

APL Volumes

Season 1, Episode 1: *THE SHINING*

This episode was transcribed by APL volunteer Martha Ladyman.

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

MADDY: Hello and welcome to APL Volumes, a new podcast from the Austin Public Library. In this first season, we'll be exploring the horror genre and its six main subgenres: Cosmic, Gothic, Humor, Paranormal, Psychological, and Visceral.

Each episode, we'll take a deep dive into a book belonging to one of the subgenres. We'll take a look at the history and patterns of the subgenre and see how well the book lines fits into the subgenre. Consider this your spoiler alert for the season.

In the second half of each episode, I'll bring on some of my APL co-workers to get a little more personal and chat about what we liked, what we didn't like, how the book fits into our own preferred flavor of horror, and also recommend some books, movies, podcasts that you, dear listener, might like if you also like that book or horror subgenre.

This episode is an introduction to the horror genre, and a look at the modern horror classic *The Shining* by Stephen King.

I'm Maddy, your host for the season, and an Adult Services librarian at APL's Central library. Later this episode I'll be joined by Jesus Hernandez, a fellow Adult Services librarian, and Nancie Mathis, an Administrative Supervisor in our Passport Office, to get snowed in with *The Shining*.

MUSIC

Horror stories have been around for as long as there have been things that scare us. Things that are beyond our comprehension show up in mythology, folklore, and religious stories, and things that reflect our everyday fears show up in nursery rhymes, fables, and proverbs.

But it wasn't until 1764, when *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole was published and became widely regarded as the first horror novel, that horror became a literary genre, with standardized elements and themes.

Horror Literature Through History, your, my, and our new favorite encyclopedia, credits a confluence of cultural and social upheaval with providing the atmosphere that enabled this novel to not only be written but explode in popularity: in the Western world, the 1700s were the time of the Enlightenment, and religious institutions, particularly the sects of the Christian church, felt the need to justify their positions of power and to defend their foundational texts and ideas. Between artists turning to the inhuman power of nature as inspiration, an explosion of new scientific advancements, the previous century's devastating witch hunts, and a reinforcement of godly abilities, horror had no shortage of themes – or of fears that infected people's daily lives – to start with.

The first horror lit boom was in Gothic Horror, which influenced poetry, short stories, plays, and novels up through the early 1900s. Major horror works of the 1800s included *Frankenstein* in 1818, which helped spawn the Paranormal subgenre; *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in 1886, which combined horror and science fiction; and *Turn of the Screw* in 1898 and *The Yellow Wall-Paper* in 1892, which turned Gothic towards Psychological. Then in the 1920s, horror experienced another major shift, with the works of H.P. Lovecraft and the development of the Cosmic subgenre and its genre neighbor of weird fiction.

During and after World War II, the movies were the next major step in horror lit history, and horror lit and horror cinema have been linked and influencing each other ever since. Horror fiction had been struggling, as the

countrywide focus on the war effort mean there was less time for general leisure reading, regardless of genre. But Hollywood reignited interest in horror, which brought attention back around to horror novels.

The late 1950s and 60s had a bit of almost every subgenre, and horror was experimented with in new and wildly influential ways. Shirley Jackson with “The Lottery” in 1948 and *The Haunting of Hill House* in 1959, Ray Bradbury with *Something Wicked This Way Comes* in 1962, and Richard Matheson through both his stories and his screenwriting credit on *The Twilight Zone*, are seen as the major defining and influential authors of horror in the mid-1900s.

Horror stories could be found to read if you wanted them, but there wasn’t a huge array until Stephen King arrived on the scene with *Carrie* in 1974 and ushered in modern horror’s explosion in popularity. King was flanked by Anne Rice’s vampire novels and Dean Koontz’s terrifying thrillers, and the combination of the three authors put horror firmly in the spotlight and consistently on the bestseller lists. The Horror Writers of America was formed in 1986 to support the needs of horror authors, and the next year the association began awarding its Bram Stoker Award, which is currently the highest honor in horror literature.

The horror boom continued on into the 1980s, with the rise of the slasher and of splatterpunk, the early name for the Visceral subgenre – and this was reflected both in lit like Clive Barker’s works and on movie screens. Horror subsided in popularity in the 1990s, particularly as the dark fantasy genre came to life, but was revitalized in the mid-aughts, with a lot of help from the Humor subgenre.

Today, with the distinction of horror as its own genre, the many publishing houses dedicated solely to horror, its many living legends, and its foothold in the unexpected arenas of podcasts, video games, and graphic novels, horror is fully embedded in US culture.

Part of why horror has remained so popular is because there is always something you are going to be afraid of! It’s just a fact of life. And because history and society and culture build on what came before, so too does horror build on all the horror literature and also real horrors and real anxieties and real fears that came before it.

Despite its long history and enduring popularity, any horror fan can tell you that horror itself is not an easy genre to define. But, as *Genreflecting* notes, it is easy to identify and understand. And that’s because horror is first and foremost an emotion.

The goal of every piece of horror is to have the person reading or watching or listening FEEL fear and FEEL scared – and that’s usually the goal of the audience too. Often, when people describe a piece of horror media they liked, they don’t really care about the plot past the initial premise—they care more, and will spend more time describing, how they reacted to the plot, how the terror felt.

And on top of that, emotion is personal, which means horror is personal. It ranges from the way you react, to how much the terror being presented mirrors your own fears. Horror allows readers to face those fears in a safe environment, because the piece of media ends. Horror also provides an escape from reality, even if leaving the horror ends up feeling more like the real escape! And that is personal too – that reality you’re escaping. Even being able to control how much horror you consume at one point, whether placing a bookmark or hitting pause, is a personal decision.

But this also means that choosing a first book, or movie, or podcast, or video game in the horror genre becomes a little harder! Knowing your limits and preferences for type of scare, or those of the person you are recommending to, is a good first step to approaching horror, and from there you’ll start to see patterns of what you do or do not enjoy being scared by.

So, let’s look at where horror sits as a genre. Horror fits under the speculative fiction umbrella, alongside science fiction and fantasy, not only because these genres often bleed into one another, but also because the fear inside a horror story is caused by speculation or a certain speculative element. Because horror exists under this umbrella, it

often does something we call genrebleeding, where other genres will incorporate horror, or recognizable elements of horror, into their stories without moving fully into the horror genre. If you, or a reader you're helping, is just getting started in the larger horror genre, try to think of some media you've encountered that may have had horror in it, and you can use that as a way to navigate toward which kind of horror you might want to start with.

And how do you separate into those different kinds of horror? Like any genre, Horror can be broken down into smaller parts. But breaking horror into categories is surprisingly difficult. How do you begin separating horror, something that is so human, so personal, and so based on imagination? Some people separate it by monsters – zombie horror vs. vampires vs. aliens. Some people will separate it by the type of terror/scare – is it a slow creep, or a jumpscare? A psychological reaction or a bodily one? Stephen King has said there are three levels of horror (the gross-out, horror, and terror), and the amounts of each in a piece of media changes the type of horror.

I've done it by thematic subgenres, but even there librarians disagree. Is it three, five, seven subgenres? Because we're librarians, we love splitting hairs, especially because digging into the details often means we can find a better book match for a reader.

