Chapter 15
The Unbreakable Vow

Casper: Chapter 15: The Unbreakable Vow.

“Snow was swirling against the icy windows once more. Christmas was approaching fast. Hagrid had already single-handedly delivered the usual twelve Christmas trees for the Great Hall. Garlands of holly and tinsel had been twisted around...”

I’m Casper ter Kuile.

Vanessa: And I’m Vanessa Zoltan.

Casper: And this is Harry Potter and the Sacred Text. This week we are doing a special shout-out to the fabulous Harry Potter and the Sacred Text local group in Vancouver, Canada run by Elektra Torgerson, who I think has the best name I’ve ever heard.

Vanessa: Although we do think that the Vancouver group could use a name as awesome as Elektra’s.

Casper: So if you have ideas for any Harry Potter-related puns that could be worked in to the Vancouver Harry Potter and the Sacred Text group’s name, feel free to email us or them by visiting harrypottersacredtext.com/groups.

Vanessa: So, Casper, as you know, I had surgery about a year ago now. And my mom came to take care of me after surgery. And my mom is just someone who self-sacrifices a lot. And I wasn’t awake a lot while she was visiting, but I was awake some, and I was obsessed with the idea of watching “Mamma Mia 2” with her. [*Casper chuckles*] My mom and I both loved the first “Mamma Mia” and I loved the second “Mamma Mia” and it’s very much about a mother-daughter love, and I was like, “The thing I want is to watch ‘Mamma Mia 2’ with you.” In fact, I was so obsessed with it, that the last thing I said as I was wheeled into surgery was, “Can we listen to the ‘Mamma Mia 2’ soundtrack?” to my surgeon. That is how much it was on my mind. And my mom is just such a self-sacrificing person that the whole time she was visiting me, she gave herself projects around my apartment, which is so nice, but I would wake up, and I’d be like, “Mom, come to bed and let’s watch ‘Mamma Mia 2.’” And she’d say, “Oh, sweetie, I’ll be there in 45 minutes, I just need to finish alphabetizing your silverware,” or whatever it was she was doing [*Casper laughs*]. And she ended up leaving without us having watched “Mamma Mia 2”. And I think she just is so used to making sacrifices for me that it didn’t seem like the right thing to do to lie in bed and watch a movie with me. I do think the sacrifice is beautiful; she made a sacrifice by coming on a plane at the last
minute and taking care of me. She left my house about eight thousand times more organized than she came to it. She is just somebody who gives and gives. I think that once sacrificing becomes our identity, we can lose sight of really important things, like “Mamma Mia 2” so I’m excited to talk to you about that idea of sacrifice and when it becomes too much a part of our identity that it becomes almost a kind of martyrdom.

Casper: See, Vanessa, I think you’ve got this all wrong. Yes, your mum sacrificed to come to you, and yes she sacrificed time and effort to look after you, but not watching “Mamma Mia 2” is not much of a sacrifice [*Casper laughs*].

Vanessa: Interesting! You think maybe she was avoiding watching “Mamma Mia 2.”

Casper: Yes! She was like, “That movie, I already enjoyed one of them, I’m not going to be made to sit through another one.” [*Casper laughs*]

Vanessa: No!

Casper: No, but I do know what you mean. I think there’s so much about giving ourselves permission to stop. And, especially when we’re in a caregiving role, there’s something about kind of just needing to always be ready to be giving care, and kind of turning off that role is really hard to do. I think sacrifice—I hope—is about moments of sacrifice rather than a lifetime of sacrifice.

Vanessa: Oh, I love that. Yeah, moments of sacrifice, not an identity of sacrifice.

Casper: Well, Vanessa, before we dig into sacrifice as our theme this week, let’s share a thirty-second recap to remind one another what happened in this Chapter 15 of Book Six: The Half Blood Prince.

Vanessa: Ok, Casper. On your mark, get set, go!

Casper: [*timer begins ticking*] Okay, so we’re getting ready for the Slug Club Party, which now has become the event of the year because there’s all these celebrities coming and the vampire Rufus Scrimgeour is coming, according to Luna, and Romilda Vane is, like, on it. She’s like, “Harry is my man. I’m going to get him.” He ends up asking Luna. She’s thrilled and then has this beautiful disarming moment. And then at the party, Draco tries to break in, and we don’t know why, and then Snape tells him, “Come with me,” and Harry sneaks out to overhear their confrontation and Snape says, “I made an Unbreakable Vow.” [*timer stops and buzzer sounds*] That’s kind of it. I’m not sure there’s anything left, love. [*Casper laughs*]

Vanessa: I’ll do my best to find one or two things.

Casper: [*laughs*] Okay. Here we go. Thirty seconds on the clock. Three, two, one. Go!

Vanessa: So, Hermione tells Harry that girls are talking about, um, love potioning him—like attacking him. Hermione and Harry have this really cute moment where they’re guessing that the librarian and Filch have a secret love affair, and I love it so
much. And then the other big thing that happens is that McLagan sexually assaults Hermione; she comes out with her hair all ruffled and is like, “He’s a monster.” And it’s absolutely terrible.

Casper: Thirty seconds. So real. So, Vanessa, we’re exploring this theme of sacrifice, which it was surprising. Reading this chapter, I was like “Get ready everyone, I’m gonna find sacrifice everywhere,” because this whole series is predicated on so much sacrifice. Of course, Lily, most importantly, but also Dumbledore and Sirius and Snape and Harry himself, most famously at the very end of the books, but I actually struggled to find clear examples of it in this chapter, so I’m curious where you would like us to go.

Vanessa: Yeah, I think let’s start with the trio. They’re in this really fraught moment where, I feel like a lot of little sacrifices are made—Harry sacrificing his opinion and sitting silently. The text says that he really wanted to maintain both of his relationships with both Ron and Hermione and therefore got really good at being quiet.

Casper: Right.

Vanessa: But then, Ron and Hermione are sacrificing their friendship for the sake of this fight, at least temporarily.

Casper: Yeah, it’s remarkable. I mean, Hermione comes back in the scene—we left them with the bird attack of last week—and then Hermione comes back to Ron very overt about the fact that she’s got someone who’s coming to Slughorn’s party with her. Of course, Ron wasn’t invited in the first place, so she’s made a calculated attack. And she’s brutal. She’s chosen McLagan, this other Keeper who didn’t win the tryouts because Hermione Confunded him; she’s stressing, “Oh, I only go out with good Quidditch players.” It seems like there’s something reckless about both of them at this point, obviously Ron with Lavender last week had been very public about making out together at this party in the Common Room, and there’s a kind of spiral which I’m not sure is sacrifice—and this is the point I want to make which is it seems mean-spirited or even ill-thought-through, and sacrifice has something noble in it for me which may be an incorrect association, but there’s something about a bigger goal that’s worthy and therefore you’re laying down something that you love or most drastically your life for it. And what the trio are doing, especially what Ron and Hermione are doing, it doesn’t seem honorable.

