
Vanessa: Hello, everybody. This is Vanessa-

Casper: And Casper!

Vanessa: We just got back from Minneapolis - we’re actually walking through Boston Logan right now. It’s just very, very quiet.

*(Casper makes whooshing wind sounds)*

Vanessa: Oh, our sound effects are amazing. We had so much fun in Minneapolis and today is going to be the first time that we are sharing one of our live shows, not just as a bonus episode, but as one of the actual chapters of one of the books that we’re going through. We’re going to talk about *Chapter 26: The Second Task* through the theme of Loyalty.

Casper: Mmm so you will be just as if you were in the audience live! In the Basilica of St Mary, the oldest Catholic Basilica in the whole of America, right here in Minneapolis/there.

Vanessa: Cause we’re in Boston Logan right now.

Casper: That’s right!

Vanessa: Because it was a live show, you’re going to hear some edits cause we have the audience turn to each other, so we’re going to edit out the bits where they’re just chatting. And you’re also going to hear some laughter that you may not understand because Ariana put together a hilarious slideshow, for example in my opening story. Also we just want to offer a little bit of a warning; when we are live, we’re unedited, and so there’s a little more… adultish content. I would say that our live shows are more PG-13 than PG. And so if you are listening with a young listener, you might want to pre-listen to the episode and make sure it’s appropriate for them. I don’t think we cross any big lines, but there’s a little bit more banter than usual.

Casper: Yes, and any swearing is bleeped out, so there won’t be any words that might be particularly shocking, but there are some more adult themes explored in our conversation.

Vanessa: For those youngsters who decide to skip this episode, we have a little offering for you until we talk to you next week. Casper, what shall we be hearing?

Casper: *The Three Little Pigs* by Roald Dahl. “The animal I really dig above all others is the pig. Pigs are noble, pigs are clever, pigs are courteous. However, now and then to break this rule, one needs a pig who is a fool. What for example would you say if strolling through the woods one day, right there in front of you, you saw a pig who’d built his house of straw? The wolf who saw it licked his lips and said, “that pig has had it’s chips. Little pig, little pig, let me come in.”
"No, no by the hairs on my chiny-chin-chin!" "Then I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in!" The little pig began to pray, but Wolfie blew his house away. He shouted, "bacon, pork, and ham! Oh what a lucky wolf I am." And though he ate the pig quite fast, he carefully kept the tail til last. Wolf wandered on a trifle bloated. Surprise, surprise, for soon he noted another little house for pigs. And this one had been built of twigs. "Little pig, little pig, let me come in." "No, no by the hairs of my chiny-chin-chin!" "Then I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in!" The wolf said. "Okay here we go," and began to blow and blow. The little pig began to squeal. He cried, "oh Wolf, you've had one meal! Why can't we talk and make a deal?" The wolf replied, "not on your nelly," and soon the pig was in his belly. (Vanessa giggles) "Two juicy little pigs," Wolf cried, "but still I'm not quite satisfied. I know how full my tummy is bulging, but oh how I adore indulging." So creeping quietly as a mouse, the wolf approached another house. A house which also had inside a little pig trying to hide. "You'll not get me," the piggy cried. "I'll blow you down," the wolf replied. "You'll need," Pig said, "a lot of puff. And I don't think you'll have enough." Wolf huffed and puffed and blew and blew. The house stayed up as good as new. "If I can't blow it down," Wolf said, "I'll have to blow it up instead. I'll come back in the dead of night, and blow it up with dynamite!" Pig cried, "you brute! I might have known." Then picking up the telephone, he dialed as quickly as he could the number of Red Riding Hood. "Hello," she said. "Who's speaking? Who? Oh, hello, Piggy, how do you do?" Pig cried, "I need your help, Miss Hood! Oh, help me please, do you think you could?" "I'll try, of course," Miss Hood replied. "What's on your mind?" "A wolf," Pig cried. "I know you've dealt with wolves before, and now I've got one at my door." "My darling pig," she said. "My sweet, that's something really up my street. I've just begun to wash my hair, but when it's dry I'll be right there." A short while later through the wood came striding brave Miss Riding Hood. The wolf stood there, his eyes ablaze, and yellowish like mayonnaise, his teeth were sharp, his gums were raw, and spit was dripping from his jaw. Once more, the maiden's eyelid flickers. She draws the pistol from her knickers. Once more she hits the vital spot and kills him with a single shot! Pig, peeping through the window stood and yelled, "well done, Miss Riding Hood!" Ah Piglet, you must never trust young ladies from the upper crust. For now Miss Riding Hood, one notes, not only has two wolfskin coats. But when she goes from place to place, she has a pigskin traveling case."

Vanessa: Ahhhhh!

(Casper laughs)

Vanessa: Whether or not you decide to listen to this Minneapolis live show, we hope that you enjoyed Casper's twisted idea of what is appropriate for children.

Casper: (Laughs) Enjoy!

(Live intro music begins)

(Audience cheers and claps)
Casper: *Chapter 26: The Second Task.* “You said you’d already worked out that egg clue!” said Hermione indignantly. “Keep your voice down!” said Harry crossly. “I just need to - sort of fine-tune it, all right?” He, Ron, and Hermione were sitting at the very back of the Charms class with a table to themselves. They were supposed to be practicing the opposite of the Summoning Charm today - The Banishing Charm.” I’m Casper ter Kuile.

Vanessa: And I’m Vanessa Zoltan.

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

Vanessa and Casper: The live show!

*(Audience cheers, intro music ends)*

Vanessa: Woo!

Casper: Hi, everyone!

Vanessa: Hello!

Casper: Hi! Hi, Twin Cities!

*(Audience cheering and clapping)*

Vanessa: Before we jump in, we want to make a formal introduction. She has a face, she has a voice, she has hands, she has a book.

Vanessa and Casper: It’s Ariana Nedelman!

*(Audience cheers)*

Vanessa: You will have a newfound appreciation for her tonight as you hear us talk without being edited and will be like, “wow, she’s really good at what she does.” And Ariana is also doing music for us for the first time ever tonight.

Casper: Ooo.

Vanessa: So, behold, Ariana the hipster.

Casper: And it’s a very special day, not only cause it’s a live show, but for some birthdays.

Vanessa: Yes, so we heard from Shannon that it is Anna Rudaman’s birthday? Anna?

Casper: Where is Anna?
Vanessa: Anna?

Casper: Yes!

(Audience cheers)

Vanessa: Anna, happy birthday!

Casper: Yes, happy birthday, Anna!

Vanessa: And we have also heard that it is Erica Halverson’s birthday?

Casper: Erica!

Vanessa: Erica?

Casper: From Wisconsin. Yes!

(Audience claps)

Vanessa: Can we all on the count of three say, “happy birthday?” You were worried I was going to ask you all to sing. I’m not. Let’s all say, “happy birthday” on the count of three. 1, 2, 3-

All: Happy Birthday!

Vanessa: I wouldn’t choose to spend my birthday like this, but good for you.

(Casper laughs)

Vanessa: Good for you. No, I totally would. (Casper continues laughing) We- nevermind, I’m not going to tell you what I did on my birthday this year cause it was weirder than going to this show.

Casper: What did you do?

Vanessa: No, I just said (Casper: Oh, I’m sorry.) I’m not going to tell! Ariana and I went to a concert that was hosted in a guy’s living room, literally.

Casper: That’s awesome!

Ariana: And we went and got our tarot read.
Vanessa: Yes, we got our tarot read! Weirder than going to this.

Ariana: But we did that because of this because we had been reading about Trelawney.

Vanessa: Right, about Trelawney. I got inspired by Trelawney and was like, “I wanna have my tarot read.”

Casper: And that’s where you went wrong. Cause…

(Audience laughs)

Vanessa: I love Trelawney. Blessing women has been a blessing to me.

Casper: There you go. That’s fair.

Vanessa: Yeah. There you go, okay.

Casper: That’s fair enough. We are going to start our show this evening as we do every show which is with a story. And, Vanessa, I hope you’re going to tell one.

