

Transcript

Episode 3.19

Book 3, Chapter 19: The Servant of Lord Voldemort

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 Three, Chapter Nineteen: The Servant of Lord Voldemort.

Lorrie: The Servant of Lord Voldemort. Snape reveals that he took wolfsbane to Lupin's office, saw Lupin going to the Shrieking Shack on the Marauder's Map, and followed him there under the invisibility cloak. He thinks Lupin and Sirius are conspiring and tries to capture them, so the kids knock him out. Sirius explains his side of the story. Lupin and Sirius reveal Scabbers as Peter Pettigrew and are about to execute him when Harry says not to kill Peter, but take him to the castle to send to Azkaban. JC, how was the experience of rereading this chapter?

JC: It was really interesting to reread it and see just how much information we get. It is a lot, and I think that the author actually does a really good job of weaving it into the dialogue so that it feels very natural. It doesn't feel like Captain Exposition, which is a joke I don't know if anybody gets but me at this point. The Captain Exposition joke, I'll tell it really quickly: I was at a con -- I'm pretty sure this was a Star Wars convention; it was a while back -- and there was a skit that this group had done that was a parody, kind of like you would do in a fanfic. It's a skit kind of thing, like a play that they had written. Every time they needed an info dump, this Imperial Soldier would come out under the stage and he would say, "I'm Captain Exposition, and I'm going to tell you what's happening now!" It was really well done, it was funny, so I've always thought, Captain Exposition... the guy has to come out and tell you what the hell's going on. Snape, in a way, catalyzes that, but it's so interesting that in this scene he has all of the evidence and he's put it together exactly the wrong way.

Lorrie: Yeah

JC: To his credit, it's actually really convoluted and difficult, right? This is not an easy, obvious thing.

Lorrie: It's really not.

JC: But still, it is interesting. It's also interesting to me that he saw the Marauder's Map and knew what it was. I think that he knew what it was before, when he found it on Harry; he just didn't know how to work it. But it made me wonder: had he ever seen it in operation prior to that, when he was younger? Or...

Lorrie: I don't think he had.

JC: But he's smart. He looked at it, he knew what it was.

Lorrie: Because the way that he was talking about it -- when he first catches Harry with it -- he kind of has an idea of what it is but he doesn't really know the details, except that it then comes out and spits insults at him. But then when he sees it open, he's like, "Ah, this is the document. So they call themselves the Marauders. Hewhewhew. Okay."

JC: Right, so he looks at it and sees where everyone is. Doesn't see Peter Pettigrew, interestingly enough, or if he does he doesn't mention it.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: But yeah, he's so angry in the scene... he's losing control.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: There's the moment when he's shouting at Hermione and sparks are coming out of his wand. It's the closest I think we've ever seen him to losing control, because he is usually buttoned down. He's in control of all of his anger; he's about to lose it here.

Lorrie: He really is.

JC: I wrote that multiple times in my notes. "Wow, he's really angry!"

Lorrie: He's really pushed. I like that at the beginning, he takes off the invisibility cloak and he says, "Very useful, Potter. I thank you." There's that trick again of referring to people only by their last names, so that you're not sure if it's the father or the son that he means; of course in this case, it's both. But it also is exciting to me, because this is a Deathly Hallow -- and it works for Snape -- that shows that no matter how wrong he is about a lot of things, he went in there with protective intention.

JC: Interesting. So if you're using the cape for malicious intent, it would not make you invisible?

Lorrie: I think it would work for anybody, but in *Deathly Hallows* there's all this stuff about how it doesn't really work great unless you're the real owner or you are using it to help others and not for your own gain. Voldemort has the Elder Wand and he's casting magic with it and it's no better than any other wand, whereas if you're really the owner of the Elder Wand, then all the power comes together.

JC: Okay.

Lorrie: It's not that the invisibility cloak wouldn't have made Snape invisible -- it would have -- but it also shows the alignment that, misguided as he is, he is going there trying to protect. He is in good faith.

JC: Right. I think that's what stood out to me: the anger is real and it's raw, and it's coming from some place deep inside him. He's not posturing, he's not....

Lorrie: No.

JC: It's not like, "Haha, I'm finally getting one over on Sirius." It's really not that. He's just bone-deep angry. He's not being rational. He's so angry.

Lorrie: He's not doing it to score any points. Yeah.

JC: Right. That's really relatable, honestly.

Lorrie: Yeah. Speaking of being in good faith: the whole reason he stumbled across what was happening this evening was because he personally was going to deliver wolfsbane to Lupin.

JC: Oh, my God, because Lupin didn't show up for it. Really?! Okay.

Lorrie: He forgot.

JC: This launches a bunch of ships right here.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Yeah. We're not a Snape-centric podcast necessarily, but it's hard to ignore the fact that that says a lot. Okay, yeah, he had lots of reasons for that, but he's like, 'Well, Lupin didn't show up. What's going on? I'm going to take the wolfsbane to him.' Wow.

Lorrie: And even though we're not a Snape-centric podcast, this is a Snape-centric moment in this part of *Prisoner of Azkaban*, where all of these Marauder guys get their turn in the spotlight. We've had Lupin's turn, we've had Sirius, and now Snape is foaming at the mouth.

JC: Yup.