I've taken the five themes presented by in *Genreflecting's* horror chapter, and added in a sixth because I don't think you can leave the influence of Lovecraft out of a discussion of the horror genre, nor does the uniqueness of Cosmic horror fit neatly into any of the other five. So all told, we are looking at the six horror subgenres of: Cosmic, Humor, Gothic, Paranormal, Psychological, and Visceral. And it's important to note that these subgenres are not distinct entities! Just as horror genrebleeds, you will often find elements of other subgenres in stories of a single subgenre.

You'll probably notice this in a couple of the books we read this season. So don't at us – we know.

And then we can break horror down another level. Every genre, and subgenre, has elements that stay relatively constant – those patterns are what helps establish a genre. We usually call these "appeal aspects."

When a librarian, or a bookseller, or really anyone who is trying to recommend a book to you, asks you what you like to read, watch, play, or listen to, we're hearing not only the titles you say, but also keywords that let us know which elements, or appeal aspects, of a piece of media you gravitate toward.

Appeal aspects can also help explain why you might like a certain kind of book across genres, but maybe not a genre itself. They then help us recommend books to you! They also help us know which books to avoid recommending to you, which is particularly helpful in horror – a genre that is so personal and which can also get so gory. All of that is the core piece of something we call readers advisory.

No one can really agree on how many appeal aspects there are, but I use the following handful: plot, pacing, writing style, setting, mood-slash-atmosphere, and characters. If you're reading non-traditional (I'm doing air quotes) formats like graphic novels and audiobooks, this list expands to include aspects like illustration style and narration style. I also usually include genre, but that one is kind of a gimme for these episodes.

As we'll see across this season, the horror subgenres get more particular about these elements, as they help establish the boundaries of each subgenre. Horror as a genre has a broad approach to appeal aspects, but there are some patterns that stay pretty constant across the board, so let's take a look at them now.

Plot: While a horror story can be plot-driven, the plot itself takes a back seat to the other appeal aspects. The story line is of course important to the book, but reading horror is less about the plot itself and more about how the reader reacts when they encounter the plot. Some key narrative elements that are found across horror stories are suspense (duh), the process of proof and discovery, and surprise, which is usually aided by foreshadowing and a sense of foreboding. Horror never really has a true happy ending – you should get the sense that the evil is gone... for now.

Pacing: Pacing can vary, but you're always going to see the pace move on a steady incline across the story as both the action and the feeling of dread increase. For most of the subgenres, that pace will be relentless in the third act and you'll have your nose pressed to the page.

Writing style: The writing style can also vary, and it usually acts a support aspect for the mood-slash-atmosphere. That being said, you can always expect the writing style to be filled with adjectives. As the *Reader's Advisory Guide to Horror* notes, these adjectives describe smells, sounds, and sights—these adjectives allow readers to feel the fear with all their senses. Descriptive but easy-to-read language is key to getting the most terror out of the story via its writing style.

Setting: Horror can be set anywhere because horror is everywhere. Horror does tend to prefer settings that isolate the characters from their community in some way, but this can manifest in unique and unexpected ways. The setting usually supports the mood, and it can even help drive along the plot or act as a character.

Mood/atmosphere: The mood-slash-atmosphere is the most important appeal aspect in horror. After all, the literal appeal of horror is the feeling it generates. That feeling is one of overall terror, but terror can be manifested via a bunch of different moods. Horror favors grim atmospheres of dread, tension, and claustrophobia, where both the characters and the reader start and stay deeply uneasy. But disgust, panic, shock, decay, and many others are also possible atmospheres that you can come across in horror.

Characters: The characters of a horror story are going to be sympathetic, relatable, and (usually) deeply human. Most of the time, horror will give us characters that we end up caring about, and will often facilitate this by rotating through multiple narratives.

So let's take a look at the king of modern horror and see where he and *The Shining* fall into this history.

Stephen King has written so many books and short stories that it is nearly impossible to count them all without having to start over twenty times. He's written at least 70 books and over 200 short stories across five decades. He writes across genres, including horror, science fiction, fantasy, thriller and dark fantasy, as well as nonfiction.

As a writer who tapped into the public consciousness and mapped their collective anxieties across decades of changes in American social life, Stephen King, particularly at the height of his popularity, is a pop culture icon. And his contributions to pop culture are vast: the enduring legacy of *The Shining*; the fan favorite of *The Stand*; the film adaptation of *The Shawshank Redemption* is considered one of the greatest movies ever made; his short story "Children of the Corn" was an early establishing example of the popular "scary child" trope.

And as *Horror Literature Through History* notes, his name still connotes excellence in the genre. And his stamp of approval, via blurb or tweet, is highly sought and highly regarded.

What makes a Stephen King story a Stephen King story?

First, his influences. Stephen King credits HP Lovecraft as giving him his first taste of fantasy-horror and some of his works, including *The Dark Tower's* connective mythology and a handful of his short fiction, reflect this influence. But King himself acknowledges as Richard Matheson as the author who has most influenced his writing, and Shirley Jackson is another very apparent influence, especially in King's early work and their many references to *The Haunting of Hill House*. So right away you know you're probably going to come across the supernaturally and the psychologically terrifying.

And since Stephen King is so prolific, there are themes you can trace across his work. These include themes of memory, childhood trauma, preternatural psychic abilities, sexual abuse, author characters standing in as commentary on the craft and on anxiety around creative freedom, the dueling strengths and evils of community, and, perhaps the most consistent of all, the, quote, imaginative capacity and resilience of children. Children are often the quiet, loyal heroes of King's stories, and are the most likely to see the horror for what it is, due to their

limitless imaginations. As for the villains—Heidi Strengell noted that “Adults without imagination are the worst of his monsters.”

These themes are usually explored through quirky offbeat characters, an everyman protagonist and their fight against a larger supernatural power, and a vivid, heavily described community or setting.

Outside of some cosmic, Lovecraftian works, King’s fiction is usually focused on the mundane and banal daily life of modern small-town America. This realist approach underscores the ripple effect that the inevitable supernatural horror will send through a story’s setting, which itself often revolves around King’s favored motif of “the bad place”, a place where a past evil is felt or makes itself known in the present. The Overlook Hotel in *The Shining* is a great example of this archetype. All of these themes and elements come together to make Stephen King’s books about ordinary, relatable people, that one day, just maybe, could be you.

And that’s what horror is about. What makes it so terrifying. The idea that it can happen to you. And, as I mentioned before, that’s why we love it so much and can come back to it again and again – because it could, but it ultimately isn’t. For even more on King and his relationship with the history of horror, I really recommend his nonfiction book *Danse Macabre*.

But now we’re going to talk about one of his other books – *The Shining*. Published in 1977, *The Shining* was King’s third published novel, after *Carrie* in 1974 and *Salem’s Lot* in 1975, and its immediate, bestselling success established King as a prominent, if not the preeminent, author of modern horror.

The Shining is itself considered the horror novel that dawned the age of modern horror, and *Horror Literature Through History* calls it the most influential haunted house story since Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House*. Even its 1980 film adaptation, which King famously dislikes and which we’ll talk more about with Jesus and Nancie, is considered to be a foundational classic of horror cinema.

