Don't Bother the Monkeys - After Earth: Media Club Plus S02E07

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Introduction

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

Keith: Greetings from Media Club Plus, a podcast about plunging into the media that thrills us and the stories that chill us. As always, we have been dragged to you by Friends at the Table. This season, we'll be subjecting ourselves to the twisted mind of M. Night Shyamalan. [crosstalk] My name is Keith Carberry.

Sylvi: [crosstalk] That's like some flavor on that one.

Keith: Yeah, a little. I, I try to give it a little flavor each time.

Sylvi: Okay. Yeah. I meant like a little extra flavor.

Art: It just occurred to me, you're gonna get like, fully canceled for next season's intro.

Keith: Who's gonna cancel me? The [bleep]? I'm gonna get canceled by the [another bleep]?

Ali: Bleep that.

Keith: Please.

Austin: Bleep that. Bleep that.

Sylvi: We have to bleep that.

Keith: We don't have to bleep that!

Sylvi: No, you have to bleep that.

Ali: Yeah, you do have to bleep that.

Keith: Oh, right. Oh. Because of the spoiler. Yeah. Okay.

Sylvi: Yeah, because of the spoiler! Not 'cause you said… that word!

Art: But it'll be funny to have people then guess what word you said.

Austin: Ah!

Keith: [laughs] Uh, wow.

Sylvi: Power Rangers.

Keith: Um, hey, this movie's pissing me the fuck off, you guys.

Ali: Really?

Sylvi: [laughs] Really? [**Keith:** Yeah.]

Austin: After all that?

Keith: After— Yeah, this movie's pissing me the fuck off.

Sylvi: This movie has me— I'm acting like Will Smith. I'm struggling to have an emotion about this one.

Austin: This is exactly the movie I thought it would be. It's exactly the movie I thought it would be.

Ali: It’s all right!

Keith: [laughs] I didn't know anything about it. I had no— I knew that it was Will Smith, and I only recently remembered that it was also Jaden Smith. And I knew that it was

sort of post-apocalyptic, and that's all that I knew. Um, and I was kind of excited to see what was gonna happen because we had a sort of a pre-apocalyptic movie just a couple weeks ago. Uh, but I'm excited to get into it because it was really strange. It was a very strange movie.

My name is Keith Carberry. You can find me online by searching @KeithJCarberry. I changed my Bluesky name. I'm just @carberry.deals now. Uh, it was too long before. It was too long before. So— but you can still search Keith J. Carberry. I show up. Uh, you can find the Let's Plays that I do at youtube.com/runbutton. We're almost done playing Silent Hill F over on Run Button. Uh, that's been really good, actually. Um, so that's interesting. Uh, with me as always is— Uh, 'cause I don't like any of the other ones. Sylvia Bullet.

Sylvi: Hi, I'm Sylvia. You can find me most places. Much like if you search Keith's name, you can search mine, @SylviBullet. You'll find me, hopefully.

Keith: I thought you were gonna say that if you search my name, they'll find you too somehow. Probably eventually. Just scroll down.

Sylvi: We're on the same podcast. It'd be pretty easy. Uh, you should also, speaking of, you should go to friendsatthetable.net and listen to Friends at the Table. It's an actual play podcast that we do that is very, very good.

Keith: Yeah, I'm excited to record more of that this… week?

Sylvi: Yeah. Weekend. Yeah.

Keith: Yeah. Weekend. Yeah. Uh, Ali Acampora.

Ali: Um, hi, my name is Ali Acampora and I'm just going to double plug. I strongly encourage that you listen to Friends at the Table, the actual play podcast that we do.

Keith: Powerful.

Ali: Um, maybe you like these movies. Maybe you don't like these movies. Maybe you listen to the show and you're like, well, how good would any of them be at writing a movie? There's like, hours and hours and hours and hours of footage to that evidence.

Keith: I find this movie— To that end, I find this movie really inspirational. Anybody could make a movie. Really, anybody could do it, I think.

Art: I mean, anyone can make a movie as long as you spent the previous 30 years making very successful movies.

Keith: Well, you say that, but I also saw the What We Do in the Shadows movie eight years ago, and that was Taika Waititi's first movie. And I also got the distinct “anybody could make this” vibe from that movie. It was inspirational in a similar way.

Sylvi: The Alan Moore read terrible books quote.

Keith: Oh yeah, I know— Yeah, I've heard that one.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Uh, we've got, uh, Art Martinez-Tebbel.

Art: Yeah. Uh, hi, you should go to friendsatthetable.shop and pick up some merch. There might be some for this show soon. Uh, we've certainly been talking about it, because I think what this movie shows is anyone can make a movie as long as they have $130 million and you can help us take that step toward having $130 million by buying a t-shirt or something.

Keith: With much less money, they could have made a better movie here, I think.

Art: Uh, they could have made this movie for a lot less money.

Keith: Well, I'm very excited. We have Jaden Smith's personal friend and confidant, Austin Walker.

[**Sylvi** hysteria]

Austin: Yeah, that's true.

Keith: Known, that's true, known to be in the crew of Jaden Smith.

Sylvi: Holy shit.

Austin: Someone, someone recently asked me, I was at a wedding and they said, um, the classic, like, I'm stuck talking to someone at the table, I don't know who you are.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: What's one fun fact about you? And I said, I once without realizing it, cut off Jaden Smith and delivered a speech while standing next to him.

Keith: Much like in this movie, he wasn't doing anything. So, it was fine.

Art: I would say that if this movie was the attempt to launch Jaden Smith, you docked Jaden Smith.

Austin: Wait a— Now, wait a second.

Sylvi: Okay, hold on. We said double plugged earlier. We need to be careful.

Austin: We gotta slow down. friendsatthetable.cash is the mother of all success.

Art: I just thought that was the opposite of launching was. I don’t—

Austin: Yeah, I got you. Crashed.

Sylvi: This is the end of the, like, Jaden Smith vehicle, uh, like movement, because this is like after Karate Kid and—

Art: This is after Karate Kid?

Sylvi: Right. Uh, much way after— Yeah, this is after 3 years after Karate Kid.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, he was, he was a child in Karate Kid, right?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Um, it is, however, is it before Neo Yokio?

Sylvi: Oh, it is. Yeah, because this is the one that made him stop acting for a while.

Keith: Now this is interesting because— is maybe the problem with Jaden Smith's acting career, uh, talent aside, nepotism aside, is it that they keep trying to cast him way too early for stuff? He's like a baby in The Karate Kid and he should be much older. And then he's also like, what is he, like, 14, 15 in this movie? And this is a movie about like, an 18-year-old.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: Yeah.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: Uh, yeah.

Keith: Yeah. And they're just like, we got to get this kid out there. He's too good. He's too good to hide.

Austin: [laughs] I just want to say two things. One, again, friendsatthetable.cash. That is the number one way you can support our work. Uh, that is where you can give us money to keep doing this. We don't run advertisements.

Art: Or to make a movie. $130— If you have $130 million, give us a call.

Austin: We will take it. We will make a movie.

After Earth [07:00]

Austin: And the second thing I want to say is, so far we've had, uh, this movie inspires you because it's so bad. Uh, we've had, we can make movies with $130 million. I want to say, as someone who has— And we've had from Ali, if you want to hear us make—

Tell stories, you can go to the front of the table. I want to say, as someone who has tried to tell stories in the, the kind of science fiction fantasy space for a decade, I felt some sympathy because it's really hard to get a new franchise off the ground in 20 minutes.

Art: Yeah, sure.

Austin: I think we've done it twice pretty well. I think the beginning of Partizan is, is really strong, and I think the beginning of Marielda— I think like, once we're in Marielda proper, it's really— It goes. Everything else, there is like, some real we have to find our footing over the first 10 episodes. And so I was very sympathetic for the very stumbly first half hour of this movie.

Keith: Well there's— But there's one big difference, which is that like, we go into it without a script and without $130 million.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. I'm not saying I wouldn't maybe do better than this, but I'm very sympathetic. I come from a place of, I would love to talk shop with M. Night Shyamalan.

Keith: Oh yeah, of course.

Austin: I think we actually have one other big difference, which is one of my big feelings about this movie. I never have Will Smith whispering in my ear that he's the money man and I need to cast his son in something. If Jaden Smith had to be in the next season of Friends at the Table so that we could all make millions and millions of dollars, it would be bad.

Art: Hold on.

Austin: Well, I'm not—

Sylvi: Huh.

Austin: Yeah, we would all say yes because of being broke.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: But then we would have to deal with Jaden Smith.

Ali: It'd be all right. Neo Yokio was fine.

Keith: Yeah, I don't know, Ali, I'm starting to ques— You just said this movie was fine.

Ali: I think, you know, I think I'm coming from a little bit of what Austin's saying here, which is like, genre-wise it's fine, world-building-wise it's fine. It's kind of boring. It's an interesting setup. The performances are not there for how much this, this movie is a guy talking to himself in front of a green screen.

Keith: I have here written—I'm glad, Ali. I'm just gonna get this note out of the way, uh, uh, that I wrote down here. Sorry, this is— I'm quoting my notes. So this is what I wrote: Movie constructed in such a way that Will Smith has nothing to do. He just gets to sit there.

Ali: Uh-huh. Um—

Austin: This movie is a real— sorry, Ali, finish your thought.

Ali: Yeah, just I mean basically that is the thought that like, the structure of the movie is fucking weird and a lot of the like, decisions around how the scenes work and how the situations are are really fucked up. But like I think the like, the like, oh, it's your first time on a planet and you're also like, going through this like emotional like, distance and the distance is still there and like, you've only related through your family through like phone calls and then you can only talk to your son via like, it's, I mean, there are ingredients there. I don't know that anyone cooked, but I can't, like, I'll snack on some raw broccoli. That's fine by me.

Keith: There's a Carberry in The Karate Kid. There's a— There's an actor named Luke Carberry.

Austin: Great rejoinder, Keith.

Keith: Sorry, I just

Sylvi: Thank you so much, dude.

Keith: I was listening fully to everything Ali was saying and then my eyes went to the word Carberry up on my screen. I was like, what's going on?

Art: You're interpolating.

Keith: Yeah. I've never seen anybody called that before but me.

Austin: Carberry.deals.

Sylvi: What about your parents?

Keith: Oh, I forgot about them. Yeah. Okay. So I guess it's no big deal.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah, man. Sorry, Ali. It was no big deal. I thought it was over.

Austin: You thought it was a cousin. You thought a cousin showed up.

Keith: I thought a cousin showed up. Shout out to Luke Carberry from The Karate Kid. To what Ali was saying, I'm not entirely sure that the world building of this holds up. Um, I agree with like, the list of things that didn't hold up and that, that the like, the theme like, they, they made, they manifested the theme of the distance between them well. But like, this, this is, this is a big, uh, uh, ah, fuck. What's the stupid show where they ding you?

Austin: CinemaSins.

Keith: This is a big CinemaSins ding video. Like, I'm just like, they have to, why do they have to have oxygen juice?

Austin: We gotta break this. No more.

Sylvi: Yeah, we gotta, we gotta, we gotta—

Keith: Why do they have to have oxygen juice? It's full of plants here.

Austin: Because the whole— They do explain this.

Keith: The baboons are fine!

Sylvi: They do explain this.

Keith: What do they say?

Austin: They— [doorbell noise] Sorry, someone's at my door.

Keith: Oh, someone's CinemaSins dinged.

Sylvi: Yeah. Um, I will wait till Austin gets back because I do have a take on, on this that I think is worth bringing up.

Art: That's so funny though, that doorbell was timed so perfectly.

Sylvi: Yeah, that was cosmic comedic timing. Wow. Anything is possible in Mamdani's New York.

Keith: Was that part of the— Where we'll send people to finish jokes over Zoom?

Sylvi: Yeah, yeah. No, it was a lesser-known part of it.

Art: [as Zohran] Hi, I'm Zohran Mondani. I heard your joke needed finishing, so I rang your doorbell.

Keith: [as Zohran] All right, bye. I have more doorbells to ring.

Austin: CinemaSins said keep, keep our name out your mouth. That's what they said, which is weird.

Keith: We got a cease and desist.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: What was the explanation for the— I mean, I knew that they talked about why they needed it, but I remember being like, this doesn't make sense.

Sylvi: Everything on Earth has evolved to be toxic to humans.

Keith: Without the humans there? Again, this is a whole part of it. Why, with 1,000 years of no humans, would things evolve to be anti-human?

Sylvi: Okay, well, now you're nitpicking.

Keith: It's not nitpicking. This is— This is— They got to write anything they wanted, and they choose to construct a world that doesn't make any sense from the ground up.

Sylvi: You talk about—

Art: No, I do— I agree with Keith here. It is silly to be like, everything here evolved to kill humans and we've been gone for 1,000 years and it's still evolved to kill humans. That doesn’t make any sense.

Keith: Here’s the nitpick. The nitpick is 1,000 years isn't enough time for anything to evolve.

Austin: That is the actual— That is, uh, but thankfully there are evil aliens. Maybe you've heard of them. They're called the S’krell or whatever. Uh, and they released the Ursas. There's the S’krell or something like that.

Sylvi: Yeah, I, uh, don't worry.

Keith: The Scrunts? I think they’re called the Scrunts.

Sylvi: No, the Scrunts are— We will talk about Scrunts during this episode. I will talk about Scrunts. Can I just give, like, my— What I think about this movie really quickly?

Austin: Please.

Keith: Yes, totally.

Sylvi: This feels like the adaptation of a young adult novel that doesn't exist.

Austin: 100%. I was thinking about this five minutes before we started.

Sylvi: This is, like, coming right off the heels of— The Hunger Games is a year prior to this, and right after this you get Divergent, which is just another one of those. Like, this is— We're in the middle of the young adult like, kind of movie boom of the 2010s. This is probably not an actual boom, but I was a teenager when this happened, so it felt like one.

Austin: It is missing one really important thing from those movies. I mean, maybe two, depending on how you count.

Sylvi: The like, really rote romance plotline?

Austin: Really rote romance. Yeah, it really is. And partly I think it's because he's too young. But if you, if you remake this movie with two people survive and it's him and a girl he doesn't like but is secretly in love with, and then they— And then she hates him but, you know, falls in love with him and it's not Jaden Smith, I think maybe— I may— I think maybe they cook financially instead of crashing.

Sylvi: I mean, the movie didn't do— Did this movie bomb? I couldn't— I thought this movie was like a critical bomb, but like, did it make at least its money back?

Art: It did okay.

Keith: It did okay. Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. Okay. It made its money back.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: It made, uh, apparently $243 million.

Art: If you believe that a movie has to hit double its budget to be profitable, it was not profitable, but like, no one— It's like no one's upset, and also it didn't turn into the franchise they wanted it to be.

Austin: Well, that's exactly it, right, Art? It's like when you, when you're doing this sort of, um, accounting for a franchise or a would-be franchise, part of what you pay that much money for up front and invest in is you're doing like, all the world building, all of the, for instance, accent and dialect creation.

Sylvi: You've got to—

Austin: You're trying to launch something that doesn't need that work indefinitely because you've already drawn what space future Nova Prime or whatever is.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: And so you can just build on all those world-building assets going forward, and they did not get to do that. So it's like, yes, they spent $130 million to make $243 million, but they were hoping to spend $130 million so that, you know, in two years they could spend $100 million or $200 million to make a billion. Because they wanted to make a whole thing.

Sylvi: There is definitely things in here that you feel like they would want to do, like sequels on, such as the aliens we never see, the Skrell.

Keith: Yeah, they're mentioned— They have two scenes, I think.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Um, they also, uh, they've set up a whole military dictatorship that never— They never talk about.

Austin: The Rangers.

Sylvi: No, they just gesture at it. Yeah.

Austin: But I think I will say, like, this is the stuff where I have a lot of sympathy for, because do you know what would have made this movie way fucking worse is another 20 minutes of “what's happening on Nova Prime?” What's up with the Rangers? That's not the movie. What a frankly rare thing for me to say about an M. Night Shyamalan movie, it should have been shorter. They should have gotten to Earth quicker.

Art: Yeah, I'm sorry, this is the length of an M. Night Shyamalan movie. It can't be shorter or longer. This is how long his movies are.

Keith: It's an immutable— It's a global constant.

Art: No, it's 100 minutes. His movies are 100 minutes.

Austin: Great.

Art: His movies are all between like, 98 and 106.

Keith: 100 to 107 minutes.

