

Transcript

Episode 3.21

Book 3, Chapter 21: Hermione's Secret

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-One: Hermione's Secret.

Lorrie: Hermione's Secret. We find out Hermione has been using a Time-Turner to get to her classes. Dumbledore deputizes Hermione and Harry to time travel illegally to save Sirius from being kissed by dementors, but he doesn't tell them how, only to remember the rules: "change nothing," and "you must not be seen." Harry learns *who* cast the Patronus that drove away a hundred dementors. Well, JC, what stood out to you about this chapter?

JC: There's just so much. I was so excited to sit down and read this, and I made myself wait multiple days from the last time that we met, so it was a treat finally. I gave myself a comfy spot and a nice drink, and I sat down ready to read it for the first time in many, many years. One thing I was thinking about as I was reading it is that the first time that I read this -- obviously all of this was a shock; I didn't see any of this coming -- I thought about the fact that it's been a while since we've seen in the book a mention of Hermione mysteriously being able to go to all these classes. There's been plenty of other things to worry about, so it hasn't been in our minds as readers like it was, I don't know, 10 chapters ago. I thought, 'That's very clever.'

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: We had plenty of time to be distracted and to have completely forgotten about this phenomenon of Hermione being able to seemingly be in multiple places at once, so it was such a wonderful surprise, the way that you find out about it. That part of it was really cool. Before we get into that part, though, there's some really interesting stuff that I had forgotten about that's happening when Harry first comes back to awareness at the beginning of this chapter with Snape talking to Fudge. The way that Snape is talking to Fudge is so interesting, because we have basically seen Snape talking to students the vast majority of the time -- and occasionally Snape talking to another teacher -- and we've never seen Snape sucking up to another person before in this way. It was almost like... I had to read it a couple times. 'I know that's Snape, but that doesn't sound like Snape.'

Lorrie: It feels almost out of character.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But in that way that you would talk if you were sucking up to someone who's higher up. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. That is my least favorite Snape, sucking up Snape, because it just feels so unfamiliar. In his life, normally, he's so put upon; here's something where he feels like he's going to get something, and it's like, 'Eww. Stop it. Eww!'

JC: It's interesting too, though, that his animosity toward Harry... he cannot keep it at bay.

Lorrie: It's pretty funny.

JC: Even the Minister for Magic is like, "Oh, that's a little harsh, don't you think?" and he's like, "Oh, you have no idea!" The line where he says, "Personally, I try and treat him like every other student." I wrote in my notes, 'THE FUCK HE DOES!' Oh, my God, Snape!

Lorrie: That is my favorite terrible, delusional thing he says. I just laugh. 'Oh, is *that* what you think you've been doing?!' Amazingly delusional.

JC: It does show you what he really thinks of Harry, because we're in Harry's head, right?

Lorrie: Right.

JC: It's easy to forget how Snape sees Harry, because all we really see is how Harry sees Snape. I've had to really push myself in recent years to try to see the story from Snape's perspective, because it's just so easy not to, so it's really interesting to think about this impression he has of Harry. It reminds me of this idea of the single story -- and I do this with my students -- to talk about making sure of being aware of your biases against different people. If you have a single story about, say, immigrants from Central America, and every kid who comes into your class you make an assumption that that's their story, then you're not treating that person like a human being. Snape just has this one story of Harry and his head that is, "He's James' kid, and James was like this, therefore Harry is the same." It's a really interesting example of a single story and Snape just can't and doesn't want to see past it for a lot of reasons.

Lorrie: Well, what amazes me, though, is that I forget until Snape reminds me that he actually has some valid points, because when there are excuses made for Harry or when Harry's infractions are allowed to slide, there are such compelling reasons to do that. But then he says to Fudge -- he's complaining to Fudge about Harry: "Against all school rules -- after all the precautions put in place for his protection -- out-of-bounds, at night, consorting with a werewolf and a murderer -- and I have reason to believe he has been visiting Hogsmeade illegally too --" I think, actually, all those things are true.

JC: Yeah, those things are true. Yeah.

Lorrie: I actually love, too, that it proves that the detail about Harry never being disciplined for being in Hogsmeade illegally wasn't dropped accidentally by the author. It was dropped on purpose as part of the plot. Yes, this is the kind of thing that happens when Gryffindors break

the rules. It just gets forgotten. Nobody ever follows up. They just leave without getting punished and nobody cares.

JC: It just falls into the bureaucracy.

Lorrie: Right, and some people remember this and hold a grudge and these things just keep building, and nobody remembers them except Snape and people in a similar position. And you do think, wow, it's true. He should have been spoken to about that, but instead we had Lupin and Snape fighting and Harry just ran. He saw the opportunity and ran for it.

JC: There's so much going on in this book. There's so much happening in the world of the story at the time that I can see how it happens, and I can see how it would be really easy for people to go, 'Okay, well, Harry is fine. Let's deal with the fact that we have our murderer.' I can see that the emergencies that rise to the surface would make it easy just to forget.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And this happens all the time in real life, right?

Lorrie: It does.

JC: But it is true that there are people who have a certain level of privilege that allows them to be in that position to be, "Well, it'll be fine," and there are other people who don't.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And I think that, yeah, Snape is realizing that 'If it was one of my kids, it wouldn't have gone the same way.'

Lorrie: Right. In his mind, he's evening the score, which is not really what he's doing, but that's what he thinks.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: He's aggrieved at all times.

JC: Amazing.

Lorrie: But when you talk about the single story, that's what this book does so brilliantly: it's not even just one side of the story or another. It's so many different characters, each having a completely different view of what's happening. Lupin's view is a whole other thing. When you realize that Peter Pettigrew has been a rat that's been living with the Weasleys all this time and has overheard every single thing going on in the Gryffindor boys' dorm, that's another mind-blowing thing. That thing in *Sorcerer's Stone*, when you realize that Voldemort's been in the back of Quirrell's head and therefore has been close to Harry all year and has been eavesdropping and everything: 'Wow, that's so creepy. I thought we were safe from him.' The same thing here with Peter: 'Oh, my God, that turncoat was snuggling up to -- Ugh, gross!' So we have that and then Sirius' viewpoint, and then we have Snape, who gets this extremely selective view of the events and draws really impeccable and wrong conclusions based very accurately on the subset of information that he has access to. Then there's Harry's point of view and Hermione's, and there's definitely a touching and young feeling among the Marauder generation in this book for me where they all fantasize about bringing their grievances to Dumbledore for arbitration. It's all about who can get Dumbledore to listen to them. Even Sirius,

in the previous chapter, says, "I will come peacefully as long as we can bring the rat to Dumbledore." They all think this is the truth. Whatever Dumbledore says is going to stand as the record, whether or not it's the actual truth, which is Snape's grievance with him. Dumbledore should not have, as headmaster, let the assassination attempt on Snape pass without any addressing of the traumatized student. Dumbledore's word is the record; they all fantasize who gets daddy's ear, and this is the chapter where Dumbledore finally enters.

JC: And, interestingly enough, says, "There's nothing I can do here. I can't say anything that will change what's going to happen." You've set all that up, and it's really interesting -- this idea that they've all been clamoring for his attention and everyone is like, "Dumbledore will fix it, Dumbledore's in charge" -- and Dumbledore has to go, "I'm not. I can't do anything here, and it's up to you, 13-year-old kids." Yeah, wow. Oh, but yeah, there's a lot that happens. Oh, my gosh. Okay, I want to back up for a second.

Lorrie: All right.

