



Transcript

Episode 6.20

Book 6, Chapter 20: Lord Voldemort's Request

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 Six, Chapter Twenty: Lord Voldemort's Request.

Lorrie: Lord Voldemort's Request. Dumbledore shows Harry a memory of young Voldemort encountering Hufflepuff's cup and Slytherin's locket and another memory of young Voldemort asking Dumbledore for a job. This is going to be a huge chapter for me. I don't know about you. I don't know how you encountered it.

JC: We're in the era of 'I don't remember any of this from my first read,' so it was all a surprise. It was like I was reading it for the first time.

Lorrie: What did you think generally?

JC: Yeah, I forgot that Voldemort came and asked Dumbledore for a job, totally. Well, because I kept thinking, 'What is the request? What's this going to be?' and it was like, *gasps* 'Ooh, okay.'

Lorrie: Job interview.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: So the chapter starts with a simple walk. Ron and Harry are released from the hospital wing and they just walk down to breakfast. During that walk, several big things happened before they even get to breakfast.

JC: Oh, my gosh, yes. I love that it opens with, from Harry's perspective, that one of the benefits of having been knocked out and poisoned is that now Hermione is going to be friends with Ron again.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: It was all worth it!

Lorrie: Oh, so that happened...

Hosts: Yeah.

Lorrie: Then she brings the news that Ginny and Dean are arguing *GASPS* and then we get one of the brilliant themes of this chapter set forth right here: "The drowsing creature in Harry's chest suddenly raised its head, sniffing the air hopefully." This is the infamous Chest Monster that Harry has. I just love how this whole volume and this chapter in particular have such nuanced parallels and layers, because now the characters (and, by extension, we the readers) have been through so much and have matured enough so that we can start making leaps of empathy from our own feelings, even to people that we don't love at all. Harry's attraction to Ginny -- which is super healthy and is competitive in a way that's super healthy -- is still not a safe thing. Desire isn't safe by nature, even at its most nurtured and sane. That's at one end of the spectrum, and this is something that we have to keep in mind when we see the other end of the spectrum in this chapter of what happens when Voldemort covets; It's the same thing (having been through trauma after trauma) in an intense person at its most extreme, but even at its best, most supported, it's not a safe thing. It's still a monster.

JC: Ooh, very interesting.

Lorrie: So Ginny's fighting with Dean, yeah. Whoo!

JC: I do love that Hermione picks up on it instantly.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Harry's like, "Ooh, what are they fighting about? What's going on? Do you think they're going to break up?" and Hermione's like, "Why are you so interested?" "Oh, no, no reason. I'm just curious." That whole little bit was really fun. I really enjoyed that.

Lorrie: "Why, Hermione? Why are you so sensitive to this? Hmm..." Yeah. Meanwhile, they walk past another small girl who sees them and is scared and drops some heavy brass scales; Hermione's touchingly so kind and says, "Oh, no, no. Here, I'll fix it," and the little girl doesn't say thank you. Hmmmm.... Then they get intercepted by Luna.

JC: Can we get back to the scales real quick? I think this is where it all clicked for me, because I was like, 'Oh, that's what Draco Malfoy was doing walking down the hall with these younger girls. Yeah, okay.' With the tapestry of the trolls with tutus, all that, I was like, 'Oh, I know what's happening here. Now I remember.'

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: Yeah, this is the warning signal that someone has come by. 'Don't come out of the Room of Requirement.' Yeah.

Lorrie: And it's so understandable that Hermione has so much on her mind; all of them have so much on their minds that they just walk right by. If they had nothing on their minds, they would have picked up on it, but no, they've got things to do.

JC: They do, but also this was really smart by Draco. That is a really smart thing.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Having this younger student who could play the part, and she probably is scared.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This older Slytherin, who's clearly powerful and scary and probably a Death Eater from her perspective, right? She's definitely scared, so she's easy to play the part pretty well. She sells it exactly like Draco wanted her to. It doesn't look suspicious. It's really clever on his part.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I'm like, 'Props to Draco!'

Lorrie: And the people that the girl is nervous about are the superstars of the school, so yeah, she would look intimidated. It's just sad, and Hermione is so nice and the niceness is so wasted. But yeah, Luna has tracked them down because she went to the hospital wing to deliver this invitation from Dumbledore, but they weren't there. Then we get this spectacular scene of Luna depositing the contents of her purse into Ron's arms for a moment. Yay!

JC: One of the things was cat litter. Look, I have cats. Cat litter? Loose cat litter? Was it a bag of it? Was it contained in some way, or did she literally just pour a handful of cat litter into his hands? I'm not sure, but I was really stuck on that visual for a moment.

Lorrie: I think what we're supposed to take from it is that it wasn't cat litter. It's just that the narrative calls it that because we don't even know what it is. It kind of looks like cat litter...

JC: Okay.

Lorrie: But she has what looks like a green onion and it turns out not to be, just like her radish earrings turn out not to be radishes; they're dirigible plums, so who knows what the cat litter is.

JC: If anyone is going to grow up to be a cat lady, though, I think it's Luna, for reals. I totally see it.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And she'll talk to them all and yeah, have eight familiars. Oh, my God!

Lorrie: I love her.

JC: Yes.

Lorrie: I do like that we get the continuation of the alliaceous theme with Luna. Whatever the Gurdyroot is, it's definitely from the onion family.

JC: I love, love, love Ron in this scene, because Luna's dumped all this crazy, weird stuff into his hands and he's just sitting there, grinning. He compliments her on her commentary of the match...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And the first thing she thinks is, "Oh, you're making fun of me. Everybody else is making fun of me," and he's like, "No."

Lorrie: "I'm actually not." Yeah.

JC: "That was the best commentary I've heard in a long time from a Quidditch game," and she's genuinely like, "Oh," but he means it.

Lorrie: Yeah, he does.

JC: Oh, my gosh, how great for Luna that she has people who get her, right?

Lorrie: Yeah. It took him a while, but he finally gets it, and that's a rare pair that I really like. I've read Luna/Ron fanfics that pick up on that moment; he doesn't understand why he gets her, but he does.

JC: It's just great. I love that for Luna, and also it says a lot about Ron. Ron was this kid who, for a long time, seemed like he was really doing that teenage thing of being really concerned what other people thought of him.

Lorrie: Yeah, conformist.

JC: Yeah, very conformist. He thought Luna was weird and he said she was weird an awful lot, so this moment when he's like, "You know, she's really growing on me. I like her," and that's a big jump in maturity for Ron there. I can see when teenagers hit that; I remember myself when I hit that as a teenager. There's this moment where it's like, 'Oh, actually, I don't give a shit what other people think. This is so great. I like this person, or I like this thing and it's weird. And you know what? I don't care. It makes me happy.' Yeah, there's this jump in maturity, and the next thing that I kind of thought after that was, 'Oh, Hermione is going to notice, and that's going to make Ron a lot more attractive to Hermione.' It's like, 'Oh, wait, he's...' Yeah.

Lorrie: Look at Ron hitting his developmental milestone...

JC: Yes, exactly.

Lorrie: And of course, with greater maturity comes an inability to tolerate the doomed romance with Lavender -- oh, God -- who is quite justifiably furious that he hasn't told her at all that he's being released from the hospital wing. Oh, geez...

JC: Has he even spoken to her since...

Lorrie: We don't know.

JC: Since he got poisoned? We don't know, yeah. He's pretended to be asleep every time she came by.

Lorrie: Yeah. Has she come back and he's given up and been awake? We don't know, but whatever conversation they have here, they spend the whole rest of breakfast sitting next to each other and not talking, which is so old married couple vibes.

JC: Oh, man, and I love that Harry noticed that Hermione just seems to be smirking through breakfast, like she's... Yeah.

Lorrie: She's so happy, she even starts doing Harry's homework for him again.

JC: Which is just amazing, so I wonder what's happening. Hermione has clearly been jealous this whole time, jealous and pissed off that this is what Ron... 'Really, Ron, this is what you wanted? You could have a relationship of substance, and instead this is what you chose?' He's kind of been a dick about it, too, let's be real, but her smirking didn't strike me as she's happy that he's miserable so much as she sees that this is on its way out, that this is over. She's seeing it and she's just like, 'I just have to be patient, and everything will go back to normal.'

