

The Devil's Library Episode 18 – “The Haar”

[Intro Music]

Lithos

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

Leraje

Hail Satan!

Lithos

I have Pike.

Pike

Hail Satan!

Lithos

Um I have Ligeia.

Ligeia

Hail Satan!

Lithos

And we have a new guest on the show, Jazz, who actually suggested this book to me.

Jazz

Hail Satan!

Lithos

Hey, and I'm Lithos. Hail Satan! And this week um we bring you The Haar by David Sodergren. Now, I'm very sorry, I pronounced that the English way and I'm dropping all the Rs. I feel like I should be going, The Haar by David Sodergren, but I don't want to piss off Scottish listeners.

I really apologise for saying The Haar and for doing a terrible Scottish accent. um It's the tale of octogenarian Muriel Margaret Macaulay, who spent most of her life in the quiet Scottish seaside village of Witchaven. Enter uh all-round baddie US billionaire Patrick Grant, who is buying out all properties and surrounding lands in order to build a golf course.

Sound familiar? Muriel, who lost her fisherman husband Billy to the sea 12 years prior, ends up being the last bastion of resistance to the development, After increasingly violent tactics from the Grant organisation, she finds a weakened, amorphous sea creature on the beach in the Ha, which is a cold sea fog, and nurses it to health, only to find it can emulate the voice and later the entire physical appearance of her dead husband, Billy.

All this requires the creature to be fed on human blood and tissue. in increasingly gory scenarios in order to get the energy to shapeshift. The baddies get their comeuppance and Muriel gets to find peace in the ocean. It's a fairly simple story with lashings and lashings of grotesqueness and gore shot through with dark Scottish humour and swearing.

What did you think of the book? Because I fucking enjoyed it.

Ligeia

Ooh.

Lithos

So, who's gonna go first? Who's gonna go first?

Ligeia

I think uh you should go first, like, Jazz and you, because it's your choice. So let's hear, hear thee, hear thee.

Lithos

Jazz, what did you like about the book?

Jazz

um As a horror fan, it was like a warm bowl of soup for my soul. It was the perfect kind of blend of grotesque horror, but also, as Lithos said, dry Scottish humour and um weird love story.

Lithos

Yeah. Very weird. Yes. Yeah.

Ligeia

Why is it weird? Why is it weird? I want to know what you think is weird.

Lithos

Well, she ended up shagging a sea creature that was a blob with an eye. That's not weird. Come on.

Leraje

That is pretty weird.

Lithos

Oh, sorry.

Leraje

I'm—

Ligeia

You live on an island and this is weird? God, come on. Have you, have you never read anything like Greek mythology or anything like Yeah, I suppose it wasn't a swan.

Lithos

That's a plus.

Pike

What was actually weird about it is that it's a very sentimental romance for a horror story. I read uh one negative review on Goodreads that I thought was amazing. They should put it on the cover It said the monster was not even a monster. It was a romantic and a gentleman.

Lithos

I mean, to me it was like, uh I would love to see someone like Sam Raimi film this. It was like the literary equivalent of Sam Raimi at his best.

Ligeia

I can see that.

Lithos

It was gross, it was funny, and, you know, it's like I didn't have to engage my brain too much. It's a fairly simple story to follow. I found it very easy and quick to read um because it was written in quite a simple, snappy style. But the, some of the gross-out parts were really hilarious and uh deliberately so, I think.

Ligeia

I do enjoy his books. I think I have read so far all of them. I really enjoy his humour, but I must say this is my least favourite.

Leraje
Really?

Ligeia
Yeah. Have you read more books by him?

Jazz
um I've read Maggie's Grave. Yeah, yeah, enjoyed that one, but I've not—

Lithos
No.

Leraje
Oh God, I'm gonna be the fucking party pooper of this episode, aren't I?

Pike
You're allowed to be.

Lithos
I'm I'm not too certain, but hell, go for it.

Leraje
I didn't find it— I kept waiting for the really gross bits, and they didn't really— I read Clive Barker. I mean, there's no comparison. Um Um, uh, I struggled with quite a lot of it, to be honest. Um, I thought some of the writing was borderline shit.

Ligeia
Okay.

Lithos
Really?

Leraje
I am the one you call— long pregnant pause— uh Avalon. That's a sentence right out of a bad sci-fi movie. Uh It shouldn't be in a book at all. He fell to his knees, trembling before the unimaginable horror. You're the fucking author. It's your job to imagine it for us. It shouldn't be unimaginable.

Tell us about it. That's why we're reading the book.

Ligeia
That is true.

Leraje
Yeah.

Pike
You sound a little stunned, LaRouche.

Leraje
I was, I was, LaRouche.

Ligeia
You didn't just do that.

Lithos
You should point out to the listeners that LaRouche um is what the AI transcription service always ends up.

