

Still Buffering: Going Retrograde

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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: Taylor, welcome back to the US.

Taylor: I made it. I made it back in one piece.

Sydnee: Yeah. It looked like, from what I could see from your videos and TikToks and such, that you had an amazing time.

Taylor: I did. I had a very, very good time. It was such an active vacation that I feel like I need a vacation from my vacation. Because I had to—I got off a plane at like, what, like 12 o'clock. Like midnight last—was that last night? The night before last. It all runs together. And then I had to roll in like six hours later to a double at my job. So like a 14-hour shift after a 17 hour plane ride.

Sydnee: That is rough.

Taylor: So, I feel a little insane. But that'll fade, I hope. [chuckles]

Sydnee: That is rough. Especially if it inspired you to use the Boomery cliché, I need a vacation for my vacation.

Taylor: Is that a Boomer cliché?

Sydnee: I believe so. I think it's up there was like, "Hey, working hard or hardly working?" [chuckles]

Taylor: Ah... man...

Sydnee: "Mondays, am I right?"

Taylor: But I don't—it's... but it's true. Vacation's really hard.

Sydnee: I know. I understand, I understand. I always feel that way when we take the kids to Disney. Like it's lovely, it's fun, the kids have a magical time, I'm glad to do it. And I'm happy to do it too. I wouldn't go without the kids, but like I'm happy to do it. But I'm exhausted. Like, I don't come back and think like, ah, I feel rejuvenated for the work ahead. [chuckles]

Taylor: Yeah... I thought I was like—in the past, when I'm in another—when I'm on any trip somewhere, I feel like I have to be going at all hours to make the most of it. And I've learned that never—at some point you will crash out. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Mm-hm.

Taylor: So like I felt like I was good. Like I stayed at a really nice—like it wasn't fancy, but it was a nice, comfortable like hotel. And there were a few nights where like, you know, I could go out, but the smart thing to do is stay in. I felt like I paced myself. But I also did like, you know, climb a mountain at one point. And there was a lot of recovery from that that didn't happen, so...

Sydnee: Aw. Well, I—

Taylor: It's okay, it's worth it. Well worth it.

Sydnee: You know, while you were climbing a mountain, I attempted at one point to go on a walk with our dad. On a day when it was—the heat index was like 102 here.

Taylor: Oh?

Sydnee: And we walked and it's hilly. You know, we live in West Virginia, everything's hilly. And it was hilly, and it was 102 degrees, and I had to get

mom to come rescue me before I finished the walk in her car because we were so far and I couldn't breathe. [chuckles]

Taylor: Oh, no? But dad was still trucking?

Sydnee: Uh-huh, yeah...

Taylor: [laughs] Wow.

Sydnee: Yes... Our 66-year-old father.

Taylor: But you know, I don't—it could be because of—that he's in very good shape, it could just be the sheer hardheadedness, that I've certainly inherited. Because I know like as I was climbing Mount Fuji, I did not—I was trying to make it all the way up in a day and all the way back down. And I was doing like the long trail, the pilgrim's route. And you're supposed to stop along the way and acclimate to the altitude. But I really wanted to make my bus so I was like, no, that doesn't affect me. I'm different. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Ah.

Taylor: I am in fact not different. I in fact am affected by high altitudes, like every other living human. And it was just sheer willpower. It was not smart or safe for me to continue to the summit, but I did, because I had to. So he could have just been going because he had to. [chuckles]

Sydnee: See, I was banking on that to get me through, and I don't know.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Like, I got to a point where I was like, my watch was telling me that my heart rate was over 200 and I was like... this is bad. I'm a physician. This is bad.

Taylor: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: I should not push through this. Justin will never forgive me if he has to raise our children alone.

[group chuckle]

Taylor: Because you just really wanted to finish that walk.

Sydnee: Because I was too stubborn. So, I have since done the walk successfully and been fine. I think it was the heat. And I think I was just, I'm not good about staying hydrated. I think I was dehydrated and then the heat. And I mean, I stopped sweating at some point. That's a bad sign.

Taylor: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: Anyway... Anyway, but I said that, I was like, "Here I am, I can't go on a walk with my dad. And my brother's out there climbing Mount Fuji."

[group chuckle]

Sydnee: "This is sad."

Taylor: It was just the power of—see, this is—but that's what it is. I was gonna say it's the power of Smirl audacity, but you gave up the Smirl name.
[chuckles]

Sydnee: Ah, that's true.

Taylor: You lost some of the power. It's a strange name, but it comes with the power to just push through when medically you should not.

Sydnee: And is that good or bad? We won't say. Don't, yeah, no need to pass judgment. While you were gone, an interesting TikTok phenomenon—that took me a while to figure out what was happening. I didn't understand why so many people were tagging Chase Bank. [chuckles]

Taylor: Yeah, because they were getting free money!

Sydnee: Yeah, it took me a minute. I was like, why is everybody talking about Chase Bank? What happened? And then I saw there was a glitch and I was like, why is everybody making TikToks about a—like was it—was there

like some money like went missing? Or some people were, maybe like their information—like I always assume it's like an information breach or something. You know, because those things happen. And so I just thought it was that and I'm like, why are people making TikToks about it? And then finally, there was someone who let—who took me down the rabbit hole and told me what was going on.

Taylor: Well, and it wasn't really a rabbit hole, it was just a generation of kids discovering that if you write a check and put it in your bank, and then immediately pull out the money, it might temporarily clear, but it will ultimately—like the money will come back.

Sydnee: They're not—well, I guess there was—there's supposed to be a limit on how much they'll let you withdraw. And the—for temporarily, the limit was removed.

Taylor: But who was out here playing this game?

Sydnee: So you could write yourself—I don't know, you could write yourself a check for \$10,000, and then immediately withdraw all \$10,000 in cash. And then people thought that because it was in cash, now it's too late, they can't get it back. Because it's... [chuckles] paper. I don't know. I don't know!

