

Still Buffering 491: The Man Will Burn (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: Tey, have you been doing a spooky thing every day, as we had said we would?

Taylor: [laughs] I think I have! Maybe there were days that I haven't been so intentional about it, but I have been doing—I've been doing a spooky drawing pretty much every day. I've been doing these little cards, you know?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: What are they called? Those A-C—I don't know. There's a term for 'em. Artist trading card, artist cards, for something. Artist cards. Little guys. I've been doing little guys.

Sydnee: Whatever you say, I'm gonna believe you, 'cause it's art—it's art-adjacent, and I don't know about that.

Taylor: But then I don't know what it's called. A series of letters, but I just—it's a little spooky guy.

Sydnee: You could make it up and I'd believe you.

Taylor: Alright. Little guy cards. Um, spooky little guys. And, uh, I don't know why it's my comfort area of TikTok is watching the buildout of Halloween Horror Nights down in—well, I guess Orlando and, uh, there's one in LA too, right? But the Orlando one is the one I'm mainly focused on. Because that's the one that I could maybe get to. So, I love—there are these TikTokers that it's like, "There's a new tent! [laughs] In the park." And the video is just a tent. And I'm like, "Yeah, that's a cool tent!"

Sydnee: They do cool—they do cool stuff, I believe, at Universal Studios. I've never experienced that. I've been to Disney's Mickey's Not-So-Scary whatever-whatever.

Taylor: I mean, that's—oh, wow. Like, that—there was drama there. Uh, because they're changing the outfits for the Mickey's No-so-scary... they've made it a bit more of, like, a... I don't know. There's not, like, a skirt option. It's a bit more of, like, two different sort of gender-neutral looking options that aren't as festive.

Sydnee: Oh no.

Taylor: And, uh, that's what—I've keyed my TikTok just right, because it was either here is a new piece of, I don't know, scaffolding at Halloween Horror Nights, and also some former cast members saying, "Well, I'm gonna tell you the background as to why they've changed the dresses," and everybody mad in the comments. I'm like, this is great. I love this. This is what I want my feed to be full of.

Sydnee: Listen. If you like that content, talk to my husband, because he, you know, he is a Disney parks fan. When I say he's a Disney fan, he always corrects me. Like, he likes the parks and the history of the parks. And, like...

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: ... that. It is not just about Disney, the brand, or Disney movies even, or Disney characters. It's like, the Disney parks specifically fascinates him. And as a result, he listens to various podcasts and video series from people who, like, those are the people who get really angry when literally anything changes. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Well, and I... I mean, I'm sure he's aware of this controversy. And, like, I will say, looking at the older outfits, like, they were a lot more fun than the kind of pared-down... if it's, you know, the assumed reason someone has—people have assumed it's cost-saving to have less complicated outfits. I find it hard to believe that Disney considers costs in making decisions. I mean, I'm sure they do. Every big corporation does. But, like, to this amount of visible degree, I find that hard to believe.

Sydnee: Well, I am sure—I am sure they do consider costs to some degree. But I don't think—I can't—I mean, what did you do to the—like, did you save a hundred bucks? 'Cause Disney doesn't care about that. You know what I mean?

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: What could you have possibly done? I mean, did it go from a million dollar costume to a 250 dollars? Like, probably not. [laughs] You know what I mean? Like...

Taylor: No. Well, and the other thought was that it is because they have a clause where basically cast members can wear any—whatever version of the costume they want.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: And that this has caused people that, you know—I mean, it's like a gender identity thing. Like, "Oh no, this person that I'm perceiving as this gender is wearing a costume that looks like that gender, and it will make guests uncomfortable." And Disney doesn't want to lose that clause that whatever—their inclusivity thing. So they just have stripped any obvious gender identity from the costumes. And of all the, like, holidays to worry about that, it seems a little silly for a Halloween thing. Like, who cares? [laughs] It's a big Halloween party.

But also it's like, what a fun challenge to a designer to say "I want to make two over-the-top, like—" 'cause the costumes were always kind of—they were a little ridiculous. They had the big bat headbands, and—like, what a fun challenge. Make two sort of gender-ambiguous outfits, or just suck it up and say, "Yeah, I don't know. That person's wearing a dress. Why are you worried about it? You're at Disney World. You got Disney money. Chill out." [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, and a lot of it is just, I mean, really... there are people who are such, like, fans, obsessively, of exactly what Disney has always been that, I mean, you change any tiny thing, and they get upset 'cause they want it to be like they remember it being when they were young.

Like, I was listening to one of the YouTubers yelling about, like, "The middle of EPCOT sucks now. Can we all agree? EPCOT sucks." 'Cause they've redone EPCOT. It has all new areas. And he was just furious about... [laughs quietly] like, there's an area that's empty in the middle of EPCOT as you transition from, like, the World Showcase to Tomorrow—I don't know. It's like... like, they wanted to revamp, um, right before COVID they were gonna revamp Spaceship Earth, which is the big golf ball.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And then they didn't get to, 'cause COVID happened. And then it was just like, "Well, we're gonna put our money elsewhere," so they haven't

done that. And I think it would be great. 'Cause if you go through Spaceship Earth, which is the history of mankind in a golf ball... [laughs]

Taylor: Where else would it be?

Sydnee: Um, it—one thing that you might notice is that there are almost no women. [laughs] In the golf ball.

Taylor: Oh, no. [laughs]

Sydnee: Um, throughout—so, like, telling the story of the human race... you know, it's mostly a bunch of dudes. There's, like, a couple. There's, like, one or two girls in there. But, like, for the most part it's all dudes. And I think it'd be good to revamp that a little bit. 'Cause...

Taylor: Add a couple ladies, maybe.

Sydnee: Add some ladies in the golf ball!

Taylor: I want some ladies up in that golf ball.

Sydnee: Put some girls in the golf ball. So, you know, I do think—but I don't... [sighs] I don't know. There's always gonna—anything changes at Disney, and you're gonna get screaming fans saying "No, no, don't change anything!" It's like, they let—they let Jasmine walk around in a more, like, appropriate, historically appropriate costume. 'Cause, like, Jasmine wouldn't have been walking around half-naked, I guess, historically, probably.

Taylor: Full midriff out, yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. And so she's in a more historically appropriate costume, and that's probably also a lot more comfortable for the cast member, you know, to not be quite so exposed all the time. I don't know, maybe. Um, and people are really angry about that. And it's like, now you're screaming 'cause you need to see someone's stomach? [laughs] Like, this is wild!

