

Still Buffering 364: SpongeBob

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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: Um, I don't know that I've ever been more prepared for an episode of this show than I am today.

Taylor: Just jumpin' right in, no small talk.

Sydnee: Well, no, I just—[laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Sydnee doesn't care about anything else right now. Just SpongeBob.

Taylor: Guess so. Already.

Sydnee: It's just been my whole—

Rileigh: Doesn't matter how my day's been, Tey's day's been, what we've been up to, maybe what we've been spending our week doing.

Taylor: Yeah. I guess—

Rileigh: None of that. None of that.

Taylor: —I guess so.

Rileigh: Nope.

Sydnee: Okay, well, go ahead. Share!

Rileigh: No. No. No.

Taylor: [simultaneously] No, it's alright.

Sydnee: No, go for it.

Raleigh: No, go ahead.

Sydnee: No, I'm not saying anything else until you both tell me in excruciating detail every second of your days for the last week.

Taylor: Wow, that wasn't... that wasn't...

Raleigh: That wasn't passive aggressive at all.

Taylor: [through laughter] Yeah, right?

Sydnee: Go. Go.

Raleigh: No, I just want to talk about SpongeBob. It's all you want to talk about, is talking about stupid SpongeBob. Just do it.

Sydnee: Raleigh's hungry right now. Should we preface with that?

Taylor: Oh, is that what's up?

Raleigh: I've been up since 6: 30 and all I've had today is one singular Starburst! That is it! I'm hungry.

Taylor: Now... now, R—Raleigh, you've got some—some autonomy going on there, right? [laughs] Like, you could've done something about that.

Raleigh: I mean, I've been at my office job from 8 to 5, so... no?

Sydnee: Aren't you legally mandated to have a lunch break?

Raleigh: I mean...

Taylor: Yes.

Raleigh: ... I could've taken one, but to eat what?

Sydnee: Well, I'm just saying, like, OSHA protects you, right? Like, you know this better than I do. I'm just a doctor.

Raleigh: I don't know. I don't know anything about OSHA. I'm just an intern.

Taylor: I mean, you can bring lunch. You can go get lunch. You can have lunch brought to you. I don't—there are options.

Sydnee: Don't they have to give you, like, 30 minutes or something?

Taylor: Yes.

Raleigh: I don't know. I don't know. I—I didn't eat. I never do.

Sydnee: There's definitely—Taylor, you probably know more about this than I do.

Taylor: Yes. You have to—you know, I was always told that it was if you work eight hours they have to give you a half hour lunch break. But, uh, currently—I mean, this might've changed, but my current job it's six hours. So if I work over six hours, I have to take a half an hour break.

Raleigh: I'd rather not put my very lovely employer on blast.

Sydnee: Well, no.

Raleigh: It's fully on me. I didn't pack lunch. I didn't bring a lunch. And then I just, you know, I work all day, so.

Sydnee: I think if you said, "Hey, I'm gonna take 30 minutes for lunch," I bet you she'd say, "No problem."

Raleigh: Oh, I'm sure.

Sydnee: Yeah, that's all I'm saying.

Raleigh: Um, but I did not, 'cause I was working, so.

Taylor: Well, yeah. I wasn't questioning your workplace's, like, ethics. [laughs] I was just more giving you a hard time. Like, darling, you could've done something about this. [laughs]

Raleigh: Okay. It's my fault. I know.

Sydnee: I'm gonna buy you a—

Taylor: Well, I'm sorry you're hungry.

Sydnee: I'm gonna buy you a bunch of protein bars and nut packs. That's what—I just put 'em in my car, because it's the only place I know I will be every day is at some point I'll be in my car, and so I will eat the things in there.

Raleigh: Protein bars and nut packs are two of the saddest snacks I think you could ever have that you take and say "This counts as sustenance. This counts as a lunch."

Taylor: I mean, it's something.

Sydnee: It's better than nothing!

Raleigh: It's something, but I mean, you know.

Taylor: It's better than a single Starburst, bud.

Raleigh: That's true.

Sydnee: Also, can I say, we had the cast party here this weekend, and upstairs I have an entire counter full of various kinds of chips, and pretzels, and crackers, as well as all kinds of little plastic bakery sugary treats. You know what I'm talking about.

Raleigh: [simultaneously] Now, I gotta be honest. I do not—I don't—

Sydnee: Little cupcakes. Little brownies.

Raleigh: I don't like those. I gotta be real. I'm not a fan. Of, like, the—like, the grocery store, like, treats that come in, like, the big boxes of, like, mini—mini.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rleigh: I just—they're very sweet. And I'm just not a super sweet—

Sydnee: [simultaneously] There's also German chocolate cake sitting up there.

Rleigh: —kinda gal. Well, Sydnee, I appreciate you sharing with me all these things I could be eating right now that I'm not because I'm sitting here—

Sydnee: I offered! I offered them!

Rleigh: —you know, recording our podcast.

Taylor: Man, I don't want to tell you how I started my day, 'cause I got up and cooked delicious... crunchy chili... peanut noodles with cilantro and scallions—

Rleigh: Ooh, that sounds good.

Taylor: —and tofu. It was really good.

Rleigh: I love the crunchy chili onion stuff from Trader Joe's

Taylor: Oh yeah.

Rleigh: I haven't had that in a couple months now.

Taylor: Well, see, this is my only off day. So, like, the rest of the week I mainly just eat family meal that gets progressively colder. Like, you know, I'll usually have a few bites when I start my shift and then seal some for my 2 AM dinner. So I try to make up for it on my off day by, like, treatin' myself.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rleigh: That sounds like a good treat.

Taylor: It was.

Rleigh: That sounds good.

Taylor: I'm sorry you couldn't have that. [laughs]

Rileigh: It's alright. Just kind of picturing it in my head.

Sydnee: Uh—

Rileigh: Imagining it sitting in front of me.

Taylor: It was real good. I'm sorry.

Rileigh: It's alright.

Sydnee: It was our first day at not having rehearsal in a very long time. The girls, I told them they didn't have to do anything today... but just lay around and just exist. And we could have a day like that. And they requested sushi for lunch. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Love that.

Rileigh: Both of them?

Sydnee: No, Cooper.

Rileigh: Okay. I was gonna say.

Sydnee: Cooper ate sushi, and Charlie ate noodles and sweet and sour chicken.

Rileigh: That sounds about right.

Taylor: See, that's why I feel like ultimately a three—a—a four day work week, three days off is the ultimate way that we're supposed to be as humans. Because you do need one day to just... not do anything.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: I think our brains just need that. A day to just, like, consume food and have sleep. And then you need a day to do all the stuff that you have to do for your life. Your laundry and your cleaning and all that. And then to have any joy in your life you need a whole other day to do that thing that you like to do that you don't get paid to do. Then you can go back to work and you're satisfied.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: That sounds nice.

