

Wonderful 430: The Deepest Crud

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[theme music 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 that we do, Rachel and Griffin McElroy. We're married. We're not brother and sister.

Rachel: Uh-huh. [laughs]

Griffin: We have the same last name because—for married reasons.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: But here on Wonderful we talk about things we like that's good that we are into. What... I think there was an employee at the hospital that clocked us and said, like, "Oh, is your sister not here with you today?" When I showed up.

Rachel: Oh, yeah.

Griffin: You remember me telling you about that? And that felt really egregious. I can't imagine what possible... the only thing I'd think was that you were maybe wearing your glasses, and I was wearing my glasses.

Rachel: Yeah, uh-huh.

Griffin: And they were like, "Well, they probably have the same bad eyes from genetics."

Rachel: Well, there is a popular internet phenomenon that people think that anyone with brown hair and glasses looks like Griffin.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: When I put my glasses on, I think it's similar. And I think people must assume we're related. and/or she thought to herself, "No husband would be so dedicated to somebody in the hospital. It must be her brother."

Griffin: Yeah. No, yeah, that's a good point.

Rachel: That you were such a stellar man.

Griffin: Yeah. No husband would possibly ever go to the hospital to support...

Rachel: Why would he come by himself?

Griffin: ... their wife's family. There's just simply no way. It must be a brother/sister situation.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: So I got her fired.

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Yeah. I went to the top and I said, "I've been embarrassed for the last time here." And I hate being that guy, but...

Rachel: They don't talk about that feeling. There should be a name for it. When you go to the hospital a lot to visit somebody, and then you're kind of not gonna go again for an indeterminate amount of time. You feel like, "Should I... say goodbye? Get them something?"

Griffin: I did, yeah.

Rachel: Oh, did you?

Griffin: Yeah, I got everybody at the hospital...

Rachel: A card.

Griffin: ... DVDs.

Rachel: [through laughter] DVDs?

Griffin: Yeah. DVDs of my show. DVDs of the MBMBaM show on Seeso.

Rachel: Oh, that's fun.

Griffin: Yeah. I went down and I said, "You guys look like you could use a laugh." I slid it across the table. I said, "You have permission to laugh again."

Rachel: "Listen, you're gonna miss me."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: "And what better way to remember me than from my hit television show?"

Griffin: Yeah. I said, "You're gonna miss me when I'm gone." And then I do the whole cup song.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: People forget about the cup song. I'm still busting that thing out in 2026. People get delighted when you bust out cup song on 'em.

Rachel: So, is that... completely and originally from Pitch Perfect? Or was—or did that exist?

Griffin: The cup song? I don't know. I learned it at church camp. I could probably still bust out a cup song. Well, that can is full.

Rachel: [laughs]

[rustling]

[percussive sounds]

Griffin: That's wet.

Rachel: [laughs] Now... can we go back a second?

Griffin: Yeah, sure, sure.

Rachel: Because of our age difference, I'm not sure if it would've timed out that Pitch Perfect would've been out when you were at church camp.

Griffin: God, no. No, baby! Church camp came out—I mean—[laughs]

Rachel: [laughs] Church camp came out.

Griffin: Pitch Perfect came out, like, when we were together, I think. I'm pretty sure.

Rachel: Is that...

Griffin: There's no way that that—first of all, I was not watching secular movies back then.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: But... um, do you have any small wonders, my love?

Rachel: Oh, man. Um, I'm gonna say something that I just treated myself to in the kitchen, which is I put a non-alcoholic beverage in a wine glass.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: To make it feel fancy.

Griffin: Oh, man. Yeah, you're living just for the Tammy Taylor of it all, it feels like to me.

Rachel: Yeah. We don't really drink much around our house anymore, partially because we don't have people over. [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And it used to be more of a social thing. But I don't have an occasion, often, to use a wine glass, and I kind of miss...

Griffin: I love it.

Rachel: I miss holding.

Griffin: One of those stemless beauties.

Rachel: Yeah, this is a stemless. I've got iced coffee in it.

Griffin: A stemmed wine glass scares me a little bit.

Rachel: Yeah. That feels like a risk every time.

Griffin: It feels like... I spill a lot of drinks, and a stemmed wine glass is really just kind of like adding a fulcrum to the spill that's gonna really just launch the beverage.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: Every which way.

Rachel: I also like—I don't know if you remember this, 'cause it's been a while. I like to put my drink just on the arm of the couch.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Not even on, like, a hard surface. Just, like, precariously balanced directly on the couch. Uh, and that's not a great thing for a stemmed situation.

Griffin: No. Um, small wonder. I'm just gonna say the... the sort of whole arc that Buddy Garrity goes on in Friday Night Lights. We did just finish our rewatch. Just polished off the fifth season. Really—I didn't remember the last couple seasons really at all. Um, great to see Michael B. Jordan out there doing his fucking thing.