Taylor: Yeah. You know, whenever I see, like, hatred directed towards Disney adults, like, I wish we could separate out. It's like, I think it's great to love something. Like, I think that's great. That's what life's about. Find things that you can be passionate about, obsess over it, love it, enjoy it. That's great. When it gets that, like, the ownership, like "I have—because I love this thing so much, I now have ownership over it, and so I get offended if anything isn't in line with what I think it should be."

That's where it's a step too far. But people do that in every area of interest.

Sydnee: Every fandom, yeah. Well, and I think that's also exactly what Disney wants. They need that. That is why—I mean, that's why it's not just like another amusement park, right? That's why people are so—that's why they can introduce a new popcorn bucket and it's gonna sell out in the day that they introduce it. 'Cause it's not about, "Oh, people like what we make." It's that people become so devoted to it that it defines them, and they feel ownership over it, and then you can sell them things forever.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Which is creepy. But also, it's what we all wanted. It's what we all built, guys. We made this.

Taylor: I mean, I—

Sydnee: We made this structure of society. I don't know.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: I guess it's like the—the dark parallel are the—'cause there—Halloween Horror Nights apparently has also a devoted following. Although, I don't know. I think it's a little—I think there—well, yes, they're much chiller. I think I can make that statement definitively. They seem much chiller than the Disney fans.

Sydnee: Universal is not the same as Disney, I think, in terms of, like, conceptually as one brand. Like, when I think of Universal Studios, like, I know the different parts that are there. They also—I think what's hard about Universal is that you got Harry Potter crammed in there. And so that's a whole—you just gotta deal with that forever. [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I mean, there are plenty of people who go there still, but... I don't know. That's gonna be a grain of sand in your show for all time.

Taylor: That's true. Oh, I didn't even think about that. That taints my enjoyment of my Halloween Horror Nights videos. [laughs]

Sydnee: I mean... I don't know. When they built it, did they know?

Taylor: I don't know. You know, again, I never read the books. I saw, like, one of the movies. I feel like my child self was discerning enough to go, "Hmm." Like, I read, like, the first half of the first book and I—something—"I don't like this."

Sydnee: I liked the books a lot.

Taylor: I'll claim to be the person that always knew. [laughs]

Sydnee: You can, you can. 'Cause I certainly didn't. I liked the books a lot.

Taylor: No, and a lot of people did.

Sydnee: And it's hard, because they're sitting on our bookshelves. 'Cause I don't get rid of books, and I don't—I would never, like, destroy a book. I just wouldn't. I just couldn't. And also, like, I had already bought them, so then what's the point, you know? They're just sitting there on my shelf. It's not like you get a check because I still own your book. But, like, do I let my kids read 'em?

Taylor: No. That's my opinion. You're the parent.

Sydnee: Yeah. Well, I mean, they've shown no interest, so it hasn't been a conversation so far. I don't know.

Taylor: I mean, that's—'cause it's sort of like—this is a bad analogy. But it almost—it kind of works. You know, like, there was the whole generation that no one told them that smoking was bad?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And so you can't really blame them for not knowing that smoking was bad. But then once we found out that smoking was bad, then if you smoked it's like, well, you knew that was bad for you.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: It's not really the same. But it is kind of the same, like, if you read these and then you fall in love with it, like, "Well, I just want some merch. I just want a t-shirt. I just want to see the park."

If you fall in love with it, you're gonna want all that stuff. So it's best just to not even go down the road.

Sydnee: Um, they're—I will say that Percy Jackson has been a fun fantasy kind of thing that Charlie has gotten into. And so I'm very hopeful that we continue to be okay with Percy Jackson. [laughs] And the author of Percy Jackson. I hope that's not... I hope that'll continue to be okay! [laughs]

Taylor: Well, and that's the—if you don't know, it's, you know. You can't beat yourself up about it after the fact. That's okay. But just don't let it in if you know.

Sydnee: Um, we—

Taylor: You could also introduce her to Books of Magic. It's a comic from Vertigo from, like, the late 90s. But it absolutely was an inspiration for Harry Potter. I'm not gonna say that she ripped it off, but there's a lot that aligns, yeah.

Sydnee: We have a lot—she has a wide array of graphic novels that she is into. Like, actually a new Lore Olympus book was just released, and she was, like, screaming today, she was so excited.

Taylor: Oh, Lore Olympus.

Sydnee: Yeah. Her birthday's coming up in, what, eight, nine days? So, anyway. So that's—I was like, "Your birthday's almost here. Just wait, just wait." But yes, she has a wide array of graphic novels. She is currently reading the last Adventure Zone, of course. And then just all kinds of, like... I think a lot of, like, the same sort of tween girl books that I read as a kid. Same idea, except they're all, like, graphic novel kind of spins on them.

But it's very similar, when I look at, like—it's even kind of Judy Bloom-ish, some of 'em. Like, it's that coming of age sort of story, and some of 'em edge up on stories about your body changing, or about, you know, crushes or whatever. And, like, a lot of insecurity or bullying or things like that. But they're all graphic novels, so. And she loves those.

Taylor: That's fun. Well, you know, I don't know if they hold up, but I remember loving them so much. Do you remember those Daughters of the Moon books that I read?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: They were such—I mean, they felt very Sailor Moon-inspired, because they would spend just as much time, like, talking about their

powers and the cool ways they use them as, like, the way they would—like, "Oh, I'm wearing, like," "Oh, she's wearing a turquoise midriff and, like, the hint of body glitter on her cheeks." And it's like, oh, I just love the way they describe the fashion alongside, like, the magic and mystery of it.

Sydnee: That's such a—it's an interesting phenomenon, 'cause I love the same thing about Baby-Sitters Club books. 'Cause you could guarantee in a Baby-Sitters Club book, you were gonna get a description of Claudia's, like—she made homemade jewelry because she was the artist.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And so there was always some beautiful description of, like, the crazy chunky earrings she was wearing that she had crafted out of clay with whatever. And, you know, like, Stacy was the fashion plate, so, like, we were always gonna get, like, whatever her cute outfit was. And, yeah. I loved those aspects of it.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. I don't know why that—I don't know what itch in our brains that scratches, but it seems to.

Taylor: Well, it's a nice just, like, I don't know. I've got—whatever the visual perception where you can, like, see things, like, to have a character kind of be built in your brain in, like, a very alluring way. It's like, ohh, that's what she looks like. That's cool.

Sydnee: That's interesting. Um, yeah. We've already started. Our spooky thing, we've already—we were doing some back to school shopping yesterday. Which—

Taylor: Oh, that's spooky in the bad way. [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, yeah.

Taylor: It's like, "[spooky voice] School is coming for you!"

