

# The Devil's Library Episode 10.5 – “The Ladies of Grace Adieu”

[Intro Music]

Leraje

Welcome to a bonus edition of the Devil's Library. I am here, uh, with my good friend Ligeia.

Ligeia

Hello. Hail Satan.

Leraje

And I'm Leraje. Hail Satan. It's just the two of us because as is our usual custom, we are doing three short stories. Up until now, it's been, uh, Ligotti all the way. But we've decided to have a little bit of a change this time. And we are reading three short stories from, uh, Susanna Clarke, the author of Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell, from her short story collection, the Ladies of Grace. Adieu. Uh, so this is an interesting one because I have read the short story collection and, um, Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell before Ligeia. You've not read either of them, have you?

Ligeia

I have not. And I couldn't really fix this really quickly because that book is huge.

Leraje

Yeah, it's massive. Yeah.

Ligeia

Yeah. So basically I just jumped into this fresh minded. And this was the first time reading even these short stories for me.

Leraje

So, uh, I mean, we were talking about it a little bit when we were reading them and I. I think it's true that what I said it's not absolutely necessary to have read Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell. They're set in the same universe. But there's nothing from that novel that plays into the storylines of these short stories.

Ligeia

Yeah. Because I asked you, like, do you think I need to know more to understand some layers of this? Because I thought I understood but wasn't sure. Is there like a, uh, hidden hint or whatever? But you said no. And if there are, well, good enough for me like this, I will say what I was able to decipher without reading it and you can maybe compare how much more.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

It has told you or, you know, like, maybe I misunderstood something because of that, but that's also fine. So it's gonna be interesting.

Leraje

So you'll have a unique viewpoint, dear Listener, from someone who has read them before and someone who's never read them before. So the stories we chose, I chose Ladies of Grace Adieu, the title Short Story. Ligeia, what was your choice?

Ligeia

Yes. So the most difficult reading because I didn't know and because I didn't want to like Che and look through the book, I just chose something that sounded yummy to me. It's a Lickerish Hill. It sounds a little bit like liquorish.

Leraje

Yes, it does.

Ligeia

And I love it. I love it. So I was like, m. That would be yummy. And anyway, yeah, if you open this book, you will Understand why I think it's the only story in this book that is written in this way. And obviously, of course I'm gonna choose this one. And I struggled.

Leraje

It did make me grin a little bit to myself. When you chose that one. Uh, the third one we chose was. Oh, what was it? Frets.

Ligeia

Uh, the antics and frets.

Leraje

Antics and Frets. Um, so the first one was, uh, the. The title short story, which was the Ladies of Grace idea. What did you think of that?

Ligeia

Uh, yeah. First of all, I needed to understand that the whole collection is just eight stories. It's. They are very short, very like, cute sized. Because when I was buying the book, I thought the Ladies of Grace Adieu. I don't know if this was intentional, but it sounded a little bit like. A little bit like it's gonna be about some, like, nunnery or like nuns or something.

Leraje

Religious sisterhood.

Ligeia

Yes. Because the Grace Adieu, it sounded a little bit like that. So that surprised me that it's not. It is actually about. It's revisiting the, uh. The idea of like magicians. I can say that. I'm trying to say it in a way that doesn't spoil everything, but if I understand correctly, and this was in all three stories that I have read, this is about bringing the power back to women.

It is about how. Correct me if this is wrong in the, uh. Jonathan Strange and Mr. What was his name? Norrell. These two were like magicians, very famous and celebrated, obviously male characters. And they were like academic and studied. And it's like universities, libraries, you know, there are rules and, um. They put all these chains on the knowledge.

Like you need to study and you need to deserve to know more. And it was usually just the male world.

Leraje

Yeah. Ah, this is something I did mention to you, I think, uh, when we'd either finished reading them or something like that, that in Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell, the novel, the. The sort of magic had become the province solely of men. It was kind of like frowned upon for, uh. For women to practise magic.

Ligeia

Yeah, yeah. It was a little bit suspicious, like m. Witchcraft, but in the hands of. Of these well studied and like educated men, it was, uh, power. It was something to look up to, you know. And in this book, I think she was trying to argue that in a very polite and subtle and beautiful way.

The whole book is very polite, very calm and it's reading very nicely. I can compare that to Piranesi. Yeah, it did remind me of that book because it's written in this like, you can't even be angry. She is not. There is no big battles and fireworks of, you know, like, arguments. No, it's no drama.

It's set in.

Leraje  
It's a battle of will.

Ligeia  
It's very intellectual. Yes, I loved it.

Leraje  
So I think, um, the tone for, uh, what you what, what I agree with you is kind of like the. The theme of the book, of this reclamation of feminine power.

