

being like, "I'm going to change the dynamic at Number Four Privet Drive," and as soon as they walk back in the door they're back in their age-old relationship system.

Vanessa: Just like you. You had this lovely day with your mom, and you want to come home and be this peaceful, sweet boy with his red balloon.

Casper: And there I am, like pulling my sister's hair.

Vanessa: Yeah, right? Within like thirty seconds. It just takes more than an afternoon out at the theater. And I think that maybe part of your mom's disappointment; you know she tried for a miracle. She was like, "I'm going to take my boy out and I'm somehow going to create a different circumstance to this magical day. And then it just fell apart, right? So its not just a disappointment in you, it's also just a like there's nothing I can do to shake up this dynamic at home. I remember moments of my mom looking like that, like, "my kids are going to be beating each other up forever."

Casper: And luckily it did get better.

Vanessa: Yes, it's called aging out of preteen-hood. Casper, I'm wondering what you think about Harry's punishment of just this day of really grueling housework. Such grueling housework that he doesn't get fed and his neck gets burnt, right?

Casper: Right. And this happens right after he's pretended to use magic on Dudley, and Dudley's like, "Mom!" and so he has to go outside and mow the lawn and all sorts of things. And what's interesting to me is that during all of this hard, physical labor; this is the moment when Harry's mind goes to the place of, "well maybe he didn't have any friends at Hogwarts." So there's this kind of element of while he's doing this work, which is humbling in some way, that the weight of the disappointment that's been with him all summer suddenly becomes very concrete in this moment of physical labor. What did you see in it?

Vanessa: What was interesting to me about the physical labor was that the list of tasks isn't terribly oppressive tasks, right? It's like gardening and mowing. I would imagine for a twelve year old that's, sort of, harder to do, but so much of our world is our mental state. And so because it's a punishment this goes from being a day in the garden, right like, some people would consider this a pleasant Saturday, but he feels no sense of ownership over this house so it's really a form of, I don't want to say slave labor, but he isn't going to get to eat until he accomplishes these tasks. So his imprisonment seems to be mental as well as physical, right? As soon as this physical punishment is dolled out, exactly what you said, he goes to this self-loathing place. And I feel if someone is exerting control over your body, it's really hard to keep control over your mind. And that's something that we hear about political prisoners, and people who are being oppressed that you can maintain a peaceful space in your mind. Nelson Mandela obviously being the great example of that, but it's not something that Harry, I mean at twelve, is able to do. And you know the punishment that I got most as a kid, was that I got sent

to my room. And I'm an introvert, I spent a lot of time in my room, but if I got sent to my room as a punishment, it was a punishment. It's not like, "Oh my room, all of my stuffed animals and my books are here: I'm fine." My room very quickly became my prison cell.

Casper: You're so right Vanessa, and I think that the fact that he's being mocked while he's doing this work. That Dudley is sitting there with his lovely ice cream is a straight comparison that there is someone enjoying the afternoon and here am I doing this hard work. It feels like his agency is being taken away, and that Harry really flourishes when he is free, like I think we learn something about Harry and the way that he engages with being imprisoned in this way. That he will really resist that to the end.

Vanessa: I mean Dudley is really engaging in psychological warfare here. It's not just do the manual labor, it's I will mock you while you do it.

Casper: But I do want to complicate this because Petunia has created this enormous pudding. A huge amount of whipped cream and sugared violets. Which if you've ever tried to make sugared violets that is a huge amount of work, very detailed, precise, and difficult. And she may be spoiling Dudley and, you know, trying to give him some leisure but she is working hard too.

Vanessa: Absolutely, and she's a partner in Vernon's business enterprise, but she has a choice she doesn't have to be making such an elaborate pudding. There's some agency in that.

Casper: Also, she's heard from her friend Yvonne how nice Majorca is, and she's like, "ten more sugared violets and I'm in Majorca."

Vanessa: Absolutely.

Casper: You know, all of this, the whole physical labor piece, the kind of psychological bullying that's going on; let's remember that this chapter is called, "The Worst Birthday." None of Harry's birthdays to this point have been good, but this the worst. And I wonder if this whole chapter is in such stark difference with his year at Hogwarts. That is the place where Harry wants to be, where he feels at home. This could have been normal for Harry and it wouldn't have been different from any other day; but the fact that he knows that there's something better coming back for him just makes the whole experience so much more disappointing.

Vanessa: Yes, and you know what's so interesting is there are all of these theories around when you are in a bleak place, it feels like it will be forever, but when you're in a good place you're very aware that it's passing time. So I feel like Harry's just so down in the dumps, that he doesn't see the, "this too shall pass"-ness of the situation. He's not saying, "Oh how much does it stink that Ron and Hermione haven't written to me today." It's, "I guess we were never friends and we're not going to be friends again." So when we feel disappointed it feels like we're going to feel disappointed for forever. And I think this is actually a nice reminder that that's not true,

that moments of disappointment feel like they are truer than good things but they're not, they pass.

(Sacred Reading Theme Music Plays)

Vanessa: So now it's time for our spiritual practice, and in order to start the second season we are going to start with our tried and true practice, Lectio Divina, which literally just means "Sacred Reading." And the way that we do Lectio Divina, which is a variation on the traditional Christian way of doing Lectio Divina, is that it is a four-step reading process. First we're going to randomly pick a line from the chapter and we are going to ask ourselves what is literally happening in this sentence. Then we're going to ask ourselves, allegorically, what is this sort of emotionally standing in for as a sentence. Then we're going to reflect on what this speaks to in our lives. And then we're going to ask ourselves what we feel called to do differently after going through this process. So Casper, do you want to thumb through and put your finger somewhere, and tell us what line?

Casper: All right, the line is:

"He'd almost be glad of a sight of his archenemy, Draco Malfoy, just to be sure it hadn't all been a dream...."

Vanessa: You did that on purpose.

Casper: I really just picked it out of nowhere.

Vanessa: Okay Casper, what's literally happening in this sentence?

Casper: Harry, at this point, is feeling so lonely. He hasn't heard from Ron, hasn't heard from Hermione, and he's starting to feel as if maybe this whole experience of Hogwarts was just an illusion. He wants a sign that what he knows is true, is true. And so he's like, "Okay listen, even Draco is good enough for me right now. Any reminder of that place, and who I am in that place is good enough right now." Vanessa, what do you hear in this sentence that's allegorical? What images or other things does it connect to for you?

"He'd almost be glad of a sight of his archenemy, Draco Malfoy, just to be sure it hadn't all been a dream...."

Vanessa: What it speaks to me of is just relativity, and sort of the new normal right? I live with these freshmen and I feel like the dining hall is always a disappointing experience for college freshman. Even the worst meal that your mom cooked, even that gross lemon chicken, you're like, "I would eat that rather than eat this." There's just some romanticizing that it's not just on a tray. Nostalgia can make even something bad seem good.

Casper: Yeah absolutely. And for me the word “dream” really jumps out. I think dream is such a creative force in literature and in painting, and this sense that we can’t quite trust our memory because whose knows, it could have all been a dream. Often in books you come to the end of the story and it’s like, “they woke up and it was all a dream.” Harry could have had that experience, and it’s just reminding me just how fragile memory is, and especially when you’re the only one in a place that’s had that experience. You’re like; can I really trust...was that really true? Cause everyone else here thinks I’m crazy. You know, that just really stands out to me.

Vanessa: What about step three Casper? What does this remind you of in your life?

Casper: It’s funny that he describes Draco as his “archenemy,” because I think it really reminds me that he’s twelve, and I’ve been twelve, and there are times where you feel like you have an “archenemy.” And of course we know that is so misplaced. We know who his archenemy is, and he’s already met Voldemort at this point, but the way he’s thinking about Draco is that’s where the focus of his rivalry really is. So its kind of a playful, childish...you know, obviously Draco is really a nasty piece of work already, but I remember thinking that I had “archenemies.” These are people that I don’t even remember the names of now. That really strikes me as something that illustrates where Harry is at, at this point. What about you? What is something that stands out to you as it relates to your own experience?

