

IAN:

Support for 'Everything is Alive' comes from GREATS. GREATS is Brooklyn's first sneaker company. Offering men's and women's styles including the classic all leather Royale lace-up in white. I have a pair and I really like them. I thought I would record this spot in their natural habitat, the sidewalk. I have to say, not only do they look great they are performing admirably, providing the agility needed to avoid many a puddle of unknown origin. My only hope is that I return home with these shoes looking as lovely as they looked when I started. You can save 15% off your first purchase by going to [greats.com](https://greats.com) and using promo code "alive". That's [greats.com](https://greats.com) promo code "alive" for 15% off your first purchase.

SEAN:

My name is Sean, I am a subway seat in New York City.

IAN:

Why don't we start...why don't you just tell me about just a typical day in your life.

SEAN:

I'm up at...well, I never go to sleep. I don't go to sleep. Yeah, we run all night long. And so, the typical day I guess officially will start at 12 midnight and one second. But a day, really a full 24-hour cycle involves me going there and back, there and back, there and back, there and back, there and back, there and back, there and back. And it's great. I mean, I see a lot of people coming and going. They look real busy. They look like they're stressed. They look like they got worries. They're...maybe they're happy, they're sad. Their life is up and down and up and down and I'm steady baby. Yeah, I love it, yeah.

IAN:

Yeah. Tell me, what is it...what's it like when...when somebody sits on you?

SEAN:

Oh well, you know, it's kinda great. Yeah, it's...it's great. I spend all day, hopefully, with someone sitting on me. And so, everyone's rear ends, they feel different. And you don't walk around feeling other human beings rear ends all day long. And which is...from what I can gather would...that would be bad if someone did that. But for me, it's my job and it's not inappropriate. For me to do it it's actually quite appropriate. So, I can feel subtle differences in muscle tension, in weight distribution and essentially that is my conduit in to the emotional wellbeing of the person. The butt is my window to the soul.

IAN:

It sounds so intimate in a way. Like you're communicating so much through, you know, physical touch. It's like...it's like almost romantic.

SEAN:

Oh, well that's funny, that's very funny. But don't say that to (LAUGHS) ...don't say that to Jerry (LAUGHS) He's the seat next to me. So, I've, you know, I've been with him for quite some time. Yeah, he and I are joined at the hip, is that the phrase?

IAN:  
Yeah.

SEAN:  
Yeah, yeah.

SEAN:  
Very funny, that's funny.

IAN:  
So that's like a...it's a...it's a partnership.

SEAN:  
Yeah oh, Jerry and I? Yeah. Yeah, we go back to...well we were created together and built at the same time and... yeah, my-my first real relationship. We just sort of...there's a non-verbal way we communicate with each other that like, would be impossible to explain to you because I'd have to non-verbally communicate it to...

IAN:  
You could try, I can... You can try to communicate with me the way you do with Jerry.

(RELAXING JAZZ MUSIC)

IAN:  
You know it's funny, it's something people say but, you and Jerry you...you literally have a connection, you're actually connected.

SEAN:  
Oh sure, yeah, I mean we are one, essentially. It's funny, it's...we're like anglerfish. You know how like an anglerfish...

IAN:  
No.

SEAN:  
The male of the anglerfish species will go up, when it's mating with the female it goes up and it sort of bites her on the stomach or belly area and it's not like a little flirtatious little peck or something. It's like, he attaches himself. He bites into her belly and just stays there. And then they sort of fuse together. They become like one fish. Their skin merges. Their like blood vessels get together and start circulating. They're together. They've merged and...

IAN:  
They're one thing.

SEAN:

They're one thing, he just stays there and his eyes and his fins and all the stuff around him that he would be using if he was by himself, it just stops working. It just sort of goes away and then you know, he's just kind of sitting there, this little like man lump on the side of her. And they're basically two fish that became one fish. They become one thing together.

IAN:

Wow, it's-it's romantic and gross.

SEAN:

Yeah, they essentially...their process of mating is to become one thing. That's kind of like Jerry and I, I mean, we're not making like little baby seats or anything like that, but we are...one. I mean I do not remember a second without him...

(BACKGROUND MUSIC PLAYS)

IAN:

Do you know the other seats around-around you?

SEAN:

I do not like Tony. Tony's the seat right across from me and he is (LAUGHS) just very arrogant and very, you know... when-someone sits down on Tony, Tony will be extremely, you know, cocky about it and as soon as the person gets off he'll just, did you see that? So, I'm blessed with my companion, but I'm also cursed. It's like this neighbor across the street who is... has the ugliest house and plays the loudest music and is just a jerk. And I can't do anything about it, you know.

IAN:

Sean I want to ask, people often leave their belongings on the train. Has anything ever been left on you?