Ligeia  
Yes, reclamation, that's the word.

Leraje  
There's an introduction, uh, that I want to quote from. And it's this. *"Above all, remember this, that magic belongs as much to the heart as to the head. And everything which is done should be done from love or joy or righteous anger. And if we honour this principle, we shall discover that our magic is much greater than all the sum of all the spells that were ever taught.*

*Then magic is to us as flight is, to the birds, because then our magic comes from the dark and dreaming heart."* Whereas in the novel, uh, Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell, it's like you say, there's this kind of like arduous learning and rote recitation and they kind of like try and reduce it to scientific principles.

And these. This collection is saying that's not the only way to approach it, and possibly not even the best way to approach it.

Ligeia  
Oh, yeah, I would agree with Susanna. I really like that idea and how subtle she's around that argument.

Leraje  
Yeah.

Ligeia  
Or the reclamation of it. Because. Why not? Yeah, why not? So, yeah, that would be like, through. Through this book, this idea is present. Yes.

Leraje  
Oh, absolutely.

Ligeia  
I'm looking at you. I'm like, I only read three stories, but, um, I'm an expert.

Leraje  
I mean, read. I'd read the novel before I read the short stories. And, you know, you do get the sense, even reading the novel, that there must be a better way than the way that Mr. Norrell teaches Jonathan Strange magic. And this, this short story collection is kind of like the proof of that.

You know, it's kind of. It doesn't have to be, you know, sitting in a classroom learning things. It can be spontaneous and natural and it's very much. I think the three short stories are very much nature centric. You know, they all sort of like discuss things to do with nature. That's. That was my take on it very much.

Ligeia

And yeah, I will. To the point. But when you, when you now said this, do you think. Do you think that when she was writing that big book, she already knew she's going to. She's going to come back?

Leraje

I'm sure, you know, that know it, but I'm. I'm sure of it. Yeah. Yeah.

Ligeia

That is interesting because. Because I was thinking like, was it because of like what readers were saying about that book and she got the idea or she was already planning and this was the whole. I don't know why that is. That is my question. I don't know how you were supposed to know.

Leraje

Well, I think, I don't. I don't think either of us can know because we don't know her. But.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Leraje

She's always struck me as an author. Ah. Who kind of like plans ahead and has things in her mind even if they're not fully concretely realised.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

So I would imagine that I can imagine her sitting, writing Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell. and thinking, God, these stuffy two men that I've created. I really have got to have some kind of like antidote to this.

Ligeia

Yeah. Maybe she needed to do this because of herself.

Leraje

Maybe so. Or maybe it was always. Or maybe this was always the plan, you know, it was always to sort of like draw this comparison.

Ligeia

This is interesting. Yeah.

Leraje

And um, in the, in the novel and it's been, I have to admit, it's been a very long time since I've read the novel.

Ligeia

Oh.

Leraje

I'm sure this acknowledgment of this idea that there are better ways to do it than the rest sort of like clattering based scientific methodology that Mr. Norrell tries um, to impress on Jonathan Strange. What did you. I was kind of like curious as having read the book, the novel. What did you make of the Jonathan Strange character as he appeared in Ladies of Greece that year?

Ligeia

Yeah, he was a little bit pompous and rigid in his thinking and righteous and entitled. You know, the attitude was very entitled. And I think he was very comfortable in thinking. Everybody is seeing it that way. And this is like given like the world acknowledged that these magic powers belonged to people like him or him especially.

And they will proceed accordingly. And it was quite a surprise to find himself in a new situation. Very unexpected. I loved how these. Can we like, can I. I don't like spoilers. Right. Like there are these three ladies. She. Clark. She took this academic. Rigid. Rigidity. Is that a word? I don't think these guys and people like these guys.

Because it's a metaphor. Obviously there are people like this who has the power all over other people. And I don't want to go into politics, but. Yes. And how surprising it is if just very like innocent looking, not well known. Three ladies who spend time in their kitchens and gardens and on their little forest walks.

And nobody thinks anything about that. It's just like, oh, these ladies. How surprising how much power they might have.

Leraje

Yeah, I mean, I think that's true. Uh, I think. I do think you're right. I agree with you. This. This idea that not only is it a kind of, like, reclamation of feminine power, it's also a reclamation of the power that somebody from what Jonathan Strange would consider a lower class of society.

Ligeia

Yeah, that too. Yeah. And the, uh, weak, weaker gender, obviously. Wow.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

You know, like, I love it so much. And it's so, you know, at this. At this moment. But it's not just at this moment, but I am here now, at this moment in this world. And it does speak to, uh, so many things that are happening. I really was smiling, like, now. I couldn't stop, like, now.

