

HARRY POTTER AFTER 2020

with LORRIE KIM and JC

Transcript

Episode 2.17

Book 2, Chapter 17: The Heir of Slytherin

Caroline: You're listening to Harry Potter After 2020, an HP chapter reread 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 Two, Chapter 17: The Heir of Slytherin.

Lorrie: So here we are finally, JC. We're at the point in a Harry Potter book when everything comes to a head and you're tripping over yourself because of how quickly you're reading.

JC: Yesss.

L: And your heart is kind of pounding and you can't believe that it's going there. Harry goes alone into the Chamber of Secrets. He confronts Tom Riddle, he slays a basilisk, and he walks out with Ginny Weasley, a phoenix, a hat, a diary, and a sword.

JC: And he almost dies along the way, just for good measure.

Lorrie: Yeah, it's a blockbuster chapter. You hadn't read this chapter in many years. What was it like reading it now?

JC: I think he goes in and the first thing we see is the Chamber of Secrets, and there's this description of it that's really appropriately creepy. A couple things really made me think: first of all, we know that Hogwarts is a thousand years old or something. But the idea that there's something this massive underneath the school that no one but a few students has seen in memory, it's so far in the past that it's a thing of legend. That's really interesting, wow. And it makes me think, okay, what other --

Lorrie: 'What else?'

JC: 'What else?' When Ron says naively earlier in this book, "How many monsters can this school hold? How many weird rooms can a school hold?" We're going to find out more.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: The other thing that stood out to me, and it could be just my own experience as a kid: it made me think about Indiana Jones movies. There's always multiple times in an Indiana Jones movie where Indiana Jones goes into this ancient, massive temple, and there's snakes and a monster guarding things, and there's a treasure. I was like, 'This feels very Indiana Jones in some way.' It's a thousand-year-old temple to Salazar Slytherin, who has this giant statue that's described as monkey-like.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I don't understand what that means. Then we have Ginny draped at Salazar Slytherin's feet, almost dead.

Lorrie: Oh, God. Tiny little bundle. Yeah.

JC: Yeah. The scene is set in a way that makes it seem kind of like a classic hero action-adventure movie, but creepier.

Lorrie: Yeah. And it feels foreign. The monkey-like aspect feels like it's a false idol from some other culture. It is a temple to Salazar Slytherin, but it's also a bunker. It's a refuge because he felt driven there, being in the minority; he was driven by fear, away from the open-door policy of the other three Founders. I also got a sense of Norse mythology, because Ginny is this tiny, little, not-conscious bundle with flaming red hair, and it made me think of Brunhilde in the center of the Ring of Fire and Siegfried coming to rescue her. It's really high-risk. There's this giant, echoing chamber and tiny little Harry Potter and even tinier little Ginny Weasley are stuck in there with almost nothing, trying to figure out, 'Okay, we're here. What can we do?' And then Tom Riddle, the long-ago author, comes to life. Whoo!

JC: Yeah, that description of his voice, the soft voice... It made me think of the way that Ralph Fiennes voiced him in the films. It's creepy; it's not an evil Joker voice. What I hear in my head is very much like what was in the film version now, but that description of it being soft...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah, there's something really, really creepy about that, and he was always that way, even as a teenager. Creepy Ghost Tom Riddle.

Lorrie: Ooh. What else did you notice during this re-reading?

JC: It was interesting to me (knowing what's really going on) how long it takes Harry to figure out that Tom is not there for a good reason. He doesn't even question that he's seeing who's

basically Tom Riddle. "Oh, you're Tom Riddle, great. Help me. Help me save Ginny! You'd think that that would be a point at which someone would go, "Wait a minute. What's happening here?"

Lorrie: "How did you...?" Yeah.

JC: Yeah. "How did you get here? What's going on?" But he's not thinking rationally because he's panicking, and it takes Harry a while to see what's really happening, or to see that Tom Riddle is actually a bad guy. That idea that 'I trusted what I saw in this book, I trusted the person in this book, just like Ginny did.' Harry trusted that what he saw was real; that the person who wrote this diary, that created this diary, was a good person because he was head boy of the school, all these things. He has an award for special services. There's no reason to think that this would be a person you couldn't trust, so Harry just trusts until it becomes obvious that this is not someone he can trust.

Lorrie: Yikes.

JC: And there's a lot of, 'Oh, God. This is how we ended up here, because Ginny also trusted this book.'

Lorrie: So yeah, speaking of books: Ginny brought him to life, because the author of this book -- the 16-year-old and the memory of him that's in the diary -- feeds on yearnings, and Ginny was yearning for so much. She was lonely; she confided to the diary that she was there with second-hand books and robes, so she had some real 'can't complain' stresses on her. Then she was yearning for Harry Potter, and she was receptive to him. Something in her yearnings interacted with the yearnings that young Tom Riddle wrote into the diary. Ginny wanted Harry, and Tom Riddle, it turns out, wanted Harry, too, or something like that, because when he learned about Harry from Ginny, he found that there had been somebody who was somehow equal to or possibly even greater than himself. That's part of the hunger that led to Tom Riddle being such a monster: this person with enormous rage at the unfairness of life that he was born into -- this enormous power and enormous contempt for everybody around him that he was able to fool and manipulate -- he does fool and manipulate people because there's so many things he wants, but every time he succeeds, the contempt in him just feeds his rage. If nothing stands in his way in his ascension to power, okay, then he'll just keep hating and despising people and killing or manipulating them, and just gaining and gaining until he can, at last, justify his exceptionally terrible circumstances by becoming the greatest sorcerer ever. But that's a consolation prize for not getting what is the birthright of every baby, of adults around who care about you, who welcome you when you have normal fears and normal power that emerge as you grow into infancy and in childhood are there to contain you and say, "Yes, what you're feeling is normal and we love you. There are limits, and there are grown-ups and people who understand you. You're not the only one." Because everything that young Tom Riddle experienced is, oh, he was the only one. Everybody else is living this other despicable life; who knows what they are, but you can crush them like ants. Nobody knows how it feels to be Tom Riddle. Then he finds that this little girl is in love with this 12-year-old boy who apparently defeated him. Wow.

