

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	Music	Music	Music from <i>A Midnight Clear</i> by Mark Isham plays in background: ethereal chorus with classic orchestra, occasionally switching back and forth between more tense and dramatic symphonic music.
00:00:02	Ben Harrison	Host	So you're busy trying to fight a war and an important day in your religious calendar comes up. What do you do? How do you deal with the fact that your religion demands that you set a day aside to honor this or atone for that when you're trying to make everyone wearing the other uniform die for their country? The holidays interact with war in such peculiar ways. These two phenomena are both so human and yet so incompatible. In the context of war, holidays make no sense. And in the context of holidays, war makes no sense. History has lots of interesting examples of this puzzling interplay. In 1968, North Vietnam took advantage of a supposed ceasefire surrounding the Tet holiday to launch a major offensive across South Vietnam in one of the bloodiest chapters of that war. A few years later, a coalition of Arab States launched a surprise attack to try and retake the Sinai Peninsula from Israel on Yom Kippur, one of the holiest days in the Jewish calendar. That one also happened to take place during the Islamic observance of Ramadan, which is another non-ideal time to be waging war from a piety standpoint.

If these days are so holy, you would think that the nations that espouse these religions would shy away from offending the Almighty by using the Almighty as cover for the element of surprise. You'd think a lot more lightning bolts would be dropping if the Almighty gave a shit. Precedent would indicate that the Almighty does not, and that whatever religion the commanders claim, the advantage of that false sense of holiday security is too good to resist in a clash of civilizations. Well, today's film is partly about that tension. It's a war movie and kind of a Christmas movie, too, and we know this episode comes out on the last day of Hannukah, so we're sorry about that. It's just the way the dice tumbled.

Keith Gordon's psychological drama pits a squad of U.S. Army dudes against an at-first-unseen group of German soldiers somewhere in the Ardennes over the Christmas holiday, and what starts as a fairly slow-paced reconnoiter turns into a freaky ghost movie for a minute before the soldiers make contact with each other and start a delicate dance toward the idea of the Americans accepting the Germans' surrender. The two squads even get in a late-night snowball fight, but despite the warm, fuzzy feelings of holiday cheer, this is a dangerous situation populated by soldiers who are not all stable and not all on the same page.

We're late in the war. Our guys just wish they were home, and the insanity of war feels especially onerous given the time of year. Not to mention all that last-minute holiday shopping they're not getting done because the Germans are building frozen corpse sculptures in the woods! I imagine our listeners feel the same way—how, at a time like this, are we still listening to this podcast? I don't know what day it is. I have no watch, so I don't know what time it is. I'm not

even sure of my name. The next thing you know, they'll be making me a general. Today on *Friendly Fire—A Midnight Clear*.

00:03:18 Music Music *[Slow, gentle acoustic guitar plays briefly, then finishes.]*
"War" off the album *War & Peace* by Edwin Starr. Impassioned, intense funk.

War!
Huh!
Yeah!
What is it good for?!
Absolutely—
—nothing!
Uh-huh!

War!
Huh!
Yeah!
What is it good for?!
Absolutely—
—nothing!

Say it again, y'all!

War!

00:03:39 Ben Host *[Song fades down and plays quietly as the hosts speak.]*
Welcome to *Friendly Fire*! It's amazing how much profanity goes on in this war movie podcast if you're tuned in to hear it. I'm Ben Harrison.

00:03:47 Adam Host I'm Adam Pranica.

00:03:48 John Host And I'm John Roderick.

00:03:51 Ben Host No cursing this episode, gentlemen.

00:03:52 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** Oh no!

00:03:55 John Host **John:** That was a good quote to start the episode with, Ben. I'd just like to say. Well chosen.

00:03:59 Ben Host *[Ben laughs.]*
Thank you. It's a very strange movie! Very different tone from a... the average *Friendly Fire* film, I feel like.

00:04:07 John Host Yeah. This film is 80% tone. For me, my whole experience of it was like, "Hm. Now we're in this tone. Now we're in that tone."

00:04:21 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* Yeah. The film debut of Gary Sinise!

00:04:24 John Host Nooo.

00:04:25 Adam Host That's— *[Laughs.]* That's amazing to me. I always feel—

00:04:27 John Host That can't be true.

00:04:29 Adam Host I feel like Gary Sinise was born 40 years old.

00:04:34 Ben Host *[Ben laughs.]*
Yeah.

00:04:35 Adam Host A lot like you in that way, Ben!

[All laugh.]

00:04:36	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:04:38	John	Host	Gary Sinise—first of all— <u>was</u> almost 40 years old. He was 37.
00:04:43	Adam	Host	Oh, okay.
00:04:44	John	Host	And also he is, like, far and away the oldest member of the cast by at least five years. Maybe, in some cases—he’s 15 years older than Ethan Hawke and 10 years older than everybody else. And this is his first film role?
00:05:01	Adam	Host	Yeah. But you stick him in those glasses and you tie his hair back. You just give him that opportunity later on when he takes ‘em off. Lets his hair down. You realize how beautiful he is.
00:05:13	Ben	Host	I didn’t really get the “Mother” thing to his character? They make the case early on that he kind of mothers the rest of the men, but he’s already totally... off his nut at the beginning of this movie. Like, the opening of the film is about his mind leaving him. So.
00:05:31	Adam	Host	Yeah. He seems like the mom from <i>Sopranos</i> .
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
00:05:35	Clip	Clip	Livia Soprano (<i>The Sopranos</i>): <i>[Contemptuously]</i> Oh, listen to him. He knows everything.
00:05:38	John	Host	I was unclear about the timeline of the formation of the squad—of the brigade. Because at first it seemed like they were all in different combat areas and were brought together. Because they’d scored so high, they were taken from other units. And then later on we see boot camp scenes with them all training together as like fresh recruits and we have the whole “lose your virginity” scene. So... yeah. All the scenes, I guess, when they’re all 18 and Mother is 26—
			<i>[Adam laughs.]</i>
			—in the two years it took for them to get to the beginning of this movie. Yeah. Maybe he was a real—real mothering figure.
00:06:25	Ben	Host	A real marm?
00:06:27	John	Host	He was a real shattered man, though, in this movie.
00:06:31	Ben	Host	Yeah. No kidding. He really fucked the whole plan up. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:06:34	John	Host	He did.
00:06:35	Adam	Host	I had pre- <i>Biloxi Blues</i> cringe going into this, because—
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
00:06:41	John	Host	We got a lot of letters, Adam. It’s “Bluxy.” <i>Bluxy Blues</i> .
00:06:44	Adam	Host	Well, no one knows where I get my accent. So—
			<i>[John laughs.]</i>
			—I’ll continue to confound people on that. But like, I was hoping we wouldn’t get <i>The Sandlot</i> for Battle of the Bulge.
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
			And I think the voiceover could’ve gone in that direction, and I think—I think for a lot of reasons, it didn’t.
00:07:04	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:07:06	John	Host	This movie does not try to be funny. At any point. There is no... there’s nothing funny about it.

00:07:12 Ben Host Yeah. Even when there's like four guys nervous to lose their virginity or a snowball fight or, like, impromptu Christmas carols? It's never played for jokey jokes.

00:07:25 Adam Host I wonder to what extent it is—it has to do with weather and time. Because in *Biloxi Blues*, like, it's hot and bright and sunny. And there's something that is so smother-y about the location for this film. It is so cold. And it is so dark. That I wonder if it suffocates the idea of that kind of... treacly, old-feeling comedy that we would get from a lesser film.

00:08:01 John Host A lesser film? I mean, I—they're just not playing it for laughs. Right? Nobody in this movie is a comedian, and everybody in *Biloxi Blues* is cast as a comedic type.

00:08:13 Adam Host I feel like the Janice story could have... pitched this film into *Biloxi Blues* territory.

00:08:19 John Host Well, except that that story is played as absolute tragedy. I mean, they come out of the bathroom and she's there saying that she was gonna commit suicide, but now she's willing to take their virginities as her last—as her dying act. When that scene was over, I was not clear whether or not the movie suggested that she got on the bus and went and *[through laughter]* and committed—and followed through on her suicide pact! *[Laughs.]*

00:08:46 Adam Host *[Through laughter]* She stepped in front of the bus instead of walking on it?

00:08:50 John Host *[Ben laughs.]*
Yeah! But I mean, that was—there wasn't any comedy in the setup. They drained all the comedy out. Right? When they were in the bathroom and they're like, "Why is it taking him so long?" Like, that was the closest we were getting to the setup of something where somebody would be like, "Eugene!"

00:09:07 Adam Host Right.

00:09:08 John Host But then they step out and they step into, like, a giant cow patty of awkward sorrow. Which is kind of how I think of this show.

00:09:20 Ben Host *[Ben cracks up.]*
Yeah. That's the—I mean, *Friendly Fire*, nominally a war movie podcast. But really, "awkward sorrow" is the brand promise. That's what people come for.

00:09:32 John Host And I think its casting—I mean, the casting of this movie is... pick five hot, young actors of 1991. Not one of them—if you think about everybody in this movie, not one of them *[through laughter]* has ever played a comedic role. I mean, I guess Arye Gross... went on to be, like, a comedic television figure.

00:09:58 Clip Clip **Stan Shutzer (*A Midnight Clear*):** I shoulda known Edwards was gonna take forever.

00:10:02 Ben Host John C. McGinley is kind of the... is kind of as close as this movie has to a funny character, but he's such a morbid character. He's playing him in a very John C. McGinley way, which kind of... I think really works. Like, it makes his, y'know, officiousness and pigheadedness feel like a threat. Even when he's not ordering people to their deaths, he feels like a dangerous presence. 'Cause he just is such a bozo.

00:10:31 Adam Host His physicality in this movie is really well played. Like, he doesn't get many scenes, but when you do get him, he's... y'know, lounged in a giant chair. For his shave. Or he's in someone's face. Or he's lounging in another chair in the chateau.

00:10:52	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:10:53	Adam	Host	I like his choices in this movie. And they're very hateable choices!
00:10:57	John	Host	He's playing the <u>exact</u> role of Eddie Albert in <i>Attack!</i>
<i>[All laugh.]</i>			
00:11:04	Adam	Host	Right.
00:11:06	Ben	Host	This movie does talk a little bit about the ages of the—the putative ages of the characters. That they're all super-young guys. And the John C. McGinley guy being, like, the old man—who is still quite young—feels like something that a lot of World War Two movies sort of ignores. I mean, especially in the nineties, like, they put older guys in those roles. I guess because—maybe because we had started to think of World War Two as a war that older people had fought in? Because they were all Olds by the nineties?
<i>[John laughs.]</i>			
So I thought that was kind of an interesting choice. And it does have that moment when McGinley completely lays into Ethan Hawke for having a messy house <i>[through laughter]</i> when he comes and visits the chateau. It's like, oh, god. Yeah. They're living like a bunch of college boys because they kind of are.			
00:12:12	Adam	Host	The idea of a house in the woods during wartime... is so interesting to me, because the idea of safety is gone. Safety and comfort. Because you've become a target, haven't you? That conflict, I think, is just ever-present. Like, "Oh, god, it's gotta be nice to light a fire in this fireplace... but what about the smoke?"
00:12:38	Ben	Host	Right. And they seem to be—like, they make the case that they're smart guys, but they also never feel well-trained or seasoned.
00:12:45	Adam	Host	Yeah.
00:12:47	Ben	Host	And they—y'know, he goes out and looks at that smoke and is like, "Oh, that's not so bad!" Like he has a good sense of how to assess whether the smoke is gonna be a problem or not. Also, lighting a fire is going to light up the windows of the house and betray your position! <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:13:02	John	Host	Well, that—so this is, I guess, one of the first questions I have about the tone of this movie. Because... the setup is that these guys are all real smart and put together in this group. This was somebody's bright idea. And then they were kinda squandered in that they were just sort of put out into the field as a regular combat unit. Y'know, they're an intelligence unit but they're being used basically as a recon unit. And so half of 'em are wiped out, and we hear several times, like, what a waste that all these really smart guys were all put together and all killed on the same day. It's kind of the refrain about World War One, that all the great poets of—what would've been the great poets of the 20 th Century all died in Flanders Field. In this case it seemed like these guys all would've gone to work for Raytheon. All the great poets of Raytheon in the fifties were all killed.
<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>			
But then this is the thing that confused me, is that their intelligence—their relative intelligence—and I have never seen Kevin Dillon cast as a really smart guy. <i>[Through laughter]</i> And I didn't—			

[Ben laughs.]

—and it seemed like against type here, too? But none of their intelligence—

00:14:29 Ben Host It was a very strange role for him.
00:14:31 John Host Yeah. But I mean, I loved his performance. But—
00:14:36 Ben Host It might be the first Kevin Dillon performance that I thought was actually pretty good.
00:14:40 John Host Mm-hm!
00:14:41 Clip Clip **Speaker 1:** He's actually got an impressive resume.
00:14:43 Adam Host What's your problem with Kevin Dillon?
00:14:44 Ben Host He felt a little out of place in this movie because he looks like he is from 1987, not 1944.
00:14:54 Adam Host Mm-hm.
00:14:55 Ben Host And I think the rest of them kind of look like past people. They look era-appropriate and Kevin Dillon just looks like he's, like...
[Laughs.] I don't know. Like he rode a skateboard to Germany or something? But the emotional truth of his performance felt more authentic than I'm accustomed—y'know, he usually plays kind of like a brash asshole. And he's self-confident but, y'know, but cares about his—the rest of his guys in this movie. We should watch *Delta Force* next.

[Adam laughs.]

00:15:32 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** We should. Are you saying we should bump it up the queue?

Adam: Sounds great.

00:15:36 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* Yeah. I mean, he's in that, right? *[Laughs.]* How does—does he have the same sensitivity when he's acting across from Chuck Norris and Lee Marvin? *[Laughs.]*
00:15:46 John Host The thing is, his portrayal of Bunny in *Platoon*—he's one of the iconic characters of *Platoon* and he plays a real, like, undercooked sociopath in that movie. But you could be forgiven for feeling like, yeah, he just rode a skateboard there and that was his natural kind of take on it. This is just—I mean, this is like six full years later. This movie. And he now seems kind of hard. Y'know? Like... he's the natural-born killer in this cast. And he wears it, I thought, really well.
00:16:25 Ben Host Yeah.
00:16:27 John Host But my point—my point about your comment to the effect of, like... lighting a fire in the fireplace and whatnot... like, the script has this jewel at its heart, which is that—unlike most World War Two movies where you got a guy from Queens and a guy from Denver and a guy from Florida and they're all thrown together—
00:16:53 Adam Host Classic Denver guy.