Sydnee: Yeah, I have two baskets full of clean laundry in my laundry room 'cause I managed to wash and dry them, but there was no time for folding. And they're, like, overflowing. And... now dirty clothes have been put in on top of them. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Okay.

Sydnee: [sighs] So I'm just gonna be washing clothes for all of time.

Taylor: Yeah. I, uh—I did the thing where I did my laundry kind of last minute last week, and I had to go to work that day. Got up early to do it, 'cause I have a uniform I had to wash. So the rest of the clothes, I didn't want them to get, like, wrinkled in the laundry bag 'cause they were clean, so I just opened it up and just threw all the clean clothes all over my bed. Like, "This'll be better."

But then when I came home from work I didn't want to deal with them, so I just slept on top of them. And then I did that, like, three days in a row. And then the question is, are these still clean? [through laughter] If I've slept on top of them, like some sort of... some sort of mole person? I don't think so.

Sydnee: I don't know. 'cause that's kind of like wearing them, right? If you lay on them.

Taylor: [laughs] I wore them—I wore three weeks' worth of clothes all at once over the course of three days. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] You were just trying to get away with only a carry-on on an airplane.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Situation.

Taylor: Not...

Rileigh: See, I just did the worst thing I could possibly do when I came home for the summer, and I left everything in my giant suitcase. And now I've just been living out of a suitcase perpetually. But then of course I wash the clothes the I wear. But I didn't ever put them away anywhere, so they just go back to sitting on top of my suitcase with all the clothes that have been in there, unworn. Um, so I'm kind of in a similar boat of, like, do they really count as clean if I clean them and wash them and then immediately just, like, throw them on top of an old suitcase? I don't know.

Taylor: How did none of us get that, whatever gene Dad has that makes him—like, we can be in a hotel for a single night and he will unpack everything into those drawers, organize them—he will move in. [laughs]

Sydney: Yep.

Taylor: Like, we don't have that!

Sydney: I will say, I don't do that, but I am obsessive about when we come back from a trip, I immediately unpack all of our suitcases and put everything away, and put all of the dirty clothes in the laundry. Like, I immediately... the suitcases are completely unpacked and put away by the end of that day.

Rileigh: See, there for a while when I was, like, having so many holiday breaks, come home from school where, like, you have a fall break, then you have thanksgiving, then you have Christmas. I was just perpetually living out of a suitcase. Just like, "Oh, I just got back from that trip. Let me take the dirty clothes out of that." But I left the clean ones in so I could wear those. But then I'm gonna put some back in, 'cause I'm about to leave again. And then I just, well, never unpack it, 'cause why would I?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydney: I don't know.

Rileigh: I find myself these days pretty much always living in some state of suitcase.

Sydney: Well...

Taylor: I mean...

Raleigh: Everything's always wrinkled. Can't really ever find anything, but I know it's in there somewhere, so I just gotta start digging. And then when I'm looking for something else is when I find the thing I was looking for, like, two days ago. [sighs]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: It's a hard life.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: You're a workin' woman now, you know?

Raleigh: It's a hard life. [pause] Well, I—I'll s—it's—

Taylor: [singing] Workin' 9 to 5. What a way to make a living.

Raleigh: [laughs quietly] It's on me. I moved away for school. And left a bunch of clothes here that then I just bought myself new clothes when I moved away. So now I have, like, a closet full of clothes from, like, high school that I haven't worn since high school. So I have nowhere to put my real, adult clothes.

Sydnee: Hmm.

Raleigh: So...

Taylor: Well, you should—all those clothes you haven't worn since high school, you should, like, clean out and, like, I don't know, donate?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah, I should. That would make me a better person than letting them exist in my closet, no one seeing them or touching them.

Sydnee: Well, and then you have more space. It's good for your mental health. 'Cause then you—you know, you don't feel so cluttered.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: My closet makes me feel cluttered. I need to get rid of a bunch of stuff, and I just haven't taken the time to do it.

Taylor: See, I have, like, two—this sounds excessive, but they're small—like, two small closets in my—the bedroom part of my house. And I have one with the clothes that I wear, and then one that could be just to have more space, but it's full of all the clothes that I wish I was the type of person to wear. Do you all have this problem?

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Taylor: Where you keep things thinking, like, "Someday I'm gonna wake up, and I'm gonna be that guy," and it just never happens.

Sydnee: Yeah, no. I have aspirational clothing.

Taylor: [laughs] Aspirational clothing, I like that.

Sydnee: I do—I do. And I also—I have aspirational clothing and then I have, like, clothes that I hold on to that I don't like anymore, but I feel like maybe—I don't know why I feel like I would be forced to wear them at some point maybe. But, like, maybe life circumstances will be such that I have to wear that shirt I hate. Or, I don't know. [laughs] And so I have, like, a stack of clothes that are like, whatever the opposite of aspirational clothing is, it's like that. It's like... this is if things get real bad.

Taylor: Prepare for the worst, hope for the best, clothing. And then you only wear the stuff that's in the middle. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. I have, like, one stack of shirts that I actually wear. And scrub pants. Just scrub pants.

Taylor: I've got, like, this leopard print cape. It's like—you know those capes where your arms come out the sides, but then it drapes in front of you?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And it's, like, floor length, full leopard print cape. I don't know when I'm gonna wake up and be the kind of person to wear that, but I keep hoping one day I will. It's—it's never gonna happen! I get uncomfortable if I'm wearing, like, not just solid black. But, like, maybe one day. [laughs]

Sydnee: I understand that. Yeah. I have multiple nicer pieces of clothing like that. That I'm like, "Maybe someday."

Well, anyway, have we—can we talk about SpongeBob now? Is that okay, or...?

Taylor: [laughs] "Have we talked about other things enough to talk about the thing I want to talk about now?" Yes.

Sydnee: It's the topic of the show!

Taylor: It is.

Sydnee: Uh, yeah. So... we're talking about—I mean, because we are doing *SpongeBob: The Musical* for our outdoor theater here, Justin and I are directing it, and Charlie and Cooper are in it, that's why I am so deeply immersed in the world of *SpongeBob* currently. But, like, we can talk about all *SpongeBob* related material. Like the cartoon and whatnot. 'Cause *SpongeBob* came out and was really more... I guess late... your young years, Taylor, and then all of Raleigh's growing up.

Taylor: I was gonna say, for me I feel like when it came out, I thought I was too old for it. I remember Raleigh watching it.

Sydnee: [simultaneously] Yeah, I think that's probably about right.

Taylor: Yeah. 'Cause Raleigh, you dug it, right?

Raleigh: Oh yeah. I watched it... I think every day, probably, for the first at least decade of my life.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: What do you think—*SpongeBob* is obviously an incredibly popular cartoon. A lot of kids watched it. Do you remember why you were so drawn to it? What was it?

