

[00:00:00]

Music: “Oh No, Ross and Carrie! Theme Song” by Brian Keith Dalton. A jaunty, upbeat instrumental.

Carrie Poppy: Hello! Welcome to *Oh No, Ross and Carrie!*, the show where we don't just report on fringe science, spirituality, claims of the paranormal. No, we show up ourselves.

Ross Blocher: That's right! When they make the claims, we show up, so you don't have to. I'm Ross Blocher.

Carrie Poppy: I'm Carrie Poppy, and I'm the devil. That's right.

Ross Blocher: Okay! Well, that settles a lot. Yeah, we're coming in with a movie review.

Carrie Poppy: Yes. *Late Night with the Devil*.

Ross Blocher: A looot of listeners and friends were reaching out to me saying, “This is so in line with what you do on the podcast. You should really check this out. It's got a James Randi inspired character. It covers a lot of themes from the podcast.” And we've talked about this—I just generally am not a horror film watcher. It's just not my thing. So, the only way I'll watch a horror film is when other people recommend it to me.

My base requirement for entertainment is that it is smart. And if I think, “Oh, I see the intelligence behind this. I see what they were going for,” I can appreciate many a horror film. But I'll admit, usually my first go-to is like, “Let's see what this got on Rotten Tomatoes.” And if it's like 85 or higher, I'll be like, okay.

Carrie Poppy: So, you're hitting all the A24s. But all the others, you're like, eeh.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, a fair amount of that. It just puts me in a certain mode of movie watching where I feel like I have to, you know, be in the mood for that. And it's not all the time, but this one had a 97% on Rotten Tomatoes.

Carrie Poppy: Damn.

Ross Blocher: And I knew it had all this kind of magic and obviously satanic panic related stuff. And I thought, okay, alright, I'm in.

Carrie Poppy: Well, I love horror movies. Our friend, Jesse Thorn, feels the way you do. He doesn't want in just because it's a horror movie. That's not a selling point. Yeah.

Ross Blocher: There we go. Yes. I can be convinced, but I want to hear your case.

Carrie Poppy: I don't like thrasher films, though. I don't want to see a bunch of blood and stuff. That's not what I want out of a horror movie. I wanna be scared!

Ross Blocher: Yeah, I always tell people it was—there were two in a row that I saw that made me just say, “Alright, I’m done with this.” It was *House of a Thousand Corpses* by Rob Zombie, and then *The Hills Have Eyes 2*, where they kind of make sort of a joke out of killing all the people you don’t want them to kill.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, I see.

Ross Blocher: Like, “Oh, we’re setting this person up, so you’ll be sympathetic to them, and this person, you’re ready for them to die.” And it’s the sympathetic one that dies. And I was just like, I’m done. I don’t want to have to like turn off whatever chip it is to let me watch this.

Carrie Poppy: Uh-huh, I understand that.

Ross Blocher: So, yeah. Slashers, forget about it.

Carrie Poppy: I felt that way about *Mother*. Did you see *Mother*?

Ross Blocher: Oh, I did see that, actually. The Jennifer Lawrence one.

Carrie Poppy: Oh my god, yes. I felt like, as I was—

Ross Blocher: I can imagine for you all the compounding stresses.

Carrie Poppy: (Groans in pain.) Of a movie theater, you mean?

Ross Blocher: No, just in the film where everyone’s trying to get her attention while she’s like trying to give birth and everything.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, totally. And then they like take her baby and pass the baby around, and she’s trying to get the baby. And I was like, “It’s Ella! It’s Ella! It’s Ella!” I was freaking out. But I felt that same thing of like, well, if I jaded myself, it would somehow be bad. So, I need to preserve my innocent horror at what is on screen.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, I don’t want this film to make me better at coping with such things.

Carrie Poppy: Yes, exactly.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, it doesn’t keep me up at night. I don’t get scared while watching the film. So, I always end up thinking like, “Well, that wasn’t so bad. Why was I so worried about that?”

Carrie Poppy: Oh, you don’t even get scared? It’s not that. Okay.

Ross Blocher: No. Watching a film does not make me believe that there's an increased likelihood that someone is outside my window, and they're going to do the same thing in the film that I just watched. Like, my brain is able to like separate those things.

Carrie Poppy: Contextualize that. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Ross Blocher: Also, you're reminding me of the point—we had this story consultant, Brian McDonald, come visit at work once. And one of his basic points was that we watch stories for survival information. We want to see how other people behave in situations, and then we can either model their actions or reject it. And so, I think for horror—I think that's probably kind of one of the main drivers is that you want to see other people survive this murder of the week mystery or this slasher or whatever, so you hopefully have some useful info that you can take, so that it doesn't happen to you at some point.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, that's what I always assume when people say that they binge podcasts about murders and stuff like that.

Ross Blocher: Such a popular genre.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, but then I feel like whenever someone says it, it's self-deprecating. They're like, “I probably shouldn't do this, but I go to sleep at night just listening to like hours and hours of blah, blah, blah.”

Ross Blocher: A guilty pleasure.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, or that they think that they're somehow fucking themselves up, which maybe that's happening too. I don't know. But my first thought is like, well, it sounds like that's a thing that you fear, and your mind is checking out how those things happen, so you have an idea. I don't know. That concept doesn't disturb me, if you're doing it.

(They chuckle.)

Ross Blocher: Yeah. You don't need to apologize for it.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, apparently it seems like a lot of people have a lot of turmoil over that.

Ross Blocher: So, this film, *Late Night with the Devil*, is very much focused on spiritual horror, on the power of the devil, of course. And as you might guess from the title, *Late Night*, we're talking about like a late-night TV show.

Carrie Poppy: TV show. This is what attracted me to it initially, because I had heard about it, I think—so, it was playing at the local theater.

[00:05:00]

I looked it up, and it takes place in the '70s. It's a variety show talk show type show.

Ross Blocher: Oh yeah, I'm seeing how this could tick a lot of boxes for you.

Carrie Poppy: It has a James Randi character. It is in almost totally real time. The colors are—what's it called?

Ross Blocher: They did a great job with the set dressing.

Carrie Poppy: Technicolor kind of?

Ross Blocher: I was just thinking in terms of like the '70s color schemes. They got that really well, where you'll have the band of colors behind on the set, that's just like a rainbow of various shades of brown and a little hint of orange and yellow. And they really captured the aesthetic very well.

Carrie Poppy: I already wanted to see this movie, but I had kind of forgotten about it, because it left the local theater, I think. And then you mentioned it. And I don't know if I knew that there was a Randi character in it at that point or not.

Ross Blocher: That was usually the pitch that listeners or friends would give me of there's this character who's totally based on James Randi. And I thought, oh, okay. We'll see how much was borrowed from that. And then you watch it and you're like, oh, yep. Okay. Clearly this was an homage to Randi. And I hear the filmmakers are fans of his, and this is supposed to be kind of loving.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, I'm sure. Let's explain who James Randi was.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, sure.

Carrie Poppy: Maybe no one knows. Not a single person listening.

Ross Blocher: (Chuckles.) Yeah. We've talked about James Randi many times on the show. He is part of our cloud of witnesses that sits with us at all times.

(Carrie “aw”s and agrees with a chuckle.)

Famous for being a magician, famous for having a very prolific beard, famed for having moved like Harry Houdini did from performing as a magician to being upset by people who did magic tricks but said they were doing something other.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. People use them to pretend to be psychics, mediums, spoonbenders.

Ross Blocher: Spoonbenders, very specifically. And so, like Houdini, he kind of dedicated a part of his career to exposing such frauds and teaching people the methods and how to be aware of things like cold reading and just parlor tricks that we cover on the podcast all the time.

Carrie Poppy: And he started something called The Amazing Meeting, where Ross and I started attending years ago and got to know Randi a little bit. And then I worked at his organization for a little bit. So, anyway, we honor the man ourselves.

Ross Blocher: Influential in our lives, for sure.

Carrie Poppy: I'm curious—I'm so curious if he would like this movie though. I'm not sure if he would, but I do like it.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, and we'll talk about this kind of trope of the type of character that is represented by his clone here.

Carrie Poppy: That's part of it, yeah.

Ross Blocher: But it's also a betrayal to what he was really about in this world that we happen to live in.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, in some ways, in some ways.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, so we'll unpack all that. So, *Late Night with the Devil*, we're going to totally spoil this film for you.

Carrie Poppy: Okay. Yes. Let's spoil it.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. Sorry, everybody.

Carrie Poppy: So, hang up if you don't want it.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. If you're already thinking, "I kind of want to see this," I guess kill the podcast. Go watch the show. Come back later. It's available a few places, and you can buy it on streaming. But if you happen to have the service Shudder, which is a streaming service devoted to horror films specifically.

Carrie Poppy: Shudder with two Ds.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, oh, hats off to that name. That's a brilliant name.

Carrie Poppy: It's very—it had to take two days to decide whether to make it Shudder or Shutter.

Ross Blocher: And I think they picked the right one, too.

Carrie Poppy: I think so.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, because they're referring, of course, to the convulsive bodily response to horror. But at the same time, the shutter—the mechanism that controls the aperture and lets light into a camera. Brilliant. There's so many times in my life as a wordplay guy that I'm like, “Oh, they should have called it this!” And every now and then you encounter the one where they should have called it exactly what they called it. Brilliant. Top marks.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. Excellent.

Ross Blocher: That's all I have to say about that.

Carrie Poppy: The band, The Strokes, I think did a really good job naming their band.

Ross Blocher: Oh, okay.

Carrie Poppy: Grateful Dead? Grateful Dead might be the best band name for the worst band.

Ross Blocher: Oh no. Send all your emails to Carrie. I don't care.

Carrie Poppy: (Laughs.) Oh, also Pink Floyd. Great name. What is this music? It's just noise.

Ross Blocher: However you respond to that, fans of those bands, find some way that I don't see it.

(Carrie cackles.)

Make sure only Carrie sees it, ‘cause I don't want to hear it. This is Carrie's opinion, not mine.

Carrie Poppy: It turns out that our contact form has been going into my spam folder for five months.

Ross Blocher: Yeah.

(They laugh.)

So, I was thinking, “Boy, Carrie, you know, there are some of these emails. Are you going to respond to any of them?” Turns out she hasn't been seeing them for about six months. Any of them, any of your emails.

Carrie Poppy: Well, any from the contact form. A lot of people still email me directly, so I thought I was hitting like a decent percentage. But no, not at all. Not. At. All.

(A dog barks.)

Oh, there's my dog!

Ross Blocher: Bly Poppy, everyone. She is now in Carrie's lap.

Carrie Poppy: Yes, she's so good. She's five months old. Okay, this movie. So, it has a late-night talk show host named Jack? No.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, Jack.

Carrie Poppy: Jack? Okay, I did it.

Ross Blocher: Jack Delroy.

Carrie Poppy: Jack Delroy. Oh, great name.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, great name. Played by a character actor that you see in a lot of things.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, okay. This guy was so good.

Ross Blocher: David Dastmalchian.

Carrie Poppy: Okay. I don't know if I had seen him before. I thought he was great.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, he's been in some of the superhero films. Like, I know he was in *Dark Knight*. He was in, what is it?

[00:10:00]

The Suicide Squad. One of the *Suicide Squad* films. He played the guy with the dots on him. I think that was the one that James Gunn directed. Anyways, he handled this role very well. And he had this kind of Elvis-like look and persona that made him fit well as a '70s TV presenter and a competitor to *Johnny Carson*.

Oh yeah. I guess let's give the very high-level synopsis of what happens, enough that people can make a final decision on whether they need to pause this and go watch it before they keep listening to us ruin the whole experience for them.

Carrie Poppy: (Laughs.) Should we pull up what the log line is that they actually gave for it?

Ross Blocher: That's a good idea. Let's read an official description.

Carrie Poppy: Official website. [LateNightWithTheDevil.movie](#).

Ross Blocher: Ooh!

Carrie Poppy: (Dropping into a spooky hush.) “A live television broadcast in 1977 goes horribly wrong, unleashing evil into the nation's living rooms. *Johnny Carson* rival Jack Delroy hosts syndicated talk show *Night Owls* that has long been a trusted companion to insomniacs around the country. However, ratings for the show have plummeted since the tragic death of Jack's beloved wife. Desperate to turn his fortunes around, on October 31st, 1977, Jack plans a Halloween special like no other, unaware he is about to unleash evil into the living rooms of America.”

Ross Blocher: Yeah, great setup. And, boy, I couldn't have put it better myself.

Carrie Poppy: (Chuckles.) I said that off the top of my head.

Ross Blocher: Amazing. (Laughs.) And you mentioned the show is called *Night Owls*.

Carrie Poppy: *Night Owl*. Owl, owl, owl.

Ross Blocher: There are so many owls in this, so our listeners will already love the multiple owl representations.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, are there?

Ross Blocher: Yeah. Carrie's looking off.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, didn't notice.

Ross Blocher: As I was—I watched it twice, and as I watched it the second time, I noted every time there was an owl.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, is it a lot?

