

Transcript

Episode 3.14

Book 3, Chapter 14: Snape's Grudge

Caroline: You're listening to Harry Potter After 2020, an HP chapter reread podcast wherein two friends who read the books way back in the day as adults revisit the series through a post-2020 lens. Your hosts are Lorrie Kim, author of *Snape: The Definitive Analysis*, and JC, an educator and long-time HP fan. I'm your editor, Caroline. In this episode, Lorrie and JC tackle Book Three, Chapter Fourteen: Snape's Grudge.

Lorrie: Snape's Grudge. Harry sneaks into Hogsmeade with his invisibility cloak and throws mud at Draco, Crabbe and Goyle. Draco runs screaming for Snape, who's about to get Harry into very deep trouble until he finds the Marauder's Map and confronts Lupin instead. Ha-ha-ha! So, this chapter... To me, it's a masterpiece. People have secret agendas, people are terrible liars. Teen boys (and former teen boys) just want to live their lives, and then they encounter consequences. Everything is working on at least three layers at once, and everybody in this chapter is very much themselves. The writing in this chapter is so good, so funny, so awful. This chapter has everything. Well, that's my take. What's your take?

JC: Yeah! I had the movie version of these events so firmly in my head that this was a surprise to read. I had forgotten how this chapter goes, so that was fun.

Lorrie: And what did you find when you were reminded?

JC: The scene at the Shrieking Shack is completely different. The scene where Snape takes the map from Harry goes very differently. Yeah. Yeah, there's so much more happening in this chapter than the movie version shows.

Lorrie: So yeah, it starts off with Harry noticing that the statue of the one-eyed witch (which he knows leads into Hogsmeade) is unguarded and unblocked, even though the whole rest of the school is on lockdown because Sirius has come back in. He thinks Fred and George, Harry, Ron and Hermione are the only ones who know about the hidden passageway.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Of course we don't know this now, but on subsequent re-reads one does wonder: What is Lupin thinking?

JC: Because Lupin knows. That was a lot of the theme of this chapter for me: what is going on with Lupin? The last chapter ended with Sirius Black seemingly attacking Ron and then disappearing again... Getting into the Gryffindor tower, attacking Ron. What is Lupin thinking?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: What's going on? Why doesn't he go to someone and tell them what he does know at this point? I have a lot of questions, and then this chapter doesn't really answer any of the questions; it just raises more about what's going on in Lupin's head.

Lorrie: Yeah. Meanwhile, the entire rest of the castle is on lockdown, they've fired Sir Cadogan... All the security is really tight.

JC: Yeah. The security measures surprised me -- again, because I haven't read this in a while -- but thinking about them from a post-2020 perspective, what happens when a school goes into lockdown.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: The fact that there's all these protocols about shutting the doors... Most schools have classroom doors that self-lock now, so teachers are discouraged from propping them open, but then there's always kids coming in and out for different things, so teachers' classes are constantly being interrupted because the kid has to come back from the bathroom or whatever. There's all these little moments where things could go wrong, but when the school goes into a lockdown drill or, God forbid, an actual lockdown, everything is ready to go. That's what it made me think of: we're doing all the things. The image of Flitwick teaching the front doors to recognize Sirius Black by holding up a picture...

Lorrie: Ouch... Yeah.

JC: I had to stop and think about that one for a moment. How sentient is this castle? That says a lot about the world that we're living in and about this castle: you could actually take a picture of someone to the doors and say, "Don't let this person in." Wow. Wow.

Lorrie: Well, it's biometrics.

JC: Yeah, I guess it is.

Lorrie: "Scan this eyeball."

JC: Magic instead of technology. Yeah, yeah. Face recognition software. Yeah, I guess so, right? Wow. And poor Neville.

Lorrie: Oh, my God.

JC: Poor Neville. There's no sympathy for Neville here, or no understanding that we've set up a system which Neville was doomed to fail. Then Neville tried to give himself an accommodation that would work, and then that also failed with horrific consequences.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And now Neville's being punished for it again. It's like, oh, God.

Lorrie: Yeah. McGonagall won't let him have any passwords at all, and she's punishing him by making him stand outside pathetically until some other Gryffindor comes along and takes pity on him and lets him into his own room. The humiliation is astonishing. He really gets the worst of it.

JC: Yeah. For kids whose brains don't work that way, shaming them for their brains not working that way and punishing them more doesn't work.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: We know that doesn't work. Telling kids with ADHD to try harder to focus, that doesn't work. Telling kids who are dyslexic just to try harder doesn't work. It's so ableist that it was actually... I usually really love McGonagall, and that was a moment where I was really frustrated with McGonagall from an education perspective. A parent perspective.

Lorrie: But you can see it happening, though. There's an old schoolness to her where you can totally imagine this is how she would react, and the whole implication that this is going to teach people an indelible lesson that is not the lesson you want.

JC: Correct. Correct. They are going to learn something from it.

Lorrie: Oh, yeah. It's indelible.

JC: Yeah, yeah. For sure.

Lorrie: Meanwhile, Ron... I would be freaked out if I were Ron, but he's loving this. He has become an instant celebrity.

JC: This is the thing that happens several times throughout the books. There are moments when Ron's celebrity eclipses Harry's, and Ron just eats it up.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He's just like, "Yeah!" Yeah.

Lorrie: It's a really good mystery. Why has this serial murderer found the wrong boy and not just gone for Harry? What on earth is happening? It's a great mystery: this time, just like Hermione in the second book, Ron is being targeted for attack for a reason that does not have to do with Harry, so they're gaining experience. Meanwhile, these teenagers... Ron thinking he's a big man now, and Neville is suffering so much. Meanwhile, another developmentally accurate thing is that Harry and Ron go down to see Hagrid and realize they have forgotten all their promises about Buckbeak. Oops! That was a responsible thing they thought they were up for; no, they forgot. Then, Hagrid is an absolute adult and says to them that Hermione's been really upset because they won't talk to her. He says, "I gotta tell yeh, I thought you two'd value yer friend more'n broomsticks or rats. Tha's all." Wow.

JC: And that one hits home for them.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. There are few people in this series who can actually make Harry feel shame. It's Hagrid and Dumbledore and Lupin later.

Lorrie: Well, that's different, though.

JC: Later in this chapter, I think.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But yeah, there's just a few adults that Harry respects enough that when they chastise him, he rightly feels ashamed, and Hagrid's definitely one of them.

Lorrie: The thing that's so impressive about the way Hagrid does it is he's not shaming them. He just says it and leaves it; then after that, they talk about Quidditch. He's not holding it against them. He's not going to stop talking to them.

JC: But he also tells them that Hermione has been helping him with Buckbeak's defense. He talks about how busy Hermione is -- which we all know how busy Hermione is -- but it made me think, 'She's doing legal research on top of everything else.'

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: But I guess that's the time that she would have been following Harry and Ron around perhaps, so she does have a little (by Hermione's standards) extra time on her hands. Oh, my gosh, she's so busy.