Lorrie: But yeah, he went to Lupin's office and Lupin had left the map unwiped. If you can imagine, that is the first rule of the Marauder's Map: you have to hide it. As soon as you're done, hide it. Something had happened to get Lupin so preoccupied that he forgot.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And this is the reason that lycanthropy cannot be fully controlled, because in the Harry Potter series, this is what is called 'the flaw in the plan'. Human love and protectiveness... If you love somebody or if you feel protective of somebody who is less powerful and under your protection, then when you're called to protect them, that overrides everything. It's a flaw, but it's also the most beautiful and powerful thing about humans and we can't get rid of it anyway. It's built into us. That urgency... Lupin saw the children with Peter Pettigrew and then with Sirius Black; he had to go. He had to go so urgently that he forgot to wipe the map. This force cannot be controlled in humans, and it can't be controlled for. He cannot guarantee that he's going to perfectly comply with wolfsbane because he's human, not because he's a werewolf; Snape is no better or no worse. He's no different. Later on in the *Order of the Phoenix*, he does the exact same thing when he leaves his worst memory unattended so that Harry goes and sees it, because he finds out that one of his Slytherins has shown up almost dead and he forgets to take care of that security precaution; he just runs. This is it. This is the flaw in the plan, but it also means that you cannot say it's safe to control lycanthropy with only this one medication that depends on human trial and error.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: You can't, because there is something more important than that, and that's protective love. Here we have Snape reading the map, seeing the same thing, going running.

JC: Almost the same thing, but yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, seeing, okay, there's a convergence of danger here. Snape says, very meanly and degradingly, that "[Dumbledore] was convinced [Lupin] was harmless... a *tame* werewolf." Okay, that is degrading, but it's also essentially correct that Dumbledore did believe that, and that it's not something you can really bet people's lives on. The lesson I'm getting from this -- one of the lessons -- is when there's a disability this severe (that Lupin is suffering from), respect the disability. Why would it be ruining his life so much if it were that easy to guarantee and control? It's not, it's not. It's really serious. He's suffering for a reason. You can't just say, "We'll just be careful." It's a serious condition.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Also, respect the immutability of human protectiveness as a flaw and as a strength and a constant. Dumbledore should be protecting other people from Lupin, but most of all there should be -- between Lupin and Dumbledore and everyone -- protection of Lupin from the danger that he is going to be in if he transforms and causes harm and then has to be taken down. This is really leaving him unprotected, because you can't guarantee human constancy that way. Meanwhile, the werewolf in question....

JC: Yeah. I guess I'm thinking, what's the alternative? The alternative is to exclude people like Lupin from participation in public life. As a society, do we say this is a risk we're willing to take?

Lorrie: Well, it's not necessarily public life, but you can't have him at a school. He has a regular predictable schedule, and teaching does not respect that schedule. If you were a remote, online I.T. worker, then that could be built into the schedule. But if you're going to be on the grounds with students, that's not the kind of job that is compatible with this disability.

JC: This is a conversation that we occasionally have in teacher education circles: obviously, teachers are human beings, so there are plenty of teachers who have disabilities who are doing a great job. But definitely, there are situations where people raise questions that are difficult to answer: okay, what if you have a person who -- I'm trying to think of a good example -- a teacher who has some kind of.... Maybe there's a teacher who is a wheelchair user, and in the event of an emergency, would that teacher be able to fulfill their role of getting the kids out of the classroom? These are questions that well-meaning people ask quite often.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This idea of 'when does your disability make it a challenge for you to fulfill the job that you're doing?' The answer that we have is that we have civil rights protections for people with disabilities, we have laws. We have the Americans with Disabilities Act, we have the Rehabilitation Act - in particular, section 504 -- that says that if you're otherwise qualified, then your workplace can't discriminate against you and must provide accommodations. What would happen in the case of a school -- we have a teacher in that situation -- is that there would be other teachers whose job it would be to come and just make sure that everything had gone correctly. I'm thinking of this situation: Lupin's got a 504 plan, it's the wolfsbane. Snape is the teacher who's been assigned to make sure that everything's going smoothly, but unfortunately,

there's this previous relationship between them that, in a very human way, makes that a challenge.

Lorrie: Well also, though, Lupin's disability makes him fatally dangerous to others, which is not your standard disability.

JC: Yeah. It's a stretch, for sure.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: It's a stretch, but I think that many people in the fandom do view Lupin's lycanthropy as a metaphor for disability. That's an argument people make.

Lorrie: It is, but in this case -- and there are disabilities in real life that are dangerous like this -- it could be fatal to others and it could be fatal to Lupin. It's not a matter of him not having access to the full range of teacher requirements. It's 'Can he safely be around other humans?' If it's not safe... There are things we don't let people do because it's not safe. There are people who can't drive cars because there's some reason why they cannot safely be on the road. It's not only the other people around Lupin that have to be protected. It's Lupin, also. Oi.

JC: Okay, we got off-track.

Lorrie: No, it's not though.

JC: But it's an interesting issue.

Lorrie: This is the essence of the disagreement between Snape and Dumbledore, where Dumbledore had an ideal and he wanted to guarantee it. There were excellent reasons why Dumbledore's wish for this to work (if it did work) would be great. Snape's skepticism is so vindictive that it's easy to think, 'Oh, Snape is just overreacting or he's just being vicious,' but there's real danger here. Lupin, meanwhile, is saying: "'Severus, you're making a mistake,' said Lupin urgently," and that is a whole different angle that's happening in this chapter where there's a terrible danger of condemning somebody without a trial. The important thing is you have to hear the whole story and that theme is in so many ways written throughout this volume, and Snape cannot hear it. His eyes are gleaming fanatically. His fantasy at that moment is confronting Dumbledore to say, "I told you so." It's all about Dumbledore for Snape; he is reliving the origins of this disagreement with Dumbledore from his own school days, when Dumbledore said, "You're not allowed to talk about what happened to you," and prioritized Lupin's needs over Snape's, even though Snape had also had this traumatic near-death experience after prolonged bullying. Whether or not Dumbledore handled that perfectly -- and I would think, as a new headmaster, he was just making it up as he went along -- anybody has the right to learn from their mistakes, and we see later on in this series that Dumbledore does learn from how he handled that with Snape. He does find out, no, you have to handle that differently. But yeah, at the time, there's this way that he prioritized Lupin's needs over Snape's in a situation when both of them needed help, and Snape is -- for, I think, understandable reasons -- not able to let go. He is in a PTSD flashback. All of his all-caps screaming at Hermione and insisting that he's going to cut off all the explanations and just go ahead... He cannot be listening.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Lupin minimizes what the conflict had been, but he's basically correct. He says: "Is a school-boy grudge worth putting an innocent man back inside Azkaban?" Okay, it was a little

