

Still Buffering 481: The Great Divide [2026]

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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 Taylor Smirl.

Sydnee: Taylor, guess what Justin found and showed me this weekend.

Taylor: What?

Sydnee: And I know podcasting is not a visual medium.

Taylor: [laughs] Oh.

Sydnee: So I'm gonna show you something, but I'm gonna say it as I'm showing you.

Taylor: Okay. We're gonna have to make this audibly exciting.

Sydnee: I know.

Taylor: To equal the visual excitement that I'm about to experience.

Sydnee: Look what he found. Do you remember this?

Taylor: Oh!

Sydnee: It's my CD case.

Taylor: Yes! That is a small CD binder. It's the kind that holds— It's the size of one CD, stacked on top of each other.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: It says “Rock ‘n Roll Girlfriends” on the front.

Sydnee: Yes, it does.

Taylor: And it has a pair of roller skates.

Sydnee: And it’s still got— It’s just the original CDs. He’s been looking through CDs that you can’t stream.

Taylor: Oh, yeah?

Sydnee: And putting them somewhere where I can listen to them now. But I have Nora Jones, and Arctic Monkeys, and my favorite, the newest Nicktoons soundtrack.

Taylor: Oh, yeah, yeah. I think that one’s mine.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Jim Croce, “Time in a Bottle.”

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: The *Blue Album*!

Taylor: Oh! Wow.

Sydnee: There’s my first copy! Can you believe that? The original Weezer *Blue Album*. But I’ve got all these burned Death Cab for Cutie. I found this. Do you remember me listening to *Sympathetic Sounds of Detroit*?

Taylor: I remember *Sympathetic Sounds of Detroit*, because that had the Detroit Cobras on it.

Sydnee: You can’t— This exact CD, you can’t stream anywhere. ‘Cause it’s a collection of bands from Detroit. I’m sure you can find all the individual bands. So I now have this. I can listen to it in my car. Justin did something,

I don't know. [chuckles] But anyway, it was very fun to look through. I found that. This CD binder, which I think was yours, this little blue guy.

Taylor: Oh, I remember that one. That's from PacSun.

Sydnee: Yeah. This little blue PacSun binder.

Taylor: It's cool.

Sydnee: The zipper's broken.

Taylor: Like, baby blue. Some sort of wave design on it.

Sydnee: But we've got [holding back laughter] the *Forrest Gump* soundtrack.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Why do you have Beethoven?

Taylor: I'm multilayered! I'm cultured.

Sydnee: Can you imagine— Here's a blank CD. Here's a blank, burned...

Taylor: Could be anything.

Sydnee: That could be literally anything. I need a CD player, is what I need.

Taylor: I have one. I recently— 'Cause I still have my big 4-CD size binder, and I recently went through mine.

Sydnee: Did you?

Taylor: We got—

Sydnee: You have to read it. I don't know what this says.

Taylor: Oh! Nihon no Ongaku... Uh...

Sydnee: I don't know. This is a burned CD.

Taylor: Punk... Punk rock!

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Japanese punk rock.

Sydnee: Japanese— Oh, my god!

Taylor: Nihon no Ongaku punk rock. [laughs]

Sydnee: I know. I've—

Taylor: I wrote that in Japanese. That's why— Sorry. See, this is why we're falling apart. It was a burned CD with Japanese on it.

Sydnee: Anyway. You got Jack Johnson—

Taylor: I wonder what's on there. I bet that's pretty good.

Sydnee: I know! We gotta listen to these.

Taylor: I'm sure The Blue Hearts are on there.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Probably Shonen Knife. They were considered Japanese punk rock back then.

Sydnee: You got Oasis. Yeah, anyway— Oh, and I remember— Do you remember, they used to make CDs that you could burn. These are kids— We used to burn CDs for each other. And they would make these that look like little records. I loved those.

Taylor: Yeah, those are cool.

Sydnee: This is Al Franken's *Lies*.

Taylor: Mm.

Sydnee: [laughs] Burned on a CD. You know. Something all of us enjoy.

Taylor: When I was going through my binder, I found a copy of— I don't know what the album title is, but the artist's name was Lennon. Not as in John; as in—

Sydnee: Right.

Taylor: And you might have— This was after you graduated, but maybe you remember it happening. She played my high school. She...

Sydnee: Yes! I remember this!

Taylor: ... played the auditorium when she was up and coming. And I don't know— 'Cause I remember, there's one song of hers. I bought her album at my high school, I bought her CD, and one of her songs I added to my computer, and then I burned it onto the mix. And I still have the song, I can think of it. I was like, "Oh, I like that song. I wonder if I can find it streaming." Nowhere. No evidence of this woman existed.

Sydnee: Really?

Taylor: Her career is gone. But I do have her CD, and it's very strange.

Sydnee: It is. That is such a strange thing. Do you know, for a while— And I don't know, I haven't looked recently. But I desperately tried to stream all of Jann Arden's album, *Living Under June*. You remember that album?

Taylor: Oh, yeah? Yeah!

Sydnee: It was what “Insensitive” was on, which is the song everybody knew by Jann Arden. But I liked the entire album, and I could not find it anywhere. Just “Insensitive.”

Taylor: Really?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I wonder why.

Sydnee: I don’t know. This is—

Taylor: Fascinating.

Sydnee: The last one I found is a mixture of— This is when Justin and I started mixing our CDs. So this is this great CD binder where, obviously, we’ve got some [holding back laughter] They Might Be Giants, we’ve got the—

Taylor: [laughs] I was gonna say, “It’s They Might Be Giants and angry women. Oh, Taylor, that’s reductive.” And then you said They Might Be Giants. [laughs]

Sydnee: They Might Be Giants. And what’s next? That’s Poe. That’s a Poe.

Taylor: Yeah, see?

Sydnee: That’s a Poe album. And what’s that right there?

Taylor: Is that the *Ally McBeal* soundtrack?

Sydnee: *Resolver* and No Doubt right there.

