

Lapvona

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00:03

Holly: This is Bimbo Book Club with Holly.

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Harley: And Harley. Okay, so this week we are doing *Lapvona*. Do you know how to say the author's name?

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Holly: Ottessa Moshfegh? No, I don't know.

00:26

Harley: Cool, cool, cool. All the trigger warnings. I really don't know how else to sum it up. Basically, if there is anything that you ever need a trigger warning for, this is your trigger warning for that. I was gonna say, except a fear of spiders, but they eat insects at one point. So literally everything.

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Holly: Yeah, so specifically trigger warning for animal cruelty, abuse of power, sadism, self-harm, sexual assault, and cannibalism.

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Harley: And a little bit of like, I would say pedophilic tones.

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Holly: Oh, definitely. Yeah. Forgot about the pedophilic tones. So, all the trigger warnings.

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Harley: Like I said, if there's a thing that needs a trigger warning, consider this your trigger warning.

01:06

Holly: Yeah, no dogs die though. Lambs? Yes. Dogs? No.

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Harley: Yeah, good point. One thing I can tell you about this book, because spoiler alert for the book ahead, but also spoiler alert for my opinion. I hated it.

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Holly: Yeah, I have confused feelings about this book. I'm not sure if I hate it. Yeah, that's the end of that sentence.

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Harley: You could elaborate.

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Holly: I could elaborate. So, we decided to do this book, which is *Lapvona*, because we happen to be in a bookshop. And I've been targeted by this. It seems to be following me around. Every time I go into a bookshop, I see it. It's popping up on TikTok.

01:55

Harley: Well, she's quite a well-known author. What's the other one she's written? I can't remember.

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Holly: *My Year of Solitude?* She is quite an established author, already. And this was a highly anticipated book.

02:09

Harley: I haven't read anything else of hers. But from what I can tell from other people's feedback, it is a bit of a departure from how she normally writes. I'm not writing her off as an author. But I stand by my dislike.

02:26

Holly: I'm not sure how I feel about this book. But I will be reading more of her stuff. One thing that I did notice is that all the positive reviews referenced her other works. Whereas all the negative reviews just focused on how shit this one book was. That sort of says something, like the book should stand in and of itself and not have to reference other books.

02:44

Harley: So, her other book is *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*. I think I was combining it with *100 Years of Solitude*, which is a completely different book. So, what did you *maybe* like about it?

03:03

Holly: This is a long silence. It's got all the elements of books that I do like. It's got sort of grotesque themes, disturbing scenes, it's got a real sense of claustrophobia to it, which are all things that I normally really enjoy in a book. I think this novel just kind of had an aimless plot. It just kind of didn't really progress. And it didn't leave you with a sense of satisfaction.

03:28

Harley: It felt like everything was like, *How far can I push this?* Rather than, *Where's the plot?* The point, I guess, more than the plot, because there is a plot, there's no point. Which can

in of itself be a point that there is no point. But it felt like the author was just seeing how far she could push stuff. So, it was a little bit like the grotesque version of something like *Saw*. Do you remember in that *Saw* era, where every horror movie was like, *Fuck a plot. Let's see how insane a thing we can get on-screen as possible*. And it was just gore porn. Yeah, like it was the loosest plot as an excuse for them to just feature gore porn.

04:19

Holly: Yeah, absolutely. But even with *Saw*, when you look at them as a complete series, there is still some element of plot and reasoning.

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Harley: But she does have a plot. She just doesn't, in my opinion, have a point. Or at least not a point that it justifies how consistently ridiculously grotesque she is. And there are some elements of that grotesqueness that I can get on board for really early on. It talks about Marek, who's the main character and has this kind of like weird relationship with religion and God and all that kind of stuff. Because, obviously, it's set in medieval times, and for anybody who doesn't know this, bedrooms and privacy, very modern thing, so he can hear his father essentially wanking. And that moment of climax and things like that he observes as a demon being expelled from his father and all that kind of stuff. I can get completely on board for that, because I can see a lot of places where you can take that and it is a little bit uncomfortable, a little bit disturbing, and it does have that grotesqueness to it. But it doesn't, at that point in the novel, feel like grotesqueness for the sake of grotesqueness and then 20 pages further in, you're like, *Okay, so we're just doing this*.

05:39

Holly: Yeah, there are a lot of very quick downhill moments for morality, particularly with this whole town, no one eats meat. The whole town, no one eats meat. Next thing you know, cannibals.

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Harley: Zero to 100. Real quick.

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Holly: Yeah, I will say I do like the way that she has fleshed out the characters in such a way that they are well-thought-out characters, but they're still so shallow. It's really hard to explain if you haven't read the book. They are complex characters in their world and in their life. But they are extremely shallow people.

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Harley: I think, too, she's done a good job of, I mean, *really*, the story follows the town. So as much as like Marek is arguably the main character. Really, the story is not about any one person, it's about the town, he just happens to be the person that crosses the barrier from townsperson to that ruling class, in becoming the lord's son.

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Holly: Yeah, and it does follow a lot of other characters, like you say, but I think we only ever have internal monologue from Marek. And that's it.

