

Still Buffering 383: "Squid Games: The Challenge" (2023)

Published January 13th, 2024

[Listen here on mcelroy.family](https://mcelroy.family)

[theme music, "Baby You Change Your Mind" by the Nouvellas 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: Well, I didn't watch them, but TikTok told me a lot about the Golden Globes the other night, and I felt like it was relevant to our podcast, because there— some blasphemy occurred.

Rileigh: You mean Taylor Swift.

Sydnee: Yes. [chuckles]

Rileigh: Yah. Yeah, the guy who hosted, I've never heard of this man before, but I don't know who on his team was like, "You should take a shot at Taylor Swift for your first ever major, like, TV gig."

Sydnee: That—

Rileigh: But that can't have been a good call. [chuckles]

Sydnee: That was really what shocked me. So, I didn't watch it, but TikTok was exploding— Well, sometimes I'll look at the dresses. And the outfits.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like sometimes TikTok'll show me like some of the outfits and I'm just like, I don't know, I'm not like a fashion person, but Gillian Anderson wore a dress covered in vaginas, and I gotta look at that. I gotta look at that!

Taylor: Love that for her.

Sydnee: I got— I love her.

Raleigh: You gotta.

Sydnee: I love— Also, it was a beautiful, tasteful vagina dress.

Taylor: Only Gillian Anderson could pull that off.

Sydnee: It was really a gor— If you haven't seen it, I would highly recommend, check it out. And you're gonna see a picture from afar, and you're gonna go, "This is not a vagina dress." You have to zoom in and look at the print on the skirt to see that they're all vulvas. [chuckles]

Taylor: Oh, wow.

Sydnee: Anyway.

Raleigh: I definitely did not see that when I looked at that.

Sydnee: Yeah, it— Well. I saw somebody talk about it, so then I had to look at a picture and zoom in to see what they were talkin' about. I was like, "Yes, Gillian Anderson. Yes, okay."

Taylor: How— She just gets cooler and cooler the older she gets, I don't understand what's happening there, what contract— [chuckles]

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: — she signed, but good for her.

Sydnee: So cool. So cool. But then people were talking about like, "Can you believe this host?" Who I had also never heard of and I don't know that it's important for me to learn his name now, because I will not be seeking out his comedy in the future. [chuckles]

Raleigh: Well, and I can't imagine he's gonna be getting any more major hosting gigs. [wheezes]

Taylor: Yeah. Man that— To go for Taylor Swift and also to make jokes at the expense of the Barbie movie.

Raleigh: Yes.

Taylor: That directly go against the whole point of the Barbie movie.

Raleigh: Yes.

Taylor: That was really sad to see.

Sydnee: It was—

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It was like they— Like the look on people's faces, everybody was describing it as "disappointed," and that's what— that was really the vibe, was like... "Did you see the movie? Because the joke you just made, that's what the movie's about." [chuckles]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: "That's the whole like..."

Taylor: "This is meta. This would be written in to the script of Barbie."

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: "If it wasn't..." [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: "— happening in real life." [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah, it was so— It was just— And I mean beyond the fact that like that was not— I mean, you missed the point. Beyond that, it wasn't funny.

Raleigh: It's not a funny joke.

Sydnee: It wasn't funny. That joke wasn't funny and the joke about Taylor Swift wasn't funny. They weren't funny. And then of course, when he wasn't getting laughs, he got mad at the audience, 'cause that's—

Raleigh: Mm-hmm. And then he said—

Sydnee: It's like classic, toxic, male behavior is—

Raleigh: He said, "I didn't write all these jokes. I just wrote the ones you guys are laughing at."

Sydnee: "And I only had 10 days."

Raleigh: [chuckles] Yeah.

Sydnee: “I only had 10 days to prepare for this. So, I told ‘em—”

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Okay, so what did you do with the other—

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: — nine days and 23 hours? [chuckles]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I’m not a comedian, but if you gave me 10 days to come up with jokes about movies and TV and celebrities, I guarantee you I could come up with at least one joke that was better than any of the mean jokes he said. [chuckles]

Taylor: This is Sydnee’s pitch to host the Golden Globes. No, sorry. [chuckles]

Raleigh: [chuckles]

Sydnee: I don’t ever wanna host anything.

Taylor: ‘Kay.

Sydnee: Hosting would not be a good gig for me, I would not enjoy that, and I would not be good at it. I’m just saying. [chuckles]

Raleigh: It really makes—

Sydnee: I’m just saying.

Raleigh: It really makes you wonder what happened with that, because the fact that he had 10 days and that’s who they came up with makes me think that someone probably more famous was supposed to do it, and then they had to scramble.

Sydnee: I don’t— I—

Rileigh: Or else they just couldn't find anybody, 'cause I mean I was thinking, didn't Tina Fey and Amy Poehler host it one year? And wasn't it a big deal when Ricky Gervais hosted it and like made unfunny jokes?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: Like they've had actually famous people host the Golden Globes before. Where did this guy come from?

Sydnee: I wondered about that too, 'cause I usually know who the host is— like I've usually heard of a host. And we watch stand-up comedy sometimes, Justin and I do, so like, I feel like even if he was just sort of famous in stand-up comedy circles, I would have at least heard of him.

[phone notification dings]

Sydnee: I don't know.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I mean... But I— Man, if nothing else, even if you can't think of anything funny to say, even if you're up there tellin' jokes that bomb, how did no-one in the room say, "We probably shouldn't tell a joke about Taylor Swift."

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: How is everyone so ignorant to the cultural landscape and to, first of all, Taylor Swift fans, and secondly just like how exhausted we all are with the conversation about Taylor Swift's boyfriends. Like how was there no-one in the room who said, "No-one's gonna like that"?

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: I don't know.

Rileigh: And did you see her reaction? 'Cause she very clearly did not like it.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: I enjoyed that.

Sydnee: Which she was—

Raleigh: And Selena Gomez.

Sydnee: And she's been criticized for her reaction, which like her reaction is she didn't laugh. She didn't laugh 'cause it wasn't funny.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Well, and there were a lot of other people that didn't laugh.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: While the camera was on their face. [chuckles] Martin Scorsese was not laughing.

Raleigh: Robert De Niro was not laughing.

Taylor: Ryan Gosling— Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah. [chuckles]

Taylor: Exactly.

Sydnee: Nobody.

Raleigh: Ryan Gosling was not laughing.

Sydnee: No.

Raleigh: They showed him when they said, "Barbie's about a plastic doll with big boobies," and he was just sitting there like, "Ehh, come on, man."

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: "Come on."

Taylor: Well, and Margot Robbie was doing the laugh that every woman can recognize, which is, "I am so uncomfortable."

Sydnee: [simultaneously] Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: [simultaneously] Uh-huh.

Taylor: "So I'm just gonna smile and laugh awkwardly." [chuckles]

Raleigh: Yup.

Sydnee: Like, how is this possible? How is it possible that... I mean... How do you make that movie and everybody watches it, and it has— there's so much like cultural conversation about it, and then you tell that joke about it?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But I mean like I don't know, is it— Are we a step forward because of the reaction that that joke has gotten, when you consider that—

And I was— I don't know if it was the Golden Globes, or it may have been the Oscars. Do you remember when Seth McFarlane did the whole song about all the actresses whose breasts he'd seen in movies?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Jesus Christ.

Sydnee: So, I mean I guess we've moved forward from that? As a society.

Taylor: [quietly] Well.

Sydnee: I don't know, have we?

