



Transcript

Episode 4.32

Book 4, Chapter 32: Flesh, Blood, and Bone

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 Thirty-Two: Flesh, Blood, and Bone.

Lorrie: Flesh, Blood, and Bone.

JC: Spooky...

Lorrie: The Triwizard Cup takes Harry and Cedric to the graveyard of Voldemort's hometown. Voldemort makes Wormtail kill Cedric, take blood from Harry, and bring Voldemort back to full strength. Oh, JC, how did it feel to reread this chapter?

JC: Wow, yeah. First of all, I was shocked that it was such a short chapter. I didn't remember where the chapter break was...

Lorrie: Right.

JC: And it made me wonder how she decided where to put the chapter breaks. It feels like this one stopped in a place that felt like a chapter break, but also it was so short.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: So I don't know. That was something that stood out to me.

Lorrie: Well, this was the book where at the beginning I said that it feels to me like the almost-final draft, and the wildly varying lengths of the chapters was part of that for me.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: I like that it's a short chapter; it does contain everything you need. If she had tried to cram this ritual in with more of the same, it would have been a lot, but there are monologues coming up that are heavy in themselves.

JC: That is true.

Lorrie: Do you remember reading this ritual for the first time?

JC: Yeah. Well, I say that... Yes and no. I remember... I knew going in that this was really spooky and there's this ritual. This is the turning point in the books, because now Voldemort's back.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: I don't think I knew. I don't think I suspected going in... Okay, first of all, the Portkey thing leading to this place was a total shock the first time I read it, and I think I assumed that Harry was going to be attacked. I figured Voldemort was going to be involved, but the fact that the whole point of this was to bring Voldemort back to life, basically... That was a shock to me. I was not expecting that. This time around, knowing it was coming...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I could think about everything that was happening around him, so rather than just being really deeply buried in Harry's terror and not knowing what was going to happen, I could look at the whole picture more.

Lorrie: Yeah, it's terrifying. I like that there are slow hints about where we have ended up from the Portkey. There's a graveyard with a yew tree -- which we know is Voldemort's wandwood -- and then the "fine old house on the hillside", so you start to register... 'Mm-hmm.' Then we get the short figure carrying the baby-like bundle of robes, and then Harry's scar exploding with pain. Oh....

JC: A couple of things at the very beginning of this chapter that stood out to me was one, the fact that Barty Crouch Jr. could turn this cup into a Portkey that could pull them away from Hogwarts in the middle of the Triwizard Tournament. Reflecting on that, good God! How powerful is this man? Much more powerful than I think anyone realized. How did he get to this point? We've seen him be a very competent version of Alastor Moody throughout this, but then realizing not only could he get Harry's name in the cup, but he could do this under Dumbledore's nose...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Holy crap! This guy is a powerful wizard.

Lorrie: My friend Irvin [Khaytman] says that it's a good thing for Dumbledore's side that this is the end of him, because he alone is as strong as all the other Death Eaters put together.

JC: Yeah, that's true.

Lorrie: He's so competent...

JC: Incredibly so.

Lorrie: And his father speaks a hundred languages or whatever and he got his twelve O.W.L.s, and he's equal to his dad.

JC: Even though he spent so much of his life imprisoned both in Azkaban and at home.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I guess... What do you do with that time but become a more powerful wizard?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. The other thing that struck me about this scene is that because (as I've said before) I've watched the movies so much more recently than I've read the books, the contrast between how Cedric actually reacts here and how he acts in the movie is really incredible. Here, both of them are immediately suspicious about being transported. "Did you know this is going to happen?" "No." "Did anyone give you a hint about this?" "No." Wands out... They're both immediately like, 'Something's not right here.' In the movie version, Cedric is completely naive. He's like, "Wow, where are we?" and the next thing you know, he's dead.

Lorrie: Ouch.

JC: This Cedric... He's acting like a Triwizard champion here. He's not acting like a dumb, pretty boy like, unfortunately, I think he was portrayed more of in the movie. Probably in the movie, I can imagine why they made that choice to make his death even more tragic, but I don't know. It's pretty dang tragic in the book, too.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But I really appreciated that, seeing Cedric as being competent here.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He didn't die a fool.

Lorrie: No.

