**The Real Question - Jealousy with Dana Schwartz**

**Casper:** Vanessa, you've been learning a lot of German over the last few years.

**Vanessa:** Yeah, I know all of the colors that are necessary to know to play Uno.

**Casper:** You might also know “schadenfreude”.

**Vanessa:** Which I know from *Avenue Q*.

**Casper:** One of the best words, “weltschmertz” - which is “a feeling of melancholy and world wearines”’. And my new favorite word “k[onkurrenzneid](https://www.linguee.com/german-english/translation/Konkurrenzneid.html)”, which is professional jealousy.

**Vanessa:** I actually spoke to our German expert, and what he says it means is that you were jealous of the person you're competing with, but you also desire to keep competing with them.

**Casper:** And that's the topic that we're exploring on The Real Question today with our special guest, Dana Schwartz. What do I do with my professional jealousy?

*[music]*

I'm Casper ter Kuile -

**Vanessa:** I'm Vanessa Zoltan -

**Casper:** and this is The Real Question.

**Vanessa:** Yeah, it is!

*[music]*

**Vanessa:** Today, we are lucky enough to be joined by the hilarious and brilliant and rigorous Dana Schwartz. Dana Schwartz is a writer of books, comics and television. She's the author of four books, including the newly released and fantastic *Anatomy, A Love Story* which just got picked as Reese Witherspoon's YA book of the winter. She is also the host of the number one charting podcast Noble Blood. She's also, I won't say, most importantly, but most excitedly to me, co-leading our Frankenstein pilgrimage with me, which is running in April. Dana, just, thank you so much for joining us -

**Dana:** Thank you so much for that intro, I’m blushing!

**Vanessa:** You're a delight, as always.

**Dana:** And I just have to say, I have been reading the 1818 text of Frankenstein, which is the first one that she published. I hadn't realized that, like, they were different texts! So I've been deep in that. I'm so excited. I'm not going to talk about Frankenstein on this, but I will just tell you, I am so excited to dive into the world of Frankenstein.

**Vanessa:** It is going to be… nerdy.

**Dana:** Oh yeah, it's going to be like every worst impulse I have.

**Vanessa:** I feel like I'm going to be doing, “Well, actually, we're not 100 percent sure that she lost her virginity at this exact location, but she would want us to think that she did.” That's going to be my voice. A lot of the trip.

**Dana:**  Yeah, and it's a lot of “isn't myth pretty powerful?”

**Casper:** Well, there may be a couple of spots left on that pilgrimage by the time this comes out. So if there is, go to Reading and Walking With dot com and book your spot to join Vanessa and Dana on that trip. But today, Dana, we're talking about a question that you've been pondering. Can you tell us what it is and what led you to ask it with us?

**Dana:** Yes. So, this is… it’s not my best self. It's not like the version of myself that I'm most proud of. So I just want that disclaimer up front, like, this isn't a thing that I'm proud of in myself. But that's why I'm asking it, because I want to try to work on bettering myself. I have a real problem with professional jealousy. I think culturally that there's a problem with like, people thinking there's only one spot at the table for a woman at any given time. And I think that there's also been this thing for me where, coming up as young writer, it always felt like at any given moment there was just like one other Hot Young Writer, and there was only ever room in the conversation for one.

But I will say I'm someone who is incredibly professionally jealous, like when there's a really cool book that's getting a lot of attention or a podcast that's getting a lot of attention. I don't think I like have unhealthy coping mechanisms, but I definitely have to mute that person on Twitter. I'm just like, I cannot look at your adorable, successful face right now. [Laughs]. I have like, not read books because I'm like, “this is going to be too good, and it's going to make me mad”.

And I will say there have been moments where I have been professionally jealous of another writer, and then I reach out to them and like, force them into friendship as a way to defer it, and then find out that they're wonderfully supportive, beautiful people who are kind and funny and nice. So it's something that I've tried to figure out and reckon with. But my question is, how do I deal with professional jealousy in the healthiest way possible?

**Casper:** I love that you're bringing this question, Dana. It's one that we've heard from other listeners about as well, and it's definitely one that Vanessa and I both recognize. So, you're in safe company - let me say that, first of all. And I so recognize that it's something within ourselves that, like, we don't love, but it's there. So what can we do abou itt?

**Dana:** Yeah, we can't help it.

**Casper:** Exactly, exactly. My first question is maybe really obvious, which is like, why do you want to change it? What's wrong with it just being there?

