

Still Buffering 495: Forbidden Fruits (2026)

Published September 7th, 2026

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Sydnee: Hello, and welcome to Still Buffering: a cross-generational guide to the culture that made us. I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Teylor Smirl.

Sydnee: Tey, how are you doin'?

Taylor: I'm doin' alright. I've been on the struggle bus this week. I've been a little sick.

Sydnee: I know, I know. I'm sorry.

Taylor: I'm sick, and every day I wake up, there's at least one work, if not two works to do. And that is just not what you want when you're sick.
[laughs quietly]

Sydnee: That is rough. I am sorry that you spent the weekend sick. I spent the weekend at Camden Park. So I feel bad. I feel doubly bad.

Taylor: I think you've definitely won.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Although because you were at Camden Park, you might spend next weekend sick.

Sydnee: This is fair. [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs] Maybe with some tetanus.

Sydnee: Camden Park is an amusement park that is—I mean, it's here in Huntington. Like, it's in our hometown. Um, it's hard to believe that,

sometimes. That there is a legit, like, amusement park here in Huntington, 'cause we don't go to it very often. We have children, so you'd think would go a lot. But, but, Camden Park has been around since... 1903.

Taylor: No way.

Sydnee: Yes. Yes.

Taylor: Wow.

Sydnee: I will never forget, now, because I got—they have merch. I had to get a t-shirt. And Camden Park has a giant clown on the sign, the Camden Park sign. So most of the t-shirts of a giant clown pointing. [laughs] And then it says "Camden Park." And they're kind of creepy, to me. And not really what I want to wear.

But they had some that just say, like, across them, "Camden," all the way across, and then "1903."

I was like, 'That's a cool shirt.' So now I have a t-shirt that says "Camden 1903."

I'll never forget. But some of the rides are original. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: That's what I was gonna ask. Like, in my mind's eye, that place has not been updated since 1903.

Sydnee: Not—I mean, parts of it—parts of it have. I don't know that the Big Dipper dates back—so the Big Dipper I believe is the oldest wooden roller coaster.

Taylor: Like, ever?

Sydnee: Like, in the US.

Taylor: [laughs] In the history of mankind.

Sydnee: In the history of mankind. It may be original. The Haunted House

dates back to, like, 1916 or 17.

Taylor: I believe that.

Sydnee: Yeah. The Haunted House is a style of ride that is called—I learned this from our friend Slice—called a pretzel ride. And there are not—there are only a handful still in existence in the US. But it was—it's like—it's a chain, and then gravity is what's making your little car go through the Haunted House. I had forgotten this when we rode it the other day, I remembered. They have to shove you to get you started.

Taylor: And they catch you when you finish, I remember that.

Sydnee: Yes, they have to catch you, or you'll keep going, 'cause it's just gravity.

Taylor: Yeah. That's interesting.

Sydnee: Yeah. We went through the Haunted House. It mainly just sort of twists you. The chain just pulls you around and it twists you. You have, like, a tiny little hill down, and then a little hill up, and it twists you around these dark corners. There's, like, a bunch of masks and spooky things.

They have a new artist who's painted the whole thing. It looks pretty cool. Um, there's all new art in it. The gum wall is gone.

Taylor: Aww. I was gonna ask, did they paint over the gum wall?

Sydnee: Yeah, they painted over the gum wall, where everybody stuck their gum on their way through. But, uh, but it's a great—I mean, it's a great old ride. It jerks you. And it does feel like the car's gonna tip over. [laughs]

But—we rode the haunted house. We rode the Big Dipper, which does look like it's going to fall apart. I mean, like...

Taylor: I remember as, like, a child, being on the Big Dipper and having the awareness of, "Hmm, this isn't safe. This is not structurally sound."

Sydnee: It does—yeah. It does not look like it... like you should ride it. But I had this moment. 'Cause, like, we're all standing there. The reason we went, by the way, is Cooper won, like, a reading competition at the library.

Taylor: Nice.

Sydnee: And got—she was supposed to get four free tickets, so she was like, "This'll be great," 'cause they went to pick up their four free tickets and were like, "The four of us will go to Camden Park."

Well, I don't know what the deal is, but the library handed my child a stack of 16 tickets to Camden Park.

Taylor: [laughs] Have a party!

Sydnee: And they were like, "Here, just take 'em all."

So... [laughs]

Taylor: I mean, how much do you think, like—do you think—it's not like they're, like, selling out on a daily basis.

Sydnee: Well, they're not. But can you—okay. So, I thought, like, "Well, this is cute." So we invited, you know, Mom and Dad, and Rileigh and Salem, like, and our friends, the Hicks. Like, so we had a whole big group that all went to Camden Park. And Cooper was so excited, 'cause she, like, went up to the front with her stack of tickets like, "This is on me."

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] She was thrilled. Do you know how much a ticket to Camden Park costs?

Taylor: How much?

Sydnee: 32 dollars!

Taylor: Eh.

Sydnee: 32 dollars!

Taylor: They gotta—they gotta make their money somehow.

Sydnee: Cooper saved us almost 400 dollars!

Taylor: I mean, because you all would've absolutely taken a group trip to Camden Park, had it not been for the free tickets?

Sydnee: Well, probably not. Probably not. [laughs]

Taylor: I was gonna say, they probably give—they give out those tickets 'cause they know once you're there, you're gonna buy the food. You're gonna spend some money.

Sydnee: They do this corn dog that they dip in, like... it's kind of a funnel cake-y situation, is the corn dog batter. And they call 'em Pronto Pups.

Taylor: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. They're really good. Um, I mean, generally, like, the—you know, the food and all that stuff, it's all good. They've got plenty of concessions. It's never that crowded, 'cause it's a theme park. And, I mean, it's in Huntington. Technically, I think, Kenova, West Virginia. [laughs quietly] Um, the—as we went to get on the Big Dipper, like, Justin and the girls took off to get in line. They were, like, not afraid. "We're riding this roller coaster."

