

Still Buffering 290: RED (Taylor's Version)

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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 Teylor Smirl.

Sydnee: Uh, Teylor, I made so many vegetables yesterday.

Taylor: Oh, did you?

Sydnee: Yeah, are you proud of me?

Taylor: I'm so proud of you. What kind of vegetables did you make?

Sydnee: Well...

Raleigh: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Well... I made a—

Taylor: List your vegetables for me.

Raleigh: Well...

Sydnee: A root vegetable medley.

Taylor: Oh!

Sydnee: I had, uh— I roasted a big... mess of... [laughs] Brussels sprouts, and parsnips, and carrots, and sweet potatoes, all mixed together. I put fresh rosemary on 'em. Threw some scallions on there, 'cause I had those.

Taylor: Love that.

Raleigh: They were delicious.

Sydnee: Thank you, thank you.

Raleigh: They were very good.

Sydnee: I was very proud of that giant bowl of vegetables.

Rileigh: I spent the entire evening just returning to the giant bowl of vegetables and picking out the parsnips and just grazing.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, well, yes, that is— it did start that way, and then after I don't know how many tie-dyes we had over there, uh, it— it turned into Rileigh standing next to the counter [laughs] holding the giant bowl of mashed potatoes, eating mashed potatoes out of the serving dish with the serving spoon. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: That's... that's where you usually head on Thanksgiving.

Rileigh: Thank you.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: It was just us. It was just family.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: It's...

Rileigh: It was just— it was just us, and your kids, and our mom and dad.

Sydnee: Well, you put that TikTok dance up, so, you know.

Rileigh: Yeah. I put that TikTok dance up. [laughs]

Taylor: That was just your way of claiming dominance over the mashed potatoes. They are now your potatoes.

Sydnee: "These are mine. These are my potatoes." [laughs]

Taylor: You just look everybody dead in the eye and you eat from the serving spoon, and then they become yours.

Rileigh: I just couldn't understand why everyone was so confused. It's like, why— of course they're delicious. Dad was like, "Hmm, you really like those mashed potatoes!"

Like, yes, obviously! They are mashed potatoes.

Taylor: It's the superior form of food.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: We— we had this, uh, debate going where— okay. Raleigh and I were pushing to add macaroni and cheese to the typical Thanksgiving lineup, because we generally don't.

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: And, uh, mom and dad were trying to decide if we're going to add mac and cheese, what are we going to jettison? What goes?

Raleigh: Any of the casseroles. [wheezes]

Taylor: I mean, you only need one. I don't know why we always have, like, four.

Raleigh: Well, this is what I said, and I don't know— I think other families do this on Thanksgiving. I don't think it's just us. We make all these foods because we accept that they are quote, unquote, "Thanksgiving foods." But no one really likes them that much, and we don't end up eating most of them. And I don't know why we continue to make them. Like, why do we make broccoli casserole, or green bean casserole, or any of that? Or cranberry salad, or anything?

Sydnee: The cranberry salad is just for mom, as far as I can tell.

Taylor: Hey, I like the cranberry salad. If I'm home, I eat the cranberry salad. But the various casseroles, I don't even— I don't understand. 'Cause even that is, like, the idea of like, "Oh, yes, a traditional Thanksgiving dish, where we take some green beans, we cover them in soup and Cheez-Its, and we bake the crap out of 'em!" [laughs] Like, what is that?

Sydnee: Well, and that's— I mean, I also, aside my root vegetables, I made just some broccoli and cauliflower, 'cause that's what Charlie and Cooper will eat pretty well.

Raleigh: Broccoli and white broccoli.

Sydnee: Broccoli and white broccoli is what they call it.

Taylor: Ghost broccoli.

Sydnee: [laughs] So I, uh— I just made that, and so Cooper had on her plate both broccoli and broccoli casserole, and she just refused to even

taste the broccoli cheese casserole. She was like, "I don't want that. I just want to eat broccoli."

Rileigh: She kept saying, "I like broccoli, not cheese."

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: But it was like— I had this moment where I was like, "Why are we trying to force this child, who is enjoying just a vegetable— like, a healthy vegetable—" [laughs quietly] Like, "No! You need to eat it smothered in cheese!" [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: My favorite part of the whole thing was that the reason we decided on bro— "We." The reason they decided on broccoli cheese casserole was because they said, "Well, the only— we don't have anything green. Like, we have the root vegetables, but we don't have anything else that's green. We have, like, you know, turkey and mashed potatoes and rolls. Like, we need something green."

And I said, "I don't think it counts as green anymore when you cover it in cheese." [laughs]

Sydnee: I brought a gigantic bowl of vegetables! [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't know.

Taylor: I don't know.

Sydnee: I was happy that the green beans were gone this year.

Rileigh: Well, I like crunchy green beans.

Taylor: Yeah. Like, why not just green beans? Why do you have to casserole everything?

Rileigh: That's what I said. They said, "Well, no one wanted green beans." And I said, "Well, not the mushy kind that just gets sat around on the stove all day, but the crunchy kind I like. I enjoy."

Sydnee: The problem is— and we should clarify— the mushy kind...

[all laugh]

Sydnee: It's nothing against— I know that there is a way to prepare green beans where you cook them with, like, bacon and stuff all day, or not all day. I don't know, for a long time.

Raleigh: All day.

Sydnee: I've never been a big green bean fan. Justin doesn't really like green beans. Cooper's really the only green bean eater in this household. But, um, I don't think when you do that you're supposed to use canned green beans and cook them that long.

Taylor: Well, and— and, like, the juice that they come in. Like, just— just put 'em straight on the pot, no seasoning, just let 'em... just soften. They're just softened green beans!

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Well... I don't know. I mean—

Taylor: They're just pre-masticated green beans!

Sydnee: They— they really get really very mushy. And, I mean, now, to be fair...

Taylor: It's like the only thing holding them together are the weird green bean threads along the side.

Raleigh: Uh-huh.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: To be fair, I did hear our grandfather say that's how he likes them.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Alright. Well...

Sydnee: So it is a way some people prefer green beans, and that's fine. I just don't... it is not my favorite preparation.

Raleigh: I mean, he also said he wouldn't— he wouldn't care if macaroni and cheese was added to the menu, so this is a man who wouldn't care about macaroni and cheese but does want... [laughs] softened green beans.

Taylor: But look at this. If you have green beans, whatever form, and macaroni and cheese, that's basically a casserole, just split into two different dishes that different people can enjoy. And if you want a green bean casserole, just mix your mushy green beans in with your mac and cheese. Instant casserole. There you go. You got options.

Rileigh: I love—[laughs] I love that our dad suggested green bean casserole and didn't know what it was.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: He was like, "We should make a green bean casserole."

Mom said, "Do you know what it is?"

And he said, "I assume it's like a broccoli one, except with green beans."

And she was like, "No, no."

Sydnee: No. It's like mushroom soup and—

Rileigh: Cream of mushroom soup, and onions, and probably, yeah, Cheez-Its or crackers or something sprinkled on the top.

Taylor: I don't know.

Rileigh: And he was like, "Oh, that sounds good. Let's do that." [laughs]

Taylor: I also saw a picture going around, somebody had posted a picture of their Thanksgiving dinner and there was some bright pink stuff on the plate, and someone was like, "No, it w— no, trust me, the pink stuff's good!"

