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Shrimp Heaven When? MBMBaM, Advice, and the Postmodern Art of Pastiche

INTRODUCTION

The history of podcasts is not a particularly long one. The art of podcasting has only been around since the late 90s in its base form, as a primarily audio-centric medium for dispersal of information similar to radio, but produced and distributed over the internet instead. As we know them now, they've been around for about half as long. Despite this, podcasting is a widespread medium. Podcast Insights estimates that in 2017, 550,000 podcasts were active on iTunes, with even more than that separate from Apple's platform entirely ("2018 Podcast Stats & Facts").

Language in podcasts, specifically question-and-answer podcasts, often lacks the same polished intentionality that other media has with respect to language use. Because Q&A podcasts depend on listener-submitted questions, hosts often spend more time improvising with and riffing off of co-hosts than writing scripts, instead putting creative energy into editing and developing the core ideas for outlines of shows. By this, I mean that instead of meticulously writing a (nearly or completely) word-for-word script, or even having a developed outline for multiple episodes in a row, Q&A 'casts develop week-by-week, and depend on something else: the hosts' good or interesting advice, the topic at hand (is it a podcast answering questions specifically on one topic?), or the very personalities of the speakers, who often serve as the backbone and reason for return for many listeners.

The minutiae of Q&A podcast speech is less written and more discovered, but no less able to be studied under the same kinds of modes in which literature or other mediums are. Q&A podcasting language (and podcasting language in general) is used to make the same kinds of points as more traditional mediums, even at the point where the language is improvised instead of written and revised again and again.

In this, I'll be discussing the podcast, [*My Brother, My Brother and Me*](#), published by podcast conglomerate Maximum Fun. *My Brother, My Brother and Me*, or, as it's better known, MBMBaM (pronounced muh-bim-bam), hosted by the McElroy brothers Justin, Travis and Griffin, is billed as a comedy advice podcast that, while at face-value is beholden to the same structure and form as its predecessors in advice columns like "Dear Abby." However, I posit that, because of the elements of comedy present at the forefront of the podcast, as well as the changing goals of the hosts, the podcast has turned into a pastiche of the genre of advice-giving media. What the final product of every episode comes to resemble is not an audio version of an advice column, but an hour long, improv comedy show with the advice as flavor text.

Thus, the wider lens of this essay looks at genre and its functions, and how our current world of technology-driven communication has turned once-familiar things like advice columns into something more befitting of a postmodern society. More specifically, I'll do this through the examination of MBMBaM as a show, developing its history, and looking at the questions it receives and the language used in it through the lens of postmodern critique, along with using terms developed by author Krista Ratcliffe in her book *Rhetorical Listening*.

DEAR ABBY, THE HISTORY OF ADVICE COLUMNS

There's no shortage of advice-giving media. There are references to advice columns as early as the 1690s. In Britain they call them agony aunts and uncles, and in America we term them often by the name of the column writer or originator. Many newspapers have advice columns, and most (nearly all, really) follow the same format: An anonymous question-asker submits a question they need advice for and, most of the time, follows it with a pseudonym (consider the movie *Sleepless in Seattle*, for instance, whose namesake is the pseudonym given to the male love interest after he speaks with a advice-giving radio personality). The asker receives a response from the columnist, host, etc. who often times goes by something else other than their own name (sometimes, even, there's multiple people trading-off or working together on these columns under one name).

Pauline Phillips, better known as her columnist personality Abigail van Buren, created the original "Dear Abby" advice column. "Dear Abby," which would go on to become the largest syndicated column in America, didn't start until the mid-1950s, and dealt with many questions from readers about social issues in a changing, often turbulent political landscape. Abby advocated for pro-choice before "pro-choice before abortion was legal and insisted it was fine to be gay well before most of her readers (or Ann Landers) [Abby's sister's advice column personality] could wrap their minds around that possibility," according to the New York Times Magazine on Phillips' life.

Abby's letters were written a signature, no-nonsense style, unafraid to dispense good advice and give letter-writers a verbal take-down when needed. In 2013, Forbes.com collected some of her [best letters](#). When asked by one reader named C.W. how to dissuade "hopeful females" as a "guy who has everything," Phillips/van Buren responded with "Keep talking." In

another, letter writer “up in arms” writes in, asking what to do about a gay couple bringing down their neighbourhood’s property values, she responded simply, with “You could move.” In other columns, though, she was more gentle, reminding readers often that there was more to life than things like looks, their love lives, or petty squabbles.

