

Transcript

Episode 6.3

Book 6, Chapter 3: Will and Won't

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 Three: Will and Won't.

Lorrie: Will and Won't. Dumbledore calls upon the Dursleys at Privet Drive to tell Harry about his inheritance and take Harry to the Burrow. Third chapter of this book, we get to Harry Potter at last, and he is a most undignified, snoozing teenager.

JC: I actually love that, how it starts with this really awkward... His face is pressed up against the window...

Lorrie: Right.

JC: He's snoring, his room is a mess, and he hasn't packed for this trip that he's going to go on with Dumbledore. It's very teenager of him, and it's just kind of funny because as the viewer's perspective pans the room and we see all of these articles, he's already being called "The Chosen One." It's like, "Here's The Chosen One in all his glory."

Lorrie: "Here he is!"

JC: That's really funny.

Lorrie: Yeah. As we look at him, his face slips down a little more against the window.

JC: The idea that people from the outside could see him asleep against the window like this... Oh, my God.

Lorrie: The chapters have been building up to Dumbledore. We saw first how Scrimgeour dominated the other politicians in the Other Minister chapter, but all of them keep talking about Dumbledore (Fudge says Dumbledore won't properly explain mysteries); then we saw the Spinner's End chapter where Snape dominated everybody, but also Snape and Bellatrix talk about Dumbledore (this powerful, great wizard, the one that even the Dark Lord can't take down). Here we get Dumbledore at last, and this is true dominance.

JC: It really is.

Lorrie: What we see is Dumbledore coming to pass judgment on the Dursleys. Oh, he's dominant.

JC: I remember reading this for the first time. I had forgotten about this chapter until I started reading it, and then I was like, 'Oh, that's right,' because I remember reading this and reading Dumbledore later in this chapter taking the Dursleys to task. That's the way that he is throughout this chapter, and I remember thinking this feels like fanfic because it felt like such fantasy fulfillment.

Lorrie: Wish fulfillment, yeah.

JC: Yeah. I had wanted to see somebody tell the Dursleys how badly they treated Harry for so long, and to have Dumbledore come in and do it, I had to keep thinking, 'Really?! Is this really happening?'

Lorrie: I know. It's a dream come true.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. It really puts the Dursleys in their place, showing that the true scope of Harry's world is so much bigger and more serious than they could possibly imagine.

JC: They had this perspective of him. I don't even know what they think happens at Hogwarts -- they just think it's all bizarre and weird -- but learning that Harry has all these relationships with people... yeah. Oh, it's very interesting. But yeah, we're getting a little bit ahead of ourselves here.

Lorrie: So yeah, as we saw throughout *Order of the Phoenix*, we (in 2025 U.S.) are further along toward fascism than the *Harry Potter* universe is. That's still true. There are several news articles from *The Daily Prophet* in this chapter, and they show *The Daily Prophet* reporting on the Battle at the Ministry and the reinforced security around Hogwarts. In *Harry Potter* universe, the news outlets have not yet been banned from press conferences.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Their paper records still have access to actual news, and they employ still some reporters.

JC: Something that really struck me as I was reading this, too, was that this is so set in the 90s. It felt old-fashioned here to have paper newspapers that kids would know how to read.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I don't think my child has ever read a newspaper, a physical newspaper. That way that you would just have to know as a human being that there would be a bunch of important stories that would start on the first page and then they would continue somewhere else in the paper, but they would be written so that the important summary of things that you needed to know was in that first part, and then if you really wanted to know more, you would continue reading on Page B, column Five or whatever, right? That's how newspapers were set up, and that was just a thing that I grew up knowing. I did a brief stint on my high school's newspaper, and that was a thing that we learned how to write that way. I'm thinking, 'I don't know if kids now know how to do that.'

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Yeah. It hit me that the kids in the story read physical newspapers, and I think that I don't remember the last time I read a physical newspaper. It's been a while. Just made me think this is set at a very particular time.

Lorrie: Yeah. Retro.

JC: Yeah. Also, it's such an interesting... Again, we've talked in the last couple chapters about the way that the author has gotten a lot better at reminding us what's happened in the past or catching us up on the events, and the quick scan of the newspaper articles is also a really clever way of doing that, and the fact that you're seeing just a little hint. It's, if you were an observer in the room, what you would see, and I like that there's a little bit of teasing of 'Ooh, what's the connection between Scrimgeour and Dumbledore? What's going on here?' Just giving a little bit of information, and then that bit where we learn that the security at Hogwarts is going to be a lot tighter. It brings up that a lot of people have been wondering, so the Ministry is saying, "Oh, no, we're going to take this very seriously." It gives you a lot of hints about what's been happening in society and what people have been talking about. Also, that little detail in there that I really loved, which is that Neville's grandmother is proud of him.

