

Still Buffering 197: "Rent" (1996)

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[theme music plays]

Raleigh: Hello, and welcome to *Still Buffering*: a cross-generational guide to the... culture that made us. I am Raleigh Smirl.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Sydnee: So close.

Raleigh: I know. I just always wanna say "content" for some reason.

Sydnee: I don't know. I mean, it is content, but it sounds... uh... it's, like, less, um... emotionally—you know what I mean?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Hm, yeah.

Sydnee: 'Cause content can be, like, things like movies and TV and books and that stuff, but it could also just be, like—like, juice in a glass.

[pauses]

Raleigh: Well—

Sydnee: [snorts]

Taylor: Okay. Okay. Well, I don't—

Raleigh: Okay.

Taylor: —I mean, I'm impressed that you're getting even close to it, Raleigh, 'cause I've listened to you say it for the past couple weeks and I still, under

pressure, [through laughter] couldn't—couldn't tell anybody what it is you're saying!

Rileigh: It doesn't help that I don't think about what I'm saying, and that I have to say it, until as we start recording the podcast.

Taylor: Yeah...

Rileigh: Then it just kind of is whatever comes out is what we go with.

Taylor: I think that's—that's alright. We'll get there.

Rileigh: We'll get there some day.

Sydnee: It—it was sort of like that thing that we used to have to recite at Mass.

Rileigh: All of the things, you mean? Throughout the entire Mass?

Taylor: [simultaneously] A lot of things.

Sydnee: Well, a lot of things, but a lot of 'em are really short. But the one thing, the big long thing that we all recite in unison? The Creed?

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Not the Apostle one. We don't say that one.

Taylor: I never learned that one.

Sydnee: The Nicene one.

Rileigh: The one they started giving people cheat cards with just whatever you're supposed to say on it in the back of the pews.

Sydnee: Really?

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I never—

Rileigh: So.

Sydnee: —that was after my time.

Rleigh: When they changed it all to the Latin stuff again, back to the closer to the original.

Sydnee: It went back to Latin?

Rleigh: Some of it. So they put little cheat cards in the back of the pews for you to read everything off of.

Sydnee: Man.

Rleigh: It was pretty nice, 'cause I never learned it in the first place, so I just used those.

Sydnee: Man.

Rleigh: People in my classes at Catholic school would be like, "What—you don't know it?"

And I'm like, "Oh, I know it. I'm just, you know—just... makin' sure. Just lookin' off it, and just..."

I didn't know it.

Sydnee: By then I was in college at the Newman Center where they were like—it was, like, cool... Catholicism?

Rleigh: [holding back laughter] Cool Catholicism?

Sydnee: So it was like...

Taylor: Cool... tholicism.

Rleigh: There's something there.

Taylor: Eh, yeah.

Sydnee: We're gonna, like, talk about philosophy, and maybe we might have a beer while we do it—

Raleigh: Whoa.

Sydnee: -'cause we're—we're in college now. Yeah.

Taylor: Oh, you were hangin' out with Buddy Christ.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] By then I'd moved on from—we didn't do—we didn't do any of that in Latin.

Raleigh: Um, guys? I hate to do this while we've already started recording the podcast, but I think I'm gonna have to quit. [pauses] Our podcast.

Sydnee: W—well—

Taylor: Well that's this—I mean, I... this is a... heck of a place to make that announcement.

Raleigh: I mean, I wanted every—

Taylor: But also an appropriate one.

Sydnee: This is, like, the worst time. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: —I wanted everyone know. I wanted you all to know. Um, I'm TikTok famous now. So I'm gonna be moving to Los Angeles to live in the Hype House with Charli D'Amelio and Lil—[enunciating carefully] Little Huddy.

And we're going to make TikToks together, and I'm going to make lots of money. [pauses] [holding back laughter] And I will be the oldest one there.

Taylor: Where—what are those names?! Who are these people?

Sydnee: Well, I don't understand anything you just said.

Raleigh: Um, so, to preface—

Sydnee: You're gonna live in a Huddle House?

Raleigh: —to preface—the Hype House.

Sydnee: Oh.

Taylor: Hype.

Raleigh: Um—

Taylor: It is Hype.

Raleigh: I would like—

Sydnee: Not the place where you get breakfast.

Raleigh: No. that's the Waffle House.

Taylor: [simultaneously] Waffle House?

Sydnee: I thought that was Huddle House, too. Is that a hotel?

Raleigh: Ihop?

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] I know—no, I know there's Ihouse, that's—

Raleigh: Ihop?! [laughs]

Taylor: So, wait. You—you—

Sydnee: [through laughter] That's a fancy house. That's an international house.

Taylor: Why—why—how come TikTok fame lets you live in the pancake place?
Please explain this.

Raleigh: Okay.

Sydnee: Yeah, is it—

Raleigh: First—

Sydnee: Wait, is it Waffle House?

Raleigh: No.

Sydnee: Is it Omelet Stoppy

Raleigh: It is the Hype House. Not Omelet Stoppy. Um, I have a TikTok that I posted two nights ago that now has 464.2 thousand views. When we started recording it was at 459, so since we have started recording it has gained... 5,000 more views.

Sydnee: How, uh—how does that—like, where does that... help me, on a rating scale.

Raleigh: Um, I mean, for reference, my most viewed TikTok before that one had 8,000.

Sydnee: Wow.

Raleigh: So, 466,000 now, since I just said 465,000.

Sydnee: That's—I mean, that's a lot. Like, my only reference point is Twitter.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: And, like, one time I had a tweet that got over 10,000 likes, and that—my head exploded so, like, this seems—this is a lot more.

Raleigh: Think about, like, a YouTube video, if it had 465,000 views. That'd be... a good amount.

Sydnee: It's a lot.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I mean... it's not Ryan Toy Surprise, but still.

Raleigh: That's true.

Taylor: What—what is the content of this video? This must be, like—

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: —something, like you—you made some high art, that it got that popular? Something really—

Raleigh: So—

Taylor: —beautiful?

Raleigh: —I have put—and I'm gonna be real. I have put a hundred times more effort into every single one of my other TikToks than this one. Um—

Sydnee: You have to be careful, 'cause this TikTok has bad words in it.

Raleigh: It does, and I'm not going to quote it, because it does have bad words in it. But when we talked about TikTok before, I mentioned, I believe, that one of the features is that you can use sounds from other people's videos and make your own. So it's kind of like community collaborative creation, if that makes sense?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Like, someone else can make a TikTok, and I can take the sound from it and—

Sydnee: Right.

Raleigh: —make a new caption for it or, like, make a new video out of it, make a new joke out of it, whatever. Um, and there was a sound on this girl's TikTok that went viral, that everyone liked the video, so I took a quote from the sound that I particularly enjoyed, and literally just put it on the letter board that my suite-mate got me for Christmas. Like, the little decorative one that you put, like, the plastic letters in, the felt one. I just put the quote in my letter board... and then filmed it, with the sound in the background, and people, I guess, thoroughly enjoyed that.

Sydnee: People love it. I—it confused me, because it has to do with somebody—which one of my roommates ratted me out to me mom—

Raleigh: [simultaneously] To my mom, yes.

