

# Harry Potter

AND THE  
CURSED CHILD

• \* •

THE JOURNEY

BEHIND THE SCENES

OF THE  
AWARD-WINNING



STAGE PRODUCTION

*Based on an original story by*

J.K. ROWLING, JOHN TIFFANY & JACK THORNE

•

*A Play by*

JACK THORNE

•

*Produced by*

SONIA FRIEDMAN PRODUCTIONS, COLIN CALLENDER &  
HARRY POTTER THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS

• \* •

*Foreword by*

J.K. ROWLING

*Written by*

JODY REVENSON

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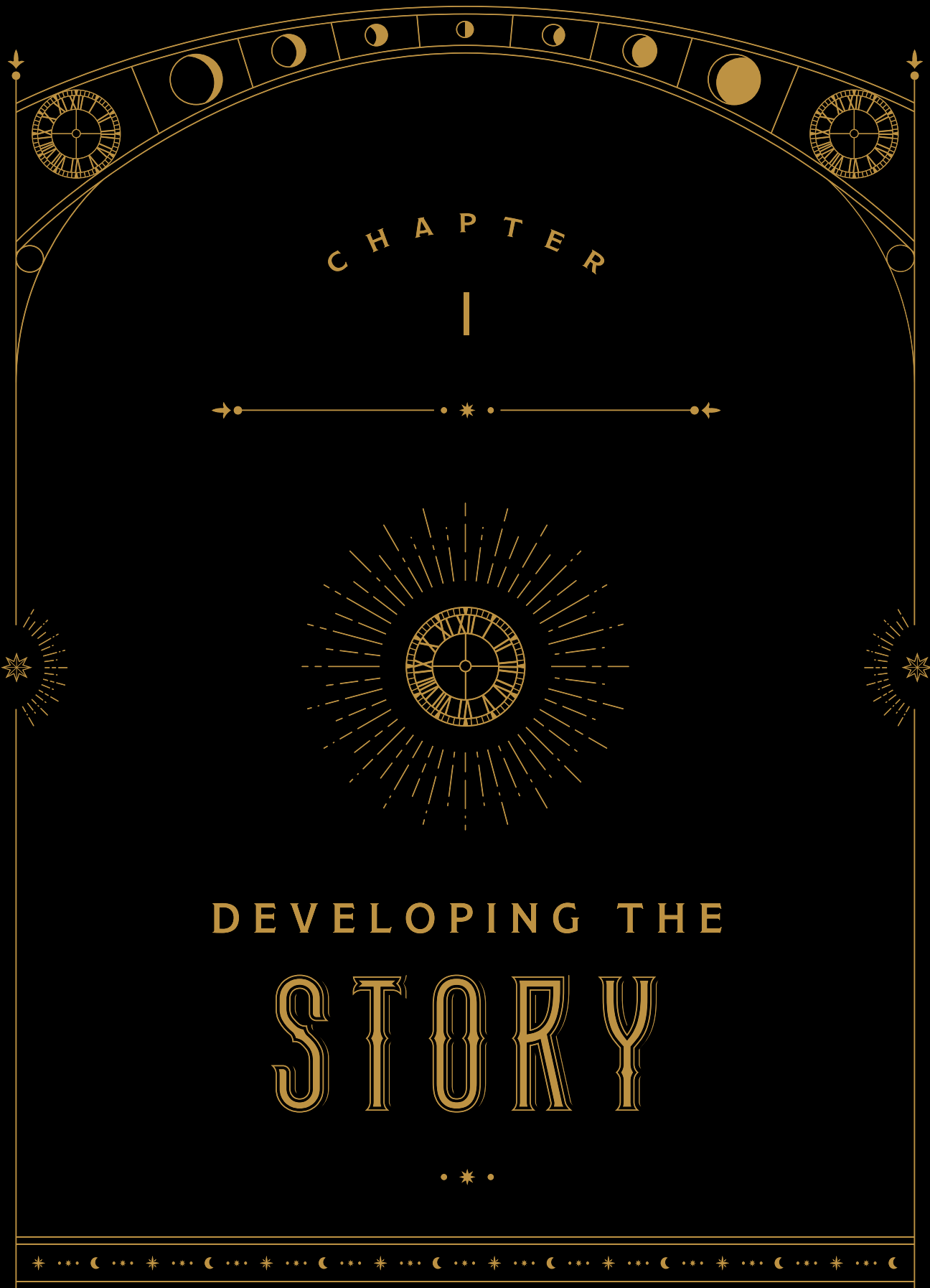
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On pages 222-223, cast members from new and ongoing  
productions of *Cursed Child*: (top row, from left)  
Gyton Grantley, Manali Datar, Paula Arundell, Original  
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Dominic Short, 2019 West End; Tom Wren, William  
McKenna, Original Australian Company; Sean Rees-  
Wemyss, Lucy Goleby, Gareth Reeves, Original Australian  
Company; Helen Aluko, Franc Ashman, Thomas Aldridge,  
2018 West End; (middle row) Rakié Ayola, 2017 West  
End; Samuel Blenkin, 2017 West End; Michelle Gayle,  
Rayxia Ojo, Thomas Aldridge, 2019 West End; Joe  
Idris-Roberts, Helen Aluko, Jonathan Case, 2018 West  
End; Diane Davis, Nicholas Podany, James Snyder,  
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Roberts, 2019 Broadway; Jamie Glover, Emma Lowndes,  
Theo Ancient, 2017 West End; Nicola Alexis, 2018 West  
End; Matt Mueller, Nadia Brown, Jenny Jules, 2019  
Broadway; Jonathan Case, James Howard, 2019 West End  
All quotes from J.K. Rowling from interviews conducted  
in 2018.



