Chapter 15, "The Hogwarts High Inquisitor"

"They had expected to have to comb Hermione’s Daily Prophet carefully next morning to find the article Percy had mentioned in his letter. However, the departing delivery owl had barely cleared the top of the milk jug when Hermione let out a huge gasp..."

I'm Casper ter Kuile—

Vanessa: And I'm Vanessa Zoltan—

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

This week on the show, we have my dear friend Artie Wu joining us who is the founder of Preside Life which is an amazing organization which really hold Artie’s at this point, years and years of work around healing, bliss, meditation.

Artie was a businessman, and entrepreneur and from two successful companies, went to Harvard and to Stanford and was very successful in all of the outward trappings of the world, and then felt this call to radically change what he was doing and to focus on accompanying people on their healing journeys.
And I did his seven day healing journey, just, a series of audio recordings, and it just magically—well, I don't want to say magically—it really changed me. It made me change how I think about my own life and my healing journey, and so I am so excited to have Artie on the show this week. Welcome!

Artie: Thank you Casper. It's great to be here. (*laughing*)

Casper: I'm so glad! I'm so glad you're here.

Artie: Well, when you started the intro, you went into your podcast mode—

Casper: (*laughing*)

Artie: And I reflexively went into my *I'm on my treadmill listening to Casper* mode.

Casper: (*laughing*)

Artie: And when you addressed me, I was like, oh, wait, I'm supposed to say something? Oh! Okay!

Casper: (*laughing*) Well listen, I am so glad we can take the conversations we've had off the air on the air, and so, I am going to ask you to share your story on this theme of healing and then we'll talk a little bit after that.

Artie: Wonderful.

So, umm, when I read the chapter for this week, I realized—I was stunned that it was all about dreams. What I thought I might do is talk about a dream that I have had. I had this dream probably three or four months ago—and I'll tell it and talk about its healing effect on me.

In this dream, I am swimming in San Francisco Bay. As I am swimming, I realize I'm actually following in the wake of this huge container ship. And, this container ship is actually a container ship from a movie I have seen in this last six months, it is called Crazy Rich Asians.

Casper: (*laughing*)

Artie: It is this huge party ship where there is alcohol flowing, loud music, pleasure and prestige, you know money is being thrown all over this place. And for me, in the dream, when I realize I am following the ship, I realize the reason that I am swimming is because I pointedly in my life have refused to get on the ship. That is the wrong ship. I am not getting on that ship.

But at the same time, one of the realizations of this particular dream is that while I'm not on the ship, I'm still kind of causally in a loosy-goosy way following in its general direction. In that
instant, the ship instantly turns into this different ship, where it's like this Red Cross humanitarian ship stocked with medical supplies. Literally in the dream I look at that, and I'm like, okay. That's better. It looks good. But you know what? The bones of the ship are the same. It's prestige coming in a different form, and I reject this version of the ship as well, in fact, what I am going to have to do, is I think I am going to have to scuttle the entire ship.

And, umm, I mean long story short, it accelerated my path of healing and gave me clarity for, actually, everything I've been doing in the four months since having that dream.

Casper: Hmm.

Artie: It's funny with regard to, you know, my sharing this dream, because in my actual work, I don't talk a lot about dreams publicly. It's just not something I lead with when I talk about the work I do, but, those tens of thousands of people who have come through my healing programs in particular, and dreams always come up. Again and again and again. And umm, I've come to really see dreams as this inner part of a person that has been exiled, pushed away. And so, it's gotten to such a point of, you know, urgency, that dreams are one of the last measures that a part of a person like that has to sort of come back to when your guard is down, you are asleep, to try to get some SOS message in terms of, there is an issue here in your life, and that has sort of been my experience of dreams as they appear in the healing processes of people.

Casper: Artie, this is so interesting. 'Cuz one of the things I remember taking away from when I first encountered your work was your idea of the 'lost board member.' That there are parts of ourselves that we, often for very, very good reason, have had to put aside, or have kind of pushed to the edge of our consciousness so that we can make it through a difficult situation, but in time that kind of lost board member becomes more and more destructive the more we push it away, and so to think of dreams as a way in which perhaps some of the voices we have pushed away internally show up.