Rachel: Oh my gosh.

Griffin: Absolutely destroying.

Rachel: Such a good part. I feel like—Griffin and I had a lot of theories about the, like, specific actors on the show who do an exceptional job, and it seems like their part gets bigger and bigger every season.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Uh, and we don't get Michael B. Jordan on there for very long. Is it just one season?

Griffin: Uh, two. We get two seasons of Michael B. Jordan, but we get five good seasons of Buddy Garrity. Small business owner, degenerate, real piece of shit for huge chunks of the show.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And, in fact, at the end of the show I would say still kind of a piece of shit.

Rachel: We kind of meet him as his marriage is falling apart.

Griffin: Because of him. Because of his actions.

Rachel: Because of choices he made.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And we see him kind of mismanaging situations with his children. And then we kind of see... him show up. You know?

Griffin: Yeah. Start to show up for people. His son. His daughter, kind of, after he gambles away...

Rachel: Tim Riggins.

Griffin: Tim Riggins! Anyway.

Rachel: It was sad to say goodbye to our friends, though, from Dillon, Texas.

Griffin: But we knew that we'll come back to see them again one day.

Rachel: Maybe.

Griffin: When going through an intense personal hardship.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: That's it. We just know, like, one day we'll go through another intense personal hardship, and when we do...

Rachel: Friday Night Lights will be there for us.

Griffin: Tim Riggins. The Saracen. The whole gang's gonna be there for us, waiting.

Rachel: Man. That'll be nice.

Griffin: Yeah. We should get the actors together to record, like, an intro.

Rachel: You know, they're doing, like, a road tour. Adrienne Palicki is, like, fronting this, like, Texas Road Show.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, and it involves her and, like, the actor, Scott Porter, that plays Jason Street is on there.

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rachel: I mean, town to town. Like, they had Gaius Charles.

Griffin: Gaius Charles! Holy shit.

Rachel: She gets on a stage with some of her fellow actors and they talk about the show.

Griffin: I love that. I love that. I love that. It's the same sort of era as OC where I, like, I feel like that cast is getting out there and, you know, reflecting.

Rachel: Yeah. I'm seeing Mischa Barton, like, talking a little bit about it.

Griffin: Yeah. That's a—oh, boy. There's a lot of healing. There's a lot of healing that's been required, there.

Rachel: I mean, for sure! Honestly. 'Cause they were very young people and became incredibly famous.

Griffin: Extremely famous very quickly.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: A lot of people can't handle it.

Rachel: Like the Dawson's Creek.

Griffin: Just like Dawson's Creek. Um, I go first this week. I'm gonna talk to you today about fonts. I like these little guys. I like these little letters that can look like different stuff.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: Different sigils.

Rachel: I don't know what that means.

Griffin: With different...

Rachel: What is sigils?

Griffin: A sigil is just like a shape that means something. Um, so, like, in a very broad sense, that's, I mean, I guess any letter, right?

Rachel: I feel like you were the one who taught me the word kerning.

Griffin: Kerning was—yeah. Kerning was a thing I learned about from newspaper school.

Rachel: Yeah, uh-huh?

Griffin: When I went to newspaper school. And kerning was, like, a huge issue. It's one of those things that once you learn about it you can't unlearn it, and so you'll start to see letters be the wrong distance away from each other all the time and have it drive you absolutely batty.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Um, so I—there's infinity different fonts. And they're like this secret, like, sub-language that goes on top of regular language and gives messages different vibes, and I think that that is magical and cool. There is a tremendous gulf between, like, a bereavement announcement written in Arial and one written in Comic Sans.

Rachel: Of course.

Griffin: Like, if you submit a resume somewhere in Verdana, it comes with a great deal more sort of weight and professionalism than one written in Papyrus.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: So, like, even though the words are the same, the way those words look can put some English on the ball, no pun intended.

Rachel: Yeah, that's a good point.

Griffin: Um, I think that's very interesting.

Rachel: I'm really fixated right now on the way that I think we say that word differently.

Griffin: Which one?

Rachel: F-O-N-T.

Griffin: Font.

Rachel: I think I say font.

Griffin: Fo—fahnt.

Rachel: I think you say font.

Griffin: Well, you're from Boston.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: You and your family's from Boston originally, so you do, like... you do say it.

Rachel: I think you—yours has more of an A-W-N quality than mine.

Griffin: Yeah. It's like when I say, like, let's go get in the automobile. And you'd be like, "Where's—where did you—where'd you park the cah?"

Rachel: Yeah, that's true.

