

Crime Is Still Happening - The Village: Media Club Plus

S02E04

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Introduction

[“[Dr Malcolm and Friends](#)” by Jack de Quidt begins playing]

Keith: Greetings from Media Club Plus, a podcast about plunging into the media that thrills us and the stories that chill us. As always, we have been dragged to you by Friends at the Table. Before our next season, we'll be subjecting ourselves to the twisted mind of M. Night Shyamalan. My name is Keith J. Carberry. You can find me online @KeithJCarberry. You can find the Let's Plays that I do at youtube.com/runbutton. Uh, you can listen to the five of us on Friends at the Table where we play role-playing games and have a good time. Um, and, uh, we— When this comes out, we will have recently uh, done a bunch of streams for our 11th anniversary? Is that the year?

Sylvi: Yeah. That's the year, yeah.

Art: Yeah.

Keith: Wow. That's wild. Um, and so, uh, you can go to youtube.com/runbutton to, to, to eventually find the, uh, VODs of that going up.

Ali: No, he's lying to you.

Keith: I'm not—

Ali: You can go to youtube.com/runbutton to find Run Button VODs.

Keith: No, youtube.com/friendsatthetable!

Sylvi: Wow. What a scammer.

Ali: If you wanna see Friends at the Table, you gotta go to a different YouTube. That was sneaky.

Keith: It wasn't sneaky.

Ali: Oh my God, Keith said he was gonna start lying and he's lying.

[**Keith** laughter]

Keith: Oh my God.

Art: Oh my God.

Sylvi: This is our twist.

Keith: I've been doing Run Button recordings for 10 days, so I just got in the flow of saying youtube.com/runbutton.

Sylvi: Unlikely excuse.

Keith: Well, hold on. I wanna— To be fair, just five days ago I said youtube.com/friendsofthetable on a run button recording, so it evens out.

Ali: Okay. Also, we're never saying youtube.com/friends_table or whatever. Friends at the Table.

Art: Yeah.

Sylvi: We're not?

Ali: Yeah.

Sylvi: Keith says it pretty often.

Keith: I say it. I say it all the time.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: That was part of our—

Art: I'm the one who does the YouTube stuff for us.

Keith: That's the truth. Yeah, it's true. But yeah, that's part of the general intro patter, I think. With me, as always, is Sylvi Bullut.

Sylvi: Hi, I'm Sylvia. You can find me most places @SylviBullet. You can also check out my band at gutmachineband.bandcamp.com if you like loud noises. Also check out sidestory.show. Did Keith mentioned that one? I don't think you did.

Keith: I did not.

Sylvi: sidestory.show if you wanna hear us talk about video games, hosted by Austin and featuring literally everyone who's on Friends at the Table.

Keith: It's true. Ali Acampora.

Ali: Hi, my name is Ali. You can find me over at Friends at the Table, which is a great actual play podcast. You can listen to all of us.

Keith: Art Martinez-Tebbel.

Art: Hi, I'm Art. You can go to friendsofthetable.cash. Has someone done that one yet?

Keith: No, I don't think I have.

Art: For bonus content from this and other shows that we do.

Keith: And returning to the show for the first time since season 1 is Jack de Quidt.

Jack: Hi, I'm Jack. You can get any of the music featured— Well, I mean, you can get this theme for this show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com, but there's a lot of other music there from Friends at the Table. I am so excited to be on Media Club Plus: M. Night Shyamalan. This is my favorite podcast. Austin said it when we were making, uh, Hunter x Hunter, and I, I thought, well, it's very kind that Austin's saying that, but he's saying that to us because we're his friends. And now, not having been on Media Club Plus and listening to it as a civilian, I can say that this podcast rules, and it is my favorite podcast.

Keith: See that, Ali?

Art: And Jack's not friends with us anymore, so it's— That really means a lot.

Keith: Yeah, that's true.

Art: We've all had a big falling out since Jack— since the Hunter x Hunter season ended.

Jack: They're paying me to be here. Ali, we're just doing it for laughs.

Keith: But a very low amount. It's very small. We're paying Jack to be here, but like almost nothing. It's an insult.

Ali: Why did you say, see that, Ali?

Keith: After every episode, Ally screams at me and says, this show's terrible.

Ali: Oh, I do do that. I do do that.

Sylvi: Wow.

Jack: You scream?

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: We didn't even know Ali could scream until we started doing this.

Art: I've gone through 3 sets of headphones making this show.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: I have a lot of notes.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: My tinnitus is a lot worse.

Art: And those notes are, I'm screamingly angry at you.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: And F sharp.

Jack: I wish you released this podcast weekly.

Sylvi: Don't say shit like that. You know what it's like.

Ali: You, Janine, and Austin can watch the movies and record a different one.

Keith: Yeah, you can do it weekly. Like an anti-Media Club Plus.

Ali: Oh.

Keith: You can do it.

Jack: Oh, but the colors are inverted.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: I'll do it, but like, don't set us up for that.

Art: Theme song in a minor key.

Keith: Run to the mountains of France and do an anti-Media Club Plus.

Sylvi: Oh, Media Club Minus. You guys have to cover Glee. Go for it.

Keith: Okay. Yeah.

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Ali: I'd do that.

Art: Um, oh no.

Keith: Uh, before we get into the recap, um, high-level thoughts on this movie. I was really excited to come in and like one of these movies as much as Art thought that I might.

Art: We might be here this time.

Keith: Well, no, because Art has come in with a lower than expected score for this one, I think.

Art: Well, I think I watched Signs and it was better than I remembered, and I watched this and it was worse than I remembered.

Keith: I thought this was so much better than Signs as a, as a movie product. To me, I was like, kind of surprised by how it didn't fall apart anywhere. It was relatively even all the way through. Sure, like all of these movies, it ended more abruptly, 4 for 4, than any other movie I've ever seen in my life. It ended like I imagine the final episode of Sopranos will end.

Ali: Hmm.

Art: Geez, spoilers. I mean, we can either get into it right now or we can save it for much later. But the idea that you would say that this movie doesn't fall apart—

Jack: Yeah, I'm with you, Art.

Art: Is just bonkers to me.

Keith: So here's the thing. It didn't fall apart because the thing that maybe I think the movie might have fallen apart around, I had been feeling since maybe the second scene.

Sylvi: That's fair. I think I also kind of expected a collapse at some point, but I ended up liking it overall.

Art: I—

Ali: Yeah. No, go ahead.

Jack: Oh, no, no, no. You go, Ali.

Ali: Okay. I, I came away as a re-viewer, a second viewing, saw this when it was in theaters. I, like, think that this movie held up a little bit. Like, the twist was twistier than I remember it being when I watched it. I think it's, like, engaging the whole way through, just in terms of, like, camera work and, like, interest in the story, even if I, like, know where it was going. Um, so I really enjoyed this. It's silly. There's—

Art: I agree with a lot of that. I think, I think the, like, scene to scene, I think the movie is very good.

Sylvi: I was gonna say, my relationship with this movie is that I think it is— I think— Objectively I can't say it's like, better than Signs, but personally I think it is. [**Keith:** I can say it is.] I think it's more like there's more interesting ideas going on here. And I think my big takeaway from it is I like the— I like, even if they're not executed great all the time, I at least like the conversations that are trying to get started here more than any of the ones in Signs.

Art: I guess I'm interested in hearing that idea articulated in a way that isn't some disabled people are magic.

Sylvi: Oh, that shit is bad.

Art: And some disabled people are the evil of the modern world personified.

Keith: Look, welcome to M. Night Shyamalan still doing Stephen King.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: He's still doing Stephen King.

Sylvi: This is very Stephen King.

Keith: It's very Stephen King.

Jack: I did not think this movie was very good, but I do think that it is very, very interesting, and I think that there are bits of it that I like a great deal. I I wanted to come on this episode first, um, after hearing you all talk about Sixth Sense and Unbreakable and Signs, even though I haven't heard that yet, because I feel like at this point in M. Night's filmography, he has gotten the, the stew bubbling on the stove, and we can look into the stew and recognize very clearly the kind of the ingredients that M. Night is interested in cooking with.

Sylvi: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And, you know, I don't want to spoil Art's notes, but Art's first note here is like, oh my god, he's making another one of these movies. And I think by this point in his filmography, he's really starting to settle into that. I'm watching the ways that this is very much of a piece with his previous films and is also kind of trying something new and sort of falling over while it's doing it. That stuff is really interesting to me. I also think that it is really interesting in terms of um— As a piece of genre work. You know, we've seen M. Night do The Sixth Sense, which is a ghost story that is actually sort of about, like, um, how you relate to other people. We have Unbreakable, which is ostensibly a superhero story but is actually about how we relate to other people. Signs, Aliens, ditto. And The Village, you know, here we are, um, making like, a folk horror movie that's not actually a folk horror movie and is instead about the transformative power of love. We are gonna see M. Night pull this trick again and again and again.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah, I, I think I'm interested in that thematically this movie is kind of like 180 degrees in the opposite direction of *Signs*, which I found to be like, irritatingly conservative in its like, sort of like, thematic direction. This movie is kind of like, like, okay, instead of a house, it's a whole village. And instead of like, being an expression of love to build these walls, it's actually an expression of corruption to build the walls. I like that. It's like one of my favorite things about this movie is the ways that it's different thematically from *Signs*. And I was also just relieved to have a movie that felt normally paced. *Unbreakable* and *Signs* were so strangely paced, so bizarrely constructed. For a guy who is like— It's Spielberg, right, who says, I make one for the studio and I make one for me? Is that his quote?

Art: Oh, I just assumed that that quote has been around for 100 years. I think that someone said that for the first time.

Keith: I think that it's specifically a thing that people attribute to Spielberg, uh, is like a one for them, one for me thing. And like, for a guy who is like, kind of not just trying to be the, you know, a Spielberg guy, and who was specifically inspired by Spielberg, and who *Newsweek* said like, this guy's the new Spielberg, which is something that I saw when I was looking up stuff about this movie.

Sylvi: So weird. Uh, like, bizarre comparison.

Keith: It is— I get it because his filmmaking style is very similar. His directorial style is very similar.

Sylvi: Sure.

Keith: Uh, uh, but like, M. Night Shyamalan seems like, incapable of structuring a movie in the normal way, even though everything about the way he packages his movies seems to be about like, doing things by the book. Uh, and the way that he strays from the book, I find make his movies harder to watch, and— But also not more interesting. And this is like the most normal watch of any of his movies, except maybe *The Sixth Sense*.

Jack: We can come back to this post-recap and as we get into the movie, but it's fascinating to me to hear you, Keith, say that this film has like, normal or good pacing, because I simply do not believe that is true.

Sylvi: Oh, the pacing is weird.

Art: Yeah, I mean—

Keith: Coming from Signs and Unbreakable, it's— Okay.

Jack: Yeah, all right. Okay, I can kind of see where you're coming from.

Art: I mean, I'd have to sit down and watch both of them again, and I'm not super interested in it with like, a pad and paper, but you convinced me this is paced exactly the same as Signs. They're both just like very— And I like how slow he's willing to go, but I do think that this is a slow movie.

Keith: It's slow. It's slow, but that doesn't mean anything to me. Like, I've always liked slow movies. But then it's the unevenness of his movies that throws me off. And this movie's very— I said it in my recap, I call— I say it is his first even movie since The Sixth Sense.

Jack: Wow.

Ali: When you say evenness with regards to pacing, [**Keith:** Yeah.] Can you expand upon that a little bit?

Keith: Yeah. So in Unbreakable, it feels like feels like we have this huge, um, but extremely brief, uh, first act, uh, and then we have a very long and slow and, um, mostly uninteresting second act about sort of exploring— About Bruce Willis's character exploring everything that the audience already knows. And then the climax is like his one superhero fight. And then he, like, goes to confront the villain, and then the movie ends with confronting the villain. And it's just— It's just the most insane thing I've ever seen in my life. I mean, I definitely like that movie more than Signs, um, but, like, it is so weird the way that that unfolds, and that that is like— Like, the beat-by-beat what

happens in that movie is so fucking weird to me. And then Signs, you have like a mostly normal first act. Again, you have a second act that is like, kind of long and kind of about exploring the stuff that the viewer already knows is happening and spending a really long time like, poking at the edges of the character's understanding. And then you have Ray Ruddy, who says, by the way, they're afraid of water.

Sylvi: Reddy, please.

Keith: Sorry, Ray Reddy. He says, by the way, the aliens are afraid of water. I figured it out in my library off screen.

Sylvi: I got a feeling.

Keith: I got a feeling they're afraid of water. They're weak to water.

Sylvi: Direct quote.

Keith: And then, and then you have like a—

Sylvi: I don't like that movie. Sorry.

Keith: You have a very— It's— Yeah, you have a very long, like, boarding up the house and like the— It's very confusing where the climax of that movie is and like, what is the falling action. And again, it just sort of ends like— They have— There's one scene where the aliens pretend like they're going to attack, and then they wake up and they've all run away, and then the movie ends. Like, it's so weird to me. This movie—

Art: They did attack. That happened. That was in the—

Keith: Well, one of the things that happens in the movie is they go like, how come they're not even trying to get into the door? And it's because they were doing a weird trick with a coal chute.

Art: I defy you to come up with a description of what happened there that isn't an attack. They attacked that house. They attacked many places.

Keith: They just could have done such a better job. I just don't understand why they didn't do a better job.

Sylvi: The competence is not up for debate. They were bad at attacking.

Keith: They were bad. This is the worst alien invasion of all time.

Sylvi: If it was me, that kid's dead.

Keith: Yeah, I think any of us could have killed that kid.

Sylvi: Yeah, I agree, Keith.

Keith: Uh, well, let's, let's get into the recap.

Sylvi: Uh, I think that's a good idea.

Keith: 2004's *The Village*, written and directed, of course, by M. Night Shyamalan. Uh, M. Night Shyamalan alongside, uh, director of photography Richard Deakins with the—

Sylvi: Nope.

Keith: Richard? No.

Art: Roger.

Sylvi: Roger.

Keith: Roger. I— why did I write Richard?

Sylvi: His brother Richard.

Keith: Roger Deakins, uh, and returning composer, uh, receiving his first Oscar nom for one of these M. Night movies, is James Newton Howard. It's perhaps the first even movie since *The Sixth Sense*, but also the most difficult and troubling film so far. We enter on a small village's funeral. August Nicholson has lost his child, 7-year-old Daniel, 1890 to 1897. We see scenes of their pastoral existence, cleaning clothes, tending

herds, gardening, burying anything red. Did we make the right decision to settle here? asks Edward Walker, one of the elders, maybe the head elder. Uh, something is going on in this town. Red is the bad color. It attracts Those We Don't Speak Of. Uh, the town should be safe from them. They've never attacked without cause, say the elders, but it isn't. Dead things are appearing in town, skinned but uneaten. Lucius, the son of one of the elders, wants to make a trip through the forest to what they call the towns, to get medicine and supplies. The death of Daniel Nicholson and other things have been weighing on his mind. He's brave, famously brave in the village for being selfless and fast-acting. He's also silently in love with the sightless Ivy Walker, the second daughter of Edward Walker. She is not so silently in love with him. And as tensions in the town grow, with life and love trying to carry on as usual, despite the encroachment of the ones we don't speak of, Ivy proposes to Lucius. When news spreads throughout the town, Noah Percy, seemingly one of the closest friends to both Ivy and Lucius and who has an unnamed developmental disability, stabs Lucius in the stomach twice, presumably over his feelings for Ivy, which begins a long unraveling of the plot that accumulates to the following reveals: one, the monsters that stalk the town are not real, merely a figment of the elders used to keep the younger generation from venturing out. Two, Noah Percy had discovered this and had taken a monster costume and had been the one causing the problems around town. And finally, it is not 1987. It is the modern day, and they all live inside billionaire [Art: 1897.] Edward Walker's wildlife preserve. Sorry, Art, did you have a note on the year?

Art: Yeah, you said, you said 1987 instead of 1887.

Keith: Oh, okay. It is not 1887. It is the modern day, and they all live inside the billionaire Edward Walker's wildlife preserve. Edward's guilt about Lucius and Daniel, and his love for his daughter, and his secret love for Lucius's mother Alice, force his hand. He lets Ivy venture alone through the woods to the town to find medicine.

Jack: I would like to begin with something that we can, um, kind of get out of the way first and, and you know, touch on throughout the rest of the film. This film is gorgeous. Um, Roger—

Sylvi: It's really pretty.

Jack: Roger Deakins, Richard Deakins, um, is a legendary—

Keith: Roger, quote, Richard Deakins.

Art: Yeah, Richard Deakins, as he likes to be called. Richard to his friends.

Jack: Yeah—

Keith: It's so annoying. I called him Roger Deakins 9 times in the last day, and then when it's on, when the mics are on, I said Richard.

Jack: Um, you know, he's, uh, perhaps most famous for working with the Coen brothers.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Um, but he's also, you know, done a lot of additional stuff. He is a very well-respected, uh, director of photography, in part because of his—

Keith: Prolific.

