

# HARRY POTTER AFTER 2020

with LORRIE KIM and JC

## Transcript

### Episode 4.9

#### Book 4, Chapter 9: The Dark Mark

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 Nine: The Dark Mark.

Lorrie: The Dark Mark. After the Quidditch match, masked wizards commit a hate crime against a Muggle family. Draco warns Hermione to avoid the scene. Harry's wand is missing. The kids hear someone cast the Dark Mark, the hate symbol used by Voldemort's followers, the Death Eaters. Ministry officials blame Harry or the other kids at first, but then they find Winky, Barty Crouch's house-elf, holding the wand that cast the spell -- Harry's. Crouch fires Winky, who is devastated. So much happens in this chapter, and I feel like the author has spent the previous chapters establishing a bigger stage for her story so that this can support her showing how explicitly rotten the world, and the evil in the world, can actually be. This chapter is the one that she said nearly finished her. She rewrote it thirteen times.

JC: Wow.

Lorrie: And if you can just imagine, nobody wants to write anything thirteen times. Oh, God. Here she establishes this bewildering mystery of what is going on with Winky the house-elf. She shows how Harry's generation cannot understand how slightly older people react viscerally to Death Eaters and their signals. She shows how hate crimes cause panic, and she sets up this tricky question of whether the person who cast the Dark Mark was in solidarity with the Death Eaters or against them. That's something that I think this volume tackles so ambitiously: wow, sometimes people are so extreme you can't even tell if they're your ally or your enemy.

JC: Oh, my God. Yeah.

Lorrie: And you have to be on your toes the whole time. 'What is happening? What is happening?' And sometimes you just have to accept that you don't know.

JC: I feel like I need to say 'buckle up' to people who are listening, because there's so much happening here.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Well, let me take a step back. When we started this project, I remember we talked about the fact that we said it's going to feel different reading this like post-2020.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Post everything that's happened. Every now and then, we hit a chapter where it reads completely differently, and this is one of them.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This one, I was shocked. To use some old slang, I was a little 'shook' at the end.

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JC: Right? It was like holy shit. This is...

Lorrie: Yeah. Too real.

JC: We have lived some of this. It was fantastical and out there the first time, and it was like, 'Oh, look what's happening in this world. This is kind of dystopian.' This time, it did not feel dystopian.

Lorrie: No. It's not dystopian. This is --

JC: It felt real!

Lorrie: This is a day on the calendar. Yeah.

JC: Oh, for sure. Oh, my God.

Lorrie: Oh, were you somebody who watched *Star Trek: DS9*?

JC: It's the one *Star Trek* I didn't watch. I watched every other one than that.

Lorrie: Oh, wow. Okay, because that's my favorite *Star Trek*.

JC: Somehow, I missed it. Yeah. That's what people say. I need to watch it.

Lorrie: Yeah. Well, it's dark and depressing, so I love it.

JC: There you go.

Lorrie: But yeah, there was this super futuristic, dystopian two-episode arc about San Francisco in the year 2024.

JC: Oh, God.

Lorrie: And it was so dystopian, and the dates of that story just passed.

JC: Oh, was that the Bell Riots thing?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Okay. I remember seeing that on social media. People marked safe from the Bell Riots and stuff on Facebook. Yeah.

Lorrie: But yeah, the incredibly depressing, dystopian vision in those episodes... We are living some of that, and that's so funny and awful. Oh, well.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. But yeah, this too.

JC: Yeah, that's... ugh. Yes, it's awful and terrible, but it also reminds me that human beings throughout history have experienced good times and bad times. We've talked about this before, that we're pretty lucky that we're Gen Xers. We lived a good chunk of our adult lives with pretty good times, comparatively.

Lorrie: With improvement. Yes.

JC: And things seemed like they were going up.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Right? Yeah. It's a shock to us to see it's not continuing to go up, but actually looking like they might be taking a horrific turn. But for other generations that have come before us, this wouldn't have been as much of a shock, so it's very interesting to me. Yeah.

Lorrie: Perspective. Yeah. So what incidents in our recent history did you especially think of when you were reading this chapter?

JC: I thought about white supremacists with tiki torches.

Lorrie: Yes. Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017 was the first thing I thought of.

JC: That was the first thing I thought of. I thought about the mob storming the Capitol.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: January 6th. I thought about school shootings and the way that they spread terror and chaos through schools. Those are the big ones, I think.

Lorrie: Yeah. I think it wasn't until this reading that I understood why Arthur Weasley was waking up the kids so much. I think the first times I read this, I thought, 'Oh, well, something's happening, so he has to go and deal with it and he has to wake up the kids.'

JC: Oh, right. I see.

Lorrie: No, no! I don't know how I missed this. No, they have to vacate...

JC: Yeah, right.

Lorrie: Evacuate before where they are is physically damaged. Some of these tents are actually burned. They don't know what's going to happen. Go hide in the forest? That's so dystopian.

JC: Go hide in the forest, right. Being a person who's involved in education, every time I see this meme go around that says, 'Every single teacher you know has thought through their plan, blah blah blah,' which is absolutely one hundred percent true.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Every school I've been in, it's almost one of the first things I think about if I'm going to spend any time in a school with kids: what's the emergency plan?

Lorrie: It's your job requirement.

JC: Yeah. It's an automatic thing now.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: What's the emergency plan? The idea is to get out. If you can get out, get out and run. It's literally this. It's "Get out, go hide in the forest."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I thought, 'That's really familiar to me, in a way.' It's not that we didn't have shootings in schools; we'd already had a significant one as of the time of this recording, and it's early September.

Lorrie: Early September, so it's time.

JC: Yeah. Yeah. School shooting season, it feels like. That idea that that's what you would do feels a lot more real to me now than I think it felt the first time I read this, too. What do you do in this? You get out.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: You tell the children to run and hide.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And then you, the adult, stay and figure out what you can do to mitigate the situation.

Lorrie: Right. And the Weasley sons, who are of age, automatically know that they have to be with the grown-ups, which is kind of impressive. The children, the teenagers in this chapter, are more naive than we are now.

JC: Right. Yeah.

Lorrie: That's not how it felt the first time I read this.

JC: That's not how it felt the first time.

Lorrie: No.

JC: Yeah. The first time, it was like, 'What's going on?' I was in there with you. 'Why are they hiding in the forest? What's happening?'

Lorrie: 'This is so disorienting.' Yeah.

JC: This time, it was like, 'Oh, shit.' Yeah. 'Run, kids!'

Lorrie: Oh, you know what else it made me think of: there was a shooting in Las Vegas at an outdoor concert that got so many victims. The cruelty of targeting a festival...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Which is a thing that has happened a lot of times, of saying, "You think you can celebrate? You think you can enjoy being human? No, you can't."

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: It's on purpose. We're trying to find some place that's supposed to be safe and fun.

JC: Yeah. Yeah.

Lorrie: Oooh. Terrorism.

JC: Yes. I guess that's what terrorism is, right? Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That specter of when they come out of the tents and they see this mob coming with the hoods over their faces and holding the Muggles... I think it didn't hit me on a previous read about what the Muggles are experiencing here.

Lorrie: Uh-huh.

JC: And the children, too.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: The terror of that, the trauma.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: They have no idea what's happening and what these people are doing.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That hit me a lot harder this time, too, the victims of this.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And really how awful this is, what's happening.

Lorrie: The thing that made it worse was I had assumed that they were just unconscious for this, but then there's a point when Mrs. Roberts, the mom... She's flipped upside down and it shows her underwear, and she cries out and she tries to cover up her underwear. I'm like, 'Oh, I didn't want them to be that conscious.'

