

HARRY POTTER AFTER 2020

with LORRIE KIM and JC

Transcript

Episode 4.12

Book 4, Chapter 12: The Triwizard Tournament

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 Four, Chapter Twelve: The Triwizard Tournament.

Lorrie: The Triwizard Tournament. It was a dark and stormy night.

JC: Quite literally.

Lorrie: Yeah! Now that Harry, Ron, and Hermione are fourth-years, the Welcoming Feast is familiar to them, but they're older now, so they get new perspectives on how their school operates. There are house-elves at Hogwarts, Mad-Eye Moody is their new Defense teacher, and they finally learn that two other schools are joining them for this year-long Triwizard Tournament. Yeah, the secret's finally out.

JC: Finally, even though at this point on a first read, you don't really know what's going to happen. You have this vague idea of oh, it's dangerous as a contest.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: There's people from other schools involved.

Lorrie: Death toll.

JC: Death toll, yeah. There's always something like "Upon pain of death at Hogwarts."

Lorrie: Right.

JC: I know that it's kind of funny...

Lorrie: And it's tradition.

JC: But also, it's a trade-off and people just die in this world, but okay, we're just going to roll with it. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But my God, the fact that at Hogwarts... The amount of death that we've seen in the last few years in these books -- the fact that this is a contest that was canceled because of the death toll -- the Wizarding World seems to have a lower tolerance for children... Well, okay, I was going to say 'for children dying than we do in our world,' but that's not true either, is it?

Lorrie: Mm-hmm, and then suddenly you can't say that, right?

JC: Yeah. You can't say that anymore either. Dang it. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Well, anyway... Okay. Yeah, we're on the same playing field here. All right, fine.

Lorrie: Well, the other thing that it reminded me of though, regardless of the U.S.'s gun problem, is high school football.

JC: Oh. I've always found that with Quidditch.

Lorrie: And genuine concussions, lifelong injuries...

JC: Occasional death.

Lorrie: And how we know that happens, but we're supposed to push that aside because the institution has so much emotion around it and it's considered such a glorious thing.

JC: Right. I don't know if in your area it's a big thing. At the middle school level, there are a lot of girls playing tackle football, but at the high school level they almost all vanish. I don't know exactly why, but part of it is that they're as big as the boys in middle school -- there's not really a size difference -- and in high school that starts to change.

Lorrie: So yeah, it's the beginning of another school year.

JC: It is, and oh, my gosh, can I just say...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I forgot about this really ominous storm at the beginning of this book, and how every moment of traveling to the castle is hard and they're pelted by rain.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: The first-years look like they've drowned when they come in. It's really ominous.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Things are not going to be sunny and happy this year, are they?

Lorrie: Yeah, something has changed on a really basic elemental level, and she really leans into it.

JC: Not only that, but then they get to the top of the stairs and Peeves is there making it worse.

Lorrie: Oh, that's a good reminder that poltergeists are not cute. They're really a menace.

JC: Everybody comes into the castle, and we're seeing people from before. It's the start of a school year, but the storm is hanging over all of this.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And I kept thinking about those poor first-years having a really... It's the first time they have been to Hogwarts. They're leaving home; it's a really big deal. Then they have to like board this... the lake is rising and Dennis Creevey falls in, and they're drowned when they get to the other side. Then it hit me: these kids are never going to have a normal year at Hogwarts. This is the crew that will never know what it was like. Not that any of them have really had a normal year, but compared to what's coming this year and the next year... We know what's happening and then it gets worse for these kids, and then I went, "Oh, shit, it's like the pandemic."

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Right? You've got the kids whose first experience they really remember with school is the pandemic, and nothing was ever the same. My kiddo, who is firmly in Gen Z, regards Gen Alpha -- the dividing line -- as being, "They don't remember what it was like before the pandemic, and we do."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Then I'm like, "Oh, my God, it's a generational shift."

Lorrie: It is.

JC: Which means Harry and the kids are just a couple years younger than him, and then the kids that come after this... There's a generational shift there and they're not going to know.

