

Transcript

Episode 5.19

Book 5, Chapter 19: The Lion and the Serpent

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 from 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 Nineteen: The Lion and the Serpent.

Lorrie: The Lion and the Serpent. It's a Gryffindor-Slytherin Quidditch match. Expect bullying, foul play, and fist fights. Whoo, Quidditch time! This was kind of a break, this chapter.

JC: Yeah. It's interesting because it's back to normal Harry Potter world. Obviously, Umbridge makes an appearance at the end of the chapter, but it feels kind of normal for a while because we're worried about Quidditch; Ron's freaking out, all of that, and there's all this bullying around the Quidditch match. It's almost like the adults aren't really involved for a while.

Lorrie: It was, yeah, a hard-won return to normalcy for a very brief moment.

JC: And boy, isn't that relatable...

Lorrie: Yeah. Then, of course, tensions erupt. I love the beginning of the chapter where Harry goes around feeling secretly strong and happy even though Umbridge is tormenting him, because inside, he knows; he knows that he's teaching his fellow students Defense and he's getting away with it, and he sustains himself by remembering ways that D.A. members have been improving.

JC: Mmm, uh-huh.

Lorrie: Yeah, that was a really good secret in the instruction manual for resistance that is *Order of The Phoenix*.

JC: Absolutely. He feels so empowered by knowing that he's doing something to make a difference in the background. That's really cool and also just very relatable, because I know that I've had feelings like that in the last few years. 'These are the things that are happening, but here's what I'm doing through my work to make it a little bit better.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Oh, it's so good.

Lorrie: And if you break it down to individual improvements, that's the level at which any change occurs: person by person, one step at a time, through practice and through connection.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: I also love that he's learning through experience that it's better when their meeting schedule is unpredictable.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: So practical.

JC: Absolutely. Then we get this brilliant moment of Hermione, when Hermione gets to be a star in front of the entire D.A.

Lorrie: Yes. That's one of my flagship Hermione moments. She comes up with the iconic charmed Galleons communication method. The part that always hit home so hard for me was that moment when she proposes it and then there's a blank silence, and she looks around and she has no idea why she's getting a blank silence and she starts to sound uncertain. She says, "Well, I thought it was a good idea," and then she starts saying, "Well, if you guys don't want to do it..." She has no idea why they're all staring at her like this.

JC: Yes.

Lorrie: Yeah. When you're not on the same wavelength as your peers, you don't know what it means -- it could be in any direction -- and she has zero idea that whatever she's just done is going to stand out for any reason.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: Oh... Oh, oh, oh...

JC: I'm sure you've had moments like that in your life. I've had moments like that in my life. It's both a relief and a surprise when other people have a reaction to something that you've done. 'Oh, my God.' I think I've done that to you before, one hundred percent, but that idea of, 'Oh, is it a big deal? Is it special? Is it unique?'

Lorrie: 'Why isn't anyone saying anything? What did I do? Did I do it wrong?'

JC: I know that I've been in a room where you spoke and then left the room kind of with stunned silence, and then you had the look on your face, like, 'Did I just put everyone to sleep? What's going on?'

Lorrie: 'What's happening?' Yeah, well...

JC: And everyone's just in shock. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. You once recorded a tutorial (I think it was on video editing or audio editing), and you just did it and then you uploaded it. Then a couple hours later, you're like, "Did people not like it?" I had to say, "No, we're just stunned. You just tossed this off."

JC: Oh, my gosh.

Lorrie: Of course, among people involved with this podcast, the master of that is Caroline, our editor, who will say, "Well, I couldn't sleep, so while you guys were sleeping, I whipped up a nine-course meal. What, don't you like it?"

JC: Or created this incredible art, or... yeah.

Lorrie: Yes. "I don't know. Then I looked at it, and I thought maybe I could fix it this way and that way," and we're like, "Uh, wow. How many months did you say this took you?" "Oh, between three and five A.M."