Taylor: Yeah, yeah.

Sydnee: So...

Taylor: So I wasn't wrong.

Sydnee: The *Ally McBeal* soundtrack. We've got Death Cab for Cutie, got to.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I think this is you. This is another burned CD that's "'00 through '04 good times, bad times." Isn't that your handwriting?

Taylor: Yeah, that is my handwriting.

Sydnee: Who knows what's on that?

Taylor: Wow. That's from high school.

Sydnee: Could be anything.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But yeah. Oh, there's another! "Ultimate mix of wonky sorrow."

Taylor: I loved a mix CD when I was in high school.

Sydnee: This is you, and you've written, "My soul is black and dark like a hole of dark blackness."

Taylor: Mm. Yeah.

Sydnee: I know. And these are all—

Taylor: I can't—

Sydnee: And then here's "Songs of protest," I think I made. [laughs] That sounds like me.

Taylor: You think? [wheeze-laughs]

Sydnee: That sounds like me.

Taylor: That's more your style?

Sydnee: Yeah. Jimmy Buffett, Brandi Carlile. Anyway. Fantastic! And all of these are going to be— Justin's doing something to make them accessible to me. [laughs]

Taylor: Wow. I should send you home my giant binder.

Sydnee: Yeah! If you want 'em— I don't know what he's— I mean, I guess he's just putting them into digital form, but...

Taylor: The one thing that I've learned is that the burned CDs do degrade over time.

Sydnee: Ooh.

Taylor: And I mean, pretty quickly. 'Cause in the stretch of time, I know those are old, but not... Compared to the same CDs I would have bought in the early 2000s, some of those burned CDs don't play anymore.

Sydnee: Really? I need to check these out, and see if these still play. I worry about the ones— This big CD binder was a fabric one. The other two are plastickey, and I think the CDs in it look better preserved. The fabric CD binder, some of the CDs look a little rough, and I think it's gotten wet, is my worry.

Taylor: Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: At some point or another.

Taylor: Well, I don't know. Would that affect a CD? Moisture? Maybe over time.

Sydnee: Yeah. I have no— I mean, I don't know.

Taylor: 'Cause I figure that they were at least somewhat resilient to water, 'cause you had that one ex-boyfriend that, in order to clean a CD, he would just *lick* it. And it was a big lick, right? It was a little too...

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: [laughs] ... much of a, "Arhm!"

Sydnee: He was—

Taylor: [laughs] Every time he opened a CD. And I would be like, "Ahh!"
[laughs]

Sydnee: He would lick it. [laughs] There was no—

Taylor: He'll wipe it off on his skinny jeans.

Sydnee: Yup. He would lick the CD, wipe it off on his skinny jeans, and pop it in.

Taylor: And it would work! I don't know!

Sydnee: Pop it in my six-disc changer, in my Neon. No, I wanna say for posterity that *licking* CDs to clean them was not a common—

Taylor: No, it's—

Sydnee: It's not like— You know how there's the joke about Nintendo cartridges, the original Nintendo cartridges, you would blow in them to clean them? And that was a common practice. A lot of people did that, thinking, "This is how you clean them." Licking CDs was not a thing, outside of this one person.

Taylor: I mean, he learned it from somebody. Or maybe he didn't, I don't know.

Sydnee: Or maybe he just— Yeah.

Taylor: Just found something that worked.

Sydnee: I will say— Although maybe somebody else did. I will say, I was joking the other day with somebody about ways that you would try to get the ice off your windshield when you're running late.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And I was not the only one to use a CD case. I found that I have now started to poll people around my age who would have had CD cases in their car, and they have had similar experiences of, "I've got to get to school. I'm running late. My windshield is a sheet of ice. I don't know how to get— I'm not gonna scrape it." And then just CD-casing off a little hole, right in front of your face.

Taylor: I mean, it makes sense. The scraper is just a piece of plastic, a thin piece of plastic. CD case is the same vibe.

Sydnee: Same idea.

Taylor: [laughs] So what we're saying is, let's say you were writing a movie that takes place in the late '90s, early 2000s, and you wanted some touches of authenticity.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Having a character scrape their windshield with a CD case, good. Having a character lick a CD, confusing.

Sydnee: Bad.

Taylor: One guy out there is gonna go, "Yeah!" And then nobody else.
[laughs]

Sydnee: And everybody else is gonna be like, "What? We didn't do that. We didn't do that!"

Taylor: Or if you did, let us know. 'Cause I'm assuming it was [unintelligible]

Sydnee: We had a whole throwback weekend, Justin and I. We watched the *Teen-Age Strangler*. You ever seen that movie?

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: 1964, filmed in Huntington.

Taylor: Oh, really?

Sydnee: Yeah!

Taylor: Huh.

Sydnee: It's— I don't know where Justin found it. I don't think it is readily available. But it's a very short horror— Well, I don't know. It's not that scary. [laughs] I mean, maybe it was scary for 1964. [laughs]

Taylor: That's great.

Sydnee: But it is about a teenage strangler. And you can see it— The main reason we wanted to watch it is 'cause we were like, "There's the old Huntington High! Hey! We know that neighborhood! I bet I know what street that is." [laughs]

Taylor: That's cool. There is a movie called, I think it's *Street Trash*? Is that the one I'm thinking of? It was one of those— You know melt movies? It was a horror movie, but it just seemed to be an excuse that people melt somehow?

Sydnee: Yeah, yeah.

Taylor: And it's like, "Look at this gross melting effect."

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: It's one of those. And it's about a tainted supply of low, bottom-shelf liquor that gets into a Brooklyn neighborhood, and it melts people from the inside-out. And it's just a series of people melting and exploding. And it's filmed in Williamsburg, which now is a very expensive neighborhood. But it was wild to see Williamsburg 30 years ago, 40 years ago. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: In the background for this horror movie.

