



Transcript

Episode 6.22

Book 6, Chapter 22: After the Burial

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 Six, Chapter Twenty-Two: After the Burial.

Lorrie: After the Burial. Hagrid asks for moral support in burying Aragog the acromantula. Harry takes *Felix Felicis* to help him get the memory from Slughorn. With the help of this potion, everything goes right: Harry and Slughorn visit Hagrid, and Slughorn gives Harry the memory. So, JC, how did you feel about this chapter?

JC: I was very excited about this chapter because I remember really enjoying this chapter the first time around. I felt like this was kind of a turning point in the book.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I remember also just really loving how the Felix Felicis worked and everything, so I was excited to read it again.

Lorrie: Yeah. The writing quality in this chapter, I really admire. It's very confident-feeling to me, and the level of comedy throughout it is really enjoyable. One of the themes of this chapter is human foibles. We all have some flaws in our character that we just have to manage and work around because there's no getting

rid of them, and everyone has them; Harry has them. If things go poorly, they can ruin lives, but even when things go really well, you still have to deal with yourself.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And then the acromantula is just so horrifying.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: "At least it's dead," the best that can be said for this thing.

JC: Ugh...

Lorrie: Yeah, and Hagrid's inability to notice that nobody is sharing in his sobs over this monster...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: His happy delusion that everyone shares in his grief is...

JC: Yeah. It's like peak Hagrid in that way, this chapter. This is the most Hagrid that Hagrid is. It's right here.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: With all the things that you just mentioned (his love of big, horrible creatures), and also just the fact that, as you said, he's completely unaware that people like Harry... He just assumes that if people like him, they're going to like his creatures, right? "If you like me, then you're going to like my monsters, and if you don't like my monsters, then what does that say about how you feel about me?" There's a little bit of that in there, but it just doesn't even occur to him.

Lorrie: Yeah. 'Everybody feels this way. Of course.'

JC: Right, yeah. 'Especially if you're my friend, then you must feel this way.'

Lorrie: 'You know.' Yeah. Yeah, to me, this is such a beautiful chapter that I got tears in my eyes rereading it. This series teaches us about Unforgivables a lot; this chapter talks about what happens when we fear that we've done something unforgivable but it was actually forgivable, but our fear and what it does to us hurts us and it hurts even the people around us. This chapter shows so much mercy to Slughorn that it ends up making me feel really quiet inside. It starts off with Harry

being stumped about how on earth he's going to get this memory from Slughorn, and Hermione (bless her) keeps Harry on track. She just scolds him: "Forget about your fixation on Draco," and that's just something that he needs. He knows that he should focus, but yeah, she's helping him. Hagrid does not help; he flat out asks the kids to break the rules and endanger themselves using the Invisibility Cloak to sneak out and help him bury Aragog. I found that really helpful within this chapter -- that even really vicious monsters can be loved by somebody -- because if you have a secret guilt that you fear is unforgivable, you can feel really monstrous and like you don't deserve to be looked at sympathetically. Also, especially important in politically divided times, even if the deceased is your mortal enemy, your friend's grief is important.

JC: Yeah. We talked a couple of chapters back about Hagrid starting to treat the kids more as friends than as students at this point. There's this transition happening there, and this is another example of that where he's saying, "I know I'm asking a lot, but I can't face this alone. I really need someone there with me." That's really interesting to hear from Hagrid, for the kid to hear from an adult.

Lorrie: Even though in just the previous chapter, he was yelling at Filch. "How dare you challenge me as a professor?" Well, Hagrid...

JC: Yeah, that's true. Also interesting that Hermione and Ron are instantly like, "No, no, not going to go. No."

Lorrie: "No way."

JC: And when Harry is serious to consider it, Hermione is saying it is not worth risking getting in trouble; she has a point, but that felt unlike Hermione to me because Hermione in the past has been very much about Hagrid. "Hagrid needs our support. When we were in Care of Magical Creatures, we had to pretend we liked these things." Hermione in the past has been much more willing to go out on a limb to support Hagrid, and this just felt... I don't know, it felt a little strange. I know that there's a reason that Hermione and Ron can't be there from a narrative perspective, but that struck me a bit. Why is Hermione completely refusing to think that this is even something that they should consider: going to support Hagrid in this moment?

Lorrie: I think the increased danger that they're all under is really foremost in her mind. If they get in trouble for this, it's not even going to help the cause. In this part of the chapter, we see that the Death Eaters have started to use Fenrir Greyback as retaliation, attacking children of political enemies, and that there's a five-year-old that just died in Saint Mungo's, which is so very similar to babies being held in detention right now and we don't even know where or who they are. That's just something that they just heard that day, so I think the urgency is really impressing itself on her. Ron, also just as usefully and helpfully, keeps Harry on track. He has the brainwave: "Oh, Felix Felicis, that's your answer. That's how you're going to get this memory from Slughorn." It's obviously and instantly the correct answer, and Harry stammers that he was, um, sort of saving it.

JC: I love that moment, because that was something I recognized so much. I think it's a very human thing that you get some kind of, I don't know, a special gift that's consumable in some way...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It can be a nice bottle of wine or a fancy bottle of olive oil or whatever, or I think stickers can be a fun example. You have something really cool... You have a really cool sticker. What are you going to put it on, right?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: You end up not acting because in your head, there's going to be the perfect moment to do it (to use this thing). In my case, it never comes and the thing goes bad and then I'm sad, but it's so interesting that Harry has that exact same very human "But I was going to save it for, I don't know, the perfect opportunity to get Ginny's attention or whatever." He had this idea in his head, and he still thinks, "Well, I'll just take some of it, so I'll save the rest." Yeah.

Lorrie: He does know. He does know that's what he wanted it for...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Because that's so much in keeping with the entire theme of this chapter: when you know and you don't want to admit it to yourself and you know it's not the right thing; you know it's a bad idea. If you end up acting on it, you do it where nobody else can see you because you don't want to hear what you already know

(that this is not the way to do it), but how much control are you going to give your own bad judgment and your own foibles that you cannot get rid of, that you have to acknowledge? The "sort of saving it" mumble, the subconscious 'I'm just going to use this to get Ginny to love me,' even though Hermione is every day proving that the right way to do it is to know that you have no control over how other people feel and you can just pine for them to death, but you can't make people feel things... It's not that Harry doesn't know that; it's just he didn't want to admit it to himself. The more he admits it to himself, the more he has to give up on the dream, right?

JC: Uh-huh.

Lorrie: What we see (in this series in general, but in this chapter, in particular) is the problem with not challenging yourself with that kind of fantasy and letting that happen. If you have bad results from that, you can feel like it's unforgivable because we all have these weaknesses. We all are faced with whether we're going to let that have some slack, so we all need support making sure we don't sabotage ourselves because of the foibles that we're all born with. Fortunately, the way Ron is incredulous at Harry, saying, "What on earth is going to be more important than getting the memory from Slughorn?" mercifully spares Harry the necessity of saying what it was, which it did not have the dignity to stand up to exposure. But no, Ron's right: you need perspective, come on. Harry has such a blessing in two friends whom he listened to when they have that to give him, which we know that somebody like Dumbledore didn't have because he didn't have equals, and we know that Draco doesn't have because he doesn't have real friends.

JC: And Snape didn't really have it either, at least not once he lost Lily.