JC: Yeah, yeah. That's very relatable, that scene with Hermione...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: At least to me. Maybe it's not relatable to everybody listening to this, but certainly, I know that I've had moments in my life and I've seen other people have those moments and it's great. I love that Terry Boot is the one who says, "Why aren't you in Ravenclaw?"

Lorrie: Yeah. I love that, because the way that the fandom takes Sorting so seriously and treats it with a lot more subtlety than the author bothered to put in the books (because she had no idea that people would start taking this as a religion)... This is one of the few times we get real Sorting subtlety in canon, this canon confirmation that being in Ravenclaw is not about whether you're smart. It's not like they skim off the top twenty-five percent and throw them all in Ravenclaw. As a Ravenclaw, I can tell you we can be plenty stupid. It's not about whether you're smart; it's about how you relate in your intrinsic makeup to thinking and using your wits and how that feels to you, or whether there's something else that's even more vital and central to the person that you are. So

yeah, we have canon confirmation that Hermione was considered for Ravenclaw, and it turned out that no, there's something even more central to her being.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, she's smart, but that's not the point.

JC: But she didn't ask to be put in Gryffindor, right? The Hat just went back and forth between the two, and then decided that she would be better in Gryffindor, but she didn't give it... Not like Harry, who said, 'Please, anything but Slytherin. Anything but Slytherin.'

Lorrie: Yeah. 'Not Slytherin,' yeah, although we do see that on the train ride before the sorting, she says that Gryffindor seems like the best House, so she may have campaigned.

JC: Ah.

Lorrie: But she might not have thought it was the best House if she didn't have some affiliation for Gryffindor traits. So yeah, Terry Boot is the person who is confident enough to explain to Hermione why they're all standing around, gaping at her.

JC: And the charm that she casts is a N.E.W.T.-level charm.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This is something that you're only supposed to be able to do if you're the most advanced adult student, and Hermione has another moment of, "What, like it's hard?"

Lorrie: She didn't know what she was doing was supposed to be hard. Yeah, it's advanced, but everything she does is advanced and not everything she does gets that reaction...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: So how are you supposed to know?

JC: Yeah. I think, too, she spends most of her time doing this in front of Harry and Ron, who are just so used to it.

Lorrie: Oh, my God... The distance between Hermione and them is so great that how can you tell?

JC: Yeah, and they're just like, 'Oh, of course Hermione would come up with something like that, but Hermione doesn't... She's always got her hand up in class and she's always getting the best marks, but the other students in the school haven't seen what she can really do. I think this is... Is this one of the first moments when everybody else other than Ron and Harry get to see what she's really capable of?

Lorrie: It's the fact that the Gryffindors never have class with the Ravenclaws.

JC: Oh, there you go. Oh, you're right.

Lorrie: They have Herbology with the Hufflepuffs, and any time there's potential for conflict, they have class with the Slytherins...

JC: Sure.

Lorrie: But we don't see them having class with Ravenclaws until sixth year, when they have N.E.W.T.-level Potions.

JC: Right, okay. Okay, so they really don't know. The Ravenclaws really don't know that Hermione is that good. Oh... Well, they're in for a treat.

Lorrie: Yeah. This is when we see that when Hermione is around people who are a little closer to her league, they have more feedback for her than just Harry and Ron begging her to copy off her notes. Oh, God... Then the real amazing point of this is when Harry says (low to her) that this reminds him of the Death Eaters' scars, and how Voldemort touches one and then everyone's scar burns and they know they have to join him. Hermione's like, "Yeah, well, that is where I got the idea," which is partly the point that magic isn't inherently good or evil; it's what you use it for. But the thing that I never noticed until this read is how important it is that Harry calls them scars here; he doesn't call them Dark Marks, he doesn't call them tattoos. Scars, because subliminally, I think we readers are meant to make the connection that the Death Eaters have scars that are similar in a lot of ways to the one that Harry has on his forehead.

JC: Oh, interesting.

Lorrie: Right? Voldemort didn't give Harry his on purpose and doesn't know about it, but there's some way in which what Harry's going through is going to have similarities to what the Death Eaters agreed to on purpose, so that's a good thing to remember.

JC: Ooh, interesting. Yeah.

