

Still Buffering 232: "Jennifer's Body" (2009)

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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: So, you guys feelin' pretty spooky?

Taylor: Well...

Raleigh: Hm...

Sydnee: You've been doin' lots of spooky things?

Raleigh: Um...

Taylor: I watched a lot of spooky movies, but I always watch a lot of spooky movies.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Nothin'?

Raleigh: It's a little hard. I mean, I decorated, like, my little—my little area with some Halloween lights and decorations, and made it a little spooky. I've been drinking out of my spooky cup a lot recently.

Sydnee: I did notice that you have your seasonal cup.

Raleigh: I do have my seasonal cup. Um, and then my seasonal mugs at home that I use in the mornings. That's about it. It's a little hard to get as spooky as normal. Like, I don't... there's nowhere for me to wear a costume so I'm not, like, getting costumes together—

Sydnee: Around the house.

Raleigh: —anything like that. Well... I guess that's true.

Sydnee: Just around the house.

Raleigh: But then I have online classes, so then do I just show up to my online classes in costume? [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yes. Yes you do. Uh, Charlie has done that. She showed up for her—first week of school, she showed up for—no, it wasn't—I guess it wasn't that long ago. But it was pretty close.

Raleigh: Well, Charlie is six. [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah...

Sydnee: She showed up for one of her—one of her early online classes dressed as Carmen Sandiego.

Taylor: I think that that's more acceptable for a kindergartner, but...

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: You could try it out. Who knows? Maybe you could make it a thing.

Raleigh: [laughs quietly] I show up to my online discussion about dictatorships and democracies around the world and I'm just dressed in some—I don't know, like... I don't even know what I would go as this year! There's no, like—there's been no big cultural, like, events or movies or anything, or TV shows, 'cause everything has stopped. So there's no, like, "Oh, everyone's gonna be that this year."

Sydnee: I saw there's a sexy hand sanitizer costume.

Raleigh: I-[laughs quietly]

Taylor: Well.

Sydnee: If you'd like to be that. [laughs]

Raleigh: Uh... hm.

Taylor: Now, I will say, you could do an old school plague doctor, because that has a benefit of having a built in mask, so...

Raleigh: That's true.

Taylor: You're good to go.

Sydnee: I have a costume.

Raleigh: I am not surprised. [laughs]

Taylor: What do you have that for, exactly?

Raleigh: When did you wear it?

Sydnee: I haven't yet.

Raleigh: When are you going to wear it?

Sydnee: I don't know! I just got it!

Raleigh: Okay. [laughs]

Sydnee: It just felt like—Justin and I saw it when we went to the Halloween store one time, and it felt like something I should have.

Raleigh: Sure.

Taylor: Well.

Sydnee: Just in case—just in case!

Taylor: Just in case.

Sydnee: [laughs] You never know when you need a plague doctor costume!

Taylor: That's fair. And now I guess—now's the time.

Sydnee: See?

Taylor: You played your cards right, there.

Sydnee: You could go as—I don't know how you—you could go as the last roll of toilet paper. That's very scary.

Raleigh: Yeah. Um, what if—

Sydnee: Relevant to 2020.

Raleigh: I mean, I if I went as, like... a CDC... im—im—uh, what am I looking for?

Sydnee: Epidemiologist?

Raleigh: Epidemiologist, and I wear the big hazmat suit. Then, like, that's a costume, but also... I'm safe.

Sydnee: Then you're safe. And—but then also if you're representing the CDC, we have to wonder if you've been compromised by the administration the whole time, so...

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Sydnee: ... that's very nerve-wracking. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Then what's a good Halloween pun on CDC? Like, they always have, you know, like, puns on FBI or CIA. [through laughter] What's one for the CDC?

Sydnee: We could all just go as Fauci.

Raleigh: That'd be good.

Sydnee: In honor—in honor of Dr. Fauci.

Taylor: You could be, like, a—like, have, like, a—a ruler that extends either side of you?

Raleigh: Six feet? [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Yeah. You could be sexy six feet of social distancing. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: Sexy social distancing. [laughs]

Taylor: Yes. And it would keep people away from you!

Raleigh: That's true.

Sydnee: Can you make a dress that looks like a mask?

Raleigh: Probably. It—well...

Sydnee: Sexy—sexy mask. [laughs]

Taylor: Just a giant... mask. Just all mask.

Raleigh: It'd have to be two masks. You kinda need one for the back and one for the front. What if I just did what they do at some of those, um, restaurants I saw, where they gave people hats that have, like, the pool noodles coming from 'em, or the big, like, inner tubes you have to, like, stand in? What if I just wore, like, an inner tube that I put pool noodles on that were six feet, and then did the same thing on a hat. And I was just... social distancing.

Sydnee: You know, whatever everyone decides to be this year, I know a great place to wear whatever costume you might wanna wear.

Raleigh: Where?

Sydnee: Uh, to vote. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Well...

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Alright!

Raleigh: There you go.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I just thought I'd throw that in there.

Raleigh: Yeah, voting is important.

Sydnee: We shouldn't be having parties or get togethers, but we should be voting, and that's like a party.

Raleigh: I already voted.

Sydnee: Well, me too.

Raleigh: At my home.

Sydnee: Yeah, me too. I drop—

Taylor: Just make sure—

Sydnee: —I dropped my ballot off, though. I didn't mail it. I got nervous.

Raleigh: Didn't trust that.

Sydnee: And so I dropped it off, just to be on the safe—although if you—I mean, if you mail it in early enough, it should be—you should be just fine. But, uh, we dropped ours off directly at the courthouse, and then I checked online. They said it was received, which I know it was received, I handed it to you.

Raleigh: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: That's good.

Sydnee: *Linda.*

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: Well, I mean, you can't take anything for granted in this election. You had those fake ballot boxes popping up in California. [laughs quietly] Just trash cans that said "ballot box!" Or "ballot drop—ballot drop off."