Vanessa: So, for those of you who’ve prepared, we’re reading tonight’s chapter, *The Second Task*, through the theme of Loyalty.

Casper: Who brought their books? (Pause) Excellent. Excellent, 50 points for you all.

Vanessa: Great. Yes. And so I was thinking about what story I could tell with loyalty, and I’m going to tell this story, which makes my mom sound really bad. So let me just say upfront, I have a great mom. Love my mom. We have a great relationship.

Ariana: That’s her.

Vanessa: So when we were little, when my brothers and I were little, until we weren’t so little, we did karate together, the three of us, for a long, long time. And every Tuesday night—(Audience laughs)—those are my brothers and me. Every Tuesday night after karate practice, my mom would take us grocery shopping with her, and we would do our big grocery shopping for the week. And my mom, evidence that mom is a good mom, she did a really good job like making grocery shopping fun. So she would like you know give us, make games out of it, and would say like, “okay, David, who’s the oldest. Like you go get the ketchup, and Vanessa, you are in charge of getting the olives. And Jonathan, the little one, you’re in charge of getting the cocaine, and everybody meet back here and whoever can be back here first wins! And we would all go and Jonathan would always win because of all of the cocaine, and (Casper and audience laugh) that was the game. And everything was really fun and that was great. Except there was one thing about grocery shopping with my mother… that was just like, it was hellish about grocery
shopping with my mom. (*Casper and audience laugh*) And that is that we would get in line with our like very full cart, we would wait in line - you know where this is going, other moms do this too - and would start emptying, and it was something about that first item touching the conveyor belt that would be like, “bing! I forgot something,” my mom would say. And so she would then go and get whatever item she forgot. She’d be like, “I forgot the noodles.” It was the Eighties, which for those of you who were alive in the Eighties, it was a time of fear-mongering about children being kidnapped. Like this was on milk bottles and like you were all constantly being warned about like being offered candy by scary men who will pull you into a white van. And so when my mom would go off, like terror would set in with my brothers and I. Right? We were like these karate outfits are not going to protect us from much. (*Audience laughs*) And we would sort of look behind us at the people behind us and would be like, “I’m so sorry, we understand she might not be back in time and that will ruin your whole life.” And then we would like look at the cashier and be like, “what if she’s not back to pay? Maybe we have to like go home with him and wash his dishes (*Audience laughs*) for him to make it up cause like you know the groceries are probably really expensive because of all of the cocaine. And so we like how are we going to work off this debt?” And cause guys she would be gone forever. Like forever. And to her credit, she always made it back in time before the final item scan. But that seemed like skin of our teeth. Like it was just a matter of time. And so one night we’re home for dinner and my brothers and I decide that we are going to lodge a formal complaint to the highest authority we know under my mom, which is my dad. And we go to him and we’re like, “Dad, we know that Mom is a very good mom. Except every week she abandons us to what we presume will eventually be our death.” (*Audience laughs*) And we tell him what she does, and we’re like, “Dad, you don’t understand. She’s gone forever.” And my mom is like, “Peter, they’re crazy. I’m gone for thirty seconds.” And we’re like, “no, that is not true!” And then my dad is like, “Vanessa, I understand that it might feel longer. Time is relative.” And I’m like, “I understand about time, Dad. She is gone forever!” (*Casper and audience laugh*) And then my dad is like, “Vanessa, you did too much cocaine today! Calm down!” And I was like- that’s my last cocaine joke, I promise.

Casper: I was going to say... (*Audience laughs*) It’s really running thin, yeah.

Vanessa: And so I was like, “Dad, if you were to see it, you would understand.” So the following week, my dad comes grocery shopping with us. He’s like, “I will witness this for myself.” And we were like, “thank you.” Part of me thought that my mom wouldn’t like miss an item, right? Like now that there’s like a witness there, she’s going to conveniently not do that. And so we go, we all go grocery shopping as a family and, sure enough, we get in line, first item goes on the conveyor belt, whatever ding goes off in my mom’s brain when she sees something go on a conveyor belt goes off, “I forgot the frozen broccoli,” she goes off, and she is you know gone forever. And my dad looks at us and he’s like, “I will grant you that this is longer than thirty seconds.” And we’re like, “told you! Relativity, nothing.” And he was like, “but I really don’t understand what the big deal is. Her purse is right here. Like she leaves her purse with you. Worst case scenario, you pay the cashier and you like wait in front.” And I was like, “Dad! A purse? I don’t know how that works! She pays with a checkbook. That is like filling out like an insurance claim. Like I don’t know what that is!” And it occurred to me in that moment, I was like
my dad was trying to be loyal to us. Right? He was like, “I remember what it was like to be a kid and have things take forever and be scared.” And then because he didn’t understand how complicated a purse is to us- *(Casper and audience laugh)* my dad is a really good dad. *(Audience laughs)* I called him before the show and was like, “this is what I’m going to do to you tonight.” And he was like, “I love you. Mazel Tov!” And I was like, “okay.” But because he couldn’t understand what it is that we were- what our anxiety was, he couldn’t be loyal to us. And I was thinking about it in this moment in this chapter, when Harry comes up with Ron and everybody is saying to Ron- to Harry, Hermione and Ron are saying to Harry, “I can’t believe that you thought that this was like people were actually going to die.” And Harry thinks to himself, he’s like, “you weren’t conscious down there. You don’t understand how stressful it was down there and how like dead you guys looked.” And they are disloyal to him in that moment, and I mean they’re teasing him, and it’s all in good fun, but I do think and I’m interested in talking to you about this tonight, Casper, that in order to be truly loyal to someone, you have to have empathy and understanding for what it is that they are going through. So that is my story for tonight. *(Audience claps)* Oh, thank you.

Casper: Huh… that’s really stimulating.

Vanessa: Thank you. *(Audience laughs)* I will say, I worked on this segue all night: do you know when time isn’t relative?

Casper: Ooo. *(Audience laughs)* The thirty-second recap!

Vanessa: Yeah! It’s the thirty-second recap. *(Audience laughs)* Guys, those segues do not write themselves. *(Casper and audience laugh)* Hours in the studio. Hours.

Casper: Pretty much every week, you know, it’ll be like, truth… and we’ll be like, you know what’s true… *(Audience laughs)* Loss… you know what you’re losing next? *(Vanessa and audience laugh)*

Vanessa: Love… you know what I love? To watch you suffer! It’s amazing how it works for every theme. *(Audience laughs)*

Ariana: So usually when we do the thirty-second recap in the studio, you can go online to our website and vote for who does better. But today we have all of you to assist us, so we’re gonna do one of those handy clap-o-meters. Vanessa is going to do her thirty-second recap. Casper is going to do his thirty-second recap. Casper’s going to go first.

Vanessa: Yeah! You saw a horrified look on my face.

*(Casper laughs)*
Ariana: Vanessa just told the story. She can take a second. And then you will clap for who you think did better and we have this crown.

Casper: Oh! Oh it just got real.

(Audience laughs)

Ariana: And I will crown the true thirty-second recap winner tonight.

Casper: Alright.

Vanessa: Okay.

Ariana: Are we ready?

Casper: So-

Vanessa: Yeah, am I going to count you in?

Casper: Yeah, but just to clarify- the clapping is not straight after the thirty-second recaps? (Vanessa: Right) This is like a special moment when the clap-o-meter is introduced.

Vanessa: Right, so don't bother clapping after his thirty-second recap.

(Audience laughs)

Casper: I'm just saying save the claps…

Vanessa: He's going add at the end be like, “people who like Casper better,” and there will be silence. And then I'll be like, “who liked Vanessa better?” And you guys will go woo! Just kidding, I'm ready. On your mark, get set, recap!

(Ticking begins)

Casper: So Harry is like freaking out. What’s the second challenge? I don’t know! So many library books, let’s go to the library. Then they all leave, but no I’m going to come back because like more library books. Cloak. Then (snoring sound) sleeping. Then Dobby. Bing! Gillyweed. Oh my God! Run, run, run, run, run, run. Creevey's to the side! Run, run, run, run, run. Like, dive in with all the clothing. Swim, swim, swim. Moaning Myrtle. They’re that way! Merpeople- no first it's the other one! Grindylows! Merpeople, rescue, wait, wait, wait. Sharkhead. Come back and rescue Gabrielle.

