

**Title:** Love on a High Horse (parts 1 and 2)

**Synopsis:**

In this two-part podcast, Tim & LeeAnna explore the frustrations of modern dating, where the effort-to-reward ratio often feels painfully out of balance. They dive into the emotional walls we build around ourselves and the unattainable standards we set for potential partners. Tim also introduces his Seven Concentric Citadel Walls™—a model for how we let people in, one emotional wall at a time. Are we too picky? Or are we just protecting ourselves from emotional vulnerability?

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Podcasts (part 2):

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**Discussion Questions**

*Use these questions to spark conversation and reflection in the classroom:*

- **Emotional Walls:** Why do we build walls around our hearts, and what role do they play in modern relationships? How can these walls be both protective and limiting?
- **The "Perfect" Person Myth:** Do you think people often get caught up in the idea of perfection when it comes to dating? How does this affect their ability to form meaningful connections?
- **High Standards vs. Self-Awareness:** A person may criticize their date while being oblivious to their own flaws. What does this tell us about human nature and self-awareness in relationships?
- **The Seven Concentric Citadel Walls:** Discuss how the Citadel model works as a way of explaining how people engage in relationships. Do you think each "wall" appropriately corresponds to a stage in relationship-building?
- **Modern Dating Landscape:** With apps, social media, and constant distractions, do we still value face-to-face, real-world connections? Is the "instant gratification" of digital relationships ultimately leading to more disconnection?

## Writer's Prompts

*Creative exercises to help students apply the themes of the topic:*

- **Prompt 1:** The "Perfect" Person Isn't So Perfect After All: Write a scene where a character finally meets someone who ticks every box on their "perfect partner" checklist, but instead of feeling relief, they feel anxiety. How does this moment challenge their beliefs about love and perfection?
- **Prompt 2:** The Double Standard Date: Write a scene in which a character with high standards critiques every little thing about their date, but when faced with similar criticism, they become defensive. How does this moment of hypocrisy lead to an epiphany for the character?

## Class Activities

*These activities will help expand on the themes of the topic:*

- **Group Discussion:** Split the class into groups and assign each group one or more of the 13 parameters from the alien-building guide (e.g., Moral Dread, Holding a Mirror to Our Fears, Alien Technology). Each group will explore how their assigned parameter could shape the alien's personality, actions, and its interactions with humans. Have each group present their findings to the class, highlighting how their parameter influences the alien's character and story.
- **Group Discussion:** Have a conversation about the idea of "perfect" relationships. Are our expectations too high? Where is the line between having standards and being unrealistic? Discuss the importance of emotional vulnerability in relationships.
- **Design Exercise:** Using the Seven Concentric Citadel Walls™, design a character's emotional progression. How do they let people in? What walls are the hardest to break down?
- **Debate:** Split into groups. One side argues that high standards in dating are necessary for long-term happiness, while the other side argues that being too picky is a barrier to meaningful connections. Debate this, and then discuss how both sides can find a balance.
- **Collaborative Story-Building:** In small groups, create a character who is emotionally unavailable due to past experiences. Using the Citadel model, have each group member contribute a scene showing how this character's walls are broken down over time.

## Closing note from the Podcasters, Tim & LeeAnna

*Here's the deal: Love isn't a perfect checklist, and your "emotional citadel" is probably just an overpriced fortress that keeps out the good stuff. If you're looking for perfection, you're bound to get bored and disappointed. So, grab a pen, scribble down a few more flaws, and stop pretending you have it all figured out. Because guess what? No one else does, either.*