HARRY POTTER AFTER 2020
with LORRIE KIM and JC

Transcript

Episode 6.29

Book 6, Chapter 29: The Phoenix Lament

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-Nine: The Phoenix Lament.

Lorrie: The Phoenix Lament. The Order convenes in the hospital wing. Bill has been injured. McGonagall is now Headmistress. This chapter opens with Harry barely knowing what he's feeling, and Ginny manages to get through to him and walk him up to the hospital wing because McGonagall has ordered all of them to gather there; Ron, Hermione, Luna, Tonks, and Lupin are all already there.

JC: Yeah. I love that not even Hagrid can get Harry to leave Dumbledore, but Ginny's the one who takes his hand and is able to lead him away. I really like that idea of your partner being the one person who can take care of you in that situation or can convince you to do the things you need to do. I like that they've been friends for a long time -- they've known each other for a long time -- and now that they're a couple, they're already taking care of each other in that way, and I like that.

Lorrie: As a reader, I like that we've seen so much of Ginny that I feel completely confident she can handle this. She's been through a lot. A lot of young women that age would not know how to handle something this serious, but no, Ginny will understand and Harry's not going to have to educate her about how he's feeling.

JC: Yeah, that's true, though as they're walking, there was this sentence that really stood out to me: "Gryffindor rubies glistened on the floor like drops of blood as they made their way towards the marble staircase." In the previous chapter, someone had destroyed the giant thing that keeps all the points rubies in it and they're everywhere, so that idea that the blood of Gryffindor has been spilled here… That's just really evocative.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But it's gems, too. It's…

Lorrie: Precious.

JC: Yeah, yeah. There's just something really precious.

Lorrie: When the Gryffindor rubies spill everywhere, that's a *Tale of Two Cities* reference…

JC: Oh…

Lorrie: Because at the beginning of that book, there's a whole chapter about a giant cask of wine that spills all over the cobblestones and it's just flowing everywhere, and it's the preface to all the bloodshed of the French Revolution.

JC: Oh, wow. Okay.

Lorrie: So yeah, this is the bloodshed starting.

JC: Yeah. They walk up and Ginny is filling him in on what's happening and tells him that Bill was attacked by Greyback (and that was the body that Draco said he had stepped over), but there's this idea that since he wasn't in werewolf form when he was attacked, no one really knows what the effect is going to be on him. Ginny just says he'll never look the same, and that's interesting because we had been told earlier that Bill was the good-looking one, but then I really like here that Ginny tells Harry that the hexes cast by all the Death Eaters kept missing them and she says the Felix Felicis that he gave them protected them all. Oh, that moment when Harry is not going to take it with him because it's actually more important for him to protect everyone, and he absolutely did; he protected all of them.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: There's so many moments in this chapter where Harry is proved right and everybody now knows that Harry was right about almost everything, and this is the start of it, right? He was right to do that. He made the right decision. It just says something about how he's moving into this role of being the General. He's making good tactical decisions already.

Lorrie: Yeah, and unlike how it was in the beginning of this year, now people are saying, "We see what you were going for. We're not going to discount you. We have this evidence that going forward, if you say something, we're going to give it some weight," which is good because they're going to need that.

JC: They are going to need that, yes. The other thing that she tells him is that… He's really concerned because the Dark Mark was there ("Who died?"), and she says the only death was one Death Eater and it was friendly fire.

Lorrie: I know.

JC: I think, in light of the last chapter where Dumbledore and Snape are both (and have all along) trying to protect Harry, Draco and the kids from being in the position of having to kill someone, the castle and Harry's actions through the Felix Felicis protected the kids from having to kill someone, so nobody in the Order of the Phoenix or none of the Hogwarts students had to kill anyone. I liked bookending all that stuff that we've been talking about (about keeping people's souls intact).

Lorrie: Bill is badly disfigured, but he was an adult who voluntarily went in to protect the kids. He took this on…

JC: And he's going to survive. Again there's been this theme of 'Yeah, people can get really badly hurt, but as long as they survive…' There's this quote, 'No harm done,' which I don't believe there's no harm done, but that idea of 'Okay, you survived and you're going to be fine,' even though there's some question about what's going to happen to Bill because he was attacked by a werewolf.

Lorrie: Yeah, and this chapter goes into the subtleties of that. 'Okay, there's some harm done. How much? We don't know; we'll see.' There's this lovely undercurrent of everybody nervously looking at Lupin. "Are we being culturally insensitive by talking about werewolves this way?" and Lupin has to take charge and say, "No,

you're not. These are things we don't know. We have to find out." Not a whole lot is known about this; there's no cure for the kind of cursed wounds that you get from a werewolf bite, and that is the book's cue -- the author's cue -- to show us Harry thinking once again about Snape healing cursed wounds with Draco's *Sectumsempra*.

JC: Yeah. The fact that Madam Pomfrey is having to tend to Bill basically in the Muggle way...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: If you had someone who was mauled by an animal, this is what you would have to do. There's no quick fix; they just have to heal. It's interesting to see.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's not a cure. It's only going to help the discomfort a little, maybe.

JC: Yeah. So after this, the hospital ward has (for six years) been this place where you can regrow bones and there's all this crazy stuff that happens, and here's one that Madam Pomfrey actually can't do anything for. Wow, yeah.

Lorrie: This is really differentiating between regular healing knowledge of most wizards and the specialized healing that can only be done by someone who used to be a Dark wizard and then repented. Someone who never stopped being Dark wouldn't want to heal, wouldn't have that urge, but somebody like Snape, we learn later, Dumbledore, and later still, it will be Harry... If you've done this and then you've gone back and regretted it, those are the people you need if you're going to figure out what to do about this kind of cursed wound. This chapter is the beginning of a kind of ascendancy for Remus Lupin as a character in the Order because there are a number of ways that his experience is invaluable in this chapter: first of all, because he can talk to them about whatever werewolf knowledge and experience and guesses he can make about Bill, but we're going to see as the chapter goes on that he's also a priceless resource as someone who has been through a round of fighting in a different era and he knows how to manage emotions. He's going to be able to be wise for people that way, which is a big need that he's filling now that Dumbledore's gone.

JC: He's kind of -- not 'kind of'. He is the last of the people that Harry could consider parent-adjacent in the sense that they knew his parents. I guess Molly is still there, but yeah, Lupin… Oh, Lupin.

Lorrie: Yeah, and he was the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, so that is an area of expertise for him.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: And he was one of Dumbledore's spies.

JC: Oh, yeah, so he knows what that's like, too.

Lorrie: He's, yeah, trained.

JC: So as happens several times, it feels like (at the end of the last chapter and through this chapter), Harry has to tell the story again. The people in this room don't know Dumbledore is dead.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Harry's the one who has to break it to them, and I've never had to do that. I've never been the person who had to deliver that news to people before, to call them up and say, "Hey, somebody passed away." I've never had to do that, and just the fact that Harry's the one who's having to do that over and over again… Oh… Also, I feel like he's taking it as an honor as well, that he's the one who -- he was there, and he's the only one left who was there, other than Snape and Draco [who] were there, but they're not here now.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Telling them this story. Then there's this other thing that happens in this chapter: multiple times, Harry is proven right and he doesn't gloat about it. I feel slightly vindicated as a reader, but he doesn't feel any "Ha! I told you so!" There's none of that emotion there.

Lorrie: It's so tragic, yeah.

