Harry Potter and The Sacred Text 5.16 – The Hog’s Head: Respite

[begin background music]

Vanessa: “Hermione made no mention of Harry giving Defense Against the Dark Arts lessons for two whole weeks after her original suggestion.” [begin intro music] “Harry’s detentions with Umbridge were finally over. He doubted whether the words etched on the back of his hand would ever fade entirely...” I’m Vanessa Zoltan.

Casper: And I’m Casper Ter Kuile

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

[intro music ends]

Casper: So, Vanessa, our theme this week is Respite. What story do you have for us?

Vanessa: So I’m going to tell a slightly different version of a story that I’ve told once before ...

Casper: Oooh.

Vanessa: Which is about the time that I went to Peru with my friend, Emmy, who listens every week to this podcast—Hi, Emmy!—Emmy and I decided that we were going to Machu Pichu, but we decided we were going to do this in, like, this grand way. And as our listeners know, I love to walk. Emmy loves to bike. And so, because I love Emmy, I let her pick this, like, adventure travel situation, in which we mountain-biked and then walked. So on day 1 of this travel to Machu Pichu situation, we were mountain-biking in the mountains outside of Cusko, which are, like pretty significant mountains. These are not, like, hills; these are mountains. And I HATED IT! I mean, like I HATED IT! I hated it so much that I was, like, way in front of everybody, not because I was in such better shape but because I was like, “Views are for nerds; I’m going to get to the next town as quickly as possible, so that this is over.” And what ended up happening is that my front tire blew. And this is the part of the story I’ve told before where, like, I flipped over, and got a minor concussion, and it was, like, a pretty bad accident. But, I remember once it was clear that I was OK, how relieved I was that I couldn’t get back on the bike.

[Casper laughs]

Vanessa: I was like, “Oh, no! I can’t do it anymore! My bike is damaged!” Now, would I do this again for the break that I got? NO. I would not flip my bike, and give myself a concussion, and bust my face up for this. Nor was it, like a conscious choice to do it. But the respite that I got from the hours of more biking I would have had to do was such a gift to me in that moment. And so I’m really interested in the contextualization of when something is a respite and when it isn’t, when it’s actually, like, violent, or a punishment.

Casper: Yeah, this doesn’t happen in this chapter, but I think of, like, the twins and their new product line of Skyving Snackboxes. Like, no one wants to throw up on cue, but if it gets you out of Professor Bins’s homework, I’m down!
Vanessa: Right, exactly. Nobody wants to, like, have their front tire blow …

Casper: Unless you’re hanging out with Emmy, in which case …

Vanessa: It wasn’t the hanging out with Emmy, it was that she picked this bike company—I also love to city-bike, I just don’t like to mountain-bike.

Casper: That’s something we can agree on.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Casper: I’ll tell you something else we can agree on …

Vanessa: That these transition jokes are amazing?

Casper: Haha! It’s time for the 30-second recap.

Vanessa: Which is a respite from the rest of the episode.

Casper: That’s true. I feel like the 30-second recaps are our, like, Shakespearean Gravedigger Moments.

Vanessa: I think that’s right.

Casper: Yeah. And you really only need one every play.

Vanessa: Like in Macbeth when they do the electric slide … So Casper, it is your turn to do the 30-second recap, are you ready?

Casper: I’m rrrrready!

Vanessa: OK, on your mark, get set, go!

[clock begins]

Casper: So um uh … she hasn’t been brought up for awhile, but let’s talk again about Defense Against the Dark Arts. It’s not called the DA but it’s happening. So they’re like, “Whoe’s coming?” and she’s like, “Well, I’ve invited some people,” and Hermione’s like, “OK well, let’s go to Hogsmead and we’ll do it there—it’s going to be great! No, not the 3 Broomsticks because a lot of people there so we’ll go to the Hog’s Head.” But, like, they enter and it’s like freaky and “Who is this barman?” and then there’s someone dressed up as a witch, and Zakarius Smith is annoying, and, but they plan it, and, like, she makes everyone sign their names, and everyone’s like, “Oh, my God, we’re part of a secret society!” and then they return. [buzzing sound] Al right, Vanessa, your turn.

Vanessa: Kay.

