

Trends Like These 227: GUEST HOST-O-RAMA! Trump's Racist Tweetstorm, Grimes's Bonkers Daily Regimen, The Next 007 is a Black Woman?, Mike Pence Visits Border Camp, Epstein Update, Area 51, Should We All Use They/Them Pronouns?, The Secret of Bearded Nodding GIF Guy

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[theme music plays]

Brent: This week: Grimes floats in stasis, the Cats movie's latest, and Trump... still a racist.

Kate: I'm Kate Sloane.

Dave: I'm Dave Bulmer.

Mustin: I am Mustin.

Brent: I'm Brent Black.

Mustin: And I'm a real gibroni.

Brent: With Trends Like These.

[theme music plays]

Brent: Hello, Kate.

Kate: Hello, Brent!

Brent: So, everybody, uh, Travis and Courtney are not on the show this week. They are at San Diego Comic Con. And everybody out there in podcast land, I'd like to introduce Kate Sloane. She's a journalist, a sex writer slash educator, and my very good friend. Hi, Kate.

Kate: Hi, Brent. I have been listening to this podcast since its inception, so this is very weird to be here, but I'm happy that you invited me.

Brent: Well, and I'm happy that you accepted the invitation. Now, I feel like you did a segment before...

Kate: I did. It was about Tumblr.

Brent: Yeah. Yeah. Something about sex and Tumblr.

Kate: Uh-huh. Porn on Tumblr.

Brent: Well, we've done, now, hundreds of episodes. So it's like, the fact that I remember an adjective or a word that wasn't just Tumblr, I'm like, "Yeah!"

Kate: Yeah. Good one.

Brent: Yeah! 'Cause boy, the news.

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: Yeah, so you are in Toronto. You just moved to a new place. How's that going?

Kate: It's good. I moved because my former roommate was having super loud sex all the time. That was basically the main reason. And I'm out of there now, so once again, I can sleep, and I can record podcasts without people emailing me to be like, "Are you watching a porn in the background of your podcast?" So that's been nice.

Brent: Well, and to be clear, like, as your friend, I happen to know. It's one thing to have loud sex during the day. Kind of rude. But we're talking like, middle of the night marathon, like...

Kate: Yeah.

Brent: From what you said.

Kate: Yeah, it's actually...

Brent: Sounds pretty terrible.

Kate: It's so loud that, when I'm on the phone with my partner, they can hear, like, how good the sex she was having is.

Brent: [laughs]

Kate: They can like, judge, y'know, who's doing a good job over there.
[laughs]

Brent: Yeah. Well, uh... I don't really know what to follow that up with, but...

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: But I'm so happy you're in a new place. And fun fact, all of you out there – Kate and I, as she said a second ago, did meet because of Trends Like These, back in 2015, when I was living in Toronto. We became good, good friends. And in part, I wanted to have her come on the show... well, I mean, in part, because she's an amazing journalist and a writer.

Kate: Thank you.

Brent: But also, because next week, uh, our new podcast drops, which is called Question Box. More about that later. But first, Kate – what are you drinking?

Kate: I am drinking an iced cinnamon latte, because I am livin' it up today.

Brent: Ooh, iced and cinnamon! Now, does that mean—is it like, foamy on the top with a little sprinkle of cinnamon?

Kate: It did have a little sprinkle. I've sort of drank that part now, but yeah. I guess that's a weird combo, but that's what I was vibin' today. What do you got?

Brent: No, I don't think it's a weird combo. I—before I tell you, I will say, my neighborhood coffee shop has two different kinds of lattes that I occasionally treat myself with. One is a gingerbread mocha...

Kate: Ooh.

Brent: And the other is called an almond joy. So it's just like a chocolatey, almond, y'know, kind of squirt of syrup in there. But um, it's good stuff. Very sugary.

Kate: Do you do the gingerbread mocha all year 'round, or is that more of a Christmassy thing?

Brent: Oh, I don't need any kind of calendar. I don't need any kind of awareness of the time of year for a gingerbread mocha. Though, I will say, going out into like, 90 degree heat with a hot coffee that is, itself, gingerbread... y'know, I feel like it's more of a, uh, to stay, and not a to go this time of year.

Kate: Some people say that it cools you down to drink a hot bev, but I think that they're wrong.

Brent: I think it cools you down to eat a hot pepper. Like, I've heard that certain cultures—no, seriously. Certain cultures where it gets really hot, like, you eat a hot pepper, it makes you sweat, and it cools you off in the end. But like, at what cost? Fuck that.

Kate: Yeah. Not on board.

Brent: To me, it's just like, y'know... I don't know. I grew up in Texas, so when people are like, "Oh, God, it's so hot." I'm like, "Yeah, I am sweaty. I am basted into these pants. It's nasty. But like... I'll live." I don't know.

Kate: Mm-hmm.

Brent: I wonder, 'cause you're from Toronto where it gets very cold. I wonder how you deal with like, y'know, 101 degree Texas heat. Have you ever experienced something like that?

Kate: Uh, it was about 101 Fahrenheit - it was a different thing in Celsius - here last weekend, and it was pretty brutal.

Brent: What?!

Kate: Yeah, it got really, really hot. There was a heat wave. There was warnings given. I tried not to leave my apartment. It was not a good situation.

Brent: Holy shit. Oh, by the way - we've gotten far field from what I'm drinking, which is... y'know, Courtney's not here. Courtney likes to have some wine. I uh, haven't had a dranky drank on the show in a while. So I am drinking a spritzer of uh, Alamos brand Torrontes, which is a white wine from Argentina. Vintage 2017. Along with a peach infused Perrier, as the sparkling part of the spritzer.

Kate: Wow. You a fancy boy today.

Brent: I mean, look, y'know... you get your cinnamon latte, and I've got my spritzer. I mean, you say fancy. It was like, on sale. But what are you gonna do?

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: Alright, so. This episode is gonna feature multiple guest segments. Kate and I will be back with more later. But for the moment, interstitial music, go!

[theme music plays]

Brent: So, this is normally where Travis would come up with something funny to bring in the Beyond the Headlines segment. But today's a little bit different. We're gonna do a politics headline, and then a beyond the headlines type headline, with the one and only founder of funky video game music cover band, The OneUps. He's been featured on CNN, and he's the resident sound engineer and editor of Trends Like These. Mustin! Hey, buddy. How's it going?

Mustin: Hey, man, how you doing?

Brent: I'm okay. Uh, I recorded... I recorded segments with Kate earlier today, during which I had some white wine. And so, basically, I have been day drinking on a Wednesday. That's what's going on with me.

Mustin: Living your best life.

Brent: We... yeah. Living my something life. But uh, how are you?

Mustin: I'm alright, man. Y'know, just doing the daily grind. Getting home. I made, uh... made some spaghetti for the kids. They love the spaghetti. I don't know why they like my spaghetti so much, but I guess I'm pretty good at making spaghetti, so...

Brent: What's your secret?

Mustin: I keep it simple. There's no chunks in my spaghetti sauce. I think that's what the kids like. I know it's what I like.

Brent: Ahh.

Mustin: Yeah. It's uh... it's very simple, but it's very tasty. Very salty, to be honest. That's probably what the secret is.

Brent: Salt. Lots of salt, no chunks.

Mustin: Yup.

Mustin: [laughs]

Brent: So, this is him being, uh... a fuck face. Uhh, not surprisingly.

Mustin: Yeah.

Brent: And so, there's so much to discuss, here. It's one of those like, where do I even start? Um, so, he talks about progressive democrat congresswomen. And he is... he's referencing these four congresswomen, uh, known as 'the squad.' Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, Rashida Tlaib of Michigan, and Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts.

Uh, they are four women who are new. They are progressive. They understand social media in a way that a lot of people in congress clearly don't. But ironically, Donald Trump kind of does in a weird, warped way.

Mustin: Yes, he does.

Brent: There's a lot of problems with this. He... he is saying... it's interesting to see these congresswomen who *originally came from countries...* Okay, I'm gonna stop you right there, bro. Um, all... almost all of them were born in America. And the one who wasn't, Ilhan Omar, is an American citizen. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was born in the Bronx, and is a congresswoman for Queens! Where Trump is fucking from!

Mustin: [laughing] Yeah.

Brent: It's nuts.

Mustin: This is such a ruse to me. Like you said, he's... he's kind of better at the social media than everyone else, 'cause he knows how to use this Twitter to stir up the pot. I mean, that's all he's doing. It's all it is.

Brent: Yeah.

Mustin: Y'know, he's definitely a real gibroni. And he's just a real—

Brent: [laughs] Dustin' off the gibroni. Classic.

Mustin: But he's also a real monster, which, y'know, hopefully, we're gonna... I mean, I hate to... it's a hard thing to say. I don't want to find out that he's... how monstrous he's been, because I hate to think of the people that he's hurt. But in a weird way, I'm hopeful that we're gonna find out more with this, with the uh...

Brent: Epstein?

Mustin: Yeah. And uh...

Brent: Yeah...

Mustin: 'Cause I just... did you see that video of him today with—hangin' out with that guy?

Brent: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Mustin: Hoo...

Brent: I have uh... I have a different part of the show where I will discuss Epstein. But yes, I did see it, and uh, I have some thoughts. I have some thoughts.

Mustin: Yeah, it's... it's rough stuff. And I just think that's what he's doing. I think that's what he's doing is, distracting from that stuff so we can focus on this stuff.

Brent: Yeah, I think that's part of it. I think, also, he's trying to divide the democratic party, because he smells blood in the water between these progressives, and say, Nancy Pelosi.

Mustin: That's right.

Brent: Who is a much more corporate-friendly, much more center-left, y'know, really good at fundraising, uh, the kind of woman that pays no lip service to democratic socialists, and will just straight up say, y'know, condescendingly, "Well, we're capitalists."

Mustin: Yeah.

Brent: And the thing is, Pelosi's done a lot of good stuff. Um, she's raised a lot of money. She's, y'know, um, for the democratic party. But she's really not the same kind of creature as these progressives. And so, I think Donald Trump, among other things, uh, in his kind of like, y'know, shooting in the dark, but hitting a lot of stuff along the way kind of fashion... he is trying to sew discord between the two different kinds of democrats. And obviously, there are many more, but you know what I'm saying. Between progressives and more center-left.

Now, I just like to point out. As long as we're talking about people born in other countries, uh, Ted Cruz wasn't born in the United States. Um, Trump is the grandson of immigrants. But what is different about these four congresswomen? Could it be that they're black and brown?

Mustin: Ah, yeah, yeah, I'd say so.

Brent: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, look, we're kind of being silly about it. But like, this is a racist bunch of tweets. The reason it's racist, everybody listening probably knows, but let's go over it. Maybe there's someone that doesn't get it, and you are who our podcast is for, sometimes. So like, let's fuckin' talk about it.

It's racist because of the trope of 'go back to your country.' Um, which I think is very anti-American. If 'go back to your country' was an American thing, none of the white people should be here. [laughs]

Mustin: Yeah, I just don't understand that. And like, I don't think about my race stuff every day, but um, I mean, of course, it's something we're talking about a lot.

Brent: For the record, you're a white-passing Latinx man, is that correct?

Mustin: Yeah. Like, that's what I was gonna say, is like... I just feel bad for everybody, 'cause everything sucks right now. But then I think about, like... I have a daughter, and she's not gonna pass with certain kinds of people. And my father is like, more of the indigenous—

Brent: You mean Aztec Mayan kind of...

Brent: Yeah. He's Mixtec. And this language that he speaks is Mixteco, and that was his first language before Spanish. And uh, so, I'm kind of like a... I get real heated up with Columbus day, and just the fact that we still call Native Americans Indians just... infuriates me. And I know that there are people who are indigenous that are okay with it.

But the fact that he's using this, like you said, and you just pointed out, which I didn't really think about. But the fact that he mentioned Nancy Pelosi to pit the old school, like, Nancy and Joe Biden, versus the new kids in town, like... it's just calculated to stir up trouble. 'Cause I mean, I know that he does have those racist bones in his body that he says he doesn't have.

Brent: Mm-hmm.

Mustin: But more than anything, he is looking out for himself, and he knows how to stir up that pot and make people look away from what he doesn't want them to see.

