

Note: This show periodically replaces their ad breaks with new promotional clips. Because of this, both the transcription for the clips and the timestamps after them may be inaccurate at the time of viewing this transcript.

00:00:00	Rob Schulte	Producer	In today's film, there's a depiction of a sexual assault, which is discussed in this episode. Please be advised before listening.
00:00:07	Music	Music	Selections from <i>Good Kill (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)</i> by Christophe Beck. Mournful violin over an unsettling soundscape.
00:00:08	John Roderick	Host	<p>Is war fair? I mean, is it supposed to be fair? Does it have to be fair? There has to be at least one measure of fairness at the outset of any war. Or otherwise we wouldn't call it a war; we'd call it a massacre. If two or more sides are going to have a go at it, and it's worth pulling up a chair and putting the kettle on for it, then there have to be some stakes, some risks, and some rules.</p> <p>I'm at war, presently, with the ants in my kitchen. And even though I have overwhelming firepower and vastly superior technology <u>and</u> the entire nation behind me, they consistently maintain control of the battlefield: my kitchen. And they never falter in the face of overwhelming odds. And they seem to have an inexhaustible resource of tiny men and materiel.</p> <p>Is it fair? Well, no, not to me, but I'm losing. When I say "fairness," I don't mean to suggest that it hasn't always been 100% kosher to employ every weapon, tactic, resource, and maneuver that you can muster that your adversary didn't expect and can't counter.</p> <p>Imagine the guy who showed up with the first spear. The guy that first got speared was like, "Ouch, not fair!" But he was winding up to brain somebody with a rock, and the global watchdogs of the time—who were literally dogs—agreed that spears were new but fair. Just because an army is bigger and better than you doesn't mean that you can't still win and that the contest wasn't, in the end, fair.</p> <p>History offers plenty of examples of outnumbered and underequipped forces winning the day. The leveling effect of chance, weather, intelligence, cunning, and error makes war unpredictable enough that fairness is the default in many ways. Also as my dad said, "Cheaters never prosper."</p> <p>Throughout history, war technology advanced incrementally, changing the battlefield gradually without changing the nature of war too much. The spear became the crossbow. And then the trebuchet and the blunderbuss and the howitzer and the Panzer and the <i>Red October</i>. But through all the centuries, they were just natural evolutions of the old same throw-thing-hard technology.</p> <p>There have been surprisingly few developments that changed the conduct of war in such a way that it forced a reckoning whether this new form of war was still fair or not.</p>
00:02:29	John	Host	I'm not talking about the stirrup, you nerds. You can put your hands down. But poison gas was a new and terrible weapon that appeared one day out of the blue. And it turned out that the blue was a bigger cloud of poison gas that wafted over the trenches and choked young Hitler and ultimately wilted the carnations of the diplomats in Geneva so badly that they <u>banned</u> chemical and biological weapons in war.

"This is not throwing things hard," they said. "This is something else." A hundred and forty-two nations—although, crucially, not Syria nor the Seattle police department—affirmed, somewhat, mostly, that poison gas was unfair and reaffirmed that even as cannons reduced millions of young men to bone meal, there were still some rules, damnit.

For instance, here are some rules of war. You can cut a guy in half with a machine gun and burn him alive with white phosphorus and drown him and all his friends in the open ocean. But if he's already injured, you can't hurt him more. And now you have to help him. Unless you really can't afford to help him right now, and then you can kill him. That's at your discretion.

You can drop massive bombs from zeppelins, but you'd better not hit any prams. If you're Galtieri, you can take the Union Jack, but Maggie will take a cruiser with all hands to make you give it back.

There are six to ten soldiers in a squad, three squads in a platoon, four platoons in a company, four companies in a brigard, five brigards in a flagon, four flagons in a Sarmizegetusa, and five Sarmizegetusas in a fnord. See, fairness was restored.

Of course, that all looked rather grim when nuclear war was invented. Another big game-changer. It's hard to pretend that it's illegal on one hand to bomb a hospital ship when hundreds of millions of people on the other hand are being melted into plasma. It was still illegal through that whole period to bomb a hospital ship, however.

This is all by way of introducing the latest entry in the still pretty-small list of new technologies that have arrived on the scene and significantly changed the nature of war. In this case, the not-so-humble Predator-slash-Reaper drone. You know, they first fired a missile in combat only in 2002? Maybe on that day, some folks out on a base somewhere cracked a Red Bull to celebrate, but it was only gradually that the news dribbled out to the rest of us. Like, "Oh, yeah. BTW, we have these new remote-controlled dildos that can drop full-on missiles. Not like a practice missile or a smoke bomb or a bag of leaflets. But full-on, Hellfire missiles—which are just what they sound like—right into the bathroom window of anywhere we want. And they fly so high up, no one hears them coming in. Oh, they can fly for 12 hours on end. And oh, also we can fly them from anywhere. Like, even Nevada or Geneva or a hospital ship."

00:05:24 John

Host

Except doing it from a hospital ship would still be illegal. "Or frankly, your mom's living room if you wanted to. And it's already operational, and we didn't ask anyone if it was cool. And I guess it's too late now. But it's pretty hard to argue with. Signed, the military industrial complex, Alexandria, Virginia, 22304."

This seems like just another iteration of the old, "throw thing hard," but it's not. It's something else. It's bigger than the stirrup, even. And yet, even this crazy new thing that lets us fight war thousands of miles away, raining Hellfire down from above the clouds and then home to the old ball and chain and Nick at Nite. Even this has not assured us victory or insulated us from consequence or spared us death and suffering. Fairness is a bitch.

Three, two one. Rifle, rifle, rifle. On today's *Friendly Fire: Good Kill*.

00:06:22	Music	Transition	<p><i>[The soundscape of the score fades down into a drumroll, which leads into the Friendly Fire theme.]</i></p> <p>“War” off the album <i>War & Peace</i> by Edwin Starr. Impassioned, intense funk.</p> <p><i>War!</i> <i>Huh!</i> <i>Yeah!</i> <i>What is it good for?!</i> <i>Absolutely—</i> <i>—nothing!</i> <i>Uh-huh!</i></p> <p><i>War!</i> <i>Huh!</i> <i>Yeah!</i> <i>What is it good for?!</i> <i>Absolutely—</i> <i>—nothing!</i></p> <p><i>Say it again, y’all!</i></p> <p><i>War!</i></p> <p><i>[Song fades down and plays quietly as host begins to speak.]</i></p>
00:06:42	Ben Harrison	Host	Welcome to <i>Friendly Fire</i> , the war movie podcast that qualifies as TARFU. I’m Ben Harrison.
00:06:50	Adam Pranica	Host	I’m Adam Pranica.
00:06:51	John	Host	And I’m John Roderick.
00:06:53	Ben	Host	“Totally And Royally Fucked Up.” Do I remember that correctly?
00:06:56	Adam	Host	Yeah, I think you got that.
00:06:58	Ben	Host	Bruce Greenwood is just a fountain of new dad jokes and sayings in this movie. He’s also got a real pottymouth.
00:07:07	John	Host	Oh, thank goodness that you just said that. I was trying desperately to remember what movie we were we were reviewing.
			<p><i>[Adam chuckles and Ben laughs.]</i></p> <p>But the pottymouth clicked it together for me. ‘Cause he does have a pottymouth, that man. He says the F-word a <u>lot</u>.</p>
00:07:22	Ben	Host	This is a real drag. And I don’t mean it this way, but it seemed like a second-year film school script with how much the Bruce Greenwood character was injecting the F-word into everything.
00:07:35	Adam	Host	I did not... notice this at all. What?
00:07:39	Ben	Host	Really?
00:07:40	John	Host	What?!

00:07:41	Adam	Host	I—it's like I never even heard it. It's like I was watching a Quentin movie. Like, I—it honestly didn't register with me at all. The thing about Bruce Greenwood that really struck me was that he felt very hand-of-screenwriter. Like, all of his monologues felt very written. All of his moments felt very crafted. But I—I can't remember ever hearing the F-word in this movie.
00:08:02	John	Host	He F-words the F-word out of every F-word F-ing F-word. <i>[Adam and Ben laugh.]</i>
00:08:08	Clip	Clip	Lieutenant Colonel Jack Johns (<i>Good Kill</i>): Sacramento fucking California.
00:08:10	Adam	Host	What is the matter with me? Do I have F-word blindness?
00:08:14	John	Host	<i>[Laughing]</i> You do! It's—that's crazy!
00:08:16	Ben	Host	Wow. <i>[Laughs.]</i> I agree with you, that he definitely sounds like the writer injecting himself into the—into the story to make a bunch of fucking observations about the different fucking things going on in this fucking movie. <i>[John chuckles.]</i>
00:08:33	Adam	Host	I wonder to what extent he is a viable proxy for that kind of person. Like, the sort of person in the military that does use the F-word in every statement. The sort of person in the military of a leadership rank who— <i>[John makes a long, thoughtful sound.]</i> —in order to, you know, become endeared to—to the high schoolers they've recruited out of shopping malls playing video games— <i>[Ben chuckles.]</i> —if—if that doesn't do something for characters like his, you know?
00:09:05	John	Host	That's what makes it feel screenwritery. Because I don't think that a lieutenant colonel that's in charge of a company like this is the guy that's gonna do that. Right? What this movie doesn't have is a drill sergeant and it's your boot camp drill sergeant that talks to you like that. I don't think the lieutenant colonel—after—I mean, he's—when he walks in those opening scenes and is talking to a group of—of raw recruits or whatever. And he's like, "Most of you don't even know which end is up," or whatever, "F-word, F-word, F-word." Is he the guy that would be doing that? I... <i>[Sighs.]</i> No. I don't think so.
00:09:46	Ben	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> I mean, it's—it seems like he commands, like, all of those people, but is also always in the trailer with Ethan Hawke when he's working. Maybe a poor use of his time.
00:09:58	John	Host	Does he do the <i>Rambo</i> thing where he walk-and-talks with them at one point and runs down his CV, like—
00:10:03	Adam	Host	I don't think he Murdocks this movie.