Artie: Well yeah, I just think that is so spot on, because when we use the metaphor of the board of directors or the lost board member, it is this idea that there are multiple voices within us. There's the voice of fear and not getting humiliated, but there's also the voice of pursuing the things we actually love and care about in our lives, and trade-offs have to be made over a course of umm, a normal life, so we'll push certain parts of us away so that we can, you know, get on with it and not rock the boat. And that's very normal. There's nothing wrong with that. But these parts we push away—they're are still board members. They still have a vote.

Casper: Am I right in thinking that it's the integration of those different parts of ourselves, that's what makes up the healing process?

Artie: Correct, correct.
Casper: It's when we're disassembled or unintegrated that we have to live these dual lives. We may be suppressed one bit which means we may never live that life. I think about this a lot as a gay man. For half my life, I was suppressing such a vital part of who I am, and so that journey to integrating that part of myself was an incredible, healing journey, and even now, I am still surprised at how I still have work to do on that. I'm like, oh I am done with the gay thing. Like, I've healed. That's great. I'm ready to move on. And, it turns out, like, no... (*laughing*) There's still more there.

Artie: Absolutely, and it's such a poignant—thank you for sharing that example, cuz, I you know, I mean in the case of being gay, right? You're young, you don't know what's going on. There's not a lot of guidance and template. And you realize, that, if I act in a certain way, there's going to be trouble. So that trauma, or that handwriting on the wall, makes you metaphorically call an emergency board meeting—

Casper: (*chuckling*)

Artie: And the parts of you that are quote unquote 'gay' get exiled.

Casper: Mmmm...

Artie: It's like, we're just not even going to do that. And they're like, 'But, but boss, we're part of the overall life agenda.'

'Yeah, sorry.' (*laughing*) 'You're off. We voted you off the island.'

Casper: (*laughing*)

Artie: So when I think about healing, it's like this trauma, very understandably, very reasonably, has caused you or driven you to cutting off your own arm.

Casper: Mmmm...

Artie: There are two problems with that. One, it hurts. And secondly, you are going through life without the use of your arm, right? And you can get by. People do that all day long. When we talk about healing, I always say, you know, there's nothing we're going to do to go back and change history, but what we can do, is we can find that lost board member that you cut off and reattach it. And where it got cut off, it will always be sore. It will always hurt. We are not going to change that, nor do we want to. It's a part of you. But at least you have the use of your hand back.

It is not just a social justice thing. I get to be a gay man in society again, and to myself, that informs a part of your voice, a part of your action in the world. And, you know, the tremendous positive impact you have on the life of the world around you. It is a healing not just for you as a
single man, it is a healing for the entire world around you and everything that you are doing, even, you know, this work with Harry Potter and the Sacred Text and everything else you do. We are all richer when you heal that.

Casper: Well that's very generous. So, Artie, you know, Harry is in such pain in this book. And, I think I've learned a lot to read this book differently through the understanding of his trauma. And I'd guess, what would you say to someone who's in someone like Harry's position in terms of how he can find some healing in the midst of this awful situation that he's in?

Artie: I mean, for scenarios like this—my overall—I don't know if I would say it out loud, it depends on the context, but my big upwelling of just, feeling and my perspective when I see someone in pain, is that you know, first of all, everything that they are doing to try to ease that pain is very reasonable. Right? It might be misguided. It may be a little bit too much in one direction or another. But the impulse it is coming from is self-love. Right? So he is trying all of this stuff to ease the pain. Every action, however misguided or having like, you know, unintended consequences right? Is to me an action of self-love. You are trying to ease the pain. It is perfectly reasonable. So that is the first thing. You are trying, so that is great.

And then the second thing is also there is nothing actually wrong with you.

Casper: Mmmm...

Artie: The pain you feel is coming from your wounds. And, your wounds are not your fault. Because nobody asks to be wounded.

Casper: Yeah.

Artie: He didn't choose to get the scar.

