

Still Buffering 315: "Our Flag Means Death"

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[theme music plays]

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

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Sydnee: So, this is a— this is an intense recording.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: We're in the middle of a storm.

Raleigh: Well, we are.

Sydnee: We are. Taylor, you're not.

Raleigh: In Huntington.

Taylor: No, I'm— I'm just experiencing this from a distance. I have storm sympathy for you.

Sydnee: You're emotionally in it with us.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: If not physically. It is— it is very likely the power may go out.

Raleigh: So it's like a fun race against time.

Sydnee: I keep getting warnings on my phone, and they alternate between excessive heat and severe thunderstorm. [laughs quietly] I just get these

warnings! I don't know— I don't even know what app is sending my warnings that there is—

Raleigh: All of them.

Sydnee: All day I got "Excessive heat," and then it was like, "Severe thunderstorm." And I just got another "Excessive heat."

Taylor: Just—

Raleigh: I got angry at the excessive heat warning I got on my phone today, because I was outside and had already been outside for an hour, and I had to continue being outside. And I was like, "Yeah, I know! I know! There's nothing I can do about it!" [laughs]

Sydnee: Our, uh— we had rehearsal tonight.

Raleigh: Yes. We do outdoor theater. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I thought those children were gonna melt. They did look adorable with their very rosy cheeks. [laughs]

Raleigh: They did, it was actually very cute. [laughs]

Sydnee: As I'm, like, running around in between going "Water, water, water." [laughs]

Taylor: Bunch of sweaty kids. So cute.

Sydnee: Ohh, I took those costumes off the girls. They were the sweatiest... I mean, 'cause, like, I don't know.

Raleigh: I basically threw away all the clothes I was wearing. I was just like, "Yeah, there's no saving these." It's like I jumped in a pool.

Sydnee: When it finally started raining— which was a relief, 'cause then the humidity broke and the temperature dropped, and it's a little— I mean, it's stormy, but at least it's not so hot. The girls were like, "Can we run around in that?" They were just still so hot!

Rileigh: Shower!

Sydnee: And I was like, "[tired] Yeah." So they were just, like, running around. "It feels so good!" [laughs]

Rileigh: Yeah, my weather app said it was 95 degrees, but it felt like 109 because of the humidity. I was like, "Alright." This is—

Sydnee: You couldn't breathe!

Rileigh: No. No.

Sydnee: Hmm. Before bed, Cooper looked at me and said, "Before bed, I want to watch the show that you told me about. With the baby vampire that bites... the mommy."

Taylor: What?

Sydnee: She's talking about *Twilight*.

Rileigh: Of course! [laughs]

Taylor: Oh no.

Sydnee: And I don't even remember when we talked about *Twilight*. At some point in the— at some point— she likes all things spooky. And at some point vampires were the discussion. And we talked about, like, "Not all vampires are scary. Some of them sparkle in the sunlight." I was trying to, like... make them seem not so scary.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm. She wants them to be scary, though.

Sydnee: Yeah. But she— but so, you know, she just indulged in the scene of Renesmee being born real quick before bed. And she was like, "That was great."

[all laugh quietly]

Sydnee: "I liked the cup of blood." I'm like, "Yep. Yep."

Rileigh: Can you please share with Teylor and our listening audience what Cooper did the other night at the foot of her bed? Before going to bed?

Sydnee: Oh. Oh. She, uh, just—

Rileigh: 'Cause it's very related.

Sydnee: Out of nowhere, she— there's a little toy chest at the end of her bed. Um, which looks like a treasure chest, like a pirate treasure chest, that Justin built for her. And she opened it up and climbed inside of it and pulled a blanket up over half of her. And she actually, like, demanded Charlie bring her a pillow for her head, and then laid her head back and said, "I'm in my coffin."

Teylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs]

Teylor: That rocks.

Sydnee: I was like, "Oh no. [laughs] No."

Teylor: That's amazing. I— I felt responsible for, like, some sort of core memory that she's developed, because when I was in town I, uh... I was wearing my Pennywise t-shirt. And she had said that she had dreams— she approached me and said, "I dreamed last night about a scary clown. And you have a scary clown on your t-shirt."

And that lineup of events— because I guess she told you about the clowns that morning, so she did in fact dream about Pennywise, and then the next day I just happened to put on a Pennywise t-shirt. I'm like, "Oh no. This is gonna be some, like, messed up poetry one day." [laughs]

Sydnee: I don't know. She— I can't tell if she likes Pennywise or not, though. Because, uh, they were actually— when they were running around in the rain they were playing near the drain, and she kept, like, climbing around over the storm drain. I know! And Justin kept going—

Teylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: That's the one place you don't go!

Sydnee: "Stay away, stay away, stay away! That's not safe!" And he said [laughs quietly], "Should we tell her to stay away 'cause Pennywise is down there?"

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: And I said, "No! No, I don't want to scare her."

Raleigh: But also don't tell her that's why to stay away, because it might draw her to it.

Sydnee: She might wanna go down there. And he's like, "No, I'm pretty sure she's scared." But then later she was like, "Mommy, before we go to bed, can you show me pictures of scary clowns?"

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: "Real quick, before I get in bed— I'm a four-year-old child and I need to look at some pictures of scary clowns, and then I'll be so ready for bed."
[laughs]

Raleigh: I remember we used to think it was weird that Charlie would wanna see pictures of crying babies. Little did we know how good we had it.

Sydnee: Oh, she did, she did!

Raleigh: She just wanted to know what emotions were like.

Sydnee: [through laughter] Aww.

Raleigh: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: She's very emotional. Every time Cooper so much as, like— like, grazes her hand past her aggressively, Charlie's like, "[tearfully] No-o-o-o! Mommy!"

Raleigh: Except I just gotta say— and this is the last thing I'll say, we can talk about the thing we're talking about— Charlie, when she is at a theater rehearsal, as soon as she enters that environment... it's all gone. She is not, like, sensitive to her little sister. She forgets her little sister is there. She is just in her element.