Sydnee: And I—there's bad words in there, though. And I, uh—

Rileigh: Basically, without bad words, it's "Which one of you snitched on me to my mom? What? I'm coming for your left shoes and I'm pooping in 'em, buddy!"

Sydnee: Yes. Um, and I thought Rileigh was saying that one of her—

Rileigh: Yes.

Sydnee: That—I thought one of—actually, I thought maybe one of your roommates had done this, and, like, had said—like, another roommate had snitched on them, and they were gonna—I don't know. I was so confused. I was like, "[hesitantly] Okay? That's a lot of hostility."

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: It's like a—it's like a meta—

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: —inner—TikTok-inclusive, like, *Inception* thing. I don't know. That's a—that's a weird world. Somebody made something on TikTok, and then you made the thing based off of that thing, and that thing is... it's interesting. [laughs]

Rileigh: Yeah. And, like, I just thought it was a funny thing because the suite-mate that got me the letter board was like, "We—we both love this TikTok. Let's put it on your letter board. That'd be funny."

So then we sat in there together that night and laid out the letters and made it together and everything. We were like, "Well, I guess we should probably put the TikTok sound behind it."

And I was like, "I'll just have it, 'cause, like, I'm not gonna keep my letter board like this forever, so I'll just make it 'cause it's, like, 'Remember when we did that?'"

And then I woke up the next day to check my TikTok and it was at, like, 90,000 views, and I didn't know that happened. And now since it has gone up to... 465.

Taylor: Do you get money? Is—is that—how do you get money?

Sydnee: [simultaneously] Yeah. That was my next question.

Rileigh: [simultaneously] No, but that's—that's why I'm moving to the Hype House.

Sydnee: Oh.

Rileigh: So we have... have we discussed—this is—this is not what our show is about anymore, but this is, like, a brief... introductory foray back into the previous *Still Buffering*. Um, Team Ten from YouTube—Jake Paul, Logan Paul—

Taylor: Yeah, I think we talked about 'em.

Rileigh: Like, the house they created—

Sydnee: Oh, okay.

Rileigh: They put a bunch of YouTubers in so they could make videos together, and then all get famous together. This is the TikTok equivalent, that a TikToker made, called the Hype House.

Sydnee: Uh-huh.

Rileigh: So all these TikTokers live together and make a bunch of TikToks. Charli D'Amelio is only sixteen, I believe? A girl who got very popular doing TikTok dances, and... lives there. Um, and is, like, one of the most popular TikTokers.

Sydnee: Is there a... is there an adult to supervise them?

Rileigh: Um, I mean, Little Huddy's, like... I think he's 18? There's a girl there—

Sydnee: Wai-wai-wai-wait. Di—did you just—

Rileigh: [simultaneously] His name is—yes.

Sydnee: —try to sell me on the idea that the adult in charge of supervising everyone in the house is called *Little Huddy*?

Rileigh: *Lil Huddy*.

Sydnee: *Lil Huddy*?

Rileigh: Charli's boyfriend, yes. Um, and there's another girl there who's my age. She's, like, 19. She lives there. So... yeah. But they all make money, 'cause they all make TikToks, and each of their TikToks gets over, like, five or six million views.

Sydnee: So basically they're—if you look in their freezer, it's just pizza rolls and toaster strudels, right? Like, that's just—

Rileigh: Yeah, and gold bars.

Taylor: What are gold bar—like, actual gold bars? That's where they keep their money?

Sydnee: [simultaneously] Oh, like money. Oh, like all the—

Rileigh: Yes.

Sydnee: Yes. It's all of our money that they're get—well, not mine—I don't—maybe—I don't know. Maybe they took mine.

Rileigh: [simultaneously] Maybe it's your money.

Sydnee: I don't know. [holding back laughter] Did—did mine get there somehow? I don't know.

Rileigh: It's possible.

Taylor: I thought that was, like, a—a new, cool teen drug. Gold bars. Hey, you wanna—

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: [through laughter] Gold bars.

Taylor: —uh, go have some... some gold bars at the... pub? I don't know.

Sydnee: Is that—is that from *Riverdale*?

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: [laughs] The jingle jangle.

Rileigh: [simultaneously] The jingle jangle.

Taylor: Uh, so it's monetized. So TikTok has a monetization feature.

Rileigh: Yeah. It's just like—you can do, like, a sponsored Instagram post or YouTube video and have—like we do ads and sponsors and sponsors and stuff like that. Just like that.

Sydnee: This—this reminds me of an—of another group of young... Bohemian artists. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Okay. Don't... disrespect—

Taylor: Oh, that—that is—

Rileigh: —*Rent* like that and call the Hu—the Hype House "Bohemian artists" of the same caliber.

Taylor: What an amazing transition, though! Bravo!

Sydnee: Right, right? Uh, only the—only I would say that maybe that—let me guess. Is the Hype House somewhere in California? Did you say that?

Rileigh: It's in Los Angeles, yes.

Sydnee: Okay. So that's the—that's the, uh—

Rileigh: That's the difference

Sydnee: —the West Coast equivalent of *Rent*. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: No.

Taylor: Yeah.

Rileigh: No.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: Well... no.

Sydnee: The—the *New Yorker* says "Yes." [laughs]

Raleigh: Tomorrow's *New Yorker* headline: "Podcaster Makes Stunning Equivalent, Shocks the Nation."

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs quietly] I think you just meant me, as in "A *New Yorker*."

Sydnee: I did. But if the *New Yorker* would like to cover our podcast, that's fine.

Taylor: That's—

Raleigh: See, I thought you meant—

Sydnee: [through laughter] It seems... off.

Raleigh: —the *New Yorker*. And I was like—I mean, I guess I could that being, like, some... independent journalist's article somewhere.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Some deep analysis of—of modern... TikTok culture into... *Rent*. I don't know. There's... someone probably said something there.

Sydnee: [simultaneously] It would be clever.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It would be clever.

Raleigh: TM.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Somewhat ironic. Uh, so—no, I don't think it sounds anything like *Rent*, but we had to talk about—I mean, I guess young people living together, and maybe making questionable decisions?

Raleigh: Sure.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: That's—

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: That was the alternate title for *Rent*. [laughs]

Raleigh: *Young People Living Together and Possibly Making Questionable Decisions*.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: It was just a little bit wordy.

Sydnee: [through laughter] Tha—that's what—that's what I would call *Rent* now as an adult.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: [laughs] And not—well, I mean, but it sounds like these people in the Hype House have financial security, uh, which—uh—

Raleigh: Which—*they* know how they're going to pay *their* rent.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: That's right. They're—they can pay their rent, and your rent, and everybody else's rent.

Raleigh: Um, so, Sydnee... why did you want to talk about *Rent*?

Sydnee: Well, I mean, the—the most obvious is just, like... I think for a lot of us from a certain generation, and then also extending past just generationally, a lot of us who were into community theater or high school theater or theater in general, uh—*Rent*, at some point, entered your, like... your understanding of the world, and had a big impact on you.

Raleigh: If you did community or high school theater, there is a 100% chance that you, at one point, went to an Applebee's after a performance and tried to perform "La Vie Boheme" with your entire cast.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Yeah. [laughs]

Sydnee: Absolutely you have. Um, *Rent*, of course, is the—the musical—in case you're not familiar, which I'd say most of our listeners are, but in case you're not, it was a musical, uh, premiered January 25th of 1996. I was lookin' up the exact date.

