

## Transcript

### Episode 1.17

#### Book 1, Chapter 17: The Man with Two Faces

Caroline: You're listening to Harry Potter After 2020, an HP chapter re-read podcast wherein two friends who read the books way back in the day as adults revisit the series through a post-2020 lens. Your hosts are Lorrie Kim, author of *Snape: The Definitive Analysis*, and JC, an educator and long-time HP fan. I'm your editor, Caroline. In this episode, Lorrie and JC tackle Book One, Chapter 17: The Man with Two Faces.

Lorrie: JC, are you ready?

JC: Oh, my God, we're finally at the last chapter.

Lorrie: This is Chapter 17, The Man with Two Faces, the final chapter of the first book of the seven-book series, which establishes the rhythm for the rest of the final chapters: a break-neck pace of suspense. We find out who's been trying to steal the Stone, Harry engages in a fight to the death and escapes once again, and then Dumbledore explains all. Whoo! What stood out to you first?

JC: Oh, well, I think the reveal that it was Quirrell after all this time; it's not a surprise obviously, but I think I recall reading it the first time just being like, \*Gasps\*. Also, how we see this big change in personality: he was just pretending to be the poor professor, so he was just faking... I don't know. Maybe he wasn't faking having the stutter, because he seemed to have it when he met Harry in the Leaky Cauldron, but he suddenly spoke with great clarity when he revealed his own identity. Also interesting that he knew that Snape was a decoy for him. That reveal was interesting, too, and I'm sure Snape knew that that was happening. The comment when he's monologuing -- the "If it weren't for you meddling kids!" kind of a thing -- when Snape was refereeing the Quidditch match, he made himself unpopular with the other teachers who thought the same thing that all the other kids did, which was that the only reason he was doing that was to stop Gryffindor from winning, and I was like, "Oh, Snape really just had a shitty school year."

Lorrie: First of many. Yeah, starting with the title of the chapter, The Man with Two Faces, that would be a reference to Janus, the God of Doors who has two faces. He's the god of doors, transitions and gateways between worlds. We do know that it's meant to be that genuinely terrifying image; we find out later in the chapter of what's underneath Quirrell's turban. Voldemort's birthday is January 1<sup>st</sup> so that is definitely a connection, but it also means Snape,

who also has a January birthday; the man who looks like one thing on the surface, and underneath he's something else. This is an author who we know from other sources is heavily into astrology, so she calculated birthdays as part of her character profiles.

[RECORD SCRATCH NOISE]

Caroline: Producer Caroline here with a note from Lorrie to hold your owls. She realized after recording that she was wrong about Tom Riddle's birthday. He was born on December 31<sup>st</sup>, in fact, and not January 1<sup>st</sup>. Management apologizes for the error.

Lorrie: And yeah, "Severus does seem the type, doesn't he? So useful to have him swooping around like an overgrown bat." That's a good clue to the kid readers: this is how to read. This is a stock type, and we're working against the stock type. I found one of the prototypes of this villain, the creepy potion-brewing villain, in the *Scarlet Letter*: Roger Chillingworth. He brews potions, he's totally creepy, and Hester Prynne is looking at him thinking, "Would he spread bat's wings and flee away, looking so much the uglier the higher he rose towards Heaven?" That's totally Snape.

JC: Mmm, interesting.

Lorrie: That's exactly what Snape looks like, but he's working against type. And yeah, his cover story as a spy -- that he's refereeing because he's trying to keep Gryffindor from winning -- is so profoundly petty that one of the prices that Snape pays for this life is the indignity that he's trying to pass himself as somebody whose grandest ambitions are that small, and that's all he is. That's all he wants. He's less mature than a child, and that's part of his penance. And I love that Quirrell mentions that Snape was muttering a countercurse, because there we see countercurse coming up again. Since this is a book about defense and Snape is all about defense, what he's doing is learning curses so that he can learn how to perform the greater magic of the countercurse that can stop it. You have to know how the curse works in order to stop it, but it takes more to do the countercurse, which is something that now Hermione is never going to forget. What next?

JC: What next? I love how Harry keeps him monologuing throughout the scene. It's the classic bad guy who's just so anxious to be understood and to tell his side of the story that even the 11-year-old prisoner that he's got tied up here is a good audience. He's just that easily goaded into continuing to talk about it, but it also brings up, too: how did Quirrell get himself here in the first place? He was maybe an idealistic, naive young wizard going off into the world and he was taken in by Voldemort, who could have used that naivete against him. Of course, Voldemort does this to all his followers; he just chews them up and spits them out again. But it made me think a lot about, certainly in the current times, there are these charlatans out there -- whose names I don't want in my mouth, and I'm not even going to say them -- but who prey on young men just like that and use them -- use their sense of not belonging, and use their loneliness -- to fuel this resentment, make money off of them, and build this empire of cruelty that is building on what comes down to this need to be seen and to be appreciated, and even to be loved, like these young men are feeling. It just made me think of Quirrell as being taken in by one of those people who reside in Eastern Europe, who are in a lot of trouble with the law right now. I was just like, \*groans\*. Obviously, Quirrell pays the price for his naivete and his being taken in, but Voldemort does this to all of his followers. The first time I read this book, I was still, myself, naive enough -- this was before modern times -- to think, how could people be sucked into things like this, right? How did all of these people become Death Eaters? How did they get sucked into it?

How does one become a Nazi? How would that happen in real life? And I don't have to ask that question anymore. It's very, very real.

Lorrie: Yeah. We find out later in the series, of course, Snape was exactly one of those young men, and that Snape's goal in life is to do what he can to prevent it from happening to people like Draco and Crabbe and Goyle because they all have targets on them. They're ripe for it. Later on, what happens to Regulus Black, we know there's only one ending. Although, because Snape is so great -- such a great, great character -- he actually manages to rewrite the ending for Draco on that one, but it takes everything he's got; he dies for it. So here we have Quirrell dismissively, absent-mindedly, tossing Harry a huge bit of his own history by saying, "Oh, yeah, Snape and Harry's father, James, went to school together." Harry would have paid anything to learn this; he's so unimportant to Quirrell, and Quirrell just tosses this out. Then he says, "They loathed each other, but he never wanted you dead," and that's one of those things about Snape that is just a given and true and constant throughout the series but completely surprising. It's given to us directly: Snape, no matter how he feels about Harry, never wants Harry dead, and it's hard to believe, right? Even when it's right there in print, readers go, "Is that true? Maybe it's not true. Maybe we're going to find out later." That's one of the greatest ways of hiding the truth about Snape as a character, is to just put it out there.

