

EPISODE 16:  
A Bump in the Night, and Not the Sexy Kind

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[0:00]

A: Hello and welcome to Be the Serpent, a podcast of extremely deep literary merit, with your classy and sophisticated hosts Alexandra Rowland, Jennifer Mace, and guest star [Ryan Boyd](#).

[Intro music plays]

On this episode, we're discussing Clive Barker's short story, "[Jacqueline Ess: Her Will and Testament](#)", both the [book](#) and [movie](#) versions of *Annihilation* by Jeff VanderMeer, and the fanfic "[Where All Ladders Start](#)" by emungere.

[Intro music ends]

A: Hello and welcome to Episode 16, A Bump in the Night and Not the Sexy Kind! While Macey and I could *probably* manage to blather about anything for a solid hour, neither of us are experts in today's topic. So, we've called in someone who is! One of my very, very best friends in the whole world, their face is so good at stupid, Ryan Boyd of the very excellent horror podcast, [Rank and Vile](#). Let's all introduce ourselves. I'm Alex, the vampire one.

M: I'm Macey, the kelpie one.

R: And I'm Ryan, the chupacabra one.

M: [impressed] Aahh.

A: Oh, you changed your answer from --

R: I was gonna go with werewolf, but then I decided, "You know what? B-list monsters."

M: Yes. Always.

R: "Chupacabra."

A: Yeah, sure, totally, absolutely. Uh, we are... *twooo* redheaded fantasy authors who miss Freya very much.

M: It's true.

A: She's on vacation, but she's coming back. So, two redheaded fantasy authors and a swamp-goblin named Ryan.

M: [giggles]

R: Yeah, that's... I was gonna say, like, an oily-haired horror author? I don't know, it doesn't quite... fit.

M: Aww, it's fine. We embrace your swamp-goblinness, but not like, physically, because slime.

A: I'll embrace you physically, Ryan. [laughs]

M: [laughs]

R: I'm basically, I'm wearing a sort of Macey meat-suit on the podcast today. It's like, "Macey's not here, *but* we did scrape this thing off the floor in an alley for the...show, so..."

M: Oooh. [eyebrows raised, probably]

R: "Hopefully that's good?"

M: Yes, the *Freya* meat-suit.

R: Oh, God. Am I...?

M: [emphatically] You are *Freya*.

R: Wait, so I'm an *expert* on horror?

M: Yes.

R: Oh my god, that's...

M: Well! We should finish up the scripty bit!

A: Yeah.

M: Yes. Because today we're talking about horror! Gore and guts and grime!

A: But before we get into that, what are we reading, fellow Serpents?

M: Well, I. Am. Reading. Some. Dignified. Items. Of. Literature. Myself.

A: Are you?

M: I am, I am.

A: [smug] Are you, though?

M: I am. I have... listen! I have... It's not my fault!

A: [sing-song] What happened? Tell our darling listeners what happened.

M: [nervous laughter] I, I made a mistake. Mistakes were made.

A: Mmhmm.

M: I might have watched, like, eight episodes of *Black Sails* in the past two weeks and then I fell down the Alex-hole of reading *everything*. And I'm gonna call it the Alex-hole because you founded this!

A: [pleading] Please don't call it the Alex-hole, maybe???

M: Oh God, that's worse!

R: Oh, oh now we *have* to.

M: [laughs]

A: [laughing] Maybe don't call it the Alex-hole, it's a little bit... nnn... *it's a little bit*.

M: Okay, I have begun a pattern of behavior which is typical of our most American of snakes.

A: Yeah, there we go.

M: There we go. I, oh God, I've read so much *Black Sails* fanfic. But I did also read an actual, book-shaped object, sort of! I read my darling agent-sibling, Emily's, novella, *Silver in the Wood*, which is full of tree spirits and ghosts and boys kissing other boys and *monsters*.

A: Very good! And I read, [\*Consider the Fork: A History of How We Cook and Eat\*](#) by Bee Wilson, which is *amazing*. I can't even explain it, just go Google it right now or click on it in the show notes, because the scribes will undoubtedly add it there. I also read [\*The Henchmen of Zenda\*](#) by KJ Charles, finally got around to that one, and I just started [\*Spectred Isle\*](#).. is it Speck-tered Isle or Speckled-red Isle? Who knows? Also by KJ Charles. And, of course, I'm still on my *Dragon*

*Age: Inquisition* fanfic kick, but! Plot twist! The cool part is that I have now actually *played* some *Dragon Age: Inquisition* since the last time that we recorded.

M: [quietly] woo!

A: And I will be playing some next week at Ryan's place when I go to visit them.

M: Very nice!

R: Yeah, you will.

[4:06]

R: So lately, I've been reading a bunch of stuff, one of them is [\*Lost Country\*](#) by William Gay, who is a Southern--or was a Southern Gothic fiction guy. He--the problem with reading anything Southern Gothic post-Flannery O'Connor is you sort of judge everybody for not literally just *being* Flannery O'Connor--

A: Hmm, sure.

R: -Um, so I mean, it is really good, so I'm reading that, I just finished [\*Space Opera\*](#) by Catherynne Valente, it was very good but also at many points, it was a bit of a slog to get through because it was sort of like, I don't know, like, I like asides, and I like the sort of ---

A: It's a lot of words.

R: Douglas Adams ---

A: It's a *lot* of words, and like, sometimes... I fucking loved *Space Opera*, I have evangelised about *Space Opera* before, but yes, sometimes I did have to stop and read a sentence aloud a couple times to understand what was being communicated.

M: I just have the minor bone to pick about the banjos in England. I will fight you.

A: Oh?

M: I will fight you.

R: Hmm.

M: That's not--that's not one of my stereotypes, sit down.

A: Alright.

[Laughter]

M: Look I'm nothing if not petty.

R: Right, exactly, well and honestly, *Space Opera*, I think it's plot-wise, not everything has to be very plot-heavy, obviously but I feel like, sort of, you could fit the plot of *Space Opera* on probably one page.

A: I would've liked a little more plot to it, as well. But we're not talking about *Space Opera* or space *operas*, today, we're talking about horror, so shall we move along, and start the episode proper, lady and gentle-person, fellow gentle-person?

R: [laughing] Associate sea creature.

M: Yes, sure. Then, as the token cis on this podcast today, I will start us off with a question, as is my habit. Hey Ryan --

A: [hint of laughter in voice] That's what cis people do a lot. That's true.

M: That--That's true. That's true. Hey Ryan?

R: Hey Macey!

M: What's horror?

R: Well, so I feel like "What's horror?" is a question like ---you know that thing when somebody asks you "Hey, what kind of music do you like?" And every band that you have ever listened to--you forget everything, and you're just like "Oompa-music?" Cause it's the first word that comes to mind--

[Laughter, with Macey's iconic cackle leading the way]

R: And you're like "That sounds like a music". The way that I think of horror is mostly that it's a sort of like... sock-puppet show about death, because necessarily, I feel like---

M: Hm.

