

Wonderful! 127: A Real Pesci Situation

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[theme music plays]

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hello, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is Wonderful!

Griffin: How you doin'?

Rachel: Eh, okay. [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah. Yeah, me too. I've been doing okay.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: I would say six out of ten.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: That's it. That ain't bad.

Rachel: No.

Griffin: I mean, it's an F. In traditional sort of school grading terminology. But six out of ten...

Rachel: Or a generous D minus.

Griffin: A generous D. Yeah, for sure. No, yeah, I'm feelin' about a good six right now, and that's better than, I think, I was last week. And that's,

y'know... I like that upward momentum. Maybe we could even aspire to a seven one day. Or a seven point five!

Rachel: [laughing] Ooh!

Griffin: [inhales]

Rachel: It's gonna take... that's gonna take a while.

Griffin: Have it made in the shade with a seven point five. We hope you're doing even better than that. Eights. Nines. Tens across the board! That's what I want from you, our audience.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, this is Wonderful. It's a show where we talk about things we like. Things that we are into. Things that are good, which is, y'know, all the more important that we talk about good things, in this day and age.

Do you have any—what are you looking at? You're gazing down at my... you're looking at my...

Rachel: [laughs] Your strange pose that you've adopted.

Griffin: I'm crossing my legs, and I'm supporting my—

Rachel: And you've got your torso, like, 45 degrees.

Griffin: It's how I like to sit. It's—I'm—it's like I'm doing a kind of stretch, and I'm engaging my core. So I guess I'm the asshole, for engaging my core.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Listen, podcast time is just a—it's—and I think we've been doing this long enough that we can admit it. Just a waste of time, at this point. So I wanna be doing something good. So I'm getting that core! So tight!

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: When I twist like this, and I push the jokes out of my diaphragm... ooh, my core gets... mmm! Like, a big, like—like it's stucco down there. It's so firm.

Do you have any small wonders?

Rachel: Uh, I'm gonna say second day cake.

Griffin: The—the second day of cake is traditionally the best day.

Rachel: Yeah. Yeah. I uh, I had a birthday.

Griffin: Mmm!

Rachel: No big deal.

Griffin: 22 years young.

Rachel: Oh, stop. Uh, and...

Griffin: 16... no! No. Not 16.

Rachel: No!

Griffin: 25 years young.

Rachel: Okay. Uh, and Griffin, uh, found a way to procure a cake in this time. [laughs] Which, itself, was wonderful.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: But then he got enough cake so that I could have it the day after my birthday as well!

Griffin: Yep. Uh...

Rachel: A+.

Griffin: Uh, it was very good cake, from La Patisserie here in town, if you're in Austin. Support your local biz. Uh, speaking of supporting your local biz, there's a little mom and pop shop called Taco Bell that I guess is giving out free tacos today?

Rachel: Oh, really?

Griffin: Free, uh, Doritos blasted whatever they're called tacos.

Rachel: This won't be applicable to our listeners.

Griffin: No, it won't... um, but I celebrate that. I think I mostly celebrate the Doritos Locos Taco as my mini—my mini one. 'Cause Doritos are good as hell, and I love these tacos. I have not had one in a long time, but from what I understand, they have discontinued the Cool Ranch one, which was like, the shit. Um...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: But yeah, givin' out free tacos is good. Maybe a bad sort of transmission vector, but... it's also a transmission vector for good flavors. Good Dorito flavors. And I think that that's—that's bold and important and special and worth talking about.

Rachel: It's kind of amazing how Doritos has changed the chip landscape.

Griffin: Oh yeah.

Rachel: There's a lot there.

Griffin: There's a lot to talk about there.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Like, you're talking about the hint of lime Tostitos, right? Or any of the hint of lime chips. Like...

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I feel like the zest on those is getting so strong and so good, and I think it's just because of the bold direction, the path that Doritos sort of bushwhacked in the flavor jungle for them.

Rachel: Yeah. The frontier men of the chip vector.

Griffin: Yeah. We love the word 'vector' in this household.

Rachel: Yeah. I'm kind of leaning into that one.

Griffin: You go first this week.

Rachel: Oh, I do.

Griffin: Can you begin?

Rachel: Uh, my first thing is, uh... is a trip back to Quantum Leap.

Griffin: You're taking us back to Quantum Leap?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: That's very... okay. Unexpected.

Rachel: As you'll maybe recall, if you are a devout Wonderful! listener, not just that I enjoy Quantum Leap; but also, I have discussed it previously on the show. But at that time, I discussed a very particular episode of Quantum Leap, which was The Leap Home.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: This time, I am discussing, in particular, when Sam, as played by Scott Bakula, interacts with historical figures.

Griffin: So like, virtually every other episode of the show.

Rachel: Nooot entirely true.