Casper: Right.

Artie: He didn't choose to put his mom in that situation. He didn't choose to have his mom make the sacrifice she did. Like, he didn't choose any of that. He didn't choose the Dursleys. (*laughing*) And it's not to say that he's a victim, right? But it's like, we get this hand we're dealt. Given that hand, we're trying to pilot through the best we can. So first, it's not your fault, and second, you're doing great.

If you put me in the same fighter jet as you, right? You're in a fighter jet, you're flying around. One engine is out, missiles are exploding all around you. And you didn't choose to be there. And you're doing the best you can. If you put me in that same fighter jet, I would do no better. In fact I probably would have gone down years ago. (*laughing*)
Casper: Right? And I think that's what I love about the trio especially. And even in this situation where Hermione is really introducing the Dumbledore's Army idea to Harry, 'cuz Harry is like, 'Oh, you don't—you think it's easy, but I don't know how to do it.—'

Artie: 'It was all dumb luck—'

Casper: Right. 'It was all dumb luck.' And Hermione is like, 'No.' She's admitting her own shortcomings that she wouldn't have been as brave or as skilled or as, just, had the instincts that Harry does to survive these engagements with Voldemort over and over again, and so I am just seeing that echo of what you're saying in the engagement.

Artie: Well, also, it was dumb luck that he was wounded—

Casper: Exactly. Exactly.

Artie: And all of that counts. All of that dumb luck counts.

Casper: Yeah. Well Artie, I am so, so grateful that you are with us today. Thank you so much. Thank you so much for the work that you do and for blessing us with your time today.

Artie: Thank you so much.

Casper: Okay Vanessa, it is time for our thirty second recap. Are you ready to roll?

Vanessa: I am.

Casper: 3-2-1 here we go! (*clock ticks*)

Vanessa: So Umbridge gets appointed High Inquisitor which means that she's going to start visiting all of the classes. Ron is like, 'I can't wait for her to visit McGonagall's class.' And, so she visits Trelawney and it's very scary, and she visits Grubbly-Plank and she sort of approves, and apparently went fine in charms, and then she goes to McGonagall's class, and McGonagall's like, 'I don't know how you expect me to teach if you're going to keep interrupting me.' And, umm, Harry get more detention so there is more cutting, and there is this very sweet scene where Hermione has this thing he puts his hand in and Hermione sort of starts the DA!

(*buzzer sounds*)

Casper: Yeah.

Vanessa: Are you ready?

Casper: Yes. Let's rock and roll.
Vanessa: On your mark.

Casper: 'Cuz I'm a dad. Let's rock and roll.

Vanessa: (*laughing*) On your mark, get set, go! (*clock ticks*)

Casper: So in this chapter, everyone, including apparently Hermione for the first time, learns at like the different levels you can pass or fail Hogwarts classes which is really interesting. And, Professor Grubbly-Plank is like, 'Yes, I am a great teacher.' And Professor Hagrid is still gone. And Trelawney is like, 'Oh, Umbridge, I think I am going to die.' And, Umbridge is like, 'Mhmm, I don't believe you.' And then Umbridge tries to take on McGonagall and like totally fails and she keeps trying to interrupt and McGonagall is not having it and that is the end of the chapter.

(*buzzer sounds*)

Vanessa: What Trelawney says, is, 'You are in grave danger.' Which, Umbridge is! Again, Trelawney is right! She doesn't say you're going to die, she says, 'You are in grave danger.' And at the end of this book, she gets like taken into the forest by the centaurs.

Casper: I think it's more like a Mufasa moment, like, less taken-into-the-forest more like, trampled-over.

Vanessa: (*laughing*) Yes!

Casper: So Vanessa, we're exploring this theme of healing. Where do you want to start in the chapter?

Vanessa: I want to start in a really beautiful Hermione moment. Umm, Harry has just had to do this detention and his hand had just begun to heal and he has to just like, rip it up all over again, and Hermione is waiting for him with this like concoction, this like, brewed, disgusting, pickled thing for him to soak his hand in. And it like, feels so good and so soothing to him.

