

HARRY AFTER POTTER 2020

with LORRIE KIM and JC

Transcript

Episode 2.15

Book 2, Chapter 15: Aragog

Caroline: You're listening to Harry Potter After 2020, an HP chapter re-read 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 Two, Chapter 15: Aragog.

Lorrie: Aragog. At the end of the previous chapter, Hagrid told the boys to "follow the spiders," so they do that and it takes a miracle for them to survive. Hey, JC. Are you ready to venture into spider territory?

JC: Yes, yes. I have to say that overall, I was kind of dreading this chapter because what was firmly in my head was the scene from the movie, and this was much less horror-inspired. There was still a lot of horror here.

Lorrie: I see.

JC: But the movie amped it up so much. I was relieved that it wasn't as bad as I remember. I'm not a horror person. I'm not a horror fan at all. I avoid it.

Lorrie: I know. I'm not a horror fan either, and I know and love people who adore horror and I'm sorry that I can't play along with them. So, what did you notice when you did the reading?

JC: At the start, the idea that everyone now no longer suspects Harry of being the Heir of Slytherin. Once Hermione is petrified, it seems like the rest of the students are like, oh, then it cannot be Harry, because there's no way Harry would do that, which says a lot about their perception of Harry as being part of the trio. Just this understanding that this is an unbreakable trio of friends, and that they would not do that to each other.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: The idea is 'Oh, he could be evil, he could have let this monster loose in the school, and he's killing whatever, trying to kill all Muggle-borns. But he wouldn't do that to Hermione.' That

idea of understanding the bonds of friendship and how important they are. I think also at the same time in this part at the beginning, we see Draco Malfoy just not doing himself any favors, certainly. He's being really cruel in a way that makes me think about young boys that get caught up in alt-right spaces and just spout off stuff that they've heard; I think it makes them look a particular way, improves their image in some way to be very casually violent and just be about hate. It feels a little bit like that's what Draco has been sucked into here. "No, I don't have any power, except in this role of being in this space that my dad is in," and that's scary.

Lorrie: I think it may just be a human thing that we have to be really careful with, because I think it's built into us. 'Draco, you haven't done anything. You don't even know what's happening.' But yeah, the first image I got was of people showing up in Klan paraphernalia after Trump was elected, feeling emboldened.

JC: Yes.

Lorrie: Power by association is really potent, and I think it's a very basic human thing that can be weaponized badly. This is something that we see with Dumbledore: anytime there is conflict in the school, he automatically addresses that feeling, saying, "Remember. Remember that we have to have bonds. We have to think about each other. We have to welcome each other. That's the first thing we have to address, because suspicion ratchets up so rapidly." So there's that. And then also, now visitors are barred from the hospital wing. Harry and Ron had been visiting Hermione every day and now they're not allowed, and Madame Pomfrey pokes her head out saying, "No, no, we can't," and that brought back such a powerful memory of the pandemic.

JC: Oh, gosh, yeah. When people were dying alone, or checking themselves into the hospital and not knowing if they'd ever see their family again. Yeah.

Lorrie: And then the families would be in the hospital and you could look through the window of the door in that room, but you couldn't be physically together; people would say goodbye through iPads, which I think was one of the things that made people angriest with the British politicians of the time, who were throwing pandemic parties in person while people were saying goodbye to their family members, not even able to be at their bedside. Yeah, in my family we had a situation where one of my family members had a loved one that was in the hospital for months during the pandemic. She couldn't visit him. This was so pathetic: to feel closer to him, she would go to the hospital and stand outside in the freezing cold and talk to his mom, who was also there outside in the freezing cold. They would look up at the hospital room; she couldn't even go inside. That was a really strong memory of feeling isolated.

JC: Yeah, for sure.

Lorrie: So here's Draco enjoying the fear and all of the opportunity it represents to gather up power and take advantage of people's jumpiness. And then we have the dynamic that I always see from Snape regarding Hermione -- because obviously her absence is really loud -- and we see Snape in potions class: "Snape swept past Harry, making no comment about Hermione's

empty seat and cauldron." That's a lack of action from the character, but that's a deliberate choice from the author to point our attention there. That's how we know Snape is aware of Hermione. He does not acknowledge her as usual. So, there's that, and that sets the tone for the fascinating non-events that happen in the rest of this chapter that give the tiniest clue about where Snape's loyalties really are. So yeah, we have Draco being a suck-up by suggesting that Snape apply to be a Headmaster saying, "I'll tell Father you're the best teacher here, sir." Suddenly Draco has --

JC: Draco has that kind of power?