Raleigh: Oh, that was—

Sydnee: It is by Jonathan Larson.

Raleigh: —four days ago.

Sydnee: The very talented Jonathan Larson. And it was based on... *La Boheme*.

Raleigh: Which is an opera, yes.

Sydnee: [simultaneously] Opera, yes. About, like, artists, poor artists, living in France.

Raleigh: So, *Rent*.

Sydnee: And these are poor artists living in New York. Which is... America's France. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs] Oh, America's France.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: Okay, wait.

Taylor: Uh...

Raleigh: Hold on.

Taylor: Well, okay. That's—that is a whole—

Raleigh: France—

Taylor: —it's a whole country.

Rileigh: —is a country!

Sydnee: I know, that was the—that was the joke!

Taylor: I'm trying to decide how I feel about that.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Living in New York. I mean, I guess I'd rather in America's France than America's America, so, uh, that's cool. I'll take it.

Rileigh: That's fair.

Sydnee: Or what would France's America be like?

Taylor: Oh no. Do they have one?

Rileigh: They don't—no one else has one.

Sydnee: They would not—they would not dare. Uh... [laughs] So I assume, Taylor, you moved to New York because of *Rent*, right?

Taylor: [laughs] Uh... no. Um, but—

Rileigh: What?

Taylor: —I—I will say it definitely shaped some of my expectations for what I thought living in New York would be like.

Sydnee: Yes. I think—I think for many people of a certain age and of a certain artistic bent—they move to New York kind of thinkin' it might be like *Rent*.

Taylor: Yeah. And, I mean, I definitely lived for a while in a—it was actually an illegal loft building—

Rileigh: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: —with a bunch of young artists. And my actual experience was, uh... "Wow, this is really dirty, and, uh, none of this is—is—nothing is—is warm, and I

wish all of you would *pay* your rent, because we're gonna get in a lot of trouble. Boy, this is stressful! We don't have any spoons."

It was awful. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] Or towels.

Taylor: No! There's mold everywhere. Just grows everywhere.

Rileigh: I think you just, like, captioned my thoughts while watching *Rent* for the first time.

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: Like, "Wait. No, pay your rent please. That's important. I don't want you to get kicked out. Also why—everything's so cold. You all are so cold."

Taylor: Well, I—I do think, like, a lot of people—I mean, I don't know. Maybe that's just the kind of people they are, or maybe they—like, maybe the takeaway they got from *Rent*, the one takeaway they got was "Rent is a—is a sometimes thing. Like, you don't *have* to pay it. It's negotiable."

'Cause I, having been in New York for, like—what, 15 years now? Like, I've always paid my rent. I've had some hard times and I've been understanding, and people's roommates that have, like, lost jobs or had hard times, and maybe they can't pay that month.

But far, far, far more people I've encountered just kinda treat rent like a "I don't know, I went to brunch a lot this month. Maybe I just won't do it. And I saw *Rent* once and they didn't pay, and that made them artists, so maybe I don't have to pay either."

And, uh, I really—really have a vendetta on *Rent* for that one.

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, there—I mean, and that's a little fantasy I think. And please know, it would be impossible for me to ever criticize *Rent* because it's—I love it so deeply.

Taylor: I understand.

Sydnee: In my heart. Um, but I think—I think that, like, it is a little fantastic. The idea that, like, you can just not pay *Rent*.

Rileigh: They do start out the musical by saying "We are not going to pay."

Taylor: Yes.

Rileigh: "Last year's rent, this year's rent, ever rent." And then they all end... living in... nice apartments.

Sydnee: You could—you can talk—and I'm sure there is a lot of—there are a lot of people who have—about some of the privilege themes.

Rileigh: Yes.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: In *Rent*. Among some of the characters, not all of them certainly, but—

Taylor: Well, that was—'cause I feel like, you know, it's only in the past couple years, and even that depending, like, you know, on when my job caught fire and that went away for a while, but it's only in the past couple years that I've had the, like, financial security and the level of employment where I don't work, like, six, seven days a week to pay my rent and stay afloat.

And I feel like that's—like, that was always kind of treated—like, I had those artsy friends that were like, "I'm putting my art first. Like, that you don't do that is a you problem, not a me problem." Like—

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: It's like, "You're a sellout because you're committed to financial stability. Like, you're not—you're not committed to your art." Like, that idea is very, like—like, Benny's bad guy 'cause he's like, "I—I covered your rent for a year, dudes. My dudes, like, I *paid* your rent for a year. I'm just sayin', how bout—how bout you do it now?"

Like, [through laughter] I really, really—

Rileigh: Ca—can we talk about Benny for a second? 'Cause I feel like everyone has the same universal experience. You watch *Rent* if you're, like, a theater kid. You're probably young. Like, you know, early teens. And you watch it and you're like, "Man, Benny's such, like, a sellout! He's, like, a representation of The Man!"

Sydnee: "What a jerk."

Rileigh: "What a jerk! Like, he doesn't care about art and creation. He just cares about [holding back laughter] money and technology."

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: And then you watch it again maybe a few years later and you're like, "Well, hold on a second. Was Benny... was he right? Was he maybe right?" [wheezes]

Sydnee: That's a natural progression.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: There is—you get to an age where you go, "Ohh... Benny was right!" [laughs]

Rileigh: I was listening to this in the car the other day in preparation for this episode. And I got to that song right after the first one and, you know, Benny's like, "Let's have a digital video recording studio. You can make movies. You can make music. You can live here for free, and you both can do whatever you wanna do, and we're gonna make this space where people can create."

Taylor: [hoarse voice] Yeah, but that would've been them *selling out*.

Rileigh: Yeah! And they're both like, "No! What happened to Benny and his heart?" And he's like, "Guys, I'm literally telling you you can live here for free. [through laughter] What do you mean?!"

Sydnee: Well, and it's also, like... I think we're supposed to pick up on the idea that, like—'cause he talked about condos.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: And so, like, I think they're—they're hinting at gentrification with that kind of talk.

Raleigh: Yeah...

Sydnee: But, like... these—these *are* two white guys.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: [through laughter] Like, we're—we're not gonna—we're not gonna gentrify the two white guys out of the neighborhood. Like, that's not... gentrification.

Raleigh: That's not how it works.

Taylor: The two white guys who both have parents that call? And, like, are legitimately concerned and checking in. like, you kind of get the idea, it's written into the musical that they have supportive families somewhere out there.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Well, and that's—I mean, I think that's all very true, and I think that's why, like, I can—I can still love it and celebrate it on, like, a level of.. "This is—this is about counterculture, about things that don't necessarily make money, and why they're still important, and about pursuing careers that aren't necessarily the most financially secure, and why that is important."

And you can, like, take those themes and celebrate them, and try not to focus too much on the—it's like, you know—it's not the literal interpretation.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs] You can't be a fundamentalist.

Taylor: Right. Well, no. I mean, you know, it's like anything. You—you can pick it apart and still not trash the thing. I think there's good—there's plenty of good in *Rent*. That is just one—one part of it. And, I mean, it's in the name. [through

laughter] It's just, like... me personally, like, uh... everybody, pay your rent. That's the one rule to New York City.