JC: He was actually on his guard.

Lorrie: It was a big loss.

JC: And that "Kill the spare..."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Is just so chilling.

Lorrie: This is callousness. This is what war and disregard are. It doesn't matter what a human life is.

JC: "Yeah, that one doesn't matter. Just kill him. No witnesses, right? It doesn't matter."

Lorrie: No, it doesn't matter.

JC: Who is it that kills him? Is it Wormtail? We don't really see it, but...

Lorrie: Based on what we find out in the next couple chapters, it seems like it was Wormtail using Voldemort's wand.

JC: Okay, right. It's also interesting that Harry is in so much pain; he's aware of what's happening, but there's nothing he can do. He is one hundred percent incapacitated by his pain.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He sees the *Avada Kedavra*. He hears it, he sees the light, he knows it goes near him, he hears this thud... and then his pain disappears. 'Why does Harry's scar stop hurting after Cedric is dead?' is a question that I had here.

Lorrie: Well, let's see. When his scar explodes with pain, we know from a couple chapters back that Dumbledore told him his scar hurts both when Voldemort is near him and when Voldemort is feeling a surge of hatred. I can imagine that it first explodes with pain because both of those things are true. Then when the *Avada Kedavra* to Cedric is completed, that might calm him down a little -- that surge might be over -- but I think also he performs Occlumency against Harry sometimes.

JC: Oh, that's interesting. Is he already aware at this point that Harry can see into his mind?

Lorrie: I don't think so.

JC: Okay. If he's performing Occlumency against Harry here, now, is he conscious of doing that?

Lorrie: I think it has to do with how much he's in control of himself, because we know from the Death Eaters -- what they feel in their Dark Marks -- that the more emotional he

is and the more out of control he is, the more likely they are to feel it too. I think it's about self-regulation.

JC: Okay. Okay, that makes sense. I think the moment that Harry looks over and realizes that Cedric is dead and can't process it is really interesting. He sees the expression of surprise on his face, his eyes are kind of empty... He's just looking at him and he's not able to process what's happening in the moment, and I don't think he does for a while...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Which is very realistic.

Lorrie: And he's in danger, so he can't anyway.

JC: Yeah, he can't anyway. Oh, I think that as much as I hate that Cedric has to die here and I want to read like a hundred fics that fix where Cedric doesn't die, it sends home the seriousness of what Harry is facing.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: It's like, "Oh, we're not... Yeah, we're not kidding around here. This is real."

Lorrie: Yeah, and I do like that we have been reassured several times that when you die of an *Avada Kedavra*, you don't feel the pain. It's like, 'Okay.' That's a mercy.

JC: Right. His face looks surprised. Cedric's death mask or whatever... He doesn't look like he's in pain. He just looks surprised.

Lorrie: We get the confirmation of where they are, because the tombstone -- the giant, towering marble headstone -- has the name TOM RIDDLE on it, so we're in full creepy graveyard mode here. Harry is being tied to this headstone by Wormtail, and he knows... Not that he doubted, but now he knows that the visions he was having -- of Wormtail and creepiness and a snake -- they were something real, and here it is.

JC: Yeah, that's true. Literally, this is a nightmare come to life. He's been having nightmares about this and now it's really happening, and that adds to this feeling of not disbelief but shock. I guess maybe it is disbelief. It's hard even as a reader to process that this is real.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: We've just come from the Triwizard Tournament -- we were at Hogwarts -- and now we're in one of Harry's nightmares, except it's really happening...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: So that feeling is really interesting here. I also like... We've got Tom Riddle's grave, this huge marble towering tombstone... That's expensive, right?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: We're going back to 'Who was Voldemort?' and this gravestone shows that he was a really important, well-regarded, beloved figure. Well, in his own mind, maybe, but here's this big tombstone that marks something about him and something that Voldemort was chasing for a good chunk of his life.

Lorrie: Well, that was his dad, Tom Riddle Sr.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: They owned the village, basically.

JC: Right. So yeah, the fact that there's a glorious tombstone for his father... Yeah. Anyway, I just thought that was interesting that here we are.

Lorrie: Yeah, and that he is the person who put his dad there.

JC: Yeah. Well, yeah.

