

Episode 40 - Kalloccain: Fun with Fascism

This month we read and discussed Karin Boye's novel Kalloccain, which was nominated for the Retro Hugo Award for 1941. This is an excellent, if bleak, book, which we think should be taught in US classrooms alongside 1984 and Brave New World.

The full text of the novel is [available to read free online](#), courtesy of the University of Wisconsin.

<INTRO MUSIC>

Amy
Hello!

Lori
Hello!

Amy
Hi!

Haley
Howdy, y'all!

Amy
Hi. I said hi too many times. I'm Amy!

Lori
I'm Lori.

Haley
I'm Haley.

Amy
And this is Hugo, Girl!, a hilarious podcast where we talk about Hugo award winning and Hugo adjacent -

Haley
One might also say that it's a Hugo Award nominated podcast.

Amy

<gasps> Oh one *could* say that! <Haley laughs>

Lori

It is in fact a Hugo finalist!

Haley

We're still so excited guys. Thank you again for all of your support.

Amy

Is Teddy ok?

Lori

My dog is like looking at a ghost or something.

Haley

This is very much Blair Witch. He's just in the corner, staring. <laughter>

Amy

Alright. Okay, so Lori might have a review. Do we have a new review?

Lori

Yes, we did get a new review! And it was from Pete on Apple podcasts. And it said, "Fun, funny, friendly and fresh." Pete with the alliteration. Short and to the point. I love it. Thanks, Pete!

Haley

We're the 4-F Club!

Lori

Ohhhhh, 4-H!

Amy

Were you in 4-H? Of *course* you were in 4-H!

Lori

I *was* in 4-H!

Haley

What are the 4 Hs? Horses, honor...

Lori

A while ago, there was someone on WABE, our local NPR station, that was talking about 4-H and she did the 4-H chant thing, like the 4-H Pledge of Allegiance <laughter> and I was in the kitchen and I just started saying it. And I remembered the whole thing!

Amy
Of all the Masonic...

Lori
I hadn't thought about it in like 25 years and I was like, "I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living for my club and my community, my country and my world."

Amy
You know who would have a 4-H? The Worldstate. <laughter>

Lori
Yes. And the fifth H is horses.

Amy
Um, I also wanted to briefly do a little shout out for our friend of the pod Emmanuel Dubois, who has a new podcast himself called Lafayette. We are here! What is that in French? We are here.

Haley
Lafayette nous sommes ici.

Amy
So he has a French history podcast. Give it a listen.

Lori
It's designed for Americans who are woefully misinformed about many things, including French history.

Haley
One time your podcast hosts were on a train going to the South of France. And we were too loud.

Amy
Yep! Not supposed to be loud in the quiet car.

Haley
They were very mad. Those French people were angrily shaking their newspapers at us.

Lori
We were...being Americans. <Amy laughs>

Amy
None of us have an inside voice

Haley

True! I really don't.

Amy

You have one decibel level, and it is a lot.

Haley

I know! I mean, obviously most Americans can be very annoying, especially abroad, but I feel like we were just buoyantly happy to be on vacation.

Amy

Buoyantly happy!

Lori

Yeah, that wasn't the buoyantly happy car though.

Amy

No. They were in their newspapers looking around.

Haley

They were like, "We're going to Provence, and it's serious! Ugh!"

Amy

We did love France, though.

Lori

We did love France. To be fair, a lot of France did seem to love us. They were very nice to us.

Amy

We had a great time in France. It was just that one train. <laughter>

Lori

We were just too happy.

Amy

Too happy for that train.

Haley

Les Américains!

Amy

Also, today we are sampling the starlight limited edition of Coca-Cola. Not sponsored.

Lori

Yeah, definitely not sponsored, just weird.

Amy

And, you know, because it's supposed to taste like space. So we figured we'd give it a try.

Lori

<sniffs loudly> Smells like Coke.

Haley

Just Coke. How are its legs? <Lori laughs>

Lori

It's - it's what?!

Haley

So like when you do wine tasting, you swirl it around the glass and it makes like rivulets, little legs.

Lori

Legs! Just like, where it's stuck to the side?

Amy

Yeah, that's how you can tell if the body of the wine is....

Lori

Good god.

Amy

This doesn't have any legs. It slides right down! <laughter>

Haley

The color is like a rosy Coke.

Amy

It's Coke rosé .

Lori

I'm a little tainted by what Kevin said earlier. It does taste like cream soda. It's Coke on the front end and a cream soda finish.

Amy

That's right.

Haley

I think it tastes like a Coke mixed with half of a flat Coke.

Lori

Yes!!

Haley

The bottom end is not quite cream soda, but something similar to taro flavored boba tea.

Amy

Oh, okay! I thought it tastes like flat vanilla Coke mixed with regular Coke. I mean, I'd drink it. I wouldn't kick it out of bed.

Lori

And the thing is, I think it's tasty, but I think that space - doesn't it taste like steak?

Haley & Amy

<incredulous> Steak?? Space tastes like *steak*?!

Lori

Yeah, like people say the smell in space is like cooking meat!

Amy

How can you smell space?!

Lori

I wondered that as I was saying it just now.

Haley

They must mean like, I think it means the air in the capsule.

Amy

Yeah, that smells like socks!

Haley

Or like farts.

Lori

What if you go on a moonwalk, and you get a jar, and you wave it around in space and then you close it and then you bring it back in? Like farting in a jar. <Amy laughs>

Amy

You take a Kroger bag and just whip it through the air, and tie it up really tightly? <Haley laughs>

Lori

And then you come back in and then you open the jar!

Haley

It would be empty, guys! There's nothing in space!

Lori

That's not true! There is stuff in space!

Haley

There's very small things, but not air, I don't think!

Amy

There's dust, that makes the stars, and you and me!

Lori

I think it's stardust, it's like char! <laughter> I think it's true! It smells like char.

Haley

I mean, there's a big fire pit in the middle of our solar system. <laughter>

Lori

It's burning something!

Amy

BYO planet, we're sitting around the fire pit, we're all chatting.

Lori

So it's clear that we need another Skype a Scientist session. <laughter>

Amy

What does space smell like?

Lori

Oh, thank you, Kevin!

Amy

Oh Google! Google!

Lori

<reading from Google> "Astronauts have reported smelling burned or fried steak after a spacewalk and they aren't just dreaming of a home cooked meal. The smell of space is so

distinct that three years ago NASA reached out to Steven Pearce of the fragrance maker Omega Ingredients to recreate the odor for its training simulations.”

Amy

But what is the smell?!

Haley

It's when they get back into the...

Lori

What do you mean, “What is it?”

Amy

What is smelling like steak? Where is the smell coming from?

Haley

Is it residual char from the sun?

Amy

Is it their outside clothes?

Lori

Oh my god. <typing into Google> *Why does it smell like steak in space?* <Haley laughs> <reading> “Steven Pearce, a chemist hired by NASA to recreate the space odor on Earth for astronaut training purposes, said the metallic aspect of the scent may come from high energy vibrations of ions.” That sounds like, that's very woo-woo

Amy

That sounds like something someone put in their science fiction book.

Haley

There's a lot of radiation in space. So maybe like...

Lori

I mean, I think the answer is, we don't know.

Amy

I want to keep talking about it, though.

Haley

I mean, I like the smell of barbecue. That's good.

Amy

Do they sniff their suits?

Lori

Yeah, like surely they come back in and they take their suits off, just like if they took a jar out and waved it around and trapped some space air. <Haley laughs>

Amy

It was like when your brother used to come in from playing outside and he smelled like outside?

Lori

Yes. It's exactly like that.

Amy

I got it.

Haley

But there's definitely not air in space, right?

Amy

No, no, there is no air and space famously.

Haley

So it's just like it's some sort of physical residualness that's on them?

Amy

That was a *terrible* joke.

Lori

Why did you say?? I didn't hear it!

