

Madam Narf vs The Rogue Scrunt - Lady in the Water: Media Club Plus S02E05

Transcriber: Jay (jay8325)

Introduction	1
30:00	22
1:00:00	44
1:30:00	64
2:00:10	88

Introduction

[evil laughter from **Keith**, cackling in response from **Sylvi**]

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

Keith: [creepy voice] 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. This season, we'll be subjected ourselves to the twisted mind of M. Night Shyamalan. [normal voice] This one gave me a run for my money. I wasn't sure at any given minute of this movie what I thought about this movie.

Sylvi: Too twisted for you?

Keith: This one was too twisted.

Sylvi: Yeah. [witch's cackle from **Art**] This might be— Yeah, this might be the most fucked up thing.

Janine: I think we're milking the Halloween vibes a little prematurely here. It's still September.

Keith: No, this is a horror movie. All of— This is a horror movie.

Janine: Is it?

Sylvi: All of these have been horror directors, apparently.

Ali: Um, okay.

Keith: Uh, my name is Keith J. Carberry. You can find me on Bluesky @KeithJCarberry. You can find the Let's Plays that I do at youtube.com/runbutton. Run Button has been Let's Playing Lorelei and the Laser Eyes on Twitch, which is twitch.tv/runbutton, and those are going up on our Patreon, and they will then be up on the YouTube. You should check that out. Of course, you should check all of us out here at friendsatthetable.net, the Friends at the Table podcast that all the Friends at the Table do. With me, as always, is Sylvi Bullet.

Sylvi: Hi, I'm Sylvia. You can find me in most places @sylvibullet. You can check out the games podcast that we also do here at Friends at the Table called sidestory.show. And if you want to do me a solid, you can go check out my band's Bandcamp at gutmachineband.bandcamp.com. Thank you.

Keith: Arthur Martinez-Tebbel.

Art: Hey, um, which— What am I— Uh, the Patreon. Go to friendsatthetable.cash for bonus episodes of—

Keith: Everything.

Art: Well, not this—

Sylvi: Everything.

Art: Version of this show yet.

Keith: Season 1 of this show.

Art: Season 1 of this show. There's bonus episodes there.

Keith: We will write— I love your idea about the thing that you brought up last time. We should absolutely do that, I think, as a bonus.

Art: Yeah, we'll do that. That'll be a bonus. That'll be there. And, um, yeah, you know,

Keith: Friends at the Table!

Art: Yeah, nothing— Yeah, the Friends at the Table bonus episodes are great. And we got to keep the lights on over here.

Keith: We got to keep the lights on. There's 8 of us. There's a lot of lights. Yeah, there's 8 distinct houses full of lights to keep on. Uh, Ali Acampora.

Ali: Hello, my name is Ali. Um, and despite Keith's mentioning it in the beginning, I would like to really extra encourage everybody to listen to Friends at the Table. It's an actual play podcast that we do. I'm playing a nice person. Uh, it's really fun.

Keith: Are you always playing a nice person?

Janine: I liked that one season where you didn't.

Sylvi: You said that so believably too, and I was like, oh, I need to catch up.

Keith: Um, and joining us for the first time, making her Media Club Plus debut, it's Janine Hawkins.

Janine: Hi. You can't find me anywhere except Friends at the Table, so if you want to be exposed to me, you're stuck with us.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: Oh, the fucking dream.

Keith: Um, uh, well, you know, Friends of the Table and also the Twitch. You're on the Twitch.

Janine: That's still us.

Keith: Yeah, that's still us.

Janine: Um, it's not like our Twitch channel is like petersbaseballvideogames.net. That's how Twitch works.

Sylvi: No, yeah, that is how Twitch works, and I'm about to register that.

Keith: Sorry, Peters Baseball videogames.net? PetersBaseballVideoGames.net. This is the first I'm hearing of it.

Sylvi: twitch.tv/PetersBaseballVideoGames.net.

Keith: I love that. I don't know who that is, but that's great.

Sylvi: That's us.

Janine: We stream there every day. We have a really reliable schedule. Um, Austin's on part 38 of his Romancing SaGa 2 Let's Play.

Keith: That's a baseball game. Is that like MLB Power Pros where it's like a visual novel?

Janine: There might be a baseball player in that game. Aren't there like a bunch of guys? There's like a bunch of stuff.

Sylvi: I've never played Romancing SaGa

Janine: I've never played it.

Sylvi: Was it the better one?

Art: They got guys and stuff over there.

Keith: Um, I think that this is going to be another divisive one. Last time we couldn't quite agree whether The Village was good or terrible.

Sylvi: Uh-huh.

Keith: Uh, or I would say whether it was like fine and bad is probably really the scale we were working on.

Sylvi: Yeah, I think that's probably more accurate.

Keith: I think this one might go down from terrible and up to good. That's my guess, I don't know. [**Sylvi:** Sure?] Do you have any, like, early feelings?

Sylvi: I think terrible is generous.

Keith: You think terrible is generous?

Sylvi: Yeah, when I, you know, when I was growing up, people always told me, if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all. And I looked at them and said, I'm a podcaster, unfortunately I have to say something. It's very bad.

Keith: This is a chicken and the egg thing. I was saying horrible things that I shouldn't be saying before I started podcasting. It's actually how I got into podcasting.

Sylvi: The, the yappers gene that we both have. Yeah, I, um, I described this movie, I think, in our chat as agonizing to watch. I really disliked this. I hated this, I think, is an easy way to put it. And it's, it's one of those things where I actually think it is probably not as bad as some of the really terrible movies I've seen, but because there are moments where I see the potential in it, it makes it worse.

Keith: I—

Sylvi: Or like, there are moments where I enjoy it for like a second. I'm like, oh, why isn't it— Why don't they build the whole plane out of the black box? You know what I mean?

Keith: I totally empathize with that. Not— I don't think here. I think here I'm a little bit more generous, but I have a long history of, uh, being mad at a, at a C- or a D+ for not being a B, and then not really caring about an F.

Sylvi: Yes.

Janine: This movie, like, gave me a revelation about movies, which is that I don't have to feel anything about it. [**Keith** laughter] [**Sylvi:** That's SO real.] It can just be a thing that I watched, you know? But you were motivated. And that's okay. And I can have ideas about that thing, but I don't have to like it or dislike it. It can just be a thing in the world.

Sylvi: Wash over you.

Keith: Sure, yeah. Oh, I think, yeah, again, I empathize with that, and maybe I agree for this movie specifically. Uh, um, you did— You were motivated to take many pages of notes.

Janine: Yeah, that's just— That's just how I am. I took a lot of notes for— Every time I do one of these things I take notes, mostly just so the, the act of writing makes me remember things. I don't need to— I don't usually go back to them as much.

Keith: Yeah.

Janine: Um, I should say up front, I thought this was the first M. Night Shyamalan movie that I'd watched start to finish. I'd seen bits and pieces and like, looked up the endings of other various ones, or like, caught them partway through or whatever, but I was wrong. It's not the first one that I've seen start to finish. Austin reminded me, and I totally memory-holed this. Technically, my first start-to-finish M. Night Shyamalan movie was Split.

Keith: Wow.

Ali: Whoa.

Sylvi: Wow.

Keith: So that's a pre— That's a preview. What did you think about Split?

Janine: I don't remember.

Keith: Oh, wow.

Janine: I don't remember anything about that movie.

Sylvi: Ringing endorsement.

Keith: Yeah, much like maybe a character in Split?

Janine: Yeah, I mean, yeah, we shall see.

Sylvi: No spoilers. I don't know.

Janine: Anya Taylor-Joy was in that movie, I guess. I don't know. That's what Austin says. I didn't check. I, I believed him. He could be fucking me, fucking me up. I don't know.

Keith: Ali, this was your, uh, maybe we should do an M. Night series thing movie, kind of.

Ali: I'm a fan of this movie.

Art: This is Ali's favorite movie.

Keith: This is Ali's favorite movie.

Ali: It's not my favorite movie. I— It's a comfort movie for me. I watched it a lot in college. I once famously said that Brian would have put it on in the like, Palisade finale or the last movie night, um, because of Paul Giamatti's performance. And I— This movie is stupid. Um, it's very weirdly paced and scripted and organized.

Keith: It's well acted.

Ali: It's so well acted.

Keith: Paul Giamatti— I love Paul Giamatti almost unconditionally.

Janine: I guess.

Sylvi: He's f-f-f-fine.

Art: I don't know that you can do that.

Sylvi: I had a stutter as a child. I'm allowed.

Janine: Some of the stuttering, just— He just— Like, there were a couple where it just sounded like he was coughing or something. Like, it's, you know, it's hit and miss. It's the acting in this is real hit and miss for me.

Keith: Look, you know, you can't pin the stuttering on Paul Giamatti. That is an M. Night special.

Sylvi: Oh, absolutely.

Art: Well, I read an entire book about this movie in the last 2 days, and I can tell you that there is some stuff about the stuttering in there.

Sylvi: Oh, I'm so excited to hear what is in this tome.

Keith: Art, this is why I saved you for last, because you said that this book really changed how you felt about this movie, and I, I refrained from asking what I really wanted to know was, in which way?

Art: I, I did not super like this movie. I think, um, there are a lot of things that are that are not good about it.

Keith: Mm-hmm.

Art: But once you get to like the story of making it, like the, you know, M. Night Shyamalan wants to make this movie really badly. It leads to the breakup of his relationship with Disney. And he tries so hard to make it. There's, there's a charm in that.

Keith: This was him trying?

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Art: Oh yeah, he tried very hard.

Janine: It's crazy to me that Disney didn't want this for reasons that I'm sure we'll get into.

Sylvi: Yes, I— That is actually really funny.

Keith: Oh, I am not picking up what you're putting down, so I'm excited to get there.

Sylvi: Well— Yeah, we— It's— I feel like it's pretty obvious.

Janine: I can even just— I feel like this is a thing that will, that will come to in the end, but looking at when this movie was made, if you put it in the context of— This is why calling it a horror movie, I think, is silly. I mean, silly's unfair but I disagree—

Keith: It's been silly each time.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: All of these have been silly to call horror movies to me.

Janine: The context that it needs to be put in is the context of like, Penelope and Enchanted, or whatever that Amy Adams one was. Or like—

Keith: I thought that was Enchanted.

Art: I thought that was Enchanted.

Janine: Yeah, I, I don't remember what it was called for sure, but there's also like Ella Enchanted, but that's a book.

Keith: I was gonna say, this is a worse movie than Enchanted, for sure.

Janine: The movie version of Stardust came out like around-ish this time. Um, also there's like, a little bit of like Dogma and Mystery Men in here where like, the way to look at this movie is not it's trying to scare or thrill. It's like, oh, this is like a— This is like an ensemble little storytime thing

Keith: Yeah, it's a storytime. And it, like, literally is a storytime.

Ali: It, like, also isn't hiding this. Like, it's another of, like, the audience really— I mean—

Janine: It's the opposite of hiding it.

Ali: Well, like, that, you know, that this movie won a, uh, Stinkers Bad Movie Award for worst horror movie when in the trailer it says “a bedtime story by M. Night Shyamalan”.

Janine: It's not horror!

Ali: And, like, has, like, a— It isn't horror. And it never was.

Janine: I remember the marketing being a little bit, like, creepy.

Art: Yeah, take that, the integrity of the Stinkers Bad Movie Awards!

Keith: I wanna say I did some looking and I definitely saw, you know, secondary sources saying that this was marketed as a horror movie and that that was a strange choice because it's not a horror movie.

Janine: That's how I remember it being marketed.

Keith: Yeah, although, you know, you can market a movie two ways. You can say, you know, a bit gets ruined by—

Janine: Marketing is often terrible.

Keith: Yeah. Yeah.

Janine: Marketing isn't about what the creator's vision is, it's about what they want what the studio wants to sell and what the marketing team understands how to sell.

Sylvi: Yeah, we've mentioned how M. Night's like, reputation kind of works against him in a lot of ways already, right? Like, the reputation for the twist being expected, even though like, we kind of talked about how, um, there wasn't— Like Signs didn't really feel like it had like a capital T twist in the same way.

Keith: No, Signs—

Sylvi: The other movies did.

Keith: It had like a deus ex machina.

Sylvi: I think we— I mean, we've talked about it like every episode since The Sixth Sense, how like, he hasn't really made a horror movie outside of a few scenes in that.

Keith: Yeah. Um, there's— I— My first jump scare in— Was in this movie when the dog breaks through the thing, and it was so fucking loud.

Sylvi: Sorry, that's not what it's called. It's not a dog. Get the name right.

Keith: It's a scrunt? It's a scrunt.

Sylvi: It's a scrunt.

Keith: Yeah, yeah.

Sylvi: That also really got me.

Janine: The ancient Korean word. Scrunt.

Keith: Maybe they're translating in real time.

Janine: We'll get there, but that's—

Sylvi: We'll get there.

Janine: Yeah, you can't translate a word you've never fucking heard before in one language.

Keith: Well, it's— It's—

Art: This is also— This is also covered in the book.

Janine: Okay.

Keith: Uh, do we have anything else pre, uh, pre-recap to talk about?

Sylvi: Yeah, I don't want to get too— Should we do— I, I don't know. Does your recap cover, like, crew? Like—

Keith: This is Ali's recap.

Sylvi: Collaborators? Ali, I was— Yes, I was putting her name at the end of that sentence.

Keith: Sorry, sorry. I wanted to say it for the audience in case you didn't say it. I didn't realize.

Sylvi: Yeah, no worries.

Ali: I have the composer and the cinematographer.

Sylvi: Okay. That's usually what we cover, I think.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: There's a lot of actors to cover.

Sylvi: Yeah, we'll get through the cast.

Art: I have the best story in the world about the cinematographer, but I will wait.

Keith: Oh, that's great, because I don't know who this guy is, I don't think.

Art: Uh-huh. Let's do the recap, and then I'll tell you. I'll tell you, Oh boy.

Sylvi: I'm excited. I'm excited to dive in.

Ali: Okay, let me stretch out here.

Sylvi: No pun intended. I didn't mean that.

Ali: Lady in the Water, a 2006 film with returning composer James Newton Howard, and cinematographer Christopher Doyle, most known for the Jet Li starred film Hero and In the Mood for Love is one of M. Night's most—

Sylvi: What?

Ali: Yep. Most critically acclaimed and award-winning movies, including 4 Razzie Awards for Worst Picture, Worst Supporting Actor, Worst Director, and Worst Screenplay, and 7 Stinkers Bad Movie Awards, adding prizes like Worst Ensemble and Most Annoying Fake Accent to the list of accolades. The movie begins with a fable about the relationship between man and those in the water, future-seeing creatures of the ocean who guided man until they refused to listen because of man's preference to move deeper into land to fight wars and own things. Despite the broken relationship, those in the water are attempting to reach out to man once again, sending in their young in the dead of the night, despite danger from their enemies who roam the lands. Our central man is Cleveland Heep, played by Paul Giamatti, an apartment superintendent who chances upon a mysterious woman named Story inhabiting the complex pool, who claims she's from the Blue World and seeks to find a writer who will be awakened in contact with her. After Cleveland and Story are attacked by a strange creature almost immediately after leaving his apartment the first night that they meet, Cleveland takes Story's claims seriously enough to start prodding through the eclectic group of inhabitants of the apartment complex to— help her on her mission. These characters include the new arrival, Harry Farber, a movie critic who is obviously stupid and sucks, played by Bob Babalan. [group laughter] A college student, Young-Soon Choi, and her disapproving mother, Mrs. Choi, played by Cindy Cheung and June Kyoto Lu, respectively. Freddiy Rodriguez as the iron-pumping Reggie, except he only pumps the left side of his body, leading to a 4-inch difference in circumference between his left and right arms.

