



Transcript

Episode 4.14

Book 4, Chapter 14: The Unforgivable Curses

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 Four, Chapter Fourteen: The Unforgivable Curses.

Lorrie: The Unforgivable Curses. Professor Moody teaches the kids about Unforgivable Curses: Imperius, Cruciatius, and Avada Kedavra. Hermione starts S.P.E.W., the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare. Sirius writes to Harry that he's coming back to the country because the news about Harry's scar has worried him. Here we go! This is a major concept in the series, Unforgivable Curses. Are you ready to deal with this?

JC: Mm-hmm, yes. I've been excited to reread this chapter, because I remember this one standing out to me the first time I read this book. There was like, 'Oh, the Quidditch World Cup.' It seemed like there was a lot of non-plotty things happening.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah, we have a new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, blah, blah, blah. Coming at some point, we have this Triwizard Tournament. But then I read this chapter and I just remember going, *gasps*, and it made a huge impact on me. Just the existence of the Unforgivables, the way that Moody rolls them out to the kids...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And the realization of what the Killing Curse actually is.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That was the first time I read it, so I was looking forward to coming back to that now and it was interesting to take a look at that again. But other things came up for me this time that I hadn't noticed the first time around, and they are very interesting to me now. So yes, I'm ready.

Lorrie: Oh, cannot wait to hear about them! So we start off with Snape in a terrible mood. He seemed to have attained "new levels of vindictiveness over the summer," and he gave Neville detention of disemboweling toads.

JC: Ugh.

Lorrie: Oh, that's really not very nice.

JC: It's cruel. Really? It's very cruel.

Lorrie: It's really not nice, so Neville is having a breakdown, practically. My friend Irvin Khaytman, who wrote the book on Dumbledore, reads this as evidence that Snape and Dumbledore are not on good terms after the end of *Prisoner of Azkaban*, which he thinks is partly because of how Snape outed Lupin. I do not have the same reading, although I can totally see why Irvin thinks that. To me, it seems like Dumbledore is absent from everybody in this book -- where is he? -- but this whole thing about Snape and his worse-than-usual mood, we're about to get it explained. Ron and Harry say, "You know why Snape's in such a foul mood, don't you?" "Yeah... Moody." Harry has noticed that Snape is wary of Moody, avoids his eye, and he says, "I reckon Snape's a bit scared of him, you know." This is intriguing, yes, aside from it being Harry's dream come true...

JC: Right, right. For sure.

Lorrie: To see somebody out-play Snape at his own game. But what's the story here? There must be one. Oh, boy.

JC: Yeah. I have a lot of things that I'm not sure about going on here, because I again cannot remember the end of the book. I can't remember what Barty Crouch, Jr.'s motivation was for doing this at all. At this point, everybody flat-out thinks this is really Moody and no one's suspicious yet, that I can tell.

Lorrie: Nobody. No one.

JC: He's doing a great job impersonating Moody. There's a line in here somewhere that Snape got a little bit nervous every time Moody's magical eye turned for him.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: And then we see other instances in the chapter of what kind of power this eye has. On the first read, I was kind of like, 'Oh, wow,' when Moody can see through the desk and see that Lavender's got something under her desk that she's reading and calls her on it. As a teacher, I was like, 'Oh, damn, what a power!'

Lorrie: Classic. Classic.

JC: They've got their phones under the desk, you can be like, "Hey, put it away." You can spot kids cheating and whatever. Amazing, so that's kind of fun.

Lorrie: 'How did the teacher know? Oh, my God!'

JC: Exactly.

Lorrie: 'They must have a magical eye!'

JC: A magical eye. But then it made me think, okay, this is a really powerful magical object that he's got. How did he get it in the first place? Is this one of those things that was locked up in the Ministry -- in the place where they put really powerful things -- and he managed to make a case that he needed it? What's the story of the eye? There's that, too. Who created it? What is it? How did he get it? That's a big question. But then another question that I had was: Does the eye... what does it see? Can it tell when people's intentions are off? Does it work like Legilimency in that way? Is Snape nervous when the eye looks at him because he knows... He is there in a duplicitous role. Snape is always pretending to... he's doing a lot of things that people don't need to know about; he would know that Moody looks at him as a former Death Eater, and there's a lot of secrets that Snape is carrying.

Lorrie: Although we don't know that yet in the series, but yes.

JC: Yeah, we don't know about that yet in the series, right?

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JC: And Snape is carrying a lot of secrets for Dumbledore, too, at this point, so I could imagine Snape being like, "Shit, shit, shit, shit. Don't look at me. I have to avoid this guy," because Moody is not stable or known as being a stable person either. Once again, I'm imagining Snape being like, 'Who's the worst possible person to bring into a school to teach children? Of course, Dumbledore's hired that one again.' Yeah, I have a lot of questions about the eye and how Moody came to be hired through this position. Yeah. Anyway... a lot.

Lorrie: We have a hint from the previous chapter. After Moody is done beating up Draco as a ferret and McGonagall says, "You have to talk to his Head of House," and then he says, "Oh, yes, old Snape," he says that they have a history; that implies that it's before Snape became this purveyor of secrets for Dumbledore. 'Okay, what?' This goes way back. About the eye: we don't ever get any backstory explanation about how the eye came to be or what kind of magic goes into it; we don't ever know. I don't think it has any power, other than to see through things. He can see through the back of his head; unlike most of us who have to watch our backs when we're afraid of being attacked, Moody has that power. It can see through things, but I think that's just that power combined with Moody's native ability to figure things out and be suspicious. If you know that this is a person who already suspects you, you don't want him to look at you at all.

JC: So you're saying it's a literal 'see through things', not like a figurative 'see through things'.

Lorrie: That's my conclusion from how this eye shows up in the story. With Moody's mind, he doesn't need more; he already comes equipped with a mind that you want to avoid, but there's a lot of emphasis on Moody being able to see through your metaphorical disguises. He thinks he can look at you and know what you truly are, even though you're presenting as something else.

JC: Oh, that's interesting. This is opening up for me, 'Moody misgendering you,' and then a year later you're like, "Wait a minute!"

Lorrie: Exactly.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: Right? Yeah. The whole issue of double agency -- presenting as somebody else, impersonating somebody -- that has whole new layers now because this author has destabilized our faith in her about gender.

JC: Right, right.

Lorrie: Because Moody might not be correct. He might be sure that, no matter what you present as on the outside, he knows who you truly are or how you used to be, and that that's still who you are. He might be wrong about that.

JC: I see.

Lorrie: But do you have something to hide? Snape apparently has an extremely guilty conscience and does not want to be anywhere where Moody can look at him.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: What I love is the power dynamic is indisputable. Snape is completely at a disadvantage. Moody is definitely more powerful, and any time he wants to flex that, there's not a thing Snape can do about it.

JC: Yeah. Thinking about Moody and Snape: one of the things that I find interesting about this chapter is that it's introduced us to a character who has a lot of history, and it opens up this lens on everyone else in the building and what their role in that history was. This stood out to me in a couple of places, but one is that early in the chapter, it's mentioned (or it's discussed) that Snape must be mad because once again, he didn't get the Defense Against the Dark Arts job, and he hasn't gotten it for the fourth year in a row, which made me laugh because Snape's been at Hogwarts for longer than four years. Just from the kids' perspective, that's when time began.

Lorrie: Yeah Harry-centric. Yeah.

JC: Exactly. But then it made me think: who else had been the Dark Arts teachers? There were a whole long string of them going back to when Tom Riddle didn't get the job. Who else had been the Dark Arts teachers all those years?

Lorrie: I know.

JC: I'm suddenly like, 'Wait a minute, do we know this? Is this extracanonical? Is it in a video game?'

Lorrie: No.

JC: We don't know? Wow.

Lorrie: It's just like a bunch of adjuncts that nobody remembers their names.