Lorrie: There's Harry being tied to this giant tribute to dead wealth -- dead Muggle wealth -- and there's that bundle of robes. Harry feels, with immense dread, "He suddenly knew that he did not want to see what was in those robes... he didn't want that bundle opened..." I remember reading that the first time thinking this is a really good horror mystery. I could barely read it, I was so horrified. 'No, no, no, what is that?' The dread mounted in me as a reader so hard.

JC: And there's so much. Wormtail bound and gagged him, and then hit him.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: What? Okay, you're definitely a prisoner here. Then he's dragging him over to a giant cauldron and starting a fire under him, and there's a giant snake and there's this weird bundle. It's like nothing good is going to happen here.

Lorrie: Yeah, and Cedric's lying there with his eyes open. Yeah.

JC: Cedric is dead, and it's like, 'Okay, what are they going to do to Harry?'

Lorrie: 'What are they going to do?' Oh, God...

JC: Now we know that there were three or four more books... wait. One, two, three, four... Four more books. I had to do math.

Lorrie: Well, if you count *Cursed Child*...

JC: There's four more books after this, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, there's a lot coming.

JC: There's more coming. Okay, Harry's not going to die. Doesn't mean he's going to come out of this unscathed, though.

Lorrie: Oh, boy, yeah.

JC: But how terrifying.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That's a nightmare image... To be bound and gagged in a graveyard with mortal enemies doing weird shit that doesn't look good.

Lorrie: That you've been having visions about, yeah.

JC: Yep. That's terrifying.

Lorrie: Yeah. Oh, when the bundle of robes is opened, what is there is so horrifying. This reddish black, hairless, scaly baby thing... The arms are so thin and it's just about able to lift its arms. It raises its arms... I don't know about you, but I can totally see the human baby gesture that this is, where babies lift up their arms and you know you are being ordered. You as the adult can choose not to heed this, but then you'll hear about it.

JC: Oh, and the look that Harry notices on Wormtail's face...

Lorrie: Yeah, complete revulsion. I'm sure it's not voluntary... He's had a whole year to get used to this, but you can't get used to it.

JC: Yeah. I don't really have a good mental image, and that's probably just as well, what this creature looks like. Also, where it came from, because Voldemort was just a spirit as far back as book one. Do we get an explanation of how he got to this form?

Lorrie: Yeah. There's some discussion of that in the following chapter...

JC: Okay, cool.

Lorrie: But there is a really significant, extracanonical interview with the author where she said that she told her editor what Voldemort had done to get into this form, and the editor looked like she was going to vomit.

JC: Oh.

Lorrie: Or it was she or he was going to, and that they agreed not to put it in the series.

JC: Wow.

Lorrie: Yeah. There are two things that were too gross to put in: there's what you have to do to make a Horcrux, and how Voldemort got from being bodyless into the form that we see him in now.

JC: Okay, now I'm very curious.

Lorrie: Right? Yeah. So I think...

JC: Are you going to make me wait until the next episode?

Lorrie: Well...Yeah, I guess, because we get some hints. Let's hear what Voldemort has to say about it, which is not all that helpful.

JC: Okay.

Lorrie: Then we can see what we make of it...

JC: Ooh, all right.

Lorrie: I know what I make of it, and there are a number of different theories.

JC: Interesting. Okay.

Lorrie: So yeah, this whole time, the whole book, Harry has been saying, "What's in that chair?" We see the back of the chair and this little voice coming from it, and Harry and Dumbledore both wondering, 'Wait a minute. If he doesn't have a body, how is he holding a wand?' The whole book, there's been talk about the thing in the chair, or Frank Bryce sees the thing in the chair and then screams before he dies. "What is this thing?" This is the thing. Here's what it is.

JC: Okay, this is a tangent. I went to college in Tucson, Arizona, and as you're driving east on I-10 out of Tucson towards New Mexico -- way, way halfway between Tucson and the New Mexico border -- you'll start seeing... Well, you used to. I think that this is no longer the case, happily, but you started seeing these billboards for *the thing*. The billboards will come like Bucky's Billboards will do in Texas; every two or three miles, you'd see, "What is *the thing*? You're this many miles from *the thing*. What is it?" Building this weird mystery. I never actually did stop, but there's this gas station that's been converted into a tourist attraction (like a big shop and all) and big signs everywhere, drawing you in like a roadside attraction to come in and look at this. Turns out that -- I've never seen it -- it was a mummy of an indigenous person that had been found. It's really horrific that they did this, and I think that this was... This is no longer existing, I'm pretty sure.

