

The Devil's Library Episode 10 – “Play Nice”

[Intro Music]

Lithos

Hello and welcome to the Devil's Library. And with me this week I have Leraje.

Leraje

Hail Satan.

Lithos

I have Pike.

Pike

Hail Satan.

Lithos

And I have Ligeia.

Ligeia

Hail Satan.

Lithos

And I'm Lithos. Hail Satan. And this week we shall be discussing ah, book by Rachel Harrison called Play Nice, which is um, a take on the haunted house category. So one of the longest standing tropes in horror is the haunted house inhabited by malevolent spirit that generally attaches itself to a child. Uh, it's not the easiest task to take this trope and make something original of it.

And this book creates its own spin on the genre via a family dealing with its traumas in dysfunctional ways, petty sibling rivalries, and a main first person character whose biting sarcasm injects some dark humour into the whole story. Warning listener, there will be spoilers as there is also the question throughout the book as to whether this malignant entity is real or just some kind of trauma induced hallucination.

So maybe read the book first if you don't want us to piss on your literary enjoyment. Ah, quick summary. There's an estranged alcoholic mum dies and leaves the haunted house to her children who had assumed she had sold it long ago. There are three sisters, a father and his younger wife who have to deal with what to make of the situation.

The main character, Clio is the youngest of the siblings and the story is told from her perspective. There is also a book which surfaces, written by the mother purporting to be the true story of the house, which all other members of the family had been sworn to not read by the father.

Pike

Have any of you read any other chick lit horror? Because that's what this is.

Ligeia

Uh, I didn't, but I read one another book by this same author just before this one, just to know if this is her style or was this just one of. So now I know. And um. We will get there. We'll get there.

Pike

Okay.

Leraje

I'd uh, read a couple of short stories of hers in various random collections as these things pop up. But other than that, this is the first novel length work of hers that I've read.

Pike

Did any of you take longer than three days to read it?

Ligeia

Yes, I think so.

Lithos

Yep. I took my time. But I did read the last half in an afternoon.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Pike

I thought it was very fast paced. Maybe because I was on a plane for much of this.

Lithos

Oh no, no, you're not wrong, it was. And it's very conversational as well. There's a lot of dialogue and the dialogue is very good. A, uh, lot of Books fall down on the dialogue being unrealistic. People over explaining or using language that they don't. Wouldn't normally use. I thought the dialogue writing in this book was superb.

Pike

Yes, it was. It was very snappy. The whole I have forsaken my serums stuff like that. It was, um, really fun to read, I thought.

Leraje

Um, Yeah, I, I will admit that this is the first book that we've read collectively together that I've genuinely struggled with.

Ligeia

Oh, yeah, me too.

Pike

Get those claws out.

Leraje

I'll preface any remarks that I make by saying up front that I think she is clearly a very good writer. Um, there's no problem with pacing. There's no problem with her, uh, writing skills whatsoever. She's clearly a very good writer. Maybe it's my fault. You know, I will read something else by her, uh, because I don't want to give up on someone who's clearly a very talented author.

But this one just did not hit right for me at all. It was. I came away with it with lots of question marks about quite a lot of it. I didn't. I don't think I really understood what the point of it was.

Lithos

Entertainment.

Ligeia

It felt like a, uh, young adult book for adults because basically if we took the tiny little sex scenes out of the book, it would be completely a young adult for me. For me. Yeah.

Leraje

Um, I didn't think of it in that. In those terms, but I can see why, why you would think that. Uh, I think the bit of the... I'll start off by saying that

the thing that I enjoyed most about it was the book within the book segments. They were by far. Yeah, they were by far my favourite part.

Ligeia

I do like the idea. I didn't like the execution of it. It was.

Leraje

Oh, I really enjoyed that.

Ligeia

Disturbing. The. Finally I was getting a little bit excited about the plot or. Because this is supposed to be a horror book. Would you agree?

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

It was not. Apparently it was not scary at all. I. And when it was getting a little bit more like exciting or there was a little build up, there was another section of the book or it was. It was not working for me. Like exactly where she put those segments of the. The diary or whatever the book, it was always taking away that little tiny build up that I could have had.

Like, oh, God, okay, there we go again.

Leraje

I think the reason I really enjoyed the book within the book segment is because the moment. Alexandra is the only character that I had any empathy for whatsoever. She's the only one I actually quite liked. I thought the rest of them were pricks, to be honest with you. All of them.

Ligeia

Uh, especially Clio. I have another name for her.

Lithos

Well, clear is. I mean, we should explain that Clio is the youngest, um, arguably from the. What comes forth in the book, the uh, the most attractive of the sisters and also a successful influencer in the sort of beauty products.

Ligeia

So. Already? I'm sorry.

Lithos

Well, yeah, that, that does, you know, the, the uh, the concept of insta influence. So uh, immediately makes you go off of.

Ligeia

No, no, no, not that. You know what, you know what? That I'm told she's attractive. I don't want to be told. I want to create my own opinion. I don't like a book or a movie that is telling me who is or who isn't attractive because that is so subjective. I did not like to be told because immediately I was thinking I don't like her because I am being like, oh.

I'm supposed to be like, oh, she's in these little shorts and tiny. I don't care.

