

## Twilight in Quarantine: Phenomenon

Julia: Chapter three, "Phenomenon". *"When I opened my eyes in the morning, something was different. It was the light. It was still the gray-green light of a cloudy day in the forest, but it was clearer somehow. I realized there was no fog veiling my window."*

Julia: I'm Julia Argy.

Vanessa: And I'm Vanessa Zoltan.

Julia: And this is Twilight in Quarantine from Hot and Bothered.

\*Intro music plays and fades\*

Vanessa: Julia, I have an update that I'm not sure how you're gonna react to it.

Julia: I can't wait to hear.

Vanessa: I might be really liking these books.

Julia: I was gonna say the same thing! I actually enjoyed reading this chapter, [\*Vanessa laughs\*] I thought it was very entertaining!

Vanessa: So do I! I was like.. uh-oh. We started this... somewhat tongue in cheek, and I'm like, no, really wanted to keep reading.

Julia: That's obviously not permitted, so I'm glad you exercised some restraint.

Vanessa: I did! But it was hard! It was genuinely enjoyable. Should we tell people what happened so they can be on board with our genuine enjoyment?

Julia: I would love to.

Vanessa: Okay, on your mark, get set, go!

Julia: [\*Ticking noise begins\*] We start the chapter with an update on the weather, it's cold and there's ice on the ground. She drives to school, oh, she doesn't slip on the driveway but she almost does. She drives to school, um, she looks at the snow tires on her car that Charlie put on, and then there's a car accident. And Edward hops over from across the parking lot and crunches the car with his body and cradles Bella to his chest to protect her, and then they go to the hospital and she's fine. That was it. [\*Buzzer starts buzzing\*]

Vanessa: [\*chuckles\*] I can fill in a couple of details that your time limitation did not permit you to get to.

Julia: Yeah, I did a really good job on the first half and then just breezed through the rest.

Vanessa: Yes.

Julia: Okay, three, two, one, go!

Vanessa: So Bella goes to the hospital and they put her in a neck brace, and she's like "I don't need a neck brace" and takes it off. And Tyler's there next to her because they don't believe in privacy in Forks, and he's like "oh my god I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry!" and she's like "shut UP". And then Edward comes and she's like "you are lying to me, you lifted a whole car" and he's like "that's so stupid", and I think this is actually the definition of gaslighting. There's nothing wrong with her, but she has to skip school and her mom is worried – [\*buzzer goes off in the background\*] – and Charlie looks after her.

Julia: Between the two of us, it was one full chapter.

Vanessa: That's why there's two of us. [\*Julia chuckles\*] Like Edward and Bella. I call being Edward. You're Bella.

Vanessa: Okay, Julia. Even though we're enjoying Stephenie Meyer so much, do you feel as though there was a moment in which you would like to give her some advice?

Julia: I would. I can't wait to hear your take on a line that confused me. Bella is questioning Edward in the hospital about how he moves at the speed of light, and this is a description of his facial reaction. "He was staring at me incredulously, but his face was tense, defensive." And I just wondered what that could mean.

Vanessa: Julia... you're being very gender normative right now. I think that if this was describing a woman having so many feelings at once, you would totally buy it. But because of a man, you're like "men can only have one feeling at a time".

Julia: I think... I'm less shocked that he's having all those feelings at once, but more so that he can express them with his face in one look.

Vanessa: Isn't that supposed to be a sign that Bella understands him so intuitively? That like, she can read every nuance of his face? This is supposed to be a sign of how well suited they are to one another.

Julia: I wonder, if he takes your advice and started taking acting classes to like expand his range...

Vanessa: I was wondering about that too. I think he did, because later she says it felt like he was this great actor, and I was like you're welcome, Edward. So glad you listened to the podcast! [\*Julia laughs\*] Don't you think he like joined Master Class and like, watched Natalie Portman's acting class? He doesn't sleep, so like he has so much time to be practicing his acting skills. Master Class isn't even a sponsor, but I think that he probably took one of those classes in how to express multiple things with one face.

Julia: I hope it's just half and half, just a vertical line down the middle. [\*Vanessa giggles\*] One half tense, the other half incredulous.

Vanessa: And then the mouth defensive?

Julia: Yeah. That's gonna be chapter four.

Vanessa: Got it. Okay.

Julia: Do you have some advice that you wanna offer, or some confusion you want me to shed light on?

Vanessa: Yeah. I was very confused by... the line where she says that she realizes that Edward was on top of her, because he whispered a low oath. And I was wondering if you know what a low oath was?

Julia: I googled it.

Vanessa: Oh!

Julia: I was so confused.