And I think you also— I knew what the pink stuff was.

Rileigh: [sighs heavily]

Sydnee: Yeah, pink stuff.

Taylor: And I was like, "Oh, wow. That is a— that is a regional thing. I know what that pink stuff is!"

Sydnee: I know that pink stuff. Uh, I was gonna make a pitch for like, do we really need the mashed potatoes when we have all these—

Rileigh: How dare you?

Sydnee: I know, I know. I'm not gonna make a pitch for that. I mentioned it, and everyone looked at me like, "What is wrong with you?"

Taylor: But actually—

Rileigh: That's, like, the one staple I think everyone agrees on.

Sydnee: Well, I would be— I mean, I— the sweet potato casserole seems to go over very well, so I will continue to make that.

Raleigh: But it's a very different food than mashed potatoes.

Taylor: Yeah, no. Mashed potatoes are a binder for all of the things on the plate.

Raleigh: Yes.

Taylor: Like, anything that lacks moisture has mashed potatoes to compensate for that. You need them for the stuffing, whatever meat thing you have, the vegetables, it makes them all work together.

Raleigh: Sydnee laughed at me for dipping my roll in the mashed potatoes, but it's delicious.

Taylor: Everything goes in the mashed potatoes.

Sydnee: No, I don't think there's anything wrong with... [sighs] I don't think there's anything wrong with dipping your roll in the mashed potatoes.

Raleigh: Well, okay. You laughed at me—

Sydnee: You were committing a lot of mashed potato related crimes last night. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: When I dipped an extra roll into the communal bowl of mashed potatoes. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah, let's clarify, yeah. No, on my personal plate I combined my turkey, mashed potato, and roll. It was all there together. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: I don't think it was a crime. I think it was delicious.

Taylor: I don't think you can commit mashed potato crimes. I think all— all's fair with mashed potatoes. And... war?

Raleigh: It's a food I don't get but, like, one time a year. 'Cause it's just, like, not something I will regularly go out of my way to make for myself, but if it's ever presented to me, of course I will partake, and usually it's only presented to me at, like, Thanksgiving and maybe Christmas.

Sydnee: We're having it again on Christmas.

Raleigh: Good.

Sydnee: Unless we decide we're gonna do, like, a low country boil or something weird like sometimes we do.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah, I love it when you surprise me with that. "Oh, great! [laughs] So I'm having potatoes for dinner."

Sydnee: Hey, we found vegan sausage.

Taylor: Oh, right, right.

Raleigh: Um... but we're not talking about mashed potatoes...

Sydnee: No.

Raleigh: ... this week. [laughs] We're talking about something even better, surprisingly.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: Finally, it's come to this.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: It's Taylor Swift: "Red (Taylor's Version)".

Taylor: The mashed potatoes of the music world.

Raleigh: The mash— you know what? Yeah. Taylor Swift is the mashed potatoes of the music industry. She just holds it all together.

Taylor: There you go.

Sydnee: Okay, okay. I didn't know how you were gonna— I was gonna say, "I don't know if that's a compliment." [laughs]

Raleigh: Yes, it brings it all together. Everyone can agree on it. There's something there for everybody. Taylor Swift.

Taylor: If you think you're too good for mashed potatoes, you're wrong, and you're pretentious.

Raleigh: Yeah. There you go.

Taylor: Just like Taylor Swift.

Sydnee: And if you suggest replacing mashed potatoes with another [laughs quietly] side dish.

Rileigh: Everyone'll look at you like you're a monster.

Sydnee: [through laughter] Everybody will want to kill you.

Taylor: And mashed potatoes generally reveal their secrets with riddles.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: Hmm, there you go. [sighs] Yes. Um, guys, this album, um, it's very long. I do wanna apologize up front. It's two hours and ten minutes long. It has 30 songs on it. Um, but— and it does come with a short film also.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: And another music video. Um, but I think it is one giant sonically cohesive piece of art.

Sydnee: It has some Leslie Knope energy there. "For my next album, it's 30 songs long and it comes with a short film. [laughs quietly] Let me present it to you now."

Rileigh: I do want to point out, this was a riddle that no one solved.

Sydnee: [laughs loudly]

Rileigh: Um, that we all got wrong. She did— in one of her music videos, it was for one of the albums that came out last year, I forget. *Folklore* or *Evermore*, I don't know. She made music videos for both the singles from them. One of them, there was a clock on the wall. It was at 4:30 for the entire video, and everyone was like, "Oh, April 30th. What are we getting on April 30th?"

This was a whole big thing. Nothing happened on April 30th, but *Red* was her fourth album, and it has 30 songs on it.

Sydnee: Ah.

Rileigh: 4:30. No one got that. We all set our hearts on April 30th, and then just nothing.

Sydnee: And then nothing.

Raleigh: So that's, like, the running thing in the Taylor Swift fandom is we can't let April 30th happen again. [laughs quietly] We can't let ourselves get set on a date for something to happen again and nothing to come from it. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] Okay?

Raleigh: Today actually was another one of those days, the 26th.

Sydnee: What's supposed to happen today?

Raleigh: Something. Nothing happened.

Taylor: I mean, maybe just, like, when you film things, clocks are just sometimes on numbers, and you all just need to let it go.

Raleigh: Nothing is a coincidence with Taylor Swift.

Taylor: I don't— I—

Sydnee: This— this is—

Taylor: —I'm of the belief that she hasn't planned anything for, like...

Raleigh: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: ... years.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And you all are just running with it. And she's like, "I don't have to do anything! They're just gonna keep making up stuff!"

Sydnee: It's on autopilot now.

Raleigh: She was filming something in her New York apartment, and the whole block was blocked off for a project called Acorn. I don't know what it was. I don't know what it is. I still don't know.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Oh— oh— oh— okay?

Raleigh: It's a mystery.

Sydnee: That sounds very mysterious.

Rileigh: It's very mysterious. Um, but— okay. So, *Red* is, first of all, probably all about Jake Gyllenhaal. Just to get that out there.

Sydnee: Right. I mean, like— well, you say "Probably."

Rileigh: Well, not every song.

Sydnee: And that—

Rileigh: Like, for example there are a few in there that are about a Kennedy.

Sydnee: A Kennedy.

Rileigh: A Kennedy.

Taylor: Ah, Kennedy.

Rileigh: Connor, specifically.

Sydnee: Do we know all that? Like, is that— is that known?

Rileigh: So—

Sydnee: 'Cause you said "Probably," and my assumption is this was completely concrete truth known—

Rileigh: So, yes.

Sydnee: —and then you threw the "Probably" in there and that threw me.

Rileigh: I only say that because Taylor never confirms or denies that her albums or songs are about anyone specifically. Um, but she used to. She doesn't anymore. In her album booklets, like the lyric booklets that come with the physical CDs, she would capitalize random letters to spell out messages within the songs that would, like, give a special secret message or secret meaning to each of the songs.

So it would, like, say, "This is for, like, fans, or this is for you all, or, like, I wrote this—" like, there's a song on the album *I Almost Do*, and the secret message was, like, "I wrote this instead of calling." Or, um, one of them— I think it was "All Too Well," the secret message was "Maple lattes," and there is a famous picture of Jake Gyllenhaal and Taylor Swift when she was in New York visiting them where they were drinking maple lattes together, and they got stopped by the paparazzi and they were asking, like, "Oh, what are you all drinking, like, on this fall day?" And, maple lattes.

