

Transcript

Episode 2.10

Book 2, Chapter 10: The Rogue Bludger

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 10: The Rogue Bludger.

Lorrie: So Hermione gets the instructions for Polyjuice potion out of the Restricted Section. A cursed Bludger breaks Harry's arm. Lockhart accidentally removes all the bones from that arm. Harry goes to the hospital wing and encounters Dobby. So, JC.

JC: Hey.

Lorrie: What did you notice about this chapter?

JC: All right, so it was fun to read this one, because this was one of the chapters that I hit and thought, I think I remember what happens in this one. The title gave away the Bludger chasing Harry around during Quidditch, but there were a lot of things in this chapter that I had forgotten about. At the beginning, we open in Defense Against the Dark Arts, where Lockhart is basically reading out of his own books in class and then making Harry come up and act out some of the parts, which is excruciating. But the other thing that stands out to me is that Lockhart is a really terrible teacher.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Everyone has a story about that one teacher who just read the textbook or read off their slides and didn't actually teach the content but just transmitted it to students. Lockhart is not quite that bad; he's trying to make it entertaining, but entertaining in a way that is self-serving.

Lorrie: It's all about him.

JC: It's not about the kids. It's about him. When they are heading out the door, and he says, "The homework is to compose a poem about the story that he just read," what made me laugh about this (and if you're a teacher you will know what I'm talking about, probably) this is not grade-level appropriate Defense Against the Dark Arts work. Him assigning the kids a poem to

write about the story that he just told them is the equivalent of giving 10th graders a map to color, and that's their homework. That's not 10th grade Social Studies level work. Schools -- especially for kids who are impoverished, especially children of color -- will tend to get these really dumbed-down assignments in their classes. They don't get the chance to even try to do grade-level work. Sometimes, it's because the teachers just don't have the resources; sometimes it's because the teachers don't think the kids can do it, and it's just plain old bias and racism that's maybe really under the surface. But there's this idea that "the kids just can't work at this level, so I'm not even going to try to give them that work." In Lockhart's case, it doesn't feel like it's like that, but wow, he doesn't know what he's doing, is what happened here. He doesn't know the stuff that he's trying to teach them, is what really comes through to me. He's just making up shit for them to do that sounds teacher-y, and this just reinforces to me that he doesn't know what the hell he's doing. It's just an amazing scene for that, even though it's funny, and it's all about them buttering him up to ask him for the pass to the Restricted Section.

Lorrie: Oh, that's so great. Yeah.

JC: It just reinforces to me: he is such an incompetent teacher.

Lorrie: I love when they go up to get the note to the Restricted Section and he signs it with this peacock quill.

JC: Like it's an autograph.

Lorrie: And this line is so great: "'Yes, nice, isn't it?' he said, misreading the revolted look on Ron's face. 'I usually save it for book-signings.'" So it doesn't say if he's misreading it on purpose, but it's a good hint that he does. He sees how people react to him and he chooses to just go with it. This is an excellent setup for the next chapter that I'm super excited for, trying to understand what's going on in Lockhart's head.

JC: It's like that meme, "Do you ever wonder what's going on in someone's head?" Yeah.

Lorrie: And his complete immunity to the disgust of other people.

JC: Yeah. Yeah. It is kind of terrifying how easily these kids were able to manipulate him into giving them a pass to the one part of the library that no other teacher in the school would have. He was very easy to manipulate there. That is kind of scary, and it does make me think, okay, other kids probably could have figured this out and could have gotten up to other things during the year. I don't remember if that happened in the book or not, but that's fascinating, too. He was just so easy to manipulate. Again, terrible teacher. This is exactly the kind of adult you do not want to be a teacher.

Lorrie: Oof.

JC: Oh, my gosh. Oh, and then at the end when they're walking out and he talks about how, "Oh, Harry, if you need any Quidditch help..." and Harry's just like "Oh, my God." I don't know how one gets through life just continuously bullshitting like that. It's wild to me.

Lorrie: What I like about that line that you mentioned: "Still, if ever you feel the need for a little private training, don't hesitate to ask. Always happy to pass on my expertise to less able players..." That's another part of the setup: in his personality, he has to pose himself as better about everything, and he's just giving clues for how to manipulate him.

JC: Uh-huh. True, true.

Lorrie: This is really excellent writing for the readership, for the age group that this book is aimed for. "Okay, remember this about him;" they ought to be able to remember it really easily, because kids by this point will have encountered grown-ups who are like this. So, what after that?

JC: It just killed Madam Pince to have to give them the book.

Lorrie: Oh, I love it.

JC: That whole scene, you can just see she's like *groans*. She's looking at the signature; she's trying to find some way to circumvent the rules here. She knows she can't, but boy, she stalls and she tries. She knows that Lockhart didn't know what he was doing. She knows that the kids asked him for it, knowing that he wouldn't understand. She knows exactly what they did here, but there's nothing she can do about it.