Ross Blocher: There's a lot.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, fun!

Ross Blocher: It's one of those, yeah, just fun visual gimmicks. And of course—

Carrie Poppy: Easter eggs.

Ross Blocher: Of course, the show is called *Night Owls*, so there will be a lot of little hold graphics like there were in the '70s. Like, “We're coming back,” there's a little picture of an owl. But also this involves the Bohemian Grove, which they just—

Carrie Poppy: Yes! They just call it the Grove. (Laughs.) It's so cute.

Ross Blocher: Yeah! And there must be a reason for that. Maybe they didn't want to use Bohemian Grove, because the organization could come after them or something?

Carrie Poppy: Oh, interesting. I just took it like we're trying to be one step removed from all the things we're referring to.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. I felt like maybe there was some legal coverage issue there, but they show photos from the actual Bohemian Grove. There's possession and exorcism. There's psychology and suppressed memories.

Carrie Poppy: Hypnosis.

Ross Blocher: Hypnosis is a big part of this story. Spoonbending even gets a mention.

Carrie Poppy: Repressed memory therapy.

Ross Blocher: Mediumship and cold reading. Yeah, there's a lot of themes in this that are really tied to our investigation work, but also just to this cultural conversation. So, it was very cleverly done by people who clearly were deeply embedded in all of this and wanted to incorporate this element. And how do we throw this in? And you could tell they were having fun.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, this is definitely—I don't say this disparagingly, which some people do, this is definitely a labor of love. Not in the, “Aw, you really liked this, didn't you? And now it's just a shit show.” No, like this is made by people who love James Randi, people who love the '70s. Like, you can just feel it. Like, this is someone's passion project.

Ross Blocher: Absolutely. Okay, well let's launch into it. And this is a recent film too, just 2023. So. Warm off the press.

Carrie Poppy: (Laughs.) Exactly, exactly. Lukewarm off the press.

Ross Blocher: But you can watch it on streaming now.

Carrie Poppy: But we will not spit this movie out of our mouths; we liked it.

Ross Blocher: That's right.

Carrie Poppy: So, the James Randi stand in is—the character is Mr. Haig, right?

Ross Blocher: Yeah, Carmichael Haig.

Carrie Poppy: Carmichael Haig, I love it.

Ross Blocher: Played by an actor named Ian Bliss, who does a good job with it, but really plays it up for the, “I’m going to debunk this!”

Carrie Poppy: Cynicism.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. I know that there’s a rational explanation, and I’ll work my way back from that. We’ll definitely talk about him a lot.

Carrie Poppy: Yes. So, he’ll get introduced a little later as a sort of foil.

Ross Blocher: You made an observation about the very opening and how many production companies are listed.

Carrie Poppy: Oh my god. There are nine title cards on this movie.

Ross Blocher: Which to me just seemed like European filmmaking, especially—I’m familiar with European—

Carrie Poppy: Well, I’m not a peon, Ross!

Ross Blocher: A peon?

Carrie Poppy: You said you’re a peon (European). (Inaudible) to interrupt you with it.

Ross Blocher: Oh, I see! And you’re not bathroom (you’re a-peein’), you’re not peeing.

Carrie Poppy: (Laughing.) Exactly. Okay, go on.

Ross Blocher: I watch a lot of European animated films, and there will always just be like 20+ production companies involved.

Carrie Poppy: Is that true? Holy crap.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, because they have to get really creative with the fundraising.

Carrie Poppy: Ohhh, I see.

Ross Blocher: So, you’ll have like a government agency covering maybe 40% of the cost, and then all of these other little boutique investors contributing just enough to make this thing happen.

Carrie Poppy: Interesting! This reminds me—have we talked about *Super Furball*?

Ross Blocher: We have not.

Carrie Poppy: Okay. I'll tell you later. But it's a movie Drew was in that's great.

Ross Blocher: Okay. Now I'm intrigued.

Carrie Poppy: Maybe ask me at the end of the episode.

Ross Blocher: Okay. So, it sets the stage with all of the '70s strife and destruction and just kind of gets us in the milieu of things people were worrying about in the '70s.

[00:15:00]

So, you see like the long gas station lines, you see the Vietnam protests, you see Charles Manson, you see the Son of Sam killer. Preparing us to think, yeah, the devil was at work in society at the time. They didn't show it, but I also think of like all of the Christian angst at the time. The satanic panic wasn't in full swing yet, but you had films like *A Thief in the Night* that was very influential on me, where people were concerned about the end of the world and the Mark of the Beast and all of this stuff.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, good point. There's a whole library of books right behind this wall, and I'm just gonna really quickly see what's at 1977. Because they're all chronologized!

Ross Blocher: Oh, okay. Carrie has organized them.

Carrie Poppy: (Thumping off-mic.) Okay.

Ross Blocher: What you got?

Carrie Poppy: It looks like we were mostly at the beginning of a lot of understanding of incest that would eventually lead to the memory wars that would eventually lead to the satanic panic.

Ross Blocher: Oh, interesting. So, that was kind of an inroad for clinical psychologists. Okay.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, yeah. And definitely real research, real trauma research there.

Ross Blocher: When I hear 1977, I have one solid association, which is *Star Wars*. That's the year that came out.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, okay. I think of the year the *Mary Tyler Moore* show ended.

Ross Blocher: There's a little incest subplot there.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, really?

Ross Blocher: Because Luke and Leia are—

Carrie Poppy: Oh! Luke and Leia turn out to be sister—oh, more—

Ross Blocher: So, them kissing on screen in *The Empire Strikes Back*, that was a big deal.

Carrie Poppy: Uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh. More spoilers.

Ross Blocher: (Laughs.) Yeah, you know what? I can't help you if you haven't seen it yet.

Carrie Poppy: (Laughs.) We have a bonus episode (crosstalk)—

Ross Blocher: I'm not your father!

(Carrie chuckles.)

So, after they kind of set up the '70s themselves, then they give us the history of this *Night Owls* TV show. It started in 1971. There was a competition between Jack Delroy and Johnny Carson. He could never quite reach the ratings of *Johnny Carson*. So, you could tell he's motivated to—"How do we make this show number one?" And they had a clever line there too, where they said, "Jack knew that history only remembers the kings." Like people only remember the number one.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, I see.

Ross Blocher: Which I think is insightful, because I was having that discussion with a friend recently about how we all by necessity need to winnow down in every category and only remember the top, standout figures.

It's why you can lose the Olympics race by 0.02 seconds, but nobody knows your name. It's only that—just because we only have a limited amount of bandwidth to remember.

Carrie Poppy: And because of the structure set up for reminding you that just locks in gold, silver, bronze.

Ross Blocher: So, you see a bunch of kids now wearing like their Nirvana shirts, and they can tell you about Nirvana and maybe Soundgarden if you're lucky, maybe the Smashing Pumpkins. But only people who were alive at the time are going to remember Pearl Jam and Jerry Cantrell and Bush.

Carrie Poppy: Or mostly, yeah.

Ross Blocher: And you know, like just by necessity, the next generation has to remember fewer and fewer examples of everything, and it all gets winnowed down.

Carrie Poppy: Except for those like individuals who develop a special interest or an obsession or whatever, and then carry on the history of this one thing kind of independently.

Ross Blocher: Right. But we just can't do that for all of history all the time. So, there's just this natural winnowing process that happens. So, him saying that just kind of resonated with me. That's right! Yeah! That is good motivation. I can see why you want to be number one in the ratings. And this show focuses around how his five-year contract is coming to an end. It's Sweeps Week, starting with Halloween night, 1977. And he wants to do something that will get everybody's eyeballs.

Carrie Poppy: And we should talk more about his wife.

Ross Blocher: Yes.

Carrie Poppy: So, his wife had died of cancer? His wife dies somehow.

Ross Blocher: Madeleine Piper. Yeah, she was like a well-known stage actress, and she was his wife. And they had a very public romance and everything. But yeah, she was declining in health. And specifically they said that she had lung cancer—

Carrie Poppy: Oh, lung cancer but never smoked.

Ross Blocher: She never smoked. Which unfortunately just happened to a friend of mine.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, sorry. Yeah, lung cancer is so surprising like that.

Ross Blocher: And apparently very common for Asian women lately, where they've been getting lung cancer without any smoking behavior.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, really? I didn't know that. Oh man. Is your friend still with us?

Ross Blocher: She is. Yeah.

Carrie Poppy: Okay. Good luck to her.

Ross Blocher: Thank you. And his wife wasn't Asian in the film, just making that note, because that's been on my mind lately. But yeah, on the show, we see her kind of in an advanced state. She's in a wheelchair. She's having difficulty breathing.

Carrie Poppy: Mm-hm. At times she has a little oxygen vent over her face.

Ross Blocher: So, they have this heartfelt interview where she's on the show, and that ends up being his highest night of ratings. But they say he was still just like a percentage point behind Carson.

Carrie Poppy: Right, right. So, there's this whole theme of him kind of trying to get the show back in its swing and this tension between how do I do that and not sort of sell out the story of my wife.

Ross Blocher: And he takes a month off after she dies. And when he comes back, he starts getting into some kind of desperate ploys to get attention—like, doing almost *Jerry Springer* like stuff before *Jerry Springer*. Bringing on controversial people, having conflict on the stage, anything to get eyeballs.

[00:20:00]

And so, he decides for this Halloween episode where Sweeps is starting, people are going to be looking, I want to get eyeballs. Let's do something controversial. Let's have an episode about the spiritual and demon possession and psychic reading. But, well, I'm a TV producer, and I happen to know this guy who's a former magician. Let's invite him as well. So, this is the setup.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, so there's a little bit of—oh, what's his name? Who did that *Satan's Underground* special?

Ross Blocher: Are we talking about Geraldo Rivera?

(Carrie confirms.)

Ugh, that guy. A joke.

Carrie Poppy: (Laughs.) Yeah. Well, I mean, but similar vibe of like let's pull on anybody who is willing to say anything about Satan or whatever and see what happens.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, it seems like his thought is just, eh, let's get them all together and see what happens. The skeptic, the believer.

Carrie Poppy: Similar to how we have a dog and a cat in this room playing and making a lot of noise.

Ross Blocher: I thought it was clever too, that after all of this intro about the show's history and the stakes for this episode, they say, “You are about to see the original tapes.” So, it's clever in that we're able to follow along sort of in real time with not only the broadcast as the viewers are seeing it, but then they add in these black and white interstitials where we can see the background conversation, the makeup being applied, the producer having his input. So, it becomes like, you know, an episode of *24* or something where we're just sort of following along as this is unfolding.

Carrie Poppy: Oh yeah, I had forgotten that was the setup. Initially, I was like, oh no, please don't do the *Fargo* thing, please don't do the *Fargo* thing.

Ross Blocher: What's the *Fargo* thing?

Carrie Poppy: Where you like make a fictional movie and then you're like, "It's nonfiction, wink, wink. Based on a true story, wink, wink."

And then make your whole audience be like, "(Sighs heavily.) Which parts? So, what's true about this? How do I follow it away in my head?"

Ross Blocher: Yeah, I didn't get that sense from it. It was just kind of you're gonna get to see what the audience saw.

Carrie Poppy: This was more obviously a mockumentary.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. Yeah. I don't think anybody—(laughing) nobody would be confused about what was real and what wasn't.

Carrie Poppy: No, but for a second I was like, if they fucking *Fargo* this, I'll be so mad. But they didn't.

Ross Blocher: Okay. Or *Blair Witch*—

Carrie Poppy: *Project*.

Ross Blocher: *Project*. That's what it was called.

Carrie Poppy: Drew was just telling me a bunch of actors from the *Blair Witch Project* are suing for their fees.

Ross Blocher: Residuals?

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, because they were given these, you know, terrible perpetuity agreements when it was an indie film, and they're getting like no money from it.

Ross Blocher: Oh, and now that it's a big deal...

But with this conceit of us being able to see a little more than the audience does, we get to see some emerging themes and kind of realize what's happening behind the scenes. It's very cleverly done.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. For example, the woman that he brings on who's a therapist, I believe it's implied that they're dating or? They have some sort of a romance going on.

Ross Blocher: Right. Which the audience wasn't supposed to know of, but the girl who's going to be possessed is aware of and makes us aware of. But yeah, let's work our way up to that. So, they start the show. There's the big, you know, (presentational) "Welcome Jack

Delroy!” kind of thing by this character named Gus, who's sort of the loyal sidekick, like every late-night television show host has. Well, not everyone, but you get the idea. The Ed McMahon.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. Your *Conan's* Andy.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, exactly. So, he's dressed as the devil for the night. One thing that emerges is that already you start to see the camera glitch every now and then. And of course, you know, it's a post processing glitch added in. You can tell. But watching it the second time, I realized they were very explicitly giving us little clues. Whenever the camera would glitch, this was something that was going to play like an important role in the final denouement.

So, I think it rewards that second viewing. ‘Cause then you're like, “Oh, I see why the camera glitched right there. Oh, that's what you were trying to draw my attention to. Okay.”

