

## The Accessible Stall

### *Bonus Episode: Disability in the News*

Emily: Hi, I'm Emily Ladau

Kyle: And I'm Kyle Khachadurian

Emily: And you're listening to another episode of *The Accessible Stall*

Kyle: You sound angry, Emily what are we going to talk about today?

E: I'm so angry! I'm so F\*cking angry!! There you go, You better bleep that out

K: Tell us why

E: I don't usually do the whole bad language thing, I apologize to our listeners with delicate ears.

K: You literally curse like three times on each recording but okay, let's go, why are you so angry?

*(Emily laughs)*

E: Okay, so there's a little story going around in the National news about a Mom who attended every class with her Quadriplegic son to be his notetaker, and she earned an honorary M.B.A alongside him at his graduation

K: My God, that is infuriating

E: Can we talk about everything that is wrong with this please?

K: I don't know, do you got about 45 minutes?

E: Oh, I think I scheduled in just enough time

K: Why don't you start?

E: Number one! I really wish people could see me holding up my finger....

K: Yeah, she's holding up one finger angrily

E: It's inspiration porn! Number two! Even though it was the idea of the son, according to the article, I think it's a nice gesture but I have a huge problem with the way that the article takes all of the sense of the accomplishment off of him and is like, "Yay his Mom did such a good thing!" Like hello, he's the one who graduated!

K: But it does talk about his injury, his motorcycle injury I think it is!

E: Right. Because that's the only important thing is, "How did you get hurt? What's your sob story?"

K: You know I thought about it, I said to you earlier when we were talking about doing this episode earlier today that I think it's annoying but harmless, I think is the word that I used, if it was indeed his idea, but the more I think about it, it's been stewing in my brain for several hours, I don't know about that anymore. Because like first of all, if he had a professional note taker given to him by the school, they wouldn't have gotten an honorary degree. If he hired one, who wasn't his mother, they wouldn't have gotten an honorary degree.

E: Hence, Number three! Why didn't Disability Support Services, if such a thing indeed exists at this here, Chapman University give him a legitimate note taker? You know, I actually served as a note taker for my Disability Support Services Office as my way of giving back because they did so much for accommodating me, that I decided I wanted to do something to help accommodate other people. Hence, I know there's such a thing as a legitimate Student Note Taking Program, so what is his mom doing going to college with him?

K: He might've wanted her to

E: Why?

K: Unfortunately the article...I don't know, I don't know!

E: Number four...grow up!

K: Yeah no, I agree with that. You're flipping so hard right now

E: God, I am so angry

K: It is so funny. You guys can't see the waveform, but I can. Emily is like through the roof!

E: The sound. I apologize if I'm breaking anyone's eardrums but clearly I'm a little worked up about this

K: Don't worry this will all be normalized by the time anyone hears it

E: Deep breaths Emily, deep breaths

K: Yeah, I mean even if the kid, it was his idea. I'm calling him a kid because that's how he's behaving. And even if he wants his mother to be the note taker, I'm not here to judge, I'm really not, but c'mon it's your Master's Degree like it's time to grow up a little bit.

E: What do you mean you're not here to judge, are you absolutely kidding me right now? Get yourself a personal care attendant, your ass together, and go to college like a person because there's just no excuse.

K I'm just saying look , if it's what they want to do, it's what they want to do. I agree with you, there is no excuse but I'm not gonna attack someone's choices.

E: Okay wait I gotta back up a second.

K: Go on

E: Um, it's just occurring to me now, and this doesn't make me approve of this story any more, but what if his family simply did not have the money or insurance coverage to have a personal care attendant in place and so his Mom took that role simply because there was nobody else.

K: Look, the problem isn't that the mother was the amanuensis, the note taker, that's the least harmful part of this.

E: The, excuse me?

K: Amanuensis. You don't know the technical term for scribe? True story.

E: No, but you do

K: There it is, look it up if you don't believe me! Go ahead everybody. That's like, I mean that's annoying yes, grow up and all that, but that is the least harmful part to me in all of this, it's just obnoxious. What's harmful is, doing that shouldn't entitle you to a damn thing, if it wouldn't entitle the same thing to anyone else. That wouldn't have happened if it wasn't his mother. That's just the truth.

