

Transcript

Episode 4.31

Book 4, Chapter 31: The Third Task

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 Thirty-One: The Third Task.

Lorrie: The Third Task. The third and last task of the Triwizard Tournament is finally here. One way or another, for better or for worse, Harry will be free of this involuntary commitment after tonight. It's been a long year.

JC: Indeed.

Lorrie: How did you feel coming into this chapter?

JC: It's wild to me that this is happening at the end of June, because I live in a place where school ends at the end of May. The end of June is almost the middle of our summer break, so I'm like, 'He's still in school at the end of June?'

Lorrie: Right.

JC: But it's been a long year, right? We started this book back in July. Not us physically, but the book started back in... We've had almost an entire year...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And we've seen him grow up a lot.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: One of the things that stands out to me is -- we see it a lot in this chapter -- that when he's talking to Ron and Hermione, he has learned how important it is to share

what he knows with the people he trusts and talk it through with them, and that is the thing that I don't think he was good at doing at the beginning of the year. He was still holding a lot of things close to the chest, right?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But now he's like, 'Okay, I've got this information. Help me process it,' and he knows who to process it with and he trusts that they'll help him.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: So I love that part of it, and the other thing that I love is seeing how his confidence has grown this year. He's learned a heck of a lot. If you think about when he goes into the third task, he's confident. He's ready.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: He doesn't spend the two weeks before... He's spending them practicing some hexes and things he thinks he's going to need, but compare it to the way he went into the first task when he was a shaking mess.

Lorrie: Paralyzed, yeah.

JC: And not sure he was going to be able to pull off the one spell that he had practiced and practiced. The difference there... The other thing is that he now knows how to research this stuff. The second task, they were throwing books against the wall, like, "What's going on?"

Lorrie: Right.

JC: This time, they had a good research strategy, and also his friends have learned how to support him, too.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It feels like the journey that they're on this year and what they've learned about how to work together -- how to support Harry, how to research magic, how to prepare for difficult things -- all of that is stuff that they'd need for the future.

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah.

JC: When they're in the seventh book -- when they're on the big camping trip -- this is preparing them for that...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And expecting the unexpected.

Lorrie: Ugh, uh-huh.

JC: Yeah. I love the fact that when Harry walks into the maze, he feels confident...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And he knows that he can do this. He's not worried about that part of it, and you get this sense that (at least, I got the sense) if all the other fuckery hadn't been going on -- if it was literally just a contest of who can get to the cup first -- I don't know if he would have won, but he would have held his own against three other older wizards who have a lot more experience than him.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And that says a lot about him as a wizard.

Lorrie: Yeah, it does. And yeah, I was so struck too, by the way that he automatically went to Ron and Hermione. They know how to do this; now they have to process it together. The way that last chapter Harry was initiated into a new, older way of being... He's not a young teen anymore, but Dumbledore has actually let him in on stuff. We saw Ron starting that with Sirius in the cave, too, when Sirius said, "Well, you guys aren't old enough to understand," and Ron said, "Why don't you try us?" This is that. Again, when Harry comes and tells Ron and Hermione everything that he's just been shown, they're all three being initiated together...

JC: Ooh, yeah.

Lorrie: And taking it seriously. You see Ron totally understanding how important this is, and I love, "Hermione had not spoken for ten minutes. She was sitting with her forehead in her hands, staring at her knees." Okay, for Hermione's brain, ten minutes is an eternity.

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: If you can imagine being with Hermione talking about something important, and then ten minutes on the clock go by and she's just sitting in one position staring, what is going on in her head? I love that so much. The connections that have just been put into place, you can feel them being made in her brain right now. One of those things that I remember realizing was in those ten minutes, she comes to understand Snape.

JC: Oh! Right at the beginning of the chapter, there's this beautiful moment where it says in the book, "Ron stared into the common room fire. Harry thought he saw Ron shiver slightly, even though the evening was warm."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "'And he trusts Snape?' Ron said, 'He really trusts Snape, even though he knows he was a Death Eater?' 'Yes,' said Harry," and then we go into the fact that Hermione had

not spoken for ten minutes. That moment... They went, in my head, from being kids to proto adults because that is a very mature moment, especially for Ron, who's used to going, "That greasy-haired git!" or whatever he likes to say. That was a moment from Ron of being like, "Okay, you're telling me that this is what Dumbledore said," and Harry's like, "Yeah," and you can tell that there's something going on there in their heads. They're thinking about Snape differently, they're thinking about Dumbledore differently, they're seeing the world differently... Oh, man, there's a lot happening there.

Lorrie: Yeah. They're taking on the responsibility of awareness. That was huge, whatever happened.

JC: The truth is uncomfortable.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This is one of the things that you learn as you go into adulthood. You hit points where you realize there's so many things that are just uncomfortably true.

Lorrie: That's huge. Yeah.

JC: And you just have to come to understand why that is, you have to come to accept things... Wow, they're there! They're on the cusp of that, and that's amazing.

Lorrie: I like that this task -- the third task, and also this chapter in general -- is about issues of community, about making alliances... Basically about the village that is there to raise Harry because he doesn't have parents. If I'm thinking about the first task as the protective force that Voldemort awakened in Lily Potter (when you threaten someone's baby) and then the second task as what Lily Potter was feeling, then this one is, to me, how to figure out your response in the aftermath of attacks like that. Okay, this damage has been done. Everyone who's dealing with it... 'Are we competing against each other? Is there some reason not to team up?' Then with various different stories that we hear in this chapter, Harry especially is thinking about Neville. He's starting to think, 'How many different ways are there to need community?' It's not just 'there are normal children, and then there's Harry Potter.' As he's getting older, he's more aware of different ways that it's not quite so simple. Another thing that happens as kids get older: when you're really little and you have this terrible traumatic origin story like Harry does, then you're very different from the other kids. As you get older, things happen to people, things that people didn't understand about you; when they have losses or traumas, then the gap starts to get smaller and eventually other people mature enough to understand you better. So yeah, this awareness that Harry has thinking about Neville... He's growing (regarding Neville), and he also is understanding there are other people who have this relationship to being normal the same as Harry.

JC: Absolutely. I wrote some notes about that, too, because when he was thinking about Neville's parents, he was thinking about that also in the context of, 'There are lots of people out there who have been through horrible things, and I didn't know.' It sounds kind of silly to say it this way, but this awareness of 'other people have lives'... You're your own main character, but other people have lives and you don't know what they've gone through; they don't have to tell you, but you still need to treat them as human beings. You shouldn't make assumptions about other people's lives.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: So there's that thing, but the other thing that it made me think about was that Harry came to understand this because he was given a glimpse of the past (or several glimpses of the past) that he's still processing. What it made me think about is, 'This is why it's so important for us to understand our history, and this is why there are people who want to restrict children's access to that history.'

