

**EPISODE 8:**

CORDELIA:

Welcome back, everyone.

ELEANOR:

Hello!

CORDELIA:

If you're new here, hi, I'm Cordie.

ELEANOR:

And I'm Ellie.

both:

And this is: The Legendary Handbook!

ELEANOR:

In which my sister and I do our best not to freak out when we read entries from a mysterious, and possibly haunted book that was sent to us.

CORDELIA:

The book has a picture of a clock that's also not a clock and its hands move, and we're almost positive it can hear us.

ELEANOR:

Whether it's benevolent or malicious remains to be seen.

CORDELIA:

Though recently it did lead us into a witch's woods and she got really mad at us.

ELEANOR:

She said she knew we were there by accident!

CORDELIA:

I know but still, I have never been so scared in my life.

ELEANOR:

What about the time Ronald McDonald was at Maggie Sullivan's birthday party?

CORDELIA:

In my defense, he did NOT look like Ronald McDonald. Who draws their clown make-up with that many pointy shapes? John Wayne Fucking Gacey? Six year old me was NOT having it.

ELEANOR:

You straight up punched that dude in the nuts. It's one of my very first memories.

CORDELIA:

Fiona didn't raise a helpless damsel in distress!

ELEANOR:

sings

"Don't be polite to men that creep you out!"

SOUND: clap clap

CORDELIA:

"Don't be polite to men that creep you out!"

SOUND: CLAP CLAP

both:

"Your comfort is essential and his feelings aren't special, don't be polite to men that creep you out!"

SOUND: clap clap

ELEANOR:

Solid advice that has helped me well into my twenties.

CORDELIA:

It's a good thing both of us are attracted to more than just men.

ELEANOR:

Could you imagine being attracted to . . .only. . .men?

CORDELIA:

I don't know what I'd do with myself.

ELEANOR:

And yet. . .men find a way to butt into our business. I told you about the time I had been on a date with Riley and some guy tried to hit on them while I had my hand on their waist?

CORDELIA:

Or when I was out with Angela and she and I were holding hands and some man said, "Can I join?" I wanted to throw up.

ELEANOR:

I did throw up on a man once. Not one of my proudest moments, but I have no regrets. How is Angela doing, by the way?

CORDELIA:

She's as fine as she can be right now, she said England is in another

lockdown, but she has plenty of books. I miss her.

ELEANOR:

For reference, Angela is the love of my sister's life.

CORDELIA:

Who had to move back to England for school and family reasons and was supposed to come back this year, but. . .PANDEMIC TIME.

ELEANOR:

Angela if you are listening, you are sorely missed here in the Shaunessy household.

CORDELIA:

Alright enough about my sad sapphic love life, let's get to the book.

ELEANOR:

Let's see. . .the time is two-eighteen pm.

CORDELIA:

Book time is. . .

SOUND: book opening, pages turning

CORDELIA:

These look like constellations, hold on. . .I think that's. . .Leo? And the other hand is pointing to. . .Sagittarius.

ELEANOR:

The second hand, look! It's. . .is that Aries?

CORDELIA:

The fire signs! Oh and there's a number. . .one sixty two.

ELEANOR:

Let's mark it. For those that might need a refresher, the clock hands move almost every time we open the book and we've been documenting where the hands are pointing to see if there's a pattern.

CORDELIA:

So far, we just have more questions than we do answers.

ELEANOR:

Such is the nature of this book.

CORDELIA:

It is my turn to pick this week, although we had an . . .irregular kind of reading last week.

ELEANOR:

Yes, last week we discovered the book can hear us, and knows we accidentally trespassed in a witch's woods, there was a fresh entry that was way too specific to not be directed at us. But I don't mind Cordie, you pick.

CORDELIA:

Okey dokey, let's see. . ."How High is Too High--Tower Construction and Dragon Proofing", page seven thirty three. . . "The Madness that Poets Call Love" page eight hundred and eighty eight. . .awww. . .and. . ."When you Find Yourself as a Bird--The Do's and Don'ts", page fifty three. Wow. . .well, now that I'm thinking about Angela, I want to read the Love one.

ELEANOR:

Yes, let's read the one about Love and cry, I'm not touch starved or anything. Hand me the book.

SOUND: book is handed to Ellie, pages turning.

ELEANOR:

"Love is an absurdity. It has been named a malady; an affliction of the mind and senses. To the ancient Romans, it was an uncouth and sometimes shameful madness, worthy of ridicule and cautionary tales. To the nobility from middle-ages Europe

to feudal Japan, it was an illness best avoided, as its presence could wreak havoc on dynastic scheming and diplomatic marriages. And yet poems were written, songs were sung, and stories were told of its inescapable pull. It afflicted the young with a terrible virulence, and the grown with an intractable shattering of their well-wrought sense.

