

## Transcript

### Episode 5.37

#### Book 5, Chapter 37: The Lost Prophecy

**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 Thirty-Seven: The Lost Prophecy.

**Lorrie:** The Lost Prophecy. Harry hurts so badly over the death of Sirius that he's ready to jump out of his skin. Dumbledore blames himself. This is the part of the book where Dumbledore explains it all, and he has a lot of explaining to do.

**JC:** Yep.

**Lorrie:** This is so intense, this chapter. Are you ready?

**JC:** Yes, yes. I have to say that the whole vibe of this chapter... I've said this before in the podcast, but my first-ever love fandom-wise was *Star Wars*, and the whole vibe of this chapter reminds me very much of the *Return of the Jedi* when Luke goes back to Dagobah to confront Yoda -- "Why didn't you tell me that Darth Vader was my father?" -- and Yoda basically says, "I thought you were not ready for the burden." That's basically what Dumbledore says to Harry in this chapter, and I was like, 'Ah, yes, yes. I have felt this before.'

**Lorrie:** Yeah, yeah. It's all of the decision-making that you have to do if you accept being the grown-up to a kid. We start the chapter where Harry is locked into Dumbledore's office alone with the portraits, and no one has been in there for ages ever since he left, chased out by Umbridge; Phineas Nigellus Black says, "This office is supposed to be barred to all but the rightful headmaster," so that is a good clue for the seventh book when Snape becomes Headmaster (that Hogwarts recognizes Snape as legitimate). There's Harry, unable to leave, waiting for this conversation that's coming

with Dumbledore, stunned by having lost Sirius and having been beaten up so badly and seen so much injury: "Harry could not stand this, he could not stand being Harry anymore.... He had never felt more trapped inside his own head and body, never wished so intensely that he could be somebody -- anybody -- else." Even though there are so many bad things happening in his head, the worst of it is guilt. This is the beginning of a massive and permanent survivor guilt burden that he's going to have for the rest of his life. Ouch!

**JC:** Yeah, he really goes through it emotionally in this chapter. Harry being sent to Dumbledore's office... I didn't think of it as so much as him being locked in until you said that. I thought of it more like Dumbledore sent Harry to the safest place that he could think of, knowing that Harry was going to be distraught and not knowing what he might run into if he was just wandering around the campus. I thought, 'Okay, he sent him to the safest place he could, which is the Headmaster's office,' and it's true that Harry was contained there until Dumbledore could arrive and they could have an elongated talk.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Another thing that stood out to me from that is Harry looks out the window and the dawn was described as "a cool line of pale green on the horizon," and I had to stop and think about that, because I thought, 'Have I ever seen a dawn that color?' I don't think I have, so I was trying to figure out... Dawn to me is always pink, which is kind of the opposite of green in a lot of ways, that idea of green being a little bit more of a foreboding color, something that's a little poisoned. Why green? That stood out to me. A new day is dawning, and it's very Slytherin-colored. What's going on here?

**Lorrie:** Well, I have definitely seen green in the pre-dawn. When you see light coming and it starts making the sky transition from midnight blue-black to something in the daytime-bluish zone but the sunlight being yellow, there's a bit of green. This dawn... A lot of times at the end of a *Harry Potter* book when they've gone through a lot of change, there's fire imagery the night before; then the next morning, when something's been resolved, you get the blazing dawn. The dawn colors for this one are like, 'Well, we have light, but not enlightenment yet.' It's the beginning of something really difficult that's coming, and at this stage, all you know is that it's starting. You don't know what it's going to be like, and it's going to be difficult.

**JC:** It could be that I've just never gotten up that early. That could be part of my problem. I've never actually watched the sky go from dark to... Maybe I haven't. I thought I had, but yeah.

**Lorrie:** If you look at a dawn, there's the pretty part where it's getting all pink and orange; if you look toward the edges, you can catch some green.

**JC:** Yeah, I'm not usually up that early. I'm not a morning person.

**Lorrie:** I was thinking of it as when you stay up super late.

**JC:** Yeah, but then I'm usually not outside.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Right.

**JC:** In the middle of Harry's awful feelings of guilt, Phineas Nigellus's portrait asks if he has a message that he wants to take to Sirius, and Harry can't even respond to that. Ugh... The idea that Harry's like, 'Oh, I'm going to have to tell people.' That's kind of the first realization. 'I'm going to have to tell people that Sirius is dead.'

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Oh, no. This is the thing: I'm very fortunate that I have not had to deal with this in my life, but I've witnessed it quite a bit where someone has passed away and other people don't know, and then the person has to say... When someone asks how they are, the person has to say, 'Okay.' The idea that you have to keep telling people over and over, and Harry's just at the beginning of that... Ugh, that was also a gut punch for me.

**Lorrie:** When Dumbledore says to Harry, "I know how you are feeling, Harry," that's another bit of foreshadowing. All of the survivor guilt and intense loss that Harry's feeling right now is going to turn out to be relevant to Dumbledore's story as well, and of course at this stage, Harry is nowhere near ready to hear about that. He has not even begun to process his own position right now.

**JC:** Yeah. There's this building up before Dumbledore comes back, right? The portraits start waking up and they seem to know, "Well, Harry's here. It means that Dumbledore must be returning. This is going to be great!"

**Lorrie:** "Oh, good. Thank goodness!" Yeah.

**JC:** They're all excited, and then Dumbledore steps out of the Floo, which is kind of interesting because maybe no one can control the Floo. Obviously, if Umbridge could have used the Floo to get into the office, she would have, but I just thought it was kind of interesting, this feeling of 'He could have come back any time he wanted.'

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Yeah.

**JC:** I just found that very interesting, but then the first thing he did was take Fawkes over, to put little tiny baby reborn Fawkes onto his pedestal. That was the most important thing to do first. I thought that was really interesting, too. First, he takes care of the tiny newborn baby (which he did for Harry, too, at one point); then he turns to Harry, and the first thing he says is... Actually, the first thing he says is that everybody else is going to be okay, all the students.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** No one has permanent injuries...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Everyone (except for Sirius), and this actually makes Harry feel worse because all he can think about is, 'They wouldn't have been in a situation if not for me.' That beating up of himself... 'I was so stupid.'

**Lorrie:** Oh, God.

**JC:** 'Everybody tried to tell me that this was Voldemort, and I didn't see it and I fell for it. People are dead because of me, people got hurt because of me.' Ugh...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Just the amount of guilt.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Oh, my God. He's going to go through it.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Fourteen-year-old Ginny with a broken ankle.

**Hosts:** Yeah. Yeah.

**JC:** Yeah. Then, when Dumbledore says, "I know how you're feeling," we know that Dumbledore knows how Harry is feeling. We don't know it now, but in a later book we find out.

**Lorrie:** We will know.

**JC:** We will know, and Harry just explodes.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** I think it's so interesting, because he starts destroying things and Dumbledore just sits there, and this is such a hard thing to do as an adult (or as a parent). Maybe there's a better way of saying it in the face of a kid just having this explosion of emotion. It's really hard just to sit there. Dumbledore put him in a safe space.

**Lorrie:** Yep.

**JC:** All the things in the office... he can destroy stuff (Dumbledore's kind of already resigned to it, like 'That's fine'). That's what you do if you have a small child or an older child who needs to get that anger out: make sure that they're in a safe spot, and then you have to keep telling yourself, 'These are just things, and if they break a thing, it's just a thing.' It's a process that as a parent (or as an adult in that situation), you have to

go through. We've talked about trauma-informed teaching practices before, but there are things that you do to keep yourself present and focused, and Dumbledore's doing all of them here. He's doing such a good job of monitoring Harry but not restricting him; he recognizes this emotion has to get out somehow. Then Dumbledore also kind of breaks a little bit later in the scene; he finally breaks a little bit, but he also is feeling guilty because he knows his own role in this.

**Lorrie:** Oh, my God, yes. Yeah.

**JC:** There's this really interesting play between the two of them. Both of them are upset, both of them have been keeping secrets...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Both of them are feeling guilty, and from two different ends of the spectrum.