Raleigh: I don't know. I just thought... hmm. I don't know. It was always one of those that it was a cartoon, but for some reason even as I got older I didn't feel like I was, like, watching a baby cartoon. Some other shows, like, I'd watch and I'd, you know, get to a certain age where I'm like, "Oh, I can't watch that anymore. I'm cool now."

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: I never necessarily felt that way about SpongeBob. Not that I'd seek it out and watch it now as an adult. Um, but I wouldn't turn it off if it was on. The girls have watched it before, and I've sat and watched it with them. I don't know. I just... I always found it... pleasant and enjoyable, and the stakes were never too high. And, um... yeah.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. It's interesting, because SpongeBob isn't a kid.

Raleigh: That's true.

Sydnee: He's not a child. And the characters—

Raleigh: Well, he's a sponge.

Sydnee: Well, but like, even when they—when they sort of make—when they give you an idea of how old he might be in terms of, like, relatability for humans, I mean, he has a job. So, like, I assume he's not a little kid. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: What is the assumption, though? That, like, he's, what? 'Cause I kind of always assumed, like, late teens, early 20's?

Sydnee: Yes.

Raleigh: We don't know what the child labor laws are in under the sea.

Sydnee: In Bikini Bottom.

Raleigh: Uh-huh.

Taylor: That's true.

Sydnee: Uh...

Raleigh: No, I always assumed he was about that old, too.

Sydnee: Yeah. Like, old—I mean, he lives on his own.

Raleigh: "How old SpongeBob?" That's the first search that came up when I typed "How." So.

Sydnee: "How old SpongeBob?"

Raleigh: "How old SpongeBob?" My phone is listening to me. Um, [clears throat], likely between 18 and mid-20's.

Taylor: Ah! Ah, I nailed it!

Sydnee: Is there ever mention—other than the fact that he lives alone, he has a job, I think there's an episode where he gets a driver's license, right?

Raleigh: Yes.

Taylor: Yeah, yeah.

Raleigh: Hold on. I found a Screenrant article that breaks this down. It does include his license.

Sydnee: I love you people who do the work. Some of you out there just do this work for us who ask these questions, and I love that.

Taylor: Isn't he occasionally romantically linked to Pearl as well? Does that...

Sydnee: Oh!

Taylor: Isn't that a subplot in the show? Am I wrong about that?

Sydnee: Is that... I didn't ever know that, if that's the case. My take on Pearl is that she was younger.

Taylor: Well, she's in high school.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: But that's why—I assumed that they were close in age. Maybe I made—I don't wanna add to [through laughter] SpongeBob lore inappropriately.

Rileigh: His official date of birth on his license, when he gets his license, is July 14th, 1986.

Taylor: Oh, so he's my age.

Rileigh: Yes.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: Which means—it's interesting, though, because that would make him 13 when the show premiered? Um, which doesn't necessarily make sense, because he's—in my opinion, it's one of those cartoons where, like, no one really ages. Like Family Guy, you know? Like, Stewie doesn't become an adult at some point. Stewie's always a baby.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: So, like, SpongeBob to me is just always perpetually an age.

Sydnee: Sure.

Rileigh: So I don't know if my '86 is whatever, and then whatever date that episode came out where he had the license, that would make his age that he just kind of perpetually is.

Sydnee: Hmm.

Rileigh: Which I think would be about late teens to early 20's.

Taylor: Okay, that makes sense.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I like that you're the same age as SpongeBob.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: I feel like that also makes sense. [laughs] Somehow. I can't explain.

Sydnee: Yeah, he can't—there's no way in the first episode he's 13, 'cause he's a fry cook.

Rileigh: Again, what are the child labor laws of Bikini Bottom?

Taylor: Well, I mean, I think child labor laws are being rewritten in certain states right now to make 13-year-old SpongeBob absolutely capable of being fry cooks so, you know.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] I don't—this is all too, like, Upton Sinclair for me. I don't want SpongeBob as a 13-year-old forced to work on a dangerous hot piece of machinery. [laughs]

Rileigh: That article mentioned that Pearl is assumed to be 16 at all times. So their reasoning for him being about 18 to mid-20's is, like, he's probably older than Pearl, just based off, like, circumstances, but not by, like, a ton.

Taylor: Okay. So they—'cause they have been... I also looked it up. They have been paired in romantic situations. They went to prom together, and some of her friends joked that he's her boyfriend, so.

Sydnee: Oh.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: Well, did he take her—now, in the episode where he took her to prom, was it like one of those where she didn't have a date, and so he did, 'cause Mr. Krabs made him?

Taylor: Well, but even in that situation, I think in a real world... like, alternative of that, having your, like, 18-year-old employee take your 16-year-old daughter to prom is one thing. If he were like, oh, I don't know, 30, it would be weird. [laughs]

Rileigh: That's true. That is true.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I think we can extrapolate from that that he is somewhere within the age of an appropriate person to go to prom with.

Sydnee: [laughs] Somewhere in the age of an appropriate person to go to prom with!

Taylor: Yes.

Rileigh: So are SpongeBob and I the same age?

Sydnee: I mean, I think—

Rileigh: Is SpongeBob 22?

Sydnee: I think that that is probably the age—

Rileigh: Somewhere in there.

Sydnee: Yes. I mean—

Rileigh: It wouldn't be—would it be... well, I wouldn't want to go to prom with someone right now.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: I thought you were gonna say, "I wouldn't want to go to prom with SpongeBob." [laughs]

Rileigh: No. [laughs] I guess if it was an 18-year-old that needed a prom date and my boss told me to go, it wouldn't be, like... I mean, it's four years. Yeah, okay.

Sydnee: Well, I mean, let's not get into the fact that Pearl is 16, right?

Rileigh: Pearl is 16.

Sydnee: That's a problem.

Taylor: Well, she's also a whale and he's a sponge that wears pants. I think we're really getting too far into this specific aspect [crosstalk].

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Well, and her dad's a crab, so I don't know how that works.

Taylor: "Don't worry about it" is the answer.

Sydnee: Yeah. It's a cartoon.

Raleigh: Is she adopted, do we think?

Sydnee: I don't know if they ever—

Taylor: Do we think?!

Raleigh: I mean, she has to be, right?

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, I don't know if they ever cover that.

Raleigh: [simultaneously] Do they ever cover it?

Sydnee: I don't think they ever comment, like—I think it is brought—like, they bring attention to the fact that, isn't it weird that the crab has a whale daughter? Like, isn't that strange? But I don't think they ever address-

Raleigh: Well, I mean, they do in the musical.

Sydnee: Well, but I think that they do that in the show, too.

Taylor: Well...

Sydnee: I don't think we ever talk about Pearl's mom, do we? I bet she's a whale.

Rileigh: Are we just gonna deep dive into some SpongeBob lore on the internet?

Taylor: We're just creating—I don't—

Rileigh: [crosstalk] rest of this episode?

