Harry Potter and the Sacred Text 4.5 - Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes: Masculinity

Casper: Chapter Five: Weasleys’ Wizard Wheezes.

“Harry spun faster and faster, elbows tucked tightly to his sides, (intro music begins) blurred fire places flashing past him, until he started to feel sick and closed his eyes. Then, when at last he felt himself slowing down, he threw out his hands…”

Casper: I’m Casper ter Kuile

Vanessa: And I’m Vanessa Zoltan

Casper: And this is Harry Potter and the Sacred Text.

(Intro music fades)

Vanessa: Isn’t saying, “Weasleys’ (mumbles) hard?

Casper: It took me a couple of takes, Weasleys’ Wizard Wheezes.

Vanessa: I just think they should go through a marketing director.

Casper: I was going to say maybe they need a brand rethinking.

Vanessa: Yeah, my father gets his v’s and w’s confused…

Casper: Awww

Vanessa: So why he named me Vanessa is very unclear to us?

Casper: It’s like Wenessa.

Vanessa: He’s like, “Vhat? Wenessa? Vhat?” But only when he’s tired so I think w’s just like freak me out anyway because of that.

Casper: Maybe if we read it in a German accent like, (in German accent) “Veasleys’ Vizard Vheezes” that comes off the tongue much easier.

Vanessa: Or a Hungarian accent it’s not just German.

Casper: It’s true.

Vanessa: But do you know what doesn’t need a rebranding?
Casper: Could it be our live show?

Vanessa: Our live show in Atlanta, Georgia, that’s right.

Casper: We’re coming out to Park Avenue Baptist Church on Wednesday the 8th of November; the show starts at 7:30pm at Park Avenue Baptist Church. Tickets are at harrypottersacredtext.com and just click on the big orange button on the homepage.

Vanessa: Casper, we are going to be reading Chapter Six: The Portkey through the theme of truth. Truth feels like an important thing to be thinking about these days.

Casper: And because this is my first trip, and you haven’t been in a while, we’re really eager for some recommendations for peach pie. I hear it’s very good in Atlanta.

Vanessa: Yeah we already got some vegetarian restaurant recommendations.

Casper: Ugh I love our listeners.

Vanessa: I know, but we haven’t gotten a good peach pie rec yet.

Casper: Vanessa, as you know, we like to swap out the stories and we kind of plan the themes ahead of time. So when today’s theme, masculinity, landed with your turn to tell a story, I was very excited. What do you have for us today?

Vanessa: So I have a story that is hot off the presses. Just last week I was walking through Harvard Square and I was listening to a podcast and I was getting pretty worked up because it was about all of the Harvey Weinstein allegations, and they were analyzing the sexual harassment accusations and how because he was this leader in Hollywood, how it exemplifies an epidemic of assault against women; and I was walking in our neighborhood, sort of doing some errands and listening to this podcast and obviously very upset. And this man comes up to me and says, “Oh come on hun, it’s not all that bad. Give us a smile.” And usually, my M.O is just to keep walking and you ignore it, I don’t want to get into it with somebody—especially somebody who sucks so much that they would say something like that to me—like this is not how I want to spend my time, but I don’t know what happened to me in this moment, if it’s because of the podcast I was listening to, just because of my mood, whatever it was; but without thinking I just looked at this guy and I went, “Seriously? Seriously? You’re doing that today? It’s 2017.” And halfway through this rant I was like, “Oh he’s going to start screaming back, like this was a tactical error you have just made Vanessa. Like shut up.” So I stopped pretty quickly in my rant and he, instead of like yelling back or getting mad, just went, “Oh, oh I’m sorry.” And sort of backed away, which I found so surprising. And it was just amazing because in answering him I was scared of the worst kind of masculinity, the stereotype of like, “Oh I’m going to make him even more aggressive and this is going to become worse and contentious,” and
instead with just the slightest provocation, that sheen of masculinity completely fell away. And instead he just apologized. And while reading this chapter through the theme of masculinity, I think we see gender dynamics play out in a lot of different ways, but I think what this incident reminded me of is how essential gender is to all of our interactions on a daily basis and yet that it is a completely made up thing that if you just poke at it, it can disappear in a second. So I’m excited to talk to you about that this week Casper.