Sydnee: It really— The novelty of seeing Huntington is like, "Ooh, there's these." And there were street toughs. There's a gang. They're like the T-Birds, basically.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: And then, to try to pick out the people who probably were local and the people who weren't. 'Cause there's one actress who's like, [posh accent] "I just know Jimmy didn't do it." And it's like, okay. You're not from around here.

And then there's another one who's like, [Southern accent] "I think I need to lie down, and take a rest." And I'm like, alright, okay. They got some local girls for this too. [laughs]

Taylor: So it was like a professional, out-of-state production that chose to film in Huntington.

Sydnee: As far as I can tell— I do not know the whole history of *Teen-Age Strangler*. But it was a full— It is not super glossy. I don't want to say, "Oh, yeah, this is grade-A movie making." But it is definitely a professional production. It is not just somebody with a video camera, shooting in their

backyard. This is a produced film with an original song called "Yipe Stripes."
[laughs]

Taylor: Wow! Like, it's performed?

Sydnee: Yeah!

Taylor: They sing it?

Sydnee: Yeah. There's a little duet, a girl and a guy. They're in a chocolate shop. It looks like they're at Pop's from *Archies*, but I don't know where this is supposed to be in Huntington. Jim's Spaghetti? But it doesn't say that.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: So I don't know what this place is. It looks like a soda shop. And the girl stands up on the counter and sings while the guy plays guitar. And she's like, [singing] "Yipe stripes, doo-doo-doo-doo. Yipe stripes." And they all do their dancing like they did, like their twisting and whatever. It's 1964.

Taylor: That's great.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And funny!

Sydnee: It's great. I mean, it's really—

Taylor: I've never heard of it.

Sydnee: Yeah. I mean, they talk about ones like, "I was having a nice dinner at the Frederick." And I was like, "Yeah, you were having a nice dinner at the Frederick! Still here!"

Taylor: Can you still have a nice dinner at the Frederick?

Sydnee: So the Frederick is a— Well, it was a hotel. I mean, it is still there,

but it's not a hotel now. It's used mainly as an event space, like a venue. And you *can* have a nice dinner in the 21 Club, which is *inside* the Frederick.

Taylor: Oh, that's where that is.

Sydnee: But you wouldn't say— Yeah. But at the time, you would just eat at the hotel, the Frederick. So yes, you can still have a wonderful dinner at the Frederick, but technically it's at the 21 Club.

Taylor: Got you.

Sydnee: Yeah. And as far as I know, we don't have roaming gangs of street toughs in matching jackets. [laughs]

Taylor: But you could! You could start it.

Sydnee: You could! You could.

Taylor: You and your fellow street doctors could become Dr. Street Tough. [laughs]

Sydnee: We can have [laughs] jackets with some sort of logo on them, to show how tough we are.

Taylor: Absolutely.

Sydnee: They had bulldogs, 'cause that's tough. So I would need something.

Taylor: Yeah. You got a cat.

Sydnee: [laughs] Just a house cat? Just like a cat?

Taylor: Yeah. Cats get in scraps.

Sydnee: [laughs] I mean, Olive, I will say, all of my friends are scared of her.

Taylor: There you go. You got a guard cat.

Sydnee: She does the thing where she cuddles up next to you, and rubs her head on you when you're sitting there until you pet her. And then she immediately bites you.

Taylor: Mm. Solid move.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. To everybody. And my friends fall for it, over and over again. They'll be sitting there, and they're like, "I know I shouldn't pet you. I know what you're doing. I know what you're doing." And she'll just keep rolling around next to 'em, and rubbing her head on 'em and purring, and rolling around. And then finally, they'll reach down and try to pet her head, and she immediately is like, "Homp!" [laughs]

Taylor: What do you think is going on psychologically in that cat brain, in that moment?

Sydnee: I don't know. It's weird, because very clearly, I'm her person. And so she doesn't do it to me. She'll play with me sometimes, I'll know. She's laying on her back, with her paws up, and that means, "I want to play." And if I rub at her tummy, she'll try to snatch me. But she doesn't put her claws out. And she'll nibble at me, but it doesn't hurt. So she plays with me, but she definitely is attacking other people. [laughs]

Taylor: She's just asserting dominance, is what she's doing.

Sydnee: Is that what it is?

Taylor: I don't know.

Sydnee: You don't know.

Taylor: No. I have a cat, but he's never— He's not very good at cat-ing. He doesn't do a lot of cat things.

Sydnee: Mm.

Taylor: He's a really sweet guy. He will do that, he'll come up to you and rub up against you, and lay next to you, but he doesn't have the follow-through of the attack.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Just every person that comes in my house is like, "You're probably my best friend now!" And that's it. It's not a very cat thing to do. [laughs]

Sydnee: I don't know. I've never had a cat that is as intentional about luring people in and attacking them as Olive is.

Taylor: Well, I don't know. They say cats adopt the personality of their owners.

Sydnee: I don't... [laughs]

Taylor: [wheeze-laughs]

Sydnee: I don't know if I believe in, can you have a special connection with an animal, on some spiritual level?

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: I don't know if I believe that, or if I used— Now, I'm inclined to. Because Olive is with me— Like, my door's shut right now, and I guarantee you she's sitting on the other side, just staring, furious. She comes with me, from the moment I wake up. She sleeps on the pillow next to me. Follows me to the bathroom, sits at my feet while I pee. Sits at my feet while I brush my teeth. Hugs my leg if I'm taking too long, to remind me— 'Cause she knows I'm gonna feed her breakfast. She sits outside the shower, or sometimes in the shower with me, while I shower.

Taylor: I mean, if it's spiritual, that's a debate. But animals definitely— Cats

specifically will choose a person. They will bond with one person in particular. It's like, "This is the person that takes care of me. I gotta take care of them."

Sydnee: I guess that's it. I've just never had one that's that consistently with me. You know what I mean?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: She's with me all the time. If I am in the house, she is next to me.