Brent: Right. And I mean, y'know what... I'll never understand. And I don't even know—y'know, I sometimes wonder about Trump's level of self-awareness. Like, I'm virulently, incurably self-aware. So like, even if I'm being, like... I'm rambling, I'm talking too long, I'm being a bit self-indulgent. Like, the voice in my head is like, "Yes, you are! Stop!" But like, I know it's happening the whole time.

Mustin: [laughs]

Brent: Trump, I don't know if he has that.

Mustin: No, I don't think so.

Brent: It's like, does he understand... like, does the thought go through his head, "Oh, I don't want people thinking about, uh, the accusations of sexually assaulting a minor against me and Jeffrey Epstein. So I am going to say a racist thing, ha ha ha!" Or is it just like this Ouija board kind of thing? Where like, he has a sense of that, but doesn't even really cognitively realize what he's doing?

Mustin: I think from experience in uh, therapy and learning about psychology, it's easy for me to see the idea that, if he's sitting there with executive time, and seeing what people are saying about, like, Epstein and stuff, and what is building, and the different lawsuits, it's very easy to project that somewhere else. To easily point out... "He started it! He touched me first! He's the one that made me do—" And then point—it's just a real, quick, easy, like, toddler fight or flight response.

And so, I agree with you that I don't think he has a good filter, but I think he has a good... it's a very well-defined, very well-oiled mechanism, self-defense mechanism for like, a narcissistic person.

Brent: Yeah. Well, so, let's go through a couple of details of these tweets. First off, he says, originally, y'know, he says these democratic congresswomen "originally came from countries." First off, only one came from any other country. She's a citizen. Then, "whose governments are a complete and total catastrophe. The worst, most corrupt and inept." So like, what are your thoughts on the kettle, Mr. Trump? At least in terms of your administration and your White House.

Mustin: [laughs]

Brent: Um, and now, he says, "loudly and viciously telling the people of the United States how our government is to be run." Now, to me, that is perhaps the most insidious part of this. But also, the dumbest? Like, hey, numbnuts. These are fucking elected congresswomen. These are members of our legislative body. Our federal, legislative chamber. And the notion that they

are viciously telling the people of the United States how our government is to be run? Um, yeah, that's their fucking job, you fucking asshole!

Mustin: [laughing] Nevermind it's what he did. It's what he wanted to do. And I know there are scandals on the democratic side and all that, but I just... how many times have you seen those people with, y'know, the family rights and family values that get caught with underage prostitutes and stuff like that? It just—

Brent: Sure.

Mustin: Those things happen a lot, and that's, I feel like, that's where this is coming from, psychologically. To say, "You don't just get to go around and tell people how the nation should be run." But that's exactly what he's doing.

Brent: So you're saying he's projecting... he's projecting his own insecurities and his own things he's trying to do.

Mustin: The dude is the most insecure person on the planet!

Brent: Absolutely.

Mustin: It's insane. I just think—I just think a lot about it from a psychological level, because he... I see through much of the pomp and circumstance, I think, because I spent a lot of time being a real gibrioni, and I'm working really hard to not be. [laughing]

Brent: [laughs] Well, I think a lot of us... a lot of us in our 30s and 40s are like, looking back and going, "Mmm, I could've been a much better person."

Mustin: [groans] Yeah, I could've done that better.

Brent: But we grew up in a world where the world told you, be a certain way, and we just figured our way through that. Now we're having to—not to pat ourselves on the back too much, but yeah, I know what you're saying. And I would not want to look at a montage of like, the dumbest shit I said in college. It wouldn't be great.

Mustin: [laughing] Oh, God.

Brent: [laughs] Um, so, okay. So like, yeah. The notion that he's calling out congresswomen for viciously telling the people of the United States how our government is to be run, comports with this notion of this brown or black 'other' showing up and bossing everyone around. And it's like... the propaganda in this century, I'm paraphrasing, but the idea of what they do is... it's not to change minds or to persuade through propaganda. It's to annihilate truth. And that is what this is.

So like, he says, "Why don't they go back and help fix the totally broken and crime-infested places from which they came?" Okay, Donald Trump? Um, Queens, for a lot of the time you've been alive, has been broken and crime-infested. It's changed now, because New York City is becoming a playground for the rich. Thanks, Rudy Giuliani.

So, again, the notion of 'go back to your countries.' So, it's a racist trope. He's getting support from white nationalist groups. So then, he was asked in a presser, uh, I think in the days after, about this. And at one point, he sort of said, "Well, if you don't like it, you can leave. If they don't like America, they could leave." But like, this is, again, a stupid dodge, because who complained more about the state of America over the last ten years, on Twitter and otherwise, than Donald Trump?

You could've said that at any turn about his whining. Whether it was about Obama, or like, Kristen Stewart, which was a particular obsession of his on Twitter at one time. You don't like it? Leave!

Mustin: Yeah.

Brent: He doesn't publically connect those things. And it's extremely hypocritical, almost like, even for him, I think.

Mustin: Yeah. It just happens like clockwork, that you find those people who have that mentality. Like, nobody... no one anywhere has the right to say that. Like, except for indigenous people.

Brent: Exactly.

Mustin: So it's just... it's just bonkers, and people who... those people are also the people that talk about precious snowflakes. But like you've pointed out many times, man, when you point a finger, you've got three pointing right back at you. It's just bonkers.

Brent: Yeah. Especially with the notion of snowflakes. Like, to me, if an arch-conservative thinks that someone is being a snowflake, 'cause, for instance, they'd like you to call them by their proper pronouns, but they get mad because Target, y'know, has a sign saying 'happy holidays' instead of 'merry Christmas,' who is the fucking snowflake?

Mustin: Yeah.

Brent: Like, everyone's got things that are either sacred or very important, or um, hard boundaries for themselves. And the notion of snowflakes just shows a different kind of bubble. Like, you probably saw on my Facebook, I posted these tweets.

And a friend of mine from Texas, who is a friend, but also a Trumper, just wrote in response, "Trump 2020!" And then he said like... he said something about like, snowflakes being fragile. And I was like, man, Donald Trump calls any news he doesn't like 'fake,' and any critique he doesn't like 'unfair.' He is the OG snowflake.

Mustin: Yup.

Brent: And I just wish... I just wish his biggest fans... I just don't know what they think when it comes to that. I don't know if they think that through. I'd love to know. I'd love to ask them all one by one, and see if they are like, "Hm." But much more like if they're like, "No, well, this! What about this?"

Mustin: Yeah. But like, this lady in Florida who was, like, going to be deported and had this year-long thing with ICE, because she couldn't get her driver's license, and uh, had to go through this huge debacle, and still, after

all of it was over, and she had to spend all this money and all this time... still going to vote for Trump. It's just... it's just beyond me.

Brent: Yeah. I've seen a lot of videos. Um, Emma Vigeland is a journalist who I have huge respect for, and she's a very, um, man on the streets, to use a tropey phrase. But she'll go to Trump events, and she'll just talk to people. And um, y'know, no one person is representative of a movement, and no movement is a monolith.

But... you'll just have people who drink the Kool-Aid so hard, and yet, don't seem to really be digging into the facts. And it almost... the thing is, like, there's a certain brand of conservatism in America. Or at least, y'know, the right, that I feel like gets marble-caked in with religion.

Um, I remember, one of my ex-girlfriends. Her very conservative dad was in town, uh, at my apartment in like, 2013 or '14. And we were talking about the constitution or whatever. It was getting kind of weird. And I was just about to say the phrase, "It's not like the constitution is like, divinely inspired." And he said, "I believe the constitution is divinely inspired." And I was like, "Oh my God."

But then, what I realized is, the Bible's a book you don't have to read to believe in it. You can quote any little part you want from it, and it'll serve your needs, even if you haven't read the whole thing. And most of the people that talk loudest about it haven't read it. Constitution. Same thing.

Mustin: Yeah.

Brent: Same thing.

Mustin: Same thing.

Brent: And if you can also think of it as sacred, well, now you're upping it to this thing that can't be questioned. And I feel like, if you think of Trump as some kind of uh... I mean, I'm stretching, but hear me out. If you think of Trump as this savior, which, if you ever listen to televangelists, they always

conveniently like a republican president and think a democratic president is demonic. Interesting.

Mustin: Mm-hmm.

Brent: Y'know, they'll talk about how God talked to them in a vision and said Trump was supposed to win or some dumb bullshit. Anyway, we're getting a little bit off the track. I want to talk about the fact that um, during the same press conference where Trump said, "If you don't like it, you can leave," he was asked about the fact that Nancy Pelosi said, "Trump wanted to make America white again."

And Trump... I gotta give it to him. Sometimes, the dude can dodge and cartwheel in a way that's completely transparent, completely, like, schoolyard dumb. But yet, he gets away with it. They said, "Sir, what do you think about the fact that Nancy Pelosi said you want to make America white again?" And he goes, "Make America white again? What a racist thing to say. I'm really surprised that Nancy Pelosi said that. Wow, make America white again? That's really surprising that Nancy Pelosi would say that. That's really racist."

And it's like, you motherfucker!

Mustin: Yeah. Yeah.

Brent: It was just... and the thing is, nobody with half a brain bought it. But... that's enough for people, y'know, that are already in his base. But then again, maybe they're not watching anyway, because they think it's all fake, anyway.

Mustin: Right. If they're already in that mindset, y'know, that just feeds what they want to hear. That's, y'know... echo chamber.

Brent: Right. I wonder if, in the big picture, he's trying to whip up his base for the upcoming election, and these racist, dog whistle things he's saying are part of that. Because um, as I've mentioned on the show before, according to the book, Everybody Lies, which I highly recommend... and I'm

being very over—I'm oversimplifying, here. But basically, it would seem that uh, racism and xenophobia had a disproportionate influence on the primary.

Now, I would say, anti-establishment sentiment, and specifically, anti-Hilary sentiment had more to do with the general election. That's something Courtney would argue with me about, and she'd have a valid opinion. I'm not trying to be sneaky. But what I'm saying is, the primary was definitely predicated upon racism and xenophobia for Trump. He knows where his bread is buttered, and that bread is white.

Mustin: [laughs]

Brent: So, um... y'know, he's got the Wonder bread base.

Mustin: Yeah.

Brent: So it makes you wonder if he's gonna do more stuff like this, and just double down. Um, any final thoughts on that before we move to story number two?

Mustin: [sighs] What a gibroni.

Brent: Alright, well, gibronis aside, onto some lighter news. Our second story in the segment. For years, we've heard rumors that the next actor to take on the James Bond mantle would be the incomparably sexy, beautiful black man, Idris Elba, and that that would, of course, be historic, since Bond has always been white.

Well, that rumor has never led to anything conclusive. But there was a hubbub this past week about, arguably, an even bigger sea change in Bondtown with the widely disseminated rumor that the next James Bond will be a black woman! At least, that's what the headlines seem to imply.

Um, from what I understand, it's very slightly more complicated than that, if the rumor is to be believed. According to the Guardian and other publications that ran with this story, an anonymous "movie insider" says that the next Bond film will see a retired James Bond as played by Daniel Craig,

being called back into action. But, Lashana Lynch will have taken the mantle of 007. Like, the MI6 agent number of 007.

Uh, this will be the 25th Bond film, so it's like... we're talking about a black Mary Jane in the MCU, and a black Valkyrie, who's the new leader of Asgard, a black Starfire in Teen Titans, a black Ariel in the Little Mermaid. And if this rumor is to be believed, a black, female 007.

So like, I don't think any of these things, singlehandedly or together, like, undo the ridiculous, disproportionate whiteness...

Mustin: [laughs] Right.

Brent: Straightness, y'know, for-men-ness of the history of cinema. But it is an exciting time for representation.

Mustin: Yeah, it's really nice. But like... [sighs] It's so hard, because I don't want to be excited about it. But I am excited about it. I just want it to be normal.

Brent: Right. Right. Like, instead of it being an event where it's like, it's announced, and certain people cheer, and certain people are mad, and then the people that cheered have to talk about the people that were mad, and Facebook post about it... it would just be as not a big deal as them saying, "Oh, yeah, Christopher Lloyd's gonna play the bad guy in this next movie." "Oh, okay, cool."

Like, it wouldn't be a thing.

Mustin: Right.

Brent: But right now, it's almost like, every time there's someone a different color than what we expected, a certain contingency has to treat it like the Sonic the Hedgehog movie model. Like, that's, to them, it's like, "Oh, no, it's gotta be this way!" And they don't even examine, apparently, why they think that.

