Vanessa: We started this podcast as a simple commitment between Casper and me. Once a week we would sit in a room and treat Harry Potter is sacred, even if no one showed up. Now, we have 70,000 listeners. We never could have imagined. We also now have Maggie who makes sure that all of our local groups feel supported. We have Megan, who makes sure that we behave with integrity in the world. We have Chelsea, who produces "The Women of Harry Potter." And we have Ariana, who makes sure that every episode, every live show, everything we put out into the world is done to the highest possible standard. We make sure that we pay all of them a living wage. We are trying to be the change we want to see in the world. We are trying to only use fair trade merchandise products, to give healthcare to all of our employees and paid time off. We are trying to save in order to plant a tree for every flight that we take. And we cannot be the company that every company should be without your support. With 70,000 listeners and 1300 supporters on Patreon, that means that 2% of you support us on Patreon. And we are so grateful for your support. But we want to make it 3% of our listeners who support us on Patreon, which would mean 2100 supporters. For $1 a month you get an extra few minutes of bloopers. That's $1 a month for the feeling of being in the top 3% of our listeners. That level of success would even make Hermione happy. To join us, be part of the top 3%. Join Casper and me in that room that gets more and more filled the more of you show up. We are so grateful that you are part of this community. I'd have sat in that room with Casper alone gladly, but I love having you here.

Harry Potter and the Sacred Text 6.08

Chapter 8: Snape Victorious

Harry could not move a muscle. He lay there beneath the Invisibility Cloak, feeling the blood from his nose flow hot in wet over his face, listening to the voices and putting steps in before...

Vanessa: I'm Vanessa Zoltan

Casper: And I'm Casper ter Kuile.

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

Casper, one of my favorite things to do, inspired by Simon and Garfunkel, is to count the cars on the New Jersey Turnpike. What else can one do in New Jersey?

Casper: You can join the amazing Mike Florio and Millie Smith with their Central Jersey local Harry Potter and the Sacred Text reading group. They both emailed Maggie, our coordinator, in the same week that they wanted to start a group in Jersey, and they've become fast friends and now run the group together. It's awesome. So if you want to join them when they get together to read Harry Potter as a sacred text or any other local group, head to harrypottersacredtext.com/groups. Or if you want to join Ariana and Vanessa for some special reading, consider going to LeakyCon this autumn.

Vanessa: Yeah, we're so excited. We're going to be at LeakyCon October 11-13 in Boston, and Ariana and I are going to be making the rounds, doing sacred reading, talking about all things Harry Potter, and all things nerdy. We can't wait to see some of you there.

So Casper, it is your turn to tell a story. I am just going to lean back and enjoy.

Casper: A few years ago, I was hosting for my day job a conference of about 25 people. And I had a lot at stake in this conference. These were people with some some influence and some power and I really wanted to make a good impression. And the first day had gone okay. You know, logistics were fine, but I
had felt very nervous. But things really came to a head in the second day, when I had presented something and it just didn't feel good. You know? You get that sinking feeling when you're halfway through a presentation, and you're like, "I don't know how to turn this around, but we still have halfway to go." And it just got worse and worse. And thank God, I finally got to the last slide, and it was time for coffee break. And I have not moved out of a room faster in my life. And I headed straight to the bathroom, where I locked myself in a cubicle, and I did not emerge for the next 45 minutes. I just sat there and tried to breathe heavily and kind of like hugged myself, and just had a little cry, because I just couldn't face going out there. And it wasn't that any singular thing had gone horribly wrong. I just had this anxious feeling that it wasn't going the way I had hoped and that there wasn't anything I could do differently. I felt people looking at me and judging me. And I was reading all sorts of things into their brains, which may or may not have been there. But I felt like the only safe thing that I could do was to extract myself from the situation and not walk into that room.

And I still don't really understand what happened. And I think all of us get anxious in some moments or another. Some of us really struggle with it; others it's, you know, a less frequent visitor. But it was just one of the most unpleasant experiences I've had, certainly in my professional life. And I was reminded of that when we chose this theme of anxiety to read this chapter: That feeling of being stuck in a situation like Harry is on that long walk with Snape, where he can't do anything about it. He's feeling awful. And he knows that really all he can do is to wait until he can escape. Right? Getting angry with Snape is not going to help. Trying to run away is not going to help. He just has to endure it until he can find some space. So that's what I thought of when I read this chapter.

Vanessa: Oh, Casper, I resonate so much with that story. And yeah, I think that you're exactly right, that it's connected to a feeling of helplessness, of like being in the middle of a presentation and being like, "I don't know how to turn this around." Which I think is, you know, also where the chapter starts, which I think is so interesting.

Casper: Yeah, exactly. I mean, Harry is physically unable to move. Like, he can feel this blood trickling down his face, but there's nothing that he can do. So let's share what happens in this chapter. We've got a 30-second recap and it's your turn to go first, Vanessa. Do you have your timer ready?