JC: Yeah, right.

Lorrie: Also, he doesn't have to because the way that Ron and Hermione are looking at him is 'You told us so,' and they all feel so terrible.

JC: They do. They all feel horrible about it.

Lorrie: So yeah, Harry has to tell his account of what happened (his eyewitness account), which is a relief for him that it's not the usual pattern where he has to correct misperceptions from the media. He says, "Yes, Snape killed him," and he says how he was immobilized and invisible at the time. "-- and then Malfoy came to the door and disarmed him --" at which point "Hermione clapped her hands to her mouth and Ron groaned." Yeah, Harry had told them so. Then we get the most beautiful example of music being so powerful in this series: "... a phoenix was singing in a way Harry had never heard before: a stricken lament of terrible beauty. And Harry felt, as he had felt about phoenix song before, that the music was inside him, not without: it was his own grief turned magically to song that echoed across the grounds and through the castle windows." I'm guessing there's some greater comfort in all of them being able to be together as they grieve among people who all know how extraordinary Dumbledore is and what a giant loss this is.

JC: Yeah. That description brought me to tears while I read it. How long have I known this part of the story? But yeah, that description was just… Oh, everything got blurry while I was reading. I was like, 'Oh, no, here we go.'

Lorrie: After they listen to Fawkes singing, McGonagall arrives, and then she almost faints when Harry tells her Snape killed Dumbledore.

Hosts: Oh…

Lorrie: She just stammers out, "We all wondered… but he trusted… always… *Snape*... I can't believe it." Oh, I feel for her.

JC: And she's expressing this sentiment that you talked about at the end of the last episode: all of the adults in the Order of the Phoenix and all the Hogwarts staff, every single one of them, are feeling or going to feel going forward, 'Were we fools all along? Was Dumbledore fooled?'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: 'How could Dumbledore have been fooled?' That's something everybody's going to be wondering for a while.

Lorrie: And if I genuinely, reflexively, came to trust Snape, can I ever trust anything my own intuition tells me ever again? Am I just a rotten judge of

character? Am I worth anything? The destruction of faith in the self is a huge cost. Lupin says, uncharacteristically harshly, "Snape was a highly accomplished Occlumens. We always knew that." That poses the question: Snape definitely fooled somebody, either Voldemort or Dumbledore. Which one was it? But whichever it was, it was definitely one of them. My guy is so powerful that he can beat one of them. Which one was it? Of course, as brilliant as a lot of these people are who are sitting in this room at this time, Dumbledore and Voldemort are more powerful, so Snape is not someone to be taken lightly. Something is happening; that can't be denied. Then Tonks and McGonagall are working this through out loud; they're talking about how Dumbledore knew something about Snape that they didn't, and McGonagall is just bewildered, saying, "...With Snape's history, of course people were bound to wonder… but Dumbledore told me explicitly that Snape's repentance was absolutely genuine… Wouldn't hear a word against him!" which, of course, is so painful to think that Dumbledore had very deliberately built up to this moment of disillusionment. Dumbledore and Snape together created this horrendous, disorienting, worldview-destroying disillusionment that this group of people is having together right now, and you know that they loved and esteemed these people and how awful it was that they would be introducing this kind of utter destruction to these people's self-confidence. Then Harry unintentionally introduces some misdirection here, because they were wondering, "So what on earth did Dumbledore know from Snape that made him trust him?" and Harry says, "Oh, I know," which he doesn't. He does know something, but he doesn't know what made Dumbledore trust Snape; he just says, "'Snape passed Voldemort the information that made Voldemort hunt down my mum and dad. Then Snape told Dumbledore he hadn't realized what he was doing, he was really sorry he'd done it, sorry that they were dead.' 'And Dumbledore believed that?' said Lupin incredulously."

JC: The interesting thing about that is that that's not false, though.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: It's on the way towards truth.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's the reason and it's not the full story about what he was sorry about, but yeah.

Lorrie: Snape did tell Dumbledore this and he was really sorry, but there are ways you can see somebody's truth that Dumbledore saw in Snape and that Snape or anyone cannot fake. One of those tests is can you heal Dark magic, and Snape absolutely could. He couldn't have knit together Draco's wounds from *Sectumsempra* if he hadn't fully remembered what it was to create and then regret *Sectumsempra*, and then we'll see later that there are other things you can do to prove to people who know what they're looking at that you're not lying about what's in your soul…

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: But these are secrets that Snape asked Dumbledore to keep private, and anyway they gamble everything on nobody else knowing these secrets. Here are these adults paying the price for it now, and it's a really heavy price.

JC: Yeah. I like the exchange that comes next where Lupin says Snape hated James and wouldn't have been sorry he was dead which I took as true, and then Harry adds that Snape wouldn't have thought much of his mother either, which is false.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: This true thing, and then this really false thing right after it, is a really beautiful part -- a little piece of misdirection -- for the readers.

Lorrie: Yeah. All of this -- Lupin being incredulous, Snape having a break in his concentration, and Harry making assumptions around his mother -- is beautifully done by the author creating the loudness of the silence around Lily's part in this story. This is a beautiful way to introduce young adult readers to this particular literary trick. It's so well done.

JC: There's one more truth that comes after this: McGonagall blames herself here and says she was the one who sent for Snape tonight when she realized they were under attack and she says she didn't think that Snape knew that they were coming, which is true, and no one sees this as a clue…

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Not even many of the readers at this point.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Yeah. If he didn't know they were coming… 'Okay, let's think about that some more,' but they're not in any position to think about that. Yeah.

Lorrie: And I can't blame them. There's so many variables and almost none of them are very clear, and how are we going to figure this out? This is such a huge theme in this series: if people have done anything even remotely connected to somebody's loss of life, they are quite likely to feel a major burden of guilt. 'I could have done something differently.' People will want to go back and try to think over what they did wrong. Could they have thought it through? Should they have done something different? Should they have known? Could they have helped it? It's torment.

JC: Yeah. We're about to hit a whole bunch of that in the next few paragraphs, yeah.

Lorrie: McGonagall feels it and her feeling of guilt is that she sent Flitwick to fetch Snape to come help them, and there we are again. She's feeling guilty because she made a conclusion about Snape's trustworthiness after years and years and years that we have seen as readers where (without any prior discussion) whenever there's an emergency that requires protecting the students, Snape just shows up at her side. They don't even talk about a plan. These two have worked together so well over the years, they don't even discuss it; they just go to work and they balance each other so beautifully. They have such a good good cop/bad cop routine going, and if that was an act from Snape over years and years and years just to fool her for this moment, that was surely a thorough act. I don't know. Can somebody act down to that level? Because we've seen as readers that a lot of those times that McGonagall didn't even have to turn to look to see if he was there -- because of course, he was -- a lot of that was just a gut reaction, very split-second instant timing where something would happen and McGonagall and Snape would both just instantly go into action. There's a point at which if this is your reliable partner for years and years and years [and] then that's called into question, was it all an act? That's so destructive to your peace of mind.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: What is life? What is anything? Here's McGonagall feeling guilty that she had processed those years and years and years of partnership and considered it trustworthy. Don't feel guilty! Don't! Then we have one of Lupin's new roles, which I am crazy about that this is one of the uses of his character in this chapter: he tells her firmly that it wasn't her fault. They all thought Snape would help, and it's that one word, 'firmly,' which gets repeated later on in this chapter when Lupin makes the exact same point to somebody else. 'Firmly,' what that does… This is such a good writing achievement. That single word 'firmly' tells us (with that one word) that managing this kind of guilt and second guessing and regret around death -- around things you could have maybe done differently -- has been a major part of this character's life over years.

JC: Yeah. Yeah.

Lorrie: We have not seen it on the page. We have seen nothing about Lupin training his brain on what is and isn't his fault, what he can punish himself over, and what is just a waste of time and logic. When he says 'firmly,' he's trying to spare them some of what he went through by giving them his expertise. He's a leader…

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And I think everyone present will know how thankful to be that Lupin has all of this experience that he's willing to share and that he's somebody whose conclusions are trustworthy… mostly.

JC: Mostly. Yeah, that's true.

Lorrie: As much as anyone's can be, nobody being trustworthy all the time.

JC: The next little thing that McGonagall tells them, I think, I really appreciated: she says that Dumbledore told the staff he was leaving and had them patrol the corridors, and he even had some of the members of the Order come and join the staff, so he was absolutely being truthful when he told Harry that he wasn't leaving the castle undefended. I love that that hints at the fact that there are so many discussions and events and things that Harry has never been privy to. As a child -- as a typical kind of teenager -- he's always like "Dumbledore just isn't listening" or "Dumbledore just isn't aware of this. I have to be the one to jump in here and do a

thing," without ever really believing that Dumbledore must somehow have this under control, and I like this little reminder that Dumbledore knew what could happen. He didn't know exactly what was going to happen, but he knew that there was danger and he really did have plans in place.

Lorrie: The accurate and awful thing is that the extent of that scaffolding is becoming apparent to Harry at this moment when they have all lost it, and that the people in that room are going to have to do what they can to reconstruct it, ready or not. Harry asks, "Okay, so tell me what you saw Snape do," and McGonagall says, "I don't know exactly how it happened. It's all so confusing…" That's exactly right. That was intentional, and also, you couldn't help it with all of that disorder. Then she says, "I still don't know how the Death Eaters can possibly have entered…" And there's the moment that this book has been building toward the whole time, it's so painful…

JC: Yep.

Lorrie: Where Harry explains that Draco…

JC: Harry's like, "I knew."

Lorrie: There was a Vanishing Cabinet, there was the Room of Requirement, and this is so true to life: "Almost against his will, he glanced from Ron to Hermione, both of whom looked devastated."

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: He's not gloating; they do have to check in with each other about this. Nobody's enjoying how awful Ron and Hermione feel at this moment. Worst vindication…

JC: Right.

Lorrie: This is also a warning, because this is one of the moments where Ron and Hermione (and the rest of the Wizarding World) [are] going to start listening to Harry's hunches more, but his hunches aren't always going to be right, so he's starting his 'correspondingly huger' era. Yes, you are going to be a leader; sometimes you'll be right. If people believe you and follow you, and then it turns out that you have your human tendency to sometimes be wrong, they're going to blame you and you will blame yourself.

JC: Yeah. I did feel a little bit of vindication there, though, for Harry that this entire… Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: A little bit of that 'All right, Ron and Hermione…'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: 'You blew him off all year, and…' yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. All the times that they eventually humored him and said, "Fine. It's not happening, but fine, since you won't shut up about it."

JC: "Yeah, okay, we'll listen. We'll roll her eyes later," but yeah.

Lorrie: No, it was really happening.

JC: And then how awful… Even as they describe what they did, they're both pretty devastated about it. Ron, Ginny and Neville… I think they have the map. They went to the Room of Requirement, but they never saw Malfoy go in and they didn't see him on the map either; he had been there. They didn't get there soon enough, but they maybe couldn't have gotten there soon enough; Malfoy was already there.

Lorrie: They did everything right in their power. They were correct and they were keeping watch; Malfoy got past them because he was using the Hand of Glory and Peruvian Instant Darkness Powder. The awful thing about Ron making this painful confession: Ron is apologizing for failing. He didn't fail, but there was nothing you could do. Ron, you did the absolute best. You couldn't have done any better than that, but he, of course, feels like he needs to apologize, and that's just the awfulness of this moment.

JC: Yeah. And even with the Hand of Glory (which was the thing that Malfoy basically put on hold at Borgin and Burke's earlier in the year), again, no one really wanted to believe him.

Lorrie: It's so gross.

Hosts: Yeah.

JC: And then we get the moment with the Peruvian Instant Darkness Powder. Ron has to tell them that that's what he used to conceal the Death Eaters entering, and

because he had the Hand of Glory, he could find his way through it but nobody else could see. Then Ron has to say, "Yeah, this is my brothers'. My brothers didn't care who they sold it to, as long as they made a buck -- made a Galleon, I guess." But I think it also shows the power of the Weasley twins. They are on Harry's side, but they're also kind of not; they're not really on anybody's side. They're sort of representing capitalism here in that sense to me. "As long as I make a buck, I don't care who I sell my weapons to. Yeah, both sides can buy my weapons. I'll just get richer." There's a little bit of that going on there. There's a nice little bit of criticism of that in the book.

Lorrie: That is actually less about capitalism. The kind of thinker this author is… That's more about the trickster archetype because this author is thoroughly steeped in folklore and archetypes, and tricksters are always relevant to both good and evil. They themselves are mischief. They're not intrinsically good or evil. They tend on the side of good; they're enough on the side of good that people who are completely on the side of good work with them all the time, love them and believe in them, and keep getting their hearts broken because the nature of a trickster is to be unable to resist mischief. Their nature is to disrupt and sometimes what they disrupt is protection, and if you appeal to their conscience and say, "How could you? Can't you change your ways?" the answer is no, they cannot change their ways. They probably can't; they definitely won't. Can you control a trickster? No, and if you get rid of them and you have no tricksters in your life at all, then nothing can ever change for the better either and hegemony will just have a deadlock on your life. You definitely need these tricksters to distract Umbridge and help create disorder, but they're also going to do this, too. You cannot control the fact that they will disrupt without regard. There are a lot of people in this world who 'trickster' is their type. It's the kind of personality they're attracted to, and life can get very stressful and difficult for them if this is what they want in their lives. Fred and George are attractive, but tiring and unsafe.

JC: That makes me ask this question: who would you cast in the role of 'trickster' in the world around us today? Is there someone that you would put in that role? I have somebody in my mind, but I don't know if it's correct.

Lorrie: My mind is going to dark political places that I don't want to go to, so let me hear who you have in mind.

JC: Elon Musk. He's more on the side of dark than the side of light, I think, but he seems to enjoy going in and wreaking havoc. He's the negative of a trickster in that way, but he could harness a lot of what he does for good if he wanted to. He seems to love fomenting chaos.

Lorrie: Elon Musk wishes he were a trickster. He's not; he's just a self-important, overgrown toddler with money. Tricksters have no property. They're not landed, they're not established; they're on the fringes. Everyone has toddler impulses. If you are powerful or disproportionately wealthy in some way, you can impose your impulses on other people. Not because you have any charisma. Elon Musk would like to think he has charisma; he just has money. J.K. Rowling didn't use to be able to force Amnesty International to retract studies that they put a lot of rigor into. She can do that because she has money.

JC: Okay, now we're looping back around to the capitalism argument again.

