

The Devil's Library Episode 14.5 – “Songs of a Dead Dreamer and Grimscribe – Part 7”

[Intro Music]

Ligeia

Hello, beautiful sinners. Welcome to our new episode. Today is just me. My name is Ligeia. Hail Satan. And my best friend, Leraje.

Leraje

Hail Satan. Um, hi. It's feeling a bit hellish here in the uk.

Ligeia

Inferno.

Leraje

Yeah. Bit warm, innit?

Ligeia

In it. Yes. So we decided to bring more hell upon you. Uh, so we are going to continue with our beloved Thomas Ligotti and his book and his. His work. Um, I think this is part eight. Am I right? Episode eight. I. I lost count. It's okay. It doesn't matter. Right, so we are doing, uh, like a group of stories which are all in this group that is called the Voice of the Demon.

And it's four stories, but we have already done one of them, uh, in the shadow of another world. So if you want to know more about that story, you can find it somewhere in our previous episodes. So today we are going to talk about the rest the. The three stories that we read before maybe.

Or we didn't. But we didn't talk about them. I don't know. How about you? I think I read them before, but I had to reread.

Leraje

Everything's new to me.

Ligeia

Is it? Okay. See, this is good.

Leraje

So, yeah, I think I've said this in other one. The other Ligotti ones we've done, but I try really hard not to read them.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

Before. Because I know we're gonna do these.

Ligeia

You know what? I read the whole book before, but.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

Uh, it was some time ago and I read the whole book in one and in one reading.

Leraje

And that's Grimscribe. Or both of them?

Ligeia

Both of them. Both of them. And I am so happy we are doing this because that's not how Ligotti's work should be read. I don't think it was. I was just overwhelmed all over the place. I think you should actually stop after each story and think and do a little analysis or whatever you want to call it.

Leraje

Yeah, certainly. After each, um, of these little sections.

Ligeia

At least. At least. Even though I. I think I've read somewhere that he actually couldn't really explain why they are in these groups really. I'm not sure if this is correct information. We should probably look into that. But it's somewhere like in the back of my mind, like, he was like, I don't like putting things in groups because, uh, I just create and I don't know.

But somehow it happened like this. If I'm wrong, I'm sorry, I might come back to this information.

Leraje

Okay.

Ligeia

But yeah, anyway, so I have my theory why? These are in the same group.

Leraje

Yeah, me too.

Ligeia

Okay, let's leave that for. For. For the. For the. The end. Okay, so we have three stories. The first one is the Dreaming in Nortown. Then the Mystics of. I read it in German. I don't know. Muelenberg.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

And then the Cocoons. M. So let's do this. I really like. It's the voice of the demon with us.

Leraje

The voice of the demon.

Ligeia

The demon.

Leraje

How apt.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

So which one did you read first? Did you do chronologically?

Ligeia

Yes, I did that because I thought maybe. Maybe the group M might be obvious. But also I thought he knew why he puts things in chronological order. I think they are getting more and more disturbing as they go.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

So I always do follow his. His mind in the. So you did the same.

Leraje

Yes. And for the same reason as well.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

Uh, I do think they get increasingly kind of like weirder, uh, and more abstract and disturbing with each one.

Ligeia

Yeah. And it's. It's in each group. It's not just this one. It's even like the one we did before, uh, with Chris. Right. What was the last time? Uh, yeah, I don't know which group was that? I forgot. But yeah, it was. It was true for that group as well.

Leraje

By the way, for those who are missing Chris, um, as is probably obvious from his accent, Chris is in the US and we were struggling to get, uh, a date and time that Ligeia and I could make, let alone Chris.

Ligeia

So sadly, we had to the different time zones. It is quite challenge. And in this heat. It's no fun. No.

Leraje

Ah, so the Dreaming in Nortown was the first one, was it? I guess.

Ligeia

Okay. Do you want to set the scene?

Leraje

Yeah. Gonna give a little controversial opinion on this one as well.

Ligeia

Okay.

Leraje

This is by far my least favourite Ligotti short story that I've read so far.

Ligeia

Yoopie. We found it. Yes.

Leraje

Yeah. It's the first time I've read one of his stories and thought, please just get to the fucking point. And it started off good and it ended good. But the bit in the middle when he's wandering around all the streets, coffee shop, pub, club, just. Okay, I get it. He's wandering around. But just.

Can we just like, get to the.

Ligeia

I know, I know, I know.

Leraje

It just seemed to go on and on and on. That bit.

Ligeia

It did, it did. It's quite like, longer. It's a longer story.

Leraje

It's a longer one.

Ligeia

The longest out, uh, of these. I. I don't want to say, uh, I Love him too much. I can't say it didn't have to, because I think he did this on purpose.

Leraje

Absolutely.

Ligeia

So I'm not going to say that because who am I to criticise? Ligoti Never. Yeah, I can't.

Leraje

And I don't think I. I would. I'm not criticising it, uh, as such, just so saying. It's. It's this. Of all the stories that we've read by him, across all the parts, all the episodes we've done on his stories, this is the one that appealed to me the least.

Ligeia

Yeah, I get it.

Leraje

And that doesn't make it bad, um, because I thought it was a very strong start and a fantastic finish.

Ligeia

Yes.

Leraje

But, uh, the middle bit, kind of like.

Ligeia

Yeah, yeah.