R: I mean obviously--And the problem is anything that you can sort of name about horror as a genre--I feel like frequently it's like, well okay, there's got to be a constant menace--yeah there are other genres that have that, uh okay, grotesque creatures--yeah, *Dune* has that, uhhh, a

feeling of pursuit by malevolent forces, and really, I think horror's a lot like pornography in that you know it when you see it.

M: Hmmmm. Yep. Mmhmm.

R: Yep. Pretty much. Yeah.

M: I know that one of the things we talked about, on the podcast before, that Alex brought up, actually, really early on, was the concept of reading something to have a particular emotional experience?

A: Yeah. Yeah. I like--I really like reading things that give me the feelings that I want to feel.

M: And I wonder if that's something that's characteristic of horror as well, is that they have a particular set of feelings, of emotional or physical reactions?

[07:11]

R: Well, yeah. I think, I'm--So, I feel like constitutionally, for me, horror is... I think the way that I got into horror is that when I was a kid... So you know how when you're a kid everything is terrifying and Out to Get You and you're terrified all the time and everything just has teeth and fingernails and it's terrible-

A: Yup.

R: -And then nothing changes and then eventually you die. When I was a kid, horror became this-

M: [cackles]

R: -way to, I don't know, sort of engage--because I was terrified of everything and so horror became a way to engage with that fear in a safe setting, without getting any bits snapped off. And so, I think, for me, horror became so many different things but I feel like the really, really common one is that I like feeling that little thrill of being afraid of something. But it's like, years and years ago I went to [Halloween Horror Nights](#) with my partner Christina and it was with a bunch of people, and I love haunted houses. I love going into the bits where a guy with a chainsaw jumps out and yells at you, it's a lot of fun for me.

M: [cackles]

R: And Christina does *not* care for this experience. So she would go and wait toward the exit for us, and after the first one I kind of popped out and was like, "Hey, you okay? You don't wanna go in?" And she was like, "I don't want someone to yell at me in the dark." And that is the most reasonable thing I have ever heard. So, not for everyone.

A: I super-identify with Christina. The last horror movie that I watched, other than *Annihilation* earlier this week, was [\*The Skeleton Key\*](#) back in 2006 or something, and I didn't sleep for three days. I have a very active imagination, so I can't really deal with horror. And even *Annihilation* gave me some creepy feelings a couple days later, because I was having to walk through a dark parking lot outside my work at 11 o'clock at night and I was like, "Hey! What if there was a bear? What if the bear fucking killed me right now? That sure would be a feeling!"

[9:03]

M: I am exactly the person who... I believe it was Hester on Twitter a while back posted about her heartbeat was so loud in her ears that she could feel it, and I just replied, but saying "[How do you know it's YOUR heartbeat?](#)"

A: EAUGHHHGHGHHH

R: [Sharp intake of breath between their teeth] GEURRRRRRRRGH

M: [laughing] So, I just *do* this shit to other people *all the time*.

A: Uh-huh...

R: [Still making disgusted noises]

M: Like, I just live in that. Always. So that's just kind of fun for me?

A: Gross.

[M cackles]

A: Okay, here's the thing though... I do enjoy writing creepy things, sometimes.

R: Mmhm.

A: And there have been a couple times when I wrote something that gave me that sort of, like, "Hey! What if there was a bear that killed me right now!" feeling, just like in the movie. And that's a lot of fun, to realize that you did a thing... I mean, it's... that's sort of how I feel about all my writing, is that if I succeed in giving someone an emotion at all then that is a huge success. That's kind of the best success that you can hope for. And it's the best compliment that I could ever receive on my writing, is "this made me feel feelings."

R: Well, and you bring up an interesting point, which I think... so romance and horror, I think, have a similar thing in common for me, in that if there was a genre that produces very physical bodily reactions, like a boner, or revulsion, or your skin is crawling, or nausea or something like

that—y'know, just those classic things that bodies feel—I feel like, necessarily, it's looked upon as being kind of low-rent or... body? Or kind of, y'know, gross.

M: Mmmm.

R: And with horror, if somebody... okay, so if somebody writes horror, and the audience has no physical response to it, and just goes, "well, yeah, that was really scary, I had a really good time reading that and being scared," and they're able to just be completely cerebral about it without any sort of "I wanted to throw up and die, I wanted to move out into the woods and never speak to anyone again..."

[M chuckles]

R: Like, you can't... there has to be that, I think, visceral involvement? Which I think also lends itself well to body horror, because, y'know... body horror—and a lot of, y'know, body horror, the problem is it's like when you watch a home invasion horror movie, and it's creepy to you because you're like "Oh no, /\* live in a house!"

[M laughs but it sounds like a cute sheet-ghost is laughing: hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo! Where the pitch goes up for every 'hoo']

R: Body horror is necessarily scary and creepy because you're like, "Shit! /\*'ve got a body! What if *my* body got fucked up?" and so... yeah, I think having a really physical response to it is really important.

M: Well, I wonder though, if that's maybe two different shades of horror? 'Cause I do think that both can be horror, or maybe one is a thriller not so much "horror"? I love taxonomies and I was thinking about this before. And I don't know as much as I want to about horror, it's something I'm sort of slowly getting into writing more and more...

R: Mmhm.

M: But I feel like there is that visceral bodily horror and then there is the more cerebral "scary" horror. Like, there's this wonderful short story or novelette by A. Merc Rustad a while back, "[Mr. Try-Again.](#)"

R: Oh, yeah!

M: Yeah! And I loved that story, and it's this really scary piece about a monster living in the swamp stealing children, using other children to lure them out, but I wouldn't say it gave me bodily feelings?

R: Mmhm.

M: But I still loved it and still felt horrified by it. Just in a very very different way than I did with the tentpole that we're going to talk about a little bit later, which *absolutely* gave me bodily feelings, holy FUCK.

[A and R chuckle]

R: Right? [That's] kind of its whole thing. You brought up an interesting thing with psychological thriller vs. horror, because I feel like—now, and this is just me being a sort of old horror crank, but—I feel like a lot of people use psychological thriller to mean “horror that I actually like.” Especially with horror movies...

M: Hoo!

R: Like, with Oscars, you look at, like, “Wow, *Silence of the Lambs* won the Academy Award for Best Picture back in the early nineties,” and it's like, “Well, but that's not a *horror* movie! That's a *psychological thriller*!”

[M cackles]

R: And you're like, “Well, how is that not a horror movie?” And they're like, “..... 'cause it's smart and I like it?” So I feel like, I mean, genres are a bit squidgy with how we define things.

M: Mmhm.

A: Yeah. For example, like, as we were planning out this episode I started wondering about all of the “horror” movies that I have seen and liked? The “horror” books that I have seen and liked? Like, [The Vampire Chronicles](#). It's got vampires, they kill a bunch of people, it's got some body horror shit in it... is that horror?

R: Hmm.

A: Is [The Addams Family](#) horror? I mean, it uses a lot of horror *tropes*, but *is it* horror?

M: I mean, I think this is why if we're talking about bodily visceral horrified reactions, maybe not? 'Cause that's not what those are for..?

A: Yeah.