So that is why people assume—

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: —because of the secret messages.

Sydnee: [continues laughing] I—

Raleigh: Like the one about Connor Kennedy, the secret message was, like, whatever pier or place or whatever that is in... somewhere, in the Northeast where they were— where they met. I don't know.

Sydnee: Yeah. It's really interesting, because sometimes, uh— okay. It's sort of like a lost escape room.

Raleigh: [snorts]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: When you're doing an escape room, and you'll come up— because, like, all the puzzles are made by people, and you'll be doing an escape room a bu— like, "This is good. These are go— ooh, this is a good one. Like, I like this."

And then sometimes you'll come up against a puzzle and you'll start to feel like, "[sighs] This is just, like, four steps too far." Like, I feel like there's so much you'd have to guess. Like, I think you guy— I think you guys got a little too clever with this one.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs] This is a hat on a hat situation. We need to back it one step back.

Raleigh: One step, mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Um, do you feel like sometimes Taylor takes it, like... [pause] [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: I mean... I— I don't know how much of it is Taylor and how much of it is just fans assuming so much that we just assume there are all these layers when really, like, everyone tried to guess what the next rerecorded albums would be before it was announced that it was *Red*.

Like, deep diving into, like, every single social media post or whatever when really, like, she had hinted at it by using, like, four red emojis in most of her tweets. And, like, using subtle lyrics in some of her captions,

and that was her way of hinting that *Red* was next. But everyone, like, went hardcore deep into it.

Sydnee: I gotcha, so it's not her fault.

Raleigh: I don't— I—[sighs] maybe, I don't know.

Sydnee: Oh, you're just blaming all of her fans.

Raleigh: Yeah, myself included.

Sydnee: Do we wanna go on record—[laughs]

Raleigh: Myself included. I am a part of this crime as well.

Taylor: So, the— the riddles that she presents to her fans are actually pretty straightforward.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: You just read into everything else.

Sydnee: Ah, gotcha.

Raleigh: Yeah. Like they're little just tiny Easter eggs that she'll just drop. Like, I don't know, everyone's trying to guess what the next one will be after this one that she drops next, and there a few things in some of her posts and tweets that have little lyrics from *Speak Now*.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: I'm like, okay, well, that's probably more likely instead of, like, let's go all the way back into all of these music videos and take apart every single frame. And it's gonna be... I don't know, whatever. People do that.

Sydnee: Um...

Raleigh: I do that.

Sydnee: Why— I have a question, which is does she know for a fact he still has the scarf?

Raleigh: So—

Sydnee: Because from listening to the song and watching the short film, it's insinuated that the scarf is in a drawer.

Raleigh: Even now.

Sydnee: Even now. Like, she knows what drawer it's in at this moment. Like, she could go to that house— is it his sister's house upstate? Is that where the scarf—

Raleigh: Maggie Gyllenhaal's, mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So it's Maggie Gyllenhaal's house upstate, and in a drawer there is the scarf.

Raleigh: Now—

Taylor: Maybe she still has a good relationship with Maggie and she just calls every now and then and is like, "Is it still there?"

Raleigh: "Still there?"

Taylor: And Maggie's like, 'Yeah, it's still there.'

Sydnee: [laughs] But, like, do you want it?

Raleigh: Now, I would like— I would like—

Sydnee: Like, what— then why didn't you get it back?

Raleigh: I'd like to remind you, this song was originally written, like, right after they broke up. So it saying "Even now" doesn't necessarily mean even now, ten years later.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: It means, like, even now, like, a month after they broke up.

Taylor: Okay.

Raleigh: But there. was a picture of him— it was a scarf that she was wearing in that picture of them actually drinking the maple lattes. There are pictures of him wearing that scarf out in public after they were rumored to no longer be dating.

Taylor: That's...

Raleigh: So yes, he did keep a scarf of hers that he did wear in public a few times.

Taylor: That's such, like, a... for as iconic as he was as, like, a sad emo boy, that's such a sad emo boy thing to do. Like, "Yeah, no, I— I totally

dumped this girl, but I'm gonna be sad about it and wear her scarf around. Ooh." [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: "Ooh. Her Gucci scarf." [laughs]

Sydnee: Oh, it was a fancy scarf?

Raleigh: It was!

Sydnee: See, 'cause I feel like—

Raleigh: It doesn't look like a fan— I don't know. It's one of those... I don't know.

Sydnee: I don't know the timelines. But, like, the vibe I got from the songs were, like, she was obviously very young. But also, like, not famous or, like, rich, or— like, he was all Hollywood, and she was, like, this country girl is sort of, like, the... vibe.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: But— but, I mean, she was famous by the time they dated, right?

Raleigh: No, she was— she was very famous. Not as much so as she is now, I think. Something happened recently where everyone got into Taylor Swift. I think it was the pandemic, I don't know. But she definitely was famous. Um, but I think her whole thing was always that— and I will say, Taylor Swift was raised in a fairly well-to-do family. Like, she was not...

Sydnee: I— see, that— I was won— I have not— I mean—

Raleigh: She did not struggle growing up. She was raised on a Christmas tree farm. She says she was raised on a farm. It's a Christmas tree farm—

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: —in Pennsylvania.

Taylor: Aww. Alright.

Sydnee: That—[laughs] that is too precious—

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: —for words! [laughs]

Rileigh: That's why she has a song she just rerecorded called "Christmas Tree Farm." It's a Christmas song. It's great.

Sydnee: Oh, I didn't know that was why!

Taylor: All of her brothers and sisters were Christmas trees!

[all laugh]

Rileigh: But she grew up on a Christmas Tree farm in Pennsylvania, but she also— she didn't— I think what her thing was about Jake Gyllenhaal and comparing them wasn't that he was famous and she wasn't. I think that it was almost of the mindset that, like, maybe Jake Gyllenhaal became famous because of, like, who his family was or, like, connections he had, or, like, he was already raised in that environment, and that's why he was able to succeed.

Sydnee: Are his parents... famous people?

Taylor: I didn't know they were.

Rileigh: I don't know if they are. But, I mean, his sister is.

Sydnee: Right, right.

Rileigh: And she was before he was, I guess. Right?

Sydnee: Well, and they may be something which connected. I have no idea. I have zero— I am just totally guessing at this point.

Taylor: Well, I got the vibe that it was more— I mean, even if there were similar levels of fame— because there's a lot of lyrics about, like, whatever his— his hipster music and stuff like that. And, like, maybe she was, like, corny, you know? Famous. And he was, like, legitimate or something. In her read of it, I don't actually feel that way about her. But, like... you know, that he was too cool for her, 'cause she was just pop music and whatever, you know, mainstream, and he was kind of indie at that point.

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah, that makes sense.

Rileigh: And she also— I mean, she was young, and she was new to being an adult and on her own and being in that world of fame. 'Cause, I mean, her first— this was her fourth album, and up until this point she had been barely 18 by the last time her last album had come out. Maybe 19.

