

EPISODE 36:
There's No Place Like Home

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[0:00]

M: Hello, and welcome to Be the Serpent, a podcast of extremely deep literary merit with your classy and sophisticated hosts Alexandra Rowland, Freya Marske, and Jennifer Mace. On today's episode we're discussing "[House Proud](#)" by astolat, [House of Many Ways](#) by Diana Wynne Jones, and [The Veldt](#) by Ray Bradbury.

[intro music plays]

A: Hello and welcome to Episode 36: There's No Place Like Home. I'm Alex, Rhos y Bayvil, my family's ancestral home in Wales.

F: I'm Freya, and today I'll be [Wightwick Manor](#), which is a beautifully decorated manor house in England.

M: I'm Macey and I will be played this week by [Bletchley Park](#) which is a cool, computer-sciencey manor place in England.

A: Ooh, that is neat.

F: Enigmaa, It's the enigma place.

A: Very you.

M: Yees. Enigmaaaa.

F: We are three red-headed fantasy authors—

A: —And today we're talking about magical houses, sort of continuing our theme of setting as character. It should be a lot of fun. We have some interesting rants scheduled for you, dear listeners.

M: Just, just one or two. Or three.

A: One or two, one or two. Yeah. But before we get into all that: what are we reading, fellow Serpents?

F: I've had a dip in my reading recently because I was finishing revisions, but my revisions are done.

M: Ooh, yay!

F: Hopefully I will not have to touch that book again until somebody buys it. In the interim, my brain has been kind of rejecting fantasy a little bit, so I've been doing a bit of romance reading. I read the new KJ Charles, [Proper English](#), which is a wonderful f/f murder mystery at a manor house. It's delightful. The person who dies is the most unpleasant person. So you don't even feel sad. There's none of this murder angst.

A: Nice.

F: You're just like, "Oh well, the terrible person's dead. Now there will be hijinks and also lesbians." It's very good in the full KJ Charles tradition. And I also read the third book in Alyssa Cole's Reluctant Royals series which is called [A Prince on Paper](#). It has fake engagement and a whole lot of other delightful tropes.

A: Nicee.

M: I, meanwhile, have spent the entire last two weeks in various modes of transportation. Bopping around England and seeing my parents, all of this, and also editing.

A: I'm so glad that you're back on a sensible time zone.

M: Listen. Listen.

A: I missed you, that's all!

M: Aww, that's cute. But, also, England is a sensible time zone!!

F: It really isn't. It is the least sensible time zone because when I wake up, everyone in England is about to go to sleep and then you'll pop online just as I am going to bed.

M: Aww.

F: It is a useless time zone.

A: Yeah, yeah.

M: Well, fine. That's me put in my place. For the second time today. [weeps] Listeners, they've already called me a [teletubby](#) before we even started recording this morning. So it's going great! Everything is going great. It's fine.

A: We love you.

M: I have been reading some books. Mostly I've been editing my own book. Very, very nearly done with that, but I've been reading, also, this really cool history book called [Sicily: An Island at the Crossroads of History](#) by John Julius Norwich.

A: Oooh.

M: It's a swift romp through 2500 years of the history of a single island.

A: Wonderful.

M: It's full of stabby boyes. I've also been reading all of [astolat's back-catalog](#) because I've been on a plane a lot and that's kind of how planes work. And also for some bizarre reason listening to [everything Fall Out Boy](#) has ever written, musically. I don't understand that one.

F: Sometimes you go through a phase where you need to listen to some Fall Out Boy. That's normal.

M: It's true, yeah. I—

A: Doctor Freya says it's normal.

M: Doctor Freya says it's fine. All right, Alex, what have you been up to?

A: I have been running the entire spectrum of literary merit, my dears. I found [a book of Pablo Neruda poems](#) for three dollars.

M: Hm!

A: Yes!

M: That's very literary merit.

A: Very literary merit indeed, yes.

M: Wow. Such merit. Very book.

A: Such merit. Very book. It has like 600 of his poems in one book. [M gasps] Yeah, it's—thicc. It's chonky. I've also played quite a lot of [Dragon Age: Inquisition](#) thanks to my dear friend Rekka who lent me her PS4. [Thank you, Rekka](#). I have read a—I'm about halfway through a non-fiction book as well. Mine is also a history book. It is called [Salt: A World History](#) by Mark Kurlansky. It's delightful.

M: I need to read that one. I've seen it and it looks amazing.

A: It's quite good, it's quite good. I've been sitting here taking frantic notes to fix some of my worldbuilding stuff. Aaaaand also today I spent several hours reading Vorkosigan memes on Tumblr.

M, laughing: Let me, let me gently correct that for our darling listeners. Alex spent several hours *reblogging* Vorkosigan memes, and so I also spent... *less* time. I feel like Alex carefully curated the best possible experience for me.

A: Yes, yes. I reblogged the solid gold ones. Which, there are many *many* solid gold Vorkosigan memes, as it turns out. I did not know that this fandom was so fruitful in terms of its shitposting, but there we are.

M: I feel like this is a good tribute because I bet you anything Miles would be great at shitposting.

A: Oh, undoubtedly! But, let's—Oh, wait we have another piece of news.

M: Oooh.

A: Because I was about to move us straight onto the episode. Real quick, before we do that then, dear listeners, you have about three weeks to give us your questions for the Episode 40 Extravaganza! We usually announce it on the seven, rather than on the six, as we are today. But we're super far ahead due to some travel and schedules and cons and so forth. So we will be recording Episode 40 on the evening of June 28th, so you have about three weeks from when this episode goes up. So please get your questions in. You can send them to us on serpentcast@gmail.com or on Twitter or on Tumblr or on Patreon. There's a—

M: Or on the Discord!

A: Actually, *don't* send them to us on the Discord because we are very likely to overlook them. A lot of chatter happens on the Discord, so just do me a favor as the curator of the Episode 40 questions.[M laughing in background] **ANYWHERE BUT THE DISCORD. Do not send them on the Discord.** If you send them to me on the Discord, I will not put them in the episode.

M: If you send them to *me* on the Discord and tag me in them, I will email them to our gmail account so that Alex doesn't have an aneurysm.

A: If you want—

F: That seems unnecessarily convoluted.

A: It does. I leave it in your hands, if you want to make your life that complicated, Macey. God bless. Let's have a fucking episode.

[7:07]

F: Yes.

A: So, as I mentioned, we've kind of had a whole theme going recently of setting as character and we have some wonderful tentpoles to talk about today. Shall we jump right into them?

M: Yes, let's! If I can stop giggling long enough to wipe my eyes and do my job.

A: Of course, do your job, Macey.

M: Challenging. It's challenging. I have to sip my tea first. So, the first of our three tentpoles this week is *House of Many Ways* by Diana Wynne Jones.

