

Transcript

Episode 2.5

Book 2, Chapter 5: The Whomping Willow

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 2, Chapter 5: The Whomping Willow.

Lorrie: Hey, JC.

JC: Hello.

Lorrie: Are you ready to discuss Chapter 5 of *Chamber of Secrets*, The Whomping Willow?

JC: Yes.

Lorrie: Oh, Harry and Ron aren't ready. They can't get through the barrier at King's Cross; the Hogwarts Express leaves without them. Being 12, they think it would be a brilliant idea to take the flying car instead. Whoo! So, what did you notice about this chapter?

JC: First of all, it's been so long since I've read this book that some things in this chapter were a surprise to me. I just didn't remember them. The film version of this set of scenes lives in my head in a way that the book versions just don't, so there were things where I was like, "Oh, wow, I forgot that this happened in the book." But I like the way that the chapter opens by saying that this month that Harry had spent at the Burrow was the happiest of his life, replacing the former happiest month of his life, which I think was his first month at Hogwarts or something like that. I do like that feeling of things getting better for Harry overall. There's his ups and downs, but in general, the trend is up; at least we're feeling that way right now, so that's nice. But just that idea that he's spent this month with his best friend and in this magical family where everyone adores him and he gets to do fun things... What a great way to spend the summer before going back to school.

Lorrie: And I liked that the night before, Mrs. Weasley makes a special effort just for Harry.

JC: Aaawww.

Lorrie: Yeah, she makes this feast. His favorite dessert is treacle pudding, the twins set off fireworks, and then before bed, they even have extra hot chocolate.

JC: Aaawww.

Lorrie: And this is something that she does here and she does a couple more times in this series: I feel like the author is apologizing in advance to Harry for what she's about to put him through.

JC: Just make sure he has some good moments, some happy moments.

Lorrie: You really feel her wanting this kid to be happy. "Here you go; here you go, because you're going to need it."

JC: Aww. Also, there was like a... I think the book described it as 'Mrs. Weasley conjured up this meal.'

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: And I thought that was interesting, because with all of the discussion of the Weasleys being so poor, they don't seem to lack food; they're not food insecure. When Harry showed up that first morning, there were all these sausages being cooked and they seemed to have enough to eat, so it makes me wonder. I'm sure there are people who are food insecure in the Wizarding world, but it's interesting that we don't see the Weasleys being portrayed that way. They always seem to have plenty to eat. We do learn later about how the food is created at Hogwarts and where it comes from, and later on, I guess, we learn some information about how you can't just create something out of nothing. You have to have the ingredients, so Molly can't just wave her wand and food appears. There have to be ingredients; it has to come from somewhere. I find that interesting because it would cost a lot of money to feed... how many of them are there? Ten, including Harry?

Lorrie: Oh, my God, yeah.

JC: I guess Bill and Charlie aren't there, but still eight, and a lot of them are teenage boys who eat a lot. That's expensive, but somehow food doesn't seem to be a problem for the Weasleys, which is great.

Lorrie: They have chickens pecking around, and I wouldn't be surprised if their garden produces vegetables. I imagine that getting vegetables ripe and ready to eat is something that magic can help.

JC: Sure.

Lorrie: But yeah, when we see food insecurity... I think it comes up in the sixth book, when the Death Eaters start to displace families from their homes and they start to take children away from their parents; you have people in Diagon Alley who are homeless, begging people to tell them, "Where are my children? You know where my children are." I remember re-reading that right around the time that the Trump administration was starting to separate families and really work on getting more people homeless. I think if you have a home base like the Weasleys do, you just automatically have a lot more resources even in the resourcefulness that you can feel. "I have a home base, I have a family, we have a source of love, we can make something work," as opposed to being really unrooted-feeling.

JC: That makes a lot of sense.

Lorrie: But that's just an impression I'm getting. Yeah. Obviously, Molly is an excellent household manager, but yeah. No, there's always plenty of food and that comes up in *Deathly Hallows*: that no matter how poor Ron has ever been, he's always had delicious home-cooked meals. He has never been hungry before, and this makes Hermione and Harry pretty sour with him. But yeah, there is such a contrast, in this chapter and the previous chapter, between how poor they are for liquid assets, for buying things like school books, and how wealthy they are for creativity and love and support.