This tradition of a mixture of genuinely good advice and flippant responses when necessary didn’t stop with Abby. It continues on today in many different forms of media beyond columns, including panel TV shows like “The Doctors,” radio shows across the country, in blogs and other online posts and, of course, podcasts. Slate.com has an advice column and matching podcast called [Dear Prudence](#), both hosted by writer Daniel Mallory Ortberg and a semi-weekly collection of guest speakers and writers. On [Stitcher](#), a podcast aggregator, dozens of advice shows pop up, from shows dealing with advice only on one topic, to others that, like Slate’s, deal with a myriad of topics. All tend to follow the form of their predecessors in news columns: anonymous question, pseudonymous username, and answer from the host or hosts.

MBMBAM HISTORY

The hosts Justin, Travis and Griffin have stated multiple times before that full, unedited versions of episodes are often only 5-6 minutes longer than the final product, which means that episodes are done straight-through with very little beforehand prep or scripting, and even less editing to make it into something polished and smooth.

MBMBaM wasn’t always so unscripted though. In fact, when the podcast first started in April of 2010, the three brothers went to great pains to hand-pick questions, discussing possible answers and coming to a consensus before recording. The final product of every question was not a comedy bit, but a genuine (or as genuine as they could be while still remaining passably

funny) answer which sought to help the writer. In the beginning, MBMBaM fit nearly perfectly into the genre of advice media. It was only after a couple years and dozens of episodes did the podcast begin to break from this mold and dip into what it would eventually become: a comedy-first, advice-second podcast.

When they started, much like “Dear Abby,” they received primarily questions about relationships — How do I tell this person I like them? How do I break up with a partner? — but, at around the same time they begin to break away from the standard form of advice media, they also stopped answering these questions, and instead only stuck with ones they deemed needing unique perspectives. Relationship questions, the brothers deemed, had answers everywhere. They wanted to provide something only they could, and in doing so, transformed their show into something that picked up speed and became a podcast that receives more than half a million downloads an episode.

POSTMODERNIST QUESTIONING

MBMBaM is unabashedly postmodernist, whether it knows it or not. Postmodernism, which deals with how humans do not discover truth, but in fact *construct* it, and how the idea of objectivity is simply the idea of rightness as decided by hegemony, is a near-perfect lens through which to look at the alternative space in advice-giving media which MBMBaM provides us listeners. If typical advice-media mostly uses the space it fills to answer questions generalizable through extrapolation or sheer one-to-one relatability to a larger audience, MBMBaM’s use of space to answer specific, ungeneralizable questions in a way that does not preclude itself by way of having to make it more applicable to a wider audience is the direct opposite.

By this, I mean that in advice columns, though the specific situations may be personal and unique, the answers are easy to read for one's own life without much trouble. This is, naturally, not true of them all, but enough that, when it comes to the intent of these columns, it's clear that making this true is at least a background player in their writing. The same goes for the experience the columnist pulls from to answer these writers' questions (and the same is occasionally true of MBMBaM as well, though it is often enough so unique that the advice space is shaped differently as a result).

For example, in Slate's [Dec. 3 "Dear Prudence" column](#), one letter writer asks what to do about a friend who chews too loud because they suffer from misophonia, or selective sound sensitivity, and have been turning down enough invitations to make their friend notice. Readers who may not have misophonia but whose friend's cooking is poor, or who may not suffer from this but are still bothered by the sounds of chewing, essentially those who do not have the same set of *exact* circumstances, benefit from Prudie's non-specific answer: tell the friend what the issue is, and offer to meet up at a different time. These issues and their solutions are often directly or nearly-directly applicable to many more readers than just the letter writer themselves, and many more without that applicability option may benefit from extrapolating the larger message of talking about the issues one has with their friends. Advice columns have less to do with situations, and more to do with the wider world of etiquette and social mannerisms, which is what makes them so easily relatable to large groups of people.

But with MBMBaM, this modernist approach does not work when it comes to many of the questions they receive. In episode 367, the hosts discuss a listener-submitted question that states,

I am a cashier at a farmers' market in Michigan. We sell a huge variety of stuff, including fresh shrimp. Today, a toddler walked by our shrimp cooler and started chanting "SHRIMP! HEAVEN! NOW!", emphasis on the "NOW!". Eventually leading his mother to say 'Please Daniel, we can't keep doing this.' What is Shrimp Heaven? Why does Daniel need it now? What are my responsibilities in this situation, if any? I'm confused and delighted by this sloganeering child, but I fear something darker may lay under the surface. (MBMBaM episode 367)

It is nearly impossible to extrapolate from that without a great amount of work, sheerly because of how weird and specific the question is. There is no larger message to garner from the idea of shrimp heaven, no way to apply the ideas here or the answers to what it could be to a larger world. At best, one might be able to use the idea of "kids say the darndest things" to other situations, but the answers the hosts give (that is, to say, the lack thereof) don't lend themselves to this either. This is due, in part, to the fact that there is no polite, etiquette-driven response for what to say when children chant strange things in public.

