

Episode 162: A Leap of Faith: Worldbuilding Fantasy Religions, ft. DEVA FAGAN

Transcribed by:

Lindsey C (@utarcher)

Note: This transcript is currently incomplete and may have missing information. Please stay tuned as our all-volunteer scribe team may make edits.

Does this episode cover a topic you feel passionate about? Would you be interested in volunteering to help a collaborative effort and improve accessibility for the podcast we all love? We'd love to have you! We even have a shiny spreadsheet to help us track all the transcripts, so you can pick the episodes you're most interested in. Every little bit helps! Email worldbuildcast@gmail.com to access the portal to the Scribes' Secret Lair.

[0:00]

C: You're listening to Worldbuilding for Masochists.

M: And we're wondering why we do this to ourselves.

D: Because everyone loves a fire-wielding nun! I'm Deva Fagan.

C: I'm Cass Morris.

M: I'm Marshal Ryan Maresca.

N: I'm Natania Barron. And this is Episode *One Sixty-Two: A Leap of Faith: Worldbuilding Fantasy Religions*.

[intro music plays]

D: I love your music. I've been listening to the podcast—

N: Aww!

C: Oh, yay!

D: And I do a little dance and always think, “it’s too bad that the music doesn’t play for you!”

N: I know.

C: We always act as if it does, though, and we take a dance break. Even though there’s no reason to. We just.

D: That’s great.

C: It helps ease the awkwardness of the scripted intro into everything else.

[Deva laughs]

C: Alright, listeners! We have another fabulous guest with us today, and I am super excited about both the guest, the book, topic! I’m about 50 pages into the book, by the way. I’ve been reading it on the beach this week. It’s delightful so far. So, welcome! Please tell our listeners who you are and what it is that you do.

D: My name is [Deva Fagan](#). I am the author of seven middle-grade fantasy and science fiction novels, which I’ve written over the past 15 years. Including [A Game of Noctis](#), which takes place in a magical world where all social interactions are ruled by games. And also [The Mirrorwood](#) which is a fairytale mash-up that was nominated for the [Andre Norton Nebula Award](#). I’m here to talk primarily, though, about my first adult epic fantasy novel.

N: Yay!

D: [House of Dusk](#), which should be out by the time you’re listening to this. It is coming from Daw in hardback, e-book, and audio format. And just a little bit about *House of Dusk*. It is a story of a fire-wielding nun who is seeking redemption for her past as a soldier. A [sybil](#) whose tears bring the prophecies of the fates. And a spy who is seeking to steal back the bones of a saint who was taken from her people.

It’s also a story about how religion and history can be shaped and used as tools to control the narrative, and ask questions about redemption and moral purity. It takes place in a secondary world that’s loosely inspired by the elements of real-world [Bronze Age Mediterranean Earth](#).

M: I was gonna say, reading the description of this book, and with a cover with a woman who is setting things on fire, I was like... Did Cass wish really hard?

C: It’s catnip! Like—this—listeners know. This book is like catnip to me. Everything about it, I’m like, “Yes, please, give this to me right now!” And the publisher *did!*

[Deva laughs]

C: The publisher sent me a copy. [Laughs]

[Crosstalk]

N: Yeah, same. It’s beautiful! Yeah, they’re beautiful!

M: And I got it too!

C: It's lovely and I'm super enjoying it because I, once again, anything where a lady gets to settin' things fire with her mind, I'm like, "yes, immediately yes."

M: That's your bag.

C: What's not to love about that? It is. That's my whole vibe. Is just that.

D: That's wonderful! Well, I'm glad to provide your catnip.

C: It's delicious. So, tell us, what is it that you love about worldbuilding? What is it that you like to dig into? Clearly you've done several different types of worlds at this point. But what sort of unifies your interest in worldbuilding?

D: So, I would say that my favorite part of worldbuilding is creating the invisible stuff that the readers don't necessarily see. That's behind the scenes, the [cosmology](#) and things like that. And then picking out little pieces that I can dribble into the story in different places. Different versions of stories that if you can read them both and find the pieces that are in common, you can start to see patterns in the world, that will reveal the truth. I just love the, sort of, puzzle aspect of worldbuilding, where it can be a challenge to you. I do this in video games too. I love video games where there's all the codexes you can read to learn about the secret history.

[Marshall laughs]

D: And this god and that god and maybe it's really these other characters. I just really love that as a reader, as well. So that's my favorite part of writing it. Is dribbling little breadcrumbs that let the reader put together some greater truth or pattern.

M: Who doesn't love just deep levels of ephemera that are *available*, but not necessarily the thing...

[Deva laughs]

N: Right.