JC: This also plays into this theme that I see across the books of feeding people being part of loving them.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Feeding people as a love language. When Harry is with the Dursleys, they withhold food to punish him or he doesn't get the choicest bits of food or whatever; food is withheld from Harry, just like the love is withheld. He doesn't experience this at Hogwarts, he doesn't experience this with the Weasleys. Even later in this chapter, even though McGonagall is angry at them, she gives them a plate of sandwiches that refills itself, an endless supply of sandwiches and pumpkin juice, so food is not ever used as a punishment. Even if they miss the feast -- they're not allowed to go in for other reasons -- they are going to eat well. That idea of you're being taken care of, you're being fed, is an important theme that I've seen, at least, so far in the last couple books.

Lorrie: One thing I noticed about the series: food is such an abundant and delightful and plentiful theme. I think that's an essential ingredient for success of a beloved children's book or series, that happy comforting feeling. I think that eating while reading is something that a lot of people enjoy, a lot of children enjoy. I think being able to connect or reconnect with a story you love by recreating some of the food that the characters eat...

JC: Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: ...is an intimate way to express your love for story and to embody it, to encode the story in your sense memories. I also know that for me, if there are foods that I associate with a story - - foods that I had learned about because the character is eating them, maybe, or if I watch how the character makes it and then learn that and make it myself and then eat it and then associate that with it, or if I throw parties for other people who enjoy the story and we eat it together -- then in later times when I eat the same food, I can remember those people that I shared the story with. I can remember the story better. Those parts of the book that are associated with that eating experience, with the flavors and the memories, I remember those more clearly to the point that if I want to say... When I was a student, if I wanted to remember something in a book more clearly for a test -- if I could associate eating a certain food with that passage -- I would be more likely to remember it well and to understand it better.

JC: Oh, interesting.

Lorrie: So this whole treacle pudding -- something that I had never eaten until driven by *Harry Potter* -- I was compelled to go seek it, and then I have no idea if what I'm eating is the real thing or not.

JC: Right. Exactly.

Lorrie: This mysterious, stodgy British dessert.

JC: I think the whole butterbeer phenomenon is a great example of this, though, which... that's a whole book away. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. And chocolate frogs.

JC: And chocolate frogs, and then the Every Flavour Beans. The fact that Jelly Belly came out with Every Flavour Beans after this... There are foods that will be forever associated with this series.

Lorrie: And a totally original but accessible thing: pumpkin juice.

JC: Ah, yes.

Lorrie: "What? Pumpkins don't have juice." But it's such an easy thing to recreate in a way that we would understand. Widely beloved, it's been accepted, and we know that what it has to be is refreshing and that it's good iced.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And that it comes in these giant jugs, so you can just have as much as you want.

JC: The idea of juicing a pumpkin is just, "What the heck?" The version that they have at the amusement parks is pretty good. It's like apple juice with pumpkin spice in it. It's kind of like a pumpkin spice juice deal, which is good.

Lorrie: Yeah, it's very syrupy. It's delicious. Okay, fess up: what *Harry Potter*-related food items have you made or tried to make for parties?

JC: Oh, God, yeah, no. I have thrown multiple *Harry Potter* parties in my life, and I would say I did try to make pumpkin juice; that didn't go very well, but I put a lot of time and effort into learning how to make really good chocolate frogs, and I once made about 90 of them for a fifth-grade party. They turned out really well, too. Boy, I put a lot of work into figuring that out, but also butterbeer; all the versions of butterbeer, but a good homemade butterbeer with cream soda, butterscotch syrup, and some whipped cream on the top, and that makes kids happy for sure. Those two... I feel like there's been more than that, but those are the two that are coming to my mind. What about you?

Lorrie: Oh, God, I've done so many. I want to know: what is your chocolate frog secret? Or is that too secret and you don't want to give it away?

JC: No, it's really cool. I bought the frog molds, the little plastic ones, and finding the right kind of chocolate chip was really important. I think I ended up with milk chocolate chips, and what I ended up doing was just dropping chocolate chips into the frogs, putting it in the microwave for like 30 seconds, and then take a toothpick and stir and you have to go 15 seconds so you don't over-do the chocolate.

Lorrie: You don't scorch it.

