

Transcript

Episode 4.2

Book 4, Chapter 2: The Scar

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 Two: The Scar.

Lorrie: The Scar. Harry wakes up with his scar hurting after a vivid dream about Voldemort, Wormtail, Nagini and Frank Bryce; the last time his scar hurt, Voldemort had been near. For the first time, Harry has a godfather to write to for advice. Yeah, this is a really good setting-up chapter.

JC: It's also the recap chapter, and it's weird that it's the second one.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's the usual first chapter.

JC: Uh-huh, but it's the second one. It also feels a little bit -- it could just be me, but by the fourth book, I'm like, 'Come on, you know we're binge-reading these.'

Lorrie: Yeah, right.

JC: Do we really need all this information? It felt a little bit like the author was doing it under duress. It wasn't as skillfully done as in previous books, and I think this is the last time she does it.

Lorrie: Yeah. I don't think *Chamber of Secrets* was skillfully done when she did that.

JC: I don't remember now. That was a year ago that we read that.

Lorrie: Yeah, no, it was very much under duress. It was a little bit easier for *Azkaban*, because I think she then, at that point, could argue that people knew what they were in for. I can understand why a publisher might have asked her to do it for this one, because at this point, *Azkaban* was when it went from a big hit to an international phenomenon. I could see that the release party for the fourth book was going to be reaching some first-time customers who just wanted to check out what all this buzz was about. There would be people who needed to be brought in.

JC: Who starts with the fourth book of a series, though? Really?! I don't know the book industry, so I'm sure there are people who do, but that blows my mind.

Lorrie: No, it's the person who brings their kid to the midnight release and the kid's been going on and on about this series for a couple years, but now they see that it's on the cover of *Time* magazine, that it's a huge phenomenon, so all right. Then the kid gets the book and is daunted by the size of it, and the kid is asleep in the car on the way home from the midnight release and the parent leafs through. 'Okay, what is this?' But yeah, the jump in scale and the size of the Harry Potter phenomenon, I think, was major between the third and fourth books.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. It felt awkward to read the little recap bits, to the point that I felt myself skimming them, like, 'Yeah, yeah.'

Lorrie: I skimmed.

JC: 'We know he goes to the wizarding school. Yeah. Yeah.'

Lorrie: Yeah, but it also might be reassuring for the child reader who struggled through the Frank Bryce chapter -- the realistic fiction post-war account of this much, much older man -- to be reminded, 'No, no, we're still at Hogwarts. We still have Hermione Granger and Ronald Weasley. Calm down. It's okay.'

JC: It starts up with Harry coming awake and holding on to the dregs of this dream as they're starting to flit away. Something I was trying to figure out was, 'Who is Harry's point-of-view character in this dream? Who was he?'

Lorrie: Right.

JC: I thought it was Nagini, but then he sees the snake curled up on the floor. I thought maybe it was actually Frank Bryce, but then he sees Frank Bryce fall down. But he also sees Voldemort. The only person that he doesn't necessarily... I don't know. Does he see Pettigrew? I can't remember.

Lorrie: Yeah, he does.

JC: I don't know who the POV character was here.

Lorrie: No. I went through the same thing. Where is he seeing this from? The best I could get to was that it's like a Pensieve memory and that he's having a vision.

JC: Yeah, I guess I was just thinking through, because he himself was a Horcrux. Nagini's a Horcrux, they're both connected to Voldemort; I thought, 'Surely, it would be,' but maybe because he has that connection, he can see the room independently of...

Lorrie: Yeah. That seems to be where he's seeing it from. It's different from the next book, when he is looking through Nagini's eyes to attack Arthur Weasley.

JC: Right. I think that's what I was thinking of. I was like, 'Is he Nagini here?' But then he saw Nagini, so yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, no, it just seems to be a vision.

JC: Since it's so specifically Nagini later, do you think that the author hadn't thought through the implications of that at this point, or is this fourth book versus sixth book?

