

Rose Dela Cruz Interview

Laurel: Hi, everybody. Welcome to Sapphic Culture Club, formerly Podcast of a Lady on Fire, where we explore lesbian themes in film, TV, books, music, and anywhere else sapphics roam. We are your hosts. I'm Laurel Hechanova.

Audrey: And I'm Audrey Nieh. Today we have a very special guest with us, someone we've known from the Portraitverse for a while now: Rose Dela Cruz.

Laurel: Yay!

Audrey: Yay!

Rose: Hi, aloha! Thanks for having me!

Audrey: Thank you for joining us. So you might know Rose as @rosedelacruzart on Instagram, and Rose is an artist who makes space for joy with art through her watercolor paintings, fan art and comics.

Yeah, welcome! Thank you for coming—not physically coming, but joining us here on Zoom all the way from Hawai'i.

Rose: Woo.

Laurel: Yay. All right. So to kick things off, we are going to start with some of the intro questions that we usually ask guests when we're talking about something *Portrait*-related. So how did you first hear about *Portrait of a Lady*

on Fire?

Rose: It's been awhile, so I don't really remember the details, but it could be from Autostraddle. I think they had an embedded video in one of their articles about it. So I watched the trailer. It was on YouTube, and that's how I first knew about it.

Laurel: So where did you end up first seeing it?

Rose: I watched it—well, it was during the pandemic, so I couldn't really go see it in the theater.

So I watched it on my laptop through Google Play.

Laurel: Yeah! Yeah, okay. So as you were watching it for the first time, do you remember some of your initial impressions about that?

Rose: I remember while I was watching, it was like, everything is just so aesthetically pleasing, and I'm sure it's been mentioned before. Every scene is like a moving painting. The settings, of course the actresses, it kind of felt overwhelming at first too, because like, you've got so many beautiful things, I guess, coming to you at once.

Of course the story is also, like, their acting also is just superb, just really awed by the film. Totally.

Laurel: And then right after it ended, what were your first feelings?

Rose: Right after it ended, I couldn't speak after that. I just had like my moment of silence. I actually journaled about it.

Laurel: Oh, cool.

Rose: I could read it to you if you want. I guess, wait, let me, let me,

Audrey: Amazing. I hope it's on the 28th page of your journal

Rose: Oh! No, it wasn't on the 28th, but I wrote it in April 29th

Laurel: Ooh nice.

Rose: On a Wednesday. Okay, here it goes, here it goes. "I don't even think I can begin to tell you how I feel. Never has there been anything that affected me so deeply."

Laurel: Yay! This is great!

Rose: "...as this has. This Portrait of a Lady on Fire. Even now I am writing in cursive. LOL."

Laurel: That's great. It made you write in cursive.

Audrey: yeah.

Rose: "How arresting, and yet it's still subtle and soft in many ways, I try to process how I feel by drawing, and yet it feels like I'm too entrammelled, too lost in my sea of thoughts and notions, and what am I saying with my art?"

Never has the question been presented to me with such persistence. I wish I could express this eloquence in my own language, experience your art with your five senses, not just through the eyes.

Sometimes this can be overwhelming and all I want to do is draw what I want. So now what? Now what? What do I do with these feelings? This new experience? It changed me forever. The idea of an unfortunate moment being turned into a memory . . . I detested it. I kept being so engaged or involved in the present moment because the future has seemed uncertain and yet a memory lives on forever.

That's why we have libraries! To the grand scheme of things: how would you like to be remembered?

Laurel: Wow. Yeah. Yeah.

Audrey: That's amazing. Did you start drawing in your journal at that time?

Rose: About *Portrait*?

Audrey: Yeah.

Rose: Wait, let me check . . . When did I start or when did I draw my very first *Portrait*-related work? Oh, it was in June.

Laurel: Oh, wow. So, kind of a . . .

Audrey: Took a couple months to kind of simmer.

Rose: So, I guess, yeah. It took a while to just, I guess, digest or like what you said—that new information, because it's just so much.

Laurel: It prompted a lot of strong feelings there, clearly—that initial watch.

Rose: Yeah, it did.