JC: Because pouring it in didn't work, but just melting the chips in there, I figured out exactly through experimentation how many chocolate chips it would take to fill it perfectly.

Lorrie: Nice.

JC: So I put that many chocolate chips in and I would stir and I would stir, and then I would poke around to make sure that chocolate got in every little nook and cranny of the frog. Then you put it in the refrigerator and if you get it exactly right, they stay beautiful and shiny for a week.

Lorrie: Wow.

JC: Before they turn gross-looking, so that was the thing. Because I had to make 90 of them, they had to be transportable.

Lorrie: Uh-huh.

JC: But they were great, and we did a lot of taste testing of chocolate chips at my house. I bought as many brands as I could find, and we all just ate them: which one is the most comforting chocolate.

Lorrie: Yeah. And you didn't put anything in them? They were just solid chocolate?

JC: Just solid chocolate, yeah.

Lorrie: And how did you package them?

JC: I got little plastic bags, little tiny cellophane bags, and just put each one in a bag and then put a little bow on it. I thought about doing chocolate frog cards, but I ran out of time to make 90 chocolate frog cards.

Lorrie: Did you find that the milk chocolate got melty on your fingers when you were packaging?

JC: My memory is that I handled them as little as I possibly could. I just dropped them in; I didn't want them to get smudged because they were beautiful and shiny, I didn't want to touch them in a way that was... I may even have worn food-safe gloves -- those cheap, plastic gloves or something -- to make sure I didn't leave fingerprints on them. I made so many chocolate frogs. I still have those frog molds somewhere.

Lorrie: The ones I ended up doing, I think we use the same chocolate molds. If you do a Google search for a chocolate frog mold...

JC: There's one.

Lorrie: Well, yeah, and they sell them as Harry Potter Chocolate Frog molds. 'We know why you're looking for frogs. Here they are.' And I did not microwave them. I did microwave the chocolate chips in a bowl, and then I used a food paint brush to paint the nooks and crannies of each chocolate frog first so that they wouldn't get those air bubbles in them. We also did a taste test of the chocolate chips, and that was really fun to get fifth-graders over and get them to help in this very, very serious experiment. The winner there was semi-sweet Nestlé, because that had the right combination of good flavor but not too melty. The dark chocolate was a little too hard to eat, but the milk chocolate smudged in your fingers. The chocolate frog molds that you get, they're not one bite; as a child, you do have to hold them.

JC: Yeah, true.

Lorrie: So the milk chocolate was too melty. Semi-sweet Nestlé is what we settled on that held shape, that didn't melt too quickly. Then, because I was too cheap to want to make them solid

chocolate (and also, because it is hard to bite through all of that), I decided that mine had to be filled, but that would also make for a more fun experience, I thought, for the fifth graders. The vegan ones were Rice Krispies. What do they call that on baking shows? Crisped rice cereal.

JC: How did you do that? How did you get that? Did you mix it with chocolate and then just drop them in?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Oh, that sounds good.

Lorrie: Well, once I had painted the insides of the mold with chocolate so that I got the outline of the frogs, then I would mix the microwave melted chocolate with Rice Krispies and fill up the rest, because the bottoms don't have to be that smooth. That takes up a lot of volume and it makes it easier to eat. Then there would be... I'm not sure why. I guess it's lactic acid, but Pop Rocks are not vegan.

JC: Oh.

Lorrie: To get non-vegan ones, I would mix the melted chocolate with Pop Rocks, and that was very magical.

JC: Oh, that would be amazing. I was thinking that: when you were talking about filling them, Pop Rocks was the first thing I thought of, because that combination... You can even get those gourmet chocolate bars that have different things, and the ones with Pop Rocks are always incredible. The magic of it popping in your mouth is so great, and that worked out well, too, huh?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Ooh, I want to try that now.

Lorrie: But yes, the point that we started off with is that food is offered up to us, the readers, as a way to love this series and to participate and to feel the bounty that Harry receives and how creative and loving it is.

JC: But there have been entire *Harry Potter* cookbooks. I'm pretty sure I own a couple.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Fans have really, definitely, jumped on that over the years.

Lorrie: There have been several. Yeah, and the first one, the unofficial one by Dinah Bucholz, she did such a thorough job that the others, even the official ones, have been chasing her success ever since.