So, like, she was a kid, so she wasn't really experiencing being, like, a famous adult and doing all that on her own. It wasn't until this point where she was, like, living on her own and being an independent adult new to that world, and I think a lot of her is also just very, like, naive and kid-like experiencing all of that, and maybe he had more of, like, a, you know, "I'm too cool, I'm too old, I'm too good for all of this. Like, it's not that big of a deal, like, not that famous," or whatever. You know? Um, "None of this is that cool."

But she was very much, like, this is all so new and cool and exciting.

Sydnee: Sort of like, uh, a, like, quieter, more subdued "Party in the USA," Miley Cyrus kind of vibe. [laughs]

Raleigh: Sure, yeah. Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I'm just saying!

Raleigh: That's a great connection you've made. Yeah!

Sydnee: It's similar. [laughs] A similar vibe.

Raleigh: Yeah. Um... but I don't know. She definitely— there are a few lyrics in there, like "I Bet You Think About Me" is one of the vault songs where she talks about him, like, having organic shoes and a million-dollar couch, and he was raised in LA and Hollywood, and...

Sydnee: Those have to be true.

Raleigh: Oh yeah.

Sydnee: That has to be, like—

Raleigh: Well, someone—

Sydnee: From, like, direct conversations, 'cause they're so specific.

Raleigh: Someone found a clip of him doing an interview from I think a few years after they dated, but not... a little bit ago on, like, a late-night show where he was talking about the shoes he wears while he runs. And it's those ones that are, like, shaped like feet.

Taylor: Oh yeah.

Raleigh: That are just like thin socks, so that, like, your feet are, like, super close to the ground when you're running. Someone found that after the song came out and was like, "Well, there's your organic shoes! [laughs] There they are! There's his fancy runnin' shoes."

Sydnee: Oh my gosh.

Rileigh: Um, but, like, that kind of stuff. The way she writes it makes it seem very much like she didn't have money, or she, like, struggled growing up, and that's not... true. The house she grew up in was also very big and very nice.

Sydnee: But she also came from country music.

Rileigh: Yeah. So it's a very different—

Sydnee: And you have to keep that sort of... I mean, that's a very country music, like, uh— I don't wanna say it's all a facade, 'cause there are certainly people who that is true, but it's so much a part of that culture that even if it's not totally true for you, I do feel like you have to kind of lean in to that narrative in that world, you know?

Rileigh: And, I mean, that song is the most country song on the album. "I Bet You Think About Me," I mean. Um, even though it wasn't originally on the album. But this was her last album that really had any country, 'cause her next one was, like, folk pop.

Sydnee: Okay.

Rileigh: So, um, that's the reason why a lot of the cut songs are more pop-y, because the label wanted this to be a more country album because they felt like she was getting too far away from country, and she was gonna lose, like, the country fans.

Sydnee: And that— that was a moment where that narrative was so intense. Where, like, "Oh, they're— they used to be country, but they're not real anymore. They're selling out to pop," yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Rileigh: So that's why you have a lot of, like, um, "Message In A Bottle." I don't know if you all listened to that, but it sounds very much like it would be in the credits of, like, a *My Little Pony* movie.

Sydnee: [laughs loudly]

Rileigh: But, like, that's why that song was cut, 'cause it was too pop-y. But, I mean, her next album was just entirely...

Sydnee: Pop.

Rileigh: ... she was moved on from country after this. Um, so...

Sydnee: Um, I... there was something interesting as I was listening to it, Justin was listening with me and he saw, like, on the screen, the parentheses (Taylor's Version), and he said, "Why does it say that on all the songs?"

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And I realized, I kind of assumed everybody knew the whole story of this.

Raleigh: The rerecording stuff.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: But maybe everybody doesn't.

Raleigh: Oh, okay. Um... yeah, I guess.

Sydnee: But before—

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: Yes. So, I want you to be able to explain that. But before we do that...

Raleigh: Let's check the group message.

Sydnee: Uh, first things first. The holidays— they're not just soon upon us. They are upon us. The holidays came [laughs quietly] crashing down upon us.

Taylor: Boom.

Raleigh: There they are.

Sydnee: And, you know, we've— we're all gonna be really busy, both with, like, our, you know, our usual stuff, and then all the fun stuff, hopefully. Hopefully there's some fun stuff in store for you with friends, family, the like. Um, and you wanna be comfortable when you're, you know, navigating all of that, and that's why you've gotta try Betabrand's dress pant yoga pants. They have the fit and flexibility of yoga pants. They really do feel like you're wearing yoga pants all day long, but they're not yoga pants. They're dress pants, and they look like professional dress pants, so the fact that they feel so comfortable is just your little secret.

Um, unless you wanna share it, which I would encourage you to do so that other people can feel just as comfortable as you do. They're wrinkle resistant, stretch knit fabric. Um, whether you're working in an office, working from home, whatever your job is, no matter how active or inactive, they really— they can accommodate all of that.

I have been u— I have been wearing Betabrand dress pant yoga pants at work for a long time because I hated the way a lot of work clothes made me feel. I felt like I was, like, shuffling everything around, trying to keep everything in place all day, and with Betabrand dress pant yoga pants that's not necessary. I felt super comfortable, could go straight from work to whatever else I had to do and not feel the need to change right away. And there's a ton of different styles. Straight leg, skinny, joggers, uh, classic black, houndstooth, whatever you like. So, uh, Raleigh, if our listeners want to check out Betabrand dress pant yoga pants what should they do.

Raleigh: Well, right now our listeners can get 30% off their Betabrand orders when you go to betabrand.com/buffering. That's B-E-T-A-B-R-A-N-D.com/buffering for 30% off your order for a limited time. And when you use our special URL, you're supporting our show, too!

Find out why people are ditching typical work pants for Betabrand's dress pant yoga pants at betabrand.com/buffering for 30% off.

Sydnee: So I mentioned earlier that I made up a whole mess of vegetables for our Thanksgiving dinner and—

Raleigh: A whole mess.

Sydnee: A whole mess. And I got all of those vegetables delivered to my door with Imperfect Foods, and that is the honest to God truth.

Raleigh: Wow.

Sydnee: Uh, it's great, um, especially this time of year when maybe you're prepping for big get-togethers and things like that, but you still wanna support a sustainable local food system. Imperfect Foods is exactly when you need. It's a grocery delivery service. They have an entire line of sustainable groceries, um, that help reduce food waste, which is great. You can feel good about that.

Um, and also kinds of, like, yummy snacks and pantry staples and some seasonal things. We got these— these, like, uh, pumpkin spice chocolate chip cookies that are really yummy, too, so they also have, like, snack-y things like that, not just produce. But the produce we got was wonderful.

Um, in addition to everything I mentioned that we made, we also got these amazing leeks, and peppers, and cilantro, and tomatoes to, like, fresh herbs, the sage that mom used in the stuffing came from Imperfect Foods. So, all kinds of different things. Um, you can check out, personalize your delivery, and have 'em— have 'em dropped right on your doorstep, everything that you need.

So— and say goodbye to packaging guilt! It makes— they make it really easy for you to return your packaging after every order with Imperfect Foods, so you can do that, too, just like we did. Um, and Raleigh, if our listeners want to check out Imperfect Foods, what should they do?

Raleigh: Well, right now Imperfect Foods is offering our listeners 20% off your first four orders when you go to imperfectfoods.com and use promo code "buffering." Again, 20% off your first four orders— that's up to an \$80 value, at imperfectfoods.com, offer code "buffering." [Imperfectfoods.com](https://imperfectfoods.com), and use code "buffering."

