

## Still Buffering 437: The Rehearsal

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[theme song, "Baby You Change Your Mind" by the 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:** Well, it's summer break over here, Tey.

**Taylor:** Oh? Time to go crazy!

**Sydnee:** Mm-hm! Yeah, we've gone so crazy here.

**Taylor:** Just playing with—I don't know, I'm trying to like cue the kids montage summer break in my head. Like you gotta be running through sprinklers, you gotta be eating push pops. You gotta have like goggles on your head constantly.

**Sydnee:** Always. And those—

**Taylor:** Even if you're not in a pool.

**Sydnee:** And those rings around your eyes from where you've been wearing them.

**Taylor:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. A lot of pizza. A lot of pizza in different sizes, different formats of pizza.

**Sydnee:** We, I will say, despite the lack of any sort of Book It program, for which we could have received a personal pan pizza, we have—

**Taylor:** Well—

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Yeah...

**Sydnee:** That usually is part of the end of the year, right? Like, you get your Book It thing, and you get to go to Pizza Hut and get your free pizza.

**Taylor:** Is that not a thing anymore?

**Sydnee:** I don't think—I mean, certainly not—there's no mention of it at our kids' school. So...

**Taylor:** Would anyone learn to read without the dangling of a personal pan pizza?

**Sydnee:** [titters] Apparently, they do—they do—now they do AR points, which, this is much less exciting. So, you have to get a certain number of AR points. Those are Accelerated Reader points. And so like, you have to read the books, and then you take a little quiz to prove that you read the book, and then you get the points. And once you hit your goal—and the goal is different for each grade, obviously. Once you hit your goal, you get to go on the AR field trip. So...

**Taylor:** Is there pizza on the field trip?

**Sydnee:** No, there was no pizza, there was no food. They went to City Hall.

**Taylor:** Oh...

**Sydnee:** Where—because our city hall has a theater in it, and they showed a movie.

**Taylor:** Okay, well, you could have let—they went to a movie.

**Sydnee:** They watched Parent Trap.

**Taylor:** [chuckles] "They went foodless to City Hall" sounds terrible.

**Sydnee:** They went food—

**Taylor:** It sounds like a punishment.

**Sydnee:** They probably had to walk, too. They went foodless to City Hall. They do—they make those kids walk everywhere now.

**Taylor:** Walk foodless to City Hall!

**Sydnee:** [titters] I feel like that's a big shift. I don't feel like we walked on field trips a lot. My kids walk on field trips *all the time*.

**Taylor:** Well, your kids go to school in like the downtown. We went to school in the—

**Sydnee:** I guess that's true.

**Taylor:** In the mountains. [chuckles] Various mountains.

**Sydnee:** Yes, yes. Then we were up on a hill.

**Taylor:** Mm-hm.

**Sydnee:** There's nowhere to go.

**Taylor:** There's nowhere to walk to.

**Sydnee:** No. The... it's—it was—they went to City Hall, and they watched The Parent Trap with Lindsay Lohan.

**Taylor:** Okay, sure, that's a good one. Classic.

**Sydnee:** Just, well, but like a strange choice for 2025, a bunch of elementary school kids, right?

**Taylor:** They were getting them ready, because there's about to be the sequel, right? They're about to do another one.

**Sydnee:** Oh, yeah... yeah...

**Taylor:** I don't—that would be a weird thought, like we gotta get these kids ready.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** We gotta make sure they're versed in the old tomes.

**Sydnee:** Well, they told me, they were like, "We're going on the AR field trip today," I was like, "That's so exciting." I—which like, I know, I signed the permission slip. I... I think this one was free. Field trips, by the way, the cost of field trips, this is a problem for me. I don't mind paying a few bucks for my kid to go on a field trip. That's okay. I don't mind it. But it's always an amount of money—and they want cash, they don't want a check. They want it in cash. And it's in a—

**Taylor:** [chuckles] No! Oh, no.

**Sydnee:** It's an amount of money that is so inconvenient. It's always like eight dollars. And it's like—

**Taylor:** What's wrong with—well, what do you got against eight dollars?

**Sydnee:** Because then I have to find like either eight ones, or a five and three ones, which I don't have—

**Taylor:** That is how money works. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** I don't have any of those. Or like it'll be like 16 dollars. There's always something like that, that I have to like find a collection of bills—

**Taylor:** You want like the round 20? [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Well, yeah, because what I tried to do is—I didn't have—all I had was—we had just gotten cash, and all I had were 20s. Because we'd just gotten cash. And so, I sent a 20, and I said—and I wrote a note with it. I said, "I don't need change back. Put any extra—put the extra towards another kid who maybe forgot," or something, you know.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** You know, like I feel like that's a nice little gesture. There you go, now two kids can go on a field trip, whatever. And take—keep the rest for classroom supplies. I know you need it. They will not take that. They sent me back change and said, "Please send exact change." [chuckles] "Please send the exact amount next time."

**Taylor:** No way? What?

**Sydnee:** And I was trying! I was trying... I don't know, it was—

**Taylor:** Why was that even that—if all those other kids get exact change, why was it that hard to give you change? Because then they'd have a bevy of change.

**Sydnee:** Right?

**Taylor:** Hm...

**Sydnee:** I don't know. I don't know. But like, keep it. You always are asking us for tissues, I know you need tissues. We get emails from the school like every three weeks saying "Our classes out of tissues." [chuckles] Which like, those kids are snottin' everywhere.