Lorrie: She's amazing. Yeah, and this is the one time in the series that she is literally the voice in Harry's right ear. She's literally the angel conscience, because she realizes that Harry's about to go into Hogsmeade despite all of the heightened security measures, and she threatens to tell McGonagall. I realized this trait of Hermione's is why Lupin is afraid of her; that's one of the reasons why he's afraid of her. Hermione is being ostracized by her only two friends and it still doesn't deter her from trying to do the right thing, and that was the thing that Lupin couldn't handle. Lupin does have harder circumstances by far than Hermione. He had a lot more to lose by alienating his friends, but he has a bad conscience about it. To watch Hermione be able to do that and suffer -- even though no, she's not a werewolf -- it is really taking a toll on her, but she'll do it. She'll keep doing it, and that strength of character is in Hermione. She serves that purpose with the Snape character often where she does, as a young student, what he in retrospect wishes he had been able to do. In this case, she's serving that role for Lupin, too. Yeah, you are supposed to stand up to your friends when you absolutely know what they're doing is wrong, and for what reward? Oh, it feels terrible.

JC: Yeah, this is one of the moments where later on, we find out that Hermione could have been put in Ravenclaw. That was a conversation that happened in her head with the Sorting Hat, but these are the moments where she's in the right house.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This is one hundred percent a Gryffindor trait, to be like, "No, I'm telling you what's right, and I don't care how you treat me. I'm still standing up for what's right." That's very Gryffindor.

Lorrie: Although, speaking from my Ravenclaw perspective, this has happened to me often, where I think I understand the logic; it's irrefutable. It is absolutely wrong and dangerous what they're doing. I can't deny it. I have to live by it. I don't like it. Am I being brave? No, I'm just acknowledging this as true. You have to change your life to fit the facts if the facts are this bald. Then I look around, like, 'Well, other people aren't changing their lives. It's just me.'

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: So yeah, Hermione's having a terrible time, but she's making up for it by working too hard; Harry and Ron forge on ahead with Harry's trip to Hogsmeade that he's absolutely not supposed to be taking. Harry goes to the statue of the one-eyed witch and, of course... Of course, there is Snape.

JC: But there's also Neville.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Neville, innocently, is like, "Oh, Harry!" and tries three times basically to distract him. Neville doesn't know what Harry's about to do, but so desperately wants someone to hang out with him and to share the misery of not being able to go to Hogsmeade.

Lorrie: And the terrible lies that Harry makes up on the spot to lose Neville... it's so relatable. It's a perfect example of everybody being themselves in this chapter and everyone having a hidden agenda, and that the agenda is not necessarily evil; a lot of it's just, "No, I want to do something. I don't want to be deterred, and I will make up stupid lies to get what I want. I'll make them up as I go along; they'll be terrible lies."

JC: And it is very human for people to want to do things that are not safe just because they want it.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Because they've been denied it. Coming out of the pandemic lockdown, I think that's something that's very familiar-feeling. It's that whole, "But I want to go do this thing. Yeah, I know it's going to be dangerous, but also I want to do it and I've been denied it for all this time. Why can't I just be happy today?" I really do identify with that feeling that Harry has there, and I felt that. Hermione tries to stop him; Neville, not on purpose, tries to stop him; Snape comes by. By the third person, as a reader, I was sympathizing with Harry there. Also, because I know how the story works out, and that he wasn't actually in any danger.

Lorrie: But we don't know that.

JC: There's this like, "Oh, God." You don't know that at this point on a first read, for sure, but that feeling of really wanting Harry to have this was right there in my head at the same time as it makes no sense, so I can really identify with that.

Lorrie: Well, talking about how people were about lockdown and people not complying with health precautions, I definitely saw friendships end over that.

JC: Yeah, that's true.

Lorrie: Yeah. So yeah, Neville is unwittingly blundering around with Harry's self-justifications. Harry's trying to lose him. Snape sees Neville and comes to the same conclusions as ever that Neville is in on whatever Harry's planning, which is so much better than what Neville really is going through, which is that he's totally an afterthought.

JC: Aww.

Lorrie: "To Harry's immense disquiet, Snape's black eyes flicked to the doorways on either side of them, and then to the one-eyed witch." He thinks Harry's going to take Neville, which Harry totally would never do. He can tell; it's not that he's ever seen the one-eyed witch being used this way. He just knows what it looks like when Marauder-type people are about to do something.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: Also, he's the personification of every bad-conscience feeling that anybody's ever had. 'Oh, of course, this is when Snape shows up.' Miraculously, Harry manages to lose Snape, and that's the whole theme for Snape in this chapter: he has no evidence. He is disproven, but he's right, and he knows he's right. Although not exactly, because there are things he doesn't know and can't know, and the motives are not always as bad as he thinks.

JC: Yeah, that's true. But he's really... The suspicion that he's had around the one-eyed witch statue has come up before.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He's sure it has something to do with what's going on here and waiting to have some evidence. There's also little moments where I'm wondering: is he looking into Harry's head to see what's going on? There's these little signals that make you think. Certainly, later he is, but at this point it's a little bit of, 'What's going on in there? What are you planning?'

Lorrie: Yeah. A lot of the way that Snape looks at Harry in this chapter I am familiar with as an older person dealing with kids who are too young to be good liars. You just look at somebody; the longer you stand there, the more miserable they look and the more they betray themselves.

JC: That's true. That's true, yeah.

Lorrie: And it's really funny.

JC: Yeah. Actually it is, isn't it? The first time that you catch a child in a lie that's defiant, but it's not... something's not going to hurt or anything, but it's just defiant. There's something between "I know that you didn't want me to do this and I did it anyway, but I have good reasons and I wish you would listen to them." There's that kind of lie, and that's a moment. Yeah.

Lorrie: And it's bravado.

JC: Yeah. "I got away with it!" Yeah. There's a little bit of, "I know you caught me just now, but..." As a parent, there's almost a little bit of --

Lorrie: "You can't prove it!"

JC: Pride is the wrong word, but recognition of, 'My child is starting to make decisions based on their own judgment.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: 'How much do I trust that, and how much do I... Where do I back off? Where's the line?'

Lorrie: It's amusement. Well, okay, I'm going to tell a story about the time that my child defied me. She was two, and she wasn't allowed to eat chocolate. I left the room briefly, and there was a piece of chocolate there. When I came back, she had this totally innocent look; it's not that she wasn't allowed to eat it, but it was before lunch time or something or she had already had some that day. She had this expression on her face of complete innocence, and I said, "You would never eat chocolate without my permission when I left the room, would you?" She's like, "No, I wouldn't. Never ever." "And you wouldn't lie about it, either." She eventually realized she'd been caught and she said, "How did you know?" I said, "There's a giant smear of chocolate on your face."

JC: Oh, my God, that's amazing.

Lorrie: But it's pretty much the same thing here.

JC: Oh, my gosh, that's so funny.

Lorrie: Snape has been teaching for how long?