Griffin: What—can I guess which one you're gonna bring?

Rachel: No, I'm talking generally.

Griffin: Generally, when Sam on Quantum Leap interacted with historical—

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Honey, this is a very, very, very specific Wonderful! topic, I believe.

Rachel: Yeah, well...

Griffin: Maybe your most specific yet.

Rachel: There's only like a dozen times that he does it in the like, five year run of the show.

Griffin: Can I say my very favorite?

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: Chubby Checker.

Rachel: Yes!

Griffin: He invents the twist accidentally, doesn't he?

Rachel: Oh no, this was very intentional.

Griffin: Okay. Fantastic.

Rachel: That was Sam bein' like, "Oh, y'know what dance you should do with this song?"

Griffin: Is the twist? And that introduces another sort of like, conundrum loop, right? Of like, who actually invented—if Sam Beckett goes back in time and teaches Chubby Checker the twist, because he learned it from Chubby Checker, who made the damn twist, though?!

Rachel: Right? Right? This is what I love. This is the kind of stuff that Quantum Leap brings to the table.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: Uh, a lot of... a lot of what I'm going to detail is a very small part of the plot.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: It's almost just like a little wink there at the end, usually. Um, I feel like the... I mean, it varies. Sometimes it's incredibly heavy-handed. I'll just start goin' through them, and you let me know if you want to spend some more time examining a particular one. 'Cause you, at this point, have watched the entire series, right? Or no?

Griffin: Yeah. I mean, babe, we watched it together. We watched the whole series together, so I don't know how I would've missed a couple there. Um... how does the Chubby Checker, teaching him the twist rank in the heavy-handedness sort of department? 'Cause it feels awfully heavy to me.

Rachel: It—it is. I, uh... there's one where he teaches Michael Jackson the moonwalk, and that one's preeetty heavy-handed.

Griffin: I would say going back to, um, black performers, and then teaching them the dances that they popularized, is maybe a little—maybe a little problematic, Quantum Leap.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. Yeah. I mean, one could argue that the twist would've... would've eventually appeared on its own, right? Because twisting your body is something that you do...

Griffin: [laughing] Okay. One would argue that the twist *did* appear, because Chubby Checker invented it.

Rachel: [laughs] Well, I'm saying the moonwalk is not something somebody would naturally do, just on moving their body.

Griffin: No, it's almost like a performer would have to sort of choreograph it.

Rachel: I'm saying, I twist my body every day.

Griffin: I'm twisting my body right now and engaging my frickin' core! Yeah!

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, there are also examples for—uh, in *How the Test Was Won*, an episodes that was supposed to take place in 1956, where Sam helped Buddy Holly write the lyrics to Peggy Sue.

Griffin: Okay. Maybe he could've given his boy a heads up about a specific airplane that he maybe should not get on board of?

Rachel: [laughing] Of all the things he could've done.

Griffin: You think he was like, "Oh, I finally accomplished my mission. Time to leap, whoaaa... oh shit, hey! Buddy! Wh—ahh, too late!" Bloop!

Rachel: [laughs] In the episode, Buddy Holly was a young boy sitting on a porch, singing to a pig he loved, and saying the phrase, 'piggy Sue.' At which point, Sam said, "Y'know what, you should try Peggy."

Griffin: So again, like, where did... okay. This is like—this is a Sam Beckett is his own dad level of like... of the snake eating its tail.

Rachel: There are also other light ones. There's one, uh, Leap of Faith is the episode. It takes place in 1963, uh, where he teaches a young Sylvester Stallone the plot of Rocky. [laughs]

Griffin: What?! [laughs] I do not remember that.

Rachel: He—it was a boxing one. It was where he was boxing for like, a church, for whatever reason. For the nuns, as a fundraiser.

Griffin: [laughs] God, this show beats ass.

Rachel: And he was learning how to box, and there was a young Sylvester Stallone there, and Sam kind of detailed, like, the great comeback story of Rocky.

Griffin: Yeah. I feel like you are cautiously inching toward the big one. The big, historical...

Rachel: I mean, okay. You say the big one, and I think I know what you're talking about, but... there's also, uh, an episode called Star-Crossed that takes place in 1972, where Sam tips off the Watergate break in.

Griffin: Oh, yeah!

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Thanks for the big tip! We couldn't have done—so he was Deep Throat? Is that like the...

Rachel: No no no, he sees some people in a hotel kind of moving around. And he like, makes a call.

Griffin: Oh, okay.

Rachel: He's not really thinking, I think, that it's Watergate at the time.

Griffin: Well... then he is very—he's not a very smart man, is he? I guess that's that Swiss cheese brain.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, there is one where he performs the Heimlich maneuver, before the Heimlich maneuver was invented. He is...

Griffin: That one, I will say, someone would've figured that out on their own eventually.