Taylor: I mean that like... I don't know, I guess... Has no one ever had a check bounce? Because that's what happens. Like sometimes, for whatever reason, the check I get from my job, I put it in the bank. And then my job doesn't have enough money, so then the money goes away again. And there's like a day period where it looks like I have that money. And I guess, feasibly, I could withdraw that money. But, you know, that's—

Sydnee: I don't—

Taylor: So it wasn't a glitch, it was just a bunch of—the next generation discovered check fraud.

Sydnee: I think that there is a—yes, yes. I mean, that is what happened. It was check fraud. But like, I think that there is a protection that is supposed to exist in the withdrawal process, where they only let you withdraw so

much money, to try to prevent this from happening. I don't know if it's like a save you from yourself protection. Like—[titters]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: "I know you want to withdraw \$10,000, but you don't have \$10,000. So we're gonna help you by not allowing you to withdraw more than you have. Because then like we will catch you, because you, your name, like it—"

Taylor: We have all of your

Sydnee: It's in your name!

Taylor: That's a—like that's—you know, if you could pull this off in some sort of like Ocean's 11-esque feat where you pulled out enough money to disappear and start a new life, then sure, yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I guess take that gamble. \$10,000 isn't gonna do it. Like none of the amounts I saw was worth federal prison. [chuckles] I'm not saying there's not an amount of money that isn't worth federal prison, but it's not 10Gs.

Sydnee: Well and I mean like, I understand, I can get behind a little bit of anarchy. Like I can get behind that.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: I don't—

Taylor: Just a little bit. Just a little smear of anarchy.

Sydnee: Yeah. I mean, I do believe that like... Like I support Robin Hood. Like I do—I feel that there is a—there is a time to break the rules. I believe that very strongly. I think there is a higher authority than whatever our human laws demand, and systems. However, that being—and that's not a

religious comment, just whatever. Whatever you take that as. However, if at the end of it they're always going to catch you and make you give the money back, this is probably not a good plan.

Taylor: Well, that's what I'm saying. Like, you gotta go big or go home. Like...

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: \$10,000, \$30,000, that's... If you could—if they accidentally deposited that much money in your account and you just got it for free, that's a glitch. That's fine. But if you're gonna commit fraud, commit enough fraud that you can disappear on that fraud.

Sydnee: Exactly. I think—

Taylor: We agree on this. [chuckles]

Sydnee: I think that people thought this was sort of like if you were just walking down the street, and all of a sudden the ATM next to you just started like spitting out piles of cash.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: And so you just picked up a pile of cash and walked away. Like, yeah. I mean, I guess. Well, they should have programmed the ATM better, really. You know, I mean like—

Taylor: Sure.

Sydnee: That would be—you could get away with that. Because you didn't put your information in there, nobody knows who took the cash. It's disappeared. Bye. Although I don't know if that's still traceable. I don't really know how money works. It could be traceable. [chuckles] They might be able to tell where those bills went. I don't know. The point is—

Taylor: I think in that situation—

Sydnee: This wasn't that! [chuckles]

Taylor: I guess I don't know how money works either. I would assume if an ATM like explodes and there's money all over the ground, they're not going to individually prosecute people that pick up money off the ground. Because you can't prosecute somebody for picking up—like if somebody drops a wallet and you take the money out of that wallet, I know you failed some sort of philosophical challenge, but you can't go to jail for that. You didn't rob that person. You found money on the ground and you put it in your pocket. That is not a crime.

Sydnee: Yes. Well... yes. It is not a—okay, this is an interesting distinction. It's not—I don't—I think you're right that it is not a prosecutable. Like you couldn't—how would you ever prove, right? Like I don't—

Taylor: Well even if you—I mean, I don't think—if you had somebody on video finding a wallet on the sidewalk, picking it up, pulling the cash out of it, and walking away, I still don't think you could prosecute that person. Even if you knew who the wallet belonged to and who took the money.

Sydnee: Is it? I don't know. I mean, I would have thought that is—it's just a crime you're going to get away with, is what I would have thought. But I don't know.

Taylor: I don't know. Where's the lawyer when you need her?

Sydnee: I know, I know! Where's Raleigh? She probably knows. I don't know.

Taylor: But I think even more so, if there's just money spitting onto the ground, I mean... But this is not what we're talking about. We're talking about actively—

Sydnee: No, this is not that.

Taylor: Like it's not a glitch. A glitch is like a computer whoopsie. If you write a check that you know you can't cash, that is...

Sydnee: It's fraud. [chuckles] It has a name.

Taylor: "Try this money hack." No, that's just fraud.

Sydnee: Yeah... that's—I think that the concept of life hacks being so prevalent now has confused people. Like... and this isn't—this is not that.

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: I also think—I mean like, when you have a financial system that is as dense and intentionally incomprehensible as ours—because they don't want you to understand it. Because they only want well-trained, well-paid tax accountants or whatever to understand it, so that they can use it to the benefit of the very wealthy to maintain our system of inequality. They don't want you to understand it. I can understand, because of that, why this sort of thing happens.

Taylor: I—well... all right. I don't know, I don't—I am not a well-trained tax accountant. I don't understand any of that. But I do understand that if I write a check fraudulently, that I could go to jail. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Okay, well, yeah. And I'm just saying—

Taylor: I do like a schmear of anarchy, but I understand that is just, there's that—that's not a—it's gonna—there's only one way that's gonna go down.

Sydnee: Yeah... yeah.

Taylor: It's not that hard to comprehend that that's a form of thievery. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Well, and more importantly, that you're gonna get caught.

Taylor: Yeah. Now see, you would have needed to do it with somebody else's account if you wanted to get away with it.

Sydnee: Yeah. There's a tip from Taylor. [laughs]

Teylor: Yeah, go big or go home. Ruin somebody else's life, not your own.

[group chuckle]

Teylor: Clearly, I learned nothing from my journey into the mountains. No inner peace.

Sydnee: I was gonna say. Well, that this is a good segue into your karmic cycle.