Lorrie: Fred and George have this kind of effect; they came from nothing. They had no money. Their startup funds were by gambling on Quidditch, and then because they and their family had put in years and years and years of generosity toward an orphan, that orphan then tragically lucked into a jackpot that he wanted nothing to do with and said, "Your family has done so much for me. Thank you, by the way, for the Marauder's Map, and you would be doing me a favor if you would take this blood money from me and do something good with it." That's their connection to good as tricksters. Fred and George… they'll do whatever. They'll follow their own mischief and their own vision, but when Harry Potter is there, Harry gets anything he wants for free; their loyalty to Harry is iron-clad, and there's just enough trickster so that you can't not love them. You will pay for that love repeatedly, but you also can't stop loving them. To me, the archetypal trickster is Loki. Loki kills Baldr; Loki shows up on the other side during Ragnarok. Loki is not okay and there's nothing about Loki that you couldn't have predicted from the very first time you knew him, but you can't not love him, and when he's there with you, it's so good. Anyway, tricksters… Rowling is a child of folklore education. That's an agenda that she's pushing in this series: spreading the love of folklore and folkloric archetypes to her readers. She has succeeded wildly. She has succeeded so much that she's made enough money to now impose her prejudices on the real world. Are you sorry you asked?

JC: No, no, I learned a lot. I think I have a better understanding of what a trickster is now than I did at the start of this conversation, so that's always good.

Lorrie: Don't give that cockroach any compliments.

JC: Yeah, and it wasn't a compliment. Well, okay… Moving on, one of the next things I have a question for you about is Ron has told his story. Hermione then tells her story that she and Luna had gone to keep watch outside of Snape's office. Why? Did Harry ask them to keep an eye on Snape? Why were they there?

Lorrie: Yes. The fact that Hermione talks about how she and Luna were outside Snape's office is a little "Unfortunately, we did tell you so" to McGonagall for all the times that she was reprimanding Harry for saying, "Draco Malfoy's up to something." McGonagall and Lupin are just not thinking about Draco and Snape at all; meanwhile, Harry Potter, sixth year, has stationed his own people outside Snape's office and was correct to do so. Hermione and Luna is a pairing that we don't often see in this series…

JC: That's true.

Lorrie: So it's odd that they are stationed together here. I don't know if this is why the author did it, although it might be: Flitwick comes running to get Snape's help and he's shouting about Death Eaters, and Hermione's saying, "...And then we heard a loud thump and Snape came hurdling out of his room and he saw us and -- and -- I was so stupid, Harry!" She is ashamed of herself. Snape said Flitwick had collapsed and the girls "should go and take care of him while he -- while he went to help fight the Death Eaters --" And then Hermione says that they found Flitwick unconscious, "... And oh, it's so obvious now, Snape must have Stupefied Flitwick, but we didn't realize, Harry… we just let Snape go!" That's why they're there. First of all, Hermione is the character second to Dumbledore in getting an accurate read on Snape. She is so accurate about him that he has to spend the entire series either ignoring her or running away from her. She's halfway to figuring him out; in this volume she is almost on the verge of knowing who the Half-Blood Prince was, so he's being witnessed by her. Meanwhile, in the next volume, we're going to find out that Luna is so good at seeing through disguises that she doesn't even realize that's what she's just done, so if you're Snape and you see these two particular girls, what's your strategy going to be? He turns on them with complete sincerity.

Nothing else is going to work on these two. He sincerely is worried about what he's about to do to Flitwick and wants these two girls to stay there; keep the girls safe and keep Flitwick safe while Snape does go fight the Death Eaters (although it's not going to look like that for a long time). That tactic is by far his best and most persuasive tactic with this particular pairing of human beings, whom he knows really well because he's taught them. He looks at them, he says this sincerely, they receive it sincerely… Of course they're going to believe him, so now Hermione is beating herself up for it. Oh, this is so awful, but their judgment had been perfectly sound and Snape… This is how good he is. He knows that's how to reach them. He told them his true motives; no one's going to believe those.

JC: Yeah, that is true. The idea that Snape Stupefied Flitwick partly to keep him safe but partly also because that was before he knew the girls were outside the door.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Partly to keep them safe and then partly also to give him a little bit of cover to go, because at this point, Snape knows what's happening. Once he knows there's Death Eaters in the castle, he's like, 'Shit…'

Lorrie: Yeah. 'Oh, here it is.' Yeah.

JC: Yeah, "Here it goes," and so he can't have anybody trailing along behind him.

Lorrie: He can't have anyone slowing him down because he has to get to Dumbledore before the Death Eaters do.

JC: Yeah, and before Draco does, right?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That's the other big thing here. When Hermione says that they failed and Lupin says, "No, Snape probably would have killed the two of you if you tried to stop him," that takes me back to something that you talked about at the end of the last episode: the transformation is complete. What Snape needed people to believe was that he really was evil, and that's what has to happen now…

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And they believe it. Lupin is like, "Yeah." Would Snape have killed students? No! There's no way! No, of course not, but now they believe that he would have, that he was capable of it. I'm like, 'Oh, there it is. The change of heart has happened. It's complete.'

Lorrie: Yeah. This is the second time that we get the word 'firmly' when Hermione is blaming herself: "'It's not your fault,' said Lupin firmly. 'Hermione, had you not obeyed Snape and got out the way, he probably would have killed you and Luna.'" Lupin is absolutely right. When you're going to be in this state of extreme uncertainty and danger, you have to know. You don't have time to be debating in yourself; you have to make a decision and be safe. It's a good tactic, and the firmness in Lupin's voice is about that. It's like, "Let me teach you sanity tactics. We have just lost Dumbledore; if you're going to be doubting yourself every time you have an incredible loss like this, you will go insane. You can't do that. You have to know how to take care of yourself." It's funny, because the thought of Snape killing Hermione and Luna is so dramatic unless you see it from Lupin's point of view as exactly what Snape intended. If Nazis have just broken into your school and killed the Headmaster, why would they let two teenage girls get in their way? And the awful humor of it is because we can see Lupin's point of view at the same time we see Snape's point of view, which is if he is faced with this, I can just hear his giant sigh because he's going to have to figure out what he can do to get Hermione and Luna out of the way safely while making it look like he did that because he was against them -- not because he cared about them being safe -- and make it look from every angle like he's Voldemort's man, and there's some persuasive reason why he needs Hermione and Luna to be safe. Everything is just much harder when you're Snape.

JC: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: But no, Lupin was right. You can't be blaming yourself like this; you're going to need your energy for other stuff. What I love about Lupin's approach: he absolves the girls of something that happened in the past that they can no longer do anything about, and he gives them permission to be on their guard about that from this point forward. You could use that to just beat yourself up endlessly over the past; no, don't. It's done. There was good reason.

JC: Learn from it and move on.

Lorrie: Yeah, and it's such a kind, wise thing for him to teach them.

JC: Yeah, and it's a really good life skill.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: No one is going to go through this life and not end up with serious regrets. You're just not, but then you have to make your peace with that and move forward.

Lorrie: Yeah, and the reasons why you made the choice you did… There may be something good in there that is valuable that you can be proud of and keep. Tonks goes on to describe how dark and confusing the battle really was and says that was the point at which Draco must have slipped upstairs and then the Death Eaters used a blocking curse, and then Snape was there and then he wasn't, and Lupin agrees. "I saw him run straight through the cursed barrier as though it wasn't there," and McGonagall chimes in, so it's like the full chorus here: "He must have known a spell we didn't. After all -- he was the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher… I just assumed that he was in a hurry to chase after the Death Eaters who'd escaped up to the tower…" Then there's one of my favorite moments in the series when Harry makes this leap of logic that I think is genius and the author very, very carefully never proves or disproves it. I believe it's true. Harry says, "... I'll bet you had to have a Dark Mark to get through that barrier --"

JC: It's the simplest explanation.

