

<INTRO MUSIC>

Lori 0:12

Hello.

Amy 0:14

Hi.

Haley 0:15

Hey there.

Lori 0:17

Welcome to Hugo Girl. (Amy: That's us!) The podcast, where we read Hugo award-winning novels and sometimes other things, but mostly Hugo award-winning novels. And today's selection is a Hugo award-winning novel called Dreamsnake. (Amy: Snakes!) (Haley: Snek!) so many of Haley's favorite things: snakes, horses, so many things. We got a few reviews and nice notes from people.

Amy 0:48

A few! Look at us.

Lori 0:50

Yeah, yeah, I had to condense them. So - (Amy: an embarrassment of riches!) Let me tell you, every word is appreciated. But I did condense them for brevity's sake.

Amy 0:59

Lori's cup runneth over.

Lori 1:01

I mean! So, nice friend Ivor, we met him when we went on a panel on Hugos There, with our friend Seth (Amy: what a delight!) He is a delight. And he sent us a very nice message and left us a nice comment on Facebook. And he said, the short version, he said, I got introduced to your podcast way back on Seth's Hugos There podcast crossover he did with you. And he said, been binge listening today while I do the chores and all infectious banter and laughter has kept me going all day. (Haley: Aww!: (Amy: Banter!) I know, it's so nice. And then another nice friend, Bob Morrell. Bob sent us an email. And he was so nice. He said, How can I leave you a review? Because I'm always shamelessly begging for reviews. (Amy: Bob doing the work.) <Haley laughs> And Bob went out of his way to leave us a review on Apple Podcasts (Amy: He sure did! He navigated all of Facebook.) He did. Bless him. Thank you, Bob. (Amy: Thank you, Bob.) And so an excerpt of his review on Apple Podcasts is: Their ability to enjoy books that have not aged well <Lori coughs: Ringworld!> is something that this aged science fiction fan appreciates. Science fiction often looks at things from alien perspectives. And for a lot of male readers of the genre, the female perspective is harder to understand than a bug-eyed alien. It shouldn't be, and Hugo Girl is a podcast that will make you laugh and think.

Haley 2:20  
Oh, that's so sweet.

Lori 2:21  
So sweet!

Amy 2:22  
Males and females coming together.

Lori 2:23  
Yes.

Amy 2:25  
As god intended! No, I'm just kidding!

Lori 2:26  
NOPE, no. <laughter> Okay, so today - Dreamsnake. That was recommended to us by our friend Joe Sherry from nerds of a feather, Hugo award-winning fanzine (Amy: Hi, Joe!) nerds of a feather, flock together. And also, our friend Seth at Hugos There has an episode covering Dreamsnake with guest JW Wartick, who's also a friend of our pod, so check that out, too. And I look forward to listening to that after we record. I always try not to listen until we've recorded, so I don't - as we've discussed - taint!

Amy 2:50  
I definitely end up parroting other people's opinions. <laughter> Because they're better than mine.

Lori 3:02  
Well, I enjoy listening to his podcast after ours because we very often end up picking up on the same things. And that always interests me. Okay, so Dreamsnake by Vonda, McIntyre won the Hugo Award for Best Novel in 1979. And the other nominees that year were Anne McCaffrey, CJ Cherryh and Tom Reamy. Tom Reamy, I don't know. Have you guys heard of him? So all of his stuff was published posthumously. And he was nominated for the Hugo for Best Novel posthumously. (Amy: Oh, okay.) Yeah, he passed away very young, unfortunately. But interestingly, three of four nominees were women that year.

Haley 3:09  
Yeah, that's 75%. <Amy laughs>

Lori 3:29  
In yeah, in 1979! Haley, with the math! <laughter>

Haley 3:46

I did the math real quick! <laughter> I was like, that's a lot of ladies! In the 70s?! No!

Amy 3:51

There weren't that many women in the 70s!

Lori 3:51

75% in '79. (Haley: Whew!) <laughter> Uh, and according to a Gizmodo article that I read, it said it was only the third time a book with a female protagonist won, although I'm going to take issue with that characterization because the first book, according to this article was big time by Fritz Leiber in 1958. And I haven't read that book, but I don't trust Fritz Leiber after *Conjure Wife* and *Our Lady of Sorrows* which were written like 30 years apart, I don't trust him. And then the other one is *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang* by Kate Wilhelm, in 1977. And I have listened to that on audiobook and it has multiple protagonists. And I think one of the three is a woman. So I'm feeling like this is the first one that counts. (Haley: I agree.) I mean, I'm not - I'm not, like, no shade at *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang*, but I think it's different.

Haley 3:52

Well, and we talked separately about how Ursula Le Guin was, you know, 10 years prior in like the late 60s, and her protagonists were men. Or, sometimes they're genderless. But I mean, I think it's still something to be said for a very first solo female protagonist.

Amy 4:57

This one's definitely through her eyes, whole thing runs through her. Yeah.

Lori 5:00

Yep, this is Snake's book through and through. This book started out as a short story called of *Mist, Grass, and Sand* that she wrote at a Clarion West workshop and the novelette version won the Nebula in 1974. And she eventually expanded it into the novel which won the Hugo, the Nebula, the Locus, and many other awards. And it was out of print for a long time.

Amy 5:21

People had liked it before though.

Haley 5:24

I like that they liked it in different incarnations too. Like, it doesn't matter the length. They're like, "give me more."

Lori 5:28

Yeah, that's a - it's like, quite a journey for this story. Okay, plot summary. (Amy: Yes, please!) Okay. So *Dreamsnake*. A very horny healer name Snake <laughter>

Amy 5:44

She has so many other qualities!

Lori 5:45

I know, but she's horny the whole time!

Amy 5:47

She is.

Haley 5:48

But in a very empowering way!

Amy 5:50

From the first three pages.

Lori 5:51

I'm not upset about it. It's just like very...it's, it's at the forefront.

Amy 5:56

It's an important part of her character.

Lori 5:57

A very horny healer named Snake, who seems to live in a future Earth after some major nuclear destruction, travels to heal a sick child in a remote desert. Her main tools for healing are a cobra, a rattlesnake, and an extremely rare and tough to breed little alien critter called a Dreamsnake, who is named Grass. While treating the sick child, she overlooks the anti snake superstitions of the people who summoned her to help the kid and while she isn't around, they kill the poor Dreamsnake. The Dreamsnake is key to healing because he induces dreams and euphoria so he acts as a kind of anesthetic and a source of comfort. Snake is devastated by the loss of Grass but not so much so that she can't fall in unfulfilled lust with one of the sick child's relatives. <laughter> The rest of the book is basically Snake on a quest to find another Dreamsnake. During her quest, she treats a rich desert horse lady who dies, she befriends and possibly problematically bones a sexually repressed nobleman, she adopts a badly abused horse girl, <Haley laughs> and she gets kidnapped by a Dreamsnake heroin dealer. It turns out he has a huge cache of Dreamsnakes and during her imprisonment, she has an "aha!" moment on how to successfully breed more Dreamsnakes, and in somewhat "everything happens for a reason" resolution, all the days are saved. The end.

Haley 7:12

You left out 1000 snakes. <laughter>

Lori 7:15

I did, there are a lot of a lot of snakes. And I did not individually mention each time she was horny.

Haley 7:20

I am happy to report that I didn't have any snake nightmares because of reading this book over the course of a week.

Lori 7:25

Good! Me neither.

Amy 7:25

I don't think I did either.

Haley 7:27

I sometimes have serpent dreams, which makes me feel like a very old-timey human. (Amy: serpent dreams?) You know, like the snake is- like a, like a serpent archetype. Like you're afraid of like (Lori: wow) cats know about, you know...animals know to be fearful of snakes.

Amy 7:39

I have alligator dreams and roach dreams.

Lori 7:43

I might have snake dreams because Haley brought over a big heap of rubber snakes and threw them on the table. <Haley laughs> So our podcast recording table is covered in rubber snakes.

Amy 7:52

She threw us into the Dreamsnake pit.

Haley 7:54

This is the Dreamsnake pit and I'm North now. <Amy laughs> I ordered these Tuesday and I wasn't sure that we're gonna arrive on time and I had grand plans to dress up as Snake. I wanted us to all dress up in our own versions of like a Snake cosplay. And I was gonna have like my snake Sleater-Kinney shirt and I was gonna wear a vest because I felt like she would definitely have a vest.