Lorrie: Eventually, Lavender will Lavender and Ron will Ron. Let's just see it happen, but that's been her journey this year: the difficulty of sitting by and doing nothing. She wants it so much, it's causing her so much misery, but you can't make people want you back, and that is definitely set against the whole love potion plot line.

JC: Right, and we also have that in Harry and Ginny.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Harry's been quietly jealous of everybody Ginny's dating for a long time now, but he's just waiting.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He's not even going to tell Ginny how he feels.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He's just waiting, sitting by and doing nothing but just continuing to be a good friend to her, which hello!

Lorrie: And it hurts, yeah.

JC: But it's also very mature.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I don't know. Obviously, there are examples of toxic relationships in these books, but that's setting them up for a really good relationship because it's starting them on a place of respect.

Lorrie: Yeah. Boundaries.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Wow, it really makes you understand what Merope was going through that she might as well give this guy a love potion; nothing better is going to happen to her ever, but it's heartbreaking. So Lavender is miserable, Hermione's happy...

JC: And then Lavender when she was dragging Ron away, "What was she doing there?" or something like that...

Lorrie: Oh, yeah... Harry eventually gets to Dumbledore's office and Trelawney bursts out of the room!

JC: "This is why I'm being thrown out?!" Yeah.

Lorrie: Demanding that someone else be fired because she's offended, and having just seen Harry wonder why on earth Cormac McLaggen is in his face, you can really see Harry get a more mature picture of what Dumbledore's life is like. The Wizarding world is on the brink, but no, she has to fling her scarves in his face and have a diva moment. In the previous chapter, we had seen Harry wonder, 'Maybe Dumbledore doesn't talk to me about... Because I'm a student, he doesn't want to confide problems with his staff in a student.' We see here, 'Well, no, no, no, that

wasn't it,' because Dumbledore says straight up to Harry about Trelawney:
"Between ourselves, she has no idea of the danger she would be in outside the castle. She does not know -- and I think it would be unwise to enlighten her -- that she made the prophecy about you and Voldemort..." There's no boundary here.

JC: I really liked that, too, and that showed me that Dumbledore has obviously brought Harry into his confidence for a variety of reasons, but this to me was the last barrier. Okay, he's treating Harry like an adult now and like a colleague in some ways...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Because you don't tell students...

Lorrie: No.

JC: I don't tell my undergrads gossip about my colleagues. No, you don't do that, and he's doing that here. He's not asking for advice, but he's just short of it, just saying, "This is a problem I have right now, and it's making me... Ugh, it's like a thorn in my side." That really stood out to me as a teacher, thinking, 'Wow, under what circumstances would I talk to a student like that?' Maybe a grad student who was about to be finished and to start helping them understand the politics of how colleagues work together. It would be more at that point, so it really felt like Dumbledore's his advisor and Harry's starting to write the dissertation; now is the time to start bringing him into the culture of academia or something like that.

Lorrie: Well, her case in particular is relevant to Harry because Dumbledore can't tell most of his colleagues why it's so important to protect her and keep her within Hogwarts, and he knows that he's not going to live for much longer. Harry is one of the few people he can tell because the need to protect Trelawney is going to outlive Dumbledore.

JC: Yes, that's true. That is true. So yeah, again, I'm going back to my advisor/grad student feeling.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's like, "Here's the things that you need to know when I'm not around." Well, he's not saying, "When I'm not around," but he knows that that's true.

Lorrie: They all know.

Hosts: Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, no, it's professional training.

JC: Yeah, so it was really great to see that because it's like... Okay, I don't know if Harry understands it in this scene, but Dumbledore's really brought Harry into his confidence here in a way that we haven't seen before.

Lorrie: And it's also always refreshing when adults stop forcing kids to pretend that the teachers are completely functional and mature at all times.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: We saw that at the beginning of this volume, when Harry is allowed to see Dumbledore and Slughorn rolling their eyes at Dolores Umbridge.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: "Are we going to pretend that she was okay? No, we're not." Having been thus promoted steadily, Harry then reaches one of the worst moments of his entire life.

JC: With the good comes the bad when you're brought into someone's confidence in this way.

Lorrie: Harry has dreadfully disappointed Dumbledore for real on a matter of utmost importance. Oh... How did you survive Harry's shame when he realized that Dumbledore gave him one job to get the memory from Slughorn and Harry completely forgot to do it?

JC: Yeah, I really felt the weight of that disappointment as well.

Lorrie: Oh, my God.

JC: I don't know how long it's been since Dumbledore gave him this job -- and I'm also not sure how long it's been since Harry tried to get the memory from Slughorn and failed completely, so I don't have a sense of how much time has passed -- but to be fair, Harry's had a lot going on the last week, for sure.

Lorrie: Yes, he has.

JC: But yeah, there was a time before that, too, but I like that Dumbledore just lets it sit quietly.

Lorrie: Oh, my God, the agony...

JC: And the funny thing is that as a parent -- you know this, too -- and also as a teacher, just sitting and waiting...

Lorrie: It's the worst!

JC: Is often the one way to get the person that you're trying to get to acknowledge their wrongdoing or whatever to think. You're just waiting, just expecting them to do some thinking and wait until they speak. Yeah.

Lorrie: You have to be prepared for the enormity of their squirming. It's not a power to be used lightly. Oh, ho, ho, ho... Dumbledore sits and Harry squirms, and it's the worst. AAAHHHH!

JC: I was admiring Dumbledore, to be honest. Being the parent of a now adult and having gone through all the years of dealing with all the kid stuff, and then having been a teacher for my entire life, I felt the weight of it from Harry's perspective, but what overshadowed it was my admiration for how good Dumbledore was at it. I was like, 'Damn... Damn.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah, that was good.

Lorrie: And part of the reason why Harry forgot -- he had the legitimate reasons of seriously having a lot on his plate, but part of it was he was obsessed with Draco, and that's something that Dumbledore is actively trying to teach him because, certainly, that ruins Dumbledore's life, too. When you have a duty, of course, it's a difficult and scary one, but you let your obsession crowd out the duty, and the obsession is related to the duty and how you're scared of it. When you have something that huge going on, then the obsession is partly like, 'Well, what if I tried this other thing? That might make things easier.' So yeah, Harry's been thinking about Draco, Draco, Draco, and he's forgotten about this. He also is, aside from being the Chosen One and having the unusual weight, simply having that developmental thing that I remember with remaining, unmitigated shame from that age, being immature at sixteen: not really believing. Dumbledore did explain to

him how important this was and Harry heard the words and nodded, but he didn't really believe it. I remember that from that age.

JC: Another thing that's interesting here, too, to me, is that Dumbledore knows what's going on with Draco.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He is putting things in motion so it will play out in the way that he wants it to, and we know that having read the book before. The first time through, [we] didn't know any of that because we're more in Harry's perspective; Harry doesn't know that, and again, we're in a situation where Dumbledore really can't tell Harry that. Harry is (in the way that you just said) not completely trusting that Dumbledore is aware of what's happening with Draco and feels the adults are just ignoring this very important thing, so if the adults are ignoring it, Harry's experience in the past has been, 'Well, maybe I should just go and take care of it.' That doesn't always work out well for Harry, but sometimes it does.

Lorrie: Sometimes he does need to.

JC: Yeah, so that same dynamic is playing out one more time here.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Having read the book now, I don't know how Dumbledore should handle it. I'm often, in hindsight, critical of the choices that Dumbledore made, but I don't know what he should do here, because if he says, "I know what's going on with Draco and I want you to trust me to handle it," I don't know how Harry would respond to that.

Lorrie: And how safe it would be, and how much it would endanger everything. Dumbledore also is not fully in control of what's happening with Draco.

JC: He's not in control, for sure.

Lorrie: He doesn't know how it's going to play out. He doesn't control what happens. Some of it is way worse than what Dumbledore would have wished. Yeah.

JC: I guess he's relying on Snape to help Draco, right? That's kind of where he's at.

Lorrie: He's hoping.

Hosts: Yeah.

JC: He's pressuring Snape to do something; at the same time, he's pressuring Harry to do something, and neither of them are making much progress on the thing he's pressuring them to do.

