

## Still Buffering 369: Mario

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[Intro, theme music plays]

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

**Sydnee:** I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Taylor:** And I'm Taylor Smirl.

**Rileigh:** Boy, do I sound bad.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Rileigh:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Rileigh:** Nothing makes you more aware of your voice when you're sick than recording a podcast.

**Sydnee:** Yeah... I'm sorry about that. I don't love that I'm stuck in this studio with you right now. [laughs]

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Rileigh:** Breathe in my germs!

**Sydnee:** [weakly] Nooo! No. That's not fair.

**Taylor:** At least my germs are really, really far away from you right now.

**Sydnee:** I know. I would have appreciated a remote recording from you today, Rileigh. [laughs]

**Rileigh:** Well, this is the last time you're gonna have to record with me in person, so...

**Taylor:** Ever.

**Rileigh:** Ever.

**Sydnee:** Well, don't say it like that.

**Rileigh:** Ever! No, I'll go back to my germs being far away next time.

**Sydnee:** Today's the first day of school for us.

**Taylor:** Oh, that's fun.

**Rileigh:** [singing] Because we're goin' back. Back to school.

**Sydnee:** What are you singing there? Where's that... What's that from?

**Rileigh:** That's *Grease 2*. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Yeah, that's from *Grease 2*. You're singin' a little *Grease 2* this mornin'?

**Taylor:** Oh, wow.

**Rileigh:** Well, you always do that. I feel like you always bring that up every year we're going back to school and you hadn't yet.

**Sydnee:** [singing] Oh whoa! I gotta go... back to school!

**Rileigh:** Yep.

**Sydnee:** [singing] Again!

**Rileigh:** Go back to school- There you go. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs] You were waiting for that, weren't you?

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yep.

**Raleigh:** Go back to school.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Boy, I love all the school supplies.

**Raleigh:** [sighs wistfully] Me too.

**Sydnee:** It was so nice too, we had the open house yesterday and we had to bring the classroom supplies to donate to. And like there was like a little table with little labels like, "Put tissues here. Put extra glue sticks here. Put the hand sanitizer bottles here." It was very nice.

**Raleigh:** Do you appreciate all the organization?

**Sydnee:** It's just all very nice. And there's all these... All these little like caddies on every... The little kids tables with their name on them and you put, like, the color pencils here and their markers here and their glue sticks and scissors here.

**Raleigh:** I wish we still had cubbies.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Why do we stop using cubbies when we get old? Why do we switch to lockers?

**Sydnee:** Do you... Do you get a—

**Raleigh:** Why can't we just go back to cubbies?

**Sydnee:** Do you get a locker at work, Tey?

**Taylor:** Uh, no. There's only so many lockers, so the people that have been there the longest have the lockers. And then the rest of us just have the... a sort of... box.

**Sydnee:** You don't get a cubby?

**Taylor:** No. But I will say that I have worked other service industry jobs where we have cubbies. So there you go, Rileigh, you know, just...

**Rileigh:** [sighs contentedly]

**Taylor:** You might not run into cubbies in lawyering, but go work at a chain coffee shop and you'll get a cubby.

**Rileigh:** I miss cubbies.

**Sydnee:** I have wished for a cubby because I don't get an office at my job anymore. I don't... [laughs] I'm not important enough for that, so I don't have anywhere to put my stuff when I go there.

**Rileigh:** Just a little cubby.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Rileigh:** It's the perfect solution because you don't have to memorize the combination, right? They don't take up as much room as lockers. They're not as loud. Just a little wall.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Rileigh:** With some cubbies with little name tags.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Rileigh:** That you can customize.

**Sydnee:** The little hooks inside.

**Raleigh:** Mm-hmm. That's it.

**Taylor:** I don't... I mean, I would prefer a locker to a cubby because I think the reason cubbies go away in adulthood is that children are told pretty extensively not to steal each other's stuff. Like that's a whole thing that we magically forget by the time we're adults.

**Sydnee:** Yeah...

**Raleigh:** I feel like cubbies would work for a law school, at least, because all we carry around are those giant, giant books. That for someone to steal, they'd have to, like, just lug around—

**Sydnee:** Well...

**Raleigh:** ... and barely be able to carry,

**Sydnee:** But they're worth a lot of money.

**Raleigh:** They do cost thousands of dollars.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, I mean, that's the thing.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I mean like, when I think about my med school books... I don't know.

**Raleigh:** Then we have doctors...

**Sydnee:** There were... There were always, like the people who would buy one book and then just like, photocopy the entire book.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Which I always found like... The devotion is impressive. Like—

**Raleigh:** I know people that do that.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** And I'm like, "That's a lot of time you're spending in the library there."

**Sydnee:** I mean, we had books that were like, a thousand pages.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** But like, I like that commitment.

**Raleigh:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** See, I don't know. It's... my current job has uniforms and you best believe if you leave a piece of your uniform laying around someone will... It'll go somewhere because we have to pay for those... So, you know.

**Sydnee:** Yeah...

**Raleigh:** Mom calls that "cockroaching," in theater.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Raleigh:** Like when you have like an ensemble number or whatever, and everyone has the same costume and they all have various pieces. But if someone forgets theirs and then they can just go and grab someone else's and you'd never know.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Cockroaching.

**Sydnee:** Well, that's the... That happens a lot at Charlie's school too with these school fleeces that you can buy.

**Raleigh:** Oh, I remember—

**Sydnee:** They look identical.

**Raleigh:** .. the private school fleeces. I love those things.

**Sydnee:** Everybody has the exact same fleece and you learn the hard way that you should probably put your kids name in it somewhere. And the way that you learn is that one day you have to sift through a lost and found box [laughs ruefully] that's just full of identical fleeces. [laughs]

Every single one is identical, and they're all in, just like a child's small or a child's medium. So you... I mean, like any... Any of these could be your child's or none of these. And so there's an ethical quandary for you. Do you just take one?

**Raleigh:** Just take one.

**Sydnee:** And like just bank on the fact that like, "Well... She lost it. It's... probably one of these is..."

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** "... ours." [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Just take it. That's what I'd do.

**Taylor:** You're not like, taking it off a kid. You're just taking it from a box. That's okay.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. It's just in a box. I don't know, but now we put names in things. We love that.

**Rileigh:** I don't think that would stop anyone from taking my textbook if I wrote my name across the front.

**Taylor:** Well—

**Sydnee:** But they—

**Taylor:** ... no.

**Sydnee:** Well, I was just going to say that the advantage of a cubby, too, is you get to display like your, you know, Spider-Man backpack or whatever.

