

Transcript

Episode 3.20

Book 3, Chapter 20: The Dementor's Kiss

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 Twenty: The Dementor's Kiss.

Lorrie: The Dementor's Kiss. Harry, Ron, Hermione, Lupin, Sirius, Peter, Crookshanks, and a weirdly floating, unconscious Snape take the tunnel out of the Shrieking Shack. We see how awful it is when Lupin transforms. Peter escapes, dementors come for Sirius, and we find out what's under a dementor's hood. Harry fails to drive the dementors away, but from a distance another Patronus appears and saves Sirius. JC, what was your experience of rereading this chapter after so long?

JC: I think, because I knew what was going to happen in this chapter, it was hard to let myself enjoy the joy. There is this love and lightness at the beginning; the first half of this chapter is full of hope and promise, and the first paragraph is light-hearted. They're described looking like contestants in a six-legged race.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: That's that silly thing you do in elementary school or whatever. It's going back to silly childhood, fun, hopeful things.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: We have that feeling in the first half of the chapter, but as someone who's read this before, I know where it's all going. It almost made it worse, because you're just like, 'Oh, no, they're building up their hope. Oh, no, their hopes are up. Oh, no, they're about to get dashed. Ugh!' It was a strange feeling for sure. Impending doom, I guess that's it. Sometimes, do you ever feel that way in real life, where you have a moment when everything's going right?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Everyone's happy and the house is clean, whatever. Your work is going well, and it's like 'What's going to happen?'

Lorrie: You're like, 'Something's about to drop.'

JC: Yeah, exactly. That's kind of what it felt like. We'll get into some of the good things, I think, and so many good things that were starting to have the possibility of happening.

Lorrie: Yeah. I found this to be a really emotional chapter, and there are a lot of ways in which I read it for the first time this time, even though I reread this series so often. I think there were some things about this chapter that were so painful that I never let myself feel them before, mostly to do with the way that twelve years of Sirius' life got robbed from him. But yeah, Sirius gets a second chance at life -- even though Peter does, too -- and Harry gets a loving guardian. That changes Harry on every level. It restores part of his story to him; it makes him more mature. This will make him forever stronger. And when I realized that I'm reading this, then it made me able to tolerate the awfulness that happens in the rest of the chapter because it's still such a level-up for Harry, something that he's been struggling with the whole time we've known him.

JC: Yeah, for sure. I think, too, it was awful, but also knowing what's to come in the book -- but then also knowing what's to come in the next four books after this -- it's going to get worse for Harry.

Lorrie: Oh, gosh.

JC: There's an extent to which, 'Oh, this is awful, but this isn't the worst thing that's going to happen to Harry by any stretch. Enjoy it while you can.' Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's the beginning, though.

JC: I think I love the realization, for both Harry and Sirius, that they have each other. They can have each other, they could be a family... how that changes both of them. You mentioned -- I think you mentioned this -- that idea that when Harry looks at Sirius again, he looks at his face and he looks ten years younger.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Even Sirius has this hope that maybe he's not about to die. Maybe he's going to have this second chance at life and he's going to get to have a relationship with Harry. Later on, there's some question about, 'Does he see Harry as Harry? Does he see Harry as James?' That comes up in later books, but this idea that Sirius might have a connection to someone after all this time, someone who actually wants that connection back with him?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I think for Harry, it's the same: he doesn't have the memory of living with a family who loved and wanted him. The idea that he could live with Sirius just blows his mind, this idea of what this life could be like.

Lorrie: To be wanted. Yeah.

JC: Oh, wow. I think you could just see the possibilities blooming in Harry's mind. What would it be like to go home in the summer or go home at the holidays and spend them with Sirius? It's incredible. The hope. Aww...

Lorrie: Having those thoughts and feelings changes a person permanently, from someone who had never had those to suddenly thinking, even if it never comes true, somebody wanted it. So much shape-shifting happens in this chapter, including within Harry. With Sirius, you were mentioning one of the major shape-shifts that happens with Sirius: when he feels the influx of love because Harry is accepting him, that removes ten of the twelve years he's lost for a moment. But also at the beginning, when we see that he's letting Snape's head bump on the way out of the Shrieking Shack, he's picking up whenever he left off. It's a really good characterization of the arrested development that has to happen for somebody who was just completely disrupted as a young adult.

