

TV Is The Fifth Character - Signs: Media Club Plus S02E03

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Opening notes

Keith: Hey everybody, just a couple quick notes up front. Uh, first, obviously this episode was a week late, uh, and usually when we're late, uh, the next episode comes out as scheduled. But this time we did a swap with Side Story, which you should check out in your podcast app or sidestory.show. Uh, and Side Story will come out next week and the Media Club Plus episode on The Village will come out the week after. So two weeks from today. And then we'll just be on that same schedule of every two weeks from that point forward. And the next note is that we're currently running a sale on our Patreon, friendsatthetable.cash, for new patrons. It's a discount on your first month. The discount will run until early morning on October 1st. You can use the code BURNTHRONES for \$2 off the \$5 tier, or BUILDTABLES for 20% off any other tier higher than that. So it doesn't work on the \$1 tier, but any other tier, BUILDTABLES for 20% off, BURNTHRONES for \$2 off. If you listen to Media Club Plus and you haven't checked out other Friends at the Table things, and you're not sure if you wanna support the show based on a sliver of the output, first of all, I think that you still should. You know, the show is worth it, I think. Uh, but I think, uh, if you've been holding off, this sale is a great opportunity to hop on board. Thank you. And, uh, oh, I also, I apologize for how bad my voice sounds in this episode. I had COVID, uh, I was recovering and in my day-to-day life I sounded fine. And then I started— I got on mic and after talking, it really

degraded very quickly. So I apologize for that. It's not so bad, but. I certainly felt bad about it while I was editing. Okay, bye.

Introduction

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

Keith: Greetings from Media Club Plus, a podcast about plunging into the media that thrills us and the stories that chill us. As always, we've been dragged to you by Friends at the Table. Before our next season, we'll be subjecting ourselves to the twisted mind of M. Night Shyamalan. This has been the cursed episode. I think, I think that the scariest thing that M. Night Shyamalan has brought to us so far is trying to record the Signs episode.

Sylvi: Okay. I thought you were about to blame him for the coronavirus.

Keith: I— Look, I'm not blaming anything except for that this episode is cursed. Because I think that we— I can't remember why we had to reschedule the first time, but then I got COVID and then we had to push it again because I wasn't good enough. I wasn't recovered enough from COVID. And then 2 days ago—

Art: Yeah, we all got on your ass. We're like, Keith, you're not good enough. Pack it up.

[**Ali** laughter]

Keith: I'm not good enough. I mean, well, not being good enough is part of it because two days ago we recorded 45 minutes of this podcast. When I realized that something had happened and I hadn't been recording the whole time. So we stopped—

Art: On that note, I have not been recording this whole time. I'm not kidding. I just hit record.

Sylvi: Wow. That's really funny.

Keith: Wow.

Sylvi: Everybody make sure they're recording.

Ali: Wow. It's so scary.

Art: But we don't do a clap. That's when I check.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: Well, we sometimes do a clap when I'm feeling it.

Ali: This is why routines are important.

Keith: I, um, I think that it's important to be ready at a moment's notice. I think that I, you know, I see the value in routine, But I also see the value in having to think on your feet, having to be quick, having to be on top of it, on your— On your best game.

Art: But we have a backup. I don't have to start over, right?

Keith: No, we have a backup. We don't have to start over. Um, and you hadn't, you hadn't said anything basically until maybe you said, yeah, you did say a couple of things. Um, uh, yeah. So it's no big deal. Anyway, I think this is just echoes of the curse.

Art: Well, I mean, this is interesting that you're saying this is the scariest thing that M. Night Shyamalan has done, because in the lost episode, and I am not making this up, Keith implies that M. Night Shyamalan is responsible for 9/11.

[**Keith** hysteria]

Sylvi: That is true. That is true. You did do that. You did sort of make the case that he was telepathically aware of 9/11 and didn't want to do anything to stop it.

Keith: Yes. Yes. And I'm glad that you brought that up. One of the tragedies of losing 40 minutes of conversation is that it's hard to find the points that you were coming to organically again in conversation, which is, I think, why, uh, I wanted to stop for two days and get back to it. 'Cause we might re— As you know, having lost a few things over the years for Run Button, it always turns out better when you cool off for a little bit

before going back into something. Um, but yes, I did, I did say that, um, this is sort of like, the original post-9/11 movie, which is interesting because it was written pre-9/11. It was written pre-9/11. It started filming like, right before 9/11, and then it came out in August of 2002. And so there's very— I don't think there's a single movie that I know of that is like, a post-9/11 movie that came out before this one.

Sylvi: You mean 9/11?

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: Oh, oh, before this one, sure.

Keith: Before this one.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: No, that would be very challenging. This came out less than a year after 9/11.

Keith: Or yeah, yeah, less than a year.

Art: Yeah, totally.

Keith: Um, but, uh, the, the, the themes of post-9/11 American film are so present in this film that it, it does feel like something was pulled out of the ether in order to make this sort of like conservative masterpiece. Masterpiece in quotes. This movie's fine.

Sylvi: It's fine.

Keith: Uh, one of the other main things that we talked about at the beginning is our general feelings about, uh, Signs. If we want to sum those up, I—

Sylvi: I think it's worth going over that again.

Keith: Yeah, I really loved the first half of this movie, maybe the first two-thirds, and, um, I think it kind of, uh, slash really falls apart in the last third. I don't I, I, I think it struggles to like, um, come up with reasons why the aliens are here. And it also does, it— It's not, it doesn't feel like fine to leave it in the background because of how bizarre

the way they behave is where it's like, they don't seem to make sense. So I want a little more of what's going on in order to make sense of it. Um, and not in a fun way. And also there's the drama, the family drama aspects of it also feel kind of rushed to me.

Sylvi: Yeah. I don't know. I—

Keith: Sylvi, we were closest on this, although I definitely liked it more than you.

Sylvi: We were very close on our feelings of the— Yeah, I think I'm the most negative on it. I don't even think— I'm not even saying it's bad. I'm just saying I don't think it really worked for me.

Keith: Yeah, um, I think I like this more than Unbreakable, except for that Unbreakable had much higher highs.

Sylvi: Yeah, if Rory Culkin pulled a gun on Mel Gibson, maybe I'd like this more than Unbreakable.

Keith: That would be really funny. Although guns are conspicuously absent from this movie.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: There's not a single gun in a frame of this movie. Not even the aliens have gun-like weapons.

Sylvi: Well, no, if they use weapons similar to ours, uh, nuclear warfare will follow and the planet will be useless to them.

Keith: Uh, Ali and Art?

Sylvi: Dr. Doom says so.

Keith: They use weapons like that.

Art: They secrete poison gas from their wrists.

Keith: They do do that. Yeah.

Sylvi: Um, yeah, I don't know. I liked when this movie was funny.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: And there were times when I liked when this movie was scary, but then when this movie was trying to be smart, I did not enjoy it.

Keith: Which were the parts where it was trying to be smart?

Sylvi: Every time it tried to talk about faith. [**Keith:** Sure. Okay.] And God, and did the God works in mysterious ways thing that I am like fully repelled by. That stuff didn't work.

Keith: Yeah, this is— I think that's a split for— That's a split for us because I'm like halfway there on that stuff. Like, I think that some of it was really good and some of it was really, um, hokey.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Ali and Art?

[both **Ali** and **Art** start and stop]

Art: Uh, Ali, go ahead.

Ali: Yeah, unfortunately, like, I find the, the, like, story and the performance of it really compelling, but I do think that, like, the worst thing about this movie is sort of the insinuation that, like, oh, your wife had to die so she had this, like, vision of what to do when aliens attack, but she wouldn't say anything about aliens. Like, right? I didn't really know that—

Keith: It's not like she saved— she doesn't save anyone else. She only saves this family.

Sylvi: And it's crazy that her last words were swing away, not pour water on aliens.

Ali: Or like, I don't know, like, I—

Keith: Well, because she also gave her, her daughter a weird obsessive compulsive desire to leave water everywhere and gave her son asthma, or God did it. Fine. God did it. **[Sylvi:** God did it.] But again, yeah, it would be easier— It would be easier to cut that stuff out and just say pour water on aliens.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: I mean, it would also be easier to just write the words aliens came and they're weak to water and not make a movie at all. The movie is about something else.

Sylvi: Yes, I know that, Art.

Art: Like, I just feel like in, in not liking this movie, the CinemaSins is really coming out of, of the haters on this podcast.

Ali: This was also the cultural reaction to this movie. The discussion around— Because I mean, I think that we've, after The Sixth Sense and Unbreakable, we've sort of gotten a sense of why people would go and buy a ticket to an M. Night movie by now. **[Sylvi:** Yeah.] Right? So I feel like a lot of that what's the twist kind of thing is like, oh, they're weak to water.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: There was this— All this like, but the Earth's atmosphere is made out of so much water. And like—

Keith: Right. Water vapor is everywhere.

Ali: Yeah, yeah.

Keith: The air— Like, the air is always like 65% humidity.

Ali: Or the, like, the, the, the pathetic, like, oh, you know, he got the poison air, but he was having an asthma attack. And like, that couldn't happen. Like, those sorts of things.

And I think that I sympathize with that reaction because of how much— I think I'm with Keith here where like, because it falls apart at the end, the conclusion to a lot of what you find compelling in the film ends up being this sort of like, milquetoast like, coincidence of it all. But also, like, really, really stretching your uh, like depth of imagination.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah.

Sylvi: There's something about the execution of it that just really leaves a lot to be desired because like, the— Seeing it— If we're going back to like looking at it on paper, the idea of like, yeah, of course he gets his faith back after his son manages to survive this harrowing thing.

Keith: Yeah. Uh, there's a great scene where he's praying with anger.

Sylvi: Wow.

Ali: Yeah.

Sylvi: Whoa.

Art: Yeah, this is—

Sylvi: Man, go to friendsatthetable.cash to not watch that.

Art: This is probably when that should release. Maybe.

Keith: Um, yeah, I'll try and—

Sylvi: Sorry, I was just— I wanted to say, um, that I think the script lets this down a lot. I think him just saying out loud that shit doesn't work as well as if he was just like, trying to get him to breathe. But like, instead him saying like, your lungs were closed for a reason and just like really beating you over the head with it.

Keith: Yeah. Kind of kills it for me.

Art: I don't want to get too construction-y about this, but his faith— The scene his faith comes back when his kid is having the asthma attack in the night, not when the kid survives the poison attack because of the asthma attack. When he starts talking about to God about how much he hates him, it, she, them, whatever pronoun we use for God.

Keith: For him, it's him. For Mel Gibson, it's him.

Art: But when he talks about how much he hates God, that's the sign that his faith has returned.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: Sure.

Art: I, I like this movie more than everyone else on this call, I think maybe put together—

Sylvi: I— If I'm coming across like I think this is a 1-star movie, I apologize. It's like a solid 2.5. It's fine.

Art: All right, then, then unless Ali and Keith are giving it less than a star each, I'm not more than everyone together.

Ali: I will state again that this movie made me cry twice upon rewatching it. And I think like, a lot of it is pretty good.

Art: I think it doesn't have a twist, if we're being like—

Sylvi: No, it doesn't, I was just joking about the ending because I thought the way it was written was silly. I don't think it constitutes a twist. I think it— Because it's—

Art: And if he had made two movies with twists in them and then his next movie has a twist in it, and then looking forward, one, two, at least two of his movies after this, after *The Village*, have twists in them. Like, if he wasn't like the twist guy, people wouldn't be like, oh yeah, the twist in *Signs* is silly.

Keith: You can tell there's no twist because halfway through the movie, M. Night Shyamalan appears on screen and says, they're weak to water.

Sylvi: Oh yeah, another scene I really don't like.

Keith: So I just want to say, I think having two days to percolate on this movie has like— It hasn't made me like the movie any less, but it has made it more easy to make fun of what I didn't like. [**Sylvi** laughter] And— [clears throat] Excuse me. And, um, another thing is like, the— I do think that CinemaSins is a— it's an interesting thing to bring up because I think that like weirdly this movie fails for me in the ways where it's trying to preempt a CinemaSins that doesn't even yet exist by over-explaining things, and then insufficiently explaining them when it would have been better to, like, have not said— like, was it Ali, was it you that said that they didn't— He didn't have to say that his lungs were, uh, closed? Like, he could have just let the kid live and have that speak on its own terms. And I think that that's true for a lot of different parts of the movie where there's like— They, they, you know, during the climax, they flash back to a scene that we had just seen like, 25 minutes earlier to explain how the— How all of the pieces are coming together. And it's like, dude, I remember. We just watched this.

Art: I can't believe you think that M. Night Shyamalan could predict 9/11 but not CinemaSins.

Keith: Well, I think if there's a proximity to 9/11 that wasn't— He wasn't close enough to CinemaSins. I definitely think it's within his power to have predicted CinemaSins had he made a movie. And he did. He did make a movie closer to CinemaSins. So we'll have to figure out when CinemaSins started, figure out what movie he made right before that, and see if there's some sort of CinemaSins connection there. I—Should I—

Sylvi: Media Club Plus CinemaSins. We're gonna watch every video.

Keith: We're gonna watch— Yeah, we're gonna do Media Club Plus CinemaSins.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Um, should I? No, no, no, no, no.

Sylvi: Should we do an intro, by the way? Or are we just gonna zombie splice that from last time?

Ali: People know who we are.

Sylvi: I know people know who we are, but we also skipped the summary.

Keith: My name is Keith J. Carberry. You can find me online @KeithJCarberry. You can find the Let's Plays that I do at youtube.com/runbutton. And I want to say this, if you haven't watched a Run Button video, or if you haven't watched one in a few years, why don't you go on to youtube.com/runbutton and watch a video? Uh, why don't you watch some, some, uh, some of our Metal Gear Solid Let's Play or our new Silent Hill 2 Remake Let's Play that also includes within it a remake, or a Let's Play of Silent Hill 2 original. Which you've already Let's Played. It's a re-Let's Play of that. Why don't you watch one of those two things and then go, oh my God, I didn't realize that Run Button's actually really good. And then leave that as a comment on the video. With me as always is Sylvi Bullet.

Sylvi: Hi, I'm Sylvia. Uh, uh, if you want to support the show, go to friendsatthetable.shop. Or not that— Well, that one too. That one's for t-shirts, but I meant to say .cash because we mentioned Praying with Anger, which we did watch for a Patreon episode. Um, and I don't know if that— When that's going up. Yeah, but there's a tease for you guys.

Keith: Yeah, we were— We watched and recorded Praying with Anger on a— We watched it on a postage stamp. Um, and, uh, I, I think that we had a lot to say about a movie that didn't— That was difficult. Art, at the very beginning of recording Praying with Anger, was like, I don't think that this was meant to be watched. And I didn't agree with him until I was editing that. I was editing it and going, yeah, maybe this wasn't to be watched.

Sylvi: Maybe that episode's not to be listened to.

Keith: Maybe. Maybe. So we'll see how it works. Maybe I can edit it into something where I'm like, I don't know, I felt too judgmental of it. But also it was really messy. It was a very messy movie. There's a lot about religion and race and personal feelings about home and when your home isn't America that I feel is really difficult to do what I want to do, which is criticize it heavily.

Art: Right. Because it's like criticizing someone's diary.

Keith: It's like criticizing someone's diary.

Art: Which you don't have to do. Everyone's diary is bad. I'm sorry.

Keith: There's famous, really good diaries out there.

Ali: Yeah.

Sylvi: What about the one of a wimpy kid?

[**Keith** and **Sylvi** laughter]

Keith: Art Martinez-Tebbel?

Art: Hi, you should go to friendsatthetable.shop and get some of our wonderful merchandise. And to just go a little off-center with plugs this week, if you live in the New York area or are going to be in the New York area in the next several months, go see the play *Kyoto* at Lincoln Center. A friend of mine is in it.

Keith: Oh, awesome.

Art: But don't see it too many times because I don't want the play to become such a hit that they don't come back to LA.

Sylvi: Wow.

Art: Sneak in to *Kyoto*.

Keith: Go twice, don't go thrice.

Art: Sure.

Keith: Uh, Alicia Acampora.

Ali: Hi. Hello. Um, I, I will be viewing Kyoto one time. Um, and, uh, Uh, hi, my name is Alicia Acampora. Um, you can find me over at Friends at the Table, which is the other thing that we do together that I care the most about.

Keith: Wow.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: Right now we're recording Perpetua. It's a very fun season with, uh, JRPG influence. I'm playing a very nice and sweet person. I'm really enjoying it. I think you should listen to it. And I also think that you should go to friendsatthetable.cash and check out Realis. You can listen to the, um, arc that is completely published so far with me, Art, and Keith.

Sylvi: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Uh, pretty—

Keith: Which I had a blast doing. It was really, really fun.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: Art plays a ghost, you know, so I really recommend it.

Keith: I play a clown, so it was a stretch.

Ali: Yeah, I know. Yeah. And I play a weird person.

Keith: Also a stretch.

Sylvi: Everyone's out of their comfort zone.

Ali: Um, and the, the the, the stuff with Sylvi is just drumming up now.

Sylvi: And, uh, and we're all normal. We're all normal and nice. And, uh, if you like, don't, don't worry about all those content warnings on it. It's like, fine. When we say cannibalism, we mean like, [sing song] cannibalism, like it's said happily.

Keith: Yeah. What's the— Do we have an approximate runtime, um, from start to cannibalism?

Ali: Um, well, so one of the characters is a cannibal.

Keith: Yeah. So, immediately. I should have read the— When, when it's brought up. Oh, first reference to cannibalism.

Ali: Maybe 30 minutes in?

Sylvi: Wow.

Ali: And it'll probably be mentioned in every single episode. So really, what's up about that?

Keith: Um, anyway, I'm really— I, I actually haven't had a chance to listen to it yet because I have been sick and then busy. Um, but I'm really excited for how different it sounds. Um, and Jack's music, of course, is fantastic for it too.

Ali: Mm-hmm. Friends await.

Keith: As always. notquitereal.bandcamp.com.

Ali: Yes.

Keith: Uh, okay, so here's the thing about this movie for— That I will read to you.

Sylvi: Thank you.

Keith: After I find my notes. Cut, cut, cut this, cut it out, cut this. Okay. Written and directed by M. Night Shyamalan, featuring the return of Tak Fujimoto as director of photography and Kathleen Kennedy as executive producer, and returning James Newton Howard to score, 2002's *Signs* follows the Hess family as they fight back

against an incipient alien invasion using only the bonds of family and God's grace. Gibson, now the second M. Night main actor we've seen to be caught in a drunken antisemitic rant, plays Graham Hess, who until very recently— That got a laugh the first time, by the way, because no one had heard it before. I just wanted for the audience, that's a laugh line.

Sylvi: I laughed!

Art: I chuckled. I think if you look at my file, there's a chuckle.

Sylvi: Warm smile on our faces.

Keith: And we also paused to say, because if you didn't know, only a few months ago, this happened to Haley Joel Osment, the sweet little kid from The Sixth Sense. who I hear on podcasts all the time because he hangs out with comedy people in LA.

Sylvi: Sora, how could you?

Keith: He lives on a small farm with his brother Merrill, played by Joaquin Phoenix.

Sylvi: Mel Gibson, not Haley Joel.

Keith: Right. Mel Gibson. Mel Gibson lives on a small farm with his brother Merrill, played by Joaquin Phoenix, who I've only seen one other movie of, The Joker. Joker. Joker. Who moved in after Graham's wife's recent death. and his two kids, Morgan and Bo, played by Rory Culkin and Abigail Breslin. Immediately upon waking, he's called out to his cornfields by screams of terror to find a crop circle. This really freaks him out, but he's pretty sure it's just the neighborhood hooligans, Lionel Pritchard and the Wolfington brothers. After a conversation with the town cop, Officer Paski, played by Cherry Jones, who's really good in this, who reveals people and animals in the area are acting strange, they head back to the house to find one of their dogs stabbed by Morgan because he was trying to attack Bo. Taking Paski's advice, they head into town to cool off and take their mind off things. But everyone in town is already obsessed with the aliens. We sort of learn about Merrill's baseball-playing past before the entire movie stops to look at M. Night Shyamalan for about 25 seconds. Because M. Night Shyamalan appears on

screen playing a character named Ray Reddy, who we'll talk about in depth later. Oh, maybe actually also later in this intro. When they get home, it's pretty clear that the alien thing is a big deal. They first hear voices on a baby monitor that Morgan has been using as a walkie-talkie. Then they hear noises coming from the cornfields, and they— Then every channel is playing the same news broadcast. UFOs, 14 of them, flying over Mexico City. Quote, everything they wrote in science books is about to change. After learning some more about the former reverend's relationship to his faith through a story about his wife's death, we enter the next day to find a world where everyone is trying to deal with a very new reality. Everyone, sort of, except Graham. Instead, Graham is trying to keep things cool, or keep himself cool, maybe trying to avoid acting or avoid feeling, until he gets a call from Ray Reddy, M. Night's character, who very clearly is the guy who killed his wife. Uh, which they then reveal pretty soon after, uh, after giving an apology and heading off to the lakes because he's inexplicably realized, and I must emphasize this, inexplicably realized, the aliens might not like water. He also admits—

Ali: The facts add up.

