
Vanessa: Chapter 20, the first task.

*Harry got up on Sunday morning and dressed so inattentively that it was a while before he realised he was trying to pull his hat onto his foot instead of his sock. When he finally got all his clothes on the right parts of his body, he hurried off to find Hermione, locating her at the Gryffindor table in the Great Hall, where she was eating breakfast with Ginny.*

Vanessa: I'm Vanessa Zoltan

Casper: And I’m Casper ter Kuile

Vanessa: And this is Harry Potter and the Sacred Text

Casper: Vanessa it’s our hundredth episode

Vanessa: Did you bake me my cake yet?

Casper: (laughs) I thought about it, actually at 10pm yesterday is when I was like you know what I should do? I should get Vanessa that cake I promised in series one, but I failed. We'll have to just keep going until we hit 200 and come to the end of the season

Vanessa: (laughs) Okay I would also like to say in the last 2 years that we've been working on this together you haven’t got me the cake but you have done lovely things for me

Casper: I'm not a monster

Vanessa: You’re not a monster (laughs)

Casper: So, thank-you everyone if you’ve listened from the beginning, whether that was you know, way back in 2016 or if you’ve listened through all the episodes now, it means so much to us to have you with us on this journey through the books, so thank-you for listening. And I want to just take a moment to tell you a little bit about the crowd funder that we’re doing. Because you know, when we started this project it was really something fun for us both to do on the side, you know, Ariana was in school, Vanessa and I had just recently graduated and we never thought that this could be part of our livelihoods. And then in season 2 we joined Panoply and the podcast kept growing and we were featured on the homepage of iTunes, and now, Vanessa is leading a really exciting new step for the podcast, which is to create a feminist production company, that puts together not only Harry Potter and the Sacred Text, but another podcast called “Hot and Bothered” which is all about writing as a spiritual practice through the art of romance novels. And, it is such a pleasure for me to see Vanessa step into her incredible leadership, not only as my co-host but really now as the executive director of the new organisation that she’s building with a lot of
people around her to support her, but really it’s Vanessa’s vision and I just want to share that with you as the listeners to understand that what she’s doing is incredible and that your support of this project enables her to really live out this vision and build content that is spiritually deep and accessible and generous to the world in a time when we really need that. So, if this podcast has been a support for you especially over this last year which has been tough for so many of us, please, dig deep and contribute to enabling that vision as it moves forward.

Vanessa: Okay you don’t have to bake me the cake

Casper: (laughs)

Vanessa: That was really nice. I love you and I’m really excited about all the different things our listeners want us to do, these pilgrimages that will be all over the world and you and I will be going to some exciting places in the next few months

Casper: Yes, we’re going to be in the twin cities on April 8th, we’re really excited about that. Sunday evening, get your tickets harrypottersacredtext.com and then we’ll be in Pittsburgh in May and London in June.

Vanessa: I’m hoping that 2019 is the year we go to the moon

Casper: Oh my god (laughs)

Vanessa: So Casper, do you have a story for me other than one that makes me blush of happiness and humility.

Casper: (laughs) Well, the theme for this week’s episode is opportunity and it really made me think back to my High School time. You know, through most of my schooling as a middle school then a high school student, I was in schools that were academically very strong. I was extremely lucky, and so I was kind of surrounded by very smart and hardworking kids and so I didn’t really stand out in anything. You know, I was okay at English, I enjoyed History, I was okay at languages, I was not okay at most like sports and I got involved in some like music things but I didn’t really ever find where I shone, you know that feeling? I really wanted -

Vanessa: No

Casper: (laughs) I wanted to be really good at drama but like that didn’t work out either but, the moment when I realised that this was a place where I could offer something was when I joined the model United Nations group. So, I was 17 and this was kind of like a debating society but you got given a country to represent so for example, I might be given the country Kenya, and I had to argue why cultural goods that had been stolen during the colonial period should be returned to Kenya and it was a sort of a practice debate. And every year the kind of the top students from all these different schools would come together in The Hague in the Netherlands, and debate in an actual United Nations building, and it was very exciting, and it was the first moment when I was on the stage there, kind of arguing about cultural restoration of goods that belong to Kenya, that I thought oh, this is what I’m good at. And it wasn’t so much being on the stage, it was really about building alliances with other
nations and teaming up with India to take on Australia, you know, that kind of strategy stuff. And it made me realise like oh there’s something that I can do in this world where I really have something to offer, and I was so lucky at that age to have an opportunity to discover that. Years later when I was reading Malidoma Patrice Somé’s writing, a west African kind of wisdom teacher, and he says that the responsibility of the community is to help individuals identify their gifts and then to receive them, which I think is so beautiful and that’s what happened for me is that there was a teacher who ran this model United Nation’s club who helped me identify what I was good at, and then gave me a place which could receive those gifts. And it was so affirming, and I just think how many people who are lucky, get to have that experience but also so many people don’t get to have that experience, certainly not at that age, and so this theme of opportunity is so much about when do you get opportunities, what type of opportunities do you get and then also, what do you do with them, when they do come? So, I’m excited to explore that in this chapter with you.

