Harry Potter and The Sacred Text 2.13 – The Very Secret Diary: Cowardice

Casper: Chapter 13: The Very Secret Diary. “Hermione remained in the hospital wing for several weeks.”

(Intro music begins)

“There was a flurry of rumor about her disappearance when the rest of the school arrived back from their Christmas holidays, because of course everyone thought that she had been attacked …”

Casper: I'm Casper ter Kuile

Vanessa: And I’m Vanessa Zoltan

Casper: And this is Harry Potter and The Sacred Text.

(Intro music ends)

Vanessa: So as many of our listeners I’m sure know, (in) May of 1945 the concentration camps get liberated at the end of World War II. And, you know, there were a series of trials and plans in order to try to make sense of World War II after it ended. But that really just went on and on for years and years and years, up until 1961 when Adolf Eichmann was put on trial. And Adolf Eichmann got caught in 1960, and he is really considered to be one of the true designers of the concentration camps. And the concentration camps easily killed over 10 million people. They definitely killed approximately 6 million Jews. And these were well-designed, truly just like brilliantly orchestrated killing machines. And Eichmann is considered to be the one who designed this sort of top to bottom and implemented it. So in 1961 in Jerusalem he was put on trial for his crimes. And my father was 13 years old and actually took the bus from Holon, which is actually just outside of Tel Aviv, to Jerusalem in order to witness this trial. It was an international event, and he went to bear witness. And I’m obsessed with this documentary footage, it’s incredible. But what’s so mesmerizing to me are the hours of footage of Eichmann testifying. And he stands up, in front of the entire world, and he says ‘I knew what I was doing was wrong, I’m not a monster, I have values, and I knew this went against my values. But I was a coward and I just followed orders. And what would you have had me do? I would have been punished, I would have been looked down upon. So I had to follow orders.’ And it feels as though the question that Eichmann is asking the world is ‘is being a coward a crime?’ To which I think that we as a society have very complicated answers. And so it was difficult for me to read this chapter through that theme of cowardice, but it was really interesting to read the first time we meet the young Tom Riddle through the lens of coward. And I’m really excited to explore what that means to you, Casper, and how that changed your perception of Tom Riddle and Voldemort.
Casper: I agree, Vanessa. Finding this theme of cowardice in the chapter in some ways was more challenging than some of the other themes we’ve looked at so far, but also kind of more revealing. So I’m excited to talk that through with you.

Vanessa: But first, we have some business to do. Shall we do our 30 second recap to make sure we’re all on the same page?

Casper: Yes, there’s a lot that happens.

Vanessa: So you go first.

Casper: Yeah.

Vanessa: On your mark, get set, go.

(Ticking noise)

Casper: So Hermione’s getting better and Madam Pomfrey’s looking after her and her whiskers are slowly disappearing and she wants to know what else has happened, and Harry hears Filch and so he goes up to hear what’s going on and Moaning Myrtle’s crying because someone threw a book at her. And he reaches out the book and the book is this diary, and it’s empty. And then Malfoy, and then there’s ink all over the book but the book doesn’t get inky, so he’s like ‘ohmygod’ so he starts writing in it and says ‘hello, my name is Harry Potter,’ and then the book writes back saying ‘hi, I’m Tom Riddle.’ And Riddle shows him Hagrid and a monster and the Chamber of Secrets has been opened 50 years ago!

(Buzzing noise – 130 words in 30 seconds)

Casper: I feel like that was a pretty decent attempt.

Vanessa: Mhmm…!

Casper: Yeah, it was.

Vanessa laughs

Vanessa: Do you want to do both parts?

Casper laughs

Vanessa: Good job, Casper. Thanks, Vanessa. Duh duh duh!
Casper: Yeah, well done, Casper. Thank you. I appr- and thanks for that compliment. Oh! You’re very welcome. Yeah, thanks. Do you want to have a go? Sure, sure.

Both chuckle

Casper: Alright Vanessa, you ready?

Vanessa: Are you going to do the 30 second recap for me?

Casper: Yeah, I’ll do your 30 second recap, yeah.

Vanessa: No way, you’ll throw it. Okay, I’m ready.

