Casper: Chapter 19 – Elf Tails “’So, all in all, not one of Ron’s better birthdays,’ said Fred. It was evening. The hospital wing was quiet, the windows curtained, the lamps lit. Ron’s was the only occupied bed.” I’m Casper Ter Kuile

Vanessa: And I’m Vanessa Zoltan

Casper: And this is Harry Potter and the Sacred Text

Vanessa: Casper, before we get started with today’s episode, do you know that in 1666, the year of the Devil, there was a big fire that burned down most of Londontowne

Casper: I do, and it came one year after a great outbreak of plagues, so those were just some difficult times

Vanessa: Those were some awkward years, but I hear that London has rebuilt itself a bit. So much so that there is a London local Harry Potter Sacred Text group.

Casper: And this group, more than anywhere else, is so lucky because there is so much Harry Potter landscape right on their doorstep. I hope they do some cool meetups.

Vanessa: So, if you wanna go to the London local group, it is a great thing to do while you’re a tourist in London. Or you can be a member of that local group. And to find out more about all of our local groups, go to harrypottersacredtext.com to learn more about a local group near you.

Casper: And while you’re on our website, we’ve only got two weeks left to support the amazing work of RAICES with our Don’t Be A Dursley campaign. We have surpassed the goal we set, and this community just keeps showing up, and it keeps showing us the world we could live in together if we treated one another with dignity and respect. So please join our fundraiser. Let’s see how far we can go together. The fundraiser closes on the 25th of December, Christmas day.

Vanessa: So, Casper, at the beginning of my friendship with the Reverend Professor Matt Potts, he and I would meet for breakfast once a week. And it was like a very tenuous beginning of a friendship. I felt like we both stepped pretty lightly on issues and it was a transition from my being his student to my becoming a family friend. And eventually we started sharing more and more about ourselves. But I was pretty hesitant to share too much about myself because I made a series of assumptions based on the fact that Matt is an Episcopal Priest. And so, I was constantly sort of scared that he was gonna judge me. And I remember there was one day in particular in which I wanted to ask for Matt’s advice but I was simultaneously afraid of asking for Matt’s advice cuz I was like, “uh, he’s gonna be an optimist about it and tell me to believe in another person and have faith in them and blah blah blah.” But whatever the issue was, it was just weighing on me too much and we were having breakfast and he was the person in front of me and so I was like “Matt, can I ask your advice” and I asked him. And he ended up just validating
every feeling that this like dead inside Atheist me had, and I was shocked, right? So, I said to him, I said, “Matt, are you secretly an Atheist?” and he said, “No, Vanessa, I think you’re secretly a Christian.” And we started having this debate of like, “You like to focus on the suffering of the world that is embodied in Jesus.” And I was like, “You like to focus on the suffering of the world, that means you like to focus on meaninglessness” And we went back and forth and what I realized is that someone does not need to be the same as you in order to want to be a part of the same message as you. And in fact, that difference is what is important. And that strikes me as what harmony is. He and I have very similar messages whenever we talk to the communities that we talk to, only he has the language of the church and of Christianity and of Jesus and I have the language of Atheists. And I think my younger self would have just seen that as difference, but really now I see that difference as such a beauty and such an opportunity for harmony. And it has made me think that you can’t harmonize with someone who has the same voice as you. You need someone to have a different voice in order for it to truly be harmony. And I think we see that throughout this chapter. And we see moments in which having things in common is not the same as harmony. Like Kreacher and Dobby who are given the exact same assignment and yet are not working in harmony. So, I’m really interested in thinking about when something is harmonious and when it’s not and why.

Casper: Yeah I really love that focus on harmony being about difference, not about unity. I think that’s exactly right. It’s so easy to think “Oh it’s all about aligning and agreeing” and I think it’s actually about like fine-tuning the difference to be pleasant. Right? Like there’s not an effort for you to become Christian, and you’re not trying to convince Matt to become an atheist, but you’re each helping one another to be clearer and more precise in the note that you’re singing in the world, right? That’s what a good friendship is about. You’re not getting lost in one another. You’re actually being more of who you are.