**Rileigh:** How did you know I got a Spider-Man backpack for my second year of law school?

**Sydnee:** I don't know. Maybe in adulthood we don't want to display our... bags?

**Rileigh:** Well, they're not fun anymore.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Yeah, I literally just have a reusable shopping bag that I bring my clothes to and from work in. It's not... Don't really want people to see it or associate it with me.

**Sydnee:** Do you want one of my cool backpacks that has paracord?

**Taylor:** Ehh...

**Sydnee:** My backpack has a paracord strap. I love it.

**Taylor:** That does sound cool. I'm sure that that is cool. Um...

**Sydnee:** [laughs]



**Taylor:** I feel like my uniform, I operate the same way as... The reason that my bike has never gotten stolen in New York City is because it's cheap and bad and dirty.

**Sydnee:** Mm.

**Taylor:** And so no one's really going to work too hard to steal my cheap, bad dirty bike. It's the same with my uniform. I keep it crumpled up in a dirty bag and who's going to want that? It's worked so far.

**Sydnee:** All right. Well, fair enough. [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Sydnee tried to give me a bag that looks like a giant croc.

**Sydnee:** Well...

**Raleigh:** Like it's not... It's not shaped like a shoe, but it's made of croc material.

**Sydnee:** Yeah...

**Raleigh:** It's like that rubber.

**Taylor:** [grossed out] Oh...

**Raleigh:** And it has holes all over it.

**Taylor:** Well now why would you want holes in your bag?

**Raleigh:** I don't know.

**Sydnee:** They're very in.

**Raleigh:** I know—

**Sydnee:** I see tons—

**Taylor:** Where would your pens go?

**Sydnee:** ... of people carrying them. We got it... It was... We did not buy it. It arrived at our house and we did not want it.

**Raleigh:** And you told me they were all the rage.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Raleigh:** And I said, "No thanks. I've never seen anyone with those."

And the very next day I saw my boss carrying one.

**Sydnee:** They're very popular!

**Raleigh:** The very next day.

**Sydnee:** Tons of people, during summer theater, had them. That's when I noticed. I was... I looked around backstage and I was like, "Wow, everybody's—"

**Raleigh:** Now—

**Sydnee:** "... got this frickin' bag."

**Raleigh:** I could see them being useful in a summer vacation or theater scenario where like, you're going to put things in there that might be like wet or sandy.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Raleigh:** Or sweaty, and you want something that's like not gonna like—

**Sydnee:** It's water resistant.

**Raleigh:** Like it's not cloth.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** So it's not gonna absorb that. And it has little holes, so it'll air out. It's not going to get all musty. But any other scenario, I don't see how having a bag covered in holes is really going to help you.

**Taylor:** I just keep thinking about your pens.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** What if... what if people read your important documents?

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** Through the holes in your bag.

**Sydnee:** I don't know. I have lots of Band-Aids and packets of antibiotic ointment in my backpack. And that would... Those would fall out.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Uh... Well... I don't have a transition here.

**Raleigh:** I also don't.

**Sydnee:** You know what else you could have on your backpack?

**Raleigh:** No. Oh... Okay.

**Sydnee:** Is that something?

**Raleigh:** And you say, "Mario"?

**Sydnee:** Mario.

**Raleigh:** Yeah. Mario.

**Sydnee:** I don't know.

**Taylor:** [does Mario Theme]

**Sydnee:** So we're going to... We're talking about Mario, not the movie. The...

**Raleigh:** I haven't seen the movie, actually.

**Sydnee:** Well, there you go.

**Raleigh:** So I can't even try to talk about it.

**Sydnee:** You can't even try to talk about it. No, just like the, you know, the cultural idea [laughs]...

**Raleigh:** The cultural shared, uh, shared commonality that is the Mario Brothers.

**Sydnee:** Mario Mario, Luigi Mario. Plumbers.

**Raleigh:** They wear overalls.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Raleigh:** They have mustaches.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Raleigh:** And color-coordinated outfits.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. I... I wanted to start way back, with... Did you ever play any of the original Mario games?

**Raleigh:** No.

**Sydnee:** I was going to say, you probably—

**Raleigh:** Well, by—

**Sydnee:** That's weird to think about.

**Rileigh:** By the time I was old enough to actually play video games and not just like, sit and watch other people play, the only system we had was a GameCube, because everything else was like, I don't even know if it was usable anymore, you know? Like I know we had an NES, but—

**Sydnee:** [wistfully] Yeah...

**Rileigh:** ... I don't think it would have been playable or usable by the time I was old enough to be playing video games in like, you know, 2005, 2006.

**Sydnee:** Tey, did you take any of that stuff with you?

**Taylor:** What?

**Sydnee:** Any of our old game systems? I mean, cause the only thing I had in my college dorm was a PlayStation.

**Taylor:** Uh, no, I took—

**Sydnee:** Maybe a PlayStation 2, actually.

**Taylor:** Yeah, I took the things that were mine specifically and that I... I still have my PS2 and I bought myself a... What is that...? Because now we're on the 5, but I think I have a 4. Right? Or is 4 the new one? Anyway.

**Sydnee:** I do not know.

**Taylor:** It's... No, I did not. I don't know where any of that, like the GameCube and the... the...um...

**Sydnee:** The original Ninen... Ninend... blugh, Nintendo. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Yeah, Super Nintendo.

**Sydnee:** Or the Super Nintendo, yeah.

**Taylor:** What's the other... Oh, the Xbox, don't know where that ended up.

**Sydnee:** I don't where any of that stuff... And I mean I'm assuming mom and dad just tossed it.

**Raleigh:** Well, we—

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** I mean, the GameCube, I played a lot, including Mario games on the GameCube very, very frequently. But then the Wii was what replaced that, I think.

**Sydnee:** Oh yeah.

**Raleigh:** The Wii, like the original Wii.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Raleigh:** And then I had an Xbox 360, instead of an Xbox. But then both of those we had had for so long they just, you know, got rid of `em.

**Sydnee:** My interest really waned after Super Nintendo.

**Raleigh:** But the graphics got better.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, but I don't know... I... So I remember, Tey, I remember us getting the NES, the original.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And... with Mario and Duck Hunt. The... So Mario, the first game, would come on a combo cartridge with the game *Duck Hunt*.

**Raleigh:** That's an interesting combo.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. So you'd have to get the gun attachment. [laughs]

**Raleigh:** I forgot there was a fun attachment for *Duck Hunt*.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** You needed the gun attachment to shoot the ducks.

**Taylor:** That's the duality of man. Do you want to save a princess or do you want to shoot a gun?

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** At a duck.

**Sydnee:** [laughing] At a duck.

**Raleigh:** At a duck.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** But I don't remember... Like, I know we played that, but that... The one that like, it's locked in as the game I played the most was *Super Mario 2*. Where you could play as the Princess.

