

**EPISODE 84**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[00:00:09] ANNOUNCER:** Welcome to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, brought to you by OnePitch. The guests on our summer show includes some of the most notable journalists from the top US-based publications who cover topics including technology, lifestyle and culture, health, science, consumer products, and business news. We discussed their role, the types of stories they cover, what their inbox looks like, and how they connect with sources.

Today, we're speaking with Sasha Lekach, a tech reporter at Mashable. Sasha covers everything transportation and tech for Mashable out of their SF office. That includes self-driving cars, electric vehicles, mass transit, ride hailing apps, and more. She's been reporting out of her hometown over the years at Bay City News, SF Gate, and even made it out of California to write for the Chicago Tribune. On the episode today, Sasha talks more about her inbox filtering system, the different ways her stories come to life, answers an audience question about pitching, and lots more. Let's jump into the episode now.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:01:19] BB:** Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger, founder of BAM, which handles all kinds of crazy venture-backed startups, and also OnePitch, which makes this whole show, which we love, because it's about coffee and journalists. Well, sometimes only not coffee, but always a journalist who's always fun to chat with. And today, from Mashable, here we have at the tech reporter, Miss Sasha Lekach is here. And she's going to tell us all about what she's covering and all her inbox stuff and maybe some good Netflix recommendations. Sasha, welcome.

**[00:01:55] SL:** Thanks for having me. Glad to be here.

**[00:01:56] BB:** Yeah, we're glad too. Are you up in San Francisco right now?

**[00:01:59] SL:** I am living in San Francisco. Born and raised with my city.

**[00:02:05] BB:** I see that. You're a fan of – Yeah, you wrote for UC Davis you said. With SF Native. Used to be a Twitter. Used to be at SF Gate. You got all types of stuff. Okay. Well, are you drinking coffee or any drink of any sort that we can brag about or talk about?

**[00:02:20] SL:** I am not a coffee drinker, strangely enough. But I am drinking an apple, mango, banana smoothie, which is great.

**[00:02:28] BB:** Wow. Did you make it yourself?

**[00:02:31] SL:** No, it is –

**[00:02:33] BB:** Ooh! Is it one of the –

**[00:02:34] SL:** It's in a bottle.

**[00:02:35] BB:** Oh. Oh, okay. I was going to say it's like a daily harvest one where they give you that little cup thing or whatever. But okay. Well, let's chat about your inbox first. That's usually where we start with things. How crazy is it in there and how do you keep it organized?

**[00:02:47] SL:** Oh, it's a s jungle in there. Yeah, I've got 14,000 unread emails.

**[00:02:52] BB:** Oh! Oh! So clearly you're not the Inbox zero type of lady. Okay.

**[00:02:56] SL:** I aspire to be, but that doesn't mean I'm not organized. Like don't let that number scare you.

**[00:03:02] BB:** Okay. I've heard worst. Don't worry.

**[00:03:04] SL:** I like keeping things unread. I know some people do the opposite method of everything read, but I prefer unread. I'm a big fan of label, which is Gmail folder essentially. And so that's how I keep things pretty organized, because I can just use the search function really well.

**[00:03:25] BB:** Everyone seems to do that. Everyone's been mentioning that lately. You just keep it all in there and then you search it when you need it.

**[00:03:30] SL:** Exactly. So that's why I always think it's really important. For sending an email, I have some good keywords in there. So when I'm doing a search, I'll find it.

**[00:03:39] BB:** The last interview I did, we were just talking about how funny the bottom of pitches, keywords, transportation, Amazon, faces, flying cars, whatever. So it'd pop up easily or something. That's funny.

**[00:03:51] SL:** There you go, all the different ways to describe.

**[00:03:54] BB:** So with unread, so you even file an unread email? You label it?

**[00:03:59] SL:** Yeah. So I have a lot of automatic filters. So from certain senders, label certain things. I have an EV label for electric vehicles, or autonomous label for autonomous vehicles.

**[00:04:16] BB:** Clearly, you don't open every email, but are you saving every pitch? Or how do you funnel through the pitches?

**[00:04:22] SL:** Oh, yeah. At this point, I've been at Mashable almost five years. So I have a pretty good understanding of like the people who are pitching me things that normally work. So there're some familiar names that come into rotation in my inbox. So I definitely keep my eyes out for that. I think it's a little maybe too manual, or I should probably automate this somehow. But yeah, just kind of going through every morning and making sure I didn't miss anything important. Obviously, I do. But yeah, but the labels really help especially for like keywords and stuff. There we go, the keywords again. Yeah. And also, there're a lot of pitches. Many other journalists before me have said that are just not relevant to me at all. And I don't have time to explain to –

**[00:05:14] BB:** Oh, no. You can't. You can't.

[00:05:16] **SL:** Yeah. But there're a lot of pitches that you can just carry on and ignore. Yeah, which the human part of me is always, "I know somebody cares out there."