Lorrie: Right.

JC: They haven't learned about any of this stuff in school, right? No one's told them why all these people are suspicious or what happened during these Death Eater trials, but Harry (having seen some of this through Dumbledore's memory) has a different perspective on the past now, and that's going to impact the way that he interacts in the present and in the future.

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: The way that he thinks about the future, thinks about some of these adults around him who have this scary history, what's possible. When you think about current educational movements to restrict or to make sure that only one version of history is taught in schools, it just highlights why it's so important that everyone has access to things that have happened in the past, and that we should not restrict people's access to that.

Lorrie: Right. If you have restricted their knowledge of this, then when you want to go in and exploit the situation, they can't be a problem for you. But if you are Cornelius Fudge saying, "Oh, it was probably Madame Maxine," and then Harry Potter comes and looks at you and calls you out on your bullshit, well, now Harry's a problem.

JC: Yeah. This is really going to become a big theme in the next book, if I recall correctly.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: We've got a few more chapters before we get there.

Lorrie: Well, we see Hermione starting to realize it already. Hermione, who (as we've seen at the beginning of this book) was very naive about house-elves and making a lot of judgments; now she's seeing a lot more subtlety. They had, of course, judged Madame Maxime for denying that she had giant blood, but now Hermione realizes and says, "I'd probably say I had big bones if I knew that's what I'd get for telling the truth." Hermione is now starting to understand the politics of when people might need to be closeted. We do know also, at the end of *Deathly Hallows*, she becomes very out and reclaims 'mudblood' at a time when she doesn't have anything to lose by that, but that's a different situation. This is a much more sophisticated Hermione than the one who rushed into starting the House-Elf Liberation Front.

JC: I think the other thing that I find interesting in this section -- before we get into the task, speaking of Hermione -- is that it's casually dropped that Ron and Hermione are still taking their final exams.

Lorrie: Yes!

JC: And we've had no mention of that. In the early books, Hermione would be giving everybody a schedule and freaking out.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And now she knows she's ready. It's not that she's not... Ron is probably not studying for his exams. Hermione knows that she's ready. She knows that she's more than ready. She understands that, and she's able to divide her time and split this other time helping support Harry. That's a level of maturity that is beautiful to see. If you're a student like Hermione, you learn how you best learn and how you can divide up your time, and how you can focus your energy on different things at the same time and what's enough. She knows she's ready for these exams and that she has time, and she hasn't been pushing Ron. Maybe she's been pushing Ron off-screen -- we haven't seen her and Ron alone, obviously -- but she's able to split her focus in a way that's incredibly mature.

Lorrie: Well, it's much easier for her this year, because first of all, she's given up the Time Turner.

JC: True. She's only taking the normal number of classes.

Lorrie: Yeah. She quit Divination. She has overcome the temptation to just try to load herself up to do everything.

JC: Yes.

Lorrie: After that Time-Turner year, that's a lesson that she will never forget. But also last year, she was spending all her hours trying to defend Buckbeak, so the amount of

extracurricular time she's spending... She always has that. The second year, before she was petrified, she was researching the Basilisk. So yeah, she's actually got a lighter load.

JC: Yeah. Yeah. Again, it's not that she's doing less; it's that she seems to be managing it better.

Lorrie: Or she knows the size of the load that she can take on.

JC: Yeah. It's also interesting... Possibly also, it's because we're so into Harry's perspective here that Harry just doesn't notice what she's doing. In the past, it was like, 'Hermione was starting to go a little crazy around all this,' and he's so focused on his own thing now that he's not even seeing it, so it could just be a perspective thing, too. But it really does seem like she's learning how to really manage... how to apply herself in a lot of different ways with a lot of control, I guess.

Lorrie: Yeah. We also know... Recently, they've all had such terrible days (Hermione with the harassment that she's been getting because of Rita Skeeter), so she's really focused right now.

JC: That's the word I'm thinking of, 'focus'. They all seem super focused, yes...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: In a way that speaks of maturity.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: They're in a very stressful situation and they're very focused on it, and that's different from the way they were feeling earlier in the year, but also different from the way they've felt in past years when they were in stressful situations.

Lorrie: Yeah, and earlier this year, Harry especially was just blanking out because it was too much for him. He wasn't ready. Can we talk about him remembering the bloodthirsty crowd that was calling for Barty Crouch Jr.'s blood? He was remembering how savage they all looked, wanting to sentence this kid, and "he understood how they had felt," which I totally do, too...

JC: Right.

Lorrie: And then there's this awful jolt... "Then he remembered the milk-white face of the screaming boy and realized with a jolt that he had died a year later..." That's the kind of thing this series pulls so well, is that awful moment of empathy or realization when you would like to think more simplistically, and suddenly something occurs in your mind and you can't. Obviously, whoever committed these crimes against Neville's parents really were evil, and yet... Oof.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: This screaming boy... Then Harry finishes the thought with, "It all came back to Voldemort... He was the one who had torn these families apart, who had ruined all these lives..." which is true, although we are setting up for him to then start to have insight into how that happened, too. This passage, though -- when Harry identifies Voldemort's crime as tearing families apart and ruining lives -- is something that I cite when people argue that Voldemort is focused on sex and sexuality and binding Bellatrix to him through sexual favors, and I always think, 'I don't think that's his focus.'

JC: I'm sure that happens in fanfic, but is there textual evidence for any of that?

Lorrie: I think, textually, there's no evidence for it or against.

JC: Okay. When I think Voldemort, I don't think any... Sexual magnetism is not the word that comes to mind.

Lorrie: Magnetism of any sort, though, he can, but I think his focus is on how he feels against people who have intact families; he is breaking apart those bonds to create people who feel more like how he does so that he's not quite so alone -- so he doesn't have to be torn apart by this death-like jealousy -- which it's quite understandable that he feels it. In 2018 -- you were there for this, at a convention -- Trump's policies were very much in the news about taking infants away from their migrant parents at the border and ruining lives on purpose and publicizing this cruelty on purpose. I was giving a talk at a Harry Potter convention, and I referenced that and I said that was what Voldemort is about. I said, "*Harry Potter* the series is about family separation," and I remember you were in the audience there. That was the moment, at the beginning of this presentation, where a young mom holding a baby got up and quietly left. Yeah, yeah, you might not want to listen to this, but it was a major point that you cannot separate being invested in a story like this from being aware of how cruelty works in the real world.

JC: Yeah, that's true. It's interesting that you say that this is one of the things that Voldemort does, because the first thing that popped into my head is that's what he does to the Malfoy family.

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: He does the same thing to them. He ensures that their child is either going to die or kill someone. He wants to ruin that and ruin this child. He pits the parents against each other.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And these are his followers!

