

Angel On Top
Episode 3.21: Benediction

[CHIME]

LaToya: Welcome back to Angel On Top, a podcast where we watch and discuss every episode of Angel, one by one, spoiler free and in tandem those [bleeped out] over at Buffering the Vampire Slayer. [Morgan laughs] I'm your co-host, LaToya Ferguson, AKA the Cordelia Chase of the Buffering verse, AKA Bones, who is the girl, AKA one half of the Gunn Squad, AKA Theodore K. Mullins, AKA Gilly, [laughing] AKA lover of long winded bits. I'm just trying to get through 'em now. [both laugh]

Morgan: And I'm your co-host, Morgan Lutich, AKA the Winifred Burkle of the Buffering verse, AKA also Bones, AKA the other half of the Gunn Squad, AKA Frank Scabopolis, AKA sorry, AKA also a lover of long winded bits. [laughs]

LaToya: Here, I know you guys are upset I didn't go full "Gilly" so here you go. "Gilly?" There you go.

Morgan: Uh-huh! [laughs]

LaToya: And this week, we're watching Angel Season 3, Episode 21, Benediction. Benediction was written and directed by Tim Minear. It aired on The WB on May 13th, 2002.

Morgan: And this is the one where Angel tries to let Connor Steven come to him, but Holtz has other plans and boxes him out.

[Angel On Top theme plays]

LaToya: Previously on Angel! Holtz with a little romantic spiking of Justine in the hand, telling her to find others like her. Angel saying, "I'm not your boyfriend, find someone else to smack you around." Just what we want, a Justine-heavy Previously. [Morgan laughs] Wes is taking the baby away, for good! Psych, throat-slice. [imitating Holtz] "Hello, son. I am your father." Nothing about Justine. [both laugh] It's really—like, how funny it is. Like, so much Justine and then they eliminate the part where, like, "And she's your mother." Who cares?

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: You're looking into Quor'toth! Holtz pushes Justine, "Daniel!"

Morgan: "Daniel!"

LaToya: They gotta punch through to Quor'toth with dark, dark magics, but there's some cosmic price. Fake-out Destroyer. "Hi, Dad. My name is Steven." "A couple of weeks ago, he was wearing diapers, now he's a teenager?" Connor refuses to listen to Angel, but Angel tells him he's got a home. The fissure is closed, yay! But sluck-Holtz got out.

Morgan: Ach! [both laugh] Sounds so gro—the worst phrase.

LaToya: Although, I realized he's not even like a sluck, Holtz. It's more like he's just become Sahjhan.

Morgan: You know what? I actually didn't think about that, but you're right. It is kind of a Sahjhan look. And it's the idea that, like, Quor'toth affected both of them and just, like, gave them immensely bad vibes. And since Connor has, like, demon ancestry, it didn't affect him visually like it affected Holtz. It's not clear to me, but I'll allow it. [laughs]

LaToya: No one should look like that, and yet he looks like that.

Kristin: I don't know what the *fuck*. You think you're doing. [laughter] Comparing my fucking boyfriend, Sahjhan [laughter] to this fucking monster! [laughter]

Morgan: Wow.

Kristin: Just had to make my voice heard. I just had to make my voice heard. Sahjhan, hot! Holtz? [laughter] Never wanna see his fucking horrific face ever again, [LaToya laughs] the end. Thank you.

Morgan: You don't wanna see his lank bob ever again? [laughter] "Daniel!"

LaToya: [laughs] But regarding the Justine of it all, because there's so much Justine in the Previouslys.

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: You know, I read the Hulu description for this episode—

Morgan: Of course.

LaToya: Which is, “Angel tries to bond with his son. Holtz tries to reconnect with Justine.” [Morgan snorts and laughs] Even the Hulu preview doesn’t know what their deal is. [laughs]

Morgan: I—I have no idea. Like, now we’re at the end of it. Because, you know, spoilers for the end of this episode, but RIP Daniel. And I still have no clue what their entire deal was. Their scene together is so disturbing and also boring. I watched and I was just like, I—like, this is an awful, like, abusive connection these two people have. And he’s, like, manipulated her and made her life worse, when she was a very lost person. But I just don’t—I don’t have it in me to feel sorry, because I’m so confused by what’s going on with them at every turn. [laughs]

LaToya: I feel no empathy for Justine whatsoever.

Morgan: Yeah, and I know that’s not what’s supposed to be happening. And from what I can tell in terms of how people are reacting to, like, our show and the amount of Justine slander we are throwing out here. Nobody seems to be rising to this character or this performance’s defense. Like, I—it does seem to be, like, one of the things in this season that is kind of a full creative failure, for lack of a better word. Like, it’s—this wasn’t—this wasn’t it. [laughs]

LaToya: It’s just this character who’s not Kate when it should be Kate.

Morgan: Yeah. I was thinking a lot about it being Kate in this episode. And I was like, oh, yeah, that would’ve really been poignant. But I guess it works ‘cause, like, Cordelia can have no idea who she is—

LaToya: Yeah.

Morgan: In that scene where she sees her. [laughs]

LaToya: [laughing] I was like, oh yeah, Cordelia has no idea who this Justine chick is.

Morgan: What a lucky woman Cordy is. Skated right over the whole Justine arc. [both laugh]

LaToya: The luckiest character on this show. Cordelia Chase.

Morgan: Wish that could be me. [laughs]

LaToya: But yeah, so I was looking at other Hulu descriptions, because I’m like—

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: Are they all this funny? [Morgan snorts] And a lot of them are pretty much this funny.

Morgan: Amazing.

LaToya: For last episode, A New World: "Angel's son rises from hell as a feral warrior bent on destroying his father for his evil past."

Morgan: I mean, accurate, I guess. [laughs]

LaToya: For Double or Nothing: "Angel grieves for Connor. Gunn is falling in love with Fred. Wes, abandoned by his friends, leaves the hospital alone." [Morgan laughs] Why is that in an episode description?

Morgan: I have great sympathy for all summary writers. [both laugh] Shall we break right into this ep?

LaToya: Let's break on through to the Justine side.

Morgan: Oh, lord. So we open same night that we left off on in A New World.

LaToya: Yeah. Which is crazy, because that—it's—so much has happened. Fred! Fred needs to go take a fucking nap. She was slucked!

Morgan: Poor thing. Yeah, I would love to give Fred, like, a spa day trip. I would love to take care of her and send her a nice, like, pair of pajamas. 'Cause she's been through it.

LaToya: [simultaneously] Yeah. Because literally, they have not taken a break since the events of The Price, because immediately once they were, like, out of the woods, Connor showed up.

Morgan: Oh, yikes. So like—oh, she needs to take a shower.

LaToya: Yeah, they're all still in the same clothes they've been in since The Price.

Morgan: Oh my god. Everybody, take a shower. Right now. [laughs] And like, poor Fred. She's, like, hungover. She drank that whole bottle of vodka. Like—

LaToya: Yeah. I don't know how she's functioning at all.

Morgan: [simultaneously] I—get her breakfast food. [laughs]

LaToya: It's—when I realized, I'm like, wait. This is the same clothing they've been wearing for the—two episodes before this. It's like, oh no. [laughs]

Morgan: Okay, that fucks me up. I don't care for that. Someone take care of Fred. [laughs] But—so it's the same night. You know. Fred and Gunn are like, oh shit. Like, what are we gonna do? Angel ends up coming in and he's very banged up. And he tells them, like, "Connor is actually Steven now, and I let him go." They are surprised to hear that. And they tell him about the, like, vibes Mistress Meerna picked up in the lobby. And they're like, "We think something else from Quor'toth might have come in." Yikes! Fred is worried that, like, whatever this thing is, it could go after Connor, but Angel isn't worried. He's like, "The kid can take care of himself." Fred's rebuttal to that is...

[Clip from episode plays]

Angel: He survived Quor'toth this long. He can take care of himself.

Fred: Okay, so he survived an unspeakable hell dimension. Who hasn't? You can't just leave him alone in the streets of Los Angeles!

Angel: He's gotta come back on his own. He will. Just as soon as he realizes what he needs.

Gunn: And what's that?

Cordelia: A father.

Morgan: Good shit. Good setup. I understand where we're going here. [laughs]

LaToya: Cut to: Connor, who needs a room for him and his father. Connor's still wearing Tyke's leather jacket, by the way.

Morgan: What a cool kid. [both laugh]

LaToya: He should not wear a leather jacket. He looks ridiculous. [laughs]

Morgan: It is not the best look for him. He definitely needs, like, an Earth haircut.

LaToya: He needs, like—I wanna say, like, a corduroy jacket, he could pull off. Leather jacket, no. No.

Morgan: Especially, like, the oversized nature of it. Like, whereas, you know, Boreanaz with the shoulders, he'll rock kind of, like, a on-the-larger side leather jacket. That's not—that isn't for Kartheiser. I think he needs something a little more fitted.