Griffin: Stuff like that.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: You're always doing stuff like that. Um, so, fonts. Technically speaking, fonts are individual, like, members of a typeface, which is the general term for, like, a font family, which can have a bunch of different variations. Depending on the weight of each letter, which is where you get, like, boldness. The slope of the letters, which is where you get italics. Uh, the size and the width. Like, each of those different kind of variations is a separate font.

Rachel: Can I tell you—and I may have mentioned this before—but I noticed when you and I started our email correspondence, very early in our courtship, you would italicize words to emphasize them.

Griffin: All the time.

Rachel: In, like, casual emails. And I remember being very, like, kind of delighted and surprised by that.

Griffin: Casual emails is a crazy way of referring to my...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: ... my, uh... laborious isn't the right word, 'cause that sounds bad. But, like, I worked so hard to court you. Like, I spent so much time.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I'm not out here sending business emails with italics all hither and yon.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: I do that shit for emphasis basically to you when I'm, you know, when I'm crushin'.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: When I'm trying to win you over, yeah, I dabble in italics.

Rachel: But it makes me, like, really be able to hear your voice.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: You know, when I see those italics, I know, like, oh, he's bringing the patented Griffin McElroy emphasis to that word.

Griffin: Yeah. Now, if you ever write a book and you use italics as heavily as I was doing it, um, you will get some edits saying, like, "Why are you using italics so much?"

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: And it's like, well, I like to emphasize things. And then the note comes back and it's like, "Two things a sentence?"

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And I'll be like, okay, yeah, I guess I do it maybe a little bit too much.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Um, so each kind of typeface has a different anatomy. Typographers have identified, like, characteristics that make up the anatomy of a typeface. Things like strokes, which is like the lines and curves. Like, the base building blocks of each letter. Do you know what serifs are?

Rachel: Oh. That's, like, whether the letter has, like, a little line at the bottom or top, or... ?

Griffin: It's kind of like when there's a flourish at the end of a line. Like, additional kind of... you put a little hat. You give the lowercase "a" a little feather.

Rachel: Yeah. One, I learned that because, you know, when you're selecting it'll be like, "Do you want serif or sans serif?"

And I was like, "Uh, what's the difference?" And that's how I figured it out.

Griffin: I never even thought about this until today, preparing this segment, that sans serif just means without serif.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Didn't even think about those two words being in conversation with each other.

Rachel: Oh my gosh. Can we start an indie rock band and call it Serif?

Griffin: Ooh, like S-E-R-I-F?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: That's cool, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah, that's cool. I think it'd be meta—it would have to be kind of metal. Like, to me that sounds like a metal...

Rachel: Okay. Well, I can play the flute.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: So...

Griffin: We're halfway there.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, so serifs, the uniformity of the width, some typefaces' letters are different widths, and some of them they make them be the same size. Uh, length of the descenders, which is the lines that come below the baseline. So for, like, a lowercase "y" or a lowercase "j." All of these things are, you know, variable and make up the anatomy of a typeface.

The history of fonts is complicated beyond my sort of pay grade here on Wonderful.

Rachel: Yeah, I bet.

Griffin: Uh, and also, like, probably pretty boring. Um, but, like, it's kind of hard to track, because even before computers there were lots of different fonts. There were competing typefaces.

Obviously Steve Gutenberg made his incredible Bible and press back in 1440, and when he did that, the typeface that he created was meant to kind of, like, emulate the kind of, like, sweeping, illustrated text of, you know, these books that had been copied through monastic traditions, and weren't necessarily so focused on things like readability or efficiency of, you know, how much ink and paper you were using to print books.

Uh, so a few decades after the Gutenberg press, there was a printer named Nicholas Jenson who wanted a, you know, simpler, more readable font. And the sort of resulting typeface that came out of that is what we know broadly as Roman. Which, you know, saved ink, it was faster to print, it was a lot simpler. It didn't have as much wild sort of, uh, variations in size and, you know, serifs that you could hang a jacket on.

Uh, and that sort of became the standard for really all forms of the printed word. Books, newspapers, everything throughout Europe was done in Roman typeface after, like, 1470 or so.

In 1501, there was a guy named Aldus Manutius who invented an even skinnier font.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: That could save more on paper, allow you to put more word printed on a single page. That was called Italic, which is where you get the sort of italics notion of skinnier, more slanted font.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Um, this goes on and on and on and on and on of somebody saying, like, "I can get more fuckin' words on that page. Check me out."

Rachel: And this is just, like, printing presses.

Griffin: This is just printing presses. This is before computers, right? If you want to fast forward to the first, like, Macintosh home computing system...

Rachel: Well, I was thinking about the typewriter.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Like, you really only get one font choice on a typewriter, unless they were at some time making typewriters with different fonts.

Griffin: I don't know how they would do that.

Rachel: I don't either.