You can have any interest and get into any amount of trouble and have anything you want delivered to your door, probably at 4 o' clock in the morning. Just pay your rent. That's it! That gets you the keys to it, to all of it.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Yeah. And, I mean, it's also, like—it's about quality of life for all these people, too. Like, as you get older you start to think, like... I mean, I just want everybody to have, like heat. And to have, like, access to chips all the time. Or, you know—[laughs]

Rileigh: Sure.

Sydnee: —bananas by the bunch. [laughs]

Rileigh: Wine and beer!

Sydnee: A box of Cap'n Crunch. [laughs]

Taylor: Is that—is that right there on the hierarchy of needs? Like, access to heat and warmth, chips and bananas. [laughs]

Rileigh: And Cap'n Crunch.

Sydnee: And Cap'n Crunch.

Taylor: [through laughter] I gotta—I don't remember seeing that on the pyramid, but maybe it is.

Sydnee: Some Stoli.

Taylor: Oh, right. That's right.

Sydnee: Uh... but yeah, I—I mean, I think that that's—that's definitely—as we get older and further away, 'cause it was also—it was a snapshot of a very specific

point in time. I mean, like, part of it is that those of us who loved *Rent* when we were teenagers are older.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: And then the other part of it is that, like, it's not 1996 anymore. You know, it's not the early 90's. But the world has changed, and, um, you can glorify... art and culture and beauty and, like, diversity and difference and things that don't fit, like, the mainstream, without also... glorifying, like, poverty. You know, and—and—and things like rent being prohibitively high in some places for people to, like, live there and pay it, you know.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Not here in Huntington, but this probably happens there. [laughs quietly] I imagine that's more of a New York problem.

Taylor: [stammers] It definitely is.

Raleigh: Um, Taylor, can I ask—as someone who lives in New York—I always thought similarly—and I'm now talking about the *Rent* film, which I understand is not, like... the best example. But if we're talking about a visual representation, there's no, like, easy access to the stage version. So if we're looking at, like, a visual... version—

Sydnee: Is there no way to watch—were there no vi—video recordings of the stage show?

Raleigh: I mean, there's the live one that was on TV recently?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: But—I could be wrong, but I have not seen, like, a legal—

Sydnee: Yeah, yeah.

Raleigh: —recording. Of the stage show, anyway.

Sydnee: I haven't either, but it's one of those things you just assumed was out there somewhere.

Rileigh: Yeah. I, uh—I've always wondered—I've always felt the same about the apartment that Mark has as I do about the apartment in *Friends*.

Taylor: Right.

Rileigh: Like, how—if he is struggling to pay rent, as the initial song suggests, is his apartment reflective of someone who—[holding back laughter] who is living in—in that area of New York and struggling to pay rent? Because it's very large. Isn't it?

Taylor: It is.

Sydney: Well—

Rileigh: It's always seemed very big.

Taylor: Well, the stage—I mean, the original staging just used that one set very openly, so there's no real parameters.

Sydney: It's abstract.

Taylor: Yeah.

Rileigh: Right.

Taylor: I mean, they refer to it as a loft, and I think there you do get into some... I mean, I feel like 90's New York—it's different because right—I mean, you had before that—you know, the 70's into the 80's, you had a lot of artists in these areas where they were squatting, where they—no—they weren't—there wasn't a lot of development, so people, like, did probably live in apartments now that, you know, have been cut in half and cost ten times as much.

Rileigh: Okay.

Taylor: But I think there was still kind of a holdover where you could live in, like, a kind of unfinished, not necessarily secure or with, like, the best... [through laughter] heating or water—

Rileigh: Yeah, okay.

Taylor: —situation. I mean, I lived in a massive loft. I lived in two. Granted, I had, like, three in one, and four roommates in the other. But, like—

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: —you could—you could—it just kind of depends. So—I—now, I will say, the *Friends* apartment I think is—is a little bit more...

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydney: That's a whole other thing.

Raleigh: Right.

Taylor: But, I mean, even now there are spaces that you can find that people have set up shop that aren't quite... legal for living. You know? Like, landlords get around it and let people live there, even though they say it's just, like, office space or storage space.

Raleigh: Yeah, gotcha.

Taylor: 'Cause there's a lot more rules that come in when you have to have tenants, so—I don't know. Maybe they were livin' in a building that wasn't supposed to have people in it.

Raleigh: That makes sense.

Sydney: Uh, I wanna—we haven't really talked about, like, the music or the—I feel like the costumes were kind of like—

Taylor: Yeah!

Sydney: —iconic.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydney: —and of that stuff yet. But before we do that...

Raleigh: Let's check the group message.

Rileigh: We have a sponsor this week I want to tell you all about.

Sydnee: Who's hungry?!

Rileigh: [stiltedly] Me. I am very hungry. Actually.

Sydnee: What should you do?

Rileigh: I should order from DoorDash!

Sydnee: Great idea! [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Because—do you know what about DoorDash? It's very—

Sydnee: Do I know what? [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Do you know what? It's very easy. To order from DoorDash. All you have to do is open the DoorDash app, choose what you want to eat, and your food will be delivered to your wherever you are. Are you on the moon? DoorDash will deliver to you. If you're on the moon.

Sydnee: Are you sure?

Taylor: Is that true?

Rileigh: They say wherever you—they say wherever you are. So... no rules. You're on the moon? You can probably get DoorDash up there.

Sydnee: Can I make a—can I make an embarrassing DoorDash admission?

Rileigh: Sure.

Sydnee: Um, Justin and I, the other night, uh—it was our cheat day, where we can eat whatever we want, and we—it was late, and we had put the girls down, and we were gonna go to bed soon, and I was bemoaning that we didn't have any good desserts.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So we DoorDashed... Applebee's desserts—

Raleigh: [hisses]

Sydnee: —at 10:30 at night.

Raleigh: [strained] Yeah, you did!

Taylor: Well...

Raleigh: [laughs] You know—

Sydnee: That might be—that—[laughs] no shame!

Raleigh: That's what DoorDash—

Sydnee: That's a guarantee with DoorDash.

Raleigh: No shade, no shame. That's what DoorDash is for.

Sydnee: Our Dasher was so pleasant and—and—

Raleigh: I'm sure they were.

Sydnee: —no shade.

Raleigh: They have always—I have always had pleashant—pleasant Dashers. Um, because not only is your favorite pizza joint already on DoorDash, but just like Sydnee has just pointed out, there are over 340,000 restaurants in 3,300 cities. So you might find a new favorite, too! Just like Sydnee's new favorite, the Applebee's—

Sydnee: [snorts quietly]

Raleigh: —[holding back laughter] here in Huntington, West Virginia!

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: And my new favorite restaurant is Applebee's.

Taylor: Wow.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: They—well, this says "Door to door delivery in all 50 states and Canada," so maybe not the moon. But all 50 states and Canada! So... uh, you can order from your local go-to's, or choose from your favorite national restaurants like Chipotle. That's *my* favorite. Wendy's, the Cheesecake Factory.

Sydnee: Got some Cheesecake Factory from—

Rileigh: Gotta love that Cheesecake.

Sydnee: —DoorDash last weekend when we were in Cincinnati!

Rileigh: Of course, of course.