**Lorrie:** Very different.

**JC:** Yeah. Oh, my God, there's just so much emotion that's about to start rolling out here.

**Lorrie:** Oh... We get Capslock Harry again.

**JC:** Yes, we hadn't seen him for a while.

**Lorrie:** He screams, "I'VE SEEN ENOUGH, I WANT OUT, I WANT IT TO END, I DON'T CARE ANYMORE --" He is suicidal because this hurts so much; that is a low point that does happen in life, and it happens in this series to characters at different times and it's no joke. Dumbledore tries to tell him the thing that he absolutely has to know, and it's intolerable to hear: "This pain is part of being human," and that is true. If you love, then you get loss, and Harry quite understandably screams, "THEN - I - DON'T - WANT - TO - BE - HUMAN!" It's too unbearable. Calling back to the previous chapter when Dumbledore says to Voldemort that there are worse things than death, Harry is demonstrating that right here. This pain is intolerable. This is a direct pointer to the way Voldemort has tried his whole life to anesthetize himself (to break off parts of himself and then never feel what they feel again), or the thing he says about himself where he says he's not a man; he's more than a man. Whether he's more than or less than (and he is both), it's to escape the pain of being human. Dumbledore... it is his job to keep Harry in that reality, but wow, it's beyond endurance. We get Harry's very accurate internal feelings: "He wanted to rush at Dumbledore and break him too; shatter that calm, old face, shake him, hurt him, make him feel some tiny part of the horror inside Harry." That is such a precise description of what goes on with Voldemort when he hurts people, why Voldemort hurts people. He wants other people to know how he feels (nobody knows how he feels), and if you don't understand how somebody becomes Voldemort, well, Harry, in this moment of emotion, sure can understand. Poor

Dumbledore has to say the truth: "If I had been open with you, Harry, as I should have been, you would have known a long time ago that Voldemort might try and lure you to the Department of Mysteries, and you would never have been tricked into going there tonight." There's Dumbledore accurately blaming himself; this is irrefutable evidence that the Molly Weasley method is completely wrong. You cannot keep information about kids' safety from them; it leaves them vulnerable. Whatever protection you think you're giving them is not safe.

**JC:** I feel like this is what I was railing against way back at Christmas time in this book: 'Why don't they just tell him what's at stake?' Oh, my God! Dumbledore even says it when he's going through later that he should have realized Harry's not just going to sit around. The evidence of the last four books is that Harry is going to go out and try to do things by himself, and that was going to happen this time, too. Yeah, that feeling is one that I've been feeling for a long time, but it's because I know what's going to happen. I know what's coming.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, and that's the thing.

**JC:** Oh, my God.

**Lorrie:** We know... We know because we are re-readers (or people who have raised children in hindsight) who can see, 'Oh, that was a mistake I made and my kid suffered. There was this other time I wasn't sure I was doing the right thing, but I told them, wondering if they were too young to handle it. But now in retrospect, I think that was the right idea.' You don't know until you do it, and the thing that they were afraid of was so undefined and potentially terrifying. The fact that Voldemort could read Harry's mind... Every bit of information that they gave Harry was right there for Voldemort to take and manipulate. The major battle between Dumbledore and Voldemort is over whether Harry gets to belong to himself and be himself, or whether Voldemort gets to possess him or become close to him or somehow subsume Harry into his own needs. Voldemort, of course, thinks everything belongs to him -- he thinks he can possess anything -- and Dumbledore is trying to keep him out of this kid's mind, even though he's actually already in this kid's mind. It's terrifyingly unknowable from the Dumbledore point of view because this is not a situation that he has ever encountered before, where somebody has this much access into the mind of their intended victim. Meanwhile, Harry -- being fifteen and being in Capslock stage -- is every single day trying to differentiate, 'What is me and what is Voldemort? I don't want to be him. I don't want him to be any part of me, but I feel so angry and I know Voldemort's angry and I could kill people, but that would make me Voldemort.' He has so many of these internal struggles, and that is the right of any fifteen-year-old to go through those struggles and to define themselves and say, 'I do feel murderously angry, but I'm not going to kill anybody. That's the difference between me and somebody who's actually evil: I feel pain, but I know that I don't have

to take that pain and then try to pass it on to other people just because there's no getting away from the pain." That's the situation that Voldemort was in, and if Dumbledore can provide Harry with more emotional support and love than Voldemort got, that is the best chance of making sure that Harry doesn't turn into somebody who's going to distract himself from his pain by giving it on to others. That was what Voldemort had; Voldemort got so much less support than Harry.

**JC:** I want the AU fanfic where Dumbledore does sit Harry down at the beginning of this volume and just says, "Look, here's what's going on," and then see how differently everything might have turned out.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** I'm really curious.

**Lorrie:** Well, I would like that AU fanfic of some of my own decisions as a parent.

**JC:** This is the wonderful thing about fiction, though. I think it's one of the things that's very interesting about a situation like this -- because obviously this is fantasy in the sense of all the magic and the Dark Lord and all these things -- but you can explore these kinds of ideas, like what happens when you do or don't do something.

**Lorrie:** And you can learn from these stories.

**JC:** Yeah. Yeah, for sure.

**Lorrie:** Maybe if you think carefully about what this story is telling you about Dumbledore's decision and how you feel about it from a parent/guardian point-of-view, and then how you feel about things as a child when your own information is kept from you, maybe that can help guide you in moments when you have this big decision coming up. 'Do I tell my kid what kind of horrible danger they're in, or do I preserve some innocence for them, and is that going to put them in danger?' So yeah... Learning from stories is something that I've done ever since I was old enough to hear stories. That's a major part of why humans are hungry for stories and why talented storytellers are a treasure: because we don't want to be without guidance. When you hear a story that emotionally resonates, you think, 'You know what? That's true. That story strikes an emotion in me. I'm going to go with that. I understand that Molly Weasley is worried, but let's not do what she did or wanted to, tried to.' But in this chapter, we see a whole series of Dumbledore continuing with half-truths and outright lies because he has to keep doing that, even while he reveals some truths and apologizes. Here's one of them: he reminds Harry, "Okay, your scar warns you when Voldemort is near you, or else Voldemort is feeling powerful emotion," and Harry's like, "Yeah, I know, I know." Dumbledore says, "This has become more and more pronounced since Voldemort returned to his own body and his full powers." Dumbledore does not say that the reason

it coincides with that moment is because it's from when Voldemort took some of Harry into himself with the blood and then they connected. This is a major part of Dumbledore fighting Voldemort's desire to possess Harry or be closer to him, which got such a huge change when he took Harry's blood in him.

**JC:** So at this point, Dumbledore does not know that Harry's a Horcrux, correct?

**Lorrie:** He does know.

**JC:** He does know? I thought he didn't.

**Lorrie:** Yes, he does. No, he knows, but he doesn't want anyone else to know. He's very, very far from wanting to tell Harry, but if he did tell Harry, then Voldemort would find out. It's super important because Voldemort thinks Dumbledore doesn't even know about the Horcruxes, and that is one of Dumbledore's advantages in fighting against him right now. There is nothing Voldemort can read more plainly than the mind of Harry Potter; let's not tell Harry that, aside from how horrifying it is. Dumbledore says that he was afraid that Voldemort "would seize his chance to use you as a means to spy upon me." Of course, Dumbledore, as we have seen, was completely correct; that is exactly what Voldemort did and kept trying to do all year. Harry's scar connection provided Voldemort a great way to see into Hogwarts (the best view of Hogwarts). Dumbledore... It's not an excuse, but "I was trying, in distancing myself from you, to protect you," because this Voldemort guy is not stable. When he's got proximity to Dumbledore through Harry's eyes, he's going to lose it -- he's going to strike -- but the thing that Dumbledore was too scared to do (which we now know from studying this story) is no matter how much you're afraid of that, keep the relationship between you and the kid foremost. Even though you're at risk and putting the kid at risk, the relationship comes first. Don't let Harry worry alone about what's going on inside himself. Honestly, I can only be so upset at Dumbledore for not being omniscient about this, because how do you... This is a really understandable mistake to make when you're so scared about what's happening to your kid. 'What do I do? What do I do to help this kid? It's so scary. I don't know any more than anyone else.' Meanwhile, Harry remembers; he's confirming that Dumbledore was right. "Harry remembered the feeling that a dormant snake had risen in him, ready to strike, on those occasions when he and Dumbledore made eye contact." Yep, there it was. Then Dumbledore says this really chilling thing: "He hoped, when he possessed you briefly a short while ago, that I would sacrifice you in the hope of killing him." That's the evidence that Voldemort believes Dumbledore does not know about the Horcruxes and is being kind of smug about this. There are many reasons why Dumbledore would not have killed Harry in the hopes of killing Voldemort, but that was one of them. That's when Dumbledore mumbles "This is when I arranged Occlumency lessons with Snape for you," because it was so important to try to protect Harry's mind from Voldemort helping himself into Harry's thoughts, and the Occlumency lessons were