Vanessa: It also is just making me think about how opportunity is in the eye of the beholder, right? The way I think about it is like that sometimes I’ll get an opportunity and I’m like yeah but that’s like a great deal on a Porsche, like I still can’t afford it, it doesn’t help me in any meaningful way, and I feel like that’s sort of Harry’s experience of being in the Triwizard Tournament right? Like it’s a great deal on a Porsche and he has nowhere to park it and doesn’t even have his licence. So, an opportunity for you came at the right time and in the right way, and how auspicious everything has to be in order for an opportunity to be that sort of true opportunity.

Casper: Yeah, that’s so true

Vanessa: So Casper, on this, our hundredth episode, you have the opportunity to go first

Casper: Before we start, do we know who’s winning the count, I feel like we’ve stopped checking at some point.

Vanessa: Yeah yeah yeah, but we have it, hold on I’ll let you know

Casper: Okay. On this, our hundredth episode, let it be known that the winner of the thirty second recaps so far is

Vanessa: Me

Casper: Nooo (laughs)

Vanessa: (laughs) I have 55.5% of the votes

Casper: Well it’s close

Vanessa: Is it? Because you have 44.5

Casper: (laughs)
Vanessa: I feel like

Casper: If we’re being generous

Vanessa: Yeah, here’s the thing, people don’t feel the need to vote as aggressively because they know that you’re never gonna give me my cake

Casper: Yeah, they’re like no cake, no votes

Vanessa: (laughs)

Casper: It’s the cake for votes scandal

Vanessa: (laughs) Cake gate

(both laugh)

Casper: Okay Vanessa I’m ready

Vanessa: Okay. On your mark, get set, recap!

Casper: Okay so this is the chapter where Harry does the first task and he has to get that golden egg from underneath the Hungarian Horntail dragon but first we see Fleur and she gets like flames and then oh no Cedric is first, no, whatever, and then erm, Krum and is like ooh but their scores and erm and Harry has learned how to do Accio, or “Axio”, I’m never quite sure, erm and the broom comes and Hermione has taught him and it’s great and they go for long walks around the park, no, around the lake, and that’s how they learn, no that’s when they talk about it. And then at the end Ron and Harry reunite and there’s not a dry tear in the house, I mean, dry eye.

*buzzer indicates time is up*

Casper: Wow that was a mess

(Casper laughing while Vanessa talks)

Vanessa: (laughs) That, for our hundredth episode was like the most Casper recap, it was like if you were mocking what a Casper recap sounds like, the only thing that was missing was an accent

(both continue laughing)

Casper: And Percy Weasley

Vanessa: Percy’s head boy. (humorous rushed voice of admiration) And er Percy is head boy.

Casper: (same voice) Percy is head boy (laughs)

Vanessa: (laughs) There we go. We did it all
Casper: Oh my God, okay so quite a lot to fill in there Vanessa

Vanessa: (laughs)

Casper: Alright here we go, 3, 2, 1, go!

