

Still Buffering 319: "Death Becomes Her" (1992)

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[theme music plays]

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

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Sydnee: I just had some string cheese.

Taylor: Huh!

Sydnee: You know what's weird?

Rileigh: That's tasty.

Sydnee: It doesn't feel like... I had to replace my string cheese because we had a power outage over the weekend. And so I got new string cheese. But I feel like... string cheese seems like so close to not-food it shouldn't have to be replaced, you know?

Taylor: I thought... does cheese go bad, or does cheese just get better?

Sydnee: I assumed all dairy had to be replaced.

Taylor: Yeah, but I feel like cheese is something that, like... just gets to be more expensive cheese. It's like wine.

Rileigh: What about when it gets green?

Taylor: That's... uh, that's when it's growing its little coat, that it's gonna sit inside of and get extra good.

Sydnee: That's too far, right?

Taylor: I don't know. I mean, mold is an important part of cheese.

Sydnee: Yeah, but the right molds, right? [laughs]

Raleigh: You gotta talk to our dad about that, because he left the milk in the fridge when we had a power outage, and our power was out for... hmm... 24 hours.

Sydnee: It was over 24 hours, yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah. Uh, he left the milk in there, and then did continue to drink it, so...

Sydnee: No. No, no, no.

Taylor: Now you've got yogurt. You got probiotics.

Raleigh: He said, "It smells fine." [laughs]

Sydnee: No. No, that's— you don't want— that's the thing with a lot of these products, especially dairy. You don't wanna, like, heat 'em up and cool 'em back down. Like... you're just— this is good— this is what bacteria love.

Taylor: That's the temperature danger zone.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: I know that. I've got my food handler's license.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah, no. That food was definitely in the danger zone for quite a while. Um...

Taylor: [singing] Temperature danger zone.

Raleigh: It's interesting we care about it so much now, when our family would get pizza with cheese and meat on it and stick it in the oven overnight, like the oven turned off, in the box, overnight.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rleigh: To then eat the next day. We didn't cool it down. We did just stick it in a warm environment.

Sydnee: That was a bad job, though.

Rleigh: For many years. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: That was a bad job.

Taylor: I feel like I still— I mean, despite having been educated to the contrary, I still have this thought of, like, delivery food... is not food-food. It can sit out and I can eat it the next day, and that's fine. And I know that's not right. I know that's not right.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: But... [laughs quietly]

Rleigh: No, I agree with that. We get pizza at our shows. They would order pizzas to sell at the top, like, slices of, and then anything left over after intermission they would bring back to the actors to eat at the end of the night. Which means the gates opened at 6: 30, which means the pizza got there at about 6: 30, and they'd bring it back to us about, hmm, 10 o' clock. And then we would take one home with us every night to eat cold, which usually wasn't until 11: 30. So that was five hours that the pizza had been just sitting that we'd then eat when we got home, and then just leave sitting out and eat again the next day. For about a week straight.

Taylor: That's a slightly rested pizza is what that is.

Rleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It depends. I mean, you could probably build some kind of case when you've got something with, like, tomato sauce, which is inherently acidic, and then you've got it open air so you're not gonna worry so much about, like, botulism. I don't know. Like, you could maybe make a case that it would be more difficult to grow bacteria on such a medium. I don't wanna say it's impossible. And certainly mold could grow, but obviously that takes a while.

Taylor: Well, okay. Do you keep your ketchup in or out of the fridge?

Raleigh: In.

Sydnee: In.

Taylor: Right. Okay.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: No, no, no. I do too. But I have encountered people that do not, because they use that argument. "Well, tomatoes are acidic." And I'm like "Yes, but... "

And this is from my experience in food service. It's like, I— you know, I work behind a bar so I'll make, like, simple syrups. That's just sugar and water. And you're like, "That's stable forever."

Nope! That'll grow mold. Anything can grow mold. Dare mold to grow somewhere at an ambient temperature and it will grow is what I've learned. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. No, that is very true. Ketchup— I will accept, ketchup and mustard both— I mean, I do not believe they need to be refrigerated, because I have been to many a restaurant where they're just there on the table. Um...

Raleigh: I guess that's true.

Sydnee: So I assume that's fine. I prefer cold ketchup and mustard. I prefer the way that...

Raleigh: Feels.

Sydnee: ... goes with, like, a warm french fry? [laughs] I don't know!

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I just like that better.

Taylor: Just a nice cold shot of ketchup with that nice hot fry.

Sydnee: [laughs] I prefer that combo. Um... to warm ketchup or mustard, so I will always keep them in my refrigerator. Especially when I make my pickle and turkey wrap with mustard. I like it to be cold.

Raleigh: [sighs]

Taylor: We're not gonna talk about that, whatever that is.

Sydnee: It's the sweet spicy pickles, and you put that on a tortilla with turkey and mustard. It's perfect. It's really good.

[pause]

Taylor: [sighs quietly]

Sydnee: Anyway.

Raleigh: [laughs quietly] I don't know about that.

