Casper: Chapter seventeen, A Sluggish Memory. “Late in the afternoon, a few days after New Year, Harry, Ron, and Ginny lined up beside the kitchen fire to return to Hogwarts…” I'm Casper ter Kuile,

Vanessa: And I'm Vanessa Zoltan,

All: And this is Harry Potter and the Sacred Text, the Live Show!

Vanessa: Hello, Washington, D.C.! *applause*

Casper: Okay!

Vanessa: I don’t care what the rest of the country says. *laughs* They seem great!

Casper: Yes! Wow, thank you all so much for coming. What a delight to see you all here! This is an absolute treat.

Vanessa: And you are going to be extra treated tonight because usually you only get to hear our voices. But tonight you also get to hear the voice of Ariana Nicole Nedelman.

Ariana: Hi!

Casper: We’re also very glad to be joined by our former classmate Usra Ghazi later on, welcome Usra. And, we also now, over the last year, it’s been amazing. We’ve had all of these local groups forming, over 50 of them now, around the world. And there is a D.C. chapter. Do we have some of the D.C. chapter here? *cheers* Yes!

Vanessa: And the D.C. chapter is very creatively called “the D.C. Discussion Group.” *laughs* And so, if you are ready for that level of fun, *laughs* then you should reach out. Amiel and Ren are here and really excited to talk to you about renaming the group. *laughs* They need fresh blood. *laughs*
Ariana: Something we should mention is that we are recording tonight's show. Which we don't do very often for live shows. So if you guys could laugh especially loudly, make everyone feel like they're missing out.

Vanessa: Should we practice what a really hearty laugh sounds like? Okay, on the count of three. Really hearty, everyone who's listening at home is really jealous laugh. One, two, three... *laughs*

Casper: Wow, wow.

Vanessa: Oh my god.

Casper: That's legit.

Vanessa: What they say about D.C. people is true... that was some good fake nonsense. *laughs* I totally bought it guys. I bought it!

Casper: Well, so for those of you don't know this show, we always like to start with a story to dig into our theme and out theme this evening is attention. And Vanessa, you have prepared a little story for us.

Vanessa: I have! I'm going to tell you a story about my dog, Rory. I know! *awww* That is the right response! I got her during divinity school, and I think because of that I was in this very spiritual headspace. And so I would tell everyone who would listen that she embodied my theology of suffering. I was like, "There's just no reason for her to ever suffer if it is not directly beneficial for her." Right, we can take her to the vet because that will help her live a longer, healthier life, but no unnecessary suffering. And I really gave this a lot of thought. So, this story starts really when she was a puppy. So we lived in the dorms for the first six years of my dog's life, and because of that there were just dog sitters available all the time. Eighteen year olds want to watch your dog when you travel. They love it.

But recently Rory and I moved in with my partner, and so we moved out to the suburbs. And there are not as many free dog sitters around in the suburbs. And so, we moved, and then immediately, like a week later, I was going to Germany with my partner and his kids and I panicked because I was like, "Who is going to watch the dog while I'm gone, I don't have all of these children around to watch her." And so my friend Stephanie said, "Don't worry about it, I will stay with her, but I work really long hours so can you just get a dog walker every day while I'm watching her?" I said, "Yes, thank you so much." I was like, okay, I'm going to interview dog walkers, this is what grownups in the suburbs who don't live in the dorms until they're 37 do.
And I interviewed dog walkers and I met this lovely young woman and I trained her on all the needs that my dog has and how to get in and out of the house, and then I fly to Germany, and there's just no cell service. Except in the third floor bathroom of my partner's dead mother's house. *laughs* There's no cell service in this part of Germany. It's good that I know where to get it. But other than that there isn't. And so the kids, Peter, a friend and I are in the car out doing Germany things, and I get a text from the dog walker and I was like, "Oh, I sort of have service" and it says, "The key isn't working. I can't get into the house."

And I was like, "Oh no, Stephanie is going to be gone for 14 hours" so I send a text back saying, you know, "There was only the one key," and trying to coach her through it, and she writes back like, "I can't get in." And each one of these texts is taking, like, 400 years to go through. I'm sitting there watching, and it's green not blue, so I'm like, "Does that mean it sent? I don't know." And so, I text Stephanie and I'm like, "Worst case scenario, if the dog walker can't figure out how to get in, can you go work from home?" and Stephanie and I are talking and I'm going back and forth with the dog walker and Stephanie and trying to figure this out, and finally I just text Stephanie being like, "Stephanie, I'm sorry this person is an idiot, can you please just go home and get the dog." And then, like two seconds back, I get a response saying, "I don't appreciate being called an idiot." *ohhhh*

Yeah. So I gasp, and everyone in the car turns to me and is like, "What?" and I tell them what happened, and I'm frantically apologizing, being like, "That's fair, I'm sorry, you just have to understand I'm frustrated, but I'm so sorry." My eleven year old step daughter turns to me and goes, "Are you afraid she's gonna hurt Rory now?" *crowd ahhhhhh* Peter turns around and is like, "She does have the key..." *laughs* and I'm like, "Thanks..."

Anyway, I will say that Stephanie then used the key to get in, so I'm not saying that this person is an idiot, I'm just saying that the key did work. But, but really what it made me think about was, I have all of this big, capital A Attention that I paid my dog, right? She is my meditation on suffering and love and goodness and if I don't pay attention to who I'm texting, if I don't pay attention to the little thing right in front of me, it doesn't matter if I'm paying big attention. It doesn't matter if I'm thinking about love, if I'm not loving to people on the subway, right? And I think that we see a lot of versions of this in this chapter, right? Where Ron and Hermione, they love each other, right? They are paying big A Attention to each other, but they are not caring for each other in little ways.

And I think we do this all the time. So I am excited to talk to you about that tonight, Casper.

Ariana: Before we do that though, it is time for the 30 second recap. *whooooo* Those of you who have been listening since the very beginning know that the 30 second recap used to be a pretty competitive sport. We even had a place that you could go to on our website where you could vote. There were some high stakes, like a cake...
Casper: Just keep bringing that up, uh huh.

