

Pusher Media Club: Dracula

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Initial Thoughts	1
Movie Synopsis [0:18:48]	14
Mina [1:11:48]	59
Dracula [1:23:39]	66
Van Helsing [1:43:09]	82
Jonathan Harker [1:55:24]	95
Final Thoughts [2:11:28]	110

Initial Thoughts

Austin: Hello, and welcome to another edition of the Pusher Movie Club. I'm Austin Walker. Joining me today, Jack de Quidt.

Jack: Hi! You can find me on Twitter at [@notquitereal](https://twitter.com/notquitereal) and buy any of the music featured on the show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com.

Austin: Sylvi Clare.

Sylvia: Hey, I'm Sylvi. You can follow me on Twitter at [@sylvibullet](https://twitter.com/sylvibullet), and you can listen to my other show, Emojidrome, wherever you get your podcasts.

Austin: And Andrew Lee Swan.

Dre: Hey! You can find me on twitter at [@swandre3000](https://twitter.com/swandre3000).

Austin: [Amused] Dre, can I read this thing you sent us earlier today?

Dre: Yeah, please do. Please do.

Austin: Okay, you said, and this is the energy I think most of us are probably bringing, "I'm only halfway through, but watching this movie has made me realize that my whole life I've just been watching dumb movies for babies." [laughs] And I think that's the energy we're bringing here.

Jack: [Amused] What movie are we watching?

Austin: We are watching *Dracula* by Francis Ford Coppola, or directed by Francis Ford Coppola, from 1992. It's a "they don't make 'em like this anymore" movie if ever there was one. [Dre laughs]

Sylvia: Oh my god.

Jack: Did they ever make them like this?

Austin: And the answer is no, because even when they made it, they were making a "they don't make 'em like this" movie anymore, because of the way this movie is fucking shot. It is a screenplay by James V. Hart. It's starring Winona Ryder, Gary Oldman, Anthony Hopkins, Keanu Reeves.

Sylvia: I was gonna say, gotta have Keanu in there.

Austin: Keanu's in the—

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: I think Keanu's in my top...top four I think I say Keanu before I say the trio of boys.

Jack: Tom Waits is in this fucking movie.

Sylvia: Yeah! Tom Waits is good in this movie.

Austin: Oh, I forgot about that! So fucking weird. [Dre laughs]

Austin: This is the strangest...yeah, you're right. Yeah, uh huh. Anyway. We're coming to you— we're recording this on World Food Day, which is already funny. Time.is also has a quote from Oscar Wilde, for me at least. "Every saint has a past and every sinner has a future."

Jack: Oooh!

Austin: Which is a great quote and doubly so because I spent some of today reading about the often erased connection between Bram Stoker and Oscar Wilde. Did anyone else know about this? Did y'all hear about this?

Jack: No, I would love to hear.

Sylvia: No.

Dre: No.

Jack: Wait, did they...? Mm, okay, I have a suspicion. [Dre laughs]

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: I love, because of Oscar Wilde, [**Austin:** "Yeah"] your, "did they *blank*?" can be anything. Anything! [laughs]

Austin: Mm-hmm!

Jack: Did Oscar Wilde and Bram Stoker have a little...have a little affair of the heart? And maybe of other bits of the body?

Austin: You know, it is unclear, but I will say you could go read Talia Schaffer's academic essay, "'A Wilde Desire Took Me': The Homoerotic History of Dracula," published in the John Hopkins University Press in 1994, if you're perhaps interested in this. [chuckles]

Jack: Yo, bits of this film are fucking gay.

Austin: Yo! [Dre laughs]

Sylvia: Oh my god, yeah.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: [laughs] This is a gay Dracula.

Austin: Uh, you mean the bit where Dracula tells all the vampire ladies that Keanu is for him, actually?

Jack: Is his.

Austin: Is his?

Jack: Shortly after shaving him. I don't even—

Austin: No, so, here's the fucking thing! That line didn't get published in the British version of *Dracula*. It gets published in the American version of *Dracula*. Do you want to know why? Like, there's a literal...that was a *choice* that Bram Stoker made, out of fear, because of how England is bad, obviously. [laughs]

Jack: Uh huh.

Austin: And the exact quote is...I need to find the exact quote. One second. It's so important. Uh, here it is. [Clears throat] Ahem. He says, uh...fuck, where is it? Uh, buh buh buh buh. It is under the Gender and Sexuality Major Themes. Here it is. The exact line was, uh, buh buh buh...yes, okay. "In the British version of the text, Harker hears the three vampire women whispering at his door and Dracula tells them they can feed on him tomorrow night. In the American version, Dracula insinuates that *he* will be feeding on Harker that night, quote, 'Tonight is mine, tomorrow is yours.' Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal, in the Norton Critical Edition of the text, posit that Stoker thought the line would render the novel unpublishable in 1897 England, and that, quote, 'The America that produced his hero Walt Whitman would be more tolerant of men feeding on men.'" [Jack and Dre laugh]

Austin: He has a whole— the long and short is that he and Oscar Wilde were decades-long rivals and compatriots and wrote in code to one another in ways that have been [Sylvia: "Mm"] erased and that he wrote *Dracula* while Wilde was on trial for sodomy.

Jack: Oh, wow.

Austin: This is the book he wrote while he was cut off from Wilde, finally, [Jack sighs] after many years, and was being processed as a criminalized other. So! [laughs] What do we think of the movie?

Jack: This film whips!

Sylvia: Yeah, no, this movie kicks ass.

Dre: [laughs] This movie does kick ass.

Austin: This movie kicks ass.

Jack: I've never seen anything like this! I remember, like, way back when we started doing Friends at the Table, Austin...

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Like, you know, 2014 or whatever, even earlier than that, maybe. I remember you saying to me, you know [chuckles] "One of my favorite movies is Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, 1992," and you sent me a gif of, uh, it's a really famous shot in this movie of a train riding across the top of a book.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: And then it cross cuts into, like, a blood-red sky with Dracula's eyes in it.

Austin: [claps once] Ah, yes.

Jack: And I remember thinking, "Oh my God, this is incredible." You know, years went by, years went by. We started making Sangfielle. You said, "Let's do this." I did not realize... [laughs quietly] The movie is like, that shot is happening constantly.

Austin: All the time. All the time.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Also, you need to understand that shot is...that shot is a lot.

Jack: It's practical, right?

Austin: I don't want to do the thing where I'm like, "Oh, that shot is the whole movie," and like, because I don't think that shot— I mean, that shot is sexy, because Keanu Reeves is in it and Dracula's eyes are looking at him from the sky, [Dre laughs] but it doesn't capture the raw eroticism of this whole movie as much as many other scenes do, and I don't want to elide those parts of what this movie is. But in terms of the practical effects work that's happening here: a train comes out of a tunnel. That's a model train. Then there are— there is a three-step backdrop of fake mountains and then a sky with the sun setting, and that is all practical. That's all sheets, you know, on a...or that's all physical things slowly being moved from right to left in front of a camera to create the illusion that you're moving past them. It's like a video game's, um...what is that called? Like a parallax scrolling effect.

Jack: Parallax.

Austin: I guess parallax probably also refers to this in filmmaking and not just in video games, I would bet. And then the camera, of course, moving forward. Then they took that exact film. The important thing to understand here is they did not...they did not take that into a computer ever. They took that film and shot, I guess, duplicate— no, I guess they just shot that film onto a reverse projection screen so that it would project in front of a fake, you know, train car that Keanu Reeves is in that's built on springs bouncing around. [Austin and Dre chuckle] And it's behind him in the window, so in the part of it where that's happening, that's what you're looking at.

And then with the train coming—the actual train is like driving on top of a book—they wanted this...it's like *two seconds* of the movie, but Coppola was like, "I need the smoke from the train, from the front of the train engine, to cover parts of the book," so the bottom half of the frame is the book, right? And the top half is...like, the top third is the train going across the screen left to right, and they tried to do it, and they were like, "We can't— we're holding the book up in front of the camera really close, so it looks big, and the train set's in the background, and we can't get the smoke to appear," and he's like "Well, just— you gotta move it back. Move it back near the train set." And they said,

"Well, now the book looks small," and he's like, "Build a bigger book!" And so they built a 20 foot wide book to put in front of a train set, [Austin and Dre laugh] so it would look, for two seconds, as if the smoke from this model train was covering up a book, and that's how they made the whole movie.

No computers were used in this. No green screens were used in this. There are bits where they're using, like, 100 year old cameras. That's not an effect. They didn't, like, fuck with the shit in— you know, when Dracula comes to London and is walking around and everything looks old-timey, that's because they used a 100 year old camera. And that's the whole movie, is them doing century-old magic tricks of the sort of films that would be coming out when this story is happening, right? All of that sort of, like, goofy— I mean, you know, they show the train coming at the screen at a certain point, in the background at a movie theater, you know? But that's how the whole movie looks. You're right that it's not just weird gimmicks, it's non-stop. It's like, jab! jab! jab!

Jack: And we'll get in—

Austin: Weird zooms, weird frame changes, et cetera.

Jack: Yeah. We'll get into this as, you know...as we talk more about it and as we go into a synopsis of the movie or whatever, but I don't want people who are listening to this to get the impression that this is some very sort of staid or austere or highfalutin take on *Dracula*. This film is like putting your head under, like, a fire hydrant—

Austin: Uh huh.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: Of like, sex and violence [**Dre:** "Mm-hmm"] and music and costume design [Austin sighs] and lights and colors and, like weird point of view shots of running animals.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Like, this film is...it's not...it is at times a very funny film, in terms of, like, "What

the hell is happening in front of me right now?" [Austin and Dre laugh] I love this thing.

Austin: It's somehow never excessive, but it's incre— I mean, maybe it's a little excessive, but only in fun ways.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: It's ostentatious but not in— you said, not in a staid way. It's, like, luscious, you know? Should I do a quick summary so that we can all just move past—?

Jack: I want to let Dre and Sylvi give their initial reactions as well.

Austin: Yes, please! Yes, absolutely.

Dre: [sighs] I feel like this movie has, at times, big *Fast and Furious* energy.

Austin: Let's go. [Jack laughs quietly]

Dre: In that it, like...ah, man. Like, there's just— I feel like there's parts of this movie where somebody, like, watched Keanu deliver a line and said, "That shit is so stupid, it rules." [Austin chuckles] Like, when Keanu screams, "You just had me taken on a carriage, chased by wolves, through a blue inferno."

Austin: [laughs, claps] He does say that!

Sylvia: Ah.

Jack: Ah.

Austin: It's so funny!

Dre: It's...uh huh. Yeah, no, this movie fucking rules. [laughs]

Austin: Like, to be fair, Dracula tells him. He's like, "Be careful where you go in my castle. You'll see strange things," and it's like, it's minute 32 of the strangest things anyone has ever seen! [Austin and Dre laugh]

Jack: The audience included!

Austin: Yes!

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Jack: This film begins by them saying, "It is 1472."

Sylvia: Ah.

Jack: And a man in the wildest armor you have ever seen steps out of the shadows.

Sylvia: That armor kicks so much ass.

Austin: I believe—

Sylvia: Oh my god.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: I saw a photo of it in Coppola's house, so he has it.

Sylvia: Oh, I saw it in person.

Austin: Did you?! What?!

Jack: Woah!

Sylvia: Yeah, it was when they did— at the AGO, the Art Gallery of Ontario, they did that, like, Guillermo del Toro's personal collection thing.

Austin: Ohh.

Jack: Holy shit.

Sylvia: And it was in there.

Austin: Wow!

Jack: What does it look like, Sylvi, in person?

Sylvia: It's cool! It looks like— so, I hadn't seen the movie when I had seen the armor. I watched the movie, like, sometime last year, I think when we were like, "We're going to do a horror season."

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: And I was like, "I need to watch this fucking vampire movie." [Austin laughs in agreement] But, up close, it looks like...I think they do this— like, I think it looks like this in the movie a little bit too, but it looks like someone who's been, like, flayed or something, right?

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Right, yeah.

Sylvia: Like, it looks like musculature, and it has that effect in person, too. I definitely think, like, when it's stylized in the movie, it is a lot more impactful.

Jack: Yes.

Sylvia: But it's really sick. All the costuming in this movie is, like...knocked it out of the park. Like, ten out of ten.

Austin: Yeah, it's so— it's so good. You were probably the person who most recently watched— I watched it years ago and loved it.

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: But you were the person who, I think, when we were setting up Sangfielle, suggested that we watch this.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: That tells me—

Jack: As our vampire.

Austin: Right, as a vampire. [Sylvia laughs]

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: Yeah, well, like, one of the reasons why was because this was— like, I wanted to— because of the sort of, like, way this is throwing back to so many things, I wanted to get that influence. Like, I have tried reading *Dracula*, and it's not very easy for me to get through.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: So like, this was the way I experienced that story, pretty much. And I think that it is, like...there's a lot of cool shit in it that we didn't really to with Virtue that, like, would have come out more with, like, vampire stuff. I think the stuff about, like, having to...they have to, like, sleep in the soil from their home.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: The, like, he can control— he has dominion over animals stuff. Like, there were some lesser, like...lesser widespread sort of vampire, like, [Austin: "Mm-hmm"] known tropes and stuff in here that I really enjoyed, and like, were some things that I hopefully played with a little bit with Virtue. I don't know. I never got— I never was able to take the advancement that let me do the cool "I'm going to command this wolf" thing.

Austin: [sighs] That's— you know, this is the, uh, dead on the altar of— not dead, but you know, lost on the altar of emergent storytelling. Sometimes you don't get to take the cool wolf power.

Sylvia: It's fine. It worked out...

Austin: My...one of the things I kept thinking about in relation to Virtue, while watching this movie, was this focus on—which I think we get a lot of with Virtue—this like, ah,

idealized past that you're so desperate to get back to.

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: That like, Dracula had a moment in life that was good, and we see it sort— we see it referenced up top. I guess we see one scene of him and Elisabeta up top, happy, and then that is it. From then on, that motherfucker's miserable. And, I think, a thing that you captured with *Virtue* really well was this drive to, at any cost, return to the moments of, like, joy.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: Obviously, a major difference is that I think, for *Virtue*, in a lot of ways, the power that Dracula has is what's desirable, whereas Dracula desires a moment before he took as much power as he did.

Sylvia: Yeah. I mean, like, that...I deliberately wanted to not just be doing *Dracula*.

Austin: Totally.

Sylvia: And there's a lot of vampire stuff that is the vampire yearning for, like, before they were turned and whatever, or wishing they never could. Like, that is such a common thing. I think it's done really effectively here, because of...

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: One, the like heightened reality of everything going on in this, you can buy into this guy's behavior way easier. But it also just really, like... [sighs] It helps to both, um, sort of play up his, like—I'm trying to figure out how to say this—his, like, creepiness towards Mina.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: Like, his obsession.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: Like, it helps to sort of elucidate why that's such a big thing for him. I think the stuff with him being...the scene where they're having the, like, most awkward dinner in the world...

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: And Keanu, like, politely laughs at something, and he whips the sword out at him.

Jack: Oh! The sword!

Austin: It's so amazing.

Sylvia: It's such a good point. It's like, oh yeah, no, this motherfucker is still so proud of all that shit [**Austin:** "Yup!"] that he can't really be proud of anymore.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Yep. Well, and that...the can't be proud of or can't voice the desire or the thing that has either— that is either currently— it's actually from both directions, right? It is, for Dracula in that scene, being a warrior of God in the Crusades is not exactly a thing you can, like, be super proud of anymore. On the other hand, you have Lucy, who is, like, proud of her sexuality and proud of the way men desire her and is butting up against the social acceptability of that desire and can't quite say that. And there's a lot of this movie and this story that is about that, um... [laughs quietly] To use the word that KB just gave a mini lecture on that is also, like, misused constantly: there's a liminality that is kind of at the center of this story. People should go watch the Hallowstreams of *Fatal Frame 2* that Jack and KB are doing right now. They're great. They're fantastic. Please go watch that. There's so much in this story that is about this middle ground, and like, obviously, being undead is a sort of middle ground already, but especially around desire and the sort of, like, the danger and the draw of desire being dangerous, right? There's something really powerful for everyone in this.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: Everyone in this story gets obsessed with something. Everyone in this story is in love with something or someone. Everyone in this story steps over the line, at some point, in some way, often to someone. And that has this incredible moral flattening effect that allows for Dracula to be, you know... [sighs] sympathetic is probably not even the right word, right? But puts him on the same general moral ground as, like, Van Helsing, who's like a weird old fucker who I don't trust in any way, right?

Sylvia: Oh my god, he's the worst.

Dre: Mm-mm.

Sylvia: The vibes are awful!

Jack: [laughs] We gotta do a summary.

Austin: Okay, let's do a summary.

Sylvia: Okay.

Jack: Or else we're gonna get way in the weeds.

Movie Synopsis [0:18:48]

Austin: It's the fifteenth century! [Jack and Austin laugh quietly] And Vlad Dracul is fighting the Crusades. I guess he's actually fighting against the Turks, at this point. I don't know what the full context is, but he is certainly, quote, unquote, "defending Christendom" against, uh...against Arab and Islamic invaders, quote, unquote. He wins! He does a good job. But his enemies send word home to say that he died in battle, and so his wife, Elisabeta, commits suicide, falls to her death. When Dracula gets back home, he's like "Where's my wife?" And the priests have no chill [laughs] and are like "Oh, in hell, because when you kill yourself, you are damned for all time." And, seeing the lack of mercy in God's dogma, especially coming back from a brutal campaign in which he was supposedly being God's warrior, he renounces God. It's not that he makes a deal with the devil, it's that the— it's like, he stabs a cross with his sword, says he renounces God and that he will return from the dead and that blood is life. Don't

worry about it. Five hundred years later, it is like 1890 something, late 1890s, almost the turn of the century, and Keanu Reeves— oh, I should say: Gary Oldman is Dracula. Keanu Reeves is Jonathan Harker, a real estate lawyer? [laughs quietly]

Sylvia: God!

