

Transcript

Episode 2.7

Book 2, Chapter 7: Mudbloods and Murmurs

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 7: Mudbloods and Murmurs.

Lorrie: Hello, JC.

JC: Hello.

Lorrie: We're talking about Chapter 7 of *Chamber of Secrets* today, Mudbloods and Murmurs. Are you ready for this?

JC: Yes.

Lorrie: So the Quidditch training season begins. Draco is racist. Ron vomits slugs. Harry hears a terrifying voice. This is when the trouble starts. I find that this is one of those chapters that operates on so many different levels all at once. There's the surface level, where Colin Creevey gets to encourage Harry to info dump about Quidditch, and there's the continuing construction of Lockhart as this problem on the surface that everybody at Hogwarts has to adjust to. Then there's a deeper level about the ongoing tensions between Gryffindor and Slytherin, which is related to tensions about blood purity and the war. Then there's a deeper level still about what's going on with the Defense Against the Dark Arts position. And then the deepest mystery is this threatening voice that only Harry can hear. And from my Snape-y perspective, this is one of those chapters where Snape isn't in it, but he's all over the background of it. So, what did you notice?

JC: Well, first of all, I remember there being a fan -- I don't know if it was a fan theory or just an observation at some point that chapter seven tends to be the chapter when the author introduces the main problem, I guess, the main conflict that we're going to spend the rest of the book trying to resolve. That clearly happened here, and I had completely forgotten about it. When we get to that, I'll talk about that a little bit more. The title of the chapter: it's interesting, to me, that the tease of the word 'mudblood' first of all (which we find out is actually a slur), and then the tease of murmurs. What does that mean? It's an interesting choice of title. I spent some

time thinking about, 'Why would she choose to put the slur in the chapter title?' But I honestly don't know. But, I guess, jumping right in with the beginning of this chapter: Colin Creevey, Fanboy. He's just fun. He's a great tool for narrative drop, of course, but also his endless, bouncy hero worship of Harry is really adorable.

Lorrie: Yeah, and annoying.

JC: And annoying, but also anyone who's worked with small children has had that experience of having a small child latch on to you and just be like, "You're the one that I am going to tell. You look like you're nice, you're listening to me. I'm going to tell you all about this really obscure video game that I love."

Lorrie: The plot of it.

JC: "And we're going to be here for an hour," and you're just like, "Oh, God," after a while. "You're not even my kid. Stop it." So, yes, I sympathize with Harry.

Lorrie: And you can't be too mean, because there's no guile in this person at all.

JC: Yeah, exactly.

Lorrie: But really, honestly, you've tripped over them one too many times.

JC: And it's just like, "Oh, my God." It's a test of your patience. The description of the photo that Colin shows him is really funny.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: The idea that he didn't even get Harry in the photo. You can just see Lockhart trying to drag Harry into the picture and then just giving up and slumping against the wall. That's really funny.

Lorrie: Yeah, there's a truth there that's in the photo that it doesn't sound like it was happening in reality.

JC: But I like the fact that that's what was captured, that idea that photos are capturing something for us to remember, and this is set at a time when everybody wasn't running around with a camera in their hand at all times. The idea that what was captured here was the reluctance of Harry to be dragged into the frame by Lockhart -- literally, Harry reluctant to be dragged into Lockhart's world -- and Lockhart continually trying to bring Harry into his orbit for his own purposes. It's just interesting the photo is just a beautiful little image of that struggle that's happening all over the book.

Lorrie: And the guilelessness of Colin Creevey bringing that to Harry to sign.

JC: Harry's arm is in it, and that's when he's like, "Will you sign it, Harry?"

Lorrie: Yeah, and it turns out to be: what is Harry looking at?

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: We get Snape's signed note that Slytherin is permitted to use the Quidditch pitch that the Gryffindors have already reserved, and that's the first moment when he's not in this chapter but he's behind the scenes. Okay. You're not supposed to do that, but he has superseded.

JC: That whole setup to that: it's interesting to me because, first of all, Wood wakes up Harry at what seems like dawn, and then he spends an hour talking to them. They could have been out on the Quidditch pitch. They could have gotten a practice then, but no. And then there's the moment where Harry is feeling guilty, because they lost the game last year because he was unconscious because he was busy defeating Voldemort. That's why he was unconscious, so there's all these little interesting things that happen leading up to that. They finally get out on the Quidditch pitch, and then we have Colin Creevey taking photos and "Who's this kid," blah blah blah, and then the Slytherins come out on the field. There's this interesting buildup to that, and it feels like the author was really building up to something there, something monumental, beyond just a practice. It worked really well, but on the literal side, I'm like, "Oh, come on, Wood. You could've gotten your practice in." Yeah.

Lorrie: And it's also an affectionate skewering of sports culture.

JC: Definitely.