Lorrie: I love the loophole search. You know how guilty the kids must have been looking. I don't think any of them has a poker face.

JC: That's probably true, that's probably true. Just all hopeful. And probably the fact that the three of them were there; if just Hermione had gone, it probably would have been better, but the fact that the three of them were there, and the alarm bells were going off in Madam Pince's head. She's like, "These three are up to no good."

Lorrie: "What could possibly be going on?"

JC: Right. I also would love to think that someone talked to Lockhart after this incident and said, "Do not sign." It's hard for me to imagine that Madam Pince would just let that go. I don't know. I like to imagine a fanfic, perhaps in the teacher's lounge, where Madam Pince lets someone have it.

Lorrie: The teacher's lounge that year...

JC: Oh, my God.

Lorrie: I have endless curiosity about that. But also sometimes when things like that happen, when you have a staff member that everybody knows is just awful, you don't talk about it. You just avert your eyes, and then sometimes somebody will let one thing fall and then everyone will go, "Ooh."

JC: Yeah, that's true. That's true, too. Everyone's just kind of going, "Eeh."

Lorrie: Because what can you do about it?

JC: Yeah, that's true. Every teacher that I know has a story like that for sure, but I think anyone who's worked in an office... It's just how human beings are.

Lorrie: Yeah. Then I love this moment: Hermione, Ron and Harry have that moment where one of them drags the other two across the activist threshold.

JC: Ooh.

Lorrie: It's about privilege. That's the thing that always stresses out Hermione: are her friends ever going to call on their privilege and stop defending her when she's all determined to make Polyjuice? Ron practically says, "Eww, toenails, yuck," but he isn't really objecting yet; it's Harry who gets all hesitant and gets cold feet and says, "Do you realize how much we're going to have to steal, Hermione? Shredded skin of a boomslang, that's definitely not in the students' cupboard. What are we going to do? Break into Snape's private stores? I don't know if this is a good idea." Hermione shut the book with a snap. 'Well, if you two are going to chicken out, fine,' she said. There were bright pink patches on her cheeks and her eyes were brighter than usual," which oh, I love her. I recognize that because she has already thought this through. The stakes are completely clear to her, and to watch these other two stumble through it for the first time, there's that moment of recognizing that other people have privilege. You don't know if they're going to stand up for you, and she has committed to an activist life. She's already weighed it all out, and no, of course it's against her nature to break rules. It's just infuriating to watch other people work it out slowly for the first time while you're there tapping your foot going, "Any minute now, any minute now." It's lucky for her that they go along with it.

JC: Yeah, her determination in this scene really does stand out. It's the first time that Hermione has been the leader in a scheme that could get them expelled.

Lorrie: Oh, my God. Yes!

JC: But it's one that she knows she can do. The fascinating thing about this is the description of the potion, what it takes to brew it; it takes a month. There's all these things they have to get; what the freak is a bicorn? Is that a horse with two horns? I don't even know what that is.

Lorrie: Isn't that a normal horned beast?

JC: Or something, maybe? Yeah. It's this long-term project. If you were a Potions teacher and you had students who could independently do all this, you would be like, 'I win. Wow, I'm a great teacher.' Snape is in the background.

Lorrie: Or, 'uh-oh.'

JC: Or going 'uh-oh'. But the skills that you would need to do this; these were adult-level skills that are needed to brew this potion, and these 12-year-olds do it. Well, mostly Hermione.

Lorrie: It's all Hermione.

JC: Hermione does it. It's all Hermione, right? And it's really astonishing to think that she, at that age, can look at this and go, "It's going to be hard, but I know I can do this." Wow. Wow. That's just amazing.

Lorrie: Also, she knows what the stakes are. She's at mortal risk.

JC: True. That's true, and has lost any trust that the adults around them are going to be able to protect them.

Lorrie: Yeah, and nothing that she gets assigned in class is at her level anyway. This happened in other parts of my life: I've been a figure skating fan, and the first guy to do a triple axel, Brian Orser, did it because nobody told him that you're not supposed to be able to back in the late 70s. He didn't know it was hard, so he did all the other triples and then he did the triple axel. Oh,

great, he set a world record. Hermione doesn't know what's too hard for her; it doesn't ever really come up.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: Sure, she knows what she has to do, she knows what's at stake, and she yells at the boys enough that they just fall into line. So, the recipe -- the instructions for Polyjuice potion -- when I read about the fluxweed: "The fluxweed has got to be picked at the full moon, and the lacewings have got to be stewed for twenty-one days... I'd say it would be ready in about a month..." That called back to me that the chapter opens with a werewolf story...

JC: Oh, interesting. Lorrie: And how Lockhart saves the village from "the monthly terror" of a werewolf. This is really menstrual-sounding to me.

JC: Interesting, interesting.