Taylor: Well, I mean at the end of the day, those jokes still get approval. Like... it's a bit of a habit both ways, right? Because we need to— [chuckles] "We need this show to appeal to a wide range of audience across America, so we gotta tell the good old misogyny jokes. But we'll have the camera cut to a woman not laughing. Feminism!" [wheezes]

Raleigh: I just— I— This, I— [sighs] I'm never gonna host the Golden Globes, but if I was and they—

Taylor: I want that to be— "I'm puttin' my foot down." [laughs]

Raleigh: I'm puttin' my foot down, that's my line in the sand I draw. But—

Sydnee: [chuckles] "If you ask, I'm saying no!"

Raleigh: But if they—

Taylor: Alright, Sydnee's a maybe, Raleigh's a no.

Raleigh: I'm a no. If they handed me that joke, and I had that job, I can't tell you how quickly I would say no. There is nothing you could tell me to convince me like, "Okay, you're right. Maybe that would be a good joke to tell."

Sydnee: But—

Raleigh: If he's being honest when he says, "I didn't write these jokes, you know, other people wrote them." I still believe he wrote the unfunny ones, 'cause you know.

Sydnee: Well—

Raleigh: He— Of course he would say that.

Sydnee: That's what I was thinking, 'cause I sat there for a second, trying to think "Okay." Obviously, this guy is not the most well-known, 'cause I didn't know who he was.

And he was offered this huge opportunity to make himself well known. And it was probably intimidating and he's sittin' in a room full of writers who, I don't know if it's his team or a team assigned to this.

I don't know. I don't know where they came from. And someone, according to him he said, "The jokes you're laughing at are the ones I wrote," so I guess from that, we could surmise that the Barbie joke, the Taylor Swift joke he didn't write. 'Cause nobody laughed at those.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So, if we give all that, if we accept that as truth, someone else in that room pitched in that joke. And I tried to imagine, was it just like he didn't feel like he could say no? Was he not allowed to say no? Was there so much pressure and he was so like trying to please everyone?

I tried to put myself in that headspace for just a second, and I thought "There is no amount of pressure or any sort of like, you know, 'This is my shot and I don't wanna blow it' feeling that I could ever experience that would make me tell a joke that was mean about Taylor Swift. I wouldn't do it.

And there is no sort of pressure that would make me tell a joke that is so clearly stereotypical and offensive and reductive to a whole segment of the population.”

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: The Barbie joke, meaning women. Like I wouldn't do that, no matter what— No matter what the opportunity was, I'm— That— You know? It speaks to like who you are as a person.

Raleigh: Especially with Greta Gerwig and Margot Robbie like in the room.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Like, it's not just offensive to women, like those are the women that made the movie, and they're right there. [chuckles] Right there.

Taylor: [sighs]

Raleigh: I mean, did you see the other drama that occurred, not including this man?

Sydnee: When Selena Gomez was whispering to Taylor Swift?

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I—

Raleigh: The—

Sydnee: I have heard interpretations of what was said, but I don't know if it's true.

Raleigh: The professional lip readers on TikTok—

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Raleigh: — have gotten into this. Which, if you haven't—

Sydnee: It involves Timothee Chalamet, I have heard.

Taylor: Oh no.

Rileigh: It involves Timothee Chalamet, who now is dating Kylie Jenner? Is it Kylie? I think it's Kylie.

Sydnee: Is that— I didn't know that was true.

Taylor: Is that a Jenner? I— [chuckles]

Rileigh: Well, I know it's a Jenner, I can't remember if it's Kendall or Kylie. It's the one who did makeup.

Taylor: I think Kendall's the mom.

Rileigh: Is Kendall the mom?

Taylor: No? No, not the mom.

Rileigh: No, Kris is the mom.

Sydnee: No, that—

Taylor: Kri— Oh god, I don't know.

Sydnee: Kris is the mom.

Taylor: What is this?

Rileigh: All with a 'K.' I think Kylie— I think it's Kylie, 'cause she's the one that did the lip kits. The one that did the makeup.

Sydnee: Sure. [chuckles]

Rileigh: Dating Timothee Chalamet.

Sydnee: Wonka.

Rileigh: And they were at the Golden Globes together. Yes, Wonka.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: Pffff, okay.

Rileigh: Of course, his most famous role. [chuckles] Sure.

Sydnee: To be, he's Wonka.

Taylor: Disrespect Gene Wilder. [chuckles]

Rileigh: [chuckles] He's Wonka. So, they were there together, and what it looks like— 'Cause it's Selena Gomez whispering something—

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: — to Taylor Swift, and Taylor Swift's friend, Kelly Teller, who is the wife of Miles Teller. And she is whispering something, and the last thing she whispers is her shaking her head saying "And she said no." And they both go, "[gasps] Whaaat? Like, oh my god." And it looks like—

Sydnee: And then she mouthed a bad word, but we can't say it on this podcast.

Rileigh: Yeah. We can't say that. But it looked like Kelly Teller said, "Timothée?" And what people are surmising is Selena Gomez said, "I asked to take a picture with him, and she said no." And she said, "Timothée?" and she said, "Yes," and they went, "[gasps]"

So I guess assuming that she asked to take a picture with Timothée Chalamet, and Kylie Jenner said no? I think is the thing that people are getting.

Sydnee: That's the assumption.

Rileigh: I don't know.

Taylor: I have a hard— I'm just trying to picture in what world Selena Gomez has to ask for pictures with other famous people like a fan.

Rileigh: I also was thinking about that, yeah.

Taylor: [laughs] I just— I don't know. I call BS on that.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Supposition.

Sydnee: 'Cause I— 'Cause I would say like, in terms of like celebrity status, aren't they pretty equal?

Taylor: I—

Sydnee: Wouldn't you put them about the same?

Taylor: I would put her a few notches above him, just by how long she's been around.

Raleigh: I would say, to me— Yeah, she is more famous to me. But...

Sydnee: Well, okay.

Raleigh: Maybe to my generation.

Sydnee: I think that maybe they're famous in slightly different circles, of the like—

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Different cuts, but like either way, there's no— It is not like somebody who just got a break and has just got a part in a movie, and people are just starting to learn who they are.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Walked up to Meryl Streep. You know what I mean?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Who, I imagine, by the way, if you ask to take a picture with Meryl Streep, don't you think she's probably like, so nice about it, and like very chill.

Raleigh: You'd hope so.

Sydnee: And very cool, and... I just feel like Meryl Streep would be so cool. We were talking about this last night, Justin and I were watching Only Murders in the Building because we haven't watched this season ever, and so we're just watching it now. We're way behind.

And we're— He said like, "What do you think it would be like to talk to Meryl Streep?" and I said, "I couldn't. I couldn't. If I had an opportunity to talk to Meryl Streep, I would just stand there, mouth agape." What would you say to Meryl Streep? She's just amazing.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: She's Meryl Streep. But I so think she'd be very nice.

Raleigh: Well, and she was sitting at the same table as Selena Gomez because they were in *Only Murders* together.

Sydnee: I don't— I couldn't say anything to her.

Raleigh: Sure.

Sydnee: I'm sure Selena Gomez can talk to her, but I mean I couldn't.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Selena Gomez seems really cool with old people.

Sydnee: Uh-huh.

Taylor: What— Like there was a clip of her talking to Harrison Ford at the reward—

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And the awards. And it's like, you know, and she's in the show with Steve Martin and...

Sydnee: Martin Short.

Taylor: Martin Short. She just seems to be friends with all of the coolest like older generation in Hollywood.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And good for her for that. [chuckles]

Raleigh & Sydnee: [simultaneously] Mm-hmm.