Lithos

I mean she does talk a lot. I mean, and that is in character. She does talk a lot about what she wears. But I think the attractiveness is. Comes out in, in the, in the sort of, um, the fights that she has with her sisters where they go, oh, well, you're the most beautiful one.

Of course, you know, she wrote it.

Ligeia

So I just felt like it's a little bit pushy to me. I would like more depth to, to the characters before I'm told what they look like, what they're wearing and nothing else. Because I can't really say anything else.

Leraje

I quite liked her at the start. I liked her more at the start than I did at the end. Put it that way.

Ligeia

Mhm. Okay, how about you guys who liked it? Go ahead. Because that is more important than.

Leraje

Yeah, we've moaned now for five solid minutes.

Ligeia

I am so sorry. I want to hear maybe you're gonna change my opinion on this book because I would really like to like it. Gonna shut up.

Pike

Well, I, I thought she was a very well written character. I mean she's shallow, narcissistic and egotistical. But um, her face, her expressions, she's very expressive, you know, blowing uh, raspberries and crossing uh, her heart and pulling uh, a face and all that. And she also, um, has a very, very modern, a very funny way of speaking.

So she, she does re. She does fall into that influencer stereotype, but also. But she's still interesting to. At least she was to me.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Lithos

Yeah, I found a Ah, quite. Quite a well written, very well written character. And yes, she comes across as shallow, but that's. I see that as deliberate. Right. She is very vain. She thinks she's the smartest in the family.

Leraje

She.

Lithos

She thinks she's the most successful. She does look down on other people in the family. That's her character. That's not the author. That's the author writing her character and writing it convincingly. To me, you know, writing this shallow, egotistical, really bitchy person who just fucking. Not just her friends, but she also upsets, um, people that she works with at one point.

Um, and in the end, you know, she gradually kind of becomes more of. To me, she became in the end more of a likeable character, uh, in that she actually had to own some of the shit that had gone on and her part in it.

Leraje

That's interesting because I was the other way around.

Ligeia

I don't think there was any consequence.

Leraje

No, I, I think I said. I said this to Pike, uh, because we had a bit of a chat about, uh. I know it was a very brief, sharp one.

Pike

Just a few words.

Ligeia
Betrayal.

Leraje
Yeah, I know.

Ligeia
Traitors.

Leraje
We're bad. It's my fault. I did it. I did it. Pike was there with her hands over her ears going, stop talking. And I just carried on. Um, but I felt her story was quite conservative, really. She started off as this kind of. When you strip everything else away, it's the story of a.

And, uh, I'm going to do air quotes here. Wild child who goes through a bad time and then at the end of it, she realises the only way she can be truly happy is if she gets a proper job and moves back home and marries the nice boy next door. I'm kind of convinced it's going to be a sequel and she's going to be a trad wife influencer in the next one.

Lithos
No, I didn't. I didn't see that at all. I did not see her, uh. That's not the way I read it. I didn't see her coming out of it in that way. I thought she just came out of it in the end. It was deliberately left kind of hanging in the air and vague.

As in they managed to sell the house.

Ligeia
Yeah, I agree with you.

Lithos
And you know, um, she's going, yeah, yeah. I think the last line was promise across my heart that I'm okay kind of thing. Um, and. But I don't. I think it was deliberately left up in the air for you to make your own mind up about it, which we've obviously done, uh, in our own ways.

Everyone's seen it differently. I'd think a sign of a good book if people come out of it with different ideas. That's my initial take.

Leraje
I think I just didn't get it in the whole book. I just. I think it's. It's my failing, not hers as a writer. I just didn't understand much about what it was trying to say.

Lithos
Well, it's not anyone's failing. If you don't like it, you don't like it. That's not failing.

Leraje
Well, that's weird because I kind of. She's. Like I said before, she's clearly not a bad writer. She's clearly a good writer and there was elements of it. I thought there was a nice vein of dark humour that ran most of the way through it. Particularly at the start, which I thought was really enjoyable.

Lithos
Oh, she had some killer, killer bitchy lines where I actually laughed out loud. It was. Yeah.

Leraje
I much preferred her at the start of the book than I did at the end.

Pike

This is gonna be a second episode that turns into a therapy session where a person, uh, who doesn't like the book is told that it's okay.

Leraje

I hate not liking books.

Lithos

Clear.

Leraje

Especially when the author is very talented, as she clearly is. It's just. It didn't particularly land for me this one that's. I think that, you know, there's a disconnect between what she was trying to say and what I was able to take from it.

Ligeia

I haven't found any redeeming qualities in this girl. I couldn't. Nothing. Clio, you know what? Yes. I think if this was a. Try to be uh, like a feminist book like she. She was acting in a way that some. Is a stereotypical bad man behaviour towards women. Women like just hanging around with one and sleeping with another and like, I don't give a.

I just need sex and whatever. She was acting like that with men. I don't think that's feminist. That's just being a. Whatever gender. I hated it. I hate when people are like that. I don't know why these guys were with her. Even if she was the most beautiful girl. She was a bitch to them.

I couldn't. I don't know how these men were so deserving of this. I did. Didn't get the explanation to that and I didn't like that because to me they were acting nicely to her and I didn't understand why she was like that. I couldn't. I don't like it.