[A gasps and then sighs dreamily]

M: As has previously been established on this podcast, I am the recalcitrant one. I am the one who hasn't really read as many Diana Wynne Jones as you two.

A: Mm, yeah.

M: I think that's fair to say. I think I listened to most of them as a kid on tape cassette and then I never remember things that I've listened to. So I don't think that I'd read this one before, but this is a delightful book about what happens when a kind of sheltered, slightly spoilt young lady named Charmain, who just wants to be left alone to read—

A: Mood.

M:—accidentally agrees to look after a mysterious house.

A: Yes.

F: It's kind of like a middle-grade gothic, which I really appreciate.

M: Yes! Nothing all that bad happens. There are a few scary creatures and someone has to climb on a roof a couple of times and nearly falls off, and there's a weird castle that's very good at getting down alleyways that castles really shouldn't fit down.

A: I don't know, there's the lubbocks, though.

M: Yeah, the lubbocks are the weird creatury thing. I think that she runs away from it in the beginning and then she is never in danger from it anymore.

F: Well, there's still a sense of creeping menace, I would say, from the lubbock and the whole lubbockin thing.

A: And it's pretty dark when you think about it, 'cause she finds that book which says, "Oh yeah, if you come across the lubbock, it will implant its eggs in you and then the eggs will burst out of you like in that one movie, and you will die."

M: So that's just like [Homestuck](#) standard then.

A: Yeah. I mean, sure.

F: Yeah, I think you're—

M: You've got to understand that my calibration for creepy in middle-grade is [Frances Hardinge](#).

F: I would say that this one is one of Diana Wynne Jones's few that does approach Frances Hardinge levels of creepy, but because Diana Wynne Jones's overall tone is so much more chirpy, you kind of don't notice.

A: Yes, yeah.

M: That's fair. But I think the important thing that we should be talking about here, though—

A:—is the house.

M:—is the House of Many Ways, which is the title but also is the name of the house. And how much fun it is, frankly, for us to kind of experience the unfolding of this house together with Charmain. She arrives and it's this pokey little cottage. Like, there's a front room with her ill great-great-uncle in it, and he's like, "I'm very sick and elves are taking me away now, goodbye."

A: [laughing] That's pretty much it.

M: And there was a very dirty kitchen and there's laundry everywhere, and when you go through the door, sometimes you end up somewhere else.

F: I like the idea—it takes her a little while to work that out. That there's a couple of things that mean she can navigate, and one of them is that if she asks a question, then her great-uncle's voice...he left a charm that will answer direct questions of "How do I get from here to the laundry? How do I get from here to the bedroom?" He'll be like, "Okay, well, turn into the doorway, turn around one and a half times, go left."

M: Okay, Google, how do I get to the bathroom?

A: Yep.

F: Exactly. Yes, he has left her magical Google Maps, which sometimes works well and sometimes does not.

M: He also left her an actual magical map. Well, an actual non-magical map?

A: Non-magical map, yeah.

F: Non-magical, but very complicated.

M: *Maps*. Who wanted to talk about maps?

A: I didn't.

F: I put in a dot point about maps, because I was amused by this idea of whether a map to describe a magical space needs to be magical in and of itself. Because obviously the Marauder's Map in *Marry Potter*—in *Marry Potter*.

[laughter]

F: *Marry Potter*. In [Harry Potter](#), um, is shown as a two dimensional map where all of the magic is the charm of it. But if you think about what Hogwarts actually is, there's so many different layers and passageways, and you can't actually represent it as a two dimensional space—

M: With geometry!

F:—which the movies, also the books, just kind of glide over. There isn't really a sense that the map itself changes, it's just that you can see where people are. And a friend of mine actually tried to make a Marauder's Map, just the map itself of Hogwarts, quite some time ago and soon realized that it would have to be one of these enormous things that folds out and folds out and folds in, in order to represent that kind of—even just a normal castle that has so many layers.

You can't do it, there has to be either something magical or something enormous and inconvenient about the map.

A: Yeah.

M: I think enormous and inconvenient is a good summary of most magical houses. But I just wanted to nerd out for a little bit about geometry.

A: Okay.

[A laughs in disbelief]

F: Go for it, Macey.

M: Non-Euclidean spaces are seriously cool. It's like when you have the [TARDIS](#), right? The TARDIS is a magical house, there's more in than out of it.

A: Yes, it is!

M: Isn't it?

A: Yeah.

F: Yeah.

M: It totally is. It's like the one true union of a spaceship and a magical house.

F: It's the equivalent of those tents in Harry Potter.

M: Right, but the House of Many Ways is exceedingly non-Euclidean. Euclidean here just meaning you can't map it on a flat surface, right? Basically. And it's super cool the way that these houses behave like the one coat from [Victoria Schwab's series](#).

A: Oh yes.

M: You can turn it inside out and upside down and shake it and you won't get back to where you started from. Like, equal actions do not have equal and opposite reactions. Which is something that magic in general in fiction does. It undermines physics, but we rarely confront it in such a visceral, touchable, physical way as when you have a door that is a different door if you go through it in one direction or you go through it with your—like, hopping on your left foot. Suddenly it's different. That's like tangibly weird and cool. And I love that.

F: And this particular series by Diana Wynne Jones—this book is actually the third in the *Howl* series, so it comes as a sequel to [*Howl's Moving Castle*](#) and [*Castle in the Air*](#) is the second one. And all of them are about weird things to do with space and travel. So you have the moving castle itself, which is slightly different to the House of Many Ways, because the moving castle is a habitat that can inhabit more than one physical space at the same time, but those spaces have to exist. So when they are moving house in the moving castle, they have to attach it to an anchored space. Like, they buy a shop and they make, okay, one of the places that the castle now exists is the shop and another place it exists is a house in Porthaven and another place it exists is the castle itself. And where you are depends on what color the knob is when you go out the door. And then you can also make it go across universes because they go and visit Howl's family in Wales, but the House of Many Ways is slightly different in that all of the space that it inhabits belongs to the house itself. You can use it to travel to, like, she goes through it to the castle to visit the king.

M: Yes, she goes to the royal palace.

F: She goes to the royal palace through it, but—

M: But it has, like, time magic, right?

F: Yeah, there's time in that parts of it exist in different times to others, so it takes the whole—the basic idea behind *Howl's Moving Castle* and then expands it horribly in many, many directions and dimensions.

M: But it gave me, like, borrowing chores from tomorrow or from last year, was the most delightful idea, and there's just this running through-line about these two hapless teenagers who keep getting dumped with bags of laundry and they're like, "Where are they coming from? Mysterious laundry?" And the house is just decided that they are the ones who have to do all the laundry. Badly. They do it really, really badly.

F: Ah, yeah, the scenes where these two fairly spoiled young people attempt to look after a house where they've never had to do a chore in their life, is really quite delightful.