Griffin: Certainly not back in the early days of typewriters.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: This is all to illustrate that, like, you know, early printers, early paper printers, they had their own fonts designed for them because, like, early laser printers had a super low resolution. And so that's, like, where we get Arial font from, was that it was designed to be readable in these low resolution laser printers. And then, you know, Windows adopted Arial as, like, a core font for Windows 3.1 back in 1992.

A lot of the fonts that, like, we know now come up from being, like, adopted early by these, like, major home computing, like, platform holders. Uh, so in 1984, the first Macintosh computer... it had nine fonts for you to choose from.

I would encourage you to go look at them, 'cause they look fucking wild.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Like, one or two of them you see and you're like, "Oh, that kind of looks like a simple kind of pixel-y font. Like, I see—I recognize that from the Mac operating system."

And then they have some that are just truly out of pocket. Truly, truly wild fonts. And they looked wild because they were bitmap fonts, which basically stored each letter as an arrangement of pixels. And you can only scale that up so big before it starts looking extremely, like, blocky and pixel-y. Uh, and that's why you don't see a lot of bitmap fonts these days. Only in situations where aesthetics is not as much of a priority as, like, speed and, like, processing efficiency.

So things like the Linux console uses pixel-y bitmap fonts. The Windows recovery screen, if your computer crashes, it drops back to that, like, usually bright blue menu where the letters are super duper duper blocky and pixel-y. Those are bitmap fonts, and those were sort of the original things that were available before we had vector fonts, which save each letter as, like, a mathematical sort of measurements of curves and lines and everything that they can scale to any size and it would still look fairly smooth.

In the late 80s, font options exploded well beyond the nine available on the original Mac OS, because Apple created TrueType, which is a standard for these vector fonts. And when this standard was established and adopted across all of, you know, the Mac platforms—and Windows took up the standard as well—it became so much easier to make new fonts and share new fonts.

And to this day, TrueType is still the standard followed by fonts that you would, you know, download on your Mac or Windows computers. It's why downloadable fonts have the extension ttf, TrueType Font.

Rachel: Oh.

Griffin: So, that was developed in the late 80s, and is still, to this day, like, how fonts get made, and the guidelines that fonts have to follow to be usable on your computer.

Rachel: Have you ever downloaded a font before?

Griffin: Oh my god, yes, babe! This is why I wanted to do this segment. I was curious about your font sort of exploration. 'Cause you can—there's so many different databases and websites where people are, like, sharing their fonts.

Rachel: Wow.

Griffin: Obviously, like, Adobe I think has their own kind of, like, font book that, you know, you can, if you're a paid subscriber to their shit or whatever, you can get access to all these hundreds of different fonts. Um, but there's lots of, you know, people out there making their own indie fonts out there.

And it's a big deal. Because, you know, for me, I kind of had to start exploring it when I was working in the online publishing world. I remember at Polygon for all of our, like, thumbnails, our fonts and thumbnails and, like, text inside of videos had to be Impact. Uh, Impact was the font that we used, or Gotham Impact I think was the specific one, which I had to, like, go and download and find. And now it's still one that I use to this day, just because, like, I don't know. I like the way it looks. It's super condensed and readable. You can get a lot of words on the screen at once.

Rachel: The only time I ever thought about font was when I was in graduate school and we had to put together—we didn't have to. But I chose to put together, like, a collection of poems that I had written as part of my thesis. And I thought a lot about font in that. To, like, create a vibe. And I remember I used Bookman Antiqua.

Griffin: Mmm. Oh, yeah. I love that one. That's a good one.

Rachel: Yeah. Yeah. And I felt really good about that. And then I probably haven't thought much about fonts since then.

Griffin: I encourage you to go and dip your snoot into the exciting world of fonts.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Because there really is a lot. And it can really refresh, you know, your creativity. Your writing. Um, go beyond the norms, right? A lot of the, like, standard fonts that are available on everything are available because they were tent pole fonts for things like—when TrueType launched it had four main

typefaces. Symbol, which, you know, had a bunch of different special characters that you could use in different things. But then it also had Times Roman, Helvetica, and Courier, which are still kind of, like, everywhere, because they were the earliest ones on that platform. But, like, man. Go dive deep.

I love Calibri, which is available in lots of places.

Rachel: Oh yeah, I like that one.

Griffin: It's a sans serif font that Microsoft Office used for, like, two decades. So, like, I get very nostalgic when I see Calibri. Uh, I like—I prefer Georgia to Times New Roman. The letters look larger, even though they are the same size.

Rachel: Yeah. I don't like Times New Roman.

Griffin: I'm not a Times New Roman fan myself. If I'm gonna go with a standard one, I will rock with Arial.

Rachel: Same.