Lithos

I Think in the end, you know, again, I'll come back to the thing. I don't think that is the sign of failure in an author. Plenty of authors have written books about, uh, abominable characters that have no redeeming features. And they're really good books. One of mine, which I listed on the website as one of my 10 reads, was the Death of Bonnie Munro by Nick Cage.

Yeah, uh, Cave. Sorry,

Pike

leave it in.

Lithos

By. By. By Nicholas. And, um, the. The guy in it, Bunny Monroe, is an absolute shitbag, awful father, terrible, uh, to women. He's, uh, he's got no redeeming features and he dies in the end. And you go, well, yeah, fuck you. And it's like, that is how it was written, you know. And yes, you need.

You need to have novels where the characters maybe don't have redeeming features. They are terrible characters. And I think it's a sign of kind of, um, ability in an author to be able to put themselves into the mindset of a really unpleasant character, an egotistical narcissist, as Clio obviously told her to stop.

Ligeia

Like, she was like that to everybody. To her sisters, like, in the family at work, she was just a selfish little brat. And, uh, it was not sounding like a real relationship with anybody because somebody would have told her already, like, listen, girl, we love you, but you need to change a little bit because this is like, absolutely, like, why are you like this constantly to everybody?

Lithos

Well, I think her sisters did tell us that, though.

Ligeia

What was Aston Austin. I will find the name.

Lithos

Yeah, Austin.

Ligeia

What did he do to her? Why was she like. I don't care.

Leraje

I don't know. Did he ever. Did he ever have an opinion through the course of that book? Because I don't remember him having one like, about anything.

Ligeia

I don't think that's how it works. And I. If it does work like this in the world, I am so sad because nobody, Nobody deserves to, to be treated that way. I'm sorry. Maybe I'm too sensitive around this. I don't know.

Lithos

Well, I think she was told by her sisters, her family, that, you know, her own father, that, you know, you, you are. Why are you behaving like this? Repeatedly this came up, you know, and it's. I, uh. You know, and again, the thing with Austin is because it's written from her perspective in the first person thing, yet, you know, you wouldn't know his opinion because that is the way she kind of regarded him as a useful person to help her out when she needed.

And, And Uh, you know, a shag

Ligeia

when she wanted one or when she needed a taxi. Daddy was good enough to take her somewhere or for lunch or bring money.

Lithos

Yeah, there was.

Ligeia

You just go home, Daddy. I don't need your opinion about anything.

Lithos

Just the thing about successful career and earning money. And then her sisters, uh, uh, saying, oh, yeah, well, the insurance, that was your dad, who's paying for it kind of thing.

Ligeia

And your phone and everything.

Pike

I would agree with Ligeia, uh, in that it wasn't a feminist book. Unless you take it as a sort of stereotype of feminism. Because I know New York Times said, uh, cold with a feminist novel, but it all just hinges. Its feminist quote unquote. Feminism hinges on, uh, that. The battle of, uh, the sexes.

So, you know, she'll say things like, oh, I can't believe how stupid men are, and other sexist stuff like that. And it's never really challenged. And it's all just seen as sort of, uh, sign of her liberation. Which is. Yeah, it's a very primitive idea of feminism, uh, that doesn't kind of fully understand that it's about gender equality or should be.

And also Roy. I mean, justice to Roy. What the hell happened?

Leraje

I know. What the fuck did he do wrong?

Ligeia

Did he not lose his head in the middle of the book? And then he was alive.

Pike

He was bleeding out of his eyes.

Lithos

He had his eyes gouged out. And then we went to hospital. And now he's retired is basically it. I mean, I guess you can still live with your eyes gouged out by a demon. And now we've given it away, folks. We've given it away. The demon is real.

Ligeia

Hold on. By the way, what do you guys think about this? Because that's not clear. The whole book is saying, like, is the demon real or is this sign of some, like, other problems? Like there's a lot of alcohol and drug misuse and whatever other things. So it is portrayed as. That could be something.

Something may be genetic in the family. Maybe she inherited something. But if that would be like, we should be reading into that. Why would she describe the demon physically? Many times it take, uh, Takes away everything that was built up. Again, like I wanted to think, like, whatever I want. Maybe he is real or it.

Whatever. But once you describe the teeth and it was so stereotypical, it was so funny to me. I'm like, come on. The empty black eyes. Can we do some pink eyes finally? Or like rainbows from like his ass or like something new? Why is this just the teeth and the Eyes and then the little smiley faces.

I couldn't. I'm like, come. Come on. You know, like smiley faces.

Leraje

I was really thinking very.

Ligeia

It was campy. It was campy. And if I knew this was a campy book, I would actually like it. But it's presented as a, uh, sort of even I. I read somewhere something like. It's taking the idea from haunting of Hill House, which I think is a heresy because. No. You know, there is the family situation and uh, the haunting in the family house and.

No, please, people. If you want to love this book, love it. I. I am sorry. I will probably try to read it again with new eyes after this. I don't like. Don't liking books. But please don't compare this to my, um.

Leraje

Shirley Jackson.

Ligeia

You can't do that. That's hurting this book. That's hurting Rachel. I think it's not good.

Lithos

Well, I deliberately don't. And in this case didn't read reviews of, uh.