Austin: Which is so funny. It's so good. Who is on his to Transylvania, because his peer, another— his coworker Renfield, who is Tom Waits, came back and was immediately institutionalized because of the way he eats bugs and worms [Sylvia laughs] and talks about his devotion to an absent master, and...

Sylvia: He's just a weird little guy!

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: He's turned into a weird little guy. Do you know Micolash from Bloodborne?

Sylvia: Oh my god!

Jack: Oh! [Jack and Dre laugh]

Sylvia: Yes! Absolutely!

Austin: He's Micolash from Bloodborne. In fact, the Micolash head cages are all around him, he just doesn't have one in these scenes, but they're there.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: Oh my god.

Sylvia: Honestly, one of the best parts of the movie. Shoutout Renfield.

Austin: Shoutout Renfield! And so, Harker takes the job up to go finish the real estate business, to sell Dracula 10 structures in London. Why 10? We don't ever find out. It never comes up again, why these particular 10!

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: Probably some magic shit. I don't know.

Jack: "Say, Count. Why have you chosen these houses, and in this particular location?" [coy Dracula voice] "I'll never tell, and the viewer will never know either!"

Austin: [laughs] Yes!

Sylvia: He goes on some talk about, like, fate or something after he says that.

Austin: Yeah!

Jack: [Dracula voice] "Do you believe in destiny?"

Sylvia: It's so good! Yeah.

Dre: I feel like they talk about— if we're talking about, like, the location of the properties, I think it's explained in the book, but it's been so long [**Austin:** "Okay"] since I've read the book, I don't remember.

Austin: Okay. Well, a production detail in this that's incredible is: before they started filming, they did weeks of rehearsals at Coppola's, like, manor, where they did all sorts of, like, improv games and read through the whole book together, you know, and took turns, and he told them all, literally every major actor in this movie, "If you read this, and you think there's something in the book that's not in the movie, you tell me how you want it to be in the movie, and you come to me. We'll figure it out."

Sylvia: Oh my god.

Jack: So good.

Austin: And so, things like the Hopkins dance scene, the Van Helsing and Mina dance. Which I don't even know if that's in the book or if that was just a weird thing [**Sylvia:** "No"] Anthony Hopkins wanted to do. [laughs quietly]

Sylvia: He wrote it in the copy that they were reading and was like "Hey, Frank. Can we do this?"

Austin: Yeah, "It says here..."

Jack: I love that moment where like...

Austin: It's incredible. There's a behind-the-scenes footage of that shot, or of that sequence, where they're doing it just in, like, regular clothes, because they're in rehearsal in like jeans and t-shirts, and then them doing it on the set, and then it's like, that scene works, if what you want is Van Helsing to be a creepy weirdo who is vying for the control over this woman's body. Like, it's there. It does work, and seeing it all the way through is fantastic. Anyway.

Jack: So, he buys these properties.

Austin: Yes. He buys these properties. Uh, and, *and* makes Jonathan send letters back to the people back at home, to be like, "Hey, I'm gonna stay here for 30 days, because Count Dracula *insists* I stay and help him with his English custom." Meanwhile, Dracula leaves Harker behind with his three vampire brides.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: I guess they're not vampire brides, but they're...I don't, you know, three vampire ladies.

Sylvia: I think they technically are, like, considered the brides of Dracula.

Austin: Okay. Okay.

Dre: Yeah, that's how they're credited in the IMDB page, anyway.

Austin: Okay, good, okay. So he leaves—

Dre: Monica Bellucci's one of those.

Austin: Incredible.

Dre: Another, like, very famous person in this movie [laughs]

Austin: Yeah. Incredible.

Jack: Whoa! I did not notice that.

Austin: Me either. So, he stays behind to be, um, put in sexual peril, as he is... [Dre and Sylvia laugh] As he is currently engaged to Mina, Mina Lastname. Mina, uh...

Jack: Harker. Oh, fuck!

Sylvia: Murray.

Dre: Murray.

Austin: Not yet. Murray, Mina Murray. Wilhelmina Murray, a young schoolteacher who is learning how to type and is entering the modern world.

Jack: Reluctantly.

Austin: Reluctantly. She is good friends with a woman named Lucy, Lucy Westenra, who is a proper, you know, lady, in terms of her station, but is enjoying the recently broadened social flexibility and expressivity being allowed to women, even though it is still kind of contained inside of the courting kind of model. We see her both as someone who Mina can talk to about sex and sexual desire, in a playful, friendly way; and also someone who, herself, is eyeing three...three...

Jack: That scene is so good.

Austin: Three incredible lads.

Dre: Who are all best friends.

Jack: The boys of this movie.

Austin: Who are all best friends!

Sylvia: She's got her own dating sim going on. [Dre laughs]

Austin: And who never stop being best friends nor wanting to fuck Lucy.

Dre: Mm-hmm!

Jack: Oh my god. Do you want to introduce the lads, at this point?

Austin: I guess so. Who's everyone's favorite lad?

Jack: [laugh quietly] For me, they come as a unit.

Austin: Okay! Yeah, you know what? That's fair.

Dre: Yeah.

Sylvia: My favorite is Mr. Morris, the Texan with the big knife.

Austin: The Texan with the big knife, Quincy P. Morris.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: He's so funny!

Austin: He's so funny!

Jack: And his big Texan coat.

Sylvia: He shoots Dracula, I'm pretty sure.

Austin: Huge Texan coat. Has a repeating rifle, like a cowboy in a Western.

Dre: Yup.

Austin: Who's also— and presumably he's, like, you know, he's like an oil magnate or something.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: That's where his— that's why he's in society. You have Dr. Jack Seward, who is a student of emerging psychological and physiological sciences. Also a student of Van

Helsing, who we'll meet later.

Jack: Works at the most—

Austin: And kind of a— yeah, go ahead.

Jack: Cartoonishly awful asylum you have ever seen on film.

Dre: Uh huh. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Austin: There's stuff happening in that asylum that is wild, where like...beyond the nightmarish abusive stuff, where like...at one point, he's like, "George, can you open this?" And George comes out, and George is a guy in a head cage.

Dre: Uh huh.

Austin: And I'm like, I guess George is in a head cage and the guy with the keys. All right! I guess you run this place, Jack. And finally, we have the third of the lads, Lord Arthur Holmwood, the fancy lad of the three.

Jack: Cary Elwes!

Sylvia: Yup!

Austin: Yes, Cary Elwes.

Dre: AKA, Westley from Princess Bride and Robin Hood.

Austin: Yep. Oh right, yes.

Sylvia: Also the dead guy from *Saw*.

Austin: Right, yes!

Jack: Wait, really?

Dre: Wait, he's in the *Saw* movies?

Sylvia: Yeah, he's in the first *Saw*.

Austin: He's in *Saw 1* as a body.

Jack: He's the dead guy!

Austin: He's the dead guy in *Saw*, the third guy in the room, right?

Sylvia: Mm, no.

Austin: Is that not right, or...?

Sylvia: No, Cary Elwes is, like, the main dude in *Saw*.

Austin: Oh!

Sylvia: In the first *Saw*.

Dre: Oh.

Sylvia: He's the doctor who's locked in there with the other guy.

Austin: Ohh, the— right. Okay.

Jack: [Incredulously] He's— he's Michael *Saw*?

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: Michael *Saw*. Yeah, yeah. [Dre laughs]

Sylvia: Yeah. He's Michael *Saw*.

Austin: Mike *Saw*.

Jack: And he's a real prick in this movie, but an entertaining one.

Austin: He is an entertaining prick in this movie. And so, for, you know, 30 minutes of this movie, we lose track of Harker, of Jonathan Harker, who is just back in Transylvania.

Jack: Poor guy.

Austin: Yeah, I don't know, dealing with physics that doesn't work anymore. Shadows are just weird there.

Dre: Mm. Getting fucked to death.

Austin: Getting fucked to death. You know, normal shit.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And we follow Mina, as she and Lucy go through their night life and as Mina stumbles into, [laughs] is harassed by Dracula, who, by the way, Dracula showed up. Dracula took a boat to England, along with a bunch of weird crates, and—

Jack: Experimental earth.

Austin: Experimental earth.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And he also killed everyone on the ship and seems to have used that blood to have made himself hot young Gary Oldman [**Sylvia:** “Mm-hmm”] instead of prosthetic, ancient, weird-hair-up-in-a-butt-shape Gary Oldman?

Sylvia: Nutsack hair? Oh, okay, yeah.

Austin: Nutsack hair? Yeah, we can go either way with that. [Dre laughs] It's nutsack from the front, butt from the back, is kind of how I see it.

Sylvia: Yeah. Well, he's got a weird, like, spine braid thing going on too.

Austin: He does.

Sylvia: It's very Giger-esque, honestly.

Jack: A huge cape!

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: A huge cape, that they carried separate. He didn't wear it in many scenes, so that it would trail behind him in an uncanny way, not where it should be.

Sylvia: Oh, that's really good.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: They do a lot of really clever stuff like that.

Austin: There's so much! We'll get there.

Sylvia: I don't want to interrupt the summary more.

Austin: Yes. So! [Claps once] Mina ends up meeting Dracula, who poses as a young prince. He has long, shoulder-length— beyond the shoulder-length hair, honestly. Very fancy, like, sunglasses.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: A top hat, all black everything, and a hot Eastern European prince accent.

Sylvia: [Disagreeing] Mm...

Austin: That's what they're going for, right?

Sylvia: That's what they're going for. I don't think he hits that mark, but...

Austin: He doesn't quite hit it.

Sylvia: There's definitely, like, a bit of a Legosi tribute thing going on with some of the stuff he's doing.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Sylvia: And I think the voice might be part of that.

Austin: After trying to push him away at first, Mina finds herself compelled by him; slipping, I think, really, when she says that she already has a husband, which is not a truth, and that sort of opens her up emotionally, having lied to him about that. Returns—you know, this is all happening very quickly, and then begins a long kind of courting process where the two of them go out to weird dinners together and the movies and...

Dre: Hanging out with wolves.

Austin: Hanging out with wolves. Meanwhile meanwhile...you know, by day. By the way, Dracula can come out in the day. His powers just aren't as good. He's kind of—

Jack: He doesn't like it.

Austin: He doesn't like it, but he can do it.

Dre: Mm.

Austin: By night, he pursues and sleeps with and seduces and begins to turn Lucy, Mina's friend, who falls mysteriously ill as blood seems to just disappear from her. The lads— at this point, she's married? Or she's...?

Sylvia: I think she's engaged.

Dre: She's engaged.

Austin: She's engaged to the lord lad, the lordiest of the lads. And everyone is like, "This is...she's, like, super sick and really horny all the time, and that makes me feel weird."

Jack: "What could it be?"

Austin: [laughs] "What could be happening?!"

Sylvia: What a mood. Like, same.

Austin: Uh huh. [laughs] And the lads are trying to attend to her while Mina is, meanwhile, off being seduced. And there are lots of sequences here where Mina is

getting glimpses of strange things but isn't quite confronting them, and things are looking bad. There's some medical procedures to try to keep Lucy alive. There's some experimental blood transfusions.

Sylvia: Did we mention wolfman Dracula?

Austin: We didn't mention that wolfman Dracula comes and fucks Lucy on an altar.

Jack: [laughs quietly] Oh boy.

Sylvia: Sorry, I just was like, "Wait, is this before...?"

Austin: No, it's all—

Sylvia: I need— Wolfman Dracula is very integral to my timeline, mentally.

Austin: I got you, yeah.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Just in life. I see, yeah.

Sylvia: In general, yeah.

Jack: God. Yeah, Wolfman Dracula shows up in this incredible, like, extended montage sequence, that kind of flows from Dracula's—

Austin: It's unbelievable.

Jack: If you had just shown me that montage, I'd be like, "This is the best film I've ever seen." [all laugh] Like, Dracula comes over on the boat.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And I'm only saying this because I think, yeah, like Sylvi, this particular montage is this, [Austin sighs] like, real turning point in the movie for me, [**Sylvia:** "Yeah"] in terms of the pace ratcheting up.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: We get this kind of, like, collage of images, and I use that not just in the sense that every montage is a collage. [Austin laughs quietly] There's like a lot of different themes that are happening and feelings that are happening in this montage of the boat. Slaughter on the boat, like a big gush of red blood up on the sails.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: A storm blows in as Mina and Lucy are standing outside, and they see Dracula's eyes in the storm. They don't know who it is, but they sort of feel compelled.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: They begin running in a sort of state of fear and excitement through the maze in the back of Lucy's garden.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: A camera drifts through the lettering above the gate of London Zoo as we hear wolves howling. Lucy and Mina kiss in the maze together.

Austin: Mm-hmm!

Jack: Like, covered in rain. And then we sort of flow straight into a sequence of, like, Lucy in this bright red dress having sex with what is really a werewolf?

Austin: It's a werewolf. Yeah, uh huh.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Jack: On an altar in front of, like, a big gothic mausoleum in the background. And like, that's like 10 minutes of this movie!

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: It's spectacular!

Austin: And it's...to be clear, we're not talking about there being, like, breaks for dialogue. [laughs]

Dre: Nope!

Sylvia: No.

Austin: Like, this is all just happening. Is this also where we get the incredible, like, newspaper cut? There's a point at which three newspapers just appear onscreen, with headlines about the wolf escaping from the zoo and other stuff.

Dre: Mm-hmm, yep. The mystery schooner.

Austin: The mystery— right, right, which is—

Jack: Yeah, the *Obra Dinn* gets...

Austin: Yes, exactly. [Dre laughs] God, there's so much good work with maps and stuff in this movie too, around that stuff.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: But yes. Mina recovers Lucy's body after the werewolf, uh...you know...night, the werewolf— it's not a whole— it's in the middle of this sequence where Mina comes into the garden, sees werewolf Dracula with Lucy. Werewolf Dracula looks at Mina and sees, like, into her body, the pulsing red veins and blood and heart.

Jack: Yeah, sees the blood!

Austin: And in this, like, moment of humility, is like, "Don't look at me. Don't look at me," because he's in his most monstrous form, his most base and animalistic form. And then, and then, she goes over and recovers Lucy, and yeah, that is— you're right, Sylvi. This is the turn, right? This is when things start to go wild. We get a lot of Renfield again, throughout all of this, yelling about how he's ready to help his master.

Jack: But like, in response to it going wild, it's time to telephone a weird fuck. [Sylvia laughs]

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Yes! Uh huh.

Sylvia: Oh...

Austin: The...I guess the lads, to all of this stuff, this is one of— who is it? I guess it's Seward, is like, "We gotta get my boy Helsing on this."

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: "I have studied under—"

Dre: "He taught me everything I know, so..." [Dre and Austin laugh]

Austin: He does say— he calls him "the Metaphysician-Philosopher," to which Quincey Morris says [Texan Accent] "Sounds like a goddamn witch doctor to me, Jack!" [Sylvia sighs; Jack laughs] I love him so much!!

Sylvia: He's doing so much.

Austin: He's doing so much! [laughs] And, so, he calls— or he sends— he doesn't call. He sends a cable, a message to Van Helsing, who is giving a lecture on the nature of civilization and sexual, uh, sexually transmitted diseases—

Sylvia: And vampire bats?

Jack: And syphilis.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. Vampire bats.

Dre: You mean syphilisization? Or what is the fucking pun he makes?

Austin: Yeah. He says—

Sylvia: He says syphilization and civilization.

Austin: He says, "Civilization and syphilization advanced together," he says, drawing a line between sexual desire, vampire bats needing to eat three times their body weight in blood a day.

Jack: [laughs] I don't know if that's true.

Austin: I don't know if that's true.

Sylvia: Yeah, I forgot to fact check that one.

Austin: Yeah, we gotta get Verit on this and see. [laughs quietly] What's your— we need to see— what's, uh— fuck, what is the name of the Fact Check-O-Meter bullshit?

Sylvia: Oh, I...ugh. I'm so glad I can't remember this.

Austin: We gotta get Snopes on this and see if it's real.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Van Helsing, played by Anthony Hopkins, is like, at this point, giving a lecture in front of a bunch of dudes in like, black, you know, overcoats. Classic early, you know, late 1800s doctor-giving-a-speech thing. And so, he's going to get called into action. I think he is the one who is able to do the blood transfusion to try and keep Lucy alive, you know, longer. But they're struggling with that, and I think it's in the middle of all of that, that finally, Jonathan Harker escapes from the sex dungeon of the vampire queens and goes to a convent and sends word for Mina,, because it's important that what we see is Mina seeing Lucy in her ill state, saying, "Hey, I don't want to go, because you're so sick." Mina gives her her ring, says, "No, no, no. Go get married. It's imperative you go get married."

Jack: In Romania.

Austin: In Romania, like we always dreamt of.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And, seconds after that conversation, Lucy, like, immediately falls into a vampiric lust, a vampiric bloodlust, grows fangs, tries to bite Helsing. Am I...? And, like, destroys some flowers? Am I forgetting other details about this scene?