It is also shockingly, deeply personal. Not only is it based on a night King and his wife, Tabitha, spent in an old hotel as the final guests of the season, where King had a terrifying dream about his son running through the hotel being chased by a firehose (a scene that makes it into the book). But Jack Torrance, and the major themes of family disintegration and the dangers of alcoholism, are rooted in King’s personal reality as well. Encyclopedia Britannica notes that King was struggling with alcoholism early in his career, and that his fear was that he would, quote, lose control of his addiction and in some way hurt his family, which he was already feeling ambivalent about. He later said that though he didn’t realize it at the time, he wrote *The Shining* about himself, and that the actual act of writing the story was quote, a kind of self-psychoanalysis, as well as a kind of catharsis.

Now, I am going to do a very brief summary of *The Shining*; brief mainly because this is a really big book, and it would take the whole episode to summarize every plot point. If you have only seen the movie, you may notice that some things are... not the same. We’ll get into that later with Nancie and Jesus. For now, let’s do this quick overview.

Sometime in the 1970s, disgraced schoolteacher and aspiring writer Jack Torrance moves his wife, Wendy, and his son, Danny, from New England to Colorado to become the off-season caretaker of the Overlook Hotel. The day they arrive, they meet departing staff, including the hotel chef Dick Hallorann, who recognizes that Danny possesses something Dick also has and calls “the shining” — a supernatural ability to read minds, see into the past and future, and to communicate telepathically. All the guests and staff leave and the hotel closes. Almost immediately, Danny begins to have paranormal experiences within the hotel, but refuses to tell his parents what he is seeing, and soon after a heavy snowfall essentially cuts off any option of leaving the hotel.

From there, Jack becomes increasingly possessed by the hotel, which, among other things, convinces him to destroy the CB radio and snowmobile, and to attempt to murder Wendy and Danny. Danny psychically calls to Dick, who makes it back to the Overlook in record time, but is immediately injured by Jack. While facing off with

the fully possessed Jack, Danny's future self reminds him about the hotel's finnick boiler, and Danny is able to find Wendy and Dick and the three escape as the boiler explodes and fire consumes both Jack and the Overlook.

A short epilogue is set in the following summer, at a Maine resort when Hallorann now works and Wendy and Danny recuperate. The long darkness is over.

The Shining is a great intro not only to modern horror, but to all the horror subgenres, because it basically includes elements from all of them. It demonstrates what we'll see in almost every book we read this season – that the horror subgenres are not self-contained entities, they bleed across their boundaries, and horror stories will pull aspects from other subgenres to enhance the aspects of their own main subgenre.

For example, *The Shining* does Cosmic horror through the wasps, Gothic through the isolated setting and nature's wintery wrath, Humor through wry dialogue, Paranormal through the hedge animals, Psychological through Jack's breakdown that started way before they arrived at the Overlook, and Visceral through the chase in the hallways with the roque mallet. And there are many more examples for each. If we really wanted to choose one, I'd say it's a toss-up between Paranormal and Psychological—even the literal shining ability itself tiptoes that line, and the monsters are both supernatural and human.

Now, let's dig in deeper and break down the appeal aspects for *The Shining*.

Plot: Let's start with the plot. Because *The Shining* doesn't belong to one subgenre in particular, and there are so many separate manifestations of the hotel's evil energy, that it's hard to say whether it should be plot-driven – or even if it really is. What we can say is that the plot is essentially driven by the timeline; we know how long they will be trapped at the Overlook and essentially how long they have to survive. And because it's a horror novel, we know a lot of bad stuff will go down before they can leave. And boy, does it.

Pacing: The pacing is pretty interesting. Since the hotel possesses and manifests in so many different ways, and since we also jump between character narratives, there's a bit of a hill-and-plateau effect as the characters' daily lives at the Overlook are continuously interrupted. The pacing builds naturally as the instances of violence and paranormal activity get closer together, but this is undercut by the length of the novel (my copy is 659 pages).

Writing Style: Stephen King's writing style is, in general, literary, and *The Shining* is much the same. It focuses on the inner thoughts of the characters, as well as descriptions and metaphors, and elevates the terror by switching to sharp, simple sentences in moments of horror. This makes scenes particularly vivid and easy to imagine, for better or worse. *The Shining* apparently verges more into vulgar language than King's books often do, as both the hotel's effects and the mental breakdowns manifest, and this runs the range from *The Exorcist*-type cursing to full racial slurs.

Setting: Though the beginning of the book takes place in Vermont, most of the book is set in the 1970s, at the Overlook Hotel, high up in the Rocky Mountains, in the dead of winter, and the story makes sure you know it. The setting in *The Shining* helps amp up the atmosphere; the hotel's labyrinthine halls and doors that seem to open into a different room every time you go through them serve to disorient the reader and the characters, so much so that you aren't sure that the hotel even has an exit by the time the final chase scene occurs. The isolation and the storms also enhance the feeling of claustrophobia and that there is really no escaping the monsters in the hotel (or the hotel itself). Later in the book, the winter setting becomes nearly a character, or at least a large plot obstacle, as it actively derails the characters' plans and ability to escape the Overlook.

And then, even as the reader gets used to this aspect of the setting, King begins to intersperse scenes in hot and humid Florida, where Dick Hallorann as he attempts to enjoy his holiday before he too is called back to the storm – going between these scenes has the shock factor of jumping from a hot tub straight into an unheated pool. The final scene with Wendy, Danny, and Dick at a summer resort gives us not only closure to the story, but a well-earned respite from the setting itself.

Mood/atmosphere: While the plot and pacing slow down due to the length of the book, the mood-slash-atmosphere is the real glue of the story. *The Shining's* atmosphere is menacing, oppressive, and charged, and it gets right under your skin, ill-fitting and itchy and making you squirm. This is bolstered by the characters' choices, their relationships, and the vivid imagery of the writing.

Characters: One of Stephen King's greatest strengths has always been said to be creating sympathetic main characters full of human flaws, who you could maybe have met in real life. Who among us hasn't had a Stuart Ullman boss, or known a kid who sees more than their parents realize, or helped a Wendy Torrance? And with Jack Torrance as a stand-in for King himself, this becomes especially true, until Jack is fully possessed – but while the readers and Danny know that Jack is no longer under his own control, Wendy thinks Jack is just being Jack and that is perhaps the most damning thing of all.

That being said, most of the characters outside of the main three often fall a bit flat, or into unwelcome tropes (such as the only explicitly queer person being forced to act like a dog, or the Black cook arriving just in time to save the main white family), and this sometimes converges with that vulgar language that the possession brings to life. Since you are most focused on the Torrances and how the Overlook is disrupting their family, these side characters only really exist to propel the plot or to heighten the atmosphere.

But for now we'll move on and see what Jesus and Nancie have to say.

MUSIC

MADDY: Most important pop culture question of the last forty years: book or movie?

NANCIE: Book.

JESUS: Book.

MADDY: Book. All right! I was worried that we were going to have, or not worried, but this is very fun. So thank you, Nancie and Jesus, for joining me on APL Volumes. Welcome!

OK, so we are going to back up a little bit and save *The Shining* for a couple of minutes. But I want to hear both of your favorite pieces of horror. Media, podcast, book, movie, what's your go-to?

NANCIE: So my favorite piece of horror is the film *The Thing*. John Carpenter's *The Thing*. That's my number one in any kind of media. But I do have a soft place in my heart for all of the Friday the 13th movies and I've been known to watch the marathons just because you've got to get that gore in.