Jack: Yeah, prolific. And, um, really, uh, uh— People like the way he shoots things, and they hire him specifically to shoot certain things. Deakins is very famous for the way he shoots conversations, shoots people's faces, uh, shoots light and dark. Um, he is very, very influential. Um, and I think, you know, firstly, it's really cool to see that M. Night is continuing a working relationship with real luminaries of photography, right? He worked with Tak Fujimoto for a long time. Um, most recently, he has been working with, um, his DOP on Trap, uh, also worked on Challengers and Call Me by Your Name with Luca Guadagnino.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Jack: Let me just get his name.

Sylvi: Sayombhu Mukdeeprom.

Jack: Yes. And so it's clear that M. Night has a real eye for like, who is photographing his films. This film looks, for the most part, tremendous. It has this sort of like, pale, dreamy, odd look about it the whole time. Deakins keeps framing these scenes that have this immense focal depth. You know, you will be looking at 2 people talking, and in the background, you'll be able to see, you know, 200 feet of the village down a hill with people in perfect focus, all, you know, moving around. There's a scene halfway through where people are like, hiding in a bunker, and we get these beautiful, like, dreamy tableaux of their faces lit from the lights of the trapdoor above in the, in the dark. I was so impressed by the way this thing looked.

Art: Um, there's a— Not to jump all the way to the end, but there's a hell of a shot like, in the last 20 minutes, where she's in the— Where Ivy is in the woods, and it has just started to appear that perhaps the monsters are real.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Oh yeah.

Art: And she like, stumbles, and she— And you— The camera pulls up to see that she is in a field of the red berries from earlier in the movie, and that is a killer shot. It's, it's, I mean, again, I'm gonna, I, I guess I'm at the bottom of this one, but I— I'm not here to say this is not a good-looking movie. I'm not here to say it isn't a suspenseful movie. I'm not here to say that there are not deeply affecting dialogue couplets in this movie. I'm just here to say—

Sylvi: Just didn't work for you.

Art: That it all falls apart.

Sylvi: Yeah, that's fair. Um, this shot with the red, and then there's a shot, uh, of Jesse Eisenberg standing on a stump that I thought looked great, which sounds silly to say, but it looked like something that was filmed like at the dawn of the, of the moving picture in a weird way. There was something about the flickering light on it that made its frame rate look different than the rest of the movie. I don't know how else to put it. Also, he

was dressed like Charlie Chaplin, which helped. Um, sorry, Ali, you— I think I cut you off too.

Ali: Yeah, I, I've just— I, I think that my, like, favorite thing about this movie is actually, like, the watching of it. Like, I— A lot of the way that these scenes are framed is really interesting. The colors are all really engaging. Like, you know, the, the, the dangerous color and the safe color of yellow and red popping up again like, never feels like, like a, you know like a, like a, a guard ramp or like a, um, like, a safety wheel on a bicycle or whatever.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: I think it's always used really well and evocatively. Um, one of my big notes for this was like, that it felt almost like with some of the setting up some of these scenes, like, this is M. Night's first attempt at real like, world building. Um, and like the ways that some of these wide shots, like— Like Jack was saying, where you'll— There'll be a focused conversation happening, but these other people moving in the background, or these scenes of people just sort of living their life that, like, are aspects of things that a film would just take advantage of when it's like, oh, it's just Philadelphia and there's traffic. You know what I mean? I thought that was all really good. I think that, like, especially the way that in the very beginning, it starts out with like, um, your access to the, um, the, the like, folklore about the monster coming from the explanation to these kids. But the like, teacher has his back to the camera. There's a ton of scenes where there are people speaking who are not looking at the camera. And there are other characters who are on the camera looking into the scene too that, like happens three or four times in this movie, and every time it's just like, that's really cool.

Jack: It's such, like, attentive photography. And I feel like, um, M. Night has always had a really good eye for, um, shooting people talking. I think about, um, some of the scenes in, uh, is it Unbreakable that has the, uh, that scene in the restaurant with the incredible, like, mural on the wall behind the two characters talking?

Sylvi: I believe so, yeah. I think that's when we learned about their favorite colors being [with **Keith**] Rust and brown.

Keith: Yes, it is.

Jack: Which is— It's so funny that you would have such a beautiful shot and then you would put that conversation in front of it. And then, you know, something as simple as, um, staging your most emotive, most powerful scene in *The Sixth Sense* being in a car stuck in traffic and making that feel good. Um, so I think this is something he's always been really clued into, but like, paired with Deakins' ability with the camera, we get some really extraordinary setups. Like, my favorite shots in the movie are really simple shots that are like, off-kilter in one way or another. Um, when, uh, Lucius and Ivy sort of eventually confess their love to each other, he, uh, rather than, um, cutting from one face to another, he staged it where they're like, sitting on the step of a house and looking at each other, uh, one looking right and one looking left. And he's pushed the camera in really close so that their faces are like, perfectly framed on either side, and he just holds the shot for the whole scene.

Keith: Yeah, he returns to that shot for like three different moments of that scene too.

Jack: It's a, it's a really simple shot. And then later there's a scene where the, the village elders, who we will kind of come to talk about later, the, the, the adults, the, the people, the council, who you will come to notice are all a very sort of specific age range. It's almost as though they might have all set this thing up at some point before a second generation.

Sylvi: Surprising number of widows too among them.

Jack: Yeah, it's very odd.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Um, at one point they have to have this sort of like hasty meeting about, uh, Ivy wants to go to the towns. And rather than going into the meeting hall or whatever, M. Night and Deakins like, stage it where they've like, all gathered quickly behind a

building. Um, and the building is like, at an angle and all the elders are standing facing, uh, uh, um, Walker, who is facing away from us. Um, and it's just such a lovely way of framing, you know, one group of people listening to another person talk with this like, um, wooden building in the background. Uh, it's very, very odd. And, and you could so easily have done it by saying like, well, we'll meet them in the meeting chamber and we'll stage the scene like we did earlier in the movie. So much imagination in the way this film was shot.

Ali: Um, yeah, I think my, my favorite scene in the movie is off-kilter in a similar way, where it's Ivy's older sister confessing to her father that she's in love with Lucius.

Jack: So good.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: An early plot beat, um, that, um, she's like— Apparently it's a thing in the town where the oldest sister needs to be married off first before the youngest one can take a hand. And it's just a weird thing. And I love Ivy's sister. She's such a funny character that we see very briefly.

Jack: Played by Pam Grier, right?

Keith: Yeah. Playing a second character named Kitty. Judy Greer.

Art: Judy Greer, Pam Grier, very different person.

Keith: Judy Greer in 2004, on screen, on TV, and in the movie theaters playing a character named Kitty.

Ali: Mm. But yeah, so the scene I was setting up is she's confessing to her father that she's in love with somebody to sort of ask his permission to want to marry him, even though she's never spoken to him. And we never see her father's face, like, to the point that the camera's far enough away that I was like, I didn't know Paul Giamatti was in this movie. Because I thought he was just a completely different person. And it's so far away. And she's speaking to him and keeps like walking forward, but turning to be

excited. And they're like, walking between these buildings and the setup of like, laundry. And the like, wind is picking up in a way that like, am I supposed to be worried about this? Like, is this just like a fun moment that they had during filming? Like, I— Like, that was— It was just really fun. And I was like, I've never— Not that I've never seen it. It just felt like, really true to life. It did not feel framed in a way that was cinematic.

Keith: What I really like about that scene is, in retrospect, the different ways that— Because Kitty Walker and Ivy Walker both, at least Kitty for a minute, loved Lucius. And the way that they loved them was so different.

30:00

Keith: You could tell that Kitty really didn't know him. Her big— Her thing was like, you know, he's not like other boys. He doesn't bounce about. And like, and Ivy had recognized that like Lucius is sort of like, uh, like, um, he's, he's intentionally reserved in a way where, where it's like, she's trying to draw him out rather than being happy with the reservedness.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: I thought that that was really well done. Um, uh, another thing is, you know, I, I really think the script is a problem here.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Sylvi: Um, there's some very clunky lines.

Keith: There's some really clunky lines. And I actually kind of like that it gets, um, uh, uh, like, this is not a natural language for any of these people. Uh, I guess for the kids it is, but this is like, this has been constructed by the elders because Walker, I guess, was both a billionaire and also a history professor? And so he's— Unless I've conflated two characters, but I'm pretty sure that that's—

Art: No, those are the same.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Okay.

Sylvi: That is true.

Art: Yeah. He inherited the—

Keith: Sure, he inherited. But name a billionaire's son who's a history professor. I'll wait. I don't think that there's one on Earth.

Art: Well, you know that I am a hobbyist billionaire genealogist in my spare time, so.

Keith: Oh no. But— So, like, you know, at the end we learn, like, you know, they've kind of constructed the historical mythology of this place. And so, like, none of them are speaking a natural language, and then their children learn this sort of unnatural language.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: And, you know, it kind of feels old-timey, but you're always like, maybe he should have had a fucking, you know, some sort of consultant work with this in the old-timey language department. But then at the end, it kind of makes sense where you're like, well, it's all fake. So I guess it sounded clunky because it's not real.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah. I—

Keith: Which I think is kind of funny.

Ali: I love the sloop about it because it is immediately like, I mean, it's like, fun, but it's a little silly [**Keith:** Very silly.] And like, the more that it's happening, it's like, this is really silly. But then you get to the end of the movie and you're like, all these motherfuckers just chose to do that?

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: These people—

Sylvi: This was theater club?

Keith: It didn't help.

Ali: They're fucking LARPing?

Art: Yeah.

Sylvi: They're like— Like, oh, it hits. I'll be real, that shit hits. Especially, like, listen, we're living in the fucking tradwife TikTok era. This shit, the reveal that they're all LARPers, it does hit.

Jack: Um, the costuming is really gorgeous, but is also like, slightly off-kilter in ways that I feel is like, very, very deliberate. They're playing in sort of a post-Puritan, uh, just post-Puritan America slash sort of, uh, religious, intentional religious community era, the tradwife era, but all their costumes are kind of too clean or too sort of perfect.

Ali: Yeah.

Jack: There's an amazing shot early on where two women are sweeping a porch and they're like spinning, they're playing a game of spinning around to make their skirts billow out. And it's such a— I mean, it's a fun like, oh, we're establishing life in the village, but also it's like there's something kind of odd and stagey and costume-like about these costumes that I really like. And especially when this becomes a film about costumes kind of later on.

Keith: I like—

Sylvi: It does feel like they are dressed like they're in a stage production of like, I don't know, I don't know anything that takes place in this time period. Would Little House on the Prairie be accurate?

Keith: Uh, sure.

Art: Yeah, but doing a stage production of Little House on the Prairie is like the most unhinged thing a person could possibly do.

Sylvi: Is that not a play?

Jack: No, it's a, it's a book.

Art: What is that?

Keith: It's a book and then a TV show. Yeah.

Art: Uh...

Jack: You couldn't make a play. It would be very odd.

Keith: Um, so...

Sylvi: It would be odd, but hey.

Jack: Spend fucking ages building a house.

Sylvi: If people didn't do things that were odd, The Village wouldn't have gotten made.

Keith: Yeah, true. So, something I like about the slightly off costuming and the slightly off language, um, uh, is, like, one of the big criticisms of M. Night Shyamalan, uh, like, if you read critical, uh, like, film critic reviews of his movies, negative ones, one of the main things that you hit on is that critics who don't like his movies tend to consider one of their big downsides that they're like, logically sealed off. He works backwards from the twist and constructs a movie around it.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: And then it's very easy to poke logical holes in them. Signs is a good one of these. You look at Signs and, you know, as soon as you start questioning what are— Why are the aliens here? Why are they so ineffective? Like, why did they just run away? Why didn't they know about the water? Like, you can— You start to ask questions and it becomes very difficult for the film to support the movie under even the tiniest of prods.

Something I like about The Village is that that becomes sort of structurally important to the village itself. The village is sealed off in this way, and it does succumb to the tiniest prods. Like, they could not last even half of a generation in this place without it falling apart, because the kids were like, you know, we need to get out of here. We need to get medicine from the towns. Like, we're— We want to dare each other to, you know, quickly enter the woods and bounce out. We, like— Lucius is like, there are secrets in this town. Like, how come nothing makes sense here? And sort of— I like that—

Sylvi: They literally have mystery boxes in all of our homes.

Keith: Yeah, they literally have mystery boxes full of like their old pictures and stuff.

Sylvi: On display.

Keith: On display, yeah.

Ali: On display. Insane!

Art: But like, yeah, as mystery boxes.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: Not like, yeah.

Sylvi: Well, to be reminded of their past, before they came here and keep their sins locked away or some shit like that.

Art: Yeah, if I were doing this, I would simply not keep evidence of my big lie in my house. I would simply remember.

Keith: Yeah. Uh, my— That is for my own well-being. So the evil things from my past are kept close and not forgotten. Forgetting would be to let them be born again in another form. Uh, I like that line. I think it's a good line. Um—

Art: It's nonsense though. Like, it is as a thing to think, it's ridiculous.

Keith: Um, I don't know. I, you know, I think that there's like a, uh, there's a kind of logic to— I think if you're trying to have a secret town, having a locked box full of exposing all your secrets in all of the elders' homes, I think is silly. Um, but as a thing of like, I don't want to forget the things that made me come here, and so if I ignore them, if I put them out of mind, then I could forget and repeat the mistakes. It doesn't work. It didn't work. But I see the logic to it, at least.

Ali: I do think, like, also being dismissive about how they all keep it public, which is also really stupid, but, like, it keeps everybody accountable on an equal level, right? Like, especially as they're having children and sort of needing to keep the secret tighter within them. This sort of, like, well, we all always have proof of this thing all of the time.

Jack: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Means that, like, you know, there isn't one weak chain among us.

Sylvi: Yeah, it's sort of like a mutually assured destruction thing. We all need each other to keep up the illusion.

Art: I would love to hear what their plan was for, like, the next generation.

Jack: Yes. I will say that I think that this film is politically and ideologically odd.

Keith: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Yeah.

Jack: Um, especially given, uh, this is kind of our first post-9/11, um, uh, M. Night movie. He was work— Signs was released after 9/11.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Jack: But I believe he was making it prior to 9/11.

Keith: It started production in September 2001.

Ali: We spoke about this at length.

Keith: We spoke about this at length.

Jack: See, if you released weekly, I would—

Sylvi: Shut up!

Art: It's a very 9/11 feeling movie.

Keith: Yes, it's deeply 9/11 feeling.

Sylvi: Um, what, you mean the movie about how they have to maintain their borders is very post-9/11?

Keith: Yeah, and they have the— Yeah, they have to board up to defend against the aliens.

Sylvi: Yeah, we must always have someone on watch protecting our borders.

Art: Do Keith and Sylvi know you're talking about different movies?

Sylvi: I'm talking about The Village.

Art: I know. Keith is talking about Signs.

Keith: Oh, I was talking about Signs.

Sylvi: But the thing is— Also kind of true about both.

Keith: Well, but that's the thing. In The Village, that is the source of the corruption in the village. That's what I like about The Village. In Signs, it's how you save the family. In The Village— [**Jack:** Well see—] Also, there are— Okay, go ahead, Jack.

Jack: There are a couple of things happening here, right? First, the impetus for creating the village among the Elders, which was initially a sort of, like, theory group at a university, is this spate of, like, very personal, very directed violence against these people. Like, there were murders, robberies, sexual assaults—

Sylvi: Yeah.

Jack: Against the Elders, and they sort of— You get the impression that they see society trending towards a dark place beyond their individual grief. There's a sense that, like, the world is, is capital B Bad, and we are going to, like, construct our own world. And then, you know, it is— It is the politics of the world that they choose to construct being a kind of traditional all-white American historical town—

Keith: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Is kind of immediately fascinating. There are— I'm trying to remember if there are any people of color inside the village.

Keith: No.

Jack: I don't know if there are.

Sylvi: Nope.

Jack: And so they seal the village off. And then, in an attempt to keep people inside the village, they start working manufactured terror against their own citizens.

Keith: Right, yeah.

Jack: These sort of weird false flag monster attacks, quite literally keeping their people in a state of terror to prevent you know, you know, going outside.

Art: Including like, regular fake attacks, right?

Jack: Yes.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Jack: I— We see one—

Keith: Maybe irregular fake attacks?

Sylvi: That's true. They stage it— It seems like they stage attacks when people start getting too curious about what's going on outside, or when the children start misbehaving.