Taylor: And we also have a Jumbotron this week!

Raleigh: Whoop whoop!

Sydnee: Yay!

Taylor: Yeah! This is, uh, for Elizabeth, and this is from, uh, Momma, Daddy, Ryan, and Alex. And they write:

"Happy birthday, Elizabeth! Now you are an official teen, even though you have been teening around for almost a year. We think you are awesome and spectacular and we love you. We know you will keep being the bright light you have always been, and we can't wait to see what happens next." So.

Raleigh: Aww.

Sydnee: Aww.

Taylor: Happy birthday, Elizabeth!

Raleigh: Happy birthday!

Sydnee: Happy birthday, Elizabeth! That's a very sweet message.

Alright.

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: Raleigh.

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: If you could— because maybe some people aren't as aware why Taylor Swift is re-releasing this album, and when you talk about vault songs, and things that aren't— 'cause actually I don't even know which songs were on the original album.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I don't know that part. So what— what is the scoop there?

Raleigh: Yeah. So, Taylor Swift was on a label, or record deal with a label that owned her first, what, six albums, I think? That was the deal, the first six albums. They would own the— the, uh, masters, and then that label was bought out by this Scooter Braun guy who sucks.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Um, and she tried to buy her masters back from him, because she knew that he was just going to sell them to another company, basically to make all the money off of them, 'cause every time they're played, like, you still make money from them. Um, he wouldn't let her buy them back, and she said, "Okay, then in my contract it says I can re-record these songs after X amount of years since they've been released."

Um, and because even though they own the masters, she has the, um, composition copyright, 'cause she wrote them, so she can still re-record them whenever she wants. She just doesn't own that original master recording.

So, she has been re-recording her past six albums so that now she has Taylor's Version, so they're called something different, but they all want to sound like the originals, because she doesn't want people to have a reason to listen to the old ones and give Scooter Braun money. So now she's re-recording them so she can own these versions of them and she can perform them again and she can own them again.

Sydnee: Is it— um, one, I would say when you said there's been this resurgence in popularity, I mean, that's gotta be it. Like, it's such a baller move, you know?

Raleigh: Yeah. Um... yeah. I think that was definitely part of it, because it wasn't until actually right before the pandemic, she had released her last album, um, before this. That was her first one that she owned on her own, and that was a big deal 'cause she was like, "This one I own all on my own. I wrote it myself, and I recorded it myself, and no one else owns it but me."

Um, but then, you know, pandemic happened and I think everyone started listening to her music because she surprise dropped those two albums, and then everyone also realized, like, "Oh, wait. She also is not re-recording all her old albums, so I can go back and listen to those, and will be exposed to them all over again."

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: Um, she did that with *Fearless* in the spring, and that was her second album, and re-recorded it, re-released it, uh, in April. Um, so, yeah. She's going through and doing that full six, but no one knows what order, or when. Everyone assumed it would just be in order from, like, one to six. That is not the case. She released the second, then the fourth.

Sydnee: Interesting.

Rileigh: I don't know when the rest will be.

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: It's a mystery.

Taylor: I like this—

Sydnee: Yeah, is there another— is there another one that also has, like, as much anger directed as one specific guy? 'Cause I bet Jake Gyllenhaal is hoping that one of those gets released next. [laughs]

Rileigh: I— yes. Um, *Speak Now* was her third album, and it is actually the one that she wrote every single song entirely by herself. So, like, a lot of these songs she obviously wrote, but had co-writers on a lot of them. *Speak Now* she wrote entirely by herself, and has several songs about John Mayer.

Taylor: Hmm.

Sydnee: Hmm.

Rileigh: Who did the same thing, except she was even younger when she dated John Mayer. Um, and she's still actually not as old as John Mayer was when he dated her, so... that's a whole thing. Um, but that's what everyone keeps saying is Jake Gyllenhaal's in hiding until that album comes out and all the attention turns to John Mayer. [laughs]

Taylor: I mean— and I'm not— I'm not defending Jake Gyllenhaal. But it sounds like what happened is a pretty normal, like, breakup. Like, there's

not some, like, heinous— he just was kind of a crappy boyfriend is what it sounds like, right?

Raleigh: I mean, he didn't come to her 21st birthday.

Taylor: Well, that's crappy boyfriend stuff.

Raleigh: And it's suppo— it's supposed to—

Sydnee: He's a bad boyfriend.

Raleigh: It's supposed to be fun, turning 21. And it was not.

Taylor: I mean— I mean, it's nothing outrageous. He just was kind of a pretentious older dude who thought he was too cool for Taylor Swift, and didn't make time for her. Like, I'm not— I'm not— like, I just...

Sydnee: [laughs] Raleigh's getting so upset.

Taylor: I'm not defending him. She got a whole awesome album out of it. Like, I like the songs on this album. But, like, it's not... it's— it's— it's not like it's an uncomfortable thing to listen to, is what I mean.

Raleigh: No, no, yeah. Um, I—

Taylor: Like, what you're describing with John Mayer I feel like sounds uncomfortable [laughs] to listen to.

Raleigh: Yeah. Like, she wrote "Dear John" about John Mayer, which she got around saying it's about John Mayer by, like, using the concept of, like, Dear John letters is what it is. But, I mean, it is about John Mayer. Um, that is very much more of, like, a direct attack at John Mayer for being a creep, um, and a bad guy. That is much more— I won't say it's uncomfortable. It's a great song.

But along those lines, um, this is very much just, like, I don't know. I feel like I've always enjoyed it because it's definitely what you feel when you get broken up with, even if it's only been three months, and some guy treats you really crappy and, um, you were really, really into him, but maybe he wasn't as into you and he just kind of, like...

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: ... never treated you the way you deserved, but then he breaks up with you, and he made your life sad for three months. It's very much those feelings you get when you're young and that happens for one of the first times, and you are not used to feeling those things, so they're all very intense and dramatic.

Taylor: Oh yeah.

Raleigh: And it's all of those feelings in an album, but... in a way that also makes you feel like you are allowed to feel all of those things.

Taylor: Please— please don't misunderstand. I am not downplaying her feelings.

Raleigh: Oh, no, no, I know.

Taylor: I think absolutely, I've been there. It's just more like the difference between finding out one of your dude friends is a total creep versus finding out one of your dude friends is a bad boyfriend and being like, "You're my buddy, but you're a terrible boyfriend."

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: I just wanna know that I can still think of Jake Gyllenhaal as my friend, I guess is what I'm saying. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yes. Yeah, no, I think that's definitely fair.

Sydnee: That— I was thinking about that, actually as I was watching the short film, I was thinking about that too. Like, even the fight they have in the kitchen after the dinner party... she's— like, what she's saying he did wrong is still not— it's not— none of it is articulated very well. Like, I watched it and it's like, "Well, you just kind of felt ignored."

But then there's also— when he talks about her being selfish, there is a moment where I thought, "I mean, it was sort of like a dinner party for him to see his old friends, so, like... why was it so important that he was—" you know? I mean, like, why was it about you? I mean, and I think— I think a lot of what you're wor— and maybe that's intentional. What she's working through is, like, those are just your early relationships.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Nobody knows what they're doing, especially when you're young. You hurt each other a lot. Both of you are sort of self-obsessed in a way, and I don't mean that in a mean way. We are when we're young. We should be. We should be focused on our own journey and what we're looking for, you know? You shouldn't be looking to, like, "I can't wait to get married and settle down and devote my life to supporting you."