Ligeia

What I was not trying, but came up somewhere.

Lithos

I don't know that. You know, that can also give you the wrong idea of. Of what it was. And I read it as. While I was reading it. Sort of entertaining, sort of

haunted house type thing, which didn't go that deep. It. It had. I did find certain bits creepy in the middle where things first start happening.

And then I thought. Yeah, I thought that was really creepy.

Ligeia

I want to know.

Lithos

It was when. When she was in the house and. And. And then suddenly the fan slowly turns and. And then something happens with the lights and the seance. Yeah. And there were creepy bits. And then there was a bit in the end where the demon manifests himself where she's there with her sisters.

And I thought that was a very funny scene. I think that was deliberately funny because the demon. The idea is the demon just hangs around and is bored and spends most of the time being bored. And when people do stupid shit, they get really excited. And they saw a big fight between the sisters coming up.

And there was a big fight. They were ripping each other's hair. And then all the doors were going, all the lights were going. The demon was having a whale of a time. And meanwhile they were fighting it out even more. And it didn't stop until they stopped fighting. And I thought that's, uh, a.

That's quite a well written scene. That's a very funny scene.

Leraje

Very much the Beavis and Butthead of demons. Do you know what? It's the sort of demon who would sit in the dark in the attic on his own Pulling the wings off flies and going [does Beavis and Butthead type laugh].

Lithos

Well, I think that's what it, what it was presented as. Yes. Uh, that's sort of just an absolute. An absolute that will just hang about most of the time and then go. Yeah, not, not pulling the wings of flies, but pulling mice to pieces. I think that's what.

Leraje

All right. Yeah. Pulling mice to pieces in this case. Yeah.

Ligeia

Yeah. But also. Sorry. The main point, when there is a haunted house, there is usually a feeling of like, people who are in that house, they come to this situation that like the demon is getting stronger and stronger. It manifests whatever. There is the feeling they can't really leave. Like it's either it's following them or, or they just can't really leave.

She could leave at any point, as she did. There was repeatedly reason for her to go back. So I didn't feel sorry. Like, did you understand? How, how, how am I supposed to.

Leraje

There was no threat.

Ligeia

No.

Leraje

Yeah, there was no threat. She went.

Ligeia

So I don't know.

Leraje

Which is a wise thing to do if your house has been haunted and you can go. Just fucking go.

Ligeia
Yes.

Leraje
And she did.

Pike
Well, she needed to catch up with her fashion friends, you know, checking on her fans.

Leraje
And that's absolutely fine. But it kind of like killed any sense of like drama or threat because once you're aware that it's. It's not going to stop her leaving. She can walk out the door and walk off.

Ligeia
Austin is there waiting for you with the white claws. Which I had to Google what that was and it was. I don't know. I would like to know if Rachel has some, some contracts with the white claw because it was mentioned like 55 times.

Lithos
I think the reason why is it

Ligeia
the white cloth, the drink?

Lithos
Yeah. White claw, which is kind of like American Hoopers Hooch or Wicked, you know, fruit based alcohol. Kind of like alcoholic lemonade kind of thing. And I think it was just basically that cheap piss that you can buy anywhere.

Ligeia
I guess there is a reason why she chose that one. I don't know how it's been like seen in America. Like, is it, is it something like really like third rate? Whatever you say. Like, not, not that good. Is it just cheap? I don't know.

Lithos
I couldn't say.

Ligeia
But like, what was the reason?

Pike
Maybe it was supposed to be like a basic girl drink, you know? Oh, uh, it's a, it's a bit, you know, it's, it's not very strong. It's a. It's a bit, um. If it's fruity influencer Drink? Yeah.

Leraje
Influencer. Drink?

Pike
Yeah, yeah.

Ligeia
I'm not an influencer. I don't know anything.

Leraje
So she's very clearly and obviously an unreliable narrator. Uh, as is her mum, an unreliable narrator. Which. And I quite liked that. I quite like that twist on it that we're kind of like hearing a story from an unreliable narrator who's also relating the story from also an unreliable standpoint as well. Because it

was quite clear from what Clio thought and said that her mum had bullshitted quite a lot during the course of the book that she wrote.

Ligeia
Mhm.

Leraje
Um, so I was kind of like thinking this idea of unreliable narration, was it something that. Because it can. So it can add very much to a story. But did it work for you as a, as a, as a device, as a plot device?

Lithos
It worked for me, yeah. Because it did keep me guessing until pretty much near the end as to whether the demon was real or not.

Leraje
Mhm.

Lithos
And I think the unreliable narration did keep the suspense going literally until that big fight scene with the sisters in the house. Because before then it was always a possibility. Is it, is it not?

Leraje
Do you think? So do you think that the double unreliable narration kind of uh, worked as well? That kind of like story within a story, both coming from an unreliable source?

Ligeia
Well, it made me feel like maybe she's trying to suggest that genetic thing, something that like Clio inherited from her mum.

Leraje
Something self destructive.

Ligeia
I don't know. Because in the whole story that in the mum was writing the book. What the reason why dad didn't want anybody to read it was sort of protect Clio as he was, you know, explaining it from knowing that they thought she was possessed. Like she was, she was the aim of this demon and the demon was like setting his eyes and teeth and his aim on her.

