

Transcript

Episode 2.1

Book 2, Chapter 1: The Worst Birthday

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 Two, Chapter 1: The Worst Birthday.

Lorrie: JC, what do you think? We're starting a new book!

JC: Yes, we are, and my least favorite of all the *Harry Potter* books, unfortunately. But yes, I'm ready to come at it with fresh eyes and see what new things I can find in it.

Lorrie: So here we are with *Chamber of Secrets*. Do you remember what it was that made you not like this one so much?

JC: The first time I read it, I think, it didn't have the same feel as the first one. It just felt like it slogged on and I didn't understand what was happening, and the whole plot with the diary was weird. Later on, of course, looking back, I'm like, "Okay, that makes a lot more sense," so I'm interested to see how that feels, but there was something about the writing of this one that didn't pop out at me like the first one did, is my memory. And then (like I said before) I almost quit, and then I got to the third book and it was like, "Whoa," from there on. "I'm in!" But I had to push my way through the second book when I first read this.

Lorrie: Mm-Hmm. Yeah, I remember being very struck by the sophomore syndrome in this book. You write a first book as a novelist, there's no guarantee that you're ever going to get another chance, so you pour everything you've got into it. But it's supposed to be the first of a series, so then you have earned yourself a second act. Then you have to switch your mentality to doing that thing where if somebody's coming across Book Two and that's their introduction, then hopefully there's enough there to catch them but you also have to catch them up on what happens so far. The sophomore effort is often considered the hardest. Once you get your stride going, third and beyond, you have momentum. But how are you going to talk people into going on from the first to committing to the whole series? Okay, so it's a whole different pacing and that seemed apparent here, and I remember thinking that there are several places in *Chamber of Secrets* where you can tell that the editor told her, "Now, do some recap."

JC: Oh, my God. That's my first note that I have written: Did an editor force her? When the re-capping feels awkward and it was inserted into the text, it's like someone sat her down and said, "You have to do this," and it was almost like she was gritting her teeth as she was typing.

Lorrie: Yeah, and anyone who's been a writer who had revisions, you know that feeling. It's like homework. "Ugh, all right. Here. Is that good enough?"

JC: Didn't she stop doing it? There's a certain point at which I feel like the re-capping just stopped in the books. I can't remember by which book, but that awkward, "Harry was a wizard. He had just done his first year at Wizarding school, blah, blah." That just vanishes at some point. If you've read this far, you know.

Lorrie: Yeah, we'll have to keep our eyes out for that. What did you notice about Chapter One, The Worst Birthday?

JC: Oh, just the title alone is depressing. It's such a depressing way to start this book. Just by giving Harry the shittiest day is how it starts, and then it only gets shittier from there.

Lorrie: It does. Yeah, it hasn't even started.

JC: And that's what I think I don't understand about this book, I guess, and maybe that's part of the reason why I disliked it the first time around: it didn't have the magical moments that the first one had. There was a lot of world-building in the first one. There's a little bit of humor in this, but also you feel beaten down with Harry and it's a weird place to start.

Lorrie: I see what you mean. Yeah, there isn't so much the payoff of thrill or comfort. I see what you mean. Yeah. Because at this point, the author is committed to the long vision. I see.

JC: But I think that's the misery of Harry going back to the Dursleys, and they're worse almost than they were before, because let's face it: they had a whole nine months with no Harry around, and they probably thought, "This is what our lives should have been like all the time." I'm sure there were lots of interesting conversations that happened before the end of the school year. "Okay, he's coming back. What are we going to do? How are we going to handle this?" They're not happy that he's there any more than he's not happy about it, but just the unreasonableness of them, and a lot of that, again, is that fairy tale: he's Cinderella, and they're doing all these things to make his life miserable on purpose. But Harry's acceptance of it: he's like, "Yeah, this is just..." He gets his little moments of pushing back, but for the most part he's like, "Oh, God, I wasn't supposed to rise to the bait. I've just got to keep my head down, I've just got to keep my mouth shut." All of that is just depressing.