Raleigh: [laughs quietly]

Sydney: I think—I think if you can vote in person safely, do that. And you can do it in costume. Now, no, your costume cannot be political in any way.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Right.

Sydney: So nothing political, because then they won't let you come in and vote.

Taylor: And I think at this point now, if you do have a costume that is in any way referencing PPE or even Dr. Fauci, that might be viewed as political.

Raleigh: That's too political.

Taylor: Yeah. Because it's been politicized.

Sydney: [sighs wearily]

Taylor: Public safety, uh. It's an agenda.

Sydney: Yeah, and I mean, I think a very popular costume seems to be dressing as a handmaid from *The Handmaid's Tale*. I—I imagine that's now considered political, because they might think you're going dressed as a nominee for the Supreme Court, so...

Raleigh: Yeah.

[pause]

Um, I mean, I'm dressing my guinea pig up as—as a tiny Ruth Bader Ginsburg, because that is who she is named after, in her memory. I got her a tiny little gavel, and a tiny little piece of lace that will make a tiny little collar.

Sydnee: But she's probably not gonna go vote, huh?

Raleigh: No, she's not gonna go vote—

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: —but she is gonna look very cute. Sydnee, I just—like, we—I just wanted to steer this conversation back to something that I thought would bring everyone joy, and that's the fact that my tiny guinea pig will be wearing a tiny little collar and holding a tiny gavel.

Sydnee: Voting brings everyone joy. [laughs quietly] Right?

Taylor: Uh... you know, this year I think—I don't know if there's joy to be found in voting. I think [laughs quietly] it's just... [pause]

Sydnee: Yeah. Voting has become less an act of triumph and more an act of desperation.

Raleigh: Desperation, yeah, that's what I was gonna say. Um... yeah.

Sydnee: Please vote, though. For real. We'll move on. But please, please vote. Please vote. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah. My guinea pig would want you to.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: So [crosstalk]—

Sydnee: And also not for Trump. I don't—did I say that? Don't vote for—yeah. No, don't vote for—

Raleigh: No, you didn't, but that's important to add.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah, I made the mistake of tweeting something that got a lot of retweets, and at the end it said "Please vote," and then I of course got the trolls that commented and said, "I will be voting, for Trump."

Well, okay. I should've—guess I should've added that in there. Um... anyways.
[laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yeah. [laughs] There was a time when we used to say, "No matter who you vote for, just vote."

[pause]

Taylor: Yeah...

[pause]

Sydnee: I'm just saying, I didn't say that. [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: I'm just saying, I didn't say that now. Anyway, we'll let just sit there, with you.

Raleigh: We'll let that sit... there. Um, do you know what... [pause] I don't know. I was gonna—there was nothing to be done there.

Sydnee: I don't—I've got noth—hey, Tey. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: What we talkin' about this week? [laughs]

Taylor: Well, this is a—I think I'm gonna try to switch us to a cheerier topic, and that's gonna involve, like, demonic possession and cannibalism. 'cause that's better, actually. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah, well.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It's a lot more fun.

Taylor: Yeah. You know, I do want to—uh, I—obviously, as I mentioned last week, I brought *Jennifer's Body* to the table this week, but I do wanna just on a whole I've been, uh—I kinda was—in September, I didn't do what I usually do, watch a lot of horror movies, but I have in October.

I have been kind of watching one or two a day. And it's been making feel a little better, and I'm trying to figure out the catharsis of, like, watching really gory brutal horror movies is weirdly making me not freak out as much about the rest of the world. I don't know. I don't know what that is. [laughs]

Rileigh: Is it like the one thing we can experience that we're like, "At least... *that's* not happening to me right now, I guess."

Sydney: [laughs]

Taylor: Maybe? Yeah. Or it's like—kind of, you know, like that euphoria when you get off a roller coaster because you survived something that you knew you were gonna survive.

That safety/fear balance, like maybe it's going through that motion. Like, "It's all gonna be okay! But oh, it's not. Put on another movie!" I watched the whole *Saw* franchise, just one after the other. Like, to just fill in the space. Uh... yeah.

Sydney: Well, you know, I think if it brings you comfort right now... [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs] Whatever works. There's probably a psychological understanding of that that I don't know, but it works.

Sydney: I would say you're right, a fear you can control.

Taylor: Yeah. Um, but yeah. So, I wanted to talk about *Jennifer's Body*. It came out in 2009, um, widely panned by critics. Uh, kind of written off as gaybait, as, um... really more spe—more—[stammers] more so it got written off as just kind of exploitation. Like, it was, you know, for the male gaze, just a stupid horror movie that was showing off Megan Fox being hot.

Um, but—but you know, it was written by Diablo Cody, who was just coming off of *Juno* success. And, uh—and Karyn Kusama was the director. So all-female writing

directing team, and I think that that kind of clues you in that there maybe was more there than—than meets the eye, or met the eye back then.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Yeah. It definitely, um... it—it surprises me that, like—well, it doesn't surprise me that people weren't on board and understanding it back then. But it does surprise me that it was made back then. [laughs] Like, you know? It feels—it feels very current.

Taylor: Yeah, I would agree. I mean, I think it was definitely ahead of its time. Um, and you know, I think that the—the advertising around it—I do—like, the setup for when this movie released, both in the trailers that came out—like, it just highlighted, like, here's Megan Fox, you know... coming out of a pool looking sexy. Like, here's Megan Fox and Amanda Seyfried, like, making out. Like, it was very much just like, this is gonna be a sexy demon romp, which is not what I would say the movie is.

Rileigh: No.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: Yeah. And then the other thing that I think is important to frame this with is this is post-*Transformers* Megan Fox, right after the big explosion where she made some comments about Michael Bay, and then a bunch of the members of the production team on *Transformers* wrote a letter defending him and completely attacking her, attacking her character.

