

Still Buffering: TikTok Round-up

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[theme song, "Baby You Change Your Mind" by Nouvellas plays]

Sydnee: Hello, and welcome to Still Buffering, a cross-generational guide to the culture that made us. I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Sydnee: That sounded like the same intonation.

Taylor: I feel like you raised your voice to sound a little bit more pitched like Riley. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Did I?

Taylor: I feel like you did. Maybe not.

Sydnee: Well, it might have been subconscious.

Taylor: Yeah?

Sydnee: Like, I mean, I've heard it like that so many times. I may have just rolled with it. I don't know.

Taylor: [titters] It's all right.

Sydnee: I wanted to a good, you know, do a good job with it. Get a gold star for that.

Taylor: They won't even know the difference.

Sydnee: They'll never know! [titters]

Taylor: Except for that I pointed it out aggressively.

Sydnee: Uh-huh. Hey, before we get started talking about all the important things we have to talk about, I need your advice on something.

Taylor: All right?

Sydnee: So—

Taylor: I have made excellent decisions in my life, so I'm a wellspring of good advice. Go right ahead.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Over the weekend, we were at the mall. The Huntington Mall, of course. Everybody knows, right?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: At the Books-A-Million.

Taylor: Yeah, sure.

Sydnee: Or BAM, however you prefer. Which has like so much stuff that is not books.

Taylor: That's a choice to go with that name, because it's all just like toys, right?

Sydnee: I mean, there are books. But yes, there are so many toys and games and music and movies, and lots of like tchotchke kind of stuff. Like—

Taylor: Those—what are the little bobble heads with the square heads?

Sydnee: Yeah, pop... Funko Pops.

Taylor: Funko Pops.

Sydnee: Lots of Funko Pops. Lots of like just a thing that you're into. Like, I like this TV show, I like this movie, whatever. Just a bunch of stuff branded with it.

Taylor: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: Like that's where I bought—this is weird. At Books-A-Million for Christmas last year, I got Justin a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle pizza cutter.

Taylor: That's cool.

Sydnee: It is cool.

Taylor: Not a thing you would think you'd find in a bookstore, but—

Sydnee: No. So, they had a whole bunch of Wednesday products, of course. And Cooper really likes Wednesday. And she was looking at all the Wednesday products, and among them was a Ouija board. A Wednesday branded Ouija board.

Taylor: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: And she wanted it. And I said, yeah, okay, we don't—you know what's weird? We don't have a Ouija board. For some reason in that moment, my thought was, "Oh, we don't have a Ouija board. We need one of those." [chuckles]

Taylor: Like this is a basic home accessory that everybody should have.

Sydnee: Right. Like, why don't we have a Ouija board?

Taylor: Like a Ninja Turtles pizza cutter. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Exactly. Like, "Oh, okay, of course. Well, we need a Ouija board." I mean, I really was standing there contemplating like our shelves where our games are kept, and I was thinking like, I don't... yeah, we don't have a Ouija board. So I said, "Yeah, you can have a Ouija board." And she said, "Will you do it with me?" And I was like, "Yeah, whatever." And I mean, in

my mind, like, oh, it's a—like she—Wednesday is on the box. It's got like a picture on the board of like Wednesday's hand on the... what's the thing called? The...

Taylor: Planchette?

Sydney: Yes, on the planchette. And also Thing on the planchette. [titters]

Taylor: Cute.

Sydney: So like it's cute and whatever, we'll have fun with it. You know, and Cooper likes spooky stuff. She's into spooky things. So I say, "Yeah, we can get this Ouija board." And Justin is immediately like, "Absolutely not. We cannot bring this in the house. No, you cannot have a Ouija board." And I thought he was just doing like a bit. And I was like, "Ha-ha, well... you know, whatever." So I bought the Ouija board and brought it home. And when I got it out of the out of the bag Justin was like, "You bought the Ouija board." And he was not pleased that I brought a Ouija board into the home.

Taylor: Mm-hm.

Sydney: And mom and dad were coming over to dinner. And when mom walked in I was like, oh, mom will get this. Mom likes spooky stuff. "Mom, we bought—we got a Ouija board." And mom was like, [gasp] "Get that out of your house." And I was like, I don't—why is everyone so—I mean, I understand. I don't understand why anybody thinks it's anything other than like, oh, you know, it's just kind of a—it was like a slumber party thing in my mind.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydney: And then mom says, "Ask Taylor. Taylor knows."

Taylor: Well, now, wait a minute.

Sydney: [chortles] And I said, "What are you talking about?" And she said, "Taylor knows why you shouldn't have a Ouija board. Ask Taylor."

Taylor: Oh, I mean, I don't—I have two Ouija boards currently. One is on display, one I mount it on my wall.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: But then I also—I mean, and mom bought me one back in middle school, like one from the Pyramid Collection. Remember that talking board, the round one that I had?

Sydnee: Yes!

Taylor: And it was very legit and—

Sydnee: Pyramid Collection, man, I missed that catalog.

Taylor: Yeah, I don't know. Man, and I've had friends react the same way. Because I—

Sydnee: Okay, so you didn't have a negative experience with one then?

Taylor: No? I don't—how do I say this in a way that doesn't sound—I feel like I was waiting for one when I was a kid. Like I thought that something spooky was supposed to happen, but I just, you know... Like at some point, one of your friends would pretend to move it. Sometimes I was the jerk that would move it and, you know, not let other people know. But that was the whole point.

Sydnee: Mom insinuated—you know how the house that we grew up in burnt down? You know how that's a true thing that happened.

Taylor: That is true. Oh, these are two different conversations. If we want to get into the conversation did I think that the house we grew up in was haunted? Yes, absolutely, 100%, no doubt, yes.