It's, like, the one roller coaster there. Well, there's the Little Dipper, but that's just the kid version. So, like, they're running towards it, and Rileigh looks at me and she's like, "Are you gonna ride? What are we gonna do?"

'Cause I had said, like, "I don't know, guys. Like, this thing's days are numbered."

And I looked at my husband and children running to get on, and I thought, "Well, if something catastrophic happens, what do I have to live for? Like,

there's my whole world right there."

Taylor: [laughs] Syd, you're the—you're the accomplished medical doctor. You stand on the side.

Sydnee: [laughs] So I got on, thinking I'd rather us all go together! [laughs]

Taylor: That is...

Sydnee: It's a very Dad moment. [laughs] It was very Tom Smirl.

Taylor: Like, assuredly, like, "Well, it will probably crash and kill us all, so I would like to be... on there."

Sydnee: I'd rather be with them.

Taylor: Wow.

Sydnee: Anyway, we—

Taylor: You didn't tell the young children that in line, right? You waited till afterwards?

Sydnee: No, I told Justin.

Taylor: Okay. I'm sure he loved that.

Sydnee: It didn't fall apart. We all survived.

Taylor: Clearly.

Sydnee: There are only... oh, like, maybe... 10... 12. 12 rides in the whole park. The whole thing is really close together. We did not ride the Log Flume, 'cause it's gross. But, um, I would've done it for my child, 'cause she really wanted to, but it was the longest line by... I mean, we didn't wait for anything else, and we would've waited in line an hour to ride the Log Flume. Everybody was just dying to get on that Log Flume.

Taylor: Big splash in the face by that 100 year old water. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah, I know. Hepatitis A, immediately. I don't understand that. But, um—but then, there was that. There are lots of rides that are spinny, so I can't ride 'em, 'cause they make me nauseous.

But the other thing about it—do you remember this? That there is a mound? Like, a Native American... it's—on the sign it says "Indian Mound," and I understand that that's not appropriate. But there, that's what it says. Did you—a burial mound?

Taylor: As a feature?

Sydnee: It's just that Camden Park was built right next to it. So they have a giant—one of the, like, historic signs, those white signs, up in front of it. And it says "Indian Mound."

Taylor: The idea of building an already cursed, just by the design, giant clown and all, amusement park, on an actual Indigenous burial ground...

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: How... how has no one made a movie about this?

Sydnee: Taylor, it didn't—like, I don't know why this hasn't clicked before. Like, I knew, like, there's a mound close to there. 'Cause there are—so, like, some of the... some of the early Indigenous people in this part of the country would build, like, these burial mounds in case, you know, you're not familiar with this concept. And so, like, there's a place in West Virginia called Moundsville.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: Named for these mounds. There are mounds throughout this area. This mound is at Camden Park. It is the largest in the Huntington area. It's the third largest in the state of West Virginia, I learned.

Taylor: Oh, wow.

Sydnee: 'Cause there's an informational plaque. They've built, like, two—three other—like, through the years, you could see where they've tried to add on—they became more aware and more culturally sensitive, and now they've tried to add on more information about the population of people who built these mounds, and what they were for and, like, the process of uncovering them.

And then some signs about, like, "Here's them weaving baskets, and here's them, I don't know, making tools, and they gardened. This was one of the first populations to, like, farm and garden and not just be nomadic."

But anyway, so there's all these signs about it, and then there's just this giant mound. And it's fenced off, so you can't walk on the mound.

Taylor: That's good.

Sydnee: And it has been there since probably about 1000 BCE.

Taylor: Wow.

Sydnee: So that is how long—and, like, they have done some excavating of it. And, like, they have a diagram of, like—because it's not just bodies inside it. Like, they were laid out in a certain—like, it's a ritual kind of thing.

Taylor: Ahh.

Sydnee: Like, they are—like, the bodies were displayed in certain ways within the mound.

Taylor: Fascinating.

Sydnee: Fascinating, fascinating. And there are signs all about it. And you can stand there while your kids are riding that—it's one of those things that go—like, spins up in the air, and it's like a blue little plane thing. And you can move the sail—

Taylor: They just go right over the mound.

Sydnee: Yeah, and they do. They're just flying right over the mound, over your head, while you're standing there reading about the burial mound. It is the wildest—like, I don't know. This has been—our entire lives, this has been there, Tey. We have been there on school trips, as children.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Many times, we've been to Camden Park. And it just—as an adult, I'm standing there reading this sign about this over 3000-year-old burial mound that's next to this old amusement park in our hometown!

Taylor: You know... coming from West Virginia, I think that there's a certain feeling. I don't know if you relate to this at all, Syd. Sometimes it's like, I feel like I'm cursed. Like, I feel like there's...

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Like, and, I mean, the state itself. And I understand that the actual—it's, you know, poverty and lack of resources. That's the reason that West Virginia [crosstalk].

Sydnee: Exploitation.

Taylor: Yeah. It's all—but also, it really does feel like, as we were designing infrastructure, we went, "Huh. What's the most cursed thing we can build?"

'Cause we've got the—okay, we've got the creepy clown amusement park. But we also have Moundsville State Prison. Wildly haunted. Built on Indigenous burial grounds. We really just went through a checkoff list of, "What messed up stuff can we put on this sacred land? [laughs] Let's just see what happens!"

Sydnee: It's wild to me. Because when they built it in 1903, I mean, I guess they knew it was a mound. Because it's very—like, it's very intentionally not part—like, it's fenced off, and you can walk either side of it. But, like, it—the park is oddly shaped because they very intentionally did not build on top of

the mound. So they recognized the mound. They knew it was important. Out of respect, they didn't build any rides on it. But they built rides right next to it!