Lorrie: Right, and it hasn't happened yet.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: The storm is an omen, but I love when they walk in and we get: "The Great Hall looked its usual splendid self, decorated for the start-of-term feast. Golden plates and goblets gleamed by the light of hundreds and hundreds of candles, floating over the tables in midair." They still get that breathtaking warm welcome, and it's the world that Harry, Ron, and Hermione now take for granted and they feel entitled to it. This is a really sophisticated way to reintroduce this fictional world. It's not like, "The editor made me do it." It's not like, "Then they play Quidditch, which is a game played with..." This is telling you about the characters and their shift into adolescence, and how that means that they're now aware of things that they didn't really understand before. But yeah, we get to see the place is the same. It's still majestic, but now we get to be aware of what makes it run a bit.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: We already saw with the horseless carriages that there's a degree of innocence that these 14-year-olds haven't lost yet; they're not going to know that for another year. I remember this being the age when I started to realize just how much labor other people put in to sustain the world that I took for granted. 'Oh. OH.' I thought I appreciated it, but I didn't.

JC: It's also the age when I think kids start to see their parents as human beings; part of that is the developmental adolescents' brains are developing in a way where they're pulling away from their parents a little bit, but they're starting to understand that their parents are fallible human beings. I think part of that is like, 'Oh, look at all the things that my parents have to do.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It felt like, 'This is how it happens before.'

Lorrie: Yeah. It's automatic.

JC: And they start to be more aware of that. 'Oh, my parents do it this way, my friend's parents are like this. Oh.' There's a lot of general developing awareness of the world and how adults operate in it that starts around the teen years, which is part of the reason why being a teenager is so hard. There's a lot to take in and to reconcile.

Lorrie: I like that we get Dennis Creevey as the contrast. He's so young. Oh, yeah, Harry was like this. The whole sorting ceremony reminds us how Harry, Ron, and Hermione are not at this phase at all anymore.

JC: Yeah. The fact that the little ones are all nervous, and they look little and they're described as little.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And they're also soaked because of the trip across the lake. Little Dennis Creevey (who is described adorably), this little wide-eyed... The kind of thing where as a high schooler, you look back on the middle schoolers and go, 'Oh, they're children. Oh, my gosh, they're tiny.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Or as a senior in high school, you look down at the freshman and you're like, 'What? How are they so young?' That feeling is really there, too, and it's done very subtly. But we're seeing from the kids' perspective how little the first-years are.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And how nervous they are, and they don't know what they're getting into. Ugh, none of them know what they're getting into. Poor Dennis. That was the one that actually hurt a little bit.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Dennis is just enthusiasm. "I'm finally here at Hogwarts and Colin's told me all the stories. I'm so excited!" Dennis is not going to have the same experience that his brother had.

Lorrie: No.

JC: And there's awful things coming for Dennis.

Lorrie: Yeah. They're still going to have to enjoy as much as they can, because they don't have much left, much time, either of them. So yeah, nice doom there. Dark and stormy.

JC: Dark and stormy.

Lorrie: Then we get the new Sorting Hat song. What did you think of that?

JC: It was interesting, because it's noted earlier in the chapter that Harry hasn't actually seen a Sorting since his own.

Lorrie: Right? Yeah.

JC: We hadn't either.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This is our first exposure to the fact that the Sorting Hat sings a different song every year, and that maybe there are some clues in the song about what's coming. What I really like about the Sorting Hat song for this one is that it gives us a little more history. Here's the history of the school and here's why the Founders were important, but also the idea that the Hat belonged to Godric Gryffindor originally and then it was imprinted with the consciousness or intelligence of the Four Founders. It's Gryffindor at its base, but it's got that painting magic in it, so that's a very interesting thing to think about.

Lorrie: It's not one of my areas, but I know that there are fans who are really interested in the Four Founders, especially if you're a British Isles enthusiast; there are a lot of clues. They're subtle here, but you can really take it far based on just what the Sorting Hat says here. There's this stanza: "Bold Gryffindor, from wild moor, Fair Ravenclaw, from glen, Sweet Hufflepuff, from valley broad, Shrewd Slytherin, from fen." That's so slight, but from that, Barbara Lemond Purdom, who does the Quantum Harry Podcast, wrote this whole, really fascinating essay called *The Rule of Four*, which I will link to. She points out: "Fair Ravenclaw, from glen" indicates Scots Gaelic, "Slytherin, from fen..." that's Irish, probably. "Hufflepuff, from valley broad" suggests Wales, and "Wild moors..." Okay, that's West Country of England. We know that Godric's Hollow is in West Country, and that's also where Rowling grew up. Then she traces these four to the elements that the Houses are each associated with, and she also traces them to heraldry, which is a clue about where the colors of the four Houses come from. So if this is your thing, there's a lot to delve into just from this. Not my area, but I really appreciate how much there is for people who are enthusiastic about it.