Sydnee: [titters]

Taylor: Not because I played with the Ouija board. It was that way from the time we moved in.

Sydnee: Well, so the house that we grew up in burnt down. Long after we had moved out, and the family that lived there was not there. So everyone's okay. So that's, you know, some stuff was lost, but everyone was fine. So we can talk about that. And it's sad. It's sad that the house we grew up in burnt down. That's a sad thing.

Taylor: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: It's like an accidental fire, like a—

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Whatever. Anyway—

Taylor: Started in my childhood bedroom.

Sydnee: That is—okay, that is what mom was referencing. It started in the room that had the Ouija board.

Taylor: Now, yes, but I feel like that is not a very believable turnaround on spiritual activity.

Sydnee: [titters]

Taylor: [chuckles] Because I was—

Sydnee: Well, it certainly wasn't punishing us.

Taylor: 16 years after I was gone. And took the Ouija board with me.

Sydnee: Yeah, that's true. Do you still have that Ouija board?

Taylor: I don't have that one anymore. I have a nice one and a decorative one. Does that make sense?

Sydnee: Yeah. [titters] One for company and one for display.

Taylor: Now that being said, I don't want to discount anybody else's experience. And I do have friends that I'll be like, "No, as a kid I played with a Ouija board and something messed up happened. I'll never touch one again." Last time I broke one out at like—I brought one to like a—not a camping trip, it was like a—we went to a nice house up in the woods in upstate New York. And I brought one thinking like this will be fun. And some people were like, "Yeah, fun." And then the one person was like, "Absolutely not. No. Had a bad experience. Never again. Don't touch that. Get it away from me." So, I don't know, you know. Don't let her play with it alone. That's the rule, right?

Sydnee: So, we only played with it once. It was just her and I. We sat down. She wanted to ask it—I mean, I think she must have seen a YouTube about Ouija boards is my guess. Because her first question was like, "Does Charlie wipe her butt?"

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: Just like, you know what? It felt like something—

Taylor: I think you could just ask Charlie that. You don't need the spirit realm?

Sydnee: I know, that's very classic like sister behavior. Absolutely, my children wipe their butts. But like, that was her first question. And so I thought, oh, okay, well, this is just silly. Like she is not—she did briefly attempt to communicate with people who had passed.

Taylor: Yeah...

Sydnee: But in like a very nice way. Like not spooky. It was more just like chatting. I had the Ouija board tell me if she had a crush on anybody.

Taylor: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: She was moving it the whole time. Like I could—I mean, she was moving—she was very deliberately answering my questions. So I didn't

know if like, oh, this is a great tool to get Cooper to open up to me.
[chuckles]

Taylor: Well, you know, maybe? [titters]

Sydnee: She's talking to me through the Ouija board. [laughs]

Taylor: That's fine.

Sydnee: And she was having fun, and then we said goodbye, because that's a rule, right?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: You have to say goodbye at the end. And so we said goodbye. And then I boxed it up and I was gonna put it away in her room, because it's hers. And mom came in and was like, "That is not how we store this." And she had me wrap it in a blanket and put it in a closet, away from her.

Taylor: You know, if she starts talking to somebody named Captain Howdy, keep an eye out for that.

Sydnee: [titters]

Taylor: But honestly, I feel like if there is any sort of power or truth to objects like that, it comes from the amount of belief we put into them.

Sydnee: Mm-hm.

Taylor: So creating the sort of fear and mystery around an object is more likely to result in some sort of bad vibes from it.

Sydnee: That is what I thought, I thought if we just keep it light. Like this is like—I mean, it's like, I have talked about slumber party stuff with my children, because they're at that age where they're starting to get obsessed with like the idea of having slumber parties. Like, I think that's like a growing up sort of, you know, like moment, is when you can start having a slumber party. And what is a slumber party? And what do you do at a

slumber party? You can't make prank phone calls anymore, those days are over. So like what do you do? You can't call the radio station and request your favorite song for your crush.

Taylor: So you do witchcraft.

Sydnee: Yeah. I mean like light as a feather, stiff as a board.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And I talked to them about that, and they thought it was really funny and silly. And like they weren't freaked out. And I don't know, in my mind, the Ouija board is in that realm. No disrespect to anybody who uses it as anything beyond that, but like my experience with a Ouija board was always like kids playing with something and having fun. And not at all—like if anything, freaking ourselves out, but not—I never had a spooky experience with a Ouija board.

Taylor: Same. Well, and I feel like for as much as I—as a kid, as a teenager, as a young adult, as I haphazardly dabbled in things, like... And never had any sort of spooky occurrence. Like, I feel like I did everything wrong purposely because I wanted something messed up to happen. [chuckles] I don't know, that's my proof. Like, look, if somebody was going to become possessed, it would have been me. And I'm fine, clearly.

Sydnee: Who was saying that recently, that that's—you hope to see a ghost because it's proof of an afterlife?

Taylor: Well, sure.

Sydnee: So that's a very deep, innate—like no wonder we hope to see ghosts.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: It makes a lot of sense. But I don't know, I felt—I'm still like—I had a moment where I thought, did I genuinely mess up here? Like, was this a—did I—I was thinking like, this is silly. This is no big deal. Did I genuinely

screw up? One, am I actually playing with forces beyond my understanding? Which I certainly didn't intend to do. And two, if not, am I—I mean, should I not trivialize this? Justin said it could be construed as disrespectful. I don't know, I think people use a lot of sort of totems as a way to communicate with a world beyond. Like we have a lot of like physical objects that we use to connect with things beyond our understanding. And this is just another physical object that physical object that people kind of use as like a—you know? I don't know.