Vanessa: Yeah, and I do think that we embody that in our 30-second recap.

Casper: Ha-ha, yes. And it’s my turn to go first. Will you count me in?

Vanessa: Yes, happily. Three, two, one, go!

Casper: So, Ron is recuperating, and all the Weasleys are there and Molly’s like, “Oh my god, you saved Ginny, you saved Arthur, and now you saved Ron. How are we ever going to repay you?” And Hermione has done a total 180 and is like, “I’m standing by my man, I’m like not worried about anything else.” Suddenly Hagrid arrives and is like, “Oh my god, guys, uh, turns out Dumbledore’s really angry with Sna-” and then like “Oh no, I’ve shared way too much” and then tells this whole story that Dumbledore’s been angry with Snape and harry is just increasingly obsessed with Malfoy.

Vanessa: Well that was a great recap of half the chapter!

Casper: Yeah
Vanessa: Let’s work in harmony and I’ll do the second half.
Casper: Will you do the second half?
Vanessa: Yes, happily. Count me in?
Casper: You bet. Three, two, one, go!
Vanessa: So, um, Harry is on his way down to the quidditch match, but he stops to see Ron. McLaggen is like, “I guess I should be your goalie while Ron is recuperating.” And Harry’s like, “Fine.” Lavender’s really upset that Ron is always asleep when she visits him and is constantly bothering Harry. Harry sees Draco on his way down to the match. The match starts. McLaggen starts yelling and being really distracting and really annoying and he, and um, Luna is the announcer and then Harry gets hit in the head and wakes up in the hospital room!
Casper: There’s just so much hospital room everywhere in this chapter.
Vanessa: Freakin’ McLaggen, man! Let’s start right with McLaggen. Because a quidditch team – any sports team – is a perfect example of harmony. Everybody needs to work together in order for a sports team to be effective. And everybody needs to their role and only their role and not step on another person’s role. And McLaggen’s just an example of absolutely not believing in a team mentality and therefore it’s like this very awkward song that is being sung, rather than a harmonious victory. There’s no harmony. There’s just: he wants to be the star. And that ego keeps harmony from happening.
Casper: And the irony is, he’s actually a pretty decent player. Like even the strategic advice – like at some point he says to two of the other players like, “Make sure you play into the sun so that the Hufflepuffs can see the ball when it’s coming.” He’s right in a lot of ways, but it’s exactly this – is his failure to know how he is in harmony or out of harmony with other players – and the team that really lets him down. And I think, you know, you can draw a musical parallel for sure – like when you have people singing together – actually sometimes it’s the strongest voice that ruins the harmony because it’s so overpowering. There’s something about harmony that I think actually limits the capacity for one individual to shine super bright. Which, if you think about the whole series, it’s actually remarkable that the trio stays so consistent. I mean yes, there are moments when things fall apart, but it is remarkable how in harmony they stay throughout these seven years of their life, when Harry is constantly put out in front, right? Like he’s the McLaggen of the proverbial quidditch trio team – and yet he’s able to melt into this – at least socially – melt into this, this harmony together. I think it’s beautiful.
Vanessa: Well, I think the important difference between Harry in McLaggen is that Harry is sort of being pulled out to be a soloist, right? Where as McLaggen is authentically playing the role of a choir member who’s just singing too loudly and like out of tune. Everybody loves a great solo moment,
Casper: Right
Vanessa: But that’s not what McLaggen was doing. What he is doing is disrespecting the belief in the possibility of harmony. And I think, you know, to go back to my story, I think I could have stayed in sort of shallow friendship land with Matt for a very long time and like not believed in his capacity to understand me and think that our differences were too great and I’m really grateful that a moment of vulnerability let us realize that we can work so well together, but I think that I’m not a big trust-the-system person, but I do believe that McLaggen has signed up to be on a team, and a team has a captain. And I guess that I just think that once you’ve signed up for a system, you sort of, at least in the moment of crisis, like a game, have to play within the system.

Casper: Yeah, I mean, just as you were talking, Vanessa, I just had this like pang of compassion for McLaggen, right? Like, usually when we become really bossy or we become the way that he’s acting, it’s because we’re actually super insecure about our own skills or whether we’re good enough, and, you know, he didn’t get in when he wanted to be in the team. And this is his one chance, this is his moment. I don’t know, suddenly I felt like I understand where it’s coming from, right? You wanna be, not just the best you can be, but you wanna be twice as good as everyone else. And I feel like that’s maybe the pressure that he’s feeling and part of what’s driving him. When you really wanna impress people, sometimes you act a bit of a, a bit of a boo-head.

Vanessa: Yeah, I just wanna push back on that, because I agree that sometimes when you really wanna impress people you can overstep, but I also think that people become bossy because they think that they’re the best, and that they are the only ones that can do a good job. I don’t know, I grew up with a real bully of an uncle, and I genuinely believe, even know with being an adult and hindsight and everything else, that he truly believes he knows better than everyone else. It was incredible to me the things that he felt comfortable giving me advice on, right? Like he would give me advice on things that he had never been in the worlds that I was in. The compassion I feel for him is that he was constantly validated as a bully and so a lot of people dislike him, and a lot of people were really happy when he retired and to have him out of his life. But I do think that some people will go through their entire lives thinking that they are right and that they know best and that everyone else is just an incompetent idiot, and hold the bludger bat like this.

Casper: Even if it results in the kind of catastrophe that happens on the quidditch match. I mean like, Harry is literally hit in the face by a bludger and it’s only thanks to two of the other teammates that he’s caught, and you know, doesn’t potentially die. And that’s McLaggen’s fault. And I don’t think McLaggen is going home tonight being like, “Oh my goodness I really screwed up, like I really need to-”

Vanessa: No, he’s like, “If Harry had been paying more attention-”

Casper: Exactly! So, I think that’s one of the challenges with being out of harmony. It’s actually very difficult to get back into it. You know, it’s much easier to grow from silence into sound.
And it’s much harder, as what McLaggen has to do and doesn’t to go from a lot of sound – not into silence – but into balance with the rest of the sound around you. I think the quidditch game is really interesting, because we see Luna do something that I had completely forgotten when I read this chapter. That she is commentating on this whole quidditch match, and it’s totally delightful of course because she’s not keeping track of the score. McGonagall has to like shout that into the microphone. And she’s talking about clouds, and it’s all very Luna-esque. But, the thing that really struck me is that, you know, she is not a quidditch player herself, as far as we know, and I think part of the reason she is so engaged in quidditch is that this is about her becoming in tune with the trio, with the Gryffindors, with Dumbledore’s Army. Like, this is an expression of wanting to resonate with and to be in harmony with these people that she has learned she can call her friends. I don’t think this is Luna’s natural place. I think she’s stretching into a world so that she can be, kind of like, yeah, in relational harmony with the people that she loves.

Vanessa: I also think that now Lee Jordan plus McGonagall, and Luna plus McGonagall shows us that we always need two commentators, which a lot of professional sports teams have.

Casper: That’s true.

Vanessa: They have what they call, you know, the person who’s telling you the play by play, then they have the quote-unquote color commentator. And I feel like McGonagall is there with the like, “Here’s the score!” and Luna is our color commentator. And I think that she is sharing really interesting information about the character of some of the players. Ginny is very nice. It needs to be a harmonious relationship. This is not a one-person job.

Casper: Yeah. I love that. I love that.

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Vanessa: So, Casper, can we talk a little bit about a moment that I’m not sure how to talk about harmony, but I was really haunted by it. So, everybody in the hospital wing is talking about whether the Katie Bell attack and Ron’s attack are somehow connected. And Hermione says, “I don’t think they’re quidditch related, but I do think they’re connected. What’s scariest is that whoever, neither of these items seemed to have poisoned the person they were meant to poison. Which makes this person even more dangerous because they don’t care who they hurt.” And to me it made Draco unforgivable. I understand that he was given this assignment by Voldemort to kill Dumbledore, and that’s terrible. He is a child soldier being sent into war, and that is awful.