JC: I've never dug into that before, and I'm actually really charmed by the idea of the founder of Hufflepuff being from Wales. That's actually really... that works really well for me. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, it does. Yeah.

JC: Oh, my gosh. And not a little bit, because of one particular actor: Michael Sheen, who plays Aziraphale in *Good Omens*, among other things, is from Wales. He has always struck me as the biggest Hufflepuff ever. There's just something that makes sense to me about Hufflepuff being from Wales. I don't know.

Lorrie: So yeah, it tracks. We get the Sorting and we get that delightful catalog of names of students that we never hear anything about except for at the sorting scene, and we get Natalie McDonald. Do you remember that story?

JC: No.

Lorrie: Yeah, this is one of those things where when it first became public, it was really touching; it still remains touching to me, despite the author now being a really rabid crusader against trans rights, but this was when the Harry Potter series was starting to be this global phenomenon. There was a terminally ill girl, Natalie McDonald, who wrote to Rowling and she was wondering what was going to happen to all of her favorite characters. Rowling wrote back and told her all the secrets of what would happen in *Goblet of Fire*, and the letter got there after the girl died. Her mom received the letter; that was a sort of comfort for the mom dealing with all that grief after her child had died, so the two of them struck up a friendship. When the mom's two younger

children were old enough, she didn't tell them what was in the letter until they had finished reading *Deathly Hallows*. She kept that secret. You don't spoil it!

JC: Right.

Lorrie: She did spoil it for the sake of this one girl, even though it didn't reach the girl, but it did reach the mom. She didn't tell the mom, but the mom found out when *Goblet of Fire* was published (as she was reading it) that her child's name was in it and had been sorted into Gryffindor. That story still gets me, even knowing the mess that we're in right now with this author. It also makes me wonder... I don't know anything about this girl's family in particular, but a lot of people who had developed powerful bonds with Rowling before she turned into this anti-trans crusader... what that does to your feelings once you realize, 'Wait a minute, you're doing what now?' So yeah, this story about the bond between Rowling and this girl's family, though... It still hits home.

JC: Yeah. And the idea that naming her as a first-year at Hogwarts, that's really a wonderful tribute, right?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's a way of immortalizing someone, and I didn't know that story before. Oh, wow.

Lorrie: Yeah, it's the fantasy that a lot of fans have. "Well, when do I get my letter?" Well, most people don't, but Natalie apparently was going to. I like how if you don't know the story you just slip right by it, but that's one of the appeals of knowing these names of students that you never learn anything else about. 'Oh, their whole story exists.' It's really an invitation to imagination or fanfiction or the fantasy -- which has substance behind it -- that the author knows a lot more about this extended universe that maybe she could be persuaded to share it. In reality, that has played out in a mixed way, because she has shared a lot of details and then there's been backlash saying, "Oh, no, she shouldn't do that. She should let us take it from here and our imaginations if you don't put it in the books and it's not canon." Part of that is how much you believe in the authority of the author. I love hearing what else she had in her head about this extended universe, but it's more interesting to me to see the range of readers' responses when she does release extra information.

JC: What's interesting about that is that in another fandom, in the Star Wars fandom, George Lucas was always famous for having all this extracanonical knowledge; you could point to a character, like an alien in a bar, and George would be like, "Oh, his name is this, and this is the background and this is the story and this is the planet..." George was really into that. The Star Wars fandom was huge, but I never got the sense that people were like, "Shut up, George." It was always like, "Oh, he loves this as much as we do." I don't know if anyone took all that seriously. I'm sure that's somewhere, there's a wiki where people actually wrote down everything that George said and recorded it and it's part of the canon, but it feels like people reacted to that differently than they reacted to this author releasing information. It's a different time and it's a different population and there's lots of things that are different, but it does feel... It feels different to me. Even before all the mess with the author here, it always felt slightly gendered to me. He's allowed to fanboy about his own creation and she's not? He's allowed to say, "I thought about all this and now I'm telling, even though it didn't make it in the story, here it is," and everybody would go, "Oh, cool," but she gets a different reaction?

