

Still Buffering 468: Labyrinth (1986)

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[theme music 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 Teylor Smirl.

Sydnee: Tey, are you doing okay in the—did you get snow or ice?

Taylor: We got both. Uh, we got at least a foot of snow, and then a nice little dusting of ice on top of that came down last night, so it's gonna be here for a while.

Sydnee: See, that's what I—I was hoping we'd get the snow. We got very little snow. There was something called the warm wedge, according to the local meteorologist. Uh, the warm wedge hit us, and pushed enough warm air so that most of the precipitation that fell was sleet and ice. So we got, like, a couple inches of snow, and then just solid ice.

Taylor: Yikes.

Sydnee: So we are iced in. We are—like, the road is an ice rink. Um, and we are in single digits for the week, so...

Taylor: Woof.

Sydnee: When even our dad can't drive to work, it's bad.

Taylor: That is when it's bad. 'Cause he will—he will drive in conditions that are awful, and will kill you. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. My neighbor is also a doctor, works at the hospital, and had to walk to work. 'Cause we're not that far from the hospital, in the big picture. And, uh... he had to get, like—I'm not sure what they were, 'cause I

was hearing this through his children's description—some sort of special spiked shoe. [laughs quietly] To walk—

Taylor: Like cleats?

Sydnee: I didn't know if they meant—that's what I was trying to decipher. Like, is this kid trying to tell me that he's wearing cleats? Or, like, are we talking—I know that there are, like—like, if you walk on ice, there are shoes for that, right? Like...

Taylor: Yeah. Well, they do have a name. I can't remember 'em, though.

Sydnee: But, like, I don't—that's what I was trying to figure out. Like, are we talking, like, for the tundra? Or cleats? Or just cleats? Like, a lot of people have cleats. [laughs]

Taylor: I mean, I feel like a cleat would do the same thing.

Sydnee: [unintelligible] I don't know. I'm not—listen. Until I have to leave, which right now—I gotta work tomorrow. I don't know how I'm getting there. Our hill—we're on a hill. And it—I mean, it is solid ice. I don't know how I'm getting down, and I cannot walk to work. It is way too far. I would, I mean...

Taylor: Dog sled?

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah. I don't know. If I could find out, if there was somebody who would pick me up, I could walk all the way down. 'Cause it's like a—it's like a network of hills that we're at the top of. So I'd have to walk all the way down to, like, the flat part, like down on Washington. That's the flat part. And then if somebody could pick me up and take me to work from there. But I don't know who that would be. I'd have to call around and see if I got a friend. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: You got a bus stop nearby?

Sydnee: Hmm. You know, okay. I think I could get to a bus stop, actually.

Taylor: 'Cause I'm thinking, like, I don't know. Like, where your whole neighborhood outlets, I feel like that's a thorough—that's, like, a main thoroughfare that you should—a bus stop around that area would make sense.

Sydnee: There is a bus stop somewhere around that area.

Taylor: Like, where the school is.

Sydnee: Yeah. I bet I could get to the bus stop.

Taylor: There you go. Use some ol' city transit.

Sydnee: But, like, we're talking about this like I won't be walking in—I mean, literally it's gonna be, like, 2 degrees.

Taylor: Yeah. I mean, I don't... I was the—on Sundays, I'm the second cook in the kitchen, and so if it's really dead, I'm not all that necessary. There's a bunch of, like, admin stuff that I also do, so I go in for that, too. But yesterday I just... I was like, "I don't think it's gonna be busy enough to need me, and I can just come in on Monday and do the admin stuff."

So I did not have to go in. Uh, I have not ventured out in it. But I do know that the trains—see, we always have the trains. They run underground. They weren't affected. Everybody went to work yesterday in the city.

Sydnee: See, this is an advantage of living in a more rural community that does not have a robust public transportation system. [laughs]

Taylor: You don't have to go to work.

Sydnee: You can use it as an excuse to not go to work! [laughs]

Taylor: I know. Well, they had—so, the train—I live off two trains. One of them is an above ground train, which always struggle when there's winter weather. But the other one is a below ground train. However, the other below ground train, the L train, there was supposed to be scheduled maintenance all weekend, so it wasn't running in my neighborhood, and they

were doing a bus—a system of buses that were free instead. So it was like, "Oh, those buses aren't gonna run. Oops! Can't get to work."

And then they decided, "Oh, no. You know what? We're gonna hold off on the scheduled repairs and we'll just let the underground train run."

Which made me beg—it begs the question, like, well, then if we could do this repair at any point in time, why are we doing them at the coldest point in the year? When—the shuttles that they run in place of the train, they don't run out of normal bus stops, so there's no, like, covering. You're just out in the elements waiting on these buses that sometimes take anyway from... they're supposed to come every 10 minutes. From experience, they at least take 20.

I waited, like, 45 minutes in pouring snow for one last week. Uh, just out in the elements. So I don't... I don't know why we would not think to, like, maybe push it to, like, March, maybe? Maybe just when it's a little not freezing outside.

Sydnee: He's barely been in office and you're already like, "Come on, Mamdani!" [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs] I know! You know, I guess that's... I think it's—I noticed I'm not the only one that did it. 'Cause I got another video from another New Yorker that was, like, stuck on the train, and they just shook their fist at the little, you know, projection of wait time. They're like, "Mamdani!"

Sydnee: "Come on!"

Taylor: I guess having a mayor that you respect means that you can kind of, you know, joke around a bit.

Sydnee: [laughs] I think it's said in the same way that, you know, we do the "Thanks, Obama." Like, you know.

Taylor: Exactly.

