

## Drawing Maps Audio 18: Sangfielle Characters #4: Virtue Mondegreen - September 2020

Transcriber: KatieDiek (up to minute 10)

**Austin:** Welcome to another edition of Drawing Maps. I'm your host, Austin Walker. And joining me today is Sylvia Clare. Hi.

**Sylvi:** Hi. Happy to be here. How's it going?

**Austin:** It's going. For people who are tuning into the for the first time for one of these, and for you, Sylvi, a real quick rundown on what Drawing Maps is. Drawing Maps is a show about actual prep for actual play. Everything we do here is actually contributing towards doing prep. We cover a bunch of different things on Drawing Maps right now, we're really focused on season seven, which doesn't have a name yet.

**Austin:** We'll get there.

**Austin:** Yeah, the hope is for these things to have kind of interesting discussion and insight, hopefully, you know, they're the end result, even if nothing gets made is at least we talked about some stuff on the way. [chuckles] You know, ideally, what we're doing is actual asset creation and management, you're actually building details about the world factions, you know, characters. When I do Drawing Maps, sometimes you'll see me literally draw maps or make, you know, put together an adventure or an enemy threat, you know, or a monster or whatever. What Drawing Maps isn't is unchecked or unannounced spoilers. So we'll be careful about spoiling stuff from past seasons or the current season. (Not that there's much to do that with this time). Nothing here is permanent or unchangeable. So for you, you shouldn't feel like "Oh, shit. I said, x on the drawing maps episodes. Now I'm stuck with it." You have no idea how many things I've written down for drawing maps and eventually I throw away. This is not an explicit tutorial. While we hope it's insightful, it's not a lesson on how to do this. And so please don't hold us to that standard. This is not designed by committee, there is always a comment section, we'd love to hear what you think about the episode, we're not really looking for like feedback in the "I think you should do x sense," especially at this point in a season where we're really just trying to get the the kind of big picture ideas down. And then finally, it's not complete drawing maps. The ideas here are neither finished or you know, up to snuff, which means sometimes they're bad ideas. Sometimes they're great ideas, but they're not - they don't have that little polish on them. That means that like, okay, yeah, now we have a cool, special name for it. And this is here for two reasons. One is because, as always, nothing is real, until it's been an episode of the show that has released and then two, because we solved it, we shouldn't feel like compelled to stick on one question, or one concept until we hammer it out perfectly, we should feel free to move on. And then we can come back to those other things off mic if we want to. So don't feel like we need to have a complete final picture of your character or the part of the world that we're talking about. I like that out those elements today. Though, obviously, you've done a lot of great work with the questions I sent over and you already have some great answers. So this should be pretty smooth. Um, how early Did you know you wanted to play a vampire in season seven?

**Sylvi:** This is if you know anything about me. You know, you know that I'm a big fan of sort of vampire fiction and stuff. I think when we sort of just landed on like dark fantasy was kinda when it clicked for me. And like, I had been turning over like, my own ideas in my head for like trying to do like a vampire story or something like that. But this is, like, I think, with just the way we do our show, I think it's an interesting thing to bring in, especially like because it gives us a chance to sort of differentiate from past representations of vampires that we've had.

**Austin:** Yeah, like we very much went a, like an emotional vampire route when we were doing Hieron which is fun. I liked that version of them. And like they were cool vamp - they were cool vampires

**Sylvi:** They were!

**Austin:** But yeah, we can kind of start fresh and go more of a gothic horror route here. If that's if that's right, if that's my that's the vibe I get from your answers and stuff. And so I guess I'll start there. Like what does a vampire mean? What type of vampires are we looking at here? What do they feed on? What do they have in terms of abilities and weaknesses and all that other stuff?

**Sylvi:** So I - like my basic sort of like definition for like what a vampire is like coming into this was basically something that like consumes the life of another thing to supplement its own immortality. And so like I I've written down like yeah, they still like there's ones that drink blood and stuff like that, but I want to leave wiggle room for the more like - one because we're not all going to be - there's not all just going to be like humans in our world but also show like we can have different sort of like flavor if more show up in the world have different methods of their sort of life and feeding.

**Austin:** But the key is about feeding on the life of someone else?

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**Austin:** How that is that - what the medium there is might be different but, but that's the through line.

**Sylvi:** Yeah, the through line is you taking someone's life and turning it into your own basically,

**Austin:** Right, right.

**Sylvi:** Was sort of the way I envisioned it. I think I even mentioned that like, I don't know where I wrote it down. But one of the things about the way this works was I was thinking about like turning and how, like, people either are, like people, typical vampire stuff, you're turned by someone and it's like, usually sort of a like, there's like a master vampire. There's a whole structure thing.

**Austin:** There's a whole structure like like a hereditary like chart of like, such and such turned such and such who then turned such and such and you're x generations removed. Yeah, find

that in like Vampire the Masquerade. But you also do find that in like Castlevania, the anime does stuff in that space.

**Sylvi:** For sure.

**Austin:** And you know, obviously, Dracula even has some of that stuff in terms of person, one turning person two into a vampire, you know?

**Sylvi:** Yeah, that was actually - I'm so glad you bring up Dracula. Because I think with that was that. I think there's a few different like, origin stories for how like, Vlad Tepes became Dracula. But like, a lot of stories where people just become that or it's more tied to like, a dark magic or something? And I was thinking, like, if people know that they can prolong their lives using this sort of, like almost necromancy, I think the transformation ends up being a side effect of that at a certain point.

**Austin:** Interesting. So the like, you start as just like, "hey, I want to live another 100 years."

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And then what happens is that whatever that spell is, whatever those methods might be, at some point, require you to supplement the life that you've added by taking it from someone else. But yeah, you just can't. it degrades over time, no matter what.

**Sylvi:** Regard for sort of, like, the common people's life and yeah, is sort of like, one strong interpretation of them, but also one that I'm drawn to, like, examining and exploring more.

**Austin:** So it was it like a technique that is guarded by vampires or, or like, do you know what I mean? Like,

**Sylvi:** I haven't? Yeah, I'm not sure. Um, I think that like, it's probably is one of those things, that's a closely guarded secret, right? And we can get into this a little bit when we get into the actual, like, character class I'm gonna be playing

**Austin:** Yes.

**Sylvi:** But I think this is a little bit more of an open and like taboo secret among like, people who know magic,

**Austin:** like practitioners of magic, right?

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**Austin:** So it's almost like it's almost analogous to like Lich-dom in fantasy stuff or something. Right? where, like, you, you're going into the, you're going into the forbidden magics, you know, section of the library (laughs). And then getting the components that maybe you need to ask a favor to get, you know, they're under the table. They're not up on the shelf, and maybe you have to do a ritual to a dark God or whatever.

**Sylvi:** It's Oh, yeah, it's a lot of stuff like that. Bloodstone is definitely a really good sort of like, like liches in general, kind of like a touchstone for that sort of process. I think there are vampires who are more like liches like,

**Austin:** Sure.

**Sylvi:** I think of like, the traditional, like, I'm picturing like, Nosferatu in my head, but I'm sure there's also like some, like, completely normal looking person that's actually waist like, been living for 1000s of years.

**Austin:** Right. What I love about this is there's a world in which there are 12 different ways to become what people call a vampire. Because what matters about being a vampire, that the the through line is, you're alive through supernatural means beyond your natural life, and two you, you, you know, take the life of others in order to extend your life. And so it's almost like there's like a lowercase v vampire categorization here, versus the like, "we're all touched." You know, the vampire, the masquerade thing. "We all have the blood of Cain in us," you know,

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**[Time stamp: 10:00]**

**Austin:** Whereas this could be like, hey, I worship a god of entropy and so through a ritual I've, you know, managed to capture that god's power to prevent my own life force from decaying, and I'm exchanging it with someone else's. That's a vampire. But also a vampire is the person who collects the right ingredients and, you know, manages to cast themself with an enchantment that allows them to like suck someone's blood and turn it into life force, right?

