

Episode 2: The Haunting of Hill House

Ligeia [00:00:00]

Hello, everybody. Welcome to our second episode, um, of our beautiful book club, the Devil's Library. This is Lygia here. Hail Satan. I have, uh, two of my dear friends with me. It's Leraje.

Leraje [00:00:16]

Hail Satan.

Ligeia [00:00:17]

And Pike.

Pike [00:00:19]

And hail Thyself!

Leraje [00:00:21]

Yay.

Ligeia [00:00:23]

And, uh, today we are going to talk about, uh, really nice, short, tiny, but very famous book by Shirley Jackson. So I guess you can guess. It's the book called the Haunting of Hill House. There you have it.

Leraje [00:00:45]

Fantastic.

Ligeia [00:00:46]

Yay. I'm excited. If you can tell, that's the best.

Leraje [00:00:50]

Introduction to a book you've ever done.

Ligeia [00:00:53]

Uh, I don't know if people are going to agree with you, but, yeah, this is what I just did. So we have to roll with this. Now. Also, I want to apologise if my sound is horrible. I am not using my proper microphone today because of issues. I will get better, guys. Bear with me, please.

[00:01:13]

I'm sorry.

Pike [00:01:14]

And I. I stole Ligeia's proper microphone. So my sound is going to be better.

Ligeia [00:01:19]

Yes.

Leraje [00:01:20]

Yeah. It's like you swapped.

Ligeia [00:01:21]

Like, you can't have everybody here to be perfect. Like, it's always gonna be one that's gonna be like the black goat.

Leraje [00:01:31]

That's all of us, isn't it? I mean, that's literally all of us.

Ligeia [00:01:34]

Yes. So, I know. I know the sound might. Might be a little bit tricky, so. Apologies. Apologies.

Leraje [00:01:41]
Okay, so, um. The Haunting of Hill House.

Ligeia [00:01:46]
Yeah.

Leraje [00:01:46]
Uh, I'll give a brief kind of, like, rundown of it, um, just so we can get kicked off. So, the Haunting of Hill House is a story. The archetypal story, some might say, of new American Gothic haunted house. And it tells the story primarily of the Bad Place, which in this case is called Hill House.

[00:02:10]
It's also the story of a young woman called Eleanor Vance, who, uh, comes to Hill House as part of a team of investigative people. Investigative people. I don't know how to describe them. And it's about what happens to them while they're there in Hill House. Does that sound.

Pike [00:02:28]
That's right. Yeah.

Leraje [00:02:29]
Yeah.

Ligeia [00:02:30]
Sounds sound. Yes.

Leraje [00:02:32]
Okay, so I guess we should start. I mean, to me, the story really starts with, uh, that absolutely incredible. First, that introductory paragraph, which is just one of the best opening paragraphs to a novel that I've ever read. It's just fantastic.

Ligeia [00:02:48]
I agree.

Leraje [00:02:49]
And ends up with. And, um, whatever walked there, walked alone, which is just unbelievably good.

Ligeia [00:02:54]
Yeah.

Leraje [00:02:55]
So much so that Stephen King lifted it almost word for word for Salem's Lot.

Ligeia [00:02:59]
Oh, yeah.

Pike [00:03:01]
It felt familiar.

Ligeia [00:03:02]
Yeah.

Pike [00:03:02]
Now I know where from?

Leraje [00:03:04]
Well, he said he was inspired. Um, he created, uh, what's it called? The, um. Uh, the big mansion that Straker lives, uh, in in Salem's Lot. He based that on Hill House.

Ligeia [00:03:19]

Okay.

Leraje [00:03:20]

And he used that line, whatever walked there walked alone. I think pretty much explicitly.

Ligeia [00:03:25]

Yeah.

Leraje [00:03:25]

In St. Louis lot. Yeah.

Ligeia [00:03:26]

And I think he. He had somewhere. He did say somewhere that this book or this story is one of the most terrifying horror stories. I don't know. I don't know if that's based on, like, real statement, but I've heard that so many times. I don't know. We will get there. We'll get there if we agree with that because, you know, we didn't say much.

[00:03:54]

So.

Leraje [00:03:54]

So what did you guys think of it as an overall book, first of all?

Pike [00:04:00]

So I, I was very nervous about reading this because I know that both of you are big fans and I tend to be quite critical. So I thought, oh, no, if I hate, it's going to be very difficult because, you know, how do I. But luckily I really liked it.

Ligeia [00:04:23]

Oh, good.

Pike [00:04:24]

It wasn't what I expected. I mean, it is scary. It is a horror story, but it's not, um, like the previous book that we read. It is not just about that. That's not the main idea of it. It had some very beautiful poetic language in places. And I loved the descriptions of the house itself, the way the, um, its personality is expressed through architecture and sounds.

[00:04:56]

Um, you know, the scent of a bush, the ash falling in the fireplace. I really liked it.

