

Buffering the Vampire Slayer
Episode 4.17: Superstar

[CHIME]

Kristin: Hello there, everyone. Welcome back to Buffering the Vampire Slayer, where we talk about the many incredible pursuits of our favorite hero, Jonathan. This week I have a very special guest host; friend of the pod, podcaster extraordinaire, Vanity Fair writer, and all around dreamboat, Joanna freaking Robinson.

We have a fashion watch from Kate Leth, a Sexual Tension Award segment from Jenny Owen Youngs and a song with four different voices, including a new addition to the buffering universe with the voice of Giles. Wonder, who's it gonna *be* [singsong]? Not me. Even though that was a wonderful vocal performance I just delivered. Okay, we're going to get right into the episode today. I just have a couple things for you.

First, the Sexual Tension Award winners from last episode. So we are talking about Who Are You. I know you all like when we do the winners together so you can get Jenny's responses in real time, live time. So today I texted Jenny, I asked her for her response to this, to these results. First, I'm going to tell you the results. 3% last place, Faith and the lady dancer. Um, third place, 13% for Joyce and stevedore Giles, 33%, maybe the first time that they have not won when they've been nominated Willow and Tara and 50 complete percent for Faith and champagne-popped Spike. I'm sorry. I didn't know I was going to say that, it just happened.

Jenny's response to me was, "Oh hell yeah. Leather gate. My main response is," and then she sent me a photo of us doing our live taping at Podcon where her face is flat on the table. As I read aloud the monologue, Faith delivers to Spike via Buffy's body. So, that's kind of what you'd get if Jenny were sitting here with me right now while I was doing this intro. I hope you enjoy it. Okay. You know what we're going to jump right into? Yeah, you do.

[SPOOKY NEWS jingle plays]
Spooky news!

Cool! So spiders are gonna eat every human on the planet within less than a year if they decide to. So it's really up to them. So far they've decided not to, but apparently—this is a report from the Sun, a UK paper. It's always the UK, giving spooky news. And I, oh, there's a horrible picture of a spider in this article that I just scrolled down to and I'm upset. Put a call out to all of you to send me some

stories about like ghosts and vampires so that I don't have to talk—the picture of this spider I'm looking at is so upsetting—so that I don't have to look at pictures of spiders or think about spiders. Okay. Here's a little bit from this news story. [clears throat] At the moment, spiders mostly eat the things we know they eat, you know, insects. But there's some big ones— Ugh!— that snack on lizards, birds, some even eat small mammals. I'm so upset. [grossed out sound].

According to a report published in the Washington Post, experts say if you add up— this is the most upsetting thing of all time— the weight of all the food eaten by the world's entire spider population in a single year, it's less than the combined weight of every human on the planet. I'm like itching my arms and back and stomach as I tell you this news. Um, Martin Nefeff? Martin NeFeller? Martin Nyffeler of the University of Basel in Switzerland and Klaus Berghofer of Lund University in Sweden, uh, published their findings in the Science of Nature journal this month. Uh... if spiders talk to each other and they decided, “you know what? Fuck these guys!” they can just get together and eat us all? Is that true? Is this real? I hate, why did I ever start doing this segment? That's your spooky news.

[SPOOKY NEWS jingle plays]
Spooky news!

Okay. Couple tiny things. We have merchandise. We have brand new, kelly green Smash the Demon Lizard Patriarchy t-shirts and hoodies. I have the hoodie. I'm obsessed with it. It's so awesome. So you should get one. Uh, we also have socks that are back in stock and you know, just a ton of fun things. Support your Local Alewives, the girl gang t-shirt and enamel pins aplenty, uh, even a vinyl of, I Will Remember You with so many beautiful songs, you know, so there's a lot of fun things over there. Bufferingthevampireslayer.com. Just click on shop. You can also support us by going over to our Patreon page. We have four levels now. They're all pretty rockin'. The new level gets exclusive merchandise. This latest round was pretty exciting. I have to say. Uh, you get the music in advance if you're at the \$5 level or higher.

It's a, just a really fun place to be. Uh, and of course if you're not already listening to our sister podcast angel on top, you should be. Brittany and Laura literally get better at talking about this show and humanity every week. I'm obsessed with them. You should be too. It's a really, really fun way to do a rewatch or a first watch of Angel. Last but not least, thank you to Lauren Klein, our sound engineer, who you can follow on Instagram if you want. Lauren Taylor Klein. She's always making us sound good. So thanks Lauren. All right, you ready to get into our favorite topic of conversation? Jonathan, Jonathan, Jonathan? Me too.

[Buffering theme]

Jonathan! [whispered]

Kristin: Hello and welcome to Buffering the Vampire Slayer, a podcast where we'll be watching and discussing every episode of Buffy the Vampire Slayer one by one, spoiler free. I am Kristin Russo—

Joanna: —and I am very special guest Joanna Robinson.

Kristin: Really, and I feel like in this universe, Joanna, now you've become the Jonathon 'cause you're the special guest so...

Joanna: He literally says that. "I will be the special guest," is what he says. I love it.

Kristin: This week, If you didn't already guess, we're talking about season four, episode 17. Superstar. Stay tuned at the end of this podcast every week for an original song written by Jenny Owen Youngs, recapping the Buffy episode we are discussing.

Joanna: Superstar was written by Jane Espenson and directed by David Grossman and it originally aired on April 4th, 2000.

Kristin: Made it to the two thousands with us Joanna!

Joanna: We made it! Out of the 90s!

Kristin: This is the one where Buffy senses that something is amiss when Jonathan becomes a hero to everyone in Sunnydale.

Joanna: I don't know why that would be amiss because Jonathan is so handsome and so great.

Kristin: Jonathan is so dapper in this episode—

Joanna: Extremely.

Kristin: —which obviously is intentional, but because when we start with the previously on, it's like Jonathan is like sweating in a church tower with a gun, and then like, we cut and he's like turning around in his chair and a suit and lookin' all...

Joanna: They put his hair up. You never— never underestimate the up hair. You'll notice by the end of the episode when he's back in his like, dumpy striped shirt,

that they like have combed his hair back down so he's got like the nerd bangs, like the late nineties nerd bangs. And it's like, no bro, just put the hair up.

Kristin: Yeah! Take a hint from your superstar self.

Joanna: Yeah! Put the hair up.

Kristin: Uh, but this is so... I, of course didn't watch the series in real time and I wonder as someone who did, you did right?

Joanna: Yeah.

Kristin: You watched it in real time. Do you remember like, seeing this previously on and being like, "What the fuck?"

Joanna: I don't think, I don't know, maybe I didn't watch the previously ons, but I do remember like, getting to the opening credits and like losing my mind. And it's still one of my favorite things about Buffy, ever.

Kristin: Can I tell you that I did not notice until this most recent watch.

Joanna: Oh really?

Kristin: Somehow. I must like, I must like be taking notes and like when the credits start I'll like, take some notes.

Joanna: Sure.

Kristin: Whatever.

Joanna: You're like, "I know the theme song. This is fine."

Kristin: Right. I know what happens here. And it was literally yesterday when I watched a tape with you that I was like, Oh my fucking God, the credits are all Jonathan splice.

Joanna: Oh it's so good. Um, yeah, it's uh, it's interesting. I was thinking about that today, where there would be no way for this episode to be, I don't know how much like a shock and surprise, cause I was on the Buffy boards when I watched it live in the late nineties, early aughts and we would get like episode descriptions. I remember it's the first show I ever like, would read the episode description in advance and stuff like that on a message board.

But I don't remember being, I don't know, quote unquote spoiled for this. And I'm like, I was just thinking now, like there's no way like, this would be a surprise to anyone because the way that TV works now, and the way we're all, the way that the fandom is all dialed in on the internet. You know, like Joss would have had to give an interview where he's like, "This season we're going to do a Jonathan episode." You know what I mean? And like, Danny Strong would've given an interview, you know, like it all would've like come out beforehand. So there's a beauty to like being surprised by what this episode is, which is this sort of, it's so interesting. Um, you were surprised, right Kristin, that I wanted to talk about this episode?

Kristin: Yes! And like, I don't know what my feelings are in this episode. I feel like I go back and forth, but yeah, I just, when I was like, Joanna, do you want to do an episode with me? *It's going to be Superstar* [apologetic voice]. Like I like had an apology in my voice, and you were like, "Fuck yeah!" [both laugh]

Joanna: Hell yes. I love superstar. Um, Superstar is like sort of a Zeppo episode, right?

Kristin: Totally.

Joanna: But then it also, and we won't talk about it 'cause we don't spoil things on this podcast, but it also just like lays track for a lot of themes that Buffy will explore in the future. And in many ways I think it's starting to show you how ahead of its time Buffy was in, in certain things. And so I just, I like this episode, especially in the larger context of the show. So I can understand why your listeners watching for the first time are like, "A Jonathan episode, who signed up for that?" But I think those of your listeners, I hope those of your listeners who have seen the whole thing will be like, "It is interesting what I feel like you can see them getting interested in certain ideas that will play out later." That's probably all we can say without spoiling.

Kristin: I'm so frustrated because I want to know which ones? Yeah. Um, but yeah, so that makes sense. And that is probably why I'm like, ah, I think it's okay, but I don't really know because as you know, I'm familiar with the series, but once we get past the episode we're talking about, or like the season we're talking about, I'm not that familiar. Like, I know the big things that are coming, but, um, it's really the first critical look I've done of the series ever.

Joanna: That's what, that's what makes you so fun to listen to.

Kristin: You'll never get this version of me again listeners!

Joanna: Awww, fleeting, it's so fleeting. But what I was going to say is I was going back through and reading. I don't think I've ever done this before an episode and I don't know why I haven't because it's very helpful that there's like a Wikipedia entry for every episode of Buffy, which has most of them have like some fun trivia on them and um, or maybe I've read them before.

Anyway, I forgot. For me it was like the first time, and I was reading a snippet from Noel Murray who still writes for a number of great outlets, uh, was writing for the AV club at the time this came out and he wrote about the episode, he said like, it's an interesting blend of a standalone episode and the overarching like main storyline. You know, 'cause the Adam storyline gets a little advanced. The Riley/Buffy stuff gets advanced. All of that happens. It's not like a standard, like you know, stand alone isolated sort of episode.

Kristin: Totally.