Lorrie: But yeah... Yeah, her invention of the Galleons is something that has reverberations for a number of different scenes later on in the series.

JC: Yeah, that's true. I also like the fact that it's kind of an ordinary object. Even though it's a shiny gold coin, it's worth a lot, and Harry says, "Yeah, we have to remember not to spend it," and Ron says, "That's not a problem."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "It's the only one I'm going to have."

Lorrie: Well, yeah. What I love, too, is the geekiness, because the kind of detail that's always present and of interest to geeks that goes unnoticed is the serial numbers around the edge of a coin. She says that's an individual goblin's mark. There's so many things in daily life that are like that and I just don't even notice them -- don't think about them -- but there's some sort of geek where that's their joy in life...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Where they can look at something and decode it instantly and say, "Oh, that was made in 1979 in San Francisco." "How do you know that?" "It says right there." "Oh, my God! I've looked at that my whole life and never known!" Love it. It's so geeky.

JC: Yeah. Also, it's a fascinating thought, too, -- and I don't know if this ever happens later on -- that idea that if you did spend this coin accidentally, there would be this coin floating around in the world that would every now and then get really hot, and you'd be like, "What's going on with this Galleon?" But probably, no one would think to look at those marks, and then they wouldn't know what it meant even if they did.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Right? I think it's just brilliant. Even if one gets lost out in the world, it's not going to really give anything away.

Lorrie: Can you imagine being one of these people thirty years later and you open up your old Hogwarts trunk? Maybe you have a kid who's going to go twenty years later, and then you find that and you go, 'Oh, yeah, wow...'

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. Are you going to give it to a museum? Are you going to pass it down to your kids? Wow! Sell it on Wizard eBay.

JC: Wizard eBay, yeah. Oh... There's lots of things like that as we get older that you just sort of clutch to your heart and think, 'Oh, this thing that's associated with so many parts of my life;' just touching it reignites all those memories and feelings.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: Intense. So, it turns out that McGonagall and Snape are just as immature as the students about their Quidditch rivalry.

JC: Oh, my God, yeah, and they've taken it to the next level here.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's basically as partisan as either of them get. McGonagall has not given them homework, which is, for her --

Lorrie: Shocker.

JC: Yeah, a shocker, and Snape is just being completely partisan.

Lorrie: Snape is authorizing sabotage.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Their Quidditch rivalry reads to me as flirting.

JC: Huh...

Lorrie: I think they're enjoying it. It's not like they don't compete with other Houses for Quidditch, but you never hear about them having this attitude about any other head of House for Quidditch. I think the way that they get along and are so compatible as colleagues... That's one of the most beautiful things to me. They really work together well, and that's a great setup for the betrayal later and why that's so effective.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: But that loss of faith in the two of them... That's one of the biggest costs for me of Snape having to lie at the end.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: They really, actually, had a lot of mutual respect.

JC: I think McGonagall's been a teacher at Hogwarts for a very long time; she was Snape's teacher, right? She taught him Transfiguration, and she knows how smart he is and knows what he's capable of. In the work that I'm in, I often have students whose dream it is to go back to their high school and teach, which I don't even understand. Why would you want to do that?

Lorrie: Yes. Ew.

JC: Really? But they want to go back and they want to be next door to their favorite teacher and be a colleague.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Wow, just four years later, but I'm thinking that's kind of what Snape did. I don't know who his favorite professor was when he was at Hogwarts, but maybe it was McGonagall. I don't know. It's just really interesting to me that he's the former student who went back.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He had Binns for History of Magic and probably had Flitwick.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: All of these people were his teachers, so they all know what he's capable of or what he was like as a student, and they know that he has Dumbledore's trust.

Lorrie: Oh... When they're preparing for their big game and they're all being really nervous. Ron's spectacular save... That's another thing from this chapter that's iconic to me: how legendary it was on the Gryffindor Quidditch team that he once hung one-handed from his broom and kicked the ball so hard that it scored on the other end of the pitch. Oh...

JC: And then later he confides to Harry that that was a complete accident. He was just trying to stay on his broom.