Keith: This is where the movie—

Ali: His facts simply added up.

Keith: He looked at the map and said—

Ali: They go to where crops are, which isn't where water is. So you think to yourself, hey—

Keith: There's so much water near crops! It's how crops survive!

Sylvi: There's no lakes though.

Keith: Um, he, uh, he off-screen, Ray Reddy, looks at the maps or something and goes, hmm, nothing near water. That must be their weakness. And then he tells this to Mel Gibson.

Sylvi: And then he knows because he wrote the script.

Keith: He knows. Well, yes, he knows because he wrote the script. Uh, uh, he drives off to the lake after apologizing for killing his wife. Sorry, I didn't mean it. Also, it felt like it was meant to be. This is like, very rarely there's a scene in a movie where the whole thing turns and I'm like, oh, I don't like this anymore. And that is this scene to me. Um, uh, oh, he also admits to having trapped an alien in his house. After finally confirming to himself that these aliens are real, extremely real actually, he heads home to prepare a sort of last meal for everyone. Um, it turns out this is explosively emotional, and after a big group hug and some cute stories where they board up the house, uh, while they board up the house, it begins. The TV broadcast is cut. We hear aliens outside scuttling around, and they're quickly forced into the basement where, after a brief attack on Morgan, who suffers then a severe asthma attack as well, they'll spend a restless night, presumably surrounded, before waking up to some surprising news about what has happened to these aliens while they slept.

Ali: Um, so I guess to start off, because I think the, the main point of my note here is about the starting scene. The thing that I was most surprised by and most appreciated in the rewatch that we did for this is the pacing of this movie. The beginning of the movie is a long credit sequence, which I think we also had that in Unbreakable, so I don't know if that's like an artist tag yet. I guess we can look out for it. But it has this really unsettling, already getting you on the edge of your seat sort of music for, like, two or three minutes. And then it literally starts with the character, like, startled awake.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Like, running into the field. I like the repetition of, like, I know that there is danger afoot because I don't hear my kids. Like, it's too quiet in this, like, desolate, like, cornfield that we're in that's, like, really divided from the city.

Keith: Totally.

Ali: And I think that, like, the way that the, the sort of horror is ramped up throughout the film of like, the invasion becoming real, the like, threat of the aliens coming closer, the ways that the cameras will sometimes do like, point of view establishing shots just to

sort of like, get the audience acclimated to an area, but also like, you know, insisting that there's this sort of threat that's, that's also approaching and this, this other viewpoint that the story is being seen at is really cool and effective to me. I thought, I thought a lot of these scenes were really scary, especially the pantry scene. Um, so, um, shoutouts to Signs in that regard. I do feel like it's funny because I feel like this is really his first horror movie in a way that like—

Keith: Yes.

Ali: Signs and Unbreakable— I mean, like, Unbreakable definitely wasn't, but Signs feels like it's get— Like, it was a ghost movie and it has these scary moments, but the horror of it are such a backdrop to what this like, family drama once again. Yeah.

Art: And you said Signs, but you mean The Sixth Sense.

Ali: I mean The Sixth Sense. But where Signs is really like, I feel like his first attempt of being like, I am going to make a movie with the sort of cadence of a thriller.

Keith: Hmm. Yeah, I— Ali, you at the beginning, you referenced, uh, the music. Obviously we talked about— We've talked about James Newton Howard already, the, uh, the longtime composer for M. Night's movies. Uh, and I felt like this one was interesting because Signs and The Sixth Sense were so similar musically.

30:00

Keith: And this score is like, so classically James Newton Howard. Like, it sounds— It has his sort of— The hallmarks of his composing are still here. But, um, it introduces one of my favorite styles of music, which is like the classical film score chase music that is like, rooted in, you know, uh, 19th and 20th century classical, like, it's like operatic, and it's very like— You know, um, uh, things like, um, uh, it's somewhere between— It's somewhere like between like Flight of the Valkyries and, uh, uh, what are the— The gladiators one, uh, Entry of the Gladiators or something.

Sylvi: Oh yeah.

Keith: The like, circus, the famous circus music. Yeah. It's like, that is in a lot of things. It's in Looney Tunes. It's in, you know, uh, uh, horror movies. It's in thrillers. It's in crime. It's everywhere in American film. But it's really interesting to hear it mixed with like the other stuff James Newton Howard has been doing, which is kind of softer and a little creepy. I really liked it. I thought that the music in this movie was really cool.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Keith: If you want to listen to a— Or maybe I'll actually add in a little bit of it because I didn't clip it for the thing, but, but, uh, the, the Hand of Fate is, uh, like the climactic piece, uh, of this movie. And yeah, I thought it was really good, and that's like a great one to listen to if you're like, what does this movie sound like? Sounds like that to me.

[“Hand of Fate” by James Newton Howard plays]

Sylvi: Hand of Fate. Wow. I wonder if it's missing a couple fingers. That's a joke. An alien gets its fingers cut off. I don't think that's literal.

Ali: That's the other thing about this movie. Did Mel Gibson, um, lead to the, like, the end of the, like, end of the world? Well, I guess the world doesn't end, but it does feel like—

Art: No, the world explicitly doesn't end.

Ali: He— And also, I'm lying because I guess Ray also has that, like, weird stab mark when you see him.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: But it does, like, he cuts the alien's fingers off. Because it sort of reaches out its hand from behind this door.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: And chop. And then there's this, like, violent reaction, and all the birds go away, but you can't hear, like, a scream. And I'm like, is that the moment the aliens decided to attack?

Sylvi: Whoa.

Art: I don't think that's supported by the text.

Keith: I, I think the— My— The way my imagination sort of assembles like, what is happening in the world outside of this farm is that there's like 1,000 other instances of the exact same thing happening all over the world, where it's like, a family is encountering an alien that is near their farm and is like, dealing with it in a scary and violent way. And I have to imagine that a good portion of those families also attacked an alien, um, and maybe also had guns.

Ali: Now that you've drawn attention to it, I do find it really interesting that there is such a lack of gun presence in this movie.

Sylvi: He's a former priest, right?

Keith: He's a former priest. It makes— yeah. But I think, you know, especially in America 2025, like, the idea of, like, a small-town farmer preacher that, like, doesn't have a rifle feels very strange. [**Sylvi:** Yes.] Like he's, he's the exact guy who would have a gun to me.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Especially—

Art: I think that's, that's how the world has changed in the last quarter century, right?

Keith: I agree. I do agree. And I think—

Art: It's like how people in movies from the '50s wear hats.

Keith: Yeah, I think that like maybe if, if I'm M. Night Shyamalan, I'm writing this movie, I think it's totally plausible that like, I would write in a reference to the fact that after I left the church, I then got a gun, and then include in the movie how the gun doesn't help me because that's not what my problem is.

Art: Oh, fascinating.

Keith: I think that would be something that might occur to someone. Because, like, Art, you talked about this movie is really about how Mel Gibson's character, Graham Hess, has really run aground emotionally after the death of his wife. He can't deal with his emotions surrounding it. He has trouble connecting with his kids, being a father to his kids. His brother has stepped in to become a sort of surrogate father to them because he has become unavailable in anything except like, a physical sense. Like he's walking around solving problems, but he's not really there for them. And this is tied directly to his ability to have faith in the same way that he had before. He— And at this— At the, you know, kind of at the same moment, presumably, he loses his faith and he also loses his connection to his kids.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: Yeah, I think it's very interesting that we've now watched four M. Night Shyamalan movies, counting the Patreon episode that may never see the light of day. And we've seen two movies about faith, three movies about grief, and three movies about parenting.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Yes.

Art: If you'd asked me, like, what are the themes of M. Night Shyamalan movies, I don't know that I would have said grief and parenting necessarily, but they're— This is a movie about grief and how it makes you a bad parent.

Keith: And can I, can I say, actually four movies about parenting? Because although M. Night's character that he played in *Praying with Anger* was not a parent, it was deeply

his friends in that movie, and he himself was the child of parents who— And that is like a deeply troubled relationship in both ways.

Sylvi: It's actually interesting you bring that up because it is— There is sort of a feeling watching this movie that Graham— it's Graham, right? Yeah.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: Oh, he is— He's more of a ghost than Bruce Willis was in Sixth Sense sometimes in this. Like, he feels like he's like, haunting their house in a lot— In a, in a way.

Keith: Yeah. The difference is like he feels aware, like he feels how Bruce Willis felt in that— In The Sixth Sense. But he isn't dead. And so like, if Bruce Willis ended up not being dead, the way he was feeling about his wife is how Mel Gibson is feeling. It's very interesting.

Ali: Yeah.

Art: Oh, that was— I meant to say that when we were talking about how this isn't really a twist because, you know, M. Night Shyamalan shows up halfway through the movie and tells you what the thing is going to be. It's like if the doctor character in The Sixth Sense had been like— Which was also M. Night Shyamalan, right? Oh no, he had a different— He was the—

Keith: He was the doctor in The Sixth Sense.

Ali: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sylvi: Oh, you're right, he was.

Keith: Yeah, he was the drug dealer in—

Sylvi: He's the drug dealer. I was mixing him up with the guy at the beginning of Unbreakable who's like, hey, why were you sitting— Where were you sitting? Because you're—

Keith: Oh, that doctor, right? Yeah, that—

Art: Yeah, there's a different Indian doctor in Unbreakable. But yes, the doctor in the middle of The Sixth Sense had been like, this is what's happening with your son, and also I think there's a ghost sitting in the waiting room.

Sylvi: Have you noticed there's a cold spot right by the door? It's weird.

Keith: My radio is picking up weird whispering of people who aren't here.

Ali: I do think on the, the, the, the topic of parenting, I think it's, it's so interesting in this movie about how that plotline doesn't— Like, it's constantly happening because the kids are in the movie, right? But it feels like the development of some of the failure that he has, you know, performed for his kids or whatever, is really not present. There's, like, ways that you can find it when you look really closely, which is like, this kid kills his dog. It's basically not mentioned again. And, like, not— There's never, like, a one-on-one or, like, a, you know, that is not an emotional pinpoint at any point. Even though it seems like kind of a big deal. But you have these, like, really intimate scenes with Graham and his brother. I think, you know, kind of one of the best kind of descriptions of faith in this movie, and that is flashbacked, is that conversation they have on the couch. You even have a scene with Graham and like, some random girl who works at a pharmacy in the town. In terms of being like, I'm really about this situation, and I need the comfort that you used to provide. But for the kids, it only sort of comes up in this way of, um, uh, Morgan, um, the son, saying to Joaquin Phoenix, I wish you were my dad instead. And Joaquin Phoenix having sort of a really strong, uh, negative reaction to that. And the just sort of like the general tension in the house.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: In, like, small ways, in the, like, clean up these water glasses, you know, go take care of your sister. The alien book isn't real. Like, the way that he's dismissive about those things.

Keith: Yeah. And dismissive about those things, and then also, like, he's so practical and physical, but so not emotional. But it's done so subtly. That when it starts to come, it starts to like, percolate up from underneath, it comes across as very sudden. But then if you think through like everything that's happened in the movie, his relationship with the kids has been so strange.

Ali: Mm-hmm. I, I thought like, a really strong example of— I don't know that it's like, like, frustrating the wants for the audience because I don't think that it's like being that intentional in leaving out these moments of family intimacy. I think that the kid part of it just sort of happens really quickly because it's less direct to have to explain. And you don't have to put as much faith in this kid actor. But one thing that I found really compelling is that in the scene where there's the idea of having this really extravagant dinner. Everyone decides exactly what they want, and that's exactly what they're going to make. And it's this moment of elation for Graham. Like, he has this huge smile, and, you know, it feels like this should be a moment of joy, but the next frame exactly is just all of the dirty plates.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: And the family sitting at the table, and none of the, like, sort of warmth and home that people and an audience would really connect with of like, cooking with my family for what I think will be the last time. And like, the fact that there is not— There, like, it goes from, like, I am joyous thinking about what this would be like, to I am now at this experience and it is the most, like, emotionally heavy, like, outburst of fight that we have in this movie.

Keith: They totally set it up like it's going to be this big release.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: Like, um, like in a positive way, but it's actually a big release in a negative way. And that—

Art: Well, it is worth noting, I think, that cooking that meal took 4 hours and was really unpleasant for everyone involved. Like, all the things that they eat— Like, we— I ended up watching this, but because we, we had all the delays, I ended up watching this movie twice. I almost watched it a third time.

Sylvi: I did.

Art: And God bless. But like, there's very few things on that like, menu that you could even like, use the same pan.

Keith: Yes, it is a disaster meal. So if I'm remembering, the meals are spaghetti, French toast and mashed potatoes— Spaghetti for Bo, French toast and mashed potatoes for Morgan, chicken teriyaki for Merrill, and a bacon cheeseburger with extra bacon for Graham.

Ali: Mm-hmm. Yep.

Keith: And they cook it all. The shot is like, the disaster of the kitchen, which again, it sort of feels like— Graham has this big smile on his face, but I actually think it's the smile of a man who's losing his mind more than the smile of a man who's like, deciding to do something fun with his family, because I think that he's like, ready— He's so ready to die, something that the movie has not quite approached telling you outright yet. And they eventually do tell you outright that he's ready to die, um, by then actually negating it by having him decide that he's not ready to die. Uh, and then you go, oh my God, this whole time he's been like, waiting to die. And so, yeah, I think that there's like, his, his like, death drive has just poisoned what could have been a fun way to spend four hours in the apocalypse.

Art: Yeah, because he's been just utterly miserable for—

Keith: Yeah, for 6 months.

Art: The entire movie. Yeah, plus the time before the movie that we didn't get to see.

Keith: I want to bring up one thing and then I think that we should go and talk about what's going on in this movie starting with Act 1. Uh, this is actually one and a half things, kind of. We planted, uh, two things to look out for in the future in M. Night Shyamalan movies based on what we had seen already. One was being weird about water. Check.

Ali: Um, oh, because it's the—

Keith: Because it's the whole thing about the aliens.

Ali: And it's the thing about Unbreakable.

Keith: And it's the thing about Unbreakable. That's where this came up, is because we were also talking about— I had brought up that The Sixth Sense and Unbreakable has very weird marital dynamics going on. And I was like, is that a thing with M. Night Shyamalan? And to the degree that everyone is familiar with M. Night Shyamalan movies, agreed. Yes, that is definitely something that we'll keep seeing. Probably knowing this movie comes up because this movie is so weird. I mentioned a couple days ago that it was not lost on me that M. Night Shyamalan made a movie where a husband was so alienated from his wife that he didn't even realize he was dead and that, that he was not even interacting with her. And then in the next movie, it was like, a guy whose marriage was actively falling apart, so much so that he was uncomfortable having a relationship with his son for how much he kind of resented his wife. And then in this third movie, M. Night Shyamalan casts himself as a character who kills a wife.

[laughter]

Ali: Every time you say, as a character who killed a wife...

Keith: He killed a wife!

Sylvi: He did kill a wife, though.

Keith: He killed a wife! He put himself as the guy who killed a wife.

Ali: You're right. You're right.

Art: Um, yeah, I, I'm sorry, I have something to say about that idea, but I can— But you're clearly winding up to something.

Keith: No, no, I, I was winding down. I mean, really, my point is, is just like, okay, we've got more checks next to these boxes of things that I wanted to keep out for, is like, there's another movie of a guy who's been destroyed by his, like, inability to process, like, wife-related feelings. And M. Night, the guy who keeps doing that, is the— Is the guy who killed the wife this time, literally.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: And he shows up like a specter on the screen when he first shows up. And we'll talk about it when they go into town. When he shows up, all of the characters in the movie look at him and go, it's him! That's him! And it is, like, sort of, like, in a meta sense, and out of the context of the movie, it is, like, such an eerie— I think it's the scariest thing that happens in the movie, the most eerie thing that happens in the movie is like all of the actors in the movie looking at the director and going, it's him. I think that that is like, terrifying.

Sylvi: It's kind of one of the things that actually works the best for me within the theme of like, struggling with your relationship with God. Having the guy who wrote and directed the story that you're living in show up and ruining your— And having him ruin your life is like, [crosstalk] a good parallel—

Keith: [crosstalk] He also ruins the movie.

Sylvi: What?

Keith: He also ruins the movie.

Sylvi: Uh, well, yeah, we can talk about that later. Yeah, um, it does feel like a very direct parallel to the stuff Graham is struggling with. And like, is it— It's a move that I

do— I, I like, I like the move in general and like, in concept, maybe not for all the way execution, but like, you know, he's trying it.

Keith: Look, I, you know, I came to— I started loving film because of Kevin Smith, and so I cannot stop myself from appreciating a director-actor, especially a writer-director-actor.

Sylvi: A dir-actor.

Keith: A dir-actor.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: And so I appreciate that when it's— When it happens, and I think that we should have more of that. And, and shout out to M. Night for keeping the dream of Kevin Smith alive, because Kevin Smith sure isn't doing that.

Art: Wow.

Keith: Well, he's not. He's not even making movies.

Art: He made a movie like, this year.

Keith: Okay, but his— He's on a worse pace critically and, you know, just pure quantity than ever.

Art: Again, I haven't seen it, but I thought his new movie looked good. Although I do think it's weird that he made like, a semi-autobiographical movie and then his daughter started dating the guy who played him.

Keith: That is odd. That is very weird.

Ali: What?

Art: Like, is there something like technically wrong with that? No, but it's weird.

Sylvi: It does make you go, huh?

Keith: It does make you go, huh? I guess his pace— He has increased his pace. I should, you know.

Sylvi: I mean, I also found out his daughter's named Harley Quinn Smith.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: Oh, you didn't know that?

Sylvi: Yeah, I didn't know that. Yep. Uh-huh. Cool.

Keith: That's a comic book guy. I just saw him. Uh, Isaac is rewatching Veronica Mars. He just showed up to hit on Veronica Mars in the ver— In season 2 of Veronica Mars.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: Just like in Degrassi when he showed up on the Degrassi to hit on the students from Degrassi.

Keith: That's crazy. Is he— Who's, who's saying we gotta get Kevin Smith in here to hit on students?

Art: Well, it's like— Degrassi, the story is that he like, wanted to direct an episode, but because of like, Canada's things about Canada, he couldn't.

Sylvi: Canada's things about Canada.

Art: The Canada, Canada laws. You know what I'm talking about?

Keith: Yeah. The ones where, where media has to be a certain amount of—

Sylvi: Oh, CanCon.

Art: Yeah, that if he directed an episode of Degrassi, it would stop being CanCon, and that was like—

Keith: Yeah, CanCon, right?

Art: Or they lied to him. They just didn't want him to do it. Maybe like, oh, Kevin, if you did it, it would be against the law.

Keith: It's illegal to have Kevin Smith direct Degrassi.

Sylvi: Kevin, that's illegal. Let's just have you flirt with some teens. Much better.

Keith: Yeah, well, he's a good actor. I feel that he's not acting in more stuff. I'm sorry, I think Kevin Smith is a good actor.

Art: And then he mentored a young Aubrey Graham.

Sylvi: Oh, no.

Ali: We will discuss this on Media Club Plus's season on Degrassi. [hysteria from **Sylvi**]
But Art, I think that you had some comments to make—

Sylvi: That scared me, don't say that

Ali: What's your take on Signs?

Art: Um, this is a— This is a point that, um, my, my wife, Jessica, came up with. It is worth noting that Jessica is a cultural studies scholar and is more qualified to be on this podcast than I am.

Keith: Than all of us.

Art: Than all of us, really. I did try to talk her into doing a movie-watching podcast during the depths of the pandemic, but it didn't come together. Anyway.

Keith: It's not too late, Jess.

Art: Interesting— It's not too late. She can't do it right now because she's watching the baby while I'm doing this.

Keith: No, I didn't mean right now.

Art: I'm going to have to do a full switch. Um, anyway, that— It's interesting to do a movie that is a home invasion movie where the matriarch is not present because protecting the matriarch is usually the focus of a movie that does this.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: And by removing that, they're, they're like, it, it calls your attention to the absence much more. And, and that, that is an interesting cinematic technique. And then I said I liked it when the aliens were reflected in the TV.