Ariana: It will one day be made. And recently though, we've gone towards a more collaborative, loving each other kind of model that really embodies our values... not tonight. *laughs* So, in this corner we have Casper ter Kuile, all the way from New York City, Slytherin. In this corner, we have Vanessa Zoltan from Boston, Massachusetts, Hufflepuff.

Vanessa: No! Update. *ohhhhh*

Casper: What?

Vanessa: As you can probably tell by my earrings and my shoes...

Casper: What?

Vanessa: I have recently converted to a Gryffindor. *cheers* I have decided.

Casper: Shock and despair in this corner!

Vanessa: I love, I love Hufflepuff. I just think that what I need is to be braver in my own life. And since housing is aspirational, we go to the house where we need to grow, what I need to grow in is my bravery. So I am representing the house of Gryffindor tonight. *cheers*

Ariana: I just want to say, for those at home, that there is a very young boy in a yellow shirt who looks so disappointed. *laughs*

Casper: And can I just say, even though I am wearing green on the outside because I'm representing Slytherin, I may or may not have some item of yellow clothing that I'm not going to show you, so all the Hufflepuffs, I'll take the lot. Come join me. *cheers*

Vanessa: I love you, Hufflepuffs, I need to be braver! Support me! *cheers*

Ariana: Alright, Vanessa, are you ready?

Vanessa: I'm sorry, I'm ready.

Ariana: Casper, can you count her in?

Casper: Vanessa, are you ready?
Vanessa: Yep.

Casper: You did the reading? *laughs*

Vanessa: Well, we'll find out.

Casper: Alright, 30 seconds on the clock. Three, two, one. Go!

Vanessa: So everybody comes back from Christmas holidays and Hermione is like, "I have to talk to you" and Ron is like, "Okay, what's up" and she's like, "No." And then, by the way McGonagall forgets to give them the password which I think is really awkward. And then Harry has his lesson with Dumbledore, he also tries to convince Hermione that Draco and Snape are in on it and Voldemort has set him up and he's a Death Eater, and then he goes to the class with Dumbledore and Dumbledore shows him a memory including that Tom Riddle killed his dad, and also that and also Slughorn's memory is a little bit messed up and it's… a Sluggish Memory! *buzzer*

Casper: Wow.

Ariana: It's a long chapter.

Vanessa: It's a long chapter.

Casper: It's a good one. It's a good one.

Vanessa: Okay Casper, are you ready?

Casper: Yes.

Vanessa: I wish you the best of luck.

Casper: Thank you.

Vanessa: On your marks, get set, go!

Casper: Okay so, the Hogwarts train has been abandoned because instead we're gonna aparate into Hogwarts and magically you land in McGonagall's fire place, and then there's a new sex ed teacher, the Fat Lady, who has a new password, which is abstinence, that's faulty. Then, we go into the charms classroom and Flitwick is blown away by some jets of water from Seamus, which is funny at the moment, but not so much now. Then we go into
two memories. Um, Morfin's memory and Slughorn's memory and there's this gooeyness cloud...*buzzer* of forgetting...

Vanessa: Yes. *cheers* Fair played ter Kuile.

Casper: You know what makes it work?

Vanessa: What?

Casper: Is that we do it together.

Vanessa: Don't. No. *laughs*

Ariana: Okay, Casper.

Casper: Yeah.

Ariana: Where did you see attention in this week's chapter?

Casper: Yes. So, a lot happens in this chapter, as you may have gathered from our 30 second recaps. The place that I was thinking about attention was we go back into memories, we see a young Tom Riddle in this chapter, and we see him meeting his uncle, Morfin, and we learn that he really wants this ring that is a kind of, you know, an ancient Slytherin item. It's this token of great symbolic power, and I was thinking about how Riddle pays so much attention to symbols. Of course in how he makes the horcruxes, each of them have this important meaning, and how, especially in this chapter, so much of the kind of attention on symbols is about representing his family, and yet it's also the chapter in which he kills three members of his family- his father and his grandparents, and in which he essentially forces his uncle into Azkaban.

So I was just, I mean even kind of like your story, right? What we pay attention to shapes how we are with people and there was something in that kind of a symbol of a family being paid attention to, instead of the actual family members.

Vanessa: What- I see that with wider society, with Morfin too. We just see Morfin being, or not being paid attention to again and again in that he's innocent. And they get an easy confession out of him, they get an easy, sort of solve out of him, and nobody cares that he's not actually guilty. Nobody cares like, why would he be confessing to this so quickly, why out of nowhere did he commit this crime, like he's lived across the valley from this family for at least 16 years, why, right, nobody is looking deeper. Nobody is paying close attention,
they're just like, "Oh I can, I can solve this case and I can put it away." He is a bad man, but he is also very much, it appeared to me in this chapter what a victim he is.

Casper: Mhm. There's something interesting about how he, both the first time when we meet him, right- oh gosh who is the man from the ministry who comes to-

Vanessa: Bob Ogdin.

Casper: Ogdin! Ah, how could I forget old Bob. Right, like, Bob doesn't even see him because he's kind of sitting in the tree and just jumps out, and here when Riddle walks in, he's kind of blended into the grime and the grossness of the furniture, I mean he clearly has not been taking care of himself, he's not been paying attention to cleanliness standards. But there's something, it's easy to not pay attention to him because he kind of fades into the background in some way, even physically.

Vanessa: Yeah, and we tend to be grateful to those people in society, right? Who we don't want to spend- pay attention to and who are gracious enough to make themselves invisible to us. Right, like that is something in society that we're like, "Oh good, you can just blend into the filth in the background and we can ignore you," when those are often obviously the people who need the most love and attention. And again, I mean we've talked about this before, it's just really upsetting that Bob Ogdin didn't send in some sort of social services when he saw what he saw! He saw absolute squalor and he saw abuse and I think because there wasn't that sort of institutional attention available, he ends up in prison, which I think is absolutely the way that that works.