Vanessa: Yeah, I think that sacrifice often shouldn’t feel like sacrifice: it should feel like love. In the story about my mom, she didn’t feel like she was sacrificing “Mamma Mia 2” whether or not she wanted to see it; she felt like she was doing acts of love for me. And so I guess that I agree with you that what Hermione is up to isn’t a sacrifice. It does not just feel like a loving act. She’s not willing to make a sacrifice by being out with McLagan, she’s willing to put herself in harm’s way. And I’m not victim-blaming her. McLagan is a rape-y jerk and takes advantage of her, but she’s willing to not respect herself in order to make a point.
Casper: You know what I’m taken back to is the very end of Book 1 when we see the trio go through the [*Casper grunts*] experience, the first confrontation to get the Philosopher’s Stone or the Sorcerer’s Stone, and the person that really sacrifices himself there is Ron on the chess board.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Casper: So there’s something interesting here. He makes a choice. He’s like, “The only way we can get Harry through is for me to be essentially slain on this chess board,” and he gets knocked out, still pretty violent. And I think in that moment, we see the trio have a bigger picture of what’s happening and what’s important and they’re therefore more willing to make these choices. And I’m suddenly seeing that the absence of an immediate crisis or the absence of Voldemort’s presence is what’s contributing to the difficult personal dynamics at play between the trio here because if there was an attack right now by Death Eaters, my god would they have each other’s backs in no time. But because there’s no needy sacrifice on that big scale in this moment, they’re playing out these smaller dramas which feel very big, and they are in some ways, but real sacrifice is instilled when we have to confront the ultimate: the most meaningful, the most terrifying and the most difficult. That’s when things become easy to make a decision like that. Like, your daughter is sick and going through surgery; you’re going to fly across the country, no question. It doesn’t matter if you had appointments or deadlines. It’s so clear what’s important, and I think it’s that absence of that clarity that leads them into this morass of relational confusion and pain. And so my question is, can we call it sacrifice when they’re at that petty level or does it demand those bigger, ultimate, life-defining moments?

Vanessa: Such a good question!

Casper: Because we do use phrases like, “Oh, we all have to make small sacrifices.” Right, we think about—my brain immediately goes to the Second World War. People used rations and so it was just what everyone had to do and it totally influences you life, just like this romantic triangle or whatever shape it is now—quadrangle—is absolutely impacting their lives, so I don’t want to minimize that, but—

Vanessa: Right, like, and my question with rationing is, is that a sacrifice if you don’t have a choice?

Casper: Ahh, right, yes.

Vanessa: That’s just an imposed system. That’s not a choice of sacrifice. I just have this theological sacrifice where it has to almost be quiet and you have to have no reward for it and it has to be a choice.

Casper: You have to do it willingly. I think that’s really true.
Vanessa: Yeah, I mean, we can move to Draco and Snape, right. Draco is not making a sacrifice; he has been given an assignment.

Casper: That’s what I was thinking about Snape as well. I has always seen Snape as a sacrificial character because for the love of Lily he’s living this double life, but on the other hand, maybe this isn’t a choice Snape has. Maybe Snape’s only option is Death Eater or death if he rejects Dumbledore.

Vanessa: Oh, Casper, such a good point! I mean, now we’re getting into some philosophical idea about whether or not any of us have any will or we’re just running around doing the best we can in very limited situations. I am willing very much to see Snape as a sacrificial character as somebody who is willing to put himself in harm’s way for the thing he has decided to care about.

Casper: Can we zoom in on their interaction at the end of the chapter because I think this is where we can learn something? We learn that Draco has been avoiding Snape, right, Snape has been asking him to come to his office. Draco has not been doing it.

Vanessa: Demanding!

Casper: Demanding! He’s like, “I would never let anyone else get away with the kind of insubordination you have been showing,” and then the kind of reveal moment is when Draco says something like, “I don’t want you to steal my glory,” and of course, we know that’s not true. But I wonder if there’s something about this interaction between Snape and Draco which reveals not just Snape’s responsibility of like, “I made an Unbreakable Vow so I have to help you otherwise I’m going to seriously suffer,” but also if there’s some actual—not parental—but certainly mentoring love from Snape from Draco. He can see Draco is suffering. His face is ashen. Clearly something is wrong; he looks “ill” is what we hear in the text. Do you think there is some sort of protective love from Snape that is basically saying, “I don’t want you to sacrifice yourself because I know it’s not worth it,”?

Vanessa: I think it’s so hard to tell if he’s doing this because of the plot with Dumbledore or what it is, but I do think it’s in part love for Draco but I also don’t believe Draco for a second that he’s saying, “You’re going to steal my glory.”