Leraje [00:05:04]

Yeah. Uh, there's that whole thing that.

Ligeia [00:05:07]

Exactly.

Leraje [00:05:08]

Lovecraft tried to do the same with this kind of idea of geometry that's not really quite right.

Ligeia [00:05:13]

Yeah.

Leraje [00:05:14]

You know, uh, triangles that have a degree count that are not, uh, quite adding up to 180 or, you know, things like that. It's like perspective seems a little bit off. And I think that really kind of like built the idea of the house itself as having, uh, as being wrong, you know, as being intrinsically not right.

[00:05:35]

You know, there was something off about it, which gave it a very large personality all of its own, I think.

Ligeia [00:05:42]

Yeah. And the doctor. What. What was his name? Uh, Montague. Uh, he actually was saying something in those lines, like, there is no, like, the angles of this house and the measurements is just all wrong. Like, there is no straight wall or whatever. Like, nothing is what it seems to be. Like, the, the doors are a little bit skew.

[00:06:09]

The. The floor is, you know, angled. And it, it all makes you feel. You can't see it with your eyes, but. But your body, you know, the. The thing that you have to like the balance and whatever. Like, you know something is wrong. You can't see it, so it doesn't connect with the.

[00:06:29]

The, you know, what you are seeing. And you see other people walking around and you're like, is it just me? It's so. It's so well done. I love this because it's so subtle and it's like constant. So good.

Leraje [00:06:43]

Yeah. It reminded me of the, um. I, uh, mean, I've got. I get motion sickness, which means that I have real trouble sitting in the back seats of cars and I can't play video games at all. I just can't. And it reminded me of that. The kind of like, contradiction between what your eyes can see and what your body feels, you know, with the balance.

Ligeia [00:07:03]

Yeah.

Leraje [00:07:03]

Uh, that kind of feeling of, uh, it's not right. You know, there's something wrong.

Ligeia [00:07:10]

Yes.

Leraje [00:07:10]

It doesn't add up. Yeah.

Ligeia [00:07:13]

And it's. It's a book, you know, so do this with words. I mean, that's so good.

Pike [00:07:20]

It made me think how in, you know, in Piranesio, the house is really beautiful and benevolent. Here the house is malevolent, but it is also lovable. In the same way I feel that as Piranes's house is lovable.

Ligeia [00:07:39]

Yeah. Yeah.

Leraje [00:07:40]

Yes. I got. Yeah. I mean, I got the sense that, um, Eleanor was appalled by it, but also kind of really attracted to it in the same way in the. In at the same time. She could see that it looked horrific. Um, but she was also. Really wanted to be there all the time.

Pike [00:08:04]

Where are you both? Did you find yourselves going from sort of fearing the house to liking the house just like.

Leraje [00:08:15]

No, not in any way.

Ligeia [00:08:17]
You didn't.

Leraje [00:08:18]
I never want to go there.

Ligeia [00:08:19]
Really.

Leraje [00:08:20]
Never.

Ligeia [00:08:21]
I might be the weirdo here. Again. Nothing new. Uh, I would love to actually have this experience in my life at some point to actually find a house that would do this to me. I would love to feel all of that. And I think I would just stay there.

Leraje [00:08:38]
Do you want to hear a bit of backstory? So, um, Shirley Jackson decided to write the novel after she heard about a real life event where, uh, four or five people had done some psychic investigation into a house. And she thought, oh, that made a good idea for a ghost story or a Houndwood house novel.

[00:09:00]
And so she started researching and she started looking around for houses that she could sort of like look at and base visually Hill House on.

Ligeia [00:09:09]
Uh huh.

Leraje [00:09:10]
Uh, and she visited, I think it was New York one day, and she saw this house, and it was just the most horrendous looking house she'd ever seen in. And, um, she thought, that's Hill House.

Ligeia [00:09:21]
Wow.

Leraje [00:09:21]
And she went home. She went home. And I can't remember what city she lived in at the time, but she contacted someone in New York and said, hey, I saw this house. Here's the address. Could you find out a little bit more about it? And it turns out that the house she spotted had been built by her great grandfather.

[00:09:37]
Uh.

Ligeia [00:09:38]
Oh, no way.

Leraje [00:09:40]
Yeah. Amazing.

Ligeia [00:09:42]
You see, uh, this is. Wow. This is amazing. Like, oh, my God. And did she actually. Did she go there? Did she go inside?

Leraje [00:09:51]
No, she was like me. She was like, fuck that. I ain't going anywhere near it.

Ligeia [00:09:54]

Really? Oh, I mean, okay, fair enough. I would. And I absolutely loved that house and everything.

Leraje [00:10:04]

What about you, Pike? Did you think, did you like it or come to like it?

Pike [00:10:08]

I did. I felt like that. Uh, that does not mean I would want to go to Hill House. Like I said, I'm a wuss. I don't. I don't really want to be scared by a house, of all things. But I think the way, um, Eleanor was changing her attitude to the house, the descriptions of the house were changing as well.