As far as a book, some of the other Stephen King novel titles like *Pet Sematary*, which scared me to death when I was younger. But yeah, the movie *The Thing*.

JESUS: And for me, currently my favorite horror movie probably for the last four years is *Trick or Treat*, with Sam, you know. The pumpkin head guy. The director is really famous, but I don't really know directors. So...

MADDY: Eh, who cares anyway?

JESUS: Yeah! I have to say *Trick or Treat* is my favorite. It's just like an ode to Halloween.

MADDY: Sounds like fun.

Since we're, you know, *The Shining* kind of covers all horror subgenres, all types of horror, there's a little bit of everything, do you guys have a preference for a kind of horror? Do you like slow burn creepy? Do you like fast gore? Lots of action? Monsters? In your head? What kind of stuff do you like?

NANCIE: Whenever I watch horror movies I definitely want to go for the most outrageous, that couldn't possibly happen. The most blood, where you're kind of like, "Aww!" Kind of visceral.

I can't remember titles off the top of my head, but my husband is a big horror fan so I am definitely tuned in to all of them. We have watched them all the time. I just can't think of a title off the top of my head. But yeah, lots of body parts, and yeah, that body horror? Yeah.

That's definitely, we've got to go watch it. Whatever comes out.

MADDY: Oh, man. Braver than !!

Jesus is making the most scared face of all time.

JESUS: Because I love it, I love all the blood and gore also, but I'm all over the place. I recently watched *The Munsters Halloween* special movie. It was the worst horror movie I've ever seen. But I had to watch it because it was the Munsters. It came out in the nineties. It's just really silly, really nineties. It's not great.

I watched it in two parts because I just like fell asleep the first time. I'm not really selling it.

MADDY: Not a hard recommendation.

JESUS: But my favorite type of horror probably has to be something that involves a person with a twisted mind.

MADDY: Psychological?

JESUS: Yeah. If they are a little bit, just

MADDY: Something's going on?

JESUS: Yeah. Twisted, I love it.

MADDY: Human monsters.

NANCIE: Absolutely.

MADDY: Amazing. So we are now going to transition into *The Shining*.

We'll start with the book. Thank you, guys, for joining me on this 659-page journey. I feel like audiobook was the way to go, which is how both of you read it. I read it on the screen and made my eyes cross a little bit.

This was Stephen King's third novel, but kind of catapulted him into the limelight as a best seller, a popular culture icon. What has your own Stephen King experience been? Is *The Shining* your favorite? Was it your first Stephen King? Are there ones you like better? Tell me what you think.

NANCIE: So the first Stephen King book I read was *Cujo*, way back when. And then *Pet Sematary*. *Carrie*. I've read *Misery*. *Salem's Lot*, which is excellent. And I read *The Shining* back when I was like nineteen, twenty, something like that? After it came out. I actually watched the movie before I read the book, because I watched the movie not long before it was released. I think I was about fifteen when I saw it.

So different things. And of course now fast forward to so many years ahead. I have a very different take on what I experienced way back then.

I've always liked Stephen King. I'm currently reading his newest book, *Fairy Tale*, which is a little bit of a different track. It definitely has a fairy-tale element to it. I think he is one of the greatest writers of our, probably more than one generation. It's unfair for some of the literary critics to not take him seriously as a great writer. He knows exactly what he is doing. He's got as much of a handle on the language as any other literary great. I think he is underestimated to a certain extent.

MADDY: Yeah.

How about you, Jesus?

JESUS: So I probably ran into *The Shining* as like a lot of people do. It's just part of pop culture. Mentioned references to it everywhere. I remember being a kid and hearing the "Here's Johnny" kind of....

MADDY: I watched the movie for the first time two days ago and I already knew all of the major scenes through cultural osmosis. I agree.

Was it your first King? Do you have experience reading his other or watching his other?

JESUS: So his short story book *Skeleton Crew* was on our bookshelf ever since I can remember as a kid. I bet it was one of my aunt's books. And it was just there at my grandma's house. And I picked it up one time as a kid and I really loved what I read. It was the story, it was probably *The Mist*.

MADDY: Yeah, *The Mist* messes a lot of people up.

JESUS: And I just realized that I really liked it. And then I had seen *The Shining* over the course of my history, but I didn't really remember what it was about and didn't pay too much attention to it until you brought it back into my attention. You were like, "I'm reading this thing." And I'm like, "I've got to read it with you." Because you started reading it in like October, right?

MADDY: Oh, yeah.

JESUS: It was prime spooky season. Or even before.

MADDY: A while ago. Yeah. It took me awhile. The 659 pages thing again.

JESUS: And I just had such a good time with the book. I had a better time than I had anticipated. I think I gave you updates.

MADDY: Yes, yes! It was great!

JESUS: It was wild. And I would have that book playing for every drive to and from work. It was a lot to get through, but it was such a pleasant experience. Such a pleasant horror experience.

MADDY: I'm so glad you brought up *Skeleton Crew*. That is my favorite piece of King work. I read *The Green Mile* when I was thirteen years old. Simply too young. It's such a weird way to be introduced to King. *Skeleton Crew* was my next. And I think his short stories are phenomenal. The short story *The Raft* pretty much ruined my life. I cannot go into a lake with a floating dock on it ever. It's been fifteen, almost twenty years, and I still can't do it.

But I think Stephen King, as we will find as we go on, is just so ubiquitous in pop culture, as you said, Jesus. You cannot escape the horror. Every part of horror is built on the horror that came before it, and nothing is more obvious than Stephen King's, and specifically *The Shining's*, influence over the past forty-plus years of horror.

So now we will get into the book. Finally!

What were the parts that stuck out to you the most? Did you have a part that was the scariest? Or just your favorite.

JESUS: So you know how I said one of my favorite types of horror is that twisted individual? Jack is it. Jack Nicholson. Jack Torrance. He's it all the way down from the onset of the book to the very end. It just keeps getting worse. And I love it for that.

MADDY: Yeah, it's a really interesting portrayal of a mental breakdown. But how much does the Overlook have to do with it, right?

JESUS: Right.

NANCIE: So, interestingly, I like Danny's perspective in the book with the whole shining. I love that, how he had that kind of a bonding with Dick Hallorann. And what shining meant, what it was. All mothers have a little bit of shine. Things like that. Some people shine more than others.

I love that offset with that piece versus Jack Nicholson's alcoholism and the trauma. I think that's what I got out of the book was all that trauma from his family. You get the family background. Stephen King did a really good job of framing that aspect of it, of this man who, you can tell he is in pain. He loves his family.

But he just can't overcome the trauma. And it shows itself in the alcoholism.

As far as the house or the hotel or the book, things being haunted, I don't know. I was explaining to somebody the other day that I don't believe in ghosts personally. So when I hear about ghost stories, I go, "Oh, there's always an explanation for that."

So I guess my mind just went to the alcoholism part because it just didn't feel like there was anything haunted about it. He also, he didn't drink in the book. He's an alcoholic, but he didn't drink anything. It was like it was all made up. There was no alcohol to be had.

It was almost like he was just destined to just lose it. But the part that I thought really offset that or balanced it out was with Danny and Dick Hallorann.