**Dana:** I think there's a lot of internalized sexism in the way that a lot of my jealousy is directed only towards women. Like, it's this cultural view that there is only room for one woman at the table, and that's something that I don't want to reinforce, even subconsciously. I don't think it's healthy that I won't read a good book because I wish I had written it. I think it comes from a place of insecurity on my part, and I kind of know like, “oh, if I was full and confident in my own stuff, I wouldn't have that”.

**Vanessa:** Yeah, it sounds to me like it's maybe about two things. It’s in part about, like, “I know I work really hard and that's enough, right? Like, I work hard enough and I'm successful enough, that some of this feeling would go away”. But also part of this is a structural problem that the world is demonstrating to you that still, to some extent, only one woman is allowed at the table. And so you are responding to an actual reality that is projected back to you in the world.

**Dana:** I will also say, I think it's - like, I don't think I work hard enough. I never think I work hard enough. I always think I'm lazy and spending too much time on Twitter, and anything I actually accomplish is not as good as it should be. You know, I’ll write a book and be like, “Wow”. Instead of being like, wow, I wrote a book that was great”. I'm like, “this work isn't as good as it could have been. This is what I could have changed. This is what I could have done better”. I'm like, “yeah, I'm a lazy, bad writer that I didn't do those things”. Oh no, this has become therapy! I'm so sorry.

*[Dana and Casper laugh]*

**Vanessa:** No! I mean, that resonates with me so much. Are you someone who also has the sort of double sight to see that you're not actually a lazy person?

**Dana:** This is me just fishing for compliments. I did this whole thing just trying to get people to say nice things about me.

**Vanessa:** Well, I'll say them. So the things that I know you did, was you have at least two more book deals in the making, right?

**Dana:** Yeah.

**Vanessa:** You just released a book. You're in a writers room on a TV show, and you're releasing one of the most successful podcasts in the world on a semi-weekly basis. Is there a version of yourself that you're like, “that would be the version of me that worked hard enough”. Or does that person just not exist?

**Dana:** She does. Can I describe her? Can I paint a picture for you?

**Vanessa:** Describe her? Yes.

**Dana:** She wakes up at six in the morning - refreshed! Didn't even set an alarm. She goes on a quick, restorative jog. She doesn't check her phone. Does some light, just like half an hour of light pilates-yoga. Not even to work out. Just like - to center herself and feel good.

She makes the coffee while she takes a shower, then drinks coffee and reads a novel. Without even checking the internet! Writes from like - it's still only like nine o’clock, and she writes from like nine to noon. Then she checks her emails and the internet for an hour while she eats lunch, and then spends the afternoon, from like one to four, doing edits. And then household chores, cooks a healthy dinner, goes to a farmer's market, then like, watches a movie, fully engaged, not with her phone out, with her fiance. Like, quality time. She reads a book, takes a bath, goes to bed. She's great. She works so hard. Who is she? How do I be her?

**Vanessa:** She works so hard.

**Casper:** Dana, just going back to your question, I'm noticing that there's something in it which is about… it sounds like the closer the person is to you… right? If they’re a woman, if they're young, if they're a writer, like, the more intense this feeling gets. And I'm curious if you can remember the first time you felt this feeling. And how it's tracked over time.

**Dana:** It's definitely, yeah, people who are similar to myself. Like, sometimes people who went to the same college or similar, you know, East Coast school people who work in media, people like young women who remind me of myself writing books. Because I think probably what I imagine that their life is like that first Dana, that I imagined, that I described.

**Vanessa:** Right. They don't even turn their phones on till noon.

**Dana:** I know…

**Casper:** They don't even need the recipe. They just have like, 20 great little simple meals with just a few ingredients, and it's a beautiful dinner for four.

**Dana:** They meal prep already, like, the kale’s already washed and dried in their fridge.

**Vanessa:** So how would it make you feel if I told you that this is you? You're very young. You're 29, but this is you, and this is how it's going to be. This is who you are and who you are is wonderful.

**Dana:** Can't I become that other one - that other Dana?

**Vanessa:** Well, let's pretend for a second that I am some sort of fairy godmother that's like, “no, this is you”. How does that make you feel? Are you like, resigned? Are you mad? Are you like, “fuck you!”