Sylvi: Yes, 107, I believe, is the, the, the, the, the special number.

Austin: Uh, he should have gotten to the 90. If you would have gotten this to 90, I think it would have been better.

Sylvi: Um, I have like—

Art: I have— Well, then he wouldn't have had every weird television star in this movie.

Sylvi: What?

Keith: Oh, I didn't notice anything about that.

Sylvi: I didn't notice anybody.

Art: One of the guys in like, you know, there's the group of guys who are like, teasing—

Sylvi: The weirdos.

Art: Yeah, Kitai. One of those is Roy from The Office.

Ali: Oh, so true.

Austin: Oh, that’s so funny.

Art: And then one of the people flying the ship is the lead guy from You're the Worst.

Sylvi: I, I'm not familiar.

Keith: Oh, You're the Worst is pretty good.

Art: Yeah, the blonde guy is, is the, is one of the pilots.

Ali: I think Roy from The Office is an easy get, I'm sorry to say.

Sylvi: He got so upset at him.

Art: The hard get in this movie was Will Smith.

Keith: I knew that was just— I knew—

Austin: No it wasn’t. No, it wasn't. No, it wasn't. It's his movie, Art.

Art: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: He— The hard get was M. Night Shyamalan.

Sylvi: Well, no, what I— What I bet his movie was, was about like a guy coming back from Afghanistan and going camp— Like on a trip with his son, and a plane crashed. Because like, you can remove all the sci-fi shit from this movie—

Austin: Sorry, wait, you don't know the answer to this? Does no one here know what this actually was?

Sylvi: I know that he wanted to add the sci-fi stuff after seeing that concept.

Austin: Art, do you want to explain what this was originally?

Sylvi: But I know that it didn't originally start that way.

Art: Um, the, the story I've heard [**Austin:** This is confirmed.] Is that Will Smith saw like, a survival documentary.

Austin: That's so much— You're already going harder than it actually— A documentary is overselling it.

Keith: Did he watch Bear Grylls?

Austin: He watched the Discovery Channel/Animal Planet original television show I Shouldn't Be Alive, 6 seasons, 58 episodes. He saw an episode while he was watching it with his brother-in-law, Caleb— Khalid Pinkett, who is also one of the producers on the film. And it was about a father and a son crashing a car and then needing to— The son has to go and rescue his father. And then he goes, what if we do that, but it's science fiction?

Sylvi: Oh, so—

Austin: Get Gary Whitta on the phone.

Art: Yeah.

Sylvi: I didn't know that. So my understanding of it was that the description of that episode you gave was the original concept for the movie. Oh, I think I must not— I think I'm misinformed here because you— Yeah, that story is really good, but I don't want it to be, you know.

Art: His production company gets Gary Whitta.

Austin: Who he'd already worked with.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: Whitta writes a full script.

Sylvi: Mm-hmm.

Art: And then Shyamalan rewrites it. And this is one of those things you can tell because of the way the credits are.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: Because it's Gary Whitta and then the word and, M. Night Shyamalan. And yeah, ampersand is people wrote together, “and” is a rewrite. And I think you can tell that Shyamalan did a pretty extensive rewrite on this because a lot of Shyamalan things are in this movie.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: But you know that it must have been extensive because the WGA does not like directors taking writing credits for rewrites. You have to like, really prove it because otherwise directors would try to take writing credits on every movie.

Keith: Right. Because directors are always writing.

Art: Yeah.

Keith: Directing is kind of writing.

Art: To direct a movie is to sort of like, smooth out the script a little bit. And so for him to have gotten that credit, he would've had to do some serious demonstratable work.

Ali: Hmm.

Keith: Maybe he should have saved some time.

Art: I don't know. I think, I think I can pick out the Shyamalan bits and I think they're some of the best bits. And maybe I'm wrong. I of course have not read the draft, or— But like, there's, there's stuff that really feels like him, and I think it's some of the stronger shit in here. Um, like the thing with the bird.

Austin: Right, which, which, yeah, we'll get to.

Sylvi: The Great Eatlon, yeah. Um, we, we— Should we do a recap? I have a recap written down.

Keith: Yes, we should.

Ali: Yeah, sure.

Austin: Um, I do have one other production thing to say, but I think we could say it after, and I think it's fine.

Sylvi: Uh, like most of these recaps, I tried to be both like, this is just a layout of everything that happened in chronological order for the audience who's not watching along. Uh, but I imagine a lot of this stuff is not going to be as in-depth as, uh, we want it to be, and we can jump around— Or not jump around, but we can get into the stuff that we actually want to talk about. I omitted some like, more emotional beats because I figured that would— Not omitted, but like, glaze over them. Um, because I figured we would have actual conversations about that. So. Much like the M. Night classic, Lady in the Water, After Earth starts with a lore drop that feels like the opening cutscene to a mid-budget PS3 game. So, after a brief flash of a spaceship crashing, our protagonist Kitai Cypher, played by Jaden Smith, explains that 1,000 years ago the United Ranger Corps was founded during the evacuation of Earth and led humanity to the colony planet Nova Prime. Unfortunately, an alien species called the S’krell followed them and unleashed a separate evil alien species called the Ursa that see humans by smelling their fear. You have to hold down the left trigger to suppress your emotions or else they'll be able to attack you. Try it now. The guy who invented this emotion suppressing system called ghosting, or emotion suppressing technique called ghosting, just so happens to be Kitai's dad, Prime Commander Cypher Raige, played by Will Smith. No one says it like that, but it feels like you should say it like that. Um, this, uh, also worth noting, uh, I don't know where else to put it, everyone has really weird accents in this. Um, opening cutscene's over and Kitai's doing the tutorial— I mean, training to be a Ranger like his dad. Uh, it's the day that Cypher gets home from deployment and Kitai is really hoping to be made a full-fledged Ranger, but unfortunately he's too emotional and can't cut it. This makes the family dinner really tense. We get a brief glimpse into the

Raige family's very awkward home life. Cypher is about to announce his retirement so he can get more time with his wife, Faia, who does work with something. She's like a— It's like implied she's a scientist, but she kind of plays with like, lights.

Keith: She works on the turbines.

Sylvi: She works on the turbines. Okay. I must have missed the specifics of that. I just was like, cool aftereffects. And Kitai. We're told Kitai is training to be a Ranger in lieu of an actual relationship with his frequently absent father. That, that's how he's reaching for him. So obviously Cypher is like, okay, you're coming with me to, to train the Marines. Uh, on the way there, we got the first of our many flashbacks to Kitai's sister Senshi and her death. While the most normal— Sorry, I'm laughing at the name, not her dying— While the most normal dudes in the universe decide to make this 14-year-old try to do their special Space Marine, uh, emotion suppression trick. It does not go great. Then the ship crashes, and wouldn't you know it, the only survivors are the Raiges. This is where the sci-fi window dressing to me stops mattering, and it just kind of becomes a by-the-numbers wilderness survival story with the like, occasion— Like, to me, we'll get into this, it feels like they're just reminding you that it's in the— It's science fiction sometimes.

Keith: What about when his mood ring suit changes color?

Sylvi: Yeah, that feels like they're just reminding me it's science fiction again. Um, Cypher is unable to walk, and there's no way for the two of them to send an SOS, so it's up to Kitai to go find the other half of the plane— I mean spaceship, not plane, spaceship— And call for help before the wilderness of Earth, uh, which has evolved so everything on it is lethal to humans, kills them both. The rest of the movie is pretty— Is a balance between Kitai traversing through the forest and freaking out whenever he sees anything while his dad tries to make him do cognitive behavioral therapy exercises over their like, communication system. Um, It's— There's also, you know, at one point their communication system gets knocked out and it's a more literal like, barrier between them. But it is, it is, uh, most of the characterization is, uh, I would say between the, um, the various levels, uh, that you have to go through in this, the aforementioned PS3

game in my mind. Um, while the two of them sort of reconnect and deal with the grief of, uh, the, the shared grief over the death of Senshi. With all that out of the way, I'm gonna list out the various trials of Kitai Raige. Uh, they are as follows: climbing up a slippery cliff face. Making sure he takes his futuristic inhaler with lung coating in it once every 24 hours. Encountering a monkey, immediately losing his shit and throwing a rock at its head. Running away from the monkey and its squad because he threw a rock at its head. Getting poisoned by a freaky little river leech that forces him to use his EpiPen when his body goes numb. Having to skydive because he broke two of his little inhaler pods. Uh, failing the skydiving minigame and getting attacked by an eagle and brought to its nest. Trying to defend the giant eagle's chicks from some very Scrunt-y saber-toothed tigers who are trying to eat them and also failing to do so. Being haunted by his dead sister/guilt while he takes a little raft down a river. Almost freezing to death on a mountain but being saved by that same giant eagle from earlier who freezes to death in his place. And engaging in a final boss fight with the Ursa where he learns to ghost and symbolically avenge his sister in a really underwhelming action sequence. After all this, he earns the ultimate good boy's delight: a salute from his father. The movie ends with the two embracing on the rescue ship and joking that he wants to work with his mom instead. 700 gamerscore total, missed out on a couple of achievements by failing the skydiving game and the saber-tooth encounters, but you can just use chapter select to get those if you really want a perfect score.

Keith: Um, I want to say, you know, I'm glad that we brought, like, Lady in the Water up, that this is extremely video game-y right from the start. Uh, I wrote very early on that, like, the whole movie is constructed exactly like a video game, down to having a bodiless guide to tutorialize you and guide you through the world.

Austin: Will Smith as Cortana.

Art: Well, they were definitely gonna make a video game, right?

Sylvi: Like 100%.

Austin: There's apparently a number of books that did come out. And a game—

Sylvi: Oh, I was gonna mention this.

Art: Yeah, we talked about this before.

Austin: Was made, for iOS.

Sylvi: Oh my God.

Austin: Yeah, I think it's long gone now.

Keith: But the, uh, the other thing is that I, I think that Sylvi, by recapping, you've actually done the movie a favor by, um, implying that there is some sort of progress between the father and son duo and their relationship at a certain point.

Sylvi: It just fixes itself, yeah.

Keith: And the movie is— Will— Okay. Will Smith is so unbelievably unlikable in this movie. I don't know why a guy who for so many years seemed to like, have a really strong hold of his image is making a movie where he is just an absolute fucking asshole.

Art: Well, it’s because he wants to get his kid over.

Sylvi: Yeah, I was literally about to say the exact same thing.

Keith: Sorry, he wants what?

Art: He wants to— He wants to launch Jaden. It's—

Keith: Yeah, but the movie doesn't do it.

Art: He's working heel so his kid could be the babyface.

Sylvi: Thank you.

Keith: But they've got one to hold. But the— But the— He reconciles to, like, with the heel. He doesn't— Like, the heel doesn't reconcile with the son.

Sylvi: Sometimes this happens.

Keith: The son goes, I have to prove to my dad that he's right and that all the stuff he thought was good is good and that I can, I can do it on his terms. Uh, one of the big things that bugs me about this movie is at the end, Sylvi, you talked about when they— When their communication gets cut off, there's almost like a, like a, link between the father and the son where Will Smith is, like, begging Jaden to do the things that he's supposed to do right. And then we see Jaden do it, and it's sort of like the movie kind of erasing the possibility that Kitai will become like, a man on his own terms. And then we'll just sort of like, be kind of an independent avatar of, uh, Cypher Raige's will.

Sylvi: The names are so funny.

Keith: Yeah, it's really funny.

Austin: Raige, R-A-I-G-E, for the listener.

Keith: They sometimes pronounce it Raige, but also they also pronounce it Rage.

Sylvi: Yeah, well, that's—

Austin: Yeah,

Art: But also the accent work in this movie is completely—

Keith: Especially Jaden, it's really weird and bad.

Austin: Well, that's because Jaden already has an unplaceable voice in many ways because I think of the shape of his life as the child of some very rich people who themselves have accents that are actually very placeable. And so I think he's like, you know, Will Smith is his dad, but he didn't grow up in Philly. You know what I mean?

Keith: Right.

Austin: His voice is already— You could go watch some behind-the-scenes stuff from him of this era, and you're like, it's a little LA, but it's not LA, you know? It's a little Will Smith's kid, but it's not Will Smith's kid.

Art: But it sounds like he's half doing English in this. He's doing like—

Austin: Well, that's intentional, right?

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: There is— They made— They hired a dialect coach to invent an accent that gathers and combines different elements of Earth, current Earth accents into something supposedly new, representing that over 1,000 years there has been a sort of blend. I think it's— It's on paper comparable to something like the Beltalowda of The Expanse, another science fiction series that is interested in the way language changes over time and space.

Keith: They should have all talked like Tom Hanks in Cloud Atlas.

Austin: I mean, that's another— Listen, that stuff sucks, but it's another good comparison in the sense of like, there was a systematized swing at what might language sound like in a future, or how do we communicate the idea that language has shifted. This really just comes across as someone who is slipping in and out of various accents.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: Because there is some Caribbean, there is some British, there are times when just Will Smith, black-ass Will Smith, is talking to you the way he talks to you or me. When I say times, I don't mean scenes, I mean words in a sentence where the rest of the sentence he is pulling on Caribbean or, or, you know, British English or South African or Australian. It's a mess.

Keith: And yet, even at operating—

Sylvi: And it's so interesting to see how— Go ahead, sorry, go ahead. I was just gonna say it's so interesting at the beginning when there is a larger cast, seeing the way it, it like, manifests in different people. The like, instructor at the beginning, it's almost like, a Mid-Atlantic accent on him. Um, it's— I don't know, it was the one thing that I just kept.

Austin: That is apparently— Supposedly there are supposed to be different versions of this accent. I believe the word that I, I heard was that if you were from a lower class, it was more guttural, whereas if you're from the upper class like Will Smith's character, it is elegant.

Art: No, you don't have enough space in this movie for this.

Austin: I agree. Well, that's the thing, Art. Yeah, it's for the books and the sequel, right?

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: Much like the worldbuilding of this movie, their accents just bleed away by the time you get to the middle point of it, and they're just talking to each other. Which, like, I— It is what makes this movie compelling in the first 20 minutes because, like—

Sylvi: It's so weird.

Ali: The strange, like, monoculture, familiar without being familiar, that you're just kind of like, huh? It can be a second screen sometimes. when the dialogue is being, you know, performed that way in a way that I think kind of heightens what they're going for. It's just a shame that there were not like, more of a cast in this movie, like, other characters that talk to them sometimes, or like, even just like, an attempt to keep it going through the entire runtime.

Keith: It's so weird that the, that the movie is like get, get Jaden Smith on his own in the woods.

Sylvi: It's wild.

Austin: That's— Yeah, I mean, so this is the thing that I think I was gonna say about production. I spent the last six episodes of this, uh, this podcast— Which I adore, it's one of my favorite podcasts— Um, uh, listening to Art and Keith quietly and then more loudly have a debate about who does acting, who's in charge of acting, whose fault is it when acting is bad. Art, you have repeatedly made the case that it is the director's responsibility to make sure the acting isn't bad. And then Keith, you've made the case that it is an actor's job to take material that is sometimes serious and sometimes laughable and to nail both of those. And sometimes they have to learn how to blend both of those, even when the director isn't giving them good direction.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: I have generally— I'm generally on Art's side with this, especially for non-principal actors. For instance, if someone's feeding themselves to a lion, I think that that is on the— That is the director's responsibility, because the person who was cast to feed themselves to a lion is not someone who you can count on. Their acting ability is up to the director to— Let me finish my thought, Keith.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: It's up to the director to step in in that situation and say, hey, that take wasn't good enough. That's not what I'm looking for. Let's do a couple more, and then to pick the right one, and if you can't pick it, to edit around it in some way that prevents the bad thing from, from hitting the screen.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: However, this movie is just about as good of a wrench to throw into that model, and it's a wrench I love to throw because it's an economic wrench. It's a material, financial wrench, which is, sometimes the bad actor's dad is paying for the movie. Sometimes the bad actor's dad came to you and said, I have gotten Sony to sign off on this. I have a script. We're making this movie.

Art: Your last movie kind of bombed.

Austin: You're gonna be the director. Your last— yeah, 100%. Uh, and I'm Will Smith. And, and actually, look, Karate Kid did pretty good. Pursuit of Happiness, which Jaden Smith was also in as an age-appropriate kid—

Keith: Won an Oscar, right?

