

Wonderful 433: Schrödinger's Vibe Situation

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

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hi! This is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is Wonderful!

Griffin: Welcome to Wonderful! This is a podcast where we talk about things we like, that's good, that we're into. The vibe's great in the room right now. I just want to put the tiger on the table and yell at it. The vibe feels so choice right now. Are you feeling this?

Rachel: Well, I was, but now I feel a little off balance. Because I feel like—

Griffin: Because I acknowledged the vibe?

Rachel: Well, and I've, you know, I've still got that like four year old mentality where somebody's like, "You like this!" And I'm like, well, now I'm not sure if I do. Don't tell me what the vibe is.

Griffin: Okay, well, let's start—clean slate.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: Welcome to Wonderful, it's a podcast where we talk about the...

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: How do you feel about the vibe?

Rachel: It's good!

Griffin: All right...

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: I fucking blew it, dude. It's really a Schrödinger's vibe situation—

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: Where it felt good, but it was good in a sort of quantum state. And as soon as I locked it in—

Rachel: Uh-huh. I know.

Griffin: And I do have—I feel like I inherited this particular dad gene more than any other, which is the—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: You pull into the driveway getting back home from a family vacation, and you absolutely have to confirm like, "So everyone had a great time, right?"

Rachel: [chuckles] Do you have that?

Griffin: I feel like that's in my bones. I just want to make sure everyone had a good time. And I'm telling myself it's not for me. It's for their bene— like I really do want—

Rachel: [chuckles] Uh-huh.

Griffin: Your feedback so I can make it a better time next time.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But really, I just need to hear it.

Rachel: That's like, Gus is fond of asking us kind of which vacations we like better. And he regularly will say, "Which do you like better, Disney World or Huntington?" And—

Griffin: Huntington's great!

Rachel: [chuckles] Huntington's great.

Griffin: The town in which I was sired.

Rachel: One of us costs us a lot, a lot, a lot of money.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Huntington, not cheap to get there, but significantly cheaper than Disney World. And the fact that he like puts those two on the same level—

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Always makes me think, wow, you have no idea.

Griffin: Hones—what's most impressive is it is always a toss up in his mind.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Which makes me think we should stop paying all that money for Disney!

Rachel: I know, but the thing is, I have fun now.

Griffin: Damn it... You found—you got—you got—it's got its hooks in you—

Rachel: It does, Man, it does!

Griffin: You like getting a little day drunk over at Epcot and hanging out over at Soarin', and just having a cruise over the Sahara Desert, blitzed out of your fucking gourd.

Rachel: What? That's never true.

Griffin: Drunk off your ass on Guardians of the Galaxy—

Rachel: I have never.

Griffin: Screaming at Chris Pratt the whole time. "Chris!" The whole time.

Rachel: [titters] I have never had too much to drink at Disney World.

Griffin: Oh.

Rachel: Maybe once the kids get older.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: It's just like we never stay anywhere long enough for me to like finish more than one beverage.

Griffin: Okay, yeah.

Rachel: If even one, you know?

Griffin: I will say Chef Morimoto got me a little bit tipsy—

Rachel: Oh yeah.

Griffin: With his—

Rachel: Well the kids aren't there—

Griffin: His highballs.

Rachel: That's the thing! We don't... we don't bring the kids to—

Griffin: We don't bring the kids to Morimoto.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: No, they couldn't rock with that. They don't care about roast duck.

Rachel: We're not racing through a meal just to like keep them from getting too bored and angsty.

Griffin: No. You can't—you can't rush Iron Chef Morimoto. Are you out of your f—out of your mind?

Rachel: [chuckles] You make it sound like he's actually in the kitchen.

Griffin: Sometimes I like to think he's there.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And he's whipping up those Suntory cocktails, just for me.

Rachel: Just for Griffin.

Griffin: And also the other guy from Iron Chef is there, who bites into the yellow bell pepper to start each episode. He's there too.

Rachel: I didn't really watch.

Griffin: My small wonder is Iron Chef.

Rachel: Okay. [chuckles]

Griffin: Kick-ass show. I used to watch it with my dad all the time. And it was a—it started in Japan, and then it came to the States, and Alton Brown hosted it. And it was still pretty fun. But the original one, where it was just a Japanese—

Rachel: Oh, is this when your brothers—

Griffin: Battle royale.

Rachel: When your brothers had moved out already, and it was just you and your dad?

Griffin: Possibly. There was an era—well, I mean also, Dad and I had like

TV that really just the two of us watched. Not like a ton, but like... like Murder in Small Town X, I remember watching every—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Episode of with Dad. Maybe that was after the boys had moved out.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But Iron Chef, man, that shit was always on Food Network. And people would roll up, and they would call out one of the Iron Chefs representing the different cuisines. And anytime anyone pulled Morimoto it was like, good fucking luck, dude!

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: You cannot beat him. You simply can't.

Rachel: Huh.