**Dana:** I'm just like, disappointed in myself. I'm like, Oh, why can't I be better?

*[Vanessa laughs]*

**Vanessa:** Why better? What would you gain from being better? Is it one more book a year? Is it sleeping more? Is it more money? Is it more fame? Is it just being more self-conscious?

**Dana:** Well - and I don't want anyone to think that like - I don't need any of those things. I just want to be like, proud of myself. I want to think that I'm doing a good job.

**Casper:** Mm, that's powerful.

**Casper:** Luckily, Dana, you don't have to figure this out for yourself. You've brought two texts with you that we're going to read, and we're going to pay real close attention to and see if they have something to teach us. And in that question of, you know, “what do I do with my professional jealousy”? I really want to pay attention to what you just said, which is, “how can I feel proud of myself”, because I think you've pointed us to the way in which that fullness feeling, that would mean, we don't have that look at someone else that has to put them down or like, make us feel smaller than - I really want to pay attention in these texts where where we can see that sense of pride.

And the first text, you know, I think we might find something! Will you tell us about the song that you've chosen for us to read closely?

**Dana:** Yes, of course. I have chosen the seminal text, I would argue, by Nick Jonas during his brief solo career entitled, fittingly enough, “Jealous”.

*[“Jealous” by Nick Jonas plays]*

**Casper:** It features the lyrics “you're sexy, beautiful, everybody wants a taste. That's why I still get jealous.”

**Dana:** You’re TOO, too sexy, beautiful.

**Casper:** “Everybody wants a taste, that’s why I still get jealous”. So why did you choose this text? How does this song help us explore the question?

**Dana:** I think it's a rich text.

*[Casper laughs]*

**Dana:** Both on the part of the character of Nick Jonas as the narrator. And also on the part of the nameless woman of whom he's jealous. This is a different type of jealousy. This is sexual, romantic jealousy. But I think the reason I picked it as a text to explore my own jealousy is that he is so shameless about his jealousy. He's saying it's not just that he gets jealous and he wants to change that, and he recognizes that that's a negative thing about himself.

He is justifying his jealousy. “You're too sexy, beautiful and everyone wants a bite. That's why I still get jealous”. And then he also says at one point, I believe, “it's my right to be hellish. I still get jealous”. It is right to be hellish. So I think the reason I chose this as a text was because of how unapologetic it is.

**Casper:** And there is something liberating in what he's doing, of just being completely transparent. So much anxiety comes from trying to figure out like, why is this person not talking to me? Is it because of “A, B, C, D”? And he's like, no, I'm mad because I'm jealous or whatever the feeling is that he's feeling - he's giving us the answer. And that's something, you know, you can't tame it without naming it right? Like that idea of just completely owning the feeling.

When you do that for yourself, when you're like, “huh, I'm jealous right now”... what happens for you? Does it feel good? Does it make you feel icky? What happens when you name it that explicitly?

**Dana:** I feel better because I can try to then be like, “what am I jealous of”? And then how do I get that for myself, if I want it? I would never want to say it's my right to be hellish, though, because I don't think being jealous ever gives you an excuse to do any bad behavior. Like, when I’m jealous, the closest to hellish I get is, I’ll mute them on Twitter.

**Vanessa:** But Dana, I just want to draw us back to this other thing that you said, which was that it makes you want to be better. And I'm just wondering if this “better” that you have in your head is an unrealistic and toxic expectation for you to have for yourself? Is there someone out there like that, or is that a shadow Dana who you've created, who you can constantly compare yourself to, in order to just find yourself wanting?

**Dana:** I think it's a shadow Dana. It's not… I don't think anyone lives like that.

**Vanessa:** Dana, is it possible that this question isn't about you being jealous, but is actually about you being OK with the kind of person and worker who you are?

**Dana:** Ohhhh, I mean, that sounds that sounds great! That sounds like it's going to be hard. I have to learn how to be OK with myself, Vanessa? That sounds like so much work.

*[Casper laughs]*

**Vanessa:** And that, these people who you're jealous of are just people who are getting in the way of you doing that. It's like, I used to run half marathons, and I didn’t feel jealous of the people in the seven minute mile group because I was like - I have no desire to be like you. I have no chance of being like you. You and I are not doing the same race. But the people in the ten minute mile group who were like, 30 seconds or a minute faster than I was? I was like, “OK, I want to beat you” until I injured myself. And then I was like, “actually pushing myself to be like them is going to literally harm me”, right?