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

[long buzzing sound]

Vanessa: So it turns out that Ginny does not have a crush on Harry anymore. Ginny is with this guy Michael and that’s how so many people get recruited. Ron gets really upset that Ginny has a boyfriend and that he didn’t even know about it, and he doesn’t even know that he has feelings for Hermione though, so he’s not really, like, up on things. Cho tries to stay behind in order to flirty-flirt with Harry a
little bit more but her friend totally gets in the way, terrible wingperson, and is like tapping her foot, and so Cho goes away, at the end of the chapter Hermione tells Harry that Cho has a crush on her and Hogsmead has just never looked more beautiful.

Casper: [sighs]
-long buzzing sound]
Casper: Again, the friends getting in the way!
Vanessa: I know.
Casper: So many friends ... Don’t have friends, people!
Vanessa: [laughs] I know. It gets in the way of your love life. Ditch your friends; date. Because high school boyfriends are forever, but friends come and go.

[Casper and Vanessa laugh]

Casper: So Vanessa, so where did you see this theme of respite (or in American respitt) in the chapter?
Vanessa: [laughs] So, The Hog’s Head, right? Like, the title of the chapter. Hogsmead weekends are supposed to be respites, right? All weekends, to some extent, are sabbaths. But Hogsmead is, like, a sabbath of sabbaths.
Casper: Mmmm.
Vanessa: in that, you’re not just getting a break from your daily schedule, but you’re also getting a separation of place. And so, you’re not going to run into Professor Snape and be reminded of the homework that you have to do because you’re in Honeydukes. And instead of being a respite on this weekend, not only does Harry have to step into this leadership role, but, in fact, he’s put into a situation in which he’s having to defend his trauma once again. And so, my heart just breaks for him, that feeling when you, like, have to work for some reason, like 17 days in a row? It’s like, you just need a break. This poor kid. Basically, I think this book should be retitled: “Harry Potter, That Poor Kid, Just Give Him a Break.”

Casper: [laughs] But I do think this is a break. I do think he gets a respite here. Because he has agency. There’s something exciting happening, right? It feels good to do something to resist Umbridge: We hear at one point in the text. And, I think, in fact so we think that often leaving the place that we’re in is going to solve the issues that we’re struggling with in our everyday life, right? We go on vacation because everything’s going to be different there. John Cabbot-Zinh says, like, Everywhere you go, there you are. Which, I still make that mistake every time. I’m like, “I’m going to be so different in 2019.” “I’m like, “If I move, I’m going to be so different.” I’m telling myself that story actually like right now about moving house. So I feel like what changes is the power dynamic. Harry’s not just suffering and making it through Umbridge’s detention and blah-blah-blah, but, like even if it’s painful, he is getting to, like, do something.

Vanessa: Is that respite, though? I guess it depends on how e define it. If we define it as “an interruption of a monotonous form of suffering”, then yes, I think you’re right. But if we think of it is restful, or “an opportunity to heal from that suffering”, then I don’t think he’s quite healing here. I think
he’s strengthening other muscles, or whatever metaphor we want to use, but I don’t see this as healing for him in the same way that that moment we talked about last week is, with Hermione finally saying Voldemort and with him finally able to be honest. He doesn’t feel quite comfortable telling his whole story here. He’s performing still.

Casper: OH, a hundred percent. I mean, when we look at the meaning of respite, it’s often about a short period of relief from something unpleasant. It’s not like rest or relaxation which is a much more long-term experience. Respite—or respite—feels like it is temporary by nature. And so whatever it is, whether it’s about being in a different place, or feeling safer because he’s away from the clutches of Umbridge, he still has to come back.

Vanessa: Right. The difference that I see between something like respite and healing is that respite is ... but like, if you’re in the middle of running a marathon, you stop for a minute; you stretch your quads; you have some water, right; but the distance isn’t getting any shorter. You’re just going to have to start running again. And you wouldn’t necessarily be able not to finish the race if you didn’t stop for those couple of minutes. So it’s sort of helps you toward your goal, but not materially.

Casper: Yeah, I like that. So instead of taking a step forward, you might be taking a step to the side. And then, like, returning to the fray of whatever busyness is going on.

Vanessa: Yeah. So I just ... I still don’t know, is the Hog’s Head opportunity is one for respite or one for something else?

Casper: Well, the thing that interests me is that maybe only when we take that side-step or we have a moment of respite or we go off-site to Hogsmead, something new can happen. And I think that’s maybe what’s most interesting about ... even if during the marathon you’re just taking a deep breath—you’re stretching your quads—a new capacity, or a new “something” comes into you that then helps you go the distance. And if you didn’t take a breath—right?—there wasn’t that moment of respite, then you actually wouldn’t make it.