Carrie Poppy: Oh, cute. Okay, that's like *Fight Club*.

Ross Blocher: Yeah! Very much like *Fight Club*. There's no penis displayed on screen. But there is a moment where subliminal messaging—

Carrie Poppy: Oh, I didn't—oh, there IS a penis! That's right. That's right.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. (Laughs.) A metaphorical penis.

Carrie Poppy: No, no. There is a penis though in *Fight Club*, right?

Ross Blocher: A literal penis? Oh yes. In *Fight Club*. In this movie, only metaphorical penis.

Carrie Poppy: No penis. Okay, okay. Is there a metaphorical penis?

Ross Blocher: Well, something that shows up in a, you know, one frame long exposure that plays an important role.

Carrie Poppy: (Laughing.) Okay, got it, got it. My AQ is 39.

(They laugh.)

Now I follow.

Ross Blocher: So, Jack dressed in a tan suit and having his big Elvis pompadour. He does his opening monologue, makes some bad jokes. You can see why he's number two to *Johnny Carson*. But it feels very '70s. Then he invites in this first guest named Christou.

Carrie Poppy: Christou. Oh yes, Christou! I had already forgotten about him. Yes!

Ross Blocher: Yeah, the psychic in the bright gold jacket who has dark features, curly hair. And so, he's gonna be our stand in for a Sylvia Brown or a John Edwards. "I'm getting a P—a Peter or a Pete."

So, this guy stands up after Christou comes up with Peterson, and he said, "Oh, my ex-wife, her maiden name was Peterman."

And he's like, "Yes, that's it." And then the guy in the audience starts making fun of the psychic along with the host.

[00:25:00]

And they're kind of ganging up on him.

Carrie Poppy: For being too lax with his rules. Uh-huh.

Ross Blocher: Right. And he just makes one misstatement after the other. So, we're like, "Oh, this is all fine. Oh, this is so silly. Cold reading. We caught him doing that."

But then he has a more serious connection when he detects "Edmund? Eddie?" And it turns out there's these two women, and they have a connection. "That's my son and her younger brother." Now, Christou is starting to get some hits about how he ended his own life. He was young. There was a lot of confusion around this.

Carrie Poppy: And clearly, the screenwriters have actually engaged with a lot of these mediums, because they know what they do—which is to tell nearly every survivor of a suicide that it wasn't really a suicide, or it might not have been.

Ross Blocher: And when he said this happened recently, they say, "Well, five years ago."

And he says, "But it feels like it was yesterday."

Like, it was well written, because they really do capture these shifts and pivots that the psychics will do in the moment to recover and did that quite well.

Carrie Poppy: And they work. Yeah.

Ross Blocher: And then the psychic said, "And he kept saying 'Papa'."

And the sister at first is like, "Well, actually he didn't know his father." And so, she thinks she's kind of debunked him for a second.

And then the mother says, "No, no, but he had a little bear named Papa. He called it Papa."

Carrie Poppy: Ah, there we go.

Ross Blocher: Wow, okay. And so, yeah, all of that felt really right on.

Carrie Poppy: Close enough.

Ross Blocher: So, at this point, hey, okay. We got a solid hit. We're ready to play out Christou. We've already introduced—you know, we've got a singing guest. We've got all these other folks who are going to show up. So, “Thank you. Thank you. That's all great.”

But then suddenly Christou has this intense headache. He's grabbing his head and going, “Augh! Oh, I've got a sudden message from Minnie. Who knows Minnie?!”

And Jack says, “Oh, maybe Millie, Molly?” ‘Cause no one in the audience is connecting to Minnie.

And Christou says, “No, no, it's definitely, it's Minnie!”

Carrie Poppy: “It's gotta be Minnie! It's gotta be Minnie!”

Ross Blocher: “And I'm sensing an unmarried man with a wedding ring. The spirit needs to talk to you right now! It's going to go away! I need a response right now!” And there's no reaction to that. And the lights start sputtering, the camera glitches again.

And Jack says, “Okay, well, you know what? Let's go to commercial break!”

(Carrie hums the pleasant transition music.)

Now we go into black and white mode. Yeah, you've got the little hold graphic like you do in the '70s.

Carrie Poppy: This is so crazy. I didn't even notice the colors were changing. I guess that's right.

Ross Blocher: And to me, watching it the first time, it felt like the psychic was pulling this thing to like, “Well, don't shoo me off the stage. I want to keep being part of this dialogue.” I want another segment, essentially. And I think that's how we're supposed to feel.

So, now Jack is warning Christou, who's still kind of writhing in pain here, that we're about to bring on another character. “Don't worry about him.” This is our James Randi character. And he's warning the psychic. “Yeah, he's going to give you a hard time.” But this was an interesting phrase—“Pay him no mind, he's all wax and no wick.” Normally you'd say he's all bark and no bite.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, all wax and no wick. So, there's—yeah, there's never going to be a light in that candle I guess is what that implies?

Ross Blocher: Yeah, or it's gonna stay really low and— Yeah, I spent a little too long thinking about what that actually meant.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Huh.

Ross Blocher: Do with that what you will. So, when the show comes back on for the listeners and the audience, there's a video montage played to introduce us to this character, Carmichael the Conjuror. That was his original stage show, just like James Randi used to be. The Amazing Randi. And they even said he became one of the leading lights of the skeptic movement. Right on the nose.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, yeah. Which is a word Randi would have used for sure.

Ross Blocher: And when Carmichael Haig—they'll often just refer to him as Haig, or Jack will call him Car—when he comes on stage, it becomes very clear that they have some sort of familiar relationship. Jack the Host, and Car—as he calls him—the magician.

Carrie Poppy: And Carmichael Haig is wearing great clothes.

Ross Blocher: Oh yeah, he's dressed for the part.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, loved it.

Ross Blocher: Wearing like a really nice sort of tan suit jacket, sort of like Carl Sagan adjacent.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, high contrast between the colors.

Ross Blocher: He was probably hired beyond his acting talents, but for his kind of like skeptical eyebrows. He has this kind of pointed eyebrows. I'm looking at you suspiciously.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, he definitely—you immediately are like, oh, you're modeled after James Randi 100%.

Ross Blocher: Right. Now, he doesn't have the beard, but he has—I don't know—kind of a Van Dyke or some sort of facial hair. But yeah, it's not the prominent beard.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. Maybe I shouldn't have literally said 100%.

(They laugh.)

But yeah, it's obviously—

Ross Blocher: Dial it down. 95%.

Carrie Poppy: You're modeled after James Randi 87%. Can we talk a little bit about like his mood, his presentation? Mr. Haig. I kept thinking like, "Am I insulted for Randi, or is this right?" And I think I'm like barely. I'm like 9% insulted for Randi.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, okay. I would say like 13%.

Carrie Poppy: Okay, yeah. I think that Randi had way more goodness than this person did, though I think Mr. Haig really was motivated by good qualities. I think he really believes what he's doing. But there is also this smarminess that seems more than Randi ever gave.

Ross Blocher: Which I was going to say—which I think Randi scrupulously avoided.

[00:30:00]

But I think naturally Randi was a polite and caring person on an individual basis. Now he would choose moments and people with which he needed to be a hard ass, and he could do that when he needed to.

Carrie Poppy: And I think he could contact anger very easily and really like knew, okay, I know that about myself, so I'm going to rein it in as often as I—as it's not appropriate. And I think he really like struggled with that battle. So, I just feel kind of bad when I see these, you know, people just being like, "Oh, he's just like this curmudgeon." I'm like, oh—I mean, I knew that guy. He fought so hard not to come off as that.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, I feel like Randi was like a 7 on the scale, and I think people thought he was a 9. And I feel like this representation of Carmichael Haig is dialed up to 11.

Carrie Poppy: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Yeah, I think that's probably right. And the other reason that I don't know—I wonder what Randi would think of it, is because when I worked for him, there was this other movie—I want to say it was called *Red Lights*—that was clearly partly based on a couple of his books. But it was a fictional movie, and the producers sent it to us and said, "Oh, we would just love to hear Randi's impressions." (Laughs.)

So, I sent it to Randi, and Randi was like, "I hated it!"

I was like, oh fuck, okay. I don't remember how I presented it to them at the time.

Ross Blocher: I'm not gonna send you pull quote.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, exactly. But it turned out what he was upset about was that he felt that there was no official acknowledgment of his role in this movie, which had been substantial as a contributor to what they were investigating.

Ross Blocher: Fair! That sounds fair to me.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, I think it kind of was. I think that sometimes like fiction leaves people—I don't know. I think fiction sometimes lets people off the hook for things they should think about more.

Ross Blocher: Okay, you know, and I think the thing that Randi might have hated the most about this portrayal was that Carmichael Haig started out by offering some useful debunks. I don't know; I'm saying that knowing that Randi tried to avoid the word debunk at all costs, 'cause it betrayed a person who was already fully convinced—as this character clearly is and James Randi is not. But he offers us some useful debunks at first that are like real stage tricks, real pieces of information. And then later on, he's going to do something that even magicians can't do, is not a real thing. I think that would have really—

Carrie Poppy: Yes! I thought about that. That pisses me off as well. Yes.

Ross Blocher: That would, yeah, definitely piss Randi off. And this might be a good time to mention this trope that I see in media that drives me a little crazy: a skeptical character who exists and operates in a paranormal world. And so, they'll say all the things that we should say in this real world of ours. But now you've created a fictional world where there actually are demons and angels.

Carrie Poppy: Where they have to be wrong.

Ross Blocher: And yeah, whatever it is. At a certain point, they become incorrect. A true skeptic should at some point say, “Wow, okay. You've convinced me that this is real. Amazing.” And there's this trope of the character who either is so committed to their cynicism that they never capitulate to what's obvious to the audience and should be to them, or they just take way too long to do this.

And as I was watching this and preparing for this episode, I put out a call on Facebook. Because I knew there's so many examples of this in fiction. It is a trope where you see the skeptical character in a paranormal world. And here's how I phrased it on Facebook. “Help me think of characters in film or television who are skeptics but operate in a world in which the paranormal is very clearly real. Or at the very least, they hold on to their skepticism longer than is justified given the circumstances. I have a love/hate relationship with the trope. The first that come to mind are Dana Scully.”

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, that's the first thing I thought of too, *X-Files*.

Ross Blocher: “—played by Gillian Anderson in the *X-Files*.” And, I mean, she's so likable on so many levels, but she saw things that should have been—

Carrie Poppy: Right, right. For like 11 seasons or something. (Laughs.)

Ross Blocher: Right. Yeah, you know, she gets abducted by aliens. They pump her stomach that she was actually pregnant in real life. You know, like—

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, at point this woman has a memory problem.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, exactly. She sees the Flukeman, all of these things that are totally impossible by, you know, her scientific standards. And yet every time she's like, "Oh, Mulder, come on. That's ridiculous. There's no way."

(Carrie laughs.)

I mean, at some point you also become Mulder and say, "Oh yeah, alright. This stuff is real. I'm with you." Also, I thought of Mike Enslin, that's—or I would have just said John Cusack's character in *1408*.

Carrie Poppy: Oh! That was—um, okay.

Ross Blocher: It's a Stephen King property. It's about this haunted hotel. And he goes in like, "Give me a break! This is all just people's minds getting the better of them and making fun of everyone who treats this as a paranormal hotspot." But then of course the room plays with his mind, and he ends up pleading for them to let him out of this room, because he lives in a world that's really paranormal.

Carrie Poppy: Okay, interesting.

Ross Blocher: I was also thinking of LaKeith Stanfield's character in the recent *Haunted Mansion* film who's like, you know, a physicist. And he built this thing that ends up being a really good ghost detector.

[00:35:00]

But he's also just poo-pooing the whole idea, making fun of all the believers. And he comes, eyes rolling, into the mansion. But of course, eventually he gets all spooked by all of these real specters who show up.

And so, I said, "The film that got me thinking about this is *Late Night with the Devil*, in which the character Carmichael Haig—clearly modeled after James Randi—is overwhelmed by supernatural forces." And people get—

Carrie Poppy: Spoiler!

Ross Blocher: Yes, I'm sorry. So many people gave me so many great pieces of feedback on this. And I've started watching some of the films like *Curse of the Demon* from 1957. Our friend Mark Edward gave me this recommendation, and it's so on the nose. It's perfect. It has some really fun optical effects work of the demon. I already highly recommend it. The original title was *Night of the Demon*. But I'm gonna work my way through some of these other ones, but this is a great collection. A friend pointed out *Indiana Jones*. He sees Nazis melt in front of his face.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, I see.

Ross Blocher: He tells Marion, “Close your eyes!” but then ends up being a hard-boiled skeptic after each adventure.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, does he? He doesn't believe those things happen afterward? Okay.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, he always just talks about all this hokum, or he certainly doesn't take on a religious character himself.

Carrie Poppy: Okay, you know who else is like this? And it's a zag.

Ross Blocher: Yeah?

Carrie Poppy: Mary Poppins.

Ross Blocher: Well, she gaslights the children!

(Carrie agrees.)