Lorrie: It's so affectionate that I almost thought maybe she has been an athlete, but I know she wasn't. I know she was more like me. If I had been writing this, it would not have been as affectionate. But the single-mindedness with which Oliver drones on and on, and the way that Harry does seriously think that fighting Voldemort should've come second to his duties to the team.

JC: Exactly. Yeah, so the Slytherins come out on the field and they have this special note from Snape.

Lorrie: Yeah. And what else do they have?

JC: No girls on their team, is something else that they have.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And that felt like a really pointed remark from the author.

Lorrie: Yeah, it's sort of showing that there are many different strategies to Quidditch, and they're choosing one specific strategy only. It is a judgment, obviously.

JC: It is very interesting to me that the author later said that she hated writing every single Quidditch scene she ever wrote, but it's very interesting to me that she intentionally chose to create a sport where there were no gender differences. There's not a girls' team and a boys' team; it's just the Quidditch team. Everybody who is there is capable of playing. It's rough, but that's okay. Usually, we reserve the rough sports for boys. There are girls there, too, so I find that really interesting because there aren't really any sports that I can think of that are like that where there's not a gender divide. I was struggling to think of something and I really couldn't, and the first thing that came to my mind though as another sport in a fictional context: in the movie *Starship Troopers*, (which God, that movie's actually maybe contemporary with this book, now that I think about it) which famously has Neil Patrick Harris in it. It's set in the future, and it opens with these cadets at a military academy playing football together; it's American football, but the team is one hundred percent co-ed. There's boys and girls, everybody playing together, everybody getting hit, all the rough stuff about football. Then the famous scene of that is they go into the locker room and they're all showering together; no one's blinking at the fact that they're all in this room naked showering together, and it sets up this movie as 'this future is different'.

We're not thinking about gender and sex in the same way as we do, so it's ironic on multiple levels that Quidditch is set up in a similar way. They're all in the same locker room hanging out, talking about this. It's not like there's any distinction between who goes in this locker room and who goes in that locker room. I find that really wild that the author's created this sport that doesn't differentiate between boys and girls playing it. The locker rooms are the same; there's no separation of sexes here at all, and yet the author goes on to... Yeah, it's really interesting. Okay, I made my whole Quidditch spiel.

Lorrie: Yeah, the boys-only Quidditch team and their new Seeker, and the seven Nimbus 2001s that his father has gifted to the team. I remember that detail that, in Harry Potter's world, the best broom from last year is old news now. People went wild for how genius, how authentic, that was, and it is.

JC: It's like the iPhone. 'What phone do you have?'

Lorrie: 'We didn't even know! We thought we were so happy with the other one,' and how much of a hero Harry was last year for having the 2000 is so outstripped now. And then Malfoy is taunting the Gryffindor team, saying, "Oh, well, I'm sure you could sell off your old brooms, and you could barely pay for anything because they're so worthless." It looks like he's flaunting his wealth. That's one thing that he does have over them. What impressions are people getting about Malfoy and the Slytherins at this point? They're coming off as extremely unpleasant and elitist and cheaters, and this is the point where I would do an exercise with the fifth graders that I once worked with and I would ask, "What's your opinion of how the Slytherins are handling this, and of Draco showing up and having bought his way onto the team and how that would make him feel and these expensive brooms?" They would see it from the Gryffindor point of view, like you're supposed to. And then I would ask them, "Why do you think Snape wrote that note when the Gryffindors had already booked the pitch?" Obviously, it would feel really unpleasant of Snape. I would say, "Did Draco buy his way onto the team, or could there be another reason that Lucius Malfoy bought all these brooms?" Then I said, "Why is Draco only becoming a Seeker now instead of first year, like Harry?" Then at that point, I'd actually have these printed out on little scraps of parchment and I would have a fifth-grader read out quotes. I would send them back to *Sorcerer's Stone*, where Wood is looking at Harry and saying, "Oh, light, speedy. We'll have to get him a decent broom, professor; a Nimbus 2000," and then McGonagall says, "I shall speak to Professor Dumbledore and see if we can't bend the first-year rule. Heaven knows we need a better team than last year. *Flattened* at that last match by Slytherin; I couldn't look Severus Snape in the face for weeks." So we see here who's doing the rule breaking, only they have some power so they can get away with it. Then I asked the fifth graders, "Where do people get their brooms from for Quidditch?" They think about that, and then I say, "Who paid for Harry's broom?" And then I have them go back to *Sorcerer's Stone* again and read the passage about how the House Cup was announced at the end of *Sorcerer's Stone*. The way that the win was given to Gryffindor away from Slytherin, but done in a way that was suspenseful and had a good guy and a bad guy, and that Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff joined Gryffindor in cheering the defeat of Slytherin. After I had the kids read that and also had them read the line from the supply list, specifying that first-years are not allowed their own brooms, then I say, "Remember how Slytherin, until Harry came, had won the House Cup for six years in a row? Why do you think Slytherin had put so much emphasis on winning the House Cup?" I had them think about that, and then I say, "How does the rest of the school view Slytherins, especially after Slytherin was the house most associated with Voldemort?" They discussed that, and then I say, "What about if