Sydnee: It was. It was spooky in a bad way. I will say, man—so, last year there were a couple things we hadn't been able to find immediately, and we had swung by Office Depot, which we don't usually do our back to school shopping at Office Depot. I don't think about that. Office Depot's the place to be, man. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs] Yeah?

Sydnee: This is not an ad for Office Depot.

Taylor: What?

Sydnee: They're not paying me to say this. I just—

Taylor: What ha—

Sydnee: I just bought school supplies.

Taylor: What's at Office Depot?

Sydnee: I know, right? You don't think about Office Depot that way. Okay, first of all, they know what time of year it is, so they are in the back to school game, so they have all the displays of, like, here's the glue sticks, little scissors, pencil boxes, you know. The things that are on your—and, like, literally we walked in with a list for Cooper that her teacher sent and a list for Charlie that her teacher sent.

So, like, we have lists to check off. And they are all displayed right there. And right next to 'em, because nowadays you're—like, you don't just need to buy colored pencils and backpacks. Every classroom needs hand sanitizer, hand soap, antibacterial wipes, paper towels, and tissues.

Taylor: Wow.

Sydnee: And band-aids and antibiotic ointment. That was on the list too.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Your child needs to come to school with a first aid kit?

Sydnee: Basically.

Taylor: Wow.

Sydnee: But that was all right there at Office Depot. Like, they had a whole shelf of those products next to all of the school products. And, and, this really amazed me—not on Charlie's list but on Cooper's list, because obviously she's younger—there was—on the teacher wish list, it said prizes

for the prize box. They had bags of little toys labeled "Prizes for prize boxes."

Taylor: Oh. Someone got the list ahead of time.

Sydnee: It was—I mean... literally, we found everything we needed at Office Depot, except Cooper didn't like their lunchbox selection, so we ended up going to Target and buying a lunchbox. But everything else we found at Office Depot. It was incredible, and it was probably half the cost of when I've bought that same sort of list of school supplies elsewhere.

Taylor: That's so smart.

Sydnee: Incredible.

Taylor: That feels like something that should just, like—those lists should be given to those stores ahead of time.

Sydnee: Yeah. Oh, it was brilliant.

Taylor: And then what if it went one step further and then, like, the government subsidized providing all those things to the kids instead of, like, I don't know, bombs and stuff. Wouldn't that be cool? [laughs]

Sydnee: Wouldn't it be cool? Wouldn't it be cool if we, uh, like, filled our schools with hand sanitizer and paper towels? Just, like, funded that and didn't ask families to buy them?

Taylor: What if kids didn't have to buy—yeah. Like, 'cause teachers shouldn't have to buy them, of course.

Sydnee: No, no.

Taylor: They already do too much. But, like, what if the kids didn't have to buy them either?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: What if that stuff was just there?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: What if a kid rolled in and it's like, "Here are your color-coded notebooks."

Sydnee: Wouldn't that be nice?

Taylor: Ready to go, yeah.

Sydnee: I know.

Taylor: But at least Office Depot is there.

Sydnee: But I, um, like I said, we made a brief swing through Target for a lunchbox. And they already had started putting some Halloween stuff up.

Taylor: Hmm.

Sydnee: So that started the conversation with Charlie. She was like, "What should I be for Halloween this year?"

And I was like, "I have to get through this back to school shopping. I cannot think about that yet."

I don't know. It was easier when—Charlie is already moving into, like, "I'm too cool for the character" phase. You know what I mean?

Taylor: Oh no. Well, that'll circle back around.

Sydnee: Yeah. That's true. Um, Cooper—it's whatever property she likes the best right before trick or treat.

Taylor: It can change last minute.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Correct.

Sydnee: Often does. Often does.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: So—

Taylor: Have you—do they have any suggestions?

Sydnee: No, they have no ideas. Like, Charlie's always like, "I don't know. Should I be something like an angel, or a princess, or a vampire?" Just

something sort of, like, generic idea. And Cooper's like—she knows herself well enough to know, like, "I can't choose right now."

Taylor: [laughs] "I'm not ready for that thought."

Sydnee: Yeah. "I'll see something that will change my mind."

Taylor: Yeah. I have one friend that is on pumpkin watch with me, where we let each other know when we see, like—a lot of it's like—like a pumpkin snack, or like a pumpkin beer.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Like, you know, we're looking for Pumking to start appearing.

Sydnee: Wow, Pumking.

Taylor: Oh yeah, that's when you know. And they usually start rolling that out, like, August. But I appreciate that. 'Cause it used to be like you didn't get Pumking till the end of September, and then you really only got the one month to drink it. But, uh, I did see—I saw pumpkin cider at the store the other day, and I was excited.

Sydnee: Pumpkin beer really helps me cope with, like, summer ended. 'Cause I love summer. Summer's my favorite. I'm always sad when summer comes to an end. But then when I see the arrival of those pumpkin-y beers I'm like, "Ohh, I do like those pumpkin beers, though."

Taylor: See, I don't... I love fall. Fall is my favorite. I hate winter. I hate the cold. But fall is my sweet spot. And I hate spring. I don't like spring. Spring is always gross in New York, so.

Sydnee: Yeah. No, I mean, spring and fall are nice here, but I just like it hot. I don't care. It can get too hot out for me. I'm not saying, like, I like when it's 110 degrees. [laughs quietly] But I would always take that over cold. Always. No matter how hot. So. I don't know. Which is why I don't know if I could handle Burning Man.

Taylor: [laughs] There we go. Uh, yeah. You had us watch the Burning Man documentary that's coming out.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm, The Man Will Burn.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Uh, so I—okay. I have been obsessed with Burning Man since I... I found out—I remember very clearly when I found out about Burning Man.

Taylor: Okay.

Sydnee: I was in college. I was a sophomore in college. And so that would've been, like, 2002, probably? And my roommate and I were staying up late one night. We had just—yeah, 'cause it would be the beginning of the school year, 'cause we were roommates, brand new roommates. And we had become friends the year before and we were very excited to move in together as roommates that year. So we're roommates.

And we got—we went to the store together, shopping for some, like, ramen or whatever for our dorm room. And we got the jello that was the, you know, mystery jello where you don't know what flavor it is. It was, like, clear with sparkles.

Taylor: Oh!

Sydnee: You ever have that?

Taylor: No, that sounds great.

Sydnee: Yeah. It was like a mystery jello.

Taylor: [simultaneously] I missed out on that.

Sydnee: And so we got really excited and we bought the mystery jello, made it in our dorm room, and tried to make jigglers, which was a massive failure. But, um, because it—you have to... the ratio's different if you're gonna make jigglers as opposed to regular jello. Did you know that?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yes. 'Cause it's gotta be a little more, like—it's gotta be firmer.