Sydnee: It's the—yeah, it's tongue in cheek. The girls and I—I mean, Justin was here too, but he was doing something else. So, the three of us yesterday were trying to decide what movie to watch on our icy, snowy day. And I was thinking, like, I should show them some of the old movies that I liked that maybe they'd enjoy. And, um, we got into this debate between Breakfast Club and Ferris Bueller.

Taylor: Hmm.

Sydnee: I know. And we finally settled on Breakfast Club, but I don't know that it was the right choice. Because... have you watched The Breakfast Club in a while?

Taylor: Not recently. I feel like I've seen it enough, though, that I can—I still have... what was not correct about The Breakfast Club?

Sydnee: Well, okay. I guess—I mean, like, I knew that they cursed, and I knew that they used drugs. But, like, I can handle that with my kids. I can talk to them. I mean, it's not like they don't hear profanity. But, like, I can talk to them about the weed scene. [laughs quietly] I'm not stressed about that.

I had forgotten, um, how much, like, sexual innuendo is in it.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I had forgotten that... well, like, I was challenged with the question, "What's a nymphomaniac?"

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: I didn't know, uh, how to explain. Like... they use the f slur a couple times.

Taylor: Hmm.

Sydnee: And this was not something my children were familiar with. I was challenged. [laughs quietly] I think I made a poor choice. Now, granted, it's

been just as long since I've seen Ferris Bueller. Maybe there's questionable content in that.

Taylor: I would assume that both of them land about the same. Uh, and also, I don't know if I would put either on for two young kids.

Sydnee: In my memory it was much more innocent. It was one of those things where I was like, "I know I watched this as a kid." And I knew—it was wild, because as we were looking through movies, like, they had suggested movies that were similar, and one of the suggested movies that was similar was *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*. And I would not show that to my children. Like, I have a mem—I have enough of a memory of that that, like, well, I know that's not for kids. And Cooper immediately was like, "Let's watch that movie, 'cause they talk about it on *Stranger Things*."

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And I was like, "No, we can't watch that movie."

And she was like, "Why not?"

And I was like, "I know there's boobs in that movie." [laughs quietly] I don't remember how much more graphic it gets. I think it gets more graphic, if I remember correctly. One way or another, there's naked people. And then I thought, like, now I'm questioning all my parenting choices that I'm exposing my children to *The Breakfast Club*, but I'm like, "No *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, 'cause you might see boobs!" Well. Man. I really need to—I need to reevaluate everything. I don't know what's right and wrong anymore! [laughs]

Taylor: I think anything from the teen genre of the 80s is going to be somewhat problematic.

Sydnee: Well, they were like—they really love Molly Ringwald. They're just kind of fascinated. I mean, like, she's so beautiful, and she's the, you know, perfect princess girl, and she's eating sushi, which is very—like, the girls were just fascinated with her. And so they were both like, "We want to watch these other movies, if they're showing us." *Pretty in Pink*, and *Sixteen*

Candles. And I was like, "I don't... listen. Mommy's gonna go do a private watch of those first before we..." [laughs] 'Cause I do not remember. But now I'm really worried.

Taylor: I'm thinking—yeah. There are things in both of those movies that probably... I mean, when you watch them as, like, with an understanding of, "Ehh. We really weren't careful with things back then."

Then it's alright. But when you're a kid and you're still trying to figure out what right and wrong is, maybe, you know, it's a lot. It's a lot to take in.

Sydnee: The sexual innuendo goes beyond—it is, um... when I say that, I'm not using the right terminology. It's like sexual harassment.

Taylor: Yeah. Yeah.

Sydnee: I mean, that is what we need to rec—and it's hard for me to say that, because it's like, "It's The Breakfast Club!" [laughs quietly] Also, it's Judd Nelson's character. Like, it's Bender. And it's, you know. Which, like, when I was a kid, when I was a teenager, I was like, "Dreamboat." Like, just thought, you know, he was the best. And now I'm watching it and I'm like, "That's harassment." [laughs quietly] I didn't... yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: So it's making me reexamine things. But, um, but that's what's happening.

Taylor: I think the world has also just warped certain archetypes when it comes to characters. Like, you know, the, like, complex bad boy that kind of has a chip on his shoulder and hates the world. That used to be such an enticing character, and nowadays it's just like, "Oh, god." That's a type of guy that's ruining our world. [laughs quietly] That guy had an inferiority complex that he made all of our problems.

Sydnee: [laughs] I know. Like, that's true. 'Cause now they're incels, right?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I'm sorry that you didn't get to sleep with Molly Ringwald. It's not our fault. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I know. I don't... [laughs] I really think you need to do some soul searching. It's really a you thing.

Taylor: Alright. I also didn't get to sleep with Molly Ringwald. I'm not making it everybody's problem.

Sydnee: I know. [laughs] Yeah, yeah, I know. I... I made some poor choices. I made some miscalculations.

Taylor: That's alright.

Sydnee: What's hard is that I was looking through a list of, like—I was looking up, like, what are teen movies that kids would like, and trying to refresh my memory. And what I should've shown them was—I came across, like, the Hillary Duff oeuvre.

Taylor: Oh. Oeuvre, that's a good word.

Sydnee: And I should have shown them *Cadet Kelly*.

Taylor: *Cadet Kelly* is great.

Sydnee: Uh, the *Cinderella Story*. Yeah. That one. And there was another one that she did. Well, there's the *Lizzie McGuire* movie, but that's a whole...

Taylor: Then you gotta...

Sydnee: They have no context for *Lizzie McGuire*.

Taylor: Although, let's be real. I don't think the *Lizzie McGuire* lore is that much of an uptake.