Lorrie: Oh, I know. What a huge change! So this is what it takes.

JC: So great.

Lorrie: Of course, she herself was the big obstacle that he had to overcome in order to become the glorious person that he is now, but yeah, she's proud.

JC: Just fun. Just a fun way to say, "Here, reader, here are all the things that are happening in the world before we really get the story rolling." I enjoyed it.

Lorrie: It's such a good cross-section, looking at the layers of power and being media literate. If the powerful people are instituting new security at Hogwarts, and if the paper of record is printing the security guidelines and they range from the obvious ("try not to travel at night") to the completely clueless and mildly panicked ("If you see an Inferius, let us know")... Meanwhile, it's like "have passwords ready." In our current climate, just saying, "Well, have a go-bag ready..." Is this going to protect you? I don't know. "Make sure that you have cash." Who uses cash? "Make sure you have your documents." Is this going to help you? Well, it won't not help. We have been seeing (with the Minister chapter and Spinner's End, and now here, the Chosen One and the legendary Dumbledore coming to his little suburban home) this is what's actually happening and all of this discussion in the media is what they're making of it, but what do they really think is happening?

What does the Wizarding World at large think is happening? Well, one thing that is an improvement for Harry's life is that nobody's doubting that this is what he has to put up with; they're not blaming him anymore. Meanwhile, the scrubby-looking teenager at the center of it all has not been letting himself believe Dumbledore's letter that Dumbledore is really going to come spring him from the Dursleys. That is as real as anything, right?

JC: Yeah, yeah. He didn't pack because he couldn't bear packing, and then having it not happen and then having to unpack it all again.

Lorrie: Ugh, yeah.

JC: Ugh. It's a loss of innocence in a lot of ways, but a loss of... not hope, but something like that. He doesn't trust that things are going to happen the way people say they're going to happen. He's always like, 'Yeah, no, things are going to go wrong. Something bad could happen.' There's this new awareness that the world is a lot more complicated, and good things aren't just going to happen to him.

Lorrie: A year ago, he had been waiting to see Dumbledore at the Ministry hearing, and Dumbledore had even shown up and then left without even saying 'hi' to Harry.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And then as we saw, we got hundreds and hundreds of pages of Dumbledore not being there for Harry, so it's no wonder that his faith has been thoroughly broken at this point.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: But it's a new day. I do like that he was realistic enough to have Hedwig ready just in case. Oof... But yeah, he's gotten no support. He's had to figure this all out on his own, meanwhile, of course, still dealing with Sirius's loss.

JC: It's interesting that this is the only little slice that we see of his life with the Dursleys. We don't have really any idea of how they've been treating him this summer. Has he been stuck inside? What's it been like? Or have they completely ignored his existence? It's unclear.

Lorrie: Well, we get a tiny hint, which is that Harry has been refusing meals.

JC: Oh, interesting.

Lorrie: He's so depressed and grieving over Sirius he's been refusing meals, and we know from other years what those meals are: they're cold vegetable soup. We can assume that they're treating him about the same as they always have, but he's so over them. He has other worries; he barely notices. This one line, though, really got to me. When Dumbledore shows up and Vernon yells, "Who the blazes is calling at this hour?" Harry is wildly laughing at himself, like 'Oh, my God, I forgot to tell them.' Harry both pelts downstairs and stops short several stairs away from Vernon, and this sentence, "... long experience had taught him to remain out of arm's reach of his uncle whenever possible." That was so real, it really got me. Okay, this is a really clear example of trauma from domestic violence. It's embedded in him, and it's presented here so matter-of-factly as to be almost funny.

JC: Almost humorously.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: But that's something where, if that's how you grew up, in old age you'll still have that habit. People might wonder why when it hasn't been that way for decades, but that might not be something that you can shake.

JC: I like the fact, too, that Dumbledore shows up precisely at eleven.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: We know he's arrived because the streetlights have gone out, and that's what alerts Harry that he's here; you see this figure walking up the garden path, as it's described. That promptness... You know he's here because the lights have gone out? Oh, wow, but it's also a nice reminder of the little puter-outer thing that he's going to pass to Ron later on...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That he will will to Ron. Just a reminder of, 'Oh, this is what he does. He's got this thing, and he takes the lights.' Yeah.