Lorrie: With Dumbledore not interfering with Draco, that's similar to Hermione holding back with forcing Ron. You can't force it; if you force it, you'll make it worse.

JC: Yeah. That's that theme, then, of sitting back and being patient. Yeah. It's popping up in a lot of places.

Lorrie: Yeah. Doing what it takes to force yourself to not act, which is so difficult, and we will see later that there will be some things about this where Dumbledore would have been really better off if he had listened to Harry.

JC: Oh, yeah. Okay, that makes sense.

Lorrie: If he had listened to Harry, then there could have been some serious damage prevented.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: But you don't know. Before it happens, you don't know which path is going to be the right one but the least harmful one.

JC: Yeah, for sure.

Lorrie: He's not that far ahead, Dumbledore.

JC: Interesting, okay.

Lorrie: And at this point, he genuinely, desperately needs Harry's help. So yeah, Dumbledore is now wading in to Harry's guilt here and saying, "Yeah, of course when Ron got poisoned, you couldn't think of anything else." Harry did say that he didn't entirely forget; he had hoped to make a second attempt with Slughorn when he took Ron to Slughorn's office to get the antidote to the love potion, and then Dumbledore says, "Yeah, then he got poisoned -- [which] naturally, made you forget all about trying to retrieve the memory; I would have expected nothing else,

while your best friend was in danger." That was the first time I realized, 'Oh, Harry is part of the club.' There is Lupin forgetting to drink the potion at the climactic moment of *Prisoner of Azkaban* so that he has to be fired from Hogwarts because then he transforms in front of school children. Why did he forget? He saw something that was so urgent, so emotional that, as a human, he had to respond and forgot everything else he prioritized, not voluntarily. Then we see Snape doing the same thing when he had to go tend to Montague, and he left his memories unattended in the Pensieve, nearly destroying the entire resistance because Harry then accessed those memories. And then Sirius, too, who was under complete orders from Dumbledore, "Do not leave Grimmauld Place. Do not delegate to Kreacher," and then he finds out that his kid is walking into the trap, and he rushes off and gets killed. Each of those times, they absolutely should not have done that - look at the disaster that happened -- but no, there is something. It's our strength, and also there's nothing we can do about it anyway, this human need to rush off when the one thing that we care about is at risk. Harry's had training in this; the whole second task of the Triwizard Tournament was about this. How do you handle when the thing that you care about most is in mortal danger? It's a good thing he handled Ron being poisoned, but yeah, it did make him forget about this other thing. And then the lecture comes. Oh, the unbearable lecture: "I thought I made it clear to you how very important that memory is. Indeed, I did my best to impress upon you that it is the most crucial memory of all and that we will be wasting our time without it." Oh, God... I didn't even do anything, and I feel guilty! "A hot, prickly feeling of shame spread from the top of Harry's head all the way down his body." After ages and ages and ages of silence and Dumbledore sitting there, Harry finally realizes that the thing to do is to apologize; it's the most genuine apology ever. Character growth... Wow! Harry matures so much in those few miserable moments. This is the person who used to (recently) be a kid who would break rules; he would sneak around Hogsmeade in his Invisibility Cloak, he tailed Draco in Knockturn Alley just a few months earlier... Okay, he's finally seeing the consequences. All right. Just in case, Dumbledore does say, summing up, "There will be little point in our meeting after tonight unless we have that memory." Oh, that's how it is... Like you were saying, treated as an adult, are we? Okay. Dumbledore says, "All right, let's continue where we left off," and Harry, with enormous relief, dives right into it, eager to show that he's on the ball, and then he

says, "Oh, yeah, and then we got to the point where Professor Slughorn gets asked about Horcruxes." So yes, the last time Harry thought about that, he was a child; now, he's returning to that as an adult. Okay. 'Now can we begin our lesson, Harry Potter?' Dumbledore says, "Now, you will remember, I hope, that I told you at the very outset of these meetings of ours that we would be entering the realms of guesswork and speculation?" This is the point at which we start to see why Dumbledore needs to team up with Harry as more of an equal. Each of them can understand things about Voldemort that the other person can't, and from this point, sometimes Harry will be right about Voldemort in areas where Dumbledore is wrong, which Dumbledore knew and foresaw. Then Dumbledore says he's going to share two memories: "I shall then be glad of your opinion as to whether the conclusions I have drawn from them seem likely." Wow, is this real? He's not just being polite? Yeah, it's going to turn out that it's real, and of course, this just makes Harry feel more ashamed of himself.

JC: Aaaww...

Lorrie: So Dumbledore explains as a preface that Tom Riddle graduated, of course, with top honors in everything; he was Head Boy.

JC: I love that when Dumbledore talks, "Okay, now, here's what happened when Voldemort left Hogwarts," but he starts by saying everyone had these incredible expectations for him because he was a prefect, he was Head Boy, and the winner of the Special Award to Services for the School, all the top honors that you can get at Hogwarts. The idea that Voldemort was Head Boy...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Wow. I forget that detail and that's incredible.

Even though Dumbledore was suspicious of him the entire time, Tom Riddle managed to charm everyone.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That's amazing.

Lorrie: He's a genius with anti-social personality disorder. The imposter syndrome went deep, deep, deep; all of his supporters try to get him jobs at the Ministry or other really high up things that were natural for somebody on this trajectory, and he

refused all of them. That made me think, 'Wait, what does this remind me of?' Oh, God, it's so awful: it reminds me of foster kids aging out of the system once they turn eighteen. You give fairly standard, not fully adequate support to somebody who's in great need of support until a certain age, and then the next day it all drops. How are they going to get the support that they need to transition into adulthood when even super supported kids from very loving backgrounds need a lot of help? I thought, 'I see. Oh, wow, I see what's happening here.' When you offer a high school senior contacts to go to a post-high school job, you're assuming that this young adult has support from home or other networks to take care of the rest of the emotional and social transition; you're just offering the job part of it. All of the things that you assume the eighteen-year-old has, Tom Riddle had none of. Hogwarts was his support, and then one day he would graduate and he would be expected to make his own way into adulthood with all of his support suddenly stripped away. Oh... And then thinking that made me wonder, 'When did he stop having to go back to the orphanage for school holidays?' Now, presumably as soon as he turned seventeen, Hogwarts would not have required it of him, but he wouldn't have had the income to rent a flat, so probably whatever job he got would be his first time having his own flat.

JC: True, yeah.

Lorrie: And then I was super excited for him. What an incredible moment that must have been for this orphan to have the keys to his own flat, his own little bachelor pad in Hogsmeade.

JC: Voldemort's like... I don't know, there's just something like the Mike Snow video, *Genghis Khan*, where the evil mastermind goes home at the end of the day. The Bond villain goes home and has a normal house.

Lorrie: It probably was a very small room, right? He didn't have much income, but he's never going back to the orphanage again.

JC: Right. I haven't thought about any of this. I guess it's really easy just to not think of Voldemort as being a person because he's so inhuman most of the time that we see him in the books, but that idea that he really was just this kid at that point -- a kid who had already created a Horcrux, I think -- but he was just this kid who had nothing.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: So yeah, what would you really do? You'd go get a job, and he gets a job at Borgin and Burke's, which it sounds like he was very well suited for.

Lorrie: I know, yeah.

JC: But yeah, 'what else was he going to do?' is a question I hadn't really thought about before.

Lorrie: This is something that Dumbledore could not have understood truly about Voldemort and Harry could understand truly about Voldemort: how desperate it must have felt for him to feel like Hogwarts was kicking him out. Dumbledore explains that Borgin and Burke's was Voldemort's second choice for a job, and the first one was he went and asked Professor Dippet if he could stay at Hogwarts as a teacher -- this little eighteen-year-old twerp, right? He did everything that a little eighteen-year-old possibly could to check every box on the resume (if eighteen-year-olds could be hired as teachers) because he didn't want to be kicked out. It's not that he didn't have places to go; he didn't have people or love or support or anything, and Harry would understand that. Dumbledore really needs Harry's perspective here, and when Dumbledore says that Voldemort was more attached to Hogwarts than he ever was to a person ("the first and only place he felt at home"), yeah, Harry gets it: 'I feel the same.' Dumbledore then, rather clinically, goes on to say, "The castle is a stronghold of ancient magic..." -- of course, Voldemort had cracked some of it, but he probably felt that there was a lot more -- and it's so clinical compared to the feelings part of it that Harry would know, and that we can think about where one of the secrets of Hogwarts that Voldemort had uncovered was the Chamber of Secrets, which is his bloodline; he probably thought it was his birthright. He, as a teenager, had learned to command the basilisk. This place that the other three founders couldn't access, this place that Hogwarts pretended didn't exist... "Stronghold of ancient magic" makes it sound clinical, but this is so personal.

