

Still Buffering 294: "Akira" (1988)

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[theme music plays]

Rileigh: Hello, and welcome to *Still Buffering*, a cross-generational guide to the culture that made us. I am Rileigh Smirl.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Teylor Smirl.

Sydnee: Well, here we are, on just a light, breezy... Thursday. Just a...

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: ... light, nothing, no big deal, nothing heavy about this. What's the date, again? What's the— what day is it? [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Um... the sixth?

Sydnee: The sixth of what month?

Rileigh: January? [laughs quietly]

Taylor: It's a week before my birthday. That's why it's important.

Rileigh: Yeah, that's what it is.

Sydnee: Oh, that's what it is!

Taylor: Yeah.

Rileigh: It's a week from Teylor's birthday.

Sydnee: It's a week from— it's a week from Teylor's birthday. That's the only significance of this day.

Rileigh: Yep.

Taylor: Yeah. [laughs quietly] Yeah.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. That's why it'll be in history books.

Sydnee: Won't it be weird when it's— do you remember in social studies books when we were kids and, like, you would have passages in there, and something would be bolded, and that would indicate, like—

Raleigh: An important term.

Sydnee: Like, War of 1812 or something. You know what I mean? Like, this is a thing. This is a concept. This is a happening. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: This was happening. [laughs]

Sydnee: This is an event. This is something that happened, or a person or what— a date, something in history that, like, you should remember. And it's probably, like, also in the, you know— in the back of the book in, like, the glossary or something. Like, you could just look it up, find all the places in the book where— anyway. [laughs] Isn't it weird that the Insurrection of January 6th—

Raleigh: Oh, that's what we're talking about.

Taylor: Yeah, yes. That's the thing that happened.

Sydnee: —2021 will be on there. I'm just saying. I'm just say— isn't that— and, like, we watched it on TV.

Raleigh: Yeah, that'll be in there. Yeah. [sighs]

Taylor: [sighs heavily]

Raleigh: Charlie'll be coming home from, like, you know, AP Gov in— in, you know, ten years. Like, "Hey, did you all know about this?"

Like, "Yeah, dude. You were there, too."

Sydnee: God. And I'll be old. I'm already old, but I'll be older. And they'll be like, "Go home and tell your parents if they remember where they were." [laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs]

Taylor: Right?

Sydnee: Instead of when Kennedy was shot, this is what they'll say. Like, when the insurrection happened, and then they— then Charlie'll come home and ask me and I'll start to tell the story and she'll be like, "Can you talk faster, mom? This is really boring." [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Well, I'll just say, not to also sound like an old person, which I am, but that concept of, like, you know... I don't know, a few years down the road and kids being like, "Ugh, why do I have to know this?"

And, like, after having, like, lived through it and the context around it and the fear it's like, every— every date that I ever forced into my brain as a child begrudgingly, like "This is dumb but I guess I'll remember this for the test," like, I'm so sorry. [laughs quietly] Generations of past people.

Sydnee: I mean, I guess that's true. [laughs]

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It is different.

Taylor: For a date to go in bold, it's gotta be a real bad day most times.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: Oh man.

Sydnee: Can't we bold some good days? Like, in 2022 could we have, like... the day of a million hugs? When, like—

Rileigh: [laughs quietly] That's a lot.

Sydnee: —a million hugs were given?

Taylor: No, Sydnee, because we still have a plague! [through laughter] We can't—

Raleigh: Yeah, I was gonna say.

Sydnee: Oh.

Taylor: That's also called the day of mass infection. [laughs]

Sydnee: Okay, wait, never mind. Not that. [laughs]

Raleigh: The day we all got COVID.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: That's—

Raleigh: The entire world.

Sydnee: That's now.

Raleigh: That goes in history.

Sydnee: That's happening now?

Raleigh: Yeah, that's happening.

Sydnee: Um... how about... hmm. What's something different?

Raleigh: It's snowing.

Sydnee: Well... yeah.

Taylor: That's...

Sydnee: Is that a— that won't be bolded. [laughs] The day it snowed?

Raleigh: It's the first snow of the year. There was a part of me that was a little bit like, "Okay, I guess this is a little— this is a little relieving," since it was, like,

65 degrees on Christmas day. It's like, well, at least we're getting some cold weather, I guess. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: The, um— I enjoyed— so it is— it's snowing here in West Virginia, and it's snowing pretty heavily. And so, like, everybody who has been— I'm currently working in the hospital and everybody's like, "You gotta get me outta here before the snow comes, doc. You gotta get me outta here before the snow comes."

All the staff are trying to leave early. Like, "We gotta get outta here before the snow comes." They let school out early, like half day today, to get everybody home before the snow comes.

Raleigh: My university closed early and we haven't even started classes yet.

Sydnee: [laughs] We have two— we have two residents on our team right now who are from Canada, and they are both looking at us like we have lost our minds. They're like, "What is wrong with you people?!"

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: "What do you mean you have to leave before the snow comes?"
[laughs] I'm like, "Yeah, I guess you guys do it differently up there, don't you?"
[laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Well... we—[sighs] we are not somewhere that, like— we're not, like, a warm state that never gets snow, so when we get it everyone, like, freaks out 'cause it's like, "Oh, we've never experienced this before."

But we sure do act like one. Every time we get a snowstorm everyone acts like [dramatically] this has never happened before! [laughs]

Taylor: I think it's exacerbated by the mountainous terrain, right? Like, a lot of scary roads.

Raleigh: It's hard to get anywhere already when the roads are clear.

Sydnee: That's what I was gonna say. It's our crumbling infrastructure.

[all laugh]

Sydnee: I say it and laugh. It's not funny! It's—[laughs] it's— see, our state is very poor, and our infrastructure is crumbled. [laughs]

Raleigh: No, you're very right. And then we had a bad ice storm, like, a year ago that shut down the entire, you know, state for a month, and everyone had no power, so everyone's, like, traumatized from that I think, probably.