You know, there was a lot of just gross sexism, slut shaming, all sorts of really just horrible attacks on Megan Fox. Michael Bay posted it to his website! And then it resulted in Megan Fox getting fired. So this was all happening this movie, which probably fed into the panning and rejection of this—this entire production.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Well, and I can see, too, if it was—if it was marketed wrong. 'Cause it—so, the thing that surprised me—I had never seen it before, and the thing that surprised me is when I went into it, I expected it to be kind of like a gory, sexy, teen horror film. You know what I mean? Like, very typical, like, "Oh, she's the hot popular girl, and now she's evil... and she's gonna eat boys."

And, like—you know? I mean, it never occurred to me that, like, I was going into something that had, like, other themes, or was using some of these ideas in what I think is kind of, like, an allegorical way. Like, that was not what I was expecting.

And I wonder how many people, if it was marketed kind of like you say, more like "Look how hot Megan Fox is, and now she's gonna eat people," like... you know. How many people were like, "Well, this is not... the movie that I thought it was gonna be."

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Well, I do think what you've described is sort of the rough premise so, I mean, you know, that's—that's not wrong. Like, there is a hot chick, and her nerdy best friend. Hot girl gets, uh, sacrificed to S—to Satan by this band that's rolling through town.

The sacrifice goes wrong, and she comes back as a demon, and then she eats boys, and her nerdy best friend has to defeat her. So, that is the wrap of the movie. But there's a lot more going on than just that.

Raleigh: Yeah. Um, there was one thing, though, that I was thinking about, is I was thinking about, like, horror movie tropes, and watching the characters in this movie, and that's that usually in horror movies that are centered around teenagers, and more specifically teenage girls, um, if you have sex, you get punished, and you get killed. Um, usually. That's, like, a pretty common thing.

And in this case, it's kind of a weird, like, lose-lose, almost? Like, Megan Fox didn't die because she *had* had sex, but then she did become possessed by a demon. Because they were supposed to sacrifice a virgin, and she was not. So, that was a little—I mean, I guess good that we weren't killing girls for having sex, but also, is becoming possessed by a demon better? Because then she—I mean, I don't know.

Sydney: I mean, no... at the end of the day, it's not better, because she must then be destroyed.

Raleigh: Right.

Sydnee: Kind of in the, like, logic of the film. Uh, but, I mean, on the flip side, she's able to eat boys, you know?

Raleigh: Yeah!

Sydnee: [laughs] So—[laughs]

Raleigh: It gives her power to destroy men, um, which is something.

Sydnee: So there's that. And I guess presumably she could be eating girls, too.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: She—she chooses to eat boys.

Raleigh: She chooses men, yeah.

Sydnee: But yeah.

Taylor: Um, but I think that—I think that that kind of, um... I mean, the fact that she has power—it's such a—it's such a common—even, like, the—the image of Megan Fox in this movie. You know, she—it's—it's the—that evil female character with power that we see repeated. I mean, it's a Disney trope. It's, you know—that's such a—a common employment.

And why do we have to—I don't think the movie is as straightforward as, "And then she has powers, so she's bad, so we kill her." I think it's more of a look at that sort of a character. Like, how did she get the power? Through trauma. Like, it's because something horrible happened to her that she has this ugliness inside of her, this demon. Um, and now she has to be killed for it. And I think—I would like to think that it's aware that it's invoking that character of the evil, sexy, powerful female.

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah. Well, I would think it would have to be. 'Cause they, um—it's not just she has this demon that she can't control that occasionally makes her do this bad thing. Like, the entire character becomes very cruel and removed, you know? Because this community is suffering this series of tragic deaths, and obviously in part she's removed because she is... causing them.

But even, like, the—the big fire in the bar that happens early in the film when a ton of people die, which she didn't cause, she was there for but she didn't cause, she is not affected by or concerned about, because of the demon, I'm assuming. But, like, they make sure that you know, she has—she is a compl—I am assuming, completely different person than she was before.

Taylor: Well, and I think it's—it's interesting, because you see, uh, the—the scene where she is sacrificed is kind of hard to watch, um, because I think it's a bit of a... of a parallel to a sexual assault scene. She's not sexually assaulted in the movie, she's just stabbed to death. But it's hard to not see that as a woman who is restrained and being taken advantage of by a bunch of young men for their advancement in life. Like, that is what is happening.

And so often in society when that happens, which it does, uh, it doesn't matter what the—right? The woman's pain, the woman's suffering, the woman's death doesn't matter. We don't—we don't care, we don't resonate on it. It doesn't impact us. Like, the deaths we're mourning in this movie are young men, and it's kind of a—it's a bit of a turn face that Jennifer is—I'm not saying it's right, but I'm saying it's—you know, Jennifer's indifference at this suddenly now it's men suffering is sort of a parallel to how we treat women's suffering, so often.

Sydnee: I think that was part of why I found myself, like, as the film progressed, I was becoming increasingly uncomfortable, because I didn't know how—like I said, this is the first time I'd seen it. I didn't know how it resolved, and I didn't feel like it was gonna resolve—like, there was a way to resolve that would make me truly happy, you know what I mean? Um, because towards—and, I mean, obviously we're spoiling the movie, [holding back laughter] in case anybody was wondering.

Taylor: [through laughter] Yeah.

Sydnee: I'm gonna talk about all the plots. [laughs quietly] All the plot points. Um, towards the end of the film, kind of the final—the, like—what finally separates Jennifer and Needy is when Jennifer kills Chip, Needy's boyfriend. And that is, like, the thing that Needy can't forgive or get past or whatever, and so I guess it's essential for Needy to finally decide Jennifer has to be stopped.

But, like, up until then I'm thinking, like, I don't want to see this character punished because the wrong was done to her. It's not her fault, you know?

Rileigh: It's not like she was the one that tried to make some sort of deal with the devil and ended up becoming a demon.

Sydnee: No, I want—

Rileigh: She was a victim.