**Raleigh:** Oh.

**Sydnee:** And that was what had intrigued me, is you could play as different characters and specifically I could play as Princess Toadstool and so that game... What?

**Raleigh:** Princess Toadstool?

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** Which one's that?

**Taylor:** Well, it's Peach, but—

**Raleigh:** Oh!

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** ... at some point—

**Sydnee:** Sorry.

**Taylor:** I don't know if that changed. I'm not a Mario expert. You're the one that brought it to the table, Syd.

**Raleigh:** Oh...

**Taylor:** ... so you got to field the questions, but...

**Sydnee:** Oh, I don't know.

**Taylor:** I know at some point...

**Raleigh:** You're married to like, the video game boy.

**Sydnee:** Yeah...

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** He'd be...

**Sydnee:** He does—

**Raleigh:** I think he'd be disappointed in you right now.

**Sydnee:** He probably would be. I mean, I know that *Super Mario 2* was originally called *Doki Doki Panic*.

**Taylor:** Hoh.

**Sydnee:** It was a totally other game. That they retrofitted for *Super Mario 2*. How's that? There's some information.



**Raleigh:** There's some information.

**Sydnee:** No, she was... She was called that sometimes. And also Peach.

**Taylor:** Oh.

**Raleigh:** See, I only ever knew her as Peach by the time I was playing Mario games.

**Taylor:** In Japan, her name has always been Princess Peach or Pīchi-Hime. But when she was first imported to America, they named her Princess Peach Toadstool.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** So...

**Taylor:** But went by Princess Toadstool because they thought peaches didn't make sense in the Mushroom Kingdom, I guess, then eventually went back to calling her Peach.

**Raleigh:** Is her first name Peach, last name Toadstool?

**Sydnee:** We can't get too hung up on that when Mario's name is Mario Mario. [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Well, that makes sense.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** You know, it's a family name.

**Taylor:** Well, and is the big bad guy Koopa or Bowser?

**Raleigh:** Isn't it Bowser?

**Taylor:** Well, it is now.

**Sydnee:** But it was Koopa.

**Raleigh:** Oh...

**Sydnee:** How have I never thought about...? Man, it's weird that those characters sort of shifted names over time, and it never really occurred to me that they did.

**Raleigh:** Uh-huh.

**Sydnee:** And I use them both interchangeably without ever thinking about it.

**Taylor:** I like the way that this article describes the difference between King Koopa and Bowser. Because it says that yes, it's the same person. It's just that Bowser is his personal name.

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** [laughing] His personal name.

**Sydnee:** What do you... His personal name?

**Taylor:** It's his personal name. That's what his friends call him. He's—

**Raleigh:** That's what you're allowed to call them if you're close.

**Sydnee:** Your... your personal name. It's sort of like Jellicle cats. You know how they have a third, secret name, that nobody else knows?

**Raleigh:** Sure. Yeah.

**Sydnee:** You know? [laughs]

**Raleigh:** I've often thought about the Jellicle Cats when I'm considering the name Bowser and playing Mario games. So is his name Bowser Koopa?

**Taylor:** [pause] Um...

**Sydnee:** I guess? I don't know.

**Taylor:** Oh, there we go he—

**Raleigh:** Is he the fa—

**Taylor:** He's Bowser, King of the Koopas.

**Raleigh:** Is he the father of all of those Koopas?

**Sydnee:** Uhh...

**Taylor:** Well, he is their king.

**Raleigh:** He is their king.

**Sydnee:** I just think he's their leader, yeah.

**Taylor:** But he did have kids.

**Raleigh:** Bowser Jr.'s up in there. What's the girl? There's a girl too.

**Sydnee:** I don't remember. I know that you're right, but I don't remember.

**Raleigh:** Oh no, I'm thinking about Donkey Kong. Do y'all remember the... Oh my gosh, it was a GameCube game that I thought I had made up for the longest time until someone else remembered it. That had the bongos?

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. Yeah!

**Raleigh:** That attached to the GameCube and you had to hit it to get the bananas?

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Rileigh:** And play the songs? Oh my... Why games stop being that fun? There used to be so many props.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Rileigh:** Like you'd have the steering wheel for *Mario Kart* you could put on your controller. We had the bongos.

**Sydnee:** All of *Rock Band*.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Rileigh:** All of *Rock Band*. God, I love *Rock Band*. When did games stop using props? Give me more props.

**Sydnee:** Well, I mean, the more you can interact with the world virtually the less necessary props become.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Rileigh:** I played that bongo game until those bongos gave out.

**Taylor:** Well, that's like—

**Rileigh:** And I don't even know what it was called.

**Taylor:** That's like Mario EU, right? Extended universe? Because you've got, the original, Donkey Kong's the bad guy. He's throwing barrels at Mario.

**Rileigh:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** We've got a princess. Why is this monkey have a princess? I don't know. I don't know that story.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** But—

**Raleigh:** Why is a monkey so big?

**Taylor:** He's so big. Why... Why is a plumber fighting a monkey in a construction yard? I don't know. It's a question.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** Well, never mind. I live—

**Sydnee:** He wasn't a... Was he a plumber yet?

**Taylor:** I think at that point he was a carpenter. But I will say that... I think, I mean, ostensibly, Mario is from Brooklyn. So I guess this takes place in Brooklyn. And I don't think the weirdest thing to happen in this borough is a carpenter fighting a monkey in a vacant lot. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** To save a princess?

**Taylor:** Yeah. I think that happens every Saturday, somewhere.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** But then Donkey Kong got... Well, I guess his kid got a game first, right? No.

**Sydnee:** No.

**Taylor:** Donkey Kong was first and then—

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** ... and then Diddy Kong came along and had racing.

**Rileigh:** [whispers] Diddy Kong!

**Taylor:** And then there was more Donkey Kong. So then I—

**Sydnee:** *Donkey Kong Country 2.*

**Taylor:** I guess it was a bit of a misunderstanding, because Donkey Kong was then like a fellow hero, I guess.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. And then there was Dixie Kong.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. I had forgotten about—

**Rileigh:** Wasn't there a Deedee Kong? Am I making that up?

**Sydnee:** Is there? I know about Dixie Kong.

**Taylor:** No. There was Diddy Kong.

**Rileigh:** Diddy Kong...

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Diddy Kong is his son.

**Rileigh:** Yeah, I made up Deedee Kong.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Rileigh:** [laughs] I made that up.

**Sydnee:** That's the pretend one that we just made up.

**Rileigh:** That I just created.

**Sydnee:** No, but what I liked about *Mario 2*, other than you could play as the Princess, is that the different characters had different strengths and abilities.