Vanessa: I do. Can you count me in, though?

Casper: Yes, ma'am. And I'll do it as if I'm Professor Flitwick. Three, two, one, go!

*tick-tocking noise starts*

Vanessa: So Harry is stuck and he is just terrified because nobody can see him. Even if they go through the compartments, they won't see him. And then Tonks find them, and she fixes his nose, and they're walking up. She sends a Patronus. And then Snape is the one who meets him at the gate. And he and Snape walk, like, forever up to the castle. And then turns out that Harry has a missed the Sorting again. And then Dumbledore makes a speech, and Filch still has rules, including banning all *stumbles over her words* Weasley Wizarding Wheezes, and then they see Hagrid!

*buzzer*

Casper: What is it that Filch has banned?

Vanessa: All Weasley's. Wizarding. Wheezes.
Casper: You nailed it!

Vanessa: I just have to say it very slowly.

Casper: Okay. 30 seconds on the clock. Count me in.

Vanessa: On your mark, get set, go.

*tick-ticking noise starts*

Casper: So this is really the buddy comedy we've all been waiting for: Snape and Harry on a long walk together. *momentarily cracks himself up* Tonks is really feeling--she might say "peaky," right. Her Patronus is different, Snape calls it weak. It's really pretty brutal. And Harry feels like "Oh, wow. She's, you know, she's she's very down." And then at the end of the chapter, Hagrid comes up who was also late for the feast, comes up and says to Harry and Hermione and Ron, like, "Oh, I'll see you tomorrow for Care of Magical Creatures." And they're all like, "nope." None of us are taking it.

*buzzer noise*

And it's really sad.

So let me first say that I'm upset about this chapter because I love the Sorting Hat, and I want to know what song it sang. And we are robbed of that moment. We are ROBBED. But--

Vanessa: We always robbed at that moment. We only see it, like, twice.

Casper: *laughing* But what we get instead is a really juicy revelation that Slughorn is not the new Defense Against the Dark Arts professor but in fact is teaching Potions, and that Snape becomes the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, which is a moment of great excitement and disturbance for everyone, certainly at the Gryffindor table. And I think it's anxiety producing, you know. Certainly for the Trio. This is at least the favorite subject for Harry and I think Ron also really enjoys it, and Hermione, even though it's sometimes harder, she's still really stimulated by it. That is being taken away again. They had this hope that you know, now post-Umbridge, they're going to have a chance to learn more about it. We've already heard Harry and Neville and Luna talk about the DA not being resuscitated, because now they're going to proper lessons. And I think this is an anxious moment.

Vanessa: Well, yeah, but then Harry has the most brilliant revelation, which is, "But it's okay, because maybe Snape will die. The position is cursed."

Casper: But I think this is this is what can happen to our brains, right? When we're in moments of anxiety, the solutions we reach for are really not always the strongest. *both giggle*

Vanessa: Yeah, I mean, I think that the reason that this is so triggering is because of their greater anxiety of not totally trusting Dumbledore/that Snape is actually a good guy.

Casper: Yeah.

Vanessa: And that experience is based in their reality. Like, Snape is a bully and abusive and--right? Like, we know that they can succeed when they're away from him, but under his thumb, they can't. And so of course they don't trust him. And if Harry cares a lot about being an Auror, which we know he does--a
necessary class. And whether or not Snape is cursed in this position, their class experience is certainly cursed. They've had one good year with Lupin.

Casper: Yeah, and it's about expectations being undercut. And feeling like there's no way out with Snape and--you're so right. That long walk up to the castle with with Harry and Snape, it's horrible. I mean, Snape is brutal. He's like, "You want a big entrance, don't you? You wanted to show off again, like you--" And we learn, later when Hermione sees Harry, there was blood all over his face. Right? And Snape doesn't even mention that. Like, there was something really twisted about Snape in this scene that I found unforgivable.

Vanessa: Well, the word "twisted" is so interesting to me because what he says doesn't even make sense. He's like, "You want to be the center of attention," and then when Harry is thinking about putting on his Cloak, he's like, "No, you have to walk in, you can't hide." And I'm like, so does he want to hide? Or does he want to be the center of attention? He is just letting all sorts of other things get in the way. Just walk in silence, if nothing else.

Casper: Right. Well, and it's really revealing to me, actually, about anxiety itself in that Henry's response to Snape is not actually one of anxiety. It's one of anger. Like, he's fuming.

Vanessa: Well, I think that sadly, this is a skill that Harry learned under the cupboard.

Casper: *dismayed* Oh, yeah.

Vanessa: Right?

Casper: Oh, my god.

