



## Transcript

### Episode 4.27

#### Book 4, Chapter 27: Padfoot Returns

**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 Twenty-Seven: Padfoot Returns.

**Lorrie:** Padfoot Returns. Snape bullies both Hermione and Harry in class, behaving even worse than usual, but then Karkaroff crashes Snape's class and we see what has got Snape on edge. The kids bring food to Sirius in the cave where he's hiding, and he gives them fascinating background on all the strange things happening. So JC, this chapter is a lesson in media literacy.

**JC:** Ooh, that's interesting.

**Lorrie:** All about how to interpret tabloids and headlines from the paper of record, something that I think all of us will benefit from sharpening our skills at in the next several years.

**JC:** Ugh. Yeah, for sure. I really love that this chapter opens with Ron being very Ron-ish...

**Lorrie:** Yes!

**JC:** He's embellishing the story of what happened under the lake to anyone who will listen, in particular when pretty girls are interested.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Then it becomes, "Well, I had my wand and I was going to do this and that," until Hermione shuts it down, but I find that really funny... It is really so Ron.

**Lorrie:** It's adorable. Yeah. At that age, you want to see, 'What am I allowed to be as an inventor, as a storyteller,' because the story he's telling is definitely a story. People like hearing that sort of thing, but you also have to be accountable for the truth.

**JC:** Yes, that's for sure. When Hermione calls Ron on his bullshit, she says, "'What were you going to do, snore at them?' said Hermione waspishly."

**Lorrie:** Yes.

**JC:** And when I read that, it struck me that that's not the first time that the adverb 'waspishly' has been used in relation to Hermione in this book. I haven't done a search to see how many other times, but it just stood out to me this time because I thought that's such an interesting word to use here. It's got a visual connotation. We all know wasps are asshole bees, right? They're like...

**Lorrie:** Stinging, yes.

**JC:** Yeah. They're mean and they'll go after you. But it's also interesting because I thought, well, it's calling our attention to bugs.

**Lorrie:** So it is.

**JC:** Sorry, my middle school-level literary analysis here will be going, "Ooh, it's a bug reference! That's going to be important!" But also, just the image of Hermione as a wasp kind of stuck in my head for a little while and made me think, 'Okay.'

**Lorrie:** Yeah, we're lucky she's not feeling this way more often because wow, she could really hurt.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** But yeah, she's in a foul mood because people keep teasing her about Viktor, so she's got no filter.

**JC:** Right, and it's about to get worse.

**Lorrie:** Yes, and we're about to have a larger lesson on what happens when you're not in a good mood and have no filter. Sirius sends an owl to ask them to meet him near Hogsmeade and "bring as much food as you can." Oof.

**JC:** Oooh... That's sad.

**Lorrie:** Well, he does what he's got to do, and I am so glad that Sirius overrode Harry's worry about wanting Sirius to stay far, far away as long as he's safe because he's the adult. He's the parent figure. He gets to be the one to make the judgment about what Harry needs. He gets to say, "I know the risk and it's worth it." Harry... He's resistant,

but he does feel stronger knowing that Sirius is nearby. This is good. This is functional. This is when grown-ups risk things for the kids that they really, really care about.

**JC:** At this point as a reader, you don't really have a sense of what Sirius is doing. In previous books, he seemed like he was on a tropical island somewhere, so to see the depths that he's had to sink to in order to be protective of Harry is really touching here, too, when we get to that later in the chapter, so yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** But the first hint of it, yeah, is "bring as much food as you can." There's only one reason why you ask someone to bring a lot of food.

**Lorrie:** Yes, and they've all seen what he looks like when he's starving and on the run, so they know exactly what's at stake. So they go to class and they discover that Pansy and her friends have planted a tabloid article that Rita Skeeter wrote called "Harry Potter's Secret Heartache." The issue that's being contested in this tabloid article is whether a smart girl gets to be defined as attractive or whether she should be punished for being so successful by being called something like 'plain but ambitious', because a previous Rita Skeeter article described Hermione as "stunningly pretty," and apparently that really got to Pansy.

**JC:** And Pansy's like, \*whispers\* "She's not!" Yeah. It's interesting, too, that this article basically describes Hermione as a shameless, love potion-making whore.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, yeah.

**JC:** Wow, wow.

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** That is such teenage girl bullying.

**Lorrie:** Right. Any success that Hermione could possibly have romantically would be because she's this devious, corrupt person...

**JC:** Right.

**Lorrie:** And Pansy, who is described as having a pug face... Pansy, just like Hermione, has normal teenage girl insecurity about her looks, and then obviously Pansy's getting paid for being Rita's informant with this description that Pansy is "pretty and vivacious". It's this jockeying that nobody's really immune to this. Pansy wants it on the record that she's pretty, and it drove her nuts that Hermione was on the record as 'pretty', and this is something that is in flux for girls of this age and it's really important. It's part of the larger theme in this volume of the shameful but uncontrollable way that humans are around fame, around media attention -- what people think of you, your public image --

which is going to become part of the bigger theme around Snape that this book is building toward.

**JC:** It's also interesting to me here that... A couple things: one is that you were talking about media earlier, and this is written at a time when tabloid papers ruled that. Now it's crap on the internet, it's misinformation.

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** It's a different world now, but at the time it was like you'd be in the grocery store and there'd be eight tabloid newspapers as you're waiting in line, and they would all say crap that would sound just like this, right?

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** It's interesting to me that it's an artifact of the time it was written in. It'd be different now; it'd be TikToks, it'd be all kinds of different things, right?

