Casper: Chapter 32: Out of the Fire. “I’m not going. I don’t need the hospital wing, I don’t want-” He was jibbering as he tried to pull away from Professor Tofty who was looking at Harry with much concern after helping him out into the entrance hall. With the students all around them starring…”

Casper: I’m Casper ter Kuile.

Vanessa: And I’m Vanessa Zoltan.

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

Vanessa: A couple of announcements before we get started. You can see The Women of Harry Potter and the Sacred Text on May 14th in Cambridge, Massachusetts. And then you can see me in London on June 18th. And then you can see “moi, à Paris” on June 22nd.

Casper: Don’t miss out. All of the dates are on harrypottersacredtext.com.

Vanessa: Casper, as you know, I grew up on the north ridge of the Sanfernando Valley in Los Angeles, California the town was called “Northridge.” Very creative. And in order to drive to like my grandparents or anywhere sort of in the valley, we would drive South on Tampa Boulevard. And whenever we would drive South on Tampa (Boulevard) we would drive past a school called: Alfred B. Nobel Middle School. And one day, I was in the car with my Dad and we’d past this like a thousand times but today was the day I decided to be curious and so I turned to my Dad and I was like: “Alfred B. Nobel, like the Nobel Peace Prize?” And my Dad was like “Yeah, also Alfred B. Nobel as in like the inventor of TNT dynamite.” And I was like, “What? Are those two things, related?” And he was like: “Oh yeah, he felt guilty about the fact that he had caused so much destruction and death in his life that he founded the Nobel committee and endowed the prize.” And, my mind was blown. And I think what my Dad wanted me to do was not just think about the Nobel Prize as a legacy but as an attempt at redemption and therefore point to the fact that there was something that needed to be redeemed, right? This isn’t just an act of generosity. Some guy named Nobel didn’t just decide: “Oh, I’m pro peace and I have all this money even though I’ve spent my whole life doing peaceful things. Right? He was a war profiteer, that’s why he had so much money. And so I’m interested in that-in that aspect of redemption. Of: “Can you redeem yourself even with grand gestures when you have caused such great atrocities?”

Casper: Yeah, I feel like, I only found out about that connection-you know, maybe in college or something. It’s just a whole hidden part of history that certainly the Nobel Prize committee doesn’t talk about. So, that will be an interesting question especially in this chapter.
Vanessa: I do think that we see some like irredeemable things in this chapter. Even if Umbridge started like an “Umbridge Peace Prize” I don’t think she would be redeemable after this chapter, right?

Casper laughs

Casper: Well let’s remind everyone what happens with our little 30 second recap.

Vanessa: Yes, well, it’s your turn to remind people first. This is a long chapter, I would be happy to go halvzies with you.

Casper: That sounds amazing.

Vanessa: Okay so you go as far as you can and then I’ll try to pick up the rest.

Casper: I’ll just describe the opening page.

Vanessa laughs

Vanessa: If you could just, read the first three sentences…

Casper: “I’m not going, I don’t need the hospital wing!”

Vanessa laughs

Vanessa: Jerk… Okay! On your marks, get set, go!

Casper: So Harry’s freaking out cause he just saw Sirius in great danger, he’s being tortured by Voldemort so he um runs to find McGonagall in the hospital wing but she’s not there. She’s gone to-um, St. Mungos and Madame Pomfrey’s like: “I know, isn’t it shocking? I would resign in protest!” Um, and then he goes to find Hermione and Ron because then they can help him because there’s nobody of the order left in the building. But, and so, Hermione’s like “No, it makes no sense it’s not logical!” And then Harry’s like: “Yeah, but what about Ron’s Dad?” And so Ron’s like: “Okay, swayed.” And then they make a plan to have distractions and then Luna and Ginny show up and then, and then they go into Umbridge’s office!

Vanessa: I think that that might literally be the half way point.

Casper laughs

Casper: Alright well, will you tell the second half?
Vanessa: Yes, of course!

Casper: 30 seconds on the clock. Here we go. Boom!

Vanessa: Floo Powder in the fire, “Kreacher, is Sirius here?” “No, nobody from The Order is here,” “Oh, okay.” So they, then Umbridge comes into the office with the entire Inquisitorial Squad and is like: “What are you doing in here? Who are you talking to?” And they’re like nearly killing Neville and they’re like: “We’re not gonna tell.” So Umbridge gets Snape and Snape comes and Harry’s like “Oh my god there is somebody else from The Order!” And Snape is like: “No more Veritaserum,” And um, Harry’s like: “Padfoot’s in trouble!” And Snape goes off and then Hermione comes up with the best lie ever and is like: “We were trying to talk to Dumbledore! And I can show you where the weapon is! The weapon is in the forest!” But no real tears.