Casper: And

Vanessa: That’s exactly right. And, he has hurt Ron and Katie. He could have killed both of them. He is being so reckless with other people’s lives. I don’t know how I come back on Draco.

Casper: Yeah. I mean it’s striking in this chapter. Harry kind of meditates on what would have happened if he hadn’t had the bezoar in Slughorn’s briefcase. Cuz Slughorn was completely
paralyzed to what was happening. Slughorn was not helpful in that moment of crisis, as Ron lay dying. And if Harry hadn’t had access to that antidote, he would have watched his friend die. I mean, the seriousness of what you’re describing is absolutely real. And I have to wonder, something has to be happening to Malfoy at that soul level, as he is committing these attempted murders. I mean both of them, right, they don’t reach their intended victim. But just that intentionality of wanting to kill and the way in which it has this horrific impact on people who, sure, he might not like Ron. But does he wish Ron’s death? No. like, I have to think that there’s something that’s happening to Draco every time something like this happens. And if I’m really gonna stretch this reading, is that one of the reasons he’s unable to kill Dumbledore? That he has actually seen in small ways, and perhaps from afar, the impact of what he has done already, and it is too much for him? I don’t know maybe that’s too kind.

Vanessa: No, I think that’s a really beautiful reading, and I think that, you know, there’s one of two ways this can impact you. It can make you more and more dead inside to the point where you’re like, oh, another victim, oh well. Or it can really make you sensitive to not wanting any victims. I know that he’s living in tremendous fear, I just, this moment really hit me hard.

Casper: I mean there’s something about this whole chapter which is funny because in so many ways it’s about the escape from death, in that Ron is, you know, Ron is ok. And we see Harry ultimately being ok as well. There’s this sweet moment where Hagrid describes going into the forest. And that he is reading to Aragog who is dying. And it made me think about this whole series is so much about this relationship between life and death, right? Voldemort’s continuous desire is to escape death. We see Harry making this fateful choice whether he accepts death. And there’s something in this moment where we actually see this beautiful moment of kind of hospice care. That like, Hagrid isn’t trying to save Aragog. But he is accompanying him in this very sweet, simple way of just reading him a story, of reading stories. And being with him in the forest, not wanting to make everything different, that is actually so rare. And the reason all of this kind of this theme of hospice care and accompaniment into death really struck me is that life and death, in some ways, are two notes. Right? They can never be the same. But in that process of dying and letting go, that there is a, I don’t know, an accompaniment from one note to the other. That I, as the person is dying, will start singing a different note, and you, as the person who’s caring for me will continue singing your note. And there’s mirroring, this harmony, this relationship between life and death, which doesn’t have to be a breach of pain and violence as we so often see, but in this sweet, sweet moment with Aragog there’s this, I don’t know. It felt harmonious in a way.

Vanessa: Yeah, I’m wondering if we can stay sort of in hospital care as harmony, cuz another real moment of harmony to me was when Mr. and Mrs. Weasley say to Harry, “We were lucky. We the Weasleys were lucky the day that Ron sat down in your carriage. You know, you’ve saved Arthur, you’ve saved Ginny, and now you’ve saved Ron.” I thought that was very beautiful, especially because Harry feels the same way about them. Right? That they have saved his life. And even if they haven’t literally saved hi – prevented his death – they have saved him
from the Dursley’s again and again. They have given him a sense of family. And I think that, you know, we talk about how you can’t always pay people back in the same way that they give you gifts. And I think that sometimes part of harmony is realizing we can’t give back to each other in an equal way and sometimes in order to show your gratitude, you actually have to pay it forward. And sometimes in order to be in harmony with someone, you just have to humbly let something go and let their generosity rush over you. My parents used to say that the quickest way to end a friendship is to be overly generous with someone. And I think that what that is, is that people feel out of harmony, right? If I were to give you a million dollars because you really needed it, and I just had a couple mil sitting around to spare, right? It creates a power imbalance and then the receiver feels like, “Well I can never be in harmony in this relationship anymore. I am now completely out of balance.” And so, I think that sometimes we have to accept that gifts don’t have to be the same in order to be equal.

