

Still Buffering 335: "May" (2002)

Published October 31, 2022

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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 Teylor Smirl.

Sydnee: Uh, well, we're really getting close to the spookiest time of the year.

Taylor: [singing] The veil is thinning.

[pause]

Sydnee: Are you all excited?

Rileigh: I am.

Taylor: Always.

Sydnee: I have, um... I will be attending two trunk-or-treats this Friday, and I will be attending a candy drop, where they take a big crane full of candy and drop it on children. Or maybe they just drop it in the park, and then the children run to it? That's what I'm hoping.

Taylor: [simultaneously] Depending on the height, that could be very dangerous.

Rileigh: [simultaneously] That's— yes. The children are not allowed under the crane.

Taylor: Okay.

Sydnee: Yeah, I don't think they drop it on the children. It kind of swings around and sprays candy out.

Rileigh: It's like a drop, and then a free-for-all.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: It's terrifying.

Sydnee: Yeah. So much candy.

Rileigh: Um, I'm going to Lawlloween, which is the Halloween party hosted by the law school.

Sydnee: Law— oh, okay. Not lol.

Rileigh: Law-lloween.

Sydnee: Lol.

Rileigh: And then I'm going on a bar crawl.

Taylor: Wow.

Sydnee: Wow!

Rileigh: A Halloween bar crawl, and I've got two costumes, making up for the past four years of not wearing a costume.

Sydnee: Are you gonna— are you gonna change halfway through the evening? Are you gonna do, like, a costume change?

Rileigh: No. I'm going as two things.

Sydnee: Ohh.

Rileigh: So I've got— one's on— the Lawlloween is— I should have clarified. They're on two different days.

Sydnee: Oh, okay.

Rileigh: One's on a Friday night, and the other's a Saturday day into the evening bar crawl.

Sydnee: That's exciting.

Raleigh: So... I've got a *Do Revenge* costume.

Sydnee: Ooh. That's cool.

Raleigh: Look like Maya Hawke. Except in a preppy school uniform.

Sydnee: I just have my, uh, my Blackbeard costume that Tey made me.

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: Which is a sick costume.

Sydnee: I know. I wore it to Spooky Pride and I got tons of compliments.

Taylor: Are you gonna get to wear it again?

Sydnee: Yes. We are— well there's trick-or-treating. I won't wear it to school trunk-or-treat. There's just too much to explain to elementary school kids there.

Taylor: Yeah... there are also a lot of weapons involved.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: That's what I was gonna say. Probably more so the weapons.

Sydnee: So I won't for trunk-or-treat, but for trick-or-treat, when we actually, like, go door to door. But then I think we're gonna have some people over Saturday night. A small— a small, intimate gathering of friends, with costuming.

Raleigh: Is that what it is, like, on the invitation? "You're invited to a small, intimate gathering of friends with costuming."

Sydnee: No, we're not fancy enough. We sent out a text that says "Come to our house." [laughs]

Raleigh: That works.

Sydnee: "Justin will bake. Sydnee will be in costume." [laughs]

Taylor: [quietly] That's nice.

Sydnee: Uh, I have to tell you all, Cooper came home from school today, and she told us this incredibly long story about getting bullied. And she told us about this boy on the playground and, like, what he was wearing and what he looked like in, like, very detailed, like what his shoes looked like, everything. And said, "What did he say to you?"

This was what we got first was this huge description of the child that bullied her with no name. And I said, "Okay, what did he say to you?"

And she said, "Well. He called me... a turd."

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: And I said, "He called you a turd?"

And she said, "Yep. He called me a turd."

And I thought, "This didn't happen." There's no way this four-year-old called another four-year-old a turd. I just don't see how it's possible!

Rileigh: I think your four-year-old would call someone a turd.

Taylor: Yeah, why does that seem impossible?

Sydnee: It just seems— like, not poop? So I kept asking her questions—

Taylor: Wait, are— are you— are you implying there is a scale of sophistication in words one might use for poop?

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: There's poop, and then there's turd. Oh no, that's far too educated for a four-year-old. "Turd."

Sydnee: Yeah, I just can't see a four-year-old—

Taylor: What?

Sydnee: [laughs] So anyway, I said—

Taylor: He didn't call her, like, "You defecation." He called her a turd.

Rileigh: I mean, there is a good chance she only knows that word from our dad. I think he's the only person I still know that uses that word.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] There are several songs and rhymes that they know from our father that, I mean, perhaps I wish they didn't, but there we are. Um... [laughs quietly] remember the diarrhea song?

Taylor: Yeah.

Rileigh: [simultaneously] Oh yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. They both know that one really well.

Rileigh: That one's got turd in it.

Sydnee: It does. It does.

Taylor: Well, maybe this kid also has a grandfather that knows the diarrhea song.

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: So I said, "Did it hurt your feelings?"

"Yes."

"Did you cry, or...? Like, what happened?"

She said, "Nothing. I cried, but nothing happened."

And I said, "Did the teacher notice you were crying? Did you talk to the teacher?"

"No, I was by myself."

Okay. Well, this is starting to sound less credible, that she was completely alone. I know how that playground looks. And that— anyway, so I said, "Well, do you want me to talk to your teacher and find out, like, what's— "

'Cause she has said this same kid has bullied her many times. And she's like, "No. I can handle it, mommy."