[00:05:26] **BB:** Somebody cares. Oh, man. Okay. So for stories that you do, for example, I saw like this manicure, the robot manicure. You had –

[00:05:37] **SL:** Yeah, that was fun.

[00:05:39] **BB:** Yeah, I want to talk about that. You had something with – You even wrote about Jeff Bezos rolling up in Blue Origin from an SUV from Tesla competitor. Like, "Ooh, that was kind of –" Anyway, how do you come up with stories you wish to pursue? Obviously the ones that are like non-news breaking.

[00:05:57] **SL:** Right. Right. Right. Yeah, there's I think, give and take, actually the robot manicure story is a good example of one of the managing editors seeing a TikTok that was blowing up about someone's robot manicure. And she was like, "Oh, this isn't San Francisco." So she hit up the San Francisco office. And I was like, "Yeah. Yes, I want to go get my nails done by a robot. That sounds awesome."

[00:06:21] **BB:** Was it actually good?

[00:06:23] **SL:** Yeah. It was a lot of fun. I mean, it was pretty good manicure. I promptly went surfing the next day, and my nails were destroyed. It was a one-day manicure.

[00:06:33] **BB:** But it was only 8 buck.

[00:06:34] **SL:** Yeah, exactly. 799. And it was pretty fun. I don't know. I enjoyed it. It was a lot more into some of the ethical qualms I may have had about it. But in the article, I wrote about that a lot. But in terms of just getting like a quick color change, did the drop. But yeah, so that's something that's kind of a more collaborative pitch, I guess you would say. And volunteering as tribute so to speak.

[00:07:00] **BB:** So that did originate from a pitch?

[00:07:02] **SL:** No, no, no. Like a pitch internally like [inaudible 00:07:05].

[00:07:05] **BB:** I see. Got it. Hey, you want to do this? Okay. Gotcha.

[00:07:09] **SL:** Yeah, I assume most newsrooms I've been, like it gets kind of confusing, because we have inbound pitches coming from publicity folks. We call those pitches. And then I also am – We call it like pitching my editor on story.

[00:07:26] **BB:** Exactly. There's lots of pitching happening.

[00:07:28] **SL:** Yeah, Just like I feel like my job is all that, it's like pitch, pitch, pitch.

[00:07:31] **BB:** Mm-hmm. So you don't necessarily do like, "Oh, okay, I'm going to go surfing to like dream up my new story." It's just kind of –

[00:07:39] **SL:** I mean, so that's an example of just one way a story comes the way. It can be the other way, where, yeah, I'm sort of zoning out waiting for a great wave and an epiphany hits me. That happens too. I have a feature coming out about Tesla versus the next generation of EVs, like the Mustang Mach-E, and some of the new Polestar cars coming out. And we have Lucid and Rivian, which I wrote about, Jeff Bezos pulling up in.

[00:08:11] **BB:** Yeah. There's a lot happening. Yeah.

[00:08:13] **SL:** Yeah. And so I've been doing a lot of – They call it press rides, but basically I get a car for a couple days and get to try it out and see what it's like to use –

[00:08:24] **BB:** How freaking great is that?

[00:08:25] **SL:** It's really fun. My neighbor thinks I'm crazy, because they're like, "You have a different car like every month."

[00:08:32] **BB:** Yeah, that's fun.

**[00:08:34] SL:** Yeah. But just from that experience, I noticed that certain cars were attracting more attention from strangers, essentially. So kind of came up with this idea about what's happening with the status of Tesla versus all these new comers. So that should be coming out hopefully later this week.

**[00:08:52] BB:** Oh, that's cool.

**[00:08:53] SL:** Yeah, things like that. So it's like, kind of a mix of some ideas that I cook up or come to me and other things that come from other places. Formal pitches from –

**[00:09:08] BB:** What percentage of pitches ever make it through to a story would you say? Is it like 1%?

**[00:09:15] SL:** Ooh! That's a good question. Does that include all the like not relevant pitches?

**[00:09:23] BB:** Maybe not those, because then I'm sure it's under 1%.

**[00:09:26] SL:** Yes. I say at this point I feel like people are getting – They're getting a little more like focused and figuring out patterns of what works and doesn't work. Maybe I'll be generous and say like 25%.