Everyone's her best friend. She is in her costume. She knows everyone's lines. Her choreography gets bigger every single night.

She said to me, she said, "I think I know what I need." I said, "What?" She said, "An audience."

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: I was like, "Oh, God. This is what happens when you're raised in this family, I guess."

Sydnee: Oh my God. It was bound to— the Smirl and McElroys have come together. Um, yeah. I— she feels very cool. She actually— the other day I had the moment I've been dreading since I had children, which is I went in for a hug, and she gave me the— like, kind of shrugged away from me and went, "Mom... "

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I was like, "[horrified gasp] [whispering] No! No!"

Raleigh: She wouldn't let *me* hold her hand at rehearsal. Like, me?! Me?!

Taylor: Oh, that— you got your last hug for, like, the next what? 15 to 20 years?

Raleigh: 15 years at least, yeah.

Sydnee: I mean, she'll still hug me at home.

Taylor: Okay.

Raleigh: Oh.

Sydnee: It's just out in public— it was the— and then she looked at me. We were at this, like, dance party down at Pullman Square, which is, like, outdoor area. Anyway, there was a dance party for kids. So she's outside with her friends, they're dancing. And then she comes walking over to me and she's like, "Mom, I'm gonna go with my friends to the arcade."

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs] What?

Raleigh: [through laughter] You're seven!

Sydnee: And then turns around to walk away. And I was like, "What? No you're not." And she went, "Whyyy?" And I said, "Because you're seven? Like, no you're not— what do you mean, you're going with your friends to the arcade? And also, like, what year is it?"

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: "[valley girl voice] Mo-om, it's 1985 and I'm going with my friends to the arcade." [laughs]

Raleigh: Oh...

Sydnee: We all went to the arcade.

Raleigh: Well, it's also a bar.

Taylor: Oh!

Sydnee: Well, and the— well, it's—

Taylor: Okay, well, that's—

Raleigh: In the day, it's family friendly.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: But they also always have drinks.

Sydnee: It's an arcade bar kind of thing.

Raleigh: Yes.

Taylor: Not... not great for unaccompanied seven-year-olds, I guess.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: No, it is not the kind of place you would— well, I mean, where do I send my unaccompanied [through laughter] seven-year-old? What is the place I send her?!

Taylor: The answer is nowhere. The library? Maybe the library.

Sydnee: I don't know about unaccompanied. Um... I don't know. Anyway, we're gonna talk about a great TV show. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Hey.

Sydnee: There's a transition. Uh, Rileigh, you finally watched *Our Flag Means Death*.

Rileigh: Yes. I am that kind of person that if you tell me, "Oh, you couldn't do that." I'll say, "A-ha, watch." And then I forced myself during my opening weekend of shows after tech week to watch all ten episodes of *Our Flag Means Death*. [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah, was it— was it forced? Was it—

Rileigh: It was not forced. I will be honest, for anyone who has not watched it and is thinking about it. It did take me, like, a full, I think—two episodes I think is what it was before I was like, "Okay. I now enjoy watching this." I mean—

Sydnee: [simultaneously] Us too.

Rileigh: —that's how I felt at the beginning of *Schitt's Creek*.

Sydnee: Us too.

Rileigh: I watched the first season of *Schitt's Creek* and gave up on it and said, "Why does everyone love this?" So I understand it happens very often. It's hard to get into a show sometimes. But after that it was very enjoyable.

Taylor: That's definitely the consensus on *Our Flag Means Death*, though. Like, you've kinda got to stick it out for the first... when does Blackbeard show up? Three, episode three, four?

Sydnee: Something like that.

Rileigh: Three. I think that's why it was two, I think he wasn't in the first two, and I think it was three.

Taylor: Yeah. I enjoyed it all, but yeah.

Sydnee: No, that definitely—

Taylor: Yeah.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. No, that definitely was the experience we had. Everybody kept telling us we should watch it. Tey, I think you had mentioned it. Several people had said "You should watch this." So we watched the first episode and we were both like, "Well... I mean... I don't know. We weren't laughing a whole lot."

Which I think is what— I think that's part of it, though. We went into it thinking this is supposed to just be comedy. And it's more than that. I mean, I'm not saying it's not funny. It's just like— it's like *Schitt's Creek*. There are lots of episodes of *Schitt's Creek* where I'm not, like, rolling on the floor the whole time.

Rileigh: Some of them I'm crying the whole time.

Sydnee: Some of them— yes. Some of them— and some of them are hilarious. But others are like, "Aww. That was a nice little story." And sometimes that's what Our Fla— and I think that if you go into it thinking, like, "I'm gonna laugh my butt off at these pirates," it's not exactly that. [laughs]

Taylor: Well, that's not the sense of humor, either. It's kind of an absurdist sense of humor. It's not a, you know, setup, punchline delivery kind of humor. Which I prefer, frankly.

Rileigh: It feels like... and it's been a very long time since I've seen this, so maybe this isn't a good connection. But I remember watching *Monty Python* with Dad one time.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: Like, it feels like a very, very updated version of that. You know what I mean? Like, that kind of humor.

Taylor: Yeah. No, I think that—

Sydnee: It has some of that, yeah.

Raleigh: And that kind of setting. 'Cause I'm also not someone who will gravitate towards things that are, like, historical in that sense, like piratey stuff or medieval stuff, even if it's comedy, usually not just my field of interest. Um, but this felt very that.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Well, that's— I mean, you are— Sydnee, I feel like you're familiar with, like, *Flight of the Concorde* or, like, *What We Do in the Shadows*. It's all the same crew. It's a lot of the same people involved. It is that— it's not— it's weird, and it's funny 'cause it's weird, but it's not... it's not traditional, like, you know, here's the laugh track that plays. Because... you know. I don't know.

Raleigh: It is not *Friends*. [laughs]

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: Yes, exactly.

Taylor: [through laughter] That's what I was exactly thinking of, because Chandler puts some weird inflection on a word, and that's humor.