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He does this to the people he likes, right? Well, for some value of 'like' that Voldemort is capable of... It's really an interesting thing to think that destroying intact families is one of his M.O.s.

Lorrie: It's hurting people for having love in their lives, which he doesn't have.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Now Harry's preparing, and I love this line, "Sirius was sending daily owls now," and I thought this is one of the most supported periods of Harry's life. He has somebody who loves him, and Sirius, like Hermione, seemed to want to concentrate on getting Harry through the last task before they concerned themselves with anything else. There's that focus again, which is a tactic that I've been gearing up for for difficult political times. It's not that you forget the bigger picture; it's not being in denial. It's being super present in the moment so that you can do things, and it is about priority. It's about preventing yourself from being overwhelmed.

JC: Right, yes. That's something that the first Trump Administration... There was a point that, I think, many of us were feeling overwhelmed with the doomscrolling nature of it that you would wake up in the morning and reach for your phone. If you did this, if you woke up in the morning and reached for your phone before you even got out of bed and just went to Twitter and started scrolling, you would get out of bed with a stomach ache because of all of the awful things that had happened overnight. The things that had been tweeted, the things that had been said... I know that I hit a point. It took a long time to get there, but a lot of other folks, too, get to a point where you think, 'Okay, I can't subject myself to that anymore,' so then you have to go through this period of, 'But if I'm not paying attention, what am I missing? Am I not keeping up? Am I bad? Am I a bad person?'

Lorrie: 'Am I abandoning people?'

JC: 'Am I abandoning people?' That's it exactly.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And I know that with my own kiddo, we've talked about this a lot when my kiddo feels overwhelmed with bad things happening in the news and feels just completely paralyzed with it. I can't do anything about it, but I feel like I should. What is my worth as a human being if I'm just sitting here? And then the idea of, 'I can't not look at it. The least I can do is look at it,' right? That idea of, 'Okay, put on your own mask first.' You can't fix it all...

Lorrie: No.

JC: So you have to ground yourself in this moment and think, 'What am I doing that is making the world a better place?' We talk about that. I love the metaphor of the problems of the world being a tapestry that you're trying to unravel, and you can only pull on one thread at a time. You just pick a thread that you can pull and you pull it, and you just have to hope that lots of other people are also pulling a thread somewhere, even if you can't see them.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: You just have to do it and you have to be present in the moment. Like you said, you have to be able to be mindful of who you are and where you are and what you are capable of and when you need to break, and you have to take care of yourself, even when the world is burning down around you.

Lorrie: Literally. Yeah.

JC: Yeah. Oh, my God. Yeah. As we record this, Los Angeles is on fire. Yeah.

Lorrie: But yeah, you have to build up evidence in your own mind of how much better it is when you and your colleagues can automatically take turns. No, ahead of time, nobody can be on all the time; that's obviously the path to burnout. Knowing that you can get to know your neighbors or your allies and have bonds of affection so that you can have some reason to know and expect that you'll be there for each other, because you're going to have to sometimes just cast out some risk and just jump...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Will somebody be there for you? Maybe, but you don't have time to think about that. You have to do it.

JC: Yeah, yeah. I guess that, coming back around to this chapter, what I see here is that Harry has built that or that has been built around him. Maybe it's not all his doing, but he has that now. He has Sirius.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And Dumbledore and Sirius have been in communication. They're also talking about what to do to support Harry...

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: And his friends are one hundred percent there for him and they're working alongside him. He's got this community that's come to support him.

Lorrie: And McGonagall has given them rooms to practice in, even.

JC: That's right. McGonagall is like, "Okay, here, take this room. Go and practice there." He's got Hagrid, he's got so many people who are on this side. Later in this chapter, Mrs. Weasley comes with Bill to be his support. Even Cedric is on Harry's side, so he really has a community. I love the idea that of the Triwizard Tournament, on the surface, there's one champion and they manifest-destiny their way through this thing, and that's not what it's about at all. Every single one of them has a ton of support, a ton of help.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Not unlike an Olympic athlete who wins a gold medal. Yes, they worked really hard and yes, they earned that, but there was a whole team of people supporting them and making it possible for them to do that, and that's what Harry has here. He's not doing it alone, and he's not supposed to.

Lorrie: Yeah. And the visiting teams bring a champion and then they bring all of these colleagues for the champion.

JC: They didn't just bring the one kid, right. Exactly.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. Also to see Ron and Hermione being lifted up at the same time is cool. There's this beautiful moment when Ron uses this impediment jinx on a wasp.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This is the same kid that, what, two books ago had a broken wand and couldn't cast a spell to save his life.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And suddenly it's like, 'Oh, look, he's confident.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: 'Look at him.' Yeah, and it's because he's been working with Harry and Hermione. It's amazing.

Lorrie: And they've been doing the Lupin School of Education, where they have practice. Hermione says, "Don't worry, we're going to get good grades on Defense because we are learning this practical method."

JC: "Because we're learning this stuff."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Oh, that reminds me of another thing that I love about this book. Through the Triwizard Tournament, we see Harry working really hard to master these spells and to

be able to go out in front of the school and look competent. From the outside, it probably looks like, "Oh, it's just Harry Potter. Of course he can."

Lorrie: Oh, my God, yeah. We see what goes into it.

JC: But you see what goes into it, and what I really like about that is it's a great example for, let's say, adolescent readers of how you get good at something.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yes, people have talents that make some things easier for them than others, but that doesn't mean they can just do it. I think that a lot of the way that social media is structured and the way that our society is structured -- and who we celebrate and who we don't -- clouds that idea that you have to work really, really hard to get there. Think about what it takes to be a K-pop Idol.

Lorrie: Oh, God...

JC: The amount of not-life those people have. It's twenty hours a day, they barely sleep, it's constant... That's what it takes to be that. On the one hand, it's like, 'Okay, who would you be if you were in Hogwarts? Would you be Harry, Ron, or Hermione?' Me, I would have been a kid in Hufflepuff who's just watching this all from the side.

Lorrie: Oh, boy...

JC: I wouldn't have been in the middle of all this, but that idea that that's what it takes and to understand that... When you see someone being successful, yeah, maybe they had a lot of shortcuts and things, but they probably had a lot of support. They had people who put a lot of energy and resources into them and then they had to be able to take that and turn it into something, and they probably worked really hard behind the scenes to make that happen. It's just good to know that and to know that's what it takes, and that you can do it, too.

Lorrie: Such a huge part of what Harry had to learn was which shortcuts are considered legal...

JC: True.

Lorrie: And which shortcuts have they not even bothered to tell you about because they assume you have the cultural knowledge to know.

JC: That is a really good point. Yes.

Lorrie: Harry was at a disadvantage. He assumed that he had to do everything on his own, and then more experienced people were telling him, "Oh, no, no, you're not supposed to do that by yourself." Well, how was he supposed to know?