Lorrie: He's making a bid to be the most important boy among the 12-year-olds.

JC: I re-read that scene a couple times, and I had an image in my head of Snape's face being like... You can't see my face through a podcast, but... that mask of not letting it show, but just barely tolerating this bullshit. "You, 12-year-old boy, are going to tell me...? Really?"

Lorrie: "Thank you."

JC: "Wow, I really wanted your approval. Thanks, Lucius Malfoy's kid."

Lorrie: "I can't tell you how much this means to me."

JC: Exactly. But the comment after that, where he says, "Well, Dumbledore has only been suspended and I'm sure he'll be back soon enough." That felt to me like a couple of things were happening there. One was that it's defusing the situation, but it also felt like him warning Draco. "Dumbledore is not gone. He's going to be back, and you can't just behave this way. It's not going to be tolerated. Don't do it, kid."

Lorrie: Yeah. "Just remember, just keep in mind: whatever you think is happening, don't get ahead of yourself." Yeah. Fortunately, Snape does not see Seamus pretending to vomit. But then it escalates, and Draco says, "I'm quite surprised the Mudbloods haven't all packed their bags by now. Bet you five Galleons the next one dies. Pity it wasn't Granger --" and I am shocked again. There's a classmate lying almost dead in a really frightening way, and he's openly wishing for her death? And what gets me, too, about that is, what is his complaint about her? He has only one complaint: she gets better grades than he does. He wants her dead because she gets better grades. The only way he can beat her is by having her killed.

JC: Yeah, and it's not like there's not a lot of other Muggle-born kids in the school. There's a pretty large Muggle-born population at Hogwarts. She's the one that has caused tension, and that's the only reasonable... Well, in fandom spaces, there are other explanations, but that's really the only reasonable explanation: because his father has pointed out, "You can't even get better grades than this Muggle-born."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Which, then it's like, okay, then she's the target for that reason.

Lorrie: Yeah, and he's playing a game. He's offering bets on her survival. This is entertainment. This sets the stage for a very subtle and almost invisible moment that shows Snape's true feelings: "The bell rang at that moment, which was lucky; at Malfoy's last words, Ron had leapt off the stool, and in the scramble to collect bags and books, his attempts to reach Malfoy went unnoticed."

JC: Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: And that passive voice, "went unnoticed." First of all, it obscures who it is that did the unnoticing; this is, I think, the only time in history that Snape ever doesn't notice a Gryffindor trying to hit a Slytherin. Usually, if a Gryffindor even thinks about it, he materializes out of thin air.

JC: Right. Yeah.

Lorrie: To gleefully take points away from only the Gryffindor. And yet, Draco has said this very loud, audible thing and then Ron is trying to hit him, and somehow Snape's attention is accidentally elsewhere.

JC: That stood out to me, and I don't think that would have stood out to me until after my interactions with you about Snape and understanding his character. I think that interaction really stood out to me when I re-read this this time of, 'Oh, he chose not to notice or to pretend like he didn't notice. He chose not to act, and it was deliberate,' and I just thought, "Wow." And it goes over Harry's head, but yeah.

Lorrie: Usually, he turns up when you do that, so this passive voice and this lack of action from Snape goes along with that almost invisible evidence that he instituted the Dueling Club lesson as a response to Harry trying to blow up Goyle. After the thing Draco had just said: if I were Snape, I would have immediately looked at Hermione's best friends to make sure that they weren't going to start anything. They were just provoked so badly. All he says is, "Hurry up, I've got to take you all to Herbology," with the usual Snape trademark of being put upon, annoyed. That's such a good cover; I'm sure he is annoyed. Ron keeps trying to hit Draco the whole way. The whole way down to the front doors, Neville and Harry have to hold on to Ron so he doesn't physically attack Draco, and somehow Snape never notices this.