**Taylor:** Well that—

**Sydnee:** So you could kind of pick and choose, you know? Who you needed?

**Taylor:** I mean, the Princess was kind of broken because she had the ability to float.

**Sydnee:** Yes!

**Taylor:** Like the other characters would drop straight down when they jumped, but her skirt would puff up and she'd float.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** And that kind of made her the best one to play with.

**Sydnee:** She was. Her hang time made it way easier to jump with her, and so I always loved playing with her. And remember were those things that shot eggs at you?

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Those were weird looking things.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. I loved that game, though. And you could, like, if you were the Princess, you could time it... You could jump on the eggs as they shot `em at you.

And then pick `em up. You did that weird... that made that weird noise when you picked things and picked things up. Where they like... You had to squat down over it? [laughs]

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And then lift it over your head. [laughs]

**Rileigh:** I like... I was trying to figure out the name of that Donkey Kong game with the bongos. It's *Donkey Konga*.

**Sydnee:** Mm.

**Taylor:** Oh, okay.

**Rileigh:** And the catch, like the subtitle catchphrase for this game is, "Is the rhythm in you?"

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Rileigh:** It's a very philosophical... I miss that game.

**Sydnee:** It's Birdo, by the way, that's the thing that shot eggs at you.

**Rileigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Just came to me, Birdo.

**Rileigh:** Um... Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I remember, for me, the height of coolness was I... we had a friend- This is when we lived in Georgia, Tey, long before you, Rileigh. We had a friend who lived a street over who got *Super Mario 3* before anybody else I knew. Do you remember this? Going over to their house?

It was a brother and sister and we would go over to their house and they had *Super Mario 3*. And I don't think they let us play. I don't remember ever getting to play. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I was just allowed to watch them play.



**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And it was so exciting to watch them play *Super Mario 3* because that's when Mario could... You could get the feather.

**Taylor:** Oh yeah.

**Sydnee:** And you could fly.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And turn into a raccoon.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Except it's not a raccoon, right?

**Raleigh:** Oh, that's right. It's kind of a cat, isn't it?

**Sydnee:** No, it's...

**Taylor:** It's a flying raccoon. I don't know.

**Sydnee:** It's... it's got a specific name.

**Raleigh:** [excited] Oh! Oh! Um... [dejected] Yeah... Never mind.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** But you could fly, and we all thought that was very cool.

**Raleigh:** Tanooki!

**Sydnee:** Yes!

**Raleigh:** It's a Japanese raccoon dog.

**Taylor:** Oh, is it a tanuki?

**Sydnee:** Yes. That's what... That's what Mario was turning into. But what we all understood is that he turned into a raccoon.

**Taylor:** Yes.

**Sydnee:** Was that the leaf that turned you into the raccoon?

**Taylor:** Well, that's what—

**Raleigh:** Yeah, that's it.

**Taylor:** There was a feather and a leaf.

**Sydnee:** There was a f- Yeah! There's a yeah.

**Taylor:** Yeah. Well, that's why I was confused.

**Raleigh:** The leaf turned you into the raccoon.

**Sydnee:** The feather...

**Raleigh:** I think...

**Sydnee:** ... you just flew.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Anyway, man, I remember watching that game and just thinking, "I don't..."

**Taylor:** Give you—

**Sydnee:** "There must"— Huh?

**Taylor:** Did it give you a cape?

**Sydnee:** Yeah, I feel like that's right.

There must have been other games that people were playing... This is what's weird to me. I am not someone who particularly loves video games. I know that might be weird or shocking considering my husband's, you know, career.

But I always, growing up, was into whatever Mario game was out. I think that's interesting. Like eventually that transferred a little bit to Zelda and we were... We definitely had, like, an intense Zelda phase where I got really into those games.

Because they were like... You could do them.... There were so many things to do and you could finish all the lists. And I liked finishing all of the lists of things you could do. But Mario, every game that came out, I would be interested in playing and knowing about and I just think that's... I don't know why. Like, why Mario?

**Raleigh:** I think—

**Taylor:** Why Mario?

**Sydnee:** I guess that's my... I guess that's my core question here. Why Mario?

**Raleigh:** It's like the thesis of this episode.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, like why did... He's a plumber who saves a princess in a mushroom world, which doesn't... make... Like, none of it comes together to make sense, right?

**Taylor:** Well, I—

**Sydnee:** It's not a character—

**Taylor:** I dunno about that.

**Sydnee:** Why did I, like as a... As a young girl, why did I see myself in this—

**Rileigh:** Plumber?

**Sydnee:** ... mustachioed plumber?

**Taylor:** Well, I mean, but—

**Sydnee:** Who's... who's an adult man.

**Taylor:** I mean, he works... He's a plumber 'cause he works on pipes. There's a lot of pipes involved.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** And those pipes are underground and underground is like, well, the mushrooms don't grow there, but they come from there.

And so the mushrooms make sense.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** And...

**Rileigh:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** Princesses, they gotta be saved. That's their whole thing. So, you know, I think it all... And then the natural predator of princesses is in fact turtles.

**Rileigh:** [sarcastic] For sure.

**Taylor:** [sarcastic] So this is all very logical.

**Rileigh:** Is that what... Is Bowser a big turtle?

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. Yes?

**Taylor:** He's a koopa, technically. Technically speaking.

**Raleigh:** He's a koopa.

**Taylor:** According to koopa science, he's a koopa.

**Raleigh:** Well, koopa is like the little guys that just kind of like walk back and forth and bob their heads, you know? Those guys look like turtles walking on two legs.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Raleigh:** Bowser looks like a dragon. And he breathes fire.

**Taylor:** And that's why he's their king.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** I guess that makes sense.

**Sydnee:** Because, you know, the turtles that breathe fire are natural leaders of turtle...

**Raleigh:** Sure.

**Sydnee:** What's a group of turtles called? A turtle...?

**Taylor:** A... a... a tur—

**Raleigh:** Pile. [laughs]

**Taylor:** A turtling. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I don't... I don't know if it's a pile of turtles.

**Taylor:** A total.

**Sydnee:** A total of turtles?

**Taylor:** Yes. That's what I would call it. I don't...

**Sydnee:** I... um...

**Taylor:** I don't get to name things.

**Raleigh:** A bale.

**Taylor:** [incredulous] A bale?

**Sydnee:** A bale?

**Raleigh:** A bale of turtles, a dole of turtles and a nest of turtles.

**Taylor:** So everything but a total of turtles.

**Raleigh:** All of those work.

**Taylor:** Hm.

**Sydnee:** Mm.

**Raleigh:** Do you guys know what a group of frogs is called?

**Sydnee:** No.

**Raleigh:** It's called an army. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Nice.

**Sydnee:** Why would frogs be an army?

**Taylor:** Why wouldn't they?

**Sydnee:** Who makes this stuff up?

**Raleigh:** Is that why Charlie's afraid of frogs?

**Taylor:** Yeah, 'cause they can—

**Sydnee:** Because she thinks they're an army?

**Raleigh:** Because she knows that they're an army?

**Taylor:** ... [laughing] They can organize—

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughing] She knows... she knows—

**Taylor:** In a militaristic fa—

**Sydnee:** ... they're an organized fighting force.

**Taylor:** Well, clearly we got that wrong because it's the turtles that are doing it.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** There are no frogs in Mario.