Leraje

Working class have power too. Yeah.

Ligeia

Yes. Yes. You pompous little freak.

Leraje

You can say fuckwit if you want, because he is a pompous little fuckwit. I mean, they both are, really.

Ligeia

Yes.

Leraje

I mean, Jonathan Strange is not as bad as Mr. Norrell, but he's Mr. Norrell. He is pretty bad.

Ligeia

Goodness. Yes. They really needed this lesson.

Leraje

They very much did.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

And the bit I particularly liked was the kind, uh. In that story was the sort of like. I mean, you said earlier there were no kind of. There was no big fights. There was no arguments. And that's true, there wasn't. But there was this very

polite conversation at the end about, which was basically them, the three ladies, saying, don't fuck with us or we will fuck you up.

Ligeia

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Girl power. I loved it so much, you know, and it was provoked by centuries of just, like, pushing them around. And I don't think if these guys were not so, uh, confident, as I said, and would be just, like, walking around expecting everybody to worship their powers, they could have just walked away, but they kept poking these ladies and, uh, everybody.

So, I mean, that speaks to me as well, because as a Satanist, I don't provoke. I don't like violence. But also, if somebody doesn't let you be. And they just keep pushing you around, pushing you to the corner, telling you, you are lesser than whatever, I'm gonna freaking fight. And also, they might be surprised.

We are legion.

Leraje

We are. There's a lot more of us than there are of them. So from. From the Three Ladies of Grace, Adieu in Lickerish Hill, we have a slightly different setup. It's one person.

Ligeia

One. One young lady, one woman.

Leraje

So I'm not going to say any more, but, uh. And I know, and I'm really sorry that it made me laugh when you chose that.

Ligeia

No, no, please don't be, don't be. No, you're my friend. You can laugh. I know you, you. I would, I laughed, actually, because I was like, this can't be true. I chose this story and it's written in. What, what did you say?

Leraje

I think it's kind of like it's written phonetically, uh, in kind of like an, an old, sort of, like, dialect of Suffolk. How the people of Suffolk used to talk.

Ligeia

Did you just say phonetically? Because it's not phonetically. According to my.

Leraje

Phonetically.

Ligeia

Come on.

Leraje

It's kind of like, um. So I'm trying to think of an example. So the word fairy, for example, would be spelled with an I and E at the end rather than a Y.

Ligeia

That was the easy one because I knew it's a piece of. I have the book, but I, I'm not gonna, I'm not gonna do that to anybody listening. But it was, it was challenging. Freaking hell at the beginning. I, I, I'm sorry. I just thought it's gonna be like, the first paragraph and then he'll stop.

Oh, it's the whole story.

Leraje

I think it's one of the.

Ligeia

Fuck me.

Leraje

It's, it's, to my mind, it's one of the most, um, uh, it's one of the funniest stories in the book. It's written very humorously.

Ligeia

I'm really happy I read it. I'm just saying, like, what are the odds I would choose this one? Well, obviously, that's just me.

Leraje

I mean, all sort of, like, jokes aside, was it a bit of a battle getting through it?

Ligeia

I mean, I just.

Leraje

In terms of the way that the words were.

Ligeia

When I realised it's gonna be the whole, whole story, I had to put it down because I, I knew I need to focus on that, so I needed to postpone it like two hours later when I knew I'm gonna have the time and understand properly every single word. Because it's not the typical English that I read as a, you know, is not.

I'm not a native speaker, so I don't know. The, uh. Is this Old English or does it still exist somewhere? I don't know.

Leraje

I mean, it's, it's a representation. I think if Susanna Clarke had actually written it in sort of like, Middle English, that would be typical of Suffolk in the 15th 16th century, then it would be almost sort of like indecipherable. To both you and me.

Ligeia

Ah.

Leraje

Oh yeah.

Ligeia

Okay.

Leraje

But she's, she's kind of like translated it a little bit. Yeah.

Ligeia

Oh, uh, thank God. Oh, thanks Satan. I don't know. Well, it was a little challenging, but I, I didn't hate brought something to that story that actually made it more fun.

Leraje

It felt to me like a fairy tale. Like literally an old fashioned or even something that Hans Christian Andersen might have written.

Ligeia

Yes, the Brother Grimm or something really like that, that oral tradition or you know, the folk lore. It was there. So I, I absolutely forgive her for putting me through this and I was very proud. I understood. Well, I think so. Lickerish Hill. Yeah. So what do you think? What is this story telling us?