**Lorrie:** To me, the feeling of it would be the same, though.

**JC:** Yeah, yeah, exactly. It's like 'different time, same shit.' Or what is it?

**Lorrie:** It's a smear campaign.

**JC:** Yeah, it's a smear campaign.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** But also even at that time, it was true that the memory was short of the public, so you could just lie. You could just make up a new story that contradicted the last one you wrote and it didn't matter, and that's just sped up now with the internet.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** It was true then, too, that she called her "stunningly pretty" in one article and in the next one called her "plain but ambitious", and that's the new reality that her readers are going to believe.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And the power of that kind of tabloid journalism -- or the power of gossip, which humans for all time have been susceptible to, that people want to know what's going on, what's the gossip -- it's interesting how that's tying in here, too.

**Lorrie:** Well, that insecurity -- that need to jockey for position and attention, and the anxiety of her looks -- is an anxiety that's hardwired into us, and anything that taps into that and can use it has a really good chance of success. It overrides logic, like Harry saying, "Oh, well, Cedric is kind of stupid." No, he's not.

**JC:** Yeah. He wouldn't be a prefect if he was stupid.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Yeah. The other thing that happens here is that Hermione (at least I think that she's being genuine here) seems like she's like, "Okay, whatever, fine, I'm not paying attention to that," and moves right on. It goes back to that wish fulfillment thing with Hermione... The idea that you could just let it go. "Yeah, I'm not going to let it bother me."

**Lorrie:** She's so good.

**JC:** Yeah. Okay, what 14-, 15-year-old girl could literally do that? Well, Hermione can. Amazing.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. There are people -- I remember being in school and looking with awe and envy at the people who would say, "Yeah, those people have a low opinion of me, but I honestly do not care what they think of me," and I would just be so impressed.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Wow! What would that be like?

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** "Really? You're not just saying that?" "No, really. I really don't care." Wow!

**JC:** Yeah. But normally that comes... Well, this is going to sound naive, perhaps: I normally have only seen that in people who only didn't care because their number one priority was to advance themselves, right? It's people who were not narcissistic but a little bit... The people who could do that weren't necessarily people I admired because they were the people who would lie to get -- They were the ones who were out there playing the game, too, as if life was like a game of *Survivor* and you have the people who were lying to each other and all this crap. It felt like, "Yeah, I don't care what they think of me, because my goal is to win this game." It's kind of like that, right? Hermione's intentions are not that.

**Lorrie:** I knew people who genuinely didn't care for the best and most ideal reasons that were hopelessly beyond my maturity level.

**JC:** It takes a lot of --

**Lorrie:** Security.

**JC:** Yeah, security and confidence to be able to say, "Look, I know that I'm right, and if ninety percent of people around me don't see that, too bad. I'm going to keep on going." Wow, that's amazing. Yeah.

**Lorrie:** I love discovering through Rita Skeeter's article that love potions are, of course, banned at Hogwarts. That is quite a relief to know because the Ministry has not made them illegal, and presumably you can't stop wizards and witches from brewing their own at home. Also, love potions have this naughty glamour feeling like underage drinking or illicit drugs, which is like, 'Yeah, maybe that glamour is not very productive because there's some actual downsides to this,' but they're very much part of the cultural lore. Not even just in *Harry Potter*, but just around witches and wizards in general, love potions are a thing that you associate with magical powers, but Dumbledore in his school can recognize that love potions are rape drugs and say, "Yeah, no, we're not having them here." Two years from now, Slughorn is going to be introducing a love potion in his classroom, and he probably shouldn't have done that. On the other hand, it's topical.

**JC:** Yeah, and we're also going to learn that there's a love potion involved in Tom Riddle's origin story a few years down the line.

**Lorrie:** This is one of those areas where people think, 'Well, what was Dumbledore doing?' In this case, he was on it. He banned love potions. They really don't need to be at Hogwarts.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Oh, and part of what helps Hermione brush off the article: she gets this huge assist from Ron because he channels Molly Weasley and he says, "Rita Skeeter's making her out to be some sort of scarlet woman," and this is so funny Hermione loses it.

**JC:** Right, right. She's like, "A what?!"

**Lorrie:** "A what?!"

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Oh!

**JC:** Okay, the one thing about the *Harry Potter* series that I find completely not realistic (and I understand why it's this way) is that teenagers go through a phase -- especially in middle school, but even into early high school -- where it's so important for them to develop slang that adults can't understand.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Right now, we're in the "skibidi toilet" phase of middle schoolers, but it's so important and it's funny because even very young adults are excluded from this. My students are undergrads; they're twenty. They're going into classrooms with middle schoolers and high schoolers, and they're like, "I feel so old, and I just don't understand

what they're saying." They're what, five, six years older than these kids, right? But there's this thing that adolescents do, where they change their own language, and you don't see that happening in the *Harry Potter* series; in fact, that example is the opposite of it. With little kids in elementary school, you will frequently hear them come out with some phrase and you're like, "What? Where did you hear that?" Then you're like, "Oh, your parents said that. It's something your parents said."

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** I remember there was a time that, in our neighborhood, there were these "watch out for deer" signs -- it was just a picture of a jumping deer -- and someone had gone through and painted red noses on them in the winter, which was cute, right?

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** But I remember talking to -- my kid was in the second or third grade and we're talking to one of his friends, and he was like, "Yeah, some joker went around and put Rudolph noses on all the deer signs." The way that he said it... he said the word 'joker'.

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** I was like, "That's something your dad said, and you're just repeating it."

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** There's lots of examples that folks can probably think of with that, but this is like an example of that, and it's more how I would expect an eight-year-old to talk than a 14-year-old.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** So a 'scarlet woman' sounds like...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Wow. That's not what I would expect a 14-year-old to say.

**Lorrie:** Well, I was wondering if he had a word he would have used, but he's trying to be polite and sympathetic to Hermione, so he's trying to... 'What's a polite way to say it?'