Sydnee: Well, that's true.

Taylor: Like, you know, it's not like a complex, like—it's like, well, she's a girl. In high school. And she has friends. And there you go.

Sydnee: That's it. That's it.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But I should've—Cadet Kelly is great, and I should've shown them Cadet Kelly. 'Cause it also has Christy Carlson Romano.

Taylor: Yeah. Yeah, she's good in that.

Sydnee: Yeah. I was—yeah. I was in love with her.

Taylor: I was gonna say, that movie is famous for the confusing tension between Cadet Kelly and her character.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Yeah, no. I mean, like, yes. Ren Stephens and Lizzie McGuire... [laughs] it was very confusing for a lot of people!

Taylor: Mm-hmm. Like, somebody wrote this fanfic. Many people wrote this fanfic.

Sydnee: Yes. But they would've loved Cadet Kelly, 'cause she's, like, fabulous and tough, and they would've loved that, and I should've shown them. I'm gonna show them that next. And then I realized, like, they'd probably like The Princess Diaries. I am getting in the way of stuff that they would like, because my tastes are, like, this old 80s stuff that they—they don't... why am I showing them this? [laughs quietly] What am I doing?

Taylor: I've had those moments, even just on my own rewatches of movies that I remember watching when I was young and really loved, or have always considered, just because everybody older than me said "This is a really important movie." I'm like, "That's a really important movie."

And then I watch it and I'm like, I don't... I get why people liked it. I think there's enough wrong about it that we can just go, "Okay, let's move beyond this."

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: I don't know. I feel that way—and this is gonna be a... a white-hot take. But, uh, in horror movies, like, *Re-Animator* is held up as such a classic, and there's so much about it, like the practical effects, that's fantastic. But there's just so much just... ugh, like, towards women in that movie that, like... I was like, this just isn't—it's not for me. I don't like it, and I don't need to take this with me wherever I'm going. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah.

Taylor: I can put it down and walk away from it.

Sydnee: No, I think that's true. There's just... and it's hard, too, because, like, if I'm gonna show it to the next generation, I have to couch it in all this stuff. Well, I didn't—it didn't even occur to me. We were watching *The Breakfast Club*, and Cooper looked at me and said, "Did teachers really used to talk to students like this?"

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: And I'm like, well, no. I mean, I think that the principal is a... I think that's hyperbole. I don't think most principals talked to students that way. Like, told them that they were bums, and losers, and jokes, and they're... I don't think that was the norm. Do I think it happened? Well, I'm sure. All things... all things that could happen have happened, right? I don't know. Like, somewhere, somebody did. Were teachers and principals harsher with students previously? Yeah, I'd say that's probably true, right? Like... you'd get away with saying a little bit tougher stuff. I think that probably there's a generational shift in that.

But they were both just, like, appalled. Like, this is an educator. This is someone who's there to...

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Which, I mean, I guess this is a good thing about the school they go to. It must be. Because their view is, like, the principal loves us. The principal's there to protect us and look out for us. And why would the principal yell at us? And that—I was like, oh. I guess I've never considered that. [laughs]

Taylor: Well... I mean, not necessarily teachers wildin' out. But I do think there's a flip side to, like, instead of guarding your children from media that has aged unfortunately, being there to explain to them, "Okay. This is why—like, this is why that language isn't okay now." Or, like, "That behavior wouldn't be okay now."

They're not gonna live in a bubble their whole lives. They're gonna be at sleepovers and other kids' houses out in the world, and they're gonna see those things. And letting them see it and explaining why it's not okay is probably better than just saying, "Well, we'll just never let you be exposed to this stuff."

I mean, they are a little young. So maybe when they're a little older and capable of, like... I don't know. Your kids are smart.

Sydnee: It's tough, because, like, we were talking about it before it started and I was like, "John Hughes made this movie. You've seen some other John Hughes movies."

'Cause, you know, they've seen Home Alone. They've seen Uncle Buck. Like, it didn't occur to me. [laughs quietly] This is a different thing.

I don't know. My memory was not that that's what it was, but their... they are having wild snow days because they're being exposed to all kinds of ideas. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: I just like that you went straight to that stuff. I feel like there's other more kid-friendly... like, what was that monsters movie? You know that one? They go under the bed.

Sydnee: Oh.

Taylor: Is there a—

Sydnee: Little Monsters?

Taylor: Is there a Savage in that?

Sydnee: Yeah. In—is it Fred or Ben? I don't remember.

Taylor: I don't know. The older one.

Sydnee: I think there's a Savage. Ben is the older one, right? No. No, Fred is the older one.

Taylor: Fred is the older, yeah.

Sydnee: Ben is Boy Meets World.

Taylor: That's right.

Sydnee: Fred is, uh, The Wonder Years. [laughs]

Taylor: I mean, I could be wrong. Maybe that doesn't hold up. But that feels like a... it feels like an 80s movie for kids.

Sydnee: Was that Little Monsters?

Taylor: Little Monsters. I think that was it.

Sydnee: Mom suggested Drop Dead Fred. And that took me for—no.

Taylor: No!

Sydnee: That's what I said. I have not seen that movie in a minute. But I do know—I do definitely know that a major plot point is main characters having hallucinations... and the pills she takes to treat the hallucinations are evil? Like, this is a bad thing that the—we're supposed to believe this is bad.

[laughs quietly] And, like, I think the message is "Don't take your mental health medication"? [laughs]

Taylor: Well, I guess also—

Sydnee: Is that right?

Taylor: Like, yes, yes. And Drop-Dead Fred is kind of a creepy perv. Like, there's lots of scenes that's like, "Oh, how funny! He's looking up a woman's skirt." Like, no. [crosstalk]

Sydnee: Oh, is it?