JC: True.

Lorrie: It's so unlikely.

JC: It's also so interesting to me that Quirrell -- well, maybe he's not a lot younger, but he seems a little younger than Snape. It seems he maybe was a few years behind Snape and James and Lily and all them at school, and it was just a known. This is the first time Harry's heard this, when everybody just knows this about his parents; how little he knows about his parents and how everyone else knows more than him.

Lorrie: Yeah. And they're not telling him.

JC: And that Quirrell's the one? They're not telling him. Quirrell's the one to throw this fact out. That's got to be, \*groans\*.

Lorrie: Harry has reason to be resentful. Yeah, if you recall: at this point, Snape is only thirty-two, so no matter how young Quirrell is, it's quite plausible that he was there at the same time, maybe a few years younger. Then we hear that Quirrell thinks of the word 'weak' as an insult, which fits perfectly into the profile of the kind of person who can be exploited by bad faith operators. He says these chilling, chilling words; he has a moment of self-doubt, exactly like a person of faith who's struggling. He says, "Sometimes I find it hard to follow my master's instructions." How many times do you see people really struggling with their faith talking like that? Then he says this thing that just chills me every time: "He is with me wherever I go." That's something that Rowling does a few times during the series to incredibly powerful effect -- in my opinion -- where she takes loved, profoundly familiar tenets of Christian life and she perverts them. She gives them to the Death Eaters, to the evil people, and shows how they use them in this horrendous perversion of faith. I am not Christian. I don't have a Christian background, so there's a lot of the Christian allegory that goes right over my head, but that one I knew. It's chilling, because then we see how important this is to Quirrell and how doomed he is. And then he gives me another Ravenclaw moment: he says, "There is no good and evil. There's only power, and those too weak to seek it." There was a point, after the series was finished, when

Rowling had heard all the criticisms that she made all the villains Slytherins and how predictable and boring and unimaginative that was, and people were complaining because it's not consistent with the distribution of real-world traits. You don't, in the real world, get all the baddies from one kind of personality, so there came a point a few years after the series closed when she started identifying some of her villains as Ravenclaws instead, because that was a safe place to put them.

JC: It's the evil genius, as opposed to just evil.

Lorrie: Extra canonically, shortly after this series closed, that's when she revealed that Quirrell was a Ravenclaw. So was Lockhart, so was Trelawney, and Ollivander. This quote, this sentence, "There's no good and evil; there's only power:" that's the kind of absolutism that I associate with Rowling's mistrust in Ravenclaw, or the parts of herself that are prone to that tendency. It's the mistrust of Ravenclaw as a way of thinking that is logically brilliant and has no moorings in a moral grounding. As a Ravenclaw, this does get me a bit. I have morals. We're not all like that, but I guess the part of herself that she's afraid of (the author) could tend in that direction. That's what I'm reading.

JC: Interesting. Yeah. I think about the fact that when she's made her awful transphobic arguments, she's come at them from a Ravenclaw perspective. That's the sense that I've gotten from her, but yet she doesn't recognize that in herself, maybe.

Lorrie: Yeah, that you can win arguments on technicalities, even though everyone knows you're not right. That's not a good faith level of argument, and I guess she identifies that as a Ravenclaw thing.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: But anyway, in this volume, he is not identified by House. He is just identified as somebody who has taken good and evil out of the equation. So what else did you notice?

JC: When we get to the point where Quirrell takes off the turban and reveals and he says Voldemort is with him, he means it literally. The body horror of that, I think Harry feels it viscerally, but because I haven't read the book in a while, it really did stand out to me. This idea that Voldemort possesses Quirrell physically, and that Quirrell views this as a punishment for his shortcomings, that's really interesting. And at this point, how does Quirrell not know that he's never getting out of this alive? It's pretty clear that Voldemort has no intention of giving him back his body once he gets the Stone. It's the naivete there: "Oh, once my master gets what he wants, he's going to set me free." No, he's not. I start feeling sorry for Quirrell in this chapter. As much as it's, "Oh, he's the baddie," I really just have to shake my head and go, "Oh, kid," because he is a kid to me at this point in my life. I'm like, "Oh, kid."

Lorrie: "You're doomed." Yeah. "And I'm sorry there's actually not a whole lot we can do for you at this point."

JC: "Yeah, you've dug it yourself. You've got to lie down now."

Lorrie: Ai yi yi. Yeah, the image of the two heads: I really am impressed that it is genuinely horrifying and that gets me every time. It's quite brilliant. What it reminded me of: this happened to me repeatedly during the regime change in the U.S, around 2016, which also, of course, was connected to the Brexit movement in Britain. That was a big change for me in shifting the Harry

Potter saga from more allegorical to, more literally, a current-event kind of story. Do you remember the political figure in Trump's orbit named Roger Stone?

JC: Yes.

Lorrie: Do you remember what he has on his back?

JC: No. Oh, no. A human face? What are we going for here?

Lorrie: Yes, it's between his shoulder blades. Do you know which human he has chosen to get tattooed on his back?

JC: Oh, God. Is it Trump?

Lorrie: No.

JC: Oh, okay. No, who?

Lorrie: Nixon.

JC: Wow, I remember that now. I had totally forgotten. He has Nixon's face tattooed on his back.

Lorrie: On his back, between his shoulder blades.

JC: Just like Quirrell.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Oh, my God.

Lorrie: And he proudly has put photos of himself shirtless from the back on his social media. I saw that and, of course, all I could think about was Quirrell.

JC: Oh, my gosh.

Lorrie: Yikes. He's proud of it. Ai yi yi.

