

## Disability and the Media

Emily: Hi, I'm Emily Ladau.

Kyle: And I'm Kyle Khachadurian.

Emily: And I have no idea what show we're on.

Kyle: I think it's called The Accessible Stall.

Emily: Oh, my goodness. Thank you.

Kyle: Yeah so what are we going to talk about today, Emily?

Emily: We're going to talk about disability and the media.

Kyle: Why?

Emily: Because there's a certain controversy going on right now.

Kyle: When isn't there a controversy in our world?

Emily: Oh, well good point but that's another episode. Today we're going to talk about controversy with media depictions of disability.

Kyle: Hurray

Emily: Get excited. I'm Excited. Anyway, so there's been controversy going on with the book-turned movie Me Before You, and I'm going to warn you ahead of time, although I assume it's already been spoiled -uh, spoiled. It's already been spoiled for you, But major spoiler alert on everything in this episode. So now that we've gotten that out of the way and you can't get mad at us, we're going to ruin everything for you.

Kyle: He dies at the end.

Emily: That's true! Ok, so this is not going to focus solely on Me Before You, but Kyle and I were inspired to discuss media depictions of disability because it's been a pretty prevalent controversy right now. And I would say that most of the disabled people that we know tend to be on the side of Me Before You's depiction of disability, is just no Bueno in any way shape or form.

Kyle: Right

Emily: and I have admittedly been one of the more vocal people about this because sometimes I like to cause a ruckus. So, I'm interested because it's pretty easy to I guess find my take elsewhere on the inter-webs what your take on it is having not read the book and only been an outside observer of a lot of what's going on.

Kyle: I don't like it because I don't like cheesy love stories

Emily: There you have, Kyle hates romance.

Kyle: No, I don't. I like good romance and this is just clichéd nonsense. I think that the whole thing quite frankly has been blown completely out of proportion, but I've come to expect that from our little world, that's what we do. I think that the people who have a problem with it, have their reasons for having a problem with it. You have the two groups of people, right? You have the people who are for and against assisted suicide. That's.. that's subtopic number one which is for a different episode for us, by the way, and then you have the people who don't like it because it reflects the systemic oppression of something or other people disabilities in the media and how they're quote on quote, often encouraged to take assisted suicide as an option before somebody else with a similar chronic illness, that happens to also be able bodied.

Emily: I'm going to throw a third one in there, not that I even think this is really the central issue that people have been focusing on, but on the fact that it's a non-disabled person portraying someone with a disability.

Kyle: Right, and we're gonna talk about that later in the episode, but let's squash that one right now because with the hubbub and controversy surrounding this movie, if they got a disabled person to play this guy instead of this able-bodied guy, then he would've had to been OK with the whole premise of the movie and if there's one thing about our community hates more than anything else it's when one of us goes against the grain of most of us, usually. So, I really do believe that that would've caused a much, much bigger controversy.

Emily: you know I had not at all thought about it like that until you just said that. So, essentially having someone disabled agreeing to play the part would in a way, be putting forward a sentiment that someone somewhere with a disability was OK with the premise of the book.

Kyle: I'm OK with the premise of the book. But I'm not starring in the movie.

Emily: Okay, see but the thing is, I think that it's a lot more nuanced than a lot of people are realizing because a lot of people are going based on hearsay and reviews and things like that. But if you read the book, none of the able-bodied people are telling the character, Will, that he should go through with assisted suicide. In fact, they're all vehemently against it.

Kyle: It's his idea, right? I've only seen shows, I've not read the book

Emily: Yeah.

Kyle: So, yeah it's all his idea.

Emily: So, in a way and I am really trying very hard to wrap my mind around this, that is a huge display of autonomy, but the fact that's really the only time in the entire story that he displays any autonomy is in his pursuance of assisted suicide. It's sort of interesting to me because where are all of the other instances in which he could, you know, better express his independence and not have it so... not have it so that he's kind of, I don't want to say a puppet

for the non-disabled characters, but I don't think they. I don't even know how to say this. I just don't think that he is treated..

Kyle: in other words he, it sounds like what you're saying is he's not a fleshed out character and he only exists to make that decision?

Emily: yes.

Kyle: Sort of like he's not three dimensional

Emily: You know what, thank you. Perfect. Yes.