JESUS: I love your perspective on that, because I had a totally flipped perspective. I was thinking about this in preparation for our conversation today, how our background as like Latinos. Like sometimes the stories of spirituality and religion, I think it plays into my love of horror today. Because spirits and demons and possessions have been a part of religious practices and religious upbringings. So it adds a little layer of plausibility or reality to the monster that may lurk.

I was wondering what exactly happened to Jack. Had he been possessed by in Overlook Hotel? By an entity? By an evil

MADDY: And there is no dearth to choose from. You've got the wasps, you've got the hedge maze animals, which were my favorite.

NANCIE: Exactly. Yes, those are cool. That was a scary moment with the hedge animals.

JESUS: So when it comes to whether there was a monster or not, I think that yes, there was a monster. I think that it is a totally haunted house story, which is great.

MADDY: And I think that is one of the strengths of *The Shining*, and why people come back to it so much, is every time you read it there is a different way to read it.

And you were saying a little bit before, Nancie, that since you read it the first time, your perspective has totally changed. Do you remember when you read it for the first time if you were intrigued by a different part of the book?

NANCIE: Yes, the book, when I read it the first time, it absolutely scared the crap out of me. The hotel is possessed, and there's a demon and there is evil there. And it absolutely got, what I got out of it the first time is completely different from what I got out of it the second time. And it affected me totally differently too.

And I just think that is interesting. I was young, and now I am a much older person. I guess it's, you get out of a book what you bring into it based on your life experience.

But I think this time around it affected me on such a deeper level. I had to step away from the book for a couple of days because it just really got to me.

We were talking about Latino families. My husband is Latino. Some of what he explained to me kind of came out in the book. There was just this big systematic effect to me over how it affected me when I was reading it. It is really interesting to think about that aspect of it. I mean, Stephen King was also going through a lot of crap himself when he wrote this, so it is almost semiautobiographical.

MADDY: It certainly is, even down to the room 237 where he stayed at his own grand hotel nightmare experience. Yeah. And I think if I had read it when I was younger, the literal monsters were certainly, I mean, that was my favorite part now. I don't have kids. The things that scare me or don't scare me are solely based on life experience, as you were saying. And that emotional baggage that we all bring into a reading or watching experience or listening experience.

Well, we can talk about the movie now. Crack our knuckles a little bit.

So, *The Shining*, I didn't even know was a book when I was younger because everybody just talks about *The Shining* movie. I'd always heard from my dad that *The Shining* book was better in a classic, classic horror fan fashion. But *The Shining's* true legacy truly is built mostly on the movie's continued success and establishment in the horror movie canon, right?

But having read it all in the last couple of months, and having watched the movie, me for the first time, what did you think of the movie's adaptation? Was there something that you wish had carried over from the book? Was there something that you thought it did well?

I think, Nancie, even going to your point, I thought the psychological bit about Jack was actually much stronger in the movie because there was less time to focus on everything else.

JESUS: I thought that the book, it had so much more insight into Jack and his psychology, and that's what I'm telling everybody now. Because if I read a book I can't stop talking about it for a month.

MADDY: It's so great! None of us can!

JESUS: So I'm telling it to everyone. And I'll just bring it up in random conversations. I thought the movie was great. It did a great job. It did the book justice.

But the book just adds so much more. It enriches your experience. And that's what I appreciated about it.

MADDY: Was there any specific supernatural elements that you wish had come through? Because quite a lot was cut. I agree that I think that the general heart of the book was maintained.

JESUS: Part of the beauty of this story is that the supernatural is so intangible. What we are talking about, Nancie, you and I, there could maybe not be a monster. And this is just a human's descent into letting his trauma take over him, letting stressors just finally break him.

That could totally be it. Or it could be supernatural. I don't think that you can show that, I don't think that the movie can show that. Sure, we had apparitions, we had the lady in the tub, we had the bartender. Those are clearly ghosts, a roomful of ghosts. But it can all be chalked up to imagination. Jack's own psychosis or something like that.

MADDY: How about you, Nancie?

NANCIE: So I'm going to go back to Danny and Dick and the shining, talking about that. I kind of miss their relationship in the movie. They had like maybe five minutes where Dick tells Danny, "Oh, you have the shining." But they had a longer conversation in the book and had this bond over the course of that part of the book. And that drove Dick too. Because he could hear Danny. He told Danny, "Call me. Call me if you need me and I'll hear you." Even though he's all the way in Florida, versus Colorado.

And that's why he goes. In the movie he calls and he goes, "Can you check up on the family?" and they are like, "We couldn't get ahold of them." And he makes his way over there.

I kind of miss that bond because Danny, poor little Danny, and this one thing that was cringeworthy to me in the book and in the movie, was when Danny, who was two years old when he got his arm broke by his dad. His dad yanked his arm because he was drunk and he was mad so he pulled him and broke his arm. And that definitely was in both the book and it was also in the movie. And they talk about that because it is a source of contention between Wendy and Jack.

Wendy is always like, "Look what you did to him. You're always going to hurt him." Type of thing. And he's, "You're telling me what? I'm not going to hurt him. I'm going to bash your head in." No.

Anyway, he needed to have, because he's so young, he's five years old, he kind of needs to have someone to bounce off. His mom, who is very loving and giving, has the shine too. Because all moms have shine. He needed Dick to have that father figure because he had lost his father. And of course in the movie you can tell that Jack has just gone in the deep end. In the book it pretty much tells you this is no longer Jack. This is evil.

MADDY: Wearing his face.

NANCIE: Exactly. He didn't have that. And what I thought was really sad was, he kills Dick, Jack kills Dick in the movie. And I was like, oh my gosh.

MADDY: I know! I kept waiting for him to get up.

NANCIA: That's right!

MADDY: Spoiler alert in the book. These are all spoiler alerts. In the book all three of them escape together. What's the point of having Dick try to get all the way back?

NANCIE: Just to have him be like fodder for the evil that was Jack?

MADDY: He barely even gets into the Overlook. He gets like about five steps and then he dies! I kept thinking like he'll stumble out of there, he's not really dead.

NANCIE: He'll be breathing. He'll come up and be like breathing, because that's what we thought in the book. But in the movie they just left him laying in there.

MADDY: My least favorite part.

NANCIE: I was like, aww! There was that and of course there was the maze instead of the topiary. The topiary animals. Which, the maze was fine. I can understand the psychology, because the scene where Jack is looking over the model of the maze, definitely, one thing about Kubrick is there is so much detail and information in just a scene without words. And that was definitely for our consumption.

MADDY: Yeah, and it zooms in, and all of a sudden they're there.

NANCIE: That was great.

MADDY: Ah, but the hedge animals!

NANCIE: I know. I think I would have liked to see that lion.

MADDY: The creeping, where they're moving underneath the snow. And they are made of thorns. That was my favorite part of the book. And I was devastated that it wasn't in the movie.

NANCIE: It wasn't even in there. Makes you wonder what they wanted to focus on.

MADDY: The chase, right, probably? The elements.

NANCIE: I guess. Just to make it where you have that added "I don't know where I am going but I have to get away. I don't know what's in front of me, but I know what's behind me." Type of thing. So maybe that's what it is.

JESUS: I think for the movie those scenes were just super disorienting. The kid riding around on the trike. The camera shots were just turning you every which way and I got dizzy.

MADDY: You didn't know where you are.