Sylvia: They have, like, garlic on her, that she starts tearing off.

Austin: They do have the garlic.

Dre: Mm.

Sylvia: I think that's when this scene gets going, is she's like, "Get this off of me."

Austin: Right.

Dre: Is this where the blood explodes around her?

Jack: No, that's in her...then a wolf shows up.

Austin: Then a wolf shows up.

Dre: Okay. Right.

Jack: And then kills her.

Austin: Does the wolf kill her?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Right, right, right, right.

Dre: Well, it's—

Austin: Hmm.

Dre: It's Dracula, as a wolf, right?

Jack: Eh, I'm not sure what's happening in that scene. But then blood explodes from

everywhere in this room, in like a full—

Austin: Right.

Dre: Yeah, there's like a blood orgasm.

Austin: There is a blood orgasm. Yes.

Jack: Yeah. And then they're like "Ohh no, she's in a glass coffin," and we get all the lads— [laughs quietly] It might sound, as we're describing this, like the lads in this movie do everything together, and that's true. They do.

Sylvia: They do.

Dre: That is 100% true, yeah.

Austin: [laughs] Yeah, don't get her...

Jack: It's my favorite.

Sylvia: I think except for the doctor. He gets some scenes without the other two.

Jack: Oh, he gets scenes, and there's a...

Austin: He gets the Renfield scenes, but that's about it.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: There's the scene I find really funny, when they all— [laughing] they all do the blood transfusion, and it seems like, except for the Texan, they *all* do it.

Austin: Mm-hmm. [Sylvia laughs]

Jack: They *all* give blood.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And then they all go staggering out into the garden and all have to sit down

because they've... [laughs] They're just like: [sighs in exhaustion]

Austin: Oh, yeah, one of them is like, "She's got 2 men worth of blood in her. How? And it didn't do anything!" [Dre laughs] Like, all right. Great.

Jack: So, now, all these— the lads are sitting sadly around the coffin, and Van Helsing goes "Psst! Jack! Over here!"

Austin: Oh, right.

Jack: "Come over here!" [Jack and Dre laugh]

Austin: Like, "I need a big knife!" [sighs]

Jack: "I need to cut her head off and put a stake in her heart!" [Sylvia laughs]

Dre: This is the point in the movie where I had the realization that Chine is just this movie's Van Helsing. [Sylvia laughs]

Austin: I think so, yeah.

Jack: I think you're right, yeah.

Austin: I think you're right. I think you're right!

Sylvia: Oh my god!

Austin: Just a whirlwind, who seems to be, like, from a different world? Or from a different movie, almost?

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: Who's, like, fallen into this.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And yet, has a sort of gravity that pulls everything else back onto his own track, you know? I guess we did skip one other important thing here, which is that like, one of

the major scenes during the Dracula Mina courting stuff: Mina is the reincarnation of Elisabeta.

Jack: Oh, yeah, that's important.

Austin: Or at least the spitting image, but I really think...they do some absinthe, and she can like straight up see the castle. She has flashes of that life.

Jack: Yeah, I have weird—

Sylvia: I mean, they...I think it's very, like, that is...I would believe that just because of the very purposeful use of Winona Ryder as Elisabeta as well.

Austin: Yes. Yes.

Jack: Yeah. I'm so—

Austin: Jack, you were saying you have very...?

Jack: I have...I could go both ways on this, and it's not really like I have a pet theory here that I prefer. But I was watching this with KB, and they and I were— we were both wondering whether or not this is— whether she is the reincarnation of Elisabeta, or whether the thing she is experiencing is legitimate but is a result of the magic that Dracula is working on her.

Austin: Right.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: Is he projecting her memories of the place.

Jack: Is he sort of inducing this in her, in some way?

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: God, the bit where she cries a single teardrop, and the tears turn into diamonds in his hands.

Jack: Into diamonds.

Austin: No other discussion of that. That's just a thing that does happen at one point.

Sylvia: That is the most close-up magician that he ever gets in the movie, just with how he's dressed and everything. [laughter]

Jack: "Aha, look what I've got!"

Sylvia: Yeah.

[40:04]

Austin: [laughs] It's true.

Jack: The thing is, though: [laughs] if I knew a close-up magician who could legitimately turn my tears into diamonds, I'd be like, "Coolest man in the world!"

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Sylvia: Sure!

Austin: Well, the question is: do you get to keep the diamonds at the end, or is he like "I'm gonna need those back, because I gotta do this trick again"?

Sylvia: "Those are important for the trick, you know?"

Austin: [laughs] Yeah!

Sylvia: "They're not— they're cubic zirconium. Please."

Austin: Exactly! [Jack laughs] Anyway, the lads agree, and they go to get— to fucking get the stake and knife, for Van Helsing and to go to go to Lucy's, uh, what do you call it?

Jack: The mausoleum [**Austin:** "The mausoleum"] behind where she had sex with the werewolf?

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Right, yeah, uh huh. The werewolf sex mausoleum. And they get there, and oh my god, she's not there! That's weird. Huh. Oh, wait! Here she comes.

Jack: But who's these footsteps? And what's she brought with her?

Austin: It's her coming down here with a child, right?

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Jack: With a child she's going to take care of?

Austin: [Hesitantly] Mm...

Dre: Nope.

Austin: Yeah. You know, I think that child's going to be "taken care of," in a sense, once and for all.

Jack: As soon as she sees them, she just drops the child, [laughs quietly] which I though was a really good detail.

Austin: Like, "Aw, fuck." Yeah.

Dre: They also hide in a corner of a dark mausoleum, while they're all carrying torches, which is just great. [laughs]

Austin: Yeah, it's bad. [Jack laughs] This whole sequence, after— when she arrives, something really cool stylistically happens, which is everything is shot backwards, which gives you that incredible effect of the way the candles— the candles are being blown out, but they're coming on in this sequence.

Jack: Oh!

Austin: Which I don't know if anyone even noticed this, but they flare up as if from nothing, [Sylvia: "Oh"] because what's happened is— like, when she comes walking

down the steps, they filmed that with her walking up the steps.

Jack: Up the steps, backwards?

Austin: Backwards, which gives, like— her trestle doesn't make sense, because it's clearly being, like, straightened out and pulled so it goes upwards, but she's coming downwards. It's so good. Anyway! Lots of little stuff like that throughout this entire movie.

Jack: He forces her back into the coffin with a cross.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: And she vomits blood all over him, and then...but in the going back into the thing, it really does have that, like, sort of jerky...Samara from *The Ring*, like, backwards-as-forwards vibes.

Austin: Yes. Yes, totally.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And she finally lays back down there, and then he ushers, uh, lord lad...why have I forgotten his name?

Dre: Arthur.

Sylvia: Arthur, it's Arthur something.

Austin: Arthur...yeah—

Sylvia: Holmwood.

Jack: Holmwood.

Austin: Holmwood, to come put the stake in her. Gives him the stake. I did not think he was going to do it. He does it. He does.

Jack: He has a great line. Van Helsing has a great line. He says, "One moment's courage, and then it is done."

Austin: Yeah. And he does it!

Jack: Which feels like it's straight from the book.

Austin: Yeah. And he does it; he stakes her heart. She is completely stark white now, also, and also wearing her white, you know, burial gown slash wedding gown. And then Van Helsing cuts off her head. It's very gruesome. And we have one of my favorite cuts in the entire...series of cuts in the entire film.

Jack: [laughs] Yes, it's so good.

Austin: Cuts off her head, at which point we get the image of Dracula in, like, the dirt, right? Uh, screaming and yelling. I think there's an actual line here. Oh! Yeah, "To live, it feeds on Lucy's precious blood. It is a beast, a monster." Cuts to Dracula in the dirt, his eyes glowing and angry. Her head, floating through the air in kind of a red tint, you know, being projected on her. Cut to [laughs] dinner! Dinner with the Harkers, as Van Helsing cuts into the most gruesome looking, gross looking roast beef I've ever seen, just dripping with blood.

Jack: It's so funny! Especially because...you know, I've seen a cut like that. Like, I feel like a cut from a moment of violence to food is fairly common.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: The thing that really surprised me was not just the images in between, of Dracula with blood coming out of his mouth, screaming, and then the head, [**Austin:** "Yeah"] but usually, when we cut away, it's to other characters in another place. There was something so grim and funny to me about Van Helsing cutting the head off [**Austin:** "Mm-hmm"] and then basically smash cutting to Van Helsing cutting into the dinner.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Was great.

Austin: One of my favorite things about this whole movie is that sort of, like, the confrontation that...with the horror of everyday, by extending the everyday, right? Which is like...

Jack: Right.

Austin: Yeah, we all— you know, 1900 England, they're all eating meat non-stop, and we don't even— or like, everybody eats a thing...everything that we ever eat was once alive in some form, right? But that doesn't gross us out. Vampires gross us out. Declaring your love for someone for the rest of your life doesn't seem like a strange thing to commit to or to demand, because we live in a world in which marriage is, like, a standard thing. But when you are Dracula and you have seduced someone into centuries of, you know, committed...a century-long commitment, suddenly that seems like, "Oh, that's crossed the line," and I think a lot of this movie is playing at its best where it's like, "Hmm, where do we start drawing those lines? And what is it about— are we drawing those lines because we are repressed in some way from some instinct? Or what things do we allow ourselves to call not vices and to call just part of daily life or to frame in less egregious ways?" And that cut is like a very on-the-nose version of that, but it works; it works for me. Anyway. Everyone's together now. Everyone— there is a plan. Jonathan Harker's hair is increasingly gray.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: It seems as if he and Mina have had some— one, they got married in that Romanian convent. Two, they seem to have both had some talks about their various situations. [Sylvia laughs] They do talk about his infidelity. [Dre laughs] He does try his best to say he was never that into it, don't worry, please.

Dre: Well, yeah, like, because while they're— after—

Austin: Too afraid.

Dre: Yeah, after Helsing, like, cuts into that thing, he looks at Harker and is like, "All

right, so: while you were fucking these three vampire ladies, right? [Austin laughs] Did you ever eat their blood?"

Jack: [laughs] He's like, "No," and Van Helsing goes "Good. Then you are not susceptible to the dreadful disease of Lucy." [Dre and Jack laugh] And Van Helsing—sorry, and Harker has this great expression on his face where he's like, 'Oh, thank fuck for that! Okay! [Austin and Dre laugh] Oh, I didn't want my head to be cut off! Whoa, phew!'

Austin: And Mina, like, you know, Mina grabs his shoulder or whatever, very dutifully. I guess she has not told him about her dalliances with the prince, right?

Sylvia: Yeah, I think she's been keeping that secret.

Austin: You know, fair enough.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: Anyway, the lads plus Harker plus Van Helsing have a plan—I guess Mina's part of the plan for like 10% of it—which is: we know where that motherfucker lives! You sold him the house! Let's go there, destroy and sanctify his dirt, so he can't sleep in it anymore, and then kill him! Or at least drive him away, or keep him in here until he's so weak that we can kill him during the day. You know, classic vampire hunter type stuff.

Jack: Real big Friends at the Table plan, though, right?

Austin: Oh yeah. [Dre laughs]

Jack: Because what they're basically working with here, is: [overconfidently] "Oh, we're gonna go to his house, and we're gonna fucking kill him!" And it's like... [Dre laughs]

Austin: Yep! Dracula? Yeah?

Jack: How? "I've got— I've got, uh... [clicks tongue thoughtfully] I've got, um...a cross."

Austin: I got a cross, and we got some...

Jack: And some, like, torches.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Look, you! You're from Texas. Bring a gun! [Austin and Jack laugh]

Austin: He does! And he does bring a gun. I believe, in the book, they put sacramental bread in— like, you know, like wafers.

Jack: Oh, we get a great communion wafer moment later.

Austin: Yeah. Oh, we do get a great communion wafer moment later. Also, by the way, across the street...

Jack: [laughs] Across the street!

Dre: Uh huh.

Austin: Across the street from where Dracula lives in England, in London, is Seward's asylum, Seward's institution, and he says to himself, "Now, this would be a good safe place to put Mina."

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: But before they can even get to his bedroom, Renfield sees her and calls out, and Mina is compelled to go over and talk to him. And he talks a lot about how she is the most, like, magnificent thing he's ever seen or something, right?

Jack: Mm-hmm. And then he bends down, and she bends down.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And he says, "Go. You have to get out of here."

Austin: Right.

Jack: "Otherwise, he's going to come and get you."

Austin: Right.

Jack: And, you know, it's like— you were talking earlier about crossing the lines, and I feel like— I feel like there is a moment here when Renfield goes, "Oh, fuck. Right."

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: [laughs] "I might be too far into this now, and I want to try and sort things out." But even then, it's not quite clear what his gameplan is. You know, how much is he—

Austin: Well, his gameplan is to suckle on her knuckle.

Jack: Yes! Yes, right.

Austin: Uh, which I did not intend to rhyme.

Sylvia: Hell yeah.

Austin: That did just come out like that.

Sylvia: Well, it's...you know.

Austin: Uh huh?

Sylvia: It's great. It's good.

Austin: It's good, actually.

Sylvia: I'm really just appreciating your rhyme.

Austin: Thank you. I appreciate it. I put a lot of work into it, deep inside.

Jack: [laughs quietly] In one second.

Austin: In one second, yeah. I love that he kneels down to give her the warning, as if that would hide this, you know, betrayal.

Jack: From Dracula, right?

Austin: [laughs] From Dracula.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Who can be a mist, we learn shortly. [Sylvia and Jack laugh] Mina hides in...Mina goes into the bedroom, or the office, I guess, the office of Seward, that has a window overlooking the lads on their attack [laughs quietly] and just kind of hangs out there as if everything's going to be okay. They get to work. They start breaking down the boxes, but oh no! Dracula's having a sleep.

Jack: No!

Austin: He's sleeping up there, as a big bat guy.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And he does an attack. He attacks them, and then, for some reason, leaves?

Jack: Turns into mist.

Austin: I feel like he could have taken them. He could have taken them then and there. I guess cause that's not his game plan, right? His game plan isn't just "kill these dudes," it's "get Mina," at this point, right? So, turns into mist, goes across the street.

Jack: Before Seward leaves the asylum, leaves Mina in the asylum, he says, "He cannot get you in here," based on absolutely nothing!

Austin: Based on nothing. Based on—

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: I mean, it has doors made of windows, my guy! Like, these are— it's all glass! [Jack laughs] Like, I could get in there! Dracula is Dracula! [Sylvia laughs] Again, they continue to sanctify the dirt. There's a snake in a scene, for some reason. Renfield gets killed by Dracula in that sequence?

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: The mist kills Renfield? Does he— he doesn't turn into a man and kill Renfield. He just kinda...

Jack: He throws him against the bars and breaks his neck.

Austin: Right. And breaks his neck, right. And then continues through the asylum towards Mina, where we get a truly dramatic and violent confrontation after Dracula has, I would say, successfully convinced Mina to sleep with him and join with him and accept her status as vampire queen?

Jack: Eugh. Accept his blood.

Austin: Accept— in fact, in a way that he, in fact, takes away at a certain point, right? There's a—

Dre: Yeah, he's like, "I don't want to do this."

Jack: Oh, that scene's great, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. He's like, "If you—"

Jack: We'll get to that when we go through these characters, I suppose. [laughs quietly]

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: It also seems implied, to me— and again, it's like, how much of this is Mina being the actual reincarnation [**Austin:** "Right"] and how much of this is, like, Dracula magic? But it almost seems to— because she says something about like, "Now that I've been married, I know it's you that I want."

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: And it's almost like, "Yeah, I had sex with Jonathan, and it wasn't very good, so, like..."

Austin: That is 100%.

Jack: Mm, yeah. Yeah. [Dre laughs]

Austin: That is 100% a— I don't even think it's subtext.

Dre: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: I think a lot of the text of this film is about anticipating a certain sort of desire and then desiring a different thing instead.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: That is one of the major anxieties, but it's not just the sort of, like, classic cuckoldry anxiety? It's like, I think this is one of Mina's anxieties is that, like, she feels terrible about her love of this prince-slash-count.

Dre: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Austin: Anyway, while she is drinking of his blood, the boys return and see that this ritual is happening. They bust into the unenterable office like it's nothing, [laughs] yet again proving that it is not a good defensive bastion. Charge in with guns and crosses and torches. Dracula becomes invisible and then becomes a— I guess he doesn't become invisible. He just becomes a bat and is up on the ceiling.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And then charges forward at them. We get a real, like, "The power of Christ compels you" style moment, and he basically says, like, you know, "Your god made me this. What are you fucking— what do you even think you're doing with that cross?"

Jack: "I will set it on fire."

Austin: Yeah, exactly. And they shoot at him a bunch. Seward has, like, a glass of wine or poison or something? [laughs]

Jack: What the fuck is that?

Austin: I don't know!

Jack: Is that holy— is that communion wine?

Austin: No, because it's— oh, maybe, yes. Maybe it's communion wine!

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: It's smoking, though. Communion wine doesn't do that.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Maybe it did in Victorian times. [Jack and Dre laugh]

Sylvia: The good stuff does.

Austin: Well, maybe it does in the presence of a vampire, you know what I mean?

Sylvia: Oh, yeah. I mean, there is a lot of that in different vampire stuff, like holy water boiling in their presence and shit.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Right, sure.

Sylvia: So that wouldn't be surprising.

Jack: Oh, I bet that's what it is.