**Sydnee:** There—

**Taylor:** And I don't... I don't know why it's a question that if one turtle could breathe fire, it wouldn't be the natural leader of other turtles. Of course it is. Breathes fire.

**Raleigh:** That's true.

**Taylor:** That's the boss.

**Raleigh:** That's true.

**Sydnee:** Unless all the other turtles decided to team up on that one, like, "We can't have one of us breathing fire."

**Taylor:** No, I think—

**Sydnee:** [as Koopa Kollektive] "That won't do."

**Taylor:** No, I feel like one fire breathing turtle could solo all the other turtles.

**Sydnee:** That's who you race against the bunny.

**Taylor:** [laughing] A fire-breathing turtle? Yeah, because then you don't—

**Sydnee:** You don't have to—

**Taylor:** You don't have to worry about how slow he is—

**Sydnee:** Mm-mm.

**Taylor:** 'Cause you got a roasted bunny on the other track.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. And then you're done. You win. [laughs] That's the updated version of that old...

**Taylor:** Yeah, that's... That's...

**Raleigh:** Fable?

**Sydnee:** Fable. [laughs]

**Taylor:** That was the act that Koopa gained his power as the King of the Koopas.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.



**Taylor:** He beat the bunny in the race.

**Sydnee:** Uh-huh.

**Taylor:** I'm sure all this is canonically accurate.

**Raleigh:** I think so.

**Sydnee:** This makes sense. I mean, it makes as much sense as like, "Some of the enemies are mushrooms with feet."

**Raleigh:** Goombas.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** No, that's a goomba. That's not a mushroom. The mushrooms are the good guys.

**Sydnee:** But the Goombas look like mushrooms with feet.

**Raleigh:** Wait, what are the mushrooms then?

**Taylor:** Well, there's Toad.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** Oh...

**Sydnee:** Toad's a mushroom.

**Taylor:** That's his head.

**Raleigh:** Oh...

**Taylor:** Or is it his hat? Conflicting evidence there.

**Sydnee:** Doesn't he call it his hat sometimes?

**Taylor:** Well, he takes it off sometimes, which is disturbing.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** And he has different hats.

**Sydnee:** So it can't be his head if he takes it off. And... Well, but I don't know. He's a mushroom.

**Taylor:** Okay...

**Raleigh:** What about Toadette? She's got braids.

**Taylor:** Well, I guess the Goomba are a mushroom-like species, but it doesn't necessarily say that they're mushrooms.

**Sydnee:** The Mario game that really captured my imagination was *Mario RPG: Search for the Seven Stars*.

**Raleigh:** Why did that capture your fancy?

**Sydnee:** Because... Okay, so the Mario games always had a story in a sense, right?

**Raleigh:** A very loose story, but yeah.

**Sydnee:** But yeah, like that... I mean, generally speaking, it was just variations of "Save Princess."

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Although, not so much in *Mario 2*, because she's with you but...

**Raleigh:** Stomp goomba, fight Bowser.

**Sydnee:** Fight Bowser. Yeah.

**Raleigh:** Take shell off, Koopa.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Raleigh:** Save Princess.

**Sydnee:** Yes. Unless we're getting to *Mario Kart*, where of course that's a whole other thing.

**Raleigh:** It's a whole other thing.

**Sydnee:** But—

**Taylor:** [laughs] The point of that game is to learn to hate your family.

**Raleigh:** Yes.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughing] That's when... That's when they realize, like, "Isn't it so nice, these video games..." Because especially like...

And I don't know. I have not bought a video game system in so long. Because like well, whatever games the girls played, Justin had. I don't know.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** But anyway—and they don't play a ton. Honestly, we play the Wii more than anything.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** We have a Wii.

**Raleigh:** I can't believe you still have a Wii.

**Sydnee:** We have a Wii. Um... [laughs] But the... Video game consoles were so expensive that it was a... I mean, I imagine we were not the only family or like kids with friends who would, like, gather at your friend's house to watch them play or gather with your family to watch one person play.

I mean, a lot of our Zelda experience, Tey, was me playing, and you talking me through it, you know?

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** So like—

**Taylor:** The same with *Seven Stars*, too. Like I never actually played that game. But I watched you play every second of that game.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. So like, watching someone play games, like that was... It was so common. I mean, *Mario Kart* was when they said, like, "Isn't this nice? All these families and friends, they sit down and they watch one person play and they root them on and they solve the puzzles or whatever together. And it's all so fun."

"Let's make 'em fight." [laughs]

**Taylor:** Which is an idea they perfected in *Mario Party*.

**Sydnee:** Yes, exactly.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** "Let's make these people fight with each other more. They're cooperating too well."

**Taylor:** Yep.

**Raleigh:** Mario—

**Sydnee:** Mario— Oh, go ahead.

**Raleigh:** I was just going to say *Mario Party*, that was my jam. That was...

**Taylor:** [satisfied sigh]

**Raleigh:** I remember walking... or not walking. I remember going to Blockbuster with Dad and renting the new *Mario Parties*. And I think I ended up getting to keep them because I'm pretty sure that Blockbuster just went out of business shortly after I rented it.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** It was like, "Well, this is mine now."

**Sydnee:** That was a beautiful moment where if you had rented something from Blockbuster right before it closed...

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** That's just it.

**Raleigh:** Like I had a sleeper—

**Sydnee:** That's probably not what they wanted you to do, but... [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Right.

**Taylor:** No, you know it's probably like a... [laughing] Like a hillbilly insider trading situation where somebody got the know ahead of time.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** And was like, "Come. Rent everything you can. They'll be yours."

**Sydnee:** [laughing] Do you... Do you remember... By the way, on a side note, do you have any memory of prior to the existence of Blockbuster?

Because I have like a clear memory—

**Raleigh:** Before Blockbuster?

**Sydnee:** ... of when the blockbuster came to town.

**Raleigh:** Oh no.

**Taylor:** Oh, I know what you're going to... I know what you're going to say, but...

**Sydnee:** Okay, so the Blockbuster came to Huntington, the first Blockbuster, when... Oh, Tey, I don't know. Maybe elementary, middle? Maybe middle school for me?