SEAN:

Oh sure, and I've got a lot of cell phones. And I don't imagine they ever see those things again because we get to the end of the line, the crews that come in and actually they, you know, they clean up. And I don't know what they do with those they take them off the train. I hear them joking, "Oh, they're never gonna see this again." You know like, "This is...this is lost forever. I'm gonna sell this." You know, whatever they manage to say. So, cell...a lot of cell phones. A lot of jewelry, bracelets, earrings things like that. Too many wedding rings. Why do people take off their wedding ring in the middle of talking to someone? Or when they meet someone, they would take their wedding ring off and then put it down on a subway seat. I don't know why anyone would do that.

IAN:

So, in a human marriage, you are committed to each other. That is your partner, your only person.

SEAN:

Do you each wear a ring?

IAN:

You each wear a ring.

SEAN:

They don't have to match though, it's just the idea that you're...

IAN:

They often do match, they don't have to match.

SEAN:

OK. That's cool.

IAN:

But I would say, the wedding ring you wear it and it indicates to others that you are not romantically available...

SEAN:

Oh! So, if you take it off, you saying you are romantic... Oh, well that's...

IAN:

Yeah.

SEAN:

That's bad. Then-then they're gonna try to be with that person instead of the person at home. Don't do that, no.

(PHONE DIAL TONE)

IAN:

Hey Bob, so you're the guy who when somebody drops something on the-the subway tracks, you're the guy who has to come get it?

BOB:

Yes, that's basically...90% of the job I'm doing now.

IAN:

So what-what's...what's like... what kind of stuff are you finding?

BOB:

Well I mean, 90% of it is... well not 90 but, most of them are cell phones. And the big thing now is earbuds for the new...because they don't have the wires. We got like a big spike in earbud, picking up them.

IAN:

Is there ever anything where you're like, why did this person want this back?

BOB:

I mean, there's all kinds of weird... you know, people drop stuff that... you know, this lady had a like a regular Bic pen and she-she lost the cap for it. She wanted the cap back so, you know. But you know, we respond to anything, it doesn't matter. You know, the lady wanted it, forget about it. But it was like you know, it's a 50 cents pen and she wants the cap. So that was kind of weird. (LAUGHS)

IAN:

So you're...you're dispatched to go wherever people need stuff picked up. How-how long would she have had to wait for you to get her pen cap?

BOB:

Usually we're there within an hour. You know, we try to be, you know.

IAN:

So, most of the things you're mentioning say are... they sound pretty small. Do you ever find big things?

BOB:

Well yeah, I mean, people drop suitcases and backpacks and... you know, skateboards and other big things, basketballs. We got the call at Hunts Point in the Bronx, you know, the call was for a pair of pants. So, I'm like (INAUDIBLE) go up. So, we go up to Hunts Point and the kid had... you know it was a young...younger... young adult. He had two pairs of pants in a...and he had just bought them, they were in a shopping bag. And him and his wife were arguing and arguing. She took the bag and flings it underneath the third rail.

BOB:

So, we go up there and he's you know, he's like, "Yo my pants my..." So, we're expecting them right down and they're... like they're way over underneath the third rail, it was like, "Dude, how did they get there?" And he tells us the story. "Yeah, I was arguing with my wife, she took my pants and flung 'em under. You know, she just flung 'em." But I mean, most people don't throw valuable stuff. (LAUGHS)

IAN:

Do you... do you think that couple... do you think they're still together?

BOB:

He actually said they were cool. He goes, "But we're cool now, we're cool now." So, by the time we got up there, 'cause it took us a while I got up there they were...she just went home. And he goes, "No, we're not arguing no more."

(INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC PLAYS)

IAN:

Support for 'Everything is Alive' comes from SimpliSafe. SimpliSafe is a home security system. They provide great protection for your home and family. They don't make you sign a contract and there's no hidden fees. CNET, PC Mag and Wirecutter all say SimpliSafe is the best security system there is. And if you've been thinking about getting a SimpliSafe, but have been waiting for the holidays, when all the tech deals come out, that was a smart move. The holidays are pretty much now. So if you're looking for a security system and want a great deal, go to [simplisafe.com/alive](https://simplisafe.com/alive) to get the offer. Make sure to use that URL, because it really helps out our show. That's [simplisafe.com/alive](https://simplisafe.com/alive). And don't wait, that offer ends soon.

IAN:

One thing I've wondered, looking around a subway car in the summertime, how do you feel about when somebody sits on you in short shorts?

SEAN:

Well, it's...I feel two ways. One is, I'm interested in human skin because most of the time I get a lot of fabric.

IAN:

Yeah.

SEAN:

So the opportunity to touch human skin is interesting to me because that's very direct contact with a human being. I feel like I actually get to know more about them, the more of their physical...actual body and skin I can touch.

IAN:

Intimate.