Keith: It seems to me like, there is one like, legitimate elder— Like a scare. that was sort of to keep Lucius in line, and the rest of them were Noah.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Jack: And this is fascinating because there's kind of— I said earlier that the impetus to create the Village was being subjected to this kind of violence and a belief that society was trending bad. But to hear the elders talk about it, to hear the council talk about it, the Village is sort of like, an act of love. They talk about love as being a, like, a directing force over and over again with this movie, not just in the specific case of Lucius and Ivy, but also in the sense of the, like, the larger project, and situating that love against the drills, the watchtowers, the good and the bad colors, the, um, the, the very strange set of rules, um, the monsters themselves. And all of this kind of comes to, like, a weird ideological head for me when Lucius gets stabbed, and the film's, and Ivy's, intention kind of immediately moves to, like, going out of the village to get medicine and bring it back to the village.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Jack: Rather than getting Lucius out of the village. Um, and I understand why that is, like, narratively, because the, the, the film would, would be a different thing if it was about breaking out of the village, but instead it turns it into this weird sort of, like, short-term restoration fantasy where the, the ideological project of the village is threatened by Noah stabbing Lucius. And we can, you know, talk about that a bit later.

Keith: Or even more sinisterly, by Lucius needing to be saved.

Jack: Yes, like a, like a, an evil— Directed violence now happens inside the village.

Keith: If Noah had simply killed Lucius, then there would be no threat because no one would need medicine.

Jack: So out goes—[**Ali** interruption] Oh, sorry. Go on.

Ali: Well, I think I would've just pushed back on that a little bit because I think the incident is that they could not run from crime. They built a wall and a lie as high as they could, but they could not save the situation from someone harming another person.

Keith: Right. Because they filled the town with people, and people are the ones who do crime, not towns.

Ali: Uh-huh.

Art: Um, not modernity.

Ali: Yeah. So yeah, I just, I, I just wanted to add that thought to it.

Keith: Sorry, what is—?

Ali: Well, just because, like, you know, the— I think that's part of the, the reversal of, of, um, going out versus coming in, you know what I mean? Like, the— This is the— This could have only been the first crack. This is why they're willing to do this for Lucius, because their point of doing this was to protect him from situations like this.

Keith: Right.

Ali: And to protect all of their children from experiencing a situation like this.

Keith: Yeah. I just think Edward Walker had to, like, really push the other elders to let Ivy go, um, in, in one of the better scenes in the movie, I think. Uh, which, Jack, you already mentioned the scene behind the house where they're kind of all huddled up. Uh, you know, and like, if, if Lucius had died, I think they would have been more than willing just to like sweep it all under the rug because there would— You wouldn't need to venture out to solve the situation. It could have been solved internally, but it would have been—

Art: There's an implicit— There's an implied event because the movie opens with a, with the death, with a funeral for a child.

Keith: Yes.

Sylvi: So this is the first shot of the movie.

Art: And not to, not to like, you know, um— Children die in the modern world all the time, but most, most childhood death has gone way down in the years since 1897.

Keith: Yeah. Edward basically says that, that, that death was probably preventable if they had had medicine.

Sylvi: And that's the reason like, the main reason Lucius wants to leave. That's like the inciting incident for a lot of it.

Art: Right.

Sylvi: So they've, they've let people die.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: Yeah. To maintain this.

Art: To maintain this project before. So like—

Sylvi: Under the— Which is— It's— I'm sorry, go ahead.

Art: The elders are explicitly evil.

Ali: Yeah.

Art: Inasmuch as people who let children die are evil.

Ali: Yeah. But I think that they, they have this sense in them that, you know, that wasn't murder, that was natural life, which is what they're living. But as soon as there's a weapon involved, then, you know, the same fear that brought them out of quote-unquote the towns is— Is— Has sort of breached the, the wall in a way that they can't—

Sylvi: We've like, talked about like, parenting and like, the relationships to your children a lot in the past movies, and I find this movie really interesting because it is like— It is from the perspective of people who had to grow up with the protective parents, with the people like— Like the, the relationship between like, father and daughter between Ivy and Mr. Walker is really reminiscent to some of the relationships we've seen with other— at least to me, with relationships we've seen to other like parent and child combos in the past M. Night movies, the sort of like, overprotective like, I'm trying to protect— I gotta— I mean, this whole movie is, is literally them trying to build like a walled fortress around their children to keep them safe. Um, and, and is also about how that is completely ineffective. Um, and I think this is something that M. Night is really interested in, is the sort of like, how being an overprotective parent can be really damaging. And then also how like no matter how much you try to keep your child like, safe from all the harm in the world, it's not possible to do that. And in some cases it is worse to do that. Um, I think—

Keith: Let's—

Sylvi: This, this is stuff to kind of— I like— We can put a pin in this, especially because I think that these themes are stuff like— I was watching this and was thinking a lot about how a lot of these ideas come back up in Knock at the Cabin, which we'll be getting to in like, months' times or whatever. Um, but like, this feels like a really like, nascent stage of the thematic stuff going on in that movie. Um, and I found it really interesting to think about that, how M. Night's been basically working through these feelings for over 20 years of like, the world that you are creating for your children and how like, the fear that it is you are leaving it worse than they came into it, or the fear that like— The fear that they will be hurt by the world the same way you were.

Keith: I want to play a clip relating to that, Sylvi, you had about the line that the elders have to walk to both keep everyone afraid enough of the creatures, but not so afraid because the threat really is literally not there. Very early in the movie, we talked about some kids find— I think that it's a goat kid that has been skinned but not eaten.

Sylvi: Do you have the line he says?

Keith: I don't know which line.

Sylvi: I have the line he says, 'cause it is so unnatural to me.

Keith: Well, let me play the clip, and if it's not in there— Anyway, this is when he takes them into the— And I think maybe Ally had already referenced this. He takes the kids into the schoolhouse, and is sort of talking to them about—

Sylvi: Yeah, this is after that thing I wanted to mention.

Keith: Oh, okay, so what's the one that you wanted to say?

Sylvi: What manner of spectacle has attracted your attention so splendidly? I ought to carry it in my pocket to help me teach.

Keith: Yes, he is acting, he's acting! Edward Walker is acting!

Sylvi: William Hurt is trying.

Keith: No, no, not William Hurt. Edward Walker is acting.

Sylvi: No, I know.

Keith: So yeah, so William Hurt is acting an actor. Which I think is—

Art: I love when actors act as actors.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: It's one of my favorite things, especially if they're not good at it. I love it more than anything.

Keith: Um, it's really funny.

Art: It doesn't come up a lot, but it's, it's, it's always amazing.

Keith: Well, it's, it's difficult because you, you have to let the ending of this movie recolor your experiences with the performances, which are, uh, strange. The, the chil— 'Cause the children should all sound natural, but the parents should sound unnatural.

Art: Well, the children only sound unnatural as they've been taught to speak by people who don't really— Yeah.

Keith: Well, I'll tell you this. We've got two main characters in the next generation, and one of them sounds very natural and one of them doesn't. We've got a little bit of a nepo baby versus child actor dichotomy going on here, uh, in the movie. Uh, of course, uh, uh, Joaquin Phoenix from a famous family of, of, of young actors, and, uh, Bryce Dallas Howard, whose father is Ron Howard and whose uncle is Clint Howard, the extremely famous Clint Howard.

Sylvi: I'm not gonna— I'm not saying a negative word about her. Sorry. The, the perform— I don't— I, I didn't even hear a word. I was like, wow, I love her hair.

Jack: I think both these performances are great in different ways.

Sylvi: I like them.

Jack: I think Bryce Dallas Howard is putting in work. Um, she is— She is like a spinning dynamo that is kind of like making this movie go in a lot of ways. And Joaquin Phoenix is playing the most awkward man alive.

Art: Yeah.

Jack: And it is very funny.

Keith: In a lot of ways, he's like Mel Gibson from Signs. He's sort of got—.

Ali: Yeah, but I liked this performance.

Keith: He sort of got— He sort of took what Mel Gibson was doing in Signs and redid it in this.

Ali: I think he does it so well that part of the research that I did for watching The Village is, because I was really bored, and I decided to watch The Joker 2.

Sylvi: Oh my God!

Ali: And I was just, like, stunned by the way that he's sort of grown as a performer, obviously. [**Sylvi:** That's crazy.] And, like, I just think in The Signs and in this, he is so cute. He is so good at what he's doing. There's, like, an enjoyment of it, I think. [**Keith:** He's really good in Signs.] He's really into it. Like, I think sometimes you can see, like, when an actor is really embodying their role. And I think that, like, Signs being the funny, goofy guy that you knew from college, and then, like, uh, in this movie being somebody who, like, lets himself appear really small, but, like, has—

Jack: Yeah.

Ali: So much, like, integrity.

Keith: Yeah. Everyone looks at Lucius like he's larger than life. And the movie doesn't quite show that that's true, but everyone kind of says it convincingly enough. And let me play this—

Sylvi: He's got aura.

Keith: He does have a little bit of aura.

[audio from The Village starts playing]

Girl: I inspected it carefully. Its head was twisted back and much of its fur removed.

Edward: I see.

Boy: It was murdered.

Edward: But who is the culprit? Who has done this heinous act?

Girl: Those we don't speak of killed it.

Edward: There it is. Why would such a notion come into your mind?

Boy: They're meat eaters.

Girl: They have large claws.

Edward: Children, those we don't speak of have not breached our borders for many years. We do not go into their woods. They do not come into our valley. It is a truce. We do not threaten them. Why would they do this?

[audio ends]

Keith: Uh, first of all, those we don't speak of, that's fucking corny as shit. That sucks. The bad color, the good color, those we don't speak of. Sucks. It sucks so bad. But this like walk that they have to do to like, hey, as long as you don't leave, you're perfectly safe. We have a truce with them. Don't test them, but don't be afraid of them. It is— It's a totally futile, self-soothing, tightrope walk. To keep the elders from going insane with guilt, I think, is really what it is.

Jack: And this produces a weird effect where once the creatures actually arrive in the town, they sort of don't really do anything at all. They mill about and they kind of, they kind of like, bobble around in the distance. They put a red mark on a door.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: I love it. I kind of love it though, because like we, the viewer gets the same experience of the, of uh, those we don't speak of, or as I call them, the red porcupines. Um, we get like, the same experience that the, the second generation of villagers do because we see them just out of— Like, there's a really great one, great shot, um, when Lucius is in the forest, I'm thinking specifically, where we don't even see the full shot. We just see it sort of like half in, like already half out of frame, and then it's all gone. We see it like, out of focus in the background during when the— What we find out is a drill, but like is, is, um, at the time to everyone a very real attack where they're, they're coming. Um, and Ivy's like holding out her hand for Lucius and we see a blurry one in the background.

Jack: That's a good shot.

Sylvi: And they like, the costume— The costuming on the, um, creatures, I think it falls apart a little bit after the reveal because it's supposed to. But until then they have a really good like— A really striking silhouette on screen and like, really work in terms of being an intimidating like, monster in a movie versus— And it's like, doing a lot of the stuff that I thought he did well in *Signs* up until he showed the alien. And it's weird in this one where the showing of the creature does what the showing of the alien did to me in *Signs*, but it feels intentional in this case.

Keith: Right, but it's like, I'm not— They go like, oh my, just— It looks like a guy in a suit. And then they're like, well, it is just a guy—

Sylvi: It is a guy in a suit.

Keith: Yeah. Um, but until that point, they're kind of complicated to look at, and they have a strange bulkiness to them. And you're like, I— He showed it, but I didn't get quite a good enough look at it still, which is the opposite of how I felt during the birthday party scene in *Signs*.

Sylvi: Don't get me started.

Ali: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I— there's two quick things that I want to say here. The first is that I think like, some of the way that the monster is revealed here is successful enough that even watching it and only half remembering the plot, I was like, well, people don't realize that this movie is still good, 'cause even if it takes place in modern times, there's still actual monsters. And then the movie kept happening, I was like, wait a minute.

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: Well, this is—

Jack: You forgot the other twist.

Keith: This is what happened to me is— So at the very beginning we have the funeral, then we have the big village dinner, and then we have Lucius coming into the elder chambers and reading his timid little speech about how he won't be afraid to leave the tem—

Jack: It's so cute. He has it on a little piece of paper.

Keith: He's more afraid to deliver the speech to the elders than to go into the woods. Uh, and, uh, but he's like, I can go. They won't attack me. They'll sense my pure heart, which is a very weird thing. Like, it was— It's never established anywhere. I guess it, I guess it makes sense, like, if that is part of their religion, like, that they can sort of feel your fear, and they can feel your whatever. I don't know.

Ali: Because I do think, like, we're about to get a third monster in Lady in the Water. And I think that's what's interesting about the way that we're watching things kind of chronologically, is that we see him continually trying to, like, keep attempting at these ideas. And, like, I think the quote-unquote, the way this has sort of, like, fixed some of those complaints about the alien reveals by being, like, smarter and more effective and, you know, holding your hand back better and, like, playing into some of the disappointment there with, like, the— It being fake, you know, things like that.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: Also, a second point to this I was gonna have— Wait one second. I think that, like, another way that this relates to Signs in that way is, like, a thing that I was thinking about with how wide the camera gets to be in the town and how much of, like, just insular, like, side characters and stuff that you see, you know, the house in Signs is so— Like, wilderness is a thing in Signs in a way that we don't see in Unbreakable and The Sixth Sense because those are such city movies.

Sylvi: Mm-hmm.

Ali: So it's not like it's his attempt at— First attempt at being in the wilderness, but like, being in a cornfield is so defined by how isolated it is and how, um, like, you know, how

close the, the, the fields to that is and how little space they had to move around and how you had this like, repeating shot of them on the lawn in the house because they only had this like, 8 by 10 section or whatever to themselves before it's corn. Whereas, like, in this movie, you have literal walls around them and you have—

Keith: It's like a reverse cornfield.

Ali: These giant trees. Yeah, yeah. But you have this, like, the way that it's sort of like able to ruminate on what quote-unquote the wilderness is, and the way that like, Signs kind of wasn't interested in, is a really interesting comparison to both those movies, at least as I was watching it.

Keith: I remembered the point that I was going to make, which is that, um, uh, when he's talking about going to the towns to get medicine my mind immediately went to that they're secretly not in the past. That was like my— That's where I just jumped there straight away when he talks about, like, going to get medicine. I was like, how is there medicine that can help people that they don't have, that the towns do have? Oh, they must not be in the past. So that's where I went there.

1:00:00

Ali: Oh.

Keith: And so the entire rest of the movie, I was trying to figure out how they could be secretly in the modern day and also there's monsters attacking their little forest encampment.

Sylvi: And I, I was like, maybe it's after— Maybe it's post-apocalypse, maybe it's like, some vibe like that.

Keith: Um, but I kept coming back to that there can't be monsters, uh, because it doesn't make any sense.

Jack: You're, uh, you're Tim Robinson saying, for two minutes I thought that there were monsters in the world.

Keith: Right. And actually there were two minutes where I thought that there were monsters in the world because they try to make Ivy feel like there are actually monsters, right?

Jack: It's a really fun moment.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Jack: You know, we— We— I think that this pacing is odd, and I stand by what I said about the odd pacing, but it does produce— You know, sometimes you like turn the shell over in your hands and you go, this is a weird looking fucking shell.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: I don't think it's particularly beautiful, but it is interesting to look at. Ivy is getting to— Going to set out on her journey, uh, and then, we get told that the monsters are fake before she sets off.

Keith: Right.

Jack: Which does— Which allows us a really fun scene with these two useless boys who are with her, and they are fucking terrified. And she says—

Sylvi: Don't worry, she has magic rocks.

Jack: She's fine, I have magic rocks. And her delivery of the magic rocks line is—

Keith: It's Michael Jordan's special stuff.

Jack: It's so amazing.

Art: And the shot is— The shot where, like, as soon as that second guy is gone, and she just, like, immediately drops the rock.

Keith: Right. And then it cuts to the reveal.

Art: It's beautiful, perfect, love it.

Sylvi: She missed her calling. She would've been great in pro wrestling. Keeps kayfabe like nobody's business.

Jack: But then he starts playing with us. And I think this is a really nice moment of— An audience has now cued in that M. Night films contain twists. This sort of is the thing that America is talking about with M. Night for so long. And it's as though he's the magician saying, you know, demonstrating to us that he hasn't got anything up his sleeves, or saying, you know, there are clearly no strings attached to this person that I'm about to do a levitation trick on. The fact that he says, you're going on the journey, the monsters are fake, and then he starts making you go, well, hang on, wait a second. Are they fake? We were just told—

Sylvi: There's one line that makes you feel like, oh, maybe not, where he's like, I based it off something I read about. A historical thing from—

Keith: A historical thing from my history books.

Sylvi: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Keith: Which they annoyingly—

Sylvi: A historical thing from history.

Keith: They annoyingly flash back to right before Noah Percy appears in the scene.

Sylvi: We gotta take his flashback privileges away.

Keith: He re-Signs. He did the same thing in Signs, but way worse, In a sense, it was way worse.

Ali: Um, yeah, I think it's a flashback to a scene, but you see the rest of that conversation. So I thought it was like— I remembered at this part, I was like, this isn't a full flashback. I accept this.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Jack: But I think, uh, the other thing that's really fun and scary that the movie kind of squanders, uh, and we'll talk about Noah in a second because I think we kind of have to—

Sylvi: We have to talk about Noah.