Taylor: Weird. Yeah.

Sydnee: See, I don't remember. I remember, like, childhood imaginary friend comes back, and she takes pills that kind of look like Prozac to make him go away.

Taylor: Yeah. That movie scared me when I was a kid. I remember being very scared. I know you were supposed to like Fred, but I did not like Fred. I thought he was scary.

Sydnee: See, I watched it multiple times and did like Fred. It was only on, like, reexamination that I stopped and thought, "I don't think that's a message we want to send." Like...

Taylor: No, that's fair.

Sydnee: 'Cause it really, like—she's, like, taking the medicine and he's, like, dying, right? Isn't that right? Like, she's, like, taking the pill, and he's like, "No! Agh! Agh!" [laughs quietly] Maybe I made that up. Maybe, like... [laughs] maybe in my head that's what it turned into. But, like, I know that's a major plot point.

Taylor: It sounds right, but I would not revisit that movie.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: To... qualify that.

Sydnee: No. I think that one's best left wherever it is. [laughs] It does—I do wonder if, like... Cooper's probably a little too young, but Charlie's watching this stuff and then, like, looking at me and being like, "Oh, okay. I understand now." [laughs]

Taylor: You think so? [laughs]

Sydnee: "This is why Mom's the way she is." [laughs]

Taylor: "Oh, this is what went into the pot."

Sydnee: "Apparently this is what she [crosstalk]."

Taylor: "And now it's going in my pot. Oh no."

Sydnee: [laughs] And they're like, "Can we watch Ada Twist, Scientist?" Which is a wonderful animated series about a bunch of young STEM kids.

Taylor: Oh, that's great.

Sydnee: There's Ada Twist, and Rosie Revere, Engineer, and Iggy Peck, Architect, and... it's just wonderful. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Yeah, maybe don't make them watch John Hughes movies. [laughs] Maybe let them watch that.

Sydnee: [laughs] No, that was better. 'Cause then they're, like—they're singing songs about what's a hypothesis. [laughs]

Taylor: Syd, you've become like our father who'd be like, "You know what we're—you would love Meatballs. We're gonna watch Meatballs."

Sydnee: I know. [laughs]

Taylor: It's like, "I never wanna watch Meatballs. I could live my whole life and never see Meatballs."

Sydnee: I don't know why as a child I watched Porky's. I don't know why that was something I watched.

Taylor: Yeah. Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah!

Taylor: Like this was the pinnacle of humor. It's really not.

Sydnee: I know. And that's—I knew, like—and see, that's the thing. In my head, there were those movies where I'm like, "Well, definitely I would never shoe these to my children."

But the John Hughes movies were in a different bubble. Like, those were like, "Oh, well, you know. Charlie's, like, a preteen. Like, she'll probably enjoy this stuff."

No. No. [sighs]

Taylor: Well.

Sydnee: No. That was a miscalculation. I needed an escape. The world is heavy, and I needed—and I thought this would be it, but that was maybe not the right choice.

Taylor: Well, but you know what is a great escape that is from the 80s?

Sydnee: What's that?

Taylor: That does hold up... I guess fairly—fair enough?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm?

Taylor: Our subject today, Labyrinth.

Sydnee: Yes. Now, Labyrinth, which we have watched many times, um, we did not watch again yesterday, because we watched it many times recently. Labyrinth is always a great escape.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And it's great for kids. I don't think there were any moments that... no, there's nothing. There's nothing upsetting for kids in that.

Taylor: No. I mean, the premise is, I guess, upsetting. Like, there's stuff that's a little creepy.

Sydnee: I love that I'm like, "There's nothing upsetting for kids." Literally the Goblin King steals a baby. [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah. Like, the premise is... is a kidnapping.

Sydnee: [laughs] So I guess that is a little upsetting.

Taylor: Yeah. Yeah.

Sydnee: But, like, it's the Goblin King.

Taylor: Well, I mean, sure.

Sydnee: And he likes—he kind of likes—he seems to like the baby. Like, he's having fun with it. He's tossing it around and having fun with it.

Taylor: Yeah, no. I mean, well, but he steals babies so that the babies become goblins, and serve him. So, I don't know. There's some sort of... baby to goblin pipeline that seems unpleasant.

Sydnee: Do you know—I did not—talking about Labyrinth, maybe I should've researched. Is this, like, an original tale? Is this based on something? Is this drawn from some sort of goblin folktale, legend, lore, fairytale situation? Or is it just original? Because that's—I mean, the idea that if you wish hard enough for the goblins to come take your baby brother, they will, it almost seems presented as like, "Well, obviously. Obviously,

everyone knows this. That if you ask the goblins very clearly to come take your baby brother, Toby, they will come take him."

Taylor: Um... well, I mean, in—in, like, fairytales and, you know, like, folklore, that is a pretty common thing, right? Like, the fae folk love to steal babies and replace them with, like—that's where you get, like, changelings, right? Like, you—they steal your baby. They give you a fae baby in—in place of it. I don't...

Sydnee: Maybe that's—

Taylor: Stealing babies seems like a big part of what fairies are up to.

Sydnee: Maybe that's all that it's just stemming from. But it... I think that it's a—it is scary. [laughs quietly] The idea that if you accidentally say, like, "I hope the goblins take my little brother 'cause, you know, he's driving me nuts," then they do.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, you know, I like that it feels like an accurate representation of, like, the rules of fae. Like, how fae logic kind of works. 'Cause that's the thing. Like, the Goblin King is not a bad guy. None of the goblins are really bad. They're in service to him, but that's just sort of, like, if you venture down any sort of, you know, folklore rabbit hole, there are just rules. Like, if you follow the rules, they can't hurt you. If you break the rules, they can. And that's just how it is. Like, it's not—it's not good or evil. It's just... did you follow the rules or not?