CHAPTER

1



DEVELOPING THE

STORY



**F**RIEDMAN, CALLENDER, TIFFANY, and Thorne had all agreed that the jumping-off point for the play should be the epilogue of *Deathly Hallows*. “We felt sure that the first scene of the play would be the final scene of the last book,” says John Tiffany. “That came naturally.” But after making that leap, where would they land? At their next meeting, they looked again at what was happening in that final scene at the train station and who was present. To Jack Thorne, it was notable that Rowling had put Draco Malfoy’s son and Harry Potter’s younger son in the same year at Hogwarts: Clearly they were destined to meet and, like their fathers before them, would have an impact on each other’s lives. “And as soon as those two were together, it put the dual father-son relationships into relief,” says Thorne.

Tiffany and Thorne didn’t want a whole new story about getting to know Harry. “We wanted it to be about where Harry was now, and the scars that accompany him from that time,” says Thorne. “What happens to a kid when they don’t have any parental support, and they’re entrusted with the world? How do you come out of that with any sense of sanity?”

They also wanted the plot to tie into something in Harry’s early life. “The story that Jack and I both loved was *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*,” says Tiffany. “For the first time, the world opens. The characters are maturing and the world is expanding.” In wanting the drama to revolve around Harry as a father to Albus, *Goblet of Fire* offered another father-son relationship that would create a contrast. “The scene of Amos Diggory, when he finds out that Cedric’s been killed, when Harry

brings his body back, it’s just heart-wrenching,” says Tiffany. “The most unnatural thing in the world is to outlive your kid.” Cedric’s death would have left a deep impression on Harry in numerous ways. “That was the first death Harry was responsible for,” says Thorne. “Well, he wasn’t responsible for *anyone’s* death, but he took Cedric there. He was responsible in a Harry way.”

The playwright also appreciated *Goblet’s* structure. “There’s three tasks,” he explains. “That’s very useful. *Goblet* had lots of stuff going for it. So, when we went up to see Jo for the first time, we went armed with that book.”



IN APRIL 2014, TIFFANY AND THORNE flew up to Edinburgh to see Rowling. Tiffany remembers a moment of trepidation as he introduced Thorne to her. “Suddenly, I thought to myself, ‘What if they don’t get on?’ But within four seconds, I was like, ‘Hello? Hello?’” Rowling has said, “Jack’s just one of my people, I knew instantly. He’s phenomenal, emotionally understanding, and totally unafraid to go into the dark place.”

