

Transcript

Episode 5.13

Book 5, Chapter 13: Detention with Dolores

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 Five, Chapter Thirteen: Detention with Dolores.

Lorrie: Detention with Dolores. Harry reports for detention with Dolores Umbridge. Nobody can get him out of this; he goes five nights in a row and learns about a completely different way that an evil person can scar someone for life. JC, are you emotionally ready to talk about this chapter?

JC: I guess. Here we are. Oh, this was a tough one to read. Ugh, this whole chapter was pain.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Pain, pain, pain.

Lorrie: Yeah, it's about as dark as it gets.

JC: Man...

Lorrie: Yeah, memorably dark.

JC: Ooh, yeah. Yeah, and dark in a way that is new, I think, for this series.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: I remember being shocked the first time I read this, like 'Oh, wow,' and that idea that someone would just be that casually cruel to a person in that way. Oh, man.

Lorrie: Oh, yeah. Twisted. Hermione and Ron take Harry out of the Great Hall because the other students are gossiping about him, and Hermione frames the issue as one about truth. She explains to Harry that people didn't have time the previous school year to process that Voldemort killed Cedric, and then during summer vacation, the Ministry mounted this summer-long disinformation campaign about Harry and Dumbledore. Harry had not had that perspective before, and she explained, "We just had Dumbledore's word for it." "'Which is the truth!' said Harry loudly. 'I know it is, Harry, so will you *please* stop biting my head off?'" which I love as an excellent lesson for all of us on what it feels like to be in a war on truth, because the powers that be will not hear you. That's the game; of course, they won't hear you. They think it's funny that they can't hear you. Your friends and allies are the ones who will hear you, so you have to be mindful of how you direct the anger that you're constantly being provoked to feel. I remember, in 2016, I had to be schooled. I had to be taught, "Do not make small hands jokes about Donald Trump. The only people who are going to hear you are your trans-masc friends." That's true. Shoot, sorry.

JC: Similarly, when people mock his weight or other things about his appearance, it's like, 'Yeah.' It's the same thing. Who hears those jokes?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And who is going to feel like, "Wow, you're lumping me in. First of all, you're lumping me into a category with this person who is morally reprehensible. Does that mean you think everyone...?" Right, yeah.

Lorrie: No one's denying that the anger is real and refreshed daily; you just have to be mindful of who hears you. Okay, okay.

JC: Yeah. It also reminds me -- and we've talked about this before -- of the way that children will lash out at their parents when they're frustrated at things that are outside of the family and that it's because you have no one else to lash out at, or children will take it out on their siblings. You've got to get it out somehow, and you're going to take it out on the people who are closest to you and who, in some sense, you trust are not going to abandon you for having been mean to them or shouting at them. Again, it's that part of basic human nature that we need to get this out and, unfortunately, we're often doing it on the people that we need the most. Yeah.

Lorrie: And that happens within fandoms.

JC: Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: That was what I thought about a lot when TERFpocalypse started, and there were people within former Harry Potter fandom who spent a lot more energy doxxing people who still followed J.K. Rowling's Twitter than they did on fighting transphobia.

Sometimes, you feel so abandoned howling into the abyss that you get more fulfillment fighting with somebody who's actually there to hear you. I understand that; I do that myself. We have to be careful about it.

JC: Yeah. It's just a human thing at the end of the day.

Lorrie: It's just something that we have to know about and learn from experience, 'Don't do that.'

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Oh, gosh, and then Hermione has one of those lapses that I am unhappy with myself for, where she suddenly cries out, "How can Dumbledore have let this happen?" and she yells it so suddenly that Harry and Ron both jump.

JC: It is a rare outburst of temper from her. She doesn't do that often. Yeah.

Lorrie: No, and she's the one who's been sarcastic at Harry and Ron for not being with the program and knowing, "Of course, things are worse than you think. Don't be naive." She has an outburst like this of that feeling of betrayal when you discover your protector is fallible and so are your institutions. When you think back of how polite Dumbledore was at the start-of-term feast when Umbridge interrupted him, he can't stop her. He's not in any position to be anything but polite, and McGonagall saying, "Harry, no, I cannot get you out of detention..." She's got them trapped, and it reminded me of my irrational heartbreak and anger and betrayal at Obama in 2017 because he just left. He just left us. What was he supposed to do? But he had this very stern expression in 2017 when he addressed the country. He looked grim and he kept emphasizing the importance of a peaceful transfer of power, and then he disappeared. Every once in a while, when I would catch glimpses of him, I would feel angry. 'How could you leave us?' But that disappearance -- the way he completely vanished after inauguration in 2017 -- was helpful for me in forcing myself to let go of the fantasy --

JC: That someone was going to come and fix it?

Lorrie: Yeah, because like Hermione, it was so horrendous. I kept thinking, 'How can this be happening? How can something or someone in this universe allow this to happen? This is outrageous. This can't be happening.' Yeah, it's happening. So yeah, I really recognized her sudden outburst that made poor Harry and Ron jump in their seats.

JC: I sense that you're going to disagree with me here, but my read on that was that even Hermione doesn't yet understand the scope of the situation.

Lorrie: Oh, yeah.

JC: She still thinks that Dumbledore could do something here.

Lorrie: Oh, no, I agree with that.

JC: Okay.

Lorrie: Or has not maybe examined how deeply she trusted in his omnipotence, and now it's coming up. 'Oh, we didn't even know that this could be destroyed by somebody so small and twisted. Oh, huh... He can do anything. Why? Why?!'

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Oh, and she's especially mad. How can he let her teach us during our O.W.L. year? Yeah, I'm really not crazy about colleges being defunded and persecuted right when my 11th grader is figuring out where to apply. This is a very inconvenient time for this to be happening.

JC: Right. Yeah. Yeah. Even this morning -- and I don't actually spend any time on Reddit -- but somehow I get a daily report of Reddit feeds that Reddit thinks I would be interested in. I have somehow gotten on a bunch of college admissions ones (even though I haven't gone and sought these out), but the amount of rage I've seen recently at Harvard... Recently in the news, at the time we're recording this, Donald Trump removed Harvard's ability to enroll international students or something like that, and it's being fought out in court. We don't know exactly how it's going to go, but the number of students that I have seen railing against this on a Reddit post... "This is ruining my life!" It's like, 'Yeah.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah, and they don't care. Yeah, it's ruining your life. You're right.