00:10:05	Ben	host	<p>The other movie about this phenomenon that we've watched—<i>Eye in the Sky</i>—came out one year after this. And I feel like these maybe are two movies that we should have watched, like, back to back, just to—for the compare-and-contrast value, here. 'Cause they're, like, set in the same trailers and—[<i>chuckles</i>]—and, like, definitely both trying to explore the ethics of drone warfare.</p> <p>I think different aspects of it. 'Cause <i>Eye in the Sky</i> was, like, an ethical puzzle. "Should we do this one strike or not?" And this is like, "We shouldn't do these strikes at all," kind of seems to be the place that this movie is coming from.</p>
00:10:48	John	Host	<p>Yeah, for <i>Eye in the Sky</i>, you know, I had the benefit of the resource of friend-of-the-show Lieutenant Colonel Matt Martin, US Air Force retired, who provided us some insight into, like, what the drone—what he thought personally about the show and what—or about the—not the show. He loves the show.</p> <p>[<i>Ben chuckles.</i>]</p> <p>What he thought personally about the movie, and what he—you know, his input. I haven't talked to him about this movie, but I don't think that he thinks this is a very good movie, just based on many conversations with him about the ethics of drone warfare. It's—this movie is very heavy-handed.</p>
00:11:29	Ben	Host	<p>Yeah, like, there's no tension in the ethics of any given strike in this movie, 'cause the movie kind of states its position right at the top. And it's like—it's a movie about watching a character continue to make decisions he knows are wrong until he hits a breaking point.</p>
00:11:50	John	Host	<p>Well, and the movie does you the good service of, any time there's a question about whether or not—what a character should do, it always puts a woman and child in the back of a pickup truck or in a doorway, to really give you an exclamation point about how this particular bomb is a bad bomb.</p>
00:12:10	Adam	Host	<p>Ben, I'm gonna take the other side of the argument here, but not maybe in the place that you think. In that, I... I felt the film's message was a little more ambiguous because its main character was such a cipher.</p> <p>Like, I understand that Ethan Hawke's character feels really bad about not being in the cockpit of a real plane. But he's so detached from feeling anything at all besides that, that I wonder if the film's message would have been better served by someone capable of feeling emotion. Like, he just wanders through this film in a fog. And it muddies the message, I think. And I think it makes it more ambiguous.</p>

00:12:57	John	Host	I agree with that. I—his desire to be back in the plane—back in a— an F-16—makes it seems like his disaffection and his alcoholism and his coming-apart-at-the-seams is not really connected to the ethics of drone warfare. It just seems like he’s a thrill jockey, right? And he just wants to be in a jet ‘cause he—‘cause it puts him in danger. He never once says, “I don’t like—uh, I don’t like shooting bombs at people.” He wants to shoot bombs. He just doesn’t want to watch—he doesn’t want to see it.
			<i>[Chuckles]</i> And he—and he wants the excitement. And that’s a— you’re right, Adam. That muddles the message.
00:13:39	Ben	Host	Well, and his—it makes his desire to get into the cockpit of a—of a jet, like, a totally insane goal. Like, he’s not actually working toward that goal at all. He’s not doing anything to make that more likely.
00:13:55	Adam	Host	Yeah, it’s really unrealistic for people to have goals and then not do anything to work their way toward them. I mean, I have no idea what that’s like.
00:14:03	Ben	Host	Okay, Adam. Yeah, I agree with you and then you kick me in the teeth.
			<i>[John and Adam laugh.]</i>
			What a fucking great podcast to be a part of.
00:14:10	John	Host	Hey, let’s not start using the F-word here.
00:14:12	Adam	Host	Ben, I was talking about me. Like, as you were just describing a— the type of person that I am, I was like, “Wow. Shit. Maybe—maybe me and Ethan Hawke are exactly alike.”
00:14:24	Ben	Host	Ethan Hawke is definitely playing the alcoholic version of Adam Pranica.
			<i>[All three laugh.]</i>
00:14:30	Adam	Host	You know what? Real talk! That moment where Ethan Hawke finally talks to his wife about what’s bothering him?
00:14:37	Ben	Host	<i>[Chuckling]</i> Mm-hmm.
00:14:38	Adam	Host	I found <u>incredibly</u> affecting in a personal way. I thought the movie could have ended there! They’re out in the desert. He finally, like, breaks himself down for her. And it—and then when the movie didn’t end there, and I paused it and I saw there was still a half an hour left, I was like, “What is the rest of this movie going to be?”
00:14:58	Ben	Host	Did you bottle it all back up inside, Adam, at that point?
00:15:01	Adam	Host	You know what? You—you make fun. But I’ve seen you at the bottler meetings.
			<i>[John and Ben laugh.]</i>
00:15:07	Ben	Host	It’s just a Seattle City Hall meeting.
00:15:10	Adam	Host	Yeah, yeah. It’s literally everyone in Seattle.

00:15:15	John	Host	I will say that Ethan Hawke is unrecognizable sometimes in this movie. Like, if you are—if you want to compliment him for playing the role of a guy who's coming apart at the seams and who's a complete bottler, he's doing a great job. I mean, it's a compelling performance of somebody that... that you don't want to spend any time with.
00:15:38	Ben	Host	At the beginning of this movie, I was like, "Oh, God. I fucking hate this character." 'Cause he's, like, in his <i>Top Gun</i> drag and driving his sports car with a primed door. And I was like, "Are we supposed to fucking believe that this guy is, like, the coolest dude, the way Tom Cruise is presented to us?" And—and then I realized, like, he's trying to project Tom Cruise <i>Top Gun</i> into the world, and almost no one sees him that way.
00:16:04	Adam	Host	Mm-hmm.
00:16:05	Ben	Host	Down to the guy that he buys his afternoon fifth of vodka from every day.
00:16:11	Clip	Clip	Major Thomas Egan (<i>Good Kill</i>): Blew away six Taliban in Pakistan just today. Now I'm going home to barbecue.
00:16:17	Adam	Host	It seems like such a challenge for him as an actor. Like, he's acting across a screen for much of the film. And we know him to be a really talented actor. It's an incredible performance, I think.
00:16:30	Ben	Host	Call him "Popov," 'cause he's a vodka bottler.
00:16:33	John	Host	My affection for the term "bottler" just went right out the window. We ha—we had it. For a minute it was a new call sign for Adam. And now it's gone.
00:16:42	Adam	Host	I think where before I was saying that, like, the case for the film's convictions could be stronger coming from someone who has a little more of a heartbeat. John's argument that his... his damage doesn't come from drone warfare but comes from not being a pilot that flies in the sky is—is a really interesting bit of triangulation. Like, it's coming from somewhere. It's just coming from the wrong place.
00:17:09	Ben	Host	Well, there—it's curious, because, you know, when we talked about drone warfare before and I—at the time—wrote Matt Martin and got a long response from him. But one of the things that's struck—that stuck out to me in being friends with a drone pilot is that there is this tension in the air force between F-16 or A-10 pilots and drone pilots. And it's—you know, it's this dick size contest about, you know, who's real and who's tough. And I think it probably is true between pilots of F-22s and F-16s. You know, it's just part of the macho culture. But the one thing that is real is, if you're flying a F-16 or an F-22, you do not have closeup video of your target. You don't spend all day watching them. You're not up there for 18 hours watching them go to the bathroom and stuff. So in a way, being a drone pilot is a <u>completely</u> different job. Leave—let the piloting—leave the piloting aside. If he was in an F-16 and he got a radio call, he doesn't know whether it's CIA. He doesn't know whether—if somebody says, like, "You're clear to fire," he just fires his gun. Or fire—he shoots a missile.
00:18:23	Ben	Host	He doesn't know how many people are in the building.

