

## Twilight in Quarantine: First Sight

Vanessa: It's April 3rd, 2020. I've been on lockdown since Saturday, March 14th. But on Friday the 13th I got this text from my dear friend Julia.

Julia: The library is closing and I panicked and took out 40 lb of books. All of Miriam Toews and Susan Choi among other things. I also got the Twilight books out so if you want to start a Hot and Bothered miniseries called "Twilight in Quarantine" just know that I'm down and prepared.

Vanessa: Now if there's one thing I learned from season 1 of Hot and Bothered, it's that I think people are serious about making Romance related stuff when they are just kidding. Like Ariana, when she said that we should make a romance podcast. Turned out that she was kidding while I was busily already brainstorming title ideas. So I was hedging when I responded to Julia, "That's actually a good idea," just in case she was joking. I realize that saying "that's actually a good idea" meant that I ended up just sounding surprised that Julia has good ideas once in a while. Which is not the case. She's full of good ideas. She just got a puppy!

But I *was* right to hedge like that because it turns out that Julia was kidding about making this podcast miniseries. But here's the thing, just because someone was kidding does not make their idea bad. So while locked up, having to stay away from each other, why not read about people getting *so* close to each other they drink each other's blood?! And honestly why not spend a few hours a week laughing with one of my best friends?

So here we are reading Twilight in quarantine.

Julia: Because it was *actually* a good idea.

Vanessa: Finally you had one. (*Julia laughing*) Now granted, some people are using quarantine time to teach themselves French or embroidery or pick up the bagpipes for the first time in years. But if you know me at all, you know that the thing that I do when I'm in trouble is read a romance novel. I started reading romance novels because I was afraid of the apocalypse and needed something to soothe my soul. Now here we are in a global pandemic where plans are officially God's favorite joke.

So let's really put my theory to the test and see if romance novels can make quarantine bearable. I'm Vanessa Zoltan.

Julia: And I'm Julia Argy.

Vanessa: Join us Monday, Wednesdays, and Fridays for 'Twilight in Quarantine.' We will be going through the first book of Twilight chapter by chapter.

*(theme music plays)*

Vanessa: So Julia and I realized last season that we had a superpower which is that we were amazing at giving advice to people who did not ask for our advice. And so when we were thinking about what we would do with Twilight in quarantine we thought why not double down on this new skill that we discovered we had and give advice to more people who didn't ask us. Stephenie Meyer and the characters in Twilight. Because arguably some of them need some advice. They are making some poor decisions. Now Julia, not everybody is gonna have the time to reread this book with us. But to those people we say 'have no fear.' Julia and I are going to recap every chapter through a rigorous 30 second recap competition. And then everything that you need to know about the Twilight books will be included in those recaps. Do you want to go first?

Julia: I can try, yeah.

Vanessa: 3, 2, 1, go!

Julia: (*ticking background noise throughout*) So there's a preface in which Bella says it's okay to die as long as the person who kills you is really hot. Then we flash backwards to her leaving Phoenix and her mother to move in with her father in Forks, Washington. She moves in; she sees her old room. Her parents are divorced, but the dad's still in love with mom...ex-mom...real mom, ex-wife. Um, she goes to school, she meets a guy, he's pale. He's Edward! (*buzzer sound*)

Vanessa: Oh my God, now no one will wanna reread it.

Julia: Like, once it hits 20 seconds it goes so fast.

Vanessa: Who you gonna call? Pale Edward!

Julia: (*laughing*) Okay, you ready Vanessa?

Vanessa: I am.

Julia: Okay, 3, 2, 1, go.

Vanessa: (*ticking background noise throughout*) So, Bella says goodbye to her mom in the sun in Phoenix and she's so sad cuz she's going this horrible, horrible place, Forks. She goes and sees her dad Charlie; he's the police chief. He gets her a car. She goes to the first day of high school. Everyone is being really nice to her and she's like really sad cuz it's rainy and cloudy. Then she sees the Cullens from afar and then she goes to her Biology class and she's put at the same seat as Edward Cullen and he is like so mad that she exists. And then she goes to the office to turn in her sheet at the end of the day and it turns out that Edward Cullen is trying to switch classes just to get away from her. (*buzzer sound*)

Julia: Great!

Vanessa: Are you worried that now no one is going to want to read the books? Or they're going to read the books and be disappointed that they're not as good as we're making them sound?

Julia: No I think they're going to love the extra spice that we put in our recaps.

*(transition sound)*

Vanessa: Okay Julia. So I am basically a Twilight novice. I have seen the movies. Let me rephrase: You made me watch all the movies when we were traveling together last year and I had no free will.

Julia: True.

Vanessa: But I haven't really read the books before and all I've ever heard is how poorly written they are. And so we thought, we're going to give advice to people who don't ask us: let's give *writing* advice to this dumb Stephenie Meyer. And the place to give advice is the places where you see faults. So I would like to share with you a fault that I saw with the text. Which was Stephenie Meyer is very fond of the word 'hope.' And the place where it really started to bug me was: Bella is walking into her new school and then she walks in and she says, 'it was warmer in there that I had hoped.' And I was like, 'Huh! I rarely walk into buildings *hoping* for a certain temperature.