Raleigh: [laughs] And usually that word is, "Bee."

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: Sometimes that's funny though, to be fair.

Taylor: That's fine.

Sydnee: But... [laughs]

Raleigh: Sydnee loves Chandler. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] I just— I just mean sometimes it's funny. Uh, I— yeah. I think that is kind of the problem at first, is we went in very much expecting, like, just comedy. And it wasn't that, and we weren't sure what it was. And so we watched a couple episodes, and then we sort of let it go. And then everybody kept telling us "You gotta stick with it. You gotta stick with it. You gotta stick with it."

And so we just sat down— much like *Schitt's Creek*! Actually, do you remember why— what we did with *Schitt's Creek*?

Raleigh: Didn't you start it and stop?

Sydnee: We played chicken.

Raleigh: That's right.

Sydnee: Who would—

Raleigh: Who's gonna give up first?

Sydnee: Who would give up first. Because we were like, Mom and Dad are making us watch this show. Let's see who gives in first. And then at some point we weren't playing anymore, 'cause we were both enjoying it so much that we didn't want to stop.

Taylor: We really have to give credit to Mom on that, because Mom was the one that kept telling all of us to watch it. And I was like, "No, I won't. I'm not— I'm just gonna watch it to make you stop telling me to watch it," but she was right. We all loved it.

Sydnee: That's never worked for her with *The Blacklist*.

Taylor: [crosstalk] worked for her with a lot of shows.

Raleigh: [laughs] But James Spader's so good in it!

Sydnee: But James— if for nothing else... for James Spader.

Taylor: Can you do the same thing in reverse and make Mom and Dad watch *Our Flag Means Death*?

Sydnee: We— well, they watched an episode...

Raleigh: And of all the people I thought would love this—

Sydnee: I think just one.

Raleigh: —our Dad is at the top of that list.

Sydnee: Right?

Raleigh: He loves pirates.

Sydnee: Yeah!

Raleigh: That man loves a good nautical adventure.

Taylor: See, now— and well, I don't think it's fair to judge anybody's reaction to the first episode.

Raleigh: That's true. If it wouldn't have been for us doing this episode, I would not have picked it up as fast as I did. I would not have kept going immediately.

Sydnee: It— and I'll tell you— and, I mean, we obviously will spoil a lot of the show. I think we should say that up front.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I think the thing that I— Taylor, you had endorsed it. And when you sold it to me, you said "Have you seen *Our Flag Means Death*?" And I said, "Oh, I think I've heard of that, but we haven't watched it yet."

And you said, "It's the gay pirate one."

And I went, "Oh, okay."

And it was kind of a relief. Because as I started watching it I really was worried, like, are they gonna make me think— are they gonna make me ship and not

deliver? I was so worried that that's what I— like, you know? But you had— like, you had given me that little hope ahead of time. Like, "Teylor endorsed this. It's not gonna bait me." [laughs]

Teylor: Well, and I was— when I saw— I mean, I don't know. I feel like a lot of times, especially being in, like, the queer and art world on the internet, there's a lot of things that get picked up like, "Oh, this is queer representation!" And I watch and I'm like, "No. The people were just weird. Not everybody that's weird is queer."

Sydnee: [laughs]

Teylor: [through laughter] Like— I mean, I'm glad you see yourself in it. Have your fun, draw your fanart. But, like, I don't— I'm tired of things just— like, crumbs. And like, "Oh, this is fine. Oh, two people in *Star Wars* that maybe were the same gender had a kiss in the background. Oh yeah, *Star Wars* gay! Ooh!" Like, no. I'm over it.

And so everyone's like, "Oh, it's so gay." I was like, "Okay. I'll be the judge of this." But I—

Rileigh: [laughs]

Teylor: —had friends that were like, "No, you— I promise it delivers. I won't spoil anything, but it delivers." And I was very... I can't explain the feeling I had when it delivered. Like, I'm not— I don't mean— obviously that's a new feeling, 'cause so rarely does media deliver in, like, a good, like, queer storyline.

Rileigh: Yes.

Sydnee: It really— it's so true. Because when I first started watching I thought, is the whole thing... like, and I shouldn't have underestimated... like, that he is— that Stede Bonnet is... you know, he's kind of fussy, he's somewhat effeminate. Is that, like— is that why people are identifying this? You know, like—but no. It's so much more than that. Like, yes, he is those things. But that's not all. [laughs]

Rileigh: Yeah.

Teylor: Well, and it's—

Sydnee: We really are going somewhere.

Taylor: Yeah. And I mean, even, like— even before you get the payoff towards the end with Blackbeard and Bonnet, like, you get so much of the rest of the cast. Like, by then I didn't even care. 'Cause I was like, well, you just delivered so much of the cast as— is queer in different ways that it's like, I kind of— like, you're good. [laughs]

Sydnee: In that very *Schitt's Creek* fashion where it just is true, and it's not...

Raleigh: It's not necessarily a big storyline. It's just, like, part of it. Yes.

Sydnee: Yes, there are multiple characters who are engaged in relationships that aren't straight. And, you know, with gender representations like Jim, who are nonbinary. And it's just there, and it's not the whole thing. It's mentioned, like, it's acknowledged, but then— and the people who have a problem, people who ever say anything, like, the slightest bit derogatory, are portrayed as, like, just terrible people. You know? There's no daylight given for the people who in any way throw shade at that.

Taylor: Yeah. I saw it compared in relation to *Schitt's Creek*, and the phrase was, uh, "Heteronormative, not homophobic." Although I think *Our Flag Means Death* almost takes it a step farther where I don't know if it's heteronormative. I'd say that most of the relationships you see— like, what is it, the— who's the pirate queen? Jackie?

Raleigh: Jackie.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: You know? Who has all of her husbands. Like, there's a lot— like, I don't— there aren't, like, a lot of relationships in there that are what I would deem heteronormative. [laughs]

Sydnee: No. I mean— well, I mean, if you look at, like, the marriage that kicks off the entire story, it's Stede and his wife... Mary?