you're an innocent first-year Slytherin who had nothing to do with that? What if you were that kid's parents? What if you have a 10-year-old, almost 11, who was about to go to Hogwarts and you're pretty sure your kid's going to get sorted into Slytherin and you're worried? You're scared that your kid is going to get treated badly through no fault of their own. Who would you talk to if you were those parents?" I remember the fifth-graders saying the headmaster, so I said, "Okay, so you're a Slytherin parent and you've gone to talk to Dumbledore about this. Would you feel reassured after talking to Dumbledore?" They all sat there and they were like, "No, because Dumbledore shows favoritism. You're not supposed to, but he favors Gryffindor." These 10-year-olds are getting indignant, and then I say, "Who do you think the parents would talk to that could make them feel better?" and that's the point at which the 10-year-olds are gasping and they say, "Snape!" And I said, "Yeah." There was a six-year streak of winning the House Cup. Snape was between 25 and 30 years old at that time. So then I'm having them think, "If the Headmaster is going to rig things against your house, if you do everything you can to win the points and you've been telling points all year and you should have won the House Cup, and then the Headmaster pulls this switch and the rest of the school is cheering along with him, there's no way that you can win." "Well, what about brooms?" "I don't know. The school bought Harry a broom, and it was a better broom. It's better than what Draco has at home." "Well, I guess we'll buy our own brooms, because nobody's going to help. It's rigged." Yeah, that's always a really fun exercise to do with kids reading this. First, it's about how things look different from whichever side you're on, because all of these conflicts are so real at that age. There's so many politics happening in a grade school classroom, and a lot of it does have to do with wealth and privilege and race and tension between parents. Then I make them see that's what an author can do. By writing these same details, and then if you look at it from one point of view, you get this and then you look at it from another point of view... It's all there if you look at it, but that's what you do when you go back to other parts of what you've already read. Write down the page numbers. This is evidence; you're building an argument. Re-read that. "Remember that?" "Oh, yeah." Because they will, at that age, remember, "Oh, yeah, we read that part." Well, you have to go back and find where it is in the text and write it down and quote it. Once you have all those parts and you put them together and you've put them in order to build your case, then you see how it's done and this teaches you how to be a reader. This is something that is harder to teach. First of all, when you're teaching a large class of grade schoolers, it's hard to teach them how to be a reader this way because there's just so many of them, and I was working with four or five kids. Obviously much easier, but it's also often harder to do this with most texts because they're not as deliberately designed. The *Harry Potter* series is deliberately designed to be educational this way, to teach people how to be mystery solvers, showing people that being a literary analyst, being a critical reader, is actually the exact same thing as being a mystery solver: noticing hints, putting them in order, making arguments. This series, especially, rewards you every time you make a good connection. "Oh, actually..." and when you go back and you remember and you put things together... *gasps* That moment of, "Hey, that makes sense. That is how people behave. It might not be how you want to behave, but it is how you do behave." And even if you manage to rise above, you still feel that way. This is partly what I really love about this series, part of why I think when people say, "Why is this so successful? It doesn't deserve all that success." Yeah, actually I think it earned that success through this kind of methodical rewarding of sleuthing, and the reason in my mind that it works is because it all feels so authentic. The pettiness is so authentic.

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: The mixed virtue and vice of Lucius Malfoy spending an obscene amount of money on this ostentatious gift. It looks like it's only disgusting, but there's something underneath that's maybe not good, but somebody else started this and they're not pure either. So, yeah, I love this whole issue of the Slytherins cheating their way onto the field and flaunting their super expensive brooms.

JC: The thing is that... oh, my gosh. I think the first time I read this, I completely was reading it from Harry's perspective, so when Hermione says, "Oh, they had to buy their way on the team," I'd probably just believed it. Now, 20 years later, it reads completely different to me for a lot of reasons, but one of which is because I'm a parent. As a parent, this scene reads differently to me than it did 20 years ago, when I was not a parent.

Lorrie: True.