Sydnee: My string cheese was not as good as that, but fine.

Raleigh: Do you like string cheese?

Sydnee: Yeah. I bought it— I bought it for the children, but I eat it all.

Taylor: I feel like string cheese is, of all the things we've discussed, I feel like that is probably shelf stable. The fact that you had it in the fridge and then you thought you had to toss it, I don't know about that. But...

Sydnee: I don't—[sighs] I don't know! It's— it's harder when you have children for those kinds of things. 'Cause, like, prior to having kids I played fast and loose with those rules all the time, you know? I was very much like a, "It smells okay, it tastes okay, it is okay," kind of person. But you can't mess around with tummy bugs and little kids.

Taylor: Yeah, but you gotta make sure they get that healthy gut flora, right?

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: [laughs] From eating partially rotten food?!

Taylor: I don't know.

Rileigh: Although you do have a kid that I think goes by the philosophy, "Does it smell good? Does it taste good? Then it is good." I don't think Cooper would care if you gave her something that looked a little bit bad, if she thought it tasted fine.

Sydnee: No. Cooper came walking in the kitchen the other day, and she was eating edamame. And I said, "What— what do you got?"

And she was like, "I got beans."

And she had, like, emptied them out of the shell and was holding, like, a handful. And she was— what she wanted to do was perform the scene from *Into the Woods*, "[singing] There's another bean, here's another bean," and that's what she was doing, tossing the beans around the room.

Rileigh: That's very good.

Sydnee: But, um— but she was also eating them. And I said, "Where did you get that?"

And she said, "From my room."

[pause]

Natch. And I said, "Well, but we haven't had edamame [holding back laughter] in a bit. [laughs] So... wha— when— where— how?"

They've just been in her room for an... a period of time that is unclear to me. We do order edamame periodically, but...

Taylor: Just had ambient beans.

Sydnee: I assume that's fine?

Rileigh: I mean, Charlie's always got a full snack drawer in her room, and a full snack backpack. She pulled out a full— like, full to the brim Ziplock bag of Cheez-

Its today, out of nowhere. I was just sitting on the couch like "Hm, I'm kind of snacky."

And before I could even look up to look for a snack in the house, she just set a full bag of Cheez-Its on my lap.

I was like, "Where did you get this?"

Sydnee: I have to— I have to go through their rooms periodically and clean out all the food they're hiding in there. You would think we don't feed them constantly. Like, that— there is a drawer in the kitchen that is specifically their drawer.

Raleigh: It's at their level.

Sydnee: That's at their level, that they are allowed to grab a snack from when they are hungry. So, like, we have free reign for multiple snacks in the house. There is no need to hide them in their room.

Raleigh: They're missing some of that danger.

Taylor: Yeah, you just— you just wanna... you wanna have your own snackies, your own— your own private bean stash.

[all laugh quietly]

Raleigh: Somewhere in Cooper's room there's a pile of edamame shells.

Sydnee: Yeah...

Raleigh: If the—[laughs quietly] if she had the beans, the shells are just somewhere.

Sydnee: "[singing] Here's another bean." [laughs]

Raleigh: That does sound very Cooper to want to recreate that.

Sydnee: Oh, the witch is her favorite. She wanted to be like the witch.

Raleigh: That makes sense.

Sydnee: That makes sense.

Raleigh: Um...

Sydnee: I don't have a...

Raleigh: Uh...

Sydnee: Um...

Taylor: Well, no. There is— there's an obvious— come on. Y'all. Talkin' about the witch.

Sydnee: Oh. Meryl Streep played the witch in the movie.

Raleigh: Oh, duh.

Sydnee: *Into the Woods*. And you know what else Meryl Streep was in?

Raleigh: *Mamma Mia*.

Sydnee: Yes. That's not the point. [laughs quietly] I mean, Meryl Streep was in a lot of movies! It's Meryl Streep.

Raleigh: *Mamma Mia 2: Here We Go Again*.

Taylor: Alright.

Sydnee: Was she in that one?

Raleigh: Very briefly. She was dead. But she sang in it.

Sydnee: That's what I—[laughs] that's why I didn't see it, 'cause I thought she died.

Raleigh: She is, yes. Not in real life.

Sydnee: No, I know. I meant the character.

Taylor: Any movie where the premise is, "Meryl Streep is not here anymore," is, like, automatically negative 50 points in my book.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Right? And I feel like that they tried to— like, I understand Cher was in it, and so I can see what you're trying to do there. You're like, "Yes, we did take away Meryl Streep, but we added Cher."

Raleigh: Not until the end.

Sydnee: Oh, but see...

Taylor: And I don't— I'm sorry. I love Cher, but you can't— I will not trade you a Cher for— a Meryl Streep for a Cher.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: I need a world where they both exist. That's my constant.

Sydnee: Yes, we need both.

Taylor: Yes.

Raleigh: She's also in *Death Becomes Her*. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yeah, that's the movie we're actually talking about. We're not talking about *Mamma Mia* or *Mamma Mia 2*.