JC: I think that that's the one I have.

Lorrie: Yeah, it's so good. And the amazing thing for me: she's an observant Jew. There's a lot of foods that she made that she can't eat.

JC: Wow.

Lorrie: But she's faithfully recreated the recipes and wrote them out for people. She has no idea what they taste like.

JC: Amazing. I'm sure she had some folks come in and do the taste testing for her. That's great.

Lorrie: Yeah, however she did it.

JC: Amazing.

Lorrie: I don't know if she borrowed a kitchen or if it messed up hers or what.

JC: Right, yeah, exactly. That would be an issue.

Lorrie: Well, she put so much labor into that.

JC: Great. But we still have not left the Burrow, have we?

Lorrie: No, because then it takes a lot of effort to leave the Burrow in the morning.

JC: That was so relatable. That whole thing where they had to go back several times because people kept forgetting things; that happens in my life on a weekly basis, so that made me laugh. I thought, of course, you have all these kids, they're going to forget things; and then, of course, there's the moment where Ginny forgets the diary, and my first thought there was, 'Wow, this would have been such a different series if she hadn't remembered it at the last moment.' Oh, another moment, though, that stands out to me is that they've magically enlarged the inside of the Ford Anglia, and everyone seems to know this except for Mrs. Weasley, which made me think of your comments about how this is such an awful representation of this relationship. Why is he lying to her about this? Ugh. Yeah, that's frustrating.

Lorrie: Yeah, "Not a word to Molly." That triggers me, the whole conspiracy between children and one parent against the other. That's not helping anyone.

JC: Yeah, exactly.

Lorrie: Anyway... so they get to the station, and brilliantly, these two 12-year-olds think, "The car, the car," so they get it to work. And then this piece of writing is gorgeous to me: "They shot up through the clouds. A minute later, they burst out into a blaze of sunlight. It was a different world. The wheels of the car skimmed the sea of fluffy cloud, the sky a bright, endless blue under the blinding white sun." I have found that some of this author's most beautiful writing has been from the perspective of flying overhead. We'll see this in other chapters, too, in other volumes. Air is really her element. It's gorgeous.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: But the perspective that she gives is really only a perspective that you could have as a human if you live in an era where you've flown on an airplane, and I see that experience in this author's writing and how wondrous she must have found it. Harry's never been on an airplane before, but look: he's getting to experience this now.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And then we have an odd, positive, blissful use of the word 'fat'.

JC: A rare moment.

Lorrie: Yeah. The kids have a fat pack of toffees in the glove compartment, and that's just such a positive, happy road trip thing. Yeah, it only conveys bounty, and it's yet another sugar association with joy, which this series does not apologize for.

JC: This whole road trip feel is something that I think is really fun in this scene. At least, it feels very realistic. Well, first of all, when they can't get through the barrier, that they don't stop and think; they just do what children would do, which is to try to solve the problem in a way that makes sense to them in the moment, and then in retrospective, they're like, "What was I thinking?" Surely, Ron's parents are going to come back out through the barrier and go get in the car to go home. Somehow, that never occurred to them, but it just seems very realistic for kids this age, which is great. Also, Ron's insistence there that underage wizards are allowed to use magic in an emergency and there's some law about this, and I thought, "That's interesting." Yeah, maybe we'll see some more of that later on. That idea that at first you're excited to be on a road trip; you're like, "Wow, eight hours in the car, this is great!" You have snacks and you have tunes, everything's great. You're looking around, the scenery is great; then they hit a point where it stops being comfortable and they're thirsty, and I keep thinking that there's no bathroom break.

Lorrie: I thought of that, too!

JC: You don't have a place to stop to go to the bathroom and get more snacks or whatever. That's part of the fun of the road trip. There's no Buc-ee's in the sky and all of that, so that's realistic, too.

Lorrie: If there's nothing to eat or drink, then they don't have to make as many pit stops.

JC: Probably true, probably true.

Lorrie: That has occurred to me. Can you tell that we're parents? We have to think about pit stops.

JC: Yes. Oh, my God, you have to think about all this stuff, exactly. But it's funny that it soon becomes boring and uncomfortable, because that's also the way that has worked.