JC: That is one thing that I find fascinating that I don't think I had realized the first time around: when Tom Riddle created this particular Horcrux, it froze a part of his soul from when he was sixteen.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: So that part hasn't become Voldemort yet. He has these ambitions to do that kind of thing, but doesn't know what's happening. He's learning what his fate is through the story of Harry Potter. I don't think that had hit me. I don't think I had realized that until I read it this time around.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's strange. Now he knows, "there's somebody that was at least as powerful as me. I have to meet this person." Learning that new piece of information from Ginny has rewritten the book (his book, his diary) so that the diary he originally wrote -- with the stated intention of just trying to get converts to his ideology and continue his mission of killing the people he despises just because he can -- now has changed to a deeper yearning for somebody to talk to that might understand him so that he might not be alone. If it turns out that this person is bogus... he has to test them first. "Are you really powerful, or can I just smush you like I smush everybody else?" If there's a potential for this opponent to be worthy, then that opponent becomes the recipient of all of Tom Riddle's suppressed rage and hatred and contempt, so of course, he's going to send it all toward Harry Potter concentrated because, 'Oh, finally, somebody who can take it. All right, let's see if you can really take it.' But there's a hope underneath that: 'Well, what if this person does withstand it, as they apparently did at 15 months, but now they're twelve and they can talk back? Okay. All right. That's my new mission now. This is something worth living for, more than just, ugh, God, people are so easy to crush. Nobody is of any use whatsoever. Nobody helps him, nobody understands him except Dumbledore, who is threatening and who Tom Riddle hasn't tried to come up against yet because he is intimidated. It's not time yet. I think he realizes he's not strong enough yet.

JC: Yeah, we learn so much. We learn more later about what Tom Riddle was like at this age, and it's interesting reading this again, knowing the stuff when Slughorn knew him and how Dumbledore was trying to learn more about this memory. Yeah, you're right. That idea that -- and we hear this a lot in the book -- Dumbledore was the only wizard that Voldemort was ever threatened by. And then there's this baby.

Lorrie: Oh, gosh. Yes.

JC: It's so interesting. Compare that to the way that he talks about Ginny. There's this quote that I wrote down: "It's very boring, having to listen to the silly little troubles of an 11-year-old girl. But I was patient. I wrote back. I was sympathetic, I was kind." It's very, very patronizing. "Ginny simply loved me. 'No one understood me like you, Tom... I'm so glad I've got this diary to confide in... It's like having a friend I can carry around in my pocket..."

Lorrie: I know.

JC: So that connection idea... even when people connect on their own terms, it's just disdainful. Then there's the whole thing of not taking little girls seriously at all. That, too.

Lorrie: I winced at the 'pocket friend' reference, because, of course, that's what I call my extremely useful and beloved support group of online friends, some of whom I've never met in person.

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: And in fact, I was friends with you before I ever met you in person.

JC: Oh, for sure. Yeah.

Lorrie: For quite a while.

JC: It is a regular thing that those of us, when we have an issue, we turn to each other. We turn to our online friend group. I don't call a neighbor.

Lorrie: No.

JC: There's nobody in this town that I talk to like that. It's amazing.

Lorrie: And there's always the threat, the phantom threat, of people laughing at you. 'Oh, they're just made-up friends, they're not real, they're not like the ones you've met in person.' Because of my age and my relative security in life, I'm not that worried about it, but the grooming aspect of online confidants and the potential predators is so real, especially for young children. Young girls, but boys, too. The textbook way that Tom Riddle is coldly being a perfect friend: that's the face of terror right there.

JC: That's true, and there wasn't a predatory or sexual prospective bent to it.

Lorrie: Right. It's something else.

JC: It's something else, but it's so analogous to what you might expect to see in someone who is grooming a child in that way. It's the same thing.

Lorrie: Yeah. It can be to your ideology, it can be for money. It can be to get kids to, I don't know, kill their parents or something. Whatever weird thing is happening.

JC: And I think, too, to show how showing someone kindness and to be sympathetic and understanding, we consider those to be -- those are good things. We should do that for someone, and it's so hard to guard against when that's being done for a bad reason or for, in this case, an evil reason.

Lorrie: Any ulterior motive.

JC: Oh, yeah. Exactly. It can be hard to see. I think about Ginny in this too. Ginny trusted this book; she trusted the person she met through this book, and she's not going to trust in the same way again.

Lorrie: This also will later on expose one of Tom Riddle's weaknesses, one of Voldemort's weaknesses: if his experience of people trusting kindness is this overwhelming contempt, then he won't understand kindness that's knowledgeably given. It's not much, but it's something to go on. Then we see an introduction of a theme that Rowling brings in repeatedly, scattered throughout the volumes: "All the time he spoke, Riddle's eyes never left Harry's face. There was an almost hungry look in them." That theme of the hungry gaze, we first saw that in the Mirror of Erised chapter of Sorcerer's Stone; Harry is staring hungrily at the images of his parents in the mirror, and he's so enchanted by this vision that he doesn't even eat the next day. Ron and Dumbledore both quite rightly say, "No, no, this is dangerous." But the hunger for this... it's not a healthy hunger; it's not one that can be sated. It's a hunger for something that can't really be fulfilled, but all humans need it; it's this hunger for connection and for nurturing. Later on in this chapter, we see that when Tom Riddle is looking hungrily at Harry, there's a point when his eyes gleam red, and that is a thread throughout other books in this series, too. That red gleam is when that unsated hunger turns into theft, into acquisitive need. If you didn't get that love for yourself, you'll take it from other people, like how he took Harry's blood or how he stole Hufflepuff's cup, because his eyes gleam red there. Why does he think he can just take? His need is so overriding. It happens to Ron when he is destroying Slytherin's locket. There's a moment when that bit of soul leaves the locket and enters Ron, and he looks at Harry and Harry sees that Ron's eyes are gleaming red. We all have that potential in us, and Voldemort is highly aware of it and understands that that's an easy point of access if he wants to control people: to activate that hunger that we all have. That's one of the protections that Harry got from 15 months of being loved by his parents: if you get that proper love that humans all crave -- whether or not we have the privilege of receiving it -- if you get enough of that when you're young, you're less susceptible to being manipulated by whatever you have of this hunger when you're older. It's not fair. It's completely arbitrary in the world who gets this and who doesn't, but here we see the original hunger in Tom Riddle that he then recognizes and manipulates in other people.

JC: Wow. I'm going to be thinking about that theme going forward then. You've talked about this quite a bit before, that Voldemort is seeking this kind of connection that he's never experienced. I think that in this scene, when he's staring at Harry and he's monologuing -- he's doing the villain monologuing -- he's doing it in a way that made me think, oh, he's trying to connect with Harry. He doesn't just squash Harry like a bug and move on, like he would with other people. The 'kill the spare' attitude. No, this one's... this one's important, and I need to tell this one what I'm doing.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And when he realizes, I guess, that Harry is really ordinary after all, then he decides it's time to kill Harry. But he spent time trying to make that connection or looking for that connection, and I don't think that would have stood out to me as much except for our conversations about this.