Casper: 3, 2, 1, go.

(Ticking noise)

Vanessa: Hermione is being cured from being a cat. Ron and Harry go, and there’s a flood and it turns out it’s because somebody threw a diary at Moaning Myrtle. They go through the diary and nothing is written in it. And Harry’s like, ‘but I feel like something is.’ And then Ginny sends Harry a Valentine. And then Harry desperately one night writes into the diary and the diary writes back, and then they go into the past and it turns out that the Chamber of Secrets has been opened 50 years ago and it turns out that Hagrid is the one who maybe opened it, at least that’s what Harry thinks. And Tom Riddle is the one who told Hagrid that ‘I’m gonna tell on you!’

(Buzzing noise – 127 words in 30 seconds)

Casper: I feel like we’re both getting more intense as the stories get more intense.

Vanessa: So much happens!

Casper: Yeah, there’s a lot at stake.

Vanessa: So weird that Hagrid knew Voldemort as a kid.

Casper: Isn’t that crazy?

Vanessa: That is crazy.

Casper: Yeah, and I feel like Hagrid lives with so much of that memory in ways that we haven’t yet understood in the story.

Vanessa: I’m really excited to think about that.
Casper: Vanessa, before we jump in to thinking about Riddle, and there is plenty to talk about there, let’s start with a nice moment where, you know, it’s Valentine’s Day, there’s these magical dwarves who were sent around the Hogwarts School campus to deliver Valentine’s Day messages, and one finds Harry, and it’s from a mystery sender. And the poetry is, you know, perhaps less than romantic. It starts, “His eyes are as green as a fresh pickled toad, / His hair is as dark as a blackboard” which, surely Harry would fall in love with whoever wrote that. But Harry runs away. He doesn’t want to hear it; he doesn’t want to be embarrassed in public. And so he doesn’t face the music, literally, and he tries to escape. Which seems to be kind of a cowardly thing, don’t you agree?

Vanessa: Yes, absolutely. I think that being a coward is when you know what the right thing to do is, and you can’t find a way to do it. You’re afraid of the consequences of doing the right thing. The right thing, both to the dwarf and to the sender, would be to sit and endure this, right? That is the polite thing to do to the dwarf and the sender, would be to sit and endure this, right? That is the polite thing to do to the singer, that is the polite thing to do to the poet. I don’t know, I think this is really wonderful: “I wish he was mine, he’s really divine, / The hero who conquered the Dark Lord.” That’s beautiful!

Casper: I mean, fair enough, Ginny is 11 when she’s writing this, so like, give her a break.

Vanessa: Yeah! So I do think that it’s cowardly, in a very middle-school forgivable way. But, you know, being polite does often require a little bit of grace and bravery.

Casper: And it’s funny because Harry is so brave in so many ways. You know, even in this chapter they hear danger on the floor above them, they hear Filch being worried, and he says to Ron, ‘you know, maybe this is another attack.’ And yet they still go to the place, right? So it seems nearly out of character, or at least he’s-, this is one area in his life, right, his romantic life where he is a bit of a coward. And we’ll see that perhaps later with Cho Chang as well. Like he doesn’t have the same courage that we see him exhibit elsewhere in his life. I also think there’s a reason that he’s not brave in this moment which has a lot to do with this element of fame. Right, it’s important for the sender that he hears this song in public, and the dwarf says that, you know, ‘you need to hear this in public.’ And Harry says, ‘no, can we do it somewhere else?’ You know, he wants to do it in private. And so there’s this element of, you know, Harry doesn’t want to be defined by his fame, he doesn’t want to be defined how people see him, and that’s very difficult to control when you’re in a position like Harry is where people know who you are.