Lorrie: I think so, because when we find out that his perspective in *Order of The Phoenix* is through Nagini's eyes, that's because that's part of the mystery that she's actively working on, that she's going to reveal. But at this point, this is the first time that we have this kind of collection of Horcruxes. In this room, we have the bit of Voldemort's soul that's still in him, we have the bit that's in Nagini... You know what? Actually, excuse me. I'm going to take a moment to Google whether Nagini is a Horcrux yet.

JC: Oh. Because when he kills Frank Bryce...

Lorrie: Oh. No, it was Bertha Jorkins, so Nagini is.

JC: Okay.

Lorrie: Nagini has newly been made into a Horcrux using the murder of Bertha Jorkins. Okay.

JC: Okay.

Lorrie: Yeah, we have the confluence of the soul bits from Nagini and Voldemort, although that's the same amount of soul that was in Voldemort before he killed Bertha Jorkins. Then we have Harry teleporting in from wherever he is; this is Rowling setting up the grand Horcrux storyline that she's going to feed slowly -- so slowly -- over the next several volumes and several years because it's all so mysterious. Why is Harry's scar hurting? It hasn't hurt since I think the end of the first book.

JC: Did it hurt Harry during *Chamber of Secrets*?

Lorrie: I don't think it did.

JC: Interesting. I was wondering that, because when the scar's hurting him and it wakes him up, I thought, 'When did we see that last?' I couldn't remember.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Definitely not in the previous book.

Lorrie: Right. But yeah, when I thought, 'Did his scar hurt when he was confronting the soul bit in the diary?' He has such a long dialogue with 16-year-old Tom Riddle. I don't recall the scar hurting. He has so much other pain; he's terrified of looking at the basilisk, he's terrified of Ginny losing power. I don't think so.

JC: So it maybe didn't hurt since the first book, which is a long time ago now.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That would be a shock to suddenly go from, "We thought we had defeated Voldemort at the end of the first book, yay!" Then there's this weird diary in the second book; we gain a godfather in the third book, and then suddenly, "Oh, no, the scar's hurting again. Shit's getting real!"

Lorrie: 'What does this mean?'

JC: Right. 'What does this mean?'

Lorrie: 'Why am I having this vision? It's so weird.' The vision is that they're about to kill him, or that's their plot.

JC: They're plotting to, yeah. 'Voldemort wants to kill Harry Potter. What else is new?'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, but now he sees the actual conspiracy in the making. He doesn't know who this old man is that is the unfortunate victim of the scene. The snake... What the heck?

JC: Why is there a snake? Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, and then the immediate mystery that she's building up for this volume, as opposed to the series-long mystery about Horcruxes, is what does Voldemort look like right now? I find it very effectively done as horror writing; she keeps telling us and keeps telling us that we don't get to see what he looks like. We just see the looks on people's faces when they see him.

JC: Yeah. It's like *Jaws* when you just see the legs in the water. It's like when the people are getting pulled under.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: The blood, yeah. Oh, interesting.

Lorrie: Yeah. We have the word 'horror' here: "...At the moment when Voldemort's chair had swung around, and he, Harry, had seen what was sitting in it, he had felt a spasm of horror, which had awoken him... or had that been the pain in his scar?" Good, good stuff, I think.

JC: At this point, it's one-way, right? Voldemort doesn't realize yet that Harry is experiencing this?

Lorrie: It doesn't become two-way until Voldemort takes Harry's blood at the end of this volume. That's the doubling. At this point, there's part of Voldemort in Harry, but there's not a part of Harry in Voldemort.

JC: This also sets up something that becomes an important tool for Harry later -- later, later, later -- that he can see what Voldemort's doing and can tap into that. Yeah.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: He can't do it consciously at this point, but he will learn how to do that.

Lorrie: Well, the thing that nobody explains to him (and he has to figure out on his own against all judgment): okay, right now it's one-way. Harry can see sometimes into Voldemort, because it seems like in this case, the emotion of Voldemort coming home and having this intense experience is enough to connect into Harry's wavelength. That's one way; then at the end of this volume, when Voldemort takes Harry's blood, it opens up and it becomes two-way, but Harry and Voldemort don't understand that yet. At the beginning of the fifth book, Harry is having these unwelcome, automatic thought visions of Voldemort obsessing over the door in the Ministry, so their connection has increased, Harry can't control it, and it's very uncomfortable for him. In the

middle of that school year, Harry has such an emotional jolt -- recognizing the door that Voldemort's been obsessing over -- that Voldemort feels it; that's when Voldemort realizes that Harry is picking up on his emotions and that Voldemort can then manipulate that. That's what Dumbledore is terrified of, and that's when they say, "Oh, no, he can get into your brain; you have to learn Occlumency," which, for a number of reasons, turns out to be impossible. Then at the end of the fifth book, Voldemort has assumed that he can just dip in and out of Harry's mind at will, which has been true until he occupies Harry's mind at a moment that Harry feels a rush of love and grief for Sirius. That jealousy that Voldemort has when he can feel somebody else's love is so painful for Voldemort that he never enters Harry's mind again. At that point, it becomes one-way, but Harry has the control. Harry can see what Voldemort's thinking. He doesn't fully control that connection yet, but Voldemort could see into Harry's mind; he just won't, and Dumbledore says, "I'm sure he'll never do that again." That pain would have killed Voldemort if he had still been mortal. It's a greater pain than mortal humans can feel, because this fool has gone and made himself immortal, so there's no upper limit on the amount of pain he can feel. He has surpassed the amount of pain that would kill a human mortal.

JC: Okay.

Lorrie: Through the seventh book, Harry isn't sure if he is allowed -- if it's okay for him -- to tap into this connection, because the guy who always told him the truth about these things is now dead.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: And they're all operating on outdated instructions from this guy that they're not sure they trust anymore, but Harry learns that he's just going to ignore Hermione and occasionally dip in and do it; he gains some agency and some mastery over this, but then -- as the volume goes on and they destroy Horcruxes -- Harry's power over this connection grows stronger and stronger, and Voldemort can't feel it when Harry's in Voldemort's head because he's lost more and more of his soul. Harry's ability to control this depends on what percentage of Voldemort's soul Harry has in him -- more and more as they destroy his Horcruxes -- and by the end, Harry can just do whatever he wants with Voldemort's mind and Voldemort has very few marbles left.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: So that's the push-and-pull power dynamic that this chapter is setting up for the first time.

JC: Interesting. Okay, yeah.

Lorrie: This is the first evidence we see that Harry has this unwanted entry into the mind of Voldemort, which is something that Voldemort has deliberately set up in other cases -- not with Harry, but with his Death Eaters. The fact that Voldemort has branded his Death Eaters with the Dark Mark (and they can feel his emotions in the Dark Mark) is really pathetic. It's because Voldemort is lonely and nobody in the world ever understood how Voldemort felt -- how Tom Riddle, the orphan, felt. He was so different from everybody: so much smarter, so much more powerful; completely abandoned, nobody cared, with all these terrifying powers that nobody taught him, that nobody would believe, that he would get into trouble if people understood. How is anyone ever going to know how Tom Riddle, the child, feels? Well, if he can brand his followers with a Dark Mark, then there will always be people who know how he feels. It's the closest thing to having friends.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: When he's angry, and he feels angry and hurt and he wants the rest of the world to suffer -- he wants to punish the rest of the world for how much he's hurting -- then he has these built-in victims that have sworn their lives and their souls over to him. They will always be available for him to punish if he's so miserable that he wants people to know. That's what he has. He has these mind readers through his Dark Mark, and then he involuntarily has created a connection like that but stronger with Harry's scar. Because there's no part of Voldemort's soul in the Dark Marks in his followers but there is an involuntary part of his soul in Harry's scar. Harry and the Death Eaters have this thing in common: they can both read Voldemort's mind involuntarily. This is intense!

JC: And we're setting all that up here. That's really cool.

Lorrie: Yeah. This chapter is called The Scar, but at this point, we understand almost nothing about it and that's by design. Harry, poor thing... All he knows is that this really sucks.

JC: Right. Yeah.

Lorrie: And it hurts.

JC: Yeah, and it hurts. It's interesting, too, that the scar becomes such a big theme of his life.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And thinking through the last few books, it was more of a decoration on his head. It did hurt a little bit in the first book and that was a surprise to him, but from here on out it becomes a major feature of his existence that the scar hurts and that means something.