JC: How was he supposed to know? Oh, my God.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I could go to a whole tangent here about college applications processes...

Lorrie: First gen, yeah.

JC: And being first gen versus --

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: You and I, we both have a kid that's the same age. You already have one in college, but we both have high school juniors who are in the process or starting to think about it. We also both... You weren't a first-gen college student, but you were probably first gen... Your dad went to university in the US, right?

Lorrie: My parents came to the U.S. because my dad had gotten accepted to an American graduate program.

JC: Oh, that's right. Yeah. Okay. There's still this cultural gap of 'what does it take to get into it in a college in the U.S., and what do you have to do?'

Lorrie: Yeah. There's different cultures, but I definitely came from education.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Meanwhile, Harry has no parents.

JC: Yeah. He has no parents to advise him, so this whole idea of 'you don't know what you don't know' really comes out here. As you said before, he's also too young to be here. He's not even supposed to be in this competition, so he's very conscious of it looking like he's cheating...

Lorrie: Yes! Poor thing...

JC: Or that he's gotten any favors. He doesn't want that.

Lorrie: No!

JC: It takes him a while to accept the fact that this is just how this thing works. It's okay.

Lorrie: Oh, boy...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. I love that he might have felt like it was a secret that Sirius was here to help him and be his support, but now Dumbledore has cleared it with him. "No, no, no, it's my idea." Okay. He's allowed to have this support.

JC: That's got to help him not worry about Sirius as much, right?

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Oh, I love the note that Sirius sends him...

JC: With the paw print?

Lorrie: That's a paw print on parchment. There was a while when I thought, 'Why isn't that a standard Harry Potter fandom greeting card when you want to wish somebody good luck?'

JC: A paw print, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's so loving.

JC: That's sweet, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Thinking about how Sirius is so supportive of Harry in this and so focused, sending him an owl every day and giving him lots of advice and saying, "Leave this part to me." He's so parental...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And it makes me understand a little bit more about how the fandom viewed him prior to Book Five coming out. There was this three-year gap between four and five, and there were a lot of people who were unhappy about the way he was characterized in Book Five; then at the end of the five, he's gone anyway.

Lorrie: Oh, dear.

JC: He seems so much more like a loose cannon in Book Five.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: He was kind of reckless and angry and petulant, like he had de-matured somehow...

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah.

JC: And looking at who he is here, he's so focused on supporting Harry, and I can understand now a lot more about how the fandom was seeing him as a character then.

Lorrie: Yeah. I read four and five with no gap, and the experience of reading four and then waiting and feeling this gratitude toward this character Sirius who, despite being poor and living in a cave, is doing what he wants to be doing in life... Okay, yeah. I'm understanding it.

JC: I'm sure there were lots of fanfics where Lupin joined him in that cave. I'm just saying. I don't remember! I don't think I've ever seen any, but I'm sure they must have existed. They've been probably lost to the fanfiction.net times. I don't know.

Lorrie: Do we want to acknowledge the horrible article by Rita Skeeter?

JC: Okay, we also should probably mention them seeing Malfoy and Crabbe and Goyle.

Lorrie: Oh, right. Yeah, giggling.

JC: Yeah, we get this lovely hint of Malfoy, Crabbe and Goyle talking to Rita Skeeter.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: They're smirking, and the whole thing of, "It looks like he's using a walkie-talkie! He's talking into his hand."

Lorrie: Right.

JC: It's such a big clue.

Lorrie: It's so good.

JC: When you -- yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: When you know where it's coming from, and then later Hermione figures it out, but it's, "What are they doing? Oh, whatever," which tells you, oh, this is a big clue. Pay attention to this. The fact they dismiss it so quickly...

Lorrie: Or "I'm sure they're doing something, but we don't have time to worry about that right now." How important are they ever?

JC: Yeah, yeah. They think they're the main characters, but they're really not. Ah, but then it turns out that they were feeding Rita Skeeter information.

Lorrie: I love how Ron and Hermione both immediately try to...

JC: "No, no, don't look at that."

Lorrie: Trying to pretend nothing's happening.

JC: Nothing's happening, nothing to see here. Also, it came out on the day of the task. Wow! That's pretty awful.

Lorrie: No... But see, having spent some time as a journalist, that's when it would come out. That's when you're supposed to.

JC: Okay. Yeah.

Lorrie: When else are you supposed to do an article on this? It's funny that she gets one thing right in the article, where she gets an expert to say "Potter's brain may have been affected by the attack" on him as an infant. Well, yeah...

JC: Yeah. That is how trauma works.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Wow.

Lorrie: Getting a quote from somebody saying that this might be Potter with "a plea for attention" reminded me of some very unpleasant memories. There are times when people get harassment -- racial harassment or sexual orientation harassment -- and one of the things that's always considered is maybe they're making it up. Maybe they're doing it to themselves for attention. That just...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Is an added layer of irritation.

JC: Yeah. Yeah, that's true. For me, people putting this on children of, "They're acting this way because they just want attention," is such a way to brush aside kids' real needs and wants.

Lorrie: Needing attention!

JC: Yeah. Right.

Lorrie: Because when you want attention, it's because something needs attention.

JC: Yeah, something needs attention. Okay...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's just like, "Oh, they just want attention." I hate that. That's one of my big pet peeves in parenting and in teaching and in larger society. It's like, "Hmm..."

Lorrie: Yeah. "Oh, look, a call for attention. What should we do?" "Ignore it." "Um, no. That's not how communication is supposed to work."

JC: Right. Exactly. The other thing that's interesting about the Rita Skeeter article is that it's written the way that Rita Skeeter writes, which is all this exaggerated... "Let's make it sound as awful as possible." I like the fact that Harry reads it and just goes, "Okay, well, fine."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "Yes, we've read it, we all know it's bullshit," sets it aside. It's like Rita Skeeter can't get to him anymore. He's just like, "Mmm." Hermione got there first...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And it's so interesting to me that later, we see adults struggling with this, and the kids are already like...

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: The kids are just like, "You can't believe anything she says, so just don't even give it any attention," and the adults can't let it go.

Lorrie: A bit of media literacy, please.

JC: Yes! The kids are showing how it's done.

Lorrie: I love that we get all these broken sentences from Hermione as she's just vocalizing, figuring out, "I think we've got her," when she figures out what Rita Skeeter has been doing. It's a good coda to the Pensieve chapter for me. Okay, we see what happens when you take your memories and you swirl them around and the connections are getting made. Harry was thinking about Hermione that she looked like she could do with the Pensieve. No, she's doing fine. She's doing fine without one and we just see these wisps of thoughts surfacing. Of course, they sound like nonsense to Ron and Harry, who know better than to try to figure anything out right now, but she rushes off to the library, and I thought, "What a good mystery. That was handled really well."