Lorrie: Yeah. Well, I did like one detail: at the beginning of the chapter. Uncle Vernon is yelling at Harry and he says, "'Do I look stupid?', a bit of fried egg dangling from his bushy mustache."

JC: Yes, you do.

Lorrie: That is funny, and it's in terrible contrast to the fat shaming, which strikes me as particularly egregious in this chapter.

JC: Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: There's more than the usual number of gratuitous references to Dudley being fat that have nothing to do with anything. Aside from the bullying, just taking out the descriptors of him being fat would've just made it better as writing.

JC: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Lorrie: There's a lot. The detail about Uncle Vernon saying, "Do I look stupid," and he's got egg on his face is funny. It could have been more like that, where people are setting themselves up to look foolish. Not this gratuitous fat-bashing.

JC: Yeah, yeah. There's the one description of Dudley's ass cheeks falling off both sides of the chair and it's like, 'Was that necessary? Really?'

Lorrie: Yeah, because that's not about his character, but it's presented as though it is. It's a disgusted gaze. Yeah. Really, when you read that as a reader, you have to be antagonistic toward the writer as you read that. As a reader, as you consume those words and they enter your mind, you have to think, "I'm reading your story, but I'm not accepting these words. I know you think that, but it's not okay with me."

JC: Right, right.

Lorrie: And that, I think, is part of the experience of reading the Dursley chapters in these books, is that I skip over them a little bit. I'll read them but I'll rush them, partly because they're no fun. Harry would also love to rush through them -- and they're designed for that -- but partly because I disagree with the author to the point that I can't let it fully in.

JC: Oh, no, that's a really good way of thinking of it. Yeah. If you're like, "I can't, this is not fun for me," then just start skimming. I had to make myself go back and reread some paragraphs because I was doing that, too. I'm skimming, and I'd go, "Ugh."

Lorrie: Yeah. It's like if you're passing through some place where it smells bad, you breathe in a more shallow way.

JC: Right. "Here, hold your breath a little bit."

Lorrie: "Is that going to help? I don't know." But then again, it's very funny when Harry says, "You've forgotten the magic word," and all three of the Dursleys lose it in terror. That is funny.

JC: The continuous overreactions to the threat of magic are really funny throughout this. It's funny on the one hand, but also it's making me think about the way that people who are bigoted or people who are transphobic or homophobic are freaking out about little minor things that have been happening for a long time. "Oh, no, there are people who have a penis who are going into the women's bathroom..." The level of hysteria around stuff that is so not a big deal, it makes me think of that a little bit, too. In that way, it's interesting to see her poking fun at people having these ridiculous over-the-top reactions, because it's like, "Yeah, okay. That is funny. Wow, you're having a ridiculous over-the-top reaction over something that's not a big deal. Hmm. Where else have I seen that in the real world?" Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. The way that some readers have always seen Harry Potter as an allegory for queerness, that runs the range for me. Sometimes you can see it and it works, but it's obviously not what she intended. All the way to, "Oh, that's a really hard reading to avoid." And in this chapter, I found it hard to avoid, because Vernon is yelling, "I warned you, I will not tolerate

mention of your abnormality under this roof," and then a couple paragraphs later, it says, "Harry Potter wasn't a normal boy. As a matter of fact, he was as not normal as it was possible to be." There's not that much in our lives that points, as strongly as it does, to queerness. What other ways can you think of where a family would have a foster child and say, "Oh, you're not bringing up your abnormality. We know we can't beat it out of you, but you're not going to mention it."

JC: Right. Yeah. I can't think of anything else, honestly.

Lorrie: There are ways to be an outlier as a child. You can be disabled, you can be gifted.

JC: And the only thing that comes close is a child who's autistic or something, or there's maybe a behavioral, emotional disturbance or something where you'd have to be a pretty cruel person to think, "We're going to beat that out of you." Obviously, there are people like that that exist, but yeah. Queerness, it's really hard not to make that comparison.