**Taylor:** Well, that, I mean, of course. Like you should just send them with a personal box every day, right? That's just—

**Sydnee:** I do send them with personal packs of tissues most days.

**Taylor:** Yeah...

**Sydnee:** But yeah. So like, I—they could have bought tissues. But the AR field trip was free. And they told me, as they left for school that day they were like, "Listen—" Because both girls got to go to it. "We—" They told us, "We are going to see a movie that hasn't even been released yet." [chuckles] And I thought, no, you're not.

**Teylor:** [chuckles] It's only eight dollars, that's absolutely not true.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] No, you're not. You are not seen a movie at City Hall!

**Teylor:** The first screening of the yet unreleased, I don't even think shot, revival of The Parent Trap.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] It's the new—

**Teylor:** Huntington, West Virginia, City Hall.

**Sydnee:** It's the new Superman!

**Teylor:** One showing.

**Sydnee:** The new Superman movie. [laughs] They're showing it at City Hall in Huntington, West Virginia. At noon—no, sorry, noon 30.

**Teylor:** It's a test audience.

**Sydnee:** It was a 12:30 to elementary school kids.

**Teylor:** Why not? Why not?! You know? They read all those books.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. They earned it. No, it was—

**Teylor:** Why did they think that? Why did they think it was gonna be a—

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] I have no idea. I never know why they—they come home with stories all the time that I'm like, that's not... that's not true. The end of the year is my favorite, because they both think all their friends are moving. Like they'll come home and they'll be like, "I'm just so sad because—" and then they'll start listing all these kids in the class who are not going to be in their class next year, because they're all moving. And every year I'm like, "Listen, I'm sure somebody's moving. Like, statistically, probably. But all these kids aren't moving. They're not. I think you're confused." And they're like, [spoofs crying] "No, I really think so. I really

think they're all moving." And then like the next year comes and, no, they didn't. Like one kid moved.

**Taylor:** [titters] You've got very emotive children. I think they like to emote. I think that, you know, like...

**Sydnee:** That's true.

**Taylor:** Creating a narrative that invites emotion is probably... appealing to them.

[group chuckle]

**Sydnee:** And maybe the problem is like, it's—it stems from having—I think a lot of kids who have like a physician parent probably suffer from this. Where I'm constantly like, "Oh, it's not that big a deal. Oh, don't cry about that. You're fine. You're fine. Stand up. No, that's not broken. No, that's just a bruise." [chuckles]

**Taylor:** They have to raise the stakes artificially to get your—get your sympathy. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** I'm like, listen—

**Taylor:** It's not one kid. It's like, "18 kids in my class are dying tomorrow. What about that, mom? What if that was the truth? Would you tell me to walk that off?" [titters]

**Sydnee:** "I literally brought someone back to life today. I don't—I'm not impressed by any of this." [chuckles]

**Taylor:** Jeez? [titters]

**Sydnee:** I don't say that. I'm joking.

[group chuckle]

**Taylor:** I don't think you should say that to your kids. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** No, I wouldn't say that to my kids. No, no, I try to be sensitive. I just, you know, I know that all the kids in their class aren't moving before next year. And I know that's not—

**Taylor:** It may feel that way, you know? Summer used to feel so long, and now it's just like—

**Sydnee:** That's true.

**Taylor:** You blink and it's over.

**Sydnee:** I know... I know. We just started, we've—we watched Sister Act 2 twice, so, you know, we've really started summer off with a bang.

**Taylor:** That's—okay. [titters] I was—I was trying to understand the segue there. But no, that's just what you're doing. Okay.

**Sydnee:** They just love Sister Act 2. That's what—what would you like to do? It's summer break. And I'm trying to like really not put pressure—okay, first of all, it's been chilly. So...

**Taylor:** Yeah. Oh, oh, you're telling me? Up here in 50 degree New York City, rain every day? Like—

**Sydnee:** Is that how it's been?

**Taylor:** What is this?

**Sydnee:** Right?

**Taylor:** This is the first—the sun is out, currently. I don't trust it. I think she's gonna—as soon as I'm ready to walk outside, she's gonna go hide again, because that's how it's been for the last week and a half, two weeks.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. No, I know what you—because like we have not—we have not been swimming at all, because it's just too chilly. We've been outside—I mean, during the day, like it's sunny. And so, you know, in the low 60s and



sunny is perfectly fine. I am always cold, so like, give me 80 degrees every day and I'm happy. But...

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** But like it's perfectly fine weather to play outside in. But once the sun goes down... it's cold. I mean, it's gotten down into the 30s! What is happening?

**Taylor:** I don't like it. Whatever it is, I don't like it.

**Sydnee:** No, I don't either. It's devastated my crops.

**Taylor:** Your crops?!

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] My crops.

**Taylor:** [laughs] Your garden? Saying your crops sounds like—

[group laugh]

**Taylor:** "A field of wheat behind you." [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** I guess I just mean my delicata. I don't know what happened. If anybody has any tips on what is—for a while—because, you know, it's the cicada year. And so, there's cicadas everywhere. And so—

**Taylor:** Sure, yeah.

**Sydnee:** Like I went outside, and everything else in my garden is doing fine. It's okay. It's not doing great, but it's doing fine. It's alive. All my delicata were either dead or *missing*. Like they're gone, like the starts are gone. Or they—like the vines have been shredded. And I don't know—

**Taylor:** And the cicadas do this?

**Sydnee:** Well, the—so no. But that was my initial like hypothesis, like what's new this year. This has never happened. That's usually my most

abundant crop. And so, what has happened? It's not the cicadas. Cicadas are actually not really that bad for your garden. They do things to trees and stuff. This is what I learned. I did a lot of reading about cicadas. But they don't do anything, typically, to a garden. Unless they like land on your plant, and just because they're so heavy, they could kind of push it over.  
[chuckles]

**Taylor:** Yeah. [titters] Aw...

**Sydnee:** Yeah. [chuckles] But other than that, they don't really—they don't really do anything to gardens. So, I don't know what—I don't know what shredded my delicata. I'm gonna have to completely replant that bed with something else. They're all gone.

**Taylor:** I think—I feel like I would be more concerned—I'd be less interested in immediately replanting it, and more concerned with the fact that you don't know what stole and shredded something on your property. Like I would—I would spend a little bit of time figuring—solving that mystery.

**Sydnee:** This is—this is my—this is my gardening—

**Taylor:** With a neighbor that hates squash?

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] The neighbors came over and destroyed my squash.

**Taylor:** "I hate delicata!" And they just raged out. Because that sounds personal. Not against you, maybe, but definitely against the squash.

**Sydnee:** Maybe the kids were tired of eating delicata, because I grew so—I grew so much!

**Taylor:** [chuckles] You know what? I could see Cooper out there like, "We gotta stop this."

**Sydnee:** "I don't want to eat those."

**Taylor:** "We have to put an end to this." [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** "It was novel for a while, but I'm over it." No, I will tell you that you do all this investigation, all of this like, I'm gonna solve all these clues and figure out what it is in your garden, nine times out of 10, it's a bunny.

**Taylor:** It's a bunny.

**Sydnee:** It's a bunny. Nine times out of 10. Every time I've gone on these like quests to figure out what destroyed something in my garden, I eventually uncover a bunny. So, it's almost certainly a bunny. Why didn't the bunny mess with the rest of my veggies? I don't know. But I bet it's a bunny.

**Taylor:** Squash bunny.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. I bet it's a bunny.

**Taylor:** I hope it's a bunny. That's a benign answer to what could be a disturbing question. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** The first year, I didn't have a fence around my garden, and the deer just came out and feasted right after I planted everything. So, I learned from that year. [titters]

**Taylor:** Aw... they were like, "You made us a buffet, that's so nice! You built your home on our ancestral lands, but at least you gave us dinner."

**Sydnee:** Listen, I try to—I feed the deer now. Now I throw out food that's like, that's your food, stay away from my beds. [chuckles] This is your food. You can have this. And I'm really good at sharing the wild blackberries with them. I have like my section, and then the birds have theirs, and the deer have theirs, and we share. There's enough for all.

**Taylor:** You partition them off, you label them.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] These are—these—

**Taylor:** Because they can definitely read.

**Sydnee:** These are human blackberries, don't touch these.

**Taylor:** [chuckles] Humans only.

**Sydnee:** Humans only for these.

**Taylor:** And they look at this sign like, "Ah, all right, that's fine, okay. Well, they labeled it. We can't—we can't—" It's like fae rules, like there's a—that's a label there.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Taylor:** They can't impede on it.

**Sydnee:** Isn't there something I could do to—some sort of—I'm sure there's a fae rule, there's something I could put up. Like bury a fork or something, I don't know.

**Taylor:** Just try it. Start it.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** Bury a fork. [chuckles] Now it's a thing!

**Sydnee:** You don't want to mess with a salt circle., that's too powerful. You don't throw salt around just anywhere.

**Taylor:** You also don't want to salt your earth, quite literally. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** No. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Even if you're in the nature of growing things, it seems like a bad thing to do.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, I'm not gonna throw salt out there. [chuckles] I'm trying to rehab—a lot of this soil is like clay. And so, I've been working on rehabbing it for a long time. That is not going to be the way to do it.

**Taylor:** Yeah, don't salt your earth.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, I'm trying with my clover yard and my creeping thyme. I'm working on it. Tey, we had an interesting watch for this episode.

**Taylor:** We did, I... usually, we pick things that we both have some experience with. I think this was sort of a random one where I have not seen any of it. I think you had a little bit of an understanding of it, but—

**Sydnee:** I had watched—so, Nathan Fielder has done a couple different shows. And I had watched an episode of Nathan for You, or two. Like I had seen—I was familiar with that program. I didn't see what—there was something else he did, I didn't see that one, before this one. The Rehearsal. I had seen one episode of this, and it's just—anything that kind of gets into like awkward humor, where somebody's uncomfortable, I have trouble with generally.

And so, I kind of avoided it, because sometimes that's the joke. I'm not saying that's the only joke he makes, but like sometimes that's what the joke is. It's kind of like that episode of The Office with Scott's Tots. It's like the one episode of The Office I just, I can never watch again because it's so uncomfortable. It makes me like hide behind the couch while I'm watching it.

**Taylor:** Mm-hm.

**Sydnee:** It's like that. Anything like that, I—so, I don't know. I was not as familiar, and I think I probably didn't watch a lot of it for a reason, now that I've watched it again. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Yeah... yeah, I really—I really wanted to—I like to only talk about things that we like, and then we just kind of don't talk about things we don't like, because you know... But then this is—we backed into it! We agreed to it. And then I was like, oh, I don't think this is for me...

**Sydnee:** I think it's—well, and I think it's fine to say, first of all, we cannot like something, and it doesn't mean that it's bad or no one should like it, or that we're passing judgment on its existence.