JC: Wow.

Lorrie: Yeah. So Voldemort reveals his signature magic. He explains: "I have form only when I can share another's body." This is our clue that for the whole series, Voldemort's signature magic is possession. That's what he will do by default, just like Harry's signature magic is flying, and we also know what happens to the bodies that he "shares." Then he recounts killing James and Lily, and he tells Harry, "They died begging me for mercy." He contradicts that story just moments later. He does this throughout the series; he makes up whatever narrative he wants. Sometimes he says, "Oh, they were just worms," and other times he'll say, "Oh, they were noble, they fought like you." He really disrespects the importance of their stories so much.

JC: But also says whatever he thinks is going to work in the moment, and that also sounds like political figures of our time.

Lorrie: Yeah. And it doesn't actually work on Harry because Voldemort doesn't care whether it's true or not, but Harry does. When Voldemort lies about how degraded James and Lily were at the end: every time he lies about that, it just glances right off Harry. He knows this is not it. 'Look at the guy making up stuff.' Then we have Quirrell trying to figure out how to get the Stone, and

it's beautiful. This is the revelation of the guiding principle of magic in this universe. This is what you do with super-magical objects: you have to want them not for yourself, but to do good for others and, more importantly, to prevent other people from being greedy with them and exploiting them. This is a constant in this universe. That's who gets super-magical objects; that's who deserves them and who owns them. The way that Harry is being taught to get the Stone now is going to be the way he wins the Elder Wand later.

JC: Yes, yes, yes. And what a lovely bookend that is.

Lorrie: It's a darn brilliant test that Dumbledore invented. It's a test for purity of soul. You can't fake this one. So, what next?

JC: A quick note that I had a question a couple of episodes back about how the hell the unicorn blood was being drunk, and that was answered here. Voldemort says, "Oh, Quirrell drank it for me," and I'm like, 'Okay, thank you. Now, the biology questions I had have been resolved.' This is a note to any listeners that I really did not read ahead and I really didn't remember how it went, so I was really glad to have that mystery solved for me.

Lorrie: Yeah, Voldemort won't do any of the work himself.

JC: "I'm not digesting that!"

Lorrie: "No!" Later on, he doesn't become Minister of Magic. He makes underlings do that. He moves into Malfoy Manor; he doesn't want to keep house, he has servants for that. They're called the Malfoys. Yeah, he won't do the labor; that's beneath him. But also, he can't.

JC: Okay, now I have this awful image of Wormtail clipping his toenails, because he won't do that either.

Lorrie: Yeah, no. No, no, no.

JC: Oh, God.

Lorrie: Yeah. Gross. Then we have the astonishing, brilliant device that Quirrell's body cannot handle touching Harry. Wow. Quirrell touches Harry and he blisters, and it's so dramatic that Harry realizes he can kill Quirrell by coming closer to him.

JC: Is that Harry's intention to kill him? I guess my impression was more that Harry realized that, "He can't get it together enough to kill me if I'm keeping him in pain. As long as I keep him in pain, he can't hurt me."

Lorrie: I think it's just Harry's intention to fight. I don't think Harry is thinking, "I will kill him." I think he's thinking moment by moment by moment.

JC: Yeah, and it's more, "Right now, this is the thing that will keep me -- this is the only thing I can do to defend myself."

Lorrie: "Look at the shock on this person's face. All right, that's what I'll do then." What does it mean to you that Quirrell's body burns when he touches Harry?

JC: I think this idea -- and I know, it's hardly a new thought -- but I really love this idea that if someone has loved you or if you have love on that basis of being cared for and being confident in that, there are kinds of evil that can't really get to you. You have a shield of some kind, and if

they try to get to you, you have the power to fight back. That's the thing that I think of, and that whole concept is something I've thought about a lot as a parent. I'm not obviously going to -- hopefully never have to die for my kid, but how do I give my kid that kind of love and confidence and then send them off to middle school, where they're not going to face Voldemort but they're sure going to face some horrors? A kid who is socially awkward and has a lot of other things that make them different from other people: how do you fortify that kid in a way that they can reject, or have some defense against, the kind of cruelty that the world might show them? That's the thing that I think about when I read that part.

Lorrie: Yeah, I went through pretty much exactly the same thought process when my kids were infants. "Wait, so if I do this and this and this, I've given them a protection? Is this going to hold? Given how horrible the world might be, I don't know if this is enough, but, um, I'll do my best!" Yeah, actually the *Harry Potter* series overtly helped me in that as I was parenting because sometimes parenting is hard, and I would remember, "No, stick with it; keep doing this because if this works, I will have given them a protection that will outlive me." My read on Quirrell's body reacting this way is compounded of two different things: one of them is that Quirrell's body is just a conduit. Voldemort, we'll hear him say later at the end of *Goblet of Fire* that when he possesses animals, they don't live for long. Humans, being more powerful, and wizards, even more powerful than that, can withstand long-term possession by Voldemort; but when he possesses rats or something, they don't last. Way later at the end of the series, we find out that when you have split your soul into pieces, a Horcrux is something that is a container that's so magically powerful that it can prevent the pieces of your soul from reuniting because that's the urge of nature. Souls want to be whole. It's incredibly powerful. Horcruxes are dark magic because they are somehow powerful enough so they can prevent that, but when pieces of soul are near each other, they long to unite. That's what causes the incredible pain in Harry's scar. Without realizing it -- because Voldemort has lost a lot of sensation by this point -- Voldemort being close to Harry, that's his soul yearning to unite with Harry. We have Voldemort's soul in Quirrell's body touching Harry, who contains another part of Voldemort's soul, with this longing for wholeness that Voldemort does not understand, has never understood. That longing is so overpowering, the conduit, being Quirrell's mortal body, can't withstand it. That's one thing. The other element of this compound that I'm thinking of is something we don't learn about in this book. This is the answer to the question, the first question being: who would try to kill a baby? Why? And the second one being: why didn't it work? We don't go anywhere near figuring out in this volume why it doesn't work, but by the end of the series, what we have seen is no, there's nothing special about Harry that makes it work. It's that Voldemort has never identified with another human being in his entire life except for Harry, so when he feels that Harry has received love, then he feels jealous. He does not feel jealous when he sees other people receiving love; he finds it laughable, despicable, other. He has no problem killing people that love each other. He doesn't feel it because they're not like him. He doesn't feel empathy, but he felt empathy for baby Harry, and that was the one way that his own pain and jealousy entered his consciousness, which is one of the protections that had kept him going until then. He didn't feel jealousy; the concept of him receiving love was so foreign, so completely outside his experience, he didn't even feel it. He didn't know he missed it. It just seemed despicable and weak and mortal to him. So what? So what, love? It's nothing. You can just squish it like a cockroach, and then what happens to your love? Nothing. It's useless. It's meaningless. He doesn't feel it, but because he identified with Harry and he saw how it felt, then that was the one