Austin: Yeah, did great. Yeah, so maybe this is it. Maybe this is the big swing. And, and I think at that point the producer— And this isn't just, it's a rich dad nepotism thing. I think the, the, the one thing that can really complicate things is overeager producers, overeager studio execs, uh, who get in the way. And, and so, you know, I think we are— We're now into—

Keith: The tickets are all the producers, basically.

Austin: 100%. 100%. So I don't know— If I'm M. Night in this situation and I'm getting these takes from Jaden Smith, I don't know what I do.

Keith: Yeah, I think that there— Obviously, here's the thing. I think there's an imaginary buck. I think that you can say that the buck stops with the director, right? The actor's job is to do the material, do the best work they can with what they have, but then it's the director's job to say, no, do it again, when it's not good. But you can't count on a director to be good in the same way that you can't count on an actor to act. And so it's sort of everybody's responsibility to be doing their job right. [**Austin:** Sure, of course.] And my— I think the point that I always am trying to make with the acting is like, at some point, the actor's the one who did it.

Austin: Well, here's the thing, Keith. This is why it has to be the director. The actor doesn't decide which take goes in the movie. The actor might have done it and you didn't get to see it. The director decided they liked the other take better. That's why it's the director. Imagine if I made you redo scenes for Friends at the Table and then I didn't ask you which one to include in the final edit.

Keith: Yeah, I just, I don't think that that takes away from that it's the actor's body doing the acting.

Austin: Sure, of course, of course. It's about responsibility, not about, you know, presence or cooperation. My point being here that, like, I think this is a great example of where art's limited because the director does not have final authority in the same way that he might want, or the ability to do the feedback on what's happening in front of him. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe, maybe he was like a real hard director. Maybe he actually pushed Jaden to do this—

Keith: Better. Yeah, maybe.

Austin: In which case, I'm glad because I wouldn't want to see this but with worse acting.

Art: And you don't want to be— You don't want to end up being Kubrick. You don't want to be Stanley Kubrick being like, we're gonna do this. We're gonna do every scene 40 times until everyone hates it.

Austin: Right.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: Because like, I believe that— Because Kubrick is on record as like, sort of believing that you get the good performance when the actor is exhausted. And that's not a good way to be someone's boss. It's about pretending. Acting is about pretending.

Keith: I also think, you know, I don't know if Will Smith comes across as too soft on his kids with not high enough expectations for his son's career.

Art: Um, have you heard this Will Smith story that like, went around a week or two ago?

Keith: No.

Austin: No.

Art: About Willow?

Austin: No.

Keith: No.

Art: Okay, so, uh, as you might remember, Willow Smith had a hit song some time ago.

Keith: Oh, yeah.

Art: Maybe about when this movie was out. I don't know. No, probably before.

Sylvi: No.

Art: Um, Willow Smith had a hit song, uh, [**Keith:** Whip Your Hair?] Whip Your Hair.

Austin: Whip My Hair.

Art: Whip My Hair. And, um, after doing this song, she was— Got a, got a, a job opening for Jay-Z. And I need to figure out how old she is because it sort of affects the story, but she's young.

Austin: She's born in 2000.

Sylvi: Yeah. She's—

Keith: So they should have been 11.

Art: She should have been 11.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: Uh, or maybe she's 12, right? But she's a little— She's, she's young. And Jada is the one who's traveling with Willow. Jada is Willow's mom. Jada is married to Will Smith, if you don't know this somehow. And they switch, they switch, the parents switch who's traveling. And Willow comes to Will and says, I don't want to do this anymore. And Willow says— and Will Smith's like, well, you have an agreement with Mr. Jay-Z, or however they say it. That's how I would say it.

Keith: I would say Mr. Jay-Z.

Austin: Mr. Carter, I think, famously.

Art: Mr. Carter. And Willow responds, no, you have an agreement with Mr. Carter. I'm 11.

Keith: Great point. Smart kid, sounds like.

Austin: Smart kid.

Art: And they, like, from what I understand from the story, like, they don't settle the disagreement. But the next morning, Willow cut off all her hair. And Will Smith's like, okay, I guess we're done. We're going to go home. And I think that's like, a reasonable insight to what the parenting is like in the Pinkett-Smith household.

Austin: Wow. I found this. Yeah. No, Daddy, you promised, Mr. Jay-Z. And I was like, this is Will Smith telling the story. And I was like, sweetie, I get it, but we promised as a family and you have to finish. She looked at me. I'll never forget the look in her eyes. And she was like, it doesn't matter to you that I'm finished, Daddy? Will Smith continues. And I was like, well, yes, sweetie, it matters, but you can't be finished. And she was like, oh, okay. And then she— Then she— I quote, we got back to the hotel and Jada had just left. So I'm there, it's my first night of daddy duty. And Willow came out the next morning and she had shaved her head bald in the middle of her Whip My Hair tour. She had shaved her head bald and it was like a magical moment. I was like, got it.

Sylvi: Wow.

Austin: Woof.

Keith: I mean, I just think it's, uh, it's terrible to put your kids in that position.

Austin: Yep. Uh-huh.

Keith: In the first place. And so this is why I'm like, like, you know, uh, not if you— I, I could see that this— I could see that this movie could be playing out in real life. The themes of this movie [**Austin:** Right.] Are a kid under enormous pressure from an

insane, completely emotionally detached father who the world agrees is the best guy of all time. And—

Art: And who was very talented at a very young age.

Keith: Who was very talented at a very young age. And he's just not quite there. On paper, it seems to work, but in practice, it's not working right. It almost feels deliberately identical to, to the actual father and son relationship that is offscreen. That's— You could imagine, you could imagine that it is deliberately identical to that. And I could even imagine Will Smith going like, well, if he can't pull it out— If he can't pull something real out of actually doing our real relationship onscreen, then maybe he's just not an actor.

Austin: Right.

Keith: That's a pretty high-stakes situation.

Austin: It's kind of funny because I think in the time since this movie came out, Will Smith has been in the public eye almost explicitly for big emotional moments. [**Keith:** Yeah.] Um, the slap obviously—

Keith: He could have killed Chris Rock.

Austin: But even the Red Table conversation stuff with— Yeah, with Jada around the their relationship and all of that, him crying. There's a real emotion, it turns out, maybe not a choice in the way that it is framed as in the big monologue here.

Keith: And you can feel very, very strongly that it is a choice until all of a sudden you're in the news again and again for your life kind of being a disaster.

Ali: I— It occurs to me though that, like, I mean, Will Smith also built his career off of, like, the emotional son who wants to do things by his own way and the militant dad.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Um, you know, shoutouts to—

Keith: Shoutouts to cycles?

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Well, except that that's the difference though, Ali, right? Which you're— I'm guessing you're teeing up— Is that's a show that often does allow— Not always, but often allows Will— We're talking about Fresh Prince of Bel-Air— Will to be his own person in the end and to find ways— Like, sometimes Uncle Phil is right, sometimes Uncle Phil is wrong, but often they're both right and wrong and they find some synthesis in the final act of the episode where they realize they're actually allied against a third party, or they were both overreacting, or— They both have to meet somewhere in the middle. And this is not really a meet somewhere in the middle movie. It is a, can Kitai become the man he wants to be, which is his father?

Keith: Um, which is being the man that his father wants him to be.

Austin: Right. I, I don't know. It's so unclear what his father wants outside of be sad.

Ali: I think it's kind of tough to make it that black and white through their relationship because like, I mean, obviously the stress of wanting to be his dad is there, but it's not even just wanting to be his dad. It's wanting to be better than his dad and better than the person that he was in his worst moment when his sister died, and he could not get over the fear of that. And the literal fear that he has is like, the end of humanity, and like, it's going to keep him from being able to perform as he wants to. You know what I mean?

Keith: I read those moments as anger at, like, I'm trying to be you. Everyone's telling me that I'm not good enough. And so, I'm going to find the ways that actually you're not good enough. And that, like, that's kind of this reaction to being told that you're failing.

Ali: There's something like, you know, you can't deny that this is sort of like, a coming-of-age film for Kitai. And we start with him being like, the kid who is so ambitious and so stubborn that he is— Running in front of his commander like, training grouper, essentially, because he wants to put himself out there. He wants to beat his dad's best

time. He is overexerting himself for this level of perfection that he is only putting on himself.

Keith: Are you saying— I don't think he's only putting it on himself.

Ali: That he's inherited at all. The fact that it is the shadow of his father is not something that you can get away from. But I think, you know, the, like, Kitai— You know, a failure or some of the question of, like— And the big mountain peak moment where he's like, I'm not a coward. You're a coward. I'm going to go do this thing anyway, even though you're telling me to come home, is Kitai, like, rebelling against his father and against his own emotions in that way. And the way that he is, like, able to complete that mission despite his father's doubt in him initially is him becoming his own man. I don't think that like, his father being like, you were having a tantrum in this moment, and I wish that you did the thing that the military and I told you to, and like, just take a breather, is so much like, oh, he is only able to create himself in this image of his father, and not just like, no, you are a child who needs emotional regulation. And like, whether or not the aliens can sense your emotional regulation is a fact about becoming an adult. You know, that's—

Art: Yeah, it's weird to have it embodied in that way because you're right, it does make him correct.

Austin: He has to— He has to overcome all this negativity to not get eaten.

Art: He has to do this thing because otherwise he'll be eaten by this weird space bear.

Austin: Yeah, but that's the thing is the, the actual— It is, it is a movie on one level about a kid who wants approval from his father, but really neither— They're— That's a sublimated second thing, right? What they are both sublimating is their guilt about Senshi dying. Because Kitai is there and he's like, why couldn't I save her? Maybe if I was more like my dad, I could have saved her. And I was weak and pathetic, and she died because I stayed inside in the fucking bubble. And his father is— Raige— Sorry, Cypher. Cypher, right?

Art: Mr. Raige to—

Austin: Mr. Raige.

Sylvi: Mr. Raige, wow.

Austin: Is away, and he's absent the whole time, so he wasn't there to save her. And so he has created distance from his son and from his family so that he doesn't have to confront the fact that he is actually— That, you know, if he had been there, he could have saved her, right? And so both of them have like, offloaded those guilts onto this terrible relationship. You know, he wants his son to be like him because that's what life looks like, successful life and protecting your family and all of that. But what he really wants is, or what he really needs, is to get over the emotional distance he's placed between him and his family. This is why the big moment at the end is a hug between the two of them, and it's a hug that Kitai has to initiate, but then he's willing to hug back instead of this crisp military salute from the— After being held up by somebody else. I think, Ali, I think that you're right that it doesn't boil down completely into that. What it never does is say, and either of them could move in the world to a different modality or different posture. The way to survive in the world is to be someone who can close off fear and emotion when the monsters who eat fear and who eat you when they smell your fear and emotion show up. I think that, like Art was just saying, that does limit how far you can push the metaphor. But they do both come to terms with their grief, which is, I guess, the actual A-plot, emotionally.

Art: Well, it is and it isn't because, because they drip-feed it to you so slowly.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: You know, it— You— It's like, bad screenwriting to have the most important thing in the movie not become super clear until like, midway through the second act.

Austin: 60 minutes in or something, yeah.

Art: Yeah. It's the opposite of it really kills the momentum of a, of a play when everyone takes a bow.

Austin: Oh, that's what this movie is about, you say 70 minutes in, yeah.

Art: Yeah, I mean, like, they, they allude to it and like, you know, like there's something there, but the— I bet at that point you've seen these two like be shitty to each other. And I guess I think these two being shitty, it's mostly one way.

Keith: Yeah. It's mostly Will Smith being shitty.

Art: Right. You mostly see an adult being shitty to a 14-year-old.

Keith: Yeah, that's the—

Art: And then at some point you're like, well, maybe he's got a point. Maybe that nine-year-old should have fought that monster.

Keith: Yeah. That's so— That's the, that's the part of this that like is so frustrating and depressing and irritating to me is that, you know, after the tryouts where he fails to be military police or whatever the fuck the Rangers are, you know—

Art: No, they're like hunters.

Keith: They're the government.

Sylvi: They're like, everything.

Keith: Yeah. And the, um, the dinner that they have, like, it's very clear that their home life is, uh, what the— Kitai is a, is a cadet. He is my subordinate. And that is how he treats him at home. He's like, he has to ask for permission and call him sir. And like, you know, he can't be excused from the table because he didn't ask right. You know, this is an insane man. And the source of this rage is that he's taken his own guilt about not saving the kid. And like, Art, you just said, he's put it on the son. The son should have saved the daughter. The daughter was an adult. She was already a Ranger. Uh, Kitai was a kid. He was hiding in a glass bubble. And, uh, they have this climactic scene of like, what did you want me to do? And Will Smith says like, it's not what I wanted you to do. What do you want to have done? And that is a wormy, mealy-mouthed way of saying, yes, I did want you to go and try to kill the thing. I wanted you to disobey your sister's orders to help and try to save her, and then eventually and inevitably die in the

process. And the reason that that's such an important scene is that that is what leads to him jumping off the cliff. So even when he's quote-unquote disobeying his father to go rogue on the mission to try to save the father, he's actually exactly following his father's orders, which is in order to save the day, you should disobey— Have disobeyed your order to risk your own life. And so even by jumping off the cliff in rebellion of his father, he's actually exactly fulfilled the thing that he was supposed to do, which is be a self-sacrificing hero in order to save the day as a kid.

Ali: I don't think that that scene is as clear as you think it is. I—

Keith: I think it's crystal clear.

Ali: I don’t think—

Austin: I'm also with you, Ally.

Ali: Yeah. I, you know, not to say that you have to hand it to Cypher Raige or whatever here, but like—

Sylvi: Under no circumstances.

Ali: When you say that he is an insane person, I think that— And when you say that they have a home life, it is important to say that they don't have a home life. They have literally not seen each other for years.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: He has only been in a military environment and does not know how to, you know, speak or live or, you know, be emotional with these people, be intimate, like— And even in the, like, hey, how was your day today? Like, the energy that his son brings in is like, I was a failure. I didn't do this test. Like, I'm disappointed with myself. Like, there's no— There's not an opportunity in that scene for them to not talk about the military. There isn't. And like, how, you know, I'm not saying that Raige makes a— or Cypher makes a good decision there, and that like, you're not supposed to look at that scene and be like, what the fuck is wrong with this dude? But like, there is an emotional weight there that

you can't— Like, you, you know, this— The wounds are on both of them. Like, you know, they're both hurt.

Keith: Will Smith is an adult and is a general of the government.

Ali: I know. I mean, I know, but like, at this— Like, it's been years. They don't have a home life. They don't have a rapport. They don't have any other way to talk to each other.

Keith: I totally agree that being in the military, being away from your family, that does something to you. But I don't think there's a reading where you're like, oh, well, I get why Will Smith is like this because he's had it so hard not being near his family.

Austin: It's not— I'm sorry, it's not, he's had it so hard. It's, he has not ever been away that isn't military-directed. He was never socialized the way families are supposed to have been socialized, apparently.

Ali: Right, yeah. It's a transitional thing. He doesn't have any other way of speaking to people. This is the way that he speaks to people for years. He has been put on a pedestal in this society and is the General guy.

Keith: I agree. I just don't see how that changes what I said, I guess, is what I'm—

Ali: Well, because the flip side of that is also him saying, like, it does not matter what I thought of you in that situation is A, because Will Smith blames himself for that situation. That's part of, you know, the whole theme of the movie. But also, like, again, when fear is legitimized and like, emotional processing is something that you need to like, develop, like—

Keith: Okay—

Ali: Environmentally to, you know, to survive in the universe. The thing of like, the way that you feel about that situation is something that you have to grapple with yourself. And like, I think that he's being a father figure in that moment by saying that. That's not like, oh, but I'm secretly saying that I don't like you. It's, you were in that situation. You

have to decide what that means for you and what that means for your future, and the decisions that you make in the future, because you're the one who is in danger. I can't help you.

Keith: I think— Okay, I want to draw a thread here. At the very beginning of the movie, the wife, uh, whose name I forget because they only— I think they only say it twice. [**Sylvi:** Faia.] Uh, yeah, yeah. Um, she introduces the idea that, uh, Kitai thinks that the father blames him, that Cypher blames him for, um, Senshi's death. And then they have this explosive moment on the— At the waterfall. And, uh, uh, Kitai says, I, I know that you blame me. And the way that I read that scene is that he goes like, yeah, I kind of do. I kind of do blame you.

Austin: Yeah, I don't— That I don't read it that way.