Casper: Really?!

Vanessa: No. I think he’s terrified and I think Voldemort said he had to do it alone and he feels like he as to do it alone, so he is just throwing daggers to see what is gonna—he is flailing wildly trying to see what will get Snape off his back. He’s like, “I have tried not showing up. I have tried being disrespectful.” He is accusing however he can. Draco, to this conversation, is not making a sacrifice. He has been forced to sacrifice. He is not even a sacrificial lamb. He’s a victim. He’s just a victim right now, and he’s scared. He’s trying to get his dad out of jail, and he’s trying to survive.
Casper: But it’s interesting because he keeps stressing—Snape asks him, “What’s your plan,” and he’s like, “It’s none of your business, but I’m not alone,” and he talks about Crabbe and Goyle but he’s also alluding to these other helpers he might have which also made me think that sacrifice—I often think about it as a lone move. But you also think of the front line in a battle situation: the people who charge first who are pretty much sure to die on a battlefield, so I’m also thinking about the difference between a solo and a communal sacrifice here.

Vanessa: And that makes me think whether or not I see what Draco is doing as a sacrifice or as him being forced into this position. I think he has reframed it for himself as a sacrifice.

Casper: That’s interesting. Yeah.

Vanessa: So part of his not being alone is this sense of a higher call. He feels as if he is doing this for his father and that he is sacrificing everything in order to appease the Dark Lord for their family. And I guess to some extent, what we’re seeing here is that Draco is very much like his mother and not like his father. I think that Lucius would very quickly sacrifice his family to please the Dark Lord, but we know that Narcissa is unwilling to and will betray Voldemort for her son. And I think that we’re seeing that same instinct in Draco where he is telling himself, “I am sacrificing myself for my family.”

Casper: I mean, what he’s doing there is meaning-making, right: when we get put in a position which seems impossible and we make meaning of it, and I feel harsh saying that about Draco, but that’s what we do.

Vanessa: I guess that’s why I’m so scared of sacrifice. It’s this story that, to use Draco’s language, we start telling ourselves about glory.

Casper: And he can’t get out of it. I mean, that’s what’s dangerous about the sacrifice stories, and perhaps this relates back to your opening story about your mum. When we get stuck in that story as our identity, then it feels like there’s no way out, and for Draco there is no way out. He confronts Dumbledore at the end of this book, and he can’t do the core thing that he has been told that he has to do. Ohhh, I’m really getting why you’re suspicious of those sacrifice narratives because there’s something scary about it.

Vanessa: You just helped me realize what it is. I hate sacrifice because I think it is a narrative that is sold in order to exploit people.

Casper: Yes.

Vanessa: Like, “Make a sacrifice for your country!” I just think that the word “sacrifice” is often used as such a tool of manipulation and oppression and a way to take advantage of people who are weaker and to give them a sense of meaning from meaningless tasks or for tasks that are doing the bidding of the more powerful. You know, I do think that there are good sacrifices, but I think that we have to make sure that when we think of
things to sacrifice, we are entirely in charge of that narrative otherwise it is not a sacrifice, it is an abuse.

[*ad intro music begins*]

Vanessa: Everybody loves the feeling of winning, especially the feeling of winning the holidays. If you’re giving everybody Bombas socks this holiday, you deserve a spot in the Holiday Gifting Hall of Fame. I will say that I am in that Hall of Fame because last year, Peter’s kids and I got Peter a collection of Bombas socks for Christmas and he is really hard on his socks. He is really hard on his socks; he bikes to work every day of the year and it’s really disgusting because it’s even during a Boston winter, and he’s still using those Bombas socks. And my favorite thing about Bombas is that they know that the number one most requested item in homeless shelters is socks. For every pair that you buy, Bombas donates a pair to somebody in need. You do a lot of different things, so Bombas made a lot of different socks like dress socks for work, performance socks for working out, and limited-edition holiday socks. They even have a line of Merino Wool socks. Merino is like regular wool, but magic. They’re soft, warm, and naturally moisture wicking, never itchy, or rough. I am wearing a pair of Merino Wool socks right now, and my feet are toasty! You know that person who is just a gift enigma, completely impossible to shop for? Bombas is the gift that even that person will love, everybody will. It’s true. When I was dating someone whose mom I didn’t like, she always got me socks for Christmas, and I loved it. I still use a lot of those socks. If you want to give a gift that lasts and a gift that is giving to somebody in need, go to bombas.com/potter and get 20% off of any purchase during their big holiday sale November 18-December 5. That’s bombas.com/potter for 20% off. bombas.com/potter.