Kyle: You're welcome

Emily: He, His whole character is this miserable person who hates everything and he used to be this happy, handsome, wonderful guy who became disabled. And let me also add in, I'm not invalidating anyone's feelings if, you know, they have suddenly had to make the transition from the life of someone without a disability to someone with a disability. You know, that's one criticism that I think is really fair. I can't speak to that, at all. I have no right to speak to that, so I leave that to the people who have become injured, but what I can speak to is that pushing the idea that the second you become disabled, there is absolutely no hope for you and your life is a miserable tragedy, is really the issue that I have with the book

Kyle: Yeah, I mean, one of the criticisms I heard is that it didn't really explore life after becoming disabled. It was just straight from the high life to cripple to dead, and that was to-what I hear. I mean, I don't know, I'm not going to read it and I'm not going to see it, to tell you the truth, but I understand that criticism.

Emily: Yeah, because I just think it ignores the complexities of what happens, following sustaining an injury that causes you to become disabled. And again, I do not speak from experience, but I do know that anytime I have been in a hospital, especially for my most recent major surgery where there was a very real risk of quadriplegia, following the surgery. You know, I could've woken up completely paralyzed. I know that I would have been given access to the rehabilitative and mental health supports that were needed to help me adjust to a different body.

Kyle: Yeah, sure. So, that's an example of, sort of, what not to do in the media. There are very few, unfortunately, good cases. I can only think of maybe a small handful. I don't know about you, but I just got done watching a Netflix show called Legit, which stars comedian Jim Jefferies and two other guys and a whole bunch of characters with disabilities. However, one main character with a disability is on that show. He's not portrayed by an actor with a disability, and we're going to get to that bit later. However, it is probably the best representation of disability I've seen in recent memory. The only disability related criticism I can give it is that everywhere is accessible, but to its credit, it made sure to stick a ramp everywhere where they went. So even though like in the real world, nowhere is accessible. They made sure to at least try to

make it so that it looks like it is everywhere this character went, so I really can't even fault them for that. There was an episode where this character, his two care takers, his brother and Jim Jefferies, had to go somewhere and they told him to like stay in the van. Of course that's what you do when you tell someone when you're going to be in and out real quick. And he screams back, well you know, Do I have a choice? Of course he doesn't, he's got muscular dystrophy. He can't move, and the whole show is basically that, but it's very real in that it shows that disability is not pretty. My god, there's this one episode where he has to choose between an experimental medicine that allows him to like move his thumbs again so he can play video games and be happy, or- and the side effect is he's impotent – or he cannot take it and not be impotent, but he can't have that tiny little increase of mobility, and it's just hilarious. It's really funny, and you should all watch it.

Emily: I'm gonna have to jump in only because I don't want you to ruin every single feature episode for me.

Kyle: That was only two episodes.

Emily: But yeah, Kyle loved this show so much that I got a frantic text from him that I needed to immediately get on the computer and we needed to watch the first episode together so that he could gauge my reactions, live while I was watching, so he's very serious about this show. But I wanted to back up to what you said about how everywhere he goes is accessible because that's really interesting, because on the one hand I kind of love that a show is even taking that into consideration and showing what an ideal world would be for someone with a physical disability, who uses mobility equipment, but at the same time, that is super not reflective of reality, so it's really fascinating to me, and I guess I'm going to have to watch more of before I can pass judgement, but you know.

Kyle: Well I think it was more of a story-telling device. Like they made the representation of the actual disability real enough where it's not untrue, but it also works in the context of the show, like they never did an episode where something was inaccessible, cause that's not funny, you know, it's a comedy show. So, I think that was purely for like story telling purposes. It's not really to educate.

Emily: Really? I think that can be pretty comedic because I just-

Kyle: Well yeah, everything can be funny, but I don't know

Emily: Okay, so think about this, like in the first episode the only episode of this show Legit that I've watched so far, there was like a, what was it? A strip club? Or something.

Kyle: A brothel.

Emily: A brothel that was accessible. I mean, that's just fascinating to me. I've never seen doors open so wide to a brothel, then again, I've never been in a brothel. Anyway, we're gonna go down a rabbit hole right now. you know, but it can be pretty funny having any accessibility

issues, not that I appreciate them at all, but I mean, the amount of times I've been like wooh let's go to a place, I'm so excited. And then we get there and there's a step and sometimes all you can do is laugh in the moment. I know it doesn't sound funny, but it could easily be a good comedy show idea. So there you go, free idea, comedy writers.