Like, I have to just be who I am on this. And I'm a 10 and a half minute girl, and that's who I am. It wasn't easy. I hate the seven minute mile people. I kind of hate the ten minute mile people, but there was this point where I was like, “I'm literally going to hurt myself, if I don't embrace that I'm a 10 and a half minute mile person”.

**DanaL** I think part of my jealousy is like, I don't think I'm a very patient, disciplined person, and I worry that that affects my writing and my work. I wish I had the patience to sit in a quiet room and write by hand. I think it would make my writing better. And so I think I'm jealous of people who, you know, are writing quote unquote “extremely literary” novels that I think are able to do that. I'm less jealous of the things they have - I don't know if their books sell better than mine, if they live in a nicer house - I don't care. That's not what I'm jealous of. I'm like, I am jealous because in my mind, they have a discipline and a patience that I don't have.

**Casper:** So, Dana, I feel like Nick Jonas has helped us clarify what kind of jealousy this is about, right? That sense of, not necessarily wanting the things that other successful people have, but the characteristics of who they are. And so there's something about the type of jealousy that I feel is really clear to me. But I'm curious for your second text, because there's something about wanting to be someone else that I think this second text explains better than anything else. Can you introduce it to us and why you chose that?

**Dana:** Yeah, I definitely think it's… you know, I was a little tongue in cheek with Nick Jonas, but I think this is THE text about career jealousy. It's the film *Amadeus*, which is a great movie if the listeners haven't seen it. It’s a lightly fictionalized account of the composer Salieri and his relationship with Mozart, and Mozart was just an undeniable prodigy.

*[Mozart plays]*

Someone whose music, talent and ability felt like it was just inherently gifted to him and Salieri is someone who, like, works hard and struggles, and can appreciate the beautiful gift that Mozart has been given, but can't have it for himself.

**Casper:** And we should say that Salieri is established - he's the leading composer at the court, like - he is extremely successful in his own right. And Mozart is this kind of annoying… frankly kind of childlike person? I mean, at some point, Salieri describes hearing Mozart's music for the first time in the movie and says, “This wasn't the music of a performing monkey. This was a music I had never heard, filled with such longing, such unfulfillable longing. It seemed to me I was hearing the voice of God”.

There’s something here which I'm hearing in your story - “that person just has something that I don't. They are someone that I'm not, and I wish I was that person”.

**Dana:** Yeah, I think that's to me the most - one of the most interesting things about the movie *Amadeus* is, like you mentioned, Salieri is successful and established and has the trappings of career success that anyone would want at that point, and should be satisfied. But instead, he is tortured because he doesn't have this beautiful other thing about the work itself. He's not jealous of Mozart for a specific career thing. He's jealous of his inherent ability.

**Vanessa:** Which is different than what you're jealous of, right? Yours comes from more of a sense of what sounds to me - I'm sorry if I'm overstepping - but, like, insecurity, or a tiny bit of self-loathing. Not just like, looking at someone else and being like, “man, I wish I was smart like her”. Or is it both?

**Dana:** I do think it is sort of similar to the Salieri feeling of - like, there is nothing more like material or tangible that I do want. It's just sort of an ineffable quality that some people seem to possess, that they're like, you know, brilliant writers or, you know, have this ability to be disciplined in a certain way.

**Casper:** Yeah, he's looking at Mozart, and he's like, “you can do something that I can't. And I'm like, the frickin best in the business, but I still can't do that”. So my question is, what does Salieri do about it? And is that a model for you? [Casper laughs] And if not, what’s the alternative?

**Vanessa:** I hope it's not a model for you, Dana, but tell us what Salieri does about it.

**Dana:** Salieri, to recount the end of the film, Salieri disguises himself as an anonymous patron in all black, who may or may not be the ghost of Mozart's father, and commissions Mozart to write a funeral dirge, with the intention of torturing him to death.

**Casper:** And he succeeds.

**Dana:** Yeah. So, uh, no - I don't think I'm so jealous of someone that I will try to orchestrate an elaborate murder. But like, I guess that is a way to solve the problem. I mean, he's not wrong that it solves the problem.

**Vanessa:** But it sounds like you're jealous of a few people, right? So who would have to be multiple murders?

**Dana:** I would have to become a mass murderer. I would have to go to like, you know, the Brooklyn Book Fair with, like a hatchet. It would be really messy.