Leraje

So tell us, what's the dream in Nortown is about? Guests. An, um, anthropologist, maybe?

Ligeia

Yes, he. Kind of Student.

Leraje

Yeah, yeah. He. He. By his own description, he likes to study people. And, um, the person that he's very interested in is his roommate, whose name is Jack Quinn. Jack seems to be having these weird dreams and, um, they get so weird and he gets so loud about that that he disturbs, um, the narrator of the story, whose name I don't think we ever learn.

No, he starts. The narrator starts to have weird dreams as well. And then there comes this protracted bit where Jack Quinn goes on this kind of, like, perambulation through this dark part of the city. And the narrator's following him from shop to pub to club to coffee shop. And then there is a kind of like, climax to the story, which I won't spoil, but, uh, it's.

It is worth it. But it does seem to take quite a long time to get there.

Ligeia

Yeah. So we are not spoiling.

Leraje

Okay, well, maybe not kind of like literally spoil, but I mean, the theme of the sort of. The overall crux of the story, as far as I could tell, was that the dreams were being manifested from somewhere else, another dimension, through

Jack Quinn, who was actively seeking out these experiences. Or maybe he started by actively seeking out these experiences and then got trapped by them.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Leraje
And slowly the narrator was also becoming kind of like infected, for want of a better word, by them as well.

Ligeia
Yeah, that's how I understood because, like, at the beginning he is just, like, seeing this roommate or whatever, and he is coming home very late. He looks bad. He doesn't change his clothes. There was like, really nice sentence about his coat. So something like it has since, like, so many Octobers. I don't know.

It was so. Yes, the Writing is so beautiful.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
Even if I can, I can, um, agree with you. It's like a lot of soup in the middle. But I think the, like, he wanted us to, to go through that because it made the story. I also had to like, I, I really struggle focusing in this heat. I was trying to read under a tree, like in the, uh, early morning.

So it's not that hot and I can actually get into this legal world, but with the sunshine in my face, it's so tough.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
So I, I, I know maybe, maybe in the like winter setting you might have not struggled that much.

Leraje
Maybe, Maybe, uh, who knows?

Ligeia
Who knows? But yeah, so whatever. So he is looking at this class, not classmate. Sorry. And he is thinking, so what's happening to him? So he's, he's paying attention because he is, he can see they are like, there is a, um, distance. They are creating distance. This, this Jack is going some places and coming back.

So he's like, what is happening to this guy? You know, like a little bit nosy there. And then he, they talk and he tells him. Oh, so I am um, like I am meeting this strange, not very secret, but maybe secretive society.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
This sect of sorts. From there we can see where it goes with Jack. And it's sad, it's very sad.

Leraje
Did you think, did you get the impression during that kind of like long walk about the city, very long, that Jack Quinn was trying to make himself stay awake because he was drinking coffee and he was like kept, he kept on moving and he kept on doing, you know, it felt like he was trying to force himself to stay awake.

And then in that final scene, he just kind of like, you know.

Ligeia

Yeah, he did not. I felt like he is trying to avoid falling asleep the best he could.

Leraje

And that's what made me think that maybe he started this willingly by wanting to explore it.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

But then ended up sort of like not wanting to.

Ligeia

He realised maybe it's not him who is controlling it. So, you know, and this is fascinating because that is the scary part about the sects and cults where I don't think this was about cults. I, I don't think so. But if we take it as like this little detail from the story being about a sect, about a cult, they are scary.

I would never join anything that is like well organised cult situation because it might be exactly this, like you are trying, you think, oh, there is this hidden knowledge. Nobody, nobody else has this access to this forbidden knowledge. And you know something that is, I want to, I would like that we do have that, by the way, but, um, we can't talk about this.

But you know what I mean, like they promise you everything. Like you will understand the universe. You will learn how everything works. You will, you will control things. I don't know everybody, it's, it's in human nature. You want to understand. It has been there since, since the beginning. And then when he realises probably that that's not the case.

And I'm deeply in this, in this shite.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

And now it's controlling me through when I'm sleeping or whatever that state was. Because I don't know if that was that sleep. I don't know. He was making these horrible sounds.

Leraje

I don't know if it wasn't kind of sleep in the, in the way that we know it as. It was certainly some kind of state of unconscious because it felt like these things were being broadcast into his mind.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

Um, but it could only happen when he was, um. Excuse me, when he was unconscious.

Ligeia

Either unconscious or maybe just like physically, you know, like sleep paralysis. Like maybe he even wasn't completely not there. But I don't know because he was, he was. His diary said a lot, so he understood something. I don't want to spoil it, so um, I'm trying but like, you know, he, the, the

narrator, he found this diary and he was reading and there was certain things that I was surprised.

Like, okay, so he knows this Jack guy. He, he knew that this, this, this and that was happening.

Leraje

But I think again, going back to that cult, the idea of the cult that you, you brought up, it's different being told that you're going to get all the secrets of the universe to actually, you know, finding out what that means. Uh, and it sounds good, but maybe it's not that great. Doesn't you start.

Yeah, yeah.

Ligeia

Um,

Leraje

so I think he probably did know. You know, they might have said to him, oh yeah, by the way, these like extra dimensional beings are going to start beaming things into your head.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

And you know, they, they would probably phrase that differently in a way that sounds really cool and exciting and you know, but once the reality of it hits him, it's kind of like not so great. But that doesn't mean that he doesn't know what's happening.