Casper: So good… So Vanessa, let’s get into this theme of redemption, where did you see it at first in this chapter?

Vanessa: So I’ve been on this journey with Umbridge where I’ve really been trying to see myself in her, or see her in me… whatever. Because, I do think that there is an argument to be made that if Umbridge thinks that Harry is really lying and is really, like, warmongering for no reason and all of these resources are going to go to a war that doesn’t need to be fought. Then like, you do desperate things in order to like shut that child up, right? And in this chapter you find out-

Casper: Mmm…

Vanessa: That like, that is not the journey that she is on. And, this is when you find that she framed him with the Dementors and that she is not only willing to torture him, but is sort of excited to torture him.

Casper: I mean she is about to use the Cruciatius curse and is halfway through the word before Hermione kind of breaks out into her fake tears to stop her.

Vanessa: Right.

Casper: We see that there are no boundaries to what she’s willing to do.

Vanessa: And, the one thing that we sort of had respect for her for, which we talked about earlier was that she was evil but ordered and now it’s like: “You’re not even ordered!”

Casper: Because she was never sanctioned to bring out those Dementors, right? She’s now gonna be like breaking actual laws not just school rules. She’s breaking the law by using one of the Unforgivable curses.
Vanessa: And she broke a law earlier by sending those Dementors after Harry!

Casper: Exactly.

Vanessa: So, until now, I’ve-I’ve obviously not condoned her behavior but I guess I’ve been living in this gray space of like: “Could she be a redeemable character?” And I really wanted to look closely to see like: “Maybe there is like a redemptive element to her.” In the way I think we could argue that there are some redemptive elements to Wormtail or, right, like there are moments of humanity. And this, I was like: “That is it! You have crossed a line.” So I’m wondering what it is. When does something become actually unredeemable?

Casper: Well it’s so interesting because even the language kind of gives it away, it’s an Unforgivable curse. It feels like this is a line that if you cross this then, then there is no redemption right? You have gone too far. It would be very arguable to say that she had already crossed that line by torturing Harry and I think that would be a, an easy case to make. But-

Vanessa: Totally. I am not saying that like it was excusable that she did child abuse. I’m just saying that if we’re following her logic-

Casper: Right.

Vanessa: Although I completely don’t agree with the tactics, I could at least intellectually justify the argument that she was making to herself.

Casper: And I think this is maybe the difference between Umbridge and Nobel, in that we don’t see any evidence, from the little that you and I know of Nobel, that he actively wanted war, right? That he was working on a scientific problem. Now, did he realize that it would have implications? Yes. When the fact came around and he saw how his invention was being used did he feel guilt? No doubt!

Vanessa: But he was an inventor, he had over 500 patents.

Casper: Exactly and so I think that’s the difference between, for me, of what makes it redeemable or not. With Umbridge we see none of that. You know, if she had stuck to her guns and was saying, you know: “I am enforcing the rules. If I want to do something that’s not allowed in the rules I’m going to go to The Ministry and get an Educational Decree which then gives me the power to apply these new rules.” Again, that would give me some sort of sympathy to that idea of like: “ordered but evil.” But now we’re seeing that she is completely willing to break the rules she is completely just out for herself, for her own ambition, wanting to carry favor with The Ministry. For me, she’s become irredeemable.
Vanessa: Do we think that she could start the “Umbridge Peace Prize” and like, involve herself in some sort of reconciliation process-And I don’t think she would, but… this is pure evil. Do we think that pure evil is ever redeemable?

Casper: So, that’s such a good question. Because, for me, it’s worth exploring on two levels. One, is redemption with you and me, the readers, the characters in the book. Right? There’s kind of a horizontal or social redemption and that’s very very hard to do I think. But then I do love this more kind of theological idea of can you be redeemed in the eyes of God, right? Or, or, you know something more mysterious something bigger than us. Then, this is where I-I feel compelled that there is a love so big that is beyond a human capacity for love and forgiveness that is all encompassing so that whatever you have done that you are still worthy of love. And like, my love is at zero at this point for Umbridge but I like the idea that there is some other love out there somewhere for her that she could be transformed by.

Vanessa: No, I mean, that’s my instinct too. I have no faith that Umbridge is going to do anything to be asking for that level of redemption and so I’m just so skeptical. Nor, do I wanna think that anybody is irredeemable.