A: I was really very charmed by the fact that it's the boy teenager who has the sort of basic general understanding of things? He's like, "Oh yes, laundry, I know the general theme. The general principles of laundry." And how to wash dishes. Like, he's the one who teaches her how to wash dishes.

M: He puts all of the food in a pot and boils it.

A: Bless his heart.

M: He puts everything in, like, in with the onions, in with the chicken breast, in with the apples.

A: Bless his heart, he doesn't actually know what he's doing, but he *tries*.

M: But he's trying really hard.

F: The worldbuilding around what the house will and won't do for them, was really quite charming because you have this wish fulfilment fantasy where you can tap the fireplace and say, "Afternoon tea," and it gives you a tray with little cakes and crumpets and things, but then when it's dinner time, it literally just gives you a heap of raw shit and a pot.

[laughter]

F: So they keep just having afternoon tea for dinner because it's the only thing they can make it produce.

M: I love this house so much, but this leads me to, I think—if we're talking about looking after houses and respecting houses, I think this leads us to our next tentpole.

A: Oh my gosh, we're so excited about this one.

[M draws in a high, excited breath]

A: This one is so good. We are once again back on our bullshit again, dear listeners.

M: I bet you our listeners can guess who the next tentpole's by.

A: Oh, yeah, I bet you totally can. You've already guessed by now, dear listeners, we've given you enough of a break to make your shouting in public about the name of this fanfiction author: it's another astolat fanfic, yes it is.

M: Yisss.

A: It is "House Proud" which is one of her Harry Potter fanfics, and this one is about Harry's relationship with Grimmauld Place, the house that he inherits from Sirius Black, and it is post-canon, and there are some negotiations happening and they need a neutral place to host these negotiations, and they don't wanna do it at Hogwarts, because Hogwarts has seen, like, too much drama, and—

M: Too much shit. Too old for this shit.

A: Too much shit, too old for this shit, no. They don't wanna do it at the Ministry. So someone asks Harry, "Can you host this at your house at Grimmauld Place?" And the house is really run down and dirty, just as it was when we saw it in [Order of the Phoenix](#), and Draco Malfoy is one

of the contingent of people who is here for the negotiations, and he walks in and he is *horrified*. He is horrified. He is mad about this. But he promptly starts talking to the house, and the house starts treating him much more nicely than it treats Harry, and Harry's mad about this and resents it. And...because how does Draco Malfoy once again get something that Harry doesn't get?

M: The love of this house.

A: The love of this house, right. The house eventually—like, eventually, Draco comes back to help with something, I forget what it was, it was a couple days since I read this.

M: It was another, like, negotiation.

A: Yeah, yeah.

M: It doesn't—the fic doesn't care and you don't either.

A: The point is, they get trapped inside the house, because the house doesn't want to let Draco leave. Because Draco is the only one treating this house nicely.

M: Yep.

A: Oh, also, Harry has a party at one point, and it's very sad.

M: Like, a really shitty, like, college party with bags of crisps.

A: Yeah, yeah.

M: And, like, party streamers, and the house is *not not* here for that. *Not here for that at all*.

A: And the guests insult the house and call it, like, dreary and bad, and the house's feelings are hurt.

M: Yep.

A: So the main—

M: It's a very different house to the House of Many Ways.

A: It has a lot of feelings and it just wants to be loved. And Draco Malfoy is the only one who can love it properly. At least until Harry learns how to take care of his, you know, real estate. Yeah, so this is a fantastic fic. It's about relationships, the relationship—it's about the hieros gamos, honestly.

M: Nnnnnn.

A: It is.

M: Nnnnnhhhh.

A: But before we get into that, I wanna give someone else a chance to speak. Freya, tell us about this dot point you've put here.

F: Well, I was very, very happy that we were going to feature this story, and I think I was the one who, like, shoved into the document or else built the entire episode around it, despite the fact that we have so recently been astolat bullshitting, 'cause this is probably one of my favorite fanfics of all time. The first time I read it, it essentially broke my brain open with how perfect it was in terms of what it was examining and the dynamics that it was doing, and certain thematic things just kind of fell into place. And have now been being explored in my own writing ever since, and I just love everything about it. It's got some really incredibly fun worldbuilding, but also some very creepy things. Like, I love that side—I think Hermione makes a sideways line about, "Ah, you know, you don't know what happens when magical houses go bad." There was the skiing chalet in the Swiss Alps that just disappeared and took an entire family with it. And there's just so much potential for weird creepy shit when you have these houses that go bad because they are treated badly.

M: But the thing that I loved the most about this one, and this is the type of—there's almost a genre of Harry Potter fic that I think of as, like, extra canon, where people will look at the worldbuilding of Harry Potter and go, "This is a little bit thin. It's a little bit thin. Let's just put some more stuff here." And the particular note that astolat does that on here, is the fair folk.

A: Oh my god.

M: She brings back the fair folk and she says, "This is what pureblood comes from, this is where the rituals and sacrifices and formalities come from." It's this knife-edge beauty of being something really wild and untameable and trying to control that and fit in with society. And so these magical houses are kind of the last remnant of underhill.

A: Yes. Yes. My god that was so good.

M: And I really love that. And this is a story in large part about Harry awakening his own eldritch part and kind of transforming himself even as he transforms the house and awakens the house to what it could be.

F: It's about him coming to terms with his history. Because if you think of Harry as—because we see him only through his point of view, he's very sympathetic to people like the Weasleys and to people like Hermione, and, you know, pureblood is this thing he's like, "These are just these

snobs who, you know—they just don't like anybody else,” and you don't think about the fact that Harry is a pureblood and that he comes from these long lines of wizarding history and this—this story really digs in and says, “Well, let's have a look at that.” And the fact that he has a certain amount of—not necessarily shame, but significant ambivalence about the history that he himself comes from.

M: I would say heritage almost more than history.

A: Yeah.

F: Yeah, his heritage. And it makes him turn around and actually see, are there parts of this that you can delight in and find wonderful in the same way he found the wizarding world wonderful when he first discovered it.

[22:10]

M: Yes.

A: And it also has that very Gothic note of the wonder in the dreadful.

M: Yes!

F: Yes, and something dark and mysterious haunting the corridors.

A: Yes, yes.

M: [gleefully laughs] Which they never bother to resolve—

F: Which I love!

M: There's a monster in this fic, and it just vanishes!

F: Complete throwaway horror! And it's very effective horror-writing. Nooooo explanation whatsoever for what it is, which is fine! You just get the sense that it's a distillation of the House's anger.

M: Yes, and that's fine, and that's all you need. But, I know that I really loved some of the lavish home improvement scenes.

F: Yes!

A: Oh my god, yes.

F: It was basically like watching home-improvement live television except magic with snarking.

M: [Downton Abbey](#) version, and magical.

