

The Devil's Library Episode 3 – "Sundial"

[Intro music]

Leraje [00:00:00]

Welcome to another episode of the Devil's Library, Uh, a podcast where atheistic Satanists talk about books and reading. We have our usual three people here. So we have Ligeia.

Ligeia [00:00:13]

Hail Satan.

Leraje [00:00:15]

And, um, Pike.

Pike [00:00:16]

Hail Satan.

Leraje [00:00:17]

And, um, hail Satan from me too. And I'm delighted to say we're joined by a guest, uh, friends of all of us, Lithos.

Lithos [00:00:25]

Hail Satan indeed.

Leraje [00:00:27]

Uh, Lithas and Ligeia, uh, do a, uh, separate podcast called Gospod. Would you like to tell us a little bit about the latest episode and, um, the sort of things that you talk about on Gospod?

Lithos [00:00:38]

Yes, um, we generally talk about, um, matters Satanic related to Satanism. But we have of late been stuck on the horror movie theme. So we've decided to go back to something more substantive. Um, and that is the, um, new online safety act, uh, coming into, well, um, which has come into effect here.

[00:01:04]

Um, and what the result will be. Sort of talk about that and then maybe a bit about the rise of the fash. So that will be coming up in a few weeks. We will be recording it soon and then it will be out when we don't have a schedule, when I've actually done the edit.

Leraje [00:01:26]

Okay, so the book that we did this year. Fucking hell. Right, Let me try that again. The book that we read most recently was Sundial by Catriona Ward, which is a kind of psychological horror. Basic premise of the book is that a, uh, mum is having a difficult time with their kids. Um, takes one of them on holiday.

[00:01:50]

That's right, isn't it? Took her on holiday.

Pike [00:01:54]

Not all of them.

Ligeia [00:01:55]
Special. Special. Holiday.

Lithos [00:01:56]
Special.

Ligeia [00:01:57]
Not all of them.

Lithos [00:01:58]
Not all of them. Not all of them. The wrong one, as it turns out.

Leraje [00:02:02]
Yeah, very much so. Um, what were our overall impressions of the book as a whole?

Ligeia [00:02:10]
This was my first read by this author. I know there is another book that usually people read first. What is it called?

Leraje [00:02:19]
Um, Last House on Needless Street.

Ligeia [00:02:22]
Yes, yes. I just ordered it today because, you know, I can't follow the normal timeline. So I'm gonna read that next. Well, so, but I have heard and read people comparing these two, so I'm really interested to see, um, I can tell like, if. If this is her usual writing style. It's really interesting.

[00:02:44]
It was interesting to me because I can't imagine how difficult that is to keep everything in order in your head and make the book so twisty and turny time wise. Like I was like, how did she put it together? That it actually made sort of sense, you know, like the timeline Was going like past and present.

[00:03:08]
Past and present. Wow.

Leraje [00:03:12]
Yeah.

Ligeia [00:03:12]
I will not spoil anything yet.

Lithos [00:03:14]
Okay, well, do we hope that listeners will have. Will have read this?

Leraje [00:03:21]
Well, they might. I guess some people will have. I mean, at, ah, the end of the last one, we said to people they could read along, didn't we?

Ligeia [00:03:28]
Yeah. So we will. We will spoil it. I'm sure. You can't. How do we. But like. No, maybe not in the first sentence. I didn't want to say everything about it immediately.

Pike [00:03:39]

You know, I really liked it. I thought the plot, it was very fast paced. It was fun to read. Uh, the way she writes abuse within a relationship is very strong. I thought that was the strongest part of the book. I didn't like everything about it, but we can get into the nitty gritty later.

Lithos [00:04:00]

First of all, I'd like to say thanks for letting me on the podcast, for inviting me. It has actually got me reading again. I used to be an avid reader, but I, for various reasons kind of like started using tablets and devices. So it's good to actually get back into it. And this really drew me in.

[00:04:20]

And I was absolutely. By the end of it, I was kind of like reading 80 pages at a time. And the, the genius of the author here is what I found was the different voices, the different characters, um, and the different styles in which they are written, including the whole Arrowwood thing, which is written as shonky fanfic.

[00:04:48]

Kind of like it's really bad, really badly written.

Leraje [00:04:52]

Yeah.

Lithos [00:04:52]

And deliberately. And then, you know, you get Callie's voice, which is kind of the voice of a, uh, confused and angry teenager. And then, uh. So it is actually quite good the way. Really, not just quite good, really, really well done the way she switches voices from one character to the other. And it is.

[00:05:15]

I do agree with Ligeia, it's kind of. It's actually quite hard as a reader to keep track of, um, you know, what, what's going on, you know, how do you construct the way you're going to do a story like that, Switching between characters and timelines, past and present, you know, to all together really well, you know, in, in the way that actually really.

[00:05:40]

And this is another thing I, I really liked about it is it. It just drew me right in. It was like, I can't wait to find out what's going to happen, what is going on.

Leraje [00:05:52]

I think the thing that really, um, I benefited very much from reading it, from having read it previously. Um, and I think a second or third reading definitely brings a lot more clarity to how the book's laid out and how that sort of timeline element of it.

Pike [00:06:10]

I was wondering. Sorry, you're reading it the second time. How were you thinking about it when you were reading it? Did you have some kind of a different theory of how things work? And did you read with that in mind?

Leraje [00:06:24]

Uh, yes. I mean, the first time I read it, I just wanted to know exactly what was going on. The second time I read it, and I will admit this is about the third or fourth time I've actually read it. So,

yeah, uh, you start to read it much, but because you haven't got that pressure of trying to keep up with what's happening and when it's happening, you can just read.

[00:06:45]

You already know that, so you can concentrate on the nuances of it. So I really enjoyed the themes of, um, duality throughout the book. There's Rob and Jack. There's, uh, pale Callie and warm Callie, which I fucking love as descriptors for them. Um, there's Annie and Callie. There's all these kind of, like, dualities throughout the whole book, which I really enjoyed.

[00:07:14]

Um, much like Twin Peaks. So. Yeah. Yeah, I've got a mention of it again. Again.

