

Still Buffering 240: "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation" (1989)

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[theme music plays]

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

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Sydnee: So, everybody gettin' excited for the season? The... holiday?

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Season?

Taylor: I guess. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Vaccine season is upon us!

Rileigh: That's what I'm most excited for.

Taylor: Oh, yeah. I'm excited for that.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: That season.

Sydnee: The vaccine season.

Rileigh: Yes.

Sydnee: Yes. I don't—I kept trying to work yesterday, and I found that all I was doing was sitting there watching videos of people getting vaccinated, and crying.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Like, I was just sitting there. I was like, "[tearfully] Look at that! It's so great! We've waited so long! Oh, there's another one. Oh, it's so good!" [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: It was, uh—it was on the news when the vaccine first came out, obviously when the first people in the country were getting it, um, and I was watching with mom and dad, and dad was like, "This is—this is history. You know, one day it's gonna be in history books that, like, this is the day the vaccine, you know, became available in the United States, and people were getting vaccinated, and your kids and grandkids are gonna be like, 'Wow, where were you when the vaccine became available?'"

[holding back laughter] And I was, like, looking around, in my sweatpants, had barely showered in several days, all I had eaten in that day was, like, Cheez-Its and old cold pizza.

I was like, "That's where I was. In my parents' house, in my eighth month of isolation, uh, stressed out over finals I had just finished, and very not clean. And not eating good food. That was it. That was where I was." [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I mean, that's where I think most everyone is.

Rileigh: That's where all of us are.

Sydnee: Yeah, that's where we all are. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Uh, but it's still exciting.

Rileigh: Yes, it is very exciting.

Sydnee: Yes. Yeah, everybody, I hope you are all intending, when it is your time, to get your jab.

Rileigh: Ew. [snorts]

Sydnee: That's what they call it in the UK.

Rileigh: Really?

Taylor: Oh, I thought that was just—

Rileigh: I did not know that.

Taylor: —oh, man. I saw somebody tweet that and I was like, "That can't be real. Nah."

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: Wow. Never mind. If you're in the UK, I'm sorry, I didn't mean "Ew." I just thought Sydnee was, like, trying to—[snorts] I don't know. I thought this was a Sydnee thing.

Sydnee: No!

Rileigh: "Get your jab."

Taylor: Sydnee was trying to be cool.

Rileigh: Yeah. [laughs]

Sydnee: I mean, I am a bit of an anglophile, so... [laughs]

Rileigh: [groans]

Taylor: Uh... alright. Alright.

Sydnee: We realized we didn't make a pudding this year.

Raleigh: Oh no!

Taylor: Oh yeah, you always make a flaming pudding.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm, but you gotta start it, you know, weeks ago. And we remembered, like, two days ago. Like, "Oh, crap." We've been doing that for several years, and we just—

Raleigh: Yeah, many years.

Sydnee: —completely... forgot. So I found myself Googling, like, "Quick British Christmas desserts that you don't have to put in a pantry and feed liquor to for several weeks before you eat them." [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Which is a weird Google search.

Taylor: When you describe it that way, it sounds like such a weird, creepy... like, it sounds like a creature. [laughs]

Sydnee: It does. You have to feed it.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: It lives in your cabinet. You feed it liquor. [laughs] And you light it on fire.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: And consume it. What is this ritual? It's terrible!

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] Uh, I think we'll have to make either mince pies, perhaps, little mince pies.

Taylor: Oh, mince.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm, I love mince. Or a Christmas cake. We could do that.

Rileigh: I'm always confused about what's pudding and what's not when we're talking about, you know, English, British foods. So many things are puddings.

Taylor: Because I think also can't pudding just be a word they use for dessert?

Sydnee: Yep.

Rileigh: Okay, do they... do—this is for everyone living [through laughter] in the UK currently. Do you have regular—do they having pudding? Like regular, like what we would think of, like a pudding cup? Do they—[laughs]

Sydnee: Well, okay. You know the—

Taylor: They probably call it something different, you know, just like the biscuit and cookie situation.

Rileigh: And the chips—

Sydnee: And the crisps and the—

Rileigh: —and the crisps.

Sydnee: —yep.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: So we have pudding. They call what we call pudding gravy? I don't know. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: I assume that's also pudding.

Taylor: [laughs] Is gravy pudding? [laughs]

Sydnee: Do—[laughs]

Rileigh: And then it's just a context clues thing?

Taylor: [through laughter] What? What is and isn't pudding, British people?

Sydnee: "Would you like some solid pudding?"

Rileigh: I need a dichotomous key! I need to know—[laughs]

Sydnee: I was gonna say "a liquid pudding," but, like, pudding isn't a liquid. Like, a colloidal pudding?

Rileigh: What *is* pudding?

Sydnee: A colloid.

Taylor: What isn't pudding?

Sydnee: Right?

Rileigh: What *isn't* pudding?

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Plasma. [laughs]

Rileigh: No, I don't think that's right.

Sydnee: [laughs] I think it's a colloid, right?

Taylor: That's not a sexy word.

Sydnee: "Would you like the colloid pudding or the solid pudding? Or is it just time for pudding? In which case, here's a pie." [laughs]

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: [laughs] [through laughter] This is like Schrodinger's pudding.

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: And when can you—when can you shorten it to 'pud' and it be okay?

Taylor: [laughs] Well...

Sydnee: Is that just in the case of the solid pudding?

Rileigh: Ah—I, uh—man. I wish you had just asked Charlie and Cooper after dinner, like, "You want—you ready for pudding? It's pudding time." And then bring them, like, I don't know, a popsicle. Ice cream. They're very confused, 'cause that's dessert.

Sydnee: They would be very confused.

Taylor: No, because your kids are young enough that you could bring them up in a household that uses 'pudding' as a reference for dessert, and [through laughter] they'd just be those weird kids that, like, "Oh, you want some pud?"

And they're like, "Oh, we don't have pudding."

"You know, it's just time for pud. You know."

Sydnee: Just pud.

Rileigh: It's pud time.

Sydnee: It's time for pud.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Well.

Rileigh: This is not meant to be, like, you know, "What's up, England, with your language?" This is just my genuine confusion. [holding back laughter] I just want to know!

Sydnee: No, this is not—I am not throwin' shade. I am in awe of all British baked goods and desserts, as everyone—

Rileigh: Should be.

Sydnee: —in the country was when they, like, got lost to the thrall of *Great British Bake Off*. Um, there are so many, and some of them are so decorative.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: And they also take many weeks. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: That's what I—I like that you—realizing it's not—you do not have time to make your tradition of pudding. You're like, "Well, I gotta find something else that's British. [laughs] Can't—can't switch it up to any other culture."

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] We used—well, we used to do, like, the big British Christmas... dinner, lunch—

Rileigh: [simultaneously] Oh man, yeah, lunch.

Sydnee: —meal. I don't know. It was a huge—[holding back laughter] Well, what we would do is say, "Lunch is sharp at three. May we expect you?" [laughs] What is wrong with us?!

Rileigh: I still remember the first year mom and dad told me that. I was like, "So you're telling me I can't sit in my pajamas all day and eat chocolate out of my stocking? I have to go wear clothes for a lunch at *three*?!"

Sydnee: Sharp at three.

Rileigh: "Sharp at three?!"

Sydnee: And we would—we would—we would get dressed up for it, and then play Minister's Cat. So it was really—

Rileigh: We—mm—

Sydnee: —a fun time was had by all. [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah, you really—you did, 'cause there were those crackers, the little Christmas crackers that we all do, and we—the weird little games inside of all of 'em.