JC: It's also funny to me how many times the word 'bug' has appeared, or insects have appeared across this book. There's just been a lot of them.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Even down to Ron stopping the wasp earlier in this chapter...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Or the number of times that people said, "Oh, is anything bugged around here?" It's really nicely done.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: We haven't even found that out yet. We haven't gotten there yet, but we'll get there.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But I do love that when you see Hermione figuring it out, it is a really cool moment, especially...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: The first-time read, maybe you haven't figured it out yet, but on subsequent reads it is very, 'Ah, there, she's connected the dots. She's connected them.'

Lorrie: Yeah. Go Hermione! Yeah, it's a reward for how hundreds and hundreds of pages in this book have been devoted to setting up all of these various mysteries, and now we're being allowed to see them coalesce. Do you want to talk about Harry being told to meet his family in the chamber?

JC: Oh, my gosh, yeah. He's sitting there thinking, 'The Dursleys didn't come. There's no way in hell!'

Lorrie: This setup where they told him, "All right, everyone's got their families coming," he's sitting there like, 'What is this fuckery? How am I going to get out of it this time? Once again, I'm not being considered.' This felt so familiar to me -- and I imagine in teaching this must feel familiar to you, too -- how there's such a gulf. When you assume that all kids come from a certain kind of intact family, the stark division this sets up between what's normal and what's considered freakish... If it's like, "Let's make a card for Mother's Day" or something... If you are being raised by a single parent who's not a mom, if you're an orphan or you're in foster care, or you have two moms or two dads, automatically this puts these children in this position where then they have to say, "Um, excuse me, what am I supposed to be doing?" I have seen first-grade teachers be annoyed at the kids for making trouble in the assignment -- "Well, just do it this way!" -- and then the kid has to have a loss of innocence about whether or not they have the power to educate the teacher on what they've just done to exclude a student. Yeah. I'm remembering a classmate of my daughter's who had a two moms situation around Father's Day; I ended up encouraging the two moms in this situation when they were faced with having to go deal with this and telling them, "She has to know, this teacher. She has to be told, because this situation is going to come up again." Pretending that it was the kid's fault for having two moms and no dad is not going to help her in the future when this happens again and again and again.

JC: Yeah. One of the things... Well, okay, since I'm in higher education and I do teacher education, we're super really conscious of things like that and we talk to our pre-service teachers about it. The term that is -- the one that we use now is 'caretakers'.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: You don't say 'parents', you don't say 'guardians'. You say 'caretakers'. Who are your -- we send the letter out to caretakers. You talk to kids about your caretakers and this and that, and it's exactly the kind of thing... We do it for the exact reason that you're saying because we just don't know what situations kids live in, and we don't want to put the children in a situation where they have to be the ones to tell us, "No, I'm different."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And "That's not my circumstance," but this is exactly the thing that we're accused of being woke about.

Lorrie: Yes!

JC: Let's face it: it is being woke, because you're awakened to the fact that not everyone's lives are like this, but this is what you would get... Someone would make a post on whatever social media with a screen cap of the teacher's letter to caretakers.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "They're trying to remove parents from the da-da-da-da!" You get this right-wing backlash to it.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And this is a thing that teachers have to deal with all the time, so it's interesting. Of course, most teachers out there are trying their best and most of them will, when they realize they inadvertently caused harm, take steps to fix it, but they have to be made aware of that.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This is like when I was very young and very naive. I was probably 19 years old and was in college, and I was working in an elementary school in an after-school program. I remember that the holiday season was approaching, so we were talking about what kind of crafts we were going to do in the after school program, and the principal of the school came and talked to us and just said, "It needs to be very generic winter stuff. You can't do anything that's Christmasy." I'm not Christian, so I wasn't like, "It has to be Christmas!" It wasn't like that at all. For me, Christmas was a generic winter holiday.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: And I was like, "Oh, okay. Not even this, not even that?" Then the principal had to tell me, "This is a Jewish neighborhood. The vast majority of kids at this school don't celebrate Christmas at all," and I was like, 'Oh.' It hadn't even occurred to me...

Lorrie: Right, right.

JC: Someone just had to tell me, "No, most of the kids here are Jewish. Don't do anything Christmasy." Oh. Boom, right? My own privilege of, I don't know, being Christian passing or whatever just hadn't even occurred to me, 'Oh, the population here is a minority religion, and even the generic version of the majority of religion is not good.' I think that for a lot of teachers just being made aware that this is an issue is important, but this is a hard time. It is freakishly enough -- in the year 2025 -- incredibly difficult to try to be inclusive and empathetic, because there are a lot of people out there who don't want you to be inclusive and empathetic and will mock you, yell at you, and come to school board meetings and threaten you for being inclusive and empathetic. That's the world we live in, and Harry lives in that world, too, let's be honest.

Lorrie: Although they're not any more protected than anyone else from being torn apart from their loved ones. It turns out in this case that Harry, who is quite understandably expecting the bad thing, actually (unbeknownst to him) is living in a world that is prepared to take care of him. He had no reason to assume that this was happening, but they had actually thought about him. When Cedric comes and just looks at Harry, like, "What is wrong with you? Harry, come on, they're waiting for you!" Harry's like, "What, waiting for me?" Harry's part of the village... It's just flawless to me every time I reread this that when I see Mrs. Weasley and Bill looking all happy to see him, that gets me every time because it turns out that they're not just doing it to be nice. They legitimately enjoy this visit.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And then the thing that Harry gets from their visit, that nobody had even considered before, is there are people who he gets to brag to because they are impressed at how well he did for real.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Not like, "Oh, you had help." Not like, "Wow, you're so good for only fourteen," but like, "No, you were a good flyer. Charlie witnessed it."

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Then they're like, "Show me how it is in your day, because it was like this in our day but you're an actual expert," and he gets to show off like the Durmstrang ship and the carriage and they're really into it.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: It's not just a consolation prize; he has people and they're super excited for him.

JC: Yeah. Mrs. Weasley... Little does anyone know that she's going to be his mother-in-law eventually anyway, but Mrs. Weasley is very aware of Harry's situation and kind of

already adopted him, right? She already considers him one of hers, and I love the image of Dumbledore or McGonagall or somebody reaching out to her and saying, "We need someone to be Harry's family." This is like the day on *Survivor* where you've made it this far, your family is here, you're going to get to go have a meal with them.

Lorrie: Oh, God, everybody cries.

JC: And everyone cries, right? It's like that. It's like, "Would you come and be Harry's family?" and I love to see Mrs. Weasley being thrilled...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Absolutely thrilled to be able to play this role for Harry because she knows. I think that she really understands how much Harry needs it and that she gets to play that part. I'm just like, 'Yay!'

Lorrie: Yeah, and her family's been following along with this since the beginning, since she went shopping for those robes.