Lorrie: It is.

JC: I teach at a university, where we're a Hispanic serving institution, and we have a lot of students who are undocumented (a pretty large percentage); it's a thing that, until a few years ago, students would be very open about because they were protected under DACA. Now they're terrified, and the state legislature just passed a law basically removing their right to be in-state students, which pretty much removes their right to go to state institutions. They're mad and it's ruining their lives, and yeah, the government doesn't care. So yeah, that feeling of impotence and being angry. 'Why doesn't somebody do something?'

Lorrie: 'How can this be happening?' Actually, what they're trying to do is ruin your life, so that's why you feel like this is ruining your life.

JC: Yeah, yeah. They're accomplishing their goal.

Lorrie: Yeah. This is not a byproduct. This is the actual goal.

JC: It's not a bug; it's a feature or something like that. Yeah, yeah. It is interesting, too, that they've just had this conversation where Harry finally, I think, came to terms with the fact that he has been set up for this. He realizes that the situation's been manipulated so that he looks like the one who's crazy (even though he knows the truth), and the full understanding of that crashes down on him.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Oh, God. Why would anyone ever believe his story over everything else?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: How awful that feels...

Lorrie: And they have the advantage of having seen Hagrid in the second book being sent to Azkaban purely for PR purposes for the convenience of the Minister, and they saw Buckbeak be sentenced to death for nothing. That has prepared him some to realize, 'Okay, I actually do know that they're capable of this.'

JC: But to have it directed at him, a kid...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. Ugh...

Lorrie: Yeah, and right around the time that Dumbledore has not been around all summer. So yeah, Hermione, Ron and Harry only have each other, and then Ron thinks doing their homework together means getting Hermione to do it for him, which annoyed the crap out of me. I felt like picking a fight with him for that.

JC: Five years in, this is the norm for them, isn't it? It was even funnier to me, in a sense, because we didn't hear any of the content either. We know what was happening with Harry during that class, and he was not in any state to receive information.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: And that's the thing that's really scary about this whole year (the way that Umbridge is doing things) and honestly, this is my major criticism of Snape as a teacher: if you create conditions under which children feel stressed and fearful, their brains are physically incapable of learning.

Lorrie: They can't learn.

JC: They cannot do it. Anyway, we know that Harry was in this state this whole lesson. They're supposed to write something about moonstones, and as the reader, it's like, 'Moonstone... I've heard that word before.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: 'What?!' It seems just as opaque to us as it does to Harry and Ron.

Lorrie: Yeah. If you can just imagine the sudden drop in Harry's grades... How is he supposed to know? He spent the whole class time trying to run away from being killed.

JC: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Ohhh... Yeah, yeah. And then the amount of homework that they get over the course of this chapter. This reminds me too much of my kid being in marching band and then having to come home after hours of practice in 100-degree weather, eat something quickly, sit down at the table and do homework until midnight, and then get up the next day and do it all over again. I was like, 'No, I don't like this.'

Lorrie: No. No, not good.

JC: No! Yeah. This is too much like junior year of high school, I swear.

Lorrie: Meanwhile, the argument between Ron and Hermione about her doing his homework gets interrupted by the sight of Fred and George poisoning first years without telling them.

JC: Oh, my God!

Lorrie: Hermione is quite rightly indignant, and I'm so glad that she's there to put limits on their disregard for informed consent. Ron is in a terrible position, of course; Ron did not sign up to lose that particular conflict between him and his brothers (who are much older, more clever, and two of them, anyway, against him). I do love what she does here: the twins didn't foresee what authority she was going to call on to limit them with.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, we're not talking rule of law here. We're talking about your relationships and the person who actually can control you.

JC: Right, right.

Lorrie: Oh, man, that was great.

JC: Yeah, that was very clever. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yes, and wow, they shut up instantly.

JC: The thing is that they're going about it... Okay, human subjects -- lack of approval aside or lack of informed consent aside -- it seems that they're trying to go about this in a fairly scientific way. They're actually really doing some due diligence on testing their products.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: They really have a plan; this shows that they have a plan. It's a plan they haven't completely thought through, but they're only sixteen, so okay, I'm not that surprised. I've seen 16-year-olds in a chemistry lab; I'm not that surprised. They're going about it in a way that they thought through this to the extent that their brains have let them.

Lorrie: Oh, they're seventeen, because they would now be old enough to compete in the TriWizard Tournament.

JC: Oh! They're two years older. That's right. They're seventeen now. Thank you.

Lorrie: Yeah, seventeen.

JC: I have a 17-year-old. I've been in chemistry labs with 17-year-olds also, yes.

Lorrie: Oh, boy.

JC: Yeah, and the fact that high school teachers start every lab by reminding everyone of the safety rules... It's done for a reason. Yeah. It's like, 'What do we do and not do with burners and things like that?' Anyway, it's interesting to me that it's very age appropriate (what they're doing), and they've thought through this and they've got a great plan.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: They just haven't thought through it quite to the level that they should have. I'm sure they would have volunteers still who would come and test out their products if they knew exactly what they were getting into.

Lorrie: Can you imagine being a first-year and it's the first week of Hogwarts? You're eleven, you can't even find your dorm yet -- you still get lost -- and these grown-up-looking, very pushy, charismatic people are saying --

JC: "Here, I'll give you money if you'll take this pill."

Lorrie: And you're like, "This is what everyone does when you get to Hogwarts, I guess."

JC: Yep. 'Oh, and that's Harry Potter over there. Apparently, he's crazy.' Yeah. Oh, my God. Yeah, what year... Especially in the last few books, I think about how the first-years coming in will never know a normal year at Hogwarts, such as one ever exists, but wow. To come and have this be your first year or the following year, or the year after that... Oh, my God.

Lorrie: Okay, well... Anyway, Fred and George Weasley, who are very grown-up-looking, tell you, "It's candy, it's perfectly safe."

JC: And they have a clipboard, and then they're watching you while you eat it. Yeah. 'No, guys, come on; think this through.'

Lorrie: And then Hermione Granger comes and yells at them, and she is really superior to Ron about this. Then she does this massively hypocritical thing.

JC: Yes! Oh, my God, and then she turns around... Yeah. Oh, Hermione...

Lorrie: And she does the exact same thing to the house-elves with not informing and getting their consent, sneaking not-very-well-knitted hats where they will accidentally free themselves by touching them. Ron... I'm impressed with him. He knows that there's no use trying to talk reason into her, and he just very practically goes behind her back and limits her and takes away these threats.