Vanessa: So Harry is really magnanimous and he tells Cedric because he figures that all of the other champions already know, and he, and er Sirius was like about to tell Harry how to do this with a very simple spell but he doesn’t know what, so Moody pulls him in and like gives Harry all these hints and then Hermione helps him practice, I think its “Accio” actually, erm and when they go down and McGonagall, everybody is giving Harry advice and sort of giving him different advice and he’s like pacing in the tent waiting for his turn, and then it’s finally his turn, he uses the Firebolt and Ron comes in and Harry is like “I guess it’s okay I forgive you”

*buzzer indicates time is up*

Casper: (laughs) Strong. I feel like everyone knows what’s happened

Vanessa: (laughs) Yes

Casper: Right

Vanessa: So, here’s the thing, when we originally conceived of a 30 second recap, we wanted it to be this like low barriered entry of like even if you haven’t read the books, don’t worry you can still engage in sacred work with us

Casper: Right

Vanessa: We’ll tell you everything you need to know

Casper: It was like this serious thing like you know an opening of the door into the text

Vanessa: Right, and now, we’ve realised that we’re so bad at it, but I don’t think that makes it less valuable. I think that it’s a gesture toward that

Casper: That we are all amateurs in this text of life

Vanessa: (laughs) And the other thing that I do think that the 30 second recap has actually done is, because it’s so silly, is it’s given us permission to go deeper on other things because we know there will be a moment of joy

Casper: That’s right. So, Vanessa, let’s start in the chapter, you actually mention this in your 30 second recap, that Harry seeks out, you know, he thinks that Cedric is the only one who doesn’t know what the challenge is, that dragons are the first test. And so, he’s walking along the corridor on his way to Herbology and then suddenly sees Cedric, and he kind of hangs around and says “Hermione you go on ahead”, waits for Cedric to be a little bit more on his own and does a spell which breaks Cedric’s
new bag and ink falls everywhere and he walks over to Cedric and he says “Cedric the first challenge is dragons”. And Cedric at first is a little sceptical like why are you telling me this, what's going on, and Harry says “well it's only fair because everyone knows, I want us all to be on the same footing”, which I think is lovely. But what really struck me is that Harry has had this thought, but he's only acted on it once he saw Cedric, once he had the opportunity to do so. How do we create the opportunity for ourselves to do the right thing, I mean it's the same with are you going to fill your house with lots of like chips and sugary sweets and all these things which we know in the long term are not good for us and it's so much harder to resist temptation if you're surrounded by it, so it just made me start thinking like wow, what would it look like to design my life for serendipity or opportunity to be the kind of person that I want to be?

Vanessa: And something that you just made me think of is I wonder if the Hogwarts champion was a Slytherin or a Ravenclaw -

Casper: (gasps)

Vanessa: - If he would have done this, because Harry uses the word “fair”, he says it wouldn't have been fair, and fairness is one of the attributes of a Hufflepuff, who Cedric is, gives Harry the opportunity to be this bigger person, and so I wonder if just Cedric carrying that idea of fairness and loyalty, it brings that out in Harry as well

Casper: I love that. Yeah, and even the history they've had through the Quidditch matches, like there's something that bonds them

Vanessa: They've already had the spirit of fairness, between them, right?

Casper: Yeah

Vanessa: Harry has watched Cedric correct Amos and be like “I didn't really beat Harry”

Casper: (gasps) That's so important

Vanessa: Right? Like there is some relationship building that has already happened here

Casper: Let's say the other champion had been, you know, George Weasley, Harry would have told George within an instant, right, there's enough of a relational bond, they're both within Gryffindor, I know about dragons, you're going to know straight away, I am going to make an effort to tell you. If the other champion had been a sixth year Slytherin, I'm pretty sure Harry would have kept that to himself. But because Cedric falls in that in-between space, it's only when he has an opportunity that he tells that information. You know, that instinct is there and I think that instinct is in all of us. We have an instinct that we want fairness, that we want good things for everyone ultimately, but he's in this kind of second layer of relationship right, not the first intimate layer, not in the outer layer of like I don't like you but in that middle place where it's like oh I wish you well, but like, I'm not going to go out of my way to do good to you
Vanessa: Yeah and I really like your question of like how do we create more opportunities for ourselves, I think that that in part, is why I believe in art so much

Casper: Mmm

Vanessa: Right? Like I walk out of a movie that’s like about mother daughter relationships and I call my Mom, right? Like I ride those emotional moments and I’m wondering if there’s a way that we can structure like putting these opportunities for goodness into our lives more

Casper: Yeah, absolutely

Vanessa: You know, and I think we were talking about this a little bit last week and again in that book on Tyranny it talks about practicing eye contact and that is something that is within all of our ability and to be more thoughtful about that and engaging with strangers I think does create more opportunities to be a good person, so I do think that there are small practices that we can do, you know, something for my own life, Ariana and I made a commitment to journal a sentence a day in 2018 and I’ve been playing with different ways to set myself up for success on it, and the way that I have found is best is the first thing that I do when I get out of bed in the morning is I put the journal on my pillow and so, that night before I put my head on the pillow, I write a sentence about my day