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Harley: I think a little bit for Jude. Because remember, we're down in the town following Jude. Yeah, during the drought, I think we might do a very brief stint with Ina. And actually, the father who becomes the new Ina of the random villages. I can't remember his name because he's only really briefly in it. But he almost dies in the drought. And then he loses some other I think, so he doesn't have sight and he loses hearing, or something like that. But he goes off into the forest. And they're the two villages that get invited up for the feast. I do think there's some elements of like, you know, the role of religion and all that kind of stuff in terms of placating people and you know, what people will ignore in the face of a hope of something better being out there or there being some master plan.

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Holly: Yeah. And I think we see both sides of this. So, we see that the townspeople with their seemingly unwavering face, to appoint, but then we see Lord Villiam, who is essentially declaring himself the ruler of everything and blocking the water and taking control. And he's got his priest, who has declared himself a priest and is not a man of God, who is just sort of, like floundering around.

08:16

Harley: I think it ties into some of that very old-fashioned stuff. I mean, I think, not as old-fashioned as we'd like it to believe that it is if you look at people who are successful and religious, but that thing of like, kings and queens and lords and all that kind of thing being like, 'I'm here because of my God-given right.' I mean, you see it in things like the Russian revolution and things like that, how long that family ignored the peasants' wishes, because 'I'm here, it's my God-given right to be here. Why would I not be here? I'm God's chosen.' Instead of being like, hey, people are starving and there's like a butt ton of them. So, if they were to revolt, that's gonna end really badly for me, which they found out the hard way. Unless you believe the not-Disney, but Disney bought it, so now it is the Disney version of events. I did read in a review that some people were talking about that it was like a modern reflection on the modern state of like the pandemic and stuff, which I thought was a bit of a reach.

09:12

Holly: Well, I feel like she wrote it in lockdown, and being a COVID novel. I think anyone is going to reach for that.

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Harley: Do you think she deliberately had those parallels? Because I gotta say that feels to me like some *I teach a writing class* bullshit. Real like reading into stuff well beyond what the author intended. But the author is happy to be like, *Yeah, deeply meaningful. That's what I was going for.*

09:40

Holly: I mean, I can sort of see it I don't feel like it was the intention. I think it's how I mentioned before how the whole town feels very claustrophobic. I think that's like that claustrophobic feeling is potentially what they're getting at with this like COVID reflection because we did feel very stuck, we felt stuck in our homes just like everyone in this town feels very stuck in this town.

09:59

Harley: You have to remember we're talking from a very... we were *very* locked down. So, we had the delightful honor of being in the most lockdown city in the world.

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Holly: I think it was the strictest lockdown for the longest. I think there were other cities that had stricter lockdowns, but ours was longest.

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Harley: Strict and for a long period. I think we had the most number of overall days in lockdown, which was lots. So, it was not necessarily the most consecutive because we did have little windows of time, and they let us out for two whole minutes and they went, *Ha! Joke's on you, lockdown.*

10:34

Holly: Yeah, you liked your freedom. *Haha, now you have five kilometers from your registered address and no more.*

10:40

Harley: *And you better have a good reason to be in those five kilometers.*

10:44

Holly: We're timing you. Half an hour. I'm sorry, it was 60 minutes, sorry, 60 minutes. All right, outside measure. Imagine if we'd started this podcast in lockdown. Imagine how far along we'd be.

10:54

Harley: Well, we wouldn't have had anything else to do. All those nights and weekends where we have to work, but we'd be not working.

11:02

Holly: Yeah, so coming from a place of Melbourne lockdown and feeling extremely claustrophobic in my own home. I definitely felt a sense of claustrophobia with the town that she had created. And that I don't know if that it would extend to the rest of the world. But I wonder if that's what they're drawing parallels from with the COVID-ness.

11:21

Harley: I think actually, a lot of it was more to do with. I mean, there was very much that thing of, I know that I've ranted to everybody who's been within 100 meters of me, about the like, *We're all in this together*, that our premier kept saying where I have never wanted to stab him more. It's a long line of people, it's fine. I'm not kidding, that man, I would not be walking down the street if I was him. The amount of people I know that hate his guts. I'm like, *I want to stab you. But I won't*. Like obviously for us. We had our premier constantly being like, *We're all in this together*. While a great deal of our city is on like, you know, we've got so many people in hospitality, we as performers require essentially people to be able to go out and party for us to do our jobs. So, every single time a lockdown was announced in Victoria, I watched 1000s of dollars of booked jobs just disappear overnight. Because even if it wasn't in the official lockdown time period, often people were canceling because they're like, let's be honest, a four-week lockdown is going to be a 16-week lockdown. So, the eight-week thing will just keep slipping.

12:26

Holly: Yeah. And the threat of having to isolate for two weeks, it was not worth having an event, like say a buck's party two weeks before a wedding in case.

12:34

Harley: You didn't even know if your wedding could go ahead, so the buck's party was the least of your worries. But on a global scale. I know there were a lot of people who complained about like, celebrities being like, *oh, like we're all stuck in our homes together* from their like multimillion dollar mansions and things like that. And I think that's and I'm putting words in people's mouths here because it is based on other people's feelings about the book. I think that a lot of people actually got that like, parallel between the like the wealthy and the poor and the like the poor people are suffering in the wealthy are like, *Yeah, bummer*.

13:08

Holly: Absolutely. And the thing about the wealthy in this book is that they are completely controlling it. And it's not even implied. It's straight up. Lord Villiam is like, *Nah, let's just stop the water.*

13:19

Harley: Yeah, *I have pleasure gardens. And I want to go for a swim. So, we're going to redirect that, and you guys can suck it.*

13:26

Holly: *Don't care if you die.* So, let's talk about Lord Villiam. He is a very interesting character. So, his son is accidentally murdered. I mean, it wasn't really on purpose. But it's kind of also wasn't not on purpose. It wasn't really meant to kill him. But it also kind of was.

