

Angel On Top
Episode 3.02: That Vision Thing

[CHIME]

LaToya: Welcome back to Angel On Top, a podcast where we watch and discuss every episode of Angel one by one, spoiler free, and in tandem with Buffering the Vampire Slayer. I'm your host, LaToya Ferguson. My guest today is Connor Goldsmith, a senior literary agent at Fuse Literary and the host of the X-Men podcast, CEREBRO. This week, we're watching Angel Season 3, Episode 2, That Vision Thing, which was written by Jeffrey Bell and directed by Bill Norton. It aired on The WB on October 1, 2001. And this is the one where Cordelia's already devastatingly painful visions take an even more devastating and painful turn. It's also the one where Angel meets Skip.

[Angel On Top theme plays]

LaToya: Hi, Connor!

Connor: Hi, LaToya! Thank you so much for having me. It's so good to see your lovely face, even if it's via Zoom.

LaToya: Ah, yes. Thank you for joining me. I knew that if I'm gonna do an Angel podcast, I have to have you on as a guest.

Connor: I am—I am the biggest Angel fan you know, probably. Who isn't you.
[laughs]

LaToya: [laughing] Exactly. Exactly. You were like, "I will do any episode you want." [laughs]

Connor: I said that. I was like, literally—I gave you a list of like, 12 episodes from this season that I would be happy to do and I was like, choose one and we'll make it work.

LaToya: So do you wanna tell our beautiful Angel On Top listeners your Angel origin story?

Connor: Yeah, absolutely. Angel is probably my favorite show.

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Connor: I think that like any show that is now 20 years old, it has in some ways aged less well or more efficiently, depending on the episode. But I think it has actually aged a lot better than Buffy, controversial opinion. And I think that it has a lot to say about, you know, the human condition that's still very relevant today. I often, when I'm talking about the work I do as a literary agent—which, you know, sometimes I work with celebrities on fun books. And sometimes I work with novelists on fiction. But a lot of my work is with journalists and activists and cultural critics. And you know, people ask, do you think you're making a difference? And I always say, well, if nothing we do matters, then all that matters is what we do. Which is from Angel's conversation with Kate Lockley in Epiphany in Season 2.

I came to Angel in my freshman year of college, because the DVDs of Angel were coming out and I had always loved Cordelia. So I found it to be really fascinating and I was consumed by Cordelia Chase, who is my favorite character still to this day on any television show. That's sort of my origin story. I have watched Angel all the way through about a billion times. I taught a class on Buffy at Oberlin when I was an undergrad there, to faculty and students, as part of their experimental college program where we did sort of put-together media studies courses. And analyzed Buffy through the lenses of sort of feminist scholarship, post-colonial scholarship, queer theory, other, you know, Oberlin-type stuff.

LaToya: I do know how much you love Cordelia. I do—

Connor: That's my girl.

LaToya: I do know how much you love the pairing of Cordelia and Angel. Our fan base is pro-Cordelia.

Connor: Well, that's good.

LaToya: Let's play the jingle, shall we? [laughs]

Connor: Let's play it right here.

[CORDELIA jingle plays]
Cordelia... (ah-ahh)
I love you, Cordelia (ah-ahh)
You're perfect, Cordelia (ah-ahh)

LaToya: No one else could do this episode justice, basically. It goes to the well of something we've become, you know, familiar with on Angel, which is, you know, Damsel Cordelia.

Connor: Mmhmm.

LaToya: We have it in things like, you know, *Expecting* and *Room with a View*. And like, thematically, this episode has a lot to do with like, both of those episodes. It hurts even more, I think, in this episode because at this point in the show, we are aware of just how competent and strong Cordelia is as a character.

Connor: Yes.

LaToya: So to see her in a weakened state like this, it just feels... atonal or—like, just, it feels wrong. Because now you even have Fred who is kind of like now the quote-on-quote damsel character.

Connor: Yes.

LaToya: And we were discussing in the premiere—the gang doesn't exactly treat Fred and her trauma the best. But the one thing that's, like, really noted is that—to Cordelia, Fred is not what she sees as a strong woman.

Connor: No. Especially in these early Season 3 episodes. Her mental state is treated a little bit as a joke.

LaToya: Which is one of the things that doesn't age well, because now it just seems very insensitive, to watch *Team Angel*—except for *Angel*—just kind of joke about it or just, like, "why can't she just be normal?" You know, a lot of that. It's also worth noting that this episode was originally supposed to be Episode 3. With *That Old Gang of Mine*, it was supposed to be Episode 2.

Connor: Mmhmm.

LaToya: And that actually informs a lot of Fred's behavior in this episode. Because she's clearly made progress since the premiere. The fact that she—she's the one who takes Cordelia home. She is leaving the hotel—

Connor: Right.

LaToya: She's going back—yeah, going back and forth to the hotel. So just keep that in mind, listeners, especially first-time viewers. So we open with the one braincell that Wes and Gunn have, as they try to be really sweet to Cordelia. 'Cause she hasn't had a vision in a while.

Connor: Right.

LaToya: It's clearly not working, 'cause they're doofuses. I love them both, but... they're kind of doofuses.

Connor: Well, and she's savvy enough to understand what they're doing, also.

LaToya: As is Fred, who has—you know, she has moved from her room. She is eating under a table, but she has moved from her room and she is hanging with the gang. There is a joke that comes out of this scene. "Forking with Gunn," which is the first of all of our sex and dick jokes in this episode. [laughs]

Connor: This episode has a lot of dick jokes, yeah. I think it's meant to counterpoint the very—and again, this is me coming at it from a certain perspective. But I think that the frivolous nature of those conversations is meant to underline the really rich emotional scenes in this episode between Angel and Cordelia.

LaToya: The humor works better for those, like, unexpected tonal shifts, as opposed to the dick jokes themselves. Like, when Angel's like, on a mission and he gets to the key store. He's like, I need a key. That kind of pulling the rug out from under very serious flowing trenchcoat Angel.

Connor: Well, and I think that that's paralleled in this episode by—this is the first time Gavin Park has a substantial role after his sort of like introductory cameo in 2:20 Over the Rainbow. And Gavin's approach to bothering Angel is so much lower stakes than Lilah's approach to bothering Angel. And I think that that's another way that the episode uses sort of lightness and silliness to really make it hit when something very serious happens.