[*ad music ends*]

[*ad music begins again*]

Casper: Harry Potter and the Sacred Text is sponsored by Noom. What if you could just use one program for all of your health and weight-loss needs? Noom is an amazingly powerful app that lets you track all sorts of things: how much you’re exercising, what you’re eating, all sorts of fabulous things that help you live the life that you want to. I use Noom, and I found it super helpful, especially having a coach that checks in with you and keeps you accountable, as well as other people sharing their stories so you don’t feel like you’re on your own because surprise, we’re not. We’re all in this together.

Vanessa: It’s based on a cognitive-behavioral approach which is something that I really appreciate. And because of that, no food is good or bad or off-limits. Noom teaches you better behaviors including moderation, which is something that I need help with in my life. Noom understands how busy we all are; we are all strapped for time. Noom just asks you to commit to ten minutes a day. Sometimes I feel like I don’t have ten minutes a day, but if I convince myself that it’s an investment in future-me, then I can somehow
trick myself into thinking I have ten minutes a day. And the other thing about Noom is that if you go off-track, there’s no shaming: there’s just an attempt to help you get back on track tomorrow which, again, is something that I really need.

Casper: 100% me too. You don’t have to change it all in one day. Small steps make big progress. Sign up for your free trial at noom.com/harrypotter. What do you have to lose? Visit noom.com/harrypotter to start your free trial today. That’s noom.com/harrypotter. The last weight-loss program you’ll ever need.

[*ad music ends*]

Casper: So, Vanessa, elsewhere in this chapter earlier on, when Harry is navigating all these lovely young women who want to go to the party with him, he ends up asking Luna, and she is characteristically both delighted and surprised, and has lots to talk about that just is not true including saying, “The vampire will be there,” talking about Rufus Scrimgeour, the Minister of Magic. And it was so interesting to me to see Harry respond differently to Luna in this moment than we’ve seen him respond before. Usually he’s kind of either bewildered by her accuracy of something or he’s laughing at her because her ideas are so silly. We get a little of that, like he’s glad she’s not wearing radish earrings to the party but by and large, he stays completely quiet to her unusual theories both at the party and beforehand. It seemed like a mature friendship. There are things that, when we’re with people that we love—I don’t want to say we overlook their faults—essentially, we sacrifice how we would react to other people when it’s with our friends. I guess I want to ask, is that a sacrifice of integrity or is that a loving gesture, is it both? How does sacrifice show up there for you?

Vanessa: Yeah, I think it’s sacrifice that is love. I think eventually you even stop seeing the “embarrassing” things. You’re just like, “Yeah, this is the person that I love. That’s weird about them.” I guess I think that sacrifice and love do go hand-in-hand, but love doesn’t make sacrifice feel like sacrifice anymore. Harry really does love Luna now, they’re fought in a battle together and she’s loyal and awesome and weird in a delightful way. So he would’ve only felt the sacrifice a year ago, and now I think that it doesn’t feel like one now. It just feels like friendship.

