HARRY POTTER AFTER 2020
with LORRIE KIM and JC

Transcript

Episode 6.25

Book 6, Chapter 25: The Seer Overheard

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-Five: The Seer Overheard.

Lorrie: The Seer Overheard. Harry learns it was Snape who overheard the prophecy leading Voldemort to kill his parents. He's furious at Dumbledore for keeping that secret, but forgets about it when Dumbledore says it's time to go destroy a Horcrux. He tells Ron and Hermione to share Felix Felicis with Ginny, contact the D.A., and monitor Draco and Snape. I really admire the way that different plot lines come crashing against each other in this chapter.

JC: I'd completely forgotten about the existence of this chapter. Even when I was thinking about the title, I was like, 'What does that mean?' Completely had forgotten about it. In our last episode, you had said something about Snape being the one to tell Voldemort, and I was like, 'I wonder where we find that out…' Little did I know, literally the next chapter.

Lorrie: Yeah. This chapter starts out with Harry having one of the happiest times of his life because --

JC: Enjoy it while it lasts, kid.

Lorrie: Yeah. He's now Ginny's boyfriend, and he's so happy that you know the author is apologizing to him in advance because she's about to put him through so much suffering.

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: So stock up!

JC: Yeah. It's interesting, too, that he's the subject of all this gossip -- "Oh, Harry Potter and Ginny Weasley are a couple!" -- and no one is gossiping about the fact that he almost killed Draco. Does that mean that they don't know or they don't care?

Lorrie: They did know. I think because Draco has recovered, things are allowed to go on.

JC: Huh… Interesting. Okay. It just seems like that was really a dramatic and awful thing that happened and everybody's like, "Eh, it's fine." I guess that's kind of typical at Hogwarts. "Oh, yeah, Katie Bell. Yeah, she was in the hospital for six months. She's back, and now everything's cool." Yeah, which puts some of that in light, too. "Oh, yeah, Snape almost got killed by something mysterious in the woods, but James Potter saved him. It's all fine." Okay, we're not going to deal with anyone's trauma.

Lorrie: Yeah. Even right after last episode, when we were talking about how close Harry came to having to deal with having killed Draco Malfoy, I went back to thinking, 'What would have happened to Slughorn if Harry hadn't found the bezoar in time to save Ron from the poisoned mead?' Then Slughorn would have to deal with the horror of being a teacher who had unknowingly given a drink to a student and then the student died right in his room. It was really a matter of seconds, so that was a big deal for a few weeks; Ron was in the hospital wing and it was big news, and then life went on.

JC: And life went on, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Like when everyone was Petrified second year, it's just like, 'This is just Hogwarts, I guess.' It's like, 'Okay, yeah.'

Lorrie: 'Okay.' So no, this distraction of celebrity gossip (the dating mill) is perfectly adequate to cover up that near-killing, but it does show if you avert the danger, you get so much of a second chance. Really, really try not to get into that situation in the first place. Really, really, really… Marietta Edgecombe. Harry and Hermione continue their arguments about whether the Half-Blood Prince could have been a girl. I love how messy this snarky, disagreeable, grumpy discussion is between them because it is so realistic. They're both on the right track for something, but they're both so very, very wrong also. It just is so realistic. Hermione's found this newspaper article about this fifteen-year-old named Eileen Prince and gosh, it's so thrilling to get a look at Mom.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: She's skinny, she's not pretty… She has this expression that's cross and sullen, and she was captain of the Hogwarts Gobstones team. She had friends. You can't be Captain of a Gobstones team unless you have friends, which I just love. It's so sweet. Hermione's arguing the name is a clue, which it is.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Harry's like, "Yeah, right," and then she undermines her argument with being so jealous and saying, "The truth is that you don't think a girl would have been clever enough," and Harry is genuinely stung by this. It reminded me of how Rowling (like any good, healthy author would, I hope) ignored a lot of constructive criticism from the masses, but it did get her after book four when people said, "You don't have enough female characters." She took that to heart, and starting from *Order of the Phoenix*, she added in Tonks and Luna and tried to make sure that she had more girls and women. Yeah, even though Harry totally is not guilty of underestimating girls, it still hurt when Hermione said that.

JC: Yeah, and his reaction is like, "How could you think that when we're friends?"