Jack: Prior to the I'm going out into the woods sequence, um, it's kind of the weakest part of the movie for me. Um, Walker also says one of the elders is kind of fucking weird.

Keith: Yes.

Jack: Um, do you remember this? [**Keith:** I do.] He says one of the elders has kind of been disagreeing with us.

Keith: Yeah, and I actually—

Jack: It's clearly a red herring.

Keith: Yeah, it's great. I actually really like this, and I have in my notes like— Like, after the reveal, I have it written like that I really would've liked to see— This is in conversation with me thinking that all of these movies needed to be just slightly longer, except for Unbreakable, which needed to be twice as long and two movies. But why weren't the elders fighting amongst themselves? Who is killing and skinning our animals and scaring everyone? This isn't part of the deal. This isn't what we're doing here. Why are you doing this? We need those animals. We're not trying to freak everybody out. Like, people are feeling the pressure of the creatures. We're just supposed to be happy out here. And that conversation doesn't happen.

Sylvi: I like— It's— I agree. It's weird that they didn't do this when they also have the cover of one of the elders' children just died, like Brendan Gleeson's character.

Jack: Shout out Brendan Gleeson. Never given a bad performance.

Sylvi: Never given a bad performance. Honestly given not enough to do in this, [**Keith:** Totally.] Aside from a couple scenes. This movie has like a stacked cast, by the way. Yeah, I don't know if we got into it, but—

Keith: We have not talked about the cast.

Sylvi: But wild how many like, good actors are in this.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: Um, but like, it's, it's— There's such an—

Keith: You should have asked him to do some of that good acting.

Sylvi: There's such like, a natural end to being like, oh yeah, the elders are fighting, and like, you just see it like, through like, a window or some shit of like, them having an argument. And like, you have a really easy way to sort of obscure whether or not it's about August Nicholson, that's his name, August Nicholson's son dying, or about, or like, as when we find out, or if it turns out it was actually about who's doing, who's skinning these creatures. Which by the way, you say it was probably a goat, I love that you can't really tell what it is.

Keith: Yeah, 'cause it's also different every time. There's one that's probably a goat, there's one that looks maybe like a fox kit.

Sylvi: This is also why I thought they were living in the Zone from Stalker.

Ali: I also think, like, you know, in the absence of the tension between the elders, what you instead get are these, like, justifications throughout the movie of why they're here. Like, it feels like it comes up naturally in conversation throughout the film of, you know, just an elder sort of casually mentioning someone that they knew that had been attacked, or like, you know, I don't want you to go to the town because they murdered your father. And the wedding scene where, you know, I forget her name, but one of the women elders is, like, talking about her sister because—

Keith: Oh, this is Cherry Jones from Signs. Mrs. Clack.

Ali: Yeah. Mm-hmm. She's just sort of talking about her sister, and then it's sort of like, oh, well, why isn't your sister here? And then it has to be this reveal of, like, there was this other violent crime.

Keith: Right. She didn't live past the age of 23.

Ali: Yeah. So I thought, like, you know, in the absence of some of that stuff, instead you get this sort of like— Individually, we have all of these reasons for doing it, so it kind of doesn't matter that we disagree with each other, is kind of cool. But it is kind of weird. Like, I— You know, Keith said at the recap, that the assumption is that like, Noah was doing the building attacks. Like the, the one where everybody runs into the, the buildings was just some guy walking around, but then during the wedding it's Noah who's having this like, big reaction.

Keith: Um, yeah, the building one where they mark the doors, that is like the real elders, and then everything else is Noah.

Sylvi: Which is like right before the, um, the wedding. And then the one that's Noah is actually quite— because they don't mark the— Do they mark the doors in the same way? I remember the Noah attack mostly just being that he strung up some of the disfigured like, animal corpses.

Keith: Yeah, he doesn't mark the door. Only the elders mark the door during their attack.

Jack: Do we know this is true?

Keith: No, this is implied.

Sylvi: I think it's an implication.

Jack: My read on the movie had been it's elders through and through until the creature in the woods at the end, and that's Noah.

Keith: Oh, so when—

Sylvi: I think— I just, I think it's supposed to be Noah doing the stuff with the animals.

Keith: I don't think you're supposed to know.

Sylvi: You're not supposed to know, but there's like a line where they're like, the things that he's done will help us sell this more, or something along those lines. Like, they do mention his actions have helped them keep this illusion up.

Keith: And his death.

Art: I also think it's Noah when Lucius goes to see the berries.

Keith: I agree that that might be Noah.

Sylvi: I would also—

Keith: I think that one is an edge case for me. But yeah, that could totally go either way.

Art: That's also a great shot.

Keith: And then this is also— This is also why, like, I had a big lightbulb moment when, um, when we— When Noah stabs Lucius and he pulls the knife out and you see it's like, this big hunting knife. That's like, a ding, ding, ding for me on—

Jack: I'm out here chopping up animals.

Keith: I'm— He's out here with— Yeah, he's skinning animals. This is the first animal skinning device we've seen all movie is in the hands of Noah Percy. And again, this is like— I like that this movie is kind of constructed to confuse people who know there will be a twist and who are trying to figure it out. Because if Noah's killing the animals, that's not feeding into what I thought was happening. The fact that there's a renegade monster out there, I hadn't— I hadn't put that together at all.

Jack: Renegade monster really tickled me for some reason. Okay. Noah Percy is played by Adrien Brody.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Jack: Doing a—

Sylvi: Oh, boy.

Jack: A classic [**Keith:** He's doing *Gilbert Grape*.] Like, soft-gloved, um, respected actor approach to playing a person with a developmental disability. This was very popular in Hollywood.

Keith: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Jack: Um, and thankfully is now less popular, but it was sort of a rite of passage for usually male actors, usually in their early to mid-20s, to take a go at playing a character with a developmental disability.

Keith: Do we think this is past that being at all in vogue? This feels late to me to be doing this.

Sylvi: I mean, it's within— I think it's— It's still a thing that was happening, but probably to less success for the people performing it.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: Yeah, I don't think this is the last one by any means. And we're only three years after *I Am Sam*, which is about a young person, but—

Sylvi: I was gonna literally bring up *I Am Sam*.

Art: Um, was certainly the most like— I think *I Am Sam* was like the tipping point of that. And 2004 is simply too close for that to have successfully rolled down the hill.

Keith: You know what? You're totally right. 'Cause *I Am Sam* was 2001. You know what's 2003? *Radio*.

Jack: This is a particular kind of weepy-eyed, liberal filmmaking, uh, that is almost always accompanied by a press tour where people talk fondly about the kind of

mealy-mouthed research they did to gain these characters. You see this a lot with, um, uh, DiCaprio in, uh, Gilbert Grape. Um, and this sort of got parlayed in American film culture into, uh, cis actors playing trans characters.

Sylvi: Oh wow.

Jack: That kind of movement, uh, complete with the same like, rhetorical media maneuver of like, I've done a lot of research as Eddie Redmayne, uh, or as Jared Leto, and, you know, we're moving on to that. This is, this is grim. Um, it is, uh, an unpleasant performance to watch.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: It's nightmarish.

Jack: Um, and it is also beginning to move in step with some kind of, uh, you know, Keith, earlier you, you described this film as very Kingian in a lot of ways. Uh, these sort of Stephen King-ass ideas about disability that M. Night is working through, you know, first with, um—

Keith: Both with Ivy and with Noah.

Jack: Ivy and Noah, and then also Mr. Glass. You know, we had that scene in Unbreakable where they were like, sometimes when people have been really hurt, their minds kind of go, you know, this sort of like, liberal subject thinking about disability. And in this movie, it goes into some kind of weird, off-kilter places because we have Ivy, who is blind and is at the same time kind of able to move through the film with a kind of wild, and capable physicality. The film is very much of the like, she's blind, but she gets around just fine, don't you worry. Like, one of the first times we see her, she's playing, like, a racing game.

Keith: It's important to this that she's kind of magic. They don't yet—

Sylvi: Because she can see Lucius's color.

Keith: Yeah, she can see people's color sometimes.

Art: Two people. She mentions two people she can see their color.

Keith: She says only there's a handful of people. and one of them is Lucius, and one of them is her father. Uh, but, um, and they don't go into, like, what this means, or why, or, or anything, but there's— She sees— She can't just see his color, she can see him through walls. She sees Lucius through a wall. So there's like a—

Jack: We're really teed up for, like, you know, she keeps saying, I won't tell you what your color is. We're really teed up for it's like, it's yellow, or it's red. This doesn't end up happening.

Art: No. Yeah, she never says it.

Keith: Well, and she said she'll never say it.

Sylvi: Yeah, that's unladylike.

Art: Well, but he was dying.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: And I, an audience member, want to know.

Jack: And then we have—

Sylvi: Oh, Amb— It's Amber.

Jack: And then we have Noah, and there's an extraordinary moment where someone says, the creatures won't hurt Noah and Ivy in the woods because of their pure hearts.

Sylvi: Yes.

Jack: Whether or not it is being spoken explicitly or not, there's a very clear implication that these people's disability renders them pure to the creatures.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: Um, it's, um, it's very reminiscent of how like, Stephen King characters like Tom Cullen are talked about, where it's like, because of their disabilities they are rendered pure, they are like, forever children. It's really bad. It's really infantilizing, obviously. And lazy fucking writing too.

Keith: It's lazy.

Jack: It's super lazy writing, and it, it means that the movie gets to an odd place with the act of violence where both the ideology of the elders and the sort of unspoken ideology of the movie seems to treat Noah's violence as sort of like, depersoned, or just sort of like, a force of nature.

Keith: To me, it reads like it is an expression of the elders' seeding of corruption into the town, like a moral corruption. And so Noah is, you know, having this developmental disability is sort of like, a, an empty cup that gets filled with their malice, and he expresses that violently in the town.

Jack: This is narrative sleight of hand because it lets M. Night do both that particular kind of soupy, sentimental storytelling about disability that we discussed earlier, but it also lets the like, violence in the village plot play in a very different way than if it had been the kind of violence that was described by the elders. You know, they describe someone shooting a man point-blank in the head to steal his money, you know, early in the movie. This is what happened to Walker's grandfather? Yeah, something like that.

Keith: Walker's father. Yeah, Ivy's grandfather.

Art: That ends up not being what happened, weirdly. Like, the rest of them are all true, or basically true.

Keith: Oh wait, I thought he was shot in the head by his business partner who then hung himself in the closet.

Art: Oh, that's right. I thought that— I thought everyone got hanged.

Ali: No, I think we're mixing it up. The one who was shot in the head was the doctor, and the billionaire guy was killed by his business partner, maybe also shot, but—

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: Two separate shootings.

Jack: But this is, like, a very distinct narratological difference, right? In that, like, the violence that causes the creation of the village is this like, hyper-personal, capital-C criminal activity from one cogent within the realm of the movie person to another. And then the violence that threatens the village and causes this journey out to the towns and the kind of the falling apart of the secret is, like Keith said, this sort of like, depersonated, sort of like, Noah is just like a— Is presented as like a, like a puff of wind, you know, that kind of like, comes running through the village.

Keith: It's a— It is a move that allows M. Night to make it through this movie without ever, um, blaming anyone or, or saying that anyone ever did anything worse than make a mistake. Uh, like, had, um, had Noah been like, just a piece of shit who lived in the town and who like, couldn't handle, uh, the girl that he liked being pursued by Lucius, and had—

Jack: It's a cooler movie.

Keith: Yeah. And who had resorted to the evil of the towns to solve this problem without ever having been there, then you have to take a harder look at the society that's being constructed in the village. But because— But M. Night tries to turn this from a social phenomenon to almost like, a natural phenomenon. Like there's no— There's no escaping human nature despite your best intentions. Oh, the elders, they tried so hard to— They only wanted to scare them a little bit to keep them in the town, and it was to keep everybody safe. And so I think that he's trying to have his cake and eat it too, because he wants the elders to be, at their core, good people who made a mistake out of guilt. And it becomes much harder to see them as—

Sylvi: They're also being misguided.

Keith: Yeah. It becomes much harder to see them as misguided if we can see like, you know, if M. Night is like, picking a rational actor to decide to turn into a criminal. And instead, you know, he's instead, he's focused on this idea of like, innocence. Like we're trying, like it's not just Noah and Ivy who are innocent. But it is a village full of people who are trying to create an innocent place. And I think that it's like, by not taking the step to go like, Walker's a billionaire. He's one of the only people in the world who actually had the resources to create something real. And instead, he escapes to this place to play-act as frontiersmen and create this constructed hell. Instead, it just tries to go like, oh, he was sad, they were sad, and they made a mistake. You can't escape society because society is just how you describe people when there's people. Culture is just when there's people. Which I still— I still think that there's something of value in there. And I think that despite maybe M. Night's efforts, I think that the evil of the elders comes through in the movie and that the corruption that they sow into the fabric of the society still comes through. But the thing with Noah, it's such a misstep for me. It's less interesting than the alternative. It's offensive. Uh, uh, but it does do something, of course, because it's in the movie, so it has to do something. And the thing that it does is, you know, on one hand, it sort of lets everyone off scot-free without ascribing blame to anybody, really. Uh, and it also like, tries to do this innocence thing that they're doing. I don't know.

Art: I disagree that this lets— That the elders are being let off here.

Keith: I think— I don't think that they are let off. I think that there's— I think that the— I don't think that the script is condemnative of them in the way that it should be, in the way that it reads. Like, I think it reads to a viewer harsher against them than maybe it was meant. Because at the end of it—

Art: No, I think it's intentional. I think that the elders, The elders are bad, and you should think they're bad. I think that's why there's the dead child at the beginning of the movie, to come back to that, that I think we're— I believe we are supposed to feel that these elders did bad. And I say that as someone who, you know, finds a lot of sympathy in— You know, it's a thing that's happened to me as I've had a kid. It's like, I do need to

protect this kid from the evils of the world. And maybe we should move to the middle of the woods and pretend that cell phones don't exist because that's where the sex predators are. But of course, the village also must have had sex predators. We just didn't get into it in this film.

Keith: Right.

Art: This isn't important. My real point is that I do believe that the movie is, is telling you that the elders are bad and what they did was bad. I think you're supposed to understand—

Keith: Can you tell me where you think that happens though? Like, I—

Art: Yeah, all these people—

Keith: To me it only happens in the eyes of the viewer, um, not in the script.

Art: The, the, the movie can convey ideas to the viewer without explicitly saying it in the script.

Ali: I think—

Sylvi: Yeah, that's why it's an imagine.

Ali: I think that it comes up in places like even, you know, Joaquin Phoenix makes the suggestion of like, if I went to the village, wouldn't there be medication that could help Noah? Which is not great scripting. And like, I don't want to defend—

Jack: Oh, that was crazy.

Ali: Yeah. I don't— Like, I don't want to defend the way that M. Night uses disability to get around this weirdness in his stories, because it's gonna be a thing that we keep talking about. It's a thing that he's done badly and will continue doing badly.

Art: Oh, is that gonna keep happening?

Ali: Yeah. Like, um, but like, I, you know, there's something in speaking about this as a 9/11 film and M. Night being like, an Indian American writing about, like, white fear and isolation is significant. And, like, you know, I think that, like, you know, the reveal of— So, M. Night's cameo in this movie is towards the very end when Ivy is actually able to leave the town and interacts with society. And we get this sort of, like— First, she runs into the security guard, and we learn that this is a wildlife preserve, which is so bizarre. And then the security guard is going back to this office where there's—

Keith: The Walker Wildlife Preserve, by the way.

Ali: Yeah. Uh-huh. This kind of put-upon security manager who's speaking to the younger and, like, sort of, uh, uh, visibly kind of disturbed by this interaction with Ivy that he's seen. And, you know, the, the manager is just like, you know, make sure you don't tell anybody about what's happening here. If anything about this place gets into the news, it's like, gonna be a big problem for me. Yeah, yeah. So, this sort of idea of, like, not only did these people isolate themselves in this piece of property that he was able to purchase because he is a billionaire's son, with this idea that he has just because he's fascinated by history and things like going into the woods and not having electricity and talking in a funny accent is gonna save him from things. But like, he is relying on the work of this guy outside to like, protect all of it. And like this, you know, the winding of how much that is and the requirement of there being somebody on the side— Outside who's also protecting it.

Keith: He needs him on that wall.

Ali: Right, yeah. Who's a person of color. Like, you know, I think that there's something there where you know, that, that is not insignificant to the script.

Keith: Yeah, I was— I actually forgot that I should have been looking for an M. Night cameo until all of a sudden there was an M. Night cameo.

Art: Until there he was.

Keith: Until there he was. There he is. Uh, I, I want to say that I'm not saying, and also did not say, that this movie is like, not saying that the elders are bad and did a bad thing. I just think it's really soft on them. It's way too soft on them.