Sydnee: —I want—I want Adam Brody [laughs quietly] and his band—[laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: —I need—[laughs] unfortunately, I feel very sad wanting Seth from *The OC* to pay, but I need him to! [laughs]

Taylor: Sorry, he's Nikolai Wolf here, so... [laughs]

Rileigh: [sighs] Oh man.

Sydnee: Okay, alright. I'll try to think of him that way. That's all I could think of was like, "[tearfully] Not Seth! [laughs] Not Seth! [laughs]"

Rileigh: It was so hard to watch him as anything other than Seth.

Sydnee: But, uh—but Adam Brody, Nikolai... Wolf [laughs quietly] needs to pay, and his band needs to pay, and I wanna see them pay. I wanna see—like, up until Chip dies, all I'm thinking is, "This is gonna be great. Needy and Jennifer are gonna hook up and go kill this band together. [laughs] This is—" Like, in my mind—okay, maybe that's a satisfactory end. But then she's still gotta eat people periodically to survive.

So how do we reconcile—I just—I felt like I don't know exactly what's coming, but I'm not gonna feel satisfied, you know?

Rileigh: I had the same exact thought process, and my hope while I was watching it was, "What if when they kill the band that made her a demon, then the demon is released?" Like, there's no longer, like—they're not benefiting—

Sydnee: Oh, you were hopeful!

Rileigh: I was!

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: I was like, "Well, the band won't be benefiting from, like, this sacrifice they made anymore, so maybe she'll stop being possessed if they can kill the people that sacrificed her." But then that is not the direction that the film went in. [laughs]

Sydnee: No...

Taylor: Well, and I mean, I think that the—I think the idea with Jen—I think that that moment—and they replay the scene a couple times, where you see Needy make eye contact with Jennifer as she's in, you know—the band takes her in their—in her van after—after this fire, the two girls get separated. Jennifer goes with the band and gets murdered.

Uh, but there's a scene where Needy's looking at Jennifer the last time she sees her as a living human, and it's very—it's—it's sad, because I feel like that's the moment—that's when Jennifer dies. That's the end of Jennifer. From there on, we're dealing with the demon.

And so I think that's why it's like—there was not—that was the moment that the hope was gone for me. At that point it was just Needy understanding that, you know, her—that these people took her best friend away, and that that is—whatever is left over isn't—isn't Jennifer.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah, that was hard too, because as that scene was happening, I was—I was yelling, like, "Needy, stop them! No, don't let—don't let her get in the van!" [laughs] I didn't know exactly where we were goin', but I knew it was somewhere bad. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: I know Adam Brody has a trustworthy face, but please just don't trust him. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Well, look at that van!

Raleigh: Look at the van!

Taylor: Well, and that's what—I don't think that reading it as a parallel to sexual assault is not meant to be how it's read, because they make several reference to—it looks like a—it looks like a rapist van. Like, and she literally asks them when they're driving off with her if that's their intent.

Sydney: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: To which one of the replied—

Raleigh: To which Adam Brody responds, "I hate girls." [laughs] Like, well, I don't think it's a wild question. [laughs]

Sydney: Well, it's—I mean, I think that they needed to make that band as disgusting as possible.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: And they succeeded.

Sydney: As, like... yes. It's about—yes, as misogynist as they possibly could.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydney: Yeah. Um, especially considering what the credits—the scene that takes place as the credits roll. [laughs]

Taylor: There's your happy ending.

Raleigh: Which I almost missed. I'm glad I didn't, yeah.

Sydney: Really?

Raleigh: Well, I was watching it before I went to bed so I was like, "Oh, it's over," and turned it off, and then as I was going to, like, close it out, then I saw it start and I was like, "Oh wait! [laughs quietly] Hold on!"

Sydney: Well, let's—okay. Let's talk about that. But before we do that... [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Let's check the group message.

Sydnee: What are we gonna talk about first this week?

Rileigh: Well, first I wanna talk to you about my... dinner.

Sydnee: Okay!

Rileigh: [laughs] Um, I—

Sydnee: I can understand why talking about this movie about cannibalism would make you hungry. [laughs]

Rileigh: —I haven't eaten today so far. I'm just really hungry right now. Uh, I wanna talk about my dinner, because I get my dinner from HelloFresh, America's number one meal kit. I'm in college, and I don't have time to learn how to cook a lot of things, or go to the store and buy lots of ingredients, but HelloFresh delivers pre-portioned ingredients so you're not over-buying, which is a burden on the planet, and your wallet. So you're saving yourself some money, but you're also saving everybody else, 'cause you're getting exactly as much as you need.

Sydnee: No food waste.

Rileigh: Exactly. Um, and you can also easily change your delivery days or food preferences, and skip a week whenever you need, so if there's a week where I have some extra food leftover, or if there's a week where, like, a Monday works better than a Thursday, I can switch that up whenever I want, and HelloFresh is gonna help me out. And there's something for everyone, including low calorie, vegetarian, and kid-friendly recipes. So for Tey, who's vegan, for Sydnee, who has kids, there's something for everybody. For me, who's just—I don't have any special needs but, you know.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: I—I just—

Sydnee: You'll just eat whatever HelloFresh sends.

Raleigh: I'll just eat whatever they send me, because it's always very tasty and good.

Sydnee: And you get a new—you get a new recipe. That's the other advantage of HelloFresh is that, you know, sometimes you get kind of stuck in a rut and you don't really—if you're not, like, a professional chef, and you don't really know what to cook next, you need recipe ideas, and HelloFresh sends 'em to you.

Raleigh: Yeah. So it gives you lots of good things to know how to cook in the future, but also just some good, tasty foods to eat in the now. Um, so Tey, if our listeners want to check out HelloFresh, what should they do?

Taylor: Well, they should go to hellofresh.com/80stillbuffering and use code "80stillbuffering," that's 8-0, to get a total of \$80 off across five boxes, including free shipping on your first box. That's hellofresh.com/80stillbuffering, and code "80stillbuffering" for a total of \$80 off across five boxes.