JC: So interesting. Yeah, so I thought that was kind of interesting, too. But I also liked when Moody talks to them -- first of all, the Gryffindors are so excited, they line up like they're waiting for good seats at a concert, which is hilarious. I thought that was so cute.

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: But we get this really interesting, good teacher detail where Moody starts off by saying, "Okay, I got a letter from Professor Lupin, and he told me everything that you did last year."

Lorrie: Loved that! Yes!

JC: It was like, 'Oh, my God, some continuity finally.' Yes, it's one person a year in the position, but it says a lot of things. We already know that Moody is someone that the Aurors trust. We know that he's kind of crazy, but we trust him because Arthur trusts him, Dumbledore trusts him...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Lupin trusts him. There's this idea that all these adults who are the good guys that knew him know who to trust; they trust each other. So if Moody trusts Lupin, that's saying something.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: There's a lot of nice little character relationships there, so that's great. He knows what they've covered, and now we can continue with their education. Ah. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, I noticed those two things, too. The passive voice about referring to the rumor about Snape wanting the Dark Arts job: "It was common knowledge that Snape really wanted the..." There's no attribution whatsoever, so that's beautifully and carefully done. Also, when Moody shows up and he says, "Put away your books." Oh, my God, two years in a row, practical lessons. Ohhh...

JC: "You're not going to need those books. We're not reading them," which is an interesting contrast to what's coming next year. Yeah.

Lorrie: Oh, yuck.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: But I love that it's this subtle reminder: it is not the natural state of children to resent school. It doesn't have to be that way. When kids are interested and it's relevant and they're being met at their level, they're eager for it. I love that reminder. That's one of those details that I think makes this a successful children's series that spoke to the kid readers, because there's a genre of children's fiction that just assumes, "Oh, haha, adults are so gross and teachers are always bad, and school is always bad." That's not quite it. When they're talking to the kids as people, they naturally want to learn. There's natural stuff about their own lives that they're interested in figuring out and advancing, so I love that. And yes, continuity is the word that also screamed itself in my head when he said those magical words, "I've had a letter from Professor Lupin about this class," because that is the only time in this series that there's any continuity from one year to the next in the teaching of this course.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: It's like this fantasy functional moment in this very, very broken department that has been so successfully undermined by Voldemort's curse. 'Make sure these children never learn how to defend themselves. Make sure there's no continuity, no job stability, no curriculum.' Because of this one year that there's any communication, Moody says, "I know that you're up to scratch on dark creatures, but you're really behind on curses." That's the only time anybody ever has this overview.

JC: Yeah. It's like we have some vertical alignment. Oh, my God.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: There's maybe a curriculum.

Lorrie: There's one tiny, tiny bit of coverage in these children's education on this super-important survival subject.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: That little taste of function... It almost hurts, it's so good.

JC: I hadn't thought about it before, until you said it just now, that there's no curriculum for Defense Against the Dark Arts; they basically have a long-term sub every year who disappears at the end of every year and Dumbledore knows this is going to happen, so he's using the position to do things other than just teach Defense Against the Dark Arts. But I haven't thought before about how intentional... I always thought that was Voldemort being petty.

Lorrie: No, it's not.

JC: But actually, that makes a lot of sense that it's Voldemort being very intentional.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: In the same way that states like Texas mess with the teaching of sex education, right?

Lorrie: That's exactly --

JC: "We're going to make it so that it has no teeth and kids aren't going to learn anything, and we're going to do it on purpose," and they're also trying to do that with history, by the way, and also science.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: So yeah, it's very intentional to keep people in the dark.

Lorrie: We're going to push abstinence-only to make sure that teenagers continue to get pregnant.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: How does this work? Nobody knows, but yes.

JC: And then, if you have a teacher who comes in and pushes against that, that teacher knows their time is limited.

Lorrie: They're going to die in a fire.

JC: Yeah. "I'm going to give you this information and I'm not going to last long in this position doing it, but it's that important to me that you have it."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That's kind of what Moody's doing here.

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: Crouch as Moody. Fake Moody.

Lorrie: That's the job he's fulfilling. The attack on education in the past several years -- the podcast being called Harry Potter After 2020 -- the attack on things like Critical Race Theory or universities having to dismantle their women's centers, or libraries being shut down and books being removed, is precisely what Voldemort's after.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: What are these things teaching? They're teaching people their own history. The whole continuity of story that Harry was robbed of, that he craves... The natural state is to be able to know where you came from and who you are and how that connects to the person you want to be and the life you're living; Harry doesn't have it and he feels the absence of that constantly. People who have their own history, and can access it and can learn why things are the way they are and where they came from and why they might want to continue a certain way, that's empowering. Nobody is even pretending about Critical Race Theory. They just came up with a phrase that doesn't even have any connection to what they're banning. What they're banning is simply anything that's normally empowering to whatever group of people they want to disempower. Why? Because when you're kept ignorant that way, then you're easier to control.

JC: Yep. The point is to keep people in the dark, to keep people oppressed.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And that's essentially what Voldemort has done by making it impossible for anyone for an entire generation to really learn Defense Against the Dark Arts. It's not until Dumbledore... And Dumbledore does his best. He really does try.

Lorrie: He is under so much constraint. One thing that kind of bugs me is when fandom is too critical of Dumbledore. 'Well, why didn't he just do this and that?' It's like when Obama was faced with a Republican Senate and Republican House.

JC: Oh, God. Yeah.

Lorrie: 'Well, why didn't he just pass stuff?' Because, actually, you don't just declare things as the head. You actually need coalition.

JC: Right. It's how our government actually works, not how many people seem to think it works, including people who've been president.

Lorrie: So yeah, Dumbledore is trying to outwit the many strictures on this position, on this set of conditions that he's inherited. But yeah, what I was going to say (before horror overwhelmed me and I forgot what I was going to say) is that this is the urge behind the giant force that we all call, "But think of the children."

JC: Oh, God, and that's exactly what Umbridge says in the next book. That's exactly where Umbridge is coming from.

Lorrie: Any sanctimonious, oppressive culture war about what kinds of truths can or can't be revealed to children who are living them is all like, 'Well, think of the children, it's for their sake,' but it doesn't have any reference to the actual children who are sitting there with wide eyes, watching themselves be discussed as usual without being asked. That's the cover story for, "No, I want to control what happens to people and I'll call it, 'just think of the children,'" and that's

exactly what Umbridge calls it. "No, it's for the sake of your innocence." It's so poisonous, but what it really is is who gets to keep who ignorant for what exploitative purpose.

JC: There's also this whole other layer there, too, of which children are the ones that we want to protect and keep innocent. There's a layer of privilege there. There are some kids that we all know as a society have seen horrors, and they're just kind of disposable. The kids that we want to protect are not every kid; it's certain kids.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: And that happens with Umbridge as well. "We're really looking at all these pure-blood kids. They are these wizard kids. We don't care what happens to these Muggle children in the world. They can just get stomped to dust." There's that piece of it, too, which is really gross and icky.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. This idea that keeping information from people that helps them learn about their past and learn about maybe who they are...

Lorrie: About themselves.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That somehow that's protecting them is so gross that I don't even... And it's been with us for a really long time. Forever, probably, but in particular it feels like it's become much more intense in the last four or five years, and it's really scary.

Lorrie: Yeah. The way it makes no sense is part of it.

JC: Yeah, because then you're being gaslit about it constantly.

Lorrie: It's profoundly cynical because they know that it makes no sense, but they can get away with it and it's rubbing it in that they can get away with it. The thing that it reminds me of is under Putin, when enemies of the state (according to Putin) get killed, then the Russian state says they fell out the window. It's arrogant in how see-through it is. 'Yes, you know what we did. We all know what we did. What are you going to do about it?' That's 'protecting the children,' because hand-in-hand with this is the assumption that the restrictions placed on vulnerable children don't apply to the privileged ones. Well, the vulnerable ones aren't allowed to learn this, but the privileged ones... they can break the rules. This is partly why Snape and Draco foam at the mouth so much when Gryffindors get away with everything, because, "Wait a minute, they're not the ones who are supposed to get away with everything. We're the ones who are supposed to get away with everything. Not fair!"

