

## Still Buffering 207: "Invader Zim" (2001)

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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.

**Sydnee:** I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Taylor:** And I'm Taylor Smirl.

**Sydnee:** Can I tell you both about a good TV show that I watched last night?

**Raleigh:** Yeah!

**Sydnee:** I'm trying to not start off by talking about... how we're all trapped in our homes. [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Yeah. I—it got to me enough last night that I got to the point where I tried to curl my hair with the belt of my robe because TikTok told me that would work.

**Taylor:** Well... that's just something that—that kids like you just do for fun though, right? That's not just 'cause of the—

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Did it?

**Raleigh:** No.

**Sydnee:** Okay.

**Raleigh:** In case you were going to try it yourself.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. I watch a lot of life hack videos and, um, also food prank videos. Not by choice, by force.

**Raleigh:** Yes.

**Taylor:** [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** From my five year old.

**Taylor:** From your children. [laughs] I thought you were gonna say from your husband, but okay.

**Sydnee:** Uh, and I—my favorite is they had one for parents, and we sat there—like, life hacks for kids, for raising kids. And I Justin and I watched it with the girls and just sat there going, "No! That one—that's stup—that would never work! That's ridiculous! You've never had kids!" [laughs]

A lot of 'em were just variations on, "Put your kid in a box and give them markers."

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** To me, that's the impression I've always had of what parenting is.

**Taylor:** I mean, if you get a big enough box, I think they can't get up the sides, that...

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Just apply gerbil logic to a child, right? [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** This is what I will tell you about children. You think, like, "Oh, they wanna draw all over everything. I'll put them in this big cardboard box and hand them a bunch of markers, and then they can go wild."

Like, we have a playhouse on our back deck and I handed them markers and stickers and glitter and glue and said, "Decorate your playhouse. I don't care. I mean, it's plastic playhouse. Put whatever you want on this thing. It's yours. Make it your own."

I would have thought... that would be the afternoon.

**Taylor:** That sounds like a fun afternoon to me. Like, now.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydney:** I would say maybe 10 minutes, maybe – and that might be generous – that they were totally into this. And then it was like, "Can we draw on the deck?"

"No."

"Can we draw on the house?"

"No."

"Can we draw on each other?"

"I'd rather you not."

"Can we draw on you? How 'bout our clothes? Let's go inside and draw on the walls."

"No! Why is this not good enough?"

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** "I gave you what you wanted!"

**Sydney:** "This is—you have this entire pretend house you can draw on!"  
Nope. Not enough.

**Taylor:** They want to draw on the thing they're not supposed to draw on, right? That's... the point.

**Sydney:** Exactly.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** It's—if you let—the only way that the box trick works is if you put a box in the middle of the room and then say, "Whatever you do..." [laughs quietly] "... don't draw on this box!"

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** "Certainly don't get inside it, where there are markers, and draw on the inside of it... for an hour."

**Raleigh:** "No, no, no!"

**Sydnee:** [holding back laughter] "For an hour, while mommy watches some—some TV or checks Twitter."

**Raleigh:** What good TV show did you watch?

**Sydnee:** It's called *Dispatches from Elsewhere*.

**Raleigh:** Okay.

**Taylor:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** Have you heard of it?

**Raleigh:** No.

**Sydnee:** Did you ever hear of a documentary called *The Institute*?

**Raleigh:** Nnno.

**Sydnee:** It was a very good documentary about this, uh, weird sort of, like, alternative reality game that people played in San Francisco where, like—it was based on this—the Jeune Institute and, like, you had to follow these directions. There were puzzles all throughout the city, and—

**Raleigh:** *Ready Player One*. The novel.

**Sydnee:** Is that what that is?

**Raleigh:** It's a book.

**Sydnee:** But this was a real thing.

**Raleigh:** Well, okay.

**Sydnee:** I mean, like, this—like, the documentary is real.

**Raleigh:** I know.

**Sydnee:** Okay. [laughs] But, like, this is the TV series based on that, in which I think—I think, like, it's—I don't know. I've only seen an episode. But I assume they're gonna suppose that, "What if it was real?" kind of thing, or who knows? They'll play with it. I don't know what they're gonna do. Jason Segel is in it.

**Raleigh:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** He helped create it, I believe. And then he stars in it. And we watched one episode last night, and it's very good, and I found it very—I—I don't know why, but I found it particularly, like, uplifting?

**Raleigh:** That's good.

**Sydnee:** And, like, it had a lot of heart. It has, like, a tad of David Lynch. Just, like, a hint.

**Taylor:** [laughs] Just a hint of Lynch? I like that.

**Sydnee:** A hint of Lynch. It's—it's—it's supposed to—like, it has a little bit of that, like, um... that strangeness, that—that uncanny valley thing that Lynch is so good at where, like, it feels like this is almost a normal circumstance, but it obviously isn't.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** But it feels so close to normal that for a second you think, "Am *I* the one... who's abnormal?"

**Raleigh:** [laughs] "Is—"

**Sydnee:** "Am *I* the one who's wrong?" [laughs] "What's wrong with this situation that it feels off? Is it *me* and not *this*?" I don't know. But it has a—a touch of that, which I really enjoy. Um... I don't know. I would—I would highly recommend it as, like—[through laughter] At least based on the first episode.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I don't know what they're gonna do with it, but it's, uh—the casting's really good. It's just—I—I would... I would recommend you check it out.

**Taylor:** Huh.

**Sydnee:** I feel like it's gonna have a lot of heart.

**Raleigh:** A lot of heart?

**Sydnee:** I need things like that right now. [laughs]

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** I've just been turning on random YouTube videos and old *Law and Order: SVU* episodes to have in the background while I play *Animal Crossing*. That's pretty much just been all I've watched.

**Sydnee:** I need anything right—I saw that picture of Demi Moore and Bruce Willis in matching pajamas.

**Raleigh:** Mm-hmm?

**Sydnee:** Because they're—did you see that?

**Raleigh:** No.

**Sydnee:** They're sheltering in place together with their kids. 'Cause, you know, they're divorced.

**Raleigh:** Right.

**Sydnee:** But they're all together, I guess, so they can all be with the kids or whatever. And I... started crying. So I need help right now! [laughs] Is what I'm saying. I went—I picked up my phone and found Justin in the house and went... [choking up] "Look! Isn't that nice?"

**Raleigh:** [tearfully] "It's Demi Moore and Bruce Willis!"

**Sydnee:** [tearfully] "It's so nice that they still get along so well! And they're wearing matching pajamas!"

**Raleigh:** And then Justin said, "Go do anything, please."

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** "This is just so nice!" [laughs quietly]

**Taylor:** Oh no.

**Sydnee:** Nobody else is there? Is it just me?

**Raleigh:** I'm not there yet. I think—I think my loss of sanity is going in another direction, and it's not where I cry at all things. It's just where there is nothing that... [laughs] ... changes my emotion from any state other than just...