JC: Dumbledore said that he was worried that he'd already seen Voldemort/Tom Riddle start collecting people to him, and he [was] really worried that he was going to take what he had learned from Slughorn about how to collect people to you and use that to collect even more followers.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He could see that happening, which yeah, that's what Voldemort would have done, for sure.

Hosts: Yep. Yeah.

JC: Very interesting that even then, Dumbledore never really trusted him and always kept an eye on him...

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: And he was right. He was right to.

Lorrie: He was doing that, yes, and saying that's what he would have wanted from being a teacher: this power, influence, and access. Then he says, "I do not imagine for an instant that Voldemort envisaged spending the rest of his life at Hogwarts..." and I thought, 'Is that right, though, or is Dumbledore wrong about this?' First of all, Dumbledore has spent the rest of his life at Hogwarts, and I think Harry might be more able than Dumbledore to imagine, 'No, maybe Voldemort would,' because as we'll see in the next volume, he does keep coming home to Hogwarts and it is much more of a home in Voldemort's mind than Riddle Manor or Malfoy Manor that he's taken over. Not only does he not have a place that's truly his own, but the depth of his claim to Hogwarts is undeniable, so yeah, Dumbledore's understanding of this is much more clinical and Harry's is much more personal, and Harry's always a little bit embarrassed at how he feels this way about Hogwarts. Well, other people have another home to go to... Eighteen-year-old Tom Riddle asked for a job and Dippet does not entirely reject him; he defers him. He says, "Try again in a few years. You're too young," even though Dumbledore is hissing in his ear the whole time, "No, no, no, no, no, no. Never, never, never."

JC: I do love that Voldemort gets the same thing that a lot of young people get, which is, "Well, we're really looking for someone with more experience," which is funny, and he goes out and becomes this evil overlord as a result. Yeah.

Lorrie: And of course, the job he wanted was Defense Against the Dark Arts, and he was correct that he had stuff to offer in that field. He probably thought that the old Professor retiring was a sign. 'Ah, yes, the universe is making a space for me,

for my greatness, and if it weren't for this meddlesome old fool, my plan would work.'

JC: 'Curse you, Dumbledore!'

Lorrie: Yes, exactly. So he does his sideways move to work in acquisitions at Borgin and Burkes, an ideal job for him.

JC: Really... Okay, let's just assume that he's thinking, 'Okay, I want to be Professor of Defense Against the Dark Arts. What should I do? I know. I'll go work at a Dark Arts emporium.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: 'That'll get me the experience I need.' It's really, actually, a smart career choice.

Lorrie: It's so good.

JC: It's really thoughtful, yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's what the career counselor at Hogwarts would have advised, honestly, I think.

Lorrie: Well, if the career counselor had had the imagination to, because we very much get the sense that everyone had ideas for Voldemort and he just ignored all of them and he knew better. He didn't... There's a figure skater named Yuzuru Hanyu who, at some point, became so great that he was essentially uncoachable; he had coaches, but they wouldn't necessarily succeed in telling him what to do and he would have plans, and he was doing things that no one had ever done before, so who was going to tell him that he was wrong? Anyway, Voldemort is uncoachable at this point and is, of course, completely correct. This is a great job for him, and he is an extremely poor person set out to deal with the extremely wealthy, using whatever he was born with as his skills. Oof...

JC: I love that his job was to convince people to part with their treasures on behalf of Borgin and Burkes and that he was very good at it, and Harry's first response is, "I bet he was." It's everything that Harry knows about Voldemort, but also what he's learned through the other lessons with Dumbledore here looking at other

memories. Yeah, that is something we know: Voldemort is very good at making people do things that he wants them to do.

Lorrie: Yeah, and they don't normally encounter somebody as dazzling as him. Normal people don't usually meet somebody this well-spoken, this powerful, this persuasive... We meet Hokey the house-elf and Hepzibah Smith (who is obviously related to Zacharias Smith), and we get this unwelcome return to J.K. Rowling's fat-shaming.

JC: Yes.

Lorrie: Oh, no, not again!

JC: Yes. That really stood out to me. Really? Really?! Do we have to go there?

Lorrie: We understand that she's gluttonous, we understand that she's self-deluding and all that. No, yes, we have to sit through her being described as "immensely fat" and "fleshy." Okay, okay, okay... Ugh.

JC: Yeah. Every description of her is unpleasant, and... yeah. Okay. Great, great. Thanks for the reminder, J.K. Thanks.

Lorrie: Yeah, and it actually made me worried as I read it. Is this how people are going to see me when I'm an old lady? Is this the hatred that's going to be leveled toward me? 'Oh, look how delusional she is. How vain and self-flattering...' Ugh. It was not a pleasant feeling to read.

JC: Yeah, and surrounded by all of her treasures.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: She has a hobby. She has a shit ton of money, she's spending it collecting things that are interesting to her. People do this, right? Okay, we do have the impression she's a hoarder. Okay, fine.

Lorrie: She's not entirely stupid, either; the way she talks about how her family's scheming against her and how she's outwitted them is pretty funny.

JC: Yeah, and she's a Hufflepuff. Come on! I was feeling a little indignation on her behalf there from the author's description of her.

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah. Well, she's happy. She's doing what she loves...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: She has some power in her own queendom, and she has some bargaining chips to spend on this extraordinarily good-looking young man.

JC: Though it is interesting... I love the way, throughout this chapter, Voldemort's physical appearance keeps disintegrating.

Lorrie: Yeah. Yes.

JC: This is the first hint of it. We saw him as a handsome young man in Slughorn's altered memory, and here we're seeing him looking a little bit gaunt. He's starting to look like a vampire here; he's very pale and very gaunt, but still very handsome, and Hepzibah Smith is very interested in being charming.

Hosts: Yeah.

Lorrie: Actually, his brush with evil and this first step toward altering his appearance actually makes him hotter, which is the bad boy intrigue. When you go really deep into it, you realize, 'No, no, no, that's awful,' but the first hint of it is attractive. So yeah, here's Voldemort, clearly a heartthrob, and he is letting himself be exploited in a way that is similar to Harry at the beginning of this volume letting himself be collected by Slughorn. You know it's gross, there's something you want, you're going to let it happen.

JC: Oh, I hadn't thought about the fact that he's letting Hepzibah Smith collect him like she collects all of her other treasures. Oh, interesting.

Lorrie: Because there's something he wants.

JC: And he learned from Slughorn that if you let yourself be collected, you can get something from it.

Lorrie: Yeah. Some of it the person who's collecting you is aware of ("Oh, look at you?") and some of it they are not aware of. It's not an easy game, right? He kisses her hand and he brings her flowers, and it's almost like sex work. Then he has so much dignity: she is trying horrendously to flirt with him, and he says quietly that he's ordered to see her because of her treasures ("I am only a poor assistant, madam, who must do as he is told"), and that quiet modesty is so attractive. Wow.

JC: She's thinking 'I will adopt you' at this point.

Lorrie: Yeah. This has been building for a while because she totally plays her ace here. She's trying to separate him away from Burke and tells him that he's more special than her family because she's going to show him something that nobody else gets to see with her best treasures. She doesn't have anything more than this; this is her big card. "You'll appreciate it for its history," which is kind of hateful; it's a taunt. Then the most disgustingly suggestive, awful response from him: "I'd be glad to see anything Miss Hepzibah shows me." There's no insinuation there, and yet there is, and she shows him a cup and a locket. Oh, my God, this is like, 'Yes, we're going Freudian.' Yeah, that's what he's there to do. He's going to do it and she's super coy about showing him, and this is how we the reader get our first glimpse at -- oh, my God -- Hufflepuff's cup. Wow!

JC: And there it is.

Lorrie: I felt it! Yeah.