Ligeia [00:07:18]

Yay.

Leraje [00:07:19]

Um, so, yeah, and it's things like that. So it was less about. Because I already knew the mystery. I already knew what the end. So you read it a lot more in terms of appreciating those kind of, like, details that she brings to it.

Ligeia [00:07:33]

You have advantage.

Pike [00:07:34]

But you did not. Um. Because she doesn't reveal everything, right? She.

Ligeia [00:07:40]

She leaves.

Leraje [00:07:42]

Not outwardly, no. There's one big bit that I'm really interested to see if any of you m.

Pike [00:07:49]

Contact lenses? Are we going to talk about that?

Leraje [00:07:50]

That's it. Exactly that.

Ligeia [00:07:51]

Yeah. Okay.

Lithos [00:07:54]

Oh, okay. Same. Tell, tell. Tell us more.

Ligeia [00:07:58]

And also the coins.

Leraje [00:08:00]

Yep, you got it. Oh, um. Man. Um. Damn. I'm kind of disappointed. I was hoping to spring up.

Pike [00:08:06]

I want to know about the coins because I didn't pick that up at all.

Leraje [00:08:10]

Well, let's do the contact lenses first.

Ligeia [00:08:13]

Yes, yes, yes.

Leraje [00:08:13]

Go on, pike, tell us about the contact lenses.

Pike [00:08:15]

Well, uh, she mentions at the beginning of the book when it's, I think, from point of view of Callie that Rob, uh, her mother, um, buys contact lens, um, solution, although she does not use contact lenses. And then towards the end of the book, the author is really, I think, a little too much, uh, is kind of pushing that idea of contact lenses right in your face a few times.

[00:08:41]

You are kind of forced.

Ligeia [00:08:43]

And the eye colour.

Leraje [00:08:45]

Yeah, yeah. Of the sisters the upshot being, is it really Rob or at the end. Or is Callie's mom really Jack? Jack, who is the. Oh, my God.

Lithos [00:08:58]

Do you know what? I missed that entirely. I completely missed the contact lens.

Ligeia [00:09:03]

I'm not surprised. It's. It's not, uh. You know, it's not an easy thing to keep everything in your mind. What. What's happening in this book. It's like, really, every page is so dense.

Lithos [00:09:16]

There's. Yeah, there's a lot of little details that in the end you go, oh, that's why that was. Oh. And then to hear, oh, yeah, there's other. Yeah. I'm not surprised. I've missed a few details. Um, I. I kind of remember coins as well. Um, I'm trying to remember where they came.

Ligeia [00:09:35]

I can't tell you that.

Leraje [00:09:37]

So tell us about the coins. Lrea.

Ligeia [00:09:39]

What? I have no idea how to connect these things together. I just have these bullet points in my head, like the. The lenses. The solution, the question about. Is this one person. Are, uh, they two people? Which one is this one? Because we get to know her as Rob. But is it really.

[00:10:01]

But then, you know all the questions. I have my answers, sort of. But I went through all these questions and the solution. And the eye colour, constant, like, reminder. Like, one has green eyes,

one has blue eyes. It was. It couldn't be unintentional because it kept. It kept coming.

Pike [00:10:21]

You should mention that we're talking about twin sisters and.

Ligeia [00:10:26]

Okay, yes, good point. Why we didn't say anything about the book yet. And we are already here, and they.

Pike [00:10:33]

Are identical except for the eye colour.

Ligeia [00:10:36]

Yeah. Yeah. So if they wanted to confuse people, it will be kind of easy just to use contact lenses. So is this just a, uh, thought, or it really happened, or is it something completely else, which I think it is. I will. We can come back to that. And the coins. I think it was in one of those.

[00:11:02]

What's the name? The stories. Arrowood. It's a difficult word for me. Sorry. I keep it. I keep calling it something else in my head and you would be confused. So I think it was there. Um, the. The vision. Oh, it was. It. Was it a dream? I'm sorry. This chair is making horrible noises.

Leraje [00:11:20]

That's okay.

Ligeia [00:11:21]

It sounds like m. Stupid thing anyway.

Leraje [00:11:26]

Ligeia is not farting on the pod.

Ligeia [00:11:28]

No, it's my. It's my husband. Yeah, I'm sitting on him. This is our little king. Please edit this out.

Pike [00:11:35]

Are you sitting on him? Is that what it is?

Ligeia [00:11:39]

Yes, it is. He has such a Big face.

Leraje [00:11:44]

Uh, no, I am not editing that bit out.

Lithos [00:11:48]

No, that's gotta stay.

Ligeia [00:11:49]

Whatever you can, you can keep it there. Fine. Also with the farting noises. So I think. I'm not sure if it was a dream of hers because they were like these nightmares and dreams. I can't tell you where it was, but there was a vision of coins being like, instead of eyes. I think it was in like Jack's face.

Leraje [00:12:12]

Yeah.

Ligeia [00:12:13]

And I think like the, the coins were like uh, not jumping out but like sort of, you know, out of her face. And it was such a disturbing thing for me to imagine. And it was. I uh, could feel like this is about her face. Her eyes. Like the, the eyes. The eyes.

[00:12:34]

The eyes. Constant. The eyes.

Leraje [00:12:36]

Yeah.

Ligeia [00:12:38]

So maybe there is a connection.

Leraje [00:12:40]

I think there is. I mean I, I took from that bit exactly what you took from it. That she was reinforcing the idea of the eyes being important in identifying people.

Ligeia [00:12:51]

And maybe a little bit of guilt because of ah, what I'm thinking was happening or you know, like sometimes. Usually when you sleep and you have like a really bad dream, it's something that is bothering you in your real life, but it's twisted and it doesn't look the same. And it's just like sort of managing what your brain thinks it is, but it isn't.

Leraje [00:13:16]

You know, I think the idea of guilt is. Is quite important because the book is. To me the major theme of the book is kind of like um, abuse. And also uh, the ambivalence. The kind of like ambivalent that you know, not every parent is a kind of like perfect parent. And you know, parents can be just as sick of their kids sometimes as, as other people.