[00:10:30]

And so I gradually. I was, I guess, empathising with Eleanor's feelings towards the house as well.

Leraje [00:10:40]

Do you think? I remember the first time I read it, and it was a very, very long time ago. Um, I think I was in my late teens when I first read it. I remember thinking that she liked it. So maybe she liked it so much because it would be the first thing in her life that she'd chosen to do that she'd had the choice to do, and she went.

[00:11:03]

And, um, that's part of the reason that she fell in love with the house or whatever that relationship is. Maybe love is the wrong word.

Ligeia [00:11:10]

It might have become a symbol for her, a symbol of her first big journey out of the family situation she was in, which. I don't know. I, um, don't know how. How true the picture of that is. Um, I'm trying to say this like the. The book was written, I think, in 1959, and so the 50s, you know, there was this really, really tense atmosphere, um, in the women's world where, you know, the.

[00:11:48]

The men were not present because of the war and they were slowly coming back to, like, normal life, or they were not coming back. They were, you know, and women had to become also men of the family and they had to go to work, which maybe wasn't the plan before. And then when the men came back, there was this situation, like, okay, so I have this work now.

[00:12:16]

I am in this new m. You know, new situation. Do I go back to the housewife. Housewife thing? And it was. It was really tense and there was, um. I've read a lot of papers around this that, like, Shirley is. Is perfect with this because I think her. Her horror is based in this domesticity, which is.

[00:12:43]

Which is weirdly working still well on me. Uh, uh, uh, anyway, because she, as a woman, I think she suffered with this. It is this. It is this silent, constant fear of failing as a woman in the new aspects, which you don't even know if they are yours. If that's your choice or it should be your choice.

[00:13:09]

You. You have a family, you are, uh. You are a wife, you are a mother. And now you're facing all these horrors of that, like, everyday mundane shite you have to do.

Leraje [00:13:23]

Have you read anything else by her?

Ligeia [00:13:24]

Oh, I have. What's the name of it? Hold on now. I can't really now, because a lot.

Leraje [00:13:31]
Of her other work centres around that same idea.

Ligeia [00:13:33]
We have always lived here in the castle. Yes. And I also have seen a movie.

Leraje [00:13:40]
Yeah.

Ligeia [00:13:41]
That's also really good book.

Leraje [00:13:43]
Yeah. But a lot of her work does centre around that idea you've just discussed.

Ligeia [00:13:48]
Yeah.

Leraje [00:13:49]
Not only in terms of, um, being a woman, but just the. The whole idea of being, um, on the outside, an outsider. Um, she wrote a very famous short story called the Lottery.

Ligeia [00:14:02]
Oh, yeah.

Leraje [00:14:03]
Which centres around that idea almost exclusively.

Ligeia [00:14:06]
Yes.

Leraje [00:14:07]
And I think what you said, what you just said then is very true. Um, particularly in terms of Eleanor more than Theo. And I don't. I. I think this whole idea about her, uh, having a choice for the first time.

Ligeia [00:14:24]
I'm not sure how really the. The relationship in the family was in the 50s, because some of the dialogues and joking atmosphere between those four people in the house. I don't know how you guys. I will just say what I felt like the jokes were so not funny. I will. I say that, like, I don't know if, uh, that was on purpose or this was the humour in that time.

[00:14:50]
Like, this was something that was funny. Or am I not getting it? But I thought, like, they are speaking like children and they were like, in their. In their 30s. I'm like, what? This is not. I'm not criticising her. I'm just saying, like, that was something that was really like the guy. What was his name?

[00:15:10]
The Luke, I think he was supposed to be like a witty, a little bit like, posh or something guy who has an answer to everything and who is like, above the. The whole thing. And he's, like, joking around and I just. He was so annoying and boring. I wanted him to be so much more witty and the humour to be like, really dark.

[00:15:35]
And it was just like children, like high school humour, like, oh. So, you know. And I don't know how to deal with that because, uh. I love the book.

Leraje [00:15:47]

I think it's reflective of its time to a certain degree. And, um, those. And I think as well that. And maybe you guys might disagree, I don't know. But I think all those characters were people who struggled in personal relationships. Um.

Ligeia [00:16:05]
Yeah.

Leraje [00:16:06]
I mean, the only ones we really saw were Eleanor's and later on Dr. Montague's with his wife and that weird dude.

Pike [00:16:15]
We do know about Theodora's friend. I don't know, friend or friend. Um, scare quotes. Um, they have a fight, a very dramatic fight before she comes.

Leraje [00:16:32]
So. So maybe these. These kind of, uh. Uh. And they're conversations of people who are also have only just met and are getting to know each other a little bit. I think they were well written. But I. I agree with you that they're. They're fairly childish, immature people, all four of them. In a lot of ways.