13:51

Harley: I think it was so Marek, the main character is 13 at the start of the book, and I think what it was supposed to be, was like that teenage boy, that young teenage boy thing of like, pulling something apart to see how it works. So, I think that like shoving him off the edge or like watching him fall or whatever, I think was supposed to be like that. Almost like, *I wonder what will happen*, pulling the wings off a bug or whatever. And they're not really realizing that there were consequences to his actions until...

14:23

Holly: Looking down and seeing an eyeball hanging out. So, his son has died. Marek's gone home to his father and us like, *Oops*, because at this point, like his father is...

14:36

Harley: I think it's a little bit more complicated than that. So, it's that religious fervor that Marek has, he's like, *I'm gonna confess to my father and be punished in a state of religious purity for my confession and punishment* and all that stuff. So, he goes home and tells his father who instead of just beating him up, like he normally does, he drags him off to Lord

Villiam expecting that essentially the eye for an eye will be that Lord Villiam says, *Well, he killed my son, so I'll kill him.*

15:08

Holly: Which is what Marek wants.

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Harley: Yeah, so everybody's on board for this. Jude is like, *Let's do this like I'm free to the burden of my wayward son.* Marek is like, *I can die in a state of religious ecstasy because I have confessed and been punished for my sins.* Jacob's mother is like, *This kid killed my kid, so die, bastard die.* Lord Villiam, on the other hand is like, *All I need is a son. So, he'll do. You take the dead body, and I'll take the living kid, and we're good to go.*

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Holly: Yeah. And so, he also quite likes comedy. He likes to be entertained. And the fact that Marek is a little bit disabled, he finds it amusing that this kid is a little bit bent out of shape. Which is, this man is just, yeah, he doesn't get better as he doesn't get any better. Doesn't get any better.

16:05

Harley: There really are no characters with redeeming qualities in this book. To be clear if you're looking for a likable character, there isn't one.

16:12

Holly: No, there is not a single likable character in this entire book. Not a single one.

16:17

Harley: I think the closest would be Luca, who's Jacobs's real father, and he's just a soldier working for Lord Villiam who's sleeping with his wife and gets knocked off later in the thing. And he's not a good person. He's just not actively too likable.

16:32

Holly: I just remembered another trigger warning, incest. Marek is the product of his mother being raped by her brother. And then Jude finds out when she's already pregnant, and then holds her captive. There's another one false imprisonment.

16:52

Harley: Sexual assault, right? False imprisonment. All the triggers. So, one of the things that's kind of mostly told through backstories, and things like that, is that Marek's mother, Agata was initially kind of sounds like a like, oh, yeah, they were just married. And Jude loved her and this, that, the other, but turns out Jude's way of saying I love you is to chain you to the fireplace, so you can't escape. We have to have her, right? And then when she finally gives birth to Marek, he's like, *I can't believe that she would have tried to abort this child that has come from one of her many sexual assaults from someone or other.* Like, why wouldn't she want to keep it? Well, he's like, *Oh, look, I have a son.* She runs away. And he pretends she's died honorably and things like that. But actually, she's just gotten the fuck away from him as fast as she humanly can with her one opportunity.

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Holly: Yeah, so she's an interesting character, because we assume that she's dead and gone for a good portion of the novel. And then surprise, she comes back. So, she never actually left. No, she was in the nunnery the whole time, she escapes.

18:06

Harley: So, she escapes from Jude. And there's this kind of thing, a few characters that spend time in the forest around them, most of them become holy. She doesn't become holy. But she does manage to get to the nunnery and become a nun, protected by the sisters there. However, there is some parallel too, because by the end of the novel, so she ends up in her nun state at the Lord's manor, and Lord Villiam believes that she's a virgin nun. Everybody else is like, *Hey,*

isn't that Marek's mother, but we all believe our fantasies, I guess. So, Lord Villiam, when his wife runs away, dies.

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Holly: Disappears into the night on a horse that returns with no eyes is the official line.

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Harley: Sadly, we know where the horse's eyes go. Once she's out of the picture, Lord Villiam essentially marries this nun in order to essentially birth the second coming of Christ. So, there is some level of her becoming holy through her escape from Lapvona, even though at no point does she consider herself holy or to have had a revelation or any of that kind of stuff.

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Holly: Yeah, this comes back to Villiam deciding that he's holy and Father Barnabas deciding that he is a man of God and then deciding that this child is the second coming.

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Harley: Barnabas isn't on board for this, is he? Because he's like, *Oh, God, if we're selling him as the second coming, real priests will come here, and they'll find me out.*

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Holly: Yeah. But I mean, in the way that he's just decided that he is holy. Lord Villiam has decided he's holy and then Lord Villiam has decided that Agata is holy, because she is a nun who is pregnant and mute, isn't she? Did they take her tongue?

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Harley: Yeah, I think so somebody ripped out her tongue. Honestly, there's so many grotesque things that happen that it all kind of blurs into one big horror show.