Lorrie: Yeah. Well, he had friends; they were not in his best interest and they were all committed to listening to their worst selves encouraging each other. Yeah, Lily couldn't be friends with him anymore because he had shut off that kind of feedback, but Harry listens and they tell him, "Could you just focus? You want to focus, we want you to focus. Okay, focus!" Having provided Harry with some support, they go off to their Apparition Test.

JC: Oh, my gosh, yeah, and every time a group of girls walks in, Ron ducks behind Hermione and Hermione's just like, "It's not Lavender. Lavender's not here."

Lorrie: We're so beyond pretending that's not what's happening.

JC: Yeah, exactly.

Lorrie: Yeah, that was pretty adorable. This is a good opportunity for the author to remind us all that Harry and Draco are both technically still underage; they're not old enough to go take the Apparition test. The clock is ticking down, but there's still some time to save them. They're still kids. I love this little iteration of the series theme: when Ron reminisces about how invincible you feel on Felix Felicis and Hermione says, "That was a placebo. You didn't even really take it," and basically, he says what Dumbledore says later: "Just because it's in your head doesn't mean it's not real."

JC: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I want to go back to the Potions class. Slughorn says, "Oh, there's only three of you here today because you're all too young. Okay, maybe we'll just do something fun today. Just brew something to amuse me," which is, like, 'Wow, okay,' but this is actually a thing that I do see teachers do a lot. In fact, my own kid (who's finishing up high school this very week), his English teacher at the end of the semester just tells the kids, "Do a presentation or lead an activity on anything you want," and that's what they do the last two or three weeks of the semester. Everybody has to do it and it's for a hundred-point grade, and kids do all kinds of different things; some of them get really creative and do amazing things, and some of them just do a thing (they have everybody play a card game). There's varying levels, but that's what it made me think of, was this thing that teachers do. I will say that I'm not criticizing that. I think it's actually fantastic for a teacher to say, "You're in charge. If I put you in charge of the class for twenty minutes, what would you have us do?"

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That's great. There's so many great things happening there, so I think it's interesting that Slughorn gives them a task that's like this. "If you can brew anything to impress me, what would you brew?"

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Or "to amuse me," I guess he says. It's a task in which, without the help of the Half-Blood Prince, all three would have failed...

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: But then Harry ends up brewing something really brilliant that is completely from the Half-Blood Prince's book, and the other two have just... I don't think Draco was even trying.

Lorrie: Yeah, they just have the expression on their face that I would also have had in that position.

JC: Yeah, exactly. There's this interesting description of Draco where Harry notices that he looks thinner and paler; he has a grayish tinge, he hasn't been sleeping, and Harry thinks this is reminding him of the way Tonks looks.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This is a line that stood out to a lot of people in the fandom.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "Why are we comparing Draco with Tonks right now? What? What's happening here?"

Lorrie: Interesting, yeah. Hmmm...

JC: Very interesting.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But also, Harry is able to conclude that the mission that Draco is doing for Voldemort must not be going well because that's why he looks like this, and that gives Harry like a little bit of a boost. 'Yeah!'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: 'Your day sucks. Good for me!' Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. 'Here I am letting down Dumbledore, but at least he's Dumbledore.'

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: 'Not like your boss!'

JC: 'Your life is worse than mine. Hey!' Yeah, for sure.

Lorrie: And unlike Draco, Harry won Felix Felicis. Under false pretenses, but he did win it.

JC: Yes. This elixir that he decides to make -- this elixir to induce euphoria, with a heavily edited recipe from this book -- sounds like something that should be a controlled substance somehow. It's like, 'Hmm, okay.'

Lorrie: Yeah. Well, Felix Felicis, too.

JC: Yeah, for sure. He brews this potion (and I guess it does what it says on the tin), and Slughorn is genuinely impressed. Slughorn has been kind of avoiding him, but he says, "I don't know where you get these brainwaves, my boy... unless..." and Harry's like, 'Oh, no,' and there's the moment where he kicks the book deeper into his bag.

Lorrie: Yes! Love it.

JC: Because he's like, 'It's not... I'm not cheating. It's not the book.' Then he mentions his mom again. "Oh, it's your mother's brilliance."

Lorrie: Blessed, blessed imposter syndrome. I'll take it.

JC: Yeah. It's really amazing that Harry has gotten away with this for this long.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: You'd think that at some point, someone other than Hermione and Ron would notice that this book is full of notes. I don't know... Maybe they don't even notice it's not his handwriting, but interesting.

Lorrie: Yeah. Harry, on the right path, takes the Felix Felicis and it feels amazing. This is so enjoyable for me to read, the way he suddenly knows what to do and has faith. He's free of wondering about consequences. He can just get inspiration and go, and everything goes right. Lavender fights with Ron! Yay! Ginny fights with Dean!

JC: Yeah! That instant 'I know what I need to do, and I just have a good feeling about this' without any doubt is very interesting. I think that's one of the things that

I found really fascinating about the part of the chapter where he takes this potion. Okay. In our logic of the world, I guess it all works out, but there's a moment of, 'Okay, how could taking a potion do this, make the universe bend in your favor? What the heck? But okay, fine, it's magic.'

Lorrie: It's magic. Yes.

JC: It's magic, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. The front door is unlocked! Woohoo!

JC: Yeah, all these things. I love the description: He immediately felt "an exhilarating sense of infinite opportunities stole through him; he felt as though he could have done anything, anything at all... and getting the memory from Slughorn seemed suddenly not only possible, but positively easy..."

Lorrie: Amazing.

JC: Oh, man...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: There have been times in my life when I did have that feeling. They're rare, but they kind of stand out. 'I know exactly what I have to do, and it's going to be straightforward and simple.' Oh, wow, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah.

JC: So yeah, it kind of took me back to a few times in my life when I knew exactly what needed to happen.

Lorrie: It's also suggestive of the times that people have that feeling, knowing it's fake. I've heard people say that there's some drugs you can take that make you feel this way until the drug wears off, and you have to deal with the mess you've made.

JC: Oh, no.

Lorrie: That's a state that we often, as humans, warn ourselves against, like when somebody is absolutely convinced that they're morally right; that's when you have to be really careful with them, that's when you have to make sure to listen to feedback. All of this usual precautionary humanity about living as beings with flawed judgment... It's cleared for him here.

JC: Okay, so I want to talk about a moment when I felt that way. I don't know if this will make sense to any listeners, but I was a doctoral student in the late 90s and I was studying for my qualifying exams in mathematics. There were three exams I had to take at the end of the summer and I had to pass all three of them, and they were really high level. I had taken the year-long courses in each and it was a final exam but then amped up, and the expectation was you spent the entire summer studying eight hours a day (which I did). I remember going to a study session that an older graduate student had organized for all of us who were taking the exams maybe a week before, and people were coming in with problems that they still couldn't solve; a problem came up that everybody in the room -- I was not by any stretch the strongest student in this group -- didn't know how to solve it, even the graduate student who's leading the session. I sat there for a minute and thought, 'It's not hard,' and then I had to think, and it never occurred to me that I was wrong. That was the weird thing about this, because normally I would be like, 'I must be wrong, because all these smart people around me don't know how to do it.'