JC: Yeah. You recognize the signs of a kid who's about to do some shit. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. It's the suspicious behavior and the "What, me? No, nothing!" Yeah. "One of my hands behind my back. Nothing's in my hand behind my back. Don't even look there!"

Lorrie: Yeah. And every time Snape thinks, 'It's Potter, he's up to something,' he's always correct.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: He does, in fact, know.

JC: Because honestly, Harry is always up to something. Yeah.

Lorrie: Also, Snape knows how he thinks. Yeah, but this is actually the same thing that Harry goes through in Book Six about Draco. When his friends are saying, "Draco Malfoy? He's not a Death Eater," and Harry's like, "Oh, I saw him go around that corner, that's proof!" they're like, "He went around a corner, Harry. It proves nothing; you can't prove anything." "Did you see his left arm?" "Yes, it was covered by a robe." It's like, "No, but I just know. I just know." So yeah, Harry manages to get out to Hogsmeade, and then there is a perfect scene where he and Ron come across Draco, Crabbe, and Goyle, and the opportunity was too perfect to miss. I agree one hundred percent. It was perfect, and the scene where Harry throws mud at them, and they don't know what's doing it and they're terrified... Ah, that is perfection!

JC: It's very satisfying right up until the last moment, but it's also interesting because in the movie version, Harry doesn't get caught here. Also, Hermione is there and all three, they're laughing. I've often wondered why that was changed for the movie version. To make it more satisfying, somehow? Whoever wrote the movie script couldn't resist saying, "No, he should get away with it this one time because this is just too good." It's very interesting to be brought back to the reality of the book of, 'Oh, no, in the book that doesn't happen and he doesn't get these perfect moments where things just work out for him.' That's rare. No, of course it's going to backfire.

Lorrie: Fortunately for me, I have no recollection of the movies, because to me -- when the invisibility cloak slips and Draco sees Harry's disembodied head, and has the worst jump scare and screams and runs -- even though Harry's luck has turned, it's still hilarious. Then, the feeling that, oh, no, Harry has to run as fast as he can back to the castle because now he's in complete trouble... Harry is the victim here, or he's going to come out the worst for it, but it's still perfect. It's still so 13-year-old.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yes, of course that's what's happening. Draco is running to Snape, and something bad will happen to Harry.

JC: Yeah. My question here is: who ran where? Okay, Harry runs through the tunnel, he runs back to the school the way he came. How does Snape get there with the news that Harry was in Hogsmeade at the same time? Was Snape in Hogsmeade? Did Draco run all the way back the long way? I'm really confused about how this -- it doesn't really matter, because what matters is that Snape got there, but you know how I get a little hung on these details.

Lorrie: Well, I think that Draco ran back to Hogwarts the usual way, and that taking the tunnel takes longer.

JC: Okay, because you've got to be hunched down.

Lorrie: Yeah, and it goes so deep underground.

JC: So Draco literally ran all the way back to Hogwarts to tell on Harry. That's commitment to the bit right there.

Lorrie: Well, he's scared. These terrifying things are happening, and Harry Potter's disembodied head shows up near the Shrieking Shack; it could have been anything. What the heck is happening? And nobody wants to have mud thrown at them by the air. That's terrifying.

JC: True, true.

Lorrie: Yeah, and if Harry's doing this to Draco, what next? There's a mention of Dumbledore, who's an unseen presence in this whole chapter: "Harry's stomach turned over -- Dumbledore would know exactly what had happened, if Malfoy said anything...." Yeah, Harry, remember the rules? Harry races there; Snape is right there, waiting to catch him. "Snape's eyes were boring into Harry's." Harry stands no chance. It's one of the many times that Snape looks right at Harry, and Harry's like, just for form's sake, lie. It's one of the instances of Snape's dialogue being perfection. This is the Snape-iest he gets.

JC: The 'Snape-iest'.

Lorrie: Yeah. "What would your head have been doing in Hogsmeade, Potter? Your head is not allowed in Hogsmeade. No part of your body has permission to be in Hogsmeade." Poor Harry is standing there like... Yeah, all he can do is take it while Snape waxes poetic. I identify so much with that 13-year-old feeling of, "Oh, I'm caught. There's nothing to do but try to live through this." Then, when Snape goes on, it took me several reads of the series to understand that what Snape says he's angry about is literally actually why he's angry. I spent so much time trying to figure out, 'What Snape's deal in this chapter?' because it could be anything. He's unhappy about so very many things all the time, but he says: "So... Everyone from the Minister of Magic downward has been trying to keep famous Harry Potter safe from Sirius Black, but famous Harry Potter is a law unto himself. Let the ordinary people worry about his safety! Famous Harry Potter goes where he wants to, with no thought for the consequences." And you're reading this, thinking, 'Well, Snape is never fair to Harry, and he's still stuck on this name-calling, that he thinks Harry likes being famous. What's his problem?' Eventually, it occurred to me, 'No, that's his problem. He's upset that he's trying desperately to protect this kid he doesn't even like, and nobody else seems really bothered by it.' Anyway, sometimes the best way to hide Snape's true self or true motivations is to stick them right out there, because nobody believes that what's on the surface is what's really going on. He's mad because he's been working to do... This kid is not appreciating anything he's doing.

JC: And neither is anyone else, really.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And it's bad enough trying to do this for a kid you like. Meanwhile, Harry doesn't believe that's the issue, so he keeps standing there; then the scene becomes even more 'everybody is their true selves'. We get truth bombs about James, where Snape starts regressing to being a high school teenager and starts complaining about how James Potter 'struts.' Harry says, "My dad didn't strut, and neither do I." Unfortunately, Harry is absolutely wrong about both of those things. He has no idea whether his dad strutted or not, but he has just had an honor guard for a Firebolt!

JC: True, true.

Lorrie: Yeah, you do, Harry.

JC: Also, I think this is a reminder... At this point, especially on rereads, it's really obvious that Harry has built up who his dad is in his head, and he doesn't know who his dad was. He knows more about his mom in some ways than he does about his dad at this point. All he knows about his dad is the reputation, and if Snape hates his dad, it must be for similar reasons that Snape hates Harry. There must be a relationship there. Harry can relate even more to this figure of his dad because Snape hates them both, so they must have been really similar. It's easy for Harry to project and think, 'Oh, my dad was like me and I wouldn't do that, so of course my dad didn't do that,' but he doesn't know.

Lorrie: Yeah. What's a better character recommendation than to be hated by Snape?

JC: Right, exactly.