Amy

Haley said, "there's no air in space, right?" And Kevin goes, "there's an Air and Space Museum!" <Haley laughs>

Kevin

It's from the Simpsons.

Lori

Ohhh, It's a Simpsons joke, for all the men in the audience. There's a Simpsons joke. <laughter> That has been our not-sponsored Coke break. <laughter>

Amy

Okay, so today on our comedy podcast, we're discussing one of the most depressing books ever written. Kallocain by Karine Boye. Kallocain was published in 1940 and was nominated for the 2016 Retro Hugo, but it did not win. RIP. Okay, so I didn't know a lot about the Retro Hugos

before reading this. I know that we did Conjure Wife a while back, which was the winner for 1944. It was awarded in 2019. But I didn't look into the retro Hugos at that time.

Haley

That was because that was more for spooky stuff.

Amy

Exactly. We read it because it was creepy

Lori

And fun and filled with breakfast. So much breakfast. I did the transcript of that episode recently and I really enjoyed typing "eggs" "coffee" "sausage" "bacon" "sandwiches." <laughter>

Amy

So, retro Hugos started with the 1996 Worldcon. Currently, they are awarded for years after 1939, which was the year of the First Worldcon, in which no Hugos were originally awarded. Worldcons can give awards to works published 75 or 100 years prior to the Worldcon year. It used to be 50. But I think those are all taken up now.

Lori

Oh, so it's not like one year corresponding with the year that's awarded. Oh, okay, cool.

Amy

So retro Hugos have been awarded eight times for 1939, 1941, 43 through 46, 51 and 54. I also looked this up. Chicon 8 is not going to do retro Hugos for 1947, which would have been 75 years.

Lori

Okay.

Amy

They're gonna do a retrospective of the works and fandom of 1946, which is being spearheaded by a friend of the pod, Cora Buhlert.

Lori

Oh, cool!

Amy

Yayyyy, Cora! Cora, finalist for best fan writer award this year, I believe. And was last year.

Lori

Yes.

Amy

Chicon gave a lot of reasons for not doing a retro Hugo this year and noted that 1946 was a really interesting year for fandom, and they said, basically, 1946 was the first Worldcon held after World War Two, and was notable for several firsts, including the first non-American guests and the first woman guest of honor, E. Mayne Hull. And this was another thing that I read that was interesting. So as they said, "it's been increasingly difficult to get representatives from estates involved in the awards, leading us to question who we were really honoring when the creators are deceased. And the estates for the most part are uninterested." So that sort of led me to kind of think like, well, do you honor them - I think there's some purpose and giving out the retro Hugos because it gets people interested in the book again.

Lori
Yeah!

Amy
Which I think is a good enough reason to give out a retro Hugo even if no person is saying "thank you. Thank you. Thank you." Yeah, but I was curious what you guys thought about that.

Lori
I think it's fun to just have a reason to geek out over something collectively like, I like I wouldn't for myself, I wouldn't be like, "What were some good books in 1946?" But like, this is a prompt to look for and think about stuff that was written at the time and think about the context of it. So I think it's just an interesting and fun thing.

Amy
We never would have read this book if it hadn't been involved with Hugos, I don't think. I mean, it was recommended to us by our listener, Lise Andreasen. And so you know, I think that's why we're reading it. I don't know if she came across it because of the Hugos or not, but you know, it being a Hugo-adjacent book is why we're reading it. So I think that's a good reason to give them out. But I guess I get it.

Lori
There's never a bad reason to read stuff, you know?

Amy
No, no, there's not.

Lori
Amy, where did you get all this fun information?

Amy
Well, these were excerpts from the announcement from Chicon. But I pulled the excerpts off of File 770 Oh, cool. And that's where I got the Cora information. So shall we jump right in?

Lori

Let's do it.

Amy

Okay. Kallocain is told as a memoir of Leo Kall, a chemist living in Chemistry City #4 in the totalitarian bureaucracy called the Worldstate. Through most of the book, Leo is primarily preoccupied with one getting FDA approval for Kallocain, a truth drug he discovered which induces a person to tell their innermost thoughts and secrets, and two ferreting out whether Linda, Leo's wife, is having an affair with Ido Rissen, Leo's boss. While using Kallocain to hunt down people who get together in secret to do mutual trust exercises, it dawns on Leo that he can Kallocain Linda. While drugged, Linda says "no, there's no affair," but she also tells Leo she wants to kill him because she loves him too much. This revelation gives Leo and Linda a new lease on their marriage and turns Leo into a revolutionary. Leo goes from being a committed Worldstate soldier to being a person who understands that the Worldstate is not the be all, end all and that the importance of an individual human does not begin and end with that person's value to the state. Then Leo gets captured by invading enemies and rots in prison for the rest of his life. Never to see Linda again. The end. <Amy laughs>

Lori

I love that he gives Linda that truth serum and he's like, "Are you cheating?" She's like, "What? No, but I'm *definitely* going to kill you, first chance I get!" <laughter>

Amy

All right Goodies from Goodreads. What y'all got?

Haley

I'll go! So, this book got overwhelmingly four and five star reviews. Which is a good sign. And a lot of people while praising it also, you know, mentioned a common theme and that is, it is a very bleak book. So I found two that I really liked. Leslie said, "maybe the author did too good a job depicting a sterile meaningless world." <laughter> And Sayeed said, "the descriptions of people under the influence of the eponymous Kallocain were harrowing. Karin Boye sure did have a particular talent for writing torture, huh?"

Amy

Oh, she probably felt very tortured.

Lori

Yeah. Well, she did. We know she did. She ended her own life, like a year or so after this came out.

Amy

And she had been living as an out lesbian. She had a partner. And I'm sure that wasn't easy at the time.

Lori

I read that her partner also died by suicide very closely after her death. So she was definitely struggling. And some of the more scholarly reviews that I read said that her self is certainly reflected in what's going on with all of these characters.

Amy

I've struggled with depression my whole life. And some of the stuff she says in there is just very much a depressed person's view of the world. Like, "wouldn't it be nice to not have to worry about anything anymore," kind of language? Got anything?

Lori

I have two. I have a one star Goodreads review from Filippa. "I did not like the way it was written. Maybe just because I'm not big on older books, or maybe because there was just too much babbling going on." <laughter> All the babbling also, just "not big on older books?" This is why we need retro Hugos. And then Oscar rated at one star: "was hoping the writer would go a different direction with the theme of the story." Like did he think it was gonna have a happy ending? Poor Oscar!

Amy

"I wish this book was a different book."

Lori

He was like, "oh, boy, Linda and Leo are getting back together!" NOPE.

Haley

I mean, what was he thinking like? 1984 and Brave New World end so well! <laughter> This buoyant, dystopian genre.

Amy

My two Goodies from Goodreads were mainly humorous to me because of translation-ese. And they just were funny to me. One's from Noela that says, "this book was the first of its gender and this is weakness because those who followed were better." <Haley laughs>

Haley

Oh, first of its gender!

Lori

Like, was Goodreads doing automatic translation?

Amy

I don't know whether she put her own review through Google Translate, and came up with us. I don't know. But it was very funny.

Lori

Maybe *gender* meant to be *genre*.

Haley

Yeah. 100%.

Amy

Oh, maybe! And then the second one is from Liv Berquist. "He says many pages were just filled with text throughout the whole page." <laughter>

Haley

I don't expect that when I read books!

Amy

How dare these words be here?!

Lori

The funny thing is that *this* book actually doesn't have - the pages are *not* filled with text. The margins are quite large!

Amy

I think I mean, there are definitely times when people get under the Kallocain and they just sort of, you know, mind vomit. There were no paragraph breaks. Maybe that's the problem. <Amy laughs>

Lori

That's true. But with this book, quite literally, the pages are not filled with text.

Amy

Well Liv would disagree. There's just text throughout the whole page.

Lori

Maybe he thought it needed more pictures.

Haley

Oh, god this book does not need pictures!