Pike [00:16:49]
I will say that people do joke that way nowadays because I definitely have friends who can go off on one of these sort of imaginative. Um. It's almost like storytelling, isn't it? Where, uh, Luke says, oh, and I'm a bullfighter and, um, Theodora is the. I, um, forget who she was. But, you know, they come up with these little stories about what is happening, even though that's not what's happening.

[00:17:19]
They're entirely imagined. And I have friends who do that. Absolutely. I think it's more particular to people than a period of time.

Ligeia [00:17:31]
Okay. You see, it's good because I really needed to talk about this. It's not something that would be bothering me or like, I would dislike the book. I just needed your opinions on that.

Leraje [00:17:44]
Like, you found it jarring.

Ligeia [00:17:47]
I don't know. I. Maybe my humour. I am so corrupted. Maybe. I don't know. I just wanted some, like, you know, like. And it was so beautiful. Or like the flowers and we are going to have a picnic. I'm like, yeah, but, like, say something more about it. Like, uh. Obviously the tension between these two young ladies was there as well, so maybe I wanted more of that.

[00:18:13]
Like the, uh. Maybe she couldn't, or she didn't dare to write more, or this is exactly the limit she. She wanted to go to. You know what I'm talking about?

Leraje [00:18:24]
I think she didn't want to make it. I mean, the whole book is written very ambiguously. Yeah. Everything in it is ambiguous. And I think that was a deliberate choice on her part. I think she wanted. I think she wanted us to think it's Theodora gay. Or am I reading too much into it?

[00:18:45]
Or am I thinking that Eleanor thinks that Theodora might be gay and there's this ambiguity and it kind of like adds to the tension.

Ligeia [00:18:55]
Mhm.

Leraje [00:18:55]
Of the. Of the whole book.

Pike [00:18:56]
I think I. I have a theory about that. I think what happens there is, um, so Eleanor chooses the. The house chooses Eleanor. And Eleanor chooses the house because that's the. The house is the only one who ever does choose her. She does mention at some point that she's so lonely that people are always.

[00:19:19]
Well, not forgetting she's there, but she's always overlooked. And so she tries to find some kind of connection to Luke and that it's not there. And then she tries to find some kind of connection with Theodora as well. And that's not. In the end, there is this almost hostility from them. Um, and in the end, that's why she, uh.

[00:19:39]
I think she finds that connection with the house. M. You know, when she hears the voice of the house and she's happy because nobody else hears it. It's only her.

Ligeia [00:19:51]
M. You know, I was thinking about the whole. If there was just like one point that I could tell about this book. I think it's about the identity, the missing identity of Eleanor. Like, she wasn't allowed to grow the relationship with her sister. From what we know if that was really true, what she was thinking, and we only know Eleanor's story, but if that was real, she was treated like a child.

[00:20:22]
She was not allowed to really have her own life and build any adult relationships, whatever, travel, just. Just be an adult. And so. But I. I was thinking, what if the whole thing is actually not real? What if the house is not real? What if this is just, uh, her looking for anything than what she had?

[00:20:47]
And like, she is looking for the identity. She wants to have something that want her. And she. She keeps saying, like, nobody ever wanted me anywhere.

Leraje [00:20:59]
Yeah.

Ligeia [00:20:59]
And she keeps asking, like, uh, she actually didn't ask Theodora. Ah. She just told her, you know what? I'm gonna follow you. And I was like, what? I'm gonna follow you. I'm gonna live with you.

Leraje [00:21:11]
All right, stalker. So what's it, so what do we, what's in it for the house? Why? Because the house quite. I mean, what the writing on the wall says, uh, and I quote, help Eleanor come home, Eleanor. Now, to me, there's a number of ways you can read that. Is the house saying, help Eleanor come home, or is the house saying, help Eleanor come home?

[00:21:44]
Or do you know what I mean? It's kind of, it's ambiguous. Is the house talking to the other three and saying, help Eleanor, or is it talking to her and saying, come home, Eleanor?

Ligeia [00:21:57]
Mhm.

Leraje [00:21:59]

So why, why do we think it is that Hill House has chosen Eleanor? Why does it identify so strongly with her?

Pike [00:22:06]

Because I think of that. Loneliness.

Leraje [00:22:08]

Yeah.

Ligeia [00:22:09]

Yeah. The lack of personality, really. Like she just takes on to herself whatever comes her way. She, she, I, I loved those pages where she was going in her car and she was seeing the house with the lions. And immediately she was like, oh, I. I have my whole life in this house.

[00:22:31]

And then she saw the oleanders and she goes like, oh, I can just be here. Like everywhere, anywhere, any place, she could just be there. Because she just didn't know where to go, where to be who she is. So I felt like this house or the idea of the house actually wrapped around her and she couldn't bear that, that weight because she didn't have any, you know, how do I say?

[00:23:00]

Not personality. You know what I mean? M. It was her decision at the end.