[Ben chuckles.]

00:16:54 John Host In this movie, you got a guy from Queens, you got a guy from Denver, and a guy from Florida, but they're all real high-IQ guys. And yet that high IQ thing really never... the screenwriter never exploits it. We—like, they just do a bungled... mission like every other bungled mission.
00:17:17 Ben Host To be fair, the Germans start with the psyops and then downgrade to snow grenades. Like— *[Laughs.]*
00:17:27 John Host Yeah. They're teasing. I mean, that's so German. Am I right? They're real teasers.

00:17:34 Ben Host *[Adam laughs.]*
 That scene when they are—they stop the Jeeps and come across the frozen corpse soldiers fixed in an embrace, standing up in the middle of the road... and they start, like, poking and prodding at it—I was like, “This thing is booby trapped. It’s like—”

00:17:53 John Host It’s such a booby trap!
 00:17:54 Ben Host “This thing is full of bombs and they are all gonna be blown apart in this moment.” And then it’s just not! *[Laughs.]*

00:17:59 John Host Right.
 00:18:01 Adam Host There isn’t a language barrier. Like, that isn’t the problem here. It’s an action barrier.

[John chuckles.]

00:18:09 Ben Host It’s what these guys are doing.
 Yeah. I knew that it was booby trapped because I’ve seen a million war movies and I know what it means when a soldier walks up to something that he’s like, “What’s this?” Y’know?

[John laughs.]

00:18:36 Adam Host That always means he’s about to get turned into cat food. And... then I was like, “Well, maybe they don’t, because they haven’t seen that trope a million times!” From that moment onward, I was like, “I have no idea where this movie is going. I have no idea what’s gonna happen. It could be a horror movie. It could be—”

00:18:51 John Host That’s the vibe that I got, Ben, because it’s not just a quality
 00:18:55 Ben Host confined to the war genre. When you fuck around with a dead body? It raises the stakes into somewhere else. Into somewhere very dangerous.
 It did feel like a horror movie setup at that point.
 And there’s so much body stuff in this. Like later, when they bathe Father’s body, like... they all take a bath in this bathtub and then put the corpse of their dead friend and like—it’s almost like a religious rite, the way they clean his body together.

00:19:13 Adam Host They should call that bathtub “Janice” with how it comforted all of the men.

[Ben snorts.]

00:19:18 John Host Oh no. Wow.
 00:19:20 Ben Host *[Through laughter]* Jesus.
 00:19:21 John Host Such a low bar.

[Adam laughs.]

But— *[Laughs.]* But that’s where the tone of the movie and the plot of the movie diverge. So here you’ve got this high-IQ group. None of ‘em speak German. Okay. Alright. Well, that seems like a screenwriter’s—either it’s a missed opportunity, or it should be made a bigger—there should be a bigger deal made of it. Because the Yiddish guy stands there and goes, like, “I don’t know what you’re saying!” And the guy’s like, *[in English, but with German accent]* “I want your officer!” And he’s like, “Did you mean—what did you say? You wanna get an office space?” And he’s like, *[with German accent again]* “Officer!”

[Ben laughs.]

00:20:05 Ben Host He's like, "Office—*Office Space* is a great movie! Yes, I agree!" And then—
00:20:08 John Host "The red stapler! Classic! Really funny stuff!"
But then it cuts to the next scene and the same character is—like, Ari is reporting to the Ethan Hawke character and he's like, "They were on the Russian front and they had a terrible time of it and then they got sent here and they've decided that they want to surrender, but they want to set up a—" Y'know, he's just like, all of a sudden he's gotten... he's gone from "I don't speak even pidgin German" to, like, "I've divined the secret of these people."

[Ben laughs.]

00:20:38 Ben Host "They told me their life story now." [Laughs.]
00:20:41 John Host But there's no—but his, like, his supposed intelligence as some 150 IQ guy doesn't really ever come into play there. And there's several scenes like that. Like, they're in the chateau. And at no point does anyone go upstairs and just station themselves in a window? Like, you're—you don't have to go out to a cold foxhole 200 yards away. You could just pull the curtains back in the window. There's already a fire in the fireplace. They know you're there. Just look out the windows! You see for a mile!

00:21:19 Ben Host I think that this movie gets away with some of that stuff because it has this sort of magical realism tone.

00:21:26 John Host There it is.
00:21:27 Ben Host And I don't think that there's any actual magic depicted. Ever. But it kind of feels like, y'know... somebody could turn into a bird [through laughter] at any moment.

00:21:36 John Host It does! And I think a lot of that has to do with the soundtrack.
00:21:41 Clip Clip Low, rumbling, otherworldly, almost sinister-sounding music plays in background.

00:21:43 Ben Host Yeah.
00:21:44 John Host Because the music that's playing is somewhere between, like, Vangelis and, like, the *Miami Vice* soundtrack. Every once in a while, y'know, they're in the woods—

[Ben laughs.]

—and they're like, "What are we—what is happening?" And there's a bunch of *Gladiator* music playing.

00:22:00 Ben Host Yeah.
00:22:02 John Host It really did feel magical.
00:22:07 Adam Host One of the magical qualities of films of this era—that sort of video portraiture of characters that you'll get when you introduce them in a film from the early nineties? Like, Kevin Dillon gets one of these moments. These characters look directly to camera and the camera's moving around them as we talk about them using voiceover. I think between the audio that John is describing and some of these visuals, it's not *verité*. It's something else. Like, it's—it's stylized in a way that suggests the presence of a magic, I think, in the way that you guys are describing. And all of these elements work together to make that suggestion.

00:22:49 John Host Yes. Yeah. The paintings in the attic that appear—I mean, what are—"The paintings appear to be observing us."