Amy

I know that it was broken up into chapters, but I don't even think there were chapter headings.

Lori

I think there were chapter numbers.

Amy

Oh, does yours have chapter numbers? Mine doesn't.

Haley

Mine does. I have a different copy than y'all do, though.

Amy

Lori and I read a translation from 1966. And Haley read the newer translation. If we were really gonna get into it, I'd be curious about some translation differences.

Lori

Do you have a different translator? I have Gustaf Lannestock.

Haley

Yeah. David McDuff, 2019.

Amy

So the University of Wisconsin led this effort to get Swedish books, particularly, translated. So this is one of the ones they did. This whole text is on the internet. On the University of Wisconsin website.

Lori

Wow, I did not know that. I paid \$26, I think. I paid this to my local feminist bookstore. So it's all fine.

Amy

I did too! I'm not mad about it. Um, okay. So actually, I'm gonna start with what we were just talking about. So at the end of this book, Leo is imprisoned by the invading enemy, the Universal State, as opposed to the Worldstate, invades the Worldstate and captures Leo and makes off with him.

Haley

Universal State sounds like they're bigger and better.

Lori

Yeah, it's like Mr. World and Mr. Universe.

Amy

Yeah, it's that, universal, universal church, or whatever it's called.

Lori

Unitarian Universalist?

Amy

Yeah, they're a liberal people. But at the end of the book, you have a censor's note from the Universal State. And they're talking about basically, they're the same as the Worldstate. Which checks out because this book is basically a cautionary tale about Germany and the Soviet Union and their alliance that they made at the beginning of World War II. And now you have these two bordering totalitarian regimes. Anyway, I digress. So Leo was in jail at the end of this book, but by the last part of the book, he's become a revolutionary. He's seeing past the totalitarian regime. And he's, you know, feeling very countercultural. And then he gets arrested, and he's in jail. But then his last line is, "I still, in spite of it all, participate in creating a new world." He believes that he's still part of this change.

Haley

I didn't quite get that. In what way did he create a new world?

Amy

Well, just by seeing, I think. By seeing the Worldstate for what it is, and, you know, snapping out of this brainwashing they'd been doing and seeing individuals as worthwhile in their own right, and not as a tool of the state. You know, that kind of thing. But my main question was, so have you guys read - Brave New World and 1984?

Lori

I don't think I have.

Haley

I read it in high school. I love it.

Amy

Which one?

Haley

Brave New World.

Amy

Have you read 1984 too?

Haley

Yes.

Amy

Winston Smith is the guy in 1984. And so basically in a way, Winston kind of picks up where Leo lets off. He's trying to move against the state, kind of. He starts having this affair, like, there's this whole thing. And they get Winston.

Haley

And there's thought police there, which is similar to Kallocain.

Amy

And so 1984 ends with Winston being gone. Winston is taken off the planet. And so I'm curious. <to Haley> I guess it's just for you, since Lori hasn't read it.

Lori

You can teach me!

Amy

I'm curious whether you see 1984 or Kallocain as a more optimistic book, because Kallocain is obviously very dark in the way it's presented.

Haley

I think 1984 is, because he falls in love. He has that affair. They bone above the bookstore.

Amy

They do. It's very British. There's tea and feelings.

Haley

But this one is - there's no joy in this book. There's not one second of joy in this book.

Lori

There's *some*, I think.

Haley

I'm open to examples.

Lori

I think there is *some* joy in this book.

Amy

It's more like there's glimmers of hope. It's not really joy.

Lori

Yeah, I would agree with that.

Amy

Which is why I'm on the other side of you, because like, you know, there's these glimmers, there's these moments where it starts. I'll also say, Leo is not a very sympathetic character. Leo is a fellow soldier.

Lori

He's a snitch!

Amy

Yeah. And he's a snitch.

Lori

He engineers snitching.

Amy

Yeah, he's snitching, left and right. He's a believer and so I don't think you're supposed to really align yourself with him to a large degree. You're supposed to hope *he* changes, not that he changes others, which is the difference, I think with Winston. But he has these moments. There's this moment at the beginning where he goes to this festival and he sees this woman really upset because her daughter is going to be taken to a different city. She's going to work in another work district. And so this mother is sad. And she's hiding it. But this other dude kind of ferrets out what this woman is feeling and starts needling her and trying to get her to admit that she's upset or something.

Lori

And you're not supposed to put family bonds ahead of your bond with the Worldstate.

Amy

Right. And any empathy-type feelings are really forbidden. And you know, basically, it's just like, these are the sacrifices you make, and everybody's supposed to be okay with it. No secret feelings, just be okay with it. And Leo sees that this is happening. And in his speech at this festival, he sort of gets a little bit subversive. He's like, "shouldn't we be more grateful to these people who feel the sacrifice than people who don't," basically. And that gets him in trouble. But like, that's the first sort of inkling you get that Leo might have these undercurrents of, maybe not all is well with the Worldstate.

Haley

Or just, not all is well with his life. The Worldstate's fine by itself. I think what I don't like about books like this versus Brave New World - so Brave New World is a dystopia. And like, there's an authoritarian world regime. But at least with Brave New World, they give them drugs, like they take Soma. They're just always happy. They're constantly having sex. <Lori laughs>

Lori

They at least get to party.

Amy

Yeah, like, I mean, this is obviously a cautionary tale by people that were, you know, on the eve of World War II, but I just feel like fear is not enough to keep people in line, like humans would not do well in this sort of fake society. I don't know.

Amy

Well, I mean, North Korea right now is basically this.

Lori

And they're *not* doing well. I mean, I think you're correct.

Amy

They're not doing well, in that sense. I mean, this kind of bureaucracy can't take care of human beings very well.

Haley

Yeah. Like humans will break down.

Amy

But there are people who are loyal to that.

Haley

Because they're afraid. I mean, like all they have in these civilizations is fear. Like, that's what keeps people in line.

Amy

Well, fear and extreme brainwashing. So like, if you grow up? I don't know, I don't know. I mean, I'm speculating, obviously. But if you grow up in this kind of situation, and all, you know, is this, right? And you're never really told what you're told that the rest of the world is wrong, for these reasons. You know, you don't want to go there for these other reasons. And if you're the kind of person who doesn't question - there are plenty of people like that - they're not particularly, they're not interested in rocking the boat. I mean, people would go along with it. And there are several different examples of this. Maybe not not for long, maybe they didn't last long.

Haley

That's just what I mean, like, you can do this for like, you know, for as long as Stalin ruled or you know, for as long as others, but like, for hundreds of years of societies? I don't know if it's sustainable.

Amy

I think the problem is that when people get powerful, they can't help themselves. Stalin even started one way and then turned a corner at some point and started, you know, being violent towards his own people. And I think when that starts happening, people are like, "wait a second, this isn't the deal we made." And then maybe that starts off a chain reaction, I don't know.

Haley

On Wikipedia, I found this interesting quote and the letter to George Orwell about 1984 from Huxley and he wrote, "Whether an actual fact, the policy of the boot on the face can go on indefinitely seems doubtful. My own belief is that the ruling oligarchy will find less arduous and wasteful ways of governing and of satisfying its lust for power. And these ways will resemble those which I described in *Brave New World*." He went on to write, "Within the next generation, I

believe that the world's rulers will discover that infant conditioning and narco-hypnosis are more efficient as instruments of government than clubs and prisons, and that the lust for power can be just as completely satisfied by suggesting people into loving their servitude as by flogging and kicking them into obedience.”

Amy

Well, that's what's going on in this book, though. They're not being beaten every day.

Haley

Well, no, but like this book and 1984 have cameras in every room. There's people always listening; whereas, in Brave New World they have more freedom in a way.

Amy

But then don't really, but all of that is tamped down by the Soma.

Haley

Well, and so what they do is that they create people and they decant babies into like, they like basically just create them from IVF. But um, so they create people based on intelligence. So like, you have the A's that are like doctors and lawyers, then you have people down to like D's that have IQs of 60. And they dig the ditches and they work. So people are happy with their lot in life based on their intelligence level, which is interesting.