Sydnee: They are. And I think there are just places in West Virginia where you drive on a road and half of the road might just be gone, and it's just gone now. Like, that road is— that part's gone now. And, like, I don't know. They might fix it someday, maybe. But, like, it wasn't—[laughs] a lot of the roads aren't two cars wide to begin with. Like, they're sort of one and a half cars wide?

Taylor: I feel like you're always playing this kind of dangerous gamble on so many roads where— well, we drive and it's like, there's only room for one car on this. What happens if someone comes the other direction? Like, we're on a mountain.

Raleigh: Standoff.

Taylor: There's no— you can't back down or— there's just— you just hope you don't come across somebody else.

Sydnee: That is— well, Tey, I have backed down a curvy one-and-a-half-lane road down a mountain before, uh, where Justin and I lived for a while, up near the museum, up on the mountain, uh, to— it was like this little curvy road, and there weren't room— there wasn't room at many of the curves for two cars, and so I did head on— not hit, you know, like... came up against a car, and so I had to back all the way down that curvy... terrifying.

Raleigh: I'd refuse.

Sydnee: Terrifying!

Raleigh: I'd just stand there and wait. Someone would have to move eventually, and it wouldn't be me.

Sydnee: We only lived there for one year 'cause, like, as soon as the lease was up I was like, "We need a new place that has [laughs] a wider road!"

Taylor: It's like, what if you then try again and then someone else comes down? Like, how many times do you do that? Be like, no, no, no. It's my turn now.

Raleigh: My turn now. [laughs]

Taylor: Up the hill.

[all laugh]

Raleigh: It's just— it's always good to remember that there is work being done on our state, though, because there is a 100% chance that the interstate will always have construction going on, and it will always be more dangerous to drive on the interstate in West Virginia than any other state. [laughs quietly]

Sydney: We should all be like, uh—

Raleigh: So. [laughs]

Sydney: —interstate 64 and always working on ourselves.

Taylor: No.

Raleigh: Always working on ourselves.

Taylor: No. The interstate in West Virginia is like the Winchester Mystery House of roads. Like, you just—

[all laugh]

Taylor: —keep building more lanes that go nowhere, and I don't understand it! Every time I'm home I feel like, "Oh, yeah, they added another inter— they added another lane."

I'm like, "Why?!" It's just—

Raleigh: Our popu— our population's going down and we're adding a third lane to our interstate. [through laughter] Why do we need it?

Sydney: I think— I— now, to be fair, I think it grew by, like, five people last year. I feel like the governor was talking about that.

Rileigh: We're losing a seat in— in—

Sydnee: Well, that— we already done last that. [laughs]

Rileigh: I'm just saying, we lost enough people. We done did it. We're down to two now.

Sydnee: Yep.

Taylor: A ghost came to Manchin and said if he doesn't endlessly build roads and obstruct American democracy then he will be claimed.

Sydnee: I don't understand. I— sorry about Manchin, everybody. [laughs]

Rileigh: We don't like him either.

Sydnee: But come— come live here and see our alternatives, and... you know, just—[laughs] just sayin'.

Taylor: I'm really glad that we can, you know, stop talking about the dystopia we live in and talk about [through laughter] a dystopia we don't live in.

Sydnee: That's perfect. That's the perfect segue. Wow!

Rileigh: Yeah, there we go.

Sydnee: Tey!

Taylor: There you go.

Sydnee: I'm so proud of you!

Rileigh: There you go. Wow.

Taylor: I brought *Akira* to the table today, which is— you know, it's obviously classic anime movie. It's set in 2019. Um...

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Which is disturbing.

Rileigh: [laughs]

Taylor: We were like, you know, "Oh, wow, this movie is so sci fi. There's, you know, it's sort of a dystopian society. There's, like, all this civil unrest and— and crumbling infrastructure and, uh, I don't know, like, corrupt government, and the Olympics are happening in Tokyo."

It's very— a little— I guess it got some things right. [laughs]

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I was gonna say, so what's so strange about all that? [laughs]

Taylor: I don't know. You gotta— you gotta try a little harder, cyberpunk dystopias. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I found that very disturbing when I realized, like, "Oh, this is set a couple years ago." [laughs]

Rileigh: This is no longer the future. This is the past now.

Sydnee: This is the past.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I had never watched *Akira*, but I was so aware of it, because I feel like the— like, the title, the way that it looks, like that font, that graphic, I don't— you know? I have seen it on things many times. I have seen that, probably in a lot of the stores and websites that we look at or have looked at in the past, Tey. I feel like I've seen that and so I was, like, peripherally aware of it, but I had no knowledge of the film. Like, what it was about or anything.

Taylor: Well—

Sydnee: For some reason I assumed it was about a sword. I don't know why.

Taylor: Alright.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: I think it's 'cause it looks sort of slashy, the writing, and I thought, "Oh, maybe it's sword related." [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: Um...

Raleigh: Sword adjacent.

Sydnee: Sword adjacent.

Taylor: For those unaware, *Akira* is— it started out actually as a manga. It's by Katsuhiro Otomo. Uh, he started publishing the manga in '82, and it ran until, like, 1990. The movie came out in '88, and it was really, I mean, like, a seminal piece of animation. It has influence in so many filmmakers and writers and creators out there today, um, like, uh, massive advancements in, like, the world of elem— animation, what we can expect from animation.

Uh, but it is— so, it came out in '88, but it's set in 2019, and sort of centers around the story of, like, a— a... [pause] two young men who are friends, one of which is developing dangerous psychic powers, and the other one who's trying to stop him from destroying the city.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm? They're part of a gang.

Taylor: Yeah, a bike gang.

Sydnee: So to speak. A what?

Taylor: A— a— a bike gang. And they're very young.

Sydnee: A bike gang. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: They're all, like—like—

Rileigh: [laughs]

Taylor: Not bicycles. Motorcycles.

Rileigh: I—[laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: I like the clarification on "bike," 'cause I'm hoping that means you thought bi gang.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: No.