Vanessa: Yeah, well, and what happens in a race is that when you step off to the side you start meeting new people. And, like, Harry is learning names of new people, right? So, like, I think it gives us the opportunity to change.

Casper: Hmmmm.

Vanessa: I think it gets really hard to change if you’re just on a path, right?

Casper: I love that.

Vanessa: The more you walk on a certain path, the more well-trodden it becomes. And you just stop thinking about things. And so I think that taking a respite gives you an opportunity to come back different, right? It’s like the joy of going on vacation is, in part, like you eat a different thing for breakfast every morning. And then you come back and you’re like, “Why do I eat oatmeal every morning? I’m going to start having yogurt.” It creates an opportunity for change that like, if you’re just making your grocery list every week, you’re going to just put oatmeal on the list every week.

Casper: A hundred percent. So this is one of the reasons why I love doing my Tech Sabbath, which I know you started doing as well. Listeners know that like I turn off my phone and my laptop and try and have 24 hours without using screens or tech. What I love about it is that it gives me that moment of
respite where suddenly it’s like, not like I have new ideas but, like, ideas that have been there for awhile get to often bubble up.

Vanessa: Yep.

Casper: And so I’ll journal on a Saturday in a way that I don’t during the rest of the week, and I’ll be like, “Oh, that would be a cool project.” Or “OH, I should do that event.” Or “Oh, this would be interesting to read or learn about.” And it gives you space for all this cool stuff that may be bubbling up that is a bit trapped with every day, whether it’s the grocery store or a new career that you want to plan. Like, it just gives that little bit of space for it to emerge.

Vanessa: Yeah, it’s why I used to listen to podcasts even while showering. And I don’t anymore because just having that 15 minutes of quiet, something always occurs to me in that time of quiet.

Casper: And what’s amazing is that we are really the first generation where it’s that intense. Like you might have had the radio on 20, 50 years ago but like, just the intensity of sound that’s like through our ears every moment of the day, I find myself feeling like a little weird when I don’t have something playing.

Vanessa: It feels like a waste of time if I’m not listening.

Casper: [crosstalk] Right, right! I should be getting something done!

Vanessa: I feel guilty. It’s like, I have so many great podcasts to listen to. I have so many great audiobooks to listen to. There’s so much music that I enjoy listening to that ... like, why would I waste times with my own thoughts? It becomes like this value judgment where respite feels indulgent, when really we have to start seeing it as necessary.

Casper: And we see that in these chapters that we’re reading right now. Because the boys are struggling with the amount of work that they’ve got. There’s quidditch practice for Ron, right? Harry’s had these awful detentions with Umbridge. And you can see them—that internal narrative of “OH we’ve got to do Snape’s essay. We’ve got to do this thing for Bins.” They don’t do it all because it’s basically impossible. And I think that, like, we’re just not meant to work this hard. That’s not what life is about.

Vanessa: Well, like I think we see it also with Sirius, right?

Casper: Hmmmm.

Vanessa: Sirius is not given respite from another form of imprisonment in Grimmaud Place. And I understand why Dumbledore says that he has to stay inside. But I think that the fact that he isn’t given any break from it is I think why he begins acting recklessly.

Casper: Yeah, yeah.

Vanessa: And with great cost. And I’m not saying that there’s like an easy way that Dumbledore can solve this, but couldn’t it be somebody in the Order’s job to quote unquote walk the dog every day?

Casper: OH, there are a hundred ways that you could do that. Like, come on, Dumbledore. And I know that this is a small problem; Dumbledore’s fighting Fascism around the world, but still.
Vanessa: But it’s not a small problem. We do have to build in tech sabbaths, right? We have to build in respite as part of the plan. I mean, like we talked about it a couple of weeks ago where Tonx says, “Look, I just can’t be on duty anymore.” And I understand that there are a limited number of people in the order, but if you’re not going to allow people to take breaks, they’re going to burn out. And we just see that with Sirius, and so he acts recklessly, and there are dire consequences.