And there are just so many interesting things to me about this. One, is that, I'm just reminded—I know I just said this a few weeks ago—but Harry is just never being given the opportunity to heal. Like, his hand has just started to heal and Umbridge gave him another detention so it is being open again. We know that quidditch, to a point that you have made, is very healing for him, and detention means he can't go to quidditch—

Casper: Mmmm...

Vanessa: And it's constantly being compounded. And like, I understand why McGonagall takes points away from him for getting detention, but it just feels like this trauma is compounding upon
him. And like, Hermione can't do anything. She's not going to report this against Harry's consent, even though she thinks Harry should go to Dumbledore or McGonagall, and so she does, like, the only thing that she can do. And I just think it is so beautiful.

Casper: I mean, the whole end of this chapter has a strong healing theme because we also see, this is another moment where Harry is really talking about what happened with Cedric, talking about what happened at the end of Book Four when he's last seen Voldemort. And I'm comparing it with earlier on in the chapter when Umbridge says in her classroom, 'There will be no need to talk.' Right? Her strategy is so much around silence. And, what we have at the end of the chapter is Harry breaking the silence and talking about his trauma. I just saw a connection there between stifling the truth and opening the reality of the truth.

Vanessa: And I love that Umbridge is like, 'I have a good pedagogy,' and she is having them read in class.

Casper: Right, I mean, it's this amazing moment where it is kind of allusion back to what we've seen before when Umbridge instructs the room to read and Hermione puts up her hand. It's the stifling of conversation both about the content of the book, which is violent, but also just this whole strategy of silencing. That's what happening in the Ministry, right? Like, no one is able to speak up about the reality or their doubts because to voice something different than the opinion coming from the top means you will be dismissed or disregarded in some way, and so you can just see how with Umbridge, that is seeping into the, into the school, because now McGonagall is even saying, 'Harry you can't say these things,' right, like silence as a strategy is spreading everywhere.

Vanessa: Yeah, and you see it—I just love the visual of—so Hermione raises her hand, and Umbridge, there's a line in the text that like Umbridge has clearly thought about this and changed her tactics. So she, right, like she bends down right in Hermione's face so the rest of the class can't hear and says like, 'What is it this time Miss Granger?' And Hermione at full volume is like, 'I've already read the chapter.' And Hermione's, again, like brilliant passive resistance or like, non-violent resistance to the silence is incredible.

Casper: One, what we see Hermione doing this chapter is echoed again at a ministry level with Umbridge being installed as the High Inquisitor. We hear of two women at the Ministry who resign in protest. And so, there are these people who are stepping out the this system, because you can choose to try and work within the system or you try and step out of it and I think we see more and more people who are like, I don't think the internal strategy is going to work, right? Cuz any voices that counter the power structure get silenced so you have to speak from outside of the system. Which is exactly what we're going to see the twins do, right? That is the whole moment of their departure from the school is like, we think we can have most impact by playing by completely different set of rules and to do that we have to leave.

Vanessa: Yeah.
So I think that, as much as like we focus rightfully on the violence that is being done to Harry, I feel like at the end of the chapter, where Hermione brings up the possibility of the DA, she is doing exactly what you just said: she is stepping out of the classroom system. She is like, the classroom system is just going to keep silencing us. We are not going to learn, and so we have to step out of it. And so she reacts to this violence, not only with action for herself, but an offering of healing to Harry. And for like, the actual benefit, right, is creating Dumbledore's Army.

Casper: Yeah, and I love that it's a collective healing as well, right? There's so much talk about self-help and self-care, and I feel like sometimes we lose sight of the collective nature of care and healing, and so I love that from the beginning, the dream of the DA is one that is collective, like Harry is essential to it because he's the teacher, but he's called into that roll. You know, like one of those questions is, how do you know you are a leader? Well it's when other people ask you to lead. I think that's what's happening in this moment. Harry is being called into something that he would not—like, I don't think he could have imagined this actually himself. It needs a group of people who want to be taught for the teacher to emerge in him.