JC: I hadn't thought about this until just now, but he was kind of frozen in time in a lot of ways. The moment when he went and confronted Peter -- and then everything happened and he went to Azkaban -- he was emotionally or mentally frozen at that time. The way he survived Azkaban was by not being himself (trying just to hang on to his sanity, being a dog a lot); the moment all of that is lifted from him, he's right back where he was at, what, twenty? How old was he?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I hadn't thought about that before, and that explains some of his behavior later on, too. He didn't grow up in the same way that everyone else did.

Lorrie: It was stolen from him. Peter took it from him, and he's getting now this second chance at life; from the moment that he argued with Hagrid -- he showed up to the house in Godric's Hollow and said, "I'm going to take the baby," and Hagrid said, "No, Dumbledore said no," and then Sirius says, "Well, you can have my motorbike. I'm not going to need it anymore." From that moment on, he had devoted the rest of his life to taking down this dangerous person, Peter, that nobody else knows about (knowing that that'll probably be the end of his life), and that kept him going in Azkaban. Then when he figured out where Peter was, he became single-minded about that. That's something he can do for the world, knowing that after that, his life is over. For that to have changed now and... wait, what? He gets to fulfill the promise that he and James made to each other: that he's going to love this child? Oh, that's a completely new thing to live for. He hasn't felt this in so long.

JC: There's that little exchange when Sirius first brings this up to Harry: "Well, if you wanted to... You probably won't want to. I know... I know I shouldn't even be asking, but..." It's like that. It's very awkward and it reminds me of... I've read a lot of stories where two people who were in love with each other don't think the other person likes them the same way. It's almost that kind of dynamic of, "I know you probably won't want to leave your aunt and uncle." Again, no one has any clue how awful Harry's life with the Dursleys is, so in the moment when Harry goes, "Are you crazy? Of course I want to come and be with you," and they're both like *GASPS* It reminds me of that moment.

Lorrie: It very much does.

JC: When two people connect, yeah, and realize they're both on the same page. That's very emotionally satisfying. "Aw, they're going to be a family!"

Lorrie: The line when Harry says, "When can I move in?" It's this skeletal inmate who's covered in blood and has been on the news.

JC: And then Harry has that moment where he's imagining Uncle Vernon's face when they find out that Harry's actually going to live with this murderer they saw on the news, what they would think. Oh, my God. Yeah.

Lorrie: What it made me realize is one of the big changes that this makes in Harry -- to be wanted by somebody who's alive and can love him back -- is solving the problem of the pain of the Mirror of Erised, where he's longing and longing but those people aren't there. He can comfort himself that when they were alive, they would have loved him, but this is different. This is a relationship. He can get back part of his own story through Sirius, who knew his parents, but he can also start writing new parts of his story again now because he's in relationship with somebody who loves and wants him equally.

JC: Aww.

Lorrie: This change in Harry is so fundamental that I read that and thought, 'No wonder.' At the end of Order of the Phoenix, when Harry is being possessed by Voldemort and he thinks to himself, 'Well, at least if I die, I'm going to go see Sirius again,' Voldemort can't endure this, and that's the last time Voldemort ever tries to be in Harry's head. It's so painful to him. When you think that's because Harry had that dream come true -- where he's looking in the Mirror of Erised and there would be somebody there who loved him, an older family member who cared about him, and then now it's come true and that person is alive and wanting to be in a relationship with him -- well, no wonder Voldemort can't stand it. That's so painful.

JC: Wow, because that's something that Voldemort never had. Yeah.

Lorrie: This is why he's so fascinated by Harry Potter, who had some similarity but then somehow got dead parents to care for him, and now a living person to come and claim him. It's so painful.

JC: Yeah, it is very painful. I've never actually personally known someone who was adopted as a teenager, but it made me wonder. I've read stories of people who were adopted as teenagers and suddenly had a family and that it was obviously a challenging thing, but also just the hope of, "Finally, I have this thing." I don't know. It made me wonder a little bit about how someone like that would read into Harry's experience here, what that might feel like.

Lorrie: I think the imperfections in the relationship between Harry and Sirius are really helpful there, because it's not happily ever after. It makes it more relatable, it's more real, and it points out the thing that's important, which is that they want each other; they care about each other as individuals. I liked, too, that when Sirius looks ten years younger: "For a moment, he was recognizable as the man who had laughed at Harry's parents' wedding."

JC: Aww.

Lorrie: Yeah. That changes his identity. For this whole book, he's been described as terrifying-looking, straggly long hair, and a knife; now, he is redefined as someone who is happy at a joyous occasion. He's now about bonds of love.

