

Transcript

Episode 5.29

Book 5, Chapter 29: Career Advice

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 Twenty-Nine: Career Advice.

Lorrie: Career Advice. The fifth years meet with their Heads of House for career counseling. Harry encounters Snape for the first time since getting thrown out of Snape's office. He sneaks into Umbridge's fireplace to ask Sirius and Lupin about Snape's worst memory. Fred and George leave school.

JC: That "leave school" covers a lot of ground.

Lorrie: It's what they did. Here we have Harry still reeling from what he learned about his father when his father was 15: "He felt as though the memory of it was eating him from inside." You can really understand how that might just be consuming all of his feelings day and night, right? And it's not like he can talk to a whole lot of people about it.

JC: Right, yeah. In the beginning, when Hermione is pressing him, "Why would Snape just drop the Occlumency lessons? No, you have to go to him and tell him that you have to continue," Harry's like, "Just drop it. No."

Lorrie: "No." Yeah.

JC: "That is the last thing that's going to happen. No."

Lorrie: Yeah. Aside from the fact that he's made a vow to Snape, "No, I'm not going to tell people what I saw." Oh, that's all he can think about, and he's miserably pondering how McGonagall used to just describe James and Sirius as "forerunners" of the

Weasley twins: "Harry could not imagine Fred and George dangling someone upside down for the fun of it... not unless they really loathed them... Perhaps Malfoy, or somebody who really deserved it." We have here the slippery slope of trying not to think about Montague, who's just showed up after really a long time jammed into a toilet. Did Montague really deserve it? He deserved something. Oy... "Harry tried to make a case for Snape having deserved what he had suffered at James's hands --" Oh, Harry... yeah. He can't. Not that... Here's this memory with James and Sirius and Lupin all horribly implicated. I don't know about you... The thing that makes me go cold when I remember what's in that complicated memory: "...his mother had been decent, yet the memory of the look on her face as she had shouted at James disturbed him quite as much as anything else. She had clearly loathed James and Harry simply could not understand how they could have ended up married. Once or twice he even wondered whether James had forced her into it...." I remember thinking, 'Wow.' I wasn't sure if this was going to actually go there, but that was a scary thought, right? 'If I override your boundaries and the way you said no, then I'll hold you hostage in place of this guy.' Ugh.

JC: Which is something that does happen or has happened before, let's say. We find out about it later...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Which is not out of the realm of possibility for this universe.

Lorrie: Yeah, we find out.

JC: It's also interesting to me that Harry's the same age as his parents were then, and when you're that age, you're fixed in that time. Later on as an adult you'll be able to look back and go, 'Oh, yeah, I was a kid' -- and Lupin and Sirius do this later on -- but Harry sees the people that his parents were at fifteen as who they were and that they still have a lot of growing up to do, they were still going to change a lot as people, and that they were absolutely making mistakes and doing things that they were going to regret. The idea that they're not fixed or finished is interesting; Harry can't see that because all he can see is who his parents were when they were his age, which is very interesting. That is absolutely how people would see that situation. It's hard for Harry to reconcile the fact that his dad had a lot of growing up and changing to do; in order for his mom to come around, he must have really grown up a lot. Some shit must have gone down that made him change his mind (and we know some of that), but it's interesting that Harry is not quite mature enough to be able to process that. It's also very soon, so he has a lot of time to think about it.

Lorrie: Yeah. To his benefit, he does have the example of Sirius and Lupin, who show how much a person from that memory can change, so that's a luxury Harry has that not everybody does. What you're saying actually points me to one of those 'If I were her

beta' moments that I have: I would have recommended to this author that she add a couple more hints somewhere in this series of how Lily got from the point of feeling sick at James to realizing that he's her soulmate and wanting to marry him, because I've noticed before... We've noticed how James the character is quite underwritten; the fantasy of the good father is not as vivid as her usual full-fledged character portraits. He's such a vague character that the contrast here of this really highly colored, detailed portrait of a moment in his life is so vivid and this portrait is so disturbing. It creates an imbalance, and I know that fandom readers have grappled with that because you can imagine the things that must have happened for him to change, but you have to imagine them.

JC: I think this is probably also (as I mentioned in the last episode) why I always thought of the Pensieve memories as not being objective, because I couldn't reconcile that. The only way it would make sense to me is if the memory was colored by Snape's perception, and it just wasn't as bad as what it looked like from Snape's perspective or it was different because we all see the world through our own lenses. But if we take that the memory is objective -- it's a recording of what was around you -- then yeah, that's a problem that we never really get the enemies-to-lovers story, as I think I called it before. We don't see really what happened.

Lorrie: If you and I had both been leaving beta comments, I think those would both have shown: "I don't know what you were aiming for here, author, but it might be good to add in a detail here and there to clarify. Was the Pensieve memory definitely an objective record? Was James really like that then? And if so, how is the reader supposed to make sense of the whole picture?" There's, at this point, so many parts of the story that the author's deliberately withholding. We don't know a lot about many of these characters, so that makes sense for now, but after you finish the whole series and you close the book on it, you still don't quite get -- you have to imagine it for yourself. We don't see what changed James. He did change.

JC: The only real hint that we get about his change is when he saves Snape from Sirius' prank.

Lorrie: Well --

JC: We don't know... Yeah, we don't know what happens around that.

Lorrie: We know that he had a Patronus and that it was the soulmate to Lily's, so we know that whatever fear we have about them being a couple that comes from this moment can be put to rest. We know he was a revolutionary and he gave his life for it, and as Sirius said, "No matter what else was wrong with him, he always, always hated the Dark Arts, and that was something sound in him." But yeah, getting from A to Z, I don't know. We have to draw our own conclusions, and fandom has stepped forward to

fill in the gap without consensus; the Lily vs. Snape fandom hatred is one of those divides that is really difficult to bridge because it is colored so much by what kind of people tormented you when you were the same age.

JC: For sure, yeah.

Lorrie: Many people have been tormented by a Snape. Many people have been tormented by a James. It's a difficult debate to have with cool heads, because that's not where any of this is coming from.

JC: And that's a theme in fandom frequently: people tend to identify so strongly with a character. To the credit of the author, many of these characters are so beautifully drawn and so richly depicted that it's easy for people to really identify with them. My experience has been (over the years) that it's really challenging for many fans to separate their own feelings and experiences; they're projecting it onto the character in ways that make it just challenging to pull back and think of it as fiction... is what I'm trying to say. I'm trying to say that very nicely, but knowing me, I definitely have seen that a lot. Not that every reader is that way, of course.