Lorrie: Oh, my God...

JC: But the idea that they found the body of an indigenous person from who knows how long ago and they put it on display in this way... The idea of the words "*the thing*" drums up stuff for me about disrespect and the way that we look at human remains...

Lorrie: How we violate what is sacred about another person's entire being and humanity...

JC: Right, and how we disregard the humanity of some groups of people.

Lorrie: Yeah, and think that we can amuse ourselves with them. Yeah. No, that is, in fact, precisely the source of this dread. 'Wow, what do humans do to each other?' So yeah, that is the scaly, hairless baby thing that Voldemort is right now: the embodiment of that kind of real violation. Harry, being tied to this headstone, knows that he's about to be an unwilling participant in more... Who knows how terrible it's going to get? So this thing, this very small body that Voldemort is in, is the self that Voldemort has been unable to strengthen since the beginning of the book. If you recall back to the very first chapter when Wormtail is bottle feeding him...

JC: Yes. Oh, my gosh...

Lorrie: He says, "The journey has tired me greatly," and there's all this talk about how he's not very strong and how he's trying to regain some strength, but then he blames Wormtail for being a crappy caretaker and he implies that that's why he's not getting any stronger. Well, it's been a year now and he's still no bigger because no matter how potent Voldemort is as the most brilliant wizard or whatever, he can't make himself grow. That is magic he doesn't have and that is what he needs Harry for, because what makes you grow? Does brilliance make you grow? Does being magically powerful make you grow? No. The most completely dirty, mundane, commonplace parental affection (or caregiver affection) is what makes babies grow. You can get bigger, but it's not the same as thriving. In the most everyday, common Muggle way, it's getting the nurturing that makes you strong, that strengthens your immunity, that develops your character, that makes you happy.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: Then, the variations in material comforts even as basic as food... That's important, too, but you can get all of your material comforts covered. Without the nurturing, you can't really grow.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: This is where he's been stuck, and Wormtail has been trying to argue that they could use somebody other than Harry Potter. Wormtail is absolutely correct, but Voldemort's holding out. No. Who does Wormtail think he is? No, only the best for Voldemort.

JC: Yeah, exactly.

Lorrie: Only the one where Voldemort has personal experience of responding emotionally to the sight of this baby getting what Voldemort couldn't deny wanting. Usually, Voldemort sees people loving each other and it just makes him full of contempt and he can just use it to torture people, but he saw Harry the baby getting that from Lily and he felt something different. All right, obviously... Well, Voldemort, being not particularly insightful, might think it's that Harry has some stronger magic than all those other loved people that he's killed; he doesn't know what is so different. Anyway, he wants this magic from Harry Potter and he wants to start over, so what if he could be born again? This time, he has help from Nagini and Wormtail, who are two beings that will not leave him. Nagini is not human and he's bound the snake to him; Wormtail is powerless and too threatened to leave him. What if he could be born again with that care, with people who will never abandon him, plus the mother's love in his blood that somehow Harry Potter got but he never did? This is a rebirth. What if he could be himself, but born with that -- with caregivers and mother's love? Well, he's got Harry Potter and they prepare the potion for the ritual, and Harry prays for the thing to drown.

JC: There's several things about it that stood out to me. One is that it's almost funny. "Oh, please, let it drown."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Wormtail would have dunked this thing in the tank. It's a desperate... 'Oh, I wish it would drown.' The other thing about it is that there are multiple things like this throughout the rest of this chapter. Under most circumstances, any person who's even remotely religious would... It would be framed as praying. 'Let it drown. I'm pleading to the universe, anyone who will listen.' The word 'pray' is not mentioned anywhere in here; I had to go back and look again, and every time, it's "He thought... He thought..." I just found that interesting. There's no religious connotation here, which I think --

Lorrie: Oh, interesting. Okay, yeah, let me redact that then, because certainly this whole chapter is written as a profane perversion of religious rituals.