Lorrie: How?! How, when you're the one who has done that? How can you possibly explain that to people that "no, that was actually one of my most humiliating, awkward moments?" The imposter syndrome set-up for Ron is brutal.

JC: Oh, for sure.

Lorrie: Oh, gosh...

JC: The other thing that's interesting about this sequence is that Harry kind of notes that he's used to getting shit from people.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He's used to people calling him names, and he's just able to ignore it and just shed it. He's just able to say whatever and let it slide off of him; Ron can't do that.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: First of all, I guess Ron has never really been in that situation. I didn't realize it until... Really, I was thinking through it, and like, 'Oh, he's never... It's always been Harry.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He's been at Harry's side and he's seen Harry get all this crap, but he's never gotten the crap directed at him in this way. It's also going to the very center of Ron's deepest desire. When he stood in front of the Mirror of Erised way back in the first book, he saw himself holding the Quidditch House Cup. He wants to be a Quidditch player so badly. Not only is this the first time that he's had to deal with this; it's going at his deepest desire. Ow.

Lorrie: Yeah. This matters so much, and a lot of it is just a matter of practice. What Ron's going through is completely normal for when you become initiated into this. You have to make some mistakes and get used to it for the first time until you adjust to everything and then you know what to expect, but there's no way for him to know what to expect. He's never done this before, so every single moment is a steep learning curve for him. Of course, he's going to be a wreck; that is the way it is. Harry, of course, was conscripted into this from first year, so by now, he's done this so many times he knows what to expect. He knows what defenses to have ready. Of course, since figure skating is the sport that I follow, I can instantly think of a zillion examples from figure skating where we watch this happen. You can have a bunch of athletes all the same age, but one of them will have been doing it since they were twelve and the other will have started at age seventeen or something. The one who's done it over and over again -- who knows the maximum that their nerves will feel and how to handle it and what happens when you act this way or that way -- will have better results and this will happen for a while. When they say, "Oh, this is somebody's first time at the Olympics, so we don't know, whereas this person's really experienced," that's what they mean.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: You know how to block out some distractions; you know that maybe these people are making a whole lot of noise, but it doesn't actually matter.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: There's no other way; you have to learn it for the first time sometime.

JC: Yes. You have to go through that, and I think that's one of the interesting things about... In education, this happens, too, where you just have to go do a thing. There's a competition -- I'm thinking spelling bees or taking a really important test -- and there's an extent to which you just have to go and do it and work through your nerves.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: You have to do it a first time and then see how it goes and learn from that experience. Everybody has to do that, and it's a very rare person who doesn't have those first-time jitters or first-time struggles, but no one talks about it.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Some people have more experience where they've done it before earlier (like you said, they get that experience earlier), so yeah. There's this very human thing of needing to learn and go through a process, and sometimes that is masked in a way that it's not obvious that everybody has to go through that, so it really kind of feeds into people's insecurities.

Lorrie: Well, you don't know if you're the kind of person who needs specific kinds of support until you do it for the first time, because there are people who go in there expecting that they're going to have to deal with nerves, and then find out, 'You know what? I was waiting and waiting for the nerves, but I never had them.' How do you know that until you do it? You don't.

JC: That's true. You just have to do it. Yeah.

Lorrie: That was so lucky for Harry the first time that he was flying, where he thought 'My goodness, I'm not nervous at all. In fact, I feel like I'm in my element.' He didn't know that. He had to find out. So yeah, it's wonderful that we see this step-by-step example through Ron. Okay, he is discovering he is somebody who is affected by confidence. The learning curve is steep, but he's going to know, and Harry, as his teammate and later team captain, is going to observe. For each kind of person, you have to have a different strategy, so we'll see in a later volume that Harry understands what kind of approach he needs to support Ron. But this is the poor kid's debut. Oof...