Lorrie: He's hoping for that connection. There's a line in this chapter where he says to Harry: "The longer you talk, the longer you stay alive." That's partly a ploy to draw more and more strength from Ginny, because Harry looks at Ginny and she's rapidly losing life and Tom Riddle's getting stronger from Ginny. But also, that's what Voldemort always wants from Harry Potter. What he really wants is Harry to be alive and talking to him and giving him some answers, and his constant anxiety with Harry Potter is: "Try killing him to make sure that he really does have answers, and when he doesn't get killed, okay, there's a chance he might still have answers. Nobody else does. I despise everybody, including my own followers, because nobody but possibly this little boy could have anything useful for me." That's an ongoing theme, too, in the rest of the series, is the constant threat of these doofus followers of Voldemort. "Oh, who cares? I'll just kill him, and then Voldemort will love me because I killed Harry." Noooooo!

JC: Yeah, right. That's true, yeah. "No, only the Dark Lord is allowed to kill this one." Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. And Snape understands, "No, that's the worst thing. Don't kill Harry Potter." That's, of course, Snape's ace: that he can hide his mission to actually keep Harry Potter alive so that Harry can finish off the Dark Lord underneath this almost identical desire that Voldemort really has. Getting Harry Potter alive and conscious and sentient to give answers is the whole point of this whole life that Voldemort has managed to make endless.

JC: It strikes me, too, but this is the reverse of the way that we normally would see a troubled person who has no connection with anyone. Typically in most stories, it's a young person who finds that connection in an older person. There's an older person who finally won't put up with their bullshit; there's hatred for a long time and fighting back, and finally there's some grudging respect and understanding of, "You finally set a boundary that I can't cross, and this is actually good for me." It's the reverse here. I don't even know how old Tom Riddle would be at this point or how old Voldemort would be at this point, but the older villain and a small child, and it's a completely different dynamic in that way.

Lorrie: Well, he'd be 66 here, because it was 50 years ago and this is 16-year-old Tom Riddle. The difference here: with Tom Riddle, we're dealing with a pretty severe case of antisocial personality disorder. He's really got no examples of empathy in his own past. That's something that Dumbledore has been trying and trying ever since he met Tom Riddle to try to connect with him about and hasn't been able to, and Dumbledore's been trying. But there's somebody who's been born -- who is about to be born, according to the prophecy -- that Voldemort can recognize. Voldemort sees in Harry something of himself, and that's something that Dumbledore could not raise in Voldemort artificially. It had to come from within Voldemort, which we get explained later here. Ginny's crush on Harry is not entirely different from Tom Riddle's curiosity about Harry. 'Who is this boy?' There's a point when Voldemort is monologuing to Harry, and

Harry just doesn't feel it. It's very one-sided; Harry doesn't return the feelings. Voldemort says, "There are strange likenesses between us, Harry Potter. Even you must have noticed. Both half-bloods, orphans, raised by Muggles. Probably the only two Parselmouths to come to Hogwarts since the great Slytherin himself. We even look something alike..." Meanwhile, Harry's like, "I don't look anything like you." He sounds like a kid with a crush saying, "We were meant for each other." The thing is, Harry wasn't a Parselmouth; Voldemort did that to him.

JC: Right. Harry wasn't an orphan; Voldemort did that.

Lorrie: Right. He was a half-blood.

JC: Harry wasn't going to be raised in a home where nobody loved him. Yeah, exactly.

Lorrie: By Muggles. Right. This is all the result of Tom Riddle doing this to somebody because he was lonely, and he wanted to make them more like himself so he wouldn't be alone. Yeah, Voldemort sees this in Harry; Harry does not see this. Harry does not feel the magic connection between them -- No! -- and he would love to have less of it.

JC: All of the things that you have described about Voldemort -- motivation for doing all this stuff -- it's just making me think about Trump.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: The kindest perspective that I can take on Trump is that he's someone who just desperately wants people to like him and understand him and he's going about it in really horrible ways, but that a lot of the things that he seemed to do -- in the time living up to his presidency and as president -- were not to please people, but it seemed like he just really wanted people to like him, and he would do whatever it took to get people to cheer, to support him, and send him money and whatever else. There's just something about the way that you were describing Tom Riddle creating this person who's his nemesis -- literally creating his nemesis -- makes me think about the way that Trump so desperately tries to frame other people, giving them nicknames and making up shit about what they've done in order to set up an enemy or something. There's just something really similarly batshit about it to me.

Lorrie: Well, the thing that both Trump and Tom Riddle here are demonstrating is so natural for a tiny child. It's somebody who has full-size rages -- as any being would -- combined with the minuscule power of somebody who's really small. That's when I realized, on my first read-through of the series a long time ago, 'Oh, that's what Unforgivables are.' Unforgivables are what infants would cast if they could, because they can't make people do what they need. They have so many needs, they have so little power. If you're an infant, and you're lying there and you're hungry, or you're cold or your diaper is wet, you can't do anything about those states. You are entirely dependent on another person noticing and caring enough to hear whatever way you're communicating these discomforts, and then to want to not only fix them for you but then to connect, to give you affection, to soothe you and to build trust so that you eventually grow

knowing that it's not perfect, but eventually somebody will hear you and somebody will come. Meanwhile, you can grow and become more powerful; eventually, you'll be able to do these things for yourself. But when you're an infant -- even the most well-cared-for infant -- at some point, the caregiver has to go to the bathroom or something, and it's terrifying. The powerlessness is terrifying, because as an infant, you know if your cries don't get heard, you will die. There is nothing you can do about it, which was the permanent state of Voldemort from the moment he was born. So if you're an infant and you have these needs for your own survival, then yeah, Imperio is what you would cast all the time if you could. Just from normal parenting experience of having had infants, the rage that I see in their tiny little bodies, it very much is Imperio. If I have a baby in a car seat, "I'm sorry, we're on the highway, I cannot stop the car," and the baby for some reason is really sick and tired of being in the car, the way they're screaming is very much like Imperio. "You will stop this car right now!" "Sorry, baby. I can't, and I cannot explain this to you." At that moment, the baby hates me. What they want, the anger is partly Crucio. "Where do you think you're going? Why aren't you helping me? Crucio!" The baby is so angry. Then, if it gets angry enough, it's Avada Kedavra. "I hate you so much!" And that's natural, because humans are not born fully developed; humans have to be cared for. When the babies get that kind of nurturing, then they grow; Tom Riddle didn't. That normal human infant rage, when not tended, combined with unusual power -- whether it's Voldemort being a magical genius or Trump having been born into money he didn't earn -- you combine that immaturity and rage with power over other people and then you get a monster.

JC: As we see more of Voldemort in this series, it's going to be hard for me not to think about Trump.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: The demagoguery and the twisting of the truth, and the appealing to our base instincts and all of that stuff... I think it's going to become more and more -- especially from book four on -- that's going to be a really interesting theme to come back to. Even worse, I think we're going to hit those books politically at a time when it's going to be very meaningful in the country we live in.