Sydnee: We still have those. We have—that was actually—Charlie had to draw a picture for her class of her favorite holiday tradition, and she drew a picture of all of us popping open crackers.

Taylor: [laughs] Her teacher was like, "Oh, are you... are one of your parents British? Are—are—are—are a part of your family from the UK?"

"No, absolutely not."

Rileigh: [laughs]

Taylor: "Super not." [laughs]

Sydnee: Charlie also had to say what she was most thankful for, and she said, uh, for her family, for—no, what her wishes were. And... what was it? Thankful for?

Anyway, her family, the world's health was something that was important to her, the health of the whole world.

Taylor: That's valid.

Sydnee: And bacon.

Rileigh: [snorts]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Well... now, were those ranked in order of importance? 'Cause that's fair.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't know. Her—her teacher felt the need to message me, though, and said, "I just needed you to know what your daughter said today." [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: Oh my God.

Sydnee: Yep, that sounds about right. [laughs]

Rileigh: I mean...

Sydnee: Bacon.

Rileigh: ... it's fair. She's six. I get it.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: There's only so much in your world.

Rileigh: Yeah. [laughs]

Sydnee: It's the one thing—she really doesn't like meat, Tey, and periodically she'll say, "I think I'm just vegan like Tey-Tey."

And I'll say, "You know you can't have bacon, right?"

And she's like, "Well, except that."

[all laugh]

Taylor: You know what? I don't—I'm not, like, one of those—if you wanna have some sort of plant-based diet and allow yourself one thing that's not, I think that's still, you know—you're still doing some good for the environment, for the animals. But that would be a pretty funny thing. Like, "No-no-no, I am totally vegan, except for I consume bacon. That's it, though! Everything else, no. But bacon. [laughs] Just—"

Sydnee: She really doesn't even like dairy. Like, I don't even think that would be the problem. It would just be the bacon.

Raleigh: She loves some mac and cheese, though.

Sydnee: Ohh. Well, I guess that's true.

Raleigh: And grilled cheese.

Sydnee: Well, that's barely cheese, though.

Raleigh: I mean, I'm just saying.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: You gotta find that fake cheese.

Taylor: I was gonna say, there's some pretty solid vegan mac and cheese out there, vegan fake cheese, for grilled cheese. Once you get into the world of, like, the fancy H cheese, there's some people doin' some—makin' some moves in that department—

Rileigh: [laughs]

Taylor: —but, you know. In the, like, "it just needs to be orange and gooey" department, vegans got it covered. [laughs]

Sydnee: That was kind of my thought, is that it's probably not cheese she's eating anyway.

Taylor: No, absolutely not. [laughs]

Rileigh: Yeah, there's probably not a lot of dairy in there in the first place.

Sydnee: Um, so... I don't know. I got nothin' here.

Rileigh: There's no...

Sydnee: Other holiday traditions. In addition to...

Taylor: There we go.

Sydnee: —Christmas lunch is sharp at three. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: For us, it's watching *Christmas Vacation*.

Sydnee: That's right. Uh—

Rileigh: *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*.

Sydnee: Yes.

Rileigh: We should clarify.

Taylor: That helps when you Google it.

Rileigh: Yes. [laughs]

Sydnee: Is there—really? Are there—

Taylor: I mean—

Rileigh: You're not just looking for, like, a Christmas vacation to take with your family.

Sydnee: You better not be lookin' for Christmas vacations! Stay at home! There's a pandemic, people!

Rileigh: Okay, Sydnee, we're trying to talk about a movie, okay? We're trying to escape—

Sydnee: I was doing, like, a crack—[mumbling] I was doing—like I was crackin' on—

Rileigh: Uh-huh.

Sydnee: Uh-huh. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: We're escaping into the world of—of the Griswold family, where there is no pandemic. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] Ahh, those were the days.

Taylor: Right?

Sydnee: When there was no pandemic. Um, [holding back laughter] we have to watch this movie every year. Whether we like it or not.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: Although we do. But we do—we do have to watch it, because, uh... of our parents. Specifically our father. He loves this movie.

Taylor: Sometimes several times. I feel like if we don't all focus on it at some point, it will be rescreened.

[pauses]

Sydnee: Yes.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs] Uh, yeah. So, you know dad watched it without us this year.

Raleigh: Yeah. It was, um... yes.

Sydnee: Can you believe that?

Taylor: Well, he said he—he told me about it. He felt bad, but he said it was because he had to do research, 'cause I guess *Court Appointed* is talking about all the laws they break in this movie.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: So he had to take notes.

Raleigh: *Court Appointed* is talking—yes. They are talking about the laws they break in this movie, but I would like to add that it is today, Thursday, um, December 17th, when we are recording this episode, and they are also recording *Court Appointed* on Thursday, December 17th.

So, dad didn't have to watch it without us.

Sydnee: So, point of order...

Raleigh: [holding back laughter] Point of order...

Sydnee: [laughs] We object!

Raleigh: I ob—

Sydnee: That's law talk.

Raleigh: —this is—that's law talk right there.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: Um—

Sydnee: I know that stuff, even though I'm a doctor.

Raleigh: Yeah. That's very impressive.

Sydnee: Thanks.

Raleigh: One of those JD MDs.

Sydnee: [laughs] Ooh.

Raleigh: [laughs] Um...

Sydnee: Double degree.

Raleigh: No, I didn't even know they were watching it, and I live in the same house as them. I was back in my room—

Taylor: Oh. [bursts into laughter]

Raleigh: —doing a class, um... you know, to prep for law school! I was learning law in my room, from nine PM to 12:30 in the morning, and I didn't even know they were watching *Christmas Vacation* without me in the other room.

Sydnee: I asked mom. I was like, "Well—" I said, "Mom, remember you said we should all get together and watch it together! What—why didn't you say anything to dad?"

And she said, "I didn't even notice he was watching it. I was sitting right next to him on my phone the entire time."

Raleigh: Which, honestly, that—

Sydnee: Which may have been true.

Taylor: That tracks.

Rileigh: —[through laughter] may have happened.

Sydnee: That actually is possible.

Rileigh: [laughs] Ahh...

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: Um, but we still love our parents.

Sydnee and Taylor: [laughs loudly]

Rileigh: [holding back laughter] I know you're both listening.

Taylor: I'm glad—I'm glad you, uh, threw that in there, just in case there was doubt.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: I just—listen! I'm the only one that lives with them, so whenever they listen to it and whenever we say anything about them, there's always that moment, like, "Hey! Heard you, uh, talk about us on this week's—"

Sydnee: "Hey, you mentioned us on your show!"

Rileigh: "—episode. Uh, what was up with that?"

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Um, no. We still love our parents, even though they watched *Christmas Vacation* without us.

Rileigh: Yes. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: We—so we watched it without them. How do you like that?

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: There it is.

Raleigh: Well. [laughs]

Sydnee: Um, Justin told us a fact about it that I didn't know.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm?

Sydnee: Did—uh, about the director was supposed to be Chris Columbus. Not... not Christopher Columbus, the—you know. The bad guy.

Raleigh: The bad guy, right.

Sydnee: No. Chris Columbus, the director. Uh, but then he—apparently when he met Chevy Chase, he disliked him so much he refused to be involved with the project.

Taylor: Really?!

Sydnee: Yes. So John Hughes, feeling bad about it, gave him a different project that he could work on instead.

Raleigh: And what was that?

Sydnee: And that is called *Home Alone*.