**JC:** Could be.

**Lorrie:** He doesn't have a lot in his toolbox here.

**JC:** But yeah. "They make you sound like a skank," or whatever kids say these days, right? Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. But then Hermione waits for ten minutes... She's not going to confess this one thing to Ron and Harry, but after ten minutes she realizes she has to because it's

actually relevant. She says Rita Skeeter was accurate in reporting that Victor had asked her to visit him over the summer and she turns completely red and Ron, of course, has a very unhappy, jealous reaction to this, but she had to bring it up because how could Rita Skeeter have heard? Was she there? She wasn't there. Was she in a cloak? We have unhappy romance happening here, and as they're being uncomfortable about this, we get one of those moments where Snape shows up exactly when you don't want him...

**JC:** Yes.

**Lorrie:** And he makes them all jump, which makes me laugh.

**JC:** And he does the worst possible thing he can do in that situation. Everyone of our generation certainly has had the experience of passing notes in class and then having a teacher catch it and decide to read it out loud.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, yep.

**JC:** I have this memory of a seventh grade teacher doing that to a friend of mine and was about to slip, but where she stopped was the name of the boy that my friend had a crush on. She knew to stop, but my friend was in tears.

**Lorrie:** That's so awful. That's so awful.

**JC:** And the teacher was just like, "I won't read the rest, but don't... I should teach you not to --" It's like, 'Aaah!' That's the feeling that I'm getting here, even though it's not a note situation, but what's the worst thing he could do right now? It's to read this article out loud and in a mocking way.

**Lorrie:** Well...

**JC:** And the note that he pauses to give the Slytherins chances to laugh... Oh, God.

**Lorrie:** He ramps this up in stages, because the first thing he does is completely what real teachers do. He says, "Fascinating though your social life undoubtedly is," and that's like, 'Oh, I've had that experience, yes.' He moves on to, "Oh, Potter has to keep up with his press cuttings," and that is annoying to Snape because he has that completely wrong conviction that Harry enjoys being notorious, and that's Snape being envious of media attention and having that jealous reaction. We've even seen in this volume that Ron has that, too, around Harry, saying, "Oh, you've got another photo call," and obviously Pansy has just had that. People crave attention and they get really weird about it, but then when he does read it out loud... Okay, I'm sorry. I think it's hilarious. In the sentence, "The article sounded ten times worse when read by Snape," I'm actually identifying with Hermione, but sometimes terrible things happen to you; even while you're suffering, you have to admit this is really funny and awful. It's the



worst, and that's a dynamic that this author does sometimes write into her humiliation scenes, as people living through this indignity, going, "Yeah, right, this is really awful. I'm thinking, 'Okay, why is he taking this so far?' because what's done skillfully, I think, in this chapter is that Hermione had gotten over the article. She was fine, and then he had to take it to this other territory and just completely obliterate her. He's exploiting his position of power in the classroom to shame her about the fact that being this age and dating for the first time is vulnerable, no matter what. Then I thought okay, this is their conflict that started off with "I see no difference" when he's being mean to her about her teeth growing, and then she really won. She got her teeth fixed, and then she was the belle of the Yule Ball and she's caught the attention of the biggest celebrity. Snape is losing ground, and we don't know yet, but we're going to find out a couple pages later what's bugging him so much. Why is he being worse than usual here? We'll find out. But yeah, that was completely unfair and she had no defense. He's accusing her of being a vulnerable teenage girl. Well, yeah.

**JC:** It's interesting, too, that he separates the three of them and he makes Hermione go sit next to Pansy.

**Lorrie:** Pansy. Ugh, yeah.

**JC:** Which okay, that's the worst person to put her next to. I can't remember who he sets Ron next to, but he makes Harry come and sit in the front row and then he keeps laying into Harry.

**Lorrie:** Well, he keeps Ron where he is.

**JC:** Okay, Ron stays there.

**Lorrie:** "Ron, you stay there. Hermione, you go where somebody can carry on the grand work."

**JC:** "Next to your bully." Yeah.

**Lorrie:** "I, meanwhile, have a bone to pick with this... child."

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Also, his final comment on all the love triangle fiction is, "How very touching." That's the same put-down he used in *Prisoner of Azkaban* when Harry lied and said, "Oh, Ron gave me this joke map from Zonko's," and Snape says, "Oh, and you've been carrying around ever since? How very touching." That is such a scathing thing to say about something that's really wholesome, so it makes sense we will learn eventually that this character, Snape, has secret motivations that are the most mockably, genuinely touching of all. Okay, he's going to be a jerk to other people about this. I also find it

hilariously funny that Harry imagines his beetles each to have Snape's face as he grinds them into the finest possible powder.

**JC:** Harry has so much self-control in this section. Snape is just pushing the buttons as hard as he can, and Harry's just not letting himself rise to it.

**Lorrie:** "I know this game. You're not going to win."

**JC:** Yeah. It's incredible, actually, that he just takes it and takes it, and he just keeps his teeth grit and his head down. Again, it shows a lot of maturity; Harry, a book ago, would have lost it.

**Lorrie:** Well, no. Harry's always been much better than most kids his age at standing up to this fight. He's well equipped because the Dursleys --

**JC:** Yeah, true, for the Dursleys --

**Lorrie:** Yeah, because he did this on the very first day of Potions class as an 11-year-old when Snape started out being this unreasonable bully and Harry wouldn't let him win. Harry is not a bad opponent; he's equipped. This sentence is so mean-spirited when Snape says, "To me, Potter, you're nothing but a nasty little boy who considers rules to be beneath him." Oh, okay, we see it's about rules. Snape has been feeling powerless; he's been fuming over what he thinks is Moody joining forces with Harry to egg him on to break rules, just like he thought Lupin was doing the year before, and he can't take it out on Moody so he's taking it out on Harry. Then he says, "If I catch you breaking into my office one more time --" Oh, okay. That's the incident that's got him even crankier than usual and feeling more powerless. Then he says, "Boomslang skin" and "gillyweed," and we know what the gillyweed's about; we've just seen. This is a clever diversion from the author to have Harry think, 'Oh, yeah, boomslang skin. Well, that was second year,' so that Harry and we the reader can think that's what Snape is referring to. Harry, admirably, "says coldly, 'I don't know what you're talking about.'" He's lying, but he knows he's not guilty and he does sound different when he knows he's not guilty. When Harry does feel guilty, then his insides squirm and he automatically thinks of all the secrets that he's keeping, and I'm sure his face is completely legible to any experienced teacher. But this time, he's really cold because he knows -- 'No, I'm not guilty' -- and that goes along with the way a couple chapters ago Snape clutched at where his Dark Mark is. Do you have that internal guilt? Can you really separate it? Well, yeah, when you're completely innocent, you don't have that, but we've just seen Snape do the same little boy thing. That's part of Snape's issue in this situation: he feels powerless and little like these fourth years compared to the seventh years, so he can't stop Moody from joining forces with the brat. He can't stop people searching his office or stealing things from him. He can't confront Moody, but he can get Harry to sit up front in class and hiss at him. Then Snape threatens Veritaserum, "spilling your innermost