Casper: I love that

Vanessa: We call them life hacks now, but I think that that demeans what they are, they are intentional practices, so that act means that the first thing I do in the morning is make a promise to myself that I’m going to reflect tonight

Casper: You know what this is making me think, that the moment that brings Ron and Harry together, hasn’t just happened. I feel like, certainly Hermione has wished it to happen, she’s being trying to speak to one and then speak to the other to influence them to rebuild this bridge between them. And someone recently said this to me that when you’re building a bridge across difference, you don’t start with the middle stone. You have to start with yourself, you have to examine your own biases, your own thought patterns and you build from your side out reaching towards the other and then when you’ve both done that work, that’s when the stone lands. Because we’ve had a few near misses, right? Ron came down the steps when Harry was speaking with Sirius, Harry has looked longingly across the classroom –

Vanessa: - and even made Ron laugh

Casper: Exactly

Vanessa: Yeah

Casper: So, there’s been that bridge building and so I feel like both Ron and Harry although they’re maybe too young to express it outwardly, have been slowly practicing getting ready for a moment so that when a traumatic, intense moment
arrived like him nearly being eaten and burnt by a dragon, the friendship can be rekindled. The other place where I see Harry really making a choice when he’s faced with an opportunity that could shape him, is when Ludo Bagman wants to help him. You know, he’s saying like oh you’re the youngest, you’re really the underdog here, let me help you. Let me tell you what’s going to come, let me tell you how to win this challenge. And Harry refuses his help, that may be a strategic choice because he’s like this dude is not a trustworthy advisor, fair point Harry. But, secondly there’s also something about his integrity of this fairness and I think we haven’t really talked enough about fairness for Harry throughout these books because it’s so fundamental to who he is and how he understands the world, it’s what fuels his fight for justice, but it shows up in everyday, small situations; his love for the underdog, his support for someone like Luna, because I feel like he knows that when things are fair, maybe people who are marginalised have the opportunity to give their gifts and the world is richer for it.

Vanessa: I mean he has 10 years of grown distaste for preferential treatment. Dudley always got the first helping of everything and Harry only gets less than after thoughts.

Casper: And you know what really strikes me there? He has seen that it doesn’t even serve Dudley in the end. Right, and this is something so important I learned only a few years ago that trying to overcome racism is not just about like giving people of colour the same opportunities as white people, but its releasing us all from this bondage of a stratified society on race where all of us are kept in boxes and kept out of relationship because of this weird, horrific structure that’s been in place for centuries.

Vanessa: Absolutely and you see that across all oppressions.

Casper: Yeah.

Vanessa: Right, you know, one of the things that is so upsetting about all these revelations around women who have been harassed in the workplace, so I’m just thinking of all the incredible creativity and contributions to society that were missed out on because those women were taken out of positions of power or weren’t allowed to thrive in their careers, I’m like what great ideas like we will never know what missed opportunities there are because of a lack of fairness, and I think Harry, he doesn’t want to be continuing that cycle of oppression in any ways. I think it gets back to that he’s practiced in that, and so when Ludo Bagman offers him something that could potentially save his life, right? He’s like no, I have practiced for this moment and my answer is no.

Casper: And you know what Harry does for like half of this chapter, is practice the summoning charm.

Vanessa: Yes.

Casper: Oh my God, like he’s literally practicing over and over again. Another question came up for me in this chapter around opportunity and the unexpected gifts it can give us. There’s this amazing moment where Harry is reflecting on the
challenge that’s coming up, this big test, he knows he’s going to get a dragon, it’s terrifying to him, and at this point he still doesn’t know how he’s going to solve this before he’s thought about the broom. And, he does a thought experiment and he’s like ugh, what if, you know, I run away? What if I leave Hogwarts? Where would I go? And he thinks about the Dursley’s. And there’s this amazing moment where he realises he’d rather stay at Hogwarts and face this challenge than go back to Privet Drive and live with the Dursley’s. So, he’s actually calmer, that’s what the text tells us, he feels more calm. And it made me reflect that when we feel like we have agency or we have a choice, even if we choose danger, it feels less frightening. Like, it’s a way of making us less anxious, less afraid, and so, you know if you’re forced into something, you feel helpless, you feel like you have no control and the fact that he chooses this dragon makes the fear more right sized. Does that make sense to you?

