

The Devil's Library Episode 17.6 – “The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe – Part 1”

[Intro Music]

Ligeia

Hello everybody, welcome back to the Devil's Library. I am here tonight with my great friend Leraje.

Leraje

Hail Satan!

Ligeia

And my name is Ligeia. Hail Satan! Today we are here to talk about something new.

Leraje

Mhm.

Ligeia

Ah, we did some— what a surprise for you! I hope you read yours.

Leraje

What were they called again?

Ligeia

I'm leaving. Bye. I will do this by myself. Oh no. Okay. Sorry. So tonight we decided to change a little bit. Uh We are staying with the horror big names. Would you agree?

Leraje

Probably one of the biggest names.

Ligeia

The biggest name and face and like the the icon of horror literature, right? So we are entering the beautiful, feverish mind of Edgar Allan Poe.

Leraje

Mhm.

Ligeia

My beloved Edgar Allan Poe. And we are— we have chosen 2 stories just randomly. Well, not really randomly, but we didn't base it on like anything that is connecting these 2 stories.

Leraje

No.

Ligeia

Even though I think there is a huge connection.

Leraje

Mm-hmm.

Ligeia

So we are going to be talking about the story that I chose, which is, ta-da-da-da, Ligeia!

Leraje

Wow.

Ligeia

Wow. And your choice was?

Leraje

Uh, uh The Masque of the Red Death.

Ligeia

Yes. So we are going to talk about these 2 stories and the connecting thing that I think is there is they're obsessed with something none of us can escape, which is death. So yeah. So, and the question in both these stories, I think, could be, what happens when human beings refuse to accept that death always gets the final word?

Leraje

Should we start with yours?

Ligeia

Okay. So Ligeia is a story about Ligeia, who is described by, like, uh he is unnamed, right? The narrator is unnamed. He's a husband of Ligeia, and he is describing her as this mysterious, extremely intelligent, absolutely extraordinarily beautiful woman. A uh woman whom he absolutely is obsessed with, worships.

Leraje

Yes.

Ligeia

In every single detail. So that's like half of the story.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

Well, and the sad, sad thing is that she is ill. She becomes ill and she dies very quickly. And he is grieving. It's really, really deep. He is Now, on opium, he is constantly intoxicated and high or whatever, low, I don't know. And he moves away from the house to uh like a different location, different country, to England.

I think the first where Ligeia lived, this I think was like Germany, if I'm right. Uh, sort of somewhere there.

Leraje

I think he mentions a specific country, but Does he?

Ligeia

He mentions her ancestors, which is still like a question. But yeah, that's how I thought it was. Well, he moves to England and he gets married again to Lady Rowena, who is the absolute opposite of Ligeia, and it's not great. But yeah, she dies too.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

And the things then start happening while she is still like, she's fresh, freshly dead. What a lovely sentence.

Leraje

She's a fresh corpse.

Ligeia

She's a fresh corpse. She's like, she's still in the house and things are happening. Or maybe not. We don't know. So would you like to add anything to this introduction?

Leraje

No, I think that sums up the story perfectly. It's, uh it's probably one of his best-known stories. You uh think? I think so. I don't know. Maybe it isn't. I always thought it was.

Ligeia

Do you think this is just based on your knowledge?

Leraje

Maybe. Well, it could be. Yeah. Yeah.

Ligeia

I mean, I have seen objects with depictions of Ligeia and with the name Edgar Allan Poe, but I don't think it's as well known as, I don't know, The Fall of the House of Usher or his poetry, obviously, The Raven. The Pit and the Pendulum and stories like The Tell-Tale Heart, which you might hear very soon.

M Hmm. I don't know. What did you think about it? Or what do you think about it? I know this was not your first read.

Leraje

No, it remains a very good story. It's um full of Poe's classic kind of obsessions, the kind of The loss and the Gothic return and the, uh, there's not really dialogue in this. It's, it's kind of like, uh in that way, it's very similar to kind of some of Lovecraft's stuff. It's very descriptive rather than dialogue-heavy.

Ligeia

Very descriptive.

Leraje

Yeah. Um And the gothy.

Ligeia

Oh yeah, we are back there.

Leraje

Yeah, yeah. And it's all about— the whole thing is told from the narrator's point of view.

Ligeia

Yes.

Leraje

And you feel, uh, his absolute agony at losing this wonderful, beautiful woman who he absolutely adores.

Ligeia

Oh yeah.

Leraje

Uh, and who adores him. It's quite obvious from, from what he says that she feels the same way. And I think you're right, what you said at the start about this being a story about the kind of, right, or a pair of stories really, about people's inability to accept that they can't cheat death.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

But there's also this thing, I mean, there's a quote right at the start of the story which is about the perseverance of will, of willpower and uh indomitable will. And I think that's the defining characteristic of the character of Ligeia herself in the story. This will to come back.