Star-crossed love. Unrequited love. Love at first sight. True love. These are the bread and butter of the poets and the romantics, of playwrights and bards. They are awful ideas. Perhaps, if we hadn't spent so long telling people that love was a terrible evil, we would not have such twisted views on what is laudable about it, on what is worth romanticizing. Perhaps, instead, we lack the linguistic nuance to talk about love in a way that is useful or enlightening. Perhaps our fear of it (through many ages, and many cultures) has caused us to bury it, and its many permutations have calcified into a terrible and rotten whole. The ancient greek language famously had many

different words to describe love, from ἀγάπη (agápē) “benevolent, charitable, love; the feeling one has for one’s children or spouse” to ἔρως (érōs) “intimate love, sexual attraction” (or, according to Plato “the appreciation of another’s beauty, or the awe of beauty in general”).

CORDELIA:

Oh my god! This author is familiar with the ancient Greek words for love.

Did you know they had six different words for different kinds of love?

ELEANOR:

I know there's more than one, but I didn't know there was six of them!

CORDELIA:

Yup. There's philia, which translates to "affectionate regard, friendship". It was developed by Aristotle, it's best known to describe the loyalty and affection friends feel toward one another.

ELEANOR:

That's beautiful.

CORDELIA:

There's also Storge, which is the empathetic love that parents have specifically for their children. It's similar to Agape, but it's usually used exclusively to describe familial relationships. Philautia has the same root as Philia, but has to do with self-love and one's own happiness. The last is Xenia and refers to the ancient Greek concept of hospitality. Think, taking care of your neighbor. Xenia was actually very sacred to the Greeks, so much so that if you showed up at the doorstep of a king and asked for lodging among him he, by the law of Xenia, had to give you food, shelter, and provisions that you needed.

ELEANOR:

Xenia I remember. Paris technically violates Xenia when he "abducts" Helen. I say that because there are many iterations of the Iliad where Helen went willingly. I also just like the idea of a woman making a choice and causing a ten year war.

CORDELIA:

Yes, the face that launched a thousand ships. All of the Greeks rallying to fight with Menealeus were all moved by

Storge, they had all sworn they would fight for whoever Helen chose to marry when she picked Menealeus.

ELEANOR:

I love ancient Greek mythology.

CORDELIA:

You're preaching to the choir. I literally have a degree in this stuff.

ELEANOR:

Shall we get back to the entry?

CORDELIA:

Oh, yes!

ELEANOR:

Alright, where was I? Oh yes! Greek words for love."But even in its earliest permutations in germanic languages and before, the word love means "care, joy, desire, to hold dear" and to... well... "love". It means all of these things, and yet, at the end, it remains an impenetrable monolith. It has been used since at least the middle ages to mean everything from horrifying, one-sided, covetous obsession to a fondness for a particular type of cheese. The confusion, the thing that has skewed it for us all, the thing that has muddied the waters so thoroughly throughout history is not our lack of a thousand different words to describe its every permutation; Every love is different in some way, and no amount of hair-splitting nuance could get us any closer to an accurate description of an individual expression of it. But our broad use of this monolithic word points to an underlying truth; The mechanism of love is the same, no matter what its form. No, the thing that has infected our sense of love is from something wholly unrelated; the idea that we can have. When we believe that our desire for

another is to have them, that our joy around another is to need to own them, we have skipped the tracks of love and begun barreling towards tyranny. We cannot love that which we believe we are owed, because the mechanism of love is inherently antithetical to anything but mutual, egalitarian benevolence. It is no wonder that after countless millennia of hierarchical categorizations for different permutations of peoples, our concept of love has become obscured. When people are viewed as things, it is easy to confuse covetousness, jealousy, objectification, projection, pride, or obsession with love."

CORDELIA:

Ah yes, the objectification of women in the male gaze.

ELEANOR:

Unrealistic expectations, men not understanding women's bodies, feeling entitled to their bodies--it all clouds what love is really about.

CORDELIA:

Then, women, who have been gaslit for so long, lower the bar so, so low for men, to the point where if they show just an iota of basic human decency, ie, not assaulting them while intoxicated, they are thanked endlessly as if they have done some great service.

ELEANOR:

Exactly. And I know plenty of cis men who would never in a million years, hurt their partners, or even a stranger in that way.

CORDELIA:

It's just that enough of them have done things like that, that it makes us weary of all men.

ELEANOR:

Toxic masculinity ruins the party

again!

CORDELIA:

Even the book knows it. What else does it say on love? We keep getting sidetracked.