JC: Right. There's sacrifice involved, and it's like someone is reborn. It's so interesting, but Harry doesn't pray.

Lorrie: No, you're right. Okay.

JC: Which is just fasc -- I don't know, it just struck me as interesting.

Lorrie: Well, that's... yeah, a very deliberate...

JC: It felt deliberate, yeah.

Lorrie: A deliberate way to write this, even if it is based on Christian ritual, to make sure that it's accessible to people who aren't from that tradition or who are atheist.

JC: Yeah. It doesn't matter who you are....

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Voldemort is coming back.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: No one can stop him.

Lorrie: Yeah, and the human dread of doing poorly by other humans who have died -- the need to respect humanity and people's lives and deaths -- that is universal. Wormtail is terrified; he's shaking. Can you imagine how much planning he did? This is it; you get the one chance, right? Of course, Harry is hoping that thing will drown. Nobody really knows, right? How often can they have done this? Obviously, this is a really high stakes moment.

JC: There is some humor, though, in the image of Voldemort being dunked into a baptismal cauldron, right?

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

JC: THUNK! I'm imagining the potion splashing, and there's no gentle laying.

Lorrie: No, no... And you hear it.

JC: 'I'm not touching you any longer than I have to.' Yeah.

Lorrie: Do we want to talk about what Wormtail does next to himself?

JC: Ooh... Okay, we have the ritual of, "Bone of the father, unknowing given..."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Harry's horror at the dust coming out of the grave... Wow. It hits the water and things happen. Then we have, "Flesh of the servant, willingly given," which is... There's a lot of things that are creepy and horrific and fascinating about Wormtail's sacrifice. On the one hand -- on the one hand, HAHA! -- a crazy thought that struck me was, 'How many times did Wormtail say, "I'd give my right hand to be out of this situation and not have to take care of this little creature." Lo and behold, that was the answer.

Lorrie: And that's a joke that Voldemort sets up in the first chapter.

JC: Yes.

Lorrie: He says, "Well, there's a service that many of my followers would give their right hand for," and that's the dad joke strain of Voldemort's personality.

JC: Voldemort's dad jokes are --

Lorrie: He thinks he's so funny.

JC: He just presses his Dark Mark, and everyone will go, "Oh, HAHAAAAHA!"

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Oh, my God.

Lorrie: Yeah. Giving up your right hand -- of course it has to be the right hand -- he's giving up his power voluntarily because he's been cornered into it. Everything with Wormtail... The lesson is, 'Well, gee, he set himself up for it. He deserves it.' It's a very trapped, fascinating way to create a character and he's the only one who's portrayed that way in the series, but Wormtail's signature magic is self-mutilation.

JC: Oh, true.

Lorrie: The way Harry's is *Expelliarmus* and Ginny's is the Bat-Bogey Hex and Voldemort's is *Avada Kedavra* or possession, Wormtail's signature is self-mutilation. There's definitely this feeling that it's because he's so disgusting nobody should even lower themselves to hurt him; you just get him to hurt himself.

JC: Ooh, mm-hmm.

Lorrie: This is the third time we've seen him mutilate himself. Cutting off his own appendages -- that with the assaults on his masculinity by naming him Peter Pettigrew and just implying that he's always cutting off his own appendages -- is a really massive contempt from the author, as well as from every single other character in this series.

JC: Right, and the fact that he turns into a rat, obviously. Everything about him is intended to be disgusting... Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. All of this patricide in this novel, and this character who self-mutilates is named after the author's father. Here he is with the patricide ritual, being compelled to hurt himself and to claim that this is willingly given, which we know it's not; it's being coerced out of him. Well, it's willing in that he could have chosen to die instead.

JC: Right. Which does make me wonder: what if Pettigrew had said, "You know what? No, I'm not going to do this," and once Voldemort's in the cauldron...

Lorrie: He could've just walked away.

JC: He could've just walked away, right? He can grab Voldemort's wand and leave.

Lorrie: Oh, my God!

JC: Let Harry fend for himself or whatever, but he could have just like... Maybe Voldemort would have drowned in the cauldron. I don't know.

Lorrie: Yeah, that could have happened.

JC: 'There's an AU where...'

