

## Episode 48 - Houston, Houston, Do You Read?: Clone Wars

It's week 2 of Novella-vember! This is the second installment in our series. We'll be releasing four weekly episodes in November, covering a Hugo Award-winning novella.

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**Haley**

Hello.

**Amy**

Hi.

**Haley**

Hello. Welcome to Hugo, Girl! Novella-vember Number Two. It's a week later. We're all wearing different shirts. <Haley laughs>

**Amy**

That's right.

**Haley**

Just kidding. We're coming to you from the living room of Lori and Kevin.

**Amy**

In the same shirts we wore last week.

**Haley**

Yep. <laughter>

**Lori**

Or 5 minutes ago when we finished Number One.

**Haley**

That's true. Today we're going to discuss a novella by James Tiptree Jr., aka Alice Sheldon, called Houston, Houston, Do You Read?

**Amy**

What's your name?

**Haley**

I'm Haley.

**Amy**

I'm Amy.

**Lori**

And I'm Lori.

**Haley**

Yeah. All right. So this book won a Nebula Award for best novella in 1976 and a Hugo Award for best novella in 1977. Let me summarize the plot for you. Three astronauts out traveling in the solar system experience disturbance from a solar flare and attempt to contact ground control on Houston, hence the title. They get no response, but start receiving a signal from mysterious women, which puzzles them. The men's ship, the Sunbird, ship needs help, and they end up

doing a spacewalk rescue mission, and they go into the women's spaceship. It turns out they weren't lost, but the American astronauts had actually time traveled for three centuries, which gives me strong Planet of the Apes vibes. On board the ship, they learn more about the new Earth, what's happened since they disappeared. An epidemic caused widespread infertility and eventually the extinction of men and the Y chromosome. The women on board are actually all clones. They drug the men to reveal their true natures and learn these time travelers have deep desires that are antithetical to the new women-based culture that has developed on Earth. It's revealed that the men were never going to get to visit the new Earth.

**Haley**

The women were just performing an experiment on them to collect semen samples. And they do not live. That is a high-level overview. It was strangely complicated when I started writing it.

**Amy**

I think that's pretty good. Sum up, man goes to space, comes back, only women. Women say no.

**Lori**

I didn't know that they were not gonna...they were going to kill them all in the ship or something??

**Amy**

Well, I don't know if they tell us, really.

**Haley**

It's ambiguous, I think, in the text itself, but every review and summary of it -

**Amy**

Seems to think they're going to die. I always figured they caged them up somewhere.

**Haley**

Yeah, it does seem like it would make sense to save the genetic material, because there's none.

**Amy**

They're going to use them for reproduction like men have done to women for time immemorial.

**Haley**

Yeah. And so you might be asking yourself, why not just keep living that clone life? And I think they stop having genetic viability. I think at a certain point, it's good to have different things worked into your genetic sequence.

**Amy**

I think that's right.

**Haley**

Okay, goodies from Goodreads. Rachel on Goodreads says, "must read for Sci-Fi lovers, especially women Sci-Fi lovers. Warning. Ending is PG-15."

**Amy**

PG-15?!

**Haley**

I don't want my high schooler reading the very, very graphic sexual assault scene. So I thought that was a ridiculous Goodreads review.

**Amy**

PG 15 isn't a real rating. <laughter>

**Haley**

Well, also, it's not a real rating either, but that's like saying you should -

**Amy**

This is at least PG-20.

**Haley**

That's like saying that Saving Private Ryan is like PG-11. Like, no.

**Lori**

I don't know. I mean, I read Prince of Tides in 11th grade.

**Amy**

I read VC Andrews.

**Lori**

I think PG-15 is fine, but it's not real. <laughter>

**Haley**

Yeah, it was a lot for me.

**Amy**

McKinley on Goodreads gave it two stars and said, "Gender issues." <laughter> That's the whole review.

**Lori**

All right, Bad Horse on Goodreads rated it one star.

**Amy**

Bad Horse!

**Lori**

And I noted that it has out of all of its reviews and ratings on Goodreads, it has only 14 one star ratings and only two one star reviews.

**Haley**

Yes.