[00:13:50]

Uh, and I really like the fact that all of the characters were kind of like none of them were. You couldn't say they're all kind of like heroes. You know, there's no. They weren't clear cut good guys and they weren't clear cut bad. Well, there was one clear cut bad guy.

Lithos [00:14:09]

Yes. The husband.

Pike [00:14:10]

Yeah, Irving.

Leraje [00:14:13]

Oh yeah, Irving, you absolute bell end.

Pike [00:14:16]

That's right.

Lithos [00:14:19]

But um, they were all fucked up through circumstances.

Leraje [00:14:24]

Yeah, but that's another interesting thing. Were they? I mean you can see why Rob and Jack would be fucked up because of the way they were kind of like found and taken back to their beginnings. Yeah. But uh, Mia, uh, and um, Falcon were not good people. Was that them or was it the things they were doing to those animals was, was pretty.

Ligeia [00:14:50]

Oh yeah. Trigger. Trigger. Warning people. This book is full of triggers.

Lithos [00:14:56]

Falcon's kind of introduced as a. Initially, uh, as a kind of kindly old hippie.

Leraje [00:15:03]

Yeah. Ah.

Lithos [00:15:03]

You know, who's all, you know, peace and love, man, and kind of like, let's all talk about things. And then Mia comes in and by the end you're going, Mia. What was. Was she involved with MK Ultra?

Leraje [00:15:18]

Yeah.

Lithos [00:15:18]

And those experiments, because, you know, going, oh, uh, she's not a hippie chick. She knows about science and how to do those things and make formula for the dogs. And there's also mention of MKUltra and experiments like that.

Ligeia [00:15:33]

Yes.

Lithos [00:15:34]

So, you know, it's like, no, she. She's not at all a good person.

Leraje [00:15:40]

I think Falcon and Mia, if they were born a couple of generations later, would, uh, have been exactly the sort of people who ended up voting for Trump.

Ligeia [00:15:47]

Oh, yeah.

Pike [00:15:49]

I found it more ambiguous than that. So I think it all sort of rests on whether you believe, uh, their story on the way they picked the children up. Because if you, if you do believe that and they didn't seek them out the way they sought out the dogs, then it's sort of.

[00:16:11]

You have two different moral dilemmas. Right. One is the. The usual one, um, the use of animal in scientific experiments to discover something that benefits humans. And then the other one is, um, what do you do with a bad child? And, you know, it made me think of. I don't know if any of you have read, uh, we need to Talk About Kevin.

[00:16:36]

It was a book that had a bad child who ends up, um, in the end, um, murdering most of his family, and his mother grapples with that idea. So I kind of. If you believe their story, the question is for you, then what would you have done?

Leraje [00:16:59]

Yeah, I mean, this idea of kind of like parenthood as. As also a morally grey area, like you say, we need to talk about. Kevin explored it. It was explored in the movie the Babadook as well. Um, so, uh, yeah, and I did very much like that. I very much like the fact.

[00:17:20]

Did you notice, by the way, that we're talking about another major theme of the book is the. The idea that people's identities can be stolen.

Ligeia [00:17:29]

Oh, yes.

Leraje [00:17:30]

Rob and Jack are two words that very much suggest the idea of stealing.

Ligeia [00:17:36]

Uh. Oh, yes, I was getting there. Even though. Which one? Okay. Anyway.

Lithos [00:17:43]

Yes, yes. We don't know who is.

Ligeia [00:17:46]

I still don't know. Maybe. Maybe the second or the third read. I might figure it out somehow. Or maybe I wouldn't. I don't know. Maybe the author didn't want us to actually figure Everything out because.

Lithos [00:18:01]

Because she left an open ending deliberately.

Ligeia [00:18:04]

I don't know what you think, guys, but I'm not sure. I'm not sure what happened at, ah, the, like, the last two pages. I. I thought, I know what's. What's happening. And now the more I'm thinking. I actually went back today, like the last two pages, and I'm not sure. I'm not even sure who.

[00:18:24]

Who is. Who is. Who is there anymore. You know what I mean?

Leraje [00:18:29]

Well, we're kind of like, presented with the idea that, you know, uh, we start off, uh, that warm, uh, Callie is not necessarily the greatest child in the world.

Ligeia [00:18:41]

Uh, we were told so.

Leraje [00:18:43]

Yes. And then by the end, by the end, that idea has totally turned on its head. And possibly it's Annie who's not the greatest child in the world, but is.

Pike [00:18:53]

It turned on its head entirely? Let's not for exactly that. Um, I'm thinking about Callie, uh, by her own description, holding a knife to her sister's tongue.

Leraje [00:19:04]

Well, yeah, I mean, these are not kind of. This is what I was saying earlier about, you know, none of them are kind of like clean cut good guys or bad guys. They're all kind of a bit up, uh, in one way.

Ligeia [00:19:14]

Well, I thought that the bad person was Rob, and she was plotting through, like, her whole. Her whole life. She was cheating and stealing and planning bad things for everybody around her. And she got very clever around it and she. Yeah. I don't know if I should go through everything I. I have written down about her, but I believe that this is.

[00:19:50]

I. I saw Callie at the end as not the. The bad one, because she might have been Jax. Even though I went through the whole story, like, maybe this is one person and we have two personalities in one person. But that didn't really make sense at the end, so maybe not. Maybe there were two and, like, Jack is really gone, and now Callie was stolen from Jack, and Annie inherited the whole psychopathic stuff.

[00:20:25]

And maybe that's why, you know, Rob is so protective around Callie. But it's weird. It's so weird. But this is. This is how I understood the story at the end. I don't know. I don't know. You can read it as you please, I guess. I don't know.

Lithos [00:20:44]

I mean, both. Both Annie and. And Callie have the. The same. If you're talking about genetics and who inherits what they've. They've got the same dad who is, in his own way, psychopath.

Pike [00:20:59]

That's right.

Lithos [00:21:00]

Um, by all accounts.

Ligeia [00:21:02]

Yeah.