Taylor: Ohh!

Sydnee: Hmm.

Taylor: Wow.

Raleigh: They left him at home. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: They left him at home. That is—

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: —yes, that is what Charlie calls it. *They Left Him At Home*.

Taylor: [laughs] [through laughter] That's a better name.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] She finds that movie so upsetting. The first time we watched it she just kept looking at us going, "They left him at home? They left him at home?!"

Taylor: I like that that's Charlie's response. Every other child that sees that movie is like, "That's amazing. I need to be abandoned in an airport. I need this to happen."

And Charlie's like, "Oh no. That's the worst. No!" [laughs]

Sydnee: "How could they do that? Don't they love him? They left him at home?!"

Rileigh: [laughs] But yes, this movie has long been—from literally every Christmas I can remember, we have watched this movie. And it wasn't until this year I think I realized, I thought it was out of, like, forced tradition that I watched it every year. But then every time I watch it I realize, like, "No, I just, I think, genuinely enjoy this movie and do find it funny." [laughs]

Sydnee: There are some, like, really funny—like, genuinely funny parts in it. Um... I don't even know how to get in—if you haven't seen *Christmas Vacation*—although, I mean, some people haven't. Justin had never watched it until he encountered our family. So, um, there's the Griswolds, and they're having all the family for Christmas, and hilarity ensues. I don't know that there's much more of a plot.

Rileigh: I mean, that's pretty much it.

Sydnee: Right? Like...

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: ... what happens in the movie?

Raleigh: Um...

Taylor: Hm.

Sydnee: A bunch of relatives show up, and it's bad. [laughs]

Raleigh: It's wacky.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: All the grandparents show up, Cousin Eddie shows up.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: And... then he kidnaps Clark Griswold's boss. [laughs]

Raleigh: [through laughter] Yeah.

Taylor: I was gonna say, but if there's any sort of through line plot, I guess it's that Clark Griswold is sort of the ultimate family man, and he's gonna use his Christmas bonus to put in a Christmas pool. Christmas pool. [laughs]

Raleigh: [through laughter] Christmas pool!

Sydnee: Not just any pool.

Taylor: I—I said it, and then I restated it, 'cause it's like, I'm going with it. Um, and his boss got rid of Christmas bonuses this year, come to find out, so I guess if there's a plot, that's it. Uh, but that is vague.

Rileigh: Yeah. Um, I guess our dad has always identified with Clark Griswold.

Taylor: Yes.

Rileigh: For many reasons, but mostly because our dad also used to risk his life [laughs quietly] to put Christmas lights all over our entire house every single year. Now it's just more so putting inflatables in the front yard, but he did climb up on our roof and, you know, wait—I mean, very dangerous situations to put those lights up.

Taylor: Yeah...

Sydnee: Yes, he always did. It was always terrifying. Like, when I was little, I remember being delighted. Like, "Oh! Dad's putting the Christmas lights up! This is gonna be great!"

Rileigh: "He's on the roof!"

Sydnee: And then as I got older, I remember the day that, like, I made that switch, as I saw dad carrying that ladder out and I thought, "Oh my gosh. This is bad! He could fall! Why are we doing this?!"

Taylor: Well, Syd, how often were you the one that had to spot the ladder?

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Because I remember playing that job a lot, where you just stand at the bottom holding it thinking, like, "Well, I'm... 12. What will I do [through laughter] if this giant man falls down this ladder?! Who, me? I'm gonna stop him?!"

[all laugh]

Rileigh: The be—the—[laughs] The best part of it, though, is the reason why he stopped, and why we all made him stop, was—I mean, only, like, three years ago I think. Um, dad was putting up the Christmas lights on our roof and was home alone, I guess. I guess no one else was there.

Sydnee: They left him—they left him alone.

Rileigh: We left him alone. [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Uh-huh. [laughs]

Rileigh: Um, and his ladder fell. This—I guess this is why he always had all of us as small children hold the ladder. Um, his ladder fell, and he was just holding on to the gutter, from... a very high distance. I mean, I don't think he would've, like, died, but he definitely would've broken, like, a leg or something, falling down that far. Um, and then the UPS guy pulled up to—[laughs]—drop off a package, and dad had to be like, "Hey, can you, uh... help me out, here?"

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: The UPS was just like, "I don't—can I—this isn't in my job description. I don't know if I can—"

Taylor: "Legally, I'm not allowed to, sir."

Rileigh: Yeah. [laughs] Um, it was after that that we decided dad cannot do this anymore.

Sydnee: No. In these films, people always sort of, like, delightfully fall into the shrubbery around the house. It's always this sort of, like, poof of snow around them as they just sort of, like, crash into the bushes, and then they're like, "I'm okay," and spit some pine needles out, and everything's fine.

Rileigh: Like, Chevy Chase—

Sydnee: Right.

Rileigh: —in *Christmas Vacation*.

Sydnee: That—I don't think—as a physician, I would say that's an unrealistic... [laughs] uh, example of what happens when you fall off a house. Added to the fact that, like, we live in West Virginia, and our houses are always, like, sort of built into hills. All of our houses are sort of, like, clinging to the side of hills. And look, like, improbably placed. Like, "Well, that's gonna fall."

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: I'm just saying, that's—every house we've ever lived in has kind of been like that.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah. I was gonna say, that old house, it wouldn't just be a fall to the ground. Then you would roll to the—[through laughter] to the next level of ground.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Yes. Yeah, that's why—remember? He had to rearrange the cars to hold the ladder with the cars.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Oh, that's right, he would do that!

Raleigh: [snorts]

Taylor: Oh...

Sydnee: For Christmas lights! So thi—[sighs] so this is part of why—I think it's the ultimate, like, devotion to... dadliness? Is what—

Rileigh: It's a very, like, suburban dad thing, right? Just, like, the—the Christmas light... need.

Sydnee: "I have to put up... a wild amount of Christmas lights on my home."

Rileigh: And I thought it was for, like, when we were all younger. Mostly me, because you all were, you know, adults by the time I was aware. Um, I used to think it was because I was still a kid in the house and dad was like, "Oh, Rileigh can help me, and she'll enjoy it, and it'll be fun."

But then I, you know, got to high school, and then I graduated, and then I was an adult and I was like, "Oh, I'm coming home for Christmas and he's still... okay, he's still doing this, and it's just him." [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. Well, and, I mean, it comes from mom too, because I remember the first time, like, before Justin and I had kids, and she was like, "So, what are you doing for your Christmas display?"

Rileigh: [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah. Oh yeah.

Sydnee: And I was like, "What do you—what do you... mean? What do you—"

And she was like, "Where—are you... gonna put lights all over the house? Is Justin gonna get on the roof? What are you gonna—"

And I'm like, "We don't have ch—children, ma. We're not gonna... we'll put a wreath, you know."

And she's like, "[incredulous] What?!"

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: "Excuse me?!"

Sydnee: Like, "I raised you better than that!" Uh... so, other than that...
[laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Yes.

Sydnee: Um... I—I don't know that I ever, like, felt... I know that dad identified strongly with this dad character. Not with Chevy Chase as a human. Let's leave that out of this.

Rileigh: Clark Griswold as a character.

Sydnee: With Clark Griswold as a character. Um, I did not personally—I was never, like, annoyed by my parents in the way that the children in the film are.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: So it did not really... like, I always kind of enjoyed dad's over-the-top dadness around the holidays.

Rileigh: Yeah. I could relate, though, to little tiny, um... oh, what is—Rusty?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Yeah.