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "I know that you are one of the smartest people here and don't doubt that for a second." Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, and even though Hermione is saying it completely unfairly out of her own bitterness, it's still an issue. Yeah, so when Hermione comes with this

extremely unpleasant, determined expression and she tries to get Harry interested again in who the Half-Blood Prince might have been, she says, "Now, I've been trying to find out a bit about who might make a hobby of inventing Dark spells --" and Harry is so cross and says, "He didn't make a hobby of it --" Yeah. Actually, Harry, he did.

JC: It's really funny. He doesn't know it, but is defending Snape at this point, which is fun.

Lorrie: Right, right. Hermione says she's going to keep looking for someone who invented Dark spells who had a lot of Potions awards.

JC: It's like, 'Hmm…'

Lorrie: She's totally on the right track.

JC: 'Who could that be?'

Lorrie: She's totally on the right track that you have to follow the mother's lineage as well as the father's, and it will take some more digging. Meanwhile, Harry is on another right track where he says, "It's the way he writes, I just know the Prince was a bloke, I can tell," which, on the one hand, makes me think, 'So, Rowling, there are ways to identify gender other than intrusive physical checks, are there?' But more to the point that Harry is making, I have always found that you can identify something about the individual humanity of authors from the way they write and even just purely on stylistics; if you analyze syntax and vocabulary, that's how people figured out that it was J.K. Rowling writing under the pseudonym Robert Galbraith for the Cormoran Strike [series]. Whoever this is writes exactly like J.K. Rowling, indisputably. It's her. Anyway, I guess this is just my longstanding resentment of any argument that the text can exist independent of the individuality of the person who wrote it.

JC: Yeah, yeah. I think you could have that conversation about so many different kinds of art. It's a human creation, and now that we're moving into this era where AI is also creating things, most of us can read a thing and tell or we could at least look at something and usually tell; at least for now. But that makes me wonder, as we get into this area where more and more things that we consume that previously were created by humans were created by AI, what will we lose there? I think that

what you're saying is that bit of humanity that you can pull from a text -- that you can tell this was written by a human and you can tell something about that human's life and experience and beliefs from it -- we're going to lose that. That's interesting to think about. If the text really can stand independently of the author, then we shouldn't have a problem with AI writing things, right?

Lorrie: Right.

JC: But we do.

Lorrie: But that uncanny feeling… The thing is when Harry says he can just tell the gender of the Half-Blood Prince, it's that he's not sophisticated enough to be able to lay out the specific signs that he's clocked, but you can take anything like that and point at individual words or moments; you can break it down. Something like a computer program that can compare writing against a bunch of different authors and figure out who it is is doing quickly what humans do more slowly; we don't always know exactly what it is that we're finding, but it is actually still performing the same distinguishing task that a human brain is doing but then need the human discernment to make sense of it. Going back to figure skating (as always), you can automate as much of the judging process as you can to make it "objective," but in the end a human has to say, "And then this is what the emotional response is that makes the ranking feel true." It's not satisfying if you outsource human discernment to machines.

JC: Yeah, that's true. Yeah, and I could think of so many forms where that's true. I think even something like film editing…

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: You need a human being to sit there and say, "If I linger on this shot for two more frames, it's going to have an emotional impact; if I leave those two frames off, it won't." Only a human being can do that, right? Yeah, yeah. We're getting off track here, but yeah.

Lorrie: Is it off track?

JC: Maybe not. I don't know.

Lorrie: I don't think it is. So Harry says, "This girl hasn't got anything to do with it." Of course, he's entirely wrong about that.

JC: Correct, yeah.

Lorrie: Just the way that they're both so wrong and so grumpy and so right…

JC: And so close, too, even when Hermione says, "If her mother was a Muggle and her father was a wizard, then she'd be the Half-Blood Prince," and it's like, 'You're so close. You're so close…'

Lorrie: Yep. So yeah, Harry, whose father is talked about all the time and whose mother is hardly even mentioned…

JC: Except that he has her eyes.

Lorrie: Yeah. Now with Slughorn, we're getting closer (Slughorn talking about her all the time) and Ron saying one part of the truth, where he says about Hermione: "She's just never got over you outperforming her in Potions," which is such a useful way of saying, "Yeah, even when you're being like that, you can still be intellectually honest and be on to something." Yeah, don't dismiss what someone is saying just because they're also obviously being immature. So yeah, this is humans; this is how complicated and uncertain we are. Oh, God… And then moving on to a different, complicated, horrible, unsure area, Harry says to him, "You don't think I'm mad, wanting that book back, do you?" and Ron says, "Course not. He was a genius… Anyway… without his bezoar tip… I wouldn't be here to discuss it."