Taylor: Yeah... I don't think it's disrespectful to not propagate fear around it, you know... I don't know, I mean...

Sydnee: I don't know.

Taylor: I think belief is very powerful. And introducing something that has—like if you build up the belief around it that it's a dangerous and scary thing, it could become one. If you build up the belief around it that it's just a fun toy and there are rules for playing with it, but that's it, I don't know, maybe it's fine? But again, I don't—I feel like I stuck my head in that fire as many times as I possibly could 'til I just got bored. Nothing happens. [chuckles] So...

Sydnee: I did—I will say, I was starting to have that feeling, as I was like telling everyone like, "Oh, come on, everybody. It's just a game. It's just a slumber party thing."

Taylor: Ah, you're in the first 15 minutes of a horror movie of your own making.

Sydnee: Yes, I had that moment of like, oh my god, what am I doing [titters] I know this character. As I was trying to fall asleep last night, I had a moment of that like, did I open a door? [titters] I said goodbye!

Taylor: As long as you say goodbye and don't look through the planchette. That just came from that movie, but...

Sydnee: Oh, yeah.

Taylor: Remember that Ouija board movie? And if you look through it, you can see things?

Sydnee: Yeah...

Taylor: Hm... I don't know.

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

Taylor: Look, every young person is gonna want to dabble with that stuff eventually.

Sydnee: Right? I mean, I think—

Taylor: It's gonna happen. Canon event.

Sydnee: It's normal to have an interest in that for all ages, really. I mean—but I definitely think there's a period we go through when we're younger, where we start exploring, especially if you grew up—and I mean, this is not true for our kids. We don't practice any religion. But if you did grow up practicing a religion, to start to explore what other systems of belief and understandings of the world are there. I think that's a very normal experience.

Taylor: Well, and I think the innate sense that there's something beyond us is something that we all have. You know?

Sydnee: Yeah. So, I don't know. So you don't think I messed up? [titters]

Taylor: I don't know! I mean, maybe? I guess you'll figure that out. [chuckles] That's what parenting is, right?

Sydnee: I was looking, it just occurred to me, I don't even know the history of the Ouija board. It looks like it's from spiritualists in the United States, okay. So this isn't even necessarily like cultural appropriation?

Taylor: No, I do think it was—I mean... Yeah, I'm sure that like communication methods have been for centuries with the other side. But the Ouija board is definitely like a Hasbro product.

Sydnee: It is, it is. I'm just looking, like there is no—the word Ouija comes from the medium Helen Peters Nosworthy, who asked the board to name itself. And the board named itself Ouija. Okay, well, there you go. So, I feel justified. I feel fine! [chuckles]

Taylor: Just do a little just—just for, you know, signs to look out for, do a little rewatch of The Exorcist. Not with the girls, just for yourself. Take some notes. Just keep an eye out. Hopefully everything will be fine. If your house burns down in 30 years after you all have moved elsewhere, then I don't know, I guess we just learned that the spirit world exists. But they take a long time to get around to things. [chuckles]

Sydnee: They take a long time.

Taylor: There's a lot of middlemen, I guess. You know, like the bureaucracy in Beetlejuice that we see, like that actually exists.

Sydnee: Ah. Well, time moves differently. You know?

Taylor: That's it. I made a spirit mad 20 years ago in my childhood bedroom and then they were like, "We're gonna burn this place down! But it's gonna take a while, we'll get around to it."

Sydnee: You gotta apply for some paperwork.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Get the permit. Well, so we're going to try some new things this week, because we want to continue to explore the then and the now, right?

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: The now and the then. That movie. Not just that movie, Now and Then. [titters]

Taylor: [sings] 'Now and then.' Yeah.

Sydnee: But we for a while now haven't necessarily had like the youths of today, you know, the youngest youths, the Gen Alphas, to tell us. But we have a window into that with things like TikTok.

Taylor: The modern Oujia board. [titters]

Sydnee: The modern—[chuckles] They tell us what the now is, not what the past or the—or another dimension. But anyway, so we can learn about that and figure it out together. And we can still talk about old stuff that we enjoy. We're still going to do that on the show. But I think that there's so much with the internet and social media, various social media apps, to help us like decode what is happening with young people today.

Taylor: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: And to help for ourselves keep up to date with like when everybody suddenly starts calling things demure, what is happening. [titters]

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: Where did that come from? That might be a good place to start. So—

Taylor: Where did it come from, Syd? [chuckles]

Sydnee: I mean, are you familiar with this trend?

Taylor: Yes, yes, it's a... I mean, it just, it started with just the one video. It's a lady, her name is Jewel, correct?

Sydnee: Yes. Jools LeBron.

Taylor: All right. She made a very funny video talking about how she comes to work, very demure. She doesn't wear a green cut crease.

Sydnee: She's at—

Taylor: Very mindful.

Sydnee: @JoolieAnnie, I should say.

Taylor: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: Okay. Carry on, sorry.

Taylor: Well, no, but the response, the expansion of videos using that has been—I think Biden had a TikTok or an Instagram post.

Sydnee: Mm-hm?

Taylor: Being very demure, very mindful, canceling student debt.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Which we can agree is very demure, very mindful.

Sydnee: I saw one that I was a Kamala ad, and I couldn't tell if it was a real one or just somebody on TikTok made it. But it was like, "I don't try to control other people's bodies. I'm very demure, I'm very mindful."
[chuckles]

Taylor: I think that was from the HQ. It's whatever 23 year old intern they've got working for them.