Laurel: I like how it immediately made you rethink what you were doing with your art explicitly, but then also that sort of larger idea of how you want to be remembered. That's pretty big.

Rose: Yeah.

Audrey: Thanks for sharing that with us.

Laurel: Yeah, thank you. That was amazing.

Audrey: Makes me wish I had written down my thoughts. I think I may have texted someone, but I definitely didn't journal.

Rose: Well, it's because there were a lot of feelings to process, you know? And sometimes you just need to find something to express that. So like writing, or in my case, art, but writing was how I express it. I didn't want to just keep it in my heart because I would feel that that wouldn't be healthy.

Audrey: It's too heavy. Yeah.

Laurel: Yeah.

Audrey: All right. So before we get into the main discussion, we're going to ask you some warm-up questions. So yeah.

Audrey: Okay, so you've actually chosen these. And the first one is which scene do you feel is the most underrated, the scene that people should consider more?

Rose: So there's this one scene that's, I'm not sure if it's really as popular as some of the other ones, like the "forgive me" scene or the harpsichord scene, but you know, the scene where—okay, so Sophie had her abortion and then that night, I guess, Marianne was kind of reflecting on it or thinking about it.

And then Héloïse told her to "Oh, we're going to paint," and she started setting up this thing. And then the way Marianne or Noémie sat down and looked at that scene before her, there's just something about it that I don't know, it could be Noémie Merlant's micro-expressions, really. I don't know if it's deliberate or if it's included in the script, I haven't fully read the script, but the way she smiles. She doesn't chuckle or look at it, like it's "Oh, it's something that I was afraid of looking at, but now I'm okay with it." It's not like that. To me, it seemed like she can look at a memory, or maybe when she thinks about abortion, her mind will refer back to that memory in that particular scene. And it's endearing for her.

Laurel: Hmm.

Rose: There's just something about that scene that I myself found endearing.

Audrey: Yeah. I like what you said about her micro-expressions cause I do think that is something very special about Noémie interacting, you

Rose: Well, I'm not familiar with her other work. I haven't seen her other ones, so I don't know if that's her special trait.

Audrey: Yeah. Maybe it's something that Céline pulled out of her for *Portrait*.

Laurel: I feel like in *Jumbo*, she was really good at conveying a fair amount of nuanced pain in different, you know, or sort of annoyance or embarrassment or joy without a lot of dialogue. So those were all just her body language and her expressions.

I think, as a model, her background posing and having so much control over what she's conveying to a camera probably comes into play there. Like she's just very self-aware in that respect would be my theory.

Audrey: Yeah, she'd be a great silent actress.

Laurel: Oh, probably. Yeah, actually.

Audrey: Or a mime

Laurel: You heard it here first: Noémie Merlant would be a great mime.

Audrey: I'd watch her do mime. I'm not—

Laurel: I would watch that. Sure!

Audrey: Mimes, like, they freak me out, but yeah, Noémie as a mime, you know, that's fine.

Rose: I would like to see her dressed up as a flapper.

Laurel: Oh yeah. Well doesn't she do something in that . . . When was *Curiosa*? I dunno, we probably shouldn't—

Rose: That one was probably set in the 1800s?

Audrey: Oops.

Laurel: Yeah, the late 1800s?

Audrey: Just off by a few decades.

Rose: Cause the way they were dressed. It's so conservative, I guess.

Laurel: I don't know that that movie is recommended either. I haven't seen it. So . . .

Audrey: Yeah.

Rose: Kind of heard about that too.

Laurel: Yeah.

Audrey: Okay. So next up we have, have any other films affected you the same way that *Portrait* has?

Rose: So far I don't think there's been any other film that's affected me as much as *Portrait* has, but there's another queer film that I like that's called *And Then We Danced*. It was recommended to me by a friend. Hey, shout out! It's about this boy named Merab. It's set in Georgia—present day, Georgia.

Laurel: The country, not the state.

Rose: The country, not the state.

And, he lives in a low-income household. He's in a dance troupe. He's trying to audition to get into the national Georgian dance troop or something like that. And that was supposed to be his way to improve his family's financial situation. He tries so hard, but their instructor is very strict and for some reason, whatever he does, it's not enough for the instructor.

