

The Devil's Library Episode 11.5 – “The Ladies of Grace Adieu” – Part II

[Intro Music]

Ligeia

Hello, everybody. Welcome to a new episode of Devil's Library, our podcast, where we talk about books that we like, maybe don't like. Um, today we are doing another of our minisodes. We call it minisodes, even though they usually last an hour. Um, so it is only me. My name is Ligeia. Hail Satan.

And my dear friend, Leraje.

Leraje

Hail Satan.

Ligeia

Yeah. So, uh, today we are going to continue with the book we already talked about. It was written by Susanna Clark, very famous author. And it's a tiny book of stories. It's called the Ladies of Grace Adieu. And so we chose. We chose three different stories. Like, the first time we did. We do just one episode.

I think we only did one.

Leraje

Yeah. This is the second one.

Ligeia

This is the second. So you can go back and listen to the first episode, because that was, like, for me, that was my first read of those three stories. So maybe if you want to just, like, have the, uh, you know, the. The fresh start to this, maybe go back and listen to that.

You don't have to. They don't follow any. There is no continuation. There are just separate stories. So whatever, whatever you want. Um, so we have three stories. Um. Ah, we do it in a way. Like, I choose one, Leraje chooses one, and then we, like, randomly choose the third one. So I chose Mrs. Mabb. Yeah, I forgot which one. Then you chose the.

Leraje

I chose, uh, Tom Brightwind. Or how the Fairy bridge was built at Thornseby.

Ligeia

And then the third one was. Hold on. What is the. The whole name? Mr Simonelli Or the Fairy Widower.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

Yeah. Okay, let's go.

Leraje

Uh, should we start with Mrs. Mabb?

Ligeia

We can. I think it's like the chronological order. There was like, uh. There was no reason why I chose this one. Probably because it's. It was like a missus and not a. Like a male name. I don't know. I was just curious. I must say, these three stories are very different from the third.

The. The three first ones. I can't even explain how I did like these more. All three of these I did. Right. Uh, I found them a little bit more complex or I think if I. If I. I will. Obviously I will go back to these, but as a first read, I think I am tempted to read them again.

Leraje

The first three that we read, they felt like kind of like myths or tales from ancient. But these feel more like stories, you know, kind of like modern stories. I mean, they're not modern because they're set in kind of like Victorian. Well, Before Victorian England. It's, uh.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

That sort of time period.

Ligeia

Yeah. I think it was only in the last story, the. About the Tom Brightwind. There was actually like years. Like we know in which years this was happening. But yes, uh, as you were saying, I. I think these three stories sounded like. Obviously she wrote. Susanna wrote, ah, all these stories. But the first three ones sounded more like they.

They were quite heavily inspired by the folk tales that you might have heard before. She slightly changed it, or she changed it a lot, but that was like. More. But it's funny because as I'm saying, we choose them. Um, not chronologically.

Leraje

No.

Ligeia

Um. I don't know. Just how did we do that? I don't know. It was really. Haha. Uh-huh. Skill. Yeah. Talking about skill. And my choice for the last episode was. Yes.

Leraje

He talked about Lickerish Hill again.

Ligeia

Yes, yes. The English killed me. Thank you.

Leraje

None of that this time.

Ligeia

No, no, no. Okay, so let's talk about Mrs. Mabb. Uh, so basically this story is about, I think, a young. I think I. In my head, she was a young girl or young woman, Venetia, or. How do you read that? Venetia Moore. She became convinced that her lover, Captain Fox, like, they were in love.

Everything was amazing. And she was actually expecting that they will be, like, engaged and there will be wedding and bright, beautiful, happy future with this man. And suddenly her lover somehow, uh, like fallen. Has fallen under a spell. I can say it like that. Of this M. Mysterious Mrs. Mabb.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

Almost the entire story. We don't really know if this Mrs. Mabb exists, if what is happening, because. Because this young girl, she's going through a lot of weird happenings, physical happenings that, uh. Like, she is getting lost.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
She has visions. She is being found, like, in a ditch or something. Her dress is dishevelled. She loses her shoes. She's hurt, she has bruises. And nobody is seeing what she is seeing.

Leraje
No, it's the. What they used to call the glamour of the fairies.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Leraje
Fairies traditionally avoid using the word magic. It's that glamour. They use a glamour to hide themselves.

Ligeia
Oh. Uh, yeah. Yeah.

Leraje
It's interesting though, because Mrs. Mabb, for whom the story is titled, never actually appears in the first person throughout the whole story.

Ligeia
It is so weird because. Well, there are mentions of her. Like, obviously she goes and she wants to see her. She wants to see. She. She learns from people that her. This lover, Captain Fox, lives with this Mrs. Mapp in her house. And. And like, he. She should forget about him. And like, that's Done.

Because. Oh, it's Mrs. Mabb. You can't like, compare yourself. This is like a whole girl. Forget about that. So we are learning that she is something. I don't know better or. She is more beautiful. She is like out of this world. She has a beautiful house. She has a, uh. She has like, maids and servants.