Sydnee: Yes, yes. So, that is where—that is the root of very demure, very mindful. The videos, there's a lot of different spins on that. Very cutesy. Cutesy is in there too.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: They're very funny. They're very—I mean, the videos are hilarious and have spread to—all kinds of people are using them. Like celebrities and personalities, politicians, obviously, in various ways to describe things.

Taylor: And there was some drama because I guess another creator came forward and said, "I was the first person to talk about being demure and mindful." But that has been debunked, that has been proven that Jools has her source material. She knows what she was referencing, and that was not—it was not this other creator. So...

Sydnee: Ah. Well, what is—okay, so is it a reference to something?

Taylor: She just like has—like there was some funny other thing that she saw that kind of put in her mind. But it wasn't a direct one to one. Nobody had done it before her.

Sydnee: It's interesting how TikTok can perpetuate these things so quickly.

Taylor: It's wild, actually. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah, and then you don't really know where it came from. And then it also, it sort of removes the question of why sometimes. Because sometimes I'll stop and go, why that? Like, why is it demure? I don't know why. I don't know. [titters] Like why that? And sometimes the answer is, I don't know, I just made it up. And it was funny and it stuck. I mean like often it is that.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But that is the root of very demure, very mindful. I saw somebody say this is going to be the new slay.

Taylor: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: That that's—that will take over.

Taylor: I like the opposite ones. I sent you one of some—[titters] a gentleman. Perhaps adding some whiskey and Baileys to his coffee in the morning.

Sydnee: Uh-huh.

Taylor: And he was saying this is not demure. This is brazen. Very Boston. Very brazen.

[group chuckle]

Taylor: So, you know... It'll spin out until we all get tired of it. But I'm enjoying it for now.

Sydnee: I'm very much enjoying it. Yeah, I think that must be such a wild experience for that creator to make that video and then see, you know, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris both do a spin. [chuckles] Which is part of Kamala's—I feel like that's sort of related, the brat summer.

Taylor: Yeah, I don't—you know, with everything going on with the presidential race, the quickness of which her team rolled out just... it's not—I don't know, I mean, we're not young enough to know if it's cringe or not I feel like. It's not cringe to me, but I'm old. Who knows? Maybe it is. But all of the reference points of the TikToks, all of the like accurately using the lingo of the youth immediately as soon as her campaign launched was very impressive. [titters]

Sydnee: It is really impressive, and it's not—I mean, it's being used very deftly so far. Like it—

Taylor: Very mindful. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Very mindful. [titters] It could be. It could be cringy. It could so easily. And I think that's why—I saw somebody saying like, "When is she gonna start making her own TikToks?" Like when are we gonna see Kamala doing it? And somebody else saying like, "Hm, I don't think we will." Because that's when it would get cringy, right?

Taylor: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: It's the using it around her that keeps just enough distance so we don't have to see like an adult who's not part of that generation trying to—you know, I think that's when it crosses the Rubicon, right? Isn't that the

moment? Because every time I look at my children and say Skibidi, they go, "Mom!"

Taylor: I was about to say I don't want to see her doing the Hot to Go dance, but then I'm like, but do I? Kind of.

Sydnee: I don't know. Maybe?

Taylor: But we're not the demographic that that I think is trying to appeal to. You know, I think that is specifically targeted to get the youth vote involved. So, I'm sure they're working those metrics.

Sydnee: Well, and it certainly is like... You know what they're counting on? Is if you are a younger person who has not, up to now, been very engaged with politics. This is shaping who you think this candidate is. Because you might not have any preconceived notions. And so they're getting to sort of build her brand like from the ground up for a whole new generation of voters.

Taylor: Well, and they're building it, I mean, in that venue, specifically around... It feels very silly, but we are in an age where I identity comes in heavily to politics. And it's like the subtext of all of that is, "I'm paying attention to what you like and I'm responding to you." You know, whereas I think traditionally, the youth vote has not been very properly courted by elected officials. And that communicates like, "We don't really care what you do, your kids." So directly targeting what they're into and doing it deftly communicates like, "I care what you care. I care about what you care about." You know.

Sydnee: Well, and I mean, it's interesting because it's—you're exactly right. And for one party, they don't want to court the youth vote. They don't want young people to vote. Because historically, young people tend to vote a certain way.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: And so, it is in their best interest if—I mean, for the Republicans, if fewer young people vote. For the Democrats, they've just always been so

bad at it. It's always been sort of this kind of like finger wagging either like, "This is your responsibility, this is your duty. Don't you care about your country? Don't you care about your planet? Get out there and take responsibility for your actions." Which it's like, that's like the last thing as a young person—you know, when you're 19 and you've only been able to vote for the last year. And somebody starts telling you like, "This is your responsibility."

Taylor: Yeah, or Hillary saying, "Pokémon Go, to the polls."

Sydnee: Ah!

[group chuckle]

Taylor: Ah, Hill.

Sydnee: I mean, yes. Like that is not... that is not the energy. That is not going to inspire young people to go do stuff. And then I mean I even think like... I mean, I would love to know, I've never looked at numbers, like how successful something like MTV's Rock the Vote was.

Taylor: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: Where it's like, what does that even mean? "We're gonna rock the vote!" Like with music? I don't—[chuckles] I don't know! I don't—I mean, yes, that's good to vote. I like MTV. But what is this? I don't understand... I don't know what that means.

Taylor: Well... I think the same thing with all of like there's always that—connected to like RuPaul's Drag Race. There's always like, "Register to vote." You know, they dance around with a vote sign at the end of it.

Sydnee: Mm-hm.

Taylor: I don't think these are bad things, but I guess this is instead of using a middleman. Like, "Oh, this is something that teens are into. We're going to have them speak on our behalf."