Casper: So let me say something that’s going to surprise you: This is why Hermione’s a genius. Because, I mean, what she’s doing is like saying, “Listen, I am interrupting the Defense against the Dark Arts classes; Harry’s standing up to Umbridge. This is not a sustainable solution. We need to expand the number of people who are going to be part of this.” The hard thing can be when the responsibility is on your shoulders to be like, “I literally cannot stop.” And when we’re in those situations, I don’t know, as hard as it is what we should be looking to do is to spread the responsibility, right? I mean, how do you bring other people in to carry the load with you? Because otherwise, you know, there’s that classic proverb of If you want to go fast you can go alone, but if you want to go far you have to go together.

We mentioned briefly the barman at the Hog’s Head. This is an exciting moment because we meet Aberforth, Dumbledore’s brother of course—and the text tells us that Harry had the impression that even the barman was listening, which of course he is. And so, as we have Dumbledore’s absence throughout this book, here we have the presence of his brother. I just found it interesting to think about, like, missing brothers, right? We’re having this conversation about Percy and the Ministry. We learn later that Aberforth has this separation from Dumbledore. And so I just love that echo of presence while we’re thinking of absence. Yeah, I don’t know what to make of that, but it was fun to notice.

Vanessa: Well, it was the first time that it occurred to me that for two brothers who don’t speak, they sure do live close to one another.

Casper: It’s so true. [laughs]

Vanessa: Right? Like Aberforth must hear Dumbledore’s name all the time. He’s like in the shadow of Hogwarts. Yeah, talk about something that he doesn’t get a respite from. But he is choosing to set up shop there, quite literally.

Casper: So Vanessa, where else do you see this theme of respite?

Vanessa: So you spoke about this a little bit, that you never get a break from yourself.

Casper: [laughs] It’s so true.

Vanessa: And so I saw this really acutely. At the beginning of them entering the Hog’s Head, two things happen: one is that Harry’s lightning scar gets recognized by the proprietor. And the other is that Ron gets really excited that they’ll probably serve to underage people here.

Casper: It’s such a Ron moment. I’m like, good for you, Ron!

Vanessa: And he’s like, “I’ve always want to try fire whiskey.” And even though he’s in a different place, Hermione reminds him, “You’re a prefect; you can’t behave like that.”

Casper: Hmmm.
Vanessa: And so it’s even when you’re not in a place where you wear that hat, those identities follow you. He doesn’t stop being a prefect just because he’s not at Hogwarts.

Casper: And what’s interesting about the two things you’re drawing attention to is that one is embodied, right? It’s physically on his face. And the other one is an identity that he could wear or not wear, depending on who he’s with. Because if he was like with his brothers, Fred and George would be like goading him into doing it if they were in a different pub somewhere without Hermione. And so there are elements of ourselves that we can forget, right? That we can leave behind, where it’s contextual on the institutions or people we’re engaging with. And there are just other things that follow us around forever, and we’ve talked a lot about the tattoos from the Nazi death camps. That is physically on someone’s body and can never leave.

Vanessa: But here’s the thing. So like my grandparents all handled their tattoos very differently. And I sort of feel that way with Harry. Like, Harry could take up wearing a baseball cap.

Casper: Or grow his hair.

Vanessa: Well his hair doesn’t behave. It’s always shaking up. But like, buy some concealer!

Casper: Men’s makeup is getting very popular now.

Vanessa: I just … Like there are ways to pull attention from his scar. He can’t get rid of the scar but he doesn’t always have to be having these moments.

Casper: And there’s this really intense thing that he’s getting a new scar on his hand. And the chapter tells us that at this point he’s not sure if it will really go away. And so that scarring is just growing and growing in a way that is very noticeable, right? I mean the back of your hand is a place that’s super visible.

Vanessa: Right. There’s like less and less of an opportunity of respite from his body. He does seem to have a very different relationship with each of these scars, right? The lightning bolt scar is this identifier. He is the boy who lived. It’s the thing that makes him noticeable as famous for something that he had no control over.

Casper: Right. He had no agency in it; it happened to him before he was conscious of who he was.

Vanessa: And, like he lost his parents. Like all of these negative things are being associated with it. And as a kid who’s trying to blend in, it’s the thing that makes him obviously him. Whereas he has a seemingly different relationship with the scar forming on his hand. In the previous chapter, when he and Cho are in the owlery, he’s deciding whether or not to show it off to her. Right? We don’t find out why, like what that’s motivated by, if it’s just motivated by sheer awkwardness of like, “I’ve already talked to you about the weather; the only other new thing in my life is this scar so let’s talk about that.” But he would never want to talk to Cho about his lightning scar.