It didn't even occur to me that I was wrong and they were all talking about what to do, and I finally just raised my hand and I said, "But..." I said the thing that was the hinge of the problem and they all stared at me, and then one by one they gasped.

Lorrie: Woaaaaow.

JC: Even the graduate student at the front of the room went, "Well, shit..."

Lorrie: Woaaaaow.

JC: And everyone looked at me differently after that. They'd known me for a year (in some cases two years), and they didn't think that I was that good at math (I was in a PhD program), but it was just this moment when it didn't even occur to me. I knew I was right, and I knew that saying it was... That was the closest I can recall, off the top of my head, of that Felix Felicis moment. If I had had any imposter syndrome at all, I would have kept my mouth shut and doubted myself, but I did not doubt myself in that moment.

Lorrie: You didn't have to. Yeah.

JC: It was like everything in the universe was telling me to say it.

Lorrie: It just worked.

JC: Yeah, yeah, so I understand that feeling just from a few moments in my life like that, so I love this. Harry's like, "No, Yeah, I think I'm going to go to Hagrid's," and everyone's like, "What?!"

Lorrie: "What?!"

JC: "No, no, that's the right thing to do. I just know it is." Oh, yeah, I get it. That's cool.

Lorrie: It bears noting here that you're talking about a level of mathematics that I cannot even begin to understand.

JC: It's funny. I remember the words that I said, and I don't completely understand the math anymore because it's been so long that I'd have to go digging to even explain what the words meant, but yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. I love how you talk about being one of a group of PhD candidates in math and how you weren't even the biggest star there.

JC: Oh, no.

Lorrie: These are all people doing things that I don't even know what I don't know about it.

JC: Right, yeah. They were all people who were just so far beyond me and brilliant, yeah. But yeah, Harry throws on the Cloak and he heads down. I love this moment where all three are coming out of the boys' dormitory together. It's Harry in front and Ron and Hermione behind, but Lavender doesn't see Harry; just sees Ron and Hermione coming out of the boys' dormitory together and Lavender's like, *gasps* "What were you doing up there?" Yeah. I don't think that I caught that on the first read; in the second read, I just found it really funny. The implication that Hermione was hanging out with Ron up in the boys' dorm is really funny.

Lorrie: Ay, yai, yai, yeah. I love the little moment when Harry realizes that Slughorn is going to get Filch in trouble. Just all of these little things, like, 'Oh, yes, yes.'

JC: Oh, yeah. The Ginny and Dean moment is great, too, because it's a nice little push toward what Harry wants, so even though this is not the focus of his task that night, it's still in the back of his mind. It's almost like the things that are happening that are good are things in the back of his mind that he wants to happen. He really wants Lavender and Ron to break up, and he would kind of like Ron and Hermione to get together; he really wants Ginny and Dean to break up, and he would really like for Ginny and him to be together. These little things happen to start pushing stuff in that direction, and that's also part of the luck of Felix Felicis, which is cool.

Lorrie: And he's getting rewarded for his self-control in these areas. If he had tried to interfere, no, that would have caused problems, but some things -- if you let them take their course -- will naturally fall. There's only so long Lavender and Ron could be a couple before the inevitable.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: Just leave it, just learn some restraint. And he did.

JC: That's actually a really good point, yeah, and then as he goes, there's no one in the halls for him to run into. Filch forgot to lock the front door, and then he goes, 'Oh, I think I'm going to go by the vegetable patch,' and he goes down and that's where Slughorn is.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: I love that series of interesting coincidences here.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And then, after Professor Sprout leaves, he says, 'Oh, I should just take off the Invisibility Cloak,' and he just dramatically reveals himself to Slughorn.

Lorrie: TA-DA! Yeah, never mind sneaking in. Never mind easing into this. I love the way this chapter is super merciful to Slughorn and all of his incurable follies; he has more than most people. It's amazing how this chapter just piles on one piece of information after another about how he's really just not a role model. Nobody would want their kid to grow up to be like this. He is so compulsively greedy. He wants to steal the acromantula venom. He is so self-pitying when he says his salary is not large. 'Oh, my God, how much would be enough for you, Horace?'

JC: Right.

Lorrie: And he's shameless in feeling that he can justify his greed. He's going to pretend to respect Hagrid's grief as a cover for robbing a spider corpse, and he sees nothing wrong with exploiting Hagrid's lesser ability to intuit, to read people. Not only does he justify it to himself; it doesn't even occur to him to hide this from Harry, because why would there be anything wrong with this?

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: He's an upscale Mundungus Fletcher. He's just a compulsive thief.

JC: Yeah, that part of it. When he was talking to Professor Sprout, he wasn't robbing the garden, but he had talked Professor Sprout into taking things. That seems more reasonable, because why are they growing this stuff? Well, they're growing it so the school can use it, so he's really thrilled. He's very nice to her -- "Thank you for all this."

Lorrie: And they're equals.

JC: Yeah, yeah. They're colleagues in that, so that's the gentle starting point in this, and then we see later when Harry just decides -- the potion is telling him, "You should just tell the truth here," and he tells him about Aragog and that he's going to go to the funeral. That's when you start to see the lights going off, the little dollar signs or whatever...

Lorrie: Yes!

JC: The Galleon symbols going off in Slughorn's eyes here. "Oh, acromantula venom is really valuable and it's almost impossible to get. Oh..." Harry says, "Oh, you should come. It would mean a lot to Hagrid, basically," and Slughorn's like, "Yeah. Oh, I'll go change into something more appropriate."

Lorrie: Oh, my God, he's so manipulating this. He has less than zero shame.

JC: But the great thing about it is that Harry's manipulating him into being manipulative. I think that's the fascinating thing about this part of the chapter: Harry's not naturally like this.

Lorrie: No.

JC: He's not good at it, at least, because he's still young. He's still figuring out how to make people do what he wants them to do, but he's doing it to the one person that I think none of us would have an issue with. He is very manipulative of Slughorn throughout this chapter to get what he wants from him, but he's not doing anything that Slughorn himself hasn't done. It's interesting that it's Slughorn that he's doing this to.

Lorrie: Well, he is letting things take their natural course, just like he did not encourage Lavender and Ron to break up; he just let them be who they are, and he's letting Slughorn be Slughorn. This is really reminding me: in the second book, how did Snape get Lockhart to propose the Dueling Club? Well, all you have to do in front of Lockhart (which is amply supported by evidence) is mention a good idea, and instantly he will steal it. He cannot stop himself. He is compulsive and he will be thrilled to erase any trace of credit to you, so that's perfect for somebody who's trying to be an undercover double agent. Here, all Harry has to do is let Slughorn be Slughorn. Yeah, each of us has these foibles where it's our own responsibility to put up our own internal boundaries to stop self-sabotage and to hack ourselves if necessary, even if it's like, "Don't put that candy in front of me. I will eat it. I don't want to be that person, but I am." If you try to say, "Well, just have some willpower," "Are you not listening to me? That is not who I'm dealing with in myself." Yeah, that's not really the way to success here. So yeah, Harry is letting things take their natural course, and then we see from Hagrid that Hagrid knew all along he should not have asked the kids to come. Harry says, "Oh, I ran into Slughorn," and Hagrid says, "Not in trouble, are yeh? Yeh shouldn' be outta the castle in the evenin', I know it, it's my fault --" It's maddening. He's self-justifying, and there's the whiny self-justifying tone of "I just couldn't handle it on my own." Did you or did you not try to get students to endanger themselves? It's not that people don't know. This whole chapter is like, 'What do you do with the internal struggle to give in to your not-noblest nature that you cannot get rid of because it's part of you?'