JC: There are so many things to talk about here. There was this moment where Harry wakes up and he hears them arguing, and it's interesting that the last thing Harry saw was the Patronus sending all the dementors away. We're again left with this mystery, because Fudge and Snape are talking about, "What was it that sent the dementors away?" No one knows, so that mystery we're immediately reminded of. That's where Harry's mind is, but then he turns to look at Hermione; Hermione looks really, really scared.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And it brings Harry back to, 'Oh, wait. What's at stake here?' There's this interesting little... The way that it's written, Harry's mind is already on, 'Was it my dad? Did I see my dad?' He's thinking about that, and Hermione's face is what reminds him, 'Oh wait, there's something bigger at stake here.' I like the way that played out right there.

Lorrie: Yeah, and I liked that we saw him gradually waking up, because of course these kids are exhausted.

JC: Oh, geez. Yeah.

Lorrie: His body had probably taken over after he passed out to try to get this child some rest, but no, it's not time to rest yet.

JC: Not yet. You've got some time ahead.

Lorrie: It took him a couple minutes to come back online, and Hermione was right there.

JC: And then we get this wonderful -- I love this -- this trope of the irritated doctor.

Lorrie: Yes!

JC: And you see it in a lot of media, where the doctor's just like, "Nobody listens to me, but I'm here. Get out of my hospital wing. I'm in charge here. I don't care who you are, Minister for Magic!" That kind of irritated doctor trope, I love it, and I think Madam Pomfrey's great here. Also, the image of her hauling in, while she's yelling at everyone and ordering them about, this giant block of chocolate and then chiseling at it with a hammer.

Lorrie: With a hammer. Yeah.

JC: Yeah. I just thought, oh, the image of that. It's just... oh, my gosh, that's beautiful. So comical, and it's this little comical moment that we need right there.

Lorrie: This is another example of the half character, half guardian spirit kind of character in Harry Potter, like Madam Pince or the trolley witch in *Cursed Child*. Are they people? They kind of are, but they're just more the guardian spirits of this domain. They're really focused on protecting their domain.

JC: Yeah. I love that. We kind of need that little bit of levity, because then we get the shouting match between the children and Snape. Gosh, that sense that you get from reading it -- of being a 13-year-old kid and knowing something that the adults are just never going to believe, and it's so important, and they won't listen to you because you're just a kid and you obviously don't know what you're talking about -- that feeling was evoked really well here.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Really from Harry, but also seeing Hermione next to him, and the realization that with all the good girl privilege, even Hermione is not being believed.

Lorrie: Nope. Not going to happen. Yeah.

JC: Yeah. And you get the sense, too, that Fudge is startled at the way that Snape is talking to these children.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Fudge is like, "Oh, wait a second."

Lorrie: Yeah, it's funny to see. Yeah, Fudge starts out being all impressed with Snape, and then as the chapter progresses, he steps back and steps back and steps back. "Whoa, what is wrong with these people?" And just the fact that Madam Pomfrey literally shuts up Harry by shoving chocolate into his mouth...

JC: Again, funny.

Lorrie: This is the recap of the lesson that the kids have been learning from Buckbeak: it just doesn't matter, in some cases, how much the truth is on your side or how important reality is or justice. The momentum is just going to grind on with or without you, and if you come waving receipts saying, "Stop, stop, I have the truth," they'll just look at you weird, like, "I don't know why you're making such a fuss. Obviously, things will happen, and will continue the way they've been going." When Fudge shows up before Buckbeak's execution and says, "Oh, well the hippogriff is going to be executed," and the kids say, "But the appeal hasn't happened yet, has it?" he looks all weird at them, like, "No, it has not happened yet." He doesn't get it. They learned that through Buckbeak, and now it's like, "Okay, this is just reminding them, 'You know exactly what's going to happen or not.'" Yeah, and when Dumbledore finally enters during all of this -- to me, I think, in this series -- this is the height of Dumbledore's powers. He is, in my mind, at his most god-like here. In the first couple of books, when you get to this point in the book, he's absent for *Sorcerer's Stone*, he's absent for *Chamber of Secrets*, and Harry has to go in alone. Later on, once Voldemort returns, he's tired and scared and he starts to look old. Here, he's just majestic. He's present; his opinion is going to decide everything. Everyone wants to bring their case to him. Madam Pomfrey totally rules the hospital wing, and he dismisses her; he overrides her. So yeah, this is peak Dumbledore. Then we see the legacy conflict that is at the

base of so much of the events of this book, which is the unresolved resentment between Snape and Dumbledore over how Dumbledore handled the prank. Snape is supposed to be leaving the hospital wing and he won't move; he disobeys. He stands there to confront Dumbledore, and he is spitting and snarling.

JC: Mmm.

Lorrie: This is the Snape that I'm much more familiar with, not the "Yes, Minister, thank you, Minister". Snape is saying, "Dumbledore, you probably believe Sirius." "Dumbledore surveys Snape closely through his half-moon spectacles." I'm reading that as Dumbledore assessing how much of Snape's response is coming from trauma; of course, Dumbledore, having just spoken to Sirius and now listening to Snape, has to look really carefully at the things they're saying to weigh the emotion behind how they're filtering the information. Snape says, "Does my evidence count for nothing?" and that's when Hermione helpfully chirps up, "That was because you were knocked out, Professor!" Of course he says, "Miss Granger, HOLD YOUR TONGUE!" We're really being reminded what forces are lined up and how, and this is the showdown between Snape and Dumbledore about the tension that Snape has been feeling ever since he heard that Lupin was going to be hired. He whispers and breathes when he talks to Dumbledore -- which is, of course, how he talks when he's at his most tested -- and he says, "'You surely don't believe a word of Black's story?' Snape whispered, his eyes fixed on Dumbledore's face. 'I wish to speak to Harry and Hermione alone,' Dumbledore repeated. Snape took a step toward Dumbledore. 'Sirius Black showed he was capable of murder at the age of sixteen,' he breathed. 'You haven't forgotten that, headmaster? You haven't forgotten that he once tried to kill *me*?' 'My memory is as good as it ever was, Severus,' said Dumbledore quietly." This is so much tension, because it's one of two times in this series where Snape -- I think this is so brave of him -- goes up to this man that means a lot to him, but Snape is nowhere near his top ten favorite people. He's so not a Gryffindor, but Dumbledore means so much to him, and he says, "What about me? Don't you care about me?" That is the most vulnerable thing for a person to say to somebody who might not love you but whose love you want desperately. You know that you're not the most appealing person, and yet, if he's rejected at this point, it would be devastating. Just as he does later in *Deathly Hallows* -- the second time Snape asks, "Don't you care about me at all, about my humanity?" -- Dumbledore does not reject him and he doesn't reassure him; he gives a completely non-committal answer. It's an answer that requires Snape to then go do more work on himself. Unrewarding, relentless, difficult work. "My memory is as good as it ever was, Severus." I find it really brave and really moving that Snape has done this and risked exposing his vulnerability and his emotion, and then Dumbledore saying, "Regardless of your issues, there's something more important than you happening right now" once again.

JC: If you look at this scene -- which I know you have, but maybe some of our listeners have not -- really look at this scene from Snape's point of view and really dig in and think about the history of Snape's experience with Sirius Black (what Snape's been dealing with all year), he is one hundred percent convinced. It's almost like... Imagine a conspiracy theorist, or someone who's just completely convinced that this is the reality and that no one around them is listening, and in particular the person who could do something about it (who is ostensibly in charge) seems to be ignoring this.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Then you go through this experience where, from your perspective, you have all the evidence that you were right all along, and know what? This person is still not listening to you. He's feeling exactly the same thing that Harry was feeling in that situation, but he doesn't have all the evidence.

Lorrie: Right, and no way to know that he doesn't.

JC: Yeah, he doesn't know that he doesn't have it. Yeah.

Lorrie: Except Hermione, whom he's shutting up.

JC: Yeah. And at the end of the scene, it's unclear to me if doubt has wiggled in at all, or is he just feeling it all personally. I don't know at the end of the scene how he feels, and I can't remember at this point when he learns the truth and that he was so wrong.