JC: Yeah. You were talking earlier about how much transformation happens, and that you see that. You can imagine the way he now looks to Harry as opposed to the way he looked before, so that's an interesting transformation in the reader's mind, isn't it? You're now seeing him differently. Yeah.

Lorrie: And his face is actually looking different.

JC: Yeah. I know we're not talking about the film versions, but I thought the film version did a really good job with this: where he went from looking utterly deranged to a loving adult caregiver pretty quickly in that scene, and they did it with makeup. They did it visually, but it really struck me how it's done with words here and that it works the same way. The mental image that I have of Sirius changed in this chapter. It did the first time I read it and it did again, and I thought, 'Wow, you could do that with words, change the way someone sees them in their head. That's pretty amazing.'

Lorrie: It's also the power of Gary Oldman.

JC: That's true. Gary Oldman's just that good.

Lorrie: Yeah. What is striking to me here is that now there's a detail that Harry knew before, but now it really matters: when Harry knew that Sirius came for him in Godric's Hollow as a baby. Now, it really matters. 'Oh, he's always wanted me,' because it means his parents left him something. His parents had arranged continuity for him before they died and it was based on love. It was intended that their love for Harry and their love for Sirius would live on, and that does a lot to connect Harry's present emotion of being happy to have a godfather with the really buried memories he has of having been loved by his father. It brings the strength of his having been loved as an infant to 15 months old more to the surface. It makes it more accessible to him. It's connected. Obviously, his father cared enough about him to secure him this godfather, and he had been a loving person because this godfather is there to attest to that bond.

JC: We're both parents. I think about the fact that these people were very young, James and Lily were... Could they have been any older than like their early twenties? They seemed like they were quite young, and I know that they were in a war. My kid was probably four or five -- four... I was close to forty at the time before it occurred to me, 'I should probably put something in my will about what would happen, if both of us were gone, where he would go.' It hadn't even occurred to me until then. Granted, I live in a very different environment than these people who were at war, but I thought the idea of being that young and deciding to have a baby -- and we don't know if they said, "We love each other, we want to have a baby, there's a war going on, who cares?" or if it was an accident. Was Harry an accident? Who knows, but the fact they had a baby during this horrific time and then had to think about that at that age, 'What if something happens to us? We got into hiding, Voldemort is after us. What's going to happen to Harry if something happens to us?' and they had to follow through on that at that age. It's like, 'Damn.'

Lorrie: Yeah, they're not surprised. They knew what they were signing up for.

JC: Yeah. That just sort of makes me think, 'Wow that's a lot.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That's a lot for me as a parent to have to... It was a lot for me to think about at the age of forty, go through the whole thing: imagining my kid being an orphan having lost both parents.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Where would he go? How would we set up our accounts so that the money would go to him? All of that was hard to think about, but I wasn't living in a war zone, being hunted down by an evil dictator wannabe. Whatever. Evil wizard megalomaniac.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I don't know. That just made me think about James and Lily in a light that I had not before.

Lorrie: When my kid was in fourth grade, they did a classroom project about civil rights, and each student was assigned a person who they would embody. One thing that really struck me was that, among all the historical figures, the activists all died so young, some of them by assassination. They knew that, and it's part of the activist way of life: you have to choose it. It's one of those things where, "Well, we're under threat anyway. Do something."

JC: It reminds me of the privilege I've had in my life of not having to face that.

Lorrie: Yeah, and people fight and give their lives in order for somebody -- some generation somewhere -- to have that privilege, which is better and more natural and what we all have the right to, whether we ever get it or not. I've been involved with the launch of a friend's book this year, *Freeman's Challenge*. My friend Robin Bernstein wrote this historical examination of a guy who, at the age of 15, was imprisoned for five years for a crime that he always swore (probably truthfully) that he never committed -- what it does to you, what kind of a person you are when you come out, the relationship to revenge. I've been thinking about that a lot as I go through what kept Sirius going, what he wanted to accomplish when he escaped. In this chapter, too, we see that okay, he's been in limbo for twelve years; so has Peter. And so has Lupin, in the sense that that day twelve years ago, he thought that two of his best friends were dead and that a third was lost to him by being a traitor, and how incredibly lonely that must have been to go from having three best friends to none.

JC: And the betrayal of thinking he knew Sirius and then realizing, 'I never knew him. What a fool I was.'

Lorrie: And having nobody to talk to about it.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: What an incredibly depressing life that must have been for twelve years, and this is why Lupin travels with giant blocks of chocolate.