No, it's normal that you're sort of thinking about yourself.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, and all of that is exactly what, like, music that connects to us when we're younger— that's what it is about. 'Cause those are the big themes. That's life. And so I think it all makes sense, and in that context, yeah, I mean, it's— it seems very mundane, but that's the whole point. It's relatable. It's mundane. It's the way relationships are when you're younger, and he was a bad boyfriend.

Taylor: Well, and especially if this album came out at that time period where she was trying to be taken more seriously. Sometimes relationships can get latched on to bigger problems in our lives, you know? And it makes sense that it's, like, having somebody that is way too serious and way too "real" for you, quote, unquote, and, like, you're trying to be taken more seriously and be seen as not just this little pop princess. Like, I think it all kind of— however, like, I think she represents those emotions very clear when you're trying to just come into yourself and sometimes you get into that relationship that kind of defines that battle for you, you know?

Raleigh: Yeah. And I mean, like, when she talks about how she wrote "All Too Well," which is the song that the short film was, um, and it is regarded as the best— one of the best songs she's ever written, and definitely the best song on that album.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Um, even though she didn't intend on that at the time. It wasn't a single or anything. Um, the ten-minute version came out with this album, which was a big deal because she said that's how it started, that she wrote a ten minute song and the label was like, "Well, we can't put a ten minute song on an album, that's ridiculous. You need to cut it down."

So she cut it down to five, but everyone for a very long time has been saying, "Well, I want the ten minute version."

So she did that on this album, and now it is the longest song to ever hit Number One on the Billboard Hot 100, or 200, whatever. Um, and it's great, but the— she tells the story of when she wrote it on one of the late-night shows. She did an interview where she had pretty much just gotten broken up with, like, very recently, within a few days, walked in to a rehearsal for her tour, and for her previous album, and just started playing a few chords and just, like, singing everything she was feeling. And then it got recorded and written down, and it became that song, and that original ten-minute version is pretty much what she was just stream-of-consciousness singing and thinking.

Sydnee: It has that feel to it too, yeah.

Rileigh: Yeah. And when you think of it that way, it's not her looking back on a, you know, objectively short relationship and thinking all these things about it. It was written right in the moment of when she has just been— you know, her heart has just been broken, and this is everything she's feeling. I think that puts it in perspective a lot more of, like, you know, these are current, active heartbreak feelings. Um, especially the ten-minute version, which I very much enjoy. Uh, I don't know. I didn't think I'd like a ten-minute song, but I do. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I— there are some ten-minute songs that I like, but I usually feel like a have to commit to them. And I will say, it just goes by really fast. Like...

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. No, that's true.

Taylor: ... just a really enjoyable— yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah, I de— I definitely still enjoyed it, yeah.

Rileigh: Yeah. Um, I can see why the parts that stayed were the parts that stayed.

Taylor: Yeah.

Rileigh: On, like, a radio-friendly five-minute version.

Taylor: Man, lucky for Jake Gyllenhaal what got cut, 'cause what got put back in... [laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs]

Taylor: That makes it so much worse!

Rileigh: I— there is some debate whether all of this was actually written at the time, or whether some of it she has written now and put back in, like the bit about "I'll get older but your lovers stay my age," 'cause it's like...

Sydnee: How would you know? [laughs]

Raleigh: How would you know that? And at that point, the only people he dated seriously, like, publicly, weren't that much younger than him, I guess. Um, I don't know if that's just her assuming, like, you took advantage of me 'cause I was young and you're just gonna keep doing that to other young girls. But some people think that she has added that now to kind of call out, like, this is a creepy... guy. I don't know.

Taylor: I love that, if she did. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: I hope she was like, "I can pull that out. I can pull that pettiness from a decade ago."

Raleigh: Yeah. I mean, it fits. It sounds like something she could've, you know, said at that time, but it just— I don't know. It does maybe make a little bit more sense if she wrote it now. Um...

Sydnee: I still like the song "Trouble." [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: "I Knew You Were Trouble?"

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: So is that about—

Raleigh: That's a good one.

Taylor: That's a Jake Gyllenhaal as well?

Raleigh: [sighs] My theory is that if you look at— I don't know if you all use Spotify or Apple Music, but on Spotify there are the little cards, like the little short videos that play on the screen as the song is playing.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Um, and since the short film came out, several of them have clips from the short film that aren't "All Too Well," like, playing as their video. And my theory is that everyone that has a clip from "All Too Well" is probably about Jake Gyllenhaal, 'cause not all of them do.

Sydnee: Hmm.

Rileigh: Um, but I could be wrong. Maybe they just picked ones that they thought fit the mood of the song. But that is pretty much my assumption, is generally every angry heartbroken song on this album is about him.

Taylor: That's interesting. I just— I find it so— and, I mean, I do think it fits that age. But, like, some of the transitions from, like— 'cause you were saying it told a story, which interests me, because going from something like "We Are Never Getting Back Together" to, like, "Stay, Stay, Stay," I'm like, "Hey, you just said..." [laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs]

Taylor: "You just said we're done! But now you say stay."

Rileigh: That's like when— what is it? "All Too Well" goes into "22"?

Taylor: "22."

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Rileigh: God, that's a— that's a whiplash. Um—

Sydnee: That is a weird— I thought about that too, yeah.

Rileigh: Yeah. Um, yeah, I mean, it definitely— from... [sighs] and I mean obviously you can't have an entire album that's just— well, I say "you can't." Olivia Rodrigo had *Sour* that's just all heartbreak songs. There's not one, like, upbeat, you know, peppy, um, love song. But I guess Taylor said when she was writing this album, they said she had too many heartbreak songs, she had too many sad songs, so then she needed some more fun ones, so that's how she ended up with, like, "22" and "We Are Never Getting Back Together," um, "Stay, Stay, Stay."

Sydnee: Which— which again, like, is true. Um, there— generally in that— especially when you're going through, like, a breakup, or you have, like, a tumultuous relationship and you're younger, and again, you're still figuring things out, you don't just feel sad all the time.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It's not— I mean, it might seem that way in retrospect, like, "Oh, I was so sad after that." But you weren't all the time. You probably did have times where you were still laughing and having fun and, like, that— that is in there. It's all part of it.

Raleigh: Yeah. It also puts "22" into perspective when you think about he ruined her 21st birthday, so she's finally like, "Oh God, I'm 21— er, I'm 22. I passed it."

Taylor: [laughs] That's all. Just one year.

Raleigh: Just one year.

Taylor: You posted something, Raleigh, that was like, your year based on Taylor Swift's album, and I think it was, like, your birth month and then your birthday.

Raleigh: Yeah. 'Cause there are 30 songs.

Taylor: Those were the— those were the two songs that I listened to first, were the—

Raleigh: Really?

Taylor: Just to know what my year was gonna be, and I had "State of Grace" and "The Lucky One," which I felt was a pretty good fortune.

Raleigh: Oh, yeah!