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Holly: So, the reason why she is a pregnant nun is because, surprise, surprise, she was raped again by Jude. So, Jude finds her pregnant with her brother's child, decides to keep that child and Agata then escapes and is gone. Comes back, finds her, rapes her, impregnates her. And then she's, I guess, stolen and kept by Lord Villiam this time.

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Harley: So, there is also a couple of layers of for like role taking, so Marek takes the role of Jacob, Marek kills Jacob, takes on his role of being the Lord's son, but then arguably this new baby takes on his role in that he's, I guess, his son, but also Jude's son for real this time. And Marek has always been the center of attention for a lot of these characters who are no longer interested in him.

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Holly: And it all feels like it should mean something, like Agata not having Jude's biological child and then coming back and then having Jude's biological child, but then being Lord Villiam's property and then it feels like it should mean something. And maybe I'm just missing the point. It seems to be going around in circles, and the whole thing just feels so pointless. And that might be the point. And maybe that's why people think it's a COVID novel, because it's so fucking pointless, like lockdown.

21:51

Harley: So, I mean, she's that argument that like, we're all looking for a point, and there is no point, and I can get on board for that. But the thing for me is that there's kind of a, like a dumbing down of people almost or like a ridiculousness of it, where it feels like the way that in like medieval history, an author would talk about whoever their enemy was. So, it's like, they're barbarians, and they're stupid. And they're ugly.

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Holly: It's very stereotypical.

22:21

Harley: In a way that just feels kind of demeaning, and also feels like, are you trying to make us feel better? Like we've evolved somehow? Because we haven't. And if you go back and read things like the Greek stances on women's roles in society, we haven't really evolved all that much. We just are allowed to vote now we're considered actual citizens, and not slightly better than a cow.

22:45

Holly: But we get a bank account. Why are you complaining?

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Harley: But the kind of the role of women in that stuff has not evolved since ancient Greek times. And then if we're talking medieval Europe, that's after that time period. So, to act like, they're the stupid sheep. And we're so like, in comparison to where we are now is like, we haven't evolved that much.

23:07

Holly: I think that's what I meant earlier, when I was talking about how the characters were complex, but shallow. It feels like she hasn't really done very much research into the time period that she's writing and not that she's really decided or stated that there's a particular time period, nor has she stated that there's a particular location, we just assume that Lapvona is a location somewhere in Europe.

23:29

Harley: Yeah, I mean, it's implied heavily enough that I feel like everybody talks about it being vaguely European.

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Holly: Yeah. But I don't even know that it's really, but it doesn't feel like there's any research that's gone into it, she's just kind of gone, *That's a stereotype that'll do.*

23:42

Harley: And arguably, on that point, I actually took me quite a while to realize it wasn't until I was like, I don't even know what I'm going to say about it because we read it for the podcast and I finished it because we were doing this episode, but honestly got to the end of it and was like I genuinely don't know what to even say about this, which is why I looked up some stuff about this book. And I do like to kind of see what other people think and kind of see what I've maybe not considered and all that stuff in general about books but for this one in particular I was like, I can't just say, *I hate it I'm done*, and then leave Holly to try and talk for an hour by herself because I've rage quit.

24:19

Holly: It wouldn't be a very long podcast.

24:21

Harley: But anyway, so I went and like, looked at what other people said and all that kind of stuff. And that's when I realized that it was written by a woman, because up until that point, I actually thought it was written by a man and I thought that in large part because of

24:36

Holly: The breastfeeding scene.

24:37

Harley: Yeah, Ina and the way that Ina was described. So, Ina is the like the town witch and the town midwife, basically. So, she's a woman who like, disappears into the forest, becomes like holy or mad depending on what stance you take, but like, holy in a pagan sense. And she magically develops breast milk in order to nourish herself so she represents like, and I get this part where she represents like nourishment and that kind of practical...

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Holly: She doesn't just represent it, she comes back to the town, and she literally nourishes all of the town's babies.

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Harley: Which is on par with that like old religious thing where instead of being a like metaphorical thing, it's a literal thing, just in case people don't understand the metaphor. It's like she literally is nourishing you. But the way that that whole thing is described, I was like, *Do you not understand how boobs work and how bodies work?*

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Holly: And how babies latch?

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Harley: Yeah, 100% Like, I actually think I sent Holly a rant about this.

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Holly: Oh, no, I was driving, and you were sitting in my passenger seat and had a rant.

25:43

Harley: One way or another. Holly had to listen to me rant about this.

25:46

Holly: And now I get to listen again.

25:49

Harley: And so, to you. So, I don't know how to say this any other way, I can lick my own nipple.

25:58

Holly: I cannot.

26:02

Harley: Which I would argue, demonstrates boobs full of milk better than my boobs. But that's the thing is that this is why I was like, *What the fuck, you've never been around like a breastfeeding woman.* Because when they're actively full of milk boobs are really hard. Like they're quite firm because they're full of stuff. Whereas my boobs are like breast tissue and fat so they they'll move around pretty easy. And that combined with volume makes it you know, like they are relatively pliable, and they will move around a fair bit.

26:34

Holly: Yeah, just for context. In case no one's seen our Instagram or anything. What size are your breasts there, dear Harley?

26:41

Harley: I'm pretty close to putting this as a FAQ on my Instagram. I am a 6G, which means I have a small back and giant tits and they're all homegrown.

26:50

Holly: G for ginormous. Sorry, I'm ranting.