Griffin: He'll get you rocked off of some Tory, and you can't compete at that point.

Rachel: Yeah, okay.

Griffin: Do you have a small wonder?

Rachel: I was thinking about this right before I came in here, because I have a small book club here in DC, and we were talking about—

Griffin: The books you read are normal to big size. I don't want people to think that you guys are only reading small books.

Rachel: No. [chuckles] No I mean, it's probably a pretty large book club, but it's very rare we can all be there. Anyway, I was talking with one of my friends, because we were talking about like how hard it is for us to start a new book with any kind of confidence that we will finish it. And the thing that I appreciate is when there is somebody that leaves a review that says

like, "Page-turner, couldn't put it down, addicting." Because then I'm like, all right, all right.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I will read that book, because somebody said they couldn't put it down, which is encouraging to me, because I frequently put books down.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: This will be the book. And it has never steered me wrong.

Griffin: Really?

Rachel: If somebody is like... you know like... "I didn't want it to end!" For me I'm like, okay, I will probably stick with it. And I would say like 99% success rate.

Griffin: I almost never don't want books to end. Work through that.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: When a book ends I'm usually like, ah... I did it.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: There's that part of my brain that still feels like I'm eating my vegetables, sort of, when reading—

Rachel: Oh? Okay.

Griffin: Reading a book.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: A non-interactive book.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: And so even when they're really great, I just finished the third Shadow of the Leviathan book. You know I love my fantasy mysteries. But even when it ended I was like, aah... Another one bites the dust!

Rachel: [chuckles] Well, congratulations, honey.

Griffin: Yeah, but I know—

Rachel: You should print out little certificates for yourself.

Griffin: Well, I want to take adult accelerated reader tests so I can get points—

Rachel: Oh, okay?

Griffin: Which I can then transfer over to Chuck E. Cheese arcade tokens.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: I'll need your help with this.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: There isn't a place I can go to get our Chuck E. Cheese arcade tokens for reading books good.

Rachel: I wonder—

Griffin: You'll have to administer them for me.

Rachel: I wonder if you win in, because the people behind the cashier at those like exchange prize places—

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Don't ever seem particularly invested in the success of the business.

Griffin: Mm-hm.

Rachel: I wonder if you could just be like, "Hey, you see my husband over there? He just finished a really long book."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And I would like to treat him.

Griffin: Yeah, yeah.

Rachel: "Do you have anything for good reader boys?"

Griffin: Oh, see, I was saying tokens for playing the games. But tickets would be cool too. Like a—

Rachel: Oh.

Griffin: Cut out the middleman and just like give me—

Rachel: Oh?

Griffin: The t—give me the tickets.

Rachel: I guess I don't know who you would talk to in that case, because usually when you get—

Griffin: Chuck.

Rachel: When you get tokens now, you usually put dollar bills in a machine —

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Or credit card—

Griffin: That's what I'm saying—

Rachel: And it spits out—

Griffin: You would have to do this for me. Do you want to administer adult accelerated reader tests, for me?

Rachel: And then how would I get the tokens?

Griffin: Go to go d... got to f... go to Chuck E. Cheese. I almost said Dave and Buster's. That works too.

Rachel: Yeah, it does work too.

Griffin: You can get some tokens and bring it home. I want tokens, though. No cards. Bothers me how all these arcades now...

Rachel: [titters]

Griffin: Back in my day!

Rachel: There's my Andy Rooney.

Griffin: Ah...

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Withering every time. You go first this week.

Rachel: I do.

Griffin: What would you like to talk about today?

Rachel: Okay, I am bringing a music artist this week, and my music artist is Paul Russell.

Griffin: This is one of those that you sent it to me and I was like, who's this? And then I listened to the first song you sent me and I was like, this! This is—oh, him!

Rachel: Oh, him.

Griffin: I never—I know his—I know this song. It's anthemic. But I had never really looked up the man behind it. And I'm so glad that I guess I'm about to learn more about him.

Rachel: Yeah. So, I heard one of his songs, I guess, back in July 2026, because I... maybe it was one of the dating shows we watch.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: And—

Griffin: Probably Perfect Match. In that time frame? It seems like perfect match is a likely—

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Or new Married at First Sight.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: One of those two.

Rachel: That's possible. Either way, I wrote the name of the song in my notes app because I wanted to look it up later because I didn't know anything about it, it was the first time I heard it. And it was the song "Lil Boo Thang" by Paul Russell.

Griffin: That was your first time hearing Paul Russell's "Lil Boo Thang—"

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Was in July 2026?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: This jam came out a while ago, right?

Rachel: Yes. It came out in 2023. [chuckles]

Griffin: Okay. I mean, that's not bad. I thought it was like way older than that.