Taylor: It was intended to be an attraction, if nothing else. Whew, boy.

Sydnee: I mean, and it's next to the mound builder pavilion. Which is where you can go sit and, like, bring a picnic and eat your snacks.

Taylor: And contemplate the mound.

Sydnee: And contemplate the mound. I did. I stood there for a long time, contemplating the mound.

Taylor: You contemplated the mound. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] Well, it's fascinating! Like, historically it's like, this is incredible, and I can't believe it's here, at Camden Park!

Taylor: This is a great—let's ride the Haunted House, throw some gum on the gum wall, eat a Pronto Pup, and contemplate the mound! [laughs]

Sydnee: Yes! It was a... I don't know. I mean, I know it's been there our whole lives, and so it doesn't feel like something I should be having these sort of, like, "What is ha—" like, the cognitive dissonance should have been there a long time ago. And in that moment it was just—I don't think as an adult I've really interacted with the mound and Camden Park combo.

Taylor: Me either. I don't remember the mound being a feature. I did not contemplate the mound as a child.

Sydnee: It's right there.

Taylor: Is it—does it—is that the mound's... choice? Like, is it only as an adult you gain awareness?

Sydnee: [laughs] You can't see it till then. It's Brigadoon. You can't see it until you get older, and then you're like, "Why did we... " It does—I don't

know... and I'm sure there have been, like, some independent filmmakers who have made movies there, right? Like, somebody should—had to have by now. Where is the—where is this movie? The movie is there, guys. You don't —

Taylor: You gotta make it. You gotta make it. You gotta make the—come on. Remember when we were kids and we made really bad movies with a handheld camera?

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: You gotta... make your directorial debut. And whatever that movie looks like...

Sydnee: There is a—

Taylor: Here you go, Syd.

Sydnee: There is—one of the merch shops is called the Happy Clown Toy Shop. Like, how is that just in—it's just a real life thing. You can just walk—I mean, if you dare—walk in.

Taylor: I—I'm... I've been—my TikTok has been Halloween Horror Nights down in—well, Orlando and Hollywood has it. But I follow it. Last year, I don't know why, I just, like... I was at, like, a bad beat. You know. Like, a bad mental beat in my life. And I submerged myself in Halloween Horror Nights TikToks. And I found it was a safe, comfortable space to just let my brain live. So I've been doing that this month. And really thinking, like, "Wow. I really hope I get to go some time. Maybe this year, maybe next year. Who knows?"

But it sounds like you've got a home-baked one right there! [laughs] Like, it's creepy clowns year-round! It's scary not-on-purpose!

Sydnee: They have a Halloween thing they do.

Taylor: Oh, really?

Sydnee: There is, like, a—yeah. I don't know if the whole park gets transformed, or if it's just—there is a, um... like, a haunted—it looks like it's supposed to be, like, hospital-themed. Because we, like, peeked in it. It was chained off, but we peeked in it. And so I think they have—it was called, like, Camden Memorial, and I think it's supposed to be, like, a haunted hospital situation.

Taylor: When does it open?

Sydnee: I don't know. I gotta look at the—the calendar—[laughs quietly]. It just—everything about Camden Park is excellent. The calendar...

Taylor: The next time I'm home, can we please go? [laughs]

Sydnee: We've gotta go. We gotta go. Cooper will probably have extra tickets still, 'cause we still have more tickets.

Taylor: Alright. Save one for me.

Sydnee: Each one lets in two people, by the way.

Taylor: Oh, man!

Sydnee: So...

Taylor: That sounds like a plot. Like, "Yeah, we're luring you there. Oh, so many free tickets! Yes, bring more blood."

Sydnee: "Bring more people." But they also—it also in the fine print said "Not good on Saturdays," which we clocked that, like, literally as we were walking in on a Saturday to hand them the ticket. And the guy at the gate did not know that. He was just like, "Hey, thanks! Have a good time!" So... [laughs quietly] But if you—

Taylor: I mean, you had Cooper leading the way. Who's gonna look at that kid and be like, "No, sorry." [laughs]

Sydnee: "No. We can't take your free library tickets that you won for

reading so many books."

Taylor: "You read so many books, but not Saturday! Sorry, kid!"

Sydnee: "Not Saturday!" But it wasn't crowded. But we're—I'm looking at the calendar to—when we got the free tickets, I was trying to figure out what day to go. And it's like, it's wild, 'cause it's like, they have—all the days are color-coded. And you can see this on the website. And then they have a little key at the bottom to tell you what each color means, right?

And it's weird because there's lots of colors. And you would think they would just maybe have a different time—like, during the summer they're open on weekdays and during, like, as we get into the school year, it's just weekends. So you would think there wouldn't be too many colors.

But there's, like—sometimes it's open from noon to 8, and sometimes noon to 9, and sometimes 11 to 9, and sometimes it's open till 10. so there's all these different—right? Like, it's very... so you really have to check, depending on when you're going, to know when it's open.

Taylor: Is this a queer-owned business? [laughs]

Sydnee: There was one at the bottom—there was a purple brick, or a magenta brick. And I was like, "I wonder what magenta means."

And I looked down at the bottom and the magenta key is for Wayne County Fair. That's it.

Taylor: Oh.

Sydnee: No time. So what time is Camden Park open on that Saturday? Wayne County Fair.

Taylor: Wayne County Fair time.

Sydnee: Wayne County Fair. Decode. Decode that.

Taylor: Figure it out. Hey, c'mon. You like puzzles.

Sydnee: Wayne County Fair.

Taylor: It's like an escape room, but you try to figure out if you can get in.

Sydnee: I don't know. Show up and see what happens, I guess. Wayne County Fair. [laughs]

Taylor: But it's not in Wayne County.

Sydnee: No—no. I mean, I think... here's what's weird.

Taylor: Is it?