Keith: I think both are totally true. Well, I, I think that not having Colleen Hess here is one of the things that makes this such a powerful 9/11 movie because it draws attention to the property and to the physical place of the farm and protecting the place because he's protecting the kids, obviously. But it really feels like— And I haven't seen a bunch of home invasion movies. It would be hard for me to imagine that they don't often use the house against the enemies, like Home Alone? Home Alone style, use the house as the weapon.

Art: Home Alone also has an absent matriarch.

Keith: Also has an absent matriarch, yeah. Oh wow. I'm struggling to think of a home invasion movie I've seen that has a matriarch, but that's just a coincidence because I've only seen Home Alone and Signs.

Art: And Home Alone had a Culkin in it. I mean, really.

Keith: I know. Wow. He looked that— Home Alone, he said, I can do this with aliens instead of Joe Pesci, which I think, huge downgrade.

Sylvi: Huge downgrade. I'm glad though, because Joe Pesci is also weak to water and I didn't want him melting.

Ali: I do think that's interesting though, because the, you know, the suggest— The reason for protecting the house at all comes from the, the family's connection to the mother, at least for the kids.

Keith: True.

Ali: I think from Graham's perspective, he's already abandoned any part of himself that he feels like he spent— I don't want to say that he— I think that he still loves his wife or whatever. I think the point of the movie is that he very much does.

Keith: Right. But he's avoiding it.

Ali: Yeah, the separation of the self that he was versus the self that he was without her makes him willing to abandon this place because the house isn't his wife or whatever. Whereas for the kids, it's like, oh, this is where she was, so I don't want to leave.

Art: Right. Morgan explicitly says that's why he doesn't want to leave the house.

Keith: Right.

Ali: Uh-huh. And that's what convinces Bo to change her vote.

Art: Um, and it sort of convinces him to give it up, right? He could— The vote's fake. He could make them go.

Keith: He could make them go. Yes.

Ali: Yes.

Keith: Yeah. The vote was always fake. Interesting.

Sylvi: Hell yeah, man.

Keith: Um, I'm making a cool, I'm making a cool thumbs up to myself. Uh, let's talk about act 1. We talked a little bit about, um, how he wakes up suddenly, um, as sort of like the, there's two things happening. There's the absence of the noise of the house, but then also there's soon screams coming from the cornfields. But one of the first— And there's a shot that repeats twice in the movie that I really liked, which was looking first outside from inside through old glass and seeing how the glass, like, distorts the, the, the, like, the swing set where his kids might be playing but aren't, and then the

cornfields. And I thought that looked really cool, the sort of rippling effect of the, of the farm distorted by the old glass. And then much later in the movie, it does the same thing but from the outside looking in, where we see Mel Gibson looking out, his face distorted, rippling, as the camera looks in through the old glass. I thought that was great. Once again, I think this movie is directed really, really well, especially in the first half. This has repeated over and over again now. M. Night is a better director than he is a writer, for sure.

Art: Yes, I think we're really entering that era too. I mean, I've always said that I think that even like, less good M. Night Shyamalan movies are very interesting because he's very good [**Keith:** Yeah.] He's a very good director.

Keith: He's a proactive— and he's a proactive director who's like, making choices.

Art: I've looked— I'm— look, I was looking at his Wikipedia page and they have like his movies in this little box, and I'm seeing that the Rotten Tomatoes scores on his movies are about to fall off a cliff.

Keith: Yeah, people did not like *The Village*.

Art: We're gonna have to— We're hot. We're bunkering in for the winter of M. Night Shyamalan here. Although, you know, we're not here yet, but I think *The Village*—

Ali: There are highs to come.

Keith: Sure.

Art: Not according to Rotten Tomatoes, the only source of whether or not a movie is good.

Sylvi: Hey guys, it's me, Mark Wahlberg. We're going to make it through this. I promise.

Keith: Is he in *The Village* or is he in *The Happening*? He's in *The Happening*. He's in *The Happening*. Okay. So we don't, we're not getting a Wahlberg here.

Sylvi: What's this happening? What's going on?

Art: What's happening? That's him.

Sylvi: That's what he says.

Art: That's his famous line. Now, I mean, again, I don't want to burn future material here, but The Village has an exquisite cast.

Keith: I, I have not. I could name one.

Sylvi: All I know is that, I know Joaquin's in it again. Oh yeah, and Adrien Brody is the thumbnail on my Plex server, which actually I need to send to you guys because it's really funny.

Keith: That's funny.

Ali: I cannot wait to watch The Village again.

Art: Um, me neither.

Sylvi: I'm curious. I haven't seen it.

Art: I'm so excited. I liked it so much and I haven't seen it in 20 years.

Keith: People hate it.

Art: Yeah, really a lot.

Keith: I know that, that the real— The real cliff is when The Happening comes out, because I know people fucking hated The Happening.

Art: People hated Lady in the Water too.

Keith: People did hate Lady in the Water.

Art: They're idiots and assholes, but they hated Lady in the Water too.

Keith: It felt like Lady in the Water was one level of hate, but then The Happening was a whole new level of like, M. Night is a hack. He cannot be redeemed. His movies have

always been bad. It felt like the tide turned on him so hard. This might be influenced by the fact that The Happening came out when I was like 14 years old and just starting to get into movies around that time, and anything that happened earlier than that I would have been too young to have really seen. So I could be wrong, but it felt like the real turn was The Happening. Anyway.

Art: I think Ali's just a little too, too old for this to work, but I did have a moment today where I was like, was there one of these movies that came out where I was older than everyone else put together?

Ali: No, I mean, I saw all of them in theaters, so I was in theater-watching age, even though I regularly saw movies in theaters before I shouldn't have. Um, Event Horizon is the prime example of that.

Art: Oh my God.

Ali: However—

Keith: I'm still not old enough to watch Event Horizon.

Art: Yeah, I saw Event Horizon in college on a dorm TV, and it scared the shit out of me.

Keith: I was eight, uh, or I was seven when The Sixth Sense came out. I had just turned seven.

Art: Yeah, and I was 15, so there's no way it works.

Keith: Um, uh, he hears the screams, he runs down to the cornfield. Joaquin Phoenix is sleeping. He lives in like, uh, an unattached like, house or barn.

Sylvi: You thought it was the barn?

Keith: Yeah, I, I— They're on a farm, it looks like a barn. He lives in like, the loft of a barn.

Sylvi: It could be a converted barn.

Keith: I, I grew up where barns are. We had a barn on the property, and there's a— Easily there's a place where you could have put a staircase and a bed in the loft.

1:00:00

Keith: And it looked like that to me. I don't know, maybe it's just a second house. That's not crazy. But they run downstairs together. They're running through the cornfields. I love cornfields. Putting cornfields in movies, that's nice to me.

Sylvi: It's a great visual.

Keith: It's a great visual. It's terrifying. It's— There's just sort of like inherent fear of a cornfield of like, I don't know where I am. I can't see the horizon. I can't see anything around me. Like, everything is the same.

Sylvi: There's a really effective use of it later when it's like, night and Mel Gibson's alone in the cornfield. I think that's one of the more effectively shot like, horror sequences in the movie.

Keith: I agree, because we talked about a little bit like the, the, the most famous horror sequence from this movie I found to be a total buzzkill. But the nighttime cornfield scene I thought was great. But he finds the first of his kids, Bo Hess, and she says, are you in my dream too? Which is a great line. And then he finds Morgan, and Morgan points him towards the crop circle, the sign of Signs. Well, one of the two meanings of signs from Signs. Um, dogs are barking, woke us up. I think God did it. Um, another really good line. Uh, and this brings us back to another M. Night staple. I think Rory Culkin and Abigail Breslin are pretty good in this. I think that he's doing more good work with kids. Abigail Breslin's really young, but.

Sylvi: She's like a— It's hard, like, it's hard to really like, talk about a performance from someone that young because it's like, sometimes she just has trouble getting the words out, which is like, cute, but.

Keith: Yeah, it is. There's no point where it's bad. It's always somewhere between cute to fine to good.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: Um, and it's probably the best Rory Culkin performance, period.

Keith: I don't know.

Sylvi: He was pretty good in that movie about Mayhem.

Keith: I don't know that movie.

Sylvi: The black metal band. It's called like Lords of Chaos or something.

Art: Um, he's also perfectly passable in The Scream.

Sylvi: I've seen a Rory Culkin movie. That's right. That's my flex. I've seen two Rory Culkin movies.

Keith: Oh my God. Look at, look at Sylvi. We gotta start, we've gotta start, uh, using this as, as—

Sylvi: I'm sort of the Culkin correspondent.

Keith: As PR for the show. Like we have someone that's seen two Rory Culkins.

Sylvi: Two Rory Culkin movies. Someone who knows that there's more than just Signs.

Art: Hold on, hold on. I'm counting my Rory Culkin movies. 1, 2, 3. I'm at three Rory Culkin movies.

Sylvi: Oh, we're going Culkin for Culkin right now?

Keith: Welcome to our newest segment, Culk for Culk.

Art: I've seen Scream 4, I've seen Signs, and I've seen, uh, The Richie Rich where he plays the young version of his own brother.

Keith: I have also seen that, so I'm two on Culk.

Sylvi: We should move on.

Keith: There's no way that I've seen more than two, although I have seen Castle Rock. He was in four episodes of Castle Rock and I saw that.

Sylvi: Okay, that's like a movie. That's a movie.

Ali: I think one of my favorite things about the, the performances from the kids in this movie is like, especially with Bo, I think it's really easy to lean on the like, strange little girl thing.

[**Keith** gasp]

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: Third, Keith, do the third.

Keith: Sorry. I've seen Igby Goes Down.

Ali: Okay.

Sylvi: Cool.

Ali: I've not even opened the list. I just—

Sylvi: God bless.

Keith: I liked Igby Goes Down when I saw it.

Ali: I believe you.

Sylvi: We need to let Ali finish her thought.

Ali: Um, I just think that, you know, it is a stereotype that is really easy to lean on, and I think that it's also easy to fuck up. And I think it's a big performance for such a little girl. And I think that she, like, really nails— And the scriptwriting does some of this— Nails

the, like, the fine point between like, fussy, annoying kid and kid with vision. Um, I think some of the like, I saw you die in my dream stuff is on the more extreme end of that.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Um, but the like, the water quirk is kind of one of the funniest things in the movie and such a big like, part of the ending that I do think that that's like, really successful just because like, that is a really, uh, relatable thing. Hashtag relatable posting. Every time she's like, my water tastes a little bit weird, I have to go get some more.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Um, so, uh, kudos to that.

Keith: Yeah, I, I— We talked a little bit about how this is like— He has already been dipping into like the Stephen King pool of— I don't want to say clichés, but Stephen King has a well that he pulls water from, and M. Night is pulling water from that same well. And like, people are just psychic sometimes is a huge like, Stephen King flag. And I actually, you know, I think that the movie's kind of uneven in how it deals with that, but I do really like the stuff of Bo's just like kind of having this psychic tether that is like giving her prophetic dreams, this— the— her connection to the end by like, you know, God is telling her to leave water everywhere. When Stephen King—

Sylvi: She's sort of like Joan of Arc for drinks.

Keith: This— This may be the— Maybe the most— I, I read, um, listening along with, uh, Just King Things, I've been rereading some of my favorite Stephen King books and and also reading some of the big ones that I had missed. Um, a, a big one that I missed that I loved was Tommyknockers. I couldn't believe how good that was. And then I also read Desperation, which was really, um, one of the most uneven books I've ever read. It was full of some of like, the best pages of writing that Stephen King has done in a book that overall is like a D book. Uh, And this is like Stephen King's getting way too into God phase. And that is like where this stuff kind of falls apart for me, where it's like people

being inexplicit— Inexplicably psychic and drawing on, you know, the ether to know or feel things about what's happening or what's going to happen, thumbs up.

Art: Yeah.

Keith: That happening because of God, thumbs down. But I'm— I'm able to scrub that from my mind and just be happy with like, the weirdness of, I'm a girl who leaves water everywhere because it tastes wrong. And that is crucial to the ending of the movie. I loved it. I thought that was great.

Art: I think it's just so funny that we have such different— I also enjoy listening to Just King Things. Shout out to the Ranged Touch people. And it has not even made me consider picking up a Stephen King book.

Keith: Well, I was a Stephen King sicko for years and years, and I read like 30 Stephen King books between the ages of 10 and 18.

Art: Okay. I mean, I would prefer not to even consider how many Stephen King books I've probably read.

Sylvi: We already did the Culkin thing. Let's be careful here.

Art: Yeah. One, one counting per show. But, but I enjoyed his work, but it's just like, I don't— I'm just on the other side now.

Keith: That's fair. I mean, I can't recommend Tommyknockers enough. I really thought it's one of the best books I've ever read. It was really good.

Art: So long.

Keith: Uh, it was— It wasn't that long of a read. I really burned through it.

Art: All right.

Keith: Um, but, uh, I can't remember where— where, uh, are we just like—?

Sylvi: We were just talking about Abigail Breslin's performance.

Keith: We were just talking about Abigail.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Okay, sure.

Sylvi: We're still pretty early.

Keith: Rory Culkin's a little stiff.

Sylvi: It works sometimes. There's sometimes where it really works, the like kid who, the like, know-it-all kid thing that he's doing.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: Um, and sometimes I don't think it works.

Keith: I think like, I think it, I think even when he, it doesn't work, my instinct is to give it to him because it's like the story works to create a stiff kid. His mother's dead and his dad's a ghost, a living ghost. And so I think that produces a stiffness.

Sylvi: Yeah, absolutely. Like, I mean, early on in the movie, we see him basically having to be the, the caretaker to Bo. That's like one of the first things we get with them is like him—I think there's like a barbecue going or something.

Keith: He's taking care of Bo. He's cooking dinner because his dad's gonna burn it. He has to kill the dog.

Ali: He's grilling his own chicken.

Keith: I forgot about that. His own chicken.

Sylvi: Yeah, like, it is really having to play a kid that grows up too fast is a tall order, I think, in general.

Art: Yeah.

Sylvi: Um, and so I do tend to give it to him.

Art: Any actor kid is a kid who had to grow up too early.

Keith: Well, yes. Yeah.

Sylvi: But that doesn't mean they're going to do it believably.

Art: Fair enough.

Keith: Uh, I love the phrase Lionel Pritchard and the Wolfington Brothers.

Sylvi: It sounds— Go ahead.

Keith: Just Lionel Pritchard is a, um, is like, the— Is like, the local scumbag, I guess. He has tragically only one scene played by Michael Showalter for some reason. And I think Michael Showalter really sells like, being kind of a dickbag who has like, a weird grudge, uh, you know, against just this family, against everyone? I don't know. The only thing we see him doing is signing up for the military. Another, another post-9/11 thing that's going on. Um, uh, but yeah, they're like convinced that it's Lionel Pritchard and his gang, the Wolfington Brothers, that have been fucking with them.

Sylvi: I love Lionel Pritchard and the Wolfington Brothers because it sounds like something that Ringo Starr should say in his, in his like Thomas the Tank Engine narration voice. Lionel Wolfington and the— Lionel Pritchard and the Wolfington Brothers were up to no good again.

Art: Like, I'm so sad we don't get to see the Wolfington Brothers because they should, they should look like wolves, right?

Sylvi: And Lionel Pritchard should look like a lion.

Keith: He should look like a lion.

Art: Um, that might be the most, um, Stephen King. Lionel Pritchard and the Wolfington Brothers is just a very King-y—

Keith: And if it was a Stephen King book, Lionel Pritchard would be like, a human source of evil. He would be like, literally—

Sylvi: Oh yeah, he's the evil greaser.

Keith: Yeah, he would be the evil greaser who is like, a font of evil spewing negative energy out into the world. So this is—

Sylvi: He's signing up for the US military. Who's to say he's not?

Keith: So they call the cops, or the cop, the town cop shows up, Officer Paski. She's really great in the movie, I think. She shows up two hours late because an old woman made a scene at a store by spitting on all the skateboards because some kids on skateboards scared her.

Sylvi: Yeah, Tony Hawk Tua.

Ali: Whoa. [everyone laughing] Whoa!

Keith: That is the first funny Hawk Tua joke.

Sylvi: Thank you so much.

Keith: No one has ever been funny about Hawk Tua, including the original girl.

Art: Uh, what about Always Sunny?

Keith: They did an Always Sunny Hawk Tua.

Art: I, I— It's, it's not for here.

Keith: Okay.

Ali: Um, we gotta talk about this movie, man.

Sylvi: We gotta, we really do.

Keith: We were doing so good two days ago. We were really going, getting through it two days ago. Um, I think that this is fine. I think we're on a good pace. I think it just, it feels like we're not, but we're, we're, we're, we're doing it. Um, uh, they're kind of like, going through the crop circle thing being like, could someone have done this? Even though they all know about crop circles and all know that the crop circle hoax was done by people later. **[Ali:** They don't know that.] They do know that. They bring it up. They bring it up later because crop circles were like a big thing from the— What was that, late '70s?

Ali: Well, the, the cop has to like, research them.

Keith: Well, but— Sure.

Ali: But just by living in a cornfield, it seems like Graham has never heard of them because they're like marveling at how like, well the angles are and like, how a human couldn't do it.

Art: It's too perfect. Yeah.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: That's incredible. And the machine couldn't do it because the machine would break them. Yeah.

Ali: Um, yeah.

Keith: [crosstalk] Uh, this is where the dog's acting aggressive.

Art: [crosstalk] This is why it can't be the Wolfingtons, they're too stupid.

Keith: Sorry, say that again. Go ahead.

Art: That's why it can't be the Lionel and the Wolfingtons, because they're too stupid.

Keith: Yeah, they're too stupid. They're too stupid to have figured out crop circles.

Sylvi: It just clued into me that we're talking about him being an absentee father, and he's also a priest who has abandoned the title of father.

Keith: Wow.

Sylvi: It just clicked for me.

Keith: Yeah. Yeah.

Sylvi: I was already like, the I can't hear my children line is very on the nose for a former priest to say, but like in a good way. I liked that line, to be clear. I'm not doing CinemaSins, I promise.

Art: I didn't mean to affect you so much.

Sylvi: No, it's okay.

Art: I was just teasing.

Sylvi: No, I know, I'm goofing too.

Art: All right.

Keith: The, uh, I really, I really like I don't know if I like it for the movie, but I like it for the world that, um— M. Night keeps including scenes in the movie that makes me think that he's setting up a character as being like, sinister and then it just never comes up. It's just a weird thing that happens. This happened with, um, Haley Joel Osment, and it has now happened with, uh, Morgan. It is never a problem, and they barely even think about it, that Morgan off-screen killed a dog and, and blamed the dog.

Sylvi: He was protecting his sister. Um, uh, yeah, that'd be a hell— There's, there's the twist. He's, he killed, uh, he's the aliens.

Keith: Yeah, he's the aliens. He killed the— And there is a, there is a scene later where it seems like he might have been replaced by an alien. There's a shot.

Ali: Replaced by an alien? What?

Keith: Morgan— So if you've— If you're me and you have in your head, is there maybe something weird going on with Morgan? Right before he gets attacked in the basement, they're like, trying to find the coal chute, and at the same time their flashlights meet in the middle to find Morgan just standing there. And until we see that there's actually a camouflaged hand that's about to grab Morgan, my mind goes, why is Morgan standing there? Is Morgan an alien? Slash, are there two Morgans and one of them is fake? That's what, but that's not what's going on at all. It's just a weird, for some reason Morgan was just standing where they were looking. I don't know. So that he could be attacked. He was standing there so that he could be attacked.

Sylvi: He was standing there for a good scare.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Well, God made it happen.

Keith: God what?

Ali: God made it happen.

Keith: God made it happen. All the stuff that happens with this movie is because of God. Um, glory to him.

Sylvi: Hosanna in the highest.

Keith: Hosanna in the highest. Uh, lift up your hearts, lift them up to the Lord. [**Keith** and **Sylvi** laughter] Um, uh, uh, the reason I thought this was strange is because Paski had just set up that the dogs weren't being aggressive. They were acting like there was a predator around.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: So I thought it was weird that the dog would then do the opposite of that and be aggressive. She was like, they weren't violent. They're more edgy, like on alert, almost like they act when they smell a predator around.

Sylvi: Oh, okay.

Ali: The film kind of explains this away by saying that, like, the dog lunged and fell on Morgan.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: But it just seems— It, like, seems so— It's such a big action.

Sylvi: It's very conspicuous.