Casper: Yeah, oh that totally makes sense. I just had this this morning. I had a meeting with a friend, and um, you see, I am very inquisitive and I’m excited to hear people’s stories and I ask lots of questions. And this time, like, he asked me lots of lots of questions, and it’s kind of turned into a life coaching session. Halfway through the conversation, I was like, Whoa, this is so out of balance, not just general half and half, but usually of how I am with other people. and I was like, no, Casper, just enjoy it. Like, receive this lovely set of open questions and interesting thoughts that I’m being offered. And it just reminded me exactly of what your saying, that you have to be able to give and take. And in that situation, it was actually a pleasure to receive in a way that, usually, I don’t. I think we see this in the chapter as well. In that we hear this frustration between Snape and Dumbledore. I mean literally the words that we hear reported that Snape said are, “You forget what you’re asking of me. And I wondered, you know, is this a failure of leadership from Dumbledore? I think that’s too much to say, but I think that there is something about the ease with which he expects from others something with which he’s unable to give himself. It just struck me of this moment of disharmony within the leadership as it were within this resistance, and the way in which stressful situations like the one they’re in – they’re fighting a war – actually you can’t be in harmony all the time, and that successful, whether it’s projects or revolutions or relationships of all kinds, like, you’re not always going to be in harmony, and that that’s also ok. Because what I don’t wanna leave this chapter with is this sense of any dissonance is dangerous. You know what I mean?

Vanessa: Yeah. Casper, before we end this conversation, there is one place where I feel like we really have to talk about harmony. And that is in Kreacher and Dobby. And this was just a moment where I saw two people, right? Kreacher and Dobby, have the same task. They both have the task to follow Draco in order to serve Harry, but they are completely nonharmonious. First of all, Dobby is choosing to do it. Kreacher is ordered to do it. The Dobby actively does not want to do it and is actively fighting it on every level. And I’m wondering if you basically think that people can be instructed to be harmonious, or if they are
two soldiers on the same task but not working in harmony. Or if, because they have the same
orders, they are necessarily working in harmony.

Casper: I wonder if the best metaphor in this case is, you know, sometimes you have a beautiful
harmony between two string instruments for example. Or you know, a flute and a clarinet. You
know, instruments that are often paired. But in this case, we’re having steel-panned drums and a
cello or something, right, like, even though they are playing harmonious notes in the work that
they’re doing together, right? Like they’re on the same mission, they’re going to execute it. It
still doesn’t sound nice, right? Like they’re not going to enjoy it. So that maybe harmony is just
one dimension of, you know, for example rhythm can be completely different and harmony still
exist, and it still sounds challenging. I feel like that’s what we’re seeing in this case.

Vanessa: Yeah, I think that’s right. I think that it almost doesn’t have to be willing to be
harmonious.

Casper: Or at least it’s more complex.

*Music*

Casper: Vanessa, it’s time for our spiritual practice, and we are going to continue with Sacred
Imagination. The exercise of imagining ourselves into a specific scene and paying attention to
the five senses. What can we hear? What can we smell? What can we touch? Taste? What can
we see? And the idea is that by imagining ourselves into the text with such detail, that we see
something new. That perhaps we see a shadow on the wall somewhere, or we hear birdsong
further away, and that the scene is enriched, and we get to know the characters and their inner
life better by understanding this outer context. So today I’m reading you a very very short
paragraph. And it comes about two-thirds of the way through the chapter towards the end. And I
really want you to pay attention to these five senses as you imagine yourself into the scene.
“There was a low, rumbling snore from Ron’s bed. After a while, Madam Pomfrey came out of
her office, this time wearing a thick dressing gown. It was easier to feign sleep. Harry rolled over
onto his side and listened to all the curtains closing themselves as she waved her wand. The
lamps dimmed, and she returned to her office. He heard the door click behind her and knew that
she was off to bed.” So, I’m curious. Did you just find yourself watching it as a bird’s eye view
or were you one of these characters? What did you notice?