Lorrie: Yeah. When you have a damaging violent criminal like Voldemort, and he has hurt people -- he's hurt his followers; he has to damage them to get them to be his followers, and they have to generally be damaged people to begin with to come to him. Then, he has hurt this child, who he orphaned and almost tried to kill. Sure, when you have that in your history and the criminal who hurt you and who killed your parents re-enters the scene, then all of your pain around that history is going to become acute. We'll see in this volume that the Death Eaters... While Voldemort was out of power, the Dark Mark was basically just a tattoo that they could cover up; now that he's back and they're starting to feel it again, they're all scared.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Okay.

JC: They had, what, fourteen years to --

Lorrie: Thirteen years.

JC: To put their wild youth behind them or whatever, right?

Lorrie: To pretend that didn't happen.

JC: That is kind of shitty if you think back fifteen, twenty years to some shit that you did that you really regret, and then it suddenly comes back rearing its head and you have to deal with it again. Oh, my God.

Lorrie: Right, which explains the character of Snape, because if you think, 'But I was so young then; I didn't know what I was getting into,' that's why people who have made that mistake in their own lives work so damn hard to prevent teenagers from making typical teenage mistakes that they will never be able to undo. That's why both Snape and Dumbledore voluntarily give up their lives to prevent Harry and Draco from having murders on their conscience, or deaths, because no, you didn't know what you were doing. Does that excuse you? Hell no! Do you get a pass from suffering? Oh, quite the opposite, actually. That's a big argument of Snape haters: "Don't tell me he was young when he did that. That doesn't excuse him." Yeah, Snape agrees with you. You may not have the equipment at that age of being sixteen or seventeen to know how much this is going to ruin your own life, let alone other people's lives, but oh, you're going to pay. Yeah, that's a trap of adolescence: you have increased power without increased judgment yet. That's why adults have to be really on guard and have to do their damndest to protect these kids without over-protecting them, and putting as little of their own issues onto the kids as possible, which is not ever possible. So yeah, that's this setup. Then Harry thinks: "The last time the scar had hurt him, it had been because Voldemort had been close by... But Voldemort couldn't be here, now... The idea of Voldemort lurking in Privet Drive was absurd, impossible..." Which is true, and Dumbledore saw to that. That's also good for the reader, who has just been in this weird world of Frank Bryce and post-war writing and then being brought back to this fantasy child series. How are these things compatible? They're so different. Okay, that's setting it up to tell you, "Right, because some kinds of scars and traumas from attacks do follow you into your life in all these different ways. No, Voldemort's not physically there, but there's some reason why he's at the forefront of Harry's consciousness now, and yeah, it's going to feel like that whether or not he's physically there." Poor kid.

JC: Yeah, for sure. There's this line that struck me as funny, where he's thinking about how his scar is hurting and then this line is something like, "Pain wasn't a big deal. After all, he goes to Hogwarts, where bizarre accidents and injuries are the norm," and I was like, 'Oh, my God.'

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Yeah. Then we get a litany of all the horrific things that have happened to him in the last few years. Again, I don't know, it's a fairy tale. It's part of the fairy tale aspect of it, but it's also really funny in a sense that they're constantly getting these bizarre injuries, like all the bones in his arm disappeared. There's pain involved.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: It's not like this stuff doesn't hurt, but he powers through it and moves on with his life.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I know that there are plenty of kids for whom that's their life; through whatever reason, they have experienced a lot of physical pain, as well as emotional pain by the time they're Harry's age, and Harry's powering through.

Lorrie: And this is something that happens in every era, to every culture: appalling things that some decades later seem incredible. 'Wait, you just put up with that?' 'Oh, yeah.' 'What are you going to do?' There's a recurring skit on *Saturday Night Live* that Kate McKinnon used to do, where it would be old-time Hollywood actresses coming together to talk about the incredible sexism that they endured and younger women would listen to this with their eyeballs falling out,

like, 'What?!' 'Oh, yeah, blah, blah, blah.' I just spent the summer in Korea -- I'm back in the U.S. -- and that was something that we just had to explain to Koreans. 'Oh, yeah, you could get shot walking home from the bus stop. Yeah, you could.' 'Isn't there a lot of gun violence?' 'Yeah.'