JC: Oh, my gosh... Yeah. There was a mention of "October faded into November," and I thought, 'Did they not have a Halloween feast this year? Did they just skip it?' We've talked in the past about the importance of the comfort of food and feasting in the books, and they just skipped over one of the major feast days. I don't know if there wasn't space for it in the book and it just got cut, or did Umbridge take that away, too? Just the fact that there's not even a mention of Halloween when it has been such a feature... It wasn't even like the Halloween Feast didn't happen. Nothing; just no mention of Halloween. That stood out to me.

Lorrie: Right. Usually on Halloween, there's some disastrous thing that happens, like there's a troll in the dungeons.

JC: Oh, right.

Lorrie: I guess this year, it's the whole year.

JC: The whole year is just a disaster. Yeah... Anyway, that just stood out to me.

Lorrie: No, that's... yeah. A break in the pattern.

JC: A break in the pattern, yeah.

Caroline: Producer Caroline here with a note from the future. After this recording was finished, host Lorrie remembered that Irvin Khaytman, a.k.a. hpboy13, wrote an article for MuggleNet in 2022 called "The Missing Halloweens" about what might have been behind the author's decisions to omit mention of Halloween from the plots of the final three books. Khaytman says up front that it's all speculation, but it's an interesting

argument projected from good analysis. We've put a link up to this article in the show notes.

Lorrie: Oh, God, Draco... Draco bullying Ron by imitating Ron dropping the Quaffle every time they run into each other... Oh, God.

JC: This whole... Draco goes so far out of his way to be an asshole.

Lorrie: He's really putting all his creativity...

JC: Yeah. He's given up on being able to do this to Harry; he realizes that Harry -- no, Ron is the weak link, and he also seems to know that if he can just provoke them in the right way, it will blow up; I think he knows that Umbridge will come down really hard on them in the way that will not happen to him. He knows that Slytherin are kind of the sweethearts here and they're going to be fine no matter what, and he knows that provoking Harry is not going to get him what he wants.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But Ron... He has picked up on Ron as the weak link here. Provoking Hermione, he tried that in the past; it didn't get him anywhere. Ron is the weak link, and he puts all of his energy into it. It's this massive campaign: the badges, he wrote a song and taught it to everybody. He really put a lot of work into this.

Lorrie: Yeah. Finally, the gods are smiling upon Draco Malfoy. Well, he is a better Quidditch player than Ron is.

JC: Oh, yeah, for sure, at this point.

Lorrie: And him mocking Ron for poverty... Ron does feel the poverty, and him flaunting how much influence Lucius has compared to Arthur... That is true, and these are things that grieve Ron on a daily basis.

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: Draco is just being given a feast here. Also, this particular thing where he's imitating Ron dropping the Quaffle brought back an extremely similar, visceral memory of high school gym class for me.

JC: Oh, no...

Lorrie: I was extremely uncoordinated. Anyone who wanted to mock me in gym class had a much easier time than anyone mocking Ron, who is, after all, good enough to be on the team. It is very difficult to physically move when bullies in your class are openly mocking you about the way you move.

JC: Oh.

Lorrie: It's merciless, and it made me realize it's no wonder that one common way to develop as a human is for people to learn to give up right away on things that they're not good at on the first try. There's the whole first pancake phenomenon: the first time you do something, it will be messy. There's no getting around that. It has to be.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: If you can practice in secret at first, that can solve some of the problems, but that doesn't solve the factor of performing in public and what that does. So yeah, anyone who is able to learn in public and make mistakes in public, that takes a lot of guts; they are to be commended. Ideally, we aim for a culture where we don't mock each other.

JC: Oh, my gosh. As I was reading this chapter and reading this part where all the mockery is happening, I thought this is just part of sports culture, too. She's taking it to another level, but anyone who's been to any kind of a professional sports game has seen that there is a certain kind of spectator whose M.O. is to mock the opponent, right? I've gone to a lot of hockey games in my life, and there was one time that I thought it would be fun to sit behind the glass and be close to the hockey team, except I was behind their opposing hockey team and I had a very small child at the time. I realized this was a terrible idea, because the people who sit behind that spend the entire game yelling insults at the guys in the box; they just sit there and they just ignore it, because that's their life. Their life is that fans of the other side are going to mock them. Oh, my God, then the chants where the audience will chant at the opposing goalie with the entire arena, like "You lose" or whatever.