Ali: Well, yeah, I mean, like, it, it's such, like, a family-breaking thing to have happen. Like, there's really— Like, for as much as this movie is about grief and, and things like that, like, it's like, oh, we killed our dog. Okay. Our other dog, we're just gonna tie up and we're not even gonna remember that it's out there. Like, the weird animal care of this, despite them being like the nice old country family on the cornfield, is like— I don't know that something is being said there, but it feels like it just like comes up so often that—

Keith: Yeah, because in the end, there's nothing wrong with the animal. The aliens aren't doing anything to the animals. They're just scared because they can see and smell [Ali: Right.] That they're surrounded by predators.

Ali: Yeah.

Art: Well, they do kill the dog at the end.

Sylvi: They kill one of them, yeah.

Keith: Right, yeah. But I just mean there's— When I— I mean that the, uh, the dogs aren't like being affected mentally by like something that the aliens are doing, or there's no like psychic control of the dogs, or there's no like, like, uh, or they're not getting rabies from the aliens.

Sylvi: Sure.

Keith: They're just scared and acting out. So they could have brought the dog inside and protected the dog dog and kept it away from the aliens. Uh, but instead they tie it up outside because they're not— They're— Well, they're not sure what's going on.

Art: I think we're trying to like, say something about like, farms and like, farm people here, but I don't know what it is. It might just be M. Night Shyamalan doesn't know anything about farms.

Keith: Right. Or he doesn't feel the same things about dogs that I do, which is that you shouldn't use them as, as like, uh, you know, tertiary-level alien alarm bait, canary in the coal mine style.

Ali: Uh-huh. It is a really strange plotline that feels like it's just there and doesn't—

Keith: Yeah, it contributes to the eeriness and the tension in the movie, but it, it strikes me as very odd that not much is made of the dogs. Um, he wakes up in the middle of the night with Bo staring in his face. This is a great shot. I think she says, there's a monster outside my room. Can I have a glass of water? Very cute. Also, it's weird and creepy. Um, what's wrong with the water next to your bed? It tastes old. This is the second reference to—

Sylvi: It's real.

Keith: Something wrong, being wrong with the water from Bo. Um, as soon as she started talking about water, I was like, I fucking knew there was something about water with this movie. A reminder for people who, uh, listened to Unbreakable, I have seen like 15, 20 minutes of this movie. when I was a kid, and I— The only thing I remembered was that there was something about the water and that I was pretty sure that the plot was basically War of the Worlds, which is— It's so War of the Worlds that they have to lampshade it. And Joaquin Phoenix says, oh my god, it's like War of the Worlds, which I don't think is a great way to write a movie, but that's just me.

Sylvi: No, they're generally speaking— Don't, don't remind me of a different thing that I might like more.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: I mean, I haven't seen it, but like, that is the vibe I'm getting from you, Keith. Or is it like, it got you thinking about something you liked more?

Keith: I do like War of the Worlds more. Um, and, uh, when he's getting Bo the glass of water, this is our first shot of the alien. I think that this is well done. You just see kind of for a split second, a creature on the roof outside in the dark.

Ali: Yeah.

Sylvi: And there is some really smart not showing the alien and then some really stupid showing the alien way too early.

Keith: Oh my God. It was like when I, when I looked at the runtime and I saw how much of the movie was left when they full-on show you freeze frame of the alien, I was like, oh my God, I can't believe this. I know he's been, he's been in screenwriting classes. He should have known. He's, he, he loves Steven Spielberg. It's obvious from the way he directs. And then also he's said as much. He should know about Jaws. Anyway.

Art: I mean, I do think it's impossible to be a filmmaker of M. Night Shyamalan's generation and not have seen Jaws. I think that's—

Keith: Yes, I agree. I think it's— Literally, it's impossible. And uh—

Art: If you're listening to this, you haven't seen Jaws, Jaws is worth it.

Keith: Jaws is really worth it. Yeah, not only— You, you, you can't not be, um, uh, uh, influenced by Steven Spielberg if you're making movies in the '90s, because his DNA is like, everywhere in popular film. But M. Night is specifically on the record saying he was inspired by Steven Spielberg, which again, I think you can see in the way he moves his camera. Um, he runs to Merrill, he says, oh my fucking God. He doesn't say, oh my fucking God. He says, oh my gosh. Oh my gosh. The gosh darn Wolfington brothers are here. And this is, I think, one of my favorite scenes in the movie. It is Merrill saying,

we've got to scare them by going outside and acting crazy. And I've got a clip of that to play.

[audio from Signs starts playing]

Merrill: It's time for an ass whooping.

Graham: This is not an intelligent way to approach this. Lee is a friend of mine, this is his son.

Merrill: Yeah, well, we're doing Lee a favor. All right, listen. We both go outside, move around the house in opposite directions. We act crazy, insane with anger, make them crap in their pants, force them around till we meet up on the other side.

Graham: Explain act crazy.

Merrill: You know, curse and stuff.

Graham: You want me to curse?

Merrill: You don't mean it. It's just for show.

Graham: What? Well, it won't be convincing. It doesn't sound natural. I don't know when I curse.

Merrill: Just make noises then.

Graham: Explain noises.

Merrill: Are you gonna do this or what?

Graham: No, I'm not.

Merrill: All right, you wouldn't— I'm stealing something in the house next time. On the count of 3. 1, 2, 3.

Graham: Ah! I'm insane with anger!

Merrill: We're gonna beat your ass, bitch!

Graham: We're gonna tear your head off! I'm losing my mind! It's time for an ass whooping! I cursed.

Merrill: I heard.

[audio ends]

Keith: If this movie was made in 2025, or if these people were real and they were in 2025, Graham Hess would be on TikTok and would be self-diagnosing himself with autism. I think this is a crucial part of this movie that is, um, subtextual. **[Sylvi: Wow.]** No? Did someone say no?

Sylvi: I said wow.

Keith: Oh, okay.

Sylvi: That's all.

Art: I'm willing to say no.

Keith: Explain noises? It doesn't sound natural when I curse. I'm, I'm insane with anger. I think that— **[Sylvi hysteria]** I think that one of the hallmarks of this movie is that Graham Hess has a neurodivergent relationship with externalizing emotion and processing grief.

Art: I think you're just describing an older white person who was very involved in religion and then left it. I think this is just like, what has been this person's answer to everything? And it's been their faith. And now they don't have that answer. And so they just— They're just adrift.

Keith: I think this is in conversation with the underdiagnosing of autism in, in like, Gen X and older generations. It's fine if no one else has any thoughts of this, but this is— I, this was present in my watching of this movie throughout the whole thing.

Ali: Yeah, I mean, I think it's a very fair reading on the character. I think it's tough to say that that's something intentional from M. Night? I mean not that that matters, but—

Keith: No, I would never say that. I would never say that.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: Um, but I do think that it's possible to write a guy that you think is, like, not quite approaching his emotional reactions normally, and the way it comes out is like a fully formed autistic character.

Ali: Sure. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I— Sure. I think that we— And I, I, ooh, maybe I shouldn't say this out loud. [group laughter] I just feel like, never mind. I'm going to say it for you guys and then Keith, you can decide to cut it, you probably should.

Keith: Okay. I can cut that. Hey, I can cut this whole thing. We don't have to talk about this.

Ali: I just feel like we are in a media landscape now and like, a cultural landscape now where like, there is that recognition of those traits and some of the stereotyping of those traits, which can be sort of dangerous. But I think that like, I don't want to say fear, but I think the difficulty of seeing this reading for me with Graham is that, you know, I don't know that like, I don't know if he's someone that can also be turned into sort of like, a comfort character in that way. And this sort of like, I'm learning about myself and my own processes through viewing the way that this person interacts.

Keith: Sure. I—

Ali: But maybe that's a reach.

Keith: I don't think that being able to identify positively with something is, like, a necessary piece of—

Ali: Yeah, sure, sure.

Keith: And maybe I think the amount that people rely on that is a bit high. I think that people rely a lot on being able to positively identify with a character and take something from it like, oh, this is me. I think there's too much this is me in media in general.

Ali: Yeah, yeah. I don't know. I think my— There's an ice cream truck outside, so I'm just gonna wait until—

Keith: I've heard this ice cream truck a few times.

Art: I'm hearing something else. I'm hearing like, soft voices.

Ali: Oh.

Keith: Speak on that.

Art: Maybe it's because of the baby monitor in here. Maybe this is on my end.

Keith: Uh, maybe. I'm not hearing anything.

Art: All right, I'm assuming this is a baby monitor-related psychosis, and I will just—

Keith: There's some of that in this movie, baby monitor-related psychosis.

Art: It's, it's really— This is not something that anyone else would have gotten from this movie, but baby monitor technology has come such a long way. My baby monitor does not resemble this baby monitor in any way.

Keith: What does yours look like?

Art: I have a tiny little video screen.

Keith: Okay.

Art: Um, that's very sharp.

Keith: So you have like, a CCTV?

Art: Yeah.

Ali: Uh-huh.

Keith: Security footage.

Sylvi: Wow.

Art: It doesn't record.

Sylvi: The surveillance state really has gotten worse since 9/11.

Art: Again, it doesn't record.

Keith: Do you feel, Art, do you feel like your baby monitor is a reflection of the very same political tendencies that this movie is, uh, is processing as part of a post-9/11 world.

Art: No.

Keith: Okay.

Art: I think a lot of that stuff is later in the real world and therefore like, not as present in this movie as you would expect.

Ali: The, the thing that stood out to me in the scene, especially, um, with some of the points that I was making about pacing before, is that the character development is so quick that it feels like efficient in the way that they— Because we don't get any, like, establishing information about the family before the crisis befalls them. Um, we're immediately, you know, sort of, uh, introduced to what the horror is at the very start of the movie.

Keith: Yeah, I'm glad that you said efficient because that's— And I sort of walked this back a little bit later in my notes, but I, I noticed right away how quickly they get to aliens. Like, they see alien very quickly and they say alien very quickly. And even though it ends up taking like, a really long time, and just like *Sixth Sense* and just like *Signs*— Or *Unbreakable*, I mean— It ends up becoming a movie about convincing the main characters of what the audience has known since the beginning. They do get to the point much quicker in *Signs*.

Ali: Of, like, the first time you see that crop circle and— And you can hear that now, can't you? That first scene when they're coming to the crop circle, and then the camera switches from like, what Mel Gibson is seeing to like, the— His face like, framed by all the corn, and then it sort of zooms out and you're seeing the spot that's like, flat is like, really effective—

1:30:10

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Camera work, I believe.

Keith: I love the shots of them in the big, empty crop circle. It's really good.

Ali: Yeah. Uh-huh. And then to have like, the way that the characters have to play off of each other immediately. Like, you get these small interactions between the kids, which sets them apart really effectively. And then this, which like, such strong character differences between the brothers in like, basically the first scene that you sort of see them really interact with each other, just feels, like, really quick and just like, you know, let's establish all of this as soon as possible because we're already sort of in the muck of what we want this movie to sort of be about and focused on.

Art: I had a very funny moment right now where I was like, well, this movie must have been shorter than the last two.

Keith: Same exact length.

Art: I looked it up, and Signs is exactly the same length as Unbreakable. It is 1 minute shorter than The Sixth Sense, and The Village is going to be two minutes longer.

Keith: Yeah, I've already noticed these movies are the same length.

Art: He's incredibly tight on his runtimes.

Keith: Yes, this is something I noticed when I was— I believe I was hoping that Unbreakable was going to be shorter than Sixth Sense, not because I felt like Sixth Sense was long, but because I was busy the day that I watched Unbreakable and I was hoping for a shorter movie because I write notes really slow and I'm taking the screenshots, and it— Basically watching one of these movies with notes, it takes me like, almost 5 hours. Um, and so I was just hoping to not have to spend that much time doing it. And, uh, I was like, oh, it's basically the exact same length. And then because I already had that number in my head, when I, uh, watched Signs online legally, I saw the runtime again. It was like, wow, same exact time. It was uncanny.

Ali: I'd love to know what that's like, to be able to do that.

Keith: To be able to do what?

Ali: To just like, be able to have that consistency. I'm sure that it's like—

Keith: Him. Yes. Yeah.

Ali: Market and, you know, movie production creates those timelines and not— It's not him being like, this is the perfect length for a story. But in terms of like making Friends at the Table, I would love to know what that's like.

Keith: Yeah. I mean, everyone on Friends at the Table has their own idea about how acceptable it is to just talk and talk and talk and talk on mic all day.

Art: What?

Sylvi: What are you talking about?

Keith: And I am, I am on one end of that spectrum. I'll say that.

Art: It's interesting that it's the two editors. I think that's very—

Keith: Yeah. Well, when I'm editing it, I resent the on-mic version of me. Why couldn't I have moved this on a little sooner? Like, I think it all— I think it's all good, but I would like to edit for less time.

Art: Um, I'm trying desperately to find the line from the beginning of Adaptation where they talk about like, how a screenplay should be about 110 pages.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: Um, because it does seem like M. Night is coming in really consistently at 110 pages.

Keith: Oh, I think he's coming in at like 130 pages, but that's, you know, not crazy.

Art: Well, a page a minute is the standard.

Sylvi: Yeah, that's what I was taught.

Keith: But aren't— Oh, you know what I'm doing? I'm doing hour— I'm forgetting that an hour is 60 minutes, and I was doing the math based off of 100 instead of 60.

Sylvi: Yeah, that happens to the best of us, man.

Keith: Yeah, but you're right, you're right. Yeah, it would be— that is how— because their movies are an hour and like 45 minutes long each.

Art: Yeah, Jess has been doing this. There's a lot of classes we're trying to get, uh, get the baby into, and a lot of them needed to be a year and a half. And, uh, and she's 14 months, and Jess keeps going, well, she's a year and a half and a month. And it's like, um, a year is actually 12 months [**Keith:** Right, not 10.] And so 1 and a half is 18 and not 15. It's not 10 months in a year.

Keith: I've been there.

Art: This has come up literally 3 times.

Keith: That is a lot in how many months are in— Look, her, her degree isn't in knowing how many months are in a year. That's true.

Art: Neither is mine though. I mean—

Keith: Oh, I thought that— oh, okay.

Sylvi: Oh.

Keith: Paski's back about the incident from last night. She foreshadows the, um, baby monitor as a one-way walkie-talkie because, um, Morgan is obsessed with the walkie-talkie. And, um, this is where they have another one of the funniest scenes, uh, in the movie, which is, uh, where Merrill and Graham assume that this is a man who's been fucking with them, and Paski insists that you have to include every possibility and insinuates that it could possibly be a Scandinavian female gold medalist.

Sylvi: Yeah, that bit's pretty funny, honestly.

Keith: It is really funny. It is really funny.

Art: And honestly, I'm saying even with the possibility of Scandinavian Olympians, free jumping from that ground to that roof, I think might be too hard.

Keith: Yeah. Merrill goes like, I'm pretty fast and I'm pretty strong, and they were just toying with us. And honestly, while in the real world it might be technically more likely that it's a Scandinavian gold medalist that's been running around their property, it does feel less likely than aliens. Even in the real world. Why would they be here? What are they doing here? I'm on a farm.

Art: Well, she, like, insinuates that there is a weird Scandinavian gold medalist attacking people. Yeah, she's mad about the cigarettes. She tells this story about, like, someone in town. Yeah, with the cigarettes. You know who smokes? Europeans.

Sylvi: That was my like, oh, this is going to come back and be something. She's gonna be like, she's, she's been tracking the UFO movements and that's why she's here. No, no, literally not a character. Literally just an anecdote.

Keith: She's just taking some minor umbrage with the idea that a woman couldn't be fucking with them and that it has to be a man.

Sylvi: Um, uh, she's maybe my favorite performance [**Keith:** She's really good.] In the movie. She's great.

Keith: Cherry, uh, I said her name earlier. Uh, Cherry Jones.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Um, she's really good. Uh, we've— We learned last time we recorded that she was in Severance.

Sylvi: Yep. Nope. Succession.

Keith: Succession. Sorry. I get those confused even though I've seen one of them.

Art: Which one have you seen?

Keith: Severance.

Sylvi: Yeah, me too.

Keith: I call them both Severance. I don't know why.

Sylvi: Makes sense.

Keith: Yeah. Uh, this is also where we learned that, um, that Merrill basically moved in to help Graham out when his wife died. And this is another one of those scenes that it makes a lot more sense once the emotion ratchets up, where Merrill's like, I don't think I've been really helping out. And Paski's like, oh, you've been helping out. That starts to really click when we hear Morgan say, like, I wish you were my dad instead, because Merrill really has stepped in to you know, raise these kids while— [**Sylvi:** Yeah.] While

Graham has been absent emotionally. Um, and, uh, she introduces, uh, the idea that maybe they should chill out and go to town, get their mind off the aliens. Surely the whole town isn't talking about aliens.

Sylvi: It's not like there's some sort of like, international event happening right now across the globe that everyone's sort of thinking about. It's not like the science books are changing.

Keith: It's not like the science books are changing. Is this also where we do get the news report that—

Art: Yes, at the end of the Scandinavian Olympic conversation, that's when she comes in and says, I need the remote.

Keith: Yeah, because there's the same show on every channel. Yeah. And they're like, there's fucking crop circles in hundreds of cities around the world. Probably nothing. It's probably nothing.

Ali: Um, yeah, it's just some hooligans.

Art: But like, wouldn't it take you a long time to get there?

Keith: Wait, to aliens?

Art: If this happened in the real world tomorrow, do you really think that you would be like, let's— Like, just immediately you'd be like, well, it's aliens?

Keith: I would be on aliens minute one, I think.

Ali: Yeah.

Art: Minute one.

Keith: Minute one. Yeah, as soon as I see the news report that it's in hundreds of cities, I'm on aliens right away.

Sylvi: I think, I think I'm claiming the CIA is doing it, just knowing me.

Keith: But even in other countries?

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: There's CIA agents doing all sorts of shit in other countries.

Keith: I know that's true, but it's just like the, the sheer extent of it, it seems like beyond the CIA.

Sylvi: I'll come around to aliens. I'm just saying I don't think I'm gonna jump there immediately. I think I'm gonna look at the true villain, America.

Keith: I'm gonna take the—

Art: That's correct.

Keith: I'm gonna take the Fox Mulder route, and I'm going to start on aliens and work backwards to CIA from there.

Sylvi: Fair enough. That is, you know

Keith: And, and, and it's not going to, um, escape me that it's possible that the CIA are working with the aliens.

Sylvi: Whoa.

Keith: Check back in for—

Art: I think that is how that the X-Files ends.

Keith: It is. Yeah, it is.

Keith: Uh, check back in for Media Club Plus X-Files.

Sylvi: That is—

Art: People think that's it. You can't, you can't make that joke.

Keith: I want to do it so bad.

Sylvi: He wants to do it. It's not, it's not a joke.

Keith: It's not a joke.

Sylvi: He's astroturfing.

Keith: There's 2 things that I want to do and it's X-Files and it's Kevin Smith movies.

Ali: Jeez.

Sylvi: I do. I would do Kevin Smith movies.

Art: I'm here for Kevin Smith movies.

Sylvi: Honestly, I would do both.

Keith: Yeah. Um, it's getting a 3rd for X-Files. That'll be the big problem.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: Well, I'll have to—

Art: It's going to take you 5 years. I mean, I'm, I'm thrilled for you to do it because I won't do it and then I won't to do this show for 5 years, but—

Sylvi: Damn, okay. It's only been 3 episodes and you're already like, I'm out.

Art: And I'm in for the next season.

Sylvi: It is true.

Keith: I'm in for the next season. Yeah. That's going to be long. Um, uh, I, the, the, we can, uh, we'll be quick for the in-town scene. There is basically a little smorgasbord of fun little scenes. There's the, um, conspiracy theorist bookstore guy who thinks that the crop circles are a hoax to sell soda because he's seen 12 soda commercials while watching the news. [**Sylvi:** Yeah, I think I would be that guy.] I struggled to see the

connection between the crop circles and the soda. I think that the commercials are to sell the soda, not the crop circles.

Ali: Well, no, because you have everybody watch the news, and then the soda companies made the news happen.

Keith: But people were already watching the news and soda commercials.

Ali: No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

Keith: No? Okay.

Ali: No. Because first of all, you're canceling your regularly scheduled programming of, I don't know, Dr. Phil, Judge Judy from like 2 to 4 or 5 or whatever to have all-day breaking news.

Keith: Was Dr. Phil on in 2002?

Art: Almost definitely not.

Ali: I don't know.

Art: Judge Judy's been on since the dawn of time though, as we've established in deep Friends the Table lore. Before there was TV, they were broadcasting Judge Judy waiting for the TVs to exist to pick up the signal.

Ali: When it's become national news, and you know everybody's watching TV, that's how you make people watch TV, by having an event.