Lorrie: He doesn't know here. What he knows is that when Dumbledore says, "My memory is as good as it ever was," in that quiet way, he knows that's a dismissal. He recognizes Dumbledore's authority and he surrenders and leaves, and he has not been entirely disregarded. Dumbledore has not said, "What are you talking about?" He has said, "I hear you, and I still think that what's happening here is more important." Snape has weighed this and obeyed, and it's Snape's job to deal with his feelings, as usual.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: "Dumbledore, don't you love me? Don't you care about me?" "Severus, something really important is happening right now. You must see it." "But...but..." "We have no time." Anyway, obviously... yeah. Dumbledore wants everybody gone because he has to talk to Harry and Hermione, and that includes Snape; Snape is trying to say, "Uh..." and no, he's dismissed. What this reminds me of in real life... I don't know if this is universal, but a lot of people I know would recognize this feeling: you know how hard it is to ask for what you truly want emotionally, in emotional terms, in relationships?

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And how everybody's saying, "You have to ask. You have to learn to ask, you have to make yourself vulnerable," and it's the hardest thing. If you put in the work and you finally get up the nerve to say, "All right, I'm going to ask for what I really want from an important relationship partner," and you finally do it -- you get it out and you cry and it was terrifying -- and then the person hears you, they're full of sympathy and affection, and they look at you and they say no. Just to make up an example: "What I really want is for you to move across country with me." Suppose you have not been talking about this for a year and you finally say it, and the person says, "I hear you and I understand, and no, I'm not going to." There's a moment of disbelief: "Wait a minute, you told me to work on myself and say what I really want, and I nearly died, but I actually finally got the words out and now you say no? What?!" They're like, "Yeah," because part two of the lesson is even though it almost killed you to say what you really want, that's only your half of it; the other person has their whole range of truth that they're entitled to. Snape does this thing where he says, "Do you remember that thing that really shaped my life in adolescence that I've been heartbroken over? I'm going to bring it up. You've been telling me all year not to bring it up. Every time I've tried, you have shut me down, but I'm going to bring it up," and he gets dismissed again. Yeah, that took a lot of courage and he wasn't unheard exactly, but yeah, that's the inconclusive, unsatisfying nature of the Snape/Dumbledore relationship: when Snape

asks, the answer is always, "Well, Severus, you could do more work on yourself." It's really merciless.

JC: Yeah. In all of that, Snape is too emotional right now to even conceive of the fact that there's information he doesn't have, it seems like. He's so angry that he's not thinking, "Well, maybe I'm wrong. Maybe there's more information I don't have." His brain is not in the right place for that.

Lorrie: The thing is, as a subordinate, he's not going to be privy to that information. He has to take it on faith, as everybody in Dumbledore's world has to. He has to take it on faith that Dumbledore knows things. He's not going to be told; either you trust Dumbledore and believe in him and let it go, or you try to raise a fuss and see how far that gets you. That happens in the first chapter of the first book, when McGonagall changes out of being a cat and says, "You can't possibly be giving the baby to these people," and Dumbledore pulls the same thing on her, basically: "I know something you don't; I don't know how you're going to make it okay with yourself, but I'm going to do what I'm going to do and that's that. Go ahead and trust that I know what I'm doing, or don't. So what if Snape thinks there's something I don't know?" It's not like Dumbledore's going to tell him what that is. He's just going to have to make sense of it somehow on his own.

JC: Yeah, no, I get all that. I guess I'm just thinking, even if it's not... Obviously, it wasn't going to happen here, but even if someone laid out all the evidence for Snape, I don't think he would have been able to accept it at that moment.

Lorrie: Well...

JC: I don't know.

Lorrie: Well, we do see, over the next two books, how the people involved in this particular, really tangled mess take a couple years to untangle it all. Considering the bombshells that have been dropped on all of them, yeah, it makes sense that it will take a couple years. For example, something that occurs completely off the page (we never see it): at some point, Snape learns that it was true that Peter Pettigrew was the rat.

JC: He has to interact with him later.

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah, and he's just as horrible.

JC: Calls him Wormtail.

Lorrie: Right, and that every disgusting thing that he thought Sirius Black had done -- to kill thirteen Muggles with one curse, to betray James and Lily, to go over to the Dark Lord -- all of those things that he had ascribed to Sirius were actually done by Peter. We know that Snape learns that and that happens all entirely off the page; we similarly see Lupin and Sirius in the next two books going through their attitude adjustments as they try to make sense of the urgent, single goal they have, and all of the emotional adjustment they have to make in order to embrace that common goal. It's really rough.

JC: And much fanfic has been written, I'm sure, about exactly this issue. Yeah.

Lorrie: Rightly so, because it's such a concentrated version of things that all of us eventually have to do in our lives: make sense of things that we don't believe, don't want to believe, and

yet are true. If we don't change to understand them, then we're the ones screwing ourselves over.

JC: Right. For sure.

Lorrie: And yeah, this information is in flux at the moment. It's not only brand new to Snape, but it's changing as we speak.

JC: Right, exactly. One of the things that I find really interesting is that there are a few moments in the books where Dumbledore, generally, is the wise, very patient, very... 'Chill' is not the right word, but he has this vibe about him that he is unruffled, and the moments when he is like, "No, listen, here's what has to happen," are really intense and this is one of them.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: So where the kids are like, "Oh, we've got to tell you blah blah blah," and he's like, "I know, I know, you've got to stop. You've got to listen to me right now. We're running out of time," I don't think I understood what he meant by 'running out of time' the first time or even the second time, maybe, that I read this. I know that I read this knowing what was about to happen. The idea that Hermione literally has a time machine around her neck and he's like, "You're running out of time," I don't think I really understood until this read that that wasn't... I was like, 'You have a time machine. How could you be running out of time?' But understanding how time travel is set up here...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's set up in a really clever way in that you're not actually changing very much of what happened, but they still have to (in the next four minutes of the time they're in) make a change, and that's really well done.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's fucking hard to write time travel. It's so hard, and this is so well done.

Lorrie: I don't understand time travel. I'm so glad that you have a STEM background and possibly have a better chance at understanding, because time travel makes my head spin. But yeah, one of the cardinal rules of Potterverse is that once death occurs or your soul is being sucked out, it cannot be undone. Nobody comes back from the dead. The inability to accept that -- the hope that maybe there's going to be an exception -- that's the thing that humans have to grapple with. Accepting, understanding, and making peace with that is what makes you a master of death in your own individual life. So no, it's not... If the time passes where dementors suck out Sirius' soul, it doesn't matter whether you have a Time-Turner or not; in this universe, it's not going to work, so yeah, it's pretty urgent.

JC: Yeah, that's really cool. Also, I wanted to think about... There was a line where Dumbledore is telling the kids, "You've got to listen to me. Yes, I believe you." It says, "*But you believe us,*" one of the kids says. "'Yes, I do,' said Dumbledore quietly. 'But I have no power to make other men see the truth, or to overrule the Minister for Magic....' Harry stared up into the grave face and felt as though the ground beneath him was falling sharply away. He had grown used to the idea that Dumbledore could solve anything. He'd expected Dumbledore to pull some amazing solution out of the air. But no... their last hope was gone." This is right before we find out about the Time-Turner, but that moment -- that moment when you go from thinking that the heroes and

the grown-ups can fix things; even if you know not all of them can, there's always one, right? There's always a grown-up in the room -- to the point where Dumbledore is saying, "I'm not the grown-up here. You're going to fix this." That barrier from childhood to adulthood that teenagers are living on is so thin right there.

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah.

JC: That moment I find really powerful.

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah, that is the coming-of-age moment. And the terror... I'm glad that this book has slowly, repeatedly, laid the ground for this moment when the kids have been getting accustomed all year to the thought of breaking the law -- breaking the law in a morally good way when you can't actually depend on the law to deliver justice. Dumbledore here is laying it out for them: No one will believe you, justice cannot be done, and you still have to act.