JC: Interesting. Oh.

Lorrie: So yeah, the letter -- the communication between Lupin and fake Moody, or any Moody -- about providing continuity in these children's education... All of the other professors don't get to do this. Quirrell dies, Lockhart's Obliviated.

JC: We have no idea who came before them.

Lorrie: Yeah. Right, and this fake Moody is not going to be in any state at the end of this book to leave anybody any letters. Umbridge doesn't want to; Snape, knowing what's coming and what kinds of teachers will come after him... There's no point in leaving anybody any letters. So yeah, this is the one connection that we feel.

JC: It's also interesting to me that Harry taking up the mantle of teaching Defense Against the Dark Arts in the fifth year does provide some continuity.

Lorrie: Yes, it does.

JC: That's cool. Okay, we're going to get to that book later. I'm excited.

Lorrie: Resistance underground. Yeah.

JC: Okay, another thing: we hear that Moody has heard from Lupin, but then Moody straight-up says, "I've only got one year to teach you," and the kids are shocked by this.

Lorrie: "Aaawww!" Yeah.

JC: I guess at this point, no one really knows that the position is cursed except for Dumbledore and probably the whole staff. Let's just be real there.

But then he tells the story, "Oh, I'm just doing this as a special favor for Dumbledore, then I'm going to go back into my retirement." Okay, so a lot of questions here. First one: why is Barty Crouch, Jr. here? That's the first question I have, honestly, and I think maybe we'll get an answer to that later. I don't remember. Why is he doing this? This is a lot of work to constantly be brewing Polyjuice Potion and to have been able to kidnap Moody in the first place. Good God, he went to a lot of effort.

Lorrie: Yes, he did.

JC: So that's a lot, but this was clearly set up before. Well, in my mind, and maybe I'm wrong. The real Moody was supposed to come and teach at Hogwarts; all of this was set up. Barty Crouch, Jr. discovered letters from Dumbledore, or maybe Barty Crouch, Jr. knew about this in advance. I don't know. My brain is going, 'There are so many possibilities.'

Lorrie: Exactly.

JC: 'How did he know this was the place he needed to be, and that Moody was...?' whatever. But going back to Moody and Dumbledore: why did Dumbledore invite Moody to come and be the Defense professor this year? That's a question that I have. Why did Moody take it? Why did Moody come out of retirement to take it? Are the things that Moody is telling the kids in this chapter... are they true? Is he making shit up, as far as why he's there? I don't know. I have no idea.

Lorrie: Right?

JC: Right? There's just so many questions that I have and I don't know if they're going to get answered or not, but I'm sitting here like, 'This man is impersonating this other person and it's all such a huge tangled web of...'

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: 'Are they lies? I don't know!'

Lorrie: Right.

JC: I don't know what's happening anyway. Yes, questions.

Lorrie: On the first read surface, this chapter reads very strongly. When we have no idea that any of these questions are even going to come up -- when we have no reason to believe that he's anybody other than how he presents himself -- it's still a super-compelling, packed chapter and it reads smoothly. Then on rereading, like we're doing going back, it is so jumbled and so complicated and a step up in complexity from all of the hidden agendas of *Prisoner of Azkaban*, which were already pretty complex. But what we find out here, what I'm seeing on this reread, is all of the moments that this teacher takes to pause and stare at the students before he says anything. This, of course, has the terrible effect of making all the students extremely uncomfortable. They don't know... 'This is a very intimidating-looking person staring at me,' and he takes a moment and then he scares the crap out of Ron by smiling.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: 'Oh, no!'

JC: This grizzled, scarred face smiling at you would look very strange.

Lorrie: Yikes! Later on, when we go back on rereads, we're realizing okay, he's centering himself because this is his first time teaching these children. What can he do to pull off this impersonation so that nobody can guess? He has to deal with all his own feelings and then present successfully and teach a class at the same time, and he has to be convincing. He has to do as good of a job as real Mad-Eye Moody would have done or his cover is blown, so he can't be half-hearted.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: He can't sabotage what he's teaching them, because that will blow his cover; if he does manage to, I don't know. If I were him, that would be a risky game.

JC: Telling a lie, it's easier if it's really close to the truth.

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah, he has to be convincing.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. He does mention that he's doing this as a special favor to Dumbledore, so that raises the giant neon question: why? What is Dumbledore thinking? And then when he says, "One year and then back to my quiet retirement," he gives this harsh laugh. We find out later on rereads that's a big inside joke that he's having with himself: what kind of retirement Moody has and how it's not quiet, what kind of retirement Barty Crouch, Jr. has been having and why that's quiet, and how he does not intend to go back to it. All of it... there are so many layers. At this point, I want to ask you how much of those questions you brought up just now (because you don't remember these details)... How much of that do you want me to discuss right now, and how much do you want to wait until that chapter happens?

JC: It might actually be helpful to have a reminder of what Barty Crouch Jr's motivations are. I think that might actually help. Otherwise, I'm going to be floundering a lot.

Lorrie: Okay.

JC: What I do want to do is be able to read that on two levels as we go forward, so yeah, that would be helpful.

Lorrie: Okay. I'm going to start off by saying: remember how I've been saying the whole time that I don't think *Goblet of Fire* is a finished novel, that I think that this is the next-to-last draft and that it really, really suffered from the author having to meet deadline instead of going over to polish everything? My major wish: if I could change things so that the author had had enough time to do that, the major thing I would want is for her to restructure the reveal, because everything about Barty Crouch, Jr.'s motivations comes in one chapter extremely late in this book in what is merely an unending monologue. It's just paragraph after paragraph of quotes as he monologues, and that's not the way this author writes when she has more time.

JC: True, true.

Lorrie: She adds in more stuff, but here it's just the info dump and she didn't have time to go back and make it a full story. It's extremely unbalanced, and this kind of imbalance does happen again later when she builds up the entire series to hinge on Snape's true motives; then we get one info dump near the end of the series that's a single chapter. That feels unbalanced, too, and I don't distrust that as much because she really intentionally gambled everything on that. It felt out of balance to me, but I feel like she had more time to do what she wanted. This one... I think it's hard for people to remember all the details of what Barty Crouch, Jr. really intended, because it came in such an unfinished, rushed way at the end and it's very complicated. Anyway, I thought that I could do this in a short way; obviously, me being me, I can't. You want the capsule summary of what Barty Crouch, Jr. is really up to and why?

JC: Yes.

Lorrie: Okay. He has been kept under Imperius by his father, Barty Crouch, Sr., ever since he was a young man. Because he was a Death Eater, he was guilty of some of the worst crimes. His father was so mortified by his own son -- because his father was so anti-Death Eater and such a stickler -- and very proud of their family's status; he took it as an insult to their family that his own son was like this and got him out of Azkaban under disguise, kept him at home, and subdued him under continual Imperius.

JC: Damn.

Lorrie: Which is one of the many, many connections between this series and *To Kill A Mockingbird*, because that's exactly what Boo Radley's father did. Boo Radley, as a young man, committed a crime; his father couldn't bear the indignity and basically just kept him as a shut-in for the rest of his life and destroyed his life. Imperius is, like most curses, something that you have to renew constantly; eventually the magic wears off. Even though Barty Crouch, Sr. is very, very powerful, his son is just as powerful and was able to start fighting back. Then when he came to and he realized that Voldemort was back, he had the motivation to connect back with his master and trade in the father he hated to get the father he wanted, which is Voldemort. Because of the way Voldemort operates -- he will reward his greatest follower -- Barty Crouch, Jr. believed himself correctly to be Voldemort's greatest follower. If he's going to do this -- if he's going to go to Hogwarts impersonating a teacher, get his hands on Harry Potter, and hand-deliver him to Voldemort -- then he will be closer than a son to Voldemort, and along the way, he will get the joy of killing his own father, whom he hates.