Lori 8:11

Oh you ARE wearing your snake shirt!

Haley 8:12

I haven't worn this shirt in like two years because I don't like snakes.

Lori 8:14

I didn't even realize it was a snake!

Haley 8:16

Kevin HAS this shirt!

Lori 8:17

I know! I just thought it was a spiral! <Haley laughs>

Amy 8:19

You can't even have a flat snake on your chest.

Haley 8:21

Yeah, so I wanted us to all cosplay as Snake because all of us had different depictions of Snake in our head.

Amy 8:26

Yeah, mine was Katniss.

Haley 8:28

Sometimes mine was Charlize Theron, and sometimes mine was like a middle aged woman that you know, just got around.

Lori 8:34

Mine was pretty consistently white lady dreads Ani DiFranco, although they never said she had dreads in the book. That was just kind of what I imagined.

Haley 8:43

She's kind of crunchy, though. (Amy: So is white lady dreads Ani DiFranco!) (Lori: That's what I mean!) Yeah, that's what I meant. Yeah, white lady Ani DiFranco. And I also wanted to...She talks a lot in this book about carrying her snakes around, and in my head is just a suitcase. And I wanted to bring like, just like a brown suitcase. <laughter>

Amy 9:01

Have you seen those old timey traveling cases that have like all the compartments in them and you open up just like it's like, a bag of holding, or something? That's what I was picturing. But then I was like, how she's sling that up on her stripey horse?

Haley 9:13

I just pictured like an empty suitcase with a snake just like rattling around like a bell. <laughter>

Amy 9:18

They're always in there, are they okay?! <Haley laughs>

Lori 9:20

I wondered about that too.

Amy 9:21

Those things were in that suitcase so much.

Lori 9:24

Periodically she would be like, "she knew they'd be okay for a while." <laughter>

Amy 9:28

They're like getting thrown across the road, they're getting stole.

Lori 9:32

I think Vonda McIntyre was like, people are gonna wonder about the snakes. So just periodically she be like, "I know that they're okay. They can last a while longer."

Amy 9:40

She has a whole conversation with her adopted daughter later in the story about how the snakes can go for many days without. <laughter>

Haley 9:47

Snakes in the wilderness would like, have their snake meal and like, not eat for two months, so they're probably fine.

Lori 9:47

Okay, goodies from Goodreads. Whatcha got?

Haley 9:47

I purposely sorted by one stars, which is what you have to do sometimes when a book is good. (Lori: Mm-hmm.) So this is from a man named Muhammad Ali Abedi. He said - and I truncated this - Why do female science fiction authors write like female science fiction authors? (Lori: Hm!) Do they have to be so stereotypical? <Lori & Amy gasp> Their ability to write characters is shit, <Lori & Amy gasp louder> which is extra annoying because women are supposed to be so fucking empathetic. (Amy: females!!) This man hates women. (Lori: Oh my god! Is this a joke?!) No! This man - and he would go on to like, just berate this book but like, sir, everything you said could be said about shitty science fiction written by men.

Amy 10:34

No, no, we read Ringworld and we know how good the characterization was.

Haley 10:38

We know how great it is when half the characters that are women are sex workers.

Lori 10:43

Ah, okay. Anything else?

Amy 10:47

I'm all mad!

Haley 10:47

I did that just to get our feathers up.

Lori 10:49

Whew, whew! Yeah, my snake rattle is rattling. <Haley laughs> I was trying to think of like, what's a snake expression? But I couldn't think of any.

Haley 10:58

My cobra ears are out. <Lori laughs>

Lori 11:02

Okay. I have two reviews. One is from Mike Moore on Goodreads. And it says: Welcome to a post apocalyptic future where isolated communities blunder about in moral turpitude, <laughter> waiting for an oddly naive young woman to come straighten them out with good sense and her trusty snakes. <Haley laughs> I mean, it's not wrong. It was a two star review. So I don't agree with it. But I thought that was a funny line.

Haley 11:27

And moral turpitude, like, is this a lawyer? <Lori laughs>

Lori 11:31

Definitely not. <Haley laughs> So the other one. So it seems like Vonda McIntyre was a very accessible author. It looks like she chatted with people on Twitter. She was very available for interviews. And I went to Twitter and I searched Dreamsnake just to see like, who had been talking about her. And I found a conversation she had had where she was basically saying that she did not engage with criticism of her books, like, you know, some people will like argue back about a negative review. And she was like, I just leave it alone. And she was like, I try not to think about it. But she said something about a particular reviewer who was also an author, Thomas Disch. And she she was like, he hated my books. And she was like, it really stuck out for me. He really hated my books. And so I googled him and her name. And I found this website that's like a literary agent website. And he had a page on it. And there were all these works, listed in order by title and author and then his comment, like just a very brief comment. And she published a story collection called Fireflood, so Dreamsnake was not on the list. But Fireflood was on the list. And so it said, Fireflood, Vonda McIntyre. And then his comment was: "story collection - for females." <laughter>

Amy 12:45

That's a theme. That's a theme. Yeah, on Amazon. Joe Bhoj - I'm gonna butcher this last name, but it's Jo Bo Driel. Maybe? <spells out> BOUDREAULT. Anyway, he gave - inexplicably - gave it three stars. I have been trying to read women writers of sci fi as well as men writers to seek the balance in all that talent out there. So far, I am not that impressed with by women writers of sci fi. Maybe it's my personal biases for a good solid and believable story. But I seem to always get the impression that the women who write (or attempt to write) sci fi aren't up to par with the men. There are a few exceptions - Kate Wilhelm Connie Willis. Good job, ladies. But this novel



struck me as more like a women's version of science fantasy for the soap opera set than anything else. (Lori whispers: Soap Stuff!) While all these female writers have the narrative skills in place, they lack what it takes in my books to make a story stand out. I wonder why this particular novel even received both the Hugo and Nebula Awards in 1978 and 1979, respectively? I guess a panel of women writers and editors sat down and said, "Let's give a woman something this year." <Haley laughs>

Lori 13:54

It must have been the cabal of women in 70s science fiction!

Haley 13:59

ALL of them.

Amy 14:01

Well, there's more, but I'll just leave -

Lori 14:02

Oh my god, there's so much! <Amy laughs>

Haley 14:04

What's funny is that I read a similar review that was like, "this book is good for its time. It could never win a Hugo Award today." Like, when do you think a woman could win a Hugo Award? Like what?

Amy 14:13

Well, we're winning them all now!

Haley 14:14

Well, thank god.

Lori 14:15

Also, it won it IN 1979. So like, what's your point, sir?

Amy 14:22

1979 wasn't that long ago.

Haley 14:23

He's like, uh, ma'am, I just want to disparage women. <laughter>

Amy 14:23

I'll look for any reason.

Haley 14:28

Well, and it's, it is weird that they're just like, the sex of the person who wrote this - I just can't identify with it! They can't make words, the sentences don't make sense.

Lori 14:37

Orson Scott Card liked this book.

Haley 14:40

Frank Herbert said it's "readable!" <laughter> I mean, come on. That's not a RINGING endorsement, but it's an endorsement nonetheless.

Amy 14:50

Ursula K LeGuin, bless her, said it was fast, fast and clean.

Haley 14:55

It is a fast, clean book.

Lori 14:56

I think that that's accurate. It's very easy to read. I sat down and read it in like 100-page chunks, so I got like four reads.

Amy 15:02

It's a little page-turner!

Lori 15:03

Yeah, I like that.

Amy 15:04

I do too! It's a good yarn.

Haley 15:06

I did write down that it would be at least three pages shorter if there was no mention of brushing horses. <laughter> (Lori: Aww, that was for me!) Exactly, every time I read I was like I bet Lori is like "mm! This, this pample-oosa," or whatever. <laughter>

Lori 15:22

That's a pamplemousse and an Appaloosa - A pamplemoussa! <Amy laughs> It's a grapefruit spotted horse.

Haley 15:28

But there's, but there's another horse with a P - was like it was it Pinto? (Lori: Pinto, paint piebald...) Paint! Come on! A paint horse?