Ligeia

Yeah, that is the first— there are more, obviously, more options how to read this story. And I think that the first the most obvious is, as you say, Ligeia, because she is saying those words before she dies.

Leraje

Exactly. Yeah.

Ligeia

But I think it's actually like the first possible reading of the story is Ligeia conquering death through her own will to just live.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

And she just decides that, no, fuck this, I'm not gonna be dead. Uh I'm coming back, basically. Uh I love that reading. I absolutely love that. But there are actually quite like multiple possible readings of the story, obviously. But I don't know. Do you think this is the one that speaks to you the most?

Leraje

I think uh that's— that was my first understanding of it. The very first time I read it was that Ligeia was a character who, apart from this wondrous beauty and apart from the fact that she was very wealthy, and her family were very wealthy, um and she was obviously incredibly intelligent. Um She also possessed this willpower, this strength of character, this strength of will.

And that was, that was, I, you know, putting that quote as the introduction to the story is, it was the thing that kind of like guided me down um that particular path.

Ligeia

So you would think that she actually really came back?

Leraje

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Ligeia

She did.

Leraje

Yeah, I think so. Yeah. This could be read as a vampire story. Yeah.

Ligeia

Yeah. Yeah. Why do you think this is my name? Yeah.

Leraje

Um Well, you know, she undergoes an illness which saps her of strength, saps her of The, you know, it steals the colour from her cheeks. She has a deathly pallor and she reclines. She reposes onto her bed and dies quietly.

Ligeia

Yes.

Leraje

And then she comes back, neither living nor dead.

Ligeia

Through another person's body.

Leraje
Right, exactly.

Ligeia
Fuck Rowena.

Leraje
I felt a bit sorry for poor Rowena.

Ligeia
Is that how you say it? The name? Rowena?

Leraje
Rowena, Rowena, doesn't matter.

Ligeia
Okay, I don't. Wrong time, wrong place. Why? No, sorry.

Leraje
She was pretty innocent of any wrongdoing. She didn't do anything wrong as such.

Ligeia
I mean, who cares? It's a story about Ligeia. Come on, come on, uh come on.
Ligeia died first, so that's not fair.

Leraje
If she hadn't, then the story couldn't have happened, so Yeah.

Ligeia
Okay.

Leraje
But do you think I'm wrong about the possible interpretation of vampirism?

Ligeia
uh I see it there.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
I was hoping you will too. So tell me, tell me, why do you think that?

Leraje
Basically, just what I said. You know, she's an old European, maybe noble, we're not quite sure, family. Her uh family history is shrouded in some kind of secrecy.

Ligeia
Yeah. He never learns her surname.

Leraje
No, she's described as being very beautiful but having a very particular look, a very particular style of beauty, which is kind of almost— I don't know the right word to describe it. Not uncanny, but very, a very kind of like austere, maybe? I don't know. I don't know the best way to describe it, but it's a very particular beauty which speaks of timelessness and agelessness and kind of eternity and eternal beauty.

And there's just all these little hints throughout the story that this might be something that Poe is hinting at. I mean, I don't think it's the answer because I don't think there is an answer, but I think it's a possible interpretation.

Ligeia

It is one of them, yes. Mhm Yeah, you're right, because she is this— she has this absolutely flawless white pale skin, Raven, gorgeous hair, beautiful, huge eyes, as he keeps coming back to, like, her eyes are absolutely enormous and gorgeous and dark. And as she was dying, she was losing a lot of weight.

So at one point he's saying she's actually emaciated.

Leraje

Mhm.

Ligeia

So those things made me think of vampires, obviously.

Leraje

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. I mean, there's no kind of like, there's no overt vampiric activity in the sense that there's no kind of like—

Ligeia

No, that wouldn't be Poe.

Leraje

Vlad Tepes, you know, stalking through the background or Dracula or anything like uh that.

Ligeia

I would love to see him lurking behind. Hey, Vlad.

Leraje

All right, Vlad, how you doing, mate?

Ligeia

What are you doing here?

Leraje

Had enough of the impaling today, have we? So, yeah, so there's nothing you could point to and say, yes, this is definitely vampirism. She's definitely become a vampire. But it's just hinted at, I think, quite a lot.

Ligeia

I like that. And there is another option to understand the story, which is the narrator is completely unreliable and she never comes back and he's just losing it.

Leraje

Well, yeah, because he's an opium addict by then.

Ligeia

He's an opium addict and his grief is actually completely consuming him. So he probably is trying to imagine that. And he can be hallucinating the whole thing until he completely just gets lost in this horrible grief.

Leraje

Yes, because the end of it. "Here then, um at least, I shrieked aloud, can I never, can I never be mistaken? These are the full and the black and the wild eyes of my lost love, of the lady, of the Lady Ligeia." I shrieked aloud. You know, this is not a stable man.