Am um, I right? That was in the book. And the dad was like, oh, uh, you shouldn't read this because that's gonna be like with you the whole life. Even though I'm not sure if that was why or he just didn't want.

Leraje
I read it as, ah, that um, he didn't want the, he didn't want them, the three girls to have anything to do with anything that their mum had.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Leraje
Tainted for want of a better word.

Ligeia
But also he was controlling the narrative then. So. Yeah, yeah, it was very controlling.

Leraje
I mean he was definitely the, the baddie of the book, I think.

Ligeia

Yeah. Like he was nice and nice and then the more you learned about the whole situation and the relationships and how he was always controlling. I was not liking him anymore.

Lithos

I, I think he was an abusive character.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Lithos

Um, that's what he came across to me. Especially this scene where he finally loses temper and smashes a chair against the wall and everyone's going, and you're going, uh, yeah, okay. I can see why her mum might have, you know, and why he might have driven her mum to drink and why the whole thing, you know, might have happened.

He, uh, was obviously just looking for an excuse to get the girls off her and make her, um, make uh, the mother character look like an insane alcoholic.

Leraje

I think this is why I struggled with the thing. Like Pike said earlier, what happened to Roy. One of the themes of the book that I think I identified was that Clio was trying to, uh, reclaim her mother's sanity. In that, uh, everybody around her was saying, you're mad for believing that a house can be possessed.

And Clio started off thinking the same and then gradually came around to the conclusion that her mum was right, that there was something in the house and maybe she wasn't mad and she wasn't unreliable.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Leraje

But then this thing with Roy happened.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

And it's like, well, Roy was also a choice that your mum made. So how can she be both? How can you be claiming to reclaim her sanity and her choices and sort of like invalidating the gaslighting of her? And now you're doing exactly the same by attacking Roy. And sort of like I thought when that scene happened, when she had a go at him over the phone towards the end, I was like, have I missed something?

Have I skipped over a couple of pages because I couldn't see why is Roy bad? I think I must have missed something.

Pike

It's because of his bad fashion sense because he's into this weird occult shit and he's not cool.

Ligeia

I like him.

Leraje

I felt very sorry for Roy. For poor Roy.

Pike

That's essentially his. The, his fault is he's not cool, you know. And uh, there is a point where he gets dragged away by the demon and Clio says, I completely

forgot about Roy. Wow. And at that point I thought, okay, Roy, you were in this book just to be comic relief. That is sad.

Ligeia

Yeah. There was no reason.

Leraje

It just felt, uh. And this is what I meant earlier when I said I don't think I quite understood what the point of it was, because I thought one of the points in the book was sort of like Clio trying to reclaim her mum's sanity and sort of like counter the gaslighting that had gone on of her mum.

And now she ends up doing pretty much the same thing. I couldn't reconcile those two things about what I was supposed to think about that and what I was supposed to think about the hero.

Lithos

See, that's interesting, because I did not think for a minute she was trying to reclaim her mother's sanity in the gaslighting. That, uh, didn't come across to me at all. I thought she was just trying to prove a point by taking on the house. Trying to prove a point to her father and her sister.

Leraje

You might well be right. I could have easily.

Lithos

And, uh, you know, in the end, she held her mum in the same regard as she held everyone else in her family. Like they were beneath her. That's the way I read it, you know, And I think, you know, that the. That's possibly why I like the book so much more. Because I just read it as kind of an entertaining horror story about where the main protagonist is an unpleasant person.

Um, who. And I don't mind reading books about unpleasant protagonists.

Leraje

No, me neither. I don't have a problem with that. And like I. Like I just said a moment ago, it could easily be my misunderstanding, not her, uh, writing. I just couldn't. I found it very hard to sort of like form an internal logic of the whole book about where it was going and what it was trying to say.

I just didn't get it.

Pike

I think a lot hinges here on whether you found the book funny. Because whenever it tries to make a serious point, it falls flat. But whilst it's cracking jokes and, uh, entertaining you, it's. I think that. That works.

Leraje

Yeah.

Lithos

I didn't try and make sense of the book at all as I was reading it. I read it sort of over the space of several days, but in quite large chunks. And I read it as an entertainment and I just went along for the ride and I really enjoyed it. And I wasn't looking for anything.

You know, if you compare it to something like Carrion Crow, which goes really deep into things. Yeah, This I, uh, just saw as a, uh. Uh, sort of horror yarn that was very entertaining and I enjoyed reading.

Leraje

I think we might have spoiled ourselves by starting off with books like Left Hand of Darkness and Carrion Crow and the Haunting of Hill House because everything is going to suffer by comparison.

Pike

I like the mixing of high and low culture. And this is one of the strong points in this book as well, is when, uh. When it mixes high and low culture. Say when she, um. When you have a family barbecue and she's talking about, oh, something's rotten in the kingdom of Denmark and they're trying to reunite the kingdom with mayonnaise using mayonnaise based salads.

Uh, I thought moments like that where it really, the writing really shown.

Leraje

She is very good at writing funny scenes, there's no doubt about that. And yeah, there were a number of times that I did laugh out loud, particularly towards the start of the book.