R: Yeah. Well, and of course, I mean... so there's this other horror movie that, honestly, I think both of you might really really like, which is on Netflix right now, called [I Am The Pretty Thing That Lives In The House](#), and—

A: [interrupts] Yes, you are.

R: It's, like... the best Shirley Jackson novel that Shirley Jackson never wrote? And I feel like, again, that sounds like the kind of horror that both of you might be more into? Like, atmospheric, sort of tension-building, not like... hearts spilling out everywhere and blood spurting.

A: Yeah. Yeah. It's not so much the gore that I object to, it's... so, the horror movie that I watched in 2006 which kept me up for three days is about this young girl who goes to be a live-in aid to an elderly couple and it turns out that they are body snatchers and that for like 200 years they have just been, like, trading bodies! And they live in a body and as that body gets old they just... switch to a new body! They keep stealing bodies from people. And at the end of the film, spoilers, the old couple take over her body and switch her soul into their old body and paralyze it so that she can't speak or tell anyone that something went wrong! And there's some jump scares in there, but it was more... I'm trying to identify, like, *what exactly* it was that squicked me out so hard, and it might be the body horror element of, "Oh God, age is terrible!" or it might be the jump scares, and there's some supernatural stuff in there, and not having control... [pause for realization] that's what it is. That's the core of it.

R: Yup.

M: So the last mainstream horror movie that I watched was [Get Out](#), which was amazing.

A: Mmm!

R: Yep.

M: And I think for me, the fascinating thing looking back on how I experienced that movie, there's a large... like, I'd say two thirds of the movie is this building ominous pressure in which you know something's wrong and the character *knows* there's something wrong, but everyone's trying to soothe him and say no no no, it's all in your mind. And by the time you get to what you might look at as pulp horror—those aspects of it where they're cutting off the top of someone's head to get at their brain—

R: Right.

M: —there's almost a release of tension, because you're like... oh, yes! I'm vindicated! It really was that bad! Okay!

R: Well, and this is, I mean, yeah. Absolutely. And also I think *Get Out* does the really great Hitchcock thing of... y'know, cause Hitchcock had the bit about the bomb under the table? That, y'know, if the bomb just explodes out of nowhere and goes off you get maybe a few seconds of turmoil for the audience; if there's a bomb under the table and you *tell* the audience, "there is a

bomb under this table and it will go off in one hour," that gives you an hour of sort of slow-building tension as it gets closer to the thing.

M: Yes!

R: And I think *Get Out* especially, like, it gives you... one of the things I love so much about *Get Out* is the level of fridge horror? With *Get Out*... you watch the movie, and in construction and execution it's fucking incredible, but like, so many bits of the movie sort of reveal themselves to you in the days after you've watched it, where you're like...

M: Blaaaah!

R: This happened to me, where I was taking a shower the next morning and then actually *in the shower* yelled like a mobster, "OHHH!" 'cause I realized, like, oh, fuck! When the father of the family says, "When my parents died we couldn't bear to let them go," he was *talking about his parents and not the servants*. So... anyway, I could... yeah, yeah, I *really* liked *Get Out*.

M: I was wondering, though, also... this makes me think about some of the differences between trying to convey that type of atmosphere and tension differently in prose and in cinema and I wonder if that brings us to one of our tentpoles, *Annihilation*, which I think all of us have looked at in both forms.

R: Mmhm.

A: Yes.

[17:24]

M: So how did you experience that? Because they changed it a lot! And I think they *had* to.

A: They did. Yes. And I agree with you that they absolutely had to, because the thing that it was doing in the book I don't think would have translated well to the screen. Personally, I think that I... okay, going back to what I said about having feelings, if the purpose of a piece of media is to make you feel a way, then the movie did a better job at making me feel a feeling than the book did. The book was sort of confusing, and there were times when I wasn't quite sure what was going on, but the movie was... for one thing, it was very pretty to look at. It's a very, very pretty, pretty movie and I support the idea of more rainbow colored horror.

M: YAS!

R: Yep.

A: And...

M: Those gorgeous mutant flowers on that bush? And somehow it's beautiful and horrifying simultaneously? Even though you have no reason to think it's horrifying? But it is!

R: Uh-huh.

A: It was just... like, I found myself wanting to keep looking at it, just because it was enjoyable to put in my eyes. 'Cause a lot of it is just... dark. And grimy. And I'm not really into dark and grimy.

R: See, and this is kind of...

A: Except for Ryan.

R: Well, of course, I mean, listen, I'm both grimy and colorful. So. Y'know. Both are possible. That's duality. Um, although I feel like...

M: Interpunk.

R: The book vs. the movie, I think you're absolutely right. They had to change it up for this adaptation because the book is largely... unadaptable. [Laughs]

[M laughs]

R: I think if you're going to do a straightforward A to B adaptation of it, I... I don't know. I feel like, I don't want to get caught in this binary of "which is better, the book or the movie?" because I think they do fundamentally different things.

A: Agreed.

R: But I feel like, for me, I'm kind of with Alex with this one in that the movie gave me feelings in a way that... I think the book was more like a brain puzzle to solve, where I was kind of like...

A: Yeah.

R: Because nobody is named, and sort of... I felt like, in the book, there weren't characters so much as metaphors and, like, figures that move the parts of the plot around?

A: Mm.

R: Because the plot sort of tells you... honestly, to me, the fact that in the book they don't even name the characters, and it's just the biologist and... y'know, their job title? It's almost like the narrative is telling you which things they're going to be moving around and what they're going to be doing with the plot, rather than "I want you to sink into this person's head and have an aside with them and really figure out what's driving them." Especially with the biologist and her

husband in the movie, where they suddenly add this motivation, I think, in the movie, that wasn't even there in the book necessarily.

A: Yeah.

M: I think, for me... and it may be a personal preference thing, or it may also be that I read the book first? For me, I found the book kind of unfolding in front of me in a way that engaged and made me complicit in what was happening?

R: Explain.

A: Tell me more.

R: Yeah, do you mean it sort of made you an active participant in the unfolding of the narrative?

M: Right, because I felt like I had to figure out what was going on, I felt like I had to be far more engaged and... Alex has this thing about white space in books, and white space, and you have to fill it in.

A: Yeah.

M: So, I was super-conscious that the biologist was very deliberately withholding information from me, and so I was kind of positing that there *were* characterizations, there *were* personal motivations, but she was deliberately censoring them.

A: Are you saying she was perhaps...

A&M, in unison: AN UNRELIABLE NARRATOR!

[laughter]

R: Alex has, like, a *slight* fondness for unreliable narrators.

A: No!

R: It's... so yeah.

A: So does Macey! We've had a whole episode about them!

R: Mmhm.

M: They're so much fun. I like them. But I also loved the... it's a very sparse, epistolary book, and I think I really engaged with the puzzle of it.

R: Yeah.

M: And, just, this unfolding as things get worse and worse... as the character realizes how much worse they're getting, you do, too.

R: Well, and the epistolary thing sort of made it feel like a bit of a throwback horror novel, because Frankenstein and Dracula were both epistolary?

M: Mmhm!

A: Hm!

R: So it feels like it's sort of part of this horror pedigree of, like... a sort of, "letters from Hell" sort of format.

