

Transcript

Episode 2.11

Book 2, Chapter 11: The Dueling Club

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 2, Chapter 11: The Dueling Club.

Lorrie: With tensions high, Hermione gets Harry to blow up a cauldron in Goyle's face. The next thing they know, there's an announcement for a new Dueling Club, taught by Gilderoy Lockhart and his assistant, Snape. Harry gains a signature spell and learns something scary about himself. So JC, we're finally at the chapter I've been waiting for: The Dueling Club.

JC: The Dueling Club.

Lorrie: Yeah. What do you think?

JC: It was very interesting to read this one again. Remembering all these little details, just seeing things with fresh eyes, has been really interesting here. Also, I think at this point, I've been so heavily influenced by you and your perspective on Snape that I view everything Snape does now from a very different lens than I know I did the first time I read this.

Lorrie: Wow. Maybe you can take us through what you saw about Snape the first time.

JC: Yeah. I'll see if I can remember it.

Lorrie: And do you want to start us off with things you noticed?

JC: In the beginning, Harry is feeling a little hurt that Ron and Hermione hadn't come to check on him that morning in that kind of adolescent, "They hate me now!"

Lorrie: Oh, no.

JC: Yeah, Ron and Hermione are Harry's ride-or-dies, so he's like, "They didn't come and check on me," feeling a little sorry for himself. But he's got a new set of arm bones, I should say, and apparently earned 50 points for Gryffindor for his feat the day before. So hey, that's good.

Lorrie: Thanks, Draco.

JC: Exactly, which makes Percy very happy to see him that morning. We're going to have a little glimpse of the things that Percy cares about, because when Harry asks if he's seen Ron, Percy says, "I just hope he's not in a girls' toilet somewhere," which is apparently the worst thing he can imagine this brother being up to.

Lorrie: And that's exactly where Ron is.

JC: Of course, though not doing anything like what Percy, perhaps, imagines. I don't know what Percy's imagining.

Lorrie: They're starting to brew Polyjuice. They've gotten to the point where they need ingredients that they can only get from Snape's stores, and Hermione engages 'good girl' privilege again. I love when she does this.

JC: That's really funny.

Lorrie: Yeah. She decides that she's going to be the one doing the stealing, because she has a clean record. "'You two will get expelled if you get into any more trouble,' she continued in a matter-of-fact tone," and I'm just picturing Harry and Ron kind of stunned that she's thought it through, like this train has left without them. They have to scramble to catch up. She says, "All you need to do is cause enough mayhem to keep Snape busy for five minutes or so." Right, that's all they need.

JC: That's all they need to do. I love this image, too, of the three of them crammed into one little toilet stall with the cauldron balanced on the toilet seat, with one of Hermione's little flames underneath it hovering above the toilet water. The whole time that she's telling them all this plan, there's just these wonderful little mundane descriptions of the potion's ingredients being added, and they're wildly Potter-esque things. It was all boomslang skin -- I can't remember exactly what it was, but little details, like Ron dumping a bag of something and then crumpling the bag. I think it's such a great example of the 'showing, not telling' thing. It's so well done, that whole scene, so you just get the sense that they're busy and Hermione's hands are moving. Everyone's contributing ingredients to this cauldron; at the same time, they're plotting. It's just a fun trio moment, I feel like.

Lorrie: Yeah, it is iconic. And the fact that wow, I guess they've learned enough so that they can do this.

JC: Yeah. The fact that there's some automaticity to it. They know how to brew potions, at least on a basic level, Hermione probably better than the rest of them, but there's just a level of skill there that we didn't see the year before and that's really nice to see. As a teacher. I'm like, "Look, they learned things! That's great!"

Lorrie: I know.

JC: There's some other details that really stood out to me this time that I think are interesting, like the offhand comment that Ginny was really distraught about Colin Creevey. Thinking about what Ginny must be feeling at this point: you brought up this thing before, this idea of being an 11-year-old girl and having this power and feeling out of control with it and knowing that there's no one who can help you with this and just how awful that feels. That's what I'm imagining Ginny's experiencing right now. Another one is Neville buying charms to protect himself against whatever this monster is, and the other boys casually saying, "You're a pureblood, it's not going

to bother you," and Neville's like, "But I'm almost a Squib, and a Squib was the first person it went after." It's interesting that it's a very kid-like casual conversation about who has privilege and who doesn't, and like everyone's very aware. "You're a pureblood. Why are you worrying about this? This guy over here is probably going to worry about it. Why are you worrying?" That was just interesting to read and it was thrown in there as a little tidbit, but it's echoing the world of the school and all this stuff's about to become really, really important, like who's a pureblood and who's not. I guess in the first book it was there, but this is the book where I feel like it really becomes a big issue.

Lorrie: Yeah, it's a survival thing.

JC: Malfoy is staying for Christmas, because the year before he was the one who had given Harry shit about, "Oh, