**Harry Potter and the Sacred Text 7.35 – King’s Cross: Trust**

Vanessa: Chapter 35: King’s Cross

 **“He lay facedown, listening to the silence.** *(Intro music begins)* **He was perfectly alone. Nobody was watching. Nobody else was there. He was not perfectly sure that he was there himself.”**

Vanessa: I'm Vanessa Zoltan

Casper: And I’m Casper ter Kuile.

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

*(Intro music fades.)*

Vanessa: So Casper, today we’re going to be discussing the theme of trust, what story do you have for us?

Casper: Well just over eight years ago I met Shawn, who is now my husband, as you know. And we had met online through OkCupid and he had a very cute picture. And so I messaged him and I was like, “hi you look really handsome.” And he had mentioned that he had liked opera so I sent him this YouTube video of an aria that I loved from the one opera that I knew, trying to impress him. And we had our first date and it was very sweet. And it stood out to me because in the other dates that I’d been going on, you know you’re always trying to make conversation and with Shawn I felt very comfortable being quiet for some of the date. And that really struck me as different from the other dates. And so we had a second date, and a third date; and on our third date he had cooked for me this delicious mushroom risotto and there were real cloth napkins and I was like, “this guy is clearly the one for me.” And so I said, “I don’t really want to see anyone else.” Essentially like shall we be together? And luckily he said yes. And when I look back at our relationships there’s just a growing number of moments, right? The first time that I told him that I loved him. The time that Boston was so blanketed in snow, there was no transport at all and I walked two and a half hours all the way from Cambridge, where I lived, to Jamaica Plains, where he lived and I’m like, “why would I do that?” But I did because I was just besotted with him. You know the first time I met his parents, the first time he met my parents, the first time I cried in front of him, when we need each other’s support. And I look at all of those moments, trying to find a single moment when I was like, “oh I trust you,” right? Like it was an on/off switch. And I couldn’t find it, I don’t think it exists because I think trust isn’t’ something that you turn a corner and suddenly you’re there. It’s this slow, intentional process of weaving something together that it accumulates over time and you just don’t know when it happened. Even now when I look back I can’t point to an exact moment. So I think about trust as this…it’s like a plant that grows. Like you might see a bud and then later you see a much bigger stalk and then later you see a blossom. But you can’t quite say when the plant was there or wasn’t really. It’s this always changing, always growing process.

Vanessa: And I also think that we see that with Dumbledore and Harry. That they weave in and out of trust. I would argue in this chapter Harry trusts Dumbledore too much; I think that he has betrayed the trust too many times for Harry to be so trusting. But I think your metaphor of a plant really works, right? And maybe it’s a question of Dumbledore and Harry actually had some good roots so it doesn’t matter that some leaves had died over the years. I don’t know we’ll see if I come to the conclusion at the end of this chapter that this plant is dead and best turned into compost for a healthy relationship somewhere else.

Casper: That’s what I was going to say, maybe it’s more like a pressed flower, something that used to be true and now is just like beautiful but not alive.

Vanessa: Dead.

Casper: But beautiful. Well let’s remind everyone what actually happens in this chapter.

Vanessa: A whole lot of nothing. Except naked Harry.

Casper: I was really struck by that, we’re going to talk about that for sure.

Vanessa: Okay count me in.

Casper: Alright here we go: 3, 2, 1, recap.

*(Ticking begins)*

Vanessa: Harry is naked and there’s silence and he doesn’t have glasses, but he has eyes. And then Dumbledore is there, in midnight blue and they sit on a bench and Dumbledore tells Harry about Horcruxes and Grindelwald and grief and power and other things. And then Harry is like; “am I dead?” and Dumbledore’s like “no you should go back. You don’t have to but a lot of people will suffer if you don’t and so Harry goes back.”

*(Buzzing Noise—79 words in 30 seconds)*

Casper: I’m really getting a strong vibe that you adore this chapter.

Vanessa: It’s not about the chapter; it’s my frustration with Dumbledore. I found him really really difficult in this chapter, which we’ll talk more about. Okay are you ready to probably give a nicer 30 Second Recap than I did?

Casper: I’ll try.

Vanessa: Okay, on your mark, get set, go.