Lorrie: Especially because we know she's thirteen and the boys are only twelve, and she's crushing out and the boys aren't there yet. There's stuff that she's aware of that she's just not telling them and doesn't expect them to be aware of. Then we know that she is foreseeing that she might get petrified, which is, to me, sort of a Sleeping Beauty/Snow White, dangerous, liminal period for pubescent girls. I just thought there's something Hermione's going through that the boys don't know.

JC: That's interesting.

Lorrie: So yeah, menarche. it's a menarche story in my reading.

JC: That's really interesting. Yeah. Yeah, the whole monthly terror of the werewolf. That one line did pop out to me that way, too.

Lorrie: Yeah. And the boys have no idea.

JC: No idea. Right, exactly.

Lorrie: So, what did you have next?

JC: I guess then we move to the Quidditch match, right?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And this is interesting, because I think this is the first match of the season. But it's the first time that we've had the Slytherin team with their new brooms that are better than everybody else's, and Draco Malfoy as Seeker. The Gryffindor team assumes they're going to get their asses whipped. That's the feeling at the beginning, and then on top of that, it's raining; it's not great. And then there's this Bludger that won't leave Harry alone.

Lorrie: Oh, my God. Terrifying.

JC: Yeah. I had actually forgotten who bewitched the Bludger. I had no idea since I hadn't read this in so long so I forgot who it was, so later on I got a nice surprise. But there's just so many things that were interesting to me in this one. I think the whole dynamic between Harry and Draco in this is really interesting to me, because Draco is just on top of the world. They're going to kick some Gryffindor butt, he's finally going to get to see Harry humiliated, he can't wait, and that just doesn't happen. Bad shit happens, but it doesn't quite go the way that Draco was

planning. There's that moment where he calls him "Scarhead", and Harry is like, "whatever," and I just thought, 'Wow, he's still trying to figure out how to push Harry's buttons,' but he just has no idea that that's just going to bounce right off Harry. Harry grew up being called so much worse that Malfoy calling him Scarhead is just like, "Try harder, man, try harder," so that was fun. There's this interesting point where they all realize there's something going on with the Bludger and they take the time-out, and the fact that George is so concerned for Harry's safety that he's telling Oliver this isn't okay.

Lorrie: "This is your fault."

JC: Yeah. And Oliver's just so blinded by his desire to win, and then they leave it up to Harry; put it all on the 12-year-old kid who's getting attacked. We always just put everything on Harry. It's this metaphor for, "I don't know, this seems dangerous," and Harry's like, "No, I'll do it. I'll do it," and they go, "Okay! Go save the day, Harry!" That keeps happening throughout Harry's life, but I had forgotten that George was the one who stopped everything and said, "Look, this is not okay," so that was an interesting moment, too. And then the moment when Harry feels his arm break when the Bludger finally hits him. The first time I read this book, I did not know what that was like; I now know what it feels like to that moment that your arm breaks. That made the scene afterward a lot more intense for me personally, because when I broke my arm, I just had to sit there and wait for someone to come and help me up. I couldn't move, could not move. And the fact that he's on a broom, up God knows how high; he still manages to catch the Snitch with all that. Harry's just that determined that he's going to just push through; with his free arm, he managed to grab the Snitch, stay on his broom somehow, and he falls to the ground after that. He's in a heck of a lot of pain; that whole thing is very intense. But that moment when he knows Draco has not seen the Snitch, he starts toward it and Draco just looks genuinely terrified.

Lorrie: That's so brilliant.

JC: "There's this madman... this madman's coming at me!" His arm is shattered, it's hanging by his side. He's been drenched, he's got this intense look on his face. That must have scared the crap out of Draco.

Lorrie: And Draco doesn't know why. He doesn't know that the Snitch is right over his head.

JC: And that part is even better, because after the fact, the amount of shit Draco must have gotten from everybody. "It was right next to you the entire time, but you couldn't look away from Harry Potter somehow. What's wrong with you?"

Lorrie: "You're too obsessed with Harry Potter."

JC: "You're too obsessed with Harry Potter. All you had to do was turn your head and we would have won the game, but no. Harry Potter caught it with a broken arm, etc.," all the stuff. I can hear Lucius Malfoy. "I bought all these brooms!"

Lorrie: Oh, no. Oh, I hope Lucius never found out.

JC: Draco just disappointed everyone.

Lorrie: Oh, God.

JC: Everyone. This must have been shitty.

Lorrie: What a terrible debut.

JC: This was the worst possible debut for him as a Seeker. He had a really awful day. Harry had a shitty day, granted, but I'm just fascinated with –

Lorrie: But he's the hero.

JC: Yeah, he's the hero.

Lorrie: Oh, yes.

JC: And everybody thought Draco had what was coming to him. Everybody else in the school except for the Slytherins, because everyone hates the Slytherins.

Lorrie: Yeah, it would have been a bad day for imposter syndrome. My goodness.

JC: Oh, yes. For sure, for sure.