She takes them on this chalk picture romp for the day. And she's like, “Absolute poppycock. What are you talking about?”

Carrie Poppy: And I am not a light user of the word gaslight, but she's like, “You're NUTS!”

Ross Blocher: That is what it is.

Carrie Poppy: (Shouting gruffly.) “You are fucking bonkers! You fucking crazy kids. Goo-goo-goo-goo-goo-goo-goo!”

(They laugh.)

I mean, she really is like—

Ross Blocher: She's a dark character!

Carrie Poppy: It's so crazy! The whole movie is so beautiful. And then the main character is like this monster insane person.

Ross Blocher: Absolutely!

Carrie Poppy: Who's so stoic you don't notice.

Ross Blocher: It's really strange. You know, I read the original book by PL Travers a few years back. And there's like talking snakes, and like it's dark and weird and I could see why she was upset with the Disneyfied version of it. As much as I absolutely love that film.

Carrie Poppy: It's so good.

Ross Blocher: But you're right. She's definitely one of those characters. Have you ever seen the *Scary Mary* trailer? I'm gonna break and show you this, because it's worth it.

Carrie Poppy: Okay.

Ross Blocher: The idea is that if you recut *Mary Poppins*, you can make a trailer for a horror film.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, I believe it. I believe it. I love the reverse of *The Shining* on this. Have you ever seen *The Shining* as a happy movie? It's so cute.

Ross Blocher: Yes! As a happy—! (Laughs.) (Sing-song.) Dun, dun, dun, we're going out to the woods.

(They laugh.)

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, I actually genuinely like that. Like, want to see that movie. Okay, here we go.

Ross Blocher: Here you go. This is great.

(They giggle as haunting music plays softly in the background.)

Carrie Poppy: Edited by Clarissa Rule. Great job, Clarissa. Very cute.

Ross Blocher: And all real footage from the film! All these things moving on their own and scathing glances from Mary Poppins. What a character. Yeah, she's a wild character.

Carrie Poppy: Oh my goodness. Yeah, she's not friendly. It's not a jolly holiday.

Ross Blocher: Indeed.

Carrie Poppy: But it's a great movie.

Ross Blocher: People pointed out that in the 2016 *Ghostbusters* film—

Carrie Poppy: Oh, okay. I thought of that! With what's his name?

Ross Blocher: It was the all-woman cast. But they had—

Carrie Poppy: Neil Casey? Neil—?

Ross Blocher: Is that the actor or is that the character?

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, the actor who plays the villain.

Ross Blocher: Oh, I haven't seen it recently, so I can't yay or nay on that one. But Bill Murray plays a cameo role as a ghost debunker on TV, which is kind of funny. In a world where clearly...

Carrie Poppy: He's wrong.

Ross Blocher: Exactly. And then in the original *Ghostbusters*, you have Walter Peck, who's dickless. That's the running joke in the film. Another friend pointed out that another Harrison Ford character, Han Solo in *Star Wars*, is this. Because he talks about the hokey religions and ancient weapons, but he's seen the force in action. But he still kind of treats it all as hokum.

Anyways, people gave me lots of great stuff to watch, so I think it checks out that this is a television and film trope. Tempted to read more of these, but that would take a while. I've got like 90 responses and counting.

Carrie Poppy: I don't remember a ton about this movie, but are there any characters like that in—what's the Disney movie that you worked on a couple of years ago that's a woman who lives in a house that's alive? *Encanto*.

Ross Blocher: Oh yes! Uh-huh.

Carrie Poppy: Are there any people who are like, “This house is normal!” (Laughs.) I don't know what I'm saying. Are there any people who are like, “This world's not magic”?

Ross Blocher: No, I think everybody at least accepts that magic powers are a real thing in that world for sure.

Carrie Poppy: Okay, okay. Alright. Okay, moving on from this idea. I think I've only got two.

Ross Blocher: It was a fun little diversion, and I like having a collection now that I'm going to work my way through.

(ADVERTISEMENT)

[00:40:00]

Carrie Poppy: But before we get back to the film, Ross.

Ross Blocher: Yes.

Carrie Poppy: Have you been thinking about how it's Nat Wahl's birthday soon?

Ross Blocher: Constantly!

Carrie Poppy: I know, thank you. We miss it every year. Mostly because we don't know them. But like other than that, I feel like we should have been up on this.

Ross Blocher: So, we're very thankful to Carly Meadows for reminding us that it's their birthday. And so, we just have to say: Nat, it's your birthday. Happy birthday, Nat!

Carrie Poppy: And this Jumbotron says, "I hope it's as wonderful as you are. Thanks for letting me join you on this adventure and for being the best partner and cat co-parent."

Ross Blocher: "I have feelings things are going to get even better this next year. Here's to another trip around the sun and many more!"

Carrie Poppy: "Love you forever, Carly."

Ross Blocher: Aw! Wonderful.

Carrie Poppy: Aw. Carly and Nat sound great.

Ross Blocher: Have a great birthday, Nat!

Carrie Poppy: Cat co-parent. I would like to know the names of those cats, their sexes, their ages, and a picture.

[00:45:00]

Ross Blocher: And good luck on your new TV series, *Nat, Cat, and Carly*.

Carrie Poppy: Nice. And if you want more entertainment, you could listen to this Max Fun show.

Promo:

Music: Fun rock music.

Mike Cabellon: Hey, this is Mike Kalon.

Ify Nwadiwe: It's Ify Nwadiwe.

Sierra Katow: And Sierra Katow.

Mike: The hosts of *TV Chef Fantasy League*.

Sierra: Where we apply fantasy sports rules to cooking competition shows.

Ify: We're not professional chefs or fantasy sports bros.

Sierra: Just three comedians who love cooking shows and winning.

Mike: We'll cover *Top Chef*, *MasterChef*, *Great British Bake Off*, whatever's in season really.

Sierra: Ooh, you know chefs looove cooking whatever's in season.

Ify: We draft a team of chefs at the top of every series.

Sierra: And every week we recap the episode and assign points based on how our chefs did.

Mike: And at the end of the season, we crown a winner.

Sierra: You can even play along at home if you want.

Ify: Or you can just listen to us like a regular podcast about cooking shows. That's cool too.

Mike: Subscribe to *TV Chef Fantasy League* on MaximumFun.org or wherever you get your podcasts.

(Music ends.)

Ross Blocher: Okay. So, we were talking about Carmichael Haig, our James Randi impersonator or inspired character. And when he first comes in, like the very first thing he does is ask for a cigar or—I don't know how, however he introduces it. He pulls a cigar out of thin air. He's doing his own sleight of hand magic. And then he lights it with his hand. You know, he's doing some impressive magic. And Christou, the psychic is just kind of grimacing at all of this. And very much like James Randi, he offers a personal check to anyone who can prove the paranormal.

Now, this is something that James Randi is, of course, very well known for. It started out with a \$10,000 offer back in kind of these days, in the '70s, but eventually worked his way up to a \$1,000,000 prize that he offered for proof of the paranormal.

Carrie Poppy: It was really there, you guys. It was really there.

Ross Blocher: When they were doing the little video segment before Haig even showed up, I should mention that they showed him conducting some tests that he had been doing. There was a guy with a bunch of medical leads on his body. I'm not sure what they were testing, but you know. He had some sort of paranormal claim. But they also showed Haig in front of the Amityville Horror House, which I recognized right away. And he even name-dropped Ed and Lorraine Warren, called them his friends. And he mentioned spoonbending. And it wasn't Uri Geller, but there was a picture of some guy looking roughly like—

Carrie Poppy: Looks like James Randi's nemesis.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. Uri Geller, bending spoons. He mentions water dowsing. That was another common thing that James Randi investigated. And he mentions speaking to the dead.

Carrie Poppy: One of Randi's favorite things to hate.

Ross Blocher: He looks very clearly at Christou as he's saying this and refers to them openly as swindlers in a tone that, again, I don't think James Randi would have quite used.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, I think he would be more delicate, yeah.

Ross Blocher: And then he pulls out a personal check for \$100,000. And Christou responded as many people did to James Randi and said, "I don't need your money."

Now, I will note later on, they refer to this prize again and they call it half a million.

Carrie Poppy: I noticed that. But at the beginning, what was it? It was like \$100,000.

(Ross confirms.)

Okay. That's what I thought. Yeah, funny.

Ross Blocher: And the second time I watched it, I was like, okay, did I just catch this?

Carrie Poppy: And it was ADR the second time. It's off camera. So, it's so weird that they would add it and get it wrong.

Ross Blocher: That they got that wrong. Yeah.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. Bizarre. I wonder if they got the note, "Oh, you should make it half a million," and then they forgot to update it in the first thing and added it as ADR. I'm sorry, by the way, ADR means when an actor like records the dialogue afterwards in a studio to insert back into the film and usually to add clarity.

Ross Blocher: Which is a good chunk of what you hear in films. It's usually really hard to get quality audio in the moment.

Carrie Poppy: And then all these reviewers watch it and say, "Oh, you need to add this for clarity." Yeah. But go on.

Ross Blocher: Just, yeah. Or maybe it went the other way around, where they started with half a million, and then they're like, well, around the '70s, James Randi didn't have quite that big of a prize. \$100,000 sounds more realistic.

Anyway, so Christou quickly changed the topic by starting to cough and heave. And as he's doing that, as he's clearly getting worse on stage, Haig is starting to debunk his earlier readings and saying, "I was counting, and you had five misses before you ever got one hit with your whole, you know, Peterman Peterson thing."

Carrie Poppy: Fair point to make.

Ross Blocher: And in case you had any question at this point whether this was inspired by James Randi—obviously, we've already proven that—but he says, "You, Christou—like I—am a liar, a cheat, and a fake. The difference is that I'm honest about it."

Carrie Poppy: He would say that.

Ross Blocher: Yep, absolutely.

(Carrie chuckles.)

Christou gets all pissed, and he takes his water, throws it in Haig's face, and tries to leave. And this is a really weird gimmick they use a couple of times on the show. Apparently the little entrance/exit door sometimes gets locked closed, and he can't leave the set.

Carrie Poppy: Oh! Oh, I didn't even clock this. Okay. (Laughs.)

Ross Blocher: Which is so silly. 'Cause he could have just walked around the set if he was really determined to leave it. And so, Jack—the host—gets up to sort of defend Christou a little bit and says, "You know what? I think I better admit. I think that last reading, before the commercial break, was about me. He yelled out Minnie, and that's actually a private pet name that I used for my wife Madeleine. I called her Minnie."

[00:50:00]

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. So, this feels very like a Houdini reference to me.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, because Houdini had sort of a...

Carrie Poppy: Disagreement with his dead wife.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, that if you want to come back, here's the secret word to use.

Carrie Poppy: It was a woman's name.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, yeah, it was the woman's name and then "believe".

Carrie Poppy: Oh, okay. My friend named her kid the name, and now I forget. Obviously, she's a really close friend.

Ross Blocher: Rosabel.

Carrie Poppy: Rosabel! There we go. Anyway, so Houdini and his wife made this agreement but didn't tell anyone that that would be the secret word. Yeah. This felt reminiscent of that.

Ross Blocher: Absolutely. And just to add the icing on top, Jack shows, “And I'm the unmarried man with a wedding ring.”

Carrie Poppy: Yes, he holds up his hand.

Ross Blocher: He holds that up to the camera. Right. And Haig was taking, I think, the wrong debunk option, which was to say, “That could be true of many people,” rather than saying like, “Oh, well, you're collaborating with him, clearly.” Which later on, he does take that tact. But—

Carrie Poppy: He does, yeah. Yeah, and actually, when he does use it later, it's not that believable. You're right, this would have been a better time to use it.

Ross Blocher: Oh, okay. So, there's collusion going on here. But that conversation is cut short, because all of a sudden Christou in his gold jacket bends over, falls on the ground, and just starts projectile vomiting. And he shoots off this big stream of black bile, 10/15 feet away at Haig, and hits him square with it. And then he turns to the camera and spits right at the camera with all this black bile. And so, we cut directly to commercial break. “Quick, quick, commercial!”

And then you see behind the scenes, Haig is explaining this away to Jack. “Oh, that's just a thing called—” And I'd never actually heard this term before! “—spouting. It's an old vaudeville trick.” And I looked that up, and sure enough, you know, you'd see like the old timey footage of people spitting out tons of water in whatever direction. That was called spouting. So, okay. I learned something new from that.

We go back to the live audience. We're back in color again. “Happy H-owl-oween” the little hold sign says, which I thought was nice. Another owl reference. And Jack lets the audience know Christy was getting medical attention for this black bile you just saw like spit all over the place.

Carrie Poppy: It's all fine! Think about the poor like comic who had to come in those 10 minutes and be like, “Okay! Warming up the crowd!” (Laughs.) “Everything's good!”

Ross Blocher: There's a scene like that later when things get even darker—and trust us, they will get darker—where you see Gus, the announcer, dressed as the devil. He goes out to the audience and tries to do a little bit of crowd work to like pep them up and get them happy again. You're like, at this point, if I was an audience member, I would be long gone.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. Bolt for the door.