Vanessa: It is one of the most vivid memories I have of reading this book, is the beginning of this chapter, of how anxious I felt for him being trapped, and so thoroughly trapped, right, that he was invisible in there also--and that Harry is not very anxious. He is like, "Ugh, I'm gonna be stuck." But he is just used to being stuck in miserable situations. He had resigned himself to being stuck in the Dursleys until he was 18. And so one thing that this poor child has learned to do is just endure awfulness.

Casper: Oh my god, that really hits home. And it just reminds us of how little time has passed since this child was under a cupboard, was being abused and had never known anything different consciously. Yeah. Ugh.

Vanessa: I mean, so another moment where I find Harry's lack of anxiety so interesting--and I love Tonks in this chapter and also I'm like, "Ah, Tonks!"--but when they... So Tonks has freed Harry, and they are standing at the gates to Hogwarts, and he's trying all these different tactics to get in. And Tonks is like, "well, that won't work because of this security measure, and that won't work because of this one," but she's letting him go through the paces of each one. And again, Harry just sort of looks at her and is like, "Okay, so like, what's the plan here? Am I just sleeping out here until morning?" And again, I just think that, you know, this kid's got nerves of steel.

Casper: Well, and especially because Tonks is kind of--what strikes me about how state is she's so physically altered, right, that like you can see when you look at her--and she's someone who changes her appearance often, but you can see when you look at her that something is not right. Also in the way that she is with Harry. Gone is that kind of bubbly warmth and inquisitiveness and friendliness. And instead there's this kind of silence and bleakness about her. And he in her own life is enduring
something, clearly. I think it's an interesting mirror to Harry in this moment, to think of Tonks is also--perhaps for the first time, we don't know--really in a sort of "dark night of the soul" moment, right? Like, in a place where she feels she has no agency, or that the agency she does have is between a rock and a hard place. It made me think that the moment when she repairs Harry's nose, which was broken by Draco, it's such an easy fix for him, but actually her fix is really hard. Like, it's not something you can just magically put back together with Spellotape. It's like soul pain, you know? You can you can just see it in her.

Vanessa: Yeah, I completely agree. And you just see it, she's still so competent, right? She notices he doesn't get off the train and she suspects that he could just be under his Invisibility Cloak. But "the shade is drawn in this one cabin, so I'm just going to check it," right? Like, she is not letting her heartache get in the way of her doing her job well, but I think that she doesn't do it perfectly, right? Like, Harry's face is covered in blood, which Hermione can clean up in two seconds flat. And I think that Tonks of, you know, pre-heartache would have had that attention to detail and she just can't muster it right now. And so she is competent in the most important ways and then just not able to do the full job because of this deep anxiety, this soul-level anxiety that's going on in her life.

*ad break*

Casper, another moment that I think that we see one way to maybe cope with anxiety is with Dumbledore's blackened hand.

Casper: Mmmm.

Vanessa: So this is a real confrontation for Harry. He, you know, knew that the hand was injured when he saw Dumbledore weeks ago, but the fact that it isn't better now, to him, signifies that this is getting worse, not better. Dumbledore is not in control of this. It's just a moment where I'm so glad that Hermione and Ron witness it also, because they can talk about it together. It is not a piece of news that Harry has to deal with on his own. And Dumbledore is, you know, sort of like waving it around publicly, he's not trying to hide it. And I just think that that is such a helpful way to deal with anxieties, articulating them to a friend. You know, often the things that we are anxious about, can--you know, we've talked before about spiraling, like, they can just become upsized to the actual situation. And sort of talking with a friend can either bring them back down to the right size, or it can just make you feel like you're in community and therefore not alone in whatever pain it is that you're in. And I think that part of what's so awful about watching Harry and during this conversation with Snape is that Snape has all the power and there is no one there to go through it with him. And then he gets this blow about Dumbledore's health but at least he is amongst his friends.

Casper: I mean, that was the relief that I had in the midst of that conference situation, was that I was with three or four trusted colleagues who I could just say like, "I'm sorry, guys, I just need to step outside." Like once I emerged from the bathroom, 45 minutes later, I may even have texted them being like, "I'm hiding in the bathroom. I'm fine, but I'm not fine." And knowing that you're not alone in the midst of those moments, even if it doesn't make you feel better, per se, at least there's a safety to it. That's been my experience. I don't think necessarily that's universal, but like that you can kind of notice the you that's in the anxious state and the bigger you that's around it or something. You know, meditation people often talk about that process of watching the mind. So it's not me that's having thoughts. It's me that's watching the me that's having thoughts. You know, that's kind of some of the
central elements around behavioral therapy and some of the other really helpful tools that support us in the midst of those anxious moments, some of those mental tools.

Vanessa: Well, I also think our anxious brain lies to us. And my anxious brain tells me to be alone. Right.

Casper: Right! Right. Why do the brains do that, Vanessa?