00:18:25	John	Host	No idea.
00:18:26	Ben	Host	Which of them are women and children.
00:18:28	John	Host	No idea. He never sees it. He never—he's not the one that sits and counts the bodies at the end. He's flying along. He's given a target. He shoots.
00:18:37	Adam	host	What a nuanced argument that would be though, if—if at any point he was like, "You know it's not just being in the air. It's not just feeling, you know, the many joys that come with being a pilot. But it's the distance I would then achieve from my targets. A distance that I need for my mental health."
00:18:57	John	Host	Oh, okay. So, I just texted Matt Martin. Do you want to hear what he said?
00:19:00	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:19:01	John	Host	So, here are his comments on <i>Good Kill</i> .
00:19:04	Ben	Host	Was Bruce Greenwood based on him?
00:19:07	John	Host	<i>[Chuckles]</i> Kind of. He says "There are no 50-year-old majors in a drone context. Everyone in this movie is too old," is the first thing he says.
00:19:16	Adam	Host	Oh!
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
00:19:17	John	Host	Also, he com— <i>[chuckles]</i> —he comments on exactly what Ben says. He said, "Why is the squadron command constantly hanging out ordering people into and out of seats? Like, he's running a squadron." <i>[Giggles]</i> And then he says, "That mostly consists of reviewing annual performance reports." So that was—good call, Ben. But he—here's what he says. "I was flying missions every day in the height of the surge in Iraq. And we were averaging one Hellfire missile per 500 hours in the air."
00:19:48	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Adam: Wow!
			Ben: Whoa!
00:19:49	John	Host	So in his three years as a line pilot, he took three shots. So he says the most realistic scene in the movie is when they spend six hours watching Special Forces sleep.
			<i>[Ben laughs loudly.]</i>
00:20:00	Adam	Host	Whoaaa.
00:20:02	John	Host	He says, "I have 1,000 hours watching guys sleep."
00:20:06	Ben	Host	No kidding.
00:20:07	John	Host	Yeah.
00:20:08	Adam	Host	That was a really interesting part of this film that I had not considered. Because—
00:20:11	Ben	Host	Yeah!
00:20:12	Adam	Host	—up until that point, it's just—it's rifle, rifle, rifle. But I'm so glad we got that moment in this movie.

00:20:19	Ben	Host	I was watching it and enjoying and wondering if it was plausible, because I was like, “God, what is the, like, budgetary line item for using drone to allow six guys to take a five-hour nap?” Just, like, the fuel cost. Like the—like this insane piece of future technology is, like, up in the sky so that these five guys can sleep. And I was like, “That just—that just seems—it strains credulity that the military would spend resources in that way.” And I am really delighted to find out that I—that I was that wrong about that.
00:20:51	Adam	host	There was something great about that performance on the ground, too. Whoever that voice actor was, was somehow able to communicate the obvious fatigue, but also the, like, incredulity at his circumstances. And also a little bit of condescension toward a drone pilot in Las Vegas. And also about, like, three other feelings in that moment. That was really well done.
00:21:16	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:21:17	John	Host	Well, it says here that it costs \$3,600 an hour to fly a Predator. So that’s weirdly less than I thought.
00:21:27	Ben	Host	Yeah. Does a Reaper have, like, a 10% more efficient engine so that you can fly it for slightly cheaper?
			<i>[Adam snorts quietly with laughter.]</i>
00:21:34	John	Host	Actually, no. A Reaper is \$1,000 <u>more</u> an hour to fly: \$4,700 an hour to fly a Reaper.
00:21:41	Ben	Host	Wow.
00:21:42	Adam	Host	I mean, that’s until they unveil the plug-in Reaper of 2022.
00:21:45	Ben	Host	<i>[Laughs]</i> Yeah.
00:21:46	John	Host	Right. Electric Reaper?
00:21:48	Ben	Host	Yeah, then you get 20 miles of electric and then it switches over to the gas engine.
00:21:53	John	Host	So to watch those guys to watch those guys get eight hours of sleep—which I’m sure they weren’t getting eight hours of sleep—would be about \$28,000.
00:22:03	Ben	Host	I have a goof, actually, before we get too far from—from this section. Um, ‘cause we were talking about the fear that he misses about flying jets. And an IMDB pedant noticed, “In one scene, Major Egan speaks of enjoying the fear of flying combat missions. That includes the fear and danger of making a landing on the pitching deck of an aircraft carrier at night. However, Major Egan is in the Air Force, and they do <u>not</u> land on aircraft carriers.”
00:22:36	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[Morse code signals play while Ben continues to speak.]</i>
00:22:37	Ben	Host	“Only Navy or Marine aviators do. Also, the plane Major Egan flies—the F-16 Fighting Falcon—does not land on aircraft carriers in any case.”
00:22:47	John	host	So, I—when that happened, it was such a, like, it was so herp-a-derp, when he started talking about—
			<i>[Adam laughs heartily.]</i>
			—landing on the pitching deck of an aircraft carrier, that I—that I—

00:22:58	Ben	Host	<i>[In a comedically dramatic tone]</i> How herp-a-derp was it?
00:22:59	John	Host	It was <u>so</u> herp-a-derp that I figured what we weren't getting was the backstory that he was a Naval aviator that transferred into the Air Force or something. There—that's the only possible explanation, unless there was some cross-service training that he did. But I don't think—I don't think there's cross-service training where they're like, "Okay, now we're gonna—now you're gonna land on the deck of a pitching aircraft carrier one time."
00:23:23	Ben	Host	Yeah, what would the point be of teaching an Air Force person to do that?
00:23:27	Adam	Host	I'm sure someone from the Navy would say the reason is to make them a better pilot.
			<i>[Ben chuckles.]</i>
00:23:30	John	Host	Yeah, but no.
00:23:31	Ben	Host	Except—but it's, like—I mean, it would be like me getting a lot of TIG welding training for my podcasting career. It's like, it's never gonna come up.
00:23:42	John	Host	Probably not. Although who knows? If you're—
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
			—if you're in the Persian Gulf and your plane is wounded and running out of gas and there's only an aircraft carrier there. I guess they'd have you ditch, right? And then they'd pick you up.
00:23:53	Ben	Host	But if it's an F-16, you couldn't—
00:23:55	John	Host	Oh, right. <i>[Inaudible.]</i>
00:23:56	Ben	Host	—'cause don't you need like the hook and all? It's gotta be—it's gotta be configed.
00:24:01	Adam	Host	You try landing on an aircraft carrier without a hook, you're in big trouble.
00:24:04	John	Host	They could put that net up. Remember the net?
00:24:07	Adam	Host	That's right.
00:24:08	Ben	Host	Oh, the net!
00:24:09	Clip	Clip	Computer Voiceover (<i>The Net</i>): Mozart's ghost! The hottest on band the internet!
			Angela Bennett: Thank you.
00:24:12	Ben	Host	This movie starts with a title card saying that it's based off actual events. I didn't feel like I was watching a document of a actual, historical situation, though. Like, is it based on an actual guy or is, like, based off actual events in the sense that there are people that do this kind of work?

00:24:32	John	Host	<i>[Chuckling]</i> Yeah, I think that that's—when it said that, I was like, "Oh, it's another one of these where we're gonna watch the high-level killing of a guy that's, you know, in the—in the deck of cards of bad guys." And they—and he actually refers to the deck of cards at one point. But we never hear any bad guy referred to by <u>name</u> .
00:24:51	Ben	Host	Yeah, they just have to take the CIA guy's word for it that that was a high card in the deck, right?
00:24:57	John	Host	Yeah, and as Matt Martin is suggesting, like, they seem to kill somebody every time that—I mean, every day they kill multiple people. And, so what exactly—I think that that is, like, based on historical events meaning that this took place between the years of 2007 and 2009. So that seems pretty cheap.
00:25:19	Adam	Host	The part that really shocked me was that there would ever be a point where someone would be left alone in a trailer the way that Egan was toward the end, when he carried out that—that solo mission against the raper.
00:25:31	John	Host	Well—
00:25:32	Adam	Host	Like, that just seems impossible.
00:25:33	John	Host	So, not to—not to be <u>that</u> guy on <i>Friendly Fire</i> , but I've actually been in one of those trailers. I think I talked about this before.
00:25:41	Adam	Host	Uh-huh. Did they leave you alone inside?
00:25:42	John	Host	They did, yeah. They just were like, "Here's the keys. Lock up when you're done."
00:25:45	Ben	Host	"Don't expend any ordnance I wouldn't expend."
00:25:48	John	Host	But there is a whole, elaborate—it's much more elaborate than this one, where the guy—when they're just pounding on the door two times. They're locked from the inside and you don't just go up and walk in. And then when you do get inside, there are—there's a whole complement of people in there. I think if you go to a—to pee break, like, you get tapped out and somebody else goes and sits in that chair while you're—while you're away.
00:26:13	Adam	Host	See, that's another way that Thomas Egan becomes a bottler, huh?
00:26:16	John	Host	Mm-hmm.
00:26:19	Ben	Host	<i>[Laughs]</i> I liked it.
00:26:20	John	host	Oh, and he—and Matt—the one other thing Matt Martin says is, "If an unnamed voice on a speakerphone tells you to blow someone up, you're—you would be obligated as an Air Force pilot to start asking hard questions, and there's no way—there's no way that you would just—"
00:26:27	Adam	Host	<i>[Surprised]</i> Oh.
00:26:38	John	Host	"—take orders from somebody called Langley."
00:26:41	Ben	Host	Yeah. 'Cause this movie does make a big point of describing the difference between the rules of engagement that they follow as Air Force people doing Air Force missions and then the radical shift that happens when they get attached to this CIA—