This lack of answering is another postmodern function of MBMBaM, as well as a result of its genre intersection (which will be discussed soon). If a modernist approach to advice functions on both the question and answer's presences, then MBMBaM is only occasionally modernist. Most often though, like in the question above, the hosts set themselves off-track, getting into the weeds of adjacent questions, stories from their own lives, or riffing and role-playing jokes between them. In the response to Shrimp Heaven, they do not answer directly what it could be, or what the question asker needs to do. Instead, they spend well over six minutes creating ideas for a t-shirt with the slogan and discussing the possibility of a Daniel-led shrimp-review TV show. This space of non-answers in place of, as they call them in the podcast,

“goofs” is better explained by Ratcliffe’s theories of listening through metaphor and metonymy as they relate to the function of the questions themselves.

Ratcliffe posits that, in order to listen rhetorically (something she defines as being a stance of openness and hearing what another party is trying to say without shutting one’s self off), we must listen metonymically, as members of groups are not synonymous with the group as a whole, which would be listening metaphorically, but simply *a* person with *an* identification. In terms of MBMBaM and postmodernism, listening metonymically, *thinking* metonymically would mean that the space for individualism that specific, non-generalizable questions opens up would be a good place for this kind of thinking. Instead of listening for ways in which we fit in or do not with the question askers, as we might with modernist advice-giving media, we listen instead for the uniqueness of the situation itself. We are not listening for modernism’s discovered Truths, but postmodernism’s constructions, its little-t truths.

Along with this, the way in which the McElroys position themselves from the very beginning of every episode through the use of their disclaimer puts them in this stance of metonymic thinking and postmodernists searching not for Truth but for discovery. It reminds the listener that they aren’t listening to advice specialists, nor are they listening to a typical advice medium. “The McElroy Brothers are not experts, and their advice should never be followed,” the disclaimer says. If modernist advice columns ask us to believe in the expertise without qualification beyond existence as a columnist as evidence, postmodernist advice media does what MBMBaM does: immediately places itself as hosted as people who are not experts in anything specific, especially not advice, not in the ways that we think of the advice coming from a modernist columnist, at least. At best, these are on the same validity level as suggestions from

friends or family members — possibly decent, probably not exactly what you needed, but advice nonetheless in the basest sense of the word.

Another important part of the postmodernist lens as it can be applied to MBMBaM is the concept of pastiche. Fredric Jameson, author of “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” discusses the idea of pastiche in terms of contemporary literature, though the principle remains the same for MBMBaM despite it being a podcast:

Both pastiche and parody involve the imitation or, better still, the mimicry of other styles and particularly of the mannerisms and stylistic twitches of other styles...Supposing that modern art and modernism — far from being a kind of specialized aesthetic curiosity — actually anticipated social developments along these lines...That is the moment at which pastiche appears and parody has become impossible. Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique style, the wearing of a stylistic mask, speech in a dead language: but it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without parody's ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse, without laughter, without that still latent feeling that there exists something normal compared to which what is being imitated is rather comic.

(Jameson 2-3)

Pastiche, unlike parody, does not mock its source material, but instead uses it to create something distinctly different from, but not wholly unlike, the original. Pastiche invites the consumer into its art and uses elements of style from the genre it is pulling from, so that this new media is recognizable but not traditional, and created with the utmost respect for the genres and mediums in mind. As Jameson points out above, along with doing all this, pastiche creates a new space, one that, also unlike parody, doesn't remind the reader of the “normal,” only the “original.”

In this sense, intentionally or not, MBMBaM invokes pastiche when generating its comedy advice, as listeners need to: know what an actual advice column looks and sounds like, but subconsciously understand that though the billing is of advice, and that some actual advice is given occasionally, the hosts of the show are not performing the same work as that of a typical advice podcast. MBMBaM is a new iteration of advice-media that brings in elements of comedy to twist the style of advice columns to fit a funnier, more internet-savvy, meme-friendly audience, one who does not need to know answers to typical relationships questions, but instead answers to questions like “What should I have done when a classmate asked me what time it was while unpeeling a lemon?,” where the hosts answers and lack thereof are both valid responses. Because of this difference, the hosts are more able to use language that typical advice columns may not, due to the breaking down of more formal advice-giving that genre-beholden media uses to communicate its messages.

LANGUAGE AS THE DRIVING FORCE OF MBMBAM’S COMEDY

This is where the importance of the vehicles of comedy and the relationship between podcaster and listener tends to be most important. While the advice part of MBMBaM’s descriptions is beholden to pastiche, the comedy part is far more traditional, in at least the mechanics of speech as a vehicle for laughter, but the intersection between the two parts proves far more interesting than either part alone. The majority of the comedy lies in a dada-esque, barely-sensical series of riffs and bits that blend to create an entire, hour long show, and is majorly propelled by the language use and sound, and the personality of, not necessarily just content, of the hosts and their show.