Vanessa: So actually, just a couple of weeks ago, while in Germany, we were at a big dinner party. And I played myself in that there weren't enough chairs, and I decided to be really helpful. And I had seen a chair around the corner, so I went to grab it. And I sat on the chair that I had grabbed. And then about halfway through dinner, the chair collapsed from under me. And it turned out that the reason that it had been pulled aside is because it was rotted. And I like fell in away that for like a second I wasn't sure if I was severely injured. Like I couldn't tell if it was like a stubbed-toe feeling that was going to go away in a minute, or if I was actually hurt. And so I just left. And Peter asked me, he said, "Should I follow you?" And I was like, "No." I just was embarrassed that I had done this to myself, I didn't know how hurt I was, and I just wanted to be left alone, and I locked myself in a room. And two minutes later, Peter came in and made me laugh and looked at where I hurt myself, and it just--he made me feel so much better. But in a moment of embarrassment and fear about being injured, and I was convinced that like, I did not want to see his face, or anybody's face--and then of course, once he came to me it made me feel so much better. So I just think yeah, there's something about it, where our brain tell us "I have to go do this alone." And you know, I do think we need moments of rest a bit and alone time as self care. And but those moments should be calls from places of love. If loathing or anxiety or pain is sending you off alone, I think that we have to question it.

Casper: Yeah, and I'm just thinking about Harry's entrance. He wants to come in with the Invisibility Cloak, right? He wants to be invisible. He wants to be kind of alone, at least not to be noticed. And of course, Snape doesn't allow him to do that. But I'm wondering if there's a difficult line to draw. But certainly it's good for him once he's back on the table, right? He literally feels protected by Ron and Hermione. I'm not sure that the exposed visibility in front of everyone is is good for him, because it's actually not safe. Right? There's a lot of people there don't wish him well. So it's about who we're with as well, right? Like, are these people that are trusted and that you know want the--

Vanessa: Absolutely. I am glad I didn't stay at the table, because I came back about 10 minutes later and everybody was joking around about it, which was their way of coping. And I was able to join in the jokes 10 minutes later, but if I had heard one of them make a joke when I still wasn't sure if I was hurt and was mad that they let me sit on a rotted chair, I think that would have really upset me. And so I think I was right to leave. I just also am grateful for Peter's wisdom. And just because she shouldn't be around anyone doesn't mean that she shouldn't be around. Someone who she knows loves her and, you know, who she trusts.

Casper: So can we turn to a moment at the end of the chapter, which actually made me a little anxious just reading it.

Vanessa: This chapter in general was somehow very anxiety-provoking. Maybe it's because I wrote "anxiety," like, big on the document. You know?
Casper: But there’s this moment when Hagrid—who is late, which I’m curious about, right? We learn that he’s with Grawp, that he’s having a chat with Grawp, that he’s thinking about bringing Grawp in as his helping assistant in Care of Magical Creatures, which I think this goes into another pile of maybe not Hagrid’s smartest ideas. But Hagrid comes up to the Trio and is talking about the lesson about tomorrow. And the kids turn to one another and they’re all realizing that none of them is going to take Care of Magical Creatures. And I’ve wanted to think about this moment, because this is the first moment that the Trio have said to each other that they’re not taking this class, right. None of them had really brought it up so far, which suggests that all of them were a little anxious about sharing the news, that they might be seen to be disloyal, or in some way letting down the brilliant mentor and friend. But they’re also then unwilling to say it to Hagrid. I just wondered how you saw anxiety showing up in this moment. Do they do the right thing? Is this the first step in a process and they’re going to tell him tomorrow? Or are they just gonna let the class happen and not show up and, you know, make Hagrid realized by himself? Which, to me, that feels really insulting. Maybe they don’t have to say it right now, but before the class I think is important.

Vanessa: I will say that nothing makes me feel more anxious in the world than being afraid that I’m going to hurt someone or that I have hurt them by accident. So that is my anxiety trigger. And I make poor decisions. Like I’ve just said, I make poor decisions when I’m in a high anxiety. You’re doing a more generous reading of them than I am. I think they hadn’t thought about it. I think that they are self-absorbed teenagers worried about which OWLs they’re going to get, and I think that they just hadn’t thought about it. And it’s one of those crushing moments of like, "*dramatic gasp* We forgot to even think about this, and had we thought about it, maybe one of us would have sort of fallen on the sword and taking the class." My impression is that they’re hoping to sneak off and sort of coordinate efforts about the best way to handle it, but there’s no worse feeling than looking at someone you love and knowing you have to disappoint them.

Casper: I think each of them doesn’t want to the one who drops it. I think the fact—again, coming back to your point before—that this is going to be a shared experience, that they’ve all dropped it, actually makes the news then less bad. I mean, it’s certainly not less bad for Hagrid, right? But I think for each of them as individuals, for the Trio to realize that they’re not the only one, I think that makes it better.