Casper: Wow well first of all, I’m so sorry that that happened in that instance, and I know it happens everyday, in so many different instances, to everywoman; and I love that there was this moment of fearlessness where you just…

Vanessa: Stupidity.

Casper: Well, you know maybe a hint of that, but also fearlessness and courage and strength to stand up to him. But I think it does open up all sorts of questions about how is something like masculinity constructed? How do people learn to behave in manly ways? What does it mean to lose that or to have lots of it? Because, as you say, there are so much at play, especially with these young men in the chapter, with the whole Weasley family there’s so much to explore.

Vanessa: Yeah like, is there a class where men all learn that they’re allowed to ask women to smile?

Casper: We all go to Kansas City, it actually happens in August.

Vanessa: Missouri or Kansas?

Casper: Well that’s what we don’t tell the women.

Vanessa: Okay.

Casper: Because they’ll find us.

Vanessa: It’s just fascinating how you hear the same lines from people, and I’m like, “do you subscribe to a newsletter? Why do you all say these things?” And I must scowl a lot, I get told to smile at least once a week.

Casper: I’m so interested to know, was this man on his own? Was he in a group?

Vanessa: He was by himself.

Casper: Because I wonder if because he was on his own he let himself back down in a way that when men are in groups there’s this whole competitive, saving-face thing; which is where I think men learn to say things like this is because they hear other men say it. I’m interested in thinking
about how masculinity depends on that group-norming behavior to make it first of all acceptable and secondly to make not doing it even more dangerous than doing it.

Vanessa: That’s fascinating, I completely agree that if he had been in a group and I had confronted him it would have gotten bad.

Casper: Vanessa before we dive into the theme conversation properly we should just remind everyone what happened and I believe you’re going first in our 30 Second Recap. Here we go, 3, 2, 1, go.

(Ticking noise)

Vanessa: So Harry and the rest of the Weasleys come back through the Floo Network and they arrive in the kitchen and Mr. Weasley is like, “Fred and George I can’t believe that you did that I’m so mad at you.” And Molly is like, “did what?” And everyone, and all of the men are like, “nothing,” and then everybody goes upstairs and Pigwidgeon has been named Pigwidgeon and I think that’s really cute. And we meet Bill and Charlie and they’re like the sexy Weasleys and why don’t we get to hang out with them more? And they all have a big fancy dinner and Harry is just like really happy to be with the Weasleys.

(Buzzing noise—116 words in 30 seconds)

Casper: That was fabulous.

Vanessa: Thank you.

Casper: That was very strong.

Vanessa: Thank you. I feel like I’ve modeled a good way for you and so I hope that I’ve inspired you.

Casper: Well I certainly will be touching on the most important part of the chapter.

Vanessa: Ooo well I’m very excited about that, Casper. 3, 2, 1.

(Ticking noise)

Casper: Mr. Crouch is the head of Department at the… the Ministry of Magic and he’s got a new intern, or a low-level employee named Percy Weasley. And Percy is very involved: he’s keen, he’s eager, and Mr. Crouch has given him a specific project around the regulations around the thickness of the bottoms of cauldrons because the British market is being flooded by imports and Percy is really working on this very important report, but he’s disturbed by his brothers and he gets very annoyed and he’s like, “some people have real work to do.”
Casper: And that’s all there is.

Vanessa: That is the entire chapter. That was uncanny.

Casper: I mean I think it is important to mention Mr. Crouch because the World Cup is coming up and everyone is very excited about that.

Vanessa: Yes and another event.

Casper: Which is highly secret.

Vanessa: And I can’t tell you about it because I’m Percy.