Lorrie: Yeah. Then Wormtail would be at the mercy of whoever knows what kinds of crimes he's committed without big bad Voldemort to be his protector.

JC: Also, I think Voldemort promised -- to the extent that Voldemort's promises mean anything -- that he would be repaid for this, right?

Lorrie: So yeah, Wormtail is resuscitating his own protector.

JC: But not out of love. Not in the way that Lily Potter would...

Lorrie: No, he's doing it out of survival, and that's the debate about this character. Is it true that his own survival is so much better than the choice to just choose death instead? That's what Sirius yells at him in the Shrieking Shack in the previous book when he says, "What was I supposed to do? What would you have done?" and Sirius says, "I would have chosen to die rather than betray my friends." All right, well, Wormtail's making this other choice and ooh, it does not look attractive, having cut off his own hand and donated it to the cause.

JC: Yeah. It is interesting, too, the way that this is written in the book that when Harry realizes what he's going to do, Harry looks away, so we only hear it.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: We don't see it.

Lorrie: It's just so horrifying.

JC: And there's something worse about hearing it in some sense, because what you hear are the screams, right? Yeah.

Lorrie: And it's just hard to see somebody attack themselves so much to consent to, which also gives you some insight into Voldemort having done that to himself. If the way that you create a Horcrux is by splitting your soul -- agreeing to create this really unnatural attack upon yourself than to mutilate something that isn't supposed to be mutilated and how hard that's going to hurt -- yes, your hand will hurt. But a soul... that's a different kind of pain, and it's worse. Whatever Wormtail thinks is worth it... Obviously, he thinks the pain of not doing this will be greater than whatever pain he gets from cutting off his own hand.

JC: Yep. Also, the fact that he does this with a little silver knife...

Lorrie: It's magic, it's magic.

JC: It's magic. You just have to say it's magic. "That's how I did it. It's magical." Yeah. He couldn't actually... Yeah.

Lorrie: He's just killed Cedric as a favor to his boss, so he can do this.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Also, this goes with Wormtail being not anywhere near as incompetent a wizard as his so-called allies keep telling him he is.

JC: Ah.

Lorrie: So yeah, that's who Voldemort has to do this incredibly important ritual and Wormtail's doing it. He's carrying it through. Having provided the second ingredient, he goes for the third.

JC: I love the parallels... The form of this, I really find interesting. "The bone of the father, unknowingly given; flesh of the servant, willingly given; blood of the enemy, forcibly taken." You've got three things... We've got the bone, flesh, and blood there, so you could imagine -- I don't know. This idea that Voldemort is being reconstructed out of the bone, flesh, and blood of others acquired under these different circumstances, and of three people who are very different from each other. The three I find really interesting in here.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: I just think it's really... It's chilling...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But God, it's really well constructed.

Lorrie: It's well done.

JC: I've got to give props.

Lorrie: Well, the way that it echoes real religious rituals... This kind of symmetry and foundational structure is something that brings humans a lot of comfort. Instead of this being a ritual about flesh and blood that's supposed to help others and bring comfort or peace to them, it's about Voldemort making other people suffer (including the dad that he killed a long time ago) and gathering his strength from that.

JC: I also wonder where the spell came from. Did Voldemort invent this?

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: Is this an old spell that they knew of? You think he invented it?

Lorrie: He says in the next chapter that he invented it.

JC: Oh, gotcha. Okay. Amazing I'm remembering what was in these books. How helpful that is for answering my questions.

Lorrie: No, he's quite original, Voldemort. He has had a lot of time to think.

JC: Okay, yeah. Being in that little weird baby form that's helpless, you would have a lot of time to think about... Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, and of course he's been focused on getting himself out of this worse-than-death situation he's in. So Wormtail steals Harry's blood.

JC: One thing about that is that after watching Wormtail cut off his own hand --

Lorrie: Right!

JC: When he says, "Blood of the enemy, forcibly taken," Harry's got to be terrified.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: "What's he going to do to me?"

Lorrie: Right. It's mercifully just a little scratch.

JC: Right. He scratches him and then collects some blood in a bottle. It's almost the nicest thing that he could have done.

Lorrie: Right, because what's he going to do? Oh...