JC: For sure, yeah. I had not thought about this being a new chance for Peter. I hadn't gone there, but also -- even though I had thought about it in the past -- I didn't think about it on this reading. Later, it becomes obvious that Lupin has the same experience here: he learns the truth, and he gets a friend back he thought he'd lost. Like what you were just saying: the stuff that he had lost over the last twelve years, now he gets part of that back, too.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: So everybody.... Yeah, you're right, there's a lot of transformation in a lot of different ways. It happens here. This chapter is so short. It's not many words, and so much happens.

Lorrie: And to have Snape here -- floating unconscious, but present and absurd -- he's like a balloon that's lost some of its helium, but not all of it.

JC: Oh, my God, bumping against the ceiling? Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. And he is, of course, a hilarious person because of his personality; to imagine bumping along like that, you just imagine how undignified he would find it. But it's always

significant, when there are these moments of pivotal change in this series, when Snape and Peter are in the same scene, because they are the examples of two people who had very similar choices to make and they went in different directions about it.

JC: Oh, yeah. That's true.

Lorrie: Yeah. They both had very despicable beginnings as Death Eaters. The way that you see Peter cringing in this revolting manner -- calculating his own miserable survival and really doing only the things that would benefit him -- sometimes people say that about Snape (which is true in some cases). But I really don't understand how him suffering in his later years -- to try to make up for some of the damage he had done, and then die the painful way he did with no guarantee -- he wasn't in it for himself there. He was getting nothing out of that. But Peter is what it looks like when really all you care about is your own skin, and you don't care how much you degrade yourself for it and who you sell out. Those two in the same scene at the same time... That happens a few times, and it's meant to show what you could do with a life where you have made some really not-great choices.

JC: I hadn't thought about that before, of Snape and Peter being two examples of people whose lives could have been really similar and then were not because of choices they made later after they had made mistakes and chosen the wrong side. I think you're right that the comparison of the two really highlights the choices that Snape made to atone, I guess. Is that the right word?

Lorrie: Yeah. Well, he definitely did a lot of that. He has to be knocked out for this scene, because he would really be interfering if he were conscious, but no, he's floating along... and then the full moon comes out.

JC: UGH! This took me right back to what you were saying in the last episode about the danger that Lupin presents, and that human aspect of you can't completely control Lupin's condition.

Lorrie: No, you can't, because look at all this important stuff happening that Lupin was urgently present for. This is really life-changing stuff. Oops. Snape, the unconscious floating balloon, was right about this.

JC: Yeah. That's what hurts, I think. I know you're not a huge fan of Lupin. That's what hurts, coming from someone who genuinely does like Lupin as a character.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It hurts that this is his mistake that caused all of this, and then everything that has to go into place to try to fix it that's coming up... All of that could have been remedied by Lupin not forgetting to take his damn potion. I'm thinking about the fix-it story, where Lupin remembers to take the potion and then everything else changes. Oh, my God.

Lorrie: Yeah, and I've come to peace with that because I'm thinking of it as: is it really a mistake, though, because his heart was with the human story that was super important. Can we humans really be completely responsible and mechanical and robotic when we have love and concern about people? In the balance of things, don't we save ourselves and other people more by caring than by being perfect? I'm not sure how much I would give up Lupin always having an incomplete feeling about Sirius' story, looking for the map, running after him and worrying about Peter and worrying about the children. Would I give that up? That urge where okay, this is the

most important thing he can possibly remember; it also happens to be the full moon. UGH. But that urge to care....

JC: And I wonder, too: it's not clear to me if he forgot to take his potion -- if he got wrapped up in everything -- or if there was a part of him that was like, 'If I don't take the potion...' I don't know. What would happen? I can't think of a good example to compare it to (of humans taking a medication). He probably didn't because he knew the kids were going to be there and he wouldn't have exposed the kids to him, but part of me was thinking... Was he thinking, 'If I do transform into a werewolf, I can take care of Sirius Black.'

Lorrie: Oof.

JC: But that's probably a dark story that maybe someone has written. Probably not.

Lorrie: I imagine some people have. Well...

JC: I'm sure that doesn't make sense in the context of what we're talking about, but it was a thought that popped into my head. You probably just forgot.

Lorrie: For canon purposes, I don't see any support for it, but if you wanted to make that argument, it's not even a half step. It is definitely possible. It's certainly something that other people might look at Lupin and wonder. In terms of strict canon reading, the reason why I think, 'No, definitively, that's not what happened,' is because we get to see how terrible the transformation is.

JC: Yeah, that's true.

