

# QLH-S02E04M: Parasite

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

film, parasite, upper class, story, movie, south korean, storytelling, bombastic, find, feel, watch, genre, metaphor, theaters, people, cinematic, class, ho, director, system

## SPEAKERS

Jessi Chartier, Jen Myers

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**J** Jessi Chartier 00:04  
Welcome to Quiet Little Horrors. Here we talk about the films that creep under your skin and take up residence in the dark.

**J** Jen Myers 00:17  
Before we get started as a reminder, when we talk about movies, we need to talk about everything in the movie. So there will be spoilers involved. If you haven't seen the movie or want to refresh your memory before you listen, you can stop now and do that before coming back.

**J** Jessi Chartier 00:33  
Let's talk about parasite. Man, Jen, this movie won best picture? What was it last year? Year before?

**J** Jen Myers 00:39  
Yeah, no, it was last year. One of the rare occurrences of them getting this absolutely right.

**J** Jessi Chartier 00:49  
That's a great way to say it. Yeah, I love this film. I came to it. I mean, I say that about all of our films, right. But this film was introduced to me by a friend of mine. And I had not seen it before it won the Oscar. And of course, probably like true to most Americans. I had not seen it. And so I had to watch it. And I was blown away. What I really like about this particular movie is that one, I am definitely not a connoisseur of South Korean films, or South Korean horror, like I want

to put that right on the table. Like, I'm not going to pretend to be an aficionado about them, because I feel like they are such a beautiful, specific genre that I don't want to discredit and just be like, This is why I think it's great and try to sound like I know what I'm talking about. I'm just going to talk about why I personally liked it. I really liked it because it was I don't know how to explain it. It was just such a clean, direct story that had all of the right figurative language like all the tricks and trades of just really good storytelling. And it wasn't like over the top it wasn't tried to be it didn't try to be jam packed with like allusion and a lot of other things. It was just really clean. Like it was just this really clean story. I really liked that about it would talk to me about your experience with parasite.

**J** Jen Myers 02:19

Yeah, I did see this when this first came out in theaters in the US. And I'm not even exactly sure why I kind of ran for it. I hadn't been as kind of up on this director and and yeah, like you I'm certainly not an expert in South Korean film. I know a little bit had been kind of exploring it mostly because South Korea cinema is kind of killing it and has been for a while. And so I feel like if you like film, it's something to be aware of. And so I've been kind of like easing into it. I think it just happens that, you know, this film has some buzz around it, just kind of like in the art scene art film scene. And one of the nice things about having a teenager now is I can go and see movies, at least I could back you know, in the before times before the pandemic. So I remember going seen this almost great when it came out in theaters was just like the October the fall before. Before it won an Oscar. And then I and then it did. And like I said, I usually don't put a lot of credence in awards. But that was like, Oh, you got it right. This time. This actually is really good. And it did build that buzz. And I know when it hit it's on Hulu now. And I think when it was coming there, my daughter mentioned to me she's like, Oh, I heard about this, this movie parasite. It's pretty good. And I'm like, do you want to watch it? You know, like leaping on that. I was like, Oh, she's interested in and you know, a foreign art film. Let's let's watch it. And so we actually watched it together when I was on Hulu again, or again for me. And that was very exciting, because I don't try to push film on my daughter. But when your teenager is genuinely interested in something you love, you just leave on it. So so we did that. So yeah, no, it's a wonderful film. And like I said, I had been kind of trying to get into some South Korean films and things of that nature. And it just was like the perfect opportunity for that. And I'm really glad that it has had the success that it is. And it's been a really great doorway for so many people. And I think that a lot of it is due to what you were just describing, which is why I love it too is that it really works with metaphors so efficiently and in a way that serves the storytelling and serves the film and not as like a heavy handed message. I mean, it's got a pretty clear message in there. And I don't feel like it's that difficult to kind of figure out what it's saying metaphorically, but for some reason, it just never seems heavy handed. It just works. It's perfectly balanced. And it works on all those levels at once.