how Snape (and therefore, immediately Dumbledore) figured out that poor Harry has been having those door dreams for months. Dumbledore would not have known if Snape hadn't been able to see that during those lessons, and then Snape told him right away. Yes, that's confirmation that their fear was correct: Voldemort would be encroaching on Harry's consciousness -- at that point, involuntarily -- but yeah, Harry was going to be susceptible to whatever Voldemort was obsessing about in a way that nobody else in the world was burdened with. Again, through those Occlumency lessons, Snape saw the image of Rookwood telling Voldemort, "You can't keep sending people for the prophecy; it has to be Harry or you." That's a super crucial piece of information that Snape saw and then reported immediately to Dumbledore through the Occlumency lessons. Dumbledore said, "It became a matter of even greater urgency that you should master Occlumency," at which point poor Harry is overcome with guilt again and says, "I didn't practice, I didn't bother, I could have stopped myself having those dreams, Hermione kept telling me to do it, if I had he'd never had been able to show me where to go, and -- Sirius wouldn't --" Meanwhile, I'm upset for this fictional character that I'm reading about and I want to run over and tell this kid, "Now, Harry, no, no, no, you couldn't have. You could not have mastered it because you weren't being given any instructions. It wasn't Snape's fault either that he couldn't give them to you. Dumbledore and Snape were both trying not to put things into your head that would make you (and everybody!) more vulnerable when Voldemort read your mind." Here's Harry thinking if he had just tried harder... It wouldn't have helped, Harry. That self-blame... I want to rush in and protect him from that self-blame because he didn't have the tools to do that, and it wasn't because anybody wanted to keep them from him.

**JC:** Do you think that there's anybody in this book... If Snape and Dumbledore are out of the picture for different reasons for teaching Occlumency, was there anyone else who could have done it? Not McGonagall, not...

**Lorrie:** Nope.

**JC:** Nobody else?

**Lorrie:** They are the only two people in the world that they know about who have successfully Occluded Voldemort. McGonagall can't even control herself in front of Umbridge, so she would not have been the person, but why does Dumbledore recommend Snape as the teacher? Because he has evidence that Snape knows how to Occlude Voldemort. Voldemort is so good at Legilimency that anyone who tries to keep him out... If anyone has survived Occluding Voldemort, it's not like they're going to go around bragging about it. You don't know, but it's a pretty safe bet that if he wants to get into your head, he's going to. Snape has, for a full year, successfully survived, and Dumbledore knows that. So yeah, continuing in this conversation, Dumbledore is continuing to keep things out of Harry's head that it's not good for Voldemort to see.

**JC:** And it's interesting, too, right now that Dumbledore is suddenly now confident that Voldemort's not going to try that again. Now, he can tell Harry things that he didn't feel he could before.

**Lorrie:** Yes, although we can't be completely positive, right?

**JC:** But I think, yeah, Dumbledore also realizes it's time.

**Lorrie:** Oh, my God.

**JC:** "Now, I have to." There are things that Harry has to know.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. The protection he thought he was getting from keeping Harry from being utterly possessed... that's not even as bad as what happened. The loving support you can give a kid by proximity to them may or may not be enough to protect them from this negative attack, but being emotionally distant from them is definitely bad. Well, you find out how to parent by parenting, not always successfully. Then Dumbledore moves into telling Harry that Kreacher lied.

**JC:** Ooh, that whole sequence was really interesting, because I had forgotten that. One of the things that I really liked about this explanation that Dumbledore gives about what happened after Harry gave Snape this coded message: Harry (being Harry and being a teenager) really thinks that he's alone in this, that no one believes him, no one's going to help, and he has to do everything himself. This story shows that a whole network of people were activated when Harry sent this coded message to Snape, which it's a relief again to know that really, Harry's not alone; there's all these people. This whole network gets activated and people go here and people go there, and they position themselves in places where they're trying to make sure if they can help. Dumbledore himself went to Grimmauld Place and talked to Kreacher.

**Lorrie:** Oh, God, yeah.

**JC:** And that little moment of saying, "Well, I am also an accomplished Legilimens..."

**Lorrie:** Yes.

**JC:** Kreacher is not bound to Dumbledore, but Kreacher told Dumbledore anyway because he kind of had to. I thought that was really a little hint of Dumbledore's power. We saw some hints of Dumbledore's true power in the last chapter, too, and I liked this a lot. Okay, this Dumbledore guy... There's a reason people are scared of or in awe of Dumbledore that Harry doesn't really see until the little moments.

**Lorrie:** Well, yes. This is a moment of non-consensual Legilimency. Is it wrong? Dumbledore's going to go ahead and do it. Did Kreacher enjoy it? No, it was terrible. We see Snape do this to Harry in the next volume after *Sectumsempra*, and very strikingly, we see Voldemort do it to Gregorovitch in *Deathly Hallows*. It's just pure domination; it's

frightening. Snape heard Harry's cryptic warning, contacted Sirius; Harry, of course at the time, naturally had been worried. 'Did my intention work? Did it go through?' Yes, it did, so this is confirmation that Harry and Snape are able to do Legilimency between the two of them. Okay, that's useful to know. Then we get, finally, another bit of the reveal about the Patronus method, where Dumbledore says, "I should explain that members of the Order of the Phoenix have more reliable methods of communicating than the fire in Dolores Umbridge's office." We first saw that in *Goblet of Fire* when we see Dumbledore send his phoenix to Hagrid; here we hear him refer to it, but he doesn't actually explain what it is yet. That's sort of how the thestrals in this volume... how we see them and the story talks about them for a long time before they're explained. Okay. There's this mention, and then Dumbledore says, "Professor Snape found that Sirius was alive and safe in Grimmauld Place," and that really got me. That's the culmination of this intense, extraordinarily difficult work that Snape and Sirius did to try to hate each other slightly less when they had to fight on the same side. I find this so moving: the author gave Snape and Sirius one moment, before Sirius died, of mutual recognition. I think, at this point, Sirius is the only person in the story that has ever seen Snape's Patronus.

**JC:** Oh, that's interesting.

**Lorrie:** Also at this point in the fandom (when *Order of the Phoenix* first came out), what Snape's Patronus was was, of course, a matter of intense speculation. Actually, no... At this point, when this book first came out, we didn't even know that's what they were.

**JC:** Oh, uh-huh.

**Lorrie:** But before *Deathly Hallows* was published, the form of Snape's Patronus was super debated in the fandom and we knew that would be important.

**JC:** Yeah. Didn't the author say in a Q&A once, "No one's ever asked me what Snape's Patronus is, and I've always been surprised by that"? I feel like that happened at some point, and then that was a moment, because I was not deeply involved in these discussions about the fandom. I was like, 'Oh, I never even thought about that. I wonder what it could be.' Because that question was planted in my head, when the doe shows up in *Deathly Hallows*, I was like, 'Oh, that's got to be Snape's Patronus.' But yeah, I think... yeah, I was not part of any of those debates. At what point did people start wondering about that? Was it at this point where people are already wondering about Snape's Patronus, or was it when the sixth book came out?

**Lorrie:** I think it was when the sixth book came out and we saw Tonks's Patronus.

**JC:** Ah, okay.

**Lorrie:** We find out in *Deathly Hallows* that a year from this point, Dumbledore sees the form of Snape's Patronus and is surprised, so Dumbledore doesn't know what it is.

**JC:** Well, it sounds like if that was my Patronus, I'd probably keep it quiet, too.

**Lorrie:** Right?

**JC:** Snape probably doesn't really... This is interesting then. If Snape did send his Patronus to Sirius, that's a show of vulnerability.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** "This is why you can trust me, Sirius." Oh, yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Once anybody who knew James and Lily saw this, they would know. 'Oh... OH.' Then two paragraphs later, Dumbledore says that Snape sent a message and Moody, Tonks, Kingsley and Lupin were at headquarters when Snape made contact. I thought, 'Okay, for purposes of the plot, the Patronus must have gone only to Sirius, and the other Order members must not have seen it because if they had seen it, then they would have known to trust Snape more.'

**JC:** Ooh.

**Lorrie:** At the point that we're reading this for the first time (when only the fifth book had been published), we don't even know any of this, but going back, we have the author giving Sirius a moment of knowing that this loathsome person had this goodness in him (and Snape trusting Sirius enough to tell him). The author gives it to Sirius and Snape and shields it from us and the other characters -- which is, I think, awesome and beautiful -- but Sirius is about to die, so he's going to take the secret with him.

**JC:** Oh, my gosh, yeah. "One of the secrets of the universe will be revealed to you, but then you must die."

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** "Oh, great. Great."

**Lorrie:** And then there's always the dissonance with the thought of Snape's Patronus, where it's this beautifully femme doe and it has really long eyelashes. What did it sound like when it talked?

**JC:** Oh, yeah, that's interesting.

**Lorrie:** Did this beautiful femme doe show up and then say, "Hello, dog."

**JC:** Yeah. I think it's the voice of the caster is what comes out, right? That is very comical.

**Lorrie:** But considering the issue, I can imagine that it was just Snape being like, "Listen, something super scary is happening right now." Whatever he said to Sirius, it had to be something where Sirius understood instantly. "Okay, this is a big deal." That

was a really amazing moment between Snape and Sirius that the author gave Sirius before he died, and boy, the two of them had a really hard time dealing with their hate for each other. You have to put that aside. Dumbledore continues: "When, however, you did not return from your trip into the forest with Dolores Umbridge, Professor Snape grew worried that you still believed Sirius to be a captive of Lord Voldemort's." Oh, what a painful sentence.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Oh, how that must've felt. Oh...

**JC:** Oh, okay. As a little aside here, no one has mentioned Umbridge.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** All this shit has gone down, Snape went to the forest to look for Harry and knows that Harry went with Umbridge. Did Snape look for him? I don't remember how Umbridge turned back up later. Is it that no one is caring? 'Yeah, whatever.'

**Lorrie:** She gets mentioned in the next chapter.

**JC:** Okay, she gets mentioned in the next chapter. All right.

**Lorrie:** She's just not very important at the moment.

**JC:** Yeah, but I just find that hilarious. No one's concerned that the centaurs hauled her away.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Yeah. "Later. We'll deal with that later. There's more important things." That's just kind of funny. 'So sad. Anyway....'

**Lorrie:** Yes. So yes, we get that terrible image of the worried parent Snape sitting there going, 'Where is Potter? Where is Potter?! Shit...!' Snape asks Sirius to stay behind to tell Dumbledore, Sirius delegated that to Kreacher, and I just think, 'Could Sirius physically have been able to stay behind when his single dearest person in the world is in danger like that?' Harry wasn't able to. Later in the final battle in book seven, we see that Ginny can't and Tonks can't. Oh, I don't know...

**JC:** Yeah, yeah. That's too much to ask of someone. I'm trying to think: if I was told my kid -- there was something happening and I should just sit here and wait?

**Lorrie:** I know. What?! No. Oh, God.

**JC:** No! Yeah.

**Lorrie:** At that point, do you even know what you're doing? It's so agonizing.

**JC:** Right.

**Lorrie:** Dumbledore explains that Kreacher and Narcissa could explain to Voldemort who it was that Harry felt that way about and would most go to rescue, and we get confirmation through Dumbledore that Hermione had been right: they should be nice to Kreacher, and Dumbledore had warned Sirius that Kreacher could be dangerous. "I do not think that Sirius took me very seriously, or that he ever saw Kreacher as a being with feelings as acute as a human's --" at which point I felt so much sympathy for Dumbledore at having been the grown-up who's trying to control Sirius. He's not controllable, but yeah, when you have these dangerous covert operations, always, always, always assume that you might be under surveillance or there might be a mole. Always.

**JC:** This is maybe not completely analogous, but thinking about how you politic your way through situations -- which I'm terrible at and I'm always learning how to do better. But even thinking about politics in the country as they are right now, you can't trust people to do the right thing. You can't even talk to people about, "Well, the right thing to do would be this." You have to manage people's interests and then manage the disagreements between them, and make sure that the disagreements don't interfere with getting the work done. I see Dumbledore doing that here. He knows the vulnerabilities, he knows who hates who, and he has had to manage this this whole time, on top of trying to keep a kid safe, run a school, and keep the Dark Lord from taking over the world again. He also has to manage these petty disagreements between people, and that's the job of a principal or anybody who's in charge of people. It is exhausting and soul sucking, but Dumbledore has to do it and I feel so much for Dumbledore here.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Oh, my God.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. The hatred between Snape and Sirius wasn't even voluntary; it was just constitutional. They just hated each other so much. Poor Harry, of course... At this moment, it's the worst time for him to hear criticism of Sirius and Snape has never been anything but an asshole to him, so he yells, "When I told him Voldemort had Sirius he just sneered at me as usual --" and Dumbledore's like, "Of course, he did; he had to. He's a double agent!"

**JC:** "What else was he going to do?"

**Lorrie:** Yes.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** So yeah, we get matter-of-fact confirmation Snape told the Order right away, he figured out where Harry had gone, and he gave Umbridge fake Veritaserum. Okay.

**JC:** Which yeah, we had suspected before, but it's great to have that confirmation.

**Lorrie:** Yes.

**JC:** I love that little bit of confirmation that despite everything, he has been protecting Harry to the extent that he could behind the scenes as he always does. I'm really curious to know, at that time, did the people who really hate Snape register that? People who really hate Snape... How do they explain away the fake Veritaserum there?

**Lorrie:** I think it's beautifully written to be 50/50 or 49/51 on this. Anything that Snape did to look trustworthy to Dumbledore could of course be a front if he's being a triple agent. We do know that no matter whether Snape is truly loyal to Dumbledore or Voldemort, he hates Umbridge; on that, he is united with most people. I think that was very deliberately done. If the true explanation is that Snape is loyal to Voldemort, all of this still would have made sense; if the true explanation was that he was loyal to Dumbledore, it would have made sense.

**JC:** Yeah. I'm not thinking about his loyalty so much as the people who think that he's out to get Harry. I think there are people who that's their... Well, I'm thinking this; you know more than I do because you're more of a Snape expert, absolutely, but I have a feeling that there are people who think that Snape's number one character motivation is to ruin Harry's life. There's that, and I feel like that and everything else that he does behind the scenes here is a big piece of evidence that actually no, he's not. That's not his M.O.; he's actually more of an adult than that.

**Lorrie:** Well, yeah. It's very carefully written so that we cannot tell at this point based on the evidence, because later on as re-readers when we find out what Snape's Patronus is and that you can't lie with it, then we can look back here and see, 'Oh, okay, that was actually evidence.' But it's too early for the readers to be given that evidence.

**JC:** Mmm, okay. I'm trying to remember how I felt at this point when I was reading this book all those years ago, and I was never someone who hated Snape. He was just a character. I was never... he was not that prominent where I was like, "Oh, Snape again..." There were things that he did that I was like, 'Oh, God, why is he doing that? He's so awful.'

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** But I never thought he was a villain. I think little moments like this stood out to me as evidence that he's not what he seems, but I don't remember at what point I was really sure. No, I was kind of sure. That just seemed like the logical way for the story to

go... It wouldn't make sense. None of this would make sense if Snape turns out to be really evil and on Voldemort's side. I thought, 'Who would write that?'

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** I think I was just sort of really sure that's where everything was going, but I'd have little bits of evidence like that and put little tick marks in Snape's column for me at the time, though I wasn't putting together a whole picture by any stretch.

**Lorrie:** I figured at the end of book five of a seven-book series that there were some more twists and turns awaiting us, so whatever we think at this point is sure to be upended again a few times.

**JC:** But I think that after this book, I really trusted Snape from there on out. In the sixth book, there wasn't any doubt in my mind. Yeah. Anyway...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Interesting.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Re-reading, right? None of this was apparent on a first read, but it was tucked away for later meaning.

**JC:** I also don't read on that level, typically; I'm just consuming quickly. I'm not really thinking that hard about these characters. That's not really the way I usually do it, so it is interesting to go back and dig in a little more and think about what were all the little signs that pointed in this direction or that direction. I was aware of them, but I wasn't thinking.

**Lorrie:** You would have if you had the task of writing fanfic about the deep motivations around this; then you would have gone back and thought through something plausible. It might not have been the correct or the one and only interpretation, but it would have been an interpretation that is emotionally plausible and makes for a good story. That's the relationship that quite a few people had to the re-reading of this series: you read it, you take things in, and then if you're going to be pondering a specific moment (often because of fanfiction and especially if you're the writer of the fanfiction), then you'll go back and focus in on key phrases and think, 'What would have gone through a person's mind at that time?' By this point, the series as the base text for an enormous online fanfic multiverse was pretty established. The publication of each volume of *Harry Potter* was valuable in large part because, 'Oh, goody, we get this whole new rush of data to play with.' Quite obligingly, the Snape that emerges in this character is endlessly usable for fanfic that goes off in a variety of directions about his motives. This is why this guy is such a great present to fans. 'Here, you can do anything you want with this poseable action figure.'