Lorrie: Well, because they're different genres.

JC: Yeah, they're completely different and the media is different.

Lorrie: There are so many more barriers to George Lucas's headcanon ever making it onto the screen. Just because he says it doesn't mean that it's now written into a script, and there are costume makers and prop designers. It's safer that way, whereas a single author writing novels can make it happen.

JC: Yeah, and Star Wars is its own giant beast now. It doesn't belong to any one person anymore.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. So yeah, we get these first years sorted. Orla Quirke, I will say, is my favorite Ravenclaw about whom we never know anything else. I thought, 'Oh, I bet that would be a good pen name for me if I ever needed to be an undercover Ravenclaw.' It's one of those classic J.K. Rowling names that's kind of weird and kind of appealing. Then we get the moment, the clanging moment, when Hermione learns that there are house-elves at Hogwarts.

JC: Yeah. It starts off with Nearly Headless Nick giving us a little more background about the ghosts and their relationships to each other. I can't remember if this is the first time that we learn that the Bloody Baron is the only one who can really control Peeves, but if it's not the first time, it's a confirmation of that again, which it's like, 'Oh, this is an important fact.' Then Nick sort of drops this bomb about the house-elves, and Hermione's like *record scratch* "What?!"

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, I love that oh, this is the turn in the fairy tale. There's the Beauty and the Beast fairy tale, which is the same as the Cupid and Psyche myth, where the young woman enters this enchanted place and there are invisible servants who do everything she wants; it's luxurious and completely invisible, and you don't know if it's benign -- it probably is, it seems to be -- and they seem really eager to please you and hurt if they fear that you haven't been pleased by their efforts, but you can't see it. What? Who puts you in this position of power and authority over these incredibly competent, invisible servants? Suddenly we have this, and Hermione realizes that without knowing it, she's been the protagonist in one of these fairy tales without her permission or knowledge, and she says to Nick, "I've never seen one!" Nick is all puzzled and says, "I mean, you're not supposed to see them, are you? That's the mark of a good house-elf, isn't it, that you don't know it's there?" Whoa. That awful feeling when you find out that you've been complicit without knowing it, and this is such a good commentary on the invisibility of systems being propped up, hegemony.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: How do these exploitative systems work by making the means of operation invisible and making the invisibility a virtue? Oh, she's got a really uphill battle.

JC: Also, you mentioned this already, but this loss of innocence around, 'I thought this place was magical and wonderful, and now I see the greedy underside.' We do, too, right?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's like oh, this magic -- the food just appears and then everything is this and that -- and then suddenly it's around every corner.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "Why is it clean?" Because house-elves cleaned it in the middle of the night. "Why is there a fire lit there?" Because the house-elves lit everything. It's like, 'Oh, wow.' It all runs on slave labor. Okay. Wow, that's really dark, and suddenly it's hard to enjoy any of it in the same way. This is what Hermione is...

Lorrie: 'Oh, I just took that for granted.'

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: I definitely remember that from childhood, the horror when I realized, 'Oh, if somebody doesn't wipe the sink, it gets dirty right away.'

JC: Sure.

Lorrie: The state of the sink that I thought was natural is not natural.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: I was just shielded from the labor until now. Oh.

JC: Yeah. I grew up in a part of the U.S. where textile mills were everywhere, and even when I was a little tiny kid in the little town that I lived in, so many people worked for the mill. Then by the early 1990s, most of the mills were gone and most of that had been exported overseas; at the same time, the price of clothes had come down a lot. I just remembered this moment where my grandparents were marveling at the fact that you could just go to Walmart and buy clothes that were super cheap.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: At the same time, your neighbor has been unemployed.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Right? And then the awareness of 'why is it cheap?' Because it was made a long way away in a country where people don't have a union and were paid pennies an hour. That realization of, 'I get to buy a cheap shirt because other people are being mistreated, and at the same time my neighbor is now unemployed and can't put food on the table.' Understanding your place in the awfulness of capitalism...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That's a moment of, 'Oh, wow,' as a young person.