worse than a school-boy grudge, but no, it is not worth putting an innocent man back in Azkaban, and Snape can't hear it. Sirius is fighting Snape, and oh, I love this. This is, to me, such an intense moment: Snape puts his wand in Sirius' face and says, "'Give me a reason... Give me a reason to do it, and I swear I will.' Black stopped dead. It would have been impossible to say which face showed more hatred." All right, first of all, Snape whispers when he's at his most intense, and in this chapter we see how each person is at their most extreme. When Lupin is at his most intense, he's casual and pleasant; when Lupin goes all pleasant, then you're like, 'Oh, no, I'm in trouble.' Sirius roars. Snape whispers.

JC: Harry goes all caps.

Lorrie: Yeah. The deadlocked hostility between Snape and Sirius is so equal. I really actually love how they are foils for each other in the most intense way. Before they die, both of them try so hard -- and they make some progress -- to work together despite loathing each other, and I find it really touching because they absolutely hate each other. They're both incredibly passionate people. This equality in deadlocked hostility happens, I think, one other time, and that's in *Deathly Hallows* when Harry tells Vernon Dursley, "You know, the Death Eaters are going to capture you to try to get to me, because they assume that I care enough about you to go save your life;" then Harry and Vernon look at each other and they don't say anything. It's a moment of complete perfect ambivalence.

JC: "We both know."

Lorrie: No one's going to say a thing. The hatred is so equal. So yeah, we have that hatred between Snape and Sirius. And Hermione... Oh, bless her. She's so bravely asking questions of Snape and Lupin and Sirius, trying to keep things at this extremely important juncture fair. 'Let's make sure we get the whole story.' She is being the embodiment of what it would be like if we humans could go back in time to things in our past with more insight and maturity. I say that, and then Snape does the all-caps hollering that you mentioned, where he yells, "KEEP QUIET, YOU STUPID GIRL! DON'T TALK ABOUT WHAT YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!" Which I find hilariously funny.

JC: There's so many wrong words in that statement. She's not stupid.

Lorrie: Hermione is, first of all, not stupid. He's so beyond reason, but one thing that outburst from him tells me, that's actually weirdly comforting, is oh, the past me wouldn't have listened to my older, more mature self anyway. Any grief-stricken wish that I could go back in time and do something over better -- not so ignorant -- I don't know. Maybe the past me would have been like Snape here, just spitting and hollering and not able to listen.

JC: Hmm.

Lorrie: I don't know. Maybe we don't have to beat ourselves up that we didn't do something better in the past. Maybe it was going to be that way. Anyway, that's a really loaded moment for me: Hermione trying to bring reason and getting shouted at in this completely unhinged manner.

JC: Right. What's really scary, I think, in this scene, too, is just how angry Snape is and the fact that he threatens Sirius. He's like, "I'll kill you right now." is what he's saying. Even a little later in the scene, he talks about dragging Sirius up. "The dementors are waiting to give you a kiss; maybe they'll have one for Lupin, too." This idea that, at this point, he's condemned them as far as he's concerned.

Lorrie: He's going to do it. He's going to do it without a trial.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And that's really scary.

Lorrie: The thing that you're not supposed to do.

JC: And we can recognize that he's super angry, but also that is pretty awful. Harry and Hermione... They're the ones who are trying to bring it back down to, "Wait, wait, there's something going on here. We need the story, and also, that's not justice."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "Just killing this guy is not justice."

Lorrie: Well, Snape, -- when he's fantasizing that he's about to do away with Sirius and he says, "Vengeance is very sweet" -- immediately made me think of how, when we found out with *Deathly Hallows* that Neville does not kill Bellatrix, people thought, 'Oh, that would have been satisfying.' That would have been vengeance. In this series, there's this strong point: vengeance is not a trustworthy filter. When you're feeling that -- Snape wants to call the dementors without a trial, he's beyond reason, he's having a flashback -- no. Don't make these life and death decisions when you're in that state. You can't understand what you're seeing.

JC: There's another really interesting moment here, which touches back on something that you said in a previous episode -- I can't remember if it's the last one or one before -- where Snape is like, "Okay, we're all going to go up to the castle," and Sirius says, "As long as the boy brings his rat up to the castle." This idea that Sirius has already decided he's going to die for this, and he's not expecting to come out of this scenario alive.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: He just wants to make sure that Peter gets exposed for what he is and punished for it.

Lorrie: And that's been the case ever since he realized that Peter got James and Lily killed. Sirius has been ready to give up his life.

JC: Before we get into the whole unveiling of what's happening in the telling of the story, it's very interesting, too, that there's also a moment where Harry and Snape have this little face-off and they both say exactly the words they've been wanting to say to each other for years. It's so interesting that, in this heightened moment when everyone's just... Harry has no qualms about saying this to this particular teacher; this teacher has no qualms about saying this to Harry. No one's holding back at this point. That's the sign to me that we've gotten to the edge.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. Something big's going to happen after this. This can't go on.