Ligeia

No. But I mean, I mean, just imagine. Just imagine If she came back and you lost a woman that is like the love of your life, right? She dies.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

And the only thing you wish for is for her to be with you, for it to never happen, or even for her to come back from the death. And just imagine if she did, um would you not shriek? I would.

Leraje

Shriek. I don't know. I guess it depends on how you interpret that word. I mean, shriek to me is something that people do when they're terrified.

Ligeia

Could be terrifying that moment, right? Because in one moment there is uh Rowena lying in bed dead. She's the complete physically, physically completely opposite from, from what Ligeia was. She, she has blonde hair, blue eyes. She's this, how would I say it? She is, hold on. I made a, Conventional, conventional, like pretty.

Leraje

Conventional beauty, yes.

Ligeia

Yeah, she's pretty, but not really unforgettable, whatever. Poor girl, as you say.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

In comparison to Ligeia, who is absolutely impossible. She's impossible. She's superior to everything intellectually. She is, her knowledge is enormous. Her emotions are overwhelming. Her beauty is like absolutely not fitting anything anybody has ever seen.

Leraje

Mm.

Ligeia

And like, he actually struggles to even describe her. That's how he thinks how she is absolutely superior in everything.

Leraje

Mm.

Ligeia

And then he is obsessed with her eyes because that's like the, you know, conventional something that speaks. You know, we talk by looking at each other. There is a huge power in there. So, and I thought this is very Poe-esque because I think he, in like almost all he ever wrote, he is dealing with these experiences of love, uh grief, pain, terror.

Yeah. Uh Whatever. And I think he is trying to express how these experiences are not like— we cannot contain them in our minds. It's just something we can't even describe. And I think Ligeia is like a personification of that as well, in some sense.

Leraje

The idea of the perfect love that can never be recovered from once it's gone.

Ligeia

Yes.

Leraje

M Yeah.

Ligeia

She is more of an idea than a real person, I think.

Leraje

That's interesting.

Ligeia

Because have you ever— like, nobody is like that. Yeah. So I think she became more of an idea of absolute beauty, intellect, desire, and will to live embodied in a person, specifically woman. Would you agree? I don't know.

Leraje

I do, yes. I mean, I think that's— Poe always denied that he ever wrote allegorically or with a kind of like metaphorically or anything like uh that. He would disdain the whole idea.

Ligeia

Yes.

Leraje

He was very much story to story and should just be enjoyed for the content of the story. But I think he was, like all writers who think that, um I think he was probably kidding himself a little bit because it's impossible not to write allegorically.

Ligeia

The image of Poe kidding himself, giggling as he was writing, like, oh, sorry, but can you imagine?

Leraje

Poe diddling, you're thinking of.

Ligeia

Oh my God. You couldn't stop yourself.

Leraje

I did.

Ligeia

We are doing that story next time.

Leraje

Yeah, we'll do that story next time.

Ligeia

For the benefit of the listener, there is a story. I don't know the whole name of it, but it starts with diddling. Diddling is like one of the exact sciences, something like that, by Edgar Allan Poe. And we couldn't believe our eyes.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

So we should absolutely do it.

Leraje

We absolutely will.

Ligeia

Diddling.

Leraje

Diddling. But what I mean by that is this, this idea that, uh, there's always a subtext to every story, to every novel, to every poem. There's always a subtext because human beings just do that. It's, it's not possible to not do that.

Ligeia
Yes.

Leraje
If you write, there's a reason. There's the surface reason, and then there's a story behind the story, and it's just unavoidable. So Poe might claim that he never wrote allegorically, he never wrote metaphorically, he never was trying to make a point, but he, he was. He just didn't know he was.

Ligeia
I understand what he was probably trying to say with that, but I would disagree with that statement as a person living nowadays, currently, uh because I think even words as they are, are just allegories.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
It's just a symbol for something that um means so many other things to anybody else. If you say, I mean, yeah, basic words. house, floor. People understand what you mean. But love, desire, terror, horror, pain, grief, um we all know the concept of that, but it's just a word. So it is an allegory, it is a symbol, it is a metaphor, it's a personification, it's whatever.

So I don't think—

Leraje
Yeah, I mean, there's all kinds of contextual Cultural context um and age context, gender context. There's all kinds of context that can be put on these words.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Leraje
So it's not possible to just write a story that means one thing and one thing only.

Ligeia
Exactly. Yeah.

Leraje
Experience. Yeah.

Ligeia
If you haven't been through such, such an enormous grief, good, good for you. Please don't. But if you, if you were, if you have been, I think you would be seeing and hearing that word in a completely different Ugh, force. Mhm So—

Leraje
I mean, his own life was not an easy one mhm on occasion, and I do wonder if some of his stories— and this story, Ligeia, is kind of like a good example of that— not a fear of his own death, but fear of the death of people he loved. This maybe was his way of processing that or talking about it, I think.