Lorrie: And then we see oh, Lupin would not want this.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: For the purposes of the story and understanding what this human being has to deal with, it's nice to get to see, 'Look, he wasn't exaggerating. This is terrible.'

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: We see that it's so scary. It must be physically terribly painful.

JC: Exactly. I think it's important for the reader and for the kids to see just how dangerous he really is as a werewolf. That brings home the point that you have made, and that Snape has been making all along: what the hell was Dumbledore thinking? This is one slip-up; look at the damage that he could have done to children in a school, because he's not in control of himself when he's in that state. It really does bring home the point that Snape was right. This was not a good idea all along.

Lorrie: It also shows -- the way that the chapter is written with the wording -- Lupin is just as much at risk or more from the transformation as the people around that he might endanger. When Sirius transforms and bites Lupin and fights with him, it's as much to save Lupin from himself; supposing that the werewolf transformation does result in Lupin hurting or killing somebody, Lupin's life is over and he would not have wanted this. He really would not have. When Hermione realizes what's about to happen, she says, "He's not safe!" That's beautifully worded, because she means both that it's not safe to be around him and that Remus Lupin the human is not safe right now; then that wording is reinforced in the later chapters, because the

text refers to 'the werewolf'. 'The werewolf does this, the werewolf does that.' Then there's also a point where Peter dives for Lupin's wand; he doesn't dive for 'the werewolf's wand'. When 'the werewolf' is attacking or fighting, it's not Lupin attacking or fighting.

JC: The separation.

Lorrie: Yeah. Other people suffer from 'the werewolf', but Lupin is always stuck with 'the werewolf'.

JC: Yeah. It makes me think: Lupin was very small when he got bitten. I'm imagining, 'What do little tiny werewolves... How did his parents handle that?'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Right. Did they have to build a special room in their house and lock him in it every month?

Lorrie: Yeah, probably. Yeah.

JC: Did it get worse as he got older? And did his parents sit there and think, 'Oh, my God. Right now he's six, but what's he going to be like when he's thirteen?'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: 'He'll never have a life.' This is the weird thing about rereading these books as a parent of a child who has had struggles and moments where I've wondered, 'How is this going to affect his life?' You've absolutely been in the same position. It's hard for me not to go back and think about Lupin's parents. I don't think I ever considered Lupin's parents.

Lorrie: And what a change for Dumbledore to say, "I can think of a way."

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And for Dumbledore to think this family's happiness depends on this experiment working.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: So there's Lupin transforming, and Sirius understands everything immediately and he becomes an adult again. We then get to see how years of being a teenager who was best friends with a werewolf trained Sirius to have this really major responsibility of containing his friend. He knows exactly what to do and he yells at Harry to run, and Harry cannot run because Ron is chained to Peter and Lupin. That's when I understood, 'Oh, this is so good. Harry understands the love that is in Sirius, and how much Sirius and James must have loved each other, because Harry has the same with Ron and Hermione. That's how he knew that James would not have wanted Lupin and Sirius to kill Peter: because Ron and Hermione didn't want him to kill Sirius.' This analogy, this love for his friends, has prepared him to understand Sirius and to let him have this bond very quickly. Meanwhile, there's Sirius being -- holy moly! -- an adult who's helping a kid in crisis and saying, "Leave it to me. Run!"

JC: Oh, yeah, when has Harry ever had that before?

Lorrie: Oh, my goodness.

JC: Damn. Harry doesn't even know what to do. What?!

Lorrie: 'What?! A grown-up stepping up?' Sirius must be so tired, and Harry punched him in the face earlier this evening.

JC: True.

Lorrie: But no, he knows what he has to do. But yeah, this does show no, there are things that this disability makes it unsafe for Lupin to do. Unsafe for him and also for other people, and the person assigned to him to take over or to cover for him is Sirius; he cannot cover Peter when he's taking care of Lupin. What do we do in this case? On the one hand, we have the Servant of Lord Voldemort about to escape. On the other hand, we have Lupin being taken over by 'the werewolf', endangering people. You've got to let the rat go.

JC: And it's an awful moment on so many levels, because you see it all crashing down.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It all comes crashing down, and it's just like, "NOOOOOOOO!"

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I understand that it's really great for the plot, but it just feels cruel.

