



Transcript

Episode 4.29

Book 4, Chapter 29: The Dream

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 a long-time HP fan. I'm your editor, Caroline. In this episode, Lorrie and JC tackle Book Four, Chapter Twenty-Nine: The Dream.

Lorrie: The Dream. No one can figure out what happened to Barty Crouch Sr. Despite the sense of impending doom, the only thing Harry can do is prepare for the third task, where whoever put his name in the Goblet might try to harm him. In Divination class, he gets a vision of Wormtail being tortured; he screams from his scar pain and he goes straight to Dumbledore. Wow.

JC: Yeah, ooh. Okay, there's a beautiful bit of humor at the beginning of this chapter that I really like: it's the crack of dawn, the Trio are in the owlery. They've apparently stayed up all night talking about what happened, or they haven't slept much, at any rate.

Lorrie: Yeah. They're really tired and nervous.

JC: And they're trying to figure out exactly what's going on. They all have theories; as usual, Hermione's theory makes the most sense or Hermione's comments on it make the most sense, but Harry notes that Crouch was at his most coherent that night when he said Voldemort was getting stronger.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I think Ron keeps trying to say, "Oh, he was off his nut, he doesn't know what he's talking about," and Harry's like, "Actually, the moments when he was coming through were those, when he talked about how he had to see Dumbledore because of Voldemort." That's scary.

Lorrie: Yeah, and they've gone to the Owlery because they want to send a note to Sirius about everything that's happened. Harry is quite rightly mumbling resentfully that it would have been so much better if Snape hadn't held him up in front of Dumbledore's office, and Ron says, "Oh, wait, what if Snape was doing that so that he could get to Barty Crouch before Harry and Dumbledore did?" Harry says, "Not unless he can turn himself into a bat or something." That got me off on a tangent -- a really cheerful tangent -- because that reminds me of one of the prototypes for Snape's type of character, which is Roger Chillingworth from *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne, who is, like Snape, an alchemist with a really shady past who's sinister and makes potions. He's the former husband of a different HP -- Hester Prynne -- and he's just really horrible to her. One day, she looks at him and she muses, "Would he spread bat's wings and flee away, looking so much the uglier the higher he rose toward heaven?" I read *The Scarlet Letter* wondering if Snape is a version of Hester Prynne because she wears the Scarlet Letter -- she wants to take it off; she's not allowed to take it off. It's supposed to be a mark of shame, but later on near the end, it becomes a mark of honor; she becomes somebody who can help fallen people because they know she won't look down on them. She's been through so much, and that has given her some compassion and wisdom that people who have never sinned don't know. I thought, 'Oh, with Snape being unable to be rid of the Dark Mark, I wonder if there's some connection there,' so I reread *The Scarlet Letter* for the first time since I was in high school or something.

JC: Oh, my gosh.

Lorrie: And I found that Snape is not in the least like Hester Prynne, but he is exactly like Roger Chillingworth, the horrible, horrible antagonist.

JC: Wow!

Lorrie: Yeah. When I read that, I was like, 'Okay, fine, he's like Roger Chillingworth.' Oh, we're talking about the potions and how haggard and creepy he is, but then... Yeah, the part where she's thinking that he's really ugly and could spread bat wings and fly off, I'm like, 'Fine, he's Snape. Fine.'

JC: Wow, interesting.

Lorrie: So yeah, every time somebody like Quirrell or Mad-Eye Moody says, "Oh, yeah, Snape is the type," and then Snape comes scowling around with his robes flapping, yep. Playing exactly into type. It probably comes from that stock character.

JC: Oh, that's interesting. I honestly cannot recall if I have ever read that book. I was probably forced to at some point in school. I have no memory of it.

Lorrie: Yeah. The weird thing that I discovered rereading it much, much later is it was gripping. It was a page turner.

JC: Really?

Lorrie: Yeah, because in ninth grade or whatever, when I was required to read it, it was just nothing but endless Puritan prose that went on and, oh, God, all the moralizing. It's too young, the age at which I was assigned to that and my whole class was assigned that. I don't know why they do that to kids.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: But this was an age when kids would be looked down on for reading YA such as Harry Potter -- people thinking, 'Well, it's not as good literature' -- but really, was it so great to assign something like *The Scarlet Letter*? I was as good a student as you were going to get in my ninth grade class. Literature was my thing, and I struggled with *The Scarlet Letter*. I'm pretty sure that most of my classmates did not get whatever they were intended to get out of it.