JC: And *you* have to act. He...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. It wasn't going to be him.

Lorrie: This is such an exciting moment for him to inform the kids, "You are growing up now." That's when, in one of the rare moments in the series, attention goes from Harry to Hermione, who is not usually the main character. Dumbledore says, "What we need,"... and his light blue eyes moved from Harry to Hermione, "is more *time*." Hermione generally, especially in this volume, has been the character who represents what we humans would like to do if we fantasize that we have a second chance to go back to the past.

JC: Yeah, this is true.

Lorrie: And do things over with better insight now that comes from retrospect. Yeah, a number of times, especially with the way that Snape won't listen to her, we see, "Well, no, you can't actually do that, but there's something you *can* do. You can be the anchor for somebody who needs to go back into the past and understand their own past differently." Since Hermione has had all of this training this year in how to be that anchor and to get to know what you can and can't do with retrospective, he's calling on her. If you're going to go back in time this way, you have to have a sponsor or an anchor. Hermione's is McGonagall; now Harry's is Hermione.

JC: I love the capitalized "OH" here, when Hermione very quickly realizes what Dumbledore is saying, and goes, "OH!"

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: We laugh a lot in fanfic about characters going "OH!" because that's the universal way. When someone has a life-shattering, life-altering, reaffirming realization, they always go, "OH!"

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It was funny. Yeah, like the italicized *OH!* kind of thing.

Lorrie: Italicized and capitalized. Yes.

JC: Yeah. I was like, "Here we have one! It's in the story."

Lorrie: It is!

JC: That was fun, but also just the way that Hermione lights up, because suddenly she sees the path forward.

Lorrie: Yes, yes.

JC: She gets this moment of she doesn't completely understand how it's going to happen, but she lights up. She also understands the time issue, so she doesn't even pause to explain it to Harry.

Lorrie: No.

JC: She's like, "Nope, come here." I think the movie version of this scene captured that really well. I know that we don't talk about the movies, but there's this beautiful little moment where she puts the chain around Harry's neck and Harry reaches for the... "What is that?" and she slaps his hand away. "No time! We have no time to discuss this." Yeah. I love how you can have a time machine that you would think would give you infinite time to do things, and yet this sense of urgency... It's really cool. It's a really cool scene when she figures it out. Oh, and then before he leaves, Dumbledore says, "I'm locking you in." That makes sense later, why he's doing that, but that whole idea of, "I'm locking this door. You've got to go!" Yeah. The line about, "You make the doctor turn around so he can have deniability."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "I don't know what you were doing. You were locked in there the whole time." Yeah.

Lorrie: I love that -- yeah, exactly what you put your finger on -- that you have this time machine, so presumably you could do anything. But no, there are rules, and they're really scary and high-stakes. There are rules to how you can go back to triggering traumatic points in your own past safely to engage with your emotions in a way that's going to resolve them for you and not go wildly off the rails -- not retraumatize you, not make you lost into depression or resentment. There are rules about how to do this, and that made me realize we get prime numbers again. You know how every once in a while, this series breaks out the prime numbers to be scary and magical? The money system is all run on prime numbers. Sirius is being held on the seventh floor, the thirteenth window.

JC: I didn't notice that. That's cool.

Lorrie: It reminds me, okay, the magic of primes here is like the rules. You have to make sure; you don't understand them, but it's important. They cannot be further divided. It's a rule. People don't come back from the dead; you have to do things in a certain way; you can't be seen. There are things that you can't change, and there's something Dumbledore wants you to do. Is he going to tell you what it is? No. Is he going to tell you when you're going to have to do it? No. Is he going to tell you what to look out for? No. You just have to make it up as you go along. Go!

JC: There's a lot of security in prime numbers, too. Without getting too nerdy here, the fact that prime numbers are not divisible by anything except themselves and one is the basis of a lot of crypto. Not crypto as in NFTs, but the way that we secure our financial information online.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: My brain ran to the security piece of that and how primes are the foundation of a lot of really interesting stuff in mathematics. Okay, sorry, I'll stop now.

Lorrie: No, no, that's exactly where I was going with it. They are bedrocks, they are natural laws.

JC: Okay, I'm going to pay attention to primes from here on out.

Lorrie: They are a place to start and they are a home base to return to. In this case, the prime law that Dumbledore is reminding Hermione is 'do not be seen.' Then Dumbledore says mysteriously, "If all goes well, you'll be able to save more than one innocent life tonight. But remember this, both of you: *you must not be seen*. Miss Granger, you know the law -- you know what is at stake.... *You -- must -- not -- be -- seen.*" That phrase, "*You must not be seen,*" is bookended with "*Look at Snape!*" which happens during the welcoming feast when Snape is glaring at Lupin and Ron says, "Harry, *look at Snape!*" Then the last thing Snape ever says in *Deathly Hallows* is, "*Look at me.*" It's being set up in this volume that Snape's second chance at life -- his vocation as a double agent who must not be seen for his true self -- means that he is on an extended version of this Time-Turner trip.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: Whatever we learn about what time-turning is for with this episode and this volume, we are supposed to apply it in general to anybody going through a second chance in life, especially like Snape does as a double agent. When Dumbledore says, "If all goes well, you'll be able to save more than one innocent life tonight," okay, we're going to see Dumbledore had been planning all along to have the kids save one innocent life; now it's going to turn out to be two, now that he has this new information about Sirius Black.

JC: Oh, now that's interesting. Okay. Okay, that's very interesting.

Lorrie: He had a plan already, and Sirius can fit into the plan.

JC: Interesting, I never thought about it that way before. I always... We're going to get here in a little bit, and I want to come back to that when we move forward.

Lorrie: Well, yeah, because I'm still in the foreshadowing.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: This is all about Snape to me. This is foreshadowing how Dumbledore makes Snape swear to protect Harry; to Dumbledore's own surprise, it turns out that in doing so, Snape can save Draco as well, because we get the moment at the beginning of *Half-Blood Prince* when Narcissa says, "Will you make the Unbreakable Vow for me?" Snape realizes that if he does that -- if he adds Draco in -- it dovetails perfectly with the plan that he already had pledged to with Dumbledore to save Harry, and he can save more than one innocent life. The second one -- the unexpected one saving Draco -- is going to be the harder one of rescuing a child that had already gone over to the Dark Side without him dying, which is what usually happens to the 16-year-olds. All of this that Snape has to do has to be without being seen.

JC: Right. Yeah.

Lorrie: We're doing this here. We're seeing how that works.

JC: Uh-huh.

Lorrie: Dumbledore tells the kids, "Three turns should do it." We're thinking, okay, it's five minutes to 9pm and there's a stream of golden sunlight? I'm like, 'Wait a minute, how is it sunny at 9pm? Oh, it's summer in Scotland. That's why.'

JC: Yeah, they're like... It's really far north, yeah.

Lorrie: Oh, yeah.

JC: I didn't catch that. That's funny. Sorry.

Lorrie: No, yeah, it wasn't on my first read, and I'm like, 'What do you mean golden sunlight? It's 9pm!' Hermione is hurriedly trying to catch Harry up and explains, "Professor McGonagall made me swear I wouldn't tell anyone. She had to write all sorts of letters to the Ministry of Magic so I could have [a Time-Turner]. She had to tell them that I was a model student, that I'd never, ever use it for anything except my studies...." Dumbledore has just overruled that and told Hermione, "You're going to use it illegally for this other purpose," and Dumbledore has more authority. He has more magical power than McGonagall does, and Hermione is going to go ahead and do that, but this is tapping right into the fear that Hermione has always had, which we've seen as her boggart, of letting down McGonagall. We've seen that theme ruling Lupin's life and his decisions all year when he can't handle the thought of confessing to Dumbledore that he also let down Dumbledore when Dumbledore had laid down his own reputation for Lupin, this whole "I swear this student will never do anything wrong." Harry of course has been doing that, too, where everybody's trying to keep him safe and he's just been jaunting off to buy candy. Hermione is making that decision to go ahead and follow Dumbledore's higher authority, and then Harry is really awesome in figuring out exactly what Dumbledore wants them to do. It's quite impressive when Harry says, "Okay, we have to save Buckbeak and that'll help us save Sirius," and when he figures that out, they say, "If we can manage that without being seen, it'll be a miracle," which I agree... for Snape. If Snape lives and dies protecting Harry Potter, getting Harry to defeat the Dark Lord and survive, and getting Draco out of there alive -- without being seen -- that'll be a miracle. So there they are, planning away, and Hermione has her excellent sense of timing again when she warns Harry, "We can't take Buckbeak away until after the Ministry sees that Hagrid has Buckbeak so that it clears Hagrid." That skill of hers when she can work out that of logic will come in handy later in *Deathly Hallows*.

JC: One thing that's really realistic about this time travel scene is Harry keeps saying, throughout the whole thing, watching themselves, "This is so weird."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That's what you would say. You would absolutely fixate on how weird it is to watch your actions from a distance, knowing what's coming. It's repetitive, but it also works because yeah, that's what you would do. You would be constantly going, "This is the weirdest thing I've ever experienced." Yeah.

Lorrie: And it's good, because it keeps you grounded. Okay, the whole point is double consciousness. When you're traumatized and you're in flashback, one of the most terrifying things is that you lose your sense of time and place. You think you're back in the thing that almost killed you, and one of the ways to reduce the suffering from a trauma flashback is to maintain a sense of time and place in the present. 'I know I'm remembering this, but actually it's not happening at this second, even though my body thinks it is. I'm here in the present,

understanding this at the same time that I'm in the past,' and that's the thing that Harry is able to do when he has dementors near him and hears his mother screaming. The first time that happens and he's playing Quidditch and he falls, he totally loses time and place and he falls off his broom because he believes that his mother is being attacked. Then in the previous chapter, the screaming starts again; he's got a hundred dementors. It's the same hundred dementors, and he thinks, 'No, no, I have to stay focused.' Protecting Sirius is important, and that keeps him anchored in time and place at the same time that the screaming is happening in his head. This is Harry and Hermione going, 'Oh, wow. Usually in life we're just in the moment, but right now we're in two moments and we're conscious of it. That is so weird.'" But that's a super necessary skill for rescuing yourself from suffering, and it's also a brilliant way to demonstrate them getting older.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Crossing that line of adolescence, because when they can go back and see themselves in the recent past, suddenly they can see what the grown-ups were up to.

JC: Yeah, that's true. It's also interesting that Harry has the very, very understandable urge, constantly through the next few hours, to want to just go and change a thing, and Hermione has to be the one to say, "No, we can't."

Lorrie: Yes!

JC: "We can't, we can't." There's this interesting moment at the beginning when she says, "What would happen if you ran into Hagrid's hut right now?" He admits, "Yeah, I'd probably think that I've just gone crazy. I wouldn't be able to process it." It's so interesting because they had that really important conversation, and even my first time through reading this book, it never occurred to me that maybe who Harry saw was himself. I knew they were time-traveling, they had this conversation... I didn't figure it out until the moment at the end of this chapter when Harry...

Lorrie: I had no clue.

JC: I'm like, "Wow, wow."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Because you're so deep into Harry's perspective. I don't know, it just... Oh, yeah, it's so interesting that they had that conversation then. Maybe some people who are listening to this realize that the first time through, but I did not. It was a shock! Oh...

Lorrie: Well, the thing that I realized for the first time on this reread, which I find super brilliant: Harry had a pretty clear view of whoever was casting the Patronus, and he didn't recognize himself because he thought that it was an older person, someone who's taller. In the time -- this process that he's going through right now -- he has crossed over from being a child to being an older person.

JC: Oh, wow! Wow!

Lorrie: The person who's casting that Patronus really is more experienced and is more of a grown-up and does have more power and authority.

JC: Three hours later.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Harry, at the time that he's experiencing this for the first time, still thinks of himself as a child who can be rescued by Dumbledore.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Meanwhile, the one who's casting the Patronus is somebody who is much more experienced.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And probably looks it, probably has an authority that child Harry a few hours ago didn't have.

JC: So interesting. Yeah. Another thing that happens during this scene: they're trying to lead Buckbeak away, and it looks like the people are about to come out and Dumbledore says, "Oh, wait. We have to... we still have to sign." Coming back to something we were talking about earlier: At what point did Dumbledore know this was going to happen? At that point, it seems like he knows.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: He's stalling and giving them more time.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Did he realize what was happening? Did he see them? Did Dumbledore make this plan that far in advance, or did he realize that this is a plan he was going to make in the future? What do you think is happening there?

Lorrie: Yeah. I think that when Dumbledore realized that Buckbeak was going to be executed and there was nothing to be done about it, he approached that whole event with the knowledge that he was going to tell Harry and Hermione, "Use the Time-Turner." Knowing that and planning it, he is opening a window for them to do it right here, because the author wrote this: "One moment, please, MacNair. You need to sign too." She wrote it to be awkward. Wait, all this suspenseful stuff is happening and now suddenly we have a technicality. We're meant as readers to notice that it's a stalling tactic. So yeah, I think he is executing a plan that he already had in mind when they approached Hagrid's cabin.

JC: How interesting to think of it... If you're thinking, 'In three hours, I'm going to send these kids back in time to do this thing, then I have to set it up so that they will be successful.' Now, does Dumbledore come out? No, Dumbledore comes out and sees... Yeah, he does. He sees that, because we're about to get to that. He knows that he was successful.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Oh, my God.

Lorrie: When they come out and they see that the hippogriff who was just there is now gone: "How extraordinary," said Dumbledore. There was a note of amusement in his voice." That's him going, 'Ah, I see that my plan worked. I will get the children to do this and they will succeed.'

JC: You know what it reminds me of, in a silly way? The movie *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*.

Lorrie: It's been so long.

JC: There's this whole sequence at the end when they're battling with -- I don't even remember who they're battling with -- some bad guy who's trying to take away their time machine, and they start doing this thing where they're like, "Oh, well in the future, we're going to use the time machine to come back to this place and leave these weapons exactly where we needed them." Then they go there and the weapons are there.

Lorrie: Oh, nice!

JC: And they keep doing that over and over. They're like, "Well, I'm going to leave a trash can over there," and the trash can is suddenly there. They keep doing this thing where they're predicting, "I'm going to come back and I'm going to do this," and they get all these things ready and it keeps happening and it keeps working, and that's kind of what this reminds me of. That was obviously a silly take-it-to-the-extreme example, but it's kind of the same idea. "I'm going to set this plan in motion right now. Oh, look, it must have worked! Okay. Keep going!"

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "Now I've got to do the thing in three hours."

Lorrie: Yeah. "I'm going to learn how to help myself out. I'm going to learn from experience." Here, when Hermione, having time-turned, is watching all this happen, it's the one time her skin color is described as white. "Hermione's white face was sticking out from behind a tree."

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: And in a whole series, for that to be the one mention, is one of those fanon/canon things where it's not that hard to just erase it. It's only the one time. But yeah, Dumbledore is amused because he has just gotten confirmation that yes, yes, he was right. This plan is going to work and okay, Buckbeak's going to be all right. Macnair the executioner is grotesquely livid that he's been deprived of his enjoyment and says, "The hippogriff... we should search... the forests," and Dumbledore says, "Macnair, if Buckbeak has indeed been stolen, do you really think the thief will have led him away on foot? Search the skies, if you will..." At first, I thought that Dumbledore was misleading Macnair on purpose because he knows that the kids have Buckbeak in the forest, but then I realized, no, no, he doesn't know that. He doesn't know, at this point, that there's going to be the addition of Sirius to this plan; he thinks that the kids have just untethered Buckbeak and encouraged Buckbeak to fly away.