Sydnee: Mm-hm.

Teylor: It's just directly connecting to them. With other young people, because I'm sure these are clearly young people running the accounts that are doing these. Because they're up on what is happening.

Sydnee: They are. They're up on the newest trends. They also know how it works.

Teylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: They know how to do it. I guarantee they never have the millennial pause.

Teylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Teylor: That's why like I would like to believe it's working, but then I have to remember that I am in—because I exist as a millennial, in essence, cringe. So I cannot be a judge of if this is good or not. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Mm-mm, no, we don't know.

Teylor: Nope.

Sydnee: Which, that is something—by the way, as long as we're talking about modern TikTok things. The millennial pause, I had to go look up what that was.

Teylor: Mm-hm. Do you do it?

Sydnee: I bet I do that. I bet I do. I bet I do that in all my videos. I don't know... is that just like our discomfort with technology that makes us wait a second to make sure it's working?

Teylor: I don't know. I guess I was aware of it before I ever tried to make a TikTok, so I will overcompensate. Like I will be making a syllable in the first

second the video is on to avoid it. [titters] But yeah, I think it's just, you know, we're used to setting up and starting it and then going. And I don't know...

Sydnee: Should we—

Taylor: It's more of an event to make a video for us.

Sydnee: Is it better to just like do a Stanley Tucci and just say at the top of every video, "Are you recording?"

Taylor: [titters] Yeah, I think that's better. Go with that. Always.

Sydnee: It also assumes that there's someone recording you.

Taylor: Yeah, like you're not just alone in your room with your phone, which is—yeah.

Sydnee: Uh-huh. Are you recording?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Okay.

[group laugh]

Sydnee: I'm gonna start doing that at the top of all my videos. Maybe that's cooler. I don't know. It's a way of saying like I don't do the technology, and that's fine. I don't have to. I'm gonna cook a steak now. [chuckles]

Taylor: I think you should just, maybe just increase the millennial pause, you know? If you can't do anything about it, just make it as long and uncomfortable as possible, and then jump into your video.

[group chuckle]

Sydnee: Just staring dead pan into the camera for a minute.

Taylor: Yeah. But you do it too long, and then you've got the Boomer stare. That's the generation above us. We're slowly—[chuckles] do you see the time it takes us to engage with media?

Sydnee: I didn't know there was a Boomer stare?

Taylor: Yeah, sometimes they call it the lead paint stare.

Sydnee: Oh, no?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Really?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah, okay. You think that lead paint thing is true?

Taylor: I don't know.

Sydnee: I don't know either. [chuckles] I don't know. I was watching a Trump rally excerpt the other day. I wasn't watching the rally, I think I was probably watching a TikTok from like The Daily Show covering the rally, that sort of thing. This is like tertiary at this point, I'm not going to engage with that on my own. But he did like sort of stare off into space for like 20 solid seconds.

Taylor: Oh, yeah, I saw that.

Sydnee: And it made me wonder. It was a long time.

Taylor: Yeah...

Sydnee: Yeah... Okay, something else that I had to un-code on TikTok was why I was watching all of these young women who are rushing sororities. Mostly in Alabama, but also in other southern states. This has been a big part of TikTok lately.

Taylor: Well, and we were talking about this previously, and I realized that I don't know if this—well, actually, no. I think this does say something very distinct about our unique algorithms. Because I thought we were talking about the same sorority videos. [chuckles] And then we exchanged sorority videos and were realized they were very different. And I could not imagine that there were two different types of sorority videos getting popular at the same time. I mean, I guess everybody's rushing, so that's why, but...

Sydnee: Mm-hm.

Taylor: You were getting like the fashion hauls, which we can get into. And I was getting the terrifying but alluring blue people.

Sydnee: So, and not the blue people of Kentucky, which is—when you first said the blue people, I thought you meant the like—I've covered this on Sawbones.

Taylor: No, not the—

Sydnee: They're the quote/unquote—[chuckles] Kentucky blue people.

Taylor: Not people that are actually blue, people that have painted themselves blue.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: And—yes.

Sydnee: And not people who are just ingesting large amounts of silver.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: For pseudoscientific health beliefs. Yes. So what I was getting is primarily Bama Rush.

Taylor: Okay.

Sydnee: Alabama. Bama Rush TikTok. Which was, it started with like young women showing off their outfits and jewelry for each day of Rush. I don't know, I thought it was a week, but I feel like it's been going on for a month. [titters] It feels like it's been a long time. I think it's really just about a week. And there are different—so first of all, they would show you their outfit and then they would tell you what day it is.

Like there is philanthropy day, there's sisterhood day, there's multiple days sometimes of each of these. I think it's different depending on what school you go to. And then there's also like pref day, which I think stands for preference day, as far as I can tell. Which is where you like state your preferences. And then there's also like bid day, which I know what that means. You know, you bid—the sorority makes a bid for you. You make a bid for the sorority. You go to the one—and then you—and like you physically run to the place that picked you. So, and this—the reason I figured this out is the outfits.

So like, there is—it starts off with like the initial rush days. And they move into philanthropy week pretty quickly, philanthropy days. And there were like three I think. And you're supposed to wear like a certain T-shirt, a pan-Hellenic society T-shirt with all the different sororities on the back. So they give you a shirt. They're like, "Wear this shirt." And so then you can only show off with your fancy skirts or shorts or whatever. And shoes and jewelry, of course. And then you move into like sisterhood days where you dress fancier. So those were like dressy dresses.