Casper: Right? You know what this is reminding me of? Twice a year in England, there’s a list of names released. People who get given awards by The State, by The Queen. They receive an “MBE” or a “CBE” or an “OBE” and it stands for: “Member of the British Empire.” And this whole tradition comes from people who were serving the British Empire this colonialist, you know, murderous, horrific institution that still to some extent the British economy is built on today, and there’s always this kind of like interesting side conversation about who has refused an MBE. Because it’s this great award, right? Like, you’re going to be called: “Dame” or “Sir” right? It’s a massive status symbol and people are awarded for humanitarian work, for volunteering, for science advancement, for you know sport-good things. All sorts of cool stuff which like in itself you’re like: “Yeah! You deserve an award! Go get ‘em!” And I’ve always wondered...Let’s say I run the fastest mile in the world and was given an MBE, would I accept it? Because, hello, wouldn’t it be lovely? I’d get to meet the Queen! It’d be so much fun! And, at the same time, would I by accepting that honor, would I be somehow part of trying to redeem the colonialist narrative of “Empire?” And frankly, like I don’t know. I don’t know what I’d do. I’d wanna say that I wouldn’t, but then, I feel like it’d be so much fun!

Casper laughs.

Vanessa: It wouldn’t just be so much fun, you can do so much good with it.

Casper: Right. I would hope.

Vanessa: Right? Say you did it for charitable work-

Casper: Right.
Vanessa: Then suddenly you’re given a whole new platform to talk about your charitable work.

Casper: And you’re raising money for like, whatever cancer treatment you’re working on. Or, or something like that. But, it is that question of like: “How much toxicity do we allow in without harming the body that we’re trying to protect in the first place?” If you accept an honor like that, which upholds this institution we disagree with of “Empire” unless you’re also telling the other side of the story about the deaths and the starvation and all the other things that were inflicted by “Empire”... it’s unredeemed for me. Like, you’re only telling part of the story which like only inflicts more wrong.

Vanessa: Right, so that, let’s say that Umbridge had a complete change of heart-

Casper: Right.

Vanessa: And creates an award, it's like for 50 years people should be going up and saying: “No thank you,” to that award.

Casper: Yeah, or in their acceptance speech saying: “Let me list the crimes that you committed.” Or, you know let’s say she creates a scholarship program for Centaurs. There has to be some acknowledgement of the wounds that were inflicted before we can kind of put on the healing balm.

Vanessa: But, for now I’m just really comfortable in my like: “Wow, Umbridge. Okay. Like you are just sort of a monster.” And some people behave in a way and like through getting used to behaving in certain ways turn themselves into irredeemable monsters. And I really think it’s important for like my humanity to believe that on some cosmic level they are still redeemable. But, Umbridge in this moment is representative to me of those like: Stalin, Pol Pot, like “Nope, you've just become a monster.”

Casper: Oh my goodness this is just striking me now. The thing that really I find the most irredeemable is not even her own actions it’s how she enables the Inquisitorial Squad. And not just enables them but encourages them.

Vanessa: Oh yeah, she’s-she’s wield a child army but like really.

Casper: This is, this is Hitler youth.

Vanessa: Yep.

Casper: And we always look at Slytherins and say: “Oh Snape, and the Head of House,” But it isn’t Snape that turns them into this it’s Umbridge. You know, in the seventh book it’s the Carrows. And so what we’re going to see happen to Draco in this scene what we see happening
to Crabbe and Goyle... That’s the bit I think is even more unforgivable. Is that she has made children into her own image.

Vanessa: If Snape didn’t come in...

Casper: Yeah!

Vanessa: Crabbe would have murdered Neville!

Casper: Yeah, he’s purple at the throat. I mean he’s being throttled.

Vanessa: So I think you lead us beautifully to Snape.

Casper: Mmm...

Vanessa: I am really surprised by how redeemed Snape is in my eyes in this moment. I mean, first of all, he walks this like beautifully fine line of like I don’t know whether or not he really was out of Veritaserum. But he pretends so thoroughly to only do things on behalf of The Order. While maintaining his like: “I hate Harry Potter,” thing, right? He’s like, “I’m out of Veritaserum, there would be so much paperwork if Longbottom died. Right? Like, there’s that. And so it was the first time that I was like: “Oh, does he have to treat these kids like he hates them in order to stay in character in moments like this?”