JC: Yeah, especially the second time around. 'Oh... Oh, shit, we're going to be hunting for that cup again.' Yeah.

Lorrie: Whoa, yeah. It's real.

JC: Also, this reminder that Harry had seen it... I had forgotten that, because when they go to the vault in the last book and they're looking for the cup, he knows what it looks like already. I think I'd forgotten that.

Lorrie: Yeah, no, it's the real thing -- it's very clearly the real thing -- and he gets the "red gleam," which is the author intentionally saying, 'Okay, that's his greed'; later, we're going to see that Ron gets that red gleam when a Horcrux possesses him briefly. It's about possession, but it's also a pun; it's about possessiveness. Not a pun, but it's a double play on possessiveness. This is the possessiveness that Voldemort feels that's desire, but more extreme, more twisted.

JC: That's also a thing that I do not have the same knowledge of literary canon that you do, but I feel like I see that "red gleam in your eyes" kind of thing appear in a lot of different kinds of stories around... It means evil and also greed, like you're saying, but also anger. That's another way that you can... Eyes flashing red for some reason.

Hosts: Yes, yeah.

Lorrie: "His greedy expression was curiously mirrored on Hepzibah's face, except that her tiny eyes were fixed upon Voldemort's handsome features." Ugh! So yeah, desire. This is desire, greed, possessiveness, all against this backdrop of Ron and Lavender and Hermione having feelings (and Harry and Ginny, but also Romilda Vane). Then buried underneath that, what is going on with Lily and James and Lily's skill in Potions and James wanting her and her not wanting him back, and what does the Half-Blood Prince have to do with any of this? That's the layering in this volume. Voldemort's desires here (we are, I think, pretty clearly shown) are not about sex or romance. Hepzibah Smith invites him to pick up the cup and touch it, and then she helps herself to his cheek? Ew! This is harassment! Then she says this infuriating thing, that she hasn't had its powers tested: "I just keep it nice and safe in here." Oh, he must so feel that she doesn't deserve this treasure.

JC: Ah, interesting. Yeah.

Lorrie: To do what with, you greedy old lady? Why should it just sit here doing nothing for you, when somebody who really knows what's to -- Anyway, here he is, biting his tongue; then it's time for her to pick it up and take the cup away from him, and then there's the shadow that crosses his face. This is a good reminder of how he must have felt also when he was denied the teaching position. 'It's a thing I want. It's a thing I crave. I covet it. Why are you taking it from me?' Oh, gosh...

JC: And (at least I had this sense there) in that moment, he's already planning her death. He's like, "Oh, I'll get that. I'll get that."

Lorrie: 'You don't even do anything with this!'

JC: Yeah, but he's like, 'I want it,' and he's already thinking, 'Hmm, okay.'

Lorrie: 'You are nothing! This is everything.'

JC: And then the next thing she shows him seals the fact that she's going to die, basically.

Lorrie: Oh, my God, and she has no clue, right? She's just like, 'Oh, he's so beautiful.' She doesn't notice any of the stuff going on in his feelings right now, and then she's like, "Ooh-hoo-hoo, now see the next thing." When she shows him the locket, this time he picks it up. She doesn't invite him to; he just picks it up and he looks at it, and he sees Slytherin's mark and he says so. She is delighted,

apparently, at the sight of Voldemort gazing at her locket, transfixed. Ugh... Oh, gosh. She thinks she's getting what she wanted, and then she says she had to have it for her collection -- oh, my God, so hateful, hateful already -- and then she says the thing that -- I honestly cannot blame Voldemort.

JC: Hmm.

Lorrie: "...From a ragged-looking woman who seemed to have stolen it, but had no idea of its true value --" How this woman can sit there, saying to Voldemort the words "true value"... Ugh.

JC: Yeah, but also the assumption that it was a ragged woman who was fooled out of it by Borgin or Burke. That...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: First of all, he knows who she's talking about. He knows who that was and he knows that she knew its value, so this assumption that this wealthy woman is making about this poor woman... There's some interesting stuff mixed up in that, too.

Lorrie: Meanwhile, she's trying to do something about her pregnancy. Here's this eighteen-year-old who's been searching like hell for his own story, and now his own story is right in front of his face, in his hands. The intensity of this moment... Holy crap! He can't let on that he's going through any of this to this offensively simpering woman. "Voldemort's eyes flashed scarlet at the words, and Harry saw his knuckles whiten on the locket's chain," and then she insults everything by saying, "Pretty, isn't it?" She takes it back from him and says she's going to keep it nice and safe. Oh, my God, if there's anything that it's not, there's nothing safe about this locket. This locket doesn't even deserve to be insulted like that. Oh...

JC: It's like the One Ring. Oh, my God.

Lorrie: Oh, my gosh. It means a lot to a lot of people, but it cannot mean anything to anyone close to what it means to this almost kid.

JC: And it is his birthright, it really is. Yeah. Yeah, she has sealed her fate in this moment.

Lorrie: He is angry. No, he's angry *for Voldemort*. Oh, God...

JC: And yet, interestingly enough, he is still patient. He could have taken it right then, but he was like, 'No, no, I know where it is now.' He waits a couple of days.

Lorrie: Yeah. He makes himself let it go.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: He has experience.

JC: Yes.

Lorrie: He knows exactly what to do; he's practiced. "'So there you are, Tom, dear, and I hope you enjoyed that!' ...Harry saw her foolish smile falter." Oh, because she accidentally got a glimpse, and now she has no idea what she's looking at. She looked "unnerved." That's satisfying, right? By this point, she's made me so angry that I'm satisfied that she got a little hint of it before she went.

JC: She did see that maybe this was a dangerous situation. Yeah.

Lorrie: You don't just toy with somebody like that, but who was going to stop her? She had nobody telling her that she couldn't. She had finally met her limit.

JC: And she was also, I think, trying to impress him. She wanted him to... Yeah. It was flirting, but in this "let me impress you with my wealth and my collection of cool things" kind of a way.

Lorrie: She just wanted him to keep coming by.

JC: Yeah. She wasn't trying to make him feel bad. I think she thought this would keep him coming back, and that's what she wants.

Lorrie: She was using her privilege and using his disadvantages, because she had him trapped as somebody who needed to keep coming to somebody who was wealthy for his job. She wanted to see more of him. She wanted to be touching him and getting him to look at, if not her, her things, and she had no intention of letting go of the things because that was her lure to keep him coming, so an abuse of power. He's had enough of this game, and he's about to put an end to it because she doesn't know who she's playing with.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: Two days... Two days later, she gets the poisoned evening cocoa. I'm sure it tasted delicious. I love chocolate. Poor Hokey, of course, believes that she made the mistake honestly and confesses.

JC: And both Harry and Dumbledore are like, "No, that's not what happened."

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Instantly, Harry... Harry actually has a house-elf who would poison Harry if he could, right?

Lorrie: True.

JC: So Harry just knows there ain't no way that Hokey did that, not even by accident. No.

Lorrie: And what a professional insult to Hokey. Hokey would never! Can you imagine Hokey making a single mistake? Never!

JC: Nope.

Lorrie: So yep, Hepzibah Smith... Once dead, it is revealed that she has lost her two greatest treasures, and her family must be so annoyed by this.

JC: "She finally kicks the bucket, and we don't even get the cool shit." Yeah.

Lorrie: "Where is it? Where is it?!" Meanwhile, the shop assistant at Borgin and Burkes has disappeared.

JC: Yeah, and no one puts any of these things together. Once again, no one connects the dots. Yeah.

Lorrie: Well, Hokey made the confession. Why should they?

JC: Just like before.

Lorrie: Yep, just like with Morfin.

JC: It's starting to look like a calling card of Voldemort's.

Lorrie: Well, he got away with it. "This time [Harry], as you will have seen, he killed not for revenge, but for gain," and then Dumbledore points out that this is a pattern, that he took trophies similar to when he was an orphan at the orphanage. Even Dumbledore has to say, "...You must admit that it is not difficult to imagine

that he saw the locket, at least, as rightfully his," saying this to Harry James Potter, who goes ballistic when there's something he thinks is part of his family story and anybody dares to keep it from him. Oh, no, no, no, no... But then Harry is wondering, "Well, why did he take the cup then?" and Dumbledore teaches him: "Well, it had belonged to another of Hogwarts' founders." Okay, so this is good. This is the series; this is the author setting us up to ask ourselves the question: What from Gryffindor might Voldemort want? Okay. Ugh, I hope Hepzibah Smith felt no pain. She annoys me, but she didn't deserve pain. Then after ten years, we see Dumbledore showing the second memory where Voldemort asks Dumbledore for the job again.