Vanessa: So, then, again my question is ‘is he being a coward?’ I think so often cowardice is in the eye of the beholder. You know, often if you’re a draft dodger you’re called a coward, but if you see yourself not as a draft dodger but as a conscientious objector then that’s actually quite brave. And at minimum, the moments that I look back on my life and wonder if I was cowardly, I’m certainly not proud of what I did, but mostly the way that I behaved was motivated by the fact that I didn’t know what to do. The sensation is more of being overwhelmed, and fear was certainly one of the feelings, but it’s also, ‘if I intervene now am I gonna make it worse? What is the appropriate intervention?’ When I know what my values are and my actions are clear I think
that I at least always try to find a way to intervene. So I’m not sure that Harry knows what the right thing to do is. He certainly hasn’t been raised by a parent who has said to him, ‘when somebody gives you a gift, unless it’s wildly inappropriate, you graciously say thank you.’ It’s not clear to me he knows what value he’s supposed to be living and is choosing not to do it.

Casper: I think you’re pointing to something really important, and it’s helping me understand why this is the place where he’s kind of cowardly and in the other places he’s so brave: is when he hears a noise upstairs he’s like, ‘oh, I have to save someone,’ right, ‘I’m going to go chase the noise.’ Or when Tom Riddle invites him to dive into the story of the diary he’s like, ‘oh, I know what to do, okay, yes, I’ll dive into the story of the diary.’ And in this moment where he’s being accosted by a dwarf who wants to sing him a Valentine song, he’s like, ‘I don’t know how to behave, at least if I’m on my own no one’s going to see me do it wrong.’ And I think that clarity of ‘what do I do?’ I mean even, to take it back to the story that you shared, Eichmann said to the world, you know, ‘I know what I did was wrong.’ And he was trying to tell the world that, you know, there were no other options. But it was very clear from his testimony, and it’s clear from the choices that other people like him made, that there were other options. And I think that’s really the sign of cowardice, is like A) when you know it’s wrong and B) you know what the alternative course of action might be and you still choose not to do it. While Harry here, he knows that it’s wrong to run away, right, he knows it’s going to hurt someone, but, like, he just doesn’t know how to behave in that scenario. So maybe those are the two kind of essential qualities for what makes for cowardly behavior, and I mean it reminds me of an experience that I had when I was a teenager, and I was in England on a train going into London. And there was a passenger sitting behind me, a man, white guy, who was kind of muttering under his breath and becoming increasingly loud with racial slurs and kind of verbal assaults about the conductor, who was checking tickets, who was Pakistani and had a heavy accent. And I was so clear that this was wrong, that I should do something. I wanted to step in and help in some way, but I was first of all afraid, I was worried, you know, what happens if this man gets violent? And secondly, I just didn’t know what to do. Like, should I talk to other passengers and say, “this is not okay, isn’t it?” Or should I talk to the conductor, or should I try and confront the man who was speaking so horribly directly? And I did nothing, and I felt awful. And now, of course, I think I’m clearer about what the strategy is. You know, you engage the person who is receiving the torrent of abuse directly in conversation, and you talk about a totally random subject, like the weather or the tie their wearing, or something that’s safe and completely non-aggressive, and you just keep building the rapport with that person to kind of isolate that nasty, attacking, you know, racial slur that’s coming. And really what you want to do is to keep talking until you’re safely away from the attacker. So you might walk with the person. We were in a train carriage, so I might have accompanied the conductor down into another carriage or something. And then check in with them to make sure, you know, they’re okay. You know, just as a sign of making the space safe and taking away the sting as much as you can out of that encounter. But I didn’t know what to do. And so I think in trying to define what cowardice is, I think you’re right, that it’s a mixture of both knowing what’s right and what’s wrong, but also knowing what practically to do. So maybe Harry’s not really a coward in this situation, cuz sure,
he knows what’s right and wrong, but he just doesn’t know what to do. And so he just wants to run away and get out of that situation as quickly as possible. Which, you know, I understand.

Vanessa: But is Ginny a coward? On some level, I think that it’s really brave of her to tell a boy that she likes she likes him. But she doesn’t, like, sign her name. She knows what the right thing to do is. She knows she wants Harry to know that she likes him, and she knows that the right thing to do is to tell him. And she’s trying to do it, but she does it in this way where, like, she doesn’t sign her name to the card. I feel like it’s very sweet, and on the surface it seems a little brave, but it’s actually quite cowardly.