Vanessa: Wait! Can I guess before you tell me? So my guess was that he was swearing, and that because he's a gentleman, he did it quietly. So it was like [\*whispers\*] fuuuck. [\*Julia laughs\*] Or, my other guess is that... it was like a low church prayer, like not an official King James' Bible prayer, but like he in his earlier life went to like a Baptist church, and some sort of like low church oath came out. Like "the power of the Devil compelled me" or something. [\*they both laugh\*] I don't know what high church oaths versus low church oaths sound like, but... those are my two guesses. Are either of them correct?

Julia: Um... yeah. I wanna just tell you my first guess as well, when I first read it, what I was guessing.

Vanessa: Oh, what was your guess? Yeah!

Julia: I thought he was like, cradling her and then whispered like, [\*whispers aggressively\*] “I’ll protect you forever!”

Vanessa: Oh! That he *made* an oath to her?

Julia: Yeah!

[\*They both laugh\*]

Vanessa: You also thought low was about volume.

Julia: Yeah.

Vanessa: Got it. Okay. But then you googled it.

Julia: I googled it, and it means a curse word. And I noticed that Bella doesn’t swear, as last chapter she said “dang it”. And so I think this is her so opposed to cursing that she doesn’t even process it as a curse. She like hears him say fuck, and then just is like “an oath!”

Vanessa: So, it turns out my first guess was right, in which case Stephenie Meyer was actually communicating very clearly and I apologize for doubting her.

Julia: Yeah, you’re such a sharp reader.

Vanessa: Or she is such a good writer that even when I don’t know what she means I can understand it from context.

Julia: Queen of context clues, Stephenie Meyer.

Vanessa: Yeah! Queen of context clues, duchess of weather updates. [\*Julia chuckles\*] She has so many titles.

Vanessa: Julia, who would you like to give advice to within this glamorous chapter?

Julia: So as per the last few chapters, Bella almost falls multiple times. And it’s gotten to the point where I feel like she should invest in some of those old people shoes, where they like prevent you from falling. They’re... they’re really clunky and they’re Velcro and often white, do you know what I’m talking about?

Vanessa: Mhm.

Julia: Exclusively seen on people over 75, but I think soon could be trending in Forks, Washington through Bella's skills as an influencer. Yeah, just the falling needs to stop. There's no reason she should have to live like this. And she's at the doctor's office and she almost fall, and then is like "I'm not gonna tell him about how I constantly fall all the time". Like, the doctor is a great person to talk to about this persistent problem in your life.

Vanessa: So you think that she has a medical condition, like some sort of vertigo?

Julia: I wonder that. I was like, is it some inner-ear dysfunction? Like –

Vanessa: Right.

Julia: - there are steps she can take to like alleviate her inability to walk in a straight line.

Vanessa: Do you know what? I followed your advice for Bella. I got not only old person shoes, but I also got super flat-wide-feet shoes to stop tripping. Bella, take this advice, because I waited too long. I waited until I had turned all the ligaments in my ankle. Bella, do it sooner than that. Excellent advice, Julia.

Julia: Thank you! I'm just trying to look out for her.

Vanessa: Yeah. Having the right gear is important – which Charlie demonstrates on the chapter, by putting the chains on her tires.

Julia: Mhm. Mhm. Do you have any advice for someone we saw in these pages?

Vanessa: Yeah, my advice is also for Bella. She is safely driving to school because she has the right gear on her tires, and she starts thinking to herself "I am really excited to see Edward at school today, but I shouldn't be because he's out of my league and because I was vulnerable in front of him". And... she is wrong on both of these fronts.

One, there's no such thing as leagues. There just isn't. It's just a false idea. Every human is equal to every other human. Attraction is a mystery and none of us should think that anyone is out of our league. I could totally get Hugh Jackman if I chose to. Some stalking would have to be involved, which is why I haven't pursued it, but I *could* get Hugh Jackman.

And second of all, if somebody inspires you to be vulnerable, that is a good sign! That is not a sign that you should be away from them and be embarrassed. That is a sign that they made you feel comfortable with them.

Julia: When you mentioned the word league, I also thought oh leagues aren't real, but then I wondered if... later they play vampire baseball, and she's just not in his vampire baseball league yet. It's like, they're in different leagues.

Vanessa: Like... he's in the American vampire baseball league and she's in the national vampire baseball league.

Julia: Yeah. If I knew anything more about sports I would understand that reference.

Vanessa: It would mean that one of them, the pitchers, also hit, and then the other one's the pitchers don't also hit, they have a designated hitter.

Julia: That is the only thing separating them right now, in terms of their relationship.

Vanessa: Yeah. I can imagine Edward both pitching and hitting. [\*Julia starts laughing\*] And then...

Julia: That sounds like it's absolutely about sex.

Vanessa: Yeah, that's why I kept going with the metaphor... [\*Julia keeps laughing and takes a deep breath\*] But now I'm actually gonna go next to our advice, because I am gonna contradict myself.

Julia: Great, do it!