*(Ticking begins)*

Casper: Harry wakes up and he’s not feeling any pain, he’s lying on something white and he’s like, “where is this place?” And as he looks around the room it starts to form into shape and he’s like, “oh my gosh maybe it’s King’s Cross Station.” And he sees this like horrible creature baby thing that’s making sounds like pounding the floors if it’s doing a drag race lip sync for your life. And then he notices a voice behind him that ways, “you can’t help.” And it’s Dumbledore and they’re have a big chat about all the things and then Dumbledore’s like, “oh we’re in King’s Cross.” And he’s like, “oh interesting if you get on the train you would go on.”

*(Buzzing Noise—120 words in 30 seconds)*

Vanessa: So Casper, should we start at the beginning where I mean like Harry is naked like a newborn babe?

Casper: I honestly have so many questions like theological questions about this moment when Harry wakes up because is this the real world? No. Is this Harry’s imagination? Maybe. Is this some sort of like spiritual plane where new things are true that weren’t true before? Perhaps. And the reason why I find it so troubling is that there’s a sense that Harry’s body is in its natural state and not just natural but in a perfected state. No longer does he have wounds, no longer does he have the scar, no longer does he need glasses, and of course he’s not wearing any cloths. Although when he wants clothes they magically appear and he puts them on. The thing that I find really troubling is that it suggests, if I’m reading it critically, that in this magical spiritual perfect world, no one has any like any disabilities or different abilities that that’s somehow not a perfect body. So that sets me really off. Then later we meet Dumbledore who is wearing glasses and clothes without having wished them, or at least we haven’t seen it. Like what is this place? And how does it work? And should we trust it?

Vanessa: First of all I agree with all of your frustrations. I find this place very strange. I can offer of you a couple of theories of readings which is that we’re getting like a very abbreviated form of the Garden of Eden where for a moment he’s perfect and naked and then feels shame and puts on clothes and so it’s this moment of something perfect and beautiful but the fall comes very very quickly. And that if Dumbledore is conjured by Harry, he’s going to look the way that Harry remembers him. And so it’s how Harry remembered seeing Dumbledore it’s not about Dumbledore’s ability to see without glasses, but it’s about how Harry remembers Dumbledore.

Casper: Yeah that does make sense to me, even tough we know Dumbledore’s hand was injured when he died, Harry does imagine him with his hand whole and white and undamaged. Like all of this language is so troubling to me.

Vanessa: It’s very ablest, right?

Casper: It’s very ablest.

Vanessa: It’s very ablest language.

Casper: And I take your point that it might be Harry’s imagination, his image of Dumbledore, but nonetheless this line of perfection and I nearly want to say supremacy, like I don’t know this ablest supremacy feels very very uncomfortable to me.

Vanessa: Yeah and you know I think we see that theory of supremacy in another moment. We find out that Harry has the invisibility cloak because he’s descendent of the Peverell brothers…

Casper: Yeah.

Vanessa: And it’s so strange to me that we’ve spent these whole books being like, “It doesn’t matter if you’re pure blood. It doesn’t matter if you’re a pure blood.” And yet the one who can be the Master of the Hallows is decedent of the Peverell brothers and I was like, “okay then that means that blood does matter.” And I understand that we do live in a world, and we’ve talked about this before, where both of those things are true. Your found family really matters and you can expunge a lot from your biological family but your eye color and your predisposition for cancer and all sorts of things, right? We can’t entirely separate ourselves from our biological families, and those seem like live questions of trust to me. Do I trust the stories of my biological family or do I trust what other people have told me? Do I trust…how much can I resist where I’ve come from and how much should I accept where I come from right? These do feel like live questions to me, I’m just not sure where the text lands on these questions.

Casper: That’s really helpful Vanessa because maybe I find it a little bit of evidence that the text gives some space for that which is in this mist because everything is forming out of a sort of primordial mist for Harry, right? The place that he’s in, the people that arrive and perhaps the mist is that space in which Harry can question, can I trust this vision? If I’m making this happen, can I trust my mind’s creation of what I’m engaging? And the thing that feels the most trickiest is that it keeps being Dumbledore who insists, yes you can trust this or no you can’t help that little creature that ends up being Voldemort’s soul. Dumbledore is the one who keeps putting boundaries on what is trustworthy and what isn’t and what can be changed and what can’t. And so maybe if I’m a generous reader I can think okay that Dumbledore is Harry’s imagination, to some extent, so there might of actually been space if Harry had engaged with this whole experience differently for some of these problematic images and storylines to be different.