Ariana: You brought it to my attention, I hadn't seen the way in which Merope had been described literally as trying to blend into the wall in that chapter, and the way that Morfin is described in those same terms in this chapter.

Casper: Ooh I love that.

Ariana: I'm sorry to cut you off though. Is there anything else you want to say about kind of making people into symbols?

Vanessa: Dumbledore is doing it to Harry, right? I mean, we have, I don't know if he's making Harry into a symbol, but he is completely objectified Harry, right, he's like, I can't do this task, I tried, you try. He is not willing to talk to Harry about any of the things that Harry wants to talk about, there's no, very little chit chat, there is you are here, I'm going to give you an assignment that I failed at. Goodbye.

Casper: Yeah, literally good luck, good night.
Vanessa: Yep. I know that Dumbledore cares about Harry, but I think there is a lack of attention to Harry in this assigning him and sending him off.

Casper: I do wonder if there's something about, I mean Dumbledore's in pain... there's a lot of, his hand looks worse than ever, I mean he's running a kind of global fight against Voldemort, right, there's a lot going on, there's a lot of tension in this scene between Dumbledore and Harry. There isn't the niceties, right, because Harry tries to sell the story about Draco again, there's something that's straining the whole relationship, and to me I was like, 'this man is in pain,' which makes it just hard to pay attention to things beyond the necessary. And that's what struck me about the whole conversation as well.

Vanessa: I think that's a really lovely point, and a really important one. Right, like we know that when you're stressed about money or hungry or tired or in pain, how that is the only thing that you can pay attention to, that attention to anything outside of yourself is a luxury and a privilege, and yeah, I do buy that. I mean even, I was on the phone with my mom, and we were talking about my dad's health stuff, and she was with my nephew who is so cute, but in the middle she was like, "Do you want to hear him say, whatever," I was like, "No, I don't, we're talking about things that matter," and then 30 seconds later I was like, "Yes, I do, yes, I do, let me hear him bark like the neighbor's dog, yes, I do want to hear that."

Right, but when we're like, thinking about bigger things, stressful things, it's like, 'I don't have time for charming little dog barks.' I do, I always have time. He can do different impressions of different dogs, he's a genius. Seventeen months old, brilliant.

Casper: No-bel Prize, No-bel Prize.

Vanessa: I think so! *laughs*

Ariana: Not to pull this away from attention, but I think we come back to this question again, of what do you- understanding that Dumbledore has other things going on, how do you wish he had been in this interaction? What do you see as the right path for him, negotiating this with Harry?

Vanessa: “Why don't you trust Snape, Harry? This is why I think it's really important for you to trust Snape.” Right, or, “Why are you so focused on Draco, this is what I actually think you should be focused on.” I just think some form of question asking, or rather than this passive aggressive, "Professor Snape, Harry," that is not instructive or informational, it's just, it's not behavior management. I just feel like there's too much subtlety.
Casper: I mean what I'm struck by is the parallel that we see between Harry and Riddle and Dumbledore, right? Because Dumbledore is so conscious that he made a choice to not inform the other professors about what he knew about Riddle when he came into Hogwarts, because he wanted to give him a fair chance, which, you know, absolutely laudable, and I think fair, but there's also some regret in there. He's kind of making a similar choice about keeping these very strong barriers of information and that Dumbledore is the only one that knows both, and so I'm wondering why he hasn't changed his approach, because first time didn't work out so well, Albus. Got work to do.

Vanessa: Spoiler!

Casper: Spoiler, sorry you guys!

Vanessa: Tom Riddle grew up not great.

Ariana: I mean, beyond the comparison to earlier Dumbledore, I think there's a strong parallel between Draco and Harry and Voldemort/Dumbledore, that there's this sense of blind loyalty, "He's Dumbledore's man through and through."

Casper: That was a touching moment! I had the little, who did the reading? Yeah, all the Ravenclaws are here, excellent. *laughs* But there's this lovely moment where Harry's saying, you know, Scrimgeour came to the, to the, well Dumbledore already knew this of course, but they're talking about the visit of the minister and how he was trying to recruit Harry to act as a pawn in front of the press, and Harry says, "Uh, I'm Dumbledore's man through," no, no something like that.

Ariana: Yes!

Casper: Yes, "I'm Dumbledore's man through and through!" And then Dumbledore says, "How rude!" *laughs* and then Harry says, "I told him he was right." And then Dumbledore is just like, *sobs*.

Vanessa: Then Celine Dion starts singing....

Casper: Yes, exactly!

Vanessa: Yeah...

Casper: Which one though?

Vanessa: It's all coming back to me...
Casper: It's all coming back to me *sings*... Yes!

Ariana: Literally, Fawks lets out a musical chirp!

Casper: Yes!

Ariana: Sooo, yes.

Casper: The synth machine in phoenix shape! *laughs* The hair, he's got the hair, all he needs is the Canadian accent!

Vanessa: French Canadian! That's why him and Madame Maxime are so close.

Casper: Yes!

Vanessa: They can speak in French to each other.

Casper: Yes, yes!

Vanessa: I’m with you. Yep. But what Ariana was insinuating was something much more insidious, which is that, right, if, let's do it as an SAT question. Draco is to Voldemort as Harry is to Dumbledore, would insinuate that there is, that this blind loyalty, being someone’s man “through and through” when it is a child/adult relationship, these are two men using children as weapons, and that there's children being raised as armies to fight another generation's fight, and the differences between Voldemort and Dumbledore are tactic, not of means.

Casper: Absolutely, and it's not a small matter, I mean we see in this chapter that a 16 year old kills three people, I mean the young Riddle murders three people in this chapter. So that weaponization is not something that's nothing, it's real. Yeah.

Vanessa: Can we talk about the most important moment of attention in the whole chapter?

Ariana: Hermione and Ron.

Vanessa: Yes. *laughs* So my favorite moment of the chapter is when Ron's like, "Hey Hermione, how was your Christmas?" and she's like, "Hi, Harry." And like, just not at all, and it just struck me because we're reading this chapter through the theme that ignoring someone is absolutely a form of attention. Right, like, first of all it takes a lot of focus to just
pretend someone isn't there. *laughs* when they're there. And she is so she is dead inside good at this. It is amazing. Yeah, I was just impressed by how good she was at that.