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And that's a fun -- cuz then it's almost like -- then we go to like that vampires are more like wizards, almost.

**Sylvi:** I definitely wanted to be,

**Austin:** Which is sick.

**Sylvi:** Like, yeah. Yeah like this started as maybe like more of a magical discipline before people realized the extent to which these things can go.

**Austin:** Right.

**Sylvi:** Um. I...

**Austin:** I also love that just cuz it's like that means anyone who's hunting vampires, the first step has to be like "okay, what type of fucking vampire am I dealing with here?"

**Sylvi:** [laughs] Well, and this is one of the things I like -- that kind of ties into my character, um, like, herself. Ooh, a pronoun reveal!

**Austin:** [like an announcer] A pronoun reveal!

**Sylvi:** Um. World premiere!

[both laugh]

**Austin:** Exclusive!

**Sylvi:** [laughs] But so I'm going to be playing the Deadwalker, and so when I like...

**Austin:** Exclusive! We got two exclusives in a row, she/her Deadwalker, let's go.

**Sylvi:** Yeah, oh my god. I should just make that my Twitter handle. She/her Deadwalker.

**Austin:** [laughing] She/her Deadwalker! Very funny!

**Sylvi:** Um. [laughs] But um one of the things I sort of pitched to the group when we were talking about like trying to figure out character classes and stuff was that my character was sort of like... Half-slain, or like I've been thinking it as like the slaying didn't take?

**Austin:** [enthused] Yeah.

**Sylvi:** And so I think that part of it is like oh yeah, someone just missed this part of the thing. There's like -- I think my, I don't wanna like... I have like an idea in my head that's a little silly, but it's...

**Austin:** Let me hear it, I wanna hear it, now is the time.

**Sylvi:** Okay. They buried the body instead of burning the body.

**Austin:** Oh, sure, okay.

**Sylvi:** So it's like something where it says the body must be burned, but it's faded [laughs] so it's like, is that an I?

**Austin:** Oh, that's so funny.

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**Austin:** That's so good. And then like hundreds of years later, you've dug your way out, you've healed.

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Right. Um, so we should say that Deadwalker, the thing that makes a Deadwalker unique is, um, the Deadwalker as written is a class about someone who should have died but didn't, and now they're like haunted by their death. It's like they lived though a, um, what's the fucking movie series? Um. About the like death by accident, and death is like --

**Sylvi:** Oh! Um, Final Destination.

**Austin:** It's like they lived through Final Destination and now their own death is haunting them. And because of that, they have a couple of like big abilities, which are like, I think the first one is that like you are protected from negative -- from what the game calls Fallout, which is like, when you get enough stress in any given category that things break bad, and so your own death kind of haunts you and protects you. And then the second one is, you're able to like go into um another, I guess like plane or dimension. The book calls it the Grey, you have your own version of it that I love.

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**Austin:** That we'll get to, but like basically you're doing a bunch of like magic undead shit, but the specific thing of the way like the book frames this is that, again, you're haunted by your own death, like death is whispering things into your ear at all times. Whether that's capital-D Death or a ghost of yourself that hasn't come into being yet, there's kind of some broadness there, so I'm curious for you -- I mean, the first thing here is, we're not doing the thing that, um, so the last one of these, I think the last one of these was Janine, who's playing the Witch, and for her all Witches are the thing she is, the sort of possessed, possessive ghost type thing that can form contracts with people, that's what a witch is. But Deadwalkers are not vampires, vampires are a broader category and you happen to be a Deadwalker, right?

**Sylvi:** Yeah. I think that there is probably some throughline between the magic that vampires have access to and then the magic that sort of creates or powers a Deadwalker, but they are different things in my head, I've sort of, um. One of the like questions that we've had was like are there other ones, and I'm really torn about it, because part of me really likes the idea of them being almost like a fairy tale? Like a sort of like --

**Austin:** Mm-hm. You're The Deadwalker.

**Sylvi:** Yeah, like, or like [slight laugh] there might be more, but they're like, it's like saying yeah, there's more than one boogeyman out there. Like people aren't going to believe you.

**Austin:** Right. Totally.

**Sylvi:** And...

**Austin:** Do you still need to, as one of these -- I guess, you finish telling me what it means to be a Deadwalker for you at this point.

**Sylvi:** Well like I think part of it is, and this sort of ties into the thing with vampires -- and I guess we didn't really talk about what their abilities are other than sort of eternal life, but. I feel like this sort of like -- it didn't erase those abilities, but becoming -- the process of one basically like dying -- of dying! And then like coming back with this magic has sort of... I think there is probably still the need to like, feed, on some level, to sort of keep the physical body going, but I think that it is like for the most part a lot of the vampirey shit is either way weakened or like, um, just not accessible to her right now.

**Austin:** Right, right, right. And then as you get powers, as you get new abilities and stuff, that can represent, in some cases at least, you like reconnecting with that part of who you are.

**Sylvi:** For sure.

**Austin:** Right, like at some point, you know, um. You have a move here called The Harvest, which is you get the Wild domain, and animals won't attack you if other targets are available.

**Sylvi:** Ugh, so cool.

**Austin:** And that's like, yeah, vampires can do that, why not, right?

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**Austin:** You know, you can ask a person, you can ask someone's spirit a single question before they die, with another move. Like yeah, okay, sure, is that vampire power? Maybe. Maybe that's an old spell

**Sylvi:** We'll figure it out!

**Austin:** Right, we'll figure it out. So. And so yeah, you also do note that like your basic ideas are like, what can vampires do, and the answer is like, you know, vampire shit, they're strong, they're fast, they can do magic shit, right?

**Sylvi:** Yeah. Like, a big -- like one of the big things I did before like -- honestly I think even like towards the end of Partizan I was doing this, was I was just looking at um different Dracula like portrayals? And the thing that I like about Dracula is how weird all the powers are, in some ways?

**Austin:** Yeah!

**Sylvi:** Like, it turns into like a weird -- I'm specifically referencing the, um, I think it's Francis Ford Coppola directed it, the one with like um Gary Oldman and Keanu Reeves?

**Austin:** Gary Oldman and Keanu Reeves? Yeah. Uh-huh.

**Sylvi:** Yeah. He turns into like a weird dog thing at one point. And I'm like sure, that's a thing in this world that not every vampire can do, but there's definitely some, like, some sort of vampire who has this weird transformation form, because they've managed to perfect it.

**Austin:** But like -- right, well, and that's the thing that's so useful is that like we now have, when you have X different origins of how you get to be the thing people call a vampire, each of those can come with its own special subset of powers, do you know what I mean -- I'm sure someone who's become a vampire by doing some sort of weird Heart ritual, meaning Heart like the game, the game concept of like Heartsblood and stuff, has different, you know, um, that has a different effect on them than if they had cast some spell or summoned some relationship with a demon, you know what I mean, or whatever it is.

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**Austin:** To get them to vampiressness, or vampirehood, and so like, yeah, I like that that can be flexible. And then likewise, weaknesses can be flexible for the same way, right, like are you a "I can't be in the sunlight for too long" vampire?

**Sylvi:** Uh. I kinda want to be. I think it would be fun to at least be like ugh, sunlight makes me sick or something.

**Austin:** Yeah yeah yeah. It makes you like, weak, fatigued, nauseous, or whatever.

**Sylvi:** Yeah. I'm a huge fan of the sort of more esoteric vampire weaknesses, like I think this came up when Throndir turned, but the rice thing, where it's like if you drop a thing of rice in front of a vampire they're compelled to count all of them?