**[00:09:42] BB:** 25? Oh, that's huge. Wow!

**[00:09:44] SL:** Yeah, that seems like a lot.

**[00:09:46] BB:** That seems quite high, but great.

**[00:09:49] SL:** I don't know. I'm not a big numbers person. Yeah, maybe.

**[00:09:51] BB:** That's all right. Okay. Well, that's encouraging. We'll go with that. We'll go with that. Keep it real high. Okay.

**[00:09:58] SL:** I'm being generous also in that me be something that's pitched, I'm like, "Well, I'm not going to write that story," but it like sparks an idea where it's, "Oh, maybe in that sense."

**[00:10:09] BB:** Mm-hmm. We do have an audience ask here. This one comes from Andrea Veloso Mayer, and she says, "How much information do you want provided in that first pitch?" Will you take it and write? Or do you prefer to follow up digging for more?"

**[00:10:26] SL:** Ah, well, that fits in with what I just said.

**[00:10:28] BB:** It does. Go ahead.

**[00:10:30] SL:** Follow up and dig in for more. It's always going to be the little weird detail that you just mentioned offhand that I'm going to be like, "Oh, that's the story." You really pick the stories about a profile about an executive or somebody on the team. And I'm like, "No, it's not about them. But it's about the really cool whatever app they developed. We'll focus on that." It might be something related, but it's going to be usually not exactly what pitch.

**[00:11:00] BB:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. That's good for PR people, because so often I hear this from my team. It's not the leading thing. It's the second third thing, that's the one little off story, the one little detail where you're like, "Oh, wait, there's something I can use there. And then that becomes the actual meat of the story. So, yes. Now, for you to get those little kernels. Is it, "Okay, let's hop on a call real quick." Is it just filming with everything? How do you extract those little details that might spark the bigger piece?

**[00:11:33] SL:** Yeah, I guess you do have to initially have the interest for you to be like, "This is worth me doing like a background call on." But yeah, usually a call, or if it's something that it's like, "Alright, let's set up a phone call with the person you're trying profile," or whatever it is. Invented this next great invention –

**[00:11:58] BB:** Mind-blowing thing. Yeah.

**[00:11:59] SL:** Yes.

[00:12:01] **BB:** Okay, we have a fill in the blank part here, Sasha. So let me give you the phrase, and you could fill it in from here. The first is my favorite sources always ...

[00:12:15] **SL:** My favorite source is don't email me at 9AM eastern, because I'm on the west coast. But anyway – No, my source is they always provide really great assets, like either it's video, or a photo, or they just like –

[00:12:37] **BB:** They got the visuals down pat. Yeah.

[00:12:38] **SL:** Yeah, because guaranteed somebody – Because I'm going to be pitching this idea. And I guarantee someone's going to be like, “Well, what does it look like? Or do you have a screenshot?” Like, okay.

[00:12:49] **BB:** I mean, I would think you're doing with transportation. These are visual, physical things. There would be –

[00:12:56] **SL:** Yeah, you need press.

[00:12:57] **BB:** Oh, God. That's embarrassing hear. Wow! Okay.

[00:13:00] **SL:** Yeah. Well, and then there's also a lot of like conceptual things.

[00:13:05] **BB:** Yeah, mock-ups.

[00:13:06] **SL:** In the future. And mock-ups are great. People love mock-ups. Rendering. I mean, the problems are clear. Like this is not the real thing.

[00:13:14] **BB:** This is not in existence yet. Yep. Okay. The most annoying sources always –

[00:13:19] **SL:** Always write subject lines. Is that what they're called? Subject lines? That have nothing to do with the substance of the email.

[00:13:32] **BB:** Oh, no. Like, saying hi. Yeah. Yeah. No. Not helpful.

**[00:13:37] SL:** Checking in.

**[00:13:39] BB:** Yeah. You'll get a response from me if –

**[00:13:46] SL:** Ah, I don't want to like promote like something that I actually don't. Then I'm going to be on the hook –

**[00:13:52] BB:** Oh God! Well, our next question – Well, how about this? Our next question is – Or blank. You'll never get a response from me if ...

**[00:14:02] SL:** Oh, usually I would say if you write, "Hey, Sarah," because my name is Sasha. That one happens a lot. But I think that's just like floppy reading, because it's like a pretty common name, Sarah.

**[00:14:17] BB:** And so is Sasha. Come on, people.

**[00:14:20] SL:** Yeah, people. Get the difference. Yeah. Or if you like send it like a lot of form pitches. And they're like, "Hey, Sasha at Mash, or at BuzzFeed. How's it going?" Like I'm not at BuzzFeed.