**Lori**

Bad Horse said, "This story is vile hate speech which claims that all men are rapists who can't stop themselves from raping women the moment they meet them and the world is better off without them. It's obscene that it won the Hugo and the Nebula, obscene that Alice Sheldon published it pretending to be a man -" <all gasp>

**Amy**

Obscene!

**Lori**

"And even more obscene that the Tiptree Award for fiction about gender is named after such a vicious sexist."

**Amy**

Well, not anymore. <Lori laughs> So you win this round.

**Haley**

Wait till they find out what's worse than being potential sexist. <laughter>

**Lori**

Has he heard of the murder?

**Haley**

So I figure, when should we talk about -

**Amy**

I think it's also patently not true. Two of the men on that boat did not rape anybody.

**Haley**

That's true.

**Lori**

And that definitely wasn't the minute they saw them.

**Haley**

I was going to say there was several, maybe even weeks or months!

**Amy**

They wined and dined them first!

**Lori**

Also, not that it's fine, but the man was extremely drugged and they were trying to collect a sperm sample.

**Amy**

What do you do with no frontal lobe?

**Lori**

I don't know what to do with that scene.

**Amy**

I don't either!

**Haley**

Before we talk more about general things. So James Tiptree was a woman named Alice Sheldon who had a fascinating life, and her Wikipedia is a wild ride.

**Amy**

It is a wild ride. I recommend reading it top to bottom.

**Haley**



Top to bottom? You have to finish it.

**Lori**

A couple of people recommended her formal biography and that it is obviously a wilder ride.

**Haley**

Yeah, I might have to check it out.

**Lori**

It's a Moby Dick version of her Wikipedia.

**Haley**

The idea to use a pseudonym to publish under a male in a very male dominated genre makes sense, of course.

**Lori**

Pseudonyms are as old as writing. Come on.

**Haley**

We don't even think that Homer - Homer might have been lots of people.

**Lori**

What was his last name? <Haley laughs>

**Haley**

He's like Cher.

**Lori**

Cher has a last name, or at least used to.

**Haley**

That's true.

**Amy**

She had that CIA career to protect.

**Lori**

Even Madonna has a last name.

**Haley**

Ciccone.

**Lori**

Beyonce has a last name. Come on.

**Amy**

<singing to the Oscar Mayer tune> Beyonce has a last name. <laughter>

**Haley**

<singing> It's K-N-O-W-L-E-S. <laughter> Okay, as I was reading the Wikipedia plot summary, which is always fun to do because some people are more eloquent or less eloquent. They refer to the man who performs a sexual assault as "over-amorous." <laughter> That's my Misogynist Moment. It's early, guys. I'm sorry.

**Amy**

That's like calling rape sex.

**Haley**

Yeah, I was just like...Did you read the short story? That's not what it is. He's just a little overloving.

**Amy**

He's just excited. He can't help himself. Boys will be boys, you know?

**Haley**

Okay, so I mentioned this in the group chat. Lori said she wasn't sure. So I want to talk about Solar Punk because it's one of my favorite genres and you can kind of like backwards stick things into it that didn't know what they were at the time.

**Amy**

Backwards stick.

**Haley**

So Solar Punk is the idea in literature and Sci-Fi particular, but it's also in movies and video games of, like, creating a very positive look of the future at Earth as humanity, as a community coming together to use the environment in a sustainable way. So it's very broad. And I think actually yeah, the definition is a literary, artistic, and activist movement that envisions and works towards actualizing a sustainable future interconnected with a nature and community. So some Kim Stanley Robinson It kind of gets into, like, climate fiction. I think a classic example from last

year was Becky Chambers' A Psalm for the Wild-Built. Basically, it's the opposite of grimdark. Like reading The Road by Cormac McCarthy. It doesn't have to always be like people killing each other. It could be like this cool future that's great and kind of green. So there's a whole complex ecosystem on the women's ship that I thought was fascinating. They've got a goat, there's an iguana, there's grasshoppers. The bathroom is in a vacuum tube that sucks your urine out or poop that you have to take out of your butt because of gravity. <Lori laughs> It's a nice greenhouse with - you pee on grass. It's nice! So it's human powered technology that's sustainable in a way. A lot of times in human history, there's like, the yin and the yang and the more women centered side has been associated with nature. And that's what this society seems to have done, which is kind of cool.

**Amy**

Yeah. It seems like it's a very small population that's left on Earth.