LaToya: We talked about this in the bonus episode about how you get Daniel Dae Kim, who has just got charisma dripping off of him—

Connor: One of the most gorgeous men ever on television.

LaToya: [laughs] Yeah. And Gavin Park is like, the biggest dweeb, who's like—

Connor: Such a drip.

LaToya: "I'm gonna get him with paperwork."

Connor: Yeah.

LaToya: [laughs] Imagine if Lindsey had tried to get him with paperwork and is like—it actually worked, and he's like, wait, I could have just done that the whole time? [laughs]

Connor: Well, I think Gavin is supposed to stand out as different from Lindsey and Lilah in a lot of ways. And you can see just from his name. I mean, in the first—when the sort of three lawyers are introduced in—

LaToya: Yeah.

Connor: The first season. Their names are Lee Mercer, Lindsey McDonald, and Lilah Morgan, and they're all L.M., which fans at the time always pointed out, is the same initials as Lucifer Morningstar.

LaToya: It's like the Superman... like, Smallville, L.L., Lex Luther, Lana Lang, Lois Lang.

Connor: [simultaneously] Yeah, Lex Luther, Lana Lang, Lois Lang.

LaToya: So Cordelia has not had a vision in a while. Which is something that happens every so often in the show. You know, they start an episode like, Cordy hasn't had a vision. [laughs] And—oh, Fred. Fred is still in her hero worship of Angel, which I think is something that makes a lot of sense, the hero worship of Angel.

Connor: Mmhmm.

LaToya: And it's something you don't see a lot of with series regulars on shows, although you can create a very interesting dynamic. 'Cause usually it's like a one-off character—

Connor: Right.

LaToya: Will have a hero worship for Angel or whoever it may be, and that's that. But here, you can kind of track it and so you can see where it is. And so Fred is getting more ingrained with the gang, but she's still like, Angel #1 and you're his super friends, basically. So she's like, hey, can you, like, use a vision to find out where Angel is? [laughs] And of course, that's not how it works. We get a little bit more exposition about how things work. Just in case you're watching for the first time, because the B-word has left this network, but Angel is still here. As one of the promos for Season 3 said: "there's *still* only one Angel."

Connor: Yeah, and I think that Fred's purpose in the early Season 3 episodes actually is to have things explained to her so that a new viewer can be caught up, if necessary.

LaToya: And now Gunn can tell her things, as opposed to, in Season 2, where he had to ask things, 'cause he was—

Connor: He served that purpose previously, yes.

LaToya: Yeah. Gavin Park shows up. Looking good, but still being Gavin Park. Cordelia is like, "you look good" until Wesley tells her, "this is Gavin Park."

Connor: Right.

LaToya: "Of Wolfram & Hart." And you know, after he brings up the 57 code violations, he's like, "new player?" when he sees Fred, because—

Connor: Yes.

LaToya: Wolfram & Hart, of course, sees these characters as pieces on a chessboard.

Connor: Yes.

LaToya: Which is very important to this episode and what Lilah does to Cordelia. And once Angel shows up to be like, wow, you nerd. Really? You're coming at me with code violations? He sends him on his way. And then Cordelia has a vision for the first time in ages.

Connor: Mmhmm.

LaToya: It's a pretty clear vision. We discussed this in the premiere. These visions are getting, you know, more specific.

Connor: She's getting better at it, yeah.

LaToya: Yeah. This is the first vision which has the claws and the coin with the hole in it.

Connor: Yes.

LaToya: Again, Angel is very concerned with Cordelia's pain. Not knowing, exactly—like, it's taken on a real physical manifestation in this way. But of course, he—like, he's checking on her and she just pushes him away. And then she goes to the bathroom. She sees that the claw marks are on her. And that's different. That is definitely different from what we usually get.

Connor: That hasn't happened before, right.

LaToya: Also... and I don't even know if it's new, but it's just upsetting, is the short-sleeve sweater that Wesley is wearing in this scene? [Connor laughs] No sweaters should ever have short sleeves. That's my opinion. [laughs]

Connor: I think that's entirely valid.

LaToya: The episode works in a way where you don't even have to really—you can question why the Powers are doing this, but not necessarily, oh, is this the Powers doing it?

Connor: Buffy is a very classic character, is a very classic sort of comedic trickster hero in the classical sense. And Angel is a tragic hero in the classical sense. Cordelia's story is a different story. It is a passion play in sort of the Catholic tradition. She is a—she has a saint's narrative. The gift that she has of these visions is miraculor [sic] and what we begin to see in this episode, is—the passion of her power has an—of her charisma, actually, one might say, 'cause that's what a divine saint's power is called, is charisma. So the—

LaToya: Puns, baby.

Connor: Well, the Charisma Carpenter is... is Jesus. So. [LaToya laughs] I mean, I'm just—I'm gonna go there. It's a pretty—it's a neat coincidental bit of—it's just a—think about it for a second. But I think that in this episode, what's interesting is she has that biblical and sort of golden legend, saintly story going on. And in this episode, she has literal stigmata from the visions.

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Connor: Which I think... but because that's how the story already has kind of been thematically going, it makes perfect sense. It's like, oh, of course that's how it escalates. Like, now she's, you know... that's what happens to saints. They start bleeding out of their eyeballs. Like, things like that, you know what I mean? What I like about this scene is that Cordelia hides it. She doesn't want them to know. She

doesn't want them to see—she knows that she's been physically harmed. She can feel it—

LaToya: Yeah.

Connor: Before she sees it. But she doesn't want them to be concerned about her. Which is very different from the Cordelia of old.

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Connor: And the only thing she cares about is telling them details about the coin—

LaToya: Yeah.

Connor: About the monster she's seen, and making sure that the mission is accomplished. And Charisma is so good in that scene with the mirror.

LaToya: And later, it's like, she also doesn't want to possibly piss off the Powers—

Connor: Correct!

LaToya: By telling them and having them trying to stop this, you know.