Lorrie: No matter how depressingly suburban this scenario has been up until now, oh... It's the eleventh hour. Magic has arrived. All right.

JC: Oh, yeah, the eleventh hour. You're right.

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: I love that he just shows up at eleven o'clock. Is it a Friday? I can't remember what day of the week it is. Anyway, he just showed up at 11 p.m.

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: It's hilariously rude to show up at somebody's house that late at night. Oh, my God, it's incredible, and I love that everything that happens from here on now is just... Oh, it's so good.

Lorrie: Yes, and the more outlandish it is, the more unfazed Dumbledore appears.

JC: Yes, which is just beautiful.

Lorrie: Yes. He is so pleasant and so polite and so domineering...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And the more he's like that, the more you realize how serious this all is. When he says, "Let us assume that you have invited me warmly into your house. It is unwise to linger overlong on doorsteps in these troubled times," that's when I, as a reader, am going, 'Oh, shoot, even Dumbledore is actually unsafe outdoors right now.' Wow, that's scary.

JC: Right, yeah. "Shall we assume that you have treated me like a guest and that you've been polite?" The Dursleys are so hung up on looking normal and being normal and fitting in with the norms of society, and Dumbledore's appearance has shocked them so much that those social routines -- the social niceties that they would normally perform, bend over backwards to perform if they knew who he was and how important he was -- they would do, they can't do it, so he's calling them out on their own ability to do that thing that he knows that they like. It's just beautiful.

Lorrie: Yeah, and he's using their own belief system against them.

JC: Yeah. You said that much more precisely. That's exactly what I was trying to say. Yes.

Lorrie: They just don't even know how to defend themselves against this. With beautiful manners, he invites himself in to be safe because he himself is the person who has made Privet Drive a safe space. This is the moment that Petunia finally meets Dumbledore face-to-face; she's shocked, and Dumbledore says courteously, "We have corresponded, of course.' Harry thought this an odd way of reminding Aunt Petunia that he had once sent her an exploding letter, but Aunt Petunia did not challenge the term." Okay, that's nice foreshadowing that's going to pay off way, way, way later.

JC: I love that he just walks into the living room and he has the sofa scoop up the Dursleys...

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: And it's all just very Dumbledore. It's this incredible power that he has; he makes it very clear who is the most powerful person in the room.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Then he says, "Let's assume that you offered me a refreshment," and whips one up, and the little glasses bang them in the heads and they refuse to take them. Oh...

Lorrie: It's very mean of him.

JC: It's so petty. It's just delightful.

Lorrie: Yeah, and he's making it clear just how much choice they all have in this matter.

JC: Yeah. Yes.

Lorrie: In case they thought there was any way out of this... No, there isn't.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And he really caps that off. He stresses that by emphasizing that the way that they can get those glasses of mead to stop pounding them on the head is if they ask him politely. "Oh, yeah, that's how you do it, huh?" "You could've asked before." So here in this chapter, in the sixth book of a seven-book series, is the point at which J.K. Rowling has finally gotten the memo: at no point in this chapter

is Dudley described as 'fat' or 'pig-like'. Now, Vernon does get described that way, so it seems that her concession is she'll still talk this way, just not about children.

JC: Though Dumbledore does say this weird thing that implies that they have been mistreating Dudley.

Lorrie: Oh, love it, yes.

JC: There's a lot of ways that you can interpret that, but one way that you could interpret that is that is a comment on his size, how he looks.

Lorrie: I didn't read it that way.

JC: Oh, really? Maybe I'm so primed to look for it that my first thought was, 'Oh.' I can't remember the exact quote now, but it's something like, "At least he hasn't been mistreated like the child sitting between you."

Lorrie: Yeah. The "appalling damage."

JC: It's unclear what that means, but yeah.

Lorrie: So yeah, that's what it took. We get Vernon's 'piggy eyes', and later on in this volume we will get some comments on fat as well, but they are for adults, not for children. That is the extent of the evolution of this author on fat shaming.

JC: She still doesn't like fat people, but at least she's not going to blame kids for a thing that she thinks is a crime or something. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. Dudley is presented as a normal teenager here, someone who has very, very good reason to be freaked out by all of this.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And, unlike his parents, has processed that this magical world is something that he has to respect because it's powerful and frightening.

JC: Which he has experienced.

Lorrie: Yes, he has.

JC: Yeah. In the seventh book, I think we do get a little bit of his thoughts about what happened to him, but he's had a year to think about what happened, and he

knows that Harry saved him. Yeah. I wonder... I do want to know what's going on in Dudley's head at this point.