Joanna: Similarly to the Zeppo which also sort of progresses some things in that episode. And Noel Murray at the time was like, I don't know, I think it was like it was, it was a, you know, a bit of a challenge to keep track to keep everything together; this reality versus this reality and how they're blending. And I don't know if I would rather this had just been like a really traditional standalone where everything was different. So it was like some of the alternate universe stuff we saw in like season three [crosstalk].

Kristin: Right, when we go to Cleveland.

Joanna: Yeah, right.

Kristin: Yeah, exactly.

Joanna: So like in this Jonathan world, everything's different. There is no shrimp or whatever and there's no Adam and there is no initiative and there is no Faith swapping bodies with Buffy and whatever it is. That's almost an easier script to write I think. And I think this is more challenging. And I actually like it because I think it gives nuance to what Jonathan does, which we can all agree is like a bad thing to do?

Kristin: Right.

Joanna: But, especially the way it interacts with the Buffy and Riley plot line, like not.. just so obviously not a malicious thing to do.

Kristin: Right. And I mean like, you know, we're skipping to the end a little bit but, but when you learn like how he came to do this, at least if we assume that Jonathan's telling the truth—

Joanna: Right.

Kristin: I don't think that he was aware of some of the darker implications that his magic or this magic would have. You know, he goes out of his way to say, like, the guy who told me about this kind of like glossed over the whole monster thing. Uh, and, and this is true to, I mean the last time we saw Jonathan in any, like developed capacity. Yeah. Cause he's been on since then, but not with a deeper bit, was Earshot, which is essentially the same thread. Just played a different way. Right? It's like he feels alone. He wants friends.

Joanna: But that's the echo of this episode— ah, I really do love this episode. That's the echo if this episode. It ends— once again, we're skipping to the end, but, like, I do want to pick apart a little bit of what you said and we will talk about it again, I think when we get to it. But the end message of the show for both Buffy and Jonathan is like, you can't just fix it with one big thing.

Kristin: Right.

Joanna: So like Buffy showing up to save the day at the end of Earshot didn't fix Jonathan. Right? And so you know, and even though he was at prom and like, in a position to do something nice to her, that doesn't mean like, his problems are gone at the end of the hour.

Kristin: And in— what's incredible about you saying that is that's even nestled into the episode where they were, in his version, in *his* wish, it's actually him receiving the award. So like, that beautiful moment we saw, we know now that Jonathan was like there for it, but also was sad and like, wanted to be the one that was getting the recognition.

Joanna: Right. Yeah, yeah. It's um, I dunno, it's, it's interesting. I just find the Jonathan character to be one of the most fascinating characters on Buffy because— not just because I really like Danny Strong, which I do, but like because how he crops up at the very beginning just as a background player, which they did not have plans to expand them the way they did. But then what they wound up doing with him like really pays off in the way that like, I don't know, did you see the skateboarding documentary minding the gap?

Kristin: No.

Joanna: Nominated for an Oscar this year it's on Hulu if you're interested at all. But like this kid, when— the guy who directed it was a skateboarder as a teenager and just happened to like film his friends a lot. And then the documentary follows them for decades. It's just sort of like, it just happened to be that this kid who has like, a knack for filmmaking and skateboarding happened to film his friends when they were like, teens. And so we just happened to have all this stuff for Jonathan that informs a long, long arc on this show. Um, which wasn't intentional, but nonetheless I think they took advantage of. So...

Kristin: Joanna, I love doing episodes with you.

Joanna: Kristin, I love doing episodes with you!

Kristin: It's just so great, you know? I just love the perspective that you bring because you have, I mean especially based on like what you do in your life day to day. I feel like you bring things to the series that Jenny and I do not have at all. Um, from what we do day to day. Uh, and it's just, it's fun.

Joanna: Right, but I don't have the appreciation for hunks that Jenny has.

Kristin: [laughs] True.

Joanna: And there was like a real hunk moment this episode and I felt like...

Kristin: Yeah, we'll talk about it. Also we will have a sexual tension award segment from Jenny and you know when she's put in charge of things, I, I cannot imagine that there won't be some hunks nominated.

Joanna: Hunk talk 2019.

Kristin: Alright, so, okay, so we talked about the credits. Something that we didn't talk about yet and I'm sure that we will, but that I noticed right away is their wardrobe. Like how the costuming in this episode has shifted and we'll hear from Kate, we'll bring Kate in a little later. But it's really a cool choice I think to make, it's the, it's an alternate universe. Buffy's hair is curly once again, just as it is in apparently every alternate reality.

Joanna: Yeah.

Kristin: But they all look a little different. They all look almost like a, like a drawing of their character. Like there's like harder lines and I mean we'll see what Kate

says. I'm not an expert on this. We'll see what Kate says when we get to her. But that's what I noticed that, that it just seemed like, I don't know, Buffy's jacket, you know, had like hard angles on it. It was, it just looked visually different to me.

Joanna: One of my favorite things about looking at the Wikipedia entry for this episode is that it literally had a bullet point about, just about Buffy's hair. Which is my first note in my notes, which is like Buffy's hair is curly. And it was like Buffy's hair is curly as it was in this episode. And in this episode. It was like someone's on hardcore Buffy hair watch and I feel like we should have some kind of infographic or chart.

Kristin: [gasps] Oh you're right.

Joanna: You know what I mean? Cause like there should definitely be like the baby bangs entry... we're gonna need, you know, like—

Kristin: We need the Beer Bad entry of course.

Joanna: Yeah, the Beer Bad entry. There's like the variations of blonde that she goes through and stuff like that, there may or may not be an important haircut later, I couldn't possibly say. You know, like Buffy hair watch is an infographic that I would enjoy.

Kristin: Well you've put it out there, Joanna. And you know what happens when you put things out there—

Joanna: I know. Your listeners are so—

Kristin: They often often come back. And so one of the reasons I was also excited to talk to you about this is because literally my notes about like the, the sort of style of this episode. Some of the things they do stylistically I've written like Mission Impossible? James Bond? Like I know that they're referencing things and my guess was James Bond. But I have no idea.

Joanna: Oh, because you've never seen it?

Kristin: I know nothing. I've, I mean I think I've seen Mission Impossible. I don't think I've seen James Bond. Like what I know of James Bond is from like Austin Powers.

Joanna: Are you talking a lot about like the soundtrack, right?

Kristin: Yeah, the soundtrack and some of the like, like, when Jonathan is blindfolded and then they like pan and it's like three dudes with three apples on their heads. It just seemed like there was some style stuff happening.

Joanna: Well you know what the theme song actually sounds like, right?

Kristin: Yeah.

Joanna: [*sings*] Detective Angel. That's exactly like, if Jenny is not busy, which I know she is, and wants to do like a, [*sings in same tune*] Superstar Jonathan sort of like jingle, right? Like—

Kristin: Wow.

Joanna: He's just like, that's his theme song is basically Detective Angel like this whole time.

Kristin: I am so excited that you have said this because I already commissioned Jenny to do a jingle later. Spoiler new jingle. It's not even a new jingle. It's just a repurposed Detective Riley. Because there's a detective Riley moment. So now I'll ask her if she can also do, I mean it's just, she just has to lay the vocal over the same track. She can do it. You can do it right Jenny?

[DETECTIVE ANGEL jingle plays]
Superstar Jonathan!

Joanna: [*inaudible*] But yeah, you know, you're right. It's very, it's, it's um, spy. I mean, but I think it's like spoof of spy.

Kristin: Yes.

Joanna: It's like—

Kristin: I guess it is like Austin Powers.

Joanna: It is Austin Powers. It is like Get Smart. It's like, you know, the old TV show spy. Like, you know, there's like, there's like a whole bunch of stuff that it's referencing there. But I don't think it's like, but it's like the spoof of. It's an adolescent boy's like, dream of what spying is.

Kristin: It's amazing too. I think they execute it brilliantly, and, and throughout. Like it's not even just like, little, like a little thing here, a little thing there. It's sort of like threaded through the whole episode. Um, I wrote in all caps THE MUSIC!

Joanna: We need to talk really quickly about the, the opening credits.

Kristin: Yes, please.

Joanna: And your favorite part of it.

Kristin: [sighs] So there's, my favorite part is not the end, though I love it. It's definitely, there's, I think it's the cut before the end cut. I can't remember what he is doing though. Do you remember all the things that Jonathan is doing?

Joanna: No. One of them is he's diffusing a bomb. [laughter] [inaudible] There's a lot of like posing with his like little crossbow.

Kristin: The cr— Yeah. I think there's a crossbow moment, but I really appreciate the interspersing and I'm sure that some of you, maybe you, I don't know, know what they had to do, is they had to take things out to fit him in.

Joanna: One would guess, in order to make the music. We need a side by side.

Kristin: I know this because when Jenny and I do live events, I put us in and it's really hard to do. I mean, I know that the credit editors are much more skilled than I am.

Joanna: No!

Kristin: No! [sarcastic]

Joanna: No! [sarcastic] [laughter].

Kristin: But it's hard to keep the rhythm of the music and like, have things that you put in land in the proper way and they do. So I just, yeah. I actually, when I watched this I was like, Oh my God. The next time Jenny and I do a live show and I do credits, I'm going to use these credits because then I can just pull Jonathan out—

Joanna: And out you in the Jonathan spot!

Kristin: —and put us in the Jonathan spot!

Joanna: Can you please be defusing a bomb?

Kristin: [laughs] Yes. Actually, Jenny and I will try to get footage of ourselves doing all of the things Jonathan is doing.

Joanna: Yep, and then the slow-mo walk to camera please.

Kristin: Oh my God.

Joanna: Thank you. Um, so, and the other thing in the opening credits, it's been a while since we recorded, um, I don't know if Emma Caulfield and James Marsters were in the opening credits. They were like almost just about in the opening credits when the last time we recorded. But I forgot that Marc Blucas has already at like also. So like he showed up and I was like, you know I don't like Riley and I was like, ugh Blucas! Fucking Blucas is here in the credits.

Kristin: My fear— so I talked to Jenny about this already and her and I will definitely be talking about it the next time we do an episode together. But I tried really hard to get Marc Blucas to surprise Jenny at prom and my fear and he like, you know, his agent was in conversation with me or whatever. He wasn't able to do it. And the thing I'm most afraid of is that he was like, Oh, this sounds so cool, let me check the podcast out. And then he like heard me being like, yeah, like fucking Riley sucks and here's a jingle. And like also here's me in a wonder bread costume for Halloween as well. So I'm hoping that Marc Blucas somewhere knows that I love and adore him.