**JC:** Yeah. Yeah, that's for sure.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. The only thing that you know for sure is that in every universe, he's just kind of a pain to be around. He's not very nice... and Dumbledore trusts him. That's fun to have this completely deep, versatile and noble character, but the constant is that Dumbledore trusts him. He never doesn't; he always completely trusts him.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Meanwhile, Harry is snarling ("Snape stopped giving me Occlumency lessons! He threw me out of his office!") and Dumbledore totally sidesteps whether Snape was right to do so or not and whether Dumbledore was mad at him about that. He just says, "I am aware of it."

**JC:** Yep.

**Lorrie:** Oh... Then Dumbledore says, "I have already said that it was a mistake for me not to teach you myself, though I was sure, at the time, that nothing could have been more dangerous than to open your mind even further to Voldemort while in my presence --" Oh, terrible situation to be in... Then we get a misdirection moment from the author (one of her great superpowers as a fiction writer) where Harry says, "Snape made it worse, my scar always hurt worse after lessons with him --" And then we get a clue from the author because Harry makes reference to one of Ron's theories, which is always a clue that it's like, 'Okay, there's something there, but it's wrong': "How do you know he wasn't trying to soften me up for Voldemort, make it easier for him to get inside my --" Snape haters *love* this theory. Oh, my God. I'm sorry, I can't... People who are determined to think the worst of this fictional character and try to build their case will seize on this Ronald Weasley theory as part of their evidence. Yeah, no, it always hurt worse after lessons with Snape because Voldemort was having such a good time watching along and making the scar hurt worse. This is a spot where Dumbledore outright lies to misdirect Harry: "I thought Professor Snape could overcome his feelings about your father -- I was wrong." Dumbledore has to come up with a compelling false narrative to convince Harry to capture Harry's imagination and lead him away from the truth about Snape's feelings on Lily. As with Snape working to protect Harry (despite the hostility toward Harry), Snape's feelings of guilt and remorse around Lily are more complicated and more subtle; therefore, they are easier to hide underneath the super uncomplicated, direct hatred of Snape for James or the way Snape just sneers at Harry. It's an easier narrative with a ton of emotional volatility behind it. This is a tactic of Dumbledore's that is meant to misdirect Harry so that Harry does not come to any true conclusions that Voldemort might read in his mind, and it's meant to misdirect readers until the big reveal that the author's working toward two books from now.

**JC:** Question: could both of those things be true? Snape did hate James, and if that was not the number one motivation, it was still in there.

**Lorrie:** Well, he says, "I thought Professor Snape could overcome his feelings about your father -- I was wrong." What Dumbledore is saying is that Snape hated remembering James so much that he refused to teach Harry further how to protect his brain from Voldemort. That's totally not what happened.

**JC:** Okay.

**Lorrie:** It's an absolute lie.

**JC:** Okay.

**Lorrie:** Snape might have been happy that Harry got to see he hadn't been kidding about James being an asshole, but it wasn't that he couldn't stand Harry seeing how humiliated he had been at age sixteen. No, that wasn't going to stop him from teaching Harry.

**JC:** Okay. When is the "Always..." conversation that Dumbledore and Snape have?

**Lorrie:** It's one February after this one, so the following school year.

**JC:** Okay, because I guess in my head, I didn't think that Dumbledore knew that Snape really still loved Lily because I remember Dumbledore being surprised. "Really, still? That's still it?" I guess I thought that was Dumbledore's best explanation: that Snape couldn't get past his anger. I didn't think of that as a lie because I didn't think Dumbledore knew that after fifteen years or whatever that Snape would still be holding on to his love for Lily, but... huh.

**Lorrie:** I also have a totally different read of that, of the "Always..." moment...

**JC:** Okay.

**Lorrie:** Which we can get to later.

**JC:** Okay, yeah. We'll get to that in about a year.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Interesting.

**Lorrie:** But no, Dumbledore knows that he is doing what he can to reinforce Harry's misdirection about the true thing that Voldemort must not know, because whatever Dumbledore does or doesn't know about Snape's current feelings, he knows that that was the initial premise behind Snape turning double agent. He said, "If you really love Lily, then you will do this," and here's Snape doing it. "But that's okay, is it? It's okay for Snape to hate my dad, but it's not okay for Sirius to hate Kreacher?" Oh, poor Harry.

**JC:** Yeah. He's in that zone of you're so angry that there's just no logic and there's so much emotion.

**Lorrie:** Oh, my God.

**JC:** It's very... When a kid does that or says things like that -- anyone, not just a child. I'm thinking of it from the perspective of an adult with a kid pouring that stuff out. You have to let it just roll away. 'They don't mean any of this in the way that I'm hearing it now. It needs to come out; this is the way their brain's working right now, but when everything calms down, they're not going to mean these things.' You just have to be so aware of that in that moment, but Dumbledore is just about at the end of what he can manage because he is also dealing. He's not just being the mountain that can be relied on.

**Lorrie:** No. He feels terrible.

**JC:** He is also suffering here, and we're about to see this moment where the mountain cracks.

**Lorrie:** He feels so, so, so terrible, and he has to be the grown-up here and try not to fail because of self-blame. If you let yourself really feel the self-blame, you could really mess up. You have to still be present. Just because you hate yourself at this moment does not absolve you of your responsibilities toward this kid.

**JC:** Yeah. That's the number one rule of any kind of trauma intervention: you have to put your own mask on first.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And if you're not in a good mental place, you have to tap out and let somebody else come in, and there's nobody for Dumbledore to tap out with, right?

**Lorrie:** No.

**JC:** There's nobody. He is the only one, but it's so important (to be able to handle this kind of situation) for you to be completely calm, knowing what your own triggers are, and being in control of your own self in that moment. Poor Dumbledore... there's no other option. He's the one who's got to do this.

**Lorrie:** If Dumbledore let himself feel all of the self-blame that is correct at this moment, it would be self-indulgent at this moment because it would take away from what he needs to do for Harry, the way he has to be present for Harry at this moment. That sucks! Dumbledore, to my relief, says, "The fountain we destroyed tonight told a lie. We wizards have mistreated and abused our fellows for too long, and we are now reaping our reward." I like that through this comment from Dumbledore, we get the text confirming that Hermione -- as clumsy and teenage as she's been about this -- has

been right. Yes, it is right to care about these things. Then Harry comes the closest that he comes in this book to expressing anger at Dumbledore for leaving him with the Dursleys, and he yells about Sirius, "You made him stay shut up in that house and he hated it..." Dumbledore says quietly, "I was trying to keep Sirius alive," and Harry says, understandably, "People don't like being locked up! You did it to me all last summer --" Dumbledore is getting more and more and more tired, and the book says this great thing about Harry's feelings: "He felt even angrier that Dumbledore was showing signs of weakness. He had no business being weak when Harry wanted to rage and storm at him." This is something beautiful that, in *Cursed Child*, Albus gets from Harry. Harry understands that this is what his kid needs and lets it happen, and Harry saying this brings Dumbledore to a moment where he has to make a decision. Dumbledore's holding his face in his hands and then he lowers his hands; he's made the decision. He tells Harry a deliberate half-truth. He is going to lie by omission, but the truth or lie that he's about to tell Harry is not the only thing he's delivering -- it's one of the main things he's delivering -- but what he is really delivering is being the grown-up for Harry that he needs at this moment. He needs to get from Dumbledore some guidance, some accountability, but most of all, containment. These are the things that Voldemort wanted and didn't get in his infancy and childhood, and Dumbledore is providing them for Harry. Whether or not he tells Harry the complete truth, that's one track, and another track is demonstrating himself being there for Harry and being big enough and strong enough for Harry to rage at him and absorb it. "Yes, Harry, no matter how awful you feel, there is a grown-up that's strong enough to take it," which Voldemort never got. Then Dumbledore tells a complete lie: "I am going to tell you everything. You will have your chance to rage at me -- to do whatever you like -- when I have finished. I will not stop you." All right, that's his promise. "I will be big enough to contain everything. I will do this for you," and Harry knows to trust this. Then Dumbledore addresses why the Dursleys and not a wizarding family that "would have been honored and delighted to raise you as a son," which is of course a question that the fandom has never forgiven Dumbledore (in my opinion, AKA God) for. How can such things happen in this world? "My answer is that my priority was to keep you alive. You were in more danger than perhaps anyone but myself realized," and I agree with Dumbledore. He has to think about the psychic damage as well as the daily kindness, so when he says he knew that Voldemort was going to return, this is (in my allegorical read) Dumbledore's way (or the story's way) of saying the trauma from Harry being orphaned is going to keep manifesting. It wouldn't just be a one-time matter of placing Harry in a home that could provide affection; it also had to be something that could withstand repeatedly all the ways that this initial trauma comes back again and again and again. Dumbledore says, "I knew that even my most complex and powerful protective spells and charms were unlikely to be invincible if he ever returned to full power," which is, in my read, another way of saying that being triggered is super dangerous for a survivor of trauma. It happens. It's going to happen.