26:56

Harley: Just from a purely like, mechanical sense. I'm not gonna say that nobody can like, lick their own boob or like, latch. I don't know that I could latch on my own nipple. I'm not going to try it. I appreciate that you tried to get to your nipple. I can definitely lick my nipple, but I don't think I could latch which Agata does to herself. But also again, I have never had children. My boobs are just like breast tissue and fat. So, they're pretty pliable. If I was to have children, and I was actively breastfeeding and all they were filling with milk, should I breastfeed, they would

become really firm, I don't have that level of movement that I have right now. Which is where I was like silicone is probably a better example of because they are firmer in the way that a full breast is. So Agata essentially latches onto her own boob feeds herself, and then feeds the rest of the town. Just from a mechanical standpoint, you've lost me right there. And then we go to the next level where Marek is 13, but he is described as being the size of an eight-year-old so I'm gonna go with eight-year-old has is, so she's got like magical boobs that just are consistently forever full of milk. Marek never outgrows breastfeeding. So, he goes to see her at 13, again, eight-year-old size.

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Holly: And there is one point where she no longer produces milk, but she's still allowing the men of the town to latch and suckle for comfort. But this is what I believe when he is 13.

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Harley: Yeah, actually, I don't think he's getting any milk from it anyway, not actually the point.

28:32

Holly: I think that I know the point you're about to make. I think it almost makes it worse but carry on.

28:38

Harley: No, I think you're talking about the next bit. So, she describes it as but like he sucked her nipple into the back of his throat. And again, from a mechanical standpoint, a baby can do that because they have little tiny mouths, they're miniature. An eight-year-old? No, like *what fucking magical*, like I get that nipples change shape and elongate and all that kind of stuff.

28:59

Holly: And he's got a whole mouth full of teeth now and a soft palate that's completely, like...

29:05

Harley: It's not designed for like, I'm not saying he couldn't latch on, and he couldn't suckle because let's be honest, grown men suckle on boobs all the time, for a multitude of reasons, including comfort. So, again, whatever. But just on a purely mechanical sense, she cannot latch on to her own boob and an eight-year-old sized person, I do not believe that they can get a nipple down their throat.

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Holly: I think that is a pretty fair assessment.

29:29

Harley: So, there is a point where Ina has allowed Marek who again, is only 13 but looks 8 to essentially go down on her so they describe it as because it's told from Marek's perspective as him suckling but suckling from somewhere else. But essentially, she's allowed him to go down on her for her own pleasure. And then she always denies him access again, because it's wrong. But nonetheless, she's gotten off with the body of an eight-year-old?

30:03

Holly: Yeah, it's a very bizarre scene, like everything about her is very bizarre. So, she has no sight. She has the horse's eyes.

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Harley: That's where the horse's eyes go.

30:17

Holly: But the more she breastfeeds, she does get her sight back when she breastfeeds. When she expels milk, she does get some of her sight back, she stops being able to breastfeed, lose her sight again, until she steals the horse's eyes. And then because they're too big, sometimes her eye sockets get sore, and she just like, pops them out for a break. But there's also that other quality that which she does about her when she is breastfeeding, and is I believe it's when she's consuming the human flesh as well. She's getting younger.

30:47

Harley: That was one of the interesting things that I wanted to bring up to you. At the end of the book. So, she's cloistered right at the end of the book with Agata and then possibly the second coming baby. Yeah, probably should have looked up that name, too. To be honest. There are so many characters here. I literally have a list of names in front of me. She gets younger and younger. Is she feeding on them, or is she feeding them? What's the deal there?

31:08

Holly: Because I have no idea.

31:09

Harley: It's like she gets younger from the cannibalism and her sight back from the breastfeeding. She is described as ageless. So, she's like, super old, but it's not clear if she's like 50 in a time period where nobody makes it to 35. Or she's like 200.

31:26

Holly: So, when Jude collects the dead body that has literally just fallen over and died. Yeah. And he collects the dead body...

31:37

Harley:

Wait that dog dies.

31:40

Holly:

No! The dog does die. Well, it's implied that the dog dies.

31:43

Harley: That dog definitely dies.

31:45

Holly: I'm sorry, I take that back. The dog does die. All the trigger warnings. All the trigger warnings. So, Jude witnesses this guy keel over dead, collects him, takes him to Ina.

31:57

Harley: But also, physically collects him because he's like, these villagers are starving. They're gonna fall upon him and end up cannibals and like, I can't allow that.

32:05

Holly: But then goes ahead and does it anyway. So, when he brings the body to Ina, she is very frail and very old and, in a bed.

32:15

Harley: And she's the one who's like, *Feed me the fucking human*. And he's like, *No, it's unholy. I could never*. And she's like, *Feed me the fucking human*.

32:22

Holly: And then it turns out he fucking froths it. So, he just keeps eating.

32:27

Harley: So, he's like, *No, no, no, no, no*. And then when he eventually gives in, because surprise, he gives in. Turns out he quite likes meat. So, he's not a vegetarian anymore. Won't eat lamb, will eat human.

32:39

Holly: Yeah, I mean, even the townspeople. So, he has a flock, and the townspeople are dying and starving and he refuses to give his flock, which are also dying and starving, to the townspeople.

32:52

Harley: I think he won't let them eat them even after they've just died. Yeah, so like he's so against the eating of meat that he won't even allow them to eat the already dead bodies.

33:04

Holly: Which is a delusional religious element.

