

# In My Veins

*Milly*

Achievement in Vidding: Winner 2009  
Achievement in Innovation: Shortlist 2009

**The review below may contain spoilers for Heroes up to season 3.**

**Brad:** I find this vid both impressive and unnerving in terms of how well the vidder becomes the voice of a stalker.

It's so elegant and horrible the way the vidder uses added footage of her own hand to represent Sylar's hand reaching out toward an unsuspecting Claire in the opening shot - and makes it look so convincing. That shot is, in many ways, the vid in microcosm. After seeing the whole vid, I go back to that opening shot, and it's just chilling on so many levels.

**Nicky:** I had the opportunity to read your review before I added my thoughts, and it struck me how we've essentially approached watching this vid from opposite points of view. For me, Sylar's influence is secondary to what I'm seeing as Claire's character development.

That is perhaps what makes this vid so compelling - it's a dual character study, about an incredibly symbiotic relationship which begins with a particular balance of power and ends in another place entirely. I don't think I've ever seen another vid quite like it.

**Brad:** It's unique in lots of ways.

I've seen Heroes, and never in a million years did I think fan art could portray the Claire/Sylar relationship in such a convincing way. It's creepy, seductive, and violent... but it also makes sense in the context of the show and who the characters are. The thing that comes through the most clearly for me is that Sylar honestly believes she needs help, and that he's rescuing her. The images sell that idea in such a deceptive way.

**Nicky:** In contrast, the thing that came through most clearly for me was how Claire developed from victim to empowerment, but not necessarily a good kind. To be more precise, the vid seems to pose the question whether there is even "a good kind" of empowerment. As a woman caught in a paternalistic web, it feels like you're either victimised or demonised with no space in between. I felt that most keenly with the colour progression, where it begins with blue tones and blood and ends in violent orange and flames.

**Brad:** The opening shows Sylar with his HAND IN HER BRAIN, comparing it to him fixing the watch at 0:22. Starting at 0:26 we see Claire's life through Sylar's eyes - not a loving daughter struggling for normalcy, but as a weary victim. In muted, cool colors we see her locked away in her bedroom, her creepy father, the approach of the Haitian, the door slamming.

But Sylar reassures her that "time is on her side," and her blood - which Sylar sees as her power - gets woven into the motif. All very disturbing, but it makes perfect sense from Sylar's point of view.

"You're too stubborn to wait" shows her testing her body's limits, with a quick overlay of a parallel to Sylar injecting himself, and then we get Sylar sticking his finger back into her brain again on "Are you listening?" Yikes.

**Nicky:** I find it really interesting that throughout this segment I'm so caught up with watching Claire being the victim and busy sympathising with her that it takes a good long while before I realise that the vid is set up so that I, the viewer, am doing this from Sylar's point of view. I don't see Sylar nearly at all in the first verse because, well, he is me. The vidder's methods in creating this voyeuristic approach is spine-tingling.

**Brad:** I think the most effective part of the narrative is the segment that begins at 0:58, which shows her disconnect from and fear of her paternal figures. In Sylar's mind, *they* are the real danger. He's the white knight who's riding in to save her.

**Nicky:** I'm not just reading this as Sylar's twisted view but also as Claire's actual view. Which, as the vid progresses, we will see is going to become more or less the same.

However, it is interesting that you brought up the concept of the white knight, because that's where the vid begins to get really chewy for me. Because he comes across less as classic white knight and more as... a kind of mentor? He doesn't ride in to save her in that familiar active versus passive configuration. Instead, he slides in as a force that guides and shapes, permeating her consciousness and imbuing her with so much of his own worldview that she *becomes* him. There's this fantastic sense of insidiousness because he's always just hanging around in the corner of your eye and in the back of your mind.

**Brad:** Stop it, you're creeping me out. Let's talk musicality for a second.

I love the build on the drum fill before the first chorus, starting with that little push-in at 1:12. The rapid-fire series of connections in the sequence show her disdain for her family and her attempts to escape them. Absolutely ADORE the series of connections from 1:14-1:17, both in terms of pacing/musicality, and as a culmination of the themes that have been building through verse 1. And just on an aesthetic level, I get way too much joy from how well the whirlpool thing at 1:17 matches the vocal.

**Nicky:** The whole first chorus just comes together so naturally with the high point in the music. The energy is absolutely terrific.