Lorrie: It's all very real, yes.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: The way that 16-year-old Tom Riddle, the author, is feeding off of Ginny: this reminded me so strongly of Claire Dederer in her book *Monsters*, saying that the experience of art, "it's not about the author creating things. It's not about 'death of the author', where the reader is the only person with power. It's two biographies meeting." Ginny's needs cause her to interpret Tom Riddle's diary a certain way. The way she reads his diary changes the most urgent drive of the diary, meaning that her reading highlights an aspect of it that might not have been as important for other readers. She is reading her need and her yearning for Harry Potter into this. To say that that's what Tom Riddle, the 16-year-old author, is getting from her, it's really more like that's

the message that this reader is extracting because that's the mindset she brings to reading it. This same document might have been primarily notable for shedding light on the origins of Voldemort's ideology; that's the main theme of Tom Riddle's diary. But because the reader happens to be Ginny Weasley, now this document has become primarily notable for clues about the person who tried to be Harry Potter's murderer and the way he was at a young age. The document has the exact same set of information that it always did when Tom Riddle, 16 years old, enchanted it, but Ginny's reading changed it. We see Tom Riddle despising Ginny; we see him despising Armando Dippet because the headmaster fell for his act. We have just seen Lockhart easily fall for Harry and Ron's act, so that's a really visceral comparison of how that's done and, when kids pull that over on adults, the depth of the contempt they feel for the adult who has failed to be an adult. You don't just do that as a kid; by the time you're doing that, you have already ascertained that this adult is worthless. Tom Riddle despises all of these people; he didn't despise Dumbledore; he wanted to test Harry to see if there's a hope of connection, and this is when Voldemort starts to exploit what Hermione later calls Harry's 'saving people thing': "From everything Ginny had told me about you, I knew you would go to any lengths to solve the mystery -- particularly if one of your best friends was attacked." This is what this Tom Riddle thinks is Harry's defining drive, and it emphasizes for Harry how dangerous it is for Harry to have friends, for him to let people be his friend and to help him, because look what happened. Yikes. Oh, here's the red gleam. "'How is it that you -- a skinny boy with no extraordinary magical talent -- managed to defeat the greatest wizard of all time? How did you escape with nothing but a scar, while Lord Voldemort's powers were destroyed?' There was an odd red gleam in his hungry eyes now." Ooh. So yeah, we've got the coveting. We've got, 'Uh-oh, dangerous things are about to happen.' And then, 16-year-old boy reveals the anagram. "I AM LORD VOLDEMORT." The fan response to that has been, 'Yeah, that's that grandiose sound of a lonely geek.'

JC: Yeah. That was 'slow clap'. "That was a good one, Tom. Yeah, great."

Lorrie: You got some sympathy and some embarrassment.

JC: 'Cringe,' as the kids would say these days.

Lorrie: Oh. But it's a very honest look at what kind of pain gives rise to this. Then he says, "You think I was going to use my filthy Muggle father's name forever? I, in whose veins runs the blood of Salazar Slytherin himself, through my mother's side? I, keep the name of a foul, common Muggle, who abandoned me even before I was born, just because he found out his wife was a witch? No, Harry -- I fashioned myself a new name, a name I knew wizards everywhere would one day fear to speak, when I become the greatest sorcerer in the world!" He finds his origin story -- his own origin story -- intolerable, and I agree. It is. How can any human bear this? This is intolerable. He couldn't accept it. If he has to be that different, he's going to be superior. This is why I think that he replaced, in his mind, his father with Slytherin so he's better than other people. He's just directly descended from Slytherin -- he doesn't have any father -- and he lays claim to this enormous kingdom underneath the school. And he actually has a point: nobody else is in line for this kingdom. He may as well.

JC: When you were talking about Ginny's reading of the diary changed it, it made me wonder who else has corresponded with Tom in the diary over the years, and I had this hilarious flash of Lucius Malfoy with a quill. "Dear diary, my wife doesn't love me. Draco won't stop crying, the house elves are whatever."

Lorrie: "How do I become the Dark Lord's most trusted servant?" Or, "Dear diary, I don't actually like Voldemort. I'm just using him."

JC: Oh, God. And I think later, we find out that Lucius was the one who planted this book there, but that makes me think: did the diary say, "You should send me to an unsuspecting kid at Hogwarts and see what chaos happens," or I don't know. There's a lot of unanswered questions here about what happened to this diary before it got passed to Ginny Weasley. I'm very curious.

Lorrie: Well, you're really reminding me of when I was reading this series to my older child, because every chapter she would say, "But what happened? Did the diary say this?" The answer to her questions was often right in the next chapter, and I got really used to saying, "We'll see."

JC: This is proof that I don't read ahead, that I just read. Interesting.

Lorrie: Or sometimes there would be things that... they're not revealed, but the answer depends on stuff that's going to be revealed later, and I would say, "We'll have to come back to that." But it's a beautiful, living example of how to write good suspense so that people will keep turning the page.

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: People will trust your book if you keep giving them the rewards. By this point, the author has proven that if you turn the page, you do get answers later and they're awesome, and they're not necessarily things you could have thought up yourself, so it's worth it. This is why you pay money for this book and you don't want your money back, because wow, it delivered. So here we are, looking at Harry staring at the orphaned boy who had grown up to murder Harry's own parents and so many others, and all I can think is how strange it would be now -- in year four of TERF-pocalypse -- to go back in time and meet 1998 J.K. Rowling and realize that there's going to be a time when she's going to devote all of her energy into fighting against legal rights, employment rights, and healthcare access for trans people. What would that be like?

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Because it's not like I would want to stop her from writing the series; I want the series, and all of the changes that it's created in this world. But yeah, 1998 Rowling does not know that this is where she's going to be.

JC: Scary, too, to think, couldn't that happen to anybody who's done this incredible thing and created something that's changed the world? Then, could you turn on all of that and become evil -- for lack of a better word? That seems over the top -- become a bad person who's actually now doing harm? That could happen to anybody.

Lorrie: Yeah, and then the urge is to go back to the original text and look for clues. "Were there clues all along? Should I have found them?" Even though a lot of people do find clues and say, "Oh, well, she always said this or she always said that," lots of people write questionable, ideologically impure things and just go on to be more educated about it later, or let life teach them more empathy or knowledge about humans. Most people don't. This experience of Harry knowing the guy that was in the back of Quirrell's head, and looking at this extremely good-looking, persuasive 16-year-old... Wow, weird. And we hear Harry here speak to Voldemort with his quiet voice full of hatred, and that really stood out to me, because we don't see the word 'hatred' that often ascribed to Harry -- and he sure could feel it more often than he does -- but we see it most in this book, in Book Two. He hates Dudley, he hates Draco Malfoy. The teachers in the previous chapter looked at Gilderoy Lockhart with something remarkably like hatred. This volume has much more raw emotions in it than a lot of the others, which I think is appropriate for the age level, for being twelve and thirteen. So then Harry says, "You're not the greatest sorcerer. Dumbledore is the greatest sorcerer, and he's not as gone as you might think."