Taylor: I think we need to be more responsible here, folks, we don't want to create SpongeBob lore. [laughs quietly] Live.

Sydnee: Hey, listen. [crosstalk] I bet she was a whale. I don't know.

Taylor: Someone's gonna correct us.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Uh, bad SpongeBob podcast.

Sydnee: Bad SpongeBob podcast.

Rileigh: Is—[sighs]—what—[sighs] hold on.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: What?

Rileigh: [laughs quietly] I looked up, "Who's Pearl's mom?" And you know how, like, Google will give you, like, a little, like, blurb of an article up top on your phone to answer your question? It says "Pearl's mother is Mrs. Krabs," which, like, sure. You could've inferred that. "And the book states that she takes after her mother, who is also a whale."

What book?!

Sydnee: What book?

Rileigh: Are there books in the SpongeBob canon?

Sydnee: That makes sense. I bet there's lots of different SpongeBob media that we're not as familiar with.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Oh. It's an official SpongeBob Squarepants trivia book.

Taylor: Okay. I was like, we're not talking about—like, this wasn't, like, a book series first, right?

Raleigh: Well, that's what I thought.

Taylor: Like, that would be some weird—[wheezes] that would be a weird discovery, here.

Sydnee: The novelization—[through laughter] the novelization of SpongeBob.

Raleigh: I didn't know if it was, like, some weird fan fiction [crosstalk].

Taylor: [simultaneously] The Sponge that Wore Pants.

Sydnee: How fantastic would that be?

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Um...

Sydnee: Yeah, I'm not seeing any... SpongeBob toothbrush—ohh, that's a cute little Krabby Patty lunchbox.

Raleigh: Did we all—Tey, did you watch the, um, the musical?

Taylor: Yes, I did.

Raleigh: So I gotta—okay, I gotta say this. SpongeBob musical obviously has the beloved characters we all know.

Sydnee: Yes.

Raleigh: All of 'em.

Sydnee: Uh-huh.

Rileigh: Um, it's—I gotta say, my one—[laughs quietly]—my one critique of the story, the book, you would say, of the SpongeBob musical, is it's a little heavy handed with some of the comments it's trying to make about our modern society in which this SpongeBob musical lives.

Taylor: How—how so?

Rileigh: Well, you know how, like, when the squirrel that likes science is the only one who's not from there? And they tell her to go back where she came from, and that we don't trust science? And next thing you know she's gonna tell us tidal warming is real?

Sydnee: I—I agree with you—

Rileigh: You know?

Sydnee: —that the tidal warming is real is a little on the nose.

Rileigh: Yeah. Well, I—okay. I think that a lot of people just casually watching it going to see it at perhaps a Huntington area regional theater, in Huntington, West Virginia, those kids aren't gonna—they're not gonna... it doesn't hit you over the head with it. It's just if you are someone who is, you know, culturally aware watching this and listening to the words you're like, "Well, wait a minute. We're all stuck inside? And they're telling us not to listen to science? Hmm!" [laughs quietly] "Hmm!"

Sydnee: Well, I mean, here's the wild thing, though. It was made pre-pandemic.

Rileigh: That is pretty crazy.

Sydnee: Like, it was—the script and everything. I mean, part of the reason I think that is didn't—I mean, I don't know, 'cause I think it's amazing. But part of the reason it didn't have, like, a longer Broadway run was COVID. And so then they did a live, like, version of it that they filmed for Nickelodeon, and that was where we first saw it. That came out during COVID. 'Cause I remember, we were so desperate for just new stuff to do with the kids, and Justin was like, "Well, I saw that SpongeBob musical in New York a while back, and Nickelodeon's doing a live filmed version of it, so the kids'll get to see it. That's great." 'Cause he had always wanted the girls to see it. And we watched it, and it j—we just became obsessed with it.

It was, like, one of the things that got us through the pandemic. We just kept watching it over and over again, and the girls memorized every song, and we talked about how much we would love to be part of that someday and help make that happen, and... I don't know. It was just, like, one of those touchstones that, like, "This'll help get us through." [laughs quietly] "Watch SpongeBob again."

Taylor: Well, and I think in the humor of SpongeBob, like, it makes sense that the—like, I don't think they're trying for, like, a subtle metaphor for global warming and, you know, trusting your community members. I think it's... it's funny that they kind of just plunk those references down in there. Like, "Oh, if you're laughing and enjoying this, but you're one of these people, hey! [laughs quietly] Wake up!"

Raleigh: Maybe that's just my SpongeBob purist self coming out, that I—SpongeBob, the stakes were never high in that world.

Taylor: You don't like your SpongeBob too political? [laughs]

Raleigh: No! It was always—there were no—no real harm could come to anyone in that world. And in the SpongeBob musical, not only is there the threat of a deadly volcano that's going to legitimately kill everyone that's involved in this entire production, but Plankton and Karen tried to murder SpongeBob, Patrick, and Sandy.

Sydney: It did occur to me after I watched it for the 50th or 60th time, like—

Raleigh: I know, I was sitting there the other night when you said, "Oh, they try to kill them."

Taylor: Yeah...

Sydney: Yeah!

Raleigh: Like, yeah! [laughs]

Sydney: Like, she says that. Like, "We can't let them reach the top alive." Oh, you want to kill SpongeBob!

Taylor: Plankton was always super evil and doing things that were super evil.

Rileigh: Right, but he just wanted to steal the Krabby Patty secret formula.

Sydnee: Yeah, was he trying to kill Mr. Krabs ever—like, was that ever part of it? I don't remember.

Rileigh: I don't think so.

Taylor: Uh...

Rileigh: I don't think there was murder—

Sydnee: [simultaneously] I know he was trying to steal the formula.

Rileigh: —or attempted murder.

Sydnee: He wanted the formula. He wanted to hypnotize people into liking Chumburgers. Like, all that tracks. That was all part of Plankton's stuff. But was he ever trying to kill anybody? [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: He just wanted to have a successful restaurant, I think.

Sydnee: Can we Google that? Did Plankton—

Taylor: [simultaneously] No, wait!

Sydnee: —ever try to kill anybody?

Taylor: Plankton apologist. No, he did not just want to have a successful...

Rileigh: He did!

Taylor: No...

Sydnee: I don't... I mean, I don't... I watched it with you. In the way that you watch cartoons with kids. Where, like, you're looking at the screen with them sometimes, but you're not necessarily there.

Taylor: Well, and I mean, SpongeBob was low stakes in the sense that there was never any real danger. But I do think they still tried to, like, tell stories bigger

than the animation format. Like, one of the ones that I—episodes I always loved about the cartoon was the one where SpongeBob's trying to be a stand-up comedian, and he realizes he can make jokes on Sandy's behalf, and because she's the outsider it's funny, and then it really hurts her. [through laughter] That was a pretty smart episode of SpongeBob Squarepants!