Ross Blocher: If I was an audience member other than me. Of course, I would stay, and I'd be very excited by all this.

Carrie Poppy: Sure, sure. And be murdered, why not?

(Ross agrees with a laugh.)

This is a big way to go!

Ross Blocher: That's true. I've just revealed that, in this fictional world, in this story, I would have ended up dead. 'Cause I would have stuck around.

Carrie Poppy: That's true. 'Cause you're not Jack Delroy. BA-BA-BAAAAA! He kills everyone.

Ross Blocher: Alright. Yep. That cat's out of the bag. So, Haig, the skeptic—he tells the audience, you know, “This was a vaudeville trick that you just saw.” He's not worried about the health of Christou at all, because he feels this is all deception.

And Jack says, “Well, it sounds like you're not ready to give up the check yet that you have in your pocket.”

And Haig does this, “It's actually in your pocket, Jack.” Oh, you sneaky devil! You did a switch during the commercial break.

Carrie Poppy: But I'm going to need that back. (Laughs.)

Ross Blocher: Yeah, totally. Okay. But now we're ready to introduce our next guest.

Carrie Poppy: Dr. June something.

Ross Blocher: Ross-Mitchell.

Carrie Poppy: Exactly. Exactly.

Ross Blocher: I'm part of her name!

Carrie Poppy: Oh, oh! June Ross-Mitchell. Got it. Yes. Great name. And whoever was making the names in this movie was just incredible.

Ross Blocher: Well, good name game. She's written a book called *Conversations with the Devil*. And they show the book cover, the camera glitches.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. This feels *Michelle Remembers-y*.

(Ross agrees.)

So, it's an age regression therapist who believes that her patient is possessed or has an alter identity or something like that is going on, and we might be able to demonstrate it on TV. But at first, the therapist is not very interested in the demonstration aspect. She'd rather just do a standard interview.

Ross Blocher: About her new book. Let's talk about demon possession and She has brought along this young ingenue—yeah, patient. They introduce all of this by giving us another little film clip reel to walk us back through the history of what happened to this girl that is her patient. And Jack warns us what you're going to see is profoundly disturbing and shocking, but of course that's going to get more eyeballs.

Carrie Poppy: And then they played the Biden debate from a few nights ago.

Ross Blocher: (Groans.) Oh no, I don't wanna talk about it.

Carrie Poppy: Just kidding. Okay, go on.

Ross Blocher: Oh, it was so bad. So, they play this film clip about this cult called the First Church of Abraxas. And the leader of this cult is Szandor D'Abo.

[00:55:00]

Again, on point with the name game, 'cause I'm like, Szandor, where have I seen that before? It starts with an S-Z-ander. Turns out that is the middle name of Anton LaVey. Anton Szandor LaVey.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, wow! Okay, there you go. Someone's really paying attention.

Ross Blocher: Absolutely. So, they were getting in all these little references. And you could tell watching it like, okay, this is clearly a spinoff of the Church of Satan. And they're showing all of these cultists in this commune together, cutting themselves, mixing blood with each other.

Carrie Poppy: Very OTO kind of stuff.

Ross Blocher: Absolutely. Yeah, and—

Carrie Poppy: Go back and listen to our OTO episodes from 2013 or so.

Ross Blocher: And the young, beautiful women who are surrounding him—yeah, feels very OTO—and a lot of these other satanic cultists. And then—

Carrie Poppy: Cutting their hands and then like shaking hands. There's just blood all over everybody. Eh!

Ross Blocher: Yeah, and they've got even an owl in their location. Like, they keep dropping the little owl symbology, which is great. And you see all the pentacles and the candles and the robes and the compliant women. Then they incorporate a bit of an anachronism. They have this police standoff that is clearly inspired by Waco, where there's a three-day scuffle between the police who are trying to raid this compound and the Satanists with guns?! Okay. And it ends up with Szandor D'Abo burning down the whole church. But you have one survivor, and that is young Lily D'Abo. That's her name.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, wow. I'm glad you followed all that. Okay. That's where she's from.

Ross Blocher: So, yeah, she's survived all this horrible stuff. And now speaking with her therapist, Dr. June Ross-Mitchell, in collaboration, they have this book. And they play like just a snippet, showing like a tape player playing back the tape. And you hear her interviewing Young Lily, and all of a sudden there's these growls and hisses. And you know, skeptical me, I'm thinking, okay, well anyone could have provided those voices. We're just seeing a tape machine. We need more than that.

But there we go. That's the end of the footage. They have now introduced these new characters. So, everyone applauds for them as they come in, sit down. And the skeptic's still up there on the stage waiting his turn. And actually, he's not waiting his turn. He's interrupting all the time.

Carrie Poppy: (Chuckles.) And these two actresses are so good. I loved them. Especially—both of them, but especially the little girl.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, the actor who plays Lily does a great job. And she's just staring down the camera, and she's kind of aware where camera A and camera B are. And she'll just be like deeply gazing into them with this like, you know, I'm possessed by the devil glare. And Jack, the host, will say, “Oh, honey, you can talk to me. You don't need to look at the camera as you're talking.”

Carrie Poppy: (Blankly pleasant.) “Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Delroy.”

Ross Blocher: (Laughs.) It's so creepy. Yeah, she does a great job with it.

Carrie Poppy: She continually talks like just two notches down below like the volume of everyone around her and the pace of everyone around her. So, everyone else is just kind of happy and clipping along, and then she'll (slowing) drag it to a halt by talking like this.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. And she's always just saying the thing that she's not supposed to say, revealing a little bit more information than anybody would be comfortable with. Like, right off the bat, she says, (eerily) “June says you're very handsome, Jack.”

Carrie Poppy: Whoopsie! Whoopsie doodle!

Ross Blocher: To the host. So, now the psychologist is nervous. Now Jack's nervous. And Lily seems to be hip to the fact—like, she says, “No, I've never seen the show before.”

Jack makes a little joke about that. “Oh, that's okay.”

“Yeah, usually I'm asleep by now. But I know that you're trying to get better ratings, and I know that you'll be successful very soon. Everybody will know who you are, Jack.”

Yeah, he's super uncomfortable. She's staring down the camera. They cut to commercial break.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, also June is a graduate of the Stanford Research Institute.

Ross Blocher: Yes! That's coming up very soon, but yeah. Also related to our recent remote viewing and ESP episode.

Carrie Poppy: Though, I don't think they offer degrees at the Stanford Research Institute, but.

Ross Blocher: Oh, fair enough. Yeah, you're right. But it was a clever way to get Stanford in on the narrative. The makeup artist comes by to improve Jack's makeup and he says, “Oh, we do this so we can look pretty on stage.”

And Lily says, in a different voice than her own, “Don't I already look pretty, Jack?”

(Carrie “uh oh”s.)

Which is a woman's voice. And I'm guessing if I were to compare them, I'm guessing it's his wife's voice. Because he kind of stops and looks over kind of stunned, like, “Wait, what was that?” So, I'm guessing that was—

Carrie Poppy: Oh, interesting. I just took that to be her talking and startling him. I didn't notice the voice.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, I think it was her channeling his dead wife.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, cute. Okay.

Ross Blocher: And June—the psychologist, the author of the book—and Jack have a little off-screen moment as well where their exchange makes you feel that they have some intimate background relationship.

Carrie Poppy: Yes, definitely. Very close talking.

Ross Blocher: What's going on here? How long has this been going on? Was there cheating on his wife? You're already starting to ask these questions.

Carrie Poppy: You're don't talk that close unless you're in that submarine.

Ross Blocher: Are you thinking of the Titanic submersible?

(Carrie agrees in a strained voice.)

Oh no!

(Carrie laughs.)

I watched a video about it.

Carrie Poppy: (Laughing.) No, move on!

Ross Blocher: I watched a video about it the other day, and I was like—

[01:00:00]

“Oh, that was interesting information.” Because they were interviewing James Cameron. I was like, “I’m not going to send it to Carrie though! If she’s not thinking about it, I’m not going to make her think about it. Intrusive thoughts.”

Carrie Poppy: But then I compared it myself, and now here we are. (Laughs.)

Ross Blocher: Yeah, you brought up submarines, Carrie. You are to blame.

Carrie Poppy: That’s right. Okay, go on.

Ross Blocher: So, we also learned during this brief moment between takes that Christou, our psychic, has died.

Carrie Poppy: As will be a theme in this movie.

Ross Blocher: Indeed. But he hemorrhaged out and—

Carrie Poppy: Here’s what I’d do. Keep shooting your special. Just keep going.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, well, that’s what Jack does as well.

Carrie Poppy: (Laughs.) I know, I’m kidding! I would cancel! I would be like, “Fuck! Everybody leave! A horrible thing has happened today!”

Ross Blocher: Right. Or commemorate him for his very last appearance on television ever in his life when we come back. No, he wants to keep this hidden for now.

Carrie Poppy: Gotta keep going!

Ross Blocher: And right after we learned that the guy's like, “On in 60 seconds!”

(They laugh.)

Okay—

Ross & Carrie: Show must go on.

Ross Blocher: Exactly. (Beat.) Oh, and this was a really nice moment too. Another little skeptical insider look is that Haig is over talking to the ladies in the audience who had had the successful reading from Christou. So, he doesn't know yet that Christou is dead. But our James Randi character is asking them, “Hey, didn't you fill out a questionnaire as you came in?” Which is a tactic for shows like that, where they're doing the reading is to capture information before.

And the women say, “Yeah, we filled out the form. Oh, and there was a nice lady who asked us a bunch of questions, and we talked to her. And then we noticed she went to talk to Christou.” So, giving away there was some audience mining for information beforehand, just underlining the fact that Christou is a fake.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. And I think this is also a Popoff reference.

Ross Blocher: Totally!

Carrie Poppy: Peter Popoff, a televangelist who collected the same kind of information.

Ross Blocher: Again, these people did their homework making this film. So, yeah, you learn a lot of little clever tie-ins to the real-life equivalents of all this.

Okay. So, we go back to—we're back on camera. Jack introduces June. “So, you call yourself a parapsychologist.”

And she jumps back at this. (Insulted.) “Because I am! I have a degree!” And like, uh, okay. And Haig jumps in.

Carrie Poppy: That's the term of art. That's all.

Ross Blocher: Our James Randi clone—and says from—essentially, like “the university of hogwash”.

And she said, “From Stanford.”

And he says, “And there's a difference?” (Chuckles.) Like, he makes a dig at Stanford.

Carrie Poppy: Okay. She doesn't say Stanford Research Institute that time? Oh, wow, okay.

Ross Blocher: I think she just said Stanford.

Carrie Poppy: Okay, I'm gonna hold this dramaturg to account for this one.

Ross Blocher: Well, I feel that was just enough to give us a reference to the fact that Stanford's name got implicated in all of the psi research.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, I just know that—I guess I'm thinking of my buddy Randi. He wouldn't shit on Stanford. He'd shit on Stanford Research Institute.

Ross Blocher: Sure, oh fair. Certainly they were borrowing the imprimatur of Stanford and acting in the poor interest of Stanford's good name.

Carrie Poppy: Stolen valor—borrowing valor. (Laughs.)

Ross Blocher: Yeah, there you go. So, then she mentions her work with telekinesis. Someone else says possession. And she says, “We actually prefer the term psychic infestation.”

Carrie Poppy: Okay. (Giggles.) Do you?

Ross Blocher: Interesting note. She also mentions that when she was interviewing Lily, one of the things that she used—beyond just her study of satanic rituals—but also age regression therapy.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, repressed memory therapy.

Ross Blocher: And she suspects that there's a minor demon inside of Lily. So, not Abraxas himself that the church is based on—this, you know, like major demonic figure. But you know, we've got some other demon that we're dealing with. And they've even brought like this dagger from the house that belonged to the cult leader. And Haig grabs it, and he has this whole stage thing. Again, I don't think James Randi would have done this, where he grabs the dagger, and he pretends that he's about to stab himself with it. And his other hand is trying to fight his own hand away, like, “No! It's taking control of me! Everyone turn off your TVs!”

Carrie Poppy: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah! But then he's faking it. He's faking it. Yeah.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. He's totally faking it, making fun of them. And June chastises him for his ridicule. “And only the most closed minded would ridicule this.”

And Haig points out to us that Abraxas is a term that became the origin of a popular magical phrase. And Lily finishes the thought for him, the demon possessed girl. She says, “Abracadabra.”

And he's very impressed. “Oh, good job. You know!”

Carrie Poppy: (Eerily.) “Thank you.”

Ross Blocher: But she has a different name for this character, this demon. She calls him Mr. Wiggles.

Carrie Poppy: Oh yeah. Mr. Wiggles. ‘Cause he wiggles inside and out of her head.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. Which just feels wrong and invasive as she describes it. So, I guess a good name. And so, right after she mentions Mr. Wiggles, the footage glitches again.

Carrie Poppy: The lights pop in the studio.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. Well, and the theremin goes wild.

Carrie Poppy: Oh yes. There's a theremin on stage. Just that musical instrument that you just kind of wave your arms nearby and goes whOOO!