SEAN:

Yeah, it's intimate and I don't... not in a way that would be inappropriate. In a way that I just think, it's a little deeper. The other downside is sweat. People when it's hot, thighs will be rubbing together at... when they...especially when they sit. And that's gonna create some sort of friction which creates sweat. And as much as I love people and connecting with them, I don't love...I don't love any fluid that comes out of a person. Or a dog or any animal. I'd like to be fluid free. So, short shorts in the summer, I like it but there's...I-I know, I always know, and Jerry and I talk about this. We always know something...we have a... what's his phrase? He uses a phrase. It's um oh, "The downside of the upside", he calls it. The downside of the upside, which I thought was so poetic. And it really...that encapsulates the whole seat. The bottom part of the top of the seat, what is really both sides of the seat, and that's life.

IAN:

It's also, the sweat is the downside to the backside.

SEAN:

Yeah exactly, exactly. Totally. You get it...you should hang out with us sometime. Just come sit on...you know what, I would...we would let you sit on both of us. We would let you man spread and sit on both of us and just the three of us hang...get on at World Trade Center, we'll go all the way to Queens.

IAN:

I would love to sit on you.

SEAN:

Yeah, please. I would love to have you sit on me. You can sit on me right now if you want.

IAN:

I'll try it.

SEAN:

Yeah get up, get off your chair and come sit on me.

IAN:

Let's do it and just maybe just describe...how it's feeling to you.

SEAN:

Oh yeah, oh totally.

SEAN:

Great yeah, go ahead, great.

SEAN:

OK. So initially, I feel your reticence.

IAN:

I-I'd have... Yes.

SEAN:

You're slightly reticent.

SEAN:

OK and now I'm feeling you sort of soften because I called it out and explained what it was. Broke the ice. Cut the tension.

IAN:

Great.

SEAN:

So now, here's what I feel. At your soul, you are a kind gentle person. What do you call your engine... people's engine, what is it called again?

IAN:

My heart?

SEAN:

Yeah, yeah, your heart is like moving...beating very low and slow. Do you exercise?

IAN:

I'm a runner.

SEAN:

You're a runner, OK great. What's the most you've ever run?

IAN:

I've run a marathon, 26 miles.

SEAN:

OK, well I go more than that in a day. (LAUGHS)

I know it's less exertion for me.

SEAN:

You're happy romantically. I feel like you're satisfied. You're just like a salt of the earth good guy. You're...you've rented some weird movies in the past. And like I won't...I can't tell if they're dirty or maybe they're like... they're just one of those...like some weird horror movies or something. But there's something...like you've watched some weird movies at some point.

SEAN:

Now you're super relaxed. Now you are...you could almost go to sleep. I can feel like you're almost like, really relaxed.

IAN:

Well I have to say that this talking to you as I do this, I was just thinking about...there is something relaxing thinking about the connection that you make when you sit down.

SEAN:

Yeah, and you know what's great? I feel like more people would be even more relaxed if they knew how it made the seat feel. Because, initially you might think, "Oh I'm sitting on this seat, it must be uncomfortable, it must hate it." We love it. We love it. Your couches, your dining room tables, you know, your seesaws, whatever you're sitting on, wants to be sat on, that's why we are there.

IAN:

Seats are for sitting.

SEAN:

Seats are for sitting. That's awesome, I'm gonna tell Jerry that. Seats are for sitting. Wow, that's everything. That's everything.



IAN:

Sean, do you know what happens to a subway car when it's retired?

SEAN:

I have heard rumors. Things like, they throw you in a fire and then melt you down and make you into a new seat. Or they, you know, some rich guy buys you and sets up a fake subway in his house, so he can pretend he's on the subway all the time. Or you know you hear like, they're gonna take this seat and shoot it into space just to see what happens. That would be great. I really feel like that's not true.

IAN:

I've never heard of that.

SEAN:

Yeah, I feel like...I don't care. I feel like, whatever's gonna happen is gonna happen. If I am some weird millionaire's idea of a good time, fine. If they shoot me into space, fine. If they melt me down, fine. And I'm just gonna be happy up until the day that that happens and maybe I'll still be happy, even afterwards. Do you know what happens to...?

IAN:

I do.

SEAN:

OK, do I want to know?

IAN:

I honestly have no idea how you're gonna feel about it.

SEAN:

OK.

IAN:

One thing that happens to subway cars, this has happened to thousands of subway cars, is when they are retired they are put on a boat and...

SEAN:

They become seats on the boat?

IAN:

No, the boat goes out into the ocean and the subway cars are thrown overboard.

SEAN:

But wait, the car...the whole...

IAN:

The whole car...

SEAN:

Is thrown off of a boat?

IAN:

Is thrown off of a boat into the ocean and...

SEAN:

And what does it...?

IAN:

Well, they sink to the bottom and they become a place where sea creatures live.