JC: Okay. Speaking of your internal natures here, there's this bit when Harry first gets down to Hagrid's, and Hagrid is distraught and Harry asks where they're going to bury Aragog. Are they going to bury him in the forest? I was like, 'Oh, no...' First of all, apparently the spiders eat their dead, so Hagrid had a hard time getting him out, and then secondly he says, "Can you believe it?"

Lorrie: I know!

JC: "Now I can't go anywhere near the other spiders, because apparently they were only not eating me on Aragog's orders."

Hosts: *gasps*

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: It's like a total shock to Hagrid that this is true, and Ron and Harry have known this since they were twelve.

Lorrie: Since they were informed, yes...

JC: Oh, my gosh, yeah. Oh...

Lorrie: By the late Aragog himself.

JC: Exactly.

Lorrie: Oh, God...

JC: Yeah, so Hagrid just had no idea. That's just peak Hagrid to me.

Lorrie: 'Oh, but what about honor?' Yes. 'Loyalty?!' So Slughorn shamelessly shows up with lots and lots of alcohol and he's in cosplay; he has worn a "somber black cravat" like somebody who actually gives a shit about Hagrid's feelings.

JC: Yes, and he's really gracious -- "I'm so sorry for your loss" -- and Hagrid is really touched by this.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah, Slughorn is Slughorn-ing, but also... I don't know. I felt like Hagrid needed that.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: The thing is that whenever Hagrid has had a large monstrous creature that he's wanted other people to care about, the kids have just pretended to care across the board because they care for Hagrid, and they lie to Hagrid's face about how sorry they are that he had to lose his dragon and all this stuff. "Wow, we really loved the Blast-Ended Skrewts, Hagrid." This has happened the entire series. The kids have

done this a lot, so Slughorn is doing it at another level; also we've seen that Hagrid doesn't know that people aren't being sincere, but it still makes him feel better.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I don't know. I have mixed feelings about it, because on the one hand, I'm like, 'Okay, everyone's lying to him,' but on the other hand, he doesn't really know and it is making him feel better right now that another teacher came down and was going out of his way to cheer him up; he's going to get paid for it, but still. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. It doesn't feel ethical. Slughorn is taking advantage of Hagrid not being as bright. Is what he doesn't know going to hurt him? No, he's too dimwitted. Is that fair? Is that good? 'Well, shut up, there's acromantula venom to steal. We don't have time for this kind of boring debate.' But yeah, one of the things that would stop me from treating somebody this way is how betrayed they would feel when they found out that I was faking just to take advantage of them. Hagrid is never going to find out. Does that make this better, worse, different, irrelevant? One thing for sure: you don't want to get too close to Slughorn, because he's not having any internal conflict about this at all.

JC: For sure, and he gets the venom under the guise of pretending to admire how beautiful this creature was, and Hagrid's very touched by that. The movie version of this changed it; in the movie version, Slughorn asks Hagrid if he can have the venom and then Hagrid says yes, so it's interesting that the movie changed that, I guess to make Slughorn a little more palatable or something.

Lorrie: Yeah, less horrendous. Ugh...

JC: Yeah. Hagrid's very touched by Slughorn being there, and Slughorn gives this eulogy...

Lorrie: Oh, God...

JC: Which is really well-performed.

Lorrie: It's unctuous.

JC: Yeah, but it leaves Hagrid sobbing, and sobbing so much that Slughorn has to use his wand to move the dirt over the grave and everything while Hagrid is

basically sobbing on his shoulder. It's so interesting. The performance is so convincing here. Yeah.

Lorrie: It's every hypocritical cliché. Ugh, gross... It's very well-written to hit that exact level of insincerity that isn't detectable to some people, and that's the horror of Slughorn: he knows exactly where that limit is and he plays it. Unlike Hagrid, Harry can see this and the reader can see this, and it's just awful.

JC: I guess it didn't strike me as awful as it did for you, because I think I was so deep in Harry's POV and I was noticing that all the things that were happening were going to make Harry successful in getting the memory. I was one hundred percent on track of whatever it takes to get the memory at this point is what Harry has to do.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Harry is not judging any of the stuff that's happening; he's just observing it happening, and I think that made me not judge Slughorn because Slughorn is just being Slughorn. He's totally doing his thing and Hagrid is being Hagrid. They are who they are and they're doing what they do, and Harry's just sitting back and observing that it's all falling into place in a way that's going to help him get this memory. Yeah.

Lorrie: I think my PR-adjacent background is part of this, too, because there's a kind of theater of performative sincerity, and if you do it right, people feel like you did your due diligence, even though it's just about striking the correct tone. The emptiness of it... Ugh, yeah. I also hate corporate speak...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And this strikes me as similar. It's the greasy surface. Ugh...

JC: Also, though, I have to say... Maybe it also didn't strike me. This is something I've had to get good at in the last five or six years at work in a way that I didn't before: when I moved into more of a leadership role, I had to learn how to speak in a way that was sincere but not honest and completely forthtelling. I needed to be able to keep things close to my chest; I needed to be able to listen and sympathize without giving anybody anything that I couldn't give them.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That balance between sincerity... I don't know even how to say it. Watching Slughorn do it here, I was like, 'Oh, he's good.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But yeah, I guess I didn't judge him as harshly, partly because that seems to be in a lot of areas of work. You have to be able to do that and just do it. You have to be able to give people what they want to hear in order to make everything run smoothly...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And then maybe behind the scenes, you're going back and you're trying to fix things, but you have to listen to everyone's complaints and you have to make them all feel heard, right? Then you have to make everyone think, "Yeah, I understand, and I'm going to try to help you," even if, in the end, you can't because of the circumstances or whatever, because that person's just freaking wrong! It's a bit of customer service, so part of me was just... I don't know. I didn't judge Slughorn that harshly here. I was like, 'He's good at it. He's just good at this thing. It's a skill.'

Lorrie: It's PR.

JC: Yeah. It's like PR, it's political, it's all that stuff.

Lorrie: So then Slughorn cements Harry's opinion of him by saying that it's fine for Hagrid to drink all of the wine that he has brought because he "had a house-elf taste every bottle after what happened to your poor friend Rupert."

JC: Rupert, exactly. He said, "I tested it all." I thought to myself, 'Oh, we live in a world of magic here, right? Surely, there's like --'

Lorrie: Like with a chemistry set.

JC: There's a way you can take a little sample and you can do a potion...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: There's ways of doing that. No, he had a house-elf taste it.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: What? Really?! Aren't you a wizard?

Lorrie: "Well, the house-elf didn't die."

JC: Aren't you a wizard, man? What? It wasn't worth brewing a freaking potion or something? Oh, my God. That was peak wizard racism. All right.

Lorrie: The life of a slave is less valuable than the trouble it takes to get out your chemistry set.

JC: Ugh, amazing.

Lorrie: Yeah. That's what he has just demonstrated in front of Harry. Not only is the author telling us that Rupert Grint has often been called Ron...

JC: That is funny. Oh, my God, I never even put those two together. Yeah, he called him Rupert. Okay.