Joanna: Oh, that's true. I like Blucas, honestly. And I've seen him in other things. I believe he's in the Cameron Diaz, Tom Cruise joint "Knight and Day". Um, no, I like Marc Blucas when he shows up and like plays a firefighter and things. But like I just don't like Riley. It's not Mark's fault.

Kristin: It's nice to be in shared company. You know, I really struggle with my current co-host on our Riley opinions. [laughter] Uh, so a note that I made early on is about like Jonathan's... So I'm going to play a jingle and then discuss it.

[THE PATRIARCHY jingle plays]

The patriarchy! [thunder clap, evil laughter]

So, I'm playing the patriarchy jingle in a general amorphous kind of way, which doesn't usually happen because I'm in one moment— not one moment, but like on one hand with Jonathan, I feel like, Oh, like I don't like the way he's sort of like daddying about. Like, don't worry, I have the advice you need and I have the whatever you need.

Joanna: Oh, it's not, it's what's important is that you tried your best.

Kristin: Yes.

Joanna: Yeah.

Kristin: That makes me feel, feel men feelings.

Joanna: Oh yeah, of course.

Kristin: But, what's interesting about what the episode does is that it's not just the women, like all of the characters in the universe are spoken to like that. And all of the characters in the universe are like hiding away their Jonathan swimsuit calendars for example.

Joanna: So we're here to talk about it for Giles right now. The fact that Jonathan had the audacity to call him Rupert?! I was like, where do you get off calling him Rupert? But like it is, it's like it's a, it's a boy's idea of like what, you know, how a man talks to another man. He's like, you know, good news, we don't have any unholy feast of some things. [inaudible], you know what I mean? He's got, he makes Giles laugh, like, but that's the thing is like, it's disrespectful on the one hand to call Giles Rupert if you're [inaudible] or not like sleeping with him or whatever, but like—

Kristin: You're not Olivia.

Joanna: But on the other hand, um, you know, his fantasy is to be important to these people. And so he like massively respects Giles, right? And so he feels so inferior to people all the time. So it's not just that he, it's not that he wants like mastery over these people, which he, like, somewhat does, but like he, he just wants them to like admire them and he thinks that this is, you know what admiration is.

Kristin: Yeah!

Joanna: Like that's what he explained at the end of the episode. That's why this, this episode, I'm glad you played the patriarchy jingle. I think we should talk about like, the way that Jonathan daddys the whole episode, but at the same time it's like it's not clear-cut evil. If it were clear-cut evil, he would be trying to like, you know, fuck Buffy or like whatever it is. And he's not, I mean we can talk about the twins if we want to, but like, he's not doing that and he's not trying to like rip things apart. He's genuinely trying to do what he thinks is good.

Kristin: Yes.

And I'm glad you brought that up and brought like, the twins up because as I was watching it, especially this last time, taking my notes and everything, I was like, this is really interesting because his idea is not sexualizing really anything. I mean, it almost felt like the twins were there as like an afterthought. Like it didn't even seem like it fit with Jonathan's version of—

Joanna: It wasn't important to him.

Kristin: No! He wanted to like, save the world and be respected and feel and like feel that people needed him. Um, which is sad!

Joanna: It's sad and it's sweet and it's disturbing. It's all of those things, you know what I mean? And so like, I don't want to give him a free pass. It's not at all what I'm trying to do. I just didn't, like, why I liked this episode is because it's like, it's a more insidious kind of evil. It's an evil. It's when we talk about young boys or young men and toxic masculinity, I think, you know, people think that when you have sympathy for them being sort of swept up by social, moral, social expectations, they, you're giving them a free pass.

Kristin: Right.

Joanna: I just want to get really clear. I'm at no point giving Jonathan free pass on this. I just think that it's like you could have sympathy for him and be like, this is so fucked up, you know?

Kristin: Yeah. And, and that it's an interesting twist on like what a dude would wish for when the genie comes out of the bottle.

Joanna: What the power fantasy is.

Kristin: Right. Like it's, it's not the typical power fantasy. There's elements of it, certainly. I'm like, I think maybe that's why I'm annoyed with the twins being in it? 'Cause I feel like the rest of it is like more nuanced and delicate.

Joanna: I agree. I don't love the twins being there.

Kristin: Um, but yeah. Okay. So, we, I mean this conversation is so delightful. I feel like we're not, we don't even need to go scene by scene like I normally do, but I do want to talk about the collaging that's happening by our witches. Yes. Nineties, collaging, they go together. But also like queer women and collaging is like a thing that exists.

Joanna: Is it?

Kristin: Yes. Well, I mean I guess I operate in one segment of being a queer woman, which is that I'm super good friends with Reese Bernard who runs Autostraddle and Reese is the best. Like if you ever need a collage commissioned call her. She's amazing at it. And I run A Camp, right? I co-direct A Camp and there's always at least one if not two to three to four collaging workshops. Like queer women fucking love to collage.

Joanna: That's so funny. My, like my friend who happens to be a queer woman has, she does these vision boards is like a big thing that she does, which is essentially like a collage with intention. And like she, she was, I was just over at her house the other day and she was like, here's my 2019 and like showing it to me. And so when I first watched this episode, I forgot what they were doing. So you just see them like tearing out things and they're like making collage. But I wrote down vision board question mark, and then I was like, Oh no it's a Jonathan collage.

Kristin: I know. I actually sent that same progression. It was like, 'cause at first I forgot what they were doing, I was like, Oh my God, this is so dead on queer women, like collaging.

Joanna: It's true [laughter]

Kristin: Oh but they're collaging and I, I don't, I don't want to like hit this too many times cause like we already had the conversation about like the patriarchy and like how, this is kind of a twist on what a male fantasy might be or whatever. But I also think like, you know what, it's the early two thousands we have these two queer characters that are like just kind of coming out of hiding or whatever. Like, we're transitioning from witchcraft to actual like, Oh we think we might like each other and the fact that nothing was done with that in a, in a weird or uncomfortable way in this fantasy of Jonathan's is also pretty fucking great.

Joanna: Yeah. I guess my question is like, does Jonathan get to watch the scenes that he's not a part of?

Kristin: Ooooh!

Joanna: Because like that's what I, I never thought that like he would be able to like review— cause he's off doing something else—

Kristin: Sure.

Joanna: —While this is happening. And so I don't feel like he goes home and watches like CCTV of like...

Kristin: Right, right.

Joanna: So he wouldn't need to have Willow and Tara like having sex or whatever. But what I do like about this scene is like you think it's completely independent of what's going on. You think they're having a chat and then like they're also in the most like, annoying... Buffy is the most important person in the universe. They're having a chat about Buffy and I'm like, is that what Willow and Tara will be talking about?

Kristin: Right?

Joanna: But then you pan out, you're like, oh, this is still a Jonathan scene.

Kristin: And I guess right. Like, you know, not, but he could watch this scene in that like they would be having sex with them. More so that like when he interacts with anyone, their desire for him is like, all equal. And that like these, these queer witches are not put in any different category, right?

Joanna: Right. Straight men and queer women all want Jonathan.

Kristin: The playing field is levelled. Right. Okay. So you mentioned a hunky moment.

Joanna: I did.

Kristin: I was like, I've gone through so many scenes. I don't mean to skip past anything you want to talk about. Uh, you mentioned a hunk and um, boy do we get, this is I think the sweatiest and most shirtless, we've seen Riley in combination 'cause we've seen him shirtless and injured and we've seen him sweaty but partially clothed. This is a, you know...

Joanna: I feel like this is an infographic that also needs to be made. It's like the, the Riley shirtless spectrum or whatever. I love that you're like, we've seen this.

Kristin: My note is just oops. Because of shirtless. Shirtless men get an oops. I want to say I'll post this on social media pretty soon, but I was looking, um, so as you and I are taping this Joanna, um, tomorrow, Jenny and I will be interviewing James Marsters.

Joanna: Oooops.

Kristin: So, so I was looking for a picture of James to post to announce the interview and I came upon a photo of angel and spike where they're like back to back and they're both wearing button down shirts and they're both oooops. Like both of them back to back. It's miraculous. And I cannot wait to share it with all of you.

Joanna: I'm like, I can't. So I was watching Indiana Jones recently. Uh, we were watching those movies where, wherein Harrison Ford, like really does like to take his shirt off, especially in the second one. And like one of our drinking game rules is like drink for Indiana Jones' nip slip.

Like, basically. So. Anyway. Oops.

Kristin: Yes. A big oops.

Joanna: Here's what I have in all caps in my notes. It's no shirtless Tai Chi! So like maybe the reason that Riley has been shy about taking his shirt off in this context is he knows that we will all have, be comparing this. Them playing indoor foam basketball to like the sexy, sexy shirtless Tai Chi of Angel and Buffy fame. So...

Kristin: Yeah.

Joanna: Sorry bud.

Kristin: He's seen some of like Buffy's scrapbooking of Angel's pecs.

Joanna: Oh, he's watched seasons two and three, I'm sure. I don't know if he watched season one. But um, you know, he says, "I'm no Jonathan, but I'm doing okay." Which is a great line. But, um, but, and all the lines, like all the little throwaways, like Jonathan lines are so great.

Kristin: Jane.

Joanna: Like really integrated in there. But like, you know, he's also no Angel, but he's doing okay anyway.

Kristin: And this is one of the first... Well, I mean we have them collaging but this, the basketball photo is one of the first cues of like, oh they've changed out existing things for other things. Like that, like Riley's balls poster is gone and in its place is a Jonathan photo. And um, which later, you know, when the spell is undone, we see that beautiful laser beam go through Sunnydale and erase it all.

Joanna: Oh, I forgot about the ba— But how could I forget about the ball poster? And then Buffy and Willow have like the chocolate poster, right?

Kristin: Yup. It's like the same poster but it's like for girls and boys.

Joanna: Right! They bought it at the same dorm poster sale. Yeah, absolutely.