Casper: Well it’s interesting to me that he is the last person of The Order at Hogwarts at this point and I think that’s why we see him behaving like the way that he does. Because, if he doesn’t, everything falls apart. And most of the time there’s Dumbledore, there’s McGonagall there’s you know, there’s Lupin at some points and so he can be distasteful and actually be not actively helpful on campus, at all. Because, where he is helpful is as this double agent with Voldemort’s supporters. But now, he’s the only one there and so he has to perform these life saving duties including, I am sure, lying about the Veritaserum. Telling Crabbe to let go of Neville, at least, not that hard. He is literally going to tell The Order about Harry leaving with Ron and Hermione and the rest of the gang. Now, it’s an interesting question that you raise. Is he pretending the rest of the time to be so despicable to the kids? I don’t think so. I think he genuinely doesn’t like them.

Vanessa: I don’t think he is pretending to dislike them. I think he genuinely dislikes them. I don’t want to say he’s like method acting.

Casper: This is a giant Stanislavsky performance.

Vanessa: Right? Like, and I don’t think that’s what it is. And I don’t think he’s entirely redeemed and I think he tortures these children for years and I still hate Snape if nothing else, just out of sheer loyalty to my own idea: “I hate Snape, cause it’s fun to hate Snape.” But, I just like, can’t
imagine how hard it is to be a double agent. And so like, walking through the world like really hating them and really convincing yourself that you hate them so that even when you have to save their lives the rest of the world doesn’t notice that what you’re doing is saving their lives.

Casper: Right.

Vanessa: Suddenly, I was just like: “Oh, it seems like his natural instinct is to dislike them and it might actually be strategically helpful for him to fan that flame rather than try to reign it back.”

Casper: Yeah, I saw such a link for the first time between Hermione and Snape in this chapter.

Vanessa: Ooooh, say more!

Casper: Well, just in the sense that Hermione does the same thing. She is, the last resort just as Umbridge is casting the Cruciatius spell she kind of does this fake breakdown and in the same way as Snape uses, you know, her words and brains to divert the whole situation and get what she needs. It was the first time, you know we always talk about how much Hermione being a Ravenclaw in Gryffindor’s house. This, I was like: “She’s totally a Slytherin.” Like, she is cunning! The other thing that connects both Hermione and Snape in this chapter is you know, Harry’s really resenting Hermione’s sort of unwillingness to sort of like run to The Department of Mysteries. But, by the end of the book when we know that this was all a trick, she is really vindicated. And, you know, her resistance is redeemed in the same way that Snape for so long you know, through-through all of the seven books is seen at least as complicated if not as horrific. And yet, to some extent is redeemed. And so, they’re both pushing back against Harry and ultimately proved right. So that pattern was really interesting to me.

Vanessa: Right, like being right in end is slightly redeeming, even when we don’t want it to be, right? Like, when I take my dog to the vet and she’s like: “You’re a monster,” and I’m like: “Yeah but you don’t have ticks because of me, like, I’m right.” and that redeems me and the eye of St. Francis.

Casper laughs

Ad music:

Vanessa: Harry Potter and the Sacred Text is brought to you by Tomboy X. I love that Tomboy X makes Kick-Ass gender-neutral underwear for all people, all bodies, all genders, all sizes in all of the ways that you see yourself and now they have done it again with their swimwear collection. You know how much I love to swim in all sorts of weird situations everyone and Tomboy X’s swimwear is perfect for me. They’ve (got) swim shorts, boy shorts, swim halters, swim race back tops, swim unisuits in fun seasonal prints and cool Caribbean colors. I personally love their rash guards because I do not like being worried about reapplying sunscreen a million times when I’m just trying to be out and have fun. And I don’t want to say
that Harry would have done even better in the second task if he'd been wearing Tomboy X swimwear but I'm definitely saying he wouldn't have done any worse... He probably would have done even better. Go to TomboyX.com/HarryPotter and check out their awesome swimsuit collection and Harry Potter and the Sacred Text listeners get an extra 15% off with the code “Harry Potter.” You’re welcome! Again code “Harry Potter” for an extra 15%. Go to TomboyX.com/HarryPotter. That’s TomboyX.com/HarryPotter.

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Casper: So Vanessa, I have another place in the text that I was interested in exploring this theme of redemption and I'm not 100% clear on what I think about it.

Vanessa: Do tell.

Casper: But, we me Kreacher again, Harry puts his face into the fireplace and like calls out for Sirius. And Sirius doesn't answer but he hears some, scuffling in the background and there comes Kreacher. And Kreacher says, first of all like: “Sirius isn’t here.” You know, “I wanna go talk to my mistress,” “I feel great.” And then says: “He’s never coming back from the Department of Mysteries.” So, Kreacher knows what is happening and we find out later why. But part of me was like: “ You know what Kreacher? I don't blame you.” He's been treated so badly for so long by Sirius that for him-You know, we have praised Dobby for liberating himself from his evil masters. Can we not say the same to some extent about Kreacher? That he is helping himself get free by ridding him of his master?