Connor: 'Cause she doesn't want this—you know, there's a joke at the beginning about how it's a gift and she sort of sees that as laughable. Which is a similar sentiment to the one Doyle had. But in the end, she does see it as a gift, because she's been tasked with this important thing. And she doesn't want to lose it. It sort of goes back to the Season 2 premiere, Judgment, where she has that speech where she says to Angel, you know, you're gonna accomplish this thing and I'll be with you until you do. She sees herself as his guide.

LaToya: And she thinks she's kind of useless if she can't be his guide. She has to kind of learn here to, you know, accept their help.

Connor: Yes.

LaToya: Because so much of this is her trying not to accept their help.

Connor: Correct.

LaToya: And trying to handle it by herself.

Connor: It's unusual on Angel for Cordelia not to get an opportunity to cut off the priest's head or smash the iced up pregnancy demon or tell the old lady ghost to go fuck herself. And in this episode, the resolution you get for her is that she gets to sleep.

LaToya: It actually helps that it is moved to Episode 2 for this because then it is kind of a counter to her belief of what it means to be a strong woman. Realizing that she can—

Connor: Yes.

LaToya: Be physically weak and still be—just accepting her friends' help, accepting Fred's help, accepting Angel's help, accepting everyone's help.

Connor: Yes.

LaToya: That doesn't make her weak. She is still a strong person here. Angel checks up on Cordy again. [laughing] He won't—like, he won't leave until she opens the door to talk to him.

Connor: I like when he says, "I mean it, Cordelia, open up." Because he doesn't mean the door, you know what I mean? Like, it's a... he wants her to tell him what's going on.

LaToya: Layers.

Connor: Yeah. Layers. It's like, oh, how deep, right? [LaToya laughs] Angel enters the herbalist shop.

LaToya: Let's talk about this scene, because we get—

Connor: The Cantonese Fook-Beast?

LaToya: [laughs] Yes, because we get some, you know—we've got some more wire fu. And I mean, this gives us a beautiful moment, which is a stunt granny.

Connor: Yes. Love that for her.

LaToya: Which, I love a stunt granny. [laughs] There's nothing I love more than in professional wrestling—the quote-on-quote "stunt granny," which is, you know—it's just a plant in the crowd.

Connor: Mmm.

LaToya: This old lady is yelling at the heels, and then the heel's like, you know what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna push this old lady into the crowd. [laughs]

Connor: [simultaneously] I'm gonna push this granny through a table or whatever, right.

LaToya: Love a stunt granny. Meanwhile, at Wolfram & Hart, Gavin's having his real estate stuff faxed to Lilah's office.

Connor: Yes.

LaToya: And he's been moved to special projects from real estate, which—

Connor: He requested the transfer, yes.

LaToya: And they allowed it because of the patriarchy. [laughs]

Connor: And he implies that Lilah didn't actually earn her position and that she's only—

LaToya: Yeah.

Connor: In charge because Lindsey quit. And what's interesting is, Lilah could take exception to that, which she does. But she then defends Lindsey. Which I think is an interesting character beat. She points out that Lindsey lost his flesh and blood, lost a limb for this company, and that Gavin's a fucking weasel. So she does—you know, there's a very interesting beat there. And also, she has a new haircut.

LaToya: Those bangs are very of the time. [laughs]

Connor: It's very—it's extremely 2001, at this point?

LaToya: Yeah, 2001.

Connor: Yeah, so it's a very—it's a very 2001 bang.

LaToya: Yeah, that's all I will say of the bangs. They are very of the time. And the thing about this Lilah/Gavin scene is that she is clearly above him in the Wolfram & Hart hierarchy.

Connor: Right.

LaToya: I mean, he's been moved to special projects, but like, she's—

Connor: In charge of special projects, yes.

LaToya: In charge. But the way he talks about having her on his team—

Connor: Yes.

LaToya: As though she's a subordinate. And he—that he thinks he's the new cock of the walk, basically. But here's the thing. He is, not because he's better than her at this, but just because of the misogyny at Wolfram & Hart.

Connor: Right.

LaToya: Lilah was better at her job than Lindsey.

Connor: Absolutely.

LaToya: He was constantly fucking up and like, he was a liability. And they were still gonna promote him over her.

Connor: Yes.

LaToya: Just because he's a man.

Connor: Yes.

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

LaToya: And so Gavin is a dweeb. [laughs] And a man. If Lilah is not careful, he is going to like, leap over her, despite not having the credentials or even just, like, the experience at all. Just—

Connor: Well, and he also underestimates her thoroughly that he's not afraid to let her know that that's his intention.

LaToya: Meanwhile, Cordy's trying to kick Fred out of her home. [laughs]

Connor: Can't deal with the intrusive questions, just really can't take Fred's whole vibe, but does try to be nice. Fred compares her to Lassie, means it as a compliment.

LaToya: Cordy gets Phantom Dennis to help her kick Fred out. But then she has a vision, which knocks her out, and she gets the boils. And this is when she can no longer hide it. The whole team is at her home. And Angel wants it—like, she's just going on about the key and what she saw in her vision, get to work. But Angel's like—he wants to talk about what happened to her.

Connor: Yeah.

LaToya: And this is at the point where you can tell Charisma Carpenter's voice is shot.

Connor: Yeah, but I—it really works. I mean, everything—

LaToya: It does work.

Connor: She has—she gives such a sort of unfiltered performance in this episode. She holds her body in sort of a stilted, kind of uncomfortable way so that you can tell that Cordelia's in a lot of pain. The way that her voice starts to give out is very real sounding. I mean, maybe—maybe it was. Maybe after all this—yeah—

LaToya: [simultaneously] Well, that's 'cause it is real. [laughs]

Connor: Yeah.

LaToya: I think she may have had a cold or recovering, and that's what the voice thing is.

Connor: But it's perfect.

LaToya: Yeah.

Connor: I mean, it really—she nails it.

LaToya: It's not just, you know, "I look disgusting and that's why I don't want you to see me." She just doesn't want them to see her weak and less than. That's what her real issue is, and she just wants them to like, do the work, focus on that. Don't focus on, like, her possibly failing them in some way.

Connor: Well, and it's—that is—that's a significant character moment. Because it's hard to imagine Cordelia even one season ago being this unconcerned with her physical appearance. Versus—you know, she's upset about it—

LaToya: Yeah. She—

Connor: But it's not her priority.