"But I knew too where Voldemort was weak." This is when you get into the ancient magic that Voldemort underestimated of Harry's mother dying to save him, and in the allegorical language of the story, Dumbledore says, "She gave you a lingering protection he never expected, a protection that flows in your veins to this day. I put my trust, therefore, in your mother's blood. I delivered you to her sister, her only remaining relative." Living with that horrible family, the Dursleys, would be undeniable to Harry that somebody had once loved him, even if Petunia doesn't. He would always know that there was a connection to his story; it would keep his mother alive by proximity and by reminder, even if it was a bitter reminder at how badly Petunia was perverting that, but Harry would not forget where he came from. The way that I read this justification from Dumbledore for placing him with this horrible, abusive family instead of a nice family comes from Rowling's primary charity. As topical as it is that Rowling uses her wealth to strip away rights from trans people, it's not where most of her money goes when she uses her wealth. Most of it goes to her charity the Lumos Foundation, which takes inspiration directly from Voldemort's story, or the same things that make Voldemort's story the principle that a lot of children who live in institutions (in orphanages) are not orphans. They are placed there for a variety of reasons (such as extreme poverty) but they have living relatives, and large institutions cannot provide the essential love that a human child needs, no matter how well-meaning and how well-run; just the ratio of staff to kids makes it impossible. If you get the kids living back with family -- if you enable them through money or safety or some other change of circumstances to reunite with somebody that's family, even if that family is not great -- it vastly improves their outcomes. If you can't get the kids out of a large institution into living with their family, get them living with a family, and if you can't do that, get them into a smaller institution. All of these things are improvements, and that's the mission of Lumos Foundation: to support families so that they don't have to use this avenue of the children being at the mercy of sometimes mercenary, large institutions. That's something that I see Dumbledore doing: making sure that Harry maintains a connection to his own story, despite how grotesque his daily life is. Petunia doesn't love Harry; she sealed the charm by accepting that there was some claim based on love and kinship. That part of this story... I find it valuable how much the *Harry Potter* series keeps bringing up the issue, 'How little does it take to call a place home? What's the minimum to feel like you have a home?' If this is a place where they have to let you in when school is out... It might not be a good home -- they might treat you terribly -- but if they realize that they're supposed to let you in, okay, that's a home. If the school can write to you at that address and they don't question it, okay, that's a home. When it's your birthday, you should get something. A cake would be nice; some sort of gift to say somebody cares that you exist would be nice, but even when the Dursleys give him a literal toothpick, they're admitting he exists. It's not that they're happy he exists -- it's not a birthday gift -- but they're admitting he exists. Having this is so, so cruel and small; it's more than Voldemort had.

They don't love Harry; somebody did, and they know that person -- they knew that person. That is why Voldemort can't touch Harry when Harry is in the Dursley home: when Voldemort crosses the threshold of the Dursley home, the envy he feels at what Harry had that he never had is unendurable. He cannot tolerate it; he can't cross that threshold. That's all it is. That's all it means that Dumbledore called on the blood sacrifice to protect Harry. Harry is the one person that Voldemort ever identified with enough so that it hurts that Harry got love that Voldemort didn't. Then we get confirmation that it was Dumbledore who sent Petunia's Howler at the beginning of this book and a reminder that Petunia had to make a super difficult choice at the time: is she going to risk her marriage, or is she going to betray somebody -- betray Harry -- to possible death? Vernon would have betrayed Harry, and Petunia stands up to him. Yeah, it's a matter of real suspense, right? I don't know which way Petunia's going to go.

**JC:** And it's such a surprise that Petunia stands up to Vernon in that moment, and we talked about it back when we were in that chapter. I remember when Dumbledore gave this explanation (reading this the first time) that I just accepted it. I tend not to dig deeply, especially the second to the last chapter of the book that I've read exactly once, but I was like, 'Oh, that makes sense.' It was the magic. There's the layer of this was the most protection. Dumbledore knew what the prophecy said and he knew the Dark Lord would come back, and when the Dark Lord came back, Harry and Voldemort would... One of them wasn't going to make it, so the idea of keeping Harry alive as long as possible trumps everything else. I totally bought that; I didn't even question it. 'Oh, yeah, that makes sense.' All of the logic of the spells and the magic here makes sense. But I think, too, something I was thinking about while you were talking about this: I'm not adopted, no one in my family is adopted, I've never adopted a child. I'm only going on what people who have been adopted or have gone through the process have said, but the importance of having a connection back to one's birth family...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** How important that is because of that idea of 'Where did I come from and what's my story?' I know several people who have adopted kids who went to great lengths to make sure that they still had connections to their biological grandparents and cousins; that was challenging in a lot of ways, because maybe the court had cut off their connection to their parents, but then they still had their grandparents. Then as adults, they would have the option to go back and get to know their parents again, but they knew who their parents were or they knew where they came from.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** How important that is and how much pain it causes people who are denied it... If you didn't know that you were adopted or if your parents went to great lengths to keep you from your extended family, how much pain that causes.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Even just that layer of it... I think imagining Harry growing up in some wizarding family and not knowing his story, even without all the magical protection in place, would have caused him a lot of pain later on. 'Where did I come from? Do I have family out here?'

**Lorrie:** 'What are they like?'

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Meeting the Dursleys that way... Oh, my God. 'I have a cousin, I have...'

**Lorrie:** Yeah, or Voldemort, Tom Riddle. 'Where did I come from?' Then he goes and meets the Riddles, and he's like, 'You guys are disgusting. I'm going to kill you.'

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Then he goes and meets the Gaunts and goes, 'Ew.'

**JC:** Yeah, yeah.

**Lorrie:** 'I'm not related to you. I'm related to Salazar Slytherin.' But one of the elements that's most intolerable is if other people know...

**JC:** Ugh, yeah.

**Lorrie:** And they decided on your behalf that it was okay for them to know, but you wouldn't know.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Somebody knows. Are they going to tell you? Why do they get to have that information and you don't? This is the super extended version of Molly Weasley saying he's not old enough to know. 'Excuse me, that's mine.'

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** This is the thread of Harry's life, starting from when these letters for him come through the fireplace at the Dursley home, and the way that Vernon Dursley keeps his letters from him makes Harry more angry than anything. 'You don't get to decide. That's mine.'

**JC:** For sure.

**Lorrie:** So yeah, at least Harry doesn't have the experience of finding Petunia and then meeting her for the first time, going, "Oh, my God."

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** "Ew! Yuck."

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Ugh... Dumbledore says, "You arrived at Hogwarts, neither as happy nor as well nourished as I would have liked, perhaps, yet alive and healthy. You were not a pampered little prince, but as normal a boy as I could have hoped under the circumstances." On first reading, I did not appreciate how valuable that was. Recently, having seen what becomes of people when they become billionaires, how it warps them... When I've seen what happens when kids are born into extremely wealthy or powerful families and how that shapes their personalities, I have felt recently a greater appreciation for what Dumbledore did for Harry by not having him be raised from the age of one as The Boy Who Lived, the Chosen One, the savior. Your childhood self is formed by how others respond to you. Neglect and abuse are awful; uncontained indulgence is frightening in a completely different way. Yeah, knowing that people who used to be a lot more normal, then became billionaires, and then there's this unrecognizable monstrosity about that lack of check on their powers and their urges and egos... Oh, scary. Well, there was no dearth of checks on Harry's ego when he was little.

**JC:** For sure. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, no, I'm thinking about the fact that the extreme wealth that we see in the world is relatively recent.

**Lorrie:** Oh, my goodness, yeah.

**JC:** Yeah. Back when I was a young person in the 90s, it was like, 'Ooh, Paris Hilton, wow,' and they were rich heiress kind of kids. But yeah, it's a whole different world now, it feels like.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** For sure, and we're glad Harry's not one of those. Yes. I just had this vision of Harry --

**Lorrie:** Oh, my God.

**JC:** Being an influencer.

**Lorrie:** Being like Draco. "Hi! You'll want to be my friend!"

**JC:** Oh, boy, yeah.

**Lorrie:** "I'm going to be on the Quidditch team. Are you?"

**JC:** "My father was the Seeker." Anyway, yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yep, and that's the person Snape thought Harry was when he showed up. Of course, Snape has since then gotten plenty of evidence that he was wrong but is still clinging to that misperception, but that's Snape's problem. Actually, he makes it Harry's problem.