LaToya: Yeah. [both laugh]

Morgan: But I do wanna note that we then go to titles, and we cut to an exterior of the motel, which is called the French Cottage Motel. [laughs] Because Holtz couldn't resist something vaguely European. [both laugh]

LaToya: I did look it up. It was in Hollywood. I think it got demolished in, like, 2007.

Morgan: Aww.

LaToya: You know what? At least it's not on the West Side. We'll go there later.

Morgan: [laughs] We will go there later. Wow, LaToya, I'm so sad we can't go to this motel together. [both laugh] And I can't—we can't go in the parking lot and, like, wrestle and poke each other.

LaToya: [laughing] Recreate Daniel and Justine scenes.

Morgan: This is so sad to me. It would have been so good. We would have loved—it was what we were meant to do. So I love that Holtz is looking at a newspaper and he's like, "It's just been days." 'Cause he's like, as a time traveller, I must check a newspaper for the date. Perfect.

LaToya: I mean, he knows this 'cause he's an established time traveller.

Morgan: Mmhmm. Absolutely. And Steven Connor says that this place is, like, nothing like home. And I will say, even Holtz is like, "Hey, just so you know, Quor'toth was never our home." But that is not how, like, Connor Steven feels about this. He did however get out of Quor'toth by following the slucks.

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Morgan: Which, again, another use of that word. Which is bad.

LaToya: [simultaneously] 'Cause yeah, because...they never actually say "slucks" in The Price. It's just—we knew it because of the script.

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: So this is the first time they're actually saying "slucks."

Morgan: Yeah, which is weird. How was anyone supposed to know what that meant? [both laugh]

LaToya: Yeah. The cracks were there already. So it's like, Angel could have possibly found a way into Quor'toth, if he had a little bit more time.

Morgan: Right.

LaToya: Like, they did the thing that needed to be done.

Morgan: Absolutely. He was, like, well on his way and doing the process. But I think like we talked about last week and Kristin bringing it up, like, it doesn't matter that he was close, 'cause it didn't happen. And like, his kid went all that time without him. So—like, that's a bell that can't be unrung, even if he almost got to a place where he could have saved him. Like, it almost doesn't count in this situation. Which I think is—is interesting and is, like, kind of an area of ground that this episode and this arc, with dealing with parenthood and all this stuff deals with.

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Morgan: Which I like. Connor says he would have killed Angel and then gone back to Quor'toth if Holtz hadn't followed him. Which I think is concerning. Like, he likes it there?

LaToya: I am so curious about this. 'Cause this whole episode is Holtz playing a little prank, basically, on Angel ultimately. But from what we see in his stuff with Steven Connor, it's like, he did try to be a good father. And he tried to, like, make Connor understand, at least, that Quor'toth was just, like, this terrible place they had to survive.

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: But for whatever reason, that didn't stick. Of the things that stuck, that one seems like a very important one that should have—yeah. But I guess also, as they note later, like, Quor'toth kind of poisoned him, too. So there's that.

Morgan: Yes, it gave him, um, vibe poisoning. But the—I wrote in my notes at this point, like, in my opinion, Holtz has failed as a parent, even by his own standards—

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Morgan: If he has not, like, convinced Connor that Quor'toth is a bad place, a place where they don't belong—

LaToya: Mmm.

Morgan: A place that should not be, like, a formative, shaping, you know, thing in Steven Connor's life.

LaToya: [simultaneously] Yeah. By—yeah. By teaching him to be driven by hate, that is what made Quor'toth so comforting for him compared to this, basically.

Morgan: Yeah.

LaToya: Because this is hard, 'cause you can't just have hate to live on Earth, basically. At least to function properly.

Morgan: Absolutely.

LaToya: And so, I guess this episode, you can just be like, every scene, "Is Holtz a good father? Yes or no?" [both laugh]

Morgan: And I'm gonna say, in this scene? No. [both laugh] So Connor, like, apologizes for not killing Angel. And Holtz replies...

[Clip from episode plays]

Holtz: Of course you couldn't. It's not in you, son.

Connor: I've killed lots!

Holtz: Only when you had to. Only to survive. And that's not the real reason why you worked so hard to get here. You wanted to see him.

Morgan: So, like, it's interesting that Holtz is playing—and I wonder, like, how much of an act this is—

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Morgan: The actual, like, compassion that he's demonstrating here for Connor and being like, of course you wanted to see your, you know, quote-unquote real father. Like, of course this is, you know, like, baked into your identity in certain ways and you wanna understand it. Because, you know, ultimately, he ends up being—like, pulling off this huge play where he pretends to be a big softie and a huge sweetie and then is like, "But then Angel killed me!" And that didn't happen.

LaToya: [simultaneously] Yeah, he—

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: 'Cause he taught Connor to kill to survive, instead of just—you know, just killing—like, be a homicidal maniac. But basically, by what he does, Connor wanting to kill Angel at the end is, like, a part of that survival. So like, even doing that, which is in theory a good thing, was all just to do the little prank at the end.

Morgan: Yeah. It's just like—it's interesting how he, like, claims the moral high ground when he's talking to Angel, that I wonder if any of it is real. Like, he talks about loving Connor and all of this stuff. But like, can you love someone if you do this to them—I mean, like, I guess you can. It's messed up, but...

LaToya: [simultaneously] This is—yeah, this is why I overall like the Holtz stuff. Justine doesn't count in that, 'cause I think the Holtz character, himself, like—the moral complexity of a once-good man and how far he's gone—

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: To get vengeance. Like, it's—he's fucked up, but he's—he fucked up this kid. And it's just a whole mess. And I—

Morgan: Yeah.

LaToya: I find it fascinating, 'cause you—by this point, again, you aren't sure what is genuine about him anymore, at this point. 'Cause at least before, you could tell. Like, he—I think he has completely lost his humanity, but we don't for sure know.

Morgan: Yeah, he tells—he and Connor kind of, like, speak and you get—you understand that, like, Connor Steven has been raised to believe that God gave him to Holtz to make up for the kids Angel stole from him. And I'm like, okay, well, that's interesting. Like, Connor is to—one, Connor is told God is real. And also, like, believes that he's this blessing to his dad, to make up for this great sin, which I do think is interesting. And Holtz then says, like, "Go to him. Find what in you is in him. But just know that, you know, the devil will show you many colors." [laughs] So, like, Jesus. This guy is no fun.

LaToya: This—the devil will show you bright things, many colors. This is where I put in my notes, Holtz is a bad dad, unlike Angel. But also, I guess I kind of appreciate—I feel like religion is probably something you would need in a place like Quor'toth, just to kinda keep moving forward.

Morgan: Gosh, yeah. It's just—it's interesting in terms of, like, Holtz's morality being very—like, very old school, very religion-based. And yet, he's cool giving this, like, big, formative lie to his son. Like, which I mean, in—I'm not a religious expert or anything. But isn't that a sin? [both laugh]

LaToya: What, you're talking about sins?

Morgan: I think lying's bad, right? [both laugh]

LaToya: Speaking of the devil and bright things. Enter Lorne with a shiny crystal. What a good transition.

Morgan: Very cute. Fred's gonna use the crystal, the Cedrian crystal, to power this Geiger counter that she and Gunn found at a yard sale. I write in my notes, Ghostbusters shit. [both laugh] And Cordelia is—like, pulls Gunn aside and is like, "How's Angel?" And—

LaToya: And they've also since taken showers, because Cordelia is wearing this iconic black number.

Morgan: Oh my gosh, yes. She's looking good. And her eye makeup is very silvery. And I'm like, it *is* the early aughts! [both laugh] I feel safe. [both laugh] Feel like I'll never know pain. So Groo just watches her, like, only have concern for Angel and go upstairs to go be with him. And he's looking sad. And don't worry, everybody. I'm here to defend Groo in this episode. [laughs] Just like you all want!

LaToya: Who's versus Groo in this episode?

Morgan: I don't know, some people don't like Groo. I feel—

LaToya: [simultaneously] Kristin. [laughs]

Morgan: [simultaneously] Really bad for Groo in this episode.

LaToya: Oh! It's heartbreaking.

Kristin: I am not anti-Groo in this episode. As I made clear an episode or two ago, I am on Team Groo.

LaToya: Yeah—

Kristin: Just not Team Groo and Cordy.

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: Of course.

Kristin: [simultaneously] He's great. Not verse.

LaToya: Yeah. Just like to bully you, that's the thing. [Kristin laughs]

Morgan: Mmhmm, yeah, I mean, I like to bully—I like to defame your character because we're in a feud. [Kristin laughs]

LaToya: But also, yeah—

Kristin: [simultaneously] I mean, it is a fucking feud. So fuck you two. [laughter]

Morgan: And fuck you as well. [laughter]

LaToya: Fuck you very much! [laughter] But—so obviously, no one is coming to the defense of Justine. But how are people reacting to our appreciation of Groo?