Casper: And it's like, when you have a difficult relationship it takes up so much of your attention, even when you don't want it to.

Vanessa: Yes!

Casper: Yeah.

Vanessa: I guess I also love this chapter because you get some quality Hermione/Harry time, which I feel like we don't get enough of. They're such good friends, they finish each other's sentences, they are just so excited to see each other, "Oh, I have this thing for you," "Oh, I have the password," "Oh, let's do this together," right, I just love the two of them together as buddies.

Casper: Are you saying that they don't have to slow down for Ron to keep up?

Vanessa: Yesssss! Noooooo. No... that's not, I would never say that. No, it's just nice to see different dynamics.

Casper: Yes.

Vanessa: Right, my favorite friends dynamic is Phoebe and Chandler, I don't feel like we get enough of that on the show. *cheers* Right? And my favorite-

Casper: Could there be any less time for that? *laughter* I haven't actually watched Friends in forever.

Vanessa: Yeah, I just feel like it's fun to see the two of them together, and to see, there's a new dynamic around,

Casper: Yes,

Vanessa: Hermione and Harry.

Casper: Yes! And in part because Harry is still trying to convince Hermione with this new information that, you know, Draco is totally working for Voldemort, that's why he's a death eater, because Fenrir Greyback, blah blah blah, all of that stuff, and Hermione is still not buying it.
Vanessa: Yep.

Casper: Which, why won't she pay attention to his, to his pretty logical argument at this point?

Vanessa: So Ariana and I were brainstorming, we were fighting about this earlier today, and I think the conclusion that we came to is that there, they are paying attention to this Draco situation, and I think first of all, Hermione is noticing that Harry is paying a toxic kind of attention to the Draco situation, which is sending off antenna signals to her. And I think her spidey sense is, I have seen Harry make a rash decision based on incomplete information before, and that lead to Sirius' death. And I think that even when we are paying attention to something right in front of us, our past traumas and right, we carry these things with us even if we're not aware that we are. And I think we see that difference in Harry too, he is trying to get more buy in-

Casper: Yes.

Vanessa: -than he used to try to get, and I think he's trying to prevent the same mistake he made. So I think that they are both paying attention to this in a different way than they would have without the Ministry.

Casper: Wow, I love that, that they're both trying to overcompensate for the other way, because of that experience.

Vanessa: Right, they're trying to pay attention in a new way. But I think it's really, I think the reason that Hermione's not taking him more seriously is because he's so obsessive. And that is a scary thing, right, you're like no, stop it, you're making really bad decisions, following him into corridors and into train cars, and like, stop it.

Casper: Yeah, it's kind of like, back to the symbol thing of Hermione sees Harry just following Draco as a symbol rather than who he is.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Casper: Or what he's doing, maybe even more accurately.

Vanessa: Well he has equated Draco and Voldemort.

Casper: Exactly, exactly.

Vanessa: And Hermione is like, 'that is not a one to one equation.'
Casper: Turns out, he's right.

Ariana: I mean, I think it's so interesting that so far we've been talking about attention as a positive thing, attention as a thing that you pay to your dog, theologically, it's a thing that we need to do more, it's like, when are we ignoring people, and I do think what you're pointing to is there is, there is a kind of super attention that tips us over from theologically beautiful to obsessive and toxic.

Vanessa: Right, stalkers are paying very close attention.

Ariana: Right, yeah.

Vanessa: Harry Potter and the Sacred Text, anti-stalking. *laughs* I'll say it. I'm brave. *laughs*

Ariana: Casper, do you have a button to put, do you have one more small point?

Casper: Well, I mean, it did strike me that Harry just cannot help but be the center of attention. This time he was the first one to apparate, and so everyone is like, 'Oh my god, tell me about it!' And it's not like he was like, 'Oh, it was fine,' he's like, 'It was the worst thing ever,' you know, like, there is something about him that keeps putting him at the center of the room. And so sometimes we're like, 'Ohhh, poor Harry,' but now I'm like, 'Listen, you bring it on yourself.'

Vanessa: He did apparate because Dumbledore, the headmaster and most powerful wizard in the world came to pick him up from his house. Which is because he's famous.

Casper: Yeah.

Ariana: Privilege begets privilege.

Vanessa: Yeah, right, it's a cycle of fame begetting fame.

Casper: I mean, let me tell you, so I've had to travel a lot recently, so I have a Delta sky lounge access. The food in there is free! *laughs*

Vanessa: Privilege begets privilege.

Casper: Yes! That's, it's like Harry.
Vanessa: You are like Harry!

Ariana: Should we move on to our first spiritual practice?

Vanessa: Yes. Let's. So, Casper. It is time for our first spiritual practice and tonight we will be doing Pardes! Yeah, the sexy practice! *laughs* So, Pardes is a medieval- I don't know, they went *woooh* like, you know, like you did in middle school when someone turned off the lights and everyone went *woooh*. So Pardes is a Jewish-Medieval spiritual practice, it's a four step practice, and Pardes means orchard, and the way that we like to think about it is that the text is an orchard, and we can reach in and pluck a sentence- this is them mocking me because I do that every time- and it will be a juicy piece of fruit that we can just bite into *laughs*. So, Pardes is a medieval spiritual practice, and the first step is P'shat, but first we have to pick a sentence, and we need your help. Casper, what is the first page number in this chapter?

Casper: 327 to 349.

Vanessa: So, my favorite Hufflepuff, please pick a number between 327 and 349. 349!

Casper: Bold choice! Oh, I love it.

Vanessa: Yes, I love it! Okay.

Casper: Four.

Vanessa: Four, okay and now, do you know what we're just going to stick with you because I really feel bad that I abandoned you. So, now please book a number 1 through 4. Two. So our Pardes sentence is...