Casper: And I love that he’s trying to get everyone interested, and no one is.

Vanessa: This is my Percy impression (in a deep voice), “I’m Percy.” What’s yours?

Casper: (in a higher voice) “Em, hello, I’m Percy Weasley.”

Vanessa: So Casper, where did you see masculinity performed, let’s say, in this chapter?

Casper: I mean, I think we have to start with the Weasley family. It’s a big family of mostly boys, and Ginny of course, so it really struck the different ways in which the different boys inhabit masculinity but also kind of try to signal masculinity in different ways. And we meet Charlie and Bill for the first time, so it’s a very exciting moment, and both of them are very traditional exhibitors of masculinity. Bill is very strong, physically, he works for Gringotts, we know that he goes to these various destinations and has to travel and be an adventurer and kind of, no doubt, depends on his own skill and strength. And Charlie works with dragons so he’s got this burn and he’s very cool and again just his physical strength is really clear. Fred and George, on the other hand, are much more about their social power and actually their business acumen, right? We’re going to see them become very successful entrepreneurs so we see them fulfill this very breadwinner, like bootstrapping kind of male ideal.

Vanessa: Through humor too…

Casper: Through humor…

Vanessa: And like demeaning…
Casper: Yeah, making fun of others, especially not as strong men, and we see that in the last chapter with Dudley.

Vanessa: And in this chapter with Percy.

Casper: Exactly and so I think that Percy is really interesting, because Percy isn’t cool, isn’t socially very adept, perhaps, doesn’t fulfill the same things that the other brothers do; but he’s still reaching to have power in some way. But for him it’s about political power, so he’s reaching for the kind of status and positional power that he would get in the ministry. Which really leaves the question for me about Ron, how is Ron signaling his masculinity? Because he plays second fiddle to Harry, but of course he gets status by being associated with Harry. It left me with the question of: how is Ron engaging his masculinity? Do we see that change in these first four books? Is there more that’s going to come?

Vanessa: Yeah, I mean I think it’s a great questions, I think that there’s certainly more that is going to come, right? As he really, I think starting in this book, rebels against Harry in some big ways. Thinks about putting his name in for the Goblet of Fire, his competitiveness with Krum. One of the ways that I see him signaling his masculinity in a way that is very recognizable to me, and let’s just say upfront these are broad brush strokes we are painting in, but the way that he’s a sports fan: his walls are plastered with posters, and it’s this conversation about, “well Bulgaria has Krum but Ireland is going to win,” and this fandom can often be a way of exhibiting masculinity. Obviously a lot of women are sports fans, but I still think that it is very hard to have a fan conversation about sports and not have it be at least a little bit about gender, even when women are fans.

Casper: Well and the other way around too, where it's very hard to be a man and not be able to have fan conversation about sports.

Vanessa: Yeah and I do think it’s one of the plus sides about being a woman is that you’re protected from the assumption that you follow sports. That is a whole series of boring conversation that I am just protected from. And it's a social status, right? Like I actually do like baseball, so the moment that I can talk sports with certain men, it elevates you in their eyes immediately if you’re a woman who can talk sports. Whereas, right, with a man it's just an assumption that you have to be, where it’s like these bonus points for a woman if you’re able to talk sports. And we see that later in these books, like everybody loves that Ginny can be rough and tumble with the boys and that’s an asset. It’s an asset to be able to perform the right amount of masculinity as a woman.

Casper: But you also have to have the flip side, right? Hermione might punch Draco in the face but we celebrate her in this weird way when she emerge later in this book as this vision of beauty at the Yule Ball. And I think for women, if they only inhabit that bonus point masculinity piece, without also being able to be the beautiful princess, actually it becomes a negative.
Vanessa: Oh absolutely, you have to perform the exact amount of masculinity as a woman: too much is bad, and too little you’re like a precious princess, right? It’s sort of like a video game, like there are ways to collect coins and at a certain point, this coin becomes poisonous.