JC: Also, just thinking about what we learned about Lucius Malfoy in the beginning of this book. He's not the kind of guy who would buy his kid's way onto the team. That's not the guy that we met in Borgin and Burkes or wherever we were. This guy, he wants Draco to earn shit, and I can see him like, "If you make the team, I might reward you with this. But you've got to make the team first. Prove to me you can do it." Lucius Malfoy is not always not going to make it easy for his kid. I really believe that, so there's that. Once Draco makes the team as a second year student, he's the Seeker, and Draco turns out to be a good Seeker. Clearly, he didn't buy his way onto this team. I don't believe that at all. The idea of Lucius saying, "Okay, well they need new brooms." For all the reasons that you said, that's what a wealthy parent would do. Wealthy parents do this all the time. This is what PTAs are built on. This is the whole model, the whole awful model of school funding in the United States, is that you get your pitiful amount from the state; then if you were lucky enough to live in a suburb where you have enough wealthy parents, the PTA raises money to pay for all the extra stuff. This is like the PTA buying new brooms for the team. It's exactly the same thing. My kid goes to a wealthy suburban school district and I see this shit happening all the time. In fact, my family, we do this shit. We have, absolutely. My kid is in band. We have donated probably six cymbals to the band over the course of the last year, and we're talking 100 bucks each. These are not cheap.

Lorrie: Oh, God. Yeah.

JC: But when a cymbal breaks, the band program doesn't have money to buy a new one. And if your kid is whacking on a piece of metal with a stick -- there have been incidents of cymbals, pieces and chunks of metal flying off and injuring kids like shrapnel because they're hitting them really hard -- yeah, we're going to spend a hundred bucks to buy a new cymbal so nobody gets hurt. We look like the Malfoys, probably, from some perspective of, yeah, we keep buying cymbals and our kid is playing cymbals, right? But I get it. I get that from that parent perspective, and if you have the resources and you're like, "My kid is in this spot and there's no money to do this, but if I give the money, then all of these kids get to have a better experience, including my kid." He didn't just buy one for Draco. He bought them for the whole team. Anyway, I have a totally different perspective on that now than I think I did before.

Lorrie: Well, we don't have evidence from the text about whether Draco actually bought his way onto the team or not, or whether Lucius bought it or not. We don't know if he tried out first. What we do know is that Hermione suggests that Draco had to buy his way onto the team, and Draco has a look of self-doubt, so it's possible. It's possible that Lucius bought his way onto the team and Draco knows it. It's possible that Lucius didn't, but Draco didn't have the reassuring talk with

his father to be certain. It's possible that Draco should have been self-confident, but there's enough pressure between him and his dad that he doubts himself. But definitely, there's something happening to undermine Draco's self-confidence.

JC: Or a fourth option there is that, because he's siloed with the other Slytherins, that this is the first time maybe it's occurred to him that that's what other people are going to think.

Lorrie: Oh, uh-huh.

JC: That's kind of what I thought it was, honestly.

Lorrie: Or I suppose it could also be -- I don't believe this, but supposing he knows that Lucius didn't buy his way onto the team. But when he realizes that's what it's going to look like, it would be hard to explain or it would get into things that Slytherins are too proud to say. "Well, what do you expect us to do? The whole rest of the school has it out for us." They wouldn't want to put it that way. Yeah, it's very complicated and we don't get any more of an answer from the text than you would normally get in real life when something this complicated happens, but we do see that Lucius Malfoy has looked at the situation and concluded that, as a parent, he's about to have to get involved. Oh, boy.

JC: We haven't even gotten to the Mudblood part yet. This is great.

Lorrie: Oh, my God. Yeah, well that's how we get there.

JC: Yeah. Draco lashes out in the worst way he can imagine.

Lorrie: Yeah. Hermione hits home with that, and Draco had been feeling superior because of wealth. Now he uses the racist slur. Then when Ron's wand backfires and he tries to get Malfoy, and he ends up vomiting slugs for hours, that's one of those moments when I realized, oh, yes, this volume... One of the themes is Schadenfreude, because I have to admit Draco is right. This is the funniest thing that's ever happened.

JC: There's... yeah.

Lorrie: Oh, my God! It's so undignified. I'm sorry, no matter how angry and tense things were before, all you can do is laugh. It's one of those rare moments where actually the book is more farcical than the movie. In the movie, Draco is just laughing. In the book: "Malfoy was on all fours, banging the ground with his fists." Honestly, that's what I would be doing, too, if I were 12 and this happened.

JC: Yeah. There's so many interesting things happening in that scene. For example, everyone erupts when Malfoy says this. The Slytherins are like, "Oh, shit," and they jump to protect Malfoy, and Ron's getting...

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah.

JC: And Harry and Hermione don't understand the implication. They're just looking around, like, "Whoa." It reminded me of -- we've talked a lot about how you find that Hermione's story reflects the Immigrant experience of coming into the situation and not fully having all the cultural details. That made me think of that.

Lorrie: Yeah. "What's going on here?"

JC: *Everyone's mad, and it seems to be on my behalf. What's happening?" And how terrifying that would be.

Lorrie: Yeah. And nobody's saying, "Why? What's wrong with saying that word?" No, everybody knows what's wrong.