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: And the fact that they managed to fly all the way to Hogwarts. It's a story, but I just thought they just... they're above the clouds. Every time they dip down, they make sure they can still see the train.

Lorrie: Oh, my God, it's so great.

JC: The fact that they finally dipped down, "Oh, there's Hogwarts." Okay, that's one of those writer things where you're like, "I don't know how they're going to get from point A to point B. It'll just happen. It's fine," and then you go on... It was like the writer was just like, "Look, don't worry too hard about how they navigated there. They just got there, okay? Just go north. It's fine." Then that did make me think about the fact that Hogwarts is protected from being seen by Muggles by a lot of different charms, but that made me go off on this tangent. At this moment I had to actually put the book down, and I thought, "Does that work for satellites? Would Hogwarts show up on Google Maps? Certainly, there would be wizards in the spy agencies of other countries who would be able to program the satellite to go through..." All these thoughts about how hidden Hogwarts is anyway. Certainly, it's hidden from Muggles walking up to it, but if

you're flying over Hogwarts and you look down, would you see something? I don't know. I had a lot of thoughts about that.

Lorrie: But then people who do things like make satellites: are any of them Muggles?

JC: Yeah, I'm wondering.

Lorrie: Yeah. So here we are, wondering.

JC: I don't know. They don't do a lot of math at Hogwarts, so I'm expecting that probably there are a lot of Muggles who run them.

Lorrie: Oh.

JC: They really don't do very much math at Hogwarts, so I worry about any engineers that come out of the magical world, to be honest.

Lorrie: Yikes. So here we have what I feel is a perfect sentence: "'Uh, oh,' said Ron into the silence." The car has run out of magic or gas or whatever is making it run, and this set piece follows: this ever-worsening catastrophe, this farce of everything that can go wrong for these two boys, as the car plummets toward the Earth. Yikes.

JC: She described that as being a mile high, so the fact that they pretty much just plummet straight down. Again, we're suspending our disbelief that they didn't just get killed when this car hit the ground.

Lorrie: And then the parent moment for me comes once the car lands: "The car, however, had reached the end of its tether. With two sharp clunks, the doors flew open and Harry felt his seat tip sideways: Next thing he knew, he was sprawled on the damp ground. Loud thuds told him that the car was ejecting their luggage from the trunk." Oh, I know that fantasy. That is such a parent fantasy, when you're driving somewhere and you didn't even want to be driving your kid and their friends. They made you, and then they're being so noisy and distracting, and all you want to do is eject them or silence them or something. I love this moment when the car goes feral. It has had enough.

JC: That idea of the sentience of objects that have been permeated by magic is really interesting, too. This isn't the first time that we see it, and it's just a part of the world. It's not remarked on, or it's not a surprise; it's like, 'Oh, yeah, of course the car is sentient. Yeah. Yeah. It's pissed off, and now it's going to roll off into the woods, and we'll see it again later.' It becomes this wild thing that has a life of its own now. That's another interesting thing that pops up in this series a bit in ways that I find surprising, and they're unremarked on.

Lorrie: You know what's like that? Printers. 'Why is it printing now? Why did it take two minutes to start printing last time? I don't know; nobody knows.' 'Why is it saying there's a jam? There's no jam.' 'Why is it now -- just turn it off and on again.'

JC: 'Turn it off and on again,' exactly. Also, the amount of things that Ron is able to do before his wand breaks. He's able to tap the car with his wand and make it function. I don't know what that means. Has he seen his father driving it? Did he really observe when Fred and George were driving it? Has he had other experiences in this car? He just knows what he's doing.

Lorrie: He knows what to do, yeah. He's quite competent.

JC: Exactly, which is very interesting.

Lorrie: Until he starts thwacking his wand on the dashboard. Oh, no.

JC: Yeah. But then we have the awful moment when his wand breaks, and I think that we don't really... At this point as a reader, the first time I read this, I didn't really understand the significance of that.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's a much bigger deal than it even feels like in the moment.

Lorrie: So then my guy appears.

JC: Oh, right, so they had imagined this glorious moment when they sail in and they land the car, and it's the most unglamorous thing ever.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: With their tails tucked between their legs, metaphorically, they drag all their stuff up at the castle. They missed the Sorting, they missed the welcoming feast and then....