Rachel: He's at a restaurant, and he saves somebody using that method, and Heimlich happens to be there, and he's like, "That's a real good method."

Griffin: "I'm gonna steal that! I'm gonna make so much money!"

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, and there's one 1964 episode, The Boogieman, where he meets a young Stephen King, at the time, called Stevie King.

Griffin: [laughs]

Rachel: [laughs] Um... there's ones where he actually leaps into the historical figure himself.

Griffin: Okay?

Rachel: So he leaps into Elvis. Uh, leaps into Dr. Ruth.

Griffin: Oh, yeah! Wowzers.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. Which is a complicated episode.

Griffin: Yeah, to say the least.

Rachel: And then, the one I think that you are references, where he leaps into Lee Harvey Oswald himself.

Griffin: Fuck yeah. It's a two-parter. Didn't it win like an Emmy or something like that?

Rachel: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Griffin: This episode is shit hot. It is like... that's my, like, ideal... if I was gonna onboard somebody on Quan—'cause I guess there's really not another sort of series sequence like that. But having him jump into Lee Harvey Oswald, and having to like, complete his mission is some wild shit, man.

Rachel: Well, and this is one of the ones where they suggest that Sam has changed history considerably, because at the end of that episode, Sam feels very upset that he wasn't able to stop the assassination. And then, Al indicates that, in the original timeline, that Jackie...

Griffin: Also was killed.

Rachel: Also passes, and that Sam has actually saved her.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I just—I just like, got chills saying that. [laughs]

Griffin: It's a—I remember the first time I saw you watch the whole episode, thinking like, "How are they gonna resolve this?" Like, there's also a subplot of Lee Harvey Oswald is the quote unquote "waiting room," right?

Rachel: Yeah! Then he like—yeah. The idea is that, when Sam leaps into a body in this show, that the body he has displaced goes into this future waiting room where the like, scientific experiment is taking place.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: Typically, it's a harmless switch, but Lee Harvey Oswald, I guess, like—

Griffin: A harmful individual, yes. Uh, yeah. That—man, those episodes are so wicked good.

Rachel: Another, um, heavier one is when he leaps into the limousine, or I guess, chauffeur driver, uh, of Marilyn Monroe.

Griffin: Oh!

Rachel: And he is in a position to, I guess, try and save her as well. And then, the argument at the end from Al is that he has extended her life. Not that he saved her. So yeah, that's another example where there's kind of—there's two circumstances, right? Where like, Sam invents something, or like, teaches the person something. And then, like, Sam actually like, changes history in a significant way. And the idea that the timeline that we know is actually not the real timeline...

Griffin: Is the Sam Beckett...

Rachel: It's the timeline that Sam Beckett has created.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: Which I, as a child watching this show, absolutely loved.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Rachel: 'Cause I—y'know, I mean, when you are a kid watching this show, and probably a lot of adults, too, you kind of like this idea that this is real.
[laughs]

Griffin: Right. [laughs]

Rachel: And I still kind of—I still kind of think of that, and we still kind of make jokes of that, of like, “Why haven’t I leaped yet?” Like, this idea that you’ve done something that is like, profound in a person’s life, and that was the thing that you were supposed to do.

Griffin: Yeah. Man, I wanna go watch some frickin’ Quantum Leap, man.

Rachel: I love it!

Griffin: I know.

Rachel: I love it so much. It is—it is a little cheesy. I mean, a lot of the examples I gave you kind of demonstrate the humor of it, which is always kind of ridiculous and goofy. But oh, so fun.

Griffin: Right. Um, my first thing this week is a band, a duo, called Capsule.

Rachel: Mmm!

Griffin: And Capsule is an electronica duo from Japan that has been kind of like, seminal to that—to that genre. They got started in 1997, when uh, the two members of the group, the producer, whose name is Yasutaka Nakata, and the vocalist for the group, and her name is Toshiko Koshijima. They were 17 years old when they met at some sort of like, conference, and since then, they have put together 15 albums.

Uh, so they’re like, really, really prolific. And their music is, for the most part, just like, super relentlessly upbeat, and very, like, danceable and enjoyable. They’re often compared to like, Daft Punk, in terms of like, aesthetic. Musical aesthetic. And I don’t know a whole lot about, like, Japanese electronica, despite the fact that this is the second time that I have brought something, including Wednesday Campanella a while back.

Um, but I really, really like Capsule a whole lot, and um... I just—I will go through periods where I don't listen to them for years, and then, I will find them again, and just go deep down a Capsule hole. And I am currently in the Capsule hole right now, and I want to take everybody down with me.

So, uh, I'm gonna play a song of theirs real quick for people who have never heard them before. This is off of their 2010 album, *Player*. The track is called *I Wish You*.