Kristin: Okay. So something that I wrote about Riley is I know that like I already know that he's still with the Initiative, but for some reason this episode I was like, wait, he's still with the initiative? Like I don't understand how that's a thing. Like I know he had his whole like, I'm a soldier, I'm not a soldier. If I'm not a soldier, what am I? And Buffy was like, you're a man, a good man, or whatever. But I don't understand what's happening now with the, like they're trying to get Adam back, but have we all forgotten that they created Adam and it was like not a cool thing? You know what I mean? Am I missing a piece?

Joanna: Well so she says this thing about like, you're no longer eating like, the food. You're no longer taking the super soldier serum. And so I think and, and honestly, you know, the back half of season four is not the one I'm most expert in because I really don't care about Adam. [inaudible] But um, yeah really. But I would guess that like, you know, Riley should be in the Initiative to try to get Adam back. To be like a guy on the inside, to like...

Kristin: Right.

Joanna: You know, know what they're doing sort of thing.

Kristin: Confusing because it seems like what we learned with Maggie Walsh was that Maggie was creating this thing and it would, didn't seem to have like, good intentionality behind it?

Joanna: Right, but isn't it sort of like the idea is that oh, Maggie represented like the splinter worst of the Initiative and now with her not like there—

Kristin: We can get the—

Joanna: We can be—

Kristin: Back on track or whatever?

Joanna: Do the good guy commando stuff, you know?

Kristin: Get that evil woman out of here. Get it back to the men!

Joanna: Bad intentions.

Kristin: Uh, and so, and the other big part of this scene is that Buffy we're seeing is weirded out by Riley because Riley has just slept with Faith in the body swap episode. Joanna, we had a big conversation. We got our, our listenership was very torn up about if body swap, uh, was represent— representative of nonconsensual, uh, anything. And I got all bent out of shape about it. I felt like body swap— so I would love— You're shaking your head and nodding your head and what have you. Um, I wanted to be able to view the body swap as something that was outside of the conversation on consent because I felt like— Not in the Riley/Faith sex. We put that in a separate bin. That I think is a major consent issue.

Joanna: Okay, great. Cool. Great. Oh, just being in someone else's body?

Kristin: Yes.

Joanna: Oh yeah. Uh, okay. 'Cause I thought you were talking about the other thing and I was like what's happening Kristin? [inaudible] [crosstalk] Um, uh, yeah I would say I would definitely call it a violation.

Kristin: The body swap itself?

Joanna: Yeah. It's a violation.

Kristin: But it's like the character of Faith is evil and this is a sci-fi fantasy show. I...

Joanna: I guess I would hesitate to put it in the conversation with consent because there is like a good example in that episode of like talking about consent and that sort of stuff. So I wouldn't want to like, I dunno, muddy it with this other thing which I would yes, call a violation and call like uh, you know, evil bad thing to do and all that sort of stuff like that. But like I think to talk about consent if you want to, which of course I do want to, like why not actually drill down on this other, [inaudible]

Kristin: Yes. This scene. And I think this is, I mean not this scene, 'cause we're not in this episode, but this thing that they're still unpacking.

Joanna: Yeah!

Kristin: It's really fucked up and like I think it's fucked up. Obviously we get more of the Buffy angle, but it's like, you know, in this it's more like Buffy...

Joanna: But it's super fucked up what happened to Riley. We're not Riley fans but we can like be like, we need to process like, his trauma, right?

Kristin: Totally!

Joanna: Yeah. Willow has such like, an interesting and like borderline gross like description of like, what happens, right? When she was like, when Faith's insides were in Buffy's outsides and he was inside, you're like, Willow! What are you saying?

Kristin: Willow! Take a glass, take a sip of water, where are you going?

Joanna: Yeah.

Kristin: But right. And that's something that we see like unfold throughout the episode. It's weird how it resolves to me. Like, it seems like there should have been a conversation and Buffy sort of shuts down that, and it's like, actually no, now that I'm in your arms this time, I trust you and I trust that you're here for it. And it just, I don't know. I was like, but you were in his arms just yesterday. Is it really just the advice that Jonathan gave you? It just felt like it was a little glossed over in terms of like how they came out of that.

Joanna: Well, especially, spoiler alert for the episode that I hate that comes after this, so you know.

Kristin: Oh yeah. Jenny and uh, Hrishikesh Hirway are having a hard time doing that episode, so that's going to be a grand old time.

Joanna: That's going to be fun.

Kristin: Hrishi's been very frustrated with us. He's like, really? Another Riley episode? Could you fucking get me on any episode that's not about Riley?

Joanna: That's so funny, I'm like, hey Joanna, do you want to talk about Where the Wild Things Are? No! I want to talk about Jonathan! Um, speaking of which. Okay, so they're at my favorite Buffy location, which is the Espresso Pump. So the one coffee shop in all of the one Starbucks town that is Sunnydale.

Kristin: Their branding is amazing by the way. Like I didn't notice the espresso pump, like how hard they had gone on being like a gas station. Like the employees are wearing like gas station uniforms.

Joanna: Now I kind of want an Espresso Pump t-shirt.

Kristin: Me too. You know, we might be able to make that happen.

Joanna: Oh, dreams do come true. No. So, so Jonathan's actually giving Buffy like good advice. She's making his coffee for him though. So like, you know? It's just tinged with— She's like sugaring his coffee for him.

Kristin: We can play it again, Joanna. We can play it again.

Joanna: Do it.

[THE PATRIARCHY jingle plays]
The patriarchy! [thunder clap, evil laughter]

Joanna: It's giant coffee mug, which is very nineties Friends.

Kristin: Yes.

Joanna: Delightful. Even though we're in the aughts. Um, but yeah, and then we get uh, Karen with a K shows up.

Kristin: Also, just before we get to Karen with a K. it is a giant coffee mug, but I would like to note that these are teenagers and these are people in college. She puts an entire canister of sugar in that coffee. Like this is, there's so much, watch how much sugar she puts in.

Joanna: Oh gross.

Kristin: Okay. So Karen with a K.

Joanna: Karen with a K shows up. She shows up with his book, which is called Oh comma, Jonathan.

Kristin: The perfect title.

Joanna: It's a beautiful—

Kristin: The perfect title.

Joanna: Oh the only thing better is if they were to reference a 1999 film, and on the Marquee later we see Being Jonathan Levinson. [laughter] Being John Malkovich came out in 99 I checked.

Kristin: Wow. Shit. That would have been good. Oh, we needed you in the writer's room.

Joanna: No, no. It happened.

Kristin: Wait, it does?!

Joanna: Yeah, at the very end, that laser that you talk about going through the town, it changes the marquee from Being Jonathan Levin, to like—

Kristin: Oh my God, I didn't even notice it. I didn't see it. Thank God they did.

Joanna: Phew! They did it. Yeah! And so then, then we get Jonathan at the Initiative. Um, which is mostly there for like a height.

Kristin: The height. Yeah. Yes. It's all height all the time.

Joanna: It's a height joke.

Kristin: And they even go, there's a line right after we see the height. Like they, they brought, they finally brought in the big guns for Jonathan.

Joanna: Just the way it's all and like the way that Danny is just like Danny Strong is such a sport. Just like walks up and like exaggerates the like head tilt up sort of thing.

Kristin: Totally.

Joanna: To just like go for it. Um, and then like, I don't want to spoil anything, but like honestly, who cares about Adam? But like. this is like, actually an important conversation about Adam. It's like nestled in this episode.

Kristin: Yeah. The uranium—

Joanna: Power core.

Kristin: Power core. And he doesn't eat food.

Joanna: Yeah! I mean it's like actually quite insightful. Like that's the thing is like Jonathan is actually quite helpful...

Kristin: Yeah! He revealed...

Joanna: In this role.

Kristin: Totally! Totally. Yeah. So keep that in the back of your minds, listeners. Uh, Adam doesn't need the— What's sad for me is that I really liked picturing Adam plugging himself into the wall to charge, you know?

Joanna: Yeah.

Kristin: It doesn't sound like he actually...

Joanna: Do you think that if Adam doesn't, he doesn't eat, he doesn't poop. Adam doesn't poop, right?

Kristin: Adam definitely doesn't poop. Although if Adam did poop, he would like, be super down with like, exploring that part about himself as well. You know?

Joanna: Good times.

Kristin: He, Why? That's all I have to say about Adam.

Joanna: Sorry. Yeah, it's not great.

Kristin: So Karen with a K...

Joanna: Yeah, Karen with a K.

Kristin: She's in the woods. Well, not the woods, but she's like in the outer ring of Jonathan's mansion—

Joanna: Property, stalking him.

Kristin: Stalking him. In the rain. Yeah. And then the monster, the long armed monster comes. That's really like, the biggest feature of the monster that I—

Joanna: Lumpy I think is a description later.

Kristin: Karen says that he's lumpy.

Joanna: I think Tara calls him lumpy.

Kristin: Oh it's Tara, that's right.

Joanna: In a daze. She's just like ah, lumpy.

Kristin: Tara!! I can't wait 'til we get to her.

Joanna: Um, but yeah, so Karen with a K gets attacked and meanwhile The Bronze... I also looked up, you know what else I looked up?

Kristin: The band!

Joanna: Not just a band, no no no. I mean I did, but not just when Being John Malkovich came out related to this.

Kristin: Did you look up jonathan.com?

Joanna: No!

Kristin: I did.

Joanna: Is it great?

Kristin: It's... I, hold on, let me...

Joanna: Okay.

Kristin: I did look up jonathan.com. It is a real thing. It's the website of Jonathan Costello, a second year PhD student in computer science at the University of California Davis. In his spare time he plays the piano and two V2 Rocket League. Jonathan also has a Twitch TV channel, which he uses about as often as he writes blog posts. Jonathan.com. I mean it's literally what jonathan.com would be.

Joanna: Jonathan.com. First of all, props to Jonathan from UC Davis, my alma mater for uh, getting that URL, locking it down and then not using it, but like not selling it also. Good job. No. So I looked up, cause there's a swing band playing, right?

Kristin: Yes. I wrote down what they're called somewhere.

Joanna: So I looked up, uh, when the Gap khaki commercial came out. Um, because like, you know, your, your younger listeners not, like being drenched in the

90s, the way that we were, would be like, why is there a swing band performing here? And on the one hand, it's so that we can see like, Danny Strong in this amazing white tux. But on the other hand, um, the swing movement was like such a thing in the late nineties, early aughts.