Lorrie: Yes. These two miserable little children at least are trying to get comfort from fantasizing about all the terrible things that might have happened to Snape, which would make up for a lot of bad things in life. They go on and on, imagining terrible things that might have happened to him, and when they say: "Maybe he's ill! Maybe he's left, or he might have been sacked! 'Or maybe,' said a very cold voice right behind them, 'He's waiting to hear why you two didn't arrive on the school train.'" That is a perfect Snape entrance.

JC: "He's right behind me, isn't he?"

Lorrie: Oh, my God. Right when they've reached the great pinnacle of ecstasy imagining bad things for him, and he's heard it all. He's heard them getting happier and happier about this. He's always announced with this thrill of horror; oh, he's caught you at your worst, and you only have yourself to blame. He's always exactly where you don't want him to be but also where you need him, and it's just the most satisfying entrance from my guy. I love that. I'm a little biased: he is a perfect character. I love him. All right, you better start talking before I just say I love him over and over again.

JC: Well, we get another mention of Harry's suspicion that Snape can read minds, and those obviously stand out more on repeat reads than they did before. But it makes me wonder: if he did use Legilimency, what did he see? How did this illuminate the situation? I wonder.

Lorrie: I imagine he just got a massive wall of guilt from both of them.

JC: Ah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah, and that's probably likely, or of terror at that point. The other thing, though, is that he holds up a newspaper, and the headlines are all about the Ford Anglia. I don't know how newspapers work in the magical world, but that is awfully fast; it has interviews from multiple people around the country. How did they get this paper out that fast? I don't know. Again, it's magic. We're not supposed to question it.

Lorrie: And then when Harry and Ron get in trouble, Harry does think, "Oh, if anyone found out Mr. Weasley had bewitched the car..."

JC: Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. There is a way in which this is all Arthur Weasley's fault.

JC: True.

Lorrie: He probably shouldn't have done that in the first place, and then he probably shouldn't have shown the kids what an appealing thought it was to drive the car, and he probably shouldn't have given them enough experience to know how to do it.

JC: True, true.

Lorrie: And how are they going to explain this? As it turns out, it's so obvious what had happened that, mercifully, Harry and Ron do not have to explain it.

JC: Yeah, which is very interesting. Yeah.

Lorrie: And then, oh, there's that awful and glorious moment where McGonagall says, "Why didn't you send us a letter by owl?"

JC: Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: Now that you... yeah.

JC: All these little moments. Harry has so many little moments of, "Oh, oh," throughout this discussion of realizing just how much they screwed up. I have memories of being, maybe not twelve, but being nine or ten, of making terrible decisions and not realizing how terrible they were until it was too late to get out of it, and then being like, "Why did I do that?"

Lorrie: "What the heck?"

JC: It's so relatable.

Lorrie: Yeah, it's perfect. I'm so impressed. Just being made to feel stupid by McGonagall is so iconic.

JC: On the other hand, though, they were given a chance to explain themselves. Snape didn't want to hear it, but McGonagall said, "Explain," and they explained; she just sat there and listened, and then Dumbledore as well. That is incredibly such a relief to me as a reader, but also that idea of Harry's never been given a chance to explain. Always, weird things would happen around him, and it's like, "Must be your fault; you're getting punished," and that was the way that it was going to go with Snape, too. Harry was used to that, but that feeling of, "An adult is going to let me explain and at least let me tell my side of the story?" That's huge for Harry, really.

Lorrie: And then the delightful thing to me: Harry is "making it sound as though he and Ron had happened to find the flying car parked outside the station. He knew Dumbledore would see through this at once, but Dumbledore asked no questions about the car."

JC: Right, yeah. Everybody knows what the deal with the car is. They're just like, "We're just going to leave that one alone."

Lorrie: He says, "I will be writing to both your families tonight." Arthur, you might be in trouble. This is one of those behind-the-scenes adult conflicts we see, where Snape is really agitated about wanting Ron and Harry to be expelled for this, because he's really worried that the kind of thing that would happen to Slytherins who did such a thing won't happen to these Gryffindors. Also, he would just be thrilled to not have to look at Harry's face, and he is quite crestfallen that this power does not belong to him. But I'm thinking that knowing that Arthur is going to get properly pulled to account for what he just made happen, I think that probably helped Snape because there's really only so much you can blame the 12-year-olds for in this.