A: I would like to listen to the two of you, my darlings, geek out about nature-related horror things.

[M gasps softly]

A: Because I *know* you both really like that. Go.

R: Mm.

M: I love them. I love them so much. I love, just, this whole concept of when you have a city that's being reclaimed by nature, that's something we're all very familiar... we see it day to day.

R: Mmhm.

M: But what about your body being reclaimed by nature? I think that's a thing that *Annihilation* super does, with the plants growing out from within your skin, and what would that *feel like* inside of you?

R: Yeah. Yeah! It makes you... because, I think we... so we like to think that all humanity, we're sort of separated from the rest of nature?

M: Mmhmmmm!

R: It's like, "well look, we've got cars and buildings and all of these things that keep any of those things from getting into our bodies!" And honestly any kind of nature-centric horror, I love it because I feel like... okay, so also with body horror, I think the fear there is the same, the structural integrity of your body being compromised.

M: Right.

R: And nature just bein' real scary and not really giving a fuck about humanity as a species? That we're a host organism like anything else. Like, we're, y'know, grist for the mill. And in *Annihilation* especially, I love... now, and here's my thing, I feel like in the novel especially, with characters that aren't named, I feel like it plays very fast and loose with what happens to the bodies of the people in *Annihilation*.

M: Mmhm.

R: Like, their bodies become plot devices sort of necessarily, in the way that what happens to them is just, like, a logical conclusion of what would happen to bodies under the circumstance. But...

M: Mmhm. I really loved the part in the movie where the bodies become the vines and the flowers in the shape of humans.

R: Hell yeah. Oh my God.

M: Ahhhh, it was SO good.

R: Augh! AUGH!

M: But I did actually also want to tie this into... I know all of us watched or rewatched the second episode of *Hannibal*, which involves corpses being used to grow mushrooms...

R: Hell yeah!

A: YEAHH!

R: Augh, so good.

M: Which was *amazing*.

A: That was really cool.

R: No, yeah, just, like... the fact that the people were left alive while buried in the fields?

M: Yes!

R: And the mushrooms were growing on their bodies? Like, I think... if they had been dead and mushrooms had been growing on their bodies, you've sort of made peace with the mushrooms at that point because you're like, well, they're fuckin' dead!

M: Haha! Right.

R: And then... the fact that they were still alive was just like, oh, *Jesus!* Like, that that sort of affectation of death is occurring while they are not yet dead and still completely conscious underground? Like...

A: It adds a whole 'nother level of gross. It's like... you know how gross athlete's foot is?

R: Sure.

A: It's like that. It's like there's a fungus that's growing *on you*. It's like... it's growing *ON YOU*. And... and it's *growing on you*.

[R laughs]

M: It's like...

A: And it's *GROWING*.

R&A: [in unison] *ON YOU*.

R: It is, it is on you, and it is growing.

A: On you!

M: On you, but it's *in you*, and it's *always* in you, and it's in you *right now*, you *are* full of fungus.

R: Yup. And this is, I mean... pregnancy is body horror, necessarily, and I feel like—

A: YES.

M: YES!

R: —the mushrooms and the *Annihilation* turning into vines, it pings the same... it pings a similar sort of squick response as, like, pregnancy or the movie *Alien*. Again, the idea that your body... the sanctity of your body, that it's not safe from the environment trying to warp you?

M: But I feel like I approach it and embrace it a little bit in my writing sometimes. And I did this in [the short story that I have](#) where the family that the character finds at the end is herself, being transformed and grown throughout with plants.

R: Hell yeah. Outstanding.

M: Right? And I think that *Hannibal* actually engages throughout the whole show—and Alex, we're gonna talk about some stuff that you maybe haven't watched yet—with nature and the symbiosis of man with body-as-meat.

R: Mmhmmmm.

M: And there's this whole thing, in even the very first episode, where they are impaling humans on deer horns... but always just throughout, the cannibalism and "you are a creature like any other who is not owed any more dignity than an animal."

R: Right. And this being sort of Hannibal's *raison d'être* for why he does what he does, that like... he kills people to debase them, and basically that, like, you're no better than a pig, this is... it's about sort of reducing people to the level of an animal, but also, as a side note here, can I point out my favorite bit of trivia about NBC *Hannibal*?

M: Mmhm!

A: Yes.

R: It's... ok so in season one, there was the monster of the week, "The Angel Maker," who flayed the skin off of people's backs and made wings out of the skin.

M: Yes.

R: So apparently Bryan Fuller had sent some... like, he'd gotten some notes back from the studio while they were making the episode, and the note that he got was "You can't show butt cracks on TV in the United States." And so Bryan Fuller sort of jokingly sent back, like, "what if I filled the butt cracks with blood?" And they were like "That would be great!!"

[Raucous laughter]

R: Like, the studio was like, look, as long as you fill it with gore, we can deal with that... we just can't deal with butt cracks on TV.

M: Oh my God.

R: So that's sort of America.png for the things we're comfortable putting on TV.

M: Wow.

A: Yeah, for reals.

[27.12]

M: But I wanna pull it back a little bit. I know when we were prepping for this episode we talked a bit, Ryan, about the difference between the monster within and the monster without?

R: Mmhm.

M: And I think *Hannibal* deals with that conflict a lot through the character of Will, who is this—at the beginning—hyper-empathetic detective who associates too closely with the murderers that he's trying to understand.

R: Mmhmm.

M: And in the fanfic tentpole we have, it's kind of pulling him in really deep with sympathizing with Hannibal himself, and I was wondering if we could talk a little bit about the fanfic and how you felt that went as a horror piece.

R: Oh, absolutely. So, the fic... which, by the way, was *really* really good, it was... what was the title? "where all ladders start."

M: Yes.

R: Yeah, and I think a) it was a really really good fic—also because, I feel like one thing that drives me crazy, and this is such a minor thing, it drives me crazy when somebody writing *Hannibal* fic has Hannibal refer to Will Graham as "William"? Because at *no* point would Hannibal ever call him William. That's not... c'mon now. C'mon now. I think Hannibal as a character, it's hard to approximate the kind of character Hannibal is for fanfic purposes.

M: Mmhm.

R: Because necessarily, I think Hannibal works very hard to sort of make his emotional process and the way that his brain works kind of obscure and impossible to understand, in some ways? Like, Will Graham, the fact that he is just this raw exposed nerve of a guy who just... he wears flannel and he's constantly standing around in his underwear, covered in sweat, crying... y'know, relatable. I think that's basically all of us.

M: Peak Alex.

R: Yep.

A: Yeah. Yeah.

R: That's... yeah, exactly. And then you've got Hannibal, who sort of... yeah. Watching... I think that's why Hannibal is so fun to watch interacting *with* Will Graham, because... I mean, if we're going with visceral vs. cerebral, it's sort of like Hannibal is sort of 100% cerebral and Will Graham is almost 100% visceral, because Will has *so much* skin in the game. He necessarily... there's wear and tear that everything takes on Will throughout the course of the series, because he can't help but be involved emotionally. And Hannibal, at several points during the series, you wonder if he's ever had a genuine emotion other than contempt in his life.

