family.

Rachel: Just trying to be a culture vulture.

Griffin: I'm just a—I'm... that's a bad thing, isn't it?

Rachel: I always thought it was like a fun way to talk about people who—

Griffin: Well, you never hear about vultures in like a positive sense?

Rachel: That's true.

Griffin: But you never say like, "Oh, that carrion bird of pre—" I mean, I think they're great, they keep—

Rachel: It rhymes, you know? I think that—

Griffin: It rhymes!

Rachel: I always assumed that was just kind of like a fun rhyming thing for people who were really up on, you know, the coolest things out there.

Griffin: Maybe, I—don't get me wrong, I don't—I want to cut this off at the pass, because I don't want to get emails. I love our nation's carrion birds.

Rachel: Okay. [chuckles]

Griffin: They keep our highways clean. They keep our highways safe for drivers. And I think that they—I think they get a bad rap. So I'll happily be called a culture vulture.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: By you, or our mean listener right now.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Who keeps just bu—just hitting us with all these questions.

Rachel: Who loves vultures—

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And does not think we should be talking about things we like.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: All right.

Griffin: A culture vulture, also, to return to that term—

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: That would suggest that that is someone who picks the bones of dead culture clean. Which is not a—not a—also like it sounds bad. Like—

Rachel: I mean, should I look it up? Are we this concerned, I guess, about...

Griffin: No. [exhales sharply]

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: This isn't like a dork podcast about etymology and stuff, I just—it's an interesting term.

Rachel: It's very close to that.

Griffin: It's exceptionally that.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: It's explicitly that. Do you have any small wonders? You look so cute, by the way.

Rachel: Thanks, dude. Do you want to go first?

Griffin: Yeah. No. Yeah. It's tough. It's—yeah.

Rachel: [chuckles] Can we say popsicles?

Griffin: Yeah, we can just say popsicles.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: We're not ha—we're not having like a—like the coolest summer. We're having a cruel summer, I believe.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Whatever band who did that song would say. Been a—been a challenging—

Rachel: Yeah—

Griffin: Couple weeks.

Rachel: A lot of unexpected challenges. But I will say, our boys have gotten very excited about popsicles. That's a f—

Griffin: They have.

Rachel: That's a fun time of year.

Griffin: Well, we got two different—I made a big boo-boo, didn't I? Because we went to the store and we got popsicles, and I was like, "What popsicles do you kids want?" And they got these little... you know, dreamsicle—

Rachel: They look like crans—

Griffin: They look like crayons and they're like four flavors in one. That's a—that's busy. That's too busy for the mouth.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: I got some of those good, premium, healthy, Outshine ones.

Rachel: Yeah—

Griffin: An adult—

Rachel: That are fruit!

Griffin: And I made a big deal about it when they had their popsicles, and I had my adult popsicle. You're not ready for this popsicle. You're not ready for the mature flavor of these adult, healthy, Outshine popsicles. And now all they want, all they want is our adult popsicles.

Rachel: I mean, that's probably good. They're probably, you know—

Griffin: But I want 'em!

Rachel: More real fruit than...

Griffin: But Rachel, I want the adult popsicles!

Rachel: Well, you shouldn't have made a big deal out of—

Griffin: I know I shouldn't!

Rachel: That's parenting 101. Like if you want something to be yours and yours alone, don't draw attention to it.

Griffin: Or just say how much it sucks.

Rachel: Or spicy.

Griffin: Spicy, yeah.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Oh, man, it's so great when your kids have like an entire flavor profile that they do not fuck with and you can just say like, "Sorry, kiddo. You can't have any of daddy's Diet Mountain Dew. It's too spicy."

Rachel: It's too spicy.

Griffin: In the mouth. I'm gonna—ooh, I'm going to give a special shout out to... okay, this is going to go down a bit of a deep rabbit hole. There's a YouTuber our kids like, and he does a song about what's called Jazzy Juice, which, long story short, is a type of Sprite that they do sell at McDonald's. And it's like a blueberry Sprite. I don't know what they do, they like mix some sort of blueberry like sherbet or some blue raspberry—

Rachel: Probably like soft serve or something, right?