Rileigh: Um, having to help him put up all the Christmas lights and decorations and just carrying armloads of, like, plastic reindeer and stuff out into the yard, and then coming up with the ridiculous excuse about why he can't help anymore.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: I understood that. [laughs]

Sydnee: Or the scene where he gets angry and kicks Santa.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah...

Sydnee: That was dad. That—that rang true for me. Standing there while dad—

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: —cussed at inflatables.

[all laugh]

Sydnee: That felt right. Like, "Uh-huh, yeah, okay. Alright. I know how that feels."

Uh, I mean, the main you want to do as you get older is just don't accidentally become Todd and Margo, right?

Taylor: You know what? I—

Sydnee: Oh, nooo!

Rileigh: I—yes, thank you, Taylor. [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Okay, wait. If this is gonna be a full throated defense of Todd and Margo—

Taylor: And it is. [laughs]

Rileigh: Yes.

Sydnee: —I'm gonna allow for it. But before we do that...

Taylor: Okay.

Raleigh: [through laughter] Let's check the group message.

Sydnee: [laughing] I felt like that was gonna take a minute. Uh, so... I am getting great sleep these days.

Raleigh: Good!

Sydnee: Yeah. I just wanted to brag about that. Do you wanna know why, though? You didn't ask, so I'll tell you.

Raleigh: Why?

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] Because of my Purple pillow! Uh, I believe not all pillows or mattresses are created equal. My Purple pillow is so comfortable. It gives me such a great night's sleep, and they use the same technology for both their pillows and their mattresses. It's patented comfort technology. It adapts to your body's natural shape and sleep style and, uh... makes for a really comfy night's sleep.

I can vouch for their pillows. They have these open air channels that help neutralize body heat so that you have a cool night's sleep, which is oh-so-important. Um, and I can say that. Like, it really is—you sleep better when you're a little cool. You don't sleep as well if you're overly warm in your bed, and sweaty. That's no fun. Um, and Purple technology helps keep you cool when you're sleeping. Every Purple pillow is engineered with The Grid. That's in capitals.

Raleigh: Ooh.

Sydnee: *The Grid*. For total head and neck support, and absolute airflow, and you're always on the cool side. So, I can vouch for my Purple pillow. I love it. Um, the technology they use is so comfortable. You're so cool. Um, and they have mattresses too, made out of this same *The Grid*. So Taylor, if our listeners want to check out the Purple experience, what should they do?

Taylor: Experience the Purple Grid. Go to purple.com/buffering10 and use promo code "buffering10." For a limited time, you'll get 10% off any order of 200 dollars or more. That's purple.com/buffering10, promo code "buffering10" for 10% off any order of 200 dollars or more. Terms apply.

Sydnee: So, you all know I love Betabrand.

Taylor and Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: I talk about 'em a lot. Um, a lot of us are working from home these days, and we want to look professional, even if we're on, like, a Zoom call or something. We don't want to look like we just rolled out of bed in our pajamas.

We—and you wanna feel like you're working. You wanna feel professional, and I find that even when you're working from home, it really helps to get dressed for the day, and get in that headspace, um, whether you're at home or going out into the world. And Betabrand dress pant yoga pants have you covered. Um, because their pants feel like you're wearing yoga pants, but they're *not*... yoga pants.

Raleigh: What?

Sydnee: They are dress pants.

Raleigh: Wow.

Sydnee: They look—you will fool everyone. They look just like dress pants, because—well, they are dress pants. And nobody will know how much comfort you're in in that moment.

Raleigh: Secret comfort.

Sydnee: You can keep your comfort a secret from everyone. Uh, Betabrand combines customer experience with their expertise to make work wear that's functional, comfortable—uh, it's just like wearing workout gear, except it's

not. They're dress pants. They're made of wrinkle-resistant, stretch-knit fabric.

They—I can vouch for 'em. I've been wearing them for a long time. They're perfect for working a long day at work, especially—I'm on my feet a lot. Um, I'm—when I'm examining patients, like, sometimes I'm in—I'm, like, down on the floor, checkin' out feet and stuff, and, you know, it helps to have pants that move with you and make you feel comfortable when you're doing that kind of work, and then I can come home and play with my kids. Um, so they're great!

And Rileigh, if our listeners wanna get 'em, what should they do?

Rileigh: Well, right now, our listeners can get 25% off their first order when they 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. Go to betabrand.com/buffering for 25% off.

Sydnee: Alright, Teylor. I am ready... this is like a legal episode.

Teylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: I'm ready for your... to present—state your case for Todd and Margo.

Teylor: Okay, here's the thing.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Teylor: 'Cause I—on the rewatch, I had a lot of sympathy for Todd and Margo, because look. They live next to this guy that is verbally insulting to them, like, a lot. He destroys their property with no remorse. Like, when he's falling off the ladder, he shoots an i—uh, a—a ice bolt goes from the gutter—

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs]

Taylor: —into their window and destroys their very large stereo. This is—it takes up—

Rileigh: It does.

Taylor: —like, a—I don't know. It's, like, a ten foot wide stereo. I don't quite understand it. Uh—

Sydnee: That is how stereos used to be.

Taylor: That's true. Um, he—he is, like, kind of a nuisance to the whole neighborhood. He drains the power grid, and then blinds them. Like, he—he allows his family to dump toxic sewage in front of their house. And they have to put up with this guy! Who has no respect for them, who is destructive to their neighborhood. And the thing is, okay, so they don't have kids. Wha—what else do they do wrong? Other than, like—they seem to be open with each other, you know? They don't have, like—whereas the Griswolds it's like this—kind of the joke is like, "Oh, ha ha, my husband is sometimes awful. Ha, ha, ha."

Rileigh: [laughs]

Taylor: "Sometimes I can't stand him. Oh, ha, ha. I have to sleep with him. Isn't that terrible?"

They seem to actually like each other. Like, they're open with their problems with each other. They've built a lovely life together. And they just have to put up with this jerk wad! I don't think there's anything wrong with the life that Todd and Margo lead, and I think it's interesting that this movie chooses to mock and treat them as the bad guys, but then also, also, cousin Eddie and his wife and their kids.

Okay, well, that's—that's good. That's a nuclear family, right? Ah, ah, ah, but they're poor! So they're also to be mocked and made fun of. The only family that we're supposed to look at sympathetically here is the example of, you know, heteronormative, capitalism-embracing, uh—

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: —American mediocrity that has been shoved down our throat our entire lives.

Rileigh: I wanna write an analytical essay about this movie now.

Taylor: [bursts into laughter]

Sydnee: I think it's fair to say that, like, they do get a comeuppance of sorts when the police crash through their windows and, like, essentially destroy their entire home.

Taylor: What—what—what are they getting a comeuppance for? Oh, you mean the Griswolds.

Rileigh: But then his boss is like—

Sydnee: [simultaneously] Well, I mean, if you—if—

Rileigh: "Yeah, your brother kidnapped me, but here's your bonus from last year, plus 20%. Go build your Christmas pool, and I'm not gonna press charges. It's fine. Merry Christmas."

Taylor: And you know whose windows they also break through? Todd and Margo's! [laughs]

Rileigh: Todd and Margo's. I would also like to say they offer the best scene in the movie, which I will argue is just when they walk in and the carpet's wet, and she says, "Why is the carpet all wet, Todd?"

Sydnee: "I don't know, Margo!"

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: It's the best scene in the movie! I don't know why, it's just very good!