**Haley**

2 million people out of the entire, you know, 8 billion.

**Amy**

And they're all clones. Right. So individuals are less than whatever.

**Haley**

Yeah. There's like 11,000 distinct phenotypes. Or genotypes.

**Amy**

So I was curious if their oneness with nature had to do more with it's a natural byproduct of there being fewer people or if it was a purposeful endeavor. Do you know what I'm saying?

**Haley**

Probably a little both. I mean, I love a spaceship. Love a spaceship. But, like, especially, you know, 1970s NASA spaceships were as about as sterile and mechanical and cold as you can

get. Like, so the idea of a goat on a spaceship, I don't know how it would work. <laughter> I don't know where the goat poop would go. I don't know how gravity -

**Lori**

It has to pull it out of its butt.

**Amy**

One of the things that happens in The Expanse is the outfitting of this generation ship.

**Haley**

Generation ships are great.

**Amy**

Yeah, generation ships, which was a running gag at the Hugo Awards, which I thought was pretty funny. But generation ships, you have families and means of continuing to live and make your own food and regeneration and all that sort of things in these generation ships. I always thought that was really interesting. And Rama was a good example of that, too. Like, Rama is a generation ship. It has, like, farmlands and all these things in it, which I thought was crazy. I love that. I love a goat on a spaceship, too.

**Haley**

Yeah. And there's also other things. Like, I used to go to a house party where they would make margaritas on a bike blender. <laughter> So there's lots of weird mechanical things like this in the ship that aren't made by an engineer necessarily, but they work. So, like, something spins where the beds are that keeps gravity going or something.

**Amy**

Does Station Eleven count as solar punk?

**Haley**

Yeah, absolutely.

**Amy**

Oh, interesting.

**Haley**

You have people trying to create a society that means something in the future.

**Amy**

Interesting.

**Haley**

I mean, usually it's more of, like there's more of, like a sciency bent, but it doesn't have to.

**Amy**

Is a world with only one gender a utopia or a dystopia?

**Haley**

I think it depends on...

**Lori**

I guess you have to go and find out.

**Haley**

Yeah, depends on who's reading it, maybe.

**Lori**

Well, it's like we were talking about in our previous episode that we definitely recorded a week ago and not 20 minutes ago. <laughter> That's time dilation, guys. We were talking about Haley, you said, like, what if everyone had the same skin color? Like, we would find other ways to stratify and treat each other badly. I think same thing if you had an all women society. We would just find other ways to be shitty to each other.

**Amy**

Yeah, we were talking about this. Lori and I, very, very briefly were talking about this, how she saw it. Correct me if I get this wrong. This is your reading, not mine. But you had read it as women come out better when they have power than men. Is that accurate?

**Haley**

The opposite.

**Amy**

Well, I read it as women not being so great when they were the only ones left.

**Lori**

No, that's what I think too. But I just think it is a takeaway. I think you could read it that way. I don't read it that way because I think things seem kind of weird. And many people read it to say that they murdered the three people, the only new three people that they met at the end. I'm not sure that they did. But no, I think that that is like a way that I would imagine people would read it. Because Tiptree, from what I read, was experimenting with the idea of being able to escape from a world where men are dragging her down and holding her back. And so I think that that's like a valid way to read this. I don't necessarily read it that way because everything is a little bit spooky sounding to me. But I think it's a way to read it.

**Amy**

That this is an ideal?

**Lori**

That it could be. Yeah. I mean, I think that's probably what some people take away from it because, for example, this person who rated it one star on Goodreads and was like, "this is a story about how all men are automatically horrible and bad." And I think at a surface level reading, it does look like that. But I don't think - that wasn't my takeaway.

**Haley**

Yeah, it's complicated because men are not the problem in society. I mean, it's how society gives men powers in certain situations. Again, I think she was married to a man, she loved a man dearly. I don't think she hates men. I think it's just the aggressive parts of toxic masculinity. And I read actually, with what appeared to be a man's profile picture, a review. He was like, "as a man, I was like, this is clearly a take on toxic masculinity. Not all masculinity."

**Amy**

Yeah, I don't think men are inherently bad.