**Taylor:** Right.

**Sydnee:** But I do think it's interesting why—I mean, obviously it's popular. It's very buzzy. This is his third television series.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** So, clearly a lot of people enjoy it, because it keeps getting made. But it... it didn't speak to us. [titters]

**Taylor:** No. Well, and, you know, just as a thought, like you mentioned the awkward humor. What's your—yeah, isn't the whole thing. But like, I get that entertainment exists like in different, you know, genres, because people like novel experiences, right? So, you know, like, sometimes I'm mystified by people that like really dramatic, emotionally charged, sad media. Because I'm like, I feel like I've had enough emotionally charged sad moments in my life. I don't need to artificially experience that.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hm.

**Taylor:** I don't want to. That's good for you, I just, I've had too much. And so, I think it's the same thing with the awkward humor. It's like, my life is awkward, so I don't want to artificially have—like, I don't need to go experience awkwardness on TV. I don't want to. That's just, it's just—[chuckles]

**Sydnee:** It's—

**Taylor:** It's bad.

**Sydnee:** Yes. Well, and I mean, I think, I—maybe, you know, maybe there's—maybe that's a touch of it there, is like, I do a lot to avoid that sort of awkwardness. And it's the same as like—I've always said, after I had kids, any movie that involves—like part of the plot is a kid dies, I just can't. Like I'm just—that is not—and even like—it really infected even like my enjoyment of old time like slasher movies and stuff, if it was like high school kids or something. Like...

**Taylor:** Oh, wow, yeah.

**Sydnee:** It really like—it kind of—it bled into a lot of media that I had engaged with without thinking even previously, you know, and hadn't had any effect on me. And I think it's because once you start to empathize more with different kinds of people, or you recognize aspects of something in your own life, it's harder to detach yourself from it as media. And so, I think there is a truth there that like I often feel nervous about social interactions, and so I don't really want to... you know what I mean? I don't—I don't want to see it play out awkwardly, because I'm already running those scenarios in my head every day.

**Taylor:** So, okay, let's... I feel like probably—like the first episode, which is what if anyone's given this a chance they've probably engaged with.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** Like, I... it was something about the comparison of how just like genuine the people were. Because I guess that's the thing that bothered me about it, it's like he brings on just normal people. And the joke seems to be, look at these normal people. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Look at these normal people with their silly little problems. They silly, little, small problems. And, oh, we're gonna build this whole set about these silly little people and their small problems. And like the setting up of the one lady, like the lady that they're afraid of. The birder lady that—

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Might be judgmental. And like, "Oh, we're gonna set her up for a fake interview and then show that she just talks over the fake interviewee." And it's like, I don't... I don't know. Like, that's your editing choice for this random person. But like, maybe she just like got a chance to talk about herself, and it was nice. You know, like, you're getting this snippet of a life of someone that did not... I'm sure there's releases involved, but like—

**Sydnee:** There are, yeah.

**Taylor:** What is the—what is the point here, other than just showing, "Ha-ha-ha, look at these little lives. And, ooh, like how small their problems are, and how silly they are. And let's play up how silly their small little problems are."

**Sydnee:** Well, I mean, I think—I think the—and I don't know. I would, I—my guess would be the counter argument that they would make is, we are... we are giving them importance by focusing on them this way. By making it—like by building an elaborate set and rehearsing, we're making the interaction—we're giving the interaction the importance it deserves.

Because we're actually like—not only will I practice in my head what I'm going to say, I am going to build an entire scenario to go through this, you know what I mean? Like, I think that's the conceit. But I think the problem—and I'm not making that case. I don't necessarily see it that way, but I think that would probably be the counter argument. I think the problem—and he says it in the episode that got all the controversy with the fake singing contest.

**Taylor:** Right.

**Sydnee:** He says he does not believe sincerity exists. He doesn't believe in sincerity. I think that if you—if you come from that perspective, there are no real—like, then you—then criticisms like, well, but you are making the scenario, and you're editing the scenario, and you're shaping the scenario. So like, whatever you've created is false. It cannot be real, because you shaped it in the way you made it into a TV show.

And the argument would be, well, yeah, that's nothing sincere. Everything is artifice. Everything is for effect. Everything has an agenda. There is no sincerity. And so, you've—I don't know, you know what I mean? Like it's the default, it's the catch 22, so it never matters. Whatever you set up, no matter how people react to it or how dishonest it might feel, like that's the point.



**Taylor:** Well, I have two thoughts from that. The first is that I'm offended at the idea that sincerity doesn't exist, because I think sincerity is the center of everything good. I think sincerity is the center of heart. And I will agree that we are not often always having sincere conversations back and forth. I mean—

**Sydnee:** Sure.

**Taylor:** I feel like it's, you know—it's like people that rage against like, "I don't want to talk about the weather every day." It's like, you know what you're saying to your coworker when you say, "Oh, man, the weather's bad today" or "the weather's nice today." Yeah, that's not a sincere conversation. You're saying... I'm here and so are you, and that's good.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hm.

**Taylor:** It is—there is sincerity behind it. Our words don't often encapsulate it, but every time we reach out and try to have interactions with other people, there is sincerity in that I want to connect with you in this moment. That's sincere, that's beautiful, and that always exists. So, it—and to that I say like, it reminds me of—you know like when a stand-up comic will make an off-color joke and then say, "I'm just saying what everybody's thinking."