Ross Blocher: (Sings a bar from the *Star Trek* theme) kind of thing. Though I don't think they used a theremin for the actual *Star Trek* show.

[01:05:00]

Just throwing that out there before we get a bunch of emails.

And so, everybody's like, “What do we do?! How do we turn off this noise?” ‘Cause it's hurting everybody's ears. It even explodes the glasses on the table. And so, Haig has to get up and march over confidently to the theremin and just unplug it. The sound turns off, and he says, “Oh, it was just feedback with your PA system.”

Carrie Poppy: “Yeah, it's the same as what makes a soprano break a glass when she's singing a high note.”

Ross Blocher: And already I'm thinking, okay, but this was extreme. At this point, I think he's been fairly justified in his skepticism. But I think this might be one of the first things where, you know, he should feel this is a little weirder that it did that at that moment, rather than at any other moment.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. And to be fair, who knows what it would look like if James Randi, after his decades of investigation, suddenly walked into a paranormal world and found out it was all real. How long would it take him to reverse course? I don't know. But—

Ross Blocher: Yeah. And this setup is the reason that whole caricature bugs me is because the reasonable thing to do would become a believer pretty quickly. Because it's a different type of world!

Carrie Poppy: Right, right. But then we'd have a character we hated.

Ross Blocher: And I think it then encourages people in the real world to get these worlds confused and say, “Oh, well, you know. You skeptics are just waiting for your comeuppance. It's going to happen.” Which is already kind of the attitude.

Carrie Poppy: Or like “You're just motivated by this cynicism. You know, wanting to be right or whatever.” Which is just definitely not true of this source person.

Ross Blocher: Absolutely. But the important part here is that we're going to have this seance, this live possession demonstration. And Haig agrees that this is an apt test for the prize money. So, yeah, let's do this. And alright, we're going to have a live communion with the devil after our sponsors! So, they cut out to black and white again. We're off camera. And June is all pissed because she didn't want to have an actual possession moment. She didn't want to do this on stage. She wanted to talk about her book.

Carrie Poppy: Yes. Yeah. Now she's feeling exploited. And this whole thing becomes a circle of exploitation. I mean, which I guess TV kind of is, but you know. Everyone's just like, “Well, what can you bring into the show? And okay, now that we've got you, can we get you to do a little more?” And everybody's kind of triangulating the different way to get something out of this.

Ross Blocher: Right. And this is Sweeps Week. We need the increased viewership if I'm going to get my contract renegotiated. So, “Ah, you know, this is a great opportunity, June. you can prove this skeptic wrong!”

Carrie Poppy: Yeah! Sell your book, babe.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. Okay. So, they come back on the broadcast, and it's very dark. They've created this stagecraft where it looks all spooky. And Jack steps into the light near the camera, wishes them all godspeed.

Carrie Poppy: Damn.

Ross Blocher: We see young Lily, you know, looking every bit the '70s girl. She could be out of *Little House on the Prairie* or something. She's got like the straight hair. She's wearing like kind of a white, formless dress. But she's now strapped to the chair with leather straps.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, they lock her in like an electric chair. Yeah, it's like why do you have this? But anyway.

Ross Blocher: June wants it as a precaution.

(Carrie affirms.)

And she says, “Okay, look at me. Close your eyes. And may I speak to the one known as Mr.

Wiggles?” The camera glitches again. We see Lily starting to strain against the restraints, and there's all these little wet cracking noises that they've edited in—the common thing that you hear when someone's possessed by the devil.

Carrie Poppy: You need to communicate that they have like superhuman strength, whatever that is.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, there's some kind of sinews being torn on some subsurface level.

Carrie Poppy: In the wood.

Ross Blocher: And then she looks up at all of us in the camera with this intensity, and all of a sudden the audience reacts like (gasps). Because we can only see one of her eyes, but it's peering up. And you know, they've added the dramatic makeup, so now there's this high contrast. Her skin is extra white, the underside of her brow is extra dark, and her eyes look extra green.

Carrie Poppy: She don't look right! She don't look right!

Ross Blocher: Yeah, she doesn't look right. When we get a look at her skin, it's all cracked, and she looks like Linda Blair from *The Exorcist*. And you know, this would have been like four years after *The Exorcist* came out, so that's very much in the public mind and another homage from this film. At some point, she does crane her neck around as well and do this kind of unhuman rotation of the neck that shouldn't be possible.

Carrie Poppy: And levitates her chair.

Ross Blocher: Yes!

Carrie Poppy: So, 54 minutes in, for me, is when I was like, “Oh! Okay, so like pretty much this is paranormal. There aren't a lot of workarounds at this point.”

Ross Blocher: Right. We had plausible deniability, but now she's levitating. There's a giant visible energy bolt that goes along the roof of the studio, this big blue ball of energy.

Carrie Poppy: Her skin changes tones without her applying any makeup.

Ross Blocher: Right. Yeah. All of this would be incredibly hard to explain away. And you have Haig trying to do exactly that.

Oh, one important thing that happens in this exchange is that, when she's turning around and looking behind her—well, she doesn't make it clear at first, but she says like, “Oh, we've met before,” and she's talking to Jack. Oh, and I'm missing an important piece to all of this. Her voice isn't just Lily's voice. We've now overlaid on top of it—

[01:10:00]

—(with a gruff, demonic affect) this voice that sounds like this!

Actually, that sounded a little more like Gonzo from *The Muppets*. But—

Carrie Poppy: No, it didn't! No, no, no, it was right.

Ross Blocher: Okay. Demonic voice, you know, (growling) this is a gruff, male voice that's overlaid on top of hers.

Carrie Poppy: Exactly. There's the two tone.

Ross & Carrie: (Ross growling and Carrie speaking in a little girl voice. It takes them a second to sync up.) I'm saying exactly what you're saying.

Carrie Poppy: Okay, there. We did it. (Laughs.)

Ross Blocher: Okay. So, she turns to Jack and says, "We've met before."

And he's like, (playfully) "Oh, I don't think we've made acquaintance." He's still trying to entertain the audience during all this.

And she says, (growling) "We met amongst the tall trees."

Carrie Poppy: Oh, The Grove. Right.

Ross Blocher: The Grove, for paying attention. I think it's supposed to be confusing to the audience, because maybe there's been all of this footage, and they haven't picked up on the connection with the redwoods at the Bohemian Grove. But then Lily starts saying things completely inappropriate, as Mr. Wiggles. As she says that, (growling) "Now that your wife is gone, June can be your new whore!" And the audience gasps at this. You don't say this on '70s live television. And then she gets all singsong about it. (growling) "Jack and Jill went up the hill to fuck each other's brains out." And then I noticed a little later, she says the word "fuck" again and gets bleeped. So, I guess the censor was just catching up, didn't catch the first one, something like that. And June slaps Lily! Which is a drastic response from her protector and psychologist.

Carrie Poppy: Boy, so much is going on in this movie. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, don't slap your patients.

Ross Blocher: And you can tell she's immediately mortified that she did this, that she slapped her. And there's even like a little time dilation effect, where Lily's head now is spinning back into position or snapping back way faster than it should. They've clearly deleted ten frames from the head motion, so that it's like this very supernatural zoop! So, June's freaking out, because she tries (snaps) snapping to like bring her out of it, and it's not working. She's still looking like she's straight out of *The Exorcist*.

And so, June pulls out her amulet and starts saying things. And I'm not sure what the amulet was. It wasn't a cross.

Carrie Poppy: Oh yeah. I'm not sure either.

Ross Blocher: Who knows?

Carrie Poppy: Was that the part where she was like reciting a poem or something, and the little girl starts mocking her?

Ross Blocher: Yeah, right. She reads along with it. Like, “Oh, you think these words have control over me, but no. Turns out—”

Carrie Poppy: “I’ll say them with you! It’s just a fun little saying.”

Ross Blocher: Exactly. “Mr. Wiggles is far more powerful than you ever knew before. And I’m revealing it now on live TV.” And this is where we see her nose bleeding. We hear more of these wet cracking sounds. The electricity rushes across the ceiling, and she’s levitating in her chair. And they cut to commercial break. (Laughs.)

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. Oh, right. Yes. That’s the big break, the station break, right? That’s right before the last 12 minutes in the movie?

Ross Blocher: Yeah, I think so. I think—yeah, we are—obviously, now we’re at the make-or-break point. It’s revealed this thing is a real demon. And we do get a moment on screen of Haig still crossing his arms and saying, “This is unconscionable! You know, there’s answers to all of this. I would like to list all of the tricks that I just witnessed.”

And Jack is telling him, “You’ll get your chance, Carmichael. Let’s go to break.”

Carrie Poppy: Around then also I wrote down two things Haig said, and one was, “This is unconscionable,” which definitely sounds like Randi. But then also he said—he insults the little girl’s sanity. This is something no decent person would do. Like, he says, “Indeed her sanity!”

And then June says, “How dare you?”

(Ross agrees.)

And yeah, I was like—yeah—

Ross & Carrie: (In unison.) How dare you?

Carrie Poppy: Who would do that? Anyway.

Ross Blocher: Absolutely. So, after all this paranormal stuff has happened, during the break, they're trying to release Lily out of her wrist straps. And I'm thinking, "I'd leave her in there!" Like, she's levitating and like sending electricity. Keep her strapped in.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, although the chair is now kind of a weapon, because it floats around with her.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. Okay. But at least whatever happens to the chair happens to her. Anyways, the assistant isn't able to get her out of the chair. Jack is struggling with the straps. And so, he goes and grabs the dagger to cut her out with a sacrificial dagger. And that seems like it's ill advised. I don't know. At this point, I'm fully convinced we live in a paranormal world. Let's take this very seriously. Haig learns that Christou died. So, you kind of see the skeptic's reaction to, oh, well, okay.

Carrie Poppy: "Shit." (Laughs.)

Ross Blocher: Yeah. I thought he was just putting on a vaudeville show. He died.

Carrie Poppy: And I'm still up here. That's interesting. Huh.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. Good point. Again, this is intelligent filmmaking. We're reminded of the stakes and that they're trying to get ratings. The producer comes over to Jack. And at first Jack is like preparing himself for, "I know, I know this is getting out of hand."

But the producer says, "Hey, we're getting better numbers than the moon landing." So, both of them are like, well, let's keep doing this! More of this. Let's make it a recurring thing. This is great.

And even Jack is like, "How did she do the thing with her voice? And I heard her at one point sound just like Minnie," which we now know means his wife. It could have been a reference to that earlier, "Don't you think I look pretty already, Jack?"

(Carrie agrees.)

[01:15:00]

Okay. So, we go back to—like you said, this is the final onscreen performance.

Carrie Poppy: What I would call the fever dream.

Ross Blocher: If shit hadn't gotten real already, shit's about to get real. Jack apologizes to anybody who might be upset or offended. And oh yeah, we've also had kind of this running dialogue about how Gus, the assistant, is really upset by this. He wants to leave. There's other members of the crew who have already left in a huff, because they're probably like Christian or religiously offended by what's going on screen. So, lots of tension building.

So, Lily's now lucid. She's back to normal and they're asking her, "Can you assure everyone that you're okay? We just saw you slapped. We saw your skin break into pieces."

And she says, "Oh yeah, it's just like I'm being asleep. And I hope Mr. Wiggles didn't say anything inappropriate." You know, tee-hee-hee.

And Jack is clearly convinced by all this. 'Cause he turns to Hagan and says, "You know, to me, this is starting to sound like a self-righteous, cold-hearted curmudgeon trying to wriggle his way out of half a million bucks."

And I'm thinking half a million?!

(Carrie cackles.)

That's what I'm caught up on. "You said \$100,000!"

Carrie Poppy: Rewind your own movie!

Ross Blocher: It's one tenth of a million!

So, Haig is saying, "Okay, well, I want to explain to you all of these tricks that just happened. Will you let me put on a little demonstration?"

And Jack says, "Alright, Haig, you've got five minutes to convince us all. It better be good."

So, Haig asks for a volunteer, as Randi might. No one from the audience volunteers. And so he volun-tells Gus to come up and join him. That's the Ed McMahon announcer guy. And so, Gus is very unhappy about this, clearly doesn't want to be involved. He's one of the people who wanted to leave the set. He's this—

Carrie Poppy: Oh, good call.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, everyone should have left. He's this bald man, a little heavysset, who's been wearing the devil costume. Now he's just wearing a suit. And he sits down across from Haig. And Haig pulls out his pocket watch and does like a quick little hand pass over the pocket watch. And now it's a spinning hypnotist wheel. And he says, "Get this with the camera. I want to make sure everyone's looking at the spinning wheel."

Carrie Poppy: Oh, that's how he accomplished it. Okay. I was distracted or something. Okay.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. "Stare deeply into it. Round it goes. Feel nice and relaxed." And then there's this flash. I don't know where the flash comes from, that kind of like takes over the camera, but now it's back to being a watch again. But we're all hypnotized. And he makes sure that even Jack in the back row and Lily and June, they're all looking at the station monitors as well. So, they're getting hypnotized.