Casper: Yeah I mean that poisonous word is so right on, because especially in gay culture there’s this whole to be masked, to be masculine; to be straight acting is this very desirable thing. I mean, of course, what we desire erotically can be a wonderful, playful area in our lives; and when that bleeds into the rest of our lives and we start to ostracize men who maybe perform a lot of femininity, there’s something very anti-trans in there, there’s something very anti-woman in there. And you see that in gay culture, it can be very ostracizing to women, and lesbian women especially, there’s a very internalized homophobia in some of the ways in which gay men desire one another, like we get trapped in these constructs.

Vanessa: Yeah and to your point earlier, it is oppressive for everyone, right? This idea of the ideal masculine man, I think a moment when we see Arthur, who in a lot of ways I think Arthur is a real paragon of having transcending things like this, right? Like he seems like a truly wise, caring person who like doesn’t seem trapped by a lot of...he’s not wealth seeking, he’s not power seeking, he wants to be a good dad and a good citizen.

Casper: And he likes electric plugs.

Vanessa: He likes plugs, like great, you know he’s got a hobby. But I see him as siding with the boys against his wife in a moment in this chapter. They emerge out of the fireplace and Fred and George have just done something terrible: they have tormented a chubby child and they did something bad for Muggle-Wizard relations and what if they had gone back before Dudley had eaten the candy and Arthur hadn’t been there to fix Dudley’s tongue? So this is a really bad thing that they have done with dire consequences under the guise of silly pranking. And then when Molly comes into the room Arthur protects Fred and George from Molly, was not planning on telling Molly, he uses Molly as a threat mechanism of like...

Casper: “Just wait until I tell your mother,” kind of thing.

Vanessa: Yeah and his masculinity seems to be at play with wanting to side with the boys, and wanting to protect, on some level, these were just boys having fun and boys being boys. But I think everybody is losing by not sitting down and talking to Fred and George: I think Molly is losing out, I think that Arthur is losing out, and I think that Fred and George are. And this family needs to have a conversation about Fred and George’s actual aspirations. Molly is saying some really awful things about their lack of ambition and their lack of academic acumen and I think that gender and masculinity is part of that. I think that a totally different conversation would be happening if it was a young girl acting out in this way.

Casper: I completely agree, there’s two things in there that I want to unpack more which is: I think you point to that primal, maybe Oedipal, conflict between father and sons in the sense that
Arthur wants to signal that he’s still “down” right? He gets the joke, like “hahaha,” if not he’s going to be ostracized by the boys and that signals ultimately his replacement by them in a way that is threatening to his identity as a man. And secondly what you were saying about Arthur signals that he’s going to tell Molly but isn’t actually going to pass on the information; I feel like Molly who then comes in and actually deals with the situation, is the only one dealing with the emotional labor of the parenting and Arthur kind of just sits down again and gets back to his sausages, or something. And that’s a pattern that we’ve seen a couple of times within that household as well as everywhere else, I mean think of Hermione being stuck between Ron and Harry when they’re not talking to each other, like we see that theme over and over again.

Vanessa: Yeah and why isn’t Molly invited to the World Cup? She’s left behind doing the physical labor of parenting as well, right? She’s getting the books and supplies, not just for her own children, but also for Hermione and Harry. She’s like very sweet, but everybody else is just going on vacation.

Casper: Oh but Vanessa, she’s more like you she’s like, “oh thank god I don’t have to have those conversations.”

Vanessa: Sure thank god I don’t have those conversations but that doesn’t mean that I want to be doing chores while you all are off having fun. Like I don’t want to be at the sporting game watching the exploitation of male bodies for the benefit of capitalism, sure that is true that I do not find that enjoyable, but I would like to be in my bath with my lavender salts. I don’t want to be running around town schlepping.