Morgan: Um, it's been kind of mixed. Like, honestly, I've seen some people who are like, nah, I don't really like Groo or like, Groo's kinda cheesy. But it honestly hasn't been—there hasn't been very much Groo talk whatsoever. Our most heated topic, I would say, in our socials is Wes and whether or not people like him or not.

LaToya: Mmm.

Morgan: And that is—I will say, that's the more divisive character that we can discuss later. [both laugh]

LaToya: Yeah. As we're just drooling.

Morgan: [simultaneously] 'Cause some people are—yeah. I know, I'm like, well, sorry to all of you who don't like Wes. As we're slobbering over here. [both laugh] So then up in Angel's room, he—we find Angel, doing punches, in a—

LaToya: [simultaneously] Yeah, we do.

Morgan: White ribbed tank top.

LaToya: Yeah, we do.

Morgan: Who is he, Ryan Atwood? [both laugh]

[BI FOR BOREANAZ jingle plays]
He's got a broody stare and hot spiky hair
If you're straight or gay,
Your tingly feelings don't care
You're just being honest 'bout this
Sexy demonic and you're...
Bi for Boreanaz
Bi for Boreanaz
Bi for Boreanaz

Morgan: The Ryan Atwood vibes are so strong, and I was thrilled.

LaToya: I mean—

Morgan: Yes, everybody, I finished watching The OC.

LaToya: Angel does have big Chino energy.

Morgan: Yeah, he has kid Chino energy with his fists of fury. [laughs]

LaToya: Yeah.

Morgan: I was thrilled, I was so happy. I write in my notes, are Angel and Cordy just Ryan and Taylor Townsend? Is Groo Henri-Michel? [LaToya laughs] Her weird guy she's bringing back from a foreign land. [laughs]

LaToya: Wow! Amazing. Amazing. 'Cause it's true.

Morgan: I know now is not the venue, but I would like 45 minutes, at least, with you to discuss Henri-Michel, Taylor Townsend's French husband from Season 4 of The OC, at length. 'Cause I do feel like we need to do that.

LaToya: We do need to talk about—we just need to talk about the final season of The OC, 'cause...

Morgan: Absolutely. One day. Put it on the list, on the slate for us. [both laugh] But—so Cordy tries to cheer him up, and she's like, "Don't worry. Maybe we'll kill something later today." [both laugh] But she—

LaToya: She knows the way to his heart.

Morgan: [laughs] But she also tells him, like, "You're doing the right thing." And Angel says, "What if he doesn't come back?"

LaToya: And I'm just like, these two and their emotional support for each other this season. You love to see it. I'm sorry, Groo. But the rest of us love to see it.

Morgan: Oh, yeah, I'm very happy about this. But speaking of the saddest boy in the world. [laughs]

LaToya: Oh, boy. This scene. This scene.

Morgan: He—the emotional support that we just saw in that last scene is continued, but it's between two different people. Lorne is so kind to Groo in this scene. He calls him bubby, which, I screamed. [both laugh] I wrote in my notes about Groo, sometimes your partner has less time for you. Like, and that can be okay. But that's not just what this is. It's—

LaToya: Yeah, that's not what's happening here. [laughs]

Morgan: Yeah, it's not just that she's, like, preoccupied with taking care of Angel, who's going through a rough time. It's that she has fully prioritized him and doesn't seem to care about Groo at all anymore. And I think I wrote in my notes, like, they're a vacation couple. You know?

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Morgan: Like, they're okay when you're on vacation. Like, they're okay when nothing's wrong. But when stuff's wrong, she's just never gonna pick him.

LaToya: And I think a thing the show's not really talking about, and we can talk about, is that, like, yeah, Angel lost his kid. But like, so did Cordy in a way, too. Like, they were very parental together—

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: With Connor.

Morgan: Yeah. I would fully agree. Like, and it was just interesting because I do think Cordelia's very maternal to Connor in this episode.

LaToya: Yeah.

Morgan: Especially, you know, where she good-vibe whammies him and, you know, calls him baby and stuff a lot. Like, it's a very maternal scene. [croakily] Which is definitely something to note. [LaToya laughs] [normal voice] So Groo says to Lorne—he's like, "I'm really confused by Angel not doing anything. You know, he was doing all this shit when Connor was taken. And now, he kind of does nothing." And Lorne explains, "Look, you know, if something's meant to be, you know, it shouldn't be and can't be forced." And they have this whole conversation. And then Lorne realizes that Groo has been coaxing him into saying all of this stuff that's actually about how Cordelia and Groo are trying to force their relationship and their connection. And Lorne's like, "Look at you! Like, so smart, so insightful." And Groo is just, um, making little sad faces and being a sweetheart. And he says, "I'm gonna go for a walk. You know, tell my princess, if she asks." And I—like, I imagine some people could be like, he's being a little mopey crybaby or something. And like, she's dealing with something much bigger than his—but like, I do think she is, like—she's not a bad person for not being able to make it work with Groo. But like, I think Groo's allowed to be sad.

LaToya: Yeah. I think about that last line, "If my princess asks, tell her I've gone for a walk, if she asks." I think about that a lot. And I don't think it's him being petty like he was last episode. I think it's just, like—I think it's a healthy version of the Riley Finn thing, honestly.

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: He's just, like—if it's not meant to be, he's going to accept it. But you know...

Morgan: Yeah.

LaToya: He hopes it is meant to be.

Morgan: He really wants it to be, and he really does have the, like, affection for her and love for her and all of this stuff. But like, he's also able to read the fucking room in a way that certain characters can't. [laughs] And like, see that he's being pulled away from. And I think that is really, like, smart and emotionally mature of him, to just be like, I guess I'm just gonna kinda, like, peace out. And if she cares, then maybe we'll talk about that when I'm back. And if she doesn't, maybe we'll talk about that when I'm back. [laughs] So in our next scene, we're back in Angel's room. And Angel says to Cordy, like, about Connor, that he feels further now than when he was first taken. Like, he feels more distant from his son. Which breaks my heart. And then he says...

[Clip from episode plays]

Angel: There's just so much I thought we'd be able to do together before he, you know...

Cordelia: Grew up?

Angel: Hated me.

Cordelia: Angel, he doesn't hate you. He doesn't even know you. But he will. He's gonna come back, Angel.

Angel: Mm. How do you know?

Cordelia: Because. He has to. Because he's family.

Morgan: Ow. Ow! Why are we doing this? And then to hurt me further, to cause me more pain, we say "family" and then we immediately cut to Wes. [LaToya laughs] And I write in all caps, cut to Wes's apartment in an attempt to hurt me specifically.

LaToya: Oh, my note is: speaking of family, we have Wes, the—in all caps—saddest man alive. [both laugh]

Morgan: Eating a microwave dinner and drinking wine, alone. And I'm like, sir. I...I love ya, I hope—[LaToya laughs] I hope it gets better for ya. This—

LaToya: Do we really want it to get better for him? That's the thing. Do we?
[laughing] 'Cause, like, he keeps getting hotter.

Morgan: [simultaneously] Yeah, would he be as hot?

LaToya: Yeah. [both laugh]

Morgan: I don't know. He has a lot of his buttons done up, so how sad is he? [both laugh] His computer beeps and I love that he goes to his computer. And he clicks on an envelope icon that then opens into a message. You know, like email works. And it says—like, gives him an address and it says to come alone. And I was like—

LaToya: Which is also—yeah, it's not a real address, by the way. I looked it up. I'm like, that's not a place. [both laugh]

Morgan: So then back in the Hyperion lobby, Fred is using her Geiger count—her Geiger counter. And she is like, "ahh, I'm picking up a reading, I'm picking up a reading." And then she picks up a very heavy reading and who is it, but it's Connor. But she's like, "Yeah, this is pretty—" and then she looks up at him and says, "Hot." And I'm like, no. No.

LaToya: Agreed.

Morgan: Stop that, right now. I don't care for it. I don't appreciate the implication.

LaToya: Again. That's why I question who else was up for the role in The WB stable of boys. 'Cause Kartheiser was not in The WB stable of boys. [laughs]

Morgan: Like, that is really implying, like...heartthrobbery that is completely absent. [laughs] And—

LaToya: Yeah.

Morgan: Yeah, like, say what you want about Vincent Kartheiser as a performer. And I could say a lot of very good things, 'cause I love me some Pete Campbell. But, um...not, like, a hottie. Like, I don't know if anyone had posters of him on their doors [LaToya laughs] that they kissed. You know? [both laughing] And I'm not saying this to be an asshole or anything like that, but like. That moment just feels so weird to me. And I truly hated it.

LaToya: Now imagine if Connor was played by Chad Michael Murray.