33:08

Harley: But, again, there's something about gender there. Because the ram, he doesn't care about he lets them kill the ram.

33:14

Holly: Yeah, I agree. He doesn't really care about it. But I don't know that he really had a choice like they were going to take the ram.

33:21

Harley: But consistently throughout the thing. He's like, *I felt bad but whatever*. Like, he doesn't really give a shit about it, its only purpose is to give him more lambs.

33:29

Holly: Yes. And I believe he gets very upset after he lets the ram mate. Which, I mean, kind of makes sense with Agata being upset that she came to him pregnant. Or he stole, her found her and she was already pregnant, kept her.

33:48

Harley: By came to him, Holly means he found her in the forest and kidnapped her.

33:51

Holly: Yeah, so I kind of understand that but then he goes ahead and does that to her anyway. So, he goes ahead and rapes her. Is there a meaning there? Is there a transition?

34:03

Harley: This is the thing is, it feels like there should be some kind of transcended meaning. And then really, it kind of turns out just that people suck is the meaning. Yeah, I don't know. This is why I can rant for so long about the mechanics of breastfeeding is because it really feels like there's no delivery and maybe I'm just stupid, but I'm pretty sure it's not that I'm stupid. I'm pretty sure it's that is a novel that is written to be grotesque and esoteric without any real point or like, concept that the author is deeply attached to. And in some way, I feel like *Fight Club*, the book, is almost a comparison in terms of, it's not so eloquently written, per se, but every single piece of that is focused on the point that the author, Chuck Palahniuk, has which is that sense of ennui, or that like, not living up to potential of being trapped like a rat in a cage to make sure that I have to link to songs as well as books in this despite all my rage and all that jazz.

35:16

Holly: I see what you did there. You're real funny. Yeah, I think across both of those novels, they're very unlikable characters, and they're morally gray characters. That's it. That's the end of the point.

35:28

Harley: But I think that *Fight Club* executes it well, because instead of being focused on just being as disgusting as possible, everything serves the purpose of his actual message. And his actual message is to communicate that feeling of nothing really matters in this modern thing. And that sense of like, just wanting to, I do, one of the biggest criticisms I have for *Fight Club*, in any of its formats, is that I think that it seems to be under the impression that it's a distinctly masculine feeling of wanting to just like blow everything up and say, *Fuck society*. And I don't think that that is exclusively masculine, but I do appreciate that it was made by a bunch of men

from like, you know, Chuck Palahniuk is obviously a man, but also when the movie was made. So, they're talking from their perspective. But I do think that everything in that is designed to serve the purpose of communicating that overall message. And there are some elements in there that are just like, *holy fuck really you went that far*. Obviously, everybody in this day and age with the movie knows the like, using lipo fat as a catalyst for soap. Yeah, but I mean, there's also things like Marla in the movie being like, 'I haven't been fucked like that since grade school,' which is primary school for everybody who's not American.

36:47

Holly: But there's layers and there's purpose, whereas this feels like there's not necessarily layers or purpose.

36:55

Harley: I can go without the layers, but I need purpose. And if the purpose is just to be like, *Look how gross I can be*, or I saw a few things that were like women authors aren't allowed to be grotesque. And I'm like, I can get on board for women authors being grotesque. If there's a point, right?

37:13

Holly: I've definitely read some really beautifully grotesque things from women, and they are fucking disturbing, way more like they leave you with a deep sense of hollowness.

37:22

Harley: Actually, you know who I think would be a really good example of, like, women can write grotesque things is have you ever read any Toni Morrison? So, she's got a whole bunch of novels I'm sure I've talked to about *Beloved*. Yeah, so the plot of *Beloved*, in its loosest sense. So, I originally read it, because I had a literature teacher who was like, *Don't read this book, dear children, she murdered her baby, it's horrifying*. And I was like, *There's got to be more context than that*.

37:51

Holly: Naturally, as soon as someone tells you not to do something, you're gonna do it?

37:55

Harley: Well, yeah, that's my ADHD kicking in.

37:57

Holly: Just adding it to my wanted list on Good Reads. Oh, it's a trilogy. Well, stay tuned, because that one just got added to the to podcast list.

38:08

Harley: Even if we don't do that one, we should do Toni Morrison. So, like, I was like, *I'm reading this book*, and she tried to deny me and essentially, my mother's stance on this was, nobody will ever forbid any child of mine from reading anything by Toni Morrison. So I read *Beloved*, and she does murder her baby. But there is a lot more context. And a lot of the context is about her being an escaped slave and how often the overseers and the white owners, the farm wish she was owned, would drain the milk dry, so babies would starve anyway, and assault babies and children and things like that. So, she's essentially murdered her child to protect her child from the horrors of the reality that she's living in. And in the rest of the book, she's haunted by this. So, a lot of it's told that from the perspective of her younger child who has to live with the ghost of their older sibling, who didn't make it past infancy. And it's more complicated than that. I am massively oversimplifying this story.

39:08

Holly: But it's not dissimilar to how people are like don't read *Lolita*. He's just a pedophile. And yes, very problematic. Yes, he is a pedophile. But the novel is about so much more than that grooming, it's about the aftermath and all of that as well. You can't paint it with one brush.