So, Haig informs Gus that he's now in a deep trance. And Gus doesn't really believe him, like sure, okay, yeah; I'm in a deep trance. And Haig says, "Tell me, Gus, about your vermiphobia."

And Gus is like, "Well, what's that?"

"Your deep fear of worms."

And Gus is like, "How did you know about that?"

So, clearly Haig's already done some kind of deep digging.

Carrie Poppy: Hot reading or whatever.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, somehow he knows that Gus is afraid of worms. Maybe he called his wife in advance and asked, "What is your husband afraid of?" Who knows.

As they're talking, all of a sudden Gus starts to get uncomfortable, and he's like, "It's really hot in here."

And Haig points out, "Hey, it looks like there's like a cut on your neck."

Gus says, "Oh yeah, I think I cut myself shaving," but it's this deep gouge in his neck. It's not a shaving wound. And all of these worms start pouring out of Gus's neck, and he kind of grabs onto them. And he sees the worms and, ugh, just grossed out. Oh no! And he's freaked out, and then he stands up. And "Oh no! What?! There's something inside of me!" And he starts ripping open his shirt. And he tears at his skin on his belly, and all of a sudden all of these worms—this big, fat, black mass of worms just comes pouring out of his stomach.

Carrie Poppy: Like, his whole stomach.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. If we weren't in a horror film before, we are now.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, it's definitely like, oh, this person would die now. If you had this size of wound on your belly, that's that.

Ross Blocher: Absolutely. Lily's in the background, and she's just chuckling like, "Oh, you're all acting so silly."

(Carrie laughs.)

So, yeah, this is all disgusting. And Haig kind of winks at the camera real quick. Like, "Ah, see what's going on here?" Like he's kind of happy with all this. And he snaps, but nothing happens. It doesn't all end. And he gets up, and Haig is all shocked. "(Gasps.) This wasn't supposed to happen! Like, this is—"

Carrie Poppy: I've lost control.

Ross Blocher: Exactly. And so, the audience is all freaked out, and it goes up another level. And Gus gets even more uncomfortable. (Chuckles.) You know, he's got worms streaming out of his belly. But all of a sudden, like his face starts sort of collapsing, and this gigantic worm that's maybe four inches in diameter pops out of his face and destroys his eye. And everyone is just all the more horrified. And Haig is—

Carrie Poppy: He's screaming.

Ross Blocher: He's screaming, and Haig gets up. He looks overwhelmed, but he yells, "Dreamer here, awake! Dreamer here, awake!" And all of a sudden now everybody snaps out of it. The audience is back to normal. Gus is back to normal. He's restored. His face is normal. He's got his shirt unbuttoned, but you just see his belly. No rips or tears, no worms anywhere.

[01:20:00]

Carrie Poppy: Normal guy.

Ross Blocher: The audience kind of... claps? Like, what do we do for this?

Carrie Poppy: What happened? Explain yourself.

Ross Blocher: Like Jeb Bush is like, "This is where you can applaud now. I just did an amazing thing for you."

(Carrie chuckles.)

He turns to the audience and says—again, I like, I don't think James Randi would—"Fortunately, you're a suggestible lot. That's why this works so well." He kind of acknowledges, yeah, this was a hypnosis thing, "but I bet it worked on most of your listeners. It worked on the audience. Anybody in the audience not see the worms?" And there's like two hands raised.

Carrie Poppy: It would be way more if this were actual hypnosis. Oh yeah.

Ross Blocher: Way more people statistically. Yeah. Good point. So, this is where I feel like, okay. It was great TV, but this wouldn't have worked. You couldn't actually pull off this ruse. Which—

Carrie Poppy: Oh, absolutely. We would be having the same reaction Lily was having watching that on TV. 'Cause it would just be—

Ross Blocher: Tee-hee, aren't these people silly?

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, people running around.

Ross Blocher: And so, he hasn't successfully debunked what came before. And so, I think this is where James Randi, if he wasn't already pissed—which he would be—he would have been pissed at this. Like, you're not educating the public with this!

And poor Gus is sitting there with his shirt open saying, (dejectedly) “I've never been so embarrassed in my whole life.”

But June insists, “I didn't hypnotize anyone.”

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. Yeah. That's a fair point, June.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, right! Yeah.

(They chuckle.)

Okay. You said, “This is how I could have done it.” I didn't do that!

But an important point here is that Haig tells us “the camera didn't capture this, ‘cause I didn't hypnotize the camera. Let's play back the footage.” And so, everyone sits there and awkwardly watches as we replay the whole scene but as Lily saw it, as the un hypnotized people saw it, with no actual worms, just a bunch of suggestion.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. So, the audience at home—yeah, it's hard to know like would the audience of home have seen it one way and then the other, or?

Ross Blocher: Yeah, well, now they've been removed from the hypnosis state. So, they see what they missed. Kind of like rewatching the video with the basketball being tossed around between the people with the black clothing and the white clothing. And then you realize, oh, I missed the guy in the gorilla suit.

Carrie Poppy: The gorilla suit. Yeah.

Ross Blocher: Sorry. I just ruined that illusion for everybody who hasn't already seen it. Anyway. So, Lily, again, makes a very smart point. She says, “Let's replay back the tape of what happened with me and see how it looks to everybody.”

And Haig has to agree. Okay. Yes, it should look different on the tape, because tapes don't lie.

Carrie Poppy: Mm-hm. Yeah, when is June supposed to have hypnotized everyone? It's not a good theory.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, what did she say or do? We certainly didn't see the spinning wheel.

So, this was the point at which originally the broadcast was supposed to end. They would run out of their time slot. Cleo James was gonna sing a song to bring us out. But at this point, the host is saying, “Yeah, I think everyone wants this resolved. So, let's just keep going.”

So, we rewind the tape. We're watching it along as a little inset on the screen while we see people's reactions. And sure enough, the same possession is happening. The skin is cracking, and you can see Haig, the James Randi guy, trying to figure this out. And he's saying, “Okay, we need to take these tapes in for forensic examination.”

(Carrie chuckles.)

But then they replay the moment where Lily turned back to Jack and said the thing about how we've met before. And this is where Jack intuits like something happened here. “Pause that. Let's play it back very slowly.” And he even gets the operators to play it back frame by frame. And I think this is like the big moment of the film. Frame by frame, we see a little bit of distortion, but then all of a sudden in one frame, you see Jack in the background. And there's an overlay of this glowing, white figure, his dead wife.

Carrie Poppy: Minnieeee.

Ross Blocher: Minnie with her hand on his shoulder. Now, I didn't notice this the first time, but my son, Andrew, pointed this out to me that in the very next shot—they show that creepy frame, when they cut back to Jack's reaction in the moment now, later watching the playback footage, you see a white spectral hand in real life on his shoulder.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, fun.

Ross Blocher: I thought that was a great touch, and I would have totally missed it. Nice move, filmmakers. So, now Haig is just incensed, and he said, “This is depraved! You know, you've messed with the footage. You're in on this, Jack You set me up.”

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. I mean, that seems like a reasonable guess from his position.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, totally. And sticking to his skeptical guns. And so, Lily is starting to react again like she's being possessed a second time. And Haig kind of yells at her, “The encore is quite unnecessary!” But no, it's too late for any of that. And here we go. Here's the real spoiler. You could have probably heard all of this up till now, but now I'm really giving away the ending. Arcs of light start shooting out of Lily. It's pulling her up from the air. You know, she's being like torn in two almost.

Carrie Poppy: Ending of *Michelle Remembers*.

Ross Blocher: Oh, really? Does it actually kind of end that way?

Carrie Poppy: Well, she doesn't die or anything, but like—

Ross Blocher: Super dramatic, supernatural.

Carrie Poppy: Mother Mary appears above a bonfire. Like, it's—woof!

Ross Blocher: Okay! Yeah, yeah. I still haven't read *Michelle Remembers*.

[01:25:00]

Carrie Poppy: Oh, I have like four copies if you want one! (Laughs.)

Ross Blocher: Oh, okay. When I'm ready. It is definitely on my list. When I'm ready, I will borrow one. Why four?

Carrie Poppy: Research reasons. But sorry, I'm also remembering it's 1980—

Ross Blocher: *Carrie Remembers*.

Carrie Poppy: (Chuckling.) Which was three years after this. So, they're very close. Yeah.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, okay. So, it's contemporary, more proximate than the Waco reference. Okay. But yeah, this is the big moment. So, the light that's pulling her apart splits her head open. Her head rips in two. So, now she's like this bright, glowing, split-headed demon. It's mostly red, but she's got these bright, glowing yellow eyes. And now she starts taking out her vengeance on everything. Gus runs up, the poor sidekick guy, and he I think has a cross, and he yells, "The power of Christ compels you!" He's seen this in *The Exorcist*. And she just kills him, like snaps his neck.

(Carrie chuckles.)

And it was sad; he'd even made a little comment earlier where he said, "Oh, be careful, Haig. My wife likes my head the way it is, on my shoulders." And now we see him with his neck snapped.

And June, the woman who's been taking care of her, publicizing her, writing the book about her, she tries to stop the demon—like, saying her incantations with whatever amulet she's wearing. She gets hoisted up into the air, and the amulet turns into this chokehold that's like being pulled up behind her, and slicing her neck, so she gets killed that way.

Carrie Poppy: How's the audience reacting to all of this? They're just screaming?

Ross Blocher: Oh, they are fleeing, screaming.

Carrie Poppy: Okay, good.

Ross Blocher: You know, arcs of light are around them. I assume most of them get away.

Carrie Poppy: Okay, good. Yeah, I have no picture of the audience in my head.

Ross Blocher: We don't see them dying, I don't think. But there's a lot of bodies stacking up here.

Jack gets thrown away, like by the power of the explosion of energy. So, he's over by the entrance door to the set, and he escapes. He gets kind of one last look as everything is falling apart. And of course, the skeptic. We've been waiting for this. Haig finally believes, in this moment. And he gets up and says a bunch of last-minute repentance stuff like, "God of all holiness, protect us in this moment!" and holds up the check for \$100,000 as if to offer it to this demon that has ripped apart the head of the girl. And the check disintegrates in his hand!

Carrie Poppy: Well, you got what you wanted. He gave in to your magical world!

Ross Blocher: Yep! And then right after the check dissolves, he also starts burning up from the center. Patches of light appear on his skin, and he dissolves into a crumble, an ash of skepticism that dies.

(They chuckle.)

And as we see Jack kind of escape, as he gets this knowing look of all of his guests dying in front of him, the TV station goes to static. And there's this male demonic face in the static that grimaces at us and laughs. Mwahahahahaha! And we cut to the little Helvetica sign that says, "Station difficulties."

Carrie Poppy: Oh, this is the station break. Okay, so after this is the fever dream.

Ross Blocher: But yeah, it's not really a break though. We don't go back to black and white. We don't get a commercial break. But yeah, now we cut back to the fever dream.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, this like dream sequence.

Ross Blocher: The show is going on. But yeah, everything is confused, because Gus is introducing Jack and saying, "Mr. Jack Delroy!" Well, we just saw him die. Why is he alive now?

Carrie Poppy: All the camera angles are very different from the rest of the movie. Just everything's very...

Ross Blocher: Soupy and loopy.

Carrie Poppy: "All That Jazz". The dancing scenes from "All That Jazz". We all know that reference.

Ross Blocher: 1976, again, around the right time.

Carrie Poppy: Oh! Wow, okay! Nice. Great movie.

Ross Blocher: Oh, 1979, I was wrong.

Carrie Poppy: Ross! Come on, man!

Ross Blocher: Oh, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.

Carrie Poppy: (Giggling.) I can't believe you did this to me!

Ross Blocher: This podcast is over! It's contemporary, at least.

Yeah, Jack is being summoned into the show, and he keeps getting kind of time warped through some of the onscreen sketches that we saw earlier. Now he's playing a caveman, but he's aware of everything that just happened. So, what's going on? And he's cursing. And yeah, he's in this fugue state, and we're confused along with him. What is going on?!

Carrie Poppy: Mm-hm. What is going on?

Ross Blocher: Pieces of what we've learned are showing up in these other set pieces. Earlier there was like this callback to an earlier shot that we saw with him talking to like a prominent zoologist who had lost a spider in the audience. But now she's got the giant worm instead of the spider. The hypnosis wheel shows up, and Jack says, "Turn off your TVs!" 'Cause he knows something horrible is happening.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. He's like breaking the fourth wall, shouting directly at the audience.

Ross Blocher: And now, we're just getting like all of these overlays of someone's bloody face, the wife dying of cancer.

Carrie Poppy: And someone tells him that he must perform his final sacrifice.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. So, there's this rich guy who shows up. Now we're like at a contract signing, and he's signing the renewal for his contract. And the rich guy, probably like the main sponsor—

Carrie Poppy: The producer or whatever.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, he's saying, Okay, here comes the final sacrifice, Jack."

[01:30:00]

"What do you have to sacrifice?"