Rileigh: Is what Taylor said.

Sydnee: They're part of a bi gang.

Rileigh: I was like, "Well, no, no, no. No no."

Sydnee: [laughs] In the future, there are roaming gangs of bis. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs quietly] Once again, that's true. That— they predicted that.

Rileigh: They got that right.

Taylor: No, they're not in the movie. Uh, yeah. Um...

Sydnee: The— the Capsules?

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: Is that what they're named? And, um, it reminded me of sort of like, uh, like an anti, um— what am I trying to say? Um, *Clockwork Orange* kind of group.

Taylor: Interesting. Yeah.

Sydnee: You know? Like gangs against the government.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Well—

Sydnee: I assume we'll have lots of those in the coming years.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Well, there's also actively, like— like— 'cause, I mean, this central gang is just sort of— they're delinquents for delinquents' sake. But then there's, like, actually, like, a resistance movement that's happening. There's a love interest, and it's a young woman who is part of this resistance movement, so. They gang leader is very involved, then, in politics. [laughs] Because this girl is cute.

[all laugh]

Sydnee: That— well, that's how all great, you know, gang leaders get involved in politics.

Rileigh: Right.

Taylor: Yeah, yeah.

Sydnee: A love interest. Um, I found— well, first of all, it is— it is dystopian, but not, like— it must have, back in the 80's... [laughs quietly] really hit people harder. Which, I mean, you know, that had to have been true for a lot of, like, thoughts about what the world was gonna be like post-2000 and stuff like that back then.

Um, now a lot of it, uh... it feels dystopian in such a familiar way.

Rileigh: [snorts quietly]

Sydnee: It is—[laughs quietly] you know?

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It is a little— like, there is a sad note to watching a movie like that right now, because they get so many things... not— I mean, not literally right, but you know, sort of right.

Rileigh: Yeah. I mean, enough where I had to remind myself a few times, this was made decades ago about current times. This was not made now. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah. I think that that kind of— I don't— there's a lot of stuff that I feel like came out around the same time as *Akira*. I'm thinking, like— like, I don't know, the original *Blade Runner*. Like, uh, *Neuromancer*. Those kind of, like, important works in the cyberpunk genre that now— I mean, they're still great, but there's a lot of just, well, this— this sort of... like, loss of humanity as we advance into, like, a technological society, that it's not all shiny and chrome, and we're not all wearing those, you know, space unitards. It's just... everything's crumbling and [laughs] there's, like... civil unrest. But then we have, like, I don't know... cool motorcycles. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Well, and a lot of it has to do with— I felt like just sort of watching it, the idea that was we advance as— I don't wanna say "a society," 'cause it has so little to do with each other. It's more like as a species, as the idea of what a human can do. Um, which is weirdly kind of an individualistic idea in many ways. That we— we start to associate advancement with, like, the ability to destroy.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: Like, there's a lot of talk about the power to destroy. And that is visualized in so many ways. And, like, that's such the antithesis of what many of us would think about as, like, an ideal modern society where everyone is cared for. [laughs quietly] Where everyone is provided the means to, you know, live and thrive and enjoy life and, like, that— that— that is sort of like the utopian ideal of where a society should head, and this is more where I think we often see, like, human advancement going, which is this power, and that power so often equates to the power to also end everything, you know what I mean?

Taylor: Which is the sort of backdrop for the movie, and also where it heads. Because, you know, the name *Akira* is the sort— the experiments that were done by the government on, like, children to improve their psychic abilities resulted in this one child who was incredibly powerful, accidentally just leveling the original

Tokyo, which was the event that kicked off World War III. And so, then when this movie takes place is after all of that, and the government is still meddling with psychic children and still trying to harness this power that's ultimately a destructive force.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: It's a little bit *Stranger Things*.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: It's a little— it's a little bit.

Sydnee: That definitely is in there too. Ooh—

Raleigh: [simultaneously] Just in the sense, like—

Sydnee: —that had to have been inspired by *Akira*. I mean, wouldn't you think?

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: [crosstalk] The whole government messing with psychic children, and also making them accidentally too powerful and it destroys, you know, everything. Yeah, I... I had that thought while watching this, that that had to have been there somewhere.

Sydnee: Yeah, I didn't— until you drew that connection it didn't hit me. But, like, I— I mean, there were visual things that made me think of *Stranger Things* for sure.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Um, although obviously *Stranger Things* were taking those cues from *Akira* and not the other way around. But, like, I definitely was reminded of that. But I didn't think about that parallel. Ooh, I wonder if that's listed as, like, an inspiration for the... creators of *Stranger Things*.

Raleigh: I'd believe it.

Sydnee: It would have to be.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: I don't know if it's listed, but I feel like it's commonly assumed. [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, I didn't know! It was the first time I've ever seen *Akira*! [laughs]

Taylor: That's the reach of *Akira*, though. I mean, you have a lot of, like— a lot of people have owned up, like, that's absolutely something that influenced me, either stylistically or thematically. Absolutely. I mean, the echoes of this film— the manga to a certain extent, 'cause the manga's great in its own right, uh, but definitely the film, I think, has had the bigger, like, universal cultural impact.

Sydnee: Do you feel like— full disclosure, I watched the dub.

Taylor: Okay.

Rileigh: Me too.

Sydnee: Um, is that, like, a good representation? Did I miss a lot? [laughs]

Taylor: Uh, I don't think you missed, as far as, like, plot. Uh, it is an interesting— the way that they— they filmed that, because, um, a lot of times in— especially with Japanese animation, the animation is done first and then the voice acting takes place. Whereas, like, in American animation, a lot of times they'll film the voice actors first, and then they'll incorporate that in the animation.

So I— 'cause I watched the sub and the dub, and I noticed that the dub— it's a little bit more jarring, 'cause the— the animation syncs up so well to the original Japanese, because it does have those cues to take from the voice actors. So they purposely did that when they were animating *Akira*. They had the voices already done, and then they could use that as a reference point for the animation. So it's a little— it's more clean when you watch the sub, but I think that— they redid the dub not too long ago, and I think it's a good dub. Once again, I'm never gonna— I'm not anti-dub. If dubs work for you... it's a good dub.