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: 'Don't kids grow up watching their family members shot down in front of them?' 'Yeah, they do.' 'How can you live with that?' 'I don't know.' Yeah, the chronic pain and the acceptance of the near-death experiences that not only Harry but quite a few Hogwarts students have... The humor in writing about that is very British to me.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: The example that I love is when Neville says, "Oh, yeah, my uncle was dangling me out the window, but then he was offered a meringue, so he dropped me." Wait, what?

JC: "And then I bounced, and everything was fine." Yeah.

Lorrie: And the understatement in that feels really British to me.

JC: For sure. Another thing that happened to this chapter that I think is interesting is that, to my recollection, this is the first time that when Voldemort tried to kill Harry, he used a curse. I remember being really confused in the first couple of books, because everyone would say, "Oh, Voldemort tried to kill you and he wasn't successful." It was like, "Did he not have an ax? What was he doing?" Somehow, even reading a book about wizards, it didn't occur to me that there was a killing spell, and I was very confused. What do you mean he didn't die? How hard is it to kill a baby?

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Geez, that sounds like an awful thing to say. I apologize.

Lorrie: The whole series is about this.

JC: Yeah, for sure.

Lorrie: You don't have to apologize.

JC: Right. You have this evil guy, he wants to kill this baby that's been prophesied to whatever, and he can't do it. It's not a Teflon baby. What the hell?! It took me a long time to think, 'What could it be,' and it wasn't until I read this book that I was like, 'Oh, it was a curse.' Then later in this book, we learn exactly what the curse was, and I do have this memory -- when we get to the chapter, we'll talk about it again -- of the Mad-Eye Moody imposter saying, "The only person who's ever known to survive it is in this room," and looks at Harry, and everyone gasps.

Lorrie: Dun, dun, DUN!

JC: Yeah, and in that moment of reading that chapter, I went, "OH!" and it all made sense. I don't know if I missed this mention in this chapter -- because I didn't put it together until that chapter -- but I saw it here, obviously, that it was a curse, and I thought, 'I'm pretty sure this is the first time it's been said that it was a curse. I could be wrong. I'm likely wrong, but to me -- in my head -- I don't remember hearing it being discussed as a curse before this.'

Lorrie: Well, in the first book, we have Ollivander (the first time Harry meets him) looking at Harry's scar and saying, "Oh, yes. I'm sorry to say that I sold the wand to who did this to you."

JC: Yeah. "His brother gave you the scar." Yeah, I didn't put it together. I didn't connect that to 'It was a spell.' It needed to say, actually, in the text it was a killing curse. That's what I needed, and I didn't get it until this point.

Lorrie: But then again, the way that I read the series, it wouldn't have made any difference whether it was a curse or an ax. The thing that made it impossible for Voldemort to kill Harry, even though this curse had been foolproof for Voldemort up until then, is that he looked at Harry and had an emotion about killing this particular baby. Whether it was casting a curse through a wand or swinging an ax or doing anything, it was something happening in him because he had a connection in his own emotions to this victim that he didn't have with any other victim. So yeah, it actually doesn't matter whether it was a curse or not.

JC: Yeah. Well, it mattered to me because I'm reading these literally.

Lorrie: Well, no, but that's...

JC: I was so confused. Why couldn't he kill the baby?

Lorrie: That's exactly what we're supposed to be doing, because the hints about this are doled out so tantalizingly -- slowly -- over a million words, and that is something that I respect so much about the series: this was the central mystery that was teased. Why didn't it work? What was different about this baby? How come? What exactly happened? That was such an important mystery, it actually did keep everyone's attention. The clues we had are all of these symbolic plot points. Let's see... Okay, this is a curse; there's no defense against it, but there's something different about this baby. It's an elaborate allegory for whether or not it's possible for a really psychopathic serial killer to be reached in his emotions at all in any way. What does that take? Poor Harry's like, 'I don't know. I didn't do anything. I was a baby.'