Austin: That makes sense.

Jack: Oh, god, then we get one of my favorite effects.

Austin: They shoot— they do shoot him. Yeah, they shoot him in the chest, and it does seem to do something. He's like, "Oh, shit!" [laughs] and he backs up into the dark, and they chase him with lights.

Jack: This is so cool.

Austin: And he's, like, in the complete dark. His eyes are glowing red in the dark, and then, when they approach him with light, the light reveals that instead of a bat man, he is a collection of dozens of little rats, which...

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Jack: In the shape of a man!

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: I have no idea how they shot this, because that is a practical effect.

Austin: It's incredible. Yes, it's all practical. It's 100%, and it's—

Jack: Yeah, but I mean, like, it's—

Austin: Arms up, and then—

Jack: How?

Austin: I don't know. I don't know.

Jack: Is it a frame that they put rats in?

Austin: I don't know. Maybe.

Sylvia: Yeah, I really want to get a...

Austin: Or maybe it's a...hmm.

Sylvia: I was going to say I really want to get a physical copy of this to hear if they go into this on any commentary stuff.

Austin: Yes. I would love that.

Sylvia: I am dying to know.

Jack: Yeah, Francis Ford Coppola going, "This was a fucking nightmare."

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: Okay, wait, do you know the story of how Coppola did— like, what happened with the effects on this is that he had good special effects people on this, and they were all like, “Well, the way we do it in other movies,” and “Hey, if we used a computer here...” and he’s like, “No. Stop it. I want to use old-timey magic tricks,” and they were like, “Okay, but the way other movies use—” He’s like, “I don’t want this to look like any other movie ever!”

Jack: [laughs] Well, he fucking succeeded.

Austin: And they’re like, “Okay, but what if—” and he’s like, “You’re fired. I’m replacing you with my son, Roman.”

Sylvia: God!

Austin: And so, his son, who is a child, who is, like, in his 20s. I have to find the photo of him.

Jack: The special effects in this movie are fucking astonishing! Roman Coppola did them?

Austin: So, I would imagine he ended up bringing on other people?

Jack: Sure.

Austin: But he...uh, “He initially hired a standard visual effects team, but when they told him that the things he wanted to achieve were impossible without using modern digital technology, Coppola disagreed and fired them, replacing them with his son Roman Coppola.” [Jack laughs] And he basically became, like, in many ways, the second director who did a lot of— like, you know the incredible shot of, like, the wolf perspective in the garden moving up at, like, half framerate or whatever?

Jack: Yeah, it’s like stop motion or something, right?

Austin: It’s like stop motion. That’s 100% Roman Coppola. He also just looked— you

should look up stuff from— there's, like, a good behind-the-scenes for this, and there is— I'm just gonna paste this in our general chat.

Jack: How did you do the rats, Roman? [Sylvia laughs]

Austin: Let me know how you did the rats. He's such a little boy. He's like a 26-year-old baby with a goatee. It's kind of adorable and brilliant. Anyway.

Jack: That's so funny. This is the same— hang on.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: I mean, I know there's...is this the same Roman Coppola that, like, did a bunch of cowriting with Wes Anderson?

Sylvia: Yeah, it is.

Austin: Oh, that makes the most sense of anything I've ever heard in my life.

Sylvia: Yeah, he cowrote *Moonrise Kingdom*, I think.

Austin: Wow! Okay. Sure.

Dre: Hmm.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Great. Fantastic. Anyway, Dracula turns into a bunch of rats and runs away. Also, it's worth saying, at this point, Jonathan Harker— Keanu Reeves is wearing a pretty bad wig for the rest of this movie.

Dre: Yup.

Sylvia: Oh my god, the hair! [Jack laughs]

Dre: Also starts forgetting to have his fake British accent, from time to time, at this point in the movie.

Jack: Hi accent!

Austin: Okay. [Sylvia sighs] It's better when he does that, though. [Dre laughs]

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: Because he sounds like a human, because he sounds natural.

Sylvia: He does still go really hard on the "Byudapest," though, no matter what.

Austin: Oh, the "Byudapest." Oh, it's so much! The story on that, apparently, is that he just tried too hard. Francis Ford Coppola was like, "Dude, you just, you don't have to—you don't need to try as hard as you are. You're really overcommitting."

Sylvia: Aw.

Austin: And he was just like, "I'm gonna get it right," and it's so sweet. He tried so hard. We'll talk about him, at some point. Anyway, we are now in the final act. Dracula—

Jack: [laughs] And it's a doozy!

Austin: It is a doozy. Dracula, his home in London having been sanctified and taken from him, must flee home to Transylvania to regain his strength and plot for the future. The other half of this is: he did successfully vampirize Mina, and so she is slowly giving way to the illness, just as Lucy did. And if she dies before Dracula does, she will become a vampire, but if they can find Dracula and kill him first, then she will be cured of the disease and get to live a life as a person. And there is a race, because they are going by train from London into France, across the continent, past Budapest, and eventually to Transylvania. Meanwhile, he has the wind at his back, because he can control the wind; Dracula is going by boat, down out across the ocean and through the various seas until he makes his way home. And so we get a really fun set of travel scenes, where they're like, "Damn, he outsmarted us again by going to a different port than we thought."

Jack: Dracula stops using a boat really quickly, ruining their entire plan. [Jack, Dre, and

Austin laugh]

Austin: Yes. And starts using this cadre of people who work for him, Romani people who are not called Romani people; they use a slur, of course. And...

Jack: But Dracula has his own— these are Dracula's lads, right?

Austin: These are Dracula's lads, yes.

Jack: We see these lads several times, and they're doing— much like our lads are, you know, rumbling around from place to place with guns [**Austin:** "Yes"] and holy water and everything, Dracula's lads are rumbling around with carts and boxes of earth and, you know, salt and things.

Austin: Yes, yes, and Dracula's body.

Jack: And Dracula.

Austin: Yeah, and so we get a series of races between horses and trains and boats, until finally, we get into Transylvania for a big final confrontation, or, I guess, a set of them. At some point, Mina and Van Helsing go off in one group to try to cut him off at the pass?

Jack: Beat Dracula? I don't fucking know.

Austin: Or bait him to slow him down, I guess?

Dre: Yeah, so they split up, because they're [**Austin:** "Right"] initially using Mina to, like, spy on Dracula because of the psychic connection.

Austin: Right, right.

Dre: But then they realize that Dracula is doing it in reverse.

Austin: Riiight, gotcha. Right, that makes sense. And then the lads go to Count Dracula's castle in Transylvania, get there first, are ready to wait for him. And meanwhile, Mina and Van Helsing kiss by the fire. She tries to vampire seduce him,

taking control of that situation.

Jack: She has an amazing breakdown, early in that scene.

Austin: Oh, it's incredible.

Jack: I don't know, she's fighting or having sex with the brides, who are invisible to us but visible to her.

Austin: To her, yeah, uh huh.

Jack: And Winona Ryder just performs this, like, single person meltdown behind a fire. It's wild.

Austin: It's remarkable.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Van Helsing completely fails here because of how, in my mind, he is in fact an old creep. [Jack laughs] But then, realizes, "Uh oh, wait a second. You're not just trying to regular make out with me. You're trying to vampire fuck me, and it's time for me to break out the Catholic—"

Dre: The top tool in my arsenal.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, my number one device here, the communion wafer. Press it against your forehead to break the vampire spell on you, reveal the three vampire wives, draw a magic circle of fire around us, and wait until the morning, I guess? Where I can go kill them in their sleep.

Jack: [laughs quietly] Which he does! In one scene!

Austin: Which he just does. It's...

Jack: Off he goes!

Austin: It's the most end-of-session thing that— where it's like, "Uh...oh, right, do you

want to make a roll to see if you can go cut off their heads and throw them in the chasm, real quick? Because you basically already beat them, but...”

Jack: That’s a 10!

Austin: Yeah, “Oh, 10. I guess you do it. Yeah, you got ‘em all. Yeah, you got ‘em all! [Sylvia and Austin laugh] I was gonna make this multiple rolls, but you just do it.” I feel like they should have stayed up late that day. Do you know what I mean? Or maybe they have to sleep in the day, in a way Dracula doesn’t, because they’re not as powerful or something? But...I would have left one person on guard, is all I'm saying. [Dre laughs] You got three of you? You could sleep in shifts.

Jack: [laughs] I'm reading the— I have a transcript of the screenplay here.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: The cutting the heads off moment in this transcript is just incredible. [reading:]

HELSING: No! We’re safe within the circle. I lost Lucy. I will not lose you to him.
Whores of Satan, this is holy ground! Leave this place now!

The vampiresses attack and kill the horses.

HELSING: No! No! No! Damn you! [laughter]

THE NEXT MORNING

The Crypt at Castle Dracula

Van Helsing finds the three vampiresses asleep in their coffins, cuts off their heads, and throws them in the river. [Austin and Jack laugh]

Austin: I mean, that’s what happens. Yeah. Everyone joins up finally, at Castle Dracula. Dracula’s lads arrive with the box of dirt that has Dracula inside of it, by the way, up to his neck in dirt. There’s lots of horseback fighting, lots of shooting, lots of swordplay. Horses—

Jack: Maybe too much? No.

Austin: This is the one time in the entire movie where I was like, “You could have cut this whole sequence down to, like, a minute. I didn't need a whole rolling epic thing here.” It's also worth saying, at this point: this whole movie is shot on soundstages. There's no location shoots. So, all that outdoor stuff is also all soundstages.

Dre: Huh.

Austin: They just built— and matte paintings. They just built wild, big, circular tracks to run the horses on. So, they're really going for a particular Old Hollywood style. The sun is setting. They want to kill Dracula before the sun sets, because that's when he gets his power. There's a tussle. There's a rumble. The lads get hurt in various ways. Mina shows up with a gun. And finally, Dracula emerges from the— not the coffin, the box, the crate of dirt; grabs Harker as if to hurt him, and Harker produces a knife and just cuts his throat very quickly, wounding him badly. Mina tries to go over there to stop the death or the killing of Dracula, but Quincey Morris, our Texan with the big knife, shoves it in his fucking heart! [Dre laughs]

Sylvia: Let's go!

Austin: It's super sick. It's so good. Dracula falls to the ground and just, like, starts to shake around—big, you know, death throes—and Mina confronts Jonathan with her rifle and is like, “Are you gonna do this to me? Is this where we're going? This is the end of our relationship is going to be that when I become like this, you're going to kill me?” and he's like, “No.” And everyone else is like, “All right, Mina, you've gotta come back over here,” and Jonathan's like, “No, no. Let them go inside the castle. We've done our work; she has to do hers.” And the work she has to do is, like, usher Dracula to his final death and let him kind of, I guess, dream of better days, return to his human form; basking in her love, if not the love of God; kissing her one final time. You know, he returns to, like, big bearded Crusader Dracula, and then, you know, young Lord Dracula. And the movie ends with a shot looking up on a sort of reverse of what they have here, in reality in this moment. She is holding Dracula as he bleeds out, and above them, on the ceiling, there

is a painting of him holding Elisabeta's body from centuries prior, when they did the same. I guess, also, she cuts off his head, right? She does the job.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: She cuts off his head, ensuring that he is really and truly dead. But, uh...the end. That's how it ends. There's no final sequence where she goes back out and hugs Keanu Reeves. [laughs] There's no...there's no resolution on that front, on the front of those kind of personal anxieties or relationship stuff.

Dre: Yeah. I mean, if you want to know what happens, you gotta watch the sequel, which is *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*.

Jack: Ha!

Austin: Right.

Sylvia: Oh my god.

Austin: Of course. Sorry, I always forget about that one.

Dre: Mm-hmm. [Jack laughs]

Austin: Right. She becomes a vampire hunter or something? What happens?

Dre: I think—

Austin: Or does she become a vampire in that?

Dre: She's a vampire in LXG, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I read all those comics years ago and thought they were all right. They were fun.

Dre: I've only seen the movie.

Austin: Mm. Mm.

Dre: Which, I mean, you know, I saw it when it came out. I'm pretty sure it's probably bad, right?

Austin: It's probably bad. It's probably bad. I wouldn't— yeah. Anyway, that's *Dracula*. What a fucking movie.

Jack: Goddamn. This film starts with this, like, really chunky cello. I can only describe it as, like, Frankenstein type music, you know? It's like... [Sylvia laughs]

Austin: Frankenstein type beat, yeah, uh huh.

Sylvia: Yeah, I was gonna say. [Dre laughs]

Jack: It really is just like...it's like if you said to me: "Jack, what does *Dracula*— [laughs] what does the soundtrack for a *Dracula* movie sound like?" And it's like the perfect version of that, and as soon as this big cello started playing, I was like, "All right, we're in it now, lads." And we were, for the next two hours and seven minutes.

Austin: [laughs] It's a long movie. This is what I'm saying.

Jack: As far as I can tell, it's the longest *Dracula* movie that there is. [Austin laughs]

Sylvia: Uh, that tracks.

Dre: Yeah.

Sylvia: That absolutely tracks.

Austin: Yeah, that does track.

Jack: And, *and*, with the exception of that extremely long gunfight chase at the end, not a minute wasted.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: That is the thing. I think you could probably get it down to exactly two hours if you cut some of that long horse race. Horse chase, rather. I think it's doable. Anyway,

where do y'all want to talk about— how do you want to hit this movie?

Dre: Wait, are we not gonna talk about the credits song?

Austin: Oh, do I—

Sylvia: I don't remember it.

Austin: I also didn't really listen to it.

Jack: I think I closed—

Dre: Okay, hold on. Hold on, hold on.

Austin: Dre, hook us up. Hook us up.

Dre: [laughs] Yeah.

Sylvia: Uh, while you're getting that, can I read my favorite thing from the IMDb trivia page?

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Yes, please!

Sylvia: Oh, I posted the image. I don't need it on the thing. "Producer and director Francis Ford Coppola had Richard E. Grant, Cary Elwes, and Billy Campbell embark on a series of adventures, including horseback riding and hot air ballooning [**Jack:** "The lads!"] to build the camaraderie between the three." [Dre laughs]

Austin: [clapping] The lads! Let's go! I love this so much.

Sylvia: It's so good!

Austin: Their relationship to each other and with Lucy is one of my favorite things about this movie.

Jack: It's so good.

Austin: Because it is unblinking. There is no—

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: There is, in fact, no anxiety around the fact that these three men are in love with this woman, and she picked one of them, but did she? [laughter] Or is the life we can imagine one in which everyone gets what they want together? Because this is a unit, if ever there was one, the three lads and Lucy. Incredible.

Jack: And Lucy gets— Lucy gets hard done by, in the sense that she's not in the back half of this movie, but I think she—

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: In a movie about vampires, she has a pretty top tier vampire time, over the course of this movie.

Sylvia: Oh, yeah.

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Austin: It's the best. It really is.

Sylvia: Oh, I think her scene where they're, like, in the mausoleum, where she comes back, is some of my favorite costuming in the movie and design stuff for her.

Jack: So good. Oh, the costuming in this movie is by, uh...I want to get her name right. Her surname is Ishikoa.

Sylvia: Oh, Eiko? Eiko Ishioka?

Jack: Yeah, Eiko Ishikoa. Ishioka, yeah.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: Who, uh...

Austin: Mm.

Jack: [laughs] Google says, “When Coppola was told he wasn’t going to receive the budget he wanted for the 1992 film, he infamously declared, ‘The costumes will be the set.’” [Austin laughs quietly] So, he brings in Ishioka, and she goes on to do basically all of Tarsem’s movies, [**Austin:** “Mm”] which I didn’t realize until I started watching this but makes so much sense.

Austin: That does make sense.

Jack: Tarsem Singh made—

Sylvia: [amused] She also designed the Houston Rockets logo. Sorry, I...

Jack: What? [Dre laughs]

Austin: Wow!

Sylvia: Yeah. The current Houston Rockets logo was designed by Eiko Ishioka.

Dre: Oh, man.

Austin: That’s incredible.

Jack: Oh, and it’s a great logo! Look at that.

Sylvia: It’s a pretty solid logo. It’s not bad.

Austin: Apparently, regarding the costumes, the...he said to bring him, for both the set design and the costume design, “Bring me stuff that’s weird. We don’t want to do any formula. Bring me stuff that either comes from research or comes from your nightmares. I gave them paintings. I gave them drawings. I talked to them about how I thought the imagery could work.” It’s just so good. Dre, you’ve given us this link.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: “Love Song for a Vampire”. I think we can probably listen at our own pace. It’s

an Annie Lennox song.

Sylvia: I checked it out a little.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: It's something. It's something. [Dre laughs quietly]

Mina [1:11:48]

Austin: I need to look up these lyrics. Wow. I mean, this gives me a way in, to some degree, to maybe start talking about Mina. Jack, if you want to go character by character, Mina seems like somewhere we can start. This movie gets made because, in a real way, Winona Ryder sells it to Coppola. And her interest in the script is what led her to do that. So, I'll just read from the Wikipedia here:

Winona Ryder initially brought the script, written by James V. Hart, to the attention of Coppola. The director had agreed to meet with her so the two could clear the air after her late withdrawal from *The Godfather Part III* caused production delays on that film and led her to believe Coppola disliked her. According to Ryder, quote, "I never really thought he would read it. He was so consumed with Godfather III. As I was leaving, I said, 'If you have a chance, read this script.' He glanced down at it politely, but when he saw the word Dracula, his eyes lit up. It was one of his favorite stories from camp." Ryder also explained that "what attracted me to the script is the fact that it's a very emotional love story, which is not really what you think of when you think about Dracula. Mina, like many women in the late 1800s, has a lot of repressed sexuality. Everything about women in that era, the way those corsets forced them to move, was indicative of repression. To express passion was freakish."