JC: The magic words are spoken.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Right. I love the fact that basically Dumbledore told Harry what to do several chapters back, and Harry at the time didn't exactly know what he meant. But he enacts it all -- every bit of it -- in this chapter, which is fantastic.

Lorrie: There is a moment in the previous chapter when Harry and Ron are hiding in the wardrobe in the teacher's lounge, and somebody bursts in and Harry thinks for a moment, 'It's got to be Dumbledore.' No, it's Lockhart. By this point in the Chamber of Secrets, he is not expecting Dumbledore, which happened also at the end of Sorcerer's Stone; he did not expect Dumbledore to come save him. Harry does not expect grown-ups to come save him, but unlike the end of Sorcerer's Stone, he is a stronger person now. Harry, after he destroyed Quirrell, learned how much Dumbledore actually did have his eye on things. At this point, Harry believes in somebody more powerful than Voldemort. Even if that person isn't there, that belief makes Harry a stronger person; this is when the book says music was coming from somewhere, and that brings me back. Do you remember in episode 1.7 -- when you and I recorded the Sorting Hat episode -- and Dumbledore said, "Ah, music, a magic beyond all we do here," and you said, "Does that come up again?" And I said, "Yep."

JC: Yeah, yeah. And here it is. It's funny that you say that, because I even made a note about 'he hears music,' and I didn't connect it back to that. That's great. Yeah, there we are.

Lorrie: But yeah. That's a kind of music that humans can't create. We can't perform it. It comes up; it vibrates. Phoenix song is emotion that is based on interpersonal connection that causes comfort and healing, so you can see why Voldemort hears it, encounters it, and repeatedly cannot understand it. Fawkes shows up and brings Harry the Sorting Hat. "He might not see what use Fawkes or the Sorting Hat were, but he was no longer alone." That is the feeling that Tom Riddle is after. He wants Harry's friendship or some answers or something stronger than he is to comfort him about the injustice or the danger that he's facing, and Harry has these useless-looking bird and hat show up. "Well, I don't know what they're for, but all right. I feel better."

JC: I love the image of Fawkes flying in and settling on Harry's shoulder, and then just gazing coolly at Voldemort. Of anything I love about this entire thing, reading it the second time through, it struck me that Fawkes just leads Harry through all of this. Harry's just reacting to the situation and doesn't have a plan, but Fawkes knows exactly what to do and at every moment is cueing Harry.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "Here, kid, pay attention to this. Do this. I'm going to do this, and you're going to do that. I'm going to fling this hat right back at you again, because you're not going to know what to do with it."

Lorrie: "Bonk you on the head."

JC: It's really interesting how much Fawkes runs the show. I don't think I recognized that the last time I read this. Also, the image of Fawkes sitting on Harry's shoulder and looking at Voldemort: it's like Dumbledore is there, and Dumbledore's looking through the bird's eyes in some sense at Voldemort. And that moment when Harry goes -- Riddle's laughing about this, but Harry feels it: "Yeah, I'm not alone." Then we, as the reader, know, because Dumbledore gave us a list multiple chapters back, of all the things that phoenixes can do, and then the phoenix does all of them in this chapter. But the loyalty thing, and the bird sitting on Harry's shoulder, is Fawkes saying, "Okay, I'm here in Dumbledore's place." Oh, that's really, really cool. To have a cool, magical bird come and sit on your shoulder, you feel... It's like a Disney princess moment. The magical bird lands on him, and it's going to help him.

Lorrie: The validation.

JC: Oh, yeah, yeah. Exactly. Fawkes wouldn't do this unless you're really a Disney princess.

Lorrie: Well, the warmth and weight of Fawkes reminds me of how comforting it was for Ron and Harry to have Fang go into the forest with the acromantulas. Poor Fang did not have a good time.

JC: Traumatized.

Lorrie: But everything is so incredibly uncanny and creepy, and this mammal -- this large mammal -- is heavy and real and warm. That's very grounding.

JC: That's why little girls love horses, by the way. It's this big creature and it could stomp on me, but yet I can control it and I love it and I can brush it. Yeah. Little girls love horses.

Lorrie: Yeah. And if I'm nice to it, it cares and appreciates it and will be nice back.

JC: And it can make me feel powerful when I'm sitting on its back. I can pretend it's flying. Yeah. Yeah. Sorry, I just went back into my childhood for a moment. I was a horse girl. Yeah, but back to the scene.

Lorrie: No, it's the same thing, though. It's all possible because having been at Hogwarts for two years now, Harry now has faith in something protective and bigger than him, and it's something that believes in second chances that he didn't have when he was first entering Hogwarts. He can look at Voldemort and know that there's something bigger than that, something that he knows is on his side. He's got Fawkes, and Voldemort is still monologuing and saying, "Your mother died to save you. Yes, that's a powerful countercharm. I can see now... there's nothing special about you, after all." This is one of the things that undoes Voldemort the most: the misconception that Harry is unexceptional, because it's both true and not true. He wants to believe that Harry's not exceptional, but he keeps failing to kill Harry, so no, there's something annoyingly that he's missing here. But if it's true that Harry is exceptional, then that keeps alive his hope that Harry has some answers for him. How can it be true that Harry's unexceptional when he's the only one who's ever withstood Voldemort? But it's just an annoying, insoluble problem for Voldemort, and that's what Snape keeps using. Snape and Dumbledore strategize to keep Voldemort off balance -- to keep reinforcing, "Oh, yeah, there's nothing special about Harry Potter. He's so mediocre, he's so boring" -- because that just lets the fear grow. "Well, if that's true, what am I missing?" It's going to be a long time before the series tells the reader, for sure, what it is that makes Harry both so ordinary and yet the only one strong enough to defeat Voldemort, and Voldemort dies without ever figuring it out.

JC: As he deserves, to be honest.

Lorrie: Oh, boy. Well, he has a chance to understand what it was, and it's so darn painful by that point that he says, "You know what? I'd rather just die." Then something heavy hit Harry so hard that he was smashed into the wall. The whole fight scene with the basilisk is terrifying. It's very well written. The weight and the massive power of this purely muscular, enormous monster... Oh, my God. Terrifying.

JC: With the mouth that can swallow you -- yeah. That's nightmare fuel, for sure.

Lorrie: Just how big and inescapable it is, and how you can't look.

JC: And you can't look, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. Then when Fawkes does the brilliant thing of attacking the basilisk's eyes -- at which point, you've got to feel, oh, my God, the poor basilisk. It's just doing what basilisks do.

JC: That's true.

Lorrie: It's not even doing anything. It's now bleeding from its eyes. It's terrified, it's in pain; it's been blinded, and Tom Riddle is so chilling. He totally has no concern whatsoever for this Basilisk that's been doing all this stuff for him. "YOU CAN STILL SMELL HIM. KILL HIM!" The lack of sympathy for this agonized, wounded creature, and just, "I don't care how injured you are. Keep doing stuff for me." And "SMELL HIM" is such an animalistic, frightening word. So creepy.