(Gong rings)
Vanessa: Wow!

(Audience cheers and claps)

Casper: Alright, Vanessa.

Vanessa: I talked a lot of smack for that to be so good. Okay!

Casper: (Laughs) But I know that you too have game, Vanessa.

Vanessa: Thank you.

Casper: So-

Vanessa: It's true.

Casper: You ready?

Vanessa: Yeah, of course.

Casper: 3 - 2 - 1 - go!

(Ticking begins)

Vanessa: So it turns out that Harry has lied to everybody and Hermione’s like, “I could've helped you all along, dummy.” And then they spend a lot of time in the library, and are practicing summoning charms, and Harry is like, “what's really more important is that fact that Snape is getting a double-second chance!” And that's really important. And then they go under, Harry knows that he's only supposed to save Ron, but really he goes and he saves everybody and when he comes up he gets extra points because oh my god, I have so much more time. He comes up and he gets extra points and Dumbledore confers with the head merperson and is like, “oh Harry is really brave and we just changed the rules of the whole Triwizard Tournament!” And Harry gets the lead!

(Gong sounds)

(Casper laughs and audience cheers)

Ariana: Okay, folks.

Casper: Alright.
Ariana: Moment of truth.

Vanessa: I'll just say that the crown would look better on me. I'll just say that now.

(Audience laughs)

Ariana: Luckily, we do this based on merit.

Casper: Yes.

(Audience laughs)

Vanessa: As the Triwizard Tournament shows us, what it is that we are meriting (Casper laughs) can change at a moment's notice. (Audience laughs) It could be who brings up their person first, who does a better thirty-second recap, or it could be who looks better in a crown.

Ariana: Okay, this time it's who did a better thirty-second recap. So for those who thought it was Casper, please clap now.

(Audience claps and cheers)

Ariana: For those who thought it was Vanessa, please clap now.

(Audience claps and cheers)

Vanessa: Thank you. Those dollar bills I handed out earlier.

(Casper laughs)

(Audience cheering)

(Casper gasps)

Casper: Thanks everyone.

Vanessa: You know, it means a lot to him.

(Casper and audience laugh)

Casper: You know me so well!

Ariana: Is there anything that you know that you missed in your recaps?
Casper: Oh…

Vanessa: We missed that Neville’s really bad at the Banishing Charm and keeps sending Flitwick across the room.

Ariana: Yeah.

Casper: Is Flitwick into it?

Ariana: You somehow didn’t name all of the wonderful books that they were reading. I don’t know how you missed that. (Vanessa: Yeah, how did we not.) But one of my favorites was *Saucy Tricks for Tricky Sorts*.

Casper: And like, *Discovering Powers that You Never Knew You Had and What to Do with Them*. That’s another good one.

Ariana: Did we mention Moaning Myrtle?

Vanessa: Yeah, Casper did.

Ariana: Oh, Casper did.

Casper: Yeah, like she points Harry on his way. Obviously like he grows gills. Like that’s a pretty intense moment.

Vanessa: Anything else we forgot?

Casper: What else happened?

*(Mumbling from audience)*

Casper: Yes!

Vanessa: He writes a letter to Sirius, and he gets back a very disappointing response. Sirius does not read his mind and assume that he wants help on a task that Harry has not told Sirius about.

Casper: Didn’t tell him about!

*(Audience laughs)*

Casper: Come on, Harry!
Vanessa: *(Sarcastic tone)* What a terrible godfather.

*Casper and audience laugh*

Casper: Also, I love that in- cause I’m as you know a Brit, and we’re in America- and the phrase, “oh it’s next weekend” is profoundly confusing for me. Because, okay… *(Vanessa: Is it “this/next?”)* is it this- cause in England, “next weekend” is not this weekend, it’s next weekend. Okay this is clearly only interesting to me. *(Laughs)*

Vanessa: No, this is true. But isn’t that true in America too?

Casper: No! People say next weekend and they mean the one that’s coming next.

*Audience mumbling*

Casper: See! There is confusion in the audience. *(Audience laughs)* Anyway, the point being is Harry says, “next weekend is the Hogsmeade weekend visit” and like Sirius doesn’t know…

Vanessa: I thought in England it makes sense.

Casper: Well that’s true…

*Audience talking*

Vanessa: Hold on a second, I just want you to know that these books take place in the UK.

Casper: That’s very true.

Vanessa: I didn’t know if you knew that.

Casper: Which is why I read from an authentic British copy; not your American stuff.

Vanessa: Did we forget what else, what else did we forget? Nothing? That makes sense.

Ariana: Did we mention Percy?

Vanessa: Oh, Percy is like brought to tears over the fact that Ron might’ve died.

Casper: I love him.

Ariana: “He looks younger,” the text says.

Casper: Yes.
Vanessa: Which is weird.

Casper: Ashen-faced.

Vanessa: Cause usually trauma ages you, right?

Ariana: But Percy is always like trying to be…

Vanessa: Oh, okay, so he’s letting his like inner child out.

Casper: Barty Crouch is not there.

Vanessa: Yes.

Casper: What else…

(Audience chattering)

Vanessa: Hagrid is back to teaching and we meet these unicorn babies. And the trio’s like, who cares about unicorn babies, let’s chat. And I’m like… I’d want to hang out with the unicorn babies.

Casper: We learn a little bit more about like becoming- you have to register to become an Animagi. Animagus.

Ariana: Right. And someone back there mentioned the beatle.

Casper: Yes! I actually didn’t catch-

Vanessa: (Gasps) When Hermione pulls the beatle out of her hair, it’s Rita Skeeter!

Casper: I did not clock that.

Vanessa: You saw me get that.

(Audience laughs)

Vanessa: If this were not a live episode, Ariana would be like, “do you want to do that again?”

(Casper laughs)

Vanessa: And I’d say yes! But…
Casper: So as ever, there is so much that happens in these chapters, and we’re gonna dig into all of it together. There’ll be some moments where you get to talk about it with each other as well, so look forward to that.

Ariana: Many people, perhaps, did not see it because our slideshow was not functioning, but we had a couple of questions up on the screen before the show started, and one of the questions we asked was, “do you have any questions for Vanessa or Casper to answer on stage?” So, Casper, I have a question for you.

Casper: Okay.

Ariana: From Renee.

Casper: I’m sorry, I’m married. (Laughs) I hate myself. (Laughs)

(Audience laughs)

Ariana: Her question was, “what would your best and worst Hogwarts classes be if you were a student there?”

Casper: Ooh.

Vanessa: What a nice question.

Casper: I think I would be really good… I don’t know… in some, oh my God, I’m totally… Trelawney’s classroom...

Ariana: Divination.

Casper: Divination… is mostly, forgive my French, bull-(beep). So I think I would be quite good at that.

(Audience laughs)

Casper: (Laughs) I think I would be very, very bad at Potions because I’m not a details person, and that is so much about precision. That’s why my husband is in charge of the kitchen, and I’m in charge of like meeting guests when they arrive. (Laughs)

(Audience laughs)

Vanessa: (Laughing) That’s true!
(Audience laughs)

Ariana: Okay, thank you.

Vanessa: (Laughing) I was going to say that you would be bad at Defense Against the Dark Arts because you would just turn over.

Casper: I know. (Laughs)

Vanessa: You’d be like, “this is amazing. Yeah, you all should learn how to defend against it.”

(Audience laughs)

Ariana: Our theme this week is Loyalty.

Casper: Yes. We haven’t said that yet, have we? The theme is Loyalty.

Ariana: We did. Vanessa said that.

Casper: We did? Okay, I’m sorry.

(Audience laughs)

Ariana: And I have a question for you.

(Audience laughs)

Ariana: Are we done?

Vanessa and Casper: Yes.

(Audience laughs)

Ariana: Which is that we read Chapter 24 through the theme of Integrity.

Vanessa: Yes.