And then, so on and so on. And so, she very much was coming to this with that part of it at the center. You know, this paragraph kind of goes on to say that Coppola says that he wanted the entire film to seem like an erotic dream. And Mina going from embarrassed looking at, you know, drawings from the *Kama Sutra* to, you know, openly sucking at

Dracula's bloody wounds is a big part of that arc, for her. [laughs] You know? That is...the sexual repression seems like one of the biggest ways to talk about this movie and to think about Mina, but I'm curious if anybody else has any other thoughts on Mina or Winona Ryder's performance, which I think is pretty good.

Sylvia: Oh, yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

Sylvia: She's one of my favorite performances in the movie. I think she does a really good job, considering the fact that, like, she has to have onscreen chemistry with so many people [**Jack:** "Yeah"] and manages to, in the right ways.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah.

Sylvia: Like, there's...obviously, the stuff with her and Dracula and her and— I think even her and Keanu clearly have chemistry, even though he's, like we've said, struggling a bit.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: But like, when she's...like, the scenes with her and Anthony Hopkins, Van Helsing, that dynamic— she fits into that dynamic really well, both early on, when he is being weird old man [**Austin:** "Uh huh"] to this, like, curious wide-eyed girl, and then later, when she's got sort of this more, like, vengeful take towards him.

Austin: Yeah. Also, her and Lucy, frankly, have such an incredible energy.

Sylvia: Oh! Right. Jesus Christ. How could I forget? [Austin laughs]

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Yeah, those two are fantastic together.

Sylvia: Yeah, no, that's...like I said, Lucy's in a bit of a dating sim, and there's a secret fourth path where you get to date Mina. [Dre and Austin laugh]

Austin: Yes. There's something so...you know, watching this, having seen it before, I knew that there was no, like, big Mina/Lucy falling out, but one of the things I really appreciate about this story is that, like...there are versions of this sort of pairing that naturally arrive at a split. And there's a narrative split here, obviously, and you can frame their outcomes as being in opposition, but the two of them never stop loving each other, and they, as people, are never forced into antagonism. You know, despite their difference.

Jack: It's the same with the lads, right?

Austin: Yeah, totally.

Jack: And, you know, my first thought was, like, "Oh, that's because the central conflict in this film is with Dracula," but the ways in which that conflict plays out...you know, it's not even like they're using all their negative energy on Dracula.

Austin: Right.

Jack: It really does feel like this movie is operating on a different emotional register to a lot of other...it really does feel dreamlike.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: It does feel like an erotic dream, right? In the sense that, like, in theory, everybody in this movie could be fighting with each other, and often they are literally violently fighting with each other.

Austin: And that's a way to tell the story. I, as a GM, do this a lot, where it's like, "Ah, I've hit that everyone in this party cares about X, but they care about X in different ways. Let me see if I can drive a wedge between them to create interesting drama." See the, uh...

Jack: [chuckles] In the Oratorio.

Austin: What do you call— the Oratorio, yeah, yeah, yeah. [Sylvia laughs] The Davia

Pledge Oratorio, right? Or see Feast of Patina. This is, like, a classic— Friends at the Table often gets towards the end of a season, and it's like, "Okay, I've seen that everyone cares about these things. How do I bring those things into conflict?" And there's a version of this where the lads all differ or where Mina and Lucy, like, their different kind of social positions—both literally in terms of income, but also in terms of the way they see themselves as different versions of the New Woman emerging onto London—would put them into conflict, and it just never does.

Jack: No.

Austin: Because that's not what this is interested in, and that's so fascinating.

Jack: I'm trying to think if I had anything on Mina...

Austin: Any other Mina thoughts?

Jack: I mean, there's just, like, the classic thing of her costuming. Her neckline **[Austin:** "Mm, sure"] moves up and down over the course of this movie. As soon as she— so, she starts wearing lower and lower neckline things as we get closer to this great absinth scene. There's a lovely detail that I want to go back and check. So, you know, at one point— so, we see them dancing together, and then he's in this sort of little parlor room, and we can see the silhouettes of people dancing behind, and then, later, we see just Dracula alone in that parlor room, and the silhouettes of the people behind—

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: I can't tell if their fighting or having sex or like... [someone chuckles] there has been some sort of— well, that's this whole fucking movie. [Dre laughs]

Austin: Uh huh, yep.

Jack: There's been some sort of a...like, some sort of a transformation has come upon these silhouettes, and it's just a background detail that I love. But yeah, her neckline gets lower and lower, and then she gets a letter saying, "Marry me in Romania," and it's like, wham! Up goes the collar again. [Austin and Jack laugh]

Austin: Yes.

Jack: We see— there's a fantastic Mina line. So, she gets this letter saying, "Marry me in Romania," and we see her walking through the garden, and her first spoken line after getting this is something like, "He must never know about my dalliance with the prince!" [laughs quietly]

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And it's like, what a great line. And then, you know, she keeps a fairly high neckline until the scene where she's trying to seduce Van Helsing, where she's, you know, physically pulling the top of her dress apart.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah.

Jack: And it's not exactly— like, a lot of this movie is not exactly subtle. The bit where he stabs a cross and blood comes out—

Sylvia: Ugh, so good.

Jack: And then blood comes out of the eyes of all the statues, and then blood pours from the church.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: It was like, oh, that's the movie we're doing? But yeah, it is interesting, this idea that, like, on top of this great crashing unsubtlety of, you know, Mina's neckline and of blood pouring from crosses and things, [**Austin:** "Mm-hmm"] there is this kind of underpinning of, like, how the relationships in this thing are working are really nuanced and are really interesting.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: I don't know that I have anything else on Mina.

Austin: One of the things that you— wait, well, one of the things that you hit on, though,

that's not Mina specific but does, again, tie back into the fact that there is not this internal conflict between everybody...there's something about this movie that...and I guess I already kind of hit this a little bit, but there's a— when I was talking about specifically the cut from cutting off Lucy's head to the roast beef or whatever it is being cut into. There's a version of this movie that presents all of the kind of excess and violence and sexual desire and the taboo-breaking stuff with the werewolf-slash-wolf and the kind of forceful sex that happens in this movie and the sort of, like, joyous weird bubbly way that Van Helsing moves around the world, where he is like, he's at his most happy when all of this is all happening, right?

Jack: [laughs quietly] So stoked.

Austin: And does the sort of, you know...I was gonna go to, uh...what the fuck is the name of the game? Oh my god. That Brendan Keogh wrote a book about? Uh...

Jack: *Spec Ops*.

Austin: *Spec Ops: The Line*. But why go to *Spec Ops: The Line* when we're already in the world of Coppola and we can just go right to, uh...wow, I'm now losing my...yeah, well—

Sylvia: *Apocalypse Now*?

Austin: *Apocalypse Now*, in which there's a sort of chiding of the viewer, of the sort of, like, "Ah, you felt horny for a moment when these people felt horny, and it was a bad horny, wasn't it?" and this just doesn't do that, right? This doesn't do the sort of, like, rubbing your nose in the enjoyment of the dreamlike sex and violence. It's interested in the anxiety around it. It's interested in making you uncomfortable and also intrigued, which is, like, the heart of Mina throughout this whole movie [Dre chuckles] is that, like, discomfort is intriguing to her, because she lives a very comfortable life and could stand to be a little bit more like Lucy, in terms of putting herself out there, and that, to her, ends up being something that's pleasurable, and it wants us to sit in the ambivalence of that pleasure and fear.

Jack: Yeah, truly.

Austin: It really does, but it doesn't resolve that into a tsking, do you know what I mean?

Jack: No.

Austin: No one ever tut-tuts you for being like, "This ten minute montage of Dracula arriving is confusing and scary and sexy all at once." It makes you sit with that and arrive at something, maybe, but it doesn't do that— and I think Mina is, in many ways, at the heart of that, because it allows her to end the movie, right? She does not have to be scolded at the end by Jonathan [laughs quietly] for her love of Dracula. She doesn't have to— we don't have to see her return to his arms to kind of, you know, reinstate the perfect, you know, marriage or something. It doesn't— we don't need that. And it's probably the thing I like most about this movie is that that seems to be one of the cores of its philosophy is like, fucking, knock you off your stable base and make you kind of stumble around a bit and realize halfway through that you kind of like— that stumbling is a little like dancing, you know?

Jack: Yeah. And the characters do this...

Austin: And not feel like they have to resolve that. Yes.

Jack: All the time. You know, like, in the— I suppose the closest thing we have to, like, the consummation scene between Dracula and Mina, both characters are having this really complex sort of series of decision-making, right? Where, like you said earlier, at one point, Dracula goes, "Oh, no, wait. Actually, I don't want to do this." Or, no, first Mina says, "Actually, no, wait. I don't want to do this," and then she's like, "Mm, no, actually, let's do it." And Dracula goes, "No, actually, wait, let's not do it," and then Mina is the one who's like, "No, absolutely, I do want this. I want to, you know, see love as you see love and see death as you see death."

Austin: Right.

Jack: Oh, it's a great movie.

Austin: Any other Mina thoughts? Anything else jump to mind? [sighs] Also, where do we go next? Who is our second...?

Dracula [1:23:39]

Sylvia: I mean, I feel like that leads right into the big man himself: Dracula.

Jack: Ah, Drac?

Austin: Dracula, the big man. Yeah.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: Or [imitates] Dracul, as they keep calling him.

Austin: Dracul. D, as he signs his letters. [Dre laughs]

Jack: D.

Sylvia: Oh, so good.

Jack: Mina calls him— god, what does Mina call him? Like, “my special friend”? She has a... [Austin laughs] I want to find this in the...uh, *Dracula* 1992...

Sylvia: Oh, yeah. I only remember the, like, “my prince,” stuff. I don’t remember.

Jack: She has a great...she has a great, like, what’s the word? Name for him.

Sylvia: A pet name?

Jack: Yeah. Uh, not to his face. She does it to— [laughs] there’s a really funny moment where we hear—

Austin: Oh, huh.

Jack: At one point, before he’s introduced, Van Helsing starts speaking as a narrator,

and the subtitle just said, “narrator.”

Austin: Yes.

Jack: And both Kat and I went, “There’s a fucking narrator?” [laughter]

Austin: Can I tell you my— while you’re looking this up, can I tell you my favorite shot of Dracula in this whole movie?

Jack: Mm, what is it? I found it.

Sylvia: Please.

Austin: It is when, still in the castle, Keanu is like, “What is going on here? This is all— this place is fucking weird. I’m not having a good time. There’s wolves out there.” You know, it’s right off of the...Dre, the line you mentioned.

Jack: [laughs] I think I know this.

Sylvia: The inferno line? [Dre laughs]

Austin: The bloody— yeah, [imitating Keanu’s British accent] “Bloody wolves chasing me through a blue inferno!”

Jack: [imitating] “Bloody wolves.”

Austin: [laughs] It’s so funny. And Dracula’s like, “Oh, yeah, they make sweet music,” and he’s like, “That’s not music,” or something like that and looks outside, and in the time it took him to turn around and look outside, Dracula has left the room [Dre laughs] and is crawling on hands and knees [**Sylvia:** “God”] across a wall or a rooftop?

Jack: Horrid little fucking bug.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And it’s hard to tell rooftops from walls. They blend, across this castle, in a way that’s incredible, including a sequence—

Jack: Oh, there's that great bit where—

Austin: Yeah, go ahead.

Jack: Where Harker falls and seems to fall sideways?

Austin: Yes! [laughs] It's incredible. But he just looks at the window, and Dracula's just crawling down the fucking wall! And it's shot like...it's shot like found footage in this one moment.

Jack: [laughs] Yeah.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Where it's just like, it just happens. He just crawls past, no big deal. Like, all right, I guess I'm here now. Anyway, what was the...what's the line?

Jack: The thing I found— this is actually in a monologue from Mina as she is on a boat crossing the English Channel to go get married in Romania.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: She throws mementos in the ocean, and I actually—

Austin: Right.

Jack: I want to read the whole paragraph, because it speaks, I think, really clearly to what you were talking about, Austin, about how the movie is trying to destabilize where you, as the viewer's, kind of comfort is. And she says:

It's odd, but I feel almost that my strange friend is with me. He speaks to me in my thoughts. With him, I felt more alive than ever I had. And now, without him, soon to be a bride, I feel confused and lost. Perhaps, though I try to be good, I am bad. Perhaps I am a bad, inconstant woman.

Austin: The dream. Ah.

Jack: Which I think is great. Great Mina writing.

Austin: Incredible. The thing about...you know, it is...I can imagine the viewer who is like, "Damn, Dracula's got his—" I guess Quincey Morris is the viewer in this scenario. [Dre and Jack laugh] [Quincey voice] "Dracula's got his magic fingers in her brain, getting her all confused." But I don't think the rest of the movie, like, works, if that's how you see the movie. Do you know what I—

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Like, I don't think it's coherent if you think that her entire affection for him is about magic Jedi mind tricks, vampire mind tricks, you know? I just don't think it functions.

Sylvia: It definitely doesn't fit with the way that the rest of it, like, is presented at all.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: Like, I think that reading works. Like, there's a lot of scenes where it looks like he is clearly trying to, like, enthrall her.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: But at the same time, like, it makes the movie a lot less interesting to me, in a lot of ways?

Austin: Yeah. He's definitely doing— he is definitely doing it, for sure.

Jack: Yeah.

Sylvia: Oh, for sure.

Austin: But I think it's like...

Jack: Where does that blur into...

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Into her desire. I don't know.

Jack: I was about to say, like...I was about to say, like, "Where does that blur into legitimate affection?" but what the fuck is "legitimate affection" in this movie?

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: A woman has sex with a werewolf in front of a mausoleum. [Austin and Dre laugh]

Sylvia: I think that's just as legitimate as any other form of affection.

Jack: Yeah, exactly.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Um...

Jack: The big man.

Austin: The big man, Dracul. Where— what—

Jack: What the fuck is going on here?

Austin: What the fuck?

Sylvia: I can say, like, stuff that I really liked about the way they presented him, at least at first.

Austin: Please.

Sylvia: They do a lot of really fun— you've mentioned, like, the cape trailing behind.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: They do a lot of fun reflection bits.

Austin: Yes!

Dre: Yeah!

Sylvia: One of my favorites is when he's watching Mina through a window, and he's buying a newspaper, and you can see the boy selling him the newspaper and the newspaper hanging in the reflection but not him opening it.

Austin: Uh huh!

Jack: I did not see that. Oh, that's so good.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: Yeah, it's really good.

Austin: It's so fucking good.

Sylvia: It's one of those things you can kinda miss, but I love it. And there's a scene in the castle— I think it's during the shaving scene, and he's like—

Austin: Yes.

Sylvia: When he approaches John Harker, I think he's like on a platform or something is how they filmed this, because he just slides in close to him.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: And it's...like, it's a little goofy, but it also [Austin sighs] gets it across so well that this dude is...a creature. [chuckles] You know?

Austin: He's a creature! Yeah!

Jack: A horrible gremlin.

Austin: That's also a sequence where he doesn't show up in the mirror, and Harker's just about to notice it, and—

Dre: He breaks the mirror.

Austin: Dracula, like, “Ah!” looks away and breaks the mirror, yeah.

Jack: Does he break the mirror by magic? I didn't know what exactly happened there.

Dre: Seems like it.

Austin: I think it's magic. That seems like magic.

Jack: [laughs] He has a great— he says, “Ah, men's vanity,” and it's like, that's your excuse, Dracula?

Austin: Yeah. [laughs] Well, and then takes— when it breaks, Keanu has cut his neck.

Jack: Oh, it's so horrible! It's great.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Cut his neck on the razor, and Dracula takes the razor blade away from him and then licks it clean.

Jack: Licks the razor!

Sylvia: [laughs] It's so gross.

Dre: And then finishes shaving him.

Austin: And then finishes shaving him, yeah.

Jack: And then finishes shaving him!

Austin: Uh huh.

Sylvia: Speaking of gay shit in the movie.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Yeah, speaking of this being an extremely homoerotic text.

Jack: God. Dracula's hands are so deliberate [**Austin:** “Uh huh”] and so much

attention, both by the camera and by the performer, [**Austin:** “Yeah”] is being paid to, like, what his hands are doing and how his hands are moving, and as much— I felt like, when he’s shaving him, as much of our attention is on the other hand on Keanu Reeves’s neck as it is on the hand holding the blade.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: It is...it is...that’s some gay shit happening in this movie! [Dre laughs]

Austin: Yeah. Uh huh. [Sylvia laughs] Well, and it’s... [sighs] You know, I think we can...I suspect, if you go back to 1992 when this comes out, you will find readings of this that are about how this is playing in a very traditionally, you know, homophobic space, in which...

Jack: [quietly] Oh, sure...

Austin: Right? But I think that there— [sighs] it’s 2021, and I’m happy to— I mean, you know, I think this year we’ve seen a lot of discussion around how you approach a text and how you go into it and whether you’re trying to kind of find something for yourself in it or whether you’re trying to knock it down a few pegs and identify the ways in which— let’s say, straight up: identify the ways in which it can do harm, right? And I think there’s already been a lot of great work on how vampires are often depicted.