Taylor: I don't think I'd ever heard "State of Grace" before. I've heard the hits off this album. I had never given a straight listen to it before. And I really liked that song. I— it was, like, a early relationship, like, somebody knocking you off your feet. And I thought "The Lucky One" was one of those stories that now reminds me of more some of the recent stuff she's written.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Where she's talking about these Hollywood starlets and writing these stories. Like, I don't know if "The Lucky One" is about anybody, or if this is just a preview of what's to come, these narratives that she writes.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Yeah. "The Lucky One" is very similar to now, like, her "The Last Great American Dynasty" that she wrote about, like, the heiress that she bought that house from, or "Marjorie," she's writing about, like, her grandma who is an opera singer and was a star and all that. It's very much that same energy. You're right.

Sydnee: Uh, so— then would mine— I just— I just looked at the song list, like, the track list to do this. 3, 27.

Raleigh: [simultaneously] Mm-hmm, so, like, 3 and 27, mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So, mine are "Treacherous" [laughs] and "Forever Winter."

Raleigh: Well...

Taylor: That doesn't sound great. [laughs]

Raleigh: That doesn't sound great.

Sydnee: [simultaneously] That doesn't sound good.

Raleigh: "Treacherous" is a great song. Um, "Forever Winter" I should say, it's one of the vault tracks, and those are the ones that they say in the title, (Taylor's Version) (From the Vault), which means they were written at the time of the album, um, but didn't make it onto the album. Uh, and "Better Man" and "Babe" actually were both songs that she wrote, and then gave to other people. So, like, "Babe" she gave to Sugarland and "Better Man" she gave to Little Big Town.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: And "Better Man" actually won, like, Best Country Song at the CMAs or whatever, like, the year that she wrote it and gave it to Little Big Town.

Taylor: Oh wow.

Raleigh: But I guess she was given the choice of either putting "Better Man" or "All Too Well" on the album, and she went with "All Too Well." Um, but "Better Man" is actually my favorite song off the album.

Sydnee: Hmm.

Raleigh: It is very good. Um, it is great. But yeah.

Sydnee: I, uh— I just— I think that if somebody wrote that "Trouble" song about me, I would like that.

Raleigh: [bursts into laughter]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: You— of course you would.

Sydnee: I think... I would.

Raleigh: "Somebody wrote that 'Trouble' song about me."

Sydnee: [laughs] I would like that.

Taylor: Is that what you want people to think when you walk in? "Uh-oh! There's Ol' Sydnee McElroy. There's trouble right there. Oh no!"

Sydnee: That's some— that's some big Aries energy I'm bringing to the podcast today. [laughs]

Raleigh: It is.

Taylor: Yeah. Yeah. I've seen her dance moves on TikTok, so watch out for that one!

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah. I do wanna apologize for not telling you all about "Ronan" being on this album, because it is an extremely sad song that was written and was performed and recorded before this. Like, it was known. Um, if you don't know the album, it was written about a little boy who had cancer.

Sydnee: Aww.

Raleigh: Who she found his mom's blog online, basically, where she was documenting his, like, struggles and everything. Um, she found it and was inspired by it, and wrote a song about him.

Sydnee: So it's all true?

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Aww.

Taylor: Oh, wow.

Raleigh: And wrote a song about him, and basically contacted his mom, like, "I wanna perform this at the American Cancer Society Benefit," or whatever. Um, she credits the mom as a co-writer of the song, 'cause it's all based on her blog. Um, but she asked her before she put it on the album and said, like, "The only version of this that exists was back then, and it was recorded when I was under this label. I want to put it out under my name and put it on this album so that it's there." Um, so that is all true. It is about a real little boy named Ronan. It is very sad.

Sydnee: That is very sad!

Rileigh: I meant to warn you. [laughs quietly] Because it is a very sad song to listen to, and I didn't think about it.

Sydnee: Well, I didn't know it was true! Now I'm sad!

Rileigh: It is true. Um, yeah, it is true. But it is a beautiful song.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: Um, but it is sad. Um, and I guess "Forever Winter" is about one of her friends that, um, struggled with addiction that overdosed.

Sydnee: Oh!

Rileigh: And that is if you listen to it, like, kind of what it's about.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: If you listen— it makes more sense if you listen to it in that—

Sydnee: With that context.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Oh.

Rileigh: Um, so that is also— that is also sad. Um, but not all of them are heartbreak songs. That's why I always get frustrated when people, like— and it doesn't happen as much anymore, but people used to say Taylor Swift just writes songs about the boys that break up with her. It's like, no, she has the ability to write stuff about really meaningful people and situations that have nothing to do with relationships. But... she was also a young girl, so.

Sydnee: But she's also smart. I mean, she's savvy when it comes to, like, the business of music, because she— I think— I was watching the music video for, um—

Rileigh: "I Bet You Think About Me?"

Sydnee: Yes.

Rileigh: [sighs] I love that music video.

Sydnee: And, like, she is very much leaning into the idea. Like, I mean, she says it.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: That I'll write a song about you.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Like, she's fine with that.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, that this is part of her image, and she knows that it sells, and she knows that people latch on to it, and there is that sort of— I think you're right, kind of negative, like, "Oh, she just gets mad and writes songs about boys."

But she's played that to great success. You know? I mean, like, to monetary success and fame, and so... I mean, sometimes if you do that, you get the ability, then to write other things and do other things you want, because, "Oh, okay, this image sells."

Raleigh: Right.

Taylor: I mean, when you look at the incredible catalog she has, I don't think it's wrong to say it seems like it's incredibly easy [through laughter] for Taylor Swift to write songs.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah, yeah.

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: I mean, you definitely get that impression. [laughs]

Taylor: She just, like, knows what, like— and also, heartbreak songs and love songs sell. She can— if she is this prolific, like, throwing a few in that are gonna be hits, like, "Oh, I'm so sorry that so many of my songs are hits, and they're popular styles of songs. Whoops." Like... [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah. There are lots of interviews from her around this period where interviewers ask, like, "What do you say to all the people that say, like, you— guys can't date you because you'll write songs about 'em?"

And she's pretty much just like, "Well, maybe they should think about that before they are mean to me, or before they cheat on me." [laughs] It's like, well, okay.

Sydnee: Well, and I mean obviously it hasn't slowed down her dating life.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I think she's—[laughs quietly]

Taylor: Hmm, no.

Sydnee: She's done fine. [laughs]

Rileigh: I will say, there's a song on this album called "Red," it is the titular song, about love being burning red, and after a breakup looking back on it and all the feelings and emotions, and in the— after this album came out, someone asked her about that. And she said that she knows that's not what love should be, and she wants to find a kind of love that's, like, lighter and brighter, um, and maybe if she ever finds that she'll write a whole album about it.

When she wrote "Lover" in 2019, um, which is about her current boyfriend, and is all pretty much songs about love, there's a song called "Daylight," and it has a line in it that says "I once believed love would be burning red, but now it's golden, like daylight." And I thought that was very sweet that she went from writing songs about how hard everything was, thinking "No, that's not what it's supposed to be, and maybe if I ever find, like, real love, I'll write a whole album about it," and then she did.

Sydnee: Aw.

Rileigh: And she referenced it in song.

Sydnee: She has that song "Me" on there, right?

Rileigh: Yeah. [laughs quietly] Yes.