Casper: And again, maybe this takes us back to your mom’s experience, it wasn’t that she saw it as a sacrifice. It wasn’t an intentional choice to be like, “Oh I don’t deserve to watch this movie,” or something. It was just like, “When I’m with you and you’re sick, what I do is look after you,” just like Harry is like, “When I am with Luna, she will say things that I think are weird, but I like being with her, and it’s not even a thing I think about anymore.” You know what I mean?
Vanessa: Right. And Luna is the person at Hogwarts, I guess other than Ginny, who he most wants to ask. He could ask Ron. He could bring anyone, and at the end of the day, I think he genuinely most wants to spend these hours with Luna.

Casper: This is what’s so interesting. At the party itself, he doesn’t really want to be there—we know that—so he’s looking for someone who will be just fine on their own as well, and we see Luna have this wonderful conversation with Trelawney about some conspiracy theory. There’s this self-sufficiency to Luna that I think is perfect in a way that with Ron, he would need to be engaging Ron more. The way that he asks her, it’s not premeditated—it comes out before he realized he said it, so there’s something about that kind of deeper knowing that this is someone that you just feel safe with and good about that it happens so quickly for him.

Vanessa: Yeah, I think this is the moment where Luna and Harry really become friends, where Harry is with her and is with her and is just like, “I want to go with you!”

Casper: Right.

Vanessa: And then he’s like, “Huh. I just asked Luna Lovegood to do this. Awesome.”

Casper: Yeah. And she’s still being called “Loony”. There’s so much about how she’s made fun of and marginalized and right in a moment when Harry is the hot-guy on campus—you know, his dress robes and all of this and all the girl want him—that’s the moment he extends a hand to someone who’s really being put at the bottom of the pecking order.

Vanessa: And I don’t think he’s doing it for that reason.

Casper: No! It’s just what he does. It’s not a sacrifice for him. It’s not like, “I’m doing a good deed by asking this person.”

Vanessa: And it gets him out of the awkward Romilda Vane situation.

Casper: Thank god.

[“spiritual practice intro music”]

Vanessa: So, Casper, we are transitioning to Sacred Imagination.

Casper: Yay!

Vanessa: And so what I would like everybody to do—if it is safe—close your eyes, put your feet on the floor firmly, stretch out your toes, and try to see if you can feel each of your toes. Take a deep breath in, and I am going to invite you into this moment. Maybe be Harry in this moment. We are at the Slug Club Christmas party, and I am going to read this section to you. And Casper, I am really excited to see what it is that you notice.
"I'm definitely not interested," said Harry firmly, "and I've just seen a friend of mine, sorry." He pulled Luna after him into the crowd; he had indeed just seen a long mane of brown hair disappear between what looked like two members of the Weird Sisters.

"Hermione! Hermione!"

"Harry! There you are, thank goodness! Hi, Luna!"

"What's happened to you?" asked Harry, for Hermione looked distinctly disheveled, rather as though she had just fought her way out of a thicket of Devil's Snare.

"Oh, I've just escaped--I mean, I've just left Cormac," she said. "Under the mistletoe," she added in explanation, as Harry continued to look questioningly at her.

"Serves you right for coming with him," he told her severely.

"I thought he'd annoy Ron most," said Hermione dispassionately. "I debated for a while about Zacharias Smith, but I thought, on the whole --"

"You considered Smith?" said Harry, revolted.

"Yes, I did, and I'm starting to wish I'd chosen him, McLagan makes Grawp look a gentleman. Let's go this way, we'll be able to see him coming, he's so tall..."

The three of them made their way over to the other side of the room, scooping up goblets of mead on the way, realizing too late that Professor Trelawney was standing there alone.

So Casper, the reason that I picked this is because I think we see something really human here which is that Hermione is in a situation in which she is treated horribly and Harry shames her for it. And I think that my first instinct is to judge Harry for that, but instead what I am seeing in this moment is that he loves her so much. Sometimes when we love someone, we want to blame them for their own pain because that means they're in control of it potentially happening again. Does that make sense? Where it's like McLagan is being the bad guy here, but there is something about it to me that I just feel for Harry that he can't change McLagan but he can talk to Hermione to never do this again.