ELEANOR:

I know, we're just filled with feminine rage today."To whit: Love is not an invisible force or form of matter in the universe, nor a state of being, nor an internal reservoir that can be drained. It is a feeling, yes, and one we can absolutely stumble into, trip, and of course, fall. But the mechanism of that feeling, the single action that comprises all of love, is to share. To share a glance across a room. To share words. To share a gift. To share time. To share food, or circumstance, or thoughts, or feelings, or touch, or our bodies. To share long-winded, imperious screeds on the nature of love because it's too difficult to approach directly. To offer--"

CORDELIA:



Wait wait wait, does it really say that or did you just make that up?

ELEANOR:

What do you mean? Of course it actually says that.

CORDELIA:

Wow, this author is really self aware.

ELEANOR:

I know. May I finish?

CORDELIA:

You may.

ELEANOR:

"To offer to engage with parts of yourself without a sense of transaction or obligation, for, naturally, if you offer something to

someone and they decline, no sharing can be said to have occurred. Love is the feeling of sharing with another and having them joyously accept. Love is the grandmother telling old stories to bored descendants, only to have them cherish those tales as they grow older. Love is the offer to give someone space when they need it, or wrap them in blankets and give them soup when they didn't know they could ask for it. Love is the active choice to share, moment to moment. And, sometimes, if you're lucky, you may learn to string those moments on into eternity. And I hope, if you'd accept it, that I get the chance."

CORDELIA:

Wow. . .that was beautiful. I really liked this one.

SOUND: pages turning.

ELEANOR:

Me too. Cordie, look at this. There's a handwritten section on the back of the page.

CORDELIA:

It reads, "It was a Sunday afternoon. The wind was pleasant, and the grass was singing. Or at least, I think it was singing. Everything felt like it was singing, then. Even the calls of the gulls felt like a symphony to me, because you were there with me. The sun was bright, but not too hot, and I swear the air tasted like sugar. But not as sweet as you. I wish I could tell you now, I would have been content to lie on that hillside with you forever, and let the wildlife feast on us and the ground swallowed us whole. Just as long as you were there with me. And even then, no grave could hold me, no time could hold me,

no world could hold me, not really. I wish time was really shaped like a rubber band, I'd love to hop in and spring towards you. I wish I could tell you now that I will always crawl home to you, though far apart we may seem. There is no such thing as separation, and your music is always playing in my ears. I will always sing for you. - B"

ELEANOR:

The writer of this note really took the book's advice here.

CORDELIA:

Do. . .do you think Brigid wrote this?

ELEANOR:

Oh. . .I don't know. The author could be anyone with a name that started with a B.

CORDELIA:

Where's the note with the letterhead on it? We should compare the handwriting. I don't think it's a coincidence that Brigid's name is in this book and there's a handwritten note with a "B" at the end.

ELEANOR:

Okay, hold on, I think it's. . .let me find it.

SOUND: rustling. drawers opening and closing.

ELEANOR:

Found it!

CORDELIA:

Hm. . .I think. . .I think this is the same handwriting.

ELEANOR:

Let me see. . .I wish we had a longer sample. But it does look really similar. We'll have to ask mom if she could show us some letters Auntie Brigid wrote to her when she was younger, that would give us a better

idea. Wait. . .what's this?

SOUND: rustling. Envelope being opened.

CORDELIA:

An envelope. . .with a dried piece of thistle inside.

ELEANOR:

I wonder what it's doing in here.

CORDELIA:

I could be a memento from this day the handwritten entry talks about. Thistle is an interesting memento to have though, it has a lot of cultural significance. It's both a flower and a weed.

ELEANOR:

She has the range, darling!

CORDELIA:

One of my favorite facts about it comes from French lore, that it is a weapon against those who may mean you harm. It's often referred to as the "Flower of the Sun" or the "Herb of Witches", and they believed that it not only could look into the sun, but proudly stood to face the light. It's also associated with protection from evil and can be used in warding and protection spells by witches.

ELEANOR:

Protective and brave? So versatile. I like the idea that could be significant to Brigid. Maybe she's trying to protect us. Whoever this entry was about she clearly loved a great deal. I wonder who it is.

CORDELIA:

We don't know for sure if this is something Brigid wrote. . .but I do really love that too.

ELEANOR:

Do you think we should put it out so it protects us here?

CORDELIA:

Maybe let's keep it in the book and look into getting a thistle bundle to put by the door. I love the idea of having it around, but this one seems special, and I don't want to take it away from the book.

ELEANOR:

Me too. Well, listeners, let us know what your favorite flowers are, or if you have any cool stories about thistle!

CORDELIA:

We'll be back next week with another entry, and hopefully no haunted stories!

ELEANOR:

And we'll try our best to stay out of the woods.

both:

G'bye!