Casper: "Good night, sir." *laughs*

Vanessa: Niiiiice. Excellent job, excellent job. Okay, so step one, step one of Pardes is P'shat, in which we ask ourselves the intended meaning of the sentence. I will do this. So, Harry, Dumbledore has dismissed Harry from his office, said, "Please leave," basically, and Harry has said, "Good night, sir." And that is the intended meaning of the sentence. Okay, so! So, now we're ready for step two, Remez. Remez is a way to find allegory. So the way that we do it is based on a Rabbinical practice in which we're going to pick one word from the sentence and we're going to track it through the seven Harry Potter books. We are going to do that with the word what, can you read the sentence?

Casper: "Good night, sir."
Vanessa: What word should we do? Sir. Sir. Okay, so where do we know the word sir?

Ariana: The witty retort to Snape, "There's no need to call me sir." *laughs*

Vanessa: Which is one of the best Harry moments ever. Harry doesn't call Snape sir and Snape is like, "Sir," and Harry is like, "You don't have to call me 'sir,' Professor." *laughs* So funny. Do you have one that has come to mind?

Casper: I'm trying to think, are there any sirs we meet, are there any peers in the books? Sir Cadogan! Yes, in the- *crowd yells*

Vanessa: Sir Nicholas, Nearly Headless Nick!

Casper: Sir Nicholas, the Nearly Headless Nick. So we're getting paintings, we're getting ghosts in the castle, so there's this spirits of the castle element.

Vanessa: Yeah, and the Sirs are sort of silly, so far all the Sirs are a little silly. Okay.

Casper: Yeah. Kreacher!

Vanessa: Kreacher, yes!

Casper: I mean all the house elves.

Vanessa: Ooohh, that is so interesting right, because Dobby calls Harry sir very sincerely, I think that we have sir ironically, we have sir in a traditional British ducal sense, we have sir-

Casper: But those are also ridiculous, right? Like, it's not just authority, certainly not with the painting and with the ghost, I mean Nearly Headless Nick is kind of a joke. And Sir Cadogin keeps going like, "You fools, you knaves!" So there's something ridiculous to them which actually undermines the status that they do have by their position.

Vanessa: Yeah, but there is also, there's some sincerity sometimes with sir, right?

Casper: Yeah, with Dobby.

Vanessa: Yeah, with Dobby, and I'm sure Harry calls Dumbledore sir sometimes, right?

Ariana: Well, right now.
Vanessa: What? Oh! *laughs*

Casper: "Good night, sir."

Vanessa: So step three of Pardes- *laughs*

Ariana: Before we do step three, yeah, let's connect.

Casper: So what does it mean in this context, right? What are the echoes that we hear when he says, "Goodnight, sir." And I think in some ways it's a beautiful illustration of the complexity of Harry's feelings. On the one hand, he feels, you know, drawn in, and he respects Dumbledore, and he's getting access to all of these, you know, memories, and he's clearly important to Dumbledore, but on the other hand he's really resentful of the ways in which he's not equal. And so I think there is a really interesting, I mean even the fact that he says "Goodnight, sir," rather than just 'goodnight,' I don't know, there's something reinforcing that separateness in just that little word for me, which is both manipulative and comical and respectful. But it's clear that there's difference between the two of them.

Vanessa: I think that's exactly right. I think that Harry with this "sir" manages to basically say "I am not leaving willingly," like "Goodnight, sir." Because you've excused me while still being polite. Right, that "sir" packs quite a punch.

Casper: Yeah, I mean the line before it literally says, "Harry got to his feet quickly," right, there is an urgency to it, yeah.

Vanessa: Okay, so step three of Pardes is D'rash, and in D'rash, the way that we do it, it means 'meaning' and the way that we talk about it is if this were our piece of liturgy, if "Goodnight sir" was the liturgy that we had to preach on this week, what lesson would we want to teach? And so the sentence, one again Casper, right is "Goodnight sir."

Casper: "Goodnight, sir." Yes.

Vanessa: Yep.

Casper: Maybe one more time. "Goodnight, sir." *laughs*

Vanessa: So I will say, I think I would preach a sermon on who you choose to be emotionally intimate with. I think I'm just getting this because one of my favorite movies is *When Harry Met Sally*, and in this great speech at the end he says, "You are the first person I want to talk to in the morning and the last person I want to say goodnight to at night," and this is, you know, Harry and Dumbledore probably are the last people they're going to talk to
at night. And I think you who talk to last at night sort of matters. Right, symbolically and yeah. And so I think that maybe this is making me think that Dumbledore and Harry are probably quite close and closer than I give them credit for. But also just that the daily rituals of loving each other, of saying good morning and goodnight to each other, I think are important and are sacred rituals.

Casper: 100% and that's in this chapter, right, that moment that we talked about before, "I'm Dumbledore's man through and through," that really, I mean who else does Dumbledore have that kind of relationship with? I don't know. So there's a lot of tenderness in that which I totally agree. A friend of mine just officiated a funeral for a former bishop in Chicago, and he was saying, you know, so many people had come and he said, "It felt like I wasn't just burying a man, I was burying an era," and there's something in this moment of "Goodnight, sir," of course this is book six, this is the book, close your ears if you don't know, but Dumbledore dies. And so there's something, I don't know, at least it's evocative of what we know is coming. But in re establishing that boundary of status, but also of age, Harry is already saying, "I know there will be an end, and that it'll be you that's leaving in some way." So, I don't know, there's just something about knowing that we will bury the people we love, and especially if they're older than us that they represent not just their own life, but a time that we never got to see. So that's something in there for me.

Vanessa: That's beautiful. So the last step of Pardes is Sud, and Sud is the most mystical practice that we engage in, and the idea is that the text holds secrets for us and by doing this work together, we've made it a little bit easier for these secrets to reveal themselves to us. So Casper will read this sentence for us one more time, Ariana will play some beautiful music and we will sit in silence together for just, you know, 30 seconds or so, and see if a Sod emerges.

Casper: "Goodnight, sir."