way he understood, "Oh, I'm feeling that," and that is so painful because his life has sucked so badly.

JC: In his not-life. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. If he had remained mortal, if he had given himself the mercy of remaining mortal, that jealousy would have killed him. It didn't because he can't die, but he doesn't know what it is he's feeling. How could he know that what he's feeling is jealousy and empathy? He can't know that. He doesn't know that. But he touches Harry; his soul is trying to reunite with Harry, including the part of his soul that, without his permission or knowledge, said, "I want what that baby has. I'm going over there. If that baby can be healed, I'm going to go over there and get healed with him. I'm going to make that baby heal me, too! Take me along!" He's yearning to reunite with that bit of his soul that knew: "We're hungry for this, this is what we want." He's feeling, and if you have as much pain as Voldemort, you really wouldn't want to feel because it's too much to endure. He wouldn't have survived enduring it if he had been mortal, but he's not, so guess what? He has earned himself the dubious privilege of feeling and enduring pain greater than a mortal can withstand. He doesn't have any way out of it, and he has no clue that this is the problem. He just wants the pain to stop because this is terrible.

JC: It's interesting, too, that there's the moment when he tells Quirrell, "Just kill him!"

Lorrie: Yeah!

JC: Because later on, he's like, "No one can kill the boy other than me." He becomes convinced: there's the prophecy and there's things like that that happen, but it's interesting that at that point, he just has no clue.

Lorrie: The difference comes when he steals Harry's blood. Until he steals Harry's blood, Harry is just an annoyance. If Voldemort has made so many Horcruxes that he's fine with a couple of them just falling by the wayside, then the loss of Harry wouldn't be any worse than that. He doesn't even know that part of his soul is in Harry, but even if he did know, well, that's why you have a lot of Horcruxes. There's some loss involved. Once he has taken Harry's blood into himself -- therefore that process of love and empathy has started in him, which he could not receive naturally because he was not loved as an infant during the time that that happens to people -- that love and nurturing give you in your blood, literally in your blood, the building blocks that help infants thrive and grow bigger. He did not receive that the organic way that organisms crave the moment we're born. He didn't receive it, but he did crave it, and he couldn't obtain it. He had to steal it; he stole Harry's, so now that ability in the blood -- those chemicals in the blood -- are now with Voldemort as well. And then he understands that, in order for him to know what to do with it, he needs answers from Harry. Nobody else will do. He needs answers from Harry, because Harry's the one who has this particular setup of love running through his veins that now Voldemort has, too. Nobody else has the exact same setup. He can't go to anybody else to say, "What do I do now? How come you have this? Give me that. You don't deserve it. I will take it from you and kill you because I want it." He can't get the answers from anyone else. Nobody better kill Harry. But that hasn't happened yet. As far as he's concerned, right now Harry's just like a bug. A very annoying bug.

JC: That won't die, no matter how hard you stomp on it.



Lorrie: "Oh, my God. Something's wrong with this. Why is this not working?" So yeah, yeah. Blistering skin of Quirrell, woof. That's a lot.

JC: And also the intense pain that Harry is experiencing there, too, so much that he blacks out. Then Dumbledore later says that he feared for a terrible moment, I think he describes it, that Harry actually died.

Lorrie: Yeah!

JC: And that idea that that could have killed Harry is very interesting.

Lorrie: So yeah, if you were orphaned by a near fatal attack when you were one and then the same person comes back and tries it again and nearly succeeds, yeah. It's not guaranteed that you'll come out of it okay. Three days later, like Christ rising...

JC: Oh, God, I didn't put that together before. That's funny. Three days later.

Lorrie: Harry wakes up and he thinks he sees the Snitch, but it's not the Snitch. It's Dumbledore and a lot of candy.

JC: And a mountain of candy. This is what's interesting to me, too, is this idea of whatever happened between you and Quirrell in the dungeons is a secret, so therefore the whole school knows. I keep wondering: how did they know? What do they think they know? I guess maybe people saw Quirrell's body. I don't know. "How do they know?" is the question that I have, but hey.

Lorrie: See, this is another example of Book One being a fairy tale and other books in this series becoming more and more like novels. The series could never have gotten away with this by the time of Book Four or Five. Here, we know that Quirrell died, but we don't get any information about how the student body and their parents were informed of a death in the staff.

JC: "What was happening?" Do they know about the Stone? How would you even present this to people?

Lorrie: Yeah. If you imagine McGonagall with a quill, writing drafts of the letter to parents and then crumpling them up and throwing them in the fire and starting another one, like "Ugh. No. What can I tell them?" And also that at the feast, in front of everybody, Ron and Hermione get credit for the chess game and the Potions puzzle. Wait, so everybody knows about it?

JC: They know about all the tests?

Lorrie: Yeah, that's a fairy tale. You don't have to explain; you just say and you just accept. And later on, when this story becomes a novel, then it doesn't work. And if you go back here, you go, "Wait a minute!"

JC: Well, that explains why I'm trying so hard to make all these things work in my head and they're just not. Okay, so I just -- well, we're at the end anyway. Do I need to keep that in mind for the next book, though?

Lorrie: Well, we'll see.

JC: We'll see.