Leraje

Well, I guess the most obvious thing is that it's quite clearly a take on the old Rumpelstiltskin story. But I again think it's a tale about misogyny, uh, of a slightly different and possibly more extreme sort than the Ladies of Grace. Adieu. And again, class. And a kind of like acknowledgement that some people, although they might not appear to be on the surface intellectual, are um, not stupid and are quite smart.

Because it is no mean trick learning the real name of a fairy. And yet here's this woman imprisoned, uh, who managed to figure it out.

Ligeia

Yeah. From the prison.

Leraje

From the prison, yeah.

Ligeia

That is true. Mhm. That's a nice, nice point.

Leraje

I did the first time I read it. I very much enjoyed it and I think it possibly at the time was my favourite story. Just because I really enjoyed the main character's humour, uh, all the way through it as well.

Ligeia

Yes. Yeah, she was very strong.

Leraje

Uh, little snarky comments about the philosopher's hats and uh.

Ligeia

Yes. I don't know what those people were like. They were. That part I'm not sure what was. Because they were so nice to her. It was almost cringy to me. How they were like when, when she was already in that tower, whatever it was, that building, and they saw her and they were like sending her kisses.

And I'm like, there. Her husband is there. Hi. What is going on? Why are they sending kisses? And they were like, well, love you. I'm like, okay, interesting. This is a young girl. These are like little. I don't know, in my head. They were old.

Leraje

Uh, I think they were, yeah, they were old. They were definitely old.

Ligeia

It was a little bit like, what are you doing? It's nice to say hi, do you need help? But they were like sending kisses and nothing. I m. Don't know, it was funny. It was funny. She was safe in that tower.

Leraje

She was. She was safe in the sense that she was completely imprisoned. But, um, I think in terms of the story, they were there because poor her husband, he was a complete prick.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

Was feeling very sorry for himself. So in terms of the story, they were there to kind of like, cheer him up and book him up and sort of like entertain his mind with their, ah, philosophical ramblings, which were largely bullshit most of the time.

Ligeia

And the little rituals when, like, she. She actually a little bit manipulated them.

Leraje  
Totally manipulated them.

Ligeia  
Yes, yes. The, uh. Like the. The formula or whatever. Like the special spell that you need to say to contact a fairy, to summon a fairy. It was so funny how she was just repeating the words.

Leraje  
I mean, she basically manipulated them by appealing to their vanity. And what did you do then, dear philosophers? Oh, tell me what you did. You're so clever. And they go ahead and tell her, and she's just like, right, okay, got that, got that.

Ligeia  
Uh, and they never knew. She was like, okay, okay, there we go. We have that. Yes. Uh, actually, the story is about this. This woman and how the. The dark side. I think the. The darkest of that was how her mom actually put this horrible curse on her. And she only told her when it was almost too late.

I will be like, um, hello. Maybe we could have been getting ready for this moment of my life. Hi. It was like I wanted to kill her.

Leraje  
I've got you this fantastic marriage. And. Oh, but by the way, um, you've got to figure out the name of this fairy. Like, you've already got three guesses.

Ligeia  
Yeah. Or you need to be. What is the sentence I needed to Google what she was supposed to spun. What. How, uh, was it said? You see, she. She was supposed to spun the. Not fox.

Leraje  
Spun the fucks.

Ligeia  
Spun the flux. Spun the fucks.

Leraje  
She had no more fucks to give.

Ligeia  
I am spanning. Spun. Spinning. Sorry, guys. Okay, this is actually, uh. Sorry, Susanna. I am so sorry. I love this book. Okay. Okay. So span the flux.

Leraje  
Yeah.

Ligeia  
Yeah. I didn't know what flux was, so I had to Google.

Leraje  
I couldn't tell you what it is. Or. I mean, it. She just made it sound like it was a lot of work, whatever it was that needed doing.

Ligeia  
Yes, Well, I know the story in German and in my language. And, you know, these phrases are completely different. Even the name of the fairy was so different. I was actually really excited to see what the name is gonna be. So it was funny. So. So she's put into this situation, like, okay, you need to spun, spin, spun, whatever the flux.

How was it? Like for a month or something like that? Like certain amount of it. Because the husband was promised. Yeah, like this. You, if you like. This is a special girl. She has this special ability. And he was like, haha, I'm marrying her. And the mom was like, okay, that is perfect.

Because that's how it works. Yeah, obviously. So he didn't know. She, she was actually just a normal girl. So this is the whole plot of the story. She needed help. So she needed to summon a fairy, which she did. Was not that, not that hard. The fairy didn't come to those guys. Well, like they were still trying.

Leraje

They kind of like figured out the formula. But what they didn't figure out was that that formula was far too basic to call the queen of the fairies. I mean, don't call on Titania with like a random summoning spell because it's never going to work.