JC: Right. Sure. Yeah, it's really a powerful image. There's something a bit comical about the image of people having to hold on to Ron's arms to keep him from going after Draco for a really long time. But yeah, the idea that Snape didn't notice that is... I don't know how you take that read. So he was just going to let natural consequences take their course? Is that what he was doing? Or was it that he was so wound up by what Draco said and the implications of where that means Draco is that he just redirected everybody?

Lorrie: I think that might have been because he has to act like he's supporting Draco. When Draco says, "I'll tell Father you're the best," Snape smiles, but he can't give support to Draco loudly approving of genocide. He can't support it. There's no way he can twist it. We don't know it yet, but in later volumes we're going to find out Snape's background. This way of thinking that only certain wealthy, well-born people deserve to exist; we're going to find out that maybe he has his own reasons for not thinking how funny it is that disadvantaged students are disposable.

JC: Right. That's true.

Lorrie: Let alone his personal reason for having feelings about Muggle-born girls getting killed.

JC: Yeah. Oh, for sure. And on top of that, I think, too, that little hint of, "I'll tell Father you could be the headmaster, you could be a great one." He does become the headmaster later on under circumstances that he would rather not, I think in both cases, be in that situation. But it becomes clear, I think, in this scene, especially when you reflect on the rest of the series, Snape is not here to accumulate power. That's not his M.O.

Lorrie: No.

JC: He's not interested, and every time that comes up, he doesn't let the conversation go there.

Lorrie: Yeah. He doesn't commit.

JC: I find that really interesting. Yeah.

Lorrie: And it makes clear that if and when he does ascend to that kind of power, it's going to have to be under these circumstances in which he doesn't deny the assumption from the Death Eaters that he is on their side because he has to play that up. He has to make them think that he is on their side. He has to tolerate enmity from people that he is protecting, despite not liking them, and he's always just got to be operating under the surface. And you can't tell from how he's behaving what he really thinks. There are these tiny little cracks that may or may not give away what he's really thinking. The other thing, too, is that when Snape came from his very impoverished, underprivileged background to Hogwarts, he wasn't good-looking. Tom Riddle had no money, but he was really good-looking and charismatic, as well as very, very smart. Snape was poor and he was not good-looking; he was not charismatic, but he was smart, and that was his one ticket in. Then to see that's why Draco wants Hermione dead? She doesn't come from any Wizarding family; she doesn't have any connections. She's just being singled out because she's a better student, and that marks her. This really hit home for me, because when I was a kid, my grandfather, my mom's father, had this huge scar on his arm. He was in his 70s, and I asked my mom, "What is that scar?" She explained to me that when he was in college, Korea did not exist. Korea was a colony of Japan, and he had won a scholarship to Tokyo University and he graduated as valedictorian. That was an incredible shame to all the Japanese, that this slave, basically, a non-person, had beaten all the Japanese students, so the

salutatorian, the Japanese guy who came in second, attacked my grandfather with a knife and tried to kill him.

JC: Wow! Wow.

Lorrie: And he didn't die, but in his 70s, he still had this ginormous scar that I still could see in the summer and ask my mom about.

JC: Yeah, a visible sign of what he had endured because of... yeah.

Lorrie: He hadn't done anything to this guy. He had just come in first.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: And if someone else had come in first that was Japanese, this wouldn't have happened.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: It's just the insult of somebody from a dirty lower class having the temerity. So yeah, I read about "why does Draco want Hermione dead?" Oh, because... well, gee, Draco. Or you could just try to study harder.

JC: That idea of, "But I deserve it because I'm me."

Lorrie: He doesn't.

JC: "I come from this family, I am a pure-blood wizard." I think it's the same reaction that you often see in spaces where anyone who is from a minority group... The story of your grandfather, I've heard similar stories, many similar stories and other situations where a person, a Black person, a Latina person, someone who wasn't supposed to have --

Lorrie: Win on merit.

JC: To win on merit. And then the majority population either cut that person down in a variety of ways, but sometimes that's physical. Yeah, it's pretty horrible. I wish it wasn't a common story, but it's interesting that you're seeing the thread of that here.