**Vanessa:** Well, and then you'd probably have less time to write. I'm not sure this is the right solution for you, Dana,

**Casper:** But it also isn't the right solution for Salieri! It doesn't solve his jealousy. Here he is, sitting at the end of his life, recounting this still-overwhelming feeling of how he feels inadequate next to Mozart. I guess what I'm really interested in is - other people have skills that we don't. And one response to that is to be like, “I'm going to get them”. You've tried that and it hasn't worked. You’re who you are.

**Dana:** Although I will say if I went to prison for multiple murders, I would probably have not be able to be on Twitter all day. I would have time to write.

**Casper:** What I want to ask is - what's a different way that you can look to those people, not minimizing their skills, not trying to make yours better. But like, how could Salieri have looked at Mozart? That wasn't destructive?

**Dana:** I mean - the two things - I think he could have enjoyed the gift of his music. I think Salieri is someone who loved and appreciated beautiful music. And I think he could have just gotten pleasure out of that. Like, if Mozart had a gift, it was a gift for everyone. Music is an inherently external, you know, it’s not an inward gift. It's an outward gift that Mozart shared. So he could have, you know, enjoyed that. And then I think he could have just been less hard on himself and just done his best and maybe learned from Mozart to be a little bit better. You know… I don't know. I don't know. Sometimes I'm like, Oh, well, maybe Salieri just hit the limit of being a composer.

**Vanessa:** And if he did, then what?

**Dana:** I guess fine? Like, he would have lived a happier life, right? If he just accepted, like, this is how good of a composer I am, and maybe I'll never become famous, but I can live a good life and enjoy Mozart. But he never then would have been - all he wanted was to be great and famous, and he wouldn't get that.

**Vanessa:** I'm someone who has a mixed feeling about the word acceptance, so I'm wondering how you feel about the word acceptance.

**Dana:** I mean, in theory, it's fine, it's not a word that I'm great at in practice. I also think it sort of inherently comes from a place of resignation where it's like… is it giving up?

**Casper:** Dana, just going back to your question was the binary option before: strive and like, beat those people at their own game and develop the discipline that they have? Or just give up completely? Was it like - it’s either this or that?

**Dana:** I think it's like. It's a twofold answer, like my current response is to self-loathe for not accomplishing. Oh yeah, see, this is the problem. It's not - it’s never about a final goal, because I can accomplish goals. I just tell myself like, “oh, you cheated to get there, you just slipped through”. It's that imposter syndrome. So, have self-loathing for not having the discipline to, like, reach my goals, the quote unquote “right way”. And then also just try to push those people out of my mind and like, you know, mute them on Twitter. To just be like, “oh, I can't think of that”. It just makes me feel bad, so let’s just shove it down.

Where, you know, maybe a more healthy thing would be to - rather than just self-loathing for not having all of these habits, these, like, all or nothing things like, “wake up at 6:00 in the morning”, and actually think like, “oh, well, maybe I could, you know. Spend less time on Twitter” and have these certain elements of discipline that I enact that are actually attainable, rather than just going all or nothing in a way that I'll never achieve. And then, you know, the same way Salieri could have just enjoyed Mozart's compositions, I could read and enjoy wonderful books. What a gift. These are the words of a healthier person, that I don't know if I can do. But in theory, that sounds nice, doesn't it?

**Vanessa:** Well, what I believe you can do is accomplish - like, I'm a huge fan of a super low bar, like a bar that you might not notice you had to step over. And I think you could do that right? Like, I think you can not be on Twitter from 11 to 12. One day a week and then notice that it’s past 12 and you're still not on Twitter. Right? And celebrate those moments, rather than berate yourself for the moments that you quote unquote “fail” at that.

But the other thing is, I just want to say this one more time. What if this is you at your best? What if this is who you are, and your cats love you, and your parents love you, and your sisters love you, and your partner loves you? (And I know all of this because of TikTok.) What if this is it?

**Dana:** I would be unhappy with myself.

**Vanessa:** Really?

**Dana:**  I'm like, I feel lazy. I feel mediocre. I just feel - I don't know. Just like, I'm not a good person. I'm really hard on myself. I'm learning, and hearing it.

**Casper:** It is so hard to recognize those internal monologues. So I just want to like, massively affirm that feeling. But the thing that I love about what you're saying, Vanessa, of like, “what's the low bar”? I wonder if it's less about - and I'm curious what you would say - if it's less about like, behavior changing, because I'm also on the train of like - we are who we are - and it's more about changing, like, nudging the goal.