Julia: So, your line actually reminded me of my line which was, 'My skin could be pretty. It was very clear, almost translucent looking.' And with your line where she walks into the room expecting it to be colder, this is all just foreshadowing for when she becomes a vampire ultimately with translucent skin and always being cold.

Vanessa: Okay. So this is not writing where Stephanie Meyer doesn't realize that wanting clear skin without acne is not the same thing as wanting clear skin that's see through.

Julia: No, it's not that at all.

Vanessa: All of that is actually character development for Bella.

Julia: I mean I think there could be a lot of finely woven threads that are leading us to an ultimate goal.

Vanessa: That is amazing. The ultimate goal being: killed by a handsome man.

Julia: Yeah! She can only hope.

Vanessa: Or it could be character development of like, how playful Bella is, right? Like when she's unpacking she's like, 'I'm not going to cry now, I'm going to cry later,' and when she leaves Phoenix she's like, 'Goodbye eyelet shirt.' Like, she's a real micro planner. She plans farewells to shirts, which is like not something I've ever done. So maybe in, like, hoping for a temperature in the next room or like, noticing the difference between clear and a little see-through we're learning that she is like very detailed oriented.

Julia: I think another...when you brought up the distinction between clear and translucent skin I thought maybe she's been consuming too much teen media about clear skin solutions. And she's just been seeing all these Clearasil ads and she thinks, 'I already had that. My skin is so clear it's translucent.'

Vanessa: Oh, so you think it's possible that it's actually meta-commentary on the hyper-marketing to young people and how it creates body dysmorphia.

Julia: Genius. Yes.

Vanessa: Wow. I think that this might happen again and again. In fact I think it might happen every episode. Where we *think* that we are going to give advice to Stephenie Meyer, but in talking about the text closely we realize that it's actually brilliant and it is teaching us so much.

Julia: Yeah. Your line could have been about Big Air-Conditioning.

Vanessa: Oh my God!

Julia: Big Air-Conditioning in Phoenix.

Vanessa: Air conditioning is always geared toward men in suits, you know? And so rooms are always too cold for women. So it's probably commentary on that and how she, Bella, has gotten used to the patriarchal way that we conditioned air and so has layered up hoping that it would be that patriarchal way and then finding out that it's not and then being like, 'I misdressed, I should have kept my eyelet shirt!' I stand corrected Stephanie Meyer's genius. Character development in even just a simple word.

*(transition music)*

Vanessa: So Julia, it did turn out that Stephanie Meyer did not need our advice but I do think that there are characters in this book who desperately need our advice.

Julia: And who are they?

Vanessa: So the first one that I have, I'm curious to hear who you have, but the first person I would like to give advice to in this chapter is Charlie. I feel like Charlie maybe needs a little

Queer Eye energy in his house. Like Jonathan Van Ness and Bobby would come in and do a lot there. For example, take down the *wedding photo* from your ex-wife. Keep it in a drawer, keep on your bedside table. But like, have a sense of shame and like take it down from public spaces. Like, can you imagine if you walked into my home, Julia, and I had a photo of me and someone who I dated 15 years ago?

Julia: But wouldn't it be creepier if I ended up walking into your bedroom and you had a photo of him like, staring at you from the bedside table? (*both giggling*) Like, wouldn't that be worse?

Vanessa: The thing is, is that it's clearly a pattern. The other moment that I was like, dude this is weird. Bella locks the house by like, picking up a hide-a-key and I'm like if you want your kid to feel welcome - just make some changes Charlie. Make an extra copy of your key, take down your wedding photo, when you've been divorced. Maybe, maybe wait but like on the 10-year anniversary of your divorce take it down. Grieving the must come to an end, is the advice that I want to give Charlie.

Julia: Mmhmm.

Vanessa: I don't want to totally criticise Charlie, because Charlie in the movie is the only good actor.

Julia: And he had that mustache. So he does not need Jonathan Van Ness help.

Vanessa: True. (*Julia giggling*) He has that great mustache in the film.

Julia: I also had a question about Charlie and maybe you know the answer to this. Do police officers really not have any other car? Like, does he actually drive the cop car everywhere?

Vanessa: I mean maybe cuz he's the chief of police? Maybe this is a misuse of funds and there's corruption in Forks.

Julia: The scandal, I hope that gets later uncovered.

Vanessa: Charlie is using taxpayer dollars to go pick up Bella from the airport.

Julia: It really seems that way.

Vanessa: Yeah. Charlie. Make some changes! Buy yourself a car, not just Bella. Yeah, He needs to treat himself, that's what he needs to do. Okay Julia, who do you want to give advice to?

Julia: My first piece of advice is for Bella, our delightful lead, who suffers from a negative self-talk problem. She meets a school administrator and she imagines the school administrators thinks 'daughter of the Chief's flighty ex-wife, back from Arizona.' And just exercising a little bit

of self-compassion during a big change in her life, I think would serve a lot in terms of her dour disposition.