Lorrie: Yeah. This is an inside complaint from the movies and the actors that she put into the canon, but it's not even just that Ron is an unimportant friend of Harry Potter; Ron is one of your students, Horace.

JC: Yeah. Oh, my gosh. Rupert...

Lorrie: Yeah. He's not Harry Potter's poor friend. He is your student.

JC: Yeah, that's true.

Lorrie: Anyway, no. In Slughorn's worldview, whatever.

JC: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Lorrie: So yeah, it is thoroughly established by this point that Horace Slughorn is simultaneously probably harmless and really does not have that many redeeming qualities.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: Not a great human being.

JC: Yeah, and a lot of who he is is the character he's crafted for himself and the fact that it's all about his connections. He's built up a network of people to support his greed. This doesn't feel quite like the right comparison, but okay: the only thing I can really think of is Jeffrey Epstein. A lot of people had to support that person in

order for all those things to happen. I'm not saying that Slughorn is that, but who keeps him in supply of the candy that he likes...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Just the way that he operates in the world without really... He does have skills and he contributes certain things and he's a very good teacher, I'll give him that. He also just uses people for whatever he can get from them constantly, constantly, constantly, and everyone knows it.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: They all know that that's who he is, so yeah, he's an interesting character in that way.

Lorrie: Yeah. He is putting his self-indulgence in charge. Who's in charge of Horace Slughorn? Is it the grown-up in him? No, it's... yeah. Harry, of course, wisely, in dealing with Slughorn, abstains. Whatever wine Slughorn has brought or persuasiveness or whatever, Harry is immune. The chapter continues to be really merciful to Slughorn here; he gets richly compensated for what's about to happen to him -- literally compensated -- because now he sees unicorn hair at ten Galleons a hair; he's going to get a hundred Galleons a pint for the acromantula venom that he got a whole ton of. He's literally going to come away richer from this experience (as well as better off in every way), and I really appreciate that mercy. That's one of the things that brings tears to my eyes because he didn't earn that mercy from the world by being an honorable person. You can be nothing to be proud of (like Slughorn is here) and still deserve some mercy. It's okay. It's not what he wanted (what Harry gets out of him, gets to see); he didn't want to be giving up that secret, but it's what he needed. That mercy... It's nearly better than he deserved, but that's the point: we don't have to deserve it. It's a good thing, whether we earned it by being good people or not. No, it's a good thing, and if Slughorn can get that release, then even I -- or you or whoever the reader is reading this, thinking, 'Yes, but I am exceptionally low-life. I know there are really disgusting people running around in this world, but nobody is as despicable as me.' Yeah, even you. Even you get to have some mercy.

JC: It's interesting to me that when he mentioned the unicorn hair, my first thought was, 'Oh, is he going to steal it? What's he going to do?' Of course, they all get drunk, and in the end, Hagrid sends him off with a whole bunch of it, right?

Lorrie: All of it!

JC: All of it, yeah. Yeah, it's a bit giving, 'Yeah, he did.' He got the acromantula venom without telling Hagrid or asking Hagrid, but he's looking around Hagrid's cabin like, 'Ooh, what other treasures do you have in here?'

Lorrie: I know.

JC: And then you get the sense at the end that they've bonded enough in their drunkenness that all Slughorn would have to do is point at something and Hagrid would be like, "Take it!"

Lorrie: Yeah. "I want you to have it!"

JC: "Aragog would've wanted it," something like that. The other thing that I really find fascinating (there's a little moment that I had to stop and think about here): Harry does a nonverbal refilling charm on the wine bottles to fill them again, which sounds great. 'What a useful little charm!' Then I just had a moment of 'Wait a minute, how does that work? Because you can't create food out of nothing.' This is a rule of magic of the Wizarding world that we know. Where is it coming from? I thought, 'Okay, if there's like dregs...' Literally, I'm overthinking this, so bear with me for a moment. If there's three drops of wine in the bottle, is it the spell that reproduces things and somehow we're able to pull atoms out of the air and reproduce the exact chemical structure of this thing? How does it work?

Lorrie: It's like making a diamond out of carbon in an hour, as opposed to over ages. How do we ferment wine?

JC: Oh, my God, yeah. How? I got stuck on that for a minute because I was like, 'Okay, that's handy, but then if that's so easy to do, then why doesn't Slughorn just do that all the time?' I don't know. I had a moment of 'Huh?' but it also made me think of *Good Omens*: when Crowley and Aziraphale drink, they drink wine and they get kind of drunk, and then at the end when they're done, they just pull the alcohol magically out of their bodies and it goes back into the bottle. Their bodies are --

Lorrie: Right, right. Insubstantial, yeah.

JC: ...Not quite human, yeah. The wine... they refill the bottles when they're done, and that's where my brain went. 'Was this where the wine came from?' No. I really got stuck for a moment on 'Where did the wine come from that was refilling the bottles?' That's still not the point of this chapter, but yeah, I got distracted by the logistics of the magic here.

Lorrie: Well, if it makes you feel any better, I went a different direction in overthinking that point. I also got distracted by that. The conclusion I told myself (so that I could settle it in my mind and move on) was that I think Slughorn brought that much wine, and that what Harry was doing was just transferring it from the bottles into their drinking vessels so that they don't notice that Harry is actively trying to get them drunker. There's nothing to prove or disprove what I thought of -- I just needed to settle it in myself -- but it does go with what Harry's trying to do. I've seen a bartender do this where they can top you off knowing that they're going to charge you more, and knowing that as you drink more, you're going to notice this less and less, but your tab is going to go up and up.

JC: Right. One of my favorite stories about my grandparents is that when I was a small child, we went on a cruise and my grandfather got very drunk at dinner the first night; the next day, he said that the problem was that every time he turned around, his wine glass was full and he had no idea how much he'd had to drink by the end of the night, so he couldn't moderate it at all. But yeah, I remember being eight or something and I was like, "Where's Grandpa?" "Grandpa's not feeling good." "Oh, is he seasick?" "Uh... something like that."

Lorrie: Close. Yeah.

JC: But the magical refilling of the wine glasses from the perspective of someone who's distracted while... Yeah.

Lorrie: Because you can get something out of them. I guess it's similar to casinos not having clocks.

JC: Ah.

Lorrie: There is this human tendency -- it's not our most self-preserving tendency. If we're lucky, our internal safeguards are functioning, but the whole point of

something like alcohol is that it depresses those internal safeguards. Slughorn brought it; he's drinking it now. Slughorn had turned the children on each other to win Felix Felicis; he's reaping the effects of it now. It's all turning back on him. Harry lets them get themselves drunk to the point that they're singing "Odo the hero," one of the great highlights of this series, and gets them to the point where Hagrid passes out, which he knows is something that Hagrid does.

JC: And right before Hagrid passes out, he's crying and telling Harry how sorry he is that his parents are dead.

Lorrie: Thank you. Thank you for that lead-in!

JC: Nice little segue there, Hagrid. *Thunk.*

Lorrie: Yeah. Great! Having accomplished that... I'm almost reluctant to get into it because it's so heavy.

JC: Wow, I didn't read any of this as heavy. I read it as Harry just being manipulative in a way that he needed to be to get the job done.

Lorrie: He did need to be.