LaToya: Yeah. She makes jokes because she—like, that's what she—

Connor: That's how she handles—

LaToya: Yeah.

Connor: Traumatic experiences, right.

LaToya: And you can just, like—Amy Acker—like, Fred is so just like, horrified for her.

Connor: Right.

LaToya: Or just, she's so worried. She's—like, the concern you can see on her face. It's just like—now is not the time, Cordy, to make jokes, basically. But she's like, what else can I do, basically.

Connor: And I think that it's notable that Wesley is startled by the physical manifestation of the stigmata that the visions have caused. Which implies, since he's a pretty well-read guy, that this is not a normal part of, you know, a visionary's experience. And Cordelia says, "this must be a mistake. The Powers wouldn't do this to me on purpose."

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Connor: "I'm part of their team. Why would anyone do this to me on purpose?" She can't understand it.

LaToya: And that's the first hint—even though we don't really realize it yet, like, why would someone do this on purpose?

Connor: Who would do this to me on purpose? Lilah Morgan would, is the answer.

LaToya: Yeah. Yeah. Gunn makes the—[laughing] as I put in my notes, the dumb selfish auntie thing. [both laugh] But then Fred actually figures it out, with like—

Connor: With her physics knowledge, yeah.

LaToya: Trying to communicate with the Powers, because, you know, it is a conversation, at least the one way. Why can't we go the other way?

Connor: And the visions have to be transmitted through some kind of energy. And this is where... this is where the Fred character shines for me, is when they manage to... and it's better when they limit it to physics, since that's supposed to be her expertise. But when she manages to bring in her science knowledge base to complement Wesley's occult knowledge base. Because it gives her a role on the team that isn't redundant. And...

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Connor: The whole B-verse is very into the idea that science and magic are the same thing. Jenny Calendar sort of introduces that concept in the very first season of the original show. Fred is almost the ultimate evocation of that, in that she can apply quantum physics theories and electrical energy theories and chemistry theories to the supernatural and they will work.

LaToya: So Gunn and Fred show up at the hotel. And this is where Gunn says the line, "why would I wanna walk with a cute young woman on a beautiful night?" To which Fred misses completely, just goes over her head because she's Fred. So you are anti a Fred/Gunn relationship as opposed to... Cordelia/Angel.

Connor: I'm anti. Here's my thing. I don't buy Gunn's attraction to Fred. Because we have seen the kind of women that Gunn is attracted to, and they include Anne Steele from the runaway shelter. They include Cordelia, initially. And they include his ex-girlfriend Veronica from 2:03 First Impressions. And all of those women are very forceful, are more... self-assured. I just don't... I think Joss Whedon's into Fred. I don't buy that Gunn would be into Fred. That's my thing.

LaToya: I see a black man who kind of left his community going for a white woman like Fred completely. But that's not even part of—[Connor laughs] yeah, that's—this is 100% realistic to me. So everyone, write this in your Shanshu prophecies. Gunn thinks Fred's a cute young woman.

Connor: Yes, he does.

LaToya: But yeah, they get to the hotel and there are some quote-on-quote exterminators in there. They say they're fumigating, but like, what are they actually doing? 'Cause you see some—

Connor: Something sneaky for Gavin, clearly.

LaToya: Fog or smoke.

Connor: Yeah.

LaToya: Like, is it a magic—a magic fog situation?

Connor: Fumigation involves like a misty, foggy thing.

LaToya: Yeah. But it's like, not real—like, they're not really fumigating. [laughs]

Connor: [simultaneously] Well, they're not actually fumigating though, right. But I think they probably are, just to be annoying, while they do something else nefarious.

LaToya: Yeah. So Angel has returned with the key. Again, we did not see the fight because we spent all of our money on the stunt granny and then a future fight in this episode. [laughs]

Connor: Yeah, but no, he gets back and The Host is there.

LaToya: Yes. The Host—which, we're still calling him The Host, at least Wesley is, even though we know he's Lorne based on the Pylea arc. Because he reads people's auras, he has some connection to the Powers That Be. So they're gonna try to use him basically to see if he can get a direct line to the Powers. 'Cause this is what happens when you no longer have, like, a direct line to the Powers like they did in Season 1.

Connor: Correct, with the Oracles.

LaToya: Yeah, yeah. You just kinda have to figure out a way to talk to them. Which, you know, not easy. And he warns them—

Connor: Yeah, which is why the Oracles had to die.

LaToya: [laughs] Yeah.

Connor: I mean, that's why there's a big debt clearing at the end of Season 1, 'cause like, this is too easy.

LaToya: Too easy.

Connor: And Cordy is so relieved that Angel's found the key. That's all she's concerned about—

LaToya: Mmhmm, yeah.

Connor: Again, is that the mission is proceeding.

LaToya: But she is understandably scared about Lorne going into her head, because right now, the last thing she wants is more people in her head.

Connor: Correct. She doesn't wanna lose the visions because she's afraid she won't matter.

LaToya: Yeah. Right now, she's worried that like, if she fights against what she thinks is the Power's doing, she—

Connor: That they'll take them away.

LaToya: Yeah, like, she's gonna like, fail this test.

Connor: Right.

LaToya: And that Angel won't need her. And he says he needs her because she's important, not because of the visions. [laughing] And then he compare—

Connor: Right, "you wouldn't need me," "that's not why I need you."

LaToya: Yeah.

Connor: Which makes my heart pitter-patter. And then he compares her to a car.

[Clip from episode plays]

Cordelia: Sure, I hate looking and feeling like this, but if I lose the visions, I wouldn't be able to help you anymore. You wouldn't need me.

Angel: That's not why I need you. You're important. The visions are just after-market extras, like Hurst shift or Krager wheels.

Cordelia: Did you just compare me to a car?

Angel: It was a very nice car.

LaToya: Dude, Angel.

Connor: But it makes sense that she thinks this is a test because she *did* just get a test from the Powers in the form of the whole Groosalugg thing in Pylea. You know, the "will you give up your visions because it would be easier?" test that she just passed with flying colors. So this does—it is reasonable for her to assume this is another one. Just a really, really nasty one.