Raleigh: *Here We Go Again*.

Sydnee: Um... so I don't know why I was always so obsessed with this movie growing up. Taylor, I feel like we watched it a lot.

Taylor: Yes! Uh, which is interesting in retrospect, 'cause I don't know— I mean, I don't think it's inappropriate necessarily for young people, but it's weird that it was, like, a— a popular movie when we were young for us to watch a lot, often. Like, did we have the VHS? I feel like we had a VHS of this.

Sydnee: I am positive that we did. Because this was not like a, we rented it and watched it and moved on.

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: Like, we wa— I know we watched it more than once.

Taylor: I mean, I know why I liked it. I'm surprised that you felt the same way about it.

Sydnee: I was kind of fascinated by it. So it came out in 1992, I should say. So I was... I was nine. [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Which is weird! Thi— thi— this is getting weirder.

Taylor: I was, what? Six, seven?

Sydnee: [through laughter] You were six or seven when this movie came out!

Taylor: [through laughter] That explains a lot, honestly.

Sydnee: Uh... I mean, I don't know that we saw it the year it came out but, like, certainly not that long after. Um, I was... I was fascinated by— okay. So, the general plot [laughs quietly] is that there's a potion that will make you young and beautiful and immortal, except immortal in the sense that, like, you can kill your body, I guess? But not your soul? [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah. Like, any damage to your body is just, you're damaged. But if you keep yourself safe, then you're good for forever.

Sydnee: Yes.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, you keep on living even if, like...

Raleigh: Your body could not be living.

Sydnee: Yeah. Well, 'cause their bodies die.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, their hearts stop beating.

Taylor: Not when they take the potion. It's only after they physically die.

Sydnee: Yes.

Rileigh: Right, right. Yeah, 'cause, well... when she goes to the doctor and they say that she's dead.

Sydnee: Yes. So, like—

Rileigh: They take her to the morgue. Like, "Oh, you're dead." [laughs]

Sydnee: Your body can die, but you, your— the *you* can't—? I don't know! This is getting more spiritual than I thought it would. [laughs]

Taylor: It's just— it's like... basic rules of zombies I guess.

Rileigh: Yeah. You'll continue to animate your body, even if the damage is... fatal.

Sydnee: And, like, you can decay.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Ew.

Taylor: I don't—

Sydnee: Which is part of, I think, the fascination I had with this movie, is it was this sort of, like— they were beautiful but decaying, and it was kind of grotesque and lovely, and I don't know why that all spoke to me as a child.

Rileigh: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: I don't either.

Sydnee: Like, their spray-painted flesh rips off. I don't know what to make of that. [laughs] I— I get why you liked this, Tey. Why did I like this?

Taylor: I don't know! I don't know. I mean, I— it's— well, but I don't know. It's... I don't think at that age we were quite at the place of contemplating mortality, so I don't think that angle was necessarily what appealed. But I do think in hindsight there is something about— specifically about femininity in this movie that I feel like is really confrontational and fun.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Like, you know, I think... what's expected of a woman, and then how, like, their beauty butts up so hard against, like... like, something so morbid and dark and decaying. Like, I love that. I mean, I love that in art when I encounter that. Like, you know, I don't know.

Sydnee: The general storyline is pretty— it's pretty basic. It's like a love triangle set within this sort of magical immortal element, where... Bruce Willis, who's incredibly not Bruce Willis-y...

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: I have to question— like, that casting. Like, "Oh, we need, like, a little nerdy doctor dude. *But* we can get Bruce Willis. Can we just make Bruce Willis look like a little nerdy doctor dude? Sure, yeah, that's fine." [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: That'll work.

Sydnee: Does it make you wonder if it was like a moment where Bruce Willis was like, "Maybe I could get these roles too. Maybe I should show I have this other side of me."

And everybody was like, "You're still Bruce Willis." [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Never again, Bruce.

Sydnee: Uh, but, like, Goldie Hawn's with Bruce Willis, and she's, like... I don't know. What's the word? What's the horrible word we would use to describe her appearance? Dowdy, probably? Is what the— that's probably what it says in the script, right? [laughs]

Taylor: Academic?

Sydnee: [laughs] Academic.

Raleigh: Yeah. Stuffy.

Sydnee: Um, and he leaves her for Meryl Streep who's, like, a performer, and very attractive. Although they're both very attractive, let's be real. But whatever. And so for re— basically revenge, Goldie Hawn steals him back after she becomes magically beautiful and hot with this potion that will also give her immortal life. And she's gonna steal him back and murder Meryl Streep, but then Meryl Streep also takes the potion, and they end up killing each other, sort of. Their bodies.

Raleigh: But again, they can't die.

Sydnee: So now they're just these, like... zombie... women. And they want to keep Bruce Willis around, because he's this genius plastic surgeon turned mortician.

Raleigh: Reconstructive mortician, is that what he called himself? Something like that? Yeah.