Lorrie: That's a good thing to keep tracking: when different genres come to the fore, because there are definitely fairy tales in the next book. So, yeah, here we have Harry after three days and Quirrell has died, but nobody seems to really notice.

JC: Or care.

Lorrie: Was there a funeral? Did they call his mom?

JC: There was no moment of silence for Quirrell at the feast, nothing.

Lorrie: Nothing. Was there a corpse, or was it just a little smoking pile of ash? Who knows. Then we hear the bigger news, which is that the Flamels are going to die now, and they are very peaceful about it. The Stone has been destroyed, by which I assume that just means that Dumbledore and Flamel had a little conference in midair somehow, and then Dumbledore just destroyed it on the spot. I'm sad; I'm sorry that Dumbledore is losing a peer, but he doesn't seem sorry. I guess he had quite a long time to be friends with Flamel, but that was just one of the so few people that I would comfort myself with thinking, 'Dumbledore can talk to so few people at his own level, and Flamel was there for him for a long time and they were partners. That must have been really nice for a long time, but it's over now. He's going to be really alone after this.' And then Dumbledore talks about the Sorcerer's Stone giving you wealth and immortality, and says, "Humans do have a knack of choosing precisely those things that are worst for them." That brings me back to truly congratulating Hermione and Harry. Because Hermione had the Seven of Cups before her, she could have chosen a lot of things that are worst for her, including her desire to be the main character, her desire to go with Harry and fight whatever's in there with him. No, she recognized that there was room for one person, one quest, and it's not going to be her; she turns around and she leaves, and she chose wisely. She did not choose what was worse for herself. We learn later that's more than Dumbledore's capable of doing; Dumbledore can't stand not being the main character. He's obviously the main character. And congratulations to Harry for knowing that nothing is more important than preventing somebody from exploiting power. Yeah, this is a purity test, and this definitely is one of the few arenas in which if you're a child, you can compete on completely equal footing with an adult. So much of childhood is incredibly unfair. You can't compete; adults can be small and petty and have their own stupid agendas and get away with it, because even though you know what they're doing, you can't stop them. You don't have the power. But in terms of knowing what's right and wrong, knowing what's good for people and not good for them, yeah, children are just as capable of being right or wrong about this as an adult.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: Yeah. When Dumbledore has humility in front of Harry, this is the kind of equality that makes Dumbledore humble even though Harry has no idea what he's talking about. Then they talk about, "So Voldemort's not really dead?" and Dumbledore says, "Yeah, he's probably out there looking for another body to share." Okay, he's not dead.

JC: And there's this implication, too, that Harry's task is just to keep delaying him coming back. That made me go back and think about, 'What does Dumbledore know at this point?' I don't remember enough of how the series works out later, because in the seventh book we find out that Dumbledore has been figuring out all the things with the horcruxes all along. At this point, I don't know what Dumbledore knows.

Lorrie: According to my friend Irvin Khaytman and his wonderful book on Dumbledore, Dumbledore has been seeking for a long time the outer limit to how many Horcruxes Voldemort probably made, because the way Horcruxes work: if you get all but one, then we're back where you started. He wanted to know where is the limit, because that's Voldemort's quest: he wants limits. He wants to know when it will be enough. Dumbledore pursues for a really long time the memory from Slughorn that will give him a really good theory -- which turns out to be true -- about the point at which Voldemort would have told himself, "Okay, I've reached the limit. This is enough. I can stop." Until that's happening, Dumbledore is just trying to locate and identify the Horcruxes. When he is running away from the school during Order of the Phoenix (because Umbridge and Fudge are chasing him out of the school) and he says, "Oh, I'm leaving, but I'm not going to Azkaban. I'm going to do something else," I didn't really understand that what he really meant was, "I have one project and one project only: I'm going to track down Horcruxes." It really wasn't until I read Irvin's book that I realized no, that's the only thing on his mind. From then on, that's the last mission of his life: to identify them and see if he can also identify the absolute limit to how many there are to find. At this point, he does not know if there's even more than one. He doesn't know for a fact that Voldemort has made *any*, but at the end of the next book -- when the diary gets destroyed and he realizes that Voldemort gave the diary to Malfoy and let it get used this way -- that's when he thought, 'Okay, for sure, there's more than one,' because until that time...

JC: You wouldn't be so careless? Is that the idea?

Lorrie: I believe it's in the sixth book: we do hear the clue when Slughorn and Tom Riddle the student are talking. We hear that until then, historically, nobody has ever made more than one Horcrux. My conjecture is that that one person was Grindelwald, but due to circumstances beyond my control, if we were ever going to get that backstory, we're not now, so who knows. But there was something that happened to make Dumbledore take the Horcrux resources out of the library, and at that point, historically, it was known that no one had ever made more than one. So, did Voldemort make more than one? Well, if he got rid of the diary this way, the answer is, obviously, yes. How many did he make? I don't know.

JC: Does he know or suspect that Harry is a Horcrux at this point?

Lorrie: I don't think so.

JC: Interesting, because Harry has probably not confided to him that his scar hurts or any of that.

Lorrie: Probably not.

JC: Very interesting.

Lorrie: But like Snape, anytime anything happens, Dumbledore and Snape are both looking at Harry. "Whatever's going on, I just have to gather all the information I can."

JC: Interesting in that in the conversation that follows, Harry asks questions and Dumbledore wonderfully says, "I may decline to answer, but I'm not going to lie to you," which is just an amazing parent tip, honestly. That's a great way to approach it. But when Harry asks, "Why did he try to kill me?" -- which is, as you say, one of the central questions of the entire series -- Dumbledore basically says, "I can't tell you that right now."

Lorrie: "I'm not going to tell you."

JC: That's what made me think, 'What does he know right now?' Interesting.

Lorrie: No, well, he could have answered. He just doesn't. He can't bring himself to, and he does tell Harry a lie: when Harry says, "Oh, did you get Hermione's owl?" and Dumbledore says, "We must have crossed in mid-air," but Hermione confirms later, no, nothing crossed in mid-air; they ran into Dumbledore before Hermione even got to the Owlery. So no, there was an element of Dumbledore having been taken in by Quirrell's diversion, and then realizing it and coming back. That was on a totally different timeline from whatever was happening to Hermione, and Dumbledore just didn't share that with the sick kid who had almost died.