JC: Yeah. That's a really good point. ELA is not my specialty by any stretch, but it does make me wonder and make me want to ask people I know who are in that area, "What's the theory on that? Pushing kids to read books that are not written for them? What is that about?" Yeah, I'm curious. Maybe someone listening has some insight, I don't know.

Lorrie: It felt really dull. Yeah. Then in adulthood, I go back and read it and I was literally flipping pages really fast because it was so gripping.

JC: Wow, that's interesting.

Lorrie: Yeah. What I discovered, which I didn't remember or maybe the import didn't strike me so much at the time in ninth grade, was that Nathaniel Hawthorne was such a feminist.

JC: Whoa!

Lorrie: He says directly in this book that the structure of sexism in society is so entrenched and so disgusting that the only solution possible is to burn the whole thing down.

JC: Wow!

Lorrie: Yeah! I'm reading this New England gentleman writing this 'burn it all down' feminist screed... Yeah, all of that just went right over my head in ninth grade.

JC: Wow.

Lorrie: Yeah, fascinating stuff. But yeah, one of Snape's literary ancestors haunts that text. Yeah.

JC: Harry and Ron are constantly looking for reasons to suspect Snape, for good reason. At this point, everybody who reads the book is very suspicious of Snape, but it's hard for me to look at that instance and think it was anything other than Snape just being an asshole. I didn't get any sense in that scene, even on a first read, that he was trying to keep Harry from doing something good here. That didn't occur to me at all in that read. It was just like, 'Oh, God, it's just Snape being a dick.' I didn't get any vibes there, so it gets dismissed pretty quickly, but it is interesting that they're still looking for reasons.

Lorrie: Yeah. When you have a teacher that's actively messing up your day-to-day attempts to live, you do sometimes as a student just wonder why. Not for any particular reason; just because it's a daily encumbrance. What makes a person so miserable?

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Because you can't do anything about it. What are they going to do, get him fired? Right?

JC: Yeah, really.

Lorrie: But yeah, in terms of where we are in this series, this is him being maximally awful with no redeeming qualities, because this is as bad as he's going to have to be in order to try to climb back up in the second half of his life. Yeah. At this point, we're supposed to have as little faith as possible that this guy could possibly redeem himself. He can make an entire career out of pettiness.

JC: Yeah, for sure. As the kids are talking, too, about the whole situation (trying to figure out what happened with Mr. Crouch), we're reminded that Moody has the map and has access to it.

Lorrie: Yes, he does.

JC: Yeah, which would have made it really easy for him, obviously, to find Crouch on the Hogwarts grounds. It's also interesting that Mr. Crouch's presence there in the woods and the reaction to it really makes it seem more likely, from the perspective of someone who hasn't read this before, that it really was Crouch who was trying to break into Snape's office multiple chapters back.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Okay, if he could get on to the grounds (and it's not the first time, probably) it's interesting how it gives you some red herrings for that little mystery, too.

Lorrie: Speaking of red herrings, Fred and George are up there doing their own mysterious thing that they won't explain.

JC: I love those three little lines.

Lorrie: Yes!

JC: "'What are you doing here?' Ron and Fred said at the same time. 'Sending a letter,' said Harry and George in unison. 'What, at this time?' said Hermione and Fred." It's just so funny.

Lorrie: It's so satisfying. Yeah.

JC: It's like, Oh, ho, everybody's up to something.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And it's like, 'Okay, then we'll all keep our secrets and pretend like we never saw each other here.' It's really fun.

Lorrie: Yeah. Ron is worried that maybe this is a line that they would cross (blackmail), which is not a bad thing to worry about when you're dealing with true tricksters like Fred and George are. Where is that line? You cannot assume that they would just stop before breaking the law, because he says they're obsessed with making money. They're so serious about their joke shop. All right, this volume has driven home the point that it is a matter of survival for these kids how they are going to pay for their own way.

JC: Yeah, for sure. There are two other things that happened in that paragraph that I thought were interesting: when Ron is pushing back, like, "What are you doing?" and George teases him that he sounds like Percy.