Lithos [00:21:03]

So, uh, which Whether. Yes. Who is actually Callie's mom is kind of like. Yeah, you're going, which one's Jack? Which one's Rob? Um, you've also got. Yeah, Annie is definitely. So is Rob's daughter, but Irving is their dad. So you've got up family genes.

Ligeia [00:21:29]

Oh, yeah.

Lithos [00:21:29]

On the girl's side, but you've definitely got up family genes on the old fucked up dad. What. Whatever. So, you know, they. They've kind of. Genetically, they've been handed a. A wasp's nest of.

Leraje [00:21:43]
Yeah.

Pike [00:21:44]
And whilst we are focusing on genetics, let's not forget also, um, what, uh, Jack said in the letter, that kids are like mirrors and reflect everything around them. So you have to make sure there's good around them.

Ligeia [00:22:01]
Yes. So how important that is, what they have around them when they're growing up. That's. That's also true. Yeah. But remember, Jack used to be able to see the pale, like the. The dogs. And Callie never could. And now. No Callie, Rob. Rob. And now Callie can see the pale. And Annie never mentioned that.

[00:22:28]
So I thought maybe there is, like, this connection. But, uh, you say the nature and nurture. I think this is one of the biggest themes in this book, obviously, and it is really scary. It's not. It's nothing new. The way she puts it in the story is very new to me. Like, there have been many books about this suburban, happy life going wrong and being actually, like.

[00:22:54]
If you. If you look inside the houses, it's actually terrifying and it's horror and it's abuse. That was well done. Her relationship with her husband, this piece of, um. Yes. I. I can't even. Because it was not like she. He was beating her every day. It was. He was. He was really realistic.

[00:23:19]
Like, the way they were was absolutely horrible to me. Even though I'm not sure if Rob was a good person, but this guy was a piece of work. And I still don't understand, like, how. How and why were they actually married? Like, this relationship sounded like business, like a contract. M. They didn't want to leave because they both could.

[00:23:49]
She knew he was cheating. Like, was nothing new. Now, this was this new neighbour. She was not even upset about that woman, the Hannah girl. She was like, okay, he's doing this again, whatever. But they didn't want to really. You know, like, this was so weird. Like there was some. Some secret that was holding them together or something.

Leraje [00:24:14]
We have to remember this is a relationship that was also born at Sundial, where everything is fucked up. Um, so. And I think Rob, he Says with inverting. Um, the response. The reason that she ended up with Irving towards the end, um, was because she was trying to, uh, make a point. To Mia and Falcon.

[00:24:42]
And possibly Jack.

Ligeia [00:24:44]
Yeah.

Leraje [00:24:45]
I mean, she was doing it. She was doing it in the worst way possible, but she was. I think that's

what. So in terms of Rob and, um, Irving getting together, I think that that was kind of like, the basis of it. And then I just think Rob was just too proud and too desperate to hold on, um, to some kind of.

Pike [00:25:04]

Normality when it came to actual marriage. I think that was to do with the. With the children, because he said, I'll take the child away. And she. So she wanted to get married to him so she could be near the child. Otherwise, she feared he would take her away. And for him, she sold the idea of being at home and looking, um, after the child so he can pursue his career and his affairs and whatever else.

Ligeia [00:25:33]

He could just be doing what he wanted to be doing. What. What was. What was. What? Monkey? What? Was it bad? No, bad Mad monkeys. That was so funny. You know what I'm talking about.

Pike [00:25:50]

The monkey business.

Leraje [00:25:51]

I can't remember.

Pike [00:25:52]

What were the children calling?

Ligeia [00:25:54]

I don't. When the children knew that dad was sex with somebody that was not a mom they knew, obviously making the bad monkey.

Lithos [00:26:05]

Bad Monkey with a lady.

Ligeia [00:26:09]

I thought that was adorable.

Lithos [00:26:12]

Yes.

Ligeia [00:26:13]

I could see it, because there. It was nothing like. Like. I want to think about, like, what. What's happening? No, because it was actually this ugly. He. He was ugly, and everything was ugly. And so that was. That was helping me to hate him. Yes.

Lithos [00:26:31]

You know, I mean, when you. When you think about Irving, he started out as a. An apprentice or student or whatever.

Ligeia [00:26:37]

Yeah.

Lithos [00:26:38]

At, um, Sundial. Uh, yeah. And he was already sniffing around at two teenage girls who are.

Ligeia [00:26:45]

Oh, yeah.

Lithos [00:26:46]

Younger than him.

Leraje [00:26:47]

Yeah.

Lithos [00:26:47]

Um, and. And then he tried to escape with Jack. Uh, and then that was stopped.

Leraje [00:26:54]

And.

Lithos [00:26:55]

Oh, yeah, then he got together with Rob and. And then she takes him back to Sundial, and then he shags Jack while he's there. Well, when she's gone to bed. And then he's got them both. He's got Jack pregnant and he's got Rob pregnant, but.

Ligeia [00:27:17]

Well, I don't think Rob's pregnant at the same time.

Lithos [00:27:22]

I think she kind of like that would. That her, uh, miscarriage was an invention kind of thing.

Ligeia [00:27:26]

Yeah. I think she just wanted everything that Jack had and the whole, like, why would she bring this guy home if her sister was dating him before? Like, obviously, it's gonna be hurtful and painful and just weird. I. I absolutely hated that move. Like, who would do. Would you. Would you do that?

[00:27:50]

I don't know.

Leraje [00:27:51]

Yeah.

Ligeia [00:27:53]

Uh, you know. You know, she could. She could tell her sister was not happy. She was in shock. She was, like, crying or if I'm remembering, everybody was in shock. Why would you bring him here?

Lithos [00:28:06]

Well, there's. There is that, but then. Then there's the whole thing of, like, once Jack's pregnant.

Ligeia [00:28:15]

Yeah.

Lithos [00:28:16]

That Irving disappears for. He just. Just doesn't appear figure in any of it until. Yeah, the whole family gets mauled by number 23. I can't remember. Um, and then he suddenly turns up, um, to. To come and get Jack and is like. Hang on a minute. So. So what. What's going on here?