I really loved what you were saying about - can Salieri enjoy Mozart's music? Because we're so trained that everything has to be about our achievement and our success. And I'm curious when you open the book of maybe someone who you feel that sense of jealousy towards or like, you read the tweet or the announcement about some accomplishment or you see the Instagram post, like what happens in that moment where you are face to face with the very material reality of someone else's success?

**Dana:** I mean, the wild thing is, I really do often enjoy those books! When I bring myself to finally read a book of someone that I'm really jealous of, like, it's a great book! and I genuinely enjoy it. Isn't that wild?

**Vanessa** I mean, so the problem isn’t the book, right? It's the moment where you said, “well, if I stay who I am, I'm going to hate myself”. So to me, the two options are either, learning how to love yourself as you are, or change the one or two things that feel really possible to change, that can be a version of you that you are at peace with.

**Dana:** I mean, that's really what it is, right? It’s not about them. It never is about them. It's about, you know, like Nick Jonas. It's not that “she's too sexy, beautiful”, it's that you were threatened. *[Vanessa and Casper laugh]*. Yeah, it really is - it's more about me being insecure in my certain abilities or lack of abilities. And that insecurity prevents me from enjoying things I might otherwise really enjoy.

**Vanessa:** So to me, it's like - what is the one thing that maybe is in your reach that you can do that could be the trip wire that would make you be like, ‘no, I do it”. Right? Like, “I write every day from 11 to 12, twitter off, everything, and I do it no matter what”.

**Dana:** I honestly think that would be it. If I have a designated period where I just write every day with no social media and nothing else, I think I would feel really proud of myself, because I'm someone who is easily distracted and needs constant stimulation, and I think I've ruined my brain with too much internet.

**Vanessa:** Well, you haven't ruined your brain, right? Like, the internet company is seeing you as the product to have intentionally infiltrated your life, right? Like, you didn't do that. But I wonder if that's the thing, right? That’s not a small goal, but like - one hour a day phone on the other side of the room, everything else off. And then at the end of that hour, you're like, “guess what I get to do? I get to feel great about myself the rest of the day”. And like, it's your goal to do that four days a week. And you get to feel great if you do that.

**Dana:** That's a great goal and actually feels kind of doable, right? Oh God, what, have you fixed me? I think you fixed me. I think I'm done.

*[Casper laughs]*

**Vanessa:** I just first of all want you to see how truly wonderful you are, and how much you accomplish, and how generous you are as you accomplish things, and how kind and inspirational you are - as you are. And so, we just need signifiers for that, like, part of your brain to light up in yourself to be like, “look, I did the thing”, and be training yourself to see what other people, I think, see very clearly.

**Dana:** Yeah, thank you, I mean, that is a wonderful, wonderful thing you said, and I fully appreciate it.

**Casper:** I mean, my final thought is also Dana, that like, this is such an age appropriate feeling. I feel sorry for Salieri, because for him, this comes so much later in his life. And it's completely bewildering because he's always been the best, like, he's always been at the top of his game, and he has this young genius who just totally disrupts everything. And I think in our, you know, our 20s, our early 30s, like we're in that mode of trying to build and grow and achieve. And I think it's very natural for that, not to mellow, but to gain perspective as we age. That's what older friends keep telling me. So I'm just like, holding on to that promise that it’s true.

But I really feel like - I turned thirty five last year. And it's not that I have stopped this feeling, but it's that I can imagine that it's going to be less important as I age. And so the other thing is just to remember, like, this is not forever, and this feeling, as powerful as it is, like, thank God we're not Salieri at the end of his life, just regretting, you know, killing the greatest composer of all time (in the fictional account, as written by Peter Schaffer).

**Dana:** I think everyone knows that Salieri was not responsible for Mozart's death. But wouldn't it have been narratively interesting if he was?

**Vanessa:** And I write like, I'm turning 40 in a few months. And the thing I really resonate with what you say is how hard I can be on myself after a day that was really by so many measures, quite productive. And just feeling like, “God, if I had the willpower, it could have been great. I could have gotten everything done that needed to be done. But I gave up too soon. I took the nap. I walked the dog more one more time than she needed”. You know, whatever it is.