Ligeia

I feel like an alien in this group. I didn't, I didn't.

Lithos

Well, it's a matter of personal taste, isn't it?

Ligeia

Am I okay?

Lithos

I mean I just. Yeah, in terms of style, I thought. I did not find any clumsy turns of phrase throughout. Um, it kind of flowed really easily. It was so easy to read. It was so easy to follow. The dialogue was great, you know, and like I say, I just read it as.

Yeah, this is a really entertaining book. You know, it. It doesn't plumb any great depths, but you don't have to have that in every book. Sometimes entertainment's all you want. And that's what I got.

Leraje

Yeah, I've got no problem with that. I mean that's pretty much how I approached Winter Tide. I don't know. When I said earlier that I was. I couldn't find an internal logic. I wasn't necessarily saying that I went looking for it, but, uh, it's kind of like the internal logic of a book should present itself to you, the reader.

And it didn't for me. Now that again, might just be my failing, not hers.

Pike

Um, stop blaming yourself.

Leraje

But it's a legitimate possibility. Yeah. Uh, I mean she's a fucking good writer. I'm not. So it makes sense that the fold. So we mentioned him briefly, the dad. And I'm going to mention him again. Poor Roy gets all that shit happened to him. The dad. Absolutely no consequences whatsoever. At ah, the end of the book, he basically smashed a chair at the wall, told his daughter that sometimes he wanted to strangle her.

Um, and no consequences.

Ligeia

But even Clio didn't suffer any consequences. For example, when she went multiple times, she went live when she was drunk and people were like seeing it. And I thought this is happening because she's gonna lose some followers or her job or something. It actually helped her or something like m. Why was it even here?

Lithos

Well, I think

Pike

maybe it's worth mentioning here what going live means in that context. As in she was on. I think. Was she on Instagram?

Lithos

Insta Live, I think.

Ligeia

Yeah, Live stream, you know, and she was acting. Well, if people didn't know what she was doing, she might have looked a little bit crazy and obviously drunk and you know, dirty and her makeup was all over the place and like it wasn't her as, as they knew her, all made up and beautiful and just posing.

And now she was doing this and I thought, okay, there is going to be a little consequence for this. Like she's going to learn a lesson. No, I could, I just couldn't. I'm like, this is not how life works. I've up in my life and I had, I had to pay a price.

Pike

Tell us about it next time.

Ligeia

Next time on the Devil's Library. I'm gonna tell you all my fuck ups.

Lithos

I think she, um, she said in the end she was saying, well, she thought that would be the end of her career. But it turns out that people like naughty stuff on Instagram and it got a few more people interested. And however, at the party in the end, uh, she did remark that, you know, people did keep their distance and did give us strange looks and like.

Ligeia

Well, she didn't care at all. So.

Lithos

But no, she didn't care. No, she didn't. But to come back to the father figure that you asked about, Leraje. Yeah, I think, you know, the thing is he's presented as a kind of man who just goes through life taking control over other people and suffering no consequences. He just kept himself out of trouble.

He didn't want anything to do with the house. He was basically a control freak and a coward, um, and a bully. Um, that's how his character came across to me. I don't know how anyone else felt about that character.

Ligeia

Yeah, I agree.

Pike

I thought it was a bit. I mean, to me it felt more complicated than that. I think partly. You know, Leraje, when you mentioned, uh, two unreliable narrators, I think one purpose for that could have been to show that when it comes to families there's a lot of myth making. And in this case, uh, they're trying to go back to events that happened when Clio was so young she can't remember anything.

And then her father is the saint, then her father is the asshole and the mother is the asshole. Then the mother. It's sort of none of it, none of it seems what it, what it appears to be to me.

Leraje

Yeah, there's this kind of um, the idea that like you say, this myth making with it, with that probably every family has about who's good and who's bad and who

did this and who did that. And the truth is always somewhere in the middle, somewhere in between.

Pike

It's bad to throw A chair. But you could, you could be that angry and still not necessarily be 100% an asshole. I don't know about your families? Uh, my. My family was very sort of stereotypical, very stable and everything. But we had some pretty awful moments sometimes.

Ligeia

Tell us about them.

Leraje

Well, next time but one on the Devil's Library.

Pike

It's the confessional.

Leraje

What did we think about all the Greek names?

Ligeia

Oh, uh, I kind of like them.

Lithos

Oh, right. I hadn't even thought of that. Of course. Yes. Yeah.

Leraje

Alexandra, Leda, Daphne, Clio.

Pike

I thought those were nice names.

Leraje

Was this. But was this, uh, Rachel Harrison trying to tell us that, uh. Look, this is a tragedy, right? This is a Greek tragedy. You must read it as a Greek tragedy.

Lithos

Well, I don't know.

Leraje

No one.

Lithos

A swan. So is it Greek?

Pike

This was what this book was missing. Everyone would have loved it.

Leraje

Swan fucking.

Ligeia

See, maybe that would make me happy.

Leraje

I gotta admit, I did kind of like wince a little bit at Leda. Uh, nicknamed Leeds being the strong force for one. And Daphne Daffy the airhead.

Pike

Yeah, the nickname is.

Leraje

It's like, come on, it doesn't have to be that on the nose. Rein it in a little bit.