Kristin: I completely forgot about that Gap commercial.

Joanna: It was such a thing.

Kristin: So when was it?

Joanna: '98.

Kristin: 98?

Joanna: Yeah.

Kristin: Yeah! God! It's also like, not They Might be Giants. Uh, Mighty, Mighty Bosstones? Right? Doing the [inaudible].

Joanna: Cherry poppin' Daddies.

Kristin: Cherry. Poppin'. Daddies.

Joanna: Yeah. [inaudible]

Kristin: Oh God. That's the first time I've heard the title of that band as a person who has learned some things about what things mean.

Joanna: Um, this band's called the Royal Crown Revue, right?

Kristin: Yes. The Royal Crown Revue. I don't know. I must've written that somewhere else. Not here, but they are called the Royal Crown Revue.

Joanna: Here's what I wrote in all caps. It really bothers me when voice dubs for people don't sound like the people. I actually thought this person sound— To the point where I wrote down, "IS DANNY ACTUALLY SINGING" in all caps and he's not right?

Kristin: He's not. It's something. I wrote a note. I read—

Joanna: The actor or the person who did vocals is Brad Kane who played Tucker Wells in The Prom.

Kristin: Yes.

Joanna: So it's Tucker's singing. It's crazy. It's nuts. And he did like, he did a really good job. I don't know, intentionally or not, voice matching Danny strong. I think he sounds a lot like him.

Kristin: You know what's funny is that I read the thing about the Pr— that Oh this is the voice of the guy with the prom. But then I watched it and I was like, Oh that must've been about something else. I truly still thought it was Danny Strong.

Joanna: Yeah. It sounds so much like him! Here's my favorite thing about Danny Strong outside of, and I don't think we talked about the, I know we talked about, 'cause I was on for Earshot. So I know we talked about Jonathan before. But like I don't think I was able to talk about it in the context of Superstar, which is that like Danny Strong himself has had like kind of a superstar career. Right?

Kristin: Oh my God. He like manifested it.

Joanna: Yeah! 'Cause he's like, you know, he, he co-created Empire, like he has like, so he's got an Emmy for sure. 'Cause he did some of those like political HBO movies. He screenwrote them, he co-created Empire. Um, I think he's got a Golden Globe as well. He was like, yeah, he, I think he wrote Lee Daniels, The Butler. Like, you know. Danny Strong, like going strong. You know what I mean? Showing up on Mad Men. But like, that's his, that's what he does in his spare time is like guest star on things and then he's just got this whole screenwriting career that like, you know, love his work or not like, well and I actually really love the stuff that he did for HBO. Like this is an amazing thing.

Kristin: But do you think that he took the spell from the show?

Joanna: Absolutely! There is a monster out there, rampaging lumpily! Because Danny strong is winning awards. Anyway, that's one way. That's, that's a meta thing that I [inaudible].

Kristin: Yeah. That's good. And true! Uh, so at The Bronze, but things that I would like to talk about is that Anya, at first it's played like Anya is moaning. Uh, I mean that Anya has said John or Jonathan's name. But then like as the scene progresses, it's like, Oh, it's not just Anya who wants to have sex—[crosstalk] [inaudible] Xander's into it. And like Nick Brendan plays this fucking amazingly.

Joanna: This is a good Xander episode.

Kristin: It really is. It is truly a good Xander episode. I'm here for Xander having crushes on all the dudes—

Joanna: Absolutely.

Kristin: All the time.

Joanna: And just like all of his quips are good. I think it's because like, I mean, you know, I'm, I come and go on Xander, but like, uh, maybe it's because like all the beta male energy is sucked up by Jonathan or something like that that he's just free to like quip and it's fun.

Kristin: Totally! And he's... Like, I mean the moment that he has later on where he like reads the Latin from the book, but it's just like good and funny and—

Joanna: Real good.

Kristin: Yes. This is of course the scene where Buffy somehow just gets over everything that's happened and...

Joanna: Swing music solves all problems.

Kristin: It could also be— Jenny's not here with us, so I will say, it could also be the size of Marc Blucas' palms on Sarah Michelle Gellar's body, which seems to have a magical effect as well.

Joanna: Or it could be Danny Strong's fingers on the trumpet because another fun fact I learned is that while he did not sing the vocals, he was fingering that trumpet correctly—

Kristin: What?!

Joanna: —Because someone taught him, he like learned how to make sure— He's not just like going like this, which is what I mean, you can't hear listeners, you can't see me just like randomly air trumpeting.

Kristin: Joanna is air trumpeting right now.

Joanna: But that's what I would do if I were like, I'd be like, "Okay cool Joss, I'm just going to be going like this," you know, whereas Danny Strong like learned the proper positioning.

Kristin: Ah, so it's like foreshadowing for the rest of his career.

Joanna: Absolutely.

Kristin: He's fucking in.

Joanna: Following through.

Kristin: He's in.

Joanna: Danny's in it.

Kristin: And then of course Karen stops the whole show. Well, I mean really Jonathan stops the show for Karen because she's come in wounded.

Joanna: And he seems to genuinely care.

Kristin: Yeah. I know. That's the thing about this, it's—

Joanna: Complicated.

Kristin: It's complicated. There's a lot of daddy stuff that I don't like, but there is also like, he does genuinely get off the stage, take Karen back, not because he wants to sleep with Karen, because he really cares what's going on with Karen. Um...

Joanna: Shout out to Danny Strong's line reading of, "Oh, this is a clue." I rewatched it three times. I thought it was so funny. Oh, this is a clue.

Kristin: I just, just before taping this episode with you, Joanna, I was talking with Mercedes McNab, who told me that she could not say Blondie Bear the way that Joss wanted her to say, Blondie Bear. Like that, that she said it so many times before she said it the way he wanted it to be heard. And so now thinking about this, when you say like, Oh, that line reading was blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I'm like, wow, I wonder how many things Joss was like, this needs to be said in this particular way so that it hits. Um, not necessarily this thing, but I didn't, it didn't occur to me before having that conversation with her that like, wow, as a director you might be super invested in like the particular sound of a line.

Joanna: If I ever meet Danny Strong, which I haven't, but I'm going to be like, how many times did Joss Whedon make you say, Oh, this is a clue? Um, I hope it was many. No, I hope it wasn't just for poor Danny's sake. Danny! You know, Danny nailed it in one!

Kristin: Yeah, that's true.

Joanna: No disrespect to Mercedes, but like Danny got it in one. One take, one take Strong. That's what they call him.

Kristin: I'm glad that you brought up clues. Uh, Joanna, because we are now at the mansion and um, not only is Jonathan talking about clues, but Riley is standing in the fucking background with a notebook jotting things down in like, it's not a trench coat, but it might as well be a trench coat. And so I've asked Jenny to create this for all of us.

[DETECTIVE ANGEL jingle plays]
Detective Riley!

Kristin: You're welcome. You didn't know you needed it, but you did. He's just like really taken one out of Angel's book on this detective work.

Joanna: Shirtless basketball. Detecting.

Kristin: Buffy's got a type.

Joanna: I mean like, you think that Jonathan is the one who's kind of doing an Angel impression with his, like, I think he has faint eyeliner a little bit in this episode.

Kristin: [gasp] Does he?

Joanna: He's got the leather duster, you know. Anyway. Um, one thing I want to say about something that I love about this episode is that Buffy is slotted into this nervous, uncertain, unconfident role, which is so hard and interesting for us to watch I think. Um, but what I love about this episode is like Buffy figures out what's going on by like believing in herself.

Do you know what I mean? And not like— Eventually. And not like, yeah, the, the, the mark on the beast or whatever is a clue. And like it is, you know, Jonathan's acting quite fishy around it and that. But like, her radar pings earlier, when they fight the nest of vampires and she's like, I don't think that was my best. I'm actually better than this, you know? And I like that about her because like, it's, if you want to talk about this in terms of like the gentle patriarchy daddying that Jonathan does and also gentle whatever, that like her journey is pushing back against that and knowing her worth is, um, is great.

Kristin: Yeah, absolutely. And something that's on the funnier side of this too, or like that I enjoy, is that not only is she sort of like weak, weaker and she's noticing that, but like in strength and fighting, but she's also not able to quip?

Joanna: Oh my God, I love that. She's like, "Oh, you big blonde guy!" 'Cause we didn't really like dig into this Jonathan/Spike interaction, but it's pretty good.

Kristin: Yes. I want to talk about it.

Joanna: Because he doesn't give a fuck about Buffy and calls her like Betty or whatever. I think it's pretty good. And then Jonathan, Jonathan has a great quip. He's like, he refers to like turning him into like, instant soup mix, which is the best description of like the ashy vampire stuff that happens a lot. Like it's so good. Yeah, buff can't quip.

Kristin: Right! It's like with power comes quipping, and when you lose that, you lose your jokes.

Joanna: You've got it all.

Kristin: Since we're talking about Spike, can we just like, talk about this scene like in the cemetery with Spike and Buffy where basically it's, you know, Jonathan thinks he can't get the information out of Spike. And Buffy again, like sort of realizing her power is able to get it out of Spike. But the last time we saw Spike and Buffy interact, it wasn't Buffy, it was Faith. And uh, Joanna, I dunno if you remember the scene in The Bronze with Buffy and Spike slash Faith and Spike, but it's really, really sexual. And she says things like, "I will ride you at a gallop." You know, the one. We all know it deep down. Uh, and so this is really the first time that we've seen— And Spike doesn't know. He's like, he's, he doesn't know at this point. He doesn't know, I think until like later in the series that that was Faith. Uh, and this is a really sexual moment between the two of them in the cemetery.

Joanna: He's like touching her so much.

Kristin: And she's not moving.

Joanna: I know. Guys. I just... Like complicated Spike feelings. Because like, Jonathan's right when he's like, you're being creepy, stop touching her and like shoves him away. I'm like, yeah! That's right! Don't do that! I don't enjoy watching it at all.

Kristin: But also if you, if you're following the arc, I mean it is, but is it? 'Cause the last time that he has seen Buffy, she had him up against a fucking wall and was literally delivering an erotic novel to his face.

Joanna: Very good.

Kristin: And I think he's been thinking about it ever since.