Vanessa: And it’s really hard for us to break the cycles of what we are taught, right?

Casper: Absolutely.

Vanessa: And so of course seventeen year old Harry goes to this heaven liminal space and is like, “oh I don’t need glasses.” I think we’re trained with an ablest mindset…

Casper: That’s right.

Vanessa: So again if we’re in Harry’s mind I think there is this understanding that some sort of purity would be this ablest ideal of what a body “supposed to be.”

Casper: Yeah.

Vanessa: But I love that you're pointing to us trusting Dumbledore because the thorny of this chapter to me, the part that I like scream against is that baby…

Casper: Yes.

Vanessa: …that is there, left in a train station, like abandoned in a way station and Dumbledore keeps saying, “we can’t help.”

Casper: Yeah.

Vanessa: And Harry, bless him, is scared to help it but keeps wanting to.

Casper: I think like three times.

Vanessa; Yeah and I just don’t understand in what world we should trust Dumbledore about taking care of a baby, like why aren’t we picking up this baby? Who cares whether or not you can help it? You pick it up! You hold babies even if you can’t help them. The only compelling reason that I could be given to not pick up the baby is it’ll harm you Harry, right? It’s a trick. But it’s not, it’s just he can’t be helped, he can’t be helped. (A) We have no reason to trust Dumbledore that’s trust. He does not have a great track record with how to care for people, and (2) I just like who cares? Pick up the baby!

Casper: If I could be a crowd of people cheering and like jumping up and down shouting hooray I would be, because this has always been the scene that has broken my heart because it’s basically suggesting if we read it at face value that some people are unworthy of love. Or that they are beyond care or that they are, to use a very theological framing, unsaveable, forever damned. And I am unwilling to engage that theology. I just think it’s so toxic, it’s how people get excluded and marginalized and oppressed and I just love what you’re saying that the person whose giving us the information, which I’ve always read at face value, is an untrustworthy voice. That Harry’s instinct of caring is so trustworthy, right? Even when it’s led him into traps, it’s still the right thing to do. That that’s the thing that’s worth trusting, because listen to the description, “a form of a small, naked child. It’s skin was raw and rough and flayed looking, it had been left unwanted, stuffed out of sight, struggling for breath. What has this book taught us? It’s that bodies like that, children like that who were abandoned and unloved, who were left under staircases or in orphanages, that they are desperately in need and deserving of love and so I just so appreciate what you’re saying.

Vanessa: And it’s so funny because Dumbledore in this chapter keeps saying to Harry, “you are more worthy of the Hallows that I, you are more trustworthy than I, you are more loving than I. Don’t touch the baby.”

Casper: Right!

Vanessa: And I’m like, “Harry don’t listen to him! Go touch the baby.” I’m like about to cry.

Casper: Yeah.

Vanessa: I can’t tell you how disturbing I find this chapter that there is a crying baby that’s been abandoned under a bench and that we see the two “heroes of the chapter” ignore it. And continuously shut themselves off to it. This, I think has been the hardest chapter to treat as sacred. And I think that our sacred reading, our conversation can make it something beautiful and complicated but this chapter is just, it is like hateful to me. And Dumbledore like again why do we trust him? He’s sending Harry back as a lamb to the slaughter a second time. We have just had this model of Sirius, Lupin, and Harry’s parents being like, “you’re so brave. We love you so much.” And like we are not going to send you anywhere and Dumbledore, being so manipulative, being like, “you could get on a train to a place where you don’t need glasses and like don’t need clothes and things magically appear.” But a lot of people will suffer and die. It’s like Jesus, I just…Dumbledore becomes unforgivable to me in this chapter.