JC: How did Fawkes peck out the basilisk's eyes without getting killed? I'm just thinking about how the rooster's crow can kill the basilisk. Is there something... Is it the fact that Fawkes is itself a magical creature? If Fawkes looked into the eyes of the basilisk, would Fawkes be killed? Fawkes knows what he's doing, clearly. This bird's in control. It's great. But that was my moment of, is Fawkes impervious to the basilisk's glare, stare, death ray, whatever?

Lorrie: I don't know.

JC: Or is it just... I don't know. Okay, we're not meant to question it.

Lorrie: It might be that they are creatures of equal magical power, so they're better matched. I don't know.

JC: But I love the fact that Harry, as Dumbledore says, asks for help. Literally is "help, help, help," and then he receives it in the form of Fawkes going, "Take the fucking hat." Harry's like, "I don't know what to do with this hat," puts it on his head, and then almost gets knocked out by the sword of Gryffindor falling out of the hat, somehow.

Lorrie: That, to me, is a comment on faith and how humans require a certain degree of stability in order to have faith, because "help me" is something that you wouldn't say if you grew up like Voldemort, knowing nobody's going to come help you. Harry... for 15 months, somebody did come help him, and then afterward for nine and three-quarters years, nobody did, and he learned not to say "help me" because nobody would. Then Hagrid shows up, he comes to Hogwarts, and there are people to help him again. His faith has been restored so he can pray. I'm saying this as an atheist, but this is a human source of strength. Harry can ask for help because he's received it before. He knows to do that, something that Tom Riddle doesn't; and when he says "help me", what Fawkes does by giving him the Sorting Hat is to help him draw upon something within himself. This is a passage that I use a lot in workshops with kids: when I say, "What does it mean that Harry pulls the sword from the Hat?" Spoiler alert: We don't find

out until the next chapter, but this is the sword of Gryffindor. "What does it mean that he pulls the sword from the Hat, and does it mean that if you're not a Gryffindor, nothing could help you and the basilisk is just going to eat you?" No. It means when he calls for help and he draws on something in himself, he draws on what is his internal strength, which are the traits that put him in Gryffindor: a surge of courage and nerve during emergency. And then during the workshops I give, I ask people to think, "Well, for example, if you weren't a person like Harry -- if you're a Ravenclaw, maybe the thing that helps you when you're in serious crisis that will get you out will be, 'I just need to think, and when I have a moment to think, then I'll know what to do.'" I am Ravenclaw; that is what works for me. I have to go somewhere quiet. If you're trying to talk to me in a moment of crisis, I will probably tell you to shut up. I can't think. If you're a Hufflepuff, then maybe the thing that you draw on is strength from remembering connections to other people, or strength from remembering the humanity of another person that you're fighting, or remembering that hard labor will get you somewhere better so that you'll be in a better position to know what to do next. And if you're a Slytherin, maybe what gets you through is, "All I have to do is survive this. All I have to do is think ahead one step at a time to survival. Don't give myself away; just make it there, and then once that happens, then I will be in a better place to know what to do," or maybe there's something else. But the scene here that I have the kids imagine is, "Okay, you're in a moment of crisis. The basilisk attack is a metaphor for all sorts of crises that can happen to real people at any time, and you say 'help me' and you get the Hat. What comes out of the Hat for you? And that's who you are." This is a really useful thing to do with kids who are reading this, because the nerves that you experience reading this extremely suspenseful chapter, they really get the reader to imagine, "Wow, this is terrifying. What would I do? I don't know what I would do. I don't know what Harry's going to do. I don't know what I would do." Then we have Harry driving the sword into the basilisk's mouth while the basilisk splinters a fang in Harry's arm and pumps him full of venom. They're about to kill each other, and I thought, 'Oh, what does this remind me of?' This is Thor and the Midgard serpent in Ragnarok, where Thor -- after a God's lifetime of trying to kill his nemesis, the Midgard serpent - he finally does. But then the venom from the serpent kills Thor, and they die at the same time. That would happen to Harry without a phoenix to come help. Thank goodness.

JC: And interesting that Tom Riddle has forgotten how phoenixes work, because he's like, "Oh, your bird is crying. Boo hoo hoo," and then, "Oh, wait." I just found that a little funny.

Lorrie: Well, that connection -- the strength that comes from sympathy and connection -- that's not a healing that he understands. Then we get the big series theme: "Without thinking, without considering, as though he had meant to do it along," that's when Harry picks up the fang and drives it through the diary, and it's a little bit annoying, I think, for some readers. I found it slightly annoying, also, that sometimes -- in the biggest moments of crisis -- the explanation we get is, "Harry didn't know why he was doing it; it was just instinct, pure instinct." Well, how does that help the reader figure out what we would do in similar situations? "Okay, listen to your intuition in times of duress. Staying in touch with who you are, with your selfhood and your instinct, is a powerful survival tool. Don't second-guess yourself too much. Don't be frightened out of being yourself," so he does that. He burns a hole in the diary; he destroys that part of Tom Riddle. We finally have a literal death of the author.

JC: A literal death of the author.

Lorrie: Ginny comes back to life. This year, as I read this, what it makes me think, first off, is deplatforming works. It does! "Well, if you just take away one platform, they'll just find another." Not always.

JC: And, well, there are six more horcruxes, which we'll learn later, but they all get destroyed.

Lorrie: In this innocent volume, we don't even know what a horcrux is.

JC: In this innocent volume... That is true. It is really interesting, though, to go back -- knowing how everything ends -- to realize that what's happening there is that he's destroying a horcrux. When I read it, I did wish that Harry had made the connection of, "He came from the book. If I destroy the book, maybe that's the one thing that will destroy him." And the basilisk fang is handy; turns out, it's also one of the only things that can kill a horcrux. Well, the sword as well, so he had two things in his hands that really could have destroyed this thing. But even just the impetus to destroy it, yeah. I do wish that there had been a little more of a thought there, but in the end he kills the book, kills the author, and then Ginny comes back. Poor Ginny, who's happily missed all this.

Lorrie: Gosh.

JC: I'm really glad she missed all this, but she doesn't even know that she's there.

Lorrie: No.

JC: She doesn't remember coming down there, probably.

Lorrie: Well, she struggles on the way down into the Chamber, so that she does know.

JC: Okay.

Lorrie: But this is a pretty realistic depiction of if you're one of those heroines in a fairy tale and you've been asleep for a really long time, you wake up: how do you feel when you wake up? Terrible. Awful. "What the hell just happened? We're not safe, are we?" Oh, poor Ginny.

JC: "What happened to me while I was unconscious and helpless?"

Lorrie: "While I couldn't do anything..."