Lori 15:34

That's a type of a horse! It's a breed.

Haley 15:36  
PaintED?

Amy 15:36  
No, PAINT.

Haley 15:37  
I don't agree with this verb form. <Haley laughs>

Amy 15:40  
It's a name! <Amy laughs>

Haley 15:42  
I don't like it. Paint.<laughter>

Amy 15:44  
Paint is a noun!

Lori 15:46  
Haley, I want to talk about the inception of this book, because I think there's an observation I made that you're going to like. So like I mentioned before, she first wrote this as a short story at a clarion West workshop. And the prompt was the teacher put a bunch of nouns in two Styrofoam cups, and you had to draw a word out of each cup. And that was your writing prompt. And that is just like - what Amy?

Amy 16:12  
SNAKE OIL!! It's just like Snake Oil!

Haley 16:15  
Oh, god I love Snake Oil.

Lori 16:12  
Dream Snake - for Haleys. So her words were snake and cow. And someone in the class was like kind of making fun of her and was like, "why don't you read a story with a character with the first name of Snake," and she was like, "Maybe I will! Maybe I will." <laughter> And a gajillion awards later. Here we are.

Haley 16:16  
You know, snake cow - if I had to sell snake cow, I would be like "snake milk," which we've discussed in previous podcasts. And we'll talk about later too, I'm sure.

Amy 16:42

Aww, milking snakes! It all comes back around. <laughter>

Lori 16:45

Well, she said, after puzzling for many hours, she decided to go with the verb form of cow, to frighten. And there's lots of being - there's lots of affright in the book.

Amy 16:56

It's very writerly.

Haley 16:57

It's because there's so many snakes. So I have a deep and deathly fear of snakes. But this book has helped, I guess, desensitize me a little bit. (Lori: Oh, good!) I bought a - I bought six rubber snakes and I'm looking at them! (Amy: And touching them!) I'm touching them! They're hand painted. Very wonkily. <Haley laughs>

Amy 17:15

Haley wouldn't go with me into the snake exhibit at the zoo one time.

Haley 17:18

I'm not gonna go in the reptile house!

Lori 17:20

She wouldn't go in with me either!

Amy 17:21

I love it in there.

Haley 17:22

I wouldn't go with anybody!

Lori 17:23

I think it was a different time. Because I think -

Haley 17:25

I wouldn't go in, I still will not go into a reptile house on my own accord. But I will play with a fake snake in front of you.

Lori 17:29

The frogs are so pretty in there.

Haley 17:31

That's an amphibian though!

Lori 17:32

They're in the same house. They're so pretty.

Haley 17:34

I don't want to go. Uh-uh. I walk by in Petsmart like this. And I shield my eyes and go straight to the cat food. <Amy laughs>

Lori 17:41

So guys, what do you think about this book? <laughter>

Haley 17:45

I could just talk about snakes. This is a therapy session, right? <laughter>

Amy 17:50

Um, what...what?

Lori 17:51

<Lori laughs> What do you think about this book? So alright, I'll start. <Amy laughs> Something I like about this book is that we have this female protagonist. And she is successful by being clever. And also by being compassionate and trying to understand the people that she's dealing with. And I think a lot of times when we have a female main character or a female hero, a lot of times - and I'm not saying there's anything bad about this - but a lot of the traditionally so called male hero characteristics are grafted on to a female character. So you get like a swashbuckling woman, which is like cool. I mean, I like a story about a woman who swings a sword. I mean, that's cool. (Haley: Furiosa, yeah.) Yeah. Or like I was thinking of like, Brienne and Arya are the characters that people really connect with in Game of Thrones. I always thought Sansa got the short end of the stick, because she was a girly girl who kind of played the game. But she survived.

Amy 18:43

And once she starts playing the game, she gets cool, quote, unquote, cooler. But she becomes "like a man."

Lori 18:50

Yeah. But she's not well, but I think like she - she plays the game of thrones, but she doesn't have swords, and she does not become a murderer. You know, she's still inhabiting a fem - Well, maybe she does. She has people executed.

Amy 19:04

Which is politically different! <Amy laughs> Didn't she like loom over Bolton? When he dies? Or something?

Haley 19:11

She gets epaulettes.

Lori 19:11

She does. She looks, I mean, she looks pretty like, grimdark and cool at the end. But I'm like, my point is like, I think we tend to lionize female characters who are doing non traditionally female things. (Amy: Yes.) And so what I like about Snake is she's not necessarily in a traditional female role. I mean, she's traveling the desert by herself with a box of poisonous serpents. But she succeeds, because she's smart, and because she's thoughtful, and because she listens and pays attention. And I like that about this book. And I like that about her character.

Amy 19:42

Yep, she's doing sort of a stereotypically female job. She's a healer. She's taking care of people. She's like, that kind of thing.

Haley 19:50

I mean, she's the opposite of Furiosa or Mad Max. She's roaming the desert wastelands helping people.

Lori 19:56

And it is a traditionally female role. To be a - to be a nurse. Not to be a doctor. (Amy: That's what I mean - a nurse.) but it's very dangerous though. She's traveling across the desert by herself and she, her tools are a cobra and a rattlesnake! <Lori laughs>

Haley 20:12

In a suitcase! <laughter>

Lori 20:16

It's funny how many times she mentions that the case - she's running, and the case is banging against her leg, banging while she's galloping on her pony.

Amy 20:24

Is that a metaphor of some kind? That was - that was a snake hitting the table, if anybody could hear that.

Lori 20:30

Yeah. I wouldn't be surprised if that doesn't make the final cut. But if it does, that was the sound of a snake hitting the table.

Haley 20:34

Well, and in this book, too. So we talked earlier about how we picture her in our heads, like, I don't think any of us pictured her as like, super feminine. So it kind of calls into question, you know, like, well, she's definitely not a man in this role. You know, she's a healer. She's traveling, but she's also not super feminine, either. Like, what is she? I don't know.

Amy 20:57  
She's pushy.

Lori 20:58  
She's pushy?!

Amy 21:00  
I like her. She's pushy. Yes. Like, everywhere she goes, she gets real...Yeah.

Haley 21:04  
She doesn't mince words. That she's like, she's like, I want to heal you. I want to bone you.

Lori 21:09  
She's a straight shooter!

Amy 21:11  
She weighs into people's home life, I think a little bit. Like she had some things to say to Jess, or whatever her name was. That rich horse lady - that she didn't get a chance to say. She had some words for that family about how their family dynamic should, how they needed to treat each other. And she had words for the Mountainside family when she went up there to help them she had - I mean, she's opinionated.

Lori 21:34  
That's true. But she's not. She's never mean. But I do think it's funny when she's occasionally snappish. And I like that. They acknowledge that and when she's in Mountainside, they talk about, "she can she could sometimes be prideful." And that she would do what she considered were menial tasks if the family was nice, and it seemed like they needed the help. But since the mayor was all bossy, and had a whole staff, she was like, I'm not changing your dressings, that's not my job.

Amy 21:53  
So she also like makes a point of, like, recognizing about herself that she can operate as if her way is the only way and she can, like, you know, be a little rigid. Think she's right about everything.

Lori 22:05  
She's assertive, which, which people often take as a negative quality in a woman.

Haley 22:10  
True.

Amy 22:11  
Yes. Like, it's commonly attributed to women, but not in a good way.

Lori 22:15

Yes, right. I almost felt like I was watching a video game. She goes out on this quest, and then she's like, got her goal of finding the Dreamsnake she like, bumps into a character and has to solve a problem. It reminds me whenever I watch Kevin play The Witcher and it's like (Haley: side quests!) watching a movie, kind of. Like he's got his overarching goal but then along the way, there's like some peasant who's like, "There's a - there's a dragacorn in my peaberry field!" <laughter> (Haley: not a dragacorn!) (Amy: a dragacorn in a peaberry field!) "Good sir!" Anyway, so she solves a variety of problems along the way. And the first one is, she meets this group of people. And so sexual orientation and relationship structure is very matter of fact, there's no eyebrow raising even. There are same sex partners. There are polyamorous families. Most of the families that we see I think are polyamorous. I love that in the - the place where she goes first where the people kill the Dreamsnake, which is definitely too bad. That was really sad. Actually, I would like to take a moment for the snake named Grass.