**Brad:** The second chorus ends with her family desperate to pull her back, but then Sylar arrives to save her!! WOOT? That closing fist at 1:25 is one of the definitive moments of the vid for me. "It's more than I can bear." \*chills\*

**Nicky:** That little zooming in and out on that clip is gorgeous. I really love that distinctive added motion technique - not just one addition but two separate ones, the push and the pull. I may be reading too much into it at this point, but for me it really hails back to the whole conflict of wills concept.

**Brad:** Then we get a sudden rush of Sylar violence, ending in the death of her fellow cheerleader. Love the closeup at 1:38, followed by the swishing away of the earlier images as everything starts to go orange. Yes, disturbing; but also wow, pretty.

**Nicky:** The colouring is fantastic. I'm not sure how it's done, but it doesn't seem like a uniform filter to me - there is a gradient-type look to the yellows and oranges which really adds depth to the visuals.

Thematically, the moment at 1:40 - 1:43 marks this transition of Claire from victim to someone who is more empowered but also more morally ambiguous. We've already seen her take action in the jumping segment earlier, but it's not until now that I really *feel* her steely resolve to become something more than the bloody cheerleader and the oppressed daughter. That moment of introspection is perfectly underpinned by her resolutely sweeping away her old self in the water.

**Brad:** Verse 2 shows Claire fighting back and standing up for herself. Love the little push-in and red shift at 1:59 as the voice asks "Are you trembling?" Uh, no.

It's all so much more disturbing because Sylar clearly believes this is how he has helped her.

**Nicky:** Here is where we differ in opinion: I think he has! To the extent that she has become empowered, anyway. Not so much that she's becoming him, but that's a value judgment that each person has to make for themselves - is it better to be a powerless victim or a powerful aggressor? Rock, meet hard place.

I also get the feeling in this second verse that it's less about Sylar watching her and having that same passive point of view and narratorship, as it is also Claire herself who's saying these things at the same time. It sits perfectly in the development of the overall narrative.

**Brad:** By 2:29 we're starting to see Sylar a bit more from a third-person point of view. In other words, exactly how creepy and insane he is here. At 2:34, it's total horror movie "flee now" mode. But he pins her to the wall, everything goes red and Claire descends into the flames. I love the door slamming again at 2:42 and then her eyes desperately peeking through the crack.

**Nicky:** I love how easily the metaphor succeeds here: Sylar pins Claire into a corner and she's trapped in this incredibly epic and fiery battle of wills. I'm forcefully reminded of a quote from Firefly in respect of Reavers: "You call him a survivor? He's not. A man comes up against that kind of will, the only way to deal with it, I suspect, is to become it." There are shades of Stockholm Syndrome in there, and as noted earlier, this incredible sense of symbiosis.

**Brad:** I totally agree, and bonus points for quoting Firefly.

In a segment that - like much of the vid - is equally gorgeous and disturbing, we see the burning picture of her family fade into an iconic overlay of her mom's hand, outstretched, filled with flames, as Claire holds up her own bloody hand.

**Nicky:** I'm actually getting a more triumphant vibe out of this segment. 2:44 is a fantastic moment where you can see her tangibly take control. In a sense, he's bleached Claire out of her and she has become Sylar. In another sense, you can read it as her finally "becoming Claire", finally digging into the core of who she is and how powerful she can be. It's a true trial by fire.

**Brad:** I agree about it feeling triumphant, but triumphant for whom? The final shot gives me the truly horrific sensation that Sylar has somehow consumed her. Thanks?

**Nicky:** It's certainly not an ultimate good in any sense, but consider the alternative: what would she be if she didn't become him? Would she really be any better off if she remained that little girl trembling in the corner?

**Brad:** For me it's a case of her becoming who Sylar wanted her to be, not necessarily who she wanted to be. The mindset of the obsessed stalker "saving" the object of his affection - forcefully - is what I find so unnerving, and so terribly true-to-life.

**Nicky:** The vid as a whole is an incredibly astute comment on the nature of intimidation and how victims react to (the threat of) violence. It's a case where a vid can convey notions so much more succinctly than we can ever hope to in words.

**Brad:** If anything, the nuanced differences in our readings point to the complexity and maturity of the statement it's making. I'm just overwhelmed by all of the ways in which this vid succeeds - tech, aesthetics, character study, relationship study, even a bit of meta. It feels like an "achievement" in every sense of the word.



THE FOURTH WALL

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