JC: Yeah, so it's interesting that Ron's reaction to defend Hermione is that strong. That's the great thing about Ron. He's just the ride-or-die friend. He's going to go down before... yeah, so I love that we see that part of him here. The other thing that stands out to me about this scene is there's that moment when they're trying to get Ron out of there and he's vomiting up slugs, and Colin comes over and then Colin goes, "Oh, Harry, can you hold him still?" He wants to take a picture of the slugs coming out, and that made me think, oh, God. If this had happened in a modern time, every one of those Slytherins would've whipped out their phone. The fact that it can become a story -- and the Slytherins are going to tell this story forever, how funny it was -- but there's no evidence, other than them telling the story. That's what it used to be like for kids, right? You would do something horrifically embarrassing and humiliate yourself and people would tell the story, but there weren't eight videos of it from different angles that went viral. That sets this in such a different time than I think kids live in now.

Lorrie: Right, and then it would be reported that, "Well, it was in response to somebody using a slur." "Well, that's 'he said, he said.' We can't prove that."

JC: Right. Can I also say that the idea of vomiting up slugs, that's one of the grossest things I can think of. That's so gross.

Lorrie: It's so disgusting.

JC: You know what you feel like when you're about to throw up and your stomach's just continually feeling like that, and slugs are coming out? I can't fathom anything much more disgusting than that, so poor Ron.

Lorrie: Oy. Yeah, and he's just at some point stoically accepting that this is just going to be taking a while.

JC: Yeah. Even Hermione is like, "Hagrid will know how to fix this," and then there's the moment they get to Hagrid's hut and Hermione's like, "I guess it just has to run its course," with a look of 'oh, I can't imagine' on her face. Oh, no.

Lorrie: And then we get the marvelous example of Hagrid being Lockhart's latest victim.

JC: Oh, yes. Yes, yes.

Lorrie: And where the sight of 12-year-olds vomiting slugs is so wonderful and peaceful and calm, compared to Lockhart who just left.

JC: Oh, my gosh.

Lorrie: And I love how emphatic this is to say: "It was most unlike Hagrid to criticize a Hogwarts teacher."

JC: Yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Lorrie: Really, Lockhart is beyond, and that's another moment where Snape is not present but he is, because that's the example of somebody that Hagrid wouldn't criticize even though you would think that he has every reason to. If Hagrid won't criticize Snape, but he's this disgusted with Lockhart? Okay, that's saying something.

JC: Right, exactly. That's really saying something, and I wrote a note about that, too. But the fact that Hagrid has dropped some of the teacher-student boundary with them: he teases Harry several times, he's honest with him about Lockhart, he shows them the pumpkins he's illegally engorged.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He's blurring the line between teacher and student in a way that -- We're going to learn more about Hagrid obviously in this book, so it kind of makes sense, but also it felt a bit... From a teacher perspective, I was like, 'Oh, Hagrid. What are you doing? No!'

Lorrie: Well, he isn't a teacher yet, though.

JC: You're right. I guess he's not a teacher, yeah. I can't help but think of him as one, but yeah.

Lorrie: Right. No, he's the groundskeeper.

JC: Yeah. But I guess there's still that idea if you're an adult who works in a school, there are certain boundaries that you keep in place between you and students, and he's starting to ease those a bit. But then again, most of the kids... he doesn't have relationships with other people, and these kids are special. It's interesting. It's very interesting.

Lorrie: Yeah, and he's counting on them to keep his secret.

JC: True, true. This is why you have those boundaries as an adult, because you don't put that responsibility on children. You just don't do that.

Lorrie: But on the other hand, they get so much from him because he's willing to tell them stuff that the other adults should be telling the kids, but don't and won't.

JC: True.

Lorrie: Yeah. Anyway, this is Hagrid's whole in-between status as a character, his function.

JC: Oh, the other thing that he says here: this is when we get that first hint that the Defense Against the Dark Arts position is cursed.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: And he says it, which I find really interesting.

Lorrie: And then Hermione says, "I think you're being a bit unfair. Professor Dumbledore obviously thought he was the best man for the job." 'He was the *only* man for the job.'" That sets up the question: which is it? Is Snape really not as good as even Gilderoy Lockhart, the worst, horriblemest teacher in the world so far?

JC: So far.

Lorrie: Or is there something else? Is there some other reason? Three volumes later, this is really playing a long game: when Umbridge is interrogating Snape in class and she says, "So I see that you've applied for the Defense Against the Dark Arts position every year and been rejected every year." How does that square with Hagrid's claim that he was the 'only' man for the job, that Lockhart was the only applicant?

JC: Ooh, that's interesting.