Amy 23:26

It was so sad! Little Grass, he's so tiny. All he does is make you feel better. And the people there are so afraid of snakes that they cannot help themselves. She leaves that snake with the little child, that's her patient, so that the little snake will make him feel better. And they're like, nope, and they cut him in half. And then they're like, sorry, we did this thing, and they hand her her snake in two pieces, (Haley: the butterflyed him) but (Lori: not even all the way in two pieces) and not even all the way dead, and she has to bite his little neck to make him die. And it's just the saddest thing.

Haley 23:51

I didn't feel sad because I didn't really believe the scene because like when you invite a snake person to your house to snake-heal you. You don't kill the snake.

Lori 23:58

I was confused by that, too. I wonder if they knew that healers use snakes? I dunno. Everyone does seem very familiar with healers.

Amy 24:05

They must not've realized she was gonna leave one, and so when they go in there and their kid has a snake on him? Like they just freak out?

Lori 24:11

I agree with you though.

Amy 24:12

Fear sometimes just takes over.

Haley 24:14



No, I agree. I would kill that snake. But like, it didn't make sense in the world because I was just like, but you invited a snake to your house.

Amy 24:20

They might not've known.

Lori 24:21

Come bring your snakes. And then they were like, but not that one. Not the nice one.

Amy 24:25

It seems like she sort of just wanders about, right, and finds people who need help. They didn't necessarily, like, invite her into the bosom of their home. It was more like okay, I recognize you as a healer. We have this person who is sick. I don't know, they might not have like, thought it all out.

Haley 24:40

There was lots of talk about "this snake's gonna bite you, it's gonna hurt," though.

Amy 24:42

It may have been a move of desperation on their part. I think they talk about that, that that was sort of the last resort.

Haley 24:48

Yeah, I was just surprised that like, it came out of nowhere. So I was like, oh, the snake's dead? Oh shit.

Lori 24:52

It made me think of though, is like, in recent times. Last time I went to the doctor, my PA - she was telling me that like, she had a patient come in and was sick. And she was like, well, let's test you for COVID. And he was like, No! And he got really mad at her. And she was like, well, let's just test you for it. You came, YOU came to ME. And she said he got mad and yelled at her. And I was like, but he called you! You weren't like, sir, sir, you have a runny nose, come into my office! <laughter> He went there, he paid to park at the hospital, and then went in there and yelled at her. So I was thinking about that. And I was like, I guess like, I had the same reaction, as you Haley, where it didn't make sense to me at first. But when I was thinking about how people are treating health care providers lately, and they, they're like seeking out health care, and then are very angry at obvious routes of investigation, or obvious solutions, like, people don't make sense, I guess.

Amy 24:54

Sometimes people don't think things all the way through. And when they're scared, they rationalize things. And then when it comes down to it, they can't do it. Or you know, I mean, you know, people are people.

Haley 25:52

Yeah, I think one of the saddest parts of this book is that for the entire rest of the novel, she like, blames herself. She's like, Oh, this was my fault. I'm like, No, it was kind of these people's fault. <Haley laughs>

Amy 26:01

Can we talk about Arevin for a second? So Arevin is the scion of this desert people, who falls in love with Snake after three days. (Haley: if that!) <Haley laughs> Well, this is what I'm getting at. So they're together for a night, while he helps her wrangle Milk.

Lori 26:21

Mist!

Amy 26:21

Mist! <laughter>

Haley 26:21

They do not kiss. Oh, Milk Snake, mm!

Amy 26:25

She takes off. Snake leaves and Arevin just can't handle it. And he feels a lot of guilt over his people killing her snake. And so he decides to go after her. And I could not stop thinking about Haley, because those people fell in love in like 45 minutes. (Lori: Yes. I don't buy it.) There's no way Haley's gonna buy this. <Amy laughs>

Haley 26:43

I didn't buy it. I mean, I how I...Well, it's definitely not love. I mean, they wanted to bone.

Lori 26:47

It's lust! And maybe some trauma bonding.

Haley 26:51

And why I struggle with that, too, is because in my head, he was like a 16 year old boy. And in my head, Snake is like a 60 year old woman.

Lori 26:57

Oh, so I thought they were both like 30.

Amy 26:59

Same.

Haley 27:00

No, so I think of her as older. And I think of him as like a child. So it just did not make any sense in my head.

Amy 27:04

I guess I kept thinking it was her proving year. So I just kept thinking of her as being like 25.

Haley 27:08

I like reverse engineered it to make it make sense. But yeah, how I put myself into this position was like snakes - like an old, wise snake woman.

Amy 27:15

He went tromping all over creation for her.

Lori 27:18

He did. He had mixed motives. I think he had guilt and lust. And the other thing is, too, he didn't feel like he had a place there anymore. Because he didn't have his own family and his parents had died. And he felt like a burden on the rest of the family. So he there were a variety of things propelling him along. (Amy: He was the rogue elephant." And I do like at the end that they're not like, Alright, let's get married. They're like, let's try this. And I appreciated that.

Amy 27:39

Yeah! That was my favorite part.

Haley 27:40

Like, let's go on a date. Let's kiss! We've never even done that.

Lori 27:44

Like, I'm not attached. You're not attached. We've been horny for each other for literal months.

Haley 27:48

Yeah, that makes sense. Because like, they probably don't meet a lot of people living in like a little desert commune.

Amy 27:52

And yet! Everybody they met - it was an option. Every single one! <Lori laughs>

Lori 27:57

Yes. Let's talk about that, Amy!

Amy 27:58

Every single one. So what we got? We got Snake, goes to see the desert people, she could have boned Arevin, but they decided not to do that. (Lori: There wasn't time.) There wasn't time.

Haley 28:08

She was also very depressed and sad that her snake died. And she hadn't eaten in three days.

Amy 28:11

But she thought about it, even though things weren't going well. She was like, could I? Nah.

Lori 28:16

Her libido is full steam ahead.

Amy 28:18

Then she goes to the oasis where she bathes naked and - you know! By herself!

Haley 28:23

She's like, "and then the water's up to my boobs! And then it's above my boobs! Now it's under my boobs!"

Amy 28:28

"And then, I realized I haven't been touched in a while. So here we go." Then she goes off to Mountainside where she meets Gabriel. So he's a roughly 18 year old person who had a traumatic first experience and hasn't slept with anybody. And she re initiates him into...into the world of love.

Haley 28:50

So why don't - a big criticism from men that read this book is, "Oh, it's so much romance." But don't men like sex? I don't understand.

Amy 28:58

It's just too nice. Everybody's too nice about it.

Lori 29:01

Everybody checks to get consent, which is famously -

Haley 29:05

A boner-killer! <laughter>

Amy 29:06

This conversation happens anytime anybody wants to do anything. They're like, "Can I do anything for you?" (Lori: It's so funny!) It's so good. They're like, "Can I do anything for you?" And they're like, "Okay!" or, "I guess not."

Lori 29:17

And Arevin doesn't know that because his people don't do that. So when he's following Snake and he gets to Mountainside, and a couple of different people are like - two people, a male servant and a female servant - both asked him, Is there anything I can do for you? And he's like,

I'm good. I'm fine. (Amy: No, I'm good. I'm just gonna go sleep.) He's like, I got my water jug, I got my pillow. I'm not in jail anymore. It's so funny. <laughter>

Lori 29:18

And then so he realizes he's been turning people down left and right, or possibly offering himself up left and right and not realizing it. <laughter> (Lori: He's offering help.) Right. And so like, everybody. Yeah, everybody's offering themselves to everybody in this book, and it's kind of hysterical.

Lori 29:58

I like that they all have individual responsibility for pregnancy prevention. (Amy: Yes!!) And they're all taught that at an early age.

Amy 30:06

You learn to control your internal temperature so that you're not fertile. (Haley: It's like biofeedback.) Which is what I kept meaning to fall into a little internet hole about that, And I kept forgetting to do it. I wanted to find out if that was in any way feasible.

Lori 30:19

Testicular temperature is a real thing.

Amy 30:21

That's real. So the women are doing it too. So I was wondering if that was actually a thing.