Casper: Well, I think Ginny is in exactly the same situation as Harry here, where she knows what’s right and wrong, like she knows the right thing is to tell him, but she just doesn’t know how.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Casper: And I think we had this in high school too, that you could send a flower on Valentine’s Day, you could send a carnation anonymously. And it’s a way of, like, reaching out and sending that message without actually having to speak to that person.

Vanessa: So yes, I mean she’s 11. And so I’m not judging Ginny. I do think that more often than we think, not signing our name is a sign of cowardice. I think there are times where you can’t sign your name to certain feedback for your own safety. But I have a really hard time taking criticism seriously if somebody does not sign their name. My students have to fill out these end-of-semester reports, and they are asked to be anonymous. And I think that my students wouldn’t feel as comfortable being honest if they had to sign their name. When there’s a power dynamic at play I certainly think that’s true. But after giving, like, a feminist talk, I got a lot of hate emails. And they were very clearly from fake email addresses. And I got a few, like, genuine criticisms that I disagreed with but I felt comfortable going back and forth with the person who sent it to me. But I couldn’t take people seriously who didn’t sign their name. I was like, if you’re not willing to sign your name to this opinion, it just felt like a way for them to be hateful and to vent and it felt like they were ashamed and that they knew better.

Casper: Well and I think this is what we see so often online, right? Especially in kind of trolling behavior or just nastiness on Twitter or other platforms, that often when people are confronted with it, when they’re tracked down, they know what they were doing was wrong. And it’s because there’s that kind of shield of anonymity which allows people to let their basest selves emerge in ways that are frankly cowardly, because they know what’s right and wrong, and they know alternatives as you say, to put their name on it, to be very articulate about the ways in which they might be hurting or they might be offended, without it becoming a nasty, name-calling situation in which everyone just gets more hurt. So I think that this is a great reflection question that I’m going to be thinking about: when are the times that I want to say something anonymously, and why am I wanting to say that without adding my name. Like
what’s in that little differentiation between adding my name and not adding my name? And is it
really about the person I’m giving the feedback to? Or is it me trying to hide about something
that I’m afraid of? Before we move on, let’s hear from this week’s sponsor.

(Recording skips the sponsor)

Casper: So speaking of masks and hiding your identity, Voldemort is using the diary and using
his young self, Tom Riddle, as a sort of mask. Harry doesn’t know who the young Riddle is.
And so he’s using the weapon of the diary in a way to really inflict a lot of damage. Now, I want
to try and figure out: is Riddle a coward? You know, he’s using Ginny to perform these horrible
acts, he’s using Ginny to open the Chamber of Secrets and inflict this damage on people and
animals and even the roosters. But is he just being very strategic?

Vanessa: The reason that I’m reluctant to call Tom Riddle a coward is because he is living up
to his values. His values are to get himself out of this orphanage, his values are to rise himself
up from this muggle background. I mean, it’s complicated because there are all sorts of
arguments about evil and sociopathy and psychopathy that I think come into play here.

Casper: But he knows what’s right and wrong, right? He hasn’t thrown Hagrid under the bus
until it became necessary in his eyes for him to throw Hagrid under the bus. Like, he could have
made Hagrid the culprit weeks ago.

Vanessa: Yeah, I just think it’s almost always cowardly to instrumentalize other human beings
to your will. I think instrumentalizing other people is almost always done because we are too
afraid to notice something within ourselves.

Casper: So that is exactly the point that I think we have to examine with Dumbledore. Because
Dumbledore knows that Riddle is up to something, right? We get this scene in that flashback
that Dumbledore is suspicious of Tom, and I am wondering why does Dumbledore not go back
with Riddle to that orphanage? Why does he not look more into Riddle’s story and what is going
on with his parents? Why is he afraid of exploring this growing dark wizard? I think it’s because
he’s afraid of what it’s going to reveal about himself and his history with Grindelwald, his
obssession with the kind of power of magic. He had an opportunity as a teacher, he had a
responsibility as a teacher, to ensure that Riddle doesn’t get into the situation that he does.
Riddle at this point is still a child. I know that’s hard for us to imagine, but at 16 he’s still legally
a child and is not yet fully, you know, in his brain development at the point of maturity. And so
I’m really disappointed with Dumbledore here. I think he could have done so much more, don’t
you?