Teylor: Yeah. I'm in my villain era, right? You are too.

Sydnee: Yes. This is the primary thing; there is a lot of astrology on TikTok, and I have always enjoyed it. I have always, yeah, I have always like to engage with it. And I mean, it stems from the fact that, at least I would assume the same for you, our mother has exposed us to all things astrology and Zodiac since we were quite small.

Teylor: You know, it's funny. Just as an aside, a few weeks ago, we talked about the Ouija board and mom not approving of the Ouija board. But she loved tarot cards.

Sydnee: Yes. I don't know.

Teylor: They're both reaching into the cosmos and asking things beyond ourselves for answers, but anyway. Also, like same category of things.

Sydnee: Same category of things. But can I tell you, the Ouija board has vanished.

Teylor: Oh, no.

Sydnee: So mom wrapped it in a blanket and put it in a closet, because she said that's how you had to store it. And I went in there the other day to get—it's our linen closet, so I went in there to get some linens or something, a towel, I don't know. Something that you put in a linen closet. And the blanket that it had been wrapped in was unwrapped and laying on the floor, and the Ouija board is gone.

Taylor: Hm...

Sydnee: My assumption is that my husband has disposed of it. He also did not want it in the house.

Taylor: I was gonna say, I would—my first thought would be either like Justin or our mother just quietly got rid of it. Second option is, one of your children has it.

Sydnee: Cooper might have it. I have not seen—now, I mean, the only thing I will say, Charlie would not. That's not Charlie's vibe. Cooper may have it, but I have never known my children, either of them, to put their toys away ever, really, without me begging them. Like, "Please just pick those things up off the floor." So if she did get it out and played with it, I feel like it should be laying in the middle of a floor somewhere where I can see it. The idea that she took the time to like pack it up and put it away somewhere in her room that I can't easily see when I walk in—

Taylor: Maybe something told her to hide it.

Sydnee: Oh, man, don't—

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: She has—we went to—I know this is an aside. We gotta talk about—we got to talk about our karmic cycle. But first, we went to Spirit Halloween. And she got—

Taylor: Again?

Sydnee: Huh?

Taylor: Again?

Sydnee: No, the original time.

Taylor: Oh, okay.

Sydnee: Have I already told this?

Taylor: You told me, I don't think you told the world.

Sydnee: She got—so we—Cooper—we have a lot of little Halloween buddies, and they're like the little teeny—

Taylor: Oh my god, I know where this is going.

Sydnee: Like porch—

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: Porch buddies of different like horror movie figures. And they look kind of cute because they're like these little squat ones. Some of them are babies, and then some of them are just like, they're the adults. But they're like, you know, a foot tall. And like kind of little like—

Taylor: Little guys.

Sydnee: Cute versions of them. Anyway, so we have a Jason, and we have a Dracula. And I thought we had a Michael Myers, but it turns out we don't. I'm trying to get one. But then, while we were at the Halloween store, we saw a little teeny—they're baby ones now. And it's the Ghostface from *Scream* killer like sitting there, like cross legged, holding a little knife.

Taylor: [titters] Cute.

Sydnee: It's very cute. And then there's like crawling, the Terrifier.

Taylor: The clown?

Sydnee: Yes. And Cooper loved them and wanted them both. They're her babies. And so they are now in her room. She's made a spooky corner in her room with this—

Taylor: She's definitely got the Ouija board. [chuckles]

Sydnee: With this ghost rug. They had these cute little bath mats, we actually saw these at Lowe's. These cute little like bath rugs that were like—Charlie's is black with little white spider webs all over it. And Cooper's is shaped like a ghost. It's very cute. And so she's got her spooky corner with a ghost rug, and then sitting on it are the clown and Ghostface. And then—oh, and Thing. We already had, Thing from Adam's Family. Thing is sitting there with them. The three of them are like sitting there in a circle, like they're having a game or something. Like they're playing duck, duck, goose. And it's in front of the little, the TikTok night light thing with the two ghosts sitting at the fire. Have you seen that?

Taylor: Oh, yes, it's so cute.

Sydnee: It's all over TikTok.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. So that's her spooky corner.

Taylor: That's adorable. And I think that like Thing and the scream killer are just like pop culture iconography. Art the Clown is a little messed up for a child. Have you seen those movies? You have not. I know you have not, because I know what you can and can't stomach in horror movies.

Sydnee: Okay, so here's the thing. We had never seen it, and I was not familiar with what it was. And so after we—because Cooper just fell in love with it and I was like, "Okay, whatever, here." So after we got home, Justin and I waited for the kids to go to bed, and then started that movie.

Taylor: Oh my god! [chuckles]

Sydnee: To see what is this character from, because we're not familiar with it. And at first, it's kind of like... like at first it's a little funny almost, because he keeps like the—it's a scary clown that kills people. And at first he's like making these sort of faces, and kind of almost like mugging at the camera. In a way that is kind of funny, you know? And so we're watching, and of course it's gory, but like it wasn't too bad at first. And then, I'll be honest, I

don't—I mean, I don't want to spoil it. But you get to a scene where they've captured—he's captured two women.

Taylor: Yeah...

Sydnee: And as soon as I realized the direction we were headed, we just went ahead and turned it off.

Taylor: Yeah, and that's—so that was the first one that you watched?

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Yeah, it gets—there's a sequel that came out like, what, last year, year before last. It gets worse.

Sydnee: Torture is not my thing.

Taylor: Yeah...

Sydnee: I thought it was just scary clown serial killer. I can handle some gore. Torture is not my thing.

Taylor: Yeah, that's kind of—that's kind of his thing. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah... Once I realized what was happening, we just turned it off. So I don't think we'll ever finish it. I could guess where we're headed.