MUSIC

Vanessa: So, I think my Sud was very much inspired by the practice, in what you said, Casper, that at the end of the day, even though Dumbledore and Harry are really frustrated with each other in this scene, I think at the end of the day this was a good night. Because they spent it together. And this is one of the last times that they're going to have a class together before they go out and, you know, hunt Horcruxes in that horrible night together, and I just think, especially looking back for Harry, this must be a really fond memory of a night that he just got to spend time with Dumbledore, a man who cared for him and one of the greatest wizards to ever lived, and he just got to be with him. And so, the secret that emerged to me is that even when we are frustrated with each other, and even when we are driving each other crazy, to be together with people we love is a good night.
Casper: Mhmm. That's beautiful. It's interesting that the Sud must have been landing in the middle of us. Because I was thinking about "Goodnight" as well, in part because night is this subliminal space for Harry, right? The whole of the last book his nights were invaded by Voldemort, right, that his nights were sights of Harry having visions, with the most dangerous wizard he knows. And here he is having night visits, with visions in the pensive, with a man who both cares for him more than perhaps any other student, and also knows that he's leading him to his death. So both of them, I don't know, there's something so difficult about their both leading him to his death, and in the night is when they have those moments of connection, so. There's something in that for me.

Ariana: Those are both so beautiful thank you.

Vanessa: Thank you.

Casper: Thank you. Friends, we're so excited to welcome a dear friend, Usra Ghazi, welcome Usra. Come on up. *cheers* Yes! *music* Usra has worked on religious literacy training in foreign policy in the state department, she's helped build relationships between government agencies and religious minorities here in the U.S., and she's about to move to my hometown of London, which we're very excited about. We've been trading tips for the great city of London. Usra is an old friend of ours, a former classmate at Harvard Divinity School, and is here to tell us a story about attention.

Usra: Thank you. Hi everybody. I almost severely damaged a police vehicle. And threatened the life of the police officer who was driving it. Not great. I happened to, I was in undergrad, happened to get out of class, living my best life. Driving my car home, I had my windows up and the music on loud. It was the Clash. And I was really, really enjoying this drive. So, I am a nerd and I follow all the rules, so I wasn't necessarily over the speed limit but pushing it to its limit as I drove home. And caught myself heading toward an intersection, the light was green, a bunch of idiots were on the right side of the street, I don't know why, it was a slower lane, so I basically hit the pedal to the medal and tried to get through as quickly as I could on my ride home.

And as I was doing this and as I entered into the intersection, it was as if time froze. I caught myself inches away from a cop car that was zooming through from my right to my left, also in the very middle of this intersection. And I still remember the look of horror on the face of this police officer, as she turned to see me careening towards her with the Clash on blast. She probably didn't know it was the Clash on blast. But she looked at me because I almost killed her. And that moment must have only lasted a few seconds, but I will never forget it. Because, silly me, I hadn't picked up on all these subtle hints. To some others it may have been more obvious, but cars had pulled over to the side of the road because they
heard sirens! There was a little white light above the green traffic signal, indicating that there was an emergency situation. And somehow I just missed all of it and almost hurt someone severely. I think about this moment often in my life now. Because of the work that I do at an organization called America Indivisible.

We are a non-profit, non-partisan organization that works with communities across the United States to address the issue of racialized anti-Muslim bigotry. So the ways that communities who are Muslim or perceived to be Muslim are impacted by hate, discrimination, and other forms of negative, negativity and bias. One of the things that calls me to, and calls us to do as an organization is to talk to communities of not Muslims, not Arabs or South Asians or others that are impacted about what it means to be a civically engaged ally. So, instead of waiting for a moment of conflict or crisis between those times of conflict, that folks are recognizing the other ways that anti-Muslim hate looks.

So, we talk to folks about recognizing if your mayor or city council member or governor hasn't yet visited the local Gurudwara or the Mosque. Maybe it's deliberate, maybe it's not. But those types of communities that policy makers do not pay attention to are the ones that we're trying to get to engage with them more effectively. So, don't be like college Usra and, you know, drive at the status quo, following the speed limit and not recognizing those subtle hints in the communities around you, in your own neighborhood, and recognize what seats at tables are not available to communities that are not represented. What associations exist, where folks who come from underrepresented backgrounds don't have a seat at that table, or do not have representation. And I encourage you all to be more attentive than I was a few years ago. Thanks everyone. *cheers*

Casper: Amazing. Usra, thank you so much, thank you for the work that you do.

Usra: Thank you!

Casper: Thank you for being with us this evening, we so appreciate it. MUSIC *cheers* Alright. Friends, it is time for our second spiritual practice of this evening. And we're going to do Florilegia. *cheers* So, for those of you who don't know Florilegia, this is a medieval Christian monastic practice, and really came from monks who were writing and copying, usually the psalms or other parts of sacred texts like the Bible, and now and then they would find one piece of text that was so shimmering, it was a little sparklet, that they would put it-

Vanessa: Bless you!

Casper: Bless you indeed. The monks also bless you. *laughs* That they would create a new text, where they would take these little sparklets and put them together and in so doing,
kind of create a new sacred text. And put these pieces in conversation with one another. Vanessa and I have both read this chapter and we have found our own sparklets. And, Vanessa will you share what yours is first of all, and Ariana will put it on the- we don't know what one another is, this is the fun part.

Vanessa: "The Ministry had arranged this one-off connection." *Casper oooohs* Thank you, Casper. None of you ooed.

Casper: Mine is, "They are too terrified." *oooh* Very good, very good. Why did you choose that snippet of text?

Vanessa: I picked this, it's funny how much it dovetails off Usra's story, that the Ministry, rather than arranging more and more connections, we talked about these pamphlets- they're really trying to separate people, and get people to be afraid of each other. And rather than structurally thinking of ways to make people more connected, they've arranged a one-off connection. Which, it really struck me that one-time connections aren't really connections, right? If we're not building community, if we're not going to support each other, if we're not going to be building sustaining relationships with each other, I'm just not really interested in one-off connections. And it feels like the Ministry is trading in that type of solution right now.

Casper: And, remind me, where in the text is it?