Listeners of MBMBaM, much like watchers of stand-up comedy, expect media that is inherently humorous. The performers (or hosts) are beholden to an audience that supports them through listenership. Vince Meserko, author of “Standing Upright: Podcasting, Performance and Alternative Comedy,” states:

An often overlooked critical approach, however, is the engagement of these texts as inherently important and as exceptional examples of the inventive use of new media from the perspective of the artist. The dynamics of the artist-fan relationship are profoundly influenced by the content itself. If the user feels compelled to participate with media he or she consumes, then something must exist within these texts that makes engagement with them attractive to those who seek them out. (Meserko 23)

When we apply this to MBMBaM specifically instead the genre of comedy as a whole, what becomes clear is that the show has only survived for as long as it has because of the audience that submits questions, submits what the hosts term “Yahoos” (questions posted to the online Yahoo Answering service), and the general audience that engages through listening alone.

When we then think about the intersection between the advice and comedy parts of the show, we see the possibility that, unlike the audiences of other advice media, listeners of the show probably aren’t sticking around for the quality of advice, at least primarily, but instead the possibility of being entertained. The hosts of MBMBaM play the central role in what makes the podcast funny, providing the sticking point for listeners to come back to again and again, unlike something like “Dear Abby,” which the author is background to the content.

Contrast this with typical comedy, which is scripted down to the last motion of the performer. MBMBaM, like many podcasts, functions on improv, where the only thing the hosts prepare before recording each week (something they’ve openly discussed in the episodes

themselves) is their intro, and the list of questions and Yahoos they intend to answer, much like how improv groups tend to only prep the *kinds* of skits they'll be doing but not the content itself. Even what little they do prep, though, isn't completely scripted, as only one of the brothers knows about the answers before the other reads them, and another doesn't reveal his picked Yahoos until he's reading them.

But beyond content alone, the McElroys use language in ways that are audibly interesting and fresh, tending toward lots of goofy slang ("deep cut," "buckwild" and "boy" in place of any person usually prefaced with "good good ADJECTIVE," being a particularly popular few) and colloquialisms that aren't entirely common outside of their Southern upbringing ("that dog don't hunt" being a common one). Part of this is their collective personalities and upbringings shining through, and another is the history of the show creating recurring phrases out of something that might not normally be as odd as they are when not on a weekly podcast broadcasted to members unfamiliar with the upbringing they had to craft such language use in the first place. In fact, the fans of MBMBaM have created a page on the show's wiki for what has been termed

["Brotherisms."](#)

On *overall* language in podcasts and how language tends to function in a lot of comedy podcasts specifically, Meserko continues on to say that,

"Because these podcasts are so indecorous in their language use, the lack of FCC oversight allows a freedom of expression impossible on traditional radio. Moreover, while some podcasts do accept advertising, it is not required. A podcaster need not be dependent on a steady revenue stream or constrained by the watchful eye of advertisers to stay afloat." (Meserko 25)

The mode of podcast as a medium apart from radio that has more space to use whatever language it sees fit explains a little bit of the use in MBMBaM, but the part about lacking advertisers as motivation for raunchier uses of language doesn't necessarily. A part of every show is the "Money Zone," where they do short advertisements for businesses, and "Jumbotron messages," or individually paid-for ads for personal reasons, like birthdays, anniversaries or congratulations. However, the advertisers MBMBaM tends to pull are internet-based businesses looking for internet-based consumers, like Warby Parker, Blue Apron or Squarespace, advertisers that need the kind of people MBMBaM is aimed at.

One particularly notable example of this is the over 50-episode long relationship between the show and website Extreme Restraints, a site for erotic adult paraphernalia. Another is ["The McElroy Family Fun Hour Brought to You by Totino's"](#) from mid-2015, the first in the show's history, where every question and Yahoo was pizza-themed, including "I've always called pizza pockets pizza pillows, but I receive weird stares now, should I stop?" and "what wine pairs best with Totino's pizza?"

The point about language use in podcasts being more freeing than on radio that Meserko points to is no different for MBMBaM even with these advertisers. It's not just that they use copious amounts of swearing (which they do), or that they talk about raunchy subjects that radio has yet to make a space for (see: Extreme Restraints and adult paraphernalia above), but that the very *ways* in which they use language could only exist in an alternative space like podcast, in a postmodern time like ours. The McElroys do not use language always in the ways which it was "intended," or "truly" meant to be used. Their brotherisms are only the tip of the iceberg of comedic language use.