Leraje [00:23:06]

I read. Not an interview. Sorry. I read a, A piece by, um, Stephen King. He used to be a lecturer once upon a time before. Became an author. And he did, uh, a piece on the haunting of Hill House. And he described Eleanor as a narcissist. To me, that sounded a bit cruel.

[00:23:27]

But I can kind of see what he says. But it seems a little bit over the top. I don't think she's a narcissist, but she is everything in the. Everything that happens. I mean, I think apart from the first chapter and the last chapter, we're literally with Eleanor the whole time, throughout the whole book.

[00:23:45]

And she's kind of like, she makes everything that happens about her.

Ligeia [00:23:49]

Yeah. We see the whole story through her perspective and we don't know what is actually real. And the narcissist, I just don't like how this term is being misused currently. Like it's everywhere. Everybody is a narcissist and it just loses the whole point of the word. I don't know. I don't know. What he meant by it, I don't.

Leraje [00:24:10]

See it, but I don't think it. I also thought narcissist was the wrong word. But, um, I understand that. I think what he was trying to say, that she was quite self centred. But I think all four of the characters were in their own way.

Pike [00:24:23]

I think that the character who is telling a story of a personal experience will always come across as self centred because they are at the centre. Yeah, I m. Didn't think it was over the top. I didn't feel like she had that controlling pull over each situation like a narcissist does.

Ligeia [00:24:42]

M. And she was questioning herself all the time, like, am I too loud? Am I speaking too much? Like she was trying to like retrospect, whatever the word is, like question her words afterwards. I am just going today, like I'm rhyming even. But. And also how she was. That was really sad. Those moments where she was actually observing parts of herself.

[00:25:12]

Like I have red shoes, I have these nails. I'm uh, like this is so sad. I don't know. I can't describe how that made me feel because I. I thought she needs to actually slow down like and, and look at herself to believe she actually is. I don't know.

Leraje [00:25:32]

She's the only. She's the only person who notices herself until Hill House notices her.

Ligeia [00:25:38]

Uh, yeah. I don't know. It just made me so sad for her. I don't know why.

Leraje [00:25:43]

Do you remember the story of the house that Dr. Montague told and the story of the companion in particular?

Pike [00:25:52]

Yes.

Leraje [00:25:52]

And what happened? Because that seemed to me to be kind of like an almost a mirror. Of what, uh, of Eleanor's story.

Ligeia [00:26:00]

Yeah.

Leraje [00:26:00]

Uh, you know, even down to the. There's two sisters who don't get on and one of the sisters comes to live in Hill House with a companion and the mother dies in the house. And it's kind of like intimated that it might be through neglect and maybe a little bit more than just neglect.

[00:26:25]

And uh, she ends up. The companion ends up hanging herself from uh, the turret. So I mean that can't be a coincidence, surely. I mean that's literally Eleanor's life, uh, before and during Hill House.

Ligeia [00:26:40]

Yes.

Pike [00:26:41]

There was a moment in the book where Eleanor starts to uh, kind of disappear into the house a little bit where I thought the book was going to take a different direction than it did. I thought she was going to merge into the house and she never existed outside of that group. And all the, the writing, the banging, it was her.

[00:27:04]

And that she, you know.

Ligeia [00:27:07]

Yeah.

Leraje [00:27:08]

I mean, go on, go on, carry on.

Ligeia [00:27:11]

Ah, yeah.

Pike [00:27:11]

Maybe it was her who hanged herself previously, or that she. She somehow, um, ends up being in the past of a house. The past of her house.

Leraje [00:27:24]

Almost like she, Eleanor, is the ghost of the companion coming back to hell. Oh, my God. That's a brilliant idea.

Ligeia [00:27:33]

I love that.

Pike [00:27:34]

Dark. It's dark.

Ligeia [00:27:35]

Oh, yes. Give it.

Leraje [00:27:38]

We like dark.

Ligeia [00:27:40]

I like that.

Pike [00:27:41]

I. I wanted to ask both of you. I mean, did you find Eleanor a sympathetic character?

Leraje [00:27:47]

Ultimately, yes.

Ligeia [00:27:49]

Me too.

Pike [00:27:51]

So, um, something that I found quite interesting about this compared to my. I have a very limited. Very limited experience with horror genre in general. And I wonder if it's just my limited experience or if it's reflective of a more general trend. But it seemed to me that a lot of the time in horror stories, the protagonists are very annoying.

[00:28:12]

They are not particularly likeable. So when they get, you know, killed or, um, scared, you kind of. You can. You don't feel a lot of sympathy. Yes, that's right. And here it felt very different to me. Do I just have very limited experience of it? And there's more.

Leraje [00:28:34]

Um. I can certainly see why you would think that, but I think that's more common in horror movies than horror novels.

Pike [00:28:44]

Right.