Lorrie: Since Snape hated Harry before Harry had even done anything. Snape's real beef, though, is with Dumbledore, because Harry yells, "I know the truth, all right? He saved your life! Dumbledore told me! You wouldn't even be here if it wasn't for my dad!" That's when Snape goes so cold and says, "Oh, Dumbledore didn't tell you the truth, did he?" He says, "Oh, your dad, he was a real low life. He only saved my life for terrible, selfish reasons," and Snape has no way of knowing that he's quite wrong about this. He assumes that James was in on the prank -- doesn't have any reason to know that James wasn't -- but this is when Harry learns that his father, and his father's friends, had been part of an incident that almost killed Snape. Eventually the reader will realize, 'Oh, this is what Snape thinks is happening again to Harry. This is what he's trying to prevent.' But at this point, the reader has no way of really knowing that, and I think Harry probably doesn't really believe him at this point. There's no reason to.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: And Snape continues with more insults. The great thing about writing dialogue about Snape here is that, no matter how much he's correct about stuff, if you add in the personal barbs that are very much part of his character, it just makes everything so hateful. When Harry lies that the Zonko's bag is a gift from Ron from the last Hogsmeade visit, and Snape goes, "Indeed? And you've been carrying them around ever since? How very touching...." He makes everything sound so horrible.

JC: It is funny, though, because Harry's just grasping at straws here. Even Harry knows he's not going to buy this. No one would buy this.

Lorrie: It's a terrible excuse.

JC: 'I can't let it go. I have to try lying. For my own pride, I have to keep my story up.'

Lorrie: 'This is how the game goes.'

JC: Exactly. I've been there as a twelve, 13-year-old kid, so I remember that. 'I'm committed to this lie now.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: 'No matter how ridiculous it gets.'

Lorrie: Oh, God. So yeah, Snape keeps his eyes on Harry, but he can't prove anything. Harry is trying to win the argument on technicalities, because that's his only chance at this point; Snape makes him turn out his pockets and he looks at the blank Marauder's Map, which is so suspenseful for the reader. 'Oh, God. Oh, God. Not that!'

JC: Oh, my God. The first time through, it feels so different than it does every other time after that.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I think that's one of the marks of a fantastic mystery.

Lorrie: Uh-huh.

JC: This is one of the things I love about the Harry Potter books in general -- and I love books that do this or films that do this -- where it's completely different on a second rewatch. You're just like, 'Oh, my God!' The tightness of the writing, the ways that it makes you have all these layers, it's just so satisfying. I remember on the first read having that 'Oh, my God, oh, my God, what's going to happen to the map?' The second time through, it's like *gasps* "OH, THE MAP!" I have it in my notes in all caps. 'THE MAP.'

Lorrie: I know!

JC: It starts... Yeah, we're going to get into it now, okay, because it's just so big. It's so big.

Lorrie: Yeah. Snape knowing that if Harry's lying -- that this map, this piece of paper, is no big deal -- then he threatens to burn it. As a reader, that panic hits me every time. "NOOOO! DON'T BURN THE MAP!" I'm sure he knew exactly that it would have that effect on Harry and watched it happen. "'So,' said Snape, his long nostrils quivering. 'Is this another treasured gift from Mr. Weasley? Or is it -- something else? A letter, perhaps, written in invisible ink? Or -- instructions to get into Hogsmeade without passing the dementors?' Harry blinked. Snape's eyes gleamed." So, as a reader, when you're reading that, what are you thinking, JC?

JC: On which read? I guess --

Lorrie: Yes, more than one.

JC: Yeah. So yeah, the blink there is just... In my head, I pictured it as one of those -- There's always the scene in the movie where things go wrong and/or somebody makes a bad choice, and then the camera pans to some character who just does that, 'Oh!!' kind of slow blink of their eyes. 'Here we go!' I think there's that feeling to it, but on subsequent reads, I'm looking for the Occlumency/Legilimency connection in there. Honestly, I don't remember enough of the technicalities of that to know what that would mean, but a little bit of that blink is, 'You've got me' in a way, and then Snape's eyes gleaming is 'I know'. There's some communication there, too, that's kind of fun.

Lorrie: What I like here is the "letter in invisible ink". It's a good red herring. Why does Snape think that's what it might be? We know that's not at all what it is, so it gives me a clue that Snape has a certain line of suspicion that I'm not following. 'Why would it be a letter in invisible ink? What is he thinking?' And then he follows up with "instructions to get into Hogsmeade without passing the dementors." Okay, so those are two clues about what Snape thinks is happening.

JC: Oh, I see where you're going with this. Okay, yeah.

Lorrie: Right, but I didn't get that the first time.

JC: Yeah, I didn't get that until just now, when you said it.

Lorrie: The first time I'm reading this, I'm like, 'He's off base. I don't know why.' In this extremely tightly written chapter, why are we given a whole sentence about the letter in invisible ink that

does not add to the conclusion of the chapter? We're being shown Snape on the wrong trail. There's something he thinks is happening that's not actually what's happening, but he has hit upon something close enough to make Harry blink. Harry knows he is trying to get into Hogsmeade without passing the dementors (for Harry's own reasons), but Snape thinks Harry's trying to do that for some other reason that's other than just because he wants to go where all the other kids are and eat some candy.

JC: Oh, interesting. Okay, now *that* I hadn't thought of. My thought here was Snape suspects Lupin of working with Sirius Black to lure Harry out and takes advantage of the fact that Harry really wants to go, and maybe has provided him these instructions and that that's maybe what Snape thinks is going on. But what would be the other reason that Harry would want to go to Hogsmeade, other than just because he's a kid and he wants to go buy candy?

Lorrie: No, I think it is what you are saying.

JC: Oh, okay.

Lorrie: That Snape isn't concerned about Harry's role in this. Snape takes for granted that a 13-year-old kid is going to want to go and break rules; or, at least, this particular one he is certain lives for nothing other than to break rules.

JC: Apparently.

Lorrie: But what is Snape looking for? He's not looking for evidence of Harry planning; he's looking for evidence of somebody taking advantage of Harry's urges to do something else. He's not trying to catch Harry as the mastermind here. He's concerned about someone else masterminding this.

JC: He's, in a way, right about that, and Lupin confirms that in a little bit.

Lorrie: And this whole chapter, people are right and wrong about everything.

JC: Yeah. Right and wrong at the same time.

Lorrie: Yep. So then he commands the map to speak up.

JC: Oh, my God, this moment! This moment. I had to put the book down for a moment and take a breath, because it was like I knew what was coming. Ugh!

Lorrie: Will you do the honors and take us through what happens here?

JC: Okay, here we go. "'Show yourself!' Snape said, tapping the map sharply. It stayed blank. Harry was taking deep, calming breaths. 'Professor Severus Snape, master of this school!' -- That's a fun sentence -- "'commands you to yield the information you conceal!' Snape said, hitting the map with his wand."

Lorrie: Oi!

JC: "As though an invisible hand was writing upon it, words appeared on the smooth surface of the map. 'Mr. Moony presents his compliments to Professor Snape and begs him to keep his abnormally large nose out of other people's business.' Snape froze."

Lorrie: Oh, boy.

JC: "Harry stared, dumbstruck, at the message." Right there, the fact that it starts with Moony is like...

Lorrie: Uh-huh. Oh...