Keith: We can play this. We have— I have the clip. We can play the clip.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Keith: Uh, I hope I have the whole clip. I don't remember.

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. I just rewatched it to make sure I felt the same way about it that I do.

[audio from After Earth starts playing]

> **Kitai:** You wouldn't give any other Ranger that order!
>
> **Cypher:** You are not a Ranger, and I'm giving you that order.
>
> **Kitai:** What was I supposed to do? What did you want me to do? She gave me an order. She said no matter what, don't come out of that box. Was I supposed to just come out and die?
>
> **Cypher:** What do you think, Cadet? What do you think you should have done? Because really, that is all that matters. What do you think you should have done?

Kitai: And where were you? She called out for you. She called your name, and you weren't there because you're never there. And you think I'm a coward? You're wrong. I'm not a coward. You're the coward!

Austin: His accent.

Kitai: I'm not a coward!

[audio ends]

Austin: Like, he is saying what Will Smith is thinking about himself. What was I supposed to do?

Keith: Yeah.

Art: Can I quickly say that I think that this scene would have been really good if one of the people in it wasn't just shouting in an inscrutable accent? Like, with just any finesse in this scene, it would have— Like, this is, I think, a Shyamalan scene. And of course, I don't know and could never prove it. And I think that this scene would have worked if it wasn't just being yelled.

Keith: It's also— I think it's, it's also, uh, Jaden's best acting in the movie, which is not saying—

Art: Okay. That’s the tallest molehill I've ever seen. I mean, what are we saying here?

Keith: I'm, I'm saying it to agree with you. This is the best he does. We started— It doesn't get better than this for him.

Ali: You didn't think he was good when he was like, oh, my face is so swollen. I'm scared. Come and help me.

Keith: So, I, I, like—

Austin: He just doesn't have it.

Art: He just doesn’t have it.

Keith: When your son says, I know you blame me for her death. I know you think I'm a coward. And he just doesn't say anything. Like, what else is that supposed to do? Like—

Austin: He does say something. He says, what do you think, cadet? What do you think you should have done? Which again is like—

Keith: Yeah, and then that's where the whole coward thing, and he just says nothing. He literally said nothing. You think I'm a coward. I'm not a coward.

Austin: No, he thinks— In the moment, he's like, you're right, I was a coward. I'm a coward for not being there for my family. That's what that scene is about.

Keith: But there's such a huge beat in between, you think I'm a coward, and, you're the coward. There's plenty of space for a father to say, I don't think you're a coward. I don't think that you should have gone and thrown your life away to save your sister.

Sylvi: Yeah, he's—

Art: Cypher Raige is a terrible parent.

Austin: Yes, you're reading that as the film saying, that that's true, that he should have gotten out of the bubble and saved his sister?

Keith: I think that Will Smith— That Cypher Raige, blames himself for not being there. And in order to not live that truth, instead lives in the blame of his son instead. That's what I'm saying.

Austin: I think he lives in the, in the absence of familial affection and feeling. I don't know that he's saying you should have gotten out, because if that's what it was, this is a movie where he would have said, yes, I do. That's what a Ranger would've done. This is why you aren't a Ranger yet. And he doesn't, but he can't even say that.

Keith: But he's the best.

Art: And if you're listening to this podcast and you work for Overbrook Entertainment and would like to sell us the rights to this franchise for basically no money, we'll buy 'em.

Keith: I think that that's what's so strange and illegible about this movie to me is that it's about Will Smith— About Cypher Raige detaching himself from the emotion that would make him capable of responding in kind to his son, to defend himself, or to attack the son, or to correct the son, to correct the record, to do anything.

Sylvi: [whispering[Attack the son.

Keith: And instead, he sits there in silence. He can't do it or won't do it. And then the movie's position on that is, well, that's what lets Cypher Raige be the best?

Art: Raige.

Keith: That's what lets Cypher Raige be the best.

Art: Well, it's tricky, right? Because the movie is, I think, pretty explicitly saying that his disconnection from his emotions makes Cypher Raige a terrible parent. And then later it says, well, but you have to be able to disconnect yourself from your emotions to beat the space bears. And so it's good to do that.

Austin: Well, that's the problem is the scene we're talking about is 50 minutes into the movie. And the question for me isn't, okay, you know, like the final judgment of the film is what happens 90 minutes into the movie, which is when he's doing the brain connection with his son— Not literal, but he's like, all right, now do this, now— And he's doing it. And he's worried about his son and he's dying. That's the moment where the movie is saying what it believes. And what seems like what it believes is that the future belongs to Jaden Smith, Kitai Raige is going to be the Luke Skywalker of our era. And unfortunately, that's not true. And because it's so invested in making him have a very boring fight with a space bear instead of Will Smith's character, who is not the protagonist of the film, having an emotional breakthrough, we just kind of have to handwave that they reconcile through Kitai's success. [**Keith:** Sure.] But it doesn't come back to— You know what I mean? This scene that we're talking about is the moment in

the film, 49 minutes in, where their relationship is supposed to be at its most heightened and contradictory, where they are supposed to be at each other's throats. And where he is— The reason that he doesn't say anything in those gaps is because he hasn't transformed yet into a father who can say, of course I don't blame you, I love you. That's the journey he's supposed to be on.

Keith: Well, that's the thing. Art says that they set him up as a terrible father, and we have this climactic moment, but the, but the story doesn't resolve that part of the story. It in fact affirms Cypher Raige's whole position.

Art: Well, but then Cypher— But they have their moment after, and because we're at 100 minutes and M. Night Shyamalan has to end the movie, they can't—

Keith: But their moment isn't, uh, they said like, son, you were enough as you are. You always would have been enough. It was like, no, you had to prove you could beat the monster first. After going through like, an almost metaphysical killing of yourself, sublimating yourself psychically to my will as commander.

Art: Well, but unfortunately you do have to kill the monster in this movie. The monster is a metaphor, but you do have to—

Keith: You do have to actually kill— Well, here's what I was thinking.

Art: Because if the movie was Cypher Raige says to Kitai, you know what? It's okay that you are the way you are. You're my son and I love you. And then the space bear just fucking ate him. It's actually not the best of endings.

Austin: He could have felt so big that the bear was overwhelmed by his feelings, right? That's like a classic way that you could— You take the premise, which is, oh, you have to hide your emotions, and instead you have the special boy who jacks— He's an anti-ghost. He's a whatever the opposite of a ghost is. A living person, right? And then that overwhelms the Ursa. So you could have done that. Instead, the only resolution we get is him saying, I want to work with Mom, and Cypher saying, me too, and kissing his face.

Sylvi: And having the weirdest laugh in the world.

Austin: Oh, it's such a weird laugh.

Keith: What a bad ending.

Sylvi: I like the weird laugh. I think the weird laugh is good, actually.

Austin: Which is a dub for Cypher, though. He does not have to go be a Ranger. He can go be a scientist.

Keith: It's true, but he also in Act 1 already wanted to do that. He was like, I'm gonna retire and work with you. So no growth there.

Austin: He should have cut off all his hair.

Sylvi: Uh, I think that the, the angle of the, like, he's the special boy who can do this at will and is also still very emotional would have been the main thing in a sequel to this.

Austin: You're totally right.

Keith: I— What I was feeling in the first, in the, in the, in act 2 is I wanted the, uh, for um, Will's— for, for— I can't even say the word— Cypher. I wonder for Cypher—

Sylvi: Cypher Raige.

Keith: Uh, to be— To unknowingly be producing the fear pheromone. He's not even aware that he's afraid for his son. And while he's watching for the Ursa around his son, it's actually locked onto him. And then he realizes that he cares for his own son.

Austin: Right. I care for my own son. Yeah, I thought that's— I fully did think that that's where it was going, Keith.

Keith: That would have been a much better choice, I think. Um, but that didn't happen.

Art: Um, I guess it— But it is true that you have to like, look at this as this was going to be a— They— This was going to be a trilogy.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: And so perhaps that we just didn't see the end of these arcs.

Keith: I feel like I don't have to look at this as shit. I have to— I think I can look at this exactly as what is on the screen.

Art: Look, I watched this movie twice.

Sylvi: This is not shit.

Art: And that's enough. I had to watch it a second time because the Dodgers played an 18-inning baseball game the night I decided to watch this. I took a big break in the middle and then was like, you know, maybe I didn't do this movie enough credit by stopping for 40 minutes in the middle.

Keith: Hmm.

Art: And it turns out—

Austin: No, you’re fine.

Art: It turns out that this movie does have a slightly better pace if you don't stop watching it for 40 minutes and watch a baseball game and come back.

Keith: I mean, it's a huge improvement off of The Last Airbender in a lot of ways.

Austin: That's the other thing. The context of me watching this was right after Last Airbender, which is one of the worst films I'd ever watched. And so— Like, genuinely, I was shocked by how competent some of the adventure and action sequences were here. Not the big final fight, but things like the skydiving.

Keith: I really liked the skydiving.

Austin: It was pretty compelling.

Keith: Yeah, totally. I really liked the skydiving. I thought— So it made me think a lot about— Because we watched The Happening, then we watched The Last Airbender, and then we watched this.

Austin: You said on here that people can go listen to us talk about The Last Airbender on Patreon, right?

Keith: Yes, that, that, that has been up for a week and a half as of recording.

Austin: Okay.

Keith: So I actually put up at the beginning of The Happening, I gave a note saying that people could go to friendsatthetable.cash to listen to our watch-along of The Last Airbender. But like— So I thought The Happening for me was an easier watch because it was pretty boring. It was not— Didn't make me angry. It was just stupid and boring and kind of stupid. Uh, The Last Airbender, it's hard because we were watching it together and that was kind of fun and laughing at it. But again, it was just a deeply boring, pretty nonsensical movie. Totally bizarrely constructed, almost broken, completely broken as a film. Uh, nothing made sense. Everything was weird. Um, but it didn't make me angry. It was too stupid to be angry at, I think.

Austin: I would watch this movie again before I watched The Last Airbender, even with you, my good friends. That was so fucking boring and bad. It was so terrible.

Keith: It was really boring. Rewatch— The idea of a rewatch throws me for a loop, but because I would— I really— I'm like, I wouldn't rewatch any of these. This movie made me really angry. The father-son stuff, I just— Just made me so irritated from beginning to end. It only got worse. Nothing makes me angrier than a poorly done father-son story.

Art: Yeah, well, I mean, we all know about the website names you've, you've bought in this area.

Keith: You can go to fuckdads.com.

Austin: Yeah. Is that still up? It's not up anymore, Keith.

Keith: That's gotta be up, yeah.

Austin: I don't— The site cannot be reached.

Keith: What?

Austin: You gotta get on that. Talk to your host.

Keith: I thought I just paid for it like, two months ago. Maybe something like, weird happened with the, uh, the renewal. All right. I'll, I'll look into that. That was up until last month.

Ali: Uh, I want to issue a correction that supports my argument, but basically doesn't matter.

Keith: Okay.

Ali: The mom never says he thinks that you blame him for this.

Austin: No, he does. She does. Doesn't she?

Ali: Does she? No, she says she blames himself and he needs a father.

Keith: Oh yeah.

Austin: Wait, is that what you said?

Keith: I guess I said that he thinks that you blame him.

Austin: Oh, I see.

Keith: But it was just that he blames himself.

Austin: Yeah, he blames himself, okay. Yeah. Okay.

Keith: Uh, that is still an introduction to that plot point, but yeah, it isn't, it isn't exactly what I thought it was.

Art: Um, can I, can I jump off from here to something that's a bit of a tangent?

Ali: Sure.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: I mean, okay.

Art: Well, I just— Because all of— Every M. Night Shyamalan film, with the exception of The Last Airbender, I suppose, is sort of about— Not about motherhood, but motherhood is like, a recurring theme. And then this script, the mother character as written is, is too thin and doesn't have enough time. And so they— So Shyamalan has to like, get his mother stuff in with the bird. The, the bird as the surrogate mother for Kitai. It like, gets the Shyamalan— I assume—

Sylvi: Yeah, I'm pretty sure that was a great Eatlon, actually.

Art: But what's that?

Sylvi: I'm pretty sure that was a great Eatlon, actually. But, um, yeah, sure.

Art: And that's a scene that I think works. I think the scene in the, the, the, the scene in the nest is sort of silly, but then that, like, with her, she, she clearly mistakes him for her baby.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: While he's skydiving, takes him to the nest. The rest of her babies are killed by the Snarfs, and then—

Sylvi: Scrunts!

Art: Scrunt.

Keith: Scrunt and Narf.

Art: Scrunt and Narf, sorry. Her babies are killed by the, by the Scrunts.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: And then her last baby she saves at the cost of her own life.

Austin: Sorry, just be clear, they're not actually Scrunts, right? I'm not misremembering it.

Sylvi: No, they're not actually Scrunts.

Austin: They're just tigers or something.

Keith: There's like these weird tigers, and then a few scenes earlier on the Ursa monitor drones, there's a hyena that looks even more like the Scrunt.

Austin: Okay, I just wanted to make sure I wasn't missing a different cinematic universe emerging that we didn't know about.

Sylvi: No, this is just my theory.

Art: And of course these are digital and the Scrunts were practical.

Austin: Famously.

Art: Yeah, yeah, yeah. But yeah, that's, that's, that's, I think, that's, I think, a Shyamalan touch. And I think it's, it's, it works. It worked on me. It's a very, it's a very sweet scene, and I'm glad that it got in there.

Keith: It felt a little magical out of nowhere.

Sylvi: Yes.

Art: I think magical out of nowhere is the, is the thing.

Keith: Yeah, it is. It— Yeah.

Art: That is how Shyamalan wants to talk about motherhood at this point.

Sylvi: The thing that I thought—

Art: Earlier he wanted to have a little more nuanced discussion of it, but now he does not. Like, the scene at the end of The Sixth Sense with the two of them in the car, that's like, his best work on this area, and he's just like, getting worse at it as time goes on.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Art: This is a tease for next week, next two weeks, next episode. Keep listening to us.

Keith: Sylvi what were you gonna say?

Sylvi: Um, I just didn't read that scene as I got— So that scene faked me out, I guess. Uh, and this is sort of the, the issue with the pop cultural image of, uh, M. Night Shyamalan is because the way that they filmed him getting rescued by the bird makes it feel like he's getting like, rescued by like, a— Like, I thought there was gonna be a reveal that humanity had come back to Earth, but they were like, cavemen.

Austin: I thought that too! I also thought that.

Sylvi: Yeah, so I was like fully waiting for the other shoe to drop, and then it was a dead bird, and I was like, oh, okay. So I'd like, never— That just stuff never crossed my mind that that was him doing the bird.

Keith: It was the bird that dragged him.

Sylvi: Yeah. Okay. The motherhood stuff just never crossed my mind.

Keith: The part that faked me out was— Art, I really liked your read on it. What I— Yeah, what I was feeling when I saw it was that the bird was kind of thanking him for trying to save the babies.

Austin: The babies. Yes. Yes. I also thought that for a moment.

Art: That— Yeah, it's, it's combined with the, the interception makes me think that I don't think that that's how I got to where I got to, but you, you could be right.

Keith: Um, I think that your take on it is extremely legible. That makes a ton of sense to me.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Because he's flying, he's in the flying suit. At first I was like, Art's talking nonsense, but he is flying.

Austin: He is. It's a cool suit. It's, uh, again, a very video gamey thing.

Keith: Yeah. We love to see that in the game.

Austin: When, when was, when did Far Cry 3 come out and everyone was— That was out a year before. Gary Whitta wrote this, wrote this. Gary Whitta, the game writer, you know. Yeah, so I think maybe there's—

Art: It takes time to make a movie, right? How—

Austin: It does— I, I don't know when to product— When this went into production. Uh, while you're looking that up, I want to read three guesses as to what the plot twist of this movie was going to be from before it came out. It's from an online Star Trek forum. The, the options were, to vote: the whole thing is a VR combat training simulator.

Keith: Okay, Ender's Game. Got it.

Ali: Sure.

Austin: Cypher died in the crash and it's actually Kitai hallucinating him.

Art: Oh, that's a good one. That's much better than the first one.

Austin: And it's actually Earth of the distant past and Kitai is Adam.

Sylvi: That is—

Keith: Oh, that's the worst thing I've ever heard.

Sylvi: Hilarious.

Austin: This is obviously— just to be very clear, these are not theories of— these are not, I watched the movie and I believe this. These are pre-release, these fans going, what could it be?