secrets for this entire class to hear." Again, this goes to public perception for the entire class. Snape is really worried about how people look, and this is a really good setup in the larger story for Snape's struggles with being perceived publicly, widely, as 'too evil' for the Defense Against the Dark Arts position because of something shady in him. This is reflexive; people do care how they come off in public. You can fight it, but it's not natural. It's more natural to care, and it's a completely empty threat. Snape loves rules. "Veritaserum," he says, "is controlled by very strict Ministry guidelines." Snape never poisons anyone in this series, but he knows (and I agree) that you can't be sure he's not going to.

**JC:** He could, and that's always hanging there. It's interesting that we learn here that Veritaserum exists...

**Lorrie:** Yes.

**JC:** And that just raises a whole lot of questions for me about the wizarding world's justice system.

**Lorrie:** Yes, it does!

**JC:** If you have this incredibly powerful... Why are people imprisoned wrongly?

**Lorrie:** Well, "controlled by very strict Ministry guidelines," so it's completely something that you have to trust your government to use.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** And even though we know and he knows that he is not about to dose Harry with Veritaserum, he's fantasizing it really badly, exactly like Harry fantasizing about crushing beetles with Snape's face on them.

**JC:** Right. Another thing that I find really interesting in this scene is that I don't know exactly how Snape's Legilimency works, but there's been all these instances throughout the books of Harry having this feeling that Snape could read his mind. Here's a moment where Harry really did not break into his storeroom to do these things. Did Snape get an inkling of, 'Harry really doesn't know'? Maybe it's colored by the fact that he does know that in second year they got the boomslang, or he's pretty sure that Dobby broke in to get the gillyweed. I wonder what Snape saw in Harry's head during all of this.

**Lorrie:** I think --

**JC:** Or was he just so mad that he couldn't even focus on it?

**Lorrie:** I think he's just so mad, because I can imagine him saying, "Well, maybe you didn't do this, but I know for sure you did a whole bunch of other stuff." He's very accustomed to this feeling of having no details correct but generally being right about

Harry, but right now, he's so impotent and enraged that he's just throwing a tantrum. Meanwhile, Harry is thinking: "He repressed a shudder at the thought of what might come spilling out of his mouth if Snape did it" with the Veritaserum because he's thinking about Hermione and Dobby stealing and thinking about Sirius. The thing is some of the things that Harry is guiltily or fearfully worried about is just a matter of privacy and everybody has the right to privacy, but If you are oppressing someone, you can deprive them of that and tell the person you're oppressing that they don't deserve privacy, because humans have in us a tendency to honesty and that tendency can be exploited and warped and you can work that into a guilty conscience. If you think about house-elves having natural normal thoughts but then feeling like they don't have the right to privacy -- they don't own their private thoughts; they have to punish themselves, so they turn it into guilty conscience -- that's just something you can do to somebody if you want to oppress them that way. But we're seeing in Harry the really natural human tendency to think about the truth. Yes. Anyway, privacy is something that yeah, if Harry learns Occlumency, he can protect his right to privacy. Meanwhile, after Snape has been completely horrible to Harry here, then there's the knock. "'Enter,' said Snape in his usual voice," so the chapter is really highlighting how incredibly hateful and hypocritical Snape is. Yeah, you can really see how Harry is fantasizing about something really, really bad happening to this guy. It's that loser Karkaroff, and Snape cannot do anything to shut him up and stop him from spilling secrets all over the place because Snape is the one who moved Harry to the single desk right in front of the classroom.

**JC:** This part just blew my mind, because Karkaroff is like... How stupid are you?

**Lorrie:** Yes.

**JC:** On the one hand, he wants to catch Snape, and he wants to make sure that -- but he could've just come in and stood in the back. He didn't have to walk up to the front, like, "I have to talk to you right now!" That raises as much suspicion as possible here. Karkaroff, you're a terrible Dark wizard.

**Lorrie:** He's terrible. Absolutely awful, and gee, whose fault is it that Harry has a front row seat to this?

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** And Harry's doing terrible pseudo innocence...

**JC:** Oh, my God.

**Lorrie:** Which is hilarious. If you can just imagine how terrible he's faking it... 'Gee, I just happen to be looking in your direction and lip reading over here.' Snape can't do a darn thing. Karkaroff is going to be an idiot and he grasps that left inner forearm spot that

we've seen Snape grasp, although at this point the author has not told us readers what this is, only where.

**JC:** He pulls his sleeve up, right?

**Lorrie:** And Snape is like, "Put it down!"

**JC:** Yeah, he pulls up his sleeve...

**Lorrie:** You idiot!

**JC:** To show Snape something on his inner forearm, and Snape is like, "Put it away!" He does it in front of all the kids!

**Lorrie:** I know!

**JC:** It's like, how stupid are you?

**Lorrie:** Very!

**JC:** Actually, weirdly, I feel for Snape in this situation.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** I'm like, 'Oh, my God, these are the people you have to work with. I'm so sorry.'