And then she's quiet. And then she goes, "I got you! No one called me a turd."

Totally made it up!

Taylor: Well...

Raleigh: She's really good at that.

Sydnee: Made up the entire story, for no reason! I didn't say, like, "Well, honey, were you bullied today?"

Like, I just said, "So, tell me about your day. What happened? Did you have a good day?"

And she comes out with this entire tale of the turd bully.

Taylor: I don't know.

Raleigh: [crosstalk] Bully.

Taylor: She's a kid. She's just learning emotional interactions. She wanted some roleplaying to understand. That's fine.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: She really knows how to— to tell a story. I asked her what she had for lunch the other day at school. 'Cause, I mean, you have one kid that always brings a lunch and one that always will just eat anything they have at school.

Sydnee: Charlie, by the way, brings chicken noodle soup every day, so that's Charlie. [holding back laughter] That's— she's— that's everything you need to know about Charlie. She brings chicken noodle soup every day in her lunch.

Taylor: For Charlie's soul.

Raleigh: [laughs] So that's Charlie. And then you've got Cooper, who just shows up and eats whatever school has every day. Um, so I asked her when I was home, like, "Hey, what'd you have for lunch today?"

She said, "I had... a breadstick... and... a donut... and... corn."

And that was the end of the sentence.

I said, "Okay, no. I know you had more than that. There's no way your school gave you a breadstick, a donut, and corn."

And she said, "Well, there was something with the breadstick, but, ugh! You don't wanna know what it was."

[laughs quietly] I said, "What was it? What'd they put with your breadstick?"

And she said, "Mayo!"

[wheezes]

Sydnee: There's no way there was mayo with the breadstick.

Raleigh: That's what I— I said, "Cooper, that doesn't sound right. You had to have had something else. Was there, like, you know, a sandwich? Was there a hot dog?" Like, I was trying to get, like, there had to have been some main course, here. There was not just a breadstick, a donut, and a piece of corn.

And she said, "Well, I did actually have two donuts, and they were the kind with the cinnamon creme. They were cinnabites." [laughs] And eventually she said—

Sydnee: [simultaneously] I never know.

Raleigh: — it was like ten minutes later. Out of nowhere she just goes, "Charlie, you would've loved what I had for lunch today. I had chicken nuggets!"

And I was like, "Okay, there it is. That's what you really had for lunch today."
[laughs]

Sydnee: You never know. So, they— at the beginning of the school year they kept forgetting to, like, mail out, email out the lunch menu. And, like, Cooper was just willing to roll with it. She was like, "I'll try whatever. Like, yeah, don't send my lunch. I'll eat whatever it is."

But then I never knew what she was eating, 'cause she'd come home and I'd be like, "What'd you eat today?"

And for, like, three days in a row she was like, "A beef sandwich."

And I'm like, "There's— [wheezes] there's not— you're not getting a beef sa— "

Like, I could not figure it out. And so finally they started sending lunch menus home, and it's fun. I don't tell her I know. I ask her, "What did they give you for lunch?" And I know, 'cause I have the menu. And it's— I mean, there's a loose association with what the truth is. It's like, there's— sometimes she'll hit something. Like, you know, there was— if there's a vegetable she gets really excited. If there are peppers.

Raleigh: I think the problem is mostly that I think to her all meat is beef.

Sydnee: Yes.

Raleigh: So anything that's not a chicken nugget is beef.

Sydnee: [simultaneously] Is beef.

Raleigh: Which, I mean, fair for school lunches, I think. It's all kind of the same. But beef sandwiches are go-to.

Sydnee: Charlie's like, "I'll just take my chicken noodle soup again, please, with some oyster crackers. And you can keep sending those sugar snap peas, mom, but I'm never gonna eat 'em."

Raleigh: I opened up her lunch box to try to steal something out of it after school. Like, "Ooh, I wonder if she has any, like, I don't know, some sort of treat left over in here she didn't eat."

And it was just one bag of sugar snap peas. And I said, "Can I eat these?"

And she said, "[scoffs] Go ahead. Mom knows I'm not going to."

Sydnee: It's the only vegetable she tells me she'll eat raw, and so I send it every day in her lunch and beg her just— and I send, like, three. I'm like, not— I'm not going— I have no lofty goals, here. Just, like, eat *a* vegetable. [sighs] Anyway.

Raleigh: Anyways, sorry if you hear noises, by the way. My guinea pigs now live right next to my desk, instead of in my bedroom, and they don't understand the importance of a podcast recording, so.

Sydnee: Well, you have guinea pigs. I have a creepy doll behind me.

Raleigh: Yeah, you do. I see that peeking over your shoulder.

Sydnee: Speaking of a creepy doll...

Raleigh: Hmm.

Sydnee: Look at that! Did you like that?

Taylor: Uh—

Sydnee: Taylor, that's your cue.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Uh, this is my week, and I chose the movie *May*, which is a 2002 horror movie. I think it's a pretty unique one. It's—

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: I— I love it. It's weird, it's disturbing, it's a little sad, but it's one of my favorites.

Sydnee: And there is a creepy doll.

Taylor: There is a creepy doll.

Sydnee: That was— That was that tie-in.

Raleigh: Yes.

Taylor: Uh, yes.

Sydnee: Not— not Annabelle. I know that sounded like Annabelle is where we were going there, but that's not where we're going. No.