Ariana: If you remember. And in that chapter, we kind of had this question about the relationship between integrity and loyalty. And since we’re reading this chapter through loyalty, I thought we would revisit that question. So, what you said for Chapter 24 was that integrity and loyalty are often in opposition to one another. That if sometimes your loyalty to someone has to come before your integrity to the truth and sometimes the other way around. That if you want to maintain integrity you have to give up your loyalty to someone. And I’m wondering if this chapter
challenges your interpretation of that. Or if there's somewhere you see it that can help explore that. Casper?

Casper: The thing that really strikes me is that, as Vanessa was saying, Harry is kind of ridiculed for his... I mean, really in this moment it’s both loyalty and integrity and I think in some ways it’s his loyalty that stimulates his integrity? You know, he loves Hermione, he doesn’t know Gabrielle, but he feels like there’s this child and she’s underwater and it’s all about to end. So I feel like you know his desire to stay initially is for Hermione, but the fact that he rescues Gabrielle in the end, is integrity. And so kind of one is a bridge to the other. That’s how I read that.

Ariana: Can you tell us a little bit about the moment that you’re talking about in the chapter?

Casper: Yeah. Well so Harry finally finds the four kind of, it feels like a hostage situation, I’m just going to say that. And finds the four hostages, he’s the first one there. He’s gotten his gills and his you know flippers, and go Harry.

Vanessa: Go Dobby.

Casper: Go Dobby. Exactly.

Vanessa: Go Barty Crouch Jr for setting up Dobby to-

Casper: Shh… *(Laughs)*

Vanessa: Go Harry!

Casper: Go Harry. So he’s the first one there and he’s like, “sweet, Ron is here. Great. Oh no, also Cho Chang, also Hermione, also Fleur Delacour’s younger sister, Gabrielle.” And so he’s kind of like, he finds the stone, frees Ron, and he’s like chilling, but then he’s like, “oh my God, what about these other people?” And I feel like he stays- that initial impulse to stay is because of his relationship with Hermione. But the reason why he stays even after you know Hermione is saved by Krum, and then later Cedric gets Cho Chang, or the other way around. The reason why he stays for Gabrielle to bring her back up in the end as well is because of his integrity. Does that make sense?

Ariana: So his loyalty to staying for Hermione-

Casper: Right.

Ariana: Right, leads to him staying for everyone else.

Casper: Yeah, so they’re not in opposition here. It’s actually one leading to another.
Vanessa: Is that a good enough answer?

Ariana: Yeah, do you have anything to add?

Vanessa: Yes.

(Audience laughs)

Vanessa: Always.

Ariana: Go for it.

Vanessa: Always. It's annoying. What I'm interested in, because we talk a lot about practicing things on the podcast, and so Harry's loyalty to Hermione triggers, "oh shoot!" I think I'm just like honing in on what you're saying. I don't think I'm saying anything really new. But he's like, "oh this is what I would do for a friend." I think we're seeing the instinct of practicing helps us be better to strangers, right?

Casper: Oh, I love that!

Vanessa: Because he's like oh I would do this for a friend. Cho is sort of my friend; I like asked her on a date. I guess I should do it for her too.

Casper: Yeah.

Vanessa: And then Cedric comes and rescues her. And he's like well if I was gonna do it for my friend, and I was going to do it for my pseudo-crush, I should also do it for this stranger. Right? And so I feel like it's his... by practicing his loyalty, he gets better and better at it. And I think it's like what we talk about all the time, that like love begets love, right? And goodness begets goodness. You know we talk about this in terms of if you brighten someone's day, they'll be nicer to the next person, right? It's like his own loyalty makes his integrity go further and further.

Casper: I'm reminded of in my kind of introduction to Buddhist practice class that I took at some point, when we were learning meta-meditation, which is loving, kindness meditation, you start first with yourself, and then you think of a person that you love, and then you think of, you know, someone that you don't know. You might not know their name, it might be a stranger, and only then do you think of someone who you maybe struggle with. And I feel like the same order is happening (Vanessa: Right) in how these people are being saved. Like Harry stays initially for someone he loves, and then like Cho, like kinda likes but doesn't really know her, and then a stranger, Gabrielle.
Vanessa: Something I’ve been thinking a lot about lately is, tipping points, basically. Is something I’ve been thinking about lately. So it’s like, I have a very good dog. She’s a very well-behaved dog, and when she acts up, right, I’m like, do I no longer get to say she’s a good dog because she did this bad thing once? Or how many times does she have to do something in order for me to have to say about her that she’s actually sort of unreliable about this, right? (Audience laughs) Right? Like when, and we see it in the chapter too, is what I’m struck by. We see it in, when Harry, Ron, and Hermione, at the very beginning of the chapter, the three of them are talking, and Harry’s like, “I want to talk about, you know, what Snape needs a second chance for.” And Hermione says, “we should trust Snape,” and gives two reasons. She’s like one, Dumbledore trusts Snape, and Dumbledore is really good at trusting. Right? He trusted Hagrid and nobody else did; he trusted Lupin and nobody else did. We should trust Dumbledore. And also I once thought Snape was trying to kill Harry and it turns out that Snape was trying to save Harry. So I have these two reasons. And I was just thinking, oh if she only had one of the reasons, would she be more interested in that? Right? And so I think, yeah, so she’s being loyal to Snape in this moment. And I guess I wonder about that too, right? Like if a friend- if you catch your friend in a white lie, you’re not going to be like, “well I don’t trust you anymore and I’m not loyal to you.” But if you catch your friend in like a dozen white lies in a few days, you’re like, “okay what’s going on here?” And then if it turns out that you see them be rude to a waiter also, you’re like, “ugh.” Right? Like at what point is the flip where you will become disloyal?

Ariana: Vanessa, it sounds like- you just used the word “trust” and like this issue of trust. And like I think trust is very close to loyalty.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Ariana: Can you like tease out a little bit like is trust always necessary for loyalty? Like what the implication is of…

Vanessa: Yeah, I think that loyalty is a sort of promise based on trust that gets you through bursts of not necessarily trusting. Right? So and then if the not trusting goes on too long, then there’s that tipping point where you like go into disloyalty. Does that make sense? So like I’m going to use you as an example because you’re here. So Casper and I, I trust you completely, you know, I really do. Keys to my apartment, right, like, I’m like yeah, my life, your life, fine. And then if Casper were to trash my apartment once- usually when Casper comes to my apartment and I wasn’t there, dishes that were in the sink get cleaned. (Audience laughs) Like he leaves my apartment nicer than he found it. So I trust him. Right. So because there’s trust built up, I feel like you could make like ten mistakes, twenty mistakes, and the loyalty would stay.
Casper: That's good to know.

(Audience laughs)

Vanessa: Let’s not push it. But if there wasn’t trust first, right, then the loyalty isn’t there, and the first mistake, you’re like okay see ya. Right? Does that make sense?

Ariana: Yeah, absolutely.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Ariana: Is there anywhere else you see loyalty in this chapter?

Vanessa: You see the kids’ loyalty to Hagrid pay off. And it is only- this is another like loyalty begetting loyalty- they go to Hagrid in the previous chapter and are like, “we miss you.” And because of that, Hagrid comes back and actually Hagrid going away and coming back kind of inspired him to maybe become a better teacher. And he, right, like really leans into that unicorn lesson. And so I feel like they believe in Hagrid and he like rises to meet their loyal expectations of him.

Casper: Beautiful.

Ariana: Yeah, that’s lovely. Something that I noticed in the last episode that we released, you say, you criticize Professor-

Vanessa: Grubby-Plank.

Ariana: Grubby-Plank-

Vanessa: For being sexist against boys.

Ariana: Right.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Ariana: Well we won’t call it that. For excluding the boys from the learning experience in that class.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Ariana: And Hagrid comes back to his class, and is like, “oh actually baby unicorns are like fine being petted by boys, so why don’t...” and he invites the boys into the space. It’s like this very
lovely moment where the criticism that you had of Grubby-Plank’s pedagogy (Vanessa: Yeah) is actually like, I don’t know, exceeded by Hagrid.