Sydnee: I don't know if you're still in—I guess you're still in Huntington city limits, there. I guess, yes, you are still within the city limits of Huntington. 'Cause it says Huntington, West Virginia on all their merch.

Taylor: Like, it's not like they are hosting the Wayne County Fair there that day. It's... just the [crosstalk].

Sydnee: Well...

Taylor: Or are they?

Sydnee: I think maybe they do. I think maybe they do host the Wayne County Fair at Camden Park on certain days. [crosstalk]

Taylor: Okay, that makes sense.

Sydnee: It was over the summer, but...

Taylor: No magenta for you.

Sydnee: No. I missed magenta. Because it was Wayne County Fair. But that was before we won the free tickets, and, you know. That's a whole thing. That was a different life, before I knew I was gonna go to Camden Park again. [laughs]

Taylor: You really need—

Sydnee: Before I contemplated the mound, and everything changed.

Taylor: I was gonna say, like, you know how people live down in—like, in Orlando, and they go to, like, Disney all the time? Like, they're there every weekend. Like, I think you all need to cultivate being those people with Camden Park.

Sydnee: I will say, we had a moment. We were like—I mean, before I realized that tickets were 32 dollars. That just feels like a lot for Camden Park.

Taylor: But you said it's 32 dollars for two people.

Sydnee: No, no. 32 dollars each.

Taylor: Or those are just the passes.

Sydnee: Those were special passes for two people.

Taylor: Oh, okay, alright.

Sydnee: But an individual ticket is 32 dollars. I will say that, like, once you get inside, the only thing you're gonna pay for is food. All the other—well, and they—they have little paddle boats. You gotta pay extra for the paddle boats. But everything else is part of it. So, like, you're not paying to ride any rides or anything.

Taylor: I mean, I don't know. 32... 32 bucks. Maybe I've just been in New York too long, 'cause I'm like, it costs me, like, 26 dollars to see a movie.

Sydnee: What threw me was—okay. We went to Kings Island, which is in Cincinnati, earlier in the summer. And we were looking comparatively. So I think a ticket to Kings Island is 45, or something like that. And it just felt like...

Taylor: Okay, fair.

Sydnee: The price difference wasn't making sense to me. You know what I mean? And, like, a season pass to Kings Island is actually cheaper than a season pass to Camden Park.

Taylor: Hmm.

Sydnee: And that really... I was trying to make that math work. 'Cause, like, listen. I'm certain if you're listening you have not been to Camden Park. There are probably—maybe one of you has been to Camden Park. But just let me tell you that Camden Park to Kings Island is, like, a wide differential.

Taylor: Well, you said there were 12 rides total?

Sydnee: Something like that. Like, about 12-ish, yeah. And, I mean, obviously Kings Island is a giant amusement park with multiple huge roller coasters. And it's, you know. It's, like, a big thing. It's, like, a whole day. You can spend a whole day at Kings Island and not ride all the rides. If you spend a whole day at Camden Park, you've ridden every ride there multiple times, including the little teeny toddler rides where they just, like, push you around on a fake train track.

Taylor: But, but... you also get to contemplate the mound. And you can't do that at Kings Island.

Sydnee: There is no mound at Kings Island.

Taylor: We're underselling that aspect.

Sydnee: It really is a—it's a surreal experience. The fact that Camden Park is just sitting there, existing, against all odds... charging 32 dollars a ticket and still filling up that park.

Taylor: Well, I mean, they probably are like, "This is what we... " that's a survival rate.

Sydnee: Yeah. And, I mean, like, the—you know, the food and stuff is

priced like a theme park. Like, it's not, you know. I don't know. They do have—I got Justin a little figurine of the Haunted House.

Taylor: Ohh.

Sydnee: It's so cute. It's just this little Haunted House thing.

Taylor: I want the clown shirt.

Sydnee: You want the clown shirt?

Taylor: I love a creepy clown.

Sydnee: I need to get you a creepy clown shirt.

Taylor: This year at Halloween Horror Nights there's, like, a whole—like, you know they have, like, the houses, but then they have scare zones. Separate ideas.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: One of the scare zones is just Downtown Clown Town. And it's just—it's Killer Klowns from Outer Space. It's Art the Clown. It's just creepy clowns in general. I would like to move there.

Sydnee: [laughs] I need to get you one of the—'cause they have—they've got, like, the old school print on some of the shirts. Which is, like, the—like, anything you see with Camden Park imagery is, like, this kind of... I don't know. It looks like a pencil drawing, like a colored pencil drawing of the sign. And it's just got this kind of creepy faded-ness to it. I mean, like, it kind of reflects that it's an old theme park, I think.

Then they've got some modern ones that are a little more cartoonish and filled-in and colorful of the clown, looking more modern-day. But I think you need one of the old-school ones.

Taylor: I would like that a lot.

Sydnee: They have it in a bunch of different colors. Although I've gotta find—I'll be honest. They did not have a single—they didn't even have a place on the shelf for any adult smalls.

Taylor: Ahh. That's my size.

Sydnee: I know. The smallest t-shirt they had was an adult medium. But you might be able to do a youth large.

Taylor: I still do the youth large.

Sydnee: Yeah. So that's what I'm thinking. I could get you a youth large.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: I was at the thrift store with my girlfriend the other day, and there were some cute shirts in the kids' section. She's like, "But those are for children."

I was like, "I don't... " Did I—have I crossed a cultural line I'm not aware of? Like, saying, "Ehh, it's fine. If it's fits, I sits. If it fits, I'm gonna wear it."

Sydnee: Yeah, I don't think that's a problem.

Taylor: I don't know.

Sydnee: I don't think so.

Taylor: I love a youth large. Perfect size.

Sydnee: I ended up—the Camden 1903 shirt I got—'cause I was really bummed, 'cause I wanted to get one, and there was none. I wear an adult small as well, and there was no small. Um, so I got it—it's a medium. But I will say, like, it's that good t-shirt material. You know that good, soft t-shirt material? Ooh.