[*'I Wish You'* by Capsule plays]

Griffin: So, their albums are really successful overseas, but where most of their like, attention comes from is that all of their music is licensed for like, theme songs for shows, or for commercials. There are talk shows that they—their music has been licensed to be the title theme of. Uh, there are... I'm trying to remember the... I have like, a list, but it's like, dozens of things that they are the theme song for.

Um, and I have a really, like, special memory of this band, and specifically, that song we just listened to, which is, uh—Rachel and I, uh, our honeymoon in Japan that we went on in 2013, where we had some afternoon where we were just like, killin' time in Shibuya. And we went into a record store that had like, those listening stations. Do you remember this?

Rachel: Yeah, uh-huh!

Griffin: And we were just like, let's go. I mean, we got like, an hour to kill. Let's go just walk around and listen to some music that like, we've never really dabbled in those genres before. And that was really fun, and I remember, I found a CD of Capsule's.

Rachel: Is that how we found them?

Griffin: Mm-hmm. And I was like, "Hey, come listen to this. Come check this out." And you listened to it, and you were like, "Oh, that's great." Flash forward like a week or so, and we're staying at this AirBnB in Kyoto, and uh, there's like, nothing to do in this AirBnB. Like, nothing really to do. So we

would get back from walking around all these places, and just be dead tired, and not really have anything to, y'know, uh, relax with at home.

So I remember, there was a CD player in the kitchen. That was like, the one sort of entertainment device in the whole place. And so, we walked to a record store that was like, in the base of the Kyoto tower, and we found this album, *Player*, by Capsule, and brought it home, and just like, listened to it non-stop. And I think we still have that CD somewhere, right?

Rachel: We do!

Griffin: It's like the only CD that I've listened to in the past decade or so. Um, so like, their music is really upbeat and really nice, and I am, uh, I am drawn to music like that right now, specifically. And it—like, listening to their music now makes me happy, not only on a like, the music is happy and it is upbeat, but it also like, makes me remember, like, a really special time and a really special memory.

I can't think of too many other times that I have like, sought out music like that. Like, we went to that record store, like, "Let's go find a fucking Capsule CD." And it took us a very long time, but we managed to do it, and I remember feeling like, "Oh, we've found this little treasure." And so like, that album has a very special place in my heart.

Rachel: Yeah, for sure!

Griffin: Um, I don't really have much else to say. They haven't dropped an album since 2015, but as far as I can tell—

Rachel: Yeah, I was gonna ask you if they were still making music.

Griffin: Uh, as far as I can tell, they didn't like, formally break up or anything like that. But uh, I think this is the longest dry spell that they have, uh, that they've ever had. Uh, but yeah. I hope they're just like, y'know, working on their magnum opus or something like.

Uh, yeah. Their sound is just like, really cool, and uh, I enjoy it on a few different levels. I'm gonna play, to take us out, another song off that album, Player, that is called Hello.

[‘Hello’ by Capsule plays]

Griffin: Yeah, that’s it. I don’t have much else to say, but I feel like we need to say something to pat out, while that track fades out, before we play the Home Improvement stinger.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: What do you think it would sound like if Capsule did the Home Improvement stinger?

Rachel: Are you gonna do that?

Griffin: I don't know how to do that, man. That would be like, pretty tough. Um... no, I'll throw my hat over the fence. I think it would sound... a little something like this. Can I steal you away?

Rachel: Please.

[some sounds that are definitely not the Home Improvement stinger]

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Rachel: This first personal message is for Samuel, and it is from Kyra. “Hi, baby! Just writing to say that I love you every second, and you mean the whole world to me. You're my baby, my angel, my pumpkin, my darling, my sweet and wonderful boy. Thanks for marrying me and always kissing me so sweet. Love love love love love you.”

Griffin: Listen, I'm supportive and inclusive of most things these days, I like to think. But I think... lovin’ a pumpkin is too much.

Rachel: Whoa!

Griffin: I think being in love with a pumpkin is a bridge too far!

Rachel: Hoo.

Griffin: Any gourd, really.

Rachel: Oh, wow! Griffin!

Griffin: Yeah, I'll say it. I'm not afraid to say it. [laughs] This is my—this is my—I'm on that Joe Rogan shit right now, telling you the truth. You may not want to hear it, but it's the frickin' truth. I don't think you should love a pumpkin.

Here's another jumbotron. This one is for Emily. It is from Beckett. I just pointed out to Rachel that the first one was from... it was for Samuel, this one is from Beckett.

Rachel: He's out there.

Griffin: He's out there, and he's reaching out, and he needs you, Rachel. He needs you right now.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, oh boy. Oops. Uh, okay. Well, Emily says... uh, Beckett says, "Happy Hanukkah to my favorite wife, author, and mother to our terrible dog children. I'm so happy you actually married me in September, and I can't wait to keep adventuring with you. I love you to the moon and back. Let's get bow and yell about our characters tonight! You're wonderful."