Vanessa: Yeah, and I mean like, he has to be invited by Hermione and then mocked by Ron—

Casper: (*laughing*)

Vanessa: For it even to begin to resonate with him as a possible idea. I love Ron's mockery in this moment where he says, 'I don't know if I want to be taught by someone as dumb as him.' Because Harry doesn't get who Hermione means. It is very endearing.

Casper: (*laughing*)

It's interesting that we're talking about this moment that could be seen as a violent insurrection or revolutionary fervor as a moment of healing and I think in some ways, it is because to have healing you need justice. Right? Like, there has to be some element of structural change for the individual experience of these people to find healing. It's not like Harry should just go on a spa retreat and learn to meditate and he is going to be fine. I feel like this moment points to an interaction between individual well-being, our collective well-being, and that for a healing for both of those levels, there are moments when you need to like, do some stuff. (*laughing*)

Vanessa: Well, yeah and healing is often very violent. To get rid of cancer, you need chemotherapy or surgery, right? Like, surgery is the most violent thing you can ethically and consciously do to your own body. It's so violent. You're asking someone to like, put you to sleep, throw a tube down your throat and stab you. But it's in order to start healing.

There's a great line in Grey's Anatomy where a kid wakes up from surgery and he's in tremendous pain, and Dr. Derek Shepherd says to him, 'This isn't disease pain, this is healing pain.' Right? And they are different kinds of pain and they are both painful. Healing is incredibly
painful, but that doesn't mean it's not healing. I think there are other ways that we will talk about the DA and we should talk about the DA and I think it is disruptive and I think it is violent but I also think it is part of healing.

Casper: Well, and I'm suddenly just remembering how, especially bodies, can heal in a way that actually isn't helpful.

Vanessa: Right!

Casper: Like, if bones haven't been realigned properly, like you end up with challenges for a much longer term rather than a moment of that kind of surgical violence which allows for more effective healing long-term. Because there are ways that we—that might look a little bit like healing, that are actually, to use Artie's language, it's more like shielding or soothing behaviors which don't actually get to the crux of the issue, so maybe, for me, it's eating. (*laughing*)

Vanessa: Me too!

Casper: Or, like it comes in many forms. Everyone has learnt different behaviors.

Vanessa: Netflix.

Casper: Netflix is a big one, right? And it feels like, oh this—this feels good, so it must be healing.

Vanessa: Right, it feels like self-care—

Casper: Right! And actually, it's just allowing our arm to set in a way that's really not going to be helpful when we're stuck in a pattern that's not going to serve us long-term.

Vanessa, I want to point to another place where what Artie talked about really resonated with me in this chapter, which is as Umbridge is going around all of these different classrooms, we have a little moment of insight as she enters Flitwick's classroom. And we've seen McGonagall's strategy, which is basically to knock Umbridge down, right? Which is so satisfying. And we've seen Trelawney's strategy which is just like, not have a strategy and be run over by Umbridge. But what Flitwick does is invite her in as a guest. And that, what Flitwick is doing here is kind of like, inviting in the lost board member, who when we don't welcome them in, become more and more aggressive and disruptive and like, lead us to sometimes very destructive behaviors.

And so, just that idea—we've talked about this before—of integrating a sort of modality of healing. I just saw an echo of that in this.

Vanessa: It's very nice. I'm pure McGonagall on this though.
Casper: (*laughing*) You're probably right.

Vanessa: He—like—you just like, you don't let cancerous things into your house.

Casper: Right, but there's something about welcoming in the guest and saying, like, 'You are welcome to sit here and have food. I'm not going to listen to anything that you say, but I'm not going to let you—

Vanessa: Right.

Casper: Like, throw stones outside of the party and disrupt everything.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Casper: Do you know what I mean? There's something there.

Vanessa: Totally. I think that is the right thing to do.

Casper: It's the hardest thing to do.

Vanessa: I just will never be good enough to do that.