E: So it makes me think back to college because you know it's obviously right around college graduation time so I've been seeing all my Memories on social media lately about all of the activities leading up to Graduation. And my college actually had a Parent Award that you could nominate parents for, and they were selected and awarded it during the senior dinner festivities. And I decided to nominate my parents because I felt they really went above and beyond in supporting me in college, even though I took care of myself for the most part and lived on campus and wasn't with them. But I wanted some kind of recognition.

K: Did they win?

E: Yeah, they did. I'm looking at it right now, it's hanging right in front of me. I made sure to get both their names on it, they got a nice plaque, it's really nice. So do I think it's important to recognize a parent for supporting you in getting through school? Absolutely. Do I think that this story should be all about his mother? No. Especially because when I was watching ABC News tonight, I don't even recall the actual quadriplegic person, I think his name is Marty, he didn't even say anything! Like, it was all about his mom. Do you really want your mom to have your moment?

K: Yeah no, I agree with you, I think that it's silly

E: But are we being bitter, and is this just like a nice gesture because it was his idea?

K: No. I don't care whose idea it was. You have somebody who you hired and paid real money to, that took all of your classes at your university with you, at the end of the four years they will be just as educated as you are and you will be the only one getting that degree because they're hired by you. They are your hands. I'm not bitter. I don't think you're bitter.

E: No, I'm just trying to give myself some counterpoints here.

K: No, if it wasn't mom it wouldn't have happened!

E: Yeah, so I'm trying to figure out if that dynamic really changes anything, but I think what's really bothering me is that this is newsworthy. I am so sick of stuff like this being turned into national news, and ABC News especially because that's what we watch in my house obviously because we're not Republicans, is so guilty of having these feel good, inspiration porn stories multiple times a week.

K: It's not just ABC News, it's everywhere. Like this was a local news story that ABC picked up.

E: But it just goes to show you that news eats this sh\*t up! And I'm so tired of it. Like any surrounding circumstances notwithstanding, it's just another one of those feel good warm, fuzzy stories that centers the non-disabled person, makes it all about the non-disabled person, and is just used for a couple minutes of feel good air time or some website clicks. That's it. And it's exhausting. And you know what? It's actually infuriating me that I even stopped to wonder if I was being bitter, because I feel like I've just been socialized that anytime I call out inspiration porn because I'm just the bitter cripple.

K: What if your parents won that award because everyone in the room felt bad for you?

E: No,, I had to write an essay explaining my logic?

K: Did they know you were in a wheelchair? What if they picked you because of that?

E: No, but I wasn't the only...my parents won, and someone's dad won. Completely different circumstances.

K: Good!

E: But you know what? It wasn't because of the wheelchair.

K: I hope not, you have great parents.

E: No, I could read the essay, I still have it. The whole point of the essay was yes I am disabled and I did need extra support from my parents during college to get certain things done, and I do believe that they went above and beyond to make that happen. But I just somehow feel like a parent award that I specifically took time out to nominate them for is a lot more justified than an honorary degree.

K: Yes. I agree with you. There's no reason for it. There's no reason for it. It's not news, it is stupid, like it checks every box. Like if you had to do "What Not to Do With Disabled People Bingo" like it would hit every one of them I swear!

E: You know and this is like a whole new level of inspiration porn

K: We should make that by the way

E: We should. Let's make "Disabled People Bingo" Trademarked, Registered, Patented, Copyright, nobody take that! I'm just kidding

K: It will already be copyrighted by the time we put this out obviously

E: It's fine, but tons of people have already put out Abeism Bingo. I don't know if there's Inspiration Porn Bingo, we should make that. But anyway, point being I'm just so used to this type of year being, "Oh look at this non-disabled person who brought this disabled person to prom! What a good person they are!" Or like, "Look at this disabled person who walked across the stage all by themselves, how inspiring!" But this is just a whole new level. I mean, ugh Oh God, on the Inspiration Scale this is just off the charts. It grates on me.

K: Who's it inspiring to? Who is it is inspiring to? Seriously, who?

E: That's the thing, I don't know who it is inspiring to

K: Like, someone who's inspired by this is listening, can you please email us and and tell us why? Please?

E: Well then why are you listening if that's the case?

K: I don't know, maybe you want to better yourself man, good for you. Just please I want to know, email me and let's talk. Because I don't get it, at all, like one bit.

E: No, you know what? Inspiring is the wrong word. So even though it's "inspiration porn" I would say that this isn't a case of inspiration so much as it is a case of warm and fuzzies.