Taylor: That's a great circle of friends to be in with.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: That would be nice. Yeah, but I wouldn't know what to say. Anyway.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I didn't— I didn't watch the Golden Globes and now I guess I'm glad I didn't.

Raleigh: I didn't either, I just saw this on TikTok, to be fair. I guess I should say that. I don't have cable.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I used to watch all the award shows, but I don't know. They're just so long.

Taylor: I heard that— Oppenheimer won a lot.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Which I haven't seen that movie, I don't plan to. [chuckles]

Raleigh: Neither. Barbie only won two. I can't believe that.

Taylor: Yeah, but at least Billie Eilish won.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: That's true. I was very happy about that.

Sydnee: I thought—

Taylor: And— Oh, go ahead.

Sydnee: Well, I was about to say I think Barbie is way better than Oppenheimer but I'm saying that having never [laughs] seen Oppenheimer.

Raleigh: I was gonna say, I've never seen it either. [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah, I don't— Yeah, I understand what it's about, and I'm like, "Nope, don't need that. Don't need that, sorry."

Sydnee: Yeah, I don't either! I don't need that! I don't.

Taylor: Well, and apparently, I mean just to add the— to the misogyny party that the night was, one of the men that lost the musical nomination to Billie Eilish like posted a picture of his like thank you speech in the trash.

Sydnee: Oh my god.

Taylor: It's like why do— What— I think it was somebody else who worked on the Barbie movie soundtrack, but I guess he thought he should've won over— He should— I mean it's— Again, it's the script itself. That he wrote "I'm Just Ken" and he thought he should've won—

Raleigh: Eh.

Taylor: — over Billie Eilish's "What I'm Made For." Like that's the point of the movie.

Sydnee: Mm.

Taylor: I guess you also didn't watch the movie, which is weird, 'cause you worked on it. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah, you worked on the movie.

Raleigh: He just watched "I'm Just Ken."

Taylor: [through laughter] Yeah, that's it!

Sydnee: Fragile.

Taylor: He's like really about that song.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Fragile, fragile men.

Raleigh: Mm. Mm mm mm.

Sydnee: Oh well. Well, that's not— I don't know, I don't have a transition from this into the— [chuckles]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Our topic.

Raleigh: Squid Games.

Taylor: Oh, I don't know.

Raleigh: Guys, it's the wildest thing I've seen on TV in a while, and I just— I'm really glad we're talking about it, because the more I talk to other people who've seen it, we all just sit there with a collective sense of like, "I can't believe this was made." [wheezes]

Taylor: It— I feel like it did injury to my soul. It did injury to our collective souls, this show.

Raleigh: Right?

Sydnee: Was—

Taylor: [sighs heavily]

Sydnee: Was it filmed on the same set as the original show?

Raleigh: They... I don't think so.

Sydnee: `Cause they were both—

Raleigh: Because I saw a video of someone who was in it, saying that they were in, well I wanna say England.

Sydnee: Hmm. Well, it was both Netflix, so I just wondered. It was such a perfect reproduction.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Of the original show that I had this thought like, "Oh, did they just put them in the—" `Cause that would be creepy. [chuckles]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: That'd be even creepier.

Taylor: I'm sure that the movie had sets. This looked like a fully functional facility of some kind.

Raleigh: That's what it was, and they were just in there and like didn't have clocks, and like didn't have their phones, and just were living on like their— I mean, I was like they were in the real Squid Games—

Sydnee: You—

Raleigh: — except you don't die die.

Sydnee: You can tell too that they are there much longer than what the show makes— like there are time jumps happening.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: And that they must be undergoing some of the— I mean 'cause like not letting people know cues of light and day, lights and sounds that they can't control that interrupt sleep and stuff, like controlling their food. These are all kinds of like— Well one, torture. [chuckles] But—

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I mean torture is the first thing that comes to mind.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: But like it's also a good way to like brainwash people.

Raleigh: Yeah. I was— Someone says it's like the Stanford Prison Experiment. [chuckles] Except Squid Games.

Sydnee: Well— And you start seeing like at— There were several times where they start talking about, especially as it gets lower in numbers, about like teamwork.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And I'm sitting there thinking "Guys, it's like a gameshow. Like only one of you— Why are you talking about teamwork?"

Raleigh: That's what I was saying.

Sydnee: It's like only one of you can win— How are they so like bonded when only one person is gonna get any money? But like, it makes sense if you think about how messed up their thinking must've been by the end of all that.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Yeah, that's what the— And I mean again, this is— I guess a lot of it is just editing, but the emphasis on like people being somehow morally unsavory with their decisions, when they're just playing a game. Like you're making the decision that works best.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: And there is an insistence on like, "No, we're gonna play the game fair. We're gonna play the game right." It's like, "Well that's not—" Like if this was a matter of life or death, like in the actual Squid Games, maybe that would matter, because you know, you're playing with other people's lives.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Right.

Taylor: But then the fact that every testimonial by like a cha— by like a person on this seemed to be like been on a lot of reality shows, the reason they want the money is like, "I want to open up a restaurant."

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Or "I want to start my small business." Most of these people's reason was like, "I want to be able to retire, and I never will," or "I've got crippling medical debt, and I would like to pay it off."

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Or like, "I want my child to be able to... afford college." Like it was really intense, sad reasons that these people needed money.

Sydnee: It— Yeah.

Taylor: So, I don't know. [chuckles] Maybe it was life or death in a way.

Sydnee: Yeah, for the most part. I thought that was kind of, I don't know, it— That's too much like the real Squid Games for me.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm. Like it—

Taylor: Well I think that was on purpose, which is dark!

Sydnee: Yeah. That was really— That was rough for me, to see all these people like who very clearly— Now I mean, I don't think we could make the case that anybody needs... whatever, four and a half million dollars, but they needed financial assistance.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: You don't need four and a half million dollars. You need money, but you don't need four and a half million. [chuckles]

Raleigh: Yeah. Yeah.

Taylor: But—

Sydnee: But then I'm sure that they had— that was taxed, you know, so. [chuckles]

Taylor: Yeah. Well, and it wouldn't make a good TV show, but when you've got all of these people that really, you all need probably like \$50 to \$100,000. You could all just have some of this money and fix that big problem you have in your life. But instead, we— only one person can have it. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yup.

Taylor: It's how society works.

Raleigh: Yup.

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah, I mean it is.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: And— But and introducing, as they try to do towards the end— I mean it's not as much in the beginning, but really towards the end like this morality to it. I mean there is no morality to capitalism, and that's what it is. So.

Raleigh: Especially when they got down to that one of the last games, it wasn't the last one, but when they're rolling the die and they're all in the circle. And if you roll a five then you're out, which is just like a— I mean, it's just luck. So many of these games are just like, "It doesn't matter."

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: "Skill or anything, it's just luck." But— And you could pick, you know, "If I roll a five, either I will be the one who goes home, or I will pick the person who goes home if I do." And the fact that all of them got mad at the woman who, spoiler alert, ended of winning because she picked another person.

Like I'm sorry guys, if I was in that position, there is no way I'd be saying like, "I'm gonna be altruistic in this moment and put one of you— You know, put myself at risk instead of one of you."

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Like I— There's just no way. I'm not risking anyone's life by doing that.

Taylor: Well—

Raleigh: I don't understand, like the shock at her being like, "Yeah, I'm gonna call out this other person," like why aren't you all doing that?

Taylor: Well it was also weird because I felt that the reason she chose the person she did was because in a game before that.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Like for whatever reason, they'd all decided that they would all— It's the bridge game, and they would all move one step forward. The point of the bridge game is that the people that go first are more likely to fail.

Raleigh: Right.