Casper: (*laughing*)

Vanessa: What you are reminding me of, even though it sounds so hard, is that like, only eventually did I do what you're talking about with my younger brother. Like, I was very mad that my parents had another kid—

Casper: (*laughing*)

Vanessa: Who's three and a half, I'd been the baby for three and a half years. I was real good at it. And, right? Like, he wasn't going anywhere and I resisted it, and I was the number one victim in that resistance, right? But eventually, when I matured, and turned like four and a half—

Casper: (*laughing*)

Vanessa: And welcomed him into the family, right? Like, accepting that like, I am a big sister now, whether or not I like it, makes it easier for everyone.

Casper: Yeah, I love that. It's like something that you can't change about the reality of life, and it's like, how can you change your response to it? Because that's the thing we do have control over.
Vanessa: Yeah. Okay, so there's one last, like, big moment of healing that i want to talk about.

Casper: Where?

Vanessa: So, I could not believe myself, but I got so choked up at the end of this chapter, where shouty Harry makes this like beautiful speech.

Casper: Mmmm...

Vanessa: He's like, is confronting them about their misconceptions of what confronting Voldemort is like, and this just so got to me, of—he says,

"...you two sit there acting like I'm a clever little boy to be standing here, alive, like Diggory was stupid, like he messed up—you just don't get it, that could just as easily have been me..."

And I just can't imagine, like, how long he's needed to say that.

Casper: Mmmm...

Vanessa: And to your point of silence being violent, and him finally having the opportunity to express survivor's guilt, and I know that my grandfather always talked about surviving the Holocaust as sheer luck, and like, if anybody ever asked him what he did to survive, he would say, "I'm lucky," and then tell a series of stories of just dumb luck. And, the survivors get to tell the stories. Right? The winners write history. And I just think there's something really healing in acknowledging that just because you are the one who survived, doesn't mean that you're more righteous.

Casper: And where is the healing in that? Is it about the honesty of not being special? I mean, because so much of Harry's story is about being the Chosen One, right? The Special One. And he's saying, like, no.

Vanessa: Yeah, I think it's—you know this is something you've really taught me about right-size-ness.

Casper: Mmmm...

Vanessa: He's able to size himself correctly again. And say like, 'I didn't survive because I beat Voldemort, I survived because Voldemort decided not to kill me. Right?'

Casper: Right.
Vanessa: And that's completely out of my control. And I can imagine figuring out—at least I am somebody who figures things out by talking them through, and so I am probably projecting, but I imagine this might be the first time he has articulated to himself even, like, how scared he was.

Casper: Yeah.

Vanessa: It could have really just as easily been me. The only thing between me and Voldemort was death.

Casper: I think you are so right, and I think it is so important that he is saying it out loud and that he is being affirmed. That is such a healing thing to share the story of what happened and for other people to affirm the reality of your story. That inherently is a healing process. I think probably this is the first time he has said it out loud, and it has been months.

Vanessa: Yeah. I have alluded to on the podcast, but haven't expressly said, I have been dealing with endometriosis very actually for like the last year or so. And I can't even tell you when I got my diagnosis how affirmed I felt—

Casper: Right.

Vanessa: And then, in having surgery, there was this like, desire to hear about how bad it was—

Casper: Mmmm...

Vanessa: Because I wanted proof that I wasn't making it up.

Casper: Because you'd been in so much pain.

Vanessa: Because I'd been in so much pain, so there's like this feeling of like, please tell me that you like, actually found disease in there, because otherwise—

Casper: It doesn't make sense.

Vanessa: Otherwise it doesn't make sense and maybe I've been a baby and whining about nothing, right? And so this desire to have outside affirmation of things you like, know in your body to be true, can still be so important.

Casper: Yeah.

(*piano interlude*)

So Vanessa, this will be out last Sacred Imagination for a little while.
Vanessa: And you know, it really is one of my favorite.

Casper: (*laughing*) (*singing to the Frozen tune*) Let it go, let it go!

Vanessa: But I mean it! I really like it.

Casper: So I am going to invite you to close your eyes. And, I'm particularly interested to see what you feel in your body as you hear this little snippet from our chapter:

"Harry felt his face grow warm and faked a small coughing fit over his roll. When he emerged from this he was sorry to find that Hermione was still in full flow about OWL grades."