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A: Yeah, and that was kind of the thing that I started wondering about when I was reading the fanfic. Because, like, he's written... in the show, or at least in the two episodes of the show that I watched, and in the fanfic, he's so unemotional and so unconnected to that part of himself?

R: Mmhm.

A: And so I was reading this and wondering, like, OK, well they're writing these two characters as being in some kind of love, is Hannibal ever happy other than when he's, like, killing and eating people? And maybe he kills and eats people to feel something, because that's the only time that he *does* feel something? Maybe that, like, gets him connected to that visceral part of himself? Why do you think that so many horror things write this... serial killers, or like, the villains, as the cold-blooded killers? Why is that such a trope? Why do we have to have them be so cold-blooded, other than they have to kill twenty people?

R: Right. Well, I feel like it's sort of... we're comfortable with two extremes. Either they are wild and out of control of their emotions and just sort of completely volatile and completely mercurial and sort of unpredictable, or they are completely passionless and clinical and have all of the emotional range from A to B. And I think that in between that... oddly enough, this is going to sound very silly, a lot of early 80's slasher movies sort of fell between that. Like the movie *Maniac*, where you've got a guy who is a serial killer, but also he's able to kind of function in society with people? But the other half of the time it's him muttering to mannequins in his apartment being a fuckin' goof, but then the rest of the time it's like, "Nah, I mean, he can sort of hold a conversation with people and sort of be fine?" So I feel like, in horror especially, having a character who's a totally cold-eyed sociopath... I feel like we're comfortable with that because, y'know, this is why we like true crime, is like... how the fuck does a brain do that?

M: Mmhm.

R: You read about a serial killer and you wonder, how does a person's brain sort of go from a starting place of "I wonder if I should kill an entire family with a trowel?" to *actually doing that*, and all of the steps along the way that make a brain do that. And I think that if someone's

completely clinical and cold and sterile and uninvolved, like a lot of people sort of write Hannibal as being, I think it's easier for a lot of people.

M: But I will kind of argue with both of you—more with Ryan than Alex, 'cause Alex hasn't really watched enough—but I would say that canon Hannibal is very Slytherin secondary, maybe, but he has a *ton* of emotions.

R: Mmhm.

M: But he's very very good at not putting them forward and he would *never* admit to it. He's kind of very... like a cat that way. But, like, come the fuck on. This is a guy who chooses his victims because they were rude to him.

R: Yep.

A: Ah, true. True, true.

M: That is *not* someone cold. That is not... that is someone who is hoity-toity and up himself and he has this huge amount of pride. He takes *such* smug joy any time Will Graham does anything even remotely evil. There's just this *look*, this very staid sort of [smug monotone hum] look and you can see him, like, *dying*, bouncing around inside going "Look! I did the thing! I did the thing! I did the thing!"

[A laughs]

R: There's that, and also, any time that he can make an obvious cannibalism joke at a dinner party and have everyone laugh.

M: YES!!

R: Because he's just sitting there going "I'm fucking hilarious."

M: I love it.

R: It's so good. This little shit.

A: [Laughs] Okay, okay, okay. I now want either of you two or possibly our dear listeners to send me a fic where Hannibal is just, like, a *huge* fucking dweeb, and nobody really notices how much of a goddamn nerd he is. Like, making these dad puns at a dinner party.

M: Yes!

R: Yep. I mean...

M: There's a thing in the fandom... there's this whole thing of, like... "[sad cannibal noises]."

[A laughs]

R: Right. Yeah, the ballad of the sad cannibal. And I feel like it's also... this is, honestly, the main thing that I love about the dynamic between Will and Hannibal, is that they are both stupid *babies*. Because you think of, like—

M: YES!!!

R: Yeah. Yeah. Like, they're both *the most*. And they're both, like... especially, you think of Hannibal sort of at the end of season two, you can tell that—although I don't want to spoil it for Alex if you haven't seen it—

A: But totally, go ahead. I do not care.

R: Yeah, no, yeah, Hannibal has the most feelings. But I think my favorite "Will Graham is a stupid baby" moment was in season one where Hannibal says "How does that make you feel?" during one bit and then Will just immediately shoots back in a snooty voice, "How does that make you FEEL?" and it's like, oh, somebody help... you. This poor guy.

[M and A giggling in the background]

M: And I think that that... that is the piece that fandom engages with, and I know that you had some thoughts, Ryan, about how fanfic *doesn't* do horror? But I think it engages with the fandom on that level, that then kind of a lot of fanfic... I went looking. I went hella looking to find a fic that even remotely engaged with "horror" in Hannibal fanfic? And this is the one that I found that was like edging toward the psychological side of things a little bit? But in general, it doesn't. So what's that about? What's up with that?

R: That's a good... that's a great question. Especially because I've noticed that in fanfiction, good horror movie fanfiction is very, very hard to find. Especially if it's for a sort of big, kind of AAA horror thing, like *A Nightmare on Elm Street* or *Friday the 13th* or *Halloween* or any of the sort of big slashers? And I think it's that, especially with *Hannibal*... [pause to gather thoughts] All right, so, the show *Hannibal* could have attracted exactly two kinds of fanbases, right? There's the first one, where it would have been sort of people who look like me, basically? Just sort of these cellar-dwelling hobgoblins who are sort of really into the gore aspect of it, or really into the psychological manipulation aspect of it, in like... a not particularly healthy way? A lot of true crime fandom is like that. Or, it could have been that, or the kind it *did* attract, which is... late twenties, highly-educated, college graduate women who make AMVs and...

M: Make them kiss?

R: And, y'know, sort of... honestly the fanbase for *Hannibal*, I feel like *Hannibal* \*really\* lucked out to get the kind of fanbase that it had, and I think that, especially with fanfiction, so much of the show is already brutal as fuck...

M: Mmhm.

R: And I think, y'know... if you wanna see thirty ways to fuck up a human being you can watch the episode where Amanda Plummer trepans a guy with a needle and puts a beehive in his head. You've got that, it's on film. But if you actually wanna dig into, y'know, the emotions that Will is feeling, because *somebody help Will Graham*, I feel like, y'know...

M: [chuckling] Yes.

R: The show lends itself to fanfiction so much because so much of what makes the show effective is the emotional beats. Because, like, the cannibalism and the murder and the crazy horror shit that happens on *Hannibal*? It's almost sort of beside the point.

M: Yup.

R: The stuff that really fucks me up on *Hannibal* is the emotional abuse of Will Graham.

M: YES.

R: Ugh. Jesus. Like...

M: That poor boy.

R: I, honestly... a way to get me to just cry on command is to say "Please don't lie to me" in the Will Graham voice. Like, it. Ugh. UGH. UGHHHH. Fuckin' Hannibal.

M: The ending! The ending! The ending!

R: Which? I still haven't seen the ending of season three yet!

M: C'mon. You'll get there.

R: Mm. Yep. It's comin'.

M: You'll get there.

A: Shall we move on to the third tentpole...

M: [doesn't even let A finish, just barges in with a big ol] YES!!!

A: ...or did we have anything else to say?

R: Yeah, third tentpole.