Ali: Sure. I think it's one of those things though, because like, the conceit of the movie has to spend so much time in their feelings about it. That's part of why I mentioned how interesting it is that like a lot of the scripting in the movie is not disagreements between them, but their own personal justifications for this stuff. Because I think in the, in the like, way that M. Night's career has been built around people talking about the twists. The way the scripting is set up here is that you interrogate those moments, and they become worse on the re-viewing or the reconsidering. And, like, you know, in an era where people are still going to the movies and, like, you know, talking about them after the fact— Not that people don't do that. I don't know what I'm saying.

Keith: You might not be wrong. People might not do that.

Ali: There's an international zeitgeist about some of this stuff. And like this sort of, like, professional pressure of, like, having the last scene of the movie be the thing that most informs your conversation about it or whatever else. I feel like this sort of, like, you are so invested in Noah and Ivy and Joaquin Phoenix's name, who I forget, that—

Keith: Lucius.

Ali: You need to see the entire movie to understand how they are victims of a decision that happened 20 years before they existed. You know what I mean?

Keith: Speaking of that decision, I'm going to play a clip of them talking about that decision here.

Art: Oh, I hope this is the clip that I— I hope this is the clip I want it to be.

Keith: Okay, let's see.

[audio from The Village starts playing]

Mrs. Clack: What have you done?

Edward: He is the victim of a crime.

Mrs. Clack: We have agreed never to go back. Never.

Edward: What was the purpose of our leaving? Let us not forget it was out of hope of something good and right.

Robert: You should not have made decisions without us. You have gone too far.

Edward: I'm guilty, Robert! I made a decision of the heart. I cannot look into another's eyes and see the same look I see in August's without justification! It is too painful! I cannot bear it!

Mrs. Clack: You have jeopardized everything we've made.

Edward: Who do you think will continue this place, this life? Do you plan to live forever? It is in them that our future lies. It is in Ivy and Lucius that this, this way of life will continue. Yes, I have risked. I hope I am always able to risk everything for the just and right cause.

[audio ends]

Keith: Um, one of the things that I think is really interesting to me about Edward Walker as the sort of the guy at the end, the elder at the end, who sort of breaks the oath and lets his daughter go to the towns in order to save Lucius, is that Ivy says— we learn that she sees Lucius's color. We learn that she sees her father's color. To me, that is genre speak to me that she's seeing good in them sort of magically. This is their good— Because she loves her dad. She said she trusts his decision. And, you know, if she was like, receiving magical signals about their aura and his aura was like, bad, I don't think that Ivy's decision-making makes a lot of sense. And we do see him let Ivy go, but also right up until the very end, they're still wanting to like, keep on living this way. that the problem isn't the belt, but how tight the belt is. And that, you know, maybe if you loosen

the belt by one notch, that can fix things. And then the movie just ends there. So it's very strange to me.

Jack: It's a very odd moment where— And again, this is really nice staging from Deakins and M. Night— Where at Lucius's bedside, as he's kind of failing, um, uh, Walker says something like, you know, essentially, shall we reconsider?

1:30:00

Jack: And then one by one, the people in the room stand, and it's not clear whether or not they are standing in affirmation of, you know, I'm with you, we should end the experiment, or I'm standing to oppose you. And that question kind of hangs in the room unanswered by the camera, and then Ivy arrives, saves Lucius and the movie ends. And it's wonderful. It's, it's, it's like, um, it's like a, it's like a moment where a car is briefly in the air after it goes over a hill and then suddenly comes back onto the road again.

Keith: You know, I hate to do this, but I, I have the clip of this one too. Maybe we should just play it now so that we have it out there.

Jack: Yeah, I don't know that it's good, but it is compelling.

Keith: Yeah.

[audio from The Village starts playing]

Boy: Ivy has returned with medicines from the towns. She was attacked by a creature and killed it.

[woman crying]

That's Noah's parents who know that it was him who's dead.

Edward: We will find him. We will give him a proper burial. We will tell the others he was killed by the creatures. Your son has made our stories real. Noah has given us a chance to continue this place, if that is something we still wish for.

[audio ends]

Keith: And yeah, Jack, like you said, it is unclear if that's something that they still wish for.

Ali: No, I think it's absolutely clear. They all stand up.

Keith: It's not clear!

Ali: No, no, no, no. They all, like, vote. Noah's mother hesitates and she stands and joins the others. I think that is clear.

Art: I also agree that this is clear.

Keith: It's clear voting to continue?

Art and Ali: Yes.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Look, I think that's totally fine to think that.

Ali: To read it, yeah.

Keith: I think that's a totally fine read of it. I think that they don't say what standing means. They don't say, all right, well, the ayes have it. Uh, you know, they just stand. And then Ivy comes in and she leans next to, uh, uh, Lucius and she says something. And then the movie ends. I don't even remember what she says.

Sylvi: I'm home?

Jack: It feels like a— it feels like a moment of suspension to me. And I don't necessarily mean that in the sense of suspense, like, like a Hitchcock suspense. I mean, like, we are suspended in a moment as they are. as they are standing.

Ali: I also think something that's significant in terms of the way the elders are considering their decisions and the way that they decide that Ivy goes out, what's never

mentioned and what seems kind of explicit, like, Walker is willing to take advantage of his daughter here because he knows that she is not going to experience the outside world any— The way anyone else will.

Jack: Yeah, yeah.

Ali: Like, they don't say, like, oh, she's blind, so it's, you know, it's less risk, or whatever. And I don't know if that's, like, an omission of— Like, if it's genuine and it's just, like, love guiding his decision and his daughter's need, or that, like, this is another example of him being sort of manipulative and—

Jack: Yeah

Ali: Yeah.

Sylvi: It feels calculated.

Keith: Sorry, Ali, could you say— Could you explain the— What, like, the part of it that's manipulative to you?

Ali: Well, because, you know, in the way that he's unable to first admit that to the elders when they question him, why would you do this? He says, well, I'm making a decision of love. Your son just died, and now my daughter's sad. And not like, well, she has to be the one because when she goes out there, she's not going to experience the way— You know, the world, the way everybody else will.

Keith: He says, she's led by love. The world moves for love. It kneels before it.

Ali: Right.

Keith: In awe.

Ali: And not like, oh, she's gonna see what a car is and come back and tell everybody what a car looks like.

Keith: You know what I mean?

Art: But that's just because we, the audience, don't know that she's gonna see what a car is, right? It's more impactful for her to see the car the first time.

Sylvi: Right.

Ali: But at this point of the story, we know that there's modern medicine. Well, I guess we don't, but we know that there's medicine.

Art: We know that there's more medicine.

Keith: I believe at that point we had seen the newspaper clippings about the billionaire and the— That it had been— And then after that, she climbs over the fence and then we see the car. But she had already been told the whole truth. I guess maybe she hadn't been told, by the way, it's 200 years later than you think it is. But what does that even mean? It is weird that— That he feels like she can go, but that he can't. And I can only— My only take on that is that, at some level, he does believe in the myth of the monsters like, how they won't take advantage of Noah and Ivy because of their disabilities.

Art: Yeah.

Keith: But, but to him, the monsters are like the people in the towns. And—

Art: I thought it was about like, reinforcing the, the story about the— That like, yeah, if he goes, well, then anyone can go. But if she goes, well, she— Lucius's innocence thing was right.

Keith: Yeah, that would— That, that makes sense to me too.

Sylvi: Also, like, he— Well, if, if, if he pops out— Sorry, we're talking about the dad going?

Keith: Edward Walker, yeah. Like, why didn't Edward just go like, I'm brave, I'm the leader of the town, I'm gonna go. And she goes—

Sylvi: Yeah, and then he runs into Peggy's boyfriend from season 3 of Mad Men, who's like, hey, aren't you that billionaire who disappeared?

Ali: Yeah.

Sylvi: Aren't you the guy who owns this place? Why are you dressed like that?

Ali: I think for him it's primarily social. I like— I like that it's not clear. And I like that it makes him kind of cowardly. It doesn't exactly make him— And especially when you know the financial setup of this. I love that scene with M. Night when he's in the security room that just has a bunch of medical supplies for some reason. That, like, he doesn't have a mailbox set up at that fucking thing? Like, he's not tech— I guess you couldn't text at that time, but, like, you know, the— When you come away from this and you realize how badly thought out this is, that they did not include packing things like, antibiotics or other sorts of modern medical devices.

Keith: Well, they may have, but it's been 30 years or something, or, you know, 20 years.

Ali: Right. Sure, sure, sure.

Art: It's been however old Lucius is supposed to be years.

Ali: Yeah. The idea that they have made this suit and they are willing to go out in the forest and make growling noises, but they're not willing to let— Like, give M. Night Shyamalan's character a payroll and, you know, a corporation that he works for and have all of these things spinning, but he doesn't have somebody outside that's like, I'm gonna put a thing in this mailbox that says, please bring me some Cheetos and some antibiotics, and I'm gonna come here once a week.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: That's one of the funniest things that makes it fall apart for me. Yeah, it's just—

Keith: I think it makes sense to me. Like, the, you know, we live in an age, we've lived through, like, the prepper thing, and we— And, like, the age of the homesteader

Youtuber. Like, we know that there are people who— Like, I believe that he's like, no, I want to do this 100%. This is ideological for me. I want to live like 1700s, and I don't want a lifeline.

Art: And, um, yeah, there's a lot of weird stuff in here that you really can only write off as like, well, he's just a weird rich guy.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: Like the year is 1897 for the audience, right? Like, no one born in that town knows what 1897 means.

Ali: No.

Keith: Right.

Art: Like you could— the year could be 5, the year could be, you know—

Keith: Right. There's a meta layer of, of like, um, oh, they were doing it out of love. No, they were doing it out of grief. Oh, they were doing it out of fear. And it's like, well, a lot of it they were doing out of being fucking nerds, actually.

Ali: Yeah. Uh-huh. I just like that he becomes such a much more interesting character when you learn that, like, I teach history, and I think that there was something pure about the world in the time that I teach it in.

Keith: Right. And there's no Black people in it. Yeah.

Ali: There's gonna be this sort of doll box that I'm gonna live in, in this place that I aspire to. It's just like, what a weird guy.

Keith: We do get relatively early on that he does consider himself a coward, 'cause he tells— When Lucius tests the bounds of the forest and goes to get the berries, and then they have that, you know, quote-unquote attack where they mark everybody's door, Lucius sends in a note to the elders admitting to what he did wrong, And, uh, saying that he brought shame on his family and asking for forgiveness.

Art: Yeah.

Keith: And, uh, uh, you know, where it's unclear at this point the temperament of the elders, but Walker sort of slowly walks up to him. Lucius has tears in his eyes. He's like— I think the camera is, is framing it like maybe he's about to be yelled at or scolded or even hit, uh, but instead Walker says, do not fret. You, uh, uh, you are fearless in a way that I shall never know. Um, and like, that's the end of it. Um, and—

Art: It's interesting. It's— That's— It's interesting that, um, it doesn't take any bravery to go into the woods if you know the monsters aren't real.

Keith: Right, but he's still more afraid than—

Art: Unless you're a blind woman that they've decided they're gonna send by herself. That was very brave, 'cause she's still blind. You can still just die in the woods.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Um, I think that when Ivy—

Keith: And she almost does. Sorry, Jack. She almost just does die in the woods, by the way.

Jack: Yeah. I think that when Ivy enters the woods, the film gets much worse.

Keith: Yeah, I agree.

[01:41:20]

Jack: Um, and I did not— I, I, um, I've been talking about the bits of this film that I like, and so I, I, I don't want to get it twisted. I do not think this is a very good movie, but I do also think that, that there are a lot of things in it that are worth worth talking about, and there are things in it that are praiseworthy. By the time she leaves, which, you know, we talked earlier about the kind of the odd pacing of this movie, unless you're Keith. And [crosstalk] I do think there's—

Keith: [crosstalk] Try watching Signs and Unbreakable.

Sylvi: I get it.

Jack: This trip through the woods feels like, like a gallop at the end of the movie. We're like, well, she has to go out and then she has to get the thing and kind of come back.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: And—

Art: Well, as we discussed, all these movies have to be the exact same length, right?

Keith: Yeah, and he doesn't remember until the second half.

Jack: Yes. Yes. You run into this real problem, which is you have one of the best living cinematographers whose specialty is shooting people's faces and interesting arrangements of like, people in sets. And you say, we're gonna put one character in the woods in daylight, and it's also kind of narratively important that the woods don't really have landmarks. You know, there aren't broken-down buildings. There aren't— You know, one area of the woods is essentially the same as another area of the woods. And there are ways that you can do this well in movies. I think Blair Witch Project still really holds up in part because of the weird camera gimmick. The woods as a hostile backdrop in that film work because the actress playing Heather is holding the camera. And so it has this nauseating effect. Instead, what you have here are just sort of 4 or 5 scenes back-to-back of Ivy moving at varying levels of speed through woods that look functionally identical. All the visual interest of the film just like, drains out of it.

Keith: There's a couple really—

Art: I liked it. I liked exactly that about it because I thought it was a way for the movie to sort of take my sight away. That I don't have— The character that I'm following has no like, visual sense of reference. And so my visual sense is also severely curtailed in this moment.

Keith: That's interesting.

Sylvi: Yeah, the camera's super tight on all these shots. You never really get a sense of landmarks other than when she's in that big field of red berries. And that's not really a landmark in the traditional sense.

Keith: There's also the big tree.

Sylvi: It's just evocative. Yeah, there's the big tree, but there's tons of big trees.

Keith: Well, she uses the big tree as a landmark.

Sylvi: No, she— I know she— I remember seeing her touch it. I didn't know— I didn't really clock that that was the same tree until she was touching the tree, and I was like, okay, that must be the tree.

Keith: Yeah, right. She had a better sense of direction than you did.

Sylvi: Well, yeah.

Jack: She falls in a hole.

Sylvi: I'm not there.

Jack: She uses this hole later to kill— To kill Noah. She both falls into and gets out of the hole very impressively. If I had gone into that hole, even if I was clinging onto the edge, there's no way that I am getting out. She's just— There's like this moment of tension where it's like, is she gonna fall in? And then she's just like, nope.

Keith: Why is this— Why is that hole there? What is this hole? What is this 35-foot hole doing? Who put that there?

Art: Woods are weird.

Keith: Woods are not like that.

Jack: I have lived in the woods. They are not like that. We have woods experts joining in. Um, that's the Woods Hole.

Keith: Yeah, that's the famous Woods Hole.

Jack: I, I don't know why the hole is like that. I think that the, the arrival of the hole and also the one line, Noah must have found the costume we keep under the floorboards, are two of the most like, clanging, put the fucking line in the script, we have to move on, moments in the film for me. I was like, I was made angry by the, he must have found the suit under the floorboards.

Keith: But I want to say, I do like that they locked him in a box and he got out. And so we as the audience— I thought he was in the box, and then when they opened the box and he was gone, I liked that.

Jack: That's, that is always fun in a mystery. They put Noah in a place they call the quiet room, which is initially described as, or sort of seems to be like a timeout, but becomes very clear that that is the village's jail, you know, that's where they [Keith: Right.] If they ever needed jail, that is it.

Keith: It's sort of, it's sort of both. It's sort of a little bit of a timeout room and a little bit of jail.

Jack: Me forgetting everything I know about contemporary carceral politics, what is jail if not a little timeout room?

Keith: Right.

Art: And I, I mean, again, I think the entire movie falls apart once you like start to— Like, I agree that watching it a second time and knowing the twist, the twist becomes like— A lot of scenes become cuter. I especially like the scene where Edward Walker is talking to the doctor and is like, sort of asking, but not like— he's asking, if we had modern medicine, could we fix this? And that— but he's not saying that because people are around.

Jack: That's a good scene.

Art: And the doctor's like, so what are you asking me? Like, that's a very— Like, that was the clip I hoped you had.

Keith: Oh, right.

Art: That's, that's like, a very good scene the second time through. But the movie itself does not survive an encounter with the idea that you would go back and think about what had already happened.

Keith: I don't know. I, I've— Because I, I really clocked in very early that that's what was going on, and there was never a time in the movie where I didn't think that they were secretly in the early 2000s. And I, um, I liked my way through it. I mean, I didn't love this movie. I thought it was easy to watch, and I thought— And that's not true of Unbreakable or Signs. Um, I don't know that I like this better than Unbreakable. The last scene in Unbreakable is better than anything in this movie. By far.

[Sylvi laughter]

Keith: Uh, that is a movie that—

Sylvi: Really?

Keith: That I— Yeah, I, I mean, that's a movie with the last scene that is so weird and good to me that, um [Sylvi: That's crazy.] It fixes a movie that I otherwise pretty much hated.

Sylvi: I think the last scene of Unbreakable is the worst part of it.

Art: Um, yeah, the best scene in Unbreakable is him flirting on the train.

Sylvi: Yeah, this one is— His son pulls a gun on him at dinner.