And like the. The whole world should just worship her. And she. She wants to see the house. She's like really suffering. She's hurt. So she goes and she asks like, okay, so where does she live? Where, like, where is the house of this Mrs. Mabb? What if I just go for a walk and just like, look.

And I would do the same, actually. I understood her so much. Like, oh my God, this is not good for you. But also. Yeah, I, uh, would.

Leraje
Yeah, but the interesting thing is that nobody gives her the straight. The same answer when she asks where Mrs. Mabb may have lived. Nobody. Everybody's sure they know where she lives, but only because they've heard someone else say it. And they all give different answers. None of them have actually been there themselves.

Ligeia
No. You think it was because they didn't know. I, uh, thought maybe it's one of those things that is like the magic actually. Like it messes their brains.

Leraje
Like, I think that's what it is.

Ligeia
Like the story changes because it's part of the.

Leraje

I think it's part of the kind of like the glamour, the magic that Mrs. Mabb puts out. This kind of like.

Ligeia

Right.

Leraje

Oh yeah. I know where Mrs. Mabb lives. Somebody told me she lives. Um. Let me remember. You got to walk down the bridal path. Then you gotta turn right. Then you gotta get all these complex instructions. And then you go there. It's like there's nothing there. Or you get turned around or something happens.

Like in Venetia's case, you imagine a troop of cavalry or something like that.

Ligeia

That's the thing. Like, she actually follows these, uh. These like, directions, these instructions. And it's not like she doesn't find anything. She actually sees what they. What they told her. And it's so weird because it's usually like a really, uh. Like a spot, uh, where nothing else is. Like. Like it's a field.

It's a huge like field of grass. And the grass is so tall. And the house is. Looks like a tower, which is all. Which is both tiny and huge. I'm like, what? What are we doing?

Leraje

Yeah. Venetia also thinks to herself, but it also looks very small. Like as if it's made for a bumblebee or a, uh.

Ligeia

Right. It's miniature. And it's huge, really. I was so looking forward to the ending because, you know, it's. It is written in a way, I think that it's supposed to make you feel like she has lost her mind or she's suffering, like there something really wrong happening in her head. And maybe it's the grief also.

I mean, it. She. She really didn't hear from him, like, okay, I'm finishing this with you and I want to be with this other woman. Maybe that would have helped.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

But he just disappeared and she was like, I don't understand. I want to know.

Leraje

She lost. I mean, not only that, but at the very start of the story. The reason she loses Captain Fox in the first place is because she has to go away to tend to a dying friend.

Ligeia

Right? Yes.

Leraje

And her friend dies and she has to come back. So she's already had this massive loss in her life and then she comes back and finds that her, uh, intended has also left her.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

So, you know, it all adds to this. Yeah. Her sister. And her sister is convinced that she's lost her mind. And, yeah, I mean, bless her. I mean, Fanny Hawkins, she's. She's obviously in there for a bit of humour. Um, yeah, but she obviously loves her sister and wants what's good for her.

But, yeah, she just cannot. She doesn't believe a word that Venetia is saying.

Ligeia

No, no, she really thinks, like, she needs help. She's sick. She's ill. She was getting ready for her return from the dying friend and she was like, oh, so when she comes home, I'm gonna talk to her about, like, why would you leave when you have this prospect of this, yeah, insanely great marriage.

You are so silly. You shouldn't have left. I will tell her. I will talk to her. You will see. I will punish her. And then she comes and she looks so sad that she actually can't even tell her anything. She's like, oh, my goodness, come here. I will take care of you. That was so sweet.

Yeah, you're right. What a, uh, what a lovely sister. Also, one more thing that when you mentioned the, uh, how the directions were given, I had this really nice and warm feeling in my heart when I was reading it. Like, I guess there are still places like this in the world. But where I live, everything is just like, you know, so every.

Everything is just like buildings and roads. And this was so adorable how they were describing, like, there is this big. There is this big hedge and you will see two trees and then there is a lilac Bush. And I'm like, oh, my God, I would never find anything because. What do you mean?

And like, all these people knew all these plants. Like they, they would tell you 15 different plants and you just find your way because you all know what these are like. Oh, my goodness, what a sweet world.

Leraje

The other coincidence between these three stories is they're all set in the kind of, uh, the East Midlands. So it's all kind of like Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and those kind of areas.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

I think people of those times and people who were kind of like country people probably would have known.

Ligeia

Yes. I'm not saying this is weird. It was just something that caught my eye. I was actually really jealous of that. Like, oh, my goodness, how sweet.

Leraje

Her descriptive powers are, uh, massive. Susanna Clarke's. I mean, she really evokes this whole balance. Yeah.

Ligeia

Right.

Leraje

When Venetia goes at three points, she goes out to seek Mrs. Mabb's house. And each one feels like a dream of old ancient England with kind of like all the greenery and the stones and the kind of like the trees and. Oh, it's a, it's a wonderful atmosphere she manages to evoke.