Lorrie: Well... yeah. He came out to see what was going on, and he has no choice either; he's just swept up by the moving couch, just like his parents. Then we get the first glimpse of what's so different about this year: we see Dumbledore's blackened, shriveled right hand. Wow! Everybody notices, nobody knows what to say about it, and we've had that foreshadowed in the previous chapter by Snape saying, "Oh, well, his reflexes aren't as good and he was shaken by the Dark Lord." It's for real. He's really injured. Yeah, then he punishes the Dursleys with the oak-matured mead. I have to say I am totally with the Dursleys here. What idiot would accept a drink from a magical being? No, no, no, no, no! Even if they hadn't had the whole Ton-Tongue Toffee experience...

JC: True, that's true. But yeah, it is funny that they don't even at least grab the glasses and just hold them.

Lorrie: They're just scared.

JC: Yeah, they're just scared, but ugh... I also think it's interesting that the Wizarding World doesn't have this puritanical (probably because it's British) "no alcohol shall ever pass a child's lips." Butterbeer is described as being very mildly alcoholic, and mead... It's a tiny little glass. 'Oh, yeah, mead is wine, so of course, teenagers are...' yeah. It's much more like an old-world perspective on alcohol and who can have it and who should not, a contrast to at least the country we live in.

Lorrie: Yeah. This is very much like, 'Well, if Dumbledore is giving it to Harry and it's the first time he's having this... Well, it's Dumbledore. Okay, I guess I've been initiated.' He's not quite sixteen here; Dudley has just turned sixteen. There they are, the Dursleys, trying to focus on this terrifying wizard while these glasses of mead are saying, "Excuse me, excuse me." Then when Dumbledore explains to Harry about Sirius's will, Vernon pipes up, "His godfather's dead?" That's so disorienting in a hateful Vernon way. Why is he interested? Does he think that that means he can now abuse Harry more because the threat of the terrifying godfather had been keeping him in line? Why is he interested? What does he care? And then the disgusting detail where Vernon greedily asks if Harry's been left a house.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Does Vernon think he's going to somehow get paid for the years that he's provided lodging to Harry? What is he interested in?

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Ugh, it's so hateful.

JC: It's also interesting that Harry hasn't told them anything of what happened, and why would he? But it is interesting that just this section reveals how little the Dursleys know about him. A really important person to him died and he went through yet another year of a traumatic experience, and he's never told them any of this. They have no idea what happens at Hogwarts, so it's interesting that they're hearing all of this. Also, along the greed line, Dumbledore also mentions the gold in Harry's vault, which gave me a little bit of "Don't talk about that in front of the Dursleys!" Yeah.

Lorrie: Yes, this kid that they've been abusing also has his own independent wealth. Even though Vernon and Petunia don't know, Dudley knows that a year earlier, Harry came home and was having screaming nightmares about Cedric being killed. Now his godfather's dead, so there is all sorts of drama going on in this kid's life.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Meanwhile, of course, Harry quite naturally has no desire to have anything to do with Grimmauld Place. There's this awful, depressing sentence: "... haunted forever by the memory of Sirius prowling in its dark musty rooms alone, imprisoned within the place he had wanted so desperately to leave." Why would he want Grimmauld Place? Yeah. Sirius didn't want to be there.... Whatever it is that the Dursleys don't know about Harry's life is not even beginning to touch the reality of what he's really feeling.

JC: The other layer that I read in there, too, is that when someone -- I've been very fortunate in my life to have not lost people in untimely ways. I remember when my grandparents passed away, I was well into adulthood. I remember my parents were cleaning out their houses, and the question was always, "What do you want from the house?" and my gut reaction was to say "Nothing."

Lorrie: Nothing.

JC: Not that any of it wasn't valuable, but the idea that I would need things to remember them by was a little bit 'Ugh' to me. At the end, I did; there were a couple of things that I ended up with that were very meaningful to me, but I understand Harry's gut reaction of "I don't want anything. I don't want it." Not only this thing that Sirius hated, but if the house now belongs to Harry, that's even more evidence than it's a reminder of Sirius is gone. That part of it, too, I really can understand in a small way.

Lorrie: So yeah, now Harry has to deal with death cleaning. It's a good thing that his world knows magic. That would be a really big gift to ordinary Muggle life. If they could have magical powers for one thing, that would be a good choice.