Vanessa: So your question is, right: “Is Kreacher redeemable even though he does this horrible thing?”

Casper: Yeah like, can we blame him?

Vanessa: I don’t know if we can blame him. I do think Kreacher redeems himself later in the books, right? He changes his behavior and like really opens his heart to the trio and takes care of them a lot at the beginning of book 7. I think there is a false equivalency between Dobby and Kreacher. Dobby does a lot to free himself, Kreacher is setting up murder. Right, like The Malfoys are like sad but he didn't murder them to get away.

Casper: Would we have been okay with him setting up the murder of Lucius Malfoy to get free?
Vanessa: Yeah so I… you know… Like, I do think violence is sometimes the answer. Right? Like, I think that if you've been kidnapped and held hostage like you do what you got to do to get out of there. And like, I think that, the Elf system is like a system of oppression. Would I blame a slave who murdered their abusive slave master to run away? Probably not. Like, super super not. Right? You're not gonna get me to say on tape: “Good for Kreacher for helping murder Sirius,” though.

Casper: No but I-And I think there's a difference between condoning and something being redeemable or at least understandable. I don't know if they're two different things.

Vanessa: Yeah, I definitely get why he does it. I would probably do same thing I am, by nature, a spiteful person. I also think it's horrible and then the other thing I want to say is that there are no good actions in such an evil situation.

Casper: Right.

Vanessa: Like everybody is making compromises Hermione is leading Umbridge into violence like everybody is behaving monstrously because they have to because something truly evil is like a black hole in this broken broken situation it's all just degrees of awful.

Casper: Yeah… Is there anywhere else in this chapter where you see this theme of redemption?

Vanessa: Yeah, like, Ron's been bugging me lately and in this chapter he really does redeem himself to me. He's like earnestly trying to discern who is right Harry or Hermione and he's not just like being blindly loyal to one of them for selfish reasons. And I would think it would be very easy for him to be super loyal to Harry because the same type of dream in Harry saved Ron's father's life. So, I can imagine him being like: “God Hermione it saved my Dad's life! Why don't you believe-” You know?

Casper: Right.

Vanessa: And instead he is like really hearing Hermione also and seems genuinely like tortured by what to do and I just see him as not being motivated by ego at all but as having grown and changed and not blindly loyal. But a trying to figure out what's right and act responsibly and reasonably and I just think that that's the gorgeous thing about young people you know? On the first day of school with my eighteen-year-olds I set an expectation with them that they are going to mess up like it is fine and on the first mistake they get 100% redemption. That I'm allowed to be mad for 24 hours. But, that after 24 hours we just start fresh, it's like it didn't happen. And it is only the second/third time that we're like: “Oh, now trust has been broken, like what's actually going on here?” Usually the way that they mess up is to throw for parties they're not supposed to throw. Or just being dumb.” No, but once it was very personal a student had a new pair of glasses and I was like: “Oh those are cute,” and she was like: “Oh try them on,” and put them on
my face and this other student said to me: “Oh, those make you look more Jewish.” And, I mean the air actually got sucked out of the room because everybody inhaled at once. And it just got so quiet and all eyes are on us. And he just like kept trying to apologize and I was like: “Nope I get to be mad for 24 hours and in 24 hours you shall be redeemed and like we start fresh.” And what’s amazing is that I obviously remember that story. But he and I have became friends and he’s graduated and we like keep in touch and I have nothing but positive feelings toward him. And I just think that there’s something beautiful about being young and the way that you’re not routinized in the way that you respond to things and he just was like: “Oh I’m never going to mess up like that again.” and Ron in this moment is just like: ‘I’m not gonna act based on my ego again I'm gonna like really try to listen.”

Casper: Well, all the loyalties-I mean, usually he’s like either mad with Harry because he’s jealous or frustrated with Hermione because she won’t share her homework or-There’s like these very small-scale things that make him shift from one to the other. And in this case, yeah he-he's the truth in both experiences and is not a driving factor in which direction to go. He kind of follows Hermione and Harry to figure out whatever they negotiate and then is an active participant in helping make it happen by trying to distract Umbridge to leave her office. That's interesting.