Casper: Dumbledore is really striking because you know what I’m going to do I’m going to point to a place where our theme word appears in the actual text. One of the things he asks Harry after talking about the Deathly Hallows, he’s says, “can you forgive me for not trusting you.” Because he told Harry about the Horcruxes but he didn’t tell him about the Hallows. And so if we were to read him as that kind of manipulative figure, it’s a way in which he rebuilds trust in order to use it to get Harry to go back. In a more generous reading, again if this is a Dumbledore of Harry’s imagination, the way I might read it is to think of Dumbledore as embodying one of the voices in Harry’s head, that he has a voice that says, “let’s just get on the train, let’s leave this behind.” And that another part of Harry is saying like, “no I want to go back, I can help.” That’s part of him as well. And that helps me read it slightly differently.

Vanessa: Yeah and I think that the text a little bit wants us to have it both ways on that. Because there are moments where I want to read it like that, where I’m like okay this is Harry’s projection of what Dumbledore would say to him. And Harry at some level knows Dumbledore well enough, or thinks that he knows him well enough, to project his onto a dream Dumbledore. However, I would like to think that dream Dumbledore wouldn’t make it all about Dumbledore. And the reason that Dumbledore is so untrustworthy to me in this chapter is that Harry has just sacrificed himself, Harry has just attempted to save the world, and Dumbledore is like, “hey let me tell you about my sad story.” If it was Harry’s projection, would Harry really be like, “why did Dumbledore never become Minister of Magic, I really need that question answered.”

Casper: But there’s the thing that I think is caretaking. Harry in this moment, I don’t think he’s looking for platitudes; I don’t think he’s looking for celebration. I think what he’s looking for is answers. This chapter is about; I need to understand why these things happened. How did I end up in this situation? Why didn’t it work out with the wands, right? Harry is piecing together a story of his own life with the information that Dumbledore is sharing and so again if I’m reading generously I guess I’m thinking of that information sharing as caregiving because it’s helping Harry make meaning and make sense of his own experience. And you know we’ll talk about this much more in the epilogue but to some extent, I think this information helps Harry close a chapter and at least try to live a normal life. And I can imagine if he didn’t have this information he would spend another you know seven years going out to look for answers that he’s able to find or perhaps make up, right? Depending on how we read the whole scene, in this fictional conversation with Dumbledore. And I do see something important in that.

Vanessa: So I agree and I think there’s moments where the chapter where they want us to see this as a projection of Harry imagining Dumbledore. Because Dumbledore says to Harry, you already know this, you already know this, you don’t need me to tell you this. We get retold the story of Ariana which Harry already knows, but then there are moments of new information; like Dumbledore says, “I got offered to be Minister of Magic twice and I rejected it both times.” And then it’s like no this Dumbledore is real and sharing information and the fact that it’s both to me just makes this whole chapter really untrustworthy and this vision of Dumbledore really untrustworthy. It feels like nothing but manipulation because it’s trying to be both.

Casper: Well I think there’s one more place just to point to which is there’s a second place where we see the word trust, and it’s again with Dumbledore but in a different context this time. He says, “I had learned that I was not to be trusted with power.” And this is about him refusing that role of the Minister of Magic and it was interested to me because he is drawing a distinction between himself and Harry, right? That Harry is worthy of power, essentially, because ultimately he doesn’t want it versus Dumbledore who is unworthy of power because he does want it, the text tells us that he was looking for glory in his younger years, right? That he was really wrapped up in Grindelwald and his own vision of wizarding supremacy. And it reminded me of that very famous quote that power corrupts, but absolute power corrupts absolutely. Which feels very true and for me allows us to make a distinction between Dumbledore as someone who had absolute power in this kind of solo way and that Harry was always embedded with Ron and Hermione. That he didn’t end up in a situation where he would have absolute power even the kind of journey of chasing Horcruxes or Hallows, Dumbledore points to the fact that he left, perhaps enough clues that Hermione would figure it out. I don’t know if we can exactly believe Dumbledore’s strategy but I at least like the distinction between Dumbledore as a solo power holder and Harry as someone who shared power with Hermione and Ron and that makes him more trustworthy.