Taylor: Oh yeah.

Sydnee: It's that good soft stuff. Kind of looks, like, feathered on it. You know what I'm saying?

Taylor: I love that.

Sydnee: Yeah. So it's okay, I don't mind that it's a little drape-y on me. It's a good t-shirt.

Taylor: Well, you definitely, definitely had a better weekend than I have.

Sydnee: Yes. I'm sorry. I'm sorry that you were sick and I was at Camden Park.

Taylor: That's okay. That's okay. Some day...

Sydnee: It was, like, 96 degrees and extremely humid, if that makes you feel any better.

Taylor: Well, I... only a little. Only a little schadenfreude.

Sydnee: The Log Flume scent was very thick in the air.

Taylor: Oh, god.

Sydnee: It was a lot.

Taylor: I can—no one could make me go on a log flume. There's nothing you could offer me to make me go on a log flume. I never want to be damp in clothes at an amusement park.

Sydnee: It's—it's—the water is moving on the Log Flume. So, like, the mosquito risk is low. But...

Taylor: [laughs] You're diagnosing the water on the Log Flume.

Sydnee: Yeah. It's not moving fast enough. It's a very slow... I don't know

if you remember this. The Log Flume is incredibly slow. That's part of why the line is so long, is that it's, like, over a minute between empty flumes. [laughs quietly] And only two, and sometimes three if they're really little, people can fit on each one. But usually it's two people per log.

Taylor: There has never... like, everything is unappealing about any log—not just—this is not about the Camden Park Log Flume.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: The Flume? Is that a—I don't—what is—the Log. It's a Log.

Sydnee: Well, the log—you're riding the log.

Taylor: [simultaneously] The flume is the—

Sydnee: The flume is the...

Taylor: The thing. The...

Sydnee: The trail. The path.

Taylor: Yeah. The log is always damp. You're always gonna get a wet butt immediately.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Like, your butt—even if you don't get any more water on you, your butt's gonna be wet. And I don't actually know what's worse. Like, 'cause I don't ever want to be just, like, ambiently wet out in public. Like, that's just not... you know. If you get splashed big, that sucks. But even if you don't get splashed big, you got a wet butt for, like, at least the next two hours.

Sydnee: I just don't... you know how at mini golf courses they always make the water super blue?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And I know that's artificial. Like, I know they're dyeing it. But I have to imagine that there's some sort of safe dye that they could put in the log flume...

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: ... water, so it wouldn't be so brown. Like, it was so thick and brown.

Taylor: Oh, I don't think it should be brown! I think that...

Sydnee: It was definitely—it was like a thick brown-to-green, brown-green... somewhere in there.

Taylor: Those aren't... those aren't colors you want... I don't actually—

Sydnee: No, I'm not an artist like you, Tey. I'm sure you could pinpoint the exact shade of the log flume water.

Taylor: It's chartreuse. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] But...

Taylor: I don't want them to be able to dye the water not-brown. I want the water to not be brown to begin with. [laughs]

Sydnee: Wouldn't it be more appealing if they did that to the water?

Taylor: I think it would be appealing if it was clean. Like, you'd think that's something they emphasize is, like, usually the log flume water is clean, at least. Like, I'm gonna get it splashed in my face and all up in my butt. I would like it to be clean.

Sydnee: I have to imagine they're dumping some sort of chemicals into it. I have to assume.

Taylor: [laughs] One must imagine the Log Flume water clean. [laughs]

Sydnee: When you open a log flume, I bet you get an instruction manual with, like, "This is how you clean the flume. This is flume cleaning—flume maintenance."

Taylor: I think that instruction manual was written somewhere in the last 100 years, post-Camden Park's opening. [laughs]

Sydnee: 1903! It is wild!

Taylor: Like, there's—one of my two jobs, I cater on a boat. And there are these new boats that have begun appearing in the East River where it's like the whole appeal is you get strapped in and they go really fast, and you get sprayed in your face by the water. And I watch these boats go up and down the East River. I'm like, that is East River water that you are getting sprayed in the face by. That's not... you don't want that water.

Sydnee: No. No.

Taylor: That is a higher concentration of people than water in that water.

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah.

Taylor: I don't know. I think that takes the fun out for me.

Sydnee: No, thank you.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: Alright.

Sydnee: Well, we need to talk about Forbidden Fruits. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: We need to, but I also really want to, 'cause wow! What a... what a theme park ride of a movie! [laughs]

Sydnee: Yes. I have to say, the movie kind of caught me off guard, because

I kind of thought I knew what I was in for. You had said it was kind of like The Craft with, like, I don't know. It's got, like, a little bit of a Mean Girls aspect to it. And, I don't know what else.

But anyway, it's kind of... it has a twist.

Taylor: Yeah. For those unfamiliar, it's—the very basic outline is there is a—a coven that works at, like, the cool girl clothing store at the mall.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: And this new girl that works at—she works in the food court, which I guess is lower on the totem pole, socially.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: She is hired by the... the cool girl clothing store, and gets to join the coven. And she has ulterior motives, infiltrating the coven.

Sydnee: Yeah. Well, and that's—I mean, I guess they let her in because she's named after a fruit.

Taylor: Yeah. They're all—they're all fruits. Although I don't... a pickle's not a fruit. I don't...

Sydnee: No. Well...

Taylor: There was another one that was named Pickle. It's...

Sydnee: I know—is pumpkin, like, technically a fruit?

Taylor: They said that in the movie, that they weren't sure if it was a fruit or a vegetable. And I always thought a pumpkin was a vegetable, but I could absolutely be wrong.

Sydnee: There's that whole distinguishing thing between, like, is it culinarily considered a vegetable, but it is scientifically—you know what I mean?

Taylor: Oh, like we think of a tomato as a vegetable. It's used like a vegetable, but it is a fruit.