JC: Yeah. Do you think... Is Wormtail actually protecting Harry there?

Lorrie: No.

JC: No, you don't think so?

Lorrie: It's just that you don't need much.

JC: Because out of cruelty, there's a lot he could have done with the blood. He didn't have to just give him a little scratch, even for a little bit. The image I have is less than what you would get from a blood draw at the doctor.

Lorrie: Right, exactly. Yeah, but just one drop is all you need. Since the love that Harry got from his mom is also the foundation of things like empathy, that one drop of empathy for somebody that you hate is all you need (whether voluntary or not) to start realizing, 'No, I can't. I can't think of them as inhuman. I can't dehumanize them. I can't.' It dissolves that. Harry wants the spell to go wrong, but it goes right; it succeeds. Voldemort is reborn from the cauldron and orders Wormtail to robe him.

JC: "Robe me."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I'm sorry, the image of Voldemort arising from this cauldron naked...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Right?

Lorrie: Right.

JC: But looking like a snake.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Oh, my gosh. The "robe me" moment is -- Anyway, I don't know why I found that humorous... We have this image of Voldemort rising out of the cauldron, oh, my God...

Lorrie: Nakey, yeah.

JC: Yeah, and he's coming up out of the...

Lorrie: The amniotic fluid.

JC: Yeah. Right. It's like a rebirth, you've been baptized... Whatever the metaphor is here, it's really dramatic.

Lorrie: Yeah. Then he steps out of the cauldron and he stares at Harry, and that, you can imagine, is a huge moment for Voldemort. He's been thinking about this for so long.

JC: And that Harry recognizes his face. He's like, 'I've seen that face in my nightmares.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Which is interesting, because Voldemort's never had exactly this face before, but yeah. Not that there was any doubt this was what was going to happen, but the terror for Harry here of 'Okay, he's been this disembodied figure, he died,' all these rumors -- "Oh, maybe he'll come back, he might come back" -- and now it's happened, and there was nothing Harry could do to stop it. Also, Harry started to realize that he played right into the plot to bring him back.

Lorrie: And there wasn't a whole heck of a lot he could do about it.

JC: Yeah. He had no idea, but the whole thing of looking back....

Lorrie: Well, Dumbledore and Sirius did have an idea, and they also knew that there wasn't a heck of a lot that any of them could do about it. They were trying all year to do their best to help defend Harry, but they kept saying, "Whoever put your name in, something really bad is going to happen. All we can do is keep you alert, " and it's not

that they didn't know something was up. This happens a few times in this series, where sometimes I hear readers say, "Why didn't Dumbledore do better? Why didn't he protect Harry this way and that way?" Because the fight between Dumbledore and Voldemort is pretty evenly matched. That's why. It's not like if Dumbledore had tried a little harder, then he could've just snapped his fingers and made Voldemort behave. No, it's not actually clear who's going to win. Voldemort is really powerful.

JC: Because I'm thinking about... Yeah, there's nothing Harry could have done, but that doesn't mean that you don't feel guilty.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Right? Whenever something -- I'm just thinking about... I fell ice skating and shattered my arm and the circumstances under which it happened were stupid, and it's like, 'If I had just made a different choice, I would not be here with a broken arm and a big surgery, and a ten-thousand dollar bill and all this stuff,' right?

Lorrie: Ouch.

JC: Things like that happen to people all the time, where you're like, 'I cannot believe that I went this way instead of that way, and now all this has happened,' and the randomness of that and how terrifying it is. Now, in Harry's case, it's not random because people have been plotting to get him to exactly this point, but that doesn't mean...

Lorrie: Right.

JC: At this point, what I'm thinking is if I'm Harry, I'm thinking, 'All I had to do was let Cedric take the cup. Oh, no, they would've killed Cedric anyway. Okay, what if I had not brought Cedric? What if I had just --' The second-guessing that might eventually be going on in his head is just traumatizing.

Lorrie: And how it would be more merciful if you could find a story where you could think, 'If I had done something differently, I could have had some control over this outcome'; when the actual answer is there's nothing you could have done, that's agony.

JC: And it's about to get worse.