Rileigh: It's what I always go with when we're watching things to discuss, just because then I feel like I am paying attention more so to the whole picture instead of focusing on reading. I don't have the brain that can, like, read as I'm

watching something and fully appreciating, like, the images happening on the screen and be able to hear it.

Sydnee: I will say that sometimes with— with subs, I'm so busy reading the words that I'm not watching as closely.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Um, that is true. But yeah. And, you know, it doesn't sync up perfectly with the dub, but I— not in a way that's any different than a lot of dubbed, you know, stuff I've watched where it's like, it's not perfect, but close enough. It does not hinder my enjoyment of the film.

Taylor: I think for something that is so— so important visually just as much as it is story-wise, you know, I get that. Like, wanting to— you kind of have to see what's going on on the screen. There are a lot of movies that you can watch just for the storyline, and subs work fine. But for *Akira*, I like that there's both available, because sometimes it's nice to just look at all the pretty things, or all the scary things. [laughs]

Sydnee: All the scary things, too! I was gonna say, there are also, like, some moments that I feel like, uh, are very brief but, um, vivid. What came to mind is when they're in the, like, sewer, and there's the rat filled with maggots that floats to the top. [laughs quietly] Do you know the part I'm talking about?

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And it's, like, right in front of his fa— oh, God. Anyway, it's very brief, and if you're reading subtitles you may have missed it.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: But there's a lot like that that it's not just for shock value, is my thought. It's for, like— to give you a feel of the time and place, and a sense of, like, how— I mean, it's gross, literally. But it's also— there's a lot of grossness morally, politically, you know.

Rileigh: Sure.

Sydnee: Like, in terms of humanity, that is happening.

Rileigh: Symbolic grossness.

Sydnee: Yeah, it's symbolic grossness.

Rileigh: Yep.

Taylor: And I think that the worldbuilding on its own is just... amazing. Just how intricate, like the graffiti on the walls and, like, the interpretation of, it's Tokyo, but then it's, you know. So we've taken sort of iconic things that exist if you go to Tokyo today, but we've moved them forward in time and kind of considered, what would they be like? I just think that's— it's really amazing to see that. I don't think— even though this movie was made in '88, I don't— there are few animated movies out today that I think still, like, compete with it. It doesn't look like something that's old to me, you know?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Sydnee: No, I don't think it looks old at all. I don't think it looks dated. Um, yeah. I agree with that completely. In a way that there are some other, like— when I think about, especially in anime, some movies that I've watched, especially with Justin is getting into that more and more, which are beautiful films, but do look very dated. This does not at all. This feels like something that could be made now that could be, you know, that has a very modern feel. Um, which just speaks to probably what you have said. It's inspired a lot of modern stuff, so this fits right in.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: I mean, it's time. Like, it—[laughs quietly] they invented 50 new colors to animate this.

Sydnee: Oh, wow.

Rileigh: Wow.

Taylor: Like, to the Pantone, like, they were responsible for that. Uh, that had never been seen on screen and animation before. It had the most cells of any film

made, to date. It was the most expensive animated movie made at that time in Japan. Like, it would be followed up the year after by I think it was *Kiki's Delivery Service*, maybe? Uh, but—

Sydnee: Oh.

Taylor: But, um— but in its time, like, it revolutionized a lot about animation and really pushed the bar as to what it could be. So I think that's also just... that's so prevalent in it.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, I want— Taylor, we haven't really dealt— we've talked a lot about the film itself, but we haven't talked about, like, why it is important to you, and I want to get into that. But first...

Raleigh: Let's check the group message.

Sydnee: So, it's a new year, still. [laughs quietly] Um, and, uh, that means that it's time to shake things up. You know? Maybe literally, like movin' and shakin'. Go, uh— go, you know, run?

Raleigh: [snorts]

Sydnee: Dance? Take some dancing lessons.

Raleigh: [holding back laughter] Uh-huh?

Sydnee: [laughs] A lot of people decide that they're gonna start getting more active this time of year, and while you're doing all this great activity, which is good for you, it's good for your heart and lungs, it's good for your brain and good for your mood and your sleep, um, you might want to listen to some— some music, or perhaps a podcast. But you need something that, uh, that's not gonna fall out of your ears, and that's why I like Raycon wireless earbuds, because no matter how much movin' and shakin' you're doing, they're not gonna fall out of your ears, and I can attest to that. In all honesty, that's always been one of my problems with, you know, wear— the wireless headphones, has been they fall out of my ears, 'cause my ears are weirdly shaped? I don't know.

Raleigh: Mine are too. I think this is a genetic thing. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I don't know what that's—

Raleigh: Dad's are, too.

Sydnee: [laughs] I don't know what that's all about. But, uh, I don't have that problem with Raycon wireless earbuds. They stay in there, even if I'm, you know, exercising or dancing around the kitchen with my kids. It doesn't matter. They stay in there.

There's also an awareness mode, so if you want to listen to your music or whatever and, you know, be aware of what's going on in your surroundings, so if you're walking somewhere or something, you can put 'em on awareness mode. So I think that's a really cool feature, and a really safe one.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Uh, and they're priced just right. You get quality audio at half of price of other premium audio brands, so you should really check out the Raycon wireless earbuds. They— I can't tell you how much it means to me to have earbuds that don't fall out of my ears.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] Uh, Teylor, if our listeners want to get their Raycon wireless earbuds, what should they do?

Teylor: Well, right now *Still Buffering* listeners can get 15% off their Raycon order at buyraycon.com/buffering. That's buyraycon.com/buffering to save 15% on Raycons. [Buyraycon.com/buffering](https://buyraycon.com/buffering).