JC: Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: Which is so horrendously the same debate that people whose lives were in some way saved by the *Harry Potter* books pre-TERFpocalypse are now just going around in circles. "Okay, the books were genius. Do we keep them? Do we hide them, but not throw them away? Do we destroy them? Do we go after each other to destroy them? Do they hide them from each other?" It's so tediously the exact same argument. Yeah, the genius was there. True.

JC: And Harry now is no longer a Potions genius. They're getting too close to the end of the year, so his grade is going to carry him through here, but yeah. Hopefully, he learned stuff. That's the other thing: I'm thinking he did this for a good chunk of the school year. He followed the Prince's directions; he must have learned things.

Lorrie: He must have.

JC: He must have, that will transfer somehow.

Lorrie: Please, we hope!

JC: We hope, yeah. But Slughorn, of course, is running off. 'Oh, he's in love and he's distracted.'

Lorrie: Yeah, making excuses for his own rose-colored glasses around Harry. Then, we have this interesting moment where Ron says, "'I mean, I'm not saying that spell you used on Malfoy was great --' 'Nor am I,' said Harry quickly." That's so similar to this moment in *Order of the Phoenix* when Harry goes to the fire to talk to Lupin and Sirius about when they were teenagers and they attacked Snape because Sirius was bored. We get "'I'm not proud of it,' said Sirius quickly," and Lupin just looks at him. Okay, they're realizing. Then Lupin even offers -- he volunteers, "Did I ever tell you to lay off Snape? Did I ever have the guts to tell you I thought you were out of order?" These are admissions that adult Lupin and adult Sirius were able to come to on their own because Snape didn't die. Had he died, who knows where they would be emotionally? Then Ron says, "'But he healed all right, didn't he? Back on his feet in no time.' 'Yeah,' said Harry; this was perfectly true, although his conscience squirmed slightly all the same. 'Thanks to Snape...' This is the author's reminder to the reader. This is like at the end of *Chamber of Secrets* when the author has Harry say to Lockhart that he shouldn't have let Snape teach everyone *Expelliarmus*. That's not necessary for the plot; that's the author laying hints, right? One of those tiny hints lining up evidence: is Snape on the side of evil or not? Here's some evidence. So yeah, the author through Harry is reminding the reader that Snape is the reason that Draco's not dead. Okay.

JC: Another layer in there, too, is that Harry has a conscience, and Harry actually saw how much Draco suffered in those moments before Snape came and knows what a horrible death it would have been. All these kids need therapy. The fact that Draco's just back on -- 'Oh, he's back on his feet, he's fine' -- There's something that's just horrifying to me about how everyone experiences some trauma in this school and then we just get on with it. I guess it's very mid-century British, but still, it's like, 'Oh, my God.'

Lorrie: Yeah, and they all know that just because you're back on your feet does not mean that you're fine.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And then right after this reminder that it was Snape who got them all out of that, then there are three paragraphs about the special misery that is detention with Snape, including Snape being extra provocative and horrible, unnecessarily so. This I find hilarious: he issues this empty threat that detentions will carry on next year.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: He totally knows things are not going to be the same next year. This is just him being petty and mean.

JC: Yeah. Yeah, I definitely had that same moment of 'Yeah, it's not going to continue after this year.' It's barely going to continue after the next few chapters.

Lorrie: Yeah, but what's to stop him from pushing on that?

JC: Right.

Lorrie: And then the other provocation (which again, it's so mean that it's really hard to figure out this guy) is him rubbing it in that Harry's missing out on time with his new girlfriend. "Indeed, he had frequently wondered lately whether Snape did not know this, for he was keeping Harry later and later every time, while making pointed asides about Harry having to miss the good weather and the varied opportunities it offered." This is so like Hermione when she's being immature about Harry beating her at Potions, but she's actually (even though irrational) on to something. Of course, Snape is completely the kind of adult that has no love life and would be really mean to teenagers about theirs, but it's for real; it's topical. His having no love life is because he's in the middle of atoning for past regrets, because he chose the kind of dangerous wartime life to make up for them. That makes romance so risky that it's out of the question, so if Draco had died, Harry would not, at the moment, be enjoying good weather and romance. He'd probably, for one thing, be on the run from Narcissa Malfoy.

JC: True, true.