Vanessa: And it certainly says that we can trust people who surround themselves well versus those who surround themselves poorly, right? Dumbledore is like you can’t trust me; I surround myself with Grindelwald whereas Harry surrounds himself with this very loving boy In Ron Weasley, the smartest witch of her age, Hermione Granter. And so I do think talking about falling in love with our partners, I think part of the process of my falling in love with Peter was meeting his friends and being like, “oh he loves really wonderful people and that makes me trust him more.” And so I do think that we can learn that Dumbledore has some very strange instincts in who to bring into his life, although that is the one moment in the chapter where I really felt for Dumbledore, if it’s real Dumbledore when he says, “I’ve resented having to take care of my sister, I wanted to be out in the world and do things, you know and so I justified that I could use the cloak to hide Ariana and just go and I resented that Aberforth told me that wasn’t possible, right?” And Dumbledore even says, “I Loved my brother and sister so much, but I also wanted to go.” And I feel that so strongly, right? I didn’t want to miss a minute with my grandfather and yet I kept leaving and I don’t want to miss a minute with my nephew and niece except that I also don’t want to move back to LA, right? And so that ambition and love for your family and resentment of your family, I really felt for Dumbledore.

Casper: Yeah I mean there’s something in his retelling that really struck me was that Dumbledore cries when he’s sharing that story and that might just be that feeling is still so strong, right? That conflict that you’re pointing us to. The other thing that it maybe might suggest is that he hasn’t trusted many people with this story. It’s a wound, not a scar, as we like to say. And that illustrated again for me the kind of isolation that Dumbledore has been in, or has put himself in to some extent, because he hasn’t shared this story freely.

Vanessa: I mean and the lesson I took from it is slightly different, which is that Dumbledore regrets not just staying and taking care of Ariana. I took his tears to be tears of regret that he should have just given in to the life that he had. And then he says this horrible thing where he calls his brother unlettered and I hate him again. So Casper I see another moment of trust which is that Voldemort really trusts this bond with him and Harry and it ends up being his undoing and it’s his trust of the prophesy and I think it’s his trust that he is grand enough to be part of a prophesy, right? And I do love the way that Dumbledore describes it right? It’s his blind belief and he and Harry have some score to settle that makes him do this very cruel thing in book four or killing Cedric and drawing Harry’s blood that ends up saving Harry. If Voldemort had rebuilt his body with anyone else’s blood, which is seems like he very much magically could have, Harry would be dead right now. And it was only his obsession and cruelty that saved Harry, which that I love, I love that idea.

Casper: There’s something really cool in here, I want to build on that because one of the things that I remembered was that all of Voldemort’s efforts are about his lack of trust in Muggles and what you’re pointing to is his over trust in magic, or this kind of specialness of magic, or the power of a certain kind of magic and it really draws this distinction of like, well you put your trust so much in this one thing that you missed all of these other things that actually are also worthy of trust. It’s an imbalance of trust nearly; the way that immediately strikes me to read that for all lives is different sources that you might want to trust rather than relying on one single news outlet, for example. A good media diet includes multiple sources. Or it might be whether you’re trusting one person who told you something or numerous witnesses. It seems to have some parallels but I wonder if there’s more?

Vanessa: I mean where I see it in our own lives in the real downsides of obsession right? The person who we are constantly comparing ourselves to, the people who we let haunt us, we should let them go because they become a part of us. When someone is haunting us I think what we’re trying to do is separate ourselves from them when we’re comparing ourselves to them because they are successful in this way and I need to try to be more successful but really you’re not separating yourself from them, you are allowing them into you. You are allowing them all this mental space.

Casper: Yes.

Vanessa: And so I think if we’re going to learn a lesson from Voldemort it’s that you’ve got to let those things go because you are carrying them with you and that is going to kill you, right? Kill your identity.

Casper: I love that Vanessa and I think we see exactly the same for Dumbledore, right? He’s haunted by Grindelwald until the very end and what Harry is doing, that’s so beautiful, he’s like I’m not going to let this haunt me, I’m letting it go. And stepping into what we hope is a new chapter for him.