00:22:58	Adam	Host	Yeah.
00:23:00	John	Host	We see that scene as they're walking through the forest and we see a frozen hand coming up out of the ice.
00:23:06	Adam	Host	Right.
00:23:08	John	Host	And we're seeing it from an omniscient viewpoint. Like, they never notice it. And it suggests that—what—under this frozen landscape there are just dead bodies all around them?
00:23:21	Adam	Host	All of these factors, I think, are why—at least, I was <u>very</u> surprised at the climax of this film and what happens during.
00:23:30	Ben	Host	Yeah. Right up until it, I could not tell where we were going. I was wondering, "Is this going to work, and if it does will it feel satisfying? Will it feel like we've watched something that was worth watching if they do the thing that they are setting out to do?" Which is take seven prisoners and help those seven prisoners not reap reprisals for their families back home in Germany?
00:24:01	John	Host	Yeah. Is that gonna be enough?
00:24:03	Music	Music	Short reprise of theme song "War."
00:24:06	Adam	Host	I thought it was really a high degree of difficulty to introduce Mother as a chaos agent and then at least personally totally forget about his danger scene-to-scene. Especially in this moment when they're at the Wehrmacht cabin. Like, I was impressed that I was surprised in this moment, even though the film told us all we needed to know about what was likely to happen in a scene like this. By keeping the secret from Mother, he was <u>always</u> going to appear at the wrong time.
00:24:41	Ben	Host	Absolutely. It was a <i>fait accompli</i> and then somehow this film sleight-of-hands that out of your mind just at the right moment.
00:24:49	Adam	Host	Hiding Mother from the rest of the characters also effectively hid him from <u>me</u> ! I was <u>very</u> surprised when he starts shooting. And I kind of, like... I was <u>hard</u> on myself in this moment. I was like, "You shoulda seen that coming!"
			<i>[Multiple people laugh.]</i>
00:25:11	Ben	Host	"This is basic movie math here!" Were you guys surprised, or did you see it? Did you see it coming? I did not see it coming. I was surprised and I wondered—'cause he's also kind of off in the forest a ways? So you don't—like, you don't make him as Gary Sinise in the moment when he starts shooting. You rely on the dialogue when Father runs toward him and shouts "Mother!"
00:25:32	Adam	Host	I thought for sure it was the coming German army that had been referred to several times up until now. Like, "We gotta do this now before the German army comes and finds these people."
00:25:44	Ben	Host	My head went in a number of directions, one of which was, y'know, they went up here to reconnoiter this area because another detachment stopped answering their cell phone. I was like, "Who could—this could be them! This could be somebody that John C. McGinley sent. Who knows!"
00:26:07	John	Host	It took me completely by surprise. And I think had either its intended effect or a powerful effect, which was disappointment. Disappointment that this was the movie that we were in now. Like, spent a <u>lot</u> of time getting to a place where I was like, "Okay. So the plot of this movie is that these guys are gonna get captured. Okay. We really—it took us a long time to get there, but I'm ready now."

[Adam laughs.]

“We’re gonna shoot these guns in the air and they’re gonna capture these guys. Okay. Whew!” And then that—then all of a sudden Mother starts killing ‘em and everybody ends up dead and I was like, “Okay. [Sighs.] That’s not the plot of the movie. What—what is the plot of the movie now? What is the plot of the movie? Are we—oh, we’re hiding it from Mother?” It was frustrating for me. It was a frustrating turn. Frustrating that I didn’t see it coming, but also that I think I didn’t see it coming because my attention was consumed trying to see what I was doing in this movie.

00:27:19 Adam Host

I did not expect to feel the amount of empathy that I felt for the German soldiers. We get scene after scene to develop that feeling as we go, and I think a big part of it is how they cast that—like, the lead old German soldier of the group has got—did you read about this guy?

00:27:41 Crosstalk Crosstalk

Adam: Curt Lowens was—

00:27:45 Adam Host

John: He’s incredible. What a—what a story.

He liberated Holocaust camps. And there’s something about his face and his performance here where you can’t help but not feel the danger that his character is in in giving it up against the soldiers that we know are the main characters. Like, we’re never not on his side.

00:28:05 John Host

I don’t mean to correct you, but he was—he didn’t liberate Holocaust camps. He was a Jew who was in hiding in Holland with his mom and dad as a kid during the war. Grew up in occupied Holland having tried to escape Berlin and, like, the Germans invaded Holland the day their ship was supposed to sail to America. And then he spent the war rescuing fellow Jews as a teenager!

00:28:38 Crosstalk Crosstalk

Ben: Wow. Where’s the movie about this guy?

00:28:40 John Host

John: His—

His story is insane! Insane! This whole business of like, “Alright, well, after Kristallnacht we gotta get out of Germany. Let’s go to Holland.” That’s actually fairly common story. But the whole story of like, “Alright! Well, we’ve got our tickets! Our ship leaves tomorrow for New York City!”

00:28:58 Ben Host

“New York City?!”

[John laughs.]

00:29:01 Adam Host

This is not the first time he’s portrayed a German officer, either. This is something that he was known for.

00:29:06 John Host

Yeah. He—oh my goodness! Y’know, Adam, he’s in *Werewolf in a Girls’ Dormitory!* In 1961.

[Ben laughs.]

00:29:14 Adam Host

I’m looking at the poster on my wall, John.

00:29:17 Clip Clip

Music: Theme song from *Werewolf in a Girls’ Dormitory*, “The Ghoul in School” by The Fortunes. Starts off with scary, discordant beats, then transitions to boppy sixties-style girl group music.

There was a ghoul in school!

(Ghoul in school!)

There was a ghoul in school!

(Ghoul in school!)

00:29:24	Ben	Host	Something I thought about a little watching this was like, “Is there—is this one of those movies that’s an effort to educate the audience on the distinction between German and Nazi?” It seems like a thing that some of the soldiers care about and others don’t. Like, the Jewish guy really comes around on these guys. He’s got some bloodlust at the beginning of this movie and then is just trying to save them once he kind of figures out what their deal is.
00:29:57	Adam	Host	It’s Curt Lowens that actually says the words, right? “We’re not Nazis; we’re German Wehrmacht.”
00:30:01	Ben	Host	Yeah. And they see SS troops later on when they’re trying to get back to camp. Like, does 1992, like... need a movie that makes that distinction for the American public? Is that the project here? Is that the <i>raison d’etre</i> for this movie?
00:30:22	John	Host	I mean, the director and writer of the movie—Keith Gordon—is a Jewish guy who everybody recognizes. He was Rodney Dangerfield’s son in <i>Back to School</i> , a fairly knowable face.
00:30:44	Adam	Host	He also married the actor who played Janice in this movie!
00:30:47	John	Host	What? Really?
00:30:48	Ben	Host	Whoa!
00:30:49	Adam	Host	Isn’t that nuts? Yeah!
00:30:52	Ben	Host	He’s the real-life Miller?
			<i>[John laughs.]</i>
00:30:53	Adam	Host	He married Rachel Griffin in 1998!
00:30:57	John	Host	Wow! That’s amazing!
00:30:59	Clip	Clip	Music: Atmospheric, ethereal choir.
			Vance “Mother” Wilkins (<i>A Midnight Clear</i>): See? Somebody cared.
00:31:02	John	Host	But we talk so much about this era of—in American film—where Hollywood really was pushing a post-racial America narrative. Y’know, at first the movies during this era were at great pains not to mention race. And then by the mid-nineties they’d kind of evolved into a place where they were successfully casting actors of color and just not making reference to race. And I really did feel, watching this, Ben, that that kind of, “No, no, no! These aren’t the <u>bad</u> Nazis! These are just regular good old German normals!” That over the course of the—or the second half of the 20 th Century, that story got airtime three or four different times.
00:31:49	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:31:50	John	Host	Right? There was a version of it in movies in the fifties and sixties where we see the Germans as kind of noble adversaries. And there’s always a Nazi that we get to hate, but then we get to also—
00:32:08	Ben	Host	There’s a real goose-stepper around, but the rest of them are just—are just guys that are trying to do a good war.
00:32:16	John	Host	Yeah. Guys we could relate to and, y’know, and then we go through a period where all Germans in World War Two movies are just sort of blind adherents to Nazism. And then we have another phase where—like, this is after <i>Das Boot</i> kind of reintroduced the idea that, “Oh! We could have movies about Germans in World War Two and have them be the sympathetic leads!” I don’t think you could make this movie now. The whole scene where they’re standing around the Christmas tree singing “O, Tannenbaum”—it’s like the soccer game on Christmas Day. I hate to keep referencing World War One. But the point of that scene is that... the cultural

00:33:18 Ben Host differences between white American soldiers and white German soldiers fighting in Belgium are—it's really almost no difference. There's this theory of the West as a meta-civilization that has lots of, like, y'know, lots of different ways of subdividing itself. But overall, America and Europe are in a lot of ways one thing that there are, like, some regional variations within.