Vanessa: Yeah. I’m still not- so my trust in Hagrid’s teaching is not strong enough that now I’m loyal to him- the idea of him being a teacher. One good lesson, congratulations, Hagrid. You’re a second year teacher. Figure it out!

(Audience laughs)

Casper: Do we have any teachers here this evening? Yes.

Vanessa: Thank you.

Casper: Have you all contributed to the failed pedagogy at Hogwarts book that we’re...? Yes...

Vanessa: It would be longer than the series.

(Audience laughs)

Casper: Yes.

Vanessa: Mostly because teachers are wordy so their essays would be... I’m kidding! No it’s just there’s so much... okay.

Ariana: Well thank you for that theme discussion.

Vanessa: Thank you!

Ariana: I think it’s time for our spiritual practice?
Vanessa: Yes!

(Music plays)

Casper: I love the spiritual practice music!

(Music continues)

Vanessa: So today’s spiritual practice, we are going to do Pardes.

Vanessa and Casper: Ooo.

Vanessa: It’s our favorite spiritual practice.
Vanessa: It really is my favorite. It really is my favorite. Okay. So we had Ariana pick a sentence for us.

Ariana: Yes.

Vanessa: And then I will explain what Pardes is. Does that sound good?

Ariana: Yeah. Well, why don’t you have any background on Pardes to share?

Vanessa: Oh do I. (Audience laughs) So Pardes is a Jewish reading practice, and Pardes, there is like numerology with Jewish words, Hebrew words, they’re not Jewish words; they’re Hebrew words. Words do not have a religious identity. Hebrew words. Anyway so Pardes, one of the meanings of Pardes is orchard, and the idea is that you can reach your hand into a book and pluck something, and no matter what it is- you eat fruit weird. (Audience laughs) So Pardes, you pick it, and no matter where you put your hand in books, you’ll get something nutritious and like juicy from it. So it’s a four-step reading practice and we will walk you through it as we go. And that’s enough.

Ariana: Yeah, Vanessa, nothing’s really calling to me.

Vanessa: Oh, should we go to the audience?

Ariana: Can we go to the audience?

Vanessa: Yes! So audience, help us pick a Pardes sentence please. The pages for this chapter are...

Ariana: 479…

Vanessa: Yes, through?

Ariana: 508.

Casper: 508.

Vanessa: Great. So somebody please say a number between 479-508.
Casper: I see someone specifically I’d like to ask. And they are wearing a kind of an orange t-shirt. Yes! You making the funny face. Yes! Would you be willing to give us a number between…

Ariana: 479-508.

Vanessa: Yes. Thank you.

Casper and Vanessa: 495.

Casper: Thank you.

Vanessa: That is the one I wanted.

(Audience laughs)

Vanessa: And then 495 has, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 paragraphs. Somebody yell out a number 1-5.

(Audience members shout)

Vanessa: I heard 3.

(Casper laughs)

Vanessa: So the sentence that we will be reading- so we’re on page 495- if you have the American edition. And if you have the British edition, you’re a snob.

(Audience laughs)

Vanessa: So, 495…

Casper: I’m fine with that. (Laughs)

Vanessa: (Laughing) The sentence is: “Small fish flickered past him like silver darts.”

Ariana and Vanessa: Ooo.

Vanessa: We would’ve made that noise no matter what the sentence was.

Casper: (Laughs) That is a good one!

Vanessa: But it is a good one! It happens to be true.
Casper: One more time?

Vanessa: Okay. Here it is again: “Small fish flickered past him like silver darts.” So the first step in Pardes is Peshat. And that is, what is the intended meaning of this sentence? Casper, do you know?

Casper: I think this is just as he is you know webbed his feet, and he’s swimming, and he’s able to breathe underwater, and there’s this kind of relief that he’s feeling, and he’s moving swiftly through the water into depth. And he is surrounded by fish.

Vanessa: Yeah, who flicker past him like silver darts.

Casper: Yes.

Vanessa: You did really well.

Casper: Thank you.

Vanessa: Good work. Okay, so this next step, Remes. Okay, so the second stage in Pardes is Remes, and what we do with Remes is we pick one word in the sentence. So there are a lot of different ways you can do Remes; it’s about tracking the meaning of something. The way that we do Remes is that we pick one word and we track it through the seven books, and we see what meaning we can imbue this word with. Casper, I will read the sentence again. It is: “Small fish flickered past him like silver darts.” What word jumped out at you.

Casper: Silver.

(Audience claps)

Casper: Yeah, right?

Vanessa: Oh, thank goodness.

Casper: Because- particularly because this is not just silver like silver, but it’s like silver in movement, and I’m thinking of Patroni, Patronuses, I’m thinking of like Snape’s tear memory… I’m thinking of… (Audience mumbling) unicorns! Adult unicorns. (Audience chattering) Peter Pettigrew’s ear? Wait, arm!

Vanessa: Hand!

Casper: Arm! I was like what, why ear? (Audience laughs) I was like no…
Vanessa: Okay, so wait. We’re going to get more ideas so say them again. The unicorn, Peter Pettigrew’s arm...

Casper: The Patronus...

Vanessa: The Patronus...

Casper: Snape’s tear memory...

Vanessa: These are all very magical objects.
Casper: Yes! Like silver is somehow otherworldly and I mean that’s true anyway as we think about- I’m also suddenly thinking about the jewel tones of Harry’s bath in the previous chapter. Like the fact that precious jewels, silver, gold, like it’s always, I don’t know, there’s something beyond...

(Audience chattering)

Vanessa: Yes! Oh, the invisibility cloak, the Horcruxes!

Casper: All of these are magic!

Vanessa: Say more. Who said Horcruxes?

(Audience mumbles)

Vanessa: That was so much help.

Casper: Everyone was like, “it was her!” (laughs)

(Audience laughs)

Vanessa: She’s the witch!

(Casper laughs)

Vanessa: No, I found that so helpful! Minnesotans, (Casper: Yes!) you live up to your hype. Yes. Horcruxes.

Casper: Rowena Ravenclaw’s diadem.

Vanessa: The diadem. So what- these are like-

(Audience talking)
Vanessa: Oh, Gringotts, the locket, okay-

Casper: Okay, class.

(Audience laughs)

Vanessa: So everyone in here is in Ravenclaw.

(Casper and audience laugh)

Vanessa: Got it. Got it.

Casper: But there’s something, there’s a magical link.

Vanessa: It’s deeply magical. So let’s reread the sentence with that idea.

Casper: Yes. (Gasps) Yep, let’s read it first. Great.

Vanessa: “Small fish flickered past him like silver darts.”

Casper: Who’s to say they’re not magical fish?

Vanessa: Right. I think that that’s right.

Casper: Right?

Vanessa: And I think until now I assumed that (Casper: Yeah) those were the regular fish on the way to the weird magical stuff in the middle, but-

Casper: Yeah the whole thing is magical.

Vanessa: The whole thing.

Casper: Which is like life!

(Audience laughs)

Casper: No, because-

Vanessa: I swear to you, he’s not on drugs. (Casper: No!) This is just how he talks.
Casper: Who knows, oh what’s her name… Marie Howe, the poet. Who likes Marie Howe poetry? (Vanessa: I do.) Okay, just me. But there’s this wonderful-

Vanessa: I said I do.

Casper: Oh you did too. Oh good. That’s why we’re friends.

Vanessa: Let’s be friends.

Casper: Yeah. She has this wonderful poem where she’s writing about her brother who’s dying of AIDS, and like she’s made him this... PB&J sandwich - we don’t eat that in England - and like-

Vanessa: Because it’s yummy and they’re against that.

(Audience laughs)

Casper: And she’s kind of just, you know, describing all these normal things, and he says to her, I can’t paraphrase it well, but her dying brother basically says like, “look at this. This!” And like that’s what I love about-

Ariana: It’s a cheese sandwich.

(Casper laughs)

Ariana: I remember the poem. Yeah.

Casper: Yeah. It’s a cheese sandwich.

Ariana: And he says like, “isn’t that something?” Like the cheese sandwich.