Vanessa: Well, I was Harry. I mean, and I could so clearly hear the curtain being pulled, that like
chhhh sound of metal on metal. And um, the lights being dimmed but not turned off. And then
the sound of the click. There was something very warm about it to me, of being in the very
capable hands of Madam Pomfrey. You know, what’s really striking me is that this is probably
the closest Harry has ever come to being tucked in. I don’t think Petunia really tucked him in.

Casper: Right.

Vanessa: I think by the time he goes to Molly, I think Ron would kill her if she tried to tuck
everyone in. And so, the line that really sticks out to me is “It’s easier to feign sleep.” And I
think he doesn’t know how to receive kindness and he doesn’t know how to receive care. All Madam Pomfrey would say is like, “Are you comfortable? Sleep well dear.” It’s not like this would have been a long, difficult interaction, and yet he would rather avoid it than receive this like tender moment from a parental figure.

Casper: Gosh, that makes me feel weepy. That’s so beautiful.

Vanessa: It was so mundane, right? Like, as someone who was tucked in nightly until my double-digits, there was such a routine to it, and there are so many sounds to it, you know, of like the creaky floorboard that my mom would step on in order to get to my bed. And I had a creaky bed that would make a noise when she would lean down to kiss me. And the closest thing he has to a familiar nightly routine is being in the hospital with Madam Pomfrey. What about you Casper?

Casper: You know, we spend so much time thinking about Hermione and Harry’s leadership, and I often kind of forget sometimes a little bit why Ron is there. I mean, we know we love him. We know he’s fun. That he’s hard working and brave in his own way. But you know what? This passage really helped me understand what the bond between Harry and Ron is about. Because they’re sleeping next to one another again. If you think about what happens at Hogwarts, for so much of the time, they’re asleep next to each other, in bunk beds, right? There is such an intimacy about these two boys who are really like brothers growing up. So much so that even in the holidays they wan to be together. I think Ron is home for Harry. I think what hurts so much in book seven – yes, they’re outside of Hogwarts – but it’s Ron’s disappearance that puts that kind of ice dagger in Harry’s heart, and I just love this low, rumbling snore from Ron’s bed. Like, yes, it’s the curtains, and yes it’s the fact that he’s safe right after he’s had this head bash from a quidditch injury, but I think it’s Ron’s like rumbling, gentle snore next to him that just makes him feel at home. Like they in later life are totally gonna try and buy a house where like upstairs downstairs right? Like you can still be neighbors even though you’re adults. I don’t know, there’s such an intimacy to this scene, and I was just really reminded that it is in their nonverbal relationship that the intimacy is established. I think that’s what we see in this scene.

Vanessa: You know that reminds me of my favorite line in book seven, which is “Their presence was his courage,”

Casper: That’s right.

Vanessa: And I sometimes think about that even just like, yesterday I was doing work off normal work hours, and I was on Slack preparing to record this episode and there was a little dot that like you were on Slack too, and it was just this like, knowing that the other person is there, right? Like, I don’t think I ended up messaging you –

Casper: No!

Vanessa: But it was like, oh Casper’s here. You know, like, we’re both here working. And there’s such warmth to knowing that there’s someone that you love. Even if they’re snoring.
Even if they’re just a dot. Just like, knowing that the other person is there can be the difference of yeah, feeling at home, and feeling safe enough to feel brave or not.

Casper: Wow, I am really excited about choosing a shorter paragraph like this that’s so evocative and rich. I just – it’s a wonderful way to get into this practice.

Vanessa: Yeah, thank you so much for picking that really sweet little passage.

Casper: Thank you, Vanessa. It’s time for our voicemail. And today we’re going to hear from Becca.