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah. Yes? Ma... Maggie? Mary?

Taylor: Mary?

Sydnee: Mary?

Raleigh: Mary?

Sydnee: Right?

Taylor: The widow Bonnet.

Sydnee: Yes. Anyway, it's that marriage.

Raleigh: [simultaneously] We're awful. [laughs]

Sydnee: And obviously it's— I mean, if that is, like, the—[laughs quietly] here's the representation of a straight marriage...

Raleigh: It's like the unhappiest relationship in the entire show!

Sydnee: They're unhappy. And he's unhappy, because obviously he's not straight. But she is not unhappy because she wants to be married, you know, to a woman or something. Like, it's not that obvious. It's just that just being in this, like...

Raleigh: Well, it was arranged, right?

Sydnee: Yeah, it was an arranged marriage and she's not happy in it, and she wants to pursue other things. And she doesn't even want to, like— I don't even think they— do they ever indicate that she wants to marry the other guy she's with?

Taylor: No, I think she likes her freedom of being...

Sydnee: Yeah, she talks about liking being a widow, yeah.

Raleigh: Liking being a widow, yeah, that's what it is.

Sydnee: So, like, I— I mean, I think what— like, it's kind of saying, you know, it's fine that she doesn't want to be married. And she can just be sort of hooking

up with this guy casually. And maybe he's part of the family, and maybe that will be a partner for a while, and maybe it won't. It doesn't matter. Yeah. Where is the healthy heterosexual relationship?

Taylor: Well, and I mean, even the fact that, like, the... I don't know. Like, I like that the kids are present. I mean, they're— you know, they're given storylines. But it's kind of like they understand, too. Like, kids can understand complicated things. Like, they have supportive parents. They're just living their own lives. I don't know. It's not like— it doesn't show that other side where there's gotta be the serious— the—[laughs] the very special episode of *Our Flag Means Death* where we can confront the damage of different kinds of relationships.

Raleigh: The other thing I was thinking about is—

Sydnee: I wasn't looking for a heterosexual relationship. I don't want that to come across that way. Like, "[sarcastically] Where is it? I need it!" I just mean, like, yeah, it's not heteronormative. You don't see that.

Raleigh: You had me sitting here thinking if there even was one. And Jim and the other pirate— what is his name?

Sydnee: Oh... I don't...

Raleigh: O— Olu? Olu? Something like that, right?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: I mean, that's a woman.

Sydnee: Well, Jim's nonbinary.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Oh, I didn't realize that.

Sydnee: Well, they don't— again, they don't—

Raleigh: I guess it was never explicitly said either way, I just assumed— well, that's me assuming and being heteronormative on my own. [laughs] Because I was like, oh, this is a person disguised as a man. So it— with a genuine disguise.

The only reason I say that is because they have a disguise. So that was me assuming that it must be a woman, then.

Taylor: Well, I mean, I think that was really— the way they handled that was so beautiful. Because you think that's gonna be it. Like, "Oh, it's a woman disguised as a man." But then it's very clearly like they're— you meet their, um... the nun that took care of them?

Sydnee: Their grandma.

Raleigh: That's right.

Taylor: And they use— she uses they pronouns immediately. Like, that is just fine. It's not questioned.

Raleigh: I didn't even question that, yeah.

Taylor: And Jim says, "I go by Jim. Just call me Jim." Like, Jim is Jim. That is...

Sydnee: And I think what you assumed is what they want you to. Because it's what the other pirates assume.

Raleigh: Right.

Sydnee: And so I think they want that assumption to be made, just so that they can undo it. And, like, I think that's a really powerful piece of media. If you, alongside the characters, assume, like, oh, this is a story of a— you know, a woman who was pretending to be a man to hide from— I mean, well, she's being sought to be killed.

Raleigh: For murder, yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. [laughs] So she— yeah, she's wanted. Like, it's just sort of that story. But it's not that. It's something else. And we assume that because of, you know, forcing people into a gender binary and heteronormativity and all that, and it's— yeah.

Raleigh: And it's a trope to be a woman disguised as a man.

Sydnee: Exactly.

Raleigh: In a group of men, and... yeah.

Taylor: Well, and I think it was a very— like, the scene where the rest of the pirates kind of get on board with "Oh, you're Jim. That's what we call you. That's fine." It was such, like, a spoon fed, like, "You saw me as this before. You liked me as Jim before. Can we just keep doing that?" And everyone's like, "Yeah, that makes sense. Sure." It's, like, the most, like, basic— like, yes. This is how you— this is my name. This is who I am. It's that easy, right? And all the pirates are like, "Yeah, that's fine. Sure, makes sense." [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. No, I thought it was very well done. All of that, it's all handled— again, it just— it's like— it's an alternate universe. And, I mean, it's set in the past, but not the historically accurate past, really. You know what I— I know it's based on real people—

Raleigh: [simultaneously] The goofy past.

Sydnee: —and real events but, like— yeah. I mean... it's obviously, like, it's own thing. Like, there's a lot of anachronistic kind of stuff. But it's this sort of alternate past where also, in addition to all of that, we're just all fine with this. It just is.

Taylor: Well, and I mean, there's a little bit of truth there in that pirates were pretty... gay. You know?

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: You did have, like—

Raleigh: You heard it here first. Pirates are gay!

Taylor: There were a lot of gay pirates! No, there was, like, the— what is it where you can, like, marry your— your— your fellow captain, and it's just like you just are two... two pirates that you're together, you're mates. And also there were a lot of, uh, you know, famous pirates that were disguised as what would've been— you know, as, like, women that were disguised as men. However they identified, who knows? But there was gender play. There was— there was pirate gay marriage. All sorts of stuff. It was— you know. Perhaps that's a good time period to set the show because, eh, who knows what was really going on? [laughs]

Sydnee: That's true.

Raleigh: That's true, that's true.