Ligeia

Right. It was so lovely. I could absolutely, like close my eyes and smell the, uh, the grass and the fields, the meadows and I was like the captain. I would just go for these walks. Hi.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
But obviously I would be curious about this Mrs. Map, just because what those people were saying sounded a little bit like too much like. What do you mean? She's this mysterious woman who has servants here. Why is she here? Why is she at the end of that garden? That doesn't make any sense.

Leraje
Do you know why she's called Mrs. Mabb?

Ligeia
No.

Leraje
Mab with one B is, uh, the daughter of Titania, the queen of the fairies in, uh, Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet.

Ligeia
Oh, okay, so she just added another B. Yeah, yeah, just. Oh, my goodness. Okay. Because. Is this like a weird name?

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
Okay. I didn't know. My knowledge of Shakespeare is not great, I have to admit. So.

Leraje
So in Romeo and Juliet, I think it's, uh. God, I'm probably going to get this wrong and if I do, I apologise to people who know Shakespeare better than me. But I think it's Mercutio who describes Mab as the fairy midwife. The midwife of the fairies. And she's supposed to be a small sort of Tinkerbell sized fairy.

Ligeia
Oh, that makes so much sense.

Leraje
Hence all the kind of like butterfly analogies.

Ligeia
Yeah, the, the, the last. You know, I don't want to say it. I was actually laughing also. I was sorry for the butterflies, but I'm like, what? Who comes up? Okay, so now I understand. That was like a, uh. You know, the inspiration was there, but still, what. What a lovely story. And it had a.

Okay, I will not say what ending. I will not say it.

Leraje
No, but it's, um. Oh, fuck it. I'm gonna say it. Sorry.

Ligeia
We can do what we want.

Leraje
Venetia pursues Mrs. Mabb to the point where Mrs. Mabb grows pale and distracted at the thought of continuing the battle. And, uh, releases Captain Fox. And it

turns out that Captain Fox thinks he's only been there for what, a few hours and afternoon. Something like that, yeah.

Ligeia

And the reason why she releases him was so funny as well. All the dead, I don't know, insects or whatever.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

She was like, oh, it's. It's costing me, like my army, but servants. And like, okay. Psyche is not worth all this loss.

Leraje

So she lets Captain Fox case and he can't figure out why it's suddenly like, uh, the middle of summer or.

Ligeia

Yes, the trees has changed, everything is weird. And. Oh, yeah, what a lovely story. Really, it was.

Leraje

It was very good.

Ligeia

It was amazing. And I had one more like the. The three stories we did last time. I. I thought they had this element of like the. I will say feminism, because I don't know what other word. Or like, she was making a point. Yes. With like, the respect towards. Towards like, women and magic.

I want to know your opinion about the other two stories we are going to do. But like, in this one, I think I still was able to find a little bit of that. And what I mean by that is that through the. The story Venetia, her. Her like, character was described. So we would think, and everybody around her would think that she's a little bit hysterical.

But at the end, and when you look back, she actually had a, um, better grasp on what was happening than anybody else because she knew she was

Leraje

right and she stuck to her guns.

Ligeia

Right?

Leraje

Basically, yeah.

Ligeia

So I found that really interesting and very subtle way of like. Yes, sometimes women are called hysterical or even. Even men or whatever. It's like the way they behave, it's hysterical. Which I don't see as a bad thing. Not always is helpful, but it's usually as a negative, you know. And in this story, I think it was actually like, oh, at the end you will see why.

And she was right.

Leraje

If someone is certain in their opinion, then somebody else saying, well, that's hysterical behaviour is just their way of looking at it from the point of view of the person who thinks they're right. It's not hysterical. It's simply conviction. They're convinced they're right.

Ligeia
Yeah. Yeah.

Leraje
I'm, um, interested in your opinion on the silent Mr. Hawkins. The Reverend Hawkins, Fanny's husband.

Ligeia
Because I'm not even sure what you want to say something.

Leraje
Well, it's kind of like the man is silent through the whole. When she first goes off, she wakes up to find Fanny clucking about her and asking her if she's all right. And Mr. Hawkins first washes her feet, then washes her hands. Same, um, with the second time. The third time, when she has been.

When everyone is trying their best to keep her in. Mr. Hawkins gives her her very precise map of exactly where to find Mrs. Mabb. He says nothing throughout the entire. I mean, there are no words that is true. And I was left kind of like, who is this guy? Because he knew exactly the right thing to do the first two times that Venetia, uh, hurt herself.

Ligeia
You know what? You know what? Is it possible that he has been through a similar thing?

Leraje
Yes, that was my opinion too.

Ligeia
But I. Only now I'm thinking about him, I completely ignore him.

Leraje
Well, he says nothing, so he's so easy to miss. Yeah, yeah.

Ligeia
I even forgot. But now you mentioned him, I'm like, yeah, he was washing her feet. Which is also quite like. Why. Why was it him? Isn't that a little bit like, would it. Would it not be her sister? Because, like, uh. Why would he be touching her?