Sydnee: So Teylor, what I was gonna ask is— and, I mean, I feel like because I know you so well, I can understand why this would have meant a lot to you, um, in terms of, like, its artistry and, like, visual impact and all that kind of stuff. But, like, generally speaking, why— there are lots of beautiful, you know, especially anime films that you could've chosen from. What made this one mean more to you?

Teylor: Um, I think— you know, yeah. 'Cause outside of obviously I love intricate sort of obsessive worldbuilding, I love a lot of detail. Stuff that you throw

in the background and it doesn't necessarily— it builds the world, but not the story, and I love that stuff, which this has a lot of. But really more to, like, the storyline, um, and this is true really in both the manga and the movie, which the manga, it's a lot longer, it goes— it's a little different. There's a lot more story to it. Uh, and one thing that it does is, you don't really have a main hero. There's not that concept of hero. You kind of change storylines to see what the— you know, what the rebellion's doing, what the religious zealots are doing, what, you know, what's happening with Tetsuo, what's happening with Kaneda. Uh, and it kind of moves around, so you're just seeing this story move forward, and all the people— like, even, like, the, uh, the Major, you know, the military guy that's kind of— he starts out seeming like a cliché bad guy, but then he really moves forward as, like, he's a source of good. He has good beliefs and he's trying to protect people, and that's what he's there for. There's a lot of nuance to how the characters develop, and there's not this central idea of, like, one big hero that's gonna save the day.

And the movie, which has much less time to work with, I think still does that same thing where I really— I'm a little exhausted by the idea of the one big hero that's gonna come in and fix things. And I think this, if anything *Akira* sort of, like, specifically skewers that. That having the most power doesn't make you the— the hero, doesn't make you the good guy. We see that with, you know, with Tetsuo, that he loses his mind. He's got all this power, and he was this kind of nice kid at the beginning that has this friendship and, you know, and he becomes a monster. And the people that work to defeat him are really just a bunch of people that don't have a lot of power, but coming together in an agreement that, you know, however decrepit this world is, we're going to do what we can to protect it.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And I like that, 'cause I— the traditional— and it's funny, 'cause I also think it's a very Western thing, the traditional hero narrative. One person, if they are strong enough and we give them all our power, they can save us. And it's like, no. That actually makes a villain. That doesn't make a hero. Like, there are protagonists in *Akira*. There aren't heroes, and I like that.

Sydnee: I think that's a really interesting point, 'cause that— that speaks to kind of an inherent cultural difference there, too. Because we don't have that sort of, um, inherent general concern for, like, humans as a collective in the US.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I'm not saying— and when I say that people get, like, mad 'cause they're like, "Well, I care about other people." And it's like, well, I mean, I'm not saying *you* don't.

Rileigh: As a whole.

Sydnee: As a whole, that is not part of traditional American values, whatever that means anymore.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] We say on the year anniversary of the insurrection. I don't know.

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] I don't know what that means.

Taylor: Well, I mean, that's— yeah. I mean, that's— I think that that's— it's— and there is— I mean, even to get into the further, like, sort of cultural relevance, I mean, I don't think you can— and this is sort of one thing that's of discussion even now, is that at some point some big American production company is probably gonna try to make an *Akira* live action, which to me just feels deeply wrong. Because you can't ignore that there's a frame around *Akira* which is, Japan went through, you know, a— an atomic bombing. Like, that is clearly an influence on this, and I think even when you get into some of the visuals, either the kids that, like, are sort of withered and they're old but they're also still in childlike bodies, or the tumor masses that explode from Tetsuo. Like, there's a lot there that specifically deals with being a country that went through that attack and fallout and radiation and all. Like, that's intrinsic to the storyline, so I think just— you can't tell that story from an American perspective, but I think that's also— that goes back to that, this idea of like, if we have all the power to destroy, then we can do the right things. We can be the good guys. And how that power ultimately just is... I don't think power— I don't think ultimate power is ever good. I don't think anybody should ever hold that.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: No, you're right. Well, and it— it's always, like, again it's such a— it is such a Western concept that that is what, like, succeeding in some way looks like. You win when you can be the biggest and toughest and strongest and scare everybody else because of the power you wield.

Taylor: Exactly. If we have the biggest guns pointing at everybody else, then we'll know peace. [laughs quietly] Which is...

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: ... not— not that.

Sydnee: Which hasn't worked for us so far.

Raleigh: Crazy how that didn't work. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I know. Um... I also think visually— that's the other thing, Taylor. I, uh— there were lots of, especially as we— as you already referenced, the— Tetsuo becomes sort of this— how would you describe his final... final form, there?

Taylor: [laughs quietly] It's like a Cronenberg nightmare. A big...

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: ... mass of tumors and veins, and there's some mecha thrown in there. Like...

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. And he, like, engulfs others. Um, yeah. [laughs quietly] Literally. And, uh, like, so gross. [laughs] So— so upset—

Raleigh: Very unsettling.

Sydnee: Yes! Uh, very unsettling. But I feel like this is a theme in a lot of the, um, stuff you're drawn to, Tey. [laughs]

Taylor: Well, I— I do love body horror. I feel like it's the thing that scares me the most, but also the thing that I enjoy the most. Um... that's— this is definitely, like, this is... the high point of body horror, that whole sequence. Um...

Raleigh: Yeah. It made me— it reminded me of, uh, what did we read? Um, that was another thing you introduced us to in an episode a while ago. It was a manga.

Taylor: Oh, *Bug Boy*.

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydney: Yes, it does remind me of *Bug Boy*, yeah.

Raleigh: [simultaneously] It had that same feel.

Sydney: [laughs]

Raleigh: Obviously different, but, like, the same sort of body horror, but in a way that is very surreal, but also very, like, realistic at the same time [laughs] in a way that's upsetting. [laughs]

Sydney: Not as cute as *Bug Boy* could be sometimes though.

Raleigh: No. [laughs]

Taylor: I was— you know, I've tried to figure— like, what is the source of my love of body horror? And I asked some of my— I asked other trans friends, like, how they feel about body horror, and we all were like, "We love it."

