

QLH-S3E6M: The Changeling

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SPEAKERS

Jessi Chartier, Jen Myers

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. Let's talk about The Changeling

J Jen Myers 00:20

We talk about movies. So we're going to talk about parts of movies that may be spoilers. If that doesn't bother you, you can keep on listening. Or you can hit the pause button and go watch the films that we're talking about before you continue here. Consider yourself warned.

J Jessi Chartier 00:37

After the death of his wife and daughter in a car crash, a music professor staying at a long vacant Seattle mansion is dragged into a decades old mystery by an inexplicable presence in the mansions attic. Man, I wanted this one to be so much better than it was.

J Jen Myers 00:56

Yeah, it's. So I feel like this is one of the classics more or less of horror film. Like I remember seeing this being mentioned a lot in you know, necessary horror movies to watch. You know, it's a it's like a classic of the genre. I feel like at least most people talk about it. When I watched it, though, I had the same opinion where I thought that there were some things introduced in it that didn't really pay off, at least as much as I would like them to.

J Jessi Chartier 01:29

I agree. So if you're gonna watch this mini, this, the story is very straightforward. The music professor loses his wife and daughter in a car crash moves to Seattle, you actually think he was

a composer, and then becomes a professor, because he needs to take care of himself and kind of reset ends up moving to Seattle to become a professor at the University. rents a house needs a house big enough for a music room, etc. So he ends up renting this house. And then he starts encountering, basically ghosts, who are trying to use him to solve the murder of this boy in the house. And that's it. Like that's the storyline. It's real straightforward. And I, the beginning, Jen and I were talking just before we started recording here, but like, The opening was so emotionally raw, like, it was hard, it was rough. And then it's like, they never circle back to it. They're just like, Oh, you're grieving. So that's why this spirit can reach out to you because you're grieving. Like that. Was it? I was like, really?

J Jen Myers 02:46

Yeah, I and one of the things I mentioned to you earlier is that I had seen this like, I don't know, it's been in like, a couple years. And then I just watched rewatched it before this podcast. And in my mind, I had it set more as I had given that kind of potential subtext, more space in my mind. So I rewatched it and I was like, Oh, they really don't push that as much as I had kind of thought that they did, because I guess that's what I wanted them to do. Right? Like the the first like, what, 15 minutes of this film, and it is the car crash that the wife and child dies and is like, horrific and such a freak accident. It's really shocking. You know, it just the film opens this way. And it's not just like a standard crash. There's like, Oh, isn't there like a semi truck involved? And yeah, it goes totally out of the way. And it's all just so weird. And he's making a call on the phone booth as it happens. So he's like, oh, you know, separated from them. But seeing everything. And it's, it's really shocking, really horrific. And yeah, and I do think that there is a very, very, very subtle subtext in the film, as like you said, there's idea He's grieving, he's more open to things. I wanted it to be a little bit more of a maybe there's just me reading into it. But I was also thinking there was more of a he was spurred to solve the mystery of what happened to this little boy who had lived in the house the the spirit that was haunting it, because it was a way for him to maybe kind of exercise his demons around what happened to his family, and that there was almost a kind of obsession driving him to do that. And I feel like you could read that into this but as like I said, I don't watch this movie the second time. I realize you have to read that into it because the film doesn't really make it. Like I said, I don't even know if the film makes it a proper subtext much less a text.

J Jessi Chartier 04:47

I don't think they do. I don't think they do because I think that the like you're talking about the forced subtext is kind of this idea that he has not put to rest his own grief and really has is not willing to let go of his wife and child being dead. But that is never indicated in the film like theirs, which would have created such a beautiful character arc for this protagonist. And I just don't feel like there's even a character arc. He's just a detective. And he doesn't grow from it. He doesn't, because there's nothing to grow from like he's not He starts out yes, in a state of a loss. But he, the character, the language, the dialogue, nothing is there about him being stuck in that grief, there's nothing that indicates that he is on able to properly put to rest the memories, or not the memories, but the the desire to have someone alive, right. I don't know how to phrase that, but just not willing to let them go. And so this just becomes like a straight up murder mystery. And it was we could have been so much more.

J Jen Myers 06:10

Yeah, I think that the thing is that they started out with that emotion, emotional, shocking scene. And I feel like if that hadn't been in there, I wouldn't have created any sort of expectations for seeing more of that sort of thing, or at least like a fallout of that. And I'd maybe the other thing in this is, I feel like I do need to acknowledge that modern horror films, I think, lean much more into grief. And I mean, we have talked about many films that have been made fairly recently that do make it very explicit that there are emotional horrors going on underneath whatever the plotline is. So I think that maybe we are also more primed to expect that sort of thing. But this is a bit of an older movie. And for whatever reason, they just didn't carry through with what the maybe we got introduced in the themes there. We were talking about this earlier, and I called it Chekhov's emotional gun, where it's like they introduced a gun in the form of emotional trauma, but it never actually fires throughout the film. They just like forget about it.