Griffin: Something, because it's got a creamy quality to it.

Rachel: I still have not tasted it.

Griffin: Oh, it's fucking baller. It's so refreshing.

Rachel: What is it called when you order it?

Griffin: It's called like Sprite Blue... blue supri—Sprite Blue Sprite.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: It's called Sprite Blue Sprite. Anyway, that's really good stuff, too. Talking about refreshing summertime treats. That's two small wonders. Now the union will get off our back.

Rachel: [chuckles] Yeah. And that angry listener.

Griffin: That angry listener. Who are you guys—you can't even think of two small things you like!

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: We're sick, too. We're out here busting our humps for you, listener, giving us the third degree.

Rachel: This energy is rough, Griffin.

Griffin: You're right, let's turn it around.

Rachel: Yeah, let's get into our good vibes.

Griffin: Let's talk about our good vibes with a positive big wonder that I would like to start out with talking about, and that's sunscreen.

Rachel: Sunscreen!

Griffin: Or as I call it, fun scream.

Rachel: [chuckles] Uh-huh.

Griffin: Because when you p—when you're putting this on, you know you're in for a good time.

Rachel: Mm-hm. Sun dream.

Griffin: Yeah... Fun cream I guess works be—fun cream works better. Fun cream, because...

Rachel: Fun cream sounds like something else.

Griffin: It sounds... I heard it and then I tried to think of a way to save it so that it wouldn't sound like a...

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Like a really immature way of referring to...

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Sex byproduct.

Rachel: When somebody gets very excited. [chuckles]

Griffin: When a mommy and a daddy love each other so much—

Rachel: Or, you know, another couple of, you know, varying backgrounds.

Griffin: Thanks, babe.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Thanks, babe. I didn't know! You're saying there can be other things other than... I was doing a bit of a bit! I didn't know—you're saying there's different... how does that even... sunscreen—

Rachel: I'm saying—I'm saying the fun cream can come in—

Griffin: Anyone can have fun cream—

Rachel: In many circumstances. [chuckles]

Griffin: Anyone can have—they don't need—you don't need us to tell you that you can have fun cream—

Rachel: You don't need a man and a woman—

Griffin: No! You can do it—

Rachel: To have fun cream. [chuckles]

Griffin: No?

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Just, anyone can do it. You don't even need two people.

Rachel: True.

Griffin: This is the grossest we've ever been on this show.

Rachel: [chuckles] I know!

Griffin: Sunscreen. I'm all about medicines and precautions that have a sort of undeniable, noticeable, beneficial effect. And baby, there's nothing in the game more sort of essential and hardworking than sunscreen in this department. If you don't wear sunscreen, you know exactly how you fucked up if you then have a long day in the sunshine.

Rachel: I know. We are at an age where it's embarrassing.

Griffin: It's embarrassing to have a sunburn when you're a—when you're pushing 40.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: It is embarrassing.

Rachel: I mean, or just generally an adult. I feel like to get a sunburn as an adult suggests, oh, yeah, I knew better.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I messed up.

Griffin: I messed up. I was—I wasn't thinking about—or when your kids get a sunburn?

Rachel: Oh, god.

Griffin: And then it's like you're a bad parent too.

Rachel: I know.

Griffin: But I don't think we've ever really let our boys get terribly burnt up—

Rachel: No! Remember the one time? There was one time—

Griffin: Uh-oh.

Rachel: When big son was wearing sunglasses, when the fun cream was applied.

Griffin: Oh, right!

Rachel: And there was just a very small like strip that was missed on both sides of his face.

Griffin: Yeah, that was bad.

Rachel: And then he had the strangest looking burn.

Griffin: Weirdest burn. Anyway, I love sunscreen!

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I've always been a big advocate for it. My mom had skin cancer, so that like obviously kicked that advocacy into high gear. But I've always—I do burn quite easily, and so—

Rachel: Yeah, you're very fair.

Griffin: It's—

Rachel: But on the other side, or maybe perhaps related, you get a lot of compliments for your youthful skin.