**[00:14:34] BB:** Yeah. Those are pretty basic –

**[00:14:37] BB:** Yes. Okay. The best compliment I received about my work was –

**[00:14:45] SL:** Ooh, that's a good question. People should reflect on the positive ones.

**[00:14:50] BB:** Yeah.

**[00:14:53] SL:** I have probably gotten – Of course comes from when you say, that the minute I'm thinking of all the angry emails I've gotten from readers, but I've gotten some positive things.

**[00:15:03] BB:** Yeah. Do you ever get somebody saying like, “Oh, because of that article, I actually bought that car,” or whatever? I don’t know.

**[00:15:10] SL:** I don’t know if that happens. But I think – Oh, this was a short-lived pandemic project, but we were trying to do IT health columns. And so I was heading up, like helping people with their –Basically Zoom problems with Zoom. This was at the beginning.

**[00:15:29] BB:** Oh yeah, when everyone one didn't know what that was, yeah.

**[00:15:31] SL:** Yeah. We solicited, asked for advice emails, and this one woman had a legit – She was teaching a water coloring class on Zoom to like a retired artist. And she was having like so much feedback issues and stuff. And I was able to help her out, because she was using her phone with her computer. And she was great, because she was like, “Oh, all that actually really helped me.” Nothing to do transportation. But I felt like that was useful.

**[00:16:04] BB:** Yes, that was useful. Nice.

**[00:16:06] SL:** Yeah. So the little things.

**[00:16:07] BB:** The little things.

**[00:16:09] SL:** Yeah.

[BREAK]

**[00:16:11] ANNOUNCER:** Today's interview will continue after this brief message brought to you by OnePitch. Are you curious to see the unique ways one pitch helps PR professionals and marketers pitch journalists? Head to [onepitch.co](https://onepitch.co) learn about our new OnePitch score and see how easy it is to find the right journalists to pitch your news to. Sign up for your free account today. Now, back to today's episode.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

**[00:16:36] SL:** My favorite stories to write about are –

**[00:16:41] SL:** I mean, I love to write about what funky and new in some of these cars coming out. It's really fun to be – It's obviously cool to drive a cool car. But it is really cool to drive a cool car. But I love when I'm able to find like a little feature or just like something that isn't what everyone's writing about. Like those little moments. I thought – Maybe I'm tooting my own horn here. But the Polestar 2 came out. Or maybe it's the new Volvos and the Polestars. And they're built in with Google built inside, which is pretty cool.

**[00:17:27] BB:** Oh, that's nice. Wait. So can like Google from the dashboard?

**[00:17:32] SL:** Yeah, you got the Google assistance is built into the car.

**[00:17:35] BB:** Oh wow!

**[00:17:36] SL:** Yeah, it's a game changer. Yeah. It's like instead of the – No offense, but like the built-in like nav system in cars. You're like, "What is this?" And so Volvo and Polestar were just like, "Let's just bypass that and put Google straight into this."

**[00:17:57] BB:** Wow! Impressive.

**[00:17:59] SL:** Yeah. And so they have Google Maps, because it's like everyone's using either like Ways or Google Maps. In my experience, very few people are using anything else. And so this just puts it straight into the car on the screen, like right on the dashboard. And I just basically wrote a little love letter about how I think like that's the future of car dashboard. Yeah, I really enjoyed that. So these little things. Yeah, I wrote a really fun story. This was a couple years ago now about fart mode on the Tesla's, because –

**[00:18:34] BB:** What? What is that?

**[00:18:35] SL:** You can like – It's a joke, but you can make it fart.

**[00:18:41] BB:** Oh, just so you get like the motor sound?

[00:18:43] **SL**: No, like actual fart.

[00:18:45] **BB**: What? I don't know about this. Oh God. That sounds like an Elon Musk thing. Okay, I will look that up. That's like a dad joke. Oh God!

[00:18:55] **SL**: Yes. It's a dad joke. Dad joke that made it into a vehicle.

[00:18:57] **BB**: Wow!

[00:18:58] **SL**: It's very Elon Musk.

[00:19:00] **BB**: Oh God! That's funny. Okay.

[00:19:05] **SL**: But instead of writing like a review about that model three, I literally wrote this out –

[00:19:11] **BB**: You wrote about that? There you go. There we go. Okay, you can follow up with me if – Like via email like once, three times, five times, never times?

[00:19:23] **BB**: Oh, like if I don't respond?

[00:19:26] **BB**: Yes. Yes. The big like, "Checking in." That dreaded email.

[00:19:32] **SL**: Right. I would say at least twice.

[00:19:34] **BB**: Okay. Twice, generous. Okay. I like it.

[00:19:38] **SL**: Yeah, the first time I probably got buried, or like between like midnight and 5am pacific time. It's just a weird space in my inbox.

[00:19:51] **BB**: Wait. Do you get pitches during that time?