Lorrie: There's nothing left to lose.

JC: Yeah. "'Don't ask me to fathom the way a werewolf's mind works,' hissed Snape. 'Get out of the way, Potter.'" And then all caps: "'YOU'RE PATHETIC!' Harry yelled. 'JUST BECAUSE THEY

MADE A FOOL OF YOU AT SCHOOL, YOU WON'T EVEN LISTEN --" Then Snape butts in: "SILENCE! I WILL NOT BE SPOKEN TO LIKE THAT!" And then he goes on to say, "Like father, like son, Potter! I've just saved your neck; you should be thanking me on bended knee! You would have been well served if he killed you! You'd have died like your father, too arrogant to believe you might be mistaken in Black -- now get out of the way, or I will *make you*. GET OUT OF THE WAY, POTTER!" So this whole.... They've both been wanting to say this to each other and there's nothing left to stop them.

Lorrie: That's just how they are.

JC: Yeah. Oh...

Lorrie: I love that when Snape is trying to attack Lupin, Harry uses the Crookshanks defense: Harry puts his own body between the two of them. It's like, "You'll have to go through me," which Crookshanks has been doing to protect Sirius. I do also love, during this outburst, when Snape is hollering, "Get out of the way... If I hadn't been here to save your skin --" That is a good reminder he is acting in good faith, mistaken though he is, and he cannot believe the ingratitude.

JC: "This little shit!"

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "This little shit who's just like his father! Argh!" Yeah.

Lorrie: Harry says, "No, Lupin's fine. He could have killed me about a hundred times this year," and that happens again and again in this series. Snape also could have killed Harry a lot of times and didn't; Peter Pettigrew says that in this chapter, too: "I've never hurt Harry." Then in *Goblet of Fire*, we're going to find that Barty Crouch, Jr. never hurt Harry. You can't tell in this universe if somebody is your friend or enemy just because they're not killing you.

JC: True.

Lorrie: Yeah. Here's Snape completely intent on harming Sirius and Lupin, taking them out without a trial. The only thing left to do is what the kids do: they do *Expelliarmus* on him and they knock him out. He cannot be reasoned with.

JC: Oh. The fact that they use the spell that Snape taught them, first of all.

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: But also, it turns out multiple *Expelliarmuses* at one time is enough to knock someone out cold. That's kind of interesting.

Lorrie: Yeah, because that is a theme that comes up over and over in this volume: were these 15-year-olds geniuses that they made the Marauder's Map? Well, each of them was pretty smart, but together, they were a force.

JC: Also love the fact that the three of them did this without prior planning, without communication. They all had the same instinct at the same moment.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: They're the Trio.

Lorrie: Yeah. 'We have tried to get through to this person. He's completely intent. Nobody has any doubt that he's about to turn these people over to the dementors. There's only one thing to do. He's got to be stopped.'

JC: Yeah, and they didn't even pause, even though Hermione is the one after the fact saying, "We just attacked a teacher. What's going to happen?" But yeah, they didn't really have a choice.

Lorrie: Well, the Hermione/Snape dynamic is in full force at this moment, where she's always trying to reach out to him in this mature retrospective way and he's ignoring her or not listening. It's this whole "What would you do if you could go back and do it over with more empathy for yourself?" She's saying, "We attacked a teacher," and "Hermione whimpered, staring at the lifeless Snape with frightened eyes." That's completely a foreshadowing of what it's going to be like at the end of *Deathly Hallows*. The Shrieking Shack is not a happy place for Snape; nothing good happens to him in the Shrieking Shack ever. It's the heat of battle and the Trio have places to go and things to do -- when Snape is left for dead, and Hermione is the one who turns and looks at him -- that's when you know, okay, his body's not going to rot there. Somebody will remember him, and of course it's going to be Hermione. It always is. Oh, I love, love, love this: Lupin says, "How did you figure it out, Sirius?" and he pulls out that crumpled piece of newspaper with the photo from the beginning of this volume. What a thrilling --

JC: When the Minister of Magic handed him the newspaper?

Lorrie: Yeah! What a payoff! We get that at the beginning of the book, and we think that this family's going on vacation and that's adorable; then we get the Minister of Magic and the crossword and Sirius Black being sane, and that's a good payoff in itself. And then this? Oh, my God, I take off my hat. I'm impressed. Wow! Any fiction writer who can build in something like that to pay off like that.... This is a good example. I would be happy to point to it as an example of a good way to do that, to build in suspense.

JC: I really like how much it explains about how we've had this mystery all along about Sirius and how he survived Azkaban. We know how horrible Azkaban is, and I love how this whole sequence gives us so much information about how he survived it, how the dementors work, and also just how Azkaban works. This idea that it's just dementors; there's no people in there other than the prisoners.

Lorrie: Oh, God.

JC: It's just the dementors. Apparently, the dementors also bring them food.

Lorrie: Ugh, twitch.

JC: Oh, God. Yeah. Who cooks the food? Probably house elves, let's be real. But yeah, the whole thing is just interesting. It's a lot of information at once. It's a lot of world-building, I guess is what I'm saying, that happens in just a very short few paragraphs.

Lorrie: And it's so intensely psychologically true to me. There's Lupin and Sirius, looking at the picture of the rat with the missing toe.

JC: You have to really zoom in on that picture, by the way, to see the missing toe on the rat, because it was the whole family or something. I don't know. Anyway, I'll give him that. I'll give him the benefit.