And you're like, no, I think you're the only one thinking that, man, and that's your problem. That's kind of your problem to deal with. And I guess that is the show, is he's kind of working through this problem. It's just—[chuckles] it's not... like I think it's a you thing that you don't... that you don't think these moments had power and beauty and importance, just existing on their own.

**Sydnee:** And well, and I think—

**Taylor:** Because it did!

**Sydnee:** I think the problem is too that—I mean, and I don't know—I am not going to speak to Nathan Fielder's like inner life. Like, I don't know what he really means. I don't know what's a joke. I don't know how much it is him. You know what I mean? I don't know those things. And so I'm not

going to make assumptions about it. But I think because I don't know—if I don't know like—I mean, he's clearly smart and he—there are times where it is funny. I don't know that it's a comedy. I don't know what it—I don't know how to define the genre of any of these shows, really.

There are times where it is funny. And I think it's intentional. So, I think he is smart enough to make clever, interesting content. So, then there must be intention. And then if there's intention, if it's not just this sort of exploration... then I don't know what I—I don't know that I like what I get sometimes. I don't know that I like putting people through these scenarios as—I know that they're willing participants because they signed releases. But were they willing to be part of a joke? I don't know. I feel like those are different things.

**Taylor:** And I mean, I think like—I felt it was really telling along those lines, when he was talking about his experience as a judge on—or as a—like a pre-judge—

**Sydnee:** Right.

**Taylor:** On a singing competition, that informed a lot of the setup for the singing thing. And like, oh, he would just, you know... end people's dreams. Just... that was his job.

**Sydnee:** Right.

**Taylor:** And I felt like there was a—like, do you feel bad about that? Like, is that what this is going towards? It was like, no, I just want to know like how do you do that better? Or like how... how can you more efficiently reject people? And he's fixated on like the one lady that's good at it.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hm.

**Taylor:** Like, she—people give them—give her good reviews, even if she rejects them. Even if she tells them they're not good singers. And I don't know, that whole setup, it's like... I feel like the joke is, isn't it silly that people cared so much about this goofy little singing competition? But even that, like... maybe it's just bad timing in the world. Because I'm like, do

you—I can totally understand somebody that lives in the cycle of just, "I work a dead-end job, I struggle... Something. Can something come along and get me out of this?"

And yeah, you latch all your hopes onto a silly little singing competition. You latch your hopes on to anything! No matter how insane it sounds. If it means you might be able to break out of the pattern you're living. And I don't know, if you've never lived that pattern, it might mystify you. I can understand that, and I can give that grace. But that's, as someone that's lived it, I'm just looking at normal people that like are looking for an opportunity to hope that something can change for them. Yeah, that's a... [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Well, it's—I mean, it—

**Taylor:** I feel for them. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** It really is tough because a lot of what we think of as—and I know— I mean, this heat was on the Canadian version. And I mean, I think his show is in Canada, right? So like, I'm speaking from an American perspective right now. A lot of the American dream, quote/unquote, as we know it, is not attainable for the vast majority of Americans. It's just not, right? And so, and we—and like, whether or not people vote like they know that, a lot of us know that. A lot of people know that. Like, it is not—especially younger people understand like, me, just being able to like finish school, pay off my debt, own a home, have transportation, whether it's a car or you live somewhere with public transit, whatever, raise a family if I want one, you know, go on vacation a couple times a year if I want to. You know, like that kind of thing is feeling less and less attainable.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** But you know what does—it's like the lottery effect. Somebody does get plucked out of that and wins the lottery. Kelly Clarkson was just a girl from Texas.

**Taylor:** [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** I mean—you know what I mean? Like, she was just like your average girl next door, who was not rich or famous, didn't come from some powerful, well-connected family. She just had an incredible voice, and won. And so like, there is some sort of... magic around those sorts of competitions that we haven't broken yet. Because people do get plucked out of obscurity, and their wildest dreams come true.

And so, I think playing on that gets tough. You know what—and I think it—and I guess this wasn't in—because he said it was in LA, this was shot in LA. So, I think play—especially people who are in LA, who maybe have gone there to pursue that. Who maybe have left everything behind to pursue that. And we know it happens. We've seen it happen. I think that's a tough—I don't know, I—the whole conceit made me really uncomfortable like, oh, these people... these people don't know.

**Taylor:** Yeah, well, because it's... I don't know, I mean, I feel like it's mean-spirited, even if that's not the intent. It comes back to the initial smugness that turned me off from like episode one, which is just the idea that you're somehow different than these people. You're somehow viewing them from above, and trying to understand them. Like, I don't know, they're somehow lesser than you.

Which, just... like... like there is an audience that will appreciate this, and they'll get it. And it's just like, okay, then I'm not part of it. Because I'm one of them, I'm on the side of the every person that does go through hoops in their brains trying to do the best by the people around them. I do rehearse my social situations when I have to have awkward conversations a million times. I do that in a constructed set in my own head. [titters]

**Sydnee:** Well, I think—I think a really like—and let me say, I did—like I read some background that they did sign releases that detailed exactly what they were doing, at least according to the lawyers involved. Like they—if they had read the entire thing, they would know this isn't a real competition. Like, it is in the sense that you're competing to get one of those yellow pieces of paper. But that's, you know, like that's nothing. Like that—there—it doesn't go anywhere. You get a yellow piece of paper. That's it. But that if they had read the whole thing, they would know that.