Leraje
It's very intimate. Especially for people of that kind of, like, time period. It would have been a very intimate. But he is a reverend, so possibly above reproach in society's eyes. And I thought when I first read that bit, the first time that I read these, it's not this time. I thought she was playing on the kind of, like, allegory of Jesus washing the feet of, uh.

Who was it? Was it Mary Magdalene?

Ligeia
Mary. Mary Magdalene. Yes.

Leraje
So I thought maybe there was an allegory.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Leraje
For that.

Ligeia
But, like, what would that mean?

Leraje
Don't know.

Ligeia
What would that mean? Taking her sins away.

Leraje
Maybe I did kind of abandon the idea once it became clear.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Leraje
What's going on. But, yeah, he's a mystery.

Ligeia
He very much. But this is what I think. But then if. If he has been through this and he has been to Mrs. Mabb.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
Maybe she's. She's like, tempting all these men. Wouldn't that sister remember that? Or.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
Would that make sense?

Leraje
You're Right.

Ligeia
I don't know.

Leraje
I don't know either.

Ligeia
But, uh, this is why I love her stories. It's never, like, an easy experience.

Leraje
No. There's always a question mark or two at the end. Purposefully. Not through loose storytelling, but purposefully.

Ligeia
Yeah. Okay, let's go to your story.

Leraje
Now, my choice was Tom Brightwind or how the fairy bridge was built at, uh, Thorseby. What did you think of this one?

Ligeia
What did I think? I was confused at the beginning, I must say. Like, uh. At the beginning there is a lot of notes, like, under. What do you call them? Yes. And I was like, where are these coming from? There are never, never, like, in this book. No footnotes. And now they're like huge footnotes.

I'm like, what happened? And also, I had to read the names of the princesses to my. To my dogs. I couldn't stop laughing. Do you remember those names?

Leraje

Uh, Princess Honey of the Wild Bees, Princess Lament from across the Water, Princess Kiss Upon a Tree, Love's Grave and Princess Bird in the Hand. Now, they were all one set of sisters. And then there were the others, which

Ligeia

were Princess Caritas, Princess Bellona, Princess Alba Perfecta, uh, Princess Lacrima and Princess Flamifera.

Leraje

And they were all sisters, too.

Ligeia

I don't know why I'm reading it in Italian. Uh, it's fine.

Leraje

They do feel vaguely Italian.

Ligeia

Like, um. Yeah, like the Kiss upon a true Love's Grace. And they call her Kiss, but she's never.

Leraje

She's never kissed anyone in her life, apparently, according to her sisters.

Ligeia

No, but this is at the beginning of the story. And. And, like, the description of, like, there's nine of these young princesses in the room. Um, nine perfumes that are mixing together nine, uh, shades of beautiful, like, colours, their dresses, like, what is this story? But I was smiling because I was like, oh, I want to be one of them.

I was going back to my childhood.

Leraje

Like, oh, Fairy Princess.

Ligeia

Oh, my God. Yes. Yes. I wanted to be, uh, like, in this dress and everything.

Leraje

And we should say that they are the granddaughters of, uh, Tom Brightwind, who is the fairy lord named in the story.

Ligeia

Yeah, yeah. So, yeah, I loved this story. But at the beginning, like, because of all of this, it was confusing. Like, where is this going to go? I really need to know. But it was your story, so maybe you can tell. Like, um.

Leraje

So, um, the premise of the story is that David Montefiore is a physician and he is friends with Tom Brightwind, who is a fairy. Uh, David goes to visit Tom at His house has the encounter with the nine fairy princesses. Uh, and then they ostensibly go on a journey to see one of David's patients who lives in Lincoln.

So it's a journey for them from London to Lincoln. I think it's London that they started at. Along the way, they. They stop off at a town called Thorseby and they don't know how to proceed because there's no bridge over the river. And, uh. M. Then they notice that there is actually a ferry and they pay to go across.

But then they are told that not only do they have to pay the ferryman's fee, they also have to pay a toll. And they are outraged at this situation. They're

told this by a man called Puli Witts, who is described as looking something like a scoundrel.

Ligeia

The description of his face was amazing.

Leraje

And, um, they refused to pay. So Mr. M. Witt says, well, I think you need to come and speak to Mr. Uh, Winstanley, who is kind of like the person in charge taking tolls. So they go to the Winstanley's house and they meet Mr. And Mrs. Winstanley, who tell them the story of why there was never been a bridge built at Thoresby, although it's been promised at least three times.

And, uh, Tom decides, after hearing the story, he. And, um, I think possibly seducing Mrs. Winstanley along the way, um, decides to build them a bridge. So he does build them a bridge, but he doesn't tell them where he's gonna build it to. It turns out that the bridge doesn't necessarily go to the other side of the river.

Of the river that, uh, runs alongside Thoresby. Yeah. Uh, uh, it's a good story and it's very funny in places.