Taylor: No, no. This is a far superior creepy doll movie. Don't let Annabelle know that I said that. Um, but *May* is the story of May, who is a young girl who was sort of ostracized from a young age. Uh, 'cause she— just the simple fact that she had a lazy eye and just sort of, I don't know, grew up lonely, without friends. Uh, she has a doll that was given to her by seemingly very controlling mother, and this was her only friend. And then as a young adult, as she navigates life she— her one goal is just to find somebody to care about her and to care about. And this is a horror movie, so that has monstrous results. The tagline is "If you can't find a friend, make one."

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Um, yeah, Tey. This— so, I enjoyed this movie. It was, um... not just, like, the ending, which of course we are going to spoil.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: Which is, I mean, disturbing. Like, intentionally. That's the goal. I felt like it was, like, often a psychological sort of thriller.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Despite the fact that, like, you get into sort of the traditional blood and gore and body horror by the very ending, there. Like, her, um... the actress— I don't know who plays May. But the stuff that she's doing to be sort of, um... a little bit outside of reality, just a little bit removed, and... I don't know. It's very, uh, it's very good and it's very disturbing.

Taylor: Angela Bettis is the lead actress.

Sydnee: She's very good.

Taylor: Yeah. She was quoted as saying she felt like she was made for this role, which I agree. I mean, if she hadn't been in other things, [through laughter] I would say, like, this is— this is an autobiographical film.

Raleigh: I recognized her and I couldn't put my finger on it. And I— it was just one of those people. I was sitting there like, "I know I've seen you in something," and it was from *The Crucible*.

Taylor: Wow.

Raleigh: The one from 2000... like, the same time. 2001, 2002? I don't know. The one with Liam Neeson in it. I had to watch it for school at one point. And that's what I recognized her from. So obviously she's got a... a type of movie. I don't know how I had never heard of this movie before.

Sydney: Yeah, me neither.

Raleigh: I'm not, like, a horror movie expert, but I do feel like I've dug pretty deep into, like, trying to find some of the best ones from, like, past years over the Halloweens where I spend months watching scary movies, and I don't know how I just had never heard of this.

Taylor: Well, I mean, it's... it got good reviews. Like, it was a well-reviewed film. But I think it also... it gets into that vein of... which these are usually where my favorite horror movies lie, where it's saying something about society that's still, based on the time when it came out and I'd say even still today, makes us uncomfortable, because we're not willing to recognize it.

Because the beauty of *May* to me is that as the... it is, uh... it's a revenge film, but not on any of the characters that are actually murdered in the movie. Some of them are kind of jerks, but they're not really bad people, you know? Nobody really deserves the fate they get. I feel like it's a revenge film on the audience, on how we treat women. On how they are raised to be objects, they're raised to be small, to be quiet. It's a bit of an inversion of the manic pixie dream girl. Quirky weird girl that's different, and like, what is it like to actually be that girl? What is it— you know. It's a lot of sort of ideas about what womanhood should be and what femininity should be kind of turned on its head. And like, what is the monster that is the feminine monster, the objectified endpoint of what a woman would become? And that's *May*.

She sees people as parts, she sees people as objects, because that's the only way she's been allowed to view herself. You know, from a young age she was a perfectly normal kid. She had a physical difference about her that in no way affected her, and yet she was ostracized just for that, and her parents reinforced that as a reason— a thing she should be ashamed of. So she grew up seeing people as parts, as just, you know, a person is just the sum of the parts they have. And if your parts are bad, that means you're bad.

I love that. And I don't think a lot— I think that's a— it's an uncomfortable thing, though, because it's calling out society in a way that I don't— we're still not—we still haven't improved on.

Sydnee: Sure. No, I know what you're saying. And I— I do think some of that's reflected in the fact that, like, um, there are scenes, especially of course in the very beginning, where she is, like— the way that she's styled is sort of like the traditional, like, the quiet girl or the nerdy girl or the girl who, like— she's a little disheveled, you know? She's not what— and then, like, there are scenes where she swings from that to, like, incredibly seductive and dressed very, like you know, kind of sexy and makeup and revealing and, like, you know, you see that sort of echoed in the way her character is styled on and off. And she goes back and forth. She doesn't, like— it's not like a makeover transformation that sticks, you know? Like in the a lot of the— "Oh, the nerdy girl gets pretty." You know what I mean? 'Cause she reverts back to sort of, like, the original kind of quiet nerdy girl sometimes.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Is— do you think part of the reason maybe it— 'cause I agree with you saying, like, we don't like recognizing that we think that about women, and we still don't. Definitely not in 2002. Is part of it because it's also... queer, do you think? 'Cause it's not— you know, it's not... I don't know. Was that, like, a thing that was allowed to be popular in 2002?