JC: Yeah. Harry goes on to describe his parents' death in detail. I don't know if he has told anyone this because this is all bits and pieces he's put together over the years, and I don't think he's ever said it out loud to one person until now.

Lorrie: I can see that, yeah.

JC: He's definitely using 'the eyes swimming with the tragedies of his past' or whatever.

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah.

JC: It's very much like he's playing that part suddenly.

Lorrie: Yeah. Well, he's stepping into his role. He is assuming his destiny here, fearlessly and completely and not only for show. This is exactly what he needs to claim being the Chosen One for: to get the job done. This is the job. It's fearless. This is his moment when he comes of age. He has just matured.

JC: Yeah. He feels like an adult here.

Lorrie: Yeah, and it's that moment when he says calmly, "Yes, I am the Chosen One. Oh, yeah, it's me." There's no artifice there; that's totally what's happening. Brave.

JC: And that he's the one who has to kill Voldemort, and that great moment when he's talking about the death of his parents and Slughorn says, "I don't want to hear anymore," Harry's like, "No, you're going to hear it."

Lorrie: Oh, my God.

JC: He doesn't let him off the hook. Another thing that's interesting here is that Harry uses *stares in silence* here to great effect, and that's not something that Harry knew how to do...

Lorrie: Until very recently.

JC: Right. He's listening to the potion tell him when to pause and when to wait and when to just stare at someone, and it's masterful. It's not something he could have pulled off on his own at this point in time.

Lorrie: Well, he just learned how to do it from Dumbledore waiting for him to apologize about forgetting to get this memory. That's directly where he learned it from because he almost died of shame waiting out Dumbledore's silence, and the only way out was he had to face the truth and crawl on his belly and say, "Yeah, I know I should have. I'm sorry." That's exactly what he's doing here. He is reaching into Slughorn's shame, and he's doing exactly what Dumbledore did to him because he knows Slughorn is in there; the regret is in there, he has just learned. He has just been trained by Dumbledore how to lead. This is vocational training. "What is Dumbledore teaching you in those private lessons?" and this is Hermione going, "Really advanced defensive magic, probably." This is it: the connection with the guilty truth, deep, deep, deep down underneath denial and shame. I love when he is relentless about forcing the attention of the conversation onto the emotional particulars of his parents' murder despite Slughorn begging. This is something that -- it's my personality. It makes me really angry when people try to evade this way. He's trying to beg off, "I'm an old man, I don't need to hear..." and then he says more of the truth: "I don't want to hear..." "Listen, you coward, you're going to listen. You're going to hear this. You have to hear this." It reminded me of one of the worst... My hatred and anger and contempt was so pure about this. Larry

Nassar is a doctor who treated U.S. Olympic gymnasts and, very badly, sexually abused many of them over a really long time and was enabled and allowed and protected for ages until finally, really, really brave teenage girls came forward and fought the system and put him behind bars. It was such an exposure of how much people will let enormous numbers of young women or less powerful people really just suffer, suffer, suffer rather than face the actual truth of what's just their jobs. If somebody is abusing kids, you're supposed to say something and stop it. This is not a difficult call; this is literally your job. If you see this happening and you know it's happening, you're supposed to say something. There are things you are supposed to do to make sure that it stops in this case and that it's prevented from happening again, and that if a crime has been committed, the criminal gets a trial and it's examined. For ages, this guy was just allowed to do whatever the heck he wanted, and then finally, when the extremely, heavily publicized trial happened and all of these girls and women came forward with gut-crawling accounts of what he did -- factual recounting of things that he voluntarily did that were truthful, not exaggerated -- he was destroyed and he begged them, "Please, I don't want to have to listen to this. This is really bad for my mental health."

JC: Aww... AAWWW... /sarcasm/

Lorrie: Sitting there like he was being held, and then they would bring him to the courtroom to the trial and he would have to listen to the evidence. These girls and young women would give the evidence and their families would be there with them. "This is what you did to our child and our family." There were just so many of them, and he begged for mercy and said, "I don't -- please don't make me listen to all of this." Well, you could have not done this stuff in the first place. Are they exaggerating? Are they lying? Did somebody else do these things? No. Look, if you did it, you have to face it. You can deny it, you can be ashamed, you can run away like Slughorn, you can spend a year breaking into Muggle houses... Is it going to make it okay within yourself? No. Are you going to be hurting other people? Yes. How many? How many people are you willing to hurt just because you don't want to face what you actually really did that you feel guilty about? How many would you like to sacrifice? At what point can even you see that 'maybe this is too many people to sacrifice, I have to face it'? No. Here's Slughorn begging, "Please don't make me think about the particulars of your parents' death." "Oh, why not? Did it not happen that way? Is it not the truth? Is it not important? Didn't

you like her?" That's a huge foreshadowing in this series of how we're going to learn that Dumbledore engaged Snape. "You said you liked her, didn't you?" and Slughorn has to admit, "Yes, of course." He's been saying that all along. The simplicity of Harry's response is stunning to me and so refreshing: "But you won't help her son. She gave me her life, but you won't give me a memory." Yeah, it is that small, Horace. You are that small. "The Potions Master seemed unable to look away." That's so clever. That's such a Snape reference without making it a Snape reference. Then Slughorn brings up what is super valid. Yeah, it's not just that he's in denial and doesn't want to take responsibility; it's that he's genuinely afraid because he is genuinely at risk. That's good that he can admit that now. Yes, it's valid and worth bringing up, and Harry says, "Oh, you're afraid that Voldemort is going to find out that you're helping me?" "Yeah. Yeah, I am," and that's not nothing; that's real, and Harry can only say, "Be brave like my mother." He can't deny that that's the risk; on the other hand, Voldemort's going to come for everyone anyway. "And you said you liked my mother... Do you want to hear again how she died?" "No." I love, love, love... This is something about the author that made me love her. This is one of the things that grieves me about having to question because she's turned into somebody who is so threatening to me and my loved ones. I love that she gives, in this series, mercy in the form of things like dreamless sleep; when things are just too traumatic (like Harry after the graveyard battle at the end of *Goblet of Fire*), she lets Madam Pomfrey give him Dreamless Sleep Potion. When Harry is nailing Slughorn to the wall here: "He knew he was safe: Felix was telling him that Slughorn would remember none of this in the morning." That's the thing that brings me to tears. How merciful is it? Slughorn is going to feel better because this thing is going to be resolved, and he's not going to have to remember how that happened. That is the kindness of that; the mercy of that is beautiful to me.

JC: Oh, that's really interesting. I hadn't thought about it that way because I actually didn't like that he wasn't going to remember it a little bit, partly because I think I just wanted him to be punished a little bit more. But also because it was like... Well, okay, 'didn't like' is a strong way of saying it. This is where I really rolled into Harry manipulating him in the same way that he manipulated Hagrid, because Harry's going to take this from him and Slughorn's not really going to know that it happened, just like Slughorn took the acromantula venom.

Lorrie: Oh, gosh.

JC: It kind of felt like it was very parallel to me, so I didn't even think about it as a kindness to Slughorn. It was more like he deserved to have it stolen from him in this way, in a way that he wouldn't really even remember how it happened because he just did that to Hagrid.