**JC:** Yeah, for sure.

**Lorrie:** But yeah, we do see what happens when people are not checked, and Voldemort by this age had not gotten any checks on his power. This is when Dumbledore introduces the series concept of the flaw in the plan. He leads up to it carefully: he cares personally about Harry, and therefore Dumbledore can't impose a rational plan on whatever is dictated by his emotion of caring for Harry. He goes into the recap of all the times this complicated his choices about Harry. Remember in first year when Harry asked why Voldemort tried to kill him? "Ought I to have told you then?" The reader thinks about this question: 'Yeah, eleven is really young. Okay, that seems clear.' "I should have recognized that I was too happy to think that I did not have to do it on that particular day." This pattern of second guessing one's parenting is quite familiar. Then he says the second year after the basilisk, "I felt a twinge of unease that I ought, perhaps, to have told you... I could not find it in me to spoil that night of triumph." Oh, do you hear that pleading note of self-justification? "I know, I shouldn't -- I should -- I couldn't make myself..." At that point, Dumbledore was telling himself he should avoid this trap, but he's not avoiding it. Then he spells this out for Harry, who of course is too young to understand this: "I cared more for your happiness than your knowing the truth, more for your peace of mind than my plan, more for your life than the lives that might be lost if the plan failed. In other words, I acted exactly as Voldemort expects we fools who love to act." There you have the Molly Weasley conundrum. Oh, the emotions are so equivalent... "What did I care if numbers of nameless and faceless people and creatures were slaughtered in the vague future, if in the here and now you were alive, and well, and happy?" Dumbledore here is spelling out the dilemma that he faced, and eventually Harry is going to have to face this dilemma about sacrificing himself. Dumbledore knew he should tell Harry soon after Voldemort returned, but he didn't and now they're paying for it. "I have watched you struggling under more burdens than any student who has ever passed through this school, and I could not bring myself to add another -- the greatest one of all," and he doesn't add it in this conversation either. Ouch. Oh, Dumbledore, needing to explain things without justifying himself. Ouch! So he spells out for Harry, Voldemort heard part of the prophecy, then he almost died and he came back and wanted to know the rest. "This is the weapon he has been seeking so assiduously since his return: the knowledge of how to destroy you." Well, whatever else, you're not the weapon, Harry. We get more alchemical imagery now, as you are noticing; the sunrise is depicted here as bringing light, but not enlightenment. The sun has risen, there's no insight yet. "The glass case in which the sword of Godric Gryffindor

resided gleamed white and opaque..." Okay, we're going to need this; we don't know what for, we don't know how. Fawkes is a chirping baby... There's so much work ahead, and then one of the great cosmic jokes: Harry says the prophecy smashed, and Dumbledore says, "That wasn't the prophecy; that was just a record." If you picture all those Death Eaters bumbling around, running after the prophecy, and Neville kicks it and there it goes... No, no, no, no, the prophecy still exists. It was spoken to a person, and the person can tell you what it said. Right! Oh, yes. And then this point that you've noticed frequently: Dumbledore really didn't think Divination should be taught at all. "It was against my inclination..."

**JC:** He was like, "But I had to go do a job interview." Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Dumbledore shows Harry, demonstrates for Harry what that prophecy said. Can you please, for us, read what Dumbledore shows Harry?

**JC:** *"The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches.... Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies... and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not... and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives.... The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies...."* Sounds like a Bible verse; it's written in that way.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. What did you make of that?

**JC:** What did I make of that... In what way?

**Lorrie:** I have never... I continue to be unable to figure out what on Earth '*neither can live while the other survives*' is supposed to parse out to mean.

**JC:** Uh... I think I didn't think too deeply about it. I'm just like, 'They can't both be alive, somebody's got to die.'

**Lorrie:** I guess. Either they're both alive or they're both -- Yeah, right.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Anyway...

**JC:** Yeah, there's only one. There can only be one.

**Lorrie:** Dumbledore says it might have meant Neville and that the Keeper of the Hall of Prophecy relabeled it to be specifically about Harry after the attack, which thrills me to think, 'Oh, wow, there's an actual keeper? A guy?'

**JC:** Somebody went and made a new label and stuck it on the shelf. 'Oh, yeah, remember that one...' The fact that they knew that that prophecy was there... How many prophecies were in that room and there's no computers keeping track of it all, right?

There's this one guy who's like, "Oh, yeah, remember that one prophecy? Hmm, I'm going to go back..."

**Lorrie:** Yeah, this is his job? He eats breakfast and then he goes to work in the morning, and he's the Keeper of the Hall of Prophecy.

**JC:** They must have had a bad day on the day that we're describing. That must have been a very bad day for whoever that was.

**Lorrie:** I wondered at the time if we were ever going to meet this character. That's the kind of question that came up all the time when we were doing the first ever read of this series as it was released book by book: you just didn't know where this story was going to take you. But yeah... Anyway, I have quite a fondness.

**JC:** Yeah. All the poor Ministry workers who had to come in the next day and clean up the mess.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** I'm just imagining... It makes me think about the musical *Puffs*, where it's like, "What was it like just to be at Hogwarts while Harry Potter was there?" What was it like just to be working in the Ministry and then have to come into work the next day and look around and go, "Oh, my God..."

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** The fountain... If you worked in the Department of Mysteries, to see the chaos in there... There were research projects that were disrupted.

**Lorrie:** Ow! That's a little topical. Ow.

**JC:** How angry and frustrated those people would have had to have been. Yeah.

**Lorrie:** "My brains!!!"

**JC:** "My brains!!! I was in the middle of... UGH!" Yeah. "We were about --" Yeah. "Our grant funding has been yanked away." Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Exactly. Yeah, so there's that. Another thing that I think is really powerful about this scene is that I think the scene hammers home the value of a Pensieve.

**Lorrie:** Oh, yeah.

**JC:** How would you remember the exact wording of this thing? Dumbledore recognized it was important; he pulled it out of his brain, he was able to preserve it probably pretty

soon after, and he can take it out and think about it. Oh, damn, that's powerful to be able to do that, and then to be able to show it to Harry... Yeah, that's cool.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Yeah. I think the other thing that I was thinking about, too, is that when Dumbledore talks about how "there were two kids that this could have been, and Dumbledore [Voldemort?] chose you," but it was Harry and Neville together who broke the prophecy.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** It was in Neville's possession when it broke. I love that.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, the two of them matter together. Yes.

**JC:** Yeah, and that Neville was along on the ride, right? Neville was so brave and pushed so hard and tried his best, and it's like, 'Okay, yeah, you can see it there. Okay, yes, it could have been Neville.'

**Lorrie:** Yeah, and he was there for Harry during the worst moments. I'm going to take a side note to make a personal plea for a pet feeling of mine. To all listeners: when something super momentous happens -- maybe something dangerous that it's going to be important to remember it exactly -- write it down right away. Say there's a crime and you're a witness; if you even wait till the next day, there will be important things that you will have forgotten. But if you keep a record right away, it's remarkable how much important, pertinent stuff you can record then. You will not be sorry. If you're going to need to come back to that later, your eyewitness contemporaneous account is going to be so, so, so valuable. We don't have Pensieves, but we have pencils and paper and computers...

**JC:** We also have cell phones, on which you can video yourself just talking through it. Yeah.

**Lorrie:** "I can't believe what I just saw."

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** But yeah, the immediate aftermath: there are things that you will be able to recall if you record your thoughts then that you can't even the next day; thankfully, Dumbledore has this memory and we get to see what Trelawney looked like when she said this prophecy. Then Dumbledore explains the Greek myth model of prophecies, which is that the prophecy wasn't anything until Voldemort heard it and put it in motion by making some choices thinking that he could try to prevent something, thereby marking Harry as his equal. If Voldemort had never activated the prophecy, it would have been just another dusty sphere. Okay, totally ancient Greek. Then the pivotal, strategic detail that Dumbledore wants to make sure Harry doesn't miss is that

Voldemort had to choose which baby it might be, and he chose the half-blood and not the pureblood: "He saw himself in you before he had ever seen you, and in marking you with that scar, he did not kill you, as he intended, but gave you powers, and a future, which have fitted you to escape him not once, but four times so far --" Because Harry understands Voldemort (and/or more importantly, Voldemort thinks Harry understands him), that makes Harry scarier than any other opponent. Voldemort didn't hear that attacking the baby would risk marking the baby and transferring power to him; he didn't know that he should have been more cautious. The power that Harry has over Voldemort is Voldemort's own projection, and the projections that come of Voldemort's fear are of enormous power. Oh, ouch... we get to the highlight of the chapter, the quote that moves me every time: "There is a room in the Department of Mysteries that is kept locked at all times. It contains a force that is at once more wonderful and more terrible than death, than human intelligence, than forces of nature." Dumbledore doesn't say here that it's love; he doesn't have to. There is a lot of secrecy involved with this power; this eludes Voldemort's understanding. Being Snape-focused as I am, this always associates this locked room with Snape in my mind. Dumbledore explains that this is the power that both took Harry to save Sirius and drove Voldemort out "because he could not bear to reside in a body so full of the force he detests." That is because Voldemort craves it and envy hurts. Harry is so grief-stricken over Sirius that he misses Dumbledore's biggest lie by omission: "Neither can live while the other survives." "So does that mean that... that one of us has got to kill the other one... in the end?" 'Yes,' said Dumbledore." Okay, JC. You being a math person, you see what Dumbledore just did here.