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Oh, oh, oh.

JC: And at the end, I think there's a mention of the fact that the Ministry got the Muggles back and they're going to erase their memories and stuff, so this idea that... I don't know. I have a lot of feelings about that, too, that idea that you can just erase this trauma. But is it really gone?

Lorrie: And it's not. No, of course it's not.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: It's non-consensual.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: That's another thing in the past several years. There have been high-profile cases of people who have been assaulted while unconscious, and they don't themselves remember it. Does that make it any less of a crime? No, that compounds it, and that absence is part of the terror. So what can the wizards do? Yeah, I can see why they think, 'Okay, no, we have to remove that.' No, there's no winning. The way that the description of the Roberts family, the four people being tormented -- "Two of the figures were very small" -- brought up all of the targeting of children during the Trump administration, especially in border policy, because the cruelty is the point. Hurting people by engaging the protective reflex toward young ones: that's an easy and guaranteed way to get other people to suffer if you're somebody who gains enjoyment from causing suffering.

JC: It's so clear that the Death Eaters in this situation... They don't see these people as human.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: It's like, "These people are beneath us. There's no reason why we wouldn't torture them. Take the child-- yeah, sure, the kids, too." That's really, really chilling.

Lorrie: It's dehumanizing, but it's not only just that they're beneath you; it's that they're there in order for you to enjoy asserting dominance over them. It's like hunting season.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: But the other thing that's kind of creepy -- and this is my ambivalent reaction to team sports, especially the really aggressive ones that have heightened testosterone --

JC: Oh, God. Yeah.

Lorrie: -- is when humans engage these instincts to be competitive and to be violent (especially in things like alcohol that lower your inhibitions) and you have group team sports and team fans, this really does set the stage for human mob behavior. Drinking and violence following organized team sports, that's a thing.

JC: It absolutely is. I hadn't made that connection until now, but yeah. When I was a college student, my university's -- I think it was basketball. It's been a while; I'm not a sports person -- the basketball team won the national championship one year. I was watching it at home, and I was like, 'Yeah, this is great, we won. Whoo!' Immediately after the game, people went out and rioted in the streets and cars were set on fire.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: We won, and that was the reaction.

Lorrie: Exactly.

JC: It blew my mind. I don't even...

Lorrie: Right.

JC: I still don't understand that. But yeah, you're right. There's something about... and they were all young men who did this, so there's something about this explosion of violence that comes even after a good result.

Lorrie: Right. Exactly.

JC: And that it's not uncommon, and that you're right. That's a piece of this, too, that's terrifying, so there's a little bit of this. They don't say that these are all men, but that was the impression I had. And with a couple of exceptions, most of the Death Eaters that we see in this world are men also.

Lorrie: Yeah. So yeah, this is part of the joy and danger of this competitive element of human nature. The answer is not to completely eliminate all opportunities for heightened emotion and competition; it's just we know that this is a feature of human nature. Ugh.

JC: So when the kids go and run in the woods, one of the first people they run into is Draco.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: And it occurred to me on this read -- in the first read, it's like, 'Oh, of course he's there,' so he could have a tormenting and taunting conversation. But then this time around, I was like, 'His parents sent him into the woods, too.' He was clearly in his very nice tent with his parents; they sent him into the woods, too, and said, "You need to go." He was hanging out there watching it all, so he was doing the thing where, 'Yeah. I'm over here, I'm safe, but also I'm hanging out on the edge of this because I want to see what's happening,' so he was doing that. But it made me think, 'Okay, he's there because his parents told him to go there.' Which made me go, 'Hmm.'

Lorrie: Well, did they?

JC: I don't know. That was my impression.

Lorrie: Okay, where is Narcissa? Narcissa's there, because she was looking down her nose at the Weasleys. Did Lucius... Was he running to get his hood and saying, "Draco, you can't see what's going on, and you have to go," or was Lucius so caught up in the excitement that he didn't even tell Draco, and Draco just saw and took himself? No, no, you're right. I think you're right. The calm way that Draco is positioning himself, I think they did say, "Okay, daddy's going to go have some fun now. You stay..." Ugh. Creepy.

JC: However it worked, I feel like he got... I don't know. I feel like he got sent to go hide in the woods with the kids for a lot of reasons. They don't want him to get hurt. He's their only child; they don't want anything to happen to him. I do get the sense that they are trying to protect him from a lot of this, and at this point, all the people who are doing this don't know that Voldemort's coming back.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Or is back. They have no knowledge of this.

Lorrie: They have no idea. They're just partying.

JC: They're just doing this, and they're just tormenting Muggles because they can, which also brings up this whole thing of what's been the atmosphere. How has the atmosphere in the Wizarding World been changing to make these people feel empowered? Now, for all we know, this has been going on the whole time, the whole fourteen years that Voldemort's been gone. You get the feeling in the book that this is new, though. New and --

Lorrie: It's not common. Yes.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: They're shocked.

JC: Everyone's really shocked by it.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It reminded me of post-2016, how lots of people who were super racist or whatever suddenly felt empowered to say things in public or to do things that they would not have done before. That's kind of what it made me think of, so it made me wonder what's been shifting in the politics of this world to make this happen.

Lorrie: Well, one thing is that the Quidditch World Cup is international, so it happened to come to England where Voldemort's stronghold was. It's like, 'Woohoo! We have this big international event,' and the conflict that you highlighted in the previous chapter was that there was this face-down staring contest between Lucius Malfoy and Hermione, where he looked at her in the Top Box like, 'You don't belong here, you're impinging on our territory,' and Hermione looking at him like, 'I was here already.' That is a tension that's playing out here.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: I have sometimes a hard time with the characterization of Ron, because I think he is portrayed as such a real kid with so many normal kid flaws that lack the heroism I need to see in him; this one is so solid where he sees the Roberts children being tortured and he just said, "That's sick." Okay, that's what I was always looking for in the Ron character: his stabilizing influence of just being really grounded and sane. 'No, you don't do that. That's gross. That's awful.' Oof. But yeah, this public demonstration is to assert in this public space that some people don't have human rights.

JC: Yeah. So the kids were in the forest and they run into Draco right away. They're instantly suspicious of him...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And the fact that he's sitting there so calmly, and they're running and freaking out. He's just calmly watching; he sees them and calls them out. He's like, 'Oh, hey.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: There's a couple things that are interesting in this. First of all, I always love the really heavily implied "Go fuck yourself, Malfoy" that appears in the subtext.

Lorrie: Yes, beautifully written.

JC: Beautifully written. The first time I read that, I remember just laughing out loud and I was like, oh, that's how you do it in a book like this.

Lorrie: That's so clever.

JC: Because you couldn't write those words...

Lorrie: Yeah.



JC: But you know that they're saying them.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It is exactly what 14-year-old kids would say to each other in this context. Yeah.

Lorrie: It's beautifully showing the tension in the adult prescriptive idea of what's appropriate for teenagers to see versus what you know teenagers are actually saying and doing. The issue is not teenagers or their innocence; the issue is the censorship and adult discomfort with what is allowed, as though that's going to change the nature of teenagers ever.

JC: Yeah, for sure.

Lorrie: It's this censorship that's creating more of a communication divide between teenagers and adults than there has to be.

JC: Definitely.

Lorrie: And it also reinforces that whatever is going on between Draco and the other kids is its own subculture with its own life or death rules...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: That parallels what the adults are doing, but the adults don't always know.

JC: That's true, but then that makes what happens next even more interesting because Draco is giving Hermione warnings.