Ligeia

Yes, I found this very funny. Like in all seriousness, how everything is described and how they talk and the topics. For example, how they went through all list of queens and kings who were supposed to build the bridge and why they never built a bridge or how there was like a lot of space on the wall where this guy.

Leraje

For future people who disappointed them.

Ligeia

Yes. It's like really looking at that. Like, yeah, it should have been in a different story. I would like to have those pictures here. But they never built the bridge. And how these people actually didn't want to do anything.

Leraje

They wouldn't do it themselves.

Ligeia

They wouldn't, like, plant anything that could grow and they could sell now. Like, they just didn't do anything. And I found it so funny, the

Leraje

bit that made me, uh, laugh out loud. Was early on in the story, we are told that Tom. Tom Brightwind the fairy, is ridiculously good looking. I mean, so handsome, it's almost silly. Uh, you know, just a beautiful man. And when they all first go to knock on the Winstanley's door, the door is answered by the maid, who can't stop looking, sort of like staring at Tom.

And then she goes off to tell Mr. M and Mrs. Winstan they've got guests. And you can hear her voice saying, oh, I saw the most beautiful man. And, uh, Tom says to David, what's happening? And David says, the maid is describing me to her.

Ligeia

I almost died. Like, is he joking? Is he jealous? Or. He really thought. I think he really thought.

Leraje

Oh, uh, dear.

Ligeia

And Tom, he was like, okay. And he continued looking at the lions. The.

Leraje
The teeny, tiny stone lions.

Ligeia
Yeah. Oh, my goodness. It was such a funny.

Leraje
It was very funny.

Ligeia
I mean, the way she wrote it, it was so.

Leraje
Yeah. My descriptions do not do it justice. It's.

Ligeia
No, no, no, it's. It's very good. And also how. I. I, uh, think one of the. The themes in this story was how different is the experience of life for a fairy. How actually a fairy can't really make any deep connections. There is this sort of not belonging anywhere because they have lived for thousands and thousands of years.

They have so many children and grandchildren, and they actually kidnap kids and they forget they kidnapped them. And they're like, why are you here? Who. Who are you? I don't care. Like, specifically, Tom had so many kids, like these daughters, and this guy was asking him, like, why don't you take care of them?

You should give them some purpose, like make them study something or get good at something. And he's like, why should I care? I don't really. They're annoying me. Oh, I have one. One, like, well, actually, I also can't stop talking, but that's different.

Leraje
I'm allowed to crown fairy.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Leraje
Lord.

Ligeia
So he sends them away. Yeah. Because they're constantly. Okay. And he's like, when.

Leraje
When we first meet Tom in person and he comes into the. The room where David is talking to the princesses, Tom's like, first words are, God, uh, there's a lot of women in this room. Whereupon they all silently stand up and walk out.

Ligeia
Just walk out.

Leraje
Because they don't want to be banished to some fairy hell or something, I guess.

Ligeia
Here we go again. He's here. Okay, girls. So it was just like, sort of. Sort of sad that, like, being a fairy is actually quite empty life, or can we call it a life, like existence? So she. She's very subtle about these things, but actually you can make these, I don't know, connections between like, what's happening because it's never like a whole paragraph about oh, so alive of a fairy is so sad.

Actually. He is very pretty.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
And he can make all this, but

Leraje
I don't think he's even aware of it. I think he just kind of like accepts it as a kind of like.

Ligeia
Oh, yeah, I don't think he's bothered anymore.

Leraje
One of my favourite bits in that story, in terms of, um, descriptive passages, is the bit where they actually build the bridge. And Tom uses his magic to summon like, an architect from Cambridge and all these people from all over the country of like, they're all in their bed in their own homes.

And like, the next thing they're like, what the am I doing in, like, uh, just outside this small town outside of Nottingham, building a bridge. And they never question it. It's like they just go ahead and do it.

Ligeia
Yes. And everything was blooming, like, even their windows, like, because it was like wooden frames. The wood starts to like, getting like, swollen and it's like. What was it? A SAP? Like a lot of SAP was dripping.

Leraje
Yeah, that's right. David notices one of the trees and he says, blimey, that tree's good. Oh, an apple tree in June. Hang on a minute. That's a horse chestnut tree. Why is it sprouting apples at all? And it's like there's, uh, all this life just pulsing through the whole thing

Ligeia
and life that doesn't make sense. As you say, like a cherry tree would bring apples. Then there were oranges and figs and pomegranate, uh, or whatever. It's like nothing makes any sense, but it's pretty. And I don't know, I think it

Leraje
gives a sense that fairy magic is not very well controlled. And it's fairly chaotic. It's kind of like Tom just kind of like dumps m this load of magic and it just does its thing. And it doesn't really stop to think about the effects. It does the thing that he wants to happen, but it also has all these unintended consequences as well.

Ligeia
You know what it reminds me of? Um, the Asterix and Obelix.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
You know the potion they were drinking, like, if you overdo it. Oh. Like it would go just like poof.