Lithos

Daphne. I don't know. Was Daphne the airhead? I thought Clio was more of an airhead. Daphne was kind of, I think, more of the, uh, sort of black sheep of the family. Because dad could not deal with the fact that she was gay for a start. And that she, she, she was working and catering and weird hours.

Um, whereas the others had steady jobs.

Pike

What? Influencer.

Ligeia

Influencer.

Lithos

Um, and of course, Tommy. Sweet Tommy.

Pike

Oh, yeah, we forgot about Tommy.

Ligeia

No, I haven't, but I don't want to. But like, you know, exactly. With him, the first sentence was, Tommy was not attractive in any sort of way. That's a sentence. And I'm, um, reading this. I'm like, how do you know what is attractive to me? I am reading this. How can you say this?

It's not.

Lithos

Yeah, but it's not to you. It's to Clio. The way she's. Yeah, but this is the way Clio thinks. I just hate thinks he's not attractive to anyone because he's not attracted to Clio. That is how Clio thinks, I think, you know, attractive.

Pike

I had a little heartbreak there because, uh, he wears sweater vests and listens to nu metal.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Pike

And I thought, oh, a lot of my friends still listen to nu metal as their main kind of music. That just

Leraje

By choice?

Pike

Yes. Surely as an adult you should be able to listen to whatever you want without it being uncool.

Leraje

But no, I'm joking. It's fine. Limp Bizkit are great.

Ligeia

I like them.

Pike

Say it again, but loud.

Leraje

No, that's the first and last time I'll ever say that sentence.

Ligeia
Is it staying in the recording?

Leraje
Uh, might do. We'll see. See how I feel.

Pike
Surely it's a bloop.

Ligeia
Like, would it be attractive enough for Clio? What I'm listening to this is the question.

Lithos
I think nothing is attractive enough to Clio, except for Clio herself, is the bottom line.

Leraje
I think what you were saying earlier, uh, Ligeia, about that the period when Clio accidentally went live on Instagram a couple of times. And I thought that had the potential to get really quite interesting about what would have happened if she'd lost all her followers and her life collapsed. And, you know, that would have been real repercussions

Ligeia
Or if somebody could see the demon in the recordings or there would be something. Like, there is a reason why it's there. Like, it happens. And I was like, why? Why did it happen? I'm, um. I'm expecting. Okay, we will. We will get back to that scene. Because this was interesting. No, no. Well, if I. If. I don't know, I'm not gonna try go live completely pissed and going on my fourth through the house and climbing the attic.

And I don't know. I'm not doing that.

Leraje
Going on a demon hunt.

Ligeia
Yeah. I think I would lose all my family. Like, basically everybody would move out. Like, okay, we are done. Like, we knew you were weird, but this is enough. Like, we don't need this in our lives. And with Clio, it's like, no, it's all good.

Lithos
Well, I think, you know, in the end, I don't know about the. No consequences. I think in the end, the family ends up being just as sort of dysfunctional as they were all the way through in that.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Lithos
That, you know, they're not having when they're together. They're not genuinely getting on or showing respect towards each other. They're doing niceties. And, you know, she said that she would never trust her father again, um, for keeping things from her, but she

Ligeia
would still take his money. So that's good.

Lithos
Well, yeah, it.

Pike
Fuck the trust.

Ligeia
Who cares? Pay my bills.

Pike
If I had to guess, I would guess that they would glue that family back together within. After a certain period of time. Because. Yeah. Do I have agreement?

Leraje
Yeah, no, I completely agree. Yeah. It's a family who. Every member of which is just like, I don't think, uh, nothing. Nothing. And this is one. Nothing felt consequential. Nothing felt like it had any kind of long reaching repercussions or impact or. I don't know. I think I just spent the whole book waiting for the other shoe to drop.

And for me, it just never did. And I came away from it thinking, that's a very good writer. I'll read another one by her. Uh, but I just didn't understand this book. I didn't understand what it was trying to say.

Ligeia
Can I have a question about, like, this phrase she uses and. Because I read another book of hers before this. It's called Soul Thirsty. It's about vampires. I did like that book more because I love vampires. It was also campy and was about these two women. And there was, like, little steamy something with this vampire.

And I. I enjoyed that. I was hoping for more, but girl can.

Pike
Oh, does it fade to black?

Ligeia
Yeah. I am a rotten girl. Okay. But she keeps using that. And you. Pike mentioned this at the beginning. The, um. To blow a raspberry is this. I know what it means, but I have never in my life heard it. Like a person say it. Is it something that is just not British, or do you guys.

Lithos
Oh, no, it's. It's a common word.

Ligeia
Is it?

Pike
I had to look it up. I had to look it up.

Ligeia
I had to look it up.

Pike
I. I'd never heard it.

Ligeia
Never in my life heard that.

Lithos
All right.

Pike
Because people. People probably do it rather than name it, you know?

Lithos
Yeah, yeah.

Ligeia
It's like sticking your tongue out. No, like.

Lithos
No. Blowing a raspberry is a really common expression.

Ligeia
Well, because I guess it's like the. The tongue is like. Like a raspberry looking for some reason. I don't know.

Pike
It's not. It's not.

Ligeia
It could be more like

Lithos
If your tongue looks like a raspberry, then you really need to go see a doctor.