K: Oh well, okay. I guess then the deeper question becomes should a writer, who's not paid by the college to be a writer, who's paid by the student to be a writer, that is essentially receiving the same education as the student, should they receive an honorary degree? That's a different question. I don't know! That's an actual discussion that I think, I mean it wouldn't be a good podcast episode. But that certainly would be a consideration.

E: No, no I'm actually thinking back to an episode of *Speechless*, where they found out that Kenneth was cheating for J.J. and so, no that's not how notetakers are supposed to work, or scribes, that's not how that works.

K: No, I understand that's not how that works.

E: So thusly, just because you're sitting in lectures doesn't mean you're the one writing the papers or taking the tests. You're functioning in the capacity of someone else's hands who is writing the paper or taking the tests. Thus, you should not be doing the work, thus, you do not deserve a degree

K: Yeah, I agree!

E: You deserve a paycheck

K: I don't know, I would feel a lot less bad, a lot less angry rather if it one's someones paid scribe who received the honorary degree. Cause I mean, what's an honorary degree right? It's not gonna get you a job, so it's really, all that is just feel good. But the fact that it's his mother, like just everything about it is just ugh...Everything about it is just wrong, on every level, at every intersection.

E: Yeah I don't know what part is bothering me the most.

K: Cause I mean like, if it was a service dog and the University gave it an honorary degree with a little cap and gown, like we'd all think it was cute. Stupid, but cute.

E: I love stories like that though!

K: See?

E: It's just a dog

K: Exactly, but the dog is fulfilling a service just like any human would.

E: Sure, but the difference is that the dog is set to serve in that capacity, it's not like the dog is a paid entity over here. It's like, "Oh, animal so cute!"

K: No seriously, I'm not, I don't mean to be literally comparing the two, I understand they're clearly different. but there's something about that difference that doesn't make it as simple as "Oh it's just a dog," that makes one adorable and the other one infuriating.

E: Also if I think about it long enough, maybe the whole service dog thing can be infuriating too because it can be trivializing the importance of a service dog, depending on how you look at it. Conversely, it could be celebrating the importance of the service dog as an extension of the person.

K: If your the type of person to think that such a thing is trivializing the importance of a service dog, you're just pessimistic.

E: I know somebody who graduated in the last couple of years who actually dressed up their service dog like a little graduate. Not like an honorary degree type thing but just to be cute, and like that's precious.

K: Right. But Oh God, when will stuff like this stop being cute?

E: It never will, because every time it keeps getting called out, there's so much pushback. That's where the whole bitterness thing comes from. Because my mom and I launched into a campaign against ABC News for a story that they shared about an amputee who "Overcame her wheelchair" and learned to walk again. Like, great for her but that's not news. And we left a comment on the story on ABC News's webpage, my mom actually started it and then I followed up. And we were called names, we were told that we must not be believers in Jesus, we were told that we were leading miserable lives for complaining, that we were trying to steal someone else's spotlight and ruin her moment of happiness. I mean, the vitriol just because we shared a different viewpoint, was unbelievable!

K: I mean, I obviously agree with you. But if you are that person, and the news comes up to you and asks, "Can we do a story on you" and you say yes, then clearly the person who the story is about doesn't mind so I understand why to the uneducated, uninformed, ignorant eyes and ears how you might come off as bitter, but just think about it for more than three seconds.

E: See but then, we pointed to the fact that this particular woman was totally thrilled with her story, she has to understand that her story doesn't exist in a vacuum and that this particular portrayal of disability in the media impacts more than just her.

K: Maybe she doesn't care

E: Exactly. And she didn't. But the reality is that it had nothing to do with her. I wasn't mad at the woman, I was frustrated with the news. And she didn't get it.

K: I'm with you but the news, you know is a terrible thing anyway. It's a very manipulative...Like, just as an aside, that story that was featured on *Cosmopolitan* of all things, it was a cab driver who was offering free cab rides after the Manchester bomb the other day

E: I didn't see this

K: Oh, well they called it a "Muslim cab driver" but someone found the original tweet, and it was either of the cab driver, or someone who saw the cab driver, took the picture and made the tweet that he was doing it. And it was a Sikh, it wasn't a Muslim, and that was pointed out in the Tweet and then *Cosmo* said, "Oh can we use this as a story?" and then *Cosmo* like made it fake news. This is just one example but like...

E: I'm not following you

K: It was a Sikh, not a Muslim

E: Yeah a get that. In terms of misidentification, they're two separate things

K: And *Cosmo*...no *Cosmo* willingly misreported it.