F: Yes!

A: Yeah.

M: And, like, spinning the curtains from like raw silk—

A: Yeah, like unravelling the old curtains, and then bleaching and dyeing the threads, and then weaving them anew.

M: It's one of the seven blessings of a house to have a spinner! What was it?

A: To have a weaver.

F & A: To have a weaver.

A: Yes!

F: And I like that for all of this idea of magical houses are kind of effort-saving, if your magical house is working properly, then it will keep itself clean, the house-elf will do the cooking, you don't have to expend a lot of energy. But if you let things slide, the amount of energy that you personally have to expend to get that relationship back is enormous. You know, he has to completely strip clean, on his hands and knees, do it using elbow grease, they have to unwind things, redo things, and it's this horrible back-breaking work. Because you're showing that you care, and only by putting in that cost will you actually get back the reward of a house that does the work for itself.

M: Well, it's the fairy deal, right? You have to bleed.

F: Yeah.

A: Yes, yes.

M: You have to bleed for Underhill or you haven't earned it.

A: And it's physical labor as well as emotional labor, because it's like the effort of caring that much, caring enough to fix all the uncaring that you did before.

F: I like that there's a whole part where Draco talks about how the amount of effort that he had to put in to get the Manor back because of what he and his family had allowed to happen in that manor.

M: Yes!

A: God, it's so good. So good!

F: It's so good!

A: But seriously, seriously hieros gamos, because it's played straight, it absolutely is. Because Harry and Draco's relationship is rocky and hostile, first of all, actually, I should re-define hieros gamos if we have some new listeners, or, it has been a while. So hieros gamos is a— what?

M: I still strongly disagree that it is.

F: No, I agree with Alex here. This is absolutely being played straight.

A: Okay, let me define it. So, hieros gamos means sacred marriage, and it's this theme in mythology studies which says that the relationship between the king and the queen is reflected in the relationship between the king and the land. So if the king and the queen have a relationship that is harmonious, and prosperous, and fruitful, then the land itself will prosper and flourish. So, Harry and Draco's relationship is rocky and hostile, at the same time that Harry's relationship with the house is rocky and hostile, and by Harry repairing his relationship with the house, he also opens up a path to have a relationship with Draco as well.

F: Yes, and the reason why you can tell that it's being played that way is because there is a line where he is describing his house, and how it's creepy, but beautiful and snobbish, and he loves it, and you realise he is talking about Draco, and he realizes he's talking about Draco, and the parallel is being made completely clear.

M: Nope. Nope. Still disagree. Still disagree.

A: Okay, why do you disagree?

M: You can parallel and echo themes in a story without it being hieros gamos, to start with. Definitely the story is doing a thing where the development of the relationship is narratively paralleled but these relationships are not metaphors for one another, they are their own individual separate things. And there isn't a kingdom, right, the thing is that it trades back and forth between it, it would be as if your healing the tax burdens of the populace makes your queen fuck you more often, like it goes in both directions in this fic?

F: It does go in both directions, but I think that it emphasizes the fact that they are metaphors for one another.

M: But that's not— hieros gamos is about rulership, as well, right? It's not just about relationships.

A: But there's also the line about being the master of your own house.

F: Yeah, and his relationship with the house-elf. It's about exerting authority, which he is reluctant to do. It's about him becoming a good king of his little kingdom.

M: I mean, I think little kingdom is exactly the point where I break from this ever being hieros gamos, for me the context of a house is not the scale of a kingdom, right? It's far more intimate, and it doesn't need the metaphor to intercede in the same way that an entire kingdom, you can't represent that on the page in the same way that you can represent the relationship, but you can represent the whole relationship of someone with their house, it's not big enough to need it.

A: I still think it's hieros gamos.

[27:27]

M: I strongly disagree! You can't just call everything hieros gamos, okay?

A: I can and I will! Watch me!

[laughter]

M: Anyway! We have a third tentpole, friendos! Who's doing this one?

F: We do! So speaking of houses that can go super creepy...

M: YES [like a gremlin]

F: Our third tentpole this week is a short story by Ray Bradbury and I'm really excited I finally managed to drag some Bradbury into this podcast!

[dramatic sigh]

F: Because I love Ray Bradbury.

M: Uh-huh.

F: And I love his short stories in particular. This is one I read a long, long time ago. I think it's in the collection [The Illustrated Man](#), which is one of the earliest Bradbury's that I read, and it really, really stuck with me. This is a story called "The Veldt" and it's essentially a science fiction story about a murderous smart-house.

[disturbed laughter]

A: Yes.

F: So the basis of the story is that it is about a family: a mum, a dad, and two children, who live in a future smart house, essentially. So the house does everything for them. It does the cooking, it does the cleaning, and also it acts as nursemaid and amuses the children by providing them with a playroom that is some kind of very advanced virtual reality. And the whole idea of it is that the house responds to what you want, so it produces the things that you want and the playroom is made to respond to the kind of creative play that you feel like. So the dad has these kind of fond memories of the playrooms it would produce for him that would reflect whatever he'd been reading about. And the parents start to become concerned that the playrooms seems to be stuck on this [African veldt](#). That they can just feel the heat of the sun, and there's just grass off in every direction, and there are some lions, just eating something, in the distance, and occasionally, they hear screams. And it's about what happens when they attempt to turn off the house because they decide that they've become too reliant on it. They're a bit uneasy that the children don't want to do anything but go into the playroom. And the house is not happy about this. And the children are not happy about this. And from there it just turns into a quiet and quite civilized horror story.

[29:30]

[Laughter]

F: What did you think of this story?

M: I think that horror story is definitely the right phrase, it reminded me a lot of like possession story, right? It feels like the house is possessed, if not precisely haunted, because it doesn't really come across as having a consciousness, it feels more like it's driven by the children, to me, at least that was how I read this.

F: Yes.

M: It's really about what the children want.

F: Yeah, and one of the things that's very interesting about the story is that the children are called Peter and Wendy, which is an obvious [Peter Pan](#) reference, and the dad is called George, which is also a *Peter Pan* reference, and it is a story about, yes, the viciousness of

children, which is what *Peter Pan* is about. And how if children are not forced to grow up, if they are, sort of, left alone with their imaginations, they will produce the Neverland, which is a dark children fantasy driven story, the whole idea of Neverland in *Peter Pan* is that it changes depending on the people who are in it, and everybody who is in it has their own version of the Neverland, so everybody's map is a bit different, and the adventures that they have are different, and that's what the playroom is, the playroom is the Neverland, and it's about the darkness of children, and it's also about this anxiety of caretaking, and the responsibility that we have to our children which is what— *Peter Pan* is an Edwardian story that shows this child-rearing anxiety because in the book, it's about Nana, the nurse is a dog? And Mr Darling has all these worries about, "Are we quite sure that a dog is the best thing to be rearing our children?" But then they're like "Well, she takes such good care of them, and she makes sure that they have their medicine", and it's played completely straight, there's just this underlying slight worry that the neighbours might be talking about them, because they have a dog as a nurse-maid [Laughter]. And in this book it is the house that is the nurse-maid, and it is a bit more eerie and vindictive, but it's got the same themes, and I love *Peter Pan*, and I love comparing things to *Peter Pan*, and I think that that's one of the most interesting things about this, which is also about how your smart-home wants to kill you.