Taylor: Well, you know, that's the int— and I remember seeing this movie closer to when it came out, and then I was rewatching it. I had kind of forgotten that there is a queer narrative in this until I was rewatching it, and it's the one part about this movie that makes me— I mean, there's— actually that's not—I was gonna say it makes me sad. There's lots about this movie that makes me sad. But I think the thing that makes me the saddest is it's got Anna Faris as this— so, May works as a veterinary assistant, and she works in an office with Anna Faris,

who is a lesbian, who has made it pretty clear that she's attracted to May. And they have— they hook up, but Anna Faris is sort of... you know, not committed, but she's very harmless. Like, I feel like actually understood May, like, saw May for what she was and was willing to be okay with that. And that— that, you know... May ends up the— the— the sort of, you know, arc of the movie is she ultimately decides to just collect parts from people to create a perfect friend, and one of those parts belongs to Anna Faris, so Anna Faris is murdered. But that part made me really sad, 'cause I think it was kind of almost played for a laugh. Like a queer relationship couldn't be taken seriously. So it's just, like, this other devious thing that her desire drives her to for perfect parts. But really it's actually the one healthy relationship presented in the film.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: Right. Well, 'cause I had a moment where I was like, "Oh. Is this a bi main female character?" Like, almost like a little bit of a *Jennifer's Body* moment. But, like, *Jennifer's Body* it was so, like, not, you know, definite. It was hinted at very heavily, but it was never said. In this I was like, "Oh. This is— this is it, except that."

And then I kind of felt the same way. It kind of felt like it was just, like, you know, played out for another, like, volatile story line of hers, I guess.

Taylor: I appreciate that comparison, because I feel the same way about *May* as I do about *Jennifer's Body* in that there is a parallel universe where the ends are gay and happy. You know, just as much— there's a parallel *Jennifer's Body* where Needy and Jennifer— like, Jennifer's a demon. Needy helps her feed her hunger for boys, and they're in love, and that's just how it ends. And there's a parallel universe for this where Polly's like, "Oh, May! You brought a body part home again, no! We're beautiful as our whole selves, not as our parts!"

And May's like, "Okay, I'm sorry."

And then they do a weird dance and they're happy forever. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Oh. I would like that.

Sydnee: And they hang out with the— they hang out with the kids from *Let the Right One In*.

Taylor: [laughs] Yeah. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Just one. I want one demonic lesbian horror movie to end in a happy, functional relationship. You should not watch horror movies for that, but why not?

Sydnee: No, I do think—

Raleigh: [simultaneously] There should be one.

Sydnee: Yeah. No, I did think that was interesting. Because it is... what did we say, 2002?

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Which was, like, I mean, to just see a character, especially... hmm, I don't know if 2002 was early Anna Faris, before she was, like, super famous. Maybe so. I don't know.

Raleigh: Probably, right?

Taylor: I mean, I feel like she was still in things. She was well known at that point.

Sydnee: I'm sure she was— and I don't know, I don't know when, like... I don't know. I've always been aware of Anna Faris. I don't know when she became super famous. Um, but I— I feel like that's a big thing for 2002. To have, like, those sort of scenes and that sort of theme. And, like, I mean, it is. That would've been a big deal in 2002 to include that in the movie. It's a shame that it ends in the way that often queer relationships did in movies back then.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, and that it's— I mean, I think that Anna Faris— it's, like, it's very harmless, the fact that she's with another woman when May shows up. It's not... I don't know. I feel like that's— it's unfortunate that, like, that was the way they

played it with her. The other guy, like, Adam, it felt like, well, May was kind of— I mean, she bit him. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Well, and that's a— that's— yeah.

Sydnee: You know? Like, he's just— they give him, like, a little more justification, and they kind of play off Anna Faris's character like, "Well, she just sort of sleeps around." And I don't know. And it's unfortunate. 'Cause at the time, like, any queer representation was all rep— you know? Like, that's— "Oh, that's everybody." Because there was so little.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: I'm not blaming Adam, but he did show her a movie about...

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: ... eating people.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: So, like...

Sydnee: What was that? That was a mixed message.

Raleigh: She had to have thought for a moment, like, "Oh. Is this your... okay. Let's... I'll— I'll do that." Like, you know what I mean? Like, he kind of set it up that way.

Taylor: Well, I mean, that's what I— I think one of the elements that I love so much about this movie is the way that Adam is not just a guy. He's this guy that's, "Oh, he's so creepy! He's got this creepy bedroom with creepy artwork, and he makes creepy art films, and oh, he's so intense!"

And then he is just terrified, horrified of May. Like, it is sort of that— you know. That fantasy of, like, oh, the manic pixie dream girl comes along and she's weird, just like you, and she gets you.

But she's— she's way— she's real. She's actually scary, and you just have sort of... attached scariness to you to make you seem mysterious and cool. And I love

that that is— I feel like that's a very self-aware character, like, to put in the movie. I think even before really the whole breaking point of manic pixie dream girl had taken place.

Sydnee: Well, and I think it's also good to comment on the idea of, like, sort of that kind of putting on this, um, like, the clothing of trauma around you. Like, "I'm so dark and twisted and, like, look at my art, because I'm so— like, everything's so bad." When you have May, a character who has actually suffered, who has actually been ostracized, who has actually suffered trauma. [laughs quietly] Who, like, it's not, um, a show. She's not putting on a show for you. She doesn't— this is not an act. This isn't for cred. This isn't to look cool and mysterious and dreamy, which is very much the vibe I get from the guy.

Taylor: Right.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And, you know, again, like, he doesn't do anything so heinous. He rejects her, but she bit him, you know? He was frightened by her. And, I mean, maybe for fair reasons.

Sydnee: She bit him.

Taylor: [laughs] She— she bit him a couple times.

Raleigh: It was a— it was a nibble.

Taylor: [laughs] Maybe the first one was a nibble.

Raleigh: It was a little nibble.