Casper: Yes And she says like, “what?” And he says, “this!”

Ariana: This. Yeah.

Casper: And like, yeah, the book is not about the silver fish on the way to the grindylows, but like even the silver fish are magical. Okay that’s my best bet.

Vanessa: Okay. I thought it was very good.

Ariana: I feel like there were a lot of ideas that got thrown out very quickly.

Vanessa: Yes.
Ariana: Can you just pick one and work with it a little bit? Because like- (Vanessa: Yeah, okay-) I feel like when we do it all up here, (Vanessa: Yeah) I feel like we end up with “everything is magical,” but...

Casper: Wow. Wow.

*(Everyone laughs)*

Vanessa: I actually thought he really brought it home.

Ariana: It was beautiful, yeah.

Vanessa: Yeah. She’s the bad guy this time. Usually it’s me; this time it’s her. Yes! I have one I want to talk about.

Ariana: Great.

Casper: Alright.

Vanessa: The Horcruxes. I’m really interested in that because everything else we’re saying like, “everything is magical” in a good way. Right? And-

Casper: Oh, let me guess. You’re going to go somewhere dark and depressing.

*(Audience laughs)*

Vanessa: Yeah. For a change.

*(Audience laughs)*

Vanessa: Yeah, but it’s interesting right? Because it’s these highly magical objects, right? And they can be beautiful and it can be like so great. It can be, right, but they can also be imbued with evil and it is up to humanity, right? Voldemort turned them evil. The magical objects in it of themselves, I’m not- I’ve got to change my train of thought, because it sounds like I’m saying “guns don’t kill people; people kill people.” Which is not what I’m saying. No but like it’s up to us to turn objects into good. That certain objects like the diadem was never supposed to hold part of someone’s soul, but that got imbued into the diadem. And so it’s up to us. We have magic accessible to us and it is up to us to honor it rather than sully it.

Ariana: Great.

Vanessa: Yeah?

Ariana: I feel like we’re drifting into other things.
Vanessa: Other things.

Ariana: Step three.

Vanessa: Step three. Let’s do that. So, step three is Drash. Pardes. Yup. Step three is Drash, and what we do with Drash is we ask ourselves if we were a traditional rabbi or priest and we were given this piece of text to preach a sermon on, what would the sermon be that we would preach? So I’m going to read us our piece of text, and it is: “Small fish flickered past him like silver darts.”

Casper: Flickering implies you can’t always see it. Like it’s shimmering. It’s moving. And so I think you know just building on what you were saying about it’s our job to imbue things with meaning and with goodness and with joy. That’s not always easy. It’s hard to see what is good and what isn’t sometimes. I’m just thinking of like whether it’s moving they’re moving at pace or you’re in a lake and you can’t actually see that well. But there’s something about the flickering. Like it’s, you have to grasp it and you can’t always catch it. So knowing what’s right is, you know, we can easily say, “oh, choose what is right over what is easy,” but like we don’t always know what’s right.

Vanessa: Yeah, something I often feel is if I knew what the right thing to do was-

Casper: Then you would do it!

Vanessa: I would find the strength even if it was hard, right, to do it. Someone please tell me what the right thing is because I don’t know. Right?

Casper: Exercise or a milkshake.

(Audience laughs)

Vanessa: I don’t know. Someone tell me. Don’t tell me.

Casper: That’s what I’m saying! Sometimes milkshake is the right answer.

Vanessa: That’s why we’re friends.

(Casper and audience laugh)

Ariana: Vanessa, do you have something you’d preach?

Vanessa: I do...
Ariana: Do you want to read it one more time?

Vanessa: Yes, I do. It is, “Small fish flickered past him like silver darts.” I you know, I’m getting older, you all are too. I’m just starting further ahead than you, and things are starting to like, you know, there’s certain things that are now clear to me that I will never do, right, and they dart past you, and they are shiny, and like you want to grab them, and there are certain things you have to let go, you have to let them pass you. And that can be hard. Right? There is a young woman who I went to high school with who is a very celebrated successful writer, and I’m very happy for her.

(Casper and audience laugh)

Vanessa: I’m very happy for her.

Casper: Your time will come.

Vanessa: No! Right, like there are just like certain things that I’m not going to be able to do anymore. And I think sometimes because they’re shiny, we want to grab at them, and therefore forsake the path that we’re on which we made- I think it’s about having faith in ourselves. We have to- there’s actually a *Jane Eyre* quote: “Laws and principles are not for the moments in which it is easy. It is for moments like these when our soul rises up in mutiny.” And it’s- we choose our laws and principles when we are sane, and Jane says I have to stick to the decisions that I made when I was sane because you know right now I’m quite mad, and I think when things are flickering past us, those can be moments of madness and we have to remember the deliberate decisions we made when we were quite sane. So that is what I would preach on.

Ariana: Okay.

Casper: Sane Jane.

Vanessa: Sane Jane. Okay last step is Sod. And Sod means secret. And there’s a great-

Casper: Like the fish- it goes past and sometimes you catch it, and sometimes you don’t.

Vanessa: Well done! Yes. So Sod, part of it- so Sod is definitely the most mythical practice that we do on the podcast, and the idea is like sometimes a secret about the text emerges to you and sometimes it doesn’t, and that that’s okay. It’s okay if we don’t come up with anything guys. It’s okay.

Casper: Cause one of you may have found it instead.

Vanessa: Yeah.
Casper: The Sod is there. Shall I read it?

Vanessa: Oh, sure! Yes, please!

Casper: “Small fish flickered past him like silver darts.”

(Quiet music tones play)

Vanessa: So we’re gonna just take a moment together. See what emerges.

Casper: “Small fish flickered past him like silver darts.”

Casper: Darts is a game.

(Audience laughs)

Vanessa: Maybe he is stoned.

(Audience laughs)

Casper: No! Like life. Like don’t take it too seriously. Let’s just have fun! It’s a game. Unless you’re a professional and then it’s your livelihood.

(Audience laughs)

Vanessa: Kids back home, we’re depending on it.

Casper: How about you, Vanessa? What Sod did you find?

Vanessa: So now I feel like such a downer. Uncle Casper always wants to have fun.

(Audience laughs)

Vanessa: So, I was thinking about the silvery, bed of silvery things, that appear to Harry in difficult times is in the forest. His parents and Sirius and Lupin appear to him and keep him company as he walks toward his death. And I was just thinking that if you are caught up in the podcast, you know that my grandfather recently passed away, and I’m not somebody who believes in an afterlife, and I don’t believe that like he’s looking over me or anything, but what I do believe very much is that like there - my grandfather was a really big part of my life - I was very lucky, and I was very lucky to have him until I was 35. And I really don’t think a day will go by in my life when I do not think of him. And that is a kind of accompaniment. Right? And so
these silver fish, right, these accompaniers, I think that more might be around us and accompanying us, even if it feels like they’re gone and they’re passing us by.

Casper: Flickering.

Vanessa: Yeah. That there are moments that you can see them. Also, life should be fun.

(Audience laughs)

Vanessa: I’m not against fun.
(Casper laughs)
Ariana: Speaking of fun. It’s time for an ad.

(Ad music begins)

Vanessa: In the middle of a live show, sometimes Casper and I get a little peckish.

Casper: Yeah, it’s like a ravenous hunger that takes over your whole body while you’re on stage. We could have got Blue Apron.

Vanessa: Yeah and just pre-cooked a meal together and then had it on stage with us.

Casper: We could’ve gone for a quick bucatini with broccoli and Pecorino cheese or a parmesan-crusted steak with mashed potatoes and broccoli.

Vanessa: And for this Minneapolis crowd, given that we were reading the chapter The Second Task, we could’ve even done it with some sort of underwater component.

Casper: Well, or making dinner is the second task. What if everyday was a Triwizard Tournament and making your dinner was the second task?

Vanessa: If one of the tasks was cooking a Blue Apron meal, then anybody could be a Triwizard Champion and then Triwizard Tournament would mean nothing.

Casper: Even Harry wouldn’t need extra, you know, hints from professors because all the ingredients have pre-portioned and there’s a simple 1-2-3 list on how to cook.