Mustin: Yeah, and that's such an interesting... an interesting idea to extrapolate on. The idea of race is still human. We all are human. But it's an anthropomorphic hedgehog...

Brent: Yeah, and I don't want to dip too far into like, what could be considered a problematic comparison. To me, I'm not saying a person of color is like an anthropomorphic, faster-than-light hedgehog.

Mustin: [laughs]

Brent: I'm saying that the way people react, in as much as saying, "No, it's supposed to be this thing! It's supposed to be what I say! It's supposed to be what I imagined!"

Mustin: Yeah.

Brent: Is weirdly similar. Like, y'know, it reminds me of the new Fantastic Four, which wasn't very good, but Michael B. Jordan playing Johnny Storm, the fire guy.

Mustin: Yeah.

Brent: And people were like, "Ahh, no! Neh, bleh!" And it's like, y'know... it's just... he's just black. Like, it's not more than that. Why is that such a huge fucking deal?

Mustin: Yeah. He's still a person. And like, at least it was a person and not a hedgehog. I mean, I don't know.

Brent: Now, let's be clear – a hedgehog playing Johnny Storm... that, I would go see. That would've been better than the Josh Trank monstrosity that the studio screwed up with Fantastic Four. That's a little of my soapbox there on that.

Mustin: Yeah. And y'know, when it comes to humans, y'know, I love humans. I want humans to be the best that they can be. But I think, like... it's just so frustrating, 'cause I can't see why people are so upset. But at the

same time, I was a big, uh, one of these people about the Transformers and the Ninja Turtles when those came out. Those Michael Bay ones. And I was a big poo-poo on that.

And I think I've heard you talk about this before. It doesn't mean that the old thing went away. It's just something new and different.

Brent: Well, I mean, like, I remember as a kid, being always pissed off at every movie based on a cartoon or a video game, 'cause they always had—some director always had to do, like, their take on it. The difference being that um, y'know, Matthew Broderick playing Inspector Gadget was not really a matter of representation.

Mustin: Yeah.

Brent: And the fact that there was no Technodrome in 1990s Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: The Movie was not a matter of representation. But it can strike a movie goer similarly. And I'm pretty sure, as a kid, there was probably—oh, I remember like, Will Smith being in Wild, Wild West when I was in high school, and me being like, "What?! Dude, that guy was white, that doesn't make any sense." Because I didn't have a grasp on the concept of representation. I didn't have a grasp of the greater picture.

And I believe we had Freddy Wong on the show in 2016 or so, and he said a thing that really stuck with me, which is, "Any time you have a person of color, or a person from the queer community, or a person who's not quite what you expect for the traditional version of a role in a piece of film or TV, it's always more interesting, and never less interesting."

Mustin: Yeah.

Brent: And that really stuck with me.

Mustin: Yeah. I remember him saying that. I remember listening to that. Uh, like, to that point of it being interesting, it's just... it just makes it better. Like, I know that you might not subjectively feel like, oh, this Bond movie's

gonna be... y'know, we don't know! We don't know. We don't know. This is all speculation, so...

Brent: Sure, yeah. And the thing is, it hasn't been... yeah. To be clear for our audience, this has not been confirmed. But it seems like the rumors are extremely specific, so we'll see.

Mustin: Yes, they are. And Lashana, y'know, she's great. She was great in Captain Marvel. And for other people that are not me, to be able to see this, for my daughter to be able to see these female heroes? Like, I always love Ripley. But she was, like, one thing in the world of Rambos and Predators, and...

Brent: Yeah. Yeah.

Mustin: So like, the more that we have that, uh, like you said, like with the black Mary Jane, I just think it's... I mean, Spiderman was so good, because it was so culturally diverse. Is that what people say?

Brent: Well, yeah. I mean, it was inclusive. Like, there's lots of words for it, and I think everyone... everyone knows exactly what you're saying.

Mustin: It wasn't Leave it to Beaver, because the world isn't—the United States isn't Leave it to Beaver anymore. And it never really was. And that's all it is. Just wanted to see something that represents what we are.

Brent: Right. I mean, it's funny. Y'know, I... I'm technically a comedy professional; though, I hate that term. But I listen to a lot of old stand up, and a lot of old comedy. And I remember, like—y'know, I recently went back and watched the Austin Powers movies, and I remember, one of the... I think Elizabeth Hurley saying in an interview, when they were doing the film tour, like the press tour for the first Austin Powers, she was like, "Y'know, the thing about Mike's comedy is, it's harmless. It really doesn't hurt anybody."

And looking back, it's like... no. Mike Myers is not an evil man, but his comedy is very representative of most of the comedy of the last 50, 60, 70 years, which is, if you're not basically an average, good looking, perfect

teeth, perfect skin, just correct height, no glasses, white, straight man of a certain amount of money... like, those are the people that get made fun of. The people that are not that.

And y'know, Austin Powers series. You've got Fat Bastard. What's funny about him? Well, he's really fat. You've got the guy with the mole. You've got Vern Troyer. He's a little person. Like, the list goes on and on. And I feel like, I'm not talking about race, but there's an element to that, too, especially as you a little bit farther back.

Mickey Rooney, y'know, Breakfast at Tiffany's, and all kinds of stuff. It's like... it was all made for white, straight men in a way that I could not see growing up. But now, it is so painfully obvious.

Mustin: Yeah. It's really hard to watch old stuff. I'm starting to show my son movies, and uh, man, it's just... the absence of people of color, it's really apparent.

Brent: Yeah. Or like... y'know, I know your son, and he's a very curious, uh, child. And here's the thing – I was kind of like him in this way. If I don't—if I didn't get a joke as a kid, I wouldn't let it go. I'd be like, "Why is that funny? I don't get it. Why is that funny?" And the thing is, sometimes, I'm sure you've had to either... you have to navigate the waters of like, "Well, it's kind of not funny. They thought it was funny." Y'know? Like, that's gotta be hard.

Mustin: Yeah. But it's good. It's good opportunity to learn. And when we have things like this, I know, like... somebody was... what was it, a person on Twitter that made that joke that was like, "Whiney white people are gonna be shaken and stirred." [laughs] Something like that.

Brent: Yeah. [laughs]

Mustin: Let it happen. Everything that I saw about this was some... was a white guy, and with one exception of one, uh, black man that was talking into their webcam and railing into it. And like, dude, this isn't for you. This is for everybody else.

Brent: Right. Well, Ben Shapiro had some stuff to say, and um, actually, Kate and I talked in a different segment on this episode about Ben Shapiro. And the thing is, in my professional, like, news and politics analyst opinion, Ben Shapiro *can* go fuck himself.

But, one thing I wanted to uh, mention before we end this segment is, uh, Bond 25, which is like the sort of code name of this 25th James Bond movie, is being co-written or otherwise, the concept and script involves Phoebe Waller-Bridge, who I have recently become a huge fan of. Uh, my friend—

Mustin: Yeah, she does Flea Bag, right?

Brent: Flea Bag, yes. The show Flea Bag on Amazon Prime. They're not paying us to say this, but Flea Bag is a show that... a friend of mine was like, "Let's watch one episode," and I was like, "Okay." And I have not been able to stop watching. She's very funny. She's very smart. And the fact that, y'know, it's not that hard. You're gonna do Wonder Woman, get a woman to direct it. It'll feel right. It'll have a feel that is not just for the men!

Mustin: Yeah.

Brent: And there are times when that's uncomfortable to me, but the thing is, it's not unlike the discomfort anyone who doesn't look like me has felt *forever*. Like um, Chris Pine. Chris Pine in Wonder Woman. He is like, in some kind of cave. There's some water or something. And he's like, either naked or mostly naked, and it's gratuitous shot of his body. And I'm sitting there watching going, "Man, what are they... this is a lot of skin. Why are they—why are they so—oh my God, this is what they do with women in every other movie! Oh my God!" Like, it was—it all happened to me all at once.

Mustin: [laughs] Yeah.

Brent: I'd like to just disclaim the fact that we are, in fact, two white-passing guys. Mustin understands, y'know, being Latinx in a first-hand way. I do not. But we are doing our best, and if there is anything we said that was

like, not how you would've phrased it, or kind of boneheaded, like... it's likely that happened. So tell us on Twitter. Tell us on Facebook. Please be nice.

Mustin: We're always trying to learn as much as we can to be better.

Brent: We are. Now, Mustin, before you go, will you please tell our audience out in podcast land where they can find you on the internet, and perhaps things they can go and buy of yours?

Mustin: Yeah, I have some new albums out this year. I'm excited. I've got an album called Freebies for Streaming, and an album called The World is Square, which features music from Final Fantasy VI in Chronotigger and Final Fantasy IV and Secret of Mana if you like that stuff. Final Fantasy VII.

Did some really cool, chill arrangements on that, and then, my band, The OneUps has a new album called Volume Four, which has music from Donkey Kong Country, and I got to sing some David Hasselhoff style vocals on a Megaman 3 track. And we have a Portuguese vocal bossa nova arrangement of the video game, Celeste, and Toe Jam and Earl, all kinds of fun stuff.

And you can find those on Spotify, and Bandcamp, and Apple Music, and Google Music, all that cool stuff. And you can check me out on my website, Mustin.net.

Brent: Cool! Well, thank you so much for being on the show. And for editing the show every week. Uh, I'm glad our audience got a chance to hear your voice. Get to know you a little. And uh, yeah, thanks for being here, dude.

Mustin: Hey, thank you. I really appreciate it. Thank you everybody!

[theme music plays]

Brent: Alright, we're back. Kate and I. Me and Kate. And Kate, you have a story from this internet thing we've heard so much about from this past week.

Kate: [laughs] I do. American journalist, Farhad Manjoo, ruffled some feathers in the transgender community this week, when they wrote a New York Times opinion column arguing that we should all adopt singular they/them pronouns instead of the gender binary standard, he and she.

So there's long been a push in the trans community to use they/them pronouns when referring to someone of indeterminate gender, or someone who inhabits the space between male and female, or someone who feels like they're both at the same time, or neither. But that's not what's really happening here.

This writer, Manjoo, is a self-described 'stereotypical cisgender, middle-aged, suburban dad.' But they believe traditional pronouns are uselessly gendered, and that we should reject the assumptions and restrictions that these pronouns kind of impose on our language.

So the column's getting a lot of flak, both from the grammar purists who are like, "You can't use 'they' that way!" Which I think is wrong, because we literally have used 'they' that way for centuries. And also, from the trans and nonbinary community, who kind of feel, in some cases, like this cis person is like, hijacking their discourse and incorrectly using a thing that they have used.

What do you think? Should we all be using they/them pronouns?

Brent: Well, okay. So me, a straight presenting, cisgender white man. Let me tell you. Let me tell you what we should be doing, Kate. Get ready.

Kate: [laughs] Absolutely.

Brent: Um, y'know, first off, it seems to me that like... so this is an issue I've run into before, certainly in the first year of Trends Like These, of like, sometimes... sometimes, you're just not the right mouth piece. You're just not the right... you, as a human being, are not the right platform to be kind of trying to lay down a definitive opinion. Even though, of course, you have one.

Kate: Mm-hmm.

Brent: And y'know, as far as like, should we? I gotta zoom out and say like, I think that one thing that is so tough about language is that, on the one hand, it's always changing against the will of the older people and/or grammar purists that just can't stand it. Like, I watch, um, a lot of trash YouTube videos. Like, top ten things you didn't know about blah blah.

And like, these 20 year olds, just trying to get a YouTube following will say, like, 'all intensive purposes.' And I'll be like, "Agh!" But the thing is, soon, that may just be what people say. Or y'know, there's so many idioms they just don't quite get right. And I'm like, is that what it's gonna be in 20 years?

But the thing is, that's how it was 50 years before I was born, and 50 years before that. The thing that I think is harder to do is try to change the language in an activist way, or almost like, by force, or by kind of pushing it in a way that is inorganic. And I think a lot of times, people feel that way. Like, they conflate, uh, the change in pronouns that we are seeing in the culture to like, newspeak. Like, Orwellian newspeak.

And the thing is, to them, I think it feels like that. Even though I think it's, in most cases or all cases, more accurate.

Kate: Mm-hmm.

Brent: But I don't know. Like, I feel like I'm a 'he,' and this is something I have examined.