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: And they're still all in his -- he still calls her a mudblood, he's still nasty about it, but the warnings he's giving her are sincere.

Lorrie: They're real. Yeah.

JC: Yeah. He's like, "There's really shit going on. You need to go hide. You need to keep your bushy head down." It's so interesting, and this scene, as you can imagine, spawned lots of fanfic.

Lorrie: Lots of fanfics.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: It's so resonant, and the ambiguity in it is completely fascinating. It starts off with him being sexy.

JC: Yeah. Okay, that too. Yeah. He's leaning back into the tree, yeah.

Lorrie: He's leaning, relaxed. Okay, that's an alpha male hot posture, which is a really interesting choice.

JC: It reminds me of the 1960s, the cool greaser guys leaning back against their car.

Lorrie: Yeah! Yeah, yeah.

JC: And there could be a gang riot happening, and they're like, "What's up?" It's kind of like that, is the impression I'm getting.

Lorrie: And that's partly to telegraph how incredibly secure he feels.

JC: Yeah, for sure.

Lorrie: He's being smug. He is pleased. He's watching his people's privilege be asserted and he's definitely enjoying it. There's also some Snape-iness involved in giving really genuine useful warnings while delivered with the same old complete hostility. If Hermione does get attacked because of this, is he going to be all that sorry? Eh... Enough for him to say something, I guess.

JC: Yeah. It felt very specifically targeted. If he really didn't care about what happens to Hermione, he would have said nothing.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: He would just continue to torment them, but the fact that he made a point of it...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's just like, hmm, okay. Yeah. He doesn't want his classmates...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Maybe we've talked about this before and I think we'll talk about it again, but he hasn't yet hit the point where I think this is real for him.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: It's still a game, or it's still all in the neighborhood of school bullying. 'We're just having a laugh. Oh, we're just having fun. Can't you take a joke?'

Lorrie: It's fun.

JC: That's how he comes across. He doesn't yet understand that actually, this is serious business and people are going to die; he will later and Harry already knows that, and Ron and Hermione already know that, so there's that divide between them, too. Draco's still innocent about how awful things could be right now in a way that the other kids are not.

Lorrie: Well, he definitely has to stand back and watch as his place in the world is shifting right now. His star is ascending, and he has to take it all in and then adjust, and enjoy his promotion to being more supreme than he was before, so he does have to stand back and watch. He had been serious a couple years earlier when he was saying, "Oh, I hope the next mudblood dies. I hope it's Hermione." He's gone back and forth between how very real it is, but I don't think... When Lucius and/or Narcissa warned him, "Okay, something's going to go down, you have to go into the forest," I don't think they said, "And warn your classmates."

JC: Yeah. Right.

Lorrie: That's his own decision.

JC: Yeah. "Go warn your Muggle-born classmates." No, those words, I'm sure, were not spoken.

Lorrie: Yeah. "Go warn the person who was stinking up the Top Box." Yeah. That's always the point of interest that generates so much energy in the Draco characterization: the points when you see him taking initiative to go against what his parents are raising him to be.

JC: Yeah, that's true.

Lorrie: Oh, I liked the phrase, "His pale eyes glittering," because 'glittering' is also a word that we see associated with Snape's eyes when he's saying something and he's got a lot going on in his head behind his warnings. It's a word assigned to Snape when he's holding back a lot of information, and you don't know what it is and it could be for you or against you.

JC: That's interesting.

Lorrie: Yeah, it's a moment of high tension. So yeah, he's having a lot of private thoughts and he's hiding most of them, and whatever he says here he has thought about.

JC: Yeah. Oh, it's going to be a while before we get into the Snape and Draco dynamic. It's a couple of books down the line, but I love... That's one of... Oh. I want more of it. I love that dynamic between them of Snape stepping in and being like, "I'm going to be the one who's going to protect you and guide you." Oh, my God, I love that. Anyway, we'll get there later.

Lorrie: Uh, and Draco saying, "Get out of my way. You're old."

JC: Exactly. It's amazing. I love it so much. Okay, we can't even go there now. I want to talk about it, but we can't. We've got to wait. Okay.

Lorrie: Oh, my God. Yeah. Snape is not at the Quidditch World Cup.

JC: He is not, and he's not even in this chapter. Yeah.

Lorrie: No. He doesn't like any of this stuff.

JC: Right. Why would he go to a sports event?

Lorrie: No. Well, my unease with this kind of sportsball mob mentality... There are anti-athletic characters like Snape and like Hermione; I'm squarely with them. "I don't know why people love Quidditch so much." I like that when Draco says, "She's in danger," and Harry says, "Hermione's a witch," Draco defines Hermione as more like a Muggle and Harry defends her and says she's a witch. Draco is right: thinking about Hermione that way is not going to do anything against the logic of a mob.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: He is saying, "I'm not telling you this for the same old tired conflict we already have." He knows better than Ron and Harry do that Hermione is in actual danger.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Because they don't actually fully know how bad these hooded former Death Eaters can be, but Draco does. It's gross, but yeah, the import of this communication from Draco is not the same old bullying. It's actually informative.

JC: Right. Yeah. Okay, I have a question. Harry's wand... Harry realizes not long after this that his wand is missing.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And I have this flash of, Oh, my God. It's like when you realize you don't have your phone, it's kind of like that.

Lorrie: Oh, my God. Yes.

JC: 'What do I do?'

Lorrie: So scary.

JC: Oh, my God, so scary. But they can't stop and look for it; they have to keep running. Do we find out later if he just dropped it or if it was taken? I can't remember.

Lorrie: We do find out later.

JC: Okay, there is an answer to that. All right.

Lorrie: And I have the urge to go rush in and assure Harry, "It's okay. It wasn't your fault. You did not lose it." It's the same as when Neville's password list gets stolen by Crookshanks, and Neville thinks, 'Oh no, I'm blaming myself again.' No, no, child, you were fine. You didn't do anything wrong. But yeah, we find out so much later though.

JC: Okay, yeah. Who did it.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I couldn't remember. Okay, so there's that. So Harry doesn't have a wand, so we're running in the forest from Death Eaters. We're terrified, and Harry, who probably knows more defensive magic than any of the other kids his age at this point, is the one that's wandless. That's terrifying.

Lorrie: It's so awful.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And when they were talking about Lucius possibly being one of the people who's masked... Oh, and Hermione says, "Well, with any luck, the Ministry will catch him." That was a painful moment to read, because I remember before 2016, if you were exposed as being linked to a white supremacist group, then your political career would be over. And also, Godwin's Law - do you remember Godwin's Law?

JC: Oh, my God. Yeah.

Lorrie: There are people who are too young to remember Godwin's Law. Everybody knew on the internet when arguments got to invoking comparisons to the Nazis, that meant the argument was over; it had just passed beyond logic, and whatever. And then after 2016, Godwin's Law got revoked because it's like, 'Okay, we're not using it as a metaphor anymore.'

JC: No, they're actual Nazis. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, and actual Godwin said, "Never mind."

JC: Yeah. Ugh.

Lorrie: Yeah. There was a point at which being linked to this kind of group no longer was damaging to your political career, and then there came a point soon after when, even being caught brazenly being part of this, you just didn't know if this was going to have any sort of result at all. So seeing Hermione saying, "Well, with any luck, the Ministry will catch him," it made me sad thinking, 'Well, that brings up...'. Sometimes when people say, "Well, why didn't these racists get caught by the police?" Well, where were the police? Maybe they're the same people.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Or "Where is the Supreme Court?" Oh, the Supreme Court has been infiltrated. That was definitely a post-2020 moment of "I don't know. Can we trust institutions?" Well, institutions are made by us, the same as anything else.