Kyle: Yeah. And it's funny because if you look up the- I was late to the party- the show was cancelled in think 2013 or 2014, but after I marathoned it, I googled it and apparently, you know, it was lauded by a lot of people with disabilities, even though the actor who plays the guy with muscular dystrophy wasn't disabled, and I think that because that's a very common criticism where you have able-bodied actors playing disabled roles, I think that it just proves that although that would've been nice, the fact that it portrayed his disability accurately enough was what really matters, and plus that show actually does have a lot of disabled actors on it, just not that one.

Emily: can we talk about this more because in listening to you just now, it raises an interesting question. Would you rather a very well researched and well done portrayal of someone with a disability, but the actor did not have a disability-

Kyle: yes

Emily: Or, I knew that was going to be your answer but I want to just put out the flip side. Or would you rather have a disabled person acting in something for the sake of them being disabled?

Kyle: The former

Emily: yeah, I know.

Kyle: Just like I didn't mind Jared Leto in Dallas Buyer's Club, where he played a transgender woman. He is a very cisgender male, but you know what I call that is acting, And I know that sounds cynical and I know that you know, everyone should have proper representation. I'm not saying they shouldn't. But I am saying that there is, when I see somebody playing a part that they're not built for, to me, all that says is that person's a good actor. Yes, of course it also says that you know, there are plenty of every kind of person to be in movies. Of course, there are, but when I see a performance by somebody who plays a kind of person that they're not, if they do it well, it almost becomes irrelevant, to me.

Emily: yeah, on the one hand I want to say that if someone acts as a disabled person convincingly enough, then I'm inclined to say that they're just a really really good method actor, but on the other hand, and perhaps more to the point on my end is that not enough people with disabilities are getting jobs in the media. And so, you know, I think that points to a larger issue not that they're casting non-disabled actors to play disabled people, but that not enough roles are written where you can put a disabled person in and it just be interchangeable with anybody else, so you know what I'm saying?

Kyle: Yes, you have to use the disability as some kind of gimmick at some point, otherwise, why are they, not a gimmick but you have to use it as a plot device or something, which is actually kind of why Legit is actually even better because the character of Billy, that's his name, he's probably the most well-adjusted, quote on quote, normal person on the show, which is part of the joke. You know, like he has the most friends and he has the most girlfriends and he has the most sex out of these three guys, but it very seldom did rely on the wheelchair as a joke, although I kind of wish they did because that's the kind of comedic tone of the show, but I'm also glad they didn't.

Emily: I actually have a question for you because you watch Game of Thrones.

Kyle: Yes

Emily: And I don't. So, I know that a lot of people have said Peter Dinklage is not cast because he is a little person, but he just happens to be a little person playing the role of Tyrion, is that true?

Kyle: Well, kind of. So, Peter Dinklage has said time and time again, and I'll find the interview to put in the description of this podcast, that he won't do roles where little people, or whatever your preferred nomenclature is cause I will screw this up and I apologize, are portrayed as like elves or dwarves, or somethings, and he just refuses those roles because he finds them very stereotypical.

Emily: Right

Kyle: And very early on in Game of Thrones he did an interview talking about Tyrion, and the producers took him aside and they asked him like have you ever read the books? Cause this ain't that, and he immediately took the role. And it actually kind of worked out in his favor, you know. I've read some of the books but there is one scene in particular where he's on trial for some sort of something, and he gives a speech on how he's not really on trial for this crime but he's on trial for being a dwarf. Those are the words in the show and in the book because old fashion, right? But in the book, the speech was fantastic, but in the show, because Peter Dinklage is- you can sort of see the man come through the character as well, and it really added another layer of depth to it that the book just didn't have, and it's amazing.

Emily: Yeah, I'm thinking about this more and more, as we talk about it how having a disabled person play a very well rounded character is really what we need, or take this for example, so you know how every movie practically ever, that's a romance or a romantic comedy, has like the side-kick best friend

Kyle: Yes

Emily: You know, I always think how hard would it be to have the side-kick best friend be a disabled person? Or to have the lead be a disabled person? I think that it would really add depth and diversity, but it wouldn't have to be that the disability is the gimmick. It would just

be a disabled person happens to be the love interest, or happens to be the best friend, or happens to be a main character.

Kyle: Peter Dinklage has, actually, exactly what you're describing in some weird Rom-com movie with Justin Long that I can't remember but I'll probably look it up.

Emily: Really?