Jack: [chuckles] Dracula.

Austin: And Dracula specifically. Deeply, you know, homophobic. Deeply, often, antisemitic. Framed around the other, in all of the ways in which those particular anxieties end up animating into real life harm for real life people, so I don’t know that we need to break new ground on that, but more than that, I don’t know that this film— when I look at those scenes...it’s clear that Dracula is a predator across his life in this way, right? But I don’t know that the fact that he wants to fuck Keanu Reeves is a special sort of, like, evil, in this film.

Jack: It’s like...yeah, it’s like...

Austin: This film wants to fuck Keanu Reeves. [Dre laughs]

Jack: It's like sex is moving through this film as an energy and as an entity sort of independent or moving within all of the characters.

Austin: Right.

Jack: It is this erotic dream vibe.

Austin: Right. Well, and even...another thing is, with this story, it was already transgressive that the vampire brides wanted to fuck Keanu Reeves, that like— or not Keanu Reeves. He is not in the book.

Jack: Keanu Reeves! [Dre laughs]

Austin: In the book, the fact that John Harker is framed as passive to their advances is, at the time, in 1900, [**Jack:** "Right"] is transgressive and strange, in terms of what the kind of public sexual politics were. And so, I think it's playing in that space, and I want to give it room to play in that space for all the reasons I think that excite us, which is that, like, in many ways, the sexiest *Dracula* scene is some of the Dracula/John Harker stuff, for many different reasons, but I think a lot of it has to do with just the onscreen...it's strange to call it chemistry, because I think Keanu's really struggling in this role.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: But John Harker's struggling, and it works, you know?

Jack: Yes.

Sylvia: Yeah, there's something about his performance coming off, like, very confused and out of his element that, like...

Austin: Yes.

Sylvia: You know, he was, but it works really well for this character.

Austin: Yes. Yeah. I think especially in this early part when he's in the castle, because

that is when he is at— that is when those two things are as aligned as they can be, you know?

Jack: He has this great monologue. He sends some letters that are like, “I’m here helping Dracula with his letters, and I’m buying houses.” And then he has another monologue where he’s like, “I’m fucked! This place is going to kill me!” [all laugh]

Austin: What’s everyone’s favorite version of Dracula that we get? Of the ten different Draculas.

Sylvia: Oh.

Austin: Of mist Dracula, rat Dracula...

Jack: Rat. No, I don’t even know.

Austin: Bat, wolf, old with the weird hair, old with gross wet hair at the end, [Dre laughs] young goth chic with sunglasses...

Dre: Oh. Yeah, what’s your best Dracula tier list? [laughs]

Austin: Am I missing a Dracula? Yeah, yeah, yeah. [Jack laughs] I guess ancient warrior or medieval warrior Dracula.

Sylvia: Oh.

Dre: Yeah. I feel like rats and ancient warrior Dracula are probably my two favorite.

Sylvia: Yeah, if the armor is included—

Austin: It’s gotta be.

Sylvia: Then that one’s, like, top of the list for me. That’s just, like, incredibly cool shit. I do really like him when he’s old towards the end. I think that’s a much, like, creepier

[**Austin:** “Mm-hmm”] representation of that than the one that they have when he’s at the beginning, which I guess makes sense, [**Austin:** “Yeah”] because he’s trying to keep things slightly under control. [Jack laughs]

Austin: Yes.

Sylvia: At least at the beginning.

Jack: Threaten him with a sword.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Ah, the sword. So good.

Jack: I like slimy putative Dracula who appears in the box, at one point.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: We just get this, like, shot of his face pushing through a membrane. That's pretty cool.

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: Oh. There's one when he's, like, cry— I think it's after Mina's left to go marry John.

Dre: When he's crying blood?

Austin: Oh.

Sylvia: Yeah, and he's got prosthetics on his face too, during that scene, I'm pretty sure.

Austin: Huh.

Dre: Yeah, it's like he's crying blood and becoming more, like, beastlike.

Jack: Yes, he is.

Sylvia: It's like he's halfway into his bat form or something, yeah. That one was also very...

Austin: That's good.

Sylvia: Good, yeah.

Jack: Monster prosthetics I was really impressed with, specifically the way whoever the creature designers were had left enough room for them to emote.

Austin: Yeah!

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Jack: The scene where— his pre-rat scene, overshadowed by the rats, where he's this bat monster with these incredible bat arms. He has to look directly, basically, into the camera and deliver dialogue in this prosthetic makeup, and the amount of movement that he gets on his face and in his mouth is really, really impressive. I was...I was thinking, "How did they do this?"

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: This can't be Roman Coppola. [laughs quietly] Has to be [inaudible] special...
[Sylvia laughs]

Austin: No, that part was not. I'm sure they had an on-staff creature designer that was not— Roman Coppola figured out the, like, fun cross-fades, and like—

Jack: Alternatively, have we considered maybe that Roman Coppola is a virtuoso?
[Jack, Austin, and Dre laugh]

Austin: I mean, if he was the person who figured out the, like, rats crawling upside down on the ceiling while—

Jack: Oh, they crawl upside down!

Austin: And the way they did that was just they shot on the same film twice! It's like, literally the first film trick is: if we cover most of the film up or the camera with felt—

Jack: It's some Lumière brothers.

Austin: It is 100% that. It's great.

Jack: My favorite Dracula actually, and I want to talk about this, because I think it's such an important part of the early movie, is: can we talk about Dracula's shadow?

Austin: Yes!

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Sylvia: Yes! Oh my god.

Austin: It's the best. It's so good.

Jack: How the fuck did they shoot that? And what do we think the shadow is doing in this movie?

Austin: I don't know. Oh, well, so, Coppola says that a thing he wanted to make clear is that when you're in Dracula's castle, physics don't work right. The Earth—

Jack: I think Dracula says this at one point.

Austin: He says that—

Jack: He says, like, "You will see strange things here."

Austin: Yeah. Coppola says that the Earth doesn't spin right in Dracula's castle, which is some Friends at—

Jack: God, it's so good.

Austin: That's some me saying some bullshit that does not hold up under any scrutiny shit, [Dre laughs] and I appreciate it.

Jack: Long moon.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. The shot you're talking about is: Harker comes in, and—

Jack: There are a couple of these, actually.

Austin: Right. You're right. It happens, like, all the time in there. But there is: Harker comes into the castle, and we see the shadow of Dracula coming around the corner, hands out in this kind of creepy gesture, and then the camera just pans— and it's, like, coming around a corner. So, we leave that corner, panning right to beyond where Dracula could yet be, because the shadow is being projected from around the corner, and instead, we see Dracula holding up a little lantern, this little beautiful stained glass lantern.

Jack: It's like a censer, right?

Austin: It is like a censer, yeah. Already there, and the shadow sort of, like, locks into place behind him. It's beautiful and scary. It's so good.

Jack: At one point, uh...again, this film is not subtle, but it is beautiful. At one point, we have Dracula and his shadow standing in front of a map of London. Dracula steps forward— you know, behind the camera, so towards us. His shadow remains and turns towards Harker, falling over the map of London. [Austin laughs] In another shot, the shadow of his hand passes over a desk and the shadow knocks over an inkwell, and then Dracula's hand enters the shot. It's spectacular.

Austin: And that's the scene where he sees Mina, finally, right?

Dre: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: Yes, yes.

Sylvia: There's a lot of, like...they do a lot of the, like, Dracula taking an almost incorporeal form. He does that towards the end, when he turns into the funny farty gas. [Dre laughs]

Jack: It's green. Not a lot of green in this movie, but Dracula...

Austin: Funny farty, uh...funny farty fatal gas, thank you.

Sylvia: Oh, for sure.

Jack: Yeah, this is FFF gas.

Sylvia: Like, he gets Renfield real bad. [Austin laughs] But also, like, that's how he gets in to see Mina again too.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: Like, there is a lot of implication that he can, like...the way I read it was the shadow is an extension of his physical form, in a lot of ways.

Dre: Yeah.

Sylvia: The way that he can sort of, like...he's not omnipotent, but he can be in a lot of places at once, you know?

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And he's expressing something...you know, I feel like the moments in the castle earlier when we see Dracula basically be like, "I am sick to the back teeth of this guy, and I want to either fuck him or kill him." [Sylvia laughs quietly] His shadow is doing that kind of thing. [laughs quietly] I think there's a moment where the shadow goes to strangle Harker.

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: [sighs] That's incredible.

Jack: How— this has got to be just some, like, bizarre complex lighting setup with a double, with a second?

Sylvia: Oh, yeah.

Austin: I think so. Yeah, I think that that's it. It has to be. And again—

Jack: Especially if they wanted to do it live.

Austin: Right, that's the other thing, is that you can see footage of people sometimes, like, going to look at the take after it's been done to be like, "Oh, wow, that looks sick." Like, in some of the behind-the-scenes footage, there's stuff of, like, Gary Oldman going over to look at the playback and be like, "All right, yeah, that looks sick." There's also a lot of— in the behind-the-scenes—the 20 minute behind-the-scenes feature on this that has a, like...dedicates like six minutes to Gary Oldman and Coppola fighting.

Jack: Ha!

Sylvia: Oh, wow.

Austin: They were...they did not always see eye to eye on some, like, very key stuff, in terms of both who Dracula was but also just the way in which you would direct a sequence. So, like, you know, there's a sequence early on where Dracula is lecturing Keanu on some shit, and it's like a long take while he's walking down the hallway. They needed another shot of it. And Gary Oldman wanted a mark on the ground, like a little piece of— like a little chalk mark, so he knew when to start speaking, and Coppola was like, "No, there's— you can't do a mark. You have to start speaking when you have to start speaking. Like, you have to— the mark is when you start speaking. That's when the camera will do the thing that I'm trying to do. It's when you start— so you have to start speaking." And he kept doing the walk and then not doing the line. Like, he couldn't find where to do— and it's this really weird back-and-forth between the two of them that is just like, the energy on this set is wild. It's very weird.

And then there's another— there's, like, a counterpart to that, which I think highlights why the big confrontation in the asylum is actually so good, is they shot that scene— the one where he— after the gas, after the blood exchange, before he turns into rats. You know what I'm talking about. That sequence has this incredible violent energy, this like very scary aggro situation. And to get that energy right...they'd shot it a bunch of times, and it wasn't going well, and so Coppola stands up and goes, "All right, everybody. I want to do some improv. All the lads, put on blindfolds. Everybody— Mina, everybody else, put on blindfolds." So, the whole— everybody except for Gary Oldman put on blindfolds. And he brought Gary Oldman over, and he's like, "All right. I want you to just

go up and whisper the most depraved, angry, scary stuff you can think of, in character, in their ears, and they won't know when you're coming up on them.” And so there's this footage of him going around, whispering in their ears and trying to scare them, and them, like, jumping, scared of him showing up in Dracula voice. They can't see him, because they're all blindfolded. And then you see the take immediately after that, and it's like, everyone is on edge. Everyone is just, like, extremely hyped up in this very antsy way, and it's like, yeah, okay. I have seen what our god has done to you. You are a fucking monster. [Dre laughs] So.

Jack: God. Okay, now you need to go and whisper it to all the rats. [Austin and Sylvia laugh]

Austin: And that's how they did the rat scene.

Van Helsing [1:43:09]

Jack: Should we talk about Van Helsing?

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: [laughs] I love this weird fuck.

Sylvia: Ah, this voice.

Dre: What a weird man.

Austin: This voice.

Jack: What is his accent?

Sylvia: I think he's supposed to be German.

Jack: He just says “ja.”

Sylvia: The version I watched— he says, “ja.”

Austin: He says “ja.”

Sylvia: And that's kind of the only indication.

Austin: When he says "ja," he remembers he's supposed to be in an accent. [laughter]

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: Which is like, and he does the accent...when he does the accent, it's better than Keanu's accent, but he is just as inconsistent—maybe even more inconsistent—with doing it.

Sylvia: I don't know. I don't want to be, like, [Austin laughs] too mean to Anthony Hopkins, but it does seem like he phones this shit in a little bit.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

Sylvia: Especially with the voices.

Austin: Yeah, with the voices especially.

Jack: [laughs] I thought he was great. I love this stupid guy. I feel like— so, imagine if this movie was all the same, except they call for Van Helsing, and he shows up, and he's like a staunch militaristic occultist.

Sylvia: No, it would suck.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Oh, yeah, it sucks.

Sylvia: It would be awful.

Jack: And like, the fact that they call for Van Helsing in a moment of crisis, he shows up and does what they asked him to do, and he's also just the weirdest fuck alive? [Dre laughs] It's the best. Van Helsing has a line after— so, after they figure out— after Van Helsing figures out that it's Dracula and after all hell has broken loose with Lucy—she's

not dead yet, but she's nearly dead—Van Helsing has a line that I wrote down, and I was like, “Oh, this is this whole character.” He says, “Guard her well, Mr. Morris. Do not fail here tonight. We are giving the forces beyond all human experience an enormous power. So guard her well, otherwise your precious Lucy will become a bitch of the devil, a whore of darkness.” And Morris says, “Well, you're a sick old buzzard!” [Austin and Dre laugh]

Austin: He does! It's so good.

Jack: Like, what a beautiful...

Austin: You have to understand: he's like humping Morris's leg while delivering this line.

Dre: Uh huh.

Austin: And like jumping up and down, bouncing with the energy.

Jack: He's so excited that he—

Dre: Uh huh.

Austin: Yeah!

Dre: And then tells the other doctor, “All right, now take me to Pizza Hut. I'm hungry.”

Austin: [laughs] He does!

Jack: He's like, “I starve. Feed me.” [Dre laughs]

Sylvia: There is, like, honestly a bit of a Renfieldishness to Van Helsing as well in this.

Austin: Yes.

Sylvia: Not just, like, that they are both weird little guys, [Austin laughs] but also that they're both obsessed with Dracula, right?

Dre: Yeah, totally.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Super obsessed with Dracula.

Sylvia: It's just one of them is being presented like— I don't think purely positively. We've talked about how he's a weird old creep.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sylvia: But it is, like, the two sides of the— like, these are the two ways it goes.

Austin: He's just on— I mean, there is that line about Renfield. There's the sort of classic trope of the, like, "Ah, if only I had the genius of the madman," line that Seward says at some point, right? Before maybe doing heroin? Is that— am I misremembering that sequence?

Sylvia: Yeah. No, he definitely shoots something up.

Dre: It looks like maybe morphine.

Austin: Maybe it's morphine, right.

Jack: But I don't think that the movie is— I don't think that the movie believes any of that shit. You know, like, I don't think Seward is saying, "Oh, if only I had the genius of the madman," and we as the viewer are supposed to go—

Sylvia: Oh, no.

Austin: No, no, no. But—

Jack: I think all of that asylum stuff, we are supposed to be like, "What the fuck is happening here? This is a nightmare."

Austin: Yeah. I think, to paint Sylvi's— the thing I was trying to get at was that if there is a line— there is a line between Renfield and Van Helsing, and Renfield is just on the

other— they're just on the other side of that line in each direction, you know?

Dre: Yeah. Yeah.

Jack: Is that crossing fealty to Dracula, do you think?

Austin: I don't know. Maybe? Because, well, okay, the moment that Renfield crosses back over is when he tries to warn Mina, right? So, maybe it is— maybe it's fealty to others? It's like a desire to protect someone else? Because, at the end of the day...hmm.

Jack: Well, Helsing definitely has that. He shows up, and he—

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's why he's on—

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: That's what I'm saying. He's on that side of it.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Whereas Renfield only crosses over to that side of it in that one moment. Normally, all he cares about is Dracula and consuming lifeblood from bugs and kittens.

Dre: Yeah, to get his eternal life.

Austin: To get his eternal life. And then he crosses over into actually wanting to protect someone when he sees Mina, so. So, yeah, I think that that— to me, the line between the two of them is: do you also— yes, you're obsessed with Dracula, but do you also want to protect people? And Van Helsing seems to want to, but also, the joy he gets when he's like, "Ah, it's my old rival," or whatever.

Sylvia: There are— yeah.

Austin: Which is like, is he?

Sylvia: There are definitely some moments where it's like, oh, no, he's doing this

because the hunt is what's he's enjoying.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Right, right.

Sylvia: There are parts where it seems like he is going to, like...I'm specifically thinking towards the end, where there's moments where it seems like he is going to, like, not follow through with what the group has planned, [**Austin:** "Mm-hmm"] because he's so, like, invested in this— honestly, you know what? Van Helsing, you've got a parasocial relationship with Dracula.

Austin: With Dracula.

Dre: Mm-hmm. Yeah, no.

Jack: You have! Yes, he does have a parasocial—

Sylvia: He doesn't know who you are.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. He's the cause of your soul, but he doesn't know you at all, you know?

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: Ugh, incredible.

Sylvia: Literally that *Mad Men* scene. [Sylvia and Austin laugh quietly]

Jack: What scene?

Sylvia: The "I don't—" uh, I don't remember what the first guy says, where it's like, "I hate you with every fiber of my being," or some shit like that.

Jack: [laughs quietly] Oh, he says, "I don't think of you at all."

Sylvia: And then he's like, "I don't think about you at all." Yeah.

Austin: “I don't think about you at all.” Yeah, uh huh. [laughs]

Jack: Uh, a couple of Van Helsing things, real quick. At the very end of the movie, he says...after Morris dies, he gets— how does he die? He gets stabbed?

Dre: Yeah, he gets stabbed.

Jack: Dracula tears his throat out?