JC: True. That's true. And, too, I don't know what an expelling offense at Hogwarts would actually be. This gets thrown around quite a bit, but do we see anyone get expelled ever in this series? In order to get expelled from a school, you have to do something really serious.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Not only putting yourself in harm but putting others in harm, and it has to be something unredeemable in the sense that the school is looking at the situation and saying, "We tried everything we could to help this kid and nothing we have done has worked, and this kid needs help that we can't provide." That's what being expelled means. So that idea that there's this fear hanging over the kids that you're going to get expelled from Hogwarts, I don't know what you would... Not even Tom Riddle got expelled from Hogwarts. What would you have to do? What about Hagrid, though? Did he get expelled?

Lorrie: Oh. No, you're right.

JC: And his wand snapped. That's almost like...

Lorrie: And we find that out later in this volume.

JC: Oh, that's true. That does happen in this book. Yeah. Sorry, listeners. We just blanked on that.

Lorrie: No, but that happens. Hagrid, because of Dumbledore, continues as such a powerful presence at Hogwarts that it's not so much being expelled as a demotion. It's a change in class status.

JC: It has to be something big. With your wand snapped, there's no indication that you'd ever be able to go get another one. That's your whole life getting changed, and it maps onto... We talk a lot about the school-to-prison pipeline in this country, the way that schools treat particularly boys of color in ways that make them so much more likely to end up in prison, and that ending up in prison as a young person is the equivalent of having your wand snapped in a lot of ways. It's really difficult for people to come back and rebuild their lives after that, and it's a systemic thing that's done that to you. It's not your fault necessarily; it's a systemic issue that we see people being funneled in this direction. But I just think about what would it even mean to be expelled from Hogwarts, and I guess we're going to talk about that later on in this book.

Lorrie: I think it has to do with if you're a danger to the lives of the other people at the school.

JC: Right, and then the idea that you having magic -- continuing to have access to magic -- is going to make it worse. There's nothing we can do to reform this person.

Lorrie: Well, another comparison I'm thinking of is: if you get into a car accident, that means that your license is taken away and you're never allowed to drive again. 'No, I'm sorry, you're a danger. You cannot exercise this privilege safely.' We do get Lupin expelled as a teacher, or he would have been if he hadn't resigned. The other times we know about are when we get Grindelwald expelled from Durmstrang, which is a more extreme case because you have to be really horrible to be expelled there.

JC: Oh, wow. Yeah.

Lorrie: And then there's some uncertainty, extracanonically, about Newt Scamander, who either was or wasn't expelled from Hogwarts, depending on which version of *Fantastic Beasts* you're going by, but that's something where he took it on himself voluntarily to protect somebody else. So yeah, Ron and Harry assume they're going to be expelled in another very 12-year-old way of being defeated before anyone has said anything. And then yeah, as you mentioned before, they get that forgiveness of this self-filling plate of sandwiches, two silver goblets -- not even like little red plastic cups...

JC: Right.

Lorrie: And a jug of iced pumpkin juice, and they eat as much as they want. McGonagall cannot be that mad at them. The thing that I love is that this all takes place on Snape's desk. Is that really the room where you want to be eating after a day of having no food or drink? It's the nicest thing that's ever happened in Snape's office.

JC: Yeah, that is true, isn't it?

Lorrie: But no, they're very hungry, so they get this hospitable, nurturing moment in Snape's office with no Snape in it. And then... is it really necessary, when they go up to Gryffindor Tower, for the password portrait to be the 'very' fat woman in the pink silk dress? That's another one of those, 'Do I trust this?' It's neutral. Maybe the word 'very' isn't necessary. Anyway, it's a moment of unease.

JC: Right, but it stands out because of... Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But right, the portrait... they don't know the password because they missed it.

Lorrie: But then, after all of that that they've been through, they show up in Gryffindor Tower and they're basically heroes.

JC: Yes.

Lorrie: And that's when... okay, we realize it's over. They're past danger now; but really, what they've done, it is the stuff of legend. Oh, my goodness.

JC: True.

Lorrie: And this really does become a story that people talk about for ages afterward. This really is one of those, "I can't believe we did that."