Lorrie: It would not have occurred to me. It's the same part of him that's like, "Oh, I know Draco has a Dark Mark," and Hermione and Ron are going, "No." "No, he's up to something." "Draco?" It's coming from the same place, and the moment I heard it, it's just so clever. What a great tool for the Death Eaters to use.

JC: That's got to be a standard Death Eater tactic.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's respectful and masterful, I find, for the author to leave it hanging there without confirmation. For all of those debates after this series was published, did or did not Draco take a Dark Mark? It's never explicitly confirmed. That's a debate that she deliberately left open. It's a children's series; that doesn't mean you don't challenge your readers. That's what makes this series successful: it gives you something to chew on. You don't get fed everything, and we readers (like the characters) have to make our own decision about whether we trust Harry's

conclusion. Meanwhile, the actual leap of logic itself is so beautiful that it makes me cry. This is why it's worth Snape's life to keep going. When we find out later that Snape thought he was worthless and that his life was worth nothing after he caused Lily's death, then Dumbledore challenged him: "If you don't want to stay alive for yourself, stay alive to help other people. Do good for other people," and Snape is like, "What good could I do?" He has a very low opinion of himself at the moment. What he could do is if you have committed evil like Snape has and then you regretted it, now you have the power to go back and save somebody who needs that kind of help, like Draco. People who have never been evil -- who have only been good and innocent their whole lives -- wouldn't know how to reach Draco, wouldn't know any solutions, wouldn't be able to gain Draco's trust. He has the power to follow Draco across the line that requires a Dark Mark, take Draco and drag him out again; the other people who have a Dark Mark can get past the barrier the first time, but they wouldn't have any urge to save Draco and drag him out the other way. Snape has the urge, he has the know-how; he can do it, and he has the original Dark Mark. There's nothing Draco is doing of evil that Snape doesn't already know and understand. No one who has always been good can do this particular rescue work, and it's necessary rescue work. It's thankless by nature and it is perilous; the good thing is that it is a worthy purpose. Snape is such an extraordinarily gifted man and mortally flawed; it's a very bizarre combination. This is worthy of his skills and his horrendous flaws. He was not meant to be a teacher; that is abundantly clear from his classroom manner. That's not his calling. He was meant to reach people who would not trust or listen to most helpers. This is my retort to anyone who says Snape is garbage, either as a person in character or standing in for the kind of person in real life who really does damage other people and hurt other people (as we have seen Snape do), that they're garbage: they can do something that most of us could not do, and when they do it successfully, the reason that they succeed in going back and rescuing people like Draco, who are like themselves, is because they are drawing on their own love and endurance. Somebody is going to need this skill. It's a beautiful skill; it comes from something really ugly; it hurts. It takes a lot. Many, many people don't have the strength to do it. Most of us aren't that strong; it takes a really unusual person and Snape is an unusual person, and Dumbledore thought it was worth telling him, "Don't kill yourself. We still could find some reason why you are who you are. You're not

garbage." That he can follow Draco across this barrier and bring him out back again…

JC: With his soul intact, yeah. With Draco's soul intact.

Lorrie: Yeah, and take Draco across the boundaries of Hogwarts without Hagrid stopping him. No matter whose side he's on, Draco knows he can trust because he's doing this, because he's an older person who cares what happens to Draco. Beautiful.

JC: Well, he's definitely doing hard things that are going to try not to be worth it, so that is where he is. It's going to be very hard for him from here on out.

Lorrie: Yeah. There's no guarantee that he'll succeed. Absolutely nobody else can do this, and the setup for thanklessness is one of the reasons why it's brave of him to do this, because it's not in human nature to enjoy working super hard and having people be blaming you incorrectly. Nobody likes that; Snape, in particular, is not well suited to this. He started out crankier than your average person to begin with. It's rough.

JC: Then the Order members that were there fighting at the entrance of the Tower say that Snape and Draco appeared and ran through the barrier, and then there's more guilt of "We just thought they were trying to escape from the Death Eaters," that Snape was just taking Draco to safety, which he was. Now that's true, yes.

Lorrie: That's why they let them pass. They correctly interpreted the genuine emotion. Now, they're blaming themselves. "Sorry…"

JC: It was too late at that point. Dumbledore was already dead, but they're still that, and then Tonks says that she heard Snape shout something. She wasn't sure what it was, and Harry said, "It's over." I love how, to everyone in the room, this damns Snape because that means that he really was working with the Death Eaters, but that actually has the opposite effect on me as a reader. 'Oh, he was protecting everyone in the castle. The thing you came here to do is done.' It's time to go, and he's making them leave.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He's protecting the castle and students, and nobody's going to see that.

Lorrie: And these disgusting Death Eaters want a party. We've got one of them shooting hexes at Ginny just for fun, Greyback is salivating, and Snape is like, "Party later. Out!"

JC: And then listen to him.

Lorrie: Yeah. Fawkes is still singing -- still healing everybody who has the blessing of being together in this awful, awful moment and working through this together -- and then Mr. and Mrs. Weasley and Fleur come in. Ouch... Fortunately for them, as they're staring down at what's left of Bill's face, Lupin is there to talk them through what damage Bill might or might not have sustained, so at least they have somebody who knows more than most people would.

JC: And then we get this amazing scene with Fleur, and I love it so much. This is the payoff for every scene that Fleur has been in, I think, in this entire series, and when Molly is dabbing at her eyes and saying, "Oh, his life is over. He was going to be married," Fleur's like "What?! What do you mean 'was'?" In this whole thing, she just goes off: "You think that I wouldn't love him now? Why would you think that?" and then she says this incredible thing: "I'm good-looking enough for the both of us." Oh…

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I think what I love about that is that she's half Veela, so she has this power to use her looks for various things.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: There's always been this idea coming from Molly (and coming from other women in the series) that you would only use that for bad purposes.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: What Fleur is showing here is such a twist. No, she uses it to protect the people she loves. That's what she uses it for, and we've seen her do that before; she did that in the Triwizard Tournament, but she uses that power for protection, not for her own gain. Oh, I just… I love that. I love that moment so much. I'm just like, 'Yes, yes!'

Lorrie: This scene is perfect. It is legendary for a reason, and Fleur also says, "Oh, you hoped I would not marry him." She hasn't been fooled by anything.

JC: She's been trying so hard to win over Molly and win over her in-laws.

Lorrie: What I love… This is something -- 'If I were her beta,' I wish Rowling had put in a little bit more about how Fleur was motivated to come toward the U.K. in this incredibly dangerous, unstable time when obviously there's mortal danger and these people are coming into power. She's coming toward the danger, she's an exceptionally gifted witch; she came to fight this and then she joined forces with Bill, and now he's been injured doing this kind of fighting. This is exactly what she came to the U.K. to do, and, of course, they're a couple. The magnificence… Ah, so satisfying.

JC: Yeah, and her saying, "If he has scars, it just shows that he fought for something." AAAAHHHH!

Lorrie: Yeah. "You think his scars are going to make him love me less?" She's right about everything.