JC: Ah, but there's no reason to hang on to him, right?

Lorrie: Right. Dumbledore mistakenly is certain that Buckbeak is flying away right now.

JC: Yeah. I hadn't caught that. That makes sense, though.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's really subtle and brilliantly done. The hints are so tiny. What you do know is whatever is going on, when Dumbledore has that amused expression, you know that he knows something everybody else doesn't.

JC: You said earlier that the laws of time travel are that you can't undo death.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Dumbledore already knows that Buckbeak didn't die, so we haven't undone anything.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Right? Yeah.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: : That's really cool. That's where the time travel stuff gets weird mentally, because you could also say, "Well, what if I went back and prevented this person...?"

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: You can't let yourself think about it too much, I think. The logic is challenging. Okay, here we are. Buckbeak never died. He never did. Cool.

Lorrie: And this is why my way of reading the time travel of this novel is to not follow the logic of time travel and science fiction fantasy, but to read it all as allegory for what we can and can't do when we go back into our own past, because on that level I can understand it. On that level, it makes sense that we can do a lot of things with time travel. We can understand a lot of things differently, but approaching a memory from literally a different perspective is the main thing we can do. We cannot change what happened; we can only get a different perspective on it. If we have a friend with us, they can help with that.

JC: And that's what they do for the next couple of hours. They just have to watch everything unfold.

Lorrie: Yeah. Whenever time travel and Time-Turners are used in Potterverse -- and this very much applies to *Cursed Child* -- I read it as this metaphor for how you can go back into trauma, into the past, with a different perspective and change not what happened, but change your view of the innocence and guilt of yourself, as well as other people, and understand where strength in yourself came from that you didn't believe in at the time. But yeah, it's so natural -- and I believe it's universal -- Harry having this fantasy of, 'Oh, God, if we could just change this -- if I just dashed out now and grabbed the invisibility cloak -- Snape would never be able to get it,' and Hermione has to say, "Yeah, no, we can't be seen." It's tempting to fantasize 'If only I could change the past' instead of accepting and understanding that no, you can't. You have to get a different perspective on it. That's all you can do, but that might actually change a lot.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: As you mentioned in Snape's case, coming back to the events of this night with a different perspective can bring him to understand the stuff that he's completely unwilling to even consider right now, but he's going to have to.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Oh, God. So yeah, the big, big mystery -- which just gives me chills -- is so huge: Harry coming to solve the mystery of who cast the Patronus.

JC: Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: The setup that Hermione gives him is so affirming, where she says, "It must have been a really powerful wizard, to drive all those dementors away...." It's like when you doubt yourself, and then you get absolutely irrefutable evidence that it's okay to believe you're strong. No, it really was you. There's no other explanation. It really was you; there was something in you that was that good.

JC: That whole scene is incredible, and I think, even knowing it's coming, it was really emotional to watch Harry make that realization.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That who he saw was himself.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It comes back around again to me: that idea that if you saw yourself, you would rationalize it as being something else. It's so interesting that that's what he did in the moment. Up to that moment, he didn't realize that it was him, and then he sees the form of the Patronus for the first time. Everybody else has seen it at this point.

Lorrie: Oi, yai yai, yai yai. Yeah.

JC: He sees it for the first time; now he understands who it is, and there's that moment where he reaches his hand out...

Lorrie: Oh, my God. Yeah.

JC: Right before it disappears, which is really emotional. But also in the last chapter, one of the last things he saw was himself reaching out.

Lorrie: And patting it. Yeah.

JC: Oh, my gosh, and he doesn't even know he's repeating his actions there. I think he can't stop himself.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: So in a way, he did see his father, is my point. It's really cool.

Lorrie: Is this real? Yes, this is real. Yeah. But now he understands where that power from him came from, because he's now connected to more knowledge about his father than he's ever had.

JC: Right. This is so cheesy, but that moment from *The Lion King*, when Simba looks into the puddle and sees himself and he thinks it's his father, and then the baboons are like, "He lives in you!" I'm thinking of that moment from *The Lion King* suddenly, but yeah, it's a very similar kind of feeling of "This is your inheritance, this is the legacy of your parents" for Harry. Yeah. Anyway... *sings*

Lorrie: But he couldn't have done it without Sirius giving him back so much of his own story about his father.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: That's why he can do it.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Oh, and of course, Harry desperately wants to interfere and catch Pettigrew, and Hermione has to repeat the prime rule: "We came back to help Sirius. We're not supposed to be doing anything else." But then I find this thrilling every time: 'Harry, okay, listen to Hermione. Don't make up anything.' But every once in a while, Harry does something that disobeys Hermione and he's right, and those moments are always so thrilling; when he says, "Hermione, we have to move," and she's like, "I told you," he says, "No, no, no, the werewolf is coming for us." "Oh, yeah, we have to move!" That is a thrill of genuine fear. Harry is not just the kid dependent on his smart friend. There is a tendency in fandom to think of Harry as stupid or unobservant. It's not that; he has some really strong insights, realizing "Oh, you know what? I know you have rules, but we have to move right now." When he comes up with going back to Hagrid's? Brilliant! So safe. Brilliant!

JC: And Buckbeak is happy to be there. He settles in.

Lorrie: Yeah, and he can stop acting like a toddler. "Buckbeak, you don't understand. You have to come with us and you have to be quiet." Buckbeak has no idea, and it just reminds me of having a baby or a toddler that has to be quiet and they don't understand; they just scream louder.

JC: Right, yeah. Oh, my gosh. So we have this wonderful scene where they get on Buckbeak's back and fly away, and Hermione is terrified and Harry is thrilled. All I could think about was they're under all this stress, it's finally dark, there's a werewolf running around, right? They're getting on the back of this hippogriff, they're riding it up to the top of the tallest tower. Now, I was a horse girl growing up. I had a horse; I spent a lot of time riding my horse around bareback, and the idea of being bareback on a creature that's *flying* scares the shit out of me.

Lorrie: Flying that high to a tower!

JC: To a tower, and I was a horse girl. I would make my horse run and jump over logs and stuff as a kid, bareback with no saddle. The idea of doing that while flying scares the *crap* out of me. I don't even know.

Lorrie: All I kept thinking was, 'There is no seat belt on this thing!'

JC: Yeah. There's nothing to hang on to, and then you do it with two people. Riding bareback with one person, you can hang on. With two people, the person behind cannot hold on to anything except that person in front of them, which means you're both going down, and that's happened to me before.

Lorrie: Oi, yai yai.

JC: That's happened, so that's terrifying to me. Oh, my gosh. I have to suspend my disbelief there. I'm like, 'Uh, it's...' Yeah.

Lorrie: Well, I like that Hermione is just going *grunts* the whole time. That's quite realistic.

JC: Definitely.

Lorrie: I did actually want to go back to the moment of Harry understanding who the Patronus is, because that's a great payoff that's been building throughout the book: Harry cast a Patronus. What does it look like? Eventually, more and more and more people see it, but Harry doesn't see it until this moment. He even asks a couple chapters back, "What was my dad's?" and then he gets cut off, right? And then the moment he looks at the Patronus and goes, "*Prongs*," and it was a stag. I had chills the first time reading that, because I was immediately overtaken. 'Oh, my God, she's calling in all of Arthurian legend.'

JC: Wow!