Lorrie: Yeah. If you have some sort of disorder, then you can't help it, clearly, and you might not be able to mask it anyway. But the way in which whatever is abnormal about Harry is its own whole separate thing that has its own separate world, it's not necessarily a handicap. It's a way to be that's just not allowed. Anyway, yeah. This is one of those points where I do have a hard time finding any reading of it that makes more sense than a queer reading, because being a wizard is a kind of giftedness, but it doesn't feel the same. If you imagine a household full of people who aren't geniuses, and there's the one child who is very clearly a genius... Well, no, I guess there is that. If you've seen the TV series *Extraordinary Attorney Woo*, it could be very much like, "Don't talk about whales." Yeah, so I guess it might be, "Yes, we know you're a genius in some subject, but you're not allowed to talk about it." But yes, it's very wearying, and a queer reading works a lot farther than other readings that I can think about. And yet, there's all this discomfort I have reading this chapter, and then there's a sentence that is the pure thing that just gets right to me: "He missed Hogwarts so much, it was like having a constant stomach ache." Yeah, there you go. That's the story. That's undeniable. The feeling of, "There is actually a place in the world for me. It's not here."

JC: Yeah. Ugh.

Lorrie: It's nice, though. He's much better off having seen that there is such a place. Missing it sucks; it's so much better than not knowing that it exists at all.

JC: Right, and he's got a timeline for when he's going back to it. Yeah.

Lorrie: What else did you notice?

JC: Oh, the fact that they've locked up all of his stuff. Poor Hedwig. Oh, my God. I know that it's not supposed to be realistic, but the idea of keeping a bird like that locked up in a cage.

Lorrie: A predator.

JC: For the entire summer. Oh, the cruelty of that is... I don't even. Yeah, I hate that part a lot. That idea of... what's Hedwig done? Come on.

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah.

JC: And what are they afraid of? I guess they're afraid of Harry getting communications and the neighbors noticing an owl coming back and forth, but it's just so over-the-top cruel. And then all

of his stuff locked up under the stairs so he can't have access to any of it, so it's that whole, "We're cutting you off." You're being cut off completely from this community that means a lot to you, that supports you, where you get to be your true self. Ugh, yeah. We're getting back to the metaphor again.

Lorrie: Yeah. The caged animal motif comes up again because there's Buckbeak, who's obviously the same as Sirius Black. This is a magnificent flying beast; it's not supposed to be chained up all the time. And then, oh, worst of all: the dragon in Gringotts. A really magnificent beast, and nobody knows how long it's been there; it's gone blind with age. Oy. And yeah, and the fact that you can't explain to them why this is happening to them. That's what makes the animal metaphor for what's being done to Harry particularly effective, I think. The pity of it, the bewilderment. Yeah, that's quite painful. I had a strong reaction to Harry despairing when the Dursleys have locked up his school materials, because he says, "What was it to the Dursleys if Harry went back to school without any of his homework done?" That struck me as such a bi-cultural phenomenon. If there were things that they told me to do in school -- American white people school -- and my parents would say, "No, you're not doing that, that's not important," or they just wouldn't get it, I'd think, "No." Oh, here's a good example. In grade school, American teachers think it's really important for your work to be original, even if it's got a ton of mistakes in it. Back in the 1970s, when my parents were raising me, the Korean tradition they came from was that it has to be correct. If that means that the kid has to go find an adult to show them what it looks like when it's correct, then go and do that. I could never persuade my parents that American teachers would rather see a grade schooler do their own thing full of mistakes than bring in something that's correct, so by American standards, I was failing. And what did my parents care if I couldn't produce the appropriate eight-year-old effort that they were hoping and expecting to see, and instead came with this adult-corrected perfect thing? That was committing an offense. That was culturally offensive, what I was doing. Anyway, that's just an example and it's, I think, not uncommon when you are first gen at a school, first generation in some way. You see that with students who are the first person in their family to go to college or something, where sometimes they get a bad grade and the teacher or somebody will say, "Why? What's wrong?" And they won't even tell you; they'll just shake their head and they'll just take the bad grade. Maybe if they explain what was happening, then something good could happen, but it's too much. "Never mind. I don't want to talk about it." Yeah, so Harry knowing that he was supposed to be doing this homework over the summer: well, he's just going to have to take the bad grade. I love that it is -- I have seen a trend in contemporary college culture, that wasn't around when I was in college, of really recognizing first-generation scholarship as a phenomenon.