Janine: Science! He's doing science.

Sylvi: He's like a scientist. I love him.

Art: I thought the right arm was the strong side?

Ali: I— Maybe it was.

Keith: Yes, it was screen right.

Sylvi: Screen left.

Keith: Sorry, screen left. It was screen left.

Ali: Okay, so screen left for me. Okay. Yeah. Um, the grouchy but respectable question mark Mr. Leeds, played by Bill Irwin, a puzzle-loving father and son pair, Mrs— Mr. Dury and Joey Dury, the animal-loving old woman, Mrs. Bell, a group of five unnamed Hispanic sisters and their father, another big group of smokers whose names aren't important, and of course, Mr. M. Night Shyamalan himself as the writer Vick Ran, living with his sister Anna, played by Sarita Choudhury. Oh, and did I mention that every time there's a TV playing in the background, reports of a forever war are trickling in? It doesn't come up, so don't worry about it.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: With that hefty list of NPCs—

Janine: Oh, wait, wait, wait. Sorry, you skipped over the, like, one of the most shocking actors in the group of smokers, who is, uh, what the fuck's his name?

Sylvi: Is it Jared Harris?

Janine: The guy who was in Mad Men and who is in Chernobyl.

Keith: Yeah, Jared Harris.

Sylvi: Yeah, two Mad Men alumni in a row. Yeah, we had Peggy's boyfriend in the last one, we got Jared Harris in this one.

Art: Does this go before Mad Men by a comfortable amount?

Janine: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Ali: I was watching with somebody who was like, oh, I know that guy. And I was like, okay, but he isn't a named character, so I don't—

Keith: He's Goatee Smoker.

Ali: Okay.

Keith: Everyone else is smoking weed.

Janine: Also, he still has a British accent. He's like a— He's like he got sucked out of stoner culture from the 1950s and transplanted into stoner culture from the 2000s.

Art: Yeah, that was one of the reasons Disney didn't want— That he wouldn't put smoking in a movie.

Keith: Um, sorry, Ally, did you, did you, did you, uh, finish out on your recap?

Ali: Let me go over the plot. Sure. With that hefty list of NPCs, the movie continues like a series of quest unlocks in search of the meaning of the word narf, a story— A word Story whispers in her sleep. Cleveland learns from Mrs. Choi, translated by her daughter, that narfs are sea creatures seeking their chosen one who will lead her to the Great Eaten, a giant eagle who will return her back to her world despite the scrunts who seek to harm them. Achievement unlocked. In search of Story's Writer, Cleveland chances upon Vick's draft of the cookbook, featuring his thoughts on cultural problems and leaders and stuff. Achievement unlocked. While Cleveland searches for a writer—

Keith: Thankfully, not one thought revealed. Not one thought revealed. Thank you.

Ali: Listen, just cultural stuff, you know? It's fine.

Keith: Yeah.

Janine: Yeah, it's relevant.

Ali: While Cleveland searches for a Writer, Story chances upon some writing of her own, digging through the top shelf in his apartment to read through his diary. and discover Cleveland's grief about his wife and children, murdered during a robbery. Character profile updated. A failed attempt for Story to get picked up by her eagle leads to the knowledge of rogue scrunts who disobey the laws of the Blue World despite fears

of the evil creatures who enforce laws that are really evil. They killed their parents. They're so evil.

Keith: But they do kill the bad guys.

Janine: Yeah, they're evil, but we're waiting for them to come save us.

Keith: The evil justice

Ali: To, like, lightly slap the weird dog at the end of the movie.

Sylvi: We gotta— I'm having such revelations right now about what this movie should have been.

Ali: Uh, I lost my place.

Sylvi: They are evil because they killed their parents. We're talking about the Tartutic.

Ali: A new check-in with Mrs. Choi reveals that this— That Story is in need of a specific scent of Adventure— Well, just people, I guess. A Guardian, a healer, a guild of many hands who will help her. Following the guidance of the critic, Mr. Farber, assuming that he has a heightened knowledge of storytelling, Cleveland assembles what he assumes is the correct group of people to help Story based on their roles, but instead massively fucks up because critics don't understand anything. The wrong interpreter, Mr. Dury, guides the wrong guild, the group of smokers, into throwing a big party so the noise and the scent of the people will confuse the rogues' grunt, giving Story her opening to make it home, only for her to get dragged off and nearly killed by the beasts, narrowly saved by Cleveland and tended to by the small group who are into the plan. Okay, let's shuffle the party. Mr. Dury is replaced with his son, trading the crosswords for cereal boxes to guide the plan. Uh, the Smokers Guild is replaced with the five sisters plus two more, meaning Anna and Young-Soon actually get to be involved instead of just like, being around or lore dropping.

Janine: Uh-huh.

Ali: Mr. Leeds is brought into plan seemingly just for asking a weird question. Do man— Do man deserve to be saved? But that's got main party aura, so it's all good. Mrs. Bell is removed as the healer after discovering the role should be taken by a man, switching Cleveland from the Guardian, allowing him to lead the healing ceremony for Story by tearfully speaking out to his late family while the guild lays hands on him. Who's the Guardian, you might wonder? Arriving at the last possible moment, with the night coming to a close and Story's last attempt at returning to her world narrowly leaving, arrives the half-brawlic Reggie to stare down— Reggie Sweep! To stare down the horrible rogue Scrunt and let it get awkwardly slapped by the evil lawmaker Tartutics. And then, in true M. Night style— Fashion, a big eagle comes to take Story away and the credits immediately roll. 10 out of 10.

Sylvi: This should have been an FMV point-and-click adventure game is what I've just figured out. This should— This is a dark— This is Dark Seed. This is— This is Harvest— Like, not like in tone, but like, this is a Cyberdreams like, weird quality FMV game where you have to fail the first time and then the game is like, no, you have to figure out who the real Guardian is. And I would have liked it more if it was that.

Keith: It is so clearly video game coded. Even in like the first third or first half of the movie, I was describing the continual returns to Mrs. Choi for more bits of the story as grinding influence.

Sylvi: She's the hint system is, is, is, uh, what I would have assumed. But yeah, that also works.

Keith: A couple things right off the top, for me, I want to say that every single fantasy name in this sucks ass, except—

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: I genuinely do like the name Story. I saw a lot of criticism of that name. I think it's a good name. I think it's a weird, good name.

Sylvi: I think it would be fine if it wasn't— Like, I think out of this context, I would have liked it more.

Keith: Right. I think that it makes it bad because it's in a bad movie, but I just want to give it credit where it's due.

Janine: It's so on the nose.

Sylvi: It's so navel-gazy.

Janine: It's all so on the nose. Yeah.

Sylvi: Yeah. That's why I dislike it.

Janine: It's a story about stories and telling stories.

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: And she tells a story in the story and her name is Story. Like, just stop, please.

Art: You can't have a character named Story tell a guy played by you how to finish the book that changes the world.

Sylvi: Yeah. You're not him!

Janine: Also, you're not gonna get a book that's gonna change the world. The Cookbook— The Anarchist Cookbook already exists and people don't like it.

Keith: Yeah, well, this is the good guys Cookbook. That's why it's starting off well.

Sylvi: Okay.

Ali: I feel like no-one's gonna read it.

Sylvi: This is how half the young adult writers I see online feel about themselves. I didn't write this good enough.

Art: Well, would you like to know the example that M. Night Shyamalan used in the meeting with Disney where they said they didn't like that the, the author was not going to be the one to change the world, but the book was?

Keith: Right.

Sylvi: Please.

Art: Because M. Night Shyamalan then said to the Disney executives, well, Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote Uncle Tom's Cabin, and then Abraham Lincoln read it and changed the world.

Keith: Oh, my God.

Janine: What?

Art: Yeah, this isn't even in my top 10 stories from this book.

Janine: That sucks.

Ali: I think another bad thing about her being named Story is that when she learns Cleveland's name, she's immediately like, oh, from the cliffs. Like—

Sylvi: Then you know what that means, don't you?

Ali: What does Story mean to you then?

Janine: I can't— I wrote this down in notes. I have 6 pages of notes. And one of the first things I wrote down was, she studied enough to know that Cleveland means of the cliffs, but not that she needs pants.

Sylvi: No, it is a— Well, we cannot put her in pants in this movie. There always needs to be a thin, little, like, weird sexual tension between her and Paul Giamatti in a way that makes me personally very uncomfortable.

Janine: Ugh, it's so— Yeah, the whole, like, the vibe of, like, is he seeing her as a daughter or a wife? And then the ending makes that all worse. Way worse.

Sylvi: It's bad.

Keith: It is bad.

Janine: Icky.

Keith: It's— And here's— There's— This is like the latent impression that this movie gives me based on knowing nothing about this movie. At the end of the last episode of *The Village*, when we were watching *The Village*, where I guessed what this movie was about, I was really sure that this was a monster fucker movie. And there's not— It's not— She's not a mermaid at all for any percent of the movie. And it's really— It's really only deep background implication that is like where, you know, the camera and the characters are sexualizing Story [**Sylvi:** A lot.] A lot. But it's not like, coming up in the plot. It's sort of this weird, constant background itch.

Sylvi: It can't really decide how it wants to present her because it will do in the same scene him be like, God, you're just a kid. And then it'll smash cut to her half naked in his lap in the morning. Blim blam. Blim blam, baby's on the half tit.

Keith: This movie really reveals the weaknesses— I think that each movie has told us like what it is that M. Night can do and what he can't do, and he has not learned from any of his past movies what he can't do. And in fact keeps just like, diving headfirst into trying to make a new movie, making all the same mistakes. The— He can't write a movie. He can't write a movie. He cannot write a movie. This movie's well directed. This movie's well acted. This movie's well— Well acted with an asterisk, a little bit.

Sylvi: I'm still like shook that the guy who shot fucking *Fallen Angels* did this movie. Like the Wong Kar-wai movie. That's insane to me.

Art: Well, let me tell you a story about Christopher Doyle.

Keith: Please.

Art: He shows up to the first day. They put him up in a fancy hotel in Philadelphia. He comes in the first day and complains that the pornography on the pay-per-view in his

hotel is not good enough, and he wants them to put him in a hotel in New York and have him driven to set, to and from set every day.

Keith: Wow.

Janine: Get a laptop, idiot.

Art: This is the first thing this person says.

Janine: Oh my God.

Sylvi: You guys gotta upgrade my, my goon cave or else I'm not shooting your movie.

Keith: Sorry, this is 2006. I was 14 in 2006. I knew where to find pornography. It wasn't in hotel TVs.

Janine: It was like a little bit harder than it is now, kind of, but not a lot.

Art: Well, they made him put him in the SoHo Grand in Lower Manhattan. And had a driver drive him 2 hours each way.

Keith: For porn? Just for porn at night? Get a laptop, dude. I had a laptop.

Art: Yeah, he was also very clearly just super drunk for the making of this movie. The first day of filming, they say at 6:45 AM, he shows up drunk wearing a golden boxing robe.

Sylvi: Huh?

Janine: Like gold, like yellow, or gold like it's metallic?

Sylvi: I would assume the latter.

Art: I'm not sure.

Ali: No photos, I bet.

Keith: Um, you know, I, I— In some ways this, this is a decent looking movie. Um, but I definitely could see how maybe the person who is like choosing how things are getting shot like that are, uh, was drunk. This is a dark movie. It's hard to see stuff a lot of times in the movie. Um, I guess that's lighting as well.

Art: They say that that's a Shyamalan choice.

Keith: Um, all right. Hey, sorry, Shyamalan, I tried to help you.

Art: And that they were having trouble with, um, focus, that it's hard to focus in low light.

Keith: I also had that, that real problem in the second half especially.

Ali: Um, they built the apartment as like, a practical set and everything, right?

Art: They built that entire— Yeah, they built a 5-story building.

Keith: The cove, get it?

Art: To make this movie.

Sylvi: Because water?

Keith: Because water.

Janine: Wait, that was a 5-story building?

Art: Yes. That did not come across.

Keith: Could they not have— Here's the real fantasy—

Art: In the suburbs of Philadelphia.

30:00

Keith: Here's the real fantasy of this movie. These are like a bunch of pretty decently sized apartments with an outrageously attentive super. Who was constantly—

Janine: And they let you do some wild stuff to the walls.

Keith: Yeah. And, and like, that is where the real fantastic element is, just like a bunch of people living in pretty good conditions with a guy who you don't have to like, write on a website, please come help me fix the hole in my ceiling, it's leaking water, once every three months, and you maybe get a response that week. Not specific. Not about anything.

Janine: It's just a story.

Keith: It's just a story.

Art: Yeah, it's just a story. Oh, they also say that he would spend takes just shooting props. That he would shoot the scene with him and the film crate at the beginning of the movie, and it would be focused on the keys. That M. Night Shyamalan was always like, yelling at him to shoot the actors.

Keith: Right.

Sylvi: Okay, wait, hold on. Maybe he was cooking.

Keith: Maybe— Oh yeah, okay. Yeah, I see the vision a little bit. Yeah, I see it. I can see how that would work.

Sylvi: I love when keys are jangled in front of me.

Art: There's a lot of good shots in this movie.

Keith: There's a lot of good shots in the movie. You know, that's—

Art: But apparently they had to shoot a lot to get those good shots.

Keith: I just— I don't know what's going on in M. Night Shyamalan's heart that he can't release this idea that he needs to be writing his movies. He's a good director. He can get the shots. He's— He can— He can ask for a second take and probably be right.

Janine: No, he's the Narf-chosen. He has to write.

Keith: He's the Narf. He's the maiden.

Janine: He's the— The, the narf— Narfed. The narfed one.

Keith: Um, uh, Ally, can you read what I sent to you when I was, uh, 22 minutes into this movie, right before I believe, um, uh, uh, Paul Giamatti asks Mrs. Choi what a narf is?

Ali: Wow. Okay. Yes. You said, I want to give you this rope in case I must hang myself with it later, but about 25 minutes in it, and I like this more than anything since The Sixth Sense.

Keith: I stand by that. I stand by that. Those first 22 minutes, like, I liked being tugged around the apartment building looking at the weirdos and being like, look at all this possibility in front of me. And then the movie like, doesn't touch any of those guys. It's just Paul Giamatti running around, you know, collecting people. Eventually I'm, I'm back in. It becomes a heist movie in the last third. It becomes a heist movie.

Sylvi: It does, huh?

Keith: And then, again, like a video game, you know, I was into it. I was into the heist thing even though it kind of sucked. They weren't really doing that good of a job with it, but it becomes a heist movie and then they go, we got the heist all wrong because critics are stupid, they don't know what they're fucking talking about, they're moron losers. And then like Halo 1, you have to go replay all the levels in reverse.

Janine: But also the critic wasn't like— The critic wasn't like, wrong.

Sylvi: He literally wasn't.

Janine: The interpretation of the critic was wrong. Like, the critic didn't say, yeah, it's the dad.

Keith: Right. And I saw the kid and I was like, I knew immediately that it was the kid because I know who M. Night Shyamalan is. I saw the kid looking at the box and he was like, wow, this box of cereal makes me sad like when you didn't pick me up from school.

And I'm like, well, it's the kid. And then he grabs the dad and it's like, why did you grab the dad? The kid's doing it. He just did it right then. I saw it.

Janine: But the dad's good at crossword puzzles.

Sylvi: I think we're just better critics than Bob Balaban.

Janine: I think that's what it comes down to.

Ali: Makes you think.

Keith: Makes you think. He's also a book critic too.

Janine: Really just like, we just beat me over the head with it already.

Keith: I'm not—

Janine: It would be a mercy compared to this.

Keith: This was— This is— I think, Janine, this is like— It's good, actually really good to have that perspective because of how attuned I am to M. Night Shyamalan's absolute lack of subtlety in all things. Like, I just got out of three straight movies where it was ruined by him not being able to, like, turn himself down. Uh, and so, like, that—

Janine: Are you saying this isn't that? What?

Keith: No, no, I'm saying— I'm just—

Janine: I'm not following.

Keith: I'm just saying that I swallowed this movie up knowing that was a flavor.

Janine: Oh, okay.

Keith: And so it's good to have someone else who hasn't just gone through Unbreakable, uh, Signs, and The Village. Uh, where you're just more sensitive to it. Like, my tolerance is up right now.

Ali: You've been taking your doses of poison.

Keith: Yeah, I've been slowly— Yeah, I've been slowly accumulating, or, uh, uh, uh, I've been slowly, uh, making myself immune. [**Sylvi:** Inoculating yourself.] Yeah, inoculating myself to M. Night's poison by taking small doses.

Art: Yeah, I, I like M. Night. I think, I think he is a good writer.

Keith: That's crazy. Art, that's crazy.

Sylvi: I also thought that before we started this podcast.

Janine: I think like many auteurs, he needs good editing. [**Sylvi:** Yeah.] He needs oversight. He needs that to bring out the best. Uh, again, I'm going off of like a really limited sample here. This is more me speaking about how I feel about people who are like put on little pedestals as creative geniuses. Um, especially like, frankly, men who are, like, a name in a field, you know?

Sylvi: Yeah.

Janine: Um, most of the time I feel like they're not up there for no reason, but they get up there by having their work kind of curated and pruned and stuff. And then they get to a point where no one wants to— Well, to the point where, like, they're above the people who would do that. So they think like, I've earned full creative freedom. And it's like, no, the pruning is the good part. Like, you cut a dead head off a flower so that good strong stuff grows instead of pumping nutrients into the dead, shitty part.

Keith: Right.

Janine: Like, it's for a reason we do this.

Art: Sure. And I— You could definitely see the wheels coming off here, especially— This is the movie where he was like, I don't want to get any notes on this before I make it.

Keith: Yeah.

Janine: It really shows.

Sylvi: It shows, yeah.

Art: The only note he took was he added the mom. The Korean mom was not in the original script.

Keith: Sure.

Sylvi: Really?

Keith: Yeah, she's important. I like—

Art: Before that, the daughter just, I guess, is she still the daughter if she— If there's no mom?

Sylvi: She's the daughter to us now.

Keith: The student.

Art: She's the student.

Janine: The mom should have been the Guardian. I was disappointed. I knew that— I knew the Guardian wasn't gonna be the mom, but I really wanted that to be the twist. Not that it was like the jack-off arm guy.

Sylvi: I thought jack-off arm guy was gonna punch the scrunt, but he didn't.

Keith: I also thought—

Janine: Me too! When he didn't do that, I was like, this is not— It's not even cute, right? Like, there's a degree to which sometimes a movie will bait you along being like, oh, you think this is gonna happen? I don't know, let's see. And then it doesn't happen, and it like, it feels like a little haha, we got you. But the thing that happens instead is just like so nothing.

Keith: He looks like— Yeah.

Janine: And goofy that I felt a little bit robbed. It was like, well, you— Okay, I know that you expected me to expect him to punch it and it didn't happen. And now I'm just sad. He just has a big arm for nothing.

Keith: I'm gonna— I'll say 2 things. The first thing is that what I expected from that guy is to need to be strong, but also need to have a thin arm because of Signs. So I thought that it was gonna be important.

Sylvi: He has to reach into the pool grate.

Keith: Yeah, he has. That is 100% what I thought, Sylvi, where he has to like— He has to, he has to punch the dog, but also reach into the grate. [**Sylvi:** Scrunts aren't dogs!] Uh, the other, the thing that I'll say is I, you know, I'm really giving credit here that is not due, but there is something maybe to this thing where like, he's doing something ridiculous with this like, half— Ali, you described it as half brolic, um, thing that he's doing.

Sylvi: Mm-hmm.

Keith: And, and what he says at the beginning is like, he wants to like, be somebody, or I guess this is what Paul Giamatti says, he wants to be like, special or something. But he has no ideas for why he wants to be special because he was magically pulled to this apartment complex to be the Guardian, a thing that he has no idea about. So he's like, I know I'm important, I don't know why, I have these weights, let's go.

Sylvi: And we don't explore it at all, which is kind of my bummer. Right, so a really big missed opportunity, I think. There's like a lot of time where we're—

Janine: And then they had him go on about science, where like, that didn't— Um, why?

Sylvi: Yeah, have him reveal he's Dr. Bimbu from Signs.

Janine: There could have been like a little clue about the Guardian being a man of science or some shit. I'm like, okay.

Sylvi: It would have been fun.

Keith: The thing that—

Art: But no, it's him at the end because no, he's the only character who hasn't had anything, right?

Sylvi: Yep.

Art: [crosstalk] Especially if you know that Mrs Choi was a late addition.

Keith: [crosstalk] He was first in, last out. Classic.

Janine: Yeah, that actually— That makes sense

Keith: Um, uh, about his writing ability, I wrote that he thinks in set pieces. He always has like, a set piece in mind, but he's not good at thinking up set pieces. So you end up with like, a roadmap that like, could work, like, super high-level plotting that can work, and then a series of set pieces. And then each individual set piece is like, really on the fence whether it works or not because he's not—

Art: I'm struggling to square this idea with like, Sixth Sense whips.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: And, um, I don't think any— I don't think most of what's— I think— I don't think most of what's wrong with Unbreakable is in the script. I think Unbreakable is a pretty strong script.

Keith: I—

Art: And then we disagreed a little bit about Signs and The Village.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Which I liked the Village.

Art: So I'm sort of coming in where this is, I think, his big stepping on a rake and having hit in the face.

Sylvi: I think I'm with you.

Art: And not the result of like a downward, uh, slide.

Sylvi: This one was the only one where I checked the time left on the movie, uh, and I did it multiple times. It felt really long.

Keith: And we know that they're all the same length already.

Art: No, they're all within 2 minutes of each other.

Sylvi: Yeah, yeah.

Keith: Uh, I don't—I wouldn't necessarily say a downward slide. I would say, mm, much like Cleveland, he had— He was at the top of the cliff with *The Sixth Sense*, and then sort of everything else lives in this valley. [**Sylvi:** Is that a joke about Cleveland the city?] You know, *Unbreakable* had these— Say again?

Sylvi: Is that a joke about Cleveland the city?

Keith: No, it's a joke about Cleveland the name, which is from the cliffs, which is what *Story* says about his name.

Sylvi: All right, I'm—I, I didn't scan. I'm so sorry.

Keith: It's okay, it's okay. Um, uh, like, *The Sixth Sense* was so much better than the second best of these movies. Um, and, and they all kind of fail in different ways and at different parts for me. Like, *Unbreakable* had these really high highs, a couple great pieces of writing, and then the rest of it I felt was like, not good and hard to sit through and boring and slow. Uh, *Signs* like, was really interesting for half, and then the second half like, he just couldn't knock down the pins. And then *The Village* was like, a kind of normal movie that was kind of boring. Which makes it the— Sort of been the best one to

me of those 3. Uh, huh. Because it was like, it didn't have those big dips where I was like, what the fuck is going on? Like in all the other ones. And this one had—

Sylvi: This one's mostly dip.

Keith: This one, right. It's sort of hard to see the dips for their length.

Sylvi: Really, like— And just to like, speak to that, it almost like— I almost got like, mad whenever there would be something that I thought was like, fun or funny because it would always be between 20 minutes of something that was just super interminable. And it got me— I was just— I could see the like, quality movie trying to claw its way out under all this other stuff, and I just— It never got there.

Keith: I have a hard time disliking Paul Giamatti running around the building. [**Sylvi:** Yeah.] Like— And that's a lot of this movie.

Art: I think there's a lot of good stuff in the end, and it's a shame that we have to get all the way there to see it.

Keith: By the end, do you mean like when they finally assembled the right crew for—

Art: Yeah, like that scene in the mailroom, I think is pretty good.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Do we want to listen to that scene?

Art: Yeah. [crosstalk] Uh, it's usually not how we do this, but—

Ali: [crosstalk] Do you want to talk about the scene first, Art?

Art: What's that?

Ali: Well, you said the scene in the mailroom but didn't really say what happens. Do we want to set up the scene before we hear it?

Art: Oh yeah, this is like, the movie hap— This is like where everyone's— They set up to do their thing, and it's like a ritual to help Story, who has been attacked by the Scrunt.

[**Sylvi:** Scrunt.] I keep wanting to say scarf.

Keith: No, it's a scrunt. It's a scrunt and a narf.

Keith: Scarf is better.

Sylvi: Um, Eitlon the Eagle.

Keith: Eidlon?

Sylvi: Eitlon.

Keith: Eitlon?

Sylvi: That's what my subtitles say.

Janine: They kept saying that and I kept thinking they were saying the great Elon, and I was like, that hasn't aged well.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: Uh, so yeah, Art, like you said, they're, they're in the mailroom. They've assembled the right crew. They identify—

Art: Story has been, has been jacked up.

Keith: Yeah, the, the, the Scrunts have an anti-Narf poison, and so every time she gets scratched by the Narf— they're big, they're huge hyena-like monsters.

Janine: Scratched by the Scrunt.

Keith: Scratched by the Scrunt.

Janine: The Narf is scratched by the Scrunt.

Keith: The Narf gets scratched by the Scrunt.

Sylvi: It's very important.

Keith: It's very important because they're such big monsters, you'd think, well, surely this can tear her limb from limb. No, they can only do scratches.

Janine: They can turn her legs into little bits of lunch meat kind of looking cuts.

Keith: Yeah, right.

Janine: It's sort of flaky.

Keith: And they thought that Paul Giamatti was the Guardian, but he's actually the Healer. Because, by the way, he was a doctor. And so a lot of this movie has him—

Sylvi: Oh, I missed that.

Keith: Has him been avoiding—

Janine: And they taught him the thing he uses in medical school, which they don't mention that outright, but that's clearly why it matters he's a doctor.

Keith: Well, he has a healing nature. He's by default a healing nature.

Janine: I guess.

Keith: This is just like how rain is a purifying, you know, rebirth that's starting here.

Janine: I do, I find it, I just, I find it a little bit interesting that like, he had to have doctor as his backstory, but the lady who likes animals, like, no, she could, she could be a Healer. She could just be a Healer. You can't just— She could be a nice person who heals, but he has to be a former doctor.

Keith: Well, she was on the radar.

Janine: I think that's a sad thing.

Keith: She was on his radar because she was a writer, and then when they say that butterflies fly—

Sylvi: And because she was a woman too, let's be clear.

Janine: Yes, that's what I'm dancing around here.

Keith: Right, yes, the story does say that.

Janine: She wasn't a doctor before, she was a writer who likes animals, and she was allowed to be the Narf hero.

Keith: Right, but they were wrong.

Janine: Theoretically.

Keith: Yeah, it doesn't make sense because they were wrong though.

Janine: I know, but I'm saying like, my point is the fact that he has to have this sad doctor backstory is a little bit silly.

Keith: Yes, there's a home invasion.

Janine: Because he's not fully bought in on that not being important for the other person who could have been the doctor.

Keith: There's a, there's a, uh, there's a, uh, well, you know, you're writing a story. It's all— You don't know what shape the peg is until you try to put it in the hole, I guess.

Janine: What? No, that's not how you write a story.

Keith: That's how M. Night Shyamalan writes a story. They're right, they're writing the story as they're going. [**Janine:** Yeah...] And I, I, I tried to refrain from saying this, but this is another wildly Stephen King-y movie. The—

Art: I got to read about the advice that Stephen King gave—

Keith: Wow.

Art: Shyamalan about writing.

Keith: Oh boy. I'm very— Was it to—

Art: Which is to write in the basement so that you feel more uneasy.

Keith: Oh, that's bad advice, Stephen.

Sylvi: What the fuck, man?

Keith: Tell him how to put words that are good on the page. That's what Stephen King is good at that M. Night isn't.

Sylvi: No, you gotta be in the dirt. You gotta be underground.

Janine: I'm sorry, but I feel like Stephen King's reasons for writing in the basement were different.

[**Sylvi** laughter]

Keith: Right, you gotta do— You gotta have somewhere where your wife can't see the coke you're doing.

Janine: Yeah, again, basically what I'm dancing around.

Keith: What was I talking about?

Sylvi: We were trying to get up to the mailroom scene, I think. We were talking about—

Keith: Okay, so he's a doctor who quit being a doctor because his family was murdered in a, in a Signs-like home invasion.

Sylvi: He has like every M. Night character's backstory at once.

Keith: Yes, he does.

Sylvi: Like, it's *The Sixth Sense*, except he wasn't home, uh, his whole family was home. So it's kind of like what happened to the people in— At the end of *Unbreakable*. And then also his wife's dead, like the guy from *Signs*.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: And I guess the Village part is that Bryce Dallas Howard is there.

Keith: Yes, that's—

Ali: No, because it was a robbery.

Sylvi: 'Cause it wasn't— Oh yeah, you're right. Yeah, you're right. I forgot about the— Oh, right.

Art: So instead of moving to a fake town, he just became a super—

Keith: He moved to a weird mystical apartment complex.

Ali: Well, 'cause he wants to help people.

Keith: He hates—

Sylvi: M. Night does sort of have a weird, like— Not weird, like, there's a theme going through his films now I've noticed of like, these insular communities and stuff like that. And like, I can feel like he's trying to get at something, but it's never fully crystallized for me what he's really going for with it. There's like a vague anti-war sentiment, anti-hate sentiment, like, we have to take care of each other idea going on. But I'm still like— The paranoia inside—

Janine: The vagueness of it I think is telling.

Sylvi: I have a— There was more in *The Village* that worked for me with the sort of like, weird surveillance state stuff that was happening with the village itself and the elders, whereas here I'm just kind of like— What, what is he trying to get at with it? And it's

just— Main reason I bring it up is it's something to keep an eye on as we go through stuff.

Janine: World bad, gotta fix it.

Sylvi: Yeah. It'll come, it'll come up again.

Keith: So I'm happy to play the scene that's very close to the end because his, his attitude about his family being murdered is sort of like, subtextually usually present through the whole movie and drives a lot of his character choices as like, you know, Story identifies him as, as a helper, very early on, like, you live here and try to, try to help people.

Sylvi: It is also something we find out fairly early, but it's not really like— We don't get the full picture of it until this scene. [**Keith:** Yeah.] 'Cause Story confronts him after reading his diary, right? Tells us that his family died in a home invasion.