Ligeia
Right.

Lithos
Kind of might have some kind of growth on there that needs removing.

Pike
The phrase that was new to me in that book was eating box. I never heard that. I wondered if it's an Americanism. I had to look.

Lithos
I think it's an Americanism because the only time.

Leraje
Say that again. I missed that.

Pike
Uh, eating box.

Lithos
Eating box.

Leraje
Box.

Lithos
It's. It's Americanism for cunnинг lingus. Of, uh, course.

Pike
Carpet munching.

Lithos
But yeah, yeah.

Leraje
Oh, box. I thought you were saying books, as in B, U, C, K, S. I think. I don't remember.

Ligeia
Maybe books.

Lithos

It's definitely not a British one. It's American. And because I first came across that on south park with Cartman saying it. So, you know, it's an offensive phrase. Um, but yeah, uh, it's something I've heard Americans say, but not British people.

Ligeia

Would that be so bad to say straight? What? This is my Slavic root coming into play. Is it so bad to say, like, straightforward what it is instead of using these?

Pike

I'm just.

Leraje

It wouldn't be bad to say. But yeah.

Ligeia

Isn't it spicy? Then, like.

Lithos

And, um, I think she was making it in terms of her sarcasm. She was talking about. Because one of the sisters, uh, Leda has. Has some kind of eating disorder.

Pike

No, Daphne. No, she was talking about Daphne, I think.

Leraje

Yeah.

Lithos

Yeah, but she was kind of talking about Leader not eating and Daphne's favourite thing being eating box. Something like that, I seem to recall.

Pike

Oh, right.

Lithos

I can't remember. But it was kind of like food related because she kept. Yeah, Leader does, uh, have some kind of eating disorder. Uh, and she keeps making harsh comments about that. And then, uh, I think it was something along those lines that. Yeah, that's why she said eating books. Um, but she was just being derogatory about her sister, basically.

Ligeia

But like, eating out. Remember the phrase during COVID Eat out to help out.

Lithos

Yes. Although we weren't allowed to.

Ligeia

I loved it so much.

Pike

Oh, well, when I was reading it, I thought she meant eating box. I thought she meant eating takeaways.

Lithos

Her being a chef.

Pike

I thought that was. That was the. Okay, that's it. Let's, let's. Let's move on to something else quickly.

Ligeia
Uh, finally something I like. Okay.

Pike
Pitchforks.

Leraje
Yeah, let's do pitchforks. Based on Pike's shiny new recommendation. I'll have to look at it now because I've forgotten what it.

Pike
Well, you don't have to use it just for the benefit of a listener. Uh, I can't rate things from 1 to 10, so I've set up, um, a list that helps.

Leraje
Pike, do you want to go first?

Pike
Yes. I will give it an 8,

Leraje
which is listener. A bit of a slog, but valuable. Or bit shallow, but fun. Did feel an urge to recommend.

Pike
I did feel an urge to recommend this to my sister because my sister's so much like Clio and I think it would be enjoy.

Leraje
She would enjoy.

Lithos
Whoa. I trust your sister doesn't listen to this.

Leraje
Yeah, I'm to going.

Ligeia
Going under the table.

Leraje
No, I would have been a lot nicer.

Pike
This is not cool enough for my sister. I'm sorry.

Leraje
Ligeia, what about you, Pitchforks?

Ligeia
Okay. Now, because Pike's sister, I, uh, will give it a four. Four, yes.

Leraje
Some redeeming moments to writing or content only. The other one sucks entirely.
Okay, Lithos, what about you?

Lithos
I'm gonna give it on my own scale. So it's, um. It basically has crossovers with the comments that you've read out before, but it doesn't quite fit.

Leraje
Right. Okay.

Lithos

I. I will give it a solid nine. I would have given it more, but for the fact that I. I think I. I can't really give it a 10 in terms of, like, stylistically and how much I enjoyed it. I would have given it a 10, but I can't really put it up there with Carrion Crow.

So it's a nine. It's a fucking great book. I loved it.

Pike

We would have to banish you from the podcast if you put it up there, Carrion Crow.

Lithos

Yeah.

Leraje

Uh, and I will give it a six, which is by Pike's rating. Not for me, but I can see its value, and I think someone else could legitimately enjoy it. Uh, next time, it is Ligeia's choice. So what have we got? Ligeia?

Ligeia

So I chose a book that is completely new. It came out January 16th. I wanted to find a book that none of us read before, so that was my point of view. So it is a book, um, by John Ward. I think this is his first, like, adult novel. It's called A Blackened Heart, a Blackened Soul, and there is a slight connotation or inspiration by the Exorcist.

So this is why I chose it. I really would like to know your opinions. Okay, so next time.

Leraje

Right, that's it from us then. We've been talking about Play Nice by Rachel Harrison. Um, as ever, look, these are just our opinions. Feel free to go ahead, read it. Make your own opinions, because that's what matters. What you think, not what we think. Until next time. I've been Leraje, Hail Satan. And with me has been Pike.

Pike

Hail Satan.

Leraje

Ligeia.

Ligeia

Hail Satan.

Leraje

And Lithos.

Lithos

Hail Satan.

[Outro music plays]