Keith: You know, I want to say that that's the worst thing I've ever heard, the Adam one, but that was in Assassin's Creed almost completely 100% unchanged. Uh, and I loved that in Assassin's Creed.

Sylvi: It's—

Austin: This movie is kind of Assassin's Creed-y.

Sylvi: Also really funny that you mentioned that first theory is so Ender's Game, because guess what came out the exact same year as this?

Keith: Oh, the Ender's Game adaptation? Yeah, I never saw that.

Sylvi: Again, this is so within the sci-fi ecosystem of the time.

Austin: Well, and isn't Oblivion the same year? The Tom Cruise—

Sylvi: I think so?

Austin: Post-apocalyptic sci-fi astronaut comes back to— Yeah, in 2017, aliens known as scavengers attack Earth and destroy the moon, triggering global natural disasters. 60 years later, humanity returns via Tom Cruise. So it's like, the same movie.

Keith: I've— I— Wait, sorry, what is that one called?

Austin: Oblivion.

Keith: Oblivion. I've never even heard of that. [**Austin:** Mm-hmm.] Here's something I like about this movie.

Austin: That one doesn't have a Scientology section on the, on the page for some reason. I don't know. Weird.

Keith: Uh, yeah, we're gonna have to get into that because I have no idea what that's about. Um, I, I found that there was a cheapness to the props and the sets in this movie, uh, despite its $130-something million budget that were— It was very charming. I liked that there's a CPAP machine rebreather on the ship.

Austin: I also saw that.

Keith: I liked that the syringes like, looked like, like plastic little toys. I like that the, the, the destroyed ship was full of stuff that looks like it was from Bed, Bath & Beyond and Joann's Fabric. And that also, like, the way to show that it was destroyed was they covered it in toilet paper or something. I— All of this stuff, I was like, wow, this movie was good. I would really like the cheesy set design here.

Austin: What did y'all think generally of its vision of sci-fi future, which is like beige and willowy. And tissue paper is actually another, another good word. Like, there's a lot of like, fabric or, um, soft materials. Um, and also lots of stuff that's kind of like, organic in shape— Like, bone-like or skin-like.

Sylvi: He kept the bee thing going from The Happening with some of the ships.

Austin: Oh, he did.

Sylvi: There's a lot of like, like it— There's like hex honeycomb patterns all over the ship on the interior. And it— I do actually like the sort of weird organic feeling of the ship, especially after the crash.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvi: When like the, the sort of membranous doors open and fly away and stuff like that. Like there's a few fun effects in here, um, and then sometimes it, it is nothing. Um, I think all the stuff on Nova Prime does not look good. Uh, I think that like the, the hangar scene in particular looks really— Like when the guy's like, I need to— Help me

up, I need to salute Cypher Raige. Um, a name I love saying. Uh, like that stuff is really bad.

Austin: He's a Mortal Kombat character.

Sylvi: He's a Mortal Kombat character, yeah. And Kitai Raige is the character that they introduce in Mortal Kombat X when they have the new generation come in.

Austin: Yeah, that's right. Kitai Raige is the son, yeah.

Keith: The Happen— When we watched The Happening, it never came up that this was a movie that had nothing beyond surface-level eco-fascism to say about the environment, which was regrettably its central theme. And this movie is kind of similar. There is a sort of eco-fascist vibe to the New World Order on Nova Prime. Uh, I kind of liked that the hangar— I mean, I think it looked stupid, but it was like, built into— Out of a cave instead of being its own building. Um, but that is kind of incongruous with like, the general lives in this gigantic window palace. I— It's very kind of confused, I think, the aesthetic.

Austin: Yeah, it sits a little all over the place. I'm curious, I, I will not be buying any of the books, uh, or I think there might've been a comic. I'm not looking at any of it, but I'm, I am curious, maybe about looking at some of the world-building concept art stuff, you know?

Keith: Yeah.

Art: I, I thought the spaceship was very cool.

Keith: It's a cool looking ship.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: The, like, I like the fabric-y doors and the, like, way that it looked like it felt.

Austin: How did everyone like his Swiss Army Knife lightsaber sword?

Sylvi: His cutlass?

Art: Oh, that was so silly because all of the modes are basically the same thing.

Keith: Yes. If, if I was fighting Ursas, I would have a different weapon than a short-range melee weapon. [**Sylvi:** Gun.] Yeah. I would use gun.

Austin: I think I have a list here of all of the cutlass types.

Ali: Whoa.

Sylvi: Oh my God.

Austin: Ranger cutlass, various modes. We have at rest where it's just a double-sided lightsaber, uh, which is important. Because this is also a group of people who have to learn how to control their emotions and not have attachments.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Sickle, two blades, dual spear slash blade, ice picks— that's just two blades again.

Keith: That's just two blades again.

Austin: Slashing blades, that's just dual spear slash blade but smaller. Fighting sticks, I guess they're blunt.

Keith: Yeah, they're blunt. Yeah.

Austin: And then spear staff, that's dual spear slash blade again.

Keith: Look how many modes it has. This thing has so many modes.

Austin: When he says like, oh, this is the C40 cutlass, it's so funny because it means they make shittier ones.

Keith: They make shitty— Well, yeah, because the second— In the second half of the movie, he's using a shittier one because he finds it on the ship.

Austin: Oh, you're right. You're right.

Keith: And that's the one that actually he uses at all. He doesn't use the, the one from the dad at all.

Sylvi: Maybe the one from the dad had gun function.

Austin: Oh, maybe the one from dad had gun function.

Keith: Oh yeah, maybe, he did say it had like, 27 functions or something.

Sylvi: I'm just saying.

Keith: One could be gun. But then why would he throw the rock at the monkey?

Austin: He don't know guns.

Sylvi: Shoot the monkey with a gun. Yeah, he doesn't know the input for gun.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvi: Uh, he didn't put that into his skill tree.

Austin: Oh, it's so funny.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Uh-huh.

Austin: It's such a skill tree-ass movie. Yeah, it's such a— He took the futuristic, uh, asthma, uh, you know, debuff or whatever. Sorry, the planet has that. It's not in him, it's in the— But very clearly, to your point in the summary, Sylvi, this was a plane crash and the kid had asthma and he was—

Sylvi: 100%.

Austin: Got an inhaler.

Sylvi: It was like he either had asthma or, like, to keep with the schedule thing, he was diabetic and had to do shots. Like, it was one of those two things. Yeah, I literally— When he was getting, uh, the leech poison, I was like, this is how people describe— Like, this is going off what anaphylactic shock is described as, but it's like obviously amped up to— So his— He does— You know what, another Will Smith thing that happens, he gives his son the Hitch allergy scene, uh, by the— Because of the leech. His face puffs up like that.

Austin: His face does puff up like that.

Sylvi: Oh, that just crossed my mind, man.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvi: I wanna watch Hitch again.

Keith: Hitch only just crossed your mind?

Sylvi: I know, right? I love that movie.

Keith: Which Kevin James movie are you thinking about instead when you're not thinking about Hitch? Is that Kevin James?

Sylvi: That is Kevin James. You nailed it.

Keith: Nice.

Sylvi: Uh, Here Comes the Boom, the only other one I can name off the top of my head.

Austin: I did a search for best Kevin James movie, and the number one, the first one that it lists is Playdate from this year. It's not out yet, so that's a bad answer. I think this is about games or maybe about kids?

Sylvi: Safe bet either way.

Austin: Looks bad. Anyway.

Sylvi: A Kevin James movie looks bad?

Austin: Yeah, I know, hard to believe.

Keith: Oh, I bet they're so different because it's got a buff guy and then also Kevin James. So I bet they have so much that, um, they don't know they have in common or something.

Sylvi: We got to talk about this movie. I, I'll riff too long on The King of Queens.

Keith: Uh, they go so hard to make, uh, like to make, uh, Kitai seem like a terrible ranger. Uh, you know, he gets— He obviously, they're like, you fall apart in the field, and then they really show him fall apart in the field. He gets bit by a spider, he lies, he throws a rock at a monkey. Will Smith is very clear.

Sylvi: For no reason.

Keith: For no reason. Will Smith is very clear, do exactly as I say or we'll both die. And then the first thing that he does is lie about getting bit by a spider, which then eventually leads to the leech that poisons him. Because he had— They— It's super subtle. He starts bleeding from his hand a very tiny bit, and that's exactly where the leech attaches to. [**Sylvi:** I totally missed that.] And yeah, the monkeys show up, and Will Smith is like, don't fuck with the monkeys. And then he picks up a rock and throws it. He throws it right into his head.

Sylvi: It's wild.

Keith: And then he's running away from the monkeys, and then Will Smith says for like nine straight minutes, they're not following anymore. Stop running. You're not running away from anything. Stop running. They're not following you. You can stop. And he just keeps running.

Austin: I don't think he should be a cadet.

Keith: He should not be a cadet.

Austin: He’s 14. He doesn't have it. It's okay.

Keith: It's okay. But what if he learns to stop feeling fear instead and kills the weird crab bear?

Austin: Is that where we want to go? We've not really walked through this movie much.

Keith: No, we had a lot to say about the middle and the end.

Sylvi: Yeah, there's kind of not a lot. Like I said, it's mostly just sort of like the, the action set pieces don't really have a lot of— Like, there's no real stakes to them. I never really feel like anything is— Like, I know Jaden Smith is not dying in this movie that's made so Jaden Smith can be famous. Um, like, I thought maybe the dad, like, uh, Will Smith would die. Um, but like, he's, he's Supreme Commander, uh, Cypher Raige. That was silly of me to think.

Austin: Right. Yeah.

Sylvi: Um, it's like the only time there's like— We've talked about all of the, the real emotional or like thematic underpinning of those scenes, like I feel like we've covered their relationship fairly well.

Austin: There is the one big speech that we haven't talked about, which is about fear is a lie, or fear is— Fear is the mind killer. Fear is a choice. Fear is a choice.

Sylvi: Fucking crazy thing to say.

Keith: Especially in a cosmology where you literally emit fear pheromones and that's how your enemy kills you. Right.

Austin: The thing that he has is the ability to control his pheromones, I guess.

Keith: Right.

Sylvi: Yeah, no, I've— Again, weird young adult novel vibes.

Austin: Yeah. What is the context that this conversation happens in? Is this— This is like halfway through the movie?

Keith: Yeah, it's so—

Austin: Before the jump?

Keith: This is before the jump, but after he recovers from the poison, I think. And the thing that struck me as weird is that the context is just uh, uh, Kitai asks Cypher, hey, how did you first, um, ghost? [**Austin:** Right.] And that's a weird thing for him to not know.

Austin: Well, it's, it's because they don't have— This goes to Ali's point before. He has not been home. They do not have a relationship.

Keith: Yeah, but this is— I just feel like there's even other places to learn this from. Learn it from his mom, learn it from the sister, learn it from a history book.

Austin: I don't think this is in the history books.

Keith: This is like the most important guy in the world. He's like the president.

Austin: He's not the president. He's out— They don't send— They wouldn't have sent him to this place.

Sylvi: He's the guy they made American Sniper about, is what he is.

Austin: That's right. That's what he is, Sylvi.

Keith: That's true, but he's the commander of the Rangers, and the Rangers are the government.

Sylvi: We're kind of assuming that.

Keith: No, that says the Rangers lead the settlement of mankind's new home, Nova Prime.

Austin: Is he the— Is he a commander or is he the leader?

Art: Is he the king of the humans, or is he just like—

Keith: I think he's king of the humans. I think he's just— Let me, let me— Let's listen to the beginning of the very, the very beginning of the movie, the monologue. I think that it might be in here.

Austin: Do you have that?

Keith: I do have that.

Austin: Okay, let's hear it.

[audio from After Earth starts playing]

> **Kitai:** The Rangers would lead the settlement of mankind's new home, Nova Prime. But we were not alone.

Sylvi: That sounds great, Jayden.

Keith: No, it's bad. Don't— it's bad. They're not alone.

> **Kitai:** The aliens released the Ursa. Monsters bred to kill humans. Technically blind, the Ursa sees humans based on the pheromones we secrete when frightened. They literally smell our fear. Humankind was again in danger of extinction and again turned to the Rangers for the answer. And that answer came in the form of the Prime Commander Cypher Raige, the original Ghost. He's believed to be so completely free of fear that to an Ursa, he is invisible. This phenomenon is known as ghosting.

[audio ends]

Sylvi: Which is what he did to my family.

Keith: Bad. That's a bad first impression.

Art: I don't think that that's the same. Like, the Rangers led—

Keith: Yeah, led the settlement. They led the settlement. They didn't lead them to the settlement. They led the settlement.

Sylvi: See, I think we're getting just— We're just mis— We're both— We're interpreting that different ways.

Keith: I'm sure this is probably answered in the books.

Sylvi: Yeah, but I'm not reading. Good for you or I'm sorry that happened. I'm not reading all that.

Austin: Oh, there's a prequel book. I'm not— I will not be reading it.

Keith: Uh, yeah, there comes the Prime Commander.

Austin: Yeah, I don't— That's a fake. It's all fake. Regardless. Yeah, I know, this hasn't happened yet. Be on the lookout from the— For the Ursa.

Sylvi: Look out for the S’krell.

Austin: Who aren't in the movie.

Sylvi: Another thing, if this— If this got sequels, the S’krell would be revealed to just be other humans. 100%.

Austin: Oh, 100%. And maybe they would also be emotionless. And then—

Keith: Wow.

Austin: And then Cypher would have to learn that something— Actually, you know, emotions are what make us real. You taught me that, Kitai. And then he dies.

Keith: And that's why if you were able to genetically create a monster to attack humans, you'd make them sightless and able to smell fear instead of just giving them sight. [laughs]

[1:30:00]

Austin: As a backup.

Keith: Right, because you're— You have no emotion. You don't want them to attack you. And if you're— If your people have no emotions and they can't even— They can't smell you, if they had eyes, there might be casualties on your side.

Austin: You're selling me, I want the sequel now. Yeah, I want to see what happens next. After After Earth.

Sylvi: Mm, After Mars.

Austin: Oh, it goes through the— Goes through the solar system.

Sylvi: Yeah, and then eventually it gets to Jupiter Ascending and I go, yay. I was also thinking about that movie a lot during this. I was like, oh yeah, this is like a couple years off from the Wachowskis trying to do this type of thing. And at least that one's fun.

Austin: It's right in— It's like a year off, right? Is it—

Sylvi: Is it 2014?

Keith: Yeah, really?

Sylvi: 2015. Yeah.

Keith: That's crazy. I've never seen that. I would have guessed that was 2017. That's crazy.

Austin: Y'all should watch that for some reason. I don't know why. I love that movie.

Keith: You don't know why we would watch it, or you don't know why we should watch it?

Austin: I know why— You should watch the movie, but I don't think there's a framework here for it. I don't think I can make that connection.

Keith: No, not yet. Yeah, uh, the—

Austin: Anyway, he's in the rain is when he asks the thing about, about, hey, where were you when you ghosted the first time?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Uh, and I, I have a theory about this, about this movie, but specifically I think that Will Smith practiced this monologue that, uh, I think you have some of it at least recorded. We don't have to hear the whole thing, but I think—

Keith: It was 4 minutes long. So I do have only a chunk of—

Austin: Yeah, I don't think you need the whole thing. My read is like, this is what he practiced the dialect, the accent on, uh, and he nailed— He, you know, with quotes, I think this is what the accent's supposed to sound like throughout the rest of the movie.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: And I don't think he practiced the rest of the dialogue or was coached on the rest of the dialogue in the same way throughout the movie.

Keith: But, and I—

Austin: That's— It's easier to practice a monologue.

Keith: Jaden was coached on his dialect.

Sylvi: Oh yeah.

Keith: And his is— I mean, it's totally true that Will Smith has propagated out of it and it's changing and it's weird, but for some reason, even though he's giving like maybe 5% of his acting ability in this movie tops, uh, uh, he— It's not as irritating coming from him. The way that, that Jaden is not able to nail it is really distracting to me. Maybe just because he has way more lines.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Do you want to hear that monologue?

Austin: Sure.

[audio from After Earth starts playing]

> **Cypher:** I see his pincer through my shoulder, and I decide I don't want that in there anymore. So I pull it out, and he lets me go. And more than that, I can tell it can't find me. Doesn't even know where to look. And it dawned on me. Fear is not real. The only place that fear can exist is in our thoughts of the future. It is a product of our imagination, causing us to fear things that do not at present and may not ever exist. That is near insanity, Kitai. Now do not misunderstand me. You see, danger is very real, but fear is a choice. We are all telling ourselves a story, and that day mine changed.