Kate: Yeah.

Brent: And so... there's that. There's also just like... I don't know if they/them is the most accurate we could have. But I also don't think, like, new pronouns, like xe/xir, y'know, all that stuff. I'm sure you've heard it.

Kate: Yeah.

Brent: I just feel like some people feel kind of silly using stuff like that. So, it's a... it's... I won't say intractable, but it's very sticky. And this is so much more your wheelhouse in terms of what you write about, and the communities you are more solidly in, I would say. So like, what do you think?

Kate: Yeah, I mean, I'm seeing a lot of arguments from, in particular, trans women, who are basically saying, like, this writer is saying that they/them is gender neutral. But in fact, it's not considered necessarily neutral in the trans community, because they/them are nonbinary or agender or genderfluid... these are all genders. They're not, y'know, a lack of a gender, necessarily, except for agender.

But, so, when you call someone 'they,' you are actually making a statement about what their gender is. And it's that they're not male or female. And so, this word is sometimes used to describe, for example, trans women, by people who don't feel comfortable calling them 'she,' because they just don't accept these people's genders. And so, in that way, it can be a hurtful thing to be called 'they/them' when that's not the pronoun that you use, and it's not neutral in the way that this person is saying.

But on the topic of like, grammar purism, like... my parents struggle with this, with using they/them, and I have a number of people in my life who use they/them pronouns. And the thing that I've told my parents over and over again is like, this is not new. You probably use this sense of they/them almost every day. The example I like to use is, "Someone forgot their umbrella here." Which you might say, because you don't know the gender of the person who forgot their umbrella.

Brent: Right. Yeah.

Kate: Or like, if you say to someone in your house, like, "Someone's at the door." They might say, "What do they want?" 'Cause you don't know, right? And so, it's so weird how there's this disconnect, where people think that this is a newfangled thing that they have to learn and practice and stuff. And they probably are using it every day.

Brent: Yeah. I think that there's so much in politics and cultural ideology. There's so much of this thing where... what I see so often is that there's a certain swath of people that, at a certain point, do not want to change fundamental things about the way they think.

And this is why things like Fox News I think are popular, 'cause they get to a certain point where they go, I'm X-age, and instead of learning a new thing I have to apply and then change the way I look at it or change the way I talk about it, I really just want to be told that the way that I already am is good, or uh, or avoid having to, y'know, have a certain kind of self-improvement, or even a certain kind of just evolution of my understanding of things.

And I'm not like that. I kind of want to be... it's not that I want to be right in terms of like, winning an argument. But I just want to be correct. And I find so often, like, what's called 'political correctness' on the right is usually just like... correctness. Y'know.

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: Um, it's hard, though. I mean, y'know, when I lived up in Canada, we had mutuals who go by they/them, or they uh, y'know... I would say, go by gender pronouns that are not what I would personally think, having grown up in the, y'know, Texas, very binary society that I did. And it's a combination of going, like, well, this is hard, but also, um, this is who they are.

Kate: Yes.

Brent: So like, y'know. Um, it's...

Kate: Exactly.

Brent: Yeah, and it's...

Kate: I think it needs to move past the point of being a discussion that centers around like, grammar pedantry. Because really, it comes down to being considerate and being kind and respecting people for who they are.

And I think a lot of cis people really don't think about and reflect on what it would be like if you had to go through every day with people calling you words that didn't match up with your internal perception of yourself, every single day, all day long.

Like, it's horrible. A lot of people really, really struggle with that. And a lot of cis people don't understand what that would feel like. And so, to them, it's just like, well, I don't want to use this word for you because it's hard. And it's like, y'know what's really hard? Being trans or nonbinary.

Brent: Sure. Well, and, so—I have a little metaphor for it that I came up with, kind of organically, that I'd like to hold up to the light and see if you think this is, um, accurate. 'Cause to me, it's just the same as like... let's say you meet someone. Y'know, a new hire at a job. And you've seen their application. And like, their name is Christopher, and you're like, "Hey, Christopher." And they're like, "Oh, I go by CK."

You wouldn't be like, "No, you're a Christopher." You'd be like, "Oh, okay, cool. That's what you go by. That is literally your identity to yourself." That is not hard.

Kate: Right. And if you did—if you did say, "No, well, it says Christopher, so I'm gonna call you Christopher," everyone knows you're an asshole. Like, everyone would basically accept that, right?

Brent: Exactly!

Kate: And it's the same thing with trans folks' pronouns and words. Like, people like Ben Shapiro try to cling to what they think is like, factually correct in terms of these things.

Brent: [sighs] Fuck that guy. Fuck that guy.

Kate: At a certain point, it is about kindness, and like, yeah, you technically have the right to be a jerk. But you're still being a jerk.

Brent: Yeah. Ben Shapiro is a real dildo.

Kate: Yeah. [laughs]

Brent: So, y'know, I um... I steep myself in all kinds of political views, particularly on Twitter, because y'know, I want to know what people I disagree with are saying. I want to know what propaganda my viewpoints are up against. And y'know what? Occasionally... occasionally, someone of a different camp has a point where I'm like, "Oh. I didn't think of that."

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: But one thing you hear about so much on the right, particularly talk radio and the worst of Fox News, is this idea that liberals want to destroy gender. And the thing is, I'm not sure that's, like, entirely unfounded. But at the same time, uh, I think people on the left and people that aren't TERFs or just old fuddy-duddy assholes are just trying to be more accurate about it, while also kind of scrambling to figure out what the fuck it is. See, ContraPoints. [laughs]

But like, what do you... what do you think about the idea of a certain part of the culture trying to destroy gender?

Kate: Well, I mean, I think there are definitely people who are trying to destroy gender. But like, in my communities of friends who are trans and nonbinary, what I see more often is people who want to destroy gender *roles*, gender *expectations*, gender *strictures*. A lot of the trans and nonbinary people I know really enjoy playing with gender.

My friend Bex likens it to a playground. Like, if you take away gender as a concept, then there's just an empty field. But if you have gender stuff in there, then there's a playground for you to play on, and you can experiment with masculinity and femininity in different manifestations of these things.

So in my experience, like, it's just the shitty parts of gender that the libs want to get rid of. And I think that that's really good, 'cause like, look, for example, at the constant violence coming out of the incel movement, which

I think is a direct result of toxic masculinity in our culture. Not to get too SJW on you, but—

Brent: No, hit me! Hit me with the good stuff.

Kate: But I mean, like, the standards that we hold men to in our culture create a lot of anger, a lot of resentment, a lot of violence. And there's a lot of damage done in the standards that we hold women to, as well. And so, I think if people are able to find a space in between, somewhere on the spectrum that feels better to them and are able to reject the strictures and the roles, like, I think that's great. I don't think that that's gonna lead to like, a chaotic society. I think, if anything, that'll lead to a more peaceful society.

Brent: Fuck yeah.

[theme music plays]

Brent: Alright, continuing our guest cohost o-rama theme of this episode, I'd like to introduce someone you've probably heard before on this show. He's a YouTuber, comic book creator, and recurring UK correspondent for Trends Like These, Dave Bulmer. Hey Dave, how's it going?

Dave: I'm going great. I'm going all the way over there where it's great. I don't know what that meant. Hi! How are you?

Brent: [laughs] Well, look, as an American, I wish you would tell us exactly where over there where it's great is, because...

Dave: [laughs]

Brent: I don't know that our nation or society has been over where it's great.

Dave: No. I'm really unhappy with what you're doing in the news these days, and I wish you would give it a rest. Please. That's my constructive

criticism. We've got our own problems, but at the moment, we seem to be having a lull in them, which is why I feel alright.

One time... I think one of the first times I came on this show, I was really sad about the British news, and I just was like, "Uhh, buhh, buhh..." All the way through. Today, I'm quite happy with our news. Horrified about your news! It's so bad that I can't even allow it into my emotional state.

Brent: [laughs] Well, luckily, we're gonna do, uh... you and I are gonna do some slightly more fun, slightly less dark, dystopian stories.

Dave: Yes.

Brent: And I want to just jump in. So last night, I was texting a friend of mine right as she was getting on a plane, and she said, "Oh, real quick – why am I seeing so many headlines about Area 51 all of a sudden?"

Dave: [laughs]

Brent: Well... why, indeed? Dave, I'm sure you've seen these as well.

Dave: Yeah, I was confused for a while. I couldn't figure out quite where this whole thing started. But now I've found out, I quite like it.

Brent: Yeah. I started to see it with the memes. And apparently, the memes were a reaction to the original thing, which was a Facebook event page with the title, "Storm Area 51: They can't stop all of us."

Dave: [laughs] Yeah!

Brent: And it was set for September 20th. In the details section, it says, "If we all meet up at the area 51 alien center tourist attraction and coordinate our entry..." Or, sorry, it says, "We will all meet up." After that, it says, "If we Naruto run, we can move faster than their bullets. Let's see them aliens!"

Dave: [laughs] I love that. This is a bit—you know what this is? I'll tell you why this makes me feel so happy. This is a good old fashioned bit of

internet. Y'know, this is the current generation getting to enjoy the internet the way we used to when things were silly and fun. Do you remember that?

Brent: [laughs] You sound like a retired vaudeville performer.

Dave: I feel like one.

Brent: Ahh, just a good old bit of internet! Back from the old days!

Dave: That's what it feels like. Yeah! I remember funny Photoshop competitions and stuff. This is kind of that.

Brent: Yeah. Yeah. And I mean, so it seems like probably most people knew it was a joke. The idea of like, the Naruto run.

Dave: But this is why it's so funny. This is why it's so funny. The people who were doing it, the people who were commenting on it and posting memes and involved in it, they knew it was a joke. And then us old, fusty, retired vaudevillian performers, we were all grumpy about it, because we didn't realize that it was a joke. Not all of us, anyway.

Brent: Right.

Dave: So any winging that came from us was funnier. I came up with an analogy that basically, when I couldn't quite understand this, this is what explained it to me. Imagine you're 12 or 13, right? The giggliest age. And you're at school, and the scrawniest kid in school is doing muscleman poses to make people laugh, and it's making them laugh a bit. But he really scores a hit when he ad libs the line, "I'm gonna go over and push that brick wall over!" And he goes over and starts pushing on the wall.

And it's just a joke. He couldn't push over a cat, this scrawny kid. But it makes everyone laugh so much that it just becomes like, a known thing about his personality. Like, that kid's gonna push over a brick wall. And any time he comes in the room, it's like, oh, don't push over a wall! And then, it starts to evolve to, he's gonna push over a brick wall on Friday afternoon after school.

And then, you start to hear people from other classes discussing this, as if it's something that's actually gonna happen. And then – then the funniest possible thing happens. The head master calls and all school assembly to tell nobody to push over a brick wall, please. They haven't actually checked the foundations in a few decades. They're due an inspection, but it hasn't happened yet. Don't push over the wall. It's the walls of the school. The whole thing could come down.

Brent: [laughing]

Dave: Imagine how funny that would be! That is what this is!

Brent: And it is similar. Y'know, one of the first—

Dave: The US Air Force had to issue a statement saying, "Please, don't go into the desert where there's no food or water or toilets or anything, on masse, and try to run into one of the most heavily armed places in the country." [laughing] "Even though you'll be doing an anime run, it's still not a good idea!"

Brent: [laughs] Right. Well, and I mean, I uh...

Dave: [laughing]

Brent: In a rare act on my part, uh, actually used a bit of Fox News' coverage in my research, because they had the most stories about it.

Dave: Oh.

Brent: And the stories were these speculative like, "Could these million people *really* do it?" Or like, y'know, "Goofy idea, but will it work?" And it's like, I understand there's a clickbait element to that. But you're right, like... and also, we live in an age where there's a seamless continuum from satire to irony to speculation to straight up coconut bonkers what the fuck are you talking about. And it can be so subtle, the differences between these things.

Dave: Yes.

Brent: So... I didn't know.

Dave: No!

Brent: For all I knew, people could honestly be like... and if you think about it, if you really did want to find out what's in Area 51, this isn't the worst way to do it. It's not exactly, uh, the precision of an Ocean's Eleven heist. Bit more brute force this way. But...