Lorrie: Oh, gosh… And Snape has to drill this into Harry. Draco hasn't been having any Quidditch or romance in his life this year. Snape likes one of them and he doesn't like the other one of them, but he is trying to steer both of them away from that kind of life-changing regret, and it's just an extra bonus for Snape that he gets to needle Harry. It's good craftsmanship from the author; it really adds to this character and makes you understand why it's so difficult to pin down exactly what this guy's real motives are. Also, this is the reference to *To Kill A Mockingbird*. In that book, the two kids (the siblings) have to stay longer and longer every time to do penance with this horrible, old, racist lady; they have to be with her until the alarm clock rings, but it rings later and later every time. Nobody explains this to them, and they wonder what would happen one day if it never rang at all, and this horrible, racist lady that insulted their dad… Their dad said that he considered her the bravest person he ever knew, which we find out in the epilogue of *Deathly Hallows* is what Harry attributes to Snape, so that wording is really distinctive.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Anyway, there's that, and then this confused, painful discussion comes to an end because we get a summons from Dumbledore. Yay! Yeah, there we go. They know what that means. At this point, if Dumbledore's calling Harry, it means it's time.

JC: Yeah, yeah. But then we get this really interesting little interruption in the form of a drunk Trelawney stumbling suddenly out of nowhere.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's interesting, too: this whole scene with Trelawney, Harry does not treat her like a teacher.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He orders her around, and he's treating her as if he's an equal adult, but also an equal adult with more power than her or something. It's very interesting, the way he treats her in this scene.

Lorrie: Yeah. I find it very well written. It's painful and true. She's having one narrative where she's drunk and undignified and she's very self-flattering; it's all

about her shame in trying to hide her alcoholism. It's not a funny issue, and it is also sadly and painfully funny because she's doing such a terrible job of it…

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And there's no question whatsoever of respecting her as a teacher. You're dealing with somebody that is obviously really suffering from addiction, and just how powerless and ridiculous she's become with her broken bottles and her shawl tangled up in her beads… Oh, and Harry honestly doesn't have time for this right now.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: The way that Trelawney narrates what's happening from her state of shame and lying here is really good unreliable narrator. We can totally see exactly what's happening through how wrong she gets it, and she reports that there was somebody already in this room "whooping." You can see a little bit of dignity in her, her distaste for the whooping.

JC: It's also interesting that she, like others, doesn't know that everybody knows about this room.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. "Oh, I didn't know that students knew about that." Yeah. It's interesting too, that she's not the first person who said that; I think even Draco wasn't sure that other people knew about it, but that idea that there's a place of hiding things… It's full of shit people have hidden for centuries, and people keep thinking, "I'm the only one who's ever stumbled on this room," including Voldemort.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That's kind of funny.

Lorrie: It's also like, 'I'm the only one who has shame. Everybody is suffering from the same kind of secrets and shame, but I can't tell anybody and nobody else knows.' Yeah. Actually, everybody does. Of course, while she's offended that somebody threw her out and was whooping, Harry instantly understands: Oh, that means whatever Draco's plan was is now working.

He's thinking on this level that Trelawney is completely unaware of, and Harry is completely right to suggest that Trelawney tell Dumbledore. He's so unconcerned about whatever level of awareness Trelawney has because he says, "He ought to know Malfoy's celebrating -- I mean, that someone threw you out of the room." She doesn't even notice. Oh, we get this thrilling horror moment where suddenly Trelawney switches. She's been comic relief, and then suddenly she's chilling: "Her bony hands closed suddenly around Harry's wrist." Oh, God, that scared me. And then she says, "Again and again, no matter how I lay them out -- the lightning-struck tower. Calamity. Disaster. Coming nearer all the time…" Even she is not too addled to see, 'Oh, there is a message, a single solid message.' This reminded me of a gift I got from a friend in the mail in 2020 -- summer 2020 -- when we were dealing with the pandemic and with racist police violence, and also TERFpocalypse.

JC: And so many other things, yeah.

Lorrie: Imagine being so transphobic that it makes the news even in the middle of everything else that 2020 was, but the gift that my friend sent me was a handmade tarot deck where every single card was the lightning-struck Tower.

JC: Oh, wow!

Lorrie: Special 2020 edition of the tarot deck, and that's pretty much what Trelawney's got here. Here she is, being THE champion of being not self-aware. She reminisces that she believes Dumbledore hired her because he was impressed by her, and that is genuinely pathetic. Then she goes on about how she could only afford to stay at the Hog's Head, which had bed bugs. Good Lord…

JC: Yikes.