Taylor: Yeah. Gotta hold its shape.

Sydnee: Anyway, but we were up late trying to do this jello thing, and we just turned on the TV, and this was before streaming so we're just watching whatever is on TV on our tiny dorm TV. And it was a documentary about Burning Man.

Taylor: Oh!

Sydnee: And we just became obsessed. We stayed up super late eating jello, failed jigglers, and watching this Burning Man documentary. And I remember thinking, like, man, I wanna do that. I wanna go out to the desert and dance, and set things on fire, and... I mean, this was... let's see. I would've been not old enough to drink yet legally.

Taylor: Okay. 'Cause I was gonna ask, were these jello jigglers, were they alcoholic or did you just stay up late eating jello?

Sydnee: Just jello. No-no-no-no-no. There was no alcohol.

Taylor: Oh, just regular jello. [laughs]

Sydnee: Uh, Taylor, we were not allowed to have alcohol in our dorms.

Taylor: Yeah!

Sydnee: Which is probably [crosstalk].

Taylor: I mean, I'm sure people did. I just—it's a very different story. Like, oh, we made some jello shots and stayed up late versus we just were eating just—just straight—just regular jello.

Sydnee: No, we were just eating—we were just eating what ended up being, like, a bowl of failed jigglers. And—no, just straight up jello.

No, I was very afraid of my RA. I never brought alcohol into my dorm. I really didn't. I'm not saying I didn't drink in college. I'm saying I never illegally brought alcohol into my dorm. I would've been terrified. Terrified. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Just like, eating some jello, watching a documentary. That sounds like the... the best date ever. [laughs]

Sydnee: It was—[laughs] it was a real—it was a real—I know this is off topic. But it was a real, like, culture shift. Because my first roommate that I got in college, which was, like, randomly paired roommate roulette, I just left it up to fate, with her—because this is what she liked to do—she liked to work out in our room. And she would convince me, like, "Work out with me. Come on. You'll feel good. Work out with me."

Which is a good—that's a good thing. And she would turn on AC/DC and blast AC/DC. Yeah, and like, do crunches for an hour. [laughs] And so that was the activity that we did together.

So then my second roommate that I got to pick, we were like, "Let's make jello and watch a documentary." [laughs]

Taylor: I mean, that's an upgrade. I think that would be an upgrade.

Sydnee: They both—you know, there's a place for both. My first roommate also taught me that—not just how to tweeze your eyebrows, but that I needed to tweeze my eyebrows. [laughs]

Taylor: Aww. That is a personal preference.

Sydnee: I—I had a full-on unibrow when I started college. It was... it was for the best. I appreciated that.

Taylor: I mean, bushy brows came back, so, you know.

Sydnee: Oh, they were still bushy. I just got rid of the stuff that was in the middle. [laughs]

Taylor: Well, that was maybe a kindness. Maybe. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. No, I will always thank her for that. Anyway, we watched a documentary about Burning Man. And my perception of Burning Man at the time was, like, um, drunk people dancing around, setting fire to things in the desert.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: It is more complicated than that, as this documentary—and I've watched—again, I've watched a lot of Burning Man content through the years, so this is not my first, like—this was my first history of Burning Man kind of thing. Like, a real in depth look at, like, the actual people firsthand accounts of how Burning Man started. I definitely didn't know that stuff. I kind of knew, but not to this level of specificity. And I certainly didn't know all the details about the new controversy surrounding Burning Man.

Taylor: When you say that you've been obsessed with Burning Man, just to clarify, do you want to—is this something that you would want to do, or is it just like watching a—like a train wreck? Like, I am so fascinated by what is

going on with this. Why does this happen? Why did it start happening? Why does it keep happening?

Sydnee: I'm so torn. Because, like, if you look at the early—like, the early episodes where they're talking about how it started, the idea of—it was an art thing, right? It was, like, an artistic expression. And it became this sort of, like, symbolic release. We're going to build this big thing, this big man, and we're gonna burn it as a way of, like, a letting go. I think there is something powerful about rituals, and specifically, like, burning things. I mean, there's a lot of that involved in, like, some of the craft I engage with.

And so I get that, and I connect to that on some level. And so part of me thinks it would be cool to be around that. Uh, but... oh, and also the bartering part. Like, a society built on the exchange and gifting principles. I like that, as opposed to a monetary society. I love that idea. So those are ideas that I connect with. I think that one, I have—I don't really crave a—like, a roughing it sort of situation in my life.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: I don't go camping. Like, I don't want that. It's not that I couldn't do it. It's just that I don't know that I would enjoy that part of it. And then two, the modern kind of Elon Musk-adjacent... version. I don't know if I'd want to be a part of that. So that's where I'm torn.

Taylor: I thought, learning the history—'cause I—and I've known some—I've had some friends that were Burners. Years ago, like, definitely pre-COVID. Um, and I mean, they are some of my favorite people, and they definitely just were like, "I'm gonna go make some art in the desert."

And I was like, "That's cool. That sounds like it rules."

Uh, I... now that I kind of understand the people that founded it, it changed that perception in that, like, I think that cool people that do cool things probably are still a part of it.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: I think it might have always kind of been going in the direction that it's gone in. Like, it's not like—there are a lot of festivals that kind of got co-opted by the very rich, and have sort of been destroyed, but I think they started off as something good. I don't know if this started off as something good. 'Cause when you hear from the founder and the way he talks about

things, and the kind of things that they parallel themselves to, I don't know if the intention from the outset was good.

Sydnee: Well, like this idea that it needed to be big from the beginning. The goal was always to be this gigantic.

Taylor: The bigness, uh, the sort of, like, the lawless—I mean, there's that—early on, when they were talking about, like—we were like, you know, the Cacophony Society that predated Burning Man.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: And we were like Fight Club. Like, the real world inspired Fight Club. Like... it—there was—I mean, I really enjoyed the documentary, 'cause there was a lot of thought that I was having, like, about how we... how we respond to sort of anarchist destructive acts in society, and where, like, where is it actually liberating versus where is this just people that have so much money, and their whiteness protects them to such a degree that they can kind of run around and cause havoc, and no one will penalize them? And those are two very different things. And that's kind of what I felt like. Like, no, this is... this is just an organization of people that have achieved such a level of safety in society that they can do this.

Sydnee: I agree. I agree with that take on it, and I think what runs with that—'cause this is what bothered me as I was thinking about, like, those origins and some of the stuff they were talking about. They talk a lot about changing the world. About, like, creating a movement. And whenever I hear that, I always feel that, like, that's a red flag for me.