Sydnee: And, uh, and so he's perfect for their needs. He can keep them spray painted, and adjusted, and... whatever, tinkered forever. [laughs quietly] Uh, and so they want to make him immortal too, but he doesn't want to be, and he ends up getting away, and they're stuck with each other forever, more or less. I don't know. Is that a pretty good plot summary?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: It's about friendship, really.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs] Really, at the end of the day. You know, I remember Mom showing me this movie when I probably was no older than 11 or 12. And the scene that really, really stuck with me was right towards the beginning. Um, with, uh... what, Meryl Streep sitting on the couch eating Cool Whip? Is that what she's eating? Or is it Goldie Hawn?

Taylor: Goldie Hawn.

Sydnee: [simultaneously] Goldie Hawn.

Rileigh: Goldie Hawn.

Taylor: And it's icing.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: Icing, that's what it is! Uh, that has stuck with me for... over a decade now. Just that image. I don't know why. I don't know if it was maybe my special effects knowledge in 2012 when I was watching this for the first time. Like, it was very deeply upsetting to me because I was like, "Why would they make her look like that?" Without the understanding that it was 1992. Um, the special effects, the makeup and all that stuff. But I don't know.

Sydnee: There's a— there's a— there's a lot. This is a movie made from the 90's, and so there's a lot of, like, problematic stuff, when they're commenting on, like, beauty standards, and how the two main characters desire to look. Um, and like, what society thinks of them when they don't look that way.

So, like, initially Goldie Hawn is— I mean, she's supposed to look really smart and sort of nerdy, and she's not dressed, like... I don't know.

Rileigh: Sexy.

Sydnee: Sexy.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: And— and by contrast I will say, Meryl Streep, her character is called cheap multiple times. So she's not good either. Like, it's not okay to be either. [laughs] That is made clear. And then when Goldie Hawn loses Bruce Willis, like,

she's supposed to go through sort of this depression, is I guess ostensibly what we're supposed to assume.

And at that time, she gains weight, and so then there's, like, a lot of fat shaming that happens. That's part of what— that is one thing. So, she is briefly in a psychiatric hospital?

Raleigh: Yeah...

Taylor: I—

Sydnee: Where she is berated for— berated for her mental illness, and for not losing weight?!

Taylor: The— the presentation of the therapist is wild.

Sydnee: Yes!

Raleigh: Very bad psychiatric hospital.

Taylor: Like, she makes a comment like, "It's been six months and you're not over this." Like... I'm thinking, like, three years into therapy, like, "Six months? Excuse me? [laughs] What?"

Raleigh: [laughs] "I was supposed to have made progress by then?"

Taylor: That's not— we were not on a first name basis at six months, okay? [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: That's— I know. It is wild that the therapist is yelling at her for not being better, and then literally yells at her for not losing weight! She says that, "You haven't lost a pound."

And it's like, "What? What?" Where was— was there— did they not consult anybody? [laughs] Like, surely this isn't what a therapist says. No.

Taylor: Well, and that's— because I feel like the movie casts a very, like, aware eye on how unfair expectations are for women in terms of beauty standards. But

the characters never really awaken to that fact. Like, and I think that's their sort of curse, right? Like, they just have to eternally live, chasing this ideal of what they're supposed to look like... for what? 'Cause they only have each other. It's kind of sad, but it is self-aware.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. I— I think part of what fascinated me the most about it when I first watched it is the, like— the scene with Isabella Rossellini, who is, like, the keeper of the magic potion. And by the way, I do think it's odd that they're, like... so, she looks beautiful and she looks young, and then she has a big reveal where she tells you how old she is.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And, like, she could be any age, because it gives you immortality.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I thought it was odd that they went with 71.

Rileigh: I agree.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Which is not an impressive nu— like, they could've— she could've said 210. [laughs quietly] I thought that was an odd scene.

Rileigh: Sydnee wanted more whimsy.

Sydnee: Yes! Well, I mean, like— like, she's immortal!

Rileigh: Yeah. Well, although I guess the only thing you could say is obviously you see what happens to Goldie Hawn and Meryl Streep after being immortal for a very short period of time, and what happens to their bodies. And then what, by the end of it it's, like, 37 years later or something like that?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: When they're literally falling apart. Um, maybe they didn't want her to be too old, 'cause her body would then be falling apart. Very weird rules of immortality.

Taylor: Well, and I—

Sydnee: Well, but that was only because they didn't take care of themselves, right?

Rileigh: Well, yeah.

Taylor: I think it's like if you let yourself physically die, then some sort of death process starts, even though you still inhabit your corpse.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: So if you don't—

Rileigh: So you are like a zombie.

Taylor: Yeah. And I mean, maybe it's just a game of, like— of odds. Like, if you've lived forever, at some point you would probably encounter some sort of cataclysmic injury that would lead to your death.

Rileigh: Right.

Taylor: So maybe that's a good age for immortality still looking good, in the mid-70's. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: But she's— but she's, like, hanging around with all those, like, muscly bodyguards and some dogs that look angry.

Taylor: What is the— the decision of the— the bodyguards? Like, why are they dressed as wrestlers? [laughs]

Sydnee: [through laughter] I don't— the bodyguards are dressed very strangely

Rileigh: Bruce Willis demanded it. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: There is something about 80's— or I guess this is 90's— but that, like, era, what opulence looked like, that is so weird to me. And I— probably what opulence looks like now will look the same way. But, you know? Like the horrible, like, salmon pink and, like, slate bed sheets and stuff, like when you're in the fancy house. I don't know.

Sydnee: Yeah. The carpeting everywhere and, like, scalloped edges on all the furniture. Like... [laughs]

Raleigh: There's a room in our grandparents' house that is very much that. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: It's true, yes.

Raleigh: [laughs] Opulence from the 80's and 90's. Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, I want to talk more about— maybe I'll figure out why it is that this movie stuck with me so much. But before we do that...

Raleigh: Let's check the group message.

So, I've had a real busy couple of weeks, and got a real busy more couple weeks coming up. Um, I'm moving, I'm packing, I just finished up a show but I'm still in the middle of having shows for the show I directed. A lot's going on. Also it's summer, so I'm kinda lazy, just in general. Um, all this to say I don't really ever feel like cooking for myself, and that becomes an issue when it comes time to eat food and I don't feel like cooking for myself. But that's why I always go to DoorDash and let them take care of my food for me. Um, it is the app that brings you food that you're craving right now right to your door. You just open up the DoorDash app, you choose what you want to eat, and your food will be left safely outside your door with their contactless delivery drop off setting. Uh, they even have lots of your favorite local restaurants. So I know sometimes I'll be craving food from one of our local places that maybe doesn't do delivery on their own, but they're right there on DoorDash. Get some of my favorite food from there. It's delivered to my door super fast, right out there, contactless delivery. Super fast, super simple. Uh, and it gets me the food I want without me having to do— do most of the work.

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: And, uh, if you're still hungry... maybe you want something that's a breakfast, or a treat, or a midnight snack. An anytime food that will make you feel good and full and will be yummy. And I'm talking about Magic Spoon. Magic Spoon has changed the cereal game, because it's all the flavor that you're looking for, all the crunch that you need in a good bowl of cereal, but it's got zero grams of sugar and 13 to 14 grams of protein per serving!

So it's a— it's a full meal, and it cuts back on your sugar, so it's just what you need when you're looking for a treat that is also— is also something that'll get you going, especially in the morning. It's keto friendly, it's gluten free, it's grain free, it's soy free. Um, so if you have specific dietary needs it can meet those for you.

And they have all kinds of flavors. And I've got the flavors, uh, helpfully classified here, if you're looking for, like— what sort of flavors. There's classics like cocoa, fruity, frosted, or peanut butter. There are the cult faves like blueberry muffin, maple waffle, and honey nut. And there's indulgent ones like cookies and cream or cinnamon roll, which would be a perfect dessert. And you can build your own box if you want to. Stuff like cocoa and peanut butter mixed together, 'cause we know that's a great mix.

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

Taylor: Well, they should go to magicspoon.com/buffering to grab a custom bundle of cereal and try the magic for yourself! And be sure to use our promo code "buffering" at checkout to save \$5 off your order. And Magic Spoon is so confident in their product, it's backed with a 100% happiness guarantee. So if you don't like it for any reason, they'll refund your money, no questions asked. That's magicspoon.com/buffering, and use the code "buffering" to save \$5 off.

Sydnee: Um, so... part of it, I think, was just simply, like, this idea of... this magical group of zombie humans who are all forever young and beautiful and have, like, secret get together parties? Maybe that was part of it.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Like, this— like movie stars that we thought were dead and stuff, and musical artists, and they're all just secretly somewhere.

Rileigh: I think I just loved watching it now as an adult, I definitely was not thinking this when I was younger, but I love that there are two women that are... I mean, it is female friendship, a lot of it, which is hard to find in a lot of movies from the 90's, that's about two women. And yes, many of their interactions involve Bruce Willis, but not necessarily, like, fighting over him in a romantic way after a certain point. Um, but also the fact that neither of them are necessarily, like, good people. Like, they're both kind of bad people in some situations, and they're still, like, these two women that are complex kind of bad, kind of good, obviously under the pressure of societal expectations of beauty for women, and they're the two, like, tellers of this story, I think is really cool.

Just because you don't get a lot of... stories like that, I guess. Like, it's very clear that they are not the bad guys. It is the society that has set these expectations that made them feel they need to be this way and look a certain way and do these things to themselves.

Sydnee: Sure.

Taylor: Well, and—

Sydnee: But I don't—

Taylor: Go ahead.

Sydnee: Oh, go ahead.

Taylor: No, it's alright, go ahead.

Sydnee: I was just gonna say, but I don't think they learn any lessons, though, I will say.

