

# HARRY POTTER AFTER 2020

with LORRIE KIM and JC

## Transcript

### Episode 4.33

#### Book 4, Chapter 33: The Death Eaters

**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-Three: The Death Eaters.

**Lorrie:** The Death Eaters. Voldemort, restored to an adult body, calls his Death Eaters to him. He tells them how he felt while none of them bothered to come rescue him. He then proclaims that he's going to kill Harry Potter in front of them so they can watch him become invincible. JC, we have reached the turning point of the series.

**JC:** Wow.

**Lorrie:** This villain who didn't have enough human in him left to die, this racist egomaniac who has spread terror and committed countless crimes, has returned to power to do more of the same. Coincidentally, JC, would you like to tell us what's happening in the U.S. today as we record on January 20th, 2025?

**JC:** At 11 A.M. Eastern time? Yes. Today is inauguration day and today, not only will Trump be our president again -- as we speak, Biden is still the president, but during the course of this conversation that's going to change, and he's back -- he's back in power and he's planning to unleash a whole lot of hell on us, even on this first day, and has already been stirring it up a-plenty.

**Lorrie:** Yep.

**JC:** It's really interesting that we are recording this particular chapter today. We didn't plan for this necessarily.

**Lorrie:** It just happened that way.

**JC:** It just happened serendipitously. Yeah, so expect a lot of us making connections to the real world here, I think, because there are a lot.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, and to think that sometimes people read fantasy for escapism... Well, we're not going to be doing that today.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Voldemort has returned to an adult-sized body and he rises from the cauldron and he examines his new body, "his expression rapt and exultant." Meanwhile, he's ignoring Wormtail, who is screaming in pain from cutting off his own hand. He gets his wand, and the first thing he does with his wand is he uses it to fling Wormtail against the headstone.

**JC:** Okay, I have a question before we move forward. How did Wormtail have Voldemort's wand this whole time? Where was Voldemort's wand?

**Lorrie:** Somebody asked Rowling in an interview ages ago, and they've just decided that Wormtail had taken it and hidden it somewhere.

**JC:** Okay.

**Lorrie:** It's a plot hole.

**JC:** Okay, there you go. That's fine.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Just curious. Okay.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Then Voldemort laughs in Harry's face, and I'm actually almost happy for him.

**JC:** For Voldemort?

**Lorrie:** Yeah. This was a big risk. How did he know this was going to work? And here he is. He's finally, finally back in an adult-sized body.

**JC:** It's very eerie and creepy, the description of him as he's checking -- stretching out and testing out -- this new form that he's in, and he hasn't been in a form that could move on its own or in any way to physically interact with the environment for a long time. There's this moment of exultation for him where he was just like, 'Yes!'

**Lorrie:** 'This is me.'

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Exactly. We have him doing this, and Harry knows exactly what's happening. He's still bound and gagged against a headstone and we have Nagini circling him, this reminder that she gets to eat him...

**Lorrie:** Yum!

**JC:** That must be coming, yeah. Then Wormtail is suffering, so this idea that --

**Lorrie:** Screaming, yeah.

**JC:** So this idea that even Wormtail, who did more than anybody else to help Voldemort come back to power, and in many ways Voldemort doesn't care. He's...

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** The point is that suffering is in service of Voldemort, and reinforcing that fact is part of his pleasure. Meanwhile, poor Wormtail, for whom I actually feel sorry in this scene... He's begging treatment for his arm -- "...you promised... you did promise..." -- so then he taunts Wormtail; he asks for Wormtail's arm and he means the other arm, the left one that has the Dark Mark on it. He checks the Dark Mark to confirm that it's vivid again -- yes, he has come back -- and then he hurts Wormtail and Harry both by pressing the Mark, and that reconvenes the Death Eaters for the first time in thirteen years.

**JC:** Something that stands out to me about the Dark Mark here is that it's described as vividly red before Voldemort touches it and then it turns black, and that's interesting. That's a detail that I had completely forgotten. Obviously, red is a warning sign and it's blood and all these things, and it's interesting that once it turns black... I'm imagining all the other Death Eaters who had seen it coming back, right? They'd been seeing it.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. They've known this moment is coming.

**JC:** And then for them to have -- Then he notes that it's reappeared; the others will have noticed, too.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And they have, because we've heard them talking about it, but I'm imagining these folks just, I don't know, sitting around their dinner table or whatever.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And then this Mark goes from red to black with this searing pain that means 'Come now to where I am'...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And all of them having to drop what they're doing right then and go. There's a lot of thoughts I have about the Death Eaters that I think I'll save for a little bit later -- some questions that this all brings up for me -- but that one I just wanted to note there that they had to drop what they were doing. They all have lives, right?

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** It's been a long time. They were in the middle of things that were probably important. Doesn't matter.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Drop it and go.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Yeah. There was a time when they promised that their whole lives would be around this, and that promise doesn't go away. He's back. While they're waiting for these guys to show up, Voldemort contrasts Lily dying to defend Harry with the way that Voldemort revenged himself on the Muggle father who abandoned his mother when she told him she was a witch. "He didn't like magic, my father..." This is a narrative that Voldemort's telling about his parents, which is different from the story that Dumbledore speculates a couple books later. Voldemort telling sometimes conflicting stories about his parents (and also about Harry's parents as well, which we'll see in the next couple chapters) is what people have to do who lost their parents as babies and never knew their parents, because you have that hunger to know your own story. That does not go away just because you don't have any information -- or you have information that's depressing -- but you still can't stop wishing that you had a story, and what that story is makes a difference in how you live your life, even if it's false. He talks about his father -- "that fool who gave me his name... Tom Riddle..." He's still angry.

**JC:** But he did get a cool name.

**Lorrie:** Well, he doesn't think so.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** He doesn't like it.

**JC:** It does sound very ordinary and very Muggle, yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, like Harry Potter. Then he says, "'Listen to me, reliving family history...' he said quietly, 'why, I am growing quite sentimental...'" It's that self-deprecating humor, that irony, which is so British... I thought, 'He's talking to Harry like a peer.' Harry is, because he's an orphan, somebody who might understand how absurd this all is, how unbelievably painful this entire subject is, and how anything about it is going to be so awful that it's funny. Then he says, "But look, Harry! My true family returns," and it's like, okay, Harry's someone he wants to show. "Look!" He's showing off. "I've managed to

gather people around me," and he hoped those people wouldn't abandon him as badly as his father did or die on him like his mother did. Of course, the pathetic thing is that they did actually abandon him for thirteen years, but this is who he has. This is all he's got.

**JC:** It was really strange to read that section before the Death Eaters show up, and it felt awkward. Why is Voldemort telling Harry this? He's just going to kill him, so why is he taking the time to make this connection? He's really trying to connect with Harry here...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And I can see Harry just being like, 'What the fuck is happening?'

**Lorrie:** Yes.

**JC:** 'Just get it over with or whatever. Leave me here, whatever.'

**Lorrie:** 'Why do you think I care?'

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** 'Maybe in your mind I'm fascinated. I'm not.'

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. It's one-sided, this relationship.

**JC:** Definitely, but you get the sense that it's always like that for Voldemort, right?

**Lorrie:** Yep.

**JC:** This is how he talks to everyone.

**Lorrie:** Well...

**JC:** He has no connections, really, other than to...

**Lorrie:** Right. If he doesn't force people, then they're just going to die on him or abandon him. The only way he can ever communicate to other beings is if he overpowers them and forces them to listen, and that's all he's ever known. So his "true family", the Death Eaters, Apparate and they approach cautiously on their knees and they kiss the hem of his robes. Ugh...

**JC:** Yeah. Just...

**Lorrie:** Obviously.

**JC:** Yeah. Oh, my gosh, and they get scolded, for sure.

**Lorrie:** And they've had plenty of time. They all know where their hoods and masks are because they've been watching this Dark Mark come back, so no one had to go look for them.

**JC:** Oh, my God. I hadn't thought of that. You're right. No one had to go look for the...

**Lorrie:** But these are all the people who are terrified. They must have had plenty of time to think it's safer to come get scolded than it is to try to go into hiding. They know better.

**JC:** Though there are some missing faces here...

**Lorrie:** There are.

**JC:** Which we'll get to, I guess, probably in a little bit.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, and everyone knows that it's just a matter of time.

**JC:** He monologues at them next. Again, he's forced them to come here.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** They're terrified, he's overpowered them, they're under threat of -- He does cast a Cruciatus Curse on one of them and he would be happy to do it on the other ones as well. There's a series of paragraphs where he's like, "I ask myself," and then he monologues. "I answer myself," and he monologues, "and then I ask myself..." He's monologuing like a supervillain, and part of that is funny to me.

**Lorrie:** It's hilarious.

**JC:** How much more stereotypical villain could you be right now?

**Lorrie:** Well, he's quite dramatic.

**JC:** Yeah, yeah. The drama... God.

**Lorrie:** He's really, honestly, had nothing else to think about for a really long time.

**JC:** He's very excited to get to tell people.

**Lorrie:** This is his moment; no one's going to take it from him. These people swore to him years ago that he would own their lives, so he's calling that in. What are they going to do? Defy him? Haha...

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** So yeah. And they've had a long vacation from him. They can sit here for a while.

**JC:** He also says this interesting thing in the middle of this monologue. He says, "They, who knew the steps I took, long ago, to guard myself against mortal death?" Who... I'm

trying to remember from the last book. Do any of them really know? Is there someone who absolutely knows what he's done, or is he the only one?

**Lorrie:** No.

**JC:** Yeah, that's what I was thinking.

**Lorrie:** No. As tyrants do, he has given them enough hints so that they are properly in awe, but he's not divulging his secrets.

**JC:** Okay.

**Lorrie:** But they do have some sense that he has done things that no one else even knows how to do. I love this thing he says: "I smell guilt. There is a stench of guilt upon the air," which I loved when I read it in this book, and then to me, it's one of the best callbacks of *Cursed Child* because that's the line... Harry -- in his dream, Voldemort is saying this ("I smell guilt. There's a stench of guilt upon the air"), but that's when Harry is having flashbacks to how much he's angry at the Dursleys for abusing him and at Dumbledore for abandoning him to the Dursleys and never coming for him, not even letting him know anything until he was eleven. That's what's in Harry's mind when the image of Voldemort comes into his dream and he hears Voldemort saying, "I smell guilt. There's a stench of guilt upon the air." This situation of Voldemort confronting the people who abandoned him a long time ago is honestly such a fantasy come true. If you're somebody who was truly victimized by people who should have taken care of you and they really ruined your life, normally you can't do anything about it. Normally they're gone, they're out of reach; maybe they're dead. Who ever gets to find the people and hold them accountable and tell them, "Look what you did to me" and he gets to do this? This is a fantasy come true and they know it. I have to laugh when he says, in this very vague way, "There is a stench of guilt upon the air," and then he just lets it hang there, lets people's guilt develop inside them. When he does that monologue that you mentioned, where he lists, "So I asked myself, maybe they believe me gone or maybe they change their allegiance to Dumbledore..." What he doesn't say is the truth. Maybe it's because they never really loved him and they had only been using him. He doesn't say the awful truth. Then Avery, one of the Death Eaters, cracks first and he offers himself to be the first Crucio.

**JC:** Right. Yeah. It's like, "I beg forgiveness," and he's like, "Yeah, Crucio!" I guess what it tells me is that he knows he's got them. He can berate them for not loving him properly.

**Lorrie:** He can do whatever he wants.

**JC:** But he doesn't want them to beg. Later on, someone starts begging again, and he just cuts them off. "No, that's enough. I don't need that."

**Lorrie:** He's like, "I don't even have time for this bullshit."

**JC:** "No, no, that's not what I want. I just want you to do my bidding and I want you to pretend that you care about me," or whatever, but the fact that when they try to beg for forgiveness he punishes them for it is interesting.

**Lorrie:** But there's nothing else.. The thing is, whether they beg or not, the betrayal that they've put him through is done...

**JC:** Right.

**Lorrie:** And it does actually make him feel a little better to confront them with the evidence of what they did and how they made him feel.

**JC:** This is reminding me, bizarrely, of that scene in the movie *A Christmas Story* where Ralphie's mother has washed his mouth out with soap and then he fantasizes about coming back later as an adult and he's suffering the effects of soap poisoning.

**Lorrie:** Oh, God!

**JC:** They're at his feet, "Please forgive us!" really dramatically. It's reminding me of that a little bit.

**Lorrie:** I don't even know that, but I'm laughing at it.

**JC:** The revenge fantasy.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. No, it is. It is a huge fantasy and Voldemort gets to do it, and he wasn't sure he ever would. He says to Avery as he's punishing him, "I want thirteen years' repayment before I forgive you," which really begs the question: honestly, Death Eaters, did any of you think Voldemort is the type to just forgive and forget?

**JC:** Right.

**Lorrie:** What were you thinking? And when he says thirteen years, what he's underlining is he suffered for exactly as long as Harry Potter has suffered being an orphan. Of all of the people there present, Harry is the only one he can be sure knows how he felt during that time and how long it was. He's angry at all of them. There are people that did not let him down, but they're not here. Everybody here is either people who betrayed him or is Harry Potter.

**JC:** Okay, so I'm imagining all these Death Eaters sitting here and what's going through their heads, because I don't think I had this read the first time around. They were just evil. I hated them all, right? Whatever they get, they deserve. This read is a product of growing older; it's also a product of living in the current version of the world and the product of today... Literally what's happening today. I'm thinking back to 2016 when Trump was newly in office or newly elected and we had that scene in Virginia with the

white supremacists with the tiki torches. We had this incident what feels like a long time ago now in Charlottesville, Virginia back in 2017 of white supremacists with tiki torches marching -- someone died, right? This horrific scene -- and I think at the time a lot of us thought, 'Wow, it's like the Death Eaters at the Quidditch World Cup,' right?

**Lorrie:** That's right.

**JC:** It felt very much like that, but I'm imagining those same young people today -- or whoever they were in the crowd -- all these years later. It's been eight years... Do they feel the same way about it? Would they do it again? Would they be inspired to pick up those tiki torches and go do the same thing again, or have they changed as people? Have they grown? Have they moved on? Have they got families now? Is there something at risk?

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** I'm imagining all these Death Eaters... They're probably in their late 30s, early 40s, most of these folks. They were young men -- all the ones who are here are men. They were young men at the time they joined Voldemort on his crusade that he had going on, right? They agreed with him about whatever the political message was at the time. Thirteen years has passed, their lives have moved on, they have been able to hide in society, and they have hidden because they are either properly ashamed of what they were involved in or know that if it got out, it would ruin them, right? Now they're being called back to this and they have no choice. They can't say no.

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** They've got wives and children, they've got jobs, they've got lives, and now they're being pulled back to this thing that they did as young men that perhaps they look back on now and think, 'Wow, that was foolish of me. I'm really lucky, I got out of it,' or perhaps they go, 'Damn, I wish I could do it all over again.' I don't know what's going on in their heads, but for me -- and I and I don't mean to sound like a Death Eater apologist -- I can't help but wonder how many of them are standing there regretting their life choices up to this moment, right?

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Yeah. They know that there's no way out. This was a life sentence. When they put that Mark on their arm, they knew it, but when Voldemort disappeared, they had a chance to do something else and now it's been taken away. Now they're here again and they have no choice, and I just can't help but think, 'What's it like in their heads right now?'