Keith: Okay, that is also— That's the other good scene in Unbreakable. Unbreakable is weird because at the same time, I really don't like that that's how it ended because I did

want more. I wanted Mr. Glass to be able to express himself as a villain instead of say, by the way, I'm the villain, movie over. But it's just such a bizarre way to end a movie. And Samuel L. Jackson, who I thought had struggled to act for the entirety of the rest of the movie, he really pulled it out for that final monologue. Something about it really stuck in my mind. I don't know why. And nothing really in The Village is that good, but some of it's pretty good, and it goes down smooth. And it's extremely unsavory in a lot of places.

Sylvi: Sure, yeah.

Keith: But, but it was a way easier watch than Signs, which bugged the fucking shit out of me in the second half.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: Um, yeah, I don't know.

Jack: Can we talk about the music briefly?

Keith: Sure.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: Oh, it's such a good score.

Jack: I hated this score.

Art: Glad we have you on this for this.

Keith: I also didn't like the score.

Art: Really?

Keith: I like that James Newton Howard is kind of a chameleon, and he's just like, well, I do 30% me, and 70% the setting, no matter what. And so you can always kind of feel the James Newton Howard underneath. But I did find the pastoral violin thing kind of cloying, and I found a lot of it to be very samey.

Jack: This is kind of exactly where I'm at. I am not the world's biggest James Newton Howard fan, although I think his work on *The Sixth Sense* is really, really good, and I think that when he is composing at his best, his work has a real like, lucidity to it. There's like, a kind of clarity and straightforwardness in the way that he is writing. I mean, you think about the, the great *Sixth Sense* cue of the celeste, it is— It like, floats along with the movie. And I don't mean that pejoratively whatsoever. I mean, it's like, it's like, um, like bobbing along with the movie. And the ideas are kind of coming through really beautifully and clearly. But I feel like what he tried to do in this movie, like Keith said, is kind of aim right for a particular kind of pastoral composing, your, you know, like ascending Vaughan Williams, your Delius kind of vibe, in a way that I think was sort of the beginning and end of his thought process there, and kind of moved on from that point to just sort of fairly straightforward violin melodrama. The texture of the movie doesn't really change in its soundscape. We have these, like, split arpeggios over and over, these violin arpeggios. There's no particular differentiation between the elders and the young people. And once we get out into the woods, we move into, like, pretty standard violin horror, you know?

Art: The violin, the scariest instrument.

Jack: It is pretty scary. I think the violin is played really well. I think something that's really cool is Hilary Hahn gets a credit. I don't know if you noticed this.

Sylvi: Like, top billing at the end.

Jack: Um, uh, and she's a, she's a fantastic player. Um, and I think she's, she's making the best out of good material. But I really feel like he wrote down *American Pastoral* and circled it.

Art: Yeah.

Jack: And then wrote an hour of music.

Keith: It's one of the things I was thinking while I was listening to this movie is that, um, James Newton Howard takes, I think, a lot of cues from the same era of classical that films of the '30s and '40s and '50s take.

Jack: Oh, that's a good point.

Keith: And the pastoral thing kind of runs away from that thing that he had been— Like, if you listen to *Signs* or *Unbreakable*, there's a lot of— There's a lot of that, like, um, that big orchestral, fast, uh, um, kind of some, like, chase scene classical music from, like, stage and early screen. And it's very hard to marry that with, um, you know, a melodramatic violin.

Ali: Yeah, I think the, the kind of worst and most honest thing I can say about the score of this movie is that I did not think about the music at all while I was watching it.

Keith: Oops.

Ali: Which is something I definitely did for *Signs* and *Unbreakable*. But in here, it just sort of feels like it's happening. It's there because it has to be? I don't really feel like there are really any memorable moments where the soundtrack comes up or makes itself known or, like, enhances stuff very much. It kind of sounds like it's supposed to, so it doesn't stand out in any way.

Art: I—

Keith: Some of the chasey stuff— Oh, sorry, go ahead, Art.

Art: I disagree. I liked it a lot. I liked the way that it went from the two things, from being the pastoral to the tense stuff, especially not so much in the woods, but in the— The town spooky stuff. Yeah, it works for me. And just for an appeal to authority, it was nominated for an Oscar.

Keith: It was nominated for an Oscar. It was the first one of M. Night's movies with a score nominated for an Oscar.

Ali: Like, in my memory of the sort of town intrusion scene where you get all of the families running into their homes and um, Lucius is kind of going from house to house to help people. I feel like that was a very successful scene, but I could not describe the way that it sounds to you at all, which was maybe just on me. But I don't think the music there was what—

Jack: No, I'm sort of the same. It's tough because it looks so good. It looks so good. The wedding looks incredible.

Keith: The wedding was amazing. Yeah, I think it's a highly functional score that is not that impressive.

Ali: That's fair.

Sylvi: Yeah, that's fair.

Keith: I think it does mostly its job as a score. I do. I think it's surprising that it's the one— Of the, of the 4 movies that we've seen now. Sixth Sense is the one with the best score by far, I think.

Jack: What does the score of The Sixth Sense sound like?

Keith: Ghost tines. Ghost tines.

Jack: Oh, ghost tines.

Keith: Ghost tines.

Ali: Ghost tines.

Keith: Creepier violins, bigger drums.

Ali: Yeah, I feel like it's the one that's the most comparable to the song that you composed, Jack. So did you listen to any of the music from— Are we talking Signs or this?

Keith: Well, Jack's theme that they did for this is basically a cover of the, um, one of the main songs from the Sixth Sense soundtrack that I can't remember.

Ali: Oh, okay.

Art: Okay.

Ali: That's why it sounds very familiar. Good job.

Jack: I was biting James, but I mean, even as I was biting, uh, his stuff, I could feel despite myself that I was, I was— That Sixth Sense— Oh my God, I can't say it. That Sixth Sense theme has such a lightness to it, such like, like an effervescence and an ethereal kind of like spookiness. And even as I was covering it, I could feel without trying that I was like bogging it down. You know, he's definitely got something, James Newton Howard.

Sylvi: Old Jim.

Keith: I believe the track is called— Is it Malcolm Is Dead, or is it— Oh, it's the main— no, it's just the main title theme. It's just the main title theme. Yeah. Which gets sort of roped into several of the other tracks.

Jack: And has become the sound of Sixth Sense, despite the fact that there's a bunch of other music in there. I'm interested, uh, do you recall Lady in the Water having kind of an interesting compositional move, Ali?

Ali: I think a little bit. I, I will certainly listen out for it, but I, I watched it actually maybe almost exactly a year ago if it was the Palisade finale. Um, I'm gonna wait for this plane to go by.

Jack: The Palisade finale was a year ago?

Ali: Uh, probably later because we did the—

Jack: I'm going to die.

Ali: We did the postmortem on our anniversary, right?

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: Oh wow.

Ali: Um, yeah, I, I feel like I am only just now recovering from Palisade.

Jack: Yes, what the hell, man?

Ali: Um, anyway, uh, friendsatthetable.cash, anyway. I was receiving more updates because that is why I said that. Anyway, I think— So there's two things with— Lady in the Water is another film about, like, fairy tale and fantasy in a way that is not— I mean, I don't want to spoil it for anybody, but it's going for that in an earnest way, so much more earnestly than this movie is. And I think that that comes across in the soundtrack as well. I think that there is a feeling in that movie that that soundtrack supports. And not in this way that this one doesn't, but I just think that the camerawork and the acting and the costuming was something that you think about as successful in bringing those moods out, um, in a way that the soundtrack does not feel memorable in that way.

Jack: Um, um, yeah.

Keith: Does Lady in the Water take place modern day?

Ali: Sure does.

Keith: Okay. I remember from the trailer—

Art: You're breaking the rules.

Keith: Sorry.

Jack: I—

Keith: So we'll go over— We'll go over Lady in the Water at the end and my guesses for what it is. I believe I've only ever seen a trailer for it. it. And I remember a suburban pool. That's what my— That is my memory, but we'll get there.

Jack: Is there anything else on the movie that we would like to talk about? I would like to talk a little bit about the reception, but I feel like there's a pretty natural break between talking about the movie and that, so I don't want to jump ahead.

Art: I would— there, there are two scenes I would still like to discuss in chronological order. It's the three of them meeting in the woods, the three of them being Lucius, Noah, Ivy.

Keith: The run like a boy scene?

Art: That you don't— The what?

Keith: You run like a boy scene?

Art: Yeah, the you run like a boy scene. I got a clip of that if you wanna hear it. Sometimes we do not do things we want to do so people do not know we want to do them. Is that in the clip?

Keith: Let's find out. I think it is.

Art: All right, play the clip.

[audio from The Village starts playing]

Ivy: My sister cried a lot. You wonder how I recognized you? Some people, just a handful, mind you, give off the tiniest color. It's faint, like a haze. It's the only thing I ever see in the darkness. Papa has it too. Do you wonder what your color is? Well, that I won't tell you. It's not ladylike to speak of such things. You shouldn't even have asked.

2:00:00

Lucius: You run like a boy.

Ivy: Thank you. I know why I know why you denied my sister. When I was younger, you used to hold my arm when I walked, and suddenly you stopped.

One day I even tripped in your presence and nearly fell. I was faking, of course, but still you did not hold me. Sometimes we don't do things we want to do so that others won't know we want to do them.

[audio ends]

Keith: Um, yeah, I'm glad, Arthur, you, you wanted to point this out because this was like the one thing I wanted to circle back to, is that we had kind of not talked about the Ivy and Lucius romance. Um, but I'm glad that I had that line that you wanted.

Art: And then, um, the other scene I would say in the Ivy-Lucius romance is the two of them on like, the porch later.

Keith: I sure have that too.

Art: Hey, just let's just run it all. Me and Keith are really synced on these clips.

[audio from The Village starts playing]

Ivy: Why can you not say what is in your head?

Lucius: Why can you not stop saying what is in yours? Why must you lead when I want to lead? If I want to dance, I will ask you to dance. If I want to speak, I will open my mouth and speak. Everyone is forever plaguing me to speak further. Why? What good is it to tell you you are in my every thought from the time I awake? What good can come from my saying I sometimes cannot think clearly or do my work properly? What gain can arise from my telling you the only time I feel fear as others do is when I think of you in harm? That is why I am on this porch, Ivy Walker. I fear for your safety before all others. And yes, I will dance with you on our wedding night.

[audio ends]

Keith: Um, they really had to sell the Ivy and Lucius romance because it happens in about 15 minutes of the movie. It's so odd. I think they basically do a good job with it?

Um, I think that they really did not make Lucius look good in that clip. I think that he comes off like an asshole.

Sylvi: Oh, absolutely.

Art: Uh, he comes off as an asshole, but I do think it's a, it's a good— I think they're both good and effective scenes.

Keith: I agree. Yeah. But it's strange because it's the only scene where he comes across like an asshole. He seemed like, kind of shy. He seemed kind of nice. He seemed like he had a head on it, a good head on his shoulders. He seemed brave. Everybody in the town respects him. And then he's basically like, you're, you're showing me up. You're emasculating me by being so forthright. But also, I love you.

Jack: They're kind of doing a Darcy thing here as well, less in the, like, overall character arc and more in the, like, individual pacing of this scene. The, like, wildly vocally repressed, you know, how come you're being like this? You know, this is Darcy flexing his hand.

Keith: I have no— I have no Jane Austen experience, so I can't—

Jack: Pride and Prejudice is really good. Lots of them are good, and she wrote 100 books.

Keith: Wow, that's too many.

Jack: That's not true. I think she wrote like 7.

Keith: Okay.

Ali: I— There's something in— It is a really weird relationship. I do like that there's, there's something in the way that it is both really— The subtleness of it, I— It's tough to say that it's, it's subtle when so much of the movie resolves around it, but like, that our first introduction to Lucius as a eligible bachelor, I guess you say, is from her—

[Keith hysteria]

Keith: The village's most eligible bachelor.

Ali: He really is. Like, her older sister, who is of marrying age, and, you know, is so impatient about this— Well, timing in this movie is also really weird. Like, it feels like it takes place over 3 days, but it could be an entire year. Like, it feels like there's missing time here in a big way that I think is really fascinating too. But so, her older sister, is, um, so wanting a husband that she is asking for her father's hand of marriage, uh, for a boy she's never spoken to, which is Lucius at this point. And then, like, within a couple scenes later, it's like, oh, she chose somebody else, so now we can be together.

Keith: Uh, Ali, I think you said this earlier—

Sylvi: The weird guy with the shirt that got wrinkled?

Keith: Yeah, yeah, Cristóbal.

Jack: So funny.

Sylvi: Yeah, yeah.

Keith: Uh, uh, you said earlier, uh, too, that, um, they've never spoken. I read that as that she hadn't spoken to him about loving him, not that they'd like, literally never spoken.

Ali: Oh, sure, sure, sure.

Keith: But I do agree that like, that her, uh, infatuation came out of nowhere and kind of she sprung it on him, whereas like, Ivy and him seem to have a pre-existing, you know, will-they-won't-they relationship.

Ali: Right. And I do think that the part of the reason is is because the first mention that we have from Ivy that she also has feelings for Lucius is both post-rejection of her older sister and speaking of this history between them. It's not her saying, like, oh, I can— You know, that first conversation happens before she's even like, oh, my sister's engaged. Now I can have a boyfriend too. I just wanted you to know that. So, you know,

the first inciting thing that we get is this sort of history between this and her questioning, like, I don't understand why you don't want to be with me anymore. But I am going to say to you very plainly that I think that you want to be with me. And I like that like, in the start of putting the relationship in focus is to illustrate the weirdness of this town. Ivy's sister Kitty is obviously kind of going about this the way that, like, an American viewer would not view courtship, you know? Like, her enthusiasm for it, this, like, sort of, like, you know, the way that Ivy ends up saying, like, oh, because my sister's married, now we can be together.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Like, that ends up being, like I said, like, world-building instead of just pure character development. And then, as the sort of like, permission and the sort of like, removal of the, I am not allowed to yearn for you because you are not eligible for marriage, to this sort of, like, I— There's a big attack on the town, and for some reason I'm gonna risk my own life and the life of my entire family so I can stand on the doorstep and wait for this person to take my hand, sort of like, immediate like, intensity of feeling between this sort of like, well, I think that you have a crush on me, and I just think that you should ask me out, is kind of fun. I mean like, you have to get to the end of the movie to believe and want for her to go to the woods to save him. And I also think it's kind of a fun reversal that like, his entire desire throughout this movie of like, I'm going to be the brave one. I am pure of heart. You have to let me do this, yada, yada, yada. And then she's the one who gets to be the adventurer is also kind of fun.

Sylvi: Mm-hmm.

Ali: But yeah, I don't know. I thought they were— I think it's sort of like, you know, Ivy as a character, especially to Lucius, is so overbearing in those scenes that I think that it actually becomes kind of endearing that he is like— His impatience with her him, or his impatience with her comes from this moment of like, you keep asking me all of these questions so much so that I do not have the room to speak.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: Um, and like, this is my moment to say it now that I am in love with you, but like, I, I didn't have access before. Like, right. Um, so I, I don't know.

Keith: I love when he tells her that she runs like a boy and she's like, thanks. That's the funniest thing to me. That is like such a, um, like, it almost feels like they're 12, not in their 20s.

Sylvi: They constantly feel younger than they are.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: Which again, I think is tying back into how they're trying to like, preserve this notion of innocence among the like, second generation of village dwellers or whatever.

Keith: Yeah, I mean, what, what you mostly see anyone who's not an— You know, in their middle ages doing is like, playing. They do chores and they play. And that's like, all that anyone's doing.

Sylvi: God.

Art: Yeah. What do they eat is a— I mean, I guess they have livestock.

Keith: They have livestock and gardens, which we see basically only in the first scene and when the livestock starts showing up dead.

Jack: Sort of an—

Art: I mean, how many people live in this village is also, you know, an interesting question.

Ali: Like 30 people?

Keith: I want to get a shot of that.

Art:: How does this work?

Keith: There's like, like 2 long tables worth of people. It seems like several dozen people.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Art: It's— I mean, I don't want to like, get too into the weeds on this, but it's definitely not enough to like, sustain for multiple generations.

Keith: It's certainly not.

Art: They're going to have a massive— I mean, this whole experiment can't last, right? There's no way, even without this incident—

Keith: Which Edward says at some point, openly.

Art: It's not going to last more than like a generation and a half. I don't even think this thing survives Google Maps, which is bearing down on them in 4 years anyway.

Keith: Well, to go back to the last scene where they stand up when asked, are we still interested in continuing this? And assuming, I think not at all outrageously assuming that they are voting to continue, doing the village, like, I just think it is careening towards an inevitable collapse that, like, they're just kicking the can further down the road. You know, they can't stop people from going. Like, as soon as Ivy can go to the village or to the towns and come back to the village of medicine, the requests for more things will pile up. That's the human nature that they're trying to escape.

Art: Mm-hmm. Which, I mean, they're just gonna have to kill Ivy, right? That's—

Keith: Yeah, they're just gonna have to kill her.