Joanna: But it's comp— But it's, this episode is complicated in that way that, that we talked about the beginning where it's like, it's continuity and it's not because like at the beginning he calls her Betty because like, she's not like, she's the Slayer, but she's not like THE SLAYER. Jonathan is like the leader. And so like—

Kristin: Ooh, that's true.

Joanna: So in like, the first interaction, he doesn't really like care about her. And then the second one, you're right. He's like touching all over her...

Kristin: Touching all over her and like Jonathan has to break it up.

Joanna: Yeah, that's true.

Kristin: So... Interesting. Interesting. Interesting. Where even are we? The twins, that's the note that I... Oh yeah. Adam knows it's a lie. That's probably a thing we get out of this scene.

Joanna: We get to Adam and I took a nap. Um, the end.

Kristin: And then Jonathan is staring into— Jonathan's taking a page out of Angel's book with this fire.

Joanna: But yes, [inaudible] but he just says something that's, you know, he's like, these kinds of magics are corrosive and they're chaotic and it'll just take care of itself basically. I'm not, I don't need to right this wrong. It's going to fix itself. And I like the chaos, so let's just sit back and watch. But it's true, this happens all the time. Like whenever we see these alternate dimensions sort of like, Anya Wish episodes or whatever, like there are consequences that things tend to, I mean... I mean, Xander says as much what, Um, when Riley's asking them about spells later and you know, he's like, oh, but it comes with a catch or whatever. And Xander's like, yeah, they tend to.

Kristin: They tend to do that.

Joanna: They tend to do that.

Kristin: Which is also like, again, good Xander episode.

Joanna: Great Xander lines, yeah.

Kristin: There being like, man, I've been here four seasons now. I've seen this episode before in a different form.

Joanna: So the monster comes in and attacks Tara, and this is maybe where we should talk about Tara. 'Cause I haven't talked about my Tara thoughts.

Kristin: Yes. So, before the monster attacks Tara, I just want to make, there's at least one thing I want to say, which is that Willow and Tara are walking together with Buffy and nobody has said anything. It's like this is the episode where it's like couples and it's like they're always there now as a couple, but it's not acknowledged yet. And Willow says to Tara, or no, Tara says to Willow, "Willow, I'll see you tomorrow." And there's this awkward pause and like Buffy is there. And then she's like, okay. And then they leave. Just awkward sexual tension is a-building for these two. Now we can get to the monster. I can't let a moment go by, Joanna.

Joanna: Why would you?

Kristin: Just bathe in the awkwardness of two queer women wanting so badly to just make out and not being able to do it. I mean, whatever. We know they pretty much slept together last episode with that really intense sweaty spell, but still.

Joanna: Still. There's some smooches to be done.

Kristin: There's some smooches.

Joanna: Shout out to Tara for like, we, we've seen this scene in a million Buffy episodes where like, the, you know, defenseless young woman gets attacked by the monster, whatever, but Tara can like, take care of herself. She does like a little like obsecrum, sort of spell.

Kristin: Oh my God. Where she shoots like smoke out of her hands.

Joanna: Yeah. And then like hides in the janitor's closet all night. Okay Tara! You know what? You defended yourself!

Kristin: She did. She has, um, I think we may have mentioned it in a previous episode. Somebody wrote us an email awhile back and they were like, when you

get to Tara will you just call out as we begin to see the difficulty she has opening doors? And so this is one of those episodes where we see it and I think we're going to see it more. Tara struggles with doors.

Joanna: Just like the aliens in the movie Signs. Tara does not know how to open doors.

Kristin: She can shoot smoke out of her hands but open a door, not always. And you know, what happens to Tara with this monster I think is really like a character development thing for Tara. Again, like sort of, we're in this weird universe, but we're still getting truths about the characters. Because none of the Scoobies that we have had to date would have hidden in a closet overnight because they were so terrified and would be in bed. Like Tara is really vulnerable and she's really powerful in a lot of ways, but she's really vulnerable in ways that I don't think we see from any of the other Scoobies yet. And in ways that I think that as humans we can identify with.

Joanna: Well like when they were new, you know, like Willow and Cordelia were basically in a janitor's closet all night. Right?

Kristin: They sure were! Joanna, thanks for bringing that up.

Joanna: So you know, she's new to it, but yeah, you're right. She's very vulnerable. Watching Willow be concerned for her. Yeah, that is interesting. Tara is a really complicated thing. Like I know that Tara is a character that I struggle with because I really like the, what Tara and Willow means for the culture, for the show. I love that, like they decided to do this at a time when it wasn't like generally accepted to do this. It matters. It means something. Tara as a character on her own is harder for me to like, be compelled by.

Kristin: Yeah. I mean I don't think you're alone in that. I think that like there are those two sides for a lot of people where it's like Tara as a character, not sure how I feel, but also this is a really great storyline. I really liked Tara, but I didn't at first. Um, I, I was more in that camp of like, I like you for what, for the relationship you're giving me and like, what have you, but I don't know how I feel about you, but I've, I think because our list— Because so many of our listeners have like just been so endeared to Tara that like this viewing for me, I'm like seeing through my own, my eyes, but also their eyes. And so I have like a very, very big soft spot for her.

Joanna: Yeah. I will say that every time I watch again, I like Tara more. Like, I really didn't like her at first and like that's changed a lot. I also happen to really like Amber Benson who plays her just as like a human. So like that, that helps, you

know, warm me up to Tara. But, but, but who I really love always in everything and everything is Anya. And Anya has this great scene where like Buffy goes, 'cause she wants to like, look through some of Xander's stuff is what she says, but really she wants to like ask Anya, um, you know, demon questions? Vengeance demon questions? Um, we had a lot of good set dressing in this because there's like so much Jonathan shit everywhere.

Kristin: Oh my God, trading cards...

Joanna: Trading cards, Dark Horse comics, which by the way, Jane Espenson has written a Jonathan Dark Horse comic that is a prequel to this episode.

Kristin: Wow. It's like, how Jonathan got this? Like did the spell?

Joanna: I haven't read it. I just like, this is just trivia I know. That there's a, there's a Jonathan issue that Jane wrote for Dark Horse that exists, but, um, Dark Horse is of course the company that like, puts forth all the Buffy stuff or did. They don't anymore, right?

Kristin: Mm. I don't know. The new stuff is Boom.

Joanna: Yeah. I think Dark Horse had it for awhile. Anyway. But Anya, like Anya's clear. I don't want you here stuff is so funny.

Kristin: It's so funny, especially countered with her trying to read from the script of being a human. Right. Come on in. It will be fine. Or like whatever she says.

Joanna: She's like, so can you go now or what? Great.

Kristin: Um, right. She also says, this is where we get the shrimp. You've, you've already made a reference to it, Joanna, but like, she's off on her shrimp metaphor. Metaphor. No, what do you call it when you're giving an example of something?

Joanna: It's like an analogy.

Kristin: Yeah. Uh, yeah. She's on her shrimp analogy. You could have a world with all shrimp. You could have a world with no shrimp. You could have a world where you make somebody fall in love with President McKinley, which I thought was really an odd thing and I looked it up 'cause I was like, what is this a reference to? President McKinley was assassinated, but I couldn't find anything saying that his assassinator? Assassin. Assassinator. [laughter] I think I like it better, uh, was like in love with him or whatever. So I don't know where that line came from or if anyone knows more than I do.

Joanna: That just sounds like to me, and I could be wrong, but it sounds to me like trying to establish that Anya has lived a long time.

Kristin: Right, right.

Joanna: She's got McKinley jokes. Whatever that means, you know? Um, yeah, but so then we get back to Giles house. And this is where we get all this undermining of Buffy as a leader. We get more shrimp jokes.

Kristin: Oh my God, pawns and prawns, pawns and prawns. It's, I think it's my favorite joke of the whole episode. It makes me like guttural laugh every time. It's the delivery too, like, it's a hilarious, ridiculous line, but fucking Emma Caulfield...

Joanna: Nails it.

Kristin: Oh my God. Nails it.

Joanna: Love her.

[clip from episode plays]

Buffy: I think that Jonathan may be doing something. That he's manipulating the world and we're all like, his pawns.

Anya: Or prawns.

Buffy: Stop with the shrimp! I am trying to do something here!

Kristin: It's also where we learn about The Matrix. That Jonathan has starred in The Matrix, which just really roots you right into the time period.

Joanna: And this, I mean this is, this is another, like this is what I think of the writing style of this episode. This is why I think that McKinley thing might be a throwaway. Because we find out like, he killed The Master and The Mayor. Okay, these are things we know. And he coached the women's US soccer team to like, well you know like we all watched him do that. That's just, I just think it's like a random thing thrown in there. When Giles tells her she's out of her depth it's one of the most painful things I've ever seen.

Kristin: Because it feels like it's, we've, I don't know that we've ever seen Giles speak like this. Well, or...

Joanna: He's tut-tutted her before. You know what I mean?

Kristin: But like that? It feels bad.

Joanna: Yeah. It feels very bad. And it underlines like, the real insidious like stuff that Jonathan is accomplishing by, by putting Buffy below him in his universe. And so then making all these people around her— It's like funny when Anya says it, but it like really hurts when Giles says it.

Kristin: Yeah, 100%. And it also is like, you know, at the beginning of this episode we were talking about how like, well, it's not like... It is patriarchal, but it's also like kind of, no— You know, there's not a lot of like sexualized stuff, so that's good. But it does beg the question of like, why, you know, why couldn't Jonathan have had a world where he was respected and loved, but also there was a woman that was more powerful than him? A question as old as time.

Joanna: I think I just realized that I'm on a podcast so I can't just like silently shake my head at you.

Kristin: No, I dunno. I think our listenership knew exactly what you were doing.

Joanna: Yeah. I know you already made reference to the swimsuit calendar, but I got to like shout out...

Kristin: Ah, yeah.

Joanna: Tony Stewart Head's, um, delivery of like, "No. Yes." Very good line delivery.

Kristin: We know, we're all bi for, we all are bi for Giles and we know that Giles is also super *bi* [singing]. Even in this universe.

Joanna: Yeah. So then Jonathan and Buffy are going to go after the monster. We get that spike scene that you referenced.

Kristin: Also, I want to say Riley comes to Buffy's defense.

Joanna: Maybe one of my favorite Riley moments of all time.