Vanessa: So Casper, I feel like we’ve just given these counterexamples, though, right? Of, you know, Hermione and Ron are telling Harry, "You need to get off this Draco obsession train and stop being so anxious that Draco’s a Death Eater." Mr. Weasley tells Harry that, right? He’s like, "What do you want me to do about it? We’ve already searched Malfoy Manor." And Harry is just on this anxious loop about Draco being a Death Eater. And I think Harry is frustrated that people aren’t sort of indulging him more, and are pushing back on this; but then there are other times where it’s comforting to have your friends say like, "Yeah, none of us want to take Care of Magical Creatures." And that’s really validating. And so I’m wondering, as a friend, if you’re watching someone be anxious, how do you know sort of which tack to take? Should I be telling them "This is the reality," or should I be supporting them in their anxiety?

Casper: Oh boy. I mean, the thing I really feel for Harry for is that he’s right. Right? He’s not crazy to think about this, and to be so insistent about it. My wish in this scene is that Hermione and Ron might have been a little bit more inquisitive. Like, we really only see them minimize or counter Harry’s noticing this. My experience as a friend has been that it can be extremely helpful to have someone who really enters your--not necessarily your reality, but takes seriously what you’re noticing and asks open-ended questions that help you, as the person who’s in the middle of an anxious moment, to kind of make a
little bit more sense of what's happening. Or at least to be able to put all the blocks in a row, so that even if it doesn't change how you're feeling, someone else sees what you're seeing and doesn't immediately invalidate it or belittle it. And so I can imagine Ron sitting down with Harry and saying, "Okay, Harry, let's start with all the pieces of evidence. Say them all again, I'm going write them down. What does that make you think, and why is that important? What could it mean? What would you like me to do?" You know? And if there's suggestions like, "Come with me to the Ministry in the middle of the night and find my godfather," then you can be like, "Mmm, let's really think about that." But if it's like, "Okay, can you keep an eye on Draco and what he does when you see him around school," that's something you can easily say yes to. So I'm just missing that inquisitive question-centeredness in Hermione and Ron that I think could have been really helpful--frankly for Harry, but also for their mission, which they'll be surprised by at the end of the book.

Vanessa: I think what you're saying is so wise, that you can validate the feelings and suss it out from the reality. The only thing I will say is that sometimes other people's anxiety makes me anxious.

Casper: Oh, that's so true.

Vanessa: And then I'm not sure that I'm a help to them, because I'm rendering myself completely inadequate. And this is something that Stephanie Paulsell says, right, that being a chaplain--the reason that you're sort of a stranger and not friends to the people you chaplain is because you can sit with them and not take on their pain and not take on their anxiety. And I think that's so much harder to do with friends. I think it's really hard to take care of, you know, our parents as they get older, or watch our children we have been, because we love them, and therefore their pain causes our pain. So their anxiety causes our anxiety.

Casper: I am laughing so hard on the inside right now, because Shawn and I are in the middle of moving right and choosing furniture and living in boxes and sleeping on a mattress on the floor and all the other things. And like this is exactly what has happened over the last few weeks is that we're both anxious, so that when one of us is in the midst of a difficult task, the other one is like with a tiny, tiny, tiny little bit of capacity sitting next to them, but themselves getting super anxious. And then we both get really snippy. And like we're trying to do the best we can. So we say things like, "Thank you for choosing the curtains." But also I'm like, "Well, why didn't you do it my way?" And he's thinking the same thing with me! And it's often early at the very end of the day when we're like snuggled in bed, that there's nothing else that we can do at that point and we can kind of meet again. I love it that point. And Stephanie is so right, because we literally don't have capacity to be that for one another. I mean, literally one of the best descriptions of a chaplain or any kind of pastoral care figure is to be a non-anxious presence. You know, at my wedding, for example, my friend Hillary was like, "I'll be the non-anxious presence. I don't have any formal role. I'm not needing anything. But I'm just going to be there to be calm and present and loving. And if someone needs a glass of water, I'll be the one to go and get it." And it's one of the biggest insights I think I have from divinity school is that that is real work. That counts. And it can change what happens to everyone around you. And oh my god, I love this because it's completely changing how I think about Hermione and Ron. They just can't be that are for Harry. And what's really frustrating is that maybe some of the others, whether it's Neville or Luna, or even--maybe that's why he's liked Ginny so much. I don't know. But there's something about this missing role, right? And even Hagrid can't be that because he's now so engaged with his only living family. You know, he's got his brother. And
Dumbledore, you know, is weakened and has got his head in the game elsewhere. But we're missing that role for Harry in this moment. And that's why we don't figure out the Draco plot until it's too late.