Vanessa: So Casper, I’m wondering if you believe this thing that Harry projects Dumbledore is saying, which is that Harry is the Master of the Hallows? And I’m wondering if you think that’s true, if we can trust Harry as the Master of Death? And if so, why? You know it ends up being true in the text that he is trustworthy with it, he drops the Resurrection Stone and we are not led to believe that he goes back and looks for it. He break the Hallows, this hundreds year old tradition, so we know that he can be trusted with them but I’m wondering why? Like why is Harry Potter, this boy who we are taught is not special in any way, other than the fact that Voldemort became obsessed with him, right? We believe that any other boy whose mother would have gotten in front of him could have beaten this curse and it’s Voldemort’s obsession that makes Harry’s special, that gets confirmed in this chapter, so what is it about Harry Potter that makes him the person who can end this horrible magic of the Hallows?

Casper: The thing that really stands out to me is that from the beginning of Harry’s kind of tenure with the cloak, right? From the very beginning he’s sharing access to it. I mean he’s not advertising it freely and putting it up for rent by the hour. But Ron uses it, other people end up being protected by it and it’s not something that Harry every uses to injure someone, and so I guess an argument could be that he proves himself trustworthy of it not necessarily inherently deserving but he proves himself a mature owner of the cloak, of this particular hallow, and he ends up doing the same with the other two. There’s something about sometimes you have to risk trusting someone and Harry proves himself trustworthy.

Vanessa: Yeah I mean and he just also proves himself so trusting, one of the beautiful parts of this chapter to me is when Dumbledore’s like you must despise me, and Harry’s like no I super don’t despise you. There’s just so much love in this kid. He’s been mad at Dumbledore, he’s been frustrated at Dumbledore, but he’s never despised Dumbledore, there’s just like there isn’t much hate in this kid, right? There’s resentment, he resents Draco and he resents, Snape, but there’s very little ill wishing in this child. And even, you know like, we see him wish ill of Draco, who he then saves again and again and again.

Casper: Yeah.

Vanessa: At the end of this book I just want to kiss him on the forehead and be like, “sweet boy.” He’s just a very sweet boy.

Casper: Yeah.

*(Sacred Reading theme music plays)*

Vanessa: So Casper, I’m going to read to you from the very end of the chapter and yeah you’re options are obviously finite which is a lovely invitation so we’re going to close our eyes if we can and really try to imagine ourselves into this scene.

 **The creature behind them jerked and moaned, and Harry and Dumbledore sat without talking for the longest time yet. The realization of what would happen next settled gradually over Harry in the long minutes, like softly falling snow.**

 **“I’ve got to go back, haven’t I?”**

 **“That is up to you.”**

 **“I’ve got a choice?”**

 **“Oh yes.” Dumbledore smiled at him. “We are in King’s Cross, you say? I think that if you decided not to go back, you would be able to…let’s say…board a train?”**

 **“And where would it take me?”
 “On,” said Dumbledore simply.**

 **Silence again.**

 **“Voldemort’s got the Elder Wand.”**

 **“True. Voldemort has the Elder Wand.”**

 **“But you want me to go back?”**

 **“I think,” said Dumbledore, “that if you choose to return, there is a chance that he may be finished for good. I cannot promise it. But I know this Harry, that you have less to fear from returning here than he does.”**

 **Harry glanced again at the raw-looking thing that trembled and choked in the shadow beneath the distant chair.**

 **“Do not pity the dead, Harry. Pity the living, and, above all, those who live without love. By returning, you may ensure that fewer souls are maimed, fewer families are torn apart. If that seems to you a worthy goal, then we ay good-bye for the present.”**

 **Harry nodded and sighed. Leaving this place would not be nearly as hard as walking into the forest had been, but it was warm and light and peaceful here, and he knew that he was heading back to pain and the fear of more loss. He stood up, and Dumbledore did the same, and they looked for a long moment into each other’s faces.**

 **“Tell me one last thing,” said Harry. “Is this real? Or has this been happening inside my head?”**

 **Dumbledore beamed at him, and his voice sounded loud and strong in Harry’s ears even though the bright mist was descending again, obscuring his figure.**

 **“Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?”**

Casper: I was Harry and it felt like you know when you’re dreaming and then you’re suddenly aware that you’re dreaming? And you’re kind of waking up but you’re still dreaming but you’re also awake now? And then you’re kind of falling out of the dream and now you’re awake? Just that ending scene where there’s a real close up of him looking into Dumbledore’s face and then the face starts to disappear and it’s just the sound, right? The loud voice and I’ve always read that final phrase as a whisper, which is so wrong because the text is like it’s nearly booming right? And that’s what carries Harry back into his real body and into the real place that he is. Yeah it struck me really differently this time, that it did have much more of a dream quality.