Austin: Yeah, in the fight.

Jack: In the fight? Yeah, I don't know.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: It's not even Dracula kills Morris, right?

Austin: I think it's just a guy.

Dre: Yeah, it's one of his servant people.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Oh, one of Dracula's lads.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, one of the Dracula's lads, yeah.

Sylvia: The Draculads.

Austin: Uh huh. Thank you.

Jack: Helsing says... [laughs quietly] I love this line so much. He says, “We've all become God's madmen,” comma, “all of us.” [Sylvia and Austin laugh]

Jack: It's like this whole movie. You could show me that line on an index card, and I'd be like, “That is *Dracula* 1992.” [Austin and Dre laugh]

Austin: It is!

Jack: “We’ve all become God’s madmen.” Beat. “All of us.” What is he talking about?

Sylvia: The vibe there is so much the guy being like, “We all did this, okay? [Dre laughs] All of us.”

Austin: All of us.

Sylvia: “Not just me!”

Austin: Not just me! I’m not the only one responsible! Poor American cowboy.

Sylvia: Ah. [sighs]

Jack: His creepy little weird dance with Mina is great, especially through a lens, as you talked about it, Austin, right? [Austin sighs] Which is that, like, I think he’s mostly in this for Dracula. If his A goal is “find and kill Dracula,” and his B goal is “behead the three brides,” his C goal is definitely “possess, in some way, the bodies of the young women adjacent to Dracula.”

Austin: [laughs] Yes. Because he’s just a Dracula!

Jack: Right, he kind of is just a— he says something like, “This is the reason for my soul,” when he realizes that Dracula is in town.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Jack: But my first read on that weird little dance, because it comes just off the back of us seeing Dracula and Mina dancing in the same way, and we’re at a point in the movie where Mina’s relationship with Dracula is currently secret...him doing that weird little dance, even though there’s no way he could know, the fact that the camera has put those scenes together made me go, “Oh, he knows.”

Austin: He does. This is— or he doesn’t know, but you’ve hit it exactly, because I just remembered a detail about when Anthony Hopkins pitched this scene: he can smell

Dracula on her. He's trying to smell Dracula on her face.

Sylvia: God!

Jack: The vibe of that little dance, for me—

Austin: Yes.

Jack: That's so Anthony Hopkins, though. [laughs]

Austin: Oh, yeah, it is, 100%. [laughs quietly] He's like, [imitating] "Ah, what if I did a little dance with you where I could smell Dracula on your face?"

Jack: [crosstalk] "To smell you."

Austin: Like, "Uhhh, yeah, okay, let's try it, I guess. [Jack laughs] All right, it worked!"

Jack: But it leads to this dream logic, the dream logic of the movie, right? And the dream logic being, you know, pinned on intimacy and sex as well, right?

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Where it's like, the fact that the camera...the fact that, in the timeline of the movie, these scenes of these two people performing a very similar dance with each other communicated to me, in that moment, "Oh, the second character has figured out that the first dance happened."

Austin: [laughs quietly] Right.

Jack: [laughs] Because he's a fucking weird little creep.

Austin: He's a weird little creep. Yeah, uh huh.

Jack: Anything else?

Austin: I like that he's not, like, filled with devices. Like, he has some devices. Sometimes you get a Van Helsing adaptation...

Dre: Oh, yeah. [Sylvia and Jack laugh]

Austin: You know what I mean? And he's got, like, an eight, you know, bolt crossbow ready to go.

Jack: Crossbow.

Sylvia: A machine gun crossbow?

Austin: Which is like, there's—

Dre: What was the fucking movie...? Was that a Hugh Jackman?

Jack: It's *Van Helsing*. It's Hugh Jackman.

Sylvia: That was Hugh Jackman, yeah.

Austin: *Van Helsing*'s Hugh Jackman, yeah.

Sylvia: I've seen that movie double digits number of times.

Jack: Is it good, Sylvi?

Austin: Wow.

Jack: I mean, like, is it fun?

Sylvia: No, it's fucking terrible.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: I just had it when I was a kid.

Austin: I saw it in theaters, so I feel you.

Dre: Ah.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: I would pay any amount of money to see this movie in theaters with you.

Sylvia: Oh my god!

Austin: Oh. Yeah, agreed.

Sylvia: Yeah, someone please organize a *Dracula* screening when we are all also in geographically similar locations.

Austin: The same place, yeah.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: A couple of days ago, I watched the 2000—so it's eight years after this—the 2000 Disney Channel original movie, *Mom's Got a Date with a Vampire*. [Sylvia laughs]

Dre: Sure.

Austin: Is that a sequel or is that like a Disney continuity?

Jack: It's a spinoff. It's a spiritual sequel.

Austin: Okay.

Dre: Yeah. It's the new, uh, Marvel what-if.

Jack: They got Roman Coppola to do the effects.

Austin: Oh, okay. [laughs] Okay, I see, yeah.

Jack: That movie has a really spectacular Van Helsing, who's basically played as, like...it's another weird Columbo, [Austin laughs] which is a character that Disney Channel original movies really love.

Austin: Gotcha.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: This Van Helsing does have a lot of gadgets, but unlike the Hugh Jackman Van Helsing, all of the gadgets in this *Mom's Got a Date with a Vampire* movie are, like, really cool, in a way that you do not expect to be in a 2000 Disney Channel original movie. Like, at one point, he wants to figure out where the vampire has gone, so he draws a chalk compass on the ground, places tea lights—like, little tiny candles—all around it, and then a big burst of flame comes out of the center of the thing, and one of the tea lights has gone out.

Austin: Oh, that's great!

Dre: That's awesome.

Austin: That rules.

Jack: KB and I were watching it, and we were like, the magic in this movie has come from a different movie. [Austin and Jack laugh] I do not know what has happened here.

Austin: Yeah, that sounds great. But you know, the devices that he has in this are, like, an experimental blood transfusion device.

Jack: Requires three men.

Austin: [laughs quietly] That requires three men.

Dre: And a bike pump.

Austin: Yeah, and a bike pump. He has, uh...

Jack: Communion wafer.

Austin: Communion wafer. He does have candle— or, you know, a torch that he draws a line with.

Dre: Mm.

Austin: I guess he has garlic. He garlicks up Lucy.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: But that's kind of it. It's all the basics.

Dre: Some crosses.

Jack: The cross, an Orthodox cross, yeah.

Austin: Crosses, yeah, yeah. Definitely Orthodox cross.

Dre: He's got the, like...the book that's not the bible. It's, like, the...I forget what the word for it is.

Jack: It's called just, like, "Vampires" or something.

Dre: No, but he's got a book that he reads, like, a chant or a something out of.

Austin: Oh, right.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: During the sort of pseudo exorcism stuff.

Dre: Right, yeah.

Jack: When was *The Exorcist* released?

Austin: Well before this.

Sylvia: Yeah, definitely before this.

Austin: Decades before this.

Jack: '73. Yeah, okay, cool.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, they're channeling *The Exorcist* in a real way during that sequence.

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Jack: In a big— like, “The power of Christ compels you,” all that shit.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: I mean, I know that comes from exorcisms, but as soon as a character in a film [Austin laughs] brandishes a cross and shouts, “The power of Christ compels you!”

Austin: Yeah, yeah. You're in that space. And gets vomited on, except in this case, it's blood.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah, I don't really have much more on Van Helsing. I think we get weird little creep, et cetera.

Jack: He could crawl...

Austin: There's a great shot of him downing his, like, beer, his dark beer during dinner, in a single take. He has a huge mug of dark liquid.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Jack: It's, like, a glass of dark liquid, yeah.

Austin: And he just, *gulp gulp gulp gulp gulp gulp!* you know? It's almost as if this movie has things to say about, like, you know, excess and feasting and et cetera, you know? [Jack laughs quietly] Not having restraint.

Dre: Yeah.

Jonathan Harker [1:55:24]

Austin: You want to talk about Jonathan Harker? Jonathan Harker thoughts?

Dre: Oh, man. The silver fox.

Austin: The wig...I know. It's so funny that he comes back and has increasingly graying hair, until it's—

Jack: And then it turns black again.

Austin: Oh, does it, at the end?

Sylvia: It's like—

Jack: I did not notice this until the transcript. What were you going to say, Sylvi?

Austin: Huh.

Sylvia: Oh, wow. Well, I was gonna say I noticed that it looked more natural later, in the scenes where— because the final confrontation's, like, outside at night in the snow.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: And I didn't realize that his hair was supposed to have turned back at— like, started turning back at that point. That makes a lot more sense than just being like, "Oh, they lit that wig a lot better." [Dre and Jack laugh]

Austin: He's such a... [sighs] It's worth saying that Keanu Reeves got, like, absolutely just scaldingly, scaldingly hot criticism for his performance in this film, when this movie came out.

Jack: I don't think anybody can review this movie—

Austin: People hated it.

Jack: I don't think it's a film— [laughs quietly] what do reviews of this look like? Bad, presumably.

Austin: No! No, it's mixed to good. 70-something percent on Rotten Tomatoes. Ebert liked it—gave it three out of four stars, which is like, you know, yeah—and also fundamentally got it, in a way that I was shocked by. He basically says, like, "Nothing looks like this, and it was a joy to look at," and he's just right, you know?

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: And has only gotten more right since then—

Sylvia: Oh my god, yeah.

Austin: Because movies immediately stopped being able to look like this, you know? Like, right after this, so.

Dre: Mm.

Sylvia: [laughs sadly] Don't say that. That's so depressing.

Austin: It's so depressing! I mean, that's the thing to understand about this is that, like, in a real way, Coppola is anticipating what's about to happen in movies, that CG is coming.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: And he wants to make this grand epic, an adaptation of this book that's never done the book right. Like, there are other *Dracula* movies out, but none of them did the story of *Dracula* the way it's actually— like, they combined characters. They didn't have— you know, it's classic adaptation stuff, right? And he wanted to do it in this grand Hollywood tradition with lots of already super out-of-date, you know, graphic techniques, and a big part of it was because he could tell that CG was about to take over. And like, I don't know; I just watched *Loki*, [**Dre:** "Mm"] and there are scenes of people in that fucking show at, like, a restaurant together, and nothing around them is real. It's a table with glasses on it, and the extras aren't even real. It's just— I mean, they're obviously, someone somewhere shot an extra, but that's just being blopped in via greenscreen in the background.

Jack: It's cheaper, Austin.

Austin: Yeah, it's cheaper, [laughs quietly] because they're not paying union workers. It sucks.

Jack: But, I mean, to this point, though, I feel like...you and Sylvi are right in that, like, they don't make things like this anymore, but we do also, every year, right, see a big crop of movies that part of the conversation around the circuit is, "Oh, they used a bunch of practical effects."

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Or they returned— you know, they resisted CGI. And I think that if you haven't seen the film we're talking about today, you might think that...you might think you've seen movies like that, and you're like—

Austin: You're right.

Jack: This film uses practical effects in a way that is outlandish, even for 1992. [laughs quietly]

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Right.

Jack: It's like, you take me the heaviest practical effect movies of the last two decades, and they won't get close to a tenth of the weird bullshit that this movie is doing. It's like, it's not just a film with a bunch of practical effects. It's a film with a bunch of the most striking practical effects I have ever seen.

Austin: Mm-hmm. The use of color in this movie [**Dre:** "Yeah"] is just out of this world. And it's all— it's, like, mostly matte paintings and light projection.

Jack: God, the scene where—

Austin: Just like, someone projecting red onto a person or whatever.

Jack: Mina and Dracula meeting in the streets of...where are we?

Austin: London.

Jack: London. Right, yes, we are in London. [Sylvia laughs] I was confused by Keanu Reeves, who... [laughs] In the streets of London, and everybody around them is kind of in sepia.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: To the point where you would watch it, and you go, "Oh, this has been so heavily color graded," and there's obviously been some color grading.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: But then, Dracula and Mina walk into the frame— oh, no, it's later, when there's a cart that has a big purple hood on the car, like a shiny purple hood, [**Austin:** "Mm"] in a scene that is otherwise so desaturated that my thought would have been, "Oh, they just shot it, like, extremely desaturated. They, you know, they brought all the colors down."

Austin: Right. Right.

Jack: But they can't have done, because there's this exceptionally bright color moving, you know, beautifully through the middle of it.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Yeah, it's unbelievable. I think it's a little telling that we started talking about Jonathan Harker [Dre laughs] and immediately started talking about how good the movie looks.

Sylvia: I mean, you know.

Dre: Yeah, I mean, he's...

Sylvia: It fits for him.

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: Something KB pointed out— KB had a very similar reaction to us, to being like, “What’s this fucking weirdo doing in this movie?” That is Jonathan Harker, right? Like, Jonathan Harker is this character.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: You know, someone who’s just—

Austin: I believe that that is accurate, yeah.

Jack: Someone who is just pulled into something that is beyond their understanding spiritually, beyond their understanding sexually, beyond their understanding sort of holistically, and just drifts around monstrosly inside this nightmare, [**Austin:** “Mm-hmm”] while all the characters in the periphery of his life have to deal with it in a much more concrete practical way. And in that way—

Austin: I mean, listen: he practically also did get all the blood sucked out of him for 30 days or whatever.

Dre: That’s true.

Austin: So I don’t want to undersell the material cost that he lived through. I just—

Jack: Oh, no, no, no. That’s true.

Austin: You know.

Jack: But he’s not out here, like, “We need to do a three-man blood transfusion to save this woman—” [Dre laughs]

Austin: No. [laughs] No, he’s not.

Jack: “Who’s been having an orgasm for 25 minutes.”

Austin: [laughs] No, he’s not. He is, instead, being a three-woman blood transfusion.

Jack: [laughs] Oh! Can we talk about the scene where they come out of the bed?

Austin: It's incredible.

Sylvia: Yes, we can.

Dre: Jesus.

Jack: What happens in this scene? Like, for people who haven't seen it.

Austin: Okay, you have to understand: that scene has— that scene starts with Keanu Reeves having been told, "Hey, don't..."

Jack: Don't...

Austin: "Don't go anywhere. Don't do anything."

Jack: This is really early in the movie.

Austin: It's very early in the movie.

Jack: We haven't warmed up.

Austin: No. First of all, he opens a trunk and finds a collection of old potions. [laughs quietly]

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And he takes the top off a potion!

Austin: And elixirs. Yeah? And what happens?

Jack: Drops form on the rim of the bottle and fall upwards.

Austin: It's incredible! I have no idea how they did that, but it's great. [Dre laughs] And he's like, "Well, that's not for me!" Puts the lid back on, puts it away. [Dre, Jack, and Austin laugh] And then, someone's like, [beckoning] "Jonathan. Come over here, Jonathan. Come to me."

Jack: “Come to my arms, Jonathan.”

Austin: And he walks towards a big curtain, and he goes to open the curtain, and the curtain opens itself, of course. And he’s like, “All right, I guess.” And then he walks through a bunch of spider webs and finds an old, huge— it’s hard to even call it a bed. It’s like, what if there were a floor **[Dre: “Mm-hmm”]** slightly above your floor that were a bed and as big as the room?

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: It’s like, what if a mattress had a gross domestic product? [Austin and Sylvia laugh]

Austin: Yes. And we see footsteps in the kind of plush carpet, and someone says, [seductively] “Lay back, Jonathan,” and he does.

Dre: He’s like, “All right!” [laughs]

Austin: [naively] “Oh, yeah, that sounds good!”

Jack: Fucking idiot.

Austin: And then, emerging from between his legs in the bed floor, is the first of our vampire wives, nude from the waist up. Chain mail, like, on her head? Or I guess it’s a sort of, like, jewelry veil thing up around her head. And begins to, like, touch his thighs, and he is over the moon. Like, nothing’s happened yet, and he’s already like, “Woo boy! Oh boy!” [Dre laughs]

Jack: Stoked.

Austin: “This is— I’m getting a little rowdy!”

Jack: [laughs] Love to be in Castle Dracula.

Austin: Yes. And then—

Sylvia: [laughs] Hey, this place ain’t so bad after all!

Austin: [laughs] Yeah, exactly. And then, emerging from his left, just straight out from the mattress, as if it's, like— it's as if it's split open just enough for a person to emerge? Like, I don't— it's as if it's unfolding, maybe, and she's in there.

Jack: You might think we're talking about, like, a fade transition of her appearing—

Dre: No. Mm-mm.

Austin: No!

Sylvia: No.

Jack: —like reverse Yoda death. No. [Sylvia laughs] You know, reverse Yoda death?

Austin: [laughs quietly] Yeah, reverse Yoda death. Yeah, yeah, yeah, I got you.

Sylvia: Yeah. You gotta really look out for that.

Austin: Classic film technique.

Jack: She physically...yeah, it's like she's birthed.

Austin: Yeah. From...

Jack: But she's birthed in a lying down position. Her whole body moves upwards, out of this mattress.

Austin: Yes. Covered in various silks and whatnot.

Jack: Naked from the waist up.

Austin: Again, naked from the waist up. They, of course, pin him down to the ground; notice the crucifix and are like, "Oh, that's no good!" and then just burn it away.

Jack: She disintegrates it.

Dre: Yep, just melts it.

Austin: Just melt it away. And then a third person appears, at some point. Does she also come from the mattress?

Jack: I don't think we see her appear.

Sylvia: Ah, I don't remember.

Austin: She's just there, then, and then it's a love— it's a sex scene. It's not a love scene. It's a sex scene.