JC: Right. And because we had all these people who hid in plain sight for so long, it turns out they were part of all these institutions. It's not that we didn't know that before, but...

Lorrie: They weren't empowered.

JC: Yeah. Now they're feeling empowered to use those positions and that's... Yeah. Again, I think Hermione's comment hit me the same way.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: 'Surely they'll catch him,' and it's like, 'And then what do you think will happen?'

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: How many people in those hoods actually work at the Ministry? Oh, my God. Yeah.

Lorrie: Right. Yeah. This is such a good thing that the author achieves in this chapter: I hadn't really thought about the intricacy of being one of those people who had chosen to hide in plain sight, and what kind of feelings there might be among people who used to be linked in this kind of activity that's now underground.

JC: People who always wear long-sleeved shirts or whatever.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: They never show their tattoos.

Lorrie: Right. I hadn't even thought about it, because they were out of sight and out of mind for me. Hmm, okay. Maybe I should have been thinking about that.

JC: Yeah. A couple of other things that happen along the way when they're running through the forests, after Harry's wand is missing and some other things happen: they run into the veela, and I just find it really interesting that Ron is still affected by them and Harry isn't at this point. I'm not completely sure what to make of that, except that Harry is... I don't know if his adrenaline is up or he's seen what they look like and he's like, 'Now I know.' With the differences between Ron and Harry here and their response to the veela when they run into them in the woods, I don't know what to make of that.

Lorrie: I think it might just be, 'Did you get caught in the magnetism of it?' But yeah, I think the fact that Harry is wandless and his emergency feelings are on... I think that probably has diverted his attention.

JC: Right, so that was interesting. Then they meet up with Bagman in the woods, who is acting very suspiciously.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: And is like, 'Okay.' Okay, so that was interesting, and I think we find out much later more about him, if I recall correctly.

Lorrie: Yeah. This looks incidental at the time -- now it does, but there's also goblins cackling over a sack of money.

JC: Right. Yeah. That, too. There's a lot happening in the forest as they're running through.

Lorrie: Isn't there? Yes.

JC: It's like every time they turn a corner, there's something new. Wow.

Lorrie: Well, this is a good example of what I meant when I said that *Goblet of Fire*, to me, really shows what happens when the author is struggling to meet deadline but it's not a complete draft yet, because we've had a number of really short chapters that were struggling to get to this really pivotal, complicated moment. Now all the choreography is unleashing, but it's out of balance, I find, from a crafting perspective, because you can see how heavy the burden is on the author trying to choreograph all of these events at once.

JC: Hmm... Yeah, I guess so.

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

JC: Interesting. It felt like chaos in my head...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But I felt like that matched what I thought I was supposed to be feeling, so that's interesting.

Lorrie: Yeah. The setup was so painstaking, because I kind of felt like she was dreading the chaos of this extremely complicated scene. So many things are happening right now.

JC: Yeah. And then they come around a corner, and I guess Mr. Crouch... No, okay. Then the Dark Mark gets cast and they look up and they see it. There's a whole scene where they hear a male voice -- a human male voice, even -- casting it. They look in the direction where it was and then immediately people Apparate into where they are. There's this image of all of these adults pointing their wands at these kids.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And looking at them with horror.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: And as we mentioned before, as of the time of recording this, we just recently in the last week had a school shooting, where the shooter was a 14-year-old boy who was given a very,

very dangerous weapon by his father and then proceeded to use it to kill people. The first time I read this, I remember thinking, 'What are they doing?! Why are they looking at these kids like this?' And it is very different now, because it's the horror on the adults' faces; there's no reason to think that kids might not have done this. They're looking at these kids --

Lorrie: You don't even know. Yeah.

JC: You don't know, and they're thinking, 'Oh, God, did these kids do this? These kids, that we thought were good or we thought were fine or whatever...' The heaviness of that hit me really differently this time.

Lorrie: Because you have to neutralize the situation first and then sort it out later.

JC: Yeah. They're clearly horrified that this could be the case, but they have to take the possibility of it seriously. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. It shows that when you're a first responder, the emergency thinking that you have on at the time will cloud your logic and it sort of has to, because you see these first responders checking each other all the time. 'Wait, you're not saying that so-and-so really did it? Think about that!' 'Oh, yeah, you're right.' Because those kinds of thinking don't coexist in the same part of your brain. If you're going to be called to an emergency site to possibly prevent deaths, it's not the same part of your brain. You can't do both at once, and mistakes will be made. That's how we are. I don't know that it's something that we can change about human nature. It's, I think, something that we have to know about ourselves.

JC: And I know that people... Well, in theory, first responders who would be called into a situation like that should have a lot of training around how to respond and how not to jump to conclusions and how not to just shoot people, and we know that they make mistakes and they make mistakes with very specific patterns that are horrible. But that's the other thing I was thinking here: when these adults came in, they saw who these kids were and that was the thing that gave them pause. There are other people that they could have seen there that they would have just -- they did try to stun them, and the kids hit the deck, but yeah. They paused when they saw who they were, but then there was still the horror of... Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. When you recognize somebody, that might introduce some hesitation, but what if you don't recognize them?

JC: Yeah. We've... God, in this country, we... I live in a state where they passed a law last year that said that every school has to have a police officer now, because Uvalde happened and... yeah. So for some reason, more police is the answer. But the research on this says lot of things, but one thing in particular is that when you have a community-based officer, or whatever they call them in a school -- a school-based officer -- they do get to know the kids. They build relationships with the kids.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And in some cases, they're less likely to act in the ways they've been trained because they know the kids. They reminded me of this situation. They know these kids, and that pause worked in a good way here, but it can also work in a bad way. You might say, "Oh, I know this kid. This kid is struggling with this and that." But to your point earlier: these are all human beings

and human beings make mistakes, and human beings who are put in a high-stress situation have to make decisions very quickly.

Lorrie: Training is good. Training can give you a lot more experience to know... Just practice. Practice is good. But yeah, giving somebody who's not trained a weapon that is used only to kill a lot of people and not used ever for anything else... Well...

JC: Right. Yeah. Yeah.

Lorrie: What did you think was going to happen? There's no other reason to have this weapon.

JC: Yeah, exactly. That was the other thing I was thinking about, too: I was comparing it to the wand situation. Wands clearly can be very powerful, dangerous weapons, but you have to be taught to use them that way.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Probably, your random 14-year-old kid at Hogwarts is not going to be able to use a wand to do killing damage...

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Because you have to be taught how to do that, frankly, and that's not a thing that they expose kids to.

Lorrie: Yeah. You have to think of yourself as having that kind of power, and that's what you were talking about earlier with Draco in the forest: he knows a lot, but he's not yet thinking of himself as powerful enough to be the one making things happen.

JC: I guess that this whole scene just really hit me differently. The other thing that stands out to me in this scene is the reaction of the adults, the first time I read this, felt way over the top. What the hell?!

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Why are they reacting this way? Why are they acting like a crime has been committed? And the kids are bewildered. They're like, 'Why?!' and everything unfolds from here. This is, I think, the first time that I could think of in the books where we have genuinely seen the intense fear that Voldemort stirs up in the adults who lived in that era. We've seen people shuddering when they say the name, but it almost becomes a joke at some point.

Lorrie: Yeah. 'Why are they doing that? Come on, don't overreact.'

JC: And this is genuine panic.

Lorrie: Yes. This is like, 'Oh, that's why.'