**Sydnee:** Hmm.

**Raleigh:** ... existing. [laughs] Just getting through every day.

**Sydnee:** Well, I think we're all—we're all having some of that. You're switching to more of a—a survive than live kind of...

**Raleigh:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** My psyche exists in—in my virtual island, with a—with a bunch of talking animals.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** I—I was gonna say, I—I also started playing *Animal Crossing*, and I kind of had to give myself, like, limited time that I'm allowed to do it, because, like... I just don't wanna really engage with the reality around me right now? But I have to.

But it's like, "Well, you—you haven't, like, done your own dishes, or cleaned—or, like, cleaned your house or watered your own plants in several days. Or changed your clothes. But your character has changed their clothes so many times, and has watered their plants, like—"

**Raleigh:** Like, 20 times!

**Taylor:** "—every day, really." Like, let's try to *Animal Crossing* your life. That's where I'm at psychologically. I got up today. I'm like, "Alright. We're just gonna have real life *Animal Crossing*."

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** "We're gonna finish tasks, and clean things, and make, like, food that we need to have for the week. But it's like the game! It's just like the game. Do things to take care of yourself, Taylor, please." [laughs]



**Raleigh:** Yeah. I—I feel like it's important, before we get started on what we're actually talking about this week, to let both of you know that I have gotten both of our parents addicted to *Animal Crossing*, to the point where our father, who I have never seen play a video game, seriously, in my life—

**Taylor:** No, never.

**Raleigh:** —um, woke up before work the other day and said he was just gonna play a little bit of *Animal Crossing*, and then said he ended up leaving late for work, and then came home for lunch, and I was also home eating lunch, and I was playing *Animal Crossing*, and he pulled out the other Switch and sat there for an hour during his lunch break playing *Animal Crossing*.

**Taylor:** [laughs quietly]

**Raleigh:** And then came home from work an hour early and said, "Well, I—I was done for the day." And I said, "Did you come home to play *Animal Crossing*?" And he said, "Yeah."

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** So, you know, that—we're all getting there. [laughs]

**Taylor:** I—I know. I like that Mom was trying to get me to do whatever, the linkup thing. She was like, "Do you need anything? Like, what can I bring you?" I'm like, "Oh, this is just gonna be real life in the game."

**Raleigh:** Yep.

**Taylor:** "Mom's gonna just send—" "I saw these—these boots and I thought of you!" And it's like, "Oh, thanks, Mom!" [laughs]

**Sydney:** Nope, that's totally true, 'cause she sends Charlie things like—she got her a snow cone maker.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Rileigh:** Hey, I sent Charlie a dress! It was good.

**Sydnee:** Well, I—I'm sure she loved it!

**Rileigh:** It made me think of her. It was a pink fairy dress.

**Taylor:** Aww.

**Sydnee:** I'm sure she—she loved it. She was very disappointed that the snow cone maker doesn't actually make snow cones. Like, you don't—you can't get a snow cone out of it.

**Rileigh:** Right.

**Sydnee:** I think you can, like, turn it on, but...

**Rileigh:** That's the one thing about *Animal Crossing* appliances. They just turn on, and just... you don't get anything out of it.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Rileigh:** It's very disappointing. Um... [holding back laughter] Taylor, what are we actually talking about this week?

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** Uh, we are actually talking about, um... [laughs] Syd, you said you wanted something with a lot of heart. What about a lot of hearts? [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Rileigh:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** Uh, we're—we're talking about *Invader Zim!* Um...

**Sydnee:** It definitely has a lot of meat.

**Taylor:** There is a lot of meat.

**Raleigh:** Meat.

**Taylor:** Yes.

**Raleigh:** Meaaat. [laughs]

**Taylor:** There is an episode all about mass organs. Uh, the—*Invader Zim*. Uh, it was a cartoon on Nickelodeon. Uh, it started in 2001, right? Um—

**Sydnee:** I believe that's right.

**Taylor:** And, uh, it ran for just—just two seasons, and the second season was actually cut a little short. Um, it was, uh, created by Jhonen Vasquez, who... [laughs] ... was previously known for... *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac*, and *Squee*? Uh, they're like—

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** —comic books that were mainly sold in Hot Topic.

**Sydnee:** And pretty dark.

**Taylor:** Oh, yeah!

**Sydnee:** I mean, I think that's important. If you—if you can't tell from the title, *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac*, uh, very dark stuff to then have Nickelodeon say, "Hey, pitch us a... kid's show." [laughs]

**Taylor:** Well, and I think—

**Raleigh:** A cartoon.

**Taylor:** —there was definitely, like, a—you know, people slightly younger than us that their first exposure to his work was through *Invader Zim*. And then, you know, you kind of did the—the backtrack into his comics. But I

loved his comics. Like, I collected them issue by issue as they were coming out [through laughter] from the Hot Topic.

Uh... and I—I—I mean, I don't know. They're—yeah. They're—they're definitely not for kids, and I remember hearing that Nickelodeon was making a cartoon show with him and just thinking, "What? How?" [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I know. It really—it is—looking back now, I mean, at the time I don't think I realized how strange it was. But that he created both of those things, 'cause I was of an age that, like, both of them were accessible to me. Like, *Invader Zim* was cool and I enjoyed it, but also, *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac*, 'cause I was old enough to not be scarred by—[laughs]

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** —either. But—but now as an adult I look and go, "How did that... how was that a connection? How did that happen?"

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** I know.

**Raleigh:** I—I will say, Taylor, I believe you introduced me to *Invader Zim* when I was young. I mean, it first started when I was a year old, and I was not that young, but I was fairly young. Probably... I don't know, Charlie's age, five or six. Um, and I remember—'cause I rewatched it before we talked about it today, and I didn't remember a lot of the stuff in the episodes! I was like, "How come the only thing I can remember is GIR?"

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** That's the only thing I can remember. I think it's because you got me a little stuffed GIR, and then whenever you'd be watching it or it'd be on, you'd just say like, "No, just—just watch these parts. There's GIR. Just—just watch these parts." [laughs] "Don't watch the rest." [laughs]

**Taylor:** Yeah. That's—that is—that is the... the GIR parts are very—they're very... sweet. They're very digestible. [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Yeah. Like, I had a little—little plushie. I was like, "Aw! He's so cute! His—his name's GIR! Okay. That's good. That's what this show is about."