Lorrie: It's full of horrendous regret, but at the same time so much powerful emotion, because these are stories that have been percolating there and now they're allowed out into the surface. I love *Expelliarmus* is what saves Lupin's wand, and it limits how much damage Peter can do. Thank you, Snape and *Expelliarmus*. Oh, gosh, the moment when Peter transforms... It's so disgusting: "Harry saw his bald tail whip through the manacle." Oh, that just got me viscerally! UGH! And then he yells, "Sirius, he's gone, Pettigrew's transformed!" And there you have it, again: a grown-up. Harry has only just gotten a godfather, and he already knows to call to Sirius for help.

JC: Oh, you're right about that. Yeah, he's never done that before.

Lorrie: No! He has nobody to call.

JC: He's never asked an adult for help.

Lorrie: He can't do it. What's he going to do? All those times he was like, 'Maybe I should talk to Dumbledore. No, he's in his office.'

JC: Wow, I didn't realize that. That is significant.

Lorrie: Isn't that huge?

JC: It's out of character for Harry to ask an adult for help, so it's really meaningful.

Lorrie: He knows he can do it. Yeah. When I think of that, a number of times in this chapter I almost want to cry, and that one really gets me.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Sirius hears him and answers and gallops off, trying to catch the rat. Then there's this weirdly awful-funny-awful moment: "Black and Lupin both gone..." This is Harry and Hermione. "They had no one but Snape for company, still hanging, unconscious, in midair."

JC: The Snape balloon that's just been floating along this whole time. I'm imagining him, yeah, as a balloon. You know in cartoons when someone puts a straw in someone's ear and they inflate?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And they float? That's what I'm imagining, is a Snape balloon.

Lorrie: Yep. It's the biggest 'no grown-ups' moment. It's so surreal with the kids going, "Uh, now what?" That's when they hear a dog in pain, and Harry, at first, isn't sure what to do. He also has to think, "Well, I don't know. Should we stay with Ron?" I don't think... Has he ever had to go save a grown-up before?

JC: I don't know. I'm trying to think. I don't think so.

Lorrie: This is a kind of shape-shifting, too. Harry is going back and forth between childhood and adulthood in this chapter, which is exactly right for the age he is: almost fourteen. This is somebody who he loves -- who he needs, who is depending on him. Okay, he's going to go. He's learning; as we read, he is putting together the first intimations in his mind, 'I am going to have to go save this man who I only just bonded with.' He had successfully used *Expelliarmus* to disarm Peter, so now he's trying desperately to use the Patronus charm that Lupin had given him, but that Patronus charm is way, way harder. Terrifyingly, he's got a hundred dementors to fight. Oh!

JC: And that little moment where he's telling Hermione the spell, and Hermione repeats it but she has no idea.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Later, Harry teaches other kids how to do this, but this is beyond Hermione. This is above Hermione's level, which is saying a lot.

Lorrie: Not only has she never done it before, but with a hundred dementors, nobody can do this.

JC: Yeah, right.

Lorrie: These dementors... Here's another thing that makes me want to cry in this chapter: as always, when the dementors approach Harry, he starts to remember his mother's screaming. He has never been able to block out that screaming before, but now he is deliberately trying to block it out because there's something more important. He used to, earlier in this book, feel slightly guilty because even though he knew he wanted to stop the screaming, he also secretly wanted to hear it because it was the only way to hear his mother's voice. They're painful memories, but they're his memories and he wants them; he wants to reintegrate as a person and to get his story back. But now this crazy rich evening -- where he has gotten so much of his own story back from people who loved his parents -- he has gotten it back and he has something more important to do, so he is now able to hold on to himself and block the power of the screaming that comes when the dementors put him in flashback. This is the beginning of the big psychological lesson that is what Patronuses do or what Occlumency does, what to do when you're being taken over by the negativity: if you have somebody that you love that you're going to protect, that power is actually stronger than your flashback. It can help pull you out of the flashback and stay at least partly in the present. He was grieving his mother, who is gone; now

he has Sirius, who's alive and in the present, that he needs to protect against dementors. He's changing.

JC: Yeah. And there's more to come.

Lorrie: Oh, gosh. There's so much more to come!