Dave: No, although, I like that some people have been addressing that by posting Ocean's Eleven style, like, charts and maps and plans. But they're all stuff like the one I saw, was like, "Okay, everyone who's a Capricorn, go in this way." [laughs]

Brent: [laughs] Well, and like, I don't know. Like, I... the people that thought that this might happen, right? It's like, you realize you're gonna run into a situation where nobody has the key card, and then, that's the ball game. Like, y'know, you can—you can run past armed guards, but—

Dave: Well, I mean, hang on. They will be doing a Naruto run. They might manage to just phase through the wall.

Brent: Oh, that's a good point. Um, there's a game called Deus Ex from the late '90s where the final, uh, showdown happens in Area 51. And uh, there's so many like, world monuments, and y'know, landmarks in that game, so I've... when I heard of it, I was like, "Oh, I've been there."

Dave: [laughs]

Brent: [laughing] But uh... and I was like, that's not gonna work, they've got commandos. And then went, Brent, you... you are being silly.

Dave: They might have! We don't know what's in there! We should get in there and find out.

Brent: That's the thing. Yeah, find out if like... They get like, the world champion Deus Ex speed runner, like, being the front of the lines. Like, I know where we're going! Follow me!

Dave: They might as well. I mean, some of the memes I've seen have put Keanu Reeves at the forefront of it. How many people have signed up? I think you found this out, right?

Brent: 1.6 million have listed themselves as going, and over a million have listed themselves as 'interested,' as if they have to see if they can get off work. But like, they want to go.

Dave: I'll see what's on, yeah. Well, I like the... even then, it's a 1.6 million. And every time they post memes about like, with, y'know, images of them doing it, they only draw about 12 people, seven people. [laughing] It's like, the whole joke is that it's gonna be this retched attempt at doing something completely impossible.

But—but! It is plausible. The conspiracy the—you can look at this in two ways. Like, on the one hand, you could say, well, it's, y'know, in this age of conspiracy theories, it is plausible that there might be some people who thought this would be possible, and they're the ones organizing. But then, on the other hand, I suspect this is something of a meta commentary on... these... these youngins, just like us, they're sick of the fact that conspiracy theories are just like, the news, now.

And y'know, you mentioned Fox News a minute ago. Okay, Fox News don't quite count as the news. But, y'know, other news is covering this. Whenever there is a conspiracy theory, it will pop up in the headlines. Even though it's just a stupid thing that somebody on the internet came up with.

Brent: Well, yeah...

Dave: And this is almost like—

Brent: Because acknowledging it... acknowledging it and coopting the 'what if' of it gets clicks.

Dave: Yeah!

Brent: There is a cynicism behind that.

Dave: So this counts. This sort of reads as like, like a piece of satirical art against that, if looked at a certain way. And some of the people – many of the people doing it will be thinking of it that way. A lot of people won't. That's the thing. There's always so many people... who knows what they're all individually thinking? But put it all together, it just seems like a good old time. It seems like a good old fashioned Photoshop thread, y'know?

Brent: Yeah. I mean, I have to say, though... to take it seriously for one moment...

Dave: Yeah.

Brent: I don't think... like, my hypothesis is that Area 51 has no aliens.

Dave: No!

Brent: No UFOs. And here's why. Because if the government had any brains after this meme of Area 51 being like that, they'd move all that stuff to like, Area 9.

Dave: Yeah.

Brent: That would solve the problem. Nobody knows where Area 9 is. You don't, I don't, and so, y'know, it's problem solved. Maybe Area 51 is just full of like...

Dave: If Men in Black's true, and there's aliens and all of that, that exact thing you just described happened 40, 50 years ago. As soon as anyone mentioned Area—by the time the X-Files was on, it was no longer there.

But, we know what Area 51 is. They were just testing out these planes... it was the cold war, and they had these planes that could go really high, and

pilots who went in normal height planes saw them and went, "Whoa, I'm in the normal height plane. There's nobody that can fly higher than me." And word got round. It's just normal, y'know, testing of air force stuff in the cold war.

Brent: Right.

Dave: And like, we find out 'bout that, 'cause word got around, and then... y'know, and then it all goes all silly, doesn't it?

Brent: All Roswell. Yeah. Um, okay. I think we can put a bow on this, because the next topic is the one I think you and I actually really want to talk about.

Dave: [laughs]

Brent: The movie version... the upcoming, uh, anxiously-awaited and self-proclaimed 'event film' of the musical, Cats.

Dave: Yeah! A strange one, because it's kind of only become an event film the same week the trailer's coming out. For me, I've been following this very keenly for a long time. I mean, a long time. We're talking '90s. There was a time when this was going to be an animated film. Back when 'animated' definitely meant hand-drawn animation of cartoon cats. That didn't make sense then. This doesn't make sense now.

By the time you listen to this, anyone at home, the trailer will be available. We haven't seen it yet, because it comes out, y'know, the day this comes out. But um, but for us, yesterday, 'cause we're recording this on... what day is it? Thursday? Wednesday? What day is it?

Brent: Yeah. Yeah. It's—this will have been recorded—this episode will have been recorded between Wednesday, July 17th, and Thursday, July 18th. Which, it is now Thursday, July 18th. Just about noon eastern time.

Dave: So we haven't seen the trailer yet, but we've seen this preview thing, where it was little interviews with the cast. And I nearly wrote this off,

because I was just thinking, "Oh, y'know, I don't need to see James Cordon say, "Watch my film." But...

Brent: Right.

Dave: They've dropped a couple of little... little nuggets in there that I'm suddenly interested and on board.

Brent: On board? Now, what does on 'on board'—

Dave: Yeah!

Brent: Unironically, you are excited for this to be good?

Dave: Uhh... uhh... [groans] I won't go that far.

Brent: [laughs] Okay.

Dave: Sort of posting Area 51 memes level on board.

Brent: Ah, okay.

Dave: But put it this way – I'm more interested in this, and more confident that I'm going to enjoy this than the Lion King. I'll say that, for sure.

Brent: Well, yeah. I mean, I'm hearing—I'm so disappointed. It seems like everything but Aladdin, which I also haven't seen. Every Disney live action or live action-esque reboot has seemed overly cynical, and without much magic.

Dave: The series certainly has its ups and its big, low downs.

Brent: Yeah. I mean, what I've heard, and I think I've said this on the show before, is that actually, it's just as much about... uh, it's just as much about Disney maintaining their copyrights and extending them on these

properties than it is about um, y'know, a whole new generation of fans. Like, fuck that.

Dave: I've certainly heard that, yeah.

Brent: Anyway, we're getting off topic, though. It sounds like Lion King is only gonna be fun if you never saw the original, and even then, perhaps a bit lifeless, perhaps a bit without magic. Because lions don't emote, and they went with that. Um...

Dave: [laughs] And that does bring us back to cats. Because Cats is a musical, a stage musical, from 1980... I don't know, one or something? Um, a British—Andrew Lloyd Webber. Lord Sir Andrew Lloyd Sir Webber, um, musical about some cats. But here's the thing – it's not a musical in the normal sense. It's not... it doesn't have a story. It's not quite just a revue, but it's... what it is. It's an adaptation of a book of poems, which was, itself, a funny, satirical joke when it came out in 18-whatevery-whatever. Um, or 19-whatevery-whatever. I don't know.

Brent: By TS Eliot, just so we're clear. Just to be historically accurate.

Dave: That's right. And he wrote this book in which, uh, he writes a series of poems about sort of one cat each, more or less, in which the behavior you can observe in cats is extrapolated outwards to sound like the behavior you can observe in gentlemen about town and other society figures. And that's the joke.

So, they're all, y'know, they're... for example, the famous Mr. Mistoffelees one, it's talking about this cat who can do magic tricks. But the magic tricks, y'know, talking like he's a stage magician. But the magic tricks are stuff like... he produced seven kittens right out of a hat! He buried the fork in the garden! Stuff like that. And then, there are others that are a bit more society-sounding.

And so, Lloyd Webber comes up with this fun idea, which, if you're an incredibly posh rich person, is the height of tittery giggles. Which is, what if we take the current trend of uh, on TV, particularly on top of the pops, pop

songs that don't have music videos, but still need to go on TV, because we have pop music TV. Um, they would just have dancers in like, sexy clothes, just sexily dancing about to the tunes?

He goes, wouldn't it be funny if we did that, but it was a poetry recital? And I wrote some songs, and we dressed them all up in skin-tight leotards and stuff, and they were cats, and they were dancing around sexily? That is it. That's the full extent of the premise of Cats. There's almost no story at all. At the end, they kind of try and tie it together by saying, like, all these cats we just introduced you to... one of them is gonna get picked for something! There we go, we picked one! The end.

Um, that's...

Brent: [laughs]

Dave: That's Cats.

Brent: Yeah. It's... you and I are both musical theater enthusiasts, which is a robust and fundamental part of our friendship.

Dave: [laughs]

Brent: And I gotta say – I was telling a friend of mine who went and saw Cats live in Philadelphia recently, like... Cats is... almost... completely devoid of any of the things I really like about musical theater.

Dave: [laughs]

Brent: Um, like, I don't love a bunch of dance, just for the sake. I don't love unconnected song cycles that seem to be themed, but actually, you just have to like... get into the mini-verse of a different character over and over again. And also, like, these different characters, unlike something like, say, songs for a new world, or certain other song cycles, um... they don't... for me, they don't really, um, capture my interest. Some of them are very catchy.

Dave: Mm-hmm.

Brent: But it's like, I don't know what I'm watching. I don't know why I should care. I'm not much of a cat person. What are we doing?

Dave: Yeah, oh, yeah. If you're not a cat person, I—I don't imagine there's anything—the joy in *Cats*, apart from just the fact that it's live theater, and it's loud, and there's lights, and people are dancing around. Um, is, there is a certain amount of like, oh, yes, my cat does do that! It does sit on my hat! Ha, that's funny!

Brent: [laughs]

Dave: So if you take that that we've just described, and you turn it into a film... [laughing] What do you do? And when it was gonna be an animated film, that made absolutely no sense at all. And now, they did do it in... I think it was 1998 or so, they did a video. They released a video where they filmed the show. And it wasn't just, y'know, on in the theater and they put a camera there. They did it in a sound stage, but it was exactly the show. Exactly the show.

That works, because it's essentially like a... it's the equivalent of buying the album. It's just a take home version of the thing, right?

Brent: Yeah.

Dave: That's still not a film. That's still not something you would see at the cinema, and everyone... y'know, the wider world who needs to generate x-million dollars for it to be worth making a film, agrees is a... like *Les Mis*, which is the closest comparison we have, because it's the same director. Tom Hooper or Hopper? I always forget.

Brent: I think Hooper.

Dave: Hmm.

Brent: Now, that being said, uh, that segues into this three and a half minute behind the scenes video that you mentioned earlier.

Dave: [laughs]

Brent: Which, just so we're clear, it starts out very... serious. Like, very, like, pensive and indulgent piano in the background as Jennifer Hudson tells you about her past and singing in church. Like, that's the first thing... for this Cats behind the scenes is Jennifer Hudson saying, y'know, I grew up singing in the church. And it's like, is this one of those featurettes, like, before an Olympic gymnast?

Dave: I know, yeah.

Brent: Like, goes and does their routine? Like, why am I supposed to be emotionally invested in these actors?

Dave: Yeah, it was like the—

Brent: And I think the reason is because the movie's not gonna be good.

Dave: It was like the montage that they show before, y'know, the winning candidate in one of those talent show series or something does their big number.

Brent: Yeah, America's Got Talent. Exactly.

Dave: Yeah. Now, that's because, basically, the only thing that is a solid sell for this film is its cast. Which is—

Brent: The cast is very exciting and solid.

Dave: It's a solid cast. Yeah. I mean, the... over here, everyone I talk to only focuses on the fact that James Corden is in it, because he's a very unpopular person in the UK for various reasons. Some justified, some not. But uh, there was a period where he just sort of seemed to turn up in everything, and to me, that culminated in the Peter Rabbit movie.

I don't mind. I can see him as Bustopher Jones perfectly fine. But that's what people are focusing on, here. But you've got your Taylor Swifts and so on, haven't you? You've got all sorts of people that young people know and I don't.

Brent: Oh, man, this is like, serious stardom. Jennifer Hudson, Taylor Swift, Judi Dench, James Corden, Idris Elba, um... and I'm sure I'm forgetting one or two, but like... oh, oh, Rebel Wilson. Um, like... these are the stars of right now.