Leraje
God. Yeah. That's a long time since I've read these books.

Ligeia

Right. Yeah. But, like, some details you will never Forget. And. I don't know, I. This is what I saw in my head. But what do you make of the. The child that was born, uh, by Mrs. Yeah. When. When what was Winstanley. Because she couldn't have kids.

Leraje

Yeah, I think it's. Its last name is quite rightly going to be Brightwind, not Winstanley.

Ligeia

But don't you. Did you see any connection between probably him seducing her and all that, that bloom? Like. Do you think it was, like, at the same moment, or am I seeing magic fairy sperm? Yeah, I mean, could be, yeah. This is what I saw again in my mind.

Leraje

It happened as a kind of thing of. All right, so I've fucked this man's wife and, um, I've got her pregnant, so she's now going to have a child. I'll give them something in return. And, uh, what I'll give them is this bridge.

Ligeia

Yeah. So they will shut up.

Leraje

But I don't think the two things are necessarily. They don't contradict each other.

Ligeia

No.

Leraje

Uh, yeah, it's a very, very funny story. It sounds awful the way we've described it. They all sound like terrible people and they are. Apart from poor David. But, uh.

Ligeia

Yeah. Oh, my goodness. Yeah. And Lucy, probably. There was also this detail which I don't know if I understood. It was to the end of the story, when everything was happening. And I think it was Lucy that made. And I don't know who. Mrs. Were, like, trying to see over the fence and they saw this golden boat with three angels, like little.

Little baby angels singing.

Leraje

I think that was the.

Ligeia

I don't know.

Leraje

You know, earlier I said that Tom kind of like just dumped this load of magic up. I think that was. That, uh. I think that the angels were kind of like fairies, just kind of like singing this thing into existence. Singing the magic into existence.

Ligeia

Can you imagine?

Leraje

Uh, yeah, because I. I mean, it's an odd scene. It's almost religious. It's almost kind of like. Almost. Yeah, almost Christian, but not. Not quite. Yeah. If you'd read that story, just that bit of the story in the Bible, you would

have said. Oh, yeah, okay. Yeah, that's. That's a. A fairly typical biblical event.

But, uh.

Ligeia

All right, yeah, well, we have talking and burning, uh, bushes. Giving you, like, the rules for your life.

Leraje

Why not three singing cherubim or whatever they were.

Ligeia

Yeah, why not? Why not? I mean, some of the Bible stuff I would take, like changing water into wine. Come on. Say no more. Give it here. No, but, yeah, it was an amazing story. And, you know, one more detail. I. When you mentioned, like, there was this architect in Cambridge, uh, there was.

There was the mention of, uh, Giambattista Piranesi.

Leraje

I saw that. I meant to make a note of it and completely.

Ligeia

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I was like. My eyes went out of my head, like, oh, my God, there we go. Because he was an actual person and he was doing these. What is it called in English? Um, imaginary prisons.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

Which is mentioned in the. In the story. Because they were like. Yeah. They were like, is it going to be a prison? Are you going to build a prison? And it was because. Because of the work he did in 1710 or 1715. Like, it's actually when the story was happening. So I guess that was just a nice little touch by Clark.

I really liked it. Yeah. So I really like that detail. Yeah, I wanted to say that.

Leraje

All right. And our random story was Mr. M. Simonelli, or the fairy widower.

Ligeia

Yes.

Leraje

Now this one, it has humorous elements in it, but overall it's a much darker story than the other two.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

Is that fair to say, do you think?

Ligeia

I think so. Because, uh, at the beginning, when it's just Mr. Simonelli and it's like, describing what is happening with his life, he's this. Do you use this word? Bachelor? Like a man who is not married yet and he would like to be. So he is a sort of. He's not. He's a priest.

Leraje

Well, at the start of the story, he's a scholar and he sort of. He kind of like, says to himself, God, I'm broke. I'm either going to have to become a vicar or get married. So he decides to become a vicar.

Ligeia

That's the funny part. Like, the beginning is really funny, how he's going about, uh, thinking about his, like, prospects of future, like M. So I will have to do something with myself. And this is what I wanted to, um, quote. Like, he is thinking of, like, the pros and cons of being married.

Like, obviously he would like to still continue being focused on the studies. And he is, uh. He likes to be, like, with his nose in. In the books and he really likes that sort of life in silence and sort of secluded. But also he would like to get married and. Because that would bring him some money and.

And a home, you know, so he's. He's contemplating. And so I'm quoting. "I have been too long accustomed to the rigorous, to the rigorous of scholarly debate to feel much enthusiasm for female conversation. No more to refresh my soul in the company of aquinas Aristophanes, Euclid and Avicenna. But instead, to pass my hours attending to a discourse upon the merits of a bonnet trimmed with coquelicot ribbons".

Coquelicot is a new word to me. End of. End of, uh, quote. I found this extremely hilarious.