And then there's like pref day, which is pretty fancy. And then there's bid day, where you wear like literally running shorts, tank tops, running shoes. And that was what threw me. I was like, now, why are you so dressed down for the day that you actually get chosen by a sorority? And it's because you're in one place on campus when they tell you where you got picked, and then everyone physically just takes off in a dead run to the sorority that picked them. You quote/unquote 'run home.'

Taylor: Do you—do only the ones that get there first—is there some sort of race element? Like, "Oh, no, you came in last. Never mind." [chuckles]

Sydnee: They never mentioned that. If that is part of it—

Taylor: That would be sad.

Sydnee: I know, like you—the last one in actually gets cut.

Taylor: Ah... what if you're just farthest away? [titters]

Sydnee: There are—there are like on—again, a lot of what I was watching was Bama Rush. And I don't know if that's because they have the most content maybe on TikTok?

Taylor: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: They have like 24 sororities. So, that's a lot.

Taylor: That is a lot.

Sydnee: I feel like on our campus here at Marshall—and I never participated in Greek Life, so I am totally an outsider talking about this. This is everything I've learned from watching TikToks from people explaining, like from recruiters and people involved with the process. Like as adults who are still involved in it somehow explaining what it means. But I was never involved with any of this. But I think we have like four or five sororities on our campus or something? If that. I don't know. Some of them don't have houses, so then I don't know. But anyway, so the—

Taylor: In the 20s, that's a lot.

Sydnee: So they show their OTD. I didn't know people actually said that, by the way.

Taylor: Oh, OTD?

Sydnee: I didn't know—like, I knew that you would put that in your like caption or whatever. I didn't know that people actually said, "Here's my OTD."

Taylor: Yeah, that doesn't flow very well.

Sydnee: Well, OOTD is four syllables. Outfit of the Day is five syllables.

Taylor: You're saving yourself one syllable and you are—but also saying something that does not communicate very well. [titters]

Sydnee: Right? That was weird to me. But that's—I mean, everybody did. I don't—it wasn't like one person getting it wrong. Like everyone says, "OOTD. Here's my OOTD." Which feels like a mouthful.

Taylor: If you remember, many years ago, we were talking about the concept of outfit of the day. And I proposed oo-ti-do as a better way to say it.

Sydnee: You did!

Taylor: It did not catch on.

Sydnee: Oo-ti-do, that would be better. Or why does it—what happened to fit?

Taylor: [titters] Exactly what you just said—

Sydnee: That? [chuckles]

Taylor: Yeah, like I don't—yeah, I don't—I can't explain why you just explained it, but you did.

Sydnee: It's the same thing that happened to kicks, huh?

Taylor: Yeah...

Sydnee: Yeah, yeah. So they show their outfit, and it's not just like, "Here's what I'm wearing today." Which, if I ever—I would never do one of these. But if I was doing that, I probably would just do that like, "Here's my outfit for the day!" And not know what else do you say. But they have to like go over each piece and where they got it. And this I think is key to understanding it, at least as far as other people on TikTok have explained to

me. All of these outfits—not all. A lot of these outfits are very expensive. They are branded pieces from designers and boutiques and places that make expensive, fine clothing, right? And it is about I think not just like that it looks nice, but that it represents a certain level of wealth.

Taylor: Right.

Sydney: I believe. And status. And so some of the brands I recognized from the beginning. Like if somebody says they're wearing a Tiffany necklace, like I've been on this planet 41 years, I know what Tiffany's is.

Taylor: Sure.

Sydney: You know, I understand that. There was somebody who showed her shoes and said, "I got red bottoms."

Taylor: Okay, yeah.

Sydney: Blue batons.

Taylor: Right, yes.

Sydney: Yes, okay.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydney: Well, I had to, I—so like some stuff I get. And if you've got like Dior or I think that—I didn't hear a lot of like Gucci. There was some Louis Vuitton. Like some of those things I recognize. But then there were—

Taylor: Chanel feels very sorority.

Sydney: I don't remember, there were a couple Chanel's, but not as many as I would have thought. I would have thought a lot more Chanel's too. There were a lot of brands I never heard of. But then—until I saw these videos repeated over and over again. Like apparently enewton bracelets.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: Huge deal.

Taylor: I do not understand those. I see them in the wild a lot around New York. And I know they're expensive, and they look—they look like something that you could make, I don't know, from a \$5 purchase at a Michaels, but...

Sydnee: David Yurman.

Taylor: Are those the ones with the little like kind of cross looking piece on them? I know those are popular too.

Sydnee: I think that's on them, yes. And well, some of them are like braided or woven-looking metal kind of dealy. And then—and then the—there was also this like—oh, and the shoes, Golden Goose shoes.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: And Cloudwalkers.

Taylor: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: Those are all big deals. And then I thought like, well, that's interesting. I guess these are popular. I mean, as they were going over their videos, they don't tell you how much they cost, they tell you the brand. A lot of Lululemon, as you may imagine. And then other branded like shirts and dresses and whatever. And then sometimes they would say like a local boutique. And very rarely you'd hear like, "Amazon. This is Amazon." Which I guess just means like, "This is no big deal. This is no big deal. This is just Amazon." But then there are other TikTokers who do price breakdowns on what these outfits are. Some of these outfits cost upwards of \$10,000.

Taylor: Oh, yeah, I definitely got fed one of these videos. And not—I'm not seeing the originals, I am seeing the people pricing them. And it was like a \$15,000 outfit.

Sydnee: That is—

Taylor: Largely because of the jewelry, but still.

Sydnee: But I mean, still, it's—I mean, it's wild! I had no idea!

Taylor: Yeah...

Sydnee: I had no idea! I mean, I don't—

Taylor: Well, the—

Sydnee: I don't know that my entire wardrobe together—when I—I know I—doesn't. It does—I can tell you, my entire wardrobe together doesn't add up to anything close to that.