[37:02]

A: Alright, so, uh, Ryan, why don't you introduce this one, since you were the one who picked it out?

R: Oh, there we go! So, by the way, both of you are saints for reading the tentpole that I suggested, which is "[Jacqueline Ess: Her Will and Testament](#)" which is by Clive Barker, who I would say, Clive Barker--

A: You love! You love Clive Barker!

R: Oh, I love Clive Barker so much! I have--

A: You have *such* a boner--

R: -Clive Barker tattoos! Clive Barker, is, I think the... he's honestly one of the biggest things that got me into horror generally, because of the stuff that Clive Barker focusses on, which, especially in "Jacqueline Ess: Her Will and Testament", this--okay. So this is horror *technically*? But I feel like, it's a bit of an oddball because it doesn't rely on a lot of big, sort of, usual horror beats, for a horror short story?

M: I found it surprisingly affecting, like the gore levels? Like normally I'm not that bothered, but that was quite a lot!

R: Yeah, yeah. For those who've--well, I just realised I should have probably--

M: We actually forgot to give introductions to any of our tentpoles, so far, this episode, well done.

R: [Laughs]

A: Yeah we did.

R: Yeah. It'll happen. Um--So, real quick, the log-line of "Jacqueline Ess: Her Will and Testament" is that there's a lady named Jacqueline who realises that she has the psycho-kinetic power to manipulate other people's bodies using only her brain, and, sort of, it's her misadventures with the various men in her life that have disappointed her, and it's about the

human experience, and it's about, sort of, being unfulfilled, and being underestimated, and other people--trying to find somebody else who's on your level, and also gore. Lots of--Jesus Christ, there's lots of gore.

M: A lot of gore. But I think it's also about--

A: Yeah.

M: -Her--there's a thing with monstrous women, in horror, that is always interesting to examine, and them realising their power and deciding to own it, or deciding to shy away from it or not, how does character react to this sudden, it's almost always framed as a reversal? It's almost always framed in direct contrast to generally a man who is oppressing them in some way, and then suddenly they have a monst--I'm thinking of, what's the--*Carrie*? Is it? Is that the one I'm thinking of? Stephen King? I guess that was... Girls? The one with the menstruation-linked power.

R: Oh! *Carrie*!

[39:23]

M: Is it?

R: Oh yeah, yeah, I--

M: *Carrie*, yeah.

R: -I heard Harry, I was like I don't think I've-

A: I also heard Harry.

[Laughter]

M: I'm sorry I have a very silly accent.

R: No, no, it's good, it's fine. Harry was actually the sort of Stephen King B-side, it was about her cousin, he doesn't have telekinesis but he can, sort of, move pencils, maybe a couple of inches at a time, it's not important.

A: Sure.

R: Yeah, no, like, *Carrie* especially, I feel like the ability to manipulate things with your mind, I think there's a reason that's such a classic horror thing, because the idea of being able to make

what you want to happen just *happen* without really having to, like, make it happen with your hands?

M: Mmhmm. Yeah.

A: I found it very--the gore didn't particularly bother me, I did find it, kind of, satisfying because there have been a lot of times in my life where I have looked at a man who is getting in my way, essentially--

M: Ha!

A: -And gone, like, "Can't I just, like, squish you into, like, a pile of gore the size of a suitcase, like..."

R: Mmhmm.

A: Yeah.

[M laughs]

R: Yep. Well, and again, so much of "Jacqueline Ess", it's sort of, she meets--there's this character in the thing called Titus Pettifer, who's like, sort of, what... Elon Musk, basically? Just some dipshit rich guy?

M: Warren Buffet, I thought.

R: And, you know, he sort of exudes--Warren Buffet, there we go, yeah, and he just sort of exudes power, and the idea is that Jacqueline's like... okay, so, you know, she's got the raw potential, and the talent, but she doesn't necessarily know how to use it yet? And she's trying to find somebody else who understands power, and understands how to wield it, that can help her realise her own potential? And then she realises, actually, he's a fuckboy, and he's not helping anyone.

M: Hehehehe. Ryan you had this note in the doc about, um, Stephen King and Clive Barker, and King's version of horror contextualises monsters as an invading force, and I was wondering if you wanted to talk a little bit about that, cause that looked fascinating.

R: Oh man. It's honestly--so I say this as somebody who is also a giant Stephen King fanboy, mostly because I once had a library card, and was nine years old, so naturally, I really liked Stephen King.

[M laughs]

R: I--So one of the big differences between Stephen King and Clive Barker, I think, is in the ethos of how they write monsters? Because--and Clive Barker, sort of took—I could not, for the life of me find this interview, and it was driving me crazy because, did you know that if you google 'Stephen King Clive Barker', you don't actually find that one specific interview from, like, 1988—but, you know, in the interview, somebody, sort of, asked him, you know, they compared him to Stephen King, because, well, you're both successful horror authors, so that means you're contemporaries, and there's... you have anything in common, right? And Clive Barker, sort of, took umbrage at being compared to Stephen King, because he was like well, you know, you read a thing like *Salem's Lot*, and it's about this invading monstrous force that comes to your town, and, you know, it's the Other, it's something scary from beyond the gates, it doesn't look like you and me, it, you know, sort of, perverts the natural order of things, it moves into the laundromat down the street, and turns all of your neighbours gay, and you know, everybody--and, sort of, he... the way that Stephen King writes a lot of stuff is that this evil force is something to be subdued. In *Salem's Lot*, you've got Barlow, who is basically just Dracula, and it's on the townsfolk of Salem's Lot to drive him out, or get rid of his influence, or in any way stomp him out, and Clive Barker has such a completely different approach where it's like, he's much more into actually, the monster lives with us, and we can't kick him out because we're all monsters? And so the monsteresses, specially in *Books of Blood* by Clive Barker, where "Jacqueline Ess: Her Will and Testament" comes from, so much of the monster stuff in that are about, sort of, well... we can't excise the monstrous parts of who we are, and so we need to find out how we fit in with each other, how we work that out in ourselves, like, what the stakes are for that. And I think Clive Barker is so into the making peace with being a monster and figuring out how to have a life like that.

M: And, I think, for me, this ties back to the point that we got to towards the end of the [Fairy Tale episode](#), Alex, if you remember it, about tales for the community, and how do you live as a community, and almost back to hopepunk, as well, which is: you have to face that there are bad things, and bad things are real, but how do you embrace it, and make progress... make progress and *forgive* yourself, for being the horrible thing sometimes. How do you make that part of yourself, and forgive one another, and move forward.

A: Yeah, or use horrible parts in a constructive way that still furthers the good of the community.

M: Mmhmm.

R: And to me, I feel like that tenderness is absolutely crucial in horror, I think, because if it's all just a big chunk of death, and it's just nothing but teeth, and hair, and nails, and it's just all, you know... like, if there's nothing tender to contrast that with, it means *nothing*, because there's not that tenderness to, sort of, provide a buffer, because... I don't know, if there's nothing worth contrasting with it, then it's--it doesn't stick, because there's nothing to make it stick-

M: Right.

R: -It's just brutal and mean.