C: It's like in flavor text.

N: Yeah.

C: I love flavor text! Some of my favorite stuff to write in my day-job stuff, just little bits. I don't actually have to explain all this. I'm just gonna give you this little drop, this little bit of dialogue or something. That's all you get. Play with it, see what it makes you think of. Have fun.

[4:52]

D: I think your day job sounds like my dream job, Cass. Because I was listening to what you talk about. Because I'm also a [LARPer](#).

[Cass gives a happy “squee” kind of sound]

C: Yay!

D: And so that’s what I love doing as a writer of LARP plot, writing the flavor text.

C: Hundred percent.

D: Props. Burning the edges to make them look old.

C: Yesss!

D: Dyeing them.

C: So much fun. [Laughs]

N: I think we were all probably the kids that did that too.

M: Oh yes.

D: Yeah.

N: Because—I love that so much of being a writer, especially in genre, is like we didn’t grow up. On purpose.

M: I refuse!

N: Like, why would I stop doing this, it’s so cool! I don’t want to die saying I didn’t have enough faux antiqued papers in my campaign. [Laughs] These are all important beautiful human things. Yeah.

[Deva laughs]

M: I was just thinking about the show [Sleep No More](#). I know Cass has gone to it, I don’t know if you’ve gone to it. And if listeners don’t know, it is this massive immersive show.

C: Was.

M: It—was? It’s a “was” now? Oh.

C: Yeah. It’s closed.

M: That’s a shame.

C: I know. After threatening to close for like two years, it finally actually closed.

M: That’s a little sad. But I’m glad I got to go twice.

C: I know.

M: But the fact that you could spend your whole time in there just going into rooms and digging through texts and ephemera and never seeing an actor once, and still have this incredibly interesting experience doing that.

C: Yep!

M: That's fascinating. The level of detail they went into. What's gonna happen to that building now?

C: I am not sure. I'm currently super psyched because I just got a ticket to see the [Phantom Masquerade](#) immersive that's just opened. I know almost nothing because they're keeping things secret, they're not letting people film. But everyone who's come out of it is just *raving*. And I'm like, I hope that's part of it too. Getting to poke around the opera house is part of the experience. That's what's fun! Finding the things in the corners.

D: Where is that running?

C: New York.

D: Is that in New York—

C: Yeah.

D: I might need to plot a trip.

C: I'm so jazzed. My inner thirteen-year old is just, like, dying of glee. She was gonna not forgive me if hadn't been able to make it up to see this. The girl who used to have to play both [Erik](#) and [Raoul](#) when singing it with her friends because, well, I'm a tenor. And. [Laughs] None of them wanted to play the boy parts.

[7:18]

[Pre-outro music begins]

M: Hi, you. Thanks for listening to this episode of *Worldbuilding for Masochists* and letting us help you overcomplicate your writing life. If you want to know more about your hosts and all the fantastical books we write, including the new editions of my [Maradaine](#) novels and [Velocity of Revolution](#), Natania's [Queen of None](#) and [Netherford Hall](#), and Cass' [Aven Cycle](#), links to all that information is on our website at worldbuildingformasochists.podbean.com. We also have an archive of all of our episodes and links to more information on the guests of this and every episode.

Also our anthology, [Traveling Light](#), is out. Filled with short stories set in the world we have been building on the show. We have stories from all of us, as well as Marie Brennan, Mike Chen, J.C. Pillard, Victor Manibo, Kate Elliott, Lindsey Carmichael, Valerie Valdes, and Mike Underwood. Links to purchase are on our website, and it's available on all the places you buy books in ebook and paperback. Also also, we now have a Patreon. Come check us out at patreon.com/worldbuildingformasochists, where we'll be giving you bonus content and surprises, and we would love any support you would have to give us.

We really hope you liked this episode. If you did, please take a minute to tell a friend, shout about us on the internet, or leave a review on iTunes. If you've got questions or just want to tell us how cute we are, there's a number of ways to contact us. We're on [Twitter](#) and [Bluesky](#) as @worldbuildcast and our email is worldbuildcast@gmail.com. We also have a Discord chatroom linked in the [About the Show](#) page of our website if you want to come chat with us and other fans of the podcast. We'd love for you to share the worlds you're making and help us all build until it hurts.

[Outro music plays]

—

A note from the Scribe Team

Thanks for reading! We are an all-volunteer team. Would you be interested in joining our collaborative effort to improve accessibility for the podcast we all love? We'd love to have you! Work on the episodes you're most interested in, pitch in a few lines here and there or help us

blast through the backlog. Every little bit helps! Email worldbuildcast@gmail.com to access the portal to the Scribes' Secret Lair.