00:26:59	John	Host	Right.
00:27:00	Ben	Host	—command. I mean it—it does seem like the CIA missions—like, once those start, like, all the characters are asked to portray having a shocked conscience in a way that, like, they weren't crazy about what they were doing before, but now they're like, "Holy shit," like, "This is—this is actually awful every single time."
00:27:23	John	Host	So here's—once again, I put this question to Matt Martin live on air.
			<i>[Ben and Adam make amused sounds.]</i>
			And he says according to policy, the CIA generates targeting recommendations and requests support from the military. But Matt Martin says in all of his years as a drone pilot, he only ever took orders from US commanders. And I said, "Does the CIA have its own Predators?" And he—in his—and you can take this as you will. I take it knowing Matt Martin. I understand this to be a—a way that he speaks. He says, "That's a great question."
			<i>[Ben and Adam laugh quietly.]</i>
			And then—
00:28:06	Adam	Host	Great.
00:28:07	John	Host	—and then—and then— <i>[chuckles]</i> —sent a smiley face emoticon.
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
			So, I don't know—that's not standard military operating procedure to send a smiley face emoticon.
00:28:18	Music	Transition	Theme music plays, "War" by Edwin Starr.
			<i>War!</i>

00:28:19 Promo

Promo

Music: Three bouncy, electronic synth chords.

Graham Clark: Hi, my name's Graham Clark, and I'm one half of the podcast *Stop Podcasting Yourself*, a show that we've recorded for many, many years. And at the moment, instead of being in person, we're recording remotely. And you wouldn't even notice—you don't even notice the lag.

[Long beat.]

Dave Shumka: That's right, Graham! Aaand the great thing about this—

Graham: Oh—

Dave: Go ahead?

Graham: No, you go ahead.

Dave: Okay, and—

Graham: Okay. Go ahead?

00:28:51 Promo

Promo

Dave: And you can listen to us every week on MaximumFun.org.

Graham: Or wherever you get your podcasts.

Dave: Your podcasts.

Music: Three bouncy, electronic synth chords.

00:29:02	Promo	Promo	<p>Music: Fun, upbeat music.</p> <p>Dave Hill: Hi! I'm Dave Hill. From before. And I'm very excited to bring Dave Hill's Podcasting Incident back to Maximum Fun, where it belongs! You can get brand new episodes every Friday on MaximumFun.org. Or, you know, wherever.</p> <p>And what my partner Chris Gersbeck and I might lack in specific subject matter on our podcast, we make up for in special effects! Chris, add something cool. Right here!</p> <p><i>[Gunshot or whip snap.]</i></p> <p>Also, we have explosions!</p> <p><i>[Explosion.]</i></p> <p>Animal noises.</p> <p><i>[A goat braying]</i></p> <p>And sometimes, even this!</p> <p><i>[Two comedic timpani "boings," a springier "sproing" sound, and what sounds like a human scream.]</i></p> <p><i>Dave Hill's Podcasting Incident!</i> Every Friday on Maximum Fun. Chris, do another explosion right here.</p> <p><i>[Another explosion, right here.]</i></p>
00:29:47	Music	Transition	<p>Theme music plays, "War" by Edwin Starr.</p> <p><i>Huh!</i></p> <p><i>Yeah!</i></p>
00:29:49	Host	Ben	We've seen a million war movies where a character goes like, "What the fuck are we even doing here, man?" to his comrades. But in this movie, it comes from the lieutenant colonel, the commanding officer of the group. <i>[Chuckles briefly.]</i>
00:30:02	John	Host	All of these questions of, like, "Is this legal? What the heck are we doing here, man?" That's all going to be happening back at HQ, before they send you the coordinates of what they want you to blow up, right?
00:30:17	Ben	Host	Right.
00:30:18	John	Host	So this is a completely unique situation, where there would be six people or five people in a room, all just kind of left to their own conscience, whether or not to do their particular part of a five-person job. You know, the—the woman playing the airman, the targeting airman—it's implied that <u>she's</u> not gonna say, "Lazed." Like—what—how many people can possibly mutiny in this chain of command before they devise a different way to do it?
00:30:50	Ben	Host	Right. Yeah. It's hard to mutiny when your commanding officer is, like, two feet behind you, watching your every movement.

00:30:59	John	Host	Right. <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:31:01	Ben	Host	A couple of other things that I thought were a little bit weak in the script, uh, the fact that there appears to be one police officer in Las Vegas.
			<i>[John chuckles quietly.]</i>
			And he is a personal friend of our main character. <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:31:15	Adam	Host	How does he get home that night? Because the police officer who catches him with the half bottle of vodka on his floorboard says, "How about you let me make sure you get home safe?" And then it cuts to later on, and all we see is Egan's Pontiac driving through his housing development. Is—is the cop driving the Pontiac?
00:31:38	John	Host	That was unclear to me, too.
00:31:40	Adam	Host	That was a moment, I thought, that was begging for its own little scene. Like, we get the moment of mutual recognition of—of two soldiers understanding how hard it is. But we don't get the accompanying car ride home that night—
00:31:57	John	Host	Right.
00:31:58	Adam	Host	—that I think could have been pretty illuminating. In a movie that's 102 minutes long, I think that could belong and not make the film seem overly stretched.
00:32:07	John	Host	It's over 30 miles each way from Creech Air Force Base to Las Vegas. So, a lot of those drives are—you know, they're not insubstantial commutes.
00:32:20	Ben	Host	Right.
00:32:21	John	Host	Especially if you're, like, completely shitfaced.
			<i>[Ben chuckles.]</i>
			Driving a Firebird that is clearly not, like, super-dialed.
00:32:32	Clip	Clip	Molly Egan (<i>Good Kill</i>): I mean, is this really just about you losing a seat in a plane?
00:32:25	Ben	Host	I don't know. January Jones is always cast as, like, the unlikeable wife who is unlikable in spite of the fact that, like, all of her grievances are super-legitimate.
00:32:48	John	Host	<i>[John has a long laugh.]</i> She's unlikeable because she's so blonde and pretty. We all recognize that that makes a person intrinsically bad.
00:32:56	Ben	Host	Oh, yeah. She's just—she's blonde and pretty but dissatisfied nonetheless.
00:32:59	John	Host	Right.
00:33:00	Ben	Host	I mean, this is very classic movie timing, where the dude recognizes his failings and cops to them and makes the change, like, an afternoon too late. And she's already made her mind up to take the kids and go to Reno.

00:33:19	John	Host	Yeah. How did you like the ending of this film, where—where the assumption is—I think—that he’s gonna turn whichever direction at that intersection and go start a new relationship with Zoë Kravitz where they go out to casinos every night. And instead he turns the other way, and we watch him head off to Reno. The implication being that after everything, all it’s gonna take for him to get back with his wife and kids is that he’d just show up and say, “I poured half a bottle of vodka down the sink in the bathroom. I’m a changed man.”
00:33:55	Adam	Host	How long after making that left turn do you think the military police get in pursuit of him?
			<i>[Ben and John laugh.]</i>
			That’s what I was thinking. Like, there’s no way they’re gonna let him drive off into the distance without showing that, right? And sure as shit, like, fade to black after making that turn. He never makes it to Reno.
00:34:14	John	Host	He does a mic drop. He, like, blows that dude up on a—you know, outside of military protocol. Mic drops as he walks out. There was an MP standing there, right?
00:34:24	Ben	Host	There was. Yeah, there was a guy with a rifle, like, waiting to get into the trailer.
00:34:28	Adam	Host	Do you think the film suggests that because of Egan’s involvement in CIA-sponsored killings that he would not be arrested for doing what he did and instead would be too much trouble to prosecute, given what he knows?
00:34:46	John	Host	I mean...I think that—in the words of Dale Dye, <i>[In a Southern accent]</i> “If there’d been an illegal killing, there’s gonna be a trial.”
			<i>[Adam laughs and Ben chuckles. John drops the accent.]</i>
			Um, I’d think he would be—I think he would lose his, uh—he’d lose his wings and probably go to Leavenworth.
00:35:01	Adam	Host	Sure. But he’d be a nightmare should he decide to go public—
00:35:07	Ben	Host	Right.
00:35:08	John	Host	Well, yeah, but—
00:35:09	Adam	Host	—is what I’m saying.
00:35:10	John	Host	—I think that’s why—that’s why none of this is realistic.
00:35:14	Adam	Host	Yeah.
00:35:15	John	Host	I don’t think you would—I don’t think you have a, like, an airman first class, who hasn’t been vetted, sitting in a shipping container, listening to a guy from CIA directing you to, you know, blow up dudes in Yemen based on a secret note they got wrapped on a—or, you know, written on a gum wrapper. And all of a sudden, it’s just like, “Oh, we just picked you. We just picked you, crew that’s already working together with no special security clearance.” I don’t think so. I don’t think so.