JC: Oh, my gosh, that would allow you to clean or vanish things to some pocket dimension. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. We encountered just how hateful the Black family was; of course, we already knew that. They are so patriarchal and so snobby that they have ensured that their own family would die out because they believe in leaving property to the oldest male with the name Black. Now that this has happened, where they've died out, they don't know. Does that mean that Sirius's will (giving it to somebody who's not related to them) is going to carry through? Or maybe they've cursed things so that things can only go to a pureblood? Or will it go to the oldest relative who is not male, which would be Bellatrix? Would all of Sirius's life and memories (and all the secrets of the Order of the Phoenix) go to that center of hatefulness that is Bellatrix? Harry in one moment goes from not caring to, 'Oh, shit. No. No, she's not getting it.' I am so impressed at the author setting things up to show the reader just how brilliant Dumbledore is when he says, "Fortunately, there's a simple test to see if Sirius's will actually worked or not," and there are a lot of ways that she could have shown this, but she really sets it up. Wow, Dumbledore, that's clever. He explains that "if you have really inherited all of Sirius's property, you have also inherited..." and then he makes Kreacher appear. Wherever Kreacher was, he abducts Kreacher and has him show up in the living room at Privet Drive.

JC: Completely freaking out the Dursleys, who have actually never seen a house-elf; even though one's been in their house, they've never seen one before, which is amazing.

Lorrie: Yeah, let alone one who employs filth as his primary mode of protest.

JC: Yeah, and who clearly hates Harry, so you'd think that he might be appealing.

Lorrie: Oh, my God. He is throwing an absolute fit in the living room, screaming, thrashing, howling about how little he ever wants anything to do with the filthy little Harry Potter and how much he yearns to be with Bellatrix.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: And that reminded me, 'Oh, yeah.' Dumbledore has to have this interaction in the Dursley home because it's a place that Dumbledore has set up to be safe against Voldemort, just like Grimmauld Place. Oh... It's not just to be funny and torture the Dursleys; he actually had to do this there, and the fact that it was going to freak out the Dursleys was just an extra cherry on top.

JC: That's true. Okay, this raises a question for me. If this is a safe place where no one can get to Harry, how did Dobby get there way back in the second book? Was it because Dobby's intentions were to protect Harry? Dobby got there and messed things up for Harry, but how was Dobby able to appear there?

Lorrie: Well, I think it's more that Voldemort can't reach Harry in the Dursley home (or people affiliated with Voldemort), because certainly, we see Dedalus Diggle visit Privet Drive.

JC: But they don't come in the house.

Lorrie: Eventually, they will.

JC: Does anyone come in the house? Well, they will, but that's after Harry's turned seventeen. Well, I guess Harry turns seventeen...

Lorrie: Also, the Weasleys showed up in book four.

JC: Yeah. I guess I'm thinking Dobby was bound to the Malfoys, so I'm just thinking through that. Yeah.

Lorrie: Well, one way or another...

JC: But I was thinking about the fact that even though Dobby was bound to the Malfoys (who had plans to do Harry harm), Dobby was there to try to protect Harry. He was there, so I don't know. If you're there for good reason, somehow the protection can sense your intentions.

Lorrie: Well, we see in the next book that Dobby can Apparate in and out of the Malfoy cellar, which is heavily guarded against wizards Apparating and Disapparating. I think that's the most convenient plot loophole: eh, elf magic.

JC: House-elves have really powerful magic, especially when it's around protecting the people they're bound to. Yeah.

Lorrie: Or that it's a loophole because they matter so little to wizards that wizards don't remember to guard against them. Kreacher's there on the living room floor, thrashing and howling, and Dumbledore, with his continued delightful understatement, says to Harry, "He's showing a certain reluctance to pass into your ownership." Dumbledore explains to Harry, "Yeah, give him an order," and Harry says to shut up; he shuts up, and Harry now owns another being against that being's will. Well, that's dark.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Okay....

JC: Yeah, all of this is interesting, something with layers. Harry doesn't want Kreacher. He doesn't want that; he wants none of this, but because this magic is so powerful and binding, he doesn't have a choice. The idea that Sirius could have some kind of a magical will that overrides the powerful magic that his family has put in place is pretty stunning. That's some damn good work there, Sirius. Wow.

Lorrie: Well, also, Harry does have a choice. He could give Kreacher clothes right that moment. He is preventing himself from doing it, because however little he wants to own Kreacher, the threat of what would happen to the entire Wizarding World if Kreacher were free to go to Bellatrix is so awful that Harry realizes no, this is part of the burden of being the Chosen One. Likewise, whatever secrets are bound up in Grimmauld Place, he could just give it away, but no, he can't. All right. Well, let's just throw that on the pile of things Harry never asked to be responsible for.