Vanessa: So what did you like feel, smell, like what were you touching? This mist is it like on your face or if it just a visual thing?

Casper: The thing that struck me about the space was that it actually wasn’t King’s Cross unless I like looked specifically to see if it was, you know? Everything else was kind of just nothing and so to kind of engage with the senses in this moment is very strange because unless I looked or tried to taste or tried to feel something there wasn’t anything there so like when I was like, “oh is there mist? Oh yes there’s mist and it’s wet to the touch.” And I was like where are we? “Oh the floor is still white? But I can see skylights or something.” So I guess what I’m trying to point to is that the space felt like unformed or that it was forming as I was looking or smelling or tasting. All of my focus was on Dumbledore, like I could see the lines on his forehead, I could see the little hairs in his nose, right? That was very very formed, but everything else was kind of formless. What about you Vanessa, what did you see?

Vanessa: I mean the main thing that I saw, it was as Dumbledore looking at Harry’s face, you know I met Harry the night he got that scar and now the scar is gone. And so it’s just this like, it’s the first time I’ve seen this like child unmarred by Voldemort. And you know I was also Harry for a moment and I felt in my chest the pain of this creature who’s jerking and moaning and for a moment saw myself in it, I was like that’s how Petunia saw me. And then the other moment that I was so strongly Harry is when Harry’s like, “Uhhh it’s not as hard as walking in the forest, but it’s nice here.” It felt like how I feel every morning trying to get out of bed. It’s like I’m excited about my day but it’s so toasty in the bed and why do I have to walk out into the cold? It’s one of the dangerous things about comfort. Is that it’s like molasses, it’s just so hard to pull yourself physically out of comfort and so I just felt that fog and this beautiful space almost like the poppies in Wizard of Oz that are just like, “no lie down here, it’s so comfortable here.” And it’s like, “no I really got to do it. I got to go and have this great moment with Narcissa.” Did it make you see this moment any differently Casper? This like half-mist, half realness?

Casper: Yeah I usually listen to Dumbledore’s words, which I think in some ways are the most important words of the whole series, right? Just because it’s happening in your head doesn’t mean it’s not real. Usually I hear them as words of wisdom, but this time I heard of them as words of self-soothing that if it is Harry saying them to himself, it’s kind of a self-taught that’s like don’t worry that this just happened, you’re doing just fine. One step in front of the other, you can do it, you can get out of bed, you can put away the cookies…I usually can’t. But there’s something intimate and vulnerable to it because it’s…I felt like harry was kind of negotiating his own experience of reality. And he’s saying like even if this experience doesn’t make sense, you’re doing okay, don’t worry about it. And that felt very sweet to me, like just a very good self-compassion practice honestly. Like he’s so compassionate to everyone else that now he’s being compassionate to himself and I really like that.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Casper: Thanks so much Vanessa what a great little place to do a sacred imagination.

Vanessa: This week’s voicemail is from Christine.

*(Beep)*

Christine: Hi Vanessa, Casper, and Ariana my name is Christine and I am calling because I want to offer a blessing for Harry. I have been thinking about how it must have felt like to learn that he had a piece of Voldemort in his head all this time. About two years ago I began having seizures and found out I had a brain tumor. It turns out that the tumor developed in utero and had probably always been with me, causing small problems that I not know about until it started causing bigger problems all of the sudden. Coming to terms with this thing that had always been in my brain but I had only jut learned about was a hard thing to do. It made me question my decisions and how I was viewing the world and wonder how this tumor might be affecting that. I scheduled surgery, I absolutely wanted this thing out of my head, but there was also the knowledge that this had literally been apart of me for all of my remembered life, and removing it was going to change things, hopefully change them in a good way but undeniably change them forever. I keep thinking about Harry and how it must have felt to have this piece of Voldemort removed. I picture him walking through the forest on his way to meet Voldemort with his family around him and I picture myself heading into the hospital that day with my mom and my best friend beside me and lots of other people sending their love and support. But the fight didn’t end the moment the tumor was removed, and for Harry it doesn’t end the minute Voldemort is dead. For me my friends and the many people within the *Harry Potter Sacred Text* community are what help me get through the hardest parts of that path and they continue to support me now, and I picture that love and support being offered to Harry through Ron, Hermione and so many other people. Harry got to his goal just like I did, he did defeat Voldemort, but it doesn’t mean that his fight is over and that everything will be easy from here on out. He and his friends have so much healing to do, just like we all do right now but they have each other to do it with. I want to bless Harry for continuing on that unknown path and continuing on that brighter future. And I want to bless the rest of us as we continue on our own paths, not knowing what the future holds or how we will get there but leaning on each other along the way.