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Which they used in the musical a bit. Like, with the fact that she was judged. Like, everybody was blaming her because she was the outsider.

Sydney: Yeah. Yeah, I—I think that—I mean, it, like—it was done before COVID. I think perhaps that's why it took on such great meaning for us, is because it was a story of a character who is... optimism, that is SpongeBob. SpongeBob never gives up hope and never stops believing in others, and never stops loving everyone around him, even when they try to kill him.

Um, that's his whole thing. And you put him in a situation where all the people that he counts on are sort of falling apart, you know? All the systems that he believes in, everything that he trusts. He trusts the government. He trusts his boss. He trusts his friends. He trusts his community. And when they all start falling apart, and it really challenges that optimism, he maintains it.

Which, I mean, is a really powerful story to tell, whether it involves a sponge or not.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydney: Rileigh, you look so—I don't know what you've Google, but you are so confused over there.

Rileigh: I just... I do appreciate that someone has made an article titled "Top 10 Evil Plans by Plankton."

Taylor: Oh. See? You can always—[laughs] you can always count on it.

Rileigh: I know.

Sydney: I love everyone out there who does this stuff.

Rileigh: Um, some of the top hits of course, um, when a promotion with superheroes Mermaid Man and Barnacle Boy earns big bucks for the Krusty Krab, jealous Plankton decides to use Krabs' best new assets to knock him down to size. He creates a special shampoo to hypnotize the heroes into calling the Krabby Patty evil, and convinces everyone in the town to eat at the Chum Bucket instead."

You remember that?

Sydnee: I do.

Rileigh: I always enjoyed that. Because it reminded you in that episode that Mermaid Man and Barnacle Boy are... old?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: And they were fun, hip superheroes at some point, and now they're old superheroes?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: And I always found that funny, 'cause you kind of, I don't know... it's not always obvious, and then you remember, "Oh, wait. They're old guys."

Sydnee: No, I like that. I wanted us to have a Mermaid and Barnacle Boy in our show.

Rileigh: Do you remember, we went to a castle to solve a murder mystery once, and we were supposed to dress as, you know, teams to solve crimes? And I did dress as Barnacle Boy.

Sydnee: Yes you did.

Rileigh: I did.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: It was pretty good, so I mean, I had the costume and you didn't ask me.

Sydnee: I—

Raleigh: To be Barnacle Boy, so...

Taylor: Oh no!

Sydnee: I told Raleigh that she could be in our show.

Raleigh: [sighs] But, like, not as Barnacle Boy. And, like, I had the costume.

Sydnee: You could've been Barnacle Boy. So, we let the cast decide—

Raleigh: [sighs heavily]

Sydnee: —everybody except, like, the named characters, who have to look like—I mean, you know. I think you want SpongeBob to look like SpongeBob, and so on and so forth.

Um, but everybody else got to pick which—either a SpongeBob character that they want to be, like somebody who maybe was only in a few episodes or a recurring character who we didn't already have—they were allowed to dress just like them, or just be a sea creature, and make up your own story, and life, and everything for your sea creature, and your costume can look like anything, as long as it is a sea creature of some sort.

Raleigh: They're all just really colorful.

Sydnee: Yeah. That's what ended up happening is everybody's just, like, an explosion of color. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Yeah. Which is good.

Sydnee: No, it's perfect. They definitely took it to a point where, like, it doesn't just look like a costume. They start to look less like people, you know? And that's what we wanted, is look like something else. With your makeup, and hair, and outfit and whatever.

Taylor: I really love that about the show design. Just, like, they—there were elements of fish they would work in, where there'd be, like, puffy sleeves or, like, a certain kind of skirt. Like, that—I like that that was there. But nothing looked like it was trying to look like a fish costume.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: That was very intentional on our part. We didn't want anybody literally to be a fish, but just look... not like a person. [laughs] It felt weird saying that over and over again. Like, "No, you need to do more to your hair, 'cause you look too much like a human." [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah. The Squidward leg situation is just maybe my favorite thing I've ever seen. My favorite small solution—those are always the things in musical theater that I love when it's like, here is a very easy thing to execute that makes a very specific big impact. Like, so silly, but so good. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: And you all did that. You made those legs.

Taylor: I saw that, yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Um, but I gotta say, one of my favorite things that's I've ever seen happen on a stage—it was during a rehearsal, so it wasn't a show. It was your last rehearsal. One of Squidward's legs came detached from the back of his real leg, so then Squidward had three forward facing legs and one backwards leg.

Sydnee: He had one broken leg.

Raleigh: And then as he was walking off, then of course it was just kind of dragged behind him, which while he's doing his tap number is just one of the most... one of the funniest things you could possibly see is him tapping with three feet that are all at the front. It's very funny.

Sydnee: I will say, he is such a trooper, the actor who plays Squidward. He... just completely rolled with it, and was, like, reaching back periodically to, like, flip the leg around, like, real—real quickly.

Raleigh: And those things are—they're heavy. Like, he's pretty much lifting two legs worth of weight every time he takes a step.

Sydnee: And he tap dances with 'em.

Raleigh: It's pretty crazy.

Sydnee: Yeah. He's really—he's been a trooper about it. He's doing a great job.

Raleigh: But—

Sydnee: They were—you know, they were made—our costumer, who is somebody that we grew up with, Teylor, Kelsey—

Teylor: Yeah, yeah.

Sydnee: —uh, Kelsey was sitting down to make them. Kelsey made all the costumes for the show. It's incredible. And was having trouble and wasn't exactly sure how to do it. And her brother is an engineer and was at her house and was like, "Oh, you're doing that all wrong. Hold on. I can help you."

And so our legs have been constructed by an engineer. [laughs]

Raleigh: They've been professionally engineered.

Teylor: That's amazing.

Raleigh: No, but you're right, Tey. It's one of those things that, like, you kind of see in a cartoon or, like, whatever the origin piece is for a musical, and you're like, "Well, how do you do that with real people?" And it very very much has a big impact. It's very funny, the first time he comes out and he does a little, like, squat. And there's a sound effect that's like a [quietly blows raspberry]. You know that kind of thing?

Sydnee: Fwomp.

Raleigh: That. That's really funny.

Teylor: Like, on a Broadway budget you could've done something, like, oh, a big, like, you know, animatronic piece or something. But when it's just, like, a stupid small solution that just—[through laughter] that makes me happier than anything.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It—it was a lot of fun to put together for that reason. Like, the whole thing. Just because it was—we were very much aware that this is a cartoon. And it needs to feel fun, and it needs to feel playful. And while it is about an apocalyptic situation, it is about, like, in theory the end of the world, and the way that different people cope... either helpfully or not so helpfully with impending doom, it is also still SpongeBob. And so it can't take itself too seriously ever. The sound effects really help. We luckily have someone who can do the foley artist work there. And so is—has, like, a sound effect board, but then is also doing some of the live foley. Like, old school radio foley sound effects there on site.