Kyle: Yes, it's exactly what you're describing. He's like the sassy, gay, coffee shop owner that kind of knows the lead male role.

Emily: Is it He's Just not that Into You? Is that it? Oh ok. Well, anyway, but I guess that's the thing. I want more of that. The fact that I didn't even know that existed. I just want the disabled person to play any old character, not to have to play someone disabled.

Kyle: To the point, and this is the only point I'll give them, usually, but to the point of the people who shout that disabled people must play disabled roles, when you look at something like The Hobbit, Hobbits, for anyone who doesn't know, are short, stumpy little creatures with hairy feet. There was no reason why you couldn't get a whole bunch of little people together to play all the hobbits and dwarves in The Lord of the Rings and the Hobbit movies. Instead we got Elijah Wood, but we got him before he was Elijah Wood. We got him when he was like twelve years old, and a kid, so nobody knew who he was. So it's not like he was a household name because he's still not a household name, but because of that, you know, you could've just put some unknown actor in there who happened to be a little person and gotten the same effect. Meanwhile, they had this kid like on his knees on set. Like why would you do that? When there's-

Emily: So, are you saying that it's a good thing that a bunch of little people were Oompa Loompas

Kyle: Yes. Yes, I would, because they were supposed to be. That's how they were portrayed in the book. And actually, I forgot which one was it, was it the old one or the new one? But in one of them, one guy played all of them.

Emily: I can tell you I hated the newer version of Willy-Wonka that's neither here nor there relevant to the conversation but ooh boy, I hated it.

Kyle: Yeah, I did because that's how they were described, and you consider that patronizing to have little orange slaves working in your chocolate factory all you want, but that's not personally a disability or society, that's some psycho-maniac in a chocolate factory.

Emily: Yo, it's patronizing to have any stature orange slaves working in your chocolate factory. So that whole role was just kind of messed up. Yeah, so, but the thing is that it's just a bunch of little people in Oompa Loompa costume, that's not the progressive that I'm talking about. What I'm talking about is having the person in the wheelchair

Kyle: Be a person?

Emily: Yeah, Be a person.

Kyle: But I disagree, I really do because it fit the role. Oh man, what was I gonna- oh yeah, similarly, American Horror Story, I think the third or fourth season had Freak Show. It was literally called Freak Show.

Emily: Yeah, and I am way too much of a chicken to ever watch that show.

Kyle: Oh, well, here's the thing. It was Matt Fraser and a whole bunch of other people with actual disabilities.

Emily: Yeah, which was super celebrated in the disability

Kyle: And it was called Freak Show, you know, and you had some flak from some people that were like oh this is patronizing, but at the same time like, okay, but they knew what they signed up for and this is exactly what you're asking for, just maybe not in the context that this net use wants it, but I would say that any exposure in that regard is good, because it's stating the thing that is, you know, quote on quote society is afraid of, which is disability and framing it in a way that is actually scary, cause it's a horror show.

Emily: You know what? I'm going to be totally honest I was a little bit uncomfortable with the whole Freak Show idea and I think I critiqued it a while back because I had just gone to the Ripley's Believe it or Not museum with one of my best friends in New York City and you know, a lot of what they had there was Look at this person who has no torso, walking on his hands and looks at the world's tallest person ever and you know, sort of taking disability and making it into a -

Kyle: A freak show?

Emily: A literal freak show, but then I thought about it more and

Kyle: It's a reflection of the time

Emily: No, but. Oh, for sure. But back in college, I took a cinema class and one of the movies that we had to watch was Freaks and it is disabled people rebelling against being mistreated. I don't have enough of a recollection of the plot line so I don't want to say anything wrong because it's like a cult classic for a lot of disabled people, but essentially, you know, using the terminology "Freak" now I guess is a nod to sort of taking back that power in the media, in the way that film did back in like the like 1920s, I think it was. Have you ever seen it?

Kyle: No

Emily: We'll have to have a movie viewing party and all of you listeners are invited. I don't know how that's going to work.

Kyle: And there's also like things like, you know, people with disabilities are pretty popular in B movies. Like in Troll 2, they got a whole bunch of little people to play the trolls. And in Hell Roller I don't know if the guy who played the wheelchair serial killer was actually disabled, but it doesn't matter because even- he could've been disabled for- but

Emily: Serial killer in a wheelchair?