Rileigh: That's fair. That's fair. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: I do think that the most poi— I mean, it's meant to be kind of a dark comedy. But I do think there is some poignancy in the scene where they apologize to each other. You know? Where, like, they— one recognizes that she's always tried to steal the other's man because she made her feel less than. You know, cheap. Like, they kind of apologize for their mutual cruelty to each other, and commit to being there for each other for good. I think that's kind of— like, I do think it's a movie about friendship. I say that kind of jokingly, but I think it's honest.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Like, I think that that's the relationship that really this movie's about. Bruce Willis's character really doesn't matter. Like, they use him as a tool, as a sort of chess piece, but, you know, that's it. It's about— I also just— I love that it's, uh, what? Madeline and Helen, but they call each other Mad and Hell. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Like— like, this is the couple. This is about Mad and Hell.

Sydnee: It is. It is very much about them. And, I mean, even Bruce Willis's character, his job is to... I mean, primari— I mean, he can operate on anybody. But, like, the way that he is sort of introduced is that his job is to keep women looking a way that we want women to look. Not him necessarily, 'cause he's the surgeon. He's just doing what— you know, whatever. But, like, as a representation of society, his whole thing is keeping women look the way we like them to look.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm. Um, I was reading about this movie some and the reception, the general crowd audience it has now. And Tey, I wanted to ask you, 'cause I didn't know this. I was reading about how it's become very popular in, like, the drag community.

Taylor: Oh yeah.

Rileigh: Uh, and that Jinkx Monsoon and BenDeLaCreme did a show at one point that was both of them doing Drag Becomes Her, were they were Hell and Mad. And that Jinkx Monsoon attributes this movie for, like, starting their— their passion for drag.

Sydnee: Hmm.

Taylor: Oh, I love that.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: I feel like that makes a lot of sense. I don't know. I can't... I feel like we encounter a lot of things in pop culture that we... we understand, this is—this is... queer somehow. But we don't— it's not in the narrative, and it doesn't need to be. It's not— it's not a storyline of that. It's just it's somehow out of what is the norm, and so it gets embraced by the queer community. And I do think that this movie does that. Because I was even thinking, like, you know the kind of, uh, irony of at his funeral, at the— it ends with, you know, Bruce Willis's character's funeral, that he's lived this long, illustrious life. And they say, like, "Oh, life begins at 50 for this man."

When for so many women it's like, your life is over at 50. It doesn't matter if you keep on living. You can't be beautiful anymore.

And it's this very hard, like, point that this movie is making about, like, what's expected of women and, like, the horrible things women will do to themselves in order to be beautiful. Like, I think it is a— it's outside of a heteronormative viewpoint. It's not buying in to the beauty standard. It's not making it look glamorous and lovely. It's making it look hideous and gross and weird, and that's what drag can do. Drag can do many things. But that's also just outside of heteronormativity, what you do. [through laughter] Like...

Rileigh: Yeah. I mean, it's very anti stereotypical male gaze of what two beautiful female stars would be in a movie. Um, 'cause I read that it had become very popular, like sort of a cult classic in recent years— well, recent years. I mean like in the 2000's, among the LGBTQ+ community. I was thinking, like— I mean, I don't know if there's— I wouldn't have guessed there was necessarily any sort of romantic insinuation in any way between the two main female characters, so not in that way. But I agree with you then, in the sense that it's just like this out of that heteronormative world of movies, but not queer in the sense where, like,

there's queer characters. But also in the way that it's trying to say something against everything that is expected out of, like, heteronormative society and relationships, and typical men and women and beauty standards and all that. I do agree with that. I thought it was very interesting. I just— I wouldn't have expected that to be the crowd, but the more I think about it the more it makes sense.

Taylor: Well, I— yeah. Well, and I think it just— even, like, the insinuation that the most important relationship in your life isn't— isn't a... normal-looking romantic relationship. It's the person that kind of holds you together, and for whatever reason, that's what these two women are for themselves. I think that that— you don't need a queer narrative. It's a queer idea in the extent that it's not heteronormative.

Raleigh: Yes. Neither of them end up with a man, and they both end up literally falling apart together and helping each other out. [laughs]

Taylor: Well, and I kind of love their relationship, you know? When they're bickering in the back of the church, I feel like that's what— you know, that's what we're all looking for. We're not looking for the thing that's great when you're both beautiful and young. You're looking for the person that sits next to you while your face is falling off and is like, "Whatever." You know? [laughs]

Sydnee: That's true. I mean, because they do a good job of avoiding— like, Bruce Willis's character wants to escape them eventually, and even though they are beautiful, he wants to get away from them. And you're supposed to kind of believe, like, they've ruined his life in some sense.

But they do a good job of not making him seem too sympathetic. Because the truth is, he was with Goldie Hawn and he left her because Meryl Streep, at that moment, was presented as the more beautiful one. And then he was gonna leave Meryl Streep, because even though she was still beautiful, she was getting older, and Goldie Hawn looked younger. So he was gonna leave her for the one who looks younger and hotter now.

And the entire time, his entire— his whole job is to make women look young and beautiful. And he's not a sympathetic character. He is the one who, like— he gets to go on and have this life but, like, he's not the good guy.

Raleigh: Mm-mm.