Ligeia

Yeah, yeah. And this is so, so Ligottian. Um, by the way, like I think this is exactly like when you take for example, Lovecraft.

Leraje

Mhm.

Ligeia

He, he was always like, oh, it was also around like seeking knowledge. But the knowledge would be exactly that. Forbidden, beautiful, powerful something with Ligotti, he is not questioning, obtaining knowledge. He's like, yeah, you can, but do you want to? Because.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

What if the truth is actually freaking terrifying and ugly and it's not, it's not for human mind, you can't comprehend. And it will, it will destroy you if you know.

Leraje

Yeah, I mean that, that is true. But uh, I mean the thing with a lot of Lovecraft stories as well, a lot of the kind of like protagonists of these stories kind of stumbled into the situation completely accidentally.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

You think of stories like Haunter of the Dark or Dagon. Um.

Ligeia

Yes. Ah.

Leraje

Where you know, a man sees a church across the other side of the town from his room, from the window in his room, and then he ends up him getting like attacked by this demigod type beast. But it's a situation. It's not a situation he thought out. It wasn't him trying to seek hidden knowledge.

It was more like you just have to be there at the wrong time and notice the wrong things.

Ligeia

That is very true. Mhm. That's a good point.

Leraje

I do think what you said about cults is probably very true. Uh, you know, that kind of. Jack Quinn seems to be someone who sought that out purposefully.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

Or at least expressed interest when it was offered to him.

Ligeia

Yeah. Maybe as an experiment, like in his studies. He. Obviously it might be. If you're into this like anthropology and humanist, you would be interested. Well, I would, I would be interested. And yeah, I was, I was very sad for the guy. Uh, I would not have followed him for so long, I can tell you that.

If it was my friend and I was like, okay, let's keep you safe. I would, but not for just like, oh yeah, that was like, oh my goodness.

Leraje

As soon as you went to the restaurant, I would have said this, I'm going home.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

I'm not gonna sit here for an hour or so and watch someone eat food slowly.

Ligeia

So what, what is your idea? Like what, what is the message here?

Leraje

Message?

Ligeia

Analyse it for me.

Leraje

Analyse. I think, I think like with a lot of Ligotti stuff, it's kind of like, it's the juxtaposition between the ancient and the modern.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Leraje

Whereas with Lovecraft it was all about the, the ancient being there, just not seen. With Ligotti it's much more present. The, the sort of like the ancient knowledge is, is like it's present, it's there and it's not particularly difficult to uh, to kind of like access with some of Lovecraft's stuff. You get the feeling, you know, these.

These are mad professor types are doing studies for decades, you know, to try and unlock the key or whatever it was. But with Ligotti's, um. And I think it's kind of like. I think it's if. If. If there is a subtext, um. And Ligotti did want to have a subtextual message to this.

It's maybe about the dangers of seeking things that are not necessarily good for you. It's. It did seem to be a bit of a parable for addiction to me.

Ligeia

Addiction? You think like. Like Jack would have been addicted addicted?

Leraje

Yeah. Unable to sort of, like, put it down and walk away and fighting not to not, you know, uh, maybe the. The long, whole evening walk. The sort of, like, writing things down. The kind of like struggle to stay awake, if that's what was happening. It felt like an addict trying to kick the habit, sort of thing.

Ligeia

That could be. Maybe that was. It is a very sad story. Which story? Ligotti is not sad, but I

Leraje

was gonna say they're all pretty miserable.

Ligeia

Yeah. Yeah. I thought. I thought the whole walk in the town is. The thing that was coming to my mind is like, this is an exploration of a, uh, mind. Like the. The town as a mind.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

And it was getting so long and, uh, you know, uh. Oh, snaily. That's a new word now. Hello.

Leraje

Snake.

Ligeia

Snaily. Sluggish. The wolf.

Leraje

I don't like snails anymore. More about that next. Next episode.

Ligeia

Next episode. I know. And just looked at you like, did I just do this? Okay.

Leraje

Okay.

Ligeia

Yeah. Don't eat tapenade people. Okay. Anyway. But. Yeah, so this is what I thought. This is why it was taking so long. Like, the mind is getting, like, distorted and slow and not computing properly. And we are exploring it in this way, but I'm not sure if this was the message.

Leraje

So maybe, like, Jack was putting himself through, like a. Like a rite of passage sort of thing. Is that.

Ligeia

I was thinking about the narrator getting. Getting. Getting a little bit.

Leraje
Oh, yeah.

Ligeia
Not all there. Following him, like, following. Maybe getting entangled in the same. He didn't go to the meetings, but it was not. I don't think it was caused by. By those meetings. I thought it was some kind of, like, contagious thing somehow through the mind. Or was it in the diary? I don't know.

I can't really.

Leraje
I don't know that that's one of the things that made me think it was possibly a metaphor for addiction. That kind of like infection sort of like. I mean, that's that's, you know, how people get addicted to, to drugs or alcohol or, or anything. You know, they might say, hey, give this a try.

You know, and it's kind of like, yeah, so maybe. But as far as the direct story goes. Yeah, I think you're probably right. Mhm. I'm thinking better of it now. I was half an hour.

Ligeia
See, it's good to talk. It's really. I always think better after we talk.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
About every story. Even though I might love the story. But after we talk I see so many new layers.