Kristin: Mine too. And that's why I feel... You know, I rag on Riley a lot, so I do try to say the moments when I appreciate him and this is good, especially though the line is written really brilliantly, I think. Where he's like, this sounds absolutely

unbelievable to me, but also I'm getting to know this person and I trust that she knows what's up.

Joanna: Yeah.

Kristin: So I'm going to help her out. Which like fuck yeah, Riley! Put a couple of points in your game.

Joanna: Only Riley really believes in her. I wrote in all, question mark, in all caps. But that's, I mean that's the thing. It's like, let's give, let's give Riley his full credit and say like, as Buffy is, the truth keeps sort of struggling to come to the surface with Buffy. Um, then that is like a fundamental truth for Riley, that is counter to the narrative that Jonathan has created, but it's coming to the surface because it is the core belief that he has in her.

Kristin: It's interesting too. This is like a total tangent or like side thing, but usually the way we're taught, um, about universes is that if you change one thing in the universe, everything else will change.

Joanna: Yeah.

Kristin: So this is like the exception to that rule because really nothing has changed except that Jonathan is infiltrated into every memory, into everything. But like most of the relationships are the same, right?

Joanna: Yeah.

Kristin: Everybody still knows each other the way they knew each other.

Joanna: Right.

Kristin: In the other universe.

Joanna: It's not like you know The Wish or whatever.

Kristin: Right, exactly.

Joanna: We get the great "Xander, don't speak Latin in front of the books" line.

Kristin: Oh my God, I love it. As a matter of fact, I'm going to play it.

[clip from episode plays]

Xander: You can't just go *Librum Incindere* and expect...

Giles: Xander, don't speak Latin in front of the books.

Kristin: I just... It's good. Actually when I heard this line, Joanna, I'm sure you remember being on some episode with me where you were like, "We used to play this game about notable lines in Buffy." And I thought of you in this one.

Joanna: Yep. It's true.

Kristin: I thought this, this might be one. I'm still trying to play the game.

Joanna: It's one! You're always a winner when you play that game. You can only be a winner. Yeah, we're cutting back and forth between like the Scoobs figuring stuff out. Anya's got a great line where like Willow's like, "Buffy was right?" and Anya's like, "Doesn't sound correct, does it?" Love you Anya. We cut to like Jonathan and Buffy, like fighting over this cavern thing, and the monsters there and whatever and like, I really do love this scene because it's like, you know, Jonathan won't want to let— You know if you hurt the monster, Jonathan loses his powers and he won't want that. So obviously like he'll want to stop Buffy—

Kristin: Right.

Joanna: But that's not what he does. He wants to stop this monster because it was not his intention when he like put this spell together, the like, part where you like, think he's going to push her into the cavern then he doesn't, he like holds her back or whatever is fine and cheesy. But the part where I get kind of emotional is like, she's like, "I don't know how to do this." And he's like, "Oh you do. You did. You'll remember."

Kristin: I know. Oh my God, I just got the chills when you said the line to me.

Joanna: Right? It's like, really, that's why this episode is so complicated.

Kristin: Right.

Joanna: You know what I mean? 'Cause it's very endearing and lovely and supportive, especially just coming off that scene where like no one was supporting her.

Kristin: Yeah.

Joanna: And I think it's partially, it's like— To give Jonathan maybe more credit than he deserves, it's him realizing like, you know, like, the other monstrous thing that he's done to Buffy. She has to underline it a bit more for him when the episode ends. But like, you know, he took her support network from her.

Kristin: Right, right.

Joanna: And he's giving it back to her. Yes, in that patronizing way that he's sort of done. But no.

Kristin: I don't know. This moment—

Joanna: It feels different.

Kristin: It does, it feels different and actually is. Earlier I was like, I believe Jonathan when he says he didn't know about the monster and I didn't even realize, but this is why, right? Like this is why I believe him because you can see that like any other like villain or whatever would have been like, "Fucking see ya. Keeping my power, thanks." But it is like, once he recognizes sort of the implications of what he's done and what it's done to Buffy and like all this stuff, like he, he's like, okay, I'll let it go. Um, we're about to do a big shift. You mentioned this, uh, at the top with Jonathan's hair going from up to down. I don't know what Kate's going to be talking about, but I've just realized we haven't even heard from Kate yet. So let's hear what Kate, if Kate hasn't even to say about the hair, the wardrobe, whatever. Kate, we've missed you. Hello.

[Fashion Watch intro theme plays]
It's time for our friend Kate
To give you the Buffy fashion update!

Kate: Well, hello, hello, and welcome back to Jonathan Fashion Watch. What an episode! We get to see our main boy, Danny Strong in so many good looks in this episode. Now, there is a point where he's talking to Buffy when they're sitting at the cafe. When you know the girl Karen with a K comes up to get her book signed, where he's wearing a suit that doesn't really fit. It's a little bit too big, but I'm willing to let that slide for so many other of his choice looks.

Honestly, he's got so much style in every scene, but the fact that we get a peek at that calendar. Yum. It's hard to remember what anyone else is wearing in this episode. It's fine. I mean, Buffy's hair. It is Buffy? It's Buffy, right? Yeah. Okay. Sorry. Buffy's hair is looking, it's just so weird, like Buffy— kind of a name. Anyway, her hair does look amazing. Everyone's does. I actually did some research because

I like to do that every once in a while on these fashion watches and found out that Danny Strong brought his own personal hairstylist to the set for this and it's not surprising.

He just brings so much to this show in every moment this season. It's like he's challenged himself to bring out performances that might not have even been in the script. He just brings, oh God. It's just amazing. It's amazing to watch a master at work. And you know, this episode Superstar in particular really shows it off. It also shows off that white tuxedo, which I wish we got to see more of. I'm ready for a swing revival. I think it's time. If everyone's gonna look as good as Jonathan does? Oof. Yeah, I'm ready. Okay. Got to calm down. Until next time, I'll see you in line for the book signing. Oh, do you think he's going to wear that sweater? Mmm!

[Fashion Watch outro theme plays]
That was our friend Kate
She gave you the Buffy fashion update!

Kristin: Okay. Thank you so much. Kate Leth. A dream. A wonder. As always.

Joanna: A walking legend.

Kristin: Truly. Truly. A legend among us. Uh, so here we are, uh, at what I've called the couple's picnic. Um, and I think that's because I'm just getting increasingly excited about Willow and Tara being like, positioned as a couple with the couples. Um, Xander has a line that's really sad, I thought. I mean, and also Xander's looking pretty good in this, in this picnic scene. I was like, Oh, Xander. I have, I have tingly feelings.

Um, but he says like, you know, when Jonathan's reality was sort of here, I felt like, respected and I felt like this tingly feeling and now I just feel empty again. And it's like, it's like you, he, there's no focus put on the line at all. But I was just like, Oh God. Like this is kind of an insight into, we haven't really looked too much at, at Xander because the show hasn't yet done, done its deeper dive. But like, you know, Xander's like living in his parents' basement, he's not going to college. We've talked about it a little bit, but we've sort of forgotten it in all the hubbub of season four.

Joanna: Yeah.

Kristin: But this tiny little line just reminded me like, Oh yeah, this, this guy. Like he loves Anya and they have a good thing going, but like he really doesn't know what the fuck he's doing and he's lost.

Joanna: Xander's townie life and what's going on with it.

Kristin: Yeah. Also Riley immediately counters with, like, "I just felt really too tall."

Joanna: Which is how I feel all the time, personally. And then as Buffy walks away to go talk to Jonathan with his like, bad stripes and bad hair, I think it's Anya who says, "Well then who really did star in The Matrix?" Like, they haven't remembered Keanu yet.

Kristin: Yeah, they haven't— [laughter]

Joanna: They're still getting their memories back about Keanu.

Kristin: One of the last memories to restore, turns out is Keanu Reeves.

Joanna: [inaudible] I got to say. And then they have this great conversation about like, I mean, you know. Sometimes it feels a little like episode of the week-y, like you know, whatever when they have this like big tied up with a bow conversation at the end of an episode. But like, just Jonathan talking about like being up in the bell tower that, that, that ability as I said, because the Jonathon stuff is plotted the way it is, the ability to call back to an episode last season that probably no one who has forgotten because there was so much conversation around what it.

It's not like you need to be reminded that Jonathan was like up in the bell tower sort of thing. Um, and then he's like, he's like, "I genuinely didn't know about the monster." Like, "I feel bad about it." And then Buffy is so great. She's like, "That's not the part people are upset about." Or like, "Yeah, that's bad, but that's not the bad part."

The bad part is like she said, people don't like being, feeling like puppets in your little like, show or whatever. People don't like being gaslit. Like this is an episode about gaslighting. And Buffy... There's an episode, I think it's in season six. That's an even, I don't think this is a spoiler thing to say, just vaguely in season six there's an even stronger, let's gaslight, Buffy and like, try to tear apart everything she believes like, is true about herself episode. It's a storyline I like. There's actually also a really good episode of The Magicians season one. Um, I know you love The Magicians.

Kristin: I do.

Joanna: I do too. Uh, where they like, they put Quentin like Quentin is in an insane asylum, but really it's just in his mind and it's like, you were never a magician. You know what I mean? And so like this, it's a trope, you know, I'm sure a TV

tropes.com has like a whole page on like, you know, the gaslight episode or whatever, but like trying to undermine what people's core identity is or, or their belief in themselves and, like that.

And that's the insidious, the real insidious, the real monster of like what Jonathan did and this episode and the real, the real beauty of those episodes when our heroes sort of emerge from that, is like a stronger connection to their core belief of who they are. And in the idea that like, you know, this is the thing is like Buffy's Scooby sensor or spidey-sense the whole time is like there's something wrong because this is not who I am. You know?

Kristin: Yeah.

Joanna: And so needing to access that belief in yourself. I just think it's really, really interesting storytelling.

Kristin: Yeah. Well fucking said, Joanna, I told you you are so smart about TV. I want to say you mentioned like, well it's kind of like a bow, you know there is a little bit of an element of like, a bow at the end maybe. But I think what's interesting and something I didn't realize until you were talking about Earshot is that what's kind of cool is that Earshot could've been an episode that you looked at as like, Oh this kind of had like bow at the end, right? We have the scene between the two of them where Buffy is explaining to Jonathan like yada yada yada. But the fact that then we come back.

Joanna: Yeah.