Dave: Yeah.

Brent: To a great extent. And um, yeah, the cast does provide a holy shit element. But um, I think my favorite phrase from the behind the scenes featurette...

Dave: [laughs] I know what it'll be.

Brent: ...is "digital fur technology."

Dave: [laughs] Yeah.

Brent: They show them dancing, and then they show what looks like an X-Box Kinect demo where you see like, the implied bone structure of a moving person.

Dave: Yeah, it's the wire frame, motion capture figure of a dancer, isn't it? And chiefly, and you, listening to this, will have your chance to see this by now. We imagine. But they don't show the fur technology – they just tell us it'll be good. [laughs]

Brent: Yeah. Yeah.

Dave: We don't know what it's gonna be. Because the reason I got all in a fuss about this, and I posted a bit thread about it on Twitter where I said

everything I know about Cats and the world, was um... in April or something. When they announced that it was going to be photo-realistic, CG cats.

But also... so, okay, we're back to the animated version. It's gonna look like the Lion King, right? But, also, they were casting as singing characters who, yes, on stage, are dancers, but that's because they all are. But characters who, in a film, only need to really sing. They were casting ballet dancers as them.

And so it's like... well, what, then? Is it CG cats, or is it dancers, or... and this is what I was hoping it wasn't, but also kind of wanted to see them crash and burn by doing. Not that I want to see them crash and burn – by the way, I'm a fan of Cats. It sounds like I'm not. I like this show. I've got the album. I will never give it up. But, I was thinking, are they gonna use the motion capture from dancers and Happy Feet it, and put it on photo-realistic cats somehow? Even though the dancing they do is really sexualized.
[laughing]

Brent: Yeah. It could get very weird, very fast. It just occurred to me, in a barely-related thing, that um... y'know, 1997, uh, animated musical comedy, Cats Don't Dance, distributed by Warner Bros Pictures, is kind of a real F you to Cats, if you think about it.

Dave: Yeah. [laughs]

Brent: Like, actually, you idiots... cats *do not* dance.

Dave: Imagine if—I think that's a Brad Bird, isn't it? Imagine if... no, it's not, it's the chap who did... oh, what is it? Emperor's New Groove? What's his name? Sorry, that guy's name. But anyway... [laughs] I apologize to his name. Um, but—

Brent: Well, directed by Mark Dindal.

Dave: Mark Dindal! That's the fellow! Yes! So imagine if he and the studio that made it, Warner Bros or whoever, what if they just got snubbed on the Cats, y'know, movie that was gonna be animated?

Brent: [gasps] Yeah!

Dave: And then they made *Cats Don't Dance* as a response to that. Wouldn't that be great? By the way, good film.

Brent: That is now my headcanon for all of this.

Dave: It's a good film.

Brent: Officially.

Dave: You should watch *Cats Don't Dance*, everyone. Um, so. Yes. *Cats* movie. Kind of excited for it. Still not explained. So this thing about the fur – from the looks of this teaser, they are filming human dancers on gigantic, blown up sets. You can see the sets in it. And you've got, y'know, sort of... y'know, street lamp lit, cobbled streets of the outdoors that you would imagine something like this would be filmed in.

Brent: Yeah.

Dave: But there's also these weird dream sequence like, milk cocktail bar places and stuff?

Brent: But everything's huge.

Dave: Mm-hmm.

Brent: Because the idea is that a human-sized actor would be actually proportionally the size of a cat. So like, door knobs are six feet off the ground, and these sorts of things.

Dave: And they're all practical! These are practical sets! Which is just...

Brent: Yeah, and I do appreciate that.

Dave: Yeah, it's kind of exciting in itself. So what it means is, we are going to see dancers, human dancers. But it sounds like they're gonna sort of CG fur on them in a cross between like, the costumes... a CG version of the costumes from the show, and just... y'know, a convention-goers greatest dream. There are gonna be so many people excited by the look of this thing.

Brent: It's such a shame that the trailer... that we can't comment on the trailer yet, and that by the time we, y'know, do next week's show, it'll be somewhat old hat, y'know what I'm saying?

Dave: It will.

Brent: It won't be brand new, and everyone will have already gotten their opinion, except for the people that listen to this show that refuse to get their news anywhere else.

Dave: [laughs] Honestly, I think those people have got the right idea.

Brent: Eyy, thanks! That's nice of you. Okay, let's put a bow on this. We've got one more thing to talk about.

Dave: Okay.

Brent: Any final thoughts on Cats, the behind the scenes thing, anything?

Dave: Just that I... it's all been re-choreographed by the choreographer who did Hamilton. That is deeply exciting to me. That choreography is very, very good. That is some—this is what it says in the trailer. I haven't actually checked that it's true, but that's what they say in the teaser.

That choreography is extremely good, and genuinely modern, and it looks, just from what I've seen, like they are, y'know, completely re-choreographing it. Making it modern, and y'know, communicative dance. Making it look like a music video, which is what I've always said they should do. And so, I actually feel like they might be taking the right approach.

When I did my thread in April about what I would imagine a Cats movie to be like, y'know, when I was younger and imagining what I would want it to be, they've basically done everything I said they should. [laughs] We'll see.

Brent: They cribbed your thread and went, "I think this guy's onto something."

Dave: I hope so.

Brent: "Let's just sneakily steal his ideas." To me, I think that there are very few movies... y'know, there's this trope of stoners, that they like, enjoy watching movies high. And the thing is, that's, to me, if something's like, so bad it's good, I adopt that, y'know, can be really fun.

Dave: Sure.

Brent: But with this, I want to be... I mean, I don't do hard drugs, y'all.

Dave: [laughs]

Brent: But I want to be pretty fucked up, like, when I... [laughs] I want to go to the cinema, and right as—

Dave: What was it Courtney said? You'll be mowing the lawn for some of that Brent kind of grass?

Brent: [laughs] Yeah. I want to go into the theater *juuust* coming up on like, an edible gummy, with like, a flask of some kind of booze that I can put in my giant Diet Coke, and just sit there, completely absorbing what will... I mean, look, we haven't seen the trailer, but I know. I just know, it's either going to be a hate watch, it's going to be surprisingly good, or it's going to be so bad it's good.

I don't think there's... I don't think, actually, that there's a whole lot of marble-caked together... what am I trying to say? I'm not sure there's a continuum of that. I think it's a very, like, discreet possibilities, uh, kind of, y'know... the outcome will be very specific, and... I don't know. Like, we'll

see. But if it's anything like the Greatest Showman, I'm just going to be mad for two hours.

Dave: The big basket of different responses are, basically, my experience every time I watch or listen to Cats. So to be honest, it's probably gonna be pretty much on the nail. [laughs]

Brent: [laughs] Alright, one more thing that is a little bit, y'know, esoteric, or... what's the word I want to use? For an audio medium, this is not going to be the most vibrant, uh, story. But I just found a thing out that blew my mind.

Okay, so, people that are on Twitter out there, or Facebook, you will almost definitely be familiar, even subconsciously, with this uh, .GIF, this animated .GIF, or jiff, if you're one of those.

Dave: [laughs]

Brent: Um, where there's a man wearing brown. He seems to be in an exterior, uh, like, woodsy area. And there's this beautiful zoom in on his face as he's clearly looking at someone in the distance. He slowly, y'know, a smirk comes across his face, and he just nods – either with approval, or acquiescence. It seems like a very tender moment. Got a big beard, kind of a, y'know, I would say, long but like, not particularly sexy looking hair. And if you know this .GIF, then you know this .GIF.

Dave: It makes you... the look of that nod that he gives you, it makes you totally trust that he will cook a big fish really well for you to eat.

Brent: [laughs]

Dave: Up there on the mountain with him. Right?

Brent: Yes. Now—

Dave: I don't know where he got a fish up in a mountain. But he got one, by golly.

Brent: Now, some kind of... some kind of stream that's not too steep, 'cause otherwise, the fish just fall.

Dave: It just falls, yeah.

Brent: But uh—

Dave: Goes with the water.

Brent: [laughs] So, the thing is, I never thought he was Zach Galifianakis. I have heard people assume that. I feel like younger-than-us people don't always... maybe this is selling them short. But I feel like younger people don't always have the ability to discern the decade of a film based on the film grain.

Dave: Oh, I thought you were gonna say faces. [laughs]

Brent: No, yeah. Did you know like, young millennials are all face blind? That's what I'm really getting at. Um, no. Uh, I uh, am not trying to be ableist against face blind people. I, myself, have problems remembering faces, so let's just not even go there. But here's what I'm saying.

Some people thought it was Zach Galifianakis. It looks very much like Zach Galifianakis.

Dave: I suppose.

Brent: And the whole point of me bringing this up is... [inhales] People, it's Robert Redford! It's Robert fucking Redford!

Dave: An incredibly, very, very famous face, Robert Redford. A face who... I mean, I've only ever seen him in about two things. There's a lot of—there's a big, missing hole in the films that I should've watched that are big, classic films. Even I know exactly what Robert Redford's face looks like, and I never put it together that this was him.

Brent: Sure. He's in the Marvel universe. He's, y'know, just one of these classic actors.

Dave: Yeah.

Brent: The Horse Whisperer. And he's so buried in this bushy beard and this really unattractive, like, y'know, it's a haircut you think of for a secluded mountain man who doesn't give a shit about his haircut. And yeah, it's from a 1972 movie called Jeremiah Johnson, about a mountain man who supports himself as a trapper in the Rocky Mountains. And um, I'll never be able to unsee that fact. But for those of you that thought it was Zach Galifianakis in a uh, sincere or faux-sincere moment, it is not. And now you know.

Dave: The reason why it's such a surprise is that, what Robert and his, y'know, his design team have done in that film is, they've used his beard and hair to bulk up this mass of his head by at least three times.

Brent: Oh yeah. It's a big, spherical nod at that point.

Dave: Hm. You just want to put your hands in it and ruffle `em around.
[laughs]

Brent: [laughs] I mean, the thing is, he's got very chiseled kind of classic leading man features. And impossibly blonde hair, most of the time. And this is just simply not that.

Um, okay. So, uh, Dave. Couple of things. Number one. Earlier in this episode, Kate and I mentioned our upcoming podcast, Question Box, and I just wanted to point out the fact that, uh, we chose you! We chose you, good sir, as our first victim. Our first contestant on our game show of shockingly personal questions.

And um, I'm hoping, later in the show, to include a little preview of that. But uh, I just wanted the audience to know, after being absolutely charmed, as I know you all are, by Dave in this segment, uh, there's more. There's more of that.

Dave: Yeah, they ask incredibly personal questions, and I basically have to answer them. [laughs] It's extremely out of my comfort zone, but we had quite a nice time, didn't we?

Brent: Yeah. Yeah. And also, just let the audience know where they can find you on the internet. Maybe anything you're working on right now?

Dave: Well, if I'm allowed to plug podcasts, I've—

Brent: Yeah, of course.

Dave: I've got a fortnightly podcast called Sonic: The Comic: The Podcast about the weird, obscure, British Sega magazine from 1993. And we cover everything, right down to its contemporary video game news, and full page adverts for Jurassic Park and Star Trek: Next Generation action figures. It is a portal to 1993, and of course, there's a lot of Sonic the Hedgehog in there.

And also, I do an irregular podcast called Serious Disness, where we wade deep into the current series of Disney remakes, like the Lion King. Like Aladdin. We force ourselves to watch every single one of them, and we're as fair and as grown up as we possibly can be about them. And we, y'know, we give them... we reappraise them without any of that sort of bias that we have, but also admitting to it and talking about it, and it's a general sort of Disney and animation podcast.

And also, I'm DemonTomatoDave on Twitter, Twitch, and YouTube, so you'll find me there.

Brent: Amazing. Alright, well, thanks, Dave. Uh, thanks for being on the show, and we'll hopefully talk to you soon.

Dave: Mm-hmm! Bye!

[theme music plays]

Brent: Hey, it's me, Brent. This segment is just gonna be me. I wanted to do an update on the Jeffrey Epstein and Alex Acosta situations, since we did that deep dive last week.

First off, Alex Acosta, who you'll remember, was the prosecutor that gave Jeffrey Epstein the sweetheart deal about ten years ago and allowed him to serve 13 breezy months of work-release prison after being charged with sex trafficking and the sexual assault of minors, uh, and Acosta is the current secretary of labor under president and Jeffrey Epstein mutual, Donald Trump.