Lorrie: Yeah. There's the function of literature as a tool that captures your emotions so that you can continue to process something that happened in your life; it might not be exactly the same as what happened with the character, but it taps into something. Then there's the function of literature where people who read the same book but have different interpretations try to engage in a dialogue, and then you're not talking about the same words on the page; you're talking about the emotional experience you had interacting with those words that might not be the conversation that you're trying to have it be.

JC: Right. Well, that takes me back to the memory, then (and this is the interesting thing about the concept of a Pensieve): you can go back to an event... Other people can see the event, and they're not necessarily seeing it from your point of view. They're just seeing it.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But they're going to identify with it in certain ways and take different things away from it. What Harry took from the experience of seeing that memory is very different from what Snape took from it, and that seems to be kind of a parallel thing happening there.

Lorrie: Yeah. That's a really good summation of how much I appreciate the way the author wrote Snape's Worst Memory, because she packed it with so many rich, overwhelming, ambiguous moments that of course you have as many different reactions to it as you have readers. Actually, probably more because I know I, reading that

passage, reacted to it in a few different, contradictory ways. Yeah, well done. Yeah, if we had witnessed a bullying moment like that in real time, we would be feeling kind of disturbed about it for a really long time after.

JC: Harry's having an identity crisis...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And we're up to the Easter holiday, which is... Okay, there we go. I'm not sure when the holiday markers -- because they start school in September and then there's a Christmas winter holiday, and then they go up to the Easter holiday and they don't get out until the end of June or something. This is kind of two-thirds of the way through the school year, or are we at three-fourths? It feels like two-thirds.

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah, because they say that after Easter holiday started what they call the summer session, which is, I guess, in Scotland when there's some hope that things will stop being frozen.

JC: And the daylight... The days are getting very long.

Lorrie: The days... whew. Yeah.

JC: I love the fact that Hermione is making steady schedules for them as they head to the O.W.L.s, and I found it very interesting that Ron was shocked that the exams were only six weeks away.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: This is the first time I've ever seen Ron concerned about studying. Normally, he'd be like, "Six weeks?!" In the past..

Lorrie: "Oh, we've got time."

JC: "Six weeks? We've got so much time." Now he's like, "Only six weeks?" Hermione's like, "Okay, if you just follow the schedule," which she has crafted in the way that the stereotypical, very organized, nerdy high school girl would: it's color-coded and there's little flashing things... I'm in awe of this schedule that she...

Lorrie: I know.

JC: I did create things along those lines as a high school student, as a college student and as a grad student. I'm looking at my planner right now; everything's color-coded with stickers in it.

Lorrie: I was about to say... You cannot convince me that you've stopped!

JC: That just appealed to me so much. Of course, the color-coding and everything... She does it for everyone because she knows they won't do it for themselves, which reminds me of me trying to do this for my own kid who just is, "Eh..."

Lorrie: Yeah, and the way that she wins just by overpowering them. They accept her schedule because they don't have what it takes to fight her on it.

JC: Right. Yeah, and they can't argue that if they followed it, it wouldn't be useful, right? They can't commit that they're going to do it, but they do see the value of it.

Lorrie: I love that she has so much executive function left over that she can do this for other people, too.

JC: Oh, that's amazing. Yeah.

Lorrie: Bless.

JC: Yeah. I do think that that amount of organizational skill... There's a little bit of non-neurotypicalness that it would require to be able to do that and to want to do that, not only for yourself but for other people. 'Here, let me organize it for you.'

Lorrie: Where Hermione is concerned, that's where I start to lose the plot a bit about what counts as non-neurotypical and what counts just as high aptitude. There comes a point where I don't know, because it's all relative.

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: Anyway, that's a whole separate conversation.

JC: That's a whole separate conversation. I just love Hermione's schedule. The other thing I really loved here was Ron ranting about Marietta and Harry grabbing a moment to be able to check out and just go, "Mm-hmm, that's right." It was funny the way it was written, but Harry's got this ride-or-die friend who will sit there and rant about the things that he would be mad about if he had time to be mad. He's outsourced some of his anger because he just doesn't have the capacity right now, and Ron is there to pick it up. I just love that about their friendship. That feels really comfortable to me.

Lorrie: Yeah, although your point also makes me realize something else: Harry is able to invoke Ron's indignation over Marietta to provide some cover for himself so that he doesn't have to expose his fears about his dad. But we see Snape do exactly the same thing later on in this chapter, where if you can trigger somebody's predictable emotional surges, you can use that to hide behind.

JC: Ah.

Lorrie: But yeah, Harry's thrilled that Ron is on a Marietta rant. Great! Keep him there.

JC: And then we move on to Ginny, who comes to find Harry after a Quidditch practice gone wrong -- this is later in the day -- and I really love that we're starting to get glimpses of who Ginny is. She's been kind of an absent character... I think I said this a couple of episodes back. She's been kind of absent as a character (and we've only got little hints of her and they've been filtered through other characters), but now Harry's getting to know her and getting to know she has some hard edges that the other students in his life don't have. She's one of the few characters who gets away with a swear word.

Lorrie: She would. She gets away with everything.

JC: Yeah. She has very strong opinions and she's not afraid to state them. I like the strength that we're seeing in her, and it's such an interesting... We haven't seen her in a few years -- she was really shy, and she had a crush on Harry and she would hide. It's unclear how she feels about Harry now, but there's such a strong sense of 'This is an ally. This is someone he can absolutely trust.' He trusts her judgment, he listens to her, and it's setting their future relationship up nicely. I like it.

Lorrie: Yeah, she's potent. I always get so excited whenever chocolate shows up.

JC: Yes, that's true. Chocolate is usually good.

Lorrie: Yes, and those beautiful chocolate Easter eggs from Molly Weasley have been unwrapped and carelessly re-wrapped. That hurts...

JC: Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: That some intruder has just rifled through the stuff that your mom put love into. Ugh, twitch... Why are they doing this? It's a power move to let people know, 'Here, you can have your chocolate. It's by our mercy that you get this chocolate, which we have found worthless because there was no contraband in there.' It's just... Ugh.

JC: Yeah. It's still possible that Crabbe or Goyle spat on it before they wrapped it back up, because it's other students that hate you going through this stuff that was packaged up and sent to you as a gift. That's part of the grossness of it for me. Did they wash their hands before they handled your chocolate? Probably not. Ugh... ugh.

Lorrie: So yeah, just a reminder of who's in charge and that you don't have any boundaries against them. This reminded me of a thing that happened to me when I was a college student and I tried to send a button home to a friend in Korea that said, "I read banned books." Here I was in the U.S. for college, and those buttons... The bookstore was giving them away for free, I thought they were so cool. At that time, the censorship laws in Korea were pretty strict; they censored almost nothing, but anything that was government or censorship related was like, 'Ooh, you can't touch that.' I wrote her a letter, saying "I'm sending this button," and then I put the button in the package; she

writes back, "I got the letter. Where's my button?" I thought, 'Oh, did I forget to include it?' I sent her another one, but just in case, this time I sent it in a care package full of lots of tiny little gifts and hid it in there, and put in an inventory. They didn't censor the parts of my letter that referred to the button; she got the entire package with every single item in it (and the letter) except for the button.

JC: Oh, my God!

Lorrie: And who am I? I was a kid. I was so not important, but I thought, 'Wow, how are they doing this? Are they hand-inspecting every single package, or did I get on some sort of list because they ran across my first one?' I don't know how they did it, but the amount of labor that must have taken really impressed me, and not in a good way.

JC: Yeah, right. That is so interesting. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: The idea that someone opened the letter, sorted through a box... Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, and the words weren't considered important. They didn't sit there and read my whole letter, but yeah, every little stuffed animal that I sent in that box all got through. I think it got through not looking all messed up.

JC: That's interesting.

Lorrie: Yeah. If she hadn't known, then she wouldn't have thought that somebody had gone through and removed something.

JC: Oh... Yeah, that's true.

Lorrie: Well, the censorship laws changed after that, but that always stuck with me.

JC: Yeah, right. Yeah. That's what these folks are experiencing here, except they know who's going through their stuff, which is a little bit different. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, it's less anonymous. Yeah, because I didn't think it was personal, what had happened to me. But an Easter egg box from Molly Weasley to Harry and Ginny? Oh, that's personal. Well, they get the chocolate -- I'm sure it was really yummy -- and we get the iconic Ginny line: "The thing about growing up with Fred and George is that you sort of start thinking anything's possible if you've got enough nerve." Fandom has often quoted that as a sort of rallying cry, and that's such a beautiful moment that Harry gets to brainstorm with an equal. That's so different from him just going around and around in his head. Everything changes when you can even just exchange thoughts with somebody else.

JC: And she's so different from Ron and Hermione.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: She's much more like Fred and George. Ron and Hermione are going to tend to talk Harry out of doing things that are risky, and here Ginny's just like, "Why not?" It's not quite an "I dare you", but it feels like she's matching... There's a part of him that really wants someone to say, "Yeah, you should do it." Ron and Hermione are not going to say it, but Ginny will. It's interesting.

Lorrie: Ron and Hermione have too much invested because they know every detail of every story, and Ginny is a little freer than that. Oh, God, poor Hermione has a terrible, terrible time in this chapter...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Trying to be the conscience and the executive function of these two semi-mature teen boys during a really fraught political time, her nerves must just be dying... We get some world building. Did you enjoy the Career Advice pamphlets?

JC: Those were funny. One of the things -- I know we were both thinking it because we both have seventeen-year-olds who are both entering their senior year of high school and about to apply to colleges and thinking about what they want to do. Knowing what is to come in this particular universe and seeing the jobs that they're considering and how ridiculous it is, some of them are funny. "You want to work for a bank? You want to be in constant danger?"

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Which is funny, but the disconnect between where I know the story is going and what these kids are going to need to be able to do, and what the school thinks they're being prepared for was really stark to me on this read...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Because of everything that's happening right now.

Lorrie: Yeah, because what are you training an almost-adult for? Possibly a job that isn't going to exist or in a field that may be outlawed...

JC: Or so taken over by AI that there's no...

Lorrie: Yeah, made redundant.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Well, maybe you have what it takes to train security trolls.

JC: Yeah. Yeah. I think that on a first read twenty years ago, this came across as exciting and fun and funny. It just reminded me of all the anxieties of my life this time...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And all of my existential dread for the future and for the future for my kid.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It was such a darker experience reading this. When it was originally written, it was totally intended to be kind of fun and fluffy, even though the author knew what was coming at this point; I don't think the readers really did. Yeah, it just felt very different.

Lorrie: Okay, this is one of those "you and I come from different backgrounds" moments, because it read to me very dark at the time...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Because the cheery, corporate tone of the pamphlets is contrasting so much with Harry's career counseling session being overseen by the authoritarian. It makes it sound like, "Blah, blah, blah, everything's so cheerful! Liaise with Muggles!" but actually, their world is constrained in such a punitive way right around them. How can they even be thinking about careers at a time when they're being punished and controlled? It was more for me like when I went to high school at an international school in Korea; it was on a college campus during a time when there were constant college student protests. There were constantly clashes with the police and cobblestones being thrown and tear gas (we would get the tear gas; it would blow over on the wind), and all this cheery government propaganda about how we could think about careers being productive citizens was really at variance with daily life. That's so funny here -- that these kids are going around dealing with such dark things where they're threatening and almost killing each other, and then "No, no, everything stop! You have to read this pink and orange pamphlet about your bright career!" The mild sarcasm from Ron and Hermione and Harry in this scene I really enjoyed, when Harry's like, "Oh, good luck liaising with my uncle." The condescension in these pamphlets is something that they're just too tired to even deal with.

JC: Right. Yeah, definitely. My experience was different from that, but one thing that it did remind me of was the experience of being a high school junior and getting endless amounts of mail from colleges that I had somehow gotten on their mailing list. This is in the late 1980s -- it's even more complicated now -- but of all these colleges that I had no hope of being able to pay for, I would just flip through them and they're like, 'Oh, you can study abroad, you could do this.'

Lorrie: Right.

JC: My family had no money and my parents had not gone to college; I was a first generation college student and they had no clue of how any of this works, so getting all these pamphlets and just looking at them and being, like, "That's out of my..."

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: It was a joke.

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah.

JC: I was reminded of that, though. My life circumstances were not anything like what you described or what these students are experiencing, but I think the humor... That was what it reminded me of: getting pamphlets from places like Harvard and Duke, places that, even if I could get in, could never have afforded. It's like, "No."

Lorrie: "Thank you. Very nice." But yeah, it's the relentlessness of the hermetically sealed environment and attitude from that pamphlet. It's like, "This is the world! It's cheery, it's beautiful... See yourself here!"