Kristin: It, you know, it's like, well even if there is a quote bow at the end, in this series, it's going to take it further. Like it's going to say like, yeah, but what did happen? What did happen to that kid? Did he just get better like that? No! Like there's more progress. There's more like journeying that has to happen.

Joanna: And they don't do that a lot of the time. But they do, you know, like, um, I, I think of Amy similarly, is used similarly. You know? Or like Harmony, you know, speaking of Mercedes.

Kristin: Yeah.

Joanna: You know, these are characters that you revisit. Characters that you didn't think the show is going to bother to explore in-depth that the show does decide to explore in-depth.

Kristin: Yeah.

Joanna: And um, I'm just saying, I could've used more Clea Duvall? Or something like that.

Kristin: Listen. Couldn't we all Joanna?

Joanna: Couldn't we all. And then it ends with, okay, so I had a revelation in this final moment, which is like Buffy and Riley, like talking and making out. Which is like, I don't know why it took me until this episode to figure it out. Maybe because I was thinking about the episode that follows it.

But like, Buffy really fucked up my idea of like, what you're supposed to do when you kiss someone. Because Sarah, Michelle Gellar does this like, terrible... I mean like I, I'm trained to think it looks really sexy. But this like, like Dolphin-y undulation thing when she like kisses him and I'm just sort of like, it's a whole thing. It's like kissing with your body is something that you do until— Not that you don't kiss with your body, listeners at home. Like, or...

Kristin: Just sit very, very still. [sarcasm]

Joanna: Right? Isn't that how— [sarcasm]

Kristin: Isn't that how you do it? [sarcasm]

Joanna: Isn't that how one kisses? [sarcasm] I'm just saying, like, Sarah does this whole thing that I just thought, was like, what everyone does and then later realized, no. I don't even know if I ever even tried it. I was just watching it and I was like... I was watching it, I was like, this is, this looks actually strange. But I remember watching many, many, many, many episodes of Sarah doing this and it didn't strike me as [inaudible].

Kristin: Do you know if she does this with other, with like with David or other humans? Uh, who she kisses? Or is it because, because, I've noticed, I feel like anytime we see, um, a scene between Buffy and Riley, it seems like Sarah Michelle Gellar is like, really working hard on her end to bring it to a sexy place.

Joanna: That might be it. I didn't even think about that. That like she's— Because like— No, I actually think she does do it with David, but I never noticed it because I was like *in it*.

Kristin: Yeah. Because he's returning—

Joanna: Yeah. And here I'm like, I don't feel it. So I'm just like observing the blocking and I'm like, that's bizarre looking, you know.

Kristin: In my mind, and perhaps someday we'll get to talk to Marc and find out what was happening in his mind, in a polite, respectful way. But like, it, it reads to me like Marc was worried about disrespecting Sarah and somewhat like, it feels like he's so polite. It feels like he is the character of Riley as an actor.

Joanna: Yeah.

Kristin: So he's being so polite. 'Cause *he* sits— You want to talk about somebody who's not moving when he kisses. He does not move. It's like his head turns and like he's kissing, but his like arms are still, his legs are still.

Joanna: I've gotta watch this again.

Kristin: Yeah, You should. 'cause it's, I mean you didn't get to talk about the sex scene where he takes a boot off of her foot sexily, but these two struggle. They struggle in the chemistry. And because we've seen Sarah be sexy with literally anything that she touches—

Joanna: Yeah.

Kristin: I want to say that it's a Marc/Sarah thing.

Joanna: I think that's right. I didn't even think about that. Because like, yeah, it's not an issue with James or Eliza—

Kristin: Right.

Joanna: Or David.

Kristin: Right. Exactly. So we really led ourselves right to Jenny Owen Youngs here, who's going to talk to us all about the Sexual Tension Awards.

[SEXUAL TENSION AWARD jingle plays]
Sexual tension award!

Jenny: Hello and welcome to the Sexual Tension Awards for season four, episode 17, Superstar. I am Jenny Owen Youngs. I don't know if you remember me from before from all the other episodes of the podcast, but I am here today to tell you about some sexual tension. Here we go. Your nominees for this very special episode

are; Jonathan Levinson and Anya Jenkins. Oh my God. Have you ever seen anybody more ready to get down than Anya re:Jonathan?

Next up we have Jonathan Levinson and Riley Finn. Riley's thing with Jonathan is much more subtle. I think he kind of like wants to be Jonathan, but sometimes you think you want to be someone, but then later you sort of figure out that you actually want to date them. So I'm putting in for that.

Thirdly, we have Jonathan Levinson and Rupert Giles, because wow, he has the Jonathon Levinson swimsuit calendar in case you didn't notice, and that just speaks volumes. And finally, for people who are unwilling to participate in this charade of Jonathan being a, the object of everyone's desire, we have a three-way nomination of Willow, Tara and the fine, fine, fine art of collaging.

If you'd like to cast your vote in our beautiful STA democracy, please visit us @bufferingcast where we'll be posting a poll for you, our devoted listeners to cast your very, very special votes. So please give them to us. Tell us what you think. Let's do this. Thanks for joining me for the Sexual Tension Awards.

[SEXUAL TENSION AWARD jingle plays]
Sexual tension award!

Kristin: Ah, thank you Jenny. Thank you to the democracy of Sexual Tension Awards. Cannot wait to see who you vote for. Um, Joanna, have we done it? Did we do it?

Joanna: We did it.

Kristin: I think we did it. This was a joy. And I knew it would be as soon as we had the like, Oh, I'm sorry, Earshot. And you were like, "Fuck no! I love Earshot!" I was like, Ooh, I'm going to come out of this loving Earshot. Like, which is exactly what has happened. Um, but it's always—

Joanna: Have I changed your mind about Superstar?

Kristin: Yeah! Or, Oh my God, I said Earshot, like, eight times. Yes.

Joanna: I didn't know if I also changed your mind about Earshot. Like maybe I'm just here to like alter Kristin's reality to my own.

Kristin: No, you did. You changed my mind on Superstar, not Earshot. And um, and I knew you would because it— I mean I think almost any episode of this show, like if you do a deeper dig, but this one really seems to have a lot of chops. And um...

Joanna: I think it does, and I think it will only grow in your listeners' estimation the further along you get in the series.

Kristin: And that's a thing. Right? And that's the thing that I don't even really truly carry. Um, so I'll carry that with me as we move into further seasons. You'll have to come back again and again and—

Joanna: Please.

Kristin: You know, you know how much I love talking to you.

Joanna: I love being here.

Kristin: Everybody loves hearing from you. Just in case we have any new humans who have not heard you on our podcast or somehow have not heard you on one of the one other million podcasts that you do, tell them where to find you.

Joanna: Right now you can hear me on three other podcasts.

You can hear me on Little Gold Men, which is a Vanity Fair, award season podcast, which we do all year round. You can hear me on Vanity Fair Still Watching podcast. Right now we are watching True Detectives. Soon we will be watching Game of Thrones. Speaking of which, you can hear me on A Storm of Spoilers, which is actually not very spoiler-y, but that is a show that we started about Game of Thrones. It is now just like whatever we want to talk about. So...

Kristin: You've done a Buffy episode, right?

Joanna: We sure have! Yeah. So—

Kristin: All the places. Joanna also writes for Vanity Fair, which is a thing that is awesome. I love everything that you write over there.

Joanna: Yes. You can find me on vanityfair.com. Or you can follow me on Twitter @Jowrotethis.

Kristin: Hell yeah. You know me probably, but just in case you don't, I'm Kristin Russo. You can find me on Twitter and on Instagram at Kristin Nolene. That's K. R.

I. S. T. I N. N O. E. L. I. N. E. That's also the spelling you could use to find my website where you can learn about the work that I do with LGBTQ communities. Uh, and of course you can find Buffering the Vampire Slayer on Twitter, on Instagram, on Facebook @bufferingcast. And you can also check out all the things that are going on with us at bufferingthevampireslayer.com.

We're only about a month out from our New York City prom, which is sold out. But we are very excited to see those of you who are coming. And don't worry. We're going to do so many more proms, proms forever. So you'll all get the chance to come to one. Joanna, I hope *you* come to a prom.

Joanna: I want to come to a prom.

Kristin: We need to make it so that you get to go to prom.

Joanna: San Francisco prom.

Kristin: Hell yeah. Oh God. Everybody in San Francisco was just like, "Yes!" [laughter] Um, and of course you can support us over on our Patreon page. You can find that at bufferingthevampireslayer.com And I think that's it until we— I'm supposed to say "Until next time." And then we're supposed to howl, are you ready?

Joanna: Yeah. I'm ready.

Kristin: Until next time.

Joanna and Kristin: A-wooo! [howl]

Kristin: Wow that's good. Have you been practicing?

Joanna: No.

[CHIME]

Jenny: Wow. Hey guys. Uh, before we jump into the song, I want to give you a heads up. You're going to hear so many voices. Oh my gosh. Most of them you're going to recognize. You're going to be like, "Wow. Hey, it's Bess Rogers back as Willow. Oh Hey, it's the original hot guy with glasses; Chris Farren back as Xander." But who is that we hear voicing Giles?

Hark! what. dulcet. tones. through. yonder. earbuds. break? Why it is none other than friend of the pod. Actually, my friend and yours, the handsomest man in all of

podcasting, Mr. Hrishikesh Hirway joins us today in his premier performance as the voice of Rupert Giles. You're welcome. And thanks Hrishi.

[Jenny, Bess Rogers, Chris Farren, and Hrishikesh Hirway performing "Superstar," off the album "Songs from Season Four" by Buffering the Vampire Slayer]

BUFFY:

There goes Jonathan, he's so cool

Protector of Sunnydale High School

Always ready with great advice

For slaying and also my love life

There goes Jonathan, he's so fine

Defeated the mayor that one time

Crushed the bones of The Master too

There's nothing that he can't do

XANDER:

I don't even mind

That my girlfriend says his name

When we're lying in my bed

I mean who could really blame

GILES:

How can I choose between
Misters July and January
Don't make me choose between
Every month he's equally dreamy
Master of strategy
Fighting demons or playing chess
Picture of suavity
In black tie or turtleneck

WILLOW:

He's the perfect height at five foot six
How I adored him in The Matrix
Love his book and every song he sings
And just when I thought I was done with men