I feel like there's something there where it's like, something about, like, living in a body that feels like a nightmare, and then, like, having that concept explored, you feel seen in a really messed up way. [laughs] There is that. It's like, "Yes, I do feel like a— a growing against my control, pulsating mass of flesh. Thank you!" [laughs]

Sydney: [laughs] Thank you.

Raleigh: That makes sense when you describe it that way.

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: Like, I see what you mean.

Sydnee: I would not have drawn that connection, but I—

Rileigh: I wouldn't have thought that, but yeah.

Sydnee: No, that— that makes sense. [laughs]

Taylor: I don't know. I don't know. If you don't— if you don't share that feeling that's fine, but that's just my own personal interpretation.

Sydnee: Sure, sure. Well, uh, I felt, um... similarly. Like, the— what are they? The espers, the E-S-P-ers?

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I felt so, um, sad about— I mean, even before, like, I watched the entire film and knew where we were going with those little— I don't know. Are they little kids, really? No, they're old now. They're not little kids.

Taylor: They're— they're in their 30's, timeline-wise, based on when the years of explosion happened, but then they've also been kept in this childlike state.

Sydnee: They made me very sad.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And I felt like that that's separate. That's a whole other, like, commentary that I felt in the movie is, um, children have this potential to, in this case, like, literally see what the world could be, or just, like, in a more figurative sense, like, have the potential to shape the future. Um, and it just— I don't know. It made me really sad. I feel like that's— and maybe because I saw *Stranger Things* first, that's why it struck that same chord in me, even though this was obviously— that is derivative of *Akira*.

Like, the idea that we would, as adults, harness that sort of power for our own gross ends.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I don't know. That made— they made me very sad. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: In her little, like, pink floating bed thing. [laughs]

Taylor: Well, you know, at the end of the movie when, uh, they all sort of join the spirit of *Akira*, they don't die. They don't go away. They go somewhere else, you know? In the manga it's a little bit more— it's like they create a second universe that they can exist in. Um, but the idea is they're— this world's not ready for this power. Uh, which I think— like, the next evolution. 'Cause there's that talk about, like, as we evolve, you know, what if you gained the next level of awareness or power, but you still had the sort of mindset of your previous evolutionary state. That humans just aren't ready for the next thing, which is this freedom of, you know, this— this power to— I love the sequence when the three E-S-P-ers are animating the toys.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like, it's really kind of beautiful and, I mean, it gets a little scary, but I also think it's— it's a beautiful sequence. And the idea that there is this power that humans could develop which is just a magical, you know, fantastic thing of how we perceive reality, but because we only have the limited, like, human way of viewing it, we go, "How can we weaponize this? How can we make this about destruction and power?"

And so it's like, "Oh, you're not ready for this. We're gonna go away until you are."

Sydnee: Yeah. That makes sense. What do you think the milk is all about?

[all laugh quietly]

Taylor: Like, why is it an ocean of milk there?

Sydnee: [laughs] Yeah.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Well... I think it's more because that's the— the thing that they're generating, these three people that have been kept in this childlike state, you know? There's children's toys and milk. It's— this is their sort of juvenile landscape.

Sydnee: I wondered about the milk. I was thinking of all kinds of things that have to do with, like, sustaining babies and stuff. I was like, "Hmm... "

Raleigh: "Hmm... "

Sydnee: "Hmm, symbolism of the milk. Hmm... I gotta think about this."
[laughs]

Taylor: Maybe. I don't— I'm not the— I have not, like, read an official response from Otomo about what the milk means!

Sydnee: About the milk. [laughs]

Raleigh: See, this is how I can tell when I'm watching something when I'm in school and when I'm out of school. When I'm in school and in, like, that mindset— 'cause a lot of my English classes are watching things and analyzing them in, like, a literature sense, or like a symbolic sense. But when I'm out of school, I don't— there is no part of me that was like, "Hmm, what's the deeper meaning? What's the milk? What does it mean?"

I was like, "Intere— okay, mm-hmm. There's milk, mm-hmm, okay."

Sydnee: I tend to assume anything that seems bizarre is, like... well, there's— this has specifically been chosen. If it seems like a very strange choice, like, oh, then I should— and then I get frustrated if I'm not understanding it. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: And I want to understand what it means. But I— you know, I always liked that about things, like dystopian future sort of, you know, books, movies, whatever. The idea that what I'm trying to do really is crack, what are you talking about now? Like, this isn't really about the future, 'cause you don't know the future. You're commenting on the now. Or the past, or the— whatever, you know? This isn't about the future. It's about your interpretation of events now, and what

that could lead to. But I always like to... you know? I don't know. That— I enjoy watching movies like that and trying to crack all those codes and figure that out. What are you wanting to say about now?

Rileigh: Right. I think that's what makes good dystopian stuff that I enjoy. Like that— well, like *Don't Look Up* that literally just came out that, Tey, we watched over Christmas. It's— yes, it takes place in the future, at a different, you know— in a different America, I guess, but I mean, it's talking about current America. Or even, like, something like *The Hunger Games* or *Divergent* or whatever that's like a YA dystopian novel or movie. Like, you can look at it and take away what it's actually saying about now. 'Cause, I mean, that's what you gotta be talking about if you're talking about how bad the future is, right? Like, you have to be thinking about, well, we did something to get there. This is what it's gonna be like. Think about what you're doing now, you know? Or you'll end up with a giant flesh blob.

Sydnee: [laughs loudly]

Taylor: Exactly, though. Like, that's— what roads are we on, and what are the obvious ends?

Rileigh: Yes.

Taylor: I guess it's a giant flesh blob.

Rileigh: [laughs]

Taylor: Or—

Sydnee: Things seemed to get better after the giant flesh blob though, so...

Taylor: Well, yeah, I mean—

Rileigh: [through laughter] It's always darkest before the giant flesh blob!

Taylor: [laughs] So we're just waiting on the giant flesh blob now, huh?