But then in comes this other guy, he seems kind of more easygoing and he seems to be much more talented than Merab, or that—I don't want to spoil it too.

Laurel: Yeah,

Audrey: Yeah.

Laurel: It already sounds super interesting, though. Yeah. Great, great, great.

Rose: And especially if you like dance, I would recommend it.

Laurel: Awesome.

Audrey: It's called *And Then We Danced*, right?

Rose: Yeah, *And Then We Danced*. It was released fairly recently, too.

Audrey: It was 2019. I don't, I've heard of this. I don't know why I haven't watched it yet. Is it? Well, don't tell me, I guess, I'm just worried it's tragic, but—it looks tragic.

Rose: [mumbling noises]

Laurel: Yeah, don't say anything!

Audrey: Yeah. Okay. Okay. Okay. Don't say anything. Okay. Everything about it is like something bad happens.

Laurel: Yeah. Like: Queer. Georgian. Country. Love story.

Audrey: I know! And it's literally called *And Then We Danced* like a poetic title.

Rose: Ohh...

Audrey: Nope, Nope,

Laurel: Nope. It's okay.

Audrey: You're good. You're good. You're good. You're good.

Laurel: Don't even emote. It's fine!

Rose: Okay. There's only one we can find out. Okay? And it to the watch the film.

Laurel: Yeah. Yeah.

Audrey: Great. Perfect.

Rose: I enjoyed it, though.

Laurel: What do you mean by "though"? No, I'm just kidding!

Audrey: I know!

Laurel: Don't say anything.

Audrey: Stop poking at this.

Laurel: Next question!

Audrey: Moving on. Okay. So back to *Portrait*, was there a particular point in the film that you realized like, holy shit, I love this? If there was a point, when was that?

Rose: Probably at the beginning, you know, when Marianne was, she was in the boat, and it's rocky waves and all of that.

But the way it was—that particular angle. It reminded me of a painting. I just—I love the colors, but that was like a sign that there were more wonderful things to come, and I just really looked forward to the rest of the film.

It was like, if there's an artsy film with a great story, *Portrait* would be it for me. I feel like that's been the kind of films that I'm looking for.

Audrey: Yeah, I like that take, cause I feel like there's a lot of films where I'm watching it and at a certain point I'm like, “Oh! I think I'm going to like this.” There's just something about it that you can't really put words to necessarily that just kind of resonates with you in a way that you kind of have a feeling it's going to be great.

Rose: And the end is solid. Well, of course the entire movie itself, but the end just solidified it, you know, just sealed the deal for me. I freaking love this film. I guess it's one of the top films. Or *the* top film for me.

Audrey: Like, it's my top 30. Haha. So moving on to the heavy duty topics, not at all. So we touched on this a little bit already, but one of the questions that we have for you is what was the first *Portrait*-inspired art you created?

Rose: The very first *Portrait*-related fanart that I ever renewed was the one where Noémie Merlant comes out of the bath tube. Well, it's literally a pipe, the green pipe from Super Mario. As she comes out, jumps out of it, like, you know, Super Mario-style, and she has the the script for *Portrait* in her hand,

like, “Oh my God, is that incredible love story and a vision. And it tells it in a new way!” That and she's dressed up in a bathrobe, and her hair is wrapped up in a towel, and she's just amazed by it.

Laurel: That's super cute. And we will link to that in the show notes, in case you were curious, because it sounds like a lot.

Audrey: I, I mean, I, I remember that very well and it's like, it feels in many ways vintage at this point,

Laurel: Yeah. Yeah.

Audrey: Been, it's been so long, but, uh, should we explain, I think just in case like anyone who doesn't know the bath tube reference, or do you think

Laurel: Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah. I was fully, especially since we're not Podcast of a Lady on Fire right

Audrey: Yeah. Yeah. We're not aware of the bath tube reference, which I think you will need to be, to understand this particular piece. There was an interview during the press tour that Noémie and Adèle did together. And Noémie was describing—I think she was asked about when she got the script or like when she was reading the script and she mentioned, she was in the bathtub.