LaToya: So Lorne gets into her head with some Sound of Music imagery. And then after making her very dizzy, [laughs] eventually, he goes flying across the room.

Connor: Yeah. And he says, "Careful, honey, you've got some power of your own." Which I like, because this is an episode where she's so passive. And the fact that Cordelia's strength of will—this does go back to Room with a View. Cordelia has sort of the most profound strength of character, of self—self-assurance in this cast. And I think that noting that as a power is—the fact that she has the ability to kind of push Lorne out of her head a little is notable. But yes, then it goes real wild.

LaToya: Yeah. And then we cut to Wolfram & Hart, where we have some freelancing woes with Lilah and Kal Penn.

Connor: And Kal Penn.

LaToya: Yeah. I understand those freelancing woes, though I don't think I've worked for anyone as evil as Wolfram & Hart, yet. He does the fire vision thing and that's when Lorne flies across the room—

Connor: Yes.

LaToya: While she's convulsing. And then we get—

Connor: And burning.

LaToya: Yeah. We get charred Cordy. And Kal Penn's—he is so pleased with what he's done. And he deserves what he gets at the end.

Connor: Oh, yeah. But what I like is that Lilah's like, you remember what we talked about, right? So Lilah has chosen these herself. Lilah is excited about ordering this, and Lilah decided, "I told you to burn her. Remember to burn her."

LaToya: Yeah.

Connor: Like, there's a—there's a complete sadism here that is interesting. And this is an important episode, because if—with Lindsey gone, it's important to establish Lilah as the primary Wolfram & Hart antagonist. And this episode does a really good job of characterizing her—

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Connor: And that's one way I think it does it.

LaToya: Because Lilah will go after Cordelia in a way Lindsey wouldn't have.

Connor: Would never have, no.

LaToya: Yeah.

Connor: Lilah has no compunction about harming innocents, and I think often, has no compunction about harming other women.

LaToya: Exactly. So Lorne's unconscious. Oops. But Cordelia's still the one that Angel's worried about here. And this is where we get something that's happened before, which is where she asks Angel if she's a bad person.

Connor: Which is very Catholic, as this show tends to be. Just—and we know that Cordelia's Catholic and Angel's Catholic. So they're just having a very Catholic moment together. [laughs]

LaToya: Ah, Catholic guilt, baby. But no, he says this is because she's strong.

Connor: Mmhmm.

LaToya: Stronger than you realize. Now she says she doesn't want the visions anymore, because she—you know, she tried to be brave. But now she—right now she's just scared all the time. And then, you know, "what could be so important that the Powers would do this to me?"

Connor: Right.

LaToya: "I don't understand." And he says, "I don't either." And that's when Wesley, like, brings Angel to the living room and Angel, again, does not want to leave her side. And he's like, this better be important, basically, that you took me away from her.

Connor: I thought it was weird, actually, that Wesley hid this information from Cordelia. It's like, they're all treating her with kid gloves in this moment. And you'd think she'd actually want to know that the Powers aren't doing this to her. She's having an existential religious crisis of faith in there. Like, tell her that someone else is sending these. [laughs] I don't know, I thought that was odd.

LaToya: That—but—that's just because it's a group scene and you don't want everyone, like, [laughing] lining back up into the room—

Connor: [simultaneously] Right. No, and you don't want them all in the bedroom, right?

LaToya: Yeah.

Connor: No, I get that. But it is sort of like, she should know this. This is information that should be given to her.

LaToya: [laughing] He yells it from the living room so she can hear.

Connor: I like the phrase Lorne uses, because again, it sort of connects the magic and science stuff, where he says that what's happening is someone is transmitting false data from the celestial pipeline. Implying that the Powers do have a specific, like, energy frequency channel open to visionaries.

LaToya: Mmhmm. Yeah, way to go, Fred, for figuring that out.

Connor: Yeah, Fred got that—Fred nailed that, completely.

LaToya: Yeah. And Gunn is right that someone hacked into Cordy's head. And you know, they're saying, like, who would do all these things? And Angel, of course, realizes—

Connor: Lilah. Of course it's Lilah.

LaToya: [laughs] Then we have Lilah playing virtual golf.

Connor: [laughs] So good, with a little tiny Lilah that plays the golf game, which I love. Like, with a little ponytail and a golf outfit.

LaToya: Yeah. And you know whose opinion I would love to hear? I would love to hear Kristin's opinion right now, in Kristin's Corner.

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

Kristin: Oh, hi everybody. Welcome to the very first Kristin's Corner. What is going to happen? Did you *really* think that I was going to let Lilah fucking Morgan play computer fucking golf... and not lose my mind about it? Lilah Morgan playing computer golf at her Wolfram & Hart desk at first made me think to myself, hell yeah, Lilah! Play that golf, kiss some ladies. And then I thought, hmm. Kristin, that's kind of stereotypical for you to think that just because a woman likes golf, it means she also likes to kiss other ladies on the mouth. And then I thought to myself, why *do* I associate golf so closely with lesbians? What's the root of the golf lesbian? Why is it so firmly planted in my mind? Well, I did a little research. Kristin level research. And I think that the answer is Dinah Shore.

So, I'm not gonna take up too much of your time. I know that you're here for ensouled vamps and Cordelia's visions—I love you, Cordy—but Dinah Shore might ring one of two bells for you. First, Dinah Shore was a totally real human person who was born in 1916 and was a famous singer. She also loved fucking golf, just like our dear, evil Lilah Morgan. Mmm, Lilah, Dinah, mmm. Dinah Shore loved golf so much that in fact, in 1972, she helped found the Colgate Dinah Shore Golf Tournament, which remains one of the major golf tournaments on the LPGA Tour. [quietly, laughing] I don't know what that means. [normal volume] The tournament is held each spring at Mission Hills Country Club and inspired many other ladies who loved golf to go and throw what were called Dinah Shore parties.

Now, if you're a queer, you probably know where I'm headed. While Dinah herself didn't identify as queer, there was one particular lesbian named Mariah Hanson who, in 1991, began a little lesbian party called The Dinah. The queers loved it and it grew and it grew and it grew, and tens of thousands of queer ladies gathered every year. And that was how I first heard Dinah Shore. I just thought it was a party. And now you know that Lilah Morgan might just be a modern-day Dinah

Shore. She doesn't have to attend the Dinah Shore lesbian party, but she can if she ever wants to. And also, some lesbians play golf and some golfers are lesbians. But we all exist on a spectrum, and I would love to kiss Lilah on the mouth.