00:35:49	Adam	Host	I think the most unrealistic part of this film is Zoë Kravitz's character making two passes at him, almost back to back. <u>Including</u> the morning after Molly leaves Egan. Look—and this may just be my own personal thing but, like, there's no personality and nothing attractive about Egan.
			<i>[John chortles heavily in the background.]</i>
			Why is anyone attracted to him? And then—like, the longer I thought about it, I was like, "He keeps his mouth shut. That's what makes him attractive. And it's what makes me unattractive to most people."
00:36:21	Ben	Host	I think she gives him her phone number after the—after he, like, he fakes that the that the drone has lost telemetry, because she admires that.
00:36:32	John	Host	Right. She—you know what's sexy, Adam?
00:36:33	Adam	Host	Oh, okay.
00:36:34	John	Host	Integrity. Integrity is sexy.
00:36:37	Adam	Host	Mm-hmm.
00:36:38	John	Host	<i>[Chuckles]</i> That's what—that's what you lack.
00:36:39	Adam	Host	It's true.
00:36:40	Ben	Host	You wouldn't know anything about that, Adam Pranica. <i>[Chuckles quietly.]</i>
00:36:43	Adam	Host	Yeah. It's my lack of integrity. This has been very good for me, this session, guys. Uh, where do I pay? And then get on the schedule for next week?
00:36:53	Ben	Host	Uh, your insurance company will take care of most of it. It's just a \$15 copay. And you can pay that in cash.
00:36:59	John	Host	Your insurance company will take care of Ben's part. But I'm a private contractor and you can PayPal me \$200.
00:37:05	Ben	Host	<i>[Laughs]</i> Shit!
00:37:07	Adam	Host	Fair enough.
00:37:08	John	Host	Yeah.
00:37:09	Ben	Host	I should have—I should have gone private.
00:37:10	John	Host	Yeah. Ben works for the National Health.
00:37:12	Adam	Host	But at the end, when Zoë Kravitz makes that pass at him, like, the—the last pass. I mean, this is before Egan does the thing that would make her love him. Like, she doesn't know about the—about the killing of the raper at this point.
00:37:30	John	Host	Right. He didn't kill the raper yet.
00:37:33	Adam	Host	That's what I'm saying. Like, that would be the thing that would really flood her basement, but—
			<i>[Ben snickers loudly.]</i>

—at this point, it's just—it's just a night in Vegas with a—with a pass that was turned down. And then a bunch of moodiness.

00:37:47	John	Host	Yeah, but I'm—let me tell you—and this is something neither one of you guys is gonna ever know anything about—moodiness is very—is very sexy. <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:37:56	Adam	Host	<i>[Laughs]</i> Oh, God.
00:38:01	Ben	Host	She thinks she can fix him, Adam.
00:38:03	John	Host	Yeah, that's right.
00:38:04	Adam	Host	What I need to tell you, John, is my moodiness is not working for me and never has. So it's gotta be something else.
00:38:15	Ben	Host	<i>[Laughs]</i> The aerial... surveillance of the rape storyline—it's such a strange part of this movie. It may be one of my favorite parts of the movie, is how, like, they're all horrified by what they're seeing, but also it feels like this very abstract thing that they're detached from. Like, I feel—I can't imagine that that's something that Matt Martin could speak specifically to. But I did feel like I was kind of understanding something about what a weird feeling it is to just be watching these people that have no idea you're watching them.
00:38:51	Adam	Host	I mean, it's clear the film is pretty heavy-handed with the equivalency it draws with its compositions, right? Because when we're with Egan, we're seeing that top-down, from-the-drone look, but—inside the trailer. But when we're in his normal life, in Las Vegas, we're also seeing those same angles.
00:39:09	Ben	Host	Right.
00:39:10	Adam	Host	I want to say also that this—one of the ways that this film really succeeds is how beautifully it's shot.
00:39:17	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:39:18	Adam	Host	I really think it is a great-looking movie. Amir Mokri is the DP on this one. He is a veteran of a lot of films that you guys probably <u>hate</u> . Like, he's worked with Michael Bay. He did the second <i>Bad Boys</i> film. Like, he is a—he's an action genre director of photography, and it's interesting to see all of the—all of the stylish choices from films like that transferred over to a film that is of a different genre. And I think it really benefits the film. I think it's—it's really gorgeous.
00:39:54	John	Host	It does. It does. It is a pretty movie.
00:39:57	Ben	host	They collaborated on <i>Lord of War</i> as well.
00:39:59	Adam	Host	Right, right.
00:40:00	Ben	Host	This—the director and cinematographer.
00:40:02	Clip	Clip	Jack Valentine (<i>Lord of War</i>): You're right. As usual, you are right.

00:40:05	John	Host	How do you guys feel about the fact that—I mean, this movie is litigating the righteousness of drone warfare, in the sense that it puts two of the—two of our sort of main, supporting characters—and the commanding officer then kind of does this, but reluctantly and with more F-words. That—to whatever degree drone warfare isn't fair or ethical—if we weren't doing it then they would be killing us, etc., etc. Right? I mean, the argument for this style of war and the argument for war—the argument for these wars—
00:40:40	Ben	Host	Right.
00:40:41	John	Host	—is vouchsafed several times.
00:40:44	Ben	Host	Yeah, I think it's interesting that the movie has a character come to the conclusion that this must be done several times. Like, Zimmer is the character that is, like, unquestioningly pro-this. But Bruce Greenwood has a tortured conscience, but always comes down on the side of, "We have to do this. This is—we can't unring this bell. Now we don't have a choice." I don't think any character ever, like, says out loud, "This is fucking horrible and we shouldn't be doing this."
00:41:15	John	Host	Right. <i>[Stutters]</i> Zoë Kravitz is the only one that—that comes close to—you know, all of the rest of it is kind of this passive aggressive, like, "Are you sure about that?" kind of talk. But the Zimmer character is—the Zimmer character is portrayed as a kind of adenoidal—he's the one that wanted to join the CIA and is obviously, like, little-boy thrilled about it.
			But he's not a dummy. He's not portrayed as a meathead. He's portrayed as a, like, a jock. But those guys make the case, right? It's—it's a case that we've been arguing in the public square for 20 years. They don't make it poorly. They make the actual case, and no one in the movies ever really refutes the case.
			As you're saying, Ben, the commanding officer keeps talking himself back into that case also. So the degree to which this movie is supposed to be a—like, an ethical referendum on the question of whether drone warfare is bad or not, it's having an actual argument in the movie that—that never—that never resolves in its favor. Or never resolves in favor of the viewpoint that the movie ends up sort of advancing.
00:42:34	Adam	Host	As close as it gets to that conclusion is the moment where they're like, "Well, if we stop, they're not gonna stop, right? If we can agree on that, then why stop?"
00:42:44	John	Host	Right, but that kind of makes the point that like, "Yeah, moms and babies are collateral damage and we blow up houses in Yemen. And that's just the price of doing business."
00:42:55	Adam	Host	Mm-hmm.
00:42:56	John	Host	How does the movie make that case and then also make the case that this kind of warfare turns 50-year-old majors into hard-bitten alcoholics and ruins their marriages, and also that's bad and we should care?

00:43:12	Ben	Host	I imagine when you're writing this, you're like, "Alright, I have a point of view on this, but I have to give some airtime to the other points of view, so that it's not, like, a totally didactic movie." Like, if this movie started with the opinion it had and never, never even, like, gave any consideration to—'cause, like, Zimmer's definitely, like, saying some kind of Fox-Newsy kind of talking points about this.
00:43:39	John	Host	Right.
00:43:40	Ben	Host	And I think that the implication is that he didn't get into the CIA because he's, like, a psychopath?
00:43:46	John	Host	[<i>Chuckles</i>] Yeah, the—right, that is the implication.
00:43:48	Ben	Host	And, like, I think that, like, he would be such a more interesting character if he just had a pretty specific opinion about this that he arrived at in a way that we could sympathize with. Like, if he's a psychopath, then we can't be like, "Okay, I also agree with his politics," you know?
00:44:05	Adam	Host	He's also a condescending psychopath <u>at</u> the one lady character in the entire film that we care about.
00:44:12	Ben	Host	Right.
00:44:13	Adam	Host	Like, that's a main character, too. And I think that combination is not a hell of a combination. It makes—it makes Zimmer's opinion seem hostile and bad.
00:44:22	Ben	Host	And we can write him off.
00:44:24	Adam	Host	Yeah. Yeah, I think—I think I'm with you on that. That he could have been a more interesting character if he seemed more reasonable in his both-sides-ism.
00:44:33	John	Host	Well, you know, I think—I think what it boils down to for me is, we are never shown anybody on the ground in Afghanistan. And so the consequences of the ethics of drone warfare are 100% borne by the effect it has on an American pilot. We—we're not shown anybody except for that woman who gets raped repeatedly. The only people really being damaged that we know about—that we know or care anything about—are the pilots that are suffering from a—a crisis of conscience.
00:45:12	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:45:13	John	Host	And that isn't really—those stakes aren't high enough. The movie does not actually say—like, that was what was so great about <i>Eye in the Sky</i> , was we saw people on the ground. We knew it was happening. You know, we spent a long time with that little girl that was selling flatbread.
00:45:32	Ben	Host	Right. She wasn't just a prop to get raped repeatedly so that Ethan Hawke could have a sad about it. Like, the woman in this movie that is victimized the most is just a total abstraction. She is there to make us be outraged. But it's not—it's not a character. It's not—she's not even three-dimensional, you know? Like, we just see this compressed image from the sky.
00:45:59	Adam	Host	This film would have to break its own rules in order to be down there with her.