Laurel: No . . . cause she was like, “What's it called? What's the thing called the, you know, the bain or whatever. . . the thing?” And then Adele very confidently—

Audrey: Oh, it was Adèle. That was like “bathtub” . . .

Laurel: “Bathtub.” Yeah. And she's like, “Are you sure?”

Rose: Oh, really? I thought Adèle was teasing her. . .

Laurel: Well, they both used it after that. And Adèle was like, “Yes, yes. Bath tube.” And then, and the interviewer was like, “Or you could just say ‘tub’.” and you know, but then Noémie went on with the, “Yes, I was in the bathtub.”

Audrey: Wow. It's really turned into something else in my brain. And then from there it turned into this *Portrait* meme.

Laurel: Yep. Although, I will say it looks like, so this isn't quite a *Portrait* fan art thing, but you did a really beautiful, I think it's a charcoal or no, it's pencil, a pencil portrait of Adèle back in May.

Audrey: Oh my God. Are you correcting her?

Laurel: I know! I just want to point out in case . . .

Audrey: Does that count though? Is it does count, I guess.

Laurel: It's related.

Audrey: Rose is like, I don't remember.

Rose: No. I was thinking, what did I do it in? Pencil or charcoal? Yeah, you're right.

Laurel: Well, cause you hashtag pencil. So it looks, it does look like charcoal. It's like a very sort of like, I don't know, 6 or 8B kind of thing, but yeah. Yeah. So surprises everywhere, should you scroll around the feed, but we will link to it . . .

Audrey: Actually, in April . . .

Laurel: Ah ha ha

Audrey: So you've created a lot of art. What would you say has been the most popular piece? The one that you've gotten the most responses or has resonated most with people?

Rose: The one with the most responses—when it comes to the art, not the comics rate is the one called the “Beginning of the End”. It was a commissioned art. So it was inspired by that “magic cut scene” from between the one fire scene and the one where they go to the cave. Yeah, basically, it's them making their way to the cave.

They're like, you know, very close proximity. And they're looking at each other, and there's this ring of fire around it.

Laurel: Yeah, it's really beautiful. We will link to that as well!

Audrey: What's been your personal favorite?

Rose: Not sure if I have any personal favorites, but I like that one a lot.

Audrey: Yeah, good answer. I personally love—is this also commissioned? The one called “A Piece that I Love”?

Rose: Yeah.

Laurel: Mm. Yeah, that one's gorgeous.

Rose: Thank you.

Laurel: It's so interesting. Like, I think I had initially seen some of your cuter comics at first, and then all of a sudden you came out with something like that. And I was like, “Wait a second!” Who is this person? Who's doing all these things, but yeah, it was a really beautiful piece.

Rose: Thank you. It's funny because when I was at that trade show, last time, this person came up to me and was looking at the painting, and he asked me like, “Are you the one who made these paintings?” And I laughed, and I said, “Of course!”

Laurel: Yeah.

Rose: The styles are so different.

Laurel: Yeah. Yeah.

Audrey: I love how you, I think like often you combine this almost anime-inspired style with more of a classical, and it just pairs really well

together, the way you do it.

Rose: Well, that's how I started drawing too, because when I was a kid, I liked watching *Sailor Moon* and *Dragon Ball Z* 'cause those were the two popular animes at that time. And back in the Philippines, we have these small trading card things . . .

Laurel: I think you have a picture on your website, which we can link to.

Rose: Yeah. And I did go through them, and I thought, "Oh, this looks so cool!" And I just started drawing them. I tried to copy them just because it was fun. But then my mom wasn't very supportive about it. It's like "Aw shucks, mom."

Audrey: Aw.

Rose: of course, you know, like I just look back at it and this, you know, think to myself that, you know, she just wants me to have a good life.

Laurel: Does she see the art that you do now and feel any differently about it?

Rose: Well, um, my mom passed away.

Laurel: Oh man. I'm so sorry.

Audrey: I'm so sorry.

Rose: No problem, but um . . . Well, I remember when I was in high school, I would tell my mom that, you know, my classmates would praise my art and she seemed happy about it because she herself is a creative person. I really find this weird because she's a creative person.