Vanessa: I do, I just also don’t want to underestimate the power of denial. I think that you think,
‘oh, it’s a phase, they’re going to outgrow it, oh it’s actually important to give them a little bit of
distance.’ So for example Sue Klebold recently wrote a book, and she’s the mother of one of
the two young men who did the shooting at Columbine. And she of course looks back, and she
has all sorts of regrets about things that she didn’t do. But I would be very uncomfortable calling her a coward. Again, I think for exactly what we isolated earlier, which is you know something is wrong, but you don’t know exactly what to do. I’m not sure that Dumbledore knows exactly what to do in that situation. Maybe it is clear that he should go to the orphanage and get more information, but if we’re seeing a metaphor in Dumbledore for an adult who feels responsible for the actions of a child, I think that someone like Sue Klebold is a great metaphor. And I think we shouldn’t be too hard on people when they really don’t know what to do.

Casper: Gosh, Vanessa, I am so interested in this point that we’re getting to about the importance of practically knowing what to do. And it makes me want to design like 1-2-3 guides for like all sorts of situations like that. Like, what if you’re worried about your child being you know aggressive and depressed? Or what if you’re worried about your coworker who seems to be overly nasty in little situations like, I feel like this kind of moral guidance is actually so needed.

Vanessa: Absolutely, there are very few things that I feel well-trained on, but the few that I do I’m so grateful for. Whenever, you know, we have both gone through suicide prevention training. And it goes against every instinct but you’re supposed to ask someone very specifically, ‘are you at risk of hurting yourself?’ And that’s actually an incredibly effective way to really intervene in somebody who’s severely depressed.

Casper: Right, you know sometimes the things that we’re most afraid to say are actually the most empowering and liberating, and help people acknowledge truth that is painful to see.

Vanessa: Which I think pulls in another layer of all this, which is the social constructs around it. Because often the best thing to do is the most socially taboo thing to do. So for instance you on the train, in order to be, quote/unquote, “brave” or “not cowardly” in that moment, think about all the different social norms you would have had to break. You would have had to acknowledge that you’d been eavesdropping, you would have had to speak to a stranger, you would have had to be rude to someone who was older than you. It’s institutionalized for us to not cooperate in these moments. So you don’t know how to act, not only because it’s confusing, but because you’ve been trained your whole life to behave in a certain way that it turns out ends up also being cowardly. We often prevent ourselves from intervening, not because we are afraid, but because it seems wrong. It seems rude. It seems risky.

Casper: Yeah, I think that’s one of the biggest challenges, is, you know, that mix of fear and not knowing what to do. And the social norms that we construct around us are often one of the, you know, biggest factors that stop us from doing what we know is right.

(Sacred reading theme music plays)

Casper: Vanessa, this week’s spiritual practice is Chavruta. And so, as we know, we always ask a question from the text, you know, a mystery or something that’s unresolved in our minds.
But we can’t just ask the question, we have to propose an answer. And the question that I have for you this week really comes from the scene where Riddle is talking to Professor Dippet in his headmaster’s office. So we’re way back in Riddle’s memory, and Dippet is asking him all sorts of questions about his background, and then says, “the things is, Tom … special arrangements might have been made for you, but in the current circumstances …” You know, so he’s suggesting, ‘because it’s so dangerous you can’t stay over the summer, you know, because of this monster is on the loose. And my question is, ‘why is Riddle killing people?’ And I think my answer is that he is simply attacking muggle-borns. I think he’s trying to fulfill Salazar Slytherin’s command that Hogwarts should be only for people from long wizarding lines, and he wants to intimidate muggle-borns, maybe doesn’t necessarily want to kill all of them, but he wants to scare them so that they go home. But I’m confused by my own answer because he’s half muggle-born, so what does he expect to happen? But that’s the best I can do. What do you think?