I still think a lot of people don't read the whole thing, and it looked so much like American Idol. The whole thing had an American Idol vibe. Obviously, even the golden tickets. Like, it—I think it would be really easy to just sign and move on. Most of us don't read the—I mean, he did a whole—he had done a whole episode previously about how people don't read contracts. So like, people don't read contracts. [chuckles]

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydney:** So, I mean—so like, that was out there. They were—and so legally, they are insulated. And so when people say they want to sue, they're probably not going to be successful. That doesn't mean it's not mean. You can do mean things that are still legal.

**Taylor:** Yeah, though that's—I definitely fall on the side of, it's probably totally legal that he did this. I do think it just kind of sucks a little bit. [chuckles]

**Sydney:** Yes! And that was kind of where I came down on it, is like—I think that urge to like, "We should sue somebody," I think if you have incited that urge in people, for me, that's not a positive thing. Maybe that's what you want. Maybe you're, you know, a disrupter. Maybe that's what you want. But it was the moment—the moment that really hurt, other than like they have the young girl crying early on when she gets rejected, And then he rejects the girl where he's trying to like pretend to be nice. The moment where he calls the guy back, the guy that got rejected, and he wants to ask him why he scored him so low—

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydney:** And he calls him and asks him to come back. Like, Justin and I were watching this, and we both had the same reaction like, oh, no, that guy's gonna think he's being called back.

**Taylor:** Getting the chance, yeah.

**Sydney:** Because they rethought it.

**Taylor:** Mm-hm.

**Sydney:** And that was all I could think, is—as I was—you're watching the car pull into a parking garage. And he's walk—and Nathan Fielder is walking towards the car. And this guy's getting out of the car. And you know this guy is thinking—I mean, because there's a camera crew there. You know he's thinking, "They changed their mind. They saw something in me. Oh! This is it. This is it." You know that's got to be what he's thinking. And then he's like, "I just want to know why you didn't like me." And it was just like, hah! Ah, like, I can't—

**Taylor:** If that happened to me, I can't say I wouldn't just punch him in the face. [chuckles]

**Sydney:** I couldn't believe the guy didn't get upset. The guy was so nice about it.

**Taylor:** So nice. He was so nice. I mean, we're only seeing what we're edited to see, but like... I don't—

**Sydney:** I mean, he engaged with him, he talked with him, he watched the video of the other woman rejecting somebody. And like... just the—ah, that moment. I don't know... I don't know how you don't watch that and think like, "Oh, man, I really put that guy through the ringer. That's not nice. Like I really—like I put that guy through it."

And did the guy—that's the problem. I think if everybody who participated knew what they were going through, I think that would be one thing. But I understand that for an experiment, like I understand scientifically, they can't know. Because if they knew, they wouldn't have real reactions, right? The rejection wouldn't hurt, because you didn't lose anything, really. But... but, man, that feels lousy.

**Taylor:** It does. And I mean, as this is a popular show, and a lot of people watch it, it just, it leaves me with the question of, who is this for? And where are these people? Somebody likes this, it's just... and that's fine. There's different things for everybody. That's—

**Sydnee:** Well, and Justin informed me that it is funny when he is trying to like reject that—the girl towards the end in a positive way. And he's trying to like say the things—

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Like the other woman said—

**Taylor:** "You were fantastic, but—"

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. And like, "You have what it takes," and "you got up this morning and came here." And like he gives that really beautiful speech, that like would be a really good speech to reject somebody.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** That would be a really beautiful thing to say. But we know it's not sincere, because he has told us it's not. And so, I don't know what to do at that moment. Now, Justin thought it was very funny. And he said you—he said there are going to be people who find this funny, because this is funny. So, okay.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** So there's funny parts in it, I just obviously am not the intended audience. I don't know what it is, though. Like that's the thing, I just, I left thinking I don't know... I don't know what to do with any of this.

**Taylor:** It felt like I'm watching a million-dollar show of a man trying to educate himself on the fact that other humans are people.

**Sydnee:** It's hard, I... I decided a long time ago, and I think it's fair to say that this is true for a lot of us who do these podcasts.

**Taylor:** [chuckles] Where is this going?

**Sydnee:** I decided a long time ago to reject cynicism. That I did not have a place in my—in my personal life for cynicism. It doesn't help me, it... it does not feed my soul. I am not better at interacting with people when I'm cynical. I'm not better at communicating. And I close a lot of doors with cynicism that I'd rather leave open. And so, I try really hard to reject cynical thinking and cynical worldviews, and embrace earnest, open-hearted dialog. And try to give benefit of the doubt, and try to accept that someone is being sincere if they seem sincere. Like I try to interact with the world that way. I don't always succeed, but I try really hard. And I think this show has a lot of inherent cynicism. And I think that's why I just, I think on a value level, I find myself conflicted.

**Taylor:** I can agree with that. And I mean, I'm not claiming some like gritty, "I've been through it." I just, I work a normal job, and I work with normal people, and that's been my experience my entire adult life. It's not some like... the people that, I don't know, that... you view as less than you, those are—that's the world. Like, whoever you think this audience that you're gonna finally be like performing for is just made up of all those people that you don't think are on your same level. But I feel like I had that thought when I was a teenager, and so it's not interesting to see somebody learn that other people matter at their big age.

**Sydnee:** Well, and I don't—I mean, I don't know that he would think of it that way. I know what you're saying. Like, I agree with you, and I viewed it the same way. I think what he would say is, "I don't know how to connect or interact or discuss or reject," or whatever the rehearsed thing is. "I don't know how to do that, and I am trying, through a series of experiments, or whatever, to learn."