Taylor: Oh, that's cool.

Sydnee: Which are really cool to watch. So we have him placed so that you can see him while he's doing it. It's really cool.

Raleigh: Um, and can I just say, one of the plot points of the musical, like, as a whole—you know, like the actual musical—of Patrick being a cult leader...

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: ... is genius? And it makes sense in a way that's, like, especially now watching it, it's like, of all the characters—you know, like, maybe some that are smarter, like, more charismatic—like, why would Patrick be the one that these people choose to follow? And then you watch and you're like, "Well, yeah. Of course. Of course it would be Patrick. That is the one everyone would follow."

And it is, in my opinion, the birth of the best song in the entire show, Super Sea Star Savior, which is just one of the... funniest things I've ever seen.

Sydnee: Yeah. I, uh—I was a little nervous about that plot element and how—

Raleigh: It's so good!

Sydnee: —how it would go over in this—in this part of the world.

Taylor: Sure, yeah.

Sydnee: But, you know, it—what they very much comment on in the show is like, okay. A volcano's about to erupt and destroy everything. That's the plot of it. Um,

and everybody's trying to figure out, like, how to cope with that, and so you have this group of sardines who essentially assign Patrick their savior and decide that the best way to cope with the impending apocalypse is... through creating a new religion around Patrick, and waiting for him to tell them what to do. And of course Patrick has no idea what to do, and isn't going to come up with the idea. But, like, they just sort of sit and wait and worship him until he tells them what to do.

And I was worried with that plot. You know? I mean, like, it... there's definitely a fear there that somebody's gonna see that and go, "Hey... wait a second!" [laughs] "What are you trying to say?" 'Cause ultimately—

Raleigh: I don't know. That's one of the least... like, connected to the real world in my opinion. Like, look at all these sardines you've got. All he's sitting up there saying is that life smells weird. And they love it.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm?

Raleigh: I know!

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: But I'm saying when you look at some of the other plot points where it's like they literally say tidal warming... or, like, "Oh, we're all stuck inside and there's nothing to do. What are we gonna do?"

Sydnee: Well, they hit it home. So at the end—

Raleigh: This one is like some good comedic relief, in my opinion, from, like, the actual impending death of the—everyone else in the entire musical.

Sydnee: Well, I—no, I mean, I enjoy it. It doesn't offend me. I was worried that other people would be offended by it.

Raleigh: You'd have to be thinking pretty hard while watching that SpongeBob musical.

Sydnee: Well, I mean, and I've seen it, I mean, literally, how—I don't even know how many dozens of times now, so of course I have. But, um... I mean, he says it in the end. SpongeBob says, like, here was have this apocalypse. It was a time when everybody needed to come together, where we needed to like, okay. How

can we solve this? Who has the brains? Who has the ability? Who has the will? Where is the—you know? Where is the funding gonna come from? Who's gonna build the thing? Who's gonna—like, all the ways that you would solve a major problem.

And he's like, "But instead, some of you looked for somebody to blame. Some of you looked for somebody to follow. Some of you looked for, you know, people to whatever—control." The government just wanted to control everybody. Put everybody on, you know, made everybody stay home and put them on the no-swim list, and... enforced them to, you know, go where they said and all this.

Raleigh: Which, by the way, they have a really—they have a real concrete no-swim list, Like, a paper no-swim list in Sydnee and Justin's production, that I don't know who wrote it. I guess one of the cast members. But our mom—

Sydnee: Our—our props.

Raleigh: —is at the top of the list.

Sydnee: Yes. That was our props person did that.

Raleigh: Mary Smirl is numero uno on the no-swim list.

Sydnee: Well, we had to—we had—it is the second version of the no-swim list.

Raleigh: Hmm.

Sydnee: Because the first version, which also had Mary Smirl, and I said, we can keep Mary Smirl on the no-swim list. I enjoy that. That's funny.

Um, but the first version also said, um, My Balls. [laughs quietly] And I said, I—

Taylor: Ohh...

Sydnee: I have been on a crew in a community theater production before. I understand this. I enjoy this. I enjoy this little joke, this little private in-joke, but it is visible to the audience. So if we could please... [laughs] have it say something else.

Taylor: This is a children's show, yes. [laughs]

Sydnee: This is a children's show! It was a fun chuckle for rehearsal. Let's switch it out for the show.

Rileigh: You know something I just—this isn't in the musical, but something I was thinking about, because your set person made a set piece that is from the SpongeBob movie, the first SpongeBob movie. It came out forever ago. And there is a scene in that movie that I think is one of the most, like, culturally... like, universally significant moments in film of my entire generation. And it's so silly, but it's one of those things that, like, I don't—I don't know what the equivalent is. I'm sure there is one for, like, something that was popular when you all were growing up. But, like, you ask anyone of your generation and they will be like, "Yes. I can tell you exactly where I was when I saw that actually, and I remember the first time I saw it, and I've seen it a dozen times since."

And that's when SpongeBob and Patrick ride on David Hasselhoff's back.

Sydnee: Yes.

Rileigh: In the SpongeBob movie. The live action David Hasselhoff. Which is almost even funnier when you remember that no one that was my age watching that movie would have had any idea really who David Hasselhoff is. I didn't know who that was. But that moment of that SpongeBob movie is... the moment, I think.

Sydnee: No, I—

Rileigh: Of my generation.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: I wish David Hasselhoff was in our show.

Rileigh: Well, you do have Lin Manuel Miranda in your show.

Taylor: That is true.

Sydnee: Yes. He is voicing Gary, the snail. Any time you hear a meow or a purr.

Rileigh: Gary had a casualty at one of your rehearsals. Actually it was opening night, wasn't it?

Sydnee: [sighs heavily] Yeah.

Rileigh: Gary's eyes fell off.

Sydnee: On opening night.

Taylor: Oh no!

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: And it was... [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Our SpongeBob is so good. The actor—

Rileigh: 'Cause Gary had, like, those tall eyes, you know? [crosstalk]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: The actor who plays—our whole cast is amazing. It's—the entire—we're just very lucky. But our SpongeBob is so good, and covered it very well. Was not shaken at all, and was talking about how he needed to get Gary to the vet. And "Oh no, Gary! I don't have time to take you to the vet right now, 'cause I've gotta go stop this volcano from erupting, but as soon as I get back," and "If I don't make it back alive, please go to the vet without me." [laughs] It was all very funny. It worked.

Rileigh: It was.

Taylor: Can I ask—speaking of Lin Manuel Miranda, I know that the fastest rap on Broadway—like, that was a thing that Hamilton had. But that Plankton rap...

Rileigh: It's so fast.

Taylor: It was coming for his gig. [laughs]

Sydnee: It was written by TI.