Vanessa: Completely. If I’m reading a book on my own and really loving it, and somebody says to me oh I’ll read it too and then we can talk about it, I suddenly don’t want to read the book

Casper: (laughs)

Vanessa: Right? It starts to feel like an assignment

Casper: Yes

Vanessa: And I’m like, they’re gonna judge me for how long I’m taking to read it or how quickly I read it, it becomes this assignment and it becomes something I do not want to do. For some reason that’s not true for Harry Potter and The Sacred Text

Casper: I was gonna say what’s different for us because we have the assignment every week

Vanessa: I think it’s because it’s so doable, it’s one chapter. It’s so doable

Casper: It’s right sized

Vanessa: Yes

Casper: Which I actually think is really important. Like we were talking earlier about if you’re given a Porsche and you can’t drive and you have nowhere to park it, right, it’s the wrong sized opportunity. And there’s something about having an opportunity that’s right sized that means you can act on it. And there’s ways to grow the ‘sizedness’ of the opportunity, right? If someone says oh let’s read this together, suddenly it becomes like this bigger thing and you’re like oh I didn’t have emotional space for that big thing

Vanessa: Yes! That’s exactly what it is. It’s like I love talking about books with people I don’t know if you know that about me, so it’s a lovely gesture and I don’t think I ever realised that I was like oh I didn’t have the emotional space for this to be a social thing and for there for be like a due date or a timeline associated with it. One of the best illustrations of this to me is in the book Fifty Shades of Grey… stay with me…so
what I think is so appealing about that book is the way that Christian, the guy in the books, gives gifts. So, what he does is he gives these really lavish gifts. Like, he gives her laptops, and I feel like often when people get something like a laptop it’s like well great, thanks, I can’t use this, thank you for giving me something totally out of my economic like, stratosphere. But what he does, is he sends the installation guy to set it up for her, sends in the Wi-Fi, gets the insurance for the computer

Casper: Woah

Vanessa: And it’s that, he makes the opportunities sort of holistic. Because often, you’ll be given an opportunity and you’re like thanks, what the heck am I supposed to do with that? I think that that is what is so sexy about him, is that he gives her a car, and he pre-pays her insurance, and it is set up on a trust that she will never have to pay insurance on this car. Do you know what it is? With every opportunity, there’s loss

Casper: Mmm

Vanessa: And so, if somebody gives you an opportunity but also, he anticipates the loss associated with the opportunity

Casper: (gasps)

Vanessa: It feels like a complete gift

Casper: Oh, I love that

Vanessa: Like giving someone an opportunity is a complicated thing

Casper: Yeah because it forces a choice

Vanessa: Which means sacrifice

Casper: Yeah

Vanessa: If you have to choose between two things it means that you are giving something up. I mean we see that right, like with the opportunity to host the Triwizard tournament, we had to get rid of Quidditch, right? Like, there’s just, I think it’s important to honour the loss

Casper: Yeah

Vanessa: Casper is there anywhere else that you saw this theme of opportunity in the text?

Casper: I do think it’s worth reflecting on how Harry manages to get to the golden egg. You know, he’s managed to get his broomstick, he’s flying around, he’s realising that he needs to get the dragon off the eggs in order to be able to get to the egg. So, what he does is he kind of tempts the dragon, he’s always just out of reach and he tempts her to fly into the air which gives him the opportunity to go down and
grab the egg and so he’s kind of made his own opportunity. And I wanted to reflect on that because on the one hand it really is true, right? Like, you know you’ve prepared well for the interview so you give yourself the opportunity to do well, but it’s easy to fall into this narrative of pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps which literally is physically impossible, like that metaphor is so apt because it is undoable. But there’s something about making your own opportunity which is both true and deceptive, and I want to think that through with you

Vanessa: Well I think we see that again with Cedric. Yes, it helps that Harry gives him this information about the dragon, but if Cedric hadn’t have done all this effort of like being a great Quidditch player, of being a great athlete, of putting his name in the Goblet, it takes both, it takes luck and hard work. And I think looking at one without the other; luck without hard work doesn’t pay off either, right? Because I think when great luck happens and there isn’t any meaning behind it, it can just be so much change so quickly that we don’t understand what has happened to us. Yeah, you can go to a million parties and be as open as you want to be and not find the love of your life, right? You have to show up, and you have to be lucky. I think it’s just always important to talk about both of those things whenever we talk about opportunity.