**Lorrie:** If Snape had been able to block the view of the students by moving his body, then he could have contained it a little bit. No, he has put Harry Potter smack in the sight line here, so once again Snape is completely powerless as usual.

**JC:** And surrounded by idiots.

**Lorrie:** Surrounded by idiots and only has himself to blame sometimes. Then Karkaroff is saying, "It's never been this clear, never since --" Okay, now we know that the Dark Mark changes according to Voldemort's state and that everyone who has one shares in that and knows about it, because Death Eaters are people who have promised that for the rest of their lives, they are going to know what Voldemort feels. This is how he's going to have something that's almost like friends. 'Do you promise your whole life you're always going to care what I think?' Okay, so they've promised, and as Snape is hissing at him, Karkaroff's like, "'But you must have noticed --' 'We can talk later, Karkaroff,' spat Snape." This is it. This is what's been getting under Snape's skin so much: he's had this growing dread because he has had this uncontrollable bodily change, he knows it doesn't mean anything good, and it's so different from the bodily changes in people like Hermione. Hermione is on her way to transitioning to be an adult who can have romantic relationships. Meanwhile, he's being reminded that at that age, he made choices that led him in a completely different, stunted direction. Though those choices are still very much unresolved, he very much minds, and they're coming around

again; he's going to have to face this again. Meanwhile, Hermione is a Muggle-born girl and she's dating a boy who the Dark side would love to have (this boy, Viktor) and he knows better. At some cost to himself, he's resisting. Hermione and students like her are leaving Snape behind. This growing clarity of his Dark Mark is really rubbing in his face, 'No, you are stunted. You are right here. You're going to have to grapple with the consequences again. You can torture Hermione as much as you like, but she's going to move on. You're not; you're stuck here. There's no escaping.' He's just in a really immature, crappy mood about this. Oh, well, Hermione... Sorry that you had to suffer this, but you're going to go on. You're going to have a life. This guy is going to have to deal with himself.

**JC:** That's an interesting bit of perspective that I think you can never have as a teenager.

**Lorrie:** No, especially as the victim.

**JC:** Yeah. But yeah, there's a certain -- I never knew any teachers who were like Snape per se, but I did know (as a student) some teachers that were just not pleasant, and it was clear that they had issues. At the time, no one was saying... None of the kids that I knew were like, 'Oh, that person just has all these unresolved issues.' The way that you just framed it is true. There's a lot of adults who never quite get past some of these things that happened in the past.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, and as a teenager you can't believe they're being so immature and obvious as to take it out on kids who did nothing. But watch them go. There they go.

**JC:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Lorrie:** And I repeatedly see that I went to a rougher school than you, because we did. We had teachers that were disgraceful and we were merciless, because you might not know the details as a teen, but that was the thing we said: 'Oh, so-and-so really needs to get laid.' It's hard to face because the pain of it is real. You know how pathetic that feels; you would have sympathy for it, as one human to another, if this person weren't abusing their situation over you to be the pettiest, most immature version, to be more immature than the 14-year-olds they're teaching. There comes a point when you know exactly why they're doing it, and you don't owe them your sympathy because they're being so shitty about it. There's a chance if you say, "Wow, are you really taking your issues out on us?" that it might stop them, but this is a thing that happens. Yeah, I just admire the structure of the first half of this chapter that takes us from Snape being some of the worst that he's ever been -- just really incredible. 'I can't believe you didn't stop before... I can't believe you're going that embarrassingly far.' Then he's having that same issue that Harry has, where he just is so small and immature and unequipped and

these terrible things are happening, and he doesn't have a lot of power. Unlike Harry, he does have himself to blame, though.

**JC:** Yeah. Before we move on from this, there is one tiny detail that stood out to me -- this is a world building thing -- and it is the armadillo bile.

**Lorrie:** Oh, yes!

**JC:** Harry knocks over his thing of armadillo bile, like, 'Oh, I'm going to clean this up so I could be listening to this conversation,' but the fact it's armadillo bile jumped out at me. Okay, I live in Texas.

**Lorrie:** You live in Texas. Yes.

**JC:** Armadillos are a native species here and Lord knows it'd be easy to collect it; they're often dead on the side of the road, right?

**Lorrie:** Yep.

**JC:** But it makes me think, 'How did armadillo bile become a common classroom ingredient in Scotland?'

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** When did New World potion ingredients make their way over to Europe or to Asia or wherever? If we think about the wizarding world, suddenly we have potatoes make their way to Europe.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Right.

**JC:** Somehow, ingredients from the Americas made their way over. That just made me think, 'Oh, armadillo bile. Where do they even get it?'

**Lorrie:** From Texas, probably.

**JC:** Right. There's a wizarding potion supply company in Dallas, and they just import it? I don't know. It just made me go, 'Oh, wow!'

**Lorrie:** And it must be expensive, and Harry has soaked a rag with it.

**JC:** Right, and he just spills it! He knocked it over. I guess he's got a lot of gold and he can buy more, but still, it was like...

**Lorrie:** It's worth it for this.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** How much would you pay to watch Snape squirm as Karkaroff reveals the giant plot twist?

**JC:** I would give up my armadillo bile.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. And just how foul must that sopping rag smell...

**JC:** Oh, God.

**Lorrie:** And Harry's probably handling it without gloves.

**JC:** Oh, yeah, I'm sure, because there's no PPE in Snape's classroom.

**Lorrie:** They do have dragon-hide gloves sometimes.

**JC:** Sometimes, and that's only for things that would actually kill you on contact, but there's no fume hoods, there's no ventilation. They're not wearing goggles.

**Lorrie:** Armadillo bile is probably very acidic... Anyway...

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** It's all worth it. If Harry has dry, scaly skin for a few days, totally worth it. Totally worth it.