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** No. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I tell you, not to—not to dwell on this point, but the Hot Topic connection for it all makes so much sense. I feel like that is the—that is where Hot Topic—that's the, like, place it fills in our culture is, like, "Here's some stuff for kids, and also for adults, and then it's all mixed in there together, and... I don't know. Good luck!" [laughs]

**Taylor:** Yeah. Well—

**Sydnee:** That's always been Hot Topic.

**Raleigh:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Like, is this okay? [laughs]

**Taylor:** I mean... 'cause I don't think—like, that was definitely—early 2000's, like, you know, that was... we—we had that—I don't think—we didn't have a lot of, like, the cartoons that are definitely made for adults. Like, when did Adult Swim start? I feel like we're—it's around this time that we had Adult Swim. Like, specific programming for cartoons, like, for adults.

But, you know, I feel like *Invader Zim* pushed that same envelope a little farther that shows like *Rocko's Modern Life* and *Ren and Stimpy* that, like, you know, we were already kind of getting to that. It just kind of took it the next step in a lot of ways. Um, but still—still somehow teetered on the side of "it's fine for kids to watch this." But—but—I don't know if it was. [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Well, I mean, I think—but I think you're definitely right. Like, that it—that model of *Invader Zim*, like, were it to come out today, nobody would bat an eye. It would make total sense, because it was a cartoon and there were, like, enough, like, kind of silly, goofy things, or, like, gross-out things. Like, the stuff that, like, you assume are more for kids. There was plenty of that in there. And it was about younger—I mean, Zim is an alien, but he is set amongst schoolchildren.

**Raleigh:** Right.

**Sydnee:** You know? So all of that speaks to children, but there's obviously stuff in there for adults. I mean, it's very clear that there are jokes and beats and notes that are only for older people in the room, and I would say that there are many cartoons like that today.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I mean, when we watch—

**Raleigh:** *SpongeBob* is like that.

**Sydnee:** [through laughter] *SpongeBob*?

**Raleigh:** *SpongeBob* is like that.

**Sydnee:** I was gonna say *Steven Universe*, but—[laughs]

**Raleigh:** *Steven Universe* also. I'm just saying, if you go back, it's like, they put jokes in all cartoons, probably all of them, that are for the parents that are stuck in the room with the kids watching the cartoons. Like, "I know you don't wanna be watching this. This is for you."

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** But even more so, like, not just like hidden jokes. Like, for—I mean, I think you could make the case that *Steven Universe* is for all ages.

**Raleigh:** Oh yeah.

**Sydnee:** Like, it is not for—I mean, I don't mean "[mockingly] It's not for kids!" I mean, like, it's for everybody.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And I think *Invader Zim* was one of the—

**Raleigh:** That first.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, one of the first cartoons that nudged that direction. It really opened that door.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** And I—I do think it's unique in, like, how it does it, though? Because a lot of the other media, it's stuff that tries to, like... it does try to, like, say something bigger or say something deeper or make a—you know. Like, get in touch with your emotions. Uh, you know, make something, like, emotionally relatable.

*Invader Zim* does not care about that at all.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** No. [laughs]

**Taylor:** It is the—it's—it's, like, nihilist. It's, like, you know, every—everybody's an idiot, and everything is gross and it sucks and there's no meaning to anything and it's just—it's, like, not really—it doesn't really have any, like, high vantage point. Any, like, agenda that it's trying to educate you on. It's just... it's just not afraid to be really uncomfortable and—and creepy, and weird, and kind of—the stuff that kids aren't supposed to be exposed to, you know? Nothing ever ties up in a little bow.

There are so many episodes that end with the characters in horrible, nightmarish scenarios, and then it just resets in the next episode and everything's fine. It's—it's almost like an evolved Looney Tune in that sense. Like, there's absolute chaotic violence, and then everybody's fine. [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Everything's fine. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** That's, uh—that's... it's interesting, 'cause I wonder if that's just more reflective of that time period and, like, the mindset—especially the American psyche at that point in time. Uh, probably is well-reflected by all of that. As opposed to now, when we do talk about more modern cartoons that, like—I also think about, like, *Apple & Onion* as, like, a modern cartoon that's—there's so much about, like, working together and being friends and looking out for each other and taking care of each other, that were not themes that were necessarily as prominent... [laughs]

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** ... in the early—[laughs] In the late '90s, you know, or early 2000s, that I think are a lot more, like, embraced in our culture today. But that—that kind of nihilism, that kind of just, like, "Look at all these idiots. Nobody really cares about you."

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I—I do not agree with that worldview, but I will say that it was quite prominent at that point in time.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** And I think that's—that is the same—while maybe they didn't have any of the, you know, any of the story of Johnny in *Invader Zim*, uh, the worldview of *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac* is exactly the same in *Invader Zim*. It is that just sort of—you know. 'Cause that was the thing with Johnny, was it was just—I—I have all those books and I reread some of it in



preparation for this, and I was like, "Man, I loved this. Like, I was obsessed with this, and this is so—"

It's hateful. It's angry. Like, it is just hateful, like... just bitter work about just, "Everybody's an idiot, and I'm a monster," and that's the story. And it's funny. Like, there's a lot of humor in it, you know. I'm not saying it's bad. The work is great but, like, it is just so pitch black. And really, *Invader Zim* is, too. There's no—there's no moment of, like, "Oh, but there's heart to these characters." Like, I don't think there is! [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Is there? [laughs]

**Taylor:** Well, but it—I don't know if—did either of you watch the movie that came out more recently?

**Raleigh:** I didn't.

**Sydnee:** No, I haven't seen that.

**Taylor:** Okay. That's—'cause I don't wanna—I mean, I guess it's—you know, we're talking about the old cartoon show.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, go ahead.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** But—

**Raleigh:** Go ahead. Yeah, it's the same.

**Taylor:** I feel like they—they made a—they made the movie just this past—or just last year, I think. And they definitely... uh... [pauses] I—that was clearly, like, of issue, because the movie has heart. It has actual, like, "You know what? Zim and Dib are actually both—they're kind of losers, and they're kind of similar." And they both kind of have, like, these depressive states that they actually give some moment of pause to.

And Dib's family, while it—they do kind of ignore him and they're kind of hard on him, they do care about him. And, like, there are a couple touching moments. Like, and there was—like, my—my teenage brain was like, "Oh no, they made it soft!" But my, like, tired adult brain that wants things to be nice was like, "Oh, but that's nice." I'm—

**Raleigh:** Aww. [laughs]

**Taylor:** I like seeing that Dib's sister actually cares about him. I like seeing that his dad actually is proud of him. Like, I like that. I would be happy with a whole new season of Zim written by the people that wrote the movie, which the creator had a huge hand in.

But even that, it's like the creator himself was, you know, voiced it, wrote it. Like, kind of had, you know. Oversaw the slight softening of the world that he created in his older age. [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** This is a—this is gen X, right? This is what has happened. [laughs]

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** It's reflective of the aging of the key demographic of the show that, you know, existed as teenagers and young adults in 2001, and now is, you know—

**Sydnee:** It is. I mean, it—I mean—

**Raleigh:** 19 years older.

**Sydnee:** —technically, I guess I'm a millennial, although I have said before, I feel like I—I identify with aspects of Gen X just from when I came of age and my thinking back then. But, uh, that's definitely the same transition I know I've gone through, was from, like, I loved how pitch black and, like, so just angsty and... um... a little, like, arrogant. That kind of humor was back then.