Lorrie: Yeah, and that's the beginning of a really long, unsatisfying lesson in how to extract yourself from complicity, which is what this podcast is all about: being people who are horrified

at transphobia after a series has already taken residence in our brains and our lives, and wondering where on the spectrum is the responsible response to, 'Do we eject it? Do we pretend to eject it? Do we embrace it? Ugh.' Hermione boycotts as a first response, which is a great first reaction to this, but as even she must know, she can't starve herself forever.

JC: True.

Lorrie: And Ron is laughing at her. "Go right ahead. You can't keep that up." So yeah, we have this view of how insoluble complicity is and how much other people don't want to hear about it, which is completely understandable because it's a horrifying reveal. 'Oh, they don't move by themselves? Somebody's underneath; they're moving it. Oh. Oh!' Every time, every time. Yeah. This is the beginning of a very unsexy, very unsatisfying plot point.

JC: But also very important.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I think it's very important. One thing I'm going to really try to pay attention to as we go forward is how other people are treating Hermione for this, because my memory of this is that Hermione is alone in this fight and is dismissed a lot. A lot of people take things that teenage girls are interested in and completely dismiss the importance of them. I am interested in having my memory of how all this plays out refreshed as we go forward.

Lorrie: Which is mortifying...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: As something I can remember more clearly than I would like. The main thing that stands out to me about that is her lack of mentoring, because she's floundering around having to invent her response all by herself. There isn't anybody around to tell her, "Oh, yes, everybody goes through this disillusionment, and these are ways to be an activist. These ways do work, these ways don't work." All of these things are things that can be passed down and taught if anybody's around to do that, and nobody is. She's making these really big blunders because she just has to invent it as she goes along, and she herself has only been aware of it for five minutes, so she's kind of set up there.

JC: Oh. Dumbledore starts to give his speech, and there's this one moment that struck me as so funny: where he mentions the things that have been added to the list of forbidden objects and that the full list is only available in Mr. Filch's office. It's not posted anywhere, it's not in the student handbook; it's in Mr. Filch's office, and it struck me as so funny. Then he had a little twinkle in his eye as he said it.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "Okay, I'm saying this because I have to, but you're going to forget just as soon as I do," and then no one cares. Poor Filch.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He tries.

Lorrie: He cares so much, and literally nobody else does.

JC: Oh, my gosh. I thought, 'Oh, wow.' Yeah. Yeah. Anyway, as a person who worked in schools my whole life, that was like, 'Yeah, that feels really real.'

Lorrie: That's the kind of thing that as a student, I would have done a paper on, though.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: 'You know what? I'm going to interview Mr. Filch. Oh, boy, never again.' Yeah. So finally, all the dark and stormy pays off: a man stood in the doorway.

JC: Ooh!

Lorrie: Yeah. All that buildup... Yep. Yep. He's silhouetted, he's bizarre and terrifying, and he bears all his scars on the outside where you can see them all. This Mad-Eye Moody person is a new level in this series of double, or triple, agency. Everything he says and does comes with this huge, obviously horrifying and gothic backstory, but what's his real motivation? Oh, this is head-hurting levels. This is in a different direction from Snape being a double or triple agent, and that's mostly emotional. This gets into evil... complicated, and I admire it. I admire the storytelling being taken up to this complexity.

JC: The way that his appearance is described... Earlier on when we get to Hogwarts and Harry's looking around at all the teachers, he sees Snape, and his internal description of Snape is so over-the-top. It's like, "Ugly, ugly, ugly, big nose, ugly, ugly, greasy." That's his description. But yet, when we look at Mad-Eye Moody, the description of him is, "Wow, he's really scarred." It's really detailed, but it doesn't feel like it's mocking him in the same way that every description of Snape we get is literally mocking him. It's picking his weak points and twisting, and here it's more like there's reverence about the fact that, "Wow, look, he's so scarred. His skin looks like this and he's walking like this, and he has his peg leg and this eye." It's more like, "Ooh, cool."