**JC:** Smells vaguely of armadillo, yeah. Oh, my God.

**Lorrie:** Well, Snape was having a bad day. He tried to make Hermione's day and Harry's day just as bad, but it's just not going to be as bad as the day he's having.

**JC:** Okay, the next part of this opens with this sentence that made me go, 'Ooh.' It says, "They left the castle at noon the next day to find a weak silver sun shining down upon the grounds," and this made me think about you talking about silver magic and gold magic.

**Lorrie:** Uh-huh.

**JC:** And I don't know if there's a connection there, if it's just a description of this sun on a cloudy day, but it just stood out to me: a weak silver sun.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. I just thought, 'Winter in Scotland.' It's time to visit Sirius.

**JC:** Yes.

**Lorrie:** I'm so excited. They get "a dozen chicken legs..."

**JC:** Which doesn't seem like enough once they get there, but it's like, okay. They did what they could.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, and "a loaf of bread, and a flask of pumpkin juice". This gave me such a strong personal memory: in college, we had a friend who couldn't afford to be on the dining hall plan. She lived in the dorms; I really don't know how we fed her all year, and we weren't allowed to sneak food out of the dining halls, so we had to be a little bit



creative. I remember once I thought, 'Okay, I'm going to make her a sandwich,' but it was two slices of bread and this giant barbecue chicken leg and thigh. It's funny. 'Well, technically, it's a sandwich.' But yeah, they feed him...

**JC:** And they take this long hike.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, half an hour.

**JC:** Yeah, uphill, up into this cave. The interesting thing about this is that when you see where he's living and this condition he's living in, it's like, 'Oh, damn.'

**Lorrie:** Wow.

**JC:** And he's doing this because he was apparently somewhere more comfortable and "safe" before, but he came back to keep an eye on the situation with Harry, and he's basically starving in a cave and eating rats as a dog.

**Lorrie:** But he's happier, because what is the point of life if the person you care about is obviously in really bad danger? How are you going to pass your days when that's all you can think about? Nobody can really look out for him. That's your only job in life; it's nobody else's job in life. There's obviously only one place he should be. What, he's going to be in danger? Well, eh. This is such an emotional sentence to me: "Harry, however, was looking at the black dog, which had just turned into his godfather." That moment of hunger when you're looking and looking at the person that you haven't seen in so long... He looks a mess, but he says I'm "fulfilling my duty as godfather." This is pure love and Harry just has to accept this: Sirius is a grown-up and he knows what he's doing, and what he's doing is collecting newspapers. Whoo! He's going to teach them how to be media literate. He's parenting.

**JC:** Interesting.

**Lorrie:** He's also quite wrong about something. He says, "You three and Dumbledore are the only ones around here who know I'm an Animagus." Wrong! He has no idea that there's somebody at Hogwarts undercover who knows about him from Wormtail, which is the thing that you have to know when you're doing any underground work: always assume there's a leak somewhere. Don't worry about who or where. You might not be able to find out; you can't be sure. Then he takes the kids through all these articles about Barty Crouch Sr. and Bertha Jorkins and shows them how to mull them over, and he paces because he's thinking. This is Sirius at his best and realest. This is his essential self. He's such a strong thinker... I love this so much. This is what he's for. I don't know. I really don't feel that bad for him starving and living on rats but getting to be his real self, because after all that time in Azkaban or the time sneaking around in some other hemisphere separate from what he really cares about, what is your life for? He has had way, way too much opportunity to think about what makes life worth living, and

here it is. Here he is, and his mind works so beautifully. So yeah, "Crouch sacked his house-elf," and he's like, "What?!" He totally knows, 'Okay, that's important.' He shows the kids how to put things together in your mind applying your knowledge of human nature. This is a totally sophisticated jump up from the kind of sleuthing that the kids had gotten really good at up until third year. We see the kids getting better and better and better at this (putting together facts and conjectures), but this is like, 'Now match it against what you know of human nature.' This is leveling up; they're growing. Then he says, "I don't know anything about Bagman except that he used to be a Beater... What's he like?" Sirius is asking the right questions and parenting them that way; Ron very usefully provides the voice of conventional wisdom, giving the standard take on all the questions and Hermione being indignant about Winky, and Sirius just flat out tells Ron, 'Oh, no, she's right; you're wrong.' 'She's got the measure of Crouch better than you have, Ron. If you want to know what a man's like, take a good look at how he treats his inferiors, not his equals,' which is one of those things that Sirius says about other people that will also turn out to apply to him, but it's an excellent antidote to the sucking-up theme of how people are behaving in this volume when they want good press coverage or they want to be famous. No, people can behave like fools when they're jockeying for position, but that's who they really are. He's focusing on all the absences of Barty Crouch from all these important events and how they don't add up, and this is one of those places where you see that *Goblet of Fire* is the volume that the author wrote as this long, slow developing mystery (similar to her Cormoran Strike books) because Sirius does a good job of laying out all of these details without having to answer to any of them; it's like an assessment. Then the thrilling character change when Harry says to Sirius, "Do you know Barty Crouch Sr.?" and then suddenly everything changes. He's like, "Oh, I know him." What did you think of finding out how Sirius knows Barty Crouch Sr.?

**JC:** Well, when he says, "Yeah, he sent me to Azkaban without a trial."

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And Sirius doesn't seem to be clinging to anger about that. It's another detail.

**Lorrie:** It's just like, "Oh, I know him."

**JC:** Yeah. "This is what he would do."

**Lorrie:** "That's what he is."

**JC:** Yeah, and that he paints him as this person who is incredibly ambitious -- who wanted to be the Minister for Magic -- and then as someone who even would sacrifice his own kid.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** He wanted to be Minister for Magic, and the only reason that he wasn't was because of the scandal with his son at the end of the day.

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** Put his own kid in Azkaban, and then Sirius talks about hearing Barty Crouch Jr. crying for his mother and talks about watching the dementors bury his body...