Vanessa: He wouldn’t even need Hermione for the first time in his life.

Casper: Exactly.
Vanessa: Blue Apron is treating our listeners to $30 off of your first order if you visit blueapron.com/harrypotter. Check out this week’s menu and get your $30 off at blueapron.com/harrypotter. Blue Apron, a better way to cook.

(Ad music ends)

Ariana: Vanessa, I have a question for you from Twitter.

Vanessa: Oh! Like all of Twitter?

Ariana: All of it.

Vanessa: Woah.

Ariana: Andrea wants to know, if you were invited to give a guest lecture at Hogwarts, what would it be on?

Vanessa: That’s a really obvious question. I mean it’s a really good question, but I would lecture them about the failed pedagogy at Hogwarts.

(Audience laughs)

Vanessa: I would be like, “I’m actually am not an expert in this, but I Googled how to teach, (Casper laughs) and this Wikihow article says ten things. You do them all wrong.” And we would go through step by step. We’d have a very short professional development day for all of the teachers at Hogwarts, and I really do believe it would make a world of difference. I really do. Don’t abuse your students. Step one. Detention should not be in places where they can die. (Audience laughs) I feel like again, not an expert. Feel like I would kill this one. So, that’s an excellent question. Thank you.

Casper: (Laughs) Amazing. Well luckily this evening we are joined by a fabulous guest, and in fact our host, Travis Salisbury, invited us here to the Basilica, and we’re so glad he’s with us. And he’s going to give some of his thoughts on this theme of Loyalty. He’s the Coordinator - this is such a good job title - the Coordinator of Liturgical Celebrations for the Basilica of St Mary and an Oblate, which means kind of like you’ve made some sort of vow but you’re not a monk? Right? In St Paul’s monastery in Maplewood. He is a self-proclaimed passionate church nerd and he is appropriately obsessed with all things Harry Potter, and in his spare time, he reads, cooks, gardens, and walks dogs. Welcome, Travis!

(Audience claps, music plays)

Travis: Alright. Well thank you guys. Welcome to the Basilica St Mary’s. It’s a pleasure to host you guys. My primary role here at the Basilica is working with and coordinating volunteers, but the story I want to tell you tell is about what I do when I’m not here. In my days off, I walk dogs.
Casper: Aww) I never thought I’d be one of those people who has 10-15 dogs trailing behind him because, let’s admit it, walking one dog is hard and stressful enough, let alone those. So the biggest dog I have in pack is a 110-pound Old English Shepherd; the littlest one is a 6-pound little Morkie. So it’s quite the pack. And so I travel from one end of the city to the other packing all these dogs into the backseat of my little four-door car, which is now completely ruined. And it’s something to just look in the rearview mirror and see all these little happy faces so excited to get ready for the walk. And when I finally have all the dogs, we’d pile into St Paul and walk along the river through downtown. So it’s a trip. For the better part of a year though, I had this little bulldog, Nitschke. (Audience aws) Don’t let him fool you; he declared himself Lord of the Front Seat in that picture. (Casper and audience laugh) He is adorable, but when we started walking, he was a puppy and he’s a bulldog, and if any of you have bulldogs, you know they’re a very strong-willed breed. So we’d go on the walk, and the walk was going fantastic, except this guy. He would pull this way, a leaf would fly by and all the other dogs would go, “oh a leaf,” and he’d be like, “oh my God, I want that leaf.” (Audience laughs) And the worst part would be, we’d be walking through a busy intersection, and if any of you have seen people with these dogs, it’s so tempting to pull out the phone and be like, “oh my gosh, that’s amazing. I want a picture of this or a video to throw up on YouTube or something.” So we’d be in the middle of a busy, busy intersection with all these cell phones out, and he decided that it’s playtime and goes into playbows and tries to get all of these dogs all super riled up. So, I would go from feeling pretty awesome to questioning my whole commitment to walking dogs. Why did I think I was even remotely good idea? There was one particular day where it was an hour long walk, and my arm was so sore from trying to keep this dog in the pack, and I got to a point where I sat down on a park bench, got them all seated, and I proceeded to sob (Casper: Aww) and think, “oh my gosh, what have I done?” He challenged me that severely and it’s from the little things to the big things that we were talking about - where’s the tipping point? And I had reached my tipping point with Mr. Nitschke. (Audience laughs) So, I was feeling really stressed out about this and it was really questioning my loyalty to the company thinking I should bail, and then one night I was out walking on my own near my apartment building, and across the parking lot I saw a human with a bulldog and there’re plenty of dogs in the neighborhood so I didn’t think much of it except for this bulldog… ears perked up and his beady little eyes followed me across the parking lot. And as they got closer and closer, I saw his human and I said, “oh good evening.” And I just happened to say, “is that Nitschke?” And this dog went from just beady little eyes on me to just melting. You know how dogs do that when they suddenly go “oh!” And I think in that moment, Nitschke taught me a little bit about loyalty that you know, sometimes loyalty just kind of simmers below the surface. Sometimes we’re not really fully aware of our loyalties, and it’s in those moments that are sort of pure, and honest, and uncomplicated. For those of us who might subscribe to a faith tradition, it’s almost like Passover or a holy week or a Ramadan, those really kind of focus moments that make us go, “huh? Yeah, that’s why I do what I do and why I believe and subscribe to these sorts of things.” And it’s sort of cliche almost to say, “oh the episode’s about loyalty. Let me tell you about dogs.” (Audience laughs) But I think dogs are great because they really do give us space to think in metaphor about our lives and they are those beings that are truly in the moment, 100%. There’s no past, there’s no future really for dogs; you know, they’re honed in on you right then and there. And I think those are the times
where I am truly most loyal, is when I’m in the present. And in my job working with volunteers, I'm always three weeks ahead of myself or two weeks behind myself, and very rarely in the present moment. And it's really in those moments where I find I get myself into trouble with loyalty and really when you really focus in and realize that this is the moment and this is the only moment we have together that loyalty really flowers and has its truest expression. You know there’s certainly complications around it, so it’s not that it’s an honesty that is uncomplicated. But it’s really the focus moments, and dogs in particular, I think, give us a chance to experience that. So thank you, Nitschke, for teaching me about loyalty.

(Audience claps)

Casper: I love that idea that when we’re fully present and you know if you use God language, you could say kind of… when you really feel like fully connected to who you are, and whose you are, and how you are in the universe, like that’s when we’re at our most loyal and our fullest self. That’s beautiful.

Vanessa: Yeah, and I think that that’s also when we’re most capable of breaking loyalty if we need to. Right? Of standing up- if you’re really in the present and you’re not thinking, “well this is a relationship I should maintain because, you know, of X or Y,” and we feel our values being crossed, it’s a moment where you’re like, “you know what? I’m actually going to have integrity here and let loyalty go by.”(Travis: Exactly) Or like if Nitsche were to like bite a little kid, which he never would, because he looks perfect. (Audience laughs) We love him. (Travis: He’s pretty perfect.) Yeah. Right? It’s like those moments, I think, a call for presence even in the name of loyalty is a lovely call. I also like any story about dogs, especially ones that have visual aids. People listening at home, he was so cute.

(Audience laughs)

Casper: Awesome. Travis, thank you so much for joining us. We’re so glad to have you here.

(Audience claps)

(Music plays)

Vanessa: Casper hates dogs.
Casper: I like them at an appropriate distance, and that was perfect. (Audience laughs, music ends) It’s lovely to be here in the Basilica, especially because our next spiritual practice is what we call Sacred Imagination, but was introduced of course by St Ignatius of Loyola, himself a great Catholic spiritual teacher. And this one really is our favorite spiritual practice.

Vanessa: This one is our favorite spiritual practice.

(Audience laughs)
Casper: And so I've chosen a passage for us this evening, which comes towards the end of the chapter, *The Second Task*. What I want you to do, if you’re so comfortable, is I’m going to invite you to close your eyes, and maybe plant both feet on the floor, and get comfortable in your sit-bone, which is a nice way of saying “your bottom”...