Casper: Mhmm. Yeah. It's so interested because you read that crucial line: something like, "It's your own fault," in a way that I had read it very different in my head when I read the chapter again. I read it in this kind of cautiously teasing way like [*quiet and cautious voice*] "Serves you right for blah blah blah," but I think your way of reading it
is probably right. I think he’s angry at Hermione for bringing McLagan because he knows that it’s done to intend to hurt Ron, so that was interesting for me to be Harry to say those words in anger and frustration. The physical descriptions really stood out this time. I can really imagine her hair, that he’s had his hands in her hair. Perhaps he’s been holding her head while he’s been kissing her. He’s been physically overpowering her. It was very disturbing to really imagine myself into the situation this time with such vividness. That’s interesting that you’re pointing to the fact that it’s about control or the myth of control because, of course you can ask anybody out on a date, but you don’t know how they’re going to act or behave.

Vanessa: It’s a really disturbing and distressing situation, and how calm she is makes me really sad as well. She’s like, “Meh a boy was mawling at me.”

Casper: Also she has a strategy. She’s like, “We can see him coming.” She’s lining up her defenses. First of all, she’s escaped. Now she’s orienting herself in the room so that she can keep running away. It’s really unpleasant.

Vanessa: It’s absolutely awful. And we see here what we see so often in the real world that she doesn’t report it to Slughorn. She could say, “He just assaulted me. Can we kick him out of the party?” But there is this sense of blaming herself, “I did this,” which we know that just because she invited someone who she knew was sort of a jerk does not mean she deserved this. I guess doing this as a sacred reading was the first time that rather than being mad at Harry—I had seen it as slut-shaming, when really what he is doing, he hates that this happened to Hermione, he is looking for something that he can do to fix it but ends up being part of the problem which I feel like I probably do all the time.

Casper: The final thing I might say having been in that situation as Harry, I was holding Luna’s hand. I pulled her away from that guy who wanted something from me towards Hermione and then Hermione and Luna have this very brief interaction, but Luna is there too throughout this whole interaction. I wonder if this changes the conversation that Harry and Hermione are having because Hermione has just admitted in front of Luna that she chose McLagan to hurt Ron. There’s actually quite a lot of intimacy being shared. I’m just taken back to this vision of Luna as chaplain, that she plays a sort of priestess throughout the whole thing where hopefully a chaplain helps people say what’s true even if it’s hard, and there’s something about Luna’s presence which makes me feel better, and I just wonder if she changed the conversation in some way just by being there.

Vanessa: Sometimes you really do need three people in order to feel comfortable. I mean, it’s what we do with this text.

Casper: Yes, exactly!
Vanessa: That triad Havruta thing of a third thing being there makes it easier to look into the eyes of your friend and say, “I’ve just been mauled.”

Casper: Or just because there’s a witness, whether it’s couple’s counseling or dispute resolution, not even them saying anything but just their silence presence and their goodwill that’s being given to you both can sometimes allow for that extra honesty. She’s like an inverse mistletoe. McLagan has been using the mistletoe as a third thing to assault Hermione, and now Luna is the kind of safety blanket to be honest and protect each other.

Vanessa: Well, thank you Casper.

Casper: Thank you for picking that passage. It’s powerful.

Vanessa: This week’s voicemail is from Niya Kelly.

