Wilber Amaya-Maurisio

Professor Eric

06/20/2025

SOC215

Squid Game Notes

**Episode 1:**

The main character signed a contract binding him to three men. If he does not pay them within a month, they will take his kidneys.

During the ddakji game, he forgets about the money prize after winning. He is so used to being slapped that he expects to get slapped again instead of claiming the reward.

His daughter is about to move to the United States. To gain custody, he must prove financial stability, which motivates his desperation.

Players are shown bodycam footage of themselves being slapped during the ddakji game, reinforcing the severity of their debt and desperation.

A mysterious man watches the “Red Light, Green Light” game while drinking and listening to jazz, suggesting a sociological dynamic of detachment and elite voyeurism.

**Episode 2:**

During the vote to end the game under Clause 3, the display of prize money influences the players’ decisions. Each player's life is revealed to be worth one million won.

Even the man who attended Seoul National University and the woman who initially begged to leave vote to continue the game because of financial desperation.

The game ends temporarily at this point.

Sang-woo receives multiple notifications from the police regarding the money he owes, bringing him back to his real-world burden.

Ali’s storyline highlights the exploitation of migrant workers and the lack of labor protection.

Most characters eventually choose to return to the game after facing the harsh realities of their outside lives.

**Episode 3:**

A detective defeats a staff member and searches his body, discovering that the man worked for law enforcement, suggesting internal corruption or surveillance.

All players return to the games.

Teams begin to form among the players.

The staff report return numbers to the boss, who orders surveillance on those who chose not to come back. This indicates control beyond the game itself.

A hierarchy is revealed among the staff: squares outrank triangles.

Even the staff live in poor conditions and are closely monitored, just like the players.

Classical music plays eerily during the games, adding a disturbing contrast to the violence.

Sang-woo figures out the next game but does not help his friend, potentially marking the start of betrayal.

One player (Player 111) receives secret notes, suggesting a corrupt internal network.

A losing player grabs a staff member’s gun in rebellion and commits suicide after discovering that the staff member is also trapped. The unmasked staff member is executed for breaking protocol.

**Episode 4:**

The guards run an illegal organ harvesting scheme with Player 111, showing how corruption thrives even in controlled systems. It reflects how institutions exploit the vulnerable for profit.

After food is deliberately withheld, chaos breaks out among the players. This engineered violence reveals how scarcity can push people to turn on each other, mirroring real-world class conflict.

Players start forming teams, showing how trust is built under pressure. These alliances often reflect shared social marginalization or survival instincts.

Power dynamics play out in group selection some people are excluded or used strategically, exposing sexism and status-based decisions.

In the Tug-of-War game, strategy and teamwork outperform brute strength. The older player's ideas show that knowledge and cooperation can challenge dominant assumptions about power.

The detective continues to spy on the staff, while the staff manipulate both the players and outcomes. Surveillance and control are central tools used to maintain order.

**Episode 5:**

A team with three women wins the tug-of-war game, proving that strategy and unity can outweigh physical strength, challenging gender stereotypes.

The bodies of dead players are mutilated, and their organs are sold to Chinese buyers, showing extreme exploitation and the commodification of human bodies.

A character experiences PTSD from a previous labor strike in which people died after being fired, reflecting the trauma linked to labor oppression.

The doctor clashes with corrupt staff, but he is not immediately eliminated due to the sensitive nature of the underground organ-harvesting scheme. Staff members even remove their masks, defying the rules.

The VIPs are introduced. We learn about their escape plan, which involves blowing up the facility.

It is revealed that corrupt staff committed further crimes against the deceased, including sexual abuse.

The Front Man reminds a staff member that the game is about fairness and giving people a second chance, despite its inherent brutality.

We see a luxurious record room with items such as a fox mask and paper documents.

Paper records date back to 1999 to 2000, suggesting the games have been taking place for decades in secret.

**Episode 6:**

The corrupt staff and doctor are publicly executed and hung as a warning to others, reinforcing strict control and fear.

The Front Man begins organizing the next game for the VIPs as if preparing for a major sporting event.

Women are once again excluded during team selections. The last unpicked player is a woman, showing gender-based exclusion.

Players are shocked to learn they must compete against their teammates. Some emotionally bond while others quickly strategize.

A North Korean player is asked if life is better in South Korea, but she remains silent, revealing complex issues around identity and displacement.

Players begin discussing what they would do with the prize money. Some express modest goals while others insist they should dream bigger, revealing the influence of societal expectations around success.

The elderly player suffers from dementia, forgetting the rules during the game and becoming vulnerable.

Ji-yeong sacrifices herself because she feels she has no purpose in life. This is an emotionally powerful moment that highlights existential despair.

**Episode 7:**

The VIPs, representing the elite, arrive and are revealed to be spectators of the games. A host oversees the entire operation.

The Front Man's role includes entertaining and satisfying the VIPs.

The VIPs prefer to watch the games in person, even though they have the option to view them through screens.

They bet on the players, treating them as disposable entertainment.

A "millionaire's row" exists with detailed information about each player, reflecting class disparity and voyeuristic control.

There is a striking contrast between the comfort of the VIPs and the suffering of the players.

One VIP says, “Show mercy to the miserables,” indicating a superficial or performative sympathy.

A VIP rests his feet on a woman, representing gender-based objectification and power imbalance.

Another VIP attempts to sexually exploit the detective in disguise, treating him like property.

The players are represented as chess knights on a model board, symbolizing how they are used as disposable pieces in a larger game controlled by the elite.

**Episode 8:**

The last remaining players are dressed formally for the final game. One player removes a bandage, revealing a wound, and continues preparing, symbolizing the normalization of pain.

The detective attempts to send out critical information but is pursued.

The players are given a gourmet dinner before the final game. This creates a stark contrast between the elegance of the setting and the violence to come.

Although dressed formally, the players still wear their numbered uniforms, and their facial wounds are visible, highlighting dehumanization beneath a facade of civility.

The dinner is designed to motivate them to perform well. The meal includes steak, fruits, and vegetables.

Once the meal is over, the classical music stops as the players are left with knives, signaling the return to violence.

A plot twist reveals that the Front Man is the detective's brother, showing betrayal and the complicity of institutions and family ties.

**Episode 9:**

We learn that Squid Game is a traditional Korean children’s game.

The VIPs observe the final match through a window as it rains, creating a visual contrast between their calm and the chaos of the game.

Sang-woo becomes a different person, focused only on survival and willing to murder others.

Player 456 also changes. He becomes emotionally numb and detached; his original spirit diminished after everything he has endured.

As the two men fight, the camera pans to the golden masks of the VIPs, symbolizing spectacle, power, and dehumanization.

The soundscape highlights the contrast between the peaceful space of the VIPs and the brutality of the final match.

Player 456 refuses to kill Sang-woo and instead tries to end the game. Sang-woo takes his own life, allowing Player 456 to win.

The Front Man explains that betting on people in the games is similar to betting on horses, revealing the players' objectification.

After returning home, Player 456 finds that his mother has died. Though he is now wealthy, he is emotionally broken.

A year later, he appears disheveled and isolated, asking for money despite having a large sum.

During a bank meeting, he is offered access to VIP opportunities.

He meets the old man again, who refers to a drunk man as trash. The old man reveals he created the games to relive joy from his childhood and escape boredom, suggesting that both rich and poor suffer from a lack of fulfillment.

In the final scene, a homeless man is helped by a stranger. This small act restores a bit of Player 456’s faith in humanity. We learn that the old man was the original game host all along.