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: They've known this is coming.

JC: And they knew who to ask. McGonagall knew who would ask to step in for his family here, to be Harry's family.

Lorrie: If they even had to ask.

JC: Well, they had to let -- Well, logistically someone had to be, "Come to the castle at this day and time." But yeah, yeah, they knew who it was.

Lorrie: I can imagine the Weasleys being in on discussions of planning this and saying, "Say, when you have that..." But yeah, I like the thought of Charlie having a meeting with them that Harry wasn't even a part of and giving them the full account.

JC: Yeah, and that the Weasley family has been talking about Harry and being proud and Harry off-page, right? Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "Oh, yeah, we sit around and we talk about the Triwizard Tournament at home." Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. Charlie, the world's coolest older brother, was bragging about him.

JC: Bill is also pretty cool here.

Lorrie: He is.

JC: I love this little moment where Harry looks over and realizes that Fleur is like looking at Bill with interest -- which is something that definitely comes to fruition -- but it's funny that in the midst of all this, Fleur, who is part veela, is the one that's going, "Oh, that one. I want that one."

Lorrie: "Somebody interesting has come."

JC: Yeah, exactly. Also, there's this little moment, too -- which is interesting to me that I think I missed it the first time through -- where they're talking a little bit about, "Oh, back when I was at Hogwarts..." First of all on the tour, we learn that the Whomping Willow came after Molly's time, so that tells us how old Molly is in relation to Sirius and Remus. We hear a little bit about what Molly and Arthur got up to in their Hogwarts days: they were out all night "going for a walk" (I'm making finger quotes here) and came back really late at night, and Arthur was the one who got caught by the caretaker. Molly says, "He still has the marks on him."

Lorrie: Corporal punishment ensued.

JC: Which I thought, 'Maybe Filch was not exaggerating.' Way back in the beginning of the series, when he talked about missing the screaming in the dungeons...

Lorrie: Oh, boy.

JC: I was like, "Wow... okay," but that also helps us place how old Mrs. Weasley is. You'd probably go back and do the math; I'm sure someone has, because we know about how long Filch has been there. But yeah, we get a little bit of their backstory that Arthur and Molly were dating while they were students at Hogwarts. Yeah.

Lorrie: They were a hot item. Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Naughty. Very naughty.

JC: Absolutely. Oh, then we have the moment of... I can't be too mad at Amos Diggory here, because I know what he's about to go through. Okay, the fact that both Amos Diggory and Molly Weasley...

Lorrie: They have fallen for it.

JC: Have fallen for Rita Skeeter's bullshit, and all the kids are like, "No." Cedric's like, 'Dad, will you stop?'

Lorrie: 'Oh, my God, dad.'

JC: 'Please stop. Just shut up. You're embarrassing me in front of Harry Potter.'

Lorrie: 'That's not really what happened, dad.'

JC: Yeah. Amos Diggory... it's so immature. Not that I have not seen adults do this, but it's just like, 'Oh, my God,' but also, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. But I also love how Cedric knows not to push it too far, because it's hopeless.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: He can't help himself, but no one's going to listen to him.

JC: Yeah. It also sets us up for the fact that you know Amos Diggory, one-hundred percent, this kid is his life, right?

Lorrie: Oh, my God, yeah.

JC: And that is going to set us up for what's coming, which is awful.

Lorrie: I never... This is the first moment that I thought of your kid as being your Cedric, because now your kid is seventeen.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: But because your kid is a musician and has competed in music competitions or has done live performances... Yeah, it's a thing of beauty. All of your emotions get caught up in it.

JC: Yeah. He's very much our Cedric Diggory, and I hope that he does not... I hope that he has a better chance.

Lorrie: I expect that he's going to live to be a hundred and fifty.

JC: Let's hope, yeah. At least outlive me. At least outlive me. Yeah. I feel for Amos here, so I couldn't be too angry or too annoyed by him.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It was more like, 'Oh.'

Lorrie: And even though he's been insufferable, it's so obviously loving.

JC: Yeah. Yeah.

Lorrie: And you can't be too mad at him, because what are you going to do? That's how he feels when he looks at this kid.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: Oh... There's something that I didn't notice until this read. Harry asks the Weasleys how Percy's doing, and they say, "Oh, he's not doing well. He's being questioned, he was brought in. They seemed to think there's a chance that the

instructions Mr. Crouch has been sending in weren't genuinely written by him." Something I never thought about until today was, 'Wait, who's writing them?'

JC: Yeah, yeah. I have a note about that, actually, because I was like, 'Who is giving these instructions?' Also, Mr. Crouch's... well, assumed demise, but the weirdness of him appearing in Hogwarts... No one seems to know.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Yeah, that's a secret. Interesting. When we saw Mr. Crouch in the woods, that man was not capable of sending anyone instructions.

Lorrie: Well, there was a time earlier this year when he really was writing them. He was being forced to write them, and as Percy said, "Well, I know his handwriting, but now they're not." Somebody is being forced to write these and everyone can tell that it's not Mr. Crouch.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: Who do you think it is? Because when I realized who it had to be, then I just had to laugh.

JC: I don't remember.

Lorrie: Well, we don't find out.

JC: Oh, we don't find out. Oh, okay. Well, I don't remember enough of how this is ending. My guess was that it was Barty Crouch Jr., but...

Lorrie: No. I think it's got to be Wormtail.

JC: Wormtail. Ooh, interesting.

Lorrie: It's got to be one of the horrible, horrible jobs he's been given that he's destined to fail at, because whoever it is has to pretend to know something about this job and none of them know anything about this job. Voldemort's not working in this department; Barty Crouch Jr. isn't. "Someone has to send in these thi-- Wormtail, you do it."

JC: Oh, my gosh.

Lorrie: "But--but--but..." Anyway, Wormtail's life sucks.

JC: I think he was much happier living as Ron's rat than his life now.

Lorrie: Oh, best time of his life. Yeah. Ooh, and then there's so much going on in this chapter...

JC: There really is. There really is. Yeah, I guess the other thing that we have is that Harry actually, finally, settles with Mrs. Weasley that Hermione is not his girlfriend. "You

didn't believe any of that crap that Rita Skeeter was writing, right?" and Molly's like, 'Uh...'

Lorrie: You owe her some candy.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: That is, I think, probably, the thing that annoys me most that Mrs. Weasley ever does. 'Don't be mean to...' Anyway...

JC: Yeah. Why would she believe that?

Lorrie: Give her some candy!

JC: Ugh. She's seen these kids together. I don't know. Anyway...

Lorrie: Yeah. Something else that I never paused over before, even though it was right there in front of me -- I guess, because as a reader, my mind is on the task -- is this little moment with Cornelius Fudge and Madame Maxime.