Sydnee: This is a—can I tell you, 'cause I know you don't read romantasy. This is a major plot point in pretty much every romantasy I read.

Taylor: Oh yeah?

Sydnee: That is about—that involves fae, and a lot of them do involve fae. But the idea that, like, that fae have very specific rules that they always have to follow, um, they... that when you make an oath with them, a deal with them, any kind of bargain, it is—it is, like—you will die if you break it. And also, be very careful with the wording. 'Cause they're not gonna lie. They will not lie and they will not cheat, but you've gotta be very specific

with the wording. 'Cause if you word anything wrong and give them any, like, legal wiggle room—they're, like, the best lawyers. They're, like...

Taylor: [laughs] Yes.

Sydnee: ... incredible lawyers. And so you have to be very careful to say, like... "Will you follow my instructions?"

And you're like, "Okay. I'll make the deal. I'll follow your instructions."

And if you don't say, "For this specific task right now," then they can tell you what to do forever. Like, forever you have to follow their instructions, for all of time. So, like, you have to be really careful with the wording with fae. That's a huge plot point in romantasy. Also that they don't lie. That's also a huge plot point. They're never lying. They can't. They cannot lie.

Taylor: I mean, I... [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: I kind of... [laughs] I'm trying to, like—there's some sort of, like, autism parallel there. Like, just, you know? [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Are they...

Sydnee: They're very literal and they cannot lie. [laughs]

Taylor: It's like, are all fae autistic? Are all autistic people fae in some way?

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: I say that as a compliment. It's cool. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: No, it's—but yes. He says—the Goblin King says a lot. Like, "I'm just doing what you asked me to do."

She did say, "Take the baby away."

Taylor: Well, that's the thing! Like, and he even says at the end, like, you know, that he's being more than fair. He really was, 'cause once you say "Take the baby," he really could be like, "Well, that's it. You let me take the baby."

He gave her some options. "Okay, fine. You can—if you conquer my labyrinth." Gave her a lot of help there to find her way through, so.

Sydnee: But then he did, like, you know, stop her on multiple occasions, and then try to trap her in an orb. In a fushigi.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: He tried to trap her in a fushigi. [laughs] Can I ask, do you know or do you think, did David Bowie learn contact juggling for Labyrinth? Or—'cause some of the shots of him—that's what it's called with the fushigi. That's called contact juggling. Some of the shots where he's using multiple fushigis, they're, like, over the shoulder, and I'm wondering if it's someone else. Like, an actual fushigi master. [laughs]

Taylor: I would just assume that it's David Bowie and he did.

Sydnee: There are definitely shots that are him doing it.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, and I feel like some of the more complex shots are—it would've had to be him, unless it's somebody with their own arm up his sleeve doing it, which I guess would be an easy staging.

Sydnee: 'Cause there are ones where he has two or three of the fushigis. And, I mean, that's [holding back laughter] really impressive stuff. If you—if you're the sort of person who's impressed by contact juggling, which I am, it is very impressive. [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs] I have faith that anything that David Bowie tried he probably figured out pretty easily. He just seems like one of those people.

So you know what? I don't want that—I don't wanna look up the truth there. I want to just believe in David Bowie's skill as a contact juggler.

Sydnee: Yes. Yeah. I like—I like it 'cause it's a practical effect. That's just how it looks when somebody's really good at fushigi.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: It looks like it's some sort of special effect, but it's not. It's just—you're just really good at it.

Taylor: I mean, speaking of practical effects, like, it just... I hate to be one of those old people that, like, talks endlessly about how things used to be, and I try to avoid that whenever possible, except for specifically when we're talking about the craft and art that used to go into movie sets, making these things. Like, this is obviously a big Jim Henson production. And just the—you can tell that a lot of these are built on soundstages. Like, you can—if you know what you're looking at, you can kind of suss out where the backdrop begins and the set ends. But they're just such beautiful pieces.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And there's so much love and creativity. I mean, I was thinking, like, the—how much thought went into, like... like when they're shooting off their little cannons, but the cannonballs are little goblins too.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And they've got those little helmets that go over them, but then they shoot out and they've got their little wiggly legs behind 'em. Like, it's just so creative. It's like, any moment that they could've shoved in more creativity, more thought, more, like, "What would be the weirdest way we could design this?" They did it, and that's just so fun to see that.

Sydnee: And that's for scenes—what's wild about it is that they did that for scenes that sometimes were fairly short.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: But that attention—I mean, like, they're constructing these elaborate sets and props and characters and everything for what will only be a minute of the movie. And then they'll move on to something else that is equally as elaborate, but completely different. I mean, I cannot imagine the amount of time and work that went into all the different sets. I mean, you think about it, 'cause you move through the labyrinth. You're in very different places all the way through. And every one must have been a different set.

Taylor: Oh yeah. And every one, just there's layers and layers of thought and creativity, and then just craftsmanship. There's tons of rigging. Like, I don't know. Like the—when she's walking through all the stone slabs that all have faces on them, and they're all talking to her, and their eyes are moving around. Like... who knows how that's rigged? But it's just—it's so beautiful to see all those carved pieces, you know.

Sydnee: Olmecs.

Taylor: That actually existed. Yeah.

Sydnee: That's all I could think is like, "These were the inspirations for Olmec. They must be."