Lorrie: "This is the struggle. How did he get these injuries? By fighting forces of evil that are real and out there. Whoa."

JC: Yeah. He's this visual representation of what it takes to fight evil in the world.

Lorrie: Yeah, and how much you can try to tell yourself, "No, no, we're safe. It's fine." No, no, you're not safe. It's not fine. So yeah, he's impressive and scary, and whether he's on your side or not, approach with caution. Yeah. That frightening, fascinating new element to the year has finally been introduced, and that's when Dumbledore finally sees fit to explain about the Triwizard Tournament and how it had been canceled for a long time because of the death toll. Of course it's Hermione who is the one who's uneasy about the phrase 'death toll,' because we see George and Fred Weasley taking it the usual way. "Death toll, huh? Okay. Moving on."

JC: Right. Teenage brains are wired to accept a lot more risk than adult brains are anyway. That's just part of teenage development; boys' brains even more so typically. [Fred and/or George] definitely were saying, "Well, other people have died, but I won't die."

Lorrie: And the school is encouraging it, because what message does it send? They think they've patched up all the loopholes. It should be fine this time.

JC: It should be fine this time. Though there's another funny moment in here when Dumbledore is introducing it and he says, "Some of you will not know what this tournament involves, so I

hope those who do know will forgive me for giving a short explanation, and allow their attention to wander freely."

Lorrie: Yeah, I love that.

JC: I love that so much! Just from a school perspective, if you're sitting in a class and you already know all the stuff the teacher's talking about, you're still expected to sit there and look like you're paying attention.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: And Dumbledore saying, "Yeah, no."

Lorrie: "It's okay."

JC: "It's okay." Which is great, but also it's a really lovely way to drop in some narrative backstory. There's multiple things I love about that.

Lorrie: Yeah, this whole chapter is really good about doing that kind of behind-the-scenes thing to purpose, not just because it's necessary. The inclusion of the death toll is indicating this is a genre shift. It's still being presented as a fairy tale; fairy tales like, 'Oh, the suitors for this princess had a contest, and if they lost they got their heads chopped off.' 'What?! Okay, we just accept that and go on.'

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Right. This is still a fairy tale, and then we're going to see at the end of this book that no, it actually turns out to be real and it's not cute; it's not everyday, and that's where it turns into a novel. Oh, this is real, and Hermione is the one who's sensitive to this. "You guys are taking this way too easily. There's a reason why we're supposed to be warned ahead of time." Yeah. I guess to me, this has a feeling of the students and the readers being told you're the main character in this kind of story. Hermione has just learned that she's the princess in *Beauty and the Beast*. "Wait, we have invisible servants." These students are being told, "If you take on this glorious test, you are agreeing to be one of those fairy tale protagonists who might die." We have Neville's reference to that dynamic, too, where he says unhappily, "I expect my gran'd want me to try, though. She's always going on about how I should be upholding the family honor, I'll just have to --" and then he goes, "Oops," and he steps in the trick stair. That's a good bit of character, but that's also how we're supposed to be seeing this: the point of reading a fairy tale is to imagine what you would do in this situation. That was always my take on this kind of story, of some young hero who was my age doing all these terrifying things. 'Wait a minute, I don't have it in me. I'm happy to sit on this couch reading this book.'

JC: 'Living vicariously through you while you're risk-taking.'

Lorrie: 'What would I do in that situation? I don't know. That's terrifying, actually.'

JC: 'Sit back and watch.' Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I'm so risk-averse as a person; there's just no way.

Lorrie: But yeah, Dumbledore's talking about how there's now an age limit, and they figure that forbidding anyone under age seventeen to enter ought to close off some of the loopholes.