Rachel: You know what else it has been on, which may be where I first heard it, but forgot? He was giving an interview talking about just kind of the success of that. Because it was—it was basically like a short hook that he put on TikTok, that again like gained virality, like a lot of these music artists. And then he had to finish the song.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: Like he had to write the whole song. But he was giving an interview, and he said, "It was on a show in the US called The Golden Bachelor, where these people in their '70s are trying to find love."

Griffin: Cool. I love that he had to explain—he felt the need to explain what it was.

Rachel: Oh, he goes on. He says, "I feel like the audience of watching that ended up being older people." [chuckles]

Griffin: Not us!

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Check yourself, Paul!

Rachel: "People will come to me, and it's older people being like, my kid loves your song or like my mom loves your song." Like it—

Griffin: Well, it's got generational crossover appeal, and I'll tell you why. It's because The Emotions' "Best of My Love—"

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Is a fucking solid hook. Anything—

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: You put on top of that is money, baby.

Rachel: Well, and that's what he said in the interview! He was like, "When I made that hook, I wasn't sure I was going to get rights to that song."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: "So, I kind of sat on it for a while, and didn't really release it as a single until I could be 100% sure I could use it." [chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: But anyway, I wanted to play, in case you're not familiar or you haven't heard it in three years. [chuckles]

Griffin: Or just you're having a rough day, maybe!

Rachel: This is "Lil Boo Thang."

["Lil Boo Thang" by Paul Russell plays]

Rachel: So you could see like kind of how the song would lend itself to like a... like young couple going out on a date—

Griffin: Or a very, very old couple.

Rachel: [laughs] Or a very, very old couple, going to share a malt at the diner.

Griffin: Yeah, yeah. Oh, Jesus... Sorry, you just made me think of the... [chuckles] you just made me think of The Golden Bachelorette date where they went to a diner to have milkshakes. No, it was Golden Bachelor—

Rachel: Golden Bachelor.

Griffin: Maybe the first season. And then they broke out in singing Journey's "Don't Stop Believing."

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: And it was like a whole musical number—

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: And the... A low point.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: For what was otherwise a delightful romp of a television program.

Rachel: Yeah, everybody in the restaurant broke in like a, you know, flash mob kind of way, broke into dance and performance.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: So, this gentleman, born in 1997, lives in Los Angeles, but he grew up in Atlanta and Allen, Texas. His—

Griffin: I don't like when towns have names like people. Drives me crazy.

Rachel: Interesting.

Griffin: Allen? What kind of name is Allen for a town?

Rachel: But you're okay with last names, clearly.

Griffin: Well, yeah, like Huntington is...

Rachel: A last name.

Griffin: Is a last name. But I'm ta—but if you say like where... where were

you—

Rachel: If it was called Collis! How do you feel about that?

Griffin: If it was called ca... Eh, Collis kind of works for me actually—

Rachel: It's not really a name—

Griffin: Maybe it's just—

Rachel: Like that you hear.

Griffin: If a j—if it was like, "I grew up in Michael."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: You like that?

Rachel: No, it's pretty funny.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I don't know, I'm sure there's a Michael in the US.

Griffin: I came from s—I hail from Susan, Wisconsin.

Rachel: Oh, well, there would never be one named after a woman, honey.
[chuckles]

Griffin: I like the way you just said "woman."

Rachel: [chuckles] I stumbled over it a little bit. A woman, a woman.

Griffin: [in a silly voice] "Can't have a city named after a *woman*."

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: "What kind of woman city are you talking about?"

Rachel: That sounds a lot like Maria Bamford, actually.

Griffin: It does, actually.

Rachel: That's remarkable. Okay, so he... went to Cornell and was working at like a startup, when this song went crazy and he was able to quit his job. But when he was in college still, he got approached by a Christian hip hop artist named Ruslan, the co-founder and owner of Christian hip hop label King's Dream Entertainment. Which I have never heard of. But that is where Paul Russell was first signed as an artist in 2018. And he released singles while he was there. He also was on a Christmas compilation.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Doing the song "We Three Kings."

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: Again... wild—

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: To me. None of this—all of this is new information to me. But again like, I... you know—

Griffin: Is it fu—is it like fun party anthem "We Three Kings?"

Rachel: I haven't listened to it.

Griffin: I don't know how one does that sa—that's a—that is one of the weirdest Christmas carols, I think.

Rachel: You could put kind of a beat behind it, I think? There's like a...

Griffin: It's one of—

Rachel: A bounce to it.

Griffin: Rare—it's not... There's not a ton of minor key Christmas jingles. And some of them you can, you know, I could rock with "Carol of the Bells." But this one, I don't know, it sou—I've always felt like an ominous vibe.

Rachel: Yeah, for sure.

Griffin: From it. Field and fountain—why are you climbing through fountains to get to the baby Jesus?

Rachel: Wow, you know more lyrics than I expected you to know?

Griffin: [sings] "Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star." That one?

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: I love—I love Christmas.