Taylor: Well, there's... I think also just a movie that wears its inspirations on its sleeve, too. Like, not only did it inspire a generation of work after it, but I noticed—I'd never really thought about this. We've talked about Agatha All Along and, you know, the big reveal in Agatha is that it's all a—what's the—I was about to just call him Warlock. The boy has created this all in his mind. And you see his bedroom, and that all of the inspiration is in his bedroom. And I never had drawn that line to this movie. 'Cause when you first see her room, you see everything she's going to encounter.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: She's got that little doll in the dress. There's the MC Escher print that is the upside—the staircases that turn on themselves. Everything that

she encounters, all of her little friends along the way, there are facsimiles in her room.

Sydnee: The Goblin King. There is, like, a little—

Taylor: Oh yeah.

Sydnee: —action figure statue thing that is the Goblin King, yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah, no. It—

Taylor: It kind of has that...

Sydnee: Yes. It's very similar. Like, that vibe. I had the same thought as it—'cause I was actually watching it, like, looking for things. Like, "Oh, look at that poster." 'Cause also she's, like, a theater nerd, you can tell.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, it has that, like, you know, you start a journey that drops you off exactly where you started, but you're changed. You know, that classic coming of age story structure. That... it's very Alice in Wonderland. It's very, uh, Wizard of Oz.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: That, you know.

Sydnee: It really, like... what she's trying to do is, I guess, let go of childish things.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Although they make the point, "But we're here, 'cause every once in a while you might need us again." I like that little caveat at the end. Not to jump to the end. But, like, they—'cause I would hate a narrative that's like, "Now let go of all the fantasy and fairytale and be a grown-up." Like, that's not a... you know. I mean, that's not a happy story. [laughs quietly]

Um, but in the end they're like, "But if you really need us, just ask, and we'll all be right here. And you can, like, you know, kind of be part of that fantasy world for a moment again with all your friends around you, and then we'll go back to where we live, and you can carry about your business."

But, um, I love when she is—when she is stuck in the fushigi. [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: And, I mean, she's in the beautiful ball scene. That's awesome. And she knows that's fake. But then she lands in the bedroom that isn't hers, but it looks like hers. And the woman is—the junk—what—the junk lady? I don't know what her character's name is. But she's piling the stuff on her back.

I think that scene is so cool, because she's literally, like—you realize she's building on her, the junk lady's building on her what the junk lady carries around. And it's all of her childhood things. It's all of her, like, toys and trinkets and jewelry and dolls and dresses, and it's all the, like, imaginary stuff that you can get lost in, but won't carry you forward. And that's what she's piling on her. And every time I see that scene I notice more things about it, and I'm like, "This is so smart." It's cool to see, but it's so smart.

Taylor: It's a very... like, following it as that parallel to going from childhood into, like, young adulthood, it's a very nuanced take on it. That you don't have to read into it, but I mean, you know, you can. And it's like, you see, like, Jareth is obviously sort of the—he's the temptation, right? It's clear that she thinks he's... I mean, it's David Bowie. Everybody thinks he's a beautiful man. But, like, you know. She's enamored with the Goblin King. There's the sequence with all of the fiery guys?

Sydnee: Oh, yeah!

Taylor: Like, let's all chill with the fiery guys. I don't know. Their heads come off? I was like, "Oh, this is about, like, drugs, right?"

Sydnee: I think?

Taylor: This is a little foray into, like, she goes into the oubliette, like, into the darkness, you know. That's what a hero's journey is. That's what that, you know, classic Alice in Wonderland story is. You have to go into the darkness and find your way back out.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And that... she encountered a bunch of, you know. They seem like pretty chill dudes, but we've all found our way into the fiery guy domain.
[laughs]

Sydnee: The girls do not like the fiery guys. They think they're scary.

Taylor: No?

Sydnee: No, they think they're—

Taylor: They are kind of scary.

Sydnee: Yeah. They were freaked out by the fiery guys. They thought that was a scary sequence.

Taylor: Well, and their whole thing is that they lose their heads, and they're trying to make her lose her head. Like, oh, okay, yeah, yeah.

Sydnee: "Lose your head." [laughs]

Taylor: Mm-hmm. That's like clinging to nostalgia, getting weighed down by it, you know. Like, I don't—falling into various temptations and, I don't know. Like, it's a... it doesn't make you work that hard. You can just enjoy all the weirdness and all the beauty, but...

Sydnee: It's all there, yeah. I love—one of my favorite parts are the hands, and the way they use the hands.

Taylor: Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: To make faces that talk to her.

Taylor: That sequence is gorgeous.

Sydnee: Yeah. I think that's one of the best. I will say, I... the... [laughs quietly] swamp of eternal stink, or the...

Taylor: The bog of eternal stench?

Sydnee: Is that what it is? The bog?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. That... that one's rough for me. [laughs quietly] That's rough for me. I don't really enjoy...

Taylor: Just 'cause of all of the weird butt holes?

Sydnee: Yeah, all the butt holes, and then all the fart noises and poop noises. Um, it's like, I don't know. After a while it's just—I'm kinda grossed out.

Taylor: Yeah. Yeah, I was really worried that, like... I was taking the rules very literally of it. Like, I'm like, "Well, I don't know. If you're stepping on the rocks that have been in the fart bog, I think... "

Sydnee: That's exactly—yes.

Taylor: You're still coming in contact with the fart bog.

Sydnee: That is exactly what I thought. The bottom of her shoes has now...

Taylor: They're gonna smell forever.

Sydnee: Yes. Which I guess she could take 'em off.

Taylor: Well, but then, like, her monster friends were not wearing shoes, so they were coming in direct contact with it.