Vanessa: I just think there's something beautiful in young people redeeming themselves so quickly. Learning quickly and instituting these changes quickly and them being like: “I'm NEVER going to make that mistake again!” And then really like never making the mistake again. And the only reason I think I gets harder as we get older is that whatever mistakes we make we've been making for longer and they're more of a habit. But, it just it made me love Ron and see so much potential in him. I think as he gets feedback and is in relationship with good people for longer he's going to turn into a wonderful young man.

Casper: As indeed he does.

Sacred reading music

Casper: It's time for our spiritual practice and this week with starting Sacred Imagination and just as a reminder this comes from the Ignition spiritual exercises so it's a Catholic tradition whereby one imagines oneself into a narrative. So in, usually a gospel story to try and have a kind of multi-sensual experience to notice what you see, what you hear, what you feel, what you taste, and touch. As a way to better understand traditionally what's what's happening in the Bible but in this case to get an insight into the characters and into the scene that I'm going to read out loud. And so it's a relatively short passage and there's lots of characters so, if you can close your eyes and find a good place where you can just be quiet for a moment. And this scene is in Umbridge’s office and we’re gonna see the team who are trying to reach Sirius into the wall by the Inquisitorial Squad.
Casper: “That was silence in the office except for the fidgetings and scufflings resulting from the Slytherins’ effort to keep Ron on the others under control. Ron’s lip was bleeding onto Umbridge’s office as he struggled against Warrington’s half-nelson; Ginny was still trying to stamp on the feet of the sixth-year girl who had both her upper arms in a tight grip; Neville was turning steadily more purple in the face while tugging at Crabbe’s arms and Hermione was attempting in vain to throw Millicent Bulstrode off her. Luna, however, stood limply by the side of her captor, gazing vaguely out of the window as though rather bored by the proceedings. Harry looked back at Umbridge, who was watching him closely. He kept his face deliberately smooth and blank as footsteps were heard in the corridor outside and Draco Malfoy entered the room, closely followed by Snape.”

Casper: So Vanessa, who were you in this room filled with people and what did you notice?

Vanessa: I was, Ginny. Like, constantly trying to stomp on someone’s feet because it’s like: “Eventually maybe I’ll find it!” Right, like it at least it’s not a totally wasted effort. And then I also as Ginny was like watching my brother’s blood drip onto the floor and I’m like watching Umbridge just watch Harry as so much violence is being ensued like: “Really? You’re just letting this happen?” And I also as Ginny got mad at Luna like: “Girl pay attention, we’re an emergency mode here.” I just had so much anger and was like not going to stop stomping and was noticing like: “What the heck is happening?” What about you?

Casper: Ugh, it’s so juicy! I found myself, actually, as Luna. My thinking is that, stamping and wriggling is not helping. It’s only making it worse the more you react because then they’re gonna hold you tighter. Like, at this point the person who’s holding me back is like holding me but not super violently. I’m not bleeding, I’m not struggling but the-the thing that stuck me was Luna doesn’t know what happened and why. I mean, she and Ginny were kind of part of the operation to you know, make sure no one walked into the corridor, to give space for Harry and Hermione but she really has no idea of the big picture. It made me think of the first World War. You know, soldiers who are at the front who are like “Why are we here? What is this for?” People who are part of a bigger effort without really being told what it’s for and why so I also didn't have a huge amount at stake. So, I wasn't going to make it worse.

Vanessa: Yeah but the point of wriggling is that like maybe you can change the circumstance.

Casper: Yeah, I guess-

Vanessa: Like, never stop wriggling.

Casper: I think I was too interested in looking at the scene of like: “What's going on?” Like I was I was curious as much as anything else and I was kind of just confused.

Vanessa: Yeah that's so interesting. I'm like, fight to the last second. Right? Cuz you never know when like one of your kicks is going to make it to the balls.
Casper: Yeah and I think that the fact that... For Ginny, Ron, her brother, is there. (It) changes everything. For Luna, I mean these are her friends absolutely and we know how much that matters to her. I just don't think she sees the value of making it worse.

Vanessa: Totally, yeah no I really appreciate you helping me see Luna. I find her so frustrating in this chapter. She tells Harry: “You’re really being quite rude right now.” I'm like: “Luna snap into action here, your like peace and love vibe is like not appropriate for this moment!” She like really annoys me in this chapter and so I'm very grateful for you like bringing us into her head.

Casper: It makes it all the more remarkable to me that she would then go to the Department of Mysteries-Right? If there isn't something huge at stake for you personally to still go on like such a risky move and ultimately be the person who figures out the transport as we will see.