JC: There's two freaking chapters in this book, and so much has to happen. You were talking a moment ago about the fact that Harry's instinct is to go and save Sirius. It made me think about when my son was -- he was not yet two. He was a toddler between one and two, the age that Harry was when Voldemort killed his parents. I may have told the story on the podcast before; if I have, I apologize. That was like a year ago, so who knows... There was this really crazy hailstorm at our house, and we were looking out the back door at the hail and it was huge -- we live in Texas, this massive hail. I wanted to go grab a hailstone, so I opened the door and I was just going to step out and pick one up. My kiddo freaked, and he ran and he grabbed me and tried to pull me back.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And it was the strangest thing, because he'd just been this baby before; it was the first moment that I looked at him and thought, 'Oh, my God, he was trying to protect me!'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It was like, 'Holy shit, I didn't know an 18-month-old would do that!'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It transformed the way I looked at him at the moment. In that moment, I thought, 'Oh, wow,' and then I realized that we were always going to have that in our relationship, where I'm taking care of him, but he's also going to feel the same about me.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: When you said... It just made me think about the fact that that is part of a healthy relationship between a child and a parent. Even though a child is smaller and less powerful, they want to protect the people in their family.

Lorrie: They want to warn you.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. They want what's best for you. Even though they're tiny and don't have the power, the feeling is just as big as an adult.

JC: Right. The fact that this is maybe the first time that Harry has experienced that in his memory is pretty amazing.

Lorrie: Yeah, you actually correctly, understandably, brought this story up in chapter nine of *Azkaban*.

JC: I thought I had.

Lorrie: It's the chapter 'Grim Defeat'. It's the first time we see these exact same one hundred dementors.

JC: Right. Oh, hey, there you are.

Lorrie: Yeah. The one hundred dementors come and break bounds and try to get at Harry during the Quidditch game, and that's when he realizes that it's his mother's voice that he's hearing. That's when he thinks, 'Oh, no, there's this woman in trouble. I have to save her!'

JC: Yeah, yeah, okay. Yeah, that's right.

Lorrie: And you're thinking, 'Child, you're 15 months old,' but no, he does feel that. You're never too young to feel like, 'No, no, I've got to do something. This is awful.'

JC: Yeah. I knew I told it before. I'm amazed that you could remember the episode. That's impressive.

Lorrie: I just listened to it last night, because Caroline had just edited it, which is why. It's such a memorable story, thinking about how agitated your baby must have been, saying, 'No, no, I must warn her!'

JC: "No, Momma, no!" Yeah.

Lorrie: "You may not understand this, mother, but this is actually dangerous."

JC: Exactly.

Lorrie: Yeah. That's really the moment when you get to see exactly how your caretaking of a child has been experienced by that child. 'Oh, that's how it... Okay, okay.' If you ever wondered, because you try to get babies to be safe and sometimes they're really mad at you. 'No! The middle of the road looks like a great place to go play.' Do they understand that you're not just trying to be a jerk, that you actually care about them? Then when they react this way, 'Oh, I guess they do understand.'

JC: Yeah. Yeah.

Lorrie: The thing that I never noticed until this reread about the writing (the wording) in this chapter is that there are three distinct stages, and the wording changes slightly where we get to see Harry develop his bond with Sirius.

JC: Ooh.

Lorrie: He's trying to cast a Patronus and he thinks, okay, okay, focus. "*I'm going to live with my godfather. I'm leaving the Dursleys.*" That's the first time he tries to concentrate to cast the Patronus. The second time, he tells himself, "*He'll be all right. I'm going to go and live with him.*" He's not even thinking about the Dursleys anymore; he's looking into a future. And then the third time, he has managed a tiny wisp of Patronus. This is after Hermione has passed out; Harry's completely alone. He thinks, "Sirius was innocent -- innocent -- *We'll be okay -- I'm going to live with him --*" Now it's become 'we'. That's it. The bonding has happened in those three passages, and I had never seen that before.

JC: That's cool. Yeah. The "Innocent -- he's innocent -- he's innocent" stood out to me, too.

Lorrie: Yeah. So when he's trying to protect Sirius and the dementors are there, he reaches for Sirius' arm; that's good grounding. There's something for Harry to protect now. Yeah, he's still in that conflict with the memories of his mother screaming. When Harry thinks he's going to die, she was going to be the last thing he ever heard. He fights against that; now, there's something that's keeping him tethered to life. He's tethered to the present. He has to stay with Sirius, so he's hanging on there, and then a miracle happens. Do you remember the first time reading that? "Where is this Patronus coming from?"

JC: Yes, and having no clue.

Lorrie: Yeah. Me neither.

JC: I couldn't possibly imagine what was to come!

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I don't know. He said, "It looks like someone familiar," and it was like, oh, who could it be?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah, I do remember having no idea who it was. I had maybe a little... Maybe it was Lupin, that Lupin had somehow... I don't know.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I had no clue.