Taylor: But it clears a path for the people later in the game. And instead, they decided everyone takes one step, so everyone has a 50:50 chance of getting across the bridge.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Which is I guess if you all decide it as a team, it's cool.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: But it's not how you have to play it. One person decided to say, "No, I'm gonna—" [chuckles] "I'm gonna let all of you go first."

Raleigh: [chuckles]

Taylor: "And then I'm gonna be fine." Right? So that was the person that then the next lady targeted.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Which is like, okay, fine, if we're gonna play some sort of moral high-ground game—

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: — then she's the one that—

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: — opted out first, so why not target her?

Raleigh: Which—

Taylor: But then that— I don't know.

Raleigh: I don't really blame her for standing still, because they said, "Okay, we all agree to this," while the whole time she was very vocally like, "I'm not gonna do that." [chuckles]

Sydnee: Well—

Raleigh: Like, "I don't agree to this."

Sydnee: I felt very— It felt very weird to me though, because we did see that happen on the bridge, and because she made that choice, that other guy went home.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like that— 'Cause that other guy had already made his 50:50 shot.

Raleigh: Right.

Sydnee: And he had to do it again because she wouldn't go.

Raleigh: Right.

Sydnee: And then he ended up falling and he went home. So the reason he was out of the game was because of her. And that's fine, again, it's a game, it's for money, who cares?

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Like I don't— Again, I don't think that's a moral thing, I think you're on a game show. But like that was— That happened, I know that happened.

And then it was like later we were all forgetting it, everybody was like, "No, she did jump. What are you talking about?" I felt very strange. I had a moment where I was like, "I don't know what happened now. I feel like I'm being gaslit."

Raleigh: It really makes you—

Sydnee: This did happen. Like it really—

Raleigh: It really makes you wonder, yeah, how much time they have between these things, that like— I don't know how much time there was between the bridge and like the next game. Maybe it was like some long stretch of time where they, you know, had no semblance of day or night.

Sydnee: And—

Raleigh: And then they kind of all forgot what happened, and I don't know.

Sydnee: It was weird because I— to me, it looked like a very clear retaliation.

Taylor: Yah.

Sydnee: Like, "You wouldn't work as a team, so that guy went home, so I'm not gonna work as a team to try to get you to go home." And again, I don't think there's any morality to it, 'cause it's a frickin' game show. Nobody's actually dying.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, and apparent— Well, this is— Okay, editing. That some contestants have said that actually the higher numbers or the— Yeah, the higher numbers tried very much to push back against the concept of this 50:50 thing.

Raleigh: Mm.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: That's edited out. And also, the people didn't actually fall through the floor. They cut and brought in like, a stunt player.

Raleigh: [gasps] Ohhh.

Taylor: For each one.

Sydnee: Justin—

Taylor: So that seg—

Sydnee: Go ahead.

Taylor: Yeah, that segment lasted forever. It took forever to film because they would cut and then bring in a stunt person. And then move on.

Raleigh: I was wondering how they did that.

Sydnee: Justin said that, he said, "I bet those were stunt doubles," and I was like, "No way. No way." Man, I can't believe he was right. That's crazy.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Huh.

Taylor: Well I mean, I guess they— 'Cause you have to be— Even if you're falling straight through. Like I guess you have to— You can't just do that to untrained— [chuckles]

Sydnee: Right.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: That be hard. That— You— If you don't fall the right way. I mean even if it's not very far and it's on a very soft surface, you could break your ankle of somethin'.

Taylor: Well.

Raleigh: Man.

Sydnee: I wanna talk more about the players and the games themselves, but before we do that...

Raleigh: Let's check the group message.

Sydnee: So... Guys, what I wanna talk to you about this week is Raycon. I have a problem where when I wear a lot of other brands of earbuds, they, you know, they fall out of my ears. I don't know, maybe my ears are differently shaped than the average person's.

I love Raycon primarily 'cause they never fall out of my ears. They are a comfortable, great fit, optimized gel tips are responsible for this perfect in ear fit. And that's not the only reason to love Raycon, but I always like to start out with my personal favorite reason, because this has been a lifelong problem for me.

Now a lot of people are makin' big changes 'cause it is the new year, and so it's a great time to like, if you're gonna, I don't know, get out and start runnin' or something. Or if you got a new routine, a new hobby, a big commute, 'cause maybe you're embarking on new adventures in the new year, you wanna listen to music while you do it, or an audiobook, or maybe there's a podcast that you specifically love. Like maybe ours.

And Raycon has everyday earbuds that are perfect, whatever your new adventures in the new year are, to not just fit great in your ears but give you eight hours of play time and a 32-hour battery life. So you don't have to worry about 'em runnin' out while you're out on your daily trips.

Whether it's goin' to work or school or the gym or on a new adventure. And they're also priced just right. You get quality audio at half the price of other premium audio brands. So all that quality you don't have to sacrifice for such a great deal. So again, they— not only do they fit great, they have customizable sound profiles. They've got awareness mode, they've got noise isolation.

You know, I love— For me, doing— whether I'm doing a task at home or like researching for a podcast or whatever I'm doin', I like to have music playing. I like to keep my brain busy, and so for me, I click on my

questionable playlist, as you all have pointed out. [chuckles] And listen to music while I'm doin' my work at home, and I can [sniffs] block out all the other noise with the noise isolation, and they're just great.

I can't say enough about Raycon earbuds. So, Teylor, is our listeners want to check them out, what should they do?

Teylor: They should go to buyraycon.com/buffering today to get 15% off your Raycon order plus free shipping. That's buyraycon.com/buffering to score 15% off and free shipping. Once again, buyraycon.com/buffering.

Sydnee: So... I... I like that they— One thing that I liked about this as compared to like, you know, the show itself, I liked that they added in some new games so that we didn't know what were all coming.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: 'Cause it was like— I thought it would be too predictable, like, "Oh, well next they'll do tug of war, next they'll do this," and it was kind of cool to see that they, you know... Like the battleship one.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: That was a really neat addition to it.

Raleigh: Well especially because you saw everyone forming these teams.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Based on thinking it was going to be tug of war. So you see all these alpha men like forming their big, strong boy team.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Raleigh: Like, "Oh, we're gonna win, this is gonna be easy." And then they all get in and it's Battleship, and they're like, "Well. Hm."

Sydnee: "Well, crap."

Raleigh: "This is not what we intended. Who is good at strategy games? I've never played Battleship before—"

Sydnee: That—

Raleigh: "— I don't know what this is."

Sydnee: That— The one player, Bea. Who like is apparently a Battleship master. [chuckles] The one— The woman with the green-ish streaks in her hair.

Raleigh: Yes.

Taylor: Oh yeah.

Raleigh: Yes, okay. Okay.

Sydnee: And she was like, “Uh, I’ve played Battleship—” Well, “war ships” is what they called it, “like, however many hundreds of times.”

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: And she was explaining strategy, like, “A lot of players will start to get nervous and start like throwing a bunch of like scattered shots towards the center of the board, and so it’s important to keep `em on the periphery,” and like she had all this strategy ahead of time.

And I’m like, “Man, they’re settin’ her up to fail.” Like with that narrative in a reality show, like when somebody’s like, “I’m an expert at this. I know exactly how to do this,” usually they— it doesn’t play out. But she just decimated the other team. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: At Battleship, she’s just a pro at Battleship.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I thought that was kinda cool.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah. I thought that was a very cool game, and it eliminated one of the most contentious players.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: I wanna say his number was like 328 or something like that.

Taylor: Yeah, that—

Raleigh: I keep forgetting.