Griffin: So yes, that's the big thing about sunscreen. And this is going to be more of a PSA than I guess our bits usually are.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And you can go back and listen to, we did talk about fun cream at the top for a while, so it's not going to be terribly preachy, I hope.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: But I think everyone's kind of gotten the memo about sunscreen these days. I feel like a lot of people sort of understand the importance of it. And I just want to give sunscreen its flowers, because it works, and it's—it is great. Before we dive into sort of the history of sunscreen, which has ancient roots, do you know what SPF is? Do you know what it is? Obviously it's a measurement of how strong a sun—a fun cream is, but like...

Rachel: I had always, and I don't know if this is just a shorthand, but I had always thought the number was a suggestion as to how often you needed to reapply.

Griffin: That's interesting?

Rachel: There was like a shorthand of like how protective it was. And that if you were using SPF 15, you were really only guaranteed 15 minutes of coverage. [chuckles]

Griffin: That's interesting.

Rachel: Now, I don't think that's true.

Griffin: It's not.

Rachel: I think it was more of a suggestion of like, hey, use the stronger one because it's better and will last longer. But I'm—as I'm saying it out loud, I'm recognizing that's probably not true.

Griffin: Hey, I didn't know this until I googled it, and it's—

Rachel: Ultraviolet something?

Griffin: Yeah, no, it protects against ultravi—it's a measurement of how much UV light penetrates a layer of the—of the sunscreen—

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: To reach the skin. SPF stands for sun protection factor. And basically, the number is the denominator of a fraction representing the amount of UV that passes through. So SPF 15 means that only $1/15^{\text{th}}$ of the UV light coming from the sun gets through.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: SPF 30 is roughly $1/30^{\text{th}}$, and so on and so forth. There's like a specific measuring sort of apparatus they use, and a specific measurement of cream applied, which is two milligrams per square centimeter of flesh.

Rachel: Whoa. Oh, man.

Griffin: So if you're not doing two milligrams per square centimeter of flesh, then you're not doing it right.

Rachel: Get out your pipette.

Griffin: Get out your pipette. Get out your Erlenmeyer flask.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Get out your... can I think of a third thing? No.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Petri dish! Most dermatologists recommend a daily usage of a broad spectrum 30 SPF sunscreen, or 50 if you have a history of sensitive skin or melanoma. It is not only listed as one of the World Health Organization's list of essential medicines for cancer prevention, it also does have broader cosmetic benefits, as you alluded to earlier.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Aging, premature aging, the number one culprit in that sort of dastardly crime is the big sun in the sky.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Photo aging is called—it's caused by UV rays, and it's caused by the two different kinds of UV rays there are, which is A and B. B affects the outer layer of your skin, your epidermis and the melano sites. Melanocytes? Melanocytes feels better, doesn't it? Because that's typically how one speaks of melanin or melanoma or whatever.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: So particularly in folks with fair skin, it's what causes freckles, is UVB rays sort of getting in there and, you know, making dark spots and, you know, ultimately melanoma if... you know, un—if you're not taking precautions. UVA rays, they go deeper. They reach into the dermis, which is under the epidermis. And it actually reduces it in size, so the epidermis like sags off of the dermis.

Rachel: Oh! Geez!

Griffin: So that's the issue, is when the sun—the sun, if you don't take precautions—

Rachel: Gosh!

Griffin: It'll shrink your dermis, fuckin' blast your dermis right out of—right out of creation. And now your epidermis is like, "Well, what am I supposed to hang on?"

Rachel: You're Dylan McDermis.

Griffin: You're Dylan McDermis, you gotta take really good care of it.

Rachel: This is particularly relevant to me. I feel like I am at an age where everybody is talking about collagen loss and how your skin is not as taut as it once was. And I am somebody that is more olive complected, so I always thought like, hey, I don't burn super easy, so I'm cool. Hey, turns out, no.

Griffin: No!

Rachel: No.

Griffin: The sun don't care.

Rachel: Still gets in there.

Griffin: Sun don't care! Sun will—Sun will fuck you up. The UVA rays can damage your DNA, which is bad.

Rachel: *Ugh.*

Griffin: So like, the Sun, thanks, man! Like you do a lot of great stuff for us, obviously, making Earth habitable and what have you.

Rachel: It's our own fault, though.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: You know? We really messed up like our protection.