Sydnee: No, we don't know.

Raleigh: None of us were around. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Well, and it's also really hard, whenever you talk about that kind of thing using all of the terminology that we have today when you're talking about a time where even to define oneself, people would— I mean, and they— they represent that well again with Jim. The— the concept of, like, the word nonbinary would not have— I mean, at the time, probably wouldn't have been used. So Jim doesn't have the language that we use today, but still it's there. Like, knows. It's the same thing. We just— we have words that we didn't use back then.

Taylor: Well, and it is a nonbinary actor that plays Jim, which I think is really cool.

Raleigh: Oh, I didn't know that.

Taylor: Like, this built in a part for the actor to portray themselves in a way.

Sydnee: That is really cool. Um, I want to talk more about, like, the show itself and why we're all obsessed with it. But before we do that...

Raleigh: Let's check the group message. So, it's been a busy time here. You'd think, it's summer, it's time to relax. Not when you do summer theater, and the whole family does it. Which means usually every single day, even when we have a day off, we are ordering food, because we have no food in the house to cook or consume. Um, and to do that we use DoorDash in my home. Because DoorDash is the app that brings you food you're craving right now right to your door. And all you have to do is open up the DoorDash app, pick what you want to eat, and it's left safely outside your door with the new contactless delivery dropoff setting, which I use always, and I hope it stays around forever. I know that it was, you know, brought into the world to limit contact with other people, but I hope in decades we still have that option to limit my contact with strangers as much as possible. That is my least favorite part of ordering food was always having to interact with someone. Now I don't even have to do that. It's just left right at my door, fresh and hot and safe and tasty. And many of your local favorite

restaurants are still open for delivery on DoorDash as well. So you can pick your favorite local restaurant and get some of their food left at your door. Lots of options, and DoorDash is always convenient and quick and easy, making my life much easier.

So, Tey, if our listeners want to check out DoorDash, what should they do?

Taylor: Well, right now our listeners can get \$5 off their first order of \$15 or more and zero delivery fees for the first month when you download the DoorDash app and enter code "buffering". That's \$5 off your first order and zero delivery fees for a month when you download the DoorDash app in the app store and enter code "buffering". Don't forget. That's code "buffering" for \$5 off your first order with DoorDash.

Sydnee: Hey, Tey, you're a cat owner, right?

Taylor: I am!

Sydnee: Well, would you say that you own your cat? Do we really own our cats?

Raleigh: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: No, we are— we are roommates. We are companions. We coexist comfortably.

Raleigh: Roommates.

Sydnee: And I would say we're also sort of butlers for our cats.

Taylor: [laughs] Yes. Caretakers.

Sydnee: Yes. We care for them, we bring them food, and we clean out their litter boxes. And that takes a lot of time. Cleaning out a litter box, adding more litter. Um, it can be a hassle, no matter how much you love your roommate cat and want to take care of it. It's not always the most fun.

So, our new sponsor, Kitty Poo Club, has found the perfect solution for this problem.

Raleigh: I love that name.

Sydnee: I know. Kitty Poo Club. Every month, Kitty Poo Club delivers an affordable and recyclable litter box that's prefilled with the litter of your choice. So it shows up, you open it up, your cat's got a nice little litter box with the litter that you chose right there to use. Um, and when the month is up, you dispose of the litter and recycle the box. So you don't have to worry. 'Cause that was my first thought was "Oh no, a different box every month? Isn't that wasteful?"

Nope, 'cause they're recyclable! So you don't have to worry. It's good for the environment. It's good for your cat. And you're gonna spend less time cleaning and refilling a litter box. You can easily customize your subscription at any time. You can add things like toys, treats, accessories; whatever will make you and your roommate, AKA the cat, happy. [laughs quietly] So, Tey, if our listeners want to try Kitty Poo Club, what should they do?

Taylor: Well, right now Kitty Poo Club is offering an awesome discount on your first litter box order, and free shipping when you set up an autoship. Just go to www.kittypooclub.com to save on your first autoship order of litter boxes. with free shipping. And be sure to let them know *Still Buffering* sent you after your checkout. That's kittypooclub.com.

Sydnee: So, um, I don't know how it was that— I mean, as I watched the show I realized I was enjoying it. And I don't know— is it the— is it the actors? Is that where the magic is? What is it that makes it— 'cause it's not just me. I mean, people are obsessed with this show. I am among them. This is not me... you know, criticizing. What is— is it the—[stammering] What is it? What's the magic? It's more than just that it's good.

Raleigh: I mean, I guess if I had to guess, as the most recent viewer here of the show, I think it's just that this is a story being told in a context and setting in time and place with people that has never been told before. Like, you know what I mean? Like, when have we gotten a show about gay pirates that's, like, openly just easily about gay pirates? That's also funny, and also heartwarming.

Sydnee: Or a show that acknowledged that the pirates it was about were gay. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah. I mean, like, what other— like, you got *Pirates of the Caribbean*. There aren't even a lot of other big— big pirate times, in the movies and the shows, so... [through laughter] this is not a big pirate time.

Sydnee: There's Captain Hook...

Rileigh: In culture.

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: Well...

Sydnee: And his crew.

Taylor: Well, he is pretty... I mean... flamboyant.

Rileigh: Um... [laughs] I love how we were just like, "I can't believe people used to just point to characters like, 'Oh, that's a gay character,' when they're not." And then we're like, "Well, Captain Hook, though." [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Well, I— okay, but look. Disney's history—

Rileigh: [simultaneously] 'Cause I agree.

Taylor: —with queer-coded villains. That's kind of every villain.

Rileigh: That's true.

Taylor: Point to one Disney villain that is... straight.

[pause]

Rileigh: That's true. That is true.

Sydnee: Uhh... uhh...

Rileigh: 'Cause I agree with you. As soon as you said it I was like, "Well... " [laughs]

Sydnee: I feel like for a while in *Tangled* that horse is sort of the villain, and—

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: —the horse strikes me as—

Rileigh: No! No!