Taylor: The one of those—

Raleigh: One of those alpha boys.

Taylor: — big, strong alpha boys. [laughs] Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah. Yeah, who like was makin' a big stink about everybody in the dorm rooms, and was— and no-one liked him, and I— Was like kicking people off of their team because they weren't strong enough.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: When they thought it was gonna be tug of war, and was like trying to curate this like perfect, strong team. Yeah he got eliminated in Battleships, which I thought was pretty satisfying.

Taylor: Yeah, well that— 'Cause that— He was one of the ones that was an instigator in the cookie game, right?

Sydnee: Mm.

Raleigh: Ahhhh, the cookie, yeah. [laughs]

Taylor: Icing that one boy out with the umbrella.

Sydnee: Oh yeah.

Raleigh: [giggles]

Taylor: Like for as much as fairness came in, like leave it up to chance afterwards, you know, that was not that. That was just "No, we're gonna all scream at you and you're gonna take the umbrella," and that poor guy. [chuckles] Like, crying.

Raleigh: That— [giggles]

Sydnee: Ready to throw up. He was so upset.

Taylor: I know! Oh my god. Okay, but then "You got— Everyone promise, you're gonna spit on somebody else's cookie if needed."

Raleigh: [giggles]

Taylor: [chuckles] I was like, "That's not how the game works, sorry."

Sydnee: That is not gonna happen. And also—

Raleigh: I was—

Taylor: Ohhh god.

Raleigh: I was losing my mind.

Taylor: I had to look away.

Raleigh: Watching that.

Taylor: [wheezes]

Raleigh: The amount of people that got eliminated because— If you haven't seen it, there are these—

The cookie game is like they have this like honeycomb cookie and there's a shape that's like half pressed into it, and you gotta use a toothpick to like pick the shape all the way out, without breaking it. And there are four different shapes, and like the circle is obviously easier than the umbrella.

So the big debate was over who gets the three easier ones and who gets the umbrella. And each team, well the person at the front of the line for each team, not even really a team captain, could go in and they would have to all agree on who would have what shapes.

The amount of people that died because they couldn't agree on what shape. I was like, "Come on, guys," especially after they watched it the first time happen to a group of four people and they went in, like what— h— just take the umbrella. What?

Sydnee: Just, I know.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: What do you mean?

Sydnee: I know, I couldn't believe that.

Raleigh: I know.

Taylor: What—

Raleigh: Like you're all gonna spit on a cookie. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Just spit on an umbrella!

Taylor: Just like the— I mean, that I do understand, bringing in some level of fairness just to get the decision made.

Sydnee: Mm.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Just rock, paper, scissor that stuff, like, just draw straws.

Raleigh & Sydnee: [simultaneously] Yeah.

Taylor: Make it so that w— no— There's no debate that you're gonna have—

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: — that's gonna decide who gets the worst cookie. [chuckles]

Raleigh: When they said, "Let's have a race, and you run to the one you want."

Taylor: [chuckles]

Raleigh: And the person that started it was like a little kid, like, "[quickly] One, two, three go!" and was already running. [chuckles]

Taylor: [chuckles]

Raleigh: It's like, what? You're on TV!

Sydnee: I know.

Raleigh: You think people aren't watching?

Taylor: I don't know.

Raleigh: What—

Taylor: It's just a painful psychological experiment when you pull back and look at it all. I don't know what it says about us as a species, but please go watch. [wheezes]

Sydnee: Well, and I thought like... At first— So they do red light, green light first, and you watch the— that's when you realize that instead of the dying, which thank goodness they're not dying, 'cause... we're not that dystopian.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yet.

Raleigh: Yet.

Sydnee: Yet. They have ink packs in their shirts that explode. [chuckles]
When they quote unquote—

Raleigh: Black ink.

Sydnee: Yeah. When they die.

Raleigh: So they're clearly not injured.

Sydnee: Yeah, so it's not blood, it's ink, but like they— They're supposed to lay down as if they've... been killed. [chuckles]

Taylor: Yeah, I was about to say, there's a million ways that they could've had an elimination system that did not mimic someone being shot.

Sydnee: Right?! Like—

Taylor: This was definitely made to mimic people being shot. [wheezes]

Raleigh: Yup.

Sydnee: But like they do that, and I thought, "Oh my gosh, that's terr— Like, they shouldn't do that," and then in some of the games they kinda moved away from it.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Like that didn't happen.

Taylor: They were just out, yeah.

Sydnee: And then I thought, "So maybe somebody realized like this is horrible, guys. Like this isn't fun, this isn't funny TV. Like we should— This— Why did we do— Let's not do that anymore. Let's take out that element." But then they came back, so then I was like, "Okay. Nobody ever said that, 'cause that was terrible to watch."

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Why would they do that?

Taylor: I don't— Why— Like give 'em like a, I don't know, some sort of like light indicator on like a wristwatch.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: That goes off.

Sydnee: Some anything.

Taylor: Just it's— Look, I mean clearly it's like, "Well it's based on the show, and they shot the people, so we have to make it look like we're shooting them." No, you don't. You don't actually. [chuckles]

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: It's disturbing.

Sydnee: We really don't, and like yeah. Like— [sighs] No.

Raleigh: I got—

Taylor: [chuckles]

Raleigh: I gotta share this, 'cause I know I shared it with you all and I don't think it was on our show last time, I think it was after. I watched this with our parents while I was home for break, and Dad—

Taylor: [chuckles] Oh.

Rileigh: — was watching that first episode. And the first time he saw those ink packs going off, he said, “Wow... That’s— They have really good aim.”

Taylor: [giggles]

Rileigh: I just kept like looking at him like, “What— Is he joking? I think he’s joking.” And then he said it again when more people started falling, and I said, “Dad, what— How do you think that ink is getting under their— What do you think is happening?” And he said, “Well, there’s someone up there with a paintball gun, right?” [giggles]

Taylor: Oh. Well, at least he didn’t think that they were actually being shot, which is where I thought this was going. [laughs]

Rileigh: Yeah. No, but he didn’t— He didn’t think they were actually being shot, but he did think that the ink that suddenly appears from underneath all of their shirts, it was someone sitting up above like the red light green light girl, I guess, with a paintball gun, just like pew pew pew.

Sydnee: To shoot— Oh my god.

Taylor: The sniper hitting them.

Rileigh: When I told him they were ink packs, he sat there and looked at me like, “[amazed] What? What?”

Sydnee: Oh my gosh.

Rileigh: And I said, “Yeah, that’s— I think that’s why they all have numbers. I mean, it’s for the game, but also like if someone hits that number when they’re out, then their ink pack goes off.” Like... [chuckles]

Sydnee: I was—

Rileigh: No-one’s shooting anything.

Taylor: [sighs]

Sydnee: I did appreciate that there were elements of skill introduced. [chuckles] I really liked towards the very end when they did whatever they called their Heads Up 7 Up.

Rileigh: Oh, the circle of... the circle of trust, is that it?

Taylor: Oh yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah, the circle of trust.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It was basically Heads Up 7 Up.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: They... The ability of both Mai and Phil to know who tapped them.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Was incredible. Like really smart.

Raleigh: Well, and Mai had a good strategy, which again I saw people criticizing her for like being very like cold and like not, you know, not caring about other people in the game. But she won.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: So, you know, good work.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: But she picked someone who she thought she was closest to.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: To put it on. And it worked, 'cause that guy was like, "Oh, she wouldn't do that to me. She wouldn't try to eliminate me," but obviously that's what you're gonna do. You're gonna put it on the, you know, the—you're gonna eliminate someone who wouldn't guess you.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Well it—

Sydnee: No, I thought that was— I mean it's— You're trying to win a game.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like it's not— I mean again, like the idea of introducing this like teamwork stuff, like this stress on like looking out for each other. It's like we— but you can't.