Lorrie: Well, I think it's worth mentioning that when you broke your arm, it's because you were figure skating.

JC: Yes, I was.

Lorrie: Because I will bring up skating again. What I always hear from skaters who have competed at high stakes competitions while very injured: it's an injury. They should stop. But no, they're going to, "Just a few more minutes," never mind that they're doing way more damage to themselves in those few minutes. "Just a few more minutes," and then they'll be out for eight months in a cast, but just a few more minutes. They say the adrenaline is so hard, you don't feel the pain. You know you're going to pay later, but you're just going to go. One of the things that Malfoy yells at Harry: he says, "Training for the ballet, Potter?" because Harry's doing these weird flourishes to try to avoid the Bludger. There are not that many instances in the series of really overt stereotyping that's anti-effeminate, but that's one of those.

JC: Yeah. For sure.

Lorrie: Yeah, and it's unanimous. Both Harry and Draco think that it looks stupid and the author does, and the reader is expected to think so, too. It's just one of the few moments that just stands out.

JC: I'm trying to think: have we encountered yet in the books many moments -- I don't think we have yet; we're going to get some more for sure -- moments that are anti-femme in that way.

Lorrie: Yeah. There are not that many.

JC: Not so far, anyway, yeah. Okay, that's interesting. I'm really glad that you pulled that one out, because I remember that but it didn't make it into my notes. I have a few other things about Quidditch -- and this is just me going on the Roomba of thought that you go on sometimes. Why does Quidditch only have one referee?

Lorrie: Huh.

JC: Having gone to a lot of high school sports in the last couple of years (not by my own choice, but because I had to), the number of referees on the field and they still miss shit. That's the whole point of the "ref, you suck" chant. Then I was like, okay, first of all, there needs to be more

referees in this game, because it's a huge stadium. It's three dimensions, it's all up, and the referee can't see everything.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: First of all, they should probably have more referees, and maybe they do at the professional level. Maybe at the school level, it's different.

Lorrie: No, there's only one ref at the World Cup.

JC: At the World Cup, there's only one rep?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: What the hell? What the hell? That's bad. But then it made me think: how do they control the crowds? There must be anti-hexing charms or something when you go. What's the Wizarding World equivalent of going through a metal detector when you go into a stadium? I'm just imagining NHL fans with access to magic wands. What kind of crap would happen? The "ref, you suck" chant: imagine taking that to the magical level, or hexing the other players. There must be some massive charm set up on these stadiums.

Lorrie: There must, yeah.

JC: But that didn't stop Hermione from setting fire to Snape's robes that one time, so I'm just really curious about what's preventing everyone in the stands from casting a hex on someone they don't want to do well, because we've seen it happen, right?

Lorrie: Yeah. I do think that there must be a lot of anti-hex charms between the audience and the players, because Dobby's magic got through and they're all shocked.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: So if a house-elf has their own different kind of magic, it can get through, but obviously nobody thinks about doing it with their wizard magic because you can't.

JC: But Quirrell did it in the first book, right?

Lorrie: And that was also exceptional. People saying, "No student did this; it would have to be a really skilled adult wizard to do something this complicated."

JC: That's interesting. It just made me wonder what's the background. I know that the author has basically said that she hates Quidditch and regrets ever admitting it, so she probably didn't flush it all out quite to the extent that I'm now wondering. But just thinking about how school sports work, it made me really think: what about all these little details?

Lorrie: But she did capture very well the fanaticism.

JC: Ooh, for sure.

Lorrie: And the hilarious athlete culture that death is no object. Death and dismemberment, we have to win. George can blame Oliver Wood for that, but Harry would have felt that way anyway. The wonderful moment when Harry's passed out and Lockhart is first on the scene, and Harry's in so much pain: "He saw a glimmer of teeth. 'Oh, no, not you,' he moaned." Harry's in so much pain, he forgot to mask his true feelings about Lockhart, which is hilarious; Lockhart just rejects

it immediately and forges onward with damaging Harry's arm. That actually reminded me of an Olympic moment. Oh, I think it's Kerri Strug.

JC: Oh, the gymnast?

Lorrie: Yeah. A U.S. gymnast at the Olympics. She had the final vault, and she thought the U.S. medal might depend on whether she nailed it or not; but she was seriously injured and she did it anyway, even though logically she should have spared her health. Then after she nailed it, following protocol, the medics were about to put her on a stretcher and take her away. She was screaming for Béla Károlyi, who was then the coach. "Don't let them do this to me! They can take me away after the medal ceremony." It was just the medics were so inexorable; there is a protocol, of course. She's screaming and screaming, and Béla Károlyi finally walks over and he physically carried her in his arms to the medal ceremony. Yeah, he's a problematic figure, but I'm so glad for that moment because it was really human.

JC: Yeah. I remember watching that on TV.