Rachel: I don't know any of the words except for like it pops off when—

Griffin: Well then you didn't go—

Rachel: They sing like—

Griffin: You didn't go—

Rachel: [sings] "We three kings—"

Griffin: You didn't go to church!

Rachel: "Of Orient..."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And then after that, I'm lost.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: [chuckles] Okay, so... 2022, he's still working with that label. 2023, he previewed a snippet of "Lil Boo Thang" on TikTok—

Griffin: Nice.

Rachel: And the clip went viral. And he agreed to sign a deal with Arista Records to release the song as a full commercial single.

Griffin: Now, is that a secular label? Because I'm about to freak the fuck out.

Rachel: [chuckles] I assume so.

Griffin: Oh, okay.

Rachel: I assume so. I... I do not know the status of his faith, but it seems that the music he is putting out now is not aligned with a particular religious bend.

Griffin: I will say that the music—

Rachel: It's wholesome!

Griffin: It's *deeply* wholesome. Like hugely, hugely wholesome. And so, it's possible. I don't know.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: It doesn't matter to me, as long as I can fuckin' bump to it.

Rachel: Yeah, I mean, it's a great—like the songs of his that I like are kind of like great party songs.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: You know? Like... it's not like it resonates with me on a particularly emotional level, it's just—

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Like this is a really fun song, and it's helping me be in a good mood.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And he cites in a lot of interviews like Outkast being a big—

Griffin: *Oh wow!*

Rachel: Influence for him. Which Outkast had a lot of like huge hits that were like great party songs.

Griffin: Of course.

Rachel: So, you can kind of make the connection there. But anyway, so when he released the single, it debuted on the US Billboard Hot 100 at number 99 in September 2023.

Griffin: Damn, you got a long road to go, my friend.

Rachel: [chuckles] And went on to peak at number 14 in January 2024.

Griffin: All right, that's pretty good!

Rachel: He worked his way up the chart.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: As a result of the song's success, he was in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. He was on Jimmy Kimmel Live and on Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve—

Griffin: Hell yeah, dude, the circuit! You did the whole fucking thing in one go. That's impressive, actually.

Rachel: And then the second song he released as a single was the other song I sent you, which was "Say Cheese."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Which kind of taps into like a little bit more of his kind of like soulful —

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Influence. I don't know if we want to play a clip of that?

Griffin: I think we absolutely should play a clip of that.

Rachel: Okay, let's play a clip of that.

Griffin: As a little treat.

["Say Cheese" by Paul Russell plays]

Griffin: I think I like this one better.

Rachel: Yeah! No, this one is like more musically interesting, I think, than the first one.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I mean partially because the first one pulls heavily—

Griffin: Uses "Best of My Love" from The Emotions.

Rachel: [chuckles] Yeah! Pulls heavily—

Griffin: And I feel like I've heard a lot of bands do that to that exact song.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I felt like... didn't Bruno Mars have a song set to the—that hook?

Rachel: Oh? I don't know.

Griffin: Maybe I'm thinking of something else. Anyway.

Rachel: I'm not a Bruno expert.

Griffin: I mean, nor am I.

Rachel: So that came out in January 2024. And then later that year, he was the opening act for Meghan Trainor on the Timeless Tour.

Griffin: All right?

Rachel: And then released in July as a single featuring her.

Griffin: That's a good time, isn't it?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: That's a good night.

Rachel: Yeah. [chuckles]

Griffin: Get the babysitter and just roll up to the Trainor concert and just like... How stoked would you be showing up and you're like, who's this opener? And then bust out "Lil Boo Thang" and you're like—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Oh, shit!

Rachel: Oh, yeah, it's that guy! This again, this is one of those situations. If I were on TikTok, I would be a lot more familiar, I'm sure. And it wouldn't have taken me three years to find this gentleman. Here's another fun fact, and maybe why he is recognizable. His older sister appeared on the sixth season of The Circle, where she posed as him. Is this—is this—

Griffin: Yes!

Rachel: Hitting you? [laughs] She used his pictures—

Griffin: Yes!

Rachel: Yes. It... Careless, is her name, I guess? And yeah, and she posed as him—

Griffin: I don't remember the names—

Rachel: I don't remember anything—

Griffin: But I remember someone playing her brother, who was a musician.

Rachel: Yeah, I guess it was him.

Griffin: That's hysterical.

Rachel: I know! I know. It's wild... the crossovers with us—

Griffin: I know.

Rachel: Like leading of like Golden Bachelor and The Circle, like two shows —

Griffin: I know.

Rachel: That we watch. And there can't be a lot of people—[chuckles]

Griffin: There simply can't be a lot of people with our specific diet.

Rachel: That watch the Golden Bachelor and The Circle.

Griffin: And The Circle. I mean, no one's watching The Circle now, because Netflix took it out behind the barn, and sold it to Hulu? Right? Who's doing The Circle now?

Rachel: I don't know. I know we were looking for it a while ago, and we found out about that.