Like, I—I really found that attractive to me. Like, that whole worldview. And now I do not feel that way at all. [laughs] Now I just want—I wanna see all

those stories—like, I need to see that at the end, people do care, and at the end, people do love each other, and at the end, people do wanna help out, and we all have the ability to be good, and I need that now. And so I—I think it—it's totally reflective of that.

**Taylor:** Well, and I think—and it's cool to see that, like, even—you know, even with that layer added on to it, they still had the same kind of humor that was—that was always, like, the best part of it, you know? There was the—the darkness and the—and the weirdness, but like—and the anger!

But the funny stuff was, I think, in retrospect, the best part of *Invader Zim*, was just how funny and weird the writing was. Um, like, that stays the same. Like, the new movie preserves that completely. I was so happy just to see, like, "Oh, right! This is how—this is how they—these—this is written," and it's great, and it's so unique! [laughs]

**Sydnee:** It's a good reminder, too, that you can be funny and weird and not angry. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Yeah!

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And it's—it's all about—I mean, we talk a lot about, like, punching down versus punching up and all that kind of stuff and, like, you don't—you can—you can achieve humor without having to punch down.

**Raleigh:** Right.

**Sydnee:** Um, and that—I think that's nice to see, that—that change reflected.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Uh, I wanna talk some more about *Invader Zim*, and especially—I feel like there were so many things that we drew from it, Tey, when we were younger. Like, that we would quote and—

**Taylor:** [through laughter] Yes!

**Sydnee:** —like, shaped what we thought was funny. But before we do that...

**Raleigh:** Let's check the group message.

--

**Sydnee:** What do we got this week on the group message?

**Raleigh:** Well, we have a sponsor this week in the group message.

**Sydnee:** Well, I would assume. That's kind of the whole existence of the group message.

**Raleigh:** Sydnee, I know you're—you're really into this... this brand, this company.

**Sydnee:** [loudly] I love these pants!

**Raleigh:** Yeah, you wanna talk about these pants?

**Sydnee:** I wanna talk about about these pants!

**Raleigh:** Alright.

**Sydnee:** Betabrand pants. Now, I feel like Betabrand dress pant yoga pants are perfect. Uh, they're perfect all the time. I already owned them prior to us ever being sponsored by Betabrand. I love these dress pant yoga pants for work.

They were good for me because, um, I would get home and I could go straight into, like, playing with the kids and everything, 'cause they're stretchable. They're comfortable. They're—they're wearable all day long, and they look nice. So, they look professional. I could go to work in them and I look like... Business Syd.

**Raleigh:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** And then I wear them home and I'm Mom Syd.

**Raleigh:** Comfy Syd.

**Sydnee:** Comfy Syd. And they work—they work for both. And, uh, right now, if you're working from home... getting dressed—

**Raleigh:** Which a lot of us are.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, which a lot of us are. Getting dressed and, like, putting on work clothes—it actually really helps to get you in the right mindset to, like, do work. Uh, and Betabrand's dress pant yoga pants are perfect for that, because they're just as comfortable as those sweatpants that you don't wanna take off right now. Um, but they look great and they feel great, and you're gonna feel more like you're, you know, in work mode. So they're really perfect for that right now.

Um, they combine customer experience with their expertise to make work wear that's functional, comfortable, as inspiring as your favorite workout gear. And their customer favorite dress pant yoga pants are made of wrinkle-resistant, stretch knit fabric, making them perfect for long workdays, or working from home, like many of us are right now.

And I—I really—I can't sing their praises enough. I—I found these pants from a bunch of other doctor moms, uh, on the internet, who were talkin' about how great they were, and I believed 'em and I bought 'em and they were totally right, and I would recommend you do it to. So—

**Raleigh:** She loves these pants!

**Sydnee:** [loudly] I love these pants! Teylor, tell how our listeners how they can get these pants!

**Teylor:** Right now, you can get 25% off your first order. You just have to go [betabrand.com/buffering](https://betabrand.com/buffering). That's 25% off your first order for a limited time at [betabrand.com/buffering](https://betabrand.com/buffering). Find out why women are ditching typical work

pants for Betabrand's dress pant yoga pants. Go to [betabrand.com/buffering](http://betabrand.com/buffering) for 25% off.

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**Sydnee:** So, Tey, as I was rewatching, it just—it hit me how many things, like... I—how many times do you think we sang the doom song?

**Taylor:** Oh my gosh. [laughs] "[high pitched singing] I'm gonna sing the doom song!"

**Sydnee:** When we were kids.

**Taylor:** [high pitched singing] "Doom doom doom doom doom doom!"

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** That's a really good GIR!

**Raleigh:** That's very good GIR.

**Sydnee:** That's a very good GIR!

**Taylor:** [through laughter] That's one of my few skills in life. Uh—

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I was—did you—did you read about how he found the voice of GIR?

**Taylor:** No!

**Sydnee:** I was reading about the show in preparation for this episode. And basically, the whole idea was "We want somebody who's very bad at this—"

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** "—to be GIR."

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Because GIR, of course is, like, a broken robot that they give Zim because—in case you're not familiar. I guess we should've said that. In case you're not familiar with the premise of *Invader Zim*...

**Taylor:** [laughs] Just talking about aliens and robots. "What is this?"

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** He's sort of like—he's like a bad invader. He is an invader alien, but he's bad at it, and so the boss aliens, the Almighty Tallest, do not want to send him out on any, like, conquering missions, because he's... you know, kind of a screw up.

**Raleigh:** He's bad at it.

**Sydnee:** Um, but—so they—they basically send him to nowhere, in space, except accidentally it ends up being Earth.

**Raleigh:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** And the robot buddy they give him, instead of, like, one of the high tech helpful robots that everybody else gets is, like, broken and messed up.

**Raleigh:** GIR.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yes. 'Cause they're supposed to be... not GIR. They're supposed to be... [pauses] SIR?

**Taylor:** Is that what it is?

**Sydnee:** No.

**Taylor:** 'Cause it—I don't think it's a—you don't know what the G stands for.

**Sydnee:** No. SIR? Is that right? [pauses] Oh, we just—I just watched it. Anyway, it's a broken robot, and so they wanted him to have... like, they wanted even the voice actor to not be a professional voice actor, who would be trying to do too much.

**Raleigh:** That's very good.

**Sydnee:** They wanted it to sound kind of, like, accidental. [laughs quietly]

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And so that was where the voice—and, like, initially they had to, like, make him more high pitched and stuff, but he got better at just doing the voice. Um, but it still has that, like, metallic kind of quality to it. But I thought that was really funny, 'cause it does...

**Raleigh:** It does sound like that.

**Sydnee:** Uh, along those lines, they originally—did you find the name?

**Taylor:** No, no. I was just...

**Sydnee:** No. Ori—along those lines, they originally had Mark Hamill... as Zim.

**Taylor:** Wait, really?!

**Raleigh:** Really?

**Taylor:** But that's not who does it.

**Sydnee:** No. That was the one—he was, like, the first choice, and in his initial reads, um, Jhonen Vasquez thought it was too... it was just—it was Mark Hamill.

**Taylor:** Right.



**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** So. And they—he wanted something that was totally different. Because I forget—whoever they went to next was already one of the leads in *Futurama*, I believe, and so they didn't want him either. Like, he wanted somebody who would sound completely different from anybody else who was—

**Raleigh:** Wow.

**Sydnee:** —on TV. They—he wanted to make sure this was a unique voice for Zim.

**Taylor:** Uh, just—just to confirm, Syd, you were right. It—it was a SIR, for Standard-Issue Information Retrieval so the information retrieval is still there. Who knows what the G is. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** G... ginformation retrieval. Uh—

**Sydnee:** Ginformation. [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Taylor:** I—I like that, because I do think the voice acting is—is something that really... I mean, there's so much good about the show. The design, like, the color palette, but the voice acting is so unique! Like, the... specifically the leads, GIR, Dib, and Zim, just have such—just unique—I don't—I don't know. Like, I can't imagine those voices being any other characters.

**Sydnee:** And I think—I think it speaks to that, like—so, when—when Jhonen Vasquez pitched it, according to what I had read about it, he really didn't think Nickelodeon would go for it. He was just like, "Here. Here's kind of what I wanna do."

He—he initially was gonna pitch something like *Mork & Mindy*. Like, a friendly...

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** ... friendly alien antic kind of show.

**Raleigh:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** Um, and then he went for this kind of darker thing, and Nickelodeon was like, "Yeah! Let's do it." And he was like, "Really? Okay."

So he had a very specific vision for everything, and wanted it realized. "I mean, if you're gonna let me do it, I wanna do it my way."

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And so that's—that's how it led to these specific actors. Um, 'cause they didn't—I read that they didn't really like Dib as a character initially. They thought he was too boring.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And so he worked really hard to make Dib not boring. That's part of why his head's so big.

**Taylor:** Well—

**Raleigh:** Just the names alone of this show.

**Taylor:** I mean, the—

**Raleigh:** And the character designs. You got Dib, Zim, and GIR. [laughs quietly]

**Taylor:** Well, and then, like—

**Raleigh:** And it's just like, "Yeah, that's the show!"

**Taylor:** —Gaz and Professor Membrane.

**Sydnee:** Uh-huh.

**Raleigh:** Yeah!

**Taylor:** And—and the designs! Like, you can't—

**Sydnee:** Tak.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Well, you really can't—like, there's just cool... like, world building in this. The way that the city looks, the way that the buildings are designed... I mean—and yeah, and every character has—like, it's kind of like that cartooning 101. Like, an iconic outline. Like, you know—you would know who the character is by looking at the shadow.

I mean, and that—you know. For—for as much as it was kind of, you know, it was like a very... trendy show to like, there was a lot of merchandise around it, you know. It all kind of... the—the catchphrases were what everybody loved about it, but when you really got into the meat—[laughs] the meaty— [through laughter] Meaty, meatiness of this show—

**Sydnee:** [monotone] Meat.

**Taylor:** [through laughter] It was just so unique from anything else. Like, I was—there's one episode, um, that I watched—I was rewatching recently, and, uh... uh, it's the planet, uh—it's, like, a planet snatching episode. Where, like, these, you know, alien, uh—this other kind of alien comes in and they, like, put this, uh, field around a planet so it looks like the night sky, but then they steal your planet, and it's so they can whip it into their dying sun and keep their sun alive.

And, I mean, the premise—it's just good sci-fi writing. Like, it's in the—

**Raleigh:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** It is good sci-fi writing.

**Taylor:** Yeah. Like, there's a lot where it's just like—that's just—it's just a cool—it's a cool plot. It's unique. It doesn't feel like it's just, you know, regurgitated the same stuff over and over again.

So many of the episodes had, like, an entirely different, like, feel to them than every other one. It wasn't just, you know—it wasn't just down to, like, "Oh, silly voices and funny—" Like, you know, GIR dancing around with a taco. [laughs] Like, there was so much more going on in the background that was just, like, smart design.

**Sydnee:** And—and it really—like, the sense of humor... we talked about how it could be dark, but there also were, like, jokes that I—again, I feel like are echoed—were echoed throughout, like, cartoons made for adults to come, in that first episode when Dib is trying to tell everybody that Zim is an alien. Which is, like, the joke, right? Like... he's obviously an alien.

Dib is for some reason the only person who's aware, and they all think that it's just that Dib's off. Like, it's not—but, like, no. He—he is an alien. But he starts saying, like, "Look, he's green! He has no ears!" And everybody basically reads as, like, "You're making fun of him."

**Taylor:** [through laughter] Yeah.

**Sydnee:** "That's so mean. How could you make—"

**Raleigh:** "How could you?"

**Sydnee:** [laughs] That—when he's—that such a good beat!

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** He has no ears! Is that also part of your skin condition?

**Taylor:** [laughs] "[Zim impression] Yes."

**Sydnee:** "[Zim impression] Yes."

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** It's a perfect beat! And then somebody says, "Oh, so is Old Kid an alien too?" And then they show what's clearly an old man sitting in the back of the room, and he's like, "Hello!"

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** That's just Joe Biden. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** It's all—

**Raleigh:** Old Kid...

**Sydnee:** [laughs] It's all just perfect! Like, it's perfect beats. Um, and that—that kind of, like... I feel like you see—you see echoes of that throughout cartoons to come.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Um... but, uh—but I—yeah. I think—I think that's great. And I—Taylor, to speak to the animation part of it, you would probably understand this a lot better than I would. I was reading about, like, that attention to detail they had. And they said that, um, in an average episode of an 11 minute TV show, like, a cartoon, there were usually around 80 to 120 pages of storyboards per episode. But *Invader Zim* had 250 to 350.

**Taylor:** [laughs] Well...

**Raleigh:** Wow.

**Sydnee:** Because it was incredibly det—like, every moment, everything, every single... and you can tell. Like, even in the background, everything is... very specific.

**Taylor:** And that—that was one of those things that, you know, I loved, going back all the way to the comic books. Like, the—the, uh, *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac* and everything.

Because, like, Jhonen would fill a page with so much stuff, in the gutters and in the backgrounds, and it was like—it was all drawn in this sort of—it felt like it was all drawn with a Sharpie. I don't know if it actually was. But, like, just stark black and white. But he would just fill in so many little jokes and weirdness and, like—and I loved that! Like, that just, you know, obsessive, like, fill the space, not just with comic book standard, "[robotically] This is a bed, and this is a house."

It's just like, nope! Everything has been, like... thought about and kind of twisted and weird, and the show definitely has that same quality of just, like—thought went into everything. Thought went into, like, the posters on the wall. [laughs] And, like, the weird layout of the house. Like, I don't know. I love that. I love that so much.

**Raleigh:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** I—I have often thought I've seen echoes of that in your own artwork, Tey.

**Taylor:** Well, I—y—you know, absolutely. I mean, I... I remember when I was first starting, uh, cartooning school, and everybody had—people came in with their influences. Like, "Oh, you know, I love Will Eisner. I love, you know, uh, Eddie Campbell. I—I—I love, you know, Peter Beck."

Like, all these, like, important figures in the scene, in comic books, be it indie or mainstream. And I'm like, "I don't know. I like *Sailor Moon* and *Invader Zim*, and I gotta find a way to make these two things my aesthetic." [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** Like, every teacher was like, "How did you get here? No! Read something!" I'm like, "I did! I read... Jhonen Vasquez! A lot!" [laughs]

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** "And *Sailor Moon*! That's it! That's all I read."

**Raleigh:** "And I watched *Sailor Moon* and I watched *Invader Zim*!" [laughs]

**Taylor:** "And I like them *a lot*." [laughs] And I still—now I think when you look at my work and I tell you that those were my two biggest influences, it kind of goes, "Ohh, yeah."

**Raleigh:** "I get it."

**Taylor:** "Yeah, I could see that." [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** It is. No, it is!

**Raleigh:** Yeah!

**Sydnee:** It very much is a—a mesh of those things.

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** [through laughter] You would think it wouldn't work, but—and I don't know if it's working, but it's what I do. [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** The magic girl who's also a homicidal maniac. That's exactly— [laughs]

**Raleigh:** That's your aesthetic.

**Taylor:** Yeah, yeah. That's kind of it. That is very it.

**Sydnee:** That's Taylor's aesthetic. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Uh...

**Raleigh:** Um, Tey, do you have a favorite episode of all time?

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** Of *Invader Zim*?

**Taylor:** I—gosh. I—I do. Um, I think it's the episode that, uh, it's a lot of people's favorites, and I think it's because—I—I mean, um, more than sci-fi, I love horror. Like, and I love... like, horror tropes, good horror, bad horror, all horror.

And the episode *Dark Harvest*, uh, which is... [through laughter] ... one of the most disturbing episode of *Invader Zim*, uh, is easily my favorite. 'Cause it's set up like a horror movie. Um, the—the premise is basically, uh, Zim has head pigeons, which seems to just be a pigeon is—is on your head. That's the disease. Um, and so—

**Sydney:** Mm-hmm.

**Raleigh:** [snorts]

**Taylor:** He's at school, and then the teacher sends him to the nurse's office to get his head pigeons looked at and, uh, Dib points out to him that when he gets to the nurse's office, they'll check him and they'll see that he—his internal anatomy isn't human, and then he'll be, uh—he'll be found out as an alien. So, to—to deal with this dilemma, Zim steals and... eats, swallows—

**Sydney:** Eats, yeah.

**Taylor:** —other children's organs, and replaces their organs with random objects.

**Raleigh:** [muffled laughter]

**Taylor:** And, like, they—



**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** —they—they do not shy away from, like, the body horror of this, like, setup. Like, you see the kids, like, you know, that are missing, like, spines, like, slumped over on the table and, like, writhing in pain.

Like, it is—[laughs] And the, uh, as Zim, like, you know, sneaks around the school stealing organs, Dib has caught on to his plan. He's, like, trying to protect the one healthy kid remaining. Um, and, uh, as Zim is about to pounce on somebody you hear the cooing as a pigeon as, like, the "Oh no! Like, he's got you!"

The—the pigeo—[laughs] [through laughter] It's, like—

**Raleigh:** The head pigeon.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** And—and it—and it culminates in, like, you know, Dib confronting Zim, and at this point Zim is just this... dis—just this massive blob of organs. And at one point, like, he's talking to Dib and he, like, coughs up, like, a large intestine that, like, rolls out of his mouth and, like—

**Raleigh:** Ahhh! [laughs]

**Taylor:** —leaks intestine juice on the ground before he slurps it back up like a spaghetti noodle. It is so gross and disturbing!

**Raleigh:** [laughs and groans uncomfortably]

**Taylor:** And just, like, the epitome of everything that I loved about *Invader Zim*.

**Sydnee:** It's so weird to me. 'Cause I read about that episode, that it was two things. They changed the other episode that it was supposed to be aired with initially, because they were both dark and disturbing episodes and they just wanted to, like, mix it up a little bit.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Not like, "Kids can't see this." It's just like "Well, we only want 'em to see 11 minutes of it at a time."

**Raleigh:** "Let's spread it out."

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Um—but that was one. And they also changed the title, because they thought the title was too upsetting, from *The Heart and Lungs of Zim's Darkness*—

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** —to...

**Raleigh:** *Dark Harvest*.

**Sydnee:** ... *Dark Harvest*. Which, like, I don't know that that makes it...

**Raleigh:** That much better.

**Sydnee:** ... I don't know if that softens it.

**Taylor:** No! I think *Dark Harvest* is a much more menacing... and better title.

**Raleigh:** Yeah. I—I like to think about a lot how cartoons would work if it was not a cartoon, it was, like, real people.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Rileigh:** And this is one of those, like, plots that's just like, that would just straight up be a horror movie if this was real people.

**Taylor:** Oh, no. There—

**Sydnee:** All the—there already is a *Dark Harvest* horror movie, so we can't call it that.

**Taylor:** Yeah, that's true, that's true.

**Rileigh:** Right.

**Taylor:** Well, that—and that was kind of—I mean, not like the—the body horror specifically in *Invader Zim*, um... I mean, there were truly frightening setups. Like, *Dark Harvest* is definitely the one that I think was the most messed up, but then there's another one where, um... to defeat Dib, Zim builds this, like, time—like, temporal displacement machine so he can send objects into the past. And...

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm?

**Taylor:** ... his original goal was to send, like, a murderbot into the past and kill young Dib, and then he doesn't have to worry about Dib in the present. And, uh, he—for some reason, his murderbot isn't accepted by the machine, but GIR's little squeazy piggy is. Like, little pig toy.

**Rileigh:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** So he sends the pig into the past, and it replaces, like—first it replaces Dib's tricycle so he's, like, in a horrible accident. And, like, you know—then, like, he's using a levitation helmet and it's replaced by another pig, so Dib is haunted by these pigs that lead to these horrible accidents.