Lorrie: That is amazing! This series is so profoundly rooted in British Isles legend and folklore, and there have been hints of it before: there is Arthurian language, especially after the denouement of the different volumes when Harry fills in Ron and Hermione on the stuff that they missed out on, because the end of the book happened to be Harry facing Voldemort by himself. He tells them what happened, and then they exclaim with wonder at his adventures. That's purely out of Arthurian legend, that language. For her to bring in the white deer as a sign of holiness and of right quests and certainty... Oh! Then the whole father/son thing about being the prophesied son of a father that you long for who is dead, and the certainty that no, Harry is the chosen one... Oh! She really brought in all that Arthurian legend, and it deepened the whole series for me instantly, in a way that worked for me on so many levels.

JC: Can you say a little bit more about the white deer and where that comes from in Arthurian legend?

Lorrie: When the knights go out on quests, that was considered to be a really noble thing for a knight to do. You're a knight; what do you do? You go out into the forest, looking for a quest. You want a quest, and then you see a white deer, a stag or a hind; when you see the white deer, that's a symbol of purity and you follow it. The purity of that deer and where it leads you, and the deeds and the nobility that you do as you go into the situations that the white deer takes you to, are all associated with Christ. You're doing good work. You're doing something pure that is going to bring peace and justice to the land. So yeah, if you see a white deer and you follow it, it will not steer you wrong. Go ahead and do it.

JC: So this also says something about Snape's Patronus, doesn't it?

Lorrie: Yes, it does! Yes, it does.

JC: How interesting!

Lorrie: And it has to do with the immediate security that Harry feels on seeing it. You're thinking, 'This is a strange Patronus, you don't know it. What if it's a scam? How can you trust it?' 'No. I know it. It's real.' So yeah, it's a sense of purpose. It's religious.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: And folkloric, and it's really, deeply tied to place, to the British Isles. To do a small diversion: this is why I was so worried, rightly, when the *Fantastic Beasts* film series was announced, because if you're going to take this magical world into different continents, you can't

have a single author do it. Part of what makes *Harry Potter* work so beautifully is her deep, deep knowledge of the folklore of the place where this is set, the place where she was born and grew up. Nobody can have that kind of deep knowledge of the lore of every continent. You can't. There is not a single author who can do it. It's not a shortcoming of J.K. Rowling's; it's something that can't be done by a single author, because this manipulation of instant holiness by conjuring a white stag... Oh! There was criticism when the Harry Potter series first became popular. There were people who -- I think, quite bitterly and resentfully -- said, "Oh, she's not inventing anything new. She's just calling on the emotional resonance of tropes that already existed that superior writers have created before her," and me thinking, oh, that's quite petty of you. I don't think that's even a criticism. She's making it work. That's what you're supposed to do with folklore, myth and legend: you're supposed to take the parts that resonate and continue their power by telling the stories again. That's practice. You're practicing the power of it. She's *in* the practice; she's amplifying and making it relevant, anew. That's not a bug; it's a feature.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: It's all to her credit.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: Anyway, yeah. The payoff for all of this delayed gratification about what is Harry's Patronus and what form did James's Animagus take... The payoff is so profound to me.

JC: It's interesting, too, that I think you get that... That payoff really, for me, comes on like a second read, because it wasn't until this moment on my first read that I understood that the Patronus even had a form. I don't know what I thought it was until now.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: On a first read, when Harry casts the Patronus during the Quidditch match and Lupin is shaken, it didn't occur to me on a first read that what he saw -- the form of what he saw -- shook him; it was more, 'Wow, Harry could do it.' That was my interpretation: he was shaken because he just thought, 'Holy shit. Harry really is --'

Lorrie: 'That was a huge Patronus!'

JC: Yup. 'That was amazing for a kid that age. Holy crap!' That was my interpretation of it. I think this establishes this idea in this canon that your Patronus has a form that is intimately connected with you somehow.

Lorrie: Yeah, and Lupin is sitting there, seeing James's Animagus form come out in this ginormous Patronus, and he can't tell a soul because James totally was breaking the law by having an Animagus form at all.

JC: Right. Ugh!

Lorrie: He just has to sit there, looking at James's orphan, feeling all these feelings and saying nothing.

JC: Yeah, not even to Harry. He can't...

Lorrie: No, yeah.

JC: Yeah. I still think about that moment, about him having that incredible realization, and there's no one he can share it with.

Lorrie: No.

JC: Which is kind of the story of his life, at that point.

Lorrie: Especially not Dumbledore!

JC: Right.

Lorrie: Well, he did it to himself. Anyway...

JC: Poor guy. Yeah.

Lorrie: What I love, too, is that the power of this moment makes a believer out of Hermione the skeptic. Hermione's role is often that of the skeptic. For example, she doesn't believe in divination. She's been skeptical at Harry this whole time, and then when he casts that Patronus, she says, "You conjured up a Patronus that drove away all those dementors! That's very, *very* advanced magic..." We have the skeptic coming face-to-face with the mysteries and admitting them into her belief system, which I think is so beautiful and one of the great payoffs of bringing a friend with you when you time-travel back into your own past. You yourself know the amazing thing that just happened, but you have somebody there to confirm it for you? That makes everything so much better. And he's the one who gets to say to her, "I knew I could do it this time because I'd already done it.... Does that make sense?" He's confirming with her the difference in perspective. There is strength that you now recognize, in retrospect, that got you through at the time.

JC: Yeah. I'm trying to think if there's an example of that in my life. It's hard to know, because we can't time-travel. We can't go back in the past. We can't have this foresight of saying, "I know I'm going to be able to do that, therefore I'm going to try for it." Yeah, it's hard to find an example in my life, but one of the things that it was making me think about as you were talking is that growing up as a child, you have these moments where you get to see your friends suddenly take this leap of maturity towards adulthood. There's nothing that dramatic in my life, but I do have memories of times when a friend stepped up in a moment when I was surprised and thought, oh, we really can take care of ourselves.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Or even myself, in my own life; moments when I stepped up and handled a situation that before that situation (or even in the middle of it) I was horrified. My example that I love to give for something like this -- and I wasn't actually a child; I was 21 at the time: I was in Germany, former East Germany; this is like the early 90s. It was very late at night... I was staying with a host family in one of those big Soviet apartment-block buildings. I couldn't remember the address of the building I was staying in. I knew what street it was on, but I couldn't remember the number or anything. I got a taxi with a friend of mine, who was Italian and blind... The two of us are in this taxi. Now, in the Eastern part of Germany at this time, people spoke German and Russian. I spoke English and Spanish; my Italian friend spoke Italian, French and Spanish. None of us spoke German, so we had no common languages amongst us and the taxi driver. In my very, very broken German, I gave the address and said where we want to go. It's midnight and the guy starts driving; suddenly I realize we're driving out of town, out into the countryside,

and it's midnight. Again, it's me, the blind friend who can't see where we're going, none of us speak German, and there was this moment where I thought, 'I have to fix this!' My phrase book was in my bag, which was in the trunk of the taxi.

Lorrie: Not the trunk!

JC: I needed to flip through my phrasebook, but this is before cell phones. There's nothing I can do...

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah.

JC: Except somehow figure out how to communicate with this guy that he was going the wrong way, and hope that that wasn't to take us out into the country and kill us and put us in a ditch, right?

Lorrie: Exactly.

JC: And I managed it, and that was this moment. So when we finally got back to our host family, it was one in the morning and they were like, "Oh, you're back!" I can't even explain the adventure we've just been on. I'm talking with my roommate -- we talked through it -- and I just remember saying, "I can't believe that happened." I had to decide when we were on the right street, because my roommate couldn't see. It was this wild -- Anyway, I'm thinking about that kind of... This is not as formative as Harry's moment here, but when you have those moments in your life when you accomplish something that you look back on and think, 'That should have been impossible, but I kept my cool and I did it anyway,' those leaps up in your life...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And to have someone there to witness it. I had a witness!

Lorrie: A witness is so important.