Lori

So I was going to say something, building off what you were saying, Amy about if you are raised this way, if you're conditioned from infancy to not question things. I think it's easy for us looking at this - and as we've said many times before, speculative fiction takes something to an extreme so that we can really examine it. But to your point about being raised in something so you don't question it, I think a good analogy for *us* would be like, people in other parts of the world look at the U.S. and they're like, “What do you mean people can't get their cancer treatment? Why would you accept that? Why do you accept that? Why do you live like that? Why are people dying when treatments and medication are abundantly available?” And some medications, life-saving medications, even get thrown away while people are dying from not having them. But like, as individuals, we're like, “Well, I don't know! That's what they gave us!” you know. So I think it's, like, easy for us to look at a book and be like “humans would never accept that!” But, you know, we're in our relative positions of privilege. And we live under a system that literally kills people and doesn't need to. So I think we are all actually susceptible to things that seem shocking.

Haley

Yeah, that's true.

Amy

Like, yeah, to other people. And it's even just slight differences too, that will make you kind of realize that. I do believe to a large degree, people accept the reality with which they are

presented. And they may question the edges of it, to some degree, but it's hard to execute a sea change over reality, because most people are like, "this is just how things are." I think we've come to be that way because, you know, if you grew up in a community, and your safety relies on your community, which is what humans were, for a really long time, you don't want to rock the boat, you want it to remain safe. So you exist in your little sphere, and you don't move too much.

Lori

Yeah, and this society in the book is engineered in such a way that people can't mobilize. So individuals don't have any power, but individuals *will* be shot to death if they're found to be agitators or enemies of the state, which is a very low bar. Like if you love your wife, you're an enemy of the state.

Amy

Another important thing is that people don't know what parts of what the state is telling them are true and what are not true. They're being told there's this enemy, there's these constant wars, that the surface is irradiated, and you can't live on it, and all this stuff, but they're not really given an opportunity to examine any of that. So they have to kind of take it on faith. So they have no idea what is true and what is not true. And I was reading, this is from the blankgarden.com, a review of Kallocain. And she was bringing up a lot of Hannah Ahrendt's philosophy. And one of the things that she wrote in the *Origins of Totalitarianism* was "the ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced communists, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction, i.e., the reality of experience, and the distinction between true and false, the standards of thought, no longer exist. What convinces masses are not facts, and not even invented facts, but only the consistency of the system of which they are presumably part."

Haley

Fox News. <Haley laughs>

Amy

Well, yeah, that's immediately what came to mind. It's like when you live in a post-fact world, then you just rely on this worldview, and nothing can shake the worldview, or everything falls apart. So that's how these people exist. And so when you see Leo, sort of periscoping out of this world and looking around and saying, "Oh, wait, this isn't what I thought." And then at the end, he doesn't go back. He's like, "no, no, I was right. There's going to be a new world." He believes that things will change. So going way back to what I was saying before. I think the reason it's a hopeful book is because if people continue to believe that the world will change, that's how you make the world change, right? Because if you don't think there's anything to change and you don't want to, then everything stays the same, right? And if you torture Winston Smith and kill him, because that's the thing about 1984 There's still torture in that book. There's a lot of physical threat to the people in that book. Unlike in this one. This is sort of an interior book.

Haley

I mean, I guess hope is good for Leo at the end of the book. He feels good, even though he's rotting away working for the enemy. So I mean, I guess one hope is better than nothing, but if you can't spread that hope? But there's also a theme throughout the book where like, some people can be a threat to the state even if they don't even open up their mouths. It's like their energy and their like positivity, maybe.

Amy

Which goes to the Kallocaïn right? So the Kallocaïn is used to ferret out - I keep saying the word *ferret*. I've said it like four times.<Lori laughs>

Lori

That's fine. I think that's fine!

Haley

It's just the Word of the Day!

Lori

<screams> Ahhhhhh!!!! Ding, ding, ding!!! <laughter>

Haley

You said the secret word!!!! <all scream> I hope you say it again.

Amy

...*Ferret*. <all scream> <laughter> Anyway, the Kallocaïn is like - the last bastion against the state is what's inside your skull, right? Like, you know, up till now, they couldn't get in there. And you could be as subversive as you want inside your brain. And as long as you didn't let it out, they couldn't do anything about it. But now Kallocaïn comes along and now people are like spewing their innermost thoughts and feelings and so now and then they pass a law in the book that says you can be convicted for this.

Haley

Yeah, this reminds me of the movie which I saw first and then there's a short story by Philip K. Dick - *Minority Report*. So that in that book slash movie, you know, they have these three mutants that work at the police department, basically, and they can predict whether a murder is gonna occur and so then they can go arrest you for a murder that you have not yet committed, but it's in your heart.

Amy

There is a part of me that, I will confess, <Haley laughs> likes the idea of being able to stop a crime before it happens because then we would not have traumatized victims.

Haley

Yeah, that's true.

Amy

But where do you draw the line, people?

Haley

Well, what's cool about it, at least in the movie, is that, you know, they go and intervene like one minute before it happens. So like, there's circumstantial evidence that it was about to take place. But yeah, that really turns the justice system on its head.

Amy

What is it when you're about to commit a crime, and you get the tools for your crime together? Is it just conspiracy? Maybe it's just like attempted murder, like you can be charged with attempted murder, these days if you have done a certain amount of things to lead up to the murder.

Haley

Oh, what do we think sex murder is in this book? I wrote that down.

Amy

Oh is that lust murder? It was called lust murderer in ours.

Lori

Oh is it like a crime of passion?

Haley

I assume sex murder was like raping and killing.

Amy

He's like, Yeah, lust, murder and sex murder are two different things.

Haley

Lust murder, I would have no question. But sex murder. I was like, ugh!

Lori

Amy! I would like to connect back to something that you said previously. We're just gonna skip sex murder! <Haley laughs> Well, that's an interesting translation difference. I think it's worth mentioning. But I would assume a lust murder is a crime of passion.

Haley

Yeah, like manslaughter.

Lori

But you're not allowed to be jealous of someone sleeping with your wife. So what is it lust murder?? I don't know.

Amy

This guy was like, he fantasized about lust murder. So I don't know if it can be a crime of passion.

Lori
Oh, yeah!

Haley
Cuz he hadn't done it.

Amy
It has to be some sort of psychosexual killing or something like that.

Haley
Yeah I think it's a sex crime.

Lori
Oy! Anyway.. So when you said you thought it was hopeful at the end, and I was very surprised. But you made a good point about how he's like, yeah, my mind is freed to an important degree. And when you said that, I thought, Oh, that makes a lot of sense. Because there were all those people that they talked to when they were under Kallocain who had no organization, no meetings, no structure, but they were just intellectually aware that this system was oppressive and not good. And they were not happy with it. But they weren't talking about it. And so like, the state viewed that as a threat. So if the state views the simple awareness as a threat, and the thinkers view their awareness as a degree of freedom, then it *is* going to create change. If it didn't have the potential for change, then the state would not fear people simply having that awareness. So I think that really reinforces what you said about it being hopeful at the end.

Amy
I mean, and the people talk on when they're under the Kallocain, and they're talking about how they can sort of tell, just by passing someone in the street, if they're a believer, you know?

Lori
Like if they're in Ul Qoma or Beszel? <laughter>

Haley
Well, I think sometimes it depends on a country's situation, whether how amenable the people may be to an oppressive regime. So I imagine in Russia, they've had some rough times. If a new government comes along, and they can make the trains run on time, and you get fed, it's like, "Well, shit, it's better than nothing."

Amy
They were controlled by religion for a long time. So they were a people who were used to having someone tell them what to do, kind of.

Haley

I think this would not work in America. We couldn't even get people to wear masks.