Lori 30:24

But I wonder if the women are doing a temperature thing or if they have a different trick? Because she explained to Gabriel how he would do it. She never said how she does it.

Haley 30:35

For me, it's traveling and taking the bar exam. That'll mess up your cycle.

Amy 30:43

Losing a lot of weight. Stress.

Haley 30:46

I had this for Feminist Favorite, but I'll say it now. So at one point Snake on the subject of birth control, she's almost embarrassed by Gabriel's inability. And she and while they're doing it, she thinks, but she had never been with a man who could not control his fertility. So I like that she shames him. Like, so many times in our society, birth control is put upon like, the woman, as the woman's job. Are you taking the pill? Are you doing this? So the fact that she's like, Oh, well, that's embarrassing that you can't control your stuff, dude.

Lori 31:13

Yeah, I mean, she's kind to him about it. But yeah.

Amy 31:16

"You can't? You're not??"

Haley 31:17

I love that she wasn't the sweetest that she could be about it. Because so many women have not been sweet to in return about it.

Amy 31:23

She's pushy. I like her.

Lori 31:26

Did that scene bother either of you? (Amy: Oh, yeah.) (Haley: No.) Cuz he was like, I felt that she was very slightly coercive because like, he was so upset and she kept being like, it's okay. I won't judge you. It's okay. I won't judge you. And I was like, I think it's time to let him go cry by himself. <Haley laughs>

Amy 31:42

A little bit. Um, it had a tinge of...groom about it. Yeah.

Lori 31:48

Or, just like, you know, he can choose to do whatever he wants. Like, if he's sad, he can still choose to have intercourse if he wants to or do whatever he wants to. But I just was like, she keeps re inviting him after he's been like, "I can't I can't." And like the reason that he says he can't is that he has this self esteem issue, and this fear issue but still like, I think you have to at a point, Snake, you need to just take the "No." I just was like, uncomfortable with it. It was...

Haley 32:16

I mean, if it was flipped, it would be definitely coercive.

Lori 32:18

Yeah, exactly. So even though she's being nice to him, it's still like, if you ask somebody 200 times eventually you wear them down.

Amy 32:26

Can I tell you the part that bothered me more than that? (Lori: Please!) So, MELISSA. (Lori: Ah, yes, let's do this.) <Haley laughs> Melissa is the horse girl that lives at the estate in Mountainside where Snake is healing the mayor and having sex with the mayor's son. Melissa lives in the loft above the stable. She's disfigured because of a fire. People in Mountainside value beauty above everything else, apparently, so she can't even show her face in public. It's a whole thing. And she's owned, for lack of a better word, by the stable master - this guy Ras. Come to find out, Ras has been having his way with Melissa. She's maybe 11 or 12, 13. It's real disgusting. My beef isn't that that happened necessarily. It's that after Snake knows this happened, Melissa sees that Snake and Gabriel were having sex or somehow gleans this. And

Melissa says to Snake, "The other one," meaning Gabriel "didn't hurt you?" And Snake says "No, we were having fun." And Melissa says all right, kind of reluctantly. And then Snake says, "I can SHOW you."

Lori 33:47

Yeah. I was like, I wish that it said, "I can explain."

Amy 33:51

But I think she meant I can SHOW you! (Lori: Yeah, I was completely taken aback by that.) There's this line running through this book that these kids go to teachers. To learn, like the arts of the bedroom, I guess, and how to control their fertility and like all this stuff. So I'm sure it's meant in the in the sense of that they are these teachers that show these people what to do. But it's already a little weird. Yeah, that they're sending children to teachers to learn to do these things. And it's even weirder, that Snake offers this in a scene to this child that we can - I mean, knowing that she is traumatized. I had no idea what to do with that.

Haley 34:41

Well, and I think on top of that, the fact that she will eventually become her surrogate mother.

Lori 34:47

I had all of these reactions. I was like, this is very strange. (Amy: And they have a very codependent relationship after that.) I just wanted that one sentence to instead be "I can explain it to you," but not "I can show you." But you know, that is a that's a thing I've seen in other books. So the series that I liked so much that I've mentioned before - the Dragon Prince series? The supernatural people are Sunrunners, and they live in a keep together where they have their training and they all have their man-making night or their woman-making night when they're like a younger teen, and a older person. Anonymously, so they don't know who it is. (Amy: Oh God.) Yeah, they meet in the darkness, and they teach them to do sex. (Amy: No, no.) yeah. And I was a teenager when I read it. So I was like, "That's fine." <laughter> And you know, as an adult, I'm like, "oh..." And and even like, later in life, the main Sunrunner character that you follow, named Sioned - the person who like had her woman-making night is, I mean, he's like, 20 or 30 years, he's like, maybe, I don't know, 15-20 years older than her. He's like, the steward of the whole fancy or special school. And it's like, even as, even when they're adults, like the other older people are like, "Oh, you always had a soft spot for her. I never should have let you have her woman-making night. <Amy groans> Like, it's, it's problematic. (Amy: I don't like that.) It doesn't feel nice to read. And yeah, so I think that that's like, that was maybe a common thing. (Amy: trope?) Yeah, trope, or whatever you want to call it. But yeah, I've seen it before. And with my old eyes was like, Oh. Uh-oh! Uh-oh!

Amy 36:27

Maybe the implication - I mean, not just implication - it's explicitly said at some point. That you know, when you're about 12, you pick the person you want to have sex with for the first time. And it sounds like it's probably usually someone your age. In this book, which, okay, great. So not actually having sex with these people. It doesn't sound like.

Lori 36:44

I imagine they see a PowerPoint, they take some classes, they do some science, and then they can go off with another 12 year old if they want to.

Amy 36:52

She's like "I can show you and she literally pulls down a shade." And like gets out a pointer. Not I can show you on the doll or yourself.

Haley 37:00

This book is filled with all sorts. I mean, so it was published at the height of like, second wave feminism, where like, everything was like, let's talk about abortion. Let's talk about birth control, let's talk about polyamory. And I think it's a way of trying to be edgy, but it just hasn't aged well, because while a lot of those things do become part of our society, this, you know, we still really protect children in our society.

Lori 37:18

Yeah, I like the educational aspects about like, knowing about your body and knowing about - all about that. It's interesting how much they focus on consent. And yet there are still these things that feel weird to me.

Amy 37:29

Now that I think about it. I mean, sex education that we have, is children going to adults and learning about these things, I guess. Really.

Lori 37:37

Yeah. But it's on a PowerPoint.

Haley 37:38

Like in fifth grade, I went into a room with girls and we like learned about pads. Like, we learned nothing about sex. Like, I think you learned that a penis goes into vagina, but you learn nothing about pleasure, nothing about various forms of sex, homosexual sex, anything like that. Nothing.

Amy 37:53

We didn't even learn about tampons because those go inside.

Lori 37:56

The thing that I remember from fifth grade, we had a sex ed class. And this lady came in and was like, talking at us. And I remember my friend said, "What if you get your period and you're wearing really, really, really thin white pants, could it possibly show through?" And the woman goes, "maybe!" <laughter>

Amy 38:15



<gasps>She did a disservice to a whole generation!!

Lori 38:20

I will say I thought about it - well, so I don't, I don't menstruate anymore. But when I did, I would think about it every month. I would be like, "that bih...that lying liar!" <laughter>

Haley 38:30

I kept a jacket in my locker for all four years of high school! Just in case!

Amy 38:33

Everybody did!

Lori 38:34

Yeah, just Yes. You know what? Yeah, don't don't wear white pants until -

Amy 38:38

It's a bad idea! Until you figure out how to get that under control,

Lori 38:42

Which, actually honestly going to be never. I never really got a handle on it. <Amy laughs>

Haley 38:47

White pants? Wasted money. White underwear? Wasted money.

Amy 38:51

I dunno, I love a white jean in the summer.

Lori 38:52

Well, you could wear a white jeans smack in the middle of your cycle and then suddenly be early. Like you don't get to wear white pants more than once.

Haley 38:58

Or you could sit on an ice cream cone! It's never a good idea. <Haley laughs>

Lori 39:00

Yeah, it's not a good idea. Um yeah, so that was weird. <Amy laughs>

Haley 39:07

Lori, every time I read this word I thought of you and the face you would make when she called the people in this book "crazies."