Taylor: Yeah, they're pretty brutal movies. I mean, I think it's that there's an area of like bad special effects, where you can get away with that level of gore, if you can clearly tell that it's a special effect. But those movies, they skirt that line of being like just like B-movie enough, but realistic enough that it's that uncomfortable space of like, "This could be somebody's home camera. I don't like this." [chuckles]

Sydnee: Well, that's—I mean, that's—as soon as I realized that's where we were going, I just, I don't really like that. The gory that I used to be okay with is what our mom always called Veg-O-Matic movies.

Taylor: Yeah. [chuckles] I don't—does that term really apply? I don't know.

Sydnee: I don't—I wouldn't say to this. I would say that this is not that. What they're—you know, I mean, I think that's a reference to like the old B-horror movies where it was just like obviously fake blood and guts everywhere. And like, that doesn't bother me because it—I know what human bodies look like inside. [titters] And it's not that. So, it doesn't—I don't know. Like I don't find it particularly disturbing because it's so clearly fake, it's silly. I don't know. It's like the same thing where I don't really like action movies, but I like John Wick.

Taylor: Well, I—you like a—you need a plot behind it.

Sydnee: I need a plot. And then the ridiculousness of John Wick, where they just keep escalating like how many guys can he fight at once? How many different cool ways can he find to fight 50 guys at once? Like, it's so, it's—the hyperbole of it I find kind of interesting. So, that. But like your standard just like guys fighting movie is not—just doesn't do it for me, you know?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't know. Anyway, beside the point. So, yes, Art the Clown is in her bedroom. I didn't realize what that was about.

Taylor: When she is at least a legal adult, she can watch those movies and make up her mind. But not before. [chuckles]

Sydnee: I'm not going to recommend 'em. [chuckles]

Taylor: No. And I can watch some pretty messed up horror movies. I don't—I enjoyed both of the Terrifier films like on a—I don't know, they're—it's very insane, the kind of kills they have. But there's definitely that level of like, this is a little too much even for me. Or like I'm just not entertained by just gratuitous torture.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: I like the character, but...

Sydney: No, it's—I mean, it was the same vibe for me as like, I remember I watched Hostel back when it came out. And it just was like, this is not—I don't want to see this. I don't want to think about this. I don't want my brain to go there. I—just not—yeah.

Taylor: Well, it's funny, because—we need to get back to the topic. But it's similar to like the Final Destination movies, which center around bizarre and gratuitous kills. I love those. I will watch a million of those. But they're so cartoonish that it takes it out of the realm of reality, and I kind of need that to happen.

Sydney: Yeah, so that it's not sad.

Taylor: Yeah! When it's a little too real, or it's just like a person. Like if it's an insane act of violence, then it's like a Looney Tune, and that's all right. If it's, you know, a person suffering—

Sydney: You don't want to be able to—right, you don't want to empathize.

Taylor: Yeah. They're also very quick. All the Final Destination kills are like five second kills, so it's very—there's the weird rodent trap build up, but then it's just like, they're gone. I don't know.

Sydney: Right. No, I know what you're saying.

Taylor: Anyway...

Sydney: Anyway, I—so, TikTok has informed me that Taylor, you and I are both cardinal signs.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydney: In the zodiac. I don't know what that means, by the way, I don't know if you know what that means. I know what they are now because of TikTok. But I'm an Aries, you're Capricorn. Also Cancer and Libra. We are the four cardinal signs. Which I know what that means like on a compass.

Taylor: I don't actually know what it means astrologically?

Sydnee: I don't either. Anyway, we're that.

Taylor: We're the... the strong guys. That's what it sounds like.

Sydnee: I don't even know that it means that. [chuckles]

Taylor: That's what it means. I made that up as based on the word cardinal. Sounds like a cardinal, like... bosses.

Sydnee: Is it? Is it like if the zodiac was a circle, would we be at the—

Taylor: I think that is where the... I don't know. Man, I don't want to—I don't want to say. There are too many smart astrology people out there. But—

Sydnee: All I know is that we are both that, and that Pluto has been in Capricorn for... 15 years. [titters] And we are in our final battle against Pluto.

Taylor: Well, I don't think we're battling against Pluto. Pluto's just been our dominant force since 2008. We were kind of right about cardinal, by the way, I looked it up. So we represent the beginning of each season, so it's like the—

Sydnee: Oh, okay.

Taylor: Like set point. And the other ones exist in between. So, yeah.

Sydnee: Okay.

Taylor: You're the beginning of spring and I'm the beginning of winter.

Sydnee: Okay. Well, now we understand. So... okay, so I—so because Pluto has been our dominant force, we have been in what I've been told is a karmic cycle. Where we've been—I don't know the best—

Taylor: Jail is what I think it is. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Like, are we kind of doing time for past sins or something?

Taylor: No, I think it's just that everything that could be hard has been hard. You know, I don't—I think we should preface this by saying, if you don't believe in any of this stuff, that's fine. We are going to have this discussion in embracing a belief in astrology.

Sydnee: Mm-hm.

Taylor: That's—you know.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: But I always... I think a good example of this is like I had this roommate for a long time who, she could literally like go out and get drunk, and leave her purse in the middle of a road. And someone would bring it to our door, like perhaps with like an iced coffee or a cookie along with it to like welcome her to her day. Whereas me, I could put my phone down on the bar that I worked at in the middle of the day when the bar is empty, just sit it down for a second while I'm doing something, and I would turn around and it would be stolen. [chuckles] Just like endless lessons learned the hardest ways.

Sydnee: Yeah, I mean, I don't know. It's hard because they were like, do you—as I'm watching these TikToks they're like, "Do you feel like you've had all of these challenges since 2008?" And first of all, that's like a really long time. And secondly, like as I'm thinking about like all these challenges—well, I mean, gosh. Since 2008, I have finished med school, I have started and completed a residency, I got like a grown up job as a doctor, I got...

I got married before 2008, so the marriage was before that. But I have had two children since then. And then like a number of other things, personal, family, friends, you know. I mean births and deaths and losses and gains and... I don't know, I ran for office and lost. I don't know, like a lot of stuff has happened in that time. So I don't know how to like put it in a bucket. Like has it all been challenging? No. Have I had challenges? Yeah.