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Upper elementary.

**Taylor:** Yeah, I would say elementary for me.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Somewhere in that range. Up until then, there was no Blockbuster in town. We would rent VHS tapes from Cummings' Renter Center.

**Taylor:** [laughs] Which was below the tanning salon.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Which was below the tanning salon and from where you could- The reason it was called Renter Center is 'cause you could rent videotapes from there, but you could also rent [laughs] lawn equipment.

**Raleigh:** [laughing] Oh my god.

**Taylor:** Yep.

**Sydnee:** So you could go there, and on the bottom floor, you could rent a lawn mower. Or a weed whacker or whatever, you know, hedge trimmers, whatever you need.

Or, you could rent a VHS tape. They had, like... I feel like it's all just like, basically movies like *Caddyshack*. [laughing] It's just like a room full of movies like *Caddyshack*.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Well, I feel like that was also the space that I rented the most disturbing like, B horror movies from.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Because I would just go- Because they wouldn't put the movies out. Like you couldn't touch the movies. They would have Styrofoam cases, like the movie case over a Styrofoam block.

**Sydnee:** Over- Yeah.

**Raleigh:** Oh, okay.

**Taylor:** So you would just take the movie up and hand it to the person, and they'd bring you a... Just an, like a vaguely-marked box with the movie in it.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** And so I would just pick the one that had the scariest art and take that up.

**Sydnee:** And then if you needed to get a tan you go upstairs to the tanning salon—

**Raleigh:** Right.

**Sydnee:** ... on the top floor.

**Taylor:** Yep. That's what our... our mom liked to tan there for a while, and it was not far from where I went to elementary school.

**Raleigh:** Yep.

**Taylor:** So I would walk to the Renter Center and peruse the movies and wait for her while she tanned.

**Raleigh:** I also had that experience.

**Sydnee:** But then the Blockbuster came to town, and that was like...

**Raleigh:** It was not... I did not have many encounters with the Blockbuster before it went out of business. Like I had a couple, but also like, just to rent video games that I was like, "I want to play this with my friends" and mom and dad were like "We're not..." You know.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Raleigh:** "Are you going to play when you're not with your friends?"

And of course, "No. I'm not going to play *Mario Party* by myself, Mom and Dad. Like the GameCube's meant for four players. That's what I'm going to play." So we'd go and rent the new games and give them back. I don't think we even rented movies or anything from there though at that point, because everything was... easily...

**Sydnee:** I think we... I think you... That would have been like the years where it was on the decline because streaming was a thing.

**Raleigh:** Well, I was going to say, we were using Netflix then, but not the online Netflix like we have now. We were using Netflix like, they send you the DVD's in the mail.

**Sydnee:** They mailed you the DVDs.

**Taylor:** Yeah.



**Raleigh:** And you'd send 'em back, yeah.

**Sydnee:** Man, that's...

**Raleigh:** Which is crazy that we did that. I forget that's how Netflix started.

**Sydnee:** Physical media really hung on for a while, there.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** It makes me a little sad. I know that we're way off the topic of Mario. But like when I think about... I can still... I still remember how the Blockbuster smelled inside.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I remember that that was like a fun thing to do on a Friday or Saturday night, was to go to the Blockbuster. Like with the goal eventually of leaving with something to watch or play or whatever.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** But going was part of the thing, [laughs] you know? Just like being there, wandering around, looking at movies, finding things you'd never heard of.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Didn't know existed and then also like seeing your friends there.

**Raleigh:** I remember the... I, of course, don't know if it was the same when it first came to town as it was when I was a patron. But I remember like the space-themed, almost, like blacklight carpet that they had that had like little stars on it and rockets and stuff. And they had a giant gumball machine, like one of those super tall like person-sized ones.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** That had a super curly slide that brought the gumball down to you by the door. I remember that.

**Sydnee:** Those were the days.

**Raleigh:** Those were the days. Fostered my love for Mario.

**Sydnee:** There was another local movie rental place called Movie Max. That was down in the Big Bear—

**Taylor:** [crosstalk]

**Sydnee:** It was down in the Big Bear Plaza.

**Taylor:** Oh, right. Yeah.

**Sydnee:** When we had a Big Bear.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** My gosh.

**Sydnee:** We'd go down to the Big Bear and then stop at Movie Max. Michael worked there. Or he knew everybody who worked there. He used to hang out there and I got to go with him to hang out there.

**Raleigh:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** And I thought it was the coolest moment of my life. I was hanging out with the people who worked at—

**Raleigh:** ... at Movie Max.

**Sydnee:** ... at the video rental store and it was just like...

**Raleigh:** Oh my gosh.

**Sydnee:** And then one day, I would marry a man who worked at a Blockbuster... Twice.

**Taylor:** [sarcastic] Yeah, that's what he's best known for.

**Raleigh:** [sarcastic] Right?

**Sydnee:** [sarcastic] Yeah is that he worked—

**Raleigh:** Working at Blockbuster.

**Sydnee:** He worked at Blockbuster twice.

**Raleigh:** Did he get fired from Blockbuster?

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. And then got rehired. [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Why did he get fired from Blockbuster?

**Sydnee:** I don't... that... Listen, that's Justin's story to tell.

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** It may... It may involve some, light crimes. [laughing] So I don't know that it's really my place to share that story.

**Raleigh:** Um—

**Sydnee:** He succeeded anyway. That's the message for your kids out there. You can get fired twice from Blockbuster and still succeed in life. Don't worry.

**Raleigh:** I think technically I committed a small crime by taking that game from Blockbuster and renting it and then never giving it back after they went out of- Like, before they went out of business. Just kept it. Probably should have given it back. But...

**Sydnee:** I don't... I mean, what were they going to do with them?

**Raleigh:** It's a great question. I think everything, when they were going out of business, was just like—

**Sydnee:** Yeah, they sold everything.

**Raleigh:** ... come and buy it for like super cheap, right?

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** But I mean, surely they didn't sell all of it.

**Raleigh:** But what... um...

**Sydnee:** *Mario RPG*.

**Raleigh:** Yes, that's... yeah.

**Sydnee:** That's what I want to talk about. So *Mario RPG* had a much more involved story. Like day-to-day you had missions and tasks to complete and different worlds to go visit and people to talk to. Like any role-playing game.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Yeah. It was like *Final Fantasy: Mario Brothers*.

**Raleigh:** Oh!

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Raleigh:** So it wasn't like just a typical platformer.

**Sydnee:** No.

**Taylor:** It was turn-based style play.

**Raleigh:** Oh, okay.

**Sydnee:** It was... what?

**Taylor:** You take turns. You each pick your... You pick your attack for each character.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** And then your characters attack one at a time.