But then present time Dib keeps morphing into, like, a more injured version of himself. Like, you know, suddenly he has a hook for a hand, and suddenly he has, like, an oxygen machine. And it's—it's like—you remember, uh, *Looper*? [laughs quietly] Like, that idea—

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** —of somebody messing with you in the past, and then you're slowly—

**Sydnee:** Oh my gosh!

**Taylor:** —slowly destroyed in the present?

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** That scene terrified me in *Looper*. But the thing is, that was what was happening! Like, that idea was what *Invader Zim* did, like, a decade ago. And it was terrifying! The idea that somebody's going to the past, and it's causing you to, like—like, have a terrible future. And the setup. Like, this idea. Like, if that was a live action scenario—obviously with the stuffed pigs it's a little weird. [through laughter] But it's—it's terrifying!

**Sydnee:** That's so much worse than the *Back to the Future* fading away from the photograph.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Trope. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Like, you're just losing limbs and—and, you know, like, just... it's a—

**Sydnee:** Uh, that—yeah, that's—and it makes sense when—I was reading that, um, he initially wanted to, like, kill off a lot more characters. And specifically, at some point, he planned on killing off Dib and just replacing him with another kid.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Um, but I guess Nickelodeon had a pretty strict "we don't kill people" rule.

**Raleigh:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Taylor:** That seems... [laughs]

**Raleigh:** We don't kill off kids! [laughs]

**Sydnee:** We don't—we don't—well, they were like, "We don't kill off characters." And he was like—and so, like, they—I guess throughout the series, like, any time they had somebody who was supposed to have been dead, they tried to, like, soften it by, like, showing them, or having some little thing that would show, like, "See? They're still alive."

**Raleigh:** Somewhere.

**Sydnee:** Or like, "No, they're not really dead." But, like, they had to—but it was all, like, sarcastic, 'cause it was not the way the creators, anybody involved in making the show, wanted to do it. They wanted there to be consequences, and they—Nickelodeon was like "No, no, no. You—you need to make it clear that no—this is a kid's show. People don't die."

**Taylor:** But you could—

**Sydnee:** "Dib can't die."

**Taylor:** —you could still—yeah. You see that in so many episodes. There's one—another—God, another horrifying body horror moment. Zim ha—uh, he... which I think actually this is one of those that's interesting too, because it touches on normal, like, high school, middle school concerns, but it does it in the weird Zim lens. Where a couple of the kids are calling him weird because he doesn't have friends.

And he gets worried that maybe if people think I don't—if I don't have friends, they'll think I'm not human, because humans have friends, so I must acquire a friend! [laughs quietly] Very—very relatable feeling, there. Um—[laughs]

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, uh-huh.

**Taylor:** So he gets one of the loser kids to be his friend, and the kid actually really, you know, is a really good friend to him. It's a really sweet kid, which quickly begins to annoy Zim. After he's adequately proven to the other children that he has a friend he's like, "Okay, friend. You're done. I don't need you anymore." But the kid won't go away.

So Zim... and it's done in shadows, but you see what happens. He has this little machine rip out the child's eyeballs—

**Raleigh:** [gasps]

**Taylor:** —and replace them with these, like, cybernetic eyes that make the first living thing that he looks at, like, look like Zim, so then he thinks that's his friend. So, the first thing the kid looks at is a squirrel, so this kid goes and chases a squirrel up on top of a roof and then falls off, and there's, like, an explosion, and it's like, "Oh, the kid's dead."

And then, like, you hear a little voice like, "Ha ha!" of the kid, like, kind of make a comment. It's like, "Yeah, but everything other than that little moment of voiceover suggests that this kid just died horribly."

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** They—they had—that exact episode they rewrote several times because Nickelodeon kept nixing the ending.

**Taylor:** [through laughter] It was terrible!

**Sydnee:** 'Cause he kept—'cause he kept trying to kill the kid off in different ways.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And Nickelodeon kept saying, "No, no, not that either, no." [laughs]

**Raleigh:** I just love imagining the meetings where he's just like, "Just let me kill one kid! Just one kid."

**Sydnee:** And they're like, "This is Nickelodeon!" [laughs]

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** But yeah, he—that—that was supposed to end very differently. It—it did end very differently several times, and then no. But that was the—that was the one that Nickelodeon went, "Okay, we're—we're actually—you know, chasing a squirrel off a roof? This is fine."

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** "This one we're fine with."

**Taylor:** That's funny, 'cause it definitely feels like, "Oh, that kid is dead." But they just threw that little bit of voice in there to be like, "No, he's fine! He just... has a squirrel friend now!" [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Don't worry, he's fine! No problem!

**Taylor:** His eyeballs have still been forcefully removed. We're not gonna— [laughs] That's fine! [laughs] You just can't—[laughs]

**Raleigh:** We're not gonna touch that part. That's good. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Oh, gosh. Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Uh, and I think we should briefly, before we end talking about *Invader Zim* say that, uh, if you'd heard the—if you were a fan and you heard the rumor of the bloody GIR—

**Taylor:** Oh, right, right, right.

**Sydnee:** —there was an image that Jhonen Vasquez drew of GIR all covered in blood, and he really wanted to have it in an episode. My understanding is it was just, like, he thought it was a great image and he needed to get it in there somewhere, and Nickelodeon was like, "No, we don't want... we don't want a character spattered in blood. [laughs] Please. Actually, that's not—remember? We're Nickelodeon, still. We continue to—"

**Raleigh:** Still Nickelodeon.

**Sydnee:** "—we continue to be Nickelodeon." [laughs quietly]

**Taylor:** Even if it's GIR, who everybody loves. It's fine, right? [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Right.

**Sydnee:** We—we can't put blood all over him, please. And so he would, like, stick these little still—it was never animated. They were just, like, little still frames of bloody GIR throughout various episodes.

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Um, but it was so fast. Like, the question was like, did anybody even register it? And, I mean, Nickelodeon didn't even know about it until after the show was canceled, so it had nothing to do with the cancellation. But you can find it if you image search "bloody GIR." You can—

**Raleigh:** That's good to know.

**Sydnee:** —you—I mean, I don't think it's... honestly, it's not that disturbing.

**Raleigh:** Right.

**Sydnee:** Like...

**Raleigh:** It's GIR.



**Sydnee:** Yeah. It's just—it's GIR with some... red splotches.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Well, 'cause that—yeah, it was just—as to why it was canceled, I remember there being a lot of those, like, uh, rumors that it was because of disturbing content, or it was too—it was, you know, too—too scary, too messed up.