39:28

Harley: That grotesqueness serves a purpose. And the purpose for *Beloved*, is the realities of the horrors of slavery in America. And that time period and the choices that people had to make that were just inhumane because they were in an inhumane situation, and it's very

similar to I mean, I think that you if you look at something like say, the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia, one of the things that they'd routinely do is make parents choose between their children, like one of these kids is going to die and you get new have to choose which one, which is a horrifying thing to even conceptualize. But it was a reality for a lot of people during that regime, and it was one of many horrors that they inflicted on people in Cambodia. Well, the citizens of Cambodia, I mean, if you look at, say, the Japanese soldiers in Korea and the like, all of the assaults that happen there, and all that kind of stuff, story set in those time periods are stories about those things, doing a disservice by not being grotesque, because you have to, if you're going to communicate a real story about that time period, it's about those situations. It's difficult to do with any degree of sincerity unless you do lean into that horror of that kind of stuff. And I think, Toni Morrison is an incredible example of a female author who has done an incredible job of really making you like you read, not just that book, but a few of her books. In fact, I think every book I've ever read, but that's a really great example of one where you're as you're reading it, you're like, I want to look away, but I can't. I love books like that. So yeah, it is this really kind of like, horrifying thing. And it's just, it's disgusting. Because it's disgusting that anybody has ever been put in those kinds of situations. It's disgusting, that things like that still happen to maybe in different places in different ways, arguably, in different places, to be honest, but it is like I don't think that we've evolved or any of that kind of stuff. But yeah, that kind of you want to look away, but you can't, because it is a reality. And because it serves a purpose within the book, whereas I found with this, in some ways, I think it does a disservice to people who've actually gone through things that are horrifying. And like pick a trigger warning, any trigger warning from the book, really because lord knows she ticked them all. And because it doesn't serve a purpose. I feel like there is a level of mockery to people who have had to experience that grotesqueness, whereas I think when it serves a purpose, I'm on board. I don't know if that makes sense. I feel like I said a lot of words, didn't really get to my point.

42:06

Holly: But neither did the book.

42:11

Harley: Or express it.

42:15

Holly: I think you are so right there because the book doesn't feel resolved. Things happen. It's got an ending, but it doesn't feel resolved. And maybe it doesn't feel resolved because there was

nothing to resolve. Because there was no point, there was no plot, there was no anything. And so that's why we left with I was left with quite a large book hangover, and not a good one. It's a confusing one, I have many feelings.

42:36

Harley: I think too, they almost feel independent of each other, in that it feels like the gross stuff was in there just for the sake of seeing how far she could push, how disgusting she could be, and all that kind of stuff. And then on the other side of it, it felt like it was pointless, because the point was that there is no point. And it kind of feels like you've got to pick a lane there.

43:00

Holly: We also don't have a point of reference, because we don't know what her other books are about. We know that they are also quite disturbing, grotesque. But do they have more fleshed-out plots?

43:13

Harley: Yeah, I don't know. I can't comment having not read any of it.

43:18

Holly: No, we can't. But then I guess this takes us back to what I was saying earlier is all the reviews that I've come across, positive ones, reference her other works.

43:26

Harley: I can see how she has the potential to be somebody who, so I'd argue, I know you mentioned I think before we started recording, the grape scene. I would argue that that feels like it has a point within it. In that it showed how Lord Villiam was just trying to push boundaries as far as he could in order to be entertained. But also, because we do see a little bit from Lisbeth's perspective, of the maid's perspective, that there's a level of like, none of it matters because he's such a fucking idiot that like humiliating yourself in front of somebody like him is not really humiliation because he's literally so pointless.

44:04

Holly: Yeah, I believe he makes a comment about *Oh, don't spit in my whatever*. And her internal monologue is like, *Too late, I started that years ago*. And it's just all of the staff, particularly her, but all of the staff despise him. And they're laughing at him.

44:23

Harley: But it kind of goes beyond despising him. It's like they are literally indifferent to him. They don't even care enough to truly despise him. It's almost like a level of pity.

44:32

Holly: Oh, absolutely. And they know, they know that he's the one that's causing all the issues down in the town, who's blocking the water and charging people too much.

44:44

Harley: So, there's three to four lots of people. So, there's the nobility, there's the town's folk, there's the servants, and arguably there's the guards and bandits, who are in cahoots. So, Lisbeth belongs to the servant class. So, she's separate to the sufferings of the town, but she's also separate to the nobility. And they're very, very much are separate. So, they like, eat different things and they separate to or there's some overlap with the town, so they don't eat any meat or any of that kind of stuff. But they, I mean, obviously they've got the comforts of still being in the Lord's manor or whatever, when he's diverting all the water and resources to himself and letting the town basically die off.

45:25

Holly: But there is a cost to that. And that is that when they are called on to entertain Lord Villiam, they have to thus like what we see with this grape scene.

45:35

Harley: So, the scene for anybody who hasn't read the book and has decided to side with me just on this alone and not going to read it, the grape scene essentially, he's like throwing grapes for her to catch like a dog, and then decides that he needs to up at a level. So, he sticks a grape in Marek's ass and then makes her catch that one and eat that one.

45:54

Holly: Yeah, in her mouth, just to be specific.

45:58

Harley: And it is a bit of a like, I feel like, for anybody listening at home is like, *Whoa, what the fuck that came out of nowhere*. Within the context of the book, it's—

46:05

Holly: It's actually not that bad. It's not the worst thing.

46:09

Harley: Like it's almost a non-event.