Vanessa: It's in the very first paragraph.

Casper: Okay.

Vanessa: So, it's talking about the Floo network, how they are getting from the Weasley's into..

Casper: Hogwarts.

Vanessa: McGonagall's office, yep.

Casper: Okay, awesome.

Vanessa: What about you Casper, why did you pick, where's yours from and why did you pick it?

Casper: Yeah, so this is from Dumbledore explaining to Harry, I'm going to show you two memories this evening, the last one is the most important. But the, essentially, for who
knows how long, Dumbledore's been going out to try and collect data, evidence, and he says most people who knew Tom Riddle as a young man, as a child, are too terrified to talk, they're too terrified to share what they know. And so there's this real, I don't know there was this field of silence that I saw in that line. Of people who know things but are too terrified to say. So.

Vanessa: That's beautiful.

Casper: Here we are. This is our text for this evening. "The Ministry had arranged this one-off connection." "They are too terrified."

Vanessa: I mean it just reads, right? The Ministry is terrified of people being genuinely connected to each other because if we are genuinely connected to each other, then we are more powerful and can hold our ministries and governments to higher account. And, right, we are stronger together and therefore structures are trying to keep us apart. So that we can't challenge them. So the Ministry had arranged this one-off connection, they're too terrified to actually just let us be connected to one another.

Casper: Mhm, so the Ministry is the one that's too terrified.

Vanessa: Yeah, I would read the Ministry as too terrified.

Casper: Mhm, "The Ministry had arranged this one-off connection." "They are too terrified." I mean, there's something about connection always involves risk. I mean, whether you're going to see a friend and you're like, ugh but really all I want to do is just stay at home, right. There's that little hump that you have to get over, and then once you're with the friend, you're like, "This is awesome! We both love hot chocolate, yay!" *laughs* But to get there you have to risk something. And there's something when you don't have that risk, I wonder if it's really connection. Because I wonder if it becomes just symbolic. If I have a transactional engagement with someone, I'm buying groceries, I'm going to the bank, I'm really just performing something that's already pre-written, and it's when it's a real connection where I have to risk something, I have to be vulnerable, I have to, I don't know, I have to show up as me, not just the role that I'm performing. That there's some terror in that. And so, I don't know I'm seeing in this line that pointing to the risk within relationship. Does that make sense?

Vanessa: Oh yeah, that's lovely. I think that it's very wise.

Ariana: I feel like we're thinking about connection, which is the center of why Vanessa picked her quote, and we've kind of dropped the idea of silence that you were really
interested in when you picked your quote, Casper, and I'm wondering if putting these two together makes you think of anything about your original thought.

Casper: Well, I mean this makes me also think of just the whole Me Too movement, and the way in which, you know, the one-off connection is the lawyer meeting with the woman who's about to bring a case, right? There's something in which the arranging of the connection can actually be a way of silencing and creating that field of silence, and creating that terror. Yeah, just in the ways in which everyone who knew Riddle knows that everyone else is still there. Right, it's not like everyone just went away, they all knew him, but they're all staying silent because they're terrified! Because this man is a mass murderer. There's ways in which connection can keep us silent, as well as help us to, do you know what I mean?

Ariana: Yeah.

Casper: There's a-

Ariana: Especially one-off connections, right?

Casper: Yes!

Ariana: Like we're talking about if all of those people who knew Riddle could talk to one another, then maybe they would have the strength to tell Dumbledore their stories. But because he's approaching them individually, it can't happen.

Casper: That's really interesting. If Dumbledore had done some community organizing training. *laughs* He'd be like, we just had a one-on-one and we just had a one-on-one but let's get together at a house party! *laughs* No the failed pedagogy at Hogwarts! *laughs*

Vanessa: But it is so Dumbledore. Dumbledore is all about one-on-one connections, and he never brings people together. The closest thing he does to bringing people together is portraits, and they're all super dead and two dimensional. *laughs*

Casper: Well, yes!

Vanessa: So like...

Casper: And, I mean, this is what's beautiful about the passing on of this, I guess the lineage from Dumbledore to Harry, is that Harry keeps doing that differently from Dumbledore. I mean the closest we see to that is Dumbledore recruiting Slughorn. But even in this chapter he's trying to manipulate Slughorn! And Harry has learned by this point in the
books that he can't do it alone, and that he needs Hermione and that he needs Ron. And so there's something, I love that Vanessa. Yes.

Vanessa: Well, and now I am reminded also of Ron and Hermione, right. Where they have both agreed to a one-off connection with Harry and have cut each other out. Because they are too terrified of how much they like each other, right?

Casper: Ohhhh.

Vanessa: That I think we limit our connections because we're scared.

Casper: Yeah.

Vanessa: Yeah. Being alive is scary. *laughs*

Ariana: Should we read them the other way?

Casper: Yes! So now we get to play with our sacred text, we get to put them the other way around. So let's say we read it like this, "They are too terrified." "The Ministry had arranged this one-off connection." "They are too terrified." "The Ministry had arranged this one-off connection."

Vanessa: So this way makes it seem as though the students and family has requested it, right? They're too terrified to go to platform 9 3/4, they're too terrified to go back to Hogwarts, so we have arranged, this makes it seem like the Ministry is in much more of a care taking role. Because it seems like the fear is starting it, and that there's something happening.

Casper: What do you think Ariana?

Ariana: I definitely think that the 'they' is no longer referring to the Ministry, right?

Casper: Right.