They pronounce words incorrectly on purpose, as in Justin's 400+ episode refusal to say the word "modern" as anything but "mod-ren." They use confusing metaphors, they use generic terms to explain specific things, like Griffin's quote from episode 668: "Maybe, if big turtle gets arrested for nunchuck crimes, he goes to zoo," and shorten words near past the point of recognition, and fall into frequently pretending to be the subject of the question-asker's query, playing off one another to create a sense that they're not mocking, not quite, but doing a little more than imitating these people.

In general, the hosts of MBMBaM tend to use language to whatever effect will most likely get them laughs, which has the side-effect of lots of breaking in the typical conventions of language. Nowhere is any of this clearer and more condensed than in episode 287. One of the questions they decide to answer during this episode is from a submitter who writes: "I had to console my kindergarteners today when they found out George Washington died. Next week we're studying Abraham Lincoln. How can I make next week's topic less traumatizing?" Near immediately, the brothers jump into doing all of this:

Travis: Especially when Little Billy said "just so long as Abraham Lincoln's fine."

Griffin, imitating Little Billy: "Woah woah woah, Washington I can deal with, okay? I get it, he was old as fuck. But *Linco*?"

Travis creates a character, "Little Billy," who could very easily be part of this question-asker's scenario. Griffin responds in the voice of "Little Billy," not only using this non-FCC sanctioned language, but shortening "Lincoln" to "Linco." They continue on, using terms like "ten-skies" for "ten minutes," saying "BRB" out loud, and replacing the phrase "flip side," as in "I'll catch you on the flip side" with "flippie-dip" (MBMBaM ep. 287, Appendix A).

In a later episode, number 341, they discuss the previously-mentioned “classmate peeling a lemon” scenario. “Just gonna let some of the raw flesh of the fruit touch the inside of my Jansport,” youngest host, Griffin, states at the beginning of the question. This sentence does the opposite of his previous specific to general statement about the ninja turtles, replacing a very general term, backpack, with Jansport, a brand of backpack (ep. 341, Appendix B).

This language use could possibly only exist in a world in which things like memes, who already push English to its comprehensible limits (often beyond it, too, honestly), exist as well. People using these kinds of phrases can only be appreciated by a generation, like mine, surrounded by them, entrenched in non-conventional uses of language. As a result, their attempts at telling jokes often succeeds sheerly because of how oddly they say it. The content doesn’t have to be funny, as long as it’s said in a funny way.

CONCLUSION

Advice media is an art form that has remained stagnant for many years, dealing with the same questions of etiquette and behavior and not straying very far into atypical advice, nor changing to fit a more modern age. Advice columns from the fifties and advice columns today don’t read very differently, even if the content and political lean of the advice does. But podcasting, a new media, has made a space and further possibility for spaces for new forms, ones that deal with specific issues individuals are having separate from confusions about the modes of good grace.

Through language use, through positioning themselves as people and not experts, through combining the genres of comedy and advice, the McElroy brothers have opened this space. They’ve taken the modern art of advice columns, and turned it postmodern through applying the same tactics as Abigail van Buren but with the refusal to fall prey to being beholden by modern

understandings of etiquette and behavior, of choosing not to try at revealing the True answer, but instead providing a possible response.

Something like this could only be possible through the audio-only method of podcasting as an already alternative space from modern radio, and as a byproduct of the internet, a medium that's grown as the internet has. Podcasting, at its core, is not inherently postmodern, but it sure could be.

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Appendix A

Ep. 287: "PRESIDENTIAL HISTORY," 42:25

Transcribed personally.

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqWDfCG0Hfc>, first two minutes

Justin: "I had to console my kindergarteners today when they found out George Washington died."

Travis: Rule of threes, man.

Laughter

J: Next week we're studying Abraham Lincoln. How can I make next week's topic less traumatizing?"

T: Especially when Little Billy said "just so long as Abraham Lincoln's fine."

Griffin: *imitating Little Billy* "Woah woah woah, Washington I can deal with, okay? I get it, he was old as fuck. But *Linco?*"

J: Lemme finish the question. That's from Bearer Of Bad News In California. Thank you, okay. Now, do your little jokes.

T: It is kind of a shame that you would have to spend the whole class period building up how awesome George Washington was, and then it's always going to end with "then he died."

G: Yeah but that's--

T: He was a super cool dude, who did a lot of awesome stuff--

G: Yeah he is, was--

T: And he's dead.

G: He was pretty sick.

G & J: Um,

G: Yeah.

J: You know how he died? Blood-letting.

G: Really?

J: You guys like, we *did* it to him.

G: Whoops.

T: They leave that out of Hamilton.

G: Whoopsie. Yeah that would be great.

Imitating "One Last Time" from Hamilton (2015), singing

G: "One last time ride." Anyway, I'ma go to the doctor, I will catch you guys--

T: Slash barber--

G: On the flippie-dip. Once I get--

J: I don't think it will be any problem at all

T: I will be back in ten-skie.