Griffin: I thought there was just a new deal where like Hulu signed it or something, I don't know. It's been too long, man.

Rachel: But yeah, that is—that is Paul Russell. He put out a single just six months ago that I really liked also called "400 Cities." You can find that on YouTube. But yeah—

Griffin: Like an Animaniacs style like song about like all the state capitals and...

Rachel: No, it's very much the song of a touring musician where he just talks about how he like just wants... like he's traveled all over the world and he just wants to get home. You know.

Griffin: Yeah. If he had a version called like... 37 Cities...

Rachel: You would empathize? Or—

Griffin: That would be—I would be a little—yeah.

Rachel: [chuckles] You would get it.

Griffin: 400 is unthinkable. I don't even think there's 400 cities on Earth. That's crazy.

Rachel: [chuckles] But yeah, that's Paul Russell. It's just, it's good time music. And it's always nice to have that when you are doing a menial task or could use—could use an upper.

Griffin: Or when summer's wrapping up, just one last gasp.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: That sounds bad. But—

Rachel: Today is officially, as we are recording—

Griffin: The last day of fall.

Rachel: The first day of fall.

Griffin: The first day of fall.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: I know...

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: We're getting—

Rachel: You're ready, man! You've gotten—

Griffin: I am! The flannel—

Rachel: The sleeves!

Griffin: Appeared on me this morning.

Rachel: [chuckles] You woke up—

Griffin: It's just sort of... like a carapace that naturally formed.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah. Can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

Griffin: Ready?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I'd like to go somewhere dangerous.

Rachel: Okay?

Griffin: Somewhere exciting, educational, rewarding, non-existent anymore. I want to become, with you, join forces and become a team, and compete on *Legends of the Hidden Temple*!

Rachel: Oh, babe!

Griffin: This is inspired by, I don't remember where we were, but basically anytime I see a big stone face—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: My mind immediately comes back to Olmec.

Rachel: I think we must have been at the new...

Griffin: Our tech house, perhaps?

Rachel: Our Smithsonian.

Griffin: Maybe it was at the new Smithsonian Museum.

Rachel: Because I feel like I may have said...

Griffin: I don't know, man. If I see a big stone face, it takes me to Olmec. I see—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Olmec, I get ready for him to open his mouth and start quizzing me about history and mythology.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: And it never happens!

Rachel: If you see a man in khaki pants swinging on a vine—

Griffin: Yes!

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: I get ready to go on the steps of knowledge, but it never happens.

Rachel: Also, you probably have mentioned this before, but there was one year where you dressed as a contestant for Halloween.

Griffin: You're right! I forgot all about that!

Rachel: Do you remember this now? You bought like a—like a kind of a knockoff shirt, and wore like a helmet and elbow pads or whatever?

Griffin: That's right. That was a good Halloween costume.

Rachel: And nobody...

Griffin: Nobody got it.

Rachel: Nobody knew who you were.

Griffin: It was heartbreaking! I put a lot of w—that's one of my best Halloween costumes! I even had like the Red Iguanas shirt. It was like legit. Like a—yeah. You're right, that—now I'm mad! Now I'm pissed off.

Rachel: You didn't remember that when you were preparing this segment?

Griffin: No, I completely forgot about that.

Rachel: Oh, okay.

Griffin: But I mean, that speaks to how badly I—more than any other Nickelodeon game show, this was the—barring maybe Nick Arcade. Which you know I would have fucking slayed.

Rachel: [chuckles] I don't remember like the questions on this one. Like was it educational?

Griffin: Oh, I'm going to walk you through the whole—

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: History. Because this show only ran for three seasons, from 1993 to 1995. And in the show, the format was they had six teams of two contestants, each a boy and a girl, and they competed in a series of physical and mental challenges, to win the right to basically raid the temple at the end of the show. Where they would go through a series of challenges and try to recover a magical, mystical artifact that was pulled from history or mythology. Can you—

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Name... How many of the six teams can you name? I already said Red Iguanas.

Rachel: Silver Monkeys, of course.

Griffin: Yeah, well... hm...

Rachel: Oh, the Shrine of the Silver Monkey—

Griffin: The Shrine of the Silver Monkey. There was—

Rachel: Okay, you're right.

Griffin: Confusingly a silver team, but it was a different animal. Alliterative, if that's any help.

Rachel: Oh, Blue Barracuda?

Griffin: Hell yeah.

[pause]

Rachel: That might be it.

Griffin: Green...

Rachel: I can't think of a... a gator?

Griffin: Monkeys. They're not alliterative anymore.

Rachel: You said allitera...

Griffin: Some of them are alliterative—

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: Some of them are not. Orange?

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Oh, wait, it was Orange Iguanas. What was the red? Red Jaguars I think was actually the—

Rachel: Mm-hm, okay.

Griffin: The team. I got this wrong in my notes. Purple Parrots and the Silver Snakes—

Rachel: Purple Parrots. I remember that one.