Keith: Which made me think he was the Writer, and then he wasn't, cuz I thought surely M. Night wouldn't make himself the Writer.

Janine: That's probably what they wanted. That's exactly what he—

Keith: Yeah, maybe. I thought it was just being sloppy at the end of the day.

Sylvi: Play the clip.

Janine: The man doesn't use breadcrumbs, he uses whole pieces of bread.

[audio from Lady In The Water starts playing]

Cleveland: I'm sorry I couldn't protect you. Oh, I should have been there. I am always gonna regret just not being there. I miss your faces. They remind me of God. I'm so lost without you guys.

[audio ends]

Keith: And that's sort of his spell to bring Story back, who has been basically killed by the Narfs. Nope, by the Scrunts. She's the Narf.

Janine: Where'd her rock mud key go?

Sylvi: She's the damn Narf. Her key?

Ali: I think he needs to make another one. They didn't have any time.

Janine: Wait, they used all of the rock mud?

Keith: He only grabbed one?

Sylvi: Guys, we gotta use the proper terminology.

Keith: Oh, sorry, what is the mud called?

Sylvi: The mud's called a key.

Keith: Okay.

Sylvi: We gotta be respectful.

Keith: The key heals the Narf

Janine: The only word that the Korean myth has that could plausibly be even a little bit Korean, yeah.

Keith: Art, can you tell me about the words for these from that book? Why are all the names so stupid and bad and not Korean?

Janine: Please, oh my God, please.

Art: Um, the short answer is because he did not care.

[**Keith** hysteria]

Janine: Yeah, that sounds right.

Keith: That's the vibe I got too, yes.

Sylvi: Did we explain that it's a Korean bedtime story? I don't know if we've mentioned that explicitly for people.

Keith: Right, it's—

Art: Yeah, it's a Korean bedtime story.

Janine: It's like a cross-cultural one, but you learn it through a Korean character, um, who— It's translated by her daughter.

Keith: Right. Uh, Young-soon Choi says that it's an Eastern bedtime story.

Janine: Therefore, there's no reason for her to know the word Scrunt if she's learning it from her Korean mother who only speaks Korean. Sorry.

Art: Cindy Cheung is cast in this movie because she's tall. [**Keith:** She is tall.] She's good at acting. She does a very good job in the audition, but the casting was— The role was originally written for a 6-foot-tall Korean woman. Um, with like, a Britney Spears look who's very heavy.

Sylvi: Sure.

Keith: Okay.

Art: Um, the casting director decides that he can't put that in the casting bulletin.

Keith: Okay.

Art: And so like sort of writes around it because what Shyamalan wants in the, in the casting is rolls of fat.

Keith: They didn't get even close to that.

Art: No.

Ali: Yeah. In fact, she's introduced butt first.

Keith: Butt first.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Tiny butt first.

Janine: She's often introduced and reintroduced butt first. The camera really, really likes her butt.

Keith: Well, we know about the cinematographer.

Art: Yeah. The cinematographer and the costuming, the head of costuming have like a big fight in the thing about how far her bikini should be above her shorts.

Sylvi: Jesus fucking Christ.

Janine: Yeah, this makes sense to me because she's, she's shot and often treated, probably until the very end, as a very like— I think the term is like, Asian baby girl? That's kind of the trope.

Keith: That's the term?

Janine: Uh, it's like a, it's like a West Coast, like, it's like a, um, it's like a girl who— it's probably like, her parents immigrated to the States, and she's a little bit more— She's sort of fallen in more with quote-unquote hip-hop culture, but has this sort of traditional home life, but then goes out and she's really sexy and provocative and street smart. It's that whole thing.

Sylvi: It also is kind of—

Janine: From the second she shows up, and it was real gross.

Sylvi: It's kind of a piece of the stuff that Gwen Stefani was doing at the time, actually, where she was using Harajuku fashion as an accessory.

Janine: Right, the Harajuki girls.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: And I think Tokyo Drift also, like, played into a lot of this stuff, obviously, but you know.

Janine: And the Britney Spears reference for casting plays into that because it's a lot of, like, you know, Britney Spears gets associated with school uniforms. Asian women get associated with school uniforms. It seems just like, instead of treating her like a funny body, they treated her like a funny sexy body. [**Sylvi:** Yeah.] Uh, which is not— that's a lateral move if I ever heard one.

Keith: If you're— If you're a non-pervert director, you have to make sure to rein in your perverts that are on set. You cannot just let your perverts run amok.

Sylvi: I don't know if I want to ascribe non-pervert to M. Night, by the way, though. He's not like a full-throated pervert.

Keith: Sure, like, he's not, but he's not driving 2 hours to get to be in the hotel room with better porn.

Janine: He's kind of like a self-pervert.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Janine: It's kind of like, he's a pervert for himself kind of vibe.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Oh, yeah. I didn't find there to be a lot of perversion in The Sixth Sense or Unbreakable or Signs.

Sylvi: No, I think—

Ali: Despite female characters being fridged a lot in his movies, this one included, the characters themselves are usually pretty fully imagined, well acted, sort of respected by the script.

Art: The characters who get to live until the movie starts are generally treated pretty well.

Ali: [laughing] Uh-huh.

Art: Anyway, so Cindy Cheung gets this part. Cindy Cheung is not Korean. Early in the process, Mrs. Choi, who I think is also not Korean. Someone points out that like, the name's just wrong, that they have like, a Vietnamese name for the character and they changed the character name.

Ali: Okay.

Art: And in this process, Cindy Cheung brings her acting, old acting teacher out from San Francisco to like, essentially like bootcamp her in her hotel room because she's had like, sort of a negative experience with [**Sylvi:** So far?] What, what's that?

Sylvi: A negative experience with things so far.

Art: Yeah. That like, she— Her process and Shyamalan's process are not gelling.

Keith: Mm-hmm.

Art: Uh, although part of that is he, he seems to think that she's overprepared. So bringing in like, more coaching might not be the right thing, but this is, this is her first lead movie role. So she's like— And in the pre-production process of having that coach, they go through all these different things, like how to connect. She's 1/8 Korean. Like, how do you connect to that part of yourself? What is it like to be this character who is a lot younger? This character's a lot younger than the actor. All of this. And it's— and there's a point where she's adding vowels to the words to make them plausibly Korean. And it's sort of presented as she never gets the confidence to take that to Shyamalan and be like, well, this is what it would be in Korean.

Sylvi: Oh, like adding them to like Scrunt and Narf and stuff like that?

Art: Yeah, like adding the vowels you would need to add to Scrunt and Narf to make them believably—

Sylvi: I thought you meant to like her delivery. I was like, what?

Keith: Do we want to hear a little bit about Narfs from the story, from the actual movie?

Art: Yeah, and I think— Is this gonna be— Is this gonna be Young-soon Choi talking?

Keith: It's going to be Young-soon Choi and Mrs. Choi.

Art: Okay, it is worth noting that these are put-on accents, and it's rough.

Sylvi: It's noticeable.

Janine: Yeah, it's very inconsistent.

Ali: Uh-huh.

[audio from Lady In The Water starts playing]

[Mrs. Choi speaking Korean]

Young-Soon: In the bedtime story—

[Mrs. Choi speaking Korean]

Young-Soon: She must be seen by the one human chosen for her.

[Mrs. Choi speaking Korean]

Young-Soon: This person is called the Vessel. Seeing the Narf will awaken something in the chosen one.

[Mrs. Choi speaking Korean]

Young-Soon: If she's successful in this—

[Mrs. Choi speaking Korean]

Young-Soon: She will return with the great Eatlon, a giant eagle, and become free. She won't tell me more. She said, why can't I be like my oldest sister? She married a dentist.

[audio ends]

Keith: Uh, so this seems to be the Narf's main motivation, is that they risk their lives to briefly enter into human society and awaken human potential like the obelisks in 2001: A Space Odyssey.

Sylvi: Well, they come from the Blue World.

Keith: They come from the Blue World, uh, and when you are connected to the Narf, you see the Narf and part of your, uh, soul awakens or something, and then they leave. Then that's all they do.

Janine: Which is of course exactly how the story at the beginning of the movie that they made us sit through goes. It was absolutely that the sea people would look at the human and the human would go, ah, I gotta write a book.

1:00:00

Janine: Um, it wasn't like there was a long dialogue that was lost, a long relationship. No, no, it was, it was you look at them and then you, you have a thought. That's what— That's— It's consistent all the way through.

Sylvi: Pretty girl inspires you and then goes away. Yep.

Art: The narration was the last thing added to the movie after test audiences were like, not getting it.

Keith: That's a good choice. Good note. Genuinely.

Janine: Why, why make it— Why not— Okay.

Sylvi: Like, it's wild because this is such a tell, don't show movie.

Janine: It's— Why— If you're gonna do it at the very end, why not make it connect more?

Keith: Yeah, I— Yeah. I think that one of the issues with the movie is that everything that happens in it feels totally superfluous. Um, and the narration at the beginning does give it a little bit of grounding because the choices that they make within the actual script, the action of the script, they feel so— Um, it's not that it's convoluted, it's that it's, uh, really hollow. So it's kind of hard to follow because it's like, you know, he has to keep getting more information from Mrs. Choi because she doesn't trust him. So he eventually has to make himself act like a kid to trick her into thinking he's a kid.

Janine: Oh, it's so gross. I don't understand.

Sylvi: It's terrible, but it's really funny.

Keith: It's really funny.

Janine: I don't understand that moment.

Keith: Paul Giamatti kicking his little feet.

Sylvi: You gotta age regress, old man.

Janine: You gotta have milk in your mustache, and then you gotta eat cookie, and then you lay down and you suck thumb and you ask for story.

Sylvi: They added more milk to his mustache between shots. It's wild.

Keith: Wow.

Janine: It's yogurt. They put yogurt in it.

Sylvi: Yeah, they definitely did.

Janine: It's like sour cream or something. It's like thick.

Keith: Yeah, it's glue.

Sylvi: Uh, that's why the cinematographer needed to watch all that stuff. Okay, keep going. I already got it.

Keith: Sorry.

Janine: It's so—

Ali: I will say in defense of the narration, it does say they need only be glimpsed and the awakening of man will happen.

Keith: All right.

Ali: So it is definitely like— It's, it's so funny looking at it and being like, oh yeah, this was added after the fact.

Keith: Yeah, yeah. Well, she does go around, she does talk to everybody, kind of. She talks to most of them. She doesn't talk to the Guild.

Janine: Sometimes she just sits in the shower and they talk around her.

Keith: There's a lot of— This was—

Sylvi: They all just stare at her.

Keith: I, I was very happy when the shower became so important because it's one of the only things I knew about the movie was at some point she'd be in a sh— In the shower. And I was disappointed when, you know, 15 minutes into the movie, she's taking a— Just taking a shower. And I was like, oh, is this what I remember? But no, it's— She spends 40 minutes sitting in the shower while people come and chat with her a little bit.

Sylvi: Yeah, you were thinking of when they need to keep her alive and not the part when they need to make you go, oh my gosh, what's happening between these two?

[Keith: Right.] About her and Paul Giamatti.

Keith: He's old-fashioned. Nothing happens. All she does is sleep in his lap.

Janine: And she knows what names mean, but she doesn't know that it's like, maybe a little bit much to be doing that.

Sylvi: There's also something to be said about like— Like they even comment on it— The visual language of her just being in one of his shirts and nothing else is like, [**Keith:** Yeah, blam blam.] That's like— Yeah, blam blam. But that's like, a known image in media in general to communicate like, a morning after look, you know what I mean? It's a little—

Art: Yeah, it's truly bizarre.

Sylvi: It's confused, and I think that it is— That's one of the reasons why I think we should make sure we don't exclude M. Night from a pervert classification.

Keith: It's true. It's true.

Art: Well, and there's so much stuff about how he keeps calling it a love story.

Sylvi: Yeah. Oh.

Art: And like—

Sylvi: And there's the stuff with the critic too.

Art: If it's a love story, who is it about?

Ali: Yeah, I, I mean, I can't defend M. Night here, but I can defend Cleveland at the very least for creating distance between him and Story, right? By like, letting Anna take her, take her in and like—

Sylvi: For sure.

Ali: Sort of be their caretakers.

Janine: I don't think anyone here is mad at Cleveland.

Ali: No, no, no, I'm just like, I think that's worth saying to the podcast audience who maybe has not watched this movie, you know what I mean?

Keith: Cleveland isn't being a creep. Mostly. Mostly.

Ali: He's mostly deeply uncomfortable in these moments.

Sylvi: Yeah, it's mostly the camera that I have an issue with.

Keith: Yeah. But the thing about Cleveland is that M. Night wrote him to be a good guy. And so, you know, it's hard to ignore that there's this fantasy going on of like, you know, there's this naive girl who keeps putting her body on me, but because I'm the good guy of the story, I'm being like, no, no, I'm old-fashioned. I'm still sad about my dead wife. You know, you're too young, you know, don't, please don't. But he's clearly affected by her and sometimes by Young-Soon Choi. Like this, you know, he is not someone who's not looking. He's trying not to look.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Janine: Yeah, there is kind of an impression of like the very, um, shitty view of like, well, men are men, of course a man's gonna look, but he's a good man, so he's not gonna touch.

Sylvi: There is some real gender essentialism going on here. Like, we talked about it with the Healer stuff, and then they're— they try to feel clever about it.

Art: They're closer in age than I thought they would be.

Sylvi: Really?

Art: They're not close, but they're closer than I thought.

Keith: Bryce Dallas Howard and Paul Giamatti?

Art: Yeah.

Keith: Or the characters?

Art: The, the actors.

Keith: Because Bryce Dallas Howard, what do you think? What is she, like 26 in this or something?

Sylvi: Something like that.

Art: She would be 20...

Sylvi: 25.

Keith: 25?

Art: Yeah, 25.

Keith: How old is Paul Giamatti?

Sylvi: He is 14 years older than her.

Art: He's 14 years older than her, so he's [**Sylvi:** 39?] 39.

Art: Which I want to say is not an acceptable age gap, really, but I thought it was going to be like 24 years instead of 14 years.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: But still clearly old enough to be her father.

Sylvi: Her dad. Yeah.

Ali: Yeah.

Art: Well, I mean, it's a young dad at 14.

Keith: I mean, biologically, but not in a— Not in any real—

Janine: Old enough to be her father in a narrative construct way that they're depicting in the movie.

Keith: Thank you, Janine, in a narrative construct way.

Ali: I did the math in my head where I was like, oh, she would be 14 when he's this age, and that is not true. That's just, that's just me being dumb.

Art: Um, yeah, I mean—

Janine: She is also a child though. The Narf, Narf, Narf-hood, Narf-life. She just like, she probably just graduated Narf school is sort of the implication.

Ali: And they make fun of her!

Sylvi: She's so clumsy.

Janine: And they send all the young Narflings out into the non-blue world to— They say she's clumsy. When?

Keith: Yeah, I don't— They never show that.

Janine: When was she actually clumsy?

Sylvi: Um, well, no, well, because if you say something, it's— The audience is like, oh, okay, so that's true then.

Janine: Yeah, they say tell, don't show is the heart of good storytelling.

Sylvi: Yeah, exactly.

Ali: She keeps getting fucked by that scarf though, so she like clearly—

Sylvi: Scrunt!

Art: Maybe she—

Janine: Scrunt. Sorry, sorry. Come on. The more we say Narf, the more I want to say Scarf

Janine: If we say— if we call them Scarfs, then the other ones have to be Nurnts. Nurnts?