**Lori**

Well, the thing that I think was the most interesting for me is about the performance of masculinity for other men. It is very clear that when men are performing toxic masculinity, it is for other men. And when men do not stand up against toxic masculinity, it is because they fear reprisal from other men. And you really see that when Bud becomes totally unhinged. He starts ranting at the end when he finds out there are no other men. And he's like, I'm going to be the big dick king of the earth and every woman is going to be my concubine. And he's like, at first seems like very aroused and excited by that. And then he sort of starts to spiral because what does it all mean? If there are no other men to lord that over? If there are no men who are jealous of you or competing with you, what does all that mean?

**Amy**

Nothing.



**Lori**

So it just becomes so clear that this performance is all for other men. And then on the other end of the spectrum, you have what is the main guy's name?

**Haley**

Lorimer.

**Lori**

Lorimer! Oh, yeah. It looks like I had some typos in the PDF that I read, so there are some places where it said Lori Mare.

**Amy**

Was it transcribed by Otter? <laughter>

**Lori**

Maybe! You see that with Lorimer on the other end of the spectrum because he is not a big guy. He's not a tough guy, and he's always sort of just on the outskirts of that boys club looking in and really wanting to be part of it. But then I think he also feels a little bad that he wants to be part of it because he sees that it's dangerous and unhealthy, but he still wants to be part of it.

**Amy**

And they make fun of him for being soft.

**Haley**

Yeah, the depiction of a "beta male" was fascinating because you don't see that a lot. He was, like, sitting there watching something horrible happen, and he doesn't like it, and then he likes it, and it gets real gross.

**Amy**

Yeah, he was aroused and he was like, Wait, no, this is weird, and he didn't know what to do.

**Lori**

Well, another interesting thing about that is that you can't help the shitty, weird things that we think and feel.

**Amy**

Your body's going to do stuff.

**Lori**

The truth serum stuff that they gave them is really terrifying because I don't -

**Amy**

Don't strip away my filters! I do not know what I will say. <laughter>

**Lori**

All of us have scary things in us, and that's what makes you a person. You make other choices.

**Haley**

Right.

**Amy**

You don't act on every thought that goes through your head.

**Haley**

Every time I hang out with kids, and kids haven't learned the layers upon layers to build, to protect, and to be polite. And whenever I hang out with an adult again, I'm like, "ahh, self control." <laughter>

**Amy**

Kids are like these weird, amoral...

**Haley**

They're just basic humans. <Amy laughs>

**Lori**

Yeah, they're just ego. It's fine.

**Haley**

They say what they feel and think, and that's got to be freeing. But it's also why they have breakdowns.

**Amy**

Unless you're raised in a Southern WASP family, in which case you do not talk about how you feel. Thank you very much.

**Lori**

I think a lot about how it's unfortunate that we become people by bumping into each other and causing harm to other people.

**Amy**

I don't want to cause you harm!

**Lori**

Like, when I'm six years old and I hurt somebody's feelings, and then I feel bad and I'm like, oh, I shouldn't do that again. It's just too bad that that's how we seem to have to learn how to be humans.

**Haley**

It's a hard thing, being a human.

**Lori**

This book was really good, actually, to pair with. The Word for World is Forest, because Lubov is like Lorimer kinda, and Davidson is kind of like Bud. I mean, there are a lot of parallels there.

**Haley**

And they were written pretty close, like, the year after each other. I think.

**Lori**

Yeah, definitely close.

**Haley**

This was 77, so both 70s.

**Amy**

This was about five years later. Yeah, but, like, same decade, about the same time.

**Haley**

Yeah. Women dealing with the same shit.

**Amy**

And they were friends.

**Lori**

They were good friends! It was so interesting to me to find out that Tiptree had all these close friends in the science fiction and fantasy community through writing letters. So all these people didn't know if she was a man or a woman or believed she was a man. She was good friends with Robert Silverberg, and he thought she was a man. And they stayed friends, which I actually thought, to his credit, he was so sure she was a man, he found out she wasn't. And I feel like toxic masculinity would dictate that you have to stop being friends with her.

**Amy**

You'd pull a Davidson.

**Lori**

Well, number one, she's a girl. Number two, she made you look really dumb. Well, you made you look really dumb, but someone would easily turn that around and be like, you made me look stupid. And toward the end of her life, she had written him a letter about wanting to take her own life and not sure what to do about her husband's life. They remained intimate friends for a long time.