Rileigh: Uh-huh. [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, it's— I mean—

Rileigh: What's our equivalent? [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] It's interesting that, you know, you talk about how, like, what they're saying is humans aren't ready for this power. Um, and so much of it is, like, resting on the fact that we don't ever remember the past. Like, we're focusing on, you know, trying to predict and see the future but, like, our problem is, the reason we can't reckon with something like that is that we... have short memories for all the stupid stuff we did, I don't know, exactly a year ago today. [laughs quietly] You know.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Let alone the last couple decades, or centuries. I don't know. How long have we been a country? A while.

Rileigh: Always. [sighs]

Taylor: I do—

Sydnee: Alwa—[wheeze-laughs]

Taylor: [laughs] Always?

Rileigh: I mean— not "We've always been a country." The always was before, before you said how long have we been a country.

Taylor: Did you forget a date? Did you forget a bolded date? [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: I forgot a bolded date.

Sydnee: Oceania has always been at war with Eurasia, and—[laughs]

Rileigh: I— we're gonna not talk about the fact that I have a degree in political science. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: I don't— I know the history of the country.

Taylor: But I do think— I don't think it's entirely hopeless. Like, I don't think the movie is hopeless, or our situation. I don't— I'm not a hopeless person. But, uh, I think that there's a point— and the manga does it, and then definitely the anime even makes room for it with Kei, you know, the, uh— the young woman who's very politically involved. She's very, you know, like, driven. She's— she believes in things. She believes in... saving people, and, like, you know, making a better world.

They also make a point of the three— the E-S-P-ers are using her because she has powers similar to theirs. She has abilities.

Sydnee: I noticed that.

Taylor: Yeah, they say, like, "Oh, we can use her." And then even at the end when they're saying they're not ready yet, but, like, sort of there are those out there. And that comes back to her. That, you know, the seeds for the future that is coming is still here, and it's in people like her that are fighting that aren't using whatever abilities they're given for their own gain, but rather for the good of other people.

Sydnee: That's really interesting. I wonder— yeah. No, that is a good point, because it— it brings about the idea that it's not— it's just that the power keeps ending up in the wrong hands.

Taylor: Right. Or maybe that it— it's the wrong— when the wrong people have it, they take it to a bad place. And when the right people have it, they don't become some almighty, all-powerful thing, because they're sharing it. They're distri— they're using it to help other people. [holding back laughter] They're distributing their wealth of power. [laughs]

Sydnee: Which— well, and it's hard, too. Because, like, when I think about what does that mean for us today, uh, I always think about, like, artificial intelligence and things like, you know, an Alexa in our home.

[all laugh]

Sydnee: Well, and it's—

Taylor: Don't say that too loud, she'll— she'll talk to you!

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Well, I know.

Raleigh: She'll be listening to us.

Sydnee: I know. There's not one in this room. I— you can't say her name. Isn't that weird? Like, you can't say the name of it 'cause then it'll start listening to you?

Raleigh: That's a regular occurrence in our house is, "You know, that thing? The A-L-E-X-A?"

Sydnee: Yeah, I do that! I know! Which is already weir— like, if you think about that you've become accustomed to doing that, it's weird and dystopian already.

Taylor: She's gonna learn to spell.

Sydnee: It is— it is!

Raleigh: It's like when you spell around a kid before they can spell, and then you realize, like, oh no, you can understand everything I'm saying now. You know how to spell. Yep.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Oh man. That'll be the day that I run out of the house screaming, when I spell her name and she's like, "I know you're talking about me."

Raleigh: "Hello, Sydnee." [laughs]

Sydnee: But, like, what is the ultimate goal of that sort of technology, that could be used to make life a lot better, and easier, and it could be used for many good things I could think of? Um, I don't know if it's bad or if you'd call it neutral that it just wants to collect data on what I wanna buy so it can sell me things. Like, where does that fall into the scale of good and evil? [laughs]

Taylor: I think that's bad, maybe? [laughs]

Raleigh: It's a little bad. [laughs]

Sydnee: I mean, obviously— and I'm not naive. I know that there are a lot worse things that collecting that data about people can lead to than selling me things.

Rileigh: I think there's another dystopian movie or book about this, right? [laughs] about this exact thing.

Sydnee: Well, I mean, 'cause then if it's collecting data on, like, "And what are your political beliefs? And what do you personally think about this person? And maybe we don't like what you personally think about this—" obviously there are lots of really scary implications to that. But it seems like a lot of the original focus was, we want to sell people things better.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Um, so I don't know. Where does that lead us? [laughs quietly]

Taylor: I mean, that's— that's the sort of— I think the sort of *Catch-22* of this futuristic look at how power works out, right? Is that the people who come into it usually have to be the type of people that desire it more than anything else, 'cause the people that could maybe do good things with it weren't the kind of people to acquire it in the first place. They're not willing to take the underhanded means to get it. Like, how do we build a better society if the people that end up in power are always people that want power for themselves? I don't know.

Sydnee: We... give the power... to people who don't... want it? That doesn't make sense.

Rileigh: Hmm.

Sydnee: I don't know. I don't have a solution.

Rileigh: [sighs] Does anyone?

Taylor: That's the *Game of Thrones* solution.

[all laugh]

Sydnee: Is that how that ends? I never watched that.

Taylor: Well... [laughs] there's a lot more to that.

Sydnee: Now, I watched the one episode with the mean uncle and the burning boats.

Raleigh: You loved to— you love to remember when mom and dad made you watch one random episode of *Game of Thrones*. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] It was a very— it was a very weird night. [laughs]

Raleigh: I would like you all to know that now that I have started living away from our parents, you know, I lived with them during the majority of the pandemic last year and now I live away from them most of the time, when I came home for Christmas I now have been victim to the same thing you all both have been victim to, which is watching a random episode of a TV show that mom and dad have been watching that I have not been watching. [laughs] Except this time it was *Dexter*. And I was like, "No, wait."