Lorrie: Oh!

JC: "You're sounding like..." which is the ultimate insult in their family, I imagine. He says, "Carry on like this and you'll be made a prefect," and Ron says, "No, I won't!" which is actually funny because that's exactly what happens, right? Isn't Ron a prefect in some year that... Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. Not only does Ron get made a prefect, but he also doesn't realize that they've just talked him into insulting himself. "Me? I would never become... I'd never be --" Yeah. That's so much the "why are you hitting yourself?" school of being out-maneuvered by a big sibling.

JC: That's funny. Then there is this really interesting comment from Harry. Ron wonders if they're... "Are they really doing something illegal? Is this going to be a problem?" Harry says, "If it was something that serious, they'd tell someone. They'd tell Dumbledore." I'm like, 'Harry Potter?'

Lorrie: 'Just like you do all the time.'

JC: 'Really? Are you hearing the words that are coming out of your mouth right now?'
Then at the end of the chapter, we see for the first time that Harry goes, 'Okay, I'm going to follow my own advice.'

Lorrie: 'I have run out of other options.'

JC: Yeah. Is this the first time we've heard about the joke shop, or have we heard about it before?

Lorrie: No.

JC: I can't remember.

Lorrie: They've talked about wanting to do it.

JC: Okay. But Ron bringing it up again feels like, 'Oh, that's right. This is maybe going to become a reality. This is their plan.'

Lorrie: They're serious.

JC: They're really serious about it, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. And why not?

JC: Yeah. It's, hey, following their joy.

Lorrie: Obviously there's a market.

JC: And they're good at it.

Lorrie: So yeah, when they run into Moody, he looks just as sleep deprived as they do.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And he says in many, many different ways that Crouch is not around, he's not on the grounds. Nobody knows where he is, but he's *definitely not* at Hogwarts.

JC: For sure!

Lorrie: And there's *nothing* -- NOTHING -- the kids can do about this.

JC: He would definitely not show up on the map. Yeah, that's funny. It's also interesting in this scene that he knows exactly how to flatter them.

Lorrie: Yes!

JC: And he flatters Harry, and then he flatters Hermione, to the point that even Ron is like, 'What about me?'

Lorrie: "Me, too! Me, too!"

JC: 'Me, too! Me, too!' Yeah, that moment. Yeah. "Took a leaf out of your book, Potter, and used a Summoning charm." That is like, wow. He didn't have to...

Lorrie: No.

JC: No, he knew exactly what he was doing there.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And then he knows Hermione is the one who might figure him out. "Oh, yeah. Yeah, you're really smart. You should be an Auror, too."

Lorrie: He distracts her with a compliment and she flushes pink. Oh, God. Yeah, he apparently doesn't think that Ron is enough of a threat to need to compliment him about anything.

JC: Exactly. Yeah, poor Ron. But yeah, it was really interesting to see that. Then he says, "Oh, yeah, don't worry about this. Instead, you should be focusing on the task. Oh, this one's right up your street. You're going to be great at this, and here's what I would suggest you do." It was almost heavy-handed...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: The way that he distracted them from the mystery of Mr. Crouch, which they have literally been all night up talking about, and it works.

Lorrie: It does work, but he's also right that Harry ought to be worried about this task. Then he gives the biggest distracting compliment and says, "If you do this right, I bet you're going to win," so he's super invested in Harry doing well.

JC: I wonder why...

Lorrie: Then they get their answer back from Sirius --

JC: Very quickly.

Lorrie: Who is emphatic and says Harry should not be going anywhere at night and that Harry should practice Stunning and disarming -- which turns out to be extremely good advice -- and he should practice a few hexes in preparation for the third task, since "your name didn't get into the Goblet of Fire by accident." Meanwhile, Harry is completely puzzled by this mystery. "No one has tried to attack [him] all year." He doesn't seem to be their target, and he has good reason to wonder about that because the previous year, Sirius was the one who was attacking. He was attacking Ron and everyone assumed that Harry was the target; Harry wasn't and neither was Ron, actually. Yeah, he has reason to be suspicious, but yeah, practice your stuff.

JC: It feels like one of the first times that Sirius has really scolded Harry like a parent would...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And Harry reacts to it. He's not *petulant teenager* about it, but he's annoyed. He's like, *scoffs*.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He reacts like you would expect someone his age to react, but in the way of, "I deserve that."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He gets it. He takes it seriously.