Lorrie: Yeah. That's really the only complaint Draco has about her, and we find out later that that was Snape's one ticket also. Meanwhile, on the other hand, Ernie McMillan, my favorite minor character. Pompous, adorable Ernie McMillan comes and takes a deep breath and gives a formal apology to Harry.

JC: It's amazing. That scene... that's not what 12-year-old kids do.

Lorrie: No, he's amazing.

JC: "Okay, I guess you're--" or they'll just start talking to each other again. They don't apologize to each other like this. It is amazing.

Lorrie: *We're cool, right?" "No, we are not cool. You have to apologize." And no, he really did it. Then I loved that he asks if Harry thinks the Heir of Slytherin is Malfoy and Harry just says "No," and he doesn't think about the way he says it. He doesn't realize how firm he sounds, so Ernie and Hannah Abbott stare at him, and I just love that. Sometimes you know something and you're not supposed to know it, and you're so certain that it just slips out and then everyone looks at you.

JC: Right, right.

Lorrie: Okay, this is not the first time and not the last time Harry clearly knows something about Draco that Draco really would rather have everyone not know. It's not a compliment to Draco. I am not a big Drarry shipper, although I have nothing against that ship, but reading with you, JC, because I know that it is... It's your Harry Potter OTP in that series.

JC: Yeah, yeah. It was the OTP, for sure, back in the day.

Lorrie: Re-reading this series with you makes it so clear this time that Harry is maddeningly out of Draco's reach.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Harry's solving real mysteries, and along the way he just accidentally finds out that Draco's just as small-potatoes as he suspected.

JC: Right, and Draco's puffing himself up. "No, I'm important. I know what's going on, and I'm going to help make Snape the headmaster at the school, etc." He has no power. It's amazing.

Lorrie: I think I'm going to start... I make octopods. I make these little octopus-shaped felted toy figurines, and I think I'm going to get a little Slytherin one that's supposed to be Draco with a caption that says, "I'm totally not obsessed with Harry Potter."

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: So yeah, Snape gets these people out, and then Ron and Harry have to go "follow the spiders" into the forest and Ron is really facing his fears.

JC: Oh, my gosh. We had learned before how much Ron hates spiders. We knew that already, and just the image of him realizing what they have to do, you see him steeling himself. He kind

of looks for excuses not to do it, but then when he realizes that this is what we have to do and he just --

Lorrie: He just does it.

JC: That's a lot for a 12-year-old kid.

Lorrie: It's really a lot. It feels quite real. Fang is with them. Thank goodness, because Fang is such a grounding presence in this scene. He's so obviously dog; he's warm, he's real. Then we get an extra little echo of dog faithfulness, because when we get Deus Ex Ford Anglia, the car shows up and then it acts exactly like a large turquoise dog. It's unquestioningly loyal and affectionate, and kind of big.

JC: Yeah. We're going to see dogs in the next book, too.

Lorrie: Oh, yes, we are.

JC: Something else that I find interesting about this scene: they sneak down, and when they open the door and the dog's like, BARK BARK BARK BARK; they give it some fudge to glue its teeth together so it can't bark, which is comically over the top, but it's a joke about Hagrid's cooking and everything. But then the other thing is they start walking, and the first thing the dog does is goes and pees on a tree, and that made me think, 'Oh, my God. Is this dog...'

Lorrie: He's been trapped in the house.

JC: They've been trapped in the house. How often does someone get down there to let the dog out? This poor dog. Oh, my God. So happy to see someone.

Lorrie: "So yes, we're here. We haven't forgotten you, we love you."

JC: "But stop barking."

Lorrie: I find it so satisfying that the car shows up, because it's been so long since the beginning of this book and so many terrible things have happened since that long-ago innocent car ride. I have completely forgotten about the car, and then it shows up like this and it's just delightful.

JC: It also is introduced in a way of... it does the classic horror thing of giving you the suspenseful moment where you think something bad's about to happen, and then it's not something bad, so you get a little bit of relief. But then you know that next time, it is going to be something bad. It's just a classic trope of writing this kind of scene, but still it gives you a moment of relief so you're happy. You're happy it wasn't bad.

Lorrie: Surprise and relief.