But it was actually just, you know, the usual stuff. Budget, ratings. Like, for as much as it performed after its end, it continued to perform well and, you know, have kind of—it lived on through its merchandising and everything. Um, it did—

**Sydnee:** Def—definitely developed, like, a cult following.

**Taylor:** Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And now has a really good comic book out, actually. Full—full circle now. Zim is a—I think it's still being published. I bought new issues as of, like, a few—a few months ago, so I think it's still happening out there.

**Sydnee:** I would—I would recommend it if you haven't seen it.

**Raleigh:** Yeah, thank you for—

**Sydnee:** Um, I would watch it. Yeah, thank you for bringing this, Tey.

**Raleigh:** Reintroducing us.

**Sydnee:** 'Cause it was—I—I don't think Charlie is quite ready for it. She was a little freaked out. Um, Cooper wasn't freaked out, but it couldn't—she—she wasn't following it close enough, so...

**Raleigh:** She's two.

**Sydnee:** I'm gonna—I'm gonna give it another few years and try it out with Charlie again, but I enjoyed it.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Well, if—Syd, I do think that you'll appreciate the, uh, the movie. Raleigh, you would too. Like, the—the movie on Netflix is—it's really good. It's... it's just... so good. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Can you watch it—for our listeners, can you watch it if you've never seen *Invader Zim*? Can you just watch the Netflix movie?

**Taylor:** Uh, yeah. It has some throwbacks. Uh, there are some callbacks to the—the show, but there's really no—I mean, it's set—like, it's—time moves forward and, you know, it's supposed to be happening a decade later, after the original one. No one's aged, but you know. Uh, they—

**Sydnee:** Sure.

**Raleigh:** Right.

**Taylor:** —they give the breakdown of the premise at the beginning. Um—and, uh, yeah. It's—I think it stands alone. You get more out of it if you've watched the show before, but I also think if that—if that total, like, nihilism, like, "Everybody is stupid and the world sucks" completely turns you off, the movie's a little bit more approachable, because there is a bit of a—a bit of a... a framing of—a bit of a softening to it that is nice.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Maybe that's what we need right now.

**Taylor:** Yeah. I think—I think watch the movie.

**Raleigh:** We all need that.

**Taylor:** The show gets—[through laughter] The show gets—even—I was watching it late at night last night. I'm like, "Oh, no, I'm gonna have nightmares about *Invader Zim*!" [laughs]

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I know. It's dark!

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Well, Raleigh?

**Raleigh:** Yes?

**Sydnee:** You're up next.

**Raleigh:** Yes, I am.

**Sydnee:** What—what dark, nihilistic... [laughs quietly] Cynical comedy have you brought to us?

**Raleigh:** *Animal Crossing*.

**Taylor:** Oh, we're gonna do it. Alright.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** We're talking about *Animal Crossing*, because now Taylor is playing it. I have been playing it. Sydnee has multiple ways of accessing it.

**Taylor:** Now you have to play it, Syd.

**Raleigh:** And multiple people in her household playing it.

**Sydnee:** Can I just be Charlie's character?

**Raleigh:** That's fine.

**Sydnee:** Okay.

**Raleigh:** I just—I wanna talk about *Animal Crossing*. Everyone's talking about *Animal Crossing*. I need to talk about it.

**Sydnee:** Alright. I'll finally figure out what the deal is with turnips and you people.

**Raleigh:** Yes.

**Taylor:** Raleigh, just—just as a preview, 'cause I think the event will be over the next time we talk... how do you feel about the bunny?

**Raleigh:** Oh yeah. Um, terrified. [through laughter] He's terrifying.

**Taylor:** [crosstalk]

**Raleigh:** [laughs] I—I wanna know what Zipper's whole deal is, because I—I think there's someone in that zipper costume, because he makes such a point of being like, "I'm not in a costume, by the way! I am just a bunny." But...

**Taylor:** No.

**Sydnee:** Ohh.

**Raleigh:** He's got a—he's got a zipper on the back. [laughs]

**Taylor:** I was gonna say, the character's named Zipper. It's right—it's right there.

**Raleigh:** [through laughter] Yeah.

**Taylor:** That's interesting.

**Sydnee:** I'm scared now.

**Raleigh:** Yeah...

**Taylor:** I—I feel bad for—I think the bunny tried real hard to...

**Raleigh:** Nah, he tries real hard. Have you seen the video of if you try to take a picture and you go out of eye shot, he, like, relaxes and it's like, "Oh, I can stop hopping."

**Taylor:** Yeah, I know!

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** I was sad for him! They put in this whole event and put—buried all these eggs, hundreds of thousands of eggs in various places—

**Raleigh:** So many eggs.

**Sydnee:** Alright.

**Taylor:** Alright, alright.

**Sydnee:** Next week, next week.

**Raleigh:** Yeah. It will be over by next week, but yes.

**Sydnee:** Alright. Well, thank you both. Uh, thank you listeners for joining us. I hope you are all staying safe, staying home as much as you possibly can.

**Raleigh:** And healthy.

**Sydnee:** Staying healthy, washing your hands. Um, all the—all that good stuff.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And protecting us all and each other. And, uh, in the meantime, when you got extra time on your hands, you should go to [Maximumfun.org](https://Maximumfun.org) and check out all the other podcasts on our network, uh, that you are sure to enjoy.

You can tweet at us @stillbuff, and you can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org, which does work... now. So please feel free to email us if you have suggestions or comments or thoughts or just... feel like emailing us, those are all fine reasons.

And thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, *Baby You Change Your Mind*.

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

**Sydnee:** I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Taylor:** And I'm Teylor Smirl.

**Raleigh:** I am still buffering...

**Sydnee and Taylor:** [out of sync] And I... am... too.

**Sydnee:** I don't know if this bunny—it'll be a competition. What's more terrifying? *Invader Zim*?

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** It's a—it's a good competition, actually.

**Taylor:** The bunny kind of feels like it could be in both universes, actually.  
[laughs]

**Raleigh:** It does.

**Sydnee:** Oh my gosh, we've unlocked it!

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

[theme music plays]

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[static]

**Speaker One:** Welcome back to Fireside Chat on KMAX. With me in studio to take your calls is the dopest duo on the West Coast, Oliver Wang and Morgan Rhodes. Go ahead, caller!

**Speaker Two:** Hey, uh, I'm looking for a music podcast that's insightful and thoughtful, but, like, also helps me discover artists and albums that I've never heard of.

**Morgan:** Yeah man, sounds like you need to listen to *Heat Rocks*. Every week, myself, and I'm Morgan Rhodes, and my co-host here, Oliver Wang, talk to influential guests about a canonical album that has changed their lives.

**Oliver:** Guests like Moby, Open Mic Eagle, talking about albums by Prince, Joni Mitchell, and so much more.

**Speaker Two:** Yo, what's that show called again?

**Morgan:** *Heat Rocks*: Deep dives into hot records.

**Oliver:** Every Thursday on Maximum Fun.

[static]

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