Morgan: Ooh! Yeah, then there would have been, like, a slow pan. She would have been like—

LaToya: [simultaneously] His, like, shirt's open.

Morgan: "Hot." Yeah. [both laugh] And there would have been, like, an 80s guitar riff and the wind would have blown. Yeah. Alright, I'll allow it. [both laugh]

LaToya: Change approved.

Morgan: Yes. But I love that, like, Angel and Team Angel all freeze. And they're like, okay, like, no sudden moves. This kid is super weird. Like, we can't fuck this up for Angel. It's so cute.

LaToya: They're all respectful and polite as heck. Lorne saying, "Hello, young man."

Morgan: It's so sweet. Steven Connor is giving Lorne looks that I don't care for.

LaToya: Oh, just you wait. I—I'm gonna burly slap this kid. [laughs]

Morgan: Good. [laughs] Deserves it. Then Cordelia—before, like—you know, as everyone's kind of clearing out and it seems like maybe Angel and his son are gonna have a moment. Cordelia has a very loud vision of—about danger in a bar. But like, the way her vision is manifesting, she is in the bar and screaming over the music. [both laugh] There's some ladies in danger from a bunch of vamps. If only Cordy hadn't been gone, then she would have known it was Justine, and we didn't have to worry at all. 'Cause who cares what happens to her?

LaToya: It's like, never mind, it's just Justine. We can stay. [both laugh]

Morgan: Truly. Ah, just Justine? Fine. [both laugh] Ah, [inaudible] in this. So, yeah. It is—like, Angel is like, "Oh, I gotta go." And Connor's like, "Oh, okay, whatever. Like, I don't even care." And he's like, "No, no, no, it's kinda my job? And there's a lot of killing and violence. You wanna come?"

LaToya: Take your son to work day!

Morgan: Dad date. [both laugh] I was so thrilled. This is so cute.

LaToya: [simultaneously] My favorite Netflix movie, Dad Date. [both laugh]

Morgan: Everyone's favorite. It was so, so cute. We go to this club. There's a lot of glowsticks.

LaToya: This busted-ass rave, [laughing] of course Justine would go.

Morgan: What a—

LaToya: I know she was tricked, but also, this is a busted-ass rave. [both laugh]

Morgan: This place did not look fun.

LaToya: You had girls who were kinda almost sexily dancing with each other.

Morgan: But also, they're really at a distance. Like, truly—

LaToya: Yeah.

Morgan: High school dance, like, leaving room for Jesus in the middle kind of stuff. Yeah. Not...not the good vibe. But there is Wes. And there is Lilah. So it's not like this whole thing is completely devoid of sexuality. [both laugh] I love—you know, she sent him the message, obviously.

LaToya: Well, I love that she's drinking a martini at a rave.

Morgan: [laughs] So hot. She clowns on him for being alone, which is so funny. She's like, "I thought writing 'come alone' in my note was a nice touch, because like, how else are you gonna come?" [both laugh]

LaToya: I also—when I read the message, I was like, who's he gonna bring?

Morgan: Yeah! [both laugh] A bunch of his cool new friends. I would love to see Wes trying to make new friends various places. Going to rare occult bookstores and being like, hey, um, I don't—do you wanna get a drink after this and look over some rare texts with me? [laughs] So Justine's at the bar. And Lilah, like, laid a vampire trap for her, essentially. Told her there'd be a lot of vampires there, told vampires she'd be there. And now she's gonna let it blow.

LaToya: And 'cause Justine's not good at this, she just walks right into the trap. I am actually kind of upset at how bad she is at this. Because she has—like, she can't even fight off a vampire in this scenario. Like, what do you do? She's a complete damsel.

Morgan: Like, she should be, like, strapped with weapons and shit. Like—and ready for this. But it seems like we’re being lured into a corner.

Kristin: I just—

Morgan: What’s that?

Kristin: I just wanted to know if you could come into my corner. ‘Cause I have quest—I have just a couple questions. [laughter]

Morgan: Mmhmm, mmhmm.

[KRISTIN'S CORNER jingle plays]
Kristin's Corner! Kristin's Corner!
It's all Riley sucks and what the fuck
And horny is hot
Kristin's Corner is the place
For very deep thoughts

Kristin: Why—so you’re—you’re both more knowledgeable in television than I am, okay? You have—many episodes of a TV show, you have a character that I’m gonna assume nobody fucking wants back. Nobody wants—[LaToya laughs] nobody—stop it. Nobody cares! Nobody cares. And I have all the space in the world and agree with you, LaToya, smart person that you are, that Holtz’s arc is really interesting. And it—like, this is the episode where I find his arc to be really interesting. Before, I was kinda like, eh. But I like where it goes here.

Morgan: Mmhmm.

Kristin: Why...why? All she’s needed for is to kill the guy? Why—why would you bring—just please tell me any good reason why we have to have Justine here again.

Morgan: Here’s the thing, there is no good reason. I’ll tell you what would be the reason in the room.

Kristin: Yeah.

Morgan: It’s one, this person knows Holtz and, like, is an ally of his and we don’t have to meet a new person. Like, that’s honestly—like, we don’t have to cast a new actor, hire a new person, do all this stuff. Like, this is a thing—

Kristin: But he could have just killed himself! I mean, I'm not promoting suicide. But like, it's a show that has—

LaToya: [simultaneously] But you gotta do the frame job and you might mess that up.

Morgan: [laughs] Yeah—

Kristin: Right...

Morgan: What if he couldn't poke himself—[crosstalk]

Kristin: [laughing] Poke himself twice, precisely, at the distance of fangs.

LaToya: [simultaneously] But I also think the frame job doesn't make sense anyway. Because like, if a vampire is biting you, they're draining you of your blood.

Kristin: Yeah.

LaToya: As opposed to when you're being stabbed with a pokey thing, isn't your blood just gonna pop out or whatever?

Morgan: Yeah, like—

Kristin: I mean, he could have just hired a vampire to actually fucking drain him.

Morgan: Ah, but he wouldn't give one the satisfaction. [Kristin groans] [laughter] I would like to agree with you that I think this is the most compelling part of his journey as well. And I honestly wish there was a little bit more space to dig into, like, this part—

Kristin: Yeah.

Morgan: Of how he's feeling and how—like, he talks later to Angel and he says, like, "Look, if that's vengeance, I have no taste for it." And I'm like, I do actually want to hear him speak on how, like, vengeance has served him.

Kristin: [simultaneously] Me too!

Morgan: Like, how hate has fueled him and all of these things. And the—like, the time he has with Justine where he can speak about this stuff—like, you know, I'm

not thrilled Justine's there. But I'm happy and interested and compelled to hear him voice—

Kristin: Yeah.

Morgan: His thoughts and feelings about this. But I definitely felt like that was the—this was the most interesting part of his journey. And it's very, very brief, and all the other stuff—you know, I think we play the same beats over and over again. Like, this, to me, was the meat of it.

LaToya: I think...well, I think the issue might be just the fact that we never get to see Quor'toth.

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: And I think for, like, logistical and monetary reasons, they should never show Quor'toth anyway—

Morgan: Mmhmm.

Kristin: Mmhmm.

LaToya: Because, like, it would be underwhelming probably. But I think that's part of it. Like, you kinda wanna actually see what they experienced. But like, nothing they show will probably ever be good enough for what it should be, you know?

Morgan: I think that's totally true.

Kristin: [simultaneously] Yeah, yeah. Our imagination's always more powerful. Almost always more powerful. Yeah, so you know, I'll—I know you have the whole episode to talk about still and what have you. But I agree so wholeheartedly. I wish there was more and I felt myself being really frustrated by this frame job. I don't remember what—I honestly don't remember what happens in the finale or in the rest of the damn series. [LaToya laughs] But I just felt like there was such a richness in some of that from Holtz—

Morgan: Mmhmm.

Kristin: That, like, the way that—the fact that it ended with this, like, double-pierced, faux vampire bite. I was like, come on, man! Like, you had so much good shit there and, like, we're here. So I'm—I am—I get to listen in-live, as you

talk about it all. Thank you for joining me in my corner. Also, fuck you both because the feud. But I care about you deeply, 'cause it's complicated. [laughter]

LaToya: I cannot wait for the finale of Kristin's Corner, 'cause I would love to know your reaction to how this season ends.

Kristin: Can't wait. See you then.

Morgan: Bye! [giggles]

LaToya: Later, [bleeped out]! [Morgan laughs]

[KRISTIN'S CORNER jingle plays]
Kristin's Corner! Kristin's Corner!

LaToya: I think we should bleep every time I say an insulting thing about Kristin or Jenny. That way, it's really funny.

Morgan: I love that and I'm in. [both laugh]

LaToya: Love a bit!