Sydnee: We just—man, we're all over this! [laughs]

Rileigh: We love DoorDash. And Taylor, if our listeners want to love DoorDash and enjoy its services as well, what should they do?

Taylor: Well, you can get \$5 off your first order of \$15 or more if you download the DoorDash app and enter promo code "buffering." that's \$5 off your first order. Download that DoorDash app from the app store and enter promo code "buffering." Don't forget! Just one more time. The promo code is "buffering." You get five bucks off, \$15 or more. So get—get some free food! 'Cause the only thing better than food coming to your door.. uh, with very minimal human interaction, is free food comin' to your door [holding back laughter] with very minimal human interaction.

Sydnee: Ooh!

Rileigh: Exactly.

Sydnee: That's the truth.

Sydnee: Um, so I—so the thing, obviously, about—there were many things that captured my imagination when I was young. And it's interesting, because I was talking to Justin about, uh—about *Rent*, since we decided to do this, and he was talking about how we all listened to it before we had the opportunity to see it.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And how, like, you have all these ideas—like, I remember going through, like, the CD insert and looking at all the pictures in it to try to get some idea of, like, "What do the characters look like, and what do the sets look like, and what are their costumes like?"

'Cause I had—I just hadn't—I mean, there was no way to access any imagery of that. And obviously I wasn't gonna be able to go anywhere to see it. Um, it eventually did come to Huntington.

Raleigh: It did. I was far too young to see it, but—

Sydnee: Yes, there was a touring company. And I remember—I sat in the front row. I got tickets as soon as they went—I sat in the very front row, wearing my... like, Mark scarf.

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: Yes. The Mark scarf.

Sydnee: I was. And just, like, in heaven. But before that, I remember all of us trying to figure out, like, what everybody looked like and what the—like, envisioning it and dream casting it and, um... and it was all—'cause it was all just in my imagination, what this was all like, what this world that the songs were about were like.

Raleigh: Sydnee played every part in her imagination.

Sydnee: Uh, I was largely Maurine.

Raleigh: Were you?

Sydnee: I—I—I wanted... to, like, have the sex appeal of Mimi, but I didn't—I knew that wasn't in me.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So... when we would, um, cast *Rent*—and if you—if you ever did theater and you wanna pretend like you haven't casted *Rent* with all your friends—

Raleigh: You're lying to yourself and everyone around you.

Sydnee: Of course you did. Of course you did. I was always Maurine.

Raleigh: Huh. See, in my, uh—my solo performances of the entire musical in my car, I'm always Mimi.

Sydnee: Hm.

Raleigh: Or Mark. [snorts]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: I've always had this dream that one day, when I'm older, there will be, like, a gender swapped—you know, no gender requirement version of *Rent* that I will one day get to play Mark.

Sydnee: Well, I don't see any reason there couldn't be.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: See, I like that, 'cause I always—I always liked Roger, like, both aesthetically and his songs the best. And I—you know, I don't see a future [through laughter] where I could ever be a Roger, but I want—I love those plaid pants.

Raleigh: So this is our next project. We're—we're writing—

Sydnee: You could be a Roger.

Raleigh: —we're staging, not writing. It's already written. Staging a—a—all... just no rules production of *Rent*. Taylor and I starring as Mark and Roger.

Taylor: [laughs] I'm down. I already know my lines.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: It's, uh—Justin, even when we were younger, when we were teenagers, always wanted to be Benny.

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: That sounds about right.

Sydnee: I know. He is—he is a Benny. He's always been a Benny. He was one—he was somebody who realized pretty early that, like—

Raleigh: That Benny was correct.

Sydnee: "Benny's on to something." [laughs] "I wanna be able to pay my rent someday. I don't wanna live somewhere where it's cold. I wanna pay my rent! What do I have to do?" [laughs]

Um... but yes, and so you would perform all these songs out in public. And of course, like, I'm not gonna sit here and be like, "The song are good" like the—I'm the first person ever to say that.

Raleigh: You're the first person to make this revelation.

Sydnee: Obviously the music is wonderful and, um, it—it's funny, because it introduced me to all kinds of things, especially "La Vie Boheme—"

Taylor: Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: —where, like, I went and read a—I went and read about a lot of stuff because of that song.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, it expanded my education. [laughs] Who are these people they're talking about? I don't know—

Raleigh: Lotta stuff in there I didn't know about when I first listened to it when I was 13. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: You know, it's also—also why one of my first stops when I moved to New York City was—and I actually regularly would go there, to the Life Cafe. Uh, 'cause it was a real place, up until fairly—a few years ago it closed down.

Raleigh: Wow.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Was it—was it as cool as it always seemed?

Taylor: I mean, it was chill. It was, like—

Raleigh: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: —it was in the East Village. It was right along a park. Uh, it was really cute. Uh, actually fu—uh, kinda funny. There was the original Life Cafe in the East Village. They opened up a second Life Cafe in my current neighborhood, and that one eventually changed hands into a restaurant that is now the sister restaurant to where I work, so in some roundabout way, [through laughter] I work at the—like, the future incarnation of the Life Cafe.

Sydnee: Um, it—I think it really—it tapped into—aside from being incredibly wonderful, and so you wanted to listen to the music over and over again and learn all the words and sing it and... dream about performing it because it's so good, it also definitely tapped into, like—I felt like I was outside the mainstream because I was a weird theater kid.

And, like, these are not... well, I mean, Maurine I guess is a theater person. She says that. Um, but they are not theater pe—they're outside the main—they're, like, not... they're not the suits.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] They're not the three piece suits. And it—I felt like I connected to, like, that aesthetic at that point in my life. It's funny. I don't—I feel so far from that now.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Well, I—I mean, I—I think a big part of it, too, was there a huge queer aspect to it. And, you know, being, like—

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: —young and confused and in high school, having something that was so universally beloved and something that you could talk about with other people, it kind of gave an opening to talk about... sexuality with people, and also with yourself. I think *Rent* was one of those big things to me that made me feel like, "Oh, I'm allowed to have these thoughts? That's—that's nice." [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I think that can't be over—can't be said enough, though, because it wasn't... so, I—I feel like, even though I didn't personally when I was in high school—I didn't know a lot of people who were, uh, not straight and out about it. I knew some, but not a lot.

Um, I—I still always feel like—and I don't know if it was just the way we were raised—like, there was never any—in my head, I never had any stigma associated with that or, like, weirdness or uncomfortable—it was never—there was nothing like that in me. Um, which is not necessarily true for everybody from this area. Um, or any smaller area.

But I think in places like Huntington and other small towns, *Rent* could—I mean, it had such an incredible impact on young people who just grew up with this, like, heteronormative kind of culture shoved upon them, and were not given any ideas from adults that anything else existed.

And that it was okay, and I think—that's something I've talked about with people my age now that, like, those were the first... gay people they saw or heard!

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: Were characters in *Rent*.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And they loved those characters, and they loved the story, and it—it—it was really—it was like—it was introduction to the idea that people are different, love means a lot of different things, and what you've been told is not the whole story.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Um, which is so—it was so important for so many people.

Taylor: Absolutely. Yeah, I definitely remember having that sense of, like—I think as a child it almost felt dangerous. Like, that's the word that I would've used when I first heard it. Like, "Nobody can hear me listening to this."