**JC:** Yeah, I guess. I don't know. I know how the story turns out, so I don't know. I don't know.

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

**JC:** No, I don't really know, actually, because I'm, like, 'Okay, yeah. Harry does have to die, but he doesn't really die, so I don't know.'

**Lorrie:** Well, Harry's asking if one of them has got to kill the other one, and what Harry and the reader are supposed to think is that maybe Harry might have to kill Voldemort. We all know that Voldemort's been trying to kill Harry and will continue to try.

**JC:** Okay.

**Lorrie:** Harry's like, "Wait, so does that mean that..." He's wondering if he's going to have to try to kill Voldemort. The answer to that (eventually, two books from now) will be, 'No, Harry never, ever, ever, must try to kill Voldemort and will not be trying,' but Dumbledore doesn't tell him that here. Dumbledore says yes. "Yes, one of you has got to kill the other one in the end," but he doesn't tell Harry that it's only that Voldemort is

going to have to kill Harry and Harry's going to have to stand there and take it. From this moment on, when Harry and Dumbledore talk about this element of Harry's destiny, the phrasing in this series is always super careful so that Dumbledore never confirms or denies that Harry might be the one who has to kill Voldemort. He never comes out and says, "Yeah, no, Harry. Actually, you're never going to be killing anybody." He lets Harry think; he can see from the way Harry's talking that Harry thinks this might mean he has to kill Voldemort. He lets that go. He lets Harry think that, knowing the whole time that that's not an option here. "Yes, Harry, one of you has got to kill the other one in the end." And from here on out, whenever Harry knows that he has to bring down Voldemort -- bring down, vanquish, defeat, all these words that are not 'kill' -- there's no mention in this series of by what means Harry thinks he's going to kill Voldemort. Is he going to run him through with the sword of Gryffindor? Is he going to cast *Avada Kedavra*? Is he going to get a Muggle gun and shoot him? How is he going to accomplish this? There's no mention of that because there has to be room for the end of the book not involving Harry killing or trying to kill Voldemort. But at this point, Dumbledore has chosen the lie by omission of letting this kid think that that's included in the end that is inevitable, and Harry doesn't even notice because for very good reason, all he could think about right now is Sirius. When he asks, "So is that what that means?" he's not even listening to the answer.

**JC:** Yeah, and I think, too: how do you tell somebody that you're doomed and that there's no hope, and you just have to work really hard until the end and then sacrifice yourself? Part of the danger of Dumbledore showing Harry the prophecy is that Harry... Voldemort didn't hear the whole thing. Voldemort made some assumptions, so Dumbledore does give him the whole thing. If Harry were in a frame of mind to be able to think about it more clearly, he might dig in a little more and think, 'Wait a minute, what is going on here?' but he's not in the right frame of mind for that. He'll remember parts of it, but not all of it because his brain is not fully online in that way. Happily, I've never had to be in the position of telling someone or being in a room when someone is told that you're going to die. I have, however (being a teacher), have been in the position of telling students, "You're not going to pass this class," which is 18,000 levels lower than this, but I understand that inclination to not talk about the full implications of this. "Yeah, you didn't show up, you were absent this many times, your grade in the 40s," whatever.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, yeah.

**JC:** "Looking at the math, you're not going to pass, so let's do some damage control or whatever. You need to get your affairs in order or whatever,."

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Then when the student says, "What does this mean for my academic career?"

**Lorrie:** Uh-huh.

**JC:** I tend to say, even though I know the answer, "That's something to go and talk to your advisor about." I don't give them the answer.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. "Let's take this a step at a time."

**JC:** Yeah. It's almost like Dumbledore doing that here with Harry. "I'm not going to give you the full consequences of this moment. You're not ready to hear it. It's not going to help in this moment. You need to process the stuff that I've already given you, and then if you come back to me later, we'll have a different..." Yeah, I totally understand it from that perspective of delivering some bad news that you know has bigger consequences than just this moment, but you can't give it all at once because it's just too much.

**Lorrie:** The attempt to give people more information than they're ready to process is just wasted effort.

**JC:** Yeah, it is.

**Lorrie:** And in classical (as in ancient Greek) fashion, there is still hope left and that's buried even deeper. Dumbledore is extra, extra not going to tell Harry at this time, but he actually knows that Harry is destined to survive this if he does everything exactly right.

**JC:** Right.

**Lorrie:** And that even letting Voldemort kill him is not necessarily going to mean that Voldemort kills him. But how can you tell Harry this and, at the same time, try to rescue (from this mess of a life that Harry never asked for) his right and ability to continue to live a teenager's life? Well, you tell them, as much as you can, the information that he is entitled to because it's about him while trying to let him live. I like that Dumbledore, at this point, lets Harry feel his grief for Sirius rather than trying to pursue this point. That grief is not only more important to Harry at the moment, but also if he at this point gets to feel it in full, that will make him in life a stronger person and better able to accept his destiny when the time comes. The grief... It's a painful consequence of his having had love in his life. Feeling all of this -- including how very nearly intolerable grief is, all of it - - makes him a more complete person than Voldemort ever got to be. Dumbledore, just by being there and demonstrating this, he's being an adult for Harry. He is apologizing, he's telling Harry as much as he can of the truth, he's making space for Harry to rage and grieve... Those are the best things that Dumbledore can do for him right now, better than telling him the whole truth. I feel like he is giving Harry not what Harry wants, but what he needs, things that Voldemort would have... It would have been so much better if Voldemort had had these things, and he didn't. What did you think about the ending of this chapter?

**JC:** Oh, is this the bit when Dumbledore tells Harry why he did not make him a prefect?

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** That one? It's funny.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** "Yeah, this is why I didn't -- Didn't you wonder why I didn't make you a prefect?" Well, Harry did wonder the way back.

**Lorrie:** Yes, he did.

**JC:** Yeah, because on top of everything else that you were dealing with, that just felt like it would be cruel, which it's kind of funny. And then a tear...

**Lorrie:** And there he's crying! Yeah.

**JC:** He's crying.

**Lorrie:** I have always loved that ending so much because it's so funny and out of proportion. Being a prefect is so little compared to all these terrible, huge things. It's so touching. It's so earthbound. It really brings to the forefront that this is just enormously pathetic because it's about a schoolboy. This is what Dumbledore's been trying to fight for: for Harry to have a life where it matters if you get to be prefect or not. Should he be telling him, "Oh, by the way, you're going to have to let Voldemort kill you, but don't worry"? No, he wanted to make Harry prefect, and he just figured, 'No, you know what? I can't do that.' That sucks. Can Harry have a nice normal family to go home to? No. Can Harry just have a godfather? No. Can he at least be prefect? No, and he feels really bad about it all. "Sorry, Harry, I messed up."

**JC:** And now Harry knows a lot more. He doesn't know everything, but he knows a lot more. From Harry's perspective at this point, he's processing Sirius's death and his guilt about all that, and now he knows something more about him and Voldemort and how their fates are tied together.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** This is a lot to be dealing with. It's so much, and I think we have one chapter left, right?

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** I know that the mirror is coming up, and I'm really sad about it.

**Lorrie:** Oh, my God, the worst. The worst!

**JC:** Oh, the regret...

**Lorrie:** Ouch. Yeah. The next chapter is called The Second War Begins.

**JC:** All right.

**Caroline:** You've been listening to Harry Potter After 2020 with hosts Lorrie Kim and JC. You can find show notes for this and all other episodes at [HPAfter2020.com](http://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.