



Discussion Guide
Straw House, Wood House, Brick House, Blow
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Introduction:

Straw House, Wood House, Brick House, Blow is a collection of novellas that explore the nature of human relationships with the divine and with each other. In Toy Farm, the characters feel that they are at the mercy of an absent God, trying to understand what it means to live with and for a greater purpose. Our Lady of Villains explores men and women's need for personal control over their lives, which often leads to instant gratification and a willingness to believe in anything that gives them what they want. Wish Police has its roots in instruction from the Sermon on the Mount to control your thoughts so they do not control you. Doom with a View is a comedy that discusses death and destiny and the relationship between life and the afterlife.

Straw House – Toy Farm

1. Dot asks Sunny, “What made you ever think we were better than the toys? They’re alive too. And we all got purposes. I’m a daughter. You protect the rows. What else do you want?” Why does Sunny feel superior to the toys before he meets the Growin’ Man? Why is this assumption detrimental to Sunny’s relationship with the Farmer, and his understanding of himself?
2. The Growin’ Man says he wants his homunculi to be human so “they’ll take things without [his] havin’ to tell ‘em. They’ll gossip as easy as drinkin’ watah. Be cruel and lie for their own ambitions” (93). Like the farmer, he wants his creations to have freewill, but for a different purpose. How does freewill play freewill gives the toys (and humans) the ability to create? And what are the purposes of the farmer and the Growin’ Man?

Wood House – Our Lady of Villains

1. Most people judge Hello Corp as good because it gives them what they want, subconsciously overlooking that it is at the expense of destroying all of Africa. How often do you think we misjudge good and evil in our daily lives?
2. What does it mean to be the hero of your own story? Does this worldview automatically render everyone else into the position of sidekicks? Why shouldn’t we be our own heroes?

Brick House – Wish Police

1. In Wish Police, a bad wish is a Wicked Idea Suddenly Human, which physically manifests itself and comes true. Are there circumstances in your own life where a thought of yours has disrupted things for good or ill?

2. Mack discovers that she is the literal embodiment of a “wicked idea.” Can she ever overcome this sort of predestination? Is it even worth trying?

Blow – Doom with a View

1. Do you believe in predestined love? Or is death the only detail in our lives that is predestined?

2. Do you believe that it is possible for two lives to collide in such a way that they smash together “with such a violent force that absolutely disintegrates your old self and becomes some new composite, some creation the world has never seen?” Is this restricted to a romantic partner; can every person we meet change who we are?

Final Thoughts

1. Toy Farm, Our Lady of Villains, Wish Police, and Doom with a View are four individual novellas, but are they separate? Do you see a connection between the stories?