**Amy**

Good for you, Robert.

**Haley**

Yeah.

**Lori**

Well, I did also read that she apologized to him, and I thought...<Amy: Never mind!> <Lori laughs> I mean, she may have just apologized. There was nothing that said, like, he made her apologize or whatever.

**Amy**

I could see why you'd feel bad for making these people look foolish.

**Lori**

Sure.

**Amy**

For having these hot takes and never telling them, hey, back off. I'm actually a woman.

**Haley**

I've never had just an epistolary relationship with somebody, but I feel like I wouldn't have to be like, "I'm definitely a woman," when I wrote, or "definitely a man." So maybe it didn't come up!

**Lori**

He wasn't like, "a/s/l?"

**Amy**

I had at least one parasocial relationship with a guy when I was, like, 14 and we were pen pals. Oh, I was in love with him.

**Haley**

Was he in jail? <Haley laughs>

**Amy**

He was not.

**Haley**

I didn't realize this until I read it twice this afternoon. So they inject some of the women on this planet with testosterone to make them stronger or bigger to do work, like manual labor or something. So there's a character on the ship that we don't realize. So they think when they arrive that it's a bunch of women and, like, a young man, and they call him Andy. Turns out her name is actually Kay. But then I realized Andy for androgen.

**Lori**

Yeah, it's like a surname that you get.

**Haley**

Yeah, it was interesting. So I think this book kind of like the trans movement, was not yet in full force, I imagine, in the 70s, but trans people existed, and I think that's not what she was trying to do. But it was interesting what they were doing with hormones in this book.

**Lori**

Yeah. You segued perfectly into the last thing in my notes was about there are interesting questions raised about gender identity in this and I would also like to read the expanded universe of this because I'd like to know more about that. I wondered when they used male pronouns for Andy when the Sunbird crew came aboard their ship, but did they do that for Andy's safety? Which then is also interesting because people will in certain situations, they will use the pronouns that maybe the person they're talking to would expect them to use because it's a safety thing. So I wonder if that was what was happening here or if in Andy's day to day life, Andy would use male pronouns. Who knows? I have so many questions about how this works. And it seems like they have very strong identity ties toward their clone type. Like Judys talk too much. But Judys can also be all different kinds of people. Judys can be painters and

doctors, but they all kind of talk too much. So I thought it was super interesting how identity seems very tied up in which type of clone you are and no one really talks about gender at all. But there's got to be interesting things going on.

**Amy**

I was like, if there's only one gender, then there's no genders, right? Or is like gender in this situation is if you're just strong then...Or is it just as much binary as...

**Lori**

Yeah, I mean, I wonder if gender identity is an identity or if it's more like I'm an Amy, if those are the identities. And what if you are an Amy clone, but you're talkative and you feel more like a Judy? I don't know, I just think that. There's a lot of room to play with that in this universe and I would have loved to have read more about it. This was so short. Looking at it, I was like, are you sure you're a novella? It was very brief.

**Haley**

I think I mentioned this in the group chat, but I'll share it with our listeners too. This is the first book I've read for the podcast in a while that I flew through. I was like, I got to know what happens, man.

**Amy**

I did the same thing. I sat down to just read a couple of pages and the next thing I knew, 2 hours later I was finishing it.

**Haley**

I was supposed to be working yesterday morning for like the first half hour of the day and I was like, oh, shit.

**Amy**

Yeah, it was a page turner.



**Haley**

And it's presented as a mystery because you want to know, like anytime you're 300 years later, I want to know what happened. And then you have this weird society with all women. Also, they can't all be gay. Not everybody is gay. Even if there's only one gender.

**Amy**

Yeah, that's an interesting question.

**Haley**

Maybe it's like prison. They're just like, I got to have a wife. I don't know.

**Lori**

They made them seem very non sexual, which is interesting.

**Amy**

Maybe sexuality changes after 300 years of only one gender.

**Haley**

Maybe.

**Lori**

I feel that there will always be a lot of horny people in the world.

**Amy**

And you're going to do what you're going to do.

**Haley**

Yeah.

**Amy**

And if you're not ever presented with a man, I don't know how that would go.

**Haley**

That's a good point. So then sex becomes completely divorced from reproduction, which has really benefited women in the last part of the last century, is like, every time you have sex, you don't have to have a baby, which is huge.