JC: I had forgotten all of this.

Lorrie: See? See? It's so important, and it was not managed well because of writer deadlines.

JC: Wow.

Lorrie: Because it's really intense.

JC: Yeah. I knew there's a big info dump, and I knew that he did something for Voldemort. I'd forgotten about the Imperius curse that his father... Completely forgot about that part. Okay, I'm really glad that you settled this because that really helps me think through this chapter.

Lorrie: The stakes are super high. He's trying to insinuate himself into Harry's trust so that he can deliver him to Voldemort. He cannot let the slightest suspicion arise that he is not Mad-Eye Moody, so he's super-motivated to study what the real Mad-Eye Moody would have done so that he could fool everyone from Dumbledore on down. He himself is keeping the real Mad-Eye Moody alive under Imperius so that he can Legilimize him or question him and find out what that guy would have done as a teacher so that he can impersonate it, but he's also free for the first time in ages. He's been housebound under mind control all this time, and this is pretty much his first time out there experiencing life and his own desires again. That's got to be something that's really difficult for him to control, but the stakes are so high, he has to do it.

JC: Wow.

Lorrie: This is a character with immense mental power, or as my friend Irvin says, it's a good thing for the story that Barty Crouch, Jr. gets taken out by the end of this book, because if he had been available to Voldemort for the rest of the series, it would have been all over. This guy is so potent. Really, really brilliant, horrifying man.

JC: Okay, that's super helpful, because a lot of the questions that I had around 'Why is he making the choices he makes?' makes a lot more sense to me now. He really is trying to be Moody. He's going to toe the line. He is not going to do anything to make anyone suspect he's not actually Moody.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: He's got some leeway there, because Moody is known to be kind of crazy. Right?

Lorrie: Moody's unstable. Yes.

JC: Yeah, unstable, so he's got some leeway, but he's not going to do anything to raise any suspicions that he's anyone other than actually Moody.

Lorrie: The motivation for Barty Crouch, Jr. is so simple. He wants a father. He wants revenge on the father who tortured him and he wants love from the father he chooses, and nothing is more important to him than that. Sure, if that means that he has to be nice to these kids, all right. That's small potatoes.

JC: But also, the fact that he's going to get Harry and company to trust him because his goal is to hand Harry over to Voldemort, right? That also casts... I was picking up on that earlier on. He's really trying hard to get Harry's trust here, and he's doing everything right -- everything from turning Draco into a ferret and the things he does in this chapter. He's nice to Ron in a way

that... It's very rare to see teachers be nice to Ron. I think this is the first time anyone's ever looked at Ron and said, "Oh, you're a Weasley," and then said something nice after that.

Lorrie: "I know who you are; you're a person to me."

JC: Yeah. "Oh, your dad is great. Your dad helped me out a little while back." Ron never gets to hear this...

Lorrie: Right.

JC: And being nice to Ron is also going to ingratiate you to Harry.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And the way he says to Ron, "Yes, this curse... your father would know how it was important in our recent history," is totally giving back to these kids knowledge of their own past that people usually don't think kids deserve to know.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: So yeah, that's one of the most brilliant and uneasy things about fake Mad-Eye Moody as a character: he is grooming them for the worst reasons, but what do you do with the absolute goodness and truth of the content he delivers underneath the fake trust that he has established?

JC: Right.

Lorrie: Is it corroded? Do we have to just throw it all away? Uuuuhhhh... The security around that is constantly under question, because the end result is always, "No, the information was sound. We're going to stick with it." The belief and trust that we had in it at the time? Bizarrely, it's so screwed up that it comes around to being good again, which (as many people will note) is the constant experience of reading the good parts of this series after the author has gone full TERF.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: 'Okay. Well, I remember reading about tolerance and love and forgiveness. Was that all just rotten? I don't know. It's still a good story.'

JC: Yeah. Yeah.

Lorrie: I still believe in love, even if TERF McTERFyhead is doing her TERF thing.

JC: Is over there TERFing away. Oh, my God. Yeah. Yeah, that actually does stand out, that part too. He talks to the kids about how this is Dark Magic you're not supposed to see for a couple more years, but Dumbledore and I agree that you need to see it. That was one of the points where I was like, 'Is he telling the truth? I don't see why he wouldn't be.' Why would Dumbledore bring this guy in this year, except that Dumbledore knows that shit's coming down and that the kids have not had a good preparation for it? I can imagine the conversations between Dumbledore and the real Moody being like, "These kids need to be educated. We've seen what's happened all these years." We have a whole generation that's, because of the pandemic... There's parallels here. We've got these kids who can't read and can't do math because of the pandemic. "They can't do this and they're going to need it, because we all know

what's coming. Moody, I want you to come in; you're the only person who can do this." I can hear the conversation, assuming that that's... That's how I'm seeing it going in my head anyway.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Crouch knows all this. I had forgotten about the fact that he's got Moody under Imperio so he can get whatever he wants out of Moody.

Lorrie: The curriculum that Moody was going to teach, yes, is all there.

JC: Yeah. At night, he's talking to Moody. "Okay, what are my lesson plans for tomorrow?"

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And Moody's like, "Here's what you're going to do next." Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. Like the work of a first-year teacher, trying to figure out 'what I'm doing tomorrow' every day. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, it's all in the hard drive.

JC: Yeah. But he's got to have Moody lay it out for him, and that raises these questions about what Dumbledore knows, what's happening behind the scenes.

Lorrie: Yep. Where is he?!

JC: Why are we having a Triwizard Tournament right now when Dumbledore knows that shit's about to go down? What?!

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: What's happening? Anyway...

Lorrie: So yeah, Moody teaching the children says, "According to the Ministry of Magic, I'm supposed to teach you countercurses and leave it at that." We find out way later, at the beginning of *Deathly Hallows*, what's the problem with this approach: it's the example of Molly Weasley not being able to heal George's cut-off ear because it was cast with Dark Magic that cut it off, and she doesn't know it so she can't heal it. There are some kinds of counter magic that you can't perform unless you understand the theory behind how it happened in the first place. We have this contrasted with what Draco is saying at the beginning: at Durmstrang they teach you Dark Magic.

JC: Ooh, uh-huh.

Lorrie: Is this risky? Yes. Is it better to never ever teach the kids this stuff? If you can guarantee the kids safety, which we currently can't because the world has just changed; Wormtail has just escaped and something is going to happen, or, as we know, is happening. Moody says, "I'm not supposed to show you what illegal Dark curses look like until you're in the sixth year... but Dumbledore reckons you can cope." Or it's not so much that they could cope, but that they're going to have to. The timeline has now shifted. This is the beginning of the Dumbledore clash with the Ministry over how things are done at Hogwarts, "think of the children," how an entire culture war can be fought over what's taught in the classroom and why, and what insecurities

people are covering up when they are having these arguments in the name of protecting the children. But as fake Moody says, "How are you supposed to defend yourself against something you've never seen?" Which is an excellent point, because if you have come from more of a secure background in history about something, you might naively think that some things cannot possibly be as toxic as this. This is where I remember Harry Potter (the series, the cultural phenomenon) being extremely useful in 2016 and 2017, when there were horrors that were happening and Americans couldn't really believe that the things being threatened would really happen in this country. 'What do you mean a Muslim ban? You can't just round up everybody who's a certain religion and put them on a list.' 'Well, that's what they're saying.' 'Yeah, but they're not really going to do that, are they? We're not going to really not let people fly in from certain countries. We're not really going to change the Constitution. We're not really going to storm the capital, right?' 'Well, that's what they say they're going to do. Why don't you believe that they're going to do it?' That whole Maya Angelou quote about how when people show you who they are, believe them? It was difficult. Americans were primed to be fooled because we had believed in safety -- in certain norms -- before then, so we were not constantly vigilant.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Like Mad-Eye Moody, we weren't primed to jump. We had this phenomenon, for example, in 2016 during that election campaign cycle where Trump was saying, "I would be the best president ever for LGBTQ causes," and damned if I didn't see people around me falling for that. They said, "He's making campaign promises; I believe it," and I'm like, "Have you met him?" They believed it, and then he became president and one bad thing happened after another. I just looked at these people like, "Now, do you believe me?" and they did, but it was too late. What I saw happening around 2016, 2017 is Americans consciously trying to teach themselves, "Yes, we can't really believe this is happening," but this is like the point in Harry Potter -- when the Death Eaters have taken over and nobody believes -- Fudge is so resistant to believing it because, "Oh, come on. If that were true, then things would be really terrible."