Leraje

Yeah, there's no escaping the fact that Mr. M. Simonelli is a bit of a dick throughout a lot of the story. But we do find out why.

Ligeia

Oh, yeah. Let's go. Go on.

Leraje

So, a brief summation of the story. That Mr. Simonelli is, uh, a scholar. I can't remember. Did they say. What university was that? Was it Cambridge or Oxford or something like? Uh, that? Uh, I can't remember.

Ligeia

Let me see if I made a, uh, note. I don't with Cambridge.

Leraje

Yeah, I thought Cambridge too. I'm not sure. Anyway, he's a scholar, he's at university, and as we said, he's desperate for money. So he's either thinking of becoming a vicar or getting married. When his nemesis, his arch enemy, Dr. Prothero, says to him, I've got the perfect situation for you. There's a town in Derbyshire which needs a vicar.

And you could do that. It would be brilliant. And he decides, okay, I'll do that. So off he goes, um, on his journey upwards. He comes across a couple of people who are saying that, uh, one of the person's wife is very ill. She's trying to give birth and she's in great distress.

No doctors can be found. And Mr. Simonelli, or Reverend Simonelli, as we. Mr. Reverend M. Simonelli, we should call him now, bizarrely says, well, I've written a few letters to an eminent physician, therefore I probably know what to do. So I'll come, um, with you and help out.

Ligeia

I read some books.

Leraje

All right. Okay. Then they're like, yeah, okay. So they go off to this strange, uh, house called all hope. Mr. Simonelli, Reverend Simonelli, pardon me, does

manage to give, to successfully birth a child, but unfortunately, the mother dies during

Ligeia

the process because he push. Pushes his whole arms into her and turns the baby around. And he's like, oh, just like, do this. Oh, what can we do? She's dead.

Leraje

So he then goes downstairs to tell the husband that, uh, unfortunately, his wife's died. And, uh, and the husband says, oh, I'm sure you did all you could. No problem.

Ligeia

Yes. He was, like, just sitting there reading a book, like, okay, it's fine.

Leraje

So it turns out that the. The husband's name is John Hollyshoes, and the name Holly Shoes immediately tells us that Jon is Fae. He's a fairy. He, um, has a manservant called Dando. And I'm not entirely sure whether Dando is Fae himself or human or a sprite. I'm not 100% clear on that.

Ligeia

I think it was left to our imagination.

Leraje

Anyway, so Mr. Simonelli. Sorry, Reverend Simonelli, resumes his journey, gets to the village where he's due to be the rector, and, uh, assumes his duties as the rector. Along the way he meets, uh, Mrs. Gathercole, the widow of, uh, the deceased Admiral Gathercole, um, and her sister in law, Mrs. Edmund. And, um, they have five daughters.

They don't have. Mrs. Gathercole has five daughters. Isabella, Marianne, Henrietta, Kitty and Jane. So, um, the first event that happens is we are told that a young girl by the name of Dido Puddifer. Great name.

Ligeia

I kept saying dildo.

Leraje

Dildo.

Ligeia

I can't just say Dildo.

Leraje

Puddifer.

Ligeia

Yes, dear.

Leraje

Uh, anyway, yeah, she's gone missing. That's all we're told. Reverend Simonelli, not being the brightest spark in the box, doesn't immediately put two and two together like everybody else in the entire world probably would.

Ligeia

Right?

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

Because like the description of a poor Dido. Yeah, she, she has a baby and she is breastfeeding the baby. That is the first information.

Leraje
What could have happened today?

Ligeia
Oh, uh, I don't know. Like, what's it, another baby that needed some.

Leraje
Yeah. Wasn't there another baby just recently born, Mr. M. Simonelli?

Ligeia
I don't know. I don't know.

Leraje
I'm going to stop calling him mister. His full name is Alessandro. Um, yeah, so also when, um, Alessandro mentions John Holly Shoes to the, the, the people within the village, no one's heard of him. They don't know who he is. They've got no idea. So these, the five daughters, uh, ingratiate themselves with Alessandro and he becomes their tutor and teaches him different things depending on what it is they want to do.

In the meantime, there's this secondary story going on where John Hollyshoes calls Alessandro back to All Hope, which is the name of the house where John lives, and reveals to him that he, Alessandro, is actually John's cousin.

Ligeia
Yeah, like we are. We are actually.

Leraje
Yeah, we're related family.

Ligeia
We are related. And he's like, no way. You know what I think? Because he didn't, you know, like, put Dido. I need to be careful with that name.

Leraje
You can call her Dildo.

Ligeia
Yeah, like the lost dildo. Okay. Um, sorry. No, Breast hitting dildo is not a good thing, I don't think. Anyway, so when we find her in the story and she is, yes of course she's imprisoned in this All Hope house. She is tied to or chained to a chair with this newborn baby of uh, what was his name?

John Holyshoes. But she is in this sort of like spell. Under a spell she sees everything beautiful around herself. She thinks she's wearing like golden dress and everything is beautiful and clean. The baby is the most beautiful baby ever born. And she is the happiest person ever to be able to be with this baby and feed him.

So she's under a spell. And I think why Jon actually was able to detect that. Okay, so this Alessandro guy keeps to be sort of like, yeah, he was not under the spell.

Leraje
Yeah, he wasn't taking him.

Ligeia
I was like, what was wrong with you? So you can actually see this interesting m. Because he asked about the baby when he was born.

Leraje
Yes.

Ligeia

There was this cloth and he was like, no, no, no, you need to put the baby in like a really clean cloth. Like what are you doing? This is. This is filthy. And. And the John guy was like, interesting. Yeah. So you see the cloth.

Leraje

That's why I wasn't sure about the status of Dando because he immediately turns to Dando and at that point and says Dan Dade, what do you see? Do you see that cloth as filthy, dirty or a rich luxurious blanket?

Ligeia

Yeah, that is true.

Leraje

I thought. I wasn't quite sure whether he was Fae himself or just an ordinary human.

Ligeia

I don't even know whether he replied to that.

Leraje

No, I can't. But. So anyway, it turns out that Alessandro Simonelli dad was Thomas Fairwood fairy, dead cousin to John Hollyshoes. So Alessandro frees Dido and they try to escape through the woods. They climb a tree to escape from John and Dando. And um.

Ligeia

Because that's what you do.

Leraje

That's what you do. Yeah, I guess. Climb a tree.

Ligeia

Climb a tree.

Leraje

And uh, John has also said that he wants to take a new wife. And he spotted five lovely ladies in the nearest village. And Alessandro this time, you know, he does actually twig. He does get the connection and realises that he has to protect these five, uh, daughters. So he. He proposes to all of them and swears of secrecy without.

Ligeia

Well like they don't know about it. Like each of them is like okay, we need to keep this really secret. So he goes to each of them and promises them marriage. And they all like almost like swear like, okay, I will not tell anybody. Not even My sisters.

Leraje

The reason being that Alessandro reasons that if John approaches one of them and asks them to marry him, that woman can legitimately say, I'm sorry, I'm already engaged.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

Which is I guess quite a good plan. But um, anyway, so Alessandro and Dido, ah, are fleeing through the woods and John and Dando catch up to them. They start to do some fairy magic on Alessandro and Dido. Alessandro manages to make to copy us a uh, kind of like hand signal that he'd seen John Hollyshoes do earlier in the story and it ends up killing Jon.

Ligeia

Yes.

Leraje

So everything's all right with the world. And then it gets out that Alessandro has proposed to each of the five daughters and there is uproar. Yeah. Of a completely non fairy related kind. The poor man has to flee for

Ligeia

his life, I imagine.

Leraje

I'm sorry, but it is, it does have moments of humour. But it is, I mean the kind of like the sort of like the kidnapping and uh, the sort of, you know, the abuse of Dido and the sort of like even the wise. The wife died like that.

Ligeia

But like they're really. There are like moments of real good humour. For example how the Mr. Simonelli never was riding a horse before. So they just put him on a horse and he was like, oh, actually I can do this.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

Because it was the spell obviously. But then he's trying to repeat this thing and he wants to be like a little bit showing off in front of the girls.

Leraje

I can do this. I'm an expert.

Ligeia

Yeah. And he is unable to. Absolutely. And they are looking at him like everything is quiet. I think even the birds were silent. Like what is happening? And he's like, no, no, no, I can do it. I did it before. I can do it. I absolutely can just ride a horse because I read it in the books, you know, like, I think it's like um, mocking a little bit or this like the.

Leraje

She has got. Susanna Clarke has got this really great skill of making a person's character obvious in a very short space of time. I mean you suspect immediately, not long into the short story that Alessandro is a bit of a dick. Uh.

Ligeia

Oh yeah.

Leraje

You know, just from his reactions to things. He's an egocentric asshole. And it turns out that he's an egocentric asshole because he's a fairy. But uh, we didn't know that the time.

Ligeia

Yeah. And he didn't know probably like that. That is kind of curious to me because I think fairies would know. They have some superpowers or you know, so.

Leraje

Well, maybe because he was raised by humans and he never.

Ligeia

Maybe, ah, I don't know.

Leraje

Maybe fairies have to go to fairy school, learn how to do fairy magic. Who knows?

Ligeia

I don't think it's Cambridge then. Yeah. Oh, my goodness. Yeah, that's basically. That's all three stories.

Leraje

Yeah, they're very good stories. Again, they're not long. None of them are long. Um, they are based in the same universe as Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell, the much, much longer novel. But it is not necessary to have read that novel before you read the stories.

Ligeia

Yeah. And we will talk to you soon.

Leraje

Yeah. The next one is going to be a full episode with all four of us. Okay, well, we'll see you next time. Um, until then, I've been Leraje Hail Satan.

Ligeia

Ligeia Hail Satan. Bye bye.

[Outro music plays]