[00:28:38]

That's. That's a bit fortuitous. Um, so, you know, there's all kinds of things. Yes, I'm sure. Reading it again. I. I would go. Yeah, uh, yeah, okay, that makes sense.

Ligeia [00:28:53]

I would need to put like a, um, separate paper for each person and just make notes because, like, I. I know I had more points to. To this and I can't really find them.

Pike [00:29:04]

If you ever do it, I want to hear your conclusions, uh, because I want a satisfactory unifying theory of this, or I'm going to feel a little pissed at the offer.

Ligeia [00:29:21]

Okay.

Leraje [00:29:21]

Uh, yeah, There you go.

Ligeia [00:29:24]

There. There I have it.

Lithos [00:29:28]

And he killed the neighbour.

Ligeia [00:29:31]

I think she did.

Leraje [00:29:34]

Did she, though? I mean, again, this is the. This is the beauty of the whole book. You come away from it thinking, okay, I could believe everything that I've just been told, but she's pulled that many twists and turns so far, there could easily be a twist and turn that I haven't spotted or something that happens off page, as it were.

Ligeia [00:29:55]

Uh. Oh, listen, now, I. I actually had, like, a strange feeling of maybe. Maybe Callie isn't that good. What if she killed everybody and then. Oh, my God, what if. What if she killed that lady? And now because she was pulling her mom. Um, like, we need to go home. For Annie. Annie is going to do this.

[00:30:18]

That's also. Is it possible? You know what I mean, guys?

Leraje [00:30:21]

Well, for Annie to do it?

Ligeia [00:30:23]

No. For Callie to actually have done something before she left.

Leraje [00:30:30]

No. Because didn't they. I mean, Hannah was on the phone at one point, wasn't she?

Ligeia [00:30:34]

But was she? Uh. You see, I can't trust anything anymore. I don't know what to trust because it was confusing.

Leraje [00:30:42]

Yes. Catriona Ward, you've destroyed our Trust in humanity.

Ligeia [00:30:45]

I love it. I love it. If she ever hears this. Yes. You have all my respect, girl. This is awesome.

Lithos [00:30:55]

Yeah. I mean, in terms of actual story construction, ideas and also prose style, I mean, she is a formidable author, I've got to say. One of the best I've read so far, quite honestly. And so, so well written, so cleverly put together. Um, I mean, absolute kudos to, uh, a masterstroke of absolutely putting together a story convincingly and engagingly.

[00:31:28]

And, you know, without sort of going, uh, a lot of stuff with. With twists and turns. You know, there's a downside where you go, well, that's not particularly well written.

Ligeia [00:31:41]

Yeah. And there's so many books with twists and turns. And now then, you know, you get all this...

Lithos [00:31:47]

Harlan Coben.

Ligeia [00:31:49]

I don't know.

Leraje [00:31:51]

Christ.

Ligeia [00:31:52]

But the ending is so underwhelming that, uh, you want to just burn the book, like, really.

Lithos [00:31:58]

That's it.

Ligeia [00:32:01]

It didn't happen here.

Lithos [00:32:02]

Or it's. Or it's. You know, again, you know, when I think of twists and turns, I always think Harlan Coben. I've read a few of his books a while back. Great twists and turns...

Ligeia [00:32:11]

I don't know,

Lithos [00:32:12]

...but they're so badly written. The prose is, is just like, so leaden and, um, sort of workmanlike.

[00:32:22]

And there's no inventiveness. It's just like. Yeah, I've come up with an idea and it's, you know...

Leraje [00:32:26]

I think, uh, in terms of her writing style and the mood she evokes, uh, there's various points when I'm... The first time I read any of her stuff, I think, Jesus, this is. This is fucking dark. I mean, this can't get any darker. Oh, no, it has. Yeah. It suddenly got a lot darker.

[00:32:44]

And it just keeps on getting darker and more convoluted and more fucked up. Uh, it's like she's. She. She's got this. She's got all these puzzle pieces. She puts the puzzles together and you think, ah, uh, and then she pours a shitload of petrol all over it and sets it on fire.

Ligeia [00:33:05]

And swirls it around.

Pike [00:33:07]

It's dark. But I didn't feel it was too graphic, you know, I didn't feel tortured by the author I could continue reading, and I didn't squirm, which I appreciate.

Ligeia [00:33:19]

Yeah. Even, like, especially with the animals, because that's. That's a big trigger for me, I guess, for all of us. Satanists love animals. Not as sacrifice. Okay. Not as sacrifice. We love them.

Leraje [00:33:33]

We do not do that.

Ligeia [00:33:33]

No. And so at the beginning, I was like, oh, maybe I will have to tell you guys, I can't do this. I was expecting, like, it's gonna get. It's gonna get graphic. It's gonna get, like, really into details, like, what's happening to these dogs. We actually never mentioned that. Have we explained, like, what's this book really?

Leraje [00:33:57]

We've touched on it briefly, but I think you're right. There's a way of talking about cruelty without being, um, unnecessarily...

Ligeia [00:34:04]

It was on my edge, like, anything more would be like, I'm closing this book. I can't do it. Uh, even the abuse, like, the domestic abuse, it was. Everybody could imagine it was horrible. But it wasn't. It wasn't too much, uh, to read, like, the idea is horrible, but I didn't read it as, like, I can't.

[00:34:28]

I can't read these sentences. I could, which is. Which is really rare to have that. You know, to create that. That specific level of being, like, terrifying and not being too much.

Leraje [00:34:43]

Yeah.

Ligeia [00:34:44]

Awesome.

Lithos [00:34:47]

The worst bit for me, the bit. Oh, um, wait. Oh, this is really kind of unpleasant. Where Irving rolls

back into Sundial, um, and to get them both, and then he just beats them up. Uh, and essentially, you know, Callie being the one that he's always kind of been on the side of and always had little secret jokes with, um,

[00:35:08]

But he's quite happy to give her a pummeling when, when she disagrees with him. Um, and that was really unpleasant. I find that the most unpleasant part of the book to read, certainly.

Leraje [00:35:21]

Yeah. I think Irving is just. We can all agree that Irving is just a piece of shit, basically.