Kyle: Yeah, that, exactly. That's what eclipsed everything. It's a terrible movie. It is. It's awful, but the point I'm trying to make is that you know, very often we hear only about the bad representation of disability in the media. Not to say that we don't hear about the good ones, it's just that they're harder to find because it's generally lower budget stuff.

Emily: Speaking of serial killer who uses a wheelchair, because you said wheelchair serial killer, mister.

Kyle: It was a wheelchair serial killer

Emily: But anyway, it reminds me my dad came home from work one day and he said that on his lunch hour he had read a story about a man in Belgium who used a wheelchair and he tried to rob a bank, and he obviously got caught, but you know, he robbed a bank and he managed to escape for a little while. And rather than my first instinct being like wow, what a jerk, he robbed a bank, I was like Get it! Yes! Like, You rob that bank!

Kyle: Disabled people can commit crimes too

Emily: And that was sort of like a positive media moment for me because I was just thinking, you know, it's good to say that we're badass once in a while.

Kyle: Or you know, it would be worse, I mean I don't know if he got convicted, but it would be worse if like he went on to trial and people let him go because he was disabled. That would've been-

Emily: Oh, he was arrested.

Kyle: Yeah, but was he convicted, nah, it doesn't matter.

Emily: I have no idea.

Kyle: The fact that he was even arrested alone, by itself, was a miracle.

Emily: I know, they didn't let him off scott-free just because he was in a wheelchair. It also makes me think of the show Speechless that's coming out soon

Kyle: Oh, yeah. So, about that, I am so excited. Actually, we actually met the actor, not formally but he was at an event that Emily and were both at.

Emily: Oh my God, I feel so terrible because I was staring right at him and I was like hmm I kinda want to go say hello to him, but he doesn't know me and now I know who he is and I feel silly, and I'm very sorry.

Kyle: The kid has CP and he cannot speak and the show is about, you know, his loving but protective helicopter mom helping him throughout life in the way that only moms can and how she constantly has to switch school districts and neighborhoods because no one's accommodating enough. And it's funny, but I worry that because this character actually has CP and because, you know, these people went through disability consultants and they actually tried to learn, and these expectations that we have as viewers are much too high. I feel like if they do one or two things wrong, that it's going to also raise a controversy. Whereas if the didn't get a guy with a disability all that would've been said was well, He should probably have CP.

Emily: See, I think it's the opposite. I think that now, people may be willing to be more lenient, or, correction- I can't say people- I am going to be more lenient

Kyle: Oh, so am I.

Emily: I can see how hard they tried.

Kyle: Oh, yeah, and the other thing too, and this is kind of important, is it actually, you know, looks funny. The disability is used as a plot device where it matters, you know, the show seems to- I haven't seen the pilot- but the show seems to make it so that it's the butt of a joke but in a way that makes it funny to everybody, not just the people who happen to have CP that are watching.

Emily: Well, yeah, and the other thing too, on the one hand it goes back to my whole I don't want someone casted solely for the fact that they're disabled and they're playing a role because it has to do with disability, but for this, I think it's important, because it not only has a disabled actor, but it's also doing it in such a mainstream fashion. I think, I really do think it'll have mainstream appeal.

Kyle: It's on ABC, it's on network TV, you know, that's-

Emily: Yeah, that's huge. I mean, I think that this has real potential to be a very positive example of how to do disability media properly. And you know what, even if they make a couple missteps, I still will be supportive unless it's so egregious that I have to stop being supportive, but ultimately I don't think anything is ever going to be perfect, and we all have different interpretations, as disabled people, of what portrayals of disability should look like. So, I think there will be some things that will be contentious as the show progresses, which I hope it progresses quite far. I'd love to see this take off and be a success, but you know, I just think that I'm going to approach this with more of an open mind than I do a lot of other things.

Kyle: That's very big of you to say.

Emily: Thank you. Where is my cookie?

Kyle: I don't have one, but I do have brownies in the other room. I also want to touch really quickly on roles that are done so well that it doesn't really matter the guy's not disabled. I know I talked about Legit, but truthfully, that's not exactly the portrayal of disability. That's the writers and common sense coming together to accurately portray the common problems of a wheelchair user, with a little bit of specific muscular dystrophy problems thrown in, and it works. But there are some movies, like, for example, Rory O'Shea or Margarita With a Straw, and granted those were like not exactly, you know, triple A budget titles

Emily: Oh man, I haven't seen Margarita with a Straw. That makes me so sad. Oh and for people who are wondering what that's about, Kyle, can you just sum it up because you have seen it.