So, we did screw the pooch on this one. We did beef this one, and we screwed it up, 'cause it was supposed to be around Hanukkah.

Rachel: Or we're really early...?

Griffin: Or we're extremely early. No, because they say that they got married in September. I have to imagine, unless they have the gift of foresight, and saw their marriage going off smoothly here in six months or so... uh, but hey, happy Hanukkah. Have a great one. Um...

Rachel: Yeah. Light some candles.

Griffin: Light some candles. Do it.

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Griffin: What's your second thing?

Rachel: My second thing is the humble sweat pant.

Griffin: Sweat pant.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: A good friend of mine, and yours, and I imagine, everyone during these trying times.

Rachel: I expect, at some point, that I will feel the desire to get dressed up as if I am to leave the house that day. But so far, that has not been the case. I have spent a lot of time in the sweat pant.

Griffin: You've been working from home for two weeks now.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Um, I—it took me several years before—of working at home before I worked up the sort of dedication, uh, to do that.

Rachel: Yeah, this has been a really interesting experience for me and Griffin, because for Griffin, his daily routine has changed, but not in the sense that he is, y'know, confined to his home while he is working. But it is

very different for me. And so, I kind of like to check in with him and be like, "Okay, tell me what the beginning was like." [laughs]

Griffin: The beginning was quite bad. Um, for several years, working from home, writing for Joystiq at AOL, uh... my office was a desk with a laptop on it that was in my bedroom.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And that was up until I lived in Chicago. That was like, my setup. And it's hard to work when your bed is like... right there.

Rachel: Well, and then, when you moved to Austin, I mean, you didn't really have your own office space.

Griffin: I didn't really have an office. Yeah, I forget. Where did I even—did I just work on the couch? I do not remember.

Rachel: You worked in the living room. Remember? You were watching a lot of Friday Night Lights at the time. [laughs]

Griffin: Oh yeah, that's true. Um, but yes. Now I try to take it very seriously, uh, because I think that it sort of, y'know, helps make it feel normal in a way. But I also think that working in your sweatpants is normal, too.

Rachel: Yeah. I was curious, and I have found a little bit of data out there to suggest that the uh, investment in athleisure has gone up in recent weeks. Um, specifically, there was a representative for Net-a-Porter, which is a kind of a popular clothing site that said that they experienced a 40% uptick in general sweatpants sales in the first week of COVID-19 lockdown.

Griffin: Good!

Rachel: Aeropostale recorded a 23% increase in women's sweatpants. Russell Athletic have seen a double digit increase in searches for sweat pant styles. Um, et cetera.

I have noticed that a particular brand that I like, um, has been sold out of many different sizes right now.

Griffin: Oh boy. Yikes.

Rachel: Uh, so sweatpants. Invented in France in the 1920s, by Le Coq Sportif.

Griffin: It took us—amazing name. It took us that long to lock down sweatpants?

Rachel: Yeah! I mean, it was primarily for athletes. Y'know. I mean, this is the era where people wore a hat if they were outside, y'know? It was a very formal time.

Griffin: [laughs]

Rachel: If you were going to leave the house, you were going to cover your head, because everything was to be formal and covered in public.

Griffin: Right. And also because the clouds are full of mercury, and so, you need protection against that.

Rachel: [laughs] Mercury?

Griffin: Yeah. Things were different back then.

Rachel: Okay. What else... what else?

Griffin: Oh boy. Let me tell you. The street lights would just like... they were fire. They were made—it was an oil lamp with fire on it, so you had to wear a hat to protect your hair, didn't you? 'Cause your hair had all manner of, uh, old oils massaged into it to...

Rachel: Y'know, a lot of people did wear a lot of oils in their hair back then.

Griffin: Because lice was just like, a thing you had. Like, every just had their own sort of lice situation. And for the courtesy of others, you would just sort of schlop them all down to your head with a thick layer of oil. But boy howdy, you walk too close to one of those lamps, you're gonna have yourself a bad Tuesday.

Rachel: You're gonna be a Joe Pesci in Home Alone.

Griffin: You're gonna have a real Pesci situation. And you see that movie and you say, "That's funny. That's so funny."

Rachel: That is so funny.

Griffin: That man's skull and brain are like, *done*. My man's head is cooked.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. [laughs]

Griffin: So just something to keep in mind, old-timey people.

Rachel: So there are a few things that popularized the sweat pant. First, Olympians. They began appearing a lot at the, uh—in the Olympics in 1930s. Seeing athletes in sweats was kind of the go-to. Wasn't until the 1980s, with films like Rocky...

Griffin: Mmm, oh yeah.

Rachel: And also, icons like Jane Fonda, who kind of popularized this kind of work out culture and the clothes associated with it.