**Austin:** That rules, that rules. The one I like about Dracula is the like, he can only sleep on his, on soil from his own country, which is sick, and people forget that one. That one's good.

**Sylvi:** That one's really good, the --

**Austin:** You gotta fuckin ship in dirt. You know?

**Sylvi:** I mean, that's like the whole like third act of that, too, where it's like they're trying to find...

**Austin:** Right. That's like -- yeah, totally.

**Sylvi:** All his dirt. Um.

[both laugh]

**Sylvi:** But then there's also just like little things like, um, I'm sure there's vampires who -- in this world -- I don't know if this is gonna be like a thing with my character, but like running water, like.

**Austin:** Right, right right right. Yes, yeah.

**Sylvi:** Is a thing, or like, there's probably some that do need to be invited inside and some that don't, but I think the most unifying thing is like, sunlight is like probably gonna be bad for like all of them, across the board. And like a stake through the heart is probably one of the more unifying things.



**Austin:** Stake through the heart, yeah, that one's a big one. Yeah.

**Sylvi:** Even if it's not the complete slaying process, it's like step one of X.

**Austin:** Mm-hm. Right, maybe you still have to burn the body or whatever, but.

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah. That makes sense. [coughs] Um. All right, let's keep on moving, cuz we got a lotta questions here.

**Sylvi:** Sure.

**Austin:** Do you, does your character know --

**[Time stamp: 20:00]**

**Austin:** I mean, I guess we've already talked -- because of what the history of vampires is, we're now not talking about a world of like, well first there was so and so, and they all descend -- so like the history of vampires, I guess, is much broader than a lot of other fiction, but I'm curious if your character, when they were still an active vampire, are they like into, into the history of vampires, do they know about all of the like -- could they namedrop other famous vampires?

**Sylvi:** I think only if she's met them. [laughs]

**Austin:** Okay. Sure.

**Sylvi:** It's one of those things where it's like... The way I'm thinking of this character is that she was so focused on just attaining immortality that like the other stuff doesn't really matter as much to her?

**Austin:** Right. She never had her like big vampire society coming out, like.

**Sylvi:** Yeah, like I'm sure that there's some level of that just because it's like well, I've got to play the game with these people to get resources or whatever, for my magic stuff...

**Austin:** Does that exist, is there that style of like Blade vampire raves?

**Sylvi:** [laughs]

**Austin:** Or not raves, but you know what I mean, right?

**Sylvi:** I was think...

**Austin:** Or, again, you think about the Castlevania -- we've talked about the Castlevania anime a couple times, where it's like, oh shit, there are all of these independent vampire lords, but they

all still kind of roll up in some sort of hierarchy or have rivalries between each other, stuff like that.

**Sylvi:** That's a bit closer. Yeah, that's a bit closer to what I was thinking. I was thinking it's either like, um, there's like small groups of like alliances and stuff that have been formed just out of like survival, like there's groups of vampires who are like, if we all team up we can sort of control what's going on in this region of the world, but then on top -- I think tied to that is there's a lot of territoriality, like.

**Austin:** Right.

**Sylvi:** Especially --

**Austin:** It's more the manor on the hill and the vampire lord who says, this is my territory, and.

**Sylvi:** For sure, yeah.

**Austin:** And maybe there's like, yknow, maybe that vampire does work with some other, weaker vampires or whatever, but like by and large it's like, this is my fuckin space.

**Sylvi:** Yeah. It's like the hierarchy's very clear there, as opposed to being sort of like a collaborative thing.

**Austin:** Right. Right.

**Sylvi:** Um. And I think that a lot of that would probably be tied to just like... yeah, I don't want more people hunting in the area that I do?

**Austin:** That I do, right, yeah.

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Um, we... yknow, the way that -- we don't have a name for the area or the world writ large yet, but the, we know that there's like this ringed city, and inside of that is where all the Heart shit is. Are vampires both inside and outside that city?

**Sylvi:** [thoughtful inhale]

**Austin:** Or are they a Heart-specific culture thing, yknow?

**Sylvi:** I haven't really thought about that. Um. I think...

**Austin:** I mean, I guess part of the answer then ends up being, does magic work... Would the sort of... I think that would have to be -- hm.

**Sylvi:** I was gonna say, I think they can exist in both... regions, but I think it's like... it's not uncommon for someone to go into sort of, what I guess I'm now calling the Heartland, and, um sort of just -- and then coming back out like either...

**Austin:** Right. This is one way...

**Sylvi:** With something that will allow them to transform, or.

**Austin:** Right.

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Right. This is one place where you can kind of go get the stuff you need, maybe a little... more, uh, under the table or without being noticed, or maybe it's like you're closer to the gods here, because things are so strange and the kind of veil is thin, not to just say the Dragon Age thing, but you know what the fuck I mean, so.

**Sylvi:** Yeah! I've been, like, it's been so hard not to just to talk about like what I'm sure we're just going to refer to as the Grey, but it's been so hard not to call names of like other liminal spaces in stuff I've been reading or playing.

**Austin:** Well, we'll call it something else based on your interpretation.

**Sylvi:** Oh, for sure!

**Austin:** We're almost there, so. [coughs]. Scuse me. Um. What is the like popular feeling about vampires?

**Sylvi:** ...Ah, I think...

**Austin:** Among non-vampire. Yknow.

**Sylvi:** Among non -- yeah. I mean, I think it is, like, a pretty realistic fearful response, but I think that there's also a lot of people who are -- unless they've [slight laugh], like... Like I think that it is such a thing where it feels like people -- there are plenty people who believe it, and then there are plenty of people who are like, that's just some weird rich person.

**Austin:** Mm-hm.

**Sylvi:** Like, that's just -- they've not actually immortal, they're just, like, evil, or something.

**Austin:** They just have magic and money.

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Right, like.

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**Austin:** So.

**Sylvi:** And like.

**Austin:** But no, I don't know why... Bill disappeared last week, but who -- people disappear all the time!

**Sylvi:** For sure. And I think like there's also like, there are regions of this world where it's like, less common to find one, and so people are less likely to believe it there.

**Austin:** Right.

**Sylvi:** Meanwhile like I'm sure people who are within that sort of like Heart ring are like, oh no, yeah, the --... More likely than not gonna be like, yeah, I might not have seen one, but I believe they're real.

**Austin:** Mm-hm. Totally. Totally. Um. I have a note here that we've already kind of touched on which is that like vampires are a pretty loaded idea in terms of potential reads.

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And I'm curious like as always my thing is like let's talk about what we want to pull from this so we can best frame conversations around it. You already hit the sort of like one of the classic reads of vampmires is like, these are rich people who are living off the backs of the lives of other people, that is super interesting and I'm curious if that's, is that like the major way you wanna talk about them and frame them?

**Sylvi:** That is sort of my major like thematic thing with them at the very least, partially because it ties into the character I'm going to be playing is like former aristocracy. And so I think that like I've been thinking about it a lot through this lens. But I also think it just makes sense, given what their abilities are and like what they do, that it is like a metaphor for that and like for just the way that people in power in this case literally chew up the people who aren't.

**Austin:** Totally. Totally. I think a vampire's such an interesting figure for our, for where we're, for the kind of space we're playing in because the, this is not going to be a season about factions intervening with each other and big wars and etcetera because the spaces we're talking about -- you said Heartland earlier? And that's like kind of a fun touchstone for sort of the frontier-y stuff we're playing with, but if you think about a show like Deadwood or kind of stories that play on those sort of frontier spaces, I'm watching Demon Slayer right now and even in something like that, the difference between the urban spaces where there's a bunch of people and clear hierarchy and blah blah blah and spaces that are like "no, this is a village in the middle of nowhere, like, the emperor's laws don't really -- that's not what happens here", you know? Um, we're much more in that latter space, and that's not something we've ever really played with, I think like a little bit in Spring in Hieron, but like, y'all were the authorities in Spring in Hieron. Um,

but, for me I think it's so interesting because you know, the federal government, so to speak, doesn't exist out here. There will be villages and towns and cities that have their own internal stuff, but in a world like that, the vampire as metaphor for the individual powerful person who can exert control and harm people in order to better themselves fits very nicely with the like, the corrupt magistrate, magistrate or the, the greedy industrialist, right, who runs a company town.