But what it actually was was—important *is* the better word. But there was something there that was going to influence the rest of my life, and the—the ideas that were gonna be shaped in my head, and that—yeah. You can't—you can't understate that importance for a lot of people that didn't have access to the culture otherwise.

Rileigh: Yeah. I mean, I remember—I will admit, the first experience I had with *Rent* was the movie. It was not the, like, music.

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: Which is just because it was more accessible for me. Like, it was just, like, what I had. There weren't CD's of the music, because I was at a weird point in time where, like, if I wanted music I still had to, like, download it on my iPod. But it *was* there, but people weren't really buying CD's of it anymore because at that point it was, like, several years old.

Sydnee: I mean, I had it.

Rileigh: Well, I know. But, like, the movie had just recently become, like, a popular thing among theater people I knew that were all older, and they were like, "You have to watch this."

And I knew who Idina Menzel was, and she was in it, and—but... more importantly, I saw Maurine date a man and then date a woman, and it was never something that anyone brought up as, like, "She was pretending to be straight and was really gay," or anything. It was always just like, "She dated two people, and one was a man and one was a woman." And that was her.

And, like, seeing that at a young age when I personally was trying to suppress feelings of the same kind was very... like, I don't know. It was very important to me growing up, because it was something I had never seen before.

Even still, I don't—I feel like... seeing bisexual people in media is something I don't see a lot. But it was more important for me when I was developing feelings that I didn't think were okay, because I did have that personal struggle, and I did, like, think that I couldn't feel how I felt.

So Maurine was always kind of like, "She can—she can do it and she's Idina Menzel."

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: It really—well, and it brought—because—because it was such a popular show, and it was so good, it brought that into so many homes that just... had not had contact with those ideas before.

Um, and, I mean, there ha—you can't—there has to be something like—that—you have to acknowledge the impact of something like that on generations of people. Where, like, they were maybe from a place where they didn't really personally know anybody who wasn't straight. And then when you hear Tom Collins sing "I'll Cover You—"

Taylor: Aww.

Raleigh: To Angel, yes.

Sydnee: I know. And just the depth, like—man. If there—every time, Justin and I cry when we listen to that song. Every single time. Because if you—if you have, like—if you don't understand, if you grew up in a place where, like, love was one thing, and you didn't understand that love is—is many things.

Well, love is one thing that is represented in many ways. And you listen to that song and the depth of those emotions and that expression and everything. Like, how that doesn't... move you and change you and shift your worldview to make it just a little more loving and open. I don't know how.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: You know? I don't know how it couldn't.

Taylor: Well, and that—that really gets to, I think, the bigger—the bigger core of, I think, *Rent's* goodness. Is, like, you know we talked about the whole, like, starving artist angle. And, like, it's not really about making art. It's about love

and acceptance. It's about, you know, loving—being yourself and loving yourself and loving the people in your life, and truly, like, loving what you're doing.

Like, there's so much at the core of it that's just about, you know, living in a state of love that is—it's really beautiful. And that was a message of hope for a lot of people that did feel that way. That, you know, that the way that I am is never gonna result in love or family or friends or community.

Sydnee: And they hit that on so many levels. 'Cause, I mean, we're spending a lot of time talking about, you know, the LGBTQ aspects of it, because those spoke to us more personally.

But, like, you could make the same case for, you know, at that time, humanizing HIV and talking about it openly. And, like, that these are people who, you know, have a disease and are in treatment, and destigmatizing that, 'cause it's just like anything else. People who need to take medicine every day. It was so important at the time. Still important, but even more so back then.

Um, it does that for—for people who are HIV positive, and it—it, uh, does the same thing to a lesser extent, it's not addressed quite as much, but for people who have substance use disorders. You know? Like, again, giving these people, like, "We—we love these characters. They're human faces. They're people we care about and want to succeed and want to help, not turn our backs on or criminalize for, you know, what they're doing."

Um, and it hits on all those levels.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Um, it reminds me—I don't think—I may have told this story on here before but, uh, what—what Tim Robbins said about *Rent*... [laughs quietly]

[pauses]

Taylor: I don't know this.

Raleigh: [simultaneously] I don't think so.

Sydnee: Have I mentioned this before?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: When, uh—when we went to see *Hamilton* the first time, after the show was over, we, uh—went up on stage with Lin to talk with Lin for a while. And Tim Robbins was there, and so Lin decided to introduce us to Tim Robbins.

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: Is this just something Lin does?

Taylor: Yes.

Raleigh: Because Taylor and I went up on the stage after *Hamilton* to talk to Lin [holding back laughter] and he introduced to Al Pacino. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: He's—he's the kindness troll. He does things that are really nice and awesome but also, like, "Why would you do that to me?!" [laughs]

Raleigh: Like, Taylor and I were just, like, talking to ourselves. I was getting too anxious to introduce myself to any of the other stars of *Hamilton*, and he's just like "Hey, wait. [holding back laughter] I have someone to introduce you all to. Here's—here's Al Pacino!" [laughs]

Sydnee: He does! And it's totally earnest.

Raleigh: It is.

Sydnee: It's just 'cause he thinks—he just thinks everyone's great.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, but he—he introduced us to Tim Robbins. So Justin and I were standing there trying to figure out, like, "How do we make small talk with Tim Robbins?" [laughs quietly] Uh, and we started, of course, by just all agreeing that *Hamilton* was amazing and wonderful and fantastic and... it was the first time I had seen it, so I was, of course, like, still crying and—uh, and I said—and we compared it to *Rent*.

I think Justin may have said it first, you know? It's—this is going to be this generation's *Re*—what *Rent* was to us. *Rent* was our generation's, and this will be

this generation's *Rent*. It's going to be so important and meaningful and they're gonna—like, all these younger people are gonna memorize it and sing it over and over again and cast it in their drama classes and live *Hamilton*, just like we lived *Rent*.

And, uh Justin made a joke about how except now they'll also get to learn history, which I guess is something—

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: —you know, we didn't get to do with *Rent*. And Tim Robbins said, "That's true, but *Rent* taught your generation tolerance."

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: "Which is every bit as important."

Raleigh: Whoa.

Taylor: Yeah!

Sydnee: Which was such a Tim Robbins thing to say?

Raleigh: Hm.

Sydnee: It was exactly what I thought Tim Robbins would say. Like, I guess I could've predicted that.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Well—

Sydnee: Uh, but it's true. And I don't—I don't love the word "tolerance" as a rule, but I get what he's saying, and it's true. It opened up our generation to so many things and made it normal and part of who we were and our life experiences and what love was and what art was, and beauty and living and—I mean, it really did.

Raleigh: Well, the word needed to be "tolerance" back in the 90's. That was what the message was back in the 90's. It was tolerance, and now it is not. Now we have been able to evolve into—

Sydnee: Acceptance.

Rileigh: —acceptance and love, and all those kinds of things. But I think when *Rent* came out, that's—tolerance was... was, you know, the next step.

Taylor: And it's—it's funny, comparison to *Hamilton*, because before this, I was looking at some articles about *Rent*. Kind of, you know, retrospective articles, and a lot of people have made that, have drawn that line about something that managed to captivate a generation of young people in coming to musical theater, unlike anything that was really existing around it.