Taylor: Yeah. Jack's the same way. He follows me from room to room. He's not a sit on your lap, be all up on you kind of cat.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: But he will always be within one to two feet of me, [laughs] if I'm home.

Sydnee: Well, it's very comforting. I'm not complaining. I'm just— I'm beginning to believe in [laughs] supernatural, I guess.

Taylor: Yeah. Just now! Aren't you into doing some witch stuff?

Sydnee: Yeah. I guess this is not new.

Taylor: What, today? Yesterday?

Sydnee: No, this isn't new. I did have— This is the last thing I'll say. I know we need to talk about Noah Kahan and the new album.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: But a spooky thing did happen today.

Taylor: Oh! Spooky.

Sydnee: Yes. Yesterday – of course, for Mother’s Day – I got up, and Cooper had made shakshouka for me.

Taylor: [wheeze-laughs] Okay. Cooper had made shakshouka, or someone helped Cooper make shakshouka?

Sydnee: Justin helped Cooper make shakshouka.

Taylor: Because the image in my mind of just little Cooper getting up, and pulling up a stool, and just, “Doo-de-doo. Mother, I’ve made you shakshouka for breakfast!” It’s very good.

Sydnee: She was very excited. I had made shakshouka for us a month or two ago, and she just adored it. I didn’t think either of the kids would particularly like it. And Charlie was, ehh, okay on it. Cooper *loved* it. And she knew we both loved it, so she made— Justin helped her. She made shakshouka.

So I came into the living room, and I was sitting there, eating my shakshouka. And somewhere between there and then when I went to get in the bathtub they drew for me, ‘cause that’s what they always do for Mother’s Day. They get me some Epsom Salts, and nice bath things, and they let me have a bath. Somewhere in that time, I lost my glasses. And it’s not a huge deal, because I usually change to my contacts pretty quickly every day. So I was thinking, “Man, I can’t find my glasses.” And it didn’t bother me ‘til this morning. I get up to get the kids ready for school, I go to do my morning routine, and I open my little glasses case next to the sink. “Ah, yeah, that’s right. I couldn’t find my glasses.” So after I get the kids off to school— And I’ve done all of this with my 2400 vision, by the way.

Taylor: Mm.

Sydnee: I can’t see. Without my contacts or glasses, I am legally blind.

Taylor: Well, you put contacts in.

Sydnee: I do now. But I didn't this morning.

Taylor: Oh.

Sydnee: I know. Justin asked me this too. It's just I don't like to put them in first thing. I like to give my eyes a minute to...

Taylor: Sure. But don't be blind and drive a car, right?

Sydnee: Oh, I didn't drive 'em.

Taylor: Oh, okay. Alright. [laughs]

Sydnee: No! No, no, no. I wouldn't do that. No, I would not— I couldn't.

Taylor: Sorry, the way you said that, "I got the kids off to school." I was like, "Well, no, wait a second. There is a situation there where I think you should've had eyeballs."

Sydnee: [laughs] No, no, no. I would never. I couldn't back out of the driveway.

Taylor: Okay. Alright.

Sydnee: I'd hit the wall of the garage. I can't do anything like that. But I can put their hair in a ponytail, and make them breakfast, and fill their snack boxes for the day. I can do that stuff. Anyway, can't find my glasses, can't find my glasses. I'm cleaning up the kitchen, I'm ready to go take a shower 'cause we've gotta do our recording, and all this, and I still can't find my freaking glasses. And Justin, meanwhile, was also looking for my glasses this whole time. Can't find them. Very frustrating.

So I go in, and I take a shower, and I'm out, and I'm about to put in my contacts. And I'm moving my stuff around on my vanity. And as I pick up my glasses case to move it, I notice now it's heavy. So I open it, and there's

my freaking glasses. So I go in, and I'm like, "Hey. Where'd you find my glasses, honey?" I asked Justin. And he's like, "I didn't."
"Yeah, you did. They're in my gla— You put 'em back in my glasses case."
"No." He absolutely did not.

I don't know what happened. But I swear to you, this morning, I got up, opened my glasses case, it was empty. And I went, "Shoot. I gotta find my glasses." And then, two hours later, they're in my glasses case, and I didn't put 'em there, and neither did Justin.

Taylor: You don't think one of your sneaky li'l kids did it?

Sydnee: [sighs] I'm gonna ask 'em when they get home from school, but I don't think— I think they would be excited to tell me. 'Cause they knew I was looking for them, so I feel like they'd come running up and be like, "Here's your glasses!" And they would want praise and appreciation.

Taylor: Yeah, but I feel like they both are capable of a scheme.

Sydnee: Hmm.

Taylor: Like, for some reason, it was a funny thing to do.

Sydnee: It could be. 'Cause the only alternative explanation is a ghost.

Taylor: Yeah. Or that you maybe didn't look, and you thought you did.

Sydnee: I know I did! Because it's so ingrained in my morning routine, you know? I would never walk out of the bathroom without my glasses on, because I am so useless without them. [laughs] I can't— I'll run into things.

Taylor: I had a situation like that that I had to just chalk up to, sometimes things happen, you go, "I don't know! Kind of weird."

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: 'Cause I lost my tablet pen, like my little, you know, Apple Pen.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I'm always very careful with it, 'cause those things are expensive. And I put my tablet in my bag, where I was out working at a cafe. And when I got home, I pulled it out, and it was gone. And I was like, "How?" I *know* I was careful with it. I *know* it went in the bag. And I could not find it, and I looked everywhere. I thought, "Well, I know I just had it in the cafe, so it's not lost in my house."

But I couldn't find it, so I ordered another one. Just whatever, it is what it is. I'm not gonna have a pen for a day or two. Got one, a replacement one. I got down, met the driver at the drop-off. As I'm walking upstairs and unwrapping it, and I walk into my house, and I step on something as I walk into my house, and there it is, in the middle of my kitchen floor. My original one, just sitting there. [laughs]

Sydnee: See? That sounds like a ghost!