Lorrie: Yeah, she couldn't do anything about it at the time. She called out to a higher authority and was answered; but that moment of helplessness, I felt it when Harry is trying to say, "No, no." When Lockhart says, "Here, I'll fix your arm," and Harry says, "Thanks, I'll keep it like this," he knows, and just the helplessness of seeing it happen.

JC: Yeah. Oh. The idea that Lockhart is just that shameless. He has to know that he can't do this shit, and he's just going to subject a child to it? What was he thinking? "Oh, maybe it'll work this time. Ha ha ha, it's just an arm."

Lorrie: Well, then when it doesn't, he makes up a really feeble excuse and just doesn't care.

JC: Oh, my God, yeah. It's just... ugh.

Lorrie: So yeah, something's really wrong with this man.

JC: Exactly, though I guess the bright side is that it stopped hurting, as Harry said. Then when they get to the medical wing, the first thing that Madam Pomfrey says is, "You should have come to me first," and Harry's like –

Lorrie: "I tried!"

JC: "You think I didn't want that?!" He's getting scolded for something that is completely not his fault. The whole idea of the Skele-Gro blows my mind, too. How often do wizards completely lose their bones that there's a branded product that grows them back?

Lorrie: Wow.

JC: Skele-Gro, copyright or trademark or whatever. TM Skele-Gro. How often does this happen?

Lorrie: Well, it gets used again in *Deathly Hallows*.

JC: So, at least twice.

Lorrie: Yeah, but it's for mending broken bones. It's for helping the bone heal.

JC: Okay, so it's for helping the bones heal. It's not just for regrowing them.

Lorrie: It's not usually needed to this drastic extent.

JC: Okay. That makes sense, because I was like, how are people just completely losing their bones?

Lorrie: Yikes.

JC: But I can see that actually, again, having completely shattered a wrist and having had to have multiple-hour surgery to put lots of metal in it to put it back together. I can see how having a potion that would just make it all mend would be really great, so that's great.

Lorrie: Tastes bad, hurts.

JC: Yeah. They could probably knock you out for that. That's the thing: why don't they knock him out? Why don't they give him a sleeping potion or something to knock him out for this? No. It's like he deserves to hurt. Like that awful thing... Remember back in the 90s, when Republicans were railing against women on welfare, and there was this movement to not pay for anesthesia during childbirth?

Lorrie: Oh, my God. J

C: For women who were on welfare.

Lorrie: I missed that.

JC: And the idea was maybe if it hurts too much you won't get pregnant again, and that was the whole idea behind it. It was just incredibly cruel. It just made me think of that. "No, you broke your arm, you're going to suffer, too bad," kind of a thing.

Lorrie: Or even better. Yeah.

JC: Or even better: maybe you'll be more careful next time, that punitive awfulness of hurting someone who's already hurt and hurting them more just to wield your power over them. I'm not saying Madame Pomfrey is an awful person, but there's that whole feeling of the old school, "We're going to punish you even more, even though you're already getting punished. We're going to do it even more to make it stick."

Lorrie: It is related to Lockhart's lies, because I don't know who believes that deterrents actually work.

JC: Oh, my God, for sure.

Lorrie: Although I know some people really actually do believe that, but then when it happens in their own lives, of course, it doesn't work.

JC: "Of course, I should be the exception."

Lorrie: "And well, maybe for the future, but what about now? There's nothing I can do about it now."

JC: Right. For sure.

Lorrie: All right. I loved that Ron is pulling Harry's fingers through the cuff of his pajama top. Their friendship is really touching, and it's just practical.

JC: The rubbery, weird glove arm that's just cracked up.

Lorrie: And Ron's not making a big deal out of it or anything. He's just doing what needs to be done.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: And then Harry's life gets even more hapless, because he wakes up because Dobby is there. Ooh!

JC: Oh, the reappearance of Dobby, and we get a lot of questions answered and many more raised by this entire visit. Dobby admits that this is why they couldn't get through Platform Nine and Three-Quarters at the beginning of the year: Dobby did that. It wasn't that the platform closes at a particular time; it is that Dobby closed it and made sure they couldn't get through. And then that Dobby was responsible for the Bludger, which struck me. I had forgotten, like I said. I was like, 'Oh, right. Yeah, okay.' But the idea that Dobby's idea was, "I just wanted to hurt you a lot. I didn't want to kill you. I thought if I hurt you so much that you had to go home..." But we've already seen that kids get hurt a lot and they do not leave Hogwarts. A bunch of kids are about to get Petrified; they ain't going anywhere, right? When kids get really hurt, they don't leave school, so I'm not exactly sure what Dobby was aiming for there.

Lorrie: Well, he doesn't really know what he's dealing with; but his plan, it's in good comparison to both Dumbledore's and Snape's. Dobby's remedies for Harry are almost worse than Harry's problem.

JC: Oh, my gosh.