**Taylor:** I think if it was done earnestly, that I would be on board with it. I mean, I want to—

**Sydnee:** Yes! Yes.

**Taylor:** Like, approach the fact that I know—and I've heard it from my friends. Like, I know there's a certain quadrant of people that view this show



through like... like, this is sort of with the experience of like being socially awkward, or even like being autistic—like this is sort of how difficult it is to maneuver social interactions. And I think if it was approached that way earnestly, it wouldn't—it wouldn't bother me. It's that I just don't think that's... like, that's not what that is.

**Sydnee:** Which he kind of—I mean, I will say, during the whole setup where he's supposedly at the German Netflix headquarters—

**Taylor:** Right.

**Sydnee:** The actor calls him out on that. Like, the actor says all that, and he does leave that in the show. So, on some level, he understands that, right? Like, that's the other thing. It's very meta. But if you pull back out, like that is left in the episode. So, he must know that that's an interpretation of this work, is that you set up these contrived scenarios that you feel are the way the world looks, but you haven't actually asked the other people how they think the world looks. You're assuming a lot. And like, he calls him out on that.

I don't know, I... I don't—I really don't know what to do with it. I mean, I will say this. Justin and I have always made this case about like, we'll watch a movie that we didn't really love and then we'll say like, but we've been talking about it for the last hour, so I guess it did something. I don't—  
[titters] I don't wanna—

**Taylor:** Yeah!

**Sydnee:** I don't want to watch it again. I don't really want to incorporate any ideas from it into my worldview.

**Taylor:** [chuckles] Well, there—

**Sydnee:** But... [chuckles]

**Taylor:** I mean, I agree. Like I think, you know, I spent—I spent a good amount of my time watching this, trying to—trying to come from a positive place. And there are elements that I enjoyed. I mean, just on a basic level, I

think the construction, the artfulness that goes into all of the fake scenarios is cool.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** Like, quite literally... Like I've been to the Alligator Lounge. It used to be one of my regular spots. Seeing it recreated was insane to me, like down to the details. Like that was cool. Like all of the construction that goes on with the crew, I... I could watch a whole show where people just create real-world sets and explain how they did it. And I don't know—

**Sydnee:** That's—and that obsessive recreation usually comes from a place of love or admiration. I mean, I think it—like it's kind of akin to cosplay, right? Like the reason—I know how hard you work on your, you know, cosplay pieces. The reason you work so hard, I think, is because you love these things.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** You either love or admire or really care about the pieces of work they're from, or the characters themselves. And so that's why you devote so much energy into recreating it.

**Taylor:** Mm-hm.

**Sydnee:** So, I mean, you could make that case. There's just a lot—I mean, the whole central conceit of "we made a fake singing competition and people really thought they were on American Idol, but they weren't," that's hard. Man, that's rough. And then, can I say, we cannot in this episode without talking about that male pilot.

**Taylor:** Oh, the one that's kicked off all the apps? [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** What... Taylor, I was having an out of body experience watching this man, this adult man, on television—he knew he was on television.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Say, "I've been kicked off of five dating apps. I've been kicked off of Instagram. And I don't know why, I guess I make jokes that women don't like." The... I was sitting here thinking like, oh my—this just can't be real. He can't be—does he does he know they're filming him? Like he just held up red flags for all women to see.

**Taylor:** And he's still allowed to fly planes? [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** And then watching him interact with that poor co-pilot? Like she was being really graceful about it, but ugh! I mean, man, I wanted her to punch him.

**Taylor:** Like, I don't—I don't—like... is that enjoyable, to watch people in bad situations?

**Sydnee:** I mean, I don't know. Like, I guess... I guess that he kind of—like Nathan did a service for women, in that we all know who—we know that guy now.

**Taylor:** Sure, yeah.

**Sydnee:** Like, there's one we can put on the do not date list, I guess. Not that I was planning on it anyway, but like you know what I mean. Like... if that guy walks up to you in a bar now and you've seen him on this show, you're gonna know. But oof... I don't know, I just was shocked. Like, I feel like I know that we are—because we do shows and because we're online a lot, we know like... we're a little more savvy about what you say. [titters] What you would say in public. You know? Because you know, you think about it. But to be that naive? And if these awful things are true about you, that you've been kicked off all these dating apps, to say it publicly, without realizing the implications? The lack of insight?

**Taylor:** Well, that is—I mean, because that's the thing. Like, I don't—I am perhaps cynical enough to say that I'm sure I walk by 10 dudes a day that have the exact same trajectory. [chuckles] Absolutely. There's a whole other level to being proud of it. There's a whole other level to feeling unbothered by it. That's just scary, because it's just—you must feel so safe. What is it like to feel so safe, to be that terrible?

**Sydnee:** Can you imagine getting kicked off all those dating apps, and then saying, "I don't know, it's—like basically it's because people can't take a joke." Can you imagine having that level of like self-delusion?

**Taylor:** Well, and then again, "And then I go and fly an airplane full of people." [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** It's terrifying. And then— And after—

**Taylor:** I don't like it.

**Sydnee:** "After I've had this conversation about how I've been kicked off dating apps and how women don't seem to like the jokes I make, whatever, I have been put in a cockpit with a woman. And I immediately ask her if she's married, if she has kids, why not, about her sex life. About maybe I should hook you up with my father, because he hasn't had sex in a while either!" I mean... just... just like wild! Trying to get her to say how old she was. Like the whole thing, it was like... it was like a bad sitcom joke.