Vanessa: Right and it's not like she’s drafted. It's not World War 1, right? She volunteers.

Casper: She's choosing to go.

Vanessa: Right, that is interesting.

Casper: The other thing I'm taking away from this scene is just the chaos.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Casper: I mean, the number of bodies in this office-Umbridge is in control but also not, quite. And we’re gonna see how Hermione I think is able to manipulate her by using the fact that the Inquisitorial Squad is there. Right, at first she's like: “Okay obviously I'm going to bring my guards,” But then, Hermione’s like: “Well, would you want everyone to see it?” and she looks at Draco's face and sees his like hunger to kind of have access to this weapon and she realizes like: “Oh, actually, I can't trust everyone here.” And so I’m, I’m thinking about how this confusion the blatant energy and violence that's in the room actually shifts Umbridge's trust of the whole school situation.

Vanessa: And, her authority is the reason that all of these Inquisitorial Squad people can have control right? They've taken the wands of the Gryffindors and Ravenclaw in the room. There is explicit condoning of the violence like it's not just that all the Slytherins are bigger than everybody else it’s also that there has been an authority that is condoning them holding them down.

Casper: Absolutely, yeah. It's also worth nothing that Neville is now in the room. He was never part of the plan but he defended Ginny when she was attacked and so we're already seeing Neville step up and involve himself willingly without anyone, you know, drafting him or asking him to be involved so that’s just a little note and Neville's development there.
Vanessa: I know, yeah if I blessed men, Neville in this chapter… Man, just jumping in front of things.

Casper: (intimidating Neville) “Take me!”

Vanessa: Well he, is like wriggling to the Nth degree, he is like-

Casper: He’s the one getting most restricted.

Vanessa: And he is like, disrupting things even though he doesn’t know if it’s the right thing but like, at least he’s taking action! And he’s like the Anti-Luna in this moment. And again, we love both Neville and Luna but I’m just-I’m more of a Neville.

Casper: Well, and also, there’s a nice parallel between Harry and Neville, right? Harry is jumping in feet first into this whole plan and Neville has done the same on a much much smaller scale. But, this Prophecy that connects them also is, in this chapter, revealing a connection.

Vanessa: Yeah. Well thank you for picking such a juicy passage Casper!

Casper: Thanks for uh-Sacred Imagination-ing with me.

Vanessa: Do you mean “Imagining?”

Casper: That’s the word I’m looking for.

Casper: This week’s voicemail is from Leah Holleran.

Voicemail tone

Leah: Hi Sacred Text team, this is Leah calling from Philadelphia. I was just listening to your episode on chapter 26. Particularly the part about Harry's Occlumency lessons with Snape and what you were talking about with the back of Harry's mind not being the safe place that it had once been. And, I've been noticing a lot in this reading of the fifth book how much Harry has to struggle with this feeling of not trusting himself and that's something that I can relate to pretty strongly with not feeling like I can trust myself. Um, I'm currently in recovery from an eating disorder and it has been a struggle to not only feel like I can't trust myself to do what is best and healthiest for my body but also just that I don't even know what is best and healthiest for my body. That I can't trust my own judgment on: “What is enough to eat? What's not enough? What's too much? What am I putting into my body?” And then this feeling of what I see when I look in the mirror isn't even something I can trust that it's an illusion and it's not accurate that what I'm seeing is not what the rest of the world is seeing. And in trying to, you know, trying to learn how to come to terms with this I found a really fantastic resource in talking to my support
system in meeting with a therapist and a dietitian and I think that that's kind of similar to what Harry finds when he finally opens up to his friends when Ginny says: “You don't know if you're being possessed? You can't tell what's really going on with you? Well, I can help you I can look from the outside and tell you ‘No, you're not being possessed.’” And so having that ability to trust a support system when you can't trust yourself is so useful. And then I think it's-it goes even further with Harry's journey that he eventually manages to kind of distinguish when he's feeling Voldemort's feelings and when he's feeling his own. And that's actually been another really useful tool that reminded me of my own recovery when separating: myself and who I am, my own thoughts from my eating disorder and being able to start at least to distinguish when: “Oh that that feeling of guilt or that voice that's telling me to restrict and not eat anything. That's not me, that is my eating disorder talking to me. That's my Voldemort and I don't have to listen to it. I don't have to obey it and I don't have to feel what it's telling me to feel.” Um, so it was really really cool to see that in this reading of-the book and thanks for listening.