Lorrie: Taunting.

JC: Yeah, just taunting and how you have to be able to tune that out. That's this awful part of sports culture, and I think that it's also part of this patriarchal way that sports is like warfare. This feels like the kids are engaging in that kind of behavior in a way that's running a little bit unchecked. It's interesting to me, too, that the referee is Madam Hooch, who is absolutely tough and everything, but can't...

Lorrie: There's only one of her.

JC: There's only one of her; she can't rein that in. The heads of House are not really on the field, so there's not much they can do. It's a little bit of a battlefield down there.

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah.

JC: There's not much the adults can do to stop it.

Lorrie: Yeah. This kind of competitiveness is a part of human nature. I can very much understand the argument that going through athletics, where this is part of the human

libido that comes out -- learning to deal with it this way -- leaves people better prepared than avoiding it. But yes, there are also good and bad ways to channel this, and they are understaffed here.

JC: Absolutely. Yeah.

Lorrie: But yeah, I do remember talking to the family of a very successful figure skater, and they said that all the noise (mostly of the noise for this person was super positive) was so loud that it would drown out her music, and I was told she doesn't hear it; she doesn't hear any of it. The ability to block out and only go with what you've trained -- what's in your head, what your goal is -- is the cause of all that success.

JC: Wow.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's like a mutation, because how many people do you know in this world where they have raw talent, but that is but one of many elements that go into this? Ugh, high school...

JC: We forgot to mention Luna's lion hat.

Lorrie: Yes! Another iconic moment from this chapter.

JC: The number of cosplays that I have seen in my life of a Luna cosplayer with the lion head... Oh!

Lorrie: Right, and how, as with everything Luna does, it's a little bit wrong in the best way. Oh, my God! I'm sure the noise it made was totally unnerving. This is not a cute lion. This is a lion that will actually endanger you.

JC: Oh, my gosh.

Lorrie: Love it! Yeah, and she's not a safe person. She says if she had time, she would have made a serpent to go with it that the lion was going to be eating. This is not just a kind, happy togetherness, unity kind of school spirit thing. She's being quite hostile. Partisan.

Yeah. It's kind of like the classic pep rally, where the avatar of the other team is (that you are destroying somehow) burning it in effigy or whatever. That kind of symbolic violence of sports... Oh, my gosh.

Lorrie: Yeah. So yeah, Luna's into it. All of the Slytherins wearing the badges (the Weasley Is Our King badges) and singing the rhyming verses that mock Ron... The success of Draco's campaign is very impressive.

JC: It is impressive. If you step back and go, 'Okay, look at all the work he did,' he worked really hard on this.

Lorrie: And it was embraced. It was one of those classic "If only you could harness all that creativity for good!"

JC: Oh, for sure.

Lorrie: The thing that really strikes me about this is that in his lyrics, Draco yoked Ron's incompetence to his poverty. "Weasley was born in a bin; he always lets the Quaffle in." That's what poetry does for better or for worse: with the magic of words, it takes two powerful things that may not have been connected and it locks them together. Now, Draco has used a poem to weaponize the harm of poverty and have it directly attack his opponent's confidence. Oof... This has nothing to do with whether he can block the Quaffle. Well, it does now. So yeah, Draco... You can see why he thought that he had a chance at being the top student in their year before Hermione came and ruined all his...

JC: Right. Yeah. He's very smart and he's very ambitious, and he knows how to organize people and he can get it done. He's got the goods. He's just... yeah. Oh, man... The fact he's got Pansy conducting the choir, though...

Lorrie: Yeah!

JC: Oh, my gosh, yeah. Amazing.

Lorrie: Well, they're having a good time.

JC: And poor Ron... We were talking about this before, but to have the first time that you do a thing be under these circumstances... Ugh. Yeah.

Lorrie: So yeah, this is what Draco is doing while the Weasley twins are developing merchandise, but it's quite similar in how enterprising he is...

JC: True, true.