Lorrie: Yeah. So they go off to practice Stunning spells. This is one of those bits of writing from this author that I really love just as writing, when she gets really understated with her humor. She writes: "The trouble was that practicing [the Stunning spell] involved certain sacrifices on Ron and Hermione's part."

JC: Yeah. You're going to practice Stunning spells? Well, this is what it's like to be Harry Potter's friends. Come on up!

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And when Ron suggests that Hermione stop criticizing him and take a turn, she very hastily says, "Okay, no, no, no. Never mind."

JC: Yeah. I get the sense that she's enjoying watching Harry Stun Ron over and over, and when he does it and he lands on the hard floor, she's like, "You're not aiming for the pillows." He's like, "What?!"

Lorrie: Then we get the little reminder when Hermione says, "We don't have to worry about disarming, because he's been able to do that for ages." Yes, we have here the signature spell becoming engraved in his repertoire. God, then we ascend into Trelawney's stuffy, perfumed, overheated classroom with the dim lights.

JC: Oh, my God. It's a wonder anyone stays awake in this class, to be honest.

Lorrie: Oh, my God.

JC: And then there's that little interesting detail where he manages to open a window and get a breeze in.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And then it says that a breeze is flying across his face and he suddenly felt really comfortable, and he kind of reminds me of a hot summer day when you find a place to sit down and there's just a little bit of a breeze, and it's such a relief.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: You're like, 'Oh, I could just take a nap right here.' Yeah, just something about that moment made me go, 'Oh.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: It's lovely. Unfortunately for Harry, this lulls him straight into a vision similar to the one he has at the beginning of the book where it doesn't seem to be a scar connection vision. He is riding on the back of the eagle owl that he has seen earlier, presumably. He's not seeing from the point of view of anyone in particular. It's not like somebody is riding on the back of that eagle owl and Harry is in their head. That's just his vantage point. Apparently the eagle owl is going to Riddle Manor -- that seems to be where the owl is going -- and then Harry's perspective leaves the owl's back. He can see the owl, too, as well as the back of the chair with that thing in it, that thing that Harry has never seen head-on: that small, baby-shaped, scary thing. So yeah, he's having a vision.

JC: And he also sees Nagini...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I actually had to go back and reread this, because the first time through I thought he was seeing through Nagini's eyes for some reason, but no.

Lorrie: But it's not that.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: He sees Nagini and she's stirring next to Wormtail, who is sobbing on the hearth rug. Wormtail is being told that his life is spared because "your blunder has not ruined everything. He is dead." Okay, what?

JC: Mmm...

Lorrie: And then the cold voice who's saying this says to Nagini, "Sorry, you're not going to get to eat Wormtail, but I promise that I'm still going to feed you Harry Potter."

JC: Yeah. Great!

Lorrie: Okay. As Harry is enjoying this vision, this mystery person with a cold voice casts the Cruciatus curse and Harry's scar fills with that pain and he screams in

Trelawney's classroom, bringing everything to a screeching halt. Trelawney, that voyeuristic parasite, has hardly ever been so excited and she's craving details, and he's so mean, he won't give her any.

JC: It's so interesting that she immediately knows what has happened.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: She looks at him and she's like, "You had a vision. I recognize them, I know what they look like. You're clutching your scar. You've got to tell us all the details right now," which of course he's not going to do.

Lorrie: Oh, God. Such a parasite. Ugh. Yeah, she's not very cunning. In contrast to Mad-Eye Moody, who knew exactly how to play these kids, she is such an amateur. Harry just brushes her off and denies the poor woman, and he finally knows to go to Dumbledore. 'Okay, okay, scar pain. I'm going, I'm going.'

JC: Oh, it was such a relief, too. I had forgotten that that happens here, and after all these times that he's like, 'Well, should I tell Dumbledore? Well, no, I don't want to bother him with this,' or 'I'm not sure' or 'I'll get somebody in trouble' or whatever, this time he's like, 'Okay, no, I'm going to go talk to Dumbledore.' It's like, 'Oh, thank God. Finally.'