JC: Yeah, true.

Lorrie: But yeah, he does. Of course, he lies to Harry right away. As soon as he says, "I won't lie to you," he lies to him.

JC: But... yeah, okay. I can excuse that one.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But there's the other thing that he says there, though: when Harry finds out finally that Dumbledore's the source of the cloak, Dumbledore makes this comment that implies that, "Well, all your father ever used it for was to steal food from the kitchen," which is like, no, that is so not true.

Lorrie: But at that point, he doesn't know.

JC: He doesn't.

Lorrie: He doesn't learn that the Marauders became Animagi and were running around with a transformed werewolf until the end of *Prisoner of Azkaban*.

JC: Okay, that's interesting.

Lorrie: He learns that between the time that the kids are out saving Buckbeak with the Time-Turner and the time that Sirius leaves on Buckbeak.

JC: Interesting. Okay, so he really doesn't know that they're... Okay.

Lorrie: That's when Sirius tells him what the Marauders used to do, and that is when Remus John Lupin is fired.

JC: Oh, my gosh.

Lorrie: Because yeah, Dumbledore says, "Well, that explains a lot." Then we get another one of those things that people cannot figure out (some of them still even can't figure out, because it's the actual truth, and that's so perplexing): when Dumbledore says a half truth, he says, "Professor Snape couldn't bear being in your father's debt. I do believe he worked so hard to protect you this year because he felt that would make him and your father even. Then he could go back to hating your father's memory in peace," because he's explaining to Harry that James saved Snape's life and Snape could never forgive him for that. Harry, quite rightly, feels like his head is swimming. What? And yeah, I know quite a few people who have no idea why Dumbledore put it that way, because it can't possibly be true. I think it's exactly true. I think that's

part of what makes Snape so crazy: "Yeah, he saved my life and I owe him, but then he went and became a martyr, and now I can't even be angry at the real James because his ending rewrote his story."

JC: Oh, interesting.

Lorrie: And that's something that is very much present in Book Six, when Harry nearly kills Draco unintentionally and Snape comes in there and prevents that from happening. Once Snape saves Harry from becoming an accidental murderer... If you go out and kill somebody on purpose, yeah, bad. Even if you didn't mean to but you kill them anyway -- but you hated them -- it's almost as bad. Had Draco died from Sectumsempra, Harry would have spent the rest of his life saying, "You don't understand what an asshole he was. No, he didn't deserve to die. No, I didn't want him to die, but people thought I did." The moment that Draco almost died, Harry's like, "No, no, no, no, no." Until then, if he had asked Harry, "How would you feel if Draco died," I'm sure he would have been like, "Well, I can't think of anyone who deserves it more." But when it's actually happening and you're the person -- the blame might not belong to you, but it belongs less to anyone else -- it's going to fall on you, whether you deserve it or not. That's what happened to Snape when he inadvertently got James Potter killed. Well, there was nothing good about James Potter, according to Snape, but he didn't want James *dead*. But yeah, that's what happens when you do hateful things and they have consequences that can ruin your life in ways that you didn't know at that age might happen. Snape -- being an adult having gone through this -- knows that this might happen, and then he spends the next several years trying to keep stupid Draco and stupid Harry from killing each other's stupid faces because he knows: "You two! Do not kill each other, because I can tell you how it feels when you accidentally kill someone you hate: it is no fun. You don't even get to enjoy it."

JC: "You don't even get to enjoy it." Oh, my God.

Lorrie: And when people talk about how great they were, you just have to shut up and take it. But yeah, Snape would have loved to go back to hating James's memory in peace. But he never can now, can he? Yeah, he owes James a life debt, as not loving as that was, and yeah, he does have to save James's kid. Then we get -- I love Dumbledore's characterization as a genius. He's not humble, but he doesn't overstate himself, and when Harry says, "So, how did you get the idea about the mirror and the Stone?" Dumbledore says, "That's one of my more brilliant ideas and, between you and me, that's saying something. My mind surprises even me sometimes." Well, yeah, he should not be modest. It is impressive. It is great and he knows it, and Harry knows it. Harry and Dumbledore, at this point, have an understanding that is beyond what most kids have with Dumbledore, and beyond what some readers want to give credit for, I have seen, I think. Hermione stands in for a whole lot of readers when she says, "That's terrible, you could have been killed!" Why would Dumbledore let Harry go do these things? Harry is completely comfortable with it and says, "Oh, no, he knew; he just taught us enough to help. I don't think it was an accident. He let me find out how the mirror worked." Hermione, like many readers, is appalled. "You can't do that. You're a grown-up." The belief that an adult can prevent these things is what children ideally should retain at this age, and a few people like Harry have difficult enough lives so that they don't have the luxury of that belief anymore. It's natural to think this. It's natural to think, "Why is the Headmaster letting an 11-year-old almost die like this? You can't do that. You're supposed to be there for them." And there are people in the world whose life experiences tell them, "You know what? That is a charming, charming way to live that is denied to me. I don't have faith anymore. Excuse me, I have stuff to do."

JC: Another layer that I read into that, which I'm sure you do, too: think about the battle over sex education that's been happening in the United States forever, or even giving women control over their bodies, let's say. This idea that life is complicated, the world is complicated, and that the best thing we can do is to give people the tools that they can use to get through it and to be successful; that idea versus the idea of, "an authority should prevent people from even needing these tools so that we don't need to give them the tools. We don't want to teach kids how their bodies work. We don't need to give women the option to have abortions if they need them, because we should just make sure that that situation doesn't happen in the first place," which is utterly fucking unrealistic. I really appreciate that Dumbledore's approach to this is, "Yeah, Harry's going to go through some shit. Let me help prepare him for that and give him the tools that he's going to need to survive it," and that Harry even recognizes that at this point.