JC: It's so interesting, because in the memory Dumbledore is standing there, and the door opens and Voldemort walks in, and Harry is just like, 'Voldemort came to the castle, and they had an appointment?!' It is kind of crazy when you think about it. 'Oh, Voldemort (using that name) made an appointment with Dumbledore.'

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Wow!

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That is so interesting. I also love that again, we see his appearance has deteriorated.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I have to say, it being May 2026, the first thing I thought was Mar-a-Lago face.

Lorrie: Oh, my God, yes. Absolutely.

JC: The way it was described...

Lorrie: "Waxy."

JC: "Waxy" and "distorted."

Lorrie: "Distorted."

JC: I was like, 'Oh, God...'

Lorrie: "The whites of his eyes now bloody." Yeah. Was it *Vanity Fair*? There was that magazine several months ago that did a photo shoot where there was a close-up of some of the Mar-a-Lago people with lip injection sites clearly visible in the photo. Yeah.

JC: Oh, my God. Oh, creepy...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: So yeah, he looks really creepy and he's starting to look like what Harry thinks of as Voldemort a little bit more now.

Lorrie: This is our signal that there's something about the process of making a Horcrux that involves giving up something of your body.

JC: Yeah. Yeah, he's looking less human every time we see him.

Lorrie: Yeah. There's a deal that you make when you go into this kind of evil that normal evil people don't make. You can be a mass murderer but never have made a Horcrux, so this thing wouldn't happen to you, but it's happening to Voldemort.

JC: Right. The parallels with Trump's cronies are really popping into my head right now, and I can't not think about that.

Lorrie: Truly is.

JC: Every word you just said, I was like, 'Okay, yeah.' When you make a deal with He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, yeah.

Lorrie: Yes, it truly is.

JC: Wow. I'm laughing, but also... yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, right. Yeah. That's kind of how they are, too, in this universe, right? They're not laughing, either.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: So Voldemort no longer looks like a handsome human. He didn't need that power, but also this is a point that Grace Candido-Beecher (who's the author of the *Voldemort* book) makes: she believes -- and I'm convinced -- that Voldemort was glad to be rid of it, that he really didn't want any of the things that come to people

from being physically attractive. In fact, we just saw how it was used to exploit him, and he's just going to get what he wants some other way from now on. He doesn't need that, so that's a big clue about things that he doesn't want: there's nothing that being good-looking can get you that is within Voldemort's desires. His desires are all elsewhere. He's really good at this meeting. He does everything right: he compliments Dumbledore respectfully on becoming headmaster and says, "A worthy choice," and Dumbledore and Voldemort are totally cordial. They smile at each other. Very politely, Dumbledore offers him a drink and he says, "That would be welcome. I have come a long way." He's very appealing.

JC: Despite looking the way he looks.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Also, the fact that Dumbledore just deadnames him to his face also made me pause. I don't think that would have bothered me as much, except knowing the author, this is where the author's life intersects, like we've talked about a lot. Before, I was always like, yeah -- Dumbledore says, "Yeah, no..." He's already refusing to give power to the name. He knows how Voldemort is using it, but it read differently to me because of the author's transphobia.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "No, I'm not going to call you by your chosen name. You will always be Tom Riddle to me, no matter what you decide to call yourself." Oh, damn... That just reads transphobic to me now.

Lorrie: So yeah, Voldemort tries. You can imagine Voldemort inhaling; he's about to give his speech. "They do not call me 'Tom' anymore," and Dumbledore doesn't even let him work up any steam; he just stops it right there. "To me, I'm afraid, you will always be Tom Riddle. It is one of the irritating things about old teachers. I'm afraid that they never quite forget their charges' youthful beginnings." He puts himself out there as a doddering old fool, but it's totally a threat. 'Oh, I remember things...' Grace Candido-Beecher did a really thoughtful section in her *Voldemort* book that I recommend people go read about. Yeah, it does bring up deadnaming and it has so many similarities, but it's ultimately not at all. Yes, J.K. Rowling's current transphobia, of course, is going to overdetermine everything about this, but she worked with the same former *Harry Potter* scholar and trans sensitivity reader

that I worked with, Charlie Waltz (who, pre-TERFpocalypse, was a *Harry Potter* scholar and cosplayer). The thing about deadnaming is that you call somebody by a name that's not their true self; Voldemort (as Grace explains much more subtly than I can encapsulate here)... that's the mask that the true person Tom Riddle has crafted. That's not his true self; that's farther and farther away from who he really is, and the more he becomes Voldemort, the more he loses control of his true selfhood. Anyway, I recommend very much that people go find what Grace wrote about this, because it is disagreeing with the concept that this is deadnaming without at all disregarding how important that whole feeling is to anybody reading *Harry Potter* post-TERFpocalypse. But yeah, it's a power move; it is the first moment in this meeting where they step away from the niceties and Dumbledore sees Voldemort starting to make a move and stops him immediately. Escalation begins here, but they haven't totally started fighting yet because Voldemort says, very honestly, "I always wondered why a wizard such as yourself never wished to leave school," and Dumbledore answers honestly, "To a wizard such as myself, there can be nothing more important than passing on ancient skills, helping hone young minds." But then that also brings up the thing that is also true that Dumbledore won't acknowledge, although Voldemort must have thought about it: Voldemort brings up, "Oh, didn't you turn down being made Minister of Magic twice?" and Dumbledore goes, "No, three times." Then he says, "We have that in common": neither of them wants to be appointed to the Ministry. This is an area where Dumbledore can understand Voldemort in a way that Harry needs Dumbledore for, because Harry has also been offered an in at the Ministry by Scrimgeour, but not because people think that Harry is so brilliant that they need his leadership; it's just bribery for him to be exploited. Harry's not interested in that kind of power either, but it's not like people want to give it to him. Meanwhile, Dumbledore and Voldemort both... Voldemort because he has bigger ambitions than the Ministry, Dumbledore because he's trying to prevent himself from becoming greedy like Voldemort. But yeah, this is why Harry needs Dumbledore to explain things to him. So yeah, that's the super complicated level at which these two super geniuses are saying and not saying things to each other during this showdown. Yikes... But Voldemort is still in the position of being a supplicant with a request; he's not powerful enough to force anything yet and says, "I have come to you to ask that you permit me to return to this castle, to teach. I think you

must know that I've seen and done much since I left this place. I could show and tell your students things they can gain from no other wizard." This is remarkable, right? It's, first of all, extremely humble. He's humbling himself; he's asking to be permitted -- Wow! -- and he's offering his true skills. This is vulnerable. He's offering what he actually has to offer. Yikes... If he were doing this to be sincere, it would have looked exactly the same if he had been being sincere. Oh, God... Yeah, Dumbledore isn't having it and says, "Oh, yeah, I've heard rumors. I should be sorry to believe half of them."

JC: I like the way, in this scene, Voldemort is being... He's not kissing up, but he's being very humble and respectful, and Dumbledore is not. Most things out of his mouth are Dumbledore being like, "No, I know exactly who you are and what you do. I know. I'm not going to be fooled by your charm or anything." He's very blunt about that. It's very interesting.

Lorrie: 'Disingenuous,' I think, is a word that came to mind. Yeah, Dumbledore's saying, "Oh, yeah, you're being really, really good at the thing that's gotten everybody else."

JC: Yeah. "It's not going to work on me." Yeah.

Lorrie: Voldemort knows how to keep appealing to Dumbledore and how lonely Dumbledore is in his genius in a way that very few people other than Voldemort could understand, and he says, "Oh, you know that people lie when they feel envy of greatness." This is truthfully something that Dumbledore experiences. Yeah, he would know what that means, and if he had not been feeling strong, he might have... It's a good bid by Voldemort. I'm not afraid for Dumbledore that he's going to fall for it, but it's a very good bid. Then Dumbledore says -- oh, you can feel the disgust in him -- "You call it 'greatness,' what you have been doing, do you?" Oh, wow... Ouch. So yeah, in other words, this interview is over. You're not getting this job.