Vanessa: I think the thing that this reminds me of is homesickness. This sort of romanticizing and nostalgia for even the worst bits of something is something that I equate with profound homesickness. Where I have a not-super comfortable bed at my parents house, but when I am traveling, and I am incredibly uncomfortable in someway or another I’m like, “I just want that springy, loud, stupid bed” right? Homesickness can just become so despondent and so lonely. And even if you think of someone as your archenemy, you’re like, I would hug them.”

Casper: I wonder if Draco is thinking the same thing and is like, “Oh, where’s Harry?”

Vanessa: There’s definitely fan fiction about this.

Casper: So Vanessa this brings us to the final stage of Lectio Divina, where we want to try to think what is the text calling us to do? What is it inviting us to do differently? So let me just read it one more time:

“He’d almost be glad of a sight of his archenemy, Draco Malfoy, just to be sure it hadn’t all been a dream....”

Vanessa: This whole episode has called me to this, I just went home a couple of weeks ago and I was so badly behaved. I was just like, every trigger point got pushed on me, and it’s one of my favorite lines on a T.V. show is on *Mad About You*, where Helen Hunt says, “How can my family push all of my buttons?” And Paul Reiser answers, “well they installed them.” And like, I just had that feeling while I was at home, that all of my buttons were being pushed. And what it’s

calling me to is actually being grateful when I'm home. Going back with a little bit of humor and levity and like, "Oh that's one of my buttons being pushed." What about you Casper?

Casper: I'm quite struck still by this idea of, like, if you've experienced something on your own, how are you going to remember it? You know, my fourth and final grandparent passed away this summer, and there's just a whole bunch of memories gone forever. And so, it's made me think about what are the things that I'm experiencing now that I want to make note of some way, whether it's writing or taking more photographs? Not that we have to hold everything permanently, but that there is some value in taking hold of the things that really move us now and then. Because who knows who will be there to remember them at some point in the future? So yeah, I think the text is calling me to maybe journal more, or just write down things that I'm thinking about. Who knows, just to keep those memories somewhere?

Vanessa: Here, here.

Casper: Vanessa we've been doing these, kind of, different ways of engaging with the text through spiritual practice, and I want to ask a new question, which is, can we find a way to read onto what we've just done this theme we've been exploring in this episode of disappointment? You know this sentence of:

"He's almost be glad of a sight of his archenemy, Draco Malfoy, just to be sure it hadn't all been a dream...."

What's so interesting is that the text didn't say that he wanted to see Draco Malfoy, but he'd almost be glad of a sight of Draco Malfoy. So, he doesn't actually want to talk to Draco, he's like I want to maybe see you from a distance. So there's a hesitancy here, what I'm noticing in that is that he would probably be disappointed with himself if he made friends with Draco.

Vanessa: Which I think gets back to what we were saying about Harry earlier, even with all the disappointment that has befallen him; he still has this internal integrity, right? And this internal optimism. Even in despair he's still like, "I still deserve better than Draco Malfoy."

Casper: Exactly, and I love that. And I think that's a really, a question I want to ask ourselves is how do we remind ourselves of that part that's in all of us?

Vanessa: Yeah...

Casper: Because that's easy to lose sight of, but if there's anything that's who we really are I feel like it's that part: that piece of integrity and goodness.

Vanessa: Yeah I think that is part of what makes him our hero.

Casper: Thank you to everyone whose been sending in voicemails. Our voicemail this week is from Grace Halverson.

(Beep)

Grace: Hi Casper! Hi Vanessa! So, my name is Grace, and I'm ten years old, and I'm in love with your podcast. So I've just listened to your "Through the Trapdoor" podcast through the theme of destiny, and I've been rereading the chapter, and it made me think of a certain line. On page 288-89, Hermione says, "books and cleverness. There are more important things like friendship and bravery." That was my best Hermione impression. Anyway, I think this line could have meant one of two things. It might have been Hermione showing a typical Hermione moment, telling Harry what's right and wrong and giving some sort of sweet encouragement. "Harry you're awesome. You're friendship and bravery is the best thing you could have." OR it could have been something much deeper. It could have been Hermione accepting her destiny, coming back to the theme. Her destiny is to love Harry, but to not go as far as him, not to be as good as him. It's clear that Hermione loves Harry as an amazing friend, but it's not crystal clear what her meaning is in this line. Is this Hermione accepting that Harry is better than her in some fields, and in the end will go farther than she will? Or is this just a simple Hermione's words of wisdom moment of encouragement? I'm truly curious to see what you guys think. Again, I love your podcast and I hope like my question. Bye everyone!