Leraje
Or me too.

Ligeia
Like options. Like oh my goodness, this is what makes them so absolutely genius. Because next time I read this I will see something else. I'm sure.

Leraje
I mean. Yeah, I mean there's. The Ligotti stuff is so multi layered anyway.

Ligeia
Um, there's always something new he never over explains. He's like, hm, do what you want with this.

Leraje
Yeah, absolutely. And I, I like that. I very much enjoy that.

Ligeia
I love it. I love it. I hate over explained books and stories. I'm like, please let me do what I want with this. And he does. And now he had. I'm um. You know, if he listens to us, he will go like, oh no, maybe I should have explained. No, no, don't. No, no, no, no, no.

Yeah, but I, I thought, uh, just like a few more things I, I wanted to say about this. Like I really liked the way he again uses sort of like a human as a puppet.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia

The lost of the control. It's. It's always there. And he finds so many new ways to explore this. It is unbelievable.

Leraje

Yeah, he does do that a lot. There's always a character that's a surrogate for the narrator, uh, or even himself, you know, as the writer. Maybe it's kind of like there's always this one remove from the actual event. Well, not always, but a lot of the time.

Ligeia

Yeah, a lot of the time. But it's always interesting. And I'm like, I have, I have seen this idea in your book. This is not new. A human being is a puppet lost of control and he finds a new story around it and explore it. And I'm not bored. One second. I'm not bored.

Maybe the, the walk is a little bit longer. I agree. But the ending was, the ending was that hit me, really hit me.

Leraje

And maybe you needed that long walking.

Ligeia

That's what I'm thinking. Yeah, yeah.

Leraje

Just so the ending hit properly.

Ligeia

Even though I, I really also had to like go back and reread a few Paragraphs. But I think it was the heat.

Leraje

Yes. All right, should we move on to the mystics of Muelenberg?

Ligeia

Muelenberg.

Leraje

Can you tell us about this one?

Ligeia

I can try. Um, yeah. The plot in this one, I struggle putting it in, like, a normal sentence, but yeah. So again, we have a narrator. I don't think we have a name for him, but he goes to visit a man. His name is Klaus, or Klaus Klingman. This guy lives in this, like, um, old or like, empty warehouse, upper floor somewhere.

So it's not a nice place. It's a weird space. Again, very, very atmospheric. I really enjoyed it. And so he visits him, and this Klaus sits down and the story goes like. He just talks. Nothing really happens. We don't go anywhere. He talks. He says a story. I really liked. There was a sentence, uh, uh, he said, like, without a doubt, um, Klingman was one of the Illuminati.

Leraje

Yes.

Ligeia

I'm like, what? This is like, one of the first information pieces we get.

Leraje

Yeah. Klaus Klingman, AKA Nemo, the necromancer. Marlow M. The Magus. And Master Marinetti of the Illuminati.

Ligeia

Yes. What? I'm like, well, we are going a good, good start here. What is going to happen? So, yeah, this guy has a, uh, quote that is like. We are coming back to this short sentence. Do you know which one?

Leraje
Maybe. Go on, say it.

Ligeia
Fluidity. Always fluidity.

Leraje
Yeah, yeah.

Ligeia
Um, and first time I read it, I'm like, okay, so I'm not getting it. What? I'm not getting it. But as we were, uh, closing, like, to. To the finish line, I was starting to understand what he means. And I will never forget the sentence. I can tell you, because this story. Aha.

Uh, was so. So spooky, scary, disturbing to me. I don't know why. I know why. But this really, really disturbed me. I had to put it down and go for a walk. And, um. So I really don't know how to say much more about this. There is this story. He tells him a story about this town of Muelenberg, which is just an example.

He. He wants to just, like, tell him an example of something he is trying to prove is real or is. Is happening in reality. So it's sort of like a lecture.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
For us. For the. For the. For the narrator, visitor. I have certain sentences written here, but, um, I don't know. I don't know. So he tells him a lot about this town. You should read this story. Because what I'm gonna say is not Is not gonna translate to anything really interesting. But the story of this town is basically that these people, some of them can see the subtle changes at the beginning.

Some of them choose to ignore that oh, something is happening. The sun is not sunning today. The air is not airing. We feel weird, you know. And they just.

Leraje
It was this, yeah. This kind of semi permanent twilight, wasn't it? It was.

Ligeia
Mhm. The colours were not colouring. Everything was starting to be more grey and they were like, you know, like they were trying to breathe as a normal breathing. Yeah. You don't think about you breathing, you just breathe.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
Once you have to actually think about, think about it. Something's wrong. And they were. And they were like well it is kind of weird, but yeah, just go sleep. Okay. So they went to sleep and it just continued and it got. Was getting worse and worse and people just took was like we do that look at the planet.

Right. Isn't that what we are doing? I don't even. This is what upset me so much because uh, I was thinking, are we these people? Look at the heat, look at what's happening. And we are just like, oh, just gonna sleep. Maybe it will go away.

Leraje

It'll be fine tomorrow it will be fine.

Ligeia

Or maybe I will just get used to this. Huh? Uh, who needs to breathe anyway? I don't know.

Leraje

I said about the previous one, uh, the nor town one, but it was the first one that I'd found. I'd read of his which you know, I found a bit of a drag in the middle section. This was superbly written.

Ligeia

Right.