JC: Absolutely.

Lorrie: Yeah. Because when I was in college -- and I was relatively privileged, but there were some people where they just were thrown in there unprepared, and there was really basic stuff that nobody had explained to them. So when I see this Muggle-born kind of struggle, yeah, there's no way he's going to tell anyone about it. He'll just take the hit.

JC: Right. Yeah, because you don't want to look even more like you don't belong in some way. It's better in some ways to take the hit and just be like, "Oh, okay," than to try to make a case for why you're even more different.

Lorrie: Why you're even further behind, yeah.

JC: Even further behind. Yeah. Yeah, no. When, in my first semester in college, I had gotten a scholarship, I was also a first-generation college student. I had gotten a scholarship, and it didn't occur to anybody in my family that that wouldn't cover everything. Into the first week of classes, I get this letter -- because there wasn't email at that point; that's how old I am -- basically saying, "If you don't pay the rest of your tuition, you're done. You're out." And it was an amount that I could not... I didn't have the money. My family didn't have the money. I went to both of my parents, because they were divorced, and my dad said, "I don't have the money," and I was just sitting there, like, "I'm going to have to drop out of college after one week. What the hell." My mom actually went to her boss and cashed in her vacation to get the money to pay the rest of my tuition. And it was just... none of us knew.

Lorrie: Yeah. How are you supposed to know?

JC: Right. After that, I went to the financial aid office every semester after that. "What do I need to do?" I didn't even know to apply for Pell grants at that point. I didn't know that; I knew none of it. After that, they're like, "Here's what you do," and then I learned, but there was a solution there. And that was at a time when college didn't cost a lot of money. I look at my students now...

Lorrie: Oh, my God, that's true. Yeah.

JC: The unsurmountable sum was under a thousand dollars.

Lorrie: Right, exactly.

JC: But now, I look at my students and there's a lot more attention paid to the struggles of first-generation students, and it's something that comes up a lot in our classes. I do teacher education, so we talk a lot about, as teachers, how to better prepare students for the things that they faced, their experiences. So yeah, anyway...

Lorrie: Yeah. So here's Harry knowing he's going to suffer when he goes back to school and he's not going to have his homework done.

JC: And no one's going to believe that the great Harry Potter shoveled manure all summer.

Lorrie: And that brings us to the immortal line: "I'll be in my bedroom, making no noise and pretending I'm not there."

JC: Yeah. And that's repeated humorously several times. Oh, did we miss the part where they ignored his birthday on purpose? Did that come before or after?

Lorrie: I'm not sure. Do you think the parents ignored it on purpose? We know Dudley was aware of it.

JC: If Dudley was aware, I feel like they were all aware, but it wasn't as important as the big business deal dinner. But they only partly acknowledged it in the past, so it feels like yet another way to be cruel: just completely ignore your birthday.

Lorrie: Yeah. Well, what surprised me -- although later in the chapter, this switches around -- Vernon says, "You stay out of your aunt's way while she's cleaning," and I remember being surprised like, "Wait, they're just going to let him hide and not do the cleaning himself?"

JC: Yeah, that was true. Yeah.

Lorrie: Well, not for long. But then, yeah, nothing compares to his pain at the silence from Ron and Hermione. You think people love you. No.

JC: And that's so visceral, that feeling of, "I thought these people were my friends, and then they said all those things. 'Oh, we'll do this; oh, we'll do that,' and then it doesn't happen." And that's his only... Ugh. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, nothing matters to him if that's not there, and that's the point of low spirits when the hedge stares back at him, which is a magical moment a little bit like what we have from the first book, where things are so bad. "Wait, why is the hedge staring at me? Hedges don't have eyes. What is that?" I thought it was unusually perceptive of Dudley to say, "How come you haven't got any cards? Haven't you even got friends at that freak place?" He knew that would bother Harry, and he knows what would hurt. He very actively hurts Harry. He knows exactly what's going to hurt. He says that Vernon said "he'll chuck you out of the house and you haven't got anywhere else to go. You haven't got any friends to take you." That is as hurtful as it can be. Yes, Harry is in a bind.