Art: Well, you just do— Well, Nunt isn't better, never mind.

Ali: I don't know, we'll just be right. I'll just try to be right.

Keith: The reason why so many people work on movies is that someone is supposed to tell you, dude, you can't call these Narfs and Scrunts. People are gonna laugh at you. And they did laugh at you. People laughed. I'm laughing. Narf and—

Sylvi: I laughed quite a bit.

Keith: Narf and Scrunt—

Art: All right, I think it is now time for me to tell the story of the meeting with Disney.

Ali: Okay.

Janine: Yes, please, please, please, please, please.

Art: Okay, so, um, first of all, first of all, Shyamalan has an incredibly detailed thing about like, how you get his scripts, um, which is that his assistant prints out the scripts and flies across the country from Philadelphia to LA with the scripts in a bag that never leaves her side.

Ali: Mmm.

Art: She then shows up to people's houses at appointed times, gives them the scripts, and then comes to collect them several hours later.

Keith: [whispering] Why?

Janine: Oh, that job's gotta suck.

Keith: [whispering] Why do you do this?

Sylvi: This reminds me of the, like, stuff people talk about, like Marvel scripts, where it's like, we have to keep it so secret, and I'm like, oh, you don't want people to know that Spider-Man's in this one?

Art: Uh, Shyamalan was apparently so upset that an early draft of Unbreakable leaked that from then on, like, no one could have unfettered access to his scripts, with one exception: Disney executive, Nina Jacobson.

Sylvi: God, he— Okay.

Ali: I wish fucking get paid—

Art: Who, uh, was previously at DreamWorks and left DreamWorks when Disney bought Sixth Sense to work on Sixth Sense.

Keith: This is an M Night ally.

Art: Yes, these three people— Nina Jacobson, the head of marketing at Disney at the time, who would end up replacing Nina Jacobson when she gets fired a year after this, and the head of the studio, the chairman of the studio, Dick Cook— they all get the script and they have a meeting with Shyamalan in a restaurant in Philadelphia where they're like, we don't get it. And they give— And they give a bunch of notes about, like, stuff they don't understand. And these notes lead to the creation of Mrs. Choi. But it's generally like, Shyamalan is really upset. He's like, is it like, that because The Village didn't do as well that they're trying to, like, clamp him down and put him in a box?

Keith: And they didn't like The Village. They tried to get him to change the twist of that where it's all in the future, or it's all in present day, and he refused. And they— And then that movie was not well received. So I can imagine this is a compounding thing of like, they probably feel incorrectly, by the way, that they were right about The Village twist. Even though that's not—

Art: Nina Jacobson specifically calls out something that we mentioned in our previous episode, that the having the year on the tombstone at the beginning be in the 1800s is like, lying to your audience for no reason.

Ali: Mmm.

Art: And she didn't like that. And he, he was also defensive about that. So they have this sort of contentious meeting. They offer him, instead of making this movie, they're like, you could direct this movie we have about ice skating? This also upsets Shyamalan. I find out in this, in this chapter that, uh, after Sixth Sense, he decides to do Unbreakable instead of directing the first Harry Potter movie. And the idea that fresh off of Sixth Sense, someone at Warner was like, give that guy Harry Potter.

Keith: Kids. It's the kids.

Ali: Yeah, it's the kids.

Art: Yeah, it's the kids. But like, what would that movie have been? Let— That's a, that's a weird movie.

Keith: That's a weird movie.

Sylvi: You know what? They should have done it and killed the cultural phenomenon.

Art: The first Harry Potter. Yeah.

Sylvi: Oh, awful.

Janine: Yeah.

Art: Anyway, that's a— It's an interesting alternate universe to think about.

Keith: There's another version where the movie's totally fine, and, you know, as fine as that movie is, and then he becomes a guy who directs other people's scripts, and he's successful for— All the way straight through.

Art: So they're leaving the restaurant after this kind of contentious meeting, and the chairman of the studio, Dick Cook, like— They get to the elevator and he's like, hang back. And he and Shyamalan have a conversation and he's like, okay, I get that we didn't get this movie and that this is— We're having a disagreement here. What if I give

you \$60 million and you don't see me again until the premiere? We won't interfere in this movie. You can just have the budget and do it.

Janine: Jesus.

Keith: Wow.

Art: That's, like, how interested we are in continuing to work with you. And Shyamalan says, no.

Sylvi and Janine: What?

Art: I don't want to make this movie with a studio that I feel doesn't understand me.

Keith: Wow.

Janine: Oh my God.

Sylvi: Wait. I'm— I— you got to get over yourself a little bit, man.

Janine: Well, no, they don't want to— they don't care. They don't want to understand you. They just want you to make your movie. Like, that's— Okay.

Art: Well, he also wanted it to be a Disney movie. He wanted to be, like, not Buena Vista. He wanted to be a, a capital-D Disney movie.

Janine: That shows.

Sylvi: That makes a lot of sense.

Art: And I'm not sure they were gonna give him that, 'cause again, they did not like the smoking. They did not like how scary this Snarf— [**Janine:** Pokémon.] Scrunt was. Grunt was.

Janine: The Leafeon.

Art: Come on. And there was some friction there, but I think they probably could have figured that out. So he bounces and he goes to Warner Brothers, 'cause the guy at Warner Brothers called him after the Village premiere, was like, I really liked it, and so he went and did the movie at Warner Brothers.

Sylvi: Oh my god.

Keith: Networking, baby.

Art: Technically, the movie did cost \$70 million, so who knows if that \$10 million would have made a big difference. Again, they had to build a 5-story building.

Keith: Had to is a huge stretch.

Janine: They had to fucking ship the guy in from New York so he could watch porn all the time. Like, that's, that's \$1 million right there.

Art: They had to employ both the car and the driver for that.

Keith: Can you, Art— You said this movie cost \$70 million. I have the answer written here, but can you also reveal the box office on this movie?

Art: Oh yeah, this is not covered in the book. The book came out the same day as the movie, so the book ends with— The book ends with a test screening of the movie that got 40 respondents. 39 said they liked it. They said the test audience liked it more than they liked *The Sixth Sense*. But I do know the movie made \$72 million.

Janine: You cannot end with your test audience being like, they liked it. It's a good movie. Bye.

Keith: \$72 on a budget of \$70. That's so bad.

Art: And I, I do know that the, that the marketing, the, the all-in price was \$140.

Keith: Yeah, that's a flop. This is a, this is a certified flop.

Art: A disastrous flop because you just left the studio that likes you too.

Keith: Yeah. Yeah. Disney liked him. He had made \$2 billion for Disney.

Janine: They liked him enough to be like here's \$60 million to just make a thing and not talk to us. That's the dream. What the hell's wrong with this guy?

Art: Yeah, if anyone listening to this has \$60 million they want to give to us to not talk to us, and we'll turn in a movie in 2 years.

Ali: It makes sense for us, don't worry about it.

Keith: M. Night Shyamalan, his decision-making makes him come across as a worse guy than the themes in his movies would suggest.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Keith: Like, you know, these are movies that are about like, love and forgiveness and self-acceptance and you know, finding your place in the world and fixing your mistakes and God and divine intervention. And M. Night Shyamalan seems just like a ruthless businessman who cannot write a script. I'm— I really, I really think no movie is bad in the way that an M. Night Shyamalan movie is bad. That is why I think he gets so much hate. I don't think that the hate that he gets is like, one-for-one deserved with how bad his movies are. I think that like, the reception to this movie is a lot worse than the movie actually is. There's way worse movies, and this will be true forever. There's way worse movies that most people like. That's what I believe.

Janine: I would say it's a little unfair, I think, to call him a ruthless businessman when he turned down \$60 million because he wanted to be able to have a conversation about the thing he was doing.

Art: Yeah.

Sylvi: The impression I got is that he's a narcissist, like, I don't know.

Art: I really cannot recommend enough *The Man Who Heard Voices*, or *How M. Night Shyamalan Risked His Career on a Fairy Tale*, the 300-page book about the making of

Lady in the Water. It's, it's a fascinating read. I think even if you don't— Even if you're somehow watching— If you're someone listening to this podcast and not watching any of the movies, I still think this book is worth it. It's fascinating. A fascinating portrait of a man who doesn't know he's about to be hit by a proverbial car.

Keith: Yeah. Yeah.

Art: And the way he got there, like there's multiple parts in this book, which again ends with like, the test scores are great, where people come to him like, I don't think this movie works.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: And he just tells them like, essentially to fuck off.

Janine: He heroically triumphs in the face of critics.

Art: Heroically triumphs in the face of several longtime collaborators saying that they don't think that this one has it.

Sylvi: That's another reason why I'm like, this movie has lowered my opinion of him because it's like, you should trust the people that you've been making stuff with at this point.

Janine: If you're paying people to be around you, it's because you at some level respect the stuff they do.

Keith: Yeah.

Janine: Listen to them.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: The number two guy in his production company, after they cut like a sample teaser trailer, says like, I don't think you're putting the focus on the right part of the trailer. And Shyamalan says to him, and again, this is someone that he's known longer than he's

been making movies, has been with him since the beginning. And he's like, why don't you go work at Burger King?

Janine: Oh my God.

Sylvi: Yeah, I'm— you know what? I'm glad he fell off. He needed to be humbled.

Janine: Fuck.

Keith: Do we want to talk about the Cookbook?

Sylvi: Oh, can we please talk about the Cookbook?

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: Because this is my main crux of this guy thinks his shit don't stink.

Keith: Yeah. So this is a— This, to me, is a guy who just read, you know, the— What is it, the 5th or the 6th? I think the 6th Dark Tower book, where Stephen King self-inserts himself as, you know, a sort of pseudo-deity that helps— Whose prophetic writing helps keep all universes from collapsing. And I think manages to come off way worse with the way humbler scope with his character here. What is his name? Something Ran?

Sylvi: Vick.

Keith: Vick Ran, who's writing a book called The Cookbook, which is his— Just his opinions on politicians and culture and stuff.

Janine: Just some thoughts.

[audio from Lady in the Water starts playing]

Vick: I don't know who you are, but you did something to me. My thoughts. Everything became clearer. The fears that were muddling my thoughts just went away. I can hear myself.

Story: Do you wish to know your future? [long pause] A boy—

Ali: He's nodding.

Story: In the Midwest of this land will grow up in a home where your book will be on the shelf and spoken of often. He will grow up with these ideas in his head. He will grow into a great orator. He will speak and his words will be heard throughout this land and throughout the world. This boy will become leader of this country and begin a movement of great change. He will speak of you and your words. Your book will be the seeds of many of his great thoughts. It will be the seeds of change.

Anna: The Cookbook?

[audio ends]

[**Keith** hysteria]

Sylvi: I'm her. I'm Anna, who I love, by the way.

Ali: I love Anna.

Janine: This is the point in the movie when I looked to see what year it was made, because I was— I had to know, was this pre-Obama, contemporary with Obama, post-Obama?

Sylvi: Oh my God.

Keith: It would've been immediately pre.

Janine: Yeah, but he was on the come up, but I definitely think he wasn't on the scene in that way.

Keith: He had— At this point, Obama would've given the one speech that made him kind of a big deal, and was still like, what, a year and change out from entering the race? Or maybe a little less than a year. I don't know exactly when this movie came out.

Janine: And then if you account for production and stuff, it's not really there. But I definitely had the thought of like, come on.

Keith: So there is a promise at the start of this movie, like in all of these, there's a promise at the start of the movie. When you're walking around and there's radios talking about the war in Iraq, there's TVs playing, helicopters.

Sylvi: Just the war.

Keith: Right, sorry, they just say the war. But I'm from America, I know which war.

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: Big war.

Keith: All of the wars, multiple wars, I guess. And—

Ali: I just wanna say the characters are also in America because this is in Philadelphia. I don't know if we've said that explicitly.

Keith: Right, yeah, sorry. It's M. Night Shyamalan, it's in Philadelphia. Yeah, they, yeah, they mentioned at the beginning when Bob Balaban gets flown in from Hollywood to write for the newspaper about film and books. But, you know, there's this problem, like— And at the very beginning, the narration where it's like, you know, human greed and war, you know, human nature has this part of them that is like, giving in to this dark thing, and then they have all of the TVs playing, talking about war, and then like it just doesn't come up. Like the thing— The Narf comes to sort of give everyone a little confidence, and it's like, what about the war stuff? You should— like when The Cookbook— The Cookbook really was the moment where I was like, oh, he's doing nothing.

Sylvi: Hey man, these things take time. Eventually some— Eventually someone will actually do something when they read the thing I wrote.

Janine: The mega war is gonna go on for 20 years, and then a kid's gonna grow up and be like, we should stop this.

Keith: I just—

Sylvi: I can feel fine.

Ali: He needs to be awakened.

Keith: The guy— It's just the guy— The guy who is so politically turbulent for America that he is assassinated for his views, the person who's writing that character, like, their ceiling of change is, you will inspire a good president. And I'm sitting here in 2025 being like, I'm gonna flush this guy down the toilet. He's a mental shrink.

Sylvi: They never really get into what the pre— They just say great change.

Keith: Right.

Sylvi: I'm just saying, Vick Ram, don't go speak at that Utah college.

Janine: They don't say anything about what he actually believes other than what is happening now is not the right stuff.

Keith: You could interpret great change as inherently positive, like instead of horrible change, great change.

Art: Yeah, well, I'm telling you he's meant to be Lincoln.

Keith: Yes, and Art already told us he's meant to be Lincoln.

Janine: He's the least political character.

Keith: Yeah.

Janine: Almost every other character in that movie, I feel like I could kind of put them on a political spectrum and maybe take some stabs at stuff they believe. He is just a t-shirt mannequin. And I also, I hate the way the camera follows him. Like, he is treated like a body that just says pretty things. And it's really fucking— It's such a— It's so— I feel like—

Keith: He's not a good actor either.

Janine: I feel like even if you didn't know that M. Night likes to be in his stuff, you'd be like, oh, that's probably the guy. That's probably him right there, isn't it?

Keith: It's very weird how much bigger his role is here. I thought that his cameo in *The Village* is really nice.

Ali: Mm-hmm. But it's weird, like, both in *The Village* and in this, his own inclusion of himself as those characters end up undercutting what the movie is about. Like, if this—

Keith: Do you think so? You don't think that it enhances *The Village*?

Ali: Yeah, well, because I think with *The Village*, you end up missing sort of the like, the sort of like, racial things that are going on, and the sort of weirdness about like, it's a rich guy who's, you know, having— Who's paying for this thing to happen to isolate himself because he wants to be a LARPer. Or, like, the, like, the, oh, white people thing that was cut out.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Was like, you know, if that's supposed to be your like, that's what this movie is about type shit. Like, you should have that be acted and performed by somebody that a character that the audience will connect with and identify with and be curious about instead of being like, well, there's M. Night again. Well, then I think that also happens in this movie where like if Vick becomes like— Is a more charming performance or is, you know, as, as easy to identify and connect with, with some of the other, you know, gag characters in this movie, instead of just being like, well, M. Night is the, the, the, the fated Writer who wrote this movie.

Sylvi: He's Jesus in a way. Like, he's gonna die for, for our sins, literally.