E: Oh, what?

K: Yeah, I'll show ya!

E: Wait but I'm still confused as on what this has to do with the inspiration porn?

K: Oh no no, my only point is like, news organizations too will...what I'm saying is, the story is what is was but you have to almost wonder if it was manufactured to make it fit the narrative that we read it as. You know what I mean? Like I understand the mother receiving an honorary degree is bullsh\*t in its own right. Oh course it is, it's nonsense and it shouldn't happen and it's always wrong and blah blah blah. But we weren't there, for all we know it could've been just a thing, and it was just like whatever and the news ate it up and turned into this huge inspirational story when in fact it was just a nice gesture by the University.



E: So you're saying like how the news always takes things just for the sake of views and clicks and turns it into like this big, over wrought dramatic headline?

K: Yeah, yeah and that doesn't make it right

E: Now I understand

K: What the University did in my opinion was still absolute bullsh\*t. What I'm saying is that there is a very real chance that it could've been way overblown. Having said that, as we said before, this stuff happens all the time! A friend of ours got engaged recently, and it was picked up by their local news

E: What?

K: I'm not gonna say her name because people listen to this. Yeah, somebody we both know got engaged recently, and she's disabled and she got on the local news, because people with disabilities are so rare!

E: I'm sorry, what!?

K: Yeah no, I'm serious!

E: How did I not know this?

K: I don't know but, I'll show you later!

E: You gotta tell me who it is!

K: I will, but I'm not gonna do it while we're recording! My only point is, this happens all the time!

E: Oh God, it just perpetuates everything

K: That was my whole point, especially with the whole Sikh thing too, it's perpetuating stereotypes negatively to a certain group of people for no reason!

E: The reason is to manufacture stories to generate ad revenue and attention!

K: Yeah but it's more than ad revenue, it's not like a good story will get like what .05% less eyeballs? Like I know that matters to some marketing a\$\$hole somewhere, but is it worth manufacturing the truth? I mean, I guess to someone it is, but to me that's just disgusting.

E: To people who seem to think that it's a good idea and that we're the bitter ones? Yeah, absolutely. We're the ones ruining everyone's nightly good feels.

K: Have them! I'm not here to tell you what should and shouldn't make you feel good

E: Oh, I am!

K: No I'm really not, like I can't control that, like this to me isn't "You shouldn't feel good!" It's like, if you really take a step back and look at what you're doing,

E: I want you to think critically about what it makes you feel good!

K: Exactly! That's exactly what I'm saying

E: Like, do you feel good because it's a son who did a nice thing for his mom? Or is disability factoring into the story here?

K: And if it's that it makes you feel good because it's a son doing a nice thing for his mother, fine but then you must concede that the whole receiving the honorary degree thing is kinda stupid, you know? Cause otherwise it wouldn't have happened if the disability wouldn't have been a factor in the first place. So, where do you draw the line? Not "you" Emily...

E: No, I know exactly what you mean! I'm also thinking about it too, and people who have honorary degrees bestowed upon them do like substantial, amazing work for the world.

K: Extraordinary like, field changing work. And what did she do? She took notes for her son. She did what a mother should do.

E: Yeah she was basically rewarded for being a good mom. Like is there such a thing as the importance of being recognized for being a good parent? Yes. Like, that is why I nominated my parents for the award I was talking about earlier, but it's just the context that irks me.

K: If something happened, if something was reported on that involves disability, that wouldn't have been reported on had it not been for the disability? Don't fu\*king report on it!

E: It's not news!

K: Just don't fuc\*ing report it. Like you know, there's probably exceptions to that. Like, okay if somebody really famous got hurt and is now disabled because of it, sure. But that's not because of the eventual outcome of the injury, it's because of somebody famous getting hurt, you know what I mean? Like if you..Oh, it's so stupid.

E: Disability just should not be news. I think that's what it needs to come down to. I can think of very few instances in which it should be newsworthy

K: Yeah, but like medical technology.

E: Sure fine, okay. But disabled people should be treated like any other person.

K: Absolutely

E: Did you do something substantial that warrants you being in the news? No, then you don't deserve to be in the news. Ugh!

K: It isn't that hard

E: I mean it's like, Stella Young. You know, she got an award but her family was like, "You know, she doesn't do anything but sit around and watch TV and be like your everyday average student, so she doesn't really do this award." But meanwhile everyone was like, "Oh, but he's so brave for being disabled! She deserves this award!" Like no, do not award me something if I don't deserve it.