JC: True, true. Though Dumbledore has a really good solution for that, which is 'send him to Hogwarts to work in the kitchen.' There.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This is a really great solution.

Lorrie: That is such a demonstration of Dumbledore's omniscience and omnipotence. He's come through with already the perfect solution for everything planned out, but he takes Harry through the motions step by step, giving the illusion and also the reality that at every step, Harry could make his own decisions. He's only going to do everything Dumbledore suggests because in every case, it's the best solution, but there's never any doubt that Harry will see the situation and then be grateful for whatever Dumbledore tells him to do.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: That brought up such a strong memory for me of times that I've been manipulated that way. In these cases, every choice that was presented to me was always totally in my best interests, but I felt so completely outmaneuvered and it was not a comfortable feeling; I did not like it. At the time, every time a solution was offered to me, I fell upon it gratefully. 'Oh, I didn't know how I was going to get out of that.' And then when it was all over, I realized every single step of that had been pre-planned. Oh, God, yuck! Even when none of it is hurtful to you when all of it is super, super helpful that somebody saw the whole thing and then led you through it and that you discover each step at a time as they present it... Ugh, that just was not a good feeling. Bleh!

JC: I think about the dynamic between Harry and Dumbledore here. I'm trying to think how situations I've been in were, and I think that I've never been put in that position by someone I didn't trust, so I think that might be the difference because I have had that experience. I was sitting here listening to you and thinking I didn't feel that way, but it was because it was someone that I completely trusted; I was relieved that they had thought about it on my behalf and had come up with some solutions that were going to work for me. I didn't feel manipulated at all; I felt relief.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: But if it was someone I didn't trust, I think it would have been like, 'Oh, ugh. Really?' or I didn't like... yeah.

Lorrie: Well, that's exactly the scenario that's being laid out here, because yes. For me also, the person that foresaw every decision of mine was somebody that I trusted, although there were other people involved in all these decisions who did not have that kind of long-standing faith in this person. Nobody got hurt by this, but that is in fact the Dumbledore that this volume is setting up so that by the end of this volume, the big question is going to be, 'But was he trustworthy, or was he wrong to trust someone else?' So yes, it's really building up Dumbledore. Yeah, Dumbledore's suggestion to send Kreacher to work within the pre-existing house-elf community that's within Hogwarts... By far the best solution. Brilliant!

JC: And we've already seen that Hogwarts is a refuge for house-elves with nowhere else to go. Yeah. It also, then, raises some questions about the stories of all the other house-elves who work there.

Lorrie: Yeah. Just another person that Dumbledore has arranged to shelter. There's certainly enough work, there are enough resources, and they're not going to be the only person of their kind shut up in that place. And it comes pre-installed with lots and lots of little spy eyeballs to report back to Dumbledore if Kreacher does anything suspicious.

JC: True, true.

Lorrie: So yeah, Dumbledore is amazing.

JC: Hey, before we move on to the next part, which is a lot of fun, I love the idea of a magical will because in my real life, there's some will drama happening with some extended family. This is a very common thing that a lot of people experience when an elder in your family passes away and they have a house or they have some stuff or maybe there's money, and the fighting over "The will said this, but..." "Was the will changed?" all this drama.... I like the fact that the magic seals it; there's no arguing. Whatever the person put in the will and that was magically sealed or whatever, that's what happens.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: There's no "You don't get to possess that thing." It's not yours. It seems very cut and dry compared to the world that we live in, where there can be long, drawn-out lawsuits and all kinds of drama, and people stopping talking to each other and everything else. It's like, "Nope."

Lorrie: Although we do get the implication that Sirius managed this because Sirius himself happened to be very, very good at this sort of thing and had, of course, his entire life dealt with the horrible rules of his family. There's some mention in this chapter that yes, Sirius did in fact know what he was doing. Can you just imagine how that was the one thing he really focused on as he was stuck alone? 'Well, if there's one thing I have to be sure of, it's that Bellatrix is never going to get her horrible talons on this.' Ugh...

JC: And that idea that he had thought ahead that much. He's pretty young here, right? He's in his 30s.

Lorrie: He's 36.

JC: Yeah. Granted, this is a generation that had already lived through one war and had seen people die and he's had a lot of trauma, but the idea that at the age of 36 he thought, 'I need to make sure that if something happens to me, this is protected.' Wow.