Amy

And yet we have a large quantity of people in this country who are very interested in falling in line, and curtailing rights and curtailing education and curtailing all these things, because they don't believe it follows in their....

Lori

Weirdly, in the name of rugged individualism. It's very confusing.

Amy

I know! That's the irony.

Haley

Also oxymoronic is the fact that the Worldstate is always like, "we need more people. We need more women to pump out babies," but then they're taking away so many people.

Lori

I was thinking about how you really see towards the end how it is going to self-destruct. Because if you kill everybody who has a thought, that's everybody!

Haley

Yeah, you can't run a society based on that.

Amy

Leo says to the police guy in this book, at some point, he's like, "You can't arrest two-thirds of the population" and the police guy's like, "why not?!"

Haley

Why not? The budget will be great.

Lori

And it's interesting being able to see Leo's so much of his interior life because he is one of the finger pointers and also he is a blossoming subversive. And so he's pointing the finger at all these people while he's also actively concealing the same thoughts, which of course reminded me once again of the people who are like, "there's pedophiles everywhere" and then like lo and behold, you find out some news, you know?

Amy

You always hate the thing that reminds you of yourself the most. That's why my father and I fight. Because we are the same. <laughter> But, totalitarianism you know, what are you gonna do?

Lori

Can't live with it, can't live without it. <laughter>

Haley

Let's talk about their lives. So they get a monthly ration of sleeping pills. The kids are gone a lot. There's home help. You got off-duty work four times a week. You get the Alexa in every room, the Alexa ear and eye.

Lori

Some of that list in isolation - I'm like, okay. There's a creche, there's a housekeeper, there's plenty of sleeping pills! <laughter>

Amy

There's a big part of me that would really like for someone to be like, here's your work suit. Here's your leisure suit. Your spare suit. You never have to worry about clothes again. <laughter>

Haley

I hope they're flight suits.

Lori

They have to be!

Amy

Yeah. They have to be flightsuits. Yeah. And their days are very regimented. And they're kept very busy. And so I think that they're either kept very busy or they're watched. So I think, you know, there's not a lot of room in there, except for your one leisure night a week.

Haley

Or it's like Lisa Simpsons closet where it's just like seven orange dresses. <laughter> There's another Simpsons reference for you guys.

Amy

That's like Elizabeth Holmes, when she decided she was going to wear one thing.

Haley

Or Steve Jobs. It's like a thing people do.

Amy

Because Steve Jobs did it. Yeah. God bless him.

Haley

Mark Zuckerberg wears the same hoodie every day.

Amy

Yeah, you know, like, there's something to be said for taking that part out of your anxiety.

Haley

I also like at one point, Leo meets somebody, maybe it's the chief. Maybe it's somebody else.

But he's like, I saw you in the Fellow Soldiers Portrait Album, which is just Facebook.

Yeah.<laughter>

Lori

Oh, I didn't catch that!

Amy

Oh, yeah. He meets the like, chief of the chiefs! And he's like, I recognize his eyebrows and nose from the -

Haley

Fellow Soldiers Portrait Album. <Lori laughs> That's like a yearbook.

Lori

It's like that scene in The Social Network where he's like, "if you'd invented Facebook, you would have invented Facebook!" Well, buddy, it looks like maybe someone else invented it.

Amy

Karine created Facebook, back in the day. God bless. I wanted to ask you guys, so our friend Leo lives in Chemistry City #4. There's reference to other cities where they do specific things.

Haley

Textile city!

Amy

What city would you live in?

Haley

If it's based on occupation, I would work in Marketing Metropolis #69.

Amy

So you'd work for the propaganda minister, Chief of Bureau #7?

Haley

Probably.

Amy

Okay. <to Lori> What do you think?

Lori

Fuuuuck. <Amy laughs> As soon as you brought that up, I was like, Uh-oh, I'm gonna fail this test. I don't know.

Amy

I don't really know either. I'm not sure what my skillset is.

Haley

I think y'all would work in the Legal Quarter.

Amy

I think I could probably do some sort of handiwork.

Haley

What?! Nooo! <Haley laughs>

Lori

Handiwork?! <Lori laughs>

Amy

Like if someone was like, "Here's the pattern for this shirt. Make the shirt fifty times."

Haley

I'm sure there's lawyers here!

Lori

Okay, so people do get divorced left and right in this society, so actually I slot right in. <Amy laughs>

Amy

You would be a divorce lawyer? You'd be running the divorce bureaucracy?

Lori

Totally! I'd be like, alright, it sounds like it's not working. And actually my job would be a lot easier because it sounds like people don't accumulate property. Their children are really property of the state. So there's no custody. There's no property division. I'd just be like, alright, sign here. Sign here.

Amy

Well, you know, there's probably 18 forms in triplicate to get a divorce in the capitol.

Lori

Watch me do a form! <Haley laughs>

Amy

I know, yeah. You would still have work to do, it just wouldn't be -

Lori

My attention to detail and my ability to press hard enough through three carbon copies is unparalleled. <laughter>

Haley

It would be like the bureaucracy scene in Jupiter Ascending.<laughter>

Lori

That is such a good scene!

Haley

It's one of my favorite scenes of almost any movie.

Lori

Going to the clerk's office is THE worst. And it is such a good scene.

Amy

Everybody go watch Jupiter Ascending.

Lori

One day, we're gonna watch it and do a special

Amy

I live for that day. I live for that day. Okay, so I'm doing handiwork and you guys are working for propaganda bureaucracy #7...

Haley

You would work for the construction police bureau.

Lori

Oh, yeah. Buildings, permits. Yeah!

Amy

Okay. Okay. I could build some stuff. But in the Worldstate, I honestly would probably just be poppin' out babies.

Haley

Yeah, well, yeah. Because the wife works in the laundry.

Amy

Should we talk about Linda? Let's talk about poor Linda. So Linda and Leo are married, they have three kids, one of their kids has gone off to the children's camp. Why do these future books always take the kids out of the home?

Lori

I think it depends on what kind of book it is. Because in a lot of books, I like it, where there's like communal child rearing. And like, it seems nice. It seems like everyone is responsible for everyone's children. And in other books, the parent/child/family bond is not so interfered with. It's not frustrated. It's not a taboo. But you definitely have more of a communal child rearing. And I think that's a good thing. I mean, it may not be right for every family, but I might be more likely to have children if I knew I had a built-in support network, you know? I mean, I still probably wouldn't - I don't want anyone to be like, Oh, Lori wants kids. I don't!

Haley

I know that you do not. <laughter>

Lori

Like yeah, I just think it would be easier for people too.

Amy

Sure. Especially if you need to keep working as well.

Lori

And I think it's good for children to have multiple adults invested in their health and wellbeing and success and things like that. So I think in some books, it sounds great to me. But then in books like this, the whole purpose is to make the child a cog in the state machine. So the parents are like a formality.

Haley

That's why in Brave New World, it goes in the opposite direction. Like there's no parents, there's just like, you are born and raised communally with no parent figures besides like community parent figures, but I think the idea of the nuclear family really came about in America in the 1940s and 50s and 60s And it wasn't very natural. Like, it's weird that we all went into separate houses to have just 2.5 kids. For most of human society, you lived in extended families, blended families, old people were with you, you know, like, sometimes your uncle was with you.

Lori

There's a support network, if someone gets sick, or if someone has an injury, or someone dies.

Amy

You still had a family unit. I mean, you still had parents, mother/father.

Haley

Oh, yeah, that's always existed. But it wasn't just like this isolated thing that you would go off into, like Levittown, New Jersey?

Amy

Yeah, no. I'm not necessarily advocating for our weird suburban way of doing things here, where everybody lives in their house, and nobody ever talks to each other. But I mean, parents throughout history have historically wanted to stay with their children. So it's interesting to me that these future books, a lot of that - when there's creches or whatever. I don't know if it's the same kind of exercise as trying to envision a different economic system. So you're trying to envision a sort of a different futuristic family system. I don't know if it's any more complicated than that, really. But it's just interesting to me that it keeps coming up.