JC: Yeah. Just take the trash off of them so that if anyone picks them up, they know exactly what they're doing. Yeah, that she could yell at Fred and George about it, and then turn around and also put someone in a position to trick them into doing something without their fully-informed consent... Oh.

Lorrie: Yeah. The way Ron deals with it by not fighting with her and just going behind her back feels really mature to me.

JC: Yeah, yeah. That's true.

Lorrie: He knows better than to waste his time getting into a pointless argument with her.

JC: Yeah, that's true. I also like the fact that they all go to bed this night without having done their homework.

Lorrie: I know!

JC: It was understandable, and it also caused me anxiety. 'Oh, no... Oh, no!'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's only going to get worse, and Harry didn't have a detention yet.

Lorrie: And Harry knows that.

JC: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: He knows, but he has a headache. Oh, gosh...

JC: It's been a bad day. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. And then the next morning, they're all still in bad moods. Hermione's hats? Ron insults them; he calls them "woolly bladders" (and you can just imagine they're not very good), and she's so insulted she doesn't talk to him. She did deserve some

pushback. Story time: last November, for ConjuratonCon, my friend Irvin Khaytman and I (he wrote the Dumbledore book) gave a joint presentation called "The Scary Side of Hermione Granger," and one of the topics we covered was her unstoppable "craftivist" energy around making these hats; for that portion, I knitted. I had to ask myself, 'How many hats could I knit for this presentation that would be funny?' If you knit a couple hats, that's not funny. If you knit five hats, that's quite a few hats, but I wanted it to be a number where people would start worrying that maybe they were never going to end. I thought about it, and I said twenty. If I knit twenty hats by hand and keep piling them on to Irvin's head, declaring him free with each one, that would be funny. It was funny, and people did start looking nervous. 'Is there going to be an end? How many hats are there going to be?' He was gasping underneath all the hats. "Too much freedom! Too much freedom!" Yeah. Then I donated them all to a hat drive, but yeah, that craftivist energy that she has... That is a response to this kind of oppressive nerve-wracking situation. What are you going to do? What are you going to do with all your anxiety?

JC: I'm thinking about all the quilts that you have made in the last few months, as well...

Lorrie: Exactly.

JC: And raised a lot of money.

Lorrie: Hopefully with more informed consent than Hermione and her 'woolly bladders'.

JC: For sure, for sure. Oh, when they walk into the Great Hall and the weather is still terrible...

Lorrie: Yep, of course.

JC: The weather's been bad. Oh, God...

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: Yeah. This day feels a little better in the sense that they're going to classes where the teachers don't hate them.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's not Monday anymore.

JC: Yeah, it's not Monday anymore. They get to actually do some practical magic; they still get a lot of homework, but the teachers are justifying it. It's a day of genuinely good teaching, and that's better than what they experienced the day before.

Lorrie: Hermione is the only student who can vanish her snail, and it took her three tries. This is clearly disproving Umbridge's assertion that if they study the theory well enough out of her book, that for the O.W.L.s they'll be able to cast practical defensive spells. No, even Hermione can't do it.

JC: It's also making me think: didn't Ginny use a Vanishing Charm to get all the muck off of them in the train a few days before? Ginny is a year behind them, and Ginny knows how to use this spell.

Lorrie: Although I think clearing up inanimate messes is different from Vanishing an actual living creature...

JC: Ah, okay.

Lorrie: But yeah, I'm arguing about this like this is a real thing.

JC: Oh, yeah, yeah. Right, exactly.

Lorrie: Draco continues to be in ascendancy.

JC: Yep.

Lorrie: As has happened before, he knows things before anyone else does because he has an inside line. He comes to Care of Magical Creatures and he says to Harry that maybe Hagrid has "been messing with stuff that's too big for him, if you get my drift," and Harry's, simultaneously, "What in the hell are you talking about, and why are you so goddamn annoying?" "Oh, no, what's happening?" Yeah, Draco knows something, and it's a good reminder of how Draco used that same kind of coding to warn Harry that they recognized Sirius.

JC: There's a lot of things that are interesting about this to me. One is that until this year, it's not been obvious that Draco's had this kind of inside information. Draco's father has clearly decided it's time to bring him into the circle. Draco was kind of a kid in his father's eyes before, and after seeing what Harry is capable of, his dad is now like, "Okay, kid, you..."

Lorrie: Yeah, he's a little older.

JC: Yeah. Draco's relationship with his dad is different now than it has been in the past, so that's really interesting. But it's also interesting... What's his motivation for telling Harry this? And is he genuinely just like, "Haha, I'm just tormenting you with the fact that I know something." He's actually giving him useful information.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He's letting them know, "We know about your stepfather being a dog, so maybe you should rein it in. I know what's happening with Hagrid, and maybe you should stop." Either way, it's also useful information for Harry, so what's his motivation here?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: You could interpret his motivation a couple different ways.

Lorrie: As far as I can tell, my judgment on that... What wins out is that Draco is gloating, that he does not want Harry to do anything useful with this information; he's just happy to get back at somebody who told the world that his father and his friends' fathers are Death Eaters because the gloves are off. This is obviously a fight, and Harry's side is losing. We know; we have seen year after year after year how aggravating it is to Draco when he doesn't win, so this feels pretty good to Draco. I try to think, 'Was there a time in the past that he knew something before Harry did?' and I thought, 'Well, he did know that the TriWizard Tournament and the Yule Ball were happening and he taunted them with that information,' but that didn't give him very much of an advantage, and this is much more real-world.

JC: Yeah. This is much more connected to the problems that this society is going through and not just "I know what the theme of the yearbook is this year."

Lorrie: Oh, my gosh, yes! Then, when Draco says, "The Ministry's really determined to crack down on substandard teaching in this place," I have this problem in which I agree with Draco, and I cannot see what's bad about this. He has a point here: Hagrid and Trelawney are terrible teachers. Dumbledore has hired them -- he's given them both sanctuary (as we'll find out about Trelawney) -- but you can give them sanctuary without making them be teachers, and it's at the expense of the kids' education. This is a case where, yeah, we have noticed that there could be some quality control.