Lorrie: He does feel guilty about it, though, unlike Hagrid, who did nothing wrong, and did not deserve to have his friend's crunchy corpse desecrated. Slughorn has been tormented by this. He's been running away, he's been avoiding Harry Potter, he's been lying, he's been slamming doors. He's been cursing Dumbledore. He's been producing terribly, poorly altered memories. It's eating him up, and he sees with dread how the Death Eaters and Voldemort are gaining power; they're coming for him. If they don't come for him, it'll be just an oversight on their part. There's nothing he can do to encourage them to forget him more.

JC: Though it is true looking ahead, because Voldemort doesn't really know that anyone else knows about the Horcruxes until quite a ways into the destruction of them. It's pretty late.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I don't remember what happens to Slughorn in the end, but whether or not anyone will ever connect it back to Slughorn giving away the memory seems like a bit of a distant chance at this point, but I don't know.

Lorrie: Yeah. He's worried. There's nothing he can do about it except pray that Voldemort won't connect the dots.

JC: Yeah, that's true, but I really do like the moment (and maybe you were leading up to this) when Harry tells him... Let me open my book. Slughorn had pressed his hand over his mouth, and then he says: "'I am not proud...' he whispered through his fingers. 'I'm ashamed of what -- of what that memory shows... I think I may have done great damage that day...'" Then Harry says, "You'd cancel out anything you did by giving me the memory. It would be a very brave and noble thing to do." I really like that Harry points that out.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "If you caused damage, here's your chance to fix it."

Lorrie: Love it. Yes.

JC: Yeah, which is true.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: That's where I saw the kindness. "You are being offered a chance to fix a big mistake here."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "This is your chance. Take it." Yeah.

Lorrie: This is so the opposite of the cruelty of saying to somebody, "I know you feel guilty. You're just a worm. There's nothing you can do. It's too late now." What if it's not? What if it's not too late? Even if you can't fix what you did, what if you could help something else? What if there's still room for you to be brave? What if there's still a use for you? What if your sorrow and regret are worth something? What if you're worth something still? Yeah, the way that Slughorn just has to hope that Voldemort never connects the dots back reminds me of this lawsuit that I was once hearing about where I really disagreed with the tactic. There was a piece of evidence and if the other side didn't find it, then on a technicality, this lawsuit could be won, so just destroy every copy of this evidence and make sure... Even though some of it was sent through email. Did we get every copy? Did we purge every copy? That's what it hinged on. If it's true that the other side never would be able to find any evidence, then the lawsuit would be won. I saw two different lawyers debate and one of them said, "That's not honest. That's not a secure way to win this. No, we can't depend on them not being able to find this," and I was so relieved to hear that. You can't control that whole thing; you think you've gotten everything, but you haven't. It turns out that Harry Potter is such an effective Auror that by the time Voldemort realizes he's on the Horcruxes, Voldemort can't fight back. That protects Slughorn; Slughorn has no control of that. What if it happened that Harry Potter destroyed a couple Horcruxes, alerted Voldemort, and then died? Eventually, Slughorn would've been in the crosshairs. This is not under his control. This is a very tenuous claim to safety. When Slughorn says, "I'm not proud, I'm ashamed... I think I may have done great damage that day..." that is the hugest fantasy. When you look at people who knowingly scapegoat other people -- have no problem throwing other people under the bus for something that they know, deep down, they did wrong -- you'd look at them from the outside, going, 'Do they

know? They know, right? They know, deep down, what they're doing. Can we get them to feel it? Can we get them to admit it? How can we connect with that?' Then you get the examples of true horror like Dolores Umbridge, where you do connect with that and they actually don't feel bad at all. Okay, that's evil. That's terrifying. What about somebody like Slughorn? He seems sympathetic, he seems like he has feelings. Could we connect with that? Of course, he is very smart and very defensive and knows that's what people are trying to do and barricades himself, but no, this is the fantasy: somehow Harry gets him where he volunteers this acknowledgment. "Yeah, I do know. I am ashamed. I'm afraid I caused damage." That is such a fantasy. Yeah. Okay, however you brew Felix Felicis, I'm now super interested because what we literally have (even though this sounds so dramatic) is that we do have, in fact, humans who would rather let entire genocides happen than admit to their own guilty consciences and to the mistakes that they know they should own up to. They don't want to own up to them; they would rather let entire peoples get killed...

JC: Right.

Lorrie: Which is the point that we learn Dumbledore was at when he finally faced Grindelwald: people saying, "You could stop this. Why aren't you?" "I don't want to face myself." "Well, how many people would you let die before that happens?" "You're right. No, I don't want to face myself." What we see Harry doing here (which we're later going to see Dumbledore use to get Snape to change as a human being) when he says "You'd cancel out anything you did by giving me the memory" is just a way of teaching people if you want to make repairs, you have to be taught; you have to be shown. It's not exactly the same as inviting somebody to; you could invite yourself to do it, but we're not born knowing how to do everything. To make repairs for your own damage is something where if somebody says, "Honestly, it's okay. Yes, I forgive you in advance. You're worth forgiving. It doesn't matter whether you're a good person on the inside or not; you're human. That qualifies you. I'm still talking to you, aren't I? Seriously, just give it a try. Follow these instructions and see if you feel better. See if, instead of letting thousands of people get killed, you can say, 'I thought that, I was wrong. I made a mistake. I'm changing my mind.'" See if that works. Will the world end? Will you die of shame? Will the genocidal maniac come get revenge on you? Yeah, maybe. That might happen anyway. That somebody thought that you were worth it enough

as a person to sit down and have this conversation with you at all is sometimes the thing that makes the difference and that people sometimes never get, and that's the damage of saying that some people are trash. Whether it's a fictional character like my guy Snape (where people say, "Oh, he's trash. He was Neville's boggart, so I don't care what he did for the rest of his life. He's not worth anything. I write him off"), this is not everybody's job, but if there is somebody who's able to sit down with that alleged trash and say, "Talk about your shame, bring it out. Here are some options for something you can still do," do you get the greatest secret agent ever (who can actually give their entire life to save people whom they don't even like) doing things that nobody else can do? This is not a theoretical question in our contemporary landscape with actual wars and genocides going on internationally. This is not hypothetical. How are you going to break strongman syndrome? How are you going to break international corruption? How are you going to break the conspiracy of people who thought that they were in something for their own profit, and then realized once they're in that they're in too deep and it's truly all going to hell? How are you going to break that if you don't reach out to the people who have something real on their conscience, some real reason to be ashamed of themselves? Who's going to know how to undo Dark magic if they weren't the ones who did it in the first place? This sitting down with somebody instead of writing them off as trash... Not everyone can do it. As Dumbledore said, Harry Potter is the only person in the world who can get this out of Slughorn. It's the person you hurt or is connected to the hurt that you caused, the person who says, "Yes, I know what you did, and you can help me." Slughorn didn't hurt Dumbledore with this particular betrayal of Lily Evans Potter; Dumbledore coming to pound down his door is going to do nothing but get more defense out of him. Harry is the only person. The person you hurt, coming to say, "I know what you did, let's do this together...." that's the person who can reach you, and this is what Dumbledore meant when he said to Phineas Nigellus, "I did not expect you to understand why Harry Potter can get this out of Slughorn" when Dumbledore can't. This is not putting down Phineas Nigellus; this is not putting down Slytherins. This is saying that Dumbledore had enough on his conscience to know how Slughorn felt and knows that Dumbledore himself would not feel like letting down his defenses just because it was the right thing to do. The lure of being told that you could earn back forgiveness (or that you could somehow make repairs or amends) is the fantasy that's powerful enough to

overcome a shame that's so deep that you would literally let thousands of people die rather than face yourself.