JC: Yeah. They are sniping at each other from here, but also the use of the word 'great' here is interesting to me because it always sticks with me that that's what Ollivander says in the beginning: calls Lord Voldemort's deeds 'great'. That stood out to me.

Lorrie: Yeah. That's the whole Ravenclaw creepy thing -- that you think about absolute value, not whether it's negative or positive -- and this is why people don't like us Ravenclaws.

JC: Ooh, I like that as 'absolute value'. Thank you for giving me a math metaphor.

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah!

JC: I understand that. Thank you.

Lorrie: Yeah. My eight-year-old understanding of math does extend to that, to the parts that are super Ravenclaw. Yeah, no, you're supposed to actually have morals along with that ability to quantify. Yeah, no, it's not that all of us Ravenclaw people don't have morals; it's that it's optional. Aye... Yeah, so to keep going with the absolute value framing, Voldemort answers: "I have pushed the boundaries of magic further, perhaps, than they've ever been pushed --" Doesn't that deserve some recognition? Voldemort's eyes are burning red as he says this. This is a point of sensitivity and pride for him, and the implication for further on in this universe is he's saying that he's pushed them further than Grindelwald did. The conclusion that I'm drawing from these hints is that Grindelwald did whatever it was that caused Dumbledore to strip the Hogwarts library of information about Horcruxes.

JC: Oh, interesting.

Lorrie: So whatever Voldemort has figured out how to do, he took it further than Grindelwald was able to, and Dumbledore is predisposed to not think kindly of magic that goes in this direction, having seen right where it leads people.

JC: And where it led someone he cared about.

Lorrie: Yeah. Voldemort's trying to be proud of what he's done, and Dumbledore won't have that and he says, "Yeah, you remain woefully ignorant" of some other kinds of magic.

JC: I love the implication that this is not the first time they've had this argument throughout this.

Lorrie: Oh, my goodness.

JC: 'Oh, yeah, they've had this discussion before.'

Lorrie: Round and round and round, and Voldemort just loses all masking here, and he smiles: "It was a taut leer, an evil thing, more threatening than a look of rage." I like that sentence. I think it's really well-written. It's scary. Then Voldemort says, "Oh, yeah, the old argument," and he says, "You know, I haven't seen any proof of your argument that love is more powerful than my kind of magic," and Dumbledore says the only possible response: "You've been looking in the wrong places. Yeah, sure you haven't. Not going to find it there."

JC: Looking for love in all the wrong places...

Lorrie: So true. "Well, if you don't think that it exists, why would you really be looking?" Ugh... This is a really painful argument, and then [Voldemort] makes a last-ditch, really super excellent pitch: "Well, then, what better place to start my fresh researches than here at Hogwarts? Will you let me return? Will you let me share my knowledge with your students? I place myself and my talents at your disposal. I am yours to command." This is intense. He is offering himself to Dumbledore. There is something genuine in here, I believe. I think Voldemort's daddy issues... Knowing that Dumbledore was the only one who had any ability to step into that role, he's asking. This means something to Voldemort, even at the same time that he is completely performing and telling Dumbledore what he thinks Dumbledore wants to hear.

JC: It's like 'the best lie is one that has an element of the truth in it.'

Lorrie: Yeah. Why does he keep coming back to this old man? It's not only because he's the one in charge. Dumbledore has torn apart all of his defenses and gone straight to the point here, and he's still here, still trying. "Yes, you see that in me, and I'm still going to ask," knowing that he never places himself at anyone else's disposal.

Okay, he's really requesting. This is a request; it's not a command, and when you make a request, that's because you might hear 'No.' Dumbledore is so not charmed by this, and then cuts through the lies completely and says, "And what will become of those whom *you* command? They call themselves Death Eaters, I hear." *gasps* Dun dun DUUUUUN! We get Voldemort's eyes turning red, and here, he's a kid again. How did he know?!

JC: He even says they're waiting at the Hog's Head, which I was like, 'Oh, yeah.'

Lorrie: Oh, yeah. This is totally Voldemort being a two-year-old saying, "How did she know that I got into the chocolate?" 'Grown-ups talk to each other? I was being so sneaky! Sneak, sneak, sneak!' Oh, my God.

JC: I love when he says, "Omniscient as ever," to Dumbledore, and Dumbledore says, "Oh no, merely friendly with the local barmen," and I'm like, 'That's his brother.'

Lorrie: Which is also a little bit sad. Voldemort's got no brothers, but yeah, Voldemort has to scramble on the spot -- 'Oh, shit, oh, shit' -- and make up some lie, so he lies and says, "My friends will carry on without me, I'm sure," and Dumbledore's like, "Eh, not even."

JC: 'No.'

Lorrie: "Oh, yeah, they came to the Hog's Head with you just to support you on your job search, huh?"

JC: "What great friends."

Lorrie: And then he says something that Grace Candido-Beecher disagrees with: Dumbledore says, "I was under the impression that they are more in the order of servants." Grace thinks that's a misreading, that Dumbledore is insultingly misunderstanding and thinking that Voldemort is incapable of having true friendship, and she thinks no, they are his friends and I can see some of that. I ultimately fall more on the reading that no, Voldemort can't, but this is somebody who had no support and who gathered these people around him because he had no family. I think there's a lot of merit to her reading, even though I eventually go more with Dumbledore's.

JC: Yeah. I tend to follow you on these things, too, but I think that you've made the case over and over again that it's Voldemort's inability to make connections with people that is his greatest weakness, and that's what ultimately allows Harry to defeat him. I've seen no evidence in any of the interactions with Death Eaters; he calls them friends, but he's not treating them like friends. There's nothing reciprocal there. It's all about fear and power. It could be what Voldemort thinks friendship is, but --

Lorrie: It's more than he had before, definitely.

JC: Yeah, but it's nothing like what most people would call friendship. It's not that; it's some twisted version of it that maybe Voldemort thinks is friendship on some level.

Lorrie: Now I'm realizing they have not yet let him down. By the time we see Voldemort as Harry experiences him, this Voldemort is yelling at his Death Eaters because he was in unspeakable agony for years and none of them bothered about him. They didn't fulfill the promises they had made when they were friends, like how Sirius acted like a friend to James and Lupin and Wormtail says, "Well, what would you have done?" and Sirius says, "I would have died for them rather than betrayed my friends." Duh.

JC: 'What, like it's hard?'

Lorrie: Yeah. That's the basic principle of it, yes. At this point, the Death Eaters that were at the Hog's Head -- who are named as Nott, Rosier, Mulciber, and Dolohov -- have promised to go along with Voldemort in whatever mission he has, and they have not yet betrayed him. This is definitely more than Voldemort had at the orphanage, and these are the people that stuck with him when he was unable to persuade Armando Dippet to let him stay at Hogwarts. So yeah, whatever creepy ass shit he's been doing for the past ten years, these guys have been with him; Dumbledore calls them 'henchmen.'

JC: It feels more like a crime organization that he's the boss of, somehow, to me, and yet he has to trust them and rely on them, but they're not his equal. With friends, there's a measure of equality between people, and that's why I don't want to call them 'friends.'

Lorrie: It's also a cult, a cult of personality.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: You do have hierarchy and issues of trust, as well as closeness. So Dumbledore says, "Let's be open. This is a job we both know you do not want," and I agree a little more with Grace Candido-Beecher here where I think that's not an accurate reading. Yeah, there is a bigger agenda that Voldemort has that he wants more and the job is part of it, but I think he does want the job.

JC: Oh, yeah, I agree with you here, too. That was my reading, too. I thought no, if Dumbledore said, "You're hired," Voldemort would have been, "Yeah, let's go," and he would have continued to do whatever evil shit he was planning to do at that point from within Hogwarts, but I think he did want the job. That's why he leaves a curse when he leaves, right? It's out of spite.

Lorrie: And his lesson plans would have been magnificent.

JC: I'm sure, yeah. I'm sure people would have learned a lot from Professor Voldemort.