Lorrie: But his aim to get Harry sent home is the same as Snape's. Snape is always fantasizing about getting Harry expelled, which is partly because things are unsafe, but mostly because Snape doesn't want to see his face and doesn't want to be responsible for protecting this kid, who is only having a bad life because of Snape. On the other hand, we have Dumbledore who kept Harry in the Dursley home for eleven years, or for nine and three-quarter years, but when it was time, he brought Harry out, and Dobby wants to send Harry back. But the point is that when you are being hidden from your destiny like that, it's only until you're old enough to go meet your destiny. Then you have to be trained, and while you're being hidden awake, your life doesn't happen. You don't live your life. It's infantilizing, and this is the counter-argument to a lot of readers saying, "What is wrong with Dumbledore? How can you bring a child into a school and then let all these terrible things happen to him? Why did Dumbledore let Death Eaters in and let Harry face all these dangers by himself when he's only eleven or twelve years old?" Well, the alternative is doing like Dobby and sending him back to where your life doesn't happen. What does Dobby say? "Not kill you, sir. Never kill you. Dobby wants to save Harry Potter's life." "For what? Is living with the Dursleys a life?" Dobby only wanted Harry Potter hurt enough to be sent home. That's not home.

JC: True.

Lorrie: I also like how this is the beginning of us seeing Harry just reflexively jumping on house-elves before they can succeed in self-harm. It was very recently -- I didn't think about this until this year -- that there's a moment in *Deathly Hallows* when Wormtail's silver hand goes to choke him, because he had a moment of disloyalty to Voldemort and a moment of being swayed by Harry's argument. It does kill Wormtail, but Harry and Ron both jump on Wormtail's hand and try

to drag it away, even though Wormtail is trying to kill them and he has zero redeeming qualities. You think, "Well, why don't they just let this happen?" But they reflexively try to stop it, and I realized, oh, they are trained by years of knowing that house-elves are going to do this automatically. Then I thought, that's what Voldemort is doing to Wormtail: he's trying to dominate and own this fellow thinking being so completely that that being internalizes their enslavement and they just do it to themselves and they can't stop, even when they want to. With Wormtail, it's only been a few years and he really doesn't want to agree with this. But for the house-elves, it's been generations.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: 'Oh, it's been entirely internalized.' The mechanism is that when you feel a moment of disloyalty to the person who wants to own you, that's when this internal conflict starts. Yeah, Harry is really attuned to that and he knows reflexively, "Okay, this is a bad thing; get in the way of that." The person doing this to themselves, they don't want to or they shouldn't.

JC: Right. And then at the same time, you have these house-elves that have a tremendous amount of power. They're incredibly magically powerful.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But yet... yeah. Thinking about Dobby: Dobby mentions the Chamber of Secrets here.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: So that seems to confirm that Dobby must have overheard Lucius Malfoy talking about this. How does Dobby know?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Lucius Malfoy knows that when he sent the diary, when he put the diary in Ginny's cauldron, he knew what would result. What would happen is that this would open the Chamber of Secrets, and I think that later on, Dumbledore says something like Lucius Malfoy didn't know it was a Horcrux; he wouldn't have let it out of his possession if he'd known. All he knew was that it was connected to the Chamber of Secrets and this would cause it to open, so it raised some interesting questions for me about what Lucius Malfoy was up to. Was he acting independently? Were there other people who knew this was going to happen? I'm really curious thinking about what Lucius Malfoy's intentions were here, because that's pretty awful.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Right? You're basically unleashing a murderous monster, metaphorically, into the school that his own kid goes to, knowing that his own kid would probably be fine.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But just releasing this into the school and doing it intentionally.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Wow. That's pretty evil.

Lorrie: Trying to burn it to the ground.

JC: Yeah. Well, I'm trying to think of an equivalent in the Muggle world, and I can't really think of one.

Lorrie: Oh, I can.

JC: Yeah. What?

Lorrie: During the Trump Administration, there were a bunch of officials named to be heads of departments that they were actively trying to dismantle, like Secretary of the Interior, Secretary of the Treasury. Or Betsy DeVos.

JC: Oh, God.

Lorrie: Secretary of Education.

JC: Oh, God.

Lorrie: These are people who had made their careers in trying to destroy these institutions, and then they were appointed to be heads of those institutions so that they could more directly continue with their mission. It was deliberate.

JC: Right. Okay, I see what you mean, yeah. I guess I'm trying to think about on a school level what it would be like.

Lorrie: Well, Lucius, having seen the favoritism for Gryffindors, he's now gotten himself on the school board and he's trying to introduce this thing that is going to have to shut down the school. It will strike at the thing he hates about Dumbledore, which is his Muggle-loving tendencies and it will also further his own pureblood agenda, but he just wants to bring down Dumbledore.

JC: Wow. Okay, is he on the school board at this point?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He is? Okay. Now that...

Lorrie: This is the year that he joined the school board because of what happened.

JC: Oh, my God.