Kyle: Margarita with a Straw is about a woman who has CP that moves to New York, And she has quadriplegic CP and she comes from a traditional Indian family who can't deal with that because of cultural reasons that I don't understand cause I'm white. And Rory O'Shea is about a guy with muscular dystrophy who befriends a guy with CP, who live in a home together and try to break out. Now, in all of those cases, both the guy with CP and the guy with MD, in Rory O'Shea, and the main actress in Margarita with a Straw, do not have those disabilities, however, they are so well done, and so well portrayed, that it is impressive to that they didn't have them. They fooled me completely. I didn't suspect for a second that they didn't have their disabilities, and to me, you know, that matters more to me. Like the fact- it's easier to portray a disability if you have one. It's not too easy if you don't.

Emily: But was there any reason in either of those films why someone disabled could not have been casted?

Kyle: In Rory O'Shea, yeah, there was one or two, but in Margarita with a Straw, you could've probably gotten somebody with quadriplegic CP if you had to, maybe. But I don't think that matters because if they did, then your caveat with casting a person with a disability solely because they're disabled, about a movie where disability is the whole thing, it would be a problem, based on what you said, but it really isn't, in my opinion. I don't think that that matters at all. I think that if a movie tells a story in a convincing way, it doesn't really matter who's playing the role. Of course, sure, it's better, but if the other version can fool you just as much, what do you get out of having a disabled actor in there? Not much.

Emily: You see, on the whole, my top priority is positive messaging about disability, and that's where Me Before You becomes problematic. I really don't care that the actor doesn't have a disability, because I'm so frustrated with the overarching message, but, you know, I just think that it's not so hard to have disabled people slay roles in which disability either does or does not have something to do with it. Either way, I'd like to see more disabled people being hired by Hollywood. With that being said, you know, sometimes I can see where you're coming from because there's a movie that I really love and I saw it years ago called Music Within. It's this fantastic movie and it has someone with a, I want to say cerebral palsy, and someone who is

deaf, and they form this lovely friendship, and it, you know, it really centers around a lot of disability legislation, and it really just takes on so many disability stereotypes, and you know, at one point, the character who has CP is kicked out of a diner based on the Ugly Law, which was a real thing.

Kyle: Sure, yeah.

Emily: You know, you could be kicked out for being ugly, but all of this is to say I was absolutely a hundred percent convinced that this actor had a disability. He did not, but that was one of the most powerful movies about disability I have ever seen.

Kyle: To the point where it doesn't matter

Emily: So, I have to give it, and you, that.

Kyle: Although, things like Fargo, on FX. Fargo is a show based on the movie Fargo but they have it in a TV series and it's amazing. In the first season they had a deaf guy who was deaf, who I didn't know was deaf. I just thought he was being deaf because he wanted use sign language to communicate his murderous plans and have nobody around him understand him, but no, he was deaf. And in one scene when they catch him, something happens to him, he ends up in the hospital, but he's a criminal so they have to handcuff him to the bed. You can't sign when you're handcuffed, and he was very frustrated when he came too, out of his coma or whatever it was, that he couldn't speak. And then in the second season they had a guy with CP, in real life, play a low level gangster in this crime family, and there's an entire like three or five minute scene where they teach him how to use a gun, and his hand is clubbed, so he can't use his left hand very well, but they teach him how to use a gun anyway because they have to.

Emily: Right.

Kyle: And when it finally comes time to use it, he misses and he has to reload. He can't reload fast enough and someone comes up behind him and bops him over the head and knocks him out, and I thought that was really funny because that's exactly what would happen in a situation where if you have limited mobility to the point where time is a much higher priority factor that sometimes your disability is, in fact, a literal handicap, in that way where it puts you at an extreme disadvantage, and you never see that, except in a blanket sort of way. But this one specific tiny situation where his CP really was the difference between life and death, it was like, it was very- it was just well done. And I think they're going to have a disabled guy in the season three, going by their track record, but.

Emily: So, I think that what we are really going for here, is accuracy

Kyle: Yeah, that is the most important part.

Emily: And fairness and avoiding ridiculous, stigmatizing, tropes and stereotypes and just- Oh my God, enough with the inspiration and the tragedy. Can you just make us normal like everybody else? It's not that hard

Kyle: Emily, you just said our N word

Emily: But is it our N word if in fact, I'm asking for us to be normal

Kyle: No, I was just being funny.