Lorrie: And then Lupin realizes he cut it off himself, because that's what he does. That is the nature of this character. He self-harms. He bit himself to fake his death again and leave blood on Ron's sheets. Peter... There's a self-harm theme with this character, but there's also this massive theme of contempt and loathing for him. It's like nobody wants to even touch him enough to hurt him. Nobody wants to lower themselves that way; he has to do it to himself.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: It's astonishing to me that this is the one character that every person, every character in this series, is unanimous about. There is nobody else where every single character on every side has the same reaction, but everybody loathes Peter Pettigrew.

JC: Yeah, that's true. One of the indicators of how a character is working (or not working, in this respect): is there fanfic? How much fanfic is there featuring that character? I don't know how much fanfic there is that's featuring Peter Pettigrew in a positive way. I have not done a search, but I can't remember really ever seeing anything other than him being a sidekick when the Marauders were young.

Lorrie: There is some.

JC: I haven't seen very much. Anyway, it's not... Considering how big the fandom is and how much fic is out there, I don't know. Maybe that's not a very reliable metric, but yeah, people are not as inclined to tell his story as they are to tell Umbridge's story or Fenrir Greyback's story. There's lots of other small characters that had a lot more of a following in fanfiction. Peter, again, seems to be one that people are like, "Umm..."

Lorrie: Yeah, it's tricky.

JC: Not wanting to touch again.

Lorrie: We find out that Crookshank stole the passwords.

JC: Oh, it wasn't Neville. It was Crookshanks.

Lorrie: Exoneration for Neville!

JC: Redemption!

Lorrie: Oh, yes!

JC: Yes, exoneration for Neville.

Lorrie: That is such a thoughtful detail to come back and tell us he was not being careless, it's not his fault. It's also exoneration for Crookshanks. Why was he behaving in this uncontrollable way? He had something important to say.

JC: Right, and the fact that Sirius and Crookshanks could communicate, which I assume meant that when Sirius was in dog form, there was something about that they could communicate. It also, again, highlights how magical animals in this universe are really sentient in a way that we typically don't regard animals in our world as being, regardless of reality. The fact that Crookshanks knew what was going on and could communicate that and did everything that he could to get the kids to notice and to protect the innocent, yeah. It's like, "Wow, Crookshanks!"

Lorrie: Yeah, and that in dog form, Sirius had the ability to understand what Crookshanks was communicating.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Which he probably would not have been able to understand as a human as well. Oh, here's another major theme of this series: when Sirius says, "I as good as killed them," he weeps because he feels like he got James and Lily killed. This happens to so many characters in the series; they didn't kill the person, but they feel the weight of it because they know it was their own terrible, bad choices that led to the loss of life. Snape didn't kill the Potters either. We all blame Snape for their deaths, Snape blames himself most of all, but he didn't actually kill them. Dumbledore probably didn't kill Ariana, but they feel it, and that's a weight on a human soul that is not really responsive to rationalizations or technicalities.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: Because you know that it came from your own flaw. Oh, here is the parallel to, uh, Snape using the invisibility cloak: Sirius uses Snape's wand to turn Scabbers back into Peter.

JC: Mmm!

Lorrie: So yeah, no matter how much Sirius and Snape hate each other and are against each other, they are united against Peter.

JC: Yeah. Okay, I have a little sideline question, and I know probably what the answer is: every time someone transforms into an animal or back, are their clothes part of the transformation? No one seems to ever appear or reappear naked. I'm just fascinated. How does this magic actually work that when you reappear.... He's been a rat for twelve years? Yeah. When he reappears, I'm just like, 'Okay, amazing.'

Lorrie: Here is a question, JC. Have you and I talked about the name of J.K. Rowling's father?

JC: No. I don't think so.

Lorrie: Do you know what his name is?

JC: I'm going to guess Peter. I don't know.

Lorrie: I'm going to sit here while you Google.

JC: Okay, I'm going to Google it.

Lorrie: Find J.K. Rowling's father's full name. First, middle, and last.

JC: All right, I'm asking Google, "What is J.K. Rowling's father's name?" Peter Rowling. Peter James Rowling. What?! Okay, that's interesting.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. Peter and James.

Lorrie: When I found that out, my brain exploded. I tried to think if there was any way that this author, in particular, could *accidentally* name two important characters after her father. Is it just a

coincidence? Is there any way this person could... Nah, there is not a single way I could think of that this would have been an accident.

JC: Now, is her father living, is my question?

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Wow. Okay.

Lorrie: And they have had a really rocky relationship. She has said on the record that.

JC: Oh....

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Continue. I'm sorry. I continued Googling.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Wow. Yeah, according to Wikipedia: in 2012, she said that they had not spoken in the last nine years. Wow!

Lorrie: Yeah. She has said on the record that when she was in her first marriage, where she suffered domestic violence, she was repeating patterns that she had learned from her family of origin. One of the things that this author does is... First and middle names, she does primary and secondary characteristics. Famously, we have Albus Severus Potter, who's primarily Gryffindor but has that Slytherin streak. Peter James Rowling, the author's father... Is it that there's a major part of his personality that she has a lot of contempt for and difficulty with, and is there a recessive love for a father that is difficult to know but heroic or has good qualities? Because that's the thing about James Potter: he is such an absent character. We are told that he had great qualities; we don't get shown most of these great qualities. We mostly get shown his questionable ones, but we don't even see that much of those. When we get reports of the death scene, when Voldemort attacks them, we get a lot about Voldemort and Harry's mom; we don't get very much about James at all. When I saw that Rowling's father's middle name is James, it felt to me like, "Oh, there's an emptiness. There's something really buried in there that's some love -- some desire for connection -- but it's really overpowered by this intense revulsion. It's so remarkable that every single character on every single side feels the exact same revulsion toward this one character. Also, speaking of names: he has the name Peter Pettigrew, and Pettigrew is a sexual insult, I think.