Taylor: I—I think—I have to be honest. I think my defense of them and why I like them is I realized that they remind me of one of my other favorite power couples of the '90s, and that's Jessie and James of Team Rocket. They're just kind of—

Sydnee: Hmm.

Raleigh: Hmm.

Taylor: —those characters in human form. Who were also always, like—I'm like—that's the—the kid's story line is fine. I'm way more interested in these stylish "they seem like bad guys but they're actually not bad guys" duo that support each other, win or lose!

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I think—I think what you're getting into is some of the, like, classic back and forth between adults with kids and adults without kids. Some of that, like, assumed, like, "Oh, you're probably annoyed by our children, 'cause you don't have children." And some of that, like, "Oh, those people are so loud and irritating because they let their kids run amok, and they don't control them," and... you know. I mean, like, I think you're—I think it's, like, that old—those tropes are on full display here.

Taylor: Yes, but there is no evidence that the—I don't—the Todd and Margos—I don't know their last name. [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs] What if their last name's just To—

Taylor: Todd—

Sydnee: I don't think they—do they have—

Taylor: —Todd—Todd Todd, Margo Margo.

Raleigh: They don't get one.

Taylor: I don't know. Um—

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: But there's no evidence that they're annoyed unfairly at the Griswolds. It is all based in actual assault [laughs] that they are experiencing at the hands of the Griswolds.

Sydnee: They do have the comment where she's like, uh, "I hope he falls and breaks his neck."

And he's like, "Oh, he'll definitely fall, but I don't think we're lucky enough to have him break his neck."

Taylor: Well, but look at the way he's treating—he treats them!

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Like, [through laughter] I think maybe he's just... you know?

Rileigh: Um, this is—apparently their last name is Chester, just in case you were curious.

Taylor: Okay. Okay.

Sydnee: Is that, like, in the film? Or is that one of those after, they were, like, interviewing... the director? [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Yeah. I mean, I don't know. I just looked up who were the characters [laughs] in *Christmas Vacation*, and it gave me their last name.

I mean, there are certain characters, like Mary. She doesn't get a last name. She's just Mary. So... maybe it's somewhere in the film.

Taylor: Well—and, you know, speaking of Mary, there's another character—it's like it's Clark Griswold's world, and everybody else just is revolving around him, because poor Mary is just working during Christmas at a store, having to put up with this middle-aged married man being incredibly

inappropriate with her, and anyone that works service knows that there is, like, this line that creeps like to skirt where you can't really say that what they're doing is wrong, but you know it is.

But it's not enough that you can call them on it, and you just have to grit your teeth and put up with it. And that is exactly the line that Clark Griswold is supposed to be comedically walking, but it wasn't comedy for me. All it was was, "Yeah, you know those dudes. They know exactly what they're doing, and you can't call 'em out on it." Poor Mary.

Sydnee: The—the—the National Lampoon thing, which I didn't know was a thing—'cause the only one of those movies that I had seen for the longest time was *Christmas Vacation*, so I had no context for, like, what is National Lampoon. Um, and even now, my only context is I saw the other movies.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: That's it. I don't really know much about—like, I think there was a magazine, or something? I don't really know. I don't know.

Rileigh: I couldn't even tell you. I just know there were other movies.
[laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yeah. I know there are other movies. And that whole—that is, like, an out—obviously outdated and, like, highly unpleasant and problematic thing, in all of them, where you have to have a woman that Clark is lusting after.

Taylor: Right.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Uh, in some sort of, like, sexy scene.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't think she's always necessarily stripping, like she is in this one, but I—you know. There's always something like that.

Rileigh: Like in, uh, is it just regleer *Vacation*?

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: Where they're driving and the car pulls up beside them and it's a hot woman in a convertible?

Sydnee: Yes.

Rileigh: Yeah. Okay. So yeah.

Taylor: Well, at least then she seems to have some autonomy in it. Like, she is actively flirting, for whatever reason, with this middle-aged man. When she's in the position of having to be the clerk, and he's just engaging her, then it seems a little bit like he just... I don't like it. I don't like it. Just saying!

I know that Clark Griswold is the number one sympathetic character in this movie, but if you actually look at the characters around him that are painted as, like, "Ooh—" like, you know, jerks, or "Ooh, evil seductress working the lingerie counter." It's like, I don't think they were bad people. I think it's just a Clark Griswold-centered world.

Sydnee: No, I think that's very true. And I think—I mean, aside from the fact that, like, it's so hard to separate cousin Eddie from Randy Quaid...

Taylor: Yeah.

Rileigh: Yeah. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: ... um, and, like, I have no sympathy for Randy Quaid. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Uh, so let's just focus on the character that is cousin Eddie.

Rileigh: Sure.

Sydnee: Um, it is—there is, like—the understanding is, "Oh, this is bad because they don't have as much money as the Griswolds." I mean, like, that definitely is a message that is being sent there, and, you know, that—that's not funny, or fun, or... anything.

Rileigh: Yeah. What is funny, though, is uncle Eddie—cousin Eddie—I don't—cousin Eddie?

Taylor: Cousin Eddie.

Sydnee: Cousin Eddie.

Rileigh: Um, I don't know. Cousin Eddie wearing, um, the—the Dickies he wears, and also the other outfits he wears. Those are—those are actually very funny. [laughs]

Sydnee: Those are funny, and when he breaks the Christmas trinkets, that's funny.

Rileigh: Just walking around, breaking things, chugging eggnog out of that moose glass with the Dickie you can see through his white, like, very, very tight sweater.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Emptying the chemical toilet into the sewer.

Rileigh: Sure.

Sydnee: These are funny things! I mean—

Rileigh: Yes.

[all laugh]

Taylor: "Here are some funny things." No, I mean, it's a comedically written character. Like, it's a—you know. I get the—I laugh, but... you know.

Rileigh: Yeah. But then he cares about his brother so much, he kidnaps his boss! He says, "You deserve more than no bonus. I'm gonna go kidnap... your boss... [holding back laughter] in my blue leisure suit."

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: So, like, are we—is this, like, a—are we taking down capitalism with this movie? Have you thought about that? Because what we're saying is, eat the rich.

Taylor: Well... or I guess at least threaten to eat the rich, and then the rich will give you... their riches? So then you're rich. I don't know.

Rileigh: Tie—tie the rich up with a Christmas bow, and threaten them to give you money for your Christmas pool.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: 'Cause that's what they do in this movie. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: It is for a pool!

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: That is—that does undercut the message. 'Cause it's not like—like, "Eat the rich so that we all get a fair living wage and can, you know, have a home and some dignity and self-respect." It's like, "No, it's so he can get a pool." [laughs]

Taylor: Well, and that's—if you look at, like—you know, we don't get to exactly understand what Clark Griswold does for a living, but he's developing chemicals for human consumption. And we know he's making, like, non-nutritive, like, cooking oils, and, like, cereal coatings—

Sydnee: Cereal varnish.

Taylor: —so he's making these weird chemicals that people are then gonna consume. And, I mean, the fact that this movie is, what? Like, late '80s, early '90s time frame?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: '89?

Sydnee: '89, I wanna say, yeah.

Taylor: So when we were kind of just the wild west of, like, "Who knows what we're puttin' in our food, but it—it makes it calorie free!" Like, I feel like that's also kind of—[laughs quietly] kind of shady behavior on Clark Griswold's behalf.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: He's part of a pretty nefarious company, so, uh... I don't know.

Sydnee: I mean, it's very true. And, like, I should say, I am not endorsing that we go individually to, like, corrupt rich capitalist houses and kidnap them. That is not the way I feel. I feel like maybe we could do it through—

Raleigh: Sure. I could.

Taylor: [simultaneously] I mean, are you sure? [laughs]

Sydnee: No, maybe we should do it through, like, policy proposals where we tax people.

Raleigh: Or... can I—

Sydnee: And take their money and put it back into—and then, like, pay everyone a living wage.

Rileigh: Or, can I suggest... you—you... eat them. [laughs]

Sydnee: No, I—I was being facetious. What I mean—[laughs]

Taylor: Hey, hey. You know how I said that vegans are allowed one exception?

Rileigh: [laughs loudly]

Taylor: You wanna know what mine is? [laughs]

[all laugh]

Sydnee: I want—I want to do it—

Taylor: I only eat plant-based meals. Except for the rich.

Rileigh: You know that AOC sweatshirt that everyone got mad about for no reason that just says "Tax the Rich?"

Sydnee: Yes.

Rileigh: I wanna make an off brand version where you just kind of cross out the tax and just write "Eat," because you know AOC wouldn't—she's, uh, a public figure enough to not make that sweatshirt. It's just "Tax the Rich," which is good. That's fine, that's good. But I want an "Eat the Rich" sweatshirt just like that. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Well, you can do that. I just want—I just want, through a series of very progressive... government policies—

Rileigh: Sure.

Taylor: Okay.

Sydnee: —for us to tax the rich.

Rleigh: Which really, if we're talking in the context of *Christmas Vacation*, would not give Clark Griswold the ability to build his Christmas pool, and it would not make his rich boss—I don't even remember his name. Mr. Shirley? Is that his name?

Sydnee: Yes.

Rleigh: Uh, would not give him all the money he has for his ridiculously big house, that they show for, like, 30 seconds, but it is a very large house.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: Yes.

Rleigh: But maybe cousin Eddie and his family would, you know... have... a better living wage.

Sydnee: That's true.

Rleigh: So, you know.

Sydnee: That's true. We need to elevate—that's who really needs the support.

Rleigh: Yeah!

Sydnee: Why are we giving—

Rleigh: You know—

Sydnee: —the Griswolds a pool when cousin Eddie doesn't have a house?

Taylor: [laughs]

Rleigh: Cousin Eddie doesn't have a house, and is the one who does—

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: —he does the kidnapping!

Taylor: [through laughter] This has devolved into a classist skewering of a Christmas movie. I love it.

Rileigh: He—he does the kidnapping for Clark, and instead of being like, "You know what, Eddie? Take this, because you did this for me."

Sydnee: Yeah!

Rileigh: "You should have this. Merry Christmas."

Clark's like, "Nah, I'm gonna build my pool!"

Taylor: "You can come to it, maybe." [laughs]

Rileigh: "Maybe, I don't know. But I got really annoyed in my, like, daydream about you being at my pool, so maybe I don't want you there."
[laughs quietly]

Sydnee: No, that's very true, though. 'Cause, like, we have established that cousin Eddie had to trade his house for the RV, and that they currently don't have a house, and that he doesn't have a job, and that he can't afford to buy Christmas presents. And it is a very, like—I feel like '80s kind of mindset that they're like, "Oh. But we're gonna show that Clark's a good guy, by he'll buy them some Christmas presents." [laughs]

Taylor: Right, yeah.

Sydnee: He's still gonna super take that bonus and put in a pool, but he will buy 'em some Christmas presents. And it's like, "Well, how about you buy 'em some Christmas presents—that's good, that's a good start. And then also... maybe give 'em some money and help him find a job, or something?"

Taylor: Or even, like, you know, help him gas up the RV. 'Cause I think they even said that. Like, [through laughter] they couldn't leave because they're out of gas!

Sydnee: That's true! [laughs]

Raleigh: [through laughter] I forgot about that.

Sydnee: They are!

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: They're your family. They're at—they're—you know. Just—I don't know. But that pool. That Christmas pool has to happen.

Raleigh: I mean... I love this movie. I'm never gonna not love this movie, I think.

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Um, but... [snorts] these are all very valid arguments I had not considered up until this moment.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Uh, and, I mean, there are things that, like, forever... at some point during Christmas, dad's gonna look at us and go, "[nasally voice] The blessing!"

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] The—[laughs]

Raleigh: Yes. [laughs]

Sydnee: There are things like that, like, will—that are just so ingrained now as part of our—

Rileigh: And someone will start in response, "[holding back laughter] I pledge allegiance to the flag—"

Sydnee: Uh-huh. "Play ball!" [laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs]

Taylor: I do—I love the parents and the, uh—what are they? The... the older couple. What are they? Are they great-aunts or uncles? The, uh... the ones that wrap up their cat?

Sydnee: Their aunt and uncle.

Taylor: Yeah, okay.

Rileigh: Yeah. Yeah.

Sydnee: They're—they're—I mean, they call them aunt and uncle, so I don't know.

Rileigh: I guess it's true. I guess I had just assumed they were two sets of grandparents. I didn't think about they called them...

Taylor: Well, there are two sets of grandparents, and then there's the other couple that comes Christmas Eve.

Rileigh: Ohh, yes. Okay. Another old couple.

Taylor: Yes.

Rileigh: Yes.

Sydnee: There—you know, to—to say a good thing about this movie... [laughs quietly] I will say this. Uh, I think what they're hitting on—and this kind of speaks to what we were talking about, comparing the Griswolds to

Todd and Margo. Like, there are all these—there are all these studies that they do to, like, compare the happiness of people who have kids with people who don't have kids to see—which, like, by the way, could we not?

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Could we all just, like... make the decision that's right for us, and be happy if we're happy, and not study it? 'Cause it's just—like, I always hate those kinds of things, 'cause it's like, then—what are we gonna tell people? Like, "I know you think you wanna have kids, but it turns out you won't be happy, don't."

Or, "I know you think you don't want kids, but it turns out you won't be happy, so you better go get at it."

Like, how about just do or don't, and that's fine?

Rileigh: I don't understand how they study happiness, anyways. Half the time, I can't tell if my brain is happy or not. How is someone else gonna study me and tell me if I'm happy? [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, they—they talk a lot—it's interesting, though, 'cause they talk a lot about, like, with—people with kids have this sort of, like, retrospective happiness? [laughs] Where, like—

Rileigh: In 18 years. [laughs]

Sydnee: —you—you look back on, like, the last week or month or year, whatever, and go, "That was such a nice time." And I feel like that's exactly what this movie is really speaking to. You look back on the whole thing and you think, "Aw. Well, that was heartwarming."

Rileigh: That was nice.

Sydnee: You know, that was nice. We were all there, and it was a holiday, and stuff happened.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: But we were all there, and we woke up the next morning, so it was good, and I guess that's fine. And, like, that's kind of what they're talking about, I feel like, so I can connect to that idea where, like—now, if you wanna get to the particulars, there was a kidnapping.

Rileigh: Sure.

Sydnee: The tree burnt down.

Taylor: Twice, right?

Sydnee: The house was destroyed—yeah. [pauses] Twice, there was a kidnapping?

Taylor: Did they lose the—no, the—the tree. Didn't they go through two trees? Just one? [pauses] Oh, there was a squirrel in the other one.

Sydnee: Yeah, the squirrel.

Rileigh: Yes, yes.

Taylor: There's a lot of tree drama. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: There was a lot of tree drama.

Sydnee: There was tree drama, there was a squirrel...