Morgan: Love—ugh. You know I love a bit. So I love Lilah in head hunter mode. I love her in, like, devil on the shoulder, seductive mode. Because one, hot. And because, two, it's really interesting for her to see value in someone. And to want something from them and try to get it. Like, she's usually such a high-status character. And she still is, and is, you know, playing it like, "let me do you the favor of recruiting you." But like, that'd be a huge get. For Wolfram & Hart to have a Watcher? Like, that would be enormous. She's being very, very smart here. And she says—you know, like, Wes tries to blow her off and is like, "Cool. Thank you for inviting me to this awful rave. Bye." And Lilah's like, "Well, actually, right now, you have a choice. Like, are you gonna warn Justine? That, like, she's in the middle of a trap, or are you just gonna leave? And you know, like, let the woman who slit your throat die." [laughs, then groans] And she's like, "Hey, cool, I like that you're hesitating. That's all I need to know." And she says, "But don't worry, like, I'll—like, to assuage your worries, like, I'll ensure that she's, you know, pulled out and that she's kept safe. 'Cause that's what you want, right? 'Cause you're *such* a good guy?" [both laugh] A plus. Hot, but also, I think, a good argument.

LaToya: Very much.

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: So yeah, I think—I'm sure all of this recruitment is off the books, too. Because she wants to have basically a big whammy to show off. Because, you know, things aren't great right now, as Gavin said.

Morgan: [laughs] Oh my god, could you imagine Gavin's face if she walked in there with Wes and was like, check out our new hire that I secured. Ha! He'd look so stupid. [both laugh] Look like a little dummy.

LaToya: He would be so upset.

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: Wanna see it immediately.

Morgan: Please. Please, for me. So, then, on the dance floor, Angel and Steven Connor show up. Wes gets it pretty quickly that, like—he watches them fight. Angel teaches his son how to slay and, like, gives him a stake and stuff. It's really cute. And Steven Connor's like, "Why are you killing these vampires? They're just like you." [laughs] Angel sees Justine! [both laugh]

LaToya: And she sees him, and he's like, ahh.

Morgan: Bleh! I wish he'd just left. [both laugh] But instead, they fight. Steven Connor does a bunch of big jumps.

LaToya: Yeah, Justine's immediately, like, grabbed by the vampires and she can't fight back at all. Like, what was all that training in a dark room for?

Morgan: And especially, like, she is prepared for a fight. She was told to come here because there would be vampires for her to fight. And yet, once vampires start fighting her, she appears completely at sea. [both laugh]

LaToya: It's like if Morgan was in a vampire fight.

Morgan: I think I would do a better job! I, like—

LaToya: [laughs] Yeah, that's true, actually.

Morgan: Yeah.

LaToya: You would.

Morgan: I'd kick. I was like, kick them! [both laugh]

LaToya: Do *something*!

Morgan: Do one thing, please.

LaToya: They're bitching—the vampires are like, "She thinks she's a Slayer!" It's like, does she? She's not doing anything.

Morgan: Yeah, she sucks. And I mean—

LaToya: Yeah—

Morgan: Honestly, use those chunky boots. Use those weapons. [laughs]

LaToya: Yeah, I wrote in my notes, for a wannabe Slayer, Justine remains so bad at this. [both laugh]

Morgan: Absolutely terrible. I guess she's only good at killing vampires that are, like, chained up in a spooky death house. [laughs]

LaToya: Well, you know what? Now that we've seen all the vampires coming to get her, we've seen all the new characters in this episode. Which means it's time for Fuck Watch at the least sexy rave ever! Hit it, bee-yotch. [Morgan giggles]

[FUCK WATCH jingle plays]
Flirting, understanding consent, and kissing
Flirting, understanding consent, and kissing
Fuck Watch!

LaToya: Who you fucking? And is it Sluck...[laughing] Holtz?

Morgan: Ugh, it's not. It's not on such principle. Um, huh, good gravy. You know, I think, in this episode, someone has stepped forward in a way that I think is lovely. And I would like to say Lorne, because I'm really proud of him—he's a sweetheart in this episode. He's got a good suit. And he's being very emotionally supportive of everybody, and being very mature with Connor, despite him acting like a real asshole. So I will say Lorne, because I have already fucked Angel and I can't say Angel Ryan-Atwooding. [both laugh]

LaToya: I'm gonna fuck Groo. The poor baby. Just—

Morgan: Go to him!

LaToya: I feel—I feel so bad for him. And I guess I’m gonna give him a sympathy bang.

Morgan: That’s beautiful of you.

Kristin: Can I fuck Lilah again?

LaToya: No! Once!

Kristin: Damnit! [laughter]

Morgan: You can fuck Sahjhan unlimited times, though, because of, like, dimensional rifts and stuff.

Kristin: Okay, I’m going to another dimension. See you later. [laughter]

[FUCK WATCH jingle plays]
Flirting, understanding consent, and kissing
Flirting, understanding consent, and kissing
Fuck Watch!

LaToya: But yeah, they’re just staking vamps at the rave.

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: Everyone’s watching like it’s the Ninja Rap.

Morgan: [laughs] It’s very silly. Lilah sees Steven Connor and is like, “Who’s the Boy Wonder?” and Wes is like, “He fights just like his father. Like, that’s Angel’s kid.”

LaToya: Yeah. So—’cause here’s the thing. I’m gonna keep harping on it. But like, he kind of flails around in his movements ’cause he’s so lanky. So like, he doesn’t move just like his father, because he’s not a broad-shouldered man, so his body does not move like a broad-shouldered man.

Morgan: Yeah. It’s not quite there in terms of, like, their fighting styles being really that similar. But the moment that I do really like, I love when they’re back to back.

And when Angel, like, grins at the prospect of fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with his son. Like, that's such a good moment.

LaToya: But before they're back to back, like, right immediately before that, he is flailing around before he gets into position. [both laugh]

Morgan: Li'l Gumby.

LaToya: [laughing] This is Steven Connor.

Morgan: As—it's good that we're doing a bunch of flailing here, [laughing] because podcasting is a visual medium, as everyone knows. [both laugh] So Wes—like, Lilah's like, "This is pretty interesting. Are you gonna leave now?" and Wes is gone. Hilarious of him. Steven Connor chases, like, a straggler out the door, in an alley. You know, Steven Connor is looking, looking for the guy who ran. And then he hears something behind him and he almost stabs his dad. And there's this moment where, like, he and Angel are kind of, like—Angel's gripping the stake in his hand. And then kind of just, like, hits his son and flips him around so that Connor stakes the vampire behind him right in the heart. It's silly. [LaToya laughs] He says, like, "You did good," and you know, he's like, "It's good to know that you can handle yourself." And then they play-fight a little bit and Connor smiles and Angel says, "It's good to know that you can do that, too."

LaToya: Aww.

Morgan: And my heart melted. [laughs]

LaToya: [laughs] And I write in my notes, Holtz's bitch-ass is watching Real Father and Son. [both laugh]

Morgan: I write in my notes, Holtz watches them have fun. In quotes, hmm, how can I ruin this?

LaToya: [laughs] Oh, we should also note that at the rave, Justine clearly realizes who Connor is. Like, Connor's like, "I don't know who you are. You're not my mother, obviously. I only have my father, Daniel Holtz."

Morgan: [laughs] Daniel. Ah, yeah, my dad told me about this weird needy girl who he knew around the time he, like, came into custody of me. [both laughing] Can't remember her name, though. I can hear her chunky boots on the wind. Clomp, clomp.

[AD BREAK]

Morgan: In the motel, Steven Connor is eating an Oreo. Fun.

LaToya: I need him to eat real food soon. I'm worried about the boy.

Morgan: Yeah, I'm worried about the nutritional value of what he's been eating.
[laughs]

LaToya: Because, like, what was he eating in Quor'toth?

Morgan: Demon meat. [both laugh]

LaToya: Sluck meat.

Morgan: Sluck—ugh! Deep fried slucks. [both gag] Ew, I don't wanna think about that. Holtz enters and Steven Connor's like, "Hey, hey. I was with my father and he tried to fool me by acting all nice. But it didn't work. Like, I'm—you know, I'm your son and I'm the kid you raised."

LaToya: Yeah, he's like—he's like, "He was everything you said," basically.

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: But like...from what we know, Holtz, obviously, acknowledged that Angel had genuinely changed. It was just his issue that that change didn't undo anything—

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: From before. So like, at first, you know, Holtz is like, I'm telling the truth to you.

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: But like, clearly not if that's what he's saying, that he's gonna try to trick you with his goodness. It's like, no, that's just who he is now.

Morgan: Yeah. Like, that is—that is lying. And that is—and I know he thinks he's doing it for a noble reason to protect, you know, this boy that he considers a son. But I don't like it. I don't care for it. Holtz, if I see you in an alley, I'm gonna poke you twice in the neck. [both laugh]

LaToya: Morgan said it's on sight!