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

LaToya: Thank you so much, Kristin. That was delightful. Vert golf. And then Angel does the little sneaky thing, walked up behind her.

Connor: His Batman thing, yeah.

LaToya: Yeah. Gavin helped him with the vampire detectors because, you know...

Connor: And I love that Angel—

LaToya: [laughing] Us men gotta stick together.

Connor: But I love that Angel just tells Lilah that, because Angel's just like, let's stir this up a little bit. FYI, Gavin helped me do it.

LaToya: Angel gives her the key, says it's over now. She tells him he'll be needing this on his mission.

Connor: Right.

LaToya: And that there was a young man who's been unfairly imprisoned and you're gonna save him.

Connor: What I love in this scene is... I mean, Lilah's named for Delilah. Again, there's a lot of biblical stuff here, right. But she's a seductress, that's her role. And so she's like, flirting with Angel and is like, "aren't I evil and sexy?" And he has no patience for it whatsoever. And it sort of starts to become clear to her that that tactic isn't working. So they just get down to brass tax and what I think is interesting here is that Angel tries to give her whatever these relics are that she definitely should not have.

LaToya: Yeah.

Connor: And is like, if you'll fix Cordelia and leave her alone, you can have these and we'll call it. Like—

LaToya: Yeah, his whole point—once, like, they figure out what it is and for the rest of the episode, he's like, I don't care what this is. As long as Cordelia's fixed—

Connor: As long as Cordelia's fixed, I won't kill you. Essentially.

LaToya: Yeah.

Connor: And—but then Lilah refers to Cordelia as "what's her name." Which is not—

LaToya: Oh yeah.

Connor: Acceptable to him.

LaToya: [laughing] It's never been acceptable.

Connor: And he—

LaToya: But especially not to Angel.

Connor: Yeah, and he grabs her in a chokehold. And it's actually an interesting moment, because—

LaToya: Yeah.

Connor: It's a rare thing to see on a TV show. And even on this TV show. And you know, you have him fighting with Darla and Drusilla sometimes in Season 2, but they're vampires with super strength.

LaToya: His physical match, which I think—here's the thing. Lilah gets a little too comfortable with Angel here.

Connor: Exactly.

LaToya: It's like what you're saying—

Connor: Exactly.

LaToya: She's trying the seductress thing and it doesn't [sic] fail. And then he chokes her. Like, Lindsey's thing was thinking that he was somehow on the same level as like, Angel and Darla, and then learning, no, no, no.

Connor: Right.

LaToya: But like, Lilah's thing is thinking that Angel, because of who he is, won't get physical with her.

Connor: Correct.

LaToya: So—

Connor: And she learns that she's mistaken.

LaToya: Yeah. When he does, you can—like, Stephanie Romanov plays, like, the shocked—

Connor: She's brilliant. She's brilliant.

LaToya: And terrified. And then when he steps away, she is shaken. And then she's clearly mad at herself for being shaken in front of him.

Connor: [simultaneously] Yes, for making a mistake. Yeah, she—

LaToya: She's mad at herself for being the weak woman after she, like—she just kind of, like—

Connor: Mmhmm.

LaToya: Put Gavin in his place and now she's, like, every bit, like, the fragile woman. Again—

Connor: Cowering a little, and then she gets her composure back really quickly 'cause she's like, I can't show fear. But Stephanie Romanov does an incredible job of showing all those conflicting emotions. Because she also is attracted to him, I think. And that's another aspect of this that's complicated.

LaToya: Basically, like, for—if Angel didn't do that, he'd be, again, underestimating Lilah—

Connor: Her, because she's a woman, correct.

LaToya: The way we're saying that she shouldn't be underestimated.

Connor: Right. And he gets that.

LaToya: He knows how—he knows how evil she is.

Connor: He knows she's real dangerous, yes.

LaToya: Yeah. Just because she's got those bangs doesn't mean she's not an evil, evil person.

Connor: Exactly.

LaToya: So. He has to go to this hell prison to get out this young man now. And basically, once he does that, everything will be squared away and Cordelia won't be getting hurt by Kal Penn anymore.

Connor: Well, actually. Lilah notably doesn't promise that.

LaToya: She doesn't.

Connor: That's what Angel asks for, and Lilah won't agree. He says, if I do this, you'll stop messing with Cordelia. And she goes, no, you'll do this because I tell you to.

LaToya: Yeah, yeah, Lilah. [both laugh] We just saw how—we saw how terrified you were. So Wesley figures out the key. And then Angel realizes that the Chinese guy and the boil guy were forces of good.

Connor: Correct.

LaToya: Again, he made a mistake, just like in the Season 2 premiere, Judgment, where he didn't realize they were the good guys 'cause they're not wearing a lapel.

Connor: Well, it's an important part of the B-verse cosmology that there are no angels. Right? There are only demons who are good and demons who are bad. And the Powers that Be are presumably not any different, species-wise, from the Great Old Ones. It's just a matter of moral decision-making, I guess. Or sort of, morality.

LaToya: Yeah.

[AD BREAK]

LaToya: So Angel is getting prepped to go. Wesley's like, you have no idea what this dimension is like, other than the fire and possible guards. [laughs] Wesley tries to, like, go with him—

Connor: To come, yeah.

LaToya: Yeah. But Angel's like, no, I need you here. Like, if something goes wrong, you know—

Connor: I need you to take care of Cordy.

LaToya: And he does the thing. And then something goes wrong, which is that he can't bring his weapons with him.

Connor: All left behind.

LaToya: Whoops! He's like, at least I got the key still. Which is nice. And then he sees the fire prison, which is—I think it's a good effect. I think it's a—

Connor: It's a pretty good effect for 2001, yeah. On TV—on—

LaToya: I think it's a better effect—

Connor: Basic cable.

LaToya: Yeah, I think it's a better effect than like, the key effect, where you can just see that like, Boreanaz is frozen and no longer moving. [laughs] So like, yeah.