Ali: Like, you know, there, there could be more there. And if like, the, the sort of like, political nail of this movie is supposed to be on that character, you're missing this

opportunity to not have that character be someone that audiences actually care about besides like, well, there he is.

Keith: With this movie, I totally agree. He's the worst acted character in the movie. He doesn't have a lot interesting to say. His story is supposed to be moving. He gets told of his death and he goes, he like, you know, solemnly accepts his mission to write about some kind of thing that would inspire some fucking president. And like, it has to be true because it comes from the Narf, you know, and the Narf tells no tales. And—

Sylvi: The Madame Narf.

Keith: The Madame Narf. In *The Village*, the thing that I like about like— Like, you know, you finally see a not-white person when you get out of the construction. Like, they have the constructed world, and then finally there's someone who isn't white. And then I really liked in the— I can't remember the review we read. It might have been— I wish I could remember whose review it was, but, uh, where they talked about how like, the camera never even falls on him. We only see him in reflections.

Sylvi: Yeah. And then I can't even bear to look at him.

Keith: I even like the next level of it where instead of being shown as in opposition to this sort of class of billionaire LARPer, instead what you have is like, hey man, I'm just a guy paid to hold this whole thing up. And the thing I'm concerned about is like not being troubled or in trouble. So just let me keep doing this job and don't bother me. Like, I like that. I think that that all works. And this is the thing about *M. Night* is that he does— He has ideas. He has ideas and they just kind of fall apart. It's like they're the best bad movies I've ever seen. They're like, how does a bad movie look this good? I don't know.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: It's such a weird— And this is what I think causes this, like, intense negative reaction and also racism and also, you know, it's— It gets, I think, pretty easy to turn people against a movie because this was 2006 and critics did have some amount of

power in shaping a narrative about a movie. And this is a movie that looked at film criticism and I cannot emphasize enough, in the smallest-brained way possible, said film critics are dumb.

Sylvi: It is so stupid.

Janine: It's so embarrassing.

Keith: So stupid. It's the worst thing in the whole movie, even if it does have one kind of funny thing.

Janine: It's like one step above like a crayon drawing of the guy with little stink lines coming off of him. Like, oh, he's a stinky little stupid guy. Like, it's just— They just— They— Every time I was like, wow, that was really heavy-handed, he really laid it on thick, there's just three extra layers waiting, just like, just like a little bit away. Just wait a little bit more for the movie to keep going. And then it's just like, oh, you, you saw how beautiful and subtle my, my handling of this character was before?

1:30:00

Janine: Well, look at this. And then it's just a fucking 10-pound weight dropped on it.

Art: Um, and then he's like, the only person who dies in the whole movie, right?

Keith: Yeah, he has a whole monologue about how he won't die—

Sylvi: The worst!

Keith: Because he can't even see life as anything but an unoriginal telling of something that already exists.

Sylvi: I hated that scene so much because it is just like water— A watered-down, less well-executed version of every Randy scene in the *Scream* movies. Where, for people who aren't aware, he's like a very genre-savvy like, horror nerd who will be like, here are the rules and shit like that, right?

Keith: I've seen Community.

Sylvi: You should watch Scream.

Janine: Also, like, it's a bummer because I— The thing that happened was I had what I think is a better version of the story in my head, which was that, like, the evil super apes were also among the tenants, and it was gonna be like, him and then like, the guy who's like, should humans exist or whatever?

Sylvi: Should man be saved?

Janine: And then like maybe the mom or something. They could be like the— They could be like the evil apes who like— But the apes just—

Sylvi: And they're not actually evil. [**Janine:** Well...] The apes actually are evil. I meant like, if there are people in the building, they probably should make them not actually evil because then that's a little bit weird.

Janine: Maybe.

Keith: Yeah, you know, secret evil guys, that's a thing. Secret evil. [**Sylvi:** Sure.] The apes hidden among you.

Janine: I don't understand how the Scrunts aren't evil, but the monkeys are evil, but the monkeys—

Keith: I thought the Scrunts were evil, they just obeyed the laws.

Art: Well, this Scrunt is evil.

Ali: Yeah, it's a rogue Scrunt.

Keith: This is a rogue Scrunt.

Janine: It seems like all Scrunts could be rogue Scrunts if they are presented with a Madame Narf.

Sylvi: Yes, this is crucial. She is the Madame Narf.

Keith: The Scrunts— the Scrunts—

Sylvi: I hate it so fucking much.

Keith: The Scrunts always want to kill a Narf, but they're so afraid of the monkeys that they won't break the rules to do it. Unless it's a Madame Narf who they hate so much because of how powerful she is.

Janine: Yes, because she's going to become queen.

Keith: And you can tell from how deep of an impact she made on everyone how powerful she was.

Janine: And also the fact that she went— She started slowly going blonde or something?

Sylvi: She did go blonde!

Keith: She did go blonde.

Ali: I guess her hair went white and she was really pale. She was dying.

Sylvi: She was already really pale.

Janine: She wasn't white.

Keith: Yeah, this movie—

Janine: I didn't mean— You know, she was white, but you know.

Keith: This movie spends so much time, like, like extreme close-up on her pale face, just sort of looking at everyone. Um, it's very weird. Hey, what's up with the cover of this movie where the fucking witch from Narnia is on it?

Janine: Yeah, can I tell you, I thought this movie had Tilda Swinton in it. And it doesn't.

Keith: Who is the witch from Narnia, right? That's Tilda Swinton, I think.

Janine: I think so.

Keith: Yeah.

Janine: Either her or what's her name.

Keith: I thought that she was gonna eventually have some sort of power of the winter, but no.

Sylvi: No.

Keith: That's just artistic license.

Sylvi: She's Lady of the Water, not Lady of the Winter. Come on.

Keith: Well, winter is just frozen water.

Sylvi: Nope, that's what ice is.

Ali: All she has is her awakening and her silly Little Mermaid cave with all her little junk in it.

Sylvi: It's so funny. Yeah, look at that stuff, isn't it neat?

Janine: Oh yeah, it's that— That was a really early example. Not really early, but like a really strong example of like, oh, you're not trying to be subtle. I understand now. I understand the rules.

Sylvi: I'm kind of rethinking now though, maybe they should have— Disney should have picked this up. We could have got her in Kingdom Hearts. This is a great level.

Keith: I'm gonna—

Sylvi: Let me run around the apartment. Let me run around this apartment as Sora and Goofy.

Keith: I'm gonna say Little Mermaid didn't pop into my head for one second watching this.

Sylvi: Wow, that's crazy. It is all I could think of in that scene.

Art: It's Little Mermaid all over.

Sylvi: She's literally Ariel.

Keith: I see it now, but—

Janine: She's redheaded, she's collecting shiny stuff from humans on the shore. Yeah, I see it. She gets washed up, she saves him. Like, it's the whole— It's all that. It's all that.

Keith: It's all that.

Art: Was anyone else like, really stunned at how long Paul Giamatti could hold his breath in that?

Keith: Yes, I was stunned.

Sylvi: Yeah, man. Again, very adventure game moment.

Art: That was 4 minutes or something.

Keith: They even had him suck some air out of a glass and it still was like, no way.

Sylvi: I laughed so hard. I laughed so hard when he slurped his, his little cup of air.

Keith: Yeah, that was so funny.

Janine: He's a dolphin, so he knows how to use his lungs well.

Sylvi: Yeah, of course.

Keith: This movie spends so much time like, fulfilling little quests that the fact that he wasn't able to like, score some scuba gear from a tenant is like, crazy.

Janine: Or a hose, just a hose, which you would have for a pool.

Keith: Or a hose, a hose. Thank you, Janine. A hose is all. And lampshading it to me with the glass only made it more obvious how goofy it is. That's just me. And that's me.

Janine: Sorry, can I ask? What, what is the word for the monk— for the ape? The evil apes?

Keith: I didn't even write it down.

Ali: Tartuics.

Keith: Tartuics.

Janine: Tartuics.

Ali: Okay.

Janine: I think there's— Isn't there another T in there? Madame Narf. I thought it was Tartutic.

Sylvi: I think it is Tartutic.

Ali: Oh, maybe. Yeah, it's Tartutic.

Janine: Tartutwig?

Ali: Tartutic.

Sylvi: These are all Fakemon. These are all M. Night Shyamalan's Fakemon. Yeah, um, they're for his Pokémon fan game, called Pokémon Water.

Janine: And then at the end, Cremis shows up. Yeah.

Sylvi: Um, that book, The Cookbook.

Keith: The Cookbook. [**Janine:** Because he's cooking in it.] And then he again, he can't— He's not good at lampshading because every time he— Every time he tries to

like play something off like, oh, we know that this is silly but we're doing it anyway like, like with the War of the Worlds thing from Signs, like it just draws attention to it for me where it's— Where you know, he, he goes like, oh, it's called The Cookbook. Yeah, stupid name, right? And it's like, well, yeah, you wrote the movie. Why don't you come up with a good fucking name, you idiot? Or at least have the confidence in your stupid name to not acknowledge it.

Janine: It's like, my number one thing that I hate as a game writer when games do, which is like, when the character's like, man, this fight is going on for a really long time. It's like, I know, you're just making me feel it more, and I'm not going to be like, haha, funny. We're so far past when irreverent meta-commentary is, like cute, and so deep into, if you knew it was too long, then you should have made it shorter.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: Unfortunately, you alienated everyone who told you to make that stuff shorter.

Art: Um, something I just had to check— It's a weird story from this book that apparently didn't make the movie because they were like, the day Jim Gaffigan was on set.

Sylvi: Huh?

Art: I was like, Jim Gaffigan wasn't in this movie.

Sylvi: I would remember if Mr. Hot Pockets showed up.

Art: He was the pool guy.

Ali: Oh my God.

Art: And then they didn't use— They like thought that he and Paul Giamatti were like too similar in type.

Sylvi: That's so funny.

Art: And they didn't mention it in the book, but they just recast and reshot it.

Keith: That's crazy. I would have kept— I would have kept Gaffigan.

Art: Really? He was very funny.

Ali: I mean, that scene does have the— The reason why the early movie of this is so good— good in quotations— [**Sylvi:** I liked it.] Is to warm you up, and it's because there are all these like, kind of good comedy beats.

Sylvi: Yeah, it starts with a funny one.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: It starts with Paul Giamatti, like, squishing a bug in a cabinet with the camera seemingly inside of the cabinet, and the group of the Hispanic sisters like, screaming in the background. Come on, sir. And he keeps trying to like, hit the broom against the thing.

Keith: It goes on so long.

Ali: And then you're introduced—

Sylvi: So much.

Ali: We're introduced to Reggie and his whole deal and his science thing. Um, despite the, like, really stupid, um, like, lines that, uh, Bob Babalan is given as the critic, like, he is shining in it with his like, little glasses and his constant like, put-upon stare.

Keith: I love Bob Babalan

Sylvi: He's great as the grouch.

Ali: Yeah.

Sylvi: It's just he's given nothing to work with.

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: I feel like I've seen him as like, a nebbish serial killer more than once. And this performance was like, kind of consistent with that.

Sylvi: Damn, that would have been a great reveal.

Keith: Yeah, that would have been— There's a—

Janine: He was a t-t-t— Whatever.

Keith: There was a brief— Like, every—

Janine: I keep thinking tteokbokki, which is food, so it's not that.

Keith: There was— There was a couple minutes where the movie had me thinking that maybe, uh, Balaban was a Scrunt in disguise. When he gets chased by the Scrunt, when he— If he— He hasn't found out he's not the Guardian.

Janine: This is what I'm saying!

Keith: Yeah, he hasn't found out he's not the Guardian, but the Guardian thing of controlling the Scrunt doesn't work, and he trips and falls, and Balaban's standing right there like, what are you doing? What's going on? And like, if you're going to have a critics are stupid movie, at least have them like, actually be evil, you know? At least have him kill someone instead of be embarrassingly killed.

Janine: How cool would it have been if when that Scrunt was chasing him, he just aped out? And it's like, okay, well, you know, the critic is evil but useful, much like the whatever the fuck, that thing.

Ali: Was there anything in the book about this character in terms of like, this is my response to yada yada?

Keith: He hadn't even been that critically slammed yet.

Art: No, he hadn't.

Janine: I think one critic is probably too many for someone like that.

Art: I mean, there is—

Ali: The Village wasn't like, really disliked?

Art: No, I don't think so. It was mildly disliked.

Keith: Art's, um, thing that, that he has said before is that like The Village became worse in people's future. Signs too became worse in like future sort of reassessment of his work after like, The Happening and this, where people were really mad at him and then were like, and The Village fucking sucked too, and so did Signs.

Art: I guess The Village has a 44% Rotten Tomatoes, whereas Signs is 75%, Unbreakable 76%, Sixth Sense 86%. So he got criticized for The Village. The book presents Shyamalan going to Lady in the Water knowing that the Village was flawed and they sort of like released it anyway.

Janine: Okay.

Art: And doesn't sort of account for—

Ali: Some sort of ego about this that comes up in this character.

Art: No, but I mean, they talk about the— They talk about that this— Multiple people suggest this character is not a great idea.

Sylvi: I agree with those people.

Art: Um, I think that's another note in the Disney meeting that they don't think that this is a smart thing to do.

Janine: Shocking. So shocking.

Keith: To have a moron critic who draws out the movie for an extra 25 minutes by giving bad advice?

Sylvi: It's so funny that he's also a the curtains are just blue guy. It's, it's so fucking funny that the critic is just like, everything is literal when he talks about the movie.

Keith: Yeah. It's such a strange understanding. It's like he hates critics, but he never read one.

Sylvi: Yeah, it's— Yeah.

Art: It's weird because, you know, he has a film degree. He's watched a lot. He's— He should be familiar with film criticism, you know?

Keith: Right. In a way, if you're directing movies, you should be a film critic. You might not be writing that stuff down, and publishing it. But.

Ali: Do you have the clip of their conversation? Because it's just—

Keith: I have the clip where he dies.

Ali: Whoa. Okay. I guess that's just as good because the, the, the one that I was asking about, that was the one where he was like, I saw this movie and it was bad. People just walked around talking about their thoughts. Who does that?

Keith: Who does that?

Ali: And the characters, they said they loved each other in the rain. Who wants to stand around in the rain?

Sylvi: Like, when he said that, I was like, okay, so they're gonna be standing around in the rain later. Cool, good to know.

Keith: This— It's like the absolute pinnacle strawman thing. Like, he has created a critic who doesn't exist.

Ali: Yeah, a guy to make up to be mad at?

Keith: Yes, he made up a guy to be mad at.

Sylvi: Literally! He's innovating.

Keith: 5 years later, 8 years later, he could have remade this guy as like a 20-something YouTuber, and— **[Sylvi:** It could have been a podcaster!] It could have been a podcaster. It would have made more sense.

Janine: I mean, what was the— There was a— Art, you might know this. There was like, wasn't there— There's like a blog that did a lot of movie stuff, uh, like back in the day.

Art: Are you talking about Ain't It Cool News?

Janine: Yeah, I think I'm talking about Ain't It Cool News. It felt kind of like it was a character who was sort of more rooted in print media, because that was still the more familiar thing to talk about.

Keith: Right.