M: Yees. Alex, did you have any thoughts on this one?

A: My thought was that the children were extremely creepy.

M: Yes!

A: Both of you have siblings, both of you, I believe, have younger sisters, have you ever, once in your life, held hands with your younger sister?

F: Possibly when forced to, when crossing a road.

M: Yes, when like crossing a road?

A: Sure, yeah.

M: Like, "Don't run off"— I rescued mine from a pond once, when I was four?

A: I rescued mine from the sea once when I was about four.

[Laughter]

M: Darling listeners, please don't ask how they ended up in the water in the first place.

A: I grew up on a sailboat.

M: Yeah, that's fair, that's fair. My parents just wandered off and left us in a park full of ponds. It's fine, it's fine, with a two year old.

A: Sisters, man. Point is, you don't really hold hands with your sibling unless you absolutely have to, and, like, these two children walk in, and they're holding hands, and I'm immediately like, "Why are you doing that? Why are you voluntarily having physical contact with your younger sibling?"

F: Because they are horror-movie children.

A: Horror movie children, exactly!

M: Yes. Were they meant to be twins?

F: I'm not sure.

A: I don't think so? I'm not sure.

M: It was kinda implied that they were born at the same time, I thought.

A: It's possible. I'm more okay with twins holding hands, because then you have that creepy twin connection.

[M laughs]

F: Yeah. I mean it did give the story that kind of changeling vibe as well? That like "We used to recognize our children, and now we do not", some kind of magical force has turned them into something evil and unrecognizable.

M: They were weirdly more knowing than their parents? Peter, in particular, clearly was in charge of that household.

A: While I was reading the story, I had a brief theory that they had been somehow possessed by the consciousness of the house itself, but then it turned out, I think, that it went the other way.

M: Yeah.

F: Yeah. It's never quite clear, like, they get this sense that this house was designed to respond to what you want, but something might have gone wrong. Like the house itself could've started to develop its own sentience.

M: Yeah, and get into like a feedback loop?

F & A: Yep.

M: It also felt a little bit— you know which sibling this reminded me of? What was the oldest brother of Ender Wiggin? Was he Peter as well?

F: He was Peter as well.

M: It reminded me of him. Because I don't know if you guys have read, or our listeners have read [*Ender's Game*](#) which—

A: A while ago.

M: Yeah, it's a really interesting classic of sci-fi YA but the sibling Peter is psychotic in the running into the woods, and torturing squirrels sense of the word. And also exceptionally smart, all of the Wiggins children are, and that's kind of the feeling that I got here is that this child knows too many things and would quite like to know some more, and wouldn't mind if he finds them out in violent ways.

F: But it also has— it's got that parental tech anxiety. You've got this very very smart child, and then you have this unlimitedly powerful technology that is giving him whatever he wants. He's able to search the internet without parental lock, essentially.

M: Ta ta da! But if I may quote Arthur Weasley, and my entire tech career, which is "If you don't know where it keeps its brain—"

A: Is that Arthur Weasley?

F: Are you going to finish that sentence?

M: Never trust anything if you don't know where it keeps its brain.

A: Oh yeah yeah, you're right.

M: They tell Ginny Weasley this after the incident with the diary.

A: Yes, yes.

M: But yeah, don't get a smart-home, people. You don't understand how little we understand what we're doing. Don't do it.

A: Oh yeah, no. No no. Shall we have the paranoid rant right here?

[34:59]

M: Sure. You wanna kick it off, and then I can tell you which bits are probably scientifically accurate?

A: Okay, sure, that sounds like a good and entertaining time.

[Laughter]

A: So I am super-paranoid of smart-homes, and I will never have a smart-home because they freak me out, and because I was raised by a man who ran Linux, and I feel like we can probably just leave it there, no, not really. No, but like I would be super paranoid of being surveilled, either by the tech company that is sponsoring the smart-home, whether it's Google, with Alexa or Apple with Siri, and also the idea that everything I do and all of my living practices could either be hacked by an outsider, or sold to the government, I'm not cool with any of these things, no, there's—

M: To be perfectly clear, those things are already happening to you. Just to clarify, like, not having a smart-home isn't going to save you from that, that's already happened.

A: Yeah, that's true. That's very true. But I don't need to lean into it—

F: They're not watching me shower or cook.

M: Um, they are watching you cook. Because they know what recipes you googled, and they know what ingredients you bought.

A: Fuck. Shit. Let's just all go live in the woods.

M: I mean, basically, like. If you don't want the government or like Big Corp Tech to know what you're doing, do everything analog, literally don't write emails.

A: Yeah, I mean it's too late.

M: Phone calls, but then those are probably recorded as well, so you have to just like encryptedly arrange to meet in person, somewhere—

A: You're more paranoid than I am [laughs].

M: Yeah, turn off your— take the battery out of your phone, let's be specific here. It's just not going to happen. The thing for me with smart-homes is the lack of fallbacks really worries me? Right? What do you do if your fire detector loses its internet connection? What does it do? Is it able to detect fires anymore? The reliability stuff is what worries me because that's what I work on, and what I know. But we also still have a lot more bullet-points to get through, good gosh.

A: Oh my gosh, yes.

M: Shall we do a speed-run?

A: Yes, let's do it. First of all, taxonomies, it's been a while since we talked about taxonomies. Gosh, probably like two weeks since we talked about taxonomies, honestly.

[Laughter]

A: Um, is there taxonomy of magical houses? Because I had an idea, when I was reading them, so at first when I was reading the first couple tentpoles, I was thinking to myself, is there a difference between magical houses and a living ship, other than a fact that one of them happens in a fantasy and one of them happens in sci-fi? And, I was like "I don't think that there is, I think they're basically the same, and then I read another tentpole, and immediately started disagreeing with myself.

[M laughs]

A: Because living ships generally have some kind of direct communication available to their passengers, i.e., Moya can communicate through Pilot on [Farscape](#), and in [The Tea Master and the Detective](#), the ship can communicate directly with the detective, I forget her name. But houses generally, if they communicate, it's by feelings, and by making their emotions known, somehow. If they communicate at all, which not all of them do, because not all of them are sentient.

M: I mean, I think that for me a useful taxonomy of magical houses is built around the things that they can do. And I think that the last point you made is a really great one. Are they sentient or not?

A: Right.

M: Right? And if they are sentient, can they communicate or not? For example, the TARDIS cannot.

A: Yes, mostly yes.

M: Other than the one time that Neil Gaiman gave us the TARDIS as a woman in a magnificent ripped up ballgown, which [sighs], was a good episode.

A: At best the TARDIS can sort of signal that there is some distress happening.

M: Right, but like in the same way that Harry's house would. Right, and so for me, that one is like— there's almost like a multi-dimensional checklist of "What does your house do for you? Does your house travel? Does your house care-take? Does your house manipulate your social life for you?"

[Laughter]

[39:36]

M: I love meddling houses okay, like, the house in "House Proud", Grimmauld Place, is so stoked to help Harry go courting, go off and propose to Draco, that it, like, helps him prepare a formal offering. And it's just like 'yes, go get him, go get him!'

A: Go get him, bring him back!

M: Bring him back!

F: Actually what you said about the direct communication versus indirect, you get this sense in "House Proud" that the house possibly *could* be more direct in how it communicated, but it is very much above—

M: Yes.

F: — the kind of direct thing like writing 'clean your fucking fridge' in blood on the walls.

[M laughs]

A: Mmhmm.

F: Even though that's what it's really trying to say. It's just going to do it—because it's a pureblood old house and it's been brought up well—it's going to do it subtly by leaving dead mice everywhere.

A: It's going to be passive aggressive about it

M: Oh yes because it's a guess culture.

F: It's very guess culture.

M: It's very British. Whereas then you have the House of Many Ways which is really not sentient or intentional in a similar way.

A: No, it's just a bunch of stacked spells.

M: Which is, there was another short story that I proposed as a tentpole, then we ran out time to read it as well, which is in [Beneath Ceaseless Skies](#), it's called "[The Popinjay's Daughter](#)" and it's about another house that works on all of these separate doors, but it's really cool because you can only pass in and out of the house through the exact same door that you came in on, in the exact same state. So it almost has a knowledge and an intention about it, it will not let you do certain things. The House of Many Ways, you can do whatever the heck you want, you can dye all the laundry pink, go right ahead.

F: And it's very much explicitly an ask culture because it literally all you have to do is stand there and say 'how do I get to the laundry?'—

M: Aww.

F: and the spell will answer you.

M: Having a magical uncle helps.

F: Yes, yes. You get the sense that the House of Many Ways itself would not even be communicating in any way, but the uncle has spent so many years working out its secrets and essentially imbuing it with a way of helping yourself around it if you're entirely new.

M: Right.

F: It's true, it's not a particularly helpful house itself, it just has a helpful spell.

M: Yees. But I think that talking about The Veldt as a haunted house, do we want to talk about haunted houses for a little bit?

A: I think we should.

M: As magical houses?

F: Yes.

A: We absolutely should.

F: Yes. I think that when I was reading through the tentpoles, I was thinking, more and more, like, you know, to what extent are these haunted houses and to what extent are haunted houses magical houses? Because the horror bits in "House Proud" reminded me of [The Haunting of Hill House](#), the Shirley Jackson classic haunted house horror book. Which is, yeah, it's about a house that has gone bad, because of—

M: I love that.

F: —things that happened or people who have lived there. And I can't quite remember if there's a sense that the house was always bad, like, from when it was built. But a good haunted house story is always about human evil that has somehow imbued a habitat and is then a remnant that will attack anybody else who moves in. There is hardly ever—that I can think of—a haunted house that was built evil, from the very beginning—

A: Yeah.

F: —and then you walk in and, oooh, it's evil. No, it's always that there is a vengeful spirit, or something terrible has soaked itself into the walls of this place, and wants revenge.

M: I really love that. I haven't read a ton of these, but I've read a fair few of the, sort of, the gothic style. I don't even know if those are quite haunted in the same way. I'm thinking of [Jane Eyre](#), the wife, the mad wife in the attic, and it's almost a haunting by a person who is still alive.

A: Mmmmm.

F: Yeah, and that person's personality comes through in the house.

M: Mmhmm!

F: A good gothic, there'll be something secret tucked away somewhere and the fact that it has been secreted—

M: [faintly] Yes!

F: —imbues the house with that sense that there is something going on.

[M makes sounds of atmospheric agreement]

F: You know, I'm hearing weird noises, you know, the wind is wailing, everyone just behaves—

A: Ambiance!

F: —a little but oddly because they're keeping a secret.

M: [faintly, but more excited] Yes!

F: And so you get that drenched gothic atmosphere because there is a secret canker somewhere, that is affecting the whole house.

A: Yeah.

[43:51]

M: But Alex, you have this bullet point and I really want to hear more about that.

A: Oh, yes, so. Um, I had this theory and it sort of ties in with what Freya was already saying that haunted houses are generally ones that have bonds with former owners who haven't left because they're dead.

[M laughs]

A: Usually, usually dead. And the person's consciousness has now kind of melded with the house itself. sort of soaked into it, like Freya said. And now there's someone else trespassing coming in—

M: Mmmm.

A: —and trying to form a bond with this house. Own it, and exert their will on it, and the ghostly consciousness is rebelling against them and rejecting them. Violently, usually.

M: That's super cool.

F: Yeah that's interesting. It implies a completely different motive from something like the haunting in "House Proud", like it's about what does the house actually want?

M: Right.

A: Yes.

F: So in that case the haunted house might just want to be left alone—

M: Right.

F: —or it might actually want to attract prey, I guess, so that they can drive somebody else mad or—

A: Yeah.

F: —you know somehow get someone else's blood. But then—

M: Well that's the question, is the house deriving energy from victims? 'Cause I think that's a theme that you see in haunted houses and horror in general is consumption, and consuming things is a big part of horror.

A: Mmm, yeah.

F: Yeah, so I think then you could almost have a haunted house taxonomy as to what the house actually wants. 'Cause in "House Proud" it doesn't want to be a haunted house.

M: [faintly] Noooo.

F: It wants to go back to the way it was.

M: It wants a master that loves it and treats it right.

A: Right.

F: Yeah.

A: I mean, who doesn't?

M: Whom amongst us?

[Laughter]

A: Who amongst us?

F: [laughing] I was just waiting for the first 'mood' to come up.

[More laughter]

M: Mood, moood.

M: The other one that this reminded me of was the haunted mansion in Fairyland in Jeannette Ng's [*Under the Pendulum Sun*](#), I don't know if either of you have read that book.

F: I have.

A: It has been on my TBR pile for ages and ages, and I keep having to do podcast homework.

[Laughter]

M: Freya!

F: It is the most gothic.

M: It is so gothic! It's super cool.

F: Yes.

M: And it has all those things you were talking about, about the secret, about the thing that you can kind of tell from the way everyone behaves that there's these little holes in what they're willing to say.