**Lorrie:** Yep.

**JC:** Which is kind of terrifying to think that Azkaban has a graveyard that if you look out of your cell window, you can see people being buried after they die.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. "Oh, that was the guy in the cell next door." Yeah.

**JC:** Yeah, but also, it's just another world building detail of how horrific Azkaban is. Barty Crouch Jr. didn't have a death sentence; you die in there, it doesn't matter. That's just how it goes. Yeah.

**Lorrie:** It's just that, as Harry says, in horror, "He gave his own son to the dementors?" and Sirius is looking at him, like, 'This is the world.'

**JC:** 'That's who this guy is.' Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, and this is evil. It's a marker of evil when the alleged good guys leap upon an excuse to be authoritarian, to do things without a trial, to do things without accountability. They're hungry to do that; they don't care about the cost that they will inevitably sometimes be wrong.

**JC:** Right. There's this description of the chaos that existed the first time that Voldemort rose to power and how everyone in the Ministry was reacting to that, and how they essentially instituted martial law.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And just in the current context, that's very interesting.

**Lorrie:** Yep.

**JC:** It's just very interesting.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Aurors were given the power to kill, not just capture.

**JC:** And yeah, that's not going to be abused, is it?

**Lorrie:** You don't even know! To have no trials? So, what if you're wrong? Nobody's ever going to find out.

**JC:** Especially not when people basically die when you send them to prison.

**Lorrie:** And then they authorized the use of Unforgivables. Oh, really? Because humans are in so much control of that kind of urge... We have just seen the fantasy of Harry imagining that the beetles have Snape's face. We have just seen Snape fantasize about drowning Harry Potter in Veritaserum. They're not going to do these things; it's normal and healthy to have fantasies of anger when you're angry. What happens when those guardrails get taken away officially?

**JC:** I think, to bring it to the modern context, that it's terrifying...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** That a lot of people, probably at the time, were like, "Good. Yeah. I know I'm not one of the bad guys, so go after... Leopards aren't going to eat my face," kind of a situation.

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** It's hard not to think about...

**Lorrie:** Things happening, yeah.

**JC:** Things happening. Things happening.

**Lorrie:** Yes.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** This is the theme that we've been building up to in this volume: extremists are dangerous, whether they're on your side or not. Sirius says of Barty Crouch Sr., "I would say he became as ruthless and cruel as many on the Dark side." This is the persistent fantasy of being tough on crime. You can be an ordinary person and feel satisfied by the fantasy that somebody somewhere is going to get punished, that somehow this is going to bring some sort of security. Yeah, this is Sirius showing, with his experience, this side of the world to the kids who are ready to learn about this, and he tells them he does not know if Crouch's son (who got caught among Death Eaters) was also a Death Eater. This is part of Sirius' mind working so well: well, you would think, probably, but no, that's not a fact; we don't know. He says that Barty Crouch Sr. thought "anything that tarnished his reputation had to go", so he committed the crime of putting himself above his child, and that's the opposite of what Sirius is doing right now. Yeah, when he says that the last time he saw Barty Crouch was the deathbed visit that he and his wife were allowed... He said, "The last time I saw Barty Crouch, half-carrying his wife past my cell..." I just thought, 'Sirius, did you think he had some kinship feelings with Barty Crouch Jr.?' 'Oh, that guy... I hate him, and now I see him doing this to you.' Yeah, that scandal is how we get that incompetent fool Cornelius Fudge as Minister for Magic. It's Barty Crouch's fault. The one constant that the chapter gives us: "Moody says Crouch is obsessed with catching Dark wizards." Okay, that's a place to start. We have all of these

pieces of contradictory evidence, but that is something that's a constant. Okay, human nature, we'll start there. Then Hermione and Ron have an argument about whether Moody had any reason to break into Snape's office or whether Crouch had any reason to break into Snape's office, and Sirius goes, "Yes, and that doesn't make any sense at all." Then we get the foreshadowing with Ron saying, "I know Dumbledore's brilliant and everything, but that doesn't mean a really clever Dark wizard couldn't fool him."

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** So yeah, we're taking stock at this point in the mystery. There are two suspects, Crouch Sr. and Snape, for 'Who is this clever Dark wizard?' Okay, thinking, thinking... Then we get to the point where -- as always happens in this series, whether you want it or not -- the series keeps pushing Snape at you. Sirius gets to the question about why Dumbledore hired Snape, and Snape is, at this point, not a particularly compelling figure in this mystery; he's just this immature asshole while scary, big things are happening, but we're supposed to be thinking, 'No, this is important.' Sirius explains: "Snape's always been fascinated by the Dark Arts, he was famous for it at school. Slimy, oily, greasy haired kid, he was," which is, at this point, a very refreshing take after the way that Snape has just behaved in class. Then Sirius says the eyebrow-raising thing: "Snape knew more curses when he arrived at school than half the kids in seventh year," and then lists all of Snape's Death Eater friends and says he was never accused. Then Harry says, "Oh, yeah, then Karkaroff came in," and Sirius says, "'He showed Snape something on his arm?' ... looking frankly bewildered." Okay, Sirius doesn't know what this is.

**JC:** That kind of surprised me. I spent some time stopping, going, 'Wait a minute.' I thought, 'Okay, well, Sirius got put in prison --' No, well, okay. Sirius got in prison at the end of everything, because Voldemort had already been defeated. How does he not know about Dark Marks? Did people just not know?