Leraje
Calling me.

Lithos

Giving us his name.

Leraje
Yes.

Ligeia
That's what uh you get for this.

Leraje
Yeah, I really wanted to— I went into this thinking I'm gonna fucking love this gross-out horror, and it's in Scotland, um, and yeah, it's gonna be good. And I did— it didn't, it didn't hit with me at all. Um, I ended up getting increasingly annoyed by it. Not, I'm not, not to the same extent of um John, obviously.

Oh, my choice.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Lithos
Yeah.

Leraje
But yeah, there was a lot of it. I mean, the baddies, literally all of them was the worst person imaginable. They had no real individual characters or characteristics at all. They were all straight out of baddie school. Well, um they have to be because they end up getting mutilated horribly.

Lithos
So that's the trope.

Leraje
I know, but it's like— because they had no individuality, they were all the worst person imaginable. I stopped caring about what happened to any of them. It was like, okay.

Ligeia
It's typical for his books. I mean, it's not going really deep. It's more fun. I imagine his stories are like horror movies from the '80s. It's very colourful and crazy. But I, I love his humour. I really do. I didn't find as much in this book, like when I compare it to his other books.

This is why I'm saying like, I didn't hate this book, but I enjoyed his other books much more.

Pike
Yeah.

Ligeia
Even uh Maggie's Grave. But this is, I mean, the premise was fun.

Leraje
So you said this was the, this is your least favourite of his books?

Ligeia
By him. Yeah.

Leraje
So I should definitely try another one then.

Ligeia
You should maybe, because, you know, maybe just this—

Leraje

Maybe it was just this particular one. Yeah.

Ligeia

I mean, if you are looking for like deep psychological horror, it's not this. This is fun. I think it's like, yeah, fun horror. It's gross. And he's coming up with all these horrible deaths, which maybe this is the thing that didn't work for me here, because, because with, with uh the Avalon, the creature, I think it became a little bit more repetitive because we knew that he's going to just like kill everybody and—

Leraje

Yeah, uh there was no tension at all to any of it.

Ligeia

You know what I'm trying to say? Like first, I don't know, 2, 3 kills were fun and then it was like, I was expecting this is going to be going this way. But I think there was this really interesting question for me. What I took from this book was uh maybe 2 questions.

One of them was the grief, and I wish it went a little bit deeper into that. Like, how far are you willing to go if you got a chance to have— you knew it's fake, but it would be a creature, a living being that would be looking, speaking, remembering everything that you had Yeah.

With the person you loved the most and you are missing them and you're grieving. You know, it's fake. You know, it's not them, but they look like them. They smell like them. They remember you. Ah, you have memories together.

Pike

That's correct. Avalon did not smell of fish. It specifically mentioned that.

Ligeia

Maybe, maybe Billy smelled like, I don't, we don't, do we know?

Lithos

Well, he was a fisherman.

Ligeia

He would've smelled like fish. Yeah, yeah.

Leraje

I did find those bits the most entertaining bits, the question, this kind of like morality of—

Ligeia

Yeah, um because I would do anything.

Leraje

Well, yeah, I think most people would. But I just, I don't uh know, maybe I'm being too harsh. I had, I reached the point where I think everything was beginning to annoy me a little bit. And even Muriel was annoying me a little bit.

Ligeia

We should probably—

Leraje

She's just like— she feels like a woman written by a male author. She's just got no— her sole defining characteristic is how much she loved Billy, her dead husband. There's no other personality to her at all. No, no, no.

Lithos

She also hates Patrick Grant and his organisation and Americans in general. Um I mean, I really think I've— I enjoyed it because I just regarded this as fun. And I kept imagining the cinematic version of this, and I thought this would be a great script for a slasher movie. Yeah, it was a good start.

It was funny, and I, you know, and I think some of the things were deliberately sort of funny, like that seemed bad to you. I saw them as deliberately funny. I just like went, this is a fun book. This has got gore in it. This is gross. It's just got humour. It's got swearing.

And every now and then I like to read a book where I just go, fuck it. This is great fun. I really don't need to think about the dark themes in this. And that really, you know, this was for me, this was uh my idea of a fantastic fun book.

Ligeia

Of the hot soup as jazz. What did you say? Hot soup?

Jazz

It felt like a bowl of warm soup for myself.

Pike

Yeah.

Ligeia

Like when you're sick and you get your chicken soup and it's so good. Well, for me it's chicken soup.

Lithos

Yes, help me here, Jaz. Defend this book.

Ligeia

Yeah, yeah, go on, go on.

Lithos

Defend this book from the naysayers.

Leraje

I think it's only me who's really got a problem with it. And, you know, it's entirely possible I've completely missed the point.

Lithos

No, it looks like Pike might have as well.

Ligeia

I also still have points, but I would like to start, like, with something that people enjoyed.