Casper: Yeah I totally get it. I want to return to Charlie and Bill because the physical descriptions are so stark, and we’ve explored that from the very first chapter when we were hearing about Petunia’s long neck and Vernon’s short neck and here we hear that Charlie has callouses, he has these strong hands and muscly arms. And that Bill is cool and he’s tall, but Bill also has long hair and an earring, right? Two things that would traditionally signify femininity in some way, and yet Bill is able to invert that and play with gender in that way that it actually makes him all the more masculine, and I don’t know I just want that fascinating, how the rules that we think we have for things like gender can be played with in a way that are surprising, but then also reaffirm the original boundaries. Does that make sense?

Vanessa: Right so it’s saying that, “I’m so masculine that I can perform a little bit of femininity, that is how much of a man I am.”

Casper: Exactly, it’s like Halloween when straight men do drag in a way that doesn’t risk their masculinity in any way. In fact, they’re such a man to do it right? Like he has the balls to do it.

Vanessa: Right. So Mrs. Weasley says to Bill, “I wish you’d let me give your hair a trim.” And Ginny says, “I like it, you’re so old-fashioned mum.” And then she puts it in context and is like, “anyway it’s no where near as long as Professor Dumbledore’s,” it’s just interesting to me that
it’s the only girl in the family that comes to his defense. I can’t imagine Fred and George being like “lay off about his hair mom.”

Casper: But I also wonder if she sees her own liberation wound up in him having more freedom, because if Bill is allowed to present femininity in some way, she’s going to be able to present more masculinity. And Ginny’s a badass right? She’s a fighter and I think she feels constrained by the victim role that she’s been put in since book two and maybe Bill being different allows her to be different.

Vanessa: I love that. And I love the idea of younger children intentionally exploiting their older siblings to make room for themselves, right?

Casper: Totally.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Casper: And I think this is a generational thing, I mean I think that the way that, whether it’s younger kids coming out earlier, whether it’s younger kids transitioning or just blurring the lines of gender identities; I feel like young people consistently are the ones at the front edge of crying out against the hurtful ideas of gender where we ask the first thing when a baby is born, “is it a boy or a girl?” Who cares? Why is that the question? It’s absurd, it’s absolutely absurd. We’re basically asking: what genetalia does the baby have? Like why? So let’s free ourselves from that, and I think young people are doing that better than anyone.

Vanessa: So Casper before we end this theme conversation, I’m just curious if you see something gendered around the fact that nobody is going to look for Bertha Jorkins? I’m wondering if Ludo Bagman is signaling some sort of masculinity of like, “sink or swim; people either find their way back or they don’t.” And I’m curious if she were a man if he would have sent people out to look for her. You know there was a conversation last summer about why it is that when blond, white women go missing, it becomes national news but when women of color go missing you can just never hear about it. And I think that, again, its about assumptions of, “well culturally this makes sense for this kind of person to disappear,” and how untrue that is, and how incredibly bigoted and dangerous and violent those racial and gendered assumptions are. Cultural assumptions that we make about each other based on completely arbitrary things like race and gender have such catastrophic impact. And again, I just really think that if we had been looking for Bertha Jorkins faster, it is entirely possible that Voldemort would not have been able to rise again. If we were to question our own assumptions as a society when we look away from certain crimes against certain people, I think we would be able to interrupt cycles that impact all of us so much earlier. And we should be doing all of these things for their own sakes, we should be looking for Bertha to look for Bertha, not because it also impacts men, we should be caring about women of color disappearing because they are humans, not because it impacts white people—but the fact that we don’t see our fates as intrinsically linked to one another even
when people look different from us, I feel like is being demonstrated in this moment of Ludo Bagman just being like, “oh Bertha.”

(Sacred Reading theme music plays)

Casper: It’s time for our spiritual practice and for the last time in a little while we’re doing Lectio Divina. Vanessa I’m going to ask you to find a random piece of text from chapter five, what can you find?

Vanessa: This is a long and not very good sentence.

Casper: Well, let’s read it anyway.