**J** Jessi Chartier 04:47

Yeah, I think this is for me it's really what I see it maybe it's one of the reasons I love this type. These quiet little horror genre like films like regardless of where they come from, is that you know so many traditional American horror films are gory, like their Gore films, they're there for. Like, they try to ramp up the shock value as you go. And I'm just not, that's just not my cup of tea. But when it comes to these stories that are just really crafted, well, I'm really interested in those the ones that don't hit you over the head with a two by four of a metaphor, but just are

very clear about using and leveraging that particular style of storytelling to be able to tell the story effectively, you know, it reminds me a lot of I don't even just so much good short story writing, like I think about, like Neil Gaiman and a lot of other short story writers, even Clive Barker, like some of the short stories that he writes are very just beautifully crafted stories, and are also very accessible, but also very elegant. I don't know how to explain it, it just feels very, very elegant. So for parasites, I remember when I watched this, I when I got about three fourths of the way through it, I'm like, This really doesn't fit any genre, like it's a drama. It's not even really a thriller, because there's no like, there's no death, the only thing that's potential is this, you know, the child's sense of seeing a ghost, which only pops up a few times. But it's not until the very end where the juxtaposition of these, of the metaphor between the class system is just really, that's where the everything just comes to a head, right? Like, for so long, there's been that just this tension, almost like, almost like Teutonic plates just kind of rubbing up against each other without each other, knowing that there's friction between them until it just explodes. And we neither side can handle it. Yeah, it's just, it's just so great. I love I love it. And, of course, it's just beautifully shot. The lighting is something I remember walking away from being Oh, my God, the lighting is just such a. It's such a character in of itself. Yeah, it was just beautiful.

**J** Jen Myers 07:14

I read somewhere that they built this house for the film, so that when it was designed and constructed, it was constructed so that they could film it in a way that highlighted all of these story elements. So it's not like they went out and found a house. They they built it so that, you know, you could have these angles, and these these ways of positioning the characters and everything like that was kind of baked into how they decided to tell the story. And I think that's really awesome. And it really shows. I mean, because I learned that after I had first seen it, and there was a thing in my mind of like, how did they find this place? That suited so and how did you know what did they add or anything like that? And then it turns out, they didn't really add anything, they created it all from scratch. And yeah, everything is is so perfectly balanced. I think elegance is a really good word for it. And I think balance is another word that pops up a lot for this. Where Yeah, all these elements are in play, and they never seem like too much, or that there's not enough to understand the the emotional or metaphorical thrust that's going on underneath.

**J** Jessi Chartier 08:25

Yeah, we should talk a little bit about being pretty concrete here in case people haven't necessarily seen it. If you haven't, you should really go watch it, you'll understand a lot of what we're saying. But the the kind of the premise and the the focal point of the movie is really around these two families. And they come from different upper class, lower class. And there's a desire from the lower class to, I don't know it to infiltrate, or to leverage the accessibility to the upper classes, luxuries, their, their halves, their their stuffs, and their lifestyle. And so this family finds ways to manipulate to get each of their family members in the employment of this upper class family. And it's interesting because on a surface level you think, okay, so the parasite is the this lower class family that's slowly infecting, and infiltrating this upper class family. But I don't really think that that's what it is. I think the class system itself is what is the parasite is that sense of like, it's going to eat you from the inside. It's not just one or the other, it's just going to eat you from the inside because even the upper class family is hollow in so

many ways, and is also lacking. I mean, there's implications that the mother is an opioid addict. And there's implications that the husband and wife aren't really in love there. It's more of like a typical contract if you will. But then you also have the man living in the shelter of the basement. Who is you know, he's his own thing. He's that's like a whole separate system. So it has there's just a lot a lot going on there.

**J** Jen Myers 10:13

Yeah, no, I think you make a good point though that "parasite" refers to different things kind of. I feel like you could watch the film and be like, oh, like the the meme of Leonardo DiCaprio pointing at the screen when something comes up. It's like, oh, that's a parasite that and but then that changes throughout the film like you're right. I think the first time you get the sense that the the impoverished family the Kim family who kind of stumbled into employments under deceptive deception, deceptive purposes, with the the other family, which is the park family, I believe they they are the parasite because they're kind of feeding off? Well, you know, money, literally, but they're also going to deceiving they've lied to get their ways in there. And then so you think that initially and then yes, you're it's revealed that there's actually been this dude that's been living inside a shelter in their house on detective and stealing food. So that's he's kind of technically a parasite on that. And then when it starts getting into more class space issues, you get the sense of like, oh, there's maybe I cuz I always I thought too, it's like, well, maybe that the parasite that they're talking about is the fact that the upper classes are is benefiting from the labor of the lower and not acknowledging it, and not understanding how that system works, and that they are dependent all these people. But then I think it comes to what you said in the end, where like, the entire system just destroys everybody. Basically, I think I remember reading a quote from the director, Bong Joon-ho, who said that, I think he was talking about why this has kind of become a success in different countries beyond South Korea, and things like that. And he I think, he said, We all live in the same country of capitalism. And that's essentially what I think it comes down to is that it's the system that's going to get all of us in the end.