JESUS: And it's just driving home the point that they verbally stated in the movie, too, that this place is like a maze. I think Wendy tells Hallorann. And that hedge maze just turns you around again. It's supposed to make your stomach turn, I think. It's supposed to. And I think it really did elicit a feeling getting you closer to fear.

I find a lot of things don't really scare me. I'm always looking for something that will. And that's what's fun about scary movies. That's why I love jump scares so much. I appreciate them so much. And everyone's like, "Not another jump scare." But I love them.

MADDY: There are quite a few in this movie. And actually one of my favorite ways that Kubrick does jump scare us in this movie is the cut to the like "four days", or like "that morning". And that's got like the Dun! Dun! That SVU-esque...

NANCIE: Yeah, you've been Dick Wolfed?

MADDY: Exactly. But that would scare me because it was building up tension. And then the cut to, you don't get to know what's next, you just have to know that time is moving and it's moving in smaller and smaller increments.

NANCIE: Yes, yes.

JESUS: Me too! I love that those parts would make me scared too because it's worth it. I don't care if it's Wednesday that scares me. The day just on the screen. As long as I jump I call it a worthwhile horror movie. Do you know what I mean?

MADDY: Yeah! And even if you don't have the background of the book or you haven't watched *The Shining* before, they hammer in home so much that these are the only people who are going to be at the hotel for the entire five months. And so any jump in time you are moving closer to what the real horror is.

NANCIE: Absolutely. There is also the whole point of it being a long snowstorm, which it has in common with *The Thing* because it is all snowy and stuff.

MADDY: And *Misery* too.

NANCIE: Yeah, and *Misery*. Maybe I have a thing for that. We witnessed our own snow horror a couple of years ago. After being through that you can kind of get that visceral feeling of being stuck in snow.

MADDY: Yes. And I grew up on the East Coast. And most of his books are set in Maine. I was so surprised when I started reading this. I knew tangentially that it was set in Colorado. So I was like, "These people have seen big snow before. They came from Vermont." So I think isolation wouldn't have scared them and that's why they did it. But to add in all these other factors...

NANCIE: Absolutely. Yes. I agree.

JESUS: I think horror really relies on playing on our instinctual fears. That's such an important part of horror.

MADDY: Oh, for sure.

JESUS: And to try to find shelter in inclement weather is one of the most instinctual like ... excuse me, one of our most basic instincts is to fear things that can hurt us.

NANCIE: Maslow's hierarchy.

JESUS: There you go.

MADDY: There you go. And I think that's like one thing that both iterations of the hedge, not to keep talking about how much I wanted the hedge animals, is that in one instance you have the hedge animals who are forcing Danny to find that shelter even, because kids love snow. They don't understand how it can hurt them. And so Danny is kind of that hold-out for much of the book, even as Wendy is being like, "The snow is getting a little too high for us."

And so in order for him to feel like the snow is dangerous you have to have those hedge animals trap him and have the snow start to fall on top of him.

But then the hedge maze in the movie you see that even though he's escaped the house, the hedge can't save him. The exterior is just as bad.

NANCIE: So talking about the maze, it just occurred to me that, as many times as it has come up, or it comes up in the movie, maybe that was Kubrick's way of showing you what was going on in Jack's head. He's got a maze of issues in his head and that everybody else is just looking at it from the outside in. And he's looking at it from the inside. And we kind of get that perspective when he's looking at the miniature. And it zones in on what's going on in the middle with Wendy. Because they are just experiencing all this stuff and he's the one that's going through it. Jack is the one who's going through it.

It makes you wonder if what he's going through is a big maze of stuff, evil, alcoholism. Just being kind of misogynistic.

MADDY: Very. Yeah. And I think actually we can talk about Jack a little bit. So he is obviously one of the main characters of the book, but he isn't the main character. And I think the movie really kind of turns him into I mean, he's the main character in terms of he's the antagonist already in the book. But like you are saying, Nancie, we are kind of in that perspective where we are seeing his breakdown. A lot of the shots are shots that we see his perspective on things.

I will say that one of the things I liked a lot about the movie, which does prioritize the psychological horror of the Overlook, is that you see how much I felt it was much more obvious in the movie just because we get the visual, especially of Shelley Duvall's face and her expressions, is how much Wendy really believes that it is just Jack being Jack.

Because I think as a reader you have way more context for what is happening and how these supernatural threads are all weaving together. And I think the movie really prioritizes how much she just doesn't believe it.

NANCIE: Absolutely.

JESUS: That's super interesting too because she knows this to be him. The story never starts out with him as a good character, I don't think. He's already ...

MADDY: A couple of strikes in.

JESUS: Yeah. And a couple of missteps with his profession. He's broken his kid's arm. And there was alcohol involved. Like he's.....

NANCIE: The crash?

MADDY: Oh, I forgot about the crash with his boss. So many layers.

JESUS: There are a lot of layers to Jack. But they are all bad. Terrible.

I enjoyed this book so much because I had such a great time not liking a character. Does that make sense?

MADDY: It certainly does.

NANCIE: My take, definitely he's got this thing with Wendy where they have this fighting but then he loves her and they kind of make up right before his descent. Kind of.

JESUS: I am rolling my eyes.

NANCIE: Yeah. We are all rolling our eyes. It really was really, really bad. You can tell this feels so much how like I think maybe marriages were in the midcentury. Way back decades ago. Things are a little different now.

To me the movie really showed that misogynistic element. I think critics are still trying to figure out what did Kubrick want people to take out of this other than the basic horror. To me I almost feel like his misogynistic tendencies were so toxic that it drove him to lose his mind.

Because from the beginning, from the first time that we see how the movie opens up with the helicopter showing over the drive, up into the mountains. That was beautiful. And they are in the car talking and he's, Jack Nicholson is just, he's the epitome of if you want a jerk to play somebody...

MADDY: He's got it nailed down.

NANCIE: Exactly! And just right off the bat he's just like so sarcastic when he was talking to Wendy, and she's just like, "Oh." And Danny is like, "What is this? What is that?" to whatever it was they were listening to on the radio. And he's like, "Oh, cannibalism." "What's cannibalism?" And she's like, "We don't want to talk about that." And he's like, "He needs to know what this stuff is. It's when people eat other people."

JESUS: He's like, I know that from TV.

NANCIE: Yeah! He's just so dismissive of Wendy through the whole thing. I didn't get it that much from the book. The misogyny. He kind of goes back and forth. "I love my family. I want to be a good guy. I want to try to make up and start from this end. Today I start over." But he keeps falling back. He just can't help himself.

In the movie there was more this focus on his maze of whatever toxicity going through his head between the alcoholism and "I've been sober for five months and it ends now." And all this.

MADDY: It's much more overt in the movie.

NANCIE: Exactly. And it's like this level of toxicity is what drove him to madness. Not the alcoholism. Not the trauma. Just because he's just a good old-fashioned jerk. I don't think Kubrick himself is trying to be misogynist. Maybe it was more of a warning?

MADDY: Cautionary tale.

NANCIE: Exactly.

MADDY: And I think he must have done it on purpose because you get no chance to believe that he's not a jerk.

In the first scene, and this is so stupid but, he's chewing with his mouth open while he's talking to people. And I was like, "OK, I know this is just bad manners anyway. But that was a choice that both of them made to be like you already know that he is not a polite person who thinks about others."

NANCIE: Absolutely, yes.