**Lorrie:** It wasn't fine print. This was all laid out for them when they took the Dark Mark, but it is underscoring the point that you can do things in your youth that will affect the

entire rest of your life, which may be very, very long even though at that age you don't know what you're signing away.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** This is very dark, but one of the things that I compare it to is if you think in your youth, 'I'm going to have a child,' then this may tie you for the rest of your life to the other parent of this child who may be somebody that you don't want to be connected with, but it's done. It's forever. You can regret it or not, but it's forever. Or any kid who commits a crime and the defense is "I didn't really know what I was doing as a teenager." That may be true, but the crime can't be un-committed.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Which brings us back to all of the hyper tension around the "think of the children" issue, which is yeah, children cannot know sometimes that they're signing away the entire rest of their lives. This is why it's important to train kids and to give them some sense of morality, maybe before they're old enough to have developed it, trying to protect them instead of exploit them. But yeah, too damn late now. As Fake Moody said to Snape, "There are marks that don't come off." Then as Voldemort often does -- as *everyone* in this series often does -- he starts to enjoy dumping on Wormtail a bit. Wormtail, the universal punching bag... He says, "Oh, Wormtail has started to repay some of his debt," and then he goes on about how dishonorable everything about Wormtail's return to Voldemort has been. "Oh, don't think that he has any loyalty. It's because he's a coward and he's afraid of his old friends." Then he says, "You deserve this pain, Wormtail. You know that, don't you?" which is very wrong and very sadistic, and yet I still do have this, like, "Well, Wormtail, what did you expect?" But yeah, getting people to punish themselves... We see that in Voldemort and we also see that with how house-elves have been brainwashed, and that's the thing that Timothy Snyder warns us against when he says, "Don't obey in advance." Those with power over others do have the power to get you to punish yourself. Don't let that happen. Hang on to yourself. Finally, finally, finally, he grudgingly gives Wormtail a reward for having sacrificed his hand and he gives him a silver hand that is beautiful and stronger than a human hand and comes with a giant warning that sounds like a hex: "May your loyalty never waver again." Uh-oh. Why? Why would anyone think it would be a good idea to be indebted to this guy? Although as a reader, I feel relief that at least Wormtail's physical pain has stopped for the moment. God. Ugh... So yeah, he got as much as he wanted out of that whole demand for self-sacrifice.

**JC:** I'm just imagining him lying there, bleeding out basically.

**Lorrie:** Oh, God.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, and Voldemort thinking, 'I will tend to you when it suits my monologuing rhetorical purposes.'

**JC:** Yeah, yeah, and not a moment earlier. Yeah. 'Just lie there and suffer, as you deserve.'

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And what's Wormtail going to say but, "Thank you, Master." Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. And fortunately for Wormtail, there does come a point in the monologue when it's useful to Voldemort to make the point. "Look, look, Wormtail gets a hand." Then Lucius is next.

**JC:** Yeah, and I love that he calls him "my slippery friend."

**Lorrie:** Oh, God.

**JC:** Oh, boy, that's so interesting.

**Lorrie:** And Lucius is such a greasy hypocrite. Oh...

**JC:** For sure. And then this: "You are still ready to take the lead in a spot of Muggle-torture?"

**Lorrie:** Ah, we have confirmation. Yes.

**JC:** And we get that confirmation that Lucius Malfoy was behind the events of the Quidditch World Cup...

**Lorrie:** Had been passing out tiki torches...

**JC:** And sending his son the other way.

**Lorrie:** Oh, God. Lucius is acting like Voldemort is going to fall for his super transparent suck-up excuses. "Had there been any sign from you, any whisper of your whereabouts..." and I'm reading this thinking, 'Oh, oh, you're making this Voldemort's fault now?' You're like, "If you were a better communicator..."

**JC:** \*You do this at your own peril."

**Lorrie:** I thought, 'Who does this remind me of?' and I realize who it reminds me of. It's Mark Zuckerberg when he was being grilled by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and he put on this kickable faux innocent expression with wide eyes trying to run out his time. She had him, but he was trying to get out of it, and I thought, 'He's so bad at this.' Privileged people are accustomed to getting away with things, so when they're caught, they don't even know how to lie. They're so bad at this. That face, yeah. The faux innocence is just dripping off of Lucius Malfoy.

**JC:** Ah, yeah. Then he also says, "And yet you ran away from my Mark, when a faithful Death Eater sent it into the sky last summer?" This impression that even though he was this little, barely physical form, he sees all, he knows all...

**Lorrie:** He does.

**JC:** Which is really scary.

**Lorrie:** But also, you really don't have to be a genius to know that Lucius Malfoy is full of shit. Okay, Voldemort may be the greatest Legilimens ever, but we the reader at this distance can hear the stupidity coming off of Lucius Malfoy.

**JC:** Right, exactly. I love how he does come across like a politician.

**Lorrie:** Ugh.

**JC:** "My Lord, if I had any idea..." All of that is very much --

**Lorrie:** Oh, my God, shut up.

**JC:** Yeah, exactly.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. And then when Voldemort says, "I expect more faithful service in the future," that just underscores how pathetic Voldemort is because Lucius Malfoy does not deserve a second chance. It's just that Voldemort doesn't have anyone else but these people.

**JC:** Right.

**Lorrie:** Then he says, "This space is for the Lestranges. *They* were faithful. They went to prison for me." Then he says, "When Azkaban is broken open, the Lestranges will be honored beyond their dreams." That's awful, too, because as we know from the future volumes, that doesn't even come true. Do not believe this guy's campaign promises.

**JC:** Yeah, for sure, for sure. He talks about basically the army that he's going to build, right? He's going to get all the dementors and he's going to get the giants, he's going to get... He's going to bring them all back together.

**Lorrie:** And that all comes true.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** And yeah, I like when he says, "Dementors are our natural allies," and that is such a post-2020 change in my reading. It was during the race-related police violence riots of the summer of 2020 that I realized, 'Oh, that's what dementors are.' Breeding fear, pretending that they can control their appetite to hurt others, but then as things get heightened, inevitably that is not a force that humans are really in control of. When you gather, when the stakes are heightened, this is not a civilizable thing that all of us

humans have within us. Then we get... This is a really useful catalog of how Voldemort works and gets his followers, because he says to Macnair, "You shall have better victims than that soon, Macnair," because Macnair has been executing beasts. "Lord Voldemort will provide." Okay, so this is actually quite an unproblematic relationship.

**JC:** Yeah. Yeah, the sadistic executioner... "Lord Voldemort will provide" is such an interesting line, too. There's such drama there. Also, Voldemort is playing this over-the-top villain role.

**Lorrie:** Pomp, yeah.

**JC:** This is how villains act. This is how he acts or something, right? He's just playing into this. Not that I even think that he's read Muggle stories or... I don't know. Where does he get this from? This is how villains act, but that's what he does.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. If you think about his preteen years in the orphanage thinking, 'Oh, one of these days -- someday -- someday, I'll make you pay, I'll make you all pay,' and then as a teenager thinking, 'I'm going to be the greatest Dark Lord ever.'

**JC:** Is he modeling himself on a Bond villain?

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Then he's had thirteen years in the forest...

**JC:** Yeah, to really, really think about it. Yeah.

**Lorrie:** 'Someday, I'm going to call myself Lord Voldemort and everyone is going to call me that, unless they're too scared to say my name. Haha!' Right? So yeah, then he passes by Crabbe and Goyle (and they are such non-entities), and then we get the clue paragraph where he says there are these three missing Death Eaters. "One, too cowardly to return... he will pay. One, who I believe has left me forever... he will be killed, of course... and one, who remains my most faithful servant, and who has already re-entered my service."

**JC:** Ooooooh...

**Lorrie:** Ooooooh. So yeah, the reader's like --

**JC:** And all three of those people are at Hogwarts.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Okay, okay. Obviously Karkaroff is one of them. He's almost definitely one of the traitors, because he's just such a loser.