Haley

It seems kind of like a waste of time to have the kids there only some of the time. Like, you'd think they'd be gone most of the time. I don't know. Like, it seems like splitting the difference between like this traditional way of doing it, and also this really subversive...

Amy

Why would this particular society put the kid back in the house? That's a really good point, because they take the kids. So it's, you know, at some point, you hit a certain age, you get taken off to kiddie camp, and then you go to youth camp, and then you're a fellow soldier, but in this society, like one night a week or something like that, you come back and stay with your parents.

Haley

Yeah, like, what does that give the kid? I don't know.

Lori

I mean, perhaps they tried it, where the children had no family bonds at all. And they realized that they were just raising, like, complete psychopaths. <Amy laughs> I do think, I mean, even in this situation, you have to recognize that people do need some type of bond with each other. I mean, they do allow for marriage. And there's gotta be some basis, some reason for doing things. I guess!

Amy

It's an odd thing to do, for the state to allow marriage because they want very clearly to cut off emotional ties between people.

Haley

Yeah, it's like being a Jedi.

Amy

Maybe marriages help them by letting these two people keep an eye on one another.

Lori

Totally, because they will snitch on each other. And it, you know, it puts people in a situation where they are likely to procreate, even if occasionally.

Amy

Although they have a police eye planted in the room where you're supposed to procreate!

Lori

I actually was so interested in the part where Leo was talking about, early in his marriage when he was younger, he kind of liked boning in front of the police eye. <laughter> He was like, "yeah, check out what I got going on." And now he's just like, "ugh," but at a point, he had sort of an exhibitionist streak, which I thought was funny. I was like, okay, Leo. Yeah, maybe you're cool. But I also think that you may also be disincentivized to have more children if your child is taken away from you immediately. So it could also be throwing some sort of bone to the family. So they still feel like, this is a family and they might want to have more children. But I think if you had had the experience of having your child ripped away from you immediately, and you never saw that child again. You might be like, "yeah, we're not doing this again."

Amy

Which brings us to Linda. Poor Linda. Linda and Leo get married. They are living together. Leo does not know if he can trust Linda, but he loves her, I think, in his Leo kind of way. And so he's upset because he can't possess her. He can't, he doesn't feel close enough to her.

Lori

And he thinks she's cheating with his boss.

Amy

He doesn't trust her. Yeah.

Haley

With absolutely no evidence.

Amy

Other than like, one time they worked together at some point. I guess.

Lori

She's spoken well of him a couple of times. <laughter>

Amy

How dare!

Lori

Well, and you're not really supposed to have friends.

Amy

So yeah, and he doesn't have a lot to think about, and doesn't like Rissen. Leo has a visceral dislike of this guy, for reasons that become clear later. But anyway, so Leo and Linda living together, he doesn't know if you can trust her and wants to put her under the Kallocain to find out what's going on. And when he does, Linda says "No - no affair. I do want to kill you. Also, let me tell you about this revelation I had about our children." And then she goes into this long, heartbreaking speech. She had her first kid and felt like, you know, I don't know. <to Lori> Maybe - you'll probably tell it better than I will.

Lori

Well, I read it the day before yesterday. It's fresh. But she has this really heartbreaking speech about how she has her first child and she's so glad it's a boy because she's really internalized - so instead of a Misogynist Moment, we'll have an Internalized Misogynist Moment. Okay, she's really internalized how women are just vessels for producing more fellow soldiers. And so she's like, I wish I were a man so I could really *be* a fellow soldier and they're just like, paying us a compliment. Basically being nice to us by being like, "of course, you're valuable. Of course, you're equal," and she's like, everyone really knows we're not. We're really just here to produce more boys for the state. And she even says at one point, "I hoped at some point in the future, they could throw out everything but the ovaries and continue to produce more fellow soldiers," and it's heartbreaking. And then she's so glad she has a son because then she's like, Oh, I've really done something. And then she has a daughter. And she's watching her son grow up. And she feels bad that he leaves the house and she misses him. And she's like, Why am I so selfish? And she has this daughter, and it sounds like her daughter's quirky. Her daughter's a little bit weird. And as she watches her daughter grow up being a little bit of a weirdo. And it's like, she *loves* that about her. She loves that she's weird. She wants her to just be a little weirdo. And she just starts like seeing other people as people and individuals, and then also seeing herself as a person and an individual. And it's just devastating. And I think the writing is beautiful. There were parts where I just paused and sat and reread some of what she was saying. And I was like, this book! This is a sad book. It's not a fun read. But I think it's a really good book.

Amy

I agree. And then she has that third kid, which she sort of talks about in stages. Like stage one, I had this boy, I was fully a member of the State. Stage two, I had this daughter and I started seeing people for what they were. In stage three, I have this third daughter and realize that I am the font of creation. And that every child has an end and a path of its own and - I got chills just talking about this. But that whole part is just so affecting, and I think I mean, it must be our girl Karine bleeding through. You know, and talking about this - I thought it was really good.

Lori

There's a part where she talks about being a mother. Where she says anyone can be a mother.

Amy

I have it written down. It's my Feminist Favorite.

Lori

So we can save it then.

Amy

Okay.

Lori

Well, I wanted to mention one of the things where I thought the writing was just really beautiful. And I was struck by it. So on my page 168, after Leo puts Linda under the Kallocain, and he's so scared, she's gonna murder him. <laughter> As soon as she wakes up from it. And I was kind of like, well, you sort of asked for it!

Haley

That's my Feminist Favorite. <Amy laughs>

Lori

But he also kept talking about how she was stronger than him. And in part of her monologue under the Kallocain, she's like, "men are naturally stronger than us." And I was like, I don't know, it sounds like you could take Leo! Leo's worried about it. But so they have this talk. And she comes to from the Kallocain, and she seems to be fully aware of everything that she said, because sometimes - there's like some question, I think, of if they fully understand everything that they've disclosed or not?

Amy

One of the selling points of this drug is that when you come out of it, you remember everything you said.

Lori

Oh okay, yeah. I missed that a little bit. So she's, like, fully aware of what she said. And he feels like he should say something, but he's not exactly sure what he should say. So he just goes and lays his head in her lap, which is such a tender thing to do. He compares this renewed bond or like this bond that they've had, but they haven't been able to acknowledge. And so now it's like, it's out there. And he compares it to being a completely exhausted person finally being allowed to sleep. And the quote is, "I was released from one communion" - and that's the one with the state. "I was released from one communion which was choking me, and delivered into a new simple, obvious one, which supported but did not bind."

Amy

Oh, some of the lines about marriage are good. Really good. Like she says at one point, he describes his marriage to Linda as a series of defeats where victories had been expected. But then he says, "It's appropriate to use the word love when in the midst of hopelessness, two people still cling to each other as if in spite of all a miracle might take place." It's beautiful.

Lori

When she says after the Kallocain, she says, "You have opened me by force like canned goods." It's just so, it's so evocative. It's so stark.

Amy

The way she wrote about when he puts her under the Kallocain, and she's, you know, not a willing participant in sort of laying herself bare. Like the phraseology that she uses is very much about rape. And it's, it was very impactful. I thought it was very good.

Haley

Yeah.

Amy

I wanted to say some of the things she writes are funny. I like when he's talking about alcohol. So Kallocain, you know, makes anybody disclose their personal secrets. And then he's like, "Do you remember when people used to use alcohol? <laughter> It used to make homes miserable, ruined health, and in the worst cases, led to a trembling of the whole body with hallucinations of white mice, chickens, and such." <Lori laughs> Which I thought was very funny.

Lori

I would not be surprised if this woman had a very sharp wit.

Amy

And I also thought it was kind of funny that every Friday people would apologize over the radio between eight and nine! <Lori laughs> And I kinda would like to reinstate that.

Haley

Just apologizing.