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: 'Don't look at me. It wasn't me. I don't have any power. Go away.'

JC: This was the thing I didn't really understand -- again, until this book -- why people were so fascinated with Harry's survival. I didn't really understand. Why was Harry so famous? Again, I don't think it was until this book that oh, there's this killing curse that never has failed to kill a person, and then it didn't kill this person; it rebounded in such a way that it actually destroyed -- for some definition of destroyed -- the person who tried to cast it. Then people are saying, 'Okay, Harry has some special power.'

Lorrie: Something there.

JC: There's something there.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And I didn't understand it until this book. I don't read on the level that you read. I'm trained as a scientist; I look at the actual words and I don't think beyond them. I'm just putting the string of words together. What does it mean? Great! Moving on...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I'm not looking at any kind of subtext, really, so for me, it was more like, 'What's happening here?' It took until this book before I really understood, 'Oh, that's why Harry was famous. That's why.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And that's the measure of when this series works the most beautifully: when it's fully effective on both the symbolic, emotional level and on the plot-driven fantasy genre level where the details line up. There's a parlor game that a lot of fans like to play of plot holes. "Oh, no, but there's this plot hole that shouldn't have worked this way!" It's not a deep game, in my opinion, but it's relevant and important; if you have a little bit showing through the skin, then it doesn't work as perfectly as you want it to. That was one of the drawbacks, in my opinion, of the seventh book -- which I still think was a great, great, great achievement, far beyond most people -- but there was so much pressure on the author to finish her series the way she wanted to that there are parts when the plot points, the world building, and the fantasy magic wears a bit thin because she's so invested in her symbolic points. She's so much like, 'Okay, Harry has to win, but he has to do it by not attacking.' The allegory is so strong and then she gets into wandlore, and you get a little lost because she cares more about the allegory -- about the emotional resonance -- than she does about world-building. Yeah, when she's firing full strength on both of those levels is a huge reason that this series became as successful as it did for me. You reading on that level and me reading on this level together... that's what makes the reading, because if you read it only on one and not the other, you're missing it. But yeah, the fact that this chapter is called The Scar... You will find no answers in this chapter, but we're setting up a lot of big questions.

JC: And setting stuff up, yeah. For sure.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: A couple of other things that stood out to me here: one is that Harry has been gradually given a little more freedom at the Dursleys every summer. The first time we see him, he's living in a closet where they can lock him in if they want.

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: The second time we see him, he's been given the second bedroom, but he's still locked in with none of his stuff.

Lorrie: There are prison bars on the window.

JC: They're still prison bars, right?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: The third time, his stuff is locked away, but he can come and go.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And then this time, finally, he has his stuff. His owl can come and go, he can come and go; they just don't want to hear him. It's interesting, because in the first book, he feels like the

Cinderella character in his family. He still is, but he's been given a little more freedom every year in this mockery of the way that we expect children to grow up and become more independent.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: That's something that I'm seeing in that progression: you give your children more independence, you let them take on more responsibilities. He's being given that, but they really don't want to; it's very reluctant.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: They're being forced to.

Lorrie: He's wielding the threat of his wicked godfather.

JC: Right, yeah. The ex-prisoner.

Lorrie: He's wrested some independence from them.

JC: That reluctant admission about Sirius...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: The moment when he says, 'Oh, he really wished he had somebody to talk to, someone like the parent he's never had,' and he's like, 'But I do have that person,' and that's just so sweet. It's very sweet.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I remember the first time I read this was before I had a child, and it hit me differently this time around.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Because by the time I was that age. I couldn't go to my parents for things like this. My parents had split up; they were having really difficult lives for a lot of reasons that I won't go into. I didn't have them to go to.

Lorrie: You couldn't do it.

JC: I couldn't do it, so the first time I read this, I was like, 'Oh, man, what would that...' I understood Harry's feeling of 'Who do I turn to here? I don't have anyone.' Like most teenagers, I turned to my friends for that kind of support, but I didn't have an adult.

Lorrie: Ron and Hermione. Yeah.