JC: Yeah, "See yourself here!" and it's the very diverse looking photo... Yeah. "Okay, I see the world you're trying to present to us."

Lorrie: Yeah, I would like a little space. "You, too..." Yes, thank you very much.

JC: And that's what this felt like to me. It felt darker to me now, just because now my experience is very different than it was some number of decades ago, when I could relate to this from my own experience.

Lorrie: Ugh... Yeah, and yet the kids do have to figure out some way to place themselves in this context. For better or for worse... Okay, here goes!

JC: Right, and that's another thing. We've talked offline quite a bit about the experience of trying to help our own kids figure out where to go from here. I work at a university; I sit on committees with a faculty, where we talk about issues coming to our university and what kinds of things students struggle with. The future is just so uncertain right now for so many reasons that it is challenging for me, even in my role as a faculty member, to think about what I'm doing to prepare students for a very specific career in education. I struggle daily with 'Am I doing the right thing? Am I giving them what they need?' and I can kind of see that Hogwarts... I think the Hogwarts teachers, if we could talk to them about this, are probably having very similar misgivings right now. Even as McGonagall is going through the process of counseling all these students, in the back of her mind she's wondering what's really in store for them.

Lorrie: And how can you counsel somebody on a future that you don't know which direction it's going to go?

JC: Right.

Lorrie: The whole mechanism of a Career Advice day is based on another different, better timeline that had some stability to it. You're still going to go through with it; are

you going to talk to the student as though the world assumed by this convention still exists?

JC: Right.

Lorrie: Well, that's what you're supposed to, because nobody's updated that yet.

JC: Yes. This is also reminding me when we send students to take a teacher certification exam, the advice that we give them is, like, "Okay, we know you've studied all this stuff. This exam is going to ask you a bunch of questions about how you would handle classroom situations, and the thing you need to keep in mind is imagine an ideal world in which everything works the way it's supposed to, children will respond in ways that seem logical, parents will be nice to you, and everything is fair and just. Pretend that's the world they're asking about, not the real world that you know exists, because that's what it takes to pass the test. You cannot take the test and pass it with the real world in your mind. You have to have this fake world of 'what if' in mind."

Lorrie: That's bilingualism.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Wow, that's...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Okay, all right. Yes, make sure you understand the truth and the code and how to be fluent in both. Oh, my goodness.

JC: That's kind of what I see McGonagall doing here all day, talking to these students.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: "Let's imagine that everything is going to be fine."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "In that case, you would need to get an Excellent in these courses."

Lorrie: Right. Yeah. I live within walking distance of UPenn -- I'm not connected to the university; this is just where we live. Yesterday, they announced that they are destroying a scholarship meant for Black women in the law school that was named after the first Black woman in the U.S. to get a law degree. That scholarship has benefited so many students with a strong mentoring network over the years, and now (because it's part of the deal that UPenn struck with the current administration) they're just getting rid of it, and they're also dismantling their DEI office. We don't know what's going to happen to the jobs and livelihoods of the employees of that office.

JC: Yep.

Lorrie: And yet a week ago, UPenn also sent out an alert: they are looking for paid employees of their LGBTQ support center, and they listed the hours and what your responsibilities might be. Is that still something to apply for? If you want to do this work and you apply and you get the job because that stream of funding somehow was overlooked in the ban, will it be gone in three months?

JC: My response is yes, it will. Living in Texas and having gone through this a year and a half ago... We're a year and a half ahead. Yeah.

Lorrie: But then do you want to get in there for a few months and do what you can before it's taken away and maybe network with the people who will come during those few weeks or months? Yeah.

JC: There's questions there, yeah, for sure.

Lorrie: These are exactly the kind of questions that McGonagall and her peers are thinking about as these very tired, unhappy fifteen-year-olds drag their asses into the offices.

JC: Yeah. The Texas legislature passed a law this last session (and they basically passed it because Trump told them to) to eliminate in-state tuition basically for DACA recipients, so for people who are even legal residents. UT (my institution) sent out an email in June or July within a few weeks of having completely renovated the students email system (so a lot of students did not get this email), telling them that if they were a non-U.S. citizen, they had to file some paperwork with the university to re-up what their residential status was; otherwise, they would be converted to full tuition, out-of-state tuition. Reddit -- the subreddits about UT -- are full of students panicking that they just got their tuition bill and instead of it being the in-state price that they've been paying all along, it's suddenly four times that and what are they going to do. There's lots of advice about 'This email went out. If you didn't get it, check for it or call the office or whatever.' It's just a nightmare.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: So yeah, the fact that the government is coming in and pulling the strings in the ways that we're seeing happening here... The fact that Umbridge is sitting in the room making comments...

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: We don't know if she's done this for every single student or if Harry is special, but you get the sense that she's been sitting there or rather that McGonagall's had to put up with her this entire time. That kind of interference just to pick on particular people...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Ugh... I see that in real time a lot in the last couple of years at my institution, and it's incredibly demoralizing for everyone involved. Yeah.

Lorrie: On purpose.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And if we go back to the start-of-term feast, where Umbridge was droning on and on and on and Hermione was saying it means the Ministry is interfering at Hogwarts, this is it. This is exactly what they were fantasizing about doing, and boy, they're doing it.

JC: Yep. We get this lovely scene of McGonagall trying to have the counseling appointment with Harry while Umbridge is trying to cough to get her attention to the background.

Lorrie: And succeeding in coughing.

JC: The funny thing about Umbridge is that she doesn't just interrupt; she waits to be invited to give her opinion and McGonagall finally has to give in.

Lorrie: Yeah, after she's irritated... Are you reading a British edition?

JC: I don't know if I am or not right now.

Lorrie: Oh, okay, because I work off the American Scholastic editions and McGonagall keeps asking if Umbridge would like a cough drop, and I thought the British edition must say 'lozenge', right?

JC: I don't know. This says 'cough drop', I think, the version I'm currently looking at.

Lorrie: I'm just curious...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Because yeah, 'cough drop' feels very colloquial. Before we get to the actual showdown in which Harry is a helpless participant...

JC: Oh, my gosh, we skipped something important. We did.

Lorrie: Well, Ginny gets Fred and George to promise a diversion for Harry so that Harry can go do something about the thing that's been gnawing at him. Fred and George have had this plan for a while and now they have a good outlet for it -- a good higher purpose to turn it to -- and Harry has finally figured out he's been dying to talk to Sirius. Of course, we the reader are yelling at Harry, 'That gift, the gift that Sirius gave you... You should open it!'