Sydnee: —as pretty straight. [laughs]

Taylor: I don't think the— you're right. The horse is very straight. That's— that's [crosstalk].

Rileigh: The horse is not the villain!

Sydnee: For a while!

Rileigh: No! Mother Gothel!

Sydnee: But for a while the horse is trying to—

Rileigh: No! [laughs]

Sydnee: —capture Flynn Rider. Which I didn't even know horses could do on their own.

Rileigh: The horse is a feisty sidekick.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Okay, you know what? If the straightest villain in the Disney universe is the horse, that's fine. I will agree with that.

Sydnee: [laughs] There's a— there's one of those Tinkerbell movies where they do, like, Tinkerbell's backstory and all the stuff that she does with her fairies when Peter Pan's not around. Um—[laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs] I wish that's the way those movies were advertised. "You ever wonder what Tinkerbell does with all the other pixie friends when Peter Pan's not around?"

Taylor: I have wondered.

Rileigh: [laughs] Well, here you go.

Sydnee: There's one with a pirate fairy, and the pirate fairy hooks up with a pirate crew.

Rileigh: Yeah!

Sydnee: And there's this, like... the dude that, like, helps interpret for her on the pirate crew... like, it's this secret twist at the end. He's Captain Hook.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: But it's like young Captain Hook.

Taylor: Oh!

Sydnee: And he's, like, kinda hot. [laughs] [pause] Anyway. [laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs] This is going in a weird direction. But that was my long way of saying I think people like it because we like fun pirate adventures, and now we get to watch them with these added... stories.

Sydnee: And they take out all the long, boring sailing parts.

Rileigh: Yeah, there's not a lot of boring sailing.

Taylor: And I do think that, like, it is— it— the freshness is from, like, a lot of times when we know we're encountering queer media, it's sold as queer media. That is part of the... and it's either— I feel like a lot of it falls into two categories where it is about the pain of being gay, you know? Suffering is a big aspect because of your identity. Or it's just completely removed from that and it's like a— there's no conflict. It just needs to be as happy as possible. But they're still always framed as "Oh, it's about a gay thing." This was just like, yeah, there's— there's queer characters, but it's not— it's a pirate story.

We don't get a lot of media that's just normal mainstream stuff that just happens to naturally include queer characters in funny dialog and, you know, humorous scenes, in natural scenes. It's always the focus is— they're queer first, and then

the story comes. Whereas in this it's the story first. They just happen to be gay or queer.

Sydnee: I think that's true, because the more you watch, like, especially— I think what's interesting that they do with the character of Ed, Blackbeard, is you're seeing, like, one of history's scariest pirates, I guess— I don't know if there's a rating for those. I don't know if there's a ranking list.

Raleigh: I mean—

Taylor: I think— I think he's the top.

Raleigh: I was gonna say, he's the only one I've actually heard of, so...

Sydnee: Wasn't there a Redbeard, too?

Taylor: Bluebeard?

Sydnee: A Bluebeard?

Raleigh: [quietly] What?

Sydnee: There were lots of—[laughs]

Raleigh: Now, Blackbeard and Redbeard make sense, 'cause those are naturally occurring hair colors. Where did Bluebeard come from? [laughs]

Taylor: Chartreuse... Mustache.

Sydnee: I think there was a Bluebeard, though. But I don't know why he's called Blueb— there has to be—

Raleigh: I think I remember that from an escape room.

Sydnee: There has to be a reason. I don't know. But anyway, you're seeing this guy who is, like, a scary, deadly pirate.

Raleigh: History's scariest pirate, yes.

Sydnee: And because you're seeing him through the eyes of this, like, romant—like, you know, growing romantic relationship, what you're really talking about is, like, the history of his trauma that he's unpacking, this life that he's leading where he is pretending to be really vicious, but also isn't, because he doesn't murder people nearly as much as people think. Except he sorta does, because he also doesn't think that, like, setting somebody's boat on fire is murdering them. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: That's true.

Sydnee: Like, "The fire killed them, not me." [laughs] You know? And, like, it's all very interesting to, like, study a character through someone else. That's how you're doing— you're being able to do it. Through the eyes of someone who cares about them. And so you're not seeing them as Blackbeard the pirate. You're seeing him as Ed.

Raleigh: Ed, yes.

Sydnee: This, you know, complicated human who's sort of going through, like, a midlife crisis, you know? Like, I don't know if pirating just doesn't do it for me anymore.

Taylor: Well, and I feel like, you know, that there's a lot of... [laughs quietly] like, sort of deconstruction of toxic masculinity. When you look at both the leads, they play very specific roles in their life. You know, Ed is this— oh, he's this violent, evil, murderous pirate. And it's clear that he's gotten to a point in his life where he's like, "I don't wanna be that, and that's not who I am." And, I mean, same with Stede Bonnet. He's been trying to play this, you know, patriarchal... head of the family role, and it's just not— he doesn't want that. Like... you know.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. No, he doesn't want it, and it's not his strength. And they're both very unhappy following the traditional roles— I mean, as much as you can call being a murderous pirate a traditional role— that—

Taylor: Being aggressive, being, you know, powerful. Uh, being a leader. You know.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Um, which is— it's interesting. I feel like on TikTok people have a lot of things to say about the character of Izzy Hands.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: And I don't— I don't—

Raleigh: I just love that name.

Sydnee: I don't know if I understand all the— usually they're saying it through clips about Izzy. [laughs quietly] And so I don't always know what they're trying to tell me about him.

Raleigh: I don't get *Our Flag Means Death* TikToks, so what are they saying about Izzy?

Sydnee: Um, sometimes it's about, like, wanting to know, desperately know what the— the romantic backstory between him and Ed is. There are a lot of people who feel like that that's... at least on TikTok, there are a lot of people who feel like that's where a lot of that anger comes from is, like, some history of being scorned.

Raleigh: I hadn't thought about that.