**Sylvi:** For sure.

**Austin:** Or like you said the aristocratic lord, who takes advantage of the community that lives on quote-unquote "their land", you know, the lord's land. Um [laughs]. Or whatever. So yeah, I love that for the way we frame this, and that gives me a lot of really fun stuff to play with in terms of introducing other vampires down the line or you know expectations about you, um, which is a question I don't have here, this is a little bit lower down, but I am curious... Do people -- do you plan on people knowing what you are as a vampire and a deadwalker, or is that a secret about who you are, typically?

**Sylvi:** I... I think... I've had a couple like ways to go about it, and it does sort of depend on like where our sort of starting point is.

**Austin:** Yeah, which we'll figure out. We're still not there yet, right, so.

**Sylvi:** Part of me is like, oh, it would be really fun for nobody to believe that I am this person who disappeared hundreds of years ago.

**Austin:** Oy...

**Sylvi:** Um. But then, also, there is that element of like trying to keep vampirism a secret, and pretend everything is normal when it's not, is like. It's fun, but I don't know how I can also do that while being a literal zombie? [laughs]

**Austin:** Right. Right. Well, I, I'm actually really curious about part of this, because -- well, we should talk about, let's talk about the thing the book calls the Grey.

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**Austin:** You have a, again, one of your first moves is a move called Enter the Grey. I'll also read from it, it says "You know the trick of stepping sideways into the Grey, the space between the worlds of the living and the worlds of the dead. Roll Delve+Religion to enact this ritual," blah blah blah, you take ten minutes to like, do a ritual, and then eventually you go into to the Grey, where "the world is a shadowy echo of its living counterparts, some souls linger here awaiting their eternal reward but for the most part it is grim, empty and monochrome." And then there's a much larger explanation of the Grey later, but I'm curious what your take on that is, because so much of what we wanna do with worldbuilding is make this space our own and not just kind of use the world of the book?

**Sylvi:** Yeah, so, I, one of the things that like jumped out to me -- and it's hard not to jump out when you read stuff for the Grey, is just like the immediate feeling of like —

**[Time stamp: 30:00]**

**Sylvi:**— they want this to be very empty and very desolate, and like.

**Austin:** Yes.

**Sylvi:** I think Desolate is literally the domain for it, actually?

**Austin:** Right. Yes. I think almost certainly, yeah.

**Sylvi:** But I --

**Austin:** Which is also your starting domain, right, you start with delve as a skill and desolate as a domain, and "a bag of interesting teeth" as your starting resource?

**Sylvi:** I love it. Trust me, I have been thinking about that. /// But my idea for our equivalent of the gray was almost the opposite direction? I was talking to my partner Emily about this and I wrote down what I said to her as well, so I'm probably just going to read that.

**Austin:** Yeah, please.

**Sylvi:** But it was like "we think of death as being a thing for creatures primarily, like living beings, but this would be a place for other things to go when they die as well." So I think the like, one of the examples I gave to her was like when paint faded from... like when the color fades from something that's been painted, where does that color go, it goes to the gray or whatever.

**Austin:** It goes to what our version of the gray is, right, which is actually then this sort of like overwhelmingly colorful place, and vibrant, and deeply alive place, then?

**Sylvi:** Yeah, the way I've been picturing it is it's like almost... Part of it is like a place where souls in transit to whatever other realm they go to spend some time in, but also as this place where all these like intangible things that have also like died in a way, go. I think another thing was like when you like come up with a song in your head and you hum it to yourself and then you forget it. Someone who's managed — who could be in the gray might eventually hear that tune if they can like focus out all the other stuff on it, you know?

**Austin:** Yeah, totally. There's a point in here where you talk about the, you say "I've obviously been leaning more towards cosmic and psychedelic influence" and you know what this brings to mind for me is Gankutsuou which, have you seen that?

**Sylvi:** I have not.

**Austin:** Do you know what I — when I say Count of Monte Cristo anime, does that mean anything to you?

**Sylvi:** I feel like I'm, I'm looking at it and I'm immediately like this looks very familiar, so. Yeah, I do know this, actually. I've seen the first episode of this.

**Austin:** Okay, yeah. So, it is — yeah, I also have only seen the first episode but like it is 100% that style of like super — the contrast, the juxtaposition between gothic spaces and these like incredibly bright colorful patterned like — it's like backdrops but also sometimes it's like part of like people's costuming, will be these incredible prints where like they're turning and falling, right, but the print is solid and still facing the right, the same direction even as they move, you know what I mean? It's wild-looking. But that style of just like, everything is turned to 11 in our version of the gray. Is sick.

**Sylvi:** Yeah I am... yeah I've been, another just like if we want to give a couple more just sort of like visual touchstones that I've had, one of them is just sort of the more — I come back to this a lot cuz he's one of my favorite animation directors but Masaaki Yuaki's Devilman Crybaby has a lot of that very colorful cosmic psychedelic stuff at times. And then I'm going to send you a link to this. This is just an example of what the animation looks like but I was looking — there's an animator called Mirai Mizue, I think I'm pronouncing that correctly.

**Austin:** Oo, this is sick, yeah.

**Sylvi:** And they do a lot of sort of abstract animation it was something that I was looking at a lot when sort of trying to like figure out how to express the idea I had for this?

**Austin:** Yeah. This is a tweet that says, "have you ever looked into the surface of your skin under a microscope? a surprising number of microorganisms live there" and just for people who want to search it really quick.

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**Austin:** This is wild, yeah.

**Sylvi:** I will say, warning for flashing lights on some of their other stuff.

**Austin:** Yeah I bet. [laughs] This also reminds me of another anime which is Mononoke, not Princess Mononoke, the TV series which is a... again, I will content warning for this, which is that like almost every episode is about abuse or grief and it's very interested in gender politics and sexual politics throughout the history of like kind of 1400 Japan forward. I don't necessarily think that like it hits those notes perfectly every time, but the use of colour and design in the show is out of the fucking — is just like unbelievable. One of my favorite things, and I don't know if it's in this trailer I just linked you, but every episode the like background people are different, like non — they're not non-speaking but like you know the characters that are not the principal characters are always in each progressive setting represented through like a different... like a different model, and so sometimes it looks like — the touchstone that I think people know now is the Shin Megami Tensei, like, J-pop game where everyone was just like those bright colorful...

**Sylvi:** Oh, Twilight Mirage sessions.

**Austin:** Twilight —

**Sylvi:** Mirage sessions I think?

**Austin:** No, Twilight, it can't be Twilight Mirage sessions, it has to be.

**Sylvi:** It's not Twilight Mirage sessions. Tokyo Mirage sessions!

**Austin:** Tokyo Mirage sessions!

**Sylvi:** I'm sorry, I'm very sleep-deprived.

**Austin:** No, I was like wait, it can't be... Fair. No, yes, totally. Anyway the whole thing, the reason this is so interesting to me is I'm curious... You had said moments before that like how could you hide being a zombie, basically. And I mean you're a deadwalker so you are a different thing than most vampires, but I'm curious, do you think vampires look more like this than they do... Like why are vampires always not also vibrant and colourful and filled with life, since they've been stealing life? Why aren't they like the, or could they be like your picture of the gray, which is not decrepit and everything's kind of falling apart at the seams and instead is just like beautiful like, their hair has little more tone to it than anyone else's, and volume. Or or or are you really interested in that other version of The Vampire which is the like almost walking dust.

**Sylvi:** So here's a thing that, I hadn't really thought about that sort of juxtaposition between what we've got with the gray and sort of how vampires would be represented. My, I think my like knee-jerk sort of idea for that is that like. By trying to sort of prolong themselves and like... like avoid dying and having to go through this place, I think it starts to disconnect them more and more from it. Or like they're not getting this sort of like.

**Austin:** It's like you can keep your life going but you can't keep the color in your body.

**Sylvi:** Yeah. It's like that stuff's already gone there.

**Austin:** Right, right. Or even, maybe we get that great thing of like in the middle of feeding they really healthy and full, but the second it's done, it's back to being gray skinned and pallid and a little, you know, your hair is falling a little flatter than you might want it to and all of that, right? That's fun.

**Sylvi:** Yeah, I like that.

**Austin:** I like that divide. I like that divide of like, no, they can't get access to that — n fact that's part of what, for you, might make being able to go to the grey so interesting, right, is that like you have access to that part of life still, in a way that most vampires don't. Thatt's not a vampire move. That's a deadwalker move.

**Sylvi:** Yeah, that's something, there's something else going on there.

**Austin:** Yeah. That's fun.



**Sylvi:** Could we talk a little bit, and jumping ahead just a tiny bit but...

**Austin:** Please. Yeah. Go for it.

**Sylvi:** Just talking about this has sort of gotten me into some ideas about like. I've had I didn't write these down.

**Austin:** No, please please please.

**Sylvi:** But for faith stuff. I was going to ask about... So I know we have a god of death of some sort.

**Austin:** Yeah, I can tell you about the four big religions that we have right now.

**Sylvi:** Oh, that would be amazing actually.

**Austin:** So Jack did a thing where they wrote out like a bunch of loose ideas of just like, you know, priests worshipping the wind with huge strings of kites above the marshlands. Another one, you know, priests that act as a congregation and attend services and rituals of other faiths. And so like huge list of things and then I was like okay, I feel four through lines here, and so here are the those through lines that turn into a thing. In fact, I'll just add you to this. We haven't like — you can hammer on this as much as you want to also, you know? But the big ones are, one, there's a thing called The Covenant of Kaitankro, or Kite and Crow. I haven't decide if it's like chitin like...

**Sylvi:** Oh, those are both really good. Yeah.

**Austin:** I mean it's both, right. It's both, right, and so it's probably like a chitinous bird, but also that is. Okay, so the big one is, the big thing to know is—

**[Time stamp: 40:00]**

**Austin:** — religions, schools of thought, ideologies in this world, for the Heart at least, are organized around trying to understand the question of like: Hey, there doesn't seem to be a singular truth behind anything, how do we respond to that? Right, like... The, what is the organizing principle of the world? What is the Unmoved Mover, what is the primary thing that everything else has to relate to, or how do I make a life and understand myself morally and in terms of who I want to be, in a world where up can be down and down can be up and left can be right and you know hot can be cold. Because as you get into the most aggressive parts of the Heartland like that's how it is. Right? And so the first one of those is Kaitankro and this is like a good example just like one way people respond to this, this is people who believe you know what, there is not necessarily one true truth underneath it all, but we got to organize ourselves some way, why not worship this Crow God? And the crow God who's kind of this kind of like Trickster-y figure, a little bit at least, is like "yeah why not me? Why not worship me?" And so the message ends up being like don't resist the fact that the wind could carry you. Put your stake — but put your stake in the ground and tie yourself to it, build a community around that. And so you

see a lot of the like, that's a community where like yes you see a lot of priests wearing crow masks and stuff but you also see lots of kites up in the air and they're all like attached to one big stake on the ground.

**Sylvi:** That rules.

**Austin:** And the idea is like the wind could pull you any direction but if we're all tied together that gives us some kind of big collection right? Contrast that kind of good community driven church, right, with the group that believes that the root of everything, the one truth behind it all is: everything turns to ash eventually, right, everything dies. That's the one truth, that even the fuckin heart can't — maybe things extend their lives but they do that cuz they're dying. Right? The one truth is the color does fade from everything in the end. And their perspective on that is, we should dig it up and light it on fire ourselves. We should burn it for fuel. They are, I pitched them to Jack as the There Will Be Blood — what if There Will Be Blood was a church.

And obviously that movie does get there eventually but these are, the kind of notes that Jack gave me were like “priests of ash with burning temples, people burning censers so thickly that they move in a cloud of scented smoke. Great beast died centuries ago and was buried underground. Priests draw its black blood up through the ground as sacred oil. Geologist priests, surveyor priests, holy theodolites and soil samples and plumlines. Religious diggings, great pits, cellars. Three nuns enter a room in an inn and start digging beneath it.”

And so these are just like, this is a church of, this is a church of oil and ash and like, the most holy thing anything can be is ash because that's the form with which it's been spent completely. I think that's probably — I don't know a deity for them yet, right, I don't know if they believe in a god or a series of gods, a pantheon of gods of death. I kind of actually, now that I said that out loud, I kind of like the idea of like there's like there is the god of like the spark, the god of the flame, the god of the ash, you know what I mean, like one god for each part of something burning, you know?

**Sylvi:** Yeah. And that's just cool because then you can have like different rites associated with which of those three, right?

**Austin:** Totally, yes. So that's two. The third one is, the third big faith that we have identified already is I guess it's technically they're tied to the frog god of wealth?

[Sylvi laughs]

**Austin:** They are. The story goes, there were once two brothers and they borrowed a silver coin from the frog god of wealth. And the frog god of wealth said, of course you can borrow this, you just have to give it back to me this year or next year, when you'll owe me two silver coins. And you'll have to give me back that silver coin. So *that* silver coin plus another silver coin. And they're like yeah yeah yeah two silver coins, whatever. Generations later. Everyone from their line has been cursed by the frog god of wealth because they never paid back this debt. And so what happens is they're like a traveling merchant like priesthood, where anytime they go from point A to point B, everything they're carrying transforms. Into something else, the same weight.

**Sylvi:** Oh my God.

**Austin:** So if they leave with 100 lbs, they leave with 100 lb of sheep, they might arrive with 100 lbs of feathers, you know, or a hundred pounds of chain. And then they have to sell it, because what they need to do is find the original silver coin that they borrowed from the frog god. So they're just like this group that will roll into town and they don't know what they have to sell or trade but they have a bunch of new stuff. And there's things they can do to prevent something from changing, they can keep something in, if they keep something in their mouth it won't transform, so you end up seeing, having these like long rows of convoys of these priests with like no one is talking, maybe they're all humming, but they all let you know someone has a coin in their mouth because they need to hold onto this, this golden coin is worth a lot and they can buy a lot or trade a lot with it. Or someone has a letter in their mouth because they're afraid it'll transform if they — you know, stuff like that. And, you know, there's reasons to join that faith, because it's like hey, they're a big group of people and you're going to end up with stuff, they have that. But this is kind of our version of the debt priests from the book except the debt is collective instead of individual, and so it's about like — and there's a little bit of a tug of war there of like do you have to pay a monthly tithe to stay in or who knows, but, you know, so that's fun. And then the fourth faith is like a catch-all faith, it's like a Pascal's wager, Pascal's wager religion. Which, do you know Pascal's wager?

**Sylvi:** Um, not by name.

**Austin:** It's the thing that's like, hey do you want to believe in God or not? What's the safest bet? If you say there's no God and there's a God you're going to hell. If you say there's a God and it turns out there's a God, well hey, nice job! It worked out for you. It's not about belief, it's about the best odds.