Keith: He launched his own advice show, Dr. Phil, in September 2002, so right after this.

Art: Right after this.

Keith: But of course he had been already appearing on the Oprah Winfrey Show.

Sylvi: Whoa.

Art: That's the 9/11 thing that this gets wrong, right, is that the 9/11 news coverage didn't have that.

Keith: I didn't know that.

Art: The first day of 9/11, they just ran no advertisements all day.

Ali: Wow.

Keith: I wouldn't have ever known that. Thank you for telling me that.

Sylvi: Yeah, I also wouldn't.

Keith: I don't think they would do that today.

Art: 'Cause you don't want your product to be on the 9/11 news.

Sylvi: Yeah, it's like in *Mad Men*. They gotta take the plane ads down when there's a plane crash.

Keith: In 2001, I think that that's true. I don't think that's true anymore. I think that we see 9/11 ads on news all the time.

Sylvi: Oh, now I don't think it's true anymore, no.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: I don't— I live in California where like, there's a car chase, the news will go without ads for like two hours while they just show you helicopter footage of a car chase.

Keith: So, okay, that's, that's fair. We don't have the car chases that way here.

Art: Yeah, we got lots of roads and too many helicopters. That's what we have.

Keith: Yeah, you guys have a lot of helicopters, huh?

Art: Yeah, we have a lot of police helicopters. The police are very anxious to do these car chases.

Keith: This is fun. It's sort of like a cooperation between weirdos and cops. They both want— They're cooperating to get what they want. The police really want to do car chases, and the car chase guys also really want to do car chases. And so they have a sort of mutually beneficial pact to do car chases with helicopters. Is this accurate? Do you think this is true? This is a theory?

Art: Yeah, I don't think you're completely off base here. I think it's—

Keith: The pharmacist keeps trying to confess her sins to him. This is also really funny. She's swearing too many times. Tracy Abernathy, the pharmacist, she said douchebag 34 times.

Art: 34 times said douchebag in the previous week!

Keith: And 37 other swears in one week.

Art: In one week!

Sylvi: No, go ahead.

Keith: She says, uh, is douchebag a swear? And he says, it depends how you use it. And she says, she says, John, you're a douchebag for kissing Barbara. And he goes, that's a swear.

[**Keith** laughter]

Art: That bit's so funny.

Keith: It's so funny.

Sylvi: The first line of when he comes back to Merrill and the kids being like, you can't hang out with— What was it?

Keith: I don't want any of you hanging around Tracy Abernathy.

Sylvi: Really good. Really funny.

Art: And that's why you need Mel Gibson. That's where you get your money's worth on hiring Mel Gibson in this movie, is those are all— Both of those sequences are very Mel Gibson.

Keith: Yeah, we had a conversation.

Art: That's Mel Gibson's talent.

Keith: We had a conversation when we were recording a couple days ago where Art, you— or Ali, I think you were like, I wish this was someone else besides Mel Gibson. And Art, you said like, in 2001 or 2002, it makes perfect sense to have Mel Gibson as this guy because he's one of the main guys who can give you all of the different parts. The disgruntled former priest, the protective father, the angry guy who's mad at God, and the fucking—

Sylvi: The guy who's insane with anger.

Keith: Yeah, the guy who's insane with anger. And then also the guy who's saying he's insane with anger when he's not. And is that sort of what you're saying here too with the Abernathy line?

Art: Yeah, for sure. This is part of getting your Mel Gibson's worth.

Keith: Yeah. My only counterargument was Kevin Costner. I think Kevin Costner could do it.

Art: I would have to check the Kevin Costner filmography. I'm not sure Kevin Costner is opening a picture at this time.

Sylvi: Yeah, um, I was, um, I was trying to talk about— I was trying to figure out someone else from the time period that could work, um, for this role because, you know, I don't really want it to be Mel Gibson. Um, and the— Oh, the name I kept coming back to, which does change the movie a lot, um, it would, would be Sam Jackson. I think he could work with it, but you'd have to recast everybody.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: Um, in the family, obviously, but like— Yeah, I think he could pull off all of the, the moves that, that Gibson has to pull off here. Um, and also he, he just worked with Shyamalan, but if I'm remembering right, Unbreakable was kind of a flop financially. Um, right, or am I wrong about that?

Art: Um, Unbreakable cost \$75 million and made \$248 million. That's not a flop.

Sylvi: Never mind. I, for some reason, I thought Unbreakable was not very— Wasn't like not as successful as as expected, but maybe—

Art: It is not as successful as Sixth Sense or The Signs— Or Signs.

Keith: Yeah, for reference, Signs cost \$20 million less and made like \$40 million more.

Sylvi: Okay.

Art: Those are not— neither of those are the numbers I have. Mine says it was \$160 million more.

Sylvi: I'm completely wrong either way. Um, but yeah, I'm like, I was really struggling to think of people who were the appropriate age in 2002, 'cause we talked also about how the age gap between the brothers makes the sort of like, hero worship relationship that Merrill has towards Graham work really well.

Art: Um, and so when we discussed the people that they had in mind were like weirdly worse. Yeah, Mark Ruffalo was supposed to be the Joaquin Phoenix role and they wanted Clint Eastwood for the Mel Gibson role.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Um, but it's stretching reality to its absolute limits if these are brothers.

Art: Yeah.

Keith: Um, because even though Clint Eastwood is not— He is— He's not like way, way older than Mel Gibson, but he also looks way, way older than Mel Gibson.

Sylvi: Yes, he is visually way, way older.

Art: And he— But he doesn't have— I don't think he has the humor for the part.

Keith: No, no, he does not. Although, um, Gran Torino is not without humor.

[long pause]

Sylvi: I haven't seen it.

Keith: Just a 2008 movie, you know, it's only 6 years after this. God, he's so fucking old in Gran Torino though.

Sylvi: 6 years after this, he's playing like someone who's unbelievably old.

Keith: In Gran Torino, he's playing someone unbelievably old.

Sylvi: Yeah, he does. I do remember seeing trailers for that and thinking, oh, Clint Eastwood looks like the Cryptkeeper.

Keith: Yeah. But like around the time of Signs, he was in— He was doing Million Dollar Baby, and he's totally humorless in Million Dollar Baby, if memory serves. It's been a very long time.

Sylvi: But yeah, the movie is not really a laugh-a-minute.

Keith: That is not a laugh-a-minute movie.

Art: Sylvi, didn't you say Tom Hanks?

Sylvi: I said Tom Hanks. I think Tom Hanks could have worked, which is crazy for me to say.

Art: I think Tom Hanks, like, doesn't— Like, I think that's a good pull, and I think it's just like not quite the gravity yet. Like, pre, uh, the movie, um, Castaway.

Sylvi: Yeah, this is the thing. Castaway is 2002, right?

Art: Castaway, I don't think— He has— well, one, he's clearly making Castaway while they're making— [**Keith:** No, Castaway is 2000.] Oh, all right.

Sylvi: No, he's making Catch Me If You Can. And I'm gonna be real, I do think that he would pick working with Spielberg over Shyamalan.

Keith: Yeah, fair.

Art: Yeah.

Keith: Um, God, Tom Hanks, that's a guy that really coasts off of 10 years of movies.

Sylvi: Yeah. And now he just does voices.

Keith: God, whoever told him that he was the guy to do voices needs to be killed and thrown in a lake. That guy was so— No one has ever been more wrong than whoever told Tom Hanks you should build your career off of doing voices.

Art: Well, again, he has a very good, like, physicality to you.

Keith: He does. What he doesn't have is good accent work.

Art: No, I mean, he's not— He's pretty good in Toy Story though.

Keith: Yeah, he's good in Toy Story, not doing it— Not doing an accent there.

Sylvi: Okay, I'm gonna— We can end this tangent soon, but I will say that some of the deliveries Mel Gibson has do sound like Buzz Lightyear, which is, uh, what, Tim Allen?

Keith: Tim Allen.

Sylvi: That's Tim Allen. Yeah.

Keith: Get another psycho. Get another— Let's trade psychos.

Sylvi: Oh no, my wife.

Ali: Oh, oh, oh.

Keith: Really? I hate you.

Sylvi: Now I'm turning into Scooby-Doo. I'm turning into Scooby-Doo.

Keith: No, he's doing— He's basically doing Scooby.

Art: Huh? Um, Tim Allen is worse than Mel Gibson at everything.

Keith: At everything. Yeah.

Art: Including being a piece of shit.

Keith: Including being a dick. Well, he did— He did have that ratting out his cocaine buddies thing. That's pretty bad. He put— He sent people to jail. That's pretty bad.

Sylvi: That's pretty bad.

Art: But I think Tim Allen would be worse in this movie.

Keith: Yeah, I agree. I do agree, by the way. Tim Allen is— What about Richard Karn?

Sylvi: That's more a comment on, uh, Mel Gibson's American accent, I think, than, uh, yeah, than anything. Sorry, Richard Karn would have to play Merrill, and then Tim Allen would have to play the Mel Gibson role. [**Art:** Oh my God.] And then, um, the, the, the police lady, you never see the lower half of her face. Like, like the neighbor.

Keith: That would be really funny if she only talks over a fence.

Sylvi: Or the aliens all have fences in front of them.

Keith: Um, so the, the last main thing that happens here is that Merrill goes into the army office. I don't know why he goes in here. I have a really long bit of audio to play

because it kept being really good and I didn't know where to end it. So if it, if it feels wrong in the edit, I'll trim it down. But he walks into an Army office and the, the guy who is at the desk to sign people up for the Army has some real thoughts about what might be going on.

Art: Oh, this scene kills.

[audio from Signs plays]

Recruiter: I've got it figured.

Merrill: You do?

Recruiter: I've had 2 separate folks tell me there've been strange, been some strangers around these parts last couple nights. Can't tell what they look like, 'cause they're staying in the shadows. Covert-like. Nobody's been hurt, mind you, and that's the giveaway.

Merrill: I see.

Recruiter: It's called probing. It's a military procedure. You send out a reconnaissance group, very small, check things out. Not to engage, but to evaluate the situation. Evaluate the level of danger. Make sure things are all clear.

Merrill: Clear for what?

Recruiter: For the rest of them.

Merrill: Yeah. You got a pamphlet or something I can read?

Recruiter: Sure.

Merrill: Thanks.

Recruiter: You didn't used to play baseball, did you? Shit, I know you. You're Merrill Hess. I was there the day you hit that 507-footer over the left field wall. Set the record, man. That thing had a motor on it. It's still the record, right?

Keith: That's a huge homer.

Sylvi: I was gonna ask.

Recruiter: On the wall, you've got 2 minor league home run records.

Merrill: 5.

Recruiter: Why weren't you in the pros making stacks of cash and getting your toes licked by beautiful women?

Lionel: Because he has another record most people don't know about. He has the minor league strikeout record.

Merrill: Hello, Lionel.

Keith: Enter Michael Showalter.

Lionel: Merrill's a Class A screw-up. He would just swing that bat as hard as he could every time. Didn't matter what the coaches said, didn't matter who was on base, he would just whip that bat through the air as hard as he could. Looked like a lumberjack chopping down a tree.

[audio ends]

Keith: He says, it felt wrong not to swing, kind of wistfully. This fucking—

Art: That is the line that has stuck with me in this movie more than anything.

Keith: Felt wrong not to swing? Yeah, great line.

Art: Felt wrong not to swing. That's, that's, that's the, that's the movie for me. Um, also, I guess a guy's wife died.

Keith: Yeah, again, this is, you know, God's grace You know, perfect guy, perfect place, can't not swing. He loves to fucking swing that thing around. And it works.

Art: And it is true that chase rate, or the amount of times you're willing to swing at pitches that are not strikes, is a huge indicator of not being able to be successful at the major league level.

Keith: Yeah. Yeah, true.

Sylvi: No chasers in baseball.

Keith: This fucking sergeant or whatever—

Art: I'm not sure that's true.

Keith: This sergeant—

Ali: Huh?

Art: I was just following up.

Sylvi: Oh, the sergeant.

Keith: Um, this sergeant here is so amazing. Perfect look, perfect delivery. We— Total weirdo. Covert-like. This guy is so weird. I love him. He just like— This is what I love about movies, is just having a guy you don't know show up and hit a fucking home run.

Art: Born to play this part.

Keith: Born to play this part.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: Which is a shame because this isn't a very big part.

Keith: It's not a very big part, but like, this is a guy who I could see having been in a bunch of other stuff doing this kind of thing and simply wasn't, unfortunately.

Sylvi: He was in a few other things, but yeah, this guy, this is his most prominent role, like, by miles.

Keith: Sylvi, do you still have his name written down? I don't.

Sylvi: I can try and find that.

Art: Ted Sutton.

Keith: Ted Sutton. Thank you. Yeah. Thank you. Um, it's, uh, yeah, as, uh, SFC Cunningham. Um, I, I love this speech. I love this guy. I love, um, that no one at the end of the movie— We have no idea why the aliens were here, why they were so ineffective, what they wanted, what their plans were. We have no idea except for like a bunch of character's guesses. And I think that, like, by just the way that the world works, all of the people in a position to have really strong guesses about what the aliens want are fucking weirdos. Uh, and this guy's a weirdo. And then there's a guy who's like, they're here to harvest us, on the TV later on. Like, that guy's a weirdo. Who is he? How did he get on TV?

Sylvi: I'm saying this a lot, dude.

Keith: Dr. Bimbu, he's a fucking weirdo. Like, all of the people whose ideas we have for what the aliens were doing are weirdos.

Sylvi: Dr. Bimbu is such an insanely funny joke, by the way.

Keith: Dr. Bimbu is really funny.

Sylvi: It's so stupid.

Keith: It's because the whole bit is like the kid is reading at the bookstore. He asked if they have any books on aliens, and they're like, yeah, we— More, more of God's grace. They accidentally got sent a book on aliens, and they kept it just in case some city folk came and wanted it. And so Morgan is able to buy and then read the book by Dr.

Bimbu. And the whole joke is like, Mel Gibson is able to discredit this weird alien book because of the guy's silly name, which to me is so funny.

Art: There's also— I think one of the funniest moments in this is the like, there's a painting in the book on an alien attack on their house?

Keith: Yes. Great.

Art: It's like, that, that famous— It's like a tweet of like the, I'm at a tarot reading and they flip up a card of me like, flying into a like, electrical— Does anyone know this tweet?

Keith: I have no idea what this is.

Sylvi: Oh, oh, I do! The, the tarot card, it reveals me. Is that good?

Art: Yeah, is that good? It's like me in a balloon flying into like electrical wires or something?

Keith: Oh, I think I've got it here. Mysterious old lady flips tarot card revealing a dude who looks exactly like me flying a hot air balloon into power lines. Me, is that good?

Art: Yeah, this is the— I don't know if this is inspired— If this post was inspired by this movie, but that's— And there's likethree dead people in the yard, or like, three charred corpses in the yard.

Keith: And we already know that Bo has been dreaming about all of them being killed.

Sylvi: That's great.

Art: But again, it's their exact house.

Keith: It's their exact house.

Sylvi: I was thinking of a post that is basically the same when Bo talks about— Says, I don't want you to die. There's a post where it's like, homeless guy, Caleb Pitts, you will die on August 5th, 2023 when a stray bullet flies through your bedroom window and into

your neck. Me, headphones in, sorry, brother, nothing on me. That's just kind of— that's how Morgan feels. It's like, hey, I'm gonna die? What?

Keith: Um, it's— I don't know. It's funny.

Art: It's so funny. It's a— I mean, I, I think it's supposed to be ominous, but it's so funny.

Keith: This movie's really funny, mostly intentionally and also occasionally unintentionally.

Ali: It's also really funny when it's trying to be scary. Like, I do think, and credit to Sylvi's recent BlueSky post highlighting the scene.

Sylvi: Thank you. Thank you so much.

Ali: But the scene where Joaquin Phoenix is watching TV, I guess I'm gonna just for— I'm gonna skip forward a little bit.

Sylvi: Please do.

Ali: The family comes home. Graham allows them to put the TV on to sort of see what's going on after like, a media shutdown. Um, and, uh, uh, whatever his name is, the brother's name—

Keith: Merrill

Ali: Yeah, gets more obsessed with it after being really dismissive about the, the idea of aliens and that it's just a hoax.

Keith: And he's laughing about how all this alien stuff is for nerds. He's like, nerds, all this stuff, just nerds doing nerd shit for nerds. And then a few scenes later, we see him with the kids wearing a tinfoil hat.

Ali: Uh-huh. Or locking himself in the closet so he can watch the TV without them. Yeah.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Um, where the scene that I'm talking about takes place, where, like, he— There's this, like, birthday party scene, and the news anchor is like, for, for, for all intents and purposes, this is genuine. Take that what you will. And it's this, um, like, video camera footage of a bunch of kids, um, like, being rowdy in front of a window, and they go from window to window, and there's something outside, and they're looking at the street, and then like an alien walks past, um, and there's this big like, drumbeat, and then it cuts back to Joaquin Phoenix, and he like jumps out of the chair.

2:00:15

Keith: He's stumbling backwards.

Art: It's so funny.

Ali: It's really funny.

Keith: It's also good acting, but it doesn't help it not be funny.

Ali: Yeah, uh-huh. It's like, it's one of the best sells that I've seen of one of these things. It's like, I feel like, also another thing that was also probably, um, spoofed a lot in the way that I see dead people thing, the like, alien in the scene, I think was also a big kind of comedy beat. Um, and it's like, a lot of this movie is really, really funny. Um, so shoutouts.

Keith: Some of the—

Art: Shoutouts to us for not talking about Scary Movie as much this time.

Sylvi: Yeah, no, I, I, that was I made that decision.

Ali: It's important!

Keith: I mean, well, it was our only exposure to Signs— I mean, I had seen 15 minutes of it— But our only exposure to Signs was people talking about it and also Scary Movie. So there's things that you will learn about Signs by watching Scary Movie and things

that you maybe will not learn from watching Scary Movie about Signs. I really like the maneuver at the beginning of what I have listed as Act 2 here, when they get back from town, of Graham sort of succumbing to like, well, maybe it's probably better to watch the news. You know, they hear the alien voices on the baby monitor. He— This is where Sylvi was talking earlier about him in the, in the cornfield, um, hearing noises and like dropping his flashlight, and he sees the alien's leg. You know, this is another great example of not showing the monster, um, something that again gets forgotten during that scene that Ali just talked about. Um, and then he eventually comes back, he's like, okay, it's time to watch TV. And this is where like, okay, there's no real escaping it. Mexico City officials as well as U.S. officials have confirmed that these are not aircraft from either government. You're seeing a live feed from our affiliate down here in Mexico City. This image has not been adjusted or enhanced in any way. What you're seeing is real. It's unbelievable. Everything they wrote in science books is about to change. There's 14 UFOs floating above Mexico City airspace.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: And like, you know, this is like, where I, you know, I— That it is alien stops being a question and starts being like, how do we deal with the apocalypse that they all sort of feel is happening?

Sylvi: Mm-hmm.

Keith: I do have one more clip to play here. It's the conversation that Graham has with Merrill, where Merrill is like, why can't you be a comfort to me like you used to be? And there's like— They kind of have the conversation about faith for the first time more openly.

Ali: This scene is so good. I cried during this scene.

Keith: I'm sorry.

Ali: It's good to be—

[audio from Signs starts playing]

Graham: Break down into two groups. When they experience something lucky, group number one sees it as more than luck, more than coincidence. They see it as a sign. Group number 1 sees it as a sign, evidence that there is someone up there watching out for them. Group number 2 sees it as just pure luck, a happy turn of chance. I'm sure the people in group number 2 are looking at those 14 lights in a very suspicious way. For them, this situation is a 50-50. Could be bad. Could be good. But deep down, they feel that whatever happens, they're on their own. And that fills them with fear. Yeah, there are those people. But there's a whole lot of people in group number 1. When they see those 14 lights, they're looking at a miracle. And deep down, they feel that whatever's going to happen, there'll be someone there to help them. And that fills them with hope. See, what you have to ask yourself is, what kind of person are you? Are you the kind that sees signs? Sees miracles? Or do you believe that people just get lucky? Or— Look at the question this way. Is it possible that there are no coincidences?

[audio ends]

Art: I just want to say real quick that we watched this, that my wife had never seen this movie before. And we finished this scene. Jessica was like, what a fucking asshole. I was like, yes, I do think that's the point of this scene is that he's kind of an asshole.

Keith: Yeah, I agree. I agree.

Art: To respond in that way to your brother asking you that question is being a piece of shit.

Keith: Yeah, well, I think that he's—

Ali: He's such a funny party guy. He used to be the jock. He's silly.

Keith: Oh, sorry. Who were you saying that Jess was saying was the asshole? Merrill or Graham?