JC: Yeah, like those Twitter threads of, "What's the craziest thing that ever happened at your high school?" This would be one of them.

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah. Middle school.

JC: Yeah. Yeah, exactly, middle school at this point. I like the fact that this chapter ends on that note, because otherwise... oh, they've gotten in so much trouble. They've gotten Mr. Weasley in trouble. They almost died; the Whomping Willow almost killed them. All this stuff is bad. Snape is already on their case, but yet they come back and the other kids are like, "Yeah, that was amazing." They get that moment they had thought about at the beginning, which was, "We're going to come in, we're going to land this car, and people are going to be in awe of us." They also recognize that this is what the staff does not want, because obviously, they don't want to encourage this kind of behavior. But then that Hogwarts gossip tree works its magic and everybody knows, even though the staff tried to keep it quiet. Everybody knows.

Lorrie: It's also sweeter now because they know that they don't fully deserve this.

JC: True.

Lorrie: They have come very close to paying quite a heavy price, but yeah, it gets to restore to them the glory that they had forgotten about by this point.

JC: Oh, and then there's a moment a little earlier before, where we have the impression, at least, that Harry talks McGonagall out of taking away House points.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: By reminding her that this technically happened before term started, and she has a little smile on her face. She's like, "All right, then." That actually makes a difference, because if they had gone in and they'd already lost 50 House points apiece, that would have been different. They would've had a different reception. But then there's the feeling of, they got away with it. Everything's okay.

Lorrie: Yeah, and there's also that weird moment where Snape is protective of the Whomping Willow, which we find out later he has reason to not necessarily feel very warm and fuzzy about, but he's mad at the boys for messing up something that's magically valuable.

JC: Yeah, which we -- you're right -- will learn more about.

Lorrie: So when we leave these boys at the end of this chapter, they have somehow gotten from the Burrow to Hogwarts. It's been a very long day. It hasn't been boring.

JC: What must have been going through Hermione's head on the entire train ride?

Lorrie: Oooh.

JC: She's waiting for her friends to join her so they can sit in the compartment and they can think about the coming year, and she can tell them all the books she's read over the summer, whatever. They're not there; then she gets to Hogwarts and they're not there, and then they're not in the welcoming feast, and then all these rumors start swirling around. How pissed off must Hermione have been? And we see that at the end: the only two people in all of Gryffindor Tower who don't look excited or impressed are Percy and Hermione, and Hermione worried all day.

Lorrie: I can just picture her: "What are they doing? It's so stupid. Whatever it is, I know it's stupid. I know it's dangerous. I know!"

JC: "They're going to get expelled!"

Lorrie: Right. "If I were there, I would take care of it. Without me, what are they going to do?" And then, I bet you that all of the Weasleys and Hermione probably heard from Molly and Arthur that the car is gone. Oh, no. Did they hear? Maybe they didn't.

JC: Ron gets a Howler.

Lorrie: But that hasn't happened yet.

JC: But I do wonder: at what point did everyone find out this was going on? Were they still on the train when people figured this out? There wasn't much time. They get to the school... but it's in the paper, so does this information somehow magically appear? "Wow, there's a magical car that left King's Cross Station. It seems to be heading towards Hogwarts. Who is missing from the train?" It seems like someone could have figured that out.

Lorrie: All right. What I'm piecing together is, although Mr. and Mrs. Weasley could have notified the kids on the train, they didn't; but by the time they got off the train and this newspaper edition was already out and Percy and Hermione saw the headline, their worst suspicions were confirmed.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: No wonder Percy's angry.

JC: And he's the prefect of Gryffindor and this happened on his watch. And his dad is involved? Yeah. Oh, Percy. Poor Percy. Prefects Who Gained Power, I tell you what.

Lorrie: Not enough power. Yeah.

JC: He's seeing his ambitions and dreams going down the drain.

Lorrie: And then... next chapter, we're going to talk about Gilderoy Lockhart.

JC: Oh, boy.

Lorrie: Oh, boy.

JC: I'm really curious to see how I'm going to react, so I'm not even going to guess now. I'm just going to let it happen, and then we'll see what comes up when we talk about our next episode.

Lorrie: 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 After 2020 is produced and edited by Lorrie Kim and Caroline Rinaldy. Original music was composed by C.L. Smith. Thank you for listening.