Ligeia
Yeah. Mhm That is my fear as well, of my own death.

Leraje
Oh, God, yeah.

Ligeia

She's like, I can't deal with anything like this. Well, yeah. So what did you think? Did you think what I— obviously, I just said it, but did you think the same thing, that Ligeia and Rowena were opposites?

Leraje

uh Oh, yeah, in all ways.

Ligeia

It's obvious, right? It's not like something I'm making up.

Leraje

No, no, no. I think that's purposeful. Um, m but I think Poe is asking us to— so when he created the character of Rowena, what little character there is of her, she's, she's the opposite in all ways, like you say. She's, um, and I think he might be saying to us, are you, are you human enough to even care about this character?

Because she's not necessarily a world-class beauty. She's not necessarily this dark-haired, dark-eyed, fabulously wealthy, vastly intelligent, um, strong-willed woman. She's something else. She's someone else. The moral question here is, if indeed that Ligeia has returned and it is now inhabiting Rowena's body, uh how, how do we feel about that? You know, I mean, as Satanists, one of our core things is consent, autonomy.

So how do we—

Ligeia

How do we But are you saying that Rowena died because Ligeia did something?

Leraje

Oh yeah, 100%.

Ligeia

Is that what you're saying?

Leraje

Yeah, yeah, yeah, absolutely.

Ligeia

But who did something to Ligeia then?

Leraje

I don't know that anybody did. I think maybe that was just a natural thing, if we put aside the vampirism thing.

Ligeia

So you are asking— because there are, as well, there are options. If Rowena just died because she was ill, It has nothing to do with Ligeia. Ligeia just saw it and she was like, oh well, she's dead anyway, so I'm going to use this m vessel m and I will come back. But that would not really make sense because she could use her own vessel, right?

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

I think I just replied to myself.

Leraje

That's fine.

Ligeia

Okay, so she did this to Rowena. How do we feel about it?

Leraje

It's not great, is it?

Ligeia

It's awful? Mm. Mhm It's a story. Come on, it's a Gothic story.

Leraje

No, I agree. I do agree. Uh You know, and looking at it purely in the terms of story, it's absolutely fine. It's just a device. But yeah, it's still, you know, I'm not saying that Poe is wrong. I think Poe is deliberately asking us to ask ourselves these questions.

Ligeia

That is very possible, but I still have this open door here that what if it's still like nothing actually is happening and it's the narrator who is unable to cope with this grief and he's just seeing things, hallucinating things, willing, wishing, losing it. Right.

Leraje

Yeah. M And, and now the horrible realisation that his second wife has also just died has just completely pushed him over the edge.

Ligeia

I don't think he cared.

Leraje

Right.

Ligeia

Maybe it was just a reminder of what happened and he— because she was dying, she was dead and it started to happen. Like, he heard a noise of like a breath and then the noise would be appearing again and again and was stronger. Then he saw a little movement, then her cheeks went like pink.

He saw that there is life in her, in Rowena's corpse. But every time that stops, he goes back to sit down and thinks of Ligeia.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

Like immediately, it is written every time, like, oh, okay, so, oh well, that's done. I'm thinking of my Ligeia. So I don't know if he was really— he cared that it's like a human being. Obviously, he was there sitting next to her. She was dead. I don't think he hated her or anything, wished her anything bad, but he truly never loved her, and she knew.

She knew that.

Leraje

Oh yeah, she did say that.

Ligeia

I don't know why he got married. That would be my question. Why would you do that then if you uh knew you're not going to love her? You knew it.

Leraje

I think maybe that was just how it was in uh that particular class of people in that particular time.

Ligeia

Probably, probably. I'm not criticising it. I'm just like, it must be so unfair to that new wife.

Leraje
Right. Yeah.

Ligeia
I mean, how do you compete?

Leraje
Poor Rowena does get— I did feel quite a lot of sympathy for Rowena. She didn't ask for any of this.

Ligeia
You have a very kind heart. I was wishing for Ligeia to come back.

Leraje
I mean, so, so was I, but, and it was obvious that she was going to. But, um you know, I did spare a little bit of sympathy for Rowena, uh who was completely innocent of all things in all of this.

Ligeia
It is true. But, you know, I'm reading this as a freaking Gothic horror story, so I am expecting some—

Leraje
Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah.

Ligeia
Darkness, which is Poor Rowena, but also, hey.

Leraje
I don't think we have to feel like it's a terrible tragedy for Rowena. But, you know, it can't be unacknowledged that the poor woman hasn't really done anything wrong.

Ligeia
As a Satanist, obviously, if this was real life, it's really difficult for me because this is—

Leraje
it's impossible.