Griffin: The Purple Parrots never won. I don't—that was—that's my ongoing —

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: I'm saying like anecdotally, speaking my truth from my heart, I feel like I never saw a Purple Parrot—

Rachel: It was an unlucky...

Griffin: It was just—

Rachel: Assignment.

Griffin: I think it's just they put the, you know, the kids who weren't as good on it. Like they...

Rachel: Uh-huh. [chuckles]

Griffin: And they were like, "There's our Purple Parrots for the episode."

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: I would have loved to have seen like an underdog story where—I don't think it ever happened. So, series of challenges. The first one, the show starts with a bang. Kids lined up in front of a big, long swimming pool with fog all over it. And usually there's obstacles like a—

Rachel: Oh my gosh?

Griffin: Little ropes course you have to go over, and there's little floating things, and you have to get across. The first four teams to get across the moat, they called it, would move on to the next round.

Rachel: Wow! I had totally forgotten that. All I can remember is the temple at the end.

Griffin: Well, no, there's so much more. And then the—you get on the steps of knowledge, where Olmec, a large talking statue head—

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Speaks and tells you the story of that artifact.

Rachel: Oh, and they have to remember details from the story!

Griffin: They have to remember details of the story and answer questions. This—the artifact in question then becomes sort of the subject of the rest of the episode. And the artifacts were bonkers, because it would be things like the broken wings of Icarus, or it would be like Benjamin Franklin's electrified key.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Like they really pulled from all over creation. There was like Queen Elizabeth's jewel-encrusted egg. So then they'd tell you a story about Queen Elizabeth's jewel—

Rachel: Yes!

Griffin: Encrusted egg and then ask the kids questions, details.

Rachel: That's like—that's like full on state assessment, standardized test skill.

Griffin: Yeah! Absolutely.

Rachel: I remember watching that and being like, oh, man, I'd crush this.
[chuckles]

Griffin: You get a question right and you go down a step. And the first two teams to reach the bottom of the steps move on to the temple games. The temple games are like physical challenges more where if you win one of the physical challenges, you get a pendant of life. And those pendant of lives are sort of like how they keep score. Whoever has the most pendants at the end of the temple games gets to move on to the final portion of the show. But you also need those pendants for the final portion of the show, because the final portion of the show is where they run through the temple. And the temple was a 12 room, two story tall obstacle course. And the rooms connected in all kinds of different ways. Sometimes there's like ladders going

up and slides going down, and hidden doors going from—

Rachel: Hidden doors, yes.

Griffin: Place to place. And production could like shut off certain doors and certain connections, so that they could essentially come up with a new route through the temple every episode.

Rachel: Yeah, well, and don't forget about the scariest part.

Griffin: Well, I'm getting to the scariest part.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: I just thought it was nah—such a novel idea that they had this set that they could kind of take and use however they needed to use and the artifact would be in a different room every time. Kids would have to run in, solve little puzzles in each of the rooms to unlock the doors, go on to the next spot—

Rachel: And the host would always yell out things, because like it was—it was an anxious watch.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: And it was one of those things where kids would just kind of look out into the crowd like, "I don't know what else to do in this room."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And the host would be like, "Lift the basket!" [chuckles]

Griffin: Well, and kids would also absolutely shit the bed at the Shrine of the Silver Monkey, a room where they had to build a monkey statue—

Rachel: Oh! Yes!

Griffin: From three pieces.

Rachel: And that was always so hard for them.

Griffin: Screaming at my TV. Screaming at my TV.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Did you not study? Did you not watch?

Rachel: I know!

Griffin: You gotta watch the game tape and see what this fucking monkey looks like all built up—

Rachel: If—it always—

Griffin: And just recreated its three pieces, Tyler!

Rachel: That is—[chuckles] That is what reminds me of Survivor, where I'm watching it and I'm thinking like, maybe the previous season hasn't come out yet? Is there some way these kids have never seen this show before? [chuckles]

Griffin: If you go on Survivor and you have to do that puzzle where you build an archway that spells—

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: A word, but you only spell it right on one side because you didn't bother to look at the other side of it, I'm fucking done with you.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: It's 2026. The puzzle has to be right on both sides. It's crazy. Anyway, I'm sorry to get so worked up about Tyler. So yeah, you run in, you get the artifact, you get out. The thing that makes it very scary is the temple guards—

Rachel: Yes!

Griffin: Which you alluded to earlier, which was three adults, hidden in hiding spots throughout the temple that would—

Rachel: Wearing themed costumes.

Griffin: Wearing themed costumes, where they would jump out and they would fucking grab you. And if you have a pin and a life, you can give it to them and they'll disappear forever. But if you don't, then now it moves on to your teammate who can run in and follow in your footsteps to try and get—

Rachel: Yes! So many jump scares for these children.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And then them like shaking, handing the pendant, like totally disoriented at that point.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And I always felt bad for them.