Rowling brought them to her writing room, where their first meeting lasted the entire day. “Jack, John, and I knew what we wanted to do emotionally,” Rowling has said, “and we discussed ideas I already had about what might have happened next.” She explains further: “I was fascinated by Albus as I wrote the *Deathly Hallows* epilogue, and felt a real pull to go with him to Hogwarts.” Tiffany and Thorne shared with Rowling their idea to make connections with both the plot and the emotional fallout of *Goblet of Fire*. “It’s Harry’s first death,” says Thorne, “and dealing with Cedric and what Cedric meant . . . It was a transformative year for Harry. So, what if we put Albus and Scorpius in that year, in their fourth year at Hogwarts?” Rowling has said, “The three of us developed this story together, always, I feel, with our eye on family, loss, what it means to be a father, and what it means to be the child of a very unusual father.”

Thorne had questions for Rowling beyond what was in the books in order to be able to shape the story. “I think most of what I found out, and was excited by, I got into the play. Such as, what is Hermione doing now? You sort of knew that Harry was going to become an Auror,” says Thorne. “Where Hermione ended up was really fascinating to me.”





THORNE DRAFTED A FORTY-FIVE PAGE treatment, and conversations among the team continued, especially between Thorne and Rowling. “We kept talking, talking, talking,” says Thorne. “It was a mixture of ‘Could we try this?’ and her going, ‘Ooh, that makes me think of this.’ It was a constant deep-core ‘mining.’ The thing is to shake the author for as much information as possible because their knowledge is your secret weapon, and their knowledge isn’t always on paper.

“And this is not hyperbole: She is without doubt the most supportive writer I’ve ever worked with,” Thorne states. “Not that she would say yes to everything. It was in the way she would guide and help and be there.” Thorne and Rowling would bounce ideas back and forth on email when he wrestled with something. “She consistently made it easy and not seem like it was the hugest job in the world, which of course it was.”

Thorne revised his treatment several times before it went to script, constantly rereading and circling back to *Goblet*. “Most times during this process, a writer delivers a draft, you give them notes, and you get the next draft,” says Colin Callender. “And it’s one step forward and two steps back. Well, Sonia and John and I would give notes to Jack, and every time the next draft would be an advance—it never went back. Every draft, the play got better and better.”

As the story development progressed, Thorne and Tiffany realized that—much like the epic adventures of the Harry Potter novels—the adventure they were crafting with Rowling for the play went beyond the scope of the typical stage production. “So we went to Sonia and Colin, and they said, ‘Why don’t you do it in two parts?’”

Tiffany recalls. “We didn’t think through any of the practical implications at the time, which we have since had to embrace for all its complexity,” says Callender. “But we didn’t even think twice about it.”



THORNE HAD ONE PARTICULAR IDEA that was important to him to weave into the story. “I really wanted to get into what it’s like at Hogwarts when you don’t fit in,” he states. “One of the first conversations Jo and I had was about the fact that we both found school excruciating. I said I thought that ten or eleven might be the hardest age for a kid, because that was the age I realized it was possible I might not have any friends. That was the age when I thought, this is possibly the moment when I’m going to be on my own.”

This fear of not fitting in draws directly from the *Deathly Hallows* epilogue, as Albus voices his concerns about being sorted into Slytherin. It also manifests in the most prominent “new” character in *Cursed Child*: Scorpius Malfoy. While Scorpius is introduced in the epilogue, it’s only in *Cursed Child* that his character is explored. Albus meets Scorpius onboard the Hogwarts Express, where Harry met Ron and Hermione. It’s apparent that Scorpius is sweet and smart and does not seem to fit the Malfoy mold. Rather, he’s a geek about Hogwarts history, worries about making friends, and wouldn’t hurt a fly. “I think people seem to love Scorpius as soon as they meet him,” declares Thorne. But the writer admits that there’s a lot of himself in the character. “Yes, I wrote myself into Hogwarts. He’s much nicer than me, but he’s like the kid who really couldn’t fit in even if you gave him a crowbar. He

{ above }

From left,  
Jack Thorne,  
J.K. Rowling,  
and John Tiffany,  
at work

doesn't know how other kids function, and I found other kids bewildering. People find him charming—it's nice that it's turned into a celebration of the nerd. But there's also a lot of pain in Scorpius, and that was important to me."

Albus and Scorpius become the closest of friends—a pair of misfits banding together in a life-changing, live-saving friendship. "For me, it was always about friendship and about my desire for a best friend who loved me," Thorne admits. "When you're best friends as kids, it's a stronger relationship than you'll ever have with anyone, because you live in each other's pockets."