Taylor: Oh yeah. Well.

Raleigh: Is it faster? Do you know?

Sydnee: I... [pause] I don't know.

Raleigh: Well, I'll say this.

Sydnee: I would—

Raleigh: It—your—

Taylor: It—

Sydnee: I would be surprised. I wouldn't be surprised.

Raleigh: Your musical director sped up some tempos, 'cause he had done shows I was in before and sped them up. With how he has sped that number up, it is possible that now our—your production, your version is faster than the Hamilton rap.

Taylor: Well, I did feel—it's the least maybe made with a little bit of a nod to Hamilton. [laughs]

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Wait till, uh... Taylor, are you gonna be able to come in to see it?

Taylor: Uh, I am... I'm going to try and come in for your closing weekend. Uh...

Sydnee: I hope you can. If not—I understand if you can't, obviously. But wait till you see our actor do it. 'Cause we really—our plan when we saw that, we were like, "Okay. Well, we're not gonna find anybody who can rap that fast. Like, that's just not gonna—nobody who auditions—"

Raleigh: And then you did.

Sydnee: And our plan was to slow it down. But we have not had to.

Taylor: Mmm. That was easily my favorite. I thought all the actors in the—I mean, I just saw the—was that the original Broadway cast that they recorded?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: I thought everybody was fantastic, but the Plankton character was probably my favorite. [laughs] Just, like, the way they translated his costume. Like, that and the fact that they kept the small Plankton, like, in hi—like he kept—he was always carrying it, or it was on his shoe. Like, I loved that. But it's kind of assumed, like, he's just the puppeteer for this. But also, like, look at him. [laughs]

Raleigh: That, uh, actor, watching it I kept thinking "This guy seems so familiar. How do I know this guy?"

And it's because the only other time I'd seen him was as the original Lucas, which is Wednesday's nerdy boyfriend, in the Addams Family musical.

Taylor: Oh!

Sydnee: Oh, okay.

Raleigh: And seeing those two characters next to each other obviously very, very different. But it's... I mean, it shows how good of an actor he is.

Sydnee: He is. And so is the—in the original, the guy who plays SpongeBob is incredible.

Raleigh: Oh yeah.

Sydnee: When he's singing upside down...?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And he sings that song—so the music for the musical is all written by different artists. Like, they all contributed different songs, and there's a song, Simple Sponge, which was written by Panic! At the Disco.

Taylor: Oh really?

Sydnee: Yeah. And you can hear it. Like... 'cause the range that you have to have to s—it's incredible. And, I mean, but you can—but there is a lot of great artists that—Cindy Lauper did a song. David Bowie did a song. Um... who else? Jonathon Coulton did a lot of the music around it. Did, like, the opening and closing and a couple other numbers. Um, Tom Kenny, the voice of SpongeBob, did a song in it.

Taylor: That's a—I d—why does SpongeBob have a legacy of amazing musical team ups? Because even in the original show, they had the, um... The Cramps make a song for them.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Well, and BFF and Best Day Ever both are from the cartoon, if I'm not mistaken.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Oh, really? Is BFF—

Raleigh: I know Best Day Ever is.

Taylor: I knew that one.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: I don't know why I was thinking BFF also was. Maybe it's not. But I know Best Day Ever is from the cartoon.

Sydnee: The Plain White T's did that. BFF.

Raleigh: Oh, did they? Maybe it's not from the cartoon, then. It just sounded familiar.

Sydnee: Er—Aerosmith, TI. Who else am I forgetting? They Might Be Giants does the tap number.

Taylor: Oh, wow.

Rileigh: Tey, did you have a favorite song?

Taylor: Oh, g—I mean, I don't—it was all... so fun. I don't know. I think my favorite vocal performance was probably Sandy, so I think any time she started singing I was most involved. Like, that final number where they're both on guitars? That tugged at the heartstrings, so I would say that one. And I don't know what that song title is. But...

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I, uh... for me, the way that—I mean, so much of it is clouded by our version. The way that they do...

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: "Our version."

Sydnee: Well, the ones—the parts that I love because—

Rileigh: Forget Taylor Swift doing Taylor's versions of albums. This is SpongeBob (Sydnee's Version).

Taylor: Hmm.

Sydnee: Sydnee and Justin. We did it together. The way that we figured out- we are doing it at an outdoor theater, so in the song Simple Sponge, they do this whole, like, black light thing with these glowing sponges.

Taylor: Okay. I didn't want to ask, 'cause it felt like such a small detail. But I was like, "Please tell me you used the glowing sponges," 'Cause I loved that in the recorded one.

Sydnee: We couldn't.

Taylor: No?

Sydnee: We couldn't figure out how to u—well, 'cause it's not dark enough at that point in the show.

Taylor: Oh, that's fair, that's fair. Okay.

Sydnee: Yeah. So we had to reblock that whole thing. And we did this—I don't know. I'm very proud of what we came up with, and it's a very touching moment in the show. Um, I don't know. I almost cry multiple times.

[pause]

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: At the end, right before they find out if the volcano's gonna erupt, they all sort of drop to their knees and hold each other, and that makes me cry. And then the bubbles make me cry.

Raleigh: But, like... song? Like...

Sydnee: Oh.

Raleigh: Remember, we were talking about songs? Do you have a favorite song? [laughs] Instead of very specific moments that's no one's going to know what you're talking about?

Taylor: Sydnee is very attached to this musical, alright?

Sydnee: [laughs] Well, it really got us through a lot of dark days. In COVID. What's your favorite song?

Raleigh: I think mine is Super Sea Star Savior.

Sydnee: It's a great song.

Raleigh: Or, I'll be honest, um, No Control is fun to listen to.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Which that one is written by David Bowie, by the way.

Taylor: Oh, okay.

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: I don't know. I really do like Best Day Ever.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Poor Pirates is a very funny song.

Taylor: I thought that was really fun. I love that they—I knew the dad was playing that character and I didn't really—I thought he would just, like, pop in. And then when he came back and had a whole number I was like, "Oh no, now I really need to see this live." [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Well, especially because you know our dad—and not only did he, you know, get the whole number, but he takes any opportunity he can to, like, add something and make it even bigger and make it more.

Taylor: Of course.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Um, so yeah. He's got—he's got all sorts of things he just—[through laughter] he threw in there.

Sydnee: Well, it—I don't know. I really do love it. I know that shows.

Raleigh: Do you have a favorite song? You don't have to. I was just curious if you did.

Sydnee: I really don't know if I could pick. I really don't know that I could pick one. I know that sounds like a cop out, but...

Raleigh: I just think it says—I think this is one of those musicals that a lot of them, like, you can pick a favorite song, but in a lot of musicals everything kind of sounds very similar. It's all meant to fit one theme. And this is different in that it's a musical where it is intentionally not one theme or genre. So I think it says a lot about what people like, music-wise, what song they pick as their favorite.