JC: And then she takes the medicine out of Molly's hands. "This is no longer your job. Now, it's my job. I'm his partner. He's not a baby anymore. It's my job now." Oh, it's just like, 'Damn, damn, damn, Fleur.' I love it, and Molly just steps back and goes, "Okay."

Lorrie: She's thrilled.

JC: Yeah. She has a moment of being shocked because she was not expecting it.

Lorrie: Yeah, but that also sets the stage for something that's about to happen at the end of this book and the beginning of the next: Harry is almost of age. The protection he has from his mother is about to run out, and we see the point in the beginning of the next book where he no longer has Lily's protection and it switches over to Ginny's, even though they can't be together but they're obviously in love. The thought of Ginny takes the place of Lily's protection once Harry becomes of age in helping him sustain himself, and that's something that we've just witnessed here, too. Bill was an adult for quite a long time, but Mrs. Weasley didn't know if Fleur was going to be reliable here. Yeah, she is. Okay, it's safe. Somebody else really puts Bill first. This is amazing.

JC: And then Molly makes the peace offer of her great aunt's tiara.

Lorrie: Oh, it's so beautiful. Yeah.

JC: And then they end up crying and hugging each other. AAAAHHHH! I love it! I love it so much.

Lorrie: I'm so glad that everyone assembled there got to witness this. This actually relates a little bit back to why Dumbledore trusted Snape: there are some displays of emotion, when you get to witness them, you know they're true. If these people found out later that Fleur was just faking it and she didn't really love Bill… Yes, she did. 'Yes, she did. I know what I saw.'

JC: Right. I think this is why weddings are public, right? This is why we have these events like this, where we see genuine emotion (or ideally, we see genuine emotion). Things can go wrong, but there's a sense in which this is the wedding.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: This is the moment where we go, 'Okay, these two are a couple now for real, and we all witnessed it.' They all witnessed it. They witnessed Fleur staking her claim. Molly kind of backs off and goes, "Okay, he's yours now." That's the wedding, and it's a very matriarchal wedding, which I like.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Molly is giving her son away to this woman who's very capable instead of the other way around, so yeah. It's like that kind of a wedding in my mind.

Lorrie: Molly can because Fleur has given her a gift: Fleur has filled up Molly's heart with confidence that it's everything she wanted Bill to have (somebody else who would care for him as much as a mother would, but as a mate instead). Okay, Molly can go to sleep at ease now.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: This is also why you have to have a bonder for an Unbreakable Vow.

JC: Ooh…

Lorrie: Two people making a promise to each other… Okay, that's a big deal. For a third person to make sure that the magic is bonding, utterly sincere, life or death?

That's what really does it. The incomparable power of witnesses feeling a true emotion together and having shared that moment so that you know, 'It's not just me. It was real…' That is measurable.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Every time I read that scene, I feel like all of us got to witness along with Molly Weasley. Actually, the feeling I get from that is a little bit similar to the comfort Harry says that he gets from hearing Fawkes' song.

JC: Oh, that's interesting.

Lorrie: It's just like, 'That's love. That's bringing comfort.' Bill has just had this really awful permanent injury; this actually helps me feel less grief about that.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: I'm reluctant to talk about what happens next.

JC: Yeah. Okay, then we get this weird, awkward reveal (awkward to me) that Tonks' issue this entire book has been that she's been in love with Remus and he's been pushing her away this whole time. There is a story here. I don't really understand this, and I remember at the time going, 'I don't buy this at all.' I don't know. I never really bought the Tonks and Lupin relationship, but anyway, here we are. I do like the idea that she finally pushes the issue here and says, "Look, your being a werewolf doesn't matter to me. Look what Fleur just said." I like that there's a theme here: everybody deserves love and deserves happiness, and disability should not get in the way of that, right?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Everybody deserves it, and the fact that he's like, "No, I'm too broken for you," and she's like, "Fuck that…" I like that piece of it, but I remember just being really unhappy that Tonks' issue this entire time was that she was just literally mooning over Moony while he was being very dramatic. "No, we can't! AAAHHH!" Yeah. Did they have some kind of torrid affair over the summer and she was clinging to him? What's the story? I really don't know.

Lorrie: I think I am in a minority… It seems like I'm in the minority. I found this storyline convincing and I really liked it, and then I found (to my surprise) that it

was overwhelmingly unpopular in the fandom and that a great many people were not faking it when they said that this missed them entirely, left them cold, and it had some unpleasant effect on them. It struck a false note for a lot of people; apparently, I was in the minority because I did not spend much time thinking that Lupin was gay. Apparently, this was obviously true to a lot of readers.

JC: Oh, that's interesting. I get the whole Remus/Sirius ship, but yeah, that's interesting. To me, it was more… Here is what it was: I was focused on Tonks. What happened between Tonks and Remus? How did it start? What was going on in the meantime? Was he stringing her along? Was there ever a point at which he was just like, "This isn't going to happen, you have to let it go," and she didn't let it go? There's just so much there that I'm like, 'What?!" and then we're not going to see it because it's not from their perspective, but I think that was part of it. Either she was being strung along, or there's something wrong here that was not clicking for me as the kind of love story I would like to see for either of those people.

Lorrie: I think I see enough in canon for us to know that as Tonks worked with Lupin as part of the Order -- probably before the Ministry battle, during all that time that Harry was too young to be led into the Order meetings at Grimmauld Place -- they were always there with their secret maps and stuff that they folded up hastily whenever the kids were around. There was so much time and effort that the Order spent together, and we see Tonks at the very beginning of this book already pale because she's been lovesick over Remus. To me, that made plenty of sense as a background story -- 'Oh, it happened then,' -- and the kind of love that we see Tonks expressing for Lupin is regardless of excellent, circumstantial reasons why they should never be a thing. She can't get away from yearning for his personality. She is in love with him. His arguments are extremely good. It's not just that he has a disability; it's the extralegal status -- the constant refugee status, the worsening legislation trying to legislate him out of public life as a werewolf, much as trans people are being legislated out of public life currently in the U.K. and the U.S. If he consents to marry her, she is signing on to some kind of worsening political life that they cannot predict, and she can't pretend in the future that she wasn't associated with him if they get legally married; it'll be out there. The way that Harry is always afraid that he's going to be responsible for somebody else dying… Is his influence going to harm somebody else? He's going to have that on his conscience, too. Harry is really jumpy about that. He's had it happen to him so

much in his life, it's going to happen again; he just doesn't want it ever, but it's going to happen. And Lupin, of course… his whole life, anytime he's wanted to be close to somebody, it has to some extent ruined their lives. His parents, their whole lives changed; his best friends… If he is so greedy as to want human connection, he is too "weak" to say no to it. He should have told James, Sirius and Peter, "What the heck are you doing? Stop illegally transforming and running around while I break my promises to Dumbledore and I'm a fully infectious werewolf running around Hogsmeade. What are you doing?" But no, they're like, "We're your buddies," and he's like "Friends? I get to have friends?" This leads many years later to Dumbledore saying, "You fooled me about what? I went through all of this to give you an education, and you did what to me? You're fired. I mean, you get to resign." He couldn't say no to it and he knew it was wrong, and he assumed that he was going to live his whole life without getting a life partner because it would endanger other people so much, and now this person keeps hammering down his door, saying, "You can't tell me anything new. I understand the dangers and it's affecting my health, I love you so much, and I will give up all of that to be with you," and he can't say no because that's his nature. That's his personality. I have the unpopular take on Lupin that I don't love everything about him, and when I've been a beta for people writing *Harry Potter* fanfiction, my rule about writing Remus Lupin (to be true to his character) is Lupin will always do what he wants. He'll know it's a bad idea, he will put other people at risk, he'll hate himself for doing it; he'll, in fact, go into an orgy of self-blame, but it won't stop him. He will do what he wants, and the Lupin/Tonks storyline to me is he can't say no. He wants this. That's why Tonks hasn't been somehow put out of her misery with a solid "No." That's why he then spends all of the next volume hating himself for letting himself be talked into marriage and why he's thrilled he's going to have a baby, even though it's the worst thing in the world and that poor baby did not ask to be born into all of this prejudice. If you buy that he's the victim here and Tonks is just an irrational almost-child who's forcing heterosexuality onto him or something, that story does not work, does it? Because Lupin is a really full and complicated character, why would he be doing this if he didn't want it? Why has she not gone away? Because there's something in him that wants it.