Taylor: The second one, there was a lot of blood. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: And I don't think— so, okay. I saw that, and here's my thought. I don't think it was the bite so much. I think if she had bitten him and then it had been followed with a; "Oh, holy crap! I'm so sorry! Oh my gosh, oh my gosh! I just got way into it and I'm so sorry!"

I think there was a way to sort of, like, save that moment? I think it was the kind of, like... like... [holding back laughter] seductively smearing the blood down her neck? [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, it was kind of the— the obvious, like, "Oh, she's enjoying rubbing my blood on her" moment that was sort of like, "Uh-oh!" [laughs]

Raleigh: But you know what? This is exactly what you were saying though, Tey. Like, he shows this weird, creepy movie, right? That's, like, his whole personality. Like, "Ooh, look how dark and mysterious." And you've got, like, these— I mean, it's cannibalism. It's people eating each other. And so she's like, "Oh. This is— you like— you like this. This is— these is the— these are the kinds of things you like. Let me do these things. You'll like these things."

And she's into them, because she actually has this, like, darker personality that he wants to look like he has, but then he sees it in real life and he's like, "Oh, wait a minute! Hold on! Oh no!"

Sydnee: I was [crosstalk]—

Raleigh: Which I do kinda like, 'cause I like that trope in movies where it's like— if it's a guy who's, like, trying to be super, like, jocky or, you know, fratty or, like, mysterious and weird, but then it's all, like, you know, they can't actually... can't actually hang.

Sydnee: And that is— that is an interesting contrast, when you consider the scene where she cuts her finger in front of Anna Faris, and then cuts Anna Faris's finger. And she's like, "Alright. Okay. I like this."

Like, there is— there is a contrast there. Like, "This is someone who gets me. This is a relationship that is more honest. This is somewhere I can be more comfortable."

But I do think you have to imagine that in 2002 there were people involved with it going, like, "Don't go too far with that narrative." You know? Just because there always were at that time.

Taylor: Well, that's what I think— like... I think that the entire queer story line was meant to be somewhat menacing in a way. You know? Like, you couldn't look at it in the guise of like, what's the healthier relationship? Because it just didn't— how was that even an option? Like, and I mean, you know, Anna Faris plays it very seductive. But not... not in any way, like, insidious. Just she's very flirtatious, she's very seductive, so it's like, "Oh. May is willing to risk a dangerous gay relationship just to find a friend. Look at how depraved she is!"

Like, no, this relationship seems pretty healthy. You're into some weird stuff, but hey, so is she. Cool! Works out. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Well, and maybe this is just me saying this from, like, my personal bi perspective, but it feels like a lot of times in movies we've talked about from early 2000's or even, like, the 90's, it was almost more of a thing for a girl in a movie to be bi than it was for there to be a lesbian character.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: You know what I mean? Like, even in, like, *Jennifer's Body* where it's like, we don't wanna say that Needy or Jennifer— we don't wanna say either of them are attracted to both men and women, 'cause it's almost like, well, that's not— can't say that. You know what I mean? Like, it feels like it would be easier for people at that time to accept a main character that was a lesbian.

Taylor: Hm...

Sydnee: I don't know.

Raleigh: Maybe not. Maybe that's just my perspective on, like, looking back at things. But it does often feel like times where we've talked about characters that were in relationships with men and women... there was less of a positive treatment, if that makes sense.

Sydnee: Sure. No, I think that's definitely true.

Raleigh: And again, we're talking about a horror movie, so there's not going to be, like, you know, positive treatment maybe at all. But...

Sydnee: I just— I think it was— I think there was a lot more of this idea that, like, somebody who was bi was on a road in one direction or the other. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I feel like that was very much, like, the take on it. And so, like, the idea is you're gonna end one place or the other, and that's what you are, period. And that will define you forever. Um, and then— and once you end on one place or the other, it will also define, like, the way we portray you in media. Because, like, if you end up on the straight end of the spectrum and you're a woman, then you're gonna look like a feminine woman who's with a dude, and it's all very, you know, rom-com or whatever. Whereas if we're gonna take you in the lesbian direction, we're gonna style you differently and we're gonna change you. You know? Like, I feel like back then it was all so stereotypical. There wasn't a lot of— like, if you're somewhere in the middle, we didn't know what to do with you. What does that mean? Like, what would you look like? What would you wear? What would you say? We have no— we have no concept of this, so we'll just shove you one way or the other eventually.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: You're saying what I was thinking much better than I was saying it. I guess that's more so what I've recognized. More of, like, an inability to accept that there are more than two, you know, extremes when it comes to identities.

Taylor: Well, and I don't... I think that this movie is... is aware of the stigma at the time against queer relationships. Uh, I don't think it's trying to demonize that. I feel like it's purposely showing— 'cause I think that goes back to, like, this idea as May being a sort of monster of womanhood that society has created. Like, what does that look like? The fact that she has one relationship, and it actually seems healthy— and, you know, the moment where Anna Faris's character says "Oh, if you want her to leave, I'll kick her out."

Like, it's clear that she is prioritizing May's feelings. That is— there's plenty of signs that that is a normal, healthy relationship. And then this other one, which is... it's just not as good. But the one that May prioritizes and cares about and fantasizes about is the traditional heterosexual relationship.

And, I mean, if you want— you know. Like, 'cause a woman can only be an object. You need a— a man. And I think that that is— and I say this, too, because the same director made *All Cheerleaders Die*, and that is a— that actually is a horror movie where you get a kind of good end to a queer narrative. It's very satisfying. So—

Rileigh: Oh, I haven't seen that one.

Taylor: I think he knew the kind of land he was playing in. I just think *May*... I don't wanna discredit this film. I don't think it's trying to make a homophobic narrative.

Rileigh: Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: I think it's trying to point out that someone that's been indoctrinated in society the way *May* is sort of presented wouldn't even know how to value a queer relationship.

Rileigh: Yes.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: Yeah, for sure. No, I think that... I think that horror movies actually usually do a lot better job than some movies that are just trying to be social commentary, in a way, at pointing out things like that. And I think that you're definitely right. This is one of those. Like, the queer relationship was there to look at how we view those, and did in that society, just like we did with women.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: So the director did two different movies with sort of a queer narrative in them?

Taylor: Have you seen *All Cheerleaders Die*?

Sydnee: I haven't.

Taylor: So, I know— I've seen— there's the original one, and then there's a remake. But I feel the director had a hand in both of them. But yes, there is a... it's actually kind of— I don't know the timeline for that. 'Cause I would feel like it'd be a response to *Jennifer's Body*, but I think the original one came out before. But there is. There is sort of a possessed cheerleader character and a witchy girlfriend that helped bring her back to life, and they... they— they navigate their struggles together. It's a good movie, so, you know.

Raleigh: Sounds good.

Sydnee: That's interesting.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Is that— it feels like if you're gonna make a couple different movies like that that there are voices— like, from the community in there somewhere.

Taylor: Well, you know, I saw... [laughs quietly] I saw, like, a thinkpiece about, like, you know, "Why do horror movies need to have agendas now?" Especially queer agendas. And it's so weird to me 'cause, like, horror is queer. You know that, right? Like, most... most horror is— is queer. It all— a lot of it comes back to that. [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, and also, like, when did horror movies not have an agenda?

Taylor: Well, I mean, they all— exactly. Like, it is—

Sydnee: Like, they're all story— they're all either morality stories or commentary or, like— it is rare to find a horror movie that's just like, "I don't know. We chopped some people up. Whatever."

Like... [laughs quietly] I'm not saying they don't exist.

Taylor: But they're usually bad, and we're not particularly interested in them. The ones we're interested in interact with us usually in ways that we're not comfortable being completely out in the light with, so we need things that kind of keep those feelings in the dark, or mask them in metaphors. I mean, you know, *May* is a bit of a Frankenstein story, and that's one of my favorite narratives. That was kind of along the same line, that same sort of thinkpiece about, you know,

"Horror movies don't have to be woke. These kids think that Dr. Frankenstein was the bad guy in Frankenstein!"

And it's like... wh— he was. Wait.

Sydnee: He was the bad guy.

Taylor: He was! [laughs]

Sydnee: He was the bad guy!

Raleigh: I'm pretty sure that's why it's called... Frankenstein.

Taylor: Like, he made the monster... but he also— he made the monster not just with his hands, but he made it by neglecting it and not loving the monster.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: In the same way that—

Sydnee: He is the bad guy!

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: He's the monster.

Taylor: May is the monster. She also then makes a monster, but she is the thing that society made that is now coming back. That society made and did not love, and she's now coming back to wreak havoc on society. That is— it's the Frankenstein story. I don't— [laughs] how do you get that wrong? I don't know!

Sydnee: I was gonna say, how do you miss that?

Taylor: Because Frankenstein, Dr. Frankenstein in the book, he's like an affluent, like, rich guy that has friends and is well-to-do, and the monster's a big scary thing, so it must be the bad guy.

Sydnee: Okay. Okay. If you're doing a reading of Frankenstein—

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: — where your interpretation is that— is more like a *Spookley the Square Pumpkin* sort of take on Frankenstein. Like, "Those mean ol' villagers just hated him 'cause he looked different and they couldn't accept somebody who looked different from them. Isn't that terrible?" Like, is that really the— that's what you got?

Taylor: Wait, that— no! Syd, that's— that is... that is!

Sydnee: No! But, like, that— but that's not the whole thing. The whole thing isn't just, like, the villagers are the bad guys. It completely leaves out the fact that, like, there was Dr. Frankenstein who made Frankenstein.

Taylor: Oh. Well, yes.

Sydnee: Who made the monster, who made all of— like, he set it all in motion.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: So are you asking, who made Spookley the square pumpkin and set all those events in motion?

Taylor: That's who's really to blame?

Sydnee: Well, I don't— that's really who's—yes. That's really— [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: That's who's to blame.

Sydnee: Not the other pumpkins in the patch. No, I know the villagers are bad for wanting to set Frankenstein on fire. I get that. I'm just saying, like, it's more than that. It's more than just a story of, like, love those who are different.

Taylor: Well, and— it is. But, I mean, it's also... I don't know. If you get into, like, if we're talking movies versus book, there's different vibes. And then you get to the second movie where there's a whole gay narrative there that— you can't dispute it. It was absolutely present. And it seems to be about, like, the fear of gay love and what will propagate from gay love, and that something monstrous, only. Like, I don't know. Horror's queer! I'm sorry.