A: Mmhmm.

F: Yeah, and it's got that at the outright darkness of Fairy—

M: Yes!

F: —and the sense that you don't quite belong, because it's about human missionaries to the Fairyland and so they're very—

M: It's great!

F: — very overtly the outsiders who have to be very careful about following the rules. And you get the sense the house is not quite happy that they're there.

M: No, it's a super bad idea for everyone.

F: Yeah, as a sense that Fairyland is not quite happy that they're there.

M: Noo.

[A laughs]

M: See that one I feel would be a better vehicle for something like hieros gamos, if you were representing with the marriage between person and house as the metaphor of the marriage between person and all of Fairyland.

A: Mmmm

M: Mmmm!

A: Interesting.

M: But! I think that this has more of that thing that I really love, which is the personal character development or skill development of your main character tied into their relationship to the house.

F: Yes.

M: So the main character from *Under the Pendulum Sun* comes into herself though discovering the house. And Harry comes into his own fae blood through developing his relationship with the house. Charmain develops her magic by getting to know the house. And the one example that I adore and *have* to bring up is, the way that Freya's main character from *Foresight*, the book that you just finished editing, right?

F: Yaaay.

M: The way that his relationship with Sutton Cottage, which is a—

A and M: [simultaneously] —magical house—

M: —that he inherits under strained circumstances, how that really gives him a chance to develop the power that other people don't think he has.

A: Yah.

F: Yes.

M: Do you want to talk a little bit about how you developed that kind of relationship between Edwin and the house?

F: Yes, this was actually a little bit of an accident, because when I was writing this book I knew that houses were going to be very important, but the one that I was particularly interested in playing with was the house that the manor house party takes place in.

M: Mmmhmm.

F: Which is actually, in the end, a lot less magical—

A: It is.

F: than Sutton, because—

M: Well, I mean, it's full of jerks, in fairness.

F: —yes. I think I mentioned, I touched on this very briefly ages ago in an episode in that it's, yes, full of jerks—

[M laughs]

F: but it's also to do with class anxiety—

M: Right.

F: —and class systems in England, especially at the time, which is, again, Edwardian, in that Edwin's family are, sort of the emerging middle class.

M: Mmmm!

F: They have quite a lot of money from development of the American railroads, but they are not land-owners in the Old English sense.

M: Right.

A: Mmhmm.

F: And so magicians, there is a similar kind of sense that, there are—you know, you can see people of any stratas of society but if you're an old magician or an old wizarding family in the *Harry Potter* sense, then you may have held onto your house for longer, or your estate for longer, and magic will have just seeped into it.

M: Yes.

F: That is never was just a magical house, that's more to do with the land. But if you built a house on the land, and it has been inhabited by magicians for long enough it starts to get a bit magical itself just through, essentially, osmosis.

[48:59]

M: Which is why the stuff in Sutton Cottage, which has been owned and loved by this old woman, and developed in the gardens, and developed for so long, has almost gained a sentience and an ability to make decisions that Edwin kind of leans on.

F: Yes. And he doesn't quite realize that it's there because he is not used to owning a very magical house.

M: [giggles]

F: But it was!

M: Or being owned by.

F: Yes, it's more that he was being owned by it. I didn't realize this was going to happen until I was halfway through the book, and I was like, "Oh! This is the way I've set up blood pledge in this book." I have accidentally made him inherit this estate. Let's just roll with that and see what happens. It became incredibly thematically important to his character development.

M: I love it. I love it.

A: That's good shit. That's good shit.

M: But yeah! It's this idea of the place is the key to the person and the person is the key to the place.

A: Yeah.

F: Yes. Yeah, and I think the really satisfying stories about houses that are magic or very technologically advanced or are haunted are about that perfect fit between the protagonist and the house. That they may not be perfect for one another at the beginning, but the satisfaction in the relationship development is seeing the ways in which they are perfect, in which they do allow one another to change.

M: And to unfurl and become more.

A: Yeah. More together than we are apart.

M: And I think for me, one of the things I really love about the scale of a magical house— or a magical ship, right? If we're talking science fiction as well — is that I do feel like you can have a relationship between one character or a small group of characters and the house or ship. Whereas in our last thematically place-based episode we were talking about cities as character, right? And, you know, Ankh-Morpork can never love you in the way that Ramkin Manor can love you.

A: Yes.

F: No, I agree. I think the intimacy is what makes it a good story. I was going to say, I think that's an example I wouldn't kind of agree with, because of the kind of character Sam Vimes is. Like sure, Ramkin Manor probably loves Sybil a lot more —

M: —Oh yeah!

F: Sam is a city sized person.

M: [whine of disagreement]

A: That's true.

M: Do I agree with that?

F: And it's just to do with it being a different type of character. That he, himself, wouldn't have that kind of intimate relationship. And if he does, it's probably with the old watchhouse.

M: Well, yea— right, right, right. The watch house would be his. I was actually thinking more of someone like Vetinari, but he doesn't have a mansion he can talk to in the same way as Ramkin Manor. But I think that my point is more that a person can love a city but a city will not love them in change for them in a way that a house will love them in change for them.

A: Okay!

M: The city doesn't care about the individual. A house can care about an individual.

A: I am willing to agree with that.

M: Yes.

F: Mhm.

M: I think you can shape a city, by choice, but the city will not notice you and choose to shape itself for you.

A: What about sizes of house? Because we have a dot-point someone put here: is a palace a house? Because I think... no. I don't think a palace can— I think a palace is more closely tied to a city. Because I don't think a palace would love an individual the way a house would.

M: I think you might well be right, but let's discuss it in the context of [*Goblin Emperor*](#).

A: Oka—if we must. [with a level of sarcastic disinterest to remind all listeners that this is a beloved Serpent book]

M: [giggles]

A: I mean, if you insist.

F: Well, in that case, I feel like what you're talking about as the palace is actually a group of people.

M: That's fair.

F: It's less to do with the bricks and mortar of the place that he's living in, and it's more to do with the people who make up the palace— are what starts to love the emperor back.

M: But I think that the book uses the setting somewhat to signal this? I think you're probably right, though. It is a lot more about the people.

F: Yeah... In terms of the setting being used that way, in [Spinning Silver](#), the reaction that the ice palace has to Miryem is quite similar. And again, it's about she manages to start exerting influence on her environment through the people in the palace.

M: That's a good point. I think you're getting at the finger of why I feel there's something intrinsically different about houses. Something that's too small to be hieros gamos in my mind, and my conception of it, because there isn't the interaction with other sentient humans that you're winning over. Like you're saying, a palace is all about the people. A kingdom is all about the people, and that doesn't exist— there isn't that layer between you and the house. Does that make sense?

F: That's true. It's just you and the place that you're living. Yeah.

M: Yeah. And so, Hogwarts.