JESUS: I think Jack Nicholson does such a good job playing Jack in this way. I think he got the character of Jack from the book down during his meeting, that work meeting where he's learning about the Overlook.

MADDY: You mean the interview? Oh my gosh.

JESUS: And that's another part that the book really gave us, good detail and background to the overlooked history that didn't make it into the movie. So I tell people, "You've really got to read the book."

Where was I going with this?

MADDY: The interview? No, you're good. If you think about it, grab it again.

I think the portrayal of Jack is the strongest part of the movie and ties the most back even if we didn't have six hundred pages worth of exposition.

JESUS: But that's all I wanted to read was all of this. I wanted to know Jack, and Stephen King made it so that we could. He really put us into this mind of this guy.

MADDY: And then gave us the opportunity to see how it was affecting and manifesting on the other people he has relationships with. Like he is "no man is an island," right?

NANCIE: Absolutely. I agree with that.

I think there is also toward the beginning of the book when ... I don't know if I can remember exactly what Stephen King wrote about what drives a family apart. Do you remember the wording?

MADDY: I don't.

NANCIE: I don't remember the wording. But it was toward the beginning of the book when he talks about, this is what happens when ... do you remember?

JESUS: Was it a prologue, or was it in the book book?

MADDY: We can also just take a second to look and cut all the silence out.

NANCIE: I'm trying to remember where it is. I don't know. It probably was in the prologue.

I cannot remember. Of course I didn't make a note of it. I didn't think it was worth making a note of it.

JESUS: To me, Jack's character just felt so real. This was a really personal book for me to read. This character, I wanted to spend time with him. I wanted to know him.

MADDY: Really?

JESUS: The human part of us that wants to make people better. Fix someone or hopefully see a happy ending.

MADDY: Well, don't come to horror for that.

JESUS: Yeah. That was me. I wanted everything to be OK in the end, right?

MADDY: Sike.

JESUS: So much for that wish.

MADDY: So what did you think, Jesus, of the ending? Nancie and I have said we wish Dick had lived in the movie, but what did you think of the book or movie ending?

In the book, for people who haven't read it, Jack has essentially fallen over to the evil, Danny reminds the Overlook, who is wearing Jack's face, to go down to check the boiler. Dick, Wendy and Danny all escape in time but the boiler blows up and the Overlook Hotel burns.

And in this one he just kind of freezes to death outside in the maze.

JESUS: Yeah, the book was so much better.

MADDY: Fire and ice.

JESUS: The pacing of that end, I just couldn't stop. Like whether I was going to be late to work, trying to get in one last minute. I've got to listen to one more minute. I'm right there.

MADDY: Circle the building until you finish.

JESUS: Also it felt like it never ended and it was so great, because Dick Hallorann is trying to make his way up to help the family while the family is just meeting their doom. It's a very climatic ending.

MADDY: Very drawn out. Very tense.

JESUS: And I loved it. It's so good. And everyone knows you have to kill evil with fire.

For the Overlook to explode was just so artistic.

NANCIE: That was absolutely the best way for it to be an ending for something like that.

MADDY: After being snowed in for four months? You've got to melt it all away.

NANCIE: I remember thinking, "Oh no, he can't give, he was lent mittens." If you've got these mittens on, all these good things are going to happen. You can't go wrong with them. But he lost them! Oh no! Right? Because he lost them.

JESUS: How cool is it that Stephen King incorporated these elements of fairy tales? You will always find help when you need it. These people with more shining have special gifts for you to accomplish your quest or whatever.

It was really nice reading all that.

MADDY: Yeah. People are always here to help, like you said.

JESUS: A little brightness in a really dark story. The kindness from the people in the village, Sidewinder. That was really good to read.

NANCIE: You totally didn't get that in the movie. I guess because Jack was such a force. He just kind of sucked all the oxygen out of the room as it was that you didn't need to have much more than Dick, Danny and Wendy in addition to it.

I thought it was interesting also, I was expecting when he went in for the interview I was expecting him to get more pushback from Ullman.

MADDY: Yeah, which he gets so much of in the book.

NANCIE: In the book there was so much of it and it gave you all this background and everything. And it just wasn't there. It was just this nice, "Hey, how's it going?" And I was like, wait a minute.

MADDY: And you start to see Jack lose his temper in a job interview.

NANCIE: Yes!

MADDY: In the first five pages of the book! It was shocking. It was such a good introduction to the character, where if you read this and then watch the movie, you are like, "I know what you are like underneath there. You can't fool me, the audience!"

NANCIE: And I thought it was interesting how, obviously when they wrote the screenplay adaptation, they made some shortcuts. Events that occurred later on in the book they just put in the first ten minutes of the movie. It was just boom, boom, boom, boom.

MADDY: And it's not a short movie.

NANCIE: No it's not. But they wanted to, obviously Kubrick wanted to focus on the snow because the snow is a character. And what eventually happens. And just wants you to feel that. Although it felt to me like Jack changed from, even though he was angry, I guess his first angry scene was when he was at the typewriter. All of a sudden he was just like, "Why are you bothering me?"

JESUS: So annoyed with him. I'm like, "You're not even writing anything."

NANCIE: I'm like, what the heck? And then all of a sudden he's got a whole stack of "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy."

MADDY: An evil dull boy.

NANCIE: Yeah! An evil dull boy. But I did also like the detail of every single page was totally different from the other pages. There were misspellings and typos.

MADDY: And it was set off like play dialogue.

NANCIE: Exactly. All the different formats and everything. That was cool.

MADDY: That was fun.

And the cavernous nature of the hotel where Wendy has to walk all the way. And he can hear her walking but it isn't until she is right next to him that he even pays attention.

NANCIE: I half expected the fish-eye lens to come in.

MADDY: Give us that dolly zoom from *Vertigo*?

JESUS: They also didn't give us very much of Wendy's character in the movie like in the book. I really, she is such a strong character in the book. She's got her own, she's dealing with Jack, which is already a challenge.

MADDY: I think also, she is a strong character. And knowing what I knew before watching the movie, we've got Shelley Duvall who is extremely full of expression in her eyes. You don't think they can get any wider. And then they do somehow.

But the Wendy in the book is very educated, she is independent, or she has a relatively independent take on her life while Jack is away at work. But I think there is that transition where you, I don't know if they did this on purpose to help you sympathize with Jack a little bit, but in the movie, especially when she's like going into every

room, and she is like, "This is the nicest room I've ever seen." And you are like, "Oh my god, be quiet! You sound so simpering."

NANCIE: I think they did that on purpose to show, because we know, we've read the book so we know Wendy is a very strong person. And toward the end of the movie Grady is telling Jack, "Your wife has proven to be very resourceful. We've really underestimated her."

But we know that from the book, that she's always been resourceful. She's always been this way. And for Kubrick to, I guess you probably heard in the pop culture gossip and stuff about what Shelley Duvall went through in the movie in order to get those scenes.

JESUS: No, I haven't.

NANCIE: You have not? Oh.

MADDY: It's like very Alfred Hitchcock levels of psychological and physical torture.

NANCIE: Yeah, there's a lot of psychological issues. It was really a toxic, almost a hostile work environment to put her in a situation where she would respond out to get the shots.

MADDY: You get that real fear to come out.

NANCIE: It's really unethical. They don't do that nowadays.