Becca: Hi, Harry Potter and the Sacred Text team, my name is Becca and I loved being a part of the DC Live show recently. I have not been able to stop thinking about this idea of tampered memories and this story we see in A Sluggish Memory. I would love to offer a blessing to Professor Slughorn. It is so evident the pain that he is in – that he has gone through the process of tampering with his memory – and just the ways that he is filled with regret that he could have never imagined the consequences for. I think the inclination here to change our memories or to want to change the past is so relatable and so human. And I would like to bless anyone who has memories that they wish they could erase, or parts of their past they want to rewrite. I know it’s so hard to live with that regret of things that you’ve said or left unsaid, and it’s so difficult to own up to our mistakes in the effort to repair the hurt we’ve caused. You know, this is something we see in our culture and our country in the way that we tell our own history, particularly around this time of year with Thanksgiving and just the racial history in this country. I wish that we all would have the courage to face our past with bravery, honesty, and own up to our mistakes to mend our shared culture. thanks.

Vanessa: Becca, thank you so much for that beautiful blessing. I also feel for Slughorn more and more. I wonder about all the things that I just choose not to think about. The things that if I were to look back on would bring me that gross feeling of shame that comes upon me when I think about certain memories, and so I just don’t engage with them. And rather than thinking, oh what could I have done differently, I just tell myself this story of “I’m a different person now, I don’t need to beat myself up about that.” And I don’t think shame is productive, but I think that there are sometimes where the icky feeling comes, and rather than engage with it, I just miss that chance. And I think that at the end of the day, that’s all Slughorn is doing.

Casper: Yeah, I’m really struck Becca, by what you said about telling the truth about what happened. That’s not something we should just go around doing all the time, right? Like it can be traumatizing for people to be confronted with that, however, I do think if the truth is never told, it’s very difficult for us to build a new chapter that transcends and includes it – you know, includes and transcends it. So, I’m really thinking about, you know, what we’re seeing here is Slughorn unwilling to tell the truth. And that’s what slows Harry down, it slows Dumbledore down, it slows down the whole movement to overcome this evil that has awoken in the world. And so, I’m really hearing your invitation to all of us to tell the truth – to tell the truth about what happened. It’s time for us to bless someone from the pages of this chapter. And there are so
many great characters that we get to see in this chapter. Vanessa, who are you going to bless today?

Vanessa: I am going to bless my darling, darling Lavender Brown. Who, in this chapter, is just being jilted by a cowardly Ron Weasley who just keeps pretending to be asleep when his girlfriend comes visit him, and she, in absence of information, is doing her best to make meaning, and is trying to talk to harry, and is coming up with stories about Hermione, and is doing all of the things any of us do when we feel as though we can’t do anything, right? She’s being kept out of her own relationship. Ron isn’t telling her what’s going on with her own relationship. And it just breaks my heart for her, and I’d just like to offer a blessing for Lavender. Dating is hard, and yeah, people can be quite cruel and dismissive, so to anybody out there who think that their dating life is treating them poorly, my blessing is for you. What about you Casper, who would you like to bless?

Casper: I was so struck by seeing Dobby again in this chapter. You know, he has these star turns. He’ll sharpen a chapter and be really really present. And it’s so easy to forget how continuously loyal, and just generous he is. And it’s layered in with lots of complexity, you know? But the reason he’s fighting with Kreacher is that he’s protecting Harry’s reputation. He’s saying, “I will not have Harry insulted and besmirched in the way that you’re doing.” So, I guess for Dobby’s just unfailing loyalty and for his protection of someone that he loves. For his protection of their integrity, and of their reputation. Just that fierce protection instinct that we see in Dobby, and for anyone who is standing up for those who might not be present, you know, protecting their reputation and staying loyal. This blessing is for you.

Vanessa: Casper, is there anyone who’s teeth you need me to knock out for you?

Casper: Let’s talk later!

*ending credits*

Vanessa: Oh Casper, you know, remember how last week, my tower was that I was so excited to make bagels?

Casper: Yeah, you forgot to add wheat –

Vanessa: Yeast

Casper: Yeast. So, what happens when you don’t add yeast? Do they just stay really flat?

Vanessa: They’re hard as rocks.

Casper: You made manna. That’s what you made.