[audio ends]

Austin: Art, I'm curious if you feel like that is M. Night or if that's Whitta.

Art: Oh, uh, I don't think it feels like Shyamalan because I have to believe that like, this was in the— That they couldn't have— They couldn't have gotten this far without that, you know?

Austin: Right, right. The big speech about the thing the movie is about.

Art: And I might be influenced by the big conspiracy theory, but you know.

Keith: To me, it feels like Shyamalan to have a monster that smells the literal fear coming off your skin and then also have a character be like, fear's not even real. That feels kind of Shyamalan-y to me.

Art: I disagree.

Keith: Yeah?

Art: I don't think, I don't think that this feels like his other monsters.

Austin: Say, say more.

Keith: You don't think it feels like the Signs monster? [**Art:** No.] There's a secret trick to getting him?

Art: No, I don't. The Signs monster is just an alien. It's just a guy, just a guy from another planet who has poison that comes out of his wrists. I mean, it's weird, but it's, it's not like this. It's not, it's not this kind of metaphor. You beat the Signs alien by having an asthma attack, not by like, transcending emotion.

Keith: I just think it's just two different kinds of trick. [**Art:** I think—] You have a water trick and you have a fear trick.

Art: No, because the water trick is, is, is, I-M-O, a clear homage to War of the Worlds, and this is stupid.

Keith: Not mutually exclusive, I guarantee it.

Sylvi: Um, I didn't say it.

Art: I mean, I mean, I think that that homage is sort of like inherently protected in that way.

Austin: I think this is also a sequence that we— I just kind of mentioned it. I don't know if anyone else read about this stuff, but at the time there was a lot of, uh, there were a lot of feelings that this movie was Scientology propaganda, um, which I expected to be way more obvious to me, I think, if, if like coming into it because I remember that response. Um, but I do think that this is one of those places because Dianetics is often— My understanding of Scientology, to some degree, it's a lot about memory. It's a lot about overcoming your innate emotional reaction to those— To the emotions tied to memories.

Keith: You're saying when he throws the rock, it's because of the thetans?

Sylvi: It's like ghosting is actually quite easy to compare to the concept of becoming clear.

Austin: Becoming clear, sure.

Sylvi: In Scientology, yeah.

Austin: Sure.

Art: Um, I think this sounds more like just like dimestore, um, what's the word, uh, mindfulness.

Sylvi: Yes, it does. That's how it reads to me too. Yeah, 100%.

Keith: Well, it's got that big volcano.

Austin: It does have the big volcano. I think the thing for me, having watched this movie, I left it being like, well, if that's Scientology, a lot of stuff is Scientology. Or the other way, which is like i, f that's what our beef is with Scientology, then we should have that same beef with a lot of mediocre sci-fi. And obviously that's not what our beef is with Scientology. Our beef with Scientology is about the way that— And I say our, I don't mean like everyone on this podcast. I mean the cultural—

Keith: Right. Sorry. Art is a Scientologist. So Austin wants to be very clear.

Austin: Very careful.

Keith: And not that kind of clear. That's the kind of clear that Art is.

Art: Oh my god.

Austin: You know, I want to be clear that there is clear documented history of people being separated from their families and people being emotionally and physically abused and all this other stuff. That is the problem. It's not that they believe in aliens and thetans and whatever. I don't give a fuck what your religious beliefs are in that way. But I

do have issues with the other stuff, which, they aren't the only religion that does that stuff either.

Keith: No.

Austin: Yeah. In any case, I want to at least bring that up here. I don't know if anybody else had done that reading or has thoughts on it that I don't have the information for, because—

Keith: I don't know about Scientology at all. Sylvi, maybe it sounds like you know more than I do, but what I do know is the—

Sylvi: I've watched a couple documentaries. I'm not an expert.

Keith: Okay, that's true. That's a couple documentaries more than I've got. Yeah. The only thing that I could possibly add to this that maybe someone else here knows more about is that I do know that Will Smith and Jada Pinkett-Smith are connected to a weird Scientology school that they claim wasn't a Scientology school, but the headmaster of that school was like, yeah, it was kind of a Scientology school.

Sylvi: Yeah, I don't know about this.

Keith: So they claim to— I think it's Googleable. They claim to not be Scientologists, but they are always— They're sending people Scientology books all the time. They hired a bunch of Scientologist teachers and they made mandatory things that you had to go to Scientology classes to teach at the school. So it sounds like a pretty much Scientologist school.

Sylvi: My we are not Scientologists t-shirt is raising a lot of questions about my ties to Scientology.

Art: The Smiths were widely speculated to be Scientologists, especially like around this time, and it is because of their involvement in this school. The Wikipedia page claims it's the New Village Leadership Academy in Calabasas, um, and that it closed shortly after this movie came out.

Keith: Well, because it wasn't working.

Austin: Huh. Um, I will say—

Sylvi: The students kept getting killed by bears.

Art: If the Smiths were Scientologists, the things that have happened to them in the last 10 years, I don't think would have happened.

Sylvi: He wouldn't have slapped Chris Rock at the Oscars, you're saying?

Art: I, I do think that's one of them, but I also don't think the whole, like, very public nature of their relationship would've come out. Because not having all that shit public is the point of this giant cult apparatus for celebrities.

Keith: I think that you could go like, well, this is why they're not all the way in, because it's not quite working for them the way that it is for Tom Cruise, who also has very public weird relationship stuff that isn't quite as public.

Art: Yeah, I don't— I certainly don't know the truth of the situation.

Keith: No, I don't either.

Art: And that they could be sort of duped by Scientology methods or Scientology-adjacent stuff is not surprising to me because actors are easily tricked by things like this. Because the, the skills you need to be an actor are not critical thinking skills. They're emotional access skills, and that's not the same thing. But I don't think that this movie is proof of anything.

Keith: No. I just— It makes sense that there's interest around the movie because of the interest around the Smiths.

Art: Yeah. And I think there's a fair amount of smoke, but I'm not sure that there's fire.

Austin: Sure.

Art: Um, but it's a weird movie. But again, like, I don't think the weirdness of the movie is anything that, like, you wouldn't see at, like, a yoga class.

Austin: They talk about fear in yoga? I guess maybe. I haven't taken yoga class.

Keith: Fear tightens up your tendons and your ligaments.

Art: It probably does.

Keith: It definitely does.

Austin: I was just actually just reading about why when you get sad or afraid, you feel it in your chest, and it does. It's part of the reaction, like the physical— We don't have to go down this road. You release pheromones that then the Ursa can smell, is what I read.

Keith: Yeah. And then you don't— You just don't want the Ursa coming to yoga.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: And this is a way better movie than Battleship Earth, if we're just like, keeping score here.

Sylvi: Well, yeah. Is that a Scientology one?

Austin: I haven’t seen Battleship Earth. It's the Scientology one, right?

Keith: Battleship Earth is like, right, the Scientology—

Art: Yeah, it's a very explicitly Scientology film. It's like based on a— The Ron Hubbard novel.

Ali: Oh, the one with Rihanna?

Sylvi: No, no, you’re thinking of Battleship.

Ali: [laughing] Okay.

Art: Which is based on the board game where you sink the battleships.

Ali: I just wanted to make everything clear.

Keith: Yeah, uh, again, hey, maybe some Scientology connection Ali wants to make everything clear. Mm-hmm. I frequently, and now will no longer, get this movie confused with Battlefield Earth just because they both say Earth and they're both sci-fi, I guess.

Austin: Sure.

Keith: But now I've seen one of them, so I know what they are now.

Austin: Battlefield Earth is the one where, where John Travolta has alien dreadlocks.

Keith: Oh, John Travolta's in it?

Art: Yes, he's the villain.

Sylvi: He's the villain.

Art: And he said something like super weird in the— Because he had like just done Pulp Fiction. He was like, this movie is also like Pulp Fiction because John Travolta doesn't understand Pulp Fiction… I guess.

Sylvi: John Travolta doesn't understand.

Keith: John Travolta doesn't understand.

Art: Yeah, Pulp Fiction for the year 3000, and then like Star Wars, only better. And—

Keith: At least he's positive.

Sylvi: Maybe not, dude.

Art: I don’t know, we should watch—

Keith: Uh, uh, do we have— What else do we have to say about this movie? Is there anything, any parts that we missed? I know that we, we talked a lot about what was going on in it without, uh—

Austin: I wrote here that Jaden's acting is actually totally fine when he isn't talking. I think that there is some physical acting in this movie that he does just fine with.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Keith: I, I think he was really hampered by having to do the voice.

Sylvi: I was gonna say, I like wonder—

Ali: And also—

Austin: Right under that, I have— Oh, go ahead, Ali.

Ali: Well, just exclusively acting with his dad. Like, I mean, the, the moments like when he's like, having weird flashback, like psycho, uh, conversations with his sister, and the acting from, uh, Zoë Kravitz, I think—

Austin: Yeah, that's right.

Ali: His sister is all really good and like, are kind of the best parts of this movie, honestly.

Art: I'm not sure Jaden has any scenes with Zoë Kravitz.

Sylvi: No, on the raft, there's one.

Ali: Yeah.

Art: Oh, that's right. Okay. Yeah.

Ali: Yeah, they have— Well, I mean, it's mostly him talking to her, talking to him, I guess. But, you know, any other characters in this movie, I think, could have brought out a better performance that is not just, like, I am locked in a warehouse with my dad and a green screen and 20 people on crew, and I have to do a really good job.

Keith: It's the disparity between how well I think they can act and how well they're acting is way bigger for Will Smith.

Sylvi: Well, yeah.

Keith: What is he doing?

Sylvi: He's a very experienced actor.

Keith: Well, that's what I'm saying. Why is he doing it— Doing this? Like every scene he's in, I'm like, why is he acting like this?

Art: Okay, here's my theory. And we're gonna have to come with me on a little journey here. And also, I just learned the person who plays Baby Kitai was named Sincere L. Bobb and that's just a— I think it's a funny name.

Austin: Listen to Perpetua.

Art: Yeah. Okay, so does anyone remember the— What was that movie with Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper?

Keith: American Sniper?

Sylvi: A Star Is Born.

Art: A Star Is Born.

Austin: And there's that song from that movie, Shallows. Yeah, yeah, huge.

Art: And in that movie, in that song, Lady Gaga is a lot better singer than Bradley Cooper because Lady Gaga is a singer and Bradley Cooper is an actor.

Keith: Yeah, right, true.

Art: I then heard a cover of that song by country music couple Garth Brooks and the lady that Garth Brooks is married to, oh, this is embarrassing.

Sylvi: Mrs. Brooks?

Art: No, because she's like famous in her own right.

Austin: Trisha Yearwood.

Art: Trisha Yearwood. And they do a cover of this song, and unfortunately Trisha Yearwood is not as good a singer as Lady Gaga, so she's sort of singing like, worse than Lady Gaga. And to like, respond to that— I think I'm getting texts from my wife yelling Trisha Yearwood because she can hear me talking. [**Sylvi** laughter] So he— So she's singing a little worse than Lady Gaga. And I think trying not to upstage his wife, Garth Brooks then comes in worse than Bradley Cooper?

Keith: Oh man.

Art: And Garth Brooks isn't like a voice guy, but he can sing better than Bradley Cooper. And I think that's what's happening here is that Will Smith wants to come in under Jaden because he wants—

Keith: He's trying to make his son look better by acting worse.

Art: By acting worse, yeah.

Keith: If that's true, that is a bad tactic.

Art: This movie was a failure, and I think that's one of the reasons. I think if this was like a Will— A capital W, capital S, Will Smith movie, this movie makes twice as much money like every other fucking Will Smith movie does.

Keith: Yeah. Uh, yeah, I think that's a— That— I don't know, maybe it's just like, tough to tell Will Smith, uh, how about you be a really low emotion, really uncharismatic guy? I don't know why he chose to be—

Art: And sit in a fucking chair I'm not here for 100 minutes

Keith: But you can be a man Sitting in a chair, but you can be no emotion and be charismatic. It happens all the time in the real world.

Art: Yeah, but it's hard for a movie.

Keith: It is hard for a movie.

Austin: It's hard to have your character's trait be like, doesn't do emotion. Yeah, I think that this is— I, I think he's playing the character as intended. I think— I don't think this movie is better if I like fucking Cypher Raige more.

Keith: No, but he can have an energy to him. The performance is bad, and also there's no energy in it. And I'm like, maybe he—

Art: This is a much better movie if he just brings his Bad Boys character to this movie. If he's just playing whatever the hell that guy's name is.

Sylvi: He should have played Hitch.

Austin: He should have played Hitch. Hitch would have fixed all this.

Keith: That's his job.

Sylvi: He would have made all the, the, the Ursas fall in love with each other.

Art: Is this movie the reason he didn't do the Independence Day sequel?

Austin: Maybe. Who knows? I mean, he talks about this movie as being like Wild Wild West.

Keith: He compared it unfavorably to Wild Wild West.

Austin: That's exactly what I mean in terms of the—

Art: Wild Wild West is a much better movie than this.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Wow.

Keith: I agree.

Austin: Uh, sorry, in the middle of saying that, I was reminded of the time that Art and his friends trolled the college we went to, uh, uh, by playing the very beginning of Will Smith's Wild Wild West over and over again for 2 or 3 hours and like, scratched it and cut it to be like, West, West, Wild West, Wild Wild Wild Wild West. And it was like that for hours in the student center, Art.

Art: I'm— I wasn't even there. I, I authorized the project and then, then didn't show up.

Austin: Not true. I know you were there because it was when you had that mustache.

Art: Oh yeah. I was only there for like a minute.

Austin: You were only there for a minute.

Art: I didn't stay for too long.

Austin: I was there for a while because I was there to try to recruit for our gaming club.

Keith: Oh my God.

Austin: I was tabling.

Keith: Did it help?

Art: Uh, and it was, it was the end of the song. It's the Wild Wild West from the end.

Austin: You're right. Okay. I'm sorry. Yes.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: West. It was very funny.

Keith: Anyway.

Art: When I roll into the—

Keith: What was the authorization that was needed to do this?

Art: No one would stop us.

Austin: Art was the editor-in-chief of Hofstra University's only intentional comedy magazine.

Keith: There's an unintentional comedy magazine?

Art: Oh, Hofstra was full of unintentional comedy.

Austin: Yeah, every other publication that students put out, that's the subtext.

Art: And yeah, I said do it and then they made it so.

Austin: Uh, you're really mixing your sci-fi series there with Do It and Make It So, but okay.

Art: Uh, yeah.

Keith: Uh, let me, let me read through my—

Art: I think Will Smith should have done a song for this movie too.

Keith: Oh, that would have fixed it. Yeah, that would have been great. A diegetic song. If he does— He's also a pop star in-universe, I think.

Sylvi: In the voice? He should have done the voice.

Art: It's like, haha, After Earth.

Keith: Um, I made a note, this is another extremely visually dark movie. Um, uh, The Happening was not, but Lady in the Water, of course. Um, no movie's ever been darker than The Last Airbender. And then this one, it was, it was really hard to see, uh, M. Night's movies even while watching them.

Austin: Uh, I think this one's a little— It is dark, but it's again coming right after, after Airbender was so— It was so bad.

Keith: Totally different kind of dark. What this was— [**Austin:** I should also say—] Underexposed blacks. This is like super— Like when it was dark, it was too dark to make stuff out. The Last Airbender is everything is black.

Austin: They're in the Arctic in the day and it's kind of hard to see.

Keith: Yes. Yeah.

Austin: It's worth saying really quick, because we've been talking about the green screen, which there is green screen in this movie, but they did shoot on location in Costa Rica for this movie. That volcano was real. It's in— that mountain is really back there.

Keith: That's pretty cool.

Art: And there's an alien monster on it if you want.

Austin: That alien monster— I mean, I will say one of the behind-the-scenes clips I watched was about how they had a team of wildlife experts constantly patrolling the sets and the tent-like camp that they'd set up for poisonous animals, and they were constantly needing to bag poisonous spiders. [**Sylvi:** How'd that leech get in?!] And— I know it was unbelievable, they must have slipped up in that moment. Jaden Smith says he once woke up with a 4-inch cockroach in his bed with him. They're constantly like finding vipers, including like jumping pit vipers, which are very poisonous.