Griffin: That's fair.

Rachel: With the—with the ozone layer and such.

Griffin: The ozone layer is our—yeah, it's a big issue—

Rachel: And the climate change.

Griffin: Climate change, so we got—

Rachel: Sun didn't wanna hurt us.

Griffin: Sun didn't, did it? And I'm puttin' a lot of blame on...

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: On that big, beautiful orb. I love it so much. I don't want to talk shit. I love being out there with it. But I don't spend a lot of time with it, do I?

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: I have too much dermis, don't I? My Dylan McDermis is like...

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Loud, proud, strong. And my epidermis doesn't know what to do with it. It's hanging on for dear fucking life, stretching like a—

Rachel: You've got a Dylan McDermis and a Dermis Mulroney.

Griffin: I have a Dermis Mulroney situation happening here.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: So, the use—

Rachel: Seriously though, I just want to—I want to compliment your skin again and say—

Griffin: Thanks.

Rachel: That Griffin and I both treated ourselves to skin services on a, I think, an anniversary recently. And—

Griffin: Skin services? I know that you were trying to like maybe not say facial—

Rachel: I didn't wanna say facial! Yeah.

Griffin: But you understand that skin service is like way worse, right? It sounds way, way worse.

Rachel: You think that's worse?

Griffin: I think skin service—

Rachel: I was thinking like car service? Like it's almost like you—a tune-up.

Griffin: Yeah, no, for sure. But skin service, I think, could mean eight things. And seven of 'em are like... Wildly—

Rachel: Oh, like fun cream? [chuckles]

Griffin: Wildly bad, yeah. I got fun cream at the skin service, is like—

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: That's a challenging one.

Rachel: Anyway, the person who was applying products, and who really, I think probably sees a lot of skin, very intentionally complimented Griffin on just the youthfulness and quality of his skin. Which is not anything that has ever happened to me, or really anybody that I know of. [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah. Yeah, no, I have a boy-like quality about me.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And it's—

Rachel: You do.

Griffin: My blessing and my curse.

Rachel: What is the curse?

Griffin: I don't want people to talk to me like a boy when I'm an almost 40-year-old father of two.

Rachel: That's fair, yeah.

Griffin: And multiple business owner.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: But I'm treated like a child. And I've cultivated some of that, sure.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Have I cultivated that by referring to myself as a baby brother for... 17 years? Yeah, yeah, sure.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: But now I'm older.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It should be—you should be allowed to change!

Rachel: You just want people to trust you with, you know, important matters.

Griffin: That's all it is.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: Or say like, why is this episode of this podcast late? You can't have an—what, were you running—were you running behind at your Beyblade tournament? Or...

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And that, even what I just said, I don't like, because there can be adult Beyblade tournaments.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: I'm becoming part of the problem here.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: A lot of reflection in this episode.

Rachel: I know! Well, you know, we took a week off.

Griffin: And we're tired!

Rachel: We took a week off, we're tired, and we've had a lot of time to kind of examine who we are.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: And what we care about.

Griffin: History of fun cream.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: People have been rubbing plant stuff on them forever. Forever, they've been—

Rachel: Aloe!

Griffin: Aloe, sure. I don't even have aloe on this list. I got ancient Greeks using olive oil, which you wouldn't think would... You would think it would give you actually a nice sort of crust—a nice crust about you.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Like a nice sort of...

Rachel: Well, you know, it's like, it's moisturizing. I feel like it's in a bunch of products still.

Griffin: Egyptians used rice, jasmine and lupine plants, like blue bonnets. Southeast Asian sailors used water weeds and rice and spices. Rice got up in there a lot. Mill it up and it makes a thick paste and, you know, you rub paste on yourself and like it's gonna do something, even before we really understood what was going on.

In Madagascar in the 18th century, and to this day, they used a thing that I'm not going to say correctly, but masonjuani? Masonjoany? Masonjoany. Which is made from wood paste, and has like really good sun protective properties, and insect repellent, which is handy. People have been sort of figuring out like, hey, I need to protect myself, and there's a—there's a lot of different kind of ointments available to us to do that.