And so much of that, I think, is... it comes down to the music itself. That, you know—*Rent*—it wasn't just, like—it was a good story, there were good characters, but the music was *good*, you know? You just like the—it—it—I would be just as happy—happy listening to that as anything on the radio. Probably more so. And *Hamilton* is, like—

Rileigh: Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: —it hits on the current music. It hits on the kind of music that people want to listen to. And then it—it feeds you a really important message with that. Like, that's not something that a lot of musicals can lay claim to.

Rileigh: Oh, I can do *Hamilton* as an episode. [gasps]

Sydnee: That's true.

Taylor: That's true, yeah. That's the—

Sydnee: That would—that—yeah, that would be the—

Rileigh: Wow.

Sydnee: —I would draw that corollary.

Rileigh: So many doors.

Sydnee: It's so good. I was trying—I was sitting here trying to think, like, what are my favorite songs from *Rent*? But I don't... it's almost impossible to choose.

Rileigh: "Another Day" is my favorite.

Sydnee: "Another Day" is great. "I'll Cover You" is way up there. Man, I love that song.

Rileigh: "I'll Cover You" is very good. I can't listen to the reprise too much, though—

Taylor: Oh, yeah...

Rileigh: —because it does make me cry.

Sydnee: Yeah, but it's so good. Um, obviously—

Rileigh: But the whole message of—

Sydnee: —"Seasons of Love" is beautiful.

Rileigh: —the whole message of "No day but today" is just...

Sydnee: Yes.

Rileigh: That's, like, the whole show.

Sydnee: Yes.

Rileigh: And that, you know...

Sydnee: Which is—I mean, I do like the—I like—I guess in the original *La Boheme*, upon which it is based, the Mimi character does not survive. Spoilers. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Aw. That's—well, [crosstalk]—

Sydnee: Unlike in *Rent*. Um, but I like the end of *Rent*. I don't—that never bothered me. I don't—that never... I think we needed that.

Taylor: Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: I think we needed that.

Raleigh: We already lost Angel.

Sydnee: We lost Angel.

Raleigh: Yeah. Spoilers, I guess. I...

Sydnee: There can't—surely not. There's no one out there—

Raleigh: Can't be spoiling anything *Rent* for anyone, right?

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Um... Angel is—we—we we're runnin' out of time, but Angel was also... man. Talk about a character that I just, like... I found so magnetic and fascinating, and I didn't know anybody like that in my life when I was—

Raleigh: That—I mean—

Sydnee: —you know, 14 in Huntington.

Raleigh: —that had to have been the first—and I could be very wrong, but the first widespread, major representation, and symbolic representation of any person that was genderfluid.

Sydnee: Is that—Justin and I were debating that. Can you—like, now, in modern day terminology—

Raleigh: [simultaneously] I don't—that's the thing. I don't want to—

Sydnee: I know. I don't wanna apply it, 'cause I don't wanna accidentally—

Raleigh: [simultaneously] I don't wanna label Angel, and I—

Sydnee: —mislabel—

Raleigh: —[simultaneously] And I—

Sydnee: —'cause it—

Raleigh: That's not me saying, like, that is what Angel is. That's just, like, the best—I mean, like—

Sydnee: But she's—she—you could—she's in—she's in drag when she performs, but also not.

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: So then—so then I think, like, is it not... you know, are we not talking about drag necessarily, but maybe—maybe genderfluid?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, and they use both male and female pronouns.

Raleigh: Right, throughout the show.

Sydnee: So either way—

Raleigh: Either way, that sort of character I had never seen before.

Sydnee: For a small town kid in 1996, you know, to see a character like that is huge, and to—especially if that is something that's already in you.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: To see that represented. I mean, it's just huge.

Taylor: Well, and it wasn't just that the character was there. It's that the character was sort of the center of goodness in the—in the entire play. Like, if you had to pick a character that was sort of, I think, rose above—

Raleigh: Is good.

Taylor: —yeah. Just... Angel was the—the heart of the musical.

Sydnee: That taught them all about the importance of appreciating that moment and that day, and loving each other, and taking care of each other, and finding a family, and taking care of your family, and—

Rileigh: And Angel was the one that didn't start with them. Angel was brought to them. Like a guardian Angel.

Taylor: That's true.

Rileigh: And then left them. Hmm. Symbolism.

Sydnee: Very good.

Rileigh: [laughs] Thank you. [laughs]

Sydnee: You should write an essay on this later.

Rileigh: I will, actually.

Sydnee: Uh, but I guess if you haven't listened to *Rent*... do.

Rileigh: This doesn't feel like something that should have to be said in the 2020.

Sydnee: It's not—it's not—and it's not dated. It's still...

Rileigh: Oh, no.

Sydnee: I mean, obviously the way that we look at things like—I would hope, as a society, things like, um, LGBTQ—the LGBTQ community and, um, HIV, and people facing homelessness, and substance use disorder, and all these different things.

I would hope we've evolved past that to some degree, or at least improved. Obviously we still have a long way to go in all these arenas, but hopefully we've moved on. So, like, there are some things that... it's not like that now, but it's still, I think, incredibly relevant and meaningful and beautiful and... the music is just as relevant. I don't think it feels aged or dated at all.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I was listening to it with Charlie, though, and there were a lot of things I had to explain.

Taylor: Yes. [laughs]

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I was like, "This might be a little much for a five-year-old."

Rileigh: I was gonna say, she's five.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Wow, that's—

Sydnee: Yeah, I—

Taylor: [through laughter]—really—exposure thera—what'd you do—what'd you do with "Contact?" Just "Oh, look that's... the next song now!"

Sydnee: We hadn't even made it—like, I was gonna skip that, but we hadn't even made it that far. When she was, like, "What is she—what—what are—what are they doing? What is smack?"

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: "What is—" [laughs quietly] and I was like, "Aw, man. I have to talk to you about drugs now!" And then I—and then I have this—I'm so bad at this. I have this moment where I'm like, "Is five when you talk to kids about drugs? Probably not. Maybe?"

Rileigh: Probably not.

Sydnee: "Seems young, but I don't know! Let's try it and see how it goes."
[laughs quietly]

Rileigh: How did that go?

Sydnee: Um, she said "I don't wanna do those," and I said, "Well, good."
[laughs] We'll keep working on it.

Rileigh: End of conversation. [laughs]

Sydnee: But then I was trying to say, "But, like, it's important to remember that this is an illness, you know, this is a disease. These people aren't doing

something to hurt themselves on purpose, they're—you know they can't... they can't just fix it. They can't just help it. They need—you know, it's something that needs treated by doctors and people who can help them and—" that—it was a lot. It was a lot.

Raleigh: She's five, yeah.

Sydnee: It was complex for a five-year-old. I realize that.

Raleigh: I can't wait for you to get the call from her preschool teacher.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: Like, "Hey! Um, weird question. Charlie's telling all the other kids about not doing smack? Is there anything... you... is that..."

Taylor: "Any X, blow, Jugie Boogie Boy—" like, "She's listing a lot of terms from the 90's for drugs!"

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: [through laughter] She has an encyclopedic know—knowledge of street terms.

Sydnee: [through laughter] She did bring up something she wrote, and I said—'cause she's learning how to write. And I was trying to read it. She writes, by the way, all the way around the edge of the paper.

Taylor: Oh!

Sydnee: She doesn't write in straight lines.