JC: I have long thought that Trelawney being in the position of being the Divination teacher is more a statement about what Dumbledore thinks about Divination than anything else as a subject. He recognizes that obviously, she made a couple of prophecies and she needs to be protected, and the best reason to protect her (or the best excuse for having her there and protecting her) is to teach the subject, but to the extent that... I don't know. That's just a fun reading that I've always taken of that. Yeah, he doesn't really have that much respect for that field as an academic pursuit. In Hagrid's case, I really feel like they gave him a chance.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: They needed somebody to do it, they didn't have anybody there. It was like, "Well, Hagrid, let's give you a chance."

Lorrie: He knows so much.

JC: And he has the knowledge, he has the background. I literally work with people who want to be high school teachers who have no preparation for being a teacher but have a degree in the subject, and they've been an engineer, they've been a nurse or whatever. They have the knowledge, and then they're getting hired because there's literally no one else for the job, and then I'm in a position of trying to help them learn how to be a teacher. Hagrid did not have such a program to fall back on.

Lorrie: No! No. He could have used at least a two-hour orientation. Jeez...

JC: So yeah, that's the least of my fears. That's the least of my concerns about Hogwarts as an educational institution, to be honest.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's something that I had just accepted, but when I think about Hagrid and Trelawney being rated on specific elements of their teaching, I can't be upset about it. It seems like a great idea to me. Maybe not get sacked for it, but to get feedback. "You know you're not supposed to do that. You know there's a better way to do that."

JC: Yeah, really. "Hold out the Ministry of Magic's teacher assessment instrument and a formal observation, and here's your score. You're not going to get merit pay this year." Yeah.

Lorrie: When the children are all terrified and locking themselves into buildings because of the animal that you're trying to teach them, you might want to rethink that lesson.

JC: Yeah. Almost every teacher at Hogwarts I have comments about, and they could all improve for sure. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Also, yeah, I think Harry's got this almost Hufflepuff loyalty to the people.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Loyalty and anti-loyalty.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: It makes it hard for him to have any kind of a positive relationship with Snape as well. Anyway, yep.

Lorrie: Yeah. But anyway, that was a weird moment in which I was ready to be indignant about the mockery of Hagrid and Trelawney being monitored, and then I realized I had no objection at all.

JC: Okay. I did not have your feeling, and that's partly because of the specter of the state government coming in and telling you who was doing a good job and who isn't. I know what that feels like...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And I don't trust that at all. Who decides what is substandard teaching, and by what instrument? Then, what are they going to do about it? I don't trust that at all.

Lorrie: We don't know this yet, but as this book plays out, Hagrid and Trelawney are the only ones who are judged wanting by this Ministry standard.

JC: And for reasons that are other than their ability as teachers.

Lorrie: It's not, though. It's not.

JC: I don't know. We'll see when we get there.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I'm just too close to that idea.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Teachers are being hunted down for political reasons right now.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: This is the thing: we live in a world where a teacher who is queer is getting targeted, and they're looking for reasons to fire them. That's the world we live in, so I cannot help but see it through that lens right now.

Lorrie: That's what we think going in, but this is one of those things where I would have a hard time arguing why Hagrid and Trelawney shouldn't be rated low on the exact points. Yes, Umbridge will be very unfair to them; there are other teachers that she doesn't like, but she can't find any reason to rate them down and they all pass. I'm sure she would have loved to find something to get McGonagall on; she can't. Anyway... And not even just with Umbridge or with Draco, but we've seen that with Hagrid and the Ravenclaws, where Luna says, "Well, we don't think he's a good teacher at all," and the Gryffindors have no defense, alas.

JC: I guess what's happening here too, though, is that Hogwarts still exists in a system where evidence matters. If the school's really determined to get rid of a teacher -- or if the school board or set of parents are really determined to get rid of a teacher in the world that I live in -- they can make up stuff.

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah.

JC: It doesn't have to be factual...

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Or they can take a small thing and they can blow it completely out of proportion.

Lorrie: Yeah, and so far.

JC: I'm so skeptical that a reviewer would come in and be --

Lorrie: Yeah. So far, it's holding, but that has been done this past summer to Dumbledore (when he's been removed from the Wizengamot). Yeah, they did that to

Dumbledore; are they going to do that with the teachers? Anyway, this is the introduction of Ministry...

JC: Accountability.

Lorrie: Surveillance. Yeah.

JC: It's accountability. Yeah, whatever that means.

Lorrie: We get Luna and Ernie Macmillan as the representatives of a fringe coalition of people who have the guts or something to come up to Harry and say, "Well, we believe you," and Luna has the iconic orange radish earrings. It's the first time we see that wonderful thing, and I have a take on Ernie Macmillan. What's your take on Ernie Macmillan?

JC: I don't know. It seemed like it came out of nowhere, and he was very grandiose about it. I know that when I first read it, because the feeling came back to me again was, 'Is he mocking Harry? Does he mean this?' It was unclear to me, but Ernie Macmillan's a Hufflepuff, right?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It felt like a very Hufflepuff thing to do as well, to be like, "You know what?" He's seeing what's happening, and it's like, "I'm going to make it clear that my family, we believe in..." But I don't know. Other than that, I'm not sure what I make of it.

Lorrie: I love Ernie Macmillan. I think he's incredibly adorable. The way he's officious... He's annoying, but he's adorable. We've seen him do this before in the second book, when the Hufflepuffs were scared that Harry was going after Justin Finch-Fletchley; Ernie officiously stood up to Harry and said, "No, we don't trust you," and then when Ernie realized no, it can't have been Harry, then he officiously apologized and held out his hand to shake. He's a little bit hard to take, but he's genuine, and I don't think he has an ounce of mockery in him because part of his wonderful support for Harry is at the expense of Luna, where he says, "Well, I'm not crazy like her. I come from a good family."

JC: Was he the one that was down for Eton before he went to Hogwarts? Is that him, or was that somebody else?

Lorrie: That was Justin Finch-Fletchley.

JC: That was Justin Finch-Fletchley. Yes, he of the hyphenated name. Yeah, okay.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: There's a moment when Harry is just so exhausted by every teacher who has started the class by reminding them how important this year is and how hard it's going

to be -- "Here are all the things you need to do" -- and the stress of that is starting to be a physical feeling in his body. Again, I was taken back to junior year of high school, but every teacher is in their own little silo. As a teacher, you don't realize what other teachers are doing and you're just thinking, 'I've got to prepare them for this test.' It's happened to me multiple times in my teaching career when I've had a small coalition -- a representative group of students -- come to me and say, "Please, professor. Everyone is loading so much work on us, and we are going around and letting everyone know. Here are all the things we're being asked to do. We feel like it's unreasonable. Is there some way that you could lighten our load?"