[00:19:54] **SL:** Yeah. I feel like they just come in at weird times.

[00:19:57] **BB:** Wow.

[00:19:58] **SL:** I mean, maybe more like 6am.

[00:20:00] **BB:** Yeah. They're on the East Coast time. Yeah.

[00:20:03] **SL:** Yeah, but stuff gets lost in that weird –

[00:20:05] **BB:** Well, on the 14,000 unread emails. Mm-hmm, I can imagine. Okay.

[00:20:11] **SL:** But those are mostly like from long ago.

[00:20:14] **BB:** Gotcha.

[00:20:15] **SL:** Not that long ago. I cleared it out a couple months ago.

[00:20:19] **BB:** But it creeps back up. That's the problem.

[00:20:21] **SL:** Yeah. I got it down to like a thousand and then it just grows. There's a lot of auto-generated –

[00:20:29] **BB:** Got it. Okay, the last best thing I ate or cooked was –

[00:20:34] **BB:** Ooh! Right now – So my friend's backyard has a plum tree. So we picked a bunch of plums, and this is happening right now. Like my house right now smells like plums in a slow cooker, because we put a bunch of plums in the slow cooker to make plum butter and –

[00:21:00] **BB:** Wait. What?

[00:21:01] **SL:** Yeah. It smells really good in the house. I haven't eaten it yet, but it's cooking.

[00:21:05] **BB:** Oh, my gosh! That sounds delectable. Oh, rich and – Ooh! Is this a new thing? Is this the new COVID thing besides after sourdough bread, we're now doing butter?

[00:21:17] **SL:** I don't know, but it's a jam that they cook even longer.

[00:21:23] **BB:** God! That sounds fabulous.

[00:21:24] **SL:** It's like apple butter, if you've ever had apple butter. And instead of apples, it's plum.

[00:21:31] **BB:** Okay. God! That's my new one.

[00:21:32] **SL:** But I love plums. Yeah, so I'll let you know how it tastes.

[00:21:36] **BB:** Please. Please.

[00:21:37] **SL:** I'm going to have some for lunch after this call.

[00:21:40] **BB:** Great. Okay, quarantine has taught me besides how to make plum butter –

[00:21:46] **SL:** Oh, yeah, plum butter was just a last night activity.

[00:21:48] **BB:** Okay. Okay. Yes.

[00:21:49] **SL:** Quarantine has taught me – Ooh! I got back into guitar. So it's taught me to play guitar again and to practice.

[00:21:59] **SL:** Oh, and were you previously playing, it sounds like? And now you picked it back up.

[00:22:03] **SL:** I got really into guitar when I was 16. I am no longer 16.

[00:22:07] **BB:** Yep, little while.

[00:22:09] **SL:** I had forgotten about guitar. Quarantine, I had a little bit of weird situation with quarantine. But I was in a house with a woman who's an excellent guitar player. And she had a guitar that I could use. So I picked it up again.

[00:22:27] **BB:** Oh, fun. And then she was there? Maybe she could even help you. Did she like teach you or do anything like that?

[00:22:35] **SL:** No. Yeah, it's a long story.

[00:22:38] **BB:** Good luck with that.

[00:22:40] **SL:** It's a long story. But basically, she had a guitar that she – The travel guitar.

[00:22:47] **BB:** Oh, okay, okay, okay.

[00:22:50] **SL:** He left it for me, and now –

[00:22:50] **BB:** Yeah. You could play guitar. That's the point.

[00:22:53] **SL:** I got the new app. Like when I was 16 there was –

[00:22:57] **BB:** No, there was no apps. There was no apps at all. Yeah.

[00:23:01] **SL:** So now I have a new app on my phone. You can tune your guitar with an app. Also a great –

[00:23:10] **BB:** Yes. I've seen one of those, mm-hmm. My friend plays guitar and she pulls out all her little fancy apps. Yep.

[00:23:16] **SL:** Yeah, it's a really cool –

[00:23:18] **BB:** It's neat how that helps and evolve on the music space.

[00:23:19] **SL:** Yeah, and there are great lesson online, this one service. I think you can pay for some part of it, but they offer a bunch of free YouTube videos for beginners.

[00:23:34] **BB:** Sounds fabulous. Good time to learn guitar.

[00:23:37] **SL:** Yeah, it's been good. Get my fingers strength back.

[00:23:41] **BB:** Yeah. Okay. My favorite Sunday is –

[00:23:45] **SL:** Sunday?

[00:23:45] **BB:** Yes.

[00:23:46] **SL:** Doing something on a Sunday?

[00:23:48] **BB:** Yeah.