Sydnee: [laughs] My kids love that song!

Taylor: I was gonna say, is that another one you like?

Sydnee: I love that song!

Taylor: Sydnee's songs are, ooh, the "Trouble" song and the "Me" song. This is...

Sydnee: [laughs] I just— it's a great song.

Rileigh: Uhh... [laughs]

Taylor: Sydnee's energy exactly.

[all laugh]

Sydnee: Um, I— but you know, the thing is, like, a lot of the criticism that is leveraged at Taylor Swift is— and we've talked about this a lot on the show, not just in regard to her but other things— it's the criticism of adults who are aiming that at younger people, usually teenager or young adult age, who are expressing emotions and feelings and thoughts that are incredibly common at that age, and that we all have when we are that age. But now we're adults, and we see things differently, and we just can't wrap our minds around the idea that, like, "But other people are still young." [laughs]

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: "And they're talking about those things." And when you were that age, that's what you listened to, and that's what you watched, and that's what you connected with. But that's what we do. We grow up, and then turn around and throw rocks at young people for having the same sorts of feelings and thoughts we did, and we're just mad at the ones who are the most articulate and can express it the best. And it's usually aimed at teen girls, but...

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, but it sucks, 'cause it's great. [laughs]

Taylor: Well, and I think it's a bit of a generational shift too, though. Because, I mean, I've heard this consistent conversation about how we're post-cringe. Like, we're moving post-cringe, 'cause, like, it's silly to not enjoy the things you enjoy.

I feel like so much of the 90's and the early 2000's was defined by the— the quest for authenticity, of being real, and, you know, being taken seriously. And, like, pop music was none of that, so we all enjoyed our pop music, like, alone in a corner where no one could catch us. I mean, I certainly did. And, like, coming out of that cringe closet and being like, "No, it's just enjoyable. Sometimes things are just easy to enjoy because they're well constructed."

And I hope that that's— that it's not always gonna be— like, maybe it feels like it's our older generation attacking the younger generation, but maybe that won't continue, because, like, that's— the younger generation isn't carrying that forward. Like, it's cool to like the things you like.

Raleigh: Right.

Sydnee: Yeah. I mean, I hope that's true, 'cause, I mean, I can listen to this music and appreciate and think, "Oh, this is good. Oh, that's well done. Oh, lyrically—" I'm always impressed by somebody who's a good lyricist.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Lyrically, this is really compelling. And at the same time, do I exp— do I empathize with that right now? Well, no. I'm a 38-year-old woman who's married and has a stable relationship. I don't have any of that sort of romantic drama in my life right now. [laughs quietly] Um, so I don't, like, feel that. But I also understand that I did. I mean, I remember feeling that way. I had those moments. And so I can appreciate that I might not connect to the music in the same way you do, but I can still enjoy it and like it, and not, like, criticize you for liking it.

Rileigh: I think that's why there's also something very, like, meaningful about her re-recording this album now that she's 31 and in a long term, stable, committed relationship, because it's almost like she's saying— I know she's re-recording it to own it, but it's also like she's saying, "I acknowledge I felt these things and I'm not embarrassed that I felt these things. I don't regret writing these angry heartbreak songs that I don't wanna think about ever again. I am proud of them. I own them. I felt these things, and these feelings are valid, and people are still feeling these things."

Sydnee: Yes.

Rileigh: "And I want to acknowledge that part of my life." And I think it's very much what you're saying, and she's passing on that message by saying, "Here I am, an adult who is not relating to any of these things anymore, but I did, and I'm not embarrassed by that."

Taylor: I think it's cool that she wrote her way through that, you know? She never, like, came out with an image remake and was like, "No, the—" you know. I mean, she did say the old Taylor's dead. But, like...

Rileigh: Yeah. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Like, didn't, like, "Now take me seriously." Like, she just kept writing and wrote to the place she's at now. And it's like, never felt the need to cast her old self off, which I think is cool.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Thank you all for listening to this very long album with me. Um, it was very much— very much anticipated. She didn't release any singles from it or anything. It was just, like, all at once. You don't get anything until you get this whole album, so...

Sydnee: Well, I enjoyed it.

Raleigh: Good.

Sydnee: And Cooper really likes the part in that music video where everything turns red.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: I thought she'd like that music video.

Sydnee: She told me right before it happened: "[croaky voice] It's all gonna turn red now."

Raleigh: [snorts]

Sydnee: I said, "What?"

"[croaky voice] It will all turn red. See? It's all red."

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] "Okay. Thank you for the—[laughs] thank you for the play-by-play."

Raleigh: She also hated when they ate the cake with their hands.

Sydnee: Yes.

Raleigh: She hated it got ruined like that. It was a white wedding cake, and Taylor Swift just took a big chunk out of it. She was like, "[gasps]". [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, and it was red velvet inside, which is one of Cooper's favorite flavors. So it was like, "Why are you wasting... "

Taylor: I thought Cooper would enjoy that.

Sydnee: Well, it wasn't her eating it. [laughs]

Raleigh: She didn't get it.

Sydnee: Why did Taylor Swift get to ruin it? [laughs]

Raleigh: Well, thank you all again. Um, what is next?

Sydnee: Uh... oh!

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: I did decide on something that's next, and I don't— it's a— it's a wild choice. But we're gonna talk about *Supermarket Sweep* next week.

Raleigh: Yeah we are!

Taylor: Whoo!

Raleigh: I'm so excited.

Sydnee: Very important to young Sydnee, *Supermarket Sweep*. [laughs]

Taylor: And apparently it's back.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: And it's back! And it's great, with Leslie Jones as the host. It's really good. It was good then, it's good now. Uh, so check either out. The old, the new. I mean, the— the conceit of the show has not changed very much, so... [laughs]

Taylor: You don't need to watch every episode to be ready for next week?

Sydnee: [laughs] There's no continuity of the plot.

Raleigh: I will watch every episode.

Sydnee: I probably have. Um, well, thank you. Thank you, Raleigh, for sharing with us.

Raleigh: Oh.

Sydnee: And thank you, listeners. You should go to Maximumfun.org and check out a lot of great podcasts you would enjoy. You can tweet at us @stillbuff. You can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org, and

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

[theme music plays in the background]

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

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Teylor Smirl.

Rileigh: I am still buffering...

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

Sydnee: You think he'll give the scarf back now?

Rileigh: I don't know. Maggie Gyllenhaal doesn't even know about it. She was like, "I don't know what scarf you're talking about."

Taylor: Really?

Rileigh: It's very funny. Yeah. [laughs]

Sydnee: Really?

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: That's amazing.

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: That's a really cool answer, actually.

Rileigh: Yeah. [laughs]

Sydnee: "I don't know— what?"

Rileigh: "What scarf?"

[theme music ends]

[music plays]

Pee-wee: Hello! I'm Pee-wee Herman. You might know me from TV. But I really wanna be a DJ! It took some convincing, but KCRW finally agreed

to give me an hour on the radio to play you some music with my friends!
[laughs]

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[laughs]

It'll be available for the whole week, from November 26th to December 3rd, so you can listen to it [increasing in volume] again, and again, and again, and again, and again! [laughs]

The *Pee-wee Herman Radio Hour* was produced by Maximum Fun, and can be streamed on KCRW.com until December 3rd.

[chord]

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