Acosta announced his resignation this past week, and uh, Trump made it sound like he disagreed with Acosta's decision, but wished him well. For the record, this is a drop in the bucket of the over 100 of Trump's political appointees to resign or be fired since Trump took office. That's not an exaggeration. A lot of them, we haven't heard about, because they were more small time people, sort of in the background, behind the scenes.

But yes, over 100 of Trump's political appointees have resigned or been fired since Trump took office. And y'know, this is the guy that said he would get "the best people." But uh, apparently they were just too good! Too good for their positions. Much, much too best.

Anyway, Epstein had a detention hearing this past week, wherein his lawyer said he's willing to post bail as high as a hundred million dollars. Prosecutors, as well as two of Epstein's accusers, urged Judge Richard Berman to keep Epstein locked up without bail. And that makes sense, considering the fact that Epstein has millions of dollars in liquid cash, his own private plane, and his own private island.

He's willing to blow a hundred million dollars on bail? I would consider that the definition of a flight risk. Assistant US attorney, Alex Rossmiller, also said that a number of additional witnesses contacted authorities after Epstein was recently indicted. And so, uh, as of today, Thursday, the 18th of July, Epstein has been denied bail by the judge, and must stay behind bars until the trial.

Let's hope this could set a precedent that super rich, straight, white guys won't always be able to get away with terrible things, scot-free, or nearly scot-free. And I'm personally hoping the guy gets life. Fuck you, man.

[theme music plays]

Brent: Alright, Kate and I are back, and Kate has yet another story from the internet to share with us.

Kate: Yeah, this is a weird one. Here's a riddle: what do sword fighting, sensory deprivation, and experimental eyeball surgery have in common?

Brent: Jesus Christ. What?

Kate: [laughs] I mean, they're all weird shit. But, they're all part of what synthpop musician, Grimes, calls her training regimen, which she published in a completely bonkers Instagram post last Monday.

Brent: Oof.

Kate: If you don't know, Grimes is a musician who is dating Elon Musk, fellow weirdo, tech CEO.

Brent: [laughs]

Kate: Um, and so, she made this post about things that she does daily, apparently, to keep her energy levels and her neuroplasticity up. Uh, it's a bunch of really strange things, including taking supplements, spending two to four hours every day in a sensory deprivation tank, doing one to two hours of sword fighting with a trainer, and having a 20-minute screaming session with another singer songwriter. I... I don't really think that that would be good for your voice.

Brent: Sounds like a bunch of random Cards Against Humanity cards, just kind of stacked on top of each other as a regimen.

Kate: Yeah. Let's just see what works. [laughs] Yeah.

Brent: Yeah.

Kate: But the most bizarre thing is that she mentions that she underwent surgery to remove the top film of her eyeball and replace it with an orange ultra-flex polymer in an attempt to cure seasonal depression, and uh, a lot of people are uh, arguing about whether, like, she's for real, or if she's just trolling. Because some of this stuff is so out there that it doesn't seem possible that this is a thing that a real human does every day.

Brent: Uh-huh. Um, what's the top film of an eyeball?

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: I don't know... I don't know, like... does she mean the cornea? Or...

Kate: So here's what I found when I looked into it. She says that she removed the part of the eyeball that perceives blue light, and her thinking is that, if you take away your eyeball's ability to perceive blue light, then the blue light won't affect your depression levels. But what I found is that, there's actually no established link, seemingly, between blue light and seasonal depression.

Like, the way that they treat seasonal depression with light therapy is uh, subjecting you to the full spectrum of light, because that's what sunlight is. And so, it's trying to replicate sunlight. So, there's really no reason why this surgery would work from what I was able to dig up.

Brent: If you get rid of your ability to perceive blue light, like, jeeze, your fashion and interior decorating choices go right out the window. Like...

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: I think that's a terrible idea. Though, I do—isn't it true that like, um, the... the apps and the settings on certain devices that like, are for night time, take out the blue light, 'cause that keeps you awake longer? Have you heard that?

Kate: Yeah, like Flux. Yeah.

Brent: Yeah. We've got it now on Macs. I really wish that more TVs had it, because I really love to, um... I mean, jeeze, y'know, Futurama singlehandedly has been my nighttime pacifier for probably the majority of nights for the past, I don't know, ten years? But like, I have to really trick the settings on my TV to make it not like, keep me awake longer.

Kate: Mm-hmm.

Brent: And I wish that, y'know, my little RCA 40-inch TV had like, a setting like that. But we're getting off track. Grimes is being weird. Back to Grimes.

Kate: I mean, you could just get the surgery if you wanted to, I guess.
[laughs]

Brent: But see, I like blue.

Kate: Yeah, me too.

Brent: It's a popular color. I don't want to just be like, "I'll fall asleep much better than I did before! Though, I'll never see a primary color again."

Kate: Yeah.

Brent: Um, I mean, that sounds pretty terrible. And it kind of asks the whole question of like, "Is your blue my blue?" Like, I've just accepted, after thinking that through a lot, I've just accepted that like, they're very similar, person to person. That's what I've come to. Do you feel like that's true, or no?

Kate: Yeah. Uh, I mean, the thing that I always go back to is that we, a lot of times, associate certain emotions or feeling states with colors, and they seem to be fairly consistent. Like, blue is associated with sadness, so to me, that suggests that we do all see the same colors. But I don't know. I'm not a philosopher.

Brent: Um, I'm not a *professional* philosopher. But uh, I'm a 'nobody asked me to be one' philosopher. So I have two thoughts – number one, uh, my apartment was painted crimson before I showed up by my landlord. And uh, very bold choice. And I kept it, and people are always like, "Ooh, such a bold color!" And I'm like, "Uh, yeah."

But I do wonder, though, how it affects my state. Is it good for creativity? Does it make me war-like? Does it make me pissed off more? I have no idea.

Kate: So she says—Grimes says, in her post, that she keeps her studio lit with red lights exclusively. Uh, for some kind of therapeutic reason that she believes in. And there are some thoughts about infrared technology, and how it might affect neural regeneration and a bunch of other things in the body and brain.

So, that's... interesting. I... I don't... I don't know that I would do it, but...

Brent: Yeah. There's like a hint... like a—a dash of sort of futurism in all this. And I'm—I'm pro-futurism, but also, like, I think that every generation... and this is so well-documented, now, that we have photographs and good, y'know, kind of like, historical documentation of the last couple hundred years. There's always something brand new that's like, "Oh, it's space aged!" But it's like, no, no, no, it's margarine, and now you have cancer. [laughs]

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: Like, it's... so, I look at this and go, some of it sounds good. Like, a 20-minute screaming session? Boy. I feel like that might be really good for a lot of people.

Kate: But that... I thought that that was so weird, given that she's a singer. Because like, you and me are both singers, so I mean, you probably know... I don't really feel like screaming for 20 minutes every day would be good for your singing voice. That sounds like it would really mess it up.

Brent: Not every day. Though, I bet you there are vocal coaches that are like, "As like as you're supporting." Y'know. [laughs]

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: I've worked with those coaches that are like, "Doesn't matter what you're doing, as long as you're doing it healthily." I'm like, okay, well... to me, the kind of screaming that would really be therapeutic is the kind that's gonna make my throat feel like shit after two minutes.

Kate: Yeah.

Brent: But um, like, y'know, the real, like, getting it out. In fact, uh, while we're on the subject, this is part of why I love rollercoasters.

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: Because nobody's... nobody's offended or freaked out that you're truly screaming out all your feelings.

Kate: Socially sanctioned screaming. Yeah.

Brent: Exactly.

Kate: There are very few avenues for that. There's like, haunted houses, scary movies maybe. People will think you're a wimp, though.

Brent: Y'know what? I love scary movies, and I love my body becoming a pretzel of fear. I love covering up my eyes so that I can only look through a tiny crack in my hands, and anybody that calls me a wimp can suck it, because I love to be scared.

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: And on that note – Hereditary, I think, is the best horror movie of the last 20 years. And Midsommer, a follow-up by the same director, not the same kind of horror, but very creepy. Full of dread. Recommended.

Kate: Interesting.

Brent: Have you seen either one?

Kate: I have not. I just recently watched Jennifer's Body for the first time, 'cause I'm very behind the times. And uh, I have concluded that I want every horror movie to have lesbian elements from now on. That's just how it's gotta be.

Brent: Oh. Okay. I mean... seconded. I'm fine with that.

Kate: Uh-huh.

Brent: Spooky. Um... though, I think that if I don't clarify, it could sound like that trope of like, straight guy being like, "Yeah, ooh." So I'm not—I'm not saying that. I'm saying, should horror movies, going forward, have lesbian elements, I am here for it.

Kate: Yeah. I want more queer representation in my succubus films, thank you.

Brent: [laughs]

Kate: The funniest thing about the Grimes post, to go back to that for a sec, is that the last line of it is that she sleeps with a humidifier on. [laughing] So she says all these completely weird things, and then, at the end of the day, she just goes to bed with a humidifier on, like the most boring among us.

Brent: [laughs]

Kate: That's very relatable.

Brent: I was gonna say, like... I do sword fighting, I ride a dolphin... also, uh... also, I take one milligram of melatonin. I have a melatonin gummy and some warm milk and a sleep mask.

Kate: [laughing]

Brent: Yeah, that is interesting. I don't know, like, all these things, I find it interesting, but also, I'm not sure I believe all of it. I don't believe you're doing two—one to two hours of sword fighting a day. I'm sorry. No, you're not. No, you're not. You're not. You're not!

Kate: I mean, if anyone is, I think it's Grimes. But I also do think that there is an element of like, trolling to the whole thing. Like, the tone of it is pretty hilarious, and uh, it would be pretty funny if she was joking about some of this stuff.

I am a little bit worried that people are gonna try to go do the stuff that she's recommending, but...

Brent: Aye yai yai.

Kate: But yeah, I don't know what would—

Brent: I mean, think about it. Think about it. We're talking, if this is being presented as 'daily,' two to four hours in a sensory deprivation tank. One to two hours of sword fighting with a trainer. 20 minutes of screaming. So like, on a real heavy day, she's doing six hours and 20 minutes of this bullshit. And also, making sure her eye is missing a part. Like... [laughs] I don't know. I just don't know.

Kate: Yeah. Do you think you would be, uh—

Brent: But I wish her well.

Kate: [laughs] Do you think you'd be a better or worse songwriter if you were doing sword fighting every day?

Brent: Worse, because so much of songwriting is like, catching yourself in that good energy pocket where you're like, "Ooh, I'm not manic. I'm not hypomanic, but I'm like, a few notches toward it. Let's ride the wave and

write some stuff." I can't waste all my energy on, y'know, freakin', uh, clang clang parry. I can't do that. No, no, no. Nay, nay, nay.

Kate: [laughing]

Brent: Alright, are you ready to suuuper shift gears?

Kate: I am.

Brent: Um, let's get rid of all of our joy. Um, which is hard to do. I recently watched a montage on YouTube of like, newscasters... oh, it was a John Oliver thing about newscasters, like, reading things with all the wrong tones. Not trying to do that. So, okay, taking a breath. [exhales] As Travis would recommend.

Okay. We're gonna talk about Mike Pence at the border camp. Unless you live under a rock with no Wi-Fi, you've surely heard about the cruelty being perpetrated by our government against migrants. And by 'our government,' I mean the United States. Sorry, Kate.

This past week, vice president, Mike Pence, traveled to one of these camps, along with some republican senators and a film crew. Remember, recently, members of congress, including AOC, had a tough time getting access to facilities like these, and were discouraged from taking pictures or video.

So, it's a strange thing when the vice president travelled there with a camera crew, and the footage shows male migrants – hundreds of them – in cells that can barely fit them, having to sleep on the concrete floor using foil blankets that, y'know, like, if it's wintertime, foil blankets are great. They keep you warm. But the centers are kept sweltering hot.

And there's footage that has come out where these men desperately look into the camera, they say they need a shower, they try to indicate they've been there for 40 days or more, some of them were wearing face masks, ostensibly to dampen the smell. Um, and Pence and senator Lindsay Graham just like, look at them blankly, or talk to guards and turn away. No clear reaction or interaction whatsoever.