Ligeia

And with the questions, they had questions

Leraje

ready for 140 questions, something like that.

Ligeia

And they were so freaking ridiculous. It was like, do you get married? Like this is what you're gonna ask. Are you serious? I guess the fairy just. I couldn't be bothered replying to all these stupid questions they uh, were expecting.

Leraje

But I think that was kind of like um, the illustration of the difference between. Here's these four male elderly, well, you know, older philosophers again resorting to science and resorting to, and trying to quantify everything. And here's Miranda, uh, who just like instinctively gets to the heart of the matter instantly and just learns what it is she needs to know in order to, you know.

And there's this contrast between trying to get the wrong information in a difficult way and getting the right information in a quick and easy way in sort of like almost on a kind of like intuitive. Using your intelligence rather than intuitive.

Ligeia

I was going to say that like she put her heart into that spell. She was like, my life depends on this. And I think that was the, the actual like gemstone it needed like because, because the fairy came like, why are you crying for me?

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

So she was, she was like crying and these poor guys are probably still there under that tree, uh, trying to figure out like what can we do differently? I don't know.

Leraje

Did we say the name right.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

But maybe, I mean it occurred to me at the end of this second reading of it that the whole crying thing for the fairy, maybe that was kind of like just telling,

showing him what he, what he needed because he got this kind of like sense of false confidence about her abilities as well.

And he was like saying, haha, woman, you are mine and, uh, I'm gonna win this bargain easily. Uh, so he kind of, like, disregarded her at all as well.

Ligeia

Oh, yes. I don't know what his intentions were with her, but you could feel it's nothing good.

Leraje

Well, yeah. Uh, in the novel Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell, going off to the land of Faerie is not a good place to go to.

Ligeia

Is this maybe her thing? Like, the fairies are actually not nice, not cute, not beautiful. They are not positive.

Leraje

I think she wanted to reclaim fairies because it was it uh, kind of in sort of 17th, 18th century and 19th century, people like Arthur Conan Doyle kind of like. And before him, a few others, they sort of like, presented fairies as these kind of like angelic Tinkerbell type.

Ligeia

Romanticised.

Leraje

Yeah. And fairies in kind of like, uh, Gaelic and Celtic folklore were never like that. They were always these kind of morally ambiguous and not necessarily on your side type characters who were, uh, potentially dangerous. So I think what Susanna Clark was doing in both Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell and these short stories as well is to try and sort of like, reintroduce the idea that fairies are not these cute Tinkerbell type figures.

Ligeia

They're actually jumping and drinking.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

Like.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

Uh, droplets of water from leaves.

Leraje

Um, they are not cartoon versions of Marilyn Monroe in short skirts.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

You know, trying to satisfy Disney movie expectations. They're actually legitimately dangerous creatures.

Ligeia

I really like that. I didn't know what to expect, but this was really like. It grabbed me in the first story as well. Like the magic and. And the whole thing,

it's not like. It's not bad, but also it's not this beautiful purple, neon purple cauldron and little sparkles all around you. And like the.

The witch or the magician is just this beautiful girl. It can be, but it doesn't have to be. And that is like a whole new layer for me. Like, I love that so much.

Leraje

I think that's, uh. Yeah. I mean, these. These stories do present the idea of. The idea of magic being something that is natural and of the natural world and was kind of like the. That England got it from the Raven King and it was given to England as a kind of. As a gift to use, but not necessarily a science or a process to research.

Ligeia

Right.

Leraje

Yeah. It's. It's kind of presented that way, or at least.

Ligeia

And this. This Raven King, is this something that appears in the book?

Leraje

Do you know what I've been trying to rack my mind, to remember. I don't think he does. At least not in England anyway. Or in France.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Leraje

My. My specific recollection of the book, of the. Of the novel is hazy because it was a very long time ago that I read it and I really need to reread it because it is a fantastic novel. Oh, God, it's brilliant. But, God, it needs you. It's a commitment. It's a very dense.

Yeah.

Ligeia

Pages.

Leraje

Yeah. And there's. There's like footnotes, uh, to a lot of it at the bottom of the pages.

Ligeia

Did you read a footnote?

Leraje

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

Ligeia

I just wanted to say also, like, I think this was more about the first story that I just forgot to say how much I appreciated how Susanna brought like, the. The domestic magic into. Into that. That. That. What was the word I wanted to say when it was like the. To compare. And I'm not sure if the second story could also have that.

But in the second story, the Lickerish hill, I had a feeling, like she really implemented the whole landscape, the whole. Like, I could feel the hill. It's not like she didn't spend a lot of words, but I could. I could feel how rooted in nature it was, that whole story. Like, I don't know how she did it.