Raleigh: But they kept mentioning it like it was important in the show, which it was to a certain extent, because again, people were dying in the real show. And people were like killing other people in the dorms at night, in their sleep, in the real show.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: So like having a team of people to protect you or like, work with you was important, because again, people were dying. [chuckles] But that's not an element of this game. [chuckles]

Taylor: I don't— I mean I think it's— There are so many... layers to this that I— it's all distressing. But the need to... show yourself as a good person on this show became an element.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: And I think that's— 'Cause it's not happening in a vacuum, everybody on this knows they're gonna be viewed, and they're gonna be edited. And that's a thing we all— I think it took a couple— a decade or so of reality TV for people to fully understand that you're going to be held accountable for how you present yourself on these things.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Taylor: That there's a secondary punishment that [chuckles] will be social media.

Sydnee: Mm.

Taylor: So I don't know, and I don't know if it's also— 'Cause like the way that Mai won is one, she was very smart,

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: She brought a lot of skills to the table. But also, people felt a need that if they were— like, “If I’m gonna lose, I’m gonna protect her.”

Sydnee: Mm.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: ‘Cause it felt like the right thing to do. This is an old woman, you know, that’s a good, wholesome person to protect and push forward, and she took advantage of that, again, excellent player, deserved to win.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: But it was weird that like everyone centered around her as like, “Okay, fine. If I can’t win, you’re gonna win.”

Raleigh & Sydnee: [simultaneously] Yeah.

Taylor: “‘Cause that’s the good and right choice.” Like I don’t know, like what— It worked in her favor, but that is an interesting thing.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: That of— Like put in this pressure cooker, that’s what we decide to do.

Sydnee: Well, and I think it’s— It would be interesting to see, I mean they allude at the end of it that they’re gonna keep doing it, right?

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Like that they’re gonna do more season of this. And so it’s interesting how this will evolve, kind of like watching— We’ve watched Survivor since the very beginning. And the game has evolved ‘cause of players’ awareness of the game.

Taylor: Mm.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Like watching other seasons, things are different now. There are people doing things they never would've done in the first season and vice versa. It'll be interesting to see how it evolves, because there's very much this sort of like, "I'm going to—" When they have the tests when you can just send people home, based on nothing, just based on like who you wanna send home.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I do think there were a lot of like, "I don't like that person, or I'm just not close to that person, so I'll send them home." You know? And it took a while to start thinking through like, "Maybe I should send home somebody who's a threat in some way," you know? And it'll be interesting to see another season where people are gonna come in thinking "No, you gotta send the threats home."

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: "I don't care if I like 'em or if I'm close to them, if I think they have a better shot at winning than me, that's who you gotta send home." I mean, I assume the game will start to evolve in that direction, but I don't know.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Well, but then you invite people seeking revenge on you.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: That's why I felt like the safest eliminations were the people that said, "I don't know you."

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: "So it's nothin' personal, I just don't know you."

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Which again, is also like that— Whether them eliminating someone you know and maybe got a bad impression of, the most diplomatic elimination is just someone you can say, "I have no judgment on you as a person 'cause we've never spoken."

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: “So I can send you—” Those were the eliminations that like—”

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: — didn’t have any repercussions from them. Which also eliminates a common reality show strategy, which is kind of being invisible.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like if you’re too invisible, people will target you because they don’t know you.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: And nobody will be mad at you.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like if they have no friends, there’s nobody to be mad at you when they’re gone.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: I gotta say, I think the wildest elimination though that I was kind of surprised they did, because as it was happening the way it was, I was like, “Well yeah, of course, that’s what’s gonna happen,” is when everyone could go up and vote on a person, and the people who got— the three people who got the most votes would go home.

But the first time you voted for someone, their face would appear up on the screen in front of everybody. So it was anonymous if you voted for somebody who’d already been voted for, but it wasn’t if you voted for someone new.

So of course, after three people had been voted on for the first time, everyone just voted for those three people because they weren't gonna call out someone new.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: And I was kind of surprised they did that, 'cause like of course that's what's gonna happen. Of course, there are gonna be three people who are going to be willing to take that hit, and put up someone's face for the first time.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: And after that, no-one is going to do that because they don't have to. Like of course that is what is going to happen.

Sydnee: I thought it was funny that the mom—

Rileigh: Yeah. [giggles]

Sydnee: — wanted to eliminate the guy who was rude to her. [chuckles]

Rileigh: It was very mom-like. She was like, "He's just not very nice." [giggles]

Sydnee: "He was rude. I'm gonna eliminate him." [chuckles]

Taylor: [chuckles] What was that—

Sydnee: I will say that—

Taylor: Oh, go ahead.

Sydnee: That mom and son playing marbles.

Taylor: Oh...

Rileigh: Oh, man.

Taylor: I just liked that the mom was like, "No, I do wanna beat my son."

Rileigh: Yeah, well they—

Taylor: “I do wanna beat—” [chuckles] It was like, she was not okay?
[laughs]

Raleigh: [giggles] It was like other parents would let— Yeah, she said, “Other parents would let their kids win. I’m not just gonna let him win.”

Sydnee: I would 100% let—

Taylor: [chuckles] It’s a very Dad situation.

Sydnee: I know, that’s what I was saying. 100% I would let my kids win. I looked at— Charlie and Cooper watched some of it with us, and I looked at them at that point, and I said, “I want you both to know that I would absolutely let you win. I would absolutely let you win. I would never beat you in a game of marbles on Squid Games.” [chuckles]

Taylor: Not only would Dad beat you, he would make sure that you play the sportier version—

Raleigh: Yup.

Taylor: — of the marbles game.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like it’s not gonna be chance, you gotta get it in the pot.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: You gotta get it in the hole. Like that’s what we’re playing.
[chuckles]

Raleigh: He’d be playing baskets. Like you’re playing basketball with marbles.

Taylor: Like the one guy that would not decide on a format for the game.

Raleigh: Yes!

Taylor: So, he just let both him and the other girl get eliminated, I guess.

Sydnee: And then she got it in first, and that should’ve been the end of it.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Man. Ugh.

Taylor: Alright.

Raleigh: I just—

Sydnee: See, and that is— It's a good point. 'Cause like I thought like, "Man, that guy genuinely seems like a jerk." Like I am watching this thinking like, "Well, that guy's a jerk," and I know I'm not the only one who thought that.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And then he went off into the real world after this televised reality competition. Like.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I mean.

Raleigh: Although—

Sydnee: You do need to think about that.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: You know, the one guy who got eliminated on battleship that we talked about, who a lot of people didn't like, he now— And it's really interesting that all the people who are like featured now have changed their social media presence to like their number on the game, and like their profile pictures on their social medias are like their promo shots from the show.

That guy, I have seen him live on TikTok just scrolling through my For You page so many times, with thousands of people watching him. And so I— Also the son of the mother and son team, I've seen him a lot.

Taylor: Mm.

Raleigh: So like even the people that were quote unquote "villains," because they were featured and because they were like contentious characters that everyone was talking about, now I would assume are

making at least some money off of just being that character and that number on social media.

Sydnee: Oh yeah.

Raleigh: It's crazy.

Sydnee: Well I— There were a lot of younger people in there who I assume were looking for like an influencer kind of thing after this.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Well, and that's— I think that's part of why— Not to say that I don't think in an actual life or death situation people wouldn't try to help each other out. I would like to think that we would.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: I don't know. But I think that's where the sort of playing the moral game really came in. It's like it's not just "I don't wanna be harassed when I get off the show."