**Raleigh:** Oh, okay. Like Pokémon.

**Sydnee:** I didn't know these terms, but I did enjoy this. And you had... You would add to your team, these other players, these other characters.

**Raleigh:** Uh-huh.

**Sydnee:** And they would all- They would have different moves. And so then you would know.

**Raleigh:** So Pokémon.

**Sydnee:** Is that how Pokémon works?

**Taylor:** Well, yeah, but they were like your friends. They weren't- I mean, not that your Pokémon wouldn't be your friends. That I mean—

**Raleigh:** My Pokémon are my friends.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Raleigh:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** I know, I didn't mean to imply that. And then I felt bad when I did imply it. But they're like, people friends.

**Raleigh:** People friends. Yeah.

**Taylor:** Instead of friends you keep in little balls.

**Rileigh:** Yeah, sure.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. And they wander along with you.

**Rileigh:** You would like Pokémon.

**Sydnee:** You think?

**Rileigh:** If that's what you like.

**Sydnee:** I mean that—

**Rileigh:** There are tasks to complete. You walk around, you talk to people, and you gather your team.

**Sydnee:** And your team gains... Like, you level up. You keep leveling. You know, you have, like, you start at level one and you can only do like whatever you...

Like, Mario can like punch somebody or jump on somebody. What does he do? He just jumps.

**Rileigh:** I was gonna say I've never seen Mario punch anything.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] I don't...

**Rileigh:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughing] He didn't punch...

**Rileigh:** I've never seen Mario deck somebody.

**Sydnee:** I don't think he punched anybody. [laughing] That'd be a fun game if Mario—

**Rileigh:** Usually he just stomps on their head.

**Sydnee:** Mario just punches `em. No, I think he just...Like, there was a jump and like the super jump and like, you know, different levels of jump. Mega jump, I don't know.

But then you would add these other characters, like, that could either do magic or could heal or whatever these other characters could do.

And then every time one of your character- And you get- You... There was strategy involved where like you'd get a certain number of points, so you'd get to level someone up. Which character do you want to level up next.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Based on what abilities will they gain and how much stronger will they get in these different areas? And like you can up their defense or their fighting ability. It's like role-playing games.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** But...

**Raleigh:** Who would... Who could you get in Mario's squad? Like all the standard—

**Sydnee:** I'm trying... I knew you—

**Raleigh:** ... cast of characters?

**Sydnee:** ... were about to ask me. Who were all the people in the squad? There was the one that could do magic, was my favorite.

**Taylor:** There was Geno.

**Sydnee:** Yes!

**Raleigh:** Oh, okay.

**Taylor:** Who was like a little wooden doll, but kind of looked like a wizard. There was Mallow, right?

**Sydnee:** Yeah!

**Taylor:** The... the cloudy boy.

**Sydnee:** Yes. Him.

**Taylor:** You could get... You could get Bowser, right?

**Sydnee:** You could get Bowser.

**Taylor:** Bowser was—

**Sydnee:** Bowser became—

**Taylor:** Yeah. Bowser would be on your side.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Who else could you get?

**Taylor:** The Princess, of course.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Peach.

**Sydnee:** Oh my gosh, I was trying to look it up, but there's just too many. All those ones you mentioned. Geno, was my favorite because Geno could do magic. So I thought Gino had the, you know, the best abilities to like, to grow quickly.

**Raleigh:** Uh-huh.

**Sydnee:** But yeah, there was Peach. There was Bowser. There... Mallow was so cute. Oh, Yoshi showed up in there.

**Taylor:** Oh, yeah.



**Sydnee:** He was... Yeah.

**Raleigh:** I always liked Yoshi.

**Sydnee:** But I just really liked the... And maybe, I don't know. You know, these are all different styles of games that you could like...

Obviously there are a ton of different games that use these same sort of formats. Whether we're talking about the basic early Mario games or *Mario Kart* or *Mario Party* or now into an RPG game.

I think Mario always felt very accessible to me, someone who didn't play a lot of games. I remember that as game consoles got more sophisticated and game controllers got more sophisticated I felt less and less able to engage with games.

Because I felt like I wasn't very good at them and I was intimidated by them.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And there was something about graphics looking more and more realistic and the characters looking like, cooler and more people-like that also used to really intimidate me.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And I mean, I would have like the... I think there are probably a lot of people my age who had the moment where you were at like, a cool party where people were playing *Silent Hill* and it was very cool because it was scary.

And everyone there was very cool. And I... you would take your turn at the controller and your character would get stuck in a corner and you were bad at the controller and you're just stuck in a corner.

**Taylor:** I feel like... I feel like you're misremembering this, Syd, because the cool party where everyone was playing *Silent Hill* was just us in our basement with our cousins because I was the one playing *Silent Hill*.  
[laughs]

**Sydnee:** But you were cool and could play *Silent Hill*, and that was where sort of the technology started to leave me behind. I started feeling like I wasn't good at games, but Mario always made me feel good games. [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Well, that's what I was—yeah.

**Sydnee:** Everything is bright. Everything's really easy to maneuver. Do you know what I mean?

**Taylor:** Maybe that's part of Mario's secret. Maybe you stumbled on it. Maybe it's making games that are engaging, but not too hard to work through.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** That's what I was going to say is—

**Sydnee:** They're just very playable.

**Raleigh:** They're very accessible. I mean, I started playing them when I was very young on like a DS, I had Mario games. And then had them on the Wii and I still play them now. Like it... I'm not very good like, quote-unquote "good" at games.

I don't like the high-intensity, high-pressure situations where it's like, "Oh man, if I don't do this exactly right, I'm going to have to start all over. Imma lose everything." I prefer like, "Oh, no, I ran into a Goomba and I'm small. I can keep going. That's fine."

**Sydnee:** Yeah. I... Maybe that's where it... Maybe that's what it comes down to is just like, I never—

**Raleigh:** I mean, that's not to say they're easy, like you can just breeze through them, but—

**Sydnee:** No, I mean—

**Raleigh:** ... they're very accessible for all people of all like, different interests and skill levels at games, I think.

**Sydnee:** They don't take themselves very seriously for the most part.

**Raleigh:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** And I always like that too, because I always thought like, this is, you know, a little silly. It's a... Again, we're in a Mushroom Kingdom or whatever, like it's a little silly.

**Raleigh:** That's why it's okay it doesn't really make sense.

**Sydnee:** There's always a sense of humor.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Like there was always... I always felt like Mario games, like the dialogue, like in *RPG*, there's a lot of funny things people say. Like it's funny, it's engaging. It's kind of like, "Nah, I don't know."

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** You know, "I'm a mushroom. What do I know?"