Art: Graham.

Keith: Right. Yes. Graham. I think that Ali totally reasonably assumed you were saying that Merrill was being an asshole because he responds so frivolously.

Art: But no, that's— I think that's a fine response.

Keith: Right. Because the brother's asking for comfort, and Graham is struggling with the fact that he doesn't feel like he can provide comfort because he doesn't believe in the thing that would give comfort anymore. And so he's trying to talk around it. And by talking around it, it makes him seem ice cold.

Art: Yes.

Keith: And he's being very clinical, and he's being very like, there's 2 kinds of people. People who believe in good things and people who believe in bad things.

Ali: Yeah, no, I mean, I don't think— I mean, the structure around that, I mean, I think that that is an effective version of Graham being the person that he used to be, right? Like, that sort of reminder of, like, you know, the decision is in your mind whether you feel comforted or whether you feel like you are in danger and alone.

Keith: Sure.

Ali: And, um, I guess the thing that we didn't say, and like, Graham or, uh, Merrill ends up responding with the story of like, I was at this college party and I was making out with this girl, or I was about— I was about to kiss this girl.

Keith: Would you like me to read it?

Ali: Sure.

Keith: [reading] I was at this party once. I'm on the couch with Sarah McKinney. She was just sitting there looking beautiful and staring at me, and I go to lean in and kiss her, and I realize I have gum in my mouth. I turn and take out the gum, stuff it in my paper cup next to the sofa, and turn around. Sarah McKinney throws up all over herself. I knew the second it happened. It was a miracle. I could have been kissing her when she

threw up. That would have scarred me for life. I may never have recovered. I'm a miracle man. Those lights are a miracle. [stops reading] Crazy. That's crazy.

Ali: He follows up by saying, which one are you? To which I guess Jess thinks is a kind of dick thing to do, which is fair, by saying, um, does it matter? Do you feel comforted? No, he says, do you feel comforted? Yes. Then does it matter? Which is kind of a dick thing to do, but—

Keith: It is a dick thing to do.

Ali: As somebody who is experiencing an apocalypse and is kind of put on, I do think that I can forgive it a little bit.

Keith: He was just a priest, and he's trying so hard to not tell his community that he doesn't believe in God anymore. And I think that that comes across really bad.

Art: He doesn't want to tell his community he doesn't believe in God anymore, but he will tell his family who are also in crisis. I guess Merrill is theoretically the one grieving the least.

Keith: Yeah. He says— This is a huge moment. It's super important. And I also think is one of the best lines in the movie. The way that it comes back, I think is one of the things I really like about the ending. I wish that they had not hammered it home so hard because it was good just as it was. But they— But if they hadn't flashed back to this scene, I think it would've been great. Anyway, he says, what does it matter? Do you know what Colleen's last words were? Merrill turns and stares quietly at his brother. Graham says, she said, see, and then her eyes glazed a bit, and she said, tell Merrill to swing away. Do you know why she said that? And Merrill says, no. And then he says, because the nerve endings in her brain were firing as she died, and some random memory of us at one of your baseball games popped into her head. There is no one watching out for us, Merrill. We're all on our own. And that is like, basically the thesis of what, you know, the— Or it is like the, the, the point on which the movie pivots. The whole movie hinges on like, this is a poisonous idea for Graham, but also is sort of necessary to bring about the change that saves them, which is interesting. It's the thing

that like, if the movie had been able to stick the landing on this for me, it would have drastically increased my appreciation of it. But they just go— I think M. Night's writing um, oversalts the food. And I like a lot of salt, and it still oversalts the food.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: That's the— You know, I, I— In the last, the last time we recorded, I said like, I'm already being bitten in the ass in the first— In, in *The Sixth Sense*. I was like, I talked about how careful you have to be with subtlety in movies and, and how much movies benefit from having what they're about kind of hammered home. And this is a movie that is like, already, this is too much. I still agree with what I said then, but I think that at the end of the— What's a good— What's a metaphor? At the end of the thing, at the end of the movie, M. Night doesn't trust— Or someone, some executive somewhere didn't trust the audience.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: And they put way too much, um, they, they, you know, they hammered it in too deep because it like, it was so obvious. And then they like, said it outright three different times and it was like, oh my God, come on, I saw the movie, I just watched it. Uh, but I still think it's—

Art: I will say it's, I think it's very unlikely that that second flashback is in this, the original script. I would be very surprised.

Keith: Yeah, I have the— I mean, I don't know if this is the original script. I have a script here. I'm curious if it— I know that it deviates from the movie by an amount, so it may in fact not have that. Ray Reddy calls the house, hangs up, and then Graham is like, I have to know why Ray Reddy called. He goes to Ray Reddy's place. The house is ransacked. Ray's not in there. He sees him in his car, packed up and ready to go. And Ray says, I'm sorry I didn't call. I've been meaning to apologize. Your phone number's been next to my phone for six months, and I just called you. I don't know why. And I hung up. And then he tells his story about the night that he hit Colleen Hess with his car.

He was like, I've never fallen asleep before. I've never fallen asleep since. It's like it was meant to be. I think that's an outrageous thing to say.

Sylvi: That's a wild thing to say to somebody.

Keith: Wild thing to say. And it's fine that later on while she's dying, Colleen says it, but for Ray to say it, I think, is beyond the pale, insensitive. Um, he apologizes. Uh, he says, I'm going to the lake because I've looked at the maps and it doesn't seem like they are making crop circles anywhere near water, so I'm thinking maybe they don't like water. This breaks the whole movie for me.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Then he says, by the way, I locked one in my pantry, don't let him out. And then he drives away.

Ali: He's also wounded.

Sylvi: He is wounded.

Keith: He is wounded. Yeah, he got, he got like, hit in the side by the alien. He's bleeding a little bit. Um, I wrote in my notes—

Art: Probably like clawed, right? Because the aliens end up having like—

Keith: Yeah, they have like talons. Yeah. Uh, I wrote, what a wild thing for the character to just say. I know it's true, but that's so stupid. That's what I wrote. And then another— I feel annoying saying this, but the first thing that popped into my head was cardinal sin that the movie commits. So right after I was annoyed with Ray Reddy just saying, by the way, I figured out off screen that I don't think they like water, we see that birthday party scene where we get a full-on shot of the alien, and we talked a bit about this last time. It's after we see that scene that then, Graham goes into the pantry and tries to get a look at the alien under the door. And they spend a really long time of Graham trying to get a look at the alien. And Ali, you were saying—

Sylvi: It bugs me. Sorry.

Keith: It bugs me too. Ali, you were saying that for you, the scene works because because we already know that the aliens are real and what they look like, that there's an ironic tension between the audience and the character of like, we know that he's going to find a monster and that there's a monster behind that door and that he's in danger, and he still doesn't feel totally like he's in danger.

Art: Right, because he does his police roleplay, which is very funny.

Keith: Oh, the police roleplay is very funny. Yeah, he tries to get— He tries to bait whoever is in there to admit that it's a hoax and that his compatriots have been captured and that he'll go easy on him if he admits to doing a hoax. And of course, no one says something right away.

Sylvi: Oh, put them in the paddy wagon.

Keith: Put them in the paddy wagon, and then he goes like, why the fuck did I say paddy wagon?

Sylvi: The wince is really good after he says that.

Keith: He uses a knife. I think this is cute. He uses a knife to like, try to angle underneath the door to get a look. He's unable to do this. But the thing with— For me is like, I find this boring because I don't find the situation tense because I've already seen what this thing looks like.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: And almost in a comedic— to me, people talk about that. This is in like, you know, lists of scariest moments in a movie, the birthday party scene. And for me, I sort of found it to be almost a comedic scene. Uh, uh, like, I think it's an intentional, um, reference to the famous Bigfoot, uh, footage of the guy walking kind of funnily through the forest. That is like the exact walk that the alien does, sort of like walks across the screen and looks into the camera and then keeps going. And to me, I'm like, that is so

not scary or threatening. And then the scene that could have been scary and threatening, uh, where we haven't yet been exposed to the alien, instead we have totally been exposed to the alien. These two scenes back to back were like a very quick slide down of how I was feeling about the movie.

Ali: Yeah, I, um, I mean, I will stand by the defense that I made of this just because, I mean, I was really affected by the scene just because I do think it is that sort of like, especially in the movie, like popcorn classic sort of feeling of like, because I am aware of the danger and because there's this character who isn't as explicitly, the like, don't go near it, don't put your face near it. Like the sort of like, uh, wanting to talk to the screen of like, you know, be careful, um, hit for me? Um, I, you know, I do think that they spend kind of a long time on it because there's this sort of like, first he has the fake, you know, I'm gonna talk this person down, and then he's gonna go closer, and then he's gonna sort of regret going closer and pull back and then go back. And, you know, I, I don't know that the pacing of the scene is really good, but like the, the real fear and like actual like squirming, like, please do not do that, I don't want to witness you do this, of like—

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Him leaning down to put his face and look with his bare eye through the, the gap in the door, knowing the, like, what could happen there is like, like, I really like it. It worked for me. I just think—

Sylvi: I would just— I think it's like a really well-paced scene. I think that it, it really is just be— it's deflated by the scene that comes before it.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: And especially like now, just because the effects don't hold up. [**Ali:** Yeah.] I did really like that scene.

Keith: It's tough because I can imagine storyboarding this out and you have this like great idea for a set piece of the birthday party. And I think that, um, you know, this

becomes like, maybe even part of the way you're pitching the movie is like, based on this reveal scene of the birthday party. Like, it is— An important part of the cultural memory of the movie is the birthday party scene. And then what happens is like, it doesn't fit into the movie anywhere. When it— If it comes before the pantry scene, it deflates the pantry scene. If it comes after the pantry scene, the pantry scene deflates it. And And I feel like if I had to— Like, if I was in charge of fixing this for me, if I was given a magic wand and it was like, fix the movie, fix this five minutes of the movie, I would either just take out the actual reveal scene of the alien, like just not show it and just show—

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: The reaction to it and then cut to the pantry. And then, uh, have him— Have the claw come out from under the door, and then he cuts off the fingers, and then cut back and show the, like, freeze frame or slow motion on the TV. Or I would just make it much less conclusive on the TV, make it conclusive enough for Merrill but not for the viewer, and then have the scene. Um, I just feel like it becomes like— Um, it becomes something that you're too scared to cut. That's how I feel about it. Like, I feel like in editing they were too afraid to cut the scene because it felt so important.

Ali: Yeah, I mean, it is an interesting thing because it, you know, what people take away from this movie is the shot of the monster and Joaquin Phoenix's reaction to it through that, and not what should feel like the most tense scene in the movie in terms of like, oh, this is really the first interaction that they have with an alien while they know it's an alien. You know what I mean? Like, part of the— My defense of the, the scene as well is because like the scare of the movie is like, how close is the danger getting?

Keith: Yes. Um, yeah, this is a good point that you made, uh, the other day too.

Ali: Right. So like, this is the first of face-to-face interaction, and while Joaquin Phoenix is having this televised— The danger isn't really the same. But you're right that the birthday party scene from history, we can just say, had more of an impact than this other scene.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: So I think you're right in that. And I do think that it's like, this is a really interesting question to think about because I think what you've seen in a lot of these sort of like monster or invasion or horror movies is the question of like, is the question of, um, do you show the monster? Yeah. When do you show the monster? How much of the monster do you show it? Um, is it going to be an interesting design? How much of the movie is going to revolve around a unique monster design versus the frustration of the audience of like, never seeing this thing.

Keith: Because frankly, it's not a very interesting design. And that's why like, I think of Jaws, another movie where like, the design of the monster is like, not very good. Uh, at the end of the day, like, it was too difficult to pull off how the thing looked, so they just didn't use how it looked. Uh, and you know, I'm thinking of like, what if they had— What if the only change that they made to Jaws is that they showed you the full-on Jaws thing 40 minutes into the movie and then had another 40 or 60 minutes left in the runtime. And I'm like, well, that would have been a big mistake. That's how I feel about this. Art, you had a negative reaction to me saying that they felt they were maybe too afraid to cut this scene.

Art: Yeah, um, I, I think that— I, I do think that like the dramatic tension of the audience now definitively knowing that it is aliens and the aliens are this, like, menacing thing makes the fear that you feel for Mel Gibson's— For Graham in this scene feel more real.

Sylvi: Uh, I guess, but we've already seen, like, Ray injured from an encounter with one of these. I don't know if it's as necessary to, like, drive that home.

Keith: Yeah. And I—

Art: Well the Wolfington brother could have—

Sylvi: So true.

Keith: We knew it wasn't the Wolfington brothers. We knew the first time we saw an alien, we knew it wasn't no damn Wolfington brother. We knew it was an alien the whole time.

Art: I think it ratchets up the tension to have already seen them.

Keith: I think, yeah, I think this is just a different world.

Art: I can't exist in a world where the— Where it's not— That's not what happened. So I can't know.

Keith: I'm surprised, Art, by this because I feel like you've been the like screenwriting textbook guy so far in these episodes? Like, I feel like my complaint is a very like screenwriting textbook technical complaint about like, well, best practices, you know, XYZ.

Art: Um, I don't— I don't know. The, like, the thing that the, the screenwriting maxim that's like, in my head right now is the whole like, any character that's gonna be important to the movie has to be introduced in the first 25 minutes of the— But we're definitely past 25 minutes here, right? So yeah.

Keith: But we also saw, we saw the alien on the roof minute—.

Art: Sure.

Keith: You know, and in the cornfield, right? The— And in the cornfield, the leg. Those both happened and those are both before 30 minutes. And at least one of them was before 20 for sure.

Art: And I don't think it counts when it's a monster like this.

Keith: Yeah, I agree. Um, uh, anyway, this scene happens and for me this is like the turn. Like everything after this gets worse for me. I think that the pacing gets weird. I think I think that like the way that the emotional seeds of the movie start like sprouting very quickly, um, uh, in retrospect, I think is interesting and comes together in a way that

like, my immediate reaction to the movie upon finishing it, um, was more critical and then having some time to sit with it and, and thinking about how weird Graham is for the first hour or for the first 45 minutes. Like, I like actually that this stuff is sort of bubbling under the surface of the film until Rory Culkin just sort of like, blurts out, I fucking hate you and you let my mom die. I still think that maybe the writing doesn't support how that goes exactly, but the idea I think is still solid and works.

Ali: Yeah, I think it just becomes— It ends up being a strange thing where— Because these are themes that are going to keep getting hit again and again, and because we've seen the sort of family breakdown the family drama happening alongside these superstition things. Like, the family dynamics in *The Sixth Sense* and *Unbreakable* are so much more present, are often better performed, are often better scripted, that it's hard not to be in the position that we're in, especially, and feel like there's something kind of lacking here. Like, it's not like these characters aren't interesting, and that their reactions to things aren't realistic, and the relationships that they have with each other aren't believable. It's just that I feel like there's almost— It's not like there's shortcuts happening, but I do think that there's— There's not enough build of some of the resentment.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: And I mentioned this before, but especially between Graham and his kids, so much of that seems so much smaller. Like, really, the only places that you can find it as a viewer going back is looking at all of the places where it's strange that it isn't present to sort of, like, backlog into, like, oh, this is how— This is how unrepresentative of a father he is. You know what I mean?

Keith: There's some good stuff there in retrospect, but as it was happening, I was like, this is coming out of nowhere. And yeah, this is what I— This is sort of what I mean, Ali, what you were saying here is like, that I think that the fault is less with how subtle it was in the beginning and more with how the— How it ends up like fully coming alive in the end of the second act here, where it just— It feels out of nowhere, and it feels like, you know, you let— You let Mom die. Like, why does he think that? That is a weird thing. It's

like a weird, um, issue to take because that— Because I don't know like, where you get that from, right?

Ali: Yeah. And I mean, like, as a person who's viewed this movie a couple times, I can say now that like, oh, it feels like he would be able to say that thing because his mother's death is so sudden and it's such an extreme case that it doesn't have the usual pacing of— We know that she does not even get the option of medical care in a hospital.

Keith: Right.

Ali: You said it before, that she is literally cut in two by a truck and pinned to a tree. And the removal of the truck, or the truck is keeping her alive, is what the character says in the movie.

Keith: Yeah, totally. She's alive when she shouldn't be is what Officer Paski says.

Ali: Right. Yeah, which is incredible. But a kid isn't going to understand that, and a kid isn't going to be able to separate the thing of like, oh, you went to go see Mom and then she died, and you chose not to take care of her or do something else there. And I can make that argument now because I've seen this movie three times in the course of my life, and I can really zero in on why some of those changes would be. But as you're watching it, it's just sort of like, huh? I think another part of that is when Merrill— No, no, no. When, um, what is the kid's name?

Keith: Morgan.

Ali: The boy. When Morgan says to Merrill like, I wish you were my dad.

Keith: Yeah, that felt like it came out of nowhere.

Ali: It felt like it came out of nowhere. And we really don't see Merrill as, like, a more caring person than Graham is in any of these scenes. Like, he seems like a doofus. He seems like a wacky guy. He's like, just as dismissive and like, rude to the kids about

their belief in the alien stuff that it's like, the sudden like, oh, I love you more than my dad.

2:30:00

Ali: Well, not that explicit. I wish that you were my dad instead, is like, I mean, I get how you get there because your dad sucks, but it's just like—

Keith: All the emotion is there, but the way that it comes out is wrong. I wish you were my dad and you let Mom die. I don't know why that's where he went. It feels wrong, even though all of the pieces were there to do it really right, I think. Like I— Go ahead.

Ali: Well, just on the flip side, it is very— you do not need a lot of time with those characters. It's a very well-spent time with the two characters in Signs for you to understand why Haley Joel Osment's character wants to hide what's happening to him from his mother [**Keith:** Sixth Sense.] Because she— Yeah, Sixth Sense, sorry. Because she's so put upon in these other ways, and they have this relationship that's like, special in other ways. And like, we don't get those sorts of relationships and the like, well-thought and, you know, considered version of those relationships in this movie as much.

Keith: It's funny how fine a point gets put on all of the faith stuff and all the God did all this in the background, stuff and how subtle the Morgan and, and Graham relationship was.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Keith: Um, just like, I just think he put the energy in the wrong place. Like, uh, these emotional beats are what audiences struggle with in movies, I think. My experience is that like, a huge percentage of the audience can watch this movie and not understand that it's about the family and feel instead that it's about the aliens and then come away upset that they don't understand anything about the aliens and it's because— And I feel that way too because the aliens really don't make sense in this movie. But I think that it's so easy to miss drama in movies. People miss the drama all the time. And maybe if

a little bit less time was spent on making sure everyone understood that this was about God and a little bit more time developing the writing for Morgan's character, maybe it would come— At the end, it would come out better. I don't know, just a thought.

Ali: Yeah, I mean, I'm sort of curious where Art and Sylvi line up on this exact point, just because it does feel like it's kind of a lever that you pull in terms of how much is it about faith? How much is it about aliens? How much is it going to be about these kids? Like, you know, a father who lost his wife recently and also had this career change and is really stoic. And, you know, those are shortcuts that you can make of like, I understand why he's a bad dad. But it just does feel sort of like out of place when you have the moments of it in this movie.

Keith: Mm-hmm. And you have to answer.

Sylvi: I think it's just more like, my issues with a lot of this stuff just comes down to execution sometimes, where I like— Sometimes it really hits the, the sort of like, fracturing of the family. And then sometimes I think that like, I don't know, it's just like, not the thing I'm thinking about given this movie. And maybe that's just a problem with me is like, I find the, the stuff that he's doing with faith to be the thing that grabs onto my brain a bit more than his, like, distance from his kids. And then, like, the way getting— Like, connecting with that faith again seems to fix all that, even, like— Or implies that that's fixed. I don't know. Yeah, there's like a whole—

Ali: It's very strange.

Sylvi: It's very strange. It doesn't really work for me. Um, I— I think it would have been better if instead of— Like, I know that the quick visual shorthand for he has his faith again and what, yada yada yada, is him coming out dressed as a priest again in the morning. But honestly, I'd rather have seen him like, just doing something with his kids instead of—

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: Uh, going off to, to preach again.

Keith: Yeah, because I was never concerned about like, that this community doesn't have their pastor anymore. That was like, never part of the movie for me, even though it was part of setting up that he had lost his faith. And I think that that's maybe somewhere where, where we can see in M. Night's scripts that he gets a little bit confused about like, how to resolve these emotional moments. And like, he gets caught up in the minutiae of like, well, people being concerned about not having their priest, it wasn't about them, it was about him. And then in the end they resolve it by being like, well, don't worry, he's there for the church again. And it's like, no, is he there for his kids though?