Vanessa: Which is a nice way of saying “your butt…”

(Audience laughs)

Casper: And I want you to feel just the weight of your body on the chair. *Music plays softly in the background* We're going to read a longish passage and I want you to feel as much as you can the different senses that you experience as you listen. “Harry darted forward and began to hack at the ropes binding the small girl to the statue, and at last she was free. He seized the little girl around the waist, grabbed the neck of Ron’s robes, and kicked off from the bottom. It was very slow work. He could no longer use his webbed hands to propel himself forwards; he worked his flippers furiously, but Ron and Fleur's sister were like potato-filled sacs dragging him back down… He fixed his eyes skyward, though he knew he must still be very deep, the water above him was so dark… Merpeople were rising with him. He could see them swirling around him with ease, watching him struggle through the water… Would they pull him back down to the depths when the time was up? Did they perhaps eat humans? Harry’s legs were seizing up with the effort to keep swimming; his shoulders were aching horribly with the effort of dragging Ron and the girl… He was drawing breath with extreme difficulty. He could feel pain on the sides of his neck again… he was becoming very aware of how wet the water was in his mouth… yet the darkness was definitely thinning now… he could see daylight above him…” *Music fades out* Thank you. I’m going to ask Vanessa- what did you feel? Who were you? Where were you? What was happening?

Vanessa: I mean, I was Harry. Part of what was so interesting was that what I felt for so long was sheer terror. First I felt the task in front of me, right, and so as long as I was doing work, I was fine. I was hacking at something. Good. And then I had this big task in front of me of like swimming. And I feel like the other really interesting thing as far as feeling goes, is that suddenly the water is very wet and it’s hard for him to breathe. And I feel like you know those moments where you notice the sun, or you notice a breeze, or you can’t breathe for some reason, and you’re like… right? Things that you take for granted are suddenly become very important. And so, that was really interesting - I never think about how water feels wet in my mouth. That was very, like, interesting observation. But it’s just sheer terror with like very little hope. Everything to lose and he like, he doesn’t even know what his enemies are, right? He doesn’t know if the merpeople are going to pull him down. He is so, no pun intended, in over his head. So it’s also that feeling of being overwhelmed. Like if I were to put it in like my life possibility, it’s like a big car accident or something where you’re like okay I know how to try to stop this. There’s only so much I can do before chaos. Right? It’s this completely overwhelming thing. What about you?
Casper: I was really noticing how time... it became impossible to manage. You know, sometimes when you’re scrubbing plates throughout the night and attention or something, but like doing a task and it’s taking so much of you. You are just completely unaware of time or you’re waiting in a hospital room and like, has it been hours? Days? Who knows. Just that intensity of emotion and how time disappears. Friends, we’ve come to the end of our show. (Audience aws) I know. I know. But we will be back, surely, at some point, in Minneapolis. And as you know we always close the show by offering a blessing to one of the characters that we met in the pages of this chapter. And a blessing is really an opportunity for us to shine a light on something that lives within us. That is perhaps not always seen, perhaps not always acknowledged or celebrated. And to remind us in some way of who we really are. And so, I'm going invite you all to think of someone that you might want to bless and it might be from this chapter, or it might be from the books, or someone in your own life. Someone maybe who needs an extra word of encouragement... or a chance to really be seen for the wonderful person they are. (Music begins) We'll ask you to share with someone near you, and then we’ll share our blessings from the stage as well. So share your blessing with one another.

(Audience chattering)

Casper: I’m going to invite Ariana to share her blessing from this chapter.

Ariana: Yeah. I’m going to bless someone who we don’t bless very often. His name is Harry Potter. (Audience laughs) I’m going to bless him for this moment where he feels really stupid for having thought that Dumbledore would have let everyone drown. (Music ends) And that’s because I’m a younger sibling, and my brother, whose birthday it is today - Happy Birthday, James - he really liked playing me for a fool when I was a kid. I was just like so gullible and I fell for it every time. And I like learned very quickly to be very cynical about everything that he told me, and then I think as I grew up, I learned to be cynical of what institutions told me and kind of hold myself away. And I don’t think that makes cynicism right, even though sometimes it’s necessary. I think what’s right and what’s beautiful is to believe people when they tell you things, and to like earnestly meet someone where they are. And so I want to bless Harry for being earnest and for like hearing something and believing that it was true. And I hope for myself and for everyone that we can find a little bit of that earnestness in our lives.

Casper: Thank you, Ariana.

Vanessa: Thank you.

(Audience claps)

Casper: How about you, Vanessa?

Vanessa: So I’m going to shock everybody… you guys want to finish the sentence with me?
Audience: Hermione!

Vanessa: I’m going to bless Hermione. *(Audience laughs)* I’m sorry, she just does the best thing in this chapter; the best thing ever. There’s a boy who she likes and who likes her and is trying to get her attention, and she’s like, “psh my friend just did something amazing.” And is just so focused on her friend, and she’s not letting a boy distract her from her friendships. And I think that especially at 14, that is like a nearly heroic feat. *(Audience laughs)* The like world’s greatest Quidditch player is like trying to get her attention, and she’s like, “no, Harry.” So I want to bless people who don’t go after the shiny thing and throw things that matter under the bus. My mom raised us that we never cancel plans for better plans, and I feel like that is what Hermione is doing in this moment. So I want to offer her a blessing for that. Casper, who would you like to bless?

Casper: There’s a moment which we haven’t actually touched on in the conversation today where Dobby reveals how he learned about the gillyweed. And he overhears Mad-Eye Moody and McGonagall talking about it. And it made me suddenly think, maybe McGonagall knew that Dobby was listening, and maybe this was her way of trying to help Harry, even from afar? And I don’t know what that means in the big picture? *(Laughs)* But I love that instinct of wanting to help, and I think that’s what I want to bless. Like in all of us to listen to that instinct even though maybe to act on it sometimes is countercultural or feels a little strange, but the desire to help one another, even if it’s clumsy. The desire itself is worth blessing. So, I bless McGonagall today.

Vanessa: Amen.

Casper: Yay.

Vanessa: Finally, we would like to bless all of you.

Casper: Yes!

Vanessa: For you know when Casper and I started this project, nine million years ago, we promised each other, we were so excited about this idea of treating *Harry Potter* as sacred, that we promised each other that even if nobody came to that class, we would sit in the room together just the two of us and meet every Wednesday for nine months from 7-8:30 and do this, and do this project. And we thought that that was a very real possibility. And so to have all of you here, and to have you make sacrifices of babysitters, and buying tickets, and supporting our crowdfunder, and listening every week just means the world to us. So I’d like to bless all of you for instinct of wanting to be a part of something, and wanting to come and show up with your bodies to be a part of that. So thank you.

Casper: Thank you very much.
Vanessa: Very much.

Casper: So that is our show, dear friends.

(Outro music begins)

Vanessa: We’re going to do our credits.

Casper: (Clears throat) Get ready... Oh, I thought there was more music coming. (Vanessa and audience laugh) Thank you for joining us! (Laughs) We’re going to be hanging out just over here saying hello. We’d love to meet you, so please come and say hello. Introduce yourselves-

Vanessa: I’m going to pee first.

Casper: Vanessa’s going to pee first. There’s more fabulous merch on the tables behind. Please leave the space as you have found it, in good order.

Vanessa: Tonight we would like to thank Emily and Maureen. We would like to thank the amazing Travis Salisbury. And everybody here at the Basilica of St Mary, including RJ, Chelsea, Cody, and Ethan. A big thanks to Megan Andugrada for selling merch for us and doing the thing for us and putting us up and just having the cutest baby in the entire world. To Jeff Edmond for conducting the music. Ariana for doing all of the music tonight. Most importantly, for all of you for coming. Thank you all so much for being here!

(Audience cheers and claps)

Casper: I’m Casper ter Kuile.

Vanessa: I’m Vanessa Zoltan.

Ariana: And I’m Ariana Nedelman.

Together: And this is Harry Potter and the Sacred Text, the live show! (Laughs)

(Audience claps and cheers)

(Final Panoply music)