JC: You're happy to see the car, you're surprised to see the car, and it sets up the car as being a friendly character. Because at that point, you're like, 'This could be the monster.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: The car is still pissed off. It's an interesting way to reintroduce the car.

Lorrie: So, yeah. They go meet the spiders. Oh, my God.

JC: The absolute horror of this idea of being picked up by these spiders and carried off.

Lorrie: Jeez.

JC: And not knowing what's going to happen, and all three of them, and poor Fang. What did this poor dog get itself into? It just... horror, and for Ron, layers and layers of horror. Oh, my gosh.

Lorrie: And then we hear that Hagrid had found Aragog a wife.

JC: That's such a strange little... okay.

Lorrie: "Gee, thanks, Hagrid."

JC: "That was a great idea, Hagrid. What did you think was going to happen?"

Lorrie: He fulfilled Aragog's joy and happiness. Frankenstein tried and failed to get a wife for the monster, but Hagrid... bless Hagrid. He managed, and therefore we now have an entire forest full of these creatures.

JC: Yes. Oh, my. And the whole 'friend of Hagrid' thing is very interesting.

Lorrie: And he's in a bad mood. He's old and tired, and he has cataracts. They woke him up.

JC: Yeah, in the middle of the night. All of the clicking...

Lorrie: Oh, yeah.

JC: That keeps being talked about. Even though you're reading this and you can't hear it, the scene is written in such a way that it engages your senses in unusual ways. You don't expect to hear sounds when you're reading a book, but you hear them here and you feel the fear. You hear the fear, and it's really well written. It's like a horror scene.

Lorrie: Yeah, because you're jumpy the whole time and it's uncanny. It's not a sound that you are accustomed to, and it's certainly not a good sound.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: So, did you ever come across Cleolinda on Livejournal?

JC: I know the name, yeah.

Lorrie: Who then went on to write a book called "Movies in 15 Minutes." She's very funny. Skipping ahead, spoiler alert: eventually in this series, Aragog dies of old age in Book Six. After the sixth movie came out, Cleolinda wrote a Movie In 15 Minutes thing about Book Six, and she did a parody of the Odo the Hero song that Hagrid and Slughorn sing at the wake of Aragog. Her parody goes: "And Aragog the spider, they dug a big hole in the forest he'd known as an egg, crammed in like a big bristly profiterole, then his pincer fell off, and his leeeeeeeeeeeeg."

JC: It's very much in the style of a song that would happen in the series.

Lorrie: Yeah, of an epic dirge. It was so funny and got that comic note so perfectly that all these years later, I still remembered it, and I was able to dig it out of whatever layers of Livejournal it was buried in.

JC: Wow. It's very much in the spirit of "Hogwarts, Hogwarts, Hoggy Hoggy Hogwarts."

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Aragog, who we will see again. But then they get information about... that there's a monster that spiders fear. They won't even say its name. They confirm what Harry had already suspected, that Hagrid did not release this monster and so on. And then it gets worse.

Lorrie: Then they see that even acromantulas have loyalty, and Aragog's many, many descendants have no residual loyalty toward Hagrid or his friends; therefore, Aragog is just really pleased that his kids can eat now. What does he say? "Goodbye, friends of Hagrid."

JC: "Goodbye, friends of Hagrid." Yeah, which, good God. That's pretty terrifying.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It makes me think of the Lord of the Rings, with the giant spider and the... yeah. I think I have read before that that part of the Lord of the Rings is probably an inspiration for this. I have no idea, but it seems reasonable. The idea of a giant spider who will catch humans.

Lorrie; Yeah. Why not?

JC: But then the car shows up, and they get out of the situation much more quickly than they do in the movie version, which is to my relief. "Just get them out of there!" Yeah, Deus Ex Ford

Anglia is correct. One of the interesting things about that scene is that... I think it's when they finally get out of the forest and they know that they're safe that Harry looks over at Ron and says, "Are you okay?" And that... wow. I had to pause in my reading and go, 'Oh.' That's incredibly mature.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: For Harry to know that this is Ron's biggest fear, to know that what Ron just went through was incredibly traumatizing -- Ron's going to be processing this for a long time -- and just to look over and say, "Are you okay?"

Lorrie: Right.