JC: Right. But on the other end of it -- now being a parent of a 16-year-old kid and having that kid actually occasionally come to me and say, "My friend is having a problem or this is happening," that need to talk to an adult about it and for my kid to have that?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Oh, man.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Okay, there. Success.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: A parenting success.

Lorrie: The difference here... It's good in this chapter, showing the limitations of Hermione and Ron. Having your friends is so much better than not, but Hermione... All she can say is, "Go to Dumbledore," who is so far above Harry that that's not a very good daily option. Ron will say, "Um, I'll ask my dad." This is the resource that Harry has. It's way better than nothing, but it's not the same. Yeah, at that moment: "What he really wanted (and it felt almost shameful to admit it to himself) was someone like -- someone like a *parent*: an adult wizard whose advice he could ask without feeling stupid, someone who cared about him, who had experience with Dark Magic." That brilliant sentence, to me, makes the whole chapter. I love that it picks up on the shame, because even when you're not a child -- when you're an adult -- you want to be taken care of, and many times in life, there are reasons why that's impossible. Maybe it's because you're old and an adult and everybody that could is dead. Maybe it's because you're an orphan and it's been hammered into your head that nobody loves you and nobody's going to take care of you, and you should have learned this a long time ago. There's self-blame involved in this. 'God damn it, why can't you learn that no one's ever going to help you? Why do you still persist in this childish fantasy that's laughable?' That shame and self-recrimination is so real.

JC: Yeah. I think even the vast majority of adults, if not all, have had moments where you're like, "I just need a grown-up to tell me what to do here. I don't know what to do."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And then you think, 'I'm the adult in this situation. I should be able to figure out how to do this and I can't. I need help.' There is this shame of having to find someone that you can turn to to help you through it.

Lorrie: If there's been somebody that was supposed to be your guidance -- supposed to be taking care of you and they've rejected you and you still want them -- that's shameful. We see this when Snape goes to Dumbledore a few times in this series when he's like, "Don't you approve of me? Please, I need you -- I don't have anyone else whose approval will mean anything," and Dumbledore's like, "You are so gross. Get out of my face." The shame there is so intense. The way that what Harry longs for is for an adult who thinks that his well-being is the most important thing in the world... that's not something you can create. You don't have any power over that. If there are adults who feel that way about you, you're so blessed, and if there aren't, you've got to figure out some way. That 'feeling stupid' aspect is so important, and this is something that Voldemort never had and thought was destroyed in him. Voldemort wasn't prepared when he saw baby Harry that he was about to kill. He wasn't prepared for seeing Harry have that from James and Lily and to feel jealous; he didn't even know that he still could feel jealous of that, because he had so thoroughly recognized, 'Oh, in this world, nobody can help you. You can kill them, but they won't help you.' That way that he forgot that he had Sirius until he consciously had to remember is so brilliant. That bond -- to go from nothing to having that -- yeah, it's going to take a while, this brand-new connection, and that moment of realizing, 'Oh, my God, he's so much richer than he was. Wow.' On one side of the chess board, we have Voldemort in some unspeakably monstrous body with his despised assistant, Wormtail, and a snake for some reason. On the other side of the chess board, we have this kid with chronic pain

and sweet child friends, a distant headmaster, but now he has a godfather. Oh, okay. This godfather is really smart and really experienced. Homeless... Oh, well.

JC: True, but apparently in a place where there are large tropical birds to deliver his letters.

Lorrie: Yes, away from dementors.

JC: Which is a detail that I love. I love that detail. I think we're going to see more of it in this book, obviously, but it's the first hint that there's a wizarding world outside of Britain and the culture of it is different than what we see in Britain, and I like that.

Lorrie: Yeah, it's not just owls. Yeah. I do love the super practical advice to any reader who suffers from depression that sunlight could help.

JC: Oh, yeah. That's true.

Lorrie: It's not just chocolate. Go outside.

JC: Yeah. Chocolate and/or sunlight. There you go.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I love the letter that Harry writes to Sirius. I love that he stays up the rest of the night writing it, and the sun is coming up as he's finishing it. The fact that it's relatively short and it still takes him forever to write it in that way that a kid is like, 'What do I say? What do I say?'

Lorrie: Yeah!