Leraje

It was super. So dark and gothic in places. It seemed to me to be a story about. Yes, very much. The things that you, you just said about the. How people can ignore the obvious wrongness of what's going on around them.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

But also about the nature of matter. Uh, sort of like the nature of reality and uh, the kind of how it can change and how obvious it can be and people still ignore it, you know. And there's like this permanent, semi permanent twilight and it lasts for like days. And yeah, there's the, all the townspeople are still going about, you know, the, the morning bell still rings at the church and they get up and it's twilight.

They go back, do all their jobs and it's twilight. They get back in the evening from work and it's twilight and it's like. And then things start. Continue to get more and more wrong. And it's nothing that you could ever say, oh no, the, the. The pub's on Fire or, you know, or there's.

Yes, there's a horde of demons coming out the front of the. It's nothing massive, but it's just all these creeping little differences that keep getting wronger and wronger and wronger.

Ligeia

Yeah. Yeah. The thing is, it doesn't stop. It is getting worse and worse and people keep finding excuses. Some of them think, okay, we might have upset some, like, higher being, or maybe angels are fighting. It will just. It will. It will go away. It's nothing to do with us.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

You know, if we just keep being good and do our, you know, mundane things and go to work and just. It will go away. I found it so, so upsetting and worrying and so true. I really, really. I wanted to cry when I read this because I really see it, like, specifically now, when everybody is suffering with this heat and there are still some people saying, like, it has been like this before.

It's called 70s. It's called summer, you idiots. Like, are you serious? I live in a country where this is not supposed to be the summer. It's not supposed to be the summer. I'm not in Nice or Marseille or Egypt. No, it's not supposed to be like this here. So.

Leraje

Supposed to have sub Saharan temperatures. No. And I think you're right. I mean, let's be honest, Ligotti has not got the highest opinion of the human race as it

is. Uh, you think that's fairly obvious from stories. But this one in particular is very sort of. I mean, the character of Klaus Klingman is.

He was kind of like. I saw him as a stand in for Ligotti himself, as kind of like, all he does is laugh at what these dickheads are doing to themselves. It's easy to put Ligotti in that role as kind of like someone who's so jaded and disappointed in humanity that he finds it easy to just laugh at the stupid reactions they have to sort of, like, things that are very obviously happening and their attempts to kind of, like, rationalise it and sort of sweep under the carpet, ignore it.

Ligeia

And he's not surprised anymore that this is. This is. This is how it is. It's like he's laughing, but it's this, like, sad laugh. Like, this is. We can't do anything because humanity is behaving this way and has been behaving this way. So do we just watch? Do what? Do we do what?

You know? Yeah, it is really disturbing and it's so beautifully beautiful, beautifully written. I, uh. I was going to, like, quote something I can't I have all pages, the whole pages. I couldn't. I can't decide what. It's so. So beautifully horrifying and dark. Please, people, it's short. Read this.

Leraje

I think if someone was to say to you, give me the archetypal Ligotti short story, I would say that, uh.

Ligeia

There we go. There we go.

Leraje

That one.

Ligeia

Yeah, yeah.

Leraje

It sums up everything.

Ligeia

It sums up everything. There is this whole, I don't know, philosophy, can we call it that is legal. Legality. And it's everything here. Yeah.

Leraje

It's got that kind of like, contempt for the idiocy.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

And this kind of like, uh, disdain for the. The rationalisations that people try and make for things that are very obviously happening. But he doesn't ever make the mistake of trying to relate it to something in the real world. I think where a lot of people who write, you know, if they write a book about environmental disaster, they might make it very obvious that that's the point they're trying to make.

Ligeia

Yes.

Leraje

And you stop reading the book and you start feeling like you're being lectured at.

Ligeia

Yes.

Leraje

Uh, but for this. And also, you know, when we read Annihilation as well, I just thought about it. Yeah. They're two very similar stories in that. In that respect. They're very obviously about kind of like the way that humanity can ignore what's going on right in front of their nose.

Ligeia

This is a very different approach. And I loved the Annihilation, that book. And I will continue reading the whole, like, four books, but this one hit me, the stories deeply. Because with the book, the Annihilation, I felt disconnected. It was about somebody else. It was about that group somewhere. Somewhere it doesn't exist.

This does not feel as fiction. This feels too real.

Leraje

Uh, yeah. I think. I mean, I'm not criticising Jeff Vandermeer's writing style, but it sometimes can. And I've read some of his Short stories as well, not just the Annihilation books. I think Lithos is on book three of that series now.

Ligeia

Oh, right.

Leraje

But it's his. His writing style can sometimes come across as a little bit removed.

Ligeia

Yes.

Leraje

It feels like it's a scientist describing something that happens.

Ligeia

It's a little sterile.

Leraje

Yes. Yes.

Ligeia

That's the truth. Which I enjoyed. I enjoyed.

Leraje

Oh, yeah.

Ligeia

It was not. It was not hurting me as a human. This. This book, this story, I love it so much, but it's still a it. Me.

Leraje

He gets a big old wooden spoon, sticks it in your brain and goes like that. Yeah. I just realised I made a mime there and we're on a podcast, which is audio only.

Ligeia

Oh, right. And I, I didn't mind. Oh, my God, if people could see us, this would be so much fun.