**Sylvi:** [laughing] Okay!

**Austin:** And so the catch-all faith is like a pantheon of pantheons. It's like, hey, we don't necessarily know what the truth is, because things are so unpredictable down here. What we know is the truth is somewhere in the mix of these hundreds of saints and gods and demigods and demons that people worship and so you can join this congregation of faiths, this conclave of faiths that represents hundreds and hundreds of different cults and sects. Not everything is there but like a whole bunch are there and they, you can be a member of the general Conclave and go to any associated church to pray or get your, you know, to do your weekly tithe, it counts, to do whatever your services are, you're guaranteed to find a candle for you to be able to light, or the right incense, you know, at any associated conclave. Even if who you worship is the moon goddesses, you could go to the god of heavy stones or whatever, because it's a conclave faith, and still find what you need to do your weekly ritual to the Moon Goddess right? And so that's where we can just have any little saint or hundreds of little religions fit fitting into this thing. But it's not, there isn't an overwhelming cosmological through-line necessarily. Or the cosmological through-line is, hey, the world is unpredictable and strange, the amounts of gods changes everyday, let's be as accommodating as possible. And so those are the big quote — what we call the big four, but they're not necessarily — I think the oil and ash faith is probably

the biggest of these in terms of wealth or whatever, cuz they're clearly a wealthy, you know, resource hog faith. But I don't know — one, I'm open for an additional God here or additional deity, pantheon, whatever but I don't necessarily know that like the Covenant of Kaitankro has huge cathedrals anywhere, that doesn't seem their vibe, do you know what I mean? They seem way more like little wooden churches on stilts on the sides of mountains you know? Stuff like that.

**Sylvi:** It's really good.

**Austin:** So anyway those are our big four right now, but again if you want to start playing in that space somewhere — you know obviously I think that the kind of entropy god church has some touch here.

**Sylvi:** I, yeah. Well something I was actually thinking about was one of the things that sort of the Deadwalker like obviously touches upon is like people's relationships with death, and like the way people in this world see it. And sort of in the base game it's described as like the people of the Eastern domain call Death the Harvest, an untamed godbeast of endings that you pray to for a quick demise. And I didn't love it. When I read that.

**Austin:** Yeah, and. We don't need that. To be in our book. Or, you know.

**Sylvi:** But it got me thinking about like, I feel like in a lot of things, people like as a whole, like, characters and stuff treat death as like the worst outcome possible, and I want there to be at least some level of people making out to be like, no this is like a good thing, this is like the end of a cycle. Like you are able to go onto like the Beyond or whatever.

**Austin:** Right.

**Sylvi:** And because of that I want the god of death, like if there is a god of death even if it's part of that smaller pantheon, to not be something that people are like —

**[Time stamp: 50:00]**

**Austin:** Afraid of, or like —

**Sylvi:** traditionally scared of? And like.

**Austin:** Right, totally. Yeah, no, that makes perfect sense to me.

**Sylvi:** Yeah this is, um.

**Austin:** Or at least there is a god of death for whom this set of beliefs make sense, right, that like. There is a god of death for whom moving to the world of color and whatever is like — or whatever that cycle is, maybe we do we root it again in the cycle of life or whatever it is. But like that isn't a, that isn't a failing, to die. Or something. Right?

**Sylvi:** Yeah. It's like, I think that like part of it comes from the fact that like a vampires exist in this world and when there are things that can prolong their life indefinitely, death becomes — like, that is seen as profane, right? And like I think maybe, I think like instead of just being like a deity of death we could have it be like a life-and-death thing, but like I don't know if I want to like point to — like it could be like a belief that not everyone shares, obviously we have like four different religions. But I don't want to just like yeah there's this deity that people think like created like everything . But thinking that there is some sort of like counterpart to this like welcoming god of death, this like smiling god of death or something, that is like this Sinister God of life . Where it's like.

**Austin:** This is fun. There is, you obviously haven't heard this yet but there is, one of Janine's things has a sort of, not a god of life but a like background hum of life.

**Sylvi:** Oh that rules.

**Austin:** A sort of drone, this the sort of like this comforting drone that things continue. And I do love the idea that the smiling god of death is like, you don't get to monopolize that life is good. or Good, do you know what I mean, The Smiling god of death can be this thing that's like, it's okay for the Drone to end. It's okay for things to come to a halt. That is not a negative thing in and of itself. Silence is very nice too, you know?

**Sylvi:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Rest is good.

**Sylvi:** Yeah for sure like this is like a thing that like I really like, especially because just having this group of people — and like probably more than just the vampires who are like this but like determined to not give into that or like be a part of that cycle. I think that's sort of a very interesting thing.

**Austin:** How do you think, what do you think of making that God of Ash we talked about as part of that kind of trio of gods being like The Smiling God of death, The Smiling god Of Ash, and then part of the symbol is just like someone who draw — you draw a smiling face, you know, out of ash on your door or wherever it is, like that's kind of part of the. And then we get the like, the god of spark can be angry or something, you know what I mean, like we get the three variations, but it's the god of ash that has that like that moment of peace and respite and like relief, and that's how that's framed, and the vampires are in some ways rejecting that, even if what we want to do is also open the space for that to be part of the conversation if that makes sense, right.

**Sylvi:** I'm like all the way on board with this especially because I mentioned my character did not get burned to death?

**Austin:** Right, totally. God.

**Sylvi:** And like tying it into everything I think works really well.

**Austin:** Yeah, totally. Yeah. Love it. It's also just fun to think of people drawing faces in ash, that's just good. Great, I love that. Okay. Added it to my notes over here. All right, let's go back up to moves and stuff. So moves like Death Follows Close and Grim Reaper refer to your Death as a being that you can see and hear, quote "a manifestation of your death that is invisible and intangible to everyone but you" which quote "has long whispered to you about the proper methods of execution" for instance. Is that what your relationship is to your Death or are you in a more metaphorical space?

**Sylvi:** I do think that there is some like actual force at play there, I don't think it's like just something that's going on in my character's head, like from like a side effect of what's happened to them. But the way I was thinking — I had like two ideas for this, was one is that it is like, it is less like an actual representation of what happened, like it does have elements of what happened when my character — at the time of her death, there's moves that like you to have need your cause of death be there but I think part of it is also like it was created when... Part of my idea is like basically that she was buried for this long time and sort of became untethered and went into that sort of the grey space. And this thing sort of grew out of like a combination of the sort of like leaking out of her last like vampire magic and the energy of like that death realm. And they just — when she came out it sort of came out with her.

**Austin:** With her, yeah.

**Sylvi:** And then the other thing is that is the same process, but this also has like some, there's some sort of like remnant of some, of the person that killed her, whoever did it.

**Austin:** I do kind of love that, but. It's kind of fun to be able to have the like the person, the vampire hunter who killed you be tied to you somehow.

**Sylvi:** This is my thing. Yeah. And I think that it like, I think it sort of brings theplaybook together in a lot of ways too, because something that I like about the playbook is the sort of ambiguity about what your death is and what its motivations are?

**Austin:** Yeah. Does it trust you, there's that one move Invidious Spectre: "your death has got your back right up until it can claim you for itself". Right? And that's fun. That's a fun — in the frame where like the person who tried to kill you is the one who's still in your, who's still like not possessing you but actually often protecting you, haunting you and you don't know that you can trust them over the long-term, that's very fun for me as a GM.

**Sylvi:** The thing is I feel like it would also be very fun for me as a player so I'm probably going to end up with going with it.

**Austin:** Let's do that. You'll have to get me information about who that Hunter was, what their deal was.

**Sylvi:** Yeah, I'm trying to sort of nail down the exact like, the big incident that ended up with my character's death and as soon as I have that you'll be the first to know.