Taylor: No. And, I mean, look at— the fact is, is he's the one that pushes Meryl Streep down the stairs!

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Like, at— the thing that launches all the action is him murdering her!

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. And, I mean, she's not— she was not being nice to him, but at the same time, I don't think that justifies that he... [laughs quietly] he murdered her.

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: And he was plotting to murder her anyway!

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I mean, that was— he had a whole plan. I mean, so, like, it wasn't even like— I mean, it was premeditated, in a sense.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, and I— you know, and it was maybe inspired by Goldie Hawn's plot line. But still, like, her whole reason for doing that was because this person she cares about hurt her so much. This person that cares— that she cares about so much that hurt her isn't him. It's— it's Meryl Streep's character. That's the emotional relationship.

Sydnee: Yes. It was always between the two of them. Yeah, I agree. 'Cause I don't think there is any— like, let's say that the movie... that they had succeeded in killing Meryl Streep. Would they have run off together? Heck no. Goldie Hawn wanted nothing to do with him. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: No, she just wanted revenge.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: I would love to see this movie done again. Not a reboot. Like, don't— like, not the same exact story, but very similar, set in modern times. I would love

to see that. I saw that they— they said in 2017 they were making a musical, and Kristin Chenoweth was going to be starring in it.

Taylor: Oh!

Raleigh: They didn't say as which one, but as one of them.

Sydnee: She'd be great.

Raleigh: But then nothing ever happened. [laughs quietly] After that.

Taylor: Oh, that'd be amazing, though!

Raleigh: I know.

Sydnee: I would love a musical of this.

Raleigh: Oh, I know...

Sydnee: Oh, can you imagine? You could include any— any famous person, like, from any time in, like, the big scene with all the— with the party with all the immortal people. Oh, you— there's so— there's so many cool things you could do with that.

Raleigh: It's kind of *Beetlejuice*-esque, in a way.

Taylor: It's funny, 'cause when you said the musical I was like, "Well, I mean, *Beetlejuice* worked great as a musical."

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Just in the way that, like, there is death and you have to confront mortality, and there's kind of some gruesome stuff, but none of it is ever in a way that's, like... actually upsetting or scary or anything like that. It's all kind of, like, silly and dark humor and that kind of stuff. Um, it has some obviously very different story than *Beetlejuice*, but similar— similar vibes.

Taylor: That's true. I don't know. I like that— that era of 90's movies that was like, kind of comical and cozy with death in a really disturbing way, but also a really fantastical way. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydney: Yeah. I mean, I think that's part of it. 'Cause usually stuff with a lot of death I find upsetting. But that— I mean, it's treated so, um... it's so ridiculous. It's so—

Raleigh: Ridiculous, yes.

Sydney: —huge. I mean... the way that they get killed is not... [laughs quietly] it's not subtle.

Raleigh: No.

Sydney: Like, her head's twisted around back— Meryl Streep's head's twisted around backwards. Goldie Hawn has a giant hole through the middle of her.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydney: Although the neck thing still sort of hurts me to watch.

Raleigh: Like, it's so funny reading about how this was lauded as having, like, some of the best visual effects and special effects of the time. And it won, like— it won an Oscar for best visual effects, or something like that, the year that it came out.

Taylor: I was surprised, though, by how well that they do hold up. I mean, I think that there's some— you know, especially with Meryl Streep when her head's on backwards, you can tell that is the most, like... digitally difficult scene that they're doing, but it holds up. I— you know.

Raleigh: Yeah! You know, also in the context of the movie there's nothing about it that's supposed to be hyper-realistic or, like, serious. So you don't need— it doesn't take you out of it, because the special effects seem old. If anything, it just kind of adds to the level of ridiculousness.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Taylor: Or like the perfect symmetrical hole—

Sydnee: [simultaneously] No, I don't think it— I don't think it—

Taylor: [through laughter] In the center of Goldie Hawn.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. I don't find it distracting. And I always— and I remember being sort of fascinated by all that. And, like, the, um— the moment that Meryl Streep takes the serum. Like, when she first stabs her in the finger and it changes her hand. Like, all of that imagery still sticks with me.

Raleigh: I always look for those things whenever I watch movies for this show specifically, just because I always like to think of what things like that would've looked like through a 1992 vision, and then now. Like, what was high tech then, and what is now. I always think that's interesting to look at. And also, just fun, because you couldn't have sort of the ridiculousness of those moments now. Because it would be about, you know, making it look hyper-realistic and all that stuff. I do think it's better with the silliness. I'm not a spe— I go on like this like I really care deeply about special effects or visual effects or something. I think they're cool. It's not like something I have a deep passion for. [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, it was a big part of why I think this movie, like, hit with people, were those effects.

Raleigh: Why those images stick with you, yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. And I think it was also because you had two actresses who were, like, incredibly famous, and beautiful, and talented, and were kind of being gross and silly and... like, it was very physical, you know? And that is not what you would expect from them, necessarily.

Raleigh: It's like comedic body horror.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: It is, yeah.

Rileigh: [quietly] I get it.