Leraje

Um, we. We forget sometimes, dear listener, that, you know, we're doing this. Uh, like you and I just like to talk about stories and we forget we're actually doing it for a reason

Ligeia
and we speak with our hands and with our whole body.

Leraje
Yes, we do. All right. Do you. Did you want to add anything else about this before we go on to the.

Ligeia
Yeah. So I had these questions. What if the. What if the enlightenment revealed something horrible, the horror of ultimate knowledge?

Leraje
I, uh, think it did. I think that's what it did.

Ligeia
That's what I thought. Like, that's what I felt like. The horror of knowledge.

Leraje
The bit where he describes them not being able to remember because they kind of like disassociate from there.

Ligeia
Oh, good.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
Yes.

Leraje
There's that kind of like when everything turns pitch black and it's. He describes it as kind of like fluid, this liquidy kind of blackness.

Ligeia
Fluidity.

Leraje
Yeah. And I think that's what he. I mean, that's the impression I got. I think that's what he was getting at. It's kind of like ultimate knowledge, but you can't ever remember it because it's too big.

Ligeia
It's too much and too horrifying and it doesn't bring any comfort. No, it's not. Oh, my flubbers are gusted. Um, I love this story. I don't know why, because I was really depressed afterwards.

Leraje
Sorry, what is. I'm still laughing at. Flappers are gusted.

Ligeia
Yes.

Leraje
Yeah. Sorry, but

Ligeia
we need to laugh after this. I'm sorry. It is. It is.

Leraje
It can sometimes be a bit soul destroying reading Ligotti.

Ligeia

It is. It is. I am still not ready for the book. The. The. What is it? The human race. What is the book?

Leraje

I don't dare read the novel by.

Ligeia

No, no, no, I'm not ready. I think I would just not be the next day. Yeah. Then I had a question. Like, is consciousness itself a mistake? Like a cosmic mistake that was not supposed to be?

Leraje

Now? I think that's one of the things that annihilation might have been hinting at.

Ligeia

Yeah. Like, can you imagine without that how. How much happier we would be? Probably, I think.

Leraje

Well, yeah, I mean, this is the

Ligeia

knowledge of not knowing.

Leraje

Yes. I mean, I do agree, but I thought. I think that was more directly addressed in the next. The next One we haven't talked about yet. But, uh. Yeah, I do think you're right. I think that, um, he is saying in all of these stories, in all of these three stories and in the fourth one that we preach previously read, that sometimes ignorance is bliss, you know, and that sometimes it's better not to know.

Ligeia

Yeah. Not even realise. I don't even care if it's Twilight.

Leraje

And I think he. He is saying that, but at the same time he's also in utter contempt of people who refuse to learn. And it's kind of like this dichotomy of positions.

Ligeia

Yeah. You can't win. No, you can't win. Both are wrong. And. I can't say that I can't. I love him too much.

Leraje

I. I don't mean it.

Ligeia

Yeah. Yeah. No, like, I mean, I. I think. I think I said everything. There is no secret knowledge. There is no redemption. I think that's all. I think we should go to the. The next one. Should we go to the next one? But should we? This is the disaster. The cocoons. Uh.

Leraje

This was an odd one.

Ligeia

It was, wasn't it?

Leraje

I mean, it's Ligotti. So they're all odd, but it was odd in a very kind of. The first two stories that we talked about tonight felt very. You. Like we. The reader was directly. You could be directly involved. You were very involved.

This one felt kind of. It felt like I would imagine watching a movie movie when you're very slightly drunk or a bit high and things are happening and you can't quite get a grasp of what's going on.

Um, but you're still managing to somewhat follow it. Does that make sense?

Ligeia

Does. It does make sense. Because even, like, the beginning, it just starts. Yeah, it just.

Leraje

This guy turns up. It's like, what?

Ligeia

Like, we are in bed and we start. The sentence is like, oh. So I had a feeling there is like some. Some. Something is on my bed. And he wakes up in the middle of the night and there is this doctor standing there and we need to follow him immediately. And we are like, can this not wait?

Like, hello, it's a night. I'm actually sleeping. And he's like, no, no, no, you have to go with me. This is. This is utmost important.

Leraje

How did he get into his house?

Ligeia

No, no, we don't know. I don't know what doctor. He is like, is he real doctor? Is he his doctor? We don't know. Probably. He's a patient. What patient is this? Insomnia? I don't know. That's what I thought. But we don't know if the whole

Leraje

thing felt like a fever dream of.

Ligeia

Yes. No explanations, like, figure it out or don't. I don't know.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

I don't care.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

He's so bad to us.

Leraje

Yes.

Ligeia

So we follow him. He takes us by taxi at night. Uh, we travel. Oh, before that. He also gives us two pills.

Leraje

Like egg shaped pills.

Ligeia

Pills. And we may or may know, may not swallow them. Who knows? And we go with him and we travel. And we arrive to this house of his former patient, I think, or still patient. I don't know. Um, Mr. Catch. Mr. Catch.

Leraje

Although we are told that's not his actual name.

Ligeia
Go figure. Why is that important? We don't know.

Leraje
Don't know.

Ligeia
So we arrive. This house is weird. And he is. He's a little bit impatient. Like, where have you been? It's almost time. And, uh, like, what is time? And he takes us to a seller and he wants us to watch a movie. Like a film. Not a movie, film.

Leraje
Found footage.