K: That's the other thing too. In cases like that, I have to imagine, and you know someone's gonna point out an exception. I know exceptions exist but I have to imagine like in those cases the person receiving the award is embarrassed because they know they're just a person too. You know what I mean, like?

E: No, no, no that mom was eating it up. Did you watch the video clip?

K: No, I'm not talking about this. I know this was a fustercluck I'm talking about like, Stella Young's example where she receives an award. That would embarrass me or you!

E: Oh you mean that the situation is uncomfortable? To the person receiving the award, because they didn't do anything to warrant it?

K: Yeah! Wouldn't that make you feel uncomfortable?

E: Yes! 100%

K: Especially if everybody in the room was happy for you? That's just awkward.

E: Yeah, oh yeah. I can't really pinpoint a time where that happened to me in particular. I don't think I've ever been awarded anything just because I'm disabled.

K: Oh yeah I can't wither. But I mean, we're young, there's still time.

E: Well unless you count the events where everyone gets a medal. You know like, the Empire State Games, Special Olympics situation?

K: Eh..They have a purpose

E: Yeah I know, they do, they do. So in that case, no. I haven't been in a situation, I'm just frustrated by it. And the reality is like, we can't do anything about it. It already happened, it's already been on the news. But the other thing two is, people are just gonna forget about it. This is such a throwaway news story. Why are you even wasting your time?

K: Well yeah, well you gotta fill the air sometime between now and the next time some disabled guy gets fed at a McDonalds!

*(Emily laughs)*

E: Or between now and the nest time Donald Trump says something. Whoops! I thought I was gonna go a whole episode without mentioning him but there he is!

K: Yeah, but that's news!

E: Is it?

K: Yes. He's the President, unfortunately

E: Is every awful thing that comes out of his mouth news?

K: Unfortunately yes. Okay, but that's a good example for why dumb sh\*t gets ratings! No, obviously every sentence that comes out of his mouth shouldn't be news, but it is! And it's for the same reason, because they know there at the news stations that people will watch.

E: Because most people value lowbrow things that they don't need to think about.

K: No, but I mean take Donald out of this. You know that's a problem that if you don't report on it, it'll go away. It won't go away. Like if you stop reporting on disabled people going to prom, it's not like the amount of disabled people going to prom is gonna go up or down. It's gonna be the exact same percentage.

E: Yeah but maybe maybe maybe the inspiration porn narrative of it will at least go away.

K: That's what I'm saying. It's not like it'll harm actual disabled people. The only thing that'll go away is this toxic idea that we're things to be felt sorry for.

E: Yeah you know what, this is what it is, this is what it comes down to. Anytime I see something like that I feel like this expendable thing, like the only worth I have in life is to make other people feel good.

K: I don't know about that. Your feelings are very valid for sure. But...

E: I don't feel that way about myself. I'm saying everytime I see a story like that it makes me think I should.

K: Well don't

E: You know what I mean

K: Here's the flipside, and I hate to bring this up but I gotta in the interest of fairness. Remember that little girl who was missing something? I think it was one or both of her limbs. And her parents either bought or made or found a company that made a doll with amputation and she was all happy on Christmas or whatever and she started crying and it was on the news, and we ate that up! And I think the reason that we ate that up was because...and I think that most people saw it for the wrong reason in the same exact way that they're seeing this story. But the reason that we liked it was because it was tied to a much more important topic which is why representation matters and why you should start young when it comes to stuff like that. But at the same time, no one who saw that who wasn't disabled knew about that sort of thing, they saw that and thought "Oh my God, what a cute little girl!"

E: Yeah it was like this heart- wrenching emotional thing to watch for me because I related so hard to not having anything that looked like me when I was little. Unless you count the Barbie doll that they took out of production pretty recently, "Share a Smile Becky,"

K: The one who couldn't fit in the Dreamhouse Elevator?

E: Yeah, in this like pink and purple wheelchair. I made my parents go absolutely bonkers looking for her in toy stores because she was the closest thing to any kind of disability representation that I could get. So that was like a very emotional video for me to watch because having toys that look like you or media that portrays something that looks like you is such a powerful thing. And I know like you said, that other people who aren't necessarily privy to that sort of connection to disability did not feel that way, and that kills me. Because everyone else was like, "Oh my God, that cute little, poor, pitiful girl, nothing is ever right for her, and this is the one thing that is right in her life!" And I'm like, "F\*ck yeah, representation!"