And whenever I had craft projects, she's so good at designing things that, you know, cutting things and all that. And I'm thinking that maybe, you know, she was artistic too, and she just didn't have that opportunity. Because her family was poor, and she didn't finish her schooling. And that's why she was very strict with me, especially when it came to academics.

But maybe if she was given that opportunity, the same opportunity that I'm enjoying now, maybe she would be happier and be more supportive. She would know what makes me happy, I guess, as a kid, because I love art. And when I draw, there are times when I notice I'm smiling where I'm chuckling to myself, like, "Oh, this is crazy!" But it really is a space for me to be joyful.

Audrey: Yeah.

Laurel: I feel like I had a similar experience with my mom too, like as a kid. So my mom and my Lola are both nurses, right? And they kind of assumed that it feels like a very safe job, you know? Like they really just want you to be able to provide for yourself, but I found some drawings that my mom did and I was like, "What? These are beautiful!" You know? And she kind of dismissed it and then we never really talked about it again. But yeah, I always kind of wondered, you know, what the background on that was too. Filipino moms, man.

Audrey: I think it's all Asian moms.

Laurel: It could be, yeah.

Audrey: You know, they just had to work a lot harder to be able to get here and provide the support that we now get and probably take for granted.

Laurel: Yeah, yeah.

Rose: Yeah, I agree.

Laurel: Yeah. So what have you been up to recently? I saw you posting some stuff on Instagram. There was, I think you did something—speaking of Filipino culture, it sounds like you did something related?

Rose: Yeah. So there was this event called Pusong Filipinx. In English it's "heart of Filipinx". It's like an expo where it showcases Filipino creatives and small businesses. Yeah, they organized the event in a way where everybody's supporting each other, not in a competitive, like crab mentality kind of way, because it's one of those things that we kind of know about Filipino culture. It's something that I wish our fellow Filipinos would do. Yeah, I really liked it. It was really good, and they're very welcoming and, you know, welcome you with aloha and treat you like you're family

Laurel: That's cool. Yeah. Could you talk a little bit about the project that it looked like you worked on leading up to it? With the animals? It's so cute. I love it so much.

Rose: Thank you. Okay. So when I was applying as a vendor, we had a requirement where you have at least one item that's Filipino-themed. I was already doing this collection of paintings called the "Idyllic Scenes". It's animals in lighthearted settings.

Laurel: More of that. We all, we all need more of this right now. Yeah.

Rose: Thank you. So I thought, "Okay, how about I do that, but featuring Filipino animals?" Or, you know, Filipino wildlife. And I remember this one animal called the tamaraw. It's like the smaller cousin of the water buffalo or the carabao. I remember that and the mouse deer, that was pretty much it. So I thought, "Okay, let's try looking up other animals that are endemic to the Philippines." And then as I did my research and looked at the photos, it's like, maybe I need to know more about it rather than just copying what's on my screen, right? That's how I found out that, you know, most of these animals that are on the painting, they're critically endangered and they're not widely known. Like even I didn't know about that, that we had of pangolin in the Philippines!

Audrey: Hmm.

Laurel: I didn't either! I thought that was amazing!

Rose: Yeah. So I believe that art is a great way to create space for joy, but not only that, it's also a great way to help spread awareness about these animals that not a lot of people know about, and they're on the brink of extinction.

"So why not make a painting about it?" is what I said to myself.

Laurel: I love that you included the animals playing—on Guam we called it Chinese jump rope, but I guess you call it Chinese garter?

Rose: In the Philippines, it's called Chinese garter. I don't know why it's called that, but it's very interesting.

Laurel: I assume it originated there? I don't know. Audrey. You want to weigh in on?

Audrey: Uh, I don't know. If it's anything like Chinese whispers it's racist, right?

Laurel: Oh my gosh. Yeah. It's the jump rope that loops around. . .

Audrey: I know what you're talking about. Yeah. Yeah, I mean, I played that. I don't know why it's called that. I'm guessing it's from there?

Laurel: We can verify. Were either of you any good at it?

Audrey: I was okay.

Laurel: How high could you get the rope?