00:46:03	John	Host	Well, that's—but that's right. Like, its rules are not—its rules are fine, but they're not broad enough for this movie to actually act as the indictment of drone warfare that it—that this screenwriter clearly wants it to be. Because the only person he can truly... that he can truly take us there with is this guy that lives in Las Vegas in a McMansion. And honestly, if you took away the part of the plot where he wants to get back into F-16s—if you took that out, because that's irrelevant, right? Or, I mean, that's just part of his—part of what deepens a character that never speaks and just looks, like, sad all the time.
00:46:47	Adam	Host	I think the word you're looking for is "endeepen."
00:46:49	John	Host	"Endeepened?"
00:46:50	Ben	Host	Uh, "endeepifies?"
00:46:52	John	Host	<i>[Amused]</i> If it didn't have that to endeepify him and you just had a guy that was going to work every day, who was suffering from—I think, what we know is real is that there is a kind of psychological, like, disconnect between being in Afghanistan all day, at the controls of a Reaper—watching people living their lives—and then punching out and being in suburban America. Like, that's fascinating.
00:47:25	Ben	Host	Yeah. Yeah. I think that's an interesting part of the movie, too. Like, the movie courts those issues a little bit.
00:47:31	John	Host	But, it—but we never see—you know, what would be interesting is if this main character spent a little bit more time actually struggling to look like he had a normal home life. Like, if—if he got out of work and came home and actually was smiling and trying to fake it and was like, "Hey, everybody! Come over to the barbecue!" But what we see is some pilots who are give—who are shown to us as having no conscience. Like the—his next-door neighbor, who's like, <i>[in a jock/surfer dude voice]</i> "Are you stupid?! We got the life here, bro! We got beers and babes!" <i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
0:48:09	Ben	Host	<i>[Imitating John's voice]</i> "You're fucking married to January Jones! Look at it!"
0:48:12	John	Host	<i>[Normal voice]</i> Like, that's—that's who we have as an example of a guy that's, like, cutting it.
00:48:08	Ben	Host	<i>[Still a bro]</i> "When you get your next paycheck, you can fix the primer on the door of your car!"
00:48:23	John	Host	<i>[In the same voice]</i> "What's up, sports fans?!" <i>[Ben laughs.]</i> <i>[Resumes regular tone]</i> But—but we waste all this time in the movie, like, wondering whether or not he's gonna get—he's gonna get back in the seat of an F-16. And why that matters! Why we should care about that. I don't care whether this guy gets in his jet plane or not! The—those F-16s are sitting out on the runway all day. He has a dream about flying one. I'm not sure, but I think he could probably go to the base commander and say, "Can I go—can I keep my—"
00:48:49	Adam	Host	"Can I get some hours?"

00:48:50	John	Host	Yeah. "I need some hours to stay current in an F-16. Let me go up once a week and—and strafe the jackrabbits or whatever."
00:48:56	Ben	Host	Then he has to dream about it.
00:48:57	John	Host	He dreams about it.
00:48:59	Adam	Host	Did you think it was weird when he woke up, he was super-wet around the crotch?
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
			What was that about?
00:49:06	Ben	Host	His basement got flooded, Adam.
00:49:07	John	Host	<i>[In a mock chastising tone]</i> This isn't a—this isn't your <i>Star Trek</i> podcast.
			<i>[Adam snickers.]</i>
			We're talking about serious business here.
00:49:14	Adam	Host	Mm.
			<i>[John chuckles.]</i>
			That's not the kind of host I am.
00:49:19	Music	Transition	Theme music plays, "War" by Edwin Starr.
			<i>War!</i>
			<i>Huh!</i>
			<i>Yeah!</i>
00:49:22	Adam	Host	Well, it's rate and review time on <i>Friendly Fire</i> . And the task falls to me to design the rating system that we will use together in reviewing the movie <i>Good Kill</i> . Thomas Egan has a drinking problem. We all know it. He buys his bottles of liquor from that smartass kid. A kid who looks a little too young to be working at a liquor store? Selling him booze in Vegas?
00:49:49	John	Host	The laws about that are different in different states.

00:49:52 Adam

Host

Yeah. That's fair. Anyway, there's a moment in the film where things have gotten as close to hitting rock bottom as they could. It's when he shows up visibly drunk to work. And you can hide how drunk you are at work in a number of ways. You could try not stagger-walking, which is a method that Egan doesn't employ.

[John and Ben laugh.]

You can try to put some Visine in your eyes. Again, not—not a technology Egan is either familiar with or interested in. It takes Suarez to slide over that pack of Big Red gum and go, like, "Come on, man. You gotta cover up the truth here. You gotta at least try. This is demotion-by-cop you're going for. And it—and it's not right. Let me try to help you."

So, the gum, the Big Red gum. And specifically sticks of Big Red gum will be the rating system we use to review this film. Gum is effective at concealing bad breath in the same way that we must decide how effective *Good Kill* is with its message. But here's the thing. We talked a lot about what that message might be. And I think that we don't agree on what that is.

Is the message that drone warfare is bad? I believe that that is what the film is trying to do, but I don't believe it's effective in making that case. Is the message about compartmentalization? And the many benefits that compartmentalization can provide in a difficult workplace. I don't know. I think maybe the idea that's the most interesting to me is that compartmentalization. The idea that there's war and then there's home. And for most soldiers, those are chapters in your life, right? Like, you go away and you come back. And this is like the—the point of the argument that Egan and his wife have all the time. That—that there's a pro to this. To Thomas Egan. And I think Molly would agree.

But what happens, like, when those chapters aren't chapters in a soldier's life, and when they're pages? And when those pages are close together the way they are in this film. I think that is really interesting food for thought. And more interesting to me than whether or not the film is making a strong case for or against drone warfare.

I think this film is beautifully shot. And I think all the performances are really strong. But I think the characters underserve these actors. We talked a little bit about January Jones and her Molly Egan character. I think her character was so interesting! And I think they really gave her a lot to do in this movie in a way that I enjoyed.

00:52:29	Adam	Host	<p>So, like, while I think technically there are a lot of great things going on here—like, its emotional flaws are enough to not make me love it. Like, I wonder about the version of this film where Tom Egan, like, has a conscience <u>and</u> charisma, instead of just conscience. Because that's why I feel things in movies. Like, it's not just identifying with characters in bad situations, but also with, like, the character themselves. And why I like and root for them. And that—and this film makes that incredibly hard for me.</p> <p>So... so there's, like, a clinical feel to this that prevents me from liking it completely. But it does give me a lot of things to think about. So, I mean, Egan says that, "I miss the fear." I think there's something missing from this film. And I think that's why I'm gonna rate it 3.9 sticks of Big Red gum.</p>
00:53:23	Ben	Host	<p>3.9 sticks of Big Red gum. <i>[Laughs.]</i></p> <p><i>[John chuckles.]</i></p> <p>Just a little nibble taken off of one of the sticks.</p>
00:53:29	Adam	Host	Yeah. You know, some—sometimes you get that dry gum, and it will be all crumbly.
00:53:34	Ben	Host	Oh, yeah. You don't like that.
00:53:35	Adam	Host	Yeah.
00:53:36	John	Host	So this is three sticks of Big Red and one crumbly stick of Big Red?
00:53:40	Ben	Host	Like, from, like a pack of baseball cards?
00:53:42	Adam	Host	Yeah. And almost an entire stick of gum with, like, a crumbly corner.
00:53:47	John	Host	But it's crumbly gum.
00:53:48	Adam	Host	No. I think you look at that pack; that looks like a fresh pack.
00:53:51	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:53:52	Adam	Host	Not one of those big honking packs with, like, 30 sticks in it. This is like a 5-stick pack of gum. I'm gonna believe that—that they're gonna be fresh. But maybe—I don't know. Maybe the quality control at the Big Red company allowed a bad stick in there.
00:54:05	John	Host	Hmm.
00:54:05	Ben	Host	Maybe it's just been on the shelf at the Liquor King for a lot longer than you realize.
00:54:10	Adam	Host	Right.
00:54:11	John	Host	<p>You know a thing or two about a bad stick, don't you, Adam?</p> <p><i>[Ben laughs heavily.]</i></p>
00:54:15	Adam	Host	I'm also known as the liquor king, John. What do you think of that?
00:54:19	John	Host	It's pretty good.
00:54:20	Ben	Host	Boom.
00:54:21	John	Host	Good.