MADDY: For reasons like this movie.

NANCIE: Exactly. And I think that they made her that way on purpose because Jack was already, he's easily set off. He's angry all the time. And just seeing her go, "Oh," like that, you kind of feel like OK, she's a normal, she's a regular person. She's just a regular woman, and he's just like, "Ohhh. Why are you doing this?" We're supposed to feel like Jack feels, like "You're so annoying."

Because I still feel that the whole thing is his descent into madness because of his misogyny. That's what I think.

MADDY: I think that's a great take.

NANCIE: I think it was psychologically similar to *Beloved*.

MADDY: Yeah. And that's on my list. So thank you for bringing it up. *Beloved* is one of my favorite books as well, and I think often is overlooked as a piece of horror. But it really is.

NANCIE: It's a ghost story.

MADDY: I have a couple of titles as well that I'm just going to list off.

And all of the things that we are talking about here will be listed in the show notes, and they will be available at the library. So, feel free to check those out later, put them on hold.

So I have to mention *Security* by Gina Wohlsdorf. It came out a couple of years ago. It's a *Shining* homage. Really good. I can't even really talk about it because it will start to give it away.

There is also a podcast called *The Hotel*. It's a horror anthology podcast, kind of *Hotel California*-ish, where you check in but you never leave.

And then in terms of haunted house stories which, as we talked about, Shirley Jackson really influenced this book, and between *The Shining* and *The Haunting of Hill House*, these two are the main haunted house foundational texts in our culture, in English lit.

So we have *Devil House* by John Darnielle.

The Last House on Needless Street by Catriona Ward, which really, really feels like the contemporary side part to this book.

The Between and *The Good House* by Tananarive Due.

Another podcast is *The Magnus Archives* which is by Rusty Quill. It really applies to almost all of the subgenres that we are going to talk about this season. Has a kind of subgenre to itself, but it's a lovely psychological descent into madness, with a lot of paranormal elements.

And to throw some nonfiction out there, since at the top of this episode I talked about the horror history, or the history of horror, so Stephen King himself has talked a lot about this and history of horror's influence on his work. Particularly in *Danse Macabre*, which is a great book.

And then *Nightmare Fuel* just came out, by Nina Nesseth, which is about the appeal and history of horror movies.

It Came from the Closet, which is edited by Joe Vallese, which is about queer horror and the role of queer people in horror literature and horror culture.

And then also *The Lore* podcast, which looks at the history of the things that scare us.

So check those out. They are amazing.

Thank you, Jesus and Nancie, for being on the first episode of Volumes. We hope to have you back soon.

WAYBACK MACHINE SOUND

MADDY: So one of the other things that was a really big difference, and especially I wanted to bring this up, Nancie, because you said you liked visceral so much, and Jesus, you like bad movies – I'm just kidding! But we get so much of a chase sequence in the movie, and we get a chase sequence in the book, but it is Jack chasing down Wendy with a roque, which is essentially croquet, a croquet mallet and hitting her and smashing different parts of her bones.

In the movie we have this fire axe that he's chopping through hotel doors with. He kills Dick with it. But we don't really see a lot of other implications. What did you guys think of that change in the pullback of that gore, and also the change of the weapon?

JESUS: Oh my gosh. So, if you haven't read the book yet and you've only seen the movie, you think that the axe is the most terrifying weapon to chase someone with, aside from like a chainsaw. But when you start reading the descriptions of a blunt object just like hammering your bones into dust, I think a roque mallet is so much more gory. It doesn't look that way on screen. So I know why they chose a sharp-edged object.

But yeah, totally, a mallet is the more gruesome way to go.

NANCIE: Yeah, the descriptions of that, I'm not sure how long, I can't remember how long it was, how many pages of that chase scene where he's...

MADDY: It was long though.

NANCIE: It was long. It was a lot. Just hitting her with that mallet.

JESUS: Sorry. You are making me wince.

NANCIE: See! Because I'm remembering it too. Because he hit her on her legs but also on her back.

MADDY: And her ribs.

NANCIE: And her ribs and all that. Am I remembering it correctly, the description of the sounds?

MADDY: Yes. Yes, you are.

NANCIE: And so I'm just like, Oh, Oh! But there's no blood. So I'm thinking that's probably why they decided to go with the axe. But the only person who got the axe was Dick.

MADDY: And he wasn't even supposed to! He gets hit by the mallet.

NANCIE: He gets hit by the mallet. But he doesn't die.

MADDY: Yeah. Page 588 in the book is where the mallet really comes into play.

"Instinct made her roll over, roll away, and the mallet whizzed past the side of her face, missing by a naked inch. It struck the deep pile of the stair carpeting with a muffled thud."

And then it skips and skips and then it goes, it talks about it landing, and she's so in shock that she can't even feel pain anymore. And then the mallet was coming down again. "She jerked her head away from it and it smashed into the stair riser, the hollow between her neck and shoulders, scraping away the flesh from her ear."

It's just chipping, much like Jack has been chipping away at her psyche. Not to read too much into it. He is chipping away at her physical body with this mallet. And I was just, that to me was, the chase exists for a reason as an element in horror. Right? There was something that was just inescapable from this chase.

NANCIE: Yeah, and I think also, and I don't know if this is appropriate to mention or not, but they had just had a very intimate night right before, you know? And then to turn around and all the sudden it is like, I don't know, it's just like so much exposure, it's like you're...

MADDY: You are swinging from one end of the spectrum to the other, of emotions.

NANCIE: And I can just feel it rise up in my throat a little bit, those emotions of when you are opening yourself up to someone in an intimate moment, but you are also being opened up by someone physically.

EVERYONE GAGGING

See? That's what I took out of this. I had to set it aside a couple of times. It was hard. It was just hard.

MADDY: Yeah. I really wanted to talk about that because that's the goriest part of the book. And it's just removed in favor of the psychological breakdown. Which, you know, has its place.

Misery is baseball bats in the movie, but in the book it is an axe. So they actually have switched it.

JESUS: I think you mentioned that once.

MADDY: Yeah, probably.

JESUS: I never have read that book.

MADDY: I've only seen it. It's interesting that it was flipped because that blunt force is just put to such extreme use in this book and to me was probably the most often I had to look away. I had to look away like every sentence.

OK, now we can stop. Thank you. I really wanted to talk about that.

MUSIC

Thank you for listening to this first episode of APL Volumes, Season One.

You can find a list of the books, movies, shows, and podcasts in the show notes, and copies of them are available to borrow through the Austin Public Library. If you want even more recommendations check out our personal pick service and get a personalized list from our expert librarians.

Thanks to my guests Jesus Hernandez and Nancie Mathis. If you see them out and about at Central, ask them about their favorite horror movies.

APL Volumes is recorded and produced in the Library's Innovation Lab, a part of the APL Innovate Digital Maker Space. The Austin Public Library is currently putting together a very cool digital maker space, which will offer not only recording equipment and hardware, but all kinds of audiovisual software for 3D modeling, graphic design, animation and much more. We are really excited to bring it to the public, so keep an eye out for it in the future.

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This podcast is all library, all the time. Our next episode will be on the cosmic subgenre. We'll be reading *The Ballard of Black Tom*, by Victor LaValle.

Thanks for listening and for supporting your local public library.

MUSIC

END TRANSCRIPT