Keith: That was in the movie. They got him bit.

Austin: They got that one. They just put that one right in.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: So, who knows how long they were shooting there, but yeah.

Art: I don’t know if I've told this, if I've like talked about this on a podcast, I think I've said it to at least one of you in person, but there's like, a story from The Office, where Bryan Cranston was directing an episode, and due to like a— Like a— It's an episode where they're all on a bus, and they all almost died of carbon monoxide poisoning because the exhaust from the bus was being fed back into the air conditioning system. And I've thought about like, what it would have been like if in the middle of The Office and the middle of Breaking Bad, the entire cast of The Office and Bryan Cranston died.

Sylvi: Holy shit!

Austin: [singing] The day the movies died.

Art: Yeah, right? I'm sort of thinking the same thing of, what if making this movie and Will and Jaden Smith both died from a poisonous spider?

Austin: Oh my God. I'm surprised this hasn't happened, frankly, with someone in our lifetime in that way. Has it? It must have. And not like a— I mean, that would be very tragic, I should be clear, but not like, suicide or just a car accident, which is also terrible. But this sort of like—

Art: What about The Crow, right?

Austin: The Crow.

Sylvi: That's the only one I can think of is— And Twilight Zone. Alec Baldwin one.

Austin: Yeah, well, the— yeah, right. Yeah, Twilight Zone, pretty bad one.

Art: Yeah, I might have done— I might have been technically alive when that happened.

Ali: I— re: green screens. The like, Jaden's like, standout scene in this movie when he is standing on top of that mountain just shouting to nobody. Yeah, is not on top of a mountain. Like, that is in front of like, a window's backyard.

Keith: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, they are shooting on location, so like, why not just find the location to do that? I guess because it's not near the waterfall, presumably, because there isn't one. Because the waterfall doesn't exist, you know?

Keith: Right. It's also dangerous to go on an outcropping.

Ali: Sure. It's just such a standout scene for it to look like shit.

Art: Yeah.

Ali: Like, it looks like the end of the first or second Harry Potter movie when he, like— It does the like, weird zoom in on his face from the like, bottom quarter of the screen. Like, the way that Jaden is like, centered into that and the emotion on his face is just really uncanny.

Keith: I'll say this sort of thing does not really bother me in movies. Like, I'm looking at these shots and, you know, I don't know why they've got to have it, but I'm also like, eh, it's a movie, whatever.

Ali: But it's The Scene.

Keith: It is The Scene, yeah.

Art: Yeah.

Ali: It's the one that should look pretty good.

Sylvi: He could just be facing the other way.

Keith: He could just be facing the other way.

Art: You know, if, if he's just facing the other way and they don't have to have the waterfall and all the stuff, and you just do that when he jumps off, I don't think it like, makes the scene worse visually. And it— You could have done it in a real location. I don't know.

Keith: Yeah, I don't know. But the flip side is that, um, I haven't—I had— I don't think M. Night Shyamalan has proved that he can film in a forest yet. Uh, there's been a couple really striking shots of the forest. It's just only in, uh, The Village. But yeah, every time they're just like in the forest, I feel like it's a really uninteresting location. It's a location issue where it's like lots of small trees and branches and it's like, medium dense. Uh, I, I found the forest in this to be pretty underwhelming looking.

Ali: Yeah. Um, I— yeah.

Keith: And presumably that was real.

Ali: It's, it's tough because, you know, when we were saying before, the interiors of some of the, the sci-fi spaces looked amazing. Like, their apartment looked amazing. The like, weird seats that they're in in the spaceship were pretty cool. The like, weird fan doors were all great. And then it's like, oh, you're on Earth, and it's this spectacle of returning to the home of humanity. and everything looks like shit. Like, it just doesn't— I don't know.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: I don't know. I think that the mountain scene also like, stands out to me because I just feel so bad for Jaden feeling how empty the set is in that moment. Especially because he's, like, pacing back and forth on this cliff and, like, sort of coming in and out of the light in a way that feels uncanny. And like, it just, it's such a disservice to him in trying to have a standout scene in this movie that it like, makes me feel bad when I watch it. And like, not for the character, for him,

Austin: For the actor.

Keith: If only they had The Volume.

Ali: Yeah, man.

Austin: You know, maybe it would, you know, I, I do kind of wonder if things like The Volume, um, which is the studio that started with The Mandalorian but now has been used throughout a lot of Disney productions. A lot of the Marvel TV shows use it. And then the technology has been kind of spread out across the industry for that scale of production, which is an interior studio space where instead of using blue screen or green screen—

Keith: Or sets.

Austin: I mean, yeah, or sets. It is a projection of background that then can also cast its light onto the actors such that both they have sightlines to work with that will be identical to the shots that are used in the final film, or at least close enough. And then also, theoretically, it's producing the light that you would get, for instance, from a flat plane with the sun high up behind some mountains in the distance or something, right, on their face, so that that doesn't have to be done in post or with a different lighting rig that's set up. And reportedly, there are ways in which this has worked really well for certain actors because it puts them in the space in a way that you can't get in a studio.

Sylvi: Mm-hmm.

Austin: You can really only get on location. Or it helps with composition because you can, you can kind of like see what different sorts of lighting situations are, you can change those on the fly, etc. And I do wonder if for, for an actor like Jaden, if being more in it in that way would have been useful for him, um, especially someone who's like, new at acting. But who knows, you know? I don't think that that— I don't think that that's gonna save the movie, you know?

Keith: Yeah, I was thinking about— You know, you see an interview with Kermit the Frog and—

Sylvi: Love that guy.

Keith: Yeah, I love that guy. And Jim Henson is there, obviously. And, you know, you talk— anybody who's been around the Muppets, you know, they talk about like, it's crazy how you just fall into talking to them as if they're real. You just fall into it. Jim Henson sitting right there on the couch, and Johnny Carson is glued to Kermit the Frog, talking to Kermit like Kermit's a real guy. And that is what's great, I think, about fully practical sets. The Volume is really controversial because anything that Star Wars fans look at and can maybe be angry at is controversial. As an idea, I kind of like it.

Austin: Yeah, it gets used bad. It got used so poorly in—

Keith: It gets used bad. Tons of things can get used bad.

Austin: That Loki show that came out, that first season of it, has some of the most aggressively bad, uh, scenes I've ever seen shot on Volume.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: I think it's like it became a, it became a, uh, a very quick fix for the problem of actually staging. And really what it is is, it goes to what we were saying before. I think, Keith, you were like, it's— Or a set. There were like interior restaurant shots being shot on the Volume, right? [**Keith:** Just film in a fucking restaurant.] Yeah, and to be clear, I think this was— That show was being shot in COVID, and so there were ways in which they were like, well, we could just shoot on the Volume and then we could shoot in parts. I get how you get there, but by God, it's bad. Yeah, it's some of the worst shit I've ever seen.

Keith: So there's just like, you know, there's a magic to being surrounded by a fake little world, you know what I mean? Like, there's— This is— It's not just because people don't like CG in movies that, that people a lot cry about the decline of practical sets and practical props and stuff like that.

Sylvi: That's me. I do that.

Keith: I also do that, but it's, but it's because of that it helps every other part of the movie for the actor to feel like they're actually, you know, in a place. And, you know, I've

been to a theme park, and you go into a theme park and it's a big set. Sometimes you walk through a big set at a theme park and you feel like you're there in a way that you can't by just imagining. You know, maybe me with a famously bad imagination, uh, I'm like, well, I need to see the stuff around me in order to feel something.

Art: Uh, it's, it's tricky though, right? Because that's true. And also it seems pretty clear that Jaden just doesn't have it.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: That's— Hey, he won an Oscar.

Austin: He's a 14-year-old. Wait, he doesn’t have an Oscar.

Keith: Right. He's also really young. Too young to be a Ranger. Too young to be heading up a franchise.

Austin: Wait, really quick. He doesn't have an Oscar.

Keith: Well, the movie has an Oscar.

Austin: The Pursuit of Happiness. It's not his Oscar.

Keith: It's not his Oscar. He was in a movie that won an Oscar, but it won Best Picture, right? So that’s—

Art: It did not.

Keith: Oh, it didn't win?

Austin: In fact, it didn't win. It didn't win anything. Will Smith was nominated.

Keith: Uh, Will Smith was nominated. It wouldn't—

Austin: I'm just saying, you know what, Jaden Smith does have an MTV Movie Award as Best Breakthrough Performance.

Sylvi: There you go.

Austin: Okay.

Art: Yeah, well, more MTV Movie Awards than anyone on this podcast.

Austin: That's so true. That's true.

Keith: I thought that, uh, Will Smith and the movie were both nominated and that the movie won. Uh, but I have a bad memory for Oscar winners.

Art: It was not nominated. And, um, you know, I don't, I don't want to pile on too much, but I don't think Jaden's ever going to beat the nepotism allegations. Anyone know what Jaden's current job is?

Keith: Is he like— Does he— Is he on the board of a company?

Ali: Is he like, producing his dad's heavily produced Instagram videos?

Art: Nope. This is better than all of these.

Austin: Is he in the music industry?

Art: He's not.

Austin: Okay, we just do 20 questions. We'll ask—Keep asking Art some questions to clarify.

Keith: Is it a creative job?

Art: Yes.

Austin: We're on the career ladder right now. That's what we're doing. Yeah.

Keith: Okay, so it's a creative job. Is it an executive role in a creative job?

Art: Yes.

Sylvi: Is it related to the podcast that his mom and sister and grandmother do?

Art: No. No.

Austin: Is it related to a different celebrity who's actually successful?

Art: No.

Austin: Huh.

Keith: Is it related to an agency? Like a talent agency?

Art: Like a talent agency? No.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Is it related to— So we said no, it's not music.

Art: It's not music.

Austin: Is it film?

Art: It's not film.

Keith: Is it advertising?

Art: No.

Keith: Okay.

Ali: Is he still doing stuff for Netflix?

Keith: No.

Sylvi: I'm— Is it— He doesn't have a job, is my guess.

Austin: No, no, no, no, no. I think Art wouldn't do this to us.

Art: No.

Austin: Well, because he said film.

Keith: He said that it was a creative— An executive position in a creative—

Austin: Advertising.

Art: No. That's been asked.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Oh, sorry. Fashion.

Art: Fashion. Yes, it is fashion.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Oh my God.

Sylvi: Does he have his own, like, like, fashion line?

Art: No, that would be much more understandable, I think.

Ali: Didn't he— Didn't someone recently become like the creative director for— Maybe not Nike, maybe something higher?

Austin: Are you thinking of Pharrell and Louis Vuitton?

Ali: Maybe, but no, I think there was something even more embarrassing on that level.

Art: You are almost certainly on the right track here.

Ali: Yeah, creative director of thing where, you know—

Sylvi: Is it H&M?

Art: No.

Sylvi: It could be. It was believable, right?

Austin: But is it— Is it—

Art: I will tell you that the title is creative director. He is creative director of a fashion brand.

Keith: Okay, so it's got to be like one of the big luxury ones. Dior?

Art: No, it's not Dior.

Austin: Dolce&Gabbana?

Art: No. Do you want me to tell you at this point?

Austin: Gucci?

Art: It's not Gucci.

Keith: I don't know any fashion brands, so you're gonna have to tell me.

Austin: Who's left?

Art: It's Christian Louboutin.

Austin: Okay, okay, dude.

Keith: Creative director.

Art: Creative director. The first male creative director for this brand.

Sylvi: I like The Karate Kid, but what the fuck does he know about shoes?

Keith: He's always wearing stuff, right?

Austin: He is always wearing stuff.

Ali: I don't know if it was about this, but I remember seeing a quote of being like, there are people who've been working in this department for years who, like, have experience in this and are now, like, answering to him in a way that is—

Art: Well, one of those people is definitely doing the real work of this job.

Austin: Right, right. Unlike Pharrell, who is doing the, the actual Louis Vuitton. He like, did release a line that no one liked, so.

Sylvi: He's trying.

Keith: Does that mean that he's doing the work or just that?

Austin: Yeah, he like had a— He was doing though, he was like in the— His— He moved his studio to the Louis Vuitton offices.

Keith: Hey, it says here that, uh, that, that, uh, Jaden moved to Paris to do this job.

Austin: So there we go.

Ali: Wow.

Sylvi: Yeah, no, he's so committed.

Ali: I mean, just to circle back to my points, nepotism aside, and it's a big aside, there's so many barriers to Jaden actually having a good performance here. And the main one is only being able to talk to his actual father.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: And they've acted against each other in a lot of things, but like, imagining any emotional depth in this movie that comes from a different relationship or a different character or a different actor with a different affect. It's like, it could have been in the script of this movie.

Keith: Is it possible that part of it's that he's not even acting opposite his father?

Austin: I was gonna say.

Keith: His father's not even there?

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: That would be rude to do.

Austin: They're on Zoom calls. I mean, but even if he is, I don't think they're— They're not making eye contact explicitly. He's talking. He needs to not be looking at his father in order to convey that they're on a phone call.

Keith: Kitai is imagining a camera that he can't see because he knows that his dad is watching him through a feed.

Ali: He isn't even getting the people who are in the positions that we talk about with green screens, where he has a balloon to look at. Or a guy who is going to be turned into Thor or whatever, you know?

Keith: Like, yeah, if I was directing this movie, I would tell— And of course you have to say, you have to— I have to also be able to tell Will Smith something. I would tell Will Smith, you've got to be here to act opposite him, even though you're not technically there. Like, he needs to— You need to do your lines with him there. And then—

Austin: But some of the shots aren't compatible with that.

Keith: Well, you just film it twice. [**Austin:** Sure.] That's what I mean. Every movie is filming everything 5 times.

Austin: Yeah, but I just, I just mean like, you know, he's walking through the field and it's a wide shot and he's talking to his dad. Like, he can't be close enough to act against in that shot. He has to— This is, Keith, for you, this is what their job is, right? Like—

Keith: Yeah, totally. Yeah.

Austin: If that's gonna be a problem, then we have to shoot it differently.

Keith: We just have him off camera giving his lines or so. Because, well, because the other thing, the other, the alternative is, is you do the fake phone call where you're talking to someone on the phone when there's actually no one on the line. It's a dead line. But there's totally a version of that that is, there is someone acting on the other end of the phone so that you can act opposite someone. You could have him piped in over a PA. That's probably, maybe the most convenient but least effective version of this.

Sylvi: That'd be pretty annoying.

Keith: Some version of giving him his dad actually there to act against. That is what I would do. I would— I'm not saying that's what happened. I'm just saying that's what I would do.

Austin: I wish that there was a Star Wars Episode 1: The Beginning style 90-minute documentary about this movie, about making this movie. If you haven't seen that, that is the Episode 1 documentary that, that they released like officially, uh, through Lucasfilm that is incredible and is like— It isn't meant to be this, but it absolutely is like a document— A documentation of everyone who failed George Lucas in all of the ways that Lucas failed.

Keith: I have not seen this. I actually—

Austin: Oh my God, Keith, you have to watch it. It's incredible.

Keith: What's it called?

Austin: It's just called The Beginning. It's called Episode 1: The Beginning. It's official. You know, the producers like, blowing smoke up Lucas's ass, and then like, all the great, like, the incredible successes of, of that filmmaking. And also things like you see him live becoming the person who's going to like, make the movie in the edit and inventing contemporary digital filmmaking, because that's what that movie did.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: It's a— It's fantastic. I really think you will come away from that movie being— or that documentary being like— Anybody listening being like, holy shit, it's kind of amazing that anything got made. And also, oh my god, I can't believe they released this officially themselves. [**Keith:** Yeah.] Because if, if you were going into it being like, I think there were some mistakes made on that movie, it captures a lot of those mistakes and a lot of the overambition and a lot of the, like, delaying decision-making until everything is already shot. And like, you see Lucas fail to be a good director, because he doesn't know how to tell anybody how to act. And I wish we had that for After Earth, but After Earth is— No one cares about it.

Keith: No one cares about it.

Austin: So we didn't get the book either, so.

Keith: That's— I mean, you can't, you can't escape your legacy. You might as well explain it.

Art: Yeah.

Keith: Do you have any more, uh, thoughts on After Earth?

Austin: I've written down here, right, right under the line about his acting being good when he's not talking. I've written down here in quotes, my suit's turned black. I like it, but I think it's something bad.