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. If you want to cling to that, you're sacrificing real people; the longer you cling to it, people are actually going to die because of this denial. I saw people trying to say, "Okay, this is the part where we have to form Dumbledore's Army," and it was a little bit embarrassing in the culture. I think there were people who were slightly embarrassed to be reaching for a children's fable to apply to this, but stories that have reached cultural saturation, that's what they can do: call upon something that we can all collectively know. Individually, we might really believe that nothing could be as bad as what Trump is threatening. "Oh, come on. They're not... He's just saying that." We had elected officials saying, "What would be the harm of just letting him have what he wants? He's just a demented old man." The harm is he's going to do it, he's going to carry... No, we cannot do that. This is how bad it really is, and that's what Dumbledore has hired Mad-Eye Moody to do: change paradigms. This generation of children that has been born during the hiatus between the two Wizarding Wars -- and therefore has known an uneasy sort of peace and security -- have not been trained by experience to have the hypervigilance that Mad-Eye Moody personifies, so they have to be shaken into it. Normally, you don't want to do that to children. Normally, you want them to be able to sleep at night, but no, this is a change that Dumbledore needs. Yeah. I do love that we have, in this bizarre scary character, the personification of hypervigilance.

JC: Yeah, for sure.

Lorrie: That's what it looks like. Even when he yells "CONSTANT VIGILANCE," his yelling makes the kids all jump.

JC: Yeah. It's comical, but also like, "Oh, my God. What's going on? What's wrong with this guy?" Yeah.

Lorrie: Hypervigilance is something I have. When people sneak up on me from behind, totally unintentionally, I will jump and scream and I'm embarrassed about it; I scream really loudly and I scare the crap out of them. I can't control it. This is something that the author used as an argument in her gender manifesto in 2020 to justify why she thinks people who were assigned male at birth (who are trans women) shouldn't be allowed in women's bathrooms. She says that due to her own background, she has hypervigilance and somehow that means that should be policy. Her position is bullshit, but I do recognize the hypervigilance. But yeah, when she describes how her children all have to laugh at her because in her family it's well known that noises will make her jump and that it's torturing, I'm like yeah. Yeah, actually, I have that too. I know exactly what you're talking about, and no, we do not make policy from that.

JC: Right. We go to therapy for that.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: We don't ask the government to oppress an entire group of people.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But yeah.

Lorrie: Okay, that's the end of that digression. You were saying...

JC: Okay. The whole bit of the lesson where Moody introduces the three curses I find really interesting for a lot of reasons. One, the choice of spiders I find really interesting, because there are very few people out there who look at spiders and go, 'Aww.' If he had chosen mice, 'Oh, my God, they're so cute.' Spiders are probably one of the most universally reviled creatures, but yet you feel sorry for them through these curses. That's a really interesting note.

Lorrie: They're fellow beings.

JC: Yeah, and these curses are so horrible that you even feel sorry for the spiders at the end.

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: So there's that, but also going back to something that we talked about earlier: from a teaching perspective, he's doing this really amazing thing. One of the best ways to teach science to kids -- Not even going to say 'one of'. The best way to teach science to kids (and this works for math and other subjects, too) is something called phenomenon-based teaching, where you start with a phenomenon, something that actually happens in the real world that will get kids curious. You can demonstrate it for them, you can show them a video... There's lots of ways you can do it, but what you want them to do is to look at a real phenomenon and you don't give them any background knowledge. You're like, "Here, look at this," and then as they look at it you say, "What do you see? What do you notice? What do you wonder?" The kids talk about what they see, they try to make sense of what they see, they ask questions; then you take the

questions the kids asked and you literally write them on the board. Then we go through and look at the questions, and there's strategies that you can use as the teacher to narrow them down. You can narrow them down to, 'What are your goals for this unit?' You're showing them some phenomenon that involves some chemistry, and at the base of the phenomenon there's something about pH; your goal in this unit is teaching about pH. You get the kids to come up with the questions that they want to answer. They want to know why this thing that they're seeing is happening. Okay, great, we've got these questions and then I can take each question and I can make a lesson out of it. Then at the end of each of these lessons, we can say, "Can we answer the question?" We go back, we try to answer our own questions, and at the end the kids can tell you all about what's going on in this phenomenon and they can use science to do it. That is how science is supposed to be taught in the modern 21st century, and that's kind of what Moody's doing here. He's doing this curse and he's like, 'What do you see? What do you notice? What do you wonder?' He doesn't use those words, but that's what I'm imposing on it in my head because I'm like, 'Dang!' He does it on the first day, so that's a phenomenon, and then he's using this to bring questions up in their minds. Who would use these curses? What can you do? He implies that you can fight back against at least the Imperius curse for reasons you just talked about earlier. How do you defend yourself against them? He's right in giving the kids a chance to raise these questions, and now they're ready to learn. They are ready to learn. I loved seeing that in this context, because I recognized it as a teacher.

Lorrie: Yeah. Gripping. Gripping, gripping. What I loved was with the Imperius curse: he does this amazing shortcut to empathy, because he has the spider do this comical tap dance routine and the kids are laughing... it is funny. Then he says, "You think it's funny, do you? You'd like it, would you, if I did it to you?" and then the kids abruptly all stop laughing. That's an amazing shortcut and it reproduces the same dynamic as the ferret incident (which I do still think is hilarious; boy, did Draco deserve it, and boy, was that satisfying, and it's also incredibly terrible) and laughing at Snape's boggart. Why do people still love that that was done to Snape, even though we know that the author is a TERF? It's like, 'Well, it was funny and it was satisfying and he deserved it.' Okay, switch it. 'You'd like it, would you, if I did it to you?' and that brings everything to this thundering halt. Wow. Okay. Yeah, he cuts right through it. Then about Imperius, he says, "Some job for the Ministry, trying to sort out who was being forced to act, and who was acting of their own free will." That is, in a nutshell, Hermione's struggle with freeing the house-elves. Yeah, it is some job. Are they doing this because they're brainwashed? If somebody is brainwashed but they believe it's their own free will, do you have the right to go in and overpower them? Who has the right to say, "I know you're disagreeing with me, but I'm doing this for your own good"? What if you're wrong? Even if you're right, are you forcing them? Why is your force effective? Because you have more power than they do? Anyway, the house-elf plot line gets brought in really clearly with Imperius. Hermione's objection to the subjugation of the house-elves is that they've been oppressed to oppress themselves; that's a degree of oppression that thoroughly creeps her out, and that's what Ron is saying that she should accept. "Look, they're fine." Yeah, that's part of the problem.