JC: He goes through all of this hassle, and it's like, 'If he just had opened...' Yeah.

Lorrie: 'Sirius already thought about this,' but no. For reasons in the plot, he's forgotten about that gift, but he did remember from a while ago that Sirius gave him this knife that's supposed to be able to unlock any door. He thought, 'Okay, I'm going to use that to get into the one Floo that still works in Hogwarts. I'm going to sneak into Umbridge's office...' This is when Hermione enters the miserable agonies that she just cannot stop. "Please, please, please, please don't do this. Oh, my God, what could go wrong? Everything! Everything could go wrong," but he's going to do it and Fred and George helped. Knowing that, all day long he's completely nervous; then he's also completely nervous for a completely different reason, which is that this is the first encounter he's having with Snape post-cockroach. Ugh, I just feel for Harry. How could this be anything but just dread? He goes in, not knowing what terrible fate awaits him... This is one of my favorite things about Snape: he's made such a case for himself as a source of pure terror that you do the work for him in your mind. 'I'm going towards Snape. I don't know what's going to happen to me, but whatever it is, it's beyond imagination.' Harry, for a moment, thinks it might not be too bad. He's lulled because Snape "seemed to have decided to act as though Harry were invisible." Okay, fine, all that. Harry totally knows how to deal with that. He's been invisible his whole life; he knows how to handle this. This even improves his potion making.

JC: Well, that's the thing I find... Funny's the wrong word, but...

Lorrie: It's hilarious!

JC: It's striking here. In the absence of abuse or whatever, he's actually able to make a decent potion. It's this little glimpse of 'He could have been good at this all along if he weren't constantly living under the terror of what Snape is going to do to him next'. For me as a teacher, all this is so important to me: if you make kids that uncomfortable, they cannot think in your presence and they won't learn anything. You cannot threaten kids into learning. It's not how brains work and it's just like, "AAAAHHH!" Oh, my God.

Lorrie: What I like is that in *Prisoner of Azkaban*, we get a quantification -- we get an equation -- that Neville's performance in Potions is ten times worse because of Snape. We have an actual formula that we can plug numbers into.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, it's not a mystery. If he'd just leave the kids alone... "How could Snape do better as a teacher?" By not teaching.

JC: Yeah. That's the interesting thing, isn't it? His presence has negative teaching value. If he did nothing, they would learn more.

Lorrie: Harry's not bad at this. Harry is lulled briefly into thinking he can survive this, and then Snape does something that's so amazingly enraging and petty to a degree that

cannot be measured: he deliberately smashes Harry's sample "with a look of gloating pleasure" and says, "Whoops. Another zero, then, Potter..."

JC: And does it in the view of Draco Malfoy, who gets to see Snape intentionally do this to Harry.

Lorrie: "The look of gloating pleasure" is very important there, and Harry... There's nothing he can do about this but take the zero. That is such a beautifully written Snape moment, right? It's the most petty, hateful, calculated moment. Also, is it serving a purpose? If we weren't sure it was serving a purpose, that "gloating pleasure" is a little bit of evidence, yes. Snape has just had to come back from explaining the whole Snape's Worst Memory incident to Voldemort, and he's had to pass off that conflict as animosity. "Why did you throw Potter out of your office?" He's had to convince the Dark Lord that it was because he hates Potter and the Marauders, and that he threw Harry out for insubordination, which is plausible. There's an argument to be made for that, but now he has to demonstrate to Voldemort that he's going to remain in that story and torment Harry (which is not difficult because he's really upset at Harry); primarily, he has to intensify Harry's enmity toward him so that it will override the developing understanding and sympathy that Harry and Snape have started to grow for each other against their will through these Occlumency lessons. If he blasts the heat under Harry's hatred of him, that can cover... that can distract Harry from this. That's what I was thinking of when you said that Harry doesn't want to be explaining his feelings to Ron, but then Ron starts yelling about Marietta and Harry gets some relief and he can disconnect for a while, while that happens. Smashing Harry's sample is a step beyond his usual pettiness.

JC: Yes.

Lorrie: It's actively malicious and actively rule-breaking in a way that we don't usually see from him.

JC: That's true. This is the kind of act that would, in most states in the U.S. (but most certainly in Texas, if reported to the state board of education), lose you your license.

Lorrie: Yeah. He doesn't usually do this.

JC: Right. This is an explicit kind of rule-breaking that would lose a teacher their job.

Lorrie: Yeah, and if somebody other than --

JC: Umbridge...

Lorrie: If a real headmaster were in charge, then this isn't what he would do, but this is the one time in the series when he does something this blatantly wrong in full view of witnesses. Does it serve a purpose? Well, whether intentionally or not, it does make

Harry hate him so much -- remind Harry of every single reason why they've always loathed each other -- yeah, it's going to wipe out a lot of those feelings. It's an exquisitely plotted detail. It's so unbelievably hateful.

JC: Oh, and the fact that he gets back to his cauldron and Hermione has cleaned it up for him, so he doesn't even have... Because he could have just taken another sample up and held it out.

Lorrie: Yeah, and make him grade it.

JC: And make him grade it, but Hermione had already vanished the rest of his potion.

Lorrie: Now, Hermione feels terrible about that, on top of having hissed at him all day.

JC: Right. But I had a moment of, 'Why is Hermione cleaning up after her friends? Stop doing that!'

Lorrie: Well, she's making their schedules...

JC: Oh, my God. Yeah, it was just like, 'Ugh...' Anyway, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Hermione... But oh, man, yeah. That was hard. That was hard to read.

Lorrie: Yeah. Well, whatever Snape's intention, it totally worked; now Harry (and the readers) cannot believe what a piece of work this asshole is, and the extra tantalization that it was a good potion for once... Ugh.

JC: Yeah, exactly.

Lorrie: So yeah, whatever fairly easy time Harry thought he was going to have, nuh-uh. But yeah, after that unfortunate interaction, Harry then realizes that he's late to his career counseling because he's been too busy hating Snape to remember that.

JC: Oh, my God. There's a lot of unpleasant emotions going on in Harry right now.

Lorrie: Here's Harry out of breath and he skids into McGonagall's office, and there's some sort of presence in the corner coughing.

JC: It's like, 'What's the next worst thing that can happen? Oh, here we go!'

Lorrie: Oh, boy... Well, did you sort of admire McGonagall gainly carrying on as though it were a normal career advice session?