Lori 39:13

Oh yeah, it's not exactly PC in 2022.

Haley 39:18

They could've picked a better word even in the 70s. It could have been like, "the wild ones."

Amy 39:21

It did seem a little like I don't know, obvious? up to read I was like

Haley 39:23

Every single time I read it, I was like, this was a bad choice.

Lori 39:25

It made me think of in The Walking Dead, how they call zombies "walkers." So you get this like very concrete word that like anyone can understand to describe like a variety of worrisome things going on. So I think that's probably what it was like in any culture if you're like "a crazy," like that would sort of ring some kind of bell for the listener.

Haley 39:45

But it made - it just left me with more questions. Like, are all crazies from the same type of tribe? Are they the same mental disorder? Like, I don't know. They're just weird.

Lori 39:54

Yeah, I assumed it was just like people who have descended into untreated, complete madness. Or I mean, I wonder now that we know that there's the guy with all the Dreamsnakes, who's getting people addicted and then tossing them aside once they're not fun anymore. Is that - because when the guy was following them and they were like, "he's definitely a crazy," I wondered like, are they all people who are cast off from that guy who's gotten them very addicted to Dreamsnake heroin and then sent them out into the desert to wander?

Amy 40:21

I will say they're also all living next to nuclear fallout areas. So it's possible that everybody's just got radiation poisoning in some way. So so that's the world of the book. We didn't mention that as like, this is a post apocalyptic world, maybe our world, maybe not, where there was some sort of nuclear war, and now they're all kind of living in the shell of the earth that is left and so they have areas that gives them radiation poisoning that they don't go near and there's a dome and then there's also outer space people. (Lori: offworlders!) now that have either crashed, landed or done something on the planet, because there's domes that they reference. And there's alien flora and fauna wandering. (Haley: Dreamsnakse are aliens.) I told Lori my theory. I had a little running theory that there were no offworlders and that the Dreamsnakes, all the weird flora that she sees - (Haley: I love the succulents, walking succulents!) All these people that sort of look like humans, sort of don't - they make this oblique reference to them, that they're all actually just mutants. Like radiation, results of radiation, and the domes are like, the Superdome fell down or something.

Haley 41:28

I was trying to imagine what the domes were. And I was like, What's it like? The Hagia Sophia?  
<laughter>

Lori 41:31

I kinda wondered if the domes or maybe like big spaceships that had landed and then been turned into walled cities. Or I also imagined the one that North was in with his Dreamsnake heroin pit was just the Mercedes-Benz.

Amy 41:43

Right! I pictured like the underside of the Colosseum in Rome. (Lori: Yes!)

Haley 41:47

Even though this book is very, it's very sci fi in some ways. Like, I do get my OFF: Oppressive Fantasy Feeling. <laughter> And I try to wonder because I read a lot of books and I read a lot of sci fi and like, I don't always get it, but I definitely get it from this one. And I think it's because you know, horses.

Lori 42:03

Horses, traveling.

Amy 42:05

Questionable technology, saying "thee" and "thine" at any point. <Haley sighs deeply>

Lori 42:09

It's funny, she only talks to the snakes like that.

Haley 42:11

And only in the beginning of the book! She didn't towards the end.

Lori 42:14

Well, they were just in the box, for like the last two-thirds of the book. <laughter>

Haley 42:19

They were just in the Tupperware!

Amy 42:20

It makes a little burp noise. <laughter>

Haley 42:24

She's got like, three pieces of Grass. Those poor snakes!

Amy 42:27

Throws a mouse in there every now and again. <Haley laughs> Yeah, so she goes and she finds this, like, vat of Dreamsnakes that this guy North has. And he's got - so the people that he's giving them to - are these like disfigured people? Are they - is it just people? Just anybody?

Lori 42:43

I think they're people who already are suffering and searching for something.

Amy 42:46

Okay. Because he's a cult leader.

Haley 42:47

And did anybody else -in the snake pit when she's like trying to get out of it, like climbing up? Think about the pit in the Ringworld, when they're like, when they're stuck upside down?

Amy 42:55

I did not. I never think about Ringworld. Not ever.

Lori 42:59

So I thought about the Broken Earth trilogy at one point. So in chapter two, when they're talking about the Center where Jesse is from, so she meets the trio of horse people who are also fancy jewelry makers. And she's taking care of Jesse. And they're talking about why Jesse left her comfy life of nobility in the Center, which is a big dome. And I made a note, because it says, "She's here because she can't stand to be trapped. Before we were together, she was rich and powerful and safe. But her whole life and her work were planned out for her. She would have been one of the rulers of Center. It was all hers if she wanted it, but she didn't want to live under A STONE SKY." (Amy & Haley: Ohhhhhh!!!!!!) Is that an homage?? I'm so curious! How do I find out??

Amy 43:49

Dang girl! It may be an homage!!

Lori 43:49

If I tweet her will she answer me? I have another Melissa scene I wanted to talk about. So Melissa, like you said is being abused by the horse guy. And Snake tells the mayor that she wants to adopt Melissa. And he's like, Well, she's got a legal father, this guy and she tells I think she tells the mayor that he's misusing her. And to his credit, the mayor is like, "not on my watch." But interestingly, they bring them both in there. And I think - so when I was reading an interview that I'll post in the show notes, on Gizmodo. Vonda McIntyre was saying that it was unusual to write a story that featured a child and actually like cared about the child. And this, like this story does a lot of beating up on this child, but also she's cared about. And this scene is so interesting to me because it's like, I think in 1970, or, well, across the decade of the 70s when this story was being developed. It's a big deal that a child's abuser is confronted and the child is believed by authority figures and immediately believed. I mean immediately, Snake is like I believe you, I'm going to help you and the mayor is like, I believe this little girl, I'm fixing this. But

the idea of having the child and the abuser in the same room during the confrontation is VERY not trauma-informed. <Haley laughs>

Lori 44:00

And like poor Melissa, I mean, they I think the way she acts through most of that interview speaks volumes about why because there's no way she could speak up. She only speaks up at the very end. And now I can't remember what the trigger is to make her actually talk. But yeah, it was a very uncomfortable scene.

Lori 45:30

It's huge that she gets some justice. She is rescued. She is believed. So I was curious what Vonda thought about how this was handled, because you're right, that the way we see Melissa, she's very, she's cowed through this whole scene. So maybe Vonda thought this isn't the right way to handle it. I don't know. Or maybe at the time in writing it, she thought it might be empowering for a child to be in that position, and be like, in this very - this huge power imbalance is corrected while the child is there. Now we know now that that's not right. But I think in 1978, I checked on this. And trauma informed care was just becoming a thing for Vietnam veterans in the 70s. So we were not thinking about that for kids. (Amy: We weren't thinking about that until like the late 80s.) Yes, we weren't thinking about kids as people in particular, really, either.

Amy 45:32

Probably it wasn't on our radar, in a lot of ways, and I think, cynically, I think probably it was just an easier way to write the scene. Because everybody's in the same room.

Haley 46:29

I can also see her being like, the fact that you have another adult standing up for you, and then another adult believing you. Yeah, maybe she thought that was good.

Lori 46:35

Well, and I also think if you had had the experience of being a child victim, and you read that scene, I think a lot of it might feel very empowering to see the child, tell what's going on and be immediately believed and get justice and get safety. So I think like, that was probably a big deal at the time, even though reading it now. It's like, oh, it's not how we do things!

Amy 46:56

And showing them that it's okay for Melissa to have trusted this adult. I think it's a big deal. Because, like, how could you trust anyone if that is happening to you, you know, like, all of the adults are in cahoots? You know? So I think that's a pretty big deal.

Lori 47:09

And the mayor believing her! The mayor not being like, well, she's just a dumb, ugly kid. She's not telling the truth. The mayor's like, oh, no, no, no, we're gonna do whatever weird paperwork we have to do to get her out of this situation.

Amy 47:23

I love that it's paperwork.

Haley 47:25

And he's portrayed as kind of a jerk throughout.

Lori 47:27

Exactly, but he still does the right thing by this kid.