Like it's all very silly and I really enjoyed that aspect of it. And games that got real serious or realistic, I never... I don't know. I couldn't engage with as much.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Do you remember in the RPG where if there... There was one like, I don't know, what was the... hotel, that you could go to because you could stay and you could sleep in the bed.

And there was a person asleep in the bed next to you, and if you tried to wake him up, it made the Zelda sound?

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Because it was Link and it was—

**Sydnee:** Because it was Link.

**Taylor:** And it was anticipating the next Zelda game. I thought that was cool. There was also a secret like battle you could access that was like a Final Fantasy battle—

**Sydnee:** Uh-huh!

**Taylor:** ... in that one.

**Sydnee:** I remember that.

**Taylor:** So it was very self-aw—like, a very tied into other, you know, games game.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. It was. No I really... I liked the references. I liked the dialogue. I like the... I just, I felt like it was fun...

I think there are so many games where you have to stop and talk to people and you're trying to like get through it as quickly as possible, like, "Oh my gosh, stop talking to me. I just wanna play the game."

I feel like *Mario RPG* really nailed like... It's very funny.

**Raleigh:** Did you—

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** It's clever.

**Raleigh:** Did you—I was looking it up to see if it was possible to like, still get it and play it and like what you could even play it on.

Because I know a lot of old games have been, like, quietly transferred to be compatible with newer systems. Did you know they're remaking *Super Mario RPG* for the Switch?

**Sydnee:** I have... Justin has told me this.

**Raleigh:** And it comes out in November of this year?

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** I know!

**Sydnee:** I—

**Raleigh:** I looked it up and it was like, "Here's this new one for Switch. You can pre-order now." I'm like, "What are you talking about? Oh my gosh."

**Sydnee:** I think I might try it out because—

**Raleigh:** Yeah!

**Sydnee:** I... I mean, I can't remember the last—other than like, the girls are really in, like I said, to *Wii*... Oh... *Wii Sports* but also there's a *Wii*... Is it called *Wii Party*?

**Raleigh:** Um...

**Sydnee:** Or something like that. *Wii*...

**Raleigh:** Yeah, I think I know what you're talking about.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** I don't remember what it's called, but yeah.

**Sydnee:** It's like party games.

**Raleigh:** Yeah, yeah.

**Sydnee:** For you and your friends to play. And you interact with the Wii. I dunno. We play *Wii Sports* a lot.

**Raleigh:** Now, there is a—

**Sydnee:** But that's, again, not... Me, I'm not choosing to do that.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I'm [laughs] playing with my children.

**Raleigh:** There is a Mario... I think it's *Mario and Sonic at the Winter Olympics*, I think is what it's called.

**Sydnee:** Oh.

**Raleigh:** But it's *Wii Sports*, basically, but with characters from Mario and Sonic playing the sports. They have a summer one as well. There's also *Mario Tennis*, that I enjoyed.

**Sydnee:** I don't know. I think... I think it's interesting because it really like... I don't... I was never... I mean, I always thought there were some video games that were fun, but they weren't particularly important to me, I would say. Like, as different, you know, pieces of media and things can be.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** But games that I could reliably return to and enjoy and have fun were typically Mario games.

And maybe it's just that. Maybe it's because they were made to be easily accessible for even casual video game players, you know?

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** You don't have to be that into it to have fun playing a Mario game.

**Raleigh:** Right.

**Sydnee:** And certainly it's not the only game like that. I'm sure there are tons of different games that that statement is true for.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** It's just one of the oldest and for someone my age, one of the first that I would have ever engaged with.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Uh-huh.

**Sydnee:** So... So thank you all for talking about Mario with me.

**Raleigh:** Of course.

**Taylor:** The concept of Mario.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** I like video games. I just like a very specific kind of video game, and Mario fits very well in that.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Raleigh:** I want to be able to relax. Anything that's going to stress me out, I can't. I can't do it.

**Taylor:** Yeah...

**Sydnee:** I would hide while you were playing *Silent Hill*.

**Taylor:** Yeah...

**Rleigh:** I remember accidentally stumbling upon all of you playing *Silent Hill* one time when I was very young. Like walking downstairs or something and seeing it and being like, "Oh, no. Oh, no. What's happening? Oh, no, I don't think I'm supposed to be seeing this. I'm four." [laughs]

**Taylor:** Ah, but those games were good.

**Sydnee:** Well, anyway, thank you both. I enjoy talking about Mario and maybe I'll check out this new RPG game coming out—

**Rleigh:** Yeah. It sounds like you have to.

**Sydnee:** ... in November. Tey, what are we going to do next?

**Taylor:** I thought that, uh, we could talk about another really excellent anime movie. One of, I don't know if it was one of the first. It was one of the big hits early from like Studio Ghibli, *Princess Mononoke*.

**Sydnee:** All right!

**Rleigh:** All right! I've watched that before, but it's been a very, very long time, so I'm excited to get a chance to go back and rewatch it.

**Taylor:** Alright.

**Sydnee:** I remember watching it in our Japanese class in high school, Tey.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Yeah.



**Raleigh:** Well, alright.

**Sydnee:** Alright.

**Taylor:** Cool.

**Sydnee:** Well, thank you both. And you know, listeners, there's... I don't... I don't need to tell you where Mario is.

**Raleigh:** It's everywhere.

**Taylor:** Everywhere.

**Sydnee:** Everywhere. Mario is everywhere.

**Taylor:** All around you.

**Sydnee:** Mario—

**Raleigh:** Mario is all of us.

**Sydnee:** Mario was in you all along.

**Taylor:** Oh, no.

**Raleigh:** Wow.

**Sydnee:** Wow. Alright.

Thank you to Maximum Fun, you should go to [maximumfun.org](http://maximumfun.org), check out all the great shows there. You can e-mail us at [stillbuffering@maximumfun.org](mailto:stillbuffering@maximumfun.org) and thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, "Baby, You Change Your Mind."

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

**Sydnee:** I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Taylor:** And I'm Teylor Smirl.

**Raleigh:** I am still buffering.

**Taylor and Sydnee:** [almost in unison] And... I... Am... Too.

[outro, theme song plays]

**Raleigh:** [Mario voice, but sick] Wahoo!

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Raleigh:** Did you like that?

**Taylor:** That was good.

**Raleigh:** Thank you.

**Sydnee:** [laughing]

**Raleigh:** I think usually it's better when I'm not sick.

**Sydnee:** That was good.

**Raleigh:** But I felt pretty good about that.

**Taylor:** You—

**Sydnee:** That was a good Mario.

**Taylor:** You saved that all the way to the end.

**Raleigh:** I did.

**Sydnee:** That was good.

**Raleigh:** Thank you.

**Taylor:** Yes.

[ad break]

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