Sydnee: The other thing I want to tell you all about this week, uh—you wanna talk about your dinner, I wanna talk about my pants. Again.

Raleigh: Talk about your pants.

Taylor: Sure, this is normal.

Sydnee: I'm gonna talk about my pants. Yep.

Raleigh: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] Everything is normal now. Betabrand's dress pant yoga pants are my go-to pants because right now, even though a lot of us are staying at home, staying at home is busy. We're working from home. I am actually—I spend a lot of my day running up and down the stairs to take care of my two-year-old and help coordinate virtual school for my six-year-old, and then have meetings and doctor stuff and podcast stuff to do, uh, for my job.

And so I need pants that, um, you know, can transition easily from one thing to the next. I want to look professional for my Zoom calls and meetings, but at the same time, I might have to then go, you know, roll around on the floor of the playroom with my two-year-old right after that, and Betabrand dress pant yoga

pants allow me to, uh, transition from one to the other without having to change clothes, because they are totally functional and comfortable, they're wrinkle resistant, they're made of this stretch knit fabric that is perfect to wear all day, feel like you're wearing yoga pants, but they're dress pants.

Uh, so they look great, they feel great. Um, I can't recommend 'em enough. I've been a fan for a long time, and I wore 'em when I was working out in the world, and now that I'm working from home they're still just as great. They're still my go-to.

Uh, Teylor, if our listeners want to check out Betabrand dress pant yoga pants, where should they go?

Teylor: Well, right now our listeners can get 25% off their first order, when you go to betabrand.com/buffering. That's 25% off your first order for a limited time at betabrand.com/buffering. Find out why people are ditching typical work pants for Betabrand's dress pant yoga pants. That's, once again, betabrand.com/buffering for 25% off.

Sydnee: So, we alluded to what happens over the credits which, again, we're already spoiling the film. I feel like this is—this was part of the tension for me, and I wonder if, like, now knowing that this gets resolved I would feel less uncomfortable watching it a second time. [laughs quietly]

Because I did enjoy it. It has that—it has a lot of that snappy Diablo Cody dialogue that we all enjoy so much, you know? So it's fun to watch. And there are parts of it that are genuinely funny. Um, even though, like, overall, movies where, like, kids—I know they're teens, but they're kids—where kids die, that's hard for me.

Um, but still, it had a lot of funny bits. But I needed that band to pay.

Teylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: I needed to see them pay. Like, the whole movie for me was, "I don't need Jennifer to pay. Jennifer already had—she already died. I need to see this band pay."

And, like, finally at the end... Needy gets back at the band. But you have to wait till the credits scene.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: To see it happen. Um, to see them, I mean, really pay. Not just, like, get put away in jail. [laughs]

Raleigh: Um, she—I mean, she murders them. With the same—

Sydnee: [simultaneously] Yes, Raleigh, thank you. [laughs]

Raleigh: —well, with the same knife that they used to murder Jennifer.

Sydnee: Yes.

Raleigh: Um, that she finds. But then... it gets a little, like—and I mean, that's the end of the movie. There's no—nothing beyond that during the credits. But then they show pictures of, like, the forensics people finding hairs that are, I assume, are Needy's, and then it worried me a little bit. Like, why do we have to... I don't wanna think about Needy going to jail again! She just broke out with her cool half demon powers, and murdered these people.

Taylor: Now she's a powerful half demon. They're not gonna—no one's gonna mess with her.

Raleigh: Well, that's true.

Sydnee: Yeah, that—

Raleigh: I guess she could just pull out those powers again.

Sydnee: And she broke out of jail.

Raleigh: She did.

Sydnee: Because she's a—yeah, so J—Jennifer—

Raleigh: She did it once, she'll do it again.

Sydnee: —Jennifer bit her, so she is now also part demon. And so she, like, levitates her way—

Raleigh: [muffled laughter] And has super strength.

Sydnee: Yeah. [laughs quietly] Out of the—yeah. So, like, I don't think she's gonna—I don't think they're gonna get her.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Um, now it does bring up the question, like, does she need to... feast on human blood, or flesh, or... whatever—it looked like blood was really the key there, from the eating scenes.

Raleigh: I hadn't thought about that.

Sydnee: Is that—is that necessary? Or is that just because Jennifer actually died.

Raleigh: That's probably just because she died, right? Like, because she's just part demon, that means she just gets the powers, but she's not dead, so she doesn't need to, like, feed on people?

Taylor: I don't know, maybe.

Raleigh: Right?

Sydnee: I don't know.

Taylor: Maybe she's just gonna pick more deserving victims, you know? Jennifer lost too much of herself, but... although she—I think she would've taken advantage and eaten those bad band boys if that was the case, so. They looked pretty much just stabb-ed.

Raleigh: Hm.

Sydnee: Um, the, uh—so, the other part of it that I don't know that we've talked enough about is the relationship between the two of them, Jennifer and Needy, because it's set up for us that they have been best friends since they were very young. And, like, early on you kind of—because when you see them you think, like, that's an odd pairing to be friends in high school, you know? In a high school

environment where everything is about popularity and cliques and all that. Jennifer is incredibly popular, obviously, and, you know, Needy is nerdy. Like, they gave her those glasses, I had to feel like, just—

Raleigh: Those glasses.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: 'Cause Amanda Seyfried is a lovely human. And so, like, they were trying to make her look believably, like, not attractive with those glasses, I guess? [laughs] They were cute, but they were definitely, like... "Look how quirky these are." [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, but they—but they set up that they've been best friends forever. And then, like, there's some sort of supernatural connection between them, I believe, that is alluded to, even before Jennifer becomes a demon, because she can, like, hear her, even when, like, she's too far away to be able to hear her. Or, like, she sense the band discussing her when she's too far away to be able to hear them.

Raleigh: And she, like, knows who she's with and can, like, know what she's doing, feel the things she feels, almost.