JC: Yeah. What's happening in Snape's mind at this moment? So many things, probably... And then it goes on. "(Mr.) Prongs agrees with Mr. Moony, and would like to add that Professor Snape as an ugly git." It's exactly the shit that they said to him when he was a teenager.

Lorrie: And that Harry says about him now.

JC: Sure. Exactly. "Mr. Padfoot would like to register his astonishment that an idiot like that ever became a professor." This is coming from Sirius Black, who is getting into the castle in some way that Snape cannot figure out, so he's literally calling Snape an idiot. "You can't even figure this out now. Look what an idiot you are." And then, "Mr. Wormtail bids Professor Snape good day, and advises him to go wash his hair, the slimeball."

Lorrie: All these things that Harry wishes he could say to Snape, but he can't because he's 20 years younger. But somebody out there, some heroic assholes, are saying everything Harry has always wanted to say to Snape!

JC: There's so much happening. On the one hand, okay, there's all -- whatever's going with Snape, we'll put that aside for a moment. In Harry's head, is Harry at this moment thinking, 'This thing is reading my mind?' It's saying the stuff that Harry wishes he could say but wouldn't actually say, because he knows how much trouble he will get in. But then here's the map doing it, so probably in Harry's mind, it's like, 'Does Snape think that I'm doing this? I wish I could do this. I can't! Who's doing this? Why is it reading my mind? Is it pulling from my feelings?' There's all kinds of things that I think could be going on in Harry's head there, too, which is interesting.

Lorrie: I don't think Harry thinks that it's reading his mind, because he's already had the experience where the map is helping him out by pointing where he should go and telling him. He knows that it's something friendly that's on his side that is cheeky and clever and older than he is; he just doesn't know where this is all leading, but I love this sentence, "Harry closed his eyes in horror," because this scene is just so good. You really don't want to be alone with Severus Snape when this is happening. What is Snape going to do to you? However mad and insulted Snape is and however much he's going to punish you, you can't even imagine. This is going to be so awful; I don't even know how mean he can get.

JC: With all that happening in Harry's head, and then in Snape's head... My impression is Snape knows exactly who these four people are. The fact that he calls for Lupin instantly, and the way that they're talking to him, he knows exactly who these four folks are. I think there's so many layers there of taking him back to his own childhood, connecting Harry again to James and then bringing up all of his suspicions about Lupin again. When he calls for Lupin, that to me means he knows exactly who's behind this map or whatever this document is. He doesn't know it's a map right now, but...

Lorrie: Even the memory that he thinks Neville was in on it reinforces this whole feeling that there was this guy who is getting into the castle, and there's Potter who looks exactly like the Potter of his memory. There's Neville -- I mean, Peter. All right, there's one guy who has to be called to account for this, and Harry thinks it's going to be him because he's the kid in trouble here. "Harry waited for the blow to fall." Then, what Snape does next is, for Harry's point of view, a complete plot twist. Harry is waiting for the blow to fall, like he's going to have his head chopped off, and then the executioner just wanders off and goes somewhere else and he doesn't --

JC: Or turns on someone else. Yeah. Whirling toward the fireplace. "LUPIN!"

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Harry's like, "What's happening?"

Lorrie: "What is going on?" From this point on, Harry has no idea what's happening...

JC: Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: Doesn't know why he is not being executed. Snape literally forgets to punish Harry.

JC: Yeah. That's what's so interesting here. It so clearly shifts to a conflict between Snape and Lupin -- that Lupin is the one that Snape is angry at -- because now it's like, 'Okay, Harry's just a stupid kid or something at this point.'

Lorrie: He's just standing there.

JC: 'He's just this little brat.' The whole conversation that Snape and Lupin then have flies over Harry's head completely.

Lorrie: And Harry can't say anything or leave or draw attention to himself, because nothing good can happen if he reminds them that he exists. He just has to try to be invisible and wonder what the hell is happening.

JC: The conversation between Snape and Lupin: I had to go back and read it again after I read it the first time...

Lorrie: Oh, my God!

JC: Because it's just so beautifully coded.

Lorrie: Yes!

JC: Ugh! Yeah, and it doesn't really make sense at all the first time through.

Lorrie: No!

JC: And then the second time through, it is so loaded.

Lorrie: God. The fact that Snape and Lupin both know that they're doing this dance, where they're speaking code and they're both referring to this other truth that they have different perspectives about, but they don't dare square their stories with each other because they have so many of their own agendas and secrets.

JC: Oh, my God, it's just amazing. Okay, so there's this moment when... Okay, it says that -- Lupin has just arrived. "Snape pointed at the parchment, on which the words of Messrs. Moony, Wormtail, Padfoot, and Prongs were still shining. An odd, closed expression appeared on Lupin's face."

Lorrie: Yes!

JC: "'Well?' said Snape. Lupin continued to stare at the map. Harry had the impression that Lupin was doing some very quick thinking."

Lorrie: Oh, my God.

JC: Oh, my God! And later, Lupin gives Harry this little eye cue of "DO. NOT. SAY. A. WORD."

Lorrie: "Shush." The amazing thing to me is that Lupin is no better at lying than Harry.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Lupin has regressed in front of our eyes. He does know how to do Legilimency, which Harry didn't know how to do, but he looks just as caught. Lupin knows what's coming, because when Snape summons him, Lupin says: "'You called, Severus?'" said Lupin mildly." Oh, when Lupin is being mild, he knows he's in trouble. 'Oh, this is starting.'

JC: I centered so much on Lupin in this scene because again, this is a guy who at this point thinks he's lost all of his friends, and then here is this document.

Lorrie: That he hasn't seen.

JC: It's like this magical yearbook or whatever kind of feeling, and he hasn't seen it in years. He confirms that Filch confiscated it, probably from them at some point. How has that found its way into Harry's hands?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: How? Oh, my God. And then, probably, to Lupin, all the possibilities are unwinding; also, he knows that Snape suspects him, so the gears are whirring and he's saying, 'What do I do? How do I get this away from Harry and away from Snape? How do I fix the situation? How do I make sure that I'm suddenly not a suspect here, that Harry is safe?' All of these things are going through his head right now.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Also, just some sheer pain around this memory.

Lorrie: Yeah, memory.

JC: Oh, man, because... Yeah.

Lorrie: He's already been practically in flashback the whole premise of the year, and then Sirius shows up last night and almost kills Ron. Then this secret from his past that he hasn't seen in over 20 years resurfaces. Oh, geez.

JC: And he knows how powerful that map is and he knows what it's capable of, and that's got to also be terrifying to realize it's still out there, floating around.

Lorrie: Yeah, and Snape is furious. In his Snapey way, as he's pinning Lupin down, he has to insult him. "'Well?'" said Snape again. 'This parchment is plainly full of dark magic. This is supposed to be your area of expertise, Lupin.'" The way he gets that insult in cracks me up. It does, and Lupin is too frantic to even be insulted by that.

JC: It's the least of his worries right now.

Lorrie: Yes. He lets that pass, and then he makes up the terrible excuse that maybe it's just a prank. It's just from Zonko's.