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: It's, "I'm gonna soft launch my influencer career when I get off this show, so I need to make it far enough, and look good and kind enough, that I can do that."

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And that's again just a different game.

Raleigh: Well—

Taylor: Some people were playing a different game.

Raleigh: Yip. And that son did that. He has made like a whole social media personality.

Sydnee: Yeah. I— This is why I wouldn't be good on a show like this. I mean one, it would be hard for me to be mean and ruthless. Like I wouldn't— I mean I like— I'm competitive, I like to win things, but if I saw people sad or like having a rough time, it'd be really—

I wouldn't be good with that. But also, the other half of it where like the group is up doing like a TikTok dance together.

Raleigh: Yeah. [laughs]

Sydnee: And like if you wanna be part of the group, you better go look like you're having fun and joining in. And just vibing. I'd be like, "[whispers] I don't wanna do any of that. That's not me. I don't wanna vibe with you." [chuckles]

Taylor: I mean, that's— [chuckles] Like—

Sydnee: I don't vibe. That's not my scene. [giggles]

Taylor: I know she was painted as a villain in the bridge game. It was Ashley, was that her name?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Ashley.

Taylor: And It— That's just how, you know, the editing manipulates you. I was definitely against her in the bridge game.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: But then afterwards, where she was kind of explaining and stuff, she was like, "I don't know, we've only been in here for, you know, so long. Like I— All these people tellin' each other they love each other and acting like they've known each other—"

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: "— that's not— I'm sorry, I'm here for a game." I was like, "You know what? That's—" I wouldn't make it, 'cause that's how I would look at it.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like, "I don't know you people. Like I'm here to win life-changing money. Like I'll be nice, I'll be a nice person. I don't know you, I don't love you."

Sydnee: Yeah. No.

Taylor: “That’s weird to say that. That’s weirder than me doing what I’m doing.”

Raleigh & Sydnee: [simultaneously] Yeah.

Sydnee: I’ve thought the same thing.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I would not— I’ve thought it before because the only show I would ever— Like I love Survivor and I’ve thought “Would I ever go on Survivor?” I couldn’t ‘cause I don’t have the ability to form those kinds of like really like, “I love you” bonds with people like instantly. Like I would be nice and care about everybody, but I don’t love you.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: I just met you. I don’t love you. We’re on a game show together. [chuckles]

Taylor: [sighs] Yeah.

Raleigh: When they did the cookie game and that one guy got it right at the last minute, and turned around and looked at [giggles] his friend who didn’t get it, and was laying there fake dead on the ground, and said, “I love you, I [chuckles] did this for you.”

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: Like what?! [laughs]

Sydnee: See...

Taylor: And that was like the third game?

Raleigh: Like you know she’s not dead, right?

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Like you know she’s not dead!

Sydnee: That's like the— But that's the result of like— I mean, it really is, that's the result if you like torture people. When you mess with their brains—

Raleigh: I know.

Sydnee: — when you don't know... Like you're controlling their sleep, their food, their ability to like clean themselves. Like I'm sure there are only set hours for showers and stuff like that.

Raleigh: Mm.

Sydnee: Like it— If you're manipulating people's— Like when you're controlling them, a high-control environment is what that is, then they're gonna behave weird. They're gonna act weird. And I—

Taylor: Well, I also think, you know, you— if you picked a cast of people that are middle-class, upper-middle-class. People that are comfortable in their lives. They just would love that money because then they, you know, would be able to do a bunch of cool stuff with it.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like that would be a very different show. When you purposely pick people that have horrible reasons that they need a bunch of money. They're coming in, it's not just "Man, this would be fun. I could live in a castle," it's "Man, this is the only way I can get the treatment I need."

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: "Or buy myself out of insane debt." And that's the reality element that they kind— like you kind of forget it as you go through it. Like this— it's— These people are desperate.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: They don't need \$4.5 million, but they need help.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And they came on the show to get it, and that's kind of the— That's the part that turns me off on it.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Like if they picked a bunch of people that are like, "Yeah, I don't know. I'll spend the rest of my life travelling the world."

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Or, you know, "I'll buy 82 cars," like alright fine, whatever.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: These are people that had really legit reasons to have the money and that's kind of another thing that I think impacts the mentality of these people.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It reminds me of we used to do these hunger banquets, where you would show the disproportionate resources in the world, to like a group of like school kids or whatever, by dividing them into like the 1% versus the, you know, the middle class versus the, you know, people living in poverty. And you would show how many people have to split this tiny amount of like whatever you're using, rice or Cheerios or whatever.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Versus how many— how few people are getting, you know, all the boxes of Cheerios.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: To the— demonstrate how unevenly, you know, resources are distributed in the world. And what was always interesting to me when we would do this is that the people who got the least were the most likely to share with each other. And the people who had the most typically didn't.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And I think that that's kinda what you're seeing here too. Is you've got a lot of people who are used to like, "Nobody's lookin' out for us, so we gotta look out for each other."

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And that's hard to watch too. I don't know. I would vote like let's not get people who are in desperate circumstances next time.
[chuckles]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: So I don't have to worry about them all so much. [chuckles]

Taylor: Well, that's like some of the people that like got it— like got on each other about like, "You're just having a sympathy story now," and it's "That's— You're playing a sympathy card."

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: It's like you all were— You were cast because you have a sympathy card.

Sydnee: Mm.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: You all have one, that's the point of this. It's awful, but it is there.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: I gotta ask, because Sydnee mentioned you do Survivor. Taylor, if you could— If you thought you could do any reality show, or like I don't know. Sydnee, do you think you could win Survivor?

Sydnee: No.

Raleigh: Like which do you think you could win? Which one could you do?

Sydnee: I don't think I could ever— I don't think I could win in any reality show, but I would— Except for, I have often said that if Dad and I went on The Amazing Race, I do think we'd win. [wheezes]

Raleigh: It'd be scary.

Sydnee: I think we might die at the end.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I think we might collapse across the finish line in exhaustion and die, but I do think we might be able to win.

Raleigh: Tey, are there any reality shows that you think you could do?

Taylor: Um... I think I could do Nailed It, because it's goofy.

Raleigh: Mmm...

Taylor: And there's low stakes. Like the poi— You come in with the supposition "I'm bad at things," and I'm— that would be great for me.

Raleigh: That's a good one.

Sydnee: That— It is a good one.

Taylor: The only other one that I like, I don't have the skills for it but they're adjacent to skills I have, so if I ever upped my skills in that department. I like— And I don't even think it's on anymore. Face Off, because—

Raleigh: Oooo.

Sydnee: Oh yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Even though it's competitive, everybody's really nice to each other and really respectful.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: And I like that. A lot of reality shows have started out as nice and respectful and they drive up the drama, and Face Off at some point said, "No. Our whole thing is that it's— people are nice to each other, they help each other out. They're just—"

Raleigh: They always help each other.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Mm.

Taylor: 'Cause like the goal I think of like everybody that they cast on that show is like, "We're artists and we want to see the best art on the stage."

Sydnee: Huh.

Taylor: "I don't wanna win because somebody else—"

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: "— you know, had a bad break during their process."

Sydnee: Sure.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: "I wanna win because I'm the best artist." I like that, so I don't—

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Those are the only two shows [chuckles] that don't stress me out.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: What about you?

Raleigh: Oh, I would— I plan to be on Big Brother.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: [laughs] Oh ho my god!

Sydnee: I knew this about you, Raleigh. I knew you wanted to be on Big Brother.