Lorrie: See, if Dumbledore hadn't pulled the switch at the end of the first book where he taunted the Slytherins with losing the House Cup, I'm not sure that it would have been that urgent for the Slytherin parents to say, "You know what? There's no hope. We have to do something about this; we have to mobilize." But everything that Lucius Malfoy is doing this year is a very angry response to something institutional that is going to be there as long as Dumbledore's in charge.

JC: Right. This is like the right-wing people running for school boards so they can get all the books that are going to make kids gay out of libraries, or whatever they're into.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Which we just recently (as of the time we're recording this) had an election in this country, and many of those school boards got flipped back to more rational people.

Lorrie: People who have other concerns.

JC: Yes, and that actually happened in my school district last year in the election. Our school district here, there were a slate of really awful people trying to get on the school board, and their entire intent was to burn it down, so yeah, that's exactly the comparison I was looking for. Thank you. That's why Lucius Malfoy is doing this. Okay.

Lorrie: So there's something that I love and it's so plausible, and I'm sorry that it wasn't able to be fleshed out in the story. Dobby says to Harry: "If he knew what he means to us, to the lowly, the enslaved, we dregs of the magical world! Dobby remembers how it was when He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named was at the height of his powers, sir! We house-elves were treated like vermin, sir!" That is really plausible. We don't ever actually get to see how that works, but in real life that's certainly true when there are totalitarian regimes: the lower down you are in status, the more people have permission to oppress. It doesn't get explored in the series, but that's a major part of a conflict between Dobby and the other house-elves is that that's something that happened and he sees it, and this is his way of responding to it; the other house-elves are, "Just keep your head down." But yeah, if that had been more fleshed out, I think the conflict between Dobby and the other house-elves would have been a little easier to see.

JC: Oh, that's interesting.

Lorrie: I don't want to criticize the author. That's a tall order to show that for a side plot, but I do like that we get this hint about it.

JC: Oh, so another thing, okay, that I wanted to talk about here: at the end of this chapter, Colin Creevey gets brought in, Petrified. It's so interesting that this is the point where this mystery really begins to build now. "What's happening? What's Petrifying these students?" We have that interesting moment with the camera film; it just dissolves, and Harry feels guilty because Colin was trying to come and visit him and all this stuff. But here's what it made me think about as a parent: okay, so your kid gets Petrified while they're at Hogwarts. Do you get an owl about this?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Does the school inform the parents? What do they tell the Muggle parents? As far as I know, no one came to visit these kids while they were Petrified. I'm trying to imagine that you get a message in the middle of the school year that your kid at boarding school is in this condition, and you're just supposed to wait it out?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That makes no sense to me as a parent. As a Muggle, it would be like going in there and being like, "No, I'm taking my kid, we're going to go to the best hospital, whatever." It blows my mind that they're just in the medical wing for the rest of the school year, and that just seems to be where they stay.

Lorrie: While the Mandrakes are growing.

JC: Yeah. "We've got to wait for the Mandrakes to grow; in the meantime, your kid's essentially in a coma."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Oh, my gosh, how terrifying that would be.

Lorrie: That shows us that Hogwarts is doing a thing that schools everywhere do, where, when there's a conflict like this, there's an urge to hush it up to protect the school. Not even to protect humans, but to protect an institution and a reputation, and this is always bad. But we see Dumbledore, Madam Pomfrey and McGonagall saying, "Oh." They all know that the Chamber has been opened in the past, so what was Binns talking about when he was adamantly refusing to acknowledge that?

JC: Ooh, uh-huh.

Lorrie: Did he just not believe it ever happened? Was he already dead when it happened that time? Does he just want to keep students uninformed? And then I thought, oh, maybe he only believes in history that's written in textbooks. Maybe he only believes in the official story, and he believes that if it's not in the story, then it's for a good reason. But if all the teachers know that the Chamber has been opened before, but there are all these whispers and rumors like "does this even exist," that's, I think, the mechanism of the school trying to shut down bad PR.

JC: Oh, that's interesting. Probably in the name of keeping everyone calm, but also...

Lorrie: But also...

JC: There's this really dangerous thing happening, and we don't really get much sense of how the adults are trying to manage the situation.

Lorrie: But yet, if word gets out, parents will pull their students from school, and then the school will financially fail.

JC: Right, right. Yeah. That's pretty dark, really, but it's also realistic. That's....

Lorrie: It is, and that's always what makes this dark: "Oh, yeah, that's what people really do."

JC: Okay, I'm going to talk about a real-world experience with a school. There was a day last year when a student had threatened to come and shoot up the school that my kid goes to, and graffiti had been written in the bathrooms about this; it had named the date and the time. A student went into the bathroom, saw the graffiti, took pictures of it, and then it started going around the school.

Lorrie: Wow.