Sylvi: I need to find a weapon so I can defend myself type dialogue.

Keith: This is another example of, uh, like, how does— How did he get to the fucking Ranger final exam without knowing that his suit changes color based on stuff. Like, I know that this is for the audience, but again, I— There's always— When you have something sloppy and it's like, well, we needed this information, it's like, yeah, do it not sloppy then. Um, all of this, it could have been anything else.

Sylvi: Just do it better, dummy.

Keith: Do it better, dummy.

Art: Yeah.

Keith: Sorry, Art, what were you gonna say?

Art: It's so weird seeing it— Like, a movie like this with the sort of like, the pedigree of some of the people involved, you know, Shyamalan and, um, [**Keith:** Will Smith.] Will Smith. Um, you know, the guy from Rogue One, uh, Gary Whitta. People who like have made competent movies. And this is just like such a like, video you make for your kid's bar mitzvah level production.

[**Sylvi** hysteria]

Keith: That is an expensive bar mitzvah.

Art: I mean, not to Will Smith, it isn't.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: I mean, I know Will Smith can't spend $130 million every day, but he can spend it a lot more freely than most, you know. I don't know, it's— You said like he talks about how hard this was, that he feels like he brought his kid into this, but like, Will Smith has been in really good movies. When did he like, look around on this set and be like, fuck, this sucks? Like—

Sylvi: He's also made some real bad movies too though.

Ali: Yeah…

Sylvi: Yeah, yeah, he's made a lot of bad movies.

Keith: But he's made up for it with Hitch.

Sylvi: That is so true! Unironically love Hitch.

Art: Hold on, I'm just gonna do a quick good versus bad on some Will Smith movies here.

Austin: Uh, yeah, go ahead. Um, I, I really want to say he called this the most faint— Most painful failure in his career.

Keith: Yeah, yeah, I can see that.

Art: It feels like he let down his I mean, Will Smith has an all-time hot run coming out of the gate. Um, I'm just gonna ignore—

Austin: Yeah, go for it—

Art: The movies that don't fit this. Oh, you know, Bad Boys, Independence Day, Men in Black, Enemy of the State— Like, those are all bangers.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Then he's in Wild Wild West— Bad. Legend of Bagger Vance— Bad. Um, the Muhammad Ali movie— Good. Men in Black 2, pretty bad. Bad Boys 2, the funniest movie I've ever seen.

Sylvi: Wow.

Art: I, Robot.

Keith: He plays himself in Jersey Girl?

Austin: It's a cameo.

Art: Yeah, we'll get to it in the Kevin Smith season of this show coming soon.

Austin: Hitch.

Sylvi: Hitch.

Keith: Shark Tale.

Art: Shark Tale.

Sylvi: Shark Tale was not good. Why? Okay, hold on.

Art: Shark Tale is not good, but—

Austin: But it was a success. It was a huge success.

Sylvi: Oh, okay. I thought you were talking quality, not, not gross.

Art: But there's more good movies than bad here.

Keith: It's worth it. Also, he's not wrong.

Art: Up until about this point— Up until about I Am Legend, and then I would say it turns.

Sylvi: What, you're not rocking with Hancock?

Art: I am not rocking with Hancock.

Sylvi: You're not rocking with Seven Pounds?

Art: I am not rocking with Seven Pounds.

Austin: I saw that in theaters for some reason.

Sylvi: Oh no.

Art: I think the interesting thing here is that he produces this movie and then the like, because of this sort of stops producing movies for a while. It's like, Annie must've been in production already.

Austin: Uh, Bright was so bad.

Art: Bright was really bad.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: He was the guy. I forgot that he was the genie in Guy Ritchie's Aladdin.

Sylvi: Oh yeah.

Art: I can't believe you're calling it Guy Ritchie's Aladdin.

Austin: I just need everyone to remember— To know that that's who directed that movie, because every time I remember it myself, it makes me laugh.

Art: Um, Gemini Man was a very funny but bad movie. Um, Ang Lee is another person who like, even when the movies are bad, they're fun to see.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Um, Bad Boys for Life was pretty bad. Bad Boys: Ride or Die is really bad.

Austin: I can't believe they got 2 legacy sequels.

Art: I can’t either.

Keith: Damn. Yeah, I mean, Men in Black only got one.

Austin: Did it? Is there not a Men in Black 4?

Keith: Yeah, only 3.

Austin: No, but there's been another Men in Black since then. It just doesn't have him in it.

Keith: Ohhh.

Sylvi: Sorry. He is credited on the Knuckles TV show because archival footage from Bad Boys is used, which I think is really funny.

Austin: Oh, that's so funny.

Keith: That's really funny.

Austin: Is that about Knuckles? Our Knuckles? Our friend? The echidna?

Sylvi: Yeah, yeah, yeah, the echidna. Yeah. Okay.

Art: There is a 4th— How did I— How do I not— How have I not seen the 4th Men in Black movie starring Chris Hemsworth and Tessa Thompson?

Keith: A lot of people haven't. I didn't even see the third one, and I liked the first two. I liked Men in Black 2 kind of fine.

Art: Can I tell you something really silly that really bothers me about Men in Black 2?

Keith: Yeah, sure.

Art: The pizza place in it is like down the block from the house that we lived in until I was four, the apartment we lived in until I was four in New York, and they made the street go the other way.

Austin: Oh, that's annoying.

Art: For the movie. So it like, it's the weirdest fucking thing.

Keith: Pretending that it's on the other side of the street, basically?

Art: No like, instead of going south, the street goes north. It's a one-way street.

Keith: Oh, okay.

Austin: Oh, I see. I see. Yeah.

Art: Um, and I don't understand why they did it. And I guess most people of course would have no idea, but I know what way that street goes.

Austin: Yeah. Okay. So here's, here's my meta question, which is we are approaching, as we were talking about before we started recording, Art, uh, a turn in— This is, this is the the— I was gonna say the zenith, but actually I guess it's the nadir of, of

Shyamalan's like, arc, right? Like this was, oh no, he's done. Like, this is it. And then we get— We have the second era of, of him starting after this movie.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Do we think we— Oh, do we think Will Smith is going to live to have another era where he gets on— He gets another hot streak?

Keith: He's only 57, unless you know something I don't.

Austin: Well, he might just stop, you know, maybe a lot of people stop acting and become producers or just like, you know, he's an extremely wealthy dude. His kids are grown up. Maybe he just doesn't do it again. I don't think that's— that's not—

Sylvi: Give it some time, he'll be in a Safdie Brothers movie.

Art: Um, it's hard to say because on one hand he's four years removed from winning Best Actor. On the other hand, he hit Chris Rock in the face on the night he won that Oscar.

Sylvi: He could have killed him!

Keith: Could have killed him.

Art: He hasn't had like the—

Keith: God, I think that's funny every time.

Art: You know, most people win Best Actor and then like, do a few movies right away, and he did a Bad Boys sequel.

Austin: Right.

Art: I think—

Keith: He did King Richard.

Sylvi: Chance.

Keith: That's what he won for. Oh yeah.

Art: You have to assume that Emancipation was already in production.

Keith: I thought that King Richard was the year after he— The punch.

Austin: But it wasn't a punch. It was an open hand slap.

Keith: He was fucking— He was biting Chris Rock. He was scratching his face.

Art: When he hit Chris Rock with a wrench. Um, he—

Sylvi: When he used his cutlass on him. Yeah.

Austin: A C50 cutlass.

Keith: Him and Martin Lawrence pulled guns on Chris Rock.

Art: Um, yeah, they, they shot Chris Rock in Cuba, at the end of a movie that should have ended 20 minutes ago.

Austin: I see.

Art: Um, yes, right. I, I think that Will Smith has to be capable of another run. I don't think America is done with Will Smith. I think he is correct that he should probably chill for a minute here.

Austin: Yeah, right.

Art: Or I don't know, make three more Bad Boys movies.

Sylvi: That's, that's chill. Those are made-for-TV movies as far as I'm concerned. That's chilling. That's, that's getting that TNT syndication money down the line.

Austin: Yeah. My mom loves Bright.

Art: That's— Oh, gross.

Austin: Um, Jesus.

Sylvi: I don't know, I hear— I, I've heard that if done correctly, it could be the next Star Wars.

Art: Uh, I am seeing I think that, that, uh, Bad Boys 4 made $400 million.

Keith: Oh my God.

Art: I would show up to make a Bad Boys movie every 2 years.

Sylvi: I think it's— I thought we were just like, yeah, I assumed that he's just gone back to doing the sort of like, like, crowd pleaser blockbuster stuff for a bit to rebuild some goodwill after the heinous incident.

Art: You'd think if he were doing something, you know, Bad Boys Bad Boys 5, 4, whatever, came out two years ago, two and a half almost, that if he were about to— If he were still working, that it would be out by now, or we'd be seeing trailers or something.

Keith: This is from the BBC. Critics are sometimes told we shouldn't analyze Hollywood blockbusters, we should just switch our brains off and enjoy them. Well, not many films are as dependent on our brains being on standby as Bad Boys: Ride or Die. The plot is nonsensical, the grenade-dodging stunts are even more nonsensical, and the internal logic is nonexistent. The assertion that Marcus has to avoid stressful situations after his heart attack is forgotten within 30 seconds, but the film is fun enough.

[**Keith** hysteria]

Sylvi: Yeah, that's— Again, that shit's ready to be shown on TNT right this second.

Art: I watched this movie and I can't figure out when. I watched this movie like, shortly after my daughter was born, but that doesn't make sense.

Keith: There's, there's a—

Art: Oh, I guess it does. It would have been released on digital platforms 2 days after she was born.

Keith: Wow. The box office section on Wikipedia has a racial breakdown, which I don't think I've ever seen before. Am I just like, not noticing stuff like this?

Art: I've seen stuff like this before.

Keith: It says, uh, 50% of the audience was under 35, 44% being Black, 26% Hispanic and Latino, 18% Caucasian, 12% Asian/other. That's very weird to need to know or to even have.

Art: Oh, they always have interracial. I remember there was a cop movie, I think it was called End of Watch, and it made a ton of money and people were like, how did this happen? It wasn't tracking that well. And it eventually figured out that everyone who saw it was a Mexican living in Los Angeles.

Keith: There's enough people in Los Angeles alone to make a movie a success?

Art: I mean, it wasn't that successful. But like, it was like number 1 in the movie— The weekend it came out.

Austin: And it cost nothing. It cost $7 to $15 million.

Keith: Yeah, I guess I've just never seen it on the Wikipedia page, which is normally where I get box office stuff.

Art: The people whose like, job this is know a lot about who's seeing movies. We've gotten pretty far afield today.

Sylvi: I was gonna say, do we have anything else to say about this?

Austin: I have one more important note here, 'cause I need to know if anyone else's brain is bad like mine is. At 1:32:06 in the movie, for a split second— This is as they're

pulling away from Earth on, on the spaceship and Kitai has his hands on, uh, Cypher's like chest and is like, you know, making sure he's okay— The music starts to swell and I really thought that we were going to get a You Can't Always Get What You Want needle drop.

Sylvi: Oh my God.

Austin: I— It like go— it does the beginning of the choir You Can't Always Get What You Want and then it changes and it's not that, but I, I started laughing so hard just before. You know, that would be really funny because in only a couple of minutes we'll get the strangest laugh on film, uh, from Will Smith. Or maybe it was before this. Maybe it was like, right before this when he wins or whatever.

Keith: It's so stupid to end this movie on a dumb joke. It's so weird. It plays so weird.

Austin: The mom one?

Sylvi: Well, the Avengers came out last year, so you gotta have a clip.

Austin: God, that's actually really interesting. It's like this movie gets made two years later and it's completely different, right? Yeah.

Art: Yeah.

Keith: Uh, my last note—

Art: If this movie gets made two years later, at one point Will Smith would have said, welcome to After Earth.

Sylvi: All right, we're done the podcast.

Keith: Why didn't he suck up the loose juice from the breath disc? He just threw those away. There was juice in there still.

Sylvi: It's spoiled.

Art: I don't know that it works if you suck.

Austin: Also he just had—

[group hysteria]

Keith: Bye.

Austin: Story by Will Smith. Story by Will Smith!

[Wild Wild West by Will Smith plays for like, 45 full seconds]

Keith: Is the next one The Visit?

Sylvi: I believe it is.

Keith: Or, I thought maybe Split and Glass came first.

Sylvi: Split is after, no.

Keith: Okay, so it's Visit, then Split.

Art: The Visit is the M. Night Shyamalan comeback vehicle.

Keith: Okay, yeah.

Keith: So I know nothing about The Visit. I, I hadn't even heard that this movie existed. I'd never heard the words The Visit until we started doing this podcast and we put it on the list. Uh, so my best guess is that it's gotta be a holiday movie.

[**Ali** laughter]

Sylvi: Okay, man.

Keith: Because you gotta like, visit your parents for Christmas or Thanksgiving or something. And so it's gonna be like evil over the river and through the woods to grandmother's house we go. It's like that, but evil.

Sylvi, **Ali**, **Art:** Ohhhhh.

Austin: Like Big Bad Wolf, Little Red Riding Hood.

Keith: Yeah. Or like, a killer in the woods.

Austin: That's the wolf.

Keith: The wolf is the killer? The killer's a wolf?

Austin: In Little Red Riding Hood?

Keith: I mean, a man killer.

Austin: No, okay, no, that's not— Yeah, that's different.

Keith: Wolves are man killers, but I mean a, a man who is a killer.

Ali: Are we, are we sure that the comeback movie is not the Devil elevator one?

Sylvi: That one came out before After Earth.

Austin: Yeah, that came out the same year as Last Airbender.

Ali: Really?

Sylvi: That came out in 2010 and was pretty reviled.

Ali: Okay, I just remember that being the like, trailer that I saw M. Night's name on again.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Ali: That people were like, oh shit, this kind of looks okay.

Austin: That was one.

Sylvi: It's one of the reasons why it got— His name took a hit. It, for at least— Like anecdotally to me, a lot of people I remember being like, yeah, that new M. Night Shyamalan movie with the evil hell elevator sucked.

Keith: Especially because there's another hell elevator movie that people kind of like.

Sylvi: What? Drag Me to Hell does not have an elevator.

Keith: Are you sure?

Sylvi: Yes.

[**Art** hysteria]

Keith: They don't drag— Do the dragging through an elevator.

Sylvi: No, there's an elevator scene, I think.

Keith: Well, there you go. Elevator.

Sylvi: Fuck.

Keith: Elevator movie.

Ali: And we're done.

Art: But yes, The Visit is a comeback.

Keith: I might be wrong about that. It might not have an elevator at all. Oh, well, I gotta find this out now.

Austin: Oh my God.

Keith: Not now. Sorry, not now. I mean, in my life, I now have to know this.

Austin: Do you have any idea who's in that movie?

Keith: Oh God, no clue. It could be literally anybody. It could be Clint Eastwood in— wait, in The Visit. Yeah, I have no idea. It could be, uh, you know, I've been saying it over and over again, maybe Kevin Costner. Every time I think maybe—

Austin: Has anyone seen this movie or know what it is?

Keith: Uh, Art really likes this movie.

Art: I've seen this movie. I saw this movie theatrically.

Austin: Okay.

Ali: I think that I— Everything that I know about this movie is actually what I know about A Knock at the Cabin or whatever.

Austin: Right. Okay.

Ali: I think I know nothing about this.

Austin: And no one knows who produced or who— What— Who, uh, what the production companies were. Art probably does.

Art: I, I do, yes.

Keith: Yeah, I, I have— I have never heard of this movie in my life.

Austin: I think—

Art: I mean, of course, one of the production companies is Shyamalan's one—

Austin: Right. Yeah, sorry, don't say the other one because I do think knowing the other one is sort of like knowing an actor in it, in that it will help you shape what the film is in your mind.

Sylvi: I think I know what you're talking about.

Keith: I think you're overestimating my knowledge about production companies.

Austin: Maybe.

Art: I think you know this.

Ali: Is it the horror movie one?

Austin: You'll have to wait and see.

Ali: With a C? Well, okay, tune in for next episode. Okay.

Austin: All right.

Art: Now I want to know, what's the C one?

Sylvi: It's okay to say it in the UK, but it’s weirder when you say it hear.

[**Keith** and **Ali** laugh]

Austin: [sighs in amusement] Uh, okay.

Ali: All right. Okay. Bye.

Keith: Bye.

Sylvi: Bye.

Art: Bye.