Vanessa: But I think that you pointed us in the exact right direction. I think that Ginny is that, and we see that in the last chapter, in "The Slug Club." Everybody is trying to figure out what's going on, and she's just sitting there being like, "This is so dumb." *Casper laughs* She is not getting anxious about Fleur, she's just making jokes, right? Like, this girl is just cool as a cucumber. And I think that, you know, Harry brings her in as that. And I am so glad he's sort of finding her, because I think that is the gift she'll be bringing to him: Being that non-anxious presence like Hillary was for you.

Casper: And it's also that Ginny is not patronizing. Right? It's not someone who's never had experiences that he's had but is saying that everything is going to be okay. That also isn't right. Ginny has fought Voldemort. She was possessed by him. She has been with him in the Ministry. She knows enough to at least have a taste of what he's feeling. So that when she can be calm and present with him, it's real. You can trust her. And I think it's that mix of experience plus presence and non-anxiousness, I think you're exactly right, that makes them such a powerful and loving couple. They already really care for one another now, even if it's not quite romantic yet.

Vanessa: Casper, it's now time for us to do lectio divina.

Casper: Woo hoo!

Vanessa: and I have picked a sentence at random. The sentence that I picked is: "Snape, who was sitting on Dumbledore's right, did not stand up at the mention of his name."

Casper: Mmmm.

Vanessa: So step one of lectio is where we talk about the literal thing that's happening in this sentence. Casper, do you know where this is, or do you want me to tell you since I have the context here?

Casper: Well, I'll do my best and then you fill it out, if that's okay. We've just seen Horace Slughorn introduced, and he stands and kind of waves at the students. Professor Trelawney at the dinner, which is very rare. And then comes the surprise announcement that Snape is the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher. And he doesn't get up, he doesn't engage the audience really very much, he stays sitting down. Is that right?

Vanessa: Yeah, that's exactly right. I think the only thing I would add is that his not standing up seems to be a response to Slughorn, right?

Casper: Mmmm.

Vanessa: He's differentiating himself from Slughorn.


Vanessa: So step two of lectio divina is where we ask ourselves, "What is happening allegorically in the chapter? What other stories does this remind us of?" And I'll read it for you again. "Snape, who was sitting on Dumbledore's right, did not stand up at the mention of his name."
Casper: It's interesting. A couple things come forward in my brain. Sitting to someone's right is always the place of honor. And often within the Christian tradition, there's this image of Jesus sitting on the right-hand side of the Father, to use that traditional language. But even, you know, as a revered guest, the guest of honor would sit to someone's right. So there's something interesting about Snape being positioned there, and says something I think about the relationship between Dumbledore and Snape.

Vanessa: Well, and the other thing that it makes me think of is, you know, you call someone your right hand man, or like, "Oh, they are my right hand." Right? And so Snape is sort of Dumbledore's right hand, in that Dumbledore can't spy on the Death Eaters and he couldn't do any of his plans without Snape, including orchestrating his own death in this way that they are currently working on. So Snape is Dumbledore's= right hand. Very much so.

Casper: And the amazing thing, Vanessa--oh my god, I hadn't thought about this, but--is that Dumbledore's injured hand is his right hand. Like, physically, he cannot do what he used to be able to do with his own body. And here is Snape, sitting physically in his right hand, but also this metaphorical role of being his right hand. That's really cool.

Vanessa: Yeah, I'm just conscious of the fact that a lot of really exceptional people--Obama, etc.--are left handed, so maybe Dumbledore is actually left handed. A lot of greats count on their ability to use their left hand. So I just wonder if Dumbledore is actually left-handed. But.

Casper: There's also something about this image of staying seated, which is interesting to me. You know, it's the inverse of standing up and being counted, right? It can be seen as meek or scared in some way. But sometimes blending into the background is the safe thing to do. I've been thinking a lot--and you'll be glad to hear this--about the Holocaust recently because this summer I spent some time, both in the city of Rotterdam and Amsterdam and Ireland I CANNOT TELL WHAT CASPER SAYS HERE kind of visiting these really important sites from the second World War. And the way in which--which I didn't really understand this--the way in which Jews were brought to the train stations in the first place is because slowly but surely, every single right and piece of access to work, to membership of all sorts of clubs, to even food in the end, was barred. And so then, when the instruction came "come to the train station, because that's where we'll send you both for work and food," that was the obvious thing to do because this was a question of survival. But of course, there were some people who were like, "I am seriously concerned about any place these people are inviting me to come," and so metaphorically kind of stayed sitting down. So I'm just thinking about the wisdom of not standing up sometimes.

And I don't know--actually, I DO know. I mean, Snape's whole survival as a double agent means sitting down, right? Like, he can't come to the front too often, right? He can't show up with the Death Eaters straight away, he can't be out in front too much. He has to be blending into the background. So this is something that Snape has always done as a way to survive.