Griffin: Hm.

Rachel: Which, in turn, has given us athleisure!

Griffin: What about a sweat short?

Rachel: I mean, that is—that is a thing, also.

Griffin: I guess it's kind of the same thing. Rachel has a pair of shorts that used to be sweat pants, but then we cut them off at the knee...

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: So that, I think it was—I think we got the pants for a costume to be Arty, the strongest man in the world.

Rachel: Yeah. Which, by the way, you're wearing a shirt that would've...

Griffin: Oh, shit, you're right.

Rachel: Would've worked pretty nicely.

Griffin: That would've been amazing.

Rachel: Yeah. Griffin found a pair of red sweatpants that he was going to repurpose as part of the costume, didn't end up going that direction, uh, and I—

Griffin: So Rachel got crafty!

Rachel: I got crafty.

Griffin: Cut the legs off, and now...

Rachel: Just—that was where it stopped. [laughs]

Griffin: And now... oof, these shorts are... we constantly joke about the sort of like, anti-sexiness of them. They are somehow the least flattering garment that exist, maybe on the planet.

Rachel: So there are a few things that have popularized athleisure. One is just the technological improvements in synthetic fiber, like spandex, which is more durable, washable, than natural materials.

Also, the modern fixation on healthy appearance. One thing you'll notice a lot with these, these pants, is they make your, uh... they make your body look good, 'cause you're all tight in there.

Griffin: Oh!

Rachel: You're packed in, and you're tight.

Griffin: Oh, is that what people like?

Rachel: People tend to like that.

Griffin: I like it loose and sort of, um, mysterious.

Rachel: And then, also, just the more... the more casual appearance that is appropriate now in daily life. As I mentioned, you don't have to wear the hat anymore when you go out to the grocery store.

Griffin: It's a—it's a common observation, but boy howdy, it's true that uh, every day at college, every class... just like, everyone had sweatpants on.

Rachel: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Pretty much all the time. I didn't roll like that, just 'cause I didn't live on campus, and so, um... for me, it was making a statement if I left the house and walked down the sidewalk to my car, and drove on public roads in my sweatpants.

Rachel: You still won't really leave the house in a sweat pant, I've noticed.

Griffin: No, no.

Rachel: A lot of times, if you are gonna go somewhere, you will change into, uh, street clothes.

Griffin: Well, because if there's a danger, or some sort of hazard, I can't negotiate that in sweatpants.

Rachel: That says a lot about you, Griffin.

Griffin: It does say a whole lot about me, huh?

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, yeah. There has been a decline in the purchase of denim recently, but there is a huge increase in athleisure.

Griffin: Well, it's a direction that I support. I support that direction of the economy.

Rachel: Yeah. I mean, one of the big popularizes for this was Lululemon.

Griffin: Oh yeah.

Rachel: And that was in the late '90s. But the phrase, or the term 'athleisure' appeared as early as 1979.

Griffin: Hm!

Rachel: Which, y'know, is kind of what I've been describing. This idea that you can wear workout clothes, and they're a little stylish so that you can wear them generally in your day to day.

Griffin: Unless there's, again, a hazard that you must negotiate, and then you're just...

Rachel: Can you give me an example of like, a hazard? Where you would be like, "Oh, I am wearing the inappropriate pant for this hazard."

Griffin: I don't want to get arrested in sweatpants, I guess, is what I'm thinking about.

Rachel: Mm.

Griffin: I don't want to have to face some sort of judge in sweat—y'know what I mean?

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: What if I get a job interview on the street, and I'm dressed in freaking sweatpants?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Or what if the—and you know this is true, the paparazzo.

Rachel: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Griffin: So like, I can't—can you imagine?

Rachel: But then you'd be a stars are just like us. Y'know?

Griffin: No, it would be like, "Look at Griffin, he's given up. He doesn't give a shit." Like, people know me for my fashion, right? You don't see Heidi Klum walkin' around in sweatpants, unless she's doing like, a really funny Halloween costume.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Um, so, that's the expectation that's on me. Is it fair? No. Is it the price that I have to pay for the level of success I have achieved? Yes. Is it a tradeoff that I think is worth it? No.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: I want to leave the house in sweatpants, but I cannot, because of just these shutterbugs outside. [makes a shutter sound] That's their shutters going off. So that's—yeah. Even now, they're out there, and they're not supposed to be.

Rachel: Well, thank you for your service, Griffin.

Griffin: Yeah. It's another kind of courage.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: My second thing this week is telekinesis. Telekinesis.

Rachel: Whoa!

Griffin: Yeah, it's so dope. Um, it is the like—it is *the* super power I wish I had. When people ask like, "What super power do you wish you had if you could have one super power?" For me, it's telekinesis. And people who are like, "Oh, I wish I could fly." Those people don't know what they're talking about. Because if you had telekinesis, you could just make yourself or anyone else fly. Like, it is the er super power. You can do so much shit with telekinesis.