It wasn't until 1820 that UV radiation was sort of hypothesized. There was an English physician named Sir Everard Holm who realized like, hey, there's something going on here, other than the heat of the sun that is causing skin damage. It's not just that it's hot and now I'm burnt, that is the typical kind of relationship between heat and burn that we know of, but there's gotta be something else happening here.

Rachel: Well, and cloudy day.

Griffin: Cloudy day! Yeah, what's going on—

Rachel: You can still get burned.

Griffin: You still get burned, that's crazy. And then, you know, over the next century, researchers kind of dialed in what UV radiation was and what the light spectrum responsible for it is. And sort of iterated on, you know, ointments designed to block that spectrum of light. What we know as sunscreen was patented in Germany in 1933, and the US a year later. And around then, you start to see some of the big names enter the space. There's a French chemist who started their own sort of commercial sunscreen in 1936 for a little company called L'Oreal. Heard of it?

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: And then in 1944, during World War II, US troops in the Pacific Theater were like, "This sucks. It sucks so—it sucks. It's so hot and we're burning so bad. Please, please, someone do something." And there was an airman named—airman? Airman, named—

Rachel: An airman.

Griffin: Named Benjamin Green, created a sunscreen called Red Vet Pet, which stands for Red Veterinary Petrolatum. Veterinary I've only ever understood to be about animals, so I was confused about that. But they were just—

Rachel: Why was red in there at all?

Griffin: Maybe it was red, the goo. I don't know what they used for it. But it must have been good goo, because that formula was acquired and improved by Coppertone, who marketed it with the—

Rachel: Heard of it?

Griffin: With the—heard of it? Coppertone girl, in the 1950s, sort of establishing it as sort of the big dog in town. And the rest is history. These days, you know, we're still finding advancements in sunscreen technology. Lots of different ways to get this stuff on you now. I really enjoy the kids banana boat that comes in fun colors, so you know if you've rubbed it in good enough or not. That's a huge issue for me, because I'm never rubbing this stuff in enough. And I come out of the bathroom ready to head to the

beach with my family, and you look so attractive. And our kids are so excited to go. And I look like Heath Ledger's The Joker, because of the white cream all over my face.

Rachel: [chuckles] That is true.

Griffin: It is true! It's an issue. So... but they're working on it, you know? They're working on making this stuff waterproof, eco-friendly, free of volatile organic compounds, broad spectrum, which means that it protects you from UVA and UVB rays. Trying to get all of that stuff together in the perfect ointment is a tricky needle to thread. But, you know, we've come a long way, baby. Also, it smells great. We covered this—I googled like, hey, have we talked about sunscreen on the show before? You talked about the smell of sunscreen as a small wonder before. And I just want to circle back to that to say, yes, it all smells really good.

Rachel: Also that. That still holds all this time later.

Griffin: Whether it's like fun tropical scents, or like coconut, or like some sort of natural sort of flavoring, or just like sunscreen-scented, I'm down with all of it. It smells like a good time to me.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: Can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

Rachel: Hi.

Griffin: Hey!

Rachel: Would you like to come with me to a very special place?

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: That so far, I believe you have only been inside of.

Griffin: Oh my god?

Rachel: And that is the Poetry Corner.

Griffin: Oh, I thought you were saying like you've only been inside of it, are you ready to like become it? Like I thought there was g—[improvises a jazzy riff and sings] 'Hear the poems calling, tossed salad and scrambled poems.' That's it.

Rachel: We're here now.

Griffin: We're here now. We're becoming it. We're... are you s—were you saying like I'm the only one who's ever been in the Poetry Corner? Because I like to think the listeners been there too?

Rachel: I think what I was suggesting is that I've never sat down with somebody else and directly invited them into the Poetry Corner.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Obviously the Poetry Corner is for everyone.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: But—

Griffin: It is a cor—it is a corner.

Rachel: And I think—

Griffin: It's not the most spacious part of the room, so—

Rachel: When I think of the kind of physical corner that I've constructed in my mind—

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Only you and I have joined hands and actually stood in it.

Griffin: Right. Well, there's capacity issues.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: And there's a lot of fragile stuff hanging on the walls, and the two of us bump that stuff all the time. If we started adding more people? It would be a real fiasco.