Lorrie: And then this thing that's so hard… Oh, it's so painful. She says, "I remember I was starting to feel a little odd, I had not eaten much that day..." That's so real. Oh, gosh… Then I was glad Dumbledore hired her because obviously she just needed room and board, totally aside from protecting her after she made a prophecy she didn't remember. I just know that hunger is up in the U.S. in the past couple of years. Not that it was ever not a problem, but the increase in how many people are hungry and how hungry they are… Oh, yeah. People can't be the selves

that they were meant to be if they can't think because they're so hungry. Yikes. "But then," she says, "we were rudely interrupted by Severus Snape!"

JC: Yeah. Before she gets to the part about Snape, she's telling the story of her interview and Harry knows what's coming because he's heard this side from Dumbledore that she had provided this prophecy, so Harry is a little bit excited. 'Oh, I'm going to hear the other side of it, what it was like for her.' Then she says that it turns out that Snape was listening at the door, and then Harry just… Everything just stops for Harry when he makes all the connections.

Lorrie: Now, I remember the first time I read this, my reaction was, 'Oh, God, Snape again? Is this series never going to stop shoving Snape at us? Is he the answer to every plot twist? It always comes around to him, doesn't it?' Yeah, and I also love the way Harry plays this whole scene: no matter what, don't tell Trelawney what role she played. Let her stay happily ignorant. But Harry's there with his mind whirling, and Trelawney is talking about "that rather uncouth barman." Just like we had Filch dragging Draco by the ear, now we get to imagine the joy of what it looked like when Aberforth flung nineteen-year-old or twenty-year-old Snape out of the Hog's Head. Here we have the unreliable narrator where Trelawney's saying, "You see, he himself was seeking a job at the time, and no doubt hoped to pick up tips!" Ouch!

JC: Yeah, no, that's not what was happening.

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah, yeah. "After that, you know, Dumbledore seems much more disposed to give me a job…" so yeah, she did get hired and Snape did not. Yeah, we're just going to leave her to draw her own conclusions about that. That's the least risky path. Oh, and then we get "the stark contract between my own unassuming manners and quiet talent, compared to the pushing, thrusting young man who was prepared to listen at keyholes --" After that bit of canon, there were some Snape fanfics portraying Snape for his entire time at Hogwarts wordlessly avoiding ever being alone with Trelawney. Oh, dear, oh, dear, oh, dear, oh, dear, oh, dear… Yikes! We read that Harry, while he's having these waves after waves of shock crashing over him as he's putting this all together, his lips have gone numb. I've had that happen to me where parts of me go numb because something is just so awful. This boy, who hates secrets being kept from him about his own history, has

just found out that people -- people he sees all the time -- have kept it secret from him that it was Snape who got his parents killed.

JC: Yeah. That's what Harry puts together, and the idea that Snape overheard this prophecy and then went to Voldemort with this piece of information. "This is what I overheard." Dumbledore says later Snape had no idea who this was about. He didn't know, and if he had known that Voldemort was going to go after Lily in particular, he would have made a different choice.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Who knows, but that's very revisionist. 'Oh, if I had only known…' But also, he was this young guy trying to impress the Dark Lord, and then he gets this piece of information that he knows the Dark Lord is going to want to hear. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. What did you think was going to happen when you were fulfilling your ICE quota without regard for who you're getting? We get another hint from the author through Harry, where Harry thinks to himself: "Snape and Peter Pettigrew together had sent Voldemort hunting after Lily and James and their son…" This mention of Peter Pettigrew is not something that I think would flow naturally for Harry at the moment. Why is the thought of Peter Pettigrew coming to mind during this really emotional moment for Harry? This is from the author differentiating between Snape and Wormtail, who at the time were both culpable, and then one of them underwent remorse and is doing the work to try to repair some of the harm; the other one never did. This is the bookend, the answer to why Wormtail was in the scene at all at Spinner's End in Chapter 2 at the beginning of this book. This is the author laying evidence for what's been going on with Snape for the theme of regretting harm and trying to remedy it, and why Dumbledore might have kept Snape on staff and kept it secret that he had overheard the prophecy, telling Harry everything about this except, "Oh, nobody knows who overheard." I feel for Harry at this moment.