Pike

I can, I can name some things that I enjoyed. Um, I, I really liked, uh, the author's grandma's little memoir at the end.

Jazz

That was cute.

Pike

I thought that was interesting. I, being from Eastern Europe, uh, I heard a lot of stories about Eastern Europeans queuing for bananas in the Soviet Union. I didn't realise that in the UK during the war, the situation was the same.

Leraje

Oh yes.

Lithos

Yes.

Pike
So that was quite interesting.

Lithos
And for several years after the war.

Leraje
Yeah.

Pike
And uh I liked the bit where Muriel shot Grant. It was very sudden and satisfying. Yeah, it was very cinematic. It was bam, you know, no, no, nothing. Just, it just, it just comes out of the dark and it's done.

Ligeia
Everybody in this room thinks that Muriel was not a villain as well? Like everybody was a villain.

Pike
No, I thought it had very clear, two-dimensional kind of villains and goodies and baddies.

Ligeia
But, but do I have to agree with that?

Pike
You don't have to agree with that.

Ligeia
Because I think everybody was a villain. She was stubborn and they were portrayed like the development, of course, like the cartoonish version of the billionaire fucker. M I don't think it's black and white in real life. I don't think it's like, you know, Old people can be really stubborn and stuck in their ways.

Sorry, but like, yes, I will be probably when I'm 84. I will probably not be 84 ever, but, uh, uh like I will die. Not that I wouldn't be 84.

Leraje
I do agree with you. I don't think anyone, anyone in any character in this story. Yeah, exactly. Exactly. Or leaving them to their death at the hands of Avalon.

Ligeia
I mean, I enjoyed the killings. Yeah.

Pike
But still, like, it's a revenge fantasy, right?

Jazz
Yeah.

Pike
It is.

Ligeia
It is.

Pike
It's the cathartic experience of having everyone you hate die a horrible death.

Ligeia

But the hate was based on like her problem with the progress and like the new life coming in.

Leraje
No, no, no.

Lithos
It's not progress. This, this was essentially Trump going and building a golf course in Scotland. And she was, she was Jenny Godley holding up a sign saying Trump is a cunt. That's basically the metaphor for that.

Ligeia
I mean, but is all progress wrong?

Pike
No, just the bad one.

Lithos
Yeah. I mean, building a golf course in a beautiful place in Scotland is not progress. Building a golf course, full stop, is not progress. It's by definition fucking up the natural environment so a load of rich people can wander around with golf clubs knocking balls about and getting pissed at the end. Fuck golf.

And fuck anyone who builds golf courses. Sorry, that's my rant.

Pike
No, Ligeia, play the devil's advocate.

Ligeia
No, uh I'm just thinking it was too, it was too obvious how it was portrayed in the book. That's why I couldn't sympathise with either of them because it was too—

Leraje
Simplistic.

Ligeia
Much, it was too simplified, or I don't know what else. Like, I couldn't sympathise with Muriel as well because, because I mean, yeah, I um understand. I understood that she was so attached to her home and the memories and everything, but I mean, how far would you go if other people already sold?

I'm not saying it's right, but that's life. It happens. It happens to my family. My grandparents had to get rid of all they had because of communistic fuckers. And like, if we were killing people for that, I don't know, I wouldn't be here. I'm happy I'm here. But like, you— like, there are points in life where you have to just like, okay, let's move on.

Pike
It's not that such a big deal. That is a hot take.

Ligeia
I know, you asked.

Lithos
I don't— I really— I'm on Muriel's side here, I'm afraid. I'm going, she's 86, she's used to going there. What, she's gonna take the money and then get all her stuff down to uh a council estate in Glasgow or something.

Ligeia
What the fuck?

Lithos
No, no, stick your ground, Muriel. Kill the fuckers. Yes, really.

Ligeia
Oh my God. Okay.

Jazz
Yeah, no, at the beginning they're very— well, throughout the book they're very much trying to bully her and everyone else in the town out of their homes. And especially at the beginning of the book when Muriel has nothing to live for except Arthur and spite.

Pike
She doesn't start the killings, to be fair. Uh She— they try to kill her. They threaten her um with killing her. They kill her best friend. Um It's, you know, it's a lot. It can push a person over the edge.

Lithos
And then, and then the actual sea creature does the killing of the person who killed her best friend and then broke into her house while she was running off to try and rescue her best friend. So she's not doing the killing. That she came back and then found that sea creature had kind of started morphing into Billy because it had consumed—

Leraje
I don't know about that. I think Avalon was the gun, but Muriel certainly pulled the trigger every time.

Pike
Yeah, I would agree with LaRouche on that. Okay, I'll stop now. I'll stop now.

Lithos
Yeah, because you're just going to make the transcript even worse.