Ligeia
It doesn't happen. No, you can't actually die and come back. Uh You can't enter anybody else's body like that. And when they are dead, you know what I'm trying to say? This sounds horrible what I'm saying, people. I'm trying to say you can't return through some other corpse and be alive again. This is what I'm trying to say.

Okay. So it's understood.

Leraje
But it still raises some interesting ideas if you remove that. the mechanics of it. M I mean, obviously you're absolutely right. Nobody can die and then come back to life inside the body of another human being. It's just not—

Ligeia
Yeah. And change that body to look like them.

Leraje
Exactly.

Ligeia

Because that's what happened. Yeah.

Leraje

But um the idea of kind of like taking over someone else's body against their will.

Ligeia

Yeah, that is horrifying.

Leraje

In an abstract sense. It's still a kind of a thorny issue.

Ligeia

It is. Obviously it is. If it wasn't in this way, and just for example, I think it's the story by Heather Parry. I read uh Orpheus Builds a Girl. Have you read that book?

Leraje

Not yet. Still um haven't. Sorry, Heather. I will.

Ligeia

So I might bring it for the book club.

Leraje

Good idea.

Ligeia

Yeah. It is, again, a beautiful story. And the basic premise is that a young girl dies and this person who wants to marry her, be with her, have her, uh keeps— just brings her back from her grave. I mean, it takes a long time um to get to that point. She is buried and he keeps coming there and then he is trying to build like a box where she could be.

He's trying everything possible for her not to decay, but obviously she does. It is a sad story, which is— it's a beautiful book. It's amazing. But like the idea of that is so wrong because that could happen. And I'm sure it has happened many times in the past. It's not made up like this.

Like, okay.

Leraje

So sad.

Ligeia

So this is obviously, uh, you know, you can't come back, but stealing a body from the grave, taking her home to him, which she never wanted. She never wanted that. It's not like, uh, you know, a love— loving couple and she would be happy. Maybe. I don't know. It is horrible.

Leraje

Yeah. And again, that's one of the themes uh uh of Frankenstein. Mary Shelley's Frankenstein.

Ligeia

Exactly, exactly.

Leraje

It's like this idea of— and again, I don't think you need to think of it, anybody needs to think of it in terms of, could this actually happen? Obviously it couldn't happen. Frankenstein, you can't reconstruct and then reanimate a human body. You just can't. And likewise, in this short story, you know, the will, the soul, the whatever of another human being cannot survive death and enter into another one.

Ligeia
Yes.

Leraje
But the basic idea of this kind of like, uh, usurp— I can't say that fucking word— the taking over of, um, the hijacking of a human body, um, or even the kind of like imbuing it with unwanted life that was never asked for in the first place. Yeah, yeah, it raises interesting questions about the idea of autonomy and human consent.

Ligeia
Absolutely, yes. Maybe it's easier for me in this case that I know this is absolutely impossible, so I'm joking around it. Which in cases like what I just described, I um am— I know where I stand. Like, obviously, as a Satanist, I can't imagine that this is— this is just— everything is wrong with you.

Leraje
Mhm.

Ligeia
Your body belongs to you, even if you are just a bag of bones. M Stop. Let them be. If they didn't wish to be, you know, like an, like an, you know, exhibit in a museum, okay, well, or if they, if they had a wish when they were still alive, yeah, for their body to be, I don't know what, buried under a tree or dismantled into pieces.

And I, I don't know. That's fine.

Leraje
Yeah. I mean, it's like the whole idea about, um, uh using human cadavers for research purposes.

Ligeia
Mm-hmm.

Leraje
Uh, you know, uh, trainee doctors, uh, practice on—

Ligeia
Yeah.

Leraje
Human cadavers. Um, organ donation, all that kind of stuff, all of which I'm very much in favour of, and I've decided that that's what will happen to my body when I fuck off. But, uh, again, there's consent. There's an issue of consent, and it's It can only be answered by that particular individual whilst they're still alive.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Leraje
uh So, I do think this story touches on the idea of consent and—

Ligeia
Oh, it does.

Leraje
How we feel about this kind of takeover uh of, uh, this kind of like hijack of someone's own body.

Ligeia
Yeah. Remember when the exhibition was everywhere? What was it called? human body, you know, like the real human bodies.

Leraje
Mm-hmm. Yeah, yeah.

Ligeia
I've never seen it. I don't need to. I have— I don't. But I think it was a lot of controversy around that. Like, did these people give consent to this? Or where are these bodies from? It's quite similar, right? Like, yeah, they are now travelling through the whole world.

Leraje
M Oh, yeah.

Ligeia
I don't know.

Leraje
It's difficult. It's difficult.

Ligeia
I don't have a problem seeing the human body being like, you know.

Leraje
No, no, no. That's just nature.