Casper: And like, who gets to go to the party in the first place, right?

Vanessa: Right, the privilege inherent with the invitation

Casper: Exactly, yeah

Vanessa: Yeah, it’s a lot easier to be lucky if you’re privileged

Casper: Well, that was really my experience of thinking about my secondary school is like I got to go to Russia for 5 days when I was 16, like I was given all of these privileges and all these opportunities and, sure you want to make the most of them but that should be something that’s available to everyone

Vanessa: But I even just think like, I’m someone with a tremendous amount of privilege and opportunity and sometimes because of depression I like can’t take advantage of an opportunity

Casper: Right

Vanessa: And so that’s just like an unlucky thing about my life that when I’m in it, it feels like it’s just a cycle

Casper: Mmm

Vanessa: Because you’re like, well now I’m not going to this thing, I feel guilty about not attending, and you can just spiral so it’s like a little bit of lack of luck can feel just like endless, and so it’s also about trying to interrupt those cycles when you can of like okay so this unlucky thing happened to me, but like, I think it’s important to forgive ourselves for letting certain opportunities go by
Vanessa: For saying, this was a Porsche when I didn’t have a driver’s licence. As somebody with depression, there are times that I have to let opportunities go by, and rather than spiral into being like ugh not only am I a depressive, but I’m somebody who gives up these amazing opportunities, it’s like, no, that was not an authentic opportunity to who I am, and it is important to let those go by because then they’re not opportunities, they’re liabilities.

Casper: Mmm, well that’s a great point, I mean this whole Goblet of Fire situation, sure, it ends up being an opportunity, but let’s wait until the end of the book and think about how that really turns out.

*music plays to introduce next section of the podcast*

Vanessa: Casper this is the last week for a little while that we’re going to do the Jewish spiritual practice of Pardes, and we are going to pick a sentence at random and then go through our four-step reading process. The sentence that I picked is:

*Cedric’s bag split.*

Casper: Oooh

Vanessa: Step one of Pardes is Peshat where we ask ourselves what is the intended meaning of the text?

Casper: So, at this point, Harry knows about the dragons, you know, he’s been walking around with Hermione to try and figure out what to do, they’re on their way to Herbology, and he sees Cedric in the corridor, and he casts a spell and the ink goes everywhere, and you know, he’s creating an opportunity to have a conversation.

Vanessa: Yes, job well done.

Casper: Ding!

Vanessa: Casper for President. Okay so step two of Pardes is Remez, where we’re going to imbue one word from the sentence with meaning from other places in the text. So, *Cedric’s bag split*, which word would you like to go with?

Casper: It has to be Cedric. I mean, this whole book is, in some ways, Cedric’s story. You know, we meet him, we learn more about his family, context about his father, about the way in which he is pressured to be in a certain way, and the way in which he refuses that pressure, and maintains his integrity. This whole book, they kind of build up to his moment of glory, and in that very last moment when he and Harry take the cup together, and the transportation to this hellish vision, where he’s killed. And I’m thinking of this image of the bag splitting, I’m thinking of his body splitting as he’s you know, broken by this killing curse. There’s something pure about him. Like,
the bag is new, Cedric is a new character in our lives but his values seem untarnished by the nastiness of what Harry’s already had to experience

Vanessa: Oh yeah, and I love – I feel like this is a short enough sentence that I’m just sort of going to give us permission to do the whole sentence –

Casper: - Yes

Vanessa: Because, I think Cedric, his bag has split even though it’s new and it’s split just by proximity to Harry, like he gets instrumentalised, and his things get instrumentalised in these like really unfortunate ways. I also thought about the word split because it feels Harry’s forehead scar is sort of like splitting him in half, right? It’s like a crack, and he’s sort of split between like being a little bit of Voldemort, in that he’s a horcrux, and that Voldemort splits himself in order to make a horcrux

Casper: (gasps) Right

Vanessa: Right? You’re splintering your soul. So, I do think that there is this image in this sentence of the purity of Cedric being broken