JC: That's one of those things: when kids are at that age -- 12, 13 -- and they're starting to show signs of the adult that they'll be, it's just flickers. Flickers of mature behavior.

Lorrie: They flip back and forth, and it's incredibly touching.

JC: Yeah. That concern for his friend, understanding what he just asked his friend to do, what he put his friend through. It's really interesting to me, because Ron was genuinely traumatized by this and Harry was not. Harry goes back and he's immediately thinking through, 'Okay, what are the next steps?' Harry is not...

Lorrie: Harry's okay.

JC: It's going to take Ron a long time to get past that, as I think it would me as well. Giant spiders almost eat me? I'm going to need some therapy about that, but Harry's just moving on. It says a lot about the fact that Harry grew up with spiders in his little cupboard under the stairs. "Yeah, sure, one big one almost ate me, but it didn't. It's fine, we're moving on." Harry's ability to brush aside things that would genuinely traumatize other people is always... I don't know. It always stands out to me throughout this entire story. And I know it's a fairy tale, but there are people who have to go through their lives dealing with this stuff, and Harry just does.

Lorrie: Yeah. "We don't have time to be upset." Yeah. "There's stuff happening."

JC: I'm imagining Ron lying there on his bed, staring at the ceiling and shaking, and Harry's strategizing. "What next? What next?"

Lorrie: Well, that's what Fang does.

JC: Yeah, true.

Lorrie: Fang just bolts into Hagrid's cabin and probably doesn't come out again for ages. And then, after they get back into the castle and they realize, "Well, we've learned a bunch of stuff

from the spiders, but we don't know who or what they're talking about," Harry thinks to ask a ghost. Hooray! And that's going to happen a few times in this series, when you realize, "We have ghosts, we can talk to them." There's a time when he gets counsel -- or he tries to get counsel -- from Nearly Headless Nick, and then at the very end, he finds the Gray Lady. So yeah, knowing that there are people around, you can look to the past, you can find out what other people have gone through. They can tell you what you need to know. That's another one of those markers of maturity.

JC: Right, yeah. To ask someone who was there.

Lorrie: To realize you can do that, and to get over how intimidating it might be. I don't know that Moaning Myrtle is intimidating, but to ask adults who have been there before.

JC: Right. I remember that in this part of the book, that being a *GASP* moment for me the first time I read it because, as you said, the ghosts are just there. They're side characters in this story, and when you start to go, 'Oh, wait. How long have these ghosts been here? What have they seen? Why are there ghosts in this castle? What's the role of these ghosts?'

Lorrie: Right.

JC: It's like, 'Huh, okay. Hmm.' Why would it be useful to have ghosts that have been around for a long time that the faculty or the Headmaster could go to and ask questions of? It opens up this whole new piece of possibility for the story.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's like, "Wow, the world doesn't only revolve around me, huh?"

JC: There's another thing that I think that I got out of this whole chapter: Hagrid's arguably greatest character flaw, in my opinion, is that he underestimates the danger of these creatures that he loves. He's just so convinced. And for him, it's not a danger because he knows how to connect with these wild creatures, or dangerous, magical animals or whatever.

Lorrie: And he's physically strong.

JC: He can physically handle a lot of things, and he cannot understand why other people don't see them the way he does. He can't just relate to them, so he sends these two kids into a situation that could very well have killed them. Yeah. That, and I think now Harry will be wary from here on out. 'Just because Hagrid says this animal is safe does not mean that it is, and I know from experience that bad things can happen.' Hagrid doesn't have the perspective on this, and I think that's also one of those lessons that everyone inevitably learns: the adults that you love and that you trust to take care of you suddenly do something that shows that they're not infallible.

Lorrie: They have limitations.

JC: Yeah, and how much a part of growing up that is to have that moment and realize that.

Lorrie: And Hagrid has no reason to know that the acromantulas would have eaten them, because in his experience, Aragog has always told his children, "You have to be respectful to Hagrid," so he doesn't know. He doesn't know this side of them. And the mature way that Harry and Ron decide, "We're not even going to argue with Hagrid about this. We're just going to know that this happens and just leave it." That's mature.