Amy 47:31

I had a beef with the portrayal of the mayor and his his relationship with his son. So like, some reason the sun isn't up to snuff for the dad, but it's never really clear why -

Lori 47:46

The dad is humiliated by the whole pregnancy snafu. That seems to be the only thing that we know about.

Amy 47:52

Okay, so I don't think we touched on this the Gabriel the son, the first time he has sex ever with this girl. She gets pregnant. Because he had a terrible teacher.

Haley 48:04

I love the shame is on him and not on her. She just goes and gets an abortion. She's like, don't worry about it. He's just like, I hate myself!

Lori 48:09

And he's like, I ruined her career. She had to start a year late. <laughter>

Haley 48:13

I mean, that is so - I mean, it sounds silly. And when you read it, you're like, this is very histrionic. Even though it's coming from a dude. It's - that's revolutionary, for a man to be embarrassed for getting a woman pregnant.

Amy 48:22

A man causing an unwanted pregnancy ruins HIS life. (Lori: Ooh, yeah.) I mean, WHAT?

Haley 48:29

She doesn't get sent to Ohio to have a baby and then not graduate from high school. I mean, I think that I mean, the snake plots I could take or leave honestly, but like, what what she does with like, gender and like, you know, sexuality, and I think is great.

Amy 48:43

It's pretty cool.

Lori 48:43

Yeah, the snake science stuff is neat, too. She feeds the snake some type of potion and they can then inject it through their venom.

Amy 48:51

Okay. But they have the technology to make vaccines and inoculations and things like that. But they don't have the technology to make a hypodermic needle??

Lori 49:01

No, that's not the issue. I have a highlighted passage where it says that something happens to whatever it is that they feed the snake that turns it into what they need.

Amy 49:13

So they're not mixing this up outside and then putting it in his fang.

Lori 49:17

No, no, no, they feed it - they force feed it to them and then -

Haley 49:21

And then they milk the snake, and they make a shot out of that with like a special shot.

Amy 49:25

No, but they had the snake bite the people!

Haley 49:26

Sometimes but not always. Sometimes they made the inoculations with like a separate piece of technology. (Amy: Hmm, okay.)

Lori 49:31

Yeah, I thought about that too, Amy. I thought, did they not have needles? There was something about it.

Haley 49:38

Yeah, it's like a shot that has like five little bits.

Amy 49:41

Can we make these potions out of snakes?

Lori 49:45

Science friends, let us know. Okay - yeah, she says, "he would simply coil up sleepily in his compartment, little different from normal while the poison glands manufactured a complicated chemical soup of several proteins, antibodies for a number of endemic diseases, stimulants to the immune systems of human beings." (Amy: Okay.) The snake is an integral ingredient.

Amy 50:03

I did not like the way they inter-used the words venom and poison, because those are two different things. That bothered me.

Lori 50:10

Um, okay. Well, we're -

Amy 50:13

Wait, we haven't talked about the Emerald City yet. (Lori: go for it!) That's it, she goes to Center. And I thought it was funny, what you said. She goes and she tries to get into Center to try and find out about their Dreamsnakes, and she gets stopped at the front door, and a little window opens up, that's actually a TV.

Lori 50:29

And then as soon as she's like, "I do genetics." They come to an agreement. He's like, I can help you in this way. And she's like, I can make that work. And she's like, this is great. I'll be able to help so many people, then he's like, what? You're gonna do science with the science? Nobody gets in to see the Wizard! Not nobody, not no how! <laughter> And sends her away. (Amy: I thought that was funny.) It was funny. I was like, "Y'all are so petty." And then I loved the whole time, Snake is looking at him like, you have exactly the face of your sister. Like if you guys aren't doing genetic modifications. You are too inbred. And you're gonna have problems. <laughter>

Amy 51:06

Jesse was like, they need help. <laughter>

Haley 51:10

Also - if Snake was not named Snake, what would you name Snake? I would name her Tanya.

Lori 51:16

I would name her Ani DiFranco. <Haley laughs> Or Jewel.

Haley 51:22

Oh Jewel?

Lori 51:25

Dreams last for so long! Dreamsnake lasts for so long.

Amy 51:32

She has a - Tanya is in the realm of what I would go with, I think. Like it's a very like 70s, hardy name.

Haley 51:39



Linda?

Amy 51:40  
Like, Pamela. Bonnie.

Haley 51:43  
Linda works in HR!

Lori 51:44  
Susan?

Haley 51:45  
Okay, sometimes I'd be reading, and I'd go like, "Wait, hold on. No. That's not talking about snakes. She's Snake. The snake's name is Mist," or whatever. <laughter>

Lori 51:53  
Yeah, it would be like if my name was affidavit.

Haley 51:56  
My name is Oxford comma.

Lori 51:58  
My name is petition.

Amy 51:59  
I am contract, nice to meetcha. <laughter>

Haley 52:04  
That means somebody's name s a Subway Sandwich.

Lori 52:06  
Aww.

Amy 52:07  
It's delicious. Anyway.

Lori 52:08  
Yeah. I mean, that's a better name than Snake.

Amy 52:11  
Not than Contract.

Lori 52:14  
It's a better name than Contract, maybe.

Amy 52:17

Or just email. That might be my name. <laughter>

Haley 52:21

My name is Slack, then.

Lori 52:25

Any other general discussion? All right.

Amy 52:28

We're didn't talk about her stripey horse. That's okay.

Lori 52:30

Oh, I love her Tiger pony.

Amy 52:33

There's good horse in this book.

Lori 52:34

This science stuff is neat. How that like, I guess her pony was like her senior thesis where she had to like, give him a virus just so that would give him tiger stripes. And then when Arevin goes to her hometown and meets her little brother, and he's like, oh, yeah, I made this tree that makes for different fruits. That was my project. I like it. It's pretty cool. And then that old lady in the desert loves the tiger pony because she's a fan of spotty stripey, splashy horses.

Amy 53:03

I was into that. I was like, that's like my friend Lori.

Haley 53:05

<yawning> Too much horses.

Lori 53:10

Okay, feminists favorite. I mean, we already talked about the bodily autonomy, the pregnancy prevention.

Haley 53:20

I read this. So there's a website called TV tropes.com Where it like talks about like, common tropes in fiction and movies and TV and books or whatever. And I like this quote, "this book was published at the height of second wave feminism and bears many of the hallmarks of the movement. Bio control has given people complete sexual and reproductive freedom with zero stigma attached to homosexuality, polyamory, premarital sex, contraception, or abortion, to the point where even the conservative and contrarian mayor is appalled that Ras refused to teach Melissa bio control. Non- nuclear families like Merideth's triad and the healers are shown, men

and women seem to be equal. And the key to breeding Dreamsnakes is to see beyond the typical male female binary that has been used up to this point." So like, this book does a lot, I think.

Amy 54:03

The whole book is just second wave feminism. I'm curious if we know anything about ole Vonda's inclinations? Do we know anything about that? I'm just curious.

Lori 54:10

About her sexual orientation. I didn't ask her.

Haley 54:14

I always want everyone to be gay. And I got no hints, either way.

Lori 54:21

Does she have a personal life section on Wikipedia?

Haley 54:23

She does not, which, as we all know, is one strike against you for being straight. But the way that she talks about having sex with men in this book, I don't think she was gay.

Amy 54:32

That's a good point. That's a good point.

Lori 54:35

Do y'all have any misogynist moments? I don't.

Haley 54:38

Not that she did particularly but I hate Ras. But that's easy.

Amy 54:43

Yeah, I can't think of anything. Oh my god. There's nothing?

Lori 54:46

Great!. Five stars! Nothing.

Haley 54:49

I mean, technically that one line that y'all didn't like, "I can show you," could. But that's less than misogynist moment more just like a questionable, disturbing moment. <laughter>

Lori 55:01

Boob talk! I just, I mean, there's no like, male gaze. She's bare-breasted after the bath, but you are bare-breasted after a bath. So I was like, that's just true!

Haley 55:10

She like it! It's kind of chilly. It feels good. Yeah, now it's warm. It feels great.

Lori 55:14

Any other boobs?

Amy 55:15

No, mostly I couldn't stop thinking about vaginal health, but that's okay.