00:54:22 Ben Host You know, this—this and *Eye in the Sky* came out within a year of each other. *Eye in the Sky* was 2015. This was 2014. Set in 2010. It's kind of an early stab at telling a story about this kind of military story. And a pretty admirable, like, maybe first attempt at, like, really setting a story in this context? And I think that, like, this drone warfare is kind of a weird challenge in telling an interesting story. Because it is, like, very static in many ways. Like, they're sitting in fucking shipping containers in a desert. Like, why are they in shipping containers? Why not build a building?

00:55:06 John Host Interesting. Interesting.

00:55:07 Ben Host Like, where they gonna have to move those things to?

00:55:09 John Host Wait a minute. This is not a question I have ever thought to ask. *[Chuckling]* Why not put them in a nice building? Wow.

00:55:18 Ben Host It seems like you wouldn't—you would have to have way fewer air conditioning units.

00:55:22 John Host Wow. Just put it a building.

00:55:24 Ben Host 'Cause you could have central air?

00:55:26 John Host Interesting.

00:55:27 Ben Host Just one of many things that I wonder about—uh, a lot of questions that this movie implies or outright poses that it can't quite figure out a way to answer. And I think that there was a lot to like about this movie, a lot of obvious flaws. But that final moment when he's peeling out in his car and heading down the highway in the desert, and we cut to the eye-in-the-sky angle, right? We cut to the—we cut to the drone POV. And I think that that was the moment when I realized what my feelings were about this movie, because I was praying that a missile would hit his car.

[John guffaws and Adam laughs along.]

I just thought that that would be such a fucking insane, perfect way to end this movie.

00:56:24 Adam Host That would be the *Lord of War* ending, wouldn't it?

00:56:27 Ben Host Yeah.

00:56:28 John Host Awesome.

00:56:29 Ben Host And I prayed to the movie gods that his car would just turn into a crater and a cloud of dust, and then we would cut to—cut to credits with some, like, heavy metal music or something.

[Adam laughs briefly.]

And we didn't get it. I was disappointed. And I think that I was hoping for that, 'cause I was just like, "Put this fucker out of his misery." Like, and I—and, you know. I don't know. It doesn't say—doesn't say a positive thing about the film. So, I think it's an interesting movie and a very worthy attempt at this kind of story. But I—I don't think it's, uh—I don't think that it quite succeeds at what it sets out to do. So I'm gonna give it three sticks of Big Red gum.

00:57:14 John Host Yeah, I—I do feel like—well, definitely having this conversation has clarified the movie to me. Because I left it both affected—I mean, it—I don't think you can not be affected by it. Because it is affecting at several different levels. I'm super interested in the ethics of drone warfare. Since the—since the idea first was broached however many, many years ago it was. It seemed like, "Wow, we better get ahead of these questions before they end up being made for us by—you know, by platoon sergeants or whatever." You know, like, whether or not a ro—it's ethical for a robot to go into a house with a machine gun and just kill everybody in there—

00:58:04 Ben Host You don't want to leave that to Sergeant Barnes?

00:58:06 John host No! No! You want to have dealt with that in the public square. And I've always felt like the technology—I think the biggest indictment of it is that the technology has outpaced our ability as a culture to reflect on what we're doing. You end up making these decisions on the basis of tactical questions rather than on the basis of philosophical ones or ethical ones. And so a long time ago, the civilian world—our civilian world—either abdicated or was cut out of decision-making when it comes to employing new war technology. And we spend an awful lot of time debating whether or not we should have dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima. But the question of remote warfare is just—it's treated as a *fait accompli*, right? We can't put the genie back in the bottle and so, anyway. Quit your bitching about it.

That's all really interesting, but I don't think that it's—I don't think it's a question of, "Is drone warfare putting an undue burden on the consciences of our pilots?" You know? Those aren't the stakes that matter. Like, there are plenty of—and I think we see that a lot in war movies, where the filmmaker is attempting to address a geopolitical issue or a major ethical one, but they feel like they're constrained. Or maybe they don't; they—as you were saying, Adam, it's just not in the purview of the film to address it, so what we have to do is address it through the proxy of somebody that joined the military for whatever reason. To—so it paid for their college. Or because, you know, their dad was in the military or something. And all of the sudden, this person that we don't know that much about is bearing the weight of the world. And that's just not sufficient.

So this movie's got a lot going on. And we're given a privileged view of war. We see an awful lot of people die of explosions. Uh, we get sworn at a lot by a lieutenant colonel. We watch a cool dude with an inexplicably cool, like, car. You know what? I mean, that's an example of what is supposed to stand in as character development for this dude. That we never see anything—we never see any emotion from him. He's not trying to cut it. And ultimately, he seems like a crybaby. I don't see that he is—I don't see that his damage is coming from an ethical wrestle with what he does all day. I think he—we start this movie off with him already crying in his beer about having lost his flight status.

And I don't think anybody in the Reaper squadron—I don't think it's a place where F-16 pilots go to retire, you know what I mean? Like, I think it's its own career path in the Air Force. It's not—*[stutters]* and that's weird. It's portrayed as a thing where either Reaper pilots are either 21 years old—

01:01:17 Ben Host Or it's like KP for—

01:01:18	John	Host	Yeah!
01:01:19	Ben	Host	—for jet pilots. <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
01:01:20	John	Host	So, anyway, I think that that message is so muddled. And as Adam says, like, this guy has no charisma. And so, you know, we end up not—not being able to care about him. But also he’s got no... I’m not clear whether he has a soul, necessarily, outside of just being tortured by—what is he tortured by exactly? He never hesitates to fire the missile. Maybe just there at the very end, where he loses—you know, he’s like, “Oh, I’m gonna—this is gonna be the turning point of the movie that—” But I didn’t see that coming from something we know about this guy.
			Anyway, I think it’s 2.9 gum sticks.
01:02:02	Adam	Host	Oh, wow.
			<i>[Ben makes a surprised sound.]</i>
01:02:03	John	Host	You know, it’s very close to three, because I do feel like there’s a lot—there are just a lot of scenes—I feel like January Jones is a pretty fleshed-out character, considering that she’s playing one of the <u>most</u> stock characters in film. She’s a beautiful and sophisticated wife who doesn’t understand what her husband does for a living and is gradually becoming disaffected. Still manages to be cute as shit in every scene. Even though she’s just a McMansion Air Force wife. Not to—not to besmirch the honor of McMansion Air Force wives.
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
			But she does—she does a lot—
01:02:42	Adam	Host	Yeah, you—you don’t want to cut down on all those DMs, John.
01:02:44	John	Host	Yeah, I know. She does—
01:02:45	Adam	Host	Better be careful.
01:02:47	Ben	Host	McMansion Air Force Wife is definitely a tab you have open in your browser.
			<i>[John and Ben laugh.]</i>
01:02:50	Adam	Host	<i>[Laughing]</i> Yeah.
01:02:52	John	Host	Right next to, “Israeli Defense Force girls.”
			<i>[Ben laughs even harder.]</i>
01:02:55	Adam	Host	Mmm.
01:02:57	John	Host	Um, so yeah, I do. I feel—I feel like there’s a ton going on here. But it just didn’t coalesce into a film that did a good job.
01:03:08	Adam	Host	There’s a larger question here that I’m hoping at some point we can answer, which is, like, “Is there something about the drone warfare movie as a genre that makes it particularly difficult to create interesting stories from?”
01:03:23	John	Host	I don’t think so. I mean, at—there are plenty of movies—like that Robert Redford movie where it was just him alone on a sailboat? I don’t know if you guys saw that, but—

01:03:33	Adam	host	<i>All is Lost.</i>
01:03:34	John	Host	So, you can have a movie about one white dude on a sailboat that never talks and make a fascinating film. Uh, I don't know if you saw the movie that Tom Hardy made, where he was driving in a car and the entire film was him on his speakerphone, talking to various people about a cement pour for a large building that was being built in England?
01:03:58	Adam	Host	You're talking about <i>Locke</i> ?
01:04:00	John	Host	Again, a really, really fascinating character study, and all we see is one person in a car, talking on his speakerphone. So, you can make a great movie with not very much.
01:04:12	Adam	Host	That is such a great comparison. Like—like a film centered around a person in a car and a film centered around a person in a trailer—there are a lot of similarities there.
01:04:23	John	Host	Yeah.
01:04:24	Adam	Host	You could <i>Locke</i> the UAV movie.
01:04:26	John	Host	So, yeah. And I feel like we all pointed out one of the most interesting scenes in this movie was watching the Reaper pilots watch some Special Forces dudes sleep. And that—and the, you know, just the amount of time that you would spend in that trailer just watching people walk around 7,000 miles away. Like, that's— [chuckling]—that does a head job on you.
			I think it's—I think that movie is still out there, waiting to be made.
01:04:58	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Adam: Yeah. Ben: Yeah.
01:04:59	Ben	Host	One thing I found in the—in reading about this movie was a link on Wikipedia to, “list of films featuring drones.” So I found some other—some stuff to add to our—
01:05:09	John	Host	Oh, nice.
01:05:10	Ben	Host	—to our big list.
01:05:11	Adam	Host	Great. Well, I'm looking forward to that. For right now, though, we need to choose guys. Ben, who's your guy?
01:05:19	Ben	Host	[Sighs] I had a really hard time coming up with a guy for this movie. 'Cause there's just not many, like, characters, even. I think I'm gonna give it to the other pilot. The—the bald dude that is always just, like, there to take over when Ethan Hawke is done shooting a missile up somebody's butt. 'Cause, like, Ethan Hawke's so depressed to be doing that. But then there's—there's a guy, like, three feet away from him that doesn't even get to do that. He just is like—is like, basically the babysitter for the drone when it's not doing anything interesting. So I felt for that guy. He seemed to be capable of doing his job without letting it cause his life to spiral into chaos. So.
01:06:05	Adam	Host	Oh, boy. What is that like?
01:06:07	Ben	Host	Yeah. He's my guy.