'So top grade’s “O” for “Outstanding’,” she was saying, ‘and then there’s “A”—’

'No, “E”,' George corrected her, “E” for “Exceeds Expectations”. And I’ve always thought Fred and I should’ve got “E” in everything, because we exceeded expectations just by turning up for the exams.’

'They all laughed except Hermione, who ploughed on, ‘So, after “E” it’s “A” for “Acceptable”, and that’s the last pass grade, isn’t it?’

‘Yep,’ said Fred, dunking an entire roll in his soup, transferring it to his mouth and swallowing it whole."

Vanessa: So I was Harry.

Casper: Uh huh.

Vanessa: And it was like, that moment where all of your friends are talking about how much savings they have.

Casper: (*laughing*)

Vanessa: And you're like, '...meeee toooo.' Or that moment, right? Where you just find out, like, how behind you are on something, when everybody else is like, 'I've been studying for a month, you?' And you're like, 'Of course!'

Casper: 'Yep! Me too!'  

Vanessa: And you're realizing, the like, almost nightmarish oh-my-God-I'm-not-wearing-pants-in-the-middle-of-the-street levels to which you are behind on something. I don't know, like, everybody stop talking.
Casper: So where did you feel that in your body?

Vanessa: I also felt it in my face, which is like—I get hot in my face. Yeah, I don't know. What about you?

Casper: I really felt it in my stomach.

Vanessa: Mmmhmmm.

Casper: That kind of pit-of-your-stomach feeling—

Vanessa: And the acid build-up—

Casper: And I felt it like, rising through my chest. And I think it was like a nameless dread. 'Cuz I don't have to take exams anymore in my life, but there are just moments where like, the nameless dread will just come and take me. And it's not—I wasn't Hermione in this scene, because Hermione is actually like—for Harry it is a technical question. And for the twins, they are over it. They are no longer playing this game, so it's just whatever. But yeah, for Harry and for Ron—

Vanessa: It is a mortal survival question.

Casper: Yeah, especially since they've begun talking about becoming Aurors. This has real consequences for them. And the fact that Harry doesn't know if the T for Troll thing is real or not—

Vanessa: Yeah, I still don't—

Casper: I don't know either!

Vanessa: The other moment it reminds me of is when I was in my twenties and went out with people, right, and like we've talked about this, where they all drank and I didn't and they all made a lot more money than I did, and there was the moment where they decided to split the check—

Casper: (*gasping*)

Vanessa: And they were all talking about $60 as if it was nothing, and I of course had ordered like $9 in food, and it was like a preventative amount of money, right? I was like, I will not be able to pay rent if I give you $60. In that moment of realizing, I actually have to say something, like, I can't fake this, it's just like that moment of like, how am I so off from the rest of
you? And I know why they could afford it and I couldn't and it's not because they are more responsible than I am, it is because they came from wealth and I don't.

Casper: Right.

Vanessa: But just that moment of like, oh my God, I have to do this thing where I'm like, 'I'm going to put in $15 to cover my meal and tax and tip.' It feels like it takes all of the bravery and all of the humiliation. And the other thing is like, you know, we were just talking about this in terms of Harvard students. Almost inevitably, if a student is doing really poorly in a class, it's an indication of a—a problem. Right? Like an emotional problem, a family problem, a health problem. Or, a pedagogical problem, right? Kids are capable of learning. We know this. And so, it should be, like, an itch. It should be an indication that calls our attention to something, not a reflection on moral character.

And so, the fact that he's not doing well—you know I don't know what it's indicating, if it's indicating that he has this trauma or if it indicates that he can't study because Umbridge is keeping him up late every night torturing him, or—

Casper: I mean, both of those count!

Vanessa: And! Snape loves failing him, right? It indicates a lot of things. But it doesn't indicate that Harry is lazy or stupid or anything else.

Casper: Yes. A hundred percent, yes.