Audrey: Like shoulder height. No, I'm kidding.

Laurel: Are you kidding?!

Audrey: Totally kidding. Oh my God.

Laurel: Oh, you were that person.

Audrey: It's also called French skipping. Interestingly.

Laurel: Oh,

Rose: French Skipping? Interesting.

Laurel: like I got to like knee height and that was, that was it.

Rose: I can get up to like up to the hips, right?

Laurel: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Audrey: That's pretty good. Yeah.

Rose: I would still mess up, but I always enjoyed watching other kids do it. And the show off their talent.

Laurel: Like, I don't even understand how someone could like—armpits, right? Is that the highest, or was it like shoulders or like. . .

Audrey: I'm sure people, I mean, you know, I've seen people jump and do flips in the air, right?

Rose: Yeah, and I've seen people do that where they would raise the thing over their heads.

Laurel: Yeah. It's like, but how? How do you even—how do your feet get up there? It doesn't make any sense to me now.

Rose: If you have acrobatic skills?

Laurel: I remember like eight year olds doing it, so I don't know.

Anyway. Cool. Okay. So now that the expo is wrapped up, are you working on anything that you're having fun with right now?

Rose: Well, they're still working on the comic and. . . I don't want to spoil it.

Laurel: Oh, we almost got it!

Rose: I'm working on the, you know, I lovingly call it my silly ass *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* fan art. There's that. And, um, there's a project, but, uh, I'm not sure if I can talk about it yet.

Laurel: Ooh, mysterious!

Audrey: Yeah, all right.

Rose: Stay in tune with—or stay tuned to—yeah, just watch out. Okay? Good.

Audrey: Just watch out. Watch out.

Laurel: Well, the, best place. And we'll talk about it again later, probably, but the best place for people to keep up with that, or your news would be

Patreon. Is that right? And Instagram.

Rose: Instagram. or they can visit my website, rosedelacruzart.com. And again, sign up to, or subscribe to my newsletter.

Laurel: Great. We will link to all of those as well.

Audrey: Okay. So I've done some deep research and apparently the game began in 7th century China, and then in the 60s, children in the Western hemisphere adapted the game, which is why it's called—

Laurel: In the 1960s? Wow. That took a long time to get there.

Audrey: I know, I mean, I guess being called Chinese jumprope in this particular case is. . .

Laurel: Historically accurate.

Audrey: Yeah, it's like giving credit back instead of calling it something. I mean, I think other countries they do call it something else. In Britain, they call it elastics, I guess. So it's nice to know where the origin is.

Laurel: Yay, found out something good.

Audrey: All right. So back to your art, which is why we're here. Can you talk a little bit about what got you interested in creating art in the first place? Is it something that, you know, you came out of the womb drawing or—?

Laurel: Was it really just watching *Dragon Ball Z* and wanting to draw the hair?

Audrey: Or the eyes? I feel like everyone always starts with the eyes.

Laurel: But the hair is so complex. It's just like these weird hair crystals.

Audrey: A life of its own.

Audrey: Hair crystals!

Laurel: It's so weird.

Rose: Like stalagmites. It's funny cause I just, I almost look at those and think to myself. Hey, just try drawing, you know, these clusters of bananas.

Laurel: That's a great drawing tip for anyone who wants to get into *Dragon Ball Z* here.

Audrey: With bananas.

Laurel: Picture a cluster of bananas! If you were unfamiliar with the cartoon, I imagine this conversation is very strange for you.

Audrey: Dragon Ball Z?

Rose: It's very vintage. Or I can mention Sailor Moon just had a remake.

Laurel: That's true. Yeah. Yeah.

Rose: Yeah. But I'm pretty sure when I was in probably nursery school or kindergarten, we had these picture books and I would copy those. And then I guess, starting out drawing, you know, stick figures.

Laurel: Okay. So now we would like to ask you, what is the weirdest job you've ever had? We were trying to segue into it, but there's just, there's no way. So we're just gonna. . .

Audrey: I'm sure there's a way, it's just not a cute way.

Laurel: Okay. Okay. Um. . .

Audrey: No, no you don't have to figure out a way. You already asked.