Sydnee: Yeah. Which I guess is traced to a sandbox injury that Jennifer sustained and [laughs quietly] when they were children, and Needy, like, kissed her bloody hand or something.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Well, I think it's also—I mean, I—you know, maybe this is—I don't know. I felt like the central relationship—I know that, you know, Needy has a boyfriend, Chip, like, Jennifer clearly references other men that she's hooking up with. Chris Pratt's random appearance. Uh—

Raleigh: Yeah. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. [laughs]

Taylor: He's there. Uh, this is pre-*Parks and Rec*, so it's weird that he's just there as, like, a bit part, but, um—

Sydnee: Yeah. He just kind of, like, shows up and then says some jerky things and disappears.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Uh... but, uh, the central relationship, the love story of this movie is between Jennifer and Needy. I mean, I think for a movie that promised in the trailers that it was gonna be [dudebro voice] sexy, sexy Megan Fox—like—

Raleigh: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: —basically. The first scene is this loving slow shot of Jennifer, like, in the—I think she works at the—she's not a cheerleader. She's, like, part of the flag team, I think? Uh, but it's from Needy's perspective, and I don't—it's, you know—it's a subtle turn. It's not a sexual shot. It's not like the slow pan up, like, focus on cleavage, it's just, this is the beautiful Jennifer, who is staring right back at Needy and gives her, like, a sweet wave, and they wave at each other, and it's a moment between the two of them. Like, that is the first moment we—well, there's an intro to where the place—where the movie goes, but that's the first time we see them in the flashback.

And, I mean, you get, like, those repeated moments of, like, their characters sort of on the verge of something between them, like, before everything goes to heck, um—quite literally. Uh, where they're watching the band, they hold hands for a brief moment, and then as, you know, as Jennifer focuses on Adam Brody's character, the hot male singer, you can see disappointment on Needy's face as she pulls her hand away from Jennifer.

So I—at least there's attraction, I think, from Needy to Jennifer, but then I would also say it's reciprocated. And I think that that's not—I don't think it was gaybaiting. I think it was an intentional sort of... uh... you know, meditation on the thin line between these best friends and soulmates, they're connected on a level that most humans are not, and then crossing the line into, like, more of a romantic love between them.

Sydnee: Yeah. I mean, 'cause I definitely think, as much as we said, like, the scene where Jennifer gets murdered feels very much like a sexual assault scene,

even though that's not what it is, the scene where Needy finally kills Jennifer... feels like it's starting out as a sex scene.

Raleigh: It does.

Sydnee: Like, it has very much that, like—it starts out in—well, I mean, it takes place in Jennifer's bed. And the way that it's shot, and the angles of it, it feels very much like that's what they're alluding to, is, like, the two of them finally, like, being together. Although I don't know. It's sort of alluded to several times, like, that they used to play quote, unquote, "boyfriend and girlfriend."

Raleigh: Boyfriend girlfriend, mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So, I mean, I don't know that the—and when they do make out in the movie, Needy is surprised, but not, like... "Why would you ever do this?" surprised. Just like—

Raleigh: "Why are you doing this right now?"

Sydnee: "Why right now?"

Raleigh: "And also I just saw you, like, jump on top of my car covered in blood."

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: So. [laughs]

Sydnee: "I'm also a little concerned about that you might be a demon." [laughs]

Taylor: Well, and you know, even through Jennifer's demon-ness, in that moment she decided to seek Needy out and tell her the truth. Like, she's gonna reveal what she is and what she does to Needy, so I don't know. I think that there's still some remnant of Jennifer that... has that affection. Obviously it's very twisted, because... demon. [laughs]

Sydnee: Right.

Raleigh: Right.

Taylor: Yeah, no, I—I think it's true. I think that's what hard is that I don't think Jennifer would hurt Needy, even after she's become a demon. Now, she will hurt her indirectly by killing Chip, but it was more about isolating her.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Keeping her for herself, you know?

Taylor: Well, I mean—and that's even from—even before she's a demon, you know, that Chip asks Jennifer to stop stealing away his girlfriend. 'Cause clearly this happens a lot, that Jennifer makes Needy choose between her boyfriend and her, to reinforce that Needy's gonna keep choosing Jennifer.

Like, I'm not saying it's, like, a wholesome, great relationship that Needy and Jennifer have. I think Jennifer's pretty controlling of Needy, um, even before demonhood. Uh, but I do think that that's, you know, that that's something that Jennifer does for her own confidence is to prove, "Oh, Needy's gonna always choose me over Chip." Like...

Sydnee: Which, I don't know. Maybe that's the difficulty of reading all of that relationship and, like, what it all is supposed to mean. Like, who—what everybody's true feelings are. Like, seeing that now maybe makes it a little harder, because I think more and more, thankfully, we're living in a time where Needy would be seen as bi. And possibly Jennifer too. I mean, I assume, although... her—her... I don't know.

It's a little more nebulous, because—because of when it's set, there's also this question of, does Jennifer feel pressured to be this, like, hyper-feminine, popular, like, kind of prom queen girl, and so therefore could not recognize other feelings. And so is she bi, or is she gay? Is she a lesbian? You know? I mean, I don't know. And so, like, whenever we're looking back at these films. That are filmed in the past—it's so hard to see them through our lens of now. Like, what is everybody feeling?

Taylor: I just—to me, it just felt more obvious. Like, when they're just, like—there are moments where, like, the way—the way that—and, I mean, I think this is a credit to Megan Fox's acting. The way that she talks to Needy throughout the movie, pre-demon, as demon, it's—it's very loving. It's very flirtatious. Like, when she tells her to wear something cute, and, like, literally gives her elevator eyes.

Like, it's—that is, I think, purposeful that there is something between them that is—it's not supposed to be, "Oh, maybe they're just friends."

And I don't know. Maybe the reason that that relationship felt very obvious to me is because I remember what it was like to be in high school and have that very good friend, that very good girl who was my friend, and trying to wrestle with those feelings of, like, "It's totally normal to be incredibly jealous of your best friend's boyfriend, right? And to hate him, and want him... to go away, right?"