JC: Oh, right. What's going on with Madame Maxime there? It said that her eyes were red, like she's been crying...

Lorrie: Yeah, and Cornelius Fudge is just sitting next to her looking stern, and this is right after (at the beginning of the chapter) Ron saying, "Well, maybe it really was her." He [Fudge] is probably forging ahead with his plan to scapegoat her for Barty Crouch Sr.'s disappearance, even though Harry caught him and he was abashed. The way Cornelius Fudge thinks, that's his best bet, so I think he's just accused her. That magnificent woman is suffering through dinner with this incompetent --

JC: Having to sit next to... Right.

Lorrie: Yeah, and her eyes are red -- I'm automatically indignant that anyone has made this magnificent woman cry. How dare they! And Hagrid keeps glancing at her. I think, 'Oh.' This is when Hagrid is having his version of Hermione's realization of why somebody would be closeted. She tried to make up with him; when she tried to talk to him, he just turned her away, but now I think he's softening toward her. He's realizing, 'No, it really is complicated. It's not so easy,' and I think he's melting. But oh, Fudge. Oof.

JC: All right. So as we're thinking about heading into the third task, it's fascinating to me that they cut off the Quidditch grounds for the entire year -- if you cancel Quidditch, it's a big deal! -- and grew this giant maze there.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: But it's been right there the whole time, and I had this moment of thinking, 'Really? Did no one ever go and spy on the maze? Surely they could have invented something -- I'm sure there were anti-spying hexes or shields on it, whatever -- but I'm just imagining someone with a drone flying over and mapping it out. I guess in the movie version, the hedges move around.

Lorrie: Ooh...

JC: But that doesn't happen in this one.

Lorrie: That we know of...

JC: That we know of, I guess. Yeah, that's true. But yeah, they're there on the Quidditch pitch and they're about to go in, and I thought this would be very strange for the spectators.

Lorrie: Yes!

JC: They go in and then..

Lorrie: And then what?

JC: And then what? Then you wait, I guess. You wait until you see sparks go up.

Lorrie: This is one I've had to make up a whole headcanon for myself about tailgate parties and a festival, because we're told that the whole school is excited and looking forward to the final task, where you just sit there.

JC: They've got to sit there.

Lorrie: They cannot be just sitting there. They cannot be.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: There's got to be popcorn machines and cotton candy or something.

JC: Yeah, there's got to be something going on. Right, so we have all of this happening, but then they walk in and it becomes eerily silent. They don't hear any of the crowd noise or anything anymore, which is really creepy.

Lorrie: And then the creepiest thing: there's nothing in Harry's path.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Ooh, that's terrifying.

JC: Yeah. It's like, "I thought I was going to be running into things and I haven't run into anything yet," so yeah. Oh, the other thing that is interesting in this is that here's where we're getting introduced to the Point Me spell...

Lorrie: Love it!

JC: Which is fun, and I know that it was very much a fandom thing for a long time and I still kind of do it: when you open up the map function on your phone and you tap the little button that tells you to 'find my location'. There are many of us that, during the 2000s, certainly would go "Point me!" and press the little button and it would tell you where you are, and then you could hold it and turn around a little bit and figure out which direction you need to go. Very much like the GPS function on your phone, this Point Me spell.

Lorrie: Yeah. Muggles, we're trying to catch up. We're working on it.

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: What does the odd golden mist symbolize?

JC: Oh, my God! Okay, I wrote a note about this because in the past, you talked about how silver magic represents you and yourself and then gold magic represents connection. I was like, 'What's the connection here?' I spent some time thinking about it, and I don't know.

Lorrie: I know. I don't know either.

JC: Okay, that makes me feel better. I was like, 'Lorrie will tell me! Lorrie will tell me what it means.'

Lorrie: No, I have never been able to figure out this golden mist. It's very creepy.

JC: Yeah, for sure. I do like the idea that it completely flips your perspective of what's up and what's down, and you just have to trust that if you take a step out of it, it'll be fine. You have to overcome your fear.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This is going to be cheesy, but it's like that third Indiana Jones movie, when he has to take the leap of faith and he has to step forward and finds out that he's on a little bridge that he couldn't see.

Lorrie: Oh, gosh.

JC: That's what it reminds me of. Sometimes you just have to trust yourself and take a step forward.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And it'll be fine.

Lorrie: Yuck. It's such a relief when it's over.

JC: That's as far as I got with it. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. Oh, God, hearing Fleur scream...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yikes.

JC: And then Harry doesn't see her or anything. He can only assume. He doesn't even see sparks, I don't think. Does he? He can only assume she's no longer in the competition. There's a skrewt and there's a dementor, and the dementor is easy for him.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: He's like, 'This is so last year.'

Lorrie: Yes!

JC: It's not even a real dementor; it's a boggart, So it's like, 'Eh, this is... Oh, Patronus, whatever.'

Lorrie: 'I've got you coming and going.'

JC: Yeah. He knows exactly how to get rid of it. It's no problem. The skrewt is slightly more of a problem.

Lorrie: And he runs into Cedric a couple times. Oh, gosh, and then there's the awfulness of Viktor Krum doing *Crucio* on Cedric, Cedric being very shaken by this, and Harry, thank goodness, realizing, 'Wait a minute, Unforgivables get you a lifetime in Azkaban. Viktor Krum could not have wanted the Cup that badly.' Okay, good. Good thinking, but this is all about alliances, right? Here are these four people running around a maze. Wait a minute. Why are they competing against each other? They're starting to question this, and I think one of my favorite moments is after Harry Stuns Viktor, and then he and Cedric stand around the body saying, "Uh, what should we do?" Harry says, "Well, I guess I should send up sparks," and Cedric is like, "Well, if we leave him he'll get eaten by the skrewts. He'd deserve it." I love that Cedric says that at the same time that he goes ahead with sending up sparks.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: That is how it's supposed to be. You're supposed to have room both to be as angry as you really are... like the angry crowd at the Wizengamot cheering for the sentencing of Barty Crouch Jr. You're supposed to be that angry, and you're also supposed to be able to... No, all right, the thing to do here is to...

JC: Well, yeah, we know what the right thing to do is...

Lorrie: And the fact that the two of them are united and have each other there for support makes it much more possible. And then right after that is when Harry has that odd feeling. 'Wait a minute. Cedric and I had been united, and now... Oh, yeah, we're competitors again. Uh...'

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. They're thinking about it.

JC: A few more things that happen, I guess: Harry comes across a Sphinx, who has her riddle for him...

Lorrie: Love her!

JC: That Harry solves. He did better than I did.