Ali: Well, no, I mean, she's just gonna have to be the bearer of the consequence, right? Like, the, you know, sort of the question is like— This is part of the patch— The, the passing of the, the torch for, uh, Father Walker.

Jack: Oh yeah.

Keith: I just think it'll never work. It's impossible.

Ali: Yeah, I mean—

Sylvi: Oh, I agree.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: But you know, they should have my mailbox idea. It would all go fine with that.

Keith: But would Ivy— Do we think that Ivy will lie to the town to keep, to keep the lie that was born out of fear and guilt and grief that she doesn't have?

Art: Well, she doesn't know.

Keith: Right. She doesn't have any of those things.

Art: But she doesn't know that the— She doesn't know the secret either.

Sylvi: She doesn't know the time thing.

Art: She knows the monsters are fake. She doesn't know it's the present.

Keith: Well, but she knows that the towns have things that they don't, things that save lives.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Art: Yeah.

Jack: I'm gonna put one copy of Tekken 2 and the console to play it inside Ali's The Village mailbox. And just let it sort itself out.

[group laughter]

Sylvi: Oh man.

Keith: Oh my God, they're gonna play as, uh, they're gonna play as Gon, the little dinosaur guy, and everyone's gonna lose their mind.

Sylvi: We do— The Armor King we do not speak of.

Jack: Um, I think briefly, as we were talking about the, you know, uh, the older sister has to get married before the younger sister can get married, and we're sort of reproducing late 19th century sort of marriage politics as we go here. I do want to ask briefly, what does the village believe? We know they believe in love and how that's good, and we know that they believe in a lot of like negative things. You know, red is the bad color and there are— And there are monsters.

Keith: Well, they believe yellow is the good color.

Jack: They do believe yellow is the good color, and they believe that love moves the world, and they believe that you should sort of be kind. But in the latter moments of the film, we have this sort of like, this revelation that they are historians and that they are like a, like a study group that became the village.

Keith: I think they were a counseling group. They were like, they were a support group.

Art: Yeah, a support group that became—

Ali: Yeah.

Jack: I mean, it's like, what, what do they believe in the village?

Keith: Yeah, it is unclear that they're like preaching Christianity in here. Uh, yeah, it is kind of absent the actual like, belief structure that they have that is not the monsters at the gates.

Art: There is a priest though, right?

Keith: Uh, at the beginning, August Walker, crying over the coffin of his son.

Jack: August Nicholson.

Keith: Sorry, August Nicholson. Walkers are the other guys. August Nicholson crying over the coffin of his son before he goes into the ground. He seems to be wearing a, um, a priest's collar, but, but I then couldn't find that in my, my screenshots, so I don't know. So I thought that he was the priest and that it was the priest's son who had died. But then they never really actually have church or any building that's clearly identifiable as a church. If I was— **[Ali: Yeah, they—]** Just if I was a historian— go ahead, Ali.

Ali: Well, no, I would just say I think that it's interesting that they conceal this as much as they do because it's not even that the wedding even has a ceremony that that we see with some—

Jack: Yeah, like an officiant.

Ali: Expression of faith. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Keith: If I was a— If I was, you know, in the late '70s or whatever, or early '80s, whenever it was, if I was a history professor and I had the chance to build a society from the ground up in the woods, I personally wouldn't include Christianity, but I also wouldn't have included only white people, so.

Jack: Would you have included the monsters?

Keith: No, I think I would have skipped the monsters. So there's a lot of places where me and the elders disagree, but—

Ali: How would you have kept people out of the forest?

Art: Well, this place has a lot of feat— Oh, sorry.

Ali: How would you have kept people out of the forest?

Sylvi: There's bugs in there.

Keith: Bugs. Yeah, bugs. There's bugs in there.

Art: There's bugs in there? Okay.

Jack: Somewhere in the forest, I've dug a 30-foot-deep hole, and I won't tell you where it is. You'd better be careful.

Keith: Yeah, it is strange. He had— He did have the funds to create any kind of barrier that he wanted, and he chose a mythological barrier instead of a physical one. Um, I guess because a physical one would have been, you know, I guess this is the difference between, um, you know, uh, you know, a jail and a border. A border is just kind of a social jail.

Ali: There is a— I mean, there's a literal wall around them, a protected wall with security guards circling it. There is a physical barrier.

Keith: Yeah, but it's the key— It's more of like a watchtower than a— 'Cause, you know, it's not like Lucius has a hard time, or Noah have a hard time getting into the forest.

Art: No, I mean, there's a wall that she has to get over at the end.

Keith: Oh, that wall.

Ali: The forest is contained within a wall.

Keith: Oh yeah, but that was like a day's walk away.

Ali: Right, but sure, I mean, like—

Art: Well, half a day's walk for a blind person.

Ali: He created a jail and hired the security.

Keith: Yeah, it was a half-day's walk.

Ali: And like, paid off planes, fucking Disneyland style.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: The only other time I've heard of somebody being able to be like, planes are not allowed to fly above here, is Disneyland.

Keith: Yeah, and governments.

Ali: Oh, sure.

Keith: Uh, it basically— it's a government. He basically created a micronation inside of— Another thing that would have been exciting to preppers and homesteaders.

Jack: I would watch the film about the first year.

Art: Mm.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Um, I don't think it would be very good, but I'm just saying that I would watch it.

Art: Well, the first year is interesting, right? Because in the first year, everyone there still knows it's a lie.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Right.

Jack: Yes. But it can't all be easy. One year. One year without modern medicine and conveniences. Something's gonna go wrong at some point.

Sylvi: Mm-hmm. I wanna see the last year.

Jack: Yeah. I wanna see the last year where they're like, it's like the fucking end of Midsommar, they're burning the houses down.

Sylvi: I wanna see when this goes all Jonestown, you know?

Jack: Yeah.

Ali: Well, that's what we need. The Village trilogy.

Sylvi: Yeah, the Villagie.

Jack: It's time.

Sylvi: It's time to do— The next sequel is gonna be called Red, and the last one's gonna be called Yellow.

Ali: Wow.

Art: Whoa.

Sylvi: Oh, yeah. Or it'd be The Towns and then it'd be The Cities. Sorry, I fixed it.

Keith: Do you have anything else to say about the contents of the movie before we move on?

Art: Oh, just one more little thing, just an addendum to what you're just saying. They made this little society. But they did make it better than 1897 world, right? There are women on the Elders Council.

Keith: Both Walkers and Earls.

Art: They're lying to their people and they're doing all of that, but there's an equality to the world.

Keith: Right. They have a liberal sensibility that comes from having been in, in the late 19th or 20th century America.

Art: Equality, as long as what you're not looking for is to leave their village or not be scared by monsters, period.

Keith: Or have anyone not white there.

Art: Well, I think that's a coincidence.

Keith: Sure, but—

Jack: It's a fucking odd coincidence?

Keith: It might be a coincidence for the characters, but is it a coincidence for M. Night Shyamalan?

Ali: Yeah.

Art: No, and I think that, like, that's something I'm not really prepared to, to go into, the idea that this— that a non-white person made a movie about these crazy white people.

Keith: Oh, I heard something about this movie, that, that, that was the original last line of the script, was that actually, M. Night Shyamalan was going to play that security guard, not Kevin, and that when when they came out of the forest to be like, we need medicine and we're living in there and blah, blah, blah. And that he was gonna say, crazy fucking white people.

Jack: Is that true?

Keith: I don't know if it's true. I just saw it. I didn't have time to look into if it was true, but I saw it.

Jack: Okay.

Sylvi: Okay, okay.

Ali: I mean—

Sylvi: Unsubstantiated report.

Ali: Again, I, you know, I think it is significant if you think about the timeline and the way that white people were feeling towards brown people in the States and how they wanted to get away from them. Like, I, you know, I think the movie is— We've said too subtle about this, um, but I, I think that, you know, that, you know, that this movie walked so fucking, uh, fuck. The Jordan Peele movie that isn't Us.

Sylvi: Get Out.

Ali: Uh, Get Out could run. Like, I, you know, I think that— I, I think that there's— I think there's a lineage there at the very least.

Jack: Yeah.

Sylvi: Yeah, I don't really disagree at all.

Keith: Shyamalan—

Jack: I wanted to see the monster like—

Keith: Uh, oh, sorry, go ahead, Jack.

Jack: Oh, I just wanted to see a monster pull someone's head off or something. I know it wouldn't have really worked.

Keith: Well, again, we've run into the situation where this is a movie that was marketed as a horror movie. I think people might say that it's a horror movie, but I watched it and I'm like, well, this wasn't really a horror movie again.

Art: No, I remember being— Feeling quite a lot of suspense when she's in the woods.

Keith: Sure, but we've got a name for that kind of genre, and it's suspense.

Sylvi: Well, thriller.

Keith: Sure, thriller. Well, I don't think that people would call it either.

Ali: I feel like Signs is his only horror movie at this point, and even that you could just say is a thriller.

Sylvi: Yeah, I mean, Sixth Sense has moments that are playing with horror movie stuff in the way that I would consider that one also a horror movie, but it's doing that in the like, way to subvert a lot of expectations.

Keith: Yeah, it's, it's the closest so far to me. Sixth Sense is the closest to a horror movie that we've seen. Uh, and, and, and upon watching it, I think I immediately was like, that's not a horror movie. And it's in the episode, you can hear me say it.

Sylvi: I do think Signs is the most straightforward horror movie of them all. Uh, uh, I'm with Ali on that one.

Keith: Shyamalan, who knew exactly exactly what film, uh, he had written and directed makes his signature Hitchcockian cameo as the only brown person in the film, the camera briefly focusing on his reflection in a plate of glass. The film's gaze can't even look at him directly. An early— That's a good note. An early draft of the script leaked in 2003, and its final line of dialogue is spoken by the truck driver who helps Bryce Dallas Howard's character obtain the medicines she has spent her life being denied. Crazy fucking white people, he says, and drives away.

Ali: I don't think we were ready for that in 2004.

Sylvi: I don't know, but I would've popped hard for that one. That would've been crazy. I would've been whooping and hollering.

Keith: I think that there's something really funny about, like, making this movie and ending it on a comedy— On the only comedy beat in the movie. And actually, he still does have the only comedy beat in the movie because when we get to, um, the outpost where, you know, Kevin's boss, M. Night Shyamalan, is at, where he says, you know, we have— We keep medicines for animal bites and whatever. And we pan to— We see him like reading the newspaper and we pan around. We don't get a look at him, but we get a look at the newspaper. And the newspaper is just full of crime. It's just like crime and death.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: It's just like, you know, 9 headlines being like, horrible crime happened today. And the radio is on, and the radio's like, and by the way, reporting on new crime, there's crime still happening.

Sylvi: He's old-timey doomscrolling.

Keith: It's so funny. Well, it's like, you know, it's weird to then to show you what those guys in there are so fucking afraid of, and it's all the crime on the news.

Art: Yeah, I thought that was thematically appropriate.

Keith: Yeah, I thought it was really funny. I thought it was really funny.

Art: I'm sorry, I just scrolled down the Wikipedia page and saw the excerpt they have from Roger Ebert's review, and it's—

Sylvi: He hated it.

Art: So brutal.

Sylvi: He hated it.

Ali: Share with the class.

Art: Okay, Roger Ebert gave the film 1 star and wrote, quote, “The Village is a colossal miscalculation, a movie based on a premise that cannot support it, a premise so transparent it would be laughable were the film not so deadly solemn. To call the ending an anticlimax would be an insult not only to climaxes but to prefixes. It's a clumsy secret about one step up the ladder of narrative originality from it was all a dream. It's so witless, in fact, that when we do discover the secret, we want to rewind the film so we don't know the secret anymore.”

Keith: I have to say, to Roger Ebert, who I, you know, you can't agree with a critic every time and you can't disagree with him every time, and Roger Ebert's just one of those guys who when he— I like how he explains when he doesn't like something, but I often find him wrong. This movie is not better if they're not in the modern day. Nothing about that. Yeah, nothing about that makes the movie better to have like, oh, they were actually in 1897 the whole time. Like, that doesn't fix anything. That's such a weird thought, I think.

Ali: And in fact, like, the, the, the way that the movie spins around this intentional action is something that makes it so compelling. Like, walking— like, if I was walking away from this movie like, oh, Joaquin Phoenix is gonna be alive, yay, like, okay, that's just a film. But like, walking away and being like, you're talking— You're saying that fucking rich guy was obsessed with history and he fucking like, ordered fake fucking tombstones and fucking— Like, that part of it that's— It's like the, the worm in your brain that's like, I want to know, I want to see the movie of the, the, the first year, is like what's interesting about it. And not like, well, Bryce Howard had a really good performance here, even though she did, you know.

Art: Um, yeah, I mean, you have to believe that they either brought a bunch of stone with them or someone is risking the monsters to go to the towns to get tombstone because there certainly isn't a quarry in this village.

Sylvi: That's actually— That's my— One of those sequels that we've got in development now.

Art: The Quarry?

Sylvi: Yeah, the Quarry. The Village Quarry, Not related to the video games.

Keith: Um, there, uh, knowing M. Night Shyamalan now as I do, I sadly have to reveal that I know exactly what the quote-unquote first year at the village would be. And it would be all the crime that happened to all the people to lead them to this sort of grief that they're feeling. And then the second that they actually get to where the village would take place, they'd lay down one, you know, piece of lumber, be like, all right, time to get started, and then credits. That's how it would go. We actually wouldn't get even a second of the village in the movie.

Ali: Whoa.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Um, Art once said, uh, rewriting, I never want to see anybody walking anywhere. You know, just like, get them there kind of immediately. And I feel like M. Night sort of

has like, a weird relationship to that where like, once he hits the idea, close the curtains as quickly as possible. [**Keith:** Yeah, it's—] I feel like they all end so abruptly.

Keith: But, but the problem is that he doesn't ever follow that advice in the film itself because like, you know, except *The Sixth Sense*, which is why I think that it's the best of these by far. You know, this is an oversimplification, but like, to me, uh, you know, the character interactions is the— Is all the meat of the movie. And the, um, uh, like, the plot is just the Japanese sushi restaurant conveyor belt that brings you more character interaction. And there's a point in all these movies where there's so much plot that's built up, uh, that despite the fact that the, the movies are so about the characters, it's— It goes like, okay, we have to take 30 minutes to like, do the action part of the plot and then slam the door shut and end it. And it's very strange to me. *Signs* is like that, *Unbreakable* is like that, and then this is like that.

Art: I'm beginning to love it. I agree that it wasn't the best choice for *Unbreakable*, but I don't care what happens after the events of this film. Like, we saw everything I cared about happen. We dealt with exactly the repercussions I think are relevant to the movie we saw.

Keith: Yeah.

2:30:00

Art: And everything else is the same brain worms that means I have to see a *Star Wars* episode about every character in the background of *Attack of the Clones*. Like—

Jack: I'm with you. I am with you. It does just sometimes feel like he reaches up and turns the projector on.

Keith: This is the— Well, this is the problem.

Art: No offense intended. to people who have dedicated themselves to studying *The Clone Wars*.

Keith: I mean, okay, fuck The Clone Wars. But, and, you know, there's obviously a negative end of the spectrum of like, doing too much with characters that don't matter and don't mean anything and like, not being able to produce anything other than delivering an audience more helpings. But the problem with just shutting the projector off is that in all of the movies, he spends the last 20 to 35 minutes showing you stuff that I don't— I'm not interested in. So it's like, he gets the, you know, the first 60 minutes great.

Art: I'm sorry, they waste all that time in Signs showing you that the child was going to live.

Keith: They— The— It's not that— Ending abruptly is fine, but he ends abruptly after all the worst stuff in the movie is in the last third. And so it's sort of like— **[Jack: I am—]** Oh, go ahead, Jack.

Jack: I am fascinated to see how you feel about this maneuver as the project continues. M. Night is, is going to kind of continue to have thoughts about how to end movies and about how to pace his movies. It's gonna be, it's gonna be interesting.

Keith: Yeah, I, yeah, I don't know. By the way, this movie has a, has a plagiarism allegation. Of course, no charges were ever filed. But charges, I don't think that's what it, when it's civil, **[Art: You sue.]** There was no lawsuit ever filed. But Simon Schuster alleged that this movie had taken ideas from the book Running Out of Time by Margaret Peterson Haddix. I forgot to read that earlier in the note. It was, uh, they both involve a— This is from Wikipedia— They both involve a 19th century village, which is actually a park in the present day, have young heroines on a search for medical supplies, and both have adult leaders bent on keeping the children in their village from discovering the truth. No lawsuit was ever filed. I have not read that book, but I did write that it reminded me of The Giver, which is a book that I read in 4th grade and liked until I thought about it when I was in high school and then said, oh, I bet that book actually fucking sucked. I don't know. Who knows?

Art: It's very hard to say that you own an idea like this. It's even harder to prove that someone stole it.