Sydnee: Yeah. See, that bothered me too, actually. I thought about that a lot, 'cause I watched the rocks raise up out of it and I'm like, "That—see, that's not... " the fae are supposed to have very clear rules. [laughs] This is violating the rules.

Taylor: See, if I was the fae making that call I'd be like, "No, you stink forever. You stink forever. You contacted the stink bog."

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Yeah. I didn't think that was very fair. The stink bog is a lot. I'm always happy when that's done. I'm like, "Good. No more stink bog. Can we not?"

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: But you wouldn't encounter—oh, gosh. The little... I'm trying to figure out if he's meant to be a fox or some sort of dog, 'cause he definitely barks. Sir...

Sydnee: Uh...

Taylor: The little fancy pants guy that rides on a dog.

Sydnee: I know who you mean. I thought he was a dog.

Taylor: I think he is. He's designed like a fox, but he does bark.

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah. I think—that was my take on it. No, I love the little dog guy. Um, he's very cute. Uh... and then of course, I mean, the other thing, too, is like, uh... oh, what's his face? The big guy. What's our big guy's name? Help me.

Taylor: Oh. Ludo.

Sydnee: Ludo. Ludo.

Taylor: Love Ludo.

Sydnee: Uh, Ludo's really the hero of the movie.

Taylor: He really comes through with that summon rock power.

Sydnee: Yeah. I don't—she would not have made it if Ludo hadn't called the rocks so many times.

Taylor: That really, like... like, the usefulness and the variety of ways in which he called the rocks.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] You would be surprised. Like, if you were pitching different—like, "You can have one superpower." And one of the things they offered you was like, "Would you like the ability to summon rocks?"

I would not, like—is flying on the menu? 'Cause probably not summoning rocks over flying. But it actually turned out to be a pretty useful power.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, and it wasn't even like—like, "Can I, like, giant rocks?"

"No. Like, medium size boulders specifically."

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: "Any time you want them."

Sydnee: Well, could he summon, like, giant rocks if he wants? I don't know.

Taylor: It seemed to be the same rocks. I like to think that there is just a pack of rocks rolling around somewhere waiting for his call.

Sydnee: [laughs] They're always the same rocks.

Taylor: Yeah. They're very, very committed rocks.

Sydnee: You would've thought at some point the Goblin King would've caught on. Like, "We just need to get that guy the stop. We gotta get him

out of the picture. If he stops summoning rocks, she is not making it through."

Taylor: Well, but I think that—again, like, that's the sort of the—the gray morality that is fae morality. It's like, as long as it seems fun, it's kind of... [laughs] fae also operate by the rule of cool.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: If you got out of my little tricky trap in a fun enough way, I'll allow it.

Sydnee: It's fine.

Taylor: Yeah, it's fine. It was a good show.

Sydnee: We enjoyed it.

Taylor: That seems to work, yeah.

Sydnee: Do you worry, like—whenever I see the scenes of the Goblin King hanging out with all the goblins and the baby, Toby, I'm thinking, like, isn't he bored? Mustn't he be bored? The goblins don't seem like great company.

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: And worried about, like—do you think he's just starving for intellectual stimulation, there?

Taylor: [laughs] Well, he's just waiting for somebody that's not, I don't know. Like, we've got what? Like, 16-year-old girl calling out for your services. Like, can, like, a middle-aged woman who has, like, maybe read some philosophy need a baby kidnapped?

Sydnee: [laughs] Couldn't just literally anybody who has something int—like, a new perspective. Like, some viewpoints. We could debate.

Taylor: He's just—like, just all of the people that have summoned the Goblin King like a dating app just scrolling through them. Like, "[sighs] It's a teenager getting rid of a baby. Another teenager getting rid of a baby. Like, is there anybody... " [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] Where's that world's—most interesting man in the world who did the commercials for the beer or whatever? What's the...

Taylor: Does he need me to kidnap a baby? Is that all—is that his only way to interact with the human world?

Sydnee: Can we get that guy? Yeah, that's it. Is that the only thing—surely the Goblin King gets to come for something other than stealing babies.

Taylor: I hope so.

Sydnee: "Goblin King, Goblin King, come to my party."

Taylor: Yeah, just hang out.

Sydnee: "And hang."

Taylor: You don't have to do anything else. Maybe sing a song?

Sydnee: "I wish the Goblin King would come to my party right now!"

Taylor: He just shows up like, "Oh, thank god. Why does nobody ever think of that?"

Sydnee: [laughs] That would... [laughs] "Just sing a song. Do some fushigi. Listen."

Taylor: Yeah. [laughs]

Sydnee: New York's hottest club is the Goblin King. It's got everything.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: He's doing fushigi. Um, it... [laughs] I think it is—it really... it does not disappoint, no matter how many times you rewatch it, because it is so rich, because there are so many things to look at. I think that you always find new little, um, set and character and costume and prop things. There are always new, like, puppets to focus more on. Um, the music is always great. I love—the ballroom scene to me is just—again, you talk about a romantasy. That is what they—I mean, that scene. It's not that scene, but there is a description of a ball in every romantasy book I read that pretty much is that scene. Like, more or less that's what we're talking about. And I would—her hair. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: I was just thinking, like, that is—every description is trying to describe that dress and that hair.

Sydnee: That hair. That's what—I wanted—like, that hair with the whatever she's got in it. I don't know the ornamentation.

Taylor: Just a little...

Sydnee: Clips, or bands, or...

Taylor: Flecks of silver, streaks of... yeah.

Sydnee: I... I mean, not really my style now. Although, man. If I could have that hair with that stuff, like, I would wear my hair like that every day.