Vanessa: Christine thank you so much for sharing that story. I think that, you know, I’m receiving it in a self-centered way. It’s how I felt very much when I was deciding to be medicated for my mental health problems. It’s do I want to medicate this thing away from me, this is a part of who I am? And is my depression part of why I’m compassionate? Is my depression part of why I’m creative? Like how am I supposed to know where one thing starts and another thing begins. It’s so scary and I just think that’s incredibly relatable and also I very much relied on my community to help me figure out what was me and what my identity was in this sort of new phase of my life. And I’m so glad that you’re local Harry Potter Group helped sustain you through that, that makes me very happy.

Casper: Yeah, thank you Christine. We’re going to continue honoring the people who’ve died from COVID who were loved by members of our community. And so we lift up the names of Michael Westbrook who was 54, a kind and *(soft music begins)* supportive band director. Martha Grace Washington who was 79, a pianist, mother, and grandmother. Rich Gilliat who was 84 who was a partner of 60 years and is missed dearly. Deborah Meeks who is 63 who loved her family and fashion. Sid Rosenblatt who was 86 and was a silly old bear. And Karen Marie Crane who was 55 and the sister, joker, huger, laugher, and friend. May their memories be a blessing.

*(Soft music ends)*

Vanessa: So Casper, who would you like to bless this week?

Casper: I want to bless Tom Riddle’s soul, or at least part of it, this little baby thing that we see on the floor. And I want to see it as the goodness in Tom Riddle that maybe he somehow tried to expel, rather than this inherently evil, hateful thing. And even if it’s true that’s not how I want to live in the world, I don’t want to think of people that way. And so I guess it’s an attempt to bless the goodness even of people who do horrible, horrible things, which can be much easier to do in the abstract or in fiction than in reality, but is something I think is worth practicing so a blessing for Tom Riddle’s soul. How about you Vanessa?

Vanessa: I want to bless Narcissa, because that witch is waiting in the wings to come in and end this book so well for me, this chapter is so hard for me and I think Narcissa is just going to fly in and be such a hero. And end this book the way it started, right? With the mom’s love saving things and so, I want to bless Narcissa, come get me. I want to get out of here.

*(Outro Music Begins)*

Vanessa: You’ve been listening to *Harry Potter and the Sacred Text.* You canfollow us on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook and you can find listeners who are discussing the episodes in our Facebook Common Room. You, of course, can join one of our local groups and come and join the community of people who are supporting us on Patreon. You can also leave a review on iTunes, this is your last chance to write an iTunes review for Casper guys! It’s ending! And you can, of course, send us a voicemail. Next week, we’ll be reading chapter thirty-six, The Flaw in the Plan through the theme of hope with our very special guest John Green. We are a Not Sorry Production, our executive producer is the Ariana Nedelman, our music is by Ivan Pyzow and Nick Bohl and we’re distributed by Acast. We want to thank Christine for this week’s voicemail, Molly Baxter, Julia Argy, Nicki Zoltan, Meghan Kelly, Stephanie Paulsel, and everyone who sent in the names of their loved ones. We will talk to you next week for the penultimate chapter of this series. Have a good week all.

*(Outro Music Ends)*

Vanessa: And I will say, I went out with you and Shawn very early in your relationship, we went to see *Hunger Games* together. And you two were still in that very smitten phase, and it was so cute.

Casper: That’s so funny because Shawn would never go and see *Hunger Games* with me now. That was like his equivalent of sending an aria from an opera.