SEAN:

What? So, we're underwater, which is...obviously you adapt to that. Oh my gosh, that sounds incredible. You know because now, if I go underwater now, something's gone horribly wrong. That would be terrible. That would be a huge...that would be code red.

IAN:

Oh yes.

SEAN:

So then instead of there being air and people, it's water and fish.

IAN:

Yes.

SEAN:

Where does the train go, does it go like...what's the route?

IAN:

The train no longer travels. The train...it lands on the floor of the sea and that is where it remains, it...

SEAN:

Gotcha, I was picturing like a track underwater that would go from one place to another. Like, take fish that come on and then they like, if they're tired of swimming they can like...the track goes somewhere and then it drops them off at work or something.

IAN:

Yeah, the traveling part of the subway car's life is over. But it's life is not over and...

SEAN:

Interesting.

IAN:

My understanding is the fish love it because the subway car becomes a kind of sanctuary. It's a safe place where they can hide from you know, sharks and larger predators.

SEAN:

Wow. Oh my gosh, sharks. Man, you know what, if we did end up at the bottom of the ocean... just be Jerry and I, sitting there chilling out, fish swimming around our heads and stuff. We might even see an anglerfish actually. That would be really cool to see one of those up close with their little man belly bump thing. Man, that's gonna be so weird.

IAN:

You know a lot of humans when they're done working they retire to the beach. I guess that's, in a way, what's hap... what will happen to you and Jerry.

SEAN:

Oh, yeah, yeah totally, but we'll be under water at the beach.

IAN:

Yeah, yeah.

(RELAXING JAZZ MUSIC)

SEAN:

You know what would be great? Maybe there's a way when... here's what I picture based off of what you said. The car hits the bottom of the ocean. Somehow, Tony gets dislodged and floats out of the subway car and gets eaten by a shark. I'm just gonna hope that that happens.

(RELAXING JAZZ MUSIC)

IAN:

This is 'Everything is Alive'. The show is produced by Jennifer Mills with me, Ian Chillag. Special thanks to Emily Spivack, Sarah Geist and Eva Wolchover. We are grateful to the reporting of Matt Soniak and Phoebe Parke. Also, a big thanks to Bob Devine for talking to us about his job retrieving your stuff off the subway tracks. Sean the subway seat was played by Peter Grosz. Most of this episode was recorded at Studio 44 in Brooklyn, New York. This is the final episode of our first season and we'd like to thank all of our performers Louis Kornfeld, Maeve Higgins, Dennis Pacheco, Tara Clancy, Ana Fabrega, Andrew Tisher, Chioke I'Anson, Annie Donley, Ayo Edebiri, and Peter Grosz. Also, a big thanks to Radio Diaries for the hospitality. Our artwork and website were created by Teddy Blanks, Adam Squires and Dan Shields of CHIPS NY. 'Everything is Alive' is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX and we are so grateful to everyone there for making this show happen. Without Julie Shapiro, executive producer, we would be stuck at the station thanks to a track fire, unable to make it anywhere. Thank you so much for listening to the first season of our show. If you like it, tell a friend about it and please subscribe so you'll know right away when we're back for season two. You can get in touch with us any number of ways at [everythingisalive.com](http://everythingisalive.com). We'll be back soon.

(RELAXING JAZZ MUSIC)

IAN:

So, before we go I just want to tell you about another Radiotopia show you should be listening to. It's from my friends at Criminal. They have another show called, 'This is Love'. The second season has just started. I just heard the first episode, it's... it's incredible. It's really beautiful. It's frankly, one of the greatest things I've ever heard. The show, as is probably clear from the title, is about love. Here's a clip.

MAN:

It is built into us from evolution to be scared of what we don't know.

PHOEBE:

Season two of our new show 'This is Love' is out now. Do you know what love is?

ROBOTIC VOICE:

My emotions may be simulated but they feel really real to me. Really really real.

MAN:

Well I think the Earth's gonna fall into the Sun. The Sun would collapse into the Universe. I mean you know, I'm holding the whole Universe right there.

PHOEBE:

He stuck out his hand and he shook my hand and he said, I'm Prince. And we kind of did that...we do the shaking hands and you do the little head bow. And it's like OK, now we can begin. (LAUGHS)

WOMAN:

People were a bit disoriented and some of them were angry. Some of them were enthusiastic.

PHOEBE:

Were you naked?

WOMAN:

Of course.

PHOEBE:

Six new stories about how to be alone, how to live forever, how to wait, how to worry, and how to love. I'm Phoebe Judge and this is love. Learn more at [thisislovepodcast.com](http://thisislovepodcast.com)

IAN:

New episodes of 'This is Love' drop every Wednesday.

(THEME MUSIC)

WOMAN: Radiotopia. From PRX.