Raleigh: I— This is my camp— This is my start of my public campaign. It's my plan to pay back my law school debt. [giggles] I just— I feel like I could do it. I don't know. I feel like I could do it.

Taylor: Are you not terrified of like, social perception?

Raleigh: Well, you know, I think... I think that I could do just good enough in making just enough connections that are like...

Taylor: Mm.

Raleigh: The slightest bit real. Like I don't think I could make like fake like friend connections with everybody. I don't have that ability. But I

think I can make just enough with the right people that I could get myself close to the end.

And I'm not the most physically adept person, but I do think the competitions there are at least like, of a skill level that I could like— Like I couldn't do Survivor. I could not do that. I could not do the physical competitions on Survivor.

Sydnee: Oh.

Raleigh: But I think Big Brother I at least would have a chance of like, not winning most of them, but doing okay.

Sydnee: Yeah, I would—

Raleigh: And the mental comps, I would be able to win.

Sydnee: I get that. I mean, if I were ever to go on Survivor, I would like, spend an entire year doing, I don't know, what do people do? CrossFit? Something. Something to get like, super strong. And like better endurance.

Raleigh: Those competitions, I would be done within like 30 seconds on Survivor.

Sydnee: Yeah, I would have to—

Raleigh: I mean I would have no chance.

Sydnee: I would really have to improve my fitness. And then I would like take like some survivalist courses, to like learn how to build shelters.

Raleigh: Mmm...

Sydnee: And fires and stuff.

Raleigh: Create a fire, yeah.

Sydnee: Like yeah, I'd wanna come in knowing all that stuff before I ever went on Survivor.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: See, I don't— I feel like on a show like that, I could make it decently far. I mean, with similar like I'd have to prep, but like I'm pretty sturdy, I'm pretty fit.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: I'm good— I work in the service industry, I'm a good team player, I'm good at taking care of people in a way that makes them feel nice.

Raleigh: Hmm.

Taylor: But I would never win, 'cause at the end of the day, like it's another skillset you need to be endearing yourself to people to whole way in such a way that you're the person they choose. [chuckles]

Sydnee: It's the manipulative stuff. I couldn't do that. I'm not good at it. I wouldn't— You know? I just would— I'm not even saying like [sarcastically] "I'm so nice," [normal] like I'm just saying I'm not very good at thinking that way, like how can I manipulate people to—

Taylor: I don't—

Sydnee: — to trust me and love me, but also I am gonna trick them? I couldn't do it.

Taylor: I don't— Is it manipulative? I don't know. I feel like a lot of seasons of Survivor I've watched where I'm like, "That's the person who should've won."

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Hmm.

Taylor: And I mean maybe that's you're manipulating the audience too. Like I walked away from Squid Games thinking, "Mai is who should've won. I am— That is a winner I'm satisfied with."

Sydnee: I feel that same way.

Taylor: But maybe that was— she was playin' that game. She somehow...

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: I mean, she was brilliant with all of her training. She had like, what, military training—

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: — on how to properly read people?

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: [chuckles] And then she used it, 'cause it's not just the people in the game she manipulated.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: The whole audience was like, "Yeah, good. Good for her. That's the winner."

Raleigh: Good for her.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: She deserved it.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: See, I've watched enough Big Brother, I know that everyone's doing it all the time, that I would be okay with manipulating people if I had to, because I'd know that it'd be happening to me as well.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Like the people who go on Big Brother aren't like the ones on Squid Games, where like, they need this money to survive. They're all—

They're all like the kind of people we were talking about where like, "Oh, it'd be nice to have this money. Like it would make my life fun." So I'd be okay with that, 'cause everyone would be doing that to me too.

Taylor: I know, but isn't that interesting that maybe each game just develops its own strategy, because we've talked so much about The Circle.

Raleigh: Mmm...

Taylor: Which is sort of like Big Brother.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Except for the whole way you win The Circle is by being authentic.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: If people think you're being manipulative or fake, you lose The Circle.

Raleigh: I know. Yeah.

Taylor: What is— Maybe it's just from how seasons have progressed.

Sydney: Mm.

Raleigh: That's interesting.

Taylor: Establishes an unspoken set of rules.

Sydney: It does.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydney: Yeah, the game evolves as people watch it. And that's why Survivor's so dense now is because it's been around so long, and there are people who like—

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydney: — have watched it their entire lives, who are now on it.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydney: You know? Who grew up with it, and now they're on it, and that's a weird energy.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Well.

Raleigh: Well.

Taylor: Spent their whole life preparing. [chuckles]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: I mean, literally that's— I mean some of 'em say that, I don't know if it's true, but.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: When are we gonna get a Hunger Games reality show, and is that the final late-stage capitalism moment?

Sydnee: No...

Raleigh: I was gonna say, it seems like we're getting close.

Sydnee: It'll come. It'll happen.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: Well I—

Raleigh: Thank you all for watching Squid Games.

Taylor: That was—

Sydnee: Yeah. A little dystopian—

Taylor: I don't know how I feel about my soul, but I enjoyed it.
[chuckles]

Raleigh: Yeah. It's an entertaining watch at least.

Sydnee: We'll probably watch the next season.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah. Syd, what's next?

Sydnee: For some reason, TikTok has been showing me clips from Remy and Michelle's High School Reunion non-stop. So let's watch that.

Taylor: Alright.

Sydnee: 'Cause—

Raleigh: Alright.

Sydnee: Yeah. I feel like that was—

Raleigh: I've never seen it.

Sydnee: I think you'll like it. It's funny, it's kind of an iconic movie from our time.

Raleigh: I'm excited.

Sydnee: Well, thank you, Raleigh. We all enjoyed Squid Games: The Challenge.

Raleigh: [chuckles]

Sydnee: By the way, if it was not clear, we are not talking about the original Squid Games.

Raleigh: Oh! [chuckles]

Sydnee: We are talking about Squid Games: The Challenge.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: The reality TV show based on Squid Games. [chuckles]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: They were both on Netflix, I think.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: So, I can see where that would be confusing. [chuckles]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: But thank you, listeners. You should go to maximumfun.org, check out all the other great podcasts that you would enjoy. You can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org, and thank you to the Nouvellas for our theme song, "Baby You Change Your Mind."

[theme music fades in]

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

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Raleigh: I am still buffering.

Sydnee & Taylor: [simultaneously] And... I... am... too.

[theme music plays]

Sydnee: The girls now walk around occasionally doing that music.

Taylor: [imitates the music from Squid Games: The Challenge]

Raleigh: Oh, that's terrifying.

Sydnee: [chuckles] I know, it's so scary. [chuckles]

Raleigh: [chuckles]

Taylor: Oh, I wouldn't want to hear that.

Sydnee: No, it's very scary.

--

Carrie: Hallelujah! Hello! Welcome everyone.

Ross: Step right up, we are going to heal you, we are the healers Ross & Carrie.

Carrie: Yes, yes. You there, you look like you're upset. Come up here!

Ross: Yes, you are healed, because you have listened to our podcast.

Carrie: Yeeeeees.

Ross: Have you been having trouble with demons?

Carrie: Are you sleeping too much? Too little? Just right?

Ross: We have the solution, it is to listen to

Carrie & Ross: [simultaneously] Oh No! Ross & Carrie.

Carrie: A show where we examine unusual claims.

Ross: We show up so you don't have to. Find us on maximumfun.org.

Carrie: [whispers] We won't actually heal you.

[Oh No! Ross & Carrie theme music plays]

MaximumFun.org.

Comedy and culture.

Artist owned.

Listener supported.