One, that's what cults say. [laughs quietly] And two, I think that if creating a movement is not, um... is not, like, deeply rooted in, you know, community building and action and mutual aid to, like, help people who are suffering now, and solve problems, if creating a movement is really an idea thing where you can come to this place and hear ideas or share your vision together, that's not a movement. You're not gonna change the world with that. I mean, it really—it almost—some of the ways they talk about it kind of remind me of watching, like, the NXIVM documentary. [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah, yeah.

Sydnee: You know what I mean? It's like, "We're gonna change the world."

How? How the heck are you gonna change the world by talking about the things you believe in? You're not gonna change the world by going to the

desert and burning things. It could be a really cool, fun, beautiful thing that you're doing. But it's not a movement. And so I really—that bothered me about it. Like, I think it's important to separate those ideas.

To me, creating a movement is going out and forming a charitable mutual aid network in your hometown where people who are hungry can access food, and you can help people get into, you know, rehab, and then help people get housing and, like, I don't know. Go do that. If you want to create a movement, go do that. If you want to do a fun, beautiful, artistic expression, go do that, too. Like, these both can happen. But they're not the same, in my mind. Does that make sense?

Taylor: No, well, no, I absolutely agree with that. Because there's another point where there's one of the people that they build giant, big—what do they call the vehicles? I don't know. The art cars or whatever.

Sydnee: Art—yeah, yeah. [crosstalk]

Taylor: They build one of those big, stupid things, and it, you know. It probably cost millions of dollars to make, and uses so many resources to build. And, I mean, I—well. I actually am against what I'll call big art in general. But that's a different conversation. But it's a big thing. And he was talking about why he wanted to do it, why he got interested in Burning Man. And it was kind of like, you know, "I'd made all this money. I'd kind of, like, beaten the capitalist game. And it was like, I needed something more. Like, what comes next?"

And it's like, well, that's when you, exactly like you said. Like, why is the answer, when someone has a bunch of money and they want to do something else, why is it always some big, bloated, unnecessary thing that...

Sydnee: Build a rocket and go to Mars? [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah. Like, why is it never, "So I made sure everybody in my—every kid in my hometown had free school lunches forever. So I—yeah, I built a library that is self-funded completely, and, you know."

Like, why is it... it's always some big, like... ejaculation, and never, like, a caring act.

Sydnee: I think you're right. I think that that is—that aspect of it I agree was always there. You can hear it in those early interviews that there was that, like—it is a privilege to go do this, and that is not fully being recognized or dealt with from the beginning.

Taylor: Well, that's—I was open to the idea that it was a cool thing that got co-opted. But yeah, like, I don't think that's... [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. No, and I do—but I do think it's... [sighs] And that's what's tough is that I believe that there were some of those people who started in the beginning, and then people who attend regularly now, who genuinely are going for the reasons that you and I would connect with.

Taylor: Absolutely.

Sydnee: They're going to just live a different existence for a week that they feel is more spiritual, is more meaningful, that they fill gives them some sort of connection or release that they really need, among people who are like-minded. And I understand craving that.

I mean, I think that there are a lot of, like, conventions and gatherings and things that do that same idea, and that people, like, really look forward to and get a lot of, like, satisfaction and enjoyment from, and that can exist. And I think that's fine. Even though that's not—is that helping? Is that saving the world? No. But is it fine, and can happen and be a wonderful thing that we should all have access to? Sure.

But that is not the same as "It's the most important thing we do, and it's gonna change everyone's lives."

No. It's not gonna do that.

Taylor: Well, it's interesting that we started off talking about Disney World, and I feel like what you just said describes Dis—like, it's fine. It's a capitalist venture that's meant to make a bunch of money, but in return, you get an enjoyable experience.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I don't know. Like, that's the world we built. That's the world we live in.

Sydnee: That's fine.

Taylor: Um, but yeah. Like, it's the pairing it with this idea that it is some higher minded—like, this is the ultimate experience for, like, the human soul. I don't... I don't know. I don't... it was a lot to, uh... it was a lot to see, like, I think that there's some really cool art, definitely, that happens there. There

are people that come, like, patrons that come that definitely, like, have their hearts in the right place. But man, the board is just a bunch of overlords that don't care.

Sydnee: Well, and that—the COVID thing, the whole COVID conversation was—I mean, it was really jarring how openly people were saying, like, "Listen. They know the risks, they're adults. We gotta hold the festival, and then if people come and, you know, what happens happens. Like, and if there are some losses, there are some losses."

And it's like, you are talking about people dying. You are—what you're saying is, "And if some people die, some people die."

And I don't... understand being able to divorce yourself from... I mean, but that's—I don't know. It's not just Burning Man. A lot of things.

Taylor: Well, but that's—that's where it, like, that whole, like, outline of, like, this is something spiritual, or somehow, like, an elevated experience. That's where it makes me cynical. 'Cause it's like, look. Again, like, yeah, if you're Disney and you're like, "We're gonna open no matter what," of course, 'cause you care about money. We know you don't have a soul. That doesn't mean you can't go and have fun. I've gone plenty of times and had fun. But let's not pretend that this is somehow different, at this point.

Sydnee: No, and to have... [sighs] I didn't—okay. I knew that Elon Musk was somehow associated with Burning Man. I remember hearing that. Like, "Oh, man. It's gone corporate."

I didn't know his brother was on the board of Burning Man. I didn't know anything about his brother before this documentary.

Taylor: [sighs] Oh, god. When he was sitting in that tent with, like, the bad guyliner and, like, the robe.

Sydnee: And the, the necklace.

Taylor: Ugh.

Sydnee: The, like, jeweled necklace—

Taylor: [simultaneously] Yeah, that say "Loved"?

Sydnee: —that says "Loved." Not "Love." "Loved."

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Which... I feel like is important. Because it's like, well, I mean, one, I don't know, are you? But two, like, it's so—it's so—it's so, like—it's "Me." It's not about the idea of love. It's about the idea that I am loved. It's so—like, of course. Of course that's what you would care about. "I am loved."

He is... I mean... someone who has grown up with such privilege, to sit there and pretend like you're, like, some modern guru. Like, you have no—you have built nothing. You've done nothing.

Taylor: Well, and I mean, but—

Sydnee: Just—ugh.

Taylor: To be fair, I think that's why, like—it makes sense that it would progress into Musk territory. You know, I... there was a quote from the founder that—it wasn't in the documentary, but I was doing some research about him. And he said—he was asked about the lack of diversity at Burning Man and he said, "I don't know. I don't think Black people like to camp as much as white people."

And now, you could take that on the surface level as a throwaway, obviously racist statement. But if you just scratch the surface of that, that is saying something that is very true about what I think is wrong with the whole equation.