JC: But he hits all these different -- he winds his way around these different topics, and then at the very end it's like, 'Oh, by the way, that scar that Voldemort gave me? Um, it hurts when he's nearby and it's hurting now. Bye!'

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah.

JC: Off goes the letter. Oh, my God.

Lorrie: The way Harry doesn't want to sound over-dramatic about this...

JC: Right, right. Yeah. 'I want to be casual.'

Lorrie: And that's so real. What I hear in that is, 'I don't know what I'm allowed to ask for. I'll just drop this here and wait to see what happens,' knowing if he goes crying to Sirius, he does not want Sirius to come running back with an ambulance flaring, like, 'No, no.'

JC: Yeah, and put himself in danger.

Lorrie: Right. 'I just want to say... Um, you said to contact you if anything weird was going on. Okay.' But he's never done this before. He's never been able to ask, so this is his first time trying. Yeah, it would take me all night. Wow. Yeah, it's so touching. He says: "I don't reckon he can be anywhere near me now, can he? Do you know if curse scars sometimes hurt years afterward?" These are totally valid questions, and they also hint to the reader, 'Okay, there's something about time and distance that has to do with this mystery of why Harry's scar is hurting.' The other detail that's super hidden and tucked into this chapter: "Harry had no idea where Dumbledore went during the summer holidays." The first time I read that, it was just

funny. It was a throwaway, because then Harry imagines Dumbledore is sitting on the beach. Okay, that's funny. It's much, much later that we realize, 'Oh, no, no, no, Dumbledore is very busy during the summer holidays, and it has everything to do with why your scar is hurting.'

JC: Yeah. That's true.

Lorrie: But yeah, he's not around to answer your questions because he's off doing this, but you do have a godfather now who's drinking umbrella drinks on a beach somewhere hopefully.

JC: Let's hope.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I really want that for Sirius.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: What's next?

Lorrie: Yeah, this chapter...

JC: I think we're heading toward the Quidditch World Cup, aren't we? I'm excited about the Quidditch World Cup.

Lorrie: Yeah, so in this chapter, what happens? Harry wakes up from a nightmare and he writes a letter.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: The next chapter is called The Invitation.

JC: The Invitation.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. I'm looking forward to the Quidditch World Cup.

Lorrie: To the party. The huge, huge party.

JC: Yeah. I love world-building. I love world-building, and I love that bit of world-building around.... In the last book, we finally got a glimpse of what the wizarding world looks like outside of Hogwarts?

Lorrie: The Knight Bus.

JC: But just in this one little town, right?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: We've seen a little bit of the government, but I love what is, for Harry, this glimpse of what life is going to be like after you're done with school.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Because that's a really important thing for kids, especially teenagers: to be able to envision their life as adults.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Harry has no vision of life as an adult. It's like, 'Oh, wow, what are his experiences so far? An evil wizard kills you, or you get framed and put in prison.'

Lorrie: 'Or you could go back to the Muggles who put you in the closet.'

JC: Right, yeah.' Or you could teach at this school, where you're constantly in mortal peril.'

Lorrie: Oh, my God, that's right! You can go to the staff room with Snape.

JC: Right, yeah. The world is very limited to Harry so far. I think the Quidditch World Cup does this great world-building for the leader, but also I think it's great for Harry just to get a vision of, 'Oh, these people are out here; they live their lives and they go to festivals.' I'm really looking forward to seeing Harry's world open up a little bit more.

Lorrie: And it's very age-appropriate. He's a ninth grader; this is, in fact, when you start looking around yourself.

JC: Yeah, and imagining what your life might be like in the future. It's exciting! I'm ready.

Lorrie: So, yeah. Well, I will talk to you then.

JC: All right!

Caroline: You've been listening to Harry Potter After 2020 with hosts Lorrie Kim and JC. You can find show notes for this and all other episodes at HPAfter2020.com. There, you will also find ways to support the show, contact the hosts, and more. If you like what you heard, consider giving us a review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. Harry Potter After 2020 is produced and edited by Lorrie Kim and Caroline Rinaldy. Original music was composed by C.L. Smith. Thank you for listening.