Sydnee: And, like, it's jealousy? I don't know. Other people see Izzy as, like, the bad guy, the baddest guy who ruined everything. Everybody was just trying to have a good time. Uh, I don't know. But people make a lot of TikToks about Izzy.

Raleigh: Interesting. Um, Tey, I gotta ask. As the resident... bird— bird lover, bird friend...

Taylor: Ooh, there is— there is bird violence in this.

Raleigh: I... there is bird violence! And, I mean, it was done in a way that I don't wanna say was comedic. But, like, depicted to be very obviously not... real. Real in the context of the show, but not real in the sense of, like, real— real world. Um, but I don't think I've ever cried over a moment between an animal and a person like that, uh, than I did with— what? Uh... what was it? Carl?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Carl, yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: And Carl's wife? [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Yeah. Hey, it's a— this show is about all types of love, you know? Including a man and his bird friend. And his bird friend's wife. [wheezes]

Raleigh: Said "Where's— where is Carl? He didn't come home!" [laughs quietly]

Taylor: It's so sad.

Raleigh: Um, it was.

Sydnee: That is a rough scene.

Raleigh: But it was another moment— it was another where it's just— I really appreciated, like, this— there's a lot going on here. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I, uh—

Raleigh: Everyone gets complexity.

Sydnee: I saw— again, I get lots of these TikToks. I saw one where somebody was sort of deconstructing the scene on the fancy boat. With the fancy people.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: That are... French?

Raleigh: That's what they—

Taylor: But they're *massive* aggressive.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah. [laughs] That's what they were made to seem.

Sydnee: The— so, um, it was interesting because they were sort of talking about how, like, it almost seems like they were playing with trope of, in a lot of, like, pirate adventures and, like, out-on-the-seas adventures set in past time periods, you will have, like, a moment where the pirates encounter some sort of indigenous population somewhere. And they're usually portrayed pretty terribly, right? Like, with a lot of racist stereotypes and, um, a lot of— a lot of things that are unflattering about the culture that you are encountering. And the idea is that that's sort of what they're doing with this scene. Because it's like this sort of, like, we don't really know what French people are like, but we've heard these things, so we'll just sort of do that. Without, like, doing the research. [laughs quietly] And everything's sort of over exaggerated. They're portrayed as not very intelligent. They're portrayed as cruel.

Raleigh: They are the bad guys. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yeah. They're the bad guys, and it's— it's interesting to see it, like, but they're the Europeans in this case. As opposed to usually— I mean, usually you would see, like, a bunch of for the most part white pirates encountering some sort of indigenous, you know, population, and then being like, "Oh, I can't believe how, you know, they're so far behind us culturally."

And they flipped that around, that expectation, which is kind of cool.

Raleigh: It's true.

Taylor: Yeah. And when they do encounter— there is the— where they get, um... uh, stranded on the island and they encounter, like, an indigenous population, and they're very... [laughs quietly] their only fear— I mean, they have legitimate fear of white people. But they're otherwise, like, you know, very good guides to the rest of the crew and, like, help kind of reset everybody's paths. So I do think that that sort of— you know, where we give sympathy versus where we give kind of cartoonish portrayal is powerful.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Yeah. Also, I was thinking— we were talking about Blackbeard and I was thinking then about him and Stede, and their mooch. Which it takes a lot for me to gasp at a TV show, 'cause I feel like usually I'm just, like, kind of just watching it with dead eyes. But when that happened I was like, "[gasps loudly] Aww!" Um, but I feel like it also does a really good job of talking about things like

mental health and not— obviously it does a lot of talking about sexuality, and not using modern terms, just kind of in the context of this period. But the whole thing with Blackbeard and the kraken and, like, memory and trauma and all that kind of stuff, um, with him I feel like is a very good way of talking about those issues without modern terminology. Just, like, in the context that they had. Um, which was another thing that I didn't— an unexpected twist of events, um, that I also thought was very meaningful.

Sydnee: Um, I think it's really well done. Do you think— do you all think he really killed Lucius?

Taylor: No. They're— no.

Raleigh: No.

Sydnee: Okay. I hope— I— that [crosstalk].

Taylor: [simultaneously] He's—he's too [crosstalk].

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

Sydnee: I— he is. He is one of my favorite characters, consistently hilarious. Um... I was really worried about him when he was losing his finger.

Taylor: He's an artist.

Sydnee: I know! That's what I kept thinking, "He's an artist, he's an artist!" [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um... yeah. But, uh... I— the moment that made me, even before they kiss, the moment that got me is when they're being captured by the British and they're laying on the deck. And they're, like, face down on the ground looking at each other. And he says, "You came back." And he says, "Never left," and winks at him. And then as they pull back you can see—

Raleigh: You're tearing up as you're talking.

Sydnee: It's just a— and then you can see him sliding his foot over next to his? Oh. Oh! And they're playing Fleetwood Mac in the background, are you kidding me?! [laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs] Yeah.

Taylor: Well—

Sydnee: I added that song to my summer playlist after that.

Taylor: I mean, the relationship between the two leads— I mean, it's— you know... even that first, like— the original setup is so much built on, like, oh, how— all the eccentricities of Stede Bonnet, how ridiculous he is as a pirate. And it's all about mocking, oh, his library and everything. You know? And when you get that first scene of just Blackbeard experiencing what he's built, his tiny boat and his library and everything, and he's just like, "This is amazing." Like, that connection of, like, it's not about— yeah, that's what I was saying. They're characters first, and then queer just happens to be how we would talk about it today. It's about two people that really see each other, and the worth in each other, and the value in each other outside of everybody else. And that's really... it doesn't— it's outside of all gender or sexuality. That's just a beautiful story to tell.

Sydnee: And it changes— it obviously changes Ed. I mean, by the end he has shaved his beard. Well, before he then puts, like, a fake one on?

Rileigh: Like a dirty— dirty beard?

Sydnee: Like a dirt one?

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Sure.