Ligeia
Found, um, footage. It's horrible because it's pretty up. Yeah, up. It's like a film of probably also a patient, A person. And this person goes through something. We can see it. Uh, do we spoil it? I don't know. It's horrifying. We have to. So we can actually witness the transformation of this person.

Like, I don't think he. That person is alive anymore, but maybe, maybe they are. But something else is alive in their body and it is taking over. It is transforming this person into something. And we see the whole process and the end of the process. And then we learn something like that should probably happen to us.

Leraje
You have to cure us.

Ligeia
To cure us. We don't know.

Leraje
Well, no, he doesn't say cure. He says, find the balance.

Ligeia
Uh, it is so weirdly worded. I don't know. What is he. Why are we patient? What are. What is wrong with us? We were sleeping. So I'm like.

Leraje
There's, uh, a whole series of, like, odd little bits. So even, Even the journey over is kind of like. It's described as being a very long way.

Ligeia
Yes.

Leraje
But getting there very, very quickly.

Ligeia
Yes. And the taxi driver was weird.

Leraje
The taxi driver seemed to be in a trance of some kind.

Ligeia
He's like, weirdly looking back, and then he's told to stay there and wait. And like, the narrator is asking, like, okay, but this is gonna cost us like, a lot of money. And he's like, you don't want to be, like, left without any transportation at this place, but we are supposed to die there.

So.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
What are we doing?

Leraje
I think the transportation might have been for him, doctor.

Ligeia
For him? Yes, for him. Obviously he wanted to escape.

Leraje
Did the, the movie, the transformation movie, did it give you alien vibes?

Ligeia
Yes.

Leraje
M. The whole.

Ligeia
But, but with like.

Leraje
Yeah, but it seemed to come from their head.

Ligeia
Oh yeah, yeah. Oh, it was, it was disgusting. It was disgusting. I don't, I mean, I can, I can go through like body horror. Uh, it's not as bad. I don't know. I think when it's written in a book, my mind creates the most horrifying things that are horrifying to me.

Leraje
The imagination is a much more potent tool than.

Ligeia
Right.

Leraje
Seeing a movie.

Ligeia
If it's in a movie, it is disgusting. And I'm sometimes like, oh, I didn't need this in my head, but now it's there. But this, ah, uh, it was horrible because I think, I think that person was still alive somehow.

Leraje
He must be, uh, it was very difficult to tell because it, when he started moving this figure in the movie, you think, oh, he's moving, he must be alive. But then it's just his movement is described as, again, like a puppet, like a, like an animatronic, like a. Ah, yes. You know, we go, we're back to Ligotti and his puppets again.

Um, you know, the, the movement is jerky and um, not coordinated and yeah.

Ligeia
Spasmodic twitchings.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia

Some energy that inhabited the old Trump.

Leraje
Say no more.

Ligeia
Right.

Leraje
But um, I, I then real. Well, my interpretation was that this kind of like the body that was inhabited wasn't alive, but this new thing which is being birthed from it. Like in the Alien movies.

Ligeia
Yes.

Leraje
You know, like John Hurt, famously, the chest burster scene in the first Alien movie and things like that. M. But it was, it was, the creature that came out of this body was, was more about pleasure and more about kind of like a, kind of like ecstasy.

Ligeia
Mhm.

Leraje
Whereas the kind of like the, the alien birthing scene in the Alien movies is violence and pain and death and that kind of thing. And I'm not saying, you know, it wasn't violent and it wasn't painful and, and it did definitely result in death, but the end result, the purpose of it seemed to be building to a point of a kind of like ecstasy in the knowledge of what's, what had happened.

Ligeia
Mhm.

Leraje
That's how I interpreted it. Anyway.

Ligeia
Now when you're saying it, I, I completely didn't see that. But when you're saying it oh, yeah. I. I saw the suffering. I somehow missed the pleasure.

Leraje
I thought maybe I've. Maybe my brain is trying to rescue me from hell and, uh. Inventing the pleasure.

Ligeia
No, I need to. I need. If it's pleasure here, I'm gonna reread. I'm gonna reread. I want my pleasures and no more

Leraje
"...is that thing which we call the mind with its craving for ever more novel sensations and perceptions." So I sort of like, interpreted that as kind of like this. Searching for that is true something. Searching for this kind of like ever new experiences. Um. Well, "Mr. Catch retreated in panic from his own powers. Yet he could not put the pieces back as they had been unheard of. Habits and responses had already been ingrained themselves into his system. The worst sort of slavery. But how persuasively he spoke of the euphoria he had known."

Ligeia
Yeah.

Leraje
"The infinitely diverse sensations beyond. Beyond all common understanding."

Ligeia

It is all over the place. And I missed it.

Leraje

I mean, I know I say this just about every time, but I don't think there is a right way or a wrong way to interpret or read the story.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

It's all, you know, to the person reading it.

Ligeia

I just saw like, the human beings being in this.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

Metamorphosis, unwillingly, without consent. Probably because that was. We were not asked as like it was supposed to happen to us. I'm not saying if. If it does, if it doesn't, you need to read it. The ending is good. Like it's well written. I'm not saying it's a happy end or whatever, but never is.

So it's not. It's not a willing participant.

Leraje

No.

Ligeia

So that's the horror of that.

Leraje

Like, do you kind of get the idea that Dr. Dublanc is kind of like experimenting on these various.

Ligeia

Yes. Yes. Yeah. And I don't know what for.