Morgan: You watch *out*! [both laugh] In Angel's room, with Angel and Cordy, Angel's telling Cordy all about it—

LaToya: [laughing] With Cordy—Cordy's just sprawled on Angel's bed.

Morgan: Cordy's, like, laying on the bed with her feet up in the air, like she's Winston Bishop on a cord phone. [LaToya laughs] Like, she is loving it. [laughs]

LaToya: I do just have in my notes, smooch, you two! [laughs]

Morgan: For real. It's getting outta hand. He says, "It's like we've never been apart. You should have seen us." And she's like, "I did. Now, with my abilities, like, I don't know if it's something I'll be able to do every time. But I went back into the vision and I watched you fight with your son and it was beautiful." [squeals]

LaToya: Kiss, kiss, kiss!

Morgan: [simultaneously] I'm so glad she got to be there for that. Like, given the—

LaToya: Right?

Morgan: Given the maternal role she's played for him, I'm like, oh. Like, it means a lot that Cordy got to be present in some way for that. That's lovely.

LaToya: And again, this is why we're having a better time than those chicks over at Buffering the Vampire Slayer. This is what we get.

Morgan: Yeah. Those [bleeped out] better watch it. [both laugh] So—

LaToya: Jesus, Morgan, what's with the slur? [both laugh]

Morgan: Being defamed. So then, back at the motel, Holtz is like, "You know what? Like, go to him. Be with him, it's what you want." So I write in my notes, White Fang, Schmidt. The only book on your Kindle. He's like, "Can't you see we don't want you anymore, Connor?" [both laugh] Ew. Like, this sucks. He says, you know, it's time to give you back. Like, go get your answers. And understandably, Connor's like, "Why are you doing—like, don't do this to me! Don't leave me." I'm like, whatever you think, like, it isn't good for your kid to play mind games with them.

It's—like, you're a bad dad. And I know, because I spent a whole episode of this podcast assessing the quality of Angel being a dad. And I found out that he was a good dad, so I know what a bad dad looks like. And it looks like Daniel Holtz. [both laugh] I don't care for him. Then, in Gunn's truck, they're at a spot where, like, Fred's, you know, Ghostbuster, Geiger counter machine led them to. And we realize they're out in front of the motel. Steven Connor, like, leaves in a huff and they're like, oh, the reading was just him. Except...

LaToya: Nope.

Morgan: They see Holtz in the doorway with his lank bob! [laughs]

LaToya: Closing the door like a little creeper!

Morgan: [makes door creaking noise, laughs]

LaToya: [simultaneously] No one closes a door like that. [laughing] He's clearly—he's just staring out into the abyss, slowly closing the door. I mean, it probably makes great Previously fodder, I gotta say, but.

Morgan: But what an angsty, dramatic little piss baby. I don't care for it. This is why we're gonna fight, me and Holtz. And you know, Gunn and Fred are like, oh, shit! Like...and Gunn refers to Holtz as a "short scary." [both laugh] Burn. Then, in the Hyperion lobby, Lorne is in his pajamas and a robe, because he is the only one acknowledging that they've had a long day. [both laugh] And Connor Steven comes in. And he's like, "Hey! I can show you to your dad." And instead of being like, "Thank you, sir, I would love that," he is a big old jerk. And—

LaToya: He's a big old bigot.

Morgan: Yeah, he calls him a filthy demon. And it is gross. Like, he speaks with such hate and such coldness.

LaToya: Yeah, the—

Morgan: It's gross.

LaToya: The way he looks at Lorne, it's very upsetting.

Morgan: I didn't care for this. Do you verbally slap this, uhh, this child like you mentioned before? 'Cause I'd love to—

LaToya: I mean...

Morgan: Love to be witness to that.

LaToya: I mean, really, I just want Lorne to physically slap this child. He changed your diapers, he babysat you when your family was off doing adventures and going to the ballet!

Morgan: Mmhmm!

LaToya: Like, fuck you, kid.

Morgan: Yeah. And Lorne gets cut off calling him a prick, which I was like—

LaToya: [laughs] Right?

Morgan: No one—that's a very underused insult. I never hear anyone calling someone a prick. And I'm like, that's great. I love it.

LaToya: Well, I think, like, they can't actually say prick on TV.

Morgan: Yeah, you can just say "pri—" [laughs]

LaToya: Yeah, yeah.

Morgan: So Cordy enters and is like, hey, let's calm everything the fuck down. Lorne's a good person.

LaToya: [simultaneously] Let's chill, Steven.

Morgan: Yeah. And, like, here, demon doesn't always mean evil. Look at me. Like, I'm a demon—like, part-demon by choice. And, uh...

LaToya: And so he pulls a knife on her!

Morgan: "Yeah!" Like—[laughs]

LaToya: Little bitch! What was his plan? Like, why are you attacking Angel's people, even if they're demons? Like, just—the whole thing was "go over there," not "go attack his friends."

Morgan: I guess he's feeling all outta sorts because of his father's abandonment. But yeah, he is like "Ahhh!" and like, makes a crazy face. And holds his curved blade up to Cordy's throat. Yikes. It's not looking good. We go to commercial, we come back. And Cordy hits him with her glowworm powers. [both laugh]

LaToya: And it's good. It's working. From the script, it says, "She seems to be connecting with him on some raw, complete level. He looks so sad, and so does she, feeling everything that he's feeling, knowing just exactly what she's flushing out of him as this happens."

Morgan: Aww. Yeah, later, Lorne refers to it as, like, a soul chalonic.

LaToya: Yeah, you can, like, hear screams as it's happening too, which...yeah.

Morgan: Is so fucked. You can hear the sounds of Quor'toth. And she's saying, "Let it go, honey. You don't need that." Which I think is a very specific choice of words, 'cause it's the idea that, like, all of this stuff Connor has taken on—and as much as we like to clown on him for being a little weirdo. He—everything that he is and everything that he did, he did to learn how to survive in, like, an uninhabitable environment, while being raised by someone who, in my opinion, is fundamentally evil. Like, and that's so much to overcome. Especially at the age of, like, what, 17, 18? Like, how do you overcome that much formative trauma? And that she says, "You can let all of those things that you learned, all of those behaviors you learned to protect yourself from the vicious things around you, because you don't need that here." And I think that that's such a compassionate and beautiful way of saying that. And she holds him and he cries. And he's suddenly just, like, very soft and so am I. [laughing] And I write in my notes in all caps, Cordy, hold me. [LaToya laughs] Would love her to just put her good vibes on me. [both laugh] I thought this was, like, really lovely. It made—

LaToya: Agreed. Yeah. I mean. He's still fucked up.

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: But you know, it helped for a little bit, at least. It helped with something that needed to be fundamentally changed about him, at least, even though, he—you know, he's still got some anger. But now, that place is no longer on him.

Morgan: Yes. Which is, like—which is good. And Angel sees this and is, like, clearly very affected by the sight of it. 'Cause who wouldn't be? We go the—a scene in the office. And Cordy's like, "Yeah, I—I'm feeling pretty tired from what I just did. But I'm okay." And it's explained that she, like, cleaned him of Quor'toth, like you said.

Angel kneels at her feet and thanks her, which is my kiss-kiss-kiss moment of the episode. There is something about a proud warrior man kneeling in front of—

LaToya: [simultaneously] [laughs] Proud warrior man.

Morgan: The woman that he's just absolutely, like, gobsmacked by constantly, that just absolutely kills me. [laughs]

LaToya: Smooch, smooch, smooch, please.

Morgan: Mmhmm. She says, like, the—you know, the sad thing is that, like, Connor Steven thought Quor'toth was where he belonged. And it's just like, ugh, god, no. Like, that's—again, the damage that that—the psychic damage that that place and the circumstances within it did to him. Like, I think you can't emphasize it enough. Like, it really is just, like, a daunting amount of stuff to cope with, deal with, and like, I don't know how you move on from it. It's really, like, hard to even fathom and think about. And I'm interested in the idea—like, this is one of those things that you can only do on a show that is supernatural like this. I think it's interesting to talk about, like, the parallels to real issues versus the kind of stuff that can only come up in genre entertainment. Like, this is obviously kind of an out-of-this-world—literally—thing that has happened to Connor. But I think you can talk about the real-world implications. Like, how do you help a kid who was so hurt at such a formative age? Like, how can you—like, you can't undo it, much like all the Holtz stuff. It doesn't—almost, saving him from it doesn't matter. Like, he experienced that trauma and that's something that you're going to have to find a way to, like, help him heal from. And that's a really long road, and I think it's really daunting. But it's really beautiful, like, what Cordelia can do and this space that Angel tries to create for him. And it's really upsetting how Holtz manipulates him. Like, I found myself just, like, really, really disgusted—[laughs]

LaToya: Mmm.

Morgan: By the end of this episode, and very hurt by it. Yeah.

LaToya: It seems whatever it did—like, Lorne gives Connor some tea. And you know, Connor doesn't, you know, recoil or anything like that. So that's a good sign, at least.