Griffin: Pretty much always. Um, to me that's, like, the most bread and butter kind of font. But this rabbit hole is so deep. So much deeper than I can cover on this show. But I just think it's neat that there are so many different ways to depict a written word on your screen or on the page that can have a different sort of vibe.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Just based on how the letters look.

Rachel: Yeah. No, vibe feels like the right word.

Griffin: Yeah. Can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

[ad break]

Rachel: Are you ready?

Griffin: I'm so ready.

Rachel: My wonderful thing this week is Great Waves Waterpark.

Griffin: I love this.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I love you're taking us here.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I love Great Waves Waterpark, man.

Rachel: This is a new discovery for us. We have lived in DC for four years, now?

Griffin: Yes. We moved here in 22, yeah.

Rachel: We're in our fourth year. Um, and it was only recently that we even discovered this water park in Alexandria, which is, like, you know, 30 minutes from where we are.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: Um, and we went two weekends in a row. [laughs]

Griffin: Probably gonna go again next weekend, 'cause they close 'em on Labor Day, and we gotta get in there one more time.

Rachel: Are they closing on Labor Day?

Griffin: Pretty sure, yeah.

Rachel: I don't actually know. That didn't come up in my research.

Griffin: I think it's illegal for a water park to stay open past Labor Day.

Rachel: It seems like it, right?

Griffin: I think it's in the Constitution.

Rachel: Yeah. Um, the thing that was most fascinating to me about this, and the reason I wanted to do research, is the Great Waves Waterpark exists within Cameron Run Regional Park, which is part of the kind of Northern Virginia Parks system.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: So the idea that you would put a water park inside of a, like, city-owned public park really was kind of hard for me to wrap my brain around.

Griffin: Yeah. Further complicating things, that park has its own radio station that is playing constantly at Great Waves. And the name of the radio station is Cam Jams.

Rachel: Oh, I don't think I put that together. I heard the radio station and I heard the ads for, like, the water park. I didn't... I don't think I...

Griffin: They're not ads for the water park as much as it's like, "Isn't it so kick ass to be at Great Waves Waterpark right now?"

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah.

Griffin: "You're listening to Cam Jams. Now here's Despacito."

Rachel: [laughs] Um, the thing I wanted to focus on specifically is the wave pool

Griffin: Okay. God, I love the wave pool.

Rachel: Yeah. The wave pool is something—it's the whole reason I found it, honestly. Because small son likes to watch a lot of water slide videos. He's scared of water slides, largely. But he likes to watch the videos. And we have been to Great Wolf Lodge several times.

Griffin and I are trying very hard not to have to go again. Because our children always get sick.

Griffin: Hey, Great Wolf Lodge. We love you.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: We love you. MagiQuest, incredible exploration. A magical, incredible adventure. Awakening the imagination of a generation of indoor youths. We love it. We love you. You're so fucking dirty and you make us sick for a month! Every time we go.

Rachel: I know.

Griffin: We get sick for a month.

Rachel: It's—I am blaming the arcade, and the fact that most of Great Wolf Lodge is run by adults under the age of 19. [laughs]

Griffin: So that's a pretty narrow window of—yeah. Yeah.

Rachel: Anyway.

Griffin: We need just a fogger going constantly. Just a sort of, like, a anti-bacterial haze that can just kind of penetrate through the entire building.

Rachel: I bring—the last time we went, I brought hand sanitizer wipes. I brought hand sanitizer spray. I made sure that after we exited any area or before we ate any meal, we wiped ourselves down. Still.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Still got sick.

Griffin: Still got sick. For four weeks! The deepest crud. Anyway.

Rachel: Anyway. Um, that is where our children became familiar with wave pools and lazy rivers, which are big hits, particularly with big son.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: So he asked me a few weeks ago, kind of, "Where is the nearest lazy river?"

And I was like, "That's an interesting question."

I looked up—now, Great Waves does not have a lazy river.

Griffin: Doesn't.

Rachel: Although that is part of their dream.

Griffin: Whatever we can do to help you get there... I would love to—give me a shovel and a trench—a trencher.

Rachel: Because they're owned by the city, there are all these rules and, like, timestamps around how long they have agreements, and when they can do things. And so, like, back in, like, 2018, they were trying to, like, add a lazy river, but they, like, had to rework their agreement with the city. And for whatever reason, it's not there. So I don't know what happened.

Griffin: They settled on doing batting cages and mini golf there instead. Which, hey. Who are you kidding, Great Waves Waterpark? Get rid of that shit and put a lazy river in there! Come on. That's outrageous. Why am I gonna bat? I'm wet. I can't bat! I'm soaking wet!

Rachel: Well, I mean, they need a year round opportunity in that park. You know?

Griffin: I guess.

Rachel: They also have—they have, like, a Christmas time thing. They have, like, an ice program where I think from what I can tell they turn the wave pool into an ice rink.