**Austin:** Cool. Sounds good. I like it a lot. Alright we already talked about religion, last rites, the harvest, Etc, so we can move past that one. We've already talked about Tattered Soul a little bit, or a similar move with Janine who obviously is also a sort of non-physical character or has that non-physical element. But Tattered Soul says your spirit has been warped and torn by your experiences, leaving you with an affinity for the not quite real. Which is, yeah, we all love Jack.

**Sylvi:** Yeah, I have a huge affinity for the not quite real.

**Austin:** Are you proof, and like the Deadwalker effectively is proof that there is such a thing as a human, or maybe not a human soul since you're a vampire, but like a soul, an immaterial self, if that makes sense and I'm curious is that like a thing everyone has in this world? What do people think about souls? What type of feelings are there out there?

**Sylvi:** I mean I feel like this has to, I don't wanna give a cop-out answer but it does feel like one of those things that there's a lot of differing opinions on. Like I'm sure that there's some mage in a tower who's like no, that's just residual life magic or whatever and then there's probably people who are like no, that is your intangible you, that's in there. And I think like the sort of like... the truth of it probably lies somewhere in the middle, but I think that like the idea that a person's selfhood could be tied to some sort of energy within them like totally fits with this sort of fantasy setting.

**Austin:** Yeah, that makes sense.

**Sylvi:** Especially given just the way, we've talked about the way vampires sort of consume that almost.

**Austin:** So that means it does — yes totally we need that to exist at some, in some way even if it's not even if it's a sort of like a medium for life to happen through, even if it's like fuel more than selfhood or something, it still needs to be, that makes sense. Yeah. Janine, again, has a move that's about like pulling someone's — it's written to be about blood but we've turned it to be the sort of physical embodiment of consciousness out of them and so.

**Sylvi:** Yeah. I'm going to be the one pulling the blood out of people.

**Austin:** Yes, great, good. Your — it's weird because your moves are like less bloody than the witch's moves, believe it or not.

**Sylvi:** Yeah, I did look through those. The thing is, I guess this is like a good place to say it. A thing about this character was I'm originally — I've taken — I originally was going to play a Cleaver?

**Austin:** Right, interesting, okay.

**Sylvi:** Which has a lot more like directly consuming stuff thing but with the Deadwalker got, gets into so much more of the like —



**[Time stamp: 1:00:00]**

**Sylvi:** — weird mystical elements of of this.

**Austin:** Yeah, totally. I love it. I really do.

**Sylvi:** So yeah.

**Austin:** That makes sense to me.

**Sylvi:** There's a lot of borrowed ideas in this like character idea from what I had before.

**Austin:** You kind of stitched some things, yeah, totally. There is another move you have called Descent which allows you to not only go to what they call the gray, which again we'll end up renaming something, but the, also to the other quote-unquote "8 heavens" of the setting, and we're going to change — we will not have the 8 heavens. There's a lot of them and, you know, I would rather not lift — I mean, a lot of them just don't make sense for us, cuz they reference like gods that we don't have, you know, but I'm curious if you have other thoughts generally — and the answer could be no right now—

**Sylvi:** Not right now.

**Austin:** — about, you know, weird dimensional spaces. Your version of the gray is so good I feel like we've already gotten a lot to play with, you know.

**Sylvi:** I mean, I feel like they're, like if we have other deities it makes sense for there to be some sort of like realms for those, but like other than that.

**Austin:** It's like the Oblivion version of it, right, where it's like each of the major Gods has some space that they administer, right.

**Sylvi:** For sure, just like sort of some sort of domain, right.

**Austin:** And Hieron did that too, so it's not like it's only — Oblivion is what came to mind because I've just watched some footage of old Oblivion gameplay for some fucking reason — oh, it's because there's a new ESO, uh, new Elder Scrolls expansion that's like the Oblivion expansion. I was like what was up with Oblivion and s...

**Sylvi:** God.

**Austin:** Video games.

**Sylvi:** Ah...

**Austin:** Anyway. All right here's one though that we should talk about which is Infernal Claws. Great name for a move. I'll just read directly from the move. Where is it? It says... I think it's a major ability right?



**Sylvi:** Uh, yes, I believe so.

**Austin:** No it's actually a Zenith ability, it's one of the final ones. "You learn the secrets of the dark place". Of *Garth Marengi's Darkplace*. It's a pretty funny show.

**Sylvi:** [laughs] You stopped using subtext.

**Austin:** [laughs] You stop using subtext, exactly. "You know the location and the route to hell, or something close to it," et cetera. I don't want to read the whole thing. But like nowhere else in the book talks about there being a hell. This is not a place to like, that's well-defined and obviously we could wait until you take this move, if you decide to take this move as a Zenith ability an hou — you know, a year from now. I almost said an hour. But a year from now.

**Sylvi:** We're jumping right in.

**Austin:** Jumping right in! But, borrowing that, I am curious like in some ways having this move gives you a degree of like authority over what, what's hell. If we've talked about the smiling god of death, but like is there a place maybe like, that is not like the kind of bright colorful cosmic psychedelic color place that we've talked about where things that die go, not just people but things. Is there something that is like, you don't get to go to that place?

**Sylvi:** Yeah, I'm — that is sort of my first inclination with this. I have sort of been, um, this was one of the questions on here that made me like frustrated the most cuz I just couldn't think of anything good for it?

**Austin:** Totally, totally.

**Sylvi:** But I do like the idea of there being some sort of counterpart to this sort of like positive like death that we've created, even if it's like a very rare thing to happen. Like, I can see this either being like maybe not specifically hell but like some sort of like, you mentioned the spark God, I think, of the three? Like if that one's the angry one it could be the ruler of this domain or something.

**Austin:** Right, right, yes, yes. Do we think the god of ash is the ruler of the colorful domain or is that a different God or is that even a place that's ruled, or is that just like a place.

**Sylvi:** I don't know yet. I was definitely picturing the god of ash almost acting as like people's guide through there .

**Austin:** That's fun, that's fun.

**Sylvi:** To somewhere else.

**Austin:** You get that like great like super tall figure that's just like made of ash and then has, or made of like whatever's caught up in the wind and then has the big ash smiley face and like —

you know, I'm a — very like Studio Ghibli style big character, No-Face style, you know, whatever. Yeah, love that.

**Sylvi:** Like constantly changing patterns and colors because of where it is.

**Austin:** Yeah. Totally. That's fun. It almost looks like, it's almost looks like it's made up of like dry paint, you know what I mean, but like color when I say like — you know, like a palette of paint or makeup or something, you know, powders and, you know, spices, even, like that style of little particulates. That's fun.

**Sylvi:** That rules.

**Austin:** Love it. So yeah we'll think about, more about that stuff, but yeah . The last thing about a kind of class ability thing is, you are the only class that starts with desolate as a domain, and so I'm curious: in your mind, what do desolate places look like? Those are, in the book, the book basically says desolate is the domain of like empty and abandoned places but obviously we can play — I can do that myself if we have to, but I'm curious for you, what comes to mind, what type of places are you interested in, et cetera.

**Sylvi:** A lot of this for me, and this is like partially tied to like my character being almost sort of out of time because of like the long period they were dead. I was thinking like a lot of it would be ruins and like places from the past that have been either like rendered obsolete or just aren't taken care of anymore. Things sort of like from a bygone era that have become like replaced or stuff that just has like been, that has had the life taken away from it, like stuff like — I'm sure there is some sort of vampire out there who has figured out how to extract the life-force from the trees. Like I think that it's... sort of like a place that has been touched by death, is like a good third way to think of it I guess.

**Austin:** That makes sense to me. Yeah. Totally. All right, a couple of other character questions and some other stuff. How old are you, and also just like how old are vampires more generally?