It's the dream that I have most often. The dream that like, I can move stuff with my—

Rachel: Really?

Griffin: Well, it's like—I don't have flying dream. I have a lot of like, um, "Oh shit, I can move stuff with my mind," and then, like, uh, I achieve a level of like, fame for that. Like, full blown phenomenon style. And then like, I have to go out on stage and move some stuff with my mind... and then I can't do it. [gasps]

Rachel: Griffin has a shocking number of going out on stage dreams. I guess maybe not so shocking, considering your profession, but I like, almost never have those dreams, and that's like, all you have.

Griffin: Man, I—that’s all I have. So, telekinesis is the ability to, uh, affect a physical system via nonphysical means with your mind. Uh, it’s also commonly called psychokinesis. Apparently, that is the more common name for it. I always call it telekinesis, but I will call it psychokinesis, or PK for the remainder of this segment.

And people throughout recorded history have, y'know, claimed to have these PK powers. Um, y'know, especially once magicians started to kind of incorporate that kind of stuff into their—

Rachel: Yeah, bending the spoon!

Griffin: —illusory acts. Well, I mean, you started out more with like, stuff that read from far away. Like, uh, y'know, I'm going to make this shit float. And then there were magicians who would say like, “I'm literally able to make shit float. I am unto a god.”

Rachel: Uh-huh. [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, and that’s when people were like, “Ayy, roll it back. Roll it back just a little bit.” It honestly, like... people claiming to be psychokinetic ability users led to a huge influx of like, professional, um... oh god, what’s the word I'm looking for? Skeptics. Like, people who tried to like, disprove those claims.

There is a large community of skeptics that came up around the sort of psychokinetic ability movement, um, because, in more modern times, the idea of like, PK abilities has leant itself to people claiming, uh, psychic healing powers.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Which is about the limits of what I find fun about telekinesis.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Parapsychologists, they typically categorize, like, the idea of psychokinetic powers into, uh, two camps. The first is macro, which is like, visible, "I'm going to pick that shit up and move it with my mind." And then, micro, which you can only track through, y'know... you can't see it. So that stuff, like, y'know, healing, and um... something called, uh, thoughtography, where you like, project an image into somebody's mind. Stuff like that.

So, I want to talk about macro psychokinesis, 'cause that is, uh, a rad fictional concept. Lots of superheroes have it. Jean Gray, Psylocke...

Rachel: Matilda.

Griffin: Matilda. Carrie from Carrie. Frickin', uh, like, a lot of characters in Akira. Which I don't think you've seen before.

Rachel: No, I have not.

Griffin: I don't think I've made you watch Akira. It's really good. Um, but even when people are using it for bad stuff, like most of the people in Akira, I'm still like, "Damn, I wish I could move stuff with my mind."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: So powerful was my desire to move stuff with my mind, I have a lot of vivid memories of elementary school. I was in the safety patrol for a few years.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: We would serve as basically like, crossing guards, and I would like, on one of those shifts when nobody was around, like, try to move the flag on the end of my pole with my mind.

Rachel: Oh, Griffin...

Griffin: And sometimes, the wind would blow it, and I'd be like, "Look! See, everyone? See?" Uh, I am not alone in that desire, because in the 1980s, fuckin' everyone wanted to move stuff with their minds.

Rachel: Yeah, yeah yeah!

Griffin: Uh, and there was a dude whose name was Jack Houck, and he was a... like an engineer at Boeing for 42 years, and then he was like, "I want to get cool psychic powers." And so, he started to, uh, research like, psychokinetic abilities and remote viewing, and all kinds of like, wild shit like that. Uh, and then, Houck popularized what were called PK parties, where bored adults would get together and just try to ruin silverware with their minds.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And it was like, a thing. Like, lots of people did this.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And he published a paper about like, how to throw a PK party for free, except for some silverware that you are going to ruin. Uh, and it's easy to find this. Just search 'Jack Houck PK party,' and you can find this document that he circulated and led to this like, whole phenomenon.

And he explains, like, not everyone at your party is gonna be able to do it, and most folks are just gonna be able to achieve what he called, quote, "kindergarten bending." Which is like, sooo bonkers. If I was like, at a party, and I bent like, a spoon a little bit with my mind, and I'd be like, "Aw... that wasn't very far." And not like, "Holy shit! It's real, it's really happening!"

This is an excerpt from the document that I think is so fucking funny. "After people have bent four or five pieces of stainless flatware in kindergarten bending, then have them try to buckle the bowl of silver plated spoons. Do not use knives, because they sometimes break and cut people. Similarly, glass and graphite pencils tend to explode, which are not good for your safety."