Vanessa: I mean; I don’t think that the half muggle-born means that he doesn’t want to kill muggle-borns. Self-hatred is a real thing. But the way that you formed your question, what it made me think of is, I think that we often do terrible things because it makes us feel more powerful. If this is a kid who feels powerless in his own life, he has no control over where he lives, or how he lives, and he knows that he’s not living the life that he should be living. He should be with parents who love him. Then this is a way for him to show the world that he has some control. And I think if you don’t have any respect, you feel as though you can earn respect through violence. Because violence is a way to get other people to do your bidding. Also, having people respect you is a way to have other people do your bidding. And I think that an immature way to have people, quote/unquote, “respect you” is to scare them, right? I mean, it’s Machiavelli. It’s fear versus love. And so he’s just willing to scare everybody in order to feel a sense of self, and a sense of power in the world.

Casper: I mean it makes me think of the story that you shared at the beginning of the podcast. You know, Eichmann was willing to enact these horrific policies and build these concentration camps, and there’s something, you know, that that power means safety, it means respect, as you say. It means that he can’t be hurt in the way that he’s hurting maybe right now. Gosh, yeah. Cuz in some ways, you know, of course it’s a mystery, we don’t really know how he opens the Chamber of Secrets the first time. But I’m sure that when he discovered his gift as a parseltongue that there was something that gave him a sense of being special, right? He had this connection to perhaps Salazar Slytherin. That he had gifts that were unusual because he was unusual. And so he’s looking for ways to set himself apart from other people, and I think that’s one of the things that, you know, sometimes we do wanna be powerful, and we do wanna have control over others. But with that comes a great loss of relationship. And in some ways when, you know, when you have that power you can’t be interdependent in the way that many of us would think that we are created to be, right. That’s what it is to be human is to be in relationship with one another. And when you cut yourself off from that through violence, through power, you can’t experience what being fully human is anymore. And that’s what happens with Riddle, I think, in the story.
Vanessa: I also wonder, you know, Dumbledore is walking the halls in this chapter, and in this flashback of Riddle. And we know that Dumbledore is a symbol for more acceptance of muggle-borns. And so the fact that there’s this progress happening, it makes sense to me that there’s this backlash against muggle-borns, and that Tom, as somebody who is worried that he can be identified as a muggle-born, is the one who’s killing the muggle-borns in order to claim the pure-blood status. You know, when the Civil Rights Movement was at its most powerful is when we saw more acts of violence, more lynchings, more KKK involvement than ever. It’s when progress is happening that the most violence instincts of the people whose power is being threatened gets elevated. And I think that Tom is a great sort of White Fang-type character here, of being half one thing and half another and therefore not feeling as though he belongs anywhere and therefore trying to claim power where he can.

Casper: Right, he has to perform that pure-blood identity to such an extreme in order to feel maybe worthy of that in some twisted way. Oh, gosh, this book is so sad.

Vanessa: Yeah, and that is probably why he doesn’t confess to Dumbledore as to what’s going on. He’s like, ‘no, Dumbledore, you’re weak. You will lie to me and tell me that my muggle-borne-ness is okay, and it’s not. My muggle-born father abandoned me,’ right. He doesn’t want Dumbledore to comfort him. He wants to keep loathing himself and it’s an excuse for this power hunger.

Casper: And he’s willing to sacrifice other people’s lives for him to feel that identity strengthened.

Vanessa: The more that we do this the more I’m really just believing that loving yourself is the first step to any good deed.

Casper: That’s your homework, everyone. Love yourselves as best you can.

(Voicemail beep)

Teague: Hi, Vanessa and Casper, my name’s Teague, I’m calling from Cardiff in California. I just wanted to contribute to those conversations you guys were having in Chapter 7: Mudbloods and Murmurs. Specifically, the situation where Hagrid and Ron were explaining to Hermione and Harry what the definition of a mudblood was, and almost trying to protect Hermione from feeling like an outcast. And for me what I found really interesting, I guess, in that conversation was that Hagrid specifically said that Hermione shouldn’t worry about her blood status because she was really smart. You know, he says, ‘there’s not a spell our Hermione can’t do.’ And I thought that was really interesting, just because it’s almost as though he’s saying, ‘you don’t have to worry about your blood status because you’re really intelligent, or you’re really successful.’ Whereas if she wasn’t really smart or really intelligent, they may be having a different conversation. And I think it’s almost, it’s almost like the opposite that Neville
Longbottom faces. So he’s there, and he’s a pureblood wizard, and we later find out he’s got these really successful Auror parents, and it almost seems as though the disappointment that people feel when he doesn’t show signs of being really smart or really intelligent is even more because of his blood status or his parents. And whereas Hermione almost faces the opposite, they almost mirror each other. So her being a muggle-born is okay because she’s so smart and she’s so successful. And it just makes me question, you know, how we justify things, and what if you’re in the minority and you’re not really smart or you’re not really successful? Does that mean that you’re lesser-than? You know, and it’s almost like that way where obviously it’s so innocently said, but it makes me really careful with how I make people feel more comfortable in a situation. So yeah. I just wanted to put that out there and see what you guys thought about it. So thanks, guys, love the podcast.