To camp, the throw yourself into a canvas tent and just sleep soundly at night, you have to have a lot of safety. You have to have a lot of protection. I think there's an awareness there that this is for people that walk through life incredibly protected.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And it's interesting that the documentary chose to, as one of their narrators, find, you know—we have a character that is a Black man that—he's getting something out of it, he clearly enjoys it—um, that goes year after year. But it feels a little shady. It's like, I mean, you wanted the documentary to have diversity, but the founder himself just kind of, you know.

Sydnee: Shrugged it off.

Taylor: Yeah. Like, "Yeah, I don't know. People of color don't come here because they don't like it as much."

It's like, no. They don't feel safe. You have a level of safety that allows you to—when they were in the Cacophony Society, like, board a bus in the middle of the day naked and have your genitals out, and you know you're not gonna be punished for that. Whereas a person of color walking down the street fully dressed can be murdered. So this isn't—it doesn't feel dissimilar from—what is—the Owl Society or whatever. All the rich people that gather in the woods somewhere in Hollywood and, like, do rituals or whatever.

Sydnee: Yes, yeah.

Taylor: Like, it feels kind of in the same mindset. Like, that's what they were always working towards.

Sydnee: Well, and it makes sense that with that sort of vibe underlying it that you would've had, whenever it was in the 90s when they had the one that, like—where everything went wrong, and they had all the fights, and...

Taylor: Everything burned. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. Everything burned. Um, that makes sense, 'cause it feels like the same vibe. It reminded me of the documentaries about Woodstock.

Taylor: Yes! Absolutely.

Sydnee: Um, when was that one? 90...

Taylor: 99?

Sydnee: 99.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. Like, similar ideas. Like, but it was a bunch of, like, white guys in khakis. [laughs] Who really needed to, like, blow off some steam. [laughs] And it was like, "Oh no." [laughs]

Taylor: That's kind of like—that's—the idea that there's this one week out of your life where you go and you live in a bartering society... Syd, let me ask you, 'cause I know the work you do. How often do you give somebody a service or something they need out of the kindness of your heart, not expecting money in exchange?

Sydnee: I mean... a lot.

Taylor: I'm not trying to, like—yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. Like, I mean, almost—

Taylor: You understand that's...

Sydnee: Almost every single day.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: But if you have empathy and you exist in a—you try to exist in the world you live in, you experience a certain amount of, I don't know, bartering society every day. Like, you understand that's part of how we connect as humans. I mean, I don't know. Like, I work in restaurants. I can think of, like, a day where just as an example, a lady came in and it was kind of early in the day. She ordered a glass of champagne and a seafood tower, which is a lot for, like, 11 AM. But I was like, "Okay, cool. Do it up."

And when it came out she started crying. I was like, "Oh, god. Something's wrong."

She was the only person at the bar. She explained to me. She's like, "No, I just... I just found out that I have—I am free of cancer for the first time in, like, a decade. And I don't want to tell my family, because it's come back before. And I don't want to get their hopes up."

And you know, like, I did not have a big buy back there. So I just swiped my card. And this is not like, "Look at what a good person I am."

But, like, it was one of those moments where it's like, I'm doing this for you because this is what we're supposed to do. This is what it's all about. And, like, I don't... [laughs] that is a one-time thing. I know without questioning that you do that every day ten times over. But, like, that's... you created a society where you can feel what it feels like to be human one week out of the year, and then go be corporate overlords that don't care about people for the rest of it. The rest of us do that every day! [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, I think what you're hitting on is why it's not a movement. Why—and again, I'm not—this is not me slamming Burning Man. I want to

be very clear. I have heard from a lot of people, 'cause I've talked about Burning Man on Sawbones before, 'cause we talked about the mud. [laughs] The mud burn, where everybody got stuck on the playa because it rained so much. And it was—and it's not good mud to have all over you. It'll dehydrate your skin. It's very alkaline. Anyway.

Um, but I got emails from a lot of people who attend Burning Man talking about what a beautiful thing it is and how fun it is and encouraging the, you know—'cause Justin and I kind of said, like, we had thought about going, maybe someday when the kids are older. We would not take the kids. I'm not gonna... I don't camp, and I'm not gonna engage in camping in a desert with children for the—like, that's the first foray into camping, is that? No.

Um, but—so I'm not saying Burning Man is bad. This is not me saying that.

Taylor: No, and I apologize. I'm not, either.

Sydnee: No. Well, I don't—I just wanted to make sure that we're being clear. Like, I still think that maybe someday we will. I don't know. Maybe we someday will go. But it is not a movement, because I experience that feeling that they're talking about on a regular basis, through the work I do. Where I am able to, like, be close with another person in a tough situation. Um, give of myself, and then sometimes I do receive in return.

I mean, I don't give with that expectation. Um, but, like, I have a small collection of things that, through the years, one of my patients have brought me. Like, "I found this chain and it made me think of you, and I brought it to you." You know? "I have this little thing I drew for you."

Somebody wrote me a poem. Like, you know. Like, sometimes I do receive things back. Um, it's usually food, and so I don't keep those things, because that—you know. A weird box of food in my house that I keep through the years would be unsanitary. But, like—and so I experience that feeling of connection and, like, humanity, and a deeper level than society as a whole can give you. I get to experience that all the time.

And I experience that letting go with those same people, because they do suffer a lot. We suffer a lot of losses. And I connect directly with the people around me in that work, and with my patients in those moments. So I don't feel like I need—I don't need Burning Man to do that. But if they want to take that idea and then infuse society with it in some active way, I think that would be great. If we could take that energy and then bring it into your day to day.

Taylor: I mean, that's—

Sydney: That's a movement.

Taylor: That's the thing that I think makes me uncomfortable with it. Again, it's not—I believe that there are people that have been doing this for, what, it's been going on for 40 years? That have been doing it in a soulful, real way.

Sydney: Yes, I firmly—yes.

Taylor: I just... I think the people at the top are the same people that are at the top of everything else. Um, and that's kind of the rub of it all is, like, the people that enjoy this the most and make the most money off of it are also the people that make it hard on us to have that society that we could be living in. You know, everybody's so scrapped these days these days that it's like, how do you offer any kindness to anybody, when you have nothing to give?

And, like, it wouldn't be so hard if the people that get to go and roll around in the sand and, you know, sit in their tents like the Musk boy does—like, if they weren't so dehumanizing to the rest of us the other—every other day of the year, like, we could have that world. Where, yeah, you know what? You can't pay for this? That's great, it's on me. Like, oh, you need a service? I'm just gonna provide it to you, 'cause I have those skills. Like, that's how we should work.