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And when you look at what other people are asking them to do, it's like, 'Oh, damn.'

Lorrie: Yeah. "Could you coordinate a little bit?"

JC: We could be coordinating a little bit better, probably (especially in the particular program that I'm thinking of), but the students will organize and come and say, "Please. We know that you mean well. We know that you have our best interests at heart. However, this is not possible for us to do in one day." Yeah, so that feeling, too... All the teachers are all in their own little siloed compartment and they know everybody else is doing stuff, but they don't really... You walk into your room and you're like, "Okay, let me tell you!" They're like, "Oh, my God, we've heard this all day." Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. I just love imagining each of them saying, "Your entire future rests on this!"

JC: Yeah. "That's the eighth time we heard it. Thank you." Yeah. Yeah, that feeling... I thought, 'Oh, yeah,' and he's really stressed out. He's got more homework than he can possibly do; the description of the homework they have to do... that's barely possible to do and also get decent sleep, and he's got to go do detention tonight for the first time. He doesn't yet know what's in store...

Lorrie: Oh, my God.

JC: But just knowing that it's hovering there, it was like, 'Oh, my God,' and he's not going to get homework done during that. Even if it was just a normal detention, he was not going to get homework done.

Lorrie: And even without detention, Angelina Johnson has taken on the persona of one of these teachers saying, "Your whole future depends on this! I don't care what the other things are that you have to do."

JC: Yeah. It's coming from everyone. Yeah. Ugh...

Lorrie: I was wondering: since under Lockhart the Defense office had beaming portraits of him, and under Lupin it had portraits of Dark creatures like him, and then under fake Moody it had Dark detectors, what would your office look like if you were DADA teacher of the year?

JC: Well, considering that people are only in this job for one year, it feels like a temporary office; I don't know that I would decorate it. It would be more like, 'Okay, I'll have my coffee maker and my little mini fridge where I can make coffee (that's important), and I'll have some personal items on my desk (a picture of my kid, things like that)', but nothing too personal because you don't want students to come in and be able to read anything about your life; shelves with things that I need to teach my classes with, and that would be kind of it. Even the office that I do have is kind of like that. We just started experimenting (my office mate and I) with putting some plants in, and then we realized, 'Oh, crap, we've got to take these home for the summer.'

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah, you take the plants in one at a time; then you realize that when you have to move them out, you have to take them all at once and that's a lot. Yeah. Here's what I read in what you said: when you said that you'd set up your coffee maker on your mini fridge, that's self-care, sustenance, and that you would personalize it, but not too much, so you would have boundaries. With the books and other sources that you would need to teach, you would be signaling what your mission is so that the students would come in and know, 'Oh, okay, this teacher is not here for their own mysterious agenda. They're here to teach us a thing,' and that would send a message.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: Yeah. Anyway....

JC: Yeah, okay, okay. And what would you make of my home office?

Lorrie: The fact that you mentioned the coffee maker first was... That is very important for defense. Whatever you know on a daily basis keeps you alert and strong enough to do what you want to get done, and a little bit of pleasure and beauty.

JC: Yeah, for sure.

Lorrie: Coffee can just be this brackish stimulant, but you can also make it into a thing of beauty.

JC: Yes. Yes, and you need the mini fridge for that. Ooh, okay, so what does that say about Umbridge's office?

Lorrie: Oh, my God, the foul kittens on the plates, and the doilies and the dried flower arrangements... Ugh.

JC: Yeah. It's like walking into... I don't even know. What kind of shop would it be? I'm trying to imagine. It felt like walking into a shop in a sense, except what do they sell here? I don't know. There's plates on the wall... When I was a kid, I remember on late-night TV, there would always be these ads for commemorative plates that you could buy, and they would have Ronald Reagan's face on it and shit like that. That was the image that brought to my mind: this was a thing that old people collect, these commemorative plates.

Lorrie: The image I have... There was this fad for sappy caricatures of children with very large eyes.

JC: Oh, yeah. The little statues? The little Precious Moments or whatever?

Lorrie: Yes. I guess I would call this aesthetic 'Cursed Victoriana', slightly cursed.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: It's so much what it is that it's cloying, and you know that there's something sinister underneath.

JC: Yeah. It's also wild to me. If you had this big collection of something (I love that notion of Cursed Victoriana), putting it in your work office seems odd to me. I don't know. Maybe it's not as odd as I think it is, but she's living at the school. She also has a room, I'm assuming, somewhere in the staff dormitory or wherever the staff live. Where do the staff live? I don't know, but she has a room somewhere and that's where that stuff seems like it would go, unless there was just so much of it that it spilled over and she could put it in her office. Okay, it's a statement. It's obviously a statement. Ugh...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But you walk in and it's like, 'Where the hell am I?' Also, one of the things I love about the film version is that the kittens are meowing constantly in the plates.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's like, "Meow, meow, meow." It's this constant racket of kittens. It's not just the visuals.

Lorrie: That's the office that Harry has delivered himself into...

JC: For torture.

Lorrie: And he starts off by asking her for a favor. Oh...

JC: Oh, no... Yeah, that didn't work. He knew even as the words were coming out of his mouth, but he was like, 'I promised Angelina I would ask.'

Lorrie: And that's a very good first test for him, because he learns what happens when you're faced with a tyrant and you show them that there's something important to you. There's nothing they love more. Okay. All right, well, we've learned that lesson, so from now on he's going to learn to control his emotions.

JC: Yeah, because now it's like, 'Oh, you love that. Well, I'm going to deny you a thing that you love, now that I know.' Yeah.

Lorrie: Drool. Yeah. Once again, we get the statement that this is about truth and who controls it. She says, "Oh, this is your punishment for spreading evil, nasty attention-seeking stories..." Okay, who owns the narrative? Who gets to say what's true? All right. The way she has that wide smile throughout this... While she's enjoying dominating Harry, this is teaching Harry very, very quickly that him showing evidence that she's breaking him... That's the currency. That's what she's after; his job is to do his best not to provide that currency. Okay. Yay.