Griffin: That's fun, I like that.

Rachel: Which I love. Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Um, but the wave pool. So, the wave pool has four patterns of waves.

Griffin: I'm so glad to get to the bottom of this.

Rachel: I know. I know. They rotate every 10 minutes. And the wave pool itself holds 500,000 gallons of water. It goes to eight feet deep, and the wave cycles, the highest they get is, like, three to four feet high.

Griffin: Yeah. It's cool. We show up. Big son wants to get in immediately. We go in.

Rachel: They have inner tubes there, so it's, like, relatively, like...

Griffin: Yeah. He's not a...

Rachel: ... as safe as you could be.

Griffin: [doubtful] Yeah. Yeah.

Rachel: [laughs] Still dangerous.

Griffin: Still definitely dangerous. Like, he ain't swimming yet. So, like, to take him out in an eight foot deep body of water, like, you're rolling the dice. But, you know, I'm there, and keeping him safe with my huge, strong body.

Rachel: He had to really get at me to let go of his tube, because I insisted on holding on to it the whole time.

Griffin: It's a metaphor, isn't it?

Rachel: Yeah, I know. [laughs]

Griffin: It's a very strong metaphor. But you go in it and it's chill. And it's like, "See, buddy? It's not so bad."

And then the next one is, like...

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: The ships are rockin' and a-rollin'. Fuckin' Ursula pops out of the water and casts a spell on you.

Rachel: You get that feeling. That, like, roller coaster feeling.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: Like, there was a wave cycle that is more, like, chaotic. Uh, and you will go up and drop in a way that gives me that, like, stomach sinking feeling.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: In the pool.

Griffin: Yeah. It's cool.

Rachel: So I had to find out.

Griffin: You know what they are? They are great waves. Truly.

Rachel: [laughs] I had to get to the bottom of how this came about.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: And potentially share this information with cities all over the country so that their city park might also install a wave pool.

Griffin: Did you at any point learn how wave pools work?

Rachel: Um, I—so, part of the reason I wanted to bring my computer in is I did not get to that. But I imagine I can get that answer for you, 'cause I figured you would bring it up.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I can tell you how they originated and how they used to work. Um...

Griffin: I have to imagine it's, like, paddles. Like, big paddles pushing the water. Big paddles?

Rachel: I don't think it's big paddles.

Griffin: Do you want to read your notes, and I can look up how wave machines work, so you don't have to search and talk at the same time?

Rachel: Here's the thing. If you're searching while I'm talking...

Griffin: I can listen and search at the same time. I'm doing it right now. You can't even tell.

Rachel: [laughs] Okay. Okay. So, history of wave pools. Uh, the first wave pool in the United States opened in 1961. This is the first outdoor wave pool, in 1961 at Oceana Park in Newbury, Ohio.

Griffin: I'm not familiar. You looked at me like, "Ohio?"

Rachel: Ohio? Yeah, I did. The wave pool—the Great Waves wave pool opened in 1984. Um, but at the time, at the time, it was the country's second and largest wave pool. Uh, in Alexandria, Virginia.

Griffin: Okay, interesting.

Rachel: Yeah. So, uh, it came about because Darrell Winslow, who was the capital programs director for the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, uh, was tasked with finding new opportunities for the park. Uh, and he had heard of a wave pool.

Griffin: [laughs]

Rachel: Uh, so he went to one in Decatur, Alabama.

Griffin: Cool job.

Rachel: He said the trip was going to be for just one day, so when he went to the airport, he just [through laughter] had a plastic bag with his suit in it. [laughs]

Griffin: Amazing.

Rachel: And then he returned home the same day and let everyone know, "Hey! There's a—they've got wave pools in Alabama."

Um, and then he did, like, a whole song, I'm sure.

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rachel: About the wave pools.

Griffin: I'm imagining sort of a music man kind of situation.

Rachel: Oh, of course. That's exactly what I'm imagining too.

Griffin: But he's—instead of pool, the danger to the community is placid water.

Rachel: Uh-huh. [laughs] Um, so they started working on securing a site in the city of Alexandria. It would be the first so-called urban park in the regional parks system along the city's southern border. Next to a stream called Cameron Run, which is what the park is now called is, like, Cameron Run Park. And a lot of people will kind of use Cameron Run and Great Waves interchangeably.

I will just say, when I was doing the research, wave pools go back to the 19th century. There was a castle builder in Bavaria, Ludwig II, who electrified a lake to create breaking waves. [laughs]

Griffin: That doesn't sound real. That sounds fake, to me.

Rachel: I don't imagine it was for swimming. I imagine it was like a moat situation.

Griffin: Sure! Incredible security measure.

Rachel: But I thought, like, how... how wild, to just go for it that way.