Rileigh: Well, horror's a space for marginalized communities to share the horrors that they have to live through in a way that people not in those communities can, like, consume and not be offended by because it can, you know, go over their heads. And they don't think it's, like you know, in their face about it. I mean, that's what the genre has always been for.

Sydnee: Now, *Willy's Wonderland* felt very straight to me, I will say.

Taylor: Uhh... until you watched it. I love that movie.

Sydnee: I did love that movie. That is a horror movie that I don't think has an agenda. Can I just put that out there? I don't know what it would be. Maybe it's there. It's a great movie. Don't think it has an agenda.

Taylor: I think there's something that you could argue about, like— like, abused workers... and, you know, the sort of...

Sydnee: Ehh. You could get there. I mean, you could get there.

Taylor: There's some capitalism at play at *Willy's Wonderland*, I would say.

Sydnee: It's a great movie.

Taylor: It is a good movie. I mean, you know, I don't— like, it's... what's the— the idea that, like, "Uh, this scary monster is scary because it might hurt you." Like, that's... that's a scary thought. Trying to, like, run a whole book or a movie off of that thought isn't so scary. But, like, "I've made a metaphorical representation about the things in yourself that you're not willing to confront." I think that's gonna... that's gonna go a little deeper.

Sydnee: Absolutely.

Taylor: I was thinking, like, with *May* and some of these other movies that I think fall into the same category of, like, the horror of femininity— and I don't think I have a better perspective, I think I just have a different one. Being— like, the horror of possessing a feminine body has always been very relevant in my life, so these movies always spoke to me in a specific way because it's kind of drawing a light to that. But, like, *Carrie* I feel very much is the same kind of a vibe, you know?

Sydnee: Yeah, I can see that.

Taylor: Like, it's just this horrible ritual that happens to you when you grow into a woman's body, whether you're one or not! [wheezes] That you just have to put up with now. You're an object, you're a thing, and that's how you're going to be viewed. And that's...

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Well, and in a very small way it's like that "good for her" film genre. Where it's like all these women that have been put in bad situations because of how society treats women, so then they just kind of, like, you know...

Sydnee: Go murder everyone?

Raleigh: Yeah. Or, like, you know— like *Gone Girl* is a pretty typical example of, like, a "good for her."

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Like, that's— you know. Kind of fits. In a very small way, kind of fits in there. Like, "Good for May. Good for her."

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Well, I mean, I didn't know. Like, I think that's why it's a powerful movie is I didn't feel— I didn't feel she was a bad person at the end of the movie. I still felt deeply sympathetic for her. And it wasn't because you put her up against cartoonish representations of the evils of man. Again, nobody was all that bad to her, you know? Like, the dude was disrespectful, but he didn't do anything awful. His girlfriend was kinda crappy, but even she was— she tried to, like, be nice to May a little bit. Like, it's just... you just wanted to see her win. And I mean, I know for me it's because there's a part of me that related to the character. Like, you know? She— you've made her this. She's found a way to live with it. I don't know.

Sydnee: Yeah, no, I can understand that. No, I definitely felt that way. It felt— it felt a lot more like when she finally— which I guess we haven't really clarified what she does at the end. She... murders basically everybody else we've mentioned in the movie.

Taylor: [wheezes] And then some! [laughs]

Raleigh: Like a— like a handful of people.

Sydnee: And takes a body part from each one to assemble into a new friend... to replace the doll that got broken. Oh my gosh! We didn't even get into that scene. When the doll breaks and there are people in the broken glass, and I can't even... it's a lot. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But that— but yes. That— so she re— reforms them into very much like a Frankenstein's monster, you know.

Raleigh: And then doesn't just use their body parts. Also uses her own, right?

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Her eyes.

Sydnee: Removes her own eye.

Taylor: [simultaneously] Pulls out one of her own eyes.

Raleigh: Ugh. Oh, which is a moment. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yes. Which— which is also how she ends her life, there. The— I'm assuming she's dead there at the end.

Taylor: I don't know if she is.

Raleigh: Yeah, I didn't assume that she was?

Sydnee: Or did she just pass out in shock? 'Cause she had pulled her eye out?

Taylor: I mean, I don't— you're the doctor. Would pulling one's eye out... I don't think that's enough blood loss to kill you.

Raleigh: Would that kill you?

Sydnee: No. No, not nece— not necessarily.

Taylor: And not that fast.

Raleigh: I just assumed she was like— you know, like, "Oh."

Sydnee: I don't know. The way she just sort of collapsed on the... friend...
[laughs]

Taylor: I think...

Raleigh: "Friend."

Taylor: I mean, she says before the friend comes to life— 'cause her goal is— she thinks she's gonna sew all these body parts together and it's going to come to life and be her friend. And she says, "You know, you don't need to speak, 'cause I'll know you're there."

And she has that moment where she's sort of— yeah. She's screaming in pain, and then she calms down, and then the thing's hand comes up and caresses her. So I think they were communicating. I think that's why she calmed down. I think she knew that her friend, Amy— which I guess it's still— hey, it still ends with a queer narrative, right? Because the monster she makes, she names it Amy.
[unintelligible] [wheeze-laughs]

Sydnee: No, I think as opposed to, like, "This is, like, an evil person who kills people," it came across more as like a "Hurt people hurt people" kind of narrative. You know? That was... which is, like, still sad. But not... it's different. She is not evil. She's not malicious. She is acting in a way that is the result of everything that's come before this moment.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: It's a little bit Edward Scissorhands.