JC: Who can say, "Yeah, you did do that. You were just..." Yeah. I've seen other people have moments like that, too. As you're growing into adulthood, that's an incredible experience to watch.

Lorrie: Yeah, and permanent. It changes your opinion of yourself, or if you witness it happen in someone else, it raises your respect for them permanently. It's like, 'Oh, that's what this person is made of. Wow.'

JC: And then the realization that that's what you're made of.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Here's maybe where it comes back into 'I already knew I could do it.' After that, when I was in a stressful situation that seemed impossible and I couldn't communicate, I already knew I could do it because I had done it before.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It was like, 'I can find my way out of this because I have done this before,' so maybe that's where the time-travel comes in. Revisiting that memory helps you remember what kind of strength you have and what you can then take it forward to.

Lorrie: Yeah. The time-travel aspect is looking back on yourself; you wouldn't have thought that you had that kind of strength, but looking back, you realize, 'Wow, that strength was in me? Huh. Okay.'

JC: And with the perspective of time, it seems stronger than it did in the moment.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Right. Now I look back, I'm like, 'Holy shit!' But even then, I didn't understand the strength that I had, so looking back you seem stronger. 'Yeah, okay. I can... Okay, yeah.' That works for me in my head: the time travel and why... Yeah.

Lorrie: Now, the thing is if you have an uninterrupted parenting experience, then some of this gets transmitted to you just from your parents; you don't have to teach it yourself. These things like, 'When this happens, this is what you do.' 'Oh, I know how to do this. I saw my parents do it, I saw my older brother do it.' Harry doesn't have that.

JC: True.

Lorrie: In finding these things, there's a huge leap in his abilities when Sirius gives him back information about his father.

JC: And knowing what his father was capable of in his age, too. They were capable of becoming Animagi and his father was in the middle of that, and his father had saved Snape's life -- all of the things that he's learned about his father, yeah.

Lorrie: Yes, and being able to connect that to his friendship with Ron and Hermione. I don't mean to cut out Lupin for his credit, either; Lupin has taught him. "You do this, you're good at this, you keep doing this," and then for Sirius to give that emotional piece... that solidifies it. This is always going to be one of Harry's signature spells now, and he's going to be famous for being able to do this. It was a skill that he wasn't naturally going to have, because if James and Lily had lived and had parented him, they could have taught him all sorts of shape-shifting things.

JC: Right. Yeah.

Lorrie: But Lupin and Sirius came and they gave him this, and they connected him back to his dad.

JC: Ooh, yeah.

Lorrie: And this is the moment in the book when he says, "Does that make sense?" to Hermione; in one sentence, she says, "I don't know -- Harry, look at Snape!" That's one sentence. 'Now that you have this ability -- now that you have crossed over to the other side, the other bank of the lake and you are a different kind of person now -- turn around and look at Snape,' in the same sentence. That's another amazing payoff. This is the bookend to Ron saying "Look at Snape!" at the beginning of the book, when Snape is glaring at Lupin.

JC: Oh.

Lorrie: And what Snape is doing at that moment: he's "conjuring stretchers and lifting the limp forms of Harry, Hermione, and Black onto them." He is not letting Sirius' head bump anywhere, he's not abusing Sirius' body, he's not casting a toenail-growing hex on Sirius' unconscious body or anything. He's not doing any of that. He's doing this super-responsible thing for this person

that is his least favorite person in the world. He's putting stretchers on for them and taking them up to the castle. This is how Snape behaves when he believes nobody's looking at him.

JC: Ooh.

Lorrie: It is one of the few moments in the series where we get to see genuine Snape; not layered Snape, not ambiguous Snape, but single, at-rest, true Snape. He thinks no one is watching. Unlike most people -- most people show their best outer self to the world, and then there's an inner self that they fear to reveal because it's their dark secrets. Snape is the reverse: he's a better person on the inside than what he shows to the world.

JC: Very interesting.

Lorrie: And this is the moment where Hermione says, "Look at Snape!" So yeah, Harry gets this one glimpse. 'Okay, that's what he does.' He was, at the time, correct in thinking nobody was watching.

JC: Did Snape see the Patronus?

Lorrie: No.

JC: No, okay.

Lorrie: No.

JC: Which he couldn't have. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. At the beginning of this chapter, when Fudge says, "You don't know what drove the dementors away," and Snape goes, "No, I have no idea."

JC: Okay, so he didn't see that part. He just came afterward.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He saw the dementors maybe flying away, and then he went and found them.

Lorrie: He had been passed out. By the time he came to, the dementors were gone.

JC: Okay, interesting. Okay. But he did know that the dementors had been there. I was trying to sort it all out in my head.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Okay.

Lorrie: So then Harry and Hermione see Macnair going to get the dementors to give Sirius the Kiss, and Harry realizes, "Okay, this is the time that we get on Buckbeak."

JC: Ah, yes, yes.

Lorrie: They have no saddle, no reins.

JC: Then we have the terrifying ride that we talked about ten minutes ago.

Lorrie: Noooo seatbelt, no nothing. They're just...

JC: Right.

Lorrie: They're just a million feet up in the air.

JC: I love how, when they get up to the tower, they are transformed from the people they were a few hours ago. They are utterly in control of the situation, they know what they need to do, they tell Sirius what to do. Hermione's *Alohomora* is this incredible, for me, callback to the first book; that's one of the first spells that Harry and Ron see her use in the service of breaking rules.

Lorrie: Right. They have no idea how to do this spell, and she just knows how to do it.

JC: Right. I love that and Sirius' astonishment that these are the same children that were in this house with him before; suddenly they're powerful. They've grown, and he is astonished.

Lorrie: Yeah, and he was resigning himself to losing his soul. No, it's another plot twist.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: He keeps getting his life taken away and given back and taken away and given back, but yeah, he's got another chance at life. It's lovely that the author puts in Sirius asking after Ron.

JC: Yeah. He's so concerned about these kids. He knows what's at stake if he doesn't get away, but he can't stop thanking them; he asks about Ron. This reveals the kindness of this person, and the care of this person, towards these people.

Lorrie: Yeah, and Ron has suffered from Sirius throughout this whole book. Ron woke up with Sirius standing over his bed with a knife.

JC: Yeah, for sure.

Lorrie: Ron has his broken leg. So is Sirius Black a monster? No, he's really worried about the kid.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, and Harry and Hermione are shouting at him to go.

JC: Yeah. The way that they're just so commanding and confident in that moment... I can't stop thinking about that, how different they are than the kids that he just saw. Then he flies away.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And they watch him fade off into the sky. Now... And then we have one more chapter.

Lorrie: Yeah, and they have saved more than one innocent life.

JC: Indeed.

Lorrie: Yeah. The next chapter we have is called Owl Post Again, and that'll be the last chapter of this incredible masterpiece of a book.

JC: Wow, wow. We've got one chapter to wrap it all up.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Oh, my goodness. I still can't believe that all of that happened in the next to last chapter of the book. Wow.

Lorrie: Right?

JC: That's wild.

Lorrie: Yeah, and we're not done yet. There's still more emotion to come.

JC: And there's still more to come. Oh, my goodness.

Lorrie: Quite a lot, actually.

JC: All right. Well...

Lorrie: We'll talk then!

JC: Can't wait!

Caroline: Producer Caroline here with an announcement as we wind down book 3 and head into book 4. In between these two seasons, we're going to release the first episode of a whole new open-ended season 8, which is going to exist outside the regular book seasons and be published outside our normal Wednesday release schedule. So your regular chapter reread episodes won't be moved around at all, and you can look forward to season 8 episodes like bonus content. And our first episode is in the can, so look forward to Lorrie and JC sitting down with writer, publisher, and sexuality activist Cecilia Tan, author of *The Binge Watcher's Guide to the Harry Potter Films*. That episode comes out on Saturday, November 16, 2024, so we'll see you then!

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.