Ligeia
Would you at least agree there was this metaphor that would connect the monster with the billionaire's name, Patrick, right? Like they were both, like there was the scale or whatever showing how the goo, the monster would eat anything, right? M And then Patrick was also—

Leraje
Also like that. Yeah.

Ligeia
Everything around. Like it was like, juxtaposition, whatever you call it, of these 2. So it, it was a tool.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
Would you at least agree with, like, could, could I read that as at least, you know?

Leraje
It never occurred to me when I was reading the book, but I think you're right.

Jazz
Yeah.

Leraje
I mean, they're both kind of like devouring and they both don't really give a shit about who it is they devour.

Ligeia

I saw it as a nice device. I wanted to say, like, that was interesting for me, how that was portrayed.

Pike

There is somewhere where, um, the author describes— he's not talking about either of them, but he's, he's, he's talking about something else entirely. And he says, well, it's, it's the cruel indifference of nature. But I think that's, uh—

Leraje

Another phrase that made me wince.

Pike

Yeah, it's overused. Okay. But it's, if you are comparing Patrick Grant and Avalon saying, you know, both— that's what they do, they just kill, they eat. I think that phrase there kind of—

Leraje

So you think it's— yeah, so, okay, so Avalon represents nature in that scenario and the kind of like indifference of the natural world.

Pike

Yeah, but you could equally say that Patrick is the opposite of nature because he's actually destroying the natural world.

Lithos

mhm Yeah, I kind of saw the sea creature as an ancient creature that just, you know, had to consume things to carry on, consumed things in the sea, actually assimilated them, you know, because everything that it consumed, it had assimilated what they knew. So there's a question whether it actually had consumed Billy in the first place because it kept saying to Muriel.

Ligeia

I thought so.

Lithos

Um It kept saying to Muriel, well, I know how Billy is because I've taken him from your memories. But I ended up thinking, nah, mate, you ate Billy and the crew on that shipping boat.

Ligeia

And that would explain why it didn't eat her, because that didn't make sense.

Lithos

No, no. And I think it did have—

Ligeia

Why did it not eat her?

Lithos

You know, it was just like it's indifferent to humans. Are, you know, for an ancient creature like that, humans are just other things that are there, and if they get in the way, they'll get eaten. It's like the way of nature kind of thing. Um, yeah, it's— there's different interpretations to this.

Leraje

I think I would have cared a lot more if— I just wish that all the baddies had had at least some shade of grey to them. You know, if they— uh if one or two of them had a couple of relatable characteristics or something. But they were literally, you could have, you could have swapped their names and descriptions and it would have been the same person.

And I just, I can't care. I just can't care. Okay, they died horribly. Fine. Next. Fine.

Lithos

I'll keep coming back to Jaz's warm bowl of soup. and I think this is it for me. It certainly was. It was just like, I did not want, you know, I didn't actually want that book to go into any further depths. That gave me exactly what I expected from it, which was just like humour and horror and, you know, and just like simple, you know, very entertaining book.

Leraje

Does anybody ever read any James Herbert books?

Ligeia

No, no, no.

Leraje

He was an author uh in the kind of like '70s and '80s. He wrote books like The Rats.

Lithos

The Rats, yeah, I think I read that ages ago. Oh, The Fog, that might be the one that I read.

Leraje

uh This David Sutherland book reminds me quite a lot of James Herbert's style. It's kind of like very kind of muscular and direct, um and there's no fucking about with it. You get exactly what he's what it says on the tin. And there's nothing, you know, there's nothing wrong with that at all.

And I will read another book by him, by David Södergren, because maybe it's just this one didn't particularly land with me and maybe a different one will. Um I just— ah, yeah, this one was not for me, I'm afraid.

Pike

I also didn't enjoy it, but I agree with what Lithos said that the that I think the cartoonishness of it was deliberate. It's just that combination of cartoonish horror and deep sentimentality that, for me, that was completely the wrong thing.

Leraje

Yes. God, yeah. Yeah. Um Maybe it's a lot of it is my own fault because I kind of like, I was really excited to start reading it and, you know, it sounded like the perfect novel.

Pike

I don't think it's anyone's fault. fault because the writing is also, you could pick holes at the writing all day long if you wanted, right? So it's very on the nose a lot of the time. Let's say the security guards, right? They laugh at what Grant says because that's what he paid them to do.

You know, they're explaining everything very— it's, I don't remember who, which of you said, maybe it was Lithos, it's like an '80s horror movie. horror film. It's all sort of, here it is.

Leraje

Yeah, it tells, not shows.

Pike

Yeah, yeah.

Leraje

A good book does the opposite.

Ligeia

It's like the neon lights, you know, like when you imagine just the visuals of The Lost Boys, for example.

Lithos
Yeah.