Lorrie: So that's when you have to start to put together another piece of evidence that maybe Snape and Dumbledore are scheming together or that they're laying a paper trail, because obviously both of these things are true. It's both true that Lockhart was the only applicant and that Snape had put in an application, but this is such a long game. This is Book Two, and we don't get that detail until Book Five. All we know is that we're building a mystery here. So yeah, still there's 'Snape?' The rumor that Percy started with the reader (when he tells Harry at the Sorting Feast in the first book, "Oh, yeah, everybody knows that Snape wants that position"). Everybody knows? Based on what? I don't know. It's out there somehow. And then I love this moment: where Hagrid and Harry laugh at Lockhart together, and Hagrid says, "'You're more famous than him without trying.' 'Bet he didn't like that,' said Harry." They both know that's what's bothering Lockhart. I also love that Hagrid is completely unbothered by the slugs, except when Ron's vomiting near his pumpkins.

JC: And he's like, "Nope, nope, nope."

Lorrie: "Hey! Hey!"

JC: Yeah. The mental image of Ron vomiting up the slugs while explaining why 'mudblood' is a slur, I thought that was really well done. Literally, he's vomiting up slugs. They keep coming out of his mouth, and he's talking about...

Lorrie: So sick.

JC: Yeah, it's a very interesting juxtaposition there.

Lorrie: And then they do their detentions.

JC: Oh, my gosh. Oh, can we talk about one more thing before we move on to that?

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah. JC: One more thing that we see, that we're being set up for here, too: we see, again, the idea that Hagrid is still using... The pieces of Hagrid's wands, we know, are in his umbrella, but this is the first time that Harry goes, 'Oh, there's something going on with that umbrella.' But it's interesting because Ron's wand is broken throughout this, and we see the impact that has on him; yet Hagrid can do pretty decent magic with a broken wand and I find that really interesting. Granted, he's had a long time to figure this out very quietly and carefully, but it's interesting that he can do magic with a broken wand. That's something that in other parts of the series, breaking your wand is supposed to be rejecting you from the Wizarding world or stopping your ability to do magic, but it's clearly not the case. It's just about control.

Lorrie: Well, I think it's about access to good tools. Say figure skating, which is something that you've done in real life and I've been part of without actually skating in real life. You're wealthy, you can have good skates. You can get them sharpened regularly. The boots fit you, they're customized to you. If you're not wealthy, you're skating in broken-down old boots. Maybe you can't have the blades that you need. It's going to affect who does well, and then it's just a non-

starter if you can't even get your own skates. If you have to skate in rentals, then you can't compete at all, or you have to get only hand-me-downs that don't even fit. So, well, if you're really, really good, you can make things happen still, but it's not going to be as easy. Or if you can only train on really bad ice, or you don't have as much access to ice time, as opposed to skaters at elite training centers where they don't even have to share with hockey. The ice is always kept at the right temperature for figure skating and not at the right temperature for hockey, and you don't have to fight for ice time and you can just skate whenever you want. Ron's wand is being broken. He's discovering now. Say you have a laptop and you don't know... It's a matter of suspense every time, whether it's going to boot up or not.

JC: Yeah. Yeah.

Lorrie: I don't know. How much more can I get out of it before I have to break down and humble myself, and try to get some sort of replacement and get ready for the fights?

JC: The laptop, actually, that's a really good analogy for kids in school, because most schools these days, I think -- in my experience, this seems to be true in the area that I'm in -- will assign kids a cheap Chromebook or something. Also, those schools tend to not let kids bring their own devices because they want to have control over the devices and what the kids are accessing, so everyone theoretically has the same thing. However, if something happens to that Chromebook, let's say, you're responsible for replacing it. So if you drop it, or if the screen is cracked... Even though we all have been given the tool, like Ollivander gives everybody -- you buy it. Ollivander gives everybody a wand, right? If something happens to it and you don't have the money to replace it or to fix it, then you're in this position of, "Can I do my school work?" Maybe you can't access the internet at home; you have to access it at school anyway, and then your computer is fried. I can really see that analogy there, too.

Lorrie: Right, and Ron doesn't have his own wand.

JC: Right. He didn't have his own wand in the first place. He got the hand-me-down Chromebook. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, it didn't choose him to begin with, so he has to adjust. Hagrid, meanwhile, has had a long time to stabilize his broken wand in the umbrella, so yeah. I forgot that Ron and Harry have to do detention. McGonagall shows up.

JC: Yeah, I'd totally forgotten that. I was like, 'Wait, what are they doing detention for? I'd forgotten. Oh, yeah, the car thing.'

Lorrie: 'Oh, yeah, they do have detention to serve.' And then Ron says, "I'm no good at Muggle cleaning," and Harry says, "I've had loads of practice with the Dursleys." That is a brilliant detail for fanfic writers. That's a part of Harry's character. It's so excellent. He's competent. If you're writing a story with Harry Potter at any age and he has to do some amount of elbow grease, heavy cleaning, that would be too much for anyone, he will do it. He will get it done and he won't complain. He won't enjoy it, but anyway, it's just great to have something that a character is super competent at. He might not enjoy it. It might have been for bad reasons, but it's in your toolbox if you're going to be writing about him.