Casper: Hmmmm. That’s interesting. And of course, I mean, he is suffering from abuse in this moment. But there is something very interesting in how it relates to … There’s some very complicated element that he’s earning something here. Which I’m hesitating to say just because of the implications of worrying. But I feel like he can take pride in this scar from Umbridge because he’s standing up to her, in a way that he never feels like he deserves that comes with the scar on his forehead.
Vanessa: He’s also enduring the torture without complaining about it; he’s endured this pain sort of manfully.

Casper: Right. I was going to go to masculinity because I think actually that’s the differentiator in a way. He is withstanding hardship silently and stoically while the other one, he was a baby.

Vanessa: [crosstalk] He was a baby, right. And just... Scars are interesting because of the difference between a scar and a wound. Right? Is that you don’t get respite from it. It follows you for the rest of your life. That’s what makes a scar a scar.

Casper: What if we saw the second scar, Umbridge’s scar, as a wound rather than a scar? Because we don’t know if that really does stay with him for the rest of the books? Let’s keep our eyes open for that.

[music interlude for Spiritual Practice]

Casper: So, it’s time for our spiritual practice, Vanessa, and we are moving on to Havruta.

Vanessa: Woo!

Casper: Woo! So, in some ways, our whole podcast project is a Havruta project because Havruta is the art of discussing and debating and talking about a text. And there was recently this awesome gathering of Jewish educational professionals in San Diego. And one of them drew me this beautiful diagram which helped me understand what we do every week. Which is a triangle, And each of the points is You, Me, and the Text. And the conversation that we’re having, and the true Havruta conversation and wisdom, lives in the middle of that triangle. So what we’re going to do is to do that a little bit more intentionally. I’m going to ask you a question and we’re going to have a conversation between you, me, and the text and see where we can find the truth.

Vanessa: Perfect.

Casper: So my question is this: WE see a real brief moment of real conflict between Hermione and Luna. And I’ll read you the moment that I’m thinking about. Luna says:

“‘Well, after all, Cornelius Fudge has got his own private army.’

‘What?’ said Harry, completely thrown by this unexpected piece of information.

‘Yes, he’s got an army of heliophaths,’ said Luna solemnly.

‘No, he hasn’t,’ snapped Hermione.

‘Yes, he has,’ said Luna.

‘What are heliophaths?’ asked Neville, looking blank.

‘They’re spirits of fire,’ said Luna, her protuburent eyes widening so that she looked madder than ever. ‘great, tall, flaming creatures that gallop across the ground burning everything in front of...’

‘They don’t exist, Neville,’ said Hermione tartly.

So my friend, Amy, pointed this out to me as really a kind of a conversation between a kind of staunch atheist and a staunch believing religious person; that there are completely two separate worldviews that are clashing here. Hermione’s saying, “This is ridiculous, like, these heliopath creatures do not exist,”
and Luna’s saying, “Like, no, absolutely they do. This is real.” So my question to you is this: In a moment where Hermione’s trying to build unity and community and support Harry, why is she coming down so hard on Luna? She’s not even letting Luna finish her sentence; she’s cutting her off. She’s saying, “You’re stupid! You’re wrong! Shut up!” Why is she doing this? What’s at stake?

Vanessa: Well, in our rules of Havruta now, you have to offer an answer to that question.

Casper: To what Hermione’s trying to do. She knows that if Luna starts talking about the magical world of ... pixie horns, that everyone might become more interested in, like, those creatures or like a plot for Cornelius Fudge. Like I feel that she’s frustrated that they’re getting off track and she wants to get back to the conversation.

Vanessa: I feel like it distracts from what the real enemy is, right? Hermione doesn’t want to be affiliated with that nonsense. I feel like what’s at stake for Hermione is what was at state when, a couple of years ago, that Rolling Stone article came out about a woman who was gang-raped. And all feminists who want to be saying “We should always believe women when they report a rape,” are like, “No, do not distract this super-important conversation about how we should believe women with this false story.” And Hermione is saying, “Believe Harry. Voldemort is back.” And then Luna is saying, “And believe me, that heliopaths are real.”: And it’s like, No, something real is at stake here and we are going to get looped into your personal mythology? That is not what this conversation can be about right now. But I think it’s more than that for Hermione. I think that we know that Hermione doesn’t like things that there is not real evidence for. Like, I’ve become real interested in the fact that, like, all of Trelawney’s predictions are true in the series, and Hermione does not go to Divonation anymore, right? If something cannot be proven to Hermione, she has like a violent rejection of it. And so, it’s interesting because, to some extent, what Luna’s saying is true: Fudge does have his own army; he has the Ministry at his disposal. He has police officers; he has aurors, right? He does actually have his own army. Whether or not heliopaths are real is beside the point; fudge does have access to his own army.