G: Be right back, and then we, god, we're going to the new ham place at 6:30, right? Tight, tight, meet you there. Anyway, ay, yo, doc, what's up?

T: And then I've got a plan for universal health care.

Justin laughing

J: I'll tell you guys where the *third* page of the declaration of independence is buried

G: I'll tell-- and I'll tell ya guys, I got this great plan, it's called "Gettin' rid of slavery right now, in 1770-whatever."

T: BRB

G: Cool cool cool.

J: I'm just, listen I'm halfway done signing the executive order, but I got the carpal tunnel, so I'm gonna go take a quick physician break, and then I'll get back to signing the executive order to end slavery, I'll just put the [unintelligible] on there

T: Oh.

G: Um. That's rough. Um... you gotta lie to 'em.

Appendix B

Ep. 341: "AN EROTIC BALLOON PUZZLE," 46:21

Transcription courtesy of: <https://mbmbamscripts.tumblr.com/>

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SpC6lZMS6mY>

Justin: I'm gonna ask another question, "The other day in my Intro to Criminal Justice class, a student took out a whole lemon and started to peel it, and then he asked me for the time. So I told him, and he went 'Oh, okay' in a sad tone of voice and put his partially peeled lemon back—"

[Justin loses it, sputtering laughter, table banging] "He put his—"

[Loses it again, continues while restraining laughter] "He put his partially peeled lemon back into his bag, almost ashamed of his actions."

[Griffin has a good laugh, Justin joins in]

J: [Continuing, still laughing] "My question is this: what should I do if this situation comes up again? What is the code word that I can use so I can get this man to enjoy his lemon in class? I think he's some kind of citrus sleeper agent, and I need advice." — Confused in [unintelligible] Concord [Justin breaks down laughing]

G: This is...

J: We have been getting— Listen, before we talk about this, I just wanna say, we've been getting some fuckin' all-time—

G: Oh, no joke.

J: The past few weeks have been all-time questions, and I can't thank you enough for making this show palatable, um...

G: There's so many— there's so many— I love our listeners and I believe, I — listen — I believe you, if you come to us with a question, that— that is a sacred bond of trust you put forward, I believe you. Except I don't believe this person, 'cause there's so many— there's so many angles to this dangle that is just unimaginable. The fact that this person was apparently gonna eat a lemon is not even chief among them, but that they unpeeled, they unspooled this lemon a little bit, found out that the time was bad or wrong, and then put the partially unpeeled lem— just gonna let some of the raw flesh of the fruit touch the inside of my Jansport. What?!

Travis: This— this kinda thing always makes me feel— I'm an old man now, I'm 33, I'm not as hip as I used to be. This always makes me fear that this is a reference or a meme or some kind of Internet joke.

G: Yeah.

T: That was like a setup, that, like, you were supposed to respond a certain way, like, "What's the fox say?" Like, "This is math class, what're you talking about— Oh, okay..."

G: "This was— this was a gag from last night's American Dad." Well, I didnt' fuckin' see that, of course.

J: [Laughs]

T: Oh, I've got it.

J: You're saying that after they asked for what time you should've looked dead in the eyes and said, "Wazzaaaaap!"

G: Yeah.

T: Exactly.

J: Exactly, that's how you do it.

T: Here's what you do: I think the proper response in this situation, they start peeling the lemon, they say, "'scuse me do you have the time?" You do a dramatic take, make eye contact with them and, whisper, "It's the sour hour."

J & G: [Laughs]

T: And everyone just goes crazy.

G: I mean, I— I think you could even be more on the nose than that, and just say, "It's time for me to watch you apparently eat a lemon -"

T & J: [Laughs]

G: "like one might eat a delicious tangelo and I'm very much looking forward to it, so please don't cockblock me again, I gotta watch this pop off. Please, I've been thinking about it all week since you bailed on me last week, you left me devastated."

J: I do enjoy the image of a person who attends their class with a lemon, and not a phone so they have the one thing— they do have a lemon with them, they left the house that day with a lemon and not a phone.

T: Doesn't this— this reminds me of, like, those logic puzzles where it's like, a— two men meet at a restaurant and order albatross and say, "For old time's sake," and when they take a bite, they fling themselves off a bridge. Like, this is, like, there's some explanation here that I just don't understand.

G: Yes.

T: And it's like, "Well, you have to know that lemon is also another word for..." and it's like, "Aaah, it all makes sense now!"

J: Is there possibly, maybe, like, a university-wide protest, a very subtle protest where like—

T: [Laughs] "Alright at noon, we're all gonna eat our lemons."

J: "Right, we're all gonna eat a lemon at the same time."