Rileigh: Little sap. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] There—[laughs] there was a lot of stuff that went wrong. [pauses] But it—you know. It was such a great time. And that's really what it's sort of like, sometimes! Like, I can't tell you how many times, like, Justin and I will sit down at the end of a long day and go, "[sighs] What a great family." And, like, they day has been crap! But still. [laughs]

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't know. That's—maybe that's what a lot of people connect to, though.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, you look at it and—even if you don't have kids, it's a family thing, right? Like, you think, "What a nice time I spent with my family." And you try not to think about all the, like... [laughs quietly] passive aggression, or all the arguments, or all the, like, "Oh my God, did you just really say that? [groans]" Like, all those moments. [laughs]

Rileigh: I mean, isn't that what the holidays are all about? Like, it's all stressful and hard, and everyone's anxious or worried about everything, and there's family sometimes you don't wanna be around and you gotta be around, and all that kind of stuff. But then at the end of it all you're like, "Aw. What a great holiday season."

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: "I miss it already." [laughs]

Sydnee: "We did that again." I don't know. Is that—is that what it's about?

Rileigh: I don't know.

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: It's really about Todd and Margo, at the end of the day.

Taylor: [laughs] Look, I'm not saying there's anything wrong with being a Griswold. I'm just saying, there are other ways that it's also okay to be.

Sydnee: I think that is very fair. I think that it would be—I think the movie would end better if both Todd and Margo could be happy with their, uh, silver jogging suits—[laughs quietly] and—

Rileigh: Which are pretty cool by the way. I would just like to say.

Taylor: Actually, yeah. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I'm just saying!

Taylor: I think in general the looks that Todd and Margo pull are really nice!
[laughs]

Rileigh: And their house is very modern and aesthetically pleasing on the inside.

Taylor: Yeah!

Rileigh: You know?

Sydnee: You think so?

Rileigh: I think so.

Taylor: I think so too!

Rileigh: Compared to the Griswold house? I think so.

Sydnee: 'Cause it's all so—like, everything is very '80s. They're both—they're—I mean, they're different—

Rileigh: Well I don't mean—

Sydnee: —but it's all such an '80s motif. Like—

Rileigh: Yeah. I don't mean modern for 2020.

Sydnee: Okay. [laughs]

Rileigh: I mean, like, in—in the mo—in the time.

Sydnee: I don't know if you remember—well, no, you wouldn't remember our house in Waycross. [laughs]

Rileigh: I was not alive! [laughs]

Sydnee: But, like, the good living room?

Taylor: Right, the good living—

Sydnee: Taylor knows.

Taylor: —yes.

Sydnee: The good living room looked like Todd and Margo's house, and then the rest of the house looked like the Griswold's.

Taylor: It is true.

Sydnee: But the good living room was, like, what mom and dad aspired to. Like, if we didn't have kids, this is what our whole house could look like. [laughs]

Taylor: It was that exact—that very '80s color palette that is like, everything's kind of pale—like a pale salmon and a pale teal, and then, like, a cream color?

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: And everything is just that. Like, the couch was like that, with, like, swatches of all those colors. And they had, like, that three-paneled painting of, like, a swan. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs]

Taylor: [through laughter] This all very—we weren't allowed in there. Like, there was a door that closed it off, and you did not open that door. [laughs]

Sydnee: There was a—there was a basket of, like... sticks and weeds or something?

Taylor: Yeah!

Sydnee: A decorative basket of sticks.

Raleigh: Gotta have that decorative stick basket. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Gla—glass top, like, coffee table?

Sydnee: Uh-huh, uh-huh. The only time I ever remember being in there was when the Rainbow salesman came.

[pause]

Taylor: Oh, yeah—oh. I like that mom escorted the Rainbow salesman into the good living room.

Sydnee: She did.

Taylor: To sell us—

Sydnee: She escorted them—this was a vacuum we had.

Raleigh: Ah, okay.

Taylor: Yeah, you should—I was gonna say, that's—[laughs]

Raleigh: I was confused.

Taylor: Man, that Rainbow was like...

Sydnee: Raleigh, there was a time—

Taylor: Ohh.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Go ahead. I mi—that vacuum just brought back weird memories! I remember that thing, all—out of nowhere.

Sydnee: There was a time—and I will not belabor this, but there was a time where a vacuum salesperson might come to your door and ask if they could come in your home and demonstrate a vacuum, and then you could purchase the vacuum at the end of the demonstration, if you liked it. And this happened. And this happened in our lifetime! Because I remember mom bringing the Rainbow—the Magic Rainbow salesman into the room, and he showed us how good the Rainbow was at stuff. And, like, I remember there were, like, scents or something you could put in it? To, like—it would also, like, freshen the room.

Rileigh: Well, why do vacuums not do that anymore?

Sydnee: And it could blow up balloons, too, of course, 'cause you could just reverse the flow.

Rileigh: [snort-laughs]

Sydnee: And it blows things up. I mean, that's, like—

Taylor: It had, like, eight attachments on it.

Sydnee: Whatever. Anyway—but the way that the Magic... [laughs quietly] it had so many attachments, and the way that it worked is it had this, like, giant canister that had water in it, right?

Taylor: Yeah. It, like—there was a whole—'cause you would—there's, like—there's, like, a basin full of water, and then, like, all the gross stuff would collect in that. It was—breaking this thing down was—

Sydnee: In the water.

Taylor: —yeah. You made a gross, like, floor soup when you used the Rainbow.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs] That's horrible!

Sydnee: [holding back laughter] And the—then you could—then you had to, like, take it outside and dump the floor soup, like, in the yard. 'Cause I remember there was, like, the part of the yard where dad [through laughter] dumped all the floor soup! And it's like, "Don't go over there."

Taylor: Just this toxic patch of grass, that smells actually kind of nice because it was scented by that—definitely, like, artificial, not tested for human consumption, intense room flavoring.

Sydnee: Like vanilla. [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah. But, well, and it—it, like—it was massive!

Raleigh: [through laughter] Room flavoring.

Taylor: Like, the body of the Rainbow was, like, R2D2. It was like a little, like, round little pot guy that was on wheels, and he'd follow you around as you vacuumed.

Sydnee: It really was—it looked like R2D2. I—man. I wonder if mom and dad have pictures of one of those things.

Taylor: They ha—'cause we moved with it. We had it in, uh—in Huntington for a long time, 'cause that—we had that washroom that was literally, "Here's the washer, here's the dryer, here's where the Rainbow lives." [through laughter] 'Cause that—with all of his tentacle extremities!

Sydnee: That's so true! And he sat there, 'cause mom wouldn't empty the floor soup.

Taylor: Oh yeah! [laughs]

Sydnee: And so sometimes it would—it would get bad, [through laughter] because the floor soup would sit in him for so long! And then dad would be like, "[grumpy] Mary! You didn't empty the Rainbow!" [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs] "The Rainbow has become sentient again [through laughter] because it's full of toxic slime!" I think it eventually just moved itself out. I don't think we ever threw it away. I think at one point it was just like, "I'm outta here! Sorry! I've collected enough floor soup to become one!" [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: "My time is up."

Sydnee: Aw, man. Alright. I'm sorry for this diversion about the Rainbow—

Taylor: [through laughter] That's alright!

Sydnee: —but if you are a person of a certain age, you know this vacuum, and you know—you know this whole—you probably experienced this same thing of, like, [laughs] your—your guardian, your adult, letting a vacuum salesman into your home to demonstrate the Rainbow and thinking, "This thing's amazing!" [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs quietly] While your children bitterly watch on. Like, "This stranger's allowed in the good living room? He's—he's allowed to sit on the painterly couch?!"