JC: "While I couldn't do anything to fight back? What happened to me?"

Lorrie: Yikes. "And can I trust the person who's right in front of me?" Terrifying. So here we are with Harry finally deciding, "Oh, no, you are not going to control us anymore," and piercing the diary with the fang. "There was a long, dreadful, piercing scream. Ink spurted out of the diary in torrents, streaming over Harry's hands, flooding the floor." This is almost too literal to talk about, but I can't dance around it too much: it reminds me of the day in December 2019, when Rowling wrote such a transphobic tweet that the fandom had to repudiate her. "The ink spurting out of the diary in torrents," all of the love and bonding that readers had poured into the relationship between ourselves, this series, and the person that we had constructed in our minds as the author, who had written back to us. Not necessarily individually (although sometimes) but had created a phenomenon of an author/fandom bond over years, giving interviews, writing in response, writing some fandom things into her books. This was a living relationship, and it was invested in with emotion from all sides, and mutual trust and affection. All of that ink, spurting out from this severed connection of survival and rage and betrayal, because if you were on the internet that day in the Harry Potter fandom, you would have seen Rowling send out that tweet. And then for the next 24 hours, one fan organization after another issued scathing, cold statements, saying, "No. If you're making us choose between our people and bigotry... I know what you gave us. I know what we owe you, but no. No."

JC: Also, that feeling of, "This is not what you taught us to do."

Lorrie: Yeah. 16-year-old Tom Riddle says, "So I decided to show you my famous capture of that great oaf, Hagrid, to gain your trust -- On the one hand, Tom Riddle, poor but brilliant, parentless but so brave, school prefect, model student... on the other hand, big, blundering Hagrid, in trouble every other week." This gambling of Tom Riddle's good student privilege -- against somebody that did not have a lot of privilege, that was already picked on -- well, he managed to get some belief in that ploy from easily misled people. But Harry says, "No, he's my friend; you can't do that to me. I know Hagrid." I don't know if Rowling was surprised at the backlash from her fandom when people wouldn't follow her here, but the response from the fandom was, "You can't talk to us that way. We know who we are." But unlike 16-year-old Tom Riddle, nothing that Rowling wrote is a horcrux. She's still alive, she's one person, and I feel like in the fandom, the ink is still bleeding out. Yeah, it's not resolved. But that long, dreadful, piercing scream... I remember feeling that scream in my soul on that day. Everything from the Leaky Cauldron and Mugglenet issuing a joint statement to the Trevor Project -- which had partnered with her before -- partnering with Daniel Radcliffe to issue their statement.

JC: All the actors' statements. What's the other...

Lorrie: The Mermaid Project.

JC: No, it's a Harry Potter fan organization.

Lorrie: Oh.

JC: I can't remember the other one. I can't think of the name of it.

Lorrie: The group that used to call themselves the Harry Potter Alliance.

JC: Yes, formerly known as the Harry Potter Alliance.

Lorrie: They have since then, because of TERF-pocalypse, changed their identity to being Fandom Forward.

JC: That's right. Okay, yeah. I could not remember. Yeah, that one.

Lorrie: But yeah, groups of Harry Potter fans changed their names. The sport that used to be known as Quidditch has now renamed itself Quadball.

JC: Right, which was huge. Being on a college campus, Quidditch was a big sport on campus. You'd see people playing it.

Lorrie: It still is.

JC: And still is, right. But changing its name to Quadball, that's a really big deal.

Lorrie: And it's an internationally played competitive sport, so there are bylaws, there are countries. There are some meetings and boilerplate language involved. But the resistance... no, you cannot turn us against our own friends and selves this way for whatever ulterior motive. We're not going to follow you there. So that happens, and then, yeah, Harry packs up.

JC: Another thing before they leave the Chamber here: it's interesting to me, too, that Ginny -- obviously, she wakes up, she's upset at what's happening -- but one of the biggest things that she's worried about is how much trouble she's going to be in, because she admits all the things that she did and then she knows that she's going to probably be expelled. I thought, that is such a kid instinct. "I almost died, and now my parents are going to kill me." That kind of feeling.

Lorrie: "This is the only place I ever imagined being, and now they're going to take me out. What's going to happen to me? What place do I have in the world?" Ugh, that poor child. So yeah, Harry does not address any of that stuff.

JC: Wisely. "Look, we've got to get out of here."

Lorrie: Yeah. He leads her out. He tells Ron, "Hey, your sister, here she is." And then we have the amazing comic relief of Gilderoy Lockhart not having the slightest clue what's going on.

JC: The utter and complete mind wipe of Gilderoy Lockhart is one of the best things in this entire book for me, personally. Wow, what a great consequence for this particular person. Oh, my God.

Lorrie: What a fitting result. And then when he gets pulled along by the phoenix flying up and he says, "Amazing! Amazing! This is just like magic!" That is such a good line. I love it. So we have that comic relief, and then we have the levity of Moaning Myrtle being grossly inappropriate at the end. That is so well-paced; the writing is really well-paced. What the chapter has put the reader through with these moments of levity, okay, we can finally start to exhale. These joking appearances cue us in. 'Okay, no more jump scares. We're done.'

JC: I also really like the contrast of Harry making sure that they take Lockhart out with them, when Lockhart was just going to abandon them all. I think that even if Lockhart had not lost his memory and then Ron had just tied him up somewhere, they would have taken him out. Harry was not going to leave him behind, and that contrast says so much about the person Harry is.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And then I also love the fact that Fawkes -- again, all the things that Dumbledore said about phoenixes happen here, that phoenixes can carry very heavy burdens. He pulls these -- by the tail feathers! By its very warm tail feathers, everyone's pulled out. And I love the fact that Fawkes just takes them straight to McGonagall's office. They just go. Fawkes is like, "No, you're going right now."

Lorrie: "This is where we're headed."

JC: "No more, children. We're going to go." Again, Fawkes runs this show in a way that I think is really, really charming, and it was very hard to stop reading at that point, I have to say. I was like, oh, my God. But we have one more chapter to go in this book.

Lorrie: Oh, my gosh! Yeah. This rhythm of the Harry Potter novels is so potent and robust and comforting. The rhythm picks up about three quarters of the way through, and then it enters a breakneck speed where you are stumbling over yourself reading. And then you get to breathe and know that there's going to be a resolution where everything's explained, and you can let your heart rate come back to normal and be comforted. That's what makes it a children's series: after you go through all of that catharsis, you get some comfort, you get some answers. Then, as the books go on in this series, there's less and less comfort and less and less certainty, and that's what it feels like to grow up.

JC: That's true. Yeah.

Lorrie: But yeah, at this one... this one, they're still allowed to be twelve and thirteen, even though what they've just been through is harrowing. So how are you feeling?

JC: Yeah. One more. One more. Oh, my gosh.

Lorrie: Is this what you remembered from this book?