Lorrie: The truly sick thing about the argument that "We'll just solve the problem by ensuring that nothing bad ever happens to people" is that it looks like it believes itself to be a good faith argument on the surface, but the awful truth is no, it's cynical. This is an argument made only by people who know perfectly well that this will enable and encourage more of that crime; it will simply disempower the victims, it will make people ripe for the picking. That is a hard thing to recognize because some of the people saying, "No, we should just make everything safe," they bought into it or they don't realize. They may believe in this without being the beneficiaries. It's tempting because it's such a beautiful fantasy that you can make things safe like that so that these awful realities don't have to be on the surface, but there are people who quite knowingly are generating this propaganda because it will coldly benefit them. We learn in Book Five with Professor Umbridge that these are those people. They are teaching children that it's wrong, that it's somehow disobedient or unpatriotic, for them to defend themselves. Why would they teach them that? Who's benefiting?

JC: That's a very good question. Who is benefiting? Yes.

Lorrie: And the children know this is wrong. "What do you mean, don't take out your wands? What do we do if somebody attacks us?" "Who's going to attack you?" "Well, I don't know. Who?" "Detention."

JC: It's so frustrating and it's so real. It's so real thinking about things that are happening. I live in Texas, so Texas is trying really hard to be Florida. The idea that "Oh, we can't even talk about gender identity in school because..." It's all of that again. The idea that somehow, if kids don't have any contact with an idea, it will never occur to them.

Lorrie: It doesn't make sense.

JC: It doesn't make any sense. It's so awful.

Lorrie: Unless you think about people who want to benefit from this by disempowering people, taking advantage of human nature and the quality that we are born with or should be born with, if we're lucky, of wishing to believe the best in ourselves and others. The fantasy that somebody's in charge, the fantasy that nobody wants to hurt you, that what people want is the best for each other; that fantasy is so powerful that it can override evidence.

JC: Yeah. It reminds me of the number of well-meaning white people who say, "I don't see color." It's that same kind of, "But..."

Lorrie: Yeah, and Harry has just been through that with Ron and Hermione: they're studying for exams and they're not worried about Snape stealing the Stone, and Harry saying, "Fine, you guys just live your coddled little lives. I'm worried about the Stone. I'm going after it." That is privilege, and Harry and Hermione are both going to deal with it in different ways throughout the series because one of their friends is a pure blood and hasn't lost his parents. That's just a thing that happens when people love each other: you have to work through the differences in your privilege, you have to earn each other's trust. So yeah, deep stuff here. Then we get Hagrid crying, swearing off of alcohol, which does not last.

JC: Yeah, we've all been there. "I'll never drink again!" Sure, Hagrid.

Lorrie: And giving him the incredibly wealthy treasure of a photo album, which immediately becomes one of Harry's greatest prized possessions. Hagrid is doing what nobody else bothered to do: using the network that's still there and still alive to give this kid some of his own back.

JC: And that idea that Hagrid just knew who to contact who would have had photos, and Harry's just been denied all of this. Ugh.

Lorrie: Nobody's thought about this. Yeah.

JC: It's an incredible gift.

Lorrie: Yeah. Then we have the Leaving Feast, where everything is decorated in Slytherin colors. Oh, God. What do you think about that?

JC: This is the only one where Dumbledore gave Gryffindor the extra points.

Lorrie: Oh, my God, yeah.

JC: I've gone back and forth on that, because on the one hand, okay, yeah. You can say, okay, wow, it wasn't fair, blah blah blah. Did he even get them in in time? Why do it at the feast? Why not do it earlier? Let's not humiliate the Slytherins. There's lots of things you could say there, but God, it's fulfilling in the context of the story, right? For all the things that are bad about it, and you think, "Wow, they were better ways to handle this," it is very finale feeling from a story perspective.

Lorrie: In the fairy tale, it is.

JC: In the fairy tale ending. It's a very fairy tale ending. Lorrie: Because sure, those nasty Slytherin foes of Harry's, they did deserve to be told, "You can't do that. We're not going to let you; that's not just. You can't get away with it." However, it's not only a fairy tale. And the cruel part of it is the way that Dumbledore set it up on purpose for maximal taunting.

JC: Yeah, it's totally like that.

Lorrie: That didn't have to be quite so cruel. He could have just said it all at once. He didn't have to lead up to it like, "And then, and then," and have everyone doing math in their heads. "Oh no, oh no." It's beautiful that he exonerates Neville after Neville has had an entire series of humiliations and betrayals and doubts, wondering how lowly his classmates think of him that they're going to set him up for this and disrespect him for that and leave him lying there. And then for Dumbledore to cast all of that in a different light and recognize it, that's tremendous. But

then he couches it in this way that is building up tension to take it away from people that he's built up as villains, but they're also 11. The way that I can't take pleasure in it... This is also a children versus adults divide, because I'm sure if I was eight and reading this, I wouldn't have worried about it. Oh, no, that is not true, because I have met children who were worried about it. It feels like he's teasing them, because we see in the next book the real-world consequences of what this very contrived, emotional setup brings between the Slytherins and the Gryffindors. We see that happening, but then I always thought, 'Okay, symbolically what Dumbledore is doing is he's signaling a regime change: seven years of Slytherin winning the House Cup. Harry Potter's here now. We are now entering the age of Gryffindor.' He is signaling that, but I always imagined: after being set up and laughed at by the other three quarters of the entire school -- because it's emphasized that Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw don't even have anything in this fight; they're just happy to see Slytherin go down. Okay, the rest of the school hates you, and you've just been set up by the Headmaster to be ridiculed this way. Who is going to pick up the pieces in the common room after the feast? It is 32-year-old Severus Snape. For the first time in memory, nobody there remembers the last time Slytherin didn't win the House Cup. He got them that one thing, even though the rest of the school hated them for all the rest of the year. Snape was going to make sure he got them that one thing; now, their faces have been rubbed in the dirt. He's the one who's going to have to comfort them.

JC: And know that the message is: "It doesn't matter how hard you worked. An adult can just take it away from you."