Janine: But the kind of person he was mad at felt very— More modern. I don't know. I think it's maybe a mistake to look at it like he's mad at specifically critics who panned a specific movie or something. Because it feels more like a response to critics who were like, well, it's an M. Night movie, but it didn't have a twist. It was really predictable. And like, where was the twist? You know, that kind of thing we were talking about earlier where like, it feels like he was just mad at the kind of critic who is like, just a know-it-all instead of enjoying a work as a whole, is being like, well, I wasn't surprised. I knew everything that was going to happen, blah, blah, blah.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Janine: I could imagine that being a thing that he was frustrated with. That said, it's a terrible character still, and it was not a good idea, it turns out. But that's sort of my read on it. Like, that kind of made sense to me in that context.

Ali: And it's also such a weird thing, 'cause like, in that context like, especially because you think 2016 and like, blogging is really just sort of hitting the thing. And, like, you're

right that he could have made him, like, a new media, a younger guy, like, you know, somebody who was more involved in the lives of the— The neighbors and like also criticizing them and not being like, this guy who is clearly writing for a newspaper.

Sylvi: Have, um—

Janine: You couldn't have a character be a blogger back then and have them be seen as like, serious and that's a career.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: Right. I'm just saying—

Keith: Even though it also was the only time where you could do it as a career.

Sylvi: I bet his LiveJournal would've popped off.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: Do we wanna hear this guy die?

Janine: I think that's what he's responding to.

Ali: I don't know, Kanye West was blogging in 2006, right?

Art: He had another job.

Janine: He just wasn't— yeah, he was like, famous and had another job.

Keith: What job did he have?

Art: He was, uh, making some music.

Keith: Oh, he's a musician? What does he play?

Ali: All right, M. Night.

Art: 808s.

Sylvi: Yeah, damn.

Keith: Uh, do we want to hear this guy die?

Sylvi: Yeah, sure.

Art: Yeah.

[audio from Lady in the Water starts playing]

Harry: My God, this is like a moment from a horror movie. It's precisely the moment where the mutation or beast will attempt to kill an unlikable side character. But in stories where there has been no prior cursing, nudity, killing, or death, such as in a family film, the unlikable character—

Janine: But there was smoking.

Harry: Will narrowly escape his encounter. And be referenced again later in the story, having learned valuable lessons. He may even be given a humorous moment to allow the audience to feel good about him. This is where I turn to run. You will leap for me, I will shut the door, and you will land a fraction of a second too late.

[audio of HARRY dying horribly]

[audio ends]

Keith: Uh, he was wrong.

Sylvi: He was super wrong. Also, he didn't really like, move when he turned around. He just turned around and then stayed still.

Keith: Now, two things I like about this, uh, to be fair. I like that, um, he delivers it— Bob Balaban delivers this like a mad scientist character revealing his ultimate plan in a— In like a B-horror movie. Um, the other thing I like about it is that he has somehow internalized that he is in fact an unlikable side character in someone else's story.

Ali: It's so cute. I also like— I think the, the other moment that I like that I probably feel like is where we're seeing him realize this is like the party that they throw, the cover for it is like, we're gonna celebrate the new guy. And him as the new guy goes to the party, he's like, thanks for throwing this. This is really nice. This is more than I expected. And the people who threw the party are like, who are you?

Keith: Oh, this was a big tip-off for me. I really like this because this is where I wrote in— I wrote down, um, did the critic get everything wrong? Uh, because he shows up—

Sylvi: Damn.

Keith: He shows up to the party. Uh, uh, this is right before everything goes wrong. He shows up to the party and he's like, oh, thanks. And they stare at him like he— They're like, who the fuck is this guy? And he has to be like— Or well, first he goes, and this is the part that I noticed, he was like, I never expected that you would throw me a party like this. This is such a surprise. I didn't see this coming at all. And then they're like, who are you? And he's like, I'm the tenant in 13B. And they're like, oh, okay, cool. And I'm like, I knew that they were gonna do critic is stupid thing because they've been sort of doing it all along. But this is where I wrote down, did he fuck up? And did they get the wrong people? Which I also— I think maybe Janine, it was you that pointed out that that's also not really how it happened. He— His analysis wasn't really wrong. It was just that they collected the wrong people.

Janine: Yeah.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: This is the part of the podcast where I do need to encourage everybody to listen to Cibo Matto's, uh, Stereotype A, a song of which is playing in this party.

Keith: Oh, hell yeah.

Ali: The reason why I like this movie. It's a very good album. None of the sins of this.

Janine: God, that reminds me that when you meet the stoners, they're listening to a song out of an iPod commercial.

Ali: Whoa.

Keith: Whoa. And this is when they're talking about how it's, it's worse than Jon Bon Jovi.

Janine: Yeah, I think so.

Ali: Is that what they're debating about?

Sylvi: They were talking about someone named Fred.

Ali: Who died?

Sylvi: Oh, I have no idea.

Ali: And that doesn't mean that, like, other— He's better than other artists just because he's dead, but it, like, doesn't—

Sylvi: I was like, Jon Bon Jovi is a crazy thing to say about anybody.

Keith: I— It, it felt true about this movie to me.

Janine: You'd rather listen to Jon Bon Jovi than watch—

Keith: Maybe not for the full runtime.

Sylvi: No, I don't know. I don't— I think I'd rather watch Lady in the Water.

Keith: It depends on how much Bon Jovi I'd have to listen to.

Janine: It's a tough choice. It's hard.

Sylvi: It is tough. If it's the full—

Keith: if it's the full runtime, I think I'd pick this movie. Uh, Ali, do you want to talk about some stuff that you like about this movie?

Sylvi: That's such a— Wow. What a setup.

Ali: Um, I really like Paul Giamatti's performance.

Keith: Yeah, me too.

Ali: I like the ensemble cast, despite them winning Worst Ensemble. Um, I like that it's a funny movie a lot of the time. Um, you know, the fact that it's kind of a straightforward fable I mean, not very straightforward, but like

Keith: It's straightforward in structure. The actual fable is absolutely, um, ridiculous at every turn.

Ali: Uh-huh. You know, M. Night is really just sort of, you know, as we've heard about him, him, um, really being dedicated to having this movie come out. He's just really doing the damn thing, which is something I unfortunately appreciate. I also really have like, a soft spot for like, male characters who are in grief. Um, the scene where he's talking to his family but talking to Story like, makes me cry basically every single time. Um, you know, there's pros and cons. That Cibo Matto song's in it.

Janine: That kind of raises the thing I was thinking about earlier, which is like, if M. Night Shyamalan had been an AO3 teen, or even like a Wattpad teen.

Sylvi: Oh my God.

Janine: I think that— I think he might have been born a little too early. I think he's before his time.

Sylvi: Born in the wrong generation. Crazy. You usually only hear that about people who want to go back and see the Beatles live.

Janine: I just think he would have written some really killer SuperWhoLock or whatever.

Sylvi: Whoa.

Keith: Is there killer SuperWhoLock?

Sylvi: You know, I'm sure there's—

Ali: If it hits, it hits.

Keith: I know for a fact that— I know for a fact that Janine doesn't know this, but that's the second SuperWhoLock reference on Media Club Plus.

Sylvi: Yeah, it is.

Keith: Which is very funny to me.

Janine: People are gonna think we're, we're teasing a SuperWhoLock mega season.

Keith: I, I believe that at the time we said Media Club Minus, I wouldn't watch Supernatural if you paid me.

Janine: You gotta like, Dark Side of the Moon it with like, you pick two of them and you watch them like, in parallel.

Art: You are being paid to be on this show.

Sylvi: Oh, Sylvi's coming to record the media clip on Media Club Plus Supernatural

Keith: Right, that's exactly— So it's directly analogous. So I guess what I mean is I wouldn't do— I wouldn't watch Supernatural if someone in addition to Friends at the Table said, I would give you extra money to do this. Yes.

Sylvi: There is no amount. I did my time. I watched 9 seasons of that show.

Keith: You what? You did WHAT? Have you ever dropped that before?

Art: Oh my God.

Sylvi: Did you guys not know that?

Keith: No. This is a must-listen episode of Media Club Plus.

Sylvi: Yeah, have I never mentioned that?

Janine: Are you okay?

Keith: Like, clearly no.

Sylvi: I remember when I stopped watching that show. I watched that show like most of high school.

Janine: What made you stop watching?

Art: There were more seasons than whatever crazy number you just said?

Sylvi: There's 15.

Keith: Oh my God.

Art: Shut the fuck up.

Sylvi: Yeah, well, when the Leviathan storyline started, I was just like, okay, it's a bit much. They should have ended it when he went to hell and died, personally speaking.

Ali: Did you watch the finale live when like, they reversed the gayness or whatever?

Sylvi: No, God no. I just saw— I just watched the scene.

Art: They reversed the gayness?

Sylvi: No, what they did is they confirmed the gayness and then they killed him immediately and sent him to super double extra hell.

Janine: They confirmed half the gayness.

Sylvi: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Janine: And the—

Ali: My bad, my bad, my bad, my bad, my bad. They did the Korra thing where they walk into a portal.

Sylvi: No, no, because one of them lived, and I think went on to have like, a wife and children.

Keith: For an extremely— For an extremely old, probably pre-Friends of the Table Stream Friends episode, I watched some amount of Supernatural in what would— You might call a proto-Media Club Plus. And I found essentially no redeeming quality to any single moment of that show.

Sylvi: It's bad.

Keith: And can I tell you that to this day, it irritates me when people talk about how attractive Jensen Ackles is, because I look at him like an undercooked steak. That's how he looks to me. And I hate when people are like, he's so hot and cool and he can do anything. And I'm like, are we— What about this show made you feel this way about this guy? Oh my God.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: Is it even a good procedural?

Keith: No, it's not even close.

Sylvi: Not really.

Keith: In the first episode, they reference X-Files, and it made me so mad.

Sylvi: It's before I ever watched X-Files.

Keith: That's— That's—

Sylvi: Like, I upgraded.

Keith: Yeah, yeah, of course.

Sylvi: I upgraded, but I was 14 on the internet, and all the gay people I hung out with were talking about this show. I'm gonna check it out.

Keith: Gay people have bad taste. That's really what it is. [**Sylvi:** It's true.] You have to modulate. You can't just watch stuff because gay people like it. It's just not a good barometer.

Sylvi: Just because it's gay doesn't mean your taste is good.

Janine: Sylvie, what's your once-sona? Your Onceler-sona.

Sylvi: I'm not that— I didn't go that far. I'm actually kind of hurt right now.

Keith: Is that the Lorax thing?

Sylvi: That's the Lorax thing. Yeah, I was not party to that, though I did— I do remember being on Tumblr when stuff like Ask Walmart Cashier Once-ler was big. Ask the Once-ler Sperm. I remember that blog. That was a funny blog.

Keith: Ask the Once-ler Sperm?

Janine: This is what I'm saying. M. Night really missed his time. Yeah.

Keith: I think he'd get bullied off of there.

Sylvi: My mom listens to this podcast is what I just— So yeah, if you were ever wondering what I, what I was doing when I was on the computer really depressed, it was looking at these blogs and watching Supernatural.

Janine: I'm just picturing you at the Thanksgiving table now with your mom and your mom being like, honey, what's a Onceler?

Sylvi: No, she did— I never let that slip. I led two lives. I never let that slip. The closest she got was, why are you— What is— Why did you order this t-shirt? Uh, while I— When I got my Homestuck t-shirt.

Keith: I can't believe—

Janine: Oh, sorry, no, I meant this year.

Sylvi: Oh, this year? Oh, that might happen.

Janine: I meant next month.

Sylvi: Yeah, no, that might happen. That might happen now. Um, I'll, I'll report back. Um, my brother also listens to this. Uh, shoutouts to you guys. I love you.

Keith: I can't believe—

Sylvi: Don't ask me about any of this.

Keith: I can't believe that you watched more Supernatural than I watched Doctor Who.

Sylvi: I also watched Doctor Who at the time, 'cause like, obviously.

Keith: 'Cause, well, 'cause obviously.

Sylvi: And I watched Sherlock, but I thought Sher— I knew Sherlock was bad the whole time.

Keith: You had blinders for Supernatural?

Sylvi: I mean, I didn't really like it either, but there was just something about it that was brain-numbing.

Keith: Yeah, I watched one episode of Sherlock, 'cause it was critically acclaimed.

Sylvi: Let me tell you the true superpower of Supernatural was it was great to have on in the background while you were on the Gaia Online role-playing forums.

Janine: Oh yeah.

Sylvi: When I was yucking it up in ol' Barton Town, this is hitting for somebody, I promise, it was just Jensen Ackles and the tall guy being completely uncharismatic in the background as white noise.

Keith: The tall guy!

Sylvi: Yeah, I can't remember his name.

Keith: They're the brothers who love each other or something.

Sylvi: They're— I know the character names. They're Sam and Dean Winchester.

Keith: Okay.

Sylvi: It's the actors who I don't know.

Keith: Is his name Adam something? I don't know.

Sylvi: I don't know. Uh, I like that they killed the gay angel. Let's get onto the Lady in the Water.

Keith: Lady in the Water, better than Supernatural. I'm gonna say it. I'm putting my stamp on it.

Sylvi: I will also— I'll co-sign that.

Keith: Again, this is what I mean, like—

Art: Remind me to come back to this movie when we get to Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back in the Kevin Smith season.

Keith: Oh, interesting.

Art: They're both movies about the relationship with critics.

Keith: Right.

Ali: Yes.

Keith: Yeah, Kevin Smith maybe has a little bit more— A little bit longer of a history of being upset with critics at this point.

Sylvi: That does not shock me. It's not shocked me in the slightest as someone who's only seen one Kevin Smith movie and mostly liked it.

Keith: Um, yeah, it's like that— It's like top 4.

Sylvi: Dogma. Keith, Keith recommended that I would like Dogma and he was right.

Art: Oh, I think you— Yeah, that, that makes sense.

Sylvi: I liked Dogma.

Janine: Yeah, that was fun.

Keith: Um, I rewatched— I talked about this already, but I rewatched Clerks for the first time in like 15 years, two— A year and a half ago, two years ago, and I was so much more impressed with it than I feared. I had this fear that I was going to loathe this, this thing from my past that was extremely important. And then I, I was like, oh, this is like more mature than I remember it, which is fine.

Art: Put it in your pocket. We'll get— Our next mini season.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: Maybe, you know, we don't get to decide that.

Keith: We don't get to decide that yet. Uh, this fucking stupid— What's up with this eagle? The eagle—

Sylvi: Oh, that we— yeah, it's—

Keith: The eagle, every time the eagle comes up, I'm like, who gives a fuck? Like, I don't know what it is about the eagle specifically, but when they're trying to like make things right for the eagle, I'm like, who fucking gives a fuck about the rules of the eagle? Who gives a fuck about the rules of the eagle?

2:00:10

Janine: They don't even say it's like, a law that the eagle can only do it twice. It's just like, the eagle's only gonna do it twice.

Sylvi: Moody-ass eagle.

Janine: It's like an Uber driver. Like, it's gonna circle the block once. And if you're not ready, too bad.

Sylvi: They have to— The eagle had to get put up in New York because it didn't like what was on the TV.

Keith: I like that they don't show the eagle. I guess at the very end you can— You're—

Sylvi: They do though.

Keith: No, no, they don't. They don't. They don't show the eagle.

Janine: Not at the very end, but they show the eagle previously. [**Keith:** When?] No, they showed at the very, very end.

Keith: Wait, hold on.

Ali: The camera is in the water and you see the water flicking and the fucking like—

Keith: Well, yes, but that's wings. That's my version of them not showing.