JC: It kind of makes me think, all right, there are lots of things that you have to be of age to do. You have to be a certain age to drive a car, to make other important decisions in your life. The idea that the age of maturity for wizards is seventeen is really interesting to me, interesting because it's a prime number. It's not like most of the world -- it's eighteen or whatever -- but that idea that here's the age... Those kids are going to be in school another year, but they're topping off what they've learned; by the time you're seventeen, you should know most of what you need to get by as a wizard in the world, which is interesting because that's as far as Harry gets. Harry never has that seventh year at school, so by the time he's seventeen, he's absolutely learned all the magic he's going to learn from Hogwarts. He's moving forward. That's interesting because it made me think about that, but it also made me think about the fact that they go on and on... It's kind of a big deal. "No, we have things in place that are going to keep you from entering if you're seventeen. You're going to find out how hard this is," and the kids are scheming. Fred and George are scheming how they're going to get in; they're scheming to get their names in contention, and then whoever this judge is will pick whoever they deem most worthy regardless of age. All you've got to do is get your name in, and the fact that they are correct about this.... 'Oh, yeah. Actually, that's true. Yeah.' So yeah, they've made a big deal about it being seventeen.

Lorrie: Yeah. Fred and George are already reading the fine print. 'Oh, there's an impartial judge; it's not Dumbledore after all.'

JC: Right. 'We've just got to get around Dumbledore, and then we're in!' Yeah. And then Harry is at the end fantasizing about being the Triwizard Champion, and it's like, "Oh, honey.'

Lorrie: 'Oh, hun.'

JC: 'Oh, no. Be careful what you wish for.'

Lorrie: But he's doing exactly what you're supposed to do. You're supposed to think, 'Oh, what a fascinating situation. I'm going to imagine myself as the hero.'

JC: Yeah. 'I'm going to imagine myself as the gold medal-winning figure skater, even though I've never stepped on the ice. It could be me.'

Lorrie: As re-readers, we know that when he gets the sack of gold, it's not going to be like this at all.

JC: Right. Exactly.

Lorrie: Actually, what I was thinking of: back when Twitter was Twitter, I remember around 2017 when the first *Fantastic Beasts* movie came out and I was so loving J.K. Rowling and I was also loving Ezra Miller. And I remember in 2020, both of them -- their names would be trending on Twitter and it was for actual crimes. It was for horrifying transphobia, and I remember thinking to myself, 'Dear 2017 self, someday both of them will be trending on Twitter and you're not going to be thrilled,' because in 2017 I could not have -- I trusted both of them so much.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: Okay, things can change. Right now, Harry having these images of himself being heroic is such a sweet, delicious thought. And then I love this detail where they go up to their dorm rooms, and of course it's lovely and welcoming, it's home: "Someone -- a house elf, no doubt -- had placed warming pans between the sheets. It was extremely comfortable..." Yeah, okay, we're committed to this now. We're fourteen; we're going to know from now on this is how the magic happens. Okay.

JC: Right. And poor Hermione, because Hermione looks at the fire and just can't even sit in front of it in the squashy armchair, and she's going to go up to her tower and find that pan in her bed, and what's her response going to be to that?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Oh. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's not that different from being alive in our world and conscious.

JC: Yeah, that's really true. It's like pulling back the curtain in *The Wizard of Oz*. It's like, 'Oh, this is how it works. Okay.' Even for the readers, the shine is off a little bit. Ugh.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Even Hogwarts, even magic can't... Even though we see Molly Weasley's magic doing the dishes -- no, she's working really hard at keeping all that running because they don't have a house-elf -- but you see how, 'Oh, wow. Okay, this is how things run in this world. All right.' It takes a little bit of the shine off, for sure.

Lorrie: I'm starting to think about buying candy for Halloween, and that's the perennial struggle: well, the affordable Halloween candy is made with child labor from other countries. You can get ethically sourced chocolate; you can't afford to buy enough of it to give out to every kid in the neighborhood.

JC: Oh, my gosh. Yeah.

Lorrie: Oh, this is hitting home.

JC: Yeah. Yeah, if anyone has seen *The Good Place*... I can't really say too much of that. Well, it's been out for a while, but anyway, massive spoilers for *The Good Place*. Go forward about a minute if you don't want to hear this. One of the big ideas in it is that people aren't getting into heaven anymore because it's impossible to be a good person anymore. That's one of the big ideas that comes out in the third season.

Lorrie: I see.

JC: Why is it so hard to get into heaven? You can't live a life that doesn't harm others in some way. It's impossible in the way our modern society works, and I thought, 'Wow, that was really a profound statement for a sitcom to make,' but it's exactly that idea that everything you do, no matter how great your intentions, is going to have negative consequences for somebody on the planet and you have to, at some point, find a way to live with that. There's just no way around it. Yeah.