Rachel: You know, perhaps with a few years and some capital, I could grow it into a... a poetry nook?

Griffin: Yeah. We've been—we've been trying to raise money for like a bay window.

Rachel: A poetry studio?

Griffin: A poetry bench, even, somewhere to sit.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: That's my main complaint, I think, actually, about the Poetry Corner, is we do have to be standing up the whole time.

Rachel: I know.

Griffin: And squished together.

Rachel: I'm sorry about that.

Griffin: Yeah, no.

Rachel: It gets hard to hold all my notes and books too.

Griffin: I know, and you're always dropping 'em.

Rachel: Uh-huh. And then you—

Griffin: And I reach down and I'm like—

Rachel: You pick 'em up for me.

Griffin: And pick 'em up. We bonk heads.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Oh? Didn't see you there.

Rachel: [chuckles] Do you want to know about the poet?

Griffin: I do!

Rachel: This week I am talking about the poet Matthew Zapruder.

Griffin: Ooh! Cool! Cool name!

Rachel: From what I can tell, no direct connection to...

Griffin: The filmographer of the assassination of—

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: President John F Kennedy?

Rachel: Yes. He does have a musician brother named Michael Zapruder.

Griffin: I don't think that was him either.

Rachel: But yeah, again, not—I believe the one is Abraham Zapruder, who was, who—

Griffin: It's cool that you know that.

Rachel: Caught that footage. Well, I did some googling.

Griffin: Oh, just to make sure.

Rachel: Just to see if there was any direct tie. I could not find it.

Griffin: Did you did you goo—did you google—[chuckles] did you google like "Zapruder camera guy problematic?"

Rachel: No.

Griffin: No, okay.

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Is it bad that he... I mean, it's bad that it happened, obviously, but like is it bad that he filmed—I don't know enough about—

Rachel: I think it was unintentional, I think—

Griffin: I don't think he knew what he was doing?

Rachel: Yeah, he wasn't like, "Today's the day." [chuckles]

Griffin: "This is gonna be a crazy—" [chuckles]

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah, probably not. Anyway, Matthew Zapruder—

Rachel: Yes—

Griffin: Poet—

Rachel: Author—

Griffin: Author.

Rachel: Of six collections of poetry.

Griffin: Hell yeah.

Rachel: Most recently the book I have here, which is I Love Hearing Your Dreams. Came out in 2024.

Griffin: Oh, I like that.

Rachel: A nice little illustration on the front.

Griffin: Yeah, beauty blog that. Beauty blog that to your camera.

Rachel: It looks kind of—reminds me of... Oh, gosh, the Beatrix Potter—

Griffin: Oh, sure!

Rachel: Why am I struggling with this one? It's a little bunny... Tale of Peter Rabbit.

Griffin: Oh, sure.

Rachel: Yes. Sorry, when I—[chuckles] when I googled it, a House and Garden article came up that was, "Was Beatrix Potter the original queen of cottagecore?"

Griffin: Whoa, probably! Yeah!

Rachel: [chuckles] Yeah. Okay, Matthew Zapruder. I found this poetry book in a bookstore in Bethesda, and like all the reviews were kind of suggesting that this would be a poet I would like.

Griffin: Did the reviews say, "This is one for rach—this is one for Rachel McElroy, host of the Wonderful podcast."

Rachel: Well, here's one from the Boston Review that says Zapruder's poems don't merely attempt beauty, they attain it. [chuckles]

Griffin: That's good.

Rachel: I mean, that sounds good, right? Publisher—

Griffin: Do we attempt—do we attempt beauty?

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Publishers Weekly says, "Zapruder's verse offers solace and an invaluable blueprint for empathy."

Griffin: Okay, that seemed better. That seemed bet—I don't want to—

Rachel: More—yeah.

Griffin: Review the poetry of the poetry reviews, but someone's got to watch the Watchmen, you know what I mean?

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: Keep 'em on their toes.

Rachel: So, I just want to start with a... with a poem. I wanted to give a little context, though. So there is a poet I have not talked about on this show before named Rupi Kaur, who is incredibly popular and specifically like an Instagram poet, in a way.