Ligeia
But my issue was they, I don't know if they could have ever proved, I don't know. But there was a big question around that. So I was like, I'm not going to participate in this because I don't know who these people are. They were babies, um unborn babies, pregnant women. I can't really imagine.

The consent? I don't know.

Leraje
It's difficult to imagine how it could have been.

Ligeia
Yeah, I don't uh think so. No.

Leraje
mhm All right. Do we want to talk any more about La Jaya?

Ligeia
I think I would just summarise the whole thing. So for me, this is obviously a story about uh denying of death or the problem of not being able to accept death on the side of the narrator, who was absolutely unable to accept the reality of her dying, and also Ligeia's own inability to accept her own death.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
You go, girl! And there are 2 things, like, the horror of that, if she returns, is exactly what we were just talking about. She actually takes over another human body, another girl's corpse, And maybe causes her death, probably. If she doesn't really return, there is the horror of this narrator and his mental state and his absolutely— the grief, the obsession, the— uh I can't even imagine the suffering of this guy.

So, I think the horror is these 2 things and maybe combination. It's um ambiguous because it's Edgar Allan Poe, so we don't really know. Yes.

Leraje
Great story, though. Really very, very good.

Ligeia
Good name, right?

Leraje
Fantastic name. Possibly my favourite name in the entirety of Edgar Allan Poe.
For the benefit of the listener, I said that just when Ligeia had a mouthful of—

Ligeia
Water.

Leraje
Water, was it? Okay.

Ligeia
Yes.

Leraje
She nearly spat it out everywhere. Sorry.

Ligeia
No, it's fine. You're alright.

Leraje
Couldn't resist. Okay, so uh the second story we read was uh The Masque of the Red Death, which was my choice.

Ligeia
Yes.

Leraje
The Masque of the Red Death is a story in which there is a pestilence, an illness, a plague, a something that is all over the land, And it seems to have a very particular set of symptoms um in that people get ill very, very quickly and then die within half an hour of having contracted and exhibiting these symptoms.

So it's extremely fatal. It's very easy, very easily transmitted, and it's cutting a swathe through uh this country, whatever this particular country or land or wherever this is. uh Um, in this land there is a king, And he builds this kind of like fortified building of some kind. And he and 1,000 of his, I guess, best mates, like noblemen, the upper class, the nobility, basically move into this heavily fortified building and uh live there basically until the Red Death has, I don't know, gone, disappeared.

Ligeia
That's the hope.

Leraje
Burnt itself out, whatever. Yeah. After they've been living there a few months, the king decides to throw a masquerade ball, and during the course of the evening, uh they notice that there's a strange figure who seems to be taking a few liberties with the whole idea of what a masquerade ball should be.

The impropriety of what this particular person is wearing, it's a— he's uh basically dressed up as a personification of the Red Death. That's what the implication is.

Ligeia
Yes.

Leraje
The king is outraged and chases after this figure. Uh And as soon as he gets near him, the king gets ill, dies of the Red Death. Everybody dies.

Ligeia
Everybody there dies.

Leraje
Yeah. So, did you enjoy this one?

Ligeia
I love this story. Yes. I just, I don't know. I don't think you have forgotten this detail, but I think there is one really Interesting.

Leraje
The rooms?

Ligeia
Okay, 2. Yes. So I was going to talk about the ebony clock.

Leraje
Right. Yeah.

Ligeia
And its chimes.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
Where like every hour the chime of this clock goes, right? There is a certain sound that is, I don't, I forgot how it's described, but it's like a really unsettling almost sound. And when this happens, everybody stops everything they are doing. So there are people dancing, flirting, drinking, eating, you know, like, absolutely, yes, I want to be there.

Leraje
um Really?

Ligeia
Oh yeah. Oh yeah. And when this clock chimes, everybody stops and is like a little bit nervous, stressed, um disturbed for a second. Everybody's like looking at each other and when it stops, like people can Breathe again and continue.

Leraje
It's described as a very kind of distressing—

Ligeia
Distressing sound and like the whole, that is happening. So, what did you think about that?

Leraje
The clock bit?

Ligeia
Mm.

Leraje
I thought it was a nice reminder of the inevitable process of time and that time cannot be stopped. Time cannot be paused. Time cannot be halted. And then it comes for us all in the end.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Leraje

You know, it's very noticeable that it was during the chiming of the clock when the fact of time is a suddenly audible presence in everyone's life that caused the disconcerted looks and uh the people kind of like almost fainting from fear and all that kind of stuff. So yeah, it was a good little device, I thought.

Ligeia

Good, beautiful device of the reminder of like, you can't escape It's one less hour of your life and you're not going to escape the actual dying and death.

Leraje

No.

Ligeia

So, yeah. And now the rooms.

Leraje

The rooms.