JC: "It's just a Zonko's product or something," yeah. Oh.

Lorrie: Then Snape says the line that, on first reading, completely confused me, where he says, "'Indeed? You think a joke shop could supply him with such a thing? You don't think it more likely that he got it *directly from the manufacturers?*'" Harry didn't understand what Snape was talking about. Nor, apparently, did Lupin."

JC: No, Lupin knows what he's talking about.

Lorrie: Yeah, but I didn't.

JC: Oh. Yeah.

Lorrie: On first reading, did you know what Snape was talking about?

JC: It took me a really... In retrospect, we know that there are four characters who made this map; then we know that there are four friends. The fact that it took me so long to make that connection... Really, not until the book told me, probably, I didn't make that connection. So yeah, I had no clue. No clue at this point.

Lorrie: And why would Snape care? It took me several reads to understand that Snape, this whole time, has been afraid that the people who conspired to kill him as brats were doing the same thing to this kid that he hates, and he doesn't know why nobody else in the whole world cares about this. Why is he the only one trying to save Harry Potter from these people that everyone else thinks are just harmless, cute pranksters? But the weirdness of Snape being maddest about this -- that he thinks Harry got it directly from the manufacturers -- oh. Three rereads later, 'Oh, Snape thinks that Lupin and Sirius have planned this from the beginning. Oh. No wonder he's foaming at the mouth. But then why is he treating Harry so badly? Oh, cause he hates Harry.'

JC: And then Lupin immediately says, "You mean from Mr. Wormtail, or one of these people? Harry, do you know any of these men?" That's such a terrible lie, and the fact that he picked Wormtail in particular...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. It's like, ugh.

Lorrie: Harry.... Oh, Harry's allowed to speak now. "No! I don't know them. Truthfully. No." He has no idea who these are. And then... oh, bless Ron! Ron comes through! Without anyone having told him what the cover story is, Ron comes through, panting and saying, "I gave that to Harry!" Oh! Ron saves them, and Lupin jumps at the rescue.

JC: Yeah. "That seems to clear that up, Severus."

Lorrie: Yeah. Before Snape can react, Lupin says, "Well, that's a win," and they've done it. Lupin and Harry have won the argument over Snape on technicalities.

JC: Oh.

Lorrie: Jeez. Even though...

JC: It is interesting, yeah, that Snape lets them walk away without another word. It's very Snape also, but it is very interesting because the lies are so clear here. It's so clear that Ron just.... Yeah, all of it. Everyone knows that everyone is lying.

Lorrie: Yes!

JC: And Snape's just like, 'Okay, I'm going to tuck all this away. It's more evidence.' I'm doing the thing where you point to the eyes, and then you point to you.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's like that. It's like that. It's all I'm imagining Snape doing to them as they walk out the door, but yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. And in case they weren't already afraid of Snape catching on to everything they're doing, well now they better be really afraid.

JC: And then we get to this wonderful moment where Lupin, in his head, is like, 'How much can I say without telling them I know what this is?'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He seems like the omniscient adult from the kids' perspective. He's like, "I know it's a map, I know what it does. I cannot believe you didn't turn this over to someone considering..." Ugh. "And no, you're not going to get it back." It's like very... Oh.

Lorrie: Well, what did you think about the line from Lupin: "I am, however, *astounded* that you didn't hand it in. Particularly after what happened the last time a student left information about the castle lying around."

JC: Well, it's hypocritical, considering that Lupin knows a lot of things, too. He's not told anybody, apparently. Or maybe he has, I don't know. Maybe Dumbledore has pulled him aside and said, "All right, what's going on?" and Lupin has told Dumbledore everything he knows, which is not much maybe. Maybe he didn't remember that this map existed until he saw it. If so, it hasn't been that long for Lupin since he was in Hogwarts, but I know if somebody pulled out something that I used in high school, I'd be like, 'What?! Is that...? Huh?!' So yeah, I don't know if Lupin is being a complete hypocrite here or just a partial one.

Lorrie: I was shocked at him when he said, "I'm astounded that you didn't hand it in." My whole response was, 'Oh, really?' Then when he says, "I can't let you have it back," I thought, 'What was Lupin thinking when Sirius came in to kill Ron or whatever -- to stand over Ron's bed with a knife?' He didn't say anything, even though the whole castle is now in lockdown. Why isn't Lupin saying anything? Is he trying to find things out for himself without confirming with anyone? And then this map shows up... Is he making up reasons to not give it back to Harry because he actually just wants it for himself?

JC: Hmm. Yeah, I think that if he thinks that he's the only person who can stop Sirius -- which he might; maybe that's his M.O. here -- then the map is going to help. If he can figure out how Sirius is getting into the castle, the map will help with that for sure, so maybe.

Lorrie: And it's such a funny parallel to the excuses that Harry gave Neville earlier in the chapter, for wanting to just lose Neville so that he can take the map and go do whatever's on his mind that he doesn't want to tell anybody about, even though he should. He absolutely should tell people, and what he wants to do is definitely not allowed. To see Lupin do this exact same thing as a former schoolboy, this chapter is working on so many levels. Harry is still innocent, and asks Lupin, "Why did Snape think I'd got it from the manufacturers?" This is dangerous for Lupin. It's getting closer, and he thinks about it and he tells the truth. He says, "Because these mapmakers would have wanted to lure you out of the school. They'd think it extremely entertaining," which shows that Lupin thinks Snape has partial validity in being so outraged. Lupin has a guilty conscience.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And while Lupin is realizing all of this, Harry gets even closer and says, "Do you know them?" "We've met."

JC: "We've met." It reminds me of when we talked about the portrait. How do portraits work? What kind of aspect of a person's personality or life do they capture? The map seems to have captured the most mischievous, rule-breaking parts of their personalities. There's the whole

thing about how, when you look back at who you were when you were a kid and you recognize, "I'm not the same person that I was as a kid. I can look back and judge that kid for the choices that they made." He's doing that, but he also understands that that wasn't also completely who he was or who they were. They were much more complex than that, but the map captured the most (probably in retrospect) dangerous aspects of their combined personalities.

Lorrie: But it's also something that's so glorious and beautiful. It's brilliant and it's life force. This is the problem with trying to control kids of this age when they really are in danger. How can you tell somebody who's so full of life, "For your own safety, you can't live"? You can be alive, but you have to not have any fun. The things that make your life worth living, the joy that just comes to you that you want to act on... No, you can't do that. If you're amazing like Hermione, you can force it to happen, but it's so much life force bursting through. There's so much happiness in it and genius, and how painful is it for Lupin, who has been living a pretty shattered life, to come across this pure relic of something that was so joyful for him.

JC: Yeah, it's got to be a little bit like watching a video of yourself from a long time ago before a lot of life happened.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah, or like watching the video where you're talking with your grandparents or whatever, something that is so far in the past. It's like, "Wow. It's a different person, the person I am now. That person hasn't experienced all these things."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "That person had a lightness to them, to their being, that I don't have anymore." There's a lot of melancholy in that, too.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That idea of, 'Oh, God,' when you are really confronted with an earlier version of yourself and you have to look that square in the eyes and be like, 'Yeah. Wow.'