[Sound of dot matrix printer in background.]

And you can think of—in that framework, like, it's like this is a civil war between different factions within an imperialist meta-civilization that spans the globe. And, y'know, the movement for globalization is happening in the early nineties and I guess, y'know, building more toward the late nineties. But you don't really hear about globalization that much in political discourse anymore, but it was—I feel like—a hotter topic then. And I wonder if it's just kind of in the water, that theory of internationalism being represented in a film like this.

00:34:29 Adam Host We can all agree on Christmas.

00:34:33 John Host *[Ben laughs.]*
If you put it in the context of it being a movie made in 1991 coming out in '92, we are—what—one year past reunification of Germany? Gorbachev was still president of the Soviet Union in August of '91, when this film was in production. But to your point, Ben, that the globalization and the post-Cold War feeling that history was at an end and what we needed to do now was all come together—

00:35:11 Ben Host *[Laughs.]*
Fixate less on our differences and more on our commonalities.
00:35:14 John Host Yeah! Look like some graphic art on the outside of a UNICEF cup.

[Ben laughs.]

00:35:24 Adam Host Just—it's a small world after all.
You're just looking around your room right now.

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:35:29 Ben Host For examples.
“We just need to look like a dartboard with the kid from *Rosea*—I mean, not that!”

[All laugh.]

“Something else. Something more ecumenical and internationalist. Oh yeah! What about this UNICEF thing?”

00:35:46 John Host *[All laugh.]*
But this was a feeling that the Germans did have in 1944. A lot of Germans on the ground did not believe that the United States entering the war was going to be decisive in the sense that they felt like they had way more in common with Americans than Americans seem to understand. And the Germans were like, “Why are you attacking us when our clear enemies are the Russians—who are Slavs and we both know that the Slavs are wrong—and Jews!”

[Ben laughs.]

“What is the matter with you Americans? Get on the same page here!”

00:36:27 Ben Host
00:36:29 John Host

And Henry Ford was like, “Fucking A!”
Yeah, exactly, right? Joe Kennedy was like, “I dunno. You got a point.” So I think German troops on the ground were surprised that—y’know, they kind of had the expectation that like, “Americans are here and they’re gonna figure this out. Before too long they’re gonna figure it out.”

00:36:45 Ben Host

“Somebody’s gonna check with Prescott Bush and he’s gonna get all this—”

[John laughs.]

“—completely straightened out.”

00:36:52 Adam Host
00:36:55 Ben Host
00:36:56 Adam Host

There was a time when we had that reputation.

Yeah. *[Laughs.]*

The “figuring it out” reputation, I mean.

[Ben laughs.]

Now we’re a warning to others.

00:37:01 Crosstalk Crosstalk

Ben: Right.

John: Yeah. A warning to others.

00:37:04 John Host

But yeah. A UFO looking down on this, I mean, the German language and the English language are basically just accents. Why is this family having a fight?

00:37:16 Ben Host

My wife was really surprised that Christmas carols transcend national and linguistic boundaries.

00:37:24 John Host
00:37:26 Ben Host

Really?

And she was comparing them to Jewish prayers, which—y’know—the melody—there are melodies associated with prayers in Jewish traditions and they’re pretty different. Like Sephardim do the songs super-differently from the way Ashkenazis do. And she kind of, I think, imagined it might be like that. So when they start singing, y’know, “Silent Night”/“Stille Nacht”, she was like, “What the hell is going on here? How do they both know the song?”

00:38:02 John Host
00:38:05 Ben Host

Right. They’re all German songs, is how.

And I was trying to remember if a famous German composer had written that one? Or I couldn’t remember. But yeah. The—there’s also that thing of Christmas—like, the way Christmas is celebrated being a relatively modern concept. And—

00:38:25 John Host
00:38:27 Ben Host

And super-German concept!

So I feel like there’s a whole film paper to be had somewhere in there that I could’ve done research before we recorded today *[through laughter]* and I failed to. But that um—

00:38:38 John Host

Well, really interesting that the ritual of washing of the body of the dead is not really at all a Christian ritual. It’s—

00:38:47 Ben Host
00:38:49 John Host

Yeah.

Y’know, it’s a Semitic ritual. It’s a big part of Islam and Orthodox Judaism to do that whole, like, caring for the body after death.

00:39:00 Ben Host

I kept wanting Spike Jonze to walk in and go, “What kinda shrine y’all got?” *[Laughs.]*

00:39:08 John Host *[John laughs.]*
If either of you die and we're in a cabin and there's a bathtub and I take a bath in it—

00:39:17 Ben Host Yeah. You're not gonna move your pot of spaghetti over to make room for us?

00:39:22 Adam Host No, there's no fucking way. You'd carry our corpses out into the snow and—

00:39:25 John Host I would.
00:39:27 Adam Host —put us beneath a tree.

[Ben laughs.]

00:39:31 John Host There's no way we're getting blood on the inside of your bathtub. No. Why would I have you in the house? I would not. You would be out—what *[through laughter]* I would've done is position you on a chair by the front door, holding a gun—

[Adam laughs.]

00:39:49 Ben Host —and then people would be like, “Oh, there's a guard!” And then you would freeze in the sitting position.
I would freeze you in a standing position embracing a soldier in the enemy uniform, probably.

00:39:54 Crosstalk Crosstalk *[John laughs.]*
John: Yeah!

00:39:56 Adam Host **Adam:** From time to time—
—would you grab our arms and pump us like a blood well?

[Ben laughs.]

00:40:06 John Host You grew up in Alaska! You can't pump a dead body for blood, can you?
No. Especially not one that's been dead for two days and has been frozen and unfrozen a couple of times. You're not gonna get blood out of that thing. *[Laughs.]*

00:40:17 Ben Host Yeah. That blood's not gonna come out looking good. *[Laughs.]*
00:40:19 John Host No. Not enough blood to draw a bunch of crosses on yourself.
Also—

00:40:23 Adam Host It'd come out like a Slurpee machine that isn't ready to dispense the product.

00:40:26 John Host Eww. Eww.
00:40:27 Adam Host It'd just kind of like spit and splatter?

00:40:31 Clip **Stoney Brown (Encino Man):** Wheeze a little ju-uice!
00:40:34 John Host The real question I had with that scene was not “how did they get enough blood out of their dead friend to draw all those crosses,” but “where did they get the white paint to draw the big white circles that the blood crosses went on?”

00:40:53 Ben Host I couldn't find any goofs about this movie, but that was gonna be—that was gonna be my goof. What made that? Were those scraps of the same fabric that they used for their cloaks?

00:41:03 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** Hm.
John: Yeah.