JC: Oh, I love McGonagall in this scene so much. This scene was a reward for all the other crap that we've had to deal with. This is such a great, I guess, antidote to the scene with Snape, because here we have McGonagall... Fucking legend McGonagall behavior here. Oh, my God... Takes every opportunity she can to slight Umbridge, and

you also get the sense here that McGonagall may be one of the few teachers that Umbridge is actually afraid of or intimidated by, because many of them could not get away with this but McGonagall can. Oh, so good, so good. She ignores her and ignores her...

Lorrie: Yeah, and speaks loudly. Yeah, the way that she takes a deep breath and starts over when she's interrupted... Yeah.

JC: Oh, so great.

Lorrie: Of course, in this classic Harry characterization, there's all this adult drama going on and he has to sit there looking very small and mumble, "I kind of wanted to be an Auror." Those moments when you just feel so very young and unimpressive...

JC: I do love, though, that most of the scene, he just kind of sits there and lets the adults yell over his head.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: There's some beautiful lines in this, like when McGonagall says, "You'll have to get a top mark in Defense Against the Dark Arts..."

Lorrie: "*Hem hem...*"

JC: Umbridge tries to say, "Well, he's not doing well in his classes with me." "I should have made my meaning plainer," said Professor McGonagall, turning at last to look Umbridge directly in the eyes. "He has achieved high marks in all Defense Against the Dark Arts tests set by a competent teacher."

Lorrie: Oh, yes.

JC: Oh, I needed that. I needed that.

Lorrie: Yeah. Umbridge is going to have to think of some other tactic.

JC: I love that Harry's just sitting here and not interfering. 'I'm just going to let this roll.'

Lorrie: If you can imagine his tennis-match eyes going left, right, left, right, left, right...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Oh, God. 'Don't move your head. They might notice you.' I love, too, that we get a hint, one of those mysterious hints that McGonagall... Something makes her not hate Snape because when she tells Harry, "Oh, you want to be an Auror? You're going to have to go on to N.E.W.T. Potions," and before Harry can show any expression, she has "the merest flicker of a smile" and she says, "Yes, Potter, Potions." She knows that these two children are fighting as always, but why isn't she indignant? What does she

know about this? Anyway, huh... She knows about their enmity, and then eventually McGonagall and Umbridge devolve into a shouting match. Gosh!

JC: I love it. The shouting match is so great, especially when they finally hit the point where it's clear that Umbridge is like, "He will never be an Auror!" and McGonagall's like, "He'll be an Auror if it's the last thing I do! If I have to tutor him personally!" It devolves into this... Oh, it's so incredible.

Lorrie: Yeah. She can't control herself, McGonagall, and she says this 'in ringing tones', which is so beautiful because she's been holding herself back so much trying to behave and she's no longer capable of this. She is magnificent -- it is magnificent -- and as a reader, I'm reading this going, 'Harry, run. Run!' And he does.

JC: And at the end of their fight, Umbridge feels like she's gotten McGonagall. "You admitted that this..." and McGonagall's like, "You are raving." Umbridge's agenda here becomes really clear.

Lorrie: Yeah, she's lost her ground. Harry is running; the argument's not over, but fade to black.

JC: I just love the idea of Umbridge and McGonagall having a screaming match, even when Harry is gone. It's so great. How does it end? We don't know.

Lorrie: We don't know.

JC: We just know that Umbridge is late to her own class because... Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. That's the next sight he has of Umbridge, is in one of her scintillating Defense classes where... Oh, this hurt. The chapter of the Slinkhard book they're reading this week is "Non-Retaliatio and Negotiation."

JC: Yeah. Actually, I laughed at that.

Lorrie: Oh, my God. If we weren't living through that right now... 'How to train your populace to accept abuse.' Oi, aye, aye...

JC: Right, right.

Lorrie: Yeah. The title of that chapter is just tucked into the sentence. It's part of the joke.

JC: And Harry hasn't had a chance even to tell anyone else what happened. He can't even talk to Hermione, because every breath Hermione has that she can direct at him is telling him, "Don't do it, don't do it, don't do it." From Hermione's perspective -- I'm on Team Hermione here, obviously. I'm just like, 'Oh, my God... Oh, my God.'

Lorrie: It's so risky.

JC: It's so risky, and for what? Because you need to talk about this memory and it can't wait. This doesn't feel like something that needs to take this big of a risk, oh, my God. I'm very much Team Hermione here.

Lorrie: Well, I understand that he can't function until he gets some help with this memory, but he can't explain that to anyone.

JC: Right. He can't, and it feels like an emergency to him. It feels like he absolutely has to do this -- he has to take whatever risk he needs to take to get this sorted out -- but you just take a step back and look at the big picture. 'Harry, what are you doing? Ugh...'

Lorrie: Poor Hermione knowing she can't stop it...

JC: Fortunately, it works out this time.

Lorrie: Thank goodness, yes.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: I still, on this nth reading of the series, am shocked and relieved that nothing bad happens, that his plan works out.

JC: Yeah. Oh, my gosh.

Lorrie: He gets Lupin first. Lupin is poring over a piece of parchment, which suggests that work for the Order has been continuing. Lupin goes and gets Sirius, too; that is such a merciful gift that we the reader get confirmation that Sirius was not left alone by himself. That moment at the end of winter break, when Harry is abandoning Sirius by going back to school and Sirius is just drunk and miserable... No, he hasn't been alone. Thank goodness he's had company.

JC: Of course, they're both panicked to see Harry's face in the fire. In the circumstances they're in, their first thought is something horrible has happened, and Harry's like, "No, I just want to talk about my dad."

Lorrie: "Your dad?!"

JC: Oh, my God. I felt like such an adult reading this, because my reaction was the facepalm. 'Oh, Harry...'

Lorrie: "Yes." Yeah. What? Yeah, although I think they did understand fairly soon... Then we see Harry break his promise to Snape, and I am on Team Harry about it -- he does have to tell someone; he tells them what he saw in the Pensieve, and then poor Lupin and Sirius...

JC: Well, they were there, is the thing. They were there...

Lorrie: Their horrible, shameful, unglorious past is spooling undeniably in front of them with this perfectly, righteously indignant, pained little face speaking to them from the fireplace. They're so caught. Oh, God...

JC: Yeah. I'm trying to imagine what that would be like to be confronted with evidence of some awful, stupid thing he did as a teenager in the way that probably many current teens will be considering how much of that has been filmed and put on social media.

Lorrie: That is true.

JC: That's kind of a similar thing, right? What if they made a TikTok of them tormenting Snape?

Lorrie: Yeah, and it comes up in your confirmation hearings. Yeah.

JC: Yeah. Yes, exactly. Right. That's kind of what it felt like a little bit, too.

Lorrie: Yep. So they try to gather themselves -- "He was only fifteen --" and of course Harry is completely correct to be furious and say "I'm fifteen!" There is actually no excuse for this behavior. There's no law that when you're fifteen, you have to be this horrible.

JC: True, true.

Lorrie: Most fifteen-year-olds are not.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: It's not that Harry hasn't been provoked...

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: In fact, James was not provoked, and that's so brave of Harry to bring up with Sirius. "He wasn't even doing anything. He just did it because you said that you were bored." That was so brave of Harry and so fortunate and blessed for him to have a living adult right in front of him that he could confront and talk to and get some closure, because that's the agony of what he saw with James; he can't even talk to the guy! To have this is such a luxury for Harry... Then Sirius hesitantly tries to say, "Well, I think Snape was envious of James, he was popular in athletics and good at everything," which on the one hand is a red herring from the author. Good. If we distract from that, that will allow for the later reveal of the other thing that was happening inside Snape that Lupin and Sirius would have had no reason to know about. They are exactly the last people in the world that Snape would want to know about the kind of change of heart that he had. Also, the storyline of James being enviable was that there's so much truth to that. Yeah, for the reader, of course it obscures other readings too, because yes, of course... This is not at all a bad reason to have this be somebody's worst memory, but

it's also wonderfully getting us to think about just how unbearable jealousy can feel, because what are you jealous of? The first memory of Harry's that Snape ever sees during Occlumency is how Harry felt at age five watching Dudley with his new red bicycle, and of course it had to be red; it was gleaming and beautiful. You think about a five-year-old looking at that and that's almost unbearable, but then Snape looking at what James has and it comes to him so easily and he can be the worst asshole in the world and still gets all of this privilege... That can be even more unbearable or the same but ten years later. This is a setup for when we see Voldemort at the end of this volume explaining why it is that he can't stay in Harry's mind possessing him when Harry thinks about how much he loves Sirius. However much you could be jealous of a bicycle or of somebody being good-looking and popular and rich, that's going to pale compared to the incredible jealousy that Harry has this person who lives for him that he can even go to to ask about his dad.

JC: I really appreciated that Remus and Sirius took Harry seriously and talked to him here, but I was a little annoyed at them for the way that they just brushed it all aside.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Because it was like, "Oh, yeah, we were complete terrors and little shits, but we were kids."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It made me think about numerous stories that I've read online of people who were in a position to confront their childhood bullies, and the childhood bullies were genuinely shocked that the person was still upset about this thing that happened when they were ten...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And they really don't understand how awful they were. For them, "Oh, we were kids. We were stupid." They don't really have any regret or remorse or understanding of what they really did.

Lorrie: Well...

JC: It seems, or they don't tell it to Harry.

Lorrie: We do get hints, though, because also, when you're confronted by terrible evidence that you were truly a piece of shit -- and it's from a kid that loves you -- those first few minutes, you've got to scramble. It's hard. When Harry says to Sirius "It was just because you were bored," Sirius says right away, "I'm not proud of it;" when he says that, Lupin gives him a look. This is different from how Sirius was a year or two ago, when bad things happened to Snape and he'd be like, "Great, he deserves it." It's very

difficult, but as Sirius and Snape have been working together for the Order, it's really clear that nothing from their personal beef is important compared to the work that they're doing, and there's just really no time for that. This is one of those tiny, tiny hints that no, they're really trying hard to grow up a little bit.

JC: We've talked a lot about Sirius's stunted development here.

Lorrie: He's trying. Yeah.

JC: Yeah, and he has made progress. He's made a lot of progress, and I imagine that he's doing much better for having a friend spend time with him than if he were all alone with just Kreacher.

Lorrie: Yeah. He has meaningful work to do. Then poor Harry... Oh, God, I'm so proud of Harry for getting all these painful details out. "He kept messing up his hair..." Oh, God, and instead of feeling Harry's agony, Lupin and Sirius get all reminiscent and fond-looking.

JC: Yeah, that's true. They laugh, and Sirius... "I'd forgotten he used to do that."

Lorrie: Oh! And Harry... I love the word 'uncomprehending.' Harry is uncomprehending while he sees them get all gooey over this asshole. This whole thing is so healing, because even if Harry can't understand it right now, he is getting some of his father back by seeing that there were real living people -- full-fledged people -- who knew the whole James and demonstrate that they knew all of him and they loved him, and that complexity is restoring some of Harry's feelings. You can't really blame Voldemort for being dead of jealousy that Harry gets this. Well, James is gone. Can you see him? No, but you can see his friends' faces when they think about him. Oh, God, this is so much. Then we get character growth from Lupin -- Oh, my God! -- where Sirius says, "Well, Lupin was better than we were," and he says no. "Did I ever tell you to lay off Snape? Did I ever have the guts to tell you I thought you were out of order?" Oh, wow, that's character growth. Yeah, Sirius is not the only one who's been confronting himself. Then Sirius says, "Yeah, well, you made us feel ashamed of ourselves sometimes.... That was something...." as we think about poor Hermione in agony here. Yeah, this is partly character growth from them from the work they've been doing with Snape on Order business (including self-reflection they've had to have after the disgraceful fight between Snape and Sirius right before break ended), but it's also because they have to grow up because they have a teenager. And then the bravest stand of all, where Harry asks miserably, "How come she married him? She hated him!" Ouch! Amazingly, Sirius has a completely easy conscience on that point and says, "Nah, she didn't." Okay, that's a good, tiny hint that tells us a lot. Okay, there was a process.

JC: And that two years later, they were dating. We still need that gap filled, but oh, well.

Lorrie: But there was a change, okay. Harry says, "Yeah, but was there change regarding Snape?" and Lupin slowly admits, "No." "And my mum was okay with that?" "She didn't know about it." Oh, God... Quite realistic.

JC: It's interesting. Lupin about Snape: Snape "never lost an opportunity to curse James, so you couldn't really expect James to take that lying down, could you?" Harry says, "And my mum was okay with that?" Sirius says, "She didn't know too much about it, to tell you the truth," which feels a bit like throwing us off the scent of the reality that Lily did know Snape really well...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That their friendship was broken at that point.