Casper: This is super-interesting. I think you’re right in pointing out a place where Hermione’s very uncomfortable. She wants to be able to measure; she wants to be able to prove, using a very traditional set of mathematical reasoning and everything else. Because I think she’s afraid of things she can’t control, whereas magic, by its inherent nature is something that’s always beyond, I think, beyond our control. And we do not know whether heliopaths are real or not. And I think in some ways there’s a real character flaw here a little bit, or at least an immaturity for Hermione, about how to engage with people who see the world differently to her. Hermione at this age was me at this age. I mean like, I thought that people who believed in God were stupid; I thought that people who were religious were weak, they needed a crutch to make it through, they couldn’t face the stark reality ...

Vanessa: Opiate of the masses.

Casper: Yeah, and that this was just a story that was made up to make people believe in institutions that controlled them. Now all of that, to some extent, could still be true. But for me, what hurts is the way that Hermione engages Luna. Because in some ways we have seen Luna’s wisdom in offering Harry, especially with the thestrels, something that Hermione cannot offer. And I think that Hermione is closing herself to possibilities of what life might offer before really engaging and learning more about what they are. You know, my experience in Divinity school was like, “Oh, the God that I thought was not real yeah like totally is not real. But the God that other people are, like really engaged with, Oh my God I’d never thought about something like that in that way. Like, my mind was opened. I still have no idea
where I land in that massive morass of joy and wonder, but I can’t shut down someone talking halfway through a sentence in a way that Hermione does anymore. And I think that’s what frustrates me in this moment.

Vanessa: Yeah, like she could say, “Whether or not heliopaths are real is not important to this conversation. What matters is that Voldemort is back and we know that to be true.”

Casper: And that Fudge can mobilize a powerful army, as you said, behind things that we’re against.

Vanessa: Right. And I also think that Hermione is doing something that especially nowadays we can recognize as so important. Opinions are valid but fake news is not. Like, lies are not. And Luna is in this in-between space where she’s offering an opinion and a theory and stating it as fact. And so by Hermione trying to flesh that out, even though she does that in this ungenerous way, it is an important thing that she is trying to excavate.

Casper: So one of the things that strikes me is that one of the reasons maybe that Hermione is so touchy about this is the whole Rita Skeeter storyline from Book 4.

Vanessa: Say More.

Casper: Well, fake news, right? News that travels, that’s incorrect. Especially because she knows that Luna’s father is an editor of a magazine, she knows how damaging news that is invented can be. She has seen what’s happened, and she took her own revenge. And so I can imagine that there’s something very personal about this; lies that travel, especially in print, have consequences, and Hermione has seen that. So many people, at least in my experience, where religion is triggering and painful, is because it has hurt them. And so there’s a good reason why people are like, “Screw you and your God because it’s done damage to people I know and love.” I’m just wondering if maybe there’s an echo of that in this conversation.

Vanessa: Right. And she’s watching Harry deal with this actual trauma of this actual thing that happened that is still being questioned. And she’s like, “Let’s not muddy the waters here. Voldemort is back. Cedric died. Harry saw it happen. And I’m tired of getting yelled at.”

[Casper and Vanessa laugh]

Casper: Stop bringing your flamethrower friends into this.

Vanessa: Right.

Casper: To Luna she says, “There are plenty of eye-witness accounts. Just because you’re so narrow-minded you need to have everything shoved under your nose,” Luna gives as good as she gets.

Vanessa: OH, yeah. Don’t worry about Luna.

Casper: The real champion in this whole scene is Ginny, who ends the conversation by going “Hem, Hem” and making everybody think Umbridge has shown up. That just made me so happy.

Vanessa: That’s what I’m blessing Ginny for.

Casper: Ahhhh!
Casper: Our voicemail this week is from Malloy Moore.