J Jessi Chartier 07:22

Yep. Yep. I just, it leaves it very limp. Like, it's just it's, it's a it's a straightforward story, like they could have cut that entire exposition, and it would have been the same story.

J Jen Myers 07:33

And I almost would have liked that better, right? Because then you wouldn't have you know, expectation setup, it just would it because it is a, I think, an effective. And I found frightening, haunted house ghost detective story. And that could be that could that can be totally great. And, you know, I think that some of the things that they have in there that when the wheelchairs going down, the stairs are chasing that one woman character. That's pretty scary. I like it. And I can get into a paranormal detective story. But you're right, it feels a little bit of a letdown when you they hinted at some maybe deeper themes and the beginning. So I think yeah, what's really wrong is that they try I guess, tried to do both, or I almost wonder if they started out with a little bit more emotional resonance. At some point, somebody higher up was like, No, people don't really care about that. Just make it a standard murder mystery story.

J Jessi Chartier 08:34

Yeah, exactly. Well, and we'd hoped for so much more, because this month's theme is about loss of a child. And so we're like, oh, the changeling is like a classic, we should watch that one because he loses a child and Nullah. And it's like, oh, so I think that we actually found more, or at least I found more in our main episode, which is a dark song, which we'll talk about in the next full release. But I found so much more complexity and texture around that theme there than I did in the changeling. And it was really disappointing. I was really disappointed. And maybe we just picked the wrong movie for this theme. And, you know, if, listeners if you have better suggestions for something about loss of a child, let us know. Yeah.

J Jen Myers 09:22

And like I said, it's funny because I had seen this film, and these kind of emotional themes. It

was what stuck in my head. And it was until I watched it for a second time, they realized that the themes never really paid off. But that was the part that resonated with me. So that was the part that I remembered the most. And then I kind of had forgotten the fact that it didn't really carry those through as much as I would like it to. So I don't know, I feel like those themes are still underneath there. They just didn't really pay off in this film. But in a way, maybe it was still a good place to start with this month's discussion about that topic because we were able to talk about, like, what doesn't work? Yeah. And you know, what it also is interesting, I think is going to be an interesting thing to contrast is that this film, the main character is a father, a man. And then the next one we're gonna talk about is a mother. And I'm wondering if there are any kind of especially because *The Changeling* was made earlier, if there's any sort of outdated gender roles in there that lead to whether one is more emotional than the other?

J Jessi Chartier 10:25

Yeah, that's, that's a really good point, although, and maybe that maybe we can explore that a little bit. Because like, if I think about, we talk about the death of the child, and we focused on this discussion specifically about the death of the daughter, but there is another child death in the film, there is the death of the boy. And her father is the one who kills him and drowns him, right. And so, but that's not a grief. That's not it's just greed, like he kills the boy in order to replace him with an basically with, he replaces him literally, he goes out and finds an orphan and replaces them in order to maintain the inheritance that was given to him. So it's like, I don't know, it's just it's a it's an odd movie.

J Jen Myers 11:13


I mean, I guess there is. Yeah, there is, like I said, I feel like there's, at some point, somebody thought about the stuff that's under the surface, but it's so deep under the surface, you really have to work at it. Because like, there is an issue of guilt there. Right? I mean, maybe the father, the original father, that killed the kid wasn't feeling all that guilty, but there is kind of an inherited guilt, because then the the orphan that was put into that son's place grows up to be what was he he's a politician, right, or somebody with a lot of influence. And, you know, it has to deal with I don't think he knew that that's what happened even know that. I mean, he would have had to know something I don't really know, it's not really clear. He seems surprised by that. Or he seems like he needs to deal with the revelation that the man who raised him killed, the boy whose place he took something like that. So there's definitely like these themes of fatherly guilt, inherited guilt, inherited grief, and things like that. But so it's like, it's all there under the surface, but none of it is really teased out to be directly relevant to our main character. And I guess that's what's frustrating about it, because you like you can see it all there. But it's so oblique and so vague that it doesn't become a very effective part of the story.

J Jessi Chartier 12:38

Right? I agree. Yeah, it just, it just falls flat. It just falls flat. It does not fall flat though, in our next film. And I really excited to talk about that, because that one is so rich in and what it hyper focuses on as a very particular point in the grieving process, especially as a parent, I'm very excited with the name of that is, oh, *A Dark Song*.

 Jen Myers 13:02

I can't remember if you said it earlier or not.

 Jessi Chartier 13:04

I think I did. I think I made it regardless, it's A Dark Song. And we're going to talk much more about this parental grief and death of a child in the next one, we're really going to tear that one apart. So very excited to talk about the next one. So make sure you tune in next time. Thank you for joining us for the mini and we will see you in the next podcast.

 Jen Myers 13:26

Bye