Art: I think you're— I think you're supposed to take that shorthand.

Keith: Yeah, I totally agree. I just think it's not— I just don't like the shorthand.

Sylvi: Yeah, that's— I think the—

Keith: Or I would have liked a different shorthand.

Sylvi: Yeah, there's just different ways to execute it that I think would work better for me personally.

Keith: He could have been out doing something with the kids and someone could have seen them on the street and said hello and called him Father. And instead of grumbling about it, he could have just accepted it.

Sylvi: He could have also, like, have him be in the priest gear but have him being like, okay kids, time to pick out a new dog because the other one got stabbed by Morgan and one of them got stabbed by aliens. Like, that's not a good ending. That's me coming up with something on the spot. That is terrible. But you know what I mean?

Keith: I know what you mean.

Keith: Art, what were you going to say?

Art: It's— Well, one, the movie ends in like 30 seconds, right?

Keith: Yeah. Like, like The Sixth Sense.

Art: They settle the thing—

Keith: They end so fast, so abruptly. These movies end.

Art: They settle the thing about the poisoning and the movie is over in 45 seconds. So we go like, from that, we do it, we go to the, the second floor of the house. We get a shot of how wrecked everything is. We pan across, we see that it's now winter, so we know the time has passed, and we see that he's wearing his priest getup.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: So if we have to end this movie in 45 seconds, as we apparently do, because after 106 minutes they're out of film.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: Um, and if so, so once we're at this movie has to be exactly 106 minutes, as M. Night Shyamalan apparently believes, and you have to end it that quickly. I think that is a suitable shorthand that he is like showing us that he has gotten his faith back and therefore fixed his life.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: Is, is enough, actually.

Keith: I'll say, I'll give you this, Art. I 100% agree, but only if you take for granted that the movie has to end in 45 seconds after this.

Art: It seems to.

Keith: It does seem to.

Art: It's happened twice in a row.

Keith: But I think that is a huge hint.

Art: The movie ends and it has to end. There's no space. There can't be a line of dialogue after the last essential line of dialogue.

Keith: I am now waiting for the M. Night movie that has an ending because these movies are crazy in the way that they end, like.

Art: I don't know what you're talking about. I'm not watching any of these movies anymore. They all did end.

Keith: Uh, sorry, they, they stopped playing. but they didn't end. They— Like, in The Sixth Sense, he learns that he's a ghost. He goes, oh my God, I'm a ghost. He tells his, his living wife, hey, don't worry about this shit anymore, bye. And then the credits. Like, it's so fast. And then Unbreakable— I believe in Unbreakable, I said it was the most abrupt ending to a movie I'd ever seen.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Keith: He becomes a superhero. Three minutes later, he's talking to his mentor. His mentor says, by the way, I'm the Mad Bomber. And then the movie— And then he goes, hahaha. And then it cuts to this guy's in jail now. Credits.

Sylvi: They call me Mr Glass.

Art: Yeah, they called me Mr. Glass. Here's a text that sums up what we could have shown you. But again, at 107 minutes, the studio isn't paying for any of this anymore, and it's all coming out of my, M. Night Shyamalan's, pocket from here.

Keith: And then, but, and, you know, and then I think if that were true, and I think that's a huge leap, if that's true, that the studio says we'll pay for 106 minutes, and then after that, it's coming out of your paycheck. I think, I think that what you should do is make a good movie still, because it's art. And if you're like, okay, well, I'll just, I'll just make 107 minutes worth of a movie and then chop off what would be the falling action and then I'll get paid more. I think that's the wrong choice.

Art: Well, I mean, you're already up the creek here because it's 106 minutes is how long these movies are. 107 minutes is what an insane person would make for their movie.

Keith: He's just a guy who's never heard of falling action. He just never saw A Story Circle. He has not heard of Joseph Campbell. Falling action? No, no, no, you do the movie, you have the climax, the climax ends, movie ends.

Art: In the 106th minute, it all has to be over, including credits, I believe.

Keith: Yes, including credits.

Ali: I am curious because, Art, you seem to be one of the strongest, at least in personal conversations, but like, one of the strongest defenders of like, this movie is not about aliens, it is about this other thing, which is true.

Art: I mean, I'm gonna go one further. No movie is about aliens.

Keith: Whoa, whoa.

Art: There are no— Movies are not about the things in them. Movies are about the relationships between people.

Keith: What about Alien?

Art: Um, aliens are always a metaphor.

Ali: Um, what about Predator?

Sylvi: In that one too.

Art: Predator is about— Well, Predator is about a few things. The original Predator, the Arnold Schwarzenegger movie is— I mean, like, it's about the Cold War.

Keith: In Signs, the aliens are about a mysterious threat at the gates that we must protect ourselves from.

Ali: Yeah.

Art: Yes, weirdly considering when the movie was written and made, Signs, the aliens are about 9/11.

Keith: The aliens are about 9/11. Which is very funny. Again, this is what I'm talking about. M. Night Shyamalan is a writer-director who's interested in latent telekinesis among the characters of his movies, and I believe also has latent telekinesis.

Ali: To have done a vibe check on the American culture to know that this was like—

Keith: Yes, he pulled the post-9/11 fugue state out of the ether.

Ali: But I guess what I was trying to set up for you, Art, was like, how in this question of like, how successful is it? Or, you know, is the balance between tension and family drama like, successful for you? **[Art:** Uh huh, absolutely.] From either just like, I like this movie, or like, an academic sense?

Art: Um, I do think that this movie does do a good enough job at— I think the, the— There's a couple of things here that we haven't mentioned that I think are sort of significant. One is the, the, the baby monitor. When the baby monitor starts picking up the alien signals, it only happens when all 4 of them are embracing.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: Hmm. I felt like that was very powerful, especially in that last scene where he's such— Not the last scene, but the scene where he's such a dick at the dinner and then they all hug, and then the final action starts. Like, that is— That's, that's the good filmmaking for me. And the stuff in the basement really works for me. His, like, his finding his faith by telling God how much he hates him works for me very well.

Keith: Yeah, me too. Especially— Yeah, I mean, he's really put praying with anger into practice. this here. **[Art:** Yeah, he prays with anger.] Like, he, he has that phrase in his head and he brings it into Signs with him.

Art: For sure.

Ali: [crosstalk] I do think—

Keith: [crosstalk] Um, uh, we are— Oh, go ahead, Ali.

Ali: Just like, I do think that's a really important point that you made, that like the catharsis of that, um, that dinner scene, which we haven't spent a lot of time on, but like basically what happens is they have the, the the food and nobody eats it because Graham is refusing to say grace.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Um, that is why.

Art: Graham gets on his full Reddit atheist.

Keith: Look, I, you know, in my heart, like, my— I am led to the thought... his family should respect his disinterest in being religious for them. Like, I think that it's sucks that they are— That M. Night is tying their love of him into his willingness to perform Christianity for them.

Art: I think when you're a parent to little children whose mom died six months ago, you should do what they want to do because you're an adult who can handle your grief in your own time, and that they should be allowed to—

Keith: I agree, and I think that this—

Art: Take comfort from their father.

Keith: But in the real world, I think that that's totally true. And in the movie, what I think that we can see is like, he's constructed his reality here where he can't, you know, he can't safely disconnect from Christianity because he has hidden how he's feeling from his family. And so their desires feel like an attack on him when really they're just doing what they've learned from him. But that is also like, a tower that M. Night built... that then he uses a plane to knock down.

Sylvi: Shut the fuck up!

Ali: What are we even doing?

Sylvi: Oh my God!

Ali: What are we doing?

Art: This is a little more 9/11-y than I thought we were doing.

[**Sylvi** hysteria]

Keith: Sorry, I didn't mean that. I, I didn't mean that. I just thought it'd be funny.

Sylvi: It was.

Keith: It was. I know it was, but I didn't mean it. Um, uh, uh, so yeah.

Art: All right.

Keith: I, I, I think I—

Art: The content warnings on this episode.

Keith: Yeah. Yeah, I think because the movie is constructed of whatever M. Night wants it to be, the content of the movie, we don't have a before, we don't have an after. I think as people, we can understand that he teaches his kids how to engage with the world because that's what being a parent is. And that doesn't excuse Merrill because Merrill is an adult and he shouldn't need his brother to be his priest for him, I think. And I think that—

Ali: But I do think that, you know, I think it's significant to be approaching the end of the world and to desire a former emotional connection that you had with somebody. The fact that Graham is unable to perform it or unwilling or is actually really willing, but, like, you know, that speech that he gives is really effective. It's something that it feels like he's said a lot of times.

Keith: Which one? The one to Merrill about, there's two kinds of people?

Ali: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Like, it just feels like he shifts into that mode so easily, but then is so dismissive of the power of what he's able to do. And so disgusted by it or sort of distanced by it.

Keith: Yeah, he's resentful of having to do that.

Ali: Yeah, him saying, we're alone out here.

Keith: Yeah. And it is his inability to like— He left the church and he's like, everyone needs to understand what that means. And people are like, no, you're still the father to us. And the children feel that way literally because he's their father. And, uh, but because he's like not teaching them what it means for him to not be a priest and why he feels the way that he feels, like they've built up this, this like deficiency of like this thing that we used to get from our dad, which is like spiritual education we haven't been getting.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Keith: And so like, this is— That's like part of, I think, where, where their resent— Resentment comes from. And his resentment is like, he keeps feeling put on. Like, why do they keep asking me to be religious when I'm obviously not religious anymore, and it is totally his responsibility to be teaching them how he's feeling.

Art: Yeah, he doesn't have to be teaching them about religion, but he does have to be nice to them.

Keith: He does have to be nice to them. Look, tensions are high, it's the end of the world, he's decided he's ready to die. He has literally cooked them a Last Supper.

Sylvi and Ali: Yeah.

Ali: And they won't just eat.

Keith: They won't just eat. These fucking idiot kids want me to say a prayer.

Ali: I'm not wasting another second of my life on prayer. Now eat your food.

Keith: I just want to be clear about this. [**Sylvi:** Their mashed potatoes.] It's not the kids who want this that I'm like, I wish the kids didn't want this. It's M. Night who's making it about how he's wrong to not— To want to step away from religion. Because that is what the movie's about. It's like, it is scientifically incorrect to decide that your faith doesn't speak to you anymore because you need that faith to save your family, maybe.

Art: Well, right because God gave your psychic wife and daughter the visions to get you through the situation.

Keith: Right. So he invented a fake world where you have to be Catholic or your family dies. I don't know that they're Catholic.

Art: I'm not sure he's Catholic.

Keith: I'm not sure that he's Catholic. I, I, I actually, in my notes originally I said Protestant, but I think they're intentionally vague about it.

Sylvi: They're... Episcopalian, I think it says on Wikipedia.

Keith: Oh, does it? Okay. Yeah, my original thing was because as, as a Catholic, we use, we use Reverend in a technical sense, but no one ever actually says Reverend. So when everyone keeps calling him Reverend, that was like, to me, that was sort of shorthand for Protestant. And—

Sylvi: Yeah, that is— Isn't Episcopalian a Protestant offshoot? Or am I— I don't know.

Keith: Episcopalian is an offshoot of the Church of England, I believe. So it's like the American Church of England.

Art: Yeah, I see.

Keith: It's the American Church of England. And so they're very Catholic-coded. because the Church of England is really just Catholicism with the serial number filed off so that King George could marry more people.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: And so that comes to America, and then America disconnects from England, and so you no longer have the head of the Church of England, so you get Episcopalianism. Which I guess is maybe why it was confusing, because if there was a Protestantism that was the closest one to Catholicism that I know of off the top of my head, and I'm not an expert, is Episcopalian. Anyway, that is my— That is the, you know, M. Night Shyamalan constructs this universe where it's like, scientifically wrong to decide that your faith doesn't speak to you anymore. And that's, I think, what is annoying to me about like the main pillar of the film. But we do have this scene. We have this, this scene where they decide what they all want to eat. They're not eating, you know, uh, Rory Culkin says, you fucking let our mom die. Um, and they all start crying and they all do a big group hug and they're like, okay, we have to start boarding up the house. And I really like— while they're boarding up the house, he tells a little story to Bo and then to Morgan about how their mom reacted to their births and like what happened when they were born. I think it's very cute. Bo's, I remember, is that she had these great big beautiful eyes and she was staring around the room at everybody and she looked at Colleen and smiled. And everyone says babies that young can't smile, but you smiled. And this is his apology to them for how he was acting. With Rory, does anybody remember what Rory's is? Morgan?

Ali: Um, Rory was that, uh, the mother was hurt during childbirth, that she kept bleeding. [**Keith:** Right.] Um, and she had been dreaming of being a mother her whole life. So Graham, um, wanted her to see Morgan first. Um, and then when they finally see each other, um, they just stare at each other for a really long time. Um, just like in each other's eyes. Um, and then the mother says like, uh, you know, hello Morgan, you look exactly like I dreamed. Um, which is also really sweet.

Art: Yeah, it's a little undercut. Every baby looks exactly the same. I, uh, yeah, but—

Sylvi: Wow.

Art: Every newborn baby looks exactly the same.

Keith: My, my feeling has been that, uh, parents are very interested in the specifics of their own newborn. But I have— I also feel that newborns look exactly the same. I've never seen— [crosstalk] I'm sorry to say, I've never seen— I've never got it.

Art: [crosstalk] I've had a newborn, it was great. She looked like all the other ones.

Keith: Sorry, say that again, Art.

Art: I've had a newborn. It was great, but she did look like all the other newborns.

Keith: Yeah, whenever somebody has said like, this, this 2-hour-old baby looks just like blank person, I have never really understood what they're talking about.

Art: Unless it's like Abe Vigoda. And then they're right. The baby does look like Abe Vigoda.

Keith: They check the TV and the news broadcast is offline. It's broadcasting like an emergency signal or something. And Graham says, it's happening. Oh, this is where— And then we get these, the stories about their births. Um, but this is like officially it's alien time. And if you're curious about what it sounds like to be attacked by aliens, it sounds like this. [audio from Signs of aliens walking around] Little footsteps running all around, pitter-patter all around. That's— That kind of is underwhelming. to me. Um, I'm confused by these aliens. They, they don't have weapons. They're not wildly aggressive. They're not super threatening. Um, they grab one kid once and then they attack Ray Reddy off screen. But we— But it sounds like he attacked the alien. And so we don't really know who attacks who.

Ali: Mm-hmm. [**Keith:** Um, it's very—] And the movie also starts— Sets up that like, they want to get into the house as almost like a puzzle. Like the— It's, it's not like they want to get into the house and eat us and kill us because they sort of don't do that.

Keith: What is motivating the alien— The aliens is so unclear, I would say, to the detriment of the movie.

Art: Well, they sort of cover it in, in weird exposition that exists just off screen, right?

Keith: There is people who have guesses. There's weirdos who have guesses about what the answer might be.

Art: Well, they take some people, right? Some people get dragged off, don't they?

Keith: Well, I thought that there was a guy who says that he heard that people were getting dragged off because his idea was that they didn't come here for our resources, they came here for us. And I'm like, okay, yeah. I mean, that's, that's a totally classic alien thing. But I never felt like the movie was super definitive about what the aliens actually wanted. And if what they wanted was to capture people, they do such a bad job of it. I mean, almost unbelievably bad.

Art: I don't know. I, I don't know how many people there were before. I don't know how many people there are after.

Keith: It seems like most of what they did was kill people with poison gas, which is not I don't know.

Sylvi: I like that the aliens, like, purpose is, uh, kept obscured. I think that, like, that is part of the big thing with horror about aliens is like, what do they want? Like, Arrival is literally, like, built on this question. The movie Arrival.

Keith: It wouldn't bug me that I don't know what they want if what they were doing, they were doing an even halfway decent job of.

Sylvi: [crosstalk] Okay, it's the effectiveness—

Keith: [crosstalk] So they show up and they're total fucking bumbling idiots that do— In my opinion, nothing that they do lines up with any sort of possible motive that they could have. And so that's where, for me, it starts becoming like, well, what do they want? Because they're not accomplishing anything and they're not doing a good job of what they're appearing—

Sylvi: They're wanting to reconcile this man with his family because God wanted it.

Keith: That's what it feels like. It feels like they're there to get him back into the church and that there should be a sequel to this movie where it— The, the fate of the Earth hinges on Graham Hess believing in God still.

Sylvi: Like, that should have been the sequel we got instead of Split and Glass.

Keith: Yeah, so I wouldn't care about what the aliens are there for if they— if it wasn't called into question by the fact that they seem like total buffoons.

Art: I mean, sometimes people are just buffoons.

Keith: But they have spaceships.

Art: We have spaceships.

Keith: Not like that. Not like that. Not like that.

Sylvi: Not like that.

Art: I'm just saying, buffoonery is intergalactic.

Keith: If, if we had the technology to do what these aliens are doing and we went to another planet and we started an invasion, billions dead. We'd be killing so many people. We'd totally, totally be effective at killing.

Art: But what if it turned out the planet was covered in acid that burns our skin?

Keith: Then—

Art: That most people had running faucets of—

Keith: Of poison to them?

Art: Acid that destroys us. But it isn't just poison, it melts them too!

Keith: It melts them, yeah. Like, it's— Yeah, it is acidic. I think that then we would still appear more ready for something. They have no clothes, they have no weapons, they

have no technology besides the ships. The only thing they have is built-in gas. It's very strange. It's very strange.

Sylvi: Smoking that shit.

Keith: The only thing I can think, and I'm, I'm really doing the movie a favor here. They didn't— They've never encountered sentient— There's nothing in the movie to support this, by the way. This is total, you know, what could possibly explain this? They do go to planets for resources, and those resources might include food, and they've never found sentient life before, so they've never had to deal with a civilization that wasn't their own. That's my only thing. But then they do the crop circles, so they've seen our cities and our towns. So that falls apart, and then I'm back to square one. I talked myself out of it. Sorry. Sorry, M. Night. Um, they get pushed down to the basement. This goes to what, Ali, you were saying. Actually, I think you said this more the other day, but you did reference it today of like, one of the tensions of the movie is like...

3:00:00

Keith: They feel more and more penned in as the movie goes. It starts, they have access to the town, they're driving all around, they're outside, you know, then they, they get home, they're like, stuck inside, and then as the aliens get closer, eventually they're boxed into just the basement. I think that's really effective, and I think that's a cool like, um, geographical motion to like, be consistently penned into a smaller and smaller place. Um, and they realize, like, uh, first of all, they lampshade, uh, the boards on the windows because they're like, what are boards on the windows going to do against aliens? And then Graham is like, well, they don't seem to be able to open the pantry door, so, so I think boards will be fine. Um, but also they're good problem solvers, so they do, like, Ali, you said they puzzle their way into the house somehow. But they lock themselves in the basement, and the aliens are making a bunch of noise, and they realized that the noise is a distraction because they're not really trying to come in through the door. So they must be trying to come in through the coal chute because they used to shovel coal in the basement. And this is one of my favorite shots in the

movie, is when they're, they're looking around the room for the coal chute and their flashlights are converging on the point where the coal chute is, and they find Morgan standing there. And this is where listeners will remember I briefly thought that maybe this was a fake Morgan. This is not a fake Morgan. Behind him was a camouflaged, uh, alien.

Sylvi: This is the best scare of the movie.

Keith: It's the best scare of the movie for sure.

Sylvi: The hand reaching through the, like, chute and, like, being on his— It's on his shoulder, right?

Art: Oh, yeah, fully terrifying.

Keith: Yeah. And it's— It is— If you freeze-frame it so that you can get a screenshot for the podcast that you do, you'll see that the hand hand is, uh, this is a practical effect and this is some guy's hand that has been painted with grates on it. And it is actually pretty funny.

Sylvi: Honestly, I like it. Do more. The— every time they did some practical stuff, I was like, yeah, man, yeah, that actually looks good.

Keith: Um, uh, yeah, they grab him and this is like, triggers— It's actually like, again, you know, how barely this movie is about the alien. The alien is only there to grab Morgan to trigger a panic attack or an asthma attack in Morgan. And so Morgan, who's had asthma the whole time— We haven't really talked about it— He's had his inhaler, has been ever-present.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: He doesn't have his inhaler because they got rushed down into the basement. He's having this asthma attack, and his dad is like, holding him, comforting him, trying to get him to breathe in rhythm, trying to get him to feel his heartbeat and being like, it'll

pass, just know that it'll pass. And this is where he starts, you know, angrily praying at God, telling God that he hates him. This is great. This is really good stuff.

Art: Yeah, I think the whole scene in the cellar rules.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: Good, good horror filmmaking.

Keith: Do you, do you have to hand it to Donald Trump's ambassador to Hollywood, Mel Gibson? He's acting in this movie.