Lori 55:21

I think about that a lot in the apocalypse, like we talked about with Station 11. Everyone's got athlete's foot and a yeast infection. At least she's in the desert.

Amy 55:28

Yeah, that's true. It's dry there.

Haley 55:30

And also healers don't get sick very often.

Lori 55:32

Oh, that's true. Yeah, she's fine. Yeah. But you know, I do like how they said there's like a trade off for that. Because she's basically got like a looming autoimmune disorder. The arthritis. (Haley: Yeah, which is so smart.) There's some good science in this book. (Amy: That's really smart. Because a lot of people wouldn't think about that.) (Haley: Yeah.) Well, and a lot of people would just make her perfect. They would just be like, Oh, we don't get sick. We don't get pregnant. Our teeth are always great. Our bones are always great. (Amy: Vonda knows that's not interesting.) There's a cost for everything, and Vonda addressed that. I like that. Fantastical foods?

Haley 56:03

There's not very much. There's like, you know, eatin' some jerky on the trail.

Lori 56:05

We've got our traditional travel foods.

Amy 56:07

They put a lot of dried foods into water to make a soup, which always seems like a terrible idea.

Lori 56:13

Dried fruit into wine - that sounds delicious.

Haley 56:15

That's like making toilet wine.

Lori 56:19

Dried fruit in wine is how I make black cake at Christmas. I boil dried fruit in wine and it's good.

Amy 56:24

Well, but right, but you put it with other stuff.

Lori 56:26

Yeah, I put it in a cake. But I mean, I'm not gonna say I haven't plucked out a prune or a cherry and just eaten it.

Amy 56:31

I just don't think throwing a stick of jerky into a boiling pot of water is gonna make a good meal.

Lori 56:37

I mean, I don't think it's a GOOD meal. It's like an adequate meal. Because that's how you preserve meat. I mean, I think that's a real way that people eat.

Haley 56:44

This is why I'm writing my book about food in the apocalypse.

Amy 56:46

Oh yeah, what's the title to your book?

Haley 56:49

It's called "I love you more than salt: Culinary dispatches from the apocalypse."

Lori 56:53

I love it! I can't wait for this!

Amy 56:55

Is there a poem or something called I Love You Like Salt?

Haley 56:57

Yeah, there's a classic story where like a daughter. A king somewhere is like, I want a - it's like King Lear. He's like, I want my daughters to give me a tribute. And once like, I love you more than emeralds that are precious. I love you more than gold, then one daughter's like, I love you more than salt. He's like, get the fuck out of here. Salt's cheap. And then like, one day, he gets a meal with no salt. And he's like, Oh, my daughter really fucking loved me. So food is important.

Lori 57:21

And whenever you're ready to publish that we're going to do a Kickstarter like Brandon Sanderson and get you \$40 billion.

Amy 57:27

Because it's okay to fund your own publication now.

Haley 57:30

I'm just putting it on Wattpad right now, so it's free to read.

Lori 57:32

Oh, really? You have something up that I can read?

Haley 57:35

I do. But it's not good. It's not - I'm not done yet. But I, but I've started writing for the first time in many years.

Lori 57:41

I love this. I love this.

Amy 57:42

I signed up for a writing prompt box. You know I love a subscription.

Haley 57:46

You definitely do. <Haley laughs>

Lori 57:49

Alright, soap stuff?

Haley 57:51

Lori, I leave this to you.

Lori 57:54

The whole book was like a LITTLE soapy. But not like, reveal secret identity soapy, like it - Arevin finding her just in the nick of time is a little soapy. But it's like a little bit but nothing like, I've got a chip in my brain or I had plastic surgery to be someone else.

Amy 58:12

Does him still having her journal in his pocket?

Lori 58:16

I don't know. She found the burglar and he still had her stuff.

Amy 58:19

And he was following her.

Haley 58:20

Yeah. Yeah, it's like just just soapy enough. It's like, sudsy.

Amy 58:25

Remember that time a dangerous jungle cat appeared at the face of their cave. And they thought that the jungle cat was going to kill them - it was a desert cat, not a jungle cat, I guess. But instead it jumped past them into a crevice in the cave. And then they almost crawled into the crevice. And then that was the way they were going to get into the city. I think in some version of this book. That's what happened. That's my soap stuff. <laughter>

Haley 58:42

I wanted to know more about that cat.

Amy 58:51

I know.

Lori 58:53

Did you like the book?

Amy 58:54

Yes.

Haley 58:54

It was decent.

Lori 58:55

Me too. All right. Star Wars or Lord of the Rings. I think this one's easy.

Amy 59:01

Lord of the Rings.

Haley 59:01

No!

Lori 59:02

Really?? All right, go, Haley. Let's hear it.

Haley 59:07

It's Dune. (Lori & Amy: Ohhhh!) There's sand everywhere. There's worms and snakes. There's women witches: Bene Gesserit. She's kind of like a healer. There's a mean and very pale bad person: North and Baron Harkonnen. And there's a hallucinogenic substance. One's a spice and one's a snake.

Lori 59:23

There's no special boy though.

Haley 59:24

And that's the best part!

Lori 59:26

None of the boys are special. It's Dune, but - fixed it!

Amy 59:31

Okay, I like that. I will also say that Vonda wrote a Star Wars book (Haley: and it's so bad!) So it does lean toward Star Wars or something.

Haley 59:39

That is not - that argument, Counselor, does not hold up in court.

Amy 59:42

I like to do an argument.

Lori 59:43

She wrote a ton of Star Trek books. People really love them.

Haley 59:50

I did sit and think about this this afternoon. I was like I don't know.

Amy 59:53

I think that's right, Dune.

Haley 59:54

I think it's Dune.

Amy 59:55

Except for, she's not - I don't think she's white savior-ing anyone.

Haley 59:59

No, cuz like, it seems like they're all pretty white or I don't know, but.

Lori 1:00:03

I mean, I think they're just all unspecified, right? Yeah, also always in these future times I imagine that maybe we're not like post-racial but - (Amy: everyone's roughly beige?) in survival mode. So I feel like we've found other ways to stratify.

Amy 1:00:17

They make a point of saying one of the women in this book that you meet is Black. I think it's the granddaughter of the caravannaire.

Haley 1:00:28



I think part of the problem for my thinking that they're white is like so many of the book covers have white people on them. So many of them do.

Amy 1:00:35

Can we talk about Dr. Quinn on the cover of my book??

Lori 1:00:36

Ohh you are absolutely right. It absolutely has Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman on her tiger pony.

Amy 1:00:44

sShe has her fantasy braid, here on the side.

Lori 1:00:48

Oh my god.

Amy 1:00:49

There's a lot happening on the cover of this book.

Lori 1:00:55

This is art specific to this book, for sure. They've drawn her as a very very very white lady.

Amy 1:00:59

And like the, nuclear fallout holes.

Lori 1:01:02

That's not really I imagined her though.

Haley 1:01:04

Oh, no, no, not at all. That's Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman. Which is you know, maybe this edition was published in the 90s when that show was at its heyday.

Amy 1:01:13

She does have some pretty dope boots on.

Lori 1:01:15

My ebook, the cover of it is like a sexy lady's like, bottom half of her face and manicured nails holding a snake. It's very like Eve/temptress.

Haley 1:01:28

That is mine too, and I hate it.

Haley 1:01:30

All right, coming up next time. Guys. We're reading a listener request called Kallocaïn, and we only have one copy, so we have to share it. Surprise! It's short. It was a nominee for a retro

Hugo. I think for 1941. So I got my copy from Charis Books here in Atlanta, which is - (Haley: they have a great sci fi selection!) a feminist bookstore in Atlanta and also now the official school bookstore of Agnes Scott college so that's cool. I'm happy for them about that because I feel like that'll be a steady income stream for them. But anyway, I got it using the gift card that our wonderful listener and friend Whitney sent to all of us for Christmas! Thank you Whitney, and thank you to our listener Lise Andreasen for recommending that book! Okay, that's it!

All 1:02:25

Bye!

<OUTRO MUSIC>

Lori 1:02:38

This book started out as a short story called of Mist, Grast, and - goddammit. Grast!

Haley 1:02:44

Ass, Grass, or gas??

Lori 1:02:44

Am I saying it right? Is it Mist, Grass and Sand?