Taylor: I mean—

Sydnee: But in a 15 year period of time—that was the only thing that like... Haven't we all probably had challenges in the last 15 years, just statistically?

Taylor: Oh, well, I'm sure. But I don't know. For me, I feel like it's... 2008 was the year I graduated and everything got so much harder. [chuckles] I immediately failed at all of my dreams, I've been working in the service industry forever, I've... I don't know, there's been plenty that I can say, yeah, this has been rough. I think of it as the cosmic rock tumbler. Do you remember a rock tumbler? Remember those were a fun activity as a kid?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: You'd put in like a big, crunkly rock, and it would come out as a pretty, polished stone.

Sydnee: Mm-hm.

Taylor: I think maybe that's what it's been for those of us that have been—because it's been Pluto, but it's been Pluto in Capricorn specifically.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: So that's Capricorn, the sign of like, I don't know, hard work and karmic retribution. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yes. Well, I mean, that is how it's been explained to me on TikTok. And so, I guess Pluto... exited Capricorn briefly.

Taylor: Yeah, we had a few brief weeks to see what our life will be like.

Sydnee: And now we're in our final battle.

Taylor: But I don't think this is a battle. Because even like the TikTok astrologers, they keep telling me like, at this point, you're so used to it that it's not even going to bother you. [chuckles] And I've kind of felt that way, honestly, like the last couple of days. Like coming back and going right back

into work. And you know, there's always the regular amount of stuff you gotta deal with. And like... yeah... yeah... [chuckles]

Sydnee: I have tried to like really think about—I mean... I don't know. Mom of course is like very into this, because... it is likely coincidence. I am a logical, science-based human. It is likely coincidence. But I will say, I am—because of other things going on in my life, I am at sort of a turning point in terms of making major decisions about what's going to happen next for me. Especially I will say career-wise, so it doesn't sound like—I'm not... I'm not like getting divorced or anything.

[group chuckle]

Sydnee: Like I'm not pregnant, I'm not—

Taylor: This would be a wild place to announce that. [titters]

Sydnee: No, well, I realized that when you're vague, like you leave room for all kinds of... who knows what I mean. [chuckles] I mean, there's nothing—I'm not—I didn't get some sort of, you know, scary diagnosis. Like it's nothing like that. But like in my career life, we'll just say, I'm sort of at this like point where I'm questioning what to do next, and what have I built, and what have I—what have I accepted for myself.

And really starting to wonder like if maybe I have more value than I've ever thought of? Or any. I don't know. And that does seem to line up with what these TikTok things are saying. And so like it did—it was kind of spooky for me to stop and think like, well, I am starting to say—because that's what they keep saying, our villain era is when we set boundaries and we say no sometimes. And we expect others to treat us with the same respect that we treat them.

Taylor: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: And we don't accept less for ourselves. That is how it has been explained to me, as the quote/unquote 'villain era.'

Taylor: I love—

Sydney: Which doesn't sound like a villain, I guess. [titters]

Taylor: I was gonna say, that term was always so funny to me. Because it's like, "Yeah, my villain era! And by that, I mean I will be establishing very reasonable boundaries about my personal space and expectations. And I will be expressing when I'm in immense pain, occasionally."

Sydney: Well, I mean, and it—I do feel like I have been kind of coming to that point in my life. I saw this... this was an unrelated TikTok. I listen to a lot of psychologists talk about different things on TikTok. Because medical doctors do not—like I had a behavioral medicine course in med school, of course. And I do a lot of behavioral med in my practice, but I'm not like a counselor. I'm not a therapist. And I'm certainly not a psychologist. So, there's a lot that is adjacent to medicine, but it's not my area of expertise. And I was listening to them talk about child happiness. Like how—what makes kids happy. What correlates with child happiness. And one of the best predictors they talked about was if their mothers are happy.

Taylor: Mm-hm.

Sydney: And that had a huge impact on me, because I don't know that I had thought about like... I prioritize their happiness over mine, because I feel like that's my job. But it never occurred to me that perhaps my happiness is part of that. If I'm prioritizing their happiness, my happiness is intrinsic to that priority. It was a wild like ah-ha moment, I guess, as Oprah would say.

Taylor: Well, and that's another one of the parts of this whole karmic cycle thing, right? Is quote/unquote 'breaking generational curses.' That I think our own mother often sacrificed her own happiness to ensure ours. She didn't think about her own enough. So, you know, that's an awareness.

[pause]

Taylor: We love you, mom. [chuckles]

Sydney: Yes. We're talking about this because of you.

Taylor: Yes.

[group chuckle]

Sydnee: But I don't know, I think that it's... I always thought that the cool thing about astrology for me, the way I sort of process it—for myself personally, no one else has to think about it this way. That like I take the things that it says about my sign or about what the current thing should be for someone with my, you know, my date of birth, whatever. And it makes me think about my own life and look for those aspects and question it, and think about it. It's almost like, I don't know, it's a good tool. It's like meditative somehow. It's a tool with which I explore how I'm feeling and thinking, and question my own beliefs and values and choices. And it is a tool that helps me do that.

Taylor: Well, and I think that leads into—because you know, when we talk about like astrology on TikTok and sort of like, you also get like the tarot readings on TikToks. Or like you sometimes get like the, "Pick one of these three stones. Oh, you picked this stone, that means this." I do think that when it comes to sort of metaphysical studies, there is a very positive Dumbo's feather element. To if you think things are going to start improving for you, even if it's just because somebody on TikTok said yes, because of where the stars were in the sky when you were born, you can kind of manifest that. Like, I think positive thinking is powerful. Like, I don't think it can cure infectious diseases. Let's not go that far.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: But I think it can direct your life. But that other side of it is another term that I've learned from TikTok, which is like spiritual psychosis. Which is sometimes you take it too far, you can believe too much in what the little people on the apps are telling you, and it can get very dangerous. And I think that understanding that—take good stuff and use the good stuff, because that's useful. And don't take it too far is an important thing to keep in mind. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah. No, it really—I think that I—a lot of them I find very empowering. I've always liked the various TikTokers, I follow several, who

are like pretending to be the different signs, having a conversation about something, or like different signs reacting to—or like ordering at a drive through. Or breaking up with someone, or whatever. Like those always make me laugh. I love when they're like all the different signs as '90s pop songs, or all the different signs as breakfast cereals, or whatever. I find that kind of stuff very like—I'll always engage with that kind of content because it's funny to me.