JC: So the school's first response was to shut that down and tell people, "Don't circulate this stuff, etc." Then, of course, some kids sent it to their parents, and the parents were like, "Wait a minute, what's happening here?" So the school made some mistakes initially in how they handled it. But the other thing that was interesting: they immediately tried to figure out who had written this graffiti, and by the time the date came around and they actually knew who it was (who had written the graffiti), that student had been pulled out and was sent to the alternative school or whatever. But everyone was so terrified that most kids didn't go to school the day of it, so the school did this thing where they... "Oh, you should still come to school. It's going to be fine, etc." This is at a really super academically competitive school, where missing a day of school is a really big deal for multiple reasons, one of which is that if you have more than three absences you can't exempt your final exams. That's how freaked out the kids were. The school, because sixty of the kids didn't go that day, finally had to say, "Okay, these absences won't count for exam exemptions," but it was only after trying really hard to convince everyone that everything's fine.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "It's going to be fine." And it was fine, but that fear that everyone had, the feeling of this administration -- They took it seriously, but then didn't really acknowledge that the fear all the kids and the families had was real enough to not shut the school down that day. They should have just said they were canceling school this day, and they couldn't or didn't. So yeah, it makes me think: schools are dealing with things like that all the time now. It makes me read all this a little differently, because I'm wondering what's going on behind the scenes with the administration and all the teachers, and what are they communicating to families and what are they not communicating to families. This is also a time, I guess, kids could have sent owls to their parents, but it's not like the kids had phones and could take a picture of the Chamber of Secrets blood-written wall, fire it off to their parents, and say this is what's going on at school. It's all in the dark.

Lorrie: But there's definitely a code among the students: don't tell your parents, or they will come and take you out of school. I cannot imagine that Hermione's parents ever found out that this happened to her for months, and that their little 13-year-old is trying to figure out how to save the world all by herself in the broken girls' bathroom.

JC: Yeah. All the stuff... Hermione's doing so much, partly behind the scenes because we're seeing Harry's experience, but the amount of work that Hermione is doing to figure all this out, and really, Hermione does figure it out.

Lorrie: Yes, she does.

JC: She's the one who figures it all out at the end and saves the day to an extent, with a little note tucked in her hand that no one saw.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Wow. Yeah. And then do her parents get informed that she's Petrified and in the infirmary?

Lorrie: I cannot imagine that they would have let her go back.

JC: Yeah, yeah. After all that. "Hermione, just be a dentist, come on."

Lorrie: She just doesn't tell her parents things.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: I love the ending of this chapter where they ask... Pomfrey and McGonagall are saying, "Who's opening the Chamber," and Dumbledore says, "The question is not who. The question is, how..." What an excellent chapter ending, because as a reader, I'm reading this going, "Wait, is he saying this is Voldemort? What?" I have no clue at this point how it's going to turn out to be Voldemort. Oh, and then the line after that goes: "From what Harry could see of Professor McGonagall's shadowy face, she didn't understand this any better than he did." Oh, that's chilling. The adults don't know what's happening, either.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: And last time with the Sorcerer's Stone, Harry thought the adults didn't know what was happening, but they did and that's reassuring. But he's a year older now, and they don't.

JC: Interesting, too, the idea of the question is not who, but how. It's two interpretations there: I think that Dumbledore knows who. Also, that it doesn't actually matter who's behind it, because the important thing is that it has been opened and now we've got shit to deal with, but they don't know how you get to the Chamber. They don't know about the bathroom. They don't know any of that stuff.

Lorrie: Yeah, and if one person is doing it, then others can, too.

JC: Yeah. Just because it happened 50 years ago and now it's happening again, and the idea of, "Okay, someone has figured this out again. How did they figure this out?" Yeah.

Lorrie: And is there only one person opening the chamber, or is it multiple? It's scary, wow. To me, the thread in this book is hard to see because it still reads like a storybook. It's hard to remember: wait, Lockhart is a really dangerous criminal, and the threat that's facing this school is really bad because it still comes across as a kids' book.

JC: Yeah. I think the first time I read this, I was just plowing through it and I didn't pay as much attention. I didn't like the book, etc.; now knowing the book is a Horcrux, it does read very differently.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: I think maybe, too, in early experience of reading this book, I didn't realize that the author was ramping up the stakes so high. "Wow, this really is evil. This is not 12-year-old-level evil. This is real evil, and they have nobody to help them through this but Gilderoy Lockhart. Oh, no."

JC: Oh, God.

Lorrie: They're going to have to find a workaround. Meanwhile, Draco Malfoy had a terrible Quidditch debut.

JC: Aww, poor Draco. Bless his little heart.

Lorrie: So the next chapter is the Dueling Club, and I'm super excited for that one.

JC: Oh, that's right. Okay. I do remember a little bit of what happens in this one. I'm going to look forward to reading it.

Lorrie: This Dueling Club is what sets up the denouement of the entire series.

JC: Ooh, you are correct. Ooh, okay.

Lorrie: So exciting.

JC: Nice, nice. Okay, I'll keep that in mind as I read. Yes.

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

JC: All right! 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

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