**Lorrie:** I guess. That's what we're given: 'All right, I guess that's a fact.'

**JC:** It blows my mind that that wouldn't be common knowledge, I guess, but I don't know.

**Lorrie:** Right, but at this point as first time readers, we wouldn't know either.

**JC:** Right. But why bring it up and make a point of Sirius not knowing what it means?

**Lorrie:** To set up a reveal later.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** It pays off. Then Sirius spells it out: "I know Dumbledore trusts where a lot of other people wouldn't, but I just can't see him letting Snape teach at Hogwarts if he'd

never worked for Voldemort," with a big unspoken "Unless..." Unless Dumbledore is counting on this incredible scenario to fool the Death Eaters and Voldemort, because it's beyond them to imagine giving second chances and knowing how to assess true remorse. Dumbledore gambling on this is pretty fail-safe, but it's difficult to believe, and the case has been made extremely strongly that what Snape started from was not very promising. 'Really, him? Really?! He's got an uphill road, doesn't he?' Then Sirius says something that establishes a line that Moody and Dumbledore don't cross: Sirius says, "I'll say this for Moody, though" -- because Moody also was quite extreme -- "he never killed if he could help it." This is quite different from Barty Crouch Sr. enabling Unforgivables and giving Aurors the power to kill and not just capture and doing away with trials. This is what Harry says about Dumbledore in King's Cross, too -- "You never killed if you could help it" -- which sounds, in one sense, like a really low bar.

**JC:** Right.

**Lorrie:** And Voldemort, too, has a burlesque version of that that's super self-congratulatory. In *Deathly Hallows*, when he's going to kill baby Harry, he's like, 'Oh, I could kill these trick-or-treaters too, but no, no, that's wasteful. Lord Voldemort does not waste.' Okay, he's super proud of himself, but that's a major difference. Barty Crouch Sr. gives in to that bloodthirsty, totalitarian urge -- doesn't even think of it as giving in -- and Moody won't.

**JC:** I think something I really like is the fact that Barty Crouch Jr. is pretending to be Moody this entire time, but he's being positioned against his own father, who is supposedly one of the good guys. He did fight Dark wizards, and I love the complexity of it. It's not just cut-and-dry good and evil.

**Lorrie:** No.

**JC:** It's complicated.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** I think that's something I really appreciate about the politics of this volume.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Sirius says yeah, Moody never descended to the level of the Death Eaters, which reminds us of the *Prisoner of Azkaban* lesson: *Always* hear out the full story. *Always*. Then Sirius goes back to Bertha Jorkins and how you have to bring human nature into it, and he says, "The Bertha I knew wasn't forgetful at all -- quite the reverse." Okay, that's important. Then he says to Harry, "I'll breathe freely again when this tournament's over, and that's not until June." To me, this is the proof. Yeah, Sirius is a parent, godfather. He and Molly Weasley have an argument in the next volume about whether he's really the same as a father. I'm like, 'Yeah, this qualifies to me.' Hermione mentions about Percy, "He would never throw any of his family to the dementors." Yeah.

No matter how much you dislike somebody, how questionable they are, that is an important line. The next chapter is called The Madness of Mr. Crouch. Oof.

**JC:** Yeah. There's a couple of other interesting things in here. There's a moment when Sirius isn't going to explain something, because he says, "You're too young."

**Lorrie:** Yes!

**JC:** And Ron calls him on it.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** He says, "No, we're not," and Sirius goes, "Okay," and he explains it.

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** And I think that's beautiful. I really like that. Ron's like, "We're not," and Sirius goes, "All right."

**Lorrie:** And Sirius is proud of them.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** He's really pleased.

**JC:** Exactly.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, they are ready. Sirius is meeting their needs. How lucky they are to have him.

**JC:** And I love that we're heading towards this recognition that they are... They're still fourteen, fifteen, but they are ready to deal with these problems in a way that the adults around them just need to let them deal with it, right? They need to be brought in in a way that they can actually make things happen because they're going to do it anyway.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** They're going to --

**Lorrie:** And nobody knows. No one can figure out these mysteries. Sirius is not that far ahead of them, so why not share whatever strategies you have, because bad things are going to happen whether you know how to deal with them or not.

**JC:** Absolutely. I also found it really interesting that we still have Bagman being held out here -- Ludo Bagman -- as a bit of a red herring.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Because Sirius asked them to go and ask Percy what he knows about Crouch but also ask for any leads on Bertha Jorkins, and he kind of implies that maybe Bagman

was... Not that Bagman got rid of her, but wasn't going to look for her that hard because maybe it was a good way to get rid of her. It felt a little sinister.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. She's a liability.

**JC:** Yeah, yeah, so I thought that was interesting, too. Yeah, okay, there's a reason why.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** She's being depicted this way in the papers, which we all know that the papers are lying at this point or we can't rely on what it says in the papers, but maybe there's another reason why they haven't looked very hard for her, so that's kind of interesting, too.

**Lorrie:** It's not adding up.

**JC:** Right. He reminds Harry to be careful and don't leave Hogwarts in case anyone wants to attack him, which... is... but he says it and he really means it.

**Lorrie:** Oh, he does.

**JC:** He's like, "Please, DO NOT..." Yeah. I can't remember if Harry actually leaves Hogwarts in the rest of this volume, but we'll find out. He's like, "Please, please, please, please be safe." I also love that at the end, they have an adorable codename for Sirius that they can start using -- that he gives them -- which is fun, and they give him pats on the head as a dog before they leave.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** I'm just imagining Harry giving him scratches behind the ears like, "Who's a good boy?"

**Lorrie:** Right, and the cute way that even as a human, Sirius still eats like a dog.

**JC:** Yeah. Right, exactly.

**Lorrie:** I like that. I like that there's a purity about the love of a dog, and that's a way that we get delivered some of the good of the Sirius Black character.

**JC:** That faithful, always going to be there...

**Lorrie:** Just pure love. Yeah.

**JC:** 'Going to sacrifice himself before anybody gets you' kind of a thing. Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, and that it really is satisfying to them. If you think that a dog who's concerned about you is going to be happier being left behind, oh, no, no, no, no.



**JC:** True. Very true, unlike my cat, who will go and hide under the bed at the first sign of danger. So yeah, The Madness of Mr. Crouch.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. It's coming to a boil, isn't it?

**JC:** Yeah. The part that we have left to read is getting smaller and smaller, so we're getting there.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**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](http://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.