Taylor: Oh, the new *Dexter*?

Raleigh: Yeah! And I hadn't started it yet. I was like, "No, wait, guys! I was actually— okay, never mind. Now I've seen the next-to-last episode." [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah... yeah, mom started discussing that with me. I was like, "Nah-nah, nope! Nope. No! I don't— no, I don't even wanna know what the setup is. I wanna know nothing."

[all laugh]

Sydnee: You can just come to our house where you can watch *Encanto* 24/7 right now.

Raleigh: Yeah, now I have seen half of *Encanto* twice.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: So I think I've seen it one whole time.

Sydnee: Well, um, Teylor, I really enjoyed *Akira*. I mean, that sounds like a dumb thing to say, 'cause obviously— I was aware enough of it, having never seen it or knowing anything about it, to know, like, "Oh, that's a big deal." [laughs] "That's a— that's a big movie. People like that."

Um, and I can see why, 'cause it really is a lot of the stuff that I enjoy today, it turns out, [laughs quietly] that's where those ideas came from, or at least in part. And I had no idea.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Teylor: Thank you for watching it. I know, like, you know, and for anyone that hasn't watched it, there is a lot of violence in it. There is a— there is blood, there is brutality, there is... body horror. So if that, if any of that—

Raleigh: Flesh blob.

Teylor: [laughs] Flesh.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: And it's— and I would say, like, thematically it is intense, especially kind of living in the time we are right now where things feel very dire, um, but, like, I don't know. In some way that kind of fiction gives me comfort right now, because I guess things must've always felt dire to people, you know? I mean, we're not new or special for thinking that, 'cause apparently people have been feeling that way long enough to make many works of art about it. [laughs] So...

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't know. Is that comforting?

Raleigh: In an odd way.

[pause]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] Teylor's not answering. Like, "I don't know. Not really."

Raleigh: "No."

Taylor: I don't know. Like, I— I'm not not a cynic, but I will say that I think that there's a hopeful message in *Akira*. Something that's sad that feels very relevant now, but I think ends on a hopeful note. I'll take it as a net positive.

Raleigh: Sure.

Sydnee: Yeah, I can see that. And I would say we didn't completely spoil this movie for you.

Raleigh: No.

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: There's a lot— there's just so much that happens, I don't think you could, without, like, a really detailed recount of every single— I don't think you could spoil the whole thing.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: So... well, thank you, Taylor.

Raleigh: Yeah, thank you, Tey.

Sydnee: I really enjoyed it.

Taylor: Thank you both for watching.

Sydnee: Raleigh?

Raleigh: Yes?

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs] Where you takin' us next?

Rileigh: Next week, we're gonna go to another dystopian world in which everyone bursts out into song in the middle of the street—

Taylor: Oh no!

Rileigh: —in LA traffic. [laughs]

Sydnee: It's not Grease 2?

Rileigh: It's La La Land.

Sydnee: Ah.

Taylor: Ahh.

Sydnee: Almost as good as Grease 2.

Rileigh: Yeah. Surprisingly— I didn't know until today neither of you have seen this movie before. Um, it is one of my all-time favorite movies, uh, so... there you go.

Sydnee: I didn't know that!

Rileigh: I can't believe we haven't talked about it yet, so.

Sydnee: Well, I've never seen it. I'm looking forward to it.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Same.

Rileigh: All the Andrew Garfield talk, Emma Stone's in it, so, you know, it's, like, adjacent.

Sydnee: Oh. I'm sitting here going, "Is Andrew Garfield in it?"

Rileigh: [simultaneously] Andrew Garfield's not in it.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: No, but Emma Stone. And she's, like, you know, just like one degree removed.

Taylor: Emma Stone is Andrew Garfield adjacent. I like that. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Uh, or maybe Andrew Garfield is Emma Stone adjacent.

Taylor: I...

Rileigh: Well, yes.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: But in the current context of media—

Sydnee: I'm joking.

Rileigh: —I like to think of everything in terms of how far removed is it from Andrew Garfield. [laughs]

Taylor: He's the new Kevin Bacon.

Rileigh: Yeah! [laughs]

Sydnee: I like to think that they're good friends who would be happy either way.

Rileigh: Yes.

Sydnee: I have no idea. [laughs] I don't know. Just seems nice, doesn't it?

Rileigh: Yes. We'll talk about it next week. [laughs]

Sydnee: Anyway. [laughs]

Taylor: Sounds good.

Sydnee: Well, thank you both. Thank you, listeners. You should go to— well, first of all you should watch *Akira*, if you haven't.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Um, we watched the dub, super enjoyed it. Teylor, the sub is great as well, I hear.

Teylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: So either way, however you prefer.

Teylor: I think Hulu has the dub. I don't— do they have the sub too? I don't know.

Sydnee: The— I watched the dub on Hulu.

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: So. Um, you should go to Maximumfun.org and check out all the great podcasts that you would enjoy. Uh, you can tweet at us @stillbuff. You can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org, and thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, "Baby You Change Your Mind."

[theme music plays in the background]

Raleigh: This has been your cross-generational guide to the culture that made us. I am Raleigh Smirl.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Teylor: And I'm Teylor Smirl.

Raleigh: I am still buffering...

Sydnee and Teylor: And I... am... too.

[music volume increases]

Sydnee: I think you might be snowed in here.

Raleigh: I know. I think I'm stuck.

Sydnee: Are you ready for *Encanto* again?

Rileigh: [sighs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

[theme music ends]

Rileigh: I mean, yeah.

Taylor: Watch it straight through. Maybe it's different that way.

Sydnee: Hey!

Rileigh: Now I can see it all together.

Sydnee: Let's go. That was a Lin reference.

Rileigh: Yeah.

[cheerful music plays]

Dave: Are you feeling elevated levels of anxiety?

[chime]

Do you quake uncontrollably even thinking about watching cable news?

[chime]

Do you have disturbing nightmares, only to realize it's two in the afternoon and you're up?

[three chimes]

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