JC: Yeah, and that way it's this battle of wills. There's a lot of things to say there; one of them is that yeah, when someone is lording power over you in a way that's very cruel, the expectation [is] to be calm and to watch your tone and to not give them the satisfaction of blowing up, because then it's on you. They're not being unreasonable; you're the one who can't control it. That's very familiar to me...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But it's also poisonous.

Lorrie: It's so poisonous.

JC: Because then you're putting yourself in a position where you're keeping it to yourself.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: You're being manipulated. It's a no-win situation, right? There's no winning there.

Lorrie: Yeah. You're trying not to emit anything that they can seize upon to further what they're doing. Any information that he gives is going to be used against him. Okay. Do we want to talk about the rather special quill?

JC: Yeah. Let's go there.

Lorrie: Ugh...

JC: I remember reading this for the first time and just being horrified by it. Now, it's obvious that it's there, and I remember the movie version of it being somehow not as horrifying as the literary version (because I guess there's only so much you could show, that you could describe it differently in words), but this idea that this is something that

this teacher would find as a good punishment, and using the words, 'has the idea sunk in?'...

Lorrie: Oh, yeah.

JC: 'Has it been carved into your skin enough?' Oh, my God.

Lorrie: Yeah. I remember the first time reading, 'Okay, she has somehow acquired a torture quill that writes using the victim's own blood as ink.' That's brilliant; brilliant from the author and brilliantly twisted. Yeah, this is pure horror that we have this character who so thoroughly enjoys this. Also, however -- no matter what fandom (fans, readers) want an author to say or write -- this is why I won't ever support demanding that an author change their story because readers want it so much. For example, there was a huge push for Rowling and for Jack Thorne (who wrote *Cursed Child*) to make Scorpius and Albus canonically, overtly, a gay couple; the arguments against homophobia and queerbaiting were real, and the frustration and heartache and rage of fans who've felt queerbaited was real also. It might not have inspired a whole lot of respect in me to see Rowling say, "No, I know what people want and I'm not going to give it to them." I might not have respected that, but the alternative of chaining an author to their desk and forcing them to write the story that other people think they should have written? That's so horrifying to me, and the fact that there were quite a few people in fandom who were proposing that as though it were a workable option... "No. Don't you believe that people have the responsibility to represent --?" If that's not the story in you, and somebody else tells you the story that you have to write instead of the one that's in you, does that ever come out okay? Does that ever turn out all right? Anyway...

JC: This is a Tumblr post that I saw that just came into my head when you were saying that just now, and this post just says, "How do you write again after a long break? You just start. That's the horror of it. You just. Start. And then the story opens its eyes." I just read that and went, 'Oh, wow!' It's not completely within your control...

Lorrie: It's true.

JC: Yeah. Anyway, that's what it made me think of just now. Oh... I can now imagine... I don't know. Where did this come from, this bit of horror?

Lorrie: Well, it is, I think, an incredibly brilliant invention of this series to symbolize what it is to control what somebody can or can't say, what kind of relationship a powerful person can demand that people have over their own truths and whether they're allowed to say them, and what you have to do with your feelings if you have no choice but to say the things that are being dictated to you, which you know are destructive. I cannot imagine a way that there can be demand for writers to write according to what readers want. I can't imagine a way that would be guaranteed not to be abusive. All the times that, in various fandoms, people have been bewildered... "Shouldn't the creators be

held accountable? Shouldn't they make this gay ship canon or something? Shouldn't we demand it? Can we sign petitions?" No, that's not how art works. I don't think that there's a way to do that that doesn't get into thought control. Whether it's for good or for evil, I don't think, can even be a question; the act of it can't be good. Ugh.

JC: Yeah. To the extent that I know anything about creating art, the act of creating art is that you're pulling something out of yourself. It can't be enforced upon you, and I think this is what makes it hard for people to turn a love of art into something they can make a living at because now you're creating art to other people's specifications.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: And they're saying, "I want the art to look like this," and that feels very soul-sucking. I know a lot of people who, if they want to create their own art so badly, they will do that in order to have time to do what they really want.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And then there are other people who are like, "You know what? No. I'm going to go be an accountant, and then I'll do this in my free time because I can't bear... It's too painful to have to make what other people want me to make. It's too much. I can't do it."

Lorrie: Right, because it's not that they wanted to hire somebody else to make that art. They want you. They want how you are; only twist it for them.

JC: Yes. That's a good way of saying it. Yeah.

Lorrie: Maybe I would rather never, ever, ever do what I love the most than go through that kind of loss of boundaries of myself. Yeah. Anyway, yeah, there's that freedom within the fan economy where my response always to that is, "Oh, I'm so sorry. I'll give you back your money."

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: But if you're writing for actual money, that becomes a whole thing. And yeah, as much as Rowling the author is doing severe damage in the world politically, I can't help but have enormous sympathy over the position she was in knowing that people were going to take her *Fantastic Beasts* storyline and make hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of movies out of them, whether or not she forced herself to write for them. It was going to happen with or without her, and her least soul-sucking option was to shackle herself to the writing of it, because otherwise it would feel even worse.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: But as we can see, the results of the *Fantastic Beasts* franchise did not work (is dead, died a very messy death). It's not the same as when an author can write the story

that's in them the way they want to. Oh, boy, it's so tempting to keep talking around the fact that Umbridge is forcing a 15-year-old to write with a quill that cuts into his skin using his own blood to say something that's totally against his very spirit.

JC: Yeah. That idea that you as an adult in someone's life (as a teacher, as a parent, whatever) somehow have the right to harm a child in a way that's going to scar them forever.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That's a big metaphor, obviously, but yeah, it's pretty horrific. That idea of "Your body doesn't belong to you. It actually belongs to me, and I can do whatever I want with it" is kind of the undertone that comes out to me here.

Lorrie: And the enjoyment of the psychological twisting -- the lie of "I must not tell lies" and how enjoyable that is for the authoritarian to know that they're causing this twisting - she knows that no one can stop her. She's being brazen because there's no limit on her. The horrifying current climate that we're in right now, as we record this, is that the U.S. is kidnapping people who have committed no crimes whatsoever and sending them to prisons abroad that are known for torture, doing this deliberately to emphasize that there are no limits on the power to be abusive like this. That's where we're sitting...

JC: Right.

Lorrie: As we look at this teacher who can do whatever she wants to Harry Potter.

JC: And he's a bit of a test case, right? He's the first one, and other students will experience this going forward.