Ligeia

As you say, yeah. The rooms.

Leraje

7 rooms, wasn't there?

Ligeia

7?

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

Do you remember the— uh I have it written down.

Leraje

I don't. I got kind of fixated on the last one, the black room.

Ligeia

Okay, so I will just name them. So they progress from east to west. And we have the rooms are all like furnished in uh like one colour.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

Which also means that the actual windows are in the same colour. So the whole, and there are no candles, no lights. So it's all just saturated in that one colour, which I think is fantastic. So the first one is blue, then it's purple. And it's green, orange, white, violet, and then um black with red, right?

Leraje

Yeah, black with a red window.

Ligeia

Red windows. And everything else is black. So, what did you think about this idea of rooms?

Leraje

Um, I thought it was clever. The, the fact that it's laid out from east to west is kind of indicative of the path of the sun. Uh, hm You know, the setting of the sun representing the end, the death, and the black room death, and the red window entering, illustrating the place where the Red Death itself might be able to come in.

But to be honest with you, I just really want to see that black room with its sumptuous—

Ligeia
Oh God, I'm moving in!

Leraje
Black carpet.

Ligeia
I know, we discussed this before this recording, and I'm like, hey, Leraje, Did you also like the black room the most? Uh Because I am living there.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
But did you think anything about the other rooms, or?

Leraje
I think I was so kind of like enamoured of what this black room might look like that I kind of forgot about the other rooms.

Ligeia
Because I have a tiny theory.

Leraje
Go on.

Ligeia
So I thought these rooms might maybe represent like stages of life.

Leraje
Yeah, could be. Yeah.

Ligeia
So this is why all these guests were happy to be in all those rooms.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
Because they were representations of happy um moments of life.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
And nobody was in that black room because they subconsciously knew that they don't want to even see that room. They don't want to think about the death. So it was like a nice device to illustrate the denial of death, how these people barricaded themselves and tried to isolate themselves and thought, okay, we're wealthy, we have all this money to spend, we can have all this feast, um drinks, uh sex, music, m whatever.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
They were doing. And somehow, this horrible thing that is happening outside and killing people every 30 minutes uh will just go away.

Leraje
Yeah. Um Have some thoughts about that as well.

Ligeia
What? Yeah, okay.

Leraje
Yeah, I think it's possible to read this as ah The Masque of the Red Death as a very political story.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Leraje
It's, you know, there's— it could— I mean, choosing to call it the red death, with echoes of socialism uh and anarchism and things like that. And at the end of this story is the death of a king, the death of a regent. Mhm And there's basically 1,001 rich people, nobles, who have tried to, as rich people always inevitably do, tried to buy their way out of death.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Leraje
Or illness, or—

Ligeia
yeah.

Leraje
And the fact that that's just not possible.

Ligeia
Um, yeah.

Leraje
And I did detect a certain glee in Poe's writing at the slaughter of all these rich nobles.

Ligeia
Oh, absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. It reminds me of, you know, like even nowadays, it has always been like that, but people reach the mega fucking rich people of this world build their bunkers.

Leraje
Yeah, I know.

Ligeia
For the apocalypse and nuclear uh whatever. And I guess, I guess it will protect them for a while. Okay, good for you. I don't know what you're gonna do because you can't do anything. You can't even fucking shower yourself anymore because you are not used to do anything for yourself, you idiots. So I don't know.

what the thinking process is, but it reminds me of that. Like, yeah, you think you will live there for— like, what is, what, what is, what is the plan? Yeah, if, if the whole Earth is like exploded and it's not anymore, you think your little bunker will be flying through the atmosphere?

Leraje
And then the echo of that idea in, in this story is, you know, they've, they've been holed up in this kind of like to use your word, which is a great word, bunker, for want of a better word.

Ligeia
Thank you. Um Created that today. It's very good.

Leraje

So, they've been in there for months at this point. So, somebody, some poor serf, peasant, poor person, or team of poor people is keeping them—

Ligeia

1,000 people.

Leraje

Yeah. Right. It's keeping them fed.

Ligeia

Yes, clean.

Leraje

Yeah, and that's a kind of reminder that the rich literally feed uh off the poor.

Ligeia

Yes.

Leraje

Yeah, they kind of use and abuse and basically take things. They take. There's no give, there's always take. And I think the inevitability of their own death and what you were saying earlier about very, very rich people, these days who have built these stupid fucking underground bunkers because they think it's gonna somehow magically save them from whatever.

Ligeia

Or planning to live on Mars or moon or Jupiter or Uranus. Yeah.

Leraje

Good. They are kidding themselves.

Ligeia

Um, and all they really need to do is read The Masque of the Red Death to really get a sense of how inevitable I mean, it's not like I envy them that they have these resources to do that, but it is like, why, why do you guys think that just because you have this money, this world will survive if you survive?