A: Yeah.

M: That's what the worst kind of grimdark brings us, is "Nothing to contrast it with. Oh, everything's just shit."

R: [laughs] Yeah, like, alright! Thanks for coming out, folks! Like-

A: Yeah.

R: Awful.

A: Like there's only so many ways that you can scoop someone's eye out with a rusty spoon.

R: And, believe me, I've tried. [Pause for punchline] Like, yeah, I--

[A laughs]

R: There's only--you know, and this is the, kind of, I think, Alex, you talking about how horror movies have a color palette of roughly the bottom of a theatre seat, and I think a lot of that, I, yeah... I blame the movie *Saw*, because like horror goes in cycles. And I think when *Saw* got really really popular in the mid 2000s, every single horror movie was like "Oh, we need a really scungy looking filter for every scene, everything needs to be really gross, everything needs to just look like it was rolled under the couch—

A: Yeah.

R: —and I think it's just now starting to bounce back from that, where it's like, mmm, but here's the thing, what if color rules, and things can be scary, and also well-lit, and visible?

A: Yes! Yes.

M: Yes! And sometimes, in the case of *Hannibal* have lesbian sex scenes disguised as kaleidoscopes!

R: Very important.

A: What are we referring to, here?

M There is a very very strange, Season 3 *Hannibal* gets weird cinematograph-ly— [pause] cinnabuh— [pause, then enunciates very very slowly] cin-e-ma-to-gra-phi-cally.

[R scoffs]

A: [laughing] I see.

[45:32]

R: Mmhmm.

M: Th--yeah. We will find you images somewhere, it's very entertaining.

[R laughs]

M: But I think that *Annihilation* does precisely that, right? Cause it brings back the beauty to horror--

A: Yeah.

M: -And bits of *Hannibal* do, too, as well.

R: Oh, I mean--

A: Yeah, *Hannibal* still seems to have, like, a slightly more muted colour palette, but it's not nearly as bad as many many other images of horror movies that I have seen.

R: Right [laughs], right, like you've seen screenshots from horror movies, and you don't care for that shit [laughs].

[M cackles]

M: Oh man.

R: I mean, that's the thing with *Hannibal*, that show's fucking gorgeous, like, it's so--

M: It's so beautiful!

R: And it's like, you're watching this, and you know that like, yeah, that's some people bein' chopped up, but also you're watching like "I don't know man, I'm kinda hungry", like... that looks really good!

M: I think, I think I made you all watch my favourite ever fanvid of every fandom, which is a fanvid called [Glitter and Gold](#), which is a *Hannibal* vid, it's only like two minutes long, and the artist from that hyper-saturated the red, which is, I think, something that horror does to start with?

R: Mmhmm.

M: -But in that context, it just pops, and it's this... and this was what made me think actually about the link between horror and sex. Because the things that it picks up, it picks up precisely two things, it picks up blood, gore and everything, blood blood blood, and it picks up their lips, and how close their lips are to one another.

A: Mmm.

R: Yep, yep, I mean, I feel like the English language is largely good at a couple of things, and one of those is describing vile sex acts, and also threatening violence, like, those are the two things English is *really*, really good at.

[Laughter]

A: Yeah.

[Laughter]

A: I keep, like, looking at the clock, and going like, "oh, surely, we're like, way over time, we need to be moving on, and it's just because Ryan talks so fast [laughs] that we have crammed, like, tons and tons of stuff into this episode. Do we have any other... more things that we wanted to hit? Any other points or anything?

M: Did you want to talk about humor?

R: Yeah, absolutely. So, real quick, I think, that another thing that I think *Hannibal*--okay, so going back to the things that produce bodily reactions, like, you know, romance and horror, I think comedy also, so much of comedy and horror go together in similar ways, because of tension and resolution?

M: Mmhmm.

R: And, I think, especially a show like *Hannibal*, I wasn't prepared--because, alright, I read the Thomas Harris books when I was a kid, and saw the movies, and was like, "Oh, okay, that's pretty much, you know, whatever", and then years ago, they'd announced, like, "Yeah, we're going to be making a *Hannibal Lecter* tv show", and at the time, I remember being like "Well, that's going to be a bucket of shit." And then, I watched it, and a) obviously it's fucking sublime, but also I wasn't prepared for how funny that show is?

M: Mmhmm.

R: You've got the, sort of, peanut gallery of the two—sorry, Macey, what are their names? I think of them as Statler and Waldorf. What are their names?

M: Ha! I don't even remember. Those two.

R: Yeah, yeah, those two.

M: But there's also there's this beautiful scene that I couldn't find a gif of, where, for various reasons, *Hannibal* is hanging from the ceiling in a pig farm, suspended in a straitjacket, and he's just kind of twisting there? And Will just walks off, and he's just twisting, he's just like "That's just where I am now. Alright-y." [Laughing]

R: Oh my god.

M: Just a suspended cannibal.

[Laughter]

M: And he looks so disgruntled?

[Laughter]

R: Oh god. See, and this is--the humor on the show, like, I think, the one I always think of is after you think Freddie Lounds has been killed? By Will and Hannibal, and then Hannibal just--they're preparing dinner, and he turns to Will and says, "You can slice the ginger"--

[M bursts into laughter]

R: -I actually did a spit-take, I was like... I love trusting that this show absolutely knew, like, "We're fucking hilarious," like... and this is... so with horror and comedy, I think, they go--they've been hanging out since both horror, and comedy have existed. Like, they go naturally together because of the sort of, you know, you get out of a haunted house with your friends, and you laugh because it's ridiculous that you've just been scared by some dude in overalls and a wheat hat, yelling at you with a chainsaw. Because necessarily, you want that moment of levity right after you've been scared, because you don't want to, again, like we've been talking about earlier, if it's a giant chunk of murder and death and sadness and grimness, you don't really know what to do with that. But if it's--if you wrap it up together into a big fucking bacon roll of sex and humor and horror, I thin that magnifies all of those things and makes them bigger, and makes them more useful, narratively?

M: I'm thinking of a tv show in the early 2000s, and it wasn't *Pushing Daisies*, it was a different one, with Reapers? There was just a [comedy tv show with Grim Reapers](#) and the girl in it gets killed by a falling toilet?

R: Outstanding.

M: Do you remember this show? I can't remember what it was! Oh god, but it was the darkest, *darkest* comedy, like, darker than M\*A\*S\*H, and I watched a lot of *M\*A\*S\*H*.

R: Oh, I love *M\*A\*S\*H*.

M: But it was just these shitty-ass Reapers met in a coffee shop, and got assigned people to go kill, and these gremlins would take away innocent people if they didn't kill the right ones, and it's just this horror concept, but it's so funny!

A: Yeah.

R: Oh my god. Yeah.

M: And terrible.

R: Honestly, okay, so *Hannibal*, I think... so going with the humor thing, I think some of the best moments on the show are the moments that give us insight into the characters that we get via humor, because especially with Will Graham, so much of the humor of Will Graham is that he is perpetually a wet cat who would prefer not to. Like, everything that happens with Will, you're sort of--

A: Mood. Same.