46:10

Holly: As soon as the scene starts, you know, it's going to escalate. You know where it's going.

46:14

Harley: If anything, I feel like it didn't escalate as much as I expected.

46:18

Holly: I actually thought was gonna be worse.

46:21

Harley: Which is why it's a bit of a like, we're like, *oh, yeah, whatever*. It's not because we endorsed that particular kind of thing. But because in the context of the book, it really is nothing. But also, again, I feel like it has a purpose, which is to express both the way that Lord Villiam is and to express that as far as he pushes people, they're so indifferent to him, in his opinion, that even something that gross is not a thing, because his opinion doesn't matter. Nobody cares about him.

46:55

Holly: And they're like, oh, well, I have to eat one ass grape, but the amount of shit that I've done to your meals.

47:02

Harley: And like, I looked down on you so much that even me eating a butt grape. Like I still feel like morally I outrank you.

47:10

Holly: Yeah, because they don't eat meat. So therefore, their religion and their worship are purer. In their eyes, in their own eyes.

47:19

Harley: So, it's like when I say that they pity him, or they look down on him. They look down on him from my sort of religious perspective. So, it's that thing of the like, yes, in this like, physical world, or whatever you get to like, stick a grape in someone's ass, and then make me eat it. But in that kind of spiritual sense, that just shows that I am so much holier than you. So, I still have the moral superiority.

47:44

Holly: Yeah. And that is probably the one theme that carries on through the whole book is that religious delusion.

47:53

Harley: But not always, I think it's like religion as a way of coping religion as a mechanism of control, religion as a sort of internal storytelling device. I honestly feel like she came close to having a point. She just didn't quite succeed. Yeah, she got a bit carried away with her work. Obviously, having a wank with words.

48:17

Holly: There's quite a few elements in there that feel like a fairy tale that I just can't quite remember. But there's not enough points in there to shape that fairy tale. And for me to be able to name it.

48:29

Harley: It feels like she started with something that was almost a point. And instead of pushing her to actually get to the point, her editor let her, just masturbate all over the page. Yeah, honestly, like, that's the simplest way I can sum up how I feel.

48:47

Holly: I guess dear listeners, if we have just massively missed the point, and it's something super simple. Please let us know. We're keen to hear. Fable, fairy tale, or just fucked up? Did we miss the point? Or are we justified in our ramblings I'm still unsure if I hate it or not.

49:07

Harley: You know, what makes me land on the side of I hate it, is that it feels like that kind of thing where people will come and say, *No, you guys missed the point. You just don't get it this that the other* but actually, it's like that, like, you know, there's bits of artwork and things like that where people get it, so that they seem intellectual.

49:27

Holly: Are we just stupid? Or are we justified?

49:30

Harley: Or are we smart enough to see through the intellectual bullshit? I don't know. It just like it felt like I know, at the start of reading it, I was like, it feels like a little bit like Russian literature or something in that it's got lots of characters and a bit rambley and all that kind of thing. And I will say I'm not a huge fan of most Russian literature. I haven't read all of it. But the bits that I have, I haven't disliked but I'm not like...

49:55

Holly: I would be impressed if you had read all of the Russian literature, all of it.

49:59

Harley: I mean, even the big names, you know what I mean. But yeah, as a general rule, I'm not like, frothing hard over Tolstoy or anything. I don't have such strong feelings about it as I do about this. But, I mean, initially, that's the kind of vibe that I got from it. And then as I got further in, I was like, *oh, okay, this is just, like, not even gore porn*. She's just pushing it to see how far she can push it. And then yeah, I got to the end of it. And I was like, *Cool. Cool. So, I did all that for that. I'm so glad that I use that time that I'll never get back*.

50:36

Holly: So, let us know what you think. Yeah, that's pretty much it.

50:39

Harley: You are allowed to like things we don't.

50:43

Holly: Thanks for listening. If you enjoyed this podcast, not the book, don't care what your thoughts on the book, if you enjoyed this podcast, please rate us five stars.

50:52

Harley: If you like, *Jesus Christ, Harley, have a Valium and calm down*. We'll do something more fun next week. And if you are still on the fence about reading it, I would say go to town, but have something lined up to read afterwards as a like palate cleanser.

51:11

Holly: Have your comfort book ready.

51:16

Harley: I think both of us really needed that palate cleanser after this.

51:20

Holly: Oh, I didn't read anything for two days. And that is so bizarre for me.

51:25

Harley: I think I took a week off and then was like, right. I think like, Robert Galbraith's book came out. I know JK Rowling is like, super controversial, but I was like, I just, I need a dumb detective thing. Yeah, I need a who done it, where it's pretty obvious from like page three who done it, but whatever. So that's my one bit of advice to you is have a palate cleanser, regardless of how you ultimately end up feeling about the book, because it is one that gives you a bit of a dirty hangover. If you enjoyed this right at five stars, if you hated *Lapvona* and you don't want to listen to me talk about the mechanics of boobs, tune in next week.

52:03

Holly: Something more lighthearted. You can find us on Instagram at [bimbo.bookclub](https://www.instagram.com/bimbo.bookclub).

52:11

Harley: All of our social links and links to all of the books mentioned, whether we like them or not, will be in our show notes. And as always, available on our website, [bimbobookclub.com](https://www.bimbobookclub.com)

under the *Lapvona* heading. Thanks for listening. If you made it this far, I'm so sorry. See you next time. Over and out.