Laurel: I was gonna try!

Rose: It's kind of funny, because I feel like there's another job that's up in the running, so. . .

Laurel: Oh, tell us all the weird jobs you've had!

Rose: I used to work at an airline catering company.

Audrey: Oh, wow.

Laurel: I have always been curious about that. Okay, great. Continue.

Rose: They make these little bentos. You know, like choosing between fish or beef, whatever. So that company was situated near the runway, right? And there are no buses that go in there. They do have shuttle service, though. And it runs at a certain time or a certain period. If you'd miss it, it's like, it really sucks.

I always had to wake up at 3:00 AM, you know, get ready and all that, just so that I wouldn't miss that shuttle.

Laurel: Yeah.

Rose: And work starts pretty early, too. I just remember that place being so cold because everything has to be at a certain—it's, you know, perishable, everything has to be at a certain temperature. We had to wash our hands often, maybe probably five times max.

We had to wear these hairnets, this apron. We had to make sure we wore non-slip shoes. It was kind of slippery. And sometimes the floor is wet depending on which area you are. There was also a section where they cut the fruits, oranges. Fricking oranges were—So they were just so tough. They so hard. Cause they keep them in the freezer, right? And you're chopping them with your hands that are shaking from the cold.

Laurel: And they're round.

Audrey: Oh. My. God.

Rose: They're round! So you might cut your fingers.

Laurel: See, you never know, you never know about this stuff!

Audrey: You don't think about this stuff.

Laurel: And you're sitting on a plane and you get this little bento box of food, and it's just like magic. You don't know who has, you know, worked on it or put it together that oranges are hard to cut, you know?

Audrey: Did you ever eat the food or like taste test stuff, or are you mostly doing like food prep?

Rose: No, we don't taste test anything. We just put them in their boxes and in the little carts and—oh yeah, we had to make sure we had the right quantities. There's a quota.

Laurel: Yeah, yeah. It seems very uniform, all the little trays.

Audrey: I'm sure everything is measured out very precisely.

Rose: And even the utensils too: match spoon, fork, napkin. Wrap it and then put it in the plastic sleeve, and you have to count all of it. Like I think one tray needs to be maybe 300 or so? Like 300 packs of those utensils.

Laurel: Oh, wow. Yeah, yeah.

Rose: And you need to complete it within a certain timeframe because you're trying to make it for, you know, these flights.

Laurel: Sounds stressful.

Rose: It is stressful! It was.

Audrey: I'm never gonna take those for granted again. I like this question. I feel like we should ask everyone this.

Laurel: That's true. Yeah. Just, like, shove it in there.

Audrey: Really seamlessly fits, you know, into all the *Portrait* talk.

Laurel: Well, speaking of travel—

Audrey: Yes, see this transitions perfectly. This was lovely. Thank you for doing that. Okay. So we know you're in Oahu, which is, would you say Oahu is like the touristy of all the islands?

Rose: In Hawaii, probably. I mean, Yeah. because there's Waikiki, and I guess all the tourists go there. Woof.

Audrey: Yeah.

Rose: Yeah.

Audrey: Well, I know it's been packed since probably April, May. So we were wondering during like peak pandemic, if it was an even more magical place without all the tourism?

Rose: Oh, like I step outside and everything's like shimmering, sparkling?

Laurel: There's no traffic.

Audrey: I mean, I'm sure it also was really rough because you know, so much of Hawai'i relies on the tourism industry, so it probably depends on what you are doing.

Rose: Well, I did notice that there were less people, less tourists. I didn't go to Waikiki at that time. So I don't know. I remember my dad telling me that he went one time and there was literally no one.

No tourists in Waikiki. So uncanny. It's funny because I'm more of an indoor person. It was okay, I guess. Well, because tourism is also like a major industry that Hawai'i depends on. A lot of people really depend on it because they work at hotels, at restaurants. And it's really tough on this state because like he would see—especially small businesses, you would see small shops closing down and even some well-established businesses are, you know, facing the threat of being closed down, too.