JC: Yeah. I remember the first time I read this, because you're in Harry's head, just being baffled. 'What happened? What is this?'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: The second time through and then after lots of things that we've been through...

Lorrie: Yeah.



JC: I was thinking, 'Okay, they saw the Dark Mark, so what would the equivalent of that be in our world? A building falling down? What would the thing be?' I was like, 'Would it be an airplane flying into a building? Would that give me the same reaction? It might.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I thought a burning cross... I don't know if that's enough.

Lorrie: You know what? A little bit. It's not the same, but the Pulse nightclub shooting. The immediate narrative -- that I believed and that took over -- was that it was targeted homophobia, and then it later transpired that that wasn't really it. But when there's a mass shooting at a gay nightclub, that fear is so strong, and that's the fear that I have to deal with in myself first before all the investigation and information comes out.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And I'm primed -- when I see evidence of homophobia and gaybashing, I'm primed to have a whole bunch of emergency reactions just jump online.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: I do like how it's portrayed that this is our introduction as readers to what the Dark Mark is. We see how the sight of it does not scare Harry and Ron, because they just don't have that context yet.

JC: Right. Yeah.

Lorrie: The difference between what they feel... Oh, this is the safer world that they've been afforded by whatever magic was in infant Harry, that one sort of reprieve. It makes sense why the Wizarding World would revere infant Harry Potter then, because oh, the relief.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Even though you know it's temporary, and everybody does know it's temporary.

JC: Yeah. There was no Voldemort body, right? Yeah.

Lorrie: Well, this is sort of also the wishful thinking that we see around COVID and COVID precautions, because we're currently in a COVID surge. It feels to me like even if COVID got super, super terrible again, that it would be a big struggle to respond with lockdown because there's so much sentiment wishing that, 'No, COVID... It's been so long, and we hated lockdown so much that we're just going to wish and make it true that it's not going to be as bad ever again, and we can just walk around without masks and nothing bad will happen and somehow long COVID will not be as bad as it is.' I have that first-hand sympathy for why people might have wanted to believe, against all evidence, that Voldemort being gone was something permanent. Nobody wants the evidence that no, it wasn't permanent; it can return at any time.

JC: Yeah. There's a whole book that's going to be about that that's coming up, if my memory serves.

Lorrie: Oi yai yai.

JC: The entire fifth book is about that.

Lorrie: Happening at the same time as all of these other things, I love the literal and metaphorical example we get from Winky of how it feels when you're trying to assert your own will and act in self-preservation and protectively against invisible forces when those forces are holding you back. It's beautifully, masterfully done that we can't see what's holding her back. Is it somebody or something we can't see, or is it internalized? That's what Hermione's saying: "Well, you know how house-elves are tortured into internalizing what they are and aren't allowed to do. Every time Dobby tried to assert his will and follow his own conscience, he had to punish himself and he didn't even believe in it, but that training enters a part of you that's really hard to eradicate by logic. Yeah. Seeing Winky trying desperately to move against something that's holding her back unnaturally against her will: that's just a really powerful image for me. That is an internal conflict I think that... I don't know if it's universal. I certainly feel it. When I know what I want to do, I know what would be best, I know what would protect everybody, and yet it goes against my training, what do I think is going to happen to me? I don't know. Somebody's going to come out and kill me. The thing that American culture really has -- a lot of cultures have it; Americans, really, really have this -- is we are trained to think that it's sinful to be selfish, but the things that Americans think of as selfish are often so not.

JC: Interesting, yeah.

Lorrie: Like when parents say, "Well, I didn't eat today and I didn't sleep because I have to work a second job to make money for my kid," and you're trying to tell them, "No, no, no, you have to sleep. You have to eat. If you run ragged like this --"

JC: "Put your mask on first and then put the others' masks on." Yeah.

Lorrie: Your kid actually will get better parenting from you if you take a moment, and you're like, "No, I can't think about that. I just have to survive for my kid." No. Actually, you have to take care of yourself or it's not going to be as good, and Americans will say "No, that's selfish." Okay, that's some part of American culture. It's not really a criticism for me, because there's some really sweet part of that, too, but it's a real example of when your ingrained fears -- the story about yourself -- when that goes against what's actually best for you and for the people you're trying to protect. Oh, here's poor Winky trying to... When she's saying, "Oh, there's bad things happening, I have to do something," she's right, and something is impeding her progress. Ouch.

JC: There's a lot of interesting stuff that happens around the whole storyline with Winky here. There's a lot that happens. We've got first mention of Hermione's interest in elf rights and Ron's complete ignorance of it, I guess. That dynamic plays out a lot through this book, I think, but Ron is just the status quo. "This is just how house-elves are. What are you talking about? They like it."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And Hermione is horrified by this, so this conflict between the two of them over the next book or so is very interesting. There's a line that Hermione says early on: "'It's people like you, Ron,' Hermione began hotly, 'who prop up rotten and unjust systems just because they're too lazy to --'" and then gets cut off. But I'm like, 'GIVE ME MORE WOKE HERMIONE!' I love it, I love it. I love that this is the way she's speaking about the world, and my first thought is, 'Where did she learn this?'

Lorrie: Yep!

JC: Because I don't think she learned it at Hogwarts.

Lorrie: No, she did not.

JC: Oooh....

Lorrie: Yeah. She arrives at Hogwarts already with her firmly established beliefs about slavery, and she came from a place where that's just obvious.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: Everybody knows, and she is entering a place where it's invisible assumed privilege. And Ron's resentment and bewilderment... That is the natural response of humans when we are shown something that we've been taking for granted, and it's uncomfortable.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: 'No, I was happier not thinking about that.'

JC: 'I don't want to think about that! Don't make me think about that! It's not my fault!'

Lorrie: 'And what do you expect me to do about it?'

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: Ugh. The whole house-elf subplot has come under a lot of grumbling from fans, because in many ways, if it's supposed to be a commentary on slavery, it's sort of crudely handled. It's not nearly as subtle as it might be, and I can understand that if you want to explore that in all the subtlety it deserves, then it can't be a subplot. It's definitely a subplot here, and part of it is awkwardly handled by the writing and part of it is necessarily, developmentally appropriate for Hermione to be awkward and crude about it. The thing that I think maybe -- if I had been making beta notes, I would have said, "You might want to highlight this a little more and make it more obvious" -- is that I think Hermione is displacing her anxiety. The conflict that you pointed out, where she was staring down Lucius Malfoy: she understands that this inequality and exploitation is the same principle, although much more extreme and entrenched for the house-elves. But if Draco and his family have their way, this is the change that's going to be happening right now: there's going to be more stratification, and people like Hermione are going to be pushed more toward the lower status that house-elves have. Hermione has been struggling in the second book with being Petrified -- targeted because she was Muggle-born; and then in the third book, seeing first-hand (with Hagrid the half-breed and Buckbeak the non-human creature) that there are definitely forces that just think, 'Oh, well, just fire them and kill them.'

JC: Yeah. Right. 'Or just throw them in Azkaban for a while. It's fine.' Yeah.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: 'For their own safety.'

Lorrie: Yeah. It's harder... You just can't, especially if you're a teenager, sustain fighting all the time for your own survival. It's so life-and-death, it's so taxing. If you're making this lateral move where you fight for rights of something that's parallel and definitely connected, that can be a testing ground to see if your loved ones -- the ones that you're counting on, the ones who you'll have to go to, to hide if things get as bad as they might get -- are they trustworthy? The way that

she always sets forth these proposals and then challenges Ron and Harry to contradict her that these should be important to them... With the Polyjuice Potion in the second book, when they're like, "I don't know, Hermione, that's a lot of risk," and she's like, "Oh. Oh, yeah, you get to make that choice, don't you?" Yeah. With the house-elf thing, she's testing them again. Not on purpose...