Leraje [00:28:45]

Um. I'm thinking of. I mean, the other most famous haunted house novel that I can think of off the top of my head is the Shining. Um, and certainly in. In the novel of that, which, by the way, and I'm sorry, I'm going to piss off a lot of people now, the novel is a million times better than the fucking movie.

Ligeia [00:29:04]

I agree.

Leraje [00:29:05]

The character of Jack Torrance in the Shining, it's very much more tragic and, um, likeable, even though he's a fairly awful person.

Ligeia [00:29:13]

Yeah.

Leraje [00:29:14]

Than he's ever presented in the movie.

Pike [00:29:17]

Uh-huh.

Leraje [00:29:18]

Uh, so. And I do think that that kind of. It's certainly, uh. What you. What you said about the likability of characters. There's usually a kind of like a couple of really annoying people that, you know, are quite obviously, they're. They're red shirts from Star Trek. They're obviously determined they're gonna die. You know, they're gonna die and they're there to die, basically, so it doesn't really matter.

[00:29:45]

But, yeah, I think that's more common in movies than the novels.

Pike [00:29:49]

Right. Yeah. Okay, makes sense.

Ligeia [00:29:51]

Well, I have read some books where I couldn't connect to anybody, and I, uh. Actually, one book I couldn't finish because of that. Like, I just hated those two People, and I wanted them to die immediately. And I wanted that to be like, please don't continue with any more pages, because this is stupid.

[00:30:12]

Well, you know, it's not, like, just annoying, but if the book is actually stupid, the story is stupid. Like, yeah, no. Okay, we. I'm not gonna go there, but I think I understand your question. It's not. I wouldn't say it's a rule, but it's an interesting question. I really need to think about it more because.

[00:30:34]

Or maybe, you know, we are different people, different opinions, different approach to the book or the story. So I might be connecting to the person because of what I feel. And for you, it might be completely annoying and horrible, and I might be in love with that person. Like, I would, you know, so depend.

[00:30:59]

I. I don't know. With Eleanor, I. I really felt sad for her the whole time, and I did not. Like, the end at, uh, all.

Pike [00:31:10]

You didn't?

Ligeia [00:31:11]

I mean, I. I did, but also, I wish the whole thing ended up somehow. I hate when it happens. I absolutely hate when that happens. You know, like, nobody was able to save her, help her, understand her, hug her. It's awful.

Leraje [00:31:31]

I think at the end, they thought they would. The rest of them, the other three, thought they were doing the right thing by removing her from the presence of the, um, house. But it was far too late by then for Eleanor. It was far too late. I think.

Ligeia [00:31:45]

I don't know. I think they thought they are doing the right thing, but I disagreed with the approach.

Leraje [00:31:51]

Oh. Uh, yeah.

Ligeia [00:31:52]

The way they did it, I would feel like I'm pushed to do something stupid because she was left alone. Even now, like, she was telling them, I don't want to go. So I. I think what she needed. I. I think this whole thing is a metaphor. I don't think we need to be taking it like this is actually what happened.

[00:32:15]

Or maybe it was a 15, uh, minutes, just in her head, the whole thing. And she only took the car from her sister, and then she did this, and the whole story just happened. I don't know. That's also, like, in my mind, that's possible because of all the stories she was creating in her head with the lions and with a, uh, cup of stars.

[00:32:39]

And, you know, it was beautiful. I love those stories that, like, I'm coming back to those pages. It's so beautiful with that little girl in that restaurant, like, insist on your cup of stars. It's one of my favourite sentences. But I think she. She was just trying to tell herself, like, I don't want to live this mundane life, insist on something better.

[00:33:01]

Eleanor, there is something more than this for me in this world. And she didn't find it. Or some. I don't know. Sorry, Pike. Say. Say what you want.

Pike [00:33:12]

Once they have trapped you into being like everyone else, you will never see a couple of stars again.

Ligeia [00:33:18]

Yes.

Leraje [00:33:18]

Yes, exactly.

Ligeia [00:33:19]

I love that.

Pike [00:33:20]

Yeah, I love that, too. I wrote it down.

Ligeia [00:33:22]

Yeah. Yeah. I'm telling you, like, there are. There are a few sentences in this book that are so strong that I can absolutely, you know, look away from the not funny jokes and the boring look, whatever. But this one is. I think it says a lot about her.

Pike [00:33:41]

You said you would like to stay in Hill House forever. That's essentially what happened to her. That's what she did. I thought it was sad, but it was also. I don't know, it. It didn't leave me feeling crushed. She seemed. She had this. Her last thoughts were like, huh, you know, gotcha. You think you're.

[00:34:04]

You think you're driving me away, but I'm gonna stay there.

Ligeia [00:34:08]

You can't send me away.

Pike [00:34:10]

And I. I felt quite uplifted by the ending. Sad, but uplifted at the same time.

Leraje [00:34:16]

Yeah. But then again, her very last thought was, am I. Is it me doing this?

Pike [00:34:21]

Yes. Why?

Leraje [00:34:22]

Am I really?

Ligeia [00:34:23]

Yeah, yeah. It's confusing to me.

Leraje [00:34:26]

I think the Eleanor in the latter stages of the book would have been happy with her own. I mean, Stephen, again, uh, the thing I read from Stephen King, and I'll send you the link to it once he says that Eleanor would think it was a happy ending, but Shirley Jackson would not think it was a happy ending.

[00:34:46]

And I think that's probably true.

Ligeia [00:34:49]

That's good.

Leraje [00:34:50]

So I've got a question for you two. Was it frightening?

Pike [00:34:55]

Oh, yes. Come, um, on.

Ligeia [00:35:00]

It was, in a way. In a way, yeah. You see, I. I am unable to just reply in one word. It's horrible. I do try frightening. Not in the way of the, like, house being frightening to me or the stuff that was happening. Was it happening? Was it. I don't know. It was very subtle.

[00:35:23]

There is no, like, jump scares, screams. I love that type of scary. Like, is it?

Leraje [00:35:31]

Yeah. I mean, you never actually see anything at all, so.

Ligeia [00:35:36]

Frightening in a, uh, really, like, psychological way. Again, connected to the women in the society and being trapped in the. The role that they're questioning. Because now, you know, in, like, the 50s, 60s, they had these new questions. It was called, I think, the, uh, like, Feminine Mystique, which sounds really romantic, but actually it meant, like, this mystique question that they can't really even put words into place.

[00:36:12]

Like, what, what, what. What is bothering me? I have this home. I have a husband. I have kids. I have a space where I belong. Everybody is living in the same way. It has been like this for a long, long, long time. Centuries. Why do I feel so unhappy that I just want to freaking burn everything, you know, like, and.

[00:36:37]

And it's not true. You love your family, you want to be there, but also you have this mystique question in yourself. Like, I. I'm gonna snap, and I don't know why. And I felt that through. Through this book again, like, this whole was just like the. The subconscious. I, uh. I. Maybe I'm talking about myself, actually, because I used to feel like that, you know, in.

[00:37:01]

Back in my country. I was trapped.

Leraje [00:37:04]

I don't think, uh. I think that's a valid take on it. I mean, I think that the way that Eleanor, in particular felt constrained was kind of, like, mirrored in the way. I mean, you remember how Hill House was described as situated in these kind of, like, looming, overbearing hills and mountains that were locked the whole house in.

[00:37:26]

And it was very difficult to see past them or get out of them or. Um. And I think that was kind of that feeling of constraint that you were talking about in terms of her own femininity and what she felt her role should be in society was kind of mirrored by the constraints that were physically there for Hill House.

Ligeia [00:37:52]

And also, what was the lady that was cooking? What's her name?

Pike [00:37:58]

Mrs. M. Dudley.

Ligeia [00:37:59]

Dudley. Mrs. Dudley. And her five sentences. You know, I felt like that's exactly the housewife mindset. Like, I put this on this table at 6:00pm and whatever they ask her, she is just. Just autopilot, pilot, just a robot. She is a piece of furniture that does the stuff. She cooks great. She knows where everything belongs.

[00:38:24]

You can't put it in any other place because this is how it is. And she is being reduced to this. Like, maybe I'm reading something else into the whole thing.

Leraje [00:38:36]

No, I don't think you are, but I think that's true.

Ligeia [00:38:38]

Like, oh, God. And the doors that kept closing again, like they were trying to get some air, some new life into this. And the door was just. No. Like, you are not going anywhere. What do you think you're just here?

Leraje [00:38:54]

The doors that wouldn't stay open. No.

Ligeia [00:38:56]

Oh, my God.

Leraje [00:38:58]

And the fact that they kept getting lost and they couldn't find their way through. I mean, uh, yes, Hill House was obviously a big house, but it didn't seem to me to be so big that you would constantly get lost within it. And yet they could never find. You know, they'd have to shout down corridors to locate each other.

Ligeia [00:39:19]

Yeah.

Leraje [00:39:19]

And. And sort of things like that. And I think that all kind of like, plays into what you were talking about, L.J. that idea of constraint.

Ligeia [00:39:28]

Yeah, that's my take on the story. I don't know. Maybe it's also because. What I think Shirley's, uh, other works, they were also around this topic. And I know that she wasn't really happy and she had this, uh, long, um, lifelong not

problem. But like, with her mother, it wasn't great because her mother was absolutely, like a completely different, you know, personality.

[00:39:56]

She was this socialite, uh, butterfly. And she was happy with her place in society as a. As a woman that keeps her home clean and the parties and she was happy to be like a husband's wife, you know.

Leraje [00:40:13]

Right.

Ligeia [00:40:14]

But no, not everybody. I don't think Shirley wanted to be in a relationship like that. And I know there was a slight problem that she. She chose to marry this Jewish guy, which, like, obviously the racism, like the anti-Semitism is not as obviously seen as, like, you know, if some people have problems with the other races.