Lorrie: But also, it made me realize it helps that Dumbledore has been more accessible to Harry lately. The previous day, when Snape was just being obstructionist and trying not to let Harry past -- and then Dumbledore just opens up the door and presents himself to Harry, listens to what Harry has to say, and leaves right away with him and treats what he's showing him as extremely important -- that is much more approachable than being a little kid on summer break saying, "Dear Mr. Dumbledore..."

JC: "I had a funny dream. I thought you should know." Yeah.

Lorrie: Right. "You said..." Yeah, because of Dumbledore's reaction, Harry knows that he doesn't have to be afraid that what's bothering him is nothing. It's obviously something.

JC: First of all, Harry's like, 'I'm going to go tell Dumbledore,' and the first thought I had was, 'Oh, God, I hope Snape doesn't try to interfere again,' because my next thought was 'Oh, no,' but he doesn't. He gets to the door and then he's trying to guess the password, and it's funny that he just starts trying every sweet name he can think of until he hits the right one, which I'm like, 'That password is highly guessable. It's not a secure passphrase by any stretch.' But on the other hand, it almost then feels like Dumbledore did that on purpose so that if someone really needs to get in, they can figure out the pattern.

Lorrie: Yes, and the pattern is that he's a lot less dignified than people think. From the Dumbledore point of view, you can imagine what kind of picture he's getting and why he would be super glad to hear from Harry right away and need to hear what Harry has to tell him. When Snape did recently visit his office, I imagine it was to tell Dumbledore about his own increasing scar pain because as Karkaroff was saying, their Dark Marks have been intensifying. Snape wasn't about to discuss it with Karkaroff with or without the whole class watching, but he is going straight to Dumbledore. That, plus Crouch's disappearance and the attack on Krum, yeah, Dumbledore is getting a pretty clear picture. He's going to want to hear whatever Harry has to say.

JC: The fact that Harry gets up there and Fudge is there...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: First he heard Fudge and then Moody chimes in, and Fudge is so irritatingly himself in this scene...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Desperately looking for an easy scapegoat for this. Who can we pin this on? Who would make sense? Oh, I bet it's one of these half-giants, blah, blah, blah. He's been reading the papers, too, and it's just... Ugh! I'm glad, on the one hand, that Harry gets this, right? But it's, again, this reminder that people who are in charge of the government are useless in this story. They're really useless. You can't trust them.

Lorrie: Well, Fudge is completely incompetent. On the other hand, it could have -- and it was supposed to be -- Barty Crouch Sr., who, as we know, is a genius and very competent, but can we trust him? Eh. Dumbledore is trying to push the real conspiracy theory at Fudge, which Fudge will refuse. Fudge will absolutely not entertain the possibility that there's some connection with Bertha Jorkins. Then there's that, ooh, deliciously thrilling moment where Moody sees Harry outside the door. Oh, my! You can't get away from the all-seeing eye.

JC: It's creepy.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And we saw it earlier in the chapter, too, when he followed these suspicious-looking first-year students.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: His eye rolled back to the back of his head to watch them go down the hall and round the corner... That idea of having eyes at the back of your head.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's an answer to how Snape always shows up where you don't want him. Moody always sees whether or not you want him to, and unlike Karkaroff, he knows not to spill secrets where kids can eavesdrop because that's when he says, "No, Potter's standing outside. We're going to stop talking. Now."

JC: Yeah. There's kind of a theme in these books -- and it pops up in other Sci-Fi and fantasy series, too -- that having a replacement body part gives you new powers that you didn't have before. It's not a disability. It's suddenly like, "Yeah, you lost an eyeball, but the replacement you're going to get is going to give you all these powers." I'm thinking about... In Star Wars, many arms are lost -- when one is disarmed, it happens literally -- but the new mechanical hands have new powers that the other ones didn't have. I think that when we see, at the end of this book...

Lorrie: Yes, we do!

JC: With the silver hand, there's lots of... I'm trying to think if there's other moments that I've seen in these books like that, but instead of it becoming like a disability, it becomes an opportunity to have a new kind of advantage.

Lorrie: So yeah, Moody brings the chapter to an end because Moody's a grown up and doesn't think Harry should overhear everything. The next chapter is called The Pensieve.

JC: Ooh, all right. I think I remember... Well, I think I remember what happens in this chapter, but I'm going to find out.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's a big deal.

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.