Janine: They just show the full-ass eagle.

Keith: I don't remember that.

Sylvi: Yeah, they do, right? Yeah. Thank you, Janine.

Keith: I'm, I'm happy to agree that you're right and I was taking notes and just missed it. I thought that it was a interesting— You know, it was internally consistent that only the,

like, Guardian and the Healer and the Guild could see the eagle and no one else was allowed to see the eagle.

Janine: No, it's just a bird. They just put a bird in there.

Sylvi: It's just a big-ass bird. Yeah, I saw Lord of the Rings.

Janine: You might not have realized it was like a moment because it is just a bird that is flying over stuff.

Keith: Because at the end—

Janine: It's not like, special in any way, it's just a bird.

Keith: Well, maybe it's that they won't— They— You're not allowed to see the eagle take her. [**Sylvi:** Maybe, I don't know.] Again, you do see, but it is obfuscated by the water. It's not clear.

Art: She does say that he won't be allowed to see her go.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: Story says that at one point.

Keith: Yeah.

Janine: But that's before she knows what his thing is.

Keith: Right, but we the audience, we're not the Healer or the Guardian or whatever, so we can't see it.

Ali: Right.

Janine: But also, we the audience don't—

Art: I think we are the Guild.

Keith: You think that we're the Guild?

Janine: Hmm.

Sylvi: Whoa. Whoa.

Ali: Whoa. Well, there were only seven members of the guild.

Sylvi: Yeah, and we got more than that.

Janine: They're all sisters, and I'm an only child.

Keith: Oh, good point. I'm also not a sister.

Ali: Can we talk a little bit about the creature design in this movie? Because—

Keith: Trash.

Ali: It's—yeah. And I kinda wanna—

Janine: Art, do you have a crazy thing to tell us about the Scrunt?

Art: The Scrunt is practical.

Keith: It's not. [laughing] It's not! I'm sorry. It's not. He's lying. It's not.

Sylvi: It's probably— I think it is probably semi-practical. I imagine they had a puppet that they used, and then they did some effects on it afterwards. which I do think it looks better—

Janine: Put some mist on there.

Sylvi: Looks better than the aliens did in Signs. It was like—

Keith: I think so.

Sylvi: Same with the, um, the apes at the end. I think that is a totally fine effect for the most part. I think the design is bad. I think the design is bad, but I think that you can see them inhabit space better than you could.

Janine: I found a video.

Keith: Sure, maybe that's true.

Janine: Um, the making of the Scrunt.

Sylvi: Oh my fucking God, this is—

Janine: It's right there. It's just a Scrunt.

Keith: It's just a Scrunt.

Sylvi: That is the Scrunt. This is unavailable on Discord, apparently.

Keith: Yeah, I clicked in.

Art: Yeah, you have to go to full big mode.

Sylvi: I thought it was— I thought it was like—

Janine: Oh my god. This Scrunt face.

Keith: So, so what I learned from the credits— What I learned from the credits is that they had digital painters and effects artists and a rotoscoper who drew over all of these, I guess, extremely practical puppets and made them look— [**Janine:** This is a robot!] It's like having to do all the work to make a practical effect without any of the benefit of having it look practical. So it's sort of the worst of both worlds. I—

Janine: It's tail moves beautifully.

Sylvi: There's some of this movement here that actually is really great.

Janine: They lost a lot of this in the actual film.

Keith: They lost all of this! It's crazy. Look at him running. Oh my God.

Sylvi: That's literally what I just saw and was like, wow, okay.

Keith: Why isn't this in the movie? It looks like shit in the movie.

Art: Well, I think it might just look like shit because it's always in the dark.

Keith: It's so dark. It's really dark. Yeah.

Ali: I do need anybody who is going to watch this movie after the fact, or just like—

Keith: Small list.

Ali: Who still has it on their hard drive or whatever, to really pay attention to the scene where the Tartuic shows up. And they are just lightly like, slapping the Scrunt's back.

Sylvi: It's so funny.

Janine: Because it's a very expensive robot and they might have to do other shoots after this.

Sylvi: Do you wanna— Something I found out by watching the credits is that legendary creature actor Doug Jones is one of those apes.

Keith: Oh wow.

Sylvi: Probably very well known for his work with del Toro. He, you know, Lady and, uh, not Lady and the Water, uh, Shape of Water. He was the fish man in that.

Janine: The actual monster fucker movie.

Keith: Is that the monster fucker movie that I thought this was? Okay.

Sylvi: He's the, um, the, um, satyr in Pan's Labyrinth. Uh, the Pale Man in that as well. Just, just a shout out to my boy Doug. I'm a big fan.

Keith: I know this guy.

Art: This looks great. They should do another Scrunt movie.

Keith: They should do a Scrunt movie. Yeah.

Sylvi: Instead of Split, they should have done Scrunt.

Ali: We should be able to remake Lady in the Water.

Keith: We should?

Sylvi: I don't wanna.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: You can. I'm good.

Keith: It's really a shame that, that, that in the better lighting of a random fucking YouTube video, uh, in 480, the Scrunt looks better than in the movie, which is so dark that you can't see anything.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: I was sure that these were— That these were not this, that it was not going to be so practical.

Janine: I think part of it is that like, yeah, they use a lot of the things that if you were doing bad CG, you would use to hide your bad CG.

Keith: Right.

Janine: And I think we, to a degree like, look at that and we're like, oh, they're hiding bad CG.

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: But it's like, no, they're hiding an amazing robot nightmare.

Sylvi: It's like if— They shot it like it's the CGI shark from Jaws, except it's good. Like, like the CGI— Not CGI, sorry. Um, the practical shot.

Janine: The robot that couldn't stay underwater.

Sylvi: The one that like, didn't work. Animatronic is the word I'm looking for. Yeah, it's very funny.

Keith: I'm really impressed by this. This is, this is better than the movie. Not— I'm not sorry, I'm not saying that this—

Janine: This YouTube video? This short YouTube video of a robot?

Keith: Yes, 2-minute video of a robot. Um, in loving memory of Moto Hata and David Fidel.

Sylvi: I don't know what that means.

Art: I assume those people died.

Keith: Oh, I'm sorry. I knew that, that part of it.

Sylvi: I assume they are people who worked at the effects shop of some kind, in some capacity would be my guess there.

Janine: Yeah.

Sylvi: Scrunt.

Keith: Any more thoughts about this movie? Do we have, uh—

Sylvi: No, I think I'm just gonna be saying Scrunt from now till the day I die though.

Janine: I do have thoughts.

Keith: I'm gonna do a Friends of the Table character called Narf Scrunt.

Sylvi: Please.

Janine: Oh God.

Sylvi: What's on your mind?

Janine: Um, this is the thing that I think I, I alluded to when I got angry at something earlier, but like— This movie, um, I don't like— Keith, when you were mentioning like, oh, I thought it was cool that if you couldn't see the eagle, it was like, you— Because you weren't one of the people as the viewer, it's— So it was excluding you. This movie, and like the way it ends, to me feels very like— It feels very like M. Night shouting at me like, it's just a story. It's not— You're not— You're— It's not pers— It's not your perspective. It's just a story. It's just a story, bro. I'm just telling a fairy tale.

Sylvi: I didn't mean to flex on you, bro. I'm just a vessel, like literally.

Janine: But it feels—

Sylvi: Oh my God, he's that Blade tweet.

Janine: It feels so aggressively like, I'm just telling a story because I want to tell a story, and I'm going to tell a beautiful story, and you're gonna enjoy the story, and then it's just gonna end because that's how stories end. It doesn't— You don't need to see what happens to him after because the story's done. It felt like very aggressively, like, pushing that line in such a way that I think is part of what led me to that sort of end conclusion of like, right, I don't have to feel anything about this. It's just, it's just stuff I saw that happened.

Keith: Weirdly, Janine, this is a hallmark of his movies so far. Every single one of his movies has ended wildly abruptly. I would— I think probably none more abruptly than Sign— no, Unbreakable. Unbreakable for sure. Unbreakable ends— The ending of Unbreakable is unlike— It's on another planet from any other thing I've ever seen in a movie in terms of the rapidness of its conclusion and ending. Uh, and then, uh, Signs and The Village are the same way. They like, get through the climax and then they go like, you know, they do a quick check of who's alive and they have one emotion and then the movie ends. There's no falling action. There's no nothing. It's just curtains.

Janine: Yeah, denouement is hard.

Keith: Apparently. Apparently for one guy I know, it's hard. I have personally never seen anyone else do this as a... stylistic choice? I don't know, it's almost like a chef who burns their food and calls it a stylistic choice to me. I really reject it.

Ali: Those are strong words.

Keith: Yeah. I don't like how these movies just fucking end. It's insane to me. I'm thrilled with, like, formally experimental movies where they don't just, like, hit you with Act 1, Act 2, Act 3. But when you are doing something that isn't that, and it doesn't work, and then you keep doing it, I'm like, he thinks something about this is working. I don't know what it is that he thinks is working about just ending your movie.

Janine: I mean, the shock of it just ending, of having it end in a high moment, and then— You know, I'm imagining a situation. I'm imagining a scenario here that says, this bears no— This bears no— Reality or truth, but just the idea of, like, the movie ends, and it ends in a moment of, like, plot intensity. And then M. Night turns around and looks at you in the screening room and is like, what do you think? And you're just like, uh... 'Cause you're, like, stunned. And it's so easy for me to imagine a situation where that has been interpreted as like, awe, and not just kind of like, confusion at the intensity and then immediate drop-off. Uh, I feel like maybe it's a thing you started doing a long time ago that got a lot of like, loud feedback, mostly positive, of like, whoa, that was, that was crazy, man. And then it just sort of becomes a thing that you do because you're trying to, you're trying to evoke things in people. I don't know.

Keith: I can say that I recognize the abruptness of the ending in *The Sixth Sense*, and in *The Sixth Sense* episode said, I really don't like how this movie ends, and it ends so quickly. And at the time, I think I was the only one who said that. And then each successive movie has ended the same way, and I've just been kind of stunned by it each time.

Sylvi: I like it in *The Sixth Sense*, and I do think it could work if the movie like, calls for it and if the movie is strong enough for it. But I just don't think he has really done anything that I have considered strong enough to work in that way.

Keith: By far, *The Sixth Sense* is the least egregious of these. For sure. Yeah, definitely, definitely for sure.

Sylvi: And I think it like, fits with the, like, I don't know, like there's like thematic ways, right? Because that movie ends with the like, bright white light, doesn't it? And—

Keith: And like, actually, I was thinking you can— Sorry, go ahead.

Sylvi: I was just gonna say like you can interpret that as— What is his name? David? Bruce Willis's character, like moving on, right? No, David is— David is *Unbreakable*. I don't remember.

Art: David is *Unbreakable*.

Sylvi: I don't remember.

Art: Malcolm is *The Sixth Sense*.

Keith: Thank you.

Sylvi: Like, you can interpret that in a different way than just the movie ending, but all of these are just, “thanks for enjoying my twisted tale.”

Keith: Art, do you need a few minutes? I think that we're close to wrapping up, but if you want— If you're like, I'm gonna go, then we can take a couple minutes.

Art: Bedtime's in 5 minutes.

Keith: Does anybody feel like we can't wrap up in 5 minutes?

Sylvi: I'm out of things to say that—

Janine: Yeah, I was gonna say, I feel like Sylvi gave you a pretty tidy wrap-up thing with the twisted mind bookend.

Keith: I agree.

Sylvi: This was another story by my twisted mind.

Keith: Uh, we do have to do reviews.

Sylvi: We do. I should get that. I was unprepared.

Keith: Oh, sorry. Well, it's okay. While you get it, while you get that, I will just say that, um, editing Signs, I realized in it that we said we were heavily criticizing the flashback during the climax, and I don't remember who said it, but we, we all sort of, you know, agreed with like, don't show me the movie in the movie. We just saw this. Sixth Sense does end with a flashback also, and in The Sixth Sense it kind of works. Having him go through and realize that he's a ghost, that works in that movie. And then it just feels like he just plucks things that worked and puts them into the wrong— Like, into wrong situations like a weirdo.

Art: The Sixth Sense is a better movie than Signs.

Keith: Yeah, for sure, for sure.

Art: I don't want to get too controversial here, but I think that's a big—

Keith: I really like that. I really liked it. I was so excited for him when that— I guess I'm sort of reliving his career because a lot of people were a lot of excited for him, and then suddenly...

Ali: Keith, do you have any predictions about The Happening?

Keith: Uh, yes, I know plants. I know about the plants. I know about the Wahlberg-er of it all. [doing a Mark Wahlberg impression] Um, and, uh, oh my God, what is it? What's happening?

Sylvi: [also doing the impression] What's happening?

Keith: What's happening?

Sylvi: Oh, guys, it's just me and my wife, Zooey Deschanel. It's okay.

Keith: These plants—

Sylvi: I don't mean you any harm.

Keith: I don't know about these plants.

Sylvi: [back to normal] This is a really good impression. Just trust me.

Ali: No, 100%!

Keith: Um, uh, so I think that weirdly, and I've talked about how I've confused these movies in the past, I thought The Village was going to be a movie about people going to a village. I now think that The Happening is gonna be a movie about people going to a village. And I know that there's plants. You know, I bet that this movie is, um, a— Why am I blanking on this? In a video game when you have to babysit a character so they don't die.

Sylvi: Escort mission?

Keith: Escort mission. I think it's gonna be a whole movie that's an escort mission.

Ali: Interesting.

Sylvi: Interesting. I have a review here from— That it's just a little quick one. We got a longer one that is more relevant to M. Night Shyamalan, but because we're under the gun, I'm just gonna read this quick one from Days I May, titled Insert Clever Title Here. This review is a 5-star review for a show that deserves more than 5 stars. Insert the best review you've heard here, and it will be an approximation at best for what this podcast deserves. And if you want to write a review that is also basically just this, go for it. It doesn't have to be that snappy. It can just be this.

Keith: We're so lazy review. I mean, Sylvi might not pick the lazy review to read every time and likely won't, but, uh, but we are pro, you know, conceptually we're pro the lazy review.

Sylvi: I can read Demon World Theory M. Night Edition, but I'm worried it will, uh, give us more to talk about and it's 10:30 PM.

Keith: Yeah. Um, that's— I think that's everything. Next time we're back with The Happening. And after that, I don't even remember what—

Sylvi: After Earth.

Keith: Oh, After Earth. Yeah, that's gonna be exciting.

Sylvi: I'm pretty sure, right?

Janine: Yeah.

Art: That's what we're gonna do. There is The Last Airbender in between.

Sylvi: We're skipping Last Airbender.

Keith: But maybe check the Patreon, contentburger dot— No, friendsatthetable.cash. I've been doing both a lot.

Sylvi: We'll see. We can talk about that.

Janine: I will be on that.

Keith: Art's, Art's.

Janine: I will be on that. I'm curious.

Keith: Art wanted to do a watch-along, not a full thing, which feels like so much less work.

Janine: I was gonna— Yeah, I was gonna suggest that would actually be kind of— I was gonna suggest that exact thing of doing a watch-along where people can get the audio.

Sylvi: I'd be down.

Janine: That'd be sick.

Keith: Uh, okay, so more info on that potentially happening next time. Bye. Oh, Janine, thanks for being here on your Media Club Plus debut.

Janine: Yeah, thanks.

Keith: Okay, bye.

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