And sometimes I do find it empowering to say like, because I am in an Aries, they're always talking about how you are a leader and you're strong and you can take control of situations. And like there's a bad side to that, of course. They're always talking about anger and temper, and all the other stuff. But there is a part of that that makes me think like I am capable of that. And it probably isn't because I was born on March 27th, it's probably just that is a quality I have that I don't always engage with. But I do find it empowering to watch that and hear that and think like, yeah, yeah, I do belong in a room. Yeah.

[group chuckle]

Taylor: And you're in a room right now.

Sydnee: There we go, I'm in this room. Where I'm recording a podcast.

Taylor: Yeah. No, I feel the same way. I mean, it's funny because when I was young, I hated my sign. Because you know, growing up with like such an awareness of your astrological placement, and I thought Capricorn—I mean, when I was a kid, I was like, oh, that's just boring and like they're supposed to love money and math. Like that's not me. I'm an artist. I remember my active teenage rebellion in high school was making a slideshow in my astronomy class. Like about the obvious like why astrology is not practical. Like talking about how like a microwave has more effects on like a child being born in a hospital than—as far as like the microwaves and the—from planets.

Sydnee: Sure, sure.

Taylor: The gravitational pull of a tree outside has more effect. Like this whole breakdown of like why astrology is bogus. Which is, in hindsight, is an incredibly Capricorn thing to do. [chuckles]

Sydnee: It is.

Taylor: As a form of teenage rebellion. [chuckles]

Sydnee: It is.

Taylor: But as I've gotten older, like I kind of feel the same.

Sydnee: [chuckles] You made a PowerPoint about—

Taylor: I did. I made a PowerPoint presentation about why it means nothing, and nothing has meaning. But yeah, I feel the same, like I—you know, my sign is a little bit more of like a—I don't know. I mean our, like, our tarot card is the devil, it's the goat. It's the sea goat, specifically, who can go anywhere, but belongs nowhere. And that's always been how I've felt. But I also think like, I think we're at our best as humans when we allow ourselves to be products of our own design.

And I also know from just being an artist, design works best when you have certain constraints. And so when you're given this, like this is your sign, you take the parts, like you said, that resonate with you. And you allow that to shape you in a certain way. And there's like kind of a give and a take there that's—maybe some of it is from the stars. I won't rule that out. I like that belief. But I think it also just kind of helps us hone in on the things that we like about ourselves, and we like to grow about ourselves. And there's nothing wrong with that.

Sydnee: I think that's true. And I mean, I do think—again, it's so hard on an app like TikTok to tell if something is more popular or if it's just being selected for you because you keep engaging with it.

Taylor: Right. [chuckles]

Sydnee: So I never know, right? Like it's my FYP, so I don't know. I do think there is a renewed interest in astrology with the younger generation. I do think that's true. I think you see—

Taylor: [chuckles] Like check fraud and astrology.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: And I mean, in an—like, we have lived through, you know, an era of uncertainty. Or maybe we still exist in it. Maybe we haven't lived through it, we are living through it currently. Where like we have powerful forces telling us the truth is unknowable, nothing is real, believe anything you're told. You know, and you have that sort of thing, and then you have a pandemic. And now we're in this moment in America where we're like, "Are we gonna do a fascist or what do you think? Like maybe? I don't know. Wait and see!"

Taylor: [chuckles] Just a little fascist. No? Maybe?

Sydnee: Are we gonna do another fascism? Maybe. We'll find out November. But like so I mean with that, with those points in, and it's very—it's like all throughout human history, when that happens, we tend to turn to spirituality, mysticism, forces beyond us. And some of those can look like more like standard religions that we understand and know what those are. And some of those do look a little more like astrology or, you know, or Tarot, or some other sort of spiritual belief. You know, again, I don't know if it's my TikTok or if it's in general, like I see a lot more about witchcraft on my TikTok now.

Taylor: Oh, yeah, same.

Sydnee: And people engaging with that. And I will say like... I don't know, I make moon water.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: I'll do—

Taylor: You look so—[titters] like you were just like at some sort of like Witchcraft Anonymous meeting. Like I make—"Hi, my name is Sydnee, and I make moon water." [laughs]

Sydnee: I mean, I do, and I'll do a simmer pot sometimes when I feel like. One, it smells really nice, so like, they do. But two, if the house vibes are really off, if everybody's just sort of like sniping at each other and being kind of crappy, I'll make a simmer pot! And I'll be like—

Taylor: Hey, everybody. Simmer.

Sydnee: Yeah, look.

Taylor: Simmer down.

Sydnee: There's some citrus and some cinnamon in there. I threw in some lavender. Let's just all... chill. Like I—and I don't know, so like I'm part of that. I'm acting like it's outside of me, but obviously... I don't—it's interesting to see—I saw one TikToker talking about astrology, saying that we're entering another Age of Aquarius.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Is that accurate like in terms of where we are aligned?

Taylor: Well, I think that's where—Pluto goes after Capricorn, right?

Sydnee: Oh, that makes sense. So we're entering another Age of Aquarius, which is when these interests came to the forefront before... I don't know. Is that coincidence?