**Lori**

And you don't have to have sex to have a baby either.

**Haley**

Yeah, that's true.

**Amy**

Evolutionary change can happen pretty quickly if you need it to!

**Lori**

If you have lots of money, then those things can be separated.

**Haley**

That's true. Oh, also I want to bring up this is like, again, the book Seveneves, which they base humanity 5000 years from now on seven phenotypes. So this is 11,000.

**Lori**

Which feel like 11,000 is a lot of genetic diversity.

**Haley**

That's too many.

**Amy**

That's too many! <Amy laughs>

**Lori**

I hope that we read Where Late the Sweet Bird sang by Kate Wilhelm soon, which is a post apocalyptic story about cloning and how things go awry when the only people are clones of clones of clones, and how they kind of slowly...the things that we think of as our humanity are eroded away.

**Amy**

I'm curious how the clones in these books decide to reproduce. Like, who decides that a clone is going to have another clone? Do you decide for yourself? Is someone dictating that for you? I would love to know what she thought about that.

**Lori**

I think that this book has so much room for stuff about sexuality, about sex, about gender identity, reproduction. I would love to read this novel.

**Amy**

I agree!

**Haley**

That clone stuff - have you seen Multiplicity with Michael Keaton?

**Lori**

I don't think so.

**Haley**

<Haley laughs> It's a stupid comedy movie where Michael Keaton is like a scientist or something. Actually, I don't know the clones come about, but he ends up cloning himself and the clones clone each other and they get dumber as they go along. So just like by clone number six, he's just like...berrp? <laughter> But that's what that sounds like.

**Lori**

Well, these clones lose creativity. They don't necessarily get like - they can do like mathematical equations and things. In the Kate Wilhelm book that I think that we should read fairly soon, they lose like, creativity and problem-solving skills and things like that. So I wouldn't say they are necessarily dumber. They lose things like individuality, they also lose interest in sex.

**Amy**

So they go on Lexapro. <laughter>

**Amy**

I am not good at math.

**Haley**

On that note, what do you got for Feminist Favorite? I think I just like that they seem to have a nice spaceship, so they made a big deal of the fact that you have a space program with only 2 million people. And I was proud of those ladies.

**Amy**

I liked it when Judy did her fearless spacewalk and she was just like "I'm going to go outside now!" And the guys were like, <with a stilted affect> "We have to go outside and it's very important!" <laughter> And she's just like "Doot"!

**Lori**

Yeah, they were very much go getters. Although then we find out it was to go get some sperm! <laughter>

**Haley**

They're like, oh, go get those men's...

**Lori**

It's too bad that they didn't know that there was an easier way. They didn't have to drug them!

**Amy**

It's not hard. What, like it's hard? <Lori laughs>

**Haley**

You could have been like, sir, would you? And he'd be like, absolutely. <laughter> So Misogynist Moment. There is a pretty horrible, very graphic, several pages long sexual assault, which it seems like they may or may not be orchestrating. But again, there's probably a better way to have depicted that, but it was tough to read.

**Amy**

It's strange because she consented. In a weird way, they entrapped him.

**Haley**

Yeah.

**Lori**

They certainly contrived to cause him to ejaculate.

**Amy**

Right.

**Lori**

And even when,

**Amy**

From his perspective, though, it was a sexual assault, which is alarming.

**Lori**

It's very interesting. It gives you, again, a lot to think about. It gives you a lot to think about about consent. And then it's like they were all in on it because Andy's got a camera. And then Laura Maris saying to Connie, we've got to stop this. And she's like, don't worry - Judy's like Vida. Judy's very athletic. Judy works out. I was like, this is so strange. Yes, but I think what makes it so, so hard to read is the way he's talking to her.

**Haley**

Oh, it's disgusting.

**Amy**

Oh, you mean Bud.

**Haley**

The way he's talking, saying horrible things. And then when he finds out that Andy's gay and, like, the litany of homophobic slurs is just awful.

**Lori**

Or like he assumes that Andy is a lesbian.

**Haley**

Yeah. Which she not be.

**Lori**

Andy looks masculine and maybe is masculine. I mean, we don't know. There's so much we don't know. But the minute he's like, oh, short hair, no boobs - the stuff he says is horrible.