Vanessa: Okay:

Harry and Ron edged out of the kitchen, and they, Hermione, and Ginny set off along the narrow hallway and up the rickety staircase that zigzagged through the house to the upper stories.

Casper: So step one, narratively, where are we in the text? We’re in the Burrow.

Vanessa: Yes, we just arrived back in the Burrow and Arthur is yelling at Fred and George for having given Dudley a toffee, and Molly comes in and is like, “what are you talking about?” And Hermione is like, “hey Ginny, Harry, Ron let’s like all go unpack Harry’s bag together.”

Casper: And Ron’s like, “I don’t have any packing.”

Vanessa: And Hermione’s like, “no let’s go.” And George and Fred are like, “we’ll come too,” and Molly’s like, “no you won’t.” And so this is Harry and Ron are edging out of the kitchen, they’re getting out of the way and it’s sort of describing the way the Burrow is set up: that it’s a long hallway, and that it’s a rickety staircase that zigzags, so it’s describing the Burrow.

Casper: So thinking about step two, allegorically, we’re looking for the stories or symbols or images that we’re reminded of in his passage. I’ll read it out for us again:

Harry and Ron edged out of the kitchen, and they, Hermione, and Ginny set off along the narrow hallway and up the rickety staircase that zigzagged through the house to the upper stories.

Vanessa: I love the upper stories because obviously they’re talking about the stories of a house, but it’s also all of the different stories of a house, like all of the different things that happen in a house. You know when you go to your childhood home or to a place that has significance for you, you walk into a certain room and all of these memories and stories come back to you. It
makes me wonder if the Burrow has to be shaped in this way because it holds so many stories. So many people have been raised here and so many childhoods and friends and the Order of the Phoenix and so much has happened here that is almost has to be zigzagged in order to contain everything. I love the idea that this house has changed shape around the humanness that has taken place within its walls.

Casper: I love that, and I was really thinking about that zigzagged word as well: I was thinking in sailing, often to get across a piece of water you can’t just go in a straight line, it depends so much on where the wind is coming from. So if you’re sailing and the wind isn’t coming at the right angel, you have to kind of zigzag your way to your target, and I feel like that is kind of like life, right? Like even if you know where you’re going, it isn’t always clear how you can get there and you have to go from place to place to find your way there. And I feel like it’s definitely true for Harry and going to the Burrow is not necessarily where he wants to end up, but this is such an important place to go from Privet Drive and so I guess it’s like what you’re saying with the stories actually shaping the house, that the places that we go to also shape us. And that we might not always know exactly why we’re going to these places, there’s just, the wind is taking us there and then it takes us somewhere else and slowly but surely we get closer to our destination.

Vanessa: I thought the other day about how I’ve lived in Harvard Yard for over five years now, and thanks to my iPhone, I know that I walk about six or seven miles a day; and how many hundreds of miles I have walked without ever going anywhere, right? I’m still right in the middle of the yard, I have not made it very far, I’ve just zigzagged, and I’ve just ping-ponged along. How many miles have I traversed just walked from the yard to the divinity school and back? But a whole life has happened, so much has happened to me in such a teeny, tiny amount of space.

Casper: That was beautiful, Vanessa, because you kind of took us into step three where we really want to think about our own experience. Like what reflections do we have from our own life that communicates with this passage? So do you want to read it one more time?

Vanessa: Yes, thank you.

Harry and Ron edged out of the kitchen, and they, Hermione, and Ginny setoff along the narrow hallway and up the rickety staircase that zigzagged through the house to the upper stories.

Casper: Oh my god okay, so the thing that I’m thinking of is when we were small, as kids and we’d have friends over, it was so easy to transform our house into a magical place. And that the hallway suddenly became an ocean and that the couch became a boat and we had to survive the storm. And maybe that’s what happening here: that Burrow house is actually totally fine, right? Like it’s solid, it’s stable; but the kids are in this moment of trepidation and the parents are angry and they’re like a little bit afraid and so they’re having to tip toe out, they’re edging out of the room and going on the rickety staircase in the narrow hall. Especially when you’re young
and your imagination is so free, I’m imagining that maybe they’re doing the same thing where that journey up two flights of stairs suddenly becomes this great adventure.