Taylor: Well, I don't—you know what? I don't—I—as far as anything spiritual or beyond us goes, I would never be as arrogant to think that there's nothing as much as I could believe there's definitively something. Like I'm just as kind of, I don't know, bored by people that believe in like, "This is the god, and that there's no other god, and this is my god." As

people that are like, "There's nothing. There's nothing beyond us. We're all just matter that randomly collided in space." I'm like, I don't know. That feels—how could we possibly know? And if there's something that works for you and enriches your world, and doesn't, you know, get you—like don't go too far. Because that also, you see a lot of that on TikTok too. Like sometimes people—a little too far down a rabbit hole. But if it just makes your life better, there's no harm in that.

Sydnee: I think that's the main thing. If you're using it as a tool to help you understand yourself and the world around you. I mean, I don't think—I don't know how that could be a bad thing. I think that it's when people use it to define or limit themselves, is when it gets dangerous. And I do see that sometime—man, I've heard that from people in my life. Like, "Well, I mean, what else do you expect? I'm a Libra." And it's like, well...

Taylor: Yeah...

Sydnee: I mean—

Taylor: That's one of those like, what's the—your damage can explain you, it can't excuse you? Your astrological sign can explain you, it can't excuse you. [chuckles]

Sydnee: I mean, I will never—like I cannot imagine how Justin would react if—because I do—I mean, here is the truth. I am a hothead. I do have a bad temper. And it takes a lot to set me off, but when you set me off, it's hard for me to rein it back in. It's usually pretty short-lived, but it's intense. And I know that about myself, and I'm working on it. [titters] I'm not embracing it or proud of it. And if I ever have one of those moments where Justin and I are having a disagreement and I do just like lose my cool completely—and when I say that, like I don't punch people. I'm not physically violent. Like I yell and scream and I'm really mean, and then I feel really bad about it. It's just that. But if I looked at him and said, "What do you expect? I'm an Aries." [chuckles]

Taylor: Yeah... Well, and I've had that kind of weird like astrological bigotry directed at me before. Where people that are way into it are just like, "Oh, I I've seen your chart. Like, I don't—if I'd seen your chart before we were

friends, I don't think we'd be friends now." And I'm like, that's an insane thing to say to me. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: That's an insane thing to say. [chuckles]

Sydnee: I know, I don't—I mean... [chuckles]

Taylor: Like, I don't know. I don't think that like... It might—even if it factors in, it's not everything. So, you know...

Sydnee: Well and I mean, I do think like sometimes, man, I already see the girls—I already see my kids doing it. Cooper will say sometimes that it's not like—she's into different stuff, stuff that's a little odd or eccentric. She's an Aquarius, what do you expect? Like, she will call attention to that. And I—if she's embracing that she is into stuff that not the average six-year-old is into, okay. Like, you should be. Like that's great. That's fine. Like, interesting people are interesting, and the world is better for them. And so like, cool. Charlie will own that she is a Leo. And so she walks into every situation with like, "Look at me. Check out my fit. Pay attention. I have something important to say." And like she owns that about herself. And I mean obviously there are ways that both of those can go very wrong.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But they also seem to be very empowered by those things. And so I mean, what am I going to turn around and go, "You know that's probably not true." [chuckles]

Taylor: Well, and I mean that's where—

Sydnee: You know?

Taylor: There's kind of the, I don't know, kind of the scapegoat of what is I think more interesting. What I see a lot in like the astrology TikToks is like they go beyond just there's your sun sign, but then there's your moon and

you're rising. They'll even get into like your node is in this and your—where's your Venus, and this is how you should dress.

Russ: Right.

Taylor: All of that stuff, which like I think it's enough—it's kind of like I—we haven't had this conversation I think on any episode of the podcast. But I know we've talked about this personally. When it comes to tarot, that there's enough room for interpretation that it becomes a psychological tool. You can look at a tarot reading and—when your cards are read correctly, and I don't mean like a charlatan tarot reader that just tells you like, "Oh, a man's coming into your life, ooh."

Like somebody that actually understands the cards. There's a lot of room for interpretation where we—what you see in it, is it divine intervention, or is it just a way for you to separate yourself from yourself? And actually just look at your thoughts and look at what you want to manifest in your life, what your goals are. I think tarot works that way. And I think when we look at like the whole astrological chart, there's enough room to kind of just find yourself based on who you want to be in it. Like I said I was—Capricorns, you know, are kind of boring. But I'm a Capricorn double Pisces.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: So you know, like yeah, I can be very down to earth, very structured, very like hard-headed. But I also have like a very watery, artistic, emotional center.

Sydnee: Mm-hm.

Taylor: And is that true because of where the stars were, or is that just how I honestly see myself? So those are the elements that I embrace... and it doesn't matter, does it? As long as it's—makes me feel valid.

Sydnee: Or if you were—because you were raised by a Pisces mother.

Taylor: Well, I mean, I—

Sydnee: There you go.

Taylor: I've got more—I've got more Pisces in my chart than mom.
[chuckles]

Sydnee: I don't know my other two.

Taylor: You don't know your other two?!

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: What?

Sydnee: I don't know how.

Taylor: You need to figure it out.

Sydnee: I probably did at some point but—

Taylor: Look it up right now! You can look it up.

Sydnee: I don't know how.

Taylor: It's like a thing on the internet. You just gotta know—do you know when you were born? Like the time?

Sydnee: It was right before noon, right? Like 11:58 or something, 11:56, something like that.

Taylor: Yeah, you just gonna know the time and your birthday. You can look it up. I can't believe—how... how do you not know your big three?

Sydnee: I don't know.

Taylor: You have not been on enough, TikTok, clearly. Like at this point I know that like I've got a stellium. Stellum? Stellium? It's like you've got more than four planets in one thing.

Sydnee: Yeah?

Taylor: I've got like five planets in Capricorn. And they're all like in my 10th house, I don't know. I know that means a lot. [chuckles]

Sydnee: I found a... oh, no, this calculator costs money.

Taylor: Don't, no, it should come up really quickly.

Sydnee: Free. I need a free one. Okay, my big three, I've looked them up. My son—

Taylor: I'm so curious, I can't believe I don't know this.

Sydnee: My son is in Aries.