G: I mean, maybe— maybe you're into it. This person just feels very disruptive today, so they take a big, juicy bite of their lemon while the professor's talking about criminal justice and he's like, "What's really important to understand about jurisprudence." And this person just, like, chomp! "Oh!" "Can you please not do that in the middle of my class?" "Hey, we're allowed to eat, I looked it up in the bylaws, chomp mmmAAAAAh!"

T: Canker sores!

G: "Ooh, the canker sores are— they're barkin!"

J: Is it— is it maybe a flash mob? Is there maybe a flash mob happening in this peron's one role in the flash mob is to eat a lemon at this exact moment, like some Improv Everywhere shit? I don't know—

T: They missed it.

G: That's it!

J: Yeah, that's what they— Yeah, it's not that they're too early, it's that they're too late, and the whole fuckin', uh, uh, mouse trap style like, uh, uh— What's the word for like —the Rube Goldberg machine that they—

T: It already started.

G: Oh.

J: Exactly, like eating the lemon started it.

T: So, there's a flash mob like waiting at twelve-o-one like, "Eh, c'mon Terry, c'mon..."

G: "C'mon."

T: And then Terry shows up to class at one-o-one because they forgot about daylight savings time, and it's like, "What time is it?" And you're like, "It's one-o-one," and they're like, "Oh no, the mob's gonna be so mad at me."

G: They planned on doing a flash mob to Led Zeppelin's "The Lemon Song" and then they were like, "Aw fuck, I even brought the prop. Guess I gotta eat it now."

J: [Quietly] This is amazing. I can't imagine...

G: So good, is there another good question you wanna do?

Appendix C

Ep. 367: "SHRIMP! HEAVEN! NOW!," 46:11

Transcribed personally.

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enN-USY3y6I>

Justin: "I am a cashier at a farmers' market in Michigan. We sell a huge variety of stuff, including fresh shrimp. Today, a toddler walked by our shrimp cooler and started--"

Laughter

Griffin: Read it, read it read it read it

J: That's the problem with reading a few words ahead is that sometimes I can mess myself up while I'm trying to read it good. "We--"

More laughter

J: "We sell a huge variety of stuff, including fresh shrimp. Today a toddler walked by our shrimp cooler and started chanting "SHRIMP! HEAVEN! NOW!", emphasis on the "NOW!".

Eventually leading his mother to say "Please--""

More laughter

J: "'Please Daniel, we can't keep doing this."

Laughter from all three

J: "What is Shrimp Heaven? Why does Daniel need it now? What are my responsibilities in this situation, if any? I'm confused and delighted by this sloganeering child, but I fear something darker may lay under the surface." That's from Shrimp Jesus Will Return

G: Alright, let's take it, let's--

J: Shrimp! Heaven! Now!

G: Let's all take a minute, and collect ourselves, and appreciate how good this child is, and how good this situation is. Alright

J: There's just no reality in which, like, that talk about trademarking, this kid went for a narrow line on it--

G: Yeah

J: But I do celebrate it. That is a great trademark.

G: Shrimp heaven now

Justin laughing

G: I like the idea of like, he's trying to say "Lemme get all up in shrimp heaven right now."

J: That's what it's gotta be, right? He's not a religious child. I... I have to imagine.

Travis: Here's the thing. What I would like to believe is that this kid is just... *crazy* for shrimp.

J: Yeah

T: Just loves those--

J: Wild.

T: Bonny bastards.

J: Wild for the stuff.

T: So much so, that is *has* led his parents to say things like “Please Daniel, we can’t keep doing this.” Because this child’s shrimp hunger is driving them out of house and home.

G: It’s an expensive protein.

J: Yes!

G: It’s an expensive protein. It’s-- so there-- it’s, it’s a lot of work to prepare one. So--

T: Fresh shrimp? Not pre-cooked. Not boil, just fresh shrimp, and it’s all Daniel wants.

G: And they got those dookie veins in ‘em still, and it takes a while--

J: But Daniel-- no, Daniel love it all. They, they go to remove the mud vein, and Daniel’s like “Ah, ah ah ah”

G: “God doesn’t make any mistakes.”

J: “That’s part of the shrimp mon frere. Why don’t you leave that in there for Daniel? Let Daniel handle that for ya.

G: Um. Shrimp heaven *now*... Oh... do you think this kid burned down a Red Lobster?

Definitely. Definitely. Or, did something in a Red Lobster that required it to be burnt down.

T: And now he has to facilitate the shepherding of these shrimp souls to heaven, to

G: That’s possible

T: --free himself from his own burden.

G: He wants to get the shrimp up to heaven by eating them.

J: How-- if you saw that exchange, how do you not just leave your job? How do you not just stand up, walk out and follow these people and be like “Listen, I *have* to get to the end of this story. I *have* to hear the rest of shrimp heaven now. What is Daniel doing?”