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: But the fact that he's the first one -- he's the one she picked to make an example of; there's a lot of reasons why she picked him -- but if she can do it to him, then she really can do it to anybody, so there's a little bit of "What are you going to do?" Is he going to go talk? I don't know. If he had gone to McGonagall, if he had gone to Dumbledore at this point, would things have been different? It's hard to know. What would have been a response that would have made a difference here? Is there anything that Harry could have done after this, anyone he could have told who could have helped him?

Lorrie: Yeah. What we do know is that she has the authority as his teacher to set him detention and to punish him in any way that she sees fit. There are probably bylaws in place at Hogwarts about what kind of corporal punishment is and isn't allowed, which we know because Filch rails against that all the time. I guess if he had brought this to Dumbledore's attention, that would have forced that confrontation, but we know that she arrived at Hogwarts hoping for exactly that confrontation. That's why she was so excited

the first day of class when Harry gets out of his seat and starts yelling about Voldemort; she didn't have to wait at all. The first class, and she gets to start on her mission, so we know that she came to Hogwarts prepared for that kind of showdown with Dumbledore if it should happen.

JC: And I don't think that Harry is thinking that. He doesn't see her bigger mission or how she's controlling Dumbledore. He doesn't go to Dumbledore now because he doesn't think Dumbledore will care or even talk to him. He's still feeling that... He doesn't understand why Dumbledore is doing this.

Lorrie: But to go along with the other things that he and Hermione and Ron are doing at this developmental stage, they're all growing and keeping their own counsel on some things. Not exactly keeping secrets from each other in a bad way; just thinking things through on their own, and Harry is deciding to try to resist Umbridge independently and trying to resist her by not showing weakness, signaling that he's not afraid of her. He can do this because he is independent, meaning he doesn't have, for example, children. There's a certain profile of people who can be more fearless activists because they're not putting as many people at risk, which is part of the Snape storyline. Obviously, he would have had a hard time getting anyone to date him anyway, but he very deliberately avoided it because you can't do that to people. You can't ask people to be in personal relationships with you and then go and do such dangerous things.

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: Harry, as a 15-year-old, only has himself to risk, and he can do this. He can decide that he's going to set his will against her.

JC: Also, the fact that he at this point doesn't want to tell his friends... There's also this hint of having to talk about it to somebody that would make it more real.

Lorrie: Oh, yeah.

JC: That idea of having to process your trauma makes you experience it again... There's that note in there, too, and he's just like, 'I'm not ready to see the horror in the eyes of other people at what's happened to me.'

Lorrie: And there's also survival. There's a way in which I approve really heavily: this is day one of five detentions, and there's a problem with healing. The human resilience and ability and tendency to heal over, even sometimes involuntarily... When you genuinely cannot do anything about torture like this, it just makes it worse. He has to be cut open all over again, over and over and over. Meanwhile, he's trying to develop some callousness to survive against this torture; healing over in between is going to set him back to zero in building up his defenses. He knows that he's not going to be rescued. He knows that he has to build up his defenses.

JC: He does do that over the course of the week. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, and confiding in his friends who will be horrified but not be able to help him... That's actually going to slow down his process of building up his defenses. The sympathy is not going to help. Oh, this is also the moment (the first time in this chapter) where Umbridge touches his hand because she's checking on the cutting on the back of his hand and he represses a shudder, so we're starting to track his physical response to her. Oh, I do like the continuity. For *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, the play... Not that anyone in the audience can see this, but [for] the actor that plays grown-up Harry, they write "I must not tell lies" on the back of his hand every time for every performance. Yeah.

JC: Oh, wow, so it's part of his... Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. These are the ordeals that shape who you become.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Ooh.

JC: It's interesting, too, that in the middle of this, Ron is also keeping a secret that Hermione doesn't know and Harry doesn't know. Everyone has their secrets right now, but to my intense relief, they don't even get out of this chapter before Harry and Ron confide in each other.

Lorrie: I know.

JC: I was so relieved. I was prepared for that to go on for three more chapters.

Lorrie: I know. We can't take it.

JC: No. They need to let each other know what's going on in their lives. Oh, thank God.

Lorrie: We, the readers... We're trying to hang in here. Okay. Yes, and as we've said before, Harry's homework suffers like any kid who is suffering torture and violence. Yeah. This fascinating sentence, "He had never before considered the possibility that there might be another teacher in the world he hated more than Snape..." It's just a different nature of evil. Is it better? Is it worse? It's different. Umbridge's evil is different from petty, immature asshole guy; it's also different from Voldemort's evil. In the fandom, there are many people who say, "Oh, Umbridge is worse than Voldemort." She's not, but one thing Voldemort doesn't do: he doesn't try to get you to lie like this. There's some things Voldemort does that are cleaner than this. Oh... Yuck.

JC: There's something about Harry going back to Umbridge's office over and over, and he can deal with it better every time. By the last time, he's distracting -- he's found a strategy.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: He can get himself through it mentally by focusing on something else, and it's like, 'Wow, he learned that really quickly.'

Lorrie: That helps. That really, really helps.

JC: Right, and that's just great life advice in general. You have to do a thing that you loathe doing? Find a way to distract yourself while you're doing the thing.

Lorrie: Ah, such good survival. I love when Ron finally, very vulnerably, confesses his dear dream of playing Quidditch. I love the way Harry is supportive of him.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: It's so sweet.

JC: Harry's like, "Oh, yeah, that's great! Yes! It'd be great to have you on the team," and Ron was just waiting for Harry, Quidditch star, to not be supportive.

Lorrie: "No, that's a great idea!" and that sets the stage so beautifully for Harry to reciprocate being vulnerable. It's so good. One of the best things about Ron the character is how he has such a healthy sense of what's right and wrong, where when something is truly awful, he has this nauseated response that's really kind of fail-proof. No, he hears what Umbridge is doing and he looks sick -- that is not okay in the least -- and of course, naturally, he suggests going to McGonagall and Harry has to catch him up. "No, McGonagall already said that won't work." Of course, Ron says "Dumbledore" and Harry demonstrates what happens when an adult abandons a teen for whatever reason, even totally justifiable or unpreventable reasons. When you abandon a teen, you lose their trust, so they have been vulnerable with each other. The other thing that helps Harry on Friday, other than him having found something to distract himself with, is he knows it's the last day of detention, so there's a limit; limits are great. In the next volume, we're going to see him serve a detention that does not have a defined limit, and that is a whole different kind of dread.