Lithos [00:35:26]

Yeah. Yeah. There's one definite where there's no doubt.

Pike [00:35:30]

Uh, I found that, for me, the hardest part to read was weirdly, uh, where Irving and Rob go to a French restaurant and he, uh, corrects the menu and upsets the guy who owns the restaurant. I cringed a lot in that scene.

Ligeia [00:35:54]

Oh, me too. I forgot about that scene. That was so. Oh, uh, you are right. Cringe bad. Like, you can tell this. This is. You can't repair this guy. This is deep. You are fucked. Like, your molecules are fucked. You are a fuck.

Lithos [00:36:16]

I mean, I. I will admit that I have at times gone to French inverted commas or Italian restaurants and sniggered at the menu and the spelling. I haven't, however, gone to the owner: You need to correct this. That's not how you spell focaccia. Uh, I might have taken a picture and gone

[00:36:36]

Look at how he spelled focaccia.

Pike [00:36:38]

No, that's normal. You can laugh, but yeah, privately.

Ligeia [00:36:41]

Exactly. Also it's normal to be annoyed inside. Like, oh, I wish they did it properly. Like the grammar is really annoying me here. But who would do this?

Leraje [00:36:52]

Yah, there's a difference between having a bit of a laugh and um, being such a pedantic prick that, you know, you have to kind of like validate your own kind of like massive intelligence by, you know, correcting somebody publicly. That scene in particular just seemed to me to be the key to his whole character.

Ligeia [00:37:14]

Yes.

Leraje [00:37:14]

Uh, that's exactly.

Pike [00:37:15]

Was that the one story that explains, uh, person for him?

Leraje [00:37:21]

I think so. I. Mhm. For me, yes. For him. For that particular character, yes. It just, everything about it spoke of a pedantic little man who could only exercise his power by belittling other people. And that was just like Irving.

Pike [00:37:36]

I guess it's worth saying that what made it really bad in the moment wasn't just that he corrected the menu. It was. He did that some 30 minutes after the owner, well or an hour after the owner came. Came, uh, up to them and told them how he took this trip to France and how important it was to him and how it inspired him to open this French restaurant.

Ligeia [00:37:59]

Yes.

Leraje [00:38:00]

Yeah. God, Irving.

Lithos [00:38:02]

Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

Ligeia [00:38:03]

Didn't stop it.

Lithos [00:38:04]

You know, um, standard tactic of finding out what's dearest to you and then belittling it.

Ligeia [00:38:12]

Yeah.

Lithos [00:38:12]

Um, you know, which is. Yeah, that, that was, that was his modus operandi. And also like I think I said earlier, you know, the fact that he comes in as someone in his mid-20s and he's sniffing around two 17 year old girls and you know, trying to. And you go, yeah, okay, I know your type.

Ligeia [00:38:36]

M. Yes.

Leraje [00:38:38]

So earlier on Pike said there was something she was, there was something she didn't really enjoy about it. Okay, well, we are all keen to hear.

Pike [00:38:49]

Now the dunk comes.

Ligeia [00:38:49]

Let's listen.

Pike [00:38:51]

Uh, personally, I. Well, obviously personally I didn't really like, um, the way Pale Callie turned out in the end. Uh, I thought the passage where Callie discovers that Pale Callie is her deceased sister

and then they kind of say goodbye to each other and there's a bit of an outpouring of emotion. It felt a little bit saccharine to me.

[00:39:19]

And also that's where the supernatural, um, comes in. Because if she really is a dead sister and they're having this conversation, then it's a bit, um.

Ligeia [00:39:31]

That's a good point.

Leraje [00:39:33]

I, I see what you're saying. I didn't read it as supernatural.

Pike [00:39:36]

You thought it was in her head?

Leraje [00:39:38]

I thought it was one half of her saying goodbye to the other half of herself.

Ligeia [00:39:42]

Yeah.

Pike [00:39:42]

Okay.

Ligeia [00:39:44]

And I think there were, like, drugs involved in the whole group of people in this book. And this is. I'm sorry. It's connected maybe to that because. I'm sorry. Because, um, the situation with lenses. I have never been on drugs. I don't want to try drugs. Okay. Like, real drugs. But I've heard or read that people, when they, like, go off and they try to heal and not do it.

[00:40:16]

Um. How do I say this? Some people use contact lenses to camouflage that they're on drugs.

Leraje [00:40:24]

Oh, I see. Yeah.

Ligeia [00:40:25]

You know, like. Because you can tell usually the eyes. I don't know if it works or is it just a cliché? Something that I don't. I have no experience with that. Thank you very much. I don't want that.

Leraje [00:40:39]

Well, some hallucinogenics make the pupils of your eyes expand. And, um, you could cover that up with contact lenses.

Ligeia [00:40:46]

Yes.

Pike [00:40:47]

All right.

Ligeia [00:40:48]

And basically all this behaviour, like, maybe. Maybe there were a lot of medication in this book. The. The dogs, the. The syringes stuff. They were trying to. Were they trying to solve this or were they just on drugs? Everybody was just high all the time. And the kids were high on some medication because they were being, like, experimented on.

[00:41:12]

And maybe this pale situation was just one of the effects that this girl had. And maybe Jack was also having the same drugs and it was creating these visions or nightmares. You know, everybody reacts differently. Like maybe, you know, maybe Jack had this. Rob was getting worse with her behaviour. She was stealing and, you know, remember, though, how she took that car from her friend when she went to the college and the friend gave her the car.

[00:41:45]

She never returned.

Lithos [00:41:47]

Just forgot about it. Didn't. Didn't answer her phone.

Ligeia [00:41:51]

I couldn't. I couldn't with this girl. Like, these are students. This was her car. What are you doing? I couldn't. I had to put it down for a while. I'm like, no, I can't do this.

Lithos [00:42:05]

Yeah, I had the same thing in that bit because I kept thinking. I was reading it and kept thinking, what about the car?

Leraje [00:42:10]

Going to take her car back.

Lithos [00:42:11]

The car back.

Ligeia [00:42:12]

That is still upsetting me to. To now.