Lorrie: By this point, we the reader have been slapped in the face by so many revelations over the past several chapters. 'WHAM, WHAM, WHAM! I don't know what's happening! I have no idea!' "It was as bright as a unicorn"; not only is it pure, it's a callback to the end of Sorcerer's Stone with the unicorn in the first book. It tells you about the nature of Patronuses, that they're pure; just the appearance of this Patronus made me think, 'Okay, now this is the love that had strengthened him from his father.' This is so much more coalesced now in him, the love he got from James for the first fifteen months. He's gotten to know the bonds between James and James' friends. He's connected with these friends, and he's been told that he's like James; flying, the most Harry thing, is connected to James. To be connected like this, in terms he understands, to his father's love... Wow. We have seen how that has changed Harry in this one chapter.

JC: It's also interesting to me that at this point, he's never seen his own Patronus.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He's cast it before in this form.

Lorrie: Lupin knows what form it is.

JC: Yeah, Lupin knows what form it is, and so does everyone who was watching that game. Harry doesn't know, so it's interesting that he sees it and he doesn't recognize it yet.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: That's such an example of the end of a Harry Potter book. You can't stop. You have to keep going.

JC: For sure. The descriptions of the dementors and everything... properly horrifying. We finally get to see what one of them looks like under their hood, and it's truly this monster with no eyes, kind of soulless.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's just a mouth and it's gross, and yeah, all of that. But as I was reading that scene, realizing that really what they're trying to do is kill Harry -- it's that dementor's kiss thing that they're turning on Harry. Maybe this comes up later, I just don't remember -- I was kind of shocked at the idea that they were doing that to Harry there.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: So I thought, okay, is it that there's a hundred dementors and it's mob violence, where they lost control like a mob would? On the other hand, these are dementors who guard a prison full of people, and they never do that in the prison unless they're supposed to.

Lorrie: Do we know that?

JC: Do we know that? Maybe we don't, but the idea that it's unusual... It's almost like a government-sanctioned thing to allow them to do this thing. The fact that they go after Harry is... Later on, we find out the dementors are connected to Voldemort, but it's a very interesting little hint of what's to come, I think, that they go after Harry in this way.

Lorrie: Yeah. 'If you think you can control this in the service of law and order, you are wrong' is the message.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: It may be convenient, but you're not in control of it. It's similar to lycanthropy: respect how dangerous this is. Don't think that it can be domesticated or, to put it in Snape's very cruel way, a 'tame werewolf'.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: That's so insulting, but there's a point there.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: This happens in fanfic, too, where characters get 'woobified'.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: Which is lovely, because there is that core of love that you want to pursue, but if you get too far away from the original danger, then it gets out of balance. What we've seen is every single one of these characters is incredibly dangerous as a human being.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Snape was about to gleefully deliver Sirius and Lupin to get the dementor's kiss without confirming all the evidence.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: And Sirius and Lupin were about to execute Peter in front of children, who would then never be able to forget this. Peter is dangerous. Oof! We can work with these characters in fanfic and we do, to enormous profit, but yeah, sometimes it gets too cozy. It's like, well, the origins of these characters are really raw and almost unthinkably painful, and that's genius.

JC: Another thing I'm thinking about: I really like the point that you made about the dementors -- the society thinking that they control the dementors but they really don't. This scene is also setting us up for Harry to be gaslit about the dementors in the future, when the dementors are coming after him in book five at the beginning and the response from the government is like, "Oh, they wouldn't do that." "They've fucking did; that just happened."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. That idea of, "No, they're under our control," and they're not, then you're ready to gaslight people like Harry who were on the wrong end of it.

Lorrie: That was a very short chapter.

JC: It was. This is a point where it is hard to stop, and I did. I stopped. I was like, 'Nope, I'm stopping. I'm preserving my process here of not reading the next chapter until we've talked about this one.' But yeah, I can't believe there's two chapters left.

Lorrie: Yeah, the next one is not short. The next is a very long chapter, and it's called Hermione's Secret. I remember reading this book for the first time going, 'We get the payoff? We get the payoff? What does Hermione's Secret have to do with any of this? Oh, my God! How does Hermione... What? What?!

JC: Yeah. The next chapter is possibly my favorite chapter of any Harry Potter book, of all of them. Maybe I'll change my mind by the time we're at the end of this podcast, but my favorite. Absolute number one.

Lorrie: It is a masterpiece.

JC: And I am so excited. I'm so excited to get to talk about it.

Lorrie: I love Hermione. Yeah. Well, this chapter was a really good setup for it.

JC: Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: Well, I'll talk to you about it then!

JC: All right. Stay tuned!

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