JC: Okay. Either he said no and she didn't let go, so that's bad on her, OR every time she comes over, he's like, 'Okay, just one more time. Just tonight, and then no, we can't. We can't, we can't.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That's the only conclusion I can come to. You don't love Remus, so I think that for you, you're like, 'Yeah, sure, that's what he did,' and I can see that. I guess that's part of what was discomforting about it: I really like both of those characters and yeah, people are like that. People are messy. It's very realistic. I just didn't like that it was those two, because I really like both of them.

Lorrie: I actually think I'm glad he did say yes, but my basic stance to Lupin often comes down to: I want to kick his ass to take responsibility and say, "You know that it's going to be a heavy, heavy price. She's coming into this as an adult with her eyes open. Okay, then, commit." But as people who genuinely love Lupin frequently tell me, the thing that I'm missing is that his circumstances make him so lonely and so extremely pained that the kind of decisive self-control that I'm expecting out of him… I'm not understanding what it is to live in his circumstances. Maybe this is the temperament in me that makes me a Snape fan instead of a Lupin fan. Snape would have loved a less virginal, despised incel sort of life, but he knew that he could not, and we do not see anybody pounding down Snape's door because they love him so much.

JC: True, true.

Lorrie: I really respond to Snape not enjoying the choice, but knowing that he's going to prevent himself from messing up somebody else's life, and we're about to see in the next chapter Harry make the exact same choice. Lupin is really relationship-oriented. It is not in his nature to resist relationships; that's what he was born for. Unfortunately, it's always going to hurt somebody to love him and be with him, and Tonks is saying, "I am an adult. I know what it is." Also, she likes him as a person.

Caroline: Producer Caroline here with a quick snippet to insert from future Lorrie and JC's conversation, where they circled back around some more thoughts on Lupin and relationships.

Lorrie: This brings me to the thing I didn't understand when I was having our discussion in the last episode about the difference between Lupin and somebody like Snape choosing abstinence because being involved with romance would endanger their partner too much. I realize what I missed; I missed this in such a huge and embarrassing way. Harry has an easier time breaking up with Ginny than Lupin has had holding off Tonks because Harry is choosing to fight. He's going towards something. He has something to gain from this. Yes, it's a really hard sacrifice to not be with Ginny anymore; Lupin's situation is completely undeserved, unasked for. He didn't ask to be a werewolf, he didn't ask for his kind to be stigmatized, there's nothing he's gaining… He doesn't get anything out of sacrificing; he only yearns for connection and companionship, and then I thought, 'Oh, right, because if I had understood what I was reading in their characters, I would have seen that Lupin's personality is that his birthright that he craves the most is human connection (friendship or love) that was really stolen from him by Greyback choosing to bite him and do that to him as a very young child, just like Harry has a birthright that he craves and is angry about having stolen from him, which is different. Harry's birthright that he wants back is his own family and his own story, but when you have that birthright that is always going to be the thing you crave more than anything else, then how can you try to be noble and abstain just because of some principle that isn't as all-encompassing to you as this craving? Your biggest motivator, the thing you want most… I was missing that about Lupin, because the difference, then, with Snape… Snape has a much easier time than either Lupin or Harry in choosing some sort of abstinent life because he is atoning for something that was his own fault in the first place. Right, right… Unlike baby Harry and five-year-old Lupin (who never asked for any of this), Snape chose to be a Death Eater and to betray Lily, and he is now atoning. It will take a lot of sacrifice to repair the damage he did; that's his choice, so any sacrifice is going to be in the service of something that he very much wants to achieve. When I saw that difference, I felt like such a cad.

JC: Okay. I have not thought of any of this, and I think that's a really fascinating insight that that's the difference there, but also putting Lupin's and Harry's experience here of pushing (or putting on hold, in Harry's case, certainly) this relationship that you want, but you know that it's not… Right now, it's more important to protect that person.

Lorrie: And Harry doesn't know right now that it's temporary; he might die tomorrow.

JC: Yeah. He doesn't know he's going to survive this.

Lorrie: He cannot possibly say to Ginny, "This is only until the war is over." What kind of mess would that make?

JC: Right, yeah.

Lorrie: He has no idea what's going to happen. He cannot ask anyone to wait for him, and if he does, then that's still leaving a bit for Voldemort to find and exploit. When I realized that once again, I've missed something major about the Lupin character when it's so easy for me to see interesting things that might be true of the Snape character, I thought, 'Okay, Lupin has always been the hardest character for me to grasp and to love, so it probably means that it's because he reminds me of parts of my own personality that I'm most ashamed of.' It is incredibly embarrassing to have these blind spots about a character in public when I discuss the series with other readers who see him very differently, and I'm trying to be okay with that and model that everybody is revealed in some way when we all have a common story and we discuss it together.

JC: Yeah. No, that is really true.

Lorrie: So here, I'm feeling very stupid and exposed. What it says about me: I didn't see the major difference why Lupin would have a harder time saying no to romance than Snape saying no (hypothetically, in case anyone might ever want to be involved with him).

Caroline: And now we return to the present and the next part of the chapter.

Lorrie: I get chills when I read Mr. Weasley's argument. Lupin says, "Tonks deserves somebody young and whole." Well, Lupin is on the verge of being angry at the ableism of people who are disrespecting just how much it takes out of you to be a werewolf. He has spent this entire time counseling people over Bill's injuries. They're damn lucky to have him on their team to just provide all of this background, and for them to say, "Oh, come on, but she loves you" is insulting. It's enraging. He is saying, "Tonks deserves somebody young and whole," and then Arthur Weasley says, "But she wants you. And after all, Remus, young and whole

men do not necessarily remain so." That is so not ableist. This is something she knows; she's not naive. Yeah. To me, that's the best argument. Mr. Weasley wins.

JC: Yeah. No, I like that a lot, too, because it's that reminder that often disability activists will say, "Odds are everyone will be disabled eventually, all of you. You live long enough, you're going to need these protections that I'm asking for now," and it's true. I think that being ableist means that you're shooting yourself in the foot. You're voting against some things that you're going to need in the future and you will need at some point in your life, and I like that Mr. Weasley reminds us of that here.

Lorrie: Yeah, and what is love about? She likes you, the person.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: She doesn't like status, she doesn't like the privilege of being able-bodied or the privilege of being a species that is legal. "No, she likes you."