R: -you're feeling, yeah, which, so relatable. Like, you feel indulgent of Will Graham.

M: Peak relatable.

R: Yeah, you see him, sort of going through all these things and it's... yeah. Honestly, I think my favorite Will Graham moment is in the script for the pilot episode, when he picks up Winston the dog, on the side of the road, and brings him back to the house, and washes Winston off, and brings him out to the other stray dogs, and he's like "Everybody, this is Winston", and the pilot script actually describes it as, like, 'Winston is not an isolated incident. Will Graham is a dog collector.' Like, it's so--that's--

[Laughter]

R: -So funny, and so human, and it makes you, like, I will follow Will Graham to the ends of the goddamn Earth, like, I am emotionally invested--

A: Yep.

M: I will not follow him, I will protect him from others--

[Laughter]

M: --But I do not trust him to lead me.

[Laughter]

A: Fair. Very fair.

[51.47]

M: [cackles] His judgement is not there! I'm sorry.

R: Oh my God. But yeah. So...

A: Good stuff.

M: And I think that's one of the things that good horror does is it gives you someone to root for, it gives you someone to relate to and to Be With.

A: Yeah, definitely.

R: Yeah, agreed. And I think--So my favorite, one of my favorite horror movies of all time is [A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors](#), which... I'm assuming neither of you have seen? [While asking this question their pitch increases until they're practically squeaking]

A: Nope.

M: [deep voice] NOOOOOO--

R: Nope? Okay.

M: --OOOOPE.

R: But the great thing about it is, like, I think... the thing that I love about that movie is, a) so in *Nightmare on Elm Street* you've got, y'know, lovable ham Robert Englund as Freddy Krueger, which... as the movies go on he becomes sort of more of a... kind of a Looney Tunes character? Like, he's, y'know, sort of cracking off one-liners all the time and he's sort of like a pop culture ghoul at a certain point, but number three is that perfect mix of, like, he's funny but he's not basically shitting out a Garfield joke book every time he kills somebody? And it's contrasted in the movie with these teenagers who are all in it together, and there's, like, a

camaraderie in that movie that I don't think I've ever seen in *any* movie? That works for me specifically, that it's funny and also every death in that movie matters. And when those kids die you *really, really* feel it, but also you've got that contrasted with Freddy Krueger tying a kid to a bed using detachable tongues and then saying, "What's wrong, Joey, feeling tongue-tied?"

[A groans]

R: It—

A: That's very bad.

R: Freddy Krueger's all about the dad jokes. And, unsurprisingly, he's my favorite movie monster. But... so...

M: Worst dad.

R: Yeah. Yeah. So... yeah. Horror and comedy.

A: Horror and comedy. So, I think we have to start wrapping up now... any final notes or anything?

M: No, but I have an end quote if you like.

R: Play it!

A: Okay, I also... before your end quote I just want to do a little bit of promo for Ryan. So, Macey made an excellent point about how horror gives us someone to Be With and I just wanted to thank you, Ryan, for being with us today on this episode! You really carried the episode, I think. You had so many, like, smart things to say. Thank you so much. And... stop making faces on me on video chat! And, dear list—that's a *great* face... that's a very good face too, all of your faces are very good—and, dear listeners, if you enjoyed this episode, if you are more of a horror person than I am, or if you just think that Ryan sounds like an extremely cute person, which they are, you should go listen to Ryan's podcast, Rank and Vile, which we will put in the show notes.

R: Oh, I guess this is a crossover episode, technically!

A: Oh, yes! Yes.

M: Mmm... kind of! And I guarantee you, darling listeners, you *are* more of a horror person than Alex.

[Outro music starts playing]

A: It's not difficult to be more of a horror person than I am.

M: It's not difficult. But, as we were saying... horror's all about, 'Don't go into the dark alone!'

A: Hey everybody, thanks for joining us for this episode of Be the Serpent, a podcast of extremely, extremely deep literary merit. Isn't Ryan just the *best* and the *cutest* and the *smartest* and the *best*? They're one of my most favorite people in the world, and you can probably see why. Or... hear why. Because this is a *podcast*.

Speaking of podcasts, I really recommend once again that you go listen to Ryan's, Rank and Vile, because it's great. Horror is great, but it's not so much my particular jam. You know what *is* my jam, though? The exciting topic we're talking about in our next episode. Exciting on multiple levels, if you know what I mean? That's because two weeks hence, on September 12, we'll be discussing... y'know. The beast with two backs. The horizontal tango. Sex, I'm talking about sex. If you want to prepare in advance, one of the tentpoles for that episode is [\*Kushiel's Dart\*](#) by Jacqueline Carey. So, if you have a friend who's into stuff like that, or who reads as much smutty fanfic as I do, maybe give them a heads up.

In the meantime, feel free to continue the conversation with us. Questions? Comments? Breathless adulations? Contact us at [serpentcast@gmail.com](mailto:serpentcast@gmail.com), [@serpentcast on Twitter](https://twitter.com/serpentcast) and [Tumblr](https://tumblr.com/serpentcast), or join in the conversation on our fan Discord chat, linked on the "About the Show" page of our website. If you enjoyed the podcast, remember to review us on iTunes! And, by the way... I love you *and* the shadowy figure who's been standing silently behind you this whole time.

## What We're Reading

[\*Black Sails\*](#) fanfic

*Silver in the Wood* by Emily Tesh

[\*Consider the Fork: A History of How We Cook and Eat\*](#) by Bee Wilson

[\*The Henchmen of Zenda\*](#) by K.J. Charles

[\*Spectred Isle\*](#) by K.J. Charles

*Dragon Age: Inquisition* fanfic (again)

[\*Lost Country\*](#) by William Gay

[\*Space Opera\*](#) by Catherynne Valente

## Stuff We Mentioned

[\*Ryan Boyd\*](#)'s podcast, [\*Rank and Vile\*](#)

[\*Dune\*](#) by Frank Herbert

[\*Halloween Horror Nights\*](#)

[\*The Skeleton Key\* \(2005\)](#)

[\*"Mr. Try-Again."\*](#) by A. Merc Rustad

[\*The Vampire Chronicles\*](#) by Anne Rice

[\*The Addams Family\*](#)

[\*Get Out\*](#)

[\*Frankenstein\*](#) by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

[Dracula](#) by Bram Stoker  
["A Cradle of Vines"](#) by Jennifer Mace  
[Maniac](#)  
[A Nightmare on Elm Street](#)  
[Carrie](#) by Stephen King  
[The Green Mile, Part 1: Two Dead Girls](#) by Stephen King  
[Salem's Lot](#) by Stephen King  
[Episode 14 of Be The Serpent: Once Upon A Something](#)  
[Saw](#), the movie  
[Glitter and Gold](#), a fanvid by voordeel  
[Hannibal Lecter series](#) by Thomas Harris  
The Hannibal Lecter [movies](#)  
The tv show [Pushing Daisies](#)  
The tv show [Dead Like Me](#)  
[M\\*A\\*S\\*H](#)  
[Nightmare on Elm Street 3](#)

**For Next Time**

[Kushiel's Dart](#) by Jacqueline Carey