Connor: The key concept is cool that it turns into a little spinning top when you put it together, I like that bit.

LaToya: Yeah. And then, we see his guard, Skip.

Connor: Named for producer Skip Schoolnik.

LaToya: And Skip, of course, played by David Denman, Roy from The Office.

Connor: Mmhmm.

LaToya: Brian the tight-end from The Replacements, a movie I greatly enjoy. [laughs]

Connor: I like the introduction of Skip here a lot. Because he is one of the most distressing demon designs we've seen in a while.

LaToya: It's a really gnarly design.

Connor: He's burning this man in a cage of fire.

[Clip from episode plays]

Angel: What keeps him in the fire?

Skip: My will.

Angel: How come he's not screaming in pain?

Skip: Oh, he is. My will prevents him from being heard. I mean, there's only so many "oh my god, the pain, please make it stops" you can listen to before it starts to bug the crap outta ya.

Connor: Terrifying. And yet, we're told explicitly that this is a heavenly dimension and that this is an agent of the Powers that Be. So again, it underlines the idea that the god that Angel and company are serving—or gods—are not necessarily very nice.

LaToya: Although he—

Connor: Which I think is an important part of the show.

LaToya: He does note that—like, do you know how monstrous a guy's gotta be to be—

Connor: Someone has to be for us to do this, yeah.

LaToya: Yeah. So it's not like, just any old—

Connor: No.

LaToya: You know, murderer or bad guy is sent to this prison.

Connor: But we don't have that context. All we get to see is the sort of Old Testament... fire and brimstone.

LaToya: Yeah. It could be, like, a petty thing, like the good place/bad place point.

Connor: Right.

LaToya: [laughs] Yeah, so we don't necessarily know. But, just we—from knowing that Wolfram & Hart *really* wants him out of this prison. We can probably make some assumptions?

Connor: That he's not a good guy, correct, yeah.

LaToya: And you know, now that we have met all of the characters in this episode, including Skip, I think it's time for a little segment called Fuck Watch.

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

LaToya: Ah, Connor.

Connor: Yes.

LaToya: You are our guest.

Connor: I am.

LaToya: Would you like to claim your Fuck Watch pick of the episode?

Connor: I mean. Daniel Dae Kim's in this episode.

LaToya: [laughs] So Gavin Park?

Connor: So it's pretty easy, yeah. I mean, like, Gavin is disgusting. But... Daniel—

LaToya: You can just say "Daniel Dae Kim" and not Gavin.

Connor: I mean, well, but that's part of what's so interesting about the casting for Gavin, as you pointed out earlier, is that they cast this unbelievably handsome and eye-catching and charismatic guy as this total drip of a character. And... you have to assume that's the only way Gavin's made it as far as he has, right? Because he doesn't have much else going for him, but he certainly does look, as Cordelia notes, very good in that suit.

LaToya: And I have to be careful with my Fuck Watch picks because again, I chose Cordy in the premiere. Cordy with that bob and that blazer. So for my Fuck Watch pick for this episode, I think it's obvious who I'm gonna pick, and it's the stunt granny.

Connor: Oh, love that for you.

LaToya: She's quite spry.

Connor: She is very spry. Flexible.

LaToya: Yeah. I think we can get up to some things. [laughs]

Connor: Yeah, definitely. Definitely, definitely.

LaToya: And also, she can provide me with some great herbs, so.

Connor: Yeah, she probably has—she's probably, like, centuries of years old 'cause she's a demon. So, you know. Probably lots of experience at... making love.

LaToya: [laughs] Sensual.

Connor: Just sensual being. She's a *Fook*-Beast! [LaToya laughs]

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

LaToya: So. Skip and Angel are talking. Skip realizes Angel is on his side, basically.

Connor: Yes.

LaToya: They're both agents of the Powers that Be.

Connor: He can smell it on Angel, actually, which is [inaudible].

LaToya: He even notes, like, this—it kinda sucks. They're gonna have to fight. Right? That sucks. It's just like Batman and Catwoman in *Batman Returns*. [Connor laughs] Do we have to fight now? The things Angel does for Cordelia.

Connor: Yeah, well, he'll do anything for her. That's why I love them.

LaToya: And they fight. And he kicks Skip and then the young man prisoner is able to actually grab Skip from the—

Connor: Mmhmm.

LaToya: He's about to, like, pull him into the prison.

Connor: Yes.

LaToya: Angel saves him. And then apologizes before him knocking him out.

Connor: [simultaneously] And knocks him out, right. [laughs]

LaToya: Yeah. Which stops the flames and we see the young man. [sarcastically] Which is, wow. The bad guy's a white guy. Shocker!

[WHITE SUPREMACY jingle plays]
You know what that sounds like to me? (What?)
White supremacy! (Oh no)
Woven in not too subtly (Ugh)
White supremacy! (Uh-uh)
Open your eyes and that's where you'll find it
Crush that (squash that)
White supremacy!

Connor: That actor makes some really great—he has not a single line of dialogue in this episode, but makes some very ominous faces that are very good.

LaToya: He makes some great smug prick faces.

Connor: Mmhmm.

LaToya: That's why he's in that prison, just for being a smug prick. So we have a sordid meet-up at the LA river. [laughs]

Connor: [laughs] Yeah. And I like that Angel's late and Lilah's impatient and sort of checking her watch. And she's just, like, annoyed.

LaToya: Yeah.

Connor: But then she's pleased 'cause she sees them pulling up.

LaToya: Mmhmm. Then she tells Angel that no one at the firm thought he could do it, "but I could." Girl, you're not friends. There's no, like, respect after this.

Connor: Again, I like that, you know—yeah, "no one thought you could do it except me." And she calls him a remarkable man.

LaToya: And he calls her an evil bitch, which I'm surprised she—

Connor: Yeah.

LaToya: I'm surprised she doesn't say thank you, but she does do a little smile.

Connor: She does—she essentially does, 'cause she gives him a little smile, like, "you're absolutely right."

LaToya: [laughing] And then Wes has a flip phone.

Connor: I do think that Angel, again, seems willing to settle this here if Lilah will say explicitly that she will leave Cordelia alone. And she says it's just business.