Vanessa: I made the big mistake of going back to my elementary school and oh my god, you know, as a first and second grader you were on a different part of campus than the third and fourth graders: and when I was six it actually was on the other side of the world. Turns out it was like, across the yard. Like going back as an adult to places that you felt were magical as a child, it’s hysterical.

Casper: Maybe that’s why there isn’t a parents’ weekend at Hogwarts because they’re like, “don’t let the parents come back because actually this building is not that special.” You’re like, “oh the stairs don’t actually move, it’s just that I got lost.” So that brings us to step four, which is really thinking about what is the text inviting us to do? And traditionally we think about what is god asking us to do through this passage and what is the text inviting us to do. Would you read it one more time for us Vanessa?

Vanessa: Happily:

Harry and Ron edged out of the kitchen, and they, Hermione, and Ginny set off along the narrow hallway and up the rickety staircase that zigzagged through the house to the upper stories.

Vanessa: So what I feel called to do is, I feel like I have a couple big projects that I’m working on right now that I know what I want the finish project to look like, but I have a really hard time trusting that all my zigzagging will get me there. And I feel called to just see the tasks that I put in front of myself and not get too worried about all of the zigzagging, especially disappointments can feel like you’ve gone back so many steps. And just to remember that zigzagging is part of the strategy. From your sailing metaphor, that is often how you have to get from Point A to Point B; those aren’t disappointments it’s just part of the process.

Casper: I have always despised the idea of “two steps forward, one step back,” it’s just zigzagging is such a better metaphor. You’re right, I love that and you’re just taking a step to the side in order to go forward now. That’s great.

Vanessa: And I feel like my brain is so scattered that even meetings that feel useless or deadlines that I miss or whatever it is, I feel like it probably has worked on my brain and helped me learn anyway. And so to stop thinking of my life this linear path, there isn’t really wasted time, there’s just time.

Casper: This is maybe too abstract Vanessa but I have a little niece, and she is the most beautiful, wonderful little niece in the whole world, and I just hope that as she grows up and one day hopefully if I have kids; I hope that I have a house or a place where kids can go on wild, crazy adventures. Maybe that’s not an action but…
Vanessa: I think the action is maybe not worrying about a mess as an adult…

Casper: Yeah.

Vanessa: And just letting a house be that for a kid.

Casper: For a kid, especially, and to let it be a place of adventure and discovery and stories. If we can do that, then we’re doing our jobs as adults I think.

Vanessa: I completely agree. This week’s voicemail is from Veronica Barchak.

(Beep)

Veronica: Hi Ariana, Casper, Vanessa; greetings from Poland! I started to listen to your podcast while I was in Belgium with my Belgische friend so we all fans all over Europe, so maybe you should come—just a thought. And I just listened to new chapter of Goblet of Fire the first chapter, which was in time for my birthday, so thank you, and it was through the theme of instinct. And I made this connection between Frank and Harry that Frank wakes up in the middle of the night because his leg hurts and it’s Voldemort and who do we know that something hurts when Voldemort is near? Well Harry, so they both have the instinct in them; I know it’s farfetched but his leg is probably hurting because of some kind of wound that you got from war. Harry got his scar from Voldemort trying to kill him, but also the thing is that you know he has this reaction like fight or flight and they are going to fight. Instinct for them is just like fighting. And for me scars aren’t visible and I have one of these scars of being a child of an alcoholic. Which of course isn’t visible but it causes a lot of pain and is getting worse with time, but my instinct is to always run away, to flight whenever I can, and then I’m thinking that maybe I should be more like Harry to fight it. Of course, we know that didn’t turn out well for Frank but he kept his principals. So it was just something that I wanted to share with you, thank you very much for your work it’s just a sunshine in my day. And I hope you do more and even more often because it would be awesome. Thank you guys. Bye!