Leraje [00:42:15]

But I think that's just. It's just another example of how everybody in this book is morally grey and they don't do the right thing.

Pike [00:42:22]

I think everyone in this conversation is morally grey because you have people being ripped up by dogs. Dogs being experimental and all. You're all worried about the car.

Ligeia [00:42:33]

Yes, yes, this is exactly the truth. Now you know me. No, no, we mentioned, we mentioned the, the animal abuse that was, that was awful. And I don't even want to start because that is just absolutely there. That's the end of everything. If you take little creatures or even big creatures that are absolutely innocent and they can't tell you no.

[00:43:00]

And you just do stuff with their psyche, with their brain, with their bodies, like that's, that's the end of everything.

Leraje [00:43:10]

There's that aspect of it, but there's also the aspect of it. It clearly wasn't fucking working.

Ligeia [00:43:15]

No.

Leraje [00:43:15]

And they kept, uh, doing it and they just kept doing it and doing it and doing it. It's like, stop.

Ligeia [00:43:20]

It was sadistic. It was complete sadism.

Lithos [00:43:23]

It's also interesting that speaking about, uh, drugs specifically and, and all the characters in the book, no one's mentioned Pavel yet.

Ligeia [00:43:33]

Oh yeah, Pavel! But he was, he was also like. I have no idea why he was even there actually.

Leraje [00:43:43]

I think he was there for the big reveal at the end. I think that was his sole purpose.

Ligeia [00:43:46]

About his family?

Leraje [00:43:48]

Yeah, I think that was the only reason he was there.

Ligeia [00:43:49]

With this one. I was expecting a big ugly...

Leraje [00:43:55]

Yeah. I kind of was as well.

Ligeia [00:43:55]

...story behind him.

Pike [00:43:57]

He was there because he was.

Ligeia [00:43:58]

Yeah.

Lithos [00:43:58]

But it was, it was kind of made obvious not only was he supplying them with drugs, but also his constant breaking down in tears. You know, obviously something terrible had happened.

Leraje [00:44:10]

Yeah.

Lithos [00:44:11]

Um, it was just like. Yeah, it was an interesting character sort of in, in the story. But the fact that we haven't mentioned him so far is like he's a forgettable character. He didn't. In that he was not that important to, to the story itself it is like, just like you said just there for the big reveal about

[00:44:33]

What has he done?

Leraje [00:44:36]

This might be unfair. I don't know. Is it fair to say that the. And I'm not. This is not a criticism by anything and there is definitely, I think, a reason for it. But is it fair to say that the male characters are a lot more forgettable and a lot more one dimensional than the female characters in this book?

Lithos [00:44:53]

Absolutely. 100% yes. But that is understandable.

Leraje [00:44:56]

And I think by design.

Pike [00:45:00]

I didn't think Irving was forgettable. I thought he's one dimensional in a sense.

Lithos [00:45:06]

One dimensional? Yeah.

Pike [00:45:07]

He's all evil. But it's, it's very well written evil.

Leraje [00:45:11]

Yes. I don't mean one dimensional or forgettable in the sense that they don't have an important role to play and they don't do terrible things. More in the sense that they're Kind of like evil almost reaches a sort of, like, cartoonish level of evil. Whereas, uh.

Ligeia [00:45:26]

The bad monkey.

Leraje [00:45:28]

Like that. Yeah, whereas. Whereas the, The. The. The sort of. I don't even. I don't even really want to use the word evil. But the, the kind of, like, immorality that the. The. The girls and the women display. And I include Mia very much in this. Um, is a much more nuanced.

Ligeia [00:45:48]

They were corrupted and broken.

Leraje [00:45:49]

Yes, they were corrupted exactly. By the male figures in the story.

Ligeia [00:45:54]

By them. You think by them?

Leraje [00:45:56]

I do, to a large degree, yeah. I mean, Falcon was the guy who kind of like, brought Sundial together. And Irving was the guy who kind of like. I don't know how to phrase it. Carry on. I'll come back.

I'll finish that thought another time. I don't know how to phrase what I want to say.

Ligeia [00:46:10]

It's an interesting thought. I stopped because I'm now thinking. What do you mean by that? Maybe you're right. I. I don't know. I didn't.

Leraje [00:46:17]

I don't think any of us can ever be 100% right or 100% wrong. All art is subjective, and we're all going to interpret it in different ways. I just felt that. And it's. Again, I, uh, gotta stress, this is not a criticism at all. I think it's. And I think it was by design that, um, the male characters were, uh, much less nuanced than the female characters.

Pike [00:46:41]

Perhaps.

Leraje [00:46:43]

Maybe that's a fairer way to say it. I don't. Maybe one dimensional is a little bit...

Ligeia [00:46:47]

I can't really come up with any argument that would be against that. I just didn't look at it this way. But maybe. Maybe you're right. Like, I will not remember this book by the male figures exactly. Except Irving, which I will keep in my head for other occasions.

Leraje [00:47:08]

Yeah. But even. Even Irving is kind of like, you know, he's Michael Myers. He's, uh, you know, he's Jason Voorhees. He's. He's kind of like the Big Bad sort of thing. Do you know what I mean? Whereas the bad things that the female characters do are for good, uh, reason. We. And we know those reasons because we're inside their head a lot of the time.

Ligeia [00:47:36]

And they go through a lot of stuff. You know, we can see these girls, uh, growing up. Rob and Jack, they go from little girls through teenage years, then like young adults. And now Rob is in her 30s, I think, so we get to know her on a much deeper level. And her sister and the kids and, you know, they are probably pregnant.

[00:48:02]

Then they give birth. So it's like a lot of huge things happening, which with Irving was just, oh, do I have time to fuck Hannah? Okay, I do. I was like, basically, that was his story.

Pike [00:48:20]

There is a question I wanted to throw out to all of you. Had the 23, the dog, had she not killed the puppies? Because when they go back to the, um. When they go back to the, uh, and see the dogs and they say, oh, there are nine other dogs, I was sort of hoping we would find the puppies alive.

[00:48:40]

So I had 23 not killed the puppies and only the people who harmed her, would that still make her a bad dog?