JC: Oh, is it?

Lorrie: Well, it's combined with the name 'Wormtail,' combined with this character's habit of cutting off his own little wormy appendages. It feels to me, yeah, that Wormtail and Pettigrew together make it an insult on manhood.

JC: Okay, what does Pettigrew mean then? I'm going to have to Google.

Lorrie: I just thought it means 'small' and 'grow' together.

JC: Oh. I hadn't thought of it that way. Okay, that's interesting. Yeah, okay, I'm not going to find anything. Every instance of Pettigrew is Peter Pettigrew on Google. Okay. All right.

Lorrie: But the name is really not a noble name.

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: And then -- not in this chapter, but later on in the series where everybody refers to him as Wormtail -- the way that this chapter really goes over the top with describing him as "cringing" with "watery eyes" and that he's 'pasty' and 'sweaty' and 'shrill' and 'squeaky', and he's grotesque like an "overgrown baby."

JC: Mmm.

Lorrie: Sirius calls him "a weak, talentless thing like you." It's really deep-seated, this feeling, and I can't get away from thinking it cannot be an accident that this character shares a name with the author's father.

JC: It's interesting, too, because so many of the names in this series are not classic British names. Name ten other characters in the series. Their names are not what you would -- well, maybe they are more British than I understand, but they're not the biblical kind named after... Peter and James were definitely apostles; they're very, very common names. It's like, 'Okay where's there a John?' But then everyone else has got really interesting names that are coming out of Latin and things like that, so it does draw your attention to the simplicity of those names, compared to some other folks.

Lorrie: So yeah. Anyway, the revulsion toward Peter is inescapable in this chapter.

JC: I think it's really interesting here that there was -- and I think because I hadn't read this in so long I had forgotten it, so it was almost like I was reading it again for the first time -- the intricacy that Peter wasn't just hiding from Sirius. Why was Peter a rat for twelve years? He was actually hiding from Voldemort's followers. I thought that was interesting, and then later on, he basically admits that that's what he was doing.

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: That gives him a whole new... I guess, because I hadn't read it in a while and I've only seen the film series, I hadn't really thought a lot about 'Why is Peter Pettigrew so determined to go back to the Dark Lord's side? How is he the one who's...' He's just really trying to save his own skin and ingratiate himself, and make sure that he's in the right place so that the other followers don't get him. That whole piece of motivation was something that I had missed or had forgotten, I guess, since I haven't read this book in a while.

Lorrie: Whoo, intense. And then the part that you were referring to earlier, where Sirius reflects and says: "...I knew I was innocent. That wasn't a happy thought, so the dementors couldn't suck it out of me... but it kept me sane and knowing who I am," which is a feat of psychological strength that is impressive. It strikes me because I am Snape-centric. It strikes me as so different from Snape's situation. Sirius thinks of himself as innocent on the inside; he didn't do the thing that he was in prison for. Snape does not think of himself that way. Snape knows that he's not innocent and good on the inside; he thinks of himself as guilty, and he has to keep himself sane feeling that. The feeling of knowing that you're a good person on the inside... that does give strength.

JC: That's interesting, that they're mirrors of each other in that way.

Lorrie: They hate each other so intensely. To me, all the efforts that they make to try to hate each other less are so epic and admirable. There are some enmities that you just can't logic away. There are some people that you just loathe on site. Oh, well.

JC: I think there's an interesting moment in this section when Sirius and Remus and Peter are talking and Peter's trying to get out of it, basically trying to give excuses for why he did the things he did; here's this interesting detail that Harry is listening to Peter's words, but he's also watching his body language. He knows to look at both of those things to determine the story someone is telling as true, and I thought, 'Oh, that's really clever. That's really good.'

Lorrie: I love that Sirius explains that he realized that Peter was at Hogwarts with Harry, and he was "perfectly positioned to act, if one hint reached his ears that the Dark Side was gathering strength again." I think I didn't really understand until this reading that vengeance was not Sirius' primary motivation. He was happy to take revenge on Peter, but primarily it's because he knew that he's the only one who is aware of this particular danger of Voldemort coming back through this one servant, and that the only way to stop this is for him to get out there and do something about it.

JC: Right. Yeah, no, that's actually a great point.

Lorrie: And that's just another thing in this chapter of the good faith or the good motivations, even in people who are doing terrifying things.

JC: Yeah. The idea that he was Harry's godfather, he failed in protecting James and Lily, and then he sees that Peter -- who was the real person who told Voldemort where James and Lily were and was the reason that they died -- is there and knows that Peter's just waiting.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That and being around all the dementors and all the... I'm sure that he hears whispers of things, so he knows that the Dark Lord is still out there, whatever he knows. That idea that that's his motivation.... He knows it's going to cost him his life.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But it's like, "The last thing I'm going to do is make sure that Peter does not get Harry." That's really noble.

Lorrie: Yeah, and doesn't bring back Voldemort.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: He hears the other Death Eaters in Azkaban screaming.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: He knows they assume Peter's dead, and he's the only one who knows that Peter isn't.