Morgan: [laughing] That's something, right?

LaToya: Yeah. Angel goes to talk to Connor, and he's like, "I think I tried to kill your friend."

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: Yeah!

Morgan: Mmhmm!

LaToya: You did.

Morgan: You really did. It wasn't cool. [laughs]

LaToya: [laughing] But Angel's like, "Yeah, well, she's used to it."

Morgan: [laughs] Angel tries to get his son to stay. And he's like, "This could be your home. You know?" And, like, Steven Connor says he doesn't have a home. 'Cause he feels so, like, gone from Quor'toth, a place that he understood and learned how to live in. Then, rejected by the only father he's ever known. So the idea that his place by that man's side, also taken from him. And now, he just feels so lost. And that is, like, such a dangerous place for him to be in and such a precarious position. Like, I do think it's just, like, crafted so well, in terms of the place he's in, to, you know, be tricked like this. Like, I just fully buy it.

LaToya: Connor's like, "You speak as though you're my father." And Angel's like—gonna be like, "I am your father." But Connor keeps going on about how, well, Holtz said this, and that they came back for a reason. And that's how Angel learns that Holtz is back too, just as Fred and Gunn show up to tell the news.

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: Meanwhile, Justine goes to see her Daniel.

Morgan: And in my notes, I write, Justine and Holtz reunite and I barf. [both laugh] And then my next note is, Daniel! In quotes, and then says, ew. [LaToya laughs] So you know how I reacted to this scene. Ugh.

LaToya: Ah, "Daniel" will never not be funny.

Morgan: It's so funny. [both laughing]

LaToya: Every time they show him pushing her! For no reason.

Morgan: He didn't have to do that. [both laugh] There was no—and it saved no time. It did nothing.

LaToya: 'Cause you know she wasn't gonna try to jump into Quor'toth, that's the thing. She wasn't gonna do it. He could have just ran in and it would have been fine, 'cause she wasn't gonna do it.

Morgan: Mmhmm. But no. Had to shove her. So then, in the Hyperion office, Angel's like, "Hey, Gunn, Fred. Take Connor somewhere. Show him a place where the world isn't as ugly as he thinks it is. And don't tell him what I'm doing." To which they're like, alright, and leave. And Cordy kind of stops Angel on his way out and says...

[Clip from episode plays]

Cordelia: Wait, Angel, before you go, we have to do that thing.

Angel: What thing?

Cordelia: That thing we do? You know. That thing where I say, "Are you sure you know what you're doing?" and "Angel, please think about this," and then you ignore me and rush headlong into trouble?

Angel: Right. That thing. 'Kay, we done?

Cordelia: Angel, please think about this. In fact, don't go there at all.

Angel: I have to.

Cordelia: I know. But don't?

Angel: I'm not gonna kill him, even though he deserves it.

Cordelia: Oh, I don't care if you kill him. He stole Connor's childhood, so kill him. But don't lie to your son.

Morgan: And Cordy's got the best head on her shoulders. 'Cause she's absolutely right here. Woulda been cool if Angel listened.

LaToya: But you know what? You know what's really cool?

Morgan: What?

LaToya: This Justine and Daniel scene.

Morgan: How dare you. [laughs] I thought something cool was gonna happen.

LaToya: "Before you, there was nothing," she tells him.

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: "I was dead! They'd taken my sister! [Morgan laughs] They'd taken a part of me! You gave me a reason again. Even if it was all lies."

Morgan: She says, "I'd have followed you into hell if you'd let me." And I write, LMAO, we know! [both laugh] Like, we're aware that that was how ride or die you were, for this older man who you have a confusing relationship with that I don't understand. [both laugh]

LaToya: [laughing] I still think, though, she wouldn't have jumped into Quor'toth. I think she would have been like, wait, what the fuck? Even if he hadn't pushed her.

Morgan: I don't know. Maybe she would've. Like, she—because I don't—

LaToya: She dies immediately, going through the portal. [laughs]

Morgan: She would. She'd, like, get chopped in half going through the portal. Like, the portal would close around her and, like, [LaToya laughs] Rose McGowan in the garage door in *Scream*. She'd just get, like, broken. [laughs] At least, that's what I believe. Holtz says he believes that, like, his hate kept him alive in Quor'toth. And he's like, "But I really do love, like, Steven though." Which is interesting. Like, he does still believe himself capable of that, even though clearly, this place did a number on him. [both laugh] And Justine very politely isn't like, "What's with your face?" [both laugh]

LaToya: She likes looking at that face too, apparently. Okay!

Morgan: Alright, Justine.

LaToya: He just needs her to do one more thing for him, then his vengeance can be done. What does he ever do for her? I mean, I guess she was like, "I was dead," but like, really. He's never done anything for her.

Morgan: He gave her a cult that she threw in the trash. Like, all of those people could've hung out with you. Like, you know, now that—

LaToya: They should've been at the rave!

Morgan: Yeah! They all shoulda come. But I guess, like, Justine, just not as charismatic a leader. Which again, we know it has only been days. And yet, the cult has completely dissolved because Justine had no way of, like, rallying them. [both laugh] Like, she called a second cult meeting and no one came, and she was like, I bought donuts. Like, this is...messed up.

LaToya: 'Cause it's after she says, like, "Yeah, the plan went just like we wanted. Holtz got the baby. We're done now."

Morgan: [laughs] Great job, Justine. So then at the beach, we've taken Steven Connor to see the ocean. And he says, "I didn't, you know, expect it to be this empty." And Fred explains it's actually full of stuff. [laughs]

LaToya: Huh. Interesting.

Morgan: Mmhmm. She also says, like—she's like, "I just want you to know, I get how lost you're feeling. Like, that's how I felt after Pylea." And Connor's like, "I actually don't feel lost." And then he walks into the ocean. I thought he was genuinely going to just walk into the sea. [LaToya laughs] And I started laughing so—I was like, do it. But he didn't. He just walks, you know, closer to the water to check it out, which fair. He hadn't seen the ocean yet.

LaToya: So Gunn and Fred, you know, they talk about keeping him busy and distracted, while Angel confronts his kidnapper. [laughs]

Morgan: Good. God. Like, they've seen him do stuff he shouldn't be able to do.

LaToya: They should not be surprised at all about what happens.

Morgan: This is—I was very upset with them. Connor can hear them and is like, "My dad is in danger!" So he zoops off, like, running like a maniac. [laughs] He gives them such a—

LaToya: [simultaneously] And Gunn's like, "Wait, there's no way he heard." Like, you saw him jump on that bus.

Morgan: He absolutely heard! Get with the program. [laughs]

LaToya: Come on.

Morgan: Come on, guys. You're better than this. You're smarter than—like, Fred hasn't slept in, like, [both laugh] 48 hours and she's, you know, still working off a hangover. But like, Gunn, come on. You're...you know what to do.

LaToya: Gunn can't seem to wrap his head around the entire Connor situation at all.

Morgan: To be fair, it is weird. [both laugh]

LaToya: He is confused by every single moment. [laughs]

Morgan: Nothing—yeah, to his internal credit, nothing about Connor makes sense. [laughs] He is a baffling entity. So I do have sympathy for Gunn in that way. In the Hyperion lobby—

LaToya: Oh, boy.

Morgan: Cordy sees a figure and silhouette with broad shoulders. And she's like, "Angel! You took my advice, yay! It means so much to me that you're here and you came back." It's Groo. [both laugh]

LaToya: Groo, who she did not ask about once.

Morgan: Did not notice he was gone, all day. That is also what makes it so sad. And I'm like, anyone who's like, ehh, Groo's a crybaby when he's like, "if she asks" or whatever. Anyone who would argue that that's, like, petty or mooney or whatever. I'd be like, she actually didn't notice though. She didn't notice the whole day that he was gone, and that is not good.

LaToya: And then when it's him, she's like, whoops. Not the man I wanted to see. [laughs]

Morgan: Ouch! I wrote "oww" in my notes. 'Cause it doesn't feel good. Then in the motel, Holtz is finishing up a letter that he's writing and he's folding it up. Angel shows up. They have this exchange about, like, temporary dwellings and whether or not Angel would need an invitation to come in. And Holtz doesn't remember anymore, and he's like, "It's so weird. That stuff used to matter to me and now it doesn't." Which I think is kind of fun and interesting and textured. Angel's very

mad. He, you know, pushes Holtz around and he's like, "You stole my son." And Holtz is like, "I kept your son alive. You killed my kids." Fair. Deeply fair.

LaToya: A point was made, yeah.

Morgan: Holtz is like, "Look, I can see that you're sorry." And he's like, "But you've never said you're sorry." And Angel's like, "Would that matter at all?" and he's like, "It might matter a little bit."

LaToya: We noted before, when they first interacted in the present, Angel was immediately snarky, which is ridiculous—

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: Considering what he did to this man.

Morgan: Yeah, and like, what he—and he was also, like, about to be a father himself. I feel like it's just like, come on. You know this is a big deal. And it's clearly meant so much to him. And so, he says, "Okay, I'm sorry. For whatever little it might mean, like, I am sorry." And I really wish, like—I wish there could have been more here. You know? Like, I wish we could have seen, like, Connor start to soften towards Angel a little more. And Holtz feel like he was slipping away from him a lot, and then making this calculated decision. And there could have been, like, more of this weird gray area where the two of them talk.

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Morgan: But they kind of have this conversation about, like, justice versus vengeance. And he's like—Holtz is like, "Well, if that's vengeance, you know, I have no taste for it." And he gives Angel this letter that he leaves unsealed, and is like, "You can read it. But give it to my kid. I love my son, I'm doing this for him." And he starts to leave the motel. And he's like, "Just so you know, like, Steven's not gonna believe that I'm—that I would do this. He's not gonna be okay with me leaving. He's gonna look for me. But don't worry, he won't find me." And he, you know, leaves, seemingly noble. [laughing] And I just think this is such a shitty thing to do.

LaToya: Yep.

Morgan: Fuck this guy.

LaToya: [laughs] Fuck Daniel!

Morgan: Fuck Daniel! I'll say it. Then we see Connor running. Angel's in his car, he starts reading the letter, which is in, you know, Holtz's voiceover as Connor runs. And the letter says that, like, Holtz couldn't bear to say goodbye in person, so he has to do it through the letter. And then, we cut to the alleyway. Justine and Holtz are locked in an embrace. But not one of romance, one of violence? [laughs] It's horrible. He's like, "I'm not asking—" he's like, "I'm just asking you to send me to hell! Like, not to—"

LaToya: Yeah. He says, "You said you'd do anything for me!" Continues to be completely unhealthy.

Morgan: Creep! Creep. Never good. Like, you—to think you're in any way righteous. Like, you're just a monster. She pokes him twice in the neck. [both laugh] And he slowly bleeds a little from the poke—I'm like, it must have taken him *forever* to bleed out. From those two tiny little pokes. Like, a vampire sucks. Like, there's suction. There's no suction!

LaToya: That's what I'm saying. Like, this body's not being drained of blood and if it's just going that slow, then like, he's full of blood! It should be, like, blood pooling, which also wouldn't be a vampire thing.

Morgan: Yeah, there should be blood absolutely everywhere. He should be in a huge puddle of it. This would look preposterous. [both laugh]

LaToya: I mean, literally, just—if you look for two seconds, it's clear he was not killed by a vampire. [laughs]

Morgan: Deeply, deeply clear. The letter continues and says, like, "Angel will help you find purpose." And Angel, like, closes the letter and is smiling to himself. And he's like, cool. I did it. Like, you know, Holtz is giving me my son back and I have this new chance. And then we cut to Holtz, and he's dead. [laughs] And we cut to Steven Connor as he rounds the corner and finds Holtz and Justine, outside the motel. His father dead with two little holes in his neck. And he says, "Angelus."

LaToya: You telling me no one heard Justine's shrieks during all of this?

Morgan: "Ah! Ah! Daniel!" [laughs]

LaToya: [laughing] "I don't wanna do this, Daniel! I don't wanna poke you in the neck, Daniel!" You telling me no one heard that?

Morgan: "Poke me in the neck again, Justine!" [both laugh]

LaToya: Why wouldn't they use, like, a barbeque poker, since that was always the thing they said is like what the vampires are like anyway?

Morgan: Yeah, just get a two-pronged thing. Then you only gotta do it once. Or like, get him in his, like, carotid. Like, there's an artery there that would bleed quickly. And yet, the blood is just dribbling.

Kristin: She is literally bad at even this! [laughter]

Morgan: Can't even kill her weird boyfriend dad. Like...[laughter] what—

Kristin: [laughing] I can't!

Morgan: [simultaneously] Trying to label their relationship now that it's over, because he's dead. Boyfriend dad, uncle, cult leader, what? Like, I can't put a finger on it and I don't care to. But at the same time, I want an answer. [laughs]

Kristin: Oh my god. I'm—I've never entered at the end of an episode before, but I just could—I was cackling so loudly in my room by myself. And I was like, I have to turn the mic on. [laughter]

LaToya: Justine. The patron saint of Angel On Top. [laughter]

Kristin: Truly, the Justine of it all. The fucking Just—oh my god. Okay.

Morgan: [sighs] Justine.

Kristin: Bye. [laughs]

Morgan: Bye! [laughs]

LaToya: I can't wait to one day, we'll be rid of her. When? Who knows?

Morgan: Who. Knows. I fear that Justine will never leave me. Like—

LaToya: Justine's actually a series regular in Season 4. Spoilers. [both laugh]

Morgan: Like, even if Justine never came back, I could never shake her. Like, the damage is done. [both laugh] Ohh. And that's Benediction, man. So, so painful. We are being set up for a brutal finale. And obviously, I can't remember what happens

in it, either. [laughing] So I just—I have a pit in my stomach. Now [inaudible] Steven Connor has seen his dad with two little holes in his neck. And maybe he's gonna shamle on up to that hotel room. And maybe that motel has cable, or maybe it just has basic TV, but I wonder if it has The WB. And I bet Angel has The WB where he is. So, what might some of our gang watch to soothe them after this day?

LaToya: That was such a smooth question.

Morgan: Woo! That's why I get paid the big bucks, baby.

LaToya: Hit it, bitch!

[DUBBA-DUBBA-WB jingle plays]
Angel is a vampire
Does he even like TV?
"I think he'll *like* The WB."
They got that hot teen drama
To ease the pain and trauma
And here's the episode that he
Needs to see (aw yeah!)

LaToya: So. As we see in this episode of television, Benediction.

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: Daniel Holtz does a little prank on Angel. It's just very cruel.

Morgan: Mmhmm.

LaToya: It's not good to do to people. Which reminds me a little bit of, you know, reality TV of the aughts. Truly, the dregs of reality TV, just hateful, angry things—no. [both laugh] No!

Morgan: For the listener, I made an X with my arms, because I was worried that LaToya's about to bring up the Jamie Kennedy Experiment. [both laugh]

LaToya: Not yet. [both laugh] But no, instead, it would be the one-season WB reality show, Superstar USA. Which was of course building off the brand that American Idol had made, with, you know, the terrible auditions.

Morgan: Mmm.

LaToya: The William Hungs, if you will.

Morgan: Ahh.

LaToya: So in Superstar USA, basically, it was looking for the worst singers in the world. But it would tell them that they were good singers. This show gaslit people and manipulated them into thinking they were good singers. It told audience members that their singing was, like, basically a dying wish situation. [Morgan groans] That way, they would applaud them. [Morgan groans] And help, you know, boost their egos. It was a horrible, horrible piece of early-2000s reality TV. Yes, it aired in 2004, the perfect time for this. The judges were Tone Loc and Vitamin C. Vitamin C got her hands dirty on this.

Morgan: Vitamin C, that you would do this. I'm disappointed. [laughs]

LaToya: But yeah, that kind of malicious prank reminds me a lot of what Holtz did. And you know what? Angel should watch this so he can know. He can see the signs of a manipulative man like Holtz.

Morgan: Mmhmm. He's riding too high. He needs to remember that the world can be ugly again. The exact opposite of why Steven Connor needs to be shown the ocean is why Angel must be shown Superstar USA. [both laugh] Ugh. And that brings us to the end of our episode. So, if you would like to find us on social media, that would be so sweet of you. You can find us @AngelOnTopCast on both Twitter and Instagram. We do fun stuff on there. If you'd like to support us on Patreon, you can go to angelontop.com. We so appreciate it and it would be really nice. And if you would like to send us an email—perhaps you love Justine. Perhaps you hate Groo. Perhaps you have an interesting take about Connor. We would love to hear it, so you can email us at angelontoppodcast@gmail.com. And if you would like to follow or find me on social media, you can look @LorganMutich. LaToya, where can the people find you? And should they?

LaToya: I mean, after the reaction to the Graham Grand thing, [Morgan laughs] that we acknowledged in the podcast, no! Don't find me. [Morgan laughs] I gave an inch. And you people took a mile.

Morgan: [laughs] As always, the internet was a mistake. But...this podcast was not. Next week—I mean, two weeks from now. Next episode, we finish Season 3 of Angel. I cannot believe it. It has been bananas. But I'm really looking forward to doing it with you, buddy.

LaToya: Yeah, I think it's gonna be the peak of us insulting Buffering, because...[Morgan laughs] why not?

Morgan: Come on, I believe in us. We can always get worse. [both laugh] And on that note, later, [bleeped out]!

[both laugh]

[Angel On Top theme plays]