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: I just want you all to know, I looked it up so I could see pictures. Not only do they make updated versions of this kind of vacuum, you can buy old ones on eBay for many hundreds of dollars.

Taylor: Oh. [laughs]

Sydnee: Why?! [laughs]

Rileigh: I don't know.

Taylor: [through laughter] Just the thrill of it.

Sydnee: I do—I will say that when I was a child, I have a very vivid memory of that vacuum salesman blowing up balloons with the Rainbow in our living room and thinking, "Oh God, I hope mom gets this. Oh man, I hope she buys this. Oh, this is the coolest thing! Oh, please, please, please, please, mom, buy this vacuum!" [laughs quietly]

Taylor: I can still, like—I don't know—remembering smells are weird, like, that's a weird thing, but I can picture that smell, if that makes sense.

Sydnee: Yes!

Taylor: Like, that was such a distinct, overwhelming smell when you would—you put that weird smell pod in the—[through laughter] in the Rainbow.

[all laugh]

Sydnee: Ah. Well... that was—that was fun. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Yes.

Sydnee: The Rainbow was fun, and *Christmas Vacation* is still funny. Um, all of its, uh—all of its problems aside, I guess.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um... [laughs] You—you can interpret it as a—as an anti-capitalist, "eat the rich" message if you like.

Rileigh: Maybe?

Taylor: I think it's just—it's made in the '80s, and that was pretty much, like—there was always that backdrop of, like, you know...

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like, "Oh, man, I charged too much stuff on credit cards, but I have to achieve this lifestyle."

It was slightly before anyone ever went, "Do—do I? Do we?"

Sydnee: Yeah. Like, "Why?" [laughs]

Taylor: "I don't need this." [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Maybe stop buying things. Um—

Taylor: I do also always—I, uh—the opening scene where they're driving to the tree farm and Clark Griswold gets very aggressive with his driving. Uh, that is very, uh... accurate [through laughter] to our family!

Raleigh: That hits very close to home.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Yes.

Raleigh: Always being a little bit scared for your life when you're in the car with dad, and the situation gets a little hairy.

Sydnee: And—and Beverly D'Angelo sort of, like, wandering in the back of the movie, like, always drinking and frustrated. [laughs]

Taylor: Oh yeah.

Sydnee: And, like—[laughs] just, like, putting up with Clark. That felt very close to me.

[all laugh]

Sydnee: Like mom with the—and she's got the big hair, even! That—remember mom back in the day with the big hair, just, like, "Oh, God, Tommy." [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs] Well, they are—you know, I do—they are a loving family. I do, despite all of the, you know—all of stuff that—it's comedic, it's "hilarity ensues" situations. I do appreciate that when his Christmas lights fail, his whole family, his core family is very much like, "It's okay, dad. Like, [through laughter] it's still nice." [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: "It looks great, even if it's not lit."

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Oh, God, that was me.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Oh, I just—that just clicked. Oops. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: I was gonna say, pre-Rilo, I think that you were more of the teenage daughter, and I had to deal with the—the—the light-wielding, the ladder-holding. But Raleigh inherited my position. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah. Charlie told me last night watching the movie that I was the dog. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Aw, don't listen to Charlie.

Raleigh: She was kidding but I was like, "Oh, well, if they have two kids then who am I?"

"Oh, the dog." [laughs]

Sydnee: You know how she is. [laughs]

Raleigh: It was very funny. It was very funny.

Sydnee: Uh, alright. Tey, what's next?

Taylor: Well, I thought we could do something a little different, since the next episode is gonna come out on Christmas Eve. We could do something, a little Christmas Special if you will. Uh, because when I was thinking of another movie that I'd want to talk about, I thought about *The Grinch*. But then, there are so many iterations of *The Grinch* out there. You've got the classic Grinch animated movie, we've got the Jim Carrey Grinch, we've got a new animated Grinch—apparently there's a terrifying musical that I don't—I—I don't know that I wanna know exists. So I thought we could have a Grinch-off.

Raleigh: Amazing.

Sydnee: I love this idea. I have such strong opinions on this. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Oh boy.

Taylor: Great. [laughs]

Raleigh: Can't wait.

Taylor: Stronger than my opinions on Todd and Margo?

Sydnee: Maybe. At least equal. At least equal.

Taylor: Okay, alright.

Raleigh: Oh, good.

Taylor: We are going—

Sydnee: I would say—I would say you don't have to watch the new musical one with Matthew Morrison from *Glee* as the Grinch. But please just watch a—

Raleigh: Well, I feel like I have to!

Sydnee: —watch a—at least watch a few minutes. That's what I was gonna say. Like, you don't—I am not gonna subject you to the whole thing, but please just watch a few minutes for context when we do this Grinch-off.

Raleigh: Okay.

Taylor: So we are gonna try to crown the ultimate... Grinch. And establish a ranking of Grinches.

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: Alright.

Raleigh: Matthew Morisson will almost certainly be last. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: I think—I think we can agree on that now. I haven't even seen it, but I'm like, "Probably."

Sydnee: Yeah. Spoilers.

Raleigh: Yeah.

[all laugh]

Sydnee: Alright. Well, thank you both. That was—that was fun.

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: That was, um—you wouldn't think we loved *Christmas Vacation* as much as we do from that discussion, but—

Taylor: Aww.

Rileigh: No, but I promise we do.

Taylor: I hope—yeah, I hope I didn't, like—dad's gonna hear this. I hope he doesn't think I don't love his Christmas movie. I do love it! You know, you just watch things differently when you get older.

Sydnee: Yes.

Rileigh: Exactly.

Sydnee: You can recognize the problems and still appreciate the jokes.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Uh, well, thank you all for listening. Um, we hope you are having a safe, healthy vaccine season. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: And that—and that you will be able to be eligible to get yours soon. Um, thank you to Maximum Fun. You should go to Maximumfun.org for a lot of wonderful podcasts that you would enjoy. Uh, you can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org, and you can tweet at us @stillbuff if you have something you want to tell us about, or say, or ask us, or whatever.

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

Rileigh: And be sure to check out our dad's podcast, *Court Appointed*, this week, because they're also talking about *Christmas Vacation*, and all the laws they break. So, if you want a good follow-up.

Sydnee: Hey, there you go.

[theme music begins in the background]

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

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Rileigh: I am still buffering...

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

Sydnee: Also, Candenights!

Rileigh: And also Candenights.

Sydnee: Also get a ticket to Candenights.

Taylor: A—although—yeah. Wait.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: This—this will drop before—

Rileigh: Yes.

Taylor: —okay. [laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: We sing! It's fun!

Rileigh: Yes.

Taylor: Yes we do. [laughs]

--

[music plays]

Justin: Hi, everybody! My name is Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: We're both doctors, and—

Sydnee: Nope! Just me.

Justin: Okay, well, Sydnee's a doctor, and I'm a medical enthusiast—

Sydnee: Okay.

Justin: —and we create *Sawbones*, a marital tour of misguided medicine.

Sydnee: Every week, I dig through the annals of medical history to bring you the wildest, grossest, sometimes dumbest tales of ways we've tried to treat people throughout history.

Justin: And lately, we do a lot of modern fake medicine... because everything's a disaster. But it's slightly less of a disaster every Friday, right here on Maximumfun.org as we bring you *Sawbones*, a marital tour of misguided medicine. And remember...

Sydnee: Don't drill a hole in your head.

[music and advertisement end]

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