No, no, nope. It's not. It's not normal. [laughs] Like...

Sydnee: Well, and I think that that—I think you're exactly right. I think that's what I was trying to suss out as I was watching it. Is that what I'm seeing? Are these two people who love each other, but because of when and where they are, they're... unable to fully recognize it themselves, or just say it out loud? Do they know it? I don't—you know? I mean, it's definitely there. Yeah, I don't think there's—I don't think there's any suggestion, like, "But they're just friends."

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Well, that's—that's where I think it—it—it changes from, you know, the way it was sold, which is, "Oh, there's gonna be a hot make out scene just because girl on girl action is hot," and "No, this is a—a kind of twisted love story between these two—this doomed love story between these two characters."

I mean, even, like, the last line of their interaction is, you know, Needy stabs Jennifer in the—in the boob. [laughs] But—her heart. And you know, Jennifer references her chest and Needy says, "No, your heart."

And, I mean, I think that moment where it's sort of—everybody sees Jennifer for her body. I mean, the name of the movie's literally *Jennifer's Body*, which I'll come back to, 'cause that's also a song title.

Uh, because everybody sees Jennifer for her body, for how hot she is, for the thing that she is, and Needy is the person that loves her for who she is as a person.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Yeah, that's true. I hadn't really thought about that line, but yeah, that's true.

Rileigh: Also, like, you're right in the way that the movie was, like, marketed, and the trailers and stuff. You do get those shots that's like, "This is sexy Megan Fox, you know, in the lake, and making out with Needy," but—

Sydnee: Unzipping of the—

Rileigh: —of the shirt, mm-hmm.

Sydnee: —shirt scene, yeah.

Rileigh: But overall, there's very little actual, like... nudity or sexuality or sexualization of her throughout the movie. Like, it's not like she's always wearing super revealing clothes, or you see her hooking up with guys in detail. I mean, if anything she, like, unzips her shirt that one time, but only so she can distract the guys long enough to murder them. [laughs quietly] And eat them.

Sydnee: Yeah. It's definitely—and I can see where, like, going into it, if it's been sold, like I said, as this kind of, like, typical teen horror film with, like, sex and blood and guts and there you go, like, all—you know, a lot of teen horror films are kind of sold that way. [laughs quietly] Um, but it's so much more than that.

It's a story about trauma, it's a story about a relationship between two women that definitely goes beyond friendship, but cannot be fully realized, or is not fully realized yet or, you know, whatever—whatever that is, that's there, um, and revenge and, like... who is—who is really the victim? I mean, there's so much more that's underneath it. And if you pick up on all that, it's not all just, I would say, like, a fun ride. You know? It's not just all like, "Ooh! That was—that was wild! That was gory!"

I mean, there's a lot more to it if you read all that into it.

Taylor: Well, because I think it—I think the way the movie is shot in the scenes where you might—a different hand might be able to more sexualize Megan Fox, I don't think she's shot in a sexy way. I think a lot of times it's very scary. It's kind of sad. I mean, the way they do her— her whole makeup when she's, you know, hungry, it's very—like, she looks sick. So it's not—I don't think it's—there's nothing sexy about the way they frame Jennifer. There's—there's the beloved way

we see her from Needy's perspective, and then there's just the monstrous way she's shot as the demon.

Sydnee: Yeah. What is the song "Jennifer's Body"?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Okay, so the title comes from a song by the band Hole, Courtney Love's band. Um, and "Jennifer's Body," it's a really brutal song. There are a couple interpretations, but it's—it's definitely about, like, a woman who's been kidnapped and is eventually dismembered.

Raleigh: Oh.

Taylor: So it's—by a man. And it's, you know, kind of just about a woman being abused and destroyed. Uh, and then, now, the song "Violet" by Hole appears in the end credit as well, which has a similar theme. I mean, you know, they take what they want and then they never want it again. Like, also about sort of just being destroyed by, you know, those who desire you.

So, I think that that's—I think the title is sort of encapsulating what this movie is gonna be about. It's about the way that women's bodies are, you know, both metaphorically and actually, sometimes, sort of dissected and picked apart and consumed by society. And not respected for the person inside.

[pause]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Well. I think that was a—I think that was a good summary—

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: —right there, of the movie! I think that was a good—a good beat to end on, 'cause that is—that is definitely what it's speaking to.

Taylor: I will say—we should've mentioned this in the beginning, but it is, uh—there is humor in the movie, there are words used that—it's teen humor, but it's not—it's not okay, you know? Just, like, jokes that they make, language that they use that I think is definitely a little outdated, and just not very sensitive, so I

would warn anyone going in that there's some problematic language, and, you know, joking going on.

Sydnee: Yeah. That's—2—2009?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah. So, I actually thought it was older than that because of some of the jokes. I'm like, "Oh, wow. You were—were were still writing movies like that [through laughter] in 2009?"

Sydnee: It's—it's really, like—it's wild how—yes.

Raleigh: How recent all of it is. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: How recent—I know. Well, I—overall, though, I will say, I enjoyed it.

Raleigh: Me too.

Sydnee: I thought it was a good movie. Like I said, it was not—it was very different. I want to watch it again now that I kind of know what it's about, um, so that I can, like, pay more attention to all those bits in it, because I think the first time I really just thought, like—'cause you like some gory movies, Tey.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: And so I assumed, like, "Oh, this is just gonna be, like, gory teen movie." And then it was very—it was a whole other thing.

Taylor: Well, I won't lie. I do agree with your kind of, like—it's an unfair ending. It's not happy. Because I do think if it was—if I could rewrite the ending I would much rather see Needy and her hot demon girlfriend taking revenge on the world. [laughs]

Raleigh: Right.

Taylor: It's kind of like how Nancy gets that treatment in *The Craft*, and I'm just—I just wish that she could've been redeemed in some, way, and they could've kept their power. I don't wanna see powerful women lose their power, I

want to see them learn how to harness it, and not be destructive, but that's— that's my gripe.