JC: I think there's that moment, though, where Harry is able to fight back. It's glorious and funny, and then he pays the price for it; then later, he's kicking himself. "Why did I rise to it?" But he needed a little bit of an outlet there. You get the sense he's been taking it for a month. Yeah.

Lorrie: I remember the first time I read this book and I got to him saying to Dudley, "Jiggery pokery!" I remember where I laughed out loud.

JC: It's just ridiculous, yeah.

Lorrie: He's so right. It has the exact effect he knew it would have. And it's such a dumb thing to say; you'd think nobody would fall for it, but no, these people will fall for it. You can trust them. Yeah. That earns him one of the things that is the most abusive to me: Petunia tries to hit him with the frying pan. She tries to hit his head. Frying pan! That's heavy. Usually, it's like, "Well, it's more like emotional abuse or they're starving him." No, she was going to beat him up. That scared me. Then she gives him every chore in the world.

JC: I don't know how it was for you as a kid, but for me, yard work was the worst thing. I hated it. Hated it, because it was in the summer and it was outside, it would be hot and you'd get sweaty and gross and there were bugs and it was awful. And I was mildly allergic to grass, so I would get stuffed up and sniffly. The idea that he's being forced to do yard work is like, "Oh, my God, make me vacuum the whole house. Make me wash all the dishes, anything but that." Yeah, that to me just struck me as the worst kid punishment, but also interesting that Dobby is there in the hedge, watching and seeing how Harry's treated.

Lorrie: Mmm, good point. Yeah, I never had a yard. We did not live in a part of the country where that was all that common, so I was spared that. But yeah, he does a lot in one afternoon and I'm sure it was very hot.

JC: It talks about him getting sunburn on the back of his neck.

Lorrie: Yeah. And then when he walks in, he sees the dessert, the pudding, and I get heart eyes about this pudding. "A huge mound of whipped cream and sugared violets." That sounds so pretty. Oh, and this was another thing growing up in Korea: I would read about Western

desserts, and there would be some that just seemed like fantasies to me. Sugared violets? What? What is that?

JC: What are sugared violets? Are they actual flowers?

Lorrie: Yes. Yes. When I came to the US for college, I remember I bought some. I was at a confectioner's store and they had candied violets, and I couldn't believe this fairy tale thing was coming true and I bought them. They don't taste very good. You can make your own, which I did, where you pick fresh violets and you wash and dry them. And then you paint them with beaten egg white and then you frost them with granulated sugar, and that preserves them. And if you do it this way, then they're also prettier than the commercial ones because the ones that I bought in the container were kind of lumpy. They had just solidified, because who knows how large the batches were? But for me, I could lay them out on the wax paper, one by one, and retain their shape and color, so they're just crystallized violets.

JC: Wow.

Lorrie: And you have to make sure that whoever you're feeding them to isn't pregnant, in case there's any germs from the egg white, but yeah. No, they're dried, they're pretty, and then you decorate your meringue or whatever with whipped cream and sugared violets. And you feel like, oh, now this is like something out of those English novels, something so beautiful and far away and exotic that I thought about while I was reading.

JC: Oh, interesting. I think all of this part of the story around the business deal is obviously funny, but it also reminded me: I grew up a latch-key kid -- Gen X, coming home and watching reruns of shows on TV -- and it makes me think about the show *Bewitched*, where Samantha's basically a housewife. She's a witch, she's a housewife, but there's the constant storyline of her having to save the day over and over for her bumbling ad-executive husband. She's always hosting a dinner party for a boss or a client or something, and it just made me think of that show, except poor Petunia is not going to be the one to pull out the save at the end. All the kissing up... It also reminds me that there was a time in my life when my partner was high up in a company, and we had to do the schmoozing; there was a time when the CEO of the company asked my partner and said, "Okay, I want you to host a party at your house for all these big-wig people," and we looked around our house and thought, "Oh God!" We remodeled our kitchen for this.