Taylor: In plain view. This is not— And you know, I have a cat. So would he bat something around, and maybe bat something under the couch, and then bat it out from— That's the best I could reason, is maybe when I pulled my tablet out, it fell on the ground. I didn't look for it right away, and it gave Jack enough time to play with it, *maybe*. But it felt like a cosmic joke. It felt like something was like, "Haha!" [laughs]

Sydnee: See? I think that's a ghost. That's what I think.

Taylor: [chuckles] That's your opinion, Dr. Sydnee McElroy? [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. I think a ghost hid my glasses.

Taylor: Diagnosis: ghost. [laughs]

Sydnee: I think a ghost hid my glasses from me this morning, and then put them back in my glasses case just to mess with me. And I think a ghost hid your Apple Pen and then gave it back to you right when you replaced it, just

to mess with you. I don't think these are *malicious* ghosts. I think they're just trying to tease us. They don't want to bring *harm* to us.

Taylor: Well, not to be too [???], but a little bit for sure, this was right after— You know I have a little altar in my house.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And I don't do anything maleficent. I just like having my little candles, and my little stones, and stuff. But I got a little Loki statue for it.

Sydnee: Mm!

Taylor: Like, God Loki. And I put it on there, and then that happened, and I thought, "I think this is just Loki saying hello." [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah?

Taylor: "I messed with you! What's up? I'm here!"

Sydnee: That's Loki behavior.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: I don't— [laughs] I don't think Hecate was ever known for hiding people's glasses.

Taylor: No? I don't know.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: You got somebody else bumping around there.

Sydnee: It's possible. For Beltane, we did a lot of rituals that are to Bel, but I don't know that Bel was traditionally a trickster God either.

Taylor: Mm. Not familiar.

Sydnee: No, I don't think so. Yeah, but either way, I can see now. So all is well.

Taylor: There you go!

Sydnee: Yeah. There's more that we cannot see, and cannot explain.

Taylor: 'Cause, you know, if any of that is true, it's one of those things where the more you believe in it, then the more powerful it is, right?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: So if you greet it with a shrug, you're fine either way.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Just like, "Okay. Yeah. Thanks!" [chuckles]

Sydnee: That's— Yeah. That's the universe. Anyway. Anyway.

Taylor: Noah Kahan.

Sydnee: So we listened to some very sad music. [laughs]

Taylor: Well, it's sad, angry. Some of the songs are maybe positive in an angry way.

Sydnee: Yeah. No, I think that's true. I just— The vibe— And to be fair, I listened to it on Mother's Day, which was a bad fit. 'Cause I was trying to be super chill and relaxed, and it's not that it's not— Definitely, it's the tempo of it, and the sound of it, and his voice. Soothing, you know. It's not loud, angry music. But it's also kind of a bummer for Mother's Day.

Taylor: I could see that.

Sydnee: I was looking to be transported.

Taylor: Well, I think you will be transported, but maybe to [laughs] an angry place. So I don't— The new album by Noah Kahan, *The Great Divide*, I think it's— I mean, almost every song seems to be singing *at* somebody about very strong emotions.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: And I was curious about, "Is this just an album directed towards one person that Noah Kahan is very angry at?" Or has very confusing feelings for? It's very strong, and mixed feelings towards.

Sydnee: Sort of a Lily Allen move.

Taylor: Yeah!

Sydnee: Just a different vibe. Yeah.

Taylor: But it's kind of all over the place. Some songs, it seems like, "I want good things for you." And then other songs, it's like, "I hope you never come back again." And then some songs, it's like, "You're an A-hole, and I'm willing to work things out with you." Which, granted, I could feel out that that could be just one person.

Sydnee: Sure.

Taylor: 'Cause life is complicated. Sometimes, you can have many feelings for one person. But I read an interview with him where he talked about how this album was sort of— A lot of these songs came from him thinking of the conversation he would have with certain people in his life, if he had that opportunity for one final conversation. And that's where a lot of these songs came from. Which I think, with that perspective, it makes a lot more sense that these are all different specters that he's singing to.

Sydnee: It also makes sense why it read to me as kind of a bummer.

Taylor: Yeah! Well, it's getting everything out.

Sydnee: Yeah. I think— So that kind of vibe of music, I can't say on this podcast what we used to call this kind of music. 'Cause it's got a bad word in it.

Taylor: Oh, yeah?

Sydnee: Sad...

Taylor: Mm, yeah.

Sydnee: You know, the B-word.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Not that B-word, the other B-word.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: Yeah. But I feel like there's always been that kind of music that was popular back in our day, too. And maybe I connected with it more when I was younger, is part of the problem. I currently have no need for catharsis like that. You know?

Taylor: Well, how old is— Noah Kahan, he's 29. So he's younger than us.

Sydnee: Yeah, he's young.

Taylor: That made sense to me, with the idea that he's a little bit younger. 'Cause I was thinking about that concept of, are there conversations lingering out there with people that I wish I could have? Like, that one last one. I don't mean first steps to repairing something. I mean, someone that they're out of my life, I know they're out of my life, but if I had that one last chance to tell them what I thought about them.

And when I was younger, I think I thought a lot about that. You know? I feel like there's a trajectory of when I was very young, and people had hurt me

or abandoned me or what-have-you, I wanted vengeance. And then, as I got older, I was like, "Well, I don't want vengeance. Vengeance is a bad thing. I want justice." And now, I think I'm old enough that I just want peace. And peace comes with an understanding that those conversations don't exist for a reason.

Sydnee: Well, yeah. I think you're absolutely right; I think that might be part of the problem. 'Cause I was sitting here, thinking, "Do I have— One, do I have people that I feel like I need to have *that* conversation with?" I don't know. I don't know if I do. I'd have to think on it, before I could definitively say no. But then I think about, I did have a conversation that was meaningful to me, to sort of close a chapter of my life with an ex two years ago. And we had not spoken since we broke up, so this was kind of a big deal. And there was no— It was in a Billy Bob's, which is a weird vibe.