Lorrie: Oh, yes. Oh, my gosh... "Voldemort looked coldly surprised." Yeah, I was surprised with that too, but Dumbledore has a point to make. He does sacrifice some accuracy because this point is really important that Dumbledore is making: "...You do not want to teach any more than you wanted to when you were eighteen." Uh, he probably could have taught. He probably did want to. "Why not try an open request for once?" 'Shit. What? I thought I was.' Yeah, this is when I have to think, no matter how slightly off Dumbledore might be being during this interview, he needs to be. This is the answer to... Often there are people reading this series who are critical of Dumbledore saying, "How could he let Death Eaters be professors? He hired Quirrell. He hired that moron, Lockhart. You just let these people into Hogwarts and run wild." No. When it counted, Voldemort came to ask for a job and he said no. He was gatekeeping, and I'm sure Voldemort had the perfect resume and everything.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: "No. I'm not going to hire you because you are not trustworthy," so Voldemort says, "Oh, you're not going to hire me?" [Dumbledore] goes, "Of course. I don't think for a moment you expected me to. Nevertheless, you came here, you asked, you must have had a purpose." It's not quite an honest question when he says, "Why not try an open request from once?" because it's not like he was going to grant it. He's not asking; he's saying, "I know you have an agenda, and the answer is no. Were you going to be able to fool me? No. Explain to me about the henchmen and whatever bigger scheme you had cooking that you can't deny that you thought I wasn't going to know about." Dumbledore was right, even though this whole interview has so much discomfort in it. Voldemort stands up and

he looked "thick with rage" and says they have "nothing more to say to each other." This is what it's like when somebody tells Voldemort no, and I do have some sympathy for him. It's really, really hard to hear no about something that you want this much, even if it's for truly evil purposes, but he really does want it. This guy is gatekeeping. Other people get told no a lot and have to deal with it; at this point, this is the Voldemort who's gotten told no by life so much that he's not normal. By the time he's seventy and Harry has to deal with him, he never hears no because he can just destroy anyone who tells him no, but at this point, he's still the person who's been told no a lot more than most people have.

JC: That's interesting.

Lorrie: "No, you can't have anything. Why am I telling you no to this? Because you're kind of rotten on the inside. You didn't have to be, but you are now." Ouch... It's because of things he decided to do and things that he has every intention of pursuing, and Dumbledore is really sad about this and says, "The time is long gone when I could frighten you with a burning wardrobe and force you to make repayment for your crimes. But I wish I could, Tom." I have sympathy for Dumbledore. He's failed; this is a teaching failure. No one else could either. It's not like he had to, but he saw it and he was right, and he didn't have that much chance. He wasn't into that much of a position of power over this student ever. It's not like he was Obi-Wan with Darth Vader. It wasn't that direct of a failure...

JC: True, true.

Lorrie: But yeah, he did fail to reach the student, and something really bad was happening and he couldn't do anything. He couldn't stop the degradation inside Voldemort, but he could at least refuse him this job in the castle.

JC: There's a question to be asked here, which is if things had gone differently here -- if Dumbledore had thought, 'If he's here, I can keep an eye on him, I can fix him' -- what do you think would have happened? Would the story have gone differently, or do you think it would have turned out kind of the same, just with Voldemort on the inside of the castle instead of on the outside?

Lorrie: I think the poison would have spread much more rapidly, and that there would not have been as much strength in Dumbledore's vision of the world where there were so many students within Hogwarts who were prepared to fight, who

knew that they had something to fight for. There were many years (the years between the two Wars) when Hogwarts was successful as being the place where you could go to be safe from Voldemort. Voldemort infiltrated; he did get in via Quirrell, he did get in via the scar connection, but essentially, you were at least safer in Dumbledore's castle than you were outside of it, and Dumbledore did what he could during that time with the underground assistance of his double agent Snape. He did what he could to teach his students Defense Against the Dark Arts around the margins of what was preventing it. To make a ham-handed comparison, what if there had been no Joe Biden interregnum? There were some court appointees, some laws set in place, some reminder of what it can be like when there is competency, when there's true health policy, some example of when you have a true medical profession as opposed to one that's being told to lie. I think four years of seeing that, an opportunity to try to put some safeguards in place -- racing against time -- made a lot of difference rather than if we had had eight years straight through.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Does that answer your question? That's my answer to your question.

JC: Yeah. No, I think that was really interesting. I had no guess, so I was curious to know what you thought would have happened, but yeah. All of that makes a lot of sense.

Lorrie: There were years when you could go to Hogwarts and be safe from Voldemort.

JC: It's also the case that by excluding Voldemort from at least that power structure, he makes it harder for him to gain the foothold that he did. To fight. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He knows he's not going to go to the Ministry at that point in time; he's not going to be able to be in Hogwarts. He's going to have to be out there somewhere, and no matter where he is, he's going to be gathering his army and doing bad shit, so don't make it easy for him by letting him in here. Yeah.

Lorrie: Well, another similar ham-handed analogy comparison is there were years when Trump was banned from Twitter. He had to go make his own pathetic social media platform; then eventually, much like the curse on the DADA position, Elon Musk bought Twitter and destroyed it.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: But the years when Twitter still existed and hadn't been bought out yet and Trump was banned, it was a safer place for a while.

JC: For a little while, yeah.

Lorrie: One that I miss.

JC: Unfortunately, the Death Eaters didn't get banned from Twitter. Yeah, that still made it pretty miserable, but yeah.

Lorrie: Quirrell still got a job.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Barty Crouch Jr. still taught for a whole year.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

Lorrie: And nobody knew. Harry asks Dumbledore, "Why did Voldemort come back this time to ask for this job?" and Dumbledore says, "I have ideas, but no more than that," and that is completely correct. That is not Dumbledore being humble, and Harry, unfortunately, really isn't going to get more out of Dumbledore than that. Harry is eventually going to be the one to figure out the answer to that question. Dumbledore lives and dies without finding out the answer; Harry will find it out. In the previous chapter, we got the tiniest little foreshadowing because the ghost of Ravenclaw namelessly, worthlessly drifts through for a sec. That's an excellent reminder that at Hogwarts, like everywhere in the world, there are stories that are ongoing and powerful that no one single person can be aware of all at once, not even if you're Dumbledore. The ending of this chapter is so sad when Harry... "Just to make sure, this was Defense Against the Dark Arts, wasn't it, that he wanted?" Yeah. Dumbledore concedes his defeat and says, "...We have never been able to keep a Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher for longer than a year since I refused the post to Lord Voldemort," which is really the punishment you get

from an infant who's been told no and then destroys everything. Being told no is unbearable. It totally reminds me of Trump being angry that a Black man got to be president and what he's going to do to the world to punish everybody for that.

JC: Or the fact that he got defeated in 2020, and now he's really punishing us for that, yeah. 'We're going to just tear it all down.'

Lorrie: 'We're never having elections again...' Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: 'Because I lost that one.' He'll want to spoil it for others. On a more practical political level for Voldemort... All right, if he can't build his army from within Hogwarts (which would have been ideal), he's going to at least do what limited things he can to make it easier for himself from the outside of Hogwarts to poach some of those people by making sure that at least Defense won't get taught properly. Dumbledore has really delivered quite a blow to his evil plans...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: But he did get some of his own back. This curse... really hampers a lot of good learning that those students had been entitled to. So yeah, this is (in the most serious, real way possible) the 'think of the children' fight for the soul of education. Do you want to teach people to be strong and defend themselves? Or do you want to keep them ignorant and easy to exploit?

JC: Oof, yeah.

Lorrie: Well, the person who wanted to exploit them is going to do whatever he can, and he's got some weapons at his disposal, doesn't he?

JC: Yeah. There's so many parallels with what's been happening in education. Oof...

Hosts: Yeah.

JC: I'm looking at how long we've been recording, thinking, 'Yeah, do I even want to go into that?' I feel like a lot of that I've already talked about on this podcast before, but yeah, all of the stuff that we've said about this in the past... Yes.

Lorrie: It's your day-to-day life, isn't it, as a policy maker in the state of Texas about education, in teacher education?

JC: I wish I were more of one, but yeah.

Lorrie: Well, you're very much in it.

JC: If only they would listen to me...

Lorrie: Well, if you don't have the podium, you have to do what you can, right?

JC: For sure, yeah. Yeah.

Lorrie: The next chapter is called The Unknowable Room.

JC: Ooh... Very exciting!

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