Griffin: Okay?

Rachel: And become incredibly famous. And I think the poetry community has mixed feelings about that, you know? Because it's like become popular through Instagram and you know—

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: Poets traditionally like quills and candlelight.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: But anyway, this poem is called Poem for Rupī Kaur.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Lying in bed at 3AM, listening to him cough in his bear pajamas is not fun. There is no joy right now or ever now that I know my heart lives outside my body in him and the grass, and my wife. Because you wrote defeated eyes, I know you understand how I feel when I say the high fever of night. There are no defenses again. I do the math. Will I live long enough to see him thrive in what sort of world we are living? Not in but on.

You know what I mean. One of the continents is on fire. You are not wrong to think in poems. We can solve something complicated. A lot of things are not information here in the middle of complicated night. It has become clear we cannot trust the central metaphor, which is we are children. Though it is true, we are not safe anywhere. I love my son, his little bear pajamas. My wife, the grass, the ends of poems.

Griffin: That was a good poem.

Rachel: Snuck up on me there at the end.

Griffin: Mm-hm. It got me like a—like one-third of the way in.

Rachel: [chuckles] Sometimes I read a poem to myself silently and I don't think of how it's gonna feel to come out of my mouth, and that was a hard one.

Griffin: Man, parent poems are—that shit hits different, man.

Rachel: I know.

Griffin: If you've been struggling to connect with parent poems lately, have—try having a kid.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Because there's a lot of... I know it's cliché, but it just hits different.

Rachel: I know. So, I was curious about this poem being referenced by Rupi Kaur, because I wanted to know kind of what he's talking about when he says "defeated eyes." And it is from a poem in the book *Milk and Honey*, that says, "When my mother says I deserve better, I snapped to your defense out of habit. He still loves me, I shout. She looks at me with defeated eyes, the way a parent looks at their child. When they know this is the type of pain even they can't fix."

Griffin: Fuck, man.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: This is like a—this is like poemception. I'm learning about two poems—

Rachel: I know—

Griffin: For the price of one.

Rachel: I don't usually do this, but that—

Griffin: But I feel like this doesn't, I don't know... I'm not particularly well-versed in poetry. I guess maybe more than the average bear at this point.

Rachel: Yeah, at this point.

Griffin: But it's cool to hear a poet sort of referencing another—referencing another poet.

Rachel: Yeah! I am—I found an interview, it looks like for the Berkeley alumni magazine that came out in 2023, and he specifically talks about the popularity of Rupi Kaur. And he says, "I mean, people said Keats wasn't literary enough. I'm bored with people saying negative things about Kaur."

Explain to me why millions of people like her writing. Are they all idiots?"
[chuckles]

He's another one of those poets who's a big advocate for, you know, people not feeling afraid or alienated by poetry. And I specifically found one of his books, which is appropriately called "Why Poetry," That came out in 2017, I believe? That is just kind of all about ways to access poetry, and then gives specific poems, and then kind of reviews them with a reader in a way that is not overly academic or requires any kind of specialized knowledge.

So I wanted to share this interview he did with Poetry Society of America, kind of talking about the intimidation that is caused by poetry. He talks about how in order for people to kind of connect with a poem, they have to be completely attentive to the words on the page, and read it at first in the same way you would read a piece of prose or any writing. And he said, "This sounds really obvious, even dumb, but it is my experience as a teacher and poet that this is not something so many people do."

He says, "Soon as something is called poetry, a big scary switch is thrown, and completely ordinary language scares people, making them feel paralyzed. All of the many close readings I do—" in the book that I mentioned, Why Poetry— "are more or less about demonstrating that the wondrous experience of poetry always come first out of literal readings. Though of course our understanding so often then goes somewhere else, away from the merely literal."

Griffin: Hell yeah! That puts to words something that I feel like this show makes me feel—it makes me feel.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: In hearing po—hearing you read poems. That I do have like a preference now, a poem preference.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Which 12 years of primary schooling and four years of supplemental collegiate schooling did not instill in me. Because I feel like I do, I don't

know, as soon as I do feel like a poem is preaching or—in some way, or is being in any way kind of anything less than super inauthentic. I don't know, I just feel like poetry is, when it is most accessible is when it is most sort of successful.