Casper: Thanks for that voicemail, Teague. I think you’re so right that even in that kind of attempt to placate and make Hermione comfortable, Hagrid’s revealing a little bit of a dangerous perspective of worthiness. And I think for all of us, when we’re thinking about, you know, encouraging friends or wanting to protect folks, to always remind them that what makes them lovable and worthy is just the fact that they exist. It’s not anything that they do or achieve, but it’s just that they are. And that we’re glad that they’re here. So thanks, Teague, for that. That’s a wonderful reminder.

Vanessa: And now for our second sponsor.

(Recording skips the sponsor)

Casper: Vanessa, it’s time for our blessings. Who are you blessing this week?

Vanessa: I would like to bless our Ginny Weasley for throwing away Tom Riddle’s diary. I mean, we know that Ginny feels very alone, she’s constantly being teased, she’s constantly being misunderstood, you know. She is sad about Mrs. Norris, and Percy just says, ‘oh, well she’s always been very fond of cats.’ And she really tries in this moment to protect herself and to protect others, and I just think it’s so brave, and so I want to bless Ginny for this invisible act of bravery, and bless everybody for the acts of bravery that we do each day that aren’t noticed. They say that character is who you are when no one else is watching, and Ginny’s character is a really strong one. Casper, who would you like to bless this week?

Casper: It’s a bit of a weird choice, but I think I want to bless Gilderoy Lockhart. He sends this note to Hermione, and I don’t know how much time he put into it, I don’t know how he heard about it, maybe she got notes from all her teachers. But it reminds me that even if someone is, you know, bad at their job, someone is kind of a bit of a mess in their life, that they’re still capable of really great goodness and care. And I really appreciate that he wrote her that note. And we see how much it means to her. And so I think this blessing is for anyone who feels like they screwed up, or like they’re not achieving what they wanted to achieve, or they’re not doing things in the way that they wanted to. That we are all capable of small acts of great kindness,
and that people appreciate it when we do them. So next time that I feel like I've made a mess of something, I'm going to remember just to write someone a little 'thank you' note, or a 'get well soon' card. Cuz it matters.

(Outro music begins)

Casper: You've been listening to Harry Potter and The Sacred Text. Next week, we'll read Chapter 14: Cornelius Fudge, through the theme of loyalty. Our live show is next week, we are so excited, there's one or two tickets left, so head on over to harrypottersacredtext.com to buy your tickets and come join us. Please subscribe and review us on iTunes or wherever you find your podcast. And follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Tumblr.

Vanessa: This episode of Harry Potter and The Sacred Text was produced by Ariana Nedelman, Casper ter Kuile, and me, Vanessa Zoltan. Our social media coordinator is Jenn Stark. Our music is by Ivan Pyzow and Nick Bohl. And Harry Potter and the Sacred Text is part of the Panoply Network. We would like to thank Teague Peterson for sending in this week's voicemail, Rebecca and Charlie Ledley, Matt Potts for thinking through cowardice on the phone with me late last night, and Stephanie Paulsell. We will talk to you next week.

Casper: See you then!

(Outro music ends)

Casper: Chapter 13: The Very Secret Diary. "When I was a young warthog, / When he was a young warthog."

Vanessa: I haven't seen that movie since 10th grade Spanish class, El Rey León.

Casper: ¡Hola Simba!

Final music: Panoply