Sydnee: But it is a fruit. So is pumpkin like that?

Taylor: But I didn't realize pumpkin was also in that. I thought pumpkin was a squash, and I thought all squashes were vegetables.

Sydnee: I did, too. But they... but I don't know.

Taylor: But again, there was a former forbidden fruit that works at the store who was named Pickle. And I...

Sydnee: And that's definitely not a fruit.

Taylor: I will say with confidence. [laughs] There is not pickle fruit.

Sydnee: A cucumber is a vegetable.

Taylor: It is not. It is definitely a vegetable.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I think that this is part of the bigger point, which is this movie is wildly campy. You can't watch this movie and take it seriously. Every beat is ridiculous.

Sydnee: No. There's this sort of spell that they cast where they drink out of a boot.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. I didn't know what to make of that. It was like, their cauldron is this boot, this very nice, fancy boot, I guess.

Taylor: Well, it's like a... like a Forever 21 looking boot. Like, it's... they all squeeze their panties in it and, like, drop their blood in it, and also put, like, a slushie in it. I don't know.

Sydnee: [laughs] It's got a little bit of a Heathers feel to it, at times.

Taylor: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely.

Sydnee: Yeah. Like, that dark. 'Cause, like, you definitely know there is a risk that they're gonna kill people. You definitely get the vibe. Like, they are ruling them all. They're ruling the social hierarchy. And they probably are capable of murder.

Taylor: And it... the, uh, the main—Apple is played by the same actress that played Betty in Riverdale. And I think that is important. 'Cause this also feels like it could exist in that—you know, like, the later seasons of Riverdale? I know, Sydnee, I know it personally offended you and you didn't hang on that long. But the later seasons just went insane. Where it's like, now—

Sydnee: When they did, like, time traveling, and...

Taylor: And they got superpowers.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And, like, this feels like that level of, like, "Just go with it. It's camp."

Sydnee: And then they—didn't it end with them in a throuple? Or was it—no. 'Cause Jughead was in there, too. So they were in a polycule?

Taylor: [hesitantly] Quadrouple.

Sydnee: Didn't it end that way? Like, the four of 'em together in a polycule?

Taylor: I believe it did. Yeah. It's that level of... of suspend your disbelief.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Although I think this was a little bit more, dare I say, smarter.

Sydnee: Yes. I think so.

Taylor: I think it was purposeful.

Sydnee: I think it was. Because what it really—what I thought was interesting is that—I mean, they're witches, I guess. But, like, that's also kind of loosely... you know? Like, you're not 100% sure. Like, at first I wasn't sure if they were really doing magic.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, I still don't—even all the way through the end, I don't think we know if they actually were, or they weren't just, like... You know, like, when you're a teen and you hang out with your girl friends and you light candles and you think you're witches?

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: There is that vibe. That, like, maybe they're not—they're not actually doing anything. And that the bad stuff that happens is just 'cause bad stuff happens, and not because they did anything? I don't know. I do definitely think that's part of it.

Um, but it really plays with the idea of the final girl.

Taylor: Hmm.

Sydnee: Like, I feel like you go in pretty clearly thinking Pumpkin is the final girl.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: Right? But then when you—and we're spoiling the movie, of course. When you find out the backstory, like, that Pumpkin is really there because Apple killed their dad...

Taylor: They're half-sisters.

Sydnee: Yes. And what it sounds like to me, like, from the back and forth, is that Pumpkin grew up with both parents involved in her life, and then all she ever knew was a wonderful, loving father, who then got killed. And Apple was—like, he had had an affair, I guess. And so she was abandoned by her father. Right?

Taylor: Yeah. Abandoned, and—it sounded like a much more violent perception that Apple had.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Like, there's an inference of violence.

Sydnee: So, like, Pumpkin is there to avenge someone who she sees—like, there's no nuance. He was a good, wonderful person. And this bad girl killed him, and so I must, you know, get proof, or get vengeance, or whatever she's out for. She's investigating. Um, and then it kind of turns the whole thing upside-down at the end when all of a sudden it's like, well, he wasn't a good guy. I mean, he was to you. But he wasn't to these other women, Apple and her mother, who suffered because of this guy. And so who's the good guy? You know?

I mean, I really think it kind of—it works more than it should for such a campy movie.

Taylor: Well, that's what I—I don't think it's—I love a movie that's not really—that's, like, not concerned with making a message, but kind of does anyway. Where there's a male-centered woman, and there's a woman-centered woman. Because perhaps—and I know just from, like, the actresses talking about this, like, that she played Apple as a sapphic character.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Like, that is a... lesbian, I don't know. But, like, definitely a woman-loving-woman. That there is a sisterhood that I'm not saying is not somewhat corrupt. There's a lot of control going on. But there is this, like, ability to have control over your surroundings through your womanhood that

the coven kind of has. And Pumpkin throws that off by bringing in this male-centered vendetta.

Sydnee: Yeah. No, that's definitely true. And, I mean, yeah. I think taking, like, everybody's sexuality out of it, you definitely get the vibe that Apple, if a man is involved, she is utilizing the man for a purpose. Not—yeah.

Taylor: Yeah. And she seems to be trying to enforce that on her—her women underlings. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yes. Controlling when they can have boyfriends, and when they can have sex, and...

Taylor: I mean, that's where it's like, you can dig deep. There's some stuff there. But it's also just so funny. 'Cause it's like, "Well, no one has sex on a Wednesday." [laughs] Like...

Sydnee: You're not allowed to have sex on a Wednesday.

Taylor: Why? I don't know. It doesn't matter. [laughs] It feels like a movie that is, like, at least has to be winking at John Waters, right?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: 'Cause it's that level of, like... don't take it too seriously. [laughs]

Sydnee: No, I do—I think you're right. Especially because, like, it's graphic in—like, towards the end when people start dying.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, it's pretty awful. [laughs quietly] For a movie that didn't—I don't feel like it—it, like, doesn't gradually get you there.