**J** Jessi Chartier 11:59

And I that's what I love about these films, just like all of these films, like I think that for I was talking with my husband a couple couple months ago, and we were talking about how, oh, there's a new, the new Wonder Woman had just come out there was like, talk about different other superhero movies. And I remember thinking, I'm over, I'm over it, I'm over the superhero nonsense. I'm over these big, bombastic movies that are over the top. Like, I don't want a story about how amazing of a character you can be if you just have a heart of gold, and like all of these other things, like I want something that tells the reality of our world in a way that is subtle, and haunting, and pricks at you. Like the real world does. You know, like, that's one of the things I love about Stephen King's writings is like, you know, he says the most terrifying things are the most domestic. And I think he was one that use the example of like, if you think you're alone, like for example, you're sitting at home alone, and suddenly you think you're home alone, but you hear a cough. He's, you know, the just like, the most domestic things, and the most ordinary pedestrian things are the things that can be the most terrifying because of that, because they're ever present. But they're off. You know, and I think that this movie does a really, the parasite does a really nice job of that.

**J** Jen Myers 13:33

Yeah, no, I agree with you. I think it's actually something that the director is really good at. Like I mentioned Bong Joon-ho, who I think has, he's, I think he's really smart about film, and really, obviously talented and skilled. And I think that he has managed to, you know, create a style out of having really like real things in in his film that have that touch of truth, and that that touch of humanity that really make make it resonate, but he doesn't in a very cinematic way. And I you know, and I don't necessarily mean that, like you said, like a overly bombastic way, but his films are very full. And they're very, like capital F films in the best way. I feel like I feel maybe parasite less than some of his other films, I feel like Snowpiercer and The Host, are all are a little bit more of that, where they're there. They've he's got lots of genres going on, he understands how to use them all and kind of weave them together. Like you mentioned. Parasite, I think is still an example of this, because it kind of crosses genre boundaries in a lot of ways. And it weaves in lots of different types of storytelling, and it doesn't do exactly what you think it's going to do. So he's got a lot of balls in the air at one time, I think, but he knows exactly what he's doing. And so I think that that's why he's been able to have the popular success that he has, because I think he's figured out how to make real films in a cinematic way. And that really gets to people

**J** Jessi Chartier 15:01

is just so such a smart business move to?

**J** Jen Myers 15:05

Yeah, I don't think that's probably what he was thinking about it. But yeah, it's, it's, it's, it's good, he's really great. I will say from what I've just to throw in a little bit on terms of like getting deeper into South Korean film, I will say that I feel like he's a great entrance point for anybody who maybe saw a parasite and wants to see more of what he's done. I think Snowpiercer is on Netflix, or it was at one point, his Okja, I think is on is on Netflix. His films are very accessible, but also very, very good. I hate to say like, accessible, like it's a bad word, but I feel like sometimes it gets treated that way. So I want to let you know, if you think of accessible of like, he doesn't dumb things down. But I think it's really easy to to get into his stories and some of his earlier work. I'm a real big fan of his his first film Memories of Murder, which is really hard to find right now. But I do think Criterion's gonna be releasing it soon. So and that's the story. It stars the same Song Kang Ho from Parasite, who is a police detective who's trying to find the serial killer who's been operating for for years and years. And it's just kind of this really low key story of these, these cops hunting the serial killer and what it makes them you know, think and feel it. It's it's kind of funny at times and also very melancholy at times. It's really, really good. And so I highly recommend anybody who wants to kind of dig in deeper is find a way to see that.

**J** Jessi Chartier 16:40

That's awesome. Well, I definitely think for those of you who have seen parasite and are listening to this, make sure to check out our next episode because we're talking about the wailing, which is, I don't feel like it's quite as well known as the parasite know, or as, excuse

me, parasite. But it is a different South Korean director and also a really, really good film. And so I think we're going to move into that at some point in time, so make sure to tune into our next episode for that. Jen, if people want to learn more about us, where can they find us?

 Jen Myers 17:15

We have a website at [quietlittlehorror.com](https://quietlittlehorror.com) and that has links to where you can find us on all the podcast services. You can also find us on Twitter at [quiethorror](https://twitter.com/quiethorror) and on Instagram at [quietlittlehorror](https://www.instagram.com/quietlittlehorror). And you can also send us email if you have some suggestions for future films or any feedback or comments and you can reach us at [hello@quietlittlehorror.com](mailto:hello@quietlittlehorror.com).

 Jessi Chartier 17:40

Awesome. Thanks for tuning in everyone and make sure you check out our next episode where we dive into *The Wailing*