K: But doesn't that just show the ginormous gap in knowledge in like...well not just knowledge but in like every aspect of the *profound* ignorance! And I don't mean willful. In many cases it's not. Just a general ignorance of the public regarding issues about disability, I mean truly.

Because I don't know if you've ever had to explain why stuff like this is wrong to someone? And like everytime, I always get the same like, "Oh wow, yeah!"

E: Oh for real? Cause I get pushback usually

K: Well no, I wait till I win. But it's like, I don't know, I feel like we could do more, but then I don't know what that would be

E: No way, do you mean just us, or like the disability community? Because there's absolutely no way that the onus is even more on us than it already is to keep calling people out on doing this.

K: No, no surely not. This is purely conjecture, I don't know, I don't know, I wonder if calling out might, I mean surely it draws attention to the issue sure, but like you said every time you do it you're the one that gets yelled at, right? So is that the way to do it? I don't know you know?

E: Do you know what I've resigned to at this point? And I really even hate to say this...

K: Go ahead

E: But I have found that my advocacy and activism needs to be a one person at a time approach. If I get one person to understand where I'm coming from, I consider that a success. Because there is no way that I'm going to change everyone's mind, As much as I wish I do not live in a world where I was a source of objectification, I know that's not going to happen.

K: Not with that attitude! And you know what they say? That's the only real disability in life!

E: Oh! Ohhhh! That was good Kyle! So it looks my only disability in life is a bad attitude.

K: You set me up for it, I couldn't resist

E: You're right I did, that wasn't intentional, not at all

K: No, I don't think you'd ever mean to do that.

E: No. You know, I don't mean to have a defeatist attitude, I need to take a pragmatic and realistic one.

K: I was just gonna say, I don't think sounds defeatist at all, that's how I do it. It works, 100% of the time. Whereas talking to hundreds of people at once

E: Disagree that it works 100% of the time though. Some people are just super dense. Yeah like perfect example, the individual people who I ended up getting into an argument with when I called out the story I was talking about with the amputee on the news.

K: Oh right, well yeah you know...I just, the whole thing is just so above disability you know? It's like when you're called out on something, I think what you should do having been the person on both ends of it is to ask why? But what happens way more often than it should is that person gets immediately defensive and waits for you to do or say something that confirms their belief that they already have, and then wanders about their day. And it's like, that's the opposite of learning! You're not learning anything, you're just digging yourself deeper into incorrect beliefs into how you feel about something. But of course I can say that about pretty much anybody. No but I'm serious, like we've said that in our miniseries about how to make the disability community better. Like I'm not saying we're guilty of it nearly to the same degree like the ignorant people that you were talking about, but I just...I wonder sometimes if the approach that we all take when it comes to like, how we share information that corrects other information, is right or not. Because I would love to live in a world where mothers don't receive honorary degrees for being mothers, and I would love to live in a world where like little girls don't have to cry about representation because their just is. But I understand we don't live in that world so how do you mitigate that, man?

E: Well the tough thing for me is what you were saying about how to go about presenting critiques of things like that. So I once got feedback from a friend of mine on something that I had written where she said that I constantly undercut my own points in an attempt to soften the blow that I was delivering.

K: Are you sure that wasn't me?

E: It wasn't you. Because I know who it was.

K: Oh...

E: You've also given me that criticism too. But for me, that was an intentional and stylistic choice. Because if I found myself thinking that if I could just soften the blow j enough, I could get people to hear what I was saying. You know this was a long time ago for an article that I got that particular piece of feedback, really for the first time actually. And I've since been doing a lot of work in Disability and finding my voice, and yet back in January with the whole thing with Meryl Streep calling out Donald Trump for mocking a disabled guy blah blah blah blah, and she used her time for that at the Golden Globes, and I wrote an article about how I didn't think it was the world's greatest thing? Some people told me I was being bitter, and other people told me I wasn't being hard enough on her. So, sometimes you can't win for losing in how you go about educating people.

K: And in this world you can never...This world is a special place, the disability world, where someone always have something to say about something someone did.

E: That's just not even limited to disability, that's everywhere

K: No, I know, but we live in this world so we know this like the backs of our hands. But your piece on Meryl Streep was alright, I had nothing but good things to say about that. See but that's the thing, the people who said you could've done better or worse should have done better or worse.

E: Well sure, but that just seems like a cranky reply for me to have. "Okay, you don't like it? Go ahead and do it yourself!"