**Haley**

Yeah. It's horrible.

**Amy**

It's like if you strip away the thin veneer of socialization on him, he suddenly becomes this, like, monster.

**Lori**

It's automatic.

**Amy**

It was awful.

**Haley**

Yeah. And again, not every man has those thoughts. So I think people that want to criticize this book might conflate that. But this is just one bad man.

**Amy**

Right.

**Lori**

Well, and you have a spectrum of men, too. Like, in these three men, you see three very different reactions and three very different expressions.

**Amy**

Like, the captain wanted to make religion out of them all and be their God.

**Haley**

Oh, my God. And he uses actual Bible verses. And I was like, that's in the Bible? <Lori laughs>

**Lori**

Sir!! It's so funny. He's like, all these little girls have just been waiting for me to arrive! <laughter>  
Sir, I think you got another thing coming.



**Amy**

I can't remember now why Lorimer ends up being rejected by them.

**Haley**

He's just a little guy, I think.

**Lori**

He's not physically large.

**Amy**

He's a short king.

**Lori**

He's a short king, and he is scholarly.

**Haley**

I think he's a nerd probably.

**Lori**

He's a thinky guy.

**Amy**

He's rejected by the women.

**Lori**

What do you mean rejected?

**Amy**

Why does he end up - I can't remember. I read this a while ago. Why he ends up...Why do they lump him in with the rest of them?

**Lori**

What do you mean?

**Amy**

The women basically come to the conclusion that it's not worth having men around because they're too much trouble and they're not very well behaved, and they take their sperm, and that's all they want from them.

**Lori**

Oh! I mean, it may have been some of the stuff that he said to Connie when he was under his truth serum, because he said some of that stuff about how he was thinking about seeing them all being raped and helpless and stuff. He did say those things.

**Amy**

True.

**Haley**

And also, he presents no - I mean, even if he does nothing horrible, he's not like, in the plus one column.

**Lori**

He's sort of been tried and convicted of a thought crime, which is very dystopian.

**Haley**

Yeah, that was a callback to Kallocain for me. This idea of seeing people's hidden truths can be horrifying. At one point towards the end when they're saying why they can't have these men on Earth, this made me laugh out loud. "We simply have no facilities for people with your emotional problems." <uproarious laughter> Obviously, she's talking about Dave and Bud.

**Amy**

Aww, that's like when I was told by a boyfriend one time that it would be a lot easier to talk to me about things if I didn't have so many emotions.

**Lori**

Well, that's probably true. That's true of all of us. <laughter>

**Haley**

But it's also hard talking to a robot.

**Lori**

If you could just receive information and be rational, be a robot.

**Haley**

Make your body respond to it.

**Amy**

Do they have any food? They have feminist food in this? <Amy laughs> "Feminist food!"

**Haley**

They do mention having delicious food, but they don't go into detail, sadly. I would love to know.

**Amy**

They ate the iguanas. One of them says, the iguana is not bad. Tastes like chicken.

**Haley**

Tastes like chicken. And then when they shoot the iguana and she's just like...

**Amy**

They reintroduce guns into the situation. Yeah.

**Lori**

He shoots the hull of the ship! They have to fix it.

**Haley**

That's the worst idea on Earth.

**Lori**

Listen, I think that the past did not send us our best men. And then Lorimer is like, no, don't use a ballistic weapon inside a spaceship. And he's like, I think I will. <laughter>

**Amy**

We didn't do Boob Talk.

**Lori**

Oh.

**Haley**

Oh, yeah. What's next? What are we on?

**Amy**

One time when what's-his-toes was doing the assault, he just says, "titties titties titties"! <laughter>

**Lori**

Didn't he say at one point, "where are the boobs?" Lorimer said, "Andy's a woman," which is debatable, but I understand that Lorimer was like, "Don't hit Andy!" And then I think he goes, "A woman? Where are the boobs?!" <laughter>

**Haley**

You know, woman equals titties. Titties! No balls! <laughter>

**Lori**

No balls at all. No balls at all. Oh, Ball Banter! <laughter>

**Haley**

Ball Banter! It's been a minute for Ball Banter.

**Amy**

Lori, was there any Soap Stuff?