**JC:** And he didn't come when summoned.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Okay, this is obviously a Snape hint. All right, which is he? And who's the third? Who's the third? Oh, my God, who's the third? Is it Snape? Voldemort does this to play with them; the Death Eaters are side-eyeing each other. "He is at Hogwarts, that

faithful servant, and it was through his efforts that our young friend arrived here tonight..." And thank God, the Death Eaters finally have permission to look at Harry. 'Oh, oh, is our punishment over now?'

**JC:** 'Now we're going to punish him? Can we?' Yeah.

**Lorrie:** 'Okay, someone else gets to be victim. Okay.' Ah, thank God for them.

**JC:** The mystery, though, of who is the faithful servant at Hogwarts -- who put his name in the Cup? All of the mystery, all of this that we've been thinking about this whole time. Someone put Harry's name in the cup and that person could not have wanted good things for Harry, and the fact that all this has been orchestrated right under Dumbledore's nose...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** When you don't know the first time through. Also, we're still suspicious of Snape, and the point has come up of Dumbledore trusts Snape. Why?

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** Dumbledore won't... "That's between me and Snape," and everyone's like, 'But what could possibly make him trust Snape? Is he wrong?'

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** 'Was he wrong about this?' You get this wonderful sense the first time through of, 'Well, maybe it could be Snape, or maybe it's somebody else.'

**Lorrie:** Right, but it almost definitely isn't Snape because he's so disgusting and repellent on the outside. That's not how this author writes. There are authors who don't believe in a deep-down character truth to people, but this author does. This author does believe that there's somebody that you truly are on the inside, whether or not the rest of the world knows, and would she really sell it this way by showing that he's so awful on the surface? That doesn't seem to be the game she's playing, because wow, he's got like a million marks against him and very little going for him. Hmm... But meanwhile, there's not that much time to think about this because dangerous things are happening right now.

**JC:** We're barreling on, right.

**Lorrie:** And then Voldemort starts using the language that he's at his 'rebirthing party' and that he's got Harry Potter as his guest of honor, and there is language that Voldemort uses about being a child who wants a friend. This comes up more than once, because that is (in a way that's miserably cliché and inescapable) kids without strong childhoods. The issue of birthdays and birthday parties... You can try to act like it's not

as terrible as it is, but it is. Every time your birthday comes and goes, there's just no getting around how rotten your life is compared to what is obvious that humans should have as a birthright: a normal human recognition that you're in the world and that's a good thing. Yeah, in Voldemort's background his birthdays were as negative as they can get, so this is a theme in this chapter. No matter how hilarious and grandiose he is about his villain monologue, this pain is real.

**JC:** Before Voldemort gets into his monologue, you had mentioned the Death Eaters exhale -- they're not... it isn't like it is now -- and there's this hilarious moment where Lucius Malfoy steps up and basically is like, "Please, oh Lord, monologue to us about where have you been all this time." It's funny to me. I actually laughed out loud.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Oh, my God. But also, it's pushing the attention off of us.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Oh... Yeah.

**Lorrie:** "Maybe if we can get him talking about this..."

**JC:** And it made me think this is how you deal with Voldemort. You get him talking --

**Lorrie:** About himself.

**JC:** Yeah, about himself. "Please, enlighten me."

**Lorrie:** "Are you clever, Voldemort? Are you better than the rest of us?" Yes.

**JC:** "Tell us how."

**Lorrie:** "We'll admire you for it." Yes.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** But yeah, Voldemort is acknowledging that he's not coming from a place of strength. He says that Lily Potter "unwittingly provided [Harry] with a protection I admit I had not foreseen... I could not touch the boy." This is not fun, talking about his failures. We remember from Quirrell that it's physically agony for Voldemort to touch somebody that is filled with love, but now that he has appropriated Harry's blood, he says "I can touch him now," and he's so triumphant. He has that blood in him now, too, so his body has love and can process love. I know that's in the book, the word that they use is 'stolen' (that he steals Harry's blood) and I realized this time around the word 'appropriate' really suits this situation for me. When you take something that doesn't belong to you -- when you take it from somebody else and that act is hostile and violent, and then you take it for your own purposes -- it never belonged to you. He did take

away Harry's infancy and he's using what benefit Harry got from it, so now Voldemort is included in Lily's love. What he doesn't realize -- he will find out a book later -- it's only that he has moved the barrier. He used to be unable to touch Harry because being that close to love, he was dying of envy. Now he can touch Harry, but he's going to find out later that he's just moved the barrier from the skin into the mind. He will find that when he can share the feelings, he still can't bear it but now his body can withstand it, and when he touches Harry, Harry "thought his head would burst with the pain" because they're more closely related now than they used to be. The boundaries between them were permeable before, but now they're even more permeable. Before, it was that Harry was carrying around some of Voldemort and some of Voldemort's burden; now, Voldemort carries around some of Harry's grief and his ability to connect with other humans and his ability to heal. These things, these qualities in Harry's blood, have now constituted his entire new body and they're already started to change him. He has, in fact, grown to this full size because of these qualities that enable you to grow and heal. He cannot be rid of them, although it's only been a little while. He still has to find out the full extent of what's just happened. What has he just done? Could it be, once again, that there are things that he has been unable to foresee? Then he explains, "My curse was deflected by the woman's foolish sacrifice, and it rebounded upon myself." He has no idea how that worked. 'Rebounded'? What? This series eventually shows us what that means, but it doesn't tell us; it's not until book seven, and this author made the choice to require a lot of interpretation from the reader to understand, "What exactly does that mean?" Whatever it means, Voldemort at this point has no idea; just that it happened. Then this very beautifully, painfully written part of the monologue where he says, "Pain beyond pain... I was ripped from my body, I was less than spirit, less than the meanest ghost... but still, I was alive. What I was, even I do not know... I, who have gone further than anybody along the path that leads to immortality." Okay, what? What have you done? He had experiments and he says, "I had not been killed, though the curse should have done it." All right, so his experiments worked. He's put himself beyond the mercy that Death can bring you. All he's done is raised his capacity for pain to superhuman levels, because how much pain he was in, for a human, would have killed us. He can't be killed by pain -- he can just feel a lot more than mortals can -- but could he bring relief to himself? No, he was stuck without a body. The thing that he doesn't understand -- the incredibly simple thing that he doesn't understand -- is what he was feeling was envy.

**JC:** Interesting. Okay.

**Lorrie:** He saw a baby get cared for by a mom. Normally, he just looks down on other humans so much that he doesn't think it has anything to do with him. With this kid, he saw that and he felt the envy. 'Wow, what is this? How can anyone survive this pain?'

Yeah, there are feelings of envy that are so awful that you feel like, 'Oh, my God, I'm going to die at this, this is so agonizing.'

**JC:** Okay, so when he says, "Pain beyond pain..." Coming from a perspective of 'pain is relative' and there's no way to know what someone else is experiencing, was it 'pain beyond pain' because it was genuinely more pain than a human could withstand, or was it pain beyond pain because Voldemort being -- I don't know if he's a psychopath, we don't know what category we could put him in -- someone who was used to being able to push pain away was forced to feel it for the first time in a really genuine way.

**Lorrie:** I think there are a number of things contributing. One of them is that most people have (starting from infancy) been nurtured enough to have tools for resilience to self-soothe and to receive comfort from others when inconsolably painful things happen, because pain beyond pain is something that is a human condition and sometimes people do die of it. But he doesn't have any tools of comfort, and he also just doesn't understand what's happening to him. But also, to me, there is a way in which his description of how agonized he felt seems really relatable. There's certain depths of depression or desolation that can feel like this. 'I don't even know what I am. I don't understand anything. How can anything hurt this badly?'