Ligeia
I see this being sort of like a book that could be that That sort of movie, m which is fun. I really enjoy, and I really like Södergren. I have watched many interviews or listened to him. M He is such a sweet person. I really, really enjoy what he does and he self-publishes.

So I just, yeah, I think we could do like more or at least one more book by him because—

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
You know, probably if this was my first book by him, I would be more positive, but I think he, he did much better with other books. Or for me, that those books maybe worked better, which is also just my preference.

Pike
But so, so, Leija, which one do you recommend?

Ligeia
I am thinking the whole time. I don't know, because it might end up exactly like this. You know, one person might like it. I know that first book that I read by him was The Night Shoot. And I was intrigued. It was— everything is in Scotland, which is a big yes for me.

I love that setting. And it was um like a group of students uh who study, like, who, like, they have this project, they need to shoot a short movie. So they have this huge mansion, Scottish, old, gorgeous thing. And they're trying to shoot this movie and it's, it's like so well done in um the commentary on misogyny and the sexualization uh of women.

I was cringing. I was like, oh yeah, I need these people to die. And how some guys died in that book is like, yes. So I understand when you say like, yes, the killings. That worked for me because I was hurt because I'm a woman in my life. That was the big— the biggest hurt.

So I understand when people see it in a way that you, Ulisses, were saying, like the billionaires and the golf club. It can be something that is probably not that triggering for me, and that's why I'm not connecting to this story that much, which I was with that because those fuckers—

Pike
What?

Ligeia
That was bad. I'm like, yes. And also, I wasn't ready for those killings and the deaths uh he created, and I was hooked. Like, yeah, yeah, I see, I see, this is good. This death is really awesome. Well done.

Lithos
So what book was that? Sorry.

Ligeia
Night Shoot.

Lithos
Night Shoot. Okay.

Ligeia

But I also enjoyed Maggie's Grave, and I keep forgetting the other one.

Leraje

Was Maggie's Grave the other one that you read? Jazz, is that the one you like?

Ligeia

Yeah, did you like it, Jazz?

Jazz

Yeah, I did. I didn't like it as much as I liked The Haard, but again, it was quite fun, slasher, campy.

Ligeia

Yeah, it's always like that with him. So why, why did you like this one more? I want to hear more positive about this book. I'm so sorry.

Lithos

Yes, Jazz, come on, help me out here. I can't be the only one going, I know I'm lowbrow, but fuck it, I do enjoy lowbrow entertainment. M If you're going to say to me, would you rather sit through Tarkovsky or The Evil Dead 2 for the 5th time? I'll go Evil Dead 2 every time.

Fuck Tarkovsky. I don't want to come out feeling depressed. So go jazz.

Jazz

Something that stood out to me was like the unique perspective. So number one, having a cHaaracter, a Scottish cHaaracter, or, you know, the particular vernacular they use, lots of canny or dinay. Um I found that really fun. And also the unique perspective of having an 80-year-old woman as the protagonist. Like, a lot of the books I read have a 20-something-year-old hero that's knees still work, and I'm like, ah, couldn't be me.

But I really enjoyed um the way he described the ageing body.

Lithos

That's a very good point.

Leraje

Yeah, that was unique, and it was a nice change from the norm. That is a good point. Even if she did irritate the piss out of me.

Ligeia

That is true.

Lithos

She didn't! I don't get it. I quite like Muriel in the end. I did like Muriel.

Leraje

I just wish she had some fucking personality beyond every chapter. Uh Oh, Billy's still dead. Dead Billy did this.

Ligeia

Hello, let up on me! Uh Maybe, maybe. Hold on. We don't know Billy's qualities.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

I don't know why I say this.

Lithos

He might have been hung like a beluga whale.

Leraje
Whoa. I'm not interested in Billy's whale cock.

Pike
Jealousy.

Ligeia
Jealousy.

Leraje
That's what it is.

Pike
The big redeeming feature of the novel was hanging in between the lines.

Leraje
Literally.

Jazz
I did quite enjoy how the big bad guy's cock was described, um, especially towards the end where it says, with hands on his hips, his small penis poking out like a curious rodent um from beneath a thick nest of pubic hair.

Leraje
Curious rodent.

Lithos
That was great.

Pike
Almost like a little bear, wouldn't you say?

Ligeia
Oh, yeah.

Jazz
The bit about the haggis.

Pike
Yeah, there was this odd little comedy moment. That's when I went like, oh, right. The cartoonishness is deliberate. That's what he's doing.

Ligeia
It is for sure. It is for sure.

Leraje
Yeah, I didn't get that. No, that missed me completely.

Pike
It was where you have 2 um murderers coming from Muriel and one says, oh, what if there's a bear? And the other one says, ah oh, there are no bears in Scotland. It was a scene straight up from the film. In films you have like the 2 Dumb and Dumber evil guys and then, and then they're like, they have haggises, they live underground or something like that.

Lithos
This is what I'm saying. I'll say to me, I was like, it was like a script and I was imagining Carpenter or Raimi doing, you know, the film for this. And I saw, you know, in the end, no difference between this and the script to something like Evil Dead 2. It was deliberately funny um and, you know, and gross.

And that to me is a killer combo. Sorry, doesn't take a lot to entertain me.

Leraje

I didn't think it was particularly gross. I kept waiting to be really grossed out by it.

Jazz

Really?

Ligeia

You didn't think it was gross?

Leraje

Not gross.

Ligeia

What do you do in your free time, Larache?

Leraje

Well, I mean, I've watched David Cronenberg films. I've read Clive Barker. That's fucking gross. This was, it was all right. Um It was, um yeah. It was okay. It just wasn't— I felt, I don't know, maybe I just had too many expectations of it. It kind of, it just didn't quite go there enough.

Jazz

It's certainly more mild on the kind of horror splatterpunk spectrum, I would say.

Leraje

Yeah, maybe that's it. Um, I do think a lot of my issues with it were born from this false expectation I'd built up in my own head about what it was going to be. like rather than what it— I should have just given it a chance and not sort of like built it up in my own mind about what it was going to be like before I actually opened the fucking book and started reading it.

Lithos

Yeah, it doesn't— no, whatever, you know, you know, we don't all have to end up liking the same stuff. No, no, absolutely not.

Pike

Do you agree to what Muriel said at one point, that she thought the life of a murderer was a fair trade for of a life of one honest man, you know, who killed prematurely.

Ligeia

Hmm.

Leraje

That's a very murky path to start going down.

Pike

I think it was— I was quite surprised that she thought— she considered it and she was like, that's a fair trade.

Leraje

Yeah.

Lithos

I mean, I don't, I don't agree with that, but I kind of like that in a cHaaracter because, you know, it's like, like I say, It— I wasn't looking for any depth of cHaaracter. I just kind of liked that as sort of her uh rationalising the whole thing.

Leraje

Mm-hmm.

Lithos

And I particularly understood how she rationalised the horror that went with what the creature was doing increasingly because of the fact that it was able to, as a result of that, make her feel Young Again, right?

Jazz

Mm-hmm.

Lithos

The bits where the creature absorbs someone else and then she touches the creature and suddenly the creature's healed all that uh and she feels young and she looks young and she feels great. And I'm going, I'm getting older and older and I'm going, I would give a fuck of a lot for that to be transplanted back into my 25-year-old body again.

I would go, fuck yeah. Go on, kill the bastard. Kill Trump just so I can be 25 again, even only for a couple of hours. Fucking hell.

Leraje

Head to the coast with a bucket.

Lithos

Yeah. Find the nearest jellyfish.

Ligeia

We should all go together.

Lithos

You know, I did understand that. I went, yeah, fucking hell, I understand her motivation there.

Leraje

Yeah.

Ligeia

I mean, yeah, that's very human.

Pike

That was where she ended up, right? So she starts off with, oh, I'm just a nice old lady, it's all okay. And then she goes, hmm, I guess a life of a murderer for a life of a good man, that's a fair trade. And then, then just when she gets young again and gets to hang out with Billy again, then she's just, fuck it, let's kill them all, but only, only the bad ones.

Yes, but it doesn't matter anymore.

Ligeia

Yeah, there was this funny moment when they fucked in the cave.

Jazz

Yeah.

Ligeia

And then the freaking thing was so tired she had to put it in a plastic bag and carry it home.

Pike

What did she do to the poor man?

Lithos

We've all fucking been there, come on.

Ligeia

Oh no, no, no, no, no, I'm leaving that shit in the cave. Like, what do you mean you're tired?

Leraje

He's fucking leaving poor Avalon. gone in his plastic bag in a cave.

Lithos

You literally— so what, are you the queen of fucking Chuck now?

Pike

Literally.

Ligeia

Oh my goodness.

Lithos

Oh no, that was actually—

Ligeia

that made me laugh.

Lithos

There were funny bits. And like, like, I think someone— I can't remember who mentioned a bit at the end when— was it you, Lajay? When, when she just turned around in the end and, and shot the billionaire. just like, you know, they'd been talking about stuff and just sort of turned around and shot him, which was kind of like— Yeah, you mentioned that.

Where— sorry, Pike, it was you. And, you know, that was like that scene in the first Raiders of the Lost Ark where, you know, the guy turns up with the swords and spins it and he just pulls his gun out and shoots him, you know. And that's why I thought this would be a really good fucking B-horror movie.

Like a really funny one.

Pike

I think it is. I think all these scenes, right, they are not— they are borrowings from films, this guy. Yeah, yeah, because that's a very classic scene, isn't it? Where a sort of random, random kill in the middle of, you know, when you don't expect it.