Sydnee: Like a soot beard. [laughs quietly] But, uh— but it changes Stede, because the admiration that Ed has for Stede that is obvious to everyone around them changes the way all those people perceive Stede as well. Um, because by the end obviously his crew, like... respects him and cares about him and stands up for him.

Rileigh: And they're still pirates.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: So...

Sydnee: Well, they still wanna murder people.

Raleigh: Right. That's the thing.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: You gotta remember that's always there. Which I do enjoy.

Sydnee: He just doesn't want to.

Raleigh: Yeah. It also was a really good— I know there is going to be another season, so it's not an ending. But just a really good ending of season of a TV show. Like, yes, obviously there are things you want to see still happen. But it was good in the sense that, like, it set it up for a good... contin— not good like, "Oh, everyone's happy, good ending." Like, oh man.

Taylor: [simultaneously] It was brutal!

Raleigh: No, yes. But in the sense that it's like, "Okay, well, now we gotta have more." Sets it up for a very interesting Season 2.

Sydnee: It was rough. Um, I— when I didn't know if there was gonna be a Season 2 it was hard.

Raleigh: Well, yeah. I have now watched it with the knowledge that there was going to be one, so I had that benefit.

Sydnee: But you can't— you couldn't have Ross and Rachel get together in the first season.

Raleigh: [wheezes]

Sydnee: What's the rest of *Friends* about?

Raleigh: They gotta have their plane moment! He got off the plane! [laughs]

Sydnee: You're getting— they'll be reunited. But they're gonna be mad at each other. It's gonna be a whole thing.

Raleigh: And then more zany adventures ensue. [laughs]

Sydnee: I know. [laughs]

Raleigh: Zany pirate adventures. With beautiful, beautiful love.

Sydnee: All I know is that Justin and I have our couples Halloween costume now.

Raleigh: Ed and Stede?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Which one of you is which?

Sydnee: I mean, obviously he's Stede Bonnet.

Taylor: I like that Sydnee took insult at that for a second. Like, are you— are you kidding me? Have you met me?

Raleigh: I just wanted to make sure. That's what I thought.

[all laugh]

Raleigh: [sheepishly] I wanted to make sure.

Sydnee: He— Justin knows about the kraken. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: Phew!

Sydnee: He's met her before. [laughs]

Raleigh: Oh yeah. We all have.

Sydnee: Hey!

Taylor: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Listen. [laughs]

Taylor: Used to call that Syd Vicious.

Raleigh: Yeah. It has a new name now.

Sydnee: She's retired.

Taylor: Hmm...

Raleigh: She's the kraken now.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: No—[laughs]

Raleigh: You were the kraken.

Sydnee: I'm just— I'm just Ed now.

Raleigh: Just Ed. Well, thank you all for introducing me to this show.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: No problem. I'm really glad you watched it.

Raleigh: I— if not for the pressures of being prepared for this episode, I genuinely don't think I would've powered through it like I did. I was losing hope. But I put my faith in it.

Sydnee: It's truly worth it. If your friends have been nagging you to watch it, which I know some of you out there they have, listen to them. And, like, just stick with it.

Raleigh: Yes.

Taylor: Well, and it's genuinely— like, after living off of decades of queer crumbs, there's a little bit— just a little taste. It's like, it's so— just the feeling of that like, "Oh, okay. It's gonna go there." That, like, I can't describe that feeling. You all need— you all deserve to experience it. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Well, thank you all for watching it.

Raleigh: Of course.

Sydnee: Um... and what's next, Tey?

Taylor: Uh, I wanted to talk about a musical artist that I really loved growing up, Ani DiFranco. Hey, it's Pride month. I feel like it's the right month to talk about Ani DiFranco.

Sydnee: This is the month.

Taylor: Yeah. Uh, and specifically— I mean... I'm gonna probably— I'll probably make y'all a playlist for some of my favorite songs. But I think I'm gonna focus around *Not A Pretty Girl*, which is the first album that I owned and loved of hers.

Sydnee: Excellent.

Raleigh: I don't know that I've ever listened, that I knew of. So...

Sydnee: You'll recognize some songs.

Raleigh: That usually happens.

Sydnee: Perfect.

Raleigh: But, yes.

Sydnee: That is a perfect selection for Pride month. Um, well, thank you all. Thank you, listeners. Um, you should watch *Our Flag Means Death* obviously. If you haven't, please do.

Raleigh: This whole episode was just an ad for *Our Flag Means Death*, basically.

Sydnee: They're not paying us. We're doing this for free. [laughs] Um, you should go to Maximum Fun. Check out Maximumfun.org. Listen to all the great shows there. 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".

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

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Raleigh: I am still buffering...

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

[theme music plays]

Sydnee: Oh, also there's that great song at the end? With the—

Taylor: [unintelligible]

Sydnee: I downloaded all the...

Raleigh: [wheezes]

Sydnee: Their—[wheezes]

Raleigh: They're all in the summer playlist now.

Sydnee: They're all in the summer playlist now. Um, I'm not gonna play it for you. [laughs]

Raleigh: This is the tiny part of the episode.

Sydnee: This is the tiny part of the episode? Well, I was just gonna tell you that it's, um... [laughs] Poor Man's Poison.

Rileigh: There we go. [laughs]

Sydnee: I looked up poop. [laughs]

[music plays]

Jesse: Hi. I'm Jesse Thorn, the founder of Maximum Fun, and I have a special announcement. I'm no longer embarrassed by *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*. You know, for years each new episode of this supposed advice show was a fresh insult. A depraved jumble of erection jokes, ghost humor, and— frankly, this is for the best— very little actionable advice.

But now as they enter their twilight years, I'm as surprised as anyone to admit that... it's gotten kinda good. Justin, Travis, and Griffin's witticisms are more refined, like a humor column in a fancy magazine. And they hardly ever say bazinga anymore.

So, after you've completely finished to listening to every single one of all of our other shows, why not join the McElroy brothers every week for *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*?

[music and ad end]

[chord]

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