Lorrie: Ugh, gosh. What is Voldemort doing here? He learned that Harry had the power to defeat him from the prophecy. He tried and failed to kill baby Harry. Now he thinks he can strengthen himself by taking in some of Harry's power? Okay... Then you think, in Voldemort's position, he didn't actually have all that much choice because for a year, nothing has gotten him past this weak, raw body. No matter what, he has tried all year and he has had to admit this is a power he cannot generate on his own. This has gotten him to the almost intolerable position of having to admit that dirty commonplace thing

that baby Harry had: he wants it, he doesn't have it, and there's no other way he can get it; he can't do without it. He's not better than Harry or any other despised Muggle. To say that this blood is "forcibly taken" is the best he can do to assert his dominance over this humiliating admission, but this is an ancient magic that not even Voldemort is great enough to find a workaround for. He has tried. If he could have come back without getting love somehow -- in this case, stealing it... If he could have come back without that, he would have, but no, he's lost that argument. My take is that I think the thing did drown.

JC: Oh...

Lorrie: I think that whatever carrier Voldemort was inhabiting until he could reconstitute using his father's bone and some flesh and blood... I think that is what drowned.

JC: Oh, that's interesting. I hadn't thought of that.

Lorrie: And that the spirit of Voldemort that is unkillable then rematerialized with the potion and the new ingredients. The thing that we hear go thud on the bottom of the cauldron... Yeah, that.

JC: So when Harry said, 'Let it drown, let it drown...'

Lorrie: Something drowned.

JC: Okay, he says it multiple times...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And it makes sense to think, 'Okay, it did, but that didn't stop Voldemort.'

Lorrie: On the other hand, it is merciful to whatever living being that used to be. 'Okay, your suffering's over now.' But yeah, when we see human adult-sized Voldemort coming out of the cauldron, whatever tiny, flayed, raw baby thing he was is not there anymore. It feels pretty much like what we see here is Voldemort, period. Ugh. Irvin Khaytman did a legendary presentation at 2019 MISTI-Con that had me howling with laughter because it was during a cosplay contest. He and his friend cosplayed Wormtail and Voldemort from this scene; Irvin made, out of fabric, a giant cauldron that he hid in on stage while his friend (who was cosplaying Wormtail) did the whole ritual. Then at the correct moment, Irvin, dressed all in a white bodysuit, made some sort of horrifying roaring sound, and emerged from the cauldron.

JC: Wow...

Lorrie: Oh, my God. It was hilarious.

JC: Wow. The year that I went to MISTI-Con, I saw some amazing things, but wow, that would have been really cool.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And I can't remember what happens in the next chapter, so I am anticipating whatever it's going to be.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: So monologuing, apparently.

Lorrie: Voldemort is tall as an adult man again and he's staring at Harry, Wormtail is still screaming, clutching his wound, and Harry is still tied --

JC: Tied to a tombstone.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Bound and gagged. Tightly bound.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Magically bound, yeah. And yeah, he doesn't have the luxury to think about what has happened to Cedric at this moment, because this is just about as terrifying as things can get.

JC: Yeah. From Harry's perspective at this point, too... Okay, Voldemort has just come back and Harry knows that Voldemort's wanted to kill him...

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: And now there's nothing stopping him.

Lorrie: No.

JC: That's why Harry is probably sitting there, thinking, 'I'm about to die, too.'

Lorrie: Yeah. Yep.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: The next chapter is called The Death Eaters.

JC: Oooh... Oh, now I remember what happens. I had totally forgotten what's coming. Okay, yeah. Whoa...

Lorrie: Yeah. They're all going to be called to the principal's office.

JC: Yep, to their horror and dismay...

Lorrie: And guilt.

JC: Yep. Oh, my gosh. Okay. Ooh... going to be interesting.

Lorrie: Yeah. There's a reason why you don't remember how short this chapter is, because nobody at this point at the end of *Goblet of Fire* is heeding chapter breaks.

JC: Oh, yeah. No, you just keep going.

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah.

JC: Just keep turning the page, yeah. It's weird not to, but here we go.

Lorrie: So I'll talk to you then!

JC: That's right! Oh...

Lorrie: Yeah. Those Death Eaters... they do know what's coming and... Oh, well. It's what they signed up for.

JC: Yep. Indeed.

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.