Um, as I said, recently, AOC traveled down there to one of these camps. Maybe not the same one. And told the press about like, these terrible, squalled conditions and mistreatment, including one migrant woman who claimed the sink didn't work, and she and others were told to drink out of toilet bowls.

Now, you'd think for Pence's trip, to be cynical about it, they could've made some kind of dog and pony show where everyone was being taken care of in a humane way. Like when you watch like, North Korea footage where they have all these like, really nice stores, but you can't buy anything.

The thing is, at least in the case of all these men in cells, they didn't do that. And the administration allowed the footage to go out. Why? To me, I think the point is to deter other migrants, to make Trump's racist and xenophobic base happy. To borrow from writer, Adam Serwer, cruelty is the point. They wanted the world to see this footage.

Pence later framed the entire issue as one of 'overcrowding,' but that's bullshit. Trump's recent fourth of July wankfest cost an estimated five and a half million dollars. Five and a half million dollars sure could buy a lot of IKEA beds for people to sleep not on the concrete floor. Y'know, like the standards upheld by prisons where they keep murderers?

Kate: Yeah.

Brent: And five and a half million dollars could help organize a system that didn't require the separation of parents and their children, or, y'know, help with running water, air conditioning, humane conditions, for people that turn out to be human beings, come to find.

Like, let's just like, zoom out for a second. Aside from Trump's theater of cruelty, we really do need some kind of immigration reform. According to the federal reserve bank of Dallas, immigrants and their children have accounted for half of the workforce growth in the last 20 years. And in their estimation, that percentage will go up, because the existing workforce is aging, and will continue to age out of the workforce. Now, to be fair, automation will affect

the workforce numbers greatly, too. But clearly, immigration can help seal that gap and is already doing so.

Meanwhile, Trump administration has rolled out a new rule targeting asylum seekers, and basically, it would make it almost impossible to seek asylum in the United States without jumping through a bunch of hoops, or being a very special kind of asterisk case. And y'know, granting asylum has a long history in this country. It's an ancient idea. It's part of the universal declaration of human rights, which is an international agreement, which the US signed in 1948.

It seems to me that so much of why Trump and his administration are doing this is because Trump's base leans racist, and it's coming up on an election year. If he can't have his wall, at least he can kick around the brown people he loves to scapegoat.

And like, I don't know, like... I'm from Texas. I try to put myself in the shoes of others. But like, where does it start? Does it start with like, someone in a white community being like, "I had an Uber driver the other day whose English wasn't very good. I don't want to have to interact with people like that." Like, I... I don't... I don't know exactly where it comes from, or if it's just simply like, "I don't like people that aren't white, and there's more of them, so I'm mad." I don't get it.

And you and I talked before we went to record about this. It seems like the far right would rather just stop all immigration except for like, educated white people who speak English. And it seems like the far left is increasingly for either open borders, or just abolishing the idea of borders. And while my politics are solidly on the left, I think the loudest people calling for abolishing borders often have the least proposals to address the logistical implications.

For instance, I grew up in Texas, as I said. My school would have undocumented kids come in who either didn't know English, or only knew a few English words. And the school didn't have the infrastructure or the personnel to properly educate these kids, which you would think is the point of a school. And also, the attempt by teachers to help their comprehension slowed down English speaking students. So it didn't really help either set of kids.

If you're gonna do away with borders, there's this huge ball of wax to be figured out, in terms of maintaining things we like or need about our country. And I don't know, like, I wonder if, to some super lefties, if I sound like Joe Biden about it. Like, maybe I'm doing that thing where politicians say like, "Let's focus on policies that are actually possible!" But like, when they say that, usually they mean like, "Let's focus on policies that maintain the status quo and allow money to stay in politics and maintain a steep class structure."

But it seems like true open borders would complicate things in ways we may not be able to predict or quickly adjust to. So I just wish I had a sense of what the entire immigration situation should look like in this country. Like, duh, we should treat all migrants like humans. Duh. No human should be inherently illegal. We shouldn't separate children from their families or put them in cages with conditions worse than prisons.

Um, but those observations have to do with what it shouldn't look like. And I just wish I could put my finger on what it *should* look like, from both a compassion standpoint, and a logistical standpoint. So, number one, if y'all out there in podcast land have thoughts about this, please let us know on Twitter, which is @TrendsLikeThese, or the Facebook fan group. Let's talk about it.

But also, Kate, you live in a different country with different and probably better immigration rules. So like, as a Canadian, what do you think about all this?

Kate: Y'know, I don't actually know that much about Canada's immigration rules. I do know that I seem to know a lot of people who came here from the states, so it doesn't seem like it's that hard, comparatively, but I don't really know.

But this story has me reflecting a lot on like... I'm thinking about maybe moving to the states and immigrating, because my partner lives there, and it's just... it's shocking, the difference between what I will have to go through, and like, what these folks are going through. Because like, it is

going to be a lot for me to do it. I'm gonna have to fill out a lot of forms. People are gonna have to examine and scrutinize my relationship.

Brent: You're gonna have to take a test to prove that you know more about civics than Donald Trump.

Kate: Right. But I mean, I'm a straight-presenting, or straight-appearing, cis, white lady who speaks English, and is, y'know, educated and stuff. And so, of course, it's gonna be easier for me, and uh, it's just... I... I don't know what the answer is, but I know that these conditions that these folks are living in are horrible. And like, for me, as a Jewish person, I'm looking at them like, this doesn't look good.

Brent: No. And there is a group, um... I think they're called, uh... I do not want to get this wrong. But like, a bunch of Jewish people that are sort of saying "never again," because they see what this is.

Kate: Yeah.

Brent: They see that... oh, okay, are they detention camps or are they concentration camps? Y'know what, if you're anywhere in the neighborhood of concentration camps, that's a concern. And they *are* concentration camps. There's no... I mean, I'm not trying to—I'm not trying to throw around references to the Holocaust in a way that is, in any way, disrespectful. But it's like, yeah, are there differences between this and Auschwitz? Sure. But it's not... to me, that's a pretty low bar.

Kate: Yeah.

Brent: And these conditions are, to me, indistinguishable from too many things that happened in that situation, to say nothing of Japanese internment, which the United States needs to own.

Kate: Yeah, and you have people like Mike Pence making statements that it's 'offensive to the memory of the Holocaust and Jewish folks to compare these things to concentration camps.' But it reminds me of when there's some big gun violence event, and the right starts saying, "This isn't the

moment to politicize it. It's disrespectful to the victims to make this a political thing."

And on the left, we're advocating for more gun control, because we want to fix the problem, and so, it's not politicizing it. It's trying to address the problem. And in the same way, calling them concentration camps is an attempt to point out and address the problem. I mean, as a Jewish person, I don't find it disrespectful. I find it accurate, and I find it harrowing.

Brent: Yeah. Yeah. And I mean... [sighs] It's a big, hairy problem. Um, and I think neither of us would claim to uh, have the solution, and that's what's so infuriating about this problem is, y'know, people on the right are like, "Oh, they just want more brown people 'cause they're gonna vote democrat!" And it's like, well, you guys are also gerrymandering like motherfuckers and trying to like, find a way to make republican ideas still get votes.

But more importantly, people aren't being treated like humans? And we're like, the greatest country in the world, air quotes? We can't afford beds? Is that what you're telling me? Only in the private prisons?

Kate: The way Pence turns away from the men in the video is just... unbelievable. Like, he just doesn't seem to regard them as human beings. And like, I don't really care what your politics are. That's not right. It's not right to put people in these situations, no matter what the justification is.

Brent: Right. And it's exaggerated, or rather, exacerbated by the fact that he knows he is being filmed.

Kate: Mm-hmm.

Brent: So he has to take into account, even in the calculations of his gut in the moment, that he doesn't want to do X, and he does want to do Y. And the thing that he doesn't want to do is show any compassion, or show any emotion at all. And it's creepy, and I don't know, we're going through a lot of things right now. Like, what is the proverb? Like, may you live in

interesting times? Like, it's interesting. But uh... boring might be okay for a stretch after this, y'know?

Kate: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Brent: Like, boring, plus Medicare for all.

Kate: [laughs] That's the bare minimum. Yeah.

[music plays]

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Brent: Well, that's gonna do it for us. Thank you for joining us on this unusual, uh, differently structured episode of Trends Like These. I hope you've liked it. I hope you, uh, had a little kind of refreshing change before we go back to Courtney and Travis and me in our usual interesting sibling relationships and insights.

Um, I've never... I don't know if I've ever said that before, but I consider Travis and Courtney to be, essentially, like news-siblings. We're not like, co-anchors. We're like, news brother and sisters. And I miss them. However, Kate, it's been so wonderful having you on the show.

Kate: Thank you for having me.

Brent: Of course. And so, what I want to do now, again, our new podcast, Kate and I, our new podcast, Question Box, is premiering on Monday, July 22nd. Coming up. It's basically a game show of shockingly personal questions. Those of you on Trends Like These out there in podcast land must

know by now, I'm kind of a TMI person. Always kind of trying to hold that information in. And this is the podcast where it's like, nope. Let's talk about it.

Um, and so, people that you've heard of, people that uh, I personally am a fan of, will come on the show. They'll be asked deep, personal questions. They can choose to answer them or not. DemonTomatoDave, AKA Dave Bulmer, who you've heard on this episode, will be our first guest. Travis McElroy will be on the show. Maybe you've heard of him.

And real quick, I just, y'know, this is self-indulgent, but fuck it. I want to just throw to a quick preview. Here that is.

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Brent: Welcome to Question Box! Hi, Kate.

Kate: Hi, Brent. How's it going?

Brent: The game show podcast of shockingly personal questions.

Kate: Dave, which cartoon character would you most like to have sex with?

Brent: Where almost everyone will say something they've never admitted publicly.

Kate: If I'm crying on the subway in Toronto, people will either ignore me or stop and ask if I'm okay, unlike New York, where people will be just like, "Get out of my way, lady."

Brent: Kate is gonna try a pair of crowd sourced questions from the question box.

Kate: What's the most embarrassing thing you did as a kid?

Brent: Neither I or Dave have been shown beforehand.

Dave: I'm a very repressed person, indeed. This is gonna be weird.

Kate: Point to Dave for that very romantic answer about anxiety and masculinity and flying bugs.

Brent: So, I can achieve multiple orgasms.

Kate: Quit braggin'.

Dave: The first piece of merchandise that my eyes fell on was a windup toy based on a cartoon character of a homeless boot.

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: [laughs]

Kate: What is your biggest deal breaker in a potential romantic partner?

Brent: There's a butt thing happening, and there is a dick thing happening, and they're happening at the same time.

Dave: By the way, I've already thought of and forgotten two separate cartoon characters I'm perfectly happy to have sex with.

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: [laughs]

Kate: What is the worst thing a romantic partner could say to you?

Dave: Later that day, I was sat down by the headmaster and told that I was going to be taken to prison.

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: Thank you, Dave. Thank you, Kate. I've been Brent Black. And this has been Question Box.

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Brent: So anyway, um, that should be on as many podcast platforms as possible. Um, we're gonna be getting it all up and running soon, but you can certainly find out more about it, uh, just by looking at like, @BrentalFloss, which is my Twitter profile. We also are gonna have a Twitter for that, but it's all coming together very quickly, which is how podcasts work, y'all.

In the meantime, Kate, would you like to tell people where they can find you on the internet?

Kate: Yes, for sure. My sex blog is called Girly Juice. It is at GirlyJuice.net, and you can follow me on Twitter and Instagram @Girly_Juice. And I also host another podcast which is about sex, dating, and masturbating. It's called the Dildorks.

Brent: Wonderful. Okay, so, everybody out there in podcast land, please check out all the other wonderful Max Fun podcasts. Give us a rate and review on iTunes. It really helps us out. Uh, the theme song to Trends Like These is available as a ringtone, and uh, you can either get it on the uh, the iTunes app on your iPhone, or you can get it for Android at BrentalFloss.bandcamp.com. It's the Trends Like These theme, as you might've guessed.

But, for the moment, that's gonna do it for another episode of Trends Like These. Kate, am I forgetting anything?

Kate: Yeah, an experimental sugery on your eyeballs.

Brent: Oh, no.

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: I wanted to forget that forever.

Kate: Sorry.

Brent: Alright. See ya next time.

Kate: Bye!

[theme music plays]

Dave: Okay, checking the clipping... no longer clipping!

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