JC: Knowing that Barty Crouch, Jr. himself was subject to this curse obviously casts a whole new light on that scene, but also when he taught, he hints that you can fight back against it and he's going to teach them how. Okay, because that brings up a whole lot of things. How are you going to teach them? Well, you're going to have to cast it on them, and they're going to have to... Wow. That's kind of big.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: I'm trying to think of what would be an example of that, putting someone in that kind of a dangerous situation in order to teach them how to get out of it.

Lorrie: Like self-defense.

JC: Like self-defense, or when you take little kids and you throw them off the deep end of the pool at the end of a swimming lesson, and they have to swim to the side.

Lorrie: Oh, god.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And there's a teacher there, just in case, but it is like, "We're going to put you in mortal peril and see what you do."

Lorrie: We have to trust that the teacher's in control of themselves. Fortunately -- and this must have been a tall order for Barty Crouch, Jr. -- he does control himself, and that must have been really hard. After all of these years of being without a wand and being powerless, to be able to cast these curses again that used to be his bread and butter must feel really good and he can't let that take over. He has to remember that he's doing this for his own reasons. The pride he takes in what it takes to fight the Imperius curse... That's partly his own pride in himself that he was able to fight off his powerful, powerful father, but it's also such a contrast to the other Death Eaters. It's like Barty Crouch, Jr. wants his Dark Lord to have the dignity of a powerful opponent. 'If Harry is so powerful that he can do this, then great, because my Dark Lord deserves the best. This is the child that's supposed to be so powerful he can take down the Dark Lord. I don't want him to be just like any kid.' That is the opposite of these bumbling former Death Eaters at the Quidditch World Cup who are just acting like fools and not like people who should be proud of being minions of the most evil Dark Lord ever. It's also the opposite of what Snape's strategy is going to be in later books, because Snape's entire strategy is, 'Oh, Harry Potter is nothing. He's completely untalented. There's no magic to him. He's easy and dumb.' He's saying this ostensibly to reassure Voldemort; meanwhile, Voldemort's unease is now growing. 'If he's so dumb, what's wrong with me?' Snape is deliberately undermining Voldemort's self-confidence with this lie that Snape profoundly does believe in in some way. Yeah, Barty Crouch, Jr. is proud of how awesome Harry is. I think he respects it. There's a respect for power that is separate from whose side he's on, I find, but this is all part of me trying to identify, underneath all of the layers of deception, who is the real Barty Crouch, Jr., and what's his essential self. No, I think he likes it. It's worthy.

JC: It's interesting to me, too, that as he's going through these three curses, he knows who to appeal to. When he talks about the Imperius curse -- he's obviously referring to his own experience -- he points out, "Yeah, Ron, your dad knows just how hard a job the Ministry have, blah blah, blah." When he gets to the Cruciatius curse, he connects to Neville. On the first read, it's like, 'Oh, my God. Someone's noticed Neville. Someone's being nice to him.'

Lorrie: It's so creepy. Yeah.

JC: It's creepy, but it's also like when you trust that Moody is who says he is.

Lorrie. Yeah.

JC: I guess at this point in the reading, you don't know what happened to Neville's parents. We know he doesn't have parents currently.

Lorrie: Yeah, we don't know why Neville is triggered by this.

JC: Right. We don't know why Neville's triggered by this. Neville really is genuinely triggered by this, but then Moody's kind to him about it.

Lorrie: And he's really kind.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And even after we know that it wasn't Moody and that this particular Barty Crouch, Jr. is the last person that should be allowed near Neville, the healing still stays.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. Wow. Life is complicated.

JC: Yeah. Was that part of his plan to getting in good with Harry and Harry's friends? Did that come from some genuine place of sympathy because he's been subject to one of these curses that he's like, "Yeah, yeah, it's rough, isn't it?" When he cast the Imperius curse on the spider, was that hard? Did it remind him of everything he had been through? Yeah, there's a lot of questions I can ask now.

Lorrie: Exactly. I was contrasting Moody a lot in my mind to Snape, because they're both characters who present one way and they have this other agenda. Moody was looking very intently at Neville because what we find out way, way later is that no, Moody does not feel sympathy for Neville. Moody is thrilled to be seeing the victim of an incredibly bad crime that he committed that he would commit all over again if he could; he was proud of it and he enjoyed it, and seeing what it did to Neville is like a report card for him. 'Look, yes, it really worked.' He's looking very intently at Neville, and this sheds light to me on the contrast with the first day of Potions class in first year when Snape first encounters Harry, because Moody has no misgivings about what he did to Neville's family; Snape is guilty about what he did to Harry's family.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: Snape, out of his guilt, makes up all sorts of wrong things about Harry and totally punishes him for them, leaving Harry not only full of hate but very confused. Massive projection. That is not happening when Barty Crouch, Jr. is looking at the near-orphan of the family that he destroyed. This, to me, is a refutation of the extremely popular fan theory that I disagree with: the reason Snape is mean to Neville and hates Neville is that he resents that it should have been Neville and not Harry. If only Neville had been the Chosen One, then his parents would've died and Lily Potter would still be around. I don't believe that's what's happening, because when Snape looks at Neville, he doesn't have guilt toward Neville or resentment; he's just a mean teacher. His feelings toward Neville... I don't know that they are any different from how they would be toward any student that has the kind of problem that annoys Snape and makes him act out. But yeah, Moody looking at the child whose family he ruined is a really good side-by-side comparison with Snape looking at the child whose family he ruined.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: No, how you feel about it later affects how you treat people. Yeah, I just have to wonder: when Moody casts Cruciatius on the spider, is he really in control of himself? Oh... It's a good thing that Hermione yells, "Stop it!" just in case he needed to be brought back a little bit.

JC: And interesting, too, that yeah, Hermione... It's not necessarily for the spider's sake. It's for Neville's sake.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "Can't you see how it's affecting him?" she says, and she's looking at Neville, yeah, which is interesting.

Lorrie: Yeah. Hermione co-teaching, as usual.

JC: As usual, right. Moving on to the third curse, this is the one that Hermione suggests, her trembling hand raised; she's had her hand raised the whole time, but this time he calls on her. It's interesting that this line... I remember reading this in the book for the first time and so many things clicked in my head. When Moody says, "Only one known person has ever survived the Killing Curse, and he's sitting right in front of me," I remember gasping out loud when I read this for the first time, because that was the moment that it clicked for me. 'Oh, that's why everybody was so amazed that Harry survived.' I think I remember talking about this in an earlier episode. 'Well, he tried to kill a baby; what did he do? Why didn't it work? The fact that no one has ever had a Killing Curse aimed at them and then not died except for Harry Potter... Oh.' That just clarified in my head why everyone looks at Harry in the way that they do.

Lorrie: Yeah. 'What are you?'

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: 'Not only did it not work, but then something happened to this guy. We don't even know where he is. What did you do to him?'

JC: Right.

Lorrie: 'Nothing! I was a baby!'

JC: Yeah. That central piece of the story solidified for me the first time I read that particular line, and I was like, 'Oh, wow.' Yeah. Interesting.

Lorrie: That was a genuine goosebump moment. You cannot have a class more relevant to the students than this right here.

JC: That is true.