Griffin: Now, if you got caught by a temple guard and you didn't have a pendant to give them, then you lose, immediately. You get a prize if you— just for getting to that stage of the game. You get a prize if you reach the artifact. But then the grand prize is if you can get the artifact and get out. When you grab the artifact, all the temple guards disappear and all the doors get unlocked. Because usually you have about—

Rachel: Oh yeah!

Griffin: Usually you have about 12 seconds left at that point—

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Because it has taken you a long time to get to the artifact chamber. So then it's just a mad dash to see how quickly kids can parkour through

these small foam-lined holes in the set—

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: That they have built. Now, they never—I don't know if there's a rule against it, but obviously it's like presented in kind of a diorama?

Rachel: [chuckles] Just run straight out.

Griffin: So just running straight out through the fourth wall seems like it should be okay. But they never say anything about that.

Rachel: I actually imagine the kids are given instructions backstage.

Griffin: Don't run through the plane—

Rachel: Like—

Griffin: The fourth plane.

Rachel: Like we are looking at you, but you have to pretend like you are trapped in this temple.

Griffin: I think one of the reasons why I wanted to talk about this, I mean one, I watched the shit out of it, because it was amazing. It was a very, very exciting—

Rachel: Yes!

Griffin: Show. But also like these days, we both love like high-concept, high-production value like reality competition shows. A lot of which are coming from South Korea. Your Physical: 100s, your Battle of Fates, your what-have-you—

Rachel: Why do you—

Griffin: And I think that we—there was not a higher concept, higher production value game show in the 20th century—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Than Legends of the Hidden Temple.

Rachel: Can I ask, because I genuinely don't know, why do you think the Floor is Lava never stuck with us?

Griffin: Hmm.

Rachel: Just not enough going on? Like maybe they needed another heat or something?

Griffin: You know, it just never—I always enjoyed watching that show with you. It just never felt like must-see TV kind of. And it played for—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It did play things for laughs a little too much. These people—

Rachel: Yeah! True.

Griffin: Are falling in the lava, I want to see genuine grief displayed—

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: As you're standing on top of like a taxi cab.

Rachel: "Noo!"

Griffin: "Noo!"

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Legends of the Hidden Temple, they played that shit serious, because it was pretty scary. It would have been even scarier if they had gone with the initial plan for the show, which was titled Secrets of the Haunted House—

Rachel: Oh, no!

Griffin: Where kids would go through a large haunted house, like the temple —

Rachel: *Ooh.*

Griffin: And literal ghouls and monsters and shit would jump out. They scrapped that, took it in a more Indiana Jones—

Rachel: Thank god!

Griffin: Style direction, which is probably for the best.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I did not know, two things, that one, the CW did a reboot for adults in 2021, which I never watched. They showed 13 episodes and canceled it.

Rachel: Wow?

Griffin: I also, worth noting, can't find any footage of it online anywhere.

Rachel: Oh, really?

Griffin: So it must not have made the biggest splash, because it got canceled, and as far as I can tell, purged from the timeline.

Rachel: Maybe this is like Bachelorette Canada, where somebody will like point us to a shared drive where you can find episodes of this. [chuckles]

Griffin: Maybe! I don't think—I don't know, I'm skeptical, dude. Like, I don't know.

Rachel: Was it the same host?

Griffin: It was not, no, it was a different host. The other—

Rachel: What was the host name? Sorry, I don't mean to interrupt.

Griffin: The host—god, Carl something? Of all the things that I prepared for this... Legends of the Hidden Temple host... His name was Kirk Fogg—

Rachel: Kirk—

Griffin: With two G's.

Rachel: Fogg. *Ah!*

Griffin: Kirk Fogg is such a cool name, and—

Rachel: What a great name.

Griffin: Dee Bradley Baker served as the announcer and the voice of Olmec. So pulling double duty for that one.

Rachel: [titters]

Griffin: And Cristela Alonso hosted the 2021 CW reboot—

Rachel: Oh!

Griffin: For adult contestants.

Rachel: Huh. Okay.

Griffin: So yeah, the other thing that I didn't realize is that Nickelodeon made a movie in 2016, about the lore of Legends of the Hidden Temple—

Rachel: Hah?

Griffin: Like a—like a fiction story narrative movie. Which I wa—I think we should get high and watch tonight possibly—

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Because that sounds like a good time. I don't know, man, we—it really... they don't make shows like this, I don't think, in—on Nickelodeon certainly—

Rachel: No, and there was always something a little culturally insensitive about it.

Griffin: Of course, yes!

Rachel: So—

Griffin: Certain cha—maybe not the Benjamin Franklin electrified key, but when it's like go find—

Rachel: And the temple guards!

Griffin: Oh, yeah, that's not great either.

Rachel: [chuckles] So I'm just saying that movie probably doesn't hold up well. [chuckles]

Griffin: Maybe. I mean, 2016, you would think like that's recent enough. That's a decade ago—

Rachel: No, yeah, it's a while ago now.

Griffin: It's possible. I don't know. I can't vouch for the film.

Rachel: [titters]

Griffin: But I don't know, the kind of adventure that that show kind of invites you into is just not one that I've seen replicated a lot. And for it to happen from 1993 to 1995 is just bonkers to me. That's such a—that's such early days.

Rachel: I wonder why it didn't last? I mean, Nickelodeon moved away from game shows in a big way.

Griffin: Well actually, it got scrapped because Nickelodeon was airing for like new game shows—

Rachel: oh?

Griffin: In 1995. I didn't look up what they were. I imagine—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Global Guts maybe.

Rachel: Oh, yeah.

Griffin: Probably had to make gray—way for shows that were not as expensive or scary to the kids.

Rachel: [titters] Super-duper extra icky sloppy double dare. [chuckles]

Griffin: Super-duper triple nasty-nasty-nasty double dare—

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Extreme nighttime edition.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: But yeah, I don't know, man, I wanted to compete on that show so badly. Mostly just to put that silver monkey together and be—

Rachel: Yeah! And like... if we had to compare and contrast with like Carmen Sandiego, which has a lot of similar elements—

Griffin: I don't wanna go on Carmen Sandiego.

Rachel: Yeah, way less intimidating. Like much easier level questions and tasks than—

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Carmen Sandiego.

Griffin: Well, and also like this probably isn't any surprise to anybody who's watched a McElroy Family Clubhouse episode where we have to find things on a map—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: My geography skills are maybe my weakest...

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: My weakest sort of knowledge point. I don't know fucking anything. I don't know anything. I'll never catch Carmen. She'll get away—

Rachel: It is so interesting!

Griffin: With those murders.

Rachel: I feel like I stopped learning about geography in maybe, like not even fifth grade, maybe like fourth grade. [chuckles]

Griffin: A shame, too! It's really quite practical and useful.

Rachel: I know! I know! It's weird that they were like, "Well, that's enough. You've got—"

Griffin: "You don't need to learn about where things are on—"

Rachel: "You've got enough now."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And then you spend a lot of time on state history because they're like, "Well, you're never getting out." [laughs]

Griffin: [chuckles] That's an interesting way to think about state-mandated —

Rachel: It feels like that—

Griffin: State history lessons.

Rachel: Though, doesn't it? A little bit? Like—

Griffin: Kind of.

Rachel: "We're done with the world. Okay? Now we're gonna focus on where you're staying the rest of your life."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: [chuckles] "Which is right here."

Griffin: I love West Virginia State history. It has so much—

Rachel: You have a very interesting story.

Griffin: Fuckin' rules, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah.

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

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Jody says, "My small wonder this week is freshly cleaned spectacles."

Rachel: That is really nice.

Griffin: That's it. Yeah. I love it too. It's like a little thing you can do, and you—

Rachel: I do that for you all the time.

Griffin: You do do that for me all the time while I'm driving the car, and I can't—I don't have my hands to use, I'll—

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: I'll hand you my glasses and say, "Will you please clean these?"

Rachel: I used to back—back when we were early courting, I used to just look at your glasses and ask to clean them.

Griffin: Yeah, that's true.

Rachel: [titters]

Griffin: Because I... I play hard.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I play hard and I get smudgy.

Rachel: [titters] Uh-huh.

Griffin: Ashley says, "My recent small wonder is saltine crackers. I've always been a big fan, but as someone in the first trimester of pregnancy, they have become my road dogs. Nauseous? Saltines. Got a cold? Saltines. Need something crunchy with your soup? Saltines. Need to make a delicious holiday treat? Saltines with toffee and chocolate on top—"

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: "What can't these salty boys do?"

Rachel: That's a really good point.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: The texture of a saltine is really pleasing.

Griffin: They figured it out. Crackers.

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: They figured out crackers, the saltines company has.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: They know what they're doing. Hey, thanks for listening to our show! Thank you to Be 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. I almost said monkey won't play, and I think that is probably because of—

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Saying monkey as many times as I did while discussing Legends of the Hidden Temple.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: We got merch over at mcelroymerch.com. You can go and take a look-see at it. If you're a TAZ Amnesty fan, we got some stuff in there just for you, and a bunch of other great stuff over there. And we have The Besties live show coming up very soon, October 9th, at the Town Hall in New York City. You can get tickets over at bit.ly/bestiesonbroadway. Come see us. Gonna be a *great* time. I think that's it.

Rachel: Mm-hm.

Griffin: I'm hot?

Rachel: Well it's the flannel, dude?

Griffin: I grew it too—I grew it too early.

Rachel: I know, you got your heavy coat and—

Griffin: Will you sheer me tonight?

Rachel: Yeah, I will.

Griffin: Thanks, babe!

Rachel: [chuckles]

Griffin: Sheer my flannel!

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

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