Lorrie: And inventive. Meanwhile, Hermione is making up these charmed Galleons. Draco's creativity is used for punching down and for gloating that he was born into more money and status than other students, okay, but there's some raw material here.

JC: For sure, for sure. This whole game... I always do enjoy Lee Jordan's commentating, which is fun. It's a clever way to make the game pass by, and we're meant to get a sense of what's happening, but the whole time, it's like, 'Please catch the Snitch. Please end this madness. This is so awful.'

Lorrie: Yes. 'Put us out of our misery.' Yes.

JC: 'Please put us out of our misery.' Oh, but poor Ron... It's three or four goals in a row, I can't even remember now. Oh...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah, it's a mess.

Lorrie: It's also fascinating that Draco knows one of the ways to really strike low at people's shame is to imply that poverty makes you smell bad.

JC: Oh...

Lorrie: He says the Weasley home stinks, and that maybe Harry remembers the stink because of his Muggle mother stinking, which if you saw the movie *Parasite*, that taunt has the same effect there. Things and people smell different ways; it doesn't make you smell more, but it's such a connection to shame. It's something that you can trigger to make people feel more ashamed, and Draco goes right for it. That's one of the things... That's the last insult Draco gets out before Harry and George lose whatever self-control they had and disgrace themselves.

JC: Oh... In the moment, there's something really satisfying about it (like the raw anger), especially the moment when Harry basically says he doesn't even remember letting go of George. He just knows that suddenly, they're both beating the shit out of Draco Malfoy.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But the fact that they had won the game... and McGonagall's so right. 'You know what's at stake here, and you know that they're trying to provoke you because if they can get a reaction out of you, it's going to be worse for you.' They know, and she's like... Ugh. Yeah.

Lorrie: "How could you fall for that?"

JC: "Don't fall for it. It's a trap!" But the fact that the twins get in... The twins are usually able to brush stuff off, but even the twins... Yeah. Draco was laying it on thick, like it was his mission to make them break. He was sacrificing himself for this. He knew they were going to come after him, but it was more important that they break.

Lorrie: Yeah, and he was only going to get so injured because it was in front of the whole school.

JC: So that's interesting, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: To taunt them until they come and attack him, and then... yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. Law enforcement is standing by.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Oh... Poor McGonagall has to try to look at these furious teenagers and convince them that self-control is the way...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And then Umbridge comes in, and McGonagall no longer has to explain to George and Harry what they've just risked because Umbridge is there to speak for herself.

JC: Oh, and McGonagall tries so hard to just steamroll through and say, "You're getting punished." She tries so hard, but then it turns out that Umbridge has this authoritarian backing of the government. She can decide any punishments, and it all has to go through her now.

Lorrie: It was very well written when Umbridge says that she had to go get more authority than "common teachers". Just that word 'common' makes you feel it on McGonagall's behalf the same way; this is about taunting, and it works on me. Assaults on McGonagall's dignity hurt me. This is when we learn that yes, the suspicion was correct: the only reason the Gryffindor Quidditch team was allowed to reform was because Dumbledore exerted a little bit of his fast-eroding authority to override Umbridge and that they're all paying for it.

JC: Yeah. This also brings up, to me, the fact that Umbridge was right there, like she had predicted that this was going to happen. Did she put Draco up to this?

Lorrie: I don't think she did. I think she was just drooling. I think it's one of those things where someone will say, "Oh, this person is subversive and a threat. I wonder if anyone's going to take them out for it," and then you just sit back and wait. "Did you contact anyone?" No, no, you're just...

JC: Yeah, but I guess that's kind of what I meant. It's not that she directly told Draco, but dropped enough hints in Draco's presence that made Draco go, 'Hmm, if I can make Harry lose his shit, he's really going to be in trouble.' Yeah, that's just kind of what I was thinking.