JC: Oh, yeah, this is the character who knows how to do laundry, who can fix the broken toilet, who can cook a basic meal, yeah. All that stuff.

Lorrie: Yeah. We don't see him doing a lot of that because he never enjoyed it to begin with, but no, he can do it.

JC: And the whole detention with Lockhart is, again, Lockhart trying so hard to pull Harry into his orbit, to get on Harry's good side. Again, I know that Lockhart is a shitty teacher. I think we've established that and not a trustable character, but oh, it's just super sus.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Why does he keep picking this kid? This is the thing where the other staff would be going, "Leave the door open, man. What's happening here?" That's creepy. But then it's funny that Lockhart thinks he's doing Harry a favor, or that's how he's positioning it. "Oh, you get to help me answer my fan mail," as if that's so great.

Lorrie: I do think, in this case, that Lockhart genuinely is so lost in his own enjoyment of it. It's not just that he's putting on something to keep Harry under his control. He really honestly... "Look at the time!"

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: This is the best thing that Lockhart does all day, for him.

JC: Oh, my gosh. And then the description of it. this description of, "The minutes snailed by."

Lorrie: I love that sentence.

JC: Which is really cool. And then, "Harry let Lockhart's voice wash over him, occasionally saying 'mmm' and 'right' and 'yeah'." And every now and then, he caught a phrase like, "Fame's a fickle friend, Harry," or "Celebrity is as celebrity does. Remember that." This image of Lockhart thinks that he's imparting all this wisdom. He's just talking, and Harry's going, "Uh-huh," carefully writing all the envelopes out.

Lorrie: Yeah. Lockhart finally has someone to share all this with.

JC: Oh, my Lord. Harry's just like, "Oh, my God. Kill me now."

Lorrie: "Oh, my God. When is this over?"

JC: Then he keeps him until midnight, which is just... what kind of school -- Hogwarts, whatever. Anyway, yeah.

Lorrie: And that's when Harry hears this terrifying, cold voice, telling him to come get killed.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And then he has to figure out all by himself, "I'm the only one who can hear this. Is it just that Lockhart can't, or is it me? Is it real? What's happening? Am I crazy?"

JC: And I had honestly forgotten that this is where the voice appears, so it was like, "Oh!" when I read it. It was a surprise. I'd totally forgotten it starts here.

Lorrie: And how big of a deal is this? That whole sense, again, of being 12 and having no idea what adults expect you to handle on your own. Last time he and Ron tried to handle something

on their own, it was the flying car, and it turned out to be the wrong decision. This time, now what? And wow, it sure is going to make him feel different.

JC: Ooh, yeah. Because let's see. There's some interesting stuff coming up around this, too. Harry goes back to the dorm and he tells Ron, and the fact that Ron just immediately believes him.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Ron is not going, "You heard voices? What, buddy?" No, Ron's, again, ride or die. He's just like, "Oh, my God. What could that mean?" I love that Harry has that in Ron. I think it's so important that he has this person who, until maybe the last book, at least, he knows is always there for him. Whatever Harry says, Ron is... actually, I guess in the fifth book, too, some things happen. Or fourth book. I can't remember.

Lorrie: It's the fourth book, yeah.

JC: Anyway, they have some issues at some point. We'll get there, but yeah. There's this person who's just like, "Yeah, yeah I believe you." Oh, God, that's so good.

Lorrie: Yeah. Now as a parent looking at this: 'Wait, is Harry hallucinating? Does he have psychosis? This is scary.'

JC: Sometimes people do hear voices that no one else hears. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, and the kind that tells you dangerous, scary things.

JC: That's very real. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. So yeah, that's happening. This is real, and that's the end of that chapter.

JC: Oh, there's one more thing I wanted to mention.

Lorrie: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Tell me.

JC: So when Ron was polishing awards and he polished the Special Award for Services to the School -- which wow, who won that?! -- but he vomits slugs all over it.

Lorrie: He threw up all over it.

JC: That was really funny.

Lorrie: Yes. That's sort of a callback to when Fred and George, in the first book, throw snowballs at Quirrell's turban.

JC: Oh, right, yeah. It's like, "We're getting close. This is a hint, a hint you won't understand for a while," but yeah.

Lorrie: And it's so undignified.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: You can be an evil overlord, but these are kids, and they're just grumpy and dirty.

JC: And they're going to write on your evil plans with crayons.

Lorrie: Throw up on everything.

JC: It's like in *Despicable Me*, when Gru adopts the kids and they take over his House of Horrors, and they turn it into... yeah, that's great. There was a whole horrible fanfic idea there, with Voldemort adopting some children and trying to turn them evil, but then he can't accomplish it because they're just little plucky orphans. That would actually be really funny.