00:41:05	Ben	Host	Ben: And if so—
00:41:07	Adam	Host	—how did they stick it on? They cut out the scene where the shed in the back of the chateau was full of tools and old paint.
00:41:15	John	Host	<i>[Ben snickers.]</i> I figured there were gonna be some goofs, just in the sense that— for whatever reason—this movie had one of the lowest, like, special effects/gear budgets of any movie we've watched. There are movies where they—I mean, the movie <i>Attack!</i> — <i>[Ben laughs.]</i> —they at least bothered to paint some grey cardboard and put it over the top of some Volkswagen bugs and call them tanks. <i>[Ben laughs.]</i> <i>[Through laughter]</i> And in this movie it seemed like they got a couple of Vietnam-era surplus Jeeps and some rifles and that was the 100% extent of their budget. The explosions that happened were... were basically like vinegar and baking soda in a volcano. They made this entire—they rented a chateau in Belgium and the made the entire movie, like—
00:42:16	Ben	Host	They did not rent a chateau in Belgium. They built the chateau in a high school gymnasium in Utah. It's a three-wall set.
00:42:22	Adam	Host	Whoa.
00:42:24	Ben	Host	And I think they scouted some international shooting locations and it—I think it was all shot in Utah.
00:42:32	John	Host	Where did they get the—I mean, but what about the out—the outside shots of that chateau? Was that just... built? In Park City?
00:42:42	Ben	Host	Yeah. I don't know. I don't know about the outside shots. Maybe it was something that was there! I don't know!
00:42:50	John	Host	Ohhh.
00:42:51	Adam	Host	It sounds like you were very unsatisfied with the depicted battle scenes in this movie, John. But did you stop to consider that the true battlefield in this film was your mind? <i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
00:43:04	Ben	Host	How could your mind be a battlefield and a weapon, though? The <u>best</u> weapon?
00:43:09	Adam	Host	Right? <i>[Laughs.]</i> <i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
00:43:14	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	God, it's true. Major Griffin (A <i>Midnight Clear</i>): Do not ever contradict me in front of the men again.
00:43:19	Adam	Host	There is a lot of body trauma in this movie between pumping the blood out, washing the body, and then using Father's body strapped, crucifix-style, to the back of a Jeep as if he were a spoiler providing downforce. <i>[All laugh.]</i> I think you gotta configure the body in a different way on that Jeep.

00:43:43	John	Host	There's just not room. I mean, you could put him on the back like a spare tire.
00:43:46	Adam	Host	It made me laugh in a way that I was not supposed to laugh.
00:43:49	John	Host	Why didn't they do the <i>M*A*S*H</i> thing where they put him across the hood?
00:43:52	Adam	Host	I was thinking you don't want to warm up a dead body after it's been cold.
00:43:56	Ben	Host	These guys do, though. They need to get at that sweet, sweet blood.
			<i>[Adam laughs.]</i>
00:44:01	John	Host	Yeah. They're gonna pump him for blood in a minute. That's—
00:44:02	Adam	Host	That would've explained the blood-pumping scene if he had been on the hood!
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
			Warm him up on that engine block.
00:44:08	John	Host	Yep. Heat it up. Nice warm blood. Spreads like paint.
00:44:14	Ben	Host	Yeah. What did you guys think of the lieutenant? He stands between the major and the soldiers and is... sympathetic to their plight and, like, clearly knows that the major is a tool.
00:44:28	Adam	Host	I like the idea of a secret friend. And that's who I felt like he was. But at the same time, he still fucked them. Like, "I wanted to radio you guys to let you know we were leaving. I just didn't have time." Like, how much is sufficient?
00:44:43	Ben	Host	How much time does that take, dude? <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:44:45	Adam	Host	Yeah. This film really did feel like <i>Dead Poets Society</i> in wartime. Like, with these sensitive, smart soldiers, right?
00:44:57	John	Host	Mm-hm.
00:44:59	Adam	Host	I think the scene of greatest sensitivity might be one that takes place up in the attic. Here's a question—did Gary Sinise put himself in the attic, or did his squad put him in the attic to keep him away from everyone?
00:45:14	John	Host	He put himself up there.
00:45:17	Adam	Host	So Gary Sinise is up there. I'm going to be on the side of, "We gotta get Gary Sinise away from us. I mean, there's more tub for the rest of us if we stick Gary Sinise up there. Skip his turn." He's up there looking at paintings, and you get the sense that maybe even more than the rest of the crew he is the deep, sensitive thinker getting lost in the eyes of these paintings. "Look at these paintings, Will," he said. "Someone cared." And Will Knott—is just, like, stunned into silence at this moment.
00:45:55	John	Host	And I mean, that was a painting of Vigo the Carpathian. That's what's scary.
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
00:46:00	Adam	Host	Yeah! And when Gary Sinise locked eyes with him? He was entranced in a bad way. In an evil way.
00:46:06	John	Host	<i>[Through laughter]</i> Mm-hm. Mm-hm. That's right. There is— <i>[Laughs.]</i> There is no Christmas, only Zuul.
00:46:12	Clip	Clip	Dr. Janosz Poha (<i>Ghostbusters 2</i>): I await the word of Vigo!
00:46:15	Music	Music	Short reprise of theme song "War."
00:46:17	Adam	Host	When we look at <i>A Midnight Clear</i> , will <u>we</u> care? The assembled hosts of <i>Friendly Fire</i> are gonna gather in the attic to decide. On a scale of one to five paintings, we will review <i>A Midnight Clear</i> .

When I think of this movie, I will always remember that feeling of tragedy of a plan working. Like, “Okay, here’s what the plan is, guys. It’s a little bit crazy, but we’re gonna try it. I think it’s gonna work.” And then you’re in the moments before the plan—“We’re really gonna do this?” “Yeah.” “Alright. Let’s do the plan.” And then the plan starts to happen, and it’s working. “Oh my god, this plan is working! It’s really gonna happen! We’re almost done with the plan and then it’s over and then it’ll be a successful plan” and then blam.

The gunfire rings out and the—like, there’s something so uniquely tragic about not just something failing, but something failing after having worked for so long. And that moment in the climax in this film, I thought, was... so effective. And traumatizing for me. In a way that I wanted to be traumatized! This is a movie surrounded by sensitive, smart thinkers, and it’s a gear that I didn’t think it had for that reason. Like... so often we get a depiction of soldiers where the point is to kill and to accomplish the mission, and then—very specifically it is always in third place—survive. Like, if you can survive, cool. But self-preservation isn’t the motivation most times, and I liked being confronted with a group of characters where that seemed to be the highest motivation. That self-preservation instinct.

And so I think that’s—that makes this film’s story really interesting. I think it’s a little bit trope-y to make smart people the sensitive ones and make very clear that when your opposition is big dumb, big dumb is often those in command. But they’re right! The sensitive ones are right. I was surprised and impressed that this film made you get comfortable in that feeling of their rightness, up until the moment when that plan failed. Like, it was very not a trope when all of these smart, sensitive people got together to formulate this plan and then it fails in the end. And it not only fails, we get that [*with exaggerated French pronunciation*] denouement—

[John makes guttural noise.]

—of half an hour of driving around with a body on your Jeep, and the survivors—as few as they are—are sent back into the front by someone who I thought was our friend! When Lieutenant Ware sends Knott back into battle—I mean, this was a terribly sad ending. And... I liked and appreciated that instead of, y’know, a war film that made the case for heroism and duty over all, this—the message here was that—was just how senseless war is. And whether you’re smart or you’re dumb, it’s gonna kill you in the same way. So I’m gonna give it four-and-a-quarter paintings. I really like this movie. It came out of nowhere for me.