[00:23:50] **SL:** My favorite Sunday is – Oh, this is another quarantine activity. But I picked up surfing, as I mentioned before. So even though I'd rather go on a weekday when there's way fewer people – I have work during the week. So it's a good Sunday. A good Sunday is heading out and catching some waves.

[00:24:16] **BB:** Isn't it freezing though in San Francisco? I'm in San Diego, and it is freezing here.

[00:24:21] **SL:** Oh, it's nice and warm in San Diego. It's sunny.

[00:24:24] **BB:** Oh God! Are you wearing like double –

[00:24:26] **SL:** Like the thickest wetsuit or what?

[00:24:29] **SL:** I have a thick wetsuit, and it's actually nice and toasty in my wetsuit.

[00:24:32] **BB:** I would imagine. Is it a dry suit even or no? It's just one of those thick, thick like rubber? Okay. Wow!

[00:24:40] **SL:** It seems like it would be colder here, but actually water temperature on the Pacific is pretty consistently cold.

[00:24:47] **BB:** Yeah, like the whole entire coast. Yeah, it's awful. It's nowhere tropical at all. Yeah, no.

[00:24:52] **SL:** It's not tropical.

[00:24:53] **BB:** Oh wow! Well, good for you. Brave. I'm sure that wakes you up too.

[00:24:58] **SL:** Like you were saying earlier, like it's a a really good place to just think. Very meditative I found. You kind of have to be one with – You have to accept what's coming at you. Can't really change what's going to happen on the water.

[00:25:13] **SL:** Yeah, it's coming. It's not. It's there. Yeah.

[00:25:15] **SL:** Yeah. It's so being good at helping me chill out maybe literally.

[00:25:18] **BB:** Oh, that's good. Okay yeah.

[00:25:20] **SL:** But the worst part is taking off and on the wetsuit.

[00:25:25] **BB:** Yeah, those are heinous to put on and off, for sure, especially when they're wet and it's coming off. Oh, God. I've only dipped my toes in the water a few times, like as in the ocean with wetsuits, and yeah, that's something.

[00:25:38] **SL:** I really want to make it down to San Diego though.

[00:25:41] **BB:** Oh, you should. You should. The sharks are down here. Lots of seaweed. Yeah, it's a good time. That's problem. That is the problem, Sasha, for me, personally.

[00:25:52] **SL:** I'm such a beginner that I'd like to think that –

[00:25:57] **BB:** They're like, "Forget her."

[00:25:58] **SL:** Yeah, because beach is too crowded. They don't want to go where I am. I'm also pretty close to the store. I'm not good enough to like –

[00:26:09] **BB:** To get, yeah, yeah, way out there. You're keeping it close.

[00:26:11] **SL:** Find that wave in the middle of the ocean. I'm not there.

[00:26:14] **BB:** Okay. Okay. Noted. Okay. Now, Sasha, what are you reading? Listening to? Watching? We'll really take anything.

[00:26:25] **SL:** Yeah. And I'm part of a book club.

[00:26:28] **BB:** Oh, really? I love that. How often do you guys meet?

[00:26:35] **SL:** Maybe aim for once a month, but it's mostly six weeks. Yeah. But next week, we're meeting and we're reading, which I don't think we even intended to do this. But it's perfect timing with the Olympics, because we're reading *The Boys in the Boat* about –

[00:26:52] **BB:** How is that?

[00:26:55] **SL:** So far so good. So I'm listening to the audio book. I'm 27% through at 1.35 speed, because I got to finish it in less than a week.

[00:27:05] **BB:** I got to get that in. Yep, I hear you.

**[00:27:07] SL:** But so far, so good. It's very history full. If you're from the Pacific Northwest, it seems like it'd be very intriguing, because you'd know all the little towns he's mentioning. But learning a lot about rowing. Sounds really hard.

**[00:27:25] BB:** It looks really hard. Have you ever looked at those people rowing on a lake? You're not having a good time. No. Someone's yelling at you.

**[00:27:32] SL:** But they're really strong. The book was just talking about how rowing takes as much energy as like two full games of basketball or something crazy.

**[00:27:45] BB:** I keep hearing all those new like rowing company where they want to set you up with a row inside, or like, "Oh, it uses your full body." And I'm like, "I must be doing something wrong, because my arms are only exhausted. Not my legs. They're just kind of going back and forth horizontally." Yeah, I think I'm doing something wrong. Anyway –

**[00:28:05] SL:** Yeah. We just did at mashable.com, did a review of – It's kind of like the Pelaton –

**[00:28:10] BB:** There's another one? Oh, gosh. There's always more. There's always like more and more. Yeah.

**[00:28:16] SL:** They just pick up a lot of space though in your house. That's my biggest hesitancy on buying one for the house.