Sydney: Well, and that—you know, it's interesting. You compared it to Disney World earlier, and I think that probably is gonna be its inherent problem, is that when it was just a bunch of people in the desert with tents, everybody's sort of on equal footing. Now that it is such a huge, commercial venture, there are levels of experiences you can have there.

Taylor: Right.

Sydney: You can go be—

Taylor: You can get a FastPass. [laughs]

Sydney: Right? Like, I mean, essentially. Like, you can go be in the mud in a tent. But you're gonna look over and see somebody who has a camper. And then some people get those big luxury tents, and campers, and a whole setup.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And, like, yes, I know some people are building structures. I understand that that's been part of it, so some people do build their site or whatever. But there are also a lot of people who just rent campers. And, like, there's a whole business in that area for, like, luxury experiences that you can just buy to have, so that it's not uncomfortable, so that you're not dirty, that you're not muddy, that you have a shower every day, that you have your own bathroom. You know? No pooping in buckets for you. But your neighbor might be.

Taylor: What you're—

Sydnee: And so we have introduced these, like, levels of experiences you might have, just like when you go to Disney. You can go to Disney and wait in lines, or you could get a FastPass. Ooh, and there's a VIP tour! Have you ever considered a VIP tour? Like, now it's a whole other thing, once you introduce all that.

Taylor: Well, and you're also pointing out that in this society that they've created in the desert, they have speedrun classism. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] Well.

Taylor: They did it. They made it.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: It's a natural progression of humanity, if we don't understand ourselves.

Sydnee: And maybe the people in the luxury tents and campers and whatever will still barter with you. [laughs quietly] I mean, I don't know if that's what we're saying. Like, "But they'll still trade you... whatever you're asking for for whatever they have." But they're not gonna give you their camper! So, like...

Taylor: Well, that's—exactly. Like, that's, like—but their like, "But I have a... a 60 million dollar setup or whatever, piece of art." Like, what is your little offering in comparison to that? And that is unfortunately how the world works.

You were talking about—I think one of the first things you said was, like, how big it is. And I think that's what, like... it's the bigness that I'm... I was

grappling with, I'm offended by bigness in association with art. Because art has to exist. And we're treating this as like—we're treating this not as a Disney World thing, although I think we kind of agree that that's what it's becoming.

But if we treat it as this artistic expression, right? Art exists in the world in which it is made. And I don't know how you look around at the world that exists now, where everybody is—is broke, everybody is suffering, has no resources, the world itself, the planet itself is suffering—how do you justify bigness in this world? Unnecessary bigness. Like giant plastic structures that are one-time use. Burning things, setting things on fire, pumping chemicals into the atmosphere. How do you justify it?

If you're justifying it like Disney does and say, "It's spectacle, it's product." Okay, fine, I get it. I'm not—I'm a realist. I understand that product and consumption and spectacle exist. People sometimes need that to blow off steam. I'm not condemning that.

But if you're gonna do it under the umbrella of art, how do you justify its existence? 'Cause I don't see where that exists.

Sydnee: Tey, I think what you're getting at is probably—and I imagine there are genuinely some of the people who sit on that board who grapple with this same idea, who in their heart of hearts are wrestling with this. They built a society, and that society is now struggling with the same capitalism that our society as a whole is struggling with.

Which is, look. I don't—I wanna help people and do something that matters. I want—like, I want some sort of genuine, like, spiritual experience. I want to do the right thing. But also, occasionally, can't I just do something fun? Occasionally, can't I spend some of my money on something silly? Can't I take a break? Can't I make this, like... I don't really need those cute shoes, but isn't okay if every once in a while I treat myself?

What they're wrestling with, which we do on a micro level day to day, like, "I want to always be doing good, but oh, every once in a while, don't I deserve a little trip to Disney?" You know what I mean?

Like, that—they are wrestling with that idea in their micro society. [laughs] When do we deserve a treat, and we do we need to say, "Okay. That's not the priority right now. The priority right now is people are starving. How do we... "

'Cause, I mean, your entire existence can't be about sacrifice and work.

Taylor: No.

Sydney: It should be about some enjoyment and fun. But where's that balance on a giant societal macro level?

Taylor: Well, and I... I think that's the bit that offends me is, like, if you just wanna say, "Yeah, I wanna go out in the desert and spend my millions and have fun and dance and build a—" yeah. I mean, do I think there's better things you could do with your money? Yeah. But, like, lots of people do lots of—I do silly things with my money all the time. I don't have as much money, but there's lots of times where I'm like, can I afford to go out to dinner tonight to a fancy restaurant? No. But I need to. I need this. I get the one life. I would like a good night every now and then.

Fine. Do what you want. Don't frame it as something that's reinventing society in this—it's this, like, high-minded billionaire guru stuff that just makes me seethe. Like, if you would like to have a soul, it was always there all along. You need to learn smallness, not bigness. You find your soul in small acts. There's nothing big you can do that you will find yourself in.

Sydney: Yep. I agree.

Taylor: 'Cause we are small by nature.

Sydney: I agree. And I think you're exactly right. I think that's probably the fundamental disconnect with—like, I think about Burning Man. Would I want to go? It seems kind of, like—maybe it would be a cool experience.

Taylor: Well, I think that's fine.

Sydney: But I don't know. I don't know. 'Cause exactly what you're talking about. Like, if Musk boy is offsetting his capitalist footprint in some way—but he's not. He's saying that in doing this, "This is the best good I could do." And I fundamentally disagree.

Taylor: Just make your own Burning Man. It's like, hey, we're all gonna meet up. West Virginia's got a lot of empty space. We're gonna meet up. Everybody bring enough food to feed yourself and one more person. And, you know, we don't have to—I mean, I don't know. This is an observation that I've had in life.

Do you ever have that moment after you see fireworks where the cloud—or the smoke clears from the sky, and then you see the stars? And there's a

moment of like, that's so much... like, they're there, and they do it so much bigger and more beautifully, all the time, every night, every day, endlessly. What a silly, small thing fireworks are.

That doesn't mean I don't like fireworks. But there's that recognition of, like, we are so small and temporary.

Sydnee: Well, and I think, which one should we be pinning meaning to?

Taylor: Yeah, exactly.

Sydnee: Yeah, exactly.

Taylor: Like, it's okay to say, "Yes, I'm here for one moment, and this is what I've got."

But we... when the goal is to ascend to some... like, higher level, there's not one. You know. You do your own burn every day, Syd. [laughs]

Sydnee: That's true. No, I do feel that way. Like, a lot of the things that they talk about they're seeking, I feel like I find in my life. Not—and I don't think it's through privilege. I don't think I have found those things through privilege. I have found them by looking to my community and saying, "I want to be a bigger part of this—of the help. Of the good. And what does that look like?" And listening, and then finding ways to act on that.