Lithos

Yeah, exactly. Oh, uh fucking hell, I've had enough of you. Just bang, right? Okay, let's get on with this. It was— it was— yeah, I just— sorry. Sorry, guys, I enjoyed it.

Ligeia

I am so happy. Don't apologise.

Leraje

It's good you enjoyed it.

Ligeia

Yes. And I'm really, really being like, honestly, I wish we could like try more books because this, I don't know, it just feels unfair to him because I really like his books.

Lithos

I mean, there's some books, you know, we've done books and there's some books I've struggled through because they were kind of difficult to read and did not gel with me at all. Like the one, the last one that you picked, Leverage, which was— no, it wasn't. It was one—

Leraje

Why Is We Witching?

Lithos

No, no, no, it was one before. It was the Wax Child.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Lithos

Oh, which just didn't do anything for me, and I found incredibly difficult to get through. And you know, just to have a book where I could just pick it up and go, yeah, I'll just keep reading this. This is great fun. Like one of the, you know, I'd call it a holiday book, kind of like, yeah, you know, you're fucking—sorry?

Pike

uh Pulp fiction.

Ligeia

Pulp.

Lithos

But really good pulp fiction. And there's nothing wrong with that. And I think there's an art to doing that.

Leraje

God, these would be very boring podcast episodes if we all agreed about every little thing about every little that we fucking did.

Pike

So when Grant, Shelley, and Connor go to Muriel's house with their security detail, there's a lot of people going into it. None of them react or notice at all that the, the whole cottage is splattered in blood.

Lithos

Yeah, that's a good point. Well, yeah, yeah, I did think, because she did say, oh, everything's covered in blood, and then They all turn up at the end and it's like they walk through the door and see guts on the ceiling. But I don't know, maybe he cleaned up. Maybe Avalon was very good uh with a sort of like mop and Jif.

Jazz

Licked the house clean.

Lithos

Licked the house clean, yes.

Ligeia

So what did you think about the name of the book? The huh Haar—

Leraje

the Haar—

Ligeia

the Fock?

Lithos

The Fog? I thought it was a great name. I think it's a great name.

Pike

It is a good name.

Lithos

The creature appears in the fog and things happen um when the fog rolls in just at the wrong time because it's supposed to be morning fog, I believe, and then it rolls in at odd times of the day and then things happen.

Ligeia
Yeah.

Pike
M Yeah. And, oh yeah, I agree with, I think, what Jaz said, that it's nice to have all the, uh like, little, you know, all the insertions of Scots speak in the, in the text. That, that was quite nice.

Ligeia
No, I can't really judge that, but I would assume that's correct because he is Scottish. So I think he did well, right?

Leraje
Yeah.

Pike
That seemed fine.

Leraje
Coos.

Lithos
And there was a drieg day and there was all kinds of things like that. Yeah.

Ligeia
I wish I could just hear how they actually say those words.

Pike
I looked it up. I listened to the audio files.

Ligeia
Files? Audio files to the huh?

Pike
And I also went and listened to Only the Lonely by Roy Orbison. And then I was like, ah, okay. Yeah. Fine.

Ligeia
Maybe if it was a movie and I could hear the Scottish accent and everything, you know, and see the fog and the cave and everything, that would be so much better because I can't read it in my head in the Scottish accent, you know, so I'm missing out.

Lithos
I don't know, I found it quite easy to actually imagine the scenery in the countryside.

Ligeia
Scenery, yes, yes.

Lithos
You know, what was going on from— because I thought it was quite well written uh for what it was, you know, I thought it was, I thought it was well written. Personally, there might have been a couple of clumsy phrases in there, but fucking hell, give me a book that's like that.

Ligeia
The scenery was well, well done, but it's always because it's Scotland.

Pike

And now imagine that you have to allocate a number of pitchforks.

Leraje

Yeah. Okay, Pike, pitchfork.

Pike

I will give it 3.5.

Leraje

Ligeia?

Ligeia

Why me? Oh God. Okay, 5.

Leraje

Ethos?

Lithos

Right, okay, I'm gonna— I don't fucking care. I've no brow. I'm giving it an 8. I fucking enjoyed it.

Leraje

Jazz?

Jazz

Yep, I'm also going for an 8.

Leraje

Cool. Uh 4 for me. There we go. Okay, so that was the haw.

Jazz

You gotta do it in a Scottish accent.

Ligeia

How you say it in Scottish accent is haw.

Leraje

Scottish accent, okay. It's the haw.

Ligeia

Oh, I like the Haar.

Lithos

Haar.

Pike

Haar.

Leraje

Uh, so we're also going to talk about any other books that we might have read. Has anyone read anything else this month they want to tell us about?

Lithos

I'm still struggling with the second, second one in GIFs. It's not— it is— I mean, I think— did you mention, Pike, that you'd heard it wasn't the best one?