JC: Okay, I think you've sold me. I think I see it now.

Lorrie: The vehemence with which so very many people in fandom say that the Tonks love storyline interfered with something super important that the Lupin character met to them… Often that he's with Sirius or that he is gay in general, but the way that they responded to this character with that storyline being super important to them, I look at how vehement that is. Whether or not I had the same read, that's something important. I respect that. This is such a blessing: fortunately, that passion has resulted in incredible fan literature. One of the most blessedly generous, creative, panoramic archives of fan imagination, collectively, is the Remus and Sirius fanworks world. Anybody who's wondering what is behind this devotion to a different reading of Remus Lupin than the one the author is giving us here… Well, there's lots of research you can do. It's not hard to find.

JC: If you're going to Google image search, be careful, as always.

Lorrie: Yeah, some of it's really good. So Hagrid finally comes in and says, "I'm done. I moved Dumbledore's body."

JC: Once again fulfilling his role as the person who handles transitions.

Lorrie: Yep, so it's time for them to get moving. McGonagall says that she needs a quick word alone with Harry in her office, which is how Harry realizes that there has been a seamless transition and the castle has now facilitated McGonagall being Headmistress.

JC: It's interesting, too, because McGonagall just learned that Dumbledore's dead not that long ago. It's a matter of minutes, and already she knows that's where she needs to go.

Lorrie: Yeah. To Harry's grief-stricken surprise, the office doesn't look any different.

JC: Oh, that's really poignant.

Lorrie: Yeah. There's one difference: now there's a portrait.

JC: Now there's a portrait. But yeah, it's like that feeling of when someone passes away -- and I've only had this experience with grandparents and in-laws and things -- to go to their house and see that all their stuff is still there.

Lorrie: It's still alive…

JC: As if they've just gone out for groceries or something, right? Yeah.

Lorrie: The beautiful thing is that in the portrait, Dumbledore's sleeping, "looking peaceful and untroubled." That's comforting.

JC: Yeah, and there's the powerful magic of the castle that that portrait appeared that fast. Has it been an hour? A couple of hours?

Lorrie: A few hours, yeah.

JC: Yeah. The portrait is there.

Lorrie: Yeah, and if he's looking peaceful and untroubled, we can hope that means that he's satisfied knowing he got a lot done before he died because he spent this whole year rushing to beat the clock. McGonagall confronts Harry, and he is ready for this confrontation. Oh…

JC: Yeah. His maturity from here on out is stunning to me. He changed, right? We talked about how the cave was this moment of transformation for him. He went into that cave; he came out a different person. Not the way that Voldemort took

people into the cave, but he went into the cave with Dumbledore a child and he came out an adult in some way. It's really cool, and you see that in the last couple of chapters.

Lorrie: Yeah. She quite rightly says she wants Harry to brief her, that Dumbledore had some secrets. What are they? "What were you guys working on?" Harry gathers his strength and says, "He didn't want me to tell anyone. Professor Dumbledore never told me to stop following his orders if he died." Dumbledore never even told Harry why; Harry is going on faith. This whole 'Trust Dumbledore' thing… That's what this is riding on, but Dumbledore was explicit and clear in training Harry during those lessons in the past school year. "I'm telling you this because there will come a time when you won't have me, and you'll need to know this." Harry is quite correct. He received Dumbledore's message correctly.

JC: Yeah. I think Harry -- because when they were on the tower and Harry heard Dumbledore tell Draco, "The reason I didn't go to you about this is because I knew that if the Dark Lord used Legilimency, he would find out and I didn't want to put you in danger," and Harry now understands that anyone he tells about the Horcruxes is in danger.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And the only people that he's willing to risk are Ron and Hermione. He needs them, right? They're a team, and Dumbledore had already said, "No, you should tell."

Lorrie: Dumbledore already authorized that.

JC: Yeah, but nobody else. Yeah.

Lorrie: "And that's all you're going to do."

JC: Not even Ginny is going to know.

Lorrie: Nope, so I really feel for McGonagall, faced with this sixteen-year-old telling her no. Gosh…

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: "But don't you see I need to know this?" "Yeah, too bad," but he does tell McGonagall, "I'm not telling you that, but you do have to know that Rosmerta has been Imperiused." What a terrible year Rosmerta has had…

JC: Yes. I assume, I guess… How do you lift an Imperius Curse? I don't know.

Lorrie: Oh, my goodness.

JC: What she's going to go through when that is lifted and finds out the things that she did or comes to terms with, because she already knows, but she can't do anything about it.

Lorrie: What a life… Then the Heads of House arrive in McGonagall's office and Hagrid, and they find out that Scrimgeour is on his way, too. They have this really excellent discussion about 'should they close the school?'

JC: I love that nobody even blinks that Harry's there.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's the Heads of House and Hagrid and Harry.

Lorrie: Hagrid… and Harry.

JC: Nobody even says "What's Harry doing here?" or even looks at him. It's just like, "Nope, Harry's… Yeah."

Lorrie: Well, he's the student rep.

JC: Yeah, I guess he is. He's the student rep on this committee, for sure.

Lorrie: Yeah. They have a really good discussion where they talk about all the things that they should consider, and they decide, "Okay, we're going to consult the governors." Great decision, and then they say, "Oh, Dumbledore will be the only person to be buried at Hogwarts because that was his wish," and everybody decides that's perfectly fitting. Then Harry -- oh, bless him -- speaks up and he says, "Hey, the students have to be allowed to attend the funeral first before anybody talks about sending students home." Oh, thank goodness he was there to say this completely right thing.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: It doesn't take much for the professors to all see that he's right, and then I love where McGonagall gives Harry permission to leave really quickly before Scrimgeour and his people arrive.

JC: Right. Harry's like, "I want no part of this."

Lorrie: "Go!"

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: Fortunately for Harry, he knows and trusts that when he goes to Gryffindor Tower, if he goes up to the dorm room, that Ron will be waiting for him and Ron is waiting for him.

JC: It's interesting, too, that he gets there and the common room is full; they've been waiting for Harry to come back and tell them what happened, and Harry's just like, 'Nope,' and just goes upstairs. They must have all gone *sighs* when they realized he wasn't going to stop and inform them all of what was going on.

Lorrie: Yeah, but who's going to argue with Harry Potter when he's got some place to be on this night of all nights? Ron asks, "Did you get a Horcrux?" Harry says no and shows him what they did get, and they're so grief-stricken. They go, "R.A.B…. Who is that?" "Dunno." Fawkes stops singing.

JC: Oh, that moment where he realizes that Fawkes has stopped singing, which means that Fawkes has left forever, and that's like, 'Where do phoenixes go when their human dies? Ah, I wonder…'

Lorrie: That's one of those things that the series gives us once in a while. Harry knows this "without knowing how he knew it…" Okay, so we have to accept that as true. No one's going to explain this; it's just a given.

JC: I feel like this is the moment that Harry just finally lets himself start to process that Dumbledore's gone, or really accepts, "Dumbledore is really gone, and now it's just me." That hits right there. If Fawkes is gone, it's really over. I really like how this chapter wraps up a lot of the loose ends from the previous one. It sets us up for the next chapter, which is the transition into the last book.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Here we are. Here's where we're at; now, you have to wait two years, readers in 2005.

Lorrie: Yeah. Limber up your fingers and write some fanfic. The next chapter, the last one in the *Half-Blood Prince*, is called The White Tomb.

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.