K: Look, you're better than me. But I'm saying, that's what you wanna say to all these people. That's what you wanna say to this mother who got the degree for her son. What are you doing? *What are you doing?* I don't care if the article says, "she handled it with grace." Grace would be not accepting it. Grace would be saying to the Dean handing it to you, "Are you fu\*king kidding me? Is this a joke?"

E: I honestly kind of wish that was the first thing you said at the beginning of the episode because honestly that has been the crux of what I keep thinking. Like, I just can't help but think that a good parent would recognize that that moment was not supposed to be about her.

K: I'd like to believe that maybe she did. I didn't watch the video, you did so. That to me is like really what it is right? Like, ugh Oh God! The stories exploit the thing that matters least, to talk about everyone else in the story!

Emily: (*chuckles*) Yup

K: Like, it doesn't even make sense! Like it turns the person with a disability into...

E: ...Into an object!

K: Into disability, and then everyone around them reacts to it.

E: Yup

K: And of course if that were the situation, then everyone's reaction around it would make complete sense. But because it's a real person, it just seems ridiculous. Oh my God! And I don't usually get this way but it's just so...ugh!

E: Mind-bogglingly ugh!

K: Like dude, replace "Disabled," with "Gay," "Black," anything! Literally any other adjective

E: Oh yeah, that wouldn't fly at all!



K: Yeah! *(Laughs)* Like, could you imagine? Oh my God, could you imagine?

E: The outrage? I can't. I can't even begin

K: Imagine this headline with the word "Disabled" replaced with "Black." Or Quadriplegic in this case. It's like, I can't even say that because that'll be the clip that people cut out.

*(Emily laughs)*

E: You know, it behooves me to point out that the only reason I even sat through the video was because...

K: To get angrier?

E: Well... It's like a running joke in my house now that there's gonna be inspiration porn at the end of the news, so like my parents and I suffered my way through it, and my dad was like, "Here let's watch this and complain about it." But also, you know how my dad is. And at then he was like, "Why was that news? That's not news!" And so sometimes I just wish everyone could be like my dad. I just do.

K: The world should be like your dad, Emily.

*(Emily laughs)*

K: I just...I feel like most people feeling that way...Who feel that way when they see pieces like this, not like your dad, like how you're "supposed to feel" when you see something like this. I really do believe that these people, aside from the idiots that you talked to at ABC in the "Comments" section. Most people would take a step back and really think about why they feel that way and then stop doing it. Because it's just so ridiculous...it's so stupid! But they don't.

E: Right, but then how do we get those people to listen to something like this with an open enough mind, that maybe we can change it?

K: Well I...I wish I had the Facebook post open. There was some "this is not news" article that a friend shared, and she knows me and she likes...she knows disability through me, so whenever there's something about disability, she'll share it. I forgot what it was. But whatever it was, some Special Needs Mom chimed in and was like, "Well what if this makes them feel good?" And I was like, "Well it doesn't." It just doesn't. And you sound like a good mom for asking that question because most mothers don't even get that far so I'll give you credit for that because most mothers just assume that it makes these people feel good and don't actually think about whether or not it does, and it doesn't. And then she argued with me! She was like, "Yeah, but you know..." And I was like, "Look, I've dealt with many of you!"

E: Special needs mom, am I right?

K: I've dealt with so much, I have one of you, I get you! Now you need to get me! And it's just like, Oh God, these people, they don't want to learn. They just want to have what they believe confirmed by the people in these stories so they can keep feeling whatever it is that the stories make them feel and it's so stupid and they're stupid, and they should be ashamed of themselves.

E: I gotta tell you, I'm spoiled. Because I had a Special Needs Mom, only insofar as I had a mom that would fight like hell for anything that I needed and that is where that stopped.

K: And she's got special needs too.

E: Well obviously I mean the point is that I'm spoiled because she didn't put me through an of this nonsense.

K: My parents didn't either, although I have to admit that my mom is one of those people where she sees something disabled and inspiring on the news she'll be like, "Did you see this thing it was so beautiful?" And I'm like, "Mom, shut up you're embarrassing me!" *(laughs)*

E: That's hilarious because my parents are the complete opposite. They're like, "Emily you are not gonna believe what we saw on the news, you are gonna be so pissed off! Here we saved it for you"

K: My dad though, he's a little weird so...Like, he's getting old, so he's got arthritis right? And he doesn't like to complain about it around me cause he knows I got through pain and I'm like, "Dad it's alright you've done enough, you've earned the right to complain around me, I don't need your able guilt, I don't need it from you."