Lorrie: "And they're all laughing at us." This guarantees that no Slytherin is going to feel the slightest obligation to avoid cheating. They will be forever convinced that it's completely stacked against them. They have been robbed of any incentive to avoid cheating. It's not going to work; the system is actively against them. Their faces are the targets. Why would you believe in a system that has you as the target? This is going to have consequences. In fact, I think if I were counseling Dumbledore, I would say, "That thing you're planning? Don't do that because it's not going to be worth it. It's going to have such bad consequences later that you'll wish you hadn't."

JC: Do you think that, if he had awarded the points three days earlier when they found out what happened so that when everyone came into the hall, it was already clear that Gryffindor had won, that that would have been different?

Lorrie: Yes, because public humiliation as a spectacle in front of the entire school at one of the assemblies of the year: that is entirely separate from the issue of who won the House Cup. It was orchestrated. It was theater.

JC: Yeah, no, definitely. Definitely.

Lorrie: And it depended on the humiliation of young children who aren't going to forget and who don't have another school to go to. This is it. This is their school. This is your administration. Who are you going to go to? Snape? But we'll see in the next book that Lucius Malfoy gets on the school board after that.

JC: Yeah, that's true. Oh, man, you're right about that.

Lorrie: And honestly, if I were him, I would have, too.

JC: Oh, wow.



Lorrie: You send your 11-year-old off to school saying, "Well, this is my only child, educate him please," and he comes home and tells you this. What are you going to do?

JC: Use the power and the money and the influence that he has, is what he does. Yeah.

Lorrie: You've got to do something. You can't just tell your kid, "Suck it up, I'm sending you back, I'm not going to do anything." You can't.

JC: There's a certain amount of privilege, though, in being able to do that.

Lorrie: Well, yeah.

JC: Because there are plenty of people in the world who do tell your kids, "That's how school is. Suck it up. It happened to me, too." There's that layer, too, which is interesting.

Lorrie: But if you don't have the resources that Lucius does, then you have to think up something else to tell your kid, even if it's just, "You have to harden yourself. You have to tell yourself you don't care." You have to tell your kids something.

JC: Or, "It's not that important. They're just trying to indoctrinate you into some liberal ideology." Right.

Lorrie: "Nobody needs school anyway." You have to do something, because your kid is coming to you, saying, "I didn't even do anything wrong, and they set me up to be ridiculed." Yeah, this was very grand theater of humiliation.

JC: It's definitely not what should happen in a school ever, definitely, in that way.

Lorrie: And we know because we get a close-up on Snape's face when this happened. We know that Dumbledore didn't tell him, "Oh, by the way, Snape, I just made a whole lot of extra work for you tonight. Whatever your plans are for this evening, they're all canceled; you'll be in the common room until 2 A.M."

JC: Do you think that Dumbledore did this on a whim, or do you think he planned it going in? Do you think he looked around the room and went, "You know what? I'm going to do this," or do you think that he had planned it all along? I know what I wish would be true.

Lorrie: Yeah, no. The way that he wanted the entire school to realize what Ron, Hermione and Neville did -- that they achieved super important things that he wants the whole student body to appreciate and know that these are things that you want to do at Hogwarts -- these are such important qualities that he wants people to learn, that they will win you the House Cup if you know how to do this. "Look at what they did. Look how brave they were, look how they used their skills. Look at what Ron did; he was able to do this. Look at what Hermione did, even though she was under stress. Look at the enormous effort that Neville put forth that didn't even pay off. These are so important that they can override the five by ten by twenty points that you've won throughout the year. This is the age of Gryffindor. These are things I want you people to learn." I think it was very much that, and he was trying to say this point-grubbing that the Slytherins had been doing to try to win the House Cup, that's over. It's not about that. It's about these other larger lessons that may not look as impressive on the surface, but really are and are worth a whole lot more points. That's the age we're in right now.

JC: Message received, I think, for whatever it's worth.

Lorrie: So yeah, the Slytherin common room that night would have been a very unhappy place to be.

JC: Speaking of unhappy places to be: Vernon Dursley's extreme discomfort at being addressed by Molly Weasley, and Hermione's like, "Oh, my God, that's who you live with?" That was a really fun little turn-up. On the one hand, it's like, "Oh, God, here we go. Harry's going to go live with these people," but then even Harry's a little like, "Yeah, well, they don't know I'm not supposed to use magic, so I'm going to have a lot of fun with it." It was a nice little note to end it on.

Lorrie: Yeah, he has returned empowered.

JC: Thankfully. Bless. Well, we know what comes next, so we'll get to that next time in the next one.

Lorrie: Yes, we will. So this was it. This was the novel that started the revolution in not only children's publishing but all of publishing. This was the book that started it. We've just read it, so that's what there was in that book.

JC: I have to say that this was probably the first non-academic work... When I read this the first time, I was in the middle of my Ph.D. dissertation. Actually, no, I had finished my Ph.D. at this point. It was one of the first non-academic works that I had read outside of some *Star Wars* stuff, I think, that I had read. But it not being a thing that I knew anything about going into it was the first time that I had picked up a book that was literature to read, and it had a big impact on me. It was a really fun read, and it's just been really interesting to go back through it again and to look back all these years later, to look back on how all the little details fit together.

Lorrie: It shows all the hallmarks of a first novel that was lovingly labored over. She got a lot in there.

JC: Yeah, and with, clearly, a lot of themes that even if we're able to look at it differently as time has passed, that's the hallmark of a timeless story, too. For better or for worse, we're able to relate it to things that we see in the world 25 years later, 30 years later, however many years it's been. Yeah.

Lorrie: I'm very glad that we have six more books to talk about because I love talking with you, and thank you again as always so much for being my companion and playing with me in Harry Potter-verse.

JC: Yes. It's going to be fun to keep going. I'm excited that we finished this one, and I'm looking forward to jumping into the next one, which is my least favorite book of the series. But I also haven't read it in a really long time, so I'll be very interested to see what it feels like this time around.

Lorrie: Okay. Well, unlike what life was like back then, we can just start the next book whenever we want to.

JC: Yes, exactly.

Lorrie: I will talk to you soon about *Chamber of Secrets*.

JC: All right!

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