[00:40:40]

M. But it was there. And again, like, the. The. Like, I think she carried this. This. This distension from her mom because she was like, pointing out, like, her body shaming issue. Like, oh, uh, surely, you know, nobody wants to do that. And not every woman wants to just be pretty in this world and then die.

[00:41:05]

You know what I mean?

Pike [00:41:06]

Like, yeah, okay, like a flower.

Ligeia [00:41:09]

Yeah. If that's enough for you. Good, fine, whatever. Sit in a corner, be pretty, wife, whatever. But I don't think Shirley wanted that, but she felt that being, like, expected from her. And I think that's awful.

Leraje [00:41:26]

It was awful.

Pike [00:41:27]

Like a beautiful flower that Eleanor picks and then stares into its dead face.

Ligeia [00:41:32]

Yes.

Leraje [00:41:32]

Yeah.

Ligeia [00:41:33]

Yes. I thought that one was like, this is heavy metal. Now it's dead. Oh, that's. That's a good one.

Leraje [00:41:44]

When I asked you both if you found it frightening, pike went, yes, immediately. So why did you find it frightening? What did you find frightening about it?

Pike [00:41:52]

Um, I just. This is going to be quite, ah, shallow, but simply the supernatural, uh, stuff, because, yes, it's quite faithful to people's accounts of poltergeists and, you know, the banging on the doors and it's. I know it's supposed to escalate. So constantly waiting for that escalation that doesn't. It moves very slowly.

[00:42:20]

Something I really liked about this book is there are breathers, paces in between. So something horrible happens, but then you have them joking and, um, making conversation. You relax a little bit, and then something else happens, and then you relax a little. So, I mean, I could. I didn't have a problem sleeping, but it was intense, right?

Leraje [00:42:44]

That. Yes, that's how I was the first time I read it.

Pike [00:42:48]

How old were you?

Leraje [00:42:50]

I think I was about, uh, 16, 17 at the time. And obviously, at 16, 17, you don't pick up on the kind of, like, nuances that maybe we're talking about now. At the time, I was just like, oh, she's holding the hand of a ghost, or the ghost is banging on the. You know, and all that.

[00:43:07]

And it was that aspect that I found very frightening. Uh, and it's still. Even now. You know, I've read that book, like, God knows how many times, but even reading it again, it's still. It's not nice.

Ligeia [00:43:23]

What did you guys think about the doctor's wife coming there and her attitude?

Leraje [00:43:29]

She was so annoying. Yeah, that whole bit was kind of like a bit out of. I remember thinking that the first time I read it, I was like, so far we've had the story of these four people, and. And it's been, uh. And then all of a sudden, there's this pair of really, truly awful people.

[00:43:46]

And I still now can't really see why. I'm not saying. I'm not saying it was bad or superfluous, but I didn't really. And I still don't really understand what the point of them was.

Ligeia [00:43:58]

Yeah. Because the story, if they were missing the story, wouldn't suffer that much. I think I was thinking about it. That's why I brought this up. But could it be, like Shirley wanted to maybe bring a little bit of, like, um, a comical, like, caricature of exactly what I'm still talking about? Like, this guy had this wife, and she came there to give it proper.

[00:44:28]

You know, this is how it is. And I'm gonna help you, and I'm gonna do it properly because. Because you can't do anything without me. I'm, um, the housewife. I'm, um. This is a house, and you need me here. And it was actually so comical and annoying and ridiculous that I think she meant it to be that way.

Leraje [00:44:48]

I think she did. And the fact that I, um, can't even remember the character's name. Uh, Dr. Montague's wife. What's her name?

Ligeia [00:44:57]

I don't think we know, do we?

Leraje [00:44:59]

Do we ever find out? Jesus.

Ligeia [00:45:02]

I think he only called her, like, dear.

Leraje [00:45:04]

Or did he? I thought he named her.

Ligeia [00:45:06]

Oh, I thought I might be wrong.

Leraje [00:45:09]

But to me it spoke volumes that her favourite person in the house was Mrs. Dudley. Yeah, she seemed to get on the best with. Yeah, get on with Mrs. Dudley. Thoroughly approve of Mrs. Dudley, everyone else, and go fuck off.

Ligeia [00:45:21]

Yeah.

Leraje [00:45:22]

And, um, I'm afraid, is where we reach the end of the podcast. We're not quite sure what happened, but the last four or five minutes got cut off. You didn't miss anything of any real importance. Um, what we did from that point on was go on to discuss what book we were going to read next.

[00:45:37]

If you'd like to read along with us, uh, for our next episode, which will be roughly three or four weeks time, we're going to be reading Sundial by Catriona Ward. So, from all of us, on behalf of Ligeia and Pike and myself, hail Satan, read some good books and we'll see you next time.