Niya: Hi, everyone at Harry Potter and the Sacred Text. Um, I have been listening for a while and I am excited to reach out to you all for my first voicemail. I have just finished listening to the episode on temptation when you were talking about the House of Gaunt and Casper, at the end of the episode, you blessed Bob Ogden, and I’d like to add onto it, but I want to address one of the folks that you included in your blessing including police officers. In the last two days, Atatiana Jefferson was murdered by a police officer in Fort Worth, Texas as was the trial of Botham Jean—both his trial but the trial of his murderer who is also a police officer. As a black American living in this country, it is really hard to live. So I would like to add onto the blessing of Bob Ogden because despite coming into a situation that was scary and he didn’t know what he was getting into, he had the wherewithal to be able to recognize that pulling out his wand and blasting everyone in the space could have caused more harm to innocent people involved. Botham was eating ice cream on his couch when Amber killed him, and Atatiana was playing video games with her seven-year-old nephew when her neighbor called the police for a wellness check. Um, so, I again want to extend my blessing to Bob Ogden for leaving—for recognizing the scariness of the situation and knowing that he did not want to make a rash decision. I am excited to see you all when you come to Chicago, and thank you all for having such a thoughtful podcast!

Casper: Niya, thank you so much for that blessing, and ugh, I just love that you found the way to bless Bob in that situation for doing his job but doing it in a way that did not escalate and frankly saved lives. I think we saw enough in that scene that if there was any kind of sign of violence, it would have escalated. I so appreciate your beautiful blessing and your call for us to look at what’s happening around the country with police violence. I mean both the cases that you point to are where people entered someone else’s home—a black American’s home—and shot them while that person was doing literally nothing. They were just living. I so appreciate your invitation for us to lift our eyes to look at that reality. So thank you for your blessing, and we look forward to seeing you in Chicago too. Thank you.
Vanessa: So, Casper, it is now our opportunity to bless someone. I am going to bless Ginny because Luna says about Ginny that Ginny stopped people from calling her “Loony Lovegood” and I just—Ginny is just out there fighting every moment. She is just not letting a thing slip by and she just must be exhausted. So I want to bless her for being so relentless, even snapping at people for calling Luna a dumb name. She is such a fierce advocate, and I am so glad we are doing this podcast because I have always liked Ginny, but I have fallen head-over-heels in love with her. So, a blessing for Ginny and her just relentlessness. What about you, Casper?

Casper: We start off the chapter in the transfiguration classroom as the students are learning to start transfigure their own human bodies, and Harry has dyed one of his eyebrows. When he speaks with Luna, she looks at it and kind of assumes that it is okay and when he asks her to the Slug Club Party, she asks, “Is that why you dyed your eyebrow?” And then this is the moment that just breaks me, “Should I do mine too?” [*Casper laughs*] UGH I CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF LUNA!

Vanessa: She’s just so game!

Casper: She just so game and so generous and I want to look at the world in the way that she does like, “Yeah, let me join you in you. Let me be open.” I think there’s such a generosity of spirit in her way of looking at the world that we can all learn from, so a blessing for Luna and anyone who looks into the world with generous eyes.

[*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 the episode. Our fundraise for RAICES is ongoing. Please go to harrypottersacredtext.com and click on “Don’t Be a Dursley.” We hope to see you at one of our upcoming live shows. We’ll be in Chicago on November 21, Toronto on December 9, and St. Louis on December 19.

Vanessa: Next week, we'll be reading Chapter 16, A Very Frosty Christmas through the theme of Erosion with a very special guest, Terry Tempest Williams. Don’t forget to check out Women of Harry Potter. This episode of Harry Potter and the Sacred Text was produced by Not Sorry Productions, executive produced by Ariana Nedelman, and associate produced by Chelsea Ursin. Our music is by Nick Bolh and Ivan Pyzow, and we are part of Nightvale Presents. Special thanks this week to Niya Kelly for sending in her beautiful voicemail, to Julia Argy, Nicki Zoltan, Maggie Needham, Meghan Kelly, and Stephanie Paulsell.

Casper: Bye, everyone!

[*music ends*]
Vanessa: [*Casper laughing*] Oh my god, Romilda.

Casper: I feel like she would have chosen a nickname by now. I feel like she would have been Mildy or RoRo.

Vanessa: Moldy! [*both laughing*]

Casper: MOLDY VOLDY! [*both laughing*]