Lorrie: The other bit of nostalgia, though, for fandom activism that this brings up is that one of the things that the group formerly known as the Harry Potter Alliance (who changed their name

to Fandom Forward after transphobia TERFpocalypse started) did a campaign to change the chocolate in chocolate frogs from compromised child-labor chocolate to ethically-sourced chocolate. Of course, that did raise the price, but it worked. That campaign worked, and that was a major triumph.

JC: Yeah. It reminds me of the Girl Scouts nationally (or maybe even internationally) protesting the fact that it was Nutella going into some kinds of Girl Scout cookies and getting that changed to something that was more ethically sourced. Yeah. Yeah.

Lorrie: So yeah, that triumph about the chocolate frogs is one of those things that it's sad to remember. That was a source of fandom pride for a long time, and then it's hard to celebrate that kind of thing when there's been such a loss of trust in the author.

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: But it was a good triumph.

JC: Yes. There's another little moment that I love, when they're going up the stairs to the dorm. Neville isn't paying attention and steps into one of the steps that you sink into, and without even pausing -- without calling attention to it -- Harry and Ron just grab him by the arms and pull him up out and they just keep on going. What a kindness that is, for one thing; they don't make fun of him for it, they don't give him shit about it. They just help them and they keep on going.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I love that Neville has people in his life that are good to him, that see what he's worth, and that are kind to him, because there's a heck a lot of people at the school who are not kind to Neville.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I just loved that moment, that little reminder that yeah, Neville is one of their own and they take care of him. They help him when he needs it, and we'll see that Neville will return the favor.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's sad to think that they are more important to Neville than he is to them, and that's illustrated really well throughout the series.

JC: That's true.

Lorrie: Later on, we know that it does get better for him. He does have really good, powerful, affectionate friendships later on, but right now it's tough for him.

JC: Yeah, for sure. I can't not think about the fact that this is... Okay, this is kind of inappropriate to have at this point in the story, but we're looking ahead: how the actor who plays Neville in the movies grows up into this super hottie.

Lorrie: Yeah. Everybody loves that resolution to the story.

JC: Matthew Lewis, oh, my God. It's just great. It's so perfect, because now the vision of Neville at the end of the story in my head is that Neville has grown into himself. Yeah. Better things are coming, Neville.

Lorrie: Yeah, it gets better. Yeah, and when Neville falls into that stair and there's a suit of armor that makes fun of him for it, Ron just shuts up the suit of armor.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: "No, don't do that."

JC: Right. So we know that the Triwizard Tournament is coming, we know that there's going to be some shenanigans afoot about getting around the seventeen thing, and we have a new Dark Arts professor. There are so many things to come.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And the Triwizard Tournament doesn't even start until October. We're not going to meet people from the other schools for a while. I can't remember what happens in the meantime. This is September 1st, right?

Lorrie: Right.

JC: And the Triwizard Tournament stuff doesn't even start until October.

Lorrie: Yeah. They don't come until Halloween-ish.

JC: Yeah. As of the recording of this, we're hitting toward the end of September, but that's still a long way away. We have two whole months!

Lorrie: Yeah. For a chapter called The Triwizard Tournament, we don't know that much about the tournament yet.

JC: Yeah. But it does stoke our interest and we have to get into another year at Hogwarts. Oh, and we're going to learn... I guess. I can't remember exactly what happens in the next chapter, so it's going to be exciting...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: We're heading into Harry learning a lot of cool things from Mad-Eye Moody, I think.

Lorrie: Well, that's the next chapter. It's called Mad-Eye Moody.

JC: It's called Mad-Eye Moody. Look at that. I didn't even look ahead. All right, that's where we're headed.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And, despite the way it turns out, probably one of my favorite Defense Against the Dark Arts teachers.

Lorrie: That's the contradiction, isn't it?

JC: Yeah, exactly.

Lorrie: 'Wait a minute. Can we trust what we learned from him?' Kinda. Yeah, actually.

JC: Actually, yeah, and such a contrast from Lupin the year before.

Lorrie: Yes, yes. All right, well, next week we'll learn more about him.

JC: Yeah, here we go!

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