JC: This scene, I did remember a lot of it, because I think the last time I encountered this content was watching the movie. It's been a while since we watched. I think probably sometime during the pandemic. It was probably before that. It was probably before that, to be honest.

Lorrie: It had to have been before, because TERF-pocalypse started in December 2019, and the pandemic reached our part of the world in February and March of 2020.

JC: Yeah, at some point, we as a family went through all the movies -- all eight films -- which was really cool, because it's very much an epic. It's a little bit like watching all the Lord of the Rings movies in a weekend, or spending a month watching all the MCU movies. "Let's do the whole story!" Yeah.

Lorrie: Oh, I'm going to mention a book here. It's called "The Binge Watcher's Guide to the Harry Potter Films", and our friend Cecilia Tan wrote it. It's a companion book to exactly that kind of experience: binge-watching the entire film series. It's beautifully done, as all of Cecilia's work is; she got the commission to write the book before TERF-pocalypse, and it was published after.

JC: Oh... wow. How painful.

Lorrie: Yeah. She had done all the work for it and it was in production, and that happened, so she had a book come out that she didn't promote.

JC: Wow.

Lorrie: But the book exists. Yeah, that was something that I remember in December 2019, when everybody -- including me -- was responding to this sudden break in Rowling's Twitter silence to announce transphobia, and I said, "Well, now what am I going to do?"

JC: Yeah. There were a lot of people, like you and like Cecilia, who a lot of their academic work focused around this series and this fandom. Yeah, then what do you do? Yeah.

Lorrie: There were different answers to that question at different points along the way that this has developed. Yeah, back in December, all we knew was, 'Oh, right now, all we can do is say no. No, you can't do this.' Well, yeah.

JC: I didn't know that about Cecilia, and I feel really bad for her.

Lorrie: Yeah. How would you know? She didn't publicize it.

JC: Oh, man. But now I'm interested in checking out the book. Probably for Cecilia's sake, but also we're reading a book series. But the films are such an integral part of my experience, partly because of all the film premieres and the experience of dressing up and going to see these movies. I remember going to see... oh, which one was it? Honestly, I can't remember which film

it was, but there was a film that I went to see and our friend Shannon came to Austin and we cosplayed. I think I cosplayed as Luna, and she cosplayed as someone else, but we dressed up as characters. We went with some other people and went to a showing and other people were dressed up, and it was just really fun to get to do that. Yeah, so my experience of the films and the books together, it's a big part of my experience of Harry Potter.

Lorrie: The films are also the thing that shapes how younger readers are reading the series. In our generation, we had the books coming out, each one at a time when we would read them, and then years later there would be the film. There was a stretch of a couple years when I naively thought, "Okay, well, now I've had babies. I wonder at what age I will introduce them to Harry Potter," not realizing that oh, they're going to grow up in a world where Harry Potter already exists. I send my child to kindergarten and the kids are running around, pointing sticks at each other and yelling "Avada Kedavra."

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: I'm like, "Oh, right," because when I grew up, Superman was a thing I hadn't watched. I knew that Superman was a thing and then I would watch the cartoons or I would see a comic strip, but that pre-existed, so there's no question. And here I was thinking, 'When do I introduce Harry Potter?' You don't introduce Harry Potter. Before they can read, they know that Snape killed Dumbledore.

JC: Yeah, and they know Harry, Ron, and Hermione, and they know... yeah.

Lorrie: Right, and they know that Voldemort loses. Okay, this is a whole different way of thinking that I didn't realize I should have, but that's because of the movies.

JC: Yeah. And I think, too, the character's voices... Many of their voices are... I read the books with those voices in my head, or I see the actors as the faces. Even in cases where I didn't want to, like Sirius Black. Remus and Sirius... The fan casting of Remus and Sirius was very different from the actual casting, let's say.

Lorrie: Oh, who's your fancast Remus and Sirius?

JC: Oh, I think it was Jude Law as Remus kind of a deal. Who else? Who were the people that were in? I think... Yeah, Jude Law was in there. I think Ewan McGregor was in there somewhere as one of them; probably as Sirius, because... Actually, I think that would have been a good fit. But yeah, younger actors, for sure, because in the books, they're in their early 30s.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: They're not middle-aged as the casting was. The same thing with Snape. I think there was a lot of... I don't know. I kind of see an Adam Driver kind of person. I don't know. He's probably

too young to have played Snape even then, but yeah, it's interesting how much the casting affected my mental image of a lot of these characters.

Lorrie: Well, one good thing about the films is that everybody was an instant expert on whether the films got it right or not.

JC: Ah.

Lorrie: Everyone had an opinion. Still does. "Well, I think the movie should have done this and that." I come from figure skating fandom, and the reason it's important to not obscure the names of the judges is because viewers want to object to the judges and feel like they did it wrong and criticize.

JC: It's like the refs in a sports ball game.

Lorrie: Yeah, saying, "Well, they got this wrong in the movie. I would have done this." That's part of the fun of it. I definitely have a continuum in my head of casting that the movies got right to very, very wrong, and there's a small, tiny group of actors that did the characters, I think, even better than they were in the books. And yeah, it's fun.

JC: That's cool. All the Dumbledores... We had only two Dumbledores, or...?

Lorrie: We had four.

JC: If you count the others, there's many more, right?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. Some of them... Jason Isaacs as Lucius Malfoy, I think, is just perfect, honestly.

Lorrie: Jason Isaacs is somebody... He is an example of someone that I think did the character even better than the books did.

JC: He's actually being that cold to him on set to get into character.

Lorrie: And then feeling awful about it.

JC: Then feeling bad about it later on. That's so cute. Oh, yeah, that's so great. And then there's all these really fun... So now Jason Isaacs, on Tom Felton's birthday, will send him "Happy birthday, son" messages, which is really so sweet. I think Tom Felton is my favorite ex-Harry Potter actor. Daniel Radcliffe, you've got to always love Daniel Radcliffe. But Tom Felton has not distanced himself from Harry Potter at all. He will go on... I don't know if it's TikTok or Instagram, and make comments about vanished things.

Lorrie: Draco-tok.

JC: Yeah, it's just great. I love it.

Lorrie: Well, we are going to meet next time to talk about the last chapter in this book.

JC: The last chapter.

Lorrie: Dobby's Reward.

JC: Dobby's Reward.

Lorrie: So I guess I'll talk to you then.

JC: All right, yeah. Looking forward to it.

Caroline: You've been listening to Harry Potter After 2020 with hosts Lorrie Kim and JC. You can find show notes for this and all other episodes at HPAfter2020.com. There, you will also find ways to support the show, contact the hosts, and more. If you like what you heard, consider giving us a review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. Harry Potter After 2020 is produced and edited by Lorrie Kim and Caroline Rinaldy. Original music was composed by C.L. Smith. Thank you for listening.