Rachel: This is so precise, and I love it.

Griffin: I fucking love it!

Rachel: Just the specificity of like, "We've bent a lot of stuff here at the institute, and so, let me tell you what you should and shouldn't bend."

Griffin: It goes on and is like, plastic cutlery is good, because it's cheap, and you can like, give it to the kiddos and not have to worry. But you will have people come up to you and be like, "Ah, I can bend all the metal, but the plastic, I can't do." And he's like, "Well, think of it like a radio dial, and on the far left side is the metal spoons, and on the far right side is the plastic spoons." And then, people come back and they're like, "I finally bent the plastic spoon." And it's like...

Rachel: Hoo!

Griffin: This—this—listen. A lot of people can be very predatory with stuff like this, and that's not great. But the idea of like, the '80s, going to a kickass, like, psychokinesis party, sounds pretty fuckin' cool to me.

Rachel: Yeah. And just like, a big spreadsheet that says, like, "What have I bended, and what would I like to bend?"

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uhh... Cabbage Patch Doll. Check. Troll doll. Check.

Griffin: And you're gonna have somebody at the party who like, bends shit, like, really good. And then, like, they go to eat the last jalapeño popper, and you are also reaching for the last jalapeño popper, and they just kind of like, look at you like scanners. And you're like, "Oh shit, okay. It's yours. It's yours. I don't want any of that shit. You can bend my bones inside of my body. No thanks, dude."

Rachel: [laughs] Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Um, yeah. PK. It's neat shit. Hey, can I tell you what our friends at home are talking about?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Elizabeth says, "My small wonder is the video call site, Zoom. Since my girlfriend and I can't see each other in person at school anymore, we have begun to call each other on Zoom. We are both making PowerPoints in the style of your podcast about our big wonders to present to each other using the screen sharing feature of Zoom on Friday, and I'm very excited. I love your podcast and I hope you're both doing well."

Rachel: Oh, that's so great!

Griffin: Yeah, I learned just this week about, um, that you can insert digital backgrounds on Zoom. Like, very easily.

Rachel: I have heard that, but I don't know how to do it.

Griffin: Uh, it's like, just in the preferences. And then you like, pick the photo you want behind you.

Rachel: I would love to do that, 'cause that has been... at work, that has been our new method, and we're supposed to start having weekly and or biweekly meetings.

Griffin: Mm-hmm.

Rachel: And I work with a lot of people that are as—just about as familiar with it as me. So I would love to just bring that heat.

Griffin: That would be really, really cool.

Rachel: Like, "Rachel, are you on a beach somewhere?"

Griffin: I've been traditionally doing, like, bootleg Shrek costumes behind me.

Rachel: Oh...

Griffin: 'Cause they're some of the scariest images on the internet. Uh, Briana says, "My small wonder is the smell of cooking onions, especially at a market or fair. The smell is delicious all the time, but when you don't know what exactly it's coming from, it can be so exciting. Is there a bratwurst stand waiting for me around the corner? A taco truck? A pizza kiosk? So many culinary possibilities!"

Rachel: That is so true. A lot of times, Griffin or I will be cooking, and that is the first thing you smell, and it's just like, "Ooh, something smells good!" It's like, always onions.

Griffin: Yeah. Always onions. Or onions and garlic. Yeah, I think I just get excited by that smell, 'cause it means some kind of home cooked food's a'comin'. It's like the starting pistol for a food race, and the finish line is my mouth.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: Thank you to Bo En and Augustus for the use of our theme song, Money Won't Pay. You can find a link to that in the episode description. And hey, thank you to Maximum Fun for having us on the network.

Rachel: Yeah, thank you so much, Maximum Fun. There are a lot of podcasters out there that are providing special, additional content right now. I would encourage you to check it out, 'cause it is very endearing and charming and kind of what I love most about the Max Fun family.

Griffin: Yeah. Uh, hey, everybody. You're doing your best. It's, uh—try not to be too hard on yourself right now, y'know? Try to be on...

Rachel: One thing Griffin said to me that I found really helpful is, he was like, "This is the first time in our lifetime that anybody has ever had to do

this." And so, y'know, be gentle with yourself as you figure it out, 'cause that's what everybody's doing.

Griffin: Be gentle. Be tender. Try a little self-tenderness.

Rachel: Be your own best lover.

Griffin: Be your—well...

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: No—yeah, sure. I mean, if that's how—

Rachel: Yeah, come on!

Griffin: Yeah, come on! It's a—

Rachel: Don't be a prude, Griffin.

Griffin: You don't have to social distance yourself from your... stuff. Your thing.

Rachel: Well, I'm not gonna go that far, I don't think.

Griffin: Oh yeah, leave me out to hang now.

Rachel: [laughs]

[theme music plays]

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