Art: It depends how you feel about acting, really. There is the idea that you should perhaps give the credit for most acting work to the director.

Keith: I think that directing is the most overrated job in Hollywood, and that almost everything that anyone likes about any movie is credited to the actors and to the DP.

Art: Well, we're doing a podcast season right now about the work of a single director.

Keith: I know, I know. Well, and writer. And sorry, and also the writer underlies the acting, so obviously the writing— The writer and the actor are in a mutually beneficial relationship. I don't think directors—

Art: I think it's the director's responsibility to be happy with the performance.

Keith: Yes.

Art: If the director thinks that the work isn't consistent with the vision for the movie, that they should not move on.

Keith: I agree. I agree that directors do something. I just think that it's vastly overstated in Hollywood.

Art: Um, I think, I think we're at a very complicated point. I think we're outside the scope of this podcast at this point.

Keith: Maybe. Maybe that's true. He calms down, the, the asthma attack passes, and they fall asleep. They go to bed because they've had a long day. That would be tough for me. They're surrounded by aliens, but good for them, I guess.

Sylvi: Sometimes exhaustion just hits.

Keith: I have a hard time falling asleep in the best of times, so. Um, how do they wake up? What is the scene in the morning when, uh, when Graham has awoken after a 12-hour slumber?

Sylvi: Is this when they start checking the— It's, it's Merrill and Graham start talking about, like, whether or not they're still out there. And so they try the baby monitor again.

Keith: Yeah, there's, there's almost no movie left. They wake up, they found light bulbs, so there's light in the basement. They're listening to the radio, and the radio says all the aliens left. They wake up and the aliens are gone. And they talk about how, you know, there's some stragglers, some— They left their injured behind, which means that they have no honor. And, and this is where they're like, you know, Morgan is still not doing well. We need to get him his asthma medicine. They check the baby monitor. monitor. They find nothing. They determine that it's safe to go upstairs. They go upstairs. There's dancing and celebrating on the TV, which quickly talks about how they found a primitive method to drive away the aliens in the Middle East. Which I sort of—

Sylvi: Yep.

Keith: I sort of moved my eyebrows at.

Sylvi: Yeah, same.

Art: It's weird that they've heard that it's primitive but don't know that it was just using water.

Sylvi: I think they— A lot of the— My brain went to, oh, it's weird that they think it's primitive just because it's from the Middle East.

Keith: It's— I think that has— I think that both of those things are exactly right. Um, uh, once again, the DNA of post-9/11 infecting a movie that technically is pre-9/11, uh, at least in part, at least the writing of the script.

Sylvi: I don't know, man. Things change during production. You can lean into something that happens while you're filming.

Keith: You absolutely can. Yeah. Uh, but there's dancing on the TV. They decide to move it to the living room because it's been in the closet for Merrill almost the whole movie. And this is one of the best shots in the whole movie. The alien reflected in the TV screen as Graham is moving it into the living room. I think this is so good. They use it twice and it doesn't feel forced. I just— So good. Uh, the alien—

Art: Yeah because of all the TV in the movie, it's—

Keith: I— yeah, the TV, the TV is the 5th character.

Sylvi: Um, whoa, whoa, whoa.

Art: Take that, cop.

Keith: The TV— The cop is the 6th character. The TV is way more present than the cop is. Oh, there's one more thing that we skipped. I'm sorry about this, to go back just really quick. We get our 2nd flashback of the night of Colleen's accident. This is his dream that he dreams at night, I believe. This happens after after the, the, uh, asthma attack. Um, and, uh, because I wrote these notes an hour before we were recording, I didn't write what was contained in that flashback. Uh, but at some point, um, like, we— I believe this is the point where we learn that, like—

Ali: Yeah, I, I think that we can kind of talk about the flashbacks kind of broadly here, because I am curious about how effective the sort of unraveling of them in this movie is for people. I think the kind of clever trick that they end up playing is that they have three different segments of the night that you see throughout the movie.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: And at this really late point, you see all of it. Like, you first sort of have Graham approaching the accident and sort of knowing what's going on. And then you have the one-on-one that he has with the cop where she explains, like, your wife is cut in half, she's technically not alive if we move the truck, she can talk, she doesn't really feel a lot. We just wanted you to be here in her final moments.

Keith: And she doesn't have much time left.

Ali: Right, the sort of like, do you understand what I have told you sort of thing.

Keith: Yeah. That was— His response to that is like some of some of the best— I, I will say that that is like his best performance of a line in the movie, is when he says like— Like he's just trying to follow along and he's like, dazed and in shock, and he's like, you're telling me this is the last time I'm going to talk with my wife? And she says, yes. I think that's like his best delivery in the movie. That was really good.

Sylvi: I think it's one of the better scenes in the movie too.

Keith: It is. Yeah, I think so.

Ali: And then you finally get the conversation that he has with her that we— I guess we've seen sort of hinted a lot, but yeah, it's really sweet. It's really tragic, her sort of saying like, um—

Keith: And he has shortened it when he retold it to Merrill. He didn't get it right, or he shortened it on purpose, um, uh, because she's like, more specific to him than I think when he repeats it to Merrill earlier in the movie when he says, tell Graham to see and tell Merrill to swing away.

Ali: Yeah. I do think what's really interesting— Like, she has two notes for each of the kids, which is like, take care of your sister and keep pretending, or something like that.

Sylvi: Play games. It's okay to be silly, I think. Which is way sadder than just keep pretending, honestly.

Art: Yeah.

Ali: And another detail that I really love in this that's just so tragic is when she's like, tell Graham this, and he says, I'm here, with this, like, like, certain amount of hope that, like, just gets moved on to because she starts saying the Merrill thing.

Art: Yeah.

Ali: Um, it's just like a heartbreaking cadence to that conversation that I really like. Um, but yeah, I mean, I do— I, I, I feel like the stringing along of the reveal of this is something that ends up feeling really impactful when you get to this moment. Yeah, especially when you've sort of— It comes at a point of the movie where the danger has sort of moved on.

Keith: Well, this is— This part, the final cutscene here happens when the alien has grabbed Morgan.

Ali: Oh, that's right. Yeah. Oh boy.

Art: This alien out for revenge.

Keith: Yes, this is the alien.

Art: They say that like the aliens have left behind their wounded, right? And so we get the, um, the closet— Pantry guy comes to like, get his revenge.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: How does he know where this guy lives? Who knows?

Keith: Smell?

Art: Maybe they all knew. Maybe this is part of their like, recon. They knew everyone.

Keith: Yeah. He is the closest person to one of the crop circles. Yeah. Um, sure. But yeah, this, this all collapses into an understanding by Graham that this was not synapses randomly firing that produced a nonsensical memory of them at a baseball

game. This was a prophetic instruction for Graham to notice the bat and to tell Merrill to swing the bat to kill the alien. And if that is what happened here, I would be so happy. But instead, after that flashback, they show you another flashback to the coincidence—Coincidences conversation to tell the viewer this isn't a coincidence.

Sylvi: It's so bad, it's such a mess.

Keith: It's so bad. It's so bad to me. And it's long. It was like a minute long. That's a really long time to be unhappy with what a movie's showing you.

Ali: Um, it's just you can't put a clip of your movie in your movie.

Sylvi: Yeah, come on. What are we doing here?

Ali: I'm sure that has been done to great effect in other films. I mean, whatever. But I feel like it's just— I saw it 40 minutes ago. Like, you can't—

Sylvi: My, my attention span is not that bad.

Ali: It's— yeah.

Art: Um, I think it's perhaps most effectively used in *The Usual Suspects*.

Sylvi: Oh, don't get me started.

Art: I, I, I'm convinced that this is a, um, a studio note gone—

Sylvi: Sure, I believe that.

Art: The people in test screenings were like, I don't know about this. What's happening? Why does— Why is all this going on? And they like, they, they're like, you have to fix it. And also remember at 107 minutes, we shoot you in the head. So you cut out whatever you had after the—

Keith: Is this his first Disney movie?

Art: No.

Keith: Okay. So if it was Disney, I might have bought that they did threaten to shoot him in the head. At 107 minutes—

Art: They've all been Disney and they've all been the same length.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Oh, sorry. They've all been Disney. Oh, okay. I thought that he did a— I thought that the first two were something else and then he went to Disney.

Ali: No, he doesn't go to Fox until Lady in the Water..

Keith: Okay. All right. So then I never mind. I take it back. I definitely believe that he was under duress when cutting these movies down. So yeah, this—

Art: Yeah, that's why he leaves. He leaves, then Lady in the Water is Warner Brothers, and that is 110 minutes. Free from these constraints, he gets 4 more minutes.

Keith: Yeah, I'm buying it. I believe this theory.

Art: And The Happening is even shorter, but I don't think anyone wanted more of The Happening.

Keith: Um, so he tells Merrill to swing away. I believe too slowly. Nitpicking. Graham grabs the bat and starts swinging away while—

Art: Merrill grabs the bat.

Keith: I'm sorry, Merrill grabs the bat and starts swinging away while the alien is gassing Morgan, um, and starts knocking the alien into all the cups of water that Bo has obsessively left around the house, and those cups of water are acid to this creature's skin, and it starts melting him.

Art: Uh-huh.

Keith: I talked in the last time we recorded, and I think actually maybe earlier too, I really like the water. The water is the coincidence that really works for me. I love the line

“swing away”, but it gets ruined by the second flashback to the, the coincidences monologue.

Ali: I also just love the way that the scene is staged. There's this sort of like— I don't know, there's almost this sort of triumphant feeling of like, the family sort of fluttering away, and you just get Joaquin Phoenix in the— The camera's sort of in the doorway of the living room, and you see him sort of moving around the space and swinging these cups and finding the best angle and like, finding the best way to like, move himself between like, a table and the alien. And eventually you get this sort of like, really interesting kill shot of like, the alien's point of view when like, he falls on his back because he got hit, and then the water falls onto his face, and it's like, yeah.

Keith: That one was a little corny, but I did like it still.

Art: I wonder if he needed the water though, or if he could have just like, beaten this guy to death with the bat.

Keith: Yeah, it felt like the bat was good. The bat was working. These aliens came unprepared. They had no weapons, no nothing.

Sylvi: Me and my friends would have beaten the aliens from Signs to death with hammers. I can tell you that much.

Keith: Um, and so the movie ends. They bring Graham— Uh, they bring Mor— Graham brings Morgan outside and he's in it. He's, you know, he's fully in, um, prophetic dream mode, and he's going— His lungs were closed, the gas didn't get in. Ali, I think you said that this isn't how asthma attacks work.

Ali: I think people watching this movie who were posting on IMDb's now-defunct forums, or were talking about it around their college like, lunch tables—

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Were like, oh, but the atmosphere is made of water. Why would they even come here? The Earth is covered in water.

Keith: Get 'em.

Ali: It's— How would they— With the gas, you know, man?

Keith: I'll explain.

Sylvi: People are 80% water.

Keith: I'm happy to believe this, though. I'm happy to believe the following: the water that is in the air as a vapor is evaporated H₂O. The water that comes out of your tap and is in your hose and is in lakes has like, a bunch of stuff in it, and it's got a pH, and I don't know, maybe, you know, they're on a farm, there's pesticides everywhere. I'm happy to believe that there's, there's something about the concentrated water that is bad in a way that the water vapor in the air isn't. I'll give it— I still think it's stupid. And, and it's a bad— It's like they took— Looked at War of the Worlds and said, how do we make that make less sense? You know, War of the Worlds already gave you the answer. What do you need a new, worse answer for? With the asthma attack, he had epinephrine in his hand. The epinephrine is enough to save you from a weird allergy attack to whatever was in the gas. I don't think they had to make up that your lungs close when you're having an asthma attack.

Art: I don't think that epinephrine is a cure to all poisons.

Keith: No, but this could have been a poison that it worked on because we don't know what it is. But we do know what happens with your lungs at an asthma attack, and it isn't that it stops breathing air. He struggles to breathe air, but that just would have been that all the air that he breathed, it wouldn't have been enough air and also would have been poison. I don't know, that's fine. I'm fine, I'm fine with this. I don't care. I'm not mad.

Ali: I think, I think it's just worth mentioning because, uh, depending on how I end up feeling about The Village on rewatching it, a lot of, a lot of what to talk about with these movies is some of the, the audience's mid-type stuff. I think that, you know, the reaction and the expectation that some of the people had for these movies and the, the conversations you ended up getting from some of them with people really focusing on

the minutiae of how much water is on the Earth to make it— To determine whether this movie is good or not.

Keith: They might have not been from a place that even had water. They might not have known even that they were allergic to it or that it was acidic to them. They might not have even known until it started happening. I think that that's— They're going too far with that. Um, I'm fine with the water even though I think it's stupid and that they looked at War of the Worlds and they just did War of the Worlds but bad. Um, uh, we talked about this a little bit already. Uh, the asthma attack passes and they show the inside of the house. They show the time has passed. They show Graham Hess in a priest getup and then they roll credits, baby. That is—

Sylvi: Yep.

Art: He buttons the buttons on the end of his sleeve. He puts his coat on and we are in credits.

Keith: Yeah. Um, my memory of this movie was that it was really popular and that people really liked it, and that people only really started making fun of it when the M. Night has fallen off thing— The ball started rolling.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: Yes, I believe that is correct. Yeah.

Keith: Um, I think that at this point, this movie has a much lower reputation than it deserves. Because of, memes are inherently reactionary. The more content a meme has, the more reactionary it is because there's not enough space in a meme to fit anything worth knowing. And then once you have enough there, you've simplified a message down to something so stupid, and then people start believing the meme instead of the message that the meme's trying to convey. And then you get people who believe that Signs is terrible even though they liked it when they saw it and haven't seen it since. That's what I believe.

Art: Yes, The Happening happened to Signs.

Keith: The Happening happened to Signs.

Sylvi: Oh, that's why it's called that.

Keith: And, and so, uh, I think that a lot of this movie is good. I think that there's a, there's a scene where the movie becomes bad and that it never really recovers from Ray Reddy, much like Graham Hess.

Sylvi: It all could have been avoided if Ray Reddy was driving a thinner car.

Art: The 9/11 of the movie. Oh, you already said that. I can't even— That's a callback. That's not even me being hyperbolic.

Keith: But I still believe that—

Sylvi: A second car has hit your wife.

[group hysteria]

Keith: That's a good one. There we go. The— this movie is now weirdly underrated, even though I don't think it's very good. A lot of good stuff. I think that M. Night has proven that he can work with kid actors three times in a row now.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Even though this is maybe the weakest of the three. I don't know. Oh, by the way, in Unbreakable, I was editing it and I called Joseph Joshua a hundred times. Sylvi, you tried to stop me once and then no one ever again ever tried to correct me. I said, I said Joshua 45 times in that movie. There's no one called Joshua in that movie. Please.

Art: Never forget.

Keith: Please, Kirk, if I'm saying a name wrong, please correct me every time. Like if I get it wrong nine times in a row, feel free to correct me nine times in a row. I'm happy to be corrected on, say— I don't know. It was driving me up the wall that I kept saying Joshua when I was editing. I was losing my mind.

Art: But you didn't put a drop together and just put it in?

Keith: No.

Art: You didn't go insane five times and—

Keith: Do you want more corrections, Ali? Every time an episode of AMCA comes out, I can send you a list if you want.

Sylvi: Wow.

Keith: Damn.

Art: Damn. The episode has hit the 3 and a half hour mark and we are getting chippy.

Keith: This is not all, this is not all Ali, but I cannot spend another minute of my life hearing someone call Bastila Bastilla. I can't do it. I can't handle it.

Ali: This has been a wonderful episode of Media Club Plus. I look forward to you all tuning in two weeks from now. Thank you very much. I'm excited to watch The Village.

Keith: Um, I also, Ali, I do want to give Ali credit. I, uh, in the— At the end of The Sixth Sense, Ali asked me what I thought Unbreakable was going to be about. And at the end of Unbreakable, I said, I want to do a new segment where I have to guess what I think the next movie's about because I have no idea. That was Ali's segment. Ali, you invented this segment. Congratulations.

Ali: Wow.

Keith: I just didn't remember.

Ali: But what do you think The Village is about?

Keith: I have no idea. Okay. I have like, I have literally no idea. I have absolutely—

Sylvi: Scary Movie got me on this one again, unfortunately.

Ali: It's called The Village.

Keith: Okay, so I think that this is going to be a pod people movie where you go to a village and people have been changed or replaced, and it's going to be a sort of slow— There's going to be an unraveling of understanding of whoever— Adrien Brody? Is Adrien Brody the main character? Who's the main character?

Sylvi: I don't— I know that he's in it.

Art: Uh, Joaquin Phoenix is the main character.

Keith: Oh, Joaquin Phoenix. Okay, so Joaquin Phoenix is gonna— Is, is showing up to a place and there's, um, uh—

Art: Oh, maybe he's not. Maybe he's not the main character. [**Keith:** Okay.] It's kind of complicated. Okay, um, well, he's certainly the highest build character.

Keith: So someone shows up to a town and much like, um, I wish I remembered the name of this Goosebumps movie that I saw when I was 8 and really fucking scared me where the town was full of like vampires and at the end there's a dog who's a vampire. [**Sylvi** interruption] Sorry Sylvi, say that again.

Sylvi: We talked about that dog, I think.

Keith: Is this— is this—

Art: I think it's Count Barkula.

Keith: I think it's Count Barkula. No, in my head it's Welcome to Dead House, but I don't think that that's right. But anyway, I saw this when I was 8 and it really scared me and it turned me off horror movies for the whole rest of my life. And I think that, you know, one of the things is like the kids, the kids in the town are like, or in the new town, they moved to a new town and they're like, I think something's wrong with our neighbors. And their parents are like, no, no, don't worry about it. And it slowly becomes extremely clear that everyone in the town is, is a monster that's trying to kill them. And I think that something

like that is going to happen in the village. They're going to go to the village and there's going to be some sort of hidden danger there that the whole village is either, uh, aware of and keeping secret or is actively perpetrating themselves, and it's going to be a process of escaping the village.

Art: Wow.

Ali: Wow.

Keith: Maybe some Salem's Lot in there.

Ali: Well, we're gonna find out.

Art: Sure.

Ali: Yeah. Two weeks from now.

Art: There's definitely some words in there.

Keith: Okay. Again, I've— I have never heard of this movie. I have no idea what it is.

Art: This movie that was released in your lifetime and made \$257 million.

Keith: I— To be fair, I was 12.

Ali: I was 13 when Signs came out. I was thinking about religion and fucking how crazy life was. I was deeply into Signs when I was 13. I don't really know why. I'm just saying you don't have any excuse.

Sylvi: Hell yes.

Keith: That's true. Well, I don't think that you saw Signs when you were 12 means that I had to have seen The Village when I was 12.

[Ali laughter]

Sylvi: No, that's how it works.

Ali: The option was there is all I'm saying. You could have bought a ticket.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: Um, whereas I think I saw—

Sylvi: I'm assuming we're wrapping up now.

Keith: Well, we're done.

Ali: Yeah.

Sylvi: Yes. Uh, before we go, I want to read a review because I've fallen off doing that. I did that during our Hunter x Hunter season and I want to keep that up during the M. Night season.

Keith: Yeah, please go to the Apple Podcast and review.

Sylvi: Give us 5-star reviews.

Art: Oh, do we have reviews of this season?

Keith: We do.

Sylvi: We have a few. I'm only gonna read one because this is a long episode, as they all have been.

Art: This is our attempt to make it shorter.

Sylvi: They're good episodes, so I'm not— I'm— Whatever. Um, this is from the review, 5-star review from Killua's T-Boy Bestie, uh, titled I Realized Exactly When... body, the Sixth Sense twist was revealed to me. It was in 2009 when the ending was referenced in the Lonely Islands song Jizz in My Pants. This is a very cursed way to learn a touchstone cultural reference, but very typical of my media intake as a teen. Then I accidentally spoiled it for my wife just now when I said, just checking, do you know anything about this movie? Like the twist? The answer was, no! Nothing at all! But because I asked, she basically immediately figured it out. Sorry, baby. She was the last

person on earth not to know and I slightly ruined it. Love MCP, Friends of the Table, and all y'all do. Thank you.

Keith: Yeah, thank you. You can go to Apple Podcasts to review. You can tell your friends about the show. You can share it online in whatever weird online places people hang out these days. Um, I would love for more people to listen to the show. The more people listen to the show, the more it makes sense that we make it.

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

Sylvi: Yep.

Keith: That's kind of how it works.

Sylvi: That's how it works. Bye!

[[“Dr Malcolm and Friends”](#) by Jack de Quidt plays in full]