Sylvia: [laughs quietly] I was gonna say. "Love scene" is not the way I'd describe this.

Austin: No. No. It is...there is real *Devil's Advocate* energy in this scene, [Jack laughs] another Keanu Reeves classic. He is the object of their sexual desire and also, I think, their not just carnal desire but very specifically their thirst and their hunger for blood. One of them has snakes in her hair. They rip his clothing in a way that's incredible, because it's like they draw their fingernails across his shirt, and then a moment later, it rips in those parts. You know, there's—

Jack: They had to do this all in camera! [laughs] It's so exhausting.

Austin: They did it on camera, and also, there's lots of shots of him, like, reacting as nothing happens, or as they're not there in the mirror, right?

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: There's, like, mirror shots of him just going, "Whoa!"

Dre: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, because there's a sex room mirror on the ceiling, yeah.

Sylvia: [crosstalk] And you can, like, see the things on the bed moving. Yeah.

Austin: There's a sex room mirror on the ceiling. It's worth saying, at one point, they suck blood from his nipples.

Jack: Oh, yes, they do, don't they?

Dre: Oh, I forgot about that.

Sylvia: A lot of nipple stuff in this movie, honestly.

Jack: There is a lot of nipple stuff in this movie.

Austin: Uh huh. And then Dracula shows up and is like, “What are you— he’s my guy! I get to do this!”

Sylvia: Hey, that’s my nip!

Austin: That’s my nip! And—

Jack: [Dracula voice] “Would you like to eat this baby that I have brought?” [Austin laughs]

Sylvia: Oh my god.

Jack: Which is classic Dracula.

Austin: Well, they accuse him— they’re like, “But you don’t ever— you never love. What do you mean he’s yours? You never give love to anybody,” and he’s like, “Oh, yes I do.”

Jack: Only hot Englishmen.

Austin: [laughs] Yeah. Only hot Englishmen and my dead wife. Oh, right! Of course. One of the women is two women, right? It’s one of the women is: between her legs, a second woman exists.

Jack: Now, I thought this. I just couldn’t figure out—

Austin: Am I wrong?

Jack: No, I think you’re right! So, I caught that, because we get a shot of her, like, scuttling across the ceiling. Again, these women, like every fucking person in this movie,

walk on the wrong surface. [Austin and Dre laugh] I thought— yeah, it's like she's two women. It's a real, um, beast with two backs type vibe. [Sylvia laughs]

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Except I saw it, and KB was like, “Oh, no, no, no. Those women were just together. Like, she was on top of another one.”

Austin: Oh. Hmm.

Jack: But no. The fact that you also said that and the fact that she is crawling on the ceiling when she does that does make me think it's a sort of chimera type—

Austin: Maybe it's only a— maybe it's a temporary state thing, because there are also clear shots where it is just three women.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: I don't know.

Jack: Yeah, later.

Austin: I truly just don't...

Sylvia: I mean, it definitely is, like...I love how purposely obfuscated that is, because it, like—

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Yes.

Sylvia: This is the most, like— not the most, but one of the more dreamlike sequences in the movie.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: Especially when it relates to the sort of, like, erotic dream shit that we were talking about earlier that they wanted to hit.

Austin: And it does an incredible circle wipe or iris wipe, the close in transition, fade to black around Dracula's face laughing and clapping, and then it comes back up to his letter sent to Mina, where he's like, "I'm here in Transylvania, and everything's great. [Jack laughs] Dearest Mina, everything is all well here! The Count's insisted I stay here for a month," and it's just so dire. I love it. Which is why I think Keanu kind of works here, is that, like...

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: He's such an absolute fop [Dre laughs] and just, like, in over his head in so many ways that it reads, it plays for me. I don't know.

Sylvia: I mean, yeah, no, it works for me too. I think part of it is also just when...like, the first time I watched this movie, I think it bothered me more, but now, like, because this is not— like, I'm watching it again, I can be like, oh yeah, John Harker is not the protagonist here.

Jack: Yeah.

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Sylvia: He's just, like, in the story.

Austin: Uh, it's worth—

Jack: The protagonist is Mina and the lads.

Sylvia: Oh, for sure, yeah.

Austin: [laughs] Yes. It's worth saying that Christian Slater was considered for this role.

Sylvia: Hmm hmm.

Dre: What? [laughs]

Austin: And turned it down and felt bad about it, and when people ask Coppola why Keanu Reeves, it was explicitly because no one casting this movie thought that Harker is a good role.

Jack: Oh, huh.

Austin: He says, "We tried to get some kind of *matinée* idol for the part of Jonathan, because it isn't such a great part. If we all went to the airport, Keanu is the one the girls would just besiege." So it very much feels like: we wanted a pretty boy, because this is a pretty boy role, and it isn't a great act— like, a better actor would almost be wasted on this role, is sort of what it feels like the vibe is.

Sylvia: I mean, like I said, I didn't finish the book, so maybe I shouldn't speak as an expert on it, but for the most part, like...

Austin: Right.

Sylvia: John Harker is very much just a flat everyman character, was my read.

Austin: Right.

Sylvia: And like, that's obviously going on here too. Like, he's an audience surrogate in a lot of ways, at times.

Dre: Let me give you this alternate universe I just accidentally created in my head.

Sylvia: Uh oh.

Dre: Because when you said Christian Slater, [**Austin:** "Ah"] my mind went to A.C. Slater, AKA Mario Lopez.

Austin: [laughs] Mario Lopez.

Dre: And then I was thinking of Mario Lopez as Jonathan Harker. [laughs]

Sylvia: Oh my god.

Austin: I wish. I would like to be in this world. Do you think Mario Lopez has ever done a vampire anything?

Sylvia: I thought you were gonna say “British accent.”

Austin: Oh!

Sylvia: Like, definitely.

Dre: I thought you were gonna say “have sex.” Um, he’s probably done a vampire thing.

Austin: Yeah, he has three kids. I think he’s had some sex.

Dre: Mm...

Austin: He was A.C. Slater. He was A.C. Slater; I think he’s had some sex. [Sylvia laughs] Jack, A.C. Slater was the, like, hot jock character from *Saved by the Bell*, an American TV show [**Jack:** “Mm”] about teens hanging out in the ‘90s. He has now become— Mario Lopez is now, like, the Extra, the E/Extra guy. Or I don’t know if he’s still there, but you know, celebrity gossip show type host.

Jack: Sure. You know, if we’re talking about Keanu being— or Harker being an undesirable role to play, I would like to go on the record that if you have a time machine or any kind of situation, and I’m sure everybody on this call would agree: we would all be happy to play any character in this movie, I think. [Sylvia laughs]

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Austin: Oh my god.

Jack: I don’t think there’s a single character that I would say—

Austin: In a second! In a second.

Jack: You just pick someone; I’ll be like, “Yes, please.”

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. For sure, for sure. Someone please let us know if he's ever played anything with a vampire. I just need to know this.

Jack: I can't find it.

Dre: I'm googling it, and I don't— it doesn't seem like it.

Austin: I guess not. He's done some horror stuff, but yeah. Anyway, that's Jonathan Harker.

Final Thoughts [2:11:28]

Jack: Do we have anything else?

Austin: Like, in general, or for Harker?

Jack: Yeah, no, in general. I'm trying to think.

Austin: We've kind of talked about the lads.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: We've talked about Lucy pretty well.

Dre: Yeah.

Sylvia: I do want to give a shoutout to the actress who plays Lucy.

Jack: Oh, she's great.

Sylvia: I think she does a really good job in this.

Austin: She's fantastic.

Sylvia: She's fantastic. We haven't really talked about that performance as much as some of the others, but she, like, is so playful and fun during the party scene where she's, like, meeting all three of the lads— not meeting— like, introducing Winona Ryder to them, basically.

Austin: Yes.

Sylvia: And then also her turn when the vampire shit starts happening. Like, she does a really good job with that too.

Austin: Yeah, she really does. And it's hard, right? Because, again...this is a movie that is really interested in that ambiguous space between having control, giving up control; between sexuality and aggression and violence. And she is the locus at which [**Jack:** "Yeah"] a lot of that ambiguity is most clearly rendered, in which she has to at once be a threat, an object of desire, someone consumed by desire, and also a full human and not someone who is like— for this movie to work, I don't think you can look at this and be like, "Lucy is bad," or that [**Sylvia:** "Mm-hmm"] the desire she feels and expresses is evil.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: And I think that that's— she has to— that's a really hard job to do, where like, part of her role is to be objectified by the camera but also to be a threat and not in a way in which it reduces down to "women's sexuality is a threat," you know? So, she does a great job. That garden scene is an all timer, the garden nightmare dream montage.

Jack: And it's, like, a deeply— like, a lot of the ways she has to communicate that is through a physical performance, right?

Austin: Yes.

Jack: And she doesn't have a lot of dialogue in this movie, but she is putting in work. [laughs] I love that when the doctor is introduced, he's introduced tripping over a polar bear head on a polar bear rug. [Dre laughs]

Austin: I forgot that. That's very funny.

Jack: And Lucy has this great line, where she's just like— I can't remember what she says. She's like, "Silly bear," or something. [Austin laughs] It's just like, she's playing around with these three men.

Sylvia: Oh, I think she calls— she says like, “Oh, it’s a naughty bear.” [Dre laughs]

Jack: It’s so good.

Austin: Incredible.

Sylvia: It’s very funny. She’s...masterful work. Great job, Lucy.

Jack: There’s a great bit where they’re looking through the *Kama Sutra* book, early. That’s a really fun scene.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: [laughs] And Lucy says— they look at a page or something, and Winona Ryder says, “I don’t understand how anybody could do that,” and Lucy says, “I did that last night,” and Winona Ryder is like, “No, you didn’t.” [Austin laughs] And Lucy has this long pause, and she goes, “...in my dreams.” [Dre laughs]

Austin: Uh huh. They’re so good.

Sylvia: I love her.

Austin: Renfield is the other person who we didn’t say too much about, but...

Sylvia: Ooh.

Jack: Tom Waits rules.

Austin: Tom Waits rules.

Sylvia: He’s doing so much, but it’s very fun. [Austin sighs] Like, again, everybody in this movie is doing so much, but I think Renfield, in the moments that he gets to just kind of— I like the scene where it’s him and Jack, basically, [**Austin:** “Yes”] and he’s talking to Jack about why he eats bugs. It’s kind of *the* Renfield scene, in my head, and that scene I really enjoyed.

Austin: I’ll also mark that as another “extremely gay shit” scene.

Sylvia: Oh, for sure.

Austin: Because where that starts is Jack Seward, the doctor, being like, “So, you eat bugs? You eat little worms and little flies?” [Sylvia laughs quietly] And then an escalation happens, in which he goes, “Well, if you eat flies, what about spiders? Spiders eat flies. Would you eat a spider?” And he’s like, “Oh, a spider would be even better,” basically. He’s like, “A spider, huh. Okay, well, what about a sparrow? Would you eat a sparrow?” and he’s like, [excited] “Oh, yes, yes, yes. Did you say sparrows? Please bring me a sparrow, just a little sparrow.” And Jack starts to play with him here, and Renfield just gets down on his knees looking up at Jack, in this, like...

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Both a position of submission and begging and desperation, but also a— it’s almost as if he’s ready to pounce on Jack at all points.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Also, again, it’s worth saying: behind them for this entire scene, just outside of this locked room, are men with big cages around their heads, so a lot is happening here.

Jack: Are those cages to...KB called it, like, the “you’re locked in here with me,” type scene.

Austin: [laughs] Right. Right.

Jack: Where it’s like, are those people wearing cages to protect them from the people who have been incarcerated here? Or are they inmates who are wearing those cages but are also...?

Sylvia: Oh.

Austin: Right.

Jack: We have that— there's a remarkable, horrible shot during the— another shot during the montage of the box-headed men hosing down the inmates to try and stop some sort of a riot.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Yes, yes. Yeah, yeah.

Jack: Just spectacular horrible costume design.

Austin: But that conversation goes to him saying, like, "What about a kitten?" and Renfield specifically is like, "Yes, yes, yes! Something to feed, something to teach."

Jack: Ooh, it's so good.

Austin: And he goes the one step too far and says, "What about something bigger, like a bigger cat?" and that's what gets Renfield up off his feet, out of this submissive position—you know, knees down, feet back—and stands up and is suddenly almost larger than Jack on the screen, and it's so good. And like, I think a worse movie cuts Renfield from this movie.

Dre: Yeah.

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Why is Renfield here? You know? He doesn't do much plot-relevance in this movie. He is an extension of Dracula. He is an image of what could happen to Harker, but he's not a, you know, a mover or shaker. But I think that that scene is so important to the vibe, and again, to exploring the erotic space of this film and giving...it's important that the ways— the bodies that are eroticized, the bodies that the camera is interested in framing as sexualized, both as objects and subjects of desire, are, you know, not just the hot young women they've cast, and— I mean, it's also important that it also gets to be the hot young women that they've cast. [laughs] But it's the breadth that I think really makes it clear what they were going for and, I think, creates a really holistic image of, you know, that core theme. So, good job, everyone who worked on this fucking movie.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: Haven't seen shit like it. Great line here from Ebert: "Coppola directs with all the stops out, and the actors perform as if they're afraid they will not be audible in the other theaters of the multiplex."

Jack: Oh, wow! God.

Austin: Yeah, true. Everyone's yelling. Thank god. Any other final big thoughts here? People should see this movie.

Dre: Yeah.

Sylvia: Yep. I think it's streaming places, but then I was like, I don't want to give any press to the place that it's streaming from currently. They're doing bad things.

Austin: Uh huh. I don't even know which place you mean, and it could be any of them, is the thing.

Sylvia: You know. A lot of them.

Austin: Uh huh. Yeah.

Jack: It's the transphobic one.

Dre: Hey.

Jack: The other one.

Sylvia: That's the one I'm talking about right now, specifically.

Austin: The other transphobic one. Yeah.

Dre: Hey, I'll say: if you go to a website where you would usually go to find videos on the internet and just type in this movie, it's there.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: It's just there for free. Someone just did the work of putting it up there. Hell yeah. Good movie. Thanks for talking about it with me, y'all.

Jack: Oh, it's such a good time. I feel like I've been electrified by this fucking movie.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Dre: Yes. [laughs]

Sylvia: It has that effect! It's infectious in a lot of ways.

Austin: It really is. We didn't even talk about the scene where they're at the movie theater and the fucking wolf shows up in the movie theater.

Dre: Yeah!

Austin: And then Dracula, like, calms it and has Mina come over, and they pet it together. Also—

Jack: We have what I can only describe as—and I don't mean this in the literal sense—a wolf sex scene. That happens earlier.

Dre: Yeah. [Austin laughs]

Jack: But this is them petting a wolf in a way that is absolutely a sex scene.

Austin: Yes.

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: Right?

Austin: A hundred percent.

Dre: Yeah.

Sylvia: Oh, so much of the courtship stuff is so charged.

Dre: Because I think it's first time they physically touch in that way, right?

Austin: Touch, yeah. It is the excuse for their hands to touch. And she, like...it is...they are playing with form and shape and texture in a way that is...they know what they are doing, for sure.

Jack: And in the background of that— okay, the film being shown on the screen is the [Austin: “Uh huh”] film of the train coming towards the— I don't know if it's actually *the* film. It is a film—

Austin: It is! It's Edison's film!

Jack: Okay.

Austin: It has— there's a— I would— okay, you know what? I guess I don't know that it is *the* film, but that is what they're doing.

Jack: So, famously, uh...Thomas Edison?

Austin: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Jack: Yeah. Shot a film of a train coming towards a camera, getting up very close, and the original audiences in theaters got up—so the story goes—and fled the theater, believing that the train would, you know, cause some damage. Or less that the train would come out of the thing and more that the emotional intensity of the train rushing towards them was like nothing they'd ever seen before. And so, we get this scene, and we get this thing playing in the background behind *Dracula*, as the momentum of this scene is, you know, building towards a sort of sexual or physical confrontation, I suppose. But we never get the train close to us.

Austin: Right.

Jack: There's never a climax of— like, the thing about that film is when the train is within, you know, feet of the camera.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And we never, ever see it here, which is just so good.

Austin: There it is. That's the movie. Yeah. Yeah, the use of literal old film techniques throughout this movie that is about the historical moment of change and the arrival of the modern and all of that stuff is like...it's so on the nose, but it all entirely works for me in a way that is hard to say no to, and I would love to have my face blown off by a movie like this, a new movie like this again. Because there...let's be clear: there are other stylistically powerful films between then and now.

Jack: Oh, yeah. A bunch of them.

Austin: I'm not saying that. But there is...I would love to see a movie like this, where I'm like, this doesn't look like other things I've seen in years, you know?

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: So. Shoutouts to Coppola. Shoutouts to the whole cast and crew of 1992's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: Thank you, Sylvi, for suggesting it.

Jack: Yeah, thanks so much, Sylvi. [Sylvia laughs quietly] This was the best.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: Oh, no problem. I'm glad it went down so well.

Austin: Yeah. All right. As always, you can find us twitter.com/friends_table, friendsatthetable.cash. You're at the Pusher tier; you already know all this stuff, so we don't need to belabor it. I think this is the last of the movie ones that we're doing?

Jack: What a one to go out on.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Yeah. I think that that's true. I guess I shouldn't say that for 100% sure, but I'm pretty sure. So, I hope you enjoyed it, and hopefully we'll be back soon with some more Pusher stuff. Until then, peace.