Casper: Yeah like he is un-split. There is something whole about Cedric

Vanessa: It reminds me of original sin, right? That there is this original sin of Voldemort, there’s this original hate. And as long as it’s out there, even in these micro ways, these like micro violence’s are going to have to happen. A bag is going to have to get ripped because Barty Crouch Jr is manipulating Harry by putting his name in the Goblet of Fire, so Harry has to get Cedric’s attention in order to do this thing, right? It’s like the way that evil penetrates on the most micro of levels

Casper: And at the same time, that there’s this original blessing. And by original blessing I mean, you know, not only Lily’s love and protection of Harry but also Harry is seeking out to share an opportunity so that there’s equality among competitors, that there is a desire for goodness, it’s the endless duality within ourselves; within the world that is revealed in these books time and time again. Harry helping Cedric in this moment, in fact enables Cedric to be joint winner which means he gets transported to meet Voldemort and faces his death

Vanessa: The third step of Pardes is Derash, where we ask ourselves what lesson we draw from this sentence, what lesson would you like to share from this sentence?

Casper: Would you read it one more time?

Vanessa: Of course. Cedric’s bag split

Casper: Well, I feel like this is a total message about consumerism and badly produced products. I get so frustrated when you buy something that’s new and then within two or three times of use like, it’s breaking. Or the fact that my phone, after only having it for a year and a half, is designed to start being faulty. How have we allowed ourselves to be in an economic system where this is the norm? Where we just expect things that should be able to work for decades. If you had a dishwasher
that was built in 1943, it still works today, right? That's the kind of quality that we used to build. And now we're in this weird designed obsolescence economy where because there's this need for buying more things from a corporate standpoint, we consumers are helpless in the face of it. So, like, here's a bag that with one little charm, splits. Magical goods should be more protected than this. Rant over. How about you Vanessa, do you find a Derash in this line, Cedric's bag split?

Vanessa: Yeah, I'm thinking about what it is we carry in our bags. I saw a photo exhibit once, that a guy would just go up to people on the street and sort of ask them to empty their bag and take a picture of everything in their bag. And Us Weekly are one of those magazines that has a fake, commodified version of this where they ask stars what's in their bag, and it's always like whatever product they're sponsoring. We would have blue apron in our bag at all times

Casper: (laughs)

Vanessa: (laughs) But, I'm just thinking about – I guess I sort of think belongings matter. The things that Cedric has in his bag, he might have written Cho's name on his notebook, or - right? Like these, you know, his allergy medicine – I don't know – these things that make up a person. I hold on to funny things from my Grandparents. I have my Grandma's old change purse, it has a huge hole in it, so it literally doesn't hold change anymore but I guess you know, we see that in religion too, relics and artefacts

Casper: And I'm just thinking that, if this bag was new, like, I know when I get a new notebook or a new coat, it's like a new beginning, right? Like, oh I get to embody this person that I want to be, and maybe that Cedric was like oh I am a Hogwarts champion

Vanessa: Yeah

Casper: Like, I am going to be someone who wins at life, and stands up in the world, and you know, here it is being ripped to shreds. Wow that ended really sadly, can you take us to the Sod?

Vanessa: Yes. So, as everybody knows, the Sod is where we sit with the sentence for a second and see if a secret emerges to us. So, I will read it one last time: Cedric's bag split

Casper: Harry didn't need to do this. He could have just shouted Hey Cedric! Can I have a moment alone with you please? And maybe Cedric was like well I'm late for class can we meet at lunch? Fine! I feel like Harry is resorting to breaking something because he's too afraid to visibly, publicly, want to talk to Cedric. This sentence which has Cedric's name in it is actually about Harry. How about you, do you have a Sod? Cedric's bag split

Vanessa: I was just talking about how wonderful certain belongings can be, but also, I was just thinking that maybe the reason that Cedric is like, I don't need your help guys, go ahead, is that it's very revealing right? It's suddenly all of his stuff is just out and he might have things to hide
Casper: Oh!