Leraje

I think it's because he's scared to actually undergo the transformation himself. He wants to perfect it before he'll do it.

Ligeia

He's changing the formula. Maybe and maybe. But what is. What is he hoping for? What is the result that he wants?

Leraje

I think it's. It ties back to that kind of like, uh. The. That ecstasy or that kind of searching for constant new experiences or the ability to experience that euphoria he talks about. I think that's what he wants.

Ligeia

Psych.

Leraje

Maybe, like the first story, maybe that's also a kind of like addiction metaphor.

Ligeia

M. Yeah.

Leraje
It's constant searching for new.

Ligeia
Oh, yeah, yeah. I mean, that's. I mean, that is very easy to fall for.

Leraje
Have you read any, um. Have you read any of Clive Barker's short stories?

Ligeia
Yes. Yeah, yeah, yeah, it is.

Leraje
This story reminded me very much of Hellbound Heart.

Ligeia
Yes.

Leraje
Um, the movies that Hellraiser were based on the book that's.

Ligeia
I just said that Hellraiser.

Leraje
Did you?

Ligeia
Yeah, like.

Leraje
Sorry, I missed that.

Ligeia
I didn't hear you say that 65 seconds ago. I. I think I just like mumbled, bumbled here. Mumble, mumble jumble. So yeah, it is reminding me of exactly like the pain they go through and how they are. The search for constant sensual.

Leraje
Is that fantastic identification the Cenobites have in. In the short story, where they say 'angels to some, demons, demons to others'. And it's kind of like. It seems to me that that's what Dr. Dublanc is kind of like searching for that, that sort of.

Ligeia
Wow, I love that. I love this. You see, I will. I will have to take a little break from this story, not think about it and then go and read it again with this in mind. Because for me it was. It was the horror of the. The um. The losing the autonomy, which is also Ligotti's style.

Like, do we actually have the autonomy? I don't think he believes in that.

Leraje
No.

Ligeia
I think the maybe losing of the. The idea of autonomy is so horrifying.

Leraje
And the idea. The loss of identity as well.

Ligeia
To become identity the self.

Leraje

Yeah, to become a victim rather than a person with. With kind of like rights and. And a name and a life.

Ligeia

Um, anything that is not consensual. As for. For us, we. This is our like first red line. Yeah, red line. And it's the basic stuff that for a Satanist, consent is above everything. I think so. It just felt really, really, really bad that he didn't. He lied to him. He was just like pulling me him out of his bed and it was all confusing and he was probably doing it to confuse him even more.

Leraje

Yeah, you're right. I think, um, I mean, all the way through the story, he constantly violated consent for the narrator, like you say, barging into his room, waking him up, bundling him into a cab, giving him pills, pills without consent or even informed knowledge about what these pills were.

Ligeia

It's like rape drugs, you know, like, what are you doing? What are you doing to him?

Leraje

I do wonder if, ah. Do you know when this story was published?

Ligeia

No, this.

Leraje

I do wonder if he'd seen Alien before he wrote this story.

Ligeia

Oh, we can. We can search. We can have a look.

Leraje

Yeah. The whole thing about a life, a new life coming from inside Birthed inside their host body.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Leraje

Plus the pills being egg shaped. It struck me as very kind of

Ligeia

like, yeah, actually, yes, the eggs. But I only noticed that at the end of the story I noticed the pills. I'm like, okay. So I thought, okay, this is, this is his doctor. So he's giving him some pills because he knows.

Leraje

He knows. That's what I thought. Yeah.

Ligeia

Yes. So it's, it's like in a good way, he's trying to take care of him. Maybe they found a new, I don't know, something that is going to help this person. And at the end I remembered it was too egg shaped and I was like, I want to puke right now. Uh, read it.

You will understand why

Leraje

we talked at the start about there being. Even if Ligotti didn't like the idea of categorising the stories, there is a theme there.

Ligeia

Ah, is a theme. So I was thinking the first story. What is connecting? First story talks about reality as a dream. Second truth is unbearable. Then we had the story that we talked about previously, but it was our world is not primary. And then we have the cocoons. The self is either unstable or not even real, as I understood.

So he is dismantling the world being real, the truth being good.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
Reality being understandable and self being permanent or real.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
So these were my points of connection.

Leraje
I didn't, I didn't get all of those points. Um, but I definitely picked up on the nature of reality not being a set thing. He's trying to get us to realise that, you know, reality is not what we perceive it to be. And that is literally true. I mean, science, uh, you know, we appear to be solid, but really we touch nothing.

Ligeia
We touch nothing.

Leraje
Um, the sort of like overarching theme for me of these stories is kind of like reality is presented to us in a certain way and uh, most of the time we can operate within that. But really that's not really reality. It's the reality we choose to see.

Ligeia
Yes. And it's so fragile. And the self is so fragile like it is. We are so vulnerable. It can break at any point. Like something happens that we are not expecting and all goes to off.

Leraje
Okay, well, we better wrap up, I guess.

Ligeia
Yeah, yeah, yeah. Next time we, we will come back with more stories. Don't.

Leraje
And we'll try our best to get Chris involved next time as well.

Ligeia
Oh yeah, okay.

Leraje
Um, so, uh, until next time. I've been Leraje. Hail Satan.

Ligeia
I've been Ligeia. Hail Satan.

[Outro music]