Lorrie: And the fact that it was so glorious that the four kids achieved this magical artifact that nobody can replicate, and that they had so much fun. There was the small matter of somebody almost getting killed. "Well, we'll just kind of glide -- He's still alive, he's fine. Nothing happened." It had been his dream come true, ever since after he got turned into a werewolf, to have friends and adventures, to be glamorous like this and naughty, and to have these bonds with these people that tragedy separated him from them afterwards and it's so painful. But no, look how glorious they were for this moment. Yeah... Anyway, he better take it away from Harry. Harry keeps asking, and that's when Lupin says this thing that I know people have so many different responses to, and I think it's one of the most wounding things anyone says in the series. He says, "Don't expect me to cover up for you again, Harry. I cannot make you take Sirius Black seriously. But I would have thought that what you have heard when the dementors draw near you would have had more of an effect on you. Your parents gave their lives to keep you alive, Harry. A poor way to repay them -- gambling their sacrifice for a bag of magic tricks." That is cutting. It's powered by Lupin's own shame, and his own need to aggressively turn Harry's mind away from whatever is going on with Lupin. If you get someone to feel guilty and ashamed of themselves, then they're going to stop wondering what the hell you've been doing. What he accuses this 13-year-old of is so awful, because Harry feels so crappy after this reprimand and I don't think Harry deserved it. He's thirteen. He had not been trying to insult the sacrifice of his parents.

JC: True, true.

Lorrie: He really wasn't trying to do that, but Lupin is accusing Harry of doing what Lupin is actually doing. What Lupin did at the time -- that Dumbledore put his own career on the line to try to give Lupin an education, and that Lupin kept it secret -- this is also the reprimand that has brought Harry low before in this book, where he's trying to be naughty and he gets reminded, "You know, the Weasleys are really putting themselves at risk for you. Just don't get into trouble. You weren't thinking of getting into trouble, were you?" And Harry's like, "Oh, God, I really have to grow up." Meanwhile, Hermione is having the same terror of letting down McGonagall; McGonagall has really put herself on the line, and Hermione had better not put a toe out of line. You can't let people down like this, but seriously, how is Harry supposed to know that his parents gambled -- sacrificed their lives? No, nobody can think that about parents who died so long ago you can't even remember. This was a really unfair low blow for Lupin, and you can see where it's coming from. If I had as much panic over needing to hide my own traces as Lupin, I would have done this, too.

JC: Also, it sounds very much like a parent to me. My note about this is, "Lupin sounds like a parent here." It sounds like the way that parents will often resort to this kind of comment. It's like, "Look at everything I've done for you. Look at all the sacrifices we've made so you could have this, and you're just going to throw it away." It felt like that kind of comment, which is what adults say when they just don't know what else to do.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Or when they're so frustrated by the fact that from their perspective, kids aren't appreciating things when the kids don't have all that baggage to really understand what sacrifices have been made or what things have happened in the past. They don't have enough life experience to process that. They're just living their life.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And they're being a kid, so it just made me think, 'Oh, yeah, that's the classic parent line here.'

Lorrie: And nobody else ever throws Harry's dead parents in his face like this to reproach Harry for his own shortcomings. This really hurts. It stings, it lingers. So yeah, the next sentence: "He walked away, leaving Harry feeling worse by far than he had at any point in Snape's office." And as long as Harry feels bad this way, he's not going to wonder what the hell Lupin has been up to, and yeah. He and Ron slowly go upstairs and Harry passes the one-eyed witch and remembers, 'Oh, God, my invisibility cloak is still in the passageway. All right.' Ron feels crappy. Ron says, "It's my fault. I persuaded you to go. Lupin's right, it was stupid. We shouldn't have done it." God, these poor boys. Then they see Hermione, and this is such a brilliant end to this chapter. Hermione comes and you think, 'Oh no, it's going to be the Crookshanks problem all over again.' No, no.

JC: It's worse than that.

Lorrie: She's reminding them that it's an issue bigger than all of this stuff. No... Hagrid lost the case, Buckbeak's going to be executed, and it does give them all perspective. "Okay, there are bigger things happening. It's okay. We should focus." I really respect that the author found something big and serious enough to put an end to this wild, wild ride of a chapter. So many timelines, so many agendas, so many misunderstandings; so many people being fundamentally wrong about things that truly affect their lives, all of them lying to each other and dancing around each other in this dance that they all know.

JC: Something that strikes me at the end of this chapter is that there are a lot of people who have a lot of information about Sirius Black at this point. If they all just sat down around a table in a room, they could probably figure out what's going on pretty quickly, but no one's going to do that.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: They're all going to do their own investigations or whatever. Yeah.

Lorrie: So let's unpack: why aren't they? What's preventing... Who has information about Sirius?

JC: Dumbledore, Lupin...

Lorrie: Yeah, okay. Dumbledore, Lupin... who else?

JC: Snape. Harry, to the extent that he has some, but then other people outside of the school, like people in the Ministry. Yeah, lots of people like that. Plenty of people went to school with Sirius. Yeah, it just seems like, at least, if a few of these people sat down in a room together and talked about what's going on -- and maybe they are. For all I know, they have done that, but we're not seeing it because it's from Harry's perspective. But it doesn't seem that way. It seems like everyone's got their own agenda.

Lorrie: No, it doesn't.

JC: Everyone's doing their own thing, got their own agenda here.

Lorrie: So to go down that list, why is Dumbledore not doing that? Why is he not sitting down?

JC: Because Dumbledore never seems to do that. I don't know. That doesn't seem to be the way he operates. I get this sense -- and maybe we'll see how it goes in this book -- that Dumbledore often sets up the conditions for things to happen, and then just sits back and waits to see what happens. That seems to be the way that things happen often.

Lorrie: What I keep remembering is that Snape tried to do exactly what you just said. Snape has been trying to talk to Dumbledore about Sirius Black the whole time...

JC: True.

Lorrie: And Dumbledore has said, "I won't hear it." Snape has been trying to say, "I think Lupin and Sirius Black are in cahoots," and Dumbledore shuts the whole thing down so much that he doesn't hear anything that might lead to a correct conclusion. He's invested in protecting Lupin because he's so sensitive about possible prejudice against Lupin for being a werewolf that this is the bargain that is going on between Dumbledore and Lupin. Dumbledore wants to assume that Lupin is a good person in good faith, which, generally speaking, he is. He wants to assume, "No, you're not a monster. You were just a kid who deserved an education; you are now an adult who is qualified to teach, and I won't have it any other way because the world is prejudiced against you." Lupin knows that this is Dumbledore's side of the bargain. Lupin knows he owes Dumbledore for this because the rest of the world is happy to be prejudiced against him, and in return he is poorly repaying Dumbledore's trust by withholding the information he knows and not coming clean about the ways he jeopardized Dumbledore's trust as a student. That's what's preventing Lupin from coming forward and saying what he knows and putting his head together with Dumbledore's, because of his guilt about having not held up his side of the bargain. So Snape has tried; Dumbledore won't hear it. Dumbledore doesn't want to entertain any thoughts that might introduce prejudice against Lupin. Snape is trying to keep his promise or follow his order from Dumbledore to know that Lupin is a werewolf and not tell anyone, so he is resentfully glaring at Lupin. "You ingrate! I'm keeping your secret. I don't even want to!"