Taylor: [wheeze-laughs]

Sydnee: We were— [laughs] This is what— See, okay. This is what happens when you get old. You don't have the big, dramatic conversation that you always thought you'd have. Instead, you end up at a mutual friend's kid's birthday party at Billy Bob's, and you awkwardly have to talk to each other.

Taylor: That's so much better, though.

Sydnee: Yes. And the thing is, there is no lingering animosity. I probably am the one who did wrong, as opposed to was wrong, would be a fair assessment. Although I don't know. In relationships, there's lots that go back and forth. But I don't think that the other party was seeking any sort of apology, or— I don't think there was any justice to be had. I don't think there was any revenge to be had.

I think it was just— Honestly, do you know what we both kind of wanted to know? What happened. Like, "Finish the story. I used to know you. I knew what was going on in your life, I knew your family." You know? "Then, I didn't have access to that information anymore. So what's going on with you?" That was really it. It was just sort of like, "End the story for me, or at least update the story for me. Because I used to know your story, and then I didn't, and now it just feels like an unfinished book." So I guess curiosity?

That was it! But I didn't feel— I guess I felt a sense of peace afterwards, from like, "Okay. I don't hate this person. And if this person hates me, that would make me kind of sad. Although ultimately, it wouldn't influence my day-to-day. But I would rather them not hate me." And they don't. And that was that. That's it. [laughs]

Taylor: I mean, I think— I think that it's a normal thing that— And it doesn't always have to be somebody that you hurt you. Again, it can be a complex— That ended *badly*.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Lots of things end badly. I would argue, most things that end, end badly. [laughs]

Sydnee: Fair.

Taylor: And I know what it's like to feel like you are having conversations with ghosts constantly. You are constantly thinking through what you would say, having that moment in your head. I don't feel that way anymore. And this is not a— I'm not calling Noah Kahan immature. I think it makes sense, for where he is in his life. I think there is that period where you want to have those. And I think that *is*, like, you *do* have to talk to those ghosts. It's not the person that— That person has kept on living. They've grown up, just like you said. Their stories continue; they've become somebody new. *That's* not actually the person you have to make peace with. You have to make peace with the ghost that's still there, that you feel the need to talk to. And that is self work.

Sydnee: Yeah!

Taylor: That's something you have to do alone.

Sydnee: Yes. Because that version of that person only exists in you now. And so it's all internal.

Taylor: A few years ago, I had an ex write me a very, very long message. And this person was not...

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: No interest in revisiting anything about this relationship. This person was very cruel to me, in every way imaginable. And it was a very bad relationship. And about five years after the relationship ended – which is now, looking back, about three years ago – they wrote me this very long message apologizing, admitting that they were awful and abusive, and that now, they— Now, they were about to marry somebody, and they were in love, and they really wanted to apologize. But what bothered me is they said, “And I think you probably need to hear this too.”

And I thought, “No.” I probably did, like, five years ago. I probably did four years ago. But at some point, I figured out that— I mean, I guess the apology’s here now, but that I can’t sit around and wait for it, and I have to figure this out on my own. I have to work through this on my own. I don’t need anything from you!

And it’s— You’ve been here, the whole time. You’ve been back there, thinking about this, and I *had* to move past it. ‘Cause that was the only way to survive, and I have. So if you need me to tell you, “Hey, it’s okay, I’m good,” I’ll give you that. But I don’t need anything from you. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah, I think that’s a really powerful thing that can only come from age, is that realization, like, “I don’t need this. It won’t change, fundamentally, how I feel, for better or worse. And if I had the opportunity to stand in front of this person who maybe, like you said, wronged me or it ended strangely, or badly or whatever, what would I say? I don’t really have anything to say. You know?”

I don’t need anything. I’ve done it all internally, I’ve done all that work. I’m fine. I have control— It’s about recognizing that, ultimately, you have control over the way people make you feel. And that doesn’t absolve them from any harm they may have caused, but it does say, well, I can choose to actually not care about this anymore. I can choose to say, “Well, I’m over that. I do not feel residual hurt. I have peace with this. I have happiness and joy in my life in these ways now. I am letting go of this anger, because it does not serve me.” Those are choices we have to make.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, that's like my crux with that relationship, was asking myself, "Did I deserve that?" And the only person that could go, "No, you didn't," was me!

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: It wouldn't matter who could tell me that.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: And I do think that that actually is why I really like this album. And I think it's— You still *have* to have those conversations with those ghosts. You still *have* to go through your feelings. You still have to say all those things. It's just, it's not to the actual physical person out there. It's to yourself, and out loud.

And I think that's what this album is a document of. I think it's actually really kind of a beautiful psychological workthrough that he's doing, in that. And I mean, some of the sentiment, it hits that— What is that, broad appeal, but through specific means?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: That pop culture sensibility.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: A lot of these songs, I can think of specific people that I feel this exact way about, that he's singing to someone very specific to him. But, you know.

Sydnee: Sure, yeah. I mean, you're right in that it is objectively beautiful. He has very nice song construction and his lyrical talent, he writes beautifully. All of that is true. It's hard, I think it's just— And I don't think this is a criticism of him or his music. I think I am just not, at this moment in my life, in a place to really enjoy an entire album that has a similar vibe

like that. I can hear a song, and go, "Oh, that was pretty." But to sit in that headspace for that long is not something that I choose to engage with, if given my druthers. [laughs] You know what I mean?

Taylor: I think that's fair.

Sydnee: It's just not for me. Which is fine! Lots of stuff's for me.

Taylor: But did you get any— 'Cause I feel like some of the standouts, obviously the title theme, "The Great Divide."

Sydnee: The title track is— Yeah.

Taylor: I think that song— I was going down a Reddit thread of people's various interpretations of it. And I think that I love that song.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: I remember when it was— He sang it at concerts. He's been singing it at concerts for a couple years now, I think. And people have been waiting for it to come out.

Sydnee: Oh, okay.