Raleigh: That's very good.

Sydnee: It follows around the edge. And it—uh, it said "I am mad because the—" and I couldn't read the last bit of it really clearly. I was like, "What does this say, Charlie?" And she said, "Oh, it says 'I am mad because the coral reef is dying.'"

Raleigh: Me too!

Taylor: [laughs quietly] Okay. Well, she can handle some big truths right now. That's alright.

Raleigh: Yeah!

Sydnee: She told her class about global warming.

Raleigh: That's good.

Taylor: Good! They need to know!

Sydnee: That was—that was—that was my fault.

Taylor: It's not a fault.

Sydnee: She told me she was gonna start taking her bike more. And I was like, "Instead of the car?" [laughs]

Raleigh: To her school that is several, several miles away? Her tricycle?

Sydnee: [through laughter] I was like, "Honey, you don't drive. I don't think that's—okay."

Taylor: [laughs] You know, it's alright.

Sydnee: Well, thank you both for indulging me in talking about *Rent*.

Taylor: Do either of you still have the problem to this day where if anybody says a line from it, you've gotta—

Raleigh: Yes.

Taylor: —get through to the end of it, at least in your head. Like, it just—you could sing a line or say a line from any part of the musical, and my brain will just immediately pick it up and just go. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yes. My roommate was lighting a candle the other night and said, "Anyone got a light?" And I said, "[singing] I know you, you're—" [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: "[singing]—you're shivering." And she said "No I'm not." [snorts] And I said, "No, just go with it."

Taylor: "We're gonna be doing this for the next hour. Sorry."

Rileigh: "This is my life now, sorry. You gotta go shut the door and listen to *Rent*."

Sydnee: Please keep going. Please keep going. Um, yes, no, that's... life with me and Justin, is accidentally starting *Rent* and then having to finish it.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Our children are never fed. It's just us doing *Rent*.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [through laughter] All day. No. Um... but yeah, and if you haven't—I don't know, if you're out there and you haven't listened to *Rent*, do that.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: Taylor, what are we doing next week?

Taylor: Uh, alright. I—this was the number one thing that I wanted to do when we did the whole—this new format. Uh, and I was like, "Should I save it?" But I just wanna do it, 'cause I'm just gonna keep thinking about it. We're gonna do *Sailor Moon*!

Rileigh: Oooh!

Sydnee: Yayyy!

Taylor: Yeah, specifically the animation. Um, the 90's one. I mean, we could talk about *Crystal* too. That's important, that's newer. Uh, that is fine.

Rileigh: I will say, that is what I have seen.

Taylor: We can talk about both. But I do want to definitely talk about the, uh—the original *Sailor Moon* animated series.

Raleigh: Awesome.

Sydnee: I'm very excited.

Taylor: I've been rewatching it, all of it, uh, this past week. And, uh, that's just all I—that's where my head is. That's where I'm livin' right now. So... I'm set.

Raleigh: That sounds like a nice break from the world.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: To watch before next week.

Sydnee: I—well, I am excited to talk about it. I will probably try to refresh my memory with a few episodes, 'cause Charlie will happily watch it with me. Um, and if you wanna play along at home... watch some *Sailor Moon*. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: If you've never watched *Sailor Moon*... uh...

Raleigh: Watch some *Sailor Moon*.

Taylor: Yeah, it's—it's all on Hulu!

Sydnee: What do you think—you think definitely something dubbed there though, right? [snorts]

Taylor: Well, okay. We'll say this.

Sydnee: I'm kidding! I thought you were gonna jump on me! [laughs]

Taylor: No! I—that is such, like—that's, like, the edgelord equivalent of, like, me in the 90's. Like, "[mocking voice] Ugh, subs are better than dubs." Now I'm like, "I don't know, they make good dubs." And when I'm drawing, I can't always be looking at the screen, or when I'm cooking.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: So I love a good dub. And they recently redid—now, I will talk about the—the [holding back laughter] iconic 90's dub, which ha—I have opinions about. But they recently redid the whole thing, uh, which they—the translations are way more on point, they didn't cut it to pieces, and they have a whole, like, new cast that does a great job. So I think that the sub is great. It's—obviously the original voice actors were amazing, but I don't think there's anything wrong with the—the redone dub that's out there, all available on Hulu in both formats. Um, uh, yeah. It's...

Sydnee: Well, um... I will have to do that, be 'cause it occurs to me that showing a subtitled program to my five-year-old would probably be—

Raleigh: Who cannot read.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: —it would probably be kind of cruel. [laughs]

Taylor: No, the dub is—the dub is good. It's—it's really good.

Sydnee: Alright! Well, then please join us next week for a *Sailor Moon* talk.

Taylor: Yayy!

Sydnee: [holding back laughter] The new name of our—that was my clever name.

Raleigh: *Sailor Moon Talk.*

Sydnee: *Sailor Moon Talk.*

Taylor: This—this next episode is just gonna spin off into the podcast that I'm gonna try to source somebody to do with me, where we just go episode by episode and talk about the musicals and the weird failed American proposed cartoon. Wait for that podcast, 'cause that's what I wanna do. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Alright. Well, that'll be comin' next.

Rileigh: Yeah, I would listen.

Sydnee: Uh, in the meantime, thank you both. Thank you, listeners. Thank you Maximum Fun for hosting us on your wonderful network. Go to Maximumfun.org and check out all of our family of—of sibling podcasts. Not, like, they have siblings. I meant, like, their podcasts are our podcast siblings.

Rileigh: They also have siblings.

[pauses]

Sydnee: Yeah, they might. I mean...

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: You know what I mean! I meant, like—

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: Go listen to podcasts! [laughs quietly] Uh, you can tweet at us @stillbuff. You can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org, and thank you to the Nouvellas for our theme song, "Baby You Change Your Mind."

Rileigh: This has been your cross-generational guide to the culture that made us. I am Rileigh Smirl.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl!

Rileigh: I am still buffering...

Sydnee and Taylor: And I... am... too.

[theme music plays in the background]

Rileigh: Guys, my TikTok has another 10,000 views, just in case you all were wondering.

Sydnee: Oh my gosh...

Taylor: Why are you still wasting your time on this podcast?

Sydnee: Get—

Raleigh: I know!

Sydnee: —get to the Huddle House!

Raleigh: I gotta move to... Omelet Shoppy.

Sydnee: Move to the Ihop!

[theme music plays]

Helen: Hey, J. Keith.

J. Keith: Hey, Helen! I hear you have a true/false quiz you wanted me to finish.

Helen: I *do*. Here we begin. We host a trivia game show podcast on the Max Fun Network called *Go Fact Yourself*.

J. Keith: True.

Helen: Correct! The show is all about celebrity guests answering trivia questions about things J. Keith enjoys.

J. Keith: False. We sometimes don't talk about baseball or cats.

Helen: Thank God. It's questions about things *they* enjoy! Next, we bring on surprise experts every episode.

J. Keith: True!

Helen: Correct! Final question: it's just the two of us, sitting alone with these guests.

J. Keith: False.

Helen: Correct! We have a live audience at the Angel City Brewery!

[audience cheers]

Helen: See? You can hear *Go Fact Yourself* every first and third Friday of the month, and if you don't listen, you can go fact yourself!

J. Keith: True!

[music plays]

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