Casper: Leah, I am so shaken by your voicemail. I think it's profound what you're saying that we can't trust the Voldemort in our head when we think about ourselves in this way. Whether it's you know, our bodies, our minds, whatever it is-I think it's incredible sacred reading. And I'm so grateful for you sharing this. Also, can I just say, like our listening community is incredible. Like, it’s ridiculous that it’s you and me in front of the microphone. I feel like, genuinely, the voicemails we received a so profound the insightful and it's sometimes a shame that we can only do one in an episode. Which is why we do Owl Post. But Leah thank you for that I'm going to take that away and use that for myself. You know: 'Oh, wait, that’s a Voldemort thought.” “Oh wait, that’s what Voldemort would be putting into my brain.” I just think it's beautiful thank you.

Vanessa: I echo all of that, Leah, thank you so much for that really exceptional voicemail.

Casper: Vanessa, it's time for us to bless someone from the pages of this chapter. I feel like there’s so many characters first of all, that are in this chapter. But, who do you want to bless?

Vanessa: I would like to bless Ginny Weasley. Because, as much as I said like, Luna's response to Harry being an emergency mode annoyed me, Ginny sort of like threads that needle. Where she and Luna are walking by, they hear Harry yelling, they go in and are like: “Hey how can we help?” And Harry yells at her and she’s like: “You don't need to talk to me like that.” And I think that that is fair, right? Like even an emergency situation to be like: “No, we're not talking to each other like that. But keep talking.” Where as Luna, I'm like: “We really don't need your just like observations here right now.” And so I just want to bless Ginny for simultaneously being helpful but maintaining her boundaries and like not distracting from the mission not like wasting time in a moment of distress but like still demanding some like basic respect. I just love that she’s like direct without dwelling.

Casper: She I think is maybe more than any other character...Wise.
Vanessa: Yeah!

Casper: Do you know what I mean?

Vanessa: Totally. She’s great. Who would you like to bless?

Casper: I wanna bless Harry. I so resonate with what's happening to him in this chapter. That sense of: You see a pattern, you know something is happening. I often act too quickly either through excitement or you know, in or just wanting to act because not acting is so painful. And we see that throughout this chapter. Any delay to Harry is more pain on Sirius which is more pain for Harry. So, for any of us who, you know, are impulsive to a fault or act too quickly. Or, don’t do a full 360 degree scan of the logic system, this blessing is for you and to-hopefully, you know, listen to the Hermione’s in our life who are helping us see that bigger picture because chances are there’s value in what they have to offer. So, a blessing for Happy.

Vanessa: I accept your blessing.

Casper laughs

Casper: The Hermione of my life.

Vanessa: Oh no, I accept your blessing as the Harry who’s like: “We gotta go, we gotta go. Where are we going? I don’t know, but we gotta!” Arianna is Hermione.

Casper: Oh, there it is.

Vanessa: You and I are both Harry. We’re like: “Nope, things need to happen!” And she’s like: “Can we figure out what needs to happen?” And we’re like: “No, no we can’t.”

Casper: “Talk to Kreacher!”

Outro music:

Casper: You’ve been listening to Harry Potter and the Sacred Text. You can follow us on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook and join our Facebook group to chat with other listeners about this episode. Or, come and join the hundreds of amazing people supporting us on patreon it makes all the difference. You can leave us a review on iTunes, send us a voicemail, and we hope to see you very soon at one of my life shows.

Vanessa: Next week, we will be reading Chapter 33: “Fight and Flight.” through the theme of inheritance. This episode of Harry Potter and the Sacred Text was produced by Not Sorry Productions, executive produced by Ariana Nedelman with editing support from Ariana Martinez. our music is by Ivan Pyzow and Nick Bolh and we are a proud part of Night Vale
Presents. Our voicemail this week is from Leah Holleran. We’d like to think is always Julia Argy, Maggie Needham, Dani Agin and Stephanie Paulsell. thank you so much and we’ll talk to you next week.

Casper: See you, friends!

Vanessa: Floo power-

Casper: Floo Powder Power, Floo Powder Power…

Vanessa: Floo power...(exclaiming) Floo-Power!

Casper: That's what I say when everyone's getting sick! Flu Power, Flu Power!

*Vanessa laughs*

Vanessa: I like the idea of um, like um, like a team of animated people all named “Floo” and they’re like

*Both together: “Floo-Power!”*

Casper: Oh, I was thinking it’s like all different diseases and its like today it's: “Flu Power!” “Venereal disease!”

*Both laughing*

Vanessa: “The Common Cold!”

Casper: Yeah exactly! Boo! Nope. Doesn't have skills.


Casper: Sniffles…

*End.*