Griffin: Yeah. I've got the answer on how wave machines work. So, we got a few options these days. We've got... I mean, no matter what you're just trying to move a bunch of water around very quickly. There's some that use, like, pneumatic systems to suck, like, water up, and then release sort of a dump tank of water to, like, form the waves.

Uh, but paddles or panels, huge hinged metal or wooden panels are pushed back and forth by hydraulic or pneumatic pistons to physically shove the water forward as a common way of doing it.

Rachel: Okay. Okay. So you were close.

Griffin: I assumed that was the case. 'Cause I used to make waves in my buddy Clint's pool with a boogie board. And I would just kind of, like, lift my body up on it like that. And you could really get some good waves going. So I figured that it was a similar mechanism in a professional wave pool environment.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Maybe they have, like, three or four big boys back there.

Rachel: Yeah. We didn't see, like, a guy while we were there.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: But that doesn't mean there wasn't one.

Griffin: No. Could've been. Probably more than one guy. These are huge waves.

Rachel: Uh, a lot of times wave pools are used for surfers, and a lot of what I found was kind of referencing that. In 1966, there was something called the Summerland Wave Pool in Akiruno, Japan, which was the first wave pool accessible to surfers, though only for 15 minutes every hour. [laughs]

Griffin: Well, the big boys get so tired making huge enough waves.

Rachel: It was labor rules. They had to, like, let them take breaks.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: You ever see them, like, surfing simulator things where they're, like—they, like, shoot a jet, like a plane of water upwards up a curve and you, like, can get on it and, like, fake surf on it?

Rachel: Yeah. Oh, for sure. I mean, in videos. And I don't know that I've ever really watched it in person.

Griffin: I'd find some way to get that shit to go right up my nose and take me out of commission for... I love Great Waves Waterpark. I had a great time there. I pushed myself too hard down one of the big slides and made my body go super

fast, and when I hit the water at the bottom, whoosh. A bunch of water park water went right up my snoot. And I did get sick. From that.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: So, like, we can't talk mad shit about Great Wolf Lodge and not call out the fact...

Rachel: But the antibiotics are helping, right?

Griffin: Yeah. The antibiotics I'm currently on are helping me a great deal, yes.

Rachel: I think part of the reason I liked Great Waves is that it has, like, a real local feel to it.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: You know? Like, it doesn't feel flashy. It feels like it may look the same now as it did 15 years ago, and I'm sure some local people can confirm or deny that. Um, but yeah. There's just, like, three kind of big tube water slides. There's, like, one big, like, chute slide that we didn't touch.

Griffin: Too scary.

Rachel: Um, and then there's, like—there's the wave pool. There's food on site, which I really appreciated.

Griffin: Love that.

Rachel: And, like, umbrellas.

Griffin: The biggest umbrellas I've ever seen!

Rachel: Yeah. [laughs]

Griffin: You guys gotta see these fuckin' umbrellas! They're enormous!

Rachel: And they have a little kids' water slide, which was perfect for small son. 'Cause he was scared of the wave pool.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Which makes sense. He's five. Like, those waves are bigger than him. But there was a little kids' slide.

Griffin: They're bigger than me, honestly. These waves are monstrous, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah. So he was able to kind of go down that little slide over and over again, and do something that he started calling the 360, which is, like, a full spin before he hit the bottom of his slide.

Griffin: It's badass.

Rachel: And then he'd, like—he tried doing two 360s. Um, which was successful.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And just made him feel like "I'm a real thrill-seeker." And that's always—and they also have, like, a baby pool, which our kids have aged out of. But it just felt like I was at, like, a friendly neighborhood water park. [laughs]

Griffin: It's really what it is. It's a really unique vibe they've cultivated there.

Rachel: Yeah. And it just made me really curious about, uh, about wave pools. I saw one—this felt very like an aesthetic to me. But there were steam powered wave pools, originally.

Griffin: Ooh, cool!

Rachel: Which felt very, like, steampunk. Like, monocles and, you know, big hats. [laughs]

Griffin: I really enjoyed the wave—the wavy river at Schlitterbahn. I know it's in a lot of other places too.

Rachel: Oh, is that what it's called?

Griffin: I think so. Um, where—it's like a lazy river, but with enormous, terrifying waves that come and launch everyone into each other in a periodic sort of basis.

Rachel: Yeah. That one I didn't like so much.

Griffin: No, I didn't either. It scared me. I did one lap, and I ended up underneath a group of people and was like, "I'm—check, please. Thank you."

Rachel: Yeah. [laughs] Yeah. Yeah. So, anyways—so the question of kind of what happens to Great Waves I think is still kind of up in the air. Because, you know, every few years they have to kind of renegotiate and argue for their space.