Leraje

Mhm.

Ligeia

What are you going to do with this planet? Because, you know, people who actually need to work and create and suffer and raise their kids and they care about each other and they have families and friendships and suffer every fucking day. They know how to survive because they have to do it every day.

Leraje

Mm.

Ligeia

What are you going to do?

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

You, uh I don't know, 300 people that are fucking mega rich, what are you going to build? Or, uh, how are you going to make food? What is happening? Why do you think you're better than everybody else?

Leraje

And how are you going to pay these people that you want to look after you in your underground bunker when the whole concept of money becomes completely meaningless at the end of the world?

Ligeia

Like with this story, I think all those people who were taking care of these thousands of people, those rich people didn't care if it's like every 30 minutes it needs to be some new servant because they would be dying outside.

Leraje

Yeah. Yeah.

Ligeia

They don't care.

Leraje

No, no.

Ligeia

Just don't bring it here. We are having fun. Haha. We are diddling. Hi.

Leraje

Diddling.

Ligeia

Uh, please just bring food. It's all good. We are having all this fun.

Leraje

I thought the name of the king was quite interesting as well.

Ligeia

Oh yeah. Yeah. Go on.

Leraje

Prospero. So Prospero is a Shakespearean character. He appears in The Tempest. And in The Tempest, Prospero is not a very likeable character.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Leraje

He's kind of like, well, not at the start anyway. He kind of slightly redeems himself towards the end, but uh at the start of it, he's very unlikable. He's pompous, he's arrogant, he's kind of like, you know, he just expects people to do what he m says. And I thought that was an interesting name choice to call the king in this Short story Prospero.

Ligeia

Mhm And it's also, it's obviously from prosperous and success. Mhm I mean, obviously there is this huge gorge between being a prince and being a peasant, m which we just discussed. So I think it's a, it's a well-chosen name, Prince Prospero. M And also one detail, this is a masquerade, right? So everybody is in their masks.

They are pretending to be something or somebody else, not themselves. They're having fun, which is an absolutely gorgeous idea. I love that.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

But then you have the mask of the Red Death and this something, the death, is coming there as they are.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
They actually don't have the mask.

Leraje
It's not a mask at all.

Ligeia
They think it's a mask, which is not a mask. They are coming there as the death. There is nothing underneath. There is nobody in there. It's like, that's it. So I thought that was really interesting to put it in a masquerade. Like they thought, uh oh, they thought everybody's masking and denying and like having this fun, like, haha moment and the Red Death is like, hey, it's me. I'm here to kill you.

Leraje
I think it was just another way of kind of like uh illustrating the arrogance of these people, these rich people.

Ligeia
And how stupid they are when it comes to that moment of like, they don't realise that they're actually going to die.

Leraje
Look at him. Yeah.

Ligeia
Like, yay, there is a new guest. Come here, take a selfie with me.

Leraje
It's a great story, really. Uh I think it's possibly my favourite Poe story.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
And again, so many beautiful descriptions of the house, of the rooms, like the building of the atmosphere and the chiming of the ebony clock. It is gorgeous. It's proper freaking Gothic.

Leraje
These are two— I mean, Poe is obviously known for Writing Gothic. Mhm But these two are very Gothic. It's got literally every—

Ligeia
Everything.

Leraje
You know, if there was a checkmark of things to include in a Gothic story, these two alone would tick every box, I think.

Ligeia
The connecting idea, as we— as I mentioned when we started, is the idea of humans, us humans, not being able to actually comprehend the actuality of death. We can comprehend the idea. We know it's going to happen. And it is very tough to deal with that. I'm not going to say that I am such a brave person that I am completely fine with it.

I am not. I have moments and days where I am absolutely terrified with that.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
But um yeah, I think these 2 stories deal with both aspects Like it's, it's one extreme to the other extreme and everything in between we can cover in the next stories. I don't know. Because it's all about death anyway.

Leraje
All Poe stories and poetry are always about death.

Ligeia
Yes. I think this was interesting and we'll see what we do next time.

Leraje
Definitely doing more Poe.

Ligeia
More Poe?

Leraje
Okay. We'll definitely do more Ligotti. And we haven't forgotten about Clive Barker. Don't worry.

Ligeia
No, no, no, no. Okay. Yeah. So thank you for listening. We hope you liked this little new niche. We will be coming back with more and we hope you enjoy it. I don't know. Mhm We will let you know what we choose next time because we haven't done that yet.

Leraje
No, we haven't decided.

Ligeia
But it will be Gothic. It will be dark. It will be filled with death and black rooms and bloodstained windows, maybe chains and candles and masks. So come back, please. So it's been me, Ligeia.

Leraje
Leraje. Hail Satan.

Ligeia
Hail Satan. Um Bye.

[Outro music]