Vanessa: Well, and in this moment, it's a power move, right? It's like, "I finally got my due, I don't need to stand up." The next clause is "he merely raised a hand in lazy acknowledgement of the applause from the Slytherin table." So I think it's also performative. If standing up to greet a guest as a sign of honor, he's just sitting back and letting this be his due that has finally come.

Casper: Yeah. So there's something arrogant about it as well.
Vanessa: Yeah, I think it's a complicated move. And I think it also shows how deep into this double agent thing he is.

Casper, Step Three of lectio is where we ask ourselves what this reminds us of in our own lives. And again, the sentence is, "Snape, who was sitting on Dumbledore's right, did not stand up at the mention of his name."

What it reminds me of in my own life is, I got an award--as you know--

Casper: Oh, that's interesting.

Vanessa: So there's, like, shame associated with standing in the fullness of getting what he has always wanted. What about you, Casper?

Casper: YES!

Vanessa: But it was such a physically painful experience for me. And part of it was--the worst part was having to stand in front of people as someone said something nice about me for two minutes. And, you know, Stephanie said very wisely to me, "I'm worried that the reason this is so hard for you is because you think you don't deserve it." And I was like, "Well, I KNOW I don't deserve it!" I know people more deserving than I am! And I think maybe that's what's going on for Snape too. Like, "I didn't want to become Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher like this. I didn't want it to be part of a strategy, I wanted it to be because I'm good at this."

Casper: What you read it one more time?

Vanessa: Yes, of course. "Snape, who was sitting on Dumbledore's right, did not stand up at the mention of his name."

Casper: I was at a very, very large family reunion of about 300 people who share my surname. And it was a weird moment of being both very visible and very invisible at the same time. And I think there's something about family *laughs* that makes us feel that way. And I struggled with how much to share about my life. Like, how much did I want to stand up and talk about myself, versus how much did I want to be inquisitive about other people? Because sometimes I can use that as a way to avoid talking about myself: just be really, really, really interested in cement or about like, accident and emergency medicine.

Vanessa: Both interesting topics

Casper: All interesting topics, right? But I can use that as a defense mechanism sometimes because I actually don't want to talk about myself. And I... I don't know what that was about. I think especially with family, it can be difficult, because maybe sometimes we try and keep something a little bit hidden, maybe about our professional life, or about our friends life, or something, so that no one knows everything except ourselves. You know what I mean?

Vanessa: Yeah! Because you made me feel called to something in my step four, which is that I--you know, I talk to my brothers every week, you know, if not more frequently, either by text or phone or whatever. But I don't think I step back and ask them about their lives. And I think I'm probably missing things. Just, like, my older brother just became a dad and he's such a good dad. And I ask him how his son is, and he tells me very lovingly, but I've never been like, "How do you like being a dad?" Right? And so I think that you've just made me want to step back with all the people in my life who I love, and not
ask "How was your day?" but "How are you liking...?" You know? And then sort of, like, the bigger questions.

What about you, Casper? What has this lectio made you feel called to?

Casper: I want to think more about hospitality. One of the things I really want to do once our furniture is in place is to have our neighbors 'round, or at least invite everyone to get together in a communal space in the building. I had a very amusing moment literally on the day we were moving in. We were going back in and out in and out with furniture and all the different boxes that we were carrying in and out. And often there'd be someone walking into the building at the same time. And I was like, "Oh, great, you know, I get to meet neighbors as we move in."

So there was one man who I introduced myself to, and I shook his hand, and he was clearly taken aback. And I was like, "Yeah, it's unusual that people do this, so okay." And we had a really nice chat. And this guy clearly really appreciated me making this effort. There was a lot of smiling, and warmth, and I think he was somebody new to America, and there was just really a lot of appreciation for the short chat that we had. It was maybe 45 seconds. And later, I was talking to the super of the building, the building manager, and I mentioned his name and which floor he was going to. And he was like, "There's no one by that name who lives there." And my husband Sean later was like, "Babe, I think that was someone who was delivering food to that floor." And I realized, like, oh, my God, I might have been really the only person who shook this man's hand and had questions for him and had a human interaction in his whole shift. Maybe his day, I don't know. And it made me realize, like, it's so easy in our day-to-day life to treat people as delivering a service, right? Whether you're in a cab, or a train conductor, or someone driving the bus or whatever. And that a moment of hospitality, not just in your own home but just to wherever you are, can really just transforming experience. I know it's true when someone does that for me.

So, yeah. I'm really being called to think about, you know, putting someone at the right-hand side of your table or welcoming people into your home, whether they're a neighbor or your, you know, Uber Eats delivery person.

Vanessa: Well, I would like to reflect back to you that you told me your bed was being delivered today. And then the next thing you said was, "The sofa bed is being delivered today, so you can come and stay here." So I do think you're going a pretty long way in your hospitality, because it is the second thing you told me about your apartment.