**JC:** I also thought on this read that when he said, "I was less than a spirit," what was left of him wasn't even whole because he had already splintered it off. The parts that he had splintered off made him more unstable and even less capable of processing or handling pain, so the person that we're seeing here is no longer a whole human, in any sense of the word. I don't know exactly what the theory is here with when Horcruxes are formed; splitting your soul, which parts of you do you lose? Surely, things go with that, right? Would it be memory? Would it be feelings? Would it be abilities? What goes when that gets split off, and what's left behind?

**Lorrie:** Well, when we learn later in the sixth book how you make a Horcrux, it's in the aftermath of when you've done something that splits your soul, which is killing someone. When you've done something that damaging and it damages you, do you have what it takes to really understand what you have just done to yourself and what you've done to others to take that all in to process it, or do you want to never think about it ever and cut off any possibility of integrating that experience into your understanding of yourself? What he's doing is he's compartmentalizing. "Yes, I did it and I refuse to feel it." This is related to aspects of his life and himself that he just doesn't want to accept or can't think about. The fact that he was born completely without love and how unfair it is that no matter how strong you are as a person, without love volunteered from other people there's just some ways in which your life is always going to suck, that's so hard to accept. It's so unfair he doesn't want to think about it, and what is the point of feeling the pain of that? It's just painful. It's not like there's a solution, so he's cut that off, and

damage that he does to other people out of that pain is part of what he's glad to never feel again, never think about again, to parcel out. The lovelessness that he was born into is something that he's interested in trying to understand and will try to replicate in other people and hurt other people so that he can observe. It never yields any satisfactory answer, but the damage that he created in them (or the damage that he originally felt that set him off on this path) are things he doesn't want to feel. He will shut them off into parts of his soul that he's just never going to feel again. In order to live, to come back to life, to be whole again... If you've done that -- if you've shut those parts of yourself off -- you have to re-admit them before you can actually get to healing. But the more you've hurt other people, the more grueling it's going to be to come back from that, and that's the instability of the soul. That's what it means to say that you've hurt so many people, you've caused so much damage in the world, that your soul is unstable, because normally when people do something wrong and someone comes up to you and says, "Hey, you hurt me," you have to recognize it somehow. Even if you don't want to talk to them or apologize to them, you think to yourself, "Ugh, yeah, I did. Well, I don't want to apologize, so I'm just going to leave." But you have to admit it. "Yeah, I know what it feels like to be treated badly like that, and yeah, I hurt them." If you've done so much damage that everywhere you turn there are people saying, "Look what you did to me," that makes you a pretty unstable person. "I don't want to hear it, I don't want to hear it, I don't want to hear it." If you're powerful enough in a destructive way, you can prevent people from bringing it up and you can try to convince them that it is your right to hurt people and it is their duty to accept that they deserve it or brought it on themselves.

**JC:** Now we're getting back around to our current situation...

**Lorrie:** Aren't we? Yes.

**JC:** Which is the person who's probably being sworn in exactly at this moment.

**Lorrie:** It's 12 o'clock Eastern Time.

**JC:** Yes, but you have people who have done a lot of harm and who are one hundred percent unrepentant and don't want to deal with the harm that they've caused.

**Lorrie:** And if the law -- the human and natural and legal law -- means that they're supposed to be accountable for the harm they've done, change the law.

**JC:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. A lot of this could be solved by just being a regular person and accepting responsibility for bad things you've done...

**JC:** For sure.

**Lorrie:** Like normal people have to do every day.

**JC:** Yes.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. We're sorry your father never loved you.

**JC:** Stop taking it out on us.

**Lorrie:** You're not the only person born to a father who didn't love you. Cruel, isn't it?

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Somehow, the rest of us managed to get through life without punishing everybody else for it the same way.

**JC:** Yeah, that's true. For sure.

**Lorrie:** It's not inevitable. So yeah, he cannot tolerate feeling envy, doesn't understand what it is, is incredulous at how painful it is, which I get. He himself has called his Death Eaters to stand there with no escape while he says, "Do you understand how you make me feel? Think about that. Think about what you've done!" But I don't think he could take it as well as he's dishing it out.

**JC:** Oh, for sure. For sure.

**Lorrie:** So yeah, he's having a moment here. We learn from *Half-Blood Prince* (in two books) that nobody has ever made more than one Horcrux, so that's one of the things that he's referring to when he says he's gone farther than anybody along the path to immortality. Based on what we got of the *Fantastic Beasts* movies, I can easily imagine that it was Grindelwald who made a Horcrux. I can also easily imagine that this came into the conflict between Grindelwald and Dumbledore, and that this is behind Dumbledore being very fierce against Horcruxes and censoring mention of them from the Hogwarts Library. But the black hole that is the *Fantastic Beasts* movies... whatever. Anyway, Voldemort's the only one who's done more than one.

**JC:** And two of them are present in that space. Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Not that he knows, but yes. He says that when he was without the body, he was "as powerless as the weakest creature alive and without the means to help myself." He's just describing what it feels like to be a baby. He's having a flashback to what it felt like to be an orphaned baby where, no matter how hard he tried to communicate his needs (which all babies have), there was nobody listening. That's the powerlessness. He says, "I remember only forcing myself, sleeplessly, endlessly, second by second, to exist..." which is desolate and also kind of admirable. Whoa, strong! Then the pity of this: he says, "Surely one of my faithful Death Eaters would try and find me... one of them would come and perform the magic I could not, to restore me to a body... but I

waited in vain..." Oh, my God, that is sad. That is purely and truly nothing but a little kid waiting to be rescued and not being rescued, being an infant. Honestly, is Voldemort ever really going to forgive any of these people?

**JC:** No. No.

**Lorrie:** They promised that they wouldn't abandon him. He had been born into abandonment. These people promise that they never would. Is he ever going to forgive them? Honestly, I wouldn't.

**JC:** I don't think he has it in him to forgive either.

**Lorrie:** But his complaint here is quite valid. Geez. "Really, I couldn't do anything to help myself. You guys said you would come!" He says, "Only one power remained to me. I could possess the bodies of others." That's his signature magic: he can appropriate. Infants wish they could perform the Imperius curse, because if people don't do what they need, they will die, right? Infants try to communicate by crying. 'What if nobody hears you? Or worse... What if they hear you and nobody cares? What does that do to you?' Voldemort, being a genius, develops his signature magic of possession. He can possess animals, but they're not strong enough to survive very long. It seems from how he's talking that humans survive longer than animals do and wizard humans are the strongest and survive the longest when he possesses them, and he says that the second setback after Quirrell died. As we sit here being sworn into the second Trump presidency... Yeah, being back in the place that you thought you had a hope of escaping can feel pretty bad. He says, "I had given up hope, now, that any of my Death Eaters cared what had become of me..." which is the much, much, much worse version of what Harry goes through at the beginning of *Chamber of Secrets* when he's not getting letters from his friends. That's just letters in a few weeks, and Harry is panicked. 'Don't they know I'm here? Doesn't anybody care? Am I just going to die in here?' And yeah, Voldemort had that so much worse.

**JC:** It is interesting that they were both experiencing it at the same time.

**Lorrie:** Yep. And Wormtail... He says Wormtail hears where he is from "his filthy little friends," because no one can even talk about Wormtail without insulting him gratuitously. He cannot bring himself to appreciate what Wormtail has done for him. He insults Quirrell, too. These guys that did a lot for him... No, he's not feeling very grateful.

**JC:** It is interesting to me that his most faithful servants... he despises them for serving him. If they were truly his equals, they wouldn't grovel at his feet like this...

**Lorrie:** Nope.

**JC:** Or do his bidding, so he punishes them for that even as he demands it of them.

**Lorrie:** Yep.

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

**Lorrie:** Well, humans are very disappointing. Isn't anyone going to be strong enough to give him what he needs? Well, no, so it doesn't matter how badly you treat them because they've pissed you off. So then he insults Wormtail, but says that somehow he had the resources to take Bertha Jorkins on a nighttime stroll.