Taylor: And that chorus was the thing that stuck in everybody's head first, the "I hope you settle down, I hope you marry rich, I hope you're scared of all the ordinary stuff."

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: But all of that, like, "And not your soul, and what he might do with it," it felt very much like a relationship with somebody that you grew up together, but you don't fully understand each other. And you realize only as an adult how much that person was suffering, looking back. And I think especially with that invoking the soul, it's like, is this religious trauma? Somebody that was held back by their religion?

Sydnee: Sure, yeah.

Taylor: And maybe now, they're living— I think that song really spoke to me. I can think of people that that makes me think of. I know I never saw all of you, because of things that held you back in your life. And I think you're doing better now, and that's just all I want for you. We'll never speak again, but I hope all that's behind you.

Sydnee: Yeah. No, I think— It makes sense it's the title track, too. It definitely is the standout. I thought "Willing and Able" was a really good one. I went back and listened to that one again.

Taylor: Well, and that one, I don't think— That feels like it's asking of something.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: That's wanting to sit down with someone, and saying, "Yeah, I can't make sense of all this, but I can talk, if you can."

Sydnee: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Taylor: I like that in contrast, too, that "Dashboard"?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: The first time I saw "Dashboard," you would appreciate this, was a supercut of Robby from *The Pitt*. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: 'Cause you know, it's like, "You cross the state line with your shadow, you're still an A-hole." [wheeze-laughs] You know, people that feel the need to go— Like they went on some great journey, and they found themselves. It's like, no, you're still exactly the same, bro. You've just been to France. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] Yep. And that is Dr. Robby.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Somebody said the problem with *The Pitt* is that what we're all trying to come to terms with is we thought that from season one, that Dr. Robby was our daddy who was gonna protect us, and take care of us, and help us get through this rough time. And then we found out, "Oh, no. He's a *daddy*. He's dark, and broody, and messed up, and we're all desperately trying to fix him." [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah. That's very true.

Sydnee: Did you see Noah Wyle doing exams on people at the Hollywood Bowl to raise money for something?

Taylor: Oh, no.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Not like real ones, obviously, right?

Sydnee: Well—

Taylor: I know he's been pretending to be a doctor for a long time, but...

Sydnee: I think— No, it was not—

Taylor: Just not an honorary...

Sydnee: [laughs] It was not a real one. I think that somebody pitched this, and everybody was like, "Oh, that would raise so much money! Let's auction off an exam by Dr. Robby." 'Cause he comes out, dressed as Dr. Robby. And what they didn't think about is, what— 'Cause it's two women who win. What these women want is not Noah Wyle being goofy in front of a huge crowd, going, "Alright! Take a deep breath, in and out. Oh, sounds great!"

Yay!" That's not what people want. People want *Dr. Robby* to examine them. [laughs] People want *John Carter* to examine them. And that's not something we can have happening in the Hollywood Bowl!

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: And that would be very creepy, if he did it! [laughs] So instead, he has to just be like, "Alright! Let's tap that knee with a hammer, and oh, good!" Like, you have to be like a game show host. 'Cause otherwise, it's *extremely* creepy. [laughs]

Taylor: If he was just method the whole time.

Sydnee: Oh, yeah. Which is what— I mean, secretly, if you have paid a bunch of money to win that in an auction, that's what you *want*.

Taylor: I guess so.

Sydnee: Right?

Taylor: But I don't think you want that on— You don't want that on film, I guess.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: That's a private experience.

Sydnee: Anyway, I digress. [laughs]

Taylor: I wouldn't want Dr. Robby to examine me.

Sydnee: No, I would take Dr. John Carter any day.

Taylor: I like the— What's the one that's also a Broadway actress? I'm thinking of *The Pitt*.

Sydnee: Uh, yes. Um...

Taylor: Santos. Santos.

Sydnee: Yes, Santos.

Taylor: Santos can examine me. I trust her.

Sydnee: Not in some sort of attractive way, but I would totally trust Mel to examine me.

Taylor: Oh, yeah. Mel, absolutely.

Sydnee: Not in some weird way. Just she'd be funny, and good at her job, and...

Taylor: She would know exactly what's wrong with me.

Sydnee: ... I would enjoy her energy. [laughs] In reference to Noah Kahan, 'cause I was listening to this in the tub for my Mother's Day spa soak. Drinking champagne, and listening to Noah Kahan. And reading *The Telltale Lilac Bush*, so maybe that contributed to my impression.

Taylor: [laughs] What a moody bath.

Sydnee: It was a very moody bath. The girls kept coming in to visit me, which I told them they were welcome to. I don't need a lot of solitude on Mother's Day. I like that the girls keep coming in, and asking me questions, or sitting next to the tub and asking me what I'm reading. That doesn't bother me. But they came in, and they were like, "What are you listening to?"

And I was like, "Noah Kahan." And first of all, Cooper said, "I don't know who that is." And I said, "'Season of the Sticks.'" And she went, "Oh, I know who that is." [laughs] And Charlie of course knew.

And I said, "Girls, let me ask you a question. You kids seem to really love Noah Kahan. What is it? What do we love about it? Why specifically?" And the only answer they could both give me was "Stick Season."

Taylor: Well...

Sydnee: Like, the song.

Taylor: It's a great song, yeah.

Sydnee: And I was like, "Yeah, but like... Why?" And they were like, "Well, it's such a good song." Like, "Okay." It just seemed like this would not be the music that would appeal to tween girls.

Taylor: No, I would not imagine so. This feels like music that is designed specifically for high school to college-age kids that have moved back and forth in a hometown to an adopted town.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Or that are either moving out of town. That is the nexus that I think...

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: 'Cause even this, there's so much about coming back. Like, "Oh, we hope you don't come home," or "You left home." And the first album had a lot of that too.

Sydnee: A lot of that too, yup.

Taylor: Which that's fertile ground. I mean, clearly.

Sydnee: Yes. Complicated relationships with your hometown, I mean...