Emily: No, I know, but I'm being serious. I know you were being funny but I mean, normal is not the N word if everyone is normal.

Kyle: If everyone's normal, no one is. But yes, I know I know, you're right. Yes, you're absolutely correct.

Emily: So, and by the way, and I just had to know, so I looked it up and the character in that movie Music Within, was Michael Sheen, who I believe is Charlie Sheen's brother. So, let's just put that out there. How's that for interesting?

Kyle: Yeah, that's your little fact of the day, guys.

Emily: Anyway, so, I'm really excited that we had this conversation because I think I've been spending a lot of time wrapped up in the Me Before You controversy, but it's more important to me to think on a larger scale, in this case, now that I've been thinking a lot about Me Before You so much, and to remind myself that there are positive portrayals of disability and that not everything is terrible. I just really needed this conversation.

Kyle: Yes, not everything is terrible. It's very important.

Emily: Yeah, I honestly-

Kyle: That's our motto on this show.

Emily: Not everything is terrible, but sometimes everything is terrible and that's okay.

Kyle: So what is your takeaways from this, as we so often do? What are your takeaways?

Emily: Oh man. I'm going to say my biggest takeaway is that we're looking for more solid disability representation in the media, and that we need to find the flowers among the weeds and we need to embrace them, and not to get all cheesy and cliché, but list them up and hold them forward as the depictions that we want to see more of.

Kyle: Yeah, and I'm just going to go ahead and say that if you're going to write a character with a disability, to me it's more important that they're portrayed in a way that makes sense, whether or not the actor is disabled. I mean, it helps, I guess, in terms of very little intricacies and nuances, however if you're not going to use those to the advantage of the show, then it too becomes irrelevant and you're just doing the thing where you're just putting a disabled guy in a role because. And that's not good either. That's patronizing.

Emily: Yeah. Also. I mean, Oh my goodness. Do your research.

Kyle: It's not that hard

Emily: Yeah, that's maybe my real biggest takeaway, despite what I just said. I firmly believe that if you're going to include a character who has a disability, whether or not-

Kyle: It matters?

Emily: No. Whether or not the actor is disabled, you know, preferably actors should be disabled, come on. But consult disabled people. There are so many of us out there who can, you know, even just by googling.

Kyle: Yeah, and I mean, it's not even a tall ask, I mean you know, in a show that has anything sciency on it, that's not CSI because they've.. they're terrible. But like even a terrible show like The Big Bang Theory has a science consultant on it that makes sure everything the characters say makes a little bit of sense, you know. So it's not that difficult, and I imagine it doesn't cost too much.

Emily: I am totally taking back everything I said about Michael Sheen being related to Charlie Sheen, that is a fallacy.

Kyle: Okay, well that's a great thing to end it on, so

Emily: Glad we had this talk. Michael sheen is pretty cool. Actors who are actually disabled are way cooler, and I'm gonna say that's wrap on my end.

Kyle: Yeah, it's, I'm done. Goodnight, everybody.

Emily: Anyway, thank you so much for listening

Kyle: Yes, it's very much appreciated. Oh by the way, we have officially cracked 1100 listens, so thank you to everyone. We love you very much.

Emily: Wooh! So exciting! No but for real though, we are so appreciative that people have been so supportive of this, and we're glad that it's been opening up dialogues, and we are really excited to see where this takes us.

Kyle: Yes. And please use the comment section, and our email addresses, and our Facebook messages if you want to get in touch with us, because a lot of you do, but you do it through avenues that are very inconvenient for the both of us, but those three are very open to everyone, so please use them.

Emily: I'm not exactly sure what he's talking about, but so far I've gotten texts and emails, and Facebook messages.

Kyle: Right, but those are all the wrong reasons. You use the email address, you use the Facebook page messages, and you use the comments. You don't have to message us personally although it's appreciated to get personal fan mail every once in a while.

Emily: Well I don't mind if you get in touch with me personally.

Kyle: Neither do I, I really don't

Emily: Kyle's just being a fancy pants over here. No, but we have tried to make ourselves as *accessible* as possible to you.

Kyle: Pshh

Emily: See what we did there? Okay, but anyway, for real, thank you so much for listening and that's a wrap on this episode.

Kyle: Goodnight, everybody.

Emily: Bye.