**Dana:** I mean, that sounds nice. Dogs need walks!

**Vanessa:** And TV needs watching, and snuggling needs happening, and everything that you do needs happening! I just think that at the end of my life, I'm not going to be on my bed being like, “do you know what I’m glad I did? Get really hard on myself about dumb shit”. And just these stories that we torture ourselves with - any little thing we can do to like, jump over them or like, kiss them goodbye and send them on their way.

**Dana:** Also, like I think that version of myself, that's “perfect” - like, there is no perfect. Perfect doesn't exist. There's no actual ideal way to structure a day. There's no answer at the back of the book.

**Vanessa:** So, Dana, at the beginning of our conversation, you said something along the lines of,” I just want to be proud of myself”. And then at the end of it, what I'm hearing you say is, “if I wrote one hour a day with my phone on the other side of the room turned off, and just did nothing but write for that hour, it would make a real change in how I thought about myself, and I could be proud of myself”. Does that feel true? Or I mean, I guess, even just worth experimenting with?

**Dana:** So this is real. I do think sometimes I use jealousy as a way to keep myself from doing those things. Instead actually turning my phone off and writing for an hour, I just scroll on Twitter resentfully for an hour. And so I really do think it would be a step in the right direction to do a small, achievable task in the direction I want to go. Because I don't think writing for an hour without Twitter, for me, a professional writer, is some crazy, unhealthy, like - “gotta lose 50 pounds” goal to have to be perfect. Sometimes I think I'm using jealousy as a way to avoid doing essential and necessary work that seems a little hard.

**Casper:** Mm hmm. Dana, is there anything else you would want to say as you think about this question of what do you do with that kind of professional jealousy when it flares its head?

**Dana:** No, I mean, I think this has been really wonderful. I apologize for turning it into a real therapy session, but I think you two are so wonderful to talk to and this has been really fun.

**Casper:** I honestly, I will always say that whenever we have a question shared on this podcast, it ends up being so helpful to me and so many listeners as well because it's like - this is just stuff we all have to navigate, and it shows up differently in different ways. But I hope it's useful for you. It's been a gift for us as well. So thank you very, very much, Dana.

**Vanessa:** I am also going to try to write for one hour each day without distractions. So an inspiration.

**Dana:** I love that. Or, what if we even have the “no internet hour” where you can read, you can write? Yeah, that way, if you're like, you know - just one hour a day.

**Vanessa:** Yeah, no internet hour. I love that.

**Casper:** Mozart would approve.

**Vanessa:** Salieri would approve. And he's the one we're scared of because he’ll murder us.

**Dana:** Mozart didn't have internet, and look what he did

**Casper: Exactly.** Dana, thank you so much and please everyone, check out *Anatomy: A Love Story*, if for no other reason that it has actually the best book cover that I have ever seen.

**Dana:** It’s so pretty. I love it.

**Casper:** It's so frickin’ pretty. And then after literally looking at it for minutes on end, then I realized there's a second image in the same image! It was incredible. *Anatomy: A Love Story.* Dana Schwartz

**Vanessa:** And Dana, the book itself is incredible, and I am just very grateful that you wrote it, and very grateful that you came on our podcast, and I'm very excited to meet and travel together for a week. Nice to meet you - let's go on vacation!

**Dana:**  I am so excited. I have been reading multiple Mary Shelley texts just to like, get my brain in the mood. I'm so excited. I think it's going to be a really, really fun.

**Vanessa:** I do too.

**Dana:** Thank you so much for having me. This was truly a delight.

**Casper:** Well, Vanessa, that was our show with the fabulous Dana Schwartz. I want to share with you a little maxim from Marnie in Melbourne, Australia, who says, “a jack of all trades is a master of none, though often times better than a master of one”. And I feel like with Dana's incredible wide variety of skills, this might be one that is appropriate for all of us as we think about that theme of professional jealousy.

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**Vanessa:** We are a Not Sorry Production. Our executive producer is the great and good Ariana Nedelman - the only person in my life with that title. We are mixed by Erica Huang and our music is by Nick Bohl. We're distributed by Eight Cast. A big, big thank you to Dana Schwartz this week for participating in the episode, and also for her fantastic book *Anatomy: A Love Story*, to Julia Argy, Nicki Zoltan, Lara Glass, AJ Rama's, Gaby Oarry and Stephanie Paulsell. Thanks everyone, and we'll talk to you in two weeks - unless you're a patron, in which case we'll talk to you next week.

**Casper:** Whoop-whoop!

*[Gentle music]*