**JC:** I'm imagining the comical thing there, right? I know what Wormtail looked like.

**Lorrie:** Yes!

**JC:** He'd been hiding as a rat for however many -- twelve years or whatever.

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** His clothes were raggedy, he certainly hasn't had any kind of a shower. Taking Bertha Jorkins on a nighttime stroll? Without casting an Imperius curse, I don't know how he...

**Lorrie:** Well, we don't know that he didn't.

**JC:** Yeah, for sure. I don't know, it's the image of Wormtail romancing Bertha Jorkins. "Would you come on a nighttime stroll with me?" and she's like, "Oh, of course I would." Oh, my God, what? Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** So this part of it, I'm like, okay, Voldemort is exaggerating some things here.

**Lorrie:** Whatever happened there...

**JC:** I don't think he took her on a nighttime stroll. I think he had a wand at her back and he's like, "Let's go."

**Lorrie:** Well, what we know of Bertha Jorkins is that if he promised that he had salacious information that she'd be interested in knowing, she would have gone.

**JC:** Ah, there you go. It wasn't his charming demeanor or his good looks or whatever.

**Lorrie:** His 'animal magnetism.'

**JC:** Animal magnetism!

**Lorrie:** That's what Ron says.

**JC:** There you go.

**Lorrie:** But yeah, no, the whole thing is deeply uncomfortable farce. Everything about this is just gross, gross, gross, gross, gross. He overpowers Bertha Jorkins and delivers her so Voldemort gets to delve into her brain, break the memory charm on her, extract all the information he can out of her, and then that just ruined her, so he just killed her.

**JC:** Ugh. Yeah.

**Lorrie:** And then he describes how he invented some process to get himself into "a rudimentary, weak body" and that Wormtail was able to do what it took. He says, "A spell or two of my own invention... a little help from my dear Nagini, a potion concocted from unicorn blood, and the snake venom Nagini provided... I was soon returned to an almost human form, and strong enough to travel." We've seen this form.

**JC:** Right.

**Lorrie:** And that brings me to the interview with Rowling.

**JC:** Yes. I've been wondering since our last conversation. What the hell?

**Lorrie:** She said, "There are two things that I think are too horrible, actually, to go into detail about. One of them is how Pettigrew brought Voldemort back into a rudimentary body. 'Cause I told my editor what I thought happened there, and she looked as though she was gonna vomit." So there, that was something that's too horrible for print. What do you think?

**JC:** I can only guess wildly that Nagini captured a human child or a toddler or a baby and ate them, and then this partially digested person was brought back to life and was able for Voldemort... I don't know. That's all I got. I don't know.

**Lorrie:** Right? Right? Yeah. My friend Irvin Khaytman (author of the book on Dumbledore)... Irvin and I have competing theories, very different theories, about how Voldemort got into this rudimentary body. They're both super gross.

**JC:** Okay.

**Lorrie:** We did a Hogwarts After Dark presentation in 2023 at CONjuration where we presented our computing theories, and it was an 18+ presentation because it's so gross. Irvin's theory (which I don't agree with, and therefore I might represent it incorrectly) involves an act of conception between Wormtail and Bertha Jorkins, and the resulting fetus being transplanted into Nagini's body as a surrogate. They had two months to gestate and he said magic, so that's his theory. I don't think that feels like this author's style. I thought, 'Okay, what does feel like this author's style?' My theory is that Voldemort would make Wormtail abduct a Muggle baby and take the body to possess and keep this baby alive and turn it evil through unicorn blood and snake venom, because (as we know from *Sorcerer's Stone*) once you taste unicorn blood, then you

have this "half-life, a cursed life" but it would keep that body alive. An infant would be easier for Voldemort to overpower than sharing the body of a more mature person, and he stayed in that form until he was ready to leave the host and enter a new body, the one that was formed in the cauldron, at which point the host would die the way Quirrell did and the way Ginny Weasley was going to die. I think that's what drowned in the cauldron. When I thought of that, I thought, 'That's horrible,' and it also feels to me like this author's style, and we have the evidence from *Sorcerer's Stone* from when Voldemort makes Quirrell kill a unicorn. The description from the Centaurs about what happens is as though they're talking about why would Voldemort have tried to kill baby Harry. Who kills babies? "You have slain something pure and defenseless to save yourself." And when they see the dead unicorn, they say, "Something bright white was gleaming on the ground... It was the unicorn all right, and it was dead. Harry had never seen anything so beautiful and sad," which is the state of something, a young person suffering like that for no reason. This is the innocence that Voldemort harmed in Harry; it was the harm that Tom Riddle as a baby was born into through no fault of his own, so I think this is his quest to keep revisiting that phenomenon of helplessness as a newborn, recreating that damage in other babies so he can observe it, and maybe gain some answers which never come or failing that to at least declare his eternal superiority over this weakness that is his origin story. I don't think that he wants children. He tells Frank Bryce he's "not a man, but much, much more than a man." I also don't think he would have wanted the slightest hint of parental bond with Wormtail or Bertha Jorkins. I think the help he got from Nagini is the snake venom. I think he's recasting her as his mother -- that he doesn't want to be human, that he comes from this really magical, venomous, maternal nursing -- and that he has recast his father to be Salazar Slytherin. So yeah, anyway, that's why I disagree with Irvin's theory, and I don't think anything quite as fleshy as his theory is what got the rudimentary body. I think he was renting.

**JC:** Yeah, that's actually closer to my whole theory about Nagini stealing a baby for him. Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. It also answers the question for me of what was in the bottle at the very beginning.

**Lorrie:** They were milking Nagini into those bottles.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And maybe acquiring some unicorn blood, too, along the way.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Yeah. Irvin and I publicized this presentation by saying... We called it "Too Horrible for Print," and we warned you have to be over eighteen, it's going to be after dark and be warned: it gets gross. We did get people coming just to see if we could live up to that; they sat there, smirking with their arms crossed. 'All right, let's see. Were you

bluffing, or is this really going to be gross?' I am proud to say that they left saying, "Okay, that was gross."

**JC:** 'How gross is it going to be?' The other image that I had in my head that matches up to this image of Voldemort in whatever that body was is from *Children of Earth*, which was an off-shoot of *Doctor Who*.

**Lorrie:** I don't know it. I know of it, yeah.

**JC:** The backstory of it was that the British government or the governments of the world had colluded with some aliens back in the 1950s to let them take some human children who were orphans that no one would miss because children, when terrified, made chemicals that these aliens will get high off of. That was the plot of this, and what the children looked like after being subjected to this for fifty years was horrific. It's one of the most horrifying things I think I've ever seen, *Children of Earth*, but when I remember what those children looked like after being tortured that way for all those years, that's what I think of when I think of what Voldemort looks like in that body in the chair, with the long spindly arms, the alien-looking face, and not quite human anymore. What did it used to be?

**Lorrie:** I --

**JC:** How did it get here? Yeah. That image of him possessing a baby or a small child or whatever, and him being the possessor and also whatever they were feeding the body/baby... That image comes back to my mind, too.

**Lorrie:** So...

**JC:** On that dark note...

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Well, it's dark, right? This is Dark Magic. This is Dark Magic as the allegory for ways that people hurt each other in real life. At the end of the presentation that I did with Irvin, we closed by bringing in a birthday cake (a sheet cake from a supermarket with blue frosting), and my friend Ally (whom you know, who used to work in a bakery) scraped off the icing that said "It's a boy!" and wrote in blue cursive, "It's a Dark Lord!" We had birthday plates and napkins that said, "You're magic!" and we said, "This is what Voldemort did to get himself back into this adult-sized body. That is impressive! It's his re-birthday party. Who wants cake?"