JC: This is making me think about... I don't know. I'm not out in the fandom very much anymore and I don't know if people still say this, but certainly at the beginning of the TERFpocalypse era, there were a lot of people who seemed to think that if a trans person just sat J.K.R. down and had a conversation with her...

Lorrie: That fantasy, yep.

JC: Yeah. What all of this (what you're talking about) hinges on is a feeling of shame and knowing that you did something wrong, and if the person doesn't feel that, then there's nowhere to go, right? The shame has to be there. Certainly we've had this conversation before; there doesn't seem to be any indication that that exists for this author.

Lorrie: If it did --

JC: This path does not seem to be available to her.

Lorrie: If it did, it wouldn't be available to people who don't even know her, like us. If you say a hypothetical, persuasive, sympathetic trans person could be airlifted into her Scottish castle... They don't have a relationship.

JC: Right, right.

Lorrie: People who do have a relationship with her haven't been able to get through to her on this. Whatever fantasy this is, it's (from where we sit) not a fantasy that's going to help us, because at the same time that you might be fantasizing about this, you also have to yourself (on a daily basis) the obligation to protect your emotions from someone who's actively trying to destroy your life or your loved ones' lives. This is something that Dumbledore had the power to actually send in for Slughorn; he actually had Harry Potter to send on this nearly impossible mission to break down the extreme defenses of Slughorn, who is very smart and very guilty. If Harry couldn't do it, then nobody could; Dumbledore tried and obviously only got Slughorn more defensive. Is there a connection? The thing that they had was that Slughorn kept saying, "Oh, I really liked Lily. I really liked her. My emotion is still there. When I look at you, I see her. Oh, it's really a shame. She was so wonderful. It really hurts that she died." "Oh, does it? Okay. Do you

feel bad about this?" Who can reach him about that? Maybe the orphan... Nobody else, which is the same tactic that Dumbledore is going to use to possibly maybe get to Voldemort. Who else could do it? "Well, is there any emotion anywhere?" "Uh, there's a little here." "Okay, that's our only chance." But no, we can't airlift a stranger in to reach somebody like that. I've heard of that happening. I've heard of people being so powerful that yeah, actually, they can reach the person. Somebody who is a billionaire who has gone on for years and years and years on this international platform and funded political movements... Uh, I think she may have some defenses about this setup already. Not to say that there aren't ways for us to protect ourselves and to fight; just that this particular fantasy is one that we can apply to our own lives with people that we already have relationships with. There are plenty of opportunities in everyday life to exercise this and to fight transphobia or any other kind of scapegoating and projecting and denying, lots of opportunity to do this in our lives and with ourselves, because as we see, Harry has this. If Harry had given free rein to his more self-indulgent side, then he would be not having this scene right now; he would be glugging Felix Felicis to get Ginny to kiss him, which she was going to do anyway. He would be ignoring Slughorn and running after Draco to no effect again. If we call on our relationships with other people and our feelings and the relief of bringing shame to light and being able to move forward and do something that helps, that does something. That can work, and there's going to be lots of examples in the next few chapters (coming up really fast) about what happens to people when they have unintentionally led to the deaths of other people and how it affects them, whether it's people that they liked or people that they absolutely hated but didn't wish dead, or people that they were willing to sacrifice to dodge responsibility. The help that Harry gave to Slughorn here is the help of simplicity. Yes, it's really this effective. This one simple trick can actually relieve your guilt. It works if someone can help you find the way; it shows mercy. Harry gave Slughorn the gift of moral certainty. What Slughorn did to Lily Evans Potter was forgivable. It wasn't intentional. Finally, Slughorn has the right to say, "You're a good boy, and you've got her eyes..." and then he says the wimpy but true thing: "Just don't think too badly of me once you've seen it..." Well, Slughorn, you're not a great person, but what you really actually did to Lily Evans wasn't that bad. You didn't actually... It's okay.

JC: And I guess in the next chapter, we're going to see the memory.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And I think that Slughorn's guilt has been such a big part of his character throughout. He has guilt about this, and I don't know if the guilt... At the beginning of this book when Dumbledore took Harry to procure Slughorn to convince him to come to Hogwarts, I think we've talked about how at that point, Dumbledore had been collecting memories from anyone he could about Voldemort's time as a student, and he knew that Slughorn had a relationship with Tom Riddle at the time, so he's looking for something. He's looking for evidence of what he thinks might have happened at that point, I think. Slughorn... He thinks because they had a relationship, maybe something happened there, so he's bringing Slughorn in on the chance that Slughorn has some information that Dumbledore can get in the form of a memory, which feels like a really big... 'Risk' is not the right word, but Dumbledore must have been pretty sure of that. 'I've narrowed it down to this guy, and if it was anyone, it was this guy.' But the more we get to know Slughorn over this school year... Knowing how it turns out (what he actually told Tom Riddle and how easy he manipulates folks), but also how easily he was manipulated by Tom Riddle...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This whole piece of his character... I just find that really interesting that he flatters people but he wants to be flattered in return, and he wants to feel important and he tries to make other people feel important in hopes that he'll be made to feel important as well.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: The fact that he had this knowledge that Tom Riddle wanted that made him feel important in his role as a teacher... I can absolutely say that I have had students ask me questions before that I knew I couldn't answer, and I knew that they were asking me because A) they thought I could answer it, and the B) they thought I would; just things about the political workings of a program or things like that, or sometimes students generally want to know what's going on. "We're hearing rumors. What's the truth?" Sometimes, you can't tell them the truth.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: You just can't, so I can see how Slughorn got sucked into that with Tom Riddle, and I wonder, too, how much... If Slughorn suspects that that's what Tom Riddle has been doing, I wonder if other people suspect it also, or is Slughorn alone? Has he lived alone with this knowledge for, what, fifty years (or however long it's been) that he is the one who told Tom Riddle/Voldemort what Horcruxes were? Yeah, there's just a lot of interesting Slughorn backstory here that this makes me think about, so knowing that he feels this guilty about it and he has this much horror when he thinks about it -- so much that he can't think about it -- what does Slughorn see out in the world that makes him think that he played a role in the rise of Voldemort?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: A big role, apparently, in his mind.

Lorrie: Yeah, and for what did you sell out the entire world? Yeah, what was worth it?

JC: Was it a bag of lemon candy or something crazy like that? Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. Then when we see that Dumbledore has the same, but is far more culpable... Oh. Oh, okay. So yeah, I like very much that you brought up your response that you would have liked Slughorn to have a little bit more understanding of his culpability here, but yeah, the chapter does end with him putting "his head on his arms, gave a deep sigh, and fell asleep."

JC: [Which] I read as "passing out," but okay.

Lorrie: Well, no, he is...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: But I kind of feel like saying to him, "Okay, you did good. You can go. Here, and here's your thousands and thousands of Galleons that you made tonight from acromantula venom and unicorn hair. That ought to help you. You can go, Horace."

JC: "Good job today, Horace." Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. The next chapter is called Horcruxes.

JC: Ooh... And Harry has the memory.

Lorrie: Yeah. Oh, boy...

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.