G: I... I’ve made six episodes of a television show, um, now on vrv.co go check it out. Um, I’ve made six episodes of a television show, and I don’t think I’m like, uh, y’know, especially tuned in to what Hollywood wants or needs, but I’m pretty sure I could make a television show about your child, about shrimp -- and the name of the show *would* be called shrimp heaven now. And I guess it’d be a shrimp review television show? It would look a little... we’ll figure that out later. But we got the title.

T: Just put Kristen Bell in there and that, plus shrimp heaven now, equals Emmy success. All the Emmys, and some Golden Globes too

J: We haven’t had a *My Brother, My Brother and Me* t-shirt available on uh, uh Topatoco for quite a while. And I feel like maybe this is the one, I feel like this is the new era for this show, and I feel like a t-shirt that just says “Shrimp Heaven Now” would be uh, extremely, extremely powerful.

T: Do you remember the like, “Peace, Love and Crabs” t-shirt, I think it was Joe’s crab shack, right? What if we just had a shirt that was like a shrimp, an angel, and a clock?

G: Yeah, I need--

T: Everyone knows.

G: The other way we’d do it is just the black t-shirt with the white words all on the same like, uh, paragraph break, that’s just like, shrimp and heaven and now? Or we could also do “Keep Calm and Shrimp Heaven Now.” That one’s also really good also. I think we have a lot of opportunity

here for shrimp heaven now. And I think we may have found a trademark that I, I *will* take from this child. I will take this from--

T: We're gonna have one that says "Big dog shrimp heaven now"

G: That one's good because no... "no fear shrimp heaven now"

J: Hypercolors, sort of

G: Hypercolors, shrimp

T: Maybe a lizard with sunglasses. An old lizard.

G: Um

J: Uhh... I, I can't believe how good this is. It's, it's renewing my entire faith in humanity.

Shrimp heaven now. But, shrimp heaven now by itself is very good. I mean, we can all agree that shrimp heaven now is excellent and beautiful. But the fact that we can't... that we can't keep doing it Daniel is what really brings it over the lip because Daniel is-- that could have been a one-off, y'know? Kids say the darndest things is one thing that I have made up, and, uh, uh, uh, y'know you could... He could have just spouted whatever came to his head. No, this is a recurring theme for Daniel is shrimp heaven now.

G: I think that the... we could, there's a lesson in that though. I obviously love shrimp heaven now, no three words have ever been perfectly suited for each other. But there's a limit. There's a limit to it before it could be exhausted. This is evidenced by the fact that, hey, hey everybody, shrimp heaven now. It's losing... It's *losing* something, isn't it? That's, I almost feel like let's call the episode I feel like, because we're gonna keep shrimp heaven now, and I don't want to rob it of its power. Let's go five or six episodes, and then *really* drop a shrimp heaven now in, and then it'll be like a fun call-back.

T: To that point, I think we do need to qualify the t-shirt so that in big bold letters: Shrimp Heaven Now. And then in small letters, subtitle: we can't keep doing this. But just like, acknowledges like, we know that this is like, this is a brief moment in time of viral t-shirt marketing of shrimp-heavy advertising.

G: I was thinking, I was thinking it'd be the title of this episode, right? Shrimp heaven now, it's a good episode title. I don't want, please don't tweet at us and each other "Shrimp heaven now." If I, I'm gonna do a google, twitter search tomorrow for shrimp heaven now and any results I get I'm gonna be very disappointed. We gotta protect this. We gotta protect this.

J: Yes, yes. Wh-- I'm tired of us burning through things um, uh uh, so quickly. We have to sort of hoard this resource of shrimp heaven now being funny

T: Oo! Let's do a slow burn, like I love bees-kind of slow burn, and like, you can tweet, "shrimp heaven when?" With the question mark for like the next two months. Right? You can tweet that whenever you want.

G: Or or or or, here's what I want: I want everyone to just tweet either "shrimp" or "heaven" or "now." Just one word.

T: Yes.

G: But not the whole thing, and then people can put it together.

J: Yeah, and you can make it private, like if you wanna use shrimpheavennow.com to access our podcast--

G: Jesus christ, Justin

J: You can definitely do that, that's an option that's available to you for sure. But like, you don't need to go runnin' your mouth about it. But that t-shirt, but when that t-shirt does become available, and like, I'm on it, like we're doing it uh, you can get it at that URL, so if you're listening to this in the past, or the future? Travis, which is it?

T: Uh, well Justin it's hard for me to say without giving away [voice raised] *too much information that could damage the time stream.*

G: Okay, that's a really good trademark actually.

J: Yeah, yeah that's a good scam

G: Because there's a fear, there's a fear in it.

J I love that. Uh, that's gonna do it for us folks.