**[00:28:22] BB:** Yeah. Some of them though, they like they like fold up and stuff. So you can like put it away like a bike or something. I'm like, "Uh –" Bbut then you're looking at – I don't know.

**[00:28:31] SL:** Yeah, I'd rather – Once my gym hopefully opens up again, that's where I'd do rowing. Because I'm like, "You guys can keep this equipment."

**[00:28:38] BB:** Yeah, keep that thing there.

**[00:28:40] SL:** Yeah, I don't need this in my living room.

[00:28:42] **BB:** That's right. I agree. Okay, totally different topic, Sasha. Oh, unless you have – Do you have anything else?

[00:28:49] **SL:** Oh, I was just going to say any good Netflix recommendations?

[00:28:52] **BB:** Oh, whatever. Audibles, podcasts, anything. I mean, beside this podcast.

[00:28:56] **SL:** Oh, I'm just really enjoying the second season of Never Have I Ever.

[00:29:02] **BB:** Oh! I haven't – Okay. Tell us about this. Is it wonderful? Do you love it? What would you say?

[00:29:08] **SL:** I love it. It's Mindy Kaling's – I think she's the director, producer.

[00:29:15] **BB:** She's so great.

[00:29:16] **SL:** Yeah, but I think they're playing high schoolers. I don't know if they're actually high schoolers in real life. But the actors are – I think they're great. I think a little bit more sophisticated teens type show. But I don't know, maybe. Maybe I'm just projecting that onto it. And it's super juvenile. But I think it's great. And it's the narrated by John McEnroe –

[00:29:41] **BB:** Okay. Oh yeah, okay.

[00:29:43] **SL:** Which is super funny and random, and there's just like a lot of little details like that. Yeah.

[00:29:49] **BB:** I wonder how you get that gig. Like you're like, "Wait, I play professional tennis, but then I suddenly got a voiceover thing."

[00:29:54] **SL:** Yeah. They make fun of themselves. It's a cool melding of – Yeah, I don't know if you've read any of Mindy Kaling's book.

[00:30:04] **BB:** A few things, and she is hilarious.

[00:30:06] **SL:** Yeah, I enjoy her type of humor. So maybe it's definitely – I was like cracking up. I was watching an episode last night.

[00:30:12] **BB:** I love it. Okay, I'm putting it on the list.

[00:30:14] **SL:** Anything that makes me laugh like that, that's a good sign.

[00:30:18] **BB:** Well, maybe something that will also make you laugh. What is the future of journalism? See? I told you.

[00:30:27] **SL:** The future of journalism. I think this could go on a lot of direction. I guess there's like the optimistic direction where I could see kind of a return to more local news and really caring about a cliché term, but like the hyper local news. Like what's happening on your blah? Return to that. I started in local news was my intro to my journalism career. And people really care when it's about their community typically.

[00:31:10] **BB:** Yeah, people are into it, for sure.

[00:31:12] **SL:** I could see – Especially with – I don't know if Next Door is going to be part of this, but I don't know, I just get my notifications from my neighborhood and people are – They're invested in their block, and their neighbors, and what's happening. So I could see the future being local. Like the future of journalism is local. But then I could also see just like keep going in this path. It was an American journalism, very divided country and different news, and of distrust of the media, which is a whole other –

[00:31:49] **BB:** A whole other rocket, yeah.

[00:31:50] **SL:** Scary future. But for me, through not marriage, but somebody, my greater family space is one of those who doesn't believe what the media is telling us.

[00:32:06] **BB:** He's also part of Illuminati and whatever else, maybe.

**[00:32:08] SL:** Yeah, who knows? And she just doesn't trust mainstream media or whatever you want to call it. It just never make sense, because he's a retired older woman. She's just so concerned about – I mean, maybe she's concerned for me and my generation. But for her herself, I'm like, "A lot of these things that get so worked up about her, they're not going to be around for them."

**[00:32:37] BB:** Immaterial. Yes, immaterial for you. Why are you stressing?

**[00:32:41] SL:** Yeah, exactly. I'm like, "They have a nice life."

**[00:32:43] BB:** It's kind of like old person syndrome or something. Yeah. I don't know what that's about.

**[00:32:47] SL:** Yeah. I think when people get older, they get very worked up about these huge issues. I'm like, "I don't know if this is going to affect your life ever."

**[00:32:54] BB:** What is that? I wonder if there's like a psychological term. You know what I mean? Is it a function of time? Is it a function of like regrets or something? It's definitely a form of like acting out in a way. But, it's definitely like an older thing. What is that?