Vanessa: This week's voicemail is from Sharlynne. (*voicemail beep*)

Sharlynne: Hi Casper, Vanessa, and Ariana. When you guys released the willpower episode, I just was thinking while I was listening to it that a huge factor in Mrs. Weasley's reaction to the boggart and you know, some of her arguments with Sirius, umm, and the general like, stress she's under, relates really strongly to the fact that her twin brothers were killed in, you know in the first incarnation of the Order.

Just like, the page, like two pages before Mad-Eye is talking about how Gideon Prewett and Fabian Prewett were killed by five Death Eaters and they fought like heroes, and it's mentioned later or confirmed later, like Antonin Dolohov was convicted of those murders. But those were her older brothers, and she wasn't in the Order at the time, but she still suffered that tragedy of having relatives die as part of the Order, and so, I really think that that informs a lot of her reactions, her inability to turn the boggart into something silly because of that, you know, deep connection with that kind of loss. And that idea of facing that with her children this time, it is impossible to reframe that as something silly and get past that boggart.
And you also kind see, like, how Lupin, you know, sees that and knows immediately what is going on because he was fighting with them in that war. Her brothers were his brothers-in-arms. And so, it is this extra level of trauma that is really informing everything that she is experiencing in this book. You know, it provides an extra rich counterpoint to the trauma that Sirius is living, like these are both people who are experiencing reenactments of some of the worst parts of their lives. Umm, so I just wanted to point that out. Umm, I really enjoy the podcast and I look forward to future episodes.

Casper: Sharlynne, this was such a helpful reminder for me. I think it so easy to forget about Molly's story, as a context of why she struggles in that moment, and I'm so grateful to you for reminding me. It explains so much. Makes so much sense.

Vanessa it's time for us to offer a blessing for someone in the pages of this chapter. Who are you going to bless this week?

Vanessa: I'm very excited to bless our dear Hermione. She does so many brave things in this chapter, so many wonderful things in this chapter, so many things worthy of blessing. She takes care of Harry's hand, she has the idea for Dumbledore's Army, but, a really brave, amazing moment is she says Voldemort's name, and the line in the text says it was the first time she'd ever said Voldemort's name, and it was this more than anything else that calmed Harry. It's really hard for her to do this, and it means so much to Harry and she makes a sacrifice in this moment that I think is really beautiful, so I want to honor anybody who makes a small sacrifice or a big sacrifice in order to take care of somebody in need.

What about you Casper, who would you like to bless?

Casper: Well, I want to bless Professor McGonagall because we've seen people really unsuccessfully navigate Umbridge, and she has this great line in the middle of the class where Umbridge keeps going, 'Ahem, ahem!' and Professor McGonagall says in cold fury,'I wonder... how you expect to gain an idea of my usual teaching methods if you continue to interrupt me?'

And like, yes! It's just so satisfying when something like that happens where you're like, someone gets their comeuppance, especially in a public way.

Vanessa: (*laughing*) I could not agree more!

(*End theme music begins*)

Casper: You've been listening to Harry Potter and the Sacred Text. You can follow us on Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook, or support us on Patreon. You can leave us a review on iTunes or send us a voicemail at harrypottersacredtext@gmail.com
Vanessa: Next week, we'll be reading Chapter Sixteen, "In the Hogshead" through the theme of respite. This episode of Harry Potter and the Sacred Text was produced by Ariana Nedelman, Casper ter Kuile, and me, Vanessa Zoltan. Our music is by Ivan Pyzow and Nick Bohl, and we are, for just a few more weeks, a part of the Panoply Network. You can find ours and other great shows on Panoply.fm. This week, we'd like to thank Sharlynne Green for sending in this week's voicemail, Julia Argy, Bridget Goggin, Danny Eagan, and Stephanie Paulsell. We'll talk to you next week.

Casper: Thanks everyone!

("Theme music ends")

Vanessa: The line in the text isssss... Mer mer merrrr...

Casper: Moldy foldy

Vanessa: That—the line in the text is moldy voldy, and then Harry goes thank God (*chatting in background*) (*laughing*)

Casper: Holy moly poldy. And than I want to scold thee.

Vanessa: And then— (*laughing*) And, umm...

("Panoply theme")