Griffin: After the publicity they're gonna get outta this episode of the podcast, I think they would be out of their minds to get [crosstalk].

Rachel: So if you are in Northern Virginia and see a proposition of some kind on a ballot for Great Waves or Cameron Run park, please consider the McElroy family has really enjoyed said water park, and would like it to continue.

Griffin: We are on Capitol Hill weekly, I would say at this point, lobbying for Great Waves. Um, like, I understand, like, drain the swamp. But not that one. Not that one particular bog.

Rachel: Not that swamp. And when I say—when we say lobbying, it's just, like, us holding a sign, which feels like lobbying.

Griffin: Well, I'm playing Cam Jams on the radio.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: On my boombox.

Rachel: Do you think we can get Cam Jams here?

Griffin: And every time—yeah, I think we could probably get Cam Jams here. And I'm splashing senators.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Senators come by. I throw buckets of water on 'em and they get mad, but then I play Cam Jams and I give 'em some Dippin' Dots. And I'm like, "You could have this. You could have this as much as you want, Ted Cruz."

Rachel: They also offer swim lessons, which I'm confused about.

Griffin: [laughs] Yeah, awesome!

Rachel: I'm confused about how that works. My guess is that they make the wave pool still.

Griffin: I'd fuckin' hope so, man!

Rachel: [laughs] And it's not like you have 10 minutes for your swim lesson and then you have to sit on the side for another 10 minutes while the waves go crazy. [crosstalk]

Griffin: I mean, it adds some heat to the—it adds some urgency to the swim lessons.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: You hear that bell chime and you're like, "Okay. Time to put your new skills into practice. You gotta get out of there, man. ASAP."

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

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Noah says:

"My small wonder is train graffiti. Every now and then I get stopped at a train crossing while driving for work, like now. And some of the art on the side of those train cars are truly incredible. It's like a museum on the move."

Rachel: Yeah. This is something I think both you and I grew up with. Weren't there trains coming through Huntington all the time?

Griffin: Oh, all the time, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: There's a train track that goes across... I want to say 7th Avenue. And, you know, you got all the viaducts going underneath it. But at the intersections

where there is no viaduct, you will get stuck there for a long time. And you'll look at a lot of train graffiti as you wait for it to pass.

Rachel: St. Louis is kind of similar in that there are kind of key intersections around the city that have a train track. And, I don't know. It just feels like a big part of growing up there.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: We don't see trains anymore, unless it's Amtrak.

Griffin: There's one that passes right by Great Waves Waterpark.

Rachel: Okay. Well, there's another—[laughs] another point in its column.

Griffin: Another point in its column. Holland says:

"My small wonder is whenever my cat rediscovers the joy of a spring doorstep, because yeah, I remember being little, and that thing was delightful to play with. Glad someone still sees the fun in it, even if it's my cat doing it for way too long."

Rachel: Yeah. Cats and babies.

Griffin: Cats and babies and, I mean, me up to late middle school.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It's such a good noise, gang.

Rachel: It's a satisfying noise, yeah.

Griffin: Brrup-bup-bup-bup bup bup bup bup. Aw, man. That was my impression of it.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Brrrrr-du-du-du-du. You can't do the slow—as it slows down.

Rachel: You can't. It's impossible. Scientists have been spending years trying to...

Griffin: Trying to emulate it.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Mouth scientists.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: That's what Michael Winslow—that's what it says on his business card. Hey, thanks for listening to our podcast! It's called Wonderful!

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 Maximum Fun for having us on the network. Go to Maximumfun.org. Check out all the shows they've got poppin' over there. You're gonna find something that you love. I guarantee it.

We've got a bunch of new merch over at the McElroy Merch store. This month, we've got the Utilidrink Tumbler. If you're ready to get your day started right with an all-in-one beverage, caffeine, protein, medicine, sort of slurry, uh, you can do that in the Utilidrink Tumbler. A bunch of other stuff over at mcelroymerch.com.

And we have a live episode of The Besties that we're gonna be doing very soon. October 9th, at the Town Hall in New York City. You can get your tickets now at bit.ly/bestiesonbroadway. Um, so I hope you will consider coming to see us if you're a fan of The Besties.

I think that's... I think that's all we got for you this week. Let me check. Yep, there's no more show. I looked in my drawer. Let me check my pockets. Nope. No more podcast. I'm plumb out, babe.

Rachel: Surely you have some in that little breast pocket on your...

Griffin: Let me check my little breast pocket. Oh, there is a little bit more show in here! Hold on.

Rachel: Yeah. Tell me more about the cup thing. At church camp, when you'd make the cup song.

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

"[high pitched] We would do the cup song. But we would change the lyrics be about Christ!"

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Thanks, breast pocket! That was amazing. I got a little guy in there who does podcast for me sometimes.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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