Lorrie: Yeah. If they're going to go around still being like this, they're not going to do it in front of the girl they like, but it's good for Harry that he gets Sirius saying, "Look, your father was the best friend I ever had, and he was a good person. A lot of people are idiots at the age of fifteen. He grew out of it." Okay... With any luck, teens have help from adults around them to get them past this phase, and then Harry says, "I just never thought I'd feel sorry for Snape." That is so good that Harry gets to say that and share that with Sirius and Lupin. This is a moment of wholeness with people who matter to him and who know everybody involved.

JC: It's also interesting to me that Harry is not fixating on the fact that Snape called his mother a "mudblood."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Again, why would he? Because that would put us on the trail as readers, so I understand why it's not there. It's interesting to me that that's a detail that Harry just seemed to gloss right over, but it felt so in character for Snape that there was no reason to get offended. Yeah.

Lorrie: We know that Snape went on to be a Death Eater, so this is exactly in line with what we would have expected. It would have been more surprising to see something different.

JC: Which makes it really good writing.

Lorrie: Yeah. Then yeah, speaking of Snape, Lupin is like, "How did Snape react...?" which is an excellent question, right? If you are Lupin and [Sirius], wouldn't you be dying to know?

JC: Yeah, for sure.

Lorrie: Okay, what unimaginable horrors happened after Snape caught you? Harry is shocked at their response when he says, "Oh, yeah, we're not having lessons anymore." He did not expect Lupin and Sirius to lose it and start hollering that he has to go get them recontinued.

JC: Yeah. Sirius is like, "I'm coming up there right now to have a word with him," which is like, 'Okay, no.'

Lorrie: 'Okay, that's not what I expected.'

JC: Yeah, yeah, which is saying a lot, right? Harry's like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa..."

Lorrie: Yeah. Lupin and Sirius, based on everything they know, are absolutely right to be that agitated. They can't know that Snape was right to have stopped the lessons because it's even worse now. But yeah, Lupin is saying, "Harry, there's nothing so important as you learning Occlumency. Do you understand me? Nothing." That's kind of reassuring. This is one of Dumbledore's ideas that everyone is behind. Okay.

JC: And a little bit of a dig that Harry hasn't been working very hard at it. He knows that he's supposed to be practicing and doing those things, but he has not been doing any of it.

Lorrie: And of course, it's one of those things where people will blame the teenager, but he was really set up to fail.

JC: Yeah, because I was thinking through, 'Oh, God, was there anyone other than Snape and Dumbledore?' I don't think there was.

Lorrie: Yeah. When people try to think, 'Couldn't they have made these lessons go any better?' Well, couldn't good people always win the war? Sometimes, life sucks and no, sometimes you can think of the best solutions you have and you're still going to lose.

JC: Yeah. There was no one else, and Snape was a better option than Dumbledore. Yeah.

Lorrie: Miraculously, Harry gets away with this hare-brained scheme, and he gets to see Filch...

JC: He hears footsteps coming, which is terrifying.

Lorrie: Miraculously, he gets the cloak over himself before Filch is drooling in ecstasy that he finally gets approval for whipping, because the diversion that Fred and George have promised went off just as splendidly as anyone could hope. They have created a Stinksap swamp indoors...

JC: An indoor swamp.

Lorrie: And seem disconcertingly serene about being cornered by Umbridge and Filch about to punish them.

JC: Yeah. Okay, this ending of this chapter felt like fantasy fulfillment.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Anyways... Fred and George have been planning this for a long time, and it's so great.

Lorrie: Yeah. You definitely get the sense reading this that you're watching legend in the making.

JC: Yeah, for sure.

Lorrie: Yeah I remember the first time reading this. Ooh, they get to repeat Harry summoning a broom; they get their brooms, which have been ignominiously chained in Umbridge's office.

JC: I don't know how you chain up a broom. In my mind, there's some handcuffs around the broom handle, which wouldn't really keep... I'm sure it's more complicated than that, but there's this comical image in my mind of handcuffs around the broomstick, where you could just slide the broomstick out.

Lorrie: I'm going to not say any of the thoughts that are going through my head right now, but I remember the first time reading this hoping, 'Oh, God, I hope the chains are still on the brooms.' Sure enough... Oh, so satisfying. We get an "iron peg swinging dangerously" from the broom as they're on their brooms flying and giving their soft opening announcement of their new shop.

JC: So great! I love the whole set-up of this: "You two are about to learn what happens to wrongdoers in my school" (as if people don't already know what happens to wrongdoers in the school) and Fred's like, "You know what? I don't think we are."

Lorrie: "Nope, nope."

JC: Oh, it's just beautiful. It's so well done.

Lorrie: Yeah. This whole thing is, 'Okay, Dumbledore... not the only one who's got style.' The most touching detail at the end: they get a salute from Peeves?!

JC: Oh, that's the best.

Lorrie: "Oh, I pledge allegiance. Yes."

JC: "Give her hell from us, Peeves."

Lorrie: Okay!

JC: Peeves takes off his hat and salutes them. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. Respect from... Yeah.

JC: He gives them respect. It's so great, and I do love that they do a soft open. They tell about their shop in Diagon Alley and they say, "Special discounts to Hogwarts students to swear they're going to use our products to get rid of this old bat," which is setting us up for something just glorious. Oh, gosh... love Fred and George.

Lorrie: Yes. Dare we say this is the resistance. Yeah.

JC: Yeah, absolutely. I still love the fact that Harry is their first investor, too. Yay, Harry is watching all this happen, knowing that he helped contribute to this. That's great.

Lorrie: Well, this is the evidence that they have profound gratitude toward him, that they have dedicated this performance to him.

JC: Yeah, that's true, too. Yeah.

Lorrie: "Go talk to Sirius. We gotcha."

JC: "It's time for us to make our dramatic exit."

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Yeah. So yeah, Fred and George are now off into the world. They literally fly into the sunset here, which is great. Oh, man...

Lorrie: Going to be rich!

JC: Oh, gosh, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. The next chapter is called Grawp.

JC: Grawp. Finally going to see that storyline. Does it come to a conclusion? I'm honestly not sure, but something happens.

Lorrie: Something happens.

JC: I have no memory of this chapter. I vaguely know what it's about, but I just don't really remember that whole plot line, which you have argued on multiple occasions could have been cut from the books and wouldn't have changed much, so hey.

Lorrie: Well, that's going to be our next chapter.

JC: That's what we're going to talk about. All right!

Lorrie: All right!

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