Taylor: [laughs] [through laughter] Very dark take on Edward Scissorhands.

Raleigh: Basically the same.

Sydnee: I was gonna say, yeah, just like Edward Scissorhands. Like, you know how at the end he starts chopping people up into pieces and makes them into topiaries?

Taylor: [simultaneously] Sewing them back together.

Raleigh: He has the ability. He could.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: He could.

Sydnee: I mean, he could.

Raleigh: [simultaneously] It's possible.

Sydnee: He could.

Raleigh: There is a universe in which that happened. Just saying.

Taylor: I mean, I think that when you root for the bad guy, I don't think it's because you're at heart a bad guy. I think it's because you relate to the bad guy, and I think that there's something really relatable about May's... she wants companionship, but everything she's been taught in her life has broken her ability to seek it in a healthy way. So... well, sorry. You know, that's what you get.
[wheeze-laughs]

Sydnee: I mean, I did. I enjoyed it. I think it was really well done. I think it was very interesting, it was very thought provoking in a way that... I mean, even—we've talked a lot about most horror movies have a message, are saying something, but even more so. And then of course it gets all of the gory stuff too, which is nice.

Raleigh: And I did not know where we were going at any point.

Taylor: Yeah. It definitely... I— it's— I think it's interesting that so much of the movie is not— I mean, it's scary because of the tension, but the violence all kind of comes at once.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: It does. I wasn't sure— I had started to suspect when we saw Ambrosia's legs, just sort of, like, disembodied legs dancing around. I had this moment where I was like, "Wait a second. We've looked at hands. We're looking at legs. Wait a second." [laughs quietly] I had an inkling.

Raleigh: I didn't. I didn't have a moment until I was like, "Oh! Oh, wait, hold on. Oh!"

[all laughs]

Raleigh: "I see what we've done now." [laughs]

Sydnee: She seems ready to snap the whole movie. I mean, like, you feel that.

Taylor: And I do think a huge part of the movie just relies on the lead actress's performance.

Raleigh: Yeah, for sure.

Taylor: I think many people could play that role and not pull it off the way she does.

Sydnee: I agree. Well, thank you, Taylor.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I really enjoyed it. I'm glad you— I never have heard of it. I wouldn't have watched it if you hadn't brought it up, so thank you.

Taylor: Yeah, thank you for giving it a watch. It's one of my favorites. I love this movie. I will— I think it's good to say, if you do— if nothing else has dissuaded you, dismemberment and death, an animal does die.

Raleigh: Oh, that's true.

Sydnee: Yes, that too.

Taylor: Sometimes that's a deal breaker, and that's totally fine. There is a cat that unfortunately perishes.

Raleigh: Forgot about that.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Did you notice it's— the cat hair is the hair on the— on Amy?

Sydnee: I did notice.

Raleigh: [simultaneously] I didn't.

Taylor: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Sydnee: I was looking for— when she got the cat out of the freezer I knew, like, okay, well the cat's gonna be incorporated into whatever's happening here.
[laughs quietly]

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: I didn't even think about that.

Taylor: Now the cat's part of her friend.

Sydnee: I was looking for it.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: The cat was her friend.

Taylor: Well, now they're all her friends.

Sydnee: There you go.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Uh, Rileigh. [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I already know what the answer to this is. So, what's next?

Rileigh: You know what's next!

Sydnee: I know what's next.

Rileigh: Do you know how long it's been since I've gotten to make you all listen to a whole Taylor Swift album? It's been a whole year.

Sydnee: I was gonna say, it doesn't feel that long. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: It's been a year.

Taylor: Has it?

Rileigh: *Red (Taylor's Version)* came out last November. It's been a full year.

Sydnee: Alright.

Rileigh: So in case you aren't aware, *Midnights* by Taylor Swift, her tenth studio album, just came out last week. So that's what you all are gonna listen to. There is a 3 AM version of the album. That's what it's called, the 3 AM version, that has seven extra songs. There's a really good basically diss track to John Mayer in there in those seven extra songs if you want to check that one out. So... there you go.

Sydnee: Alright.

Rileigh: Basically, two albums.

Sydnee: [simultaneously] We will check it out.

Rileigh: But kind of one. So, yeah.

Sydnee: And, uh— so we'll check that out for next week. And if you wanna watch *May...* where did— was it on Ama... zon... ?

Taylor: I watched it on Shudder.

Sydnee: Oh, is it on Shudder? Is that where it was?

Taylor: I think Shudder has— the way they organize their horror movies, they have an entire category that's just like "unhinged women." [through laughter] And there's so many good movies in that category.

Rileigh: Oh, I want to— I need to check that category.

Sydnee: Well, there you go. Check out "unhinged women" category on Shudder [crosstalk]. [laughs]

Taylor: I love Shudder in general, but that— yeah.

Rileigh: I need to look at that.

Sydnee: Love it. Alright, well, thank you both. Thank you, listeners. Um, you should go to Maximumfun.org and check out all the great shows that 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."

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

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Rileigh: I am still buffering...

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

[theme music plays]

Sydnee: I wouldn't mind ending up in some sort of list that was titled "unhinged women."

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: You'd be okay with that I'm thinking.

Taylor: Syd, you're on that list somewhere.

Sydnee: Hey! [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Fair. It's fair!

[cheerful 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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