**JC:** His re-birthday party. Oh, my God.

**Lorrie:** It is! It is. He was thirteen years without a body and he's made it back, and that is impressive. So yeah, we had cake.

**JC:** Another thing that stood out to me is this detail of Voldemort telling Wormtail's story, and I guess I can trust that Voldemort is... I don't know how much I trust this story, but

Voldemort makes it almost sound like a fairy tale, the way that Wormtail knew where to go and seeked him out and Wormtail could talk to the rats, and the rats told him about the shadowy thing and Wormtail kept going. All this stuff, right?

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** It's very fairy tale-ish. Voldemort is some warped fairy tale princess that draws the rats to him.

**Lorrie:** Yes! Now I'm picturing his robes in all pink, right?

**JC:** There you go. I feel like I've seen that image somewhere, too. But anyway...

**Lorrie:** Oh, yeah.

**JC:** Yeah. So anyway, I found that fascinating. At the same time that he's humiliated and tortured Wormtail, he's also romanticizing Wormtail's rescue of him to the other Death Eaters. "These are the lengths you have to go to. You have to be willing to be a rat for me!"

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Wow.

**Lorrie:** So I was wrong. In the previous episode, I said that I thought Voldemort invented the rebirth potion spell with a cauldron, but no, he did not. He says it's Dark Magic, old Dark Magic.

**JC:** Ah, okay.

**Lorrie:** And then he says, "I wanted the blood of the one who had stripped me of power thirteen years ago... for the lingering protection his mother once gave him would then reside in my veins, too." Oooh, hon, that's going to backfire on you. You should have done what Wormtail suggested and just used somebody else.

**JC:** Interesting. This is not the first time, right? He's, once again, casting Harry as the one who could destroy him as his equal, in some sense.

**Lorrie:** Right, because after his whole life of all humans (except Dumbledore) being grave disappointments and nobody being able to stand up to him, he gets this prophecy. "A baby is going to be strong enough to kill me? Where is that baby now? Oh, that baby must be amazing." Little Harry's like, "What?" Then Voldemort mentions that Dumbledore invoked the ancient magic to call on Harry's blood to keep him safe in the Dursley home.

**JC:** I think that's the first time we've heard that, right, at this point in the series.

**Lorrie:** Oh, that's a good question.

**JC:** Because I definitely remember...

**Lorrie:** I think so.

**JC:** Okay.

**Lorrie:** I think Dumbledore goes into it at the end of the next book. Yeah. Yes.

**JC:** Okay, yeah, because I remember reading this for the first time and that question of 'Why does Dumbledore send him...?'

**Lorrie:** Right, right.

**JC:** And then it was like, 'Oh, he has to go for the protection,' which is really interesting. That Harry learns it from Voldemort is interesting. Yeah.

**Lorrie:** And yeah, if I'm following the allegorical read, it's that when Harry is living with relatives, that invokes the envy that Voldemort can't endure: that Harry has relatives. They are shitty relatives, but they're related to somebody who Harry loved, and as long as that's happening, that's just all the stuff that he can't endure because Voldemort literally can't come into the Dursley house. It's just too painful for him.

**JC:** It's like a vampire. They'd have to invite him.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, exactly.

**JC:** They probably would invite him if they knew.

**Lorrie:** Well, they don't, though, because that's the thing that Petunia... No matter how crappy she is and how much she pretends that none of that ever happened, she actually does know how dangerous it was and it was awful to her to lose a sister.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** So then he monologues about how his faithful servant planted the whole Triwizard plot, and that is an area of embarrassment I have because there exists in this world a significant population of people who laugh at *Harry Potter* the series and the fandom, don't respect it. It's not real science fiction or better stories, and whatever they're fans of is better. I'm like, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.' This one criticism I heard was, 'What was the point of the Triwizard cup plot? There was no reason why Harry had to go through that whole thing and then be delivered to Voldemort at the end, that whoever turned it into a Portkey could have done that at any point.' I just sat there, like, 'Yeah, you're right. Yeah. Yeah.'

**JC:** But good points for style. Voldemort likes drama! This is pleasing to Lord Voldemort. This is how you impress him.

**Lorrie:** Right, right, but he was a long shot to win. This is a lot to gamble, and my only response to that is "I don't actually read *Harry Potter* for the plot." We find this in the discussions you and I have, where you're all like, 'Wait, so how does that plot point work?' And I'm like, 'What plot point? Oh, yeah. Uh, I don't know. I never thought about it.' So no, it's true. There was absolutely no reason that the Portkey had to be tied to this ridiculous tournament at all.

**JC:** But I think that from an allegorical perspective, I'm not sure, the skills that Harry learned along the way are what allow him to escape.

**Lorrie:** Exactly.

**JC:** So it works out, and that doesn't bother me. Yes, it's a plot hole, but it doesn't bother me. I don't know why it doesn't bother me.

**Lorrie:** It only bothers me because it came from somebody who looks down on *Harry Potter* the series as opposed to similar fantasy or science fiction sagas.

**JC:** Yeah. Yeah, we could pick apart *Star Wars* so easily, right? Yeah. It's a story. It's fine.

**Lorrie:** Well, from the craftsperson's point of view, if I'm going to play 'if I were her beta' again and somebody had said to me, "You know that draft that that author is working on? You should mention to her that this..." and I would have to go to an author and say, "Oh, somebody brought this up and they have a point. Make something up." Whatever, she got away with it.

**JC:** Voldemort had to get strong enough or whatever or something.

**Lorrie:** Right. As an author, you have to take fifteen minutes to make something up and go back several chapters and plant it, and it's not like anybody refused to buy her books because of this plot hole.

**JC:** True, true. I love the way that it comes as a complete surprise. I don't think anyone would have read the story for the first time and not been utterly shocked that the cup turned out to be a Portkey.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Wait, what? Yeah.

**JC:** Yeah. For just the story itself, it's such an incredible plot twist.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** I can forgive that it maybe doesn't make sense, because wow, what a plot twist.

**Lorrie:** But also, I have a folder in my mind that I've titled "Things that could have benefited from one more pass in the draft that was *Goblet of Fire*," and this would have been like, "Oh, just make something up."

**JC:** Yeah, yeah. "Just make something up." Exactly.

**Lorrie:** Oh!

**JC:** Okay, here's a question that I have.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Voldemort tells us about the faithful Death Eater who did all these things behind the scenes. Harry is not capable of thinking about it right now because it's just --

**Lorrie:** No.

**JC:** But if he could, I wonder if he would have any guess as to who it is. He doesn't have the brain space to even, as Voldemort's saying it, think, 'Who could this be?' But I wonder, if he did, who it would be, who he would guess. I don't know if he --

**Lorrie:** Well, I as the reader couldn't figure it out.

**JC:** Yeah. I don't think he would have any guess, because I don't think that he thinks it's Snape at this point. I think that he trusts Dumbledore.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. There's nothing like that. Yeah.

**JC:** Yeah. He trusts Dumbledore at this point, but if not Snape, then who? Does he think it's Karkaroff? Who does he think it is? Anyway...

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Yeah, no, this story is galloping along.

**JC:** Yeah. We don't have time to think about it either, yes, as the reader. Oof.

**Lorrie:** And then Voldemort gets to make his dream come true. This is the big payoff. This is the thing he's wanted. He is going to finally release his anger at Harry. He first does *Crucio* on Harry to dominate him and make the Death Eaters laugh at him, but also he is punishing Harry for the pain that Harry made Voldemort feel by making Harry feel it too, the pain that he describes having felt the whole time that he was without a body. *Crucio* is as much pain as you can cause another person; it's like, "This is what you made me feel."

**JC:** Also, the fact that we learn from fake Moody early on that you have to have a lot of intent.

**Lorrie:** Oh...

**JC:** It's proportional to how pissed off you are, how much it'd take to hurt someone. This is like... it's got to be really bad.