**Lori**

Oh, the clone thing. <laughter> And, theft of sperm is pretty soapy. That has absolutely happened on Days of Our Lives. <Amy laughs>

**Haley**

Yeah. No, that's true.

**Amy**

Did you like this book?

**Haley**

I did like this book a lot. Even though we've talked about, generally 99% of the time I'm against showing graphic rape in a book, but I think it did serve a purpose in this book, and I hate to say that.

**Amy**

And it was a complicated situation.

**Haley**

It wasn't just a sexual assault. There's a little bit of layers to it, but that doesn't make it easier for someone who's experienced trauma to read it.

**Amy**

No, he was awful.

**Haley**

Yeah. I mean, it was hard to read.

**Lori**

Even the language, without what was physically going on, would have been fucked up. It was difficult to read.

**Haley**

Yeah, for sure. But despite that, a page-turner, I love it. It was a perfect mix of hard Sci-Fi and soft sci-fi. A lot of women get shit for, like "oh, most women only write soft Sci-Fi." But this one was talking about mechanical things and sciency things with OVA.

**Amy**

I thought she did a good job with the science when they were trying to triangulate their trajectories and get the ships close enough to and then they had to cross space, and I thought that all that was...And they had to net them.

**Haley**

That reminded me of The Martian, the movie, when you're watching him trying to get rescued by the ship.

**Amy**

It was cool. Yeah, it was good.

**Haley**

I think it'd be a cool movie, actually.

**Amy**

Oh, yeah. Agreed. They could work out some of the nuance.

**Haley**

Can we get someone to write the prequel?

**Lori**

I did like it.

**Amy**

Oh, good.

**Lori**

Yeah, I did like it.

**Amy**

I knew you were on the fence.

**Lori**

I was kind of on the fence last night. The more I thought about it today, I like it. I think it's very effective. Very effective exploration of how people have been conditioned to behave, too.

**Haley**

Yeah. No, it's true.

**Lori**



Or conditioned to think about things and then how that can come out of people in different ways.

**Haley**

I think it was such a good book because it wasn't too long. A lot of the books we read suffer from good idea, very bad execution. I think she nailed both. And it was feminist, and it was just really good.

**Amy**

And bonus wikipage.

**Haley**

Oh, yes, please. I don't even think that we can do justice in our abbreviated format this time to talk about her life. But it's - read it.

**Lori**

But I feel like this is a spoiler and a content warning.

**Haley**

Yeah.

**Amy**

Don't spoil it.

**Lori**

You can't tell people to go read that without it.

**Amy**

You can't??

**Lori**

Suicide??

**Amy**

Okay! Content warning. There's death by suicide at the end.

**Haley**

Yeah.

**Lori**

Which I did not know about her. I mean, it did happen a very long time ago, so it's like not exactly a spoiler.

**Haley**

It's never fun to stumble upon something that might trigger you.

**Amy**

That's true.

**Lori**

I was very surprised when I got to the end. I was like, holy shit.

**Haley**

Yeah. No. Very rarely is my mouth open at the end of a Wikipedia.

**Amy**

And the way that it was, I mean, that was A+ storytelling. Did not see coming.

**Haley**

Yeah. All right.

**Amy**

Star wars?

**Haley**

Star wars. I think it's Star Wars. Because space.

**Lori**

it's Lord of the Rings. Is it the clone war? <all scream>

**Lori**

I thought it was Lord of the Rings because I said, a band of friends is in search of fresh DNA and they encounter evil on their journey. But I may have to defer to Clone Wars. That's pretty good. <laughter>

**Amy**

I did a Star Wars!

**Haley**

That's the best one I've heard in a while. It's the clone wars! <laughter> And they're fighting an evil force of imperials...

**Lori**

Who are guarding the only remaining sperm. I am gobsmacked!

**Haley**

Yeah. A new hope. <laughter> Revenge of - no, I'm not going to say it!

**Lori**

Okay, on that note, what's coming up next?

**Amy**

Connie Willis, Last of the Winnebagos.

**Haley**

And then the Brandon Sanderson one.

**Amy**

Emperor's Soul after that.

**Haley**

That reminds me of boys soul from It's Always Sunny. Anybody? No? Got that. Okay.

**Lori**

Anything else?

**Amy**

No!

**Lori**

Bye!

**Amy**

Goodbye.

<outro music>