JC: Yeah. Then he has to go to Dumbledore's office, knowing that probably Dumbledore found a Horcrux and they're going to go find it, but also he's got this piece of information now.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: What does he do with it? And he's so, so angry.

Lorrie: Actually, he temporarily forgot that the Horcrux was an issue. When he heard this bit about how Dumbledore knew perfectly well the whole time who it was and had lied and lied and lied and lied, he doesn't remember. He storms into Dumbledore's office and Dumbledore is, of course, preoccupied with the other issue, and it takes him a while to notice that Harry's upset about something. He just turns around and says, "Well, Harry, I promised that you could come with me." Harry's totally confused: "What? Where?" I think this is such amazing storytelling because at that moment, I had also forgotten why Harry was headed there in the first place, and for one of the few reasons that really would be important enough to supersede the hugeness of what Harry's just learned about Snape.

JC: It's interesting that in this moment, Harry doesn't want to tell him, and the idea that Dumbledore uses a bit of Legilimency just to see… Okay, there's something big going on here. "You were never really good at Occluding, Harry."

Lorrie: "AAAAHHHH!" I like the way this conflict is shown: "Rage and resentment fought shock and excitement. For several moments, Harry could not speak." Yeah, that is so real and it's such an adult problem, right? Can you prioritize? Dumbledore tells him he's found a Horcrux, this thing that would have been the hugest thing in the world to Harry if not for this detail about the lies that he's just uncovered. Poor Harry… "Boiling with anger at Snape, his desire to do something desperate and risky had increased tenfold in the last few minutes." Oh, no.

JC: Yeah, this is a really great headspace to be in when we're going off to find a Horcrux.

Lorrie: I find it very relatable when Dumbledore says it's natural to be scared, and Harry's like, "Oh, I'm not scared!"

JC: Yeah, no, that's not what's happening here.

Lorrie: Yeah. He's going to have to temper that feeling. That's not safe for what they're about to do. Harry says to Dumbledore that he learned it was Snape who had heard the prophecy, and Dumbledore goes pale and cannot move.

JC: Ugh… Dumbledore's going, 'Shit…' on the inside.

Lorrie: Oh, this is so adult level, Harry's quandary here. "He wanted to rage and storm at Dumbledore, but he also wanted to go with him to try and destroy the Horcrux; he wanted to tell him that he was a foolish old man for trusting Snape, but he was terrified that Dumbledore would not take him along unless he mastered his anger…" Oh, this is rough, and Dumbledore really does not have that much chance of convincing Harry with whatever he comes up with for an explanation here.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: If I were Harry, I would have a bunch of sarcastic responses to Dumbledore's argument: "Well, Snape was still working for Voldemort. He didn't know it was going to be your mother and father." I'm not swayed. Harry says, "He hated my dad like he hated Sirius! Haven't you noticed, Professor, how the people Snape hates tend to end up dead?" Which is great. The author carefully mentions Lily in the previous paragraph and then not at all in this paragraph. Okay, good. Harry speaks for all Snape haters when Dumbledore says, "You have no idea of the remorse Professor Snape felt when he realized how Lord Voldemort had interpreted the prophecy, Harry. I believe it to be the greatest regret of his life and the reason that he returned --" Yeah. Very fortunately for Dumbledore, Harry interrupts him because Dumbledore was this close to breaking Snape's confidentiality here, and I do have to have sympathy for Dumbledore, too, dying to explain. He so wishes he could say something. Harry says, "How can you be *sure* Snape's on our side?" Have you been in that position, where you wish you could say something and you're like, 'I really can't, I really can't'?

JC: Yeah, but it was never this level of consequences for someone's life; it was much more low, low consequences than that. Things weren't going to fall apart, the world wasn't going to end, someone's life wasn't going to be ruined, but yeah, that kind of thing. "No, I can't say."

Lorrie: Dumbledore "looked as though he was trying to make up his mind about something." Yeah, smart as Dumbledore is, he's trying to find… Is there any loophole to try to say anything about human goodness? No, there isn't. Nope. In the end, all he can say is, "I trust Severus Snape completely." That's great for the fun of reading this series. We get really, really good suspense about what on earth is going on in Dumbledore's head before he comes out with that. Okay, this is interesting.