Vanessa: Let’s go in order of importance: Happy Birthday, we would love to come to Europe, you’re amazing, we gasped when we collectively listened to your comparison of Harry’s scar and Frank’s leg—I think that’s so interesting.

Casper: I love that.

Vanessa: I do want to say that I do think that fight or flight is a false dichotomy. And I think that we often judge ourselves for those instincts when I actually think the whole point of the podcast is exactly what you’re doing right now: we are trying to go through this process in order to train ourselves to pick our values so that when we are put in a tough situation, we can pick our action rather than let our gut evolutionary instinct take over. We’re trying to train ourselves, like we
talked about in our very first episode, to commit ourselves to things like hospitality so that when something scary happens, we’ve trained ourselves in our values. And it sounds like that is what you’re doing, but I just think that it’s really important to not judge ourselves in that process. We should be picking our values and then trying our best to live up to them and knowing that it’s a process and that we’re just always going to try.

Casper: Thank you so much Veronica and you allow me to say my one word of Polish, “czesc” which means, “hi.”

Vanessa: Casper, now we get the chance to bless a character from this chapter, Percy is in the chapter so do you want to go ahead and bless Percy?

Casper: Listen, he is working really hard, and we can tease him about it and we can make fun of him; but if you’re trying to do your job and other people are making noise around you just on purpose just to distract you or annoy you—or they don’t respect what you’re doing—it’s so frustrating. So I’m getting very defensive of Percy here, but my blessing is for Percy or anyone who feels like they have to work in conditions that are not only suboptimal, but purposefully annoying. Vanessa how about you?

Vanessa: I want to bless our dear Ginny because I think she has the funniest line in this whole chapter, which is: the four musketeers are all upstairs and they’re talking about Fred and George’s joke company and how they’ve been trying to make all these things and how there have always been explosions in their room and Ginny says, “I just thought they liked the noise.” And I just think it’s hysterical how little esteem she hold her brothers in, like you know they are going to become gabillionaries doing this, and there’s just something about family where no matter how impressive they are they like just like loud noises. And so I just love seeing Fred and George through Ginny’s point of view where they’re just some dumb doofuses. So a blessing for sisters, basically.

(Outro Music Begins)

Casper: You’ve been listening to *Harry Potter and the Sacred Text*. Follow us on Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, and Facebook and leave us a review on iTunes. We’d love to hear your two-minute voicemail sent to harrypottersacredtext@gmail.com. Next week we’ll be reading The Portkey through the theme of acceptance. This episode was produced by Arianna Nedelman, me, Casper ter Kuile, and Vanessa Zolta. Our music is by Ivan Pyzow and Nick Bohl. And we are part of the Panoply Network. You can find ours and other great shows on panoply.fm.

Vanessa: This week’s voicemail was thanks to Vanessa Barchak. Our social media manager is Harshi Hettige. We’d like to thank, as always, Rebecca and Charlie Ledley, and Stephanie Paulsel. Thanks and we’ll talk to you next week.
Casper: Bye

(Outro Music Ends)

Casper: What’s your Bill impression? Just like (in southern accent) “Hey, I'm Bill Weasley.”

Vanessa: Yeah Bill Weasley's from Texas.

Casper: “I got my cowboy boots.”

Vanessa: What is my Bill impression? I feel like Bill Weasley would be played by a young Hugh Jackman.

Casper: Oh my god, with red hair.

Vanessa: Yeah I can’t…

Casper: (in Australian accent) I mean he’s Australian yeah, “I'm Bill Weasley and I sing and dance.”

Vanessa: Yes, oh my god, it just got hot in here right?

Casper: Wolverine Weasley.

Vanessa: Or Wolverine Veasley.

Casper: Wolverine Veasley (laughter)