01:06:08	Adam	Host	<p>Good guy. My guy made me think about whether or not we've been wrong about the point of this movie all along. Maybe this movie is about something bigger. Maybe the evolution of pilots is analogous to what's happening to all of us. And instead of really being the pilots of our personal experiences, the real thing is being replaced with automation or the internet or our phones.</p> <p>Molly is my guy. Because she is determined to have a good life. A real life. She wants to go out and be with friends. She wants to go to Vegas. She might even become a dancer again! It's fine. But that's living. What's happening inside the house, between Molly and her husband, that's not living at all. And she chooses to take the kids to her sister's in Reno. She's gotta take her life back. And I hope she slams the door in her husband's face if he makes it as far as Reno. 'Cause he doesn't deserve her.</p> <p><i>[Ben and John laugh quietly.]</i></p> <p><i>[Chuckles]</i> So Molly's my guy.</p>
01:07:15	Ben	Host	Wow. Okay.
01:07:18	John	Host	<p>Well, you know, there are two guys in this movie that are that are close to my heart. And of course one of them is Lieutenant Colonel Jack Johns. Because other than the F-words—</p> <p><i>[Ben and Adam snicker.]</i></p> <p>—he's the kind of swaggering guy in command that I always imagined I would be if I had joined the military and had leapfrogged immediately to being a middle-aged officer in command, without having to spend 22 years taking orders from other people.</p>
01:07:51	Adam	Host	I know that's what Ben and I thought when we watched this film.
01:07:54	Ben	Host	Yeah.
01:07:55	Adam	Host	He's very you.
01:07:56	John	Host	<p>But he says too many F-words.</p> <p><i>[Adam giggles quietly.]</i></p> <p>But the other person, of course, I always want to be is Peter Coyote—the disembodied voice from Langley—who shows up to meetings in flip-flops—</p> <p><i>[Ben laughs heartily.]</i></p> <p>—and then suddenly is, like, going on Special Forces raids through drug tunnels into Mexico. And nobody knows who this guy is or why he's in charge. But the problem is that Peter Coyote voiced him in such a, like—in a way that had so <u>little</u> swagger, really. He didn't sound like a guy in flip-flops. He sounded like he was wearing brown shoes. So I can't be Langley. Even though that's really—I think they should have had Bruce Greenwood as Langley.</p>
01:08:39	Adam	Host	Or that's the big reveal, is that Bruce Greenwood isn't in the trailer, and that it's him on the phone?

[John laughs.]

01:08:45	Ben	Host	No, he's in the trailer, but he's also throwing his voice and making it sound like it's coming from— <i>[breaks off, laughing]</i> .
01:08:50	Adam	Host	He's using one of—like, an iPad and a bunch of buttons that say different things in his voice.
01:08:58	John	Host	So I guess—I guess I've gotta be Bruce Greenwood throwing his voice as Peter Coyote as Langley.
			<i>[Ben laughs heartily.]</i>
01:09:08	Adam	Host	Mm.
01:09:09	Music	Transition	Theme music plays, "War" by Edwin Starr.
			<i>War!</i>
			<i>Huh!</i>
			<i>Yeah!</i>
01:09:12	Adam	Host	What are we watching next week, guys? Only John's big die can tell us.
01:09:16	John	Host	Let's see here.
01:09:17	Adam	Host	Why don't you whip that thing out?
01:09:19	John	Host	Alright, here we go: 120 sides. Which side will it be?
01:09:25	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[Clinking sound of the die being rolled, clattering and spinning on a ceramic surface. A dog barks in the background.]</i>
01:09:33	Ben	Host	Strong feelings from the doggy about that dice roll.
01:09:37	John	Host	I'll say. Sixty-six!
01:09:40	Ben	Host	Sixty-six is another 2014 film. Two 2014 films in a row. This one is directed by Han Man Kim. It's about a war between Japan and Korea.
01:09:53	Music	Music	
01:09:54	Ben	Host	It's called, " <i>The Admiral</i> ," colon, " <i>Roaring Currents</i> ." Roaring currents. <i>Rural Juror</i> .
			<i>[Adam chuckles.]</i>
01:10:03	John	Host	Wasn't "Roaring Currents" the bass player of Bay City Rollers?
01:10:06	Adam	Host	Hmm.
01:10:10	Ben	Host	<i>[Laughs]</i> I have not heard about this film, but in my brief survey of the Wikipedia entry on it, it says that this was, until 2019, the most-watched and highest-grossing film of all time in South Korea.
01:10:25	John	Host	Ohhh.

01:10:26	Adam	Host	<i>[Intrigued]</i> Hm.
01:10:27	Ben	Host	I'm excited for this. It looks like guys in armor and wooden boats on the poster.
01:10:28	Music	Music	Theme song slowly fades in as the hosts speak. "War" by Edwin Starr.
01:10:31	Adam	Host	You guys love a wooden-boat movie.
01:10:33	Ben	Host	Yeah. Ye olden times. So we'll be—we'll be headed way back to the past. That will be next week. We're gonna leave it with Rob Schulte from here. So, for John Roderick and Adam Pranica, I've been Ben Harrison. To the victor go the spoiler alerts. <i>[Imitating the 30 Rock pronunciation]</i> <i>Rural Juror. Roaring Currents.</i>
01:10:49	Rob	Producer	<p><i>Friendly Fire</i> is a Maximum Fun podcast hosted by Ben Harrison, Adam Pranica, and John Roderick. The podcast is produced by me, Rob Schulte. Our theme music is "War" by Edwin Starr, courtesy of Stone Agate Music. And our logo art is by Nick Ditmore.</p> <p>Last year, we reviewed <i>Casualties of War</i> from 1989, a Brian De Palma-directed Vietnam War film about an unnecessary kidnapping, starring Michael J. Fox and Sean Penn. So if you're looking for more to listen to, go back and check that one out.</p> <p><i>Friendly Fire</i> is made possible by the support of listeners like you. Please leave us a five-star rating and review on Apple Podcasts, and head to MaximumFun.org/join to pledge your support. It's especially helpful during the MaxFunDrive. You gain access to all the Maximum Fun bonus content, as well as all of the Pork Chop episodes we've put out.</p> <p>You can now also follow <i>Friendly Fire</i> on Twitter and Instagram under the handles "FriendlyFireRSS," in addition to the discussion group we have on Facebook. So, join in the conversation. Thanks for listening. And we'll see you next week on <i>Friendly Fire</i>.</p> <p><i>[Theme song plays for a while at full volume before fading out.]</i></p>
01:12:21	Adam	Host	John, what did you make of the Nada Surf song that we heard during this movie?
01:12:24	John	Host	Well, it's funny. Um, because this—one of the things that kind of... maybe put me off the film a little bit was the soundtrack. Kind of this disassociated group of hard-rock-y stuff. It's not that you're—it's like—it sounded like somebody's playlist but it was used to communicate something about the character. But it wasn't clear to me from the song choices. But there is the opening bars of Nada Surf's "High-Speed Soul." Which is—
01:13:04	Adam	Host	Mm-hmm.
01:13:05	John	Host	—a great Nada Surf song. And also one that The Long Winters have covered. There's an album of Nada Surf songs covered by their friends, and "High-Speed Soul" is the one that we covered. So—but anyway, I was really excited to hear my friends in a big movie, because of course, they're gonna get <u>paid</u> , bro. Some amount. They're gonna get paid some <u>caaassh</u> . If you wanna hear The Long Winters' cover, the record is called <i>Standing At the Gates: The Songs of Nada Surf's Let Go</i> . It's all the songs from the album <i>Let Go</i> .

01:13:46	Adam	Host	Listen to you trying to sell an album right now! That was not the point of the question, John.
01:13:52	Music	Transition	A cheerful ukulele chord.
01:13:53	Speaker 1	Guest	MaximumFun.org
01:13:54	Speaker 2	Guest	Comedy and culture.
01:13:56	Speaker 3	Guest	Artist owned—
01:13:57	Speaker 4	Guest	—audience supported.