Sydnee: [laughs] Well, it was good anyway.

Raleigh: Yeah. Thank you, Tey.

Taylor: Thank you for watching this with me.

Raleigh: Very good.

Sydnee: Alright. Raleigh?

Raleigh: Oh man. Oh boy.

Sydnee: You look so excited. Raleigh's over here grinning.

Taylor: [shudders]

Raleigh: I... um... it's the moment everyone ever that has listened to this podcast ever has been waiting for. [laughs quietly] Um, there are very few, I would say, movies of specifically, I think, my generation—like, when I was growing up, um, that everyone knows about and can talk about. And one of those... is *Twilight*.

Sydnee: Oh nooooo!

Raleigh: Now, Sydnee, you don't get to say "Oh no."

Sydnee: No, I'm joking.

Raleigh: You *loved*—

Sydnee: I was the audience, there. I was the listeners.

Raleigh: You loved *Twilight*, yeah. Yeah, that was our listeners, but Sydnee was very into *Twilight*.

Sydnee: I did read all the books [trails off] and watch all the movies and [unintelligible]... more than once, and so... [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Now, I'm gonna—I'm gonna say this. Uh, I have never read any of the books. Um, and I've never seen any of the movies straight through.

Raleigh: [gasps] Oh, man.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Well, you don't have to read the books, obviously.

Taylor: Well, I wasn't [crosstalk] [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah. And we'll talk mostly about the first one. I'll probably end up rewatching the whole thing, but we'll talk about the first one, mostly.

Sydnee: We—if—as long as you can watch the first one, we will focus on the first one.

Taylor: I can watch the movies. How—there were three, it's a trilogy?

Raleigh: Four.

Taylor: There's four.

Raleigh: Right? Didn't they—it's a trilogy of books, or... wait.

Sydnee: No, there's four books, aren't there?

Raleigh: They broke the last one into two movies, like they usually do. *Twilight*, *New Moon*, *Eclipse*, and *Breaking Dawn*. There are four, so there were five movies.

Sydnee: Yeah, there are five movies, that's what I was gonna say.

Raleigh: Oh, wow.

Taylor: Oh, wow.

Raleigh: Um, we'll talk about the first one most.

Taylor: I'll get through what I can.

Sydnee: It gets progressively stranger. [laughs]

Raleigh: It does.

Taylor: Well, and now—just recently, just—I know we're wrapping up here, but they just released—Stephanie Meyer just released a retelling of the first one from the—the sparkly boy's perspective, right?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yes, from sparkly boy's perspective.

Raleigh: What is it called? *Midnight Sun*? Is that what it is?

Sydnee: Uh, yes.

Raleigh: I have not read it.

Sydnee: I—I haven't either. I'm—[holding back laughter] from the reviews, I kinda want to. [laughs]

Raleigh: I know.

Taylor: I was gonna say, that's the only thing I know about it is, like, I—I just saw somebody review it on YouTube that I was curious, because it sounded interesting. Anyway, alright. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah, we're gonna talk about *Twilight*. You ready?

Taylor: [groans]

Sydnee: I'm kind of excited. [laughs]

Taylor: At least Kristen Stewart's there.

Raleigh: That's true.

Sydnee: Robert Pattinson, you know?

Rileigh: Robert Pattinson's also good. He's good, right?

Taylor: No, he's good, he's good.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: I like—I like current Robert Patter—I like both of them now, actually, as presence in Hollywood. I think they both have grown into themselves. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Taylor Lautner's okay, isn't he?

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: See?

Rileigh: They're—they're all good.

Sydnee: Anna Kendrick is in this movie?

Rileigh: Anna Kendrick forgot she was in this movie.

Sydnee: But she is. [laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs] Uh, I love that. Alright.

Sydnee: You're gonna love it. [laughs loudly]

Taylor: I—I am sure I will. I will keep an open mind.

Sydnee: Alright. Well, thank you both. This was fun. This was fun and spooky. Um, *Twilight* is less spooky, but it will be fun. [laughs quietly] Uh, thank you listeners, and thank you Maximum Fun. You should go to Maximumfun.org and check out all the wonderful podcasts that you would enjoy. Um, you should tweet at us @stillbuff. I apparently don't have enough coffee in me right now.

Rileigh: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: And you should email us [laughs quietly] at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org if you have thoughts or suggestions or questions

or comments. Uh, and you should vote. I already said that, but I'll say it again. You should definitely vote, and you should stay safe, and wear a mask, and wash your hands, and take care of each other, and... thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, "Baby You Change Your Mind." [laughs quietly]

[theme music begins in the background]

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

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Rleigh: I am still buffering...

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

Sydnee: ... too.

Taylor: Boo!

Sydnee: Ooooh, I like it!

Rleigh: Oh, you scared me!

Taylor: Right? That was for scary month. Spooky times.

Rleigh: Oooh!

Sydnee: That was good! That was a good one. [laughs] That was very clever.

Taylor: [laughs]

[theme music plays]

Kirk: Video games.

Jason: Video games!

Maddy: Video games. You like 'em?

Kirk: Maybe wish you had more time for them?

Jason: Maybe you wanna know the best ones to play?

Kirk: Maybe you wanna know what happens to Mario when he dies?

Jason: [laughs]

Maddy: In that case, you should check out *Triple Click*. It's a brand new podcast about video games.

Jason: A podcast about video games? But I don't have time for that!

Kirk: Sure you do. Once a week, kick back as three video game experts give you everything from critical takes on the hottest new releases—

Jason: —to scoops, interviews, and explanations about how video games work—

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Kirk: *Triple Click* is hosted by me, Kirk Hamilton.

Jason: Me, Jason Schreier.

Maddy: And me, Maddy Myers.

Kirk: You can find *Triple Click* wherever you get your podcasts, and listen at Maximumfun.org.

Maddy: Bye!

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