Taylor: People you grew up with. I mean, I think even some of these songs, he's singing to himself.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: He talks about only coming home until you have your next song. That's gotta be self-reflection.

Sydnee: You would think, yeah.

Taylor: Do you use your hometown as inspiration, but does that kind of make you a jerk?

Sydnee: Which is, you know, that is reflective too of that process. 29 is just the right age to be— It makes total sense that that's where he is. [laughs]

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I was probably feeling similar to this at 29.

Taylor: I think I've only— Yeah, I think I felt that way for a good half a decade. So [laughs] I think— I mean, I really enjoyed this album.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I would listen to it when I was out on my run, so I could just sort of turn my brain off and feel things, and it's perfect for that.

Sydnee: I don't think— I'm gonna be completely honest. And this is not me saying, "I think it's bad," or "Nobody should listen to it." This is not a criticism. Again, I am fully recognizing this is not music that is made for a 43-year-old woman who [laughs] still has two little kids she's raising. And does, I would say, because my job is very emotionally taxing, I don't necessarily need a lot of— I don't engage with a lot of media like that. If something is trying to take me there to a dark place, because that's part of what it's attempting to do, I generally stay away from it. Because I go there every day enough, you know? So I engage with a lot of media that's lighter, or sillier. If it's horror, I like it to be ridiculous, hyperbolic. You know? That's the kind of stuff I tend to engage with.

Teylor: Well, I would go out on a limb and say that I bet you have your albums that you listen to when you want to feel things. Not that we get to choose when we feel things, but I know I have that— When I'm dealing with something that I'm like, "I have too much to do, I can't feel this right now," I do have my safe albums that I tuck myself into and say, "Okay. I need to feel this, and I need to be in a safe place and feel this, and I will."

And for me, it's like, I'll listen to— I have Damien Rice or something. Something sad. There's some Aimee Mann albums, like *Lost in Space* does it for me.

Sydnee: Poe is a good choice for me. *Haunted*.

Teylor: Oh, that's a great one.

Sydnee: Yeah. Poe is good, or Regina Spektor sometimes. But yeah, no, I know what you mean. I have that. And I'm not saying I don't ever engage with that, but I'm just owning that if this was not *my* favorite album, that does not reflect the quality. It just reflects that I am not the perfect audience, maybe, for this album. But it is absolutely beautiful, and very well done. I think that, for me, I would want to throw these songs in a mix with other songs that were more upbeat and lighter to intermingle.

Teylor: [laughs] Just there you go, Noah Kahan. Just next time, throw in a couple pop classics for Syd.

Sydnee: Just a few. [laughs]

Teylor: Just to listen to in the bath.

Sydnee: I mean, let's be completely honest. I am so excited for Eurovision this coming weekend.

Teylor: [wheeze-laughs]

Sydnee: That's me! That's me.

Taylor: Hey, different strokes.

Sydnee: Yes. And we can all like what we like, and there is no one great or one bad. It's all what you prefer. And that's fine.

Taylor: Alright.

Sydnee: [laughs] But I can recognize, objectively, that it's good. I, you know...

Taylor: Hey, we did our best to keep up with the youth. This is the youth.

Sydnee: We tried. Even the youth couldn't explain to me why they liked it. They were just like, "I don't know. We just do."
"Okay. Fair enough, youth."

Well, Tey, again, I did enjoy it. And I do like the— I think it's important, as we get old, to listen to the new stuff. To continue to engage with the stuff that young people like, so that we don't become those old people who are like, "Well, music stopped being good in 1998!"

Taylor: No! Well, I think it's even kind of magical to see that, even if you're not feeling that now, that kids today are feeling the same thing *you* felt 15 years ago.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: That we all still have that in common. Even if we've moved past those feelings, we can remember having them.

Sydnee: I sat and listened to a Jeff Buckley album the same way that kids are listening to Noah Kahan right now.

Taylor: Absolutely.

Sydnee: No, that makes total sense. That's a very nice symmetry, I suppose. [chuckles]

Well, Tey, what should we do next?

Taylor: Well, this was your idea. I haven't watched it yet.

Sydnee: Oh, yeah. This was my idea.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: *Ready or Not 2: Here I Come*.

Taylor: We're— To be fair, 'cause we didn't talk about the first one, but this one has Sarah Michelle Gellar.

Sydnee: We didn't, did we? [laughs]

Taylor: No. And it wasn't some big cultural touchstone. No insult to the movie. I saw the first one, it was very good. But this is not some, "Oh, we have to talk about this." I just think we really wanna talk about Sarah Michelle Gellar.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: A constant source of inspiration to the show.

Sydnee: Yes, perfect. We'll talk about *Ready or Not 2: Here I Come* on the next episode.

Taylor: Alrighty.

Sydnee: In the meantime, obviously, you probably have already listened to Noah Kahan's new album, but if you haven't, you should check it out. If you're old like me, you gotta pay attention to this stuff. Keep up with the kids.

Taylor: Remind yourself what emotions are, every now and then.

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah. Every now and then. And you should go to MaximumFun.org and check out a lot of other great podcasts there that you would enjoy. And thank you— No, that's not what I meant to say yet. You can email us...

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: ... at StillBuffering@MaximumFun.org. And *then* thank you to the Nouvellas for our theme song, "Baby You Change Your Mind." [laughs]
[theme music plays]

Taylor: Are you sure you didn't just not check your glasses case?

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: It was a ghost!

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.

Sydnee: I— It's a ghost!

Taylor: [laughs] Alright.

Sydnee: Playful poltergeist.

Taylor: Ghost and [unintelligible]

Sydnee: It was the ghost of Velma.

Taylor: [laughs] "I lost my glasses!"

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: You think the ghost was just holding them about five inches above your head the whole time? "Hee-hee-hee!"

Sydnee: Probably.

Taylor: "She'll never know!"

Sydnee: "She won't look up. She can't see 'em!"

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