00:49:43 Ben Host

Um... yeah, that seems like a pretty spot-on score. It’s hard for me to imagine watching after hearing an episode of a podcast about it like this, ‘cause I think one of the things I enjoyed so much about it was how little I knew what to expect. How much the movie had me at its mercy. Like, I didn’t read anything about it. I didn’t watch a trailer before I watched it. And it was so unlike the kinds of movies we normally watch for this film that I found the kind of sense of discovery and newness about it really delightful. And I was honestly, like, riveted by it. I found it fascinating and it was really great, I thought. So I will also give it four-and-a-quarter. Paintings.

00:50:36 Adam Host Vigo paintings.
00:50:37 John Host Vigo. Well, I'm kind of the outlier here, and I wonder whether it is a little bit cultural. Because the language of this movie... would've been—I mean, in 1992 I was 23, when this movie came out. So I was kind of soaking in the cultural milieu—the stew of the kind of visual and artistic language—

00:51:08 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** —of the culture.

Adam: How come no one laughs when you say a word like “milieu”—

00:51:11 Adam Host —and everyone laughs when I say “denouement”?

[John laughs, applauds.]

00:51:18 John Host How do you get away with that shit and I don't?
[Through laughter] I love your *[exaggerated accent]* “denouement.” It went right up your nose. The word denouement started coming out of your mouth and then it, like, took a U-turn and went up your nose.

[John laughs.]

00:51:28 Adam Host Is that not how it's supposed to be said?
00:51:31 Ben Host Adam's got a \$200 a day denouement habit.

[John laughs.]

00:51:37 Adam Host Yeah.
00:51:38 John Host Yes. The milieu of—

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:51:47 Adam Host —the culture in 1992—
What accent does John Roderick have?

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:51:50 John Host I have the perfect accent. The perfect bland, American accent. So the production value of this movie—the way that the sound worked and in particular the kind of meandering quality that the script had—and I don't just mean the plot meandered. Because the plot did meander, but also... scriptwise, like, a lot of things are introduced... that no one in the film exploits. Primarily the fact that this is a squad of smart guys. But they are never—their intelligence is never employed. And also... the flip side of it, which could've been the plot of this movie, which is that their intelligence leads them into hubris. And hubris undoes them. Which is kind of...? Nascent in the story? It's never really... that—that device isn't... really, like, explicit or utilized. Right?

Like, they're not undone by their hubris. In the end they're just sort of bad soldiers but the fact that they're poor soldiers isn't really related to how smart they are. Their conversations aren't really smart with each other. They are playing a tiny game of chess at one point. But most war movies, if you're gonna have smart guys, one of 'em's gonna be an explosives expert and one of 'em's gonna be fluent in five languages. We don't get any of that. They don't have any capabilities, but they're also not... nebbishes, and their nebbishness doesn't either rescue them or doom them.

And they're—so, there're so many of those throughout the film where it's like, "Is this a loose end, or is this meant to confuse me or am I meant to... just forget that you, y'know—forget that the film kind of works us up into feeling like..." Like the two dead bodies on the road that are standing up and holding each other in an embrace. What are we supposed to do with that? At the end of the movie, that image is still there. I'm still thinking, like, "Who did that? Was that—" At some point in the middle of the movie, someone speculates, like, "Oh no, that was a gesture of friendship." [Laughs.] "That was the sign that the Germans want to surrender! They took two dead bodies and put them in a hug in the middle of the road!" It's like, "What? Whose—what—at what script read—at what table read did that line go by and nobody was like, 'Oooh... do we wanna—do we wanna go back to that? Fill in that idea a little bit?'"

So there's so much of that. So many, like, threads. And the musical cues, the... the way it kinda was laid out, it felt like a made-for-TV movie sometimes to me. And if we were gonna—if this movie was gonna be *Labyrinth* and there was gonna be a faun in it, I kinda would've bought in to a faun at some point. To some weird magic. But without it... I—and especially given that I loved so many of the performances. That they were really good, high-quality, war movie trope-laden performances... why didn't I get into this movie, and why didn't... I wasn't quite, like, waiting for it to be done?

But definitely during the denouement I was wondering... if we were gonna—if that Jeep was just gonna keep driving. Or if— [through laughter] If when the lieutenant comes and says, "You're headed back to the front," I was like, "Maybe this movie is [through laughter] gonna follow these guys back to the front and there's gonna be another plot, or maybe going back to the front we're gonna wrap up the plots that this movie has left lying around, like so many dead Germans." So I'm gonna give it... [sighs, raps knuckles on desk]. It is an interesting movie and it's nice to see all these young actors chewing on the scenery. I'm gonna give it... two of the big Vigo paintings, and then a third painting made up of all the littler paintings in the room. So in the end, I'm gonna give it all the paintings, but the paintings add up to basically three—three paintings.

00:56:56 Ben Host
00:56:59 Adam Host

Wow.
Kinda math-y, but alright.

[All laugh.]

The hit segment at the end of every episode of *Friendly Fire* is Who's Your Guy? It's where each of the hosts chooses their guy. Ben, who's your guy?

00:57:16 Ben Host

I'm gonna give it to Avakian. Just for one particular moment that—it's another one of these sleight-of-hand moments where the movie introduces some tension and then somehow gets me to forget about it. And then puts it right back in. And it's the scene where they are in the trench, in the lower lookout post at night, and Ethan Hawke has pulled a pin from a grenade, and they are waiting—

[John chuckles.]

—for the spooky sounds that the Germans are making to die down. And Avakian, at the end of this scene, turns to him and says, “Hey, uh—” *[Laughs.]* “Go ahead and put that pin back in that grenade.”

[Multiple people laugh.]

And like, I had forgotten that he was white-knuckle-fisting a grenade at that point!

[Adam laughs.]

And it was just like a, “Oh my god! What if he had just set the grenade down? Like, I might have done that!” And... I loved that moment. I thought that was just... it was a real mindblower.

[Laughs.] That I’d forgotten that there was a live explosive in play and I loved Avakian for reminding everyone *[through laughter]* of that. How about you, John? Did you have a guy?

00:58:40 John Host

Yeah. It has to be Frank Whaley’s character, Father. He is such a recognizable actor to me for a couple of reasons, and one of them is that he has that iconic scene in *Pulp Fiction*. Y’know, he’s the—*[through laughter]* he’s the guy that—

00:59:06 Ben Host

He gets his drink drunk.

00:59:07 John Host

Yeah. He’s the one that says, “What?” And Samuel L. Jackson says, *[yelling]* “Say ‘what’ one more time!”

[Ben laughs.]

His face is so, y’know, just burned into my retina for all time. For that. But he also is the character that—he’s the baby-faced character that kills Hoffa at the end of *Hoffa*. Anyway. He’s in a lotta movies, and his face is—it just resonates with me because... he’s fresh-faced and young, but there’s something sinister about him, too. I’m not sure exactly what. But that performance—his death scene... was the hook that the whole movie sort of dangled from for me, because if that was there this whole time—if we’re in a world in this movie where that death scene is possible? Then what are we doing... the rest of the time here? Like, what—what’s all this other japery?