JC: Oh, wow.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: I guess at the end of this detention is when Umbridge touches his arm again and his scar hurts.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And then she makes this comment, "It hurts, doesn't it?" and he has this moment of "Which pain is she talking about?"

Lorrie: "What does she know?"

JC: Yeah. What does she know?

Lorrie: Yeah. So yeah, that is something that we're going to have to track really closely. This volume, *Order of The Phoenix*, is very difficult to understand in my opinion, in my experience. There are a lot of things that Harry has to figure out that are not fully explained to the reader either, but if we pay attention, we can see what's being laid out here. When disgusting Dolores Umbridge touches his hand to check on the scar of his 'writing', he feels three different things: he feels the back of his hand that has been searing with pain, he feels the forehead scar (which sears the way it has been for months), and then he feels a most peculiar sensation somewhere around his midriff, which I think might be the first appearance of what he's later going to call his 'chest monster' (there's a monster in his chest). But what does this mean? Does it have anything to do with Voldemort? What's Harry feeling on his own, and what is he feeling? Because the people torturing him are causing him pain, how on Earth is he supposed to differentiate? What does or doesn't Umbridge know about what Harry has felt in his forehead and in his midriff? Poor, terrified Harry is just telling himself, 'Stay calm. It doesn't necessarily mean what you think it means.' Ooooh... I don't know what I would do here. What the heck?

JC: I had forgotten about the chest monster. I was just thinking about that. 'Oh, I forgot about that.'

Lorrie: Yeah. He feels three different things.

JC: Because I noticed the three things, and I did not make the connection between the feeling in his midriff and later. Yeah, I had forgotten about the chest monster.

Lorrie: Yeah. One of them is the old pain in his forehead, one of them is the pain he's been feeling for a week, and then the "peculiar sensation around his midriff". Is that even pain? What is this? It's never happened before. He doesn't have a whole lot of energy left to ponder it at this particular moment.

JC: But at least this detention is over.

Lorrie: Ugh... Yeah. When he gets out of there, he does confide in Hermione; he mentions the forehead scar hurting and he does not mention the midriff sensation, which is something that we're going to continue to track.

JC: Okay. Also, does she know about the quill at this point?

Lorrie: I wasn't sure. I looked carefully, and my best guess is at some point during telling her about the forehead scar, because she's trying to work out, "Okay, Voldemort can't be possessing Umbridge. Last year, your scar hurt when nobody was touching

you. Didn't Dumbledore say it had to do with what You-Know-Who was feeling at the time?" For her to be figuring out this logic, I think at some point he must have explained to her about the writing on his hands the way he had to Ron, but I don't see it in the text. I didn't see where he might have imparted that to her.

JC: But going forward, Hermione knows that Umbridge is doing this. Okay.

Lorrie: Yeah. I think. Yeah, I don't think we have a scene where Hermione discovers for the first time that there's this evil quill.

JC: Okay.

Lorrie: But at some point possibly already, she knows that such a thing exists, and she's being very good about being reasonable where she says, "Okay, Voldemort can't be possessing Umbridge because he possessed Quirrell when he didn't have a body, and now he has a body. It might be a coincidence that the scar on your forehead hurt at the same time." That's happened before. That was at the beginning of *Sorcerer's Stone* where Harry felt the scar and he was looking at Snape, and that turned out to be a coincidence. It's good that he has Hermione in his corner; she, of course, advises him to go to Dumbledore, and he rejects that and says he wants to write to Sirius, and then Hermione says, "No, no, no! You can't. We're being monitored." And then, bless her and her craftivism... She invites him, all excited, to knit with her -- she's such a nerd -- and he's like, "No."

JC: He has a mountain of homework to do, so the idea that he would have time to knit... Oh, God.

Lorrie: "I really, really don't want to knit."

JC: Also... yeah. Yeah.

Lorrie: Then she looks disappointed. Nerd.

JC: Yeah. It's like, "Oh, I have a ridiculous amount of work to do, and I'm working in the evenings." I have friends who are like, "Oh, we're going to do a watch-along of this really fun, new show," and I'm like, "I can't. Yeah."

Lorrie: Have fun!

JC: "Oh, I can't," and it's not the same as knitting hats for house-elves, obviously. It's like, "Okay." Ordinarily, that would be, but no.

Lorrie: It is good. They've each found coping mechanisms.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Harry has started to reach out to his friends, Ron has Quidditch now, Hermione is unstoppable with the hats...

JC: Yeah. Oh, I guess we didn't talk about Harry coming back to the Gryffindor common room and Ron is the Keeper, and everybody is celebrating.

Lorrie: Yeah. That's a really grounding conversation, because Angelina's like, "Look, he was good enough to make it, but he's not very good. He's going to need to improve," and it's so practical. It's something you can do something about.

JC: Yeah, and I like how she goes through the three people that were up for Keeper and the reasons why the other two were not going to be as good as Ron. She looks at Ron and she knows he is going to commit to this team. He really wants it.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And she's valuing that, which I think is really cool.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. The idea of valuing someone's determination and desire to learn over someone else who may be slightly more talented, I really appreciate that.

Lorrie: Yeah, and the theme of not being confident has already been raised in this chapter, because earlier, we see McGonagall saying, "Everyone in this class can get an O.W.L.; even you, Longbottom. The only problem with you is lack of confidence." Again, developmentally appropriate. These kids are going to be tested this year in every way, and confidence is something that you have to exercise and build up on purpose.

JC: Yup. Ooh, we are, what, about 25 percent of the way (I was looking where my bookmark is) through this book, something like that, and it's been so dark. I don't know how much longer it's going to be dark before we get a little glimmer of something good.

Lorrie: Yeah. I hear you about current events. Yeah. Well, the answer, as you know perfectly well, is it's going to go on for so long that we're going to forget what hope looks like.

JC: Ugh...

Lorrie: Next up is a chapter called Percy and Padfoot, so things are only going to get more complicated.

JC: Great. Oh, I just wanted to remark that this was chapter thirteen...

Lorrie: Yes, yes.

JC: In which the villain shows how evil she is. Yeah.

Lorrie: Terrible, terrible things happen, and it's awful and dark.

JC: Yep.

Lorrie: All right. Well, I'll talk to you next time when Percy and Padfoot show up.

JC: All right.

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