Casper: Yeah, but hospitality doesn't count when it's family. *There is a cute pause.*

Vanessa: Okay, that really sweet. Thank you, Casper, for doing that lectio with me.

Casper: Thank you.

This voicemail comes from Kent Stephenson.

*voicemail beep*

Kent: Hey, Vanessa and Casper. I'm responding to the story that Casper brought at the beginning of the episode for book six, chapter one. My name is Kent and I'm in Seattle. I'm a gay witch. And I'm actually part of the group for Harry Potter and the Sacred Text - McGonagall's Army. I really kind of binged the last few seasons, and I have really enjoyed and appreciated the work that you've brought. I spent 28 years in the cupboard under the stairs because I grew up in a fundamentalist household that was Baptist
that never gave me the option to be gay. But after leaving conservative area that I grew up, and coming here, I was finally able to come out to myself. And I have found loving friends and chosen family in Seattle. As I've opened up about my experience to my family, I've actually had multiple members approach me with their queer experiences. And we've grown closer in those ways as well.

I just want to thank you, Casper for sharing that story. Because I came out recently--only a couple years ago--and having examples of men loving each other and being in partnerships that are so beautiful is really helpful to me. And although perhaps you didn't approach this episode of depression that Sean was going through in the most correct way, whatever that means, you really care about him. And even imagining that one day, I might be with a guy that, like, will research on the internet and try to figure out any way that he can help for me is really beautiful, and really encouraging. So again, thank you for sharing that story. It meant a lot to me.

Casper: Well, Ken, thank you for sharing that and I'm so glad. I'm so glad that meant something to you. I wish you every happiness and every gay witchy joy and love that may come may come your way, knowing that your love for yourself is the most beautiful and revolutionary of all of them, and you already have that. So thank you.

Vanessa, it's time for us to bless someone from the pages of this chapter, and I am going to start by blessing Harry. There were there were many fascinating moments and difficult moments in this chapter, but that image that you shared of him lying on the ground of this train compartment, feeling it move, knowing no one can see him both because he's invisible and the blinds are drawn, just feeling that warm blood on his face--it was such a visceral reminder of how much Harry is a victim. We see him so much as a hero and a warrior and a charming, fun adventurer and he is all of those things, but he's also lying broken and bloodied on the floor. And he is still a child. And so for anyone who feels perhaps the confusion or the anxiety of being multiple things at once, and the power of surviving through them, I have that blessing for Harry and for each of you. How about you, Vanessa?

Vanessa: I'm going to bless Marietta Edgecombe because I'm guessing that she tried all summer to figure out a way to get rid of these spots on her forehead, the way that I tried every summer in high school to lose five pounds and show up thin and fabulous with a great haircut and a great first day of school outfit. And I know it's the start of school term for a lot of people right now and I just--that feeling, you know. She could a little bit hide on the train but now she's in the Great Hall. She's tried to cover it, we learned in the last chapter, with some makeup but she can't really follow it. And now she has to be in the same room as Hermione, who did this to her. And as a prefect, Hermione's like leading students out the door. I just want to offer a blessing to Marietta, that even though she's not in this chapter, she's in a lot of pain in this moment. And I just want to offer a blessing for all the, like, small indignities that going to school can encompass. And anybody who is feeling that way, I hope that you know that you are loved by someone like Cho and that you feel joy in your school year. Thanks, Vanessa.

Casper: Thanks, Vanessa.

Vanessa: Thank you, my love.

*outro music begins*

Casper: You've been listening to Harry Potter and the Secret Text. You can follow us on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook or join our Facebook group to chat with other listeners of the episode. Please
consider joining our Patreon and be part of the team that helps move this mountain. You can leave a review of us on iTunes, send us a voicemail, or join us at LeakyCon October 11-13th. Registration is open for a number of pilgrimages and we hope to see you at one of our live shows in Cambridge on October 2, DC on November 7, Chicago on November 21, and St. Louis on December 19.

Vanessa: Next week, we will be reading Chapter Nine: The Half-Blood Prince through the theme of friendship, with special guest Gabby Dunn. Don't forget to check out Women of Harry Potter, which now has its own feed, and you can find all of its episodes there. This episode of Harry Potter and the Sacred Text is produced by Not Sorry Productions. Our executive producer is Ariana Nedelman, our associate producer Chelsea Ursin. Our music, as always, is by Ivan Pyzow and Nick Bolh, and we are a part of Night Vale Presents. Thank you this week to Kent Stephenson for that beautiful voicemail, to Julia Argy, Nikki Zoltan, Maggie Needham, Meghan Kelley and Stephanie Paulsell. We'll talk to you next week.

Casper: Bye bye!

*outro music ends*

I'm really excited about that Hungarian branch that just opened in Budapest. Veezley's Vizarding Vheezes. *both are quietly cracking up*

Vanessa: It vill be very successful.