Lorrie: Ow, geez.

JC: Which is expensive, but that was the level of what we needed to do. We remodeled our whole kitchen; three days before the event, it got canceled, and the boss was like, "No, we're not going to do it. We're going to do something else." It never got rescheduled because my partner lost his job with that particular company before it could ever get rescheduled. We remodeled our kitchen for this. All the ridiculousness of the situation where you have to suck up to people: oh, I hated it. I hated it, so I read that, too, and I'm like, "Oh, God, this sucks." Yeah, all of this.

Lorrie: I'm glad you didn't get a house elf in the middle of all that.

JC: That's true, and that's where the nightmare part of the story is heading for me. Oh, my God.

Lorrie: God. And then Harry gets dinner, which is the fairy tale deprivation dinner of two slices of bread and a lump of cheese.

JC: A lump of cheese. The description is so unappetizing.

Lorrie: Yeah, it's very fairy tale.

JC: Cheese doesn't come in lumps. It comes in blocks, or you slice it. That's a lump of cheese. I don't even want to know. I'm imagining that someone just grabbed a handful of curds and squished them up into a ball and went, "There." Oh, God. Lorrie: What I'm imagining is it's what's left after you've grated cheese. It's the stub that you held on to so that you wouldn't hurt your fingers.

JC: That's so bad, that's so gross. Oh, my God. Then they hand it to somebody else and say, "Here's your dinner." Oh, my God.

Lorrie: "I don't have time to cut this into cubes for you or whatever." So that's his dinner, and I'm sure he's very hungry by then because he's done a lot of work. Petunia is wearing a color that we can tell Rowling thinks is a bad color: Petunia's dress is salmon pink, and there's revulsion in that description.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: That's a whole kind of lifestyle that the author has some personal shuddering over. Petunia's all ready, she's in her salmon pink dress; Harry drags himself up to his bedroom, and then we have a classic wonderful cliffhanger. And let's see, the last line of this chapter: Uncle Vernon reminds him, "'Remember, boy -- ONE sound!' Harry crossed to his bedroom on tiptoe, slipped inside, closed the door, and turned to collapse on his bed. The trouble was there was already someone sitting on it. His troubles have just begun." Okay.

JC: Yeah. And that's... it's a conflict trope that I just despise: the one where you have a character who is set up; you can see it coming, something terrible's going to happen, and there's nothing they can do about it. You just have to watch it happen, and it gets worse and worse and worse for them. I hate that. It's so not fun. It's the kind of thing that my kiddo hates to the point that, if this happens in any movie or show that he's watching, he'll get up and leave the room. "Just tell me when it's over, I can't watch it." That's the feeling I have reading this part of the book: do I have to read it? Do I have to watch? I know it's not going to be pretty. It's going to be awful. Oh, and that's how the book opens, is with this awfulness. I know it gets -- well, eventually it gets better. Oh, this is just a shitty year for Harry. It's such a shitty year. Oh, my God.

Lorrie: Although, actually, the analogous year for an American student would be seventh grade.

JC: Oh, God. Yeah, that's true.

Lorrie: And seventh grade is the worst year. You just can't get through seventh grade without being scarred. JC: Seventh grade is... yeah, it's a rough one. Weirdly enough, the year that my kiddo -- and I think one of yours, as well -- were online. It was the online year, which mediated some of the awfulness.

Lorrie: That was the year that they lost to the pandemic, and I thought, "You know, if you had to miss one year..."

JC: Yes.

Lorrie: The worst thing about going through seventh grade is that your classmates are seventh graders.

JC: This is true.

Lorrie: They are the problem. You are also your own problem, but they're even worse because there's more of them, so if you're going to not have classmates, let it be seventh grade.