Keith: I just think it's not his first one of those. I think that he has a couple of these. Hey, did you lift our idea for this? And I don't know, maybe, whatever. I think kind of whatever about that. I think that's kind of whatever.

Jack: Yes.

Keith: Signs had alleged similarities between that and Lord of the Barrens, the Jersey Devil.

Jack: People got very weird about M. Night Shyamalan.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: Oh, very much so.

Art: Yeah.

Jack: And I think with this being his kind of like— I think with the release of *The Village* and it not doing well, America was really starting to move into a phase of M. Night Shyamalan is a bad filmmaker.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: And also he's an Indian guy, and so we are going to turn a lot of pop culture racism directly onto this guy. And, and that in combination with M. Night puts twists in his films was the kind of like prevailing M. Night story in American media for a very long time, right?

Keith: You never want to be the, like, the famous golden boy. And you also never want to be the famous golden boy who isn't white. Because as soon— You can change almost nothing about what you're doing, and people will fucking tear you limb from limb.

Jack: Yes.

Keith: He's changed almost nothing about it. He made one really good movie and three basically okay movies, and people acted like he was the worst filmmaker of all time.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: I want to say that this movie was still wildly profitable.

Keith: Oh, yeah. Made \$260 million on a budget of \$60 million. Something like that.

Art: Yeah.

Jack: Holy hell.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: That where the next one is, but this is where the audience starts to turn on him. I want to especially call out the Robot Chicken M. Night Shyamalan sketch, which comes out a year— Which comes out in between this movie and Lady in the Water, is jaw-droppingly racist. And like is sort of the whole thing in a nutshell. In a— What the— It's, it's the whole thing in one place for me. [**Sylvi:** Nutshell.] In one capsule. In a nutshell. There we go.

Sylvi: Yeah, we got you, bud. Yeah, no, this is kind of that. It's that, and then like we sort of mentioned how the, the Scary Movie factory was starting to really start shitting on his movies. I don't know if it ever got quite as racist as that Robot Kitchen— Robot Chicken stuff did.

Keith: Robot kitchen? Sounds delicious.

Sylvi: Nah, dude, you don't want that. I don't need Wi-Fi in my stove. But yeah, no, like we are—

[loud staticky sound]

Ali: Sorry, that's YouTube.

Sylvi: Whoa.

Keith: Whatever that is. That's really scary. Why was it trailing?

Sylvi: Those we don't talk about. It's the monster, the real. Ahhh!

Ali: That's so scary.

Sylvi: I'm never leaving the village again.

Jack: But yeah, like, like Art says, the machine of— It's turning. Anti-American M. Night— Oh, sorry, American anti-M. Night racism is now starting to turn.

Keith: Mm-hmm.

Sylvi: Oh yeah. This is when people start, like, 'cause it's the Robot Chicken sketch that gives him the racist nickname that I will not be saying, correct?

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Sylvi: Yeah. 'Cause I feel like that is how he just sort of started getting referred to in—

Keith: Oh, and I'm guessing that we actually— I think that we actually, I think we talked about that in the first episode.

Sylvi: Probably have.

Keith: I didn't know it was from Robot Chicken, a show that I've seen basically zero seconds of.

Sylvi: I would watch too much of that show.

Art: Yeah, I'm like not willing to watch this sketch to check.

Keith: That's fair. The— I, I— It's very funny that this movie has the reputation that it does because I think that it is sort of like plainly better than Signs as a movie, and you know probably like I think I have like, a weirdly— Weird appreciation for Unbreakable. Like I think that it's terrible in a lot of ways, but there's just enough weird stuff in there that I'm like oh that's kind of fun and, and interesting. You know the gun scene and

Samuel L Jackson's closing monologue. Um, uh, I just— I think The Village, like, as far as for a general audience movie, The Village just feels like, so much more appealing. And the fact that it has the reputation that it does seems very unearned.

Ali: Yeah, I, you know, I do wonder if it's also a consequence of the, like, racial politics at play here that people did not walk away from The Village thinking that this is an interesting concept, and instead were like, the twist was that it was present day? It was so obvious! You know? And I, like— Sorry. I do think we're at an interesting—

Keith: Your little car beeping again?

Ali: Yeah. I think we're at an interesting place in his career because as we go to Lady in the Water, first of all, it's like, all right, we're gonna do a silly one. And then I do think a lot of that movie is about story and filmmaking and, uh, things of that nature. Um, so I'm looking forward to it.

Keith: This is—

Art: He then follows it up with three movies that are, like, pretty bad.

Ali: And people hated Lady in the Water.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: I— Yeah. Yeah, I, uh-huh.

Art: I think we're going to like Lady in the Water a little more than certainly its 25% Rotten Tomatoes score says.

Keith: Sure, yeah.

Sylvi: Ouch.

Art: Um, but then I do think, I mean, I don't think, and then we have three movies of which I think only one of them is on our schedule. And I don't think we would like the

other two either. It's Lady in the Water, The Happening, The Last Airbender, and then After Earth, the Will and Jaden Smith.

Keith: We're watching that one.

Ali: Oh, we're watching that one?

Art: That's on our list?

Keith: Yeah, it is on our list. Yeah.

Art: Well, that's a bad movie.

Keith: That's an Austin one, I think. Austin wants to watch After Earth with us.

Ali: I can't, I've seen that movie once and I think that it is strange and interesting.

Sylvi: This might be a good time to mention the like, two M. Night Shyamalan movies my boyfriend has seen in theaters are The Last Airbender and After Earth, which is really funny.

Art: Oh no.

Jack: Oh no.

Sylvi: It's really funny.

Keith: Um, and then we get to the, the Shyamalan renaissance with The Visit.

Sylvi: Yeah, I'm really excited for everything from— Well, I'm really excited for The Visit, Knock at the Cabin, Old, and Trap. I'm less excited for the, the Split and Glass of it all.

Keith: The Split and Glass of it all.

Ali: And we're skipping those, right?

Sylvi: I can't remember if we are or not any more. I think we are.

Keith: Art and Unbreakable convinced me that I really wanna see what happens with that.

Art: We could do Split and Glass as a one-episode speed round.

Sylvi: Maybe.

Keith: Maybe.

Sylvi: We can talk about this off air.

Keith: I like this, can I read this? This is from a French newspaper, Libé, about a review of this movie.

Sylvi: Yes, but you have to do the accent.

Keith: It doesn't say that here. It doesn't say that. No, I just checked it. They said I didn't have to do the accent actually, here.

Ali: Weird.

Sylvi: I'm done on this show. I'm leaving.

Keith: *Libération* called it “a Jansenist turnip,” which “pretends to worry about the isolationism of its ass-benitent heroes, but shows above all that it understands their fears and feels sympathy for them.” And I, and I really like that because it kind of hits on both things. Like, I, I do like it, like that it makes gestures towards worrying about and condemning the isolationism. Uh, but I also do— Am really annoyed by how there's this sort of like, you know, the world kneels before love. And, you know, you know, Walker's love for his daughter and his respect for Lucius, like, sort of allows him to rise above his own sort sort of moral sins, mortal sins. It's an interesting movie. I think as a post-9/11 movie, it works much better for me than Signs, which to me is almost like, a pro-isolationist movie. Maybe M. Night Shyamalan felt like, oh no, I accidentally released this movie with this message at the worst possible time and kind of tacks doing something new but can't quite make it all the way there. It's hard to make a left-wing

movie even a little bit, especially if you're a mainstream American director. So I'm not surprised that it fell short for me in that regard.

Art: But I don't think in 2004 this movie felt left-wing, but I—

Keith: No, I agree. I mean, it didn't feel left-wing in 2025, but it felt like he was running to the left from Signs, which did feel like a right-wing movie.

Ali: Mm.

Art: Well, all American pop culture became just fiercely right-wing after 9/11.

Keith: Yeah, I agree.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: Until, you know—

Keith: Until forever.

Sylvi: Oh yeah, no, that's definitely a sentence with an until.

Keith: Until dot dot dot.

Art: Until the point in the future where we fix it.

Keith: Yeah, this is a headstone with 2001 dash and then no—

Sylvi: That's a— I think even the date might be a little, uh, too late there for that first one.

Keith: Well, there's a series of headstones and we're in the— we're at the latest one.

Sylvi: Oh, okay. I'll accept it now.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Um, um, Keith, would you do the honors of taking us out with your predictions of Lady in the Water?

Jack: Oh yeah.

Keith: Yes. Okay, so I know what the lady looks like because she's the face of the box.

Ali: Oh, yeah.

Keith: On the boxcars.

Sylvi: Yeah, okay, yeah.

Keith: So the lady— I'm presuming that that blue lady is the lady in the water. And I think that she lives in a man's pool in the suburbs, and I think that he loves her. And I think that something bad happens to her, and she ends up in his shower to get water on her.

Sylvi: Sure, yeah.

Keith: I think I remember that from a trailer, that she's in the shower. But not like taking a shower, like in the tub with the shower on.

Sylvi: Like she's being kept alive by the water.

Keith: Right, yes, like a floundering fish. Now, the lady in the water, I think, is gonna be magic. But I don't know in what way. Uh, Ali gave me a hint that it was a fairy tale, but I probably would've said that anyway. Uh, um, and I think that that's all that I know. I don't know anything other than this is like a, like, um, uh, you know, pardon my French, but maybe a monster fucker romance. And—

Sylvi: Okay... Sorry, can you say that with the accent?

Keith: It says here I don't have to. It says here I don't have to.

Sylvi: [with a terrible French accent] A monster fucker romance.

Art: [with an equally terrible French accent] How you say, monster fucker romance?

Keith: And, and, and I, and I don't want to put this on Ali. I don't want to put this on Ali. And Ali, you can tell me if I'm wrong, but I think that this is the movie that inspired Ali and, and her love of this movie, or at least appreciation for it, to want to do this M. Night Shyamalan project. To me, speaks to that it probably is a monster fucker romance.

[pause]

[hysterical laughter]

Art: Whoa, interesting.

Sylvi: I love that.

Ali: I can't wait for the next episode.

Art: Monster fucker romantic. I—

Jack: Keith, do you think it's a— you know, you've said woman in the pool and in the shower. Is this a mermaid?

Keith: No, I think she's a water ghost.

Jack: Ah, okay.

Keith: I think that there's something, like, psychic or ghostly going on. Uh, I don't think that she's a mermaid. Um, like, um, maybe this is a— Maybe this is like a ment— You know, now knowing M. Night Shyamalan, you know, maybe his wife died in the ocean, and she's a mental or spiritual projection of his desire for a water-based emotional safe haven rather than a fear and grief.

Ali: Sylvi, you've been trying to get a word in here. I'd love to hear from you.

Sylvi: I was just gonna ask who you think the guy who has the lady in the pool is. Like, who— Do you have any casting predictions?

Keith: I just weirdly, every time there's an M. Night movie, my mind immediately jumps to Kevin Costner, and he's not been in one Mm-hmm. But I— and I think he's too old. And I remember hearing that Mark Ruffalo was meant to be in Signs. So maybe they got Mark Ruffalo, who's definitely younger than Kevin Costner, but not by a whole bunch. It would be very funny if it was Joaquin Phoenix again. And Joaquin Phoenix is sort of like his guy. It might be— And I know that he's in The Happening, so it might be the Wahlberger himself, Mark Wahlberg. And, but I don't, I think all of those are wrong. Is it a famous guy? Is it a male lead, like a famous male lead?

Sylvi: Oh, it is a famous guy.

Keith: Okay.

Art: And you are correct in that M. Night Shyamalan does seem to like, swing from one person to another. Like, I guess it didn't happen between Unbreakable and Signs, but he likes holding onto people if he can.

Keith: Okay. Um, let's see. Is it a leading man kind of guy?

Sylvi: I would consider him that, but like, not a traditional one. That's an interesting question. Not a traditional leading man, I suppose, in the way that you might think of a Hollywood leading man.

Keith: Uh, oh, fuck. Okay. All right. I have a guess. I have a good guess. Leading man, but not a traditional one. Uh, I'm blanking on his name. It's, uh, fuck. Um, Steve Buscemi.

Sylvi: No, but that's actually a pretty good guess.

Art: You're very close. You're definitely in the ballpark.

Keith: Oh, close with Steve Buscemi. Okay, that's a short list. There's a short list of close with Steve Buscemi.

Art: I mean, I have a— I can't— There's a clue I can't give you because of, because of circumstances.

Keith: Uh-huh. Okay. Um, okay.

Ali: We're just gonna have to live the next 7 days of our life.

Keith: Close to Steve Buscemi.

Ali: We'll come back to see how— Yeah.

Art: We'll see you in 9 days for— Well, I'll see you in 9 days. You, the listener, will wait 2 weeks or whatever.

Keith: Yeah. Um.

Art: I'm looking at the cast for The Last Airbender, and it's, one, super weird. Two, does not have carryover from Lady in the Water.

Keith: Carry— oh, carryover from, not a person named Carrie Overfrom—

Art: Carryover cast from Lady in the Water.

Keith: They didn't cast Carrie Overfrom— Is there anything else before we get out of here?

Sylvi: Oh, shit. I gotta read a review.

Keith: Oh, yeah, you do. Yeah. If you want to read a review and have Sylvi maybe read your review, you can go to Apple Podcasts and leave us a 5-star review and talk about how much you like that show. We've got 655 reviews. I would love to get to 700. And, and, uh, and that means that if you're listening to this and you've been listening and you haven't left a review, that's you. You're the person who hasn't left a review yet. Uh, you know, we've, we, we've, we've exhausted all the people who are excited and happy.

Sylvi: It has to be 5 stars.

Keith: Yeah, it has to be 5 stars. Excited and happy about leaving reviews. Those people left reviews ages ago. So if you're dragging your feet on leaving a review, pick up those feet.

Art: But I want you to know that we do have way more than 700 people listening to this show.

Keith: Right. It's just that it's been two years.

Sylvi: Um, this review is from user Not at the Table, uh, titled She Hunter My Hunter Till I Shyamalan. Uh, 5 stars. I can't believe Friends at the Table got me to watch M. Night movies after I swore I'd never watch another after seeing The Last Airbender movie in theaters.

Keith: From, by all accounts, that is a reasonable swear.

Sylvi: Well, you don't have to watch that movie.

Art: That's a rookie mistake. That movie was never gonna be good.

Keith: Yeah, that's true.

Art: You could tell from the trailer, you did that to you.

Keith: Yeah, but people are, and sorry to Not at the Table, people are weird about The Last Airbender. So there's a huge number of people who probably knew it was gonna be bad but had to see it.

Art: Yeah.

Sylvi: People love pretending fast food is fine dining. And that's all I'll say about The Last Airbender.

Art: Wow. Wow. And we'll never get to it. You'll never have to—

Sylvi: The TV show, not the movie. But also, we'll never have to either.

Art: You'll never have to defend those.

Keith: That's a Media Club Minus.

Sylvi: I think so, yeah.

Keith: I think that show's fine. But a fine to fine plus show from 20 years ago, what are we doing here?

Art: I've, I've had fast food meals that I didn't hate.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: Sometimes you're driving and that's what you can get and it tastes fine and you've had a good time.

Keith: I totally agree, but you're not still talking about your fast food from 20 years ago.

Sylvi: And you know what we're not talking about anymore?

Keith: What?

Sylvi: The Village or this episode of the podcast. Thank you everyone for listening.

Keith: Bye.

Jack: Thank you. Bye.

Keith: Oh, thank you, Jack, for being here. We're gonna have more guests.

Jack: Thank you for having me.

Keith: And it's gonna be a lot of fun. Um, uh, Jack, is there another one that you were thinking about being on to give people a preview?

Jack: Yes.

Keith: Yeah, which one is that?

Jack: I think you will see me— I think you will see me next when Mark Wahlberg and Zooey Deschanel start experiencing strange—

Keith: Things start happening.

Jack: Things start happening, I shall be here again.

Art: What a good cast that movie has, and it's so bad.

Ali: I loved that movie.

Jack: I've never seen it. I'm really excited.

Keith: I've never heard anyone else ever say that, ever. I've never heard that ever. I'm excited because no one, no one likes the movie everyone hates more often than me.

Art: I just skipped to the critical response page on *The Happening* Wikipedia, and there's a, there's a positive review from— Wait for it— Stephen King.

Ali: Whoa!

Sylvi: Wow. Not—

Keith: Good for him. Good for him.

Jack: He's onto something.

Keith: Famously a guy who can't tell the difference between good things and bad things. And it's what makes him a genius. It's what makes him a genius that he can't tell. I believe that.

Art: A guy who hated the Kubrick *Shining* and loved the ABC miniseries *Shining*.

Keith: Look, I get it. I get it.

Sylvi: What did I just say about fast food and fine dining?

[["Dr Malcolm and Friends"](#) by Jack de Quidt begins playing]

Sylvi: Stephen King loves to do that.

Ali: Good night, everybody. Good night.

Jack: Good night.

Sylvi: Bye.