Taylor: No, no.

Sydnee: It just, like, ramps it up to, like, a horror movie all at once.

Taylor: But the deaths—I mean, especially the escalator death is such a funny... it's so ridiculous.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: And I think it was only—I've watched this movie twice now. It was only on the second watch through that I see, like, it is set up. Like, one of the first things they say is, like, "Oh, when we wear our skinny heels, we don't take the escalator." [laughs]

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: And then you see the—the payoff of that later. When, uh... Cherry—who is played by—oh, gosh. I love this actress. She's in all the Haunting on Hill House, and, um...

Sydnee: Oh, I didn't know that. I didn't recognize her.

Taylor: She's been in a bunch of stuff. She's great. But the way that she plays that character, Cherry, is just... the whole thing is like a weird vocal affectation, and it's not like anything that I've seen her do in other things. But her death on the escalator is just—it's so ridiculous. It's that thing that I love. Like, the Evil Dead movies do it. Not the new ones, but the old ones. Where it's horrifying, but it's so ridiculous that it feels like a carnival ride.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: It feels like a Looney Tune.

Sydnee: Yeah. No, I think you can do—I think when you do that, you... it's helpful to remove, like, I don't know, the horror, the shock from it, the sadness of it. Because it's so ridiculous. Like, it's not—yeah, it's not real.

Taylor: 'Cause her character was endearing, and so to see that character die would be sad, except for, like, she got chewed up by an escalator. [laughs]

Sydnee: She got stuck in an escalator. [laughs] Which is—which is a fear. I

mean, don't get me wrong.

Taylor: Well, I don't—I mean, I don't [crosstalk].

Sydnee: I take escalators very seriously.

Taylor: As a doctor, would a body do that in a... [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, no.

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: No. There is no—no. That was... that was probably—no. I have to imagine, too—I don't know much about escalator construction or maintenance. But probably there is some sort of automatic shutoff valve if something—like, if it starts to get stuck. Don't you think?

Taylor: I would assume. I mean—

Sydnee: There's some sort of failsafe.

Taylor: Like, her foot got stuck, and then her leg came off at the knee.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And I don't think that's how—I'm, again, not the doctor. I don't think that's how bodies work.

Sydnee: No. No, no. I mean, nothing—no.

Taylor: It's like a lizard dropping its tail. Like, "Uh-oh." Gone.

Sydnee: No. It just would've gotten stuck. She just would be stuck there. And, like, her foot would be in bad shape. But, like, I feel like the escalator would've stopped, and she'd be stuck, and... like, we don't squish. We don't squish easily. We got, like, bones in there.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] We're not—humans aren't incredibly squishable. I'm not saying that we couldn't be squished. But, like, not in that circumstance.

Taylor: Not that quickly. It happened fast.

Sydnee: No. It would take more to squish us. But I do take—all that being said, I take escalators seriously. [laughs quietly] I watch my feet. I never take for granted—I'm not distracted. Not on my phone.

Taylor: And you don't wear your skinny heels.

Sydnee: I don't wear any heels. But yes, I would not wear skinny heels on an escalator.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Only flats, here. But it was interesting, 'cause I thought for such a campy, kind of goofy movie, where they are—I mean, it's all—it's all very silly. Like, these girls who—it's not Forever 21, but it's basically they work at Forever 21. And they run the mall, and they get free food from all the guys at the food court, 'cause they all worship them.

And then there's this, like, girl who at first kind of seems like the nerdy girl who works at the pretzel shop who's desperate to be in with the cool girls. And it feels very, like, silly and like all these movies we've referenced. Um, like Mean Girls, and Heathers, and all that.

But then by the end, I really do think it's kind of a powerful message that the final girl is the girl who survived... I mean, I don't know that we know exactly the nature of what her dad did to her and her mom, in terms of—did he just abandon them? Did he deny them? Did he abuse them? Did he—I don't know. I don't really know.

One way or another, she was done wrong by a man. And even after eliminating him, this has come back to continue to hurt her, through the form of her half-sister.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And she manages to escape that.

Taylor: Well, and there's that really—that line exchange where I think Pumpkin is doing the big reveal. Like, "Ha ha, I was your half-sister all along!"

And Apple's like, "I knew. Did you not—did he not tell you about us?"

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: That's how deep the betrayal went. Like, "I knew you existed. I knew who you were. You didn't know that I existed."

Sydnee: Yeah. "You were able to grow up in this, like, happy life, and I never had that. I always knew the reality of men."

Taylor: I think from the very first scene that we're introduced to Apple, I was rooting for Apple, and I'm glad that she was the—I mean, I don't know. Like, I always have that thing where I watch horror movies where sometimes I root for the bad guys. And I feel bad about that internally, but I'm also, like, that's just the coolest character.

And it's... I don't know. It's like, well, yeah. But that was the character that I wanted to win. And she did win. And the only thing upset me is that, like, there was the one cut scene where she finds the new group of free-eating girls and, like, finds her new coven. But then there's the other after-credits scene where maybe she's still being hunted. Which I guess sets up a sequel, but I was also like, I don't—I want her to get away with it. I want her to murder everybody that hurt her and get away with it, and be beautiful.
[laughs]

Sydnee: Well, I assumed that was just to leave room for a sequel. That was what that felt like to me, was maybe it tested really well or something, so they shot this little extra scene just to open the door. I mean, I wouldn't be surprised. It's the kind of movie that you definitely can see them making

sequels of.

Taylor: I agree.

Sydnee: But, you know, there's no reason to think Apple won't win again.