Leraje

No, because she describes things very kind of, like, physically. So, I mean, you can feel how sort of like, damp this place is and the woods are kind of like dripping with rain and it's all very moist. Sorry, I hate this word. Moist.

Ligeia  
Moist.

Leraje  
Uh, but. And it all feels that sort of like those characteristics of old England and that it feels ancient and it feels kind of like very lived in and like the fairies have always been there,

Ligeia  
uh, secret life and spells that are in. In the stones and in the soil and the green grass of England. Come on. That is something else. When I came here for the first time, I'm like, you guys at home, you are not gonna believe this is raining.

Leraje  
It does rain a lot here.

Ligeia  
It is beautiful and it's quite warm. The temperature doesn't go that far. You know, it's not crazy. So. Yeah. And that helps me with these, like, magic, you know, the grass and the soil and, like, what happens and the life and death. Everything is in. In there, in earth. So I really wanted to say that, like, that was really well done.

And it's. It's really. It's short. She doesn't really waste, uh, time, whatever. I. I love descriptions, but she doesn't waste time. She says the right thing, right amount of words.

Leraje  
M. I love the way she writes and I love the way she describes things. Um, there's a physicality and an immediacy to all of her descriptions that make it. You can appreciate it from a story point of view, but you can also appreciate it from a kind of, like, admiration of the prose that she writes.

Few points as well. All right, so that was Lickerish Hill. And, um, the third one we read was. I've forgotten the name already. Remind me.

Ligeia  
Antics and Frets. I had to Google both words, but actually there. There are actually. No, I'm lying. There is, uh, like a last sentence of this story is saying what. What that is. But then I also googled because I was not satisfied. So it says the antics off. Um, sorry. Not. Not. Please stay, everybody.

Antics are grotesque. Figures and frets are, uh, for formal. I need my eyes. Formal Renaissance devices. Both are used in 16th century embroidery.

Leraje  
What did you think of this story?

Ligeia  
Like, it starts in the middle of everything. I was not sure, like, where did we go? Because there is. There is the Mary Queen of Scots who is imprisoned and she is basically the plot is. She is trying to use some magic to plot against, uh, Elizabeth I. And do we. Do we say, like.

Yeah, the way I've mentioned embroidery. So she is trying to use magic sewn into. Into stuff. Right.

Leraje  
That she then presents to Elizabeth as gifts.

Ligeia

Yeah, yeah. And she is. She is believing or willing for, like, she, for example, she made this skirt with, I think it was like, uh, red carnations and she wanted her to get some. Some, uh, skin problems, something. I forgot what it was, or it would be some beast and she would want these beasts to, like, come alive and tear her to pieces.

So I don't know. I don't know what, what to think. Like, I understood this, but I'm, um, not really sure what. What. What does this story actually. Teaches. Teach or, uh. What. Like, what is the point?

Leraje

I agree with you. It's probably the most.

Ligeia

I know. I don't mean it in a bad way. Please.

Leraje

No, no.

Ligeia

It just didn't know.

Leraje

I do agree with you that it's. It's probably them. I don't know how to say this. It's probably the most obvious or straightforward or, um. And in the sense of there's no kind of, like, lore. There's no kind of sense of ancientness. There's no kind of sense that the other two stories and, um, um, literally the rest of most of the other stories also have as well.

It's essentially a retelling From a magical point of view of the exact chain of events that did happen in the real world between Mary and Elizabeth, like

Ligeia

the whole story happened.

Leraje

Um, yeah, I mean, Mary was in. Elizabeth had Mary imprisoned because she was. She was.

Ligeia

Yeah, I know that, but do we think, do we know if Mary actually believed in magic and she was trying to do so?

Leraje

No, I doubt it. But she definitely, in, in real life, she definitely did plot against Elizabeth.

Ligeia

Yeah, that I believe. Right. But it's not like she really, really tried to.

Leraje

No, not at all.

Ligeia

Poison her with some herbs or.

Leraje

No. Well, she might have tried to have her poisoned, but not through magical means, not through fabrics, not through sewing.

Ligeia

It might even be possible, you know, like if, uh, infuse the fabric with something that can, you know, somebody is allergic to, it can kill them, but that's not magic.

Leraje

I think the interesting thing for me about this story is that she was completely unsuccessful. She, a queen was completely unsuccessful. Whereas in the other two stories, someone, people of a, uh, kind of like so called lesser social status were very

Ligeia

successful and the magic worked.

Leraje

And might it be because they put the work in and Mary didn't put the work in to do it herself, she got someone else to do it for her.

Ligeia

Oh, right. Yeah, I. Oh, uh, my God. Uh, those moments. I forgot the name. Mrs. Shrewsbury.