Ligeia [00:48:47]

The dogs were okay in my mind. They were made to be bad or reactive in a way, with the freaking controller. Who wouldn't? I would be biting everybody. If somebody had a controller pulling me wherever, I would be fucking biting their heads off.

Leraje [00:49:07]

I think it's a good example of nature versus nurture. I mean, a lot of the. The human characters were bad by kind of like the way they were, uh, the female characters in particular, because of the way they were brought up, the way they were raised, the kind of abuse they were subjected to, whereas the dogs were made deliberately that way, you know, and you can't even say, oh, well, they weren't trying to make them into savage killers.

[00:49:35]

But like I said earlier, come on, they fucked up enough times, you know, and they kept doing it. They must have known what was going to end up happening to these dogs on an individual level.

Ligeia [00:49:45]

But, yeah, I. I think I want to believe that the puppies were not killed like that.

Pike [00:49:53]

Oh, they're dead. They're dead. They're so dead.

Ligeia [00:49:55]

What about the pale dogs? Are they. These puppies? Puppies?

Leraje [00:50:00]

I think they, uh, they went into the, the distance with Pale Callie. Maybe in another dimension Pale Callie is looking after all the pale dogs and the pale cow. Don't forget the pale cow. Uh.

Ligeia [00:50:16]

Oh, no. Uh. Oh, that was awful as well. Such a sweet cow.

Leraje [00:50:21]

That was. That really. That was horrible.

Pike [00:50:24]

Oh, I had to look up whether how much a cow's femur, um, weighs, because when, um, when Rob is hitting Irving over the head with it, I thought, surely that can't do a lot of damage. But I looked it up. It's two to three kilos. It's a big bone.

Ligeia [00:50:42]

Wow. Oh, that's, uh, a freaking good point.

Leraje [00:50:45]

I think at this point, we have to commend Pike's dedication to podcast recordings by looking up the weight of a cow's femur.

Ligeia [00:50:54]

I am, uh, I am going to uh, give you a few points in my little table that doesn't exist. But anyway.

Pike [00:50:59]

Yeah.

Leraje [00:51:01]

What did, what did we think of the character of Mia? What did we all think of Mia?

Lithos [00:51:05]

Um, I think terrible. As, as I said earlier, it's. She was, she was involved with some secret government experiment somewhere. There was the mention of MK Ultra or something similar at the end of the book also. Yeah, and, and she also knew way too much about the, the kind of like psychotropic drugs that altered

[00:51:30]

or the drugs that altered DNA. This snip snip scissors kind of thing. Clips they were called or something, weren't they? Um, and, and then inserting electrodes and using dental paste to, to fix them into dogs brains. You know, it's like you don't just pick that up.

Leraje [00:51:50]

No.

Lithos [00:51:51]

On a commune somewhere where you're sort of like in a drum circle with Falcon, you know, it's like you were part of some serious shitting experiments in the military. That, that's my suspicion.

Leraje [00:52:04]

Yeah. Very self centred as her name suggests. Um, yeah, I kind of like, like Lithos, you know, I picked up on all the MK Ultra references and stuff and I think my headcanon is that Mia's backstory is she used to work for the government, something went wrong, she got booted out and now here she is stuck on Sundial trying to recreate and trying to make it work, whatever it was she got booted out for.

[00:52:31]

Mhm.

Lithos [00:52:32]

Yeah, I think we were given some of her. She mentioned something about difficult childhood or an abusive childhood, I can't remember.

Leraje [00:52:41]

Oh, something with her sister, wasn't it? She walked out on her sister.

Lithos [00:52:43]

Yes. Oh yes, she walked out on her sister and the implication was her sister was then abused in some manner by a parent.

Leraje [00:52:55]

Yeah.

Lithos [00:52:55]

Um, or a parental figure. Yes, um, that was it. But other than that we know bugger all. And I'm like, no, no, she was doing, she was doing military shit.

Leraje [00:53:11]

Yeah, yeah, yeah. All right, uh, well, we're coming up to the hour. Pike, how many pitchforks for you out of ten?

Pike [00:53:16]

Give it a seven.

Leraje [00:53:17]
Oh, seven. Lithos?

Lithos [00:53:19]
I'll give it a solid nine.

Leraje [00:53:24]
Ligeia?

Ligeia [00:53:26]
Seven and a half.

Leraje [00:53:28]
And I will give it eight just to sort of like split the middle there. Okay, so, um, that was our take on um, Sundial in our usual rambling, non specific, generalised way. Um, I hope we said something that you found when you read the book. Again, author's name is Catriona Ward. She's uh, written several other books.

[00:53:52]
Three or four I think. Uh, Little Eve, um, Last House on Needless Street. A couple of others that I can't remember the names of right now, but they're all very good. So, Lithos, it's going to be you to choose our next book.

Lithos [00:54:08]
Why, thank you. What I would like to suggest is, uh, the Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula K. Le Guin. Um, a bit of science fiction, although she prefers speculative fiction, which I wholeheartedly agree with, because science fiction, to me, that's Star Trek. That's warp drives and plasma cannons, and you get yourself out of a stick... sticky situation with cod science.

[00:54:36]
So, speculative fiction, um, by one, uh, of the most respected authors in the genre, and a book which I believe won the Hugo and Nebula Award and is highly rated, um, and also touches on the aspects of, um, gender.

Leraje [00:54:57]
Did you see her take on, uh, the awful Scottish wizard lady and her books?

Lithos [00:55:05]
Oh, no. Go on, tell me.

Leraje [00:55:07]
So someone asked her, uh, in an interview what she thought of her books. Uh, no, what she thought of her writing. And she said, I have no great opinion of it. Okay. So that's the end of another episode of the Devil's Library. Hope you enjoyed it. Uh, next time, as per Lithos, we'll be reading Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula K.

[00:55:30]
Le Guin. Uh, I've been Leraje. Hail Satan.

Ligeia [00:55:34]
This is Ligeia. Hail Satan.

Pike [00:55:37]
Pike here. Hail Satan.

Lithos
And Lithos. Hail Satan.

[Outro music]