Casper: Grace, first of all I am very impressed with that accent. That was like legit, movie-style accent. Nice work!

Vanessa: Grace, I hope this is obviously the best voicemail that we've gotten, and probably ever will get ever. But I completely disagree with you about Hermione's destiny. I love your different reading of that line, but I guess I just don't think that we should compare destinies. There is a Jewish line that the best revenge is a good life. And I think that if you are living your own best life that it's not worth comparing whether somebody gets "as far" as somebody else. But I definitely think there's an argument to be made that Hermione's destiny is to go just as far as Harry. And so, I love your question. I think it's great to keep thinking about these things, but my dear, I completely disagree with you.

Casper: As we start our journey into season two with *Chamber of Secrets*, we're going to ask you if you want to send in a voicemail, which we very much hope you do, that keep it within one to two minutes so we can share easily on the podcast. And what we really love hearing from you about is how a story from your own life helps you understand the text differently from what we've shared in the podcast. So many of you have different perspectives and different experiences, and we just love learning about them. So please try to find a good story that you can share that helps us all learn from each other's reading. So thank you for sending in all of your voicemails, we get so excited when we hear from you. Vanessa, it's time for our blessings. We love to close every episode with a little blessing for someone who's we've seen on the pages of this chapter. Who are you going to bless this week?

Vanessa: I'm going to stick with my commitment of only blessing women. And the woman who I would like to bless this week, and I feel like I'm going to get a little backtalk from you because I couldn't remember her name during my thirty second recap, but it's Miss Hedwig. Who is locked up, you know, this whole summer. She is a prisoner with Harry, and she is the only reminder of the magical world for Harry. And I just think that she is suffering, and is a reminder of suffering in the world. And I think that's a lot for, like, a little bird to bear, and so I want to bless her and just, sort of, tell her that even in her suffering we see her. And offer a blessing to those who are suffering today, and sort of use this as an opportunity to myself to try to see the suffering in others. What about you Casper? Who would you like to bless this week?

Casper: I feel like we've talked a lot about Harry, but he is so deserving of a blessing and so are we all, always. But nonetheless, I feel like Harry really illustrates that sense of fortitude and goodness, and just an amazing capacity for trying to keep holding onto the best of who he is in a really difficult situation. So a blessing to anyone who's trying to change things in a difficult dynamic, or anyone who feels like they're a little bit abandoned by people who they thought loved them. And to hold out for good news, and maybe a car rescue in the middle of the nighttime.

(Outro Music Begins)

Casper: Thank you for listening to our first episode of *Harry Potter and the Sacred Text* Season 2. Next week we'll be reading Chapter Two: Dobby's Warning through the theme of control.

Vanessa: Don't forget to write us a review on iTunes. Follow us on Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, and Facebook. And email us your voicemails with our new prompt to harrypottersacredtext@gmail.com.

Casper: This episode is produced by Arianna Nedelman, Vanessa Zoltan, and me, Casper ter Kuile.

Vanessa: Our social media coordinator is Jen Stark. Our music is by Ivan Pyzow and Nick Bohl and we are part of the Panoply Network.

Casper: Thank you to Grace Halverson who sent in this week's voicemail, Stephanie Paulsel, Rebecca and Charlie Ledley, and everyone at the Panoply Network for helping us join the family.

Vanessa: Thank you so much, and we'll see you next week.

(Outro music ends)

Casper: It's like a good dress, right? Like you want just a little detail here and there. Okay, not that I think about my dresses, I'm obsessed with "Ru Paul's Drag Race." Okay, we'll cut all of that.

Arianna: I can use none of this, Casper

Casper: I know, I know.

Vanessa: I'm just letting you do it...

Casper: That's so unfair you set me up for that! That's so unfair. Life is unfair, Casper! Vanessa are you ready? Thirty seconds.

Vanessa: Do you need me here today? You can just do this whole thing by yourself.

Final Music: "Panoply"

ZabanVideo.com