Then Harry moves the discussion to something that Dumbledore has a much easier time with: he tries to tell Dumbledore that Snape is up to something with Draco. Oh, no, no, no, no. Dumbledore interrupts, won't let him get any further… Then there is this hilarious and awful moment where Harry just exposes all of Trelawney's shame like it's nothing. "Professor Trelawney was just in the Room of Requirement, trying to hide her sherry bottles, and she heard Malfoy whooping." Ow! Ouch… She put so much effort into trying to hide her shame. This whole 'everybody knows, everybody sees…' ouch, ouch, ouch.

JC: Yeah. It's consequential to mention it.

Lorrie: And everybody knows.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: That's just tucked into Harry's sentence. It's not news to anyone. "...She heard Malfoy whooping, celebrating! He's trying to mend something dangerous in there and if you ask me, he's fixed it at last and you're about to just walk out of school without --" Oh, okay. "Enough."

JC: Yeah, this is where Dumbledore draws the line.

Lorrie: Dumbledore says he's left protection in place. I don't know. What do you think Dumbledore should have done here?

JC: I don't know if he could have done anything different. When someone is that upset and raging, you can't have a reasonable conversation with them. The best thing you can do is try to get them to calm down or to give them the means to say, "Okay, maybe we can circle back to this later, but we cannot have a rational discussion about this when you're this upset. I'm taking your concerns seriously, but we're not going to make any progress right now on this. We need to do something else," and then you have to follow through, and that's not what Dumbledore intends to do either; he does not intend to come back to this anytime soon. Also for Dumbledore, he recognizes that this is a big moment for Harry, but also there's more important things for Dumbledore. The most important thing is that we've got to go after this Horcrux. I've got to get this… It's unfortunate that you learned this secret, Luke Skywalker, at this time, because now you're going to

rush off into things with anger in your heart, and that's dangerous for everyone, right? It's a little bit of Star Wars-iness for me there, too.

Lorrie: And I guess this answers a question you had a little while back: Why didn't Dumbledore explain to Harry what Horcruxes were before sending Harry off to Slughorn to get the memory? There's so much at stake; you really need to know all the pieces of information before you can decide what action you're going to take because there are so many competing urgencies and so much fear, and it's awful. Dumbledore says he's left protection in place; when we find out later what Draco does on this night during their absence, it would have gone better if Dumbledore had been there to intervene, but you're right. Destroying a portion of Voldemort's soul is actually more important than your own school being overrun by Death Eaters and a werewolf, and your fighters being almost killed and one of the invaders actually did. Oh, my goodness…

JC: Right.

Lorrie: What a no-win choice.

JC: It's also interesting here that Harry is so convinced of his own rightness in this that something is going to happen… Yes, okay. At this point… I can't remember now if Harry even thinks this, but this idea of 'This is not the time to go after the Horcrux because something's about to happen.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But he does go back to Ron and Hermione and tells them about this.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "Now it's up to you. I have to go with Dumbledore, but you need to round everybody up and protect the school." He knows something's going to happen and he also knows he's not going to convince Dumbledore of that, and that Dumbledore in his Dumbledoreiness is like, "Oh, everything will be fine because I have…" Harry doesn't know what he's left behind as far as security goes. Does Dumbledore know what Draco is planning?

Lorrie: Yeah. No, he doesn't.

JC: Yeah, so he doesn't really know the extent of the risk, but he's also so single-mindedly focused on "We have got to get these Horcruxes and we have to go tonight."

Hosts: Yeah.

JC: Dumbledore's also running out of time. There's just all these competing things happening and this is something you have to do as an adult. There's a bunch of important things that need to happen and you just have to pick one sometimes, and you're neglecting other things and other people by making a choice, but you have to make a choice about what's the most important thing right now to attend to.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's not quite like being an emergency room physician, but maybe something a little bit like that. You look around the room and go, 'What am I going to do right now?'

Lorrie: Yeah. He's being a general.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: After I think about all of the options, I agree that Dumbledore chose the correct one, but he couldn't have known the extent of what Harry is trying to tell him. I don't think he knew it was in this much danger, and the good thing that I admire about Harry making this giant push: All year long, everybody -- Dumbledore, most of all -- everyone's been shutting Harry down about his suspicions about Draco. He has gotten completely clear instructions to just never bring it up again, and this time he knows. He's so certain. "I know you guys have not been listening to me, but you really need to be told this," and he's right.

JC: He's been right about Draco this entire time. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, but he has known to say less about it because he knows how much people are going to shut him down; this time, he's facing up to the most intimidating wizard in the entire world and saying, "I know you've told me that I'm not allowed to say this to you. I know. I am overriding it because you need to be told." That gives me faith in Harry as a fighter and as a leader.