Lorrie: Oh, that's the whole... Many years ago, there were those little books about Darth Vader raising Luke and Leia.

JC: Yeah, I have them on my shelf right over there.

Lorrie: Yeah, and Leia cuts hearts out of his black cape.

JC: Yeah. Oh, my God, and they're just little tyrants that he can't control. It's amazing.

Lorrie: No, he just ends up sighing.

JC: Yeah. Yeah, those books are great.

Lorrie: They are.

JC: So now it begins, right? Now we're starting to get to the main mystery of the book.

Lorrie: Yeah. And we've set up that there's this conflict between wealthy purebloods and everybody else, and we've set up that Snape is behind the scenes on everything, and that everybody has to defend themselves against Lockhart somehow. Yeah, it's complicated. Meanwhile, as much as the Slytherins have genuine grievances, they're still really hateful and awful people.

JC: True. True. Actually, something you just said about Lockhart made me realize that so far, we've seen multiple teachers having to deal with Lockhart. Now, granted, it was in front of kids, so it would probably be handled differently if they were not around kids. But they've all just gritted their teeth and sucked it up and they've maybe said something subtle, but no one has confronted him, which says something about who he's being protected by. Do all the teachers know what's going on with the Defense Against the Dark Arts position? There's something going on there that the adults in this space know that Lockhart is there for a reason, and that they can't just call him out on his bullshit.

Lorrie: Yeah, there's really only so much you can do.

JC: Yeah. Like a political hire, where you just like, "Oh, God, this person. I just have to put up with their crap because they're being protected by someone more powerful and ugh, we have to live with it." It's kind of what it feels like, reading it. Just from the kids' perspective, I know, we're seeing, but...

Lorrie: That's reminding me: during the Trump administration, after Sean Spicer left his press secretary role, he was hired to teach for a semester at Harvard.

JC: That must have been fun.

Lorrie: And wow, there were many Harvard faculty members who... "What do we do? Do we quit?" They signed letters of protest. They were horrified. There were Harvard alums who were

horrified. And then can you imagine that he shows up on campus and he talks to people whose jobs are to find the truth, and his job was the opposite of that?

JC: Oh, my gosh. Yeah, that's a real-life example of exactly this, isn't it? Oh, my God.

Lorrie: Yeah. And wasn't it Dentyne that he used to chew and swallow every day?

JC: Oh, I have no memory of that.

Lorrie: Sean Spicer, he had a habit of swallowing gum.

JC: Oh, yikes.

Lorrie: And he was such a weirdo.

JC: Oh, man.

Lorrie: And to know that he's going to have to come teach here. Okay.

JC: It's got to be... yeah. I can imagine what that would feel like. Oh, my gosh.

Lorrie: But that also happens now in Congress, when people get elected who are unqualified and who built their platforms on harassing or just being mouthpieces for hate, and they're really uninformed about the job. They're very loud, and they got elected. So yeah, you have to treat them like your colleagues. They are your colleagues. You have to sit next to them, you have to vote on the same stuff, and just that whole sense of, "we have the same job and we're sitting next to each other, but you and I are not the same."

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: Knowing that there's nothing you can do about it.

JC: Yup.

Lorrie: And to think that there are people in Congress serving alongside people who, before they got elected to Congress, called for them to be killed publicly. Now, you stand next to each other in line for the bathroom or whatever.

JC: Yeah. So yeah, that's the thing that I think a lot. Those are some fantastic examples. I think a lot of us have had that experience of having a colleague who just... "Oh, God," and everybody knows it and there's nothing you can do but just tolerate them. Lockhart is the extreme example of that, but I think that the examples that you're bringing up are actually pretty close to the way things happen in the book.

Lorrie: It's actually more extreme than Lockhart, because he didn't personally call for any of these people to get killed. That comes later in this series, when things get darker. We don't know yet how dark Lockhart can get; we just know that he's intolerable.

JC: And I don't remember, so I'm going to be surprised. But speaking of darkness, our next chapter is called The Deathday Party.

Lorrie: Oh, yeah.

JC: I don't remember anything about that. That's going to be fun.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I remember so little of this book, but then it has been a long time. A lot's happened in the intervening years, so things got pushed out of my brain in the meantime.

Lorrie: Is it interesting?

JC: Yeah, yeah. I'm actually enjoying it more than I thought. I don't remember enjoying it that much the first time through, as I've said multiple times, and yeah, I'm enjoying it a lot more this time.

Lorrie: Well, we're going to get more Schadenfreude in The Deathday Party.

JC: I guess so. I'm going to find out.

Lorrie: Yeah. All right, I'll talk to you then. J

C: Okay!

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.