Taylor: [laughs quietly] Well, I mean... it's very 80s. Just the hair alone is very—the volume is very 80s.

Sydnee: The volume is very 80s.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I will—it's—I will always have a—like, a little piece of my heart, though, that wants to have 80s hair. That'll never go away.

Taylor: I mean, everything that the Goblin King wears. I was looking at it, 'cause I was like, I've never done a—a Labyrinth cosplay, despite many people telling me that I could pull it off.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And what I loved is in my head he wears the same thing. And, like, no. He wears multiple versions of the exact same—like, the jacket's a similar cut, the pants are similar, but they're different pieces.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And they're all incredibly elaborate. 'Cause in that he's wearing this gorgeous—it's like a dark, like, blue velvet that's just completely encrusted with giant gems. And, like, just every piece of costuming is so elaborate.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: It just must have been so much more fun to work on movies like that where it's just everything. It's like, just make it as lush and as dense and as weird and cool as possible.

Sydnee: It really was. And it was so reflective of culture at the time where, like, more is more is more is more. I mean, it really—that kind of—the decadence of... the visual decadence, it is very of a time. And it works. I mean, in this, especially putting it in a fantasy setting with the puppets and everything. I mean, it so works. Yeah, it...

Taylor: Yeah, it's really... and like you were saying, I think that the—even when you pull back and just look at the story, I do love that ending point. Where it's like, that is really the goal, is that you learn how to be a—you learn how to mature. You learn how to take care of yourself and others. You learn how to—I think that early instance where she keeps saying, like, "That's not fair. This isn't fair."

And then she says to herself, like, "It isn't fair." Like, that's one of those things you learn. Like, hey. Life isn't fair. You have to work with it. Like, you learn all the lessons, and you step away from all the stuff that ties you to

your childhood, all the nostalgia that can drown you. But you can still, like, take your... you don't have to have your soul crushed. Like, you can take your innocence with you. You can take your youth with you.

In an odd way, I think a lot of these stories—I mean, I know we're both big fans of tarot. It's the Fool's journey through the tarot deck. Like, if you follow the Major Arcana as a story, which it is kind of built that way, it's the Fool's journey encountering, you know, the Magician, and the Hierophant, and the Chariot. You're encountering all these figures that teach you different things about life, and then the thing about the tarot is it restarts from zero, so you're the Fool again.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And you tie up everything you've learned in your little sack and you throw it over your shoulder and you go off on another adventure, which is what you kind of get at the end of this.

Sydnee: Exactly, yeah. And yes, just because you're moving on to a next phase doesn't mean you're not taking all that with you. All of that time informs who you are and who you'll be on this next journey.

Yeah, I—it's one of those movies too that as you get older and rewatch it, I think you take those new messages and learn those things from it. Like, as a kid, that was definitely not something I was... you know. It's like, puppets and music and...

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Pretty princess. You know? I mean, like... and I don't know that—like, certainly seeing Charlie and Cooper enjoy it so much—Cooper is not enjoying this, because of the coming-of-age tale. She's enjoying it because of those things. But it's fun, 'cause then you'll watch it—I imagine they will watch it as they get older and see all these things that we're seeing in it, so that's really cool.

Well, thank you for watching it, 'cause it really—I always love... especially something that I can watch with the girls and I know they're gonna dig, and then I get to see their reactions to it, so.

Taylor: Oh, absolutely. I hadn't watched it since college, and I think even then it was sort of, you know. It's one of those movies you put on in the background. It's like, "Oh, that's fun."

But to, like, sit down and dedicate, like, "I'm watching it. I'm thinking about what it's trying to tell me." That was really fun.

Sydnee: Yeah. Well, Tey, I think it's about time we tackle a big thing next.

Taylor: Yeah. We're definitely, um—we're late to this, but your fam is finally caught up in Stranger Things, so.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: We can finally talk about it.

Sydnee: Yes. The girls decided when season five came out, they said, "We want to watch Stranger Things."

And we were like, "I don't know if it's too scary."

So we let 'em go back and watch the very first episode of season one, and they loved it. So then we were committed, so we had to tear through all of it before we could get caught up, so.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: So we'll talk about Stranger Things next. I think that's—I think it's very relevant.

Taylor: It's a funny—for everything we've been talking about today, it's a funny next step, because it's set in the 80s, but it is current. So it's old and new.

Sydnee: Yes, exactly, exactly. Alright. Well, um, if you all have not seen Labyrinth, listeners, please. Labyrinth is so good. It's fun. I don't think there's any... there's nothing... it's just good. Yeah.

Taylor: Even in the ways I would've worried about it being weird. I was like, "Oh, is the Goblin King creepy towards the teenage girl?" No. He seems to have pretty clear boundaries that he's just... he's the Goblin King. He's doing his thing.

Sydnee: Yeah. No, he just wants to give her the—he's not trying to seduce her. He's giving her the fantasy world she wants to live in. That's it. Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah, no. I think it's good. Holds up and is good. And, I mean, my kids love it, so I think it's fairly family friendly.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, and you can also go to Maximumfun.org, and there are a bunch of great podcasts that you would love to listen to, so check that out. You can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.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 music plays]

Sydnee: I know we both have to do that gut check. Like, "Is there anything? Did we... did we just not notice it?" [unintelligible]

Taylor: Yeah. Well, I mean, you have those moments where you watch something that, like, "This is such a good—oh. Oh no. Ugh."

Sydnee: "Oh no."

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: "I didn't remember that!" [laughs]

Taylor: Ugh.

Sydnee: "Was this like this?!"

Taylor: "Boy they used that word a lot."

Sydnee: "Ugh! I was not prepared."

[chord]

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