Taylor: No... But there's a reason for this, right? There's a sort of subtext to all this?

Sydnee: So my understanding—again, from watching a lot of TikTokers.

Taylor: [titters]

Sydnee: Who are familiar with this process, who have either gone through it or lived there or still, like I said, adults still involved with it—is that if you can get into the top-tier sororities. And they all talk about top houses, middle houses and bottom houses. So this is definitely an accepted concept. If you can get into the top houses, those top houses are so because they have relationships with the top fraternities. And then you will have access to the top frat guys. Which I suppose is desirable, because then you can marry I am assuming other rich, powerful people to perpetuate a rich, powerful... ruling class? [chuckles] I don't know.

Taylor: Oh, it got dark so fast. So these women are presenting their dowry in video form. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yes. It feels very like—I mean, and I don't know, I feel like if you've watched Gilmore Girls, there's reference to that. There's like the wealthy families who want their kids to marry other—

Taylor: Oh, sure, sure.

Sydnee: Kids from the wealthy families, right? Like it's the same vibe. It's just we're doing it through this convoluted, algorithmically driven process. Because there's also an algorithm. It's almost like the residency match, where the sororities rank their picks and the PMNs, potential new—PNMs, potential new members. The PNM's rank their picks, and then they have to do math to figure out where everybody goes. So, there's math involved, supposedly. That is what they say. I don't know, I kind of assumed that after everybody left, they just sat in a circle and was like—and we're like, "Who do you like?" But they say there's math. They say that it's very specific, it's an algorithm, it's math. So... anyways.

Taylor: See, I much prefer the weird sorority content that I was being fed. Which was Kappa, I believe is the sorority that is always doing—they all look like some sort of weird, I don't know, like Old Gregg type creation. Like—[chuckles] no.

Sydnee: They're in blue this year.

Taylor: They're in blue and—

Sydnee: Those are their colors.

Taylor: Disturbing makeup, weird costumes. The most I could find for an explanation is like it's just, they're told to dress as like wildly as possible. And specifically, if you look pretty, you're not doing it right. I don't know if this is a different way of showing off wealth. You know, I know sometimes the very wealthy obscure their wealth in the way they dress. So, who knows? [chuckles]

Sydnee: They also—

Taylor: I'm not part of this culture. [chuckles]

Sydnee: They also were from Oklahoma, the ones you sent me.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: So, is this—

Taylor: It was OU.

Sydnee: Is this unique to OU?

Taylor: I don't know. I've never in my entire life seen anything about Greek Life that would have ever appealed to me. But I think if I saw a bunch of weird weirdos, just weird weirdos dressed up in weird costumes dancing around like lunatics, I'd be like, "Okay, I can vibe with this." I'll—

Sydnee: I saw—

Taylor: I'll do—

Sydnee: I saw somebody—

Taylor: Weird blue face paint.

Sydnee: I saw somebody refer to those as personality sororities. [chuckles]

Taylor: Oh, no.

Sydnee: And I was like—

Taylor: That's a judgment.

Sydnee: Oh, no! That's such—oh, that's such subtle shade. Like that's a personality sorority. *You know.* You know. [titters]

Taylor: I would much rather be part of a personality sorority.

Sydnee: Personality sorority—

Taylor: I thought—

Sydnee: Okay.

Taylor: They look like fun. They look like fun people. They look like they know how to have a good time.

Sydnee: Yes, yes. I—yeah. And, I mean, I don't know, maybe all these—all of these young women who are rushing these sororities in these southern schools are having a good time. I don't know. I think there—and there are lots of other TikTokers who have had extremely negative experiences with Greek Life.

Taylor: Oh, for sure.

Sydnee: All of the things that you would—that like stereotypically you would assume, they talk about. You know, that they are unsafe places, especially for young women. That they are put in vulnerable positions because of predators and alcohol and all of—and you know, all of the stuff that we think is scary and happens on college campuses. There are plenty of people on TikTok who say, "That is exactly what happened to me or to my friend or I know happens in various aspects of Greek Life." So...

Taylor: Yeah, I have no doubt about that. We're not—[chuckles] we're just deciphering the TikToks. We're not—

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Not close enough with Greek Life to give any more of an insight than that. [titters]

Sydnee: No, I don't... I—yeah. I could never have—I was not—it was not an area of interest of mine, ever. So...

Taylor: But an area of interest of mine. Not—there's no tangential relations to sororities. I do like watching that guy that makes a cucumber every day a weird way.

Sydnee: Okay, help me understand that. I got one of these and I was like, why does he—he says like, "Some days you have to eat a whole cucumber." Is that what it is?

Taylor: Yeah, and I think it's every day at this point.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Now, guy's name is Logan, and he's actually been—he cooks a lot on TikTok. He makes really good food. A lot of it is like, I don't know, like a lot of Korean dishes that he pulls off so well. That he has people being like, "This is very authentic. Like, this is very respectful." He knows his stuff. But this specific series has caught on, where he just takes a whole cucumber, mandolins it up, and puts something on it. And you know, I'm not gonna say I was ahead of this trend, because he takes the cucumber to places that I would never think so. But having like—[titters]

Sydnee: Okay?

Taylor: Having like just a, like a, just a slightly marinated cucumber in the fridge like sliced up is something that I usually have in my fridge. So I was very on board with this. You know, like just—like the classic one. Like rice vinegar, soy sauce, like a little sesame seeds, nothing crazy. A little sugar.

Sydnee: A little sugar, yeah.

Taylor: Yeah. Very big fan of these. But then he puts like cream cheese and like bacon and...