**[00:33:13] SL:** Yeah. But for their sake, I do hope that journalism does become – It kind of grounds people more, or connect people more to their specific communities and what's happening now where you are. So this is very like amorphous, not like, "Oh, this is for the greater good," or this is – I think you can do a lot of good at looking inwardly or locally. This is just to say that I'm all stressed out about all that.

**[00:33:45] BB:** There you go. Yes. Yes. Well, we can maybe go to something more fun than think about old people stressors and all the things that they maybe or maybe you're not doing. So let's do our madlib. And I will read it back to you, but we'll first start with the little words. And we'll see what we get. And sometimes they're fun. Sometimes they're on point. Sometimes they're just plain silly. We've had some definitely wild one. So we will say. Let's start. So first thing is an emotion.

[00:34:13] **SL**: Excited.

[00:34:15] **BB**: Excited. I like it. An adjective.

[00:34:19] **SL**: Delighted.

[00:34:21] **BB**: Delighted. Great. What's another adjective? There's only a few more.

[00:34:26] **BB**: Grotesque? An adjective?

[00:34:28] **BB**: Grotesque. Yes. Okay. A greeting of any time, of any kind?

[00:34:37] **SL**: What's up?

[00:34:38] **BB**: What's up? A verb.

[00:34:41] **SL**: Decide.

[00:34:43] **BB**: Decides. And I'm sure you're hearing the sirens in the background. We're just going to keep going, because it's life in the city. Okay. A noun.

[00:34:51] **SL**: Disco ball.

[00:34:53] **BB**: Disco ball. Fun. Haven't heard of that before. An adjective?

[00:35:00] **SL**: Scrappy.

[00:35:01] **BB**: Scrappy, excellent. A cringe-worthy PR term or phrase? Like just following up.

[00:35:11] **SL**: Let's do a little scroll through my inbox.

[00:35:13] **BB**: Yeah, there you go.

[00:35:15] **SL**: I think just checking in. I don't know.

[00:35:18] **BB**: Yeah, that's just checking in. That is a phrase. And then what about a part of a pitch?

[00:35:24] **SL**: Oh, headshot.

[00:35:26] **BB**: Headshots. An amount of time.

[00:35:31] **SL**: Four days.

[00:35:32] **BB**: Four days. The name of a real person?

[00:35:38] **SL**: Elon Musk?

[00:35:39] **BB**: Elon Musk, for the man. And then an emotion.

[00:35:45] **SL**: Upset. Is that an emotion?

[00:35:46] **BB**: Upset. Yes, yes. Okay. Here we go, Sasha. When I think of the future of journalism, I feel excited. The pitches I receive have gone from delightful to grotesque. If I receive a pitch that starts with what's up, I decide. When I write stories on disco balls, I get scrappy. And my favorite pitches include just checking in and very specific headshots. I normally take around four days to respond to emails, but if it's Elon Musk, I will respond immediately. If you do get a response back for me, you should know that I'm very upset for you. There you go, Sasha.

[00:36:23] **SL**: That's pretty accurate.

[00:36:24] **BB**: It kind of is, and varied, and visual. I love it. Great job on that.

[00:36:29] **SL**: Yeah. I feel like Elon Musk is an unattainable figure to get a hold of.

[00:36:35] **BB:** I don't think he talks to media often. Well, he's very choosy.

[00:36:39] **SL:** Just like on Twitter.

[00:36:40] **BB:** Yes, exactly. He has his own media verticals. There you go. Oh, my gosh. So, Sasha, thank you so much for this. We had such a good time. I love it. I hope you get some more cars to test drive. That sounds absolutely delightful.

[00:36:55] **SL:** Yeah, maybe I'll come and take one down to San Diego.

[00:36:58] **BB:** Yes, you should. Do your surf trip. Oh my gosh, that could be a whole article, Sasha. See?

[00:37:03] **SL:** There we go. See?

[00:37:04] **BB:** Oh, there you go. Perfect. Write that down. I love it.

[00:37:07] **SL:** Okay. I'm going on the idea.

[00:37:08] **BB:** There you go.

[00:37:10] **SL:** I'm game.

[OUTRO]

[00:37:12] **ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee With a Journalist, featuring Sasha Lekach from Mashable. If you enjoy listening to our show, make sure to subscribe on iTunes, Spotify, Google Podcasts, and anywhere else you listen to podcasts. And if you have a moment, please leave us a review to share your thoughts about the show and today's guests. To learn more about the latest tools on OnePitch, and to subscribe to our weekly podcast newsletter, head to our website at [onepitch.co](http://onepitch.co). We'll see you all next week with a

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Until then, start great stories.

[END]