Lori

There's definitely an absurdity to it.

Amy

I just would like people who have wronged America to come on the radio and apologize between eight and nine every Friday.

Lori

And it's voluntary, you don't have to, but you have the opportunity to. And you're encouraged to. But no one's gonna come to your house and give you a citation and make you do it.

Amy

Yes. Because *not* totalitarian. Famously. <laughter>

Lori

Exactly. What we want is for people to *want* to be better.

Haley

Help us help you. <laughter>

Amy

Oh, the voluntary sacrificial service!

Lori

Oh, god.

Amy

Ugh! So laboratory experiments and other experiments, I'm assuming, are performed on people whose job it is to be human lab rats, basically. Which, you know, you do have to do human trials. So like, now it's just purely voluntary, I suppose.

Haley

But like how voluntary? I feel like it's not that voluntary.

Amy

Now? Here?

Haley

No, I mean, like, even in this book.

Amy

No, this was not voluntary!

Lori

It's your career to be a test subject. It's not like, well, "I have this, this uncommon illness and there's a new treatment. And I would like to sign up for it."

Amy

It's not like you see on Instagram: "Do you have depression? Are you in a relationship?"

Lori

Let us not pretend, though, that the United States has not conducted many an involuntary trial on particularly marginalized groups of people. But yeah, this is like, it's your full time job for your life. And then they see the increasing decrepitude of people who have been used as test subjects. And they're like, they get paid in like, thanks. They're like, "Oh, You're the bravest among us! You're the best of us!" And they're like...<weakly> "Yeah, I am..."

Haley

"I miss my leg!" <laughter>

Amy

Leo goes to that Disney focus group for the propaganda video.

Lori

That was a very weird scene!

Haley

I did not understand it one bit! <laughter>

Amy

It was very weird. It's when he's at the Capitol. He ends up at this random propaganda meeting where they're going to make a new video to get people to volunteer for the Voluntary Service.

Haley

But it can't be too - it's like the Goldilocks of being inspirational. <laughter>

Amy

Right! It can't have a happy ending. It has to have a *sad* ending so that people want to fix it and then -

Lori

They have to feel stirred by it, not frightened by it. Motivated!

Amy

And then I was like, this is how Disney makes all their movies, as well as Mr. Spielberg. That's how they make all their movies. They're like, "I know exactly what to do to *stir* them."

Lori

The exact right amount

Amy

Exactly.

Haley

For me, it just takes a swelling orchestra and I will cry. <laughter>

Amy

Sports movies, and swelling orchestras? I'm done. Okay, let's move to Feminist Favorite.

Haley

So even though there's lots of internalized misogyny with the female characters hating themselves and there's this push to only be vessels for procreation. The leader of the Seventh

Bureau is like a Tilda Swinton lady. What's her name? Kalipso Lavris. And she's like, just like an icy bitch. And I love her.

Amy

She's shirt and trousers, man. She's Chief of the Propaganda Ministry, Seventh Bureau.

Haley

Why would they let a woman be that high up if they hate women?

Amy

Well, I don't know that they overtly hate women in this society. I think that Linda just felt like they were.

Haley

Well, she's probably not wrong.

Amy

One success story does not no-prejudice make.

Lori

Also like, what's a "success story?" Like, there are always marginalized people who carry water for their oppressors. You know, there are women who are like, "Yeah, we *should* be in the home," you know, "we *should* do what we're told, we *should* submit to our husbands." And those women like, achieve a degree of what *they* would call success or fame or notoriety or whatever. They sell some stupid book. And so to me, this is kind of like that.

Haley

So I think this is, it's the opposite. Because she's the minister of propaganda. So like in Nazi Germany, there were no higher-up women. So like, I think it's interesting that she chose to have one be higher up. But yeah, it could be a fluke.

Lori

Yeah, I mean, I think it's probably a deliberate choice. But I also think that these types of people will always elevate a select handful of compliant minorities.

Amy

It could also be a flaw of the narrative. Y

Haley

It's kind of like in the early Star Wars movies from the 70s and 80s. There's only white British men in the empire. And then by the sequel trilogy, there's all kinds of different types of human beings that are on the bad side.

Amy

I would like to read aloud some of the descriptions of Kalipso Lavris.

Lori

What a fun name! Kalipso.

Haley

It sounds like fun!

Amy

"A thin-necked woman, behind her desk, her skin stretched over lips and cheeks in a permanent ironic smile." <Lori laughs> (Haley: It's Tilda, man.) "Her age was indefinite, her bearing stiff as an ancient idol. She's half-human." (Lori: It *is* Tilda!) "She has an enormous pimple on the left side of her nose, just about to reach its full ripeness."

Lori

Ripeness!!

Haley

Oh, I like that. Such a detail.

Amy

"In her face, one could not read anything personal. Her immobility held in check no secret springs, the crystal-clear personification of logic, cleansed of individuality's incidentals."

Lori

That reminds me of Tilda in Moonrise Kingdom when she's Social Services. And that's the whole name. She's like, "I am Social Services!"

Haley

The pimple description is such a weird thing to include, and it reminds me. So one summer I sat on the front porch of my house, and I read all Of Mice and Men in one setting. And there's one part where one of the characters reaches up and "plucks a ripe pimple off of his neck." And I don't know why I remember that. But like, it's always stuck in my head. <Lori laughs>

Lori

<makes gagging sound> And now I'm gonna remember it! <Lori laughs>

Amy

And we're talking earlier, this is my other Feminist Fav - when Linda says she's envisioning this new world. And she says, "perhaps a new world may grow from those who are mothers, whether they are men or women and whether they have given birth to children or not."

Lori

I love it.

Amy
I love that too.

Haley
That is good.

Lori
Because her definition here of a mother is a person who can see potential for other people, a person who has empathy. That's a mother.

Amy
Yeah, that's beautiful.

Lori
Love it.

Amy
We did internalized misogyny for our Misogynist Moment. I don't have any other Misogynist Moments.

Lori
Yeah, just poor Linda.

Haley
I wrote down, the very first test subject for Kallocain, #135 really hates women. And when he's speaking his truth, he's like, "They're deceitful". And he says, "The ones in the VSS aren't really women anymore," which is one of the worst insults you could hurl at a woman.

Amy
Yeah, like, what does that mean? It means you are not *my vision* of a woman.

Haley
Exactly. Yeah. It's like, what do you mean, I'm not a woman? Ugh.

Amy
I swear I am though!

Lori
I wonder if there's some connection there to like, whatever terrible testing and surgeries they may have undergone. It's awful in a lot of ways.

Amy
I don't think there's any boobs.

Lori
Not one boob.

Haley
You gotta keep them in the suit.

Amy
When women write a book, you don't get very many boobs.

Haley
That's true.

Lori
Yeah, cuz they're just body parts. They're like elbows. <Amy laughs>

Amy
Fantastical Food. The food we eat in this book includes corn porridge, potato soup, pea soup, and there is a reference to bad beef stew.

Lori
So there's food, but it is not fantastical.

Amy
No. Although I do like a beef stew.

Lori
Yeah, I know. None of that really sounds bad.

Amy
Potato soup is good!

Haley
I mean, it sounds like they're at sea, kinda.

Amy
I doubt their potato soup comes with cheese and sour cream and chives.

Haley
It's like a watery potato soup. There's no cream in it. <laughter>

Amy
Soap Stuff. So -

Amy & Lori
Truth serums!

Amy
Truth serums are *pretty* soapy!

Haley
Basically roofie-ng your wife to give her a truth serum and find out if she's cheating on you is like the height of Soap Stuff.

Amy
What's the woman who played Marlina?

Lori
Deidre Hall. <Haley laughs>

Amy
Thank you. I can see her being truth serumed. In a satin nightgown.

Lori
I'm sure people have been truth serumed on Days, in the past 200 years that it's been on television.

Haley
Yeah. And there's like a real truth serum. It's like sodium hydroxide?