Vanessa: Not necessarily bad things, maybe, he has been hiding Cho’s name on his notebook, right? And so, this could have been a very embarrassing moment for Cedric

Casper: Which makes me think really differently about the newspaper coverage. Seeing the intimacy with which Rita Skeeter is writing about Harry’s life, maybe Cedric is like, oh I’m good

Vanessa: Thank goodness

Casper: Thank-you

Vanessa: Yeah

Casper: Yeah. This week’s voicemail comes from Hannah Burgess

Hannah: Hi Casper and Vanessa. My name is Hannah, and I’m a Slytherin from Australia. I love the Harry Potter books, and there is something I've always wondered. Harry Potter went to a muggle primary school, as he was living with Muggles. Which made me think, do wizard families go to muggle primary school’s? Where do you think the Weasley’s went to primary school? As a note of the Muggle world, we find out is quite small, like the fact that they couldn’t use a mobile phone, and the Weasley’s didn’t know any muggle fairy tales. I think if Wizarding children were sent to muggle primary schools, there would be a stronger connection and knowledge of muggles, that would be important for the Wizarding World. At Hogwarts, there is no mention of Maths or English classes. So, I just wanted to know your views on where do wizarding children go to primary school? I would love to hear from you, bye!

Vanessa: Hannah I think that that’s such a good question, and my answer would be that I think it is like as diverse as the Hogwarts students are, we know where one Hogwarts student goes to primary school, we know about Harry and that he goes to his local school, and I would imagine that it depends right? Like Hermione probably went to her local school, some kids are probably home schooled, I would think that it was very diverse, but the other thing that I want to pull out is that I do think it is disturbing that there isn’t any conversation about Maths or English in the Hogwarts universe. Who’s teaching them Jane Eyre and like do they know who Shakespeare is? These are real questions I have

Casper: Yeah, I am guessing, looking at Ron, probably not

Vanessa: (laughs)

Casper: Vanessa, it’s time for our blessings, and who are you offering your blessing to this week?
Vanessa: My blessing this week is going to Mamma Hungarian Horntail. I just think that this task is exploiting a mother’s love for a child.

Casper: Mmm

Vanessa: And torturing her for the protective instinct. And it is that same protective instinct that saved Harry’s life, that he is now exploiting in this way, and I know it’s not Harry’s fault but it just – this is everything terrible about the patriarchy to me in one thing, and the animal abuse, and it’s for the sake of sport, and I hate it so much, and it was hard to read. I hate it. So, a blessing for that Horntail who is in the middle of being tortured in plain sight of hundreds of people, who are cheering whilst its happening.

Casper: Great

Vanessa: Happy Hundredth episode. Casper, who would you like to bless?

Casper: There’s a funny moment in this chapter where the fake Moody is in his office and Harry notices all these dark detectors, these secrecy detectors that he has, you know, from his Auror days. And they’re all going off like crazy because of course Moody isn’t who he says he is. But Moody blames it on, you know, all the children nearby who are probably very naughty and this kind of thing and so I want to give a blessing to all of these secrecy sensors and lie detectors. Like, they are doing the best they can and even though they don’t really work and it’s only with hindsight that Harry realises what happens, I just want to offer a blessing to anyone who is doing the best they can even if it isn’t working out. Keep going.

*Coutro music starts *

Casper: You’ve been listening to Harry Potter and the Sacred Text

Vanessa: Our hundredth episode!

Casper: Woo!

Vanessa: Thanks for sticking with us guys!

Casper: You can contribute to our crowd funder where we’re on our way to both our goals of reaching 2000 donors and 75,000 dollars at harrypottersacredtext.com. Follow us on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and leave us a review on ITunes or send us a voicemail to harrypottersacredtext@gmail.com. Next week, we’ll read chapter 21, House Elf Liberation Front, through the theme of faith. This episode was produced by Ariana Nedelman, Vanessa Zoltan and me, Casper ter Kuile. Our music is by Ivan Pyzow and Nick Bohl, and we are part of the Panoply network, where you can find ours and other great shows on panoply.fm.

Vanessa: This week’s voicemail is thanks to Hannah Burgess, we would like to thank as always Rebecca and Charlie Ledley, Julia Argy and Stephanie Paulsell.

Casper: We will see you all next week everyone.
Vanessa: Bye!

*extras*

Vanessa: It's a gesture toward the low barri ered entry, it's like look!
Casper: Look at our standards!

Vanessa: (laughs)

Casper: You’re gonna be just fine

Vanessa: I meant –

Casper: (laughs)

Vanessa: Look with what it is to come. The doors are open (laughs)

Casper: (laughs) Because people are leaving because it's so bad

Vanessa: (laughs) I hope you brought food. But you’re welcome. Oh actually, can you go and order a pizza

Casper: (laughs) Because everything is burnt