And... why are—like, all the scenes of like, “We were spying on them but then it turns out they were spying on us and they were teasing us in the dark and we threw snowballs at them and—”

There was an hour and a half of this movie that is like... that it felt like... it felt like this was a college film made by me and my friends.

On a ski trip. And then all of a sudden one of us is like, bleeding through the nose and gasping for air and I’m like, “Wow. Who knew one of us was an actor?” So anyway. He’s my guy, and I want to—I want Hollywood to go back in time and use him more in better films.

01:01:05 Adam Host

My guy comes straight out of nowhere, I think. I’m not gonna say the word, but the last scenes of the film? You know there’s a word for this. I feel like you’re lulled into that sense of, “This thing is winding down; how shocking can it get? I’m ready for my sad ending and then I’m gonna go on with my day.” The grave registrar is a character who has different plans. He clips a dog tag off, puts it in Father’s mouth, and then bangs it home with the pliers he used to

cut the tag off. Just... crunching it into his soft palate. Just a terrible scene. And I think it's emblematic of... of how this film made me feel in a number of parts. Like, I thought I was safe from a moment like this. And I was not. At all.

And... that character represents that feeling. Like, never off the hook. Never safe. I wonder why, in the construction of this film, it saved so many of those scenes for the back half. The back third, even. I wonder if I would've felt differently about the film had they been sprinkled throughout the film a little more evenly, but then when I think about the math of that I would be more prepared for them when they arrive. So I think the way that it is is the way that's effective. And I think the grave registrar is maybe the last moment that reminds you that... that you can feel really bad in a war film all the way up until it ends. So he's gonna be my guy.

01:02:55	Ben	Host
01:02:57	Music	Music
01:02:59	Promo	Clip

Good guy.

Short reprise of theme song "War."

Music: Mellow synth piano plays in background.

Brea Grant: Hey! I'm Brea Grant, an e-reader who loves spoilers and chocolate.

Mallory O'Meara: And I'm Mallory O'Meara, a print book collector who will murder you if you spoil a book for me.

Brea: And we're the host of *Reading Glasses*, a podcast designed to help you read better.

Mallory: Over the past few years, we've figured out why people read.

Brea: Self-improvement.

Mallory: Escapism.

Brea: To distract ourselves from the world burning down.

Mallory: And... why they don't.

Brea: Not enough time.

Mallory: Not knowing what to read.

Brea: And being overwhelmed by the number on their TBR list.

Mallory: And we are here to help you with that. We will help you conquer your TBR pile... while probably adding a bunch of books to it.

Brea: *Reading Glasses*.

Mallory: Every week—

Brea: —on MaximumFun.org.

[Music fades out.]

01:03:42 Promo

Clip

Music: Tense sci-fi music.

[Announcer narrates in voiceover intercut with dialogue from the show. Dialogue is slightly fuzzy, as if being heard through a speaker.]

Announcer: Strange planets, curious technology, and a fantastic vision of the distant future. Featuring Martin Starr.

Martin Starr: So we're going on day 14. Shuttle still hasn't come.

Announcer: Aparna Nancherla.

Aparna Nancherla: *[Cheerful and electronic]* The security system provides you with emotional security! You do the rest!

Announcer: Echo Kellum.

Echo Kellum: Can you disconnect me, or not?

Announcer: Hari Kondabolu.

Hari Kondabolu: I'm staying.

Announcer: From *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Geoffrey McGivern.

Geoffrey McGivern: Could you play Cyndi Lauper's "Girls Just Want to Have Fun"?

Announcer: It's *The Outer Reach: Stories from Beyond*.

Announcer 2: Now available for free at MaximumFun.org, or anywhere you listen.

[Music fades out.]

01:04:27 Music

Music

Short reprise of theme song "War."

01:04:28 Ben

Host

Only one thing left to do, gentlemen—find out what we will be watching next week!

01:04:33 Adam

Host

There's only one die for the job!

01:04:36 John

Host

Here it comes. *[Singing]* One hit to the body! *[Regular voice]* I've got a weird—I found a weird little velvet bag—a blue velvet bag—that says—it's embossed in gold lettering, "Congratulations."

[Ben laughs.]

I'm not sure what it ever held. I don't know how it came into my realm of bags.

01:05:01 Adam

Host

You should keep your manscaping trimmer in it.

[John laughs.]

01:05:06 John

Host

I've been keeping the green die in the "Congratulations" bag, and now here we go. Rolling for the next film.

[Sound of die clanking inside a ceramic mug.]

01:05:41	Ben	Host	Twenty-eight! <i>Viente y ocho!</i>
01:05:48	Clip	Clip	Twenty-eight is a 1959 film called <i>Operation Amsterdam</i> .
01:05:49	John	Host	Cheerful, circus-style music begins playing in background.
01:05:50	Ben	Host	Oh boy.
01:05:52	John	Host	Takes place in the Netherlands in World War Two.
01:05:56	Adam	Host	Oh, boy.
01:05:57	John	Host	Peter Finch?!
			Lotta good stories. I was in Amsterdam in the forties. Tell ya all about it.
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
01:06:05	Ben	Host	Oh yeah?
01:06:06	John	Host	Oh, yeah.
01:06:07	Adam	Host	When you said “Operation” I thought for sure “Petticoat” would be the second word in this film title.
01:06:12	Ben	Host	Nope! “Amsterdam” is.
			<i>[Theme song “War” begins playing faintly in background.]</i>
01:06:15	Adam	Host	Alright!
01:06:17	Ben	Host	Looking forward to it, guys. Well, that’ll be next week on <i>Friendly Fire</i> . We’re gonna leave it with RobsRobsRobsRobs from here. In the meantime, for Adam Pranica and John Roderick, I’ve been Ben Harrison. <i>[In a dramatic whisper]</i> To the victor go the spoiler alerts!
			<i>[Theme song plays briefly at full volume before fading into background as Rob Schulte begins speaking.]</i>
01:06:36	Rob Schulte	Producer	<i>Friendly Fire</i> is a Maximum Fun podcast hosted by Adam Pranica, Ben Harrison, and John Roderick. The show is produced by me, Rob Schulte. Our theme music is “War” by Edwin Starr and it’s courtesy of Stone Agate Music. And that podcast art is by Nick Ditmore.
			This year, celebrate the December holidays by revisiting some of your old <i>Friendly Fire</i> faves, like last year’s review of <i>Anthropoid</i> , a 2016 film about two Czech soldiers who parachute into their occupied homeland to assassinate a Nazi officer.
			Do you feel like supporting our show? Well, please head to MaximumFun.org/join , and for as little as \$5 a month you’ll gain access to our bonus Pork Chop feed, as well as all of the bonus content provided by Maximum Fun. You can now follow us on Twitter and Instagram under the handles FriendlyFireRSS. So check that out! Thanks for listening. We’ll see ya next week with another episode of <i>Friendly Fire</i> .
			<i>[Theme song plays at full volume before fading out entirely.]</i>
01:07:58	Music	Transition	A cheerful ukulele chord.
01:07:59	Speaker 1	Guest	MaximumFun.org .
01:08:01	Speaker 2	Guest	Comedy and culture.
01:08:02	Speaker 3	Guest	Artist owned—
01:08:03	Speaker 4	Guest	—Audience supported.