Lorrie: I kind of think it was more that Umbridge knew that this dynamic was going to happen whether or not, and Umbridge is taking advantage of a setup that was already there. The enjoyment that Draco's been getting out of flaunting how much influence Lucius has at the Ministry -- which Umbridge has been encouraging because it benefits her -- that's one of the ways to control a person like Draco: to know how good it feels to have unfair privilege and to keep feeding that. We'll see later on that Umbridge is highly aware that this is one of Draco's weaknesses and that he does not have the upper hand over her on this. This is also how Voldemort gets his followers: you find out what people's appetites are and you feed them.

JC: Mm-hmm.

Lorrie: But yeah, if you want to have control over Draco, you notice how satisfying he finds it when he can finally, finally flaunt some of his privilege and get one over on these annoying people. Oh, what's the use being the son of Lucius Malfoy if you keep losing in fights? She bans Harry and George from Quidditch "for life" and confiscates their brooms, and the touch that's so chef's kiss in a terrible way: first, she banned Fred, too, for not doing anything, and then she has a mockery of reasonableness by saying that the rest of the team can still play. That mock reasonable thing... That's the real insult. The true taunt is, "I'm just going to really make you guys feel it, that I have power and you don't." Oof.

JC: Yeah. The fact that she bans Fred and Fred didn't actually do anything...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But just because of what he might do.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I thought, 'Oh, okay, what they assumed he would do if he hadn't been held back...'. That was also very, 'Oh, that's happening today.' Yeah, that felt a little more real than it did the first time through.

Lorrie: Yeah, and she's not wrong as Fred says, "Oh, I would have."

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: "The fact that I didn't do it isn't my fault." But yeah, you get punished for your intentions. But yeah, it took me a while to think, 'Okay, that seems like the most twisted thing she did there,' but really, I think the most twisted thing is her acting like it was generous of her to let the others continue. Banning Fred, even though he didn't do anything... That's only Snape-level yuckiness. Being magnanimous and letting the rest of the team continue is what takes Umbridge to the next level and makes her arguably the most hated villain in this series. Oof... The Quidditch team is, of course, very despondent and Ron feels guilty and wants to quit, and Harry has an excellent point: he yells at Ron to stop making it about himself. This is true.

JC: I feel so bad for Angelina Johnson in all of this. What a year to be Quidditch Captain... It even makes me think of the kids who their senior year in high school was 2020 and it's like, 'Oh, this is the year I get to be drum major,' except marching band doesn't happen because... you know. 'This is the year I get to...' No.

Lorrie: Yeah. "We made it to Nationals." Well, they're not going to have Nationals.

JC: They're not going to have them. Yeah, exactly. This was her year to be Quidditch Captain and take this team to whatever, and no, of course not. All this shit that's not her fault, that she cannot control, and she has to deal with the fallout and figure out how to put a team back together.

Lorrie: A more horrendous thing that it reminds me of is when there are national boycotts of the Olympics; you've been training your whole life to peak during this particular four-year period, and then you can't go. That's been on my mind this whole time that we're supposed to be getting the Los Angeles Olympics. During this presidency that is cracking down on international travel, I'm worried. How are these two things compatible? I don't know what's going to happen, but what do you do if you're an athlete who's training for that? Do you just keep training anyway, knowing that it might be a colossal waste of everybody's lives? Yeah, cheerful. Sorry... Well, this is where this author pulls one of her good tricks and when she's taken the chapter to a point of misery that you don't know how we're ever going to get out of it. She has Hermione claim, "I can think of one thing that might cheer you both up," and you're, like, 'Oh, please, what? What could possibly...?' It's a tall order, but she delivers because I have successfully been made to forget the plot line of Hagrid being gone until now. Oh, yeah... So much has happened, it just drove it out of my mind.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: But yeah, no, that was a good ending to that. Other reactions you have to where this chapter ends up?

JC: Oh, just the image of Ron just wandering about in the snow, despondent...

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: And finally coming back and then finding out that all these other awful things happened after... and how he says, "This is the worst I've ever felt in my life." Harry says, "Join the club," which is quite a big statement coming from Harry because Harry's had a lot of really bad things happen in his life, and if this is a low point, it's like, holy shit.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Well, the next chapter is called Hagrid's Tale, so we get to find out what this big mystery is leading up to.

JC: Mmmm...

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