LaToya: Yeah, right, "just business." And then with some business, Angel throws some rebar at Kal Penn's dumb head.

Connor: And impales him. [laughs]

LaToya: Yeah.

Connor: And Angel again sort of physically threatens Lilah and says, "don't you come at me through Cordelia ever again."

LaToya: Yeah.

Connor: "You play that card a second time and I'll kill you."

LaToya: And again, she's shaken. But she has to, of course, hide it. And now, Cordy is making Angel a pop-up waffle. [both laugh]

Connor: Coffee and breakfast for him even though he can't enjoy it, correct.

LaToya: Yes. He's "not a foodie," as we know. And that was—[laughs] I wrote in my notes, "if only the blood was syrup." [both laugh]

Connor: Gross, but yeah.

LaToya: [laughs] A smiley face, but it's blood.

Connor: [laughs] Yeah. That would be cute, that would be cute. That was—that's a good thought. And Cordelia's really... moved by what Angel did for her, with no questions asked. But she also feels responsible for the fact that this young man has been freed.

LaToya: Angel points out, you know, that she is way more important than winning—

Connor: Yes.

LaToya: Against Wolfram & Hart, which of course, is in contrast to how Angel was feeling in Season 2—

Connor: Correct.

LaToya: Especially during his beige Angel, AKA Angle, arc when he fired them. [laughs] So you know, progress and growth. That is growth, as they say.

Connor: Yeah. Well, and it's reminiscent of To Shanshu in L.A.

LaToya: Yeah.

Connor: And he says, "I did what I had to do. We'll just deal with the consequences when they happen." Which is meant to tell us that this is the first part of a two-parter—not in order, necessarily.

LaToya: Yeah.

Connor: But that things that happen in this episode will return later. It's very clear.

LaToya: And speaking of consequences—

Connor: Yeah.

LaToya: Over in Honduras. Pregnant Darla is back, as we saw at the end of Heartthrob in the little epilogue. And she meets up with a shaman and he's like, "I know why you're here." And she's like, you are my last hope. She's try—

Connor: Yeah, "I want an abortion."

LaToya: Yeah. She wants to get rid of it and she's tried everything and it's not working. So she wants to also know what it is and why she can't get rid of it.

Connor: Yeah. A.) Why can't I abort my child? B.) Why am I pregnant when I'm dead? [laughs]

LaToya: And he, like, double-checks. He's like, the father's also a vampire, right? She's like, yeah, but not a very good one. [laughs]

Connor: Yes, though not a very good one. [Darla impression] "Though not a very good one." In her little Darla voice. And so then he tries to read the baby. And, uh, there's nothing good in there. [laughs]

LaToya: He says—yeah. He says, "I cannot help you. No man can. This is not meant to be known." And she decides, time to go visit Daddy. Ooh.

Connor: Yeah, what I wanna know is if she—is if she eats the shaman after. But we don't get to see. [laughs]

LaToya: Yeah, we don't see that.

Connor: If I were her, I might. I'd be kind of annoyed.

LaToya: Speaking of more consequences. You know, Angel has said that we'll deal with the consequences when we get there.

Connor: Yes.

LaToya: Whether it's about this young man, about Darla—which he doesn't even know there will be consequences to.

Connor: Not yet.

LaToya: Which means that it's time to suggest an episode of television to Angel.

[DUBBA-DUBBA-WB jingle plays]

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

LaToya: So Connor.

Connor: Yes?

LaToya: There's a new segment we have on Angel On Top—

Connor: Okay.

LaToya: Which is where I suggest an episode from a television show on The WB that Angel should watch to help him navigate the issues he is dealing with this week. Would you like to know the episode?

Connor: Yes.

LaToya: It is Felicity, Season 2, Episode 2, The List. Also known as the episode where Felicity cuts her hair.

Connor: I was gonna say, that's the haircut, right? Yeah.

LaToya: Yeah. Which of course, to this day, people blame for the ratings' decline of the show. Everything going to chaos after, you know, Keri Russell won the Golden Globe in Season 1. Even though the show lasted for two more seasons, making it through all four years of college. Possibly the ratings went down because it had a time slot change—

Connor: Yeah.

LaToya: Going from Tuesday at 9, following the B-word, to Sunday at 8 PM as the lead-in to Jack & Jill.

Connor: Right.

LaToya: And also following 7th Heaven Beginnings, which is just reruns of 7th Heaven on The WB's Big Sunday.

Connor: [simultaneously] Oof. And Sunday is a really competitive slot, yeah.

LaToya: And so, you know, Angel is only thinking about the here and now, and not the consequences of his actions. Which is noble, for Cordelia. But he should be worrying about these things, because when you don't worry about these things, people complain that you ruined your show.

Connor: [laughs] Certainly some of the consequences of these actions will involve things that some people feel ruined the show. So that's a—[laughing] I think it's an apt comparison. [both laugh] I don't agree with them, but I do—I think that that—you'll get that later, newbies.

LaToya: I'm just saying, Angel. Get some Keri Russell in your life. Like, really absorb her actions. That has been... That Vision Thing. You can, of course, find me on Twitter and Twitter only, @lafergs. And this podcast @Angelontopcast, both on Twitter and Instagram. Or you can email us at angelontoppodcast@gmail.com. And Connor, what about you? Where can the people find you?

Connor: You can find me on Twitter, @dreamoforgonon. I'm sorry, it's not great to spell. Dream of O-R-G-O-N-O-N. It's a Kate Bush lyric. You can find me on Instagram @ConnorGoldsmith. You can find my X-Men podcast, CEREBRO cast—or it's just called CEREBRO, but it's @CerebroCast or cerebrocast.com or CerebroCast on Instagram. It's relatively new, it's only been going on for about a month or so. And it's a character-by-character exploration of the 57-year history of Marvel's X-Men franchise, which is newbie friendly. So I encourage newbies to jump in the deep end of that particularly weird, gnarled fictional universe, just as you might be jumping into this one. And you can also see more about my work as a literary agent and the incredible authors I represent at connorgoldsmith.com.

LaToya: Thank you, Connor. And thank you for listening to Angel On Top.

Connor: Thank you for having me, guys, this was so much fun.

[Angel On Top theme plays]