Taylor: Mm-hmm. Well...

Sydnee: So, I don't know. So it's up in the air if I'll ever go to Burning Man. We'll see.

Taylor: Well, and I don't—I don't know. I feel like—I'm not trying to—I think if you want to go you should go. And I think that there are probably a lot of good people that go. I don't want to be negative about it. But it's okay that we can throw darts at the billionaire overlords that have got their hands in it.

Sydnee: I don't think—I think if you are part—anything that you are a part of, any large thing like that that you are a part of or that you enjoy, you have to be self aware and critical about the experience. If you are just unapologetically in defense of anything large like that, you really need to stop and question yourself. Like, there is—anything that large, there's gonna be some nuance, right?

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Maybe you still go, but you need to consider these things. I think that's fair. I mean, I think it's fair if you go to Disney World. Maybe you still go.

Taylor: Oh, absolutely.

Sydnee: Yeah. I'm not saying "Don't go to Disney World" either! Which is clearly a corporate, capitalist thing. Go to Disney World, please. It's fun. My kids love it. Go to Disney World.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: But we need to be clear-eyed about what we're doing. I think that's all—yeah. I think that's all we're saying.

Taylor: Yeah. No one rolls up to Disney World thinking, like, this is a soul-changing experience. You know, like, "I'm engaging in a... a consumerist product that's a lot of fun. And there's gonna be some bright lights and some funny things to look at." And, I don't know, sure. Life is hard. Have your fun.

Sydnee: Yes. And you can do the same with Burning Man. I'm gonna go roll around on the playa for a week and...

Taylor: Just don't—not when it's muddy! Like, don't.

Sydnee: Don't do that. Yeah, that was a bad idea. [laughs] [sighs] Alright. Well, Tey, thank you for watching it. 'Cause I really—I've always been fascinated by Burning Man and its evolution through the years into a whole city, and now a weird corporate thing, and... I don't know. Maybe someday Justin and I will burn.

Taylor: I had not—I had not followed it. I didn't really know much about it outside of what friends had told me. So it was really fascinating. I'm gonna keep up. There's still at least one more episode of the documentary left, right?

Sydnee: Yeah, yeah. So... well, what should we do next?

Taylor: Well, uh, I... I mean, I guess in line with continuing spooky things, um, and it's spooky and gay. Uh, there is the Interview with the Vampire the series that's been going on. Um, and now we've got The Vampire Lestat, too, right?

Sydnee: Right. So—

Taylor: I don't—go ahead.

Sydnee: I would love to talk about it. There's two seasons of Interview with the Vampire, and then there's The Vampire Lestat. In between, there's a witches thing, The Witches of Mayfair?

Taylor: Oh! Is that part of it too?

Sydnee: That's part of the world. But I don't think you need to—we watched the first two seasons of Interview with the Vampire, and skipped straight to The Vampire Lestat. And, I mean, I think there's some references that maybe I would understand better if I'd watched the other series, but you can—you don't need to.

Taylor: Alright.

Sydnee: I'll probably go back and do that, but I'm so—like, I was so into Lestat, I had to follow him first. I had to see where he went first. He's incredible. He's incredible.

Taylor: I'm very excited. I don't know how—it's the nexus of all things I enjoy. I don't know how I avoided it so far. But no longer.

Sydnee: And don't feel like you need to watch all—that's three seasons.

Taylor: Maybe I will. Who knows? I've only got two jobs, I can figure it out.
[laughs]

Sydnee: I will say that having watched the first two Interview with the Vampire, which are great, which are fantastic, The Vampire Lestat is even better.

Taylor: Alright. Well, I'm excited.

Sydnee: 'Cause he's like—I'd never seen that actor before. He's incredible, so.

Taylor: Very excited.

Sydnee: Yes. Very spooky, very gay. Very gay.

Taylor: Amazing.

Sydnee: Alright. Well, we'll talk about that next week. And in the meantime, again, I really want to clarify, 'cause I've heard from a lot of people through the years, because I have mentioned Burning Man, who go to Burning Man and have genuinely wonderful experiences and feel like it brings them a lot of meaning and, like, they have fun and, like—a lot of healthcare people who go and, like, help out, and that's kind of what they're trading. Like, they help out with, you know, first aid stuff.

This is not our—I really feel conflicted. Because part of me still really would like to go experience that, and I totally understand why people do. But I'm never gonna sit in defense of a Musk brother, so I'm torn. You know what I mean? [laughs]

Taylor: Well, and it's—I mean, it's—I think too often, especially on the internet, we tend to do black and white thinking, and that's never constructive.

Sydnee: Right.

Taylor: It's okay to understand the nuance of a situation.

Sydnee: Yes, it's nuanced, it's nuanced. So, just to clarify. I don't want anybody thinking that we're shaming them for going to Burning Man. [crosstalk]

Taylor: No, go burn.

Sydnee: That's later this month. Go burn, go burn if you burn.

Taylor: I'm gonna go ahead and assume that our listeners are not the billionaires flying in on private jets. I'm sorry if you're out there. I don't know how you're still here. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah, no. I don't think we've got billionaires listening to our podcast. [laughs] For sure.

Taylor: You're probably the people having a good time and just doing it right.

Sydnee: But if you are a billionaire listening to our podcast, please consider, um, using your wealth to do good in society, in some way. In addition to

having fun. Go burn, but also, there are probably some local 501(c)(3)s that could use your help.

Taylor: Have you considered subsidizing school supplies for your local elementary? [laughs]

Sydney: Or maybe lobbying government with your billions to do good things, like universal healthcare, or free education for all, or... housing.

Taylor: Many options, really.

Sydney: So many things. Build some housing. Build some housing.

Taylor: Build some housing.

Sydney: [laughs] [sighs] Alright. Well... [laughs] uh, so, thank you, listeners. Thank you to Maximum Fun. You should go to Maximumfun.org. There are a lot of great shows there that you would enjoy. Um, and thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, Baby You Change Your Mind.

[theme song plays]

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

Sydney: I'm Sydney McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Sydney: I'm still buffering.

Taylor: And I am too.

Sydney: [unintelligible] all the billionaires that we're inspiring.

Taylor: Well, you know, once you open the door to what billionaires could do with their money, that's not... I don't know, building giant rockets to space, there's a lot—there's a lot behind that door!

Sydney: I know! [laughs]

[theme music ends]

Taylor: [laughs] Who hasn't played the game of "What would I do with a billion dollars?"

Sydnee: It's just too tempting.

[chord]

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