Taylor: Well, that's what I just—I don't know. Like, I support women's wrongs. I think that's... [laughs]

Sydnee: I think it's cleverly done, because you really—I think most people would fall into the trap of rooting for Pumpkin the entire time. And rooting for whatever she must do to achieve her vendetta here, even if that's killing Apple. Like, rooting for that.

Um, but at the end, it really challenges you. Like, I have only been thinking about this from her perspective. Which is all she—I mean, that's all we're allowed is to see it from her perspective, and to only understand her. And that's her problem, is that fundamentally she saw another woman as the enemy, and never considered that maybe this other woman was also a victim. You know? And just set herself against her, as opposed to truly joining the sisterhood.

Taylor: Well, and this other woman that brought her into something and, like, made her a part of something. It is interesting, that comparison to *The Craft*, because I've seen a lot of, like, retroactive views of *The Craft* that are like, "Nancy did nothing wrong."

And it's like, well, we won't go that far. But we can agree that Nancy was a... a very abused, hurt teenage girl who did not deserve what she got at the end. Didn't deserve to be punished for what other people did to her. And so this is a bit of that, like, you know, satisfaction. Like, yeah, you know what? Apple was messed up. But I'm glad she got away with it. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yeah. No, I think that's true. I think that is one of the—I love *The Craft*. You know I love *The Craft*, and I will always—I will always watch it. I was gonna say "defend it," but I don't know. All movies from that time period are—they are what they are.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And I do think that it falls into that, like, well, we want to be feminist. So a girl wins, in *The Craft*, you know? We have a girl who is the winner. She's still a witch. She's very powerful. She even is able to take in the power of Manon and handle it, and be the most powerful witch, or whatever. But also, we need the bad girl to be punished. So there's still a right way to be a powerful woman.

You can be a powerful woman, now. It's the 90s. But there's a right way to be powerful, and a wrong way.

So it is cool to kind of see that, like, "Nah. You can just be powerful."

Taylor: Yeah. Well, 'cause that was the sort of—the double-edged sword of *The Craft*, right? It's like, oh, what if teenage girls had power in a world where they're usually powerless?

Most of them end up powerless. One of them ends up locked up. Like, that's not... they are the aspects that feel revolutionary, and then the aspects that tell us the same lesson over and over again: "Don't seek power. You'll probably end up worse off than you started."

Sydnee: Yeah. And you also—I mean, I know we're not talking about *The Craft*. But you also see that the woman who comes out on top, who's allowed to maintain power—even, like, the way she looks and dresses at the end, she's cast off all the witchiness, all the weirdness, all the freakiness that she had kind of, like, embraced with the other girls, and returned to a very, like, acceptable version of womanhood again.

Taylor: Right. Well, and, like, the inciting incident is that her boyfriend attempted to assault her. And Nancy—we can agree that—

Sydnee: Made him pay.

Taylor: Yeah. I mean, that's, like, I don't know. Like, I don't... if you had power and—if women had power and they had the ability to punish the

people that did that level of assault, like why... I don't know. Like, you want—it's fantasy. I want to see that story play out. And that's what I think this gave us. Is like, yeah. Apple punished the men in the worst way possible that hurt her. And anyone that would come out swinging for those men, I guess. Which Pumpkin unfortunately did.

Sydnee: That's true, yeah. It is a shame. Because Pumpkin, her ultimate crime was ignorance, and then maintaining it. Not seeking to reach beyond it. You know.

Taylor: Not embracing the sisterhood, I guess. [laughs]

Sydnee: Not embracing the sisterhood. Don't be a pick-me.

Taylor: There you go. [laughs] That's what this movie's about.

Sydnee: Embrace the sisterhood. [laughs]

Taylor: That's why it's Forbidden Fruit! Don't be a pick... pick-me. Pick—ahh.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm, there you go. See? It all comes together. Well, I'm really glad I watched. I really enjoyed it. Justin and I had a lot of fun watching it.

Taylor: Oh yeah, no. It's great.

Sydnee: I do hope they make a sequel.

Taylor: Well, and it was one of those movies, like, this movie deserves a cult following. Like, this movie deserves, like, midnight showings, and people watching this every year.

Sydnee: There have got to be some Halloween costumes this year based on that. Right?

Taylor: Yeah. I hope so.

Sydnee: I would assume, yeah. Alright. Well, Tey, I really enjoyed watching it. I'm glad we did.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't remember where—was it on Shudder? I think it was on Shudder.

Taylor: I watched it on Shudder, yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. Um, so I would recommend it. If you have not seen Forbidden Fruits, I would highly recommend watching it. There's some goriness and, you know... that's about it. I don't know.

Taylor: Yeah. [laughs]

Sydnee: As far as warnings, it's a little gory. Um, what should we do next?

Taylor: Well, we were talking about—Phoebe Bridgers has had a new album come out, which Bo Burnham guests on. And we never talked about Bo Burnham's Inside special, so I thought we could maybe do a one-two hit. We will talk about Phoebe Bridgers' new album, but first we will talk about Inside.

Sydnee: Yes. I've never watched it. I've seen clips of it on TikTok, but I've never actually watched it, so.

Taylor: Alright.

Sydnee: So I will check it out for next time.

Taylor: There you go.

Sydnee: And in the meantime, thank you for listening to our show. And you should go to MaximumFun.org and check out a lot of other great shows that you would enjoy. You can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org. And thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, Baby You Change Your Mind.

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

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Teylor: And I'm Teylor Smirl.

Sydnee: I'm still buffering...

Teylor: And I am too.

[theme music plays]

Sydnee: Olive has abandoned me for podcasting. Now she's sitting in a chair across the room just staring at me. She's, like, in the watch position. You know? Like, shaking her butt, staring at me from across the room.
[unintelligible]

Teylor: That's your audience, now.

Sydnee: [laughs] She's waiting for me to mess up. Waiting for me to say something dumb.

Teylor: I'll pounce!

Sydnee: Not gonna do it, Olive!

[chord]

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