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: Well, why does this occur to her in a way that it doesn't occur to Ron? Why is house-elf treatment a direct threat to Hermione's well-being in a way that it isn't for Ron?

JC: Yeah, that's interesting. I hadn't thought of it that way. I think I was thinking of my own experience of being a young person and learning about the injustices that exist in the world around me, and looking at the adults around me, thinking, 'You just live like this? You just think that's okay? This is not okay.' I see my own kid doing the same thing. Granted, white middle-class people... There's some layers of privilege in that, in being able to look around and go, 'Wow, people should be fighting for this more. Maybe I'll do that.' But the fear that you're mentioning there was not necessarily there for me as a teenager; if it was, I was not aware of it. Now, for my own kid, it's a little different, because a lot of the things that he's really worried about are things that are concerning the way that things are going for queer folks, so I think he feels that much more keenly.

Lorrie: Yeah. The good thing happening here -- the good, developmentally appropriate thing happening here, awkward as it is (which is, I think, part of what comes with being this age as a teenager): this is where allyship starts.

JC: Ah.

Lorrie: And it starts with empathy; it starts with the ability to see the parallels. Honestly, you can't always be fighting for yourself. It's exhausting, and seeing people to your face say, "I actually don't care that much whether you survive or not," there's only so much of that a human being can take. But if there's a parallel cause, it's definitely connected and you can work together for that. It will benefit you, and it provides some structure and some safety for you to work out all of these arguments without all the time exhaustingly putting yourself and your own survival on the line. It's crude, but who said being fourteen was easy?

JC: For sure. That's the interesting thing about this book; we'll talk about this more as we go on. There's so much happening in this book that parallels adolescent development. There's just a lot of really interesting stuff happening here. It's like, 'Wow. The author really looked into what's happening in kids' brains and how kids are behaving at this age, and what kinds of things they're struggling with and what ways they're developing,' and you just see many examples of it here.

Lorrie: Right. And I think (not on purpose) the way the author has been \*gasps\* gearing up for this super-difficult chapter, and then taking it on and nearly being defeated by it that I think (not on purpose) parallels how it feels to be in ninth grade.

JC: Yeah. I think that's true.

Lorrie: 'I don't know. Can I do this?' That happened when my daughters started in high school at this age and they had to start taking public transportation across the city to public high schools

instead of walking to their neighborhood school. Then it's like, 'Well, can you negotiate public transportation with all of the sexual harassment that comes toward physically maturing, attractive, but still childish and somewhat defenseless young girls? Ooooh. It's a big jump. It's not gradual. Ugh.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: I do love also -- and I'm more prejudiced against sports than I should be -- Harry's reflexes. When the Aurors and the Ministry people shoot their Stunning Spells, Harry hits the ground and he pulls Hermione and Ron down with him. Wow, Harry! Wow! That's amazing.

JC: There's so much that happens in the scene. It goes by very quickly with who shot off the spell, and we establish pretty quickly that it wasn't the kids and Harry doesn't even have his wand. Then they point to where it came from and they find the wand in the woods; it turns out it's Harry's wand.

Lorrie: So scary.

JC: Also, I think Winky is there, too, but then we find out that there is a way to learn what was the last spell that a wand cast, which is like, 'Oh.'

Lorrie: Ooh!

JC: That's very interesting.

Lorrie: A new tool! Yeah.

JC: This feels like something we're going to see again in the future.

Lorrie: I sense fanfic writers everywhere rubbing their hands together in glee!

JC: But the horror of that -- whoever casts this -- used Harry's wand to do it, so the idea --

Lorrie: Right. Oh, no!

JC: Was it on purpose? Was someone trying to set Harry up? Did Winky actually protect Harry here?

Lorrie: Why does everything happen to Harry?

JC: Why does everything happen to Harry? Yeah. Yeah. And the kids still don't understand what the Dark Mark is and what it means. Well, Hermione does, but the other kids are like, 'Why are the adults freaking out?'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: 'Why are they looking like they want to throw us into prison? What's happening?'

Lorrie: And then we have the introduction of the instability that is Barty Crouch.

JC: Oh, Lord.

Lorrie: He arrives on the scene: "His eyes were popping -- he looked slightly mad." This is a different kind of fanaticism that we start seeing: the way he's responding to this, which is so mysterious. What is going on with him? He finds out that it was his house-elf and he goes, "This

-- cannot -- be," and then he goes into the bushes. What?! What is he thinking? On subsequent readings, after I find out the incredibly complicated stuff that's going on in his mind, it's so complex I find it difficult to keep it all in mind. It's so complicated and risky, and it's full of shame and secrets.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: So much of it is his fault, and he is, by nature, proud, and he's unwilling to admit his fault.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Ugh.

JC: And then we have Winky in the middle of this, who's bound to protect this family, and there's literally -- she's between a rock and a hard place. There's nothing she can do. Nothing.

Lorrie: She is, in my mind, one of the most tragic characters of the series. I can't even think about her without hurting. She's pure, protective, maternal despair. Ouch.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: All of the caring and none of the power. The thing that we see about Winky is it's not that she's bound to protect them, although that is her contract. It's real, her bond is real. It's totally voluntary.

JC: Oh, yeah, she loves this family. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. There's actual bond of affection there and judgment.

JC: Yeah. And there's this interesting moment when the line that really stood out to me on this read was Mr. Crouch yelling, "If you accuse my elf, you accuse me," which I thought -- he has a very different relationship with his house-elf than Lucius Malfoy had with Dobby.

Lorrie: Yes, yes.

JC: Yeah. Very interesting.

Lorrie: Barty Crouch is a true 'death to the patriarchy' moment for me. The way that he's like, "My reputation is its own thing and deserves its own rights." What? Ew!

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And if he had not revered his own reputation that way, some of this pain could have been spared.

JC: I think that the author did a really good job of setting us up for the scene with all the Percy fawning over Crouch in the early chapters.

Lorrie: Yes, yes.

JC: Because if this was just a guy that we didn't really know who he was and we hadn't had any interaction with him and he popped onto the scene, the payoff wouldn't be what it is.

Lorrie: It's so fascinating, because this is all of Percy's father issues.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: This is the father Percy wishes he had.

JC: And he turns out to be just as complicated as any other human. Yeah. There's a lot going on here. You're right. And it's hard to keep it all in your mind as you're thinking through this.

Lorrie: Yeah. This is patriarchal power that Percy is angry at Arthur for abdicating.

JC: Yeah. Oh, Arthur is so interesting. This whole chapter...

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: I love the fact that the first person who actually uses the term 'elf rights' is Arthur, and he indicates that he is sympathetic...

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: That maybe this is something he's... And the Weasleys don't have a house-elf.

Lorrie: Nope, although Molly would love one.

JC: They are an old wizarding family. Yeah. Molly, I'm sure, could use one. They don't have one, so I was like, hmm, that's interesting. But also he acknowledges to Hermione that there is an awareness in the wizarding community and there is a movement to establish rights for non-human magical creatures, and he agrees with her.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: So I was like, 'Oh, my God.' Having been the kid who was frustrated at my family's casual racism and to have another adult say, "You're right. I agree with you."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Oh, my God.