*(Emily laughs)*

K: Everyone else in the world? You're right. But you, tell me where it hurts

*(Emily laughs)*

E: Definitely the same with my Dad. Although I would say my dad is almost the opposite. I feel like he almost needs to compete with two women who have ridiculous amounts of disability related aches and pains every five seconds. But he's like, "I got a papercut!"

K: I gotta out complain you!

E: I mean, he's got pains of his own for sure. Lots due in part for his caregiving of us.

K: I mean what can you do? That's just life.

E: But uh, he certainly doesn't want or need an honorary degree for that.

K: Wouldn't that embarrass him? Wouldn't that embarrass anyone?

E: (*unintelligible*). ...He wouldn't

K: I can't get over that. I can't get over that...I won't get over that! I refuse to get over that, this is usually...we've switched roles for a minute but I just can't, I swear to God, It's just like, "Oh are you fuc\*ing serious?"

E: We haven't switched roles, I like wanna go throw myself out a window over this. That's how annoyed I am.

K: And you know, there's gonna be someone that hears this, maybe not the people that interact with you and I, but there's gonna be someone who hears this and be like, "Can't these people just understand it was a nice gesture?" Yes!

E: "Can't these people just realize that they're overreacting?" Yeah, sorry.

K: No but here's the thing about nice gestures, right? Nice gestures aren't news. Random acts of kindness are no longer kind!

E: No, no it's so context dependent. I didn't mean to cut you off

K: No no, you're right, you're right you should absolutely cut me off.

E: Manchester. Manchester, perfect example. Like, the articles about people who were offering places to stay

K: You're right, you're right.

E: People who were offering places to stay, who were giving out sandwiches on the street, that is absolutely newsworthy.

K: Yes, it is. I was wrong. But don't exploit people for your feel-good sh\*t man!

(*Emily laughs*)

K: Dude it's so bad, oh it's so bad, Oh God it's so bad!

E: Yeah like, people giving out food in the wake of a terrorist attack like, that is newsworthy because that is when people need to pull together over random acts of kindness. But that's the kind of random acts of kindness that are newsworthy. I wish they didn't have to be newsworthy either because I wish that terrorism wasn't a thing, but you know what I mean.

K: Well but they're not doing it to get out on the news

E: Right, they're doing it because a horrible thing just happened.

K: Right (unintelligible)

E: Right, it's not a publicity stunt

K: Right, and I don't know if this was a publicity stunt by the University. I don't know Tinfoil hat says yes, but you know, practical, logical me says probably not. But still! You know someone thought about it

E: Maybe

K: I guarantee an Admin somewhere thought about it

E: You know in fact if it was the kid's idea, I bet it was only approved because they knew it would be a good PR stunt.

K: Yeah, which makes this even more disgusting. I mean, we're just guessing but really, think about it. You can see that can't you?

E: (sighs) God! Usually by the end of an episode I feel better about something but instead I'm just even angrier!

K: ..Just feeling worse! Yeah no, this needs a part two, this needs a part two! Cause see, this was a rant. We need to actually formulate our thoughts and put them in a real episode. But this is going out anyway. But for real like...

E: No because I feel like this is one of the most fired up conversations we've had.

K: Oh yeah, this is going out for sure! Anyway final takeaways, Fu\*k yeah! Oh, and if you're a reporter or like a scouter I guess

E: Don't do this!

K: Yeah just don't please? Just don't. Just don't. Just please, just don't. Find a surfing animal, find you know, the oldest tree in the neighborhood. Because those things have the same amount of value as this story, and it's better!

E: Here's a tip: Find a disabled person who's actually doing something newsworthy.

K: And hey, if none of them are just don't report on any of us today then, cool right?

E: My final takeaway

K: Oh, I didn't really give one of those but go ahead!

*(Both laugh)*

E: Please stop objectifying disabled people for your warm fuzzies! Period, the end.

K: I honestly think I'd rather be exploited for warm fuzzies than for ad revenue. But that's a slightly different...

*(Both laugh)*

E: That's a different episode!

K: I'm holding my fingers super close together. My final takeaway is if you're in news and you do this please just die in a fire, thanks! I'm Kyle, she's Emily, goodnight everybody!

*(Emily laughs)*

E: Thanks for listening

K: See you next time!

E: Bye!