JC: Yeah. Of all the years, that was my feeling: it was the best one to miss. Seventh grade P.E. was on Zoom.

Lorrie: Oh, my God. Seventh grade P.E.

JC: They just met for 15 minutes, and then the teacher told them to go and do this list of exercises. Who knows if they did it.

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah.

JC: So that was... Yeah. You're right, it's seventh grade. This year is going to suck, Harry. So sorry. So sorry.

Lorrie: You're not special. Everybody hates seventh grade. Yeah, well I mean for better or for worse, at least Draco has to go through seventh grade, too.

JC: That's true, and that's one of the funny lines: when Harry was so miserable that he would even had been happy to see Draco at that moment. That wouldn't be worse than everything happening now. The idea of Draco going, "You're doing servant stuff!" would have been better than listening to Dudley's bullshit. Yes.

Lorrie: Snape gets name-checked the same way.

JC: Yes, exactly.

Lorrie: All the stuff that he misses about Hogwarts. Oh, except Snape.

JC: Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

Lorrie: But yeah, by the end of this chapter, I would welcome a sight of Snape and Draco also.

JC: Do we ever get Snape and the Dursleys in the same space?

Lorrie: No.

JC: Interesting, okay. We know that Lily and Snape met. Sorry, Petunia met Snape. We know that Petunia knows of Snape's existence.

Lorrie: Yeah. Harry doesn't realize, until after Snape dies, that Snape actually knows who raised him. Snape knows; Snape glimpses Petunia during the Occlumency lessons, but Harry doesn't know that Snape knows who this is.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: But Snape asks about them; when Harry is remembering bad things from his childhood and Snape says, "That dog that chased you up the tree, who did that dog belong to?" and Harry

says, "Oh, Uncle Vernon's sister." Snape was situating it in his mind. But yeah, Snape knew how miserable these people were.

JC: Do you think -- did Snape take any pleasure knowing that Harry was miserable at home?

Lorrie: When we get to Book Five, we can talk about that. It's clear to me he does not take any pleasure in it. He has been trying to tell himself how Harry is other and despicable and can't even feel pain anyway; then as he is continued into proximity with Harry, he sees more and more evidence that he can't keep fooling himself that way. No, this really is just a kid. He did not grow up all big-headed. And then it's during the Occlumency lessons when he sees glimpses. Harry and Snape see glimpses into each other's memories, where both of them are unable to keep lying to themselves that the other person isn't even a human. Snape can't pretend that Harry grew up as this glorified prince when he's stuck up in a tree because the whole family thinks it's hilarious to threaten him, and Harry can't help feeling sympathy for Snape as this incredibly miserable teenager. Both of them, despite themselves, have to admit to themselves, "I do know how that feels." That's what is starting to happen that's so dangerous that Snape has to stop the lessons. Once the two of them start having some sympathy for each other, that really threatens the mental barriers that Snape relies on to convince Voldemort that Snape and Harry have nothing but hatred, could never possibly be working on the same side somehow. So no, the answer is no. I do not think Snape enjoyed thinking about Harry suffering. I think it was too close to home in a pathetic way that he had no pleasure in, and he does, after all, know Petunia. Who wants to spend any time with that person? Oi! No, no, no, no, no, no. Not even Harry Potter deserves Petunia Dursley. Yeah, I guess, unlike the chapters in Book One, in this one we have some feeling other than, "Oh, wow, I can't wait to see what happens next." This is more like "Oh."

JC: I think even on the first read, even if you don't know who Dobby is, just the ominous way that Harry is worn over and over and over. It's bad. It's going to be bad. Oh, no. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, that's true. The foreshadowing is underlined several times.

JC: Highlighted, bolded. Oh, my God. Caps lock. Yeah. This is going to be a painful chapter to read.

Lorrie: Well, we'll see. We'll get through it.

JC: Yes.

Lorrie: The next chapter, when we talk next, it's going to be Dobby's Warning.

JC: Dobby. Uh, Dobby.

Lorrie: Oh, I know. Okay.

JC: All right. See you next time.

Lorrie: All right, talk to you then.

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