A: Hogwarts is, undoubtedly, a magical house, because it is house shaped and intensely magical. And I think Hogwarts does care about the students, but it cares about the students as a group, and it would absolutely sacrifice an individual to save the group if it had to. But I don't think that it has that sentience. I don't think it has that kind of willpower and freedom of choice. I think it's more a series of stacked spells, like the House of Many Ways.

F: I agree. I think we get a sense of it as almost like a magical house because of the particular importance it holds for Harry, who has not had a home.

A: That's fair.

F: It becomes home for him, and because it is very magical and quirky in its own ways, and it's got all its moving statues and it's talking paintings, it has a sense of deeply magical personality as a place. And the Marauders Map kind of really hammers that home, because for Harry this is the only place he's ever loved and thought of as home and now he's been given a key to it.

A: Mhm.

F: But I agree that Hogwarts itself does not love Harry back, any more than it loves all of its students as a caretaker.

A: There is exactly one point where Hogwarts shows any kind of sentience, where Harry asks Hogwarts for anything, and that's with the Room of Requirement. Because there's that part where he's just walking back and forth and being— and thinking, 'I just need a place to hide' or 'I just need to find that one thing' and Hogwarts gives him the thing that he needs.

F: But it gives it impartially, because it also gives Draco a place to work on the vanishing cabinet that he's going to use to let in invaders, essentially.

A: Right, right.

M: I feel like that's very much presented as a deliberate spell that's set up to give you a room? It's not there because Hogwarts decided there should be a Room of Requirement. Someone has made a Room of Requirement.

A: Right, right.

M: I'm actually thinking about Harry asking for help while fighting the basilisk.

A: Oh— that's the hat, though.

M: No, before he gets the hat. He shouts for help in general, and Fawkes comes bearing the hat.

A: Mhm... interesting.

M: So there's a few times like that—

A: —It's subtle.

F: It's subtle but it's also, but that, for me, suggests that if there is a one-on-one, it's between Dumbledore and Hogwarts, because by asking—

M: —Yes! Because he's the headmaster.

F: —Yeah! The headmaster, whoever that is, I think would have this kind of intimate relationship because by asking Hogwarts for help he was asking Dumbledore for help, and that's why Fawkes came.

M: Oh yes, because— oh yes—

A: —Yeah.

M: —because Hogwarts is not... Hogwarts is not a school. Let me correct myself—

[laughter]

M: —Hogwarts was built as castle for this—

F: —It's not. There's no fucking maths on that particular curriculum. At all.

M: —That's also fair. But what I'm trying to say is, Hogwarts was built as a castle/fortress for Godric Gryffindor, Salazar Slytherin, Helga Hufflepuff, and Rowena Ravenclaw, and it is their magical house.

F: Yes.

M: I'm unconvinced they built it intending it to be a school from the get-go. I think they probably built it and were like, "Aaand we should train some mercenaries and shit! Whoops! We need someone to man this thing, it's bloody huge."

A: [chuckles]

F: And so if it is actually haunted by anything, it's four personalities—

M: —Yes!

F: —become melded and that's why it's so completely weird. Yeah.

M: It totally is haunted by them, isn't it!? Like all the way through the whole sets of the books we get them.

A: Man, it would have been good if she had leaned harder into that.

F: Yeah, and that's why it can never have a particular sentience of conscious, or play favorites in one direction, because it's really four different sentiences that have been smushed into one space.

M: And then the Hogwarts headmaster is almost more of a pope, than anything. He is an intercedent.

A: Yes.

[outro begins]

A: Yes. Man that's some good shit.

M: Yeah!

A: That's some real good shit! Should we just end the episode right there?

M: Yeah!

A: On your real piece of good shit?

F: Dumbledore, the Pope. Thank you, goodnight.

[giggles]

[theme music begins in earnest]

M: Hi folks! And thanks for joining us in the episode of Be the Serpent, a podcast of extremely, *extremely deep* literary merit. I think the thing I love the most about magical houses is the way they can be the genesis of a character, or at least of a character's power. We see that twice over in our tentpoles today, with Charmaine's discover of her magic and Harry's unfurling fae ancestry. And someday, dear listeners, I hope that you will be able to join us in experiencing the subtle flowering of power experienced by the main character of Freya's novel, *Foresight*, hand-in-hand with his own unexpected magical home. But alas, not yet.

For now, we have some even more exciting topics to talk about in upcoming episodes. On the next episode, two weeks hence on June 19th, we'll be discussing assassins! Those oh so deadly and oh so alluring masters of knife and garotte. If you want to prepare in advance, one of the tentpoles for that episode is [The Perfect Assassin](#) by K.A. Doore. So if you have a friend who's into stuff like that, maybe give them a heads up.

In the meantime, feel free to keep up the conversation with us. Questions, comments, breathless adulations, contact us at serpentcast@gmail.com, @serpentcast on [Twitter](#) and [Tumblr](#), or join in the conversation at our [fan Discord chat](#). As a reminder, we are currently collecting questions for our Episode 40 Extravaganza. So please drop them anywhere that communication will find us. Particularly in the Discord, no matter what Alex says. Anyway! While we're here, I think your home is pretty neat. After all, it's got you in it.

What We're Into Lately

[*Proper English*](#) by KJ Charles

[*A Prince on Paper*](#) Alyssa Cole

[*Sicily: An Island at the Crossroads of History*](#) by John Julius Norwich

Everything [astolat](#)

[Fall Out Boy's discography](#)

[*The Poetry of Pablo Neruda*](#)

[*Dragon Age: Inquisition*](#)

[*Salt: A World History*](#) by Mark Kurlansky

Other Stuff We Mentioned

[Wightwick Manor](#)

[Bletchley Park](#)

Episode 40 Extravaganza!

[Homestuck](#)

[Frances Hardinge](#)

[Harry Potter](#)

[TARDIS](#) (from *Doctor Who*)

[Victoria Schwab's series](#) (*A Darker Shade of Magic* by V.E. Schwab)

[Howl's Moving Castle](#) and [Castle in the Air](#) by Diana Wynne Jones

[Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix](#)

[Downton Abbey](#)

Hieros gamos

[The Illustrated Man](#) by Ray Bradbury

[African veld](#)

[Peter Pan](#) by J.M. Barrie

[Ender's Game](#)

[Farscape](#)

[The Tea Master and the Detective](#) by Aliette de Bodard

[Beneath Ceaseless Skies](#)

[The Popinjay's Daughter](#) by Anne Cross

[The Haunting of Hill House](#) by Shirley Jackson

[Jane Eyre](#) by Charlotte Brontë

[Under the Pendulum Sun](#) by Jeannette Ng

Foresight by Freya Marske

[Goblin Emperor](#)

[Spinning Silver](#)

For Next Time

[The Perfect Assassin](#) by K.A. Doore