Lorrie: It's also part of his character that he takes being a godfather so seriously. It's the most important thing in his life.

JC: That's true. Yeah.

Lorrie: If Harry had had living parents, then he would have inherited their house; now he's Sirius's godson, so there.

JC: Yeah. Yeah, that does make me wonder. I know that James and Lily's money passed on to Harry, but yeah, they had a house. They were other things... I wonder: did they not have time to put together a will? I know that you and I talked about this before, but when my kiddo was four, we realized we need to have a will. It just occurred to us suddenly, 'We don't have a will. What if something happened to both of us? What would happen to our child? What would happen to our house and everything?'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: We drew up a will. Our kid is about to turn eighteen, so we're going to need to go and revise it all, but yeah, it's one of those things. There's a time in your life when you have someone to protect and you realize, 'Oh, I need to make sure that I make it clear what should happen to this person if I am not able to make these decisions.' It's really sweet and beautiful that Sirius did that for Harry.

Lorrie: Yeah. Meanwhile, we get even the extra detail of how Dumbledore thinks of absolutely everything when he says, "Oh, now you have Buckbeak, too."

JC: Oh, Buckbeak...

Lorrie: "Do you want him to stay with Hagrid?" "Yes, definitely." "By the way, we've now called him 'Witherwings'." He really thinks of everything keeping people safe. So yeah, then we move into the portion of the chapter where Dumbledore gets to unleash his judgment on the Dursleys. What a dream come true!

JC: I love that he sends Harry off to finish packing. He says, "Are you packed?" and Harry's like, "Uhhh..." and Dumbledore wisely says, "Oh, you didn't think I was actually going to show up?" Harry goes and quickly stuffs all his things in his trunk, and when he comes back, they're just all sitting there in awkward silence.

Lorrie: And Dumbledore is enjoying himself.

JC: Oh, yeah. I like that he waits for Harry to come back before he lays into them.

Lorrie: Yeah. Not only does Harry deserve to really enjoy this scene, but it has the happy side effect of making the Dursleys more and more nervous. I like that we get the reminder from Petunia when Dumbledore says, "Okay, so Harry's about to come of age," and Petunia, who never had a word to say until now, says, "No, that's not how things are. The rules say... Harry is one month younger than Dudley, and Dudley is not of age yet." That is such a reminder that Dumbledore brought Petunia a one-year-old when she had a one-year-old. Nobody with a sixteen-month-old wants another one-year-old. Nobody. Not only is he dumping this baby on her doorstep, but there's zero support [and] a ton of judgment and expectations.

JC: Yeah. Back in the very beginning when we talked about the first book, the idea of 'you suddenly have two sets of diapers to change and two babies to try to put

down at night...' Oh, yeah. The thing is that Dudley and Harry could have been raised as brothers; they could have been raised almost as twins.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Dumbledore... that was his hope that Harry would grow up in a loving family. I love the way that it's very... I don't even know if passive-aggressive -- It's just aggressive, not passive.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's judgment. He is the embodiment of judgment. Just the way that this is a dream come true for anybody who, like Harry, grows up in a situation where they're mistreated and there's absolutely no greater power to call into account the people who can and do choose to be abusive... 'Wow, someday... Someday, you'll get judgment,' and in real life, often these people never do. This is totally the dream, even though, of course, this begs the question: wow, it would have been great at any point in the preceding several years if Dumbledore had shown up and done this then, but no, it's happening now and it's a full feast. Dumbledore explains to the Dursleys what's so important here: he says, "The Wizarding community is currently in a state of open warfare," so it is seriously important that they continue to protect Harry for one more year. Just as Harry realizes no, he has to be Kreacher's owner -- he has to; the dangers are too great otherwise -- this is being presented to the Dursleys. Okay. Yeah, he's judging their abuse. When he says to them, "The best that can be said is that he has at least escaped the appalling damage you have inflicted upon the unfortunate boy sitting between you," I did think that was a judgment on how they raise children and that they warped Dudley emotionally by never setting limits for him. But it is a really deep thing for him to say because it may not make a dent in Petunia and Vernon's minds, but it has awakened something super uneasy in Dudley and it's going to take a long time for him to work out what that could possibly mean. As Dudley moves into adulthood and the rest of his life, inevitably this is going to continue to show up. He's not going to be able to forget this; the way that he has such an uphill road to even beginning to understand what Dumbledore might have meant by that (questioning the life that he had been raised to think was perfect) really does take that much work in real life for people to break out of (however they were raised) when it's been really, really bad for them. It's a lot of work. That was a creepy, terrifying and truthful thing for Dumbledore to plant in the Dursleys as a family.

Oof. Yeah, it's not about how they treated Harry; it's a judgment on them as parents, one of the biggest threats and fears to self-image that I can imagine.

JC: Yeah. Whatever else we can say about the Dursleys, they genuinely adore Dudley to the point of not seeing all the bad things that he does, like when he turned into a bully, when he started running around with these other kids, when he mistreated the people around him. As long as whatever Dudley was doing made Dudley happy, there was no limit setting. There was no morality there, other than "get yours, and you deserve it."

Lorrie: "Break things, beat people." Yeah.

JC: Yeah. All of it's, "You deserve to get what you want." That describes the current leader of our country, too; no one has ever set a limit here and helped you have empathy for other people or understand that you're part of a society or part of this family group. All of these things that are important, things about being human beings, they haven't taught Dudley.

Lorrie: They're mirroring him back to himself in a distorted way so that he's going to have to deal with that on his own without them when he's older. The reproach that Dumbledore is laying thickly upon them is preparation for asking them for one more year. He is asking one last return for Harry in a year that will renew "the powerful protection while he can still call this house 'home'." So yeah, he comes with a request.

JC: I also get that feeling that Harry hasn't been there very long.

Lorrie: Nope.

JC: If we're a month before Harry's birthday, he's probably only been there for a week or so.

Lorrie: That's why he hasn't believed that 'Is this really going to happen? Oh, come on.'

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Surely he's going to suffer longer...

JC: Yeah, for sure, because that usually is what happens. But at the end of the last book, the Weasleys said, "Oh, it won't be long..."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: So this plan was already in place. Harry would go back just long enough to reset the magic, and then Dumbledore would come get him and then he would spend the rest of the summer at the Burrow. It's almost too good to be true, but knowing what's coming, he got to have one good summer. I guess he had part of a good -- Well, he started to have a good summer in the fourth book, except that it got interrupted by the Death Eaters.

Maybe bad stuff happens, I don't remember, this summer. We'll see, but this is the last summer of his childhood.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: One hundred percent. This is it, so it's nice that he gets to have one.

Lorrie: Well, it's only moments here and there, because no matter how good this summer is, he is only weeks into knowing that there's some destiny about him and Voldemort. That means he can't look forward to a normal life, so it takes a willful suspension for him to make happiness for himself.

JC: But I'm just thrilled that the author has set it up so that he has the opportunity for that. It's not just misery, misery, misery, misery.

Lorrie: Yeah. He already paid his dues last year.

JC: Yeah, for sure.

Lorrie: Yeah. Dumbledore tells Harry to keep his Invisibility Cloak. He sends everything else of Harry's on, magically, to the Burrow in one last casual demonstration of just how incredibly powerful he is. So convenient! "But no, the Invisibility Cloak, you're going to keep that," and that's going to be for the rest of the year. This continues to be part of the expert setting-up that this author is doing for how this year is going to unfold, and how the ground rules of the magic are more intense in this volume than they have been before. Oof.

JC: It's also this idea that Dumbledore is going to take Harry on a little errand before they go to the Burrow. After a year of Harry basically feeling like he's being ignored and no one's involving him in anything, it's like, "Okay, now you're going to be involved in something." It feels like a shift in that way, too, which is nice.

Lorrie: Yeah, and he has not been intimate with Dumbledore on this casual everyday one-on-one level before. It's only been at the end of every year, you get this prophetic session with Dumbledore while Harry is half-dead.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: What is this?

JC: But this book... He's got these two teachers in this book this year. Well, yeah, okay, maybe three, but there are two people in his life who are teaching him the forbidden magic this year and he gets to spend a lot of time with Dumbledore, which to me as a reader... I remember starting this book, and I wasn't spoiled for any of it, but the fact that Dumbledore was spending a lot of time with Harry... I was like, 'I know how the hero's journey works. Something bad is going to happen to Dumbledore. He's getting all this time... Harry, learn as much as you can.'

Lorrie: 'What's with that hand?' Yes.

JC: Yeah, exactly. Oh...

Lorrie: Well, I guess Harry's going to have to be his right hand.

JC: Ah... Ooh, hey. There we go. He's truly Dumbledore's man now, after all of this time. And next up, we get to meet Horace Slughorn.

Lorrie: Yeah. That's the title of the next chapter, and I'm very excited about this.

JC: Ooooo...kay.

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.