JC: And again, it's that understanding that adults are just older kids in a lot of ways. When you're a kid, it feels like there's such a boundary between you and adults, and adults are in a different place. Then when you become an adult, there's this time period of, 'Am I really an adult?' I was just talking last night with one of my teachers, who's a first-year teacher in a classroom, and she was relating the story about a student having a medical emergency in the middle of her class, and having that moment of looking around and then realizing, "Oh, shit, I'm the adult. I have to handle this situation. It's up to me. All the kids are looking at me." We all have had those moments in our lives where you're like, "Oh, crap, I'm the adult."

Lorrie: "Oh, no." Yeah.

JC: But being a teenager is being in that liminal space where some teenagers have to take on a lot more responsibility for helping out, becoming an adult or having adult responsibilities and others don't. I think that's another thing that I think about the difference between Harry and Draco here: Draco is very much a protected, sheltered kid. His dad won't even tell him what's going on. Harry, on the other hand, is in the middle of trying...

Lorrie: To follow the spiders.

JC: To follow the fucking spiders, or to solve this mystery, and Dumbledore had looked at Harry and basically said, "It's up to you."

Lorrie: Right, and Dumbledore and Hagrid are gone.

JC: Oh, my gosh. The vast gap between where Draco is (and thinks he is) and where Harry is (and knows he is) shows how different the experience of adolescence is for kids in different places.

Lorrie: And it was Lucius Malfoy who got rid of Hagrid and Dumbledore, so he is the reason why there's this enormous gap in maturity and responsibility between Harry and Draco. There's also a gap in social status between Hagrid and Harry and Ron, because part of the reason that he can't correctly gauge how dangerous these creatures are to humans is that he's not entirely human.

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: And that makes him more vulnerable. Whenever Lucius Malfoy wants a scapegoat to pick on, he knows that he can pick on Hagrid (or other half humans or humans) because there's already this wariness against them and this lack of social status.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: Even though they're only children, Harry and Ron are moving into a position of stepping up and trying to be protective toward Hagrid, because they do have this privilege that he doesn't.

JC: That's true. That also reminds me: there's a bit at the beginning of the chapter where they're in Lockhart's class, and Lockhart is saying the thing that you often hear people in privileged positions say: "Oh, of course, the government has your best interest at heart."

Lorrie: Oh, my God!

JC: "Oh, they would not have arrested him if he hadn't done something." All the police violence that had been experienced by Black men, and the way that the media treats Black men in particular when they've been victims -- the way that they're depicted -- it just made me think about that, too, about how Lockhart here is such a representative of the establishment. The kids all know at this point he's not done any of the things he said; he doesn't have the power that he thinks he does. But because he has so much privilege in their society, they just have to tolerate it.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: If anyone thought he was competent, he would have been suspected of opening the Chamber of Secrets by now, and no one has even a possibility. No one said, "Oh, God, no, it's not Lockhart." Lockhart shows up and people... "Hmm, the Chamber of Secrets." No, if anyone had thought he was capable of anything, that would have happened, but something that little... That little bit just really -- for me, it made me hate Lockhart so much more. It was this intense hatred of him that I felt that was three lines. But yeah, that whole... This is how a person like this would respond in this situation.

Lorrie: So yeah, we got the kids out of the forest. Nobody ate them.

JC: Oh, my God, thank God. They did not get eaten today.

Lorrie: And next, we have the Chamber of Secrets.

JC: Oh, my goodness. Here we go.

Lorrie: So maybe they will get eaten.

JC: Maybe they will get eaten. I'm just flipping through it right now to take a look. It's a slightly longer one. Oh, then we're heading toward the ending. We've just got three chapters to go.

Lorrie: Which is good, because how much worse can things get?

JC: How much worse can things get? Well, we'll find out, won't we?

Lorrie: Yep.

Caroline: You've been listening to Harry Potter After 2020 with hosts Lorrie Kim and JC. You can find show notes for this and all other episodes at HPAfter2020.com. There, you will also find ways to support the show, contact the hosts, and more. If you like what you heard, consider giving us a review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. Harry Potter After 2020 is produced and edited by Lorrie Kim and Caroline Rinaldy. Original music was composed by C.L. Smith. Thank you for listening.