There's this section in a major shopping center here in Hawaii called Shirokiya. If we want to eat Japanese food, that is the place, right? And I think it's been around for 30, 40, 50 years or so. And I just read in the news that might be closing down because they couldn't pay.

Laurel: Oh man, is that the one with like—it's kind of underground-ish or like on a lower level? And they're like a bunch of stalls and stuff and you can go.

Rose: Yeah. It's in the lower level.

Laurel: Okay. Oh man. That's such a nice—that's so sad.

Rose: Yeah. They have all this good ramen, all this good takoyaki, udon.

Laurel: Yeah.

Rose: It's a really good place. It'd be really sad if it closed down.

Laurel: Yeah. Ah, yeah.

Audrey: I hope it's doing a little better now, you know, with everyone kind of flowing in.

Rose: I hope so too.

Audrey: That's rough.

Laurel: All right. So for our last question, here's something that might make us feel better, hopefully, maybe? Which are our queer media recs.

Audrey: What if she has a really sad rec?!

Laurel: I know it could be, yeah. So I am waiting in suspense to see if we are going to remain sad or maybe be happier in the near future.

Rose: Like, am I going to recommend something like where, you know, the common trope for lesbians where one of them dies?

Laurel: Right?

Audrey: Have you heard of this movie called *Brokeback Mountain*?

Laurel: No. . .

Rose: No, I haven't watched it yet.

Laurel: That's okay!

Audrey: That's okay. You're good.

Laurel: Yeah. That's all right. But yeah. Do you have anything queer that you are enjoying recently?

Rose: Recently? I haven't been watching any shows, but I'm so busy managing my art and my art business stuff. But I'm listening to Hayley Kiyoko.

Audrey: Oh nice.

Laurel: That's great.

Rose: Yeah, I like her music and Troy Sivan and sometimes Todrick Hall. He has this song called out "Nails, Hair, Hips, Heels".

Laurel: Great.

Rose: I use it for my morning walks.

Laurel: Oh, that's great.

Rose: The energy.

Audrey: Love it.

Rose: It's like "Shablam for me, shablam for me!"

Audrey: We're going to close out with that. It's beautiful.

Laurel: Oh, that was great. Great, great, great.

Rose: Oh, yeah, right? So I recommend *The Haunting at Bly Manor*, it's on Netflix. It's really good.

Laurel: I would also recommend that.

Audrey: Yeah. Yeah. . .

Laurel: Ha ha ha!

Audrey: No, I would too! I really enjoyed it.

Laurel: Yeah, I enjoyed it too.

Audrey: I feel like it's definitely become classic. All right. So that wraps up our show. Thank you so much, Rose, for joining us.

Rose: Yay! Thank you so much.

Audrey: Thank you. Tell us where people can find you.

Rose: Well, people can find my art on Instagram. It's @rosedelacruz. Oh yeah, I have my website too. It's the same thing: rosedelacruzart.com. You can also support my art through Patreon where you can receive early access to my art and also other art and secret comics that I don't post publicly online.

Laurel: Great. Awesome.

Audrey: Great. And we will link to that in our show notes.

Laurel: For this episode our GAYSMR is the sound of running water at Stony Creek in Sequoia National Park, which Audrey recorded while camping there a few weeks ago. The source of the water is probably snow melt from the Sierras, and it's gay because she recorded it from a swimming hole and swim holes are gay.

Audrey: That's right. But before we GAYSMR are all over your ear holes, do you have any questions for the next show or perhaps your own GAYSMR sounds that you'd like to share with everyone. Let us know. You can email us sapphiccultureclub@gmail.com. You can find us on Instagram @sapphiccultureclub and Twitter @sapphicpodcast.

Once again, thank you, Rose, so much for joining us. We really appreciate it.

Rose: Thank you so much for having me.

Audrey: And now please enjoy the sound of Stony Creek.

Laurel: GAYSMR. . .

[The bright, bubbling sounds of a running creek fades into the end of Todrick Hall's "Nails, Hair, Hips, Heels". . .

Shablam for me, shablam for me, shablam

Shablam for me, shablam for me, shablam

Shablam for me, shablam for me, shablam

Shablam for me, shablam for me, shablam

That's all

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha

A static sound fades out.]