Ariana: They are too terrified, whoever they are. The ministry had arranged this one-off connection... something that's standing out to me is the ministry is a kind of institution, right, I think, for me reading it, they are terrified of the connection that the ministry has made for them, that it like, because it's created by an institution, that there is some terror that emerges, rather than like, they are too terrified, Vanessa had arranged this one-off connection, I would feel like, okay Vanessa's taking care of me in my terror. But I think the terror is created out of the ministry.
Casper: Mhmm. I'm suddenly thinking about the rest of the magical world beyond witches and wizards. For whom so much is at stake, right? We've heard how giants are being played by Voldemort and by the ministry and that must be true of the goblins. There's so many other creatures that are within this battlefield that's growing, and I'm just thinking how they too are terrified, about a war that's happening that they don't really have a say in. And, I mean, we know that the kind of supremacy that's physically embodied by this statue in the ministry is itself a sort of block, right? Maybe that forces these connections to be one-off or not trustworthy, so I'm just seeing, again, kind of what Usra was talking about that the lack of collegiate co-creative relationships across difference, based on equality then can force must stronger civic-

Ariana: I also think, yeah, I think we've been pretty down on one-off connections, but I also think there's a possible reading that says a one-off connection is a chance.

Casper: Yes! Well, and think of things like Postsecret, or a friend of mine who does subway therapy, where he makes a sign saying 'subway therapy' and he sits on a subway platform in a suit and tie and with sticky notes and pens, and people can write whatever they want or sit down with him and have a conversation. And sometimes it's so much easier to talk to a stranger about something that is really hard, and you know, you don't know where that emboldened first time of telling a story can go.

Vanessa: Yeah, and I mean right. I've been really down on one-off connections and sometimes a one-off connection can be the difference between despair and hope, right? If you're in a dark place and you sort of meet a friendly stranger you can be reminded that the world is a beautiful place. I do believe in the possibility of one-off connections, I just worry that we can rely on them too much.

Ariana: Thank you.

Vanessa: Thank you. Thank you everybody.

Casper: Thank you. Thank you everyone.

Casper: So, we're coming to the end of our show and as we always do with every episode of the podcast, we end by offering a blessing to someone. Ariana, do you have a blessing for someone in this chapter?

Ariana: I'm going to bless Lavender Brown. *cheers*

Casper: Bold choice.
Ariana: Thank you. *laughs* Lavender comes on a little strong in this chapter... I feel like this is the chapter where Ron starts to become embarrassed of her. He's kind of running away from her and it's, you know, just going to get more and more of that. And I just felt so bad for her, I feel bad for anyone who is in a relationship with someone who is embarrassed of them. And I think it's fairly normal in early relationships, I know that in my high school relationship I dated someone because I just liked being liked, that there was something about trying it out for the first time, and I think that's okay. But the thing about Lavender is that she's going to die at the end of book seven, and this is going to be her only relationship, and it's going to be with someone who never loved her for her and who's embarrassed of her. *laughs* So I just, the blessing is that I hope that we all have people who love us for ourselves and who are not embarrassed of us, I think we all deserve that kind of love, including Lavender Brown.

Casper: Mhm. That's beautiful.

Vanessa: Except also, you think her and Parvati have a secret love affair.

Ariana: Number one ship. *cheers*

Vanessa: So maybe she does find another love.

Ariana: Yes.

Vanessa: It's just not in the pages of the text.

Ariana: Absolutely.

Casper: Well, one of my favorite, I've two great pieces of advice for marriage that I've heard which I've loved. One was 'make sure you don't want to get divorced from the other person at the same time,' that that's the secret to a long marriage. But the other one was 'don't be afraid to be the one who loves more,' and I feel like Lavender does that so beautifully.

Ariana: Thank you.

Vanessa: Team work! Look at that.

Ariana: How about you Vanessa, who are you going to bless?

Vanessa: I am going to bless Ginny because there's a moment in this chapter where it's like, 'oh Ginny I do that too.' Molly is crying as she's hugging Ginny goodbye, as she's
hugging each of them goodbye, and Ginny is just doing such a bad job taking care of Molly in this moment. And I have lived away from my mother for more than half of my life now, and my mom cries when she drops me off at the airport every time. I know. She loves me very much, it's very sweet, she's also listening. Hi mom. And I don't know when I started doing this, but when we hug goodbye I always snap her bra *laughs* to get a laugh out of her. So I just want to offer a blessing to children who are loved by their parents and we love them back really imperfectly. And I think Ginny loves Molly so much and is just imperfectly loving her right now. So that is my blessing. What about you, Casper?

Casper: I'm going to bless a slightly obscure character from this chapter. We learn that the, that Tom Riddle's father and his grandparents are discovered by a maid. That she sees their dead bodies, that she's the one to call the alarm. And I was just in the Museum of African American history and there's this very striking, a room where the original casket of Emmett Till is on display. The 14 year old boy who was, you know, horrifically killed, which was a really important moment for a public awakening, and in part it was that because his mother, who could not even recognize his face, so disfigured and horrifically beaten was it, that she did not let him be buried in Mississippi, but took the casket to Chicago and had it be an open casket funeral. She wanted the world to see. And so, I mean I just can't imagine as a parent to first of all have to go through that, but then to, just to have that courage and vision and intense ferocity about what is right to be able to keep looking at this dead person's face. And the maid in this book just has a momentary taste of that, but no one should have to discover that. So a blessing for anyone who has to gaze on, you know, the dead body of their child, especially when it's been so horrifically mutilated. Thank you.

Vanessa: And that is our show! *cheers* Thank you so much for joining us, we are going to do a meet and greet up here after. Go downstairs and get a t-shirt or a new pin, feel free to stay behind and chat with us. Next week we are back in the studio for chapter 18 "Birthday Surprises" through the theme of recklessness. Our music, as always, is by Nick Bohl and Ivan Pyzow.

Casper: Our production team is Chelsea Ursin, Julia Argy, Nicki Zoltan, Meghan Kelly, Maggie Needham, and Stephanie Paulsell. Thanks this week especially to Usra Ghazi, our special guests, the staff here at Sixth & I, Jordan, Char, Trevor, David, Sasha, our volunteers Meghan Quinn, Lindsey Nelson, Mallory Wood, Tara Hoffman. And most importantly all of you for coming! I'm Casper ter Kuile,

Vanessa: I'm Vanessa Zoltan.

Ariana: And I'm Ariana Nedelman.

Casper: And you've been watching Harry Potter and the Sacred Text,
All: THE LIVE SHOW!

Vanessa: Thank you, goodnight!

MUSIC