Lorrie: Yeah. That's just a classic British drawing room riddle, right? That's this author getting to write her version, and it's nice. My headcanon about the Sphinx, which I got a couple years ago and I've been unable to let it go, is that the Sphinx is who Cassandra turns into. If you're a woman who is always right and trying to warn people so that they can protect themselves and nobody ever believes you -- nobody ever listens to you and all the bad things happen -- eventually, when people start asking you questions, you just get tired of them. If they're going to be wrong about things, you're just going to have to eat them. "Look, don't bother me. I know you're going to be wrong, and if you are wrong, you're going to piss me off so much and there is a way out of this. Well, you could be right, which will be great! Bless you! Bless your heart. Or if you're going to be wrong, how about you say nothing. How about you just remain silent, turn around and walk away? I'll let you go. It'll be fine. Did you know that was an option?"

JC: 'Did you know...?' Oh, my God, that's so funny.

Lorrie: Oh, my girl the Sphinx, remain silent and walk away unscathed. Harry gets it right and she smiles at him. Great! Good. Okay!

JC: I guess then, at that point, he goes around the corner and then there he can see the cup, glowing.

Lorrie: Oh, he gets the acromantula.

JC: Yeah. On the way, yeah. Cedric's there, too, and then there's... I had forgotten about the giant spider showing up here.

Lorrie: Oh, my God... Yeah. He has to warn Cedric about it. Just in case we weren't sure what lesson we were supposed to be learning, the two of them combined can stun the acromantula when one of them by himself couldn't have done it.

JC: I still forgot that it bites Harry.

Lorrie: Oh, my God, his leg is in agony the whole time. He's shaking.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: It's like some sort of nerve-affecting toxin. Oh, God.

JC: And then we have this lovely, lovely scene in the last moments here where Harry and Cedric argue with each other that the other should take the Cup. "No, you deserve it because..." and they go through and they name off all the things, all the ways that the other person has helped them...

Lorrie: Yeah. This scene made me laugh so much because it totally made me think of you. I spent the whole scene going, 'Oh, you Hufflepuffs! Ugh!'

JC: That is very Hufflepuff. Yeah.

Lorrie: Such a Hufflepuff. Harry is annoyed. His leg is hurting him. He says, "Stop being noble." He's irritable; meanwhile, there are these incredible adjectives showing Cedric's Hufflepuff nature. He's being stubborn -- mulish, he's being mulish -- and when he's decided, he folds his arms. Oh, there's just no budging him. Oh, JC, you Hufflepuff!

JC: Yeah, I love it. I love Cedric here.

Lorrie: It's just so funny. Then we get the answer: when Cedric says, "You stayed behind to get all the hostages. I should have done that." And then you realize, oh, he's been brooding on that. After that task, he's been asking himself, 'What lesson was I supposed to learn?' and then according to his own worldview, he's come to this conclusion. Meanwhile, Harry's calling himself thick, saying, "No, I shouldn't have done that." No, no, no, no, Harry. This is never going to be settled. There will always be people who will think that you are wrong, but you are right about this. There's this real character moment of, 'How does a young adult Hufflepuff decide what kind of person to be in the world?' He's been thinking about this.

JC: It makes me wonder what would have happened differently if Cedric had just grabbed the Cup and left Harry there. I wonder what would have happened. Obviously, we know what's coming next, but how would things have been different if Harry had been left behind there...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And had to come out and say, "Yeah, Cedric grabbed the Cup and disappeared?"

Lorrie: And then "I don't know what..."

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Oh, God, it would have been another horrible, horrible disappearance, but yeah. Cedric knows that he doesn't want to grab the Cup alone, but he needs Harry to be the one to suggest that it should be both of them together, because I think that's the lot of somebody who thinks like a Hufflepuff: you cannot assume that anyone else is going to see it your way. The rest of the world will disagree with a more generous take and may just say, "Well, I'm going to be out for myself," so it's this great surprise for Cedric when Harry says, "Both of us should take it," because it fits way more with his worldview than he's accustomed to. The moment Harry says it, it's obviously the right solution. You see the two of them looking at each other like, "Oh, can it be? Can it?" It's a really well done moment. Yeah, disaster is about to happen, but it's better for them that they did it this way.

JC: I don't think it's better for Cedric.

Lorrie: It is.

JC: Oh.

Lorrie: It is, because what this reminds me of... When I did a training for civil disobedience for when you are getting arrested at a protest to make a point and you're doing it non-violently -- you don't make any trouble for the police, you don't force them to drag you or anything; you're just getting arrested. When we did a simulation and part of the simulation the police were violently dragging off this other person in the training next to me, I grabbed on to them and got dragged off with them. When they asked me later, "Why did you do that?" I said, "So that if they get arrested, then there's two of us." The more of you there are, the better chance there are that people will know about it, will come help you or you can keep each other company, or there's more resources. That's what it made me think of here. Yeah. It's better that the two of them went... Or similarly to the moment when Harry has Ron and Gabrielle. He's dragging their unconscious bodies up to the surface, and then once Ron is alert, then he asks Ron to help him. Yeah, have allies with you.

JC: Yeah. But at the same time, Cedric doesn't last very long after this.

Lorrie: No. Well, Cedric would have lasted long either way, but Cedric doesn't live in a vacuum. He's part of a family, and there's somebody who can come back and tell his family what happened. No, nothing happy happens here.

JC: Yeah, I know. I would like an AU where Cedric doesn't have to die.

Lorrie: I'm sure that's been written several times.

JC: I'm sure that's been written. Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. This moment when they reach for the Cup together and then this scary Portkey thing happens, in my opinion, is the second worst cliffhanger of the series. I think it's not as impossible to stop here as it is when Harry sees who's got the stone, that it wasn't Snape, it wasn't Voldemort. To me, that's harder to stop right there. But what happened... My older kid was doing her first read-through. At the beginning, I was reading all the chapters to her and then through that year, she got to be a better, independent reader. By *Goblet of Fire*, she often liked having me read to her. But then she would say, "Can I read more on my own?" That was the first time that we were letting her stay up past her bedtime. Now that you're an independent reader, you have earned the right to stay up a little bit later. "Yes, you can, as long as you're reading to yourself." I finished reading to her that they touched the Portkey and they're being whirled away, and she says to me, "Can I stay up late and read what happens next?" And I said, "No!"

JC: No, because it's probably not bedtime reading.

Lorrie: The way I said, "No! Absolutely not." Oh, my God.

JC: So yeah, nothing good will come of that. Yeah.

Lorrie: Because you can't stop after that. Once you've turned that page, you can't take a breath until a long time later. You don't start that at bedtime. Oh, my gosh. So yeah, I absolutely forbade her, and I think I probably took the book with me.

JC: Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: Well...

JC: Now we move into the next phase of --

Lorrie: All innocence is about to be gone. The next chapter is called *Flesh, Blood and Bone*. We're about to go dark and never, ever come back from it.

JC: Yup. Well, I guess I'll see you on the other side of that.

Lorrie: 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.