JC: Making the potion...

Lorrie: Right, and the secret that Dumbledore has been forcing Snape to keep is the secret of Snape's own trauma. He was very nearly the victim of Lupin being a werewolf, but because it's so important to protect Lupin from prejudice, Snape and his need to talk about what happened to him is being sacrificed. Clearly, Lupin is more important to Dumbledore than Snape from the Snape point of view. Yeah, just the feeling of keeping a secret for somebody -- who, in your mind, nearly killed you -- that is continuing to do probably nefarious things; protecting from that a child that you don't even like (who is actively undermining your protective efforts); trying to bring it up with Dumbledore, who won't hear it; and then being faced with Ron saying, "I bought that for Harry!" Harry, Ron, as quietly as you can, run!

JC: Yeah. So just to clarify, I was not saying that it would be reasonable for all these people to sit down at a table.

Lorrie: No, no, no, no, no! Me neither. No!

JC: I totally get why it's not....

Lorrie: No!

JC: It is funny that a lot of times in books -- this is true in life, too; it's not like this is unrealistic. It's interesting that sometimes, stories are structured around, "If people just communicated better, none of this would've happened."

Lorrie: No, and I absolutely didn't think that's what you were saying.

JC: Okay. Yeah.

Lorrie: What I was doing was following all of those lines of logic, because this goes so deep.

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: Why are they not sitting down and talking to each other? Actually, for amazingly complicated secret agendas and misinformation and guilt, all of these things are coming into play in this completely mystifying chapter.

JC: Right, and amazingly, it's all from Harry's perspective, and Harry has even less context for all of this. Yeah.

Lorrie: But actually, all of the people here are confused and under-informed, including Dumbledore. Nobody knows what's happening; everyone's hiding something and everyone's doing this complicated dance, and we're reading it. My respect for this chapter is through the roof; my admiration and gratitude are also through the roof at having a piece of literature that is so rewarding to read over and over again and understand more and more, and it's all there.

JC: It's a common refrain online for people who really dislike the author, and dislike her for extremely legitimate reasons, who will often say, "Oh, the books are mediocre." That's something that I hear a lot, and this is the kind of chapter where I want to go, "How do you read this and call it mediocre? Where's the evidence that this is mediocre writing? How do you...? Yeah. I don't understand." As much as I dislike the author personally, I've got to admit this is just damn good.

Lorrie: It's so good. It's so complicated. It's so real and recognizable, this feeling of when you walk into a situation, you don't know what's happening, but you know it goes deep and that you

better just keep your mouth shut. And the way that everybody's personality comes through so powerfully with every bit of dialogue... Everyone is so themselves.

JC: Yeah. It reminds me of politics. I recently had the experience of testifying before a state committee.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: The experience of being in the room and understanding that every single person that I'm testifying before has an agenda and has a staff who are telling them what to do and what to think. Now I have no idea what kind of research they've done about me, what they know about me, their responses to me and the way that other people are asking questions, all of it. If there's an agenda, then I do not understand because I don't live in that world. It was terrifying.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And it makes me think of the complexity of this situation that Harry's in. It's like, 'Yeah, people are playing these games all the time.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Some people are better at it than others, and I very much identify with Harry going, "Huh? What?" Yeah.

Lorrie: "I'm just going to do what I can do."

JC: Yeah. Yeah, exactly.

Lorrie: 'Choreography' is the word that keeps coming up for me. It's so choreographed; this is the point at which you pretend that it was from a joke shop. This is the point at which you rapidly try to remember if there's anything that's going to contradict that. 'No, no, it's fine, it's safe. Go with that.' This is the point at which Snape bears down on the whole situation, trying to find 'the thing' that's going to unravel it all and he can't, and you know that's what he's doing and you have to race to prevent it. Meanwhile, Snape is letting you know his whole attitude about it, and letting your bad conscience develop and betray you.

JC: Amazing.

Lorrie: Yeah, and putting Lupin, also, in the position of having to make up some extra effort to explain this to the kid who has to be thrown off the scent. Well, it wasn't until, oh, at least the third or fourth read, but Snape is not as horrible in this chapter as I thought he was being. What he's upset about, regarding Harry, is actually protective.

JC: The fact that he turns so quickly to Lupin is, I think, the big sign of that there. Yeah, it's so interesting.

Lorrie: And it never fails to make me laugh that Harry takes a while to realize he's going to get away with this. He is never going to be punished for sneaking into Hogsmeade and throwing mud at Draco Malfoy as a disembodied head. There is no justice for Draco.

JC: No justice for Draco. Oh, my God.

Lorrie: This thing happens to Draco. He does the right thing -- he goes and tells an adult -- and nothing happens because Harry's a Gryffindor.

JC: Because Harry's Harry. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Because it's Harry Potter. Yeah. Yeah, that's a point.

Lorrie: Yeah. And in this whole book, any time Snape thinks he's going to finally be able to prove it, no. Gryffindors are going to win again.

JC: Yep.

Lorrie: And they're all so very, very guilty.

JC: For sure. And they haven't even gotten started yet.

Lorrie: No.

JC: Yeah, they haven't even gotten started. We're about to hit the part where they really actually do breaking of rules in big ways.

Lorrie: Yeah. But I guess the two things that I want to come away with from this chapter, after multiple rereads, are Snape thinks that they're actually trying to kill Harry, and that's what's upsetting to him. The thing that Lupin reprimands Harry for: that was too much. The reason that stings so hard is because that's the way people talk when they're covering up their own guilt. It stings more when you project that onto somebody else. I want to go to 13-year-old Harry and say, "I know that really, really hurt and there's some truth to it, but you didn't deserve that much." But yeah, that reprimand... it's really memorable, isn't it?

JC: Definitely.

Lorrie: It's exciting. The chapter's a masterpiece, in my opinion. I do not agree with people who think that one of the ways to fight back against J.K. Rowling is to say that the Harry Potter series is poorly written.

JC: No, yeah.

Lorrie: I think they're wrong about that.

JC: I don't even know how... Unless you've never read the books, I don't know how you say that. I really don't.

Lorrie: Well, the people I hear saying this have read the books. And the chapter after this, next time, it's called The Quidditch Final.

JC: All right. More Quidditch!

Lorrie: The Final! Yeah.

JC: But not just Quidditch.

Lorrie: It's never just Quidditch.

JC: It's never just Quidditch. Yeah, it's never just Quidditch.

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.