Vanessa: She's not going to get a man with that attitude!

Julia: Yet she manages to get Edward through smell alone.

Vanessa: Not a man, arguably! That's just a dead man! But of course I do like interrupting cycles of negative self-talk. I think that that's really important. Especially when you're projecting them onto like, innocent others. Like, at least lay claim to your own negative self-talk. Be like 'I think I'm just that flighty girl from Phoenix.' Like, this poor unsuspecting woman is just trying to give you your class schedule. You don't know what she's thinking about you. She's probably wondering why your skin is translucent. *(both start laughing)(sound of gasping for breath between laughter)* Right? Like, you don't know.

Julia: Yeah.

Vanessa: She's like, "my, that young woman would look great in an eyelet top."

Julia: "Has she been using Clearasil?"

Vanessa: So, I mean, I think the advice is check your negative self-talk at the door. But if you can't, then at least have the decency to not project it onto other people.

Julia: I think that's good.

Vanessa: She actually does do a good job of that at the end of the chapter. When Edward is trying to transfer out of the class because of her, I do think it's admirable that she's like, "Clearly this can't be about me." It turns out that it is about her, but that I think is the right instinct. Like, if somebody is having a ridiculous reaction. I have a habit of making a lot of things about me that aren't. Especially other people's negative energy that I think I'm perceiving. Like, my mom won't call me back immediately and I'll be like, "Oh I guess she doesn't love me." When really it's like, she was in the shower. I do appreciate that Bella is like, that would be in a crazy over reaction to me politely sitting next to him in Biology class. So it must not be about me. So I do think that we see that Bella can sometimes not project negative self-talk onto another, but sometimes she absolutely does, you're right.

Julia: Wow. It's amazing that she does it in both circumstances to the wrong person.

Vanessa: Yeah, but I don't think that it matters that she's wrong. I think that's like, a healthy practice even though she happened to be wrong. Don't you?

Julia: Yeah! Better to be wrong than right, that's what I always say.

Vanessa: Well! I don't know you at all cuz I've never heard you say that. (*Julia laughing*) Okay, so my last piece of advice today is for the Cullens. Which is, I think that they should get better at fake eating. (*Julia laughs*) Like, one of them just trashes a whole tray of food. And it's like, people are going to notice that. I think Edward is actually the best of them at fake eating, right? He like, picks at a bagel and pretends to put it in his mouth. I just feel like they should take an acting class.

Julia: Okay, I got a new idea. They should have an opaque smoothie container and just pretend that they're constantly on juice cleanses. And just like, drink from something. They can have blood in there or it can just be empty. But just be like, we only have a liquid diet and then there's no food waste.

Vanessa: Yes! (*laughing throughout*) I think it's the food waste more than the bad acting that bothered me. Thank you for helping me articulate that.

Julia: My advice is a solution to your problem, luckily. I think that if you're a hundred plus years old and a millionaire and super-hot do literally anything else but keep going to high school.

Vanessa: It's so weird that they keep going to high school.

Julia: Just stop.

Vanessa: It is a weird choice. Like, do something productive with infinite time. Like, we have infinite time right now and what we decided to do with that is make this podcast. Which, agreed, is questionable. But they have infinite-infinite time and they keep going to *high school!* I literally have that nightmare.

Julia: I'm trying to think of like, some healthy solutions for them to use their time that's not high school. Coronavirus vaccine, number one.

Vanessa: Fighting climate change. If anyone should be worried about climate change it should be the *immortals*.

Julia: They should take all the plastic out of the sea. Cuz they're really fast and they don't need to breathe. (*Vanessa laughs*)

Vanessa: I love sea turtles. They could like, solve sea turtles. We could still use plastic straws cuz the Cullens could just collect them all.

Julia: Okay, I'm glad we figured that out. Before we head out, you haven't read these books before so what do you think is going to happen next chapter?

Vanessa: I mean I'm hoping that this whole series turns into a really specific serial drama about petty corruption. And how they're going to root it out on the like, gas gouging level in Forks. And the woman who works in the administration at the high school is going to be made Mayor because she is not corrupt and she is unwilling to transfer Edward out of the Biology class without a real reason. And so she's a real stand-your-ground person and so she gets Charlie's job. I want that to begin in Chapter 2. I want us to be laying some groundwork for rooting out corruption within the police force at Forks.

Julia: So you want Twilight to turn into a detective novel.

Vanessa: Yes! A very painstaking detective novel that is actually not about the mystery at all but is just about the procedures. I would like long drawn-out scenes of people filing. Is that not what's going to happen?

Julia: That is actually exactly what's going to happen.

Vanessa: Oh, man! I'm gonna love this book.  
(*outro music in the background*)

You have been listening to 'Twilight in Quarantine,' a vampire baby of Hot & Bothered. This episode and all episodes are executive produced by Ariana Nettleman, produced by Ariana Martinez, conceived of as a vampire baby by Julia Argy and merely attended to by me. We're production of Not Sorry Productions and distributed by ACAST. Thanks everybody and we'll talk to you in a few days. Talk to you later.