Leraje

The Countess of Shrews.

Ligeia

Right.

Leraje

Was it Shrewsbury?

Ligeia

Shrewsbury. Even with the carnations, when, like the skirt arrived to Elizabeth, the whole work was completely messed up because Mrs. Shrewsbury didn't do her knots. I'm like, are you creating this or who is it? Like, what the fuck? I hate people like that, you know, like, no, it's your fault.

Leraje

Yeah. I mean, not only did she trust or, or not only she. Does she try and force someone else to do magic on her behalf without learning it herself. She also assumed that this person would be on her side and want to do harm to Elizabeth.

Ligeia

Yeah, she never questioned that. It was. Again, it was just given because I'm entitled. Hi. Who are you? You just, you are a robot here. I mean, it was a funny story. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed like the images created in my mind how she was um, sitting and like doing all this nonsensical work.

Leraje

She's a, she's a hard character. I think in the Ladies Of Grace Adieu, the three main characters are very likeable. Ms. M Tobias Miranda in Lickerish Hill is very likeable. Um, Mary is not likeable. Really?

Ligeia

Absolutely not. No, that is true. That's why it was a little bit different for me. Like, this story was different. It was interesting, but it didn't really. I don't know. Yeah, it is about magic. It's about women.

Leraje

I guess it is, but it's about. I think it's about. I think that distinction between the ladies of Great Adjure and Miranda from Lickerish Hill, who put the work in to learn what it was they were doing and why they were doing it. And, um. Um, the important thing being that they did it themselves.

Whereas Mary pawned the work off to a lesser someone of a lesser social status to do it for her.

Ligeia

Her maid or whatever.

Leraje

Maybe magic requires the person who wants the deed to happen to actually perform the magic themselves.

Ligeia

Personal approach and personal. You know, the. Like, Miranda, uh, like the cry of her soul. Like, oh, this is. And the ladies, um. I absolutely loved the Miss Tobias and how she was. Hold on. I actually. Hold on. If we still have a minute, I have something underlined, probably. I can't see. But.

So these are a few sentences. Again, I can't stop. So I don't know who this was thinking M. *"She had no money and must either marry Mr. Field or go and be a teacher in a school."* Okay, I. I was. I was crying. And now. Now, blah, blah, blah. Hall *"...was a picture in which womanliness and childishness were sweetly combined...Supposed her to have a character childishly naive and full of pleasant feminine submission in keeping with her face."* Like, what the. But no, this is. This is good. Hold, um, on. *"The governess, Ms. Tobias, was not much liked in the village. She was too tall, too fond of books, too grave and a curious thing - never smiled unless there was something to smile at."* I love her so much. She was too tall.

Leraje

The best thing about those descriptions are, uh. They, uh, are descriptions of how they are perceived by men.

Ligeia

Yes. She. She's too fond of books and never

Leraje

smiles unless there's something to actually smile at.

Ligeia

Like, she's a weirdo, basically.

Leraje

What's wrong with her? Apart from absolutely nothing.

Ligeia

Oh, my God. Like, yeah. So they were not expecting this to be okay. Like, this is not feminine. Come on, girl. Like, you are a little bit weird. And then the surprise came. Because she was studying her books, she knew what she was doing. She was not trying to sell it to anybody.

She was just like, okay, this is

Leraje

what I will do.

Ligeia

Owls. Yeah, the owls.

Leraje

The owls are literally not what they seem.

Ligeia

Oh, that was. That was good. That I really enjoyed. Yeah. Sorry for this, but, like, I almost forgot.

Leraje

But again, it's a good contrast how other people see the ladies and how Mary perceives herself. Because it's written mainly from Mary's point of view.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

And how she perceives herself almost in a. In a kind of like someone who is above the idea that sex or gender means anything. She sees herself solely as a regal person, as a. As a, uh, monarch. And um, um. That's the core of who she is. And she must therefore be obeyed at all times.

Ligeia

Yeah. Because like, who can question that it was given to her by God. So I mean, that's it. Right.

Leraje

Uh, but also at the same time, she's also. I mean, they would never be so coarse as to use the actual word. But she was a prisoner.

Ligeia

Yeah. Actually, you see, when we are talking about it, there is so much to talk about. And I thought, okay, this is a short one. I don't even know what to say. So my notes are like two sentences and like I have no idea and how much we are able to talk.

Leraje

It could have been a very different story, that one. It could have been a story about. She's. She's not a very likeable person, Mary. Uh, and I think that was probably true in real life as well. But if Susanna, uh, Clarke had chosen to. She could have made fictional Mary a more sympathetic character and she could have taken the story in the direction of she'd learned how to do magic for herself.