Rachel: Yeah, and I talked about this in like a previous Poetry Corner, where I talk about how a lot of people approach poems as riddles. Like, "All right, I'm gonna figure out what the poet's really saying here."

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Rachel: "And okay, they talked about a blue rose, who else talks about a blue rose. And let me—" You know, and school really encourages that. You know and sometimes it's to check, you know, kind of whether or not you've done the work to kind of learn, you know, the historic origins of the form or of the topic. But it really ruins a lot of people's experience because they get nervous about connecting just with what they read on the page. So yeah, anyway, just some background on Zapruder. He was born in Washington DC, he earned a BA in Russian literature at Amherst College, an MFA in poetry at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, which I know that you are familiar with.

Griffin: Recently visited, yes.

Rachel: Yeah. He is currently a teacher in the MFA program at St. Mary's College of California.

Griffin: Rad.

Rachel: But yeah, he's taught at NYU and the new school and Berkeley and University of California, Riverside. He's been kind of all over the place.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And I think a lot of it—and I mean, you get the sense, even from what I've shared, that he's a really good teacher.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And has a real like love for the form. And, man, that poem I read.

Griffin: Yeah, no, it was a—it was really good.

Rachel: Just very intimate, but straightforward. You know? There's no like, there's no riddles there. Like, I feel like it's really easy to connect with that work.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Again, that is from the book *I Love Hearing Your Dreams*, that came out in 2024.

Griffin: I love that title.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: It's pretty untrue for me for most folks.

Rachel: Yeah. [chuckles]

Griffin: But sometimes—

Rachel: The whole book has kind of like themes of like gardening and then also like things that have happened in dreams, and kind of blending the surreal with the very real. And I don't know, I've really enjoyed it.

Griffin: Cool. You wanna know what our friends at home are talking about?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: David says, "Today's little wonder is what I call marbled water. This happens when you leave a cold bottle of water out in the heat for just a little bit, so when you take that first drink, you get swirls of different temperatures of water. It's just a little bit of magic on a hot work day."

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: I like that, David. I like the idea of a little—a little halocline in the—in the middle of my water bottle.

Rachel: Wow, I don't know what that means?

Griffin: It's like when different parts of a—like where freshwater and saltwater meet, and they make like a little visible layer.

Rachel: Oh?

Griffin: You ever see there's like videos like cave divers going in and they find one, and you can just like, it looks like they're surfacing, nope! It's just different water. Jessica says, "My small wonder is over-the-air television. I recently bought a pair of rabbit ears from a thrift store, and now I have access to major broadcast channels, local news and even PBS! It feels so good to have 24-7 entertainment without having to pay a thing."

Rachel: Yes! We had an antenna—

Griffin: We did—

Rachel: Remember this?

Griffin: For a long time, in Austin.

Rachel: It was how we watched The Bachelor and Bachelorette.

Griffin: Right! That's right, we did!

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: For free!

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Cool! That was a different time.

Rachel: Different time.

Griffin: Cool time. Thank you so much for listening. Thank you to Bo En and Augustus for the use of our theme song, "Money Won't Pay." You can find a link to that in the episode description. And thanks to Maximum Fun for having us on the network. Go to maximumfun.org, check out all the great stuff they have going on over there. We got new merch over at the merch store, at mcelroymerch.com! We got a centennial Trav Nation design of Travis' Mount Rushmore. That's very good. And some other new stuff over at mcelroymerch.com. And our last TAZ graphic novel comes out in... Jesus, like less than two weeks at this point?

You can go to theadventurezonecomic.com and pre-order that, which I would hugely appreciate if you're thinking about buying the book anyway. That really helps us out and lets booksellers know how many copies to put on their shelves. Very excited for this book to come out, very excited. That's it for us this week, then! Thank you for joining us. Sorry I was so hostile at the beginning.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: No one has ever been anything less than totally chill and cool about our program.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: It's not you, it's us, but—

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: I'll come at it from a different angle—you know, that's all you can really hope for. The Sun will come out tomorrow. I just came up with that.

[theme music "Money Won't Pay" by Bo En and Augustus plays]

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