Carrie Poppy: So, yeah, I mean, the symbology is really heavy hitting here. (Laughing.) But I mean, I think the idea is like—

Ross Blocher: This is the Faustian bargain.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, he's chewing up his actual personal experiences for the digestion of the audience.

Ross Blocher: Mm-hm. He wanted it all. He wanted fame. He wanted stardom, and he was willing to make a deal with the devil. Here's what it's all come to. Technically, he got what he wanted, but was it worth it, Jack? Was it?

Carrie Poppy: And now he must stab his wife.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. So, now he's—in the scene, he just like got up from the chair to sign the contract. But all of a sudden, all these elements of the Bohemian Grove take over the TV set. And you've got tall trees and you've got Szandor D'Abo, the cult leader. And you've got men in owl suits, and it's wild and trippy.

So, Jack drinks from this cup—I guess sealing the deal, making the sacrifice—and the set makes way for the scene with Minnie on her hospital bed. And so, Jack is talking to his wife. And she said, “They told you that you could have it all, that you could be number one. But you had to pay a price. And I had to exit stage left.”

Carrie Poppy: Yikes.

Ross Blocher: And Jack said, “You have to believe me. It was never meant to turn out this way!”

Carrie Poppy: And this is all intentionally melodrama. It's all in this style of—yeah, the melodramas of like the '50s and '60s. So, everybody's intentionally being like (wails cartoonishly).

Ross Blocher: Right, right. So, there's the sacrificial blade on the table. And she says, “Do it, Jack, just do it.” And so, he takes the blade, and he stabs his wife with it.

Carrie Poppy: Brutal.

Ross Blocher: And then all of a sudden—(gasps) he snaps out of all of this. He looks down.

Carrie Poppy: The reverie's gone.

Ross Blocher: He's back, and not only is everybody dead around him, but he's just stabbed young Lily.

Carrie Poppy: And the implication is that he's actually been killing everybody. Because everyone around him is dead by stab wound.

Ross Blocher: Yes. And that Szandor D'Abo has had the last laugh, that he had used this demon to possess her, to possess him. And he wanted to kill off that final victim who didn't die in the fire. But yeah, now you're left wondering, so, wait, did he kill his wife earlier? Was that part of the deal?

Carrie Poppy: Right, right, right, yes. Right, yeah, or was that like, "I traded this—as a spirit, I somehow traded it. And the spirits knew that and took my wife."

Ross Blocher: So, I think it's all kind of left up to you. This is definitely a moment of you now scratching your head going, "Waaait, okay—wait, what does this mean? What actually happened?" And I think a lot of it is left up to subjective speculation. This is what you're supposed to be left at the end of the movie pondering is, okay, what actually played out here? But the camera kind of pans away from Jack as, you know, all these dead bodies lie around him, and he's trying to mutter the (weakly) "Dreamer, here awake. Dreamer, here awake."

Carrie Poppy: To wake himself up.

Ross Blocher: And he hears police sirens in the background, because they're coming to arrest him, (chuckling) because all of this was on TV of him killing the whole crew and all of the visitors. Wild!

Carrie Poppy: Yeah! Did you like it?

Ross Blocher: Yeah. You know, I did. Respect for the intelligence behind it. And I enjoyed it even more the second time as I picked up some of these additional subtleties and saw where all the little TV glitches were happening.

Carrie Poppy: I liked it too.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. Like you were saying, a real labor of love.

Carrie Poppy: Definitely. I also think—okay, I think I'm 90% this world has to be in paranormal, but I leave 10% for I can imagine that the writer might be like, "Nuh-nuh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no! Actually—"

Ross Blocher: It was all his madness.

Carrie Poppy: I found a way that it can actually all not have supernatural elements. I feel like that's threaded in there, but didn't win me over. And more—

Ross Blocher: That would be a tall order for sure.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. But I don't know. I'm curious. I'm curious if we ever hear from the filmmakers whether they can see a route through this movie that doesn't require the paranormal.

Ross Blocher: I can certainly see why folks would have recommended it to us, because it does touch on sooo many of the themes that we've talked about in this podcast over the years, so.

Carrie Poppy: And clearly, clearly love for James Randi in this movie.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. Yes, even though in some ways the portrayal does a disservice to the memory of James Randi, you could tell it was done out of love. And obviously, we don't live in the world where all that stuff happens. There's a reason why you have to show it in film, because that's the only place you can produce it.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, true.

Ross Blocher: I feel like people get confused about that sometimes, because we'll go to lectures and stuff where people mention *The Matrix* and other films as if they're an example of what's real. And it's like, no, no, there's a reason that was a film.

Carrie Poppy: (Cackles.) Touché, yeah.

Ross Blocher: You see, films are manipulable. And all of you in the audience should be less so. Yeah, that was fun. And hopefully you enjoyed us completely spoiling that film. Or if you've already seen it or paused to see it, I hope you enjoyed our commentary on top of it, and it only enhanced the experience.

Carrie Poppy: And if you wrote it, let us know.

[01:35:00]

Because we want to hear from you.

Ross Blocher: Yes. Tip of the hat to the directors and writers, Cameron Cairnes and Colin Cairnes. Probably not related.

Carrie Poppy: Probably not. But you guys should look into it.

Ross Blocher: Clearly, this was their brainchild. So, thank you for this experience. I did enjoy the film. I did see the intelligence, and I think it deserved its 97% on Rotten Tomatoes.

Carrie Poppy: Well, speaking of movies with many title cards. I mentioned earlier in this episode the movie *Super Furball*. And I cannot let this go unremarked on. *Super Furball* is a film out of—Holland? The Netherlands? Uhh, somewhere around there—that Drew is in,

where he plays the head fish. It's a movie about a, um—uh—(laughs) a hamster I think that somehow becomes supernatural.

Ross Blocher: Oh, I've seen this poster! It's a 2018 film. “When a young girl acquires a secret superpower from her pet guinea pig, her ordinary life turns upside down. She decides to use her newfound powers to make a difference in the world.” I'll admit, just looking at this poster—which I think I've seen before—and reading that description, I would never, ever watch this film. But! Now that I know Drew's in it, I'm very excited to see this movie.

Carrie Poppy: (Laughs.) You should watch it. It's great. He is the head fish. And Drew has to play a fish with a Russian accent. It's just really wonderful.

Ross Blocher: Oh, this is all great.

Carrie Poppy: I can't remember if it actually had many title cards, or if I just recall that a lot of companies contributed to it. But similar situation.

Ross Blocher: I'm adding it to my watch list on Letterboxd, which I very aggressively watch these films to get that list down. I've mentioned this on the show before, but yeah. If any of you are big movie fans and want to follow me on Letterboxd, I log every film that I watch there. Which last year was, I think, 177 films. I watch a lot of movies.

Carrie Poppy: Wow! That's a lot of movies. Also, you mentioned the movie *1408*, is that what it's called?

Ross Blocher: Yes.

Carrie Poppy: I wanted to say—

Ross Blocher: Which is one of our conference rooms at work. I'm gonna think about it a little differently now.

Carrie Poppy: (Chuckles.) That movie—I didn't remember anything about it when you were describing it, except that I remember it has my favorite thing to be creeped out by in a horror movie. Which is someone looking in the mirror and their reflection being fucked up or not matching.

Ross Blocher: Oh, like *Mary Poppins*!

Carrie Poppy: That gives—oh, it gives me like immediate stomach drop feeling.

(Ross “wow”s.)

It's like (aggressive hyperventilating). Like, so immediately, yes.

Ross Blocher: Super effective. Wow. Okay!

Carrie Poppy: So, when people drop it into movies, I'm like, “(Panting.) Oh, you did it. Oh, you did it. Wow!”

(They laugh.)

Ross Blocher: Okay. Yeah, it's effective. That's interesting.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. It just does it to me. And finally, we said in the last episode that we would talk about the cost of my autism assessment, and then I think we forgot to.

So, it was very, very expensive. It was \$6,000 at UCLA. Which is—

Ross Blocher: Whew! Okay, so you were saying entry level is like \$2,000 for one of these assessments, but full bells and whistles, \$6,000. Okay.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. Well, it's where you go. Like, this is a research university that, you know, is just like really on top of its game.

Ross Blocher: And insurance tends not to cover such assessments.

Carrie Poppy: That's right. That's right. I mean, it's a terrible paywall situation. I couldn't—

(Ross agrees.)

I know. I'm in a very good position, and I would have had to wait a lot more time if I didn't have a financial gift to help with it. So, yeah, I don't blame anyone who doesn't seek a diagnosis with that kind of paywall. But, boy, I'm glad I did, since I was able to. Yeah.

Ross Blocher: Thanks for sharing your testimony.

Carrie Poppy: Totally!

Ross Blocher: And by the way, we've gotten such a response to that autism quotient episode. Thank you everybody for sharing your scores, pouring out your heart, your recent diagnoses that you've had yourself. There was such a heartfelt response to that.

Carrie Poppy: Sorry to everyone who emailed the contact form, because apparently I haven't been reading it for five months. But I'll look now. But I've gotten a lot of very sweet tweets as well, or Xes, as you might say.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. Thanks everybody. We appreciate that.

Alright. Well, that was it for this episode. I keep finding myself wanting to apologize for ruining the movie, but it's too late.

(Carrie laughs.)

At this point, you're here with us. So, I hope you enjoyed it. We're going on a two-week break. This just happens to be the time of the year where I shuffle off to Camp Omni for a week, and Carrie has a birthday coming up. Happy future birthday.

Carrie Poppy: Hell yeah! Hell yeah! Thank you. And then Ross has a birthday in August, but we'll be back by then, I guess.

Ross Blocher: Happy future birthday. We definitely will be back by then. So, just warning you all that we'll be off the air for a couple of weeks. Though I'm hoping to get out that *Communion* Communion Bonbon BonCon. So, if you're a supporter of the podcast, this is me putting it out there that I intend to release that in that same interstitial period. So, there we go. Now I'm committed!

Carrie Poppy: Thank you, Ross. That was fun to record. That was with John Hodgman.

Ross Blocher: It was fun, yeah. And we've got the video version. We've got the podcast version that will come out to our supporters. Speaking of which, if you want to support the show, MaximumFun.org/join.

Carrie Poppy: It's a forward slash.

Ross Blocher: You could probably still get away with a backward slash.

Carrie Poppy: You probably can. (Chuckles.)

[01:40:00]

Ross Blocher: And also, we should mention our theme music is by Brian Keith Dalton.

Carrie Poppy: This episode was edited by Ross Blocher.

Ross Blocher: Our administrative manager is Ian Kremer.

Carrie Poppy: And you could support this and all our investigations by going to MaximumFun.org/join. Join. You said that. (Laughs.)

Ross Blocher: Yeah, but it bears repeating. Also, leave us a positive review, tell a friend, and put your shopping cart back where you got it from. Just make the world a better place.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, yeah. If you have the time and the ability, go ahead and put it back.

Ross Blocher: Leave the world better than you found it when you can.

Carrie Poppy: When you can! We're not asking for a bunch here!

Ross Blocher: And use your turn signals. I'm just thinking of if I were rewriting the 10 commandments, I would easily replace the injunction against graven images with “put your shopping cart back”.

Carrie Poppy: Interesting. Yeah. Yours are both about four-wheeled vehicles making their way around you. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. That's your religion.

Ross Blocher: Do it with care and consideration for others. And remember!

Clip:

Music: Ominous orchestral music.

Speaker: You're meddling with things you don't understand.

Jack: Whoa! Now, as you know, here on *Night Owls*, we think it's very important to keep an open mind. Please welcome Dr. June Ross-Mitchell and Lily, the young subject of the book, *Conversations with the Devil*.

June: I really don't think it's a good idea, Jack. She's becoming more unpredictable.

Jack: (Whispering.) That's a good thing. That's why we still do live TV!

Ladies and gentlemen, please stay tuned for a live television first, as we attempt to commune with the devil.

(A long, vibrating low note.)

Music: “Oh No, Ross and Carrie! Theme Song” by Brian Keith Dalton. A jaunty, upbeat instrumental.

Promo:

(Fantastical tinkling and sparkle sounds.)

Narrator: (Echoing.) Somewhere, in an alternate universe where Hollywood is smarter.

(Harp chords fade into applause.)

Presenter: And the Emmy nominees for Outstanding Comedy Series are *Jetpackula*, *Airport Marriott*, *Throuple*, *Dear America*, *We've Seen You Naked*. And *Allah in the Family*.

(Applause fades into harp chords.)

Narrator: (Echoing.) In our stupid universe, you can't see any of these shows. But you can listen to them on *Dead Pilots Society*.

(Rock music fades in.)

The podcast that brings you hilarious comedy pilots that the networks and streamers bought but never made. Journey to the alternate television universe of *Dead Pilots Society* on [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org).

(Music fades out.)

Transition: Cheerful ukulele chord.

Speaker 1: Maximum Fun.

Speaker 2: A worker-owned network.

Speaker 3: Of artist owned shows.

Speaker 4: Supported—

Speaker 5: —directly—

Speaker 6: —by you!