**Taylor:** Which is... scenarios that happen regularly, every day in life. And again, I'm searching for the value here. And I'm not saying, "I don't see it, I don't know where it is." I'm like, is there something useful about showing this scenario? Is it trying to, you know, warning us about one particular man? Great. Like, I—you know, that's... fine. But like, what is it doing for the state of... Art doesn't have to do anything. It doesn't.

**Sydnee:** It doesn't.

**Taylor:** It doesn't have to exist for the better good. It can just exist.

**Sydnee:** I guess it—I guess it—a lot of it feels like at least people's reactions are kind of honest. Like, the—not his, but like the other people that he's interacting with are just people. That was the one moment where watching his interview with the guy, where he talked about the dating apps, and then watching him interact with this woman in the cockpit, I started to question if this was scripted.

Because it felt so outrageous that like, we want to see how she interacts with a pilot and like pushes back, even when she's uncomfortable. Like, that's the whole point, right? Is that she's willing to speak up to her pilot. That's why she's good at rejecting people. She's good at like smoothing those difficult interactions, basically. And so we want to put her in here with like a very toxic person, and see how she does. How did they just stumble upon somebody like that? I don't know. You know what I mean. Like, it almost—like, I started to question the whole thing. Like, is this scripted? Because I don't see how this is really happening.

**Taylor:** I would feel better about it if it was all scripted. I also then would—

**Sydnee:** Right?

**Taylor:** Then really why does this exist? [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Yeah! Well, then I really don't know. I mean, I know that—I know men talk to women that way. I'm not—42 years I've been a woman. I know that happens. I'm very aware. I know those men are out there. I guess I'm surprised one would be on TV saying it. That's all. I thought we were—in 2025, I thought we were at a point where most men wouldn't want to say it on TV. That's it. That's all I'm thinking!

**Taylor:** I mean, I think that's—I'm not—I'm not surprised. And I think that's sort of a sign of things to come.

**Sydnee:** I have to say, just my final thoughts, I... I just don't—I am not the audience for this. I'm not going to condemn it.

**Taylor:** No.

**Sydnee:** And I'm not going to say like it's not doing something for someone, because, again, clearly, this is his third series, people like what he does and want to keep watching it. And so, that's fine. Like, there can be lots of things that aren't for me. There are other things that are for me. But I think that I would come down on making a fake singing competition and getting people's hopes up, and then it turns out that it was all for nothing, and they never had a chance to win anything. Whether you got a golden ticket or didn't. I

just—it feels kind of mean spirited. And I don't—I would not—it doesn't make me feel good to have watched it or any of that. [titters]

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I mean, I—just that.

**Taylor:** No, I agree. I mean, you know, if people enjoy it, that's fine. I don't... if there's value beyond that that I'm missing, then I truly do apologize, because I did want to find it. And I think that maybe it is there and I'm just missing it. That's okay too. It's okay to not like things. That's fine.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And I watch things that I know people don't like. I watch a variety of really bad dating shows, that are very bad.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** But—

**Taylor:** No, that's true. And there's a lot that's exploitative there too, in the similar veins, but—

**Sydnee:** Yup. Yeah.

**Taylor:** It's just... it's a cross section of... recognized insincerity that maybe doesn't speak to us.

**Sydnee:** No, it's just—it's just not—it's not my vibe. Not my aura. [titters]

**Taylor:** Yeah. Well, and I will say, as a—as a final thought, I do think his sort of outset is wrong. I do think sincerity exists.

**Sydnee:** I do too.

**Taylor:** [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** And I think—I think we should always be saying that and striving for that, and allowing other people to be sincere. I don't think.... I don't—I do not think cynicism gets us anywhere.

**Taylor:** No. The world gets real dark, real fast when we—when we part ways with sincerity.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, I will—I will not let go of honesty and hope and a belief that most people mean well. I will not let that go.

[group chuckle]

**Taylor:** So... [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** So next time, Taylor—

**Taylor:** An artful exercise in sincerity. The Minecraft movie. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Yeah. My children have been demanding I watch the Minecraft movie, now that it's available streaming. So, would you please watch the Minecraft movie with me?

**Taylor:** That's fine. I'll try to be a little kinder to the Minecraft movie. I'm sorry. [titters]

**Sydnee:** I don't know, my children have seen it in theaters twice. They're obsessed with it. They're—they wanted to watch it immediately when I told them that was going to be—I was going to propose to you that our—that's our next episode. They wanted—they were like, "Right now!" And I was like, "No, I gotta record this episode first. But then, yes, we can watch it." So...

**Taylor:** All right, I will watch it.

**Sydnee:** All right. [titters] Well, thank you all, thank you listeners. If you enjoy The Rehearsal, that's fine. We're not—I mean, again, I'm not passing

judgment on anybody who enjoys anything. Enjoy what you like. That's fine. We can—we can just disagree on that. [chuckles]

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** But thank you, Max Fun. You should go to [maximumfun.org](http://maximumfun.org) for a lot of great shows you would enjoy. You can email us at [stillbuffering@maxfun.org](mailto:stillbuffering@maxfun.org). And thank you to the Nouvellas for our theme song, Baby You Change Your Mind.

**Taylor:** This has been Still Buffering, your cross-generational guide to the culture that made us.

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

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

**Sydnee:** I'm still buffering.

**Taylor:** And I am too.

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

**Sydnee:** I almost forgot my name.

**Taylor:** [chuckles] "Am I even Sydnee?"

**Sydnee:** I've lost track of everything. I don't know what—I really don't know what I watched. [chuckles]

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