And then maybe her magic would have had more effect on Elizabeth.

Ligeia

Mm mhm. But would that be well perceived by the readers? Um,

Leraje

I don't know either. It's a good question.

Ligeia

This is. This is like a. Really. Especially for you who are from this country, this might be something quite sensitive. I don't know. It's not for me.

Leraje

I don't think so. I mean.

Ligeia

No, no.

Leraje

I mean, we're, you know, we're going back 500 years or so. So. Uh.

Ligeia

But there is sort of like a generalised.

Leraje

People are generally aware that, you know, the Tudor period was a pretty awful time and the Tudors were pretty awful people. And so, uh, uh, there is this kind of like romanticism. Romanticisation of the Scots at the time. The Stuarts.

Ligeia  
Mhm.

Leraje  
And it's very much true that they were subjugated by the English, but it's also true that their monarchs didn't see themselves as kin of the Scottish people. They saw themselves as kin to the English monarchy. You know, Mary was literally Elizabeth's sister in. In that respect. And she would have. Mary in real life would have had more feeling for Elizabeth than she would have done for the people that she ruled over. M. So it's difficult to say it.

Ligeia  
Yeah.

Leraje  
You're talking about the clash between how people feel about themselves as a nation of people and how people feel about the people who, uh, ruled over them at the time. I guess.

Ligeia  
I don't know. But that was one point I thought about. Like, how would it be perceived if. If. Actually, I don't know. Either the magic worked and she was able to hurt or kill Elizabeth. Maybe even like, if Elizabeth would learn that this is happening and she would use her magic against Mary.

Uh, I don't know, something.

Leraje  
I think that would have been a very interesting direction to go in, but possibly would have taken up more space than a short story. It would have been very interesting. That kind of like, silent battle of magic between two sisters.

Ligeia  
Yeah. And like, maybe sort of like, you know, how sometimes love and hate are very close to each other, so maybe there would be actually stop wanting to kill each other. But they will still be playing with that idea. But that would be like love, almost like a little.

Leraje  
Yeah. Uh.

Ligeia  
Where am I going with this? My silly brain.

Leraje  
No, no, it's a good point. And I think it again comes down to how the Tudors and the Stuarts and literally all monarchs view familial. Familial relationships versus a kind of like, anointed by God. It's true. You know, in real life, Mary was, uh. Sorry. Elizabeth was horrified when Mary died. Um, and she was shocked that, you know, she was responsible for the death not of her sister, but of, um, a monarch.

So she was upset. She was horrified that she'd killed a fellow monarch, not a family member. You know, it's kind of. It's this really weird disconnect between how they viewed who they were as people and how they viewed who they were in terms of their, uh, station in life.

Ligeia  
Like, what is the priority of the thought and of the status? It's not the status of a family member. It's a status of the same social position.

Leraje  
It could have. It's a short story that could have gone in a different way.

Ligeia

Yeah. But maybe this is. This is actually very good because now I can create these stories in my head. Yeah, she. She did. She did perfectly. Ending it as it is. Because I can now. Yeah, I can do that. Stop me.

Leraje

I cannot. I cannot stop your imagination.

Ligeia

I am unstoppable.

Leraje

Absolutely. Are you tempted to read the rest of the stories?

Ligeia

Mhm. Very much.

Leraje

I think you'll enjoy them.

Ligeia

If we decide. Maybe we will.

Leraje

Yeah. Maybe we'll do three more.

Ligeia

You know, more recordings.

Leraje

Yep, absolutely.

Ligeia

You never know with us.

Leraje

So we do what we want when we want. Right. Okay. So that was our take on, um, Three Short stories from the Ladies of Grace Adieu by Susanna Clark. As ever, just our opinions. Yours may differ. Only have an opinion if you've actually read the stories. And I think both Ligeia and I would like to encourage you to read this collection.

Ligeia

Yes, absolutely. It's. It's very good. You will have a lot of new ideas to think about. It's very sweet. It's cute. It's also scary. Love it. Love her. Love her writing. Also, if you disagree with us, I will send an owl.

Leraje

And I will send some Liquorish.

Ligeia

You know my address.

Leraje

I do know your address. I'll post some Liquorish. Right. Okay. Um, so this has been a bonus thing. Uh, so our next one is going to be, um, the John Ward book, I guess.

Ligeia

Oh, yeah. The. The whole couple. The whole couple. The whole group.

Leraje

The whole group. Yeah. It'll be all four of us. Yeah. Not just Ligeia and I rambling on. Okay, so until next time, uh, I've been Leraje. Hail Satan.

Ligeia  
I'm Ligeia. Hail Satan.

[Outro music plays]