**Lorrie:** "This is how you make me feel." Yeah. Then Voldemort says, "I will give him his chance. He will be allowed to fight, and you will be left in no doubt which of us is the stronger."

**JC:** going to backfire on you there, Voldemort, but...

**Lorrie:** But he's laying out his fantasy. His whole life, he has wanted someone worth fighting, someone he can rail against for the pain that he has felt, someone he can push back against and can give him something back, someone he cannot dominate as easily as he dominates his Death Eaters and everybody else. This is a big treat for him.

**JC:** Yeah. There's another moment here where he's torturing Harry and the Death Eaters are laughing, and I'm brought back again to this question of what's really going on in their heads. Many of the people in that circle have children the same age as Harry. This cannot look funny to them. They're laughing because what else are you going to do...

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** But to look there and think, 'That kid has been in my kid's classes. Yeah, that kid, I hate that kid, that kid's annoying, but that's a child and I have a child that age.' How can you as a parent not think 'that could be my child being tortured here'? I wonder what's going on in their heads.

**Lorrie:** Well, what happens in the head of somebody who is a parent who is in favor of legislation to cause suffering to other people's children?

**JC:** Oh, like many people in our country are today. Yeah.

**Lorrie:** "There should be no free school lunches; let those children starve. There should be school lunch debt."

**JC:** Right.

**Lorrie:** "My child is getting whatever they need, but other people's children... They should go hungry and they should learn."

**JC:** Yeah, like somehow they're going to learn that their parents failed them, or I don't know. What are we going to learn from that? Yeah.

**Lorrie:** And if that legislation passes, then they look satisfied. Something has caused them to feel fulfilled if they get to take away free lunches. I don't know.

**JC:** Okay, but that's theoretical, right? That's theoretical kids. That's not you standing at the cafeteria and watching children get turned away from food, right? Those are two different things. Would that person who voted for that, who then goes and volunteers in elementary school and watches a child who's in their kid's class walk up and get turned away, say, "No, sorry, no food for you. You don't have any money to pay"? Would they still feel that way looking at the actual child?

**Lorrie:** I can only say that if you are asking that question, bless you.

**JC:** Because I can't wrap my head around that kind of cruelty. I can't. I know it exists.

**Lorrie:** My friend, the Hufflepuff?

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** You think other people are as tenderhearted as you?

**JC:** Or that there's a seed of it in there somewhere.

**Lorrie:** Or that deep down... See, this is a problem with you Hufflepuffs!

**JC:** Deep down, that's it. Deep down, I really think --

**Lorrie:** The problem with Hufflepuffs is that deep down, you think we're all the same in a good way, and that thinking may result in not adequately protecting people from some actual evil out there.

**JC:** Yeah. No, that's true.

**Lorrie:** Says the Ravenclaw with her head in her hands.

**JC:** Yeah. But yeah, I can't because at the end of the day, it's the Anne Frank quote that will always stick with me. Anne Frank died, right, but deep down, how do I face the world if I don't believe that deep down, there's some humanity and empathy?

**Lorrie:** You have to do both and you have to disconnect them. You have to know that anyone, absolutely anyone -- including Voldemort -- is capable of finding that empathy, even if it's the last thing they ever do, and you have to separate that from your alertness about protecting people from evil. You can't risk the safety of people dependent on bad actors finding their humanity just in time.

**JC:** For sure, yeah. But I guess what I'm talking about here, going back to these Death Eaters, is are any of them experiencing that conflict? Is my question.

**Lorrie:** I think it's inevitable that they have these --

**JC:** Not that they're going to do anything about it.

**Lorrie:** No, but they're tormented. Well, Remus Lupin! Remus Lupin is the embodiment of laughing while you're watching somebody being tortured while inside kicking yourself, knowing that you have empathy that you're not doing a darn thing about. That's what Voldemort is stuck with with these subpar followers. He knows that they all have this conflict in them; that's why he can gather them and say, "I smell guilt," and then just wait for them to do it to themselves because they know darn well that they are not strong of mind. They do have doubts. They can overcome those doubts by feeding the parts of them that get off on watching other people suffer and killing their empathy. That makes them better Death Eaters; that destabilizes their souls. This is a human process that happens anytime you have to watch other people suffer and possibly contribute toward it. It's... Anyway, yeah, no, he knows perfectly well that complicit laughter at the suffering of others results in feelings in his followers that he can exploit however he wants, whenever he wants, but that's inevitable. Making people witness and be complicit in this sort of thing has consequences that Voldemort is happy to count on, happy to manipulate later. It's fail-safe. I'm going to change to an equally cheerful topic. In 2012, someone named Karl Smallwood on Cracked.com wrote this theory that deservedly went viral. According to Karl Smallwood's theory, everything in the Harry Potter series -- Hogwarts and magic and Voldemort -- are fantasies that a child in a cupboard under the stairs constructed to help him cope with his abusive home life, that Harry Potter is always living in the cupboard and he's making up these stories. Many people, including me, loved this theory; it's depressingly plausible. The theory that I believe in is reversed and speaks to me even more: I imagine that this entire series is being imagined by Tom Riddle, an orphan in an orphanage who is a brilliant and violent and lonely child, and that he's fantasizing that somewhere in the world there is a little kid like himself who has spent the exact same time suffering and can understand him, and if he finds this kid, this kid can give him some answers, put some limits on his pain, maybe help him heal. Voldemort has spent his entire life hurting and killing anyone he wants with no repercussions. Isn't there anything in the world more powerful than he is that can help him limit his pain or at least give his pain some meaning? Maybe if he hurts enough people so they feel what he feels, one of them will turn out to have some insight. This boy, maybe he knows something... It's a good bet for Voldemort to make this boy suffer, because if Harry Potter turns out to be just as disappointing as everybody else, you can just kill him. But maybe there's something there, and if there is, then Voldemort will never rest until he learns what it is. That's my theory about why Voldemort and Harry suffered this pain during all the same times and, as you very insightfully pointed out, that Harry was suffering with no letters from Hermione and Ron at the beginning of *Chamber of Secrets* at the exact same time that Voldemort was like, 'I can't believe I'm back in the forest with no body. This hurts even more than it did before.' This is Voldemort's fantasy. This is why he'll never leave this poor kid alone.

**JC:** It's interesting to me, too, that instead of just killing Harry at this point, I get the sense that he doesn't actually want to just kill Harry, right? He wants to see what Harry can do. 'This kid's got to have something, right? There's got to be more power here,' so he sets up this... "Okay, give him his wand and we're going to duel to the death." It's all very dramatic, but also he's giving Harry the death he thinks Harry deserves, right? This kid has meant something to him in some twisted way. He's not just going to kill him like he did Cedric. No, this is going to be a grand duel, "You'll all remember where you were" kind of a thing. That says a lot, too, about the value -- the respect, in some sense -- that Voldemort has for Harry, which is wild because Harry's fourteen.

**Lorrie:** It's hope. So this gets me to the point: Why couldn't Voldemort kill Harry? What happens when you cast *Avada Kedavra* and you don't really mean it?

**JC:** It just bounces off, right? But Moody -- fake Moody -- says early on, "You could cast it at me now and I don't know if I'd even get a scratch," right? You have to really mean it.

**Lorrie:** Voldemort has never failed to kill somebody with *Avada Kedavra* except this kid. Is it something about the kid? No. No. If Voldemort were a little more introspective, he would come up with the answer, but it's funny how you can't be introspective when you've put pieces of your soul into different compartments that can't communicate with each other anymore. He will never, ever, ever be able to figure this out.

**JC:** And I guess we're at the end of the chapter, and of course, this is another one that's arbitrary chapter breaks where you just want to keep turning the page. 'Okay, now what?'

**Lorrie:** The next chapter is called *Priori Incantatem*.

**JC:** Oooh, I'm going to cry.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** I'm going to cry. It's coming.

**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.