Pike

What? What?

Leraje

The second book in The Annihilation.

Pike

Oh yeah, oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Apparently the second one is bad and the third one is good again, but I haven't, I haven't read them.

Lithos

Uh I, I, I'm going to get through it, but it is a difficult read. There's an awful lot of sort of introspection, which isn't—

Pike

It's too highbrow.

Lithos

For me, too highbrow. Yes, sorry, too many big words tonight.

Ligeia

What the hell?

Leraje

Pike, are you reading anything else? Have you finished with, uh, Secret History?

Pike

No, I haven't finished Secret History. I um am, I'm reading a cookbook. I'm reading, uh, Heat, Fire, Acid, you know that one?

Jazz

Oh yeah, that one's really good.

Pike

It's really good.

Leraje

Yeah. Jaz, are you reading anything this month? Have you read anything else?

Jazz

Um, not really. I've been kind of on a Romantasy binge for the past months. Mm-hmm. Um, so I've been reading a lot. I've been reading most of the S.J. Maas books again in preparation for her 2 books that are coming out end of October. So I'm debating whether I should take time off work to read them.

I'm tempted.

Leraje

Definitely do that.

Ligeia

And when you say preparation, is it like a continuation of the story?

Jazz

Yeah. So I think it's books 8 and 9 that are being released.

Ligeia

Oh, see, I don't have a clue.

Leraje

LaJaya, have you read anything else this month?

Ligeia

Yeah, I've been reading some poetry.

Lithos

Okay.

Ligeia

Uh, Sylvia Plath. I love her. And also we have been with Larache, we have been doing some new episodes with uh Edgar Allan Poe. So I've been rereading some

other stories just here and there. because I'm just enjoying it. And I've been also reading the book, um, The Bone Mother. I don't have it with me, so I can't tell you the name of the author, but it's— yeah, it is a book.

Leraje

Of all the books that have been written, it's certainly one of them. It is a book.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Pike

That is the level of analysis we bring to you in this podcast.

Ligeia

Yeah, it's a book. I don't know how to say just like 2 sentences. I never know how to do that.

Lithos

I'm personally quite happy with that level of analysis. Like I say, I'm easily pleased.

Ligeia

Good. So uh there you go.

Leraje

So I've been reading um a book called The Hollow Places because based on what I think, well, what Ligeia has told us her next choice is going to be. And Hollow Places is also by that same author. So I thought I'd get one in. early, um and it's very good. Very much enjoying it.

And I also be reading another book called The Salt Bind, which is excellent. Very, very good. It's witchy.

Ligeia

Salt Bind?

Leraje

Salt Bind.

Ligeia

uh Okay.

Leraje

S-A-L-T. Um, yeah, it's set in Cornwall in the 17th century, I think.

Lithos

Is it another cookbook?

Leraje

It's not a cookbook, no.

Lithos

It's—

Leraje

well, there is, there is a lot of salt and fishes in it, so, you know, maybe. But no, it's about um the pact between the sea and the land and how this coven of witches holds the pact in place.

Ligeia

Coven of witches, you say?

Leraje

Oh yeah.

Ligeia
I should check that out.

Leraje
You definitely should. Yeah, it's very good.

Ligeia
Okay.

Leraje
Yeah. Okay, so that's it from us about the HAAR and also what books we've been reading. Ligeria, it's your choice next. What are we reading?

Ligeia
So we are doing um something a little bit different next time. We are going to be comparing one of the most famous, maybe the most famous work of Edgar Allan Poe, which is The Fall of the House of Usher.

Leraje
Yeah.

Ligeia
With a remake, or how do you call it? Remake?

Leraje
A reimagining.

Ligeia
Reimagining, uh, by T. Kingfisher, which is called What Moves the Dead, which is like based on the same story, but it's modern take. And I would like to, I would like to be more like focused on still Poe's work more as the original source of the beauty of this story. And then just like, but whatever you do, guys, whatever you do, this is just like maybe how I'm going to proceed.

Pike
We'll probably end up just talking about dicks.

Lithos
But Posers is a novella, isn't it? It's quite short. And the other one's actually a full-length novel.

Ligeia
Yeah, it's less than 200 pages per book. It's still very short. That's why I did this to you, because it's still very short altogether.

Lithos
Right.

Leraje
So that's it from us.

Jazz
Scene 1, take 2.

Leraje
Okay. That's it from us. for another month. Uh, we'll see you next time. I've been Niroj. Hail Satan. Lygeia.

Ligeia
Hail Satan.

Leraje

Uh, Pike.

Pike
Hail Satan.

Leraje
Lithos.

Lithos
Hail Avalon.

Leraje
Oh, Avalon. Jazz.

Jazz
Hail Satan.

[Outro music]