[beep]

Malloy Moore: Hi, Casper, Vanessa, and Ariana. My name’s Malloy, and I want to start by thanking you for all of the effort you put into this podcast. I want to provide a possible answer for why Harry is so frustrated by Ron and Hermione’s inability to engage with his anger. So this moment comes from the first chapter of book 5. It says: “It gave Harry enormous satisfaction to know how furious he was making Dudley. He felt as though he was siphoning off his frustration into his cousin, the only outlet he had.” And I wanted to put this in perspective. In the next few chapters when Harry sees Ron and Hermione, he reacts angrily towards them and he expects them to get angry back. And I think that it really is with love and kindness that Ron and Hermione respond to Harry’s anger in calm, supportive ways. But I want to take a moment to recognize that Harry has not just suffered a kind of PTSD from Cedric’s death at the end of the fourth book, but that he still has the lasting implications of growing up in a household that treats him not always with kindness. I want to give a blessing to Harry in figuring out complicated trauma and when old ways of coping in a different situation might not work in the present situation. I’ve wanted to call in so many times but I thought that it was important to do it now to share the perspective of the frustration that comes when you expect someone to behave in a way that is maladaptive and they don’t.

Vanessa: Malloy, I think you’re right that we haven’t been thinking about the Dursleys and the way it impacts Harry during this year. And I think that we really do see his aloneness, right? He doesn’t have a parent or any really sense of someone who unconditionally loves him who he can be brainstorming with and thinking this through and railing against and then apologizing. I mean we’ve talked a lot about the ways that Sirius is not an ideal godfather but I think that obviously that the Dursleys are also not ideal foster parents. And so, Dumbledore is missing—there’s just such an absence of adults in his life—McGonogall is telling him to listen to Umbridge. Harry really doesn’t have an adult in his back pocket here, and I can’t imagine being 15 and feeling that way.

Casper: I love how you said “not ideal foster parents.”

Vanessa: They’re not.

Casper: They’re really not.

Vanessa: I’d die in that hell; they’re not ideal.

Casper: Vanessa, it’s time for us to bless someone from the pages of this chapter. And we haven’t really talked much about some of the characters whom we meet in the Hog’s Head, but I loved meeting Anthony Goldstein. Hermione’s midway through a point, and he just says from the back of the room, “Here! Here!” Which both says that he’s super-posh, but also reminded me of one of my favorite YouTube videos about how to start a movement, which tracks how one guy on this field, like on this hill, starts dancing, like weirdly and wildly. And suddenly, there’s this second person who joins him. And the movement is started when the second person joins the first. Because, no longer is there a weird loner in a field, now there’s two. And very very quickly there’s a third and a fourth. And then these crowds descend and suddenly there’s a rave happening in a meadow. And yes, you need one person who is brave and goes first, but that doesn’t matter really, until a second person joins in. And so,
Anthony, with those two words, gets to be that person for Hermione, and I want to bless him for that. How about you, Vanessa?

Vanessa: I’m going to bless Ginny for a moment that you just pointed to, which was her killer Umbridge impression. But I just want to offer a blessing to someone who is, like willing to make a joke to cut tension. I think that often being a class clown can be seen as being disruptive or disrespectful. And I think that Fred and George take this to an extreme. But Ginny, I think we see the beauty of what Fred and George are up to with their constant jokes. They’re just at it all the time, and they’re not always funny. Whereas Ginny, we don’t see make jokes frequently but when she does, they’re very funny, and they come at this great moment that’s really tense, and she just breaks the tension with her humor. So I would like to offer a blessing for hilarious women everywhere.

[begin outro music]

Vanessa: You’ve been listening to Harry Potter and the Sacred Text. You can follow us on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. And we have started a Patreon which we will soon be uploading exclusive content to. Leave us a review on iTunes, send us a voicemail, and we hope to see you at one of our live shows or for our weekend extravaganza in Orlando. Next week, we will be reading Chapter 17 “Educational Decree Number 24 through the theme of Supremacy.” This episode of Harry Potter and the Sacred Text was brought to you by Ariana Nedelman, Casper Ter Kuile, and Vanessa Zoltan. Our music is by Ivan Pyzow and Nick Bohl.

Casper: Thanks to Malloy More for this week’s voicemail and to Julia Argie, Brigitte Doggen, Denny Aigen, and Stephanie Paulsell. We’ll see you all next week.

Vanessa: Bye!