Sydnee: I like Hero Is My Middle Name a lot.

Taylor: I like that one too.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: That's a Cyndi Lauper bop.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Oh.

Raleigh: Cyndi Lauper bopper.

Sydnee: Yeah. John Legend did I Guess I Miss You. That's a good one.

Taylor: Oh, that one made me—it made me a little teary-eyed. That was sweet.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: We, uh—well, and I like that they—they don't—I mean, there was always that thing, which is why some kids weren't allowed to watch SpongeBob. [laughs quietly] Which was that people thought SpongeBob and Patrick were a couple.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Which, like, I mean, they're a sea star and a sea sponge. Are we really...

Taylor: Well, I'm pretty sure that Nickelodeon included SpongeBob in their Pride celebration.

Sydnee: They did, they did.

Taylor: Because SpongeBob is canonically... what? I mean, I think they based it off of what sea sponges are, which is... [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I don't know!

Taylor: I know he's part of the—he's somewhere in the LGBTQs... S is for sponge. That's fine. [laughs]

Rileigh: I was gonna say asexual.

Taylor: Maybe? Sure.

Rileigh: 'Cause I—don't sponges reproduce—

Sydnee: [simultaneously] Yeah, do they reproduce asexually?

Rileigh: —asexually?

Taylor: Why not?

Rileigh: I think that's—I feel like that's—maybe not. Maybe I'm making that up.

Sydnee: Well, I think it was just like—I think for some, like... I don't know, conservative parents who think like this, uh, Patrick and SpongeBob gave 'em, like, Bert and Ernie vibes.

Taylor: You know, it's sad, because to me I think that there's a dual problem with both accepting that queer people exist, and that means that queer relationships should be normalized, but also, like, specifically when you've got masculine characters, close, like, dependent masculine friendships can exist, and that's not often a thing we see. And I think we really like it when we see it, but then everybody gets freaked out 'cause "Oh no, it's gay for a guy to love another guy as a friend."

No it's not. That's just normal and healthy, guys. [laughs] You can love your friends.

Sydnee: Yes. And I think—I think either way, it's—it's very nice to see that. It's a very—it was progressive for the time. Whether they are a couple or they are just... best male friends who express their love and appreciation for each other openly. That's all fine and healthy and good. [laughs]

Rileigh: Um, by the way, sponges apparently reproduce asexually and sexually. So that means SpongeBob canonically is bisexually asexual, I think.

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: Right? It's both. I mean, bi means both.

Sydnee: Or pan.

Raleigh: Well, I mean, bi means two...

Sydnee: Oh.

Raleigh: ... ways of reproduction, right?

Sydnee: Oh, okay.

Raleigh: And then he, like, can—you know what I mean?

Sydnee: Can reproduce in two different ways, yes.

Taylor: We're just gonna call that the Q. That's just queer.

Raleigh: Yep.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: [unintelligible] It doesn't matter how. Just queer.

Sydnee: Either way, it is also written into the musical very clearly that they have a deep affection for each other.

Raleigh: Yes. It is very sweet.

Sydnee: Like, we don't shy away from that, either.

Raleigh: Also, I Guess I Miss You is the only one in the whole show that I can hear John Legend singing that. Like I immediately heard that and was like, "Well, I know who wrote this." Like, you know, Hero Is My Middle Name sounds like, oh. It sounds like Cyndi Lauper. But I can hear John Legend singing I Guess I Miss You.

Sydnee: And it's the love song.

Raleigh: Oh yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah, I was not ready to cry over the friendship between Patrick Star and SpongeBob Squarepants, but you know what? I'm okay that I have. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I have many times.

Raleigh: Yeah, I will say.

Sydnee: When I watch them do it live I cry.

Raleigh: Makes sense.

Sydnee: Well, thank you both. I have committed the last six months of our lives to this, so. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Well, thank you.

Sydnee: I appreciate you all.

Taylor: I mean, I watched it for the first time for this episode, and I'm probably gonna watch it again after this discussion, 'cause I want to.

Sydnee: It's a lot of fun. Really, if you haven't watched it, that—was that on Paramount? Is that where it was?

Taylor: Yeah, it's on Paramount Plus.

Sydnee: That filmed version is available on Paramount. Um, and it's—it's a ton of fun. It's good for adults and kids alike. It's good for everybody. Taylor, what's next?

Taylor: So, uh, we're gonna get the butt end of Pride month with this one. I guess, I mean, we were talking about it earlier that, like, we didn't do anything gay this month, but I feel like anything we do by proxy kind of qualifies. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yep.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: As a not straight podcast.

Sydnee: [simultaneously] SpongeBob. Yeah.

Taylor: Podcast, yeah—er, SpongeBob, yeah. Uh, but I wanted to talk about Harley Quinn in partially relation to the new, uh... animated show that's been on HBO Max, but also just sort of the history of the character. Because it's a character that I love and hold near and dear, and also I think has had a really good evolution in media. So... as our final Pride month episode, I want to talk about one of my favorite gay superhero/villains, Harley Quinn.

Raleigh: Alright.

Sydnee: Alright. That'll be excellent.

Raleigh: Excited, yeah.

Sydnee: Alright, well, thank you both. We'll talk about Harley Quinn next week. And in the meantime, you can go to Maximumfun.org and check out a lot of 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.

Raleigh: This has been your cross-generational guide to the culture that made us. I am 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: We make our stuffed Patrick sit [unintelligible] in our show.

Rileigh: That's very cool.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: It's kind of fun.

Taylor: Do you have a—the old guy that gets flattened out? How did you do that?

Sydnee: Uh, I took a picture of him, and then we stretched it out and printed it. We had it printed at, like, a place that does that, you know? Like a big giant of the picture.

Taylor: Nice.

Sydnee: And then Justin glued that to a piece of plywood, and then used a jigsaw to cut him out.

Taylor: Love it.

Sydnee: So there you go. Behind the scenes.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

[school bell rings]

Ella: Alright, class. Tomorrow's exam will cover the science of perfect pitch, the history of Pride flags, and speedrunning video games. Any questions? Yes, you in the back.

Speaker 2: Uh, what is this?

Caroline: It's the podcast Let's Learn Everything!

Tom: Where we learn about science and a bit of everything else. My name's Tom. I studied cognitive and computer science, but I'll also be your teacher for intermediate emojis.

Caroline: My name's Caroline, and I did my Masters in biodiversity conservation, and I'll be teaching you intro to things the British Museum stole.

Ella: My name's Ella. I did a PHD in stem cell biology, so obviously I'll be teaching you the history of fan fiction.

Tom: Class meets every other Thursday on Maximum Fun.

Speaker 2: So do I still get credit for this?

Together: [laugh] No!

Ella: Obviously not.

Caroline: No.

Tom: It's a podcast.

[all laugh]

[ad ends]

[chord]

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