Dear Jo,

Here is a treatment. It's changed a little bit since our discussions, but I think retains most of the stuff—with some other stuff added in. What it doesn't have is any sense of the magic that John Tiffany will throw over the stage, but it's written to allow as much of that as possible. I've loved every second of writing it, undoubtedly my most daunting job, but one that has brought me so much joy. I hope you like some of it, there's so much that will change.

Jack

Dear Jack—

Wow.

*I love it. I really do.*

*You've so got the measure of the characters and where the story needs to take us. I'm truly blown away by it.*

*My one second thought is Marazion. I think we should have a very elderly McGonagall instead. What do you think? Other minor points for discussion can be done face-to-face but I think it's wonderful as it is and really couldn't be happier.*

*Looking forward to seeing you—thank you and congratulations!*

Jxx

Dear Jo—

You have no idea what this e-mail means to me. I've felt like such an imposter in your beautiful world and I so just wanted to do you and Harry justice. And the fact that I've pleased you—that's just awesome. Awesome awesome awesome.

I love the idea of an elderly McGonagall. I think that'd be marvellous. And I truly can't wait to talk about it face-to-face.

I have so loved doing this, and I love how long the road looks ahead, and I promise I'll do everything in my power not to let you down.

Thank you thank you thank you,

Jackxxx

THROUGH THE PROCESS OF STORY development, characters came and went, always in the interest of better serving the story. "Obviously there were lots and lots of dramaturgical and narrative changes, but I think we always knew the characters we wanted," says Friedman. "I wanted Dobby in it, but that didn't happen. And we talked a little bit about whether Sirius Black could be there or not." To all involved, it couldn't just be a roll call of Harry Potter characters. "That was an ongoing dialogue all the way through," says Callender. "Everyone had a favorite character, and there wasn't room to have everybody in it."

"They had to have a part in the narrative; there has to be a purpose for them being there," says Friedman. "We had the conversation about who we couldn't tell this story without. Of course, there's a number of characters we couldn't fit in. But we certainly never had a major character cut."

Not cut, but it might have taken a little time before one appeared. In Thorne's original treatment, the headmaster of the school was a professor named Marazion. After Rowling read the treatment, she sent an email back to him. "It was just lovely," says Thorne, "but had one big note in it which was: I think Marazion doesn't fit. I think we need Professor McGonagall."

Additional family members make an appearance on platform nine and three-quarters during the epilogue to *Deathly Hallows*: Hermione and Ron's young son, Hugo, and Teddy Lupin, Remus and Tonks's son. Thorne, Tiffany, and Rowling discussed Teddy Lupin's possible involvement at length. "Teddy's an amazing character," says Thorne, "and he really fitted into our world in terms of 'the sins of the parents visiting the children.' But we realized that we just couldn't do service to him. Every character you use, you've got to use them properly. We reached our limit quite quickly without it feeling like cameos." So Teddy Lupin was left out, and it was suggested that perhaps Hugo was being watched by his grandmother Molly, rather than coming to King's Cross that day.

Luna Lovegood made it to the rehearsal phase but not beyond. Thorne originally played with the idea that elements of the story heralding the return of darkness would be accompanied by the smell of cinnamon. "We would have had the smell of cinnamon wafting through the theater," says Tiffany. "Unfortunately, things like that never work because of air-conditioning." Luna would have been sensitive to the smell, and "she would have been in the Ministry of Magic meetings, saying, 'Has anyone smelt the cinnamon?'" says Thorne. "She was being very Luna-y, and very lovely and interesting, but it just felt like an in-joke for

the fans who knew Luna. And we were cheapening her by not giving her the space to be brilliant as well as eccentric.”

One of the hardest characters to lose, in many ways, was Astoria Malfoy, wife of Draco and mother to Scorpius. Astoria appeared in the first few drafts, but Thorne and Tiffany came to the same realization that there wasn’t enough space in the story to do justice to her. “We didn’t have time to go into Draco’s private world—we could only see Harry’s private world,” Thorne explains. “We barely see any of Hermione’s private world. It was a problem that we had this character and we weren’t serving her.”

Thorne and Tiffany brought this concern to Rowling. “We pitched to Jo that we wanted Scorpius’s mum to be dead, and explained what that did for Draco—being a single parent—and what that did for Scorpius to remove her.” Rowling thought it was an interesting idea and even gave them the illness that would take Astoria’s life: a blood malediction.

Without Astoria, Draco and Scorpius lost the emotional glue that held them together. “And it just immediately opened up the whole story,” says Thorne. “When we talked to Jo at the beginning, learning her thoughts and all the stories she has in her head, Astoria was this very beautiful woman. I miss the fact that we don’t get to tell that story, but hopefully there’s hints of her in Scorpius.”



WHILE HE DEVELOPED THE RELATIONSHIP between Harry and Albus, Thorne’s attention was caught by what Harry tells his son about his name in the final chapter of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*: “Albus Severus, you were named after two headmasters of Hogwarts. One of them was a Slytherin and he was probably the bravest man I ever knew.” Harry and Ginny’s oldest son, James, is named for Harry’s father; their daughter, Lily, is named for his mother. “They got family names and he got legacy names,” says Thorne. “Okay, being a James or a Lily is tough. But being an Albus, your parents have decided something about you right at the beginning of your life.”

The tension that develops between father and son results in a heated confrontation and words are said between them that are immediately regrettable. Thorne chose to write this scene first: “I wanted to make sure I was able to do it.” He was well aware that no one other than Rowling had written new Harry Potter stories to that point. “No one else had chosen what he would say. It was a ludicrous responsibility, and I wanted to make sure she was okay with it.” When Thorne sent in his first treatment, he included the explosive, hurtful dialogue

between father and son that is a catalyst in the story. Rowling wrote back to Thorne that she loved what he had done. “Which was lovely, amazing, and such a ridiculous relief,” says Thorne. “And then in the first draft, I cut that scene out and John said, ‘Where’s that gone?’”

Thorne had removed the scene because he felt as if he was putting Harry in a very dark place very early on. But Tiffany told him that was the point. “As often is the case in writing, you go to a brutal place, and then you pull yourself back from there, because you get scared,” Thorne explains. “John pushed me back to that brutal place, and it was the right decision.” He also admits that removing the scene had made writing the rest of the play harder. “And by putting it back, it made everything make better sense.”

The fight between Harry and Albus is shocking, but real and relatable. “I know that there’s a lot of people who are very uncomfortable that Harry says what he does, but I think it’s true,” says Thorne, who became a first-time father during the production. “I don’t think it makes him a bad man, I think it makes him very confused. He has to be in a dark place from his childhood, and that’s the way of exposing it; we had to go there.”

The effects of a fight like this between parent and child would be devastating. “You would want to destroy the world,” says John Tiffany. “The energy levels of unhappiness and hatred and anger that would be released at that point would be seismic enough to do what happens in *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*.”



SONIA FRIEDMAN CALLS THE DEVELOPMENT process for *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* “a complete joy and an utter privilege.” Friedman clearly remembers when she read the first drafts and saw the names Harry Potter and Dumbledore on the page. “I was reading it in bed—I seemed to always be in bed when I was reading it; it’s where I do my best reading—and I could not believe I was reading a script and these names were in this play I might be producing. My geekness was aquivering! I literally was shaking. And when I read the father-son scene from Jack, the key dramatic shift, I just had tears flowing down my cheeks, going, ‘Oh my god, we’ve got a play!’ I wouldn’t say it’s my favorite scene in terms of making me feel good about the world,” she continues, “but it’s my favorite scene, because it’s the scene where I knew we had a play. I remember John saying exactly the same thing the same day: ‘We’ve got a play. We’ve got a play.’”



{ opposite }

Emails between Jack Thorne and J.K. Rowling, on Thorne’s original treatment for *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*

{ next page }

Jamie Parker (Harry Potter) and Sam Clemmett (Albus Potter) in the Original West End Production

HARRY:

You wish me dead?

ALBUS:

No! I just wish you weren't my dad.

HARRY (*seeing red*):

Well, there are times I wish you weren't my son.

*There's a silence. ALBUS nods. Pause.*

*HARRY realizes what he's said.*

No, I didn't mean that . . .

—ACT ONE, SCENE SEVEN