JC: That he is seeing things that other people aren't.

Lorrie: Nobody else agrees with him.

JC: Yeah, but he stuck to his convictions.

Lorrie: And he knows, "You can demote me. I'm not shutting up," and he is scared: "Harry bit back his retort, scared that he had gone too far, that he had ruined his chance of accompanying Dumbledore…" That's something that this author does so well: showing how people's private little desires and guilts hold them back or affect their behavior, even in the face of something really huge. Younger Harry would be squirming because, 'Do they know about the broom? Oh, no!' Your own little secrets change how you behave about really important things, but these two giant, heroic people make their way through to a plan, to what is the best plan. Dumbledore sets ground rules, and he says Harry's got to obey him in every way, including if Harry has to leave Dumbledore and save his own life. Wow!

JC: Yeah, that's heavy.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And Harry actually hesitates on that one.

Lorrie: Yeah, because can you promise that? Can you override? What if it turns out that no matter how much you will yourself to do that, that something in you won't do that? 'All right, well, he's got to promise.' He manages to successfully prioritize this one Horcrux mission over everything, including what he's just learned about Snape or whatever Draco's happy about; Dumbledore asks him to focus on this, and Harry does. This is greatness, and this is a Gryffindor way to be mature: "His mind was oddly clear all of a sudden." Okay, that's good. That works. Then he does the thing that you mentioned, where he is his own general and assigns Ron and Hermione, and he interrupts them and says, "I know you don't believe me, but I don't have time to argue this. Call up our reserves and set up surveillance."

JC: Yeah. "Something is going down, and I know it is. Here's the Felix Felicis." Ron and Hermione… I can't remember which one of them it says, but "You're going to go find a Horcrux. You need this more than we do," and he's like, "Nope."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "No, I do not."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "You're going to need it," but also, it's the way he can protect the people he loves, right?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He's not going to be there, but he knows that if Ron and Hermione and Ginny split the Felix Felicis, that will protect them and maybe protect the people around them.

Lorrie: Yeah. This is so clearly the answer to all the times in this volume that he's thought, "I can use Felix Felicis to get Ginny to date me, right?" and everyone from Hermione to the reader is screaming, "Noooooo!!! Don't do that!" This is so clearly the right thing to do with it, and him answering Hermione sets up the most incredible reprise in this volume where he says, "I'll be fine. I'll be with Dumbledore," and we'll see that resonate in the next chapter so profoundly. He asks Dumbledore what they're going to do, and Dumbledore says people often see him going to The Three Broomsticks or to the Hog's Head or they think that's what they're seeing, so that's what they're going to do. One of those things that this author writes so well, just a throwaway that comes back to be significant later, they run into Rosmerta, who is throwing someone out of her bar and says hi to them.

JC: So now, Dumbledore makes sure that he is seen and that someone knows where he's going. Yep.

Lorrie: Then they get to the spot where they can Apparate, and Dumbledore takes Harry with him with Side-along Apparition.

JC: It's interesting to me, too, that he says, "We don't have to go into the Hog's Head." Harry doesn't know who Aberforth is, but Dumbledore knows that Aberforth would cover for him.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Aberforth probably knows what's happening, even, so there's a little partnership there that Harry doesn't know about.

Lorrie: "That rather uncouth barman." Do you think he threw job seeker Snape out by the collar or by the ear? Or by something else?

JC: No idea.

Lorrie: I picture collar.

JC: Yeah. What would be more humiliating? I don't know.

Lorrie: I am sure it was only one arm. If you can just imagine how physically strong Aberforth is, wow.

JC: Yeah, yeah. And then they have the really uncomfortable Apparition. It's even more uncomfortable than normal.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's described like they're going somewhere challenging.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This is a serious Apparition where Harry's not sure he's going to be able to breathe at the end of it.

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah. Everything from this point on is going to be life and death. Going into the dark place is hard.

JC: Yeah. It's my least favorite part of any suspense movie. When we get to the next chapter, I think we're going into the cave in the next chapter, right?

Lorrie: Yes, we are.

JC: Yeah. I remember reading that and going, 'Oh, God,' because I dislike suspense and horror so much that I was like, 'No! I have to read this through my fingers.'

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah, that is the next chapter. It's called The Cave, and anyone who is remotely familiar with this series knows that this is the scary chapter.

JC: Yeah, for sure. Dun dun DUNNN….

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.