Amy
There's several. And actually, there were two that were being talked about a lot, when this book was being written. One of them was something usually given to pregnant women for I think anti-nausea -

Haley
Who's the daddy?! <laughter>

Amy
They still use it. But the doctor, an obstetrician who prescribed it, noticed that it made them a lil' talky! <Lori laughs> So he started trying to get the army to use it as a truth serum. I looked into truth serums when I was reading this book, so I was like, where are we on this? What's the truth serum status? And it's sort of like alcohol and someone who's drunk. You start talking. But it doesn't necessarily mean that what you're saying is reliable.

Lori
It just lowers your inhibitions.

Amy
Exactly.

Haley
It's like what they say about torture too like, sometimes it works. Sometimes it doesn't.

Lori
If I accidentally discovered a truth serum, I'd be like, "No one needs to know." That'd be like the one thing that I would actually keep a secret, in my life.

Amy
It's like being given the One Ring. Can I wield this power?

Lori
I'd put it in a drawer. No, I cannot.

Haley
I don't ever want the ability to read someone's thoughts.

Amy
I might, I might.

Haley
I would, if I could make sure that it was never about me. But if I can read someone's thoughts about something else.

Amy
I assume it's always about me. And it usually never is, probably. Like, we always assume everybody else is thinking about us, but they usually aren't. I had one other Soap Stuff. There was this part where she says that police ears and eyes, quote, unquote, "for technical reasons, could not be installed in elevators." And I got really upset by the end of the book that we did not have a clandestine meeting with someone in an elevator.

Lori
Oh yeah, it does seem like an obvious place.

Haley
I know. It doesn't make any sense why not.

Amy
For "technical reasons," Haley. "Technical reasons."

Haley

But she did that on purpose.

Amy

I think she just forgot to come back to it! <laughter> I think she was setting something up and then we just didn't get the payoff.

Haley

It's because they move too fast.

Amy

They go up and down.

Lori

Or you can't like, wire it? Like, it's moving. The wires will get squished...

Amy

You needed wires for everything.

Haley

That's true. Although elevators run by wires.

Lori

Cables, cables on a pulley. So I guess the - I don't know.

Amy

Guys, did you like this book?

Lori

I did. I think it's a really good book. And, in talking about it, it kept reminding me of the book that you and Kevin and I read, Amy, *When the Sparrow Falls*, that the country is like so out of step with the whole rest of the world but they don't really know it, or they've been taught that the whole rest of the world is wrong, and then they suddenly start to be like, "Why *don't* we have enough to eat?" I think if you like that book, you will enjoy this book, and vice versa.

Haley

It sets out what it accomplishes, but I did not enjoy myself reading it, which is one of my hallmarks for liking a book.

Amy

It's, it's bleak.

Lori

Yeah. It's not like, "Oh, boy! Can't wait to read it again!" You know? But I think it's good.

Haley

I mean, I had to like, be in a specific mind state to pick it up and read.

Amy

Well, I kind of like that I got down a little bit to the wire with finishing it before we recorded and so I'm glad that happened. Because I think otherwise, I might have had to do that. Like, "I don't feel like reading this book tonight."

Haley

It's better to read it in a big chunk.

Amy

I think that the fact that I had to read it kind of all at once was better, because it just sort of puts you in that place. And you don't leave, and it works in that kind of way. But yeah, it's not. It's not like you have a lot of joy reading the book. So yeah. But it's good!

Lori

I think she's an excellent writer. And I think that really works for me riding around in Leo's head, like in real time and seeing his interior life versus his exterior behaviors. I think that's so well-executed.

Amy

It's fascinating, because people don't always do exactly what they're thinking. Like, it's a very human thing to like, do things that are contrary to what you want to do. I don't know why we do that. But we do.

Haley

Because we contain multitudes.

Amy

We contain multitudes, Haley! And I think she's great at portraying that. She's very good at human nature, like humans are going to do this thing no matter what situation they are in. These various things, including fall in love, including want human connection, including not doing what you intend all the time.

Haley

Yeah, I mean, I think this book is a testament to why even though she was very afraid of, you know, the coming storm of, you know, Nazism and totalitarianism in Russia, she's like, it's not going to work. It will never last forever. So that's hopeful in itself.

Amy

She took a trip to the Soviet Union. And she was very into this idea before she went to the Soviet Union. And when she went there and came back, she was like, "Nope, this is not gonna be good." <laughter>

Haley

Yeah, I mean, all the leaders of these big, you know, fascist regimes - they're all hypocrites.

Amy

Yeah. And I think eventually people cottoned on to it and - people, man!

Lori

So can we agree it's neither Star Wars nor Lord of the Rings? <Lori laughs>

Amy

Yeah, the only thing I said was, uh, maybe it's Star Wars because I think Darth Vader would like to rule the Worldstate.

Haley

Yeah, I put that it was Star Wars because this is what it would be like to live under the Galactic Empire.

Amy

Yeah. That's kind of where I was.

Lori

Ohh, I like that! So Star Wars. Man, I am not good at this! <laughter> I was just like, oh, well, there's nothing to talk about there.

Amy

We all have our strengths. You bring Soap Stuff to the table! Alright guys, what are we reading next time?

All

<gasp and shriek happily>

Haley

So I was just transcribing the Hyperion episode, which I think we recorded right after Lori read The Terror for the first time, and every five minutes she was like, "This reminds me of The Terror." <laughter>

Lori

I don't think it was right after I read it, I just - the scenes that I liked in it really reminded me of the Terror.

Haley

No, it's true because it is written by the same guy, Dan Simmons.

Amy

I just transcribed...What did I just transcribe? I just transcribed Starship Troopers, which was the first time we mentioned that we wanted to do an episode about The Terror.

Haley

Yeah, we're finally following through.

Amy

We're finally doing The Terror!

Lori

Yes, and we've had so many people be like, sure talk about The Terror a lot, why isn't there an episode?

Haley

And we've gotten so many people to read it.

Amy

And it has nothing to do with the Hugos!

Lori

Dan Simmons is a Hugo Award winner. So it's adjacent.

Haley

Also, it's our podcast.

Lori

The reason I thought The Terror is that I've read 2.5 of his books now. And they really have - he's got high points that seem to be templates to me. And they work! I like them! But they feel very familiar.

Haley

He does suspense very well.

Amy

He's got a winning formula.

Haley

I can't wait to spend time with our men again. It's been a minute since I've read it. So yeah, I'll make some hard tack for us. Maybe some pea soup.

Lori

Oh, boy! I hope my hard tack is monogrammed.

Haley

It will be. So, I've been watching videos - I won't do this for y'all. And I probably won't do it at all. But I've been watching a lot of videos on how to make salt pork.

Lori

You can make some for Amy.

Haley

You just put pork in salt.

Amy

Can you make salted tofu?

Lori

Maybe! Fish?

Haley

Oh, I'll find some salt fish! Because they definitely have salt fish or like salted codfish at DeKalb Farmers Market.

Amy

We can have a rum ration and some antiscorbutics.

Haley

I can get some canned food and we could dent them. <laughter>

Amy

Please just give me an atmosphere! We're all gonna get botulism.

Lori

No thank you, no lead, no botulism.

Haley

I wish that we were recording this in the winter.

Amy

Should we all get scurvy before we record so that we can talk about it from first-hand experience? <Haley laughs>

Lori

Apparently when you get scurvy, it starts to reverse like the minute you get vitamin C!

Haley

Your body's collagen is like, "thank you!" The teeth just like immediately pop back in. I liked when the pirate got scurvy on Our Flag Means Death. <Lori laughs>

Amy
I need to finish that.

Lori
It's so good!

Amy
So The Terror, next time! Tune in. Okay, bye!

All
Bye!

<OUTRO MUSIC>

Kevin
<slurps Coke>

Amy
You can't slurp your cup if we're doing room tone! Rude!!

Lori
Jeez!! You're fired. <Haley laughs>