Lorrie: Yeah. Also, he's farther along than she is, because when she starts ripping into Ron -- "It's people like you" -- Mr. Weasley butts in on purpose to cut her off, because that's such a basic, elementary, adolescent version of this argument and he has decades more experience with this. This can't go anywhere good. "Yes, yes, yes. You can grow up about this later. Right now, we've got to go."

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: He is fathering in this chapter. There's so much fathering going on in this chapter, because there's him and there's Barty Crouch and there's Amos Diggory. It's a lot of different ways to be patriarchal, and Arthur's protectiveness is, "That's my son. Stop."

JC: Yeah. Oh, there's a moment at the beginning of this chapter, too -- while we're talking about Arthur Weasley -- when he looks at Fred and George, who've got all this money, and he makes this decision to say, "Just don't tell your mother."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It made me think these boys, they're sixteen. I think we established they're sixteen at this point.

Lorrie: Yes, they're sixteen.

JC: : I have a 16-year-old, you have a 16-year-old. You have had a former 16-year-old.

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: That's this age when they're so close to adulthood and they have a ways to go.

Lorrie: And they give him a hint. They give him an opening. They say, "Oh, no, we've got plans for this money," and then they're waiting for him to ask and he makes a decision.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Plausible deniability. This is plausible deniability. It's similar to sending Draco into the woods, too. It's better if you don't know.

JC: For sure. Yeah, so there's that. That idea that as an adult... he's running through his head. He knows what they're going to do with this money. He already knows, and he's just like, 'I'm going to not say anything.' We do this as parents a lot. It's like, 'I know exactly what you're doing.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: 'And I'm just going to keep my mouth shut, because you need to learn the lesson on your own or you need to figure this out on your own. You are now old enough that I can visualize the damage that you might do. It's not that awful. Go make mistakes. Go do it.'

Lorrie: But it's also a conflict in parenting styles between the two parents, and they're not communicating about it.

JC: Yes. Yes. I think I wrote that exact note. 'Yes.' Yeah. And that's also very real.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That's... yeah.

Lorrie: So yeah, he's making a decision.

JC: I don't think that... That would not have hit me until this read, because I was not the parent of an older teenager until now. It's like 'Oh, I recognize that. I recognize that sigh.'

Lorrie: Yeah. Well, it's always a payoff. There's a point at which stepping in to protect your teen from their own decisions... There's a point at which it's more costly to coddle them, and it's more beneficial. You just have to cross your fingers that letting them take the risk won't backfire terribly. What if you're like, 'Well, I guess there's a small outside chance that they might die from this, but...' and then if they do, well, you're screwed forever. Yeah. This having children/parenting thing: high stakes at all times. This chapter is a really good demonstration of why later on, when *Cursed Child* was brought into creation... I do accept it as the eighth story. I know a lot of people don't, but *Cursed Child* is about the role of the father, as these seven books are, generally speaking, about the role of the mother. *Cursed Child* connects back to this year of Harry's schooling, because book four, *Goblet of Fire*, is the one about fathering. Yeah, all these different modes of fathering all have this super high stakes moment here.



JC: Another thing I think -- and this kind of connects to the fathering thing -- is that when they come out of the woods, everyone looks at Arthur Weasley. "What do we do? Arthur, what do we do?"

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Arthur is often portrayed as almost a comical character and not very effective; we kind of see Percy's opinion of him and we see how Mr. Malfoy treats him, but when he comes out of the woods, it's like oh, no, he does have a lot of standing in the Wizarding World.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: People do respect him, and it's nice to see that.

Lorrie: Yeah, it is.

JC: That was, yeah, comforting to see, and he did kind of take charge of the situation. Even though he seems like he bumbles around his own house and doesn't know how to work with Muggle objects, he's in command in this scene and he takes care of all the kids. I thought, 'Oh, I like that.'

Lorrie: It's nice --

JC: It was kind of hot, to be honest. I was like, 'Arthur... Hey.'

Lorrie: It's nice to see why his children, with the exception of Percy, have such loyalty to him. They're not just trying to cover up defensively. They actively see value in his ways, and all of that overachieving from all seven Weasleys has to come from somewhere. Or six and a half Weasleys.

JC: Right. Yeah. And then he goes on to teach the kids. 'What's the history of the Dark Mark? Why is all this happening?' He takes the time to sit down with them and explain to them what's going on, and after everything that's been happening, the kids need -- and we, the reader, need -- this information. He does this multiple times in the series. He's the one who sits them down and tells them the truth.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Several times, if I'm remembering correctly. Which is what a good parent does.

Lorrie: Yeah, Ron will sometimes say, "Ask my dad." He actually does know stuff.

JC: Yeah. I really like his role these last few chapters.

Lorrie: It's reassuring.

JC: It's very reassuring. Yeah. Okay, there are adults who are on the right side, who do know what's going on, who do have the respect of other adults around them, who have the possibility of being good leaders. Yeah.

Lorrie: Well, if you're thinking about patriarchy -- like when Hermione says, "Well, maybe the Ministry will catch whoever's doing this," and you're like, 'I don't know. Can we trust institutions? Can we trust in authority? Can we trust in patriarchy?' -- Arthur is someone where you think, 'Oh, they are demonstrating trustworthiness, and that's something that we could really use right

now.' Then there's this other thing that I found so chilling, speaking of patriarchy: the Code of Wand Use that they mention, because Winky's found with the wand. The Code of Wand Use says, "No non-human creature is permitted to carry or use a wand." That raises the question, "Or what?" Winky says, "No, I'm a good house-elf. I wouldn't use a wand. First of all, I don't know how. But more importantly, I'm good. I wouldn't do that." Why? How is this enforced? That leads into one of the things that Hermione is objecting to, that she's so repelled by: when there are groups that wield oppressive power over other groups, how is this enforced? But especially, how is it so entrenched that this psychological tactic is at work of getting people to do it to themselves? Nobody has told Winky, "You can't use a wand or you're a bad elf. She wants credit for knowing that and for abiding by it herself. That reminded me of one of my favorite Harry Potter scholars, Timothy Snyder, who wrote (among many other things) *On Tyranny*, which was a little anti-authoritarian guidebook that became quite popular in 2016. Things to do to resist authoritarianism, and his first rule was 'Do not obey in advance.'" The quote from this goes: "Most of the power of authoritarianism is freely given. In times like these, individuals think ahead about what a more repressive government will want, and then offer themselves without being asked. A citizen who adapts in this way is teaching power what it can do." Chilling. Hermione here -- by objecting to acceptance of house-elf compliance -- she's championing resistance. I say Tim Snyder is a Harry Potter scholar; he gave the keynote speech for the Harry Potter Academic Conference at Chestnut Hill College in 2020, which I loved, and I will link to that in the show notes.

JC: Yeah. It's so relevant to the world we live in I don't even know where to begin, but I was trying to think about where the story is going and how much of that we're going to see. In a couple of years, when we get to those books... Yeah, and how... Wow. Okay, we are sitting right now -- as of this recording, it is early September of 2024, so we are a couple of months out from an election that could change the world in terrible ways or in better ways.

Lorrie: I don't know what's going to happen.

JC: This is a really momentous moment in history. We don't know what's going to happen, and that's going to change the way we interpret these books going forward, which is kind of wild to me; books that we haven't yet gotten to we would interpret differently now than we might interpret them a few years down from now, but that's the nature of what we're doing here.

Lorrie: That's the nature of being a reader: it's going to change who we are the next time we encounter these stories. Who we are affects what we read.

JC: Yeah. Yeah.