Taylor: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: My moon is in Virgo. And my rising sign is cancer.

Taylor: Oh, wow!

Sydnee: So there you go.

Taylor: That's interesting.

Sydnee: Yeah. I don't know if this matters that my Mercury and my Mars were both in Aries. But my Venus was in Taurus. So there you go. So, I'll look up what all that means about me. I don't know. All I've ever known is that I'm an Aries.

Taylor: Yeah, but I feel like that does—I mean... I don't know, you can look into that. But that, especially the cancer I feel like makes sense. Because cancers are all like soft, emotional, like... you know, like that—there's a lot of that.

Sydnee: Do you think that's why I like to garden?

Taylor: Well, that could also be Virgo though, because Virgos are super earthy.

Sydnee: I love to—I feel most—I mean like I—yes, I know I'm confrontational. I enjoy confrontation. I like to fight with people. I understand all that part of me. But I also could just disappear into my garden for hours and be very happy, just like digging around and being quiet and...

Taylor: Well, I think—and I don't—I might get this wrong, because I'm not—I don't have too much of a grasp on it. But I think it's like, your sun sign is sort of like what you front with. And your moon is sort of like what's interior. And your rising is sort of what guides you.

Sydnee: It's interesting too because two of my big three now are in the—are in the villain era.

Taylor: Yeah?

Sydnee: Mm-hm.

Taylor: So...

Sydnee: Interesting.

Taylor: [laughs] Interesting.

Sydnee: All right, so I'm ready.

Taylor: Wow.

Sydnee: We'll see how we come out the other side.

Taylor: Well, I—only one of my big three, but then I've got almost all of my planets in Capricorn, so we'll see how that goes. [chuckles]

Sydnee: I will say, I now have on my watch, I have the watch face that has the lunar cycle around it, so that I don't miss a full moon.

Taylor: Our next one is, what the 13th, 14th?

Sydnee: I think, I think the next one's in Aries.

Taylor: It's an important moon too. It's the most magical moon of the year.

Sydnee: Mm-hm. Yeah. Well, anyway, I think that also if you don't like—if this stuff really isn't your jam, I will tell you that it is fun to find out like what sort of house your sign most reminds them of. Or what you know, wedding dress looks like your sign. Or you know, I think that kind of stuff is really fun... Well, I don't know.

Taylor: I think deep down we—I mean, not even deep down. Like we all like hearing about ourselves. That's just part of who we are as humans.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: And anything that you can kind of read. Like it's like fortune telling, you know, you like to read something that's like, this is about you. As long as you don't go over the edge with it and let it start making decisions for you that you wouldn't otherwise make, I think it's healthy and fine, and can be fun. And in the case of this planetary event, just going to lean into the idea that all of my hard times are behind me and things are going to get better. I just have to get through the next two months. [laughs]

Sydnee: I am looking at it the same way. And I will—one last caveat I will throw out there. I think that there are a lot of aspects that we've talked about where like trying to use something to help you understand yourself, your emotions better, and then by virtue of that, make better choices and interact better with others and have a better human experience on Earth, is all really good stuff. And it also sounds a lot like what therapy does.

Taylor: Oh, yeah!

Sydnee: And I would just like to say that this is in no way a replacement. [chuckles]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, it is—while there are similar—there are like similarities that you could like, from what we've said, draw on. This is in no way a replacement for actual professionally guided therapy counseling, working with a psychologist. Working with someone who has been trained to help you with these matters is always a great thing to do. And probably most of, if not all of us, could use that. And while this is also fun and can be helpful, it does not replace that. [titters]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I would just like to make that statement very clearly. But, well, Tey, this was fun. I love the zodiac TikToks and I—obviously, because the more I engage with them, the more I get. And that's most of my FYP right now.

Taylor: Yeah. I mean specifically around this, this whatever, Pluto just doing a little sidestep, moonwalking, whatever. Let's just all get through it. Us and our fellow cardinal signs. [titters]

Sydnee: Mm-hm.

Taylor: Probably everybody's got a cardinal sign on the chart, so everybody's really a part of it, right? That's the thing. You can pick and choose what you're paying attention to, so there you go.

Sydnee: There you go. There you go.

Taylor: Everything's gonna get better.

Sydnee: Tim Walz is an Aries.

Taylor: I saw that.

Sydnee: Yeah, I know.

Taylor: That makes a lot of sense.

Sydnee: All right. All right then.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: [chuckles] Well, thank you, listeners. For next week, we're gonna talk about—we're gonna do like a throwback episode. We're gonna talk about the old Scooby Doo movie, the one—the live action one with like Sarah Michelle Gellar and what Freddie Prinze Jr. And...

Taylor: Matthew Lillard.

Sydnee: Matthew Lillard was in that one, yup. Okay, so that'll be for next week.

Taylor: A little preview to spooky season.

Sydnee: There we go.

Taylor: All right.

Sydnee: Until then, you should check out maximumfun.org, all the other great podcasts there. Thank you to Maximum Fun. You can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org. And thank you to the Nouvellas 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: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Sydnee: I am still buffering.

Taylor: And I am too.

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

Taylor: I slowed down thinking you were gonna join me. Oh, wait, we don't do that anymore. [chuckles]

Sydnee: No, we got it. We are on it.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: Perfect. Excellent.

Taylor: Great job, everybody.

Sydnee: Great job.

Taylor: It's because we're in our villain era.

Sydnee: That's why, yeah. Pluto.

Taylor: [laughs]

John: One thing we all have in common; we all have a mind.

Guest 1: It makes me so scared. Because I'm like, when is the bad thing going to happen?

John: And minds can be kind of unpredictable and eccentric.

Guest 2: Everybody wants to hear that they're not alone. Everybody wants to hear that someone else has those same thoughts.

John: Depresh Mode with John Moe is about how interesting minds intersect with the lives and work of the people who have them. Comedians, authors, experts, all sorts of folks trying to make sense of their world.

Guest 3: It's not admitting something bad if you say this is scary.

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