Sydnee: Which again, you wouldn't— yeah, certainly people did that, but not usually very attractive women.

Rileigh: Mm-mm.

Sydnee: So— which is the other part of it. Like, at the end of the day, Goldie Hawn and Meryl Streep, before the serum, after the serum, they're still, like...

Rileigh: Very beautiful.

Sydnee: They're hotties. [laughs]

Rileigh: Well, Syd, have you figured out yet why you think this movie... meant so much to you? [laughs quietly] 'Cause I just keep hanging on to those images of the big hole in Goldie Hawn's stomach, and... icing, and...

Taylor: I'm gonna at least offer— 'cause you mentioned that that scene with— it's Isabella Rossellini, right?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Where she's just— she's not wearing— she's wearing a shirt made out of just jewels.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: I know you seem to be mystified as to why that scene was so striking to you.

Rileigh: [laughs]

Taylor: Uh... [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: I hate to inform you of this... [laughs]

Sydnee: It— that scene. Like, I could've recreated that scene completely from memory.

Taylor: I think a lot of people saw that scene and went, "Ohh, this movie means a lot to me!"

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: "Hmm... "

Taylor: I don't think there's any deep reason why. [laughs]

Sydnee: I have no idea. [laughs] I was fascinated by the, uh— the angry dogs guarding the potion. That was it.

Taylor: Sure, yeah, yeah.

Sydnee: Um... well, I appreciate you all watching *Death Becomes Her* again, because I really do— I don't know. I like the movie. I didn't show it to the girls. I didn't feel like they were ready for that.

Rileigh: I think Cooper would love it.

Taylor: Yes... but Cooper is currently trying to devise how to take Charlie out of the running for the baby kangaroo, so maybe don't put—

Rileigh: That's true.

Taylor: —[through laughter] put any ideas in her head.

Sydnee: Yeah...

Rileigh: Gosh, that's true. Don't let her know that pushing someone down the stairs is a thing.

Sydnee: Yeah, 'cause there all quite a few, like, murderous plots in this.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. No, we won't show them this one quite yet. We'll wait till they're a little—

Raleigh: I can see her trying to figure out how to get a hole in her stomach like that. "How do I... how do I get a hole in my stomach and walk around with it?"

Sydnee: We'd have to watch that scene— well, and when— when Meryl Streep shoots her and she falls back into the fountain and there's blood all over the place, would have to watch that scene, like, 30 times.

Raleigh: Just like the one from *Twilight*. That she loves to watch.

Sydnee: "I want to watch the scene where the baby bites the boob."

Raleigh: "And it's covered in blood."

Sydnee: "The baby's covered in blood." Oh...

Raleigh: Oh... [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: She's always asking me, "Was I covered in blood when I was born?"

Raleigh: She wants the answer to be yes.

Sydnee: I know. Like, "No." [laughs quietly] This is fun. [laughs]

Raleigh: Well, thank you for reintroducing this movie to me. I had not seen it in a very long time. I don't know why our mom showed this to me when I was much younger, but I do know for a fact that she definitely did.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Well, thank you all for watching it. What is next, Tey?

Taylor: Well, I wanna— I wanna sort of talk about the body of work of an animator that I really love, Don Hertzfeldt. You know, I think, like, *Rejected* and, like, maybe *It's Such a Beautiful Day*, *World of Tomorrow*— he's got a— they're all shorts. They're animated shorts, so hopefully we can watch a couple of 'em and talk about 'em, 'cause it's some of my favorite stuff in existence.

Sydnee: Okay.

Raleigh: Sounds good.

Sydnee: Sounds good, we'll check that out.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Alright. Well, thank you all. Thanks, listeners. You should go to Maximumfun.org and check out lots 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."

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: [quietly] Yeah, I definitely can't show Cooper this movie.

Taylor: [laughs] Wait until she's at least... how old were you? How old was I? A year or two. Wait a year or two.

Sydnee: Six? Yeah, I got a year or two.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't know what she'd like better: the bleeding or the moment when Meryl Streep's boobs kind of pop up.

Rileigh: Oh, she'd love that.

Sydnee: She loves boobs. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Yeah.

[music plays]

Travis: [exaggerated posh voice] Hello! I'm a stuffy dowager countess.

Teresa: Travis?

Travis: [exaggerated posh voice] I'm judging everybody's manners!

Teresa: Oh no.

Travis: *Shmanners* isn't judgy. It's about teaching you to be your best self, and be a little more confident when you enter social situations that you don't understand, and maybe also teach you a little bit about history you didn't know, or give you interesting things to talk about at parties.

Teresa: Yeah! Like the secret life of Emily Post.

Travis: Or like why wristwatches are the way that they are.

Teresa: We can talk about table manners from the Victorian Era?

Travis: Sure! Or what it's like to attend a Regency ball.

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: You can find all that and more if you listen to *Shmanners* on Maximum Fun, or wherever your podcasts come from, I guess.

Teresa: Manners, *Shmanners*. Get it?

[music and ad end]

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