Vanessa: Bella, run from Edward, is my second piece of advice. He's already proving himself to be a serial liar who tries to make you feel dumb rather than address the situation in front of you, who is attempting to gaslight you and just flat out says to you, "no one will believe you". RUN from men like this. He is showing you who he is, and he cannot be trusted.

Julia: Yeah, that's also true. I mean, he saves her life, and then is like, really mean to her the rest of the time.

Vanessa: Some of the things that he says in this chapter I find really disturbing. The fact that he says to her, like, "what are you accusing me of? No one will believe you"? He's Harvey Weinstein.

Julia: Yeah. He behaves pretty badly. I totally agree. Indisputable.

Vanessa: What is your second piece of advice?

Julia: Well... the second piece of advice is for Edward, beyond like, stop being a horrible person, is... when you're trying to disguise the fact that you're a vampire to

your community, don't make vampire jokes. At one point, when Tyler is trying to apologize to him for almost hitting him with his car, Edward says "no blood no foul", which is funny because if there was blood on the ground Edward would try to eat everyone, or like lap up the blood like a dog or something. Anyway, so it would be a bad situation, and... he just makes that joke, which undermines his eventual goal.

Vanessa: Yeah. I think again we're seeing the same thing in Edward, which is a profound belief in everybody else's stupidity, right? He thinks that he can flaunt this right in front of people. Pick at a bagel, be a bad actor, make blood jokes, and like everybody is so dumb they won't get it, and that even if Bella outs him, no one will believe her.

Julia: Very insidious.

Vanessa: This is just like a metaphor for like, white male heterosexual privilege, right? So yeah, my advice to Edward would be to like, really try to deprogram himself from all of the privilege he has. Like, he needs to go to some like... social justice, like, deprogramming camp.

Since I sort of tied my two pieces of advice into one, can I give one more piece of advice really quickly?

Julia: Sure, hit me with it.

Vanessa: Bella is like "I feel fine" and takes off her neck stabilizer.

Julia: Mhm.

Vanessa: I would like to warn everybody at home – if you have a serious head injury, or get into an accident where you fall and potentially hurt your back, please do not take your healthcare into your own hands. The neck stabilizer is very important. I understand that it is frustrating how slow emergency protocols go sometimes, and they can feel quite oppressive. However, adrenaline confuses you and you might think that you are fine when you are not. And so Bella, do NOT take off your own neck stabilizer in the emergency room.

And she uses such poor logic! She's like "they didn't care about my privacy so I took off the neck stabilizer." If you're upset that they didn't give you privacy, say "please close the curtain", don't take your healthcare into your own hands.

Julia: That's also very sound advice.

Vanessa: Thank you.

Vanessa: So Julia, before we go, we have started to get together a care package that we're gonna send to Bella. What are you putting in yours?

Julia: Crampons, or old lady shoes.

Vanessa: For ice, walking, protection?

Julia: For ice walking, for hospital walking, for classroom walking. What are you gonna add?

Vanessa: I'm gonna send her some, like, poetry about winter. So she can start to really find the beauty in it.

Julia: Mhm.

Vanessa: She's really resisting this weather, and I think... weather is not something that you can like, beat. So it's best to give in. So I think I'm gonna send her some Emily Dickensen winter poetry.

Julia: She'll really enjoy that. She's already read everything, so... she might have already heard these.

Vanessa: Yeah. I'll get back a really annoyed note, being like "we already read that in Phoenix in my AP program." [\*Julia laughs\*] I'll be like, sorry Bells.

Julia: So what do you think is going to happen next chapter?

Vanessa: Since we now know Edward listens to this podcast, and then the book changes [\*laughs\*] based on him taking the advice we gave him, I think that he is going to go to her and apologize and say "I think that people should always believe women, I would prefer if you keep this a secret between us for my own safety and privacy, but what can I do to make you feel safe?" And I think they are gonna have a real reckoning about trust and forgiveness.

Julia: Much needed.

Vanessa: Is that what happens?

Julia: In all honesty, I think that kinda happens later, I just have no idea when. Who knows what happens next chapter?

Vanessa: Well, if Edward keeps listening to the podcast, that will happen sooner rather than later.

Julia: Well, he might in the interim have to go to his rehab camp.



Vanessa: Yeah.

Julia: So it might take a long time for him to come back and give that. Have that moment of reckoning.

Outro starts playing

Vanessa: This has been Twilight in Quarantine, a re-education of Edward Cullen by Hot and Bothered. This episode of Hot and Bothered is executively produced by Ariana Nettleman, produced by Ariana Martinez, and this podcast was conceived as a vampire baby by the great Julia Argy. I'm Vanessa Zoltan and I showed up. This is a production of Not Sorry Productions and we are distributed by ACAST. Bye Edward, thanks for listening! Tweet about it, write a review!