**Sylvi:** So I think I did write down a number, I wrote down 482. I said a good century or two was spent in the ground and she was turned in her early thirties. Vampires I think it is like I think like maybe in the time where we're playing they are like probably a little like, they are probably around the age of my character or older. I think that like maybe like when — there might have been a thing where like slayings went up or something or like people got this fervor where they were like... There's this like — like if there is one of those like meetings of vampires where it's like.

**Austin:** Right.

**Sylvi:** Oh, and then people find out and slay them and then the people who are like okay we're not giving this power, we're not teaching anybody else how this to do this because they keep fucking it up for us.

**Austin:** That's a fun potential place for you to have died or way for you to have died that could be fun to play with, so definitely keep developing that. But yeah, I like that for — and then that's part of why vampires right now tend to be older is cuz like the techniques have become a little more precious, or at least certain ones have.

**Sylvi:** A lot more guarded

**Austin:** Yeah, more guarded, yeah, love that. Attached to that I wanted to know like do you remember your life as a vampire before the slaying, the attempted slaying?

**Sylvi:** Yeah, I really want to sort of play this character as like an unreliable narrator for her own life. Like everybody is, but like to an extreme extent. I think like I've talked a little bit — I might have put this in a comment where like I think part of that time when she was in the gray was like seeing glimpses of both her life and also like her death happening again and those things becoming warped by like her own like presence there but also just like by her own memory sort of like failing after the years.

**Austin:** On that note like are there things about the world that you think should have been changed while you were away, like obviously we can just do this in play but is there something you're like that your character misses from the old days, you know? Or the opposite the thing of like, oh the tea is so much better now, or the like fashion has gotten to be outlandish, I love it, or what's the, what is your relationship to that stuff and does anything come to mind — and again if not then you can always hit me up before we start the season .

**Sylvi:** I don't have anything off the top of my head right now but I do definitely think it's more of a like, why is everything changing? It was good the way it was before!

**Austin:** Big Andy Rooney energy.

**Sylvi:** Yeah, a little bit. What if Andy Rooney was a sexy vampire?

**Austin:** Ah—

**[Time stamp: 1:10:00]**

**Austin:** — finally someone's asking the question we all need to know the answers to.

[Sylvi laughs]

**Austin:** Let's just type sexy Andy Rooney vampire —

**Sylvi:** No!

**Austin:** — into Google.

**Sylvi:** Oh God.

**Austin:** Do you believe that your character could return to being a vampire, is that part of what your goals are?

**Sylvi:** I think like... I think a big thing for my character is either — my two ways of looking at this are like returning to her old power or her old stature. Cuz like I mentioned I was thinking of her as sort of being like an aristocrat or something. And so even I think just like... I've had a few ideas for like what the calling would be. I looked at Enlightenment a little bit and I was thinking of tweaking that to like Legacy or something along those lines, but something related to sort of, both like uncovering what is happened to the stuff that she had between her death and now and then also trying to harness that magic again. Even if it turns to be ultimately futile or something, you know?

**Austin:** Yeah yeah yeah, I like that a lot, I do. For sure, and for what it's worth I think a lot of the callings could like totally work for you. So read through them and let me know what you end up going with but I'm down, I'm down.

**Sylvi:** Enlightenment— the one I was — enlightenment was definitely top of the list. I was thinking about doing like Penitent or Forced but I'm like that's all my characters. All my characters are either like really religiously guilty or they're prisoners and I'm just like, you know what, let's do something new.

**Austin:** Let's break it up, let's break it out, yeah, totally. Love it. A big one for me, and this is tough cuz. Again, this goes back to the question of do people know you're a vampire, do people know you're a Deadwalker, do they just think you know some magic, is like, why is your character committed to helping the Haven — and we don't know what the Haven is, we haven't done the worldbuilding in terms of like building that city, but assume we get to a place where it's like a place you cared about. Why would your character care about a place and also given what you are as an undead, twice undead vampire lord, why would the Haven be happy to have you? What is it that you bring to the table in that way that's like, people like not look past it but like think of you as an asset?

**Sylvi:** I think it is... Like it's tied to a couple things, I think like one of them is sort of, it depends on if I take this move or not, but Last Rites sort of casts the Deadwalker as knowing sort of like funerary rites and stuff. I think that obviously would be a thing within the community but I also like... One of my main ideas for like linking my character to whatever region of the world the Haven is in is that she's from there. Either like, maybe she isn't, that wasn't like where her power was, but I like the idea of even like, someone's first instinct after all of this is still like "I should go home".

**Austin:** That makes sense to me. Yeah.

**Sylvi:** And then I think like one of the reasons why people are like fine with her being around even if, regardless of whether or not they believe that she's a vampire or not is that she knows about sort of dark magic and like can help with that sort of element of keeping things like safe and adventuring out into the Heart and stuff.

**Austin:** That makes sense, yeah. The last thing here, and this is on everybody's thing, is just like, what are some ways in which your class and your character can like — or, again, this isn't like give me the answers now, but just like to get the gears going, to think about contradiction, certainty and uncertainty and then community which are the kind of like three big like... three big touchstones or thematic directions I'm really interested in exploring this season. And obviously you're living dead thing so like a contradiction is right there immediately, but I don't know if any of those really speak to you, if there's a direction you're excited to explore .

**Sylvi:** There are a couple of things. I mean, I think that not only the living dead thing but that sort being from a past age fits into the sort of contradiction stuff and like... the thing with the community that I thought would be interesting was like, this is a character who for all intents and purposes has always used the community — like, her community as a tool.

**Austin:** Selfishly taken from communities, right? Preyed on them.

**Sylvi:** Yeah, and now that's not who — as much of an option, really, like she's not going to get like fucking super powerful by killing everyone in this town. She's still going to be dead. Like. And I think trying to sort of put someone who is used to that power but can no longer access it and has to be part of the community is like a fun way to go with it? It's something that I like, I feel like I kind of got a little bit Ephrim, but eventually he just ended up back in power? In a lot of ways? And like I kind of want to do like... someone who has no chance of that happening. Like. She can think that, but I don't think she is going to end up being...

**Austin:** But you don't want — you, Sylvi, doesn't want that to be the arc for this person.

**Sylvi:** Yeah. I don't want her to be pretending to be now she's the vampire baroness of the Haven you know?

**Austin:** Yes.

**Sylvi:** But I .

**Austin:** But, see, that just means, that just means I get to like make you say no to it, you know?

**Sylvi:** Oh, for sure!

**Austin:** Serve it to you on a silver platter and then make you resist it and that's drama, baby.

**Sylvi:** [laughs] I love it .

**Austin:** All right.

**Sylvi:** But yeah that's about it for like what I've got for the last thing there.

**Austin:** Yeah. do you have any remaining questions or ideas or like things we didn't get to or stuff that you're interested in or concerned about or need thoughts on.

**Sylvi:** There is nothing coming to mind right now .

**Austin:** Okay.

**Sylvi:** Yeah, no, not — no pressing questions or anything, I feel like we kind of talked out a lot of the stuff I either had like loose ideas for or like anything that I was kind of unsure about, so no, I'm good.

**Austin:** Sounds good. Well this was really fun and helpful, for sure. I was thinking, what if the smiling god of death, who's AKA the God of Ash both exists in our kind of faith of like entropy and destruction or whatever but also exists in the catch-all like Conclave, where like it's a crossover god or like two variations thereof, could be fun. I'm just like tossing ideas at the wall at this point.

**Sylvi:** I mean, yeah, I like that because Grim Reaper figures show up in all sorts of religions, right?

**Austin:** Exactly, totally, totally. All right. We should do a time.is.

**Sylvi:** Yes, we should. I'm ready whenever.

**Austin:** 55.

**Sylvi:** Okay.

[They clap]

**Austin:** Alright! Perfect.

**[Time stamp: 1:17:48 - end]**