JC: Yeah. There's this moment that I think often stands out to people in this chapter, but Ron has been very quiet; then Peter turns to Ron and says, "Wasn't I a good rat?" or something like that.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And at this moment, Ron looks at him with revulsion and says, "I let you sleep in my *bed!*"

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: I think that takes the creepiness to a whole other level. All along, this guy's been pretending to be a rat, and he's been snuggling up in Ron's pocket and sleeping on his pillow. It's like, 'Oh, okay, yeah.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And Ron has innocently been having affection with this warm creature that's supposed to be sharing his life.

JC: Yeah, so that just takes the creepiness factor up a whole other level. I also find it interesting that Peter goes to everybody in the room and he goes to Harry last with his begging. The last person he begs is Harry, and he knows what words to say.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He's had a lot of years to observe Harry. He's been around Ron all this time.

Lorrie: He knows these people so well.

JC: Yeah. That's also really creepy to think this whole time, he was listening. Yeah, it was filtered through rat brain, but he was listening; he knew what was going on and was privy to all these conversations and all these adventures and knows them very well. The fact that he's now going to take that into the next book -- he's going to take that knowledge to Voldemort -- is like 'Holy shit!'

Lorrie: As an aside, we find out from Sirius that another way to fool dementors is to turn into an animal. Okay, so a Patronus is not the only way. There comes this incredibly emotional gut punch moment that Sirius reveals that he came to watch Quidditch, and says, "You fly as well as your father did, Harry." No matter how single-minded Sirius was about trying to keep away this threat to reviving Voldemort, he did need to go see if James's kid loves Quidditch; yes, he does, and that is such a gift to Harry. We know that flying and Quidditch are innate parts of Harry that he feels complete ownership over and complete enjoyment in. This is something that -- being an orphan, being attacked by Voldemort, never touched this; this is his, and to know that this is a direct connection to his father, okay, that's strengthening. Oh! Here we have Lupin talking casually. Uh-oh! Lupin casually asks Sirius, "So you assumed I was the spy, right?" and Sirius says, "Yes, forgive me," so they forgive each other. Then Sirius and Remus terrify me: they agree to commit murder, execution style, in front of children. I feel like a lot of the fandom doesn't really remember that they were about to do something that terrifying in cold blood. Hermione is so shocked and helpless at this, she turns her face to the wall; she can't watch, but they're going to make these 13-year-olds witness this and live through this. It's a good reminder: these characters, Sirius and Remus, they're dangerous. They're intense, and they don't see anything wrong with this.

JC: It's interesting, too, because in this universe there's this mechanism of the thestrals.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That if you've seen death, it transforms you in a way that you see the world differently. They know that. It's not something to be taken lightly in this world.

Lorrie: So yeah, every time I come to this part of *Prisoner of Azkaban*, where beloved godfather Sirius and cuddly Remus are about to execute a man -- Geez! Whoa! War makes hardened beings out of people. Then Harry does the Crookshanks defense again: he puts his own body in front of Peter, even though Sirius says, "Peter would have let you die." That's the hardest thing in this series: when you learn to protect even people who would kill you. It took me several reads, a few years, to understand this one point when Harry says, "I don't reckon my dad would've wanted [his best friends] to become killers -- just for you," and for a few years I wondered, 'How does Harry know that? He can't possibly know that! He barely knows James! Is he making this up out of nowhere?' Finally, I thought, 'Oh, no, no, no.' This is the callback to chapter eleven, The Firebolt, when he has just overheard at the Three Broomsticks that Sirius supposedly betrayed his parents; the next chapter, Ron and Hermione have to spend the whole chapter trying to say, "You're not thinking about killing Sirius Black, are you?" Harry won't even answer them, and they look really upset. "You can't! You can't do it! Don't do it. Don't do it. Don't do it." They have to talk him out of it, and that's the precedent. That's how Harry knows that his father wouldn't have wanted to do this, because he knows that there's something about this man, his father, that he doesn't remember, that was similar on the inside.

JC: That felt more like childish idealism to me, I guess. I never thought that much about how Harry would be sure of that, but I always just thought Harry idolizes his father. At this point, he doesn't know a heck of a lot about who his father was, but he knows his father was respected and all that stuff.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He can idealize the person that he thinks his father was, and no one's going to tell them differently except for Snape, but yeah, I guess I never thought that much about that. It was more like, "My dad...."

Lorrie: Well, he also does know, at this point, that James had run after Snape and said, "Don't go. Whatever Sirius told you, no. Don't."

JC: That's true.

Lorrie: He does know that about James, and that James put himself at physical risk to do this.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: James was doing something to protect someone that he didn't like, who wished him harm.

JC: So in that way, Harry putting himself in front of Pettigrew is like saying, "Well, this is what my dad would have done. My dad would have said no."

Lorrie: Yeah. At age thirteen, Harry is plenty old enough to have his own ideas about death and who deserves it. So they finally put Ron's leg in a splint.

JC: Poor Ron.

Lorrie: Oh, my goodness.

JC: Oh, my gosh. Lupin is like, "Yeah. I don't know enough healing magic to do this." It's such an interesting contrast to Lockhart in the previous book, going, "Oh, sure, I can mend your arm."

Lorrie: Yeah. I like it.

JC: Lupin's like, "Nope."

Lorrie: Yeah. Every time Lupin says, "I'm not the expert here," is so reaffirming.

JC: Yeah, for sure. He's like, "But I can create a splint for you." Yeah, exactly.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "I'm not even going to try to heal this." Yeah. And they get everybody packaged up. Oh, what was the... We didn't talk about the spell that tied up Lupin. I forgot to mention that earlier, the ropes that came out of Snape's wand and tied him up.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Anyway, yeah. Everyone's packaged up, everyone's ready to go. What could possibly go wrong?

Lorrie: Yeah. Once again, Hermione says, "'What about Professor Snape?' said Hermione in a small voice, looking down at Snape's prone figure." I like that there's always this little reminder... It would be tempting to just completely dismiss Snape as irrational and wrong in every way, and we have the voice of everyone's little conscience saying, "Wait, no. He's a person, too." Yeah, then they parade out and Crookshanks has the big "I told you so" ending; his bottlebrush tail is high in the air. This moment feels so good because it's gone on for chapters and chapters, this most intense of scenes. For one moment, things are okay and the reader is allowed to take a breath.

JC: Phew! It also feels ominous.

Lorrie: Yeah, this respite is not going to last.

JC: Obviously, we know what's going to happen next.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: But it does feel -- even on a first read, I remember it feeling ominous. 'Oh, there's still five chapters left.' Actually, it's crazy to me how many chapters there are left and how much has yet to happen.

Lorrie: Right, how much we haven't found out yet.

JC: Yeah, which we haven't gotten to. Oh, my gosh.

Lorrie: We haven't even started. It's a long night!

JC: There's what, three, four chapters left, and there's so much about to happen.

Lorrie: We've already had several nights worth of trauma in this one night already, and we haven't even gotten started.

JC: Yeah, we haven't gotten started.

Lorrie: Yeah. At least Ron's leg is in a splint.

JC: Yes.

Lorrie: And Snape has not learned any of the stuff that has transpired since he was knocked out.

JC: Right, because he was conveniently unconscious, so he has no idea what the real story is.

Lorrie: Right, emphasizing this whole book's theme about how what one person hears is literally not what someone else hears.

JC: Uh...

Lorrie: Sooo complicated and satisfying. So the next chapter is called The Dementor's Kiss.

JC: Wow.

Lorrie: Nothing good can come of that!

JC: Nothing good can possibly come of that. Yeah.

Lorrie: Ah. Well, what an unbelievably, well-written, complicated, satisfying chapter with so many different points of view.

JC: Yes, and so much information. The world-building in this one astounds me. There's a lot that happens here, enough that I had the feeling of reading too fast and then having to make myself go back and look at details because I was just plowing through.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And I kept stopping, going, 'No, no, no. Go back, read that sentence. What actually was said? What word was used here?' Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: 'What's happening over on that side of the room? Take it all in, because I'm not trying to get to the end of the book this time.'

Lorrie: Yeah. This is the first time I really understood, 'Oh, gosh, revenge was really Sirius' secondary motive. It really wasn't the first one.'

JC: Yeah. That's actually really interesting, because it's really easy to say, "Okay, yeah, he saw Peter and he went, 'Oh, I'm going to go kill him, I'm going to get my revenge,'" but that was not it at all.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: No one can blame anyone who says, "Twelve years wrongfully imprisoned; I'm going to get the guy that did it." But that wasn't even his primary thing.

JC: It's the, "He's at Hogwarts, he's at Hogwarts" bit, because you can read that in so many ways. Many people in the story did read it in so many ways, but then at this point, it's like, "Oh, he's at Hogwarts," 'he' being Peter, 'at Hogwarts' meaning 'inside where he can harm Harry'.

Lorrie: He's gotten really far.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: This guy who killed thirteen people with one curse and nonchalantly put his former friend in jail under false pretenses for twelve years is now biding his time as a rat.

JC: Can you imagine: you're hanging out with your friends in high school and everyone can turn into a cool animal, and when your turn comes around, you turn into a rat? Wouldn't that be disappointing somehow?

Lorrie: And yet almost no one can do this. The fact that he managed it at all is incredible.

JC: We've talked about it before, but there are these little bursts of genius that you see with Harry and his friends and you see with the Marauders. One thing that I think is a criticism of education that's very valid is that we often squash kids down. Kids who are interested in learning -- who are curious, who are really bright -- we put them in little boxes and contain them and don't necessarily allow them to grow. It's an institution. It's the way that institutions work and it's awful, but I'm thinking of Hogwarts as being that same kind of institution, where the kids who have these gifts -- and you can go back and you can put Tom Riddle in that box, too, and Albus Dumbledore -- the school actually does some harm to them by not allowing them to blossom and use the gifts that they have. To have seen these bursts of it -- like the Marauder's Map, or the fact that the Marauders learned how to become Animagi -- and looking at all the things that Harry and Ron and Hermione accomplished, it's interesting that Hogwarts -- the looseness of Hogwarts -- people often go, 'Oh, what's going on at this school?' The looseness of it allows for that in an interesting way, and I wonder if that's not an intentional choice on Dumbledore's part to not lock it down. Dumbledore could have chosen to make the school much more -- Umbridge does this later, so it's obviously possible, but Dumbledore's choice to turn a blind eye to certain things happening and to allow things to be kind of loose is maybe Dumbledore's way of saying, "Okay, the last time anyone tried to lock down these kids, bad things happen, so I'm going to let them explore and grow."

Lorrie: There's the whole way that Dumbledore says, "You guys have broken every school rule, and a hundred points to Gryffindor each." Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Well, we're about to see Dumbledore sanction --

JC: About to break some more!

Lorrie: Yeah. He's going to sanction major rule-breaking with the student least likely to do it on her own.

JC: That's true.

Lorrie: So lots to come, still.

JC: Lots to come. Oh, my gosh.

Lorrie: This is an incredibly beautiful, fulfilling, fun chapter to go through with you. Thank you.

JC: I'm excited about the ones that are left, too. I'm like, 'Oh, yeah.'

Lorrie: Well, I can't wait. Talk to you soon!

JC: All right!

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.