Sydnee: Peanut butter.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, the peanut butter cilantro ones, that's a good one.

Sydnee: That's the one I want to try. That was the one that looked really good to me. The one with bacon and cheese and stuff on it, at some point I just felt like, well, I mean, whatever you put underneath that—[chuckles]

Taylor: Yeah, but like look, the cucumber is a good vehicle for whatever.

Sydnee: That's true. I like cucumbers. Yeah.

Taylor: But there have been some casualties to this, though. Of all the things we've talked about today, the most dangerous is that it encourages the casual use of a mandolin. Which I watched a video of someone trying to replicate one of his recipes, and the video ended at the ER because they cut the tip of their finger off. We always have a mandolin at the bar I work at, and that's been the case for lots of restaurants I've worked at. And a mandolin will require a blood sacrifice from you at some point if you're not careful.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: So, I don't know.

Sydnee: I've cut myself on the—not severely, but I have cut—I have minorly. We have a special glove now.

Taylor: I do too, and yet I still—I will wear the glove while I'm slicing my daily cucumber. And I'm still terrified. You know?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Just feels like it could happen so fast.

Sydnee: It is—it is a useful—I will say, because the girls were very interested in how to use the mandolin. And so the special glove became essential to—

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But yeah, please, this is like a public service announcement. If you are unfamiliar with a mandolin, just like do a little research before you just jump in and start using it. A protective glove is a great idea. If nothing else, go slow. Take your time.

Taylor: Yeah, you don't—I know how fast it can seem, but sometimes I'll see like the cooks using it at my restaurant and they're just like having a conversation, music blasting in the kitchen, like not looking. I'm like, what are—no, I can't look. Please stop! [titters]

Sydnee: Yeah, no, you can definitely really injure yourself with a mandolin. But those videos I'd highly recommend just because the recipes look so good. I gotta try some of those.

Teylor: It's... I don't know. Anything else? You got anything else?

Sydnee: well, Tey, I think we're running out of time.

Teylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: We did, we had more to talk about.

Teylor: That's all right. We can always come back to TikTok trends now and then.

Sydnee: I think we need to, because what we didn't get to discuss at all is the fact that it is—we are recording this episode on a super blue moon. It is the super blue moon.

Teylor: It's a super blue moon, but it's also... but it has a name. Is it the sturgeon moon?

Sydnee: Is that what it is?

Teylor: It's something like a fish. Yes, it's a very important—TikTok has told me many things are going to happen in my life as a Capricorn because of this moon.

Sydnee: I have seen a bunch of stuff about that for the cardinal signs, which you and I both are. And then I saw another one about the influence, because the moon is in Aquarius and the sun is in Leo. And also Mercury is in retrograde.

Teylor: Ah, always.

Sydnee: And so it is—I had to tell both Charlie and Cooper this morning like, these mean big things for your signs.

Taylor: Well, TikTok astrology is a whole other conversation. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah, I think that's almost a whole episode unto itself, TikTok astrology.

Taylor: But that was a fun rundown of us vaguely understanding some modern trends. [chuckles]

Sydnee: I think—you know, I like researching this stuff. It was—I had no idea about all that goes into—the fact that there is like a match like algorithm that determines sororities is fascinating to me. I never would have guessed. Again.

Taylor: That then somehow results in the people that make decisions for us at political levels?

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: That's actually pretty dark. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah, but like overall I think we're, you know, decoding these mysteries of TikTok. What the—that's what we're trying to do, is stay—we are still buffering in the sense that like we can learn new things. We don't have to just like be Luddites who have resolved to never understand what Gen Alpha means. We can know these things. Right?

Taylor: Yeah, well, I think that is—that's one of the biggest problems with the intergenerational conflict, right? It's that you get old and you go, "Oh, I don't understand what these kids are doing." I believe it is cringe that we're trying, but it still will be more helpful in the long run. [chuckles]

Sydnee: I think it is cringe that we're trying.

Taylor: It's okay.

Sydnee: But no, I think that it's important to continue to challenge yourself to understand and not dismiss. That's the big thing, right? Not dismiss. Because that is too often what we tend to do as old people.

Taylor: [titters]

Sydnee: What are we doing next time though, Tey?

Taylor: Well, I am gonna be leaving the country for the first time since before Covid, since like 2018. I'm going on a little trip to Japan. So I thought to prepare myself, I wanted to watch a few episodes of No Reservations. A couple of Anthony Bourdain's episodes, specifically around Japan. And I've never talked about No Reservations or any of Anthony Bourdain's work on the show. He's a big impact on my life, one of my favorite writers, creators, people to ever exist on this planet. So, help me prepare for my trip abroad.

Sydnee: Perfect. So we'll do a throwback episode, talk about some stuff that shaped us. And then we'll be back with more... I don't know, what the youths are doing, in the future.

Taylor: Keeping an eye on you, youths.

Sydnee: All right, well, thank you listeners for joining us. And thank you to Maximum Fun. You should go to maximumfun.org and check out all the wonderful podcasts there that you would enjoy. Thank you to the Novellas for our theme song, Baby You Change Your Mind. This has been Still Buffering, a cross-generational guide to the culture that made us. I am Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: Taylor Smirl.

Sydnee: Oh, no! [laughs]

Taylor: One of us—I'm still buffering.

Sydnee: And I am too! [laughs]

Taylor: Well at least we don't have to try to make that sync up anymore, because that was always very bad.

Sydnee: It was very bad. Look, we fixed it.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydney: Oh, we miss you, Riley. [chuckles]

Taylor: [laughs] One of us has to say it first.

[theme song, "Baby You Change Your Mind" by Nouvellas plays]

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