Lorrie: It changes the book we're reading, even though the words don't change. Yikes. Well, yeah. This moment of high tension that these people are experiencing... Hmm. Yeah, I can see it. I can see it.

JC: Yeah. I feel it in a different way than I did before. There's some other information that we get at the end of this chapter that I think really also stood out to me: Bill's comment that, "Oh, they were all scared away as soon as they saw the Dark Mark." There's a lot we could say about that.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But the idea that they were rioters who felt empowered to just go out and be cruel and be terrorists...

Lorrie: And that's patriarchy, too.

JC: But the moment they thought it might be real, they ran.

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah.

JC: Yeah. But that made me think of January 6th. That's what that made me think of.

Lorrie: "We're big guys." Yeah.

JC: Get all these people who were all puffed up and they were breaking into the Capitol and doing all the stuff, and then when they --

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. And then later, I was like, "Oh, I didn't know." The way that they scattered and ran when they understood, "Oh, we're actually going to get in trouble."

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: "People are taking this seriously. We were joking."

Lorrie: Oh, poor Winky. She comes back to consciousness and she sees the Dark Mark. Oh, and there's that bit of writing where Harry sees the Dark Mark reflected in each of her eyes, and she's being interrogated, so she starts rocking backward and forward. That poor thing. Later on, when we learn what's been going on with her, then we understand whatever's in her mind is so much more distressing to her than being surrounded by twenty Ministry wizards. Ouch.

JC: Yeah, but also that Mr. Weasley notes later that only Death Eaters ever knew how to conjure the Dark Mark. That would have been a good thing to bring up when Winky was being grilled over this.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. If the only person who could have conjured it was a former Death Eater...

Lorrie: Yeah, but also not everybody knows all these details about Death Eaters.

JC: But yeah, plenty of us have been in situations where we think, 'Damn, I really should have said this, so I can't fault him for not saying the perfect thing at the perfect moment.' But also, it was like, 'Ugh, now we hear this.' Yeah.

Lorrie: And there's also the super creepy factor of Harry recognizing his own wand. This is not the first time that something that shouldn't have happened happened around Harry Potter. What does this mean? Why is this child an exception? Then it turns out this time, "No, no, no, it was a coincidence, but you can't know," and that's the weariness of the life that is Harry Potter. Every single thing could be the Dark Lord coming back.

JC: And then we've already seen him in the past -- and we're going to definitely see him in the future -- being suspicious of his connections to Voldemort: the fact that the Hat wanted to put him into Slytherin and all these other things that start to feel like coincidences, and he starts to

kind of question who he really is. This is another moment where that could have happened. Why was it his wand that cast the Dark Mark? That's another moment of "How and why am I connected to Voldemort?"

Lorrie: Yeah. What more burdens are being put on him that he knows perfectly well did not originate from him?

JC: It's got to be more than just, "He tried to kill my parents." There's something else somewhere. He'll learn more about that later, but that's what it made me think of, too. And I love the fact that at the end of this, they go back and Mr. Weasley's like, "We have to sleep," and it's like, are you kidding me?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: How could anybody sleep after all of that? But yeah, they go back to their tent and he makes them go to sleep.

Lorrie: I love when Winky is being interrogated -- you can see the effort that the author put into this -- her dialogue is written so carefully so that she doesn't lie. You see Winky is thinking every word through, saying no, she didn't see anyone. Okay. Literally speaking, that's true. She did not see anyone. "What were you doing with that wand?" "I didn't cast the Dark Mark with it." Oh, that poor thing... Meanwhile, Mr. Crouch is shouting, "I despise and detest the Dark Arts and those who practice them." That's a good introduction of this book's theme: that extremism is its own value-neutral danger. Is he on your side or not? I don't know. It's not trustworthy either way. Oh, God, then he uses the power of patriarchy again when he says, "I have no use for a servant who forgets what is due to her master, and to her master's reputation." Ugh. He pulls rank, and he says he's going to deal with Winky personally. That's just totally pulling rank, and you can see Amos Diggory thinking that's not good, but he doesn't have the power to override this. Barty Crouch fires his elf, and he and she cannot speak openly in front of all these people about what's happening. The author -- I think achieves really well -- shows why Hermione would see what's happening and conclude that Mr. Crouch has bewitched Winky or something. The reader -- we don't know why Winky doesn't want to leave his service; Ron has this surface explanation that house-elves want to serve by nature, which doesn't feel like it's going to be right either, yet we'll find out later the truth is so much more heartbreaking. But the confusion level... The stakes of all the mystery that is being set up in the chapter. This is really high stakes.

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: So after this, when they get back to the tent, Hermione shouts at Percy. This is the first break between Hermione and Percy that's just going to get worse and worse.

JC: Ooh.

Lorrie: They've never disagreed on stuff before. This is after a day when she had that staring contest with Lucius Malfoy. Yeah, it's a test. Okay, if somebody doesn't care about house-elf subservience, can she trust them to be her ally? I like the comment from Bill, that he says, "The Dark Mark scared away the Death Eaters who were torturing the Roberts family." That's when Harry learns for the first time -- and we, the readers, learn for the first time -- what Death Eaters are. That's when we get introduced to that term.

JC: Oh, that's right.

Lorrie: 'Death Eaters'? What could that mean? I think this is the point in this series when we, the readers -- and also Harry, Ron, and Hermione -- are being treated as ready to handle learning that the reason these people torture and kill Muggles is for fun. They think this is enjoyable. That's evil. That's chilling. And then Ron asks why the Death Eaters would then Disapparate at the sight of the Dark Mark. I feel like it is slightly unfair of Bill to say, "Use your brains," because I wasn't there either. I also was wondering. It's a pretty subtle point: oh, they have their own politics going on. They were romping around irresponsibly, and now they're being called to account maybe, or at least their consciences are being challenged. Hermione then voices the crucial question: "Whoever conjured the Dark Mark... were they doing it to show support for the Death Eaters, or to scare them away?" So convoluted. People's hidden motives can be so convoluted; there can be more than two sides. The enemy of my enemy is not necessarily my friend. Yeah. All the Death Eaters who distanced themselves from Voldemort, they will be frightened to see him come back -- the return of the angry father. Then Mr. Weasley raises, intriguingly, the possibility of a truly reformed Death Eater. "I'd be very surprised if the person who did it hadn't been a Death Eater once, even if they're not now." Hmm.

JC: Hmm...

Lorrie: Exhausted Harry finishes the chapter, and I think the author is also trying to put the chapter to bed. He thinks okay, three days ago, his scar burned. Now Voldemort's mark appears in the sky. What did these things mean? Ugh, we haven't even left the riot site yet.

JC: And we haven't even gone to school yet. We're still in the summer.

Lorrie: Yeah!

JC: Yeah. Yup.

Lorrie: The next chapter is called Mayhem at the Ministry.

JC: Oh, that's comforting.

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah. Here we go.

JC: Wow. That's an answer to Hermione's question: won't the Ministry do something about it? Yeah, here we go. Let's put our faith in institutions. Oh, my God. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Wow. Yeah. That was a big chapter.

Lorrie: We'll have to go have hot chocolate or something and try to recover from that.

JC: Yeah, really.

Lorrie: Pumpkin Spice.

JC: It's fall. I'm in my Pumpkin Spice mode, so yeah.

Lorrie: Is it cider doughnut season?

JC: Yeah, exactly.

Lorrie: All right.

JC: All right.

Lorrie: Well, I'll talk to you when we've recovered.

JC: Okay, all right. We've got more excitement coming up. We're getting into it now. Eventually, we'll even get to Hogwarts.

Lorrie: Hmm.

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