Lorrie: This is why we're learning this. You are history. All of us are living through history. Everything is important. The way that Avada Kedavra has no defense and is irreversible was one of those political moments for me when I was reading this series for the first time. 'Oh, this author is anti-gun. Okay.' Other kinds of combat -- hand-to-hand combat, bow and arrow, whatever -- there are things that you can defend against, but shooting somebody... There's nothing you can do against this, especially the kinds of weapons that are designed to do nothing but slaughter humans at a great pace. Not what you would take deer hunting.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: That's what she said. Okay, that's her parallel to Avada Kedavra. She is pro-disarmament. When Moody introduces this as the last and worst, okay, that's interesting. There's a ranking of the severity of these Unforgivables: each one of them will get you a life sentence in prison, but you can recover from Imperio and Crucio. You cannot recover from Avada Kedavra; it's irreversible. That's one of the themes of this series: Magic, sure, yes, love, mysteries, but nothing can bring back anybody from the dead. Nobody ever comes back from the dead. When that happens, it's over. Irreversibility is the line that we want as humans to teach ourselves not to cross. 'Don't do that. You can't get it back after that.' We will find in this series that Harry and Draco both perform the first two of the Unforgivables, and Snape and Dumbledore do what they have to do to prevent Harry and Draco from performing the third one, because you can't come back from that.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Well, Snape does, but he takes that on in Draco's stead because he knows he has what it takes and he can handle it; a teenager definitely cannot. Dumbledore asking Snape to take that on was like, 'Really, Dumbledore? I could kill you.' So why is it called an Unforgivable? It's not so much that this is so terrible that nobody can forgive it. Forgiveness is something that if you have this crime done to you, and for your own reasons and mental health and personality you forgive, nobody's going to stop you. What I first thought was oh, okay, what 'unforgivable' means... One of the things it means is if you're the person who was a victim of one of these crimes, you do not owe the criminal your forgiveness. If somebody has tried to mind-control you, torture you, or kill you, it's not your job to forgive them. It's not your job to restore their human dignity, to tell them it was okay. They may need that; that's on them. They have to go find whatever peace they can from somebody else. It's not your job, which comes into play later when Lily stops being friends with teen Snape because he's going to join up with these people who are trying to kill people like her. 'Well, can't you forgive him that he called you a slur?' 'Uh, he can seek forgiveness if he wants, but it's not on me. It's not my job to forgive him. He was threatening me. No.' That's one side of why they're Unforgivable, according to the rules of this moral universe, but then the other one we don't find out until *Deathly Hallows*, which is that casting something this damaging on another human damages the soul of the person who does it. Nothing can repair that soul damage except your own remorse. The victim can forgive you; that's not going to help. It'll make you feel guilty, and even if you have not achieved remorse, getting some forgiveness or mercy from the victim can make you lash out; it's intolerable. We'll see examples of that in this series, too: when Dumbledore goes to save Umbridge in the forest, she loses it, because here's somebody that she was trying to destroy and he would actually come and do this for her? She can't handle it. Not only does she not feel remorse; she is determined to never feel remorse, so she can't handle that act of mercy. So whether victims forgive you or not after you cast this is not even going to help you. It's unforgivable that way because that's not going to get you where you need to be. The fact that these are called Unforgivables and that they're in this category is that these are things that you can do to other people that will damage you if that's the kind of person you are and that's what you've done, and it's really hard to come back from it. Actually controlling people and overpowering their will *is* bad. It doesn't seem as bad as physically torturing them or killing them. It's bad. Don't do it. You'll hurt yourself doing it. Anyway, that's my mini-lecture on Unforgivables and why they're called that.

JC: It makes me think about... We've talked before about the idea of the biography -- the author intersecting with this text and that kind of thing. You've mentioned that the author spent some time working for Amnesty International and actually working, probably, with or meeting people who suffered things like this. To my knowledge, I've never met a person who's been tortured, so I can only imagine what that person might feel about toward the people who torture them. I would go and read a book about it or something, but I haven't experienced that in any way. I'm wondering if that's connected to that experience, that she chose to bring this concept into this because she had seen it.

Lorrie: Yeah. I think there's a direct connection because she does talk about incidents, and she was not working at any high level. She was administrative assistant, but she was still in touch with people who were coming in to use the services and meeting them and hearing what they had to say, as well as believing in the mission. So yeah, I think that was very much at the top of her mind. I have met people who were tortured in this political fashion; in my experience, the mood of it is not all that different from when you meet people who were abused or assaulted in a similar, traumatic way. It changes your mind and your body in a similar way, and that's something that I think a lot of people can relate to. 'Well, what do you feel as somebody who survived that kind of treatment? What do you feel toward the person or people who enabled that to happen?' Well, there's not just one answer, but it's all intense. One of the things that I find has been a burden for people -- and a lot of people feel some freedom -- is, 'Oh, no, I have to forgive,' and then when they are told, 'You know what? You don't have to,' there's a lot of things that you can do to make sense of humans and life in the world and what happened to you that don't require you to be the bigger person towards somebody who violated you. That's a concept that's really important. So yeah, Moody talks about Avada Kedavra and looks into Harry's eyes. He's getting to know his enemy and his enemy's vulnerability -- gets into Harry's head, knows how Harry thinks so he can report on it to Voldemort -- but he's also being trustworthy to Harry, and now Harry is old enough to find out, 'Oh, so that's how my parents died.' He does go into some flashback here and he's remembering how he saw what happened when he had the flashbacks from the dementor attacks the previous year; he hears Moody from a great distance and he manages to pull himself back to the present. It took a lot of effort, but that's impressive. Well done, Harry! Neville can't do it; Neville's going through the same thing, but Harry last year had treatment.

JC: Right. Right.

Lorrie: Patronus lessons and dealing with trauma specifically and training; meanwhile, Neville is where Harry was the previous year when he fell from his broom. 'Oh, no.' Yeah. Treatment is a good thing. Then Moody gives us a clue... Barty Crouch. He says, "Avada Kedavra's a curse that needs a powerful bit of magic behind it -- you could all get your wands out now and point them at me and say the words, and I doubt I get so much as a nosebleed." It's not that Harry is the only person who's ever survived Avada Kedavra. It's that he's the only person who survived it when it was properly cast; cast by somebody who had cast it countless times and it's never failed, and suddenly it's failed. But if you try casting it and you don't have conviction behind it, it's not going to work. That is a clue to why Voldemort was unable to kill baby Harry.

JC: Ooh.

Lorrie: Just keep that in mind.

JC: Ooh, okay. Interesting. Also, the thing I think is interesting is that without that intent behind it, it's not effective, but that's not true of guns.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: That's interesting.

Lorrie: Yes. There are other curses in Pottermore where even if you didn't intend it, you can accidentally hurt someone and then feel really, really bad.

JC: Yeah. We see one later in Book Six. A big one. Yeah.

Lorrie: Woo! But yeah, for the purposes of this plot and the central mystery, which is "Why couldn't this serial killer kill a baby," this element of intention being necessary is super important. It also has real-world parallels of people who think they're really tough and that they're all about killing, and then they kill for the first time and it's so much worse than they ever could have known. All that tough talk is one thing, but actually going through it changes you... Or so I've been told, because I'm on the innocence side of that divide. I have no idea, and I hope not to find out because it's apparently just awful what it does to you. That's even when you didn't intend to, even when it was a complete accident. Yeah. Here we are in Moody's first class, going, 'Oh, my God,' and he's saying, "You've got to know. You've got to appreciate what the worst is."

JC: And he set them up well for all the stuff that they're going to learn.

Lorrie: Yeah. Then when he catches up with Neville to try to nurture him after this terrifying lesson, he speaks in a much lower and gentler growl than they have yet heard. Aside from all the creepy layers of Barty Crouch, Jr. being the one to be gentle to Neville about this, it also made me wonder (and I have found no evidence of this either way): was he able to come up with that because that's something he wished he had received as a child instead of the incredible sternness that he had from his father? Would he have liked, when he was a violent, hate-filled child, to be comforted?

JC: Yeah, I don't know. I guess I'm reading his comforting of Neville here to be very much part of his plan. Harry and Hermione were standing there looking at Neville, so it's playing the role of, 'Oh, I'm on your side,' to come and say, 'Hey, Neville, let's grab a cup of tea.' I feel like if Harry and Hermione hadn't been there with Neville, he would have kept on walking. I'm not sure he would have, except he also had this ulterior motive of giving Neville this particular book about water plants. There's a big, very complex plan that he is rolling out slowly, one step at a time, in his head.

Lorrie: The thing is, though, that when Neville comes back from this meeting, "he looked a good deal calmer than at the end of Moody's lesson" and his eyes are red. That's really impressive. Whatever Moody did managed an emotional connection at a really tough time, and that's not guaranteed. That's not easy what he did, but he managed it, and there was some sort of sincerity that actually worked no matter where it was coming from. Then the narrator says, "It was the sort of thing Professor Lupin would have done," because Neville says that Mad-Eye Moody passed on the compliment from Professor Sprout about Neville's gift for Herbology. Again, we have that call back to communication. Maybe that was one of the things that Lupin told Mad-Eye Moody: "When you teach these children..." Maybe he said, "This kid, build up

their confidence this way." I don't know, but it does reinforce the good that can come from continuity. Also, it's excellent misdirection from the author...

JC: Yeah, for sure.

Lorrie: To make us trust this teacher more.

JC: It's also true, though, that people who are politically savvy -- which Barty Crouch, Jr. would have to be in order to have gotten himself up high enough in the Death Eater organization -- know exactly what to say to get someone on their side.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Even though he's doing a good thing for Neville, he has some understanding of how to play this kid to get this kid on his side. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, and that's the scary thing we hear about sociopaths: you can be really insightful and not tell. You won't be able to tell. They look exactly like a sincere person. They're really good at it, and it's not that they don't feel empathy or can't; it's that they can choose whether to turn that on or not, or they can use that ability to further their own ends, and it's scary.

JC: Yeah. Our introduction to this year's Defense Against the Dark Arts class is definitely very dramatic.

Lorrie: And that's not even the end of the chapter. Oh, my God.

JC: Yeah. Okay, the next part, Harry and Ron are trying really hard to do their Divination homework and they spend like an hour trying to do it properly, even though Hermione's not there.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And finally Ron's like, 'We're just going to bullshit our way through this,' and then they do, but the things they're coming up with are really funny. Also, I feel like some of them come true in the way that you get a horoscope, and it's like, 'You're going to have a miserable day today,' or whatever. It's not that it's a self-fulfilling prophecy, but you throw enough bullshit at the situation and some of it is going to work, just by the law of averages. 'You're going to lose something important to you.' There are really high odds that Ron's going to do that anyway in any given week; it doesn't matter that it's been predicted. 'Someone's going to try to kill Harry sometime this year.' Yeah...

Lorrie: Okay, that's a safe bet.

JC: I think we can assume that's going to happen. Yeah.

Lorrie: Well, it's a genre of writing and they've mastered it.

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: They know the rules; they know how to pitch it so that it's plausible but not too detailed. Meanwhile, the Weasley twins are up to something.

JC: Ooh, up to something and being very out of character for themselves by hiding off in a corner and working hard on something.

Lorrie: Yeah, so that's an ongoing mystery. Then Hermione comes back with the buttons for S.P.E.W.

JC: A very unfortunately named S.P.E.W.

Lorrie: The thing about her aims for the organization is that she's actually right. Her aims are actually all good: what she wants is fair wages and working conditions. Very notably to me, she wants to reverse the ban on house-elves using wands. And then this is so pathetic and real: she wants to fight to get an elf into the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures. The jump from zero representation to the beginning is so huge, insurmountable and ineffective. Having at times in my life been the first person of a certain group to enter, it's very tough. It's not that rewarding, but it's necessary. It's grueling. What difference is it going to make to have zero elves, and now there's an elf and you picture this first ever elf on the committee, shaking and trembling and beating itself up?

JC: While people are yelling at it, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, and excluding it and scheduling meetings at times that the elf can't make it.

JC: And publicly pointing out everything that elf has ever done wrong. Yes.

Lorrie: Oh, my god.

JC: Yes.

Lorrie: Hermione's aims are all good. First of all, I find the entire elf liberation subplot to be deplorably unsexy as part of the story, but she gets grief from the readers who were (at the time) the same age or younger. She's doing this all wrong, but it's kind of hard to know in what way she could have done it better because she has the exact same problem that we've been pointing out all this time: no continuity. All of the things that she's doing wrong could have easily been guided had there been a mentorship continuity in place. 'What you're doing is called activism. When we want to do this, these are some things that work, these are some things that don't. You don't go and tell people that you've never met what they really want. You don't go against their wish. What they actually know about their own situations is much more knowledgeable than what you know about.'

JC: Right.

Lorrie: All of these things that if you have a thriving underground movement -- a resistance with elders that can draw on experience -- then she wouldn't be thrown out there by herself having to make things up like no one's ever invented this wheel before. It's just herself and the library. Yeah, she's doing it all wrong; that's what would happen if you were fourteen and nobody understands why you're upset about something.

JC: Right. She spent all this time in the library, and it makes me wonder, 'what was she researching?' She was looking for the history, certainly, of house-elves. She also seems to have done some research on the history of labor movements; she tried really hard to find the kind of stuff you're talking about, but she didn't find much in the Hogwarts library about it. Is she drawing on what she knows as a Muggle?

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: She can't look it up on the internet. What she really needs is to go to some public library in London, maybe. Wouldn't that be... The Hogwarts library for this purpose is probably infuriatingly limited for Hermione.

Lorrie: Yeah, and this topic is not one that many wizards were motivated to take up.

JC: But if she went and talked to Muggles about this issue, I feel like she would have had a much better strategy.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But wizards are like, 'Eh.'

Lorrie: That's where she comes from. When she finds out that there are house-elves at Hogwarts and she says, "Slave labor... that's what made this meal," that's her Muggle background coming in. She knows what this is. There's that subplot happening while Harry and Ron are avoiding her gaze.

JC: And they've now been appointed the secretary and the treasurer of S.P.E.W., and they're just like, "Oh, god, we have no choice."

Lorrie: Then we get Hedwig back with, finally, the thing that Harry's been craving all this time: an answer from Sirius. In the letter, Sirius says that he's heard "the latest in a series of strange rumors..." I love this so much. We get to see Sirius really, actually, is smart. There's a reason why, as a student, he always assumed he was the smartest person in the room. He still has it. He is the only other person who's on track with Dumbledore, seeing what's happening and knowing where this is leading and thinking several steps ahead. In his letter he says they're saying that Dumbledore's got Mad-Eye Moody out of retirement, which means he's reading the signs even if no one else is. 'Reading the signs...' Oh, thank goodness somebody knows how to do that. Yeah, Dumbledore's reading the signs; that's why he's getting the kids back into hypervigilant mode. Yeah, and then poor Harry. Poor Harry. All of his mechanisms slam into place that, 'Oh, no, when I love somebody and they need to protect me, then...'

JC: Bad things happen.

Lorrie: 'They croak.' Yeah. 'I can't let that happen. Nothing bad's happening to me! Nobody croak!'

JC: It is comforting, though, to hear Sirius say, "Okay, I see what's happening," and Harry's scar hurting and Harry's dream is just another layer of that. It's not just Harry out here by himself; there are adults in the world who see things that are happening and they're taking action...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Even in ways that are limited by the world they live in. Dumbledore always said before it's under constraints, but they're doing what they can to fight and to take steps to be prepared for what might be coming. That's comforting. It's not just Harry. In a lot of the book, for Harry, feels like it's just Harry -- that he's the only one -- but he's never really alone.

Lorrie: Yeah. That's the delightful setup of reading a mystery like this. As the reader, we're being assured it's worth it to keep reading. None of this makes sense, and there's going to be a

payoff; keep reading. It'll be answered. That's fun. Yeah, the next chapter is called Beauxbatons and Durmstrang.

JC: Ooh, it's beginning. It's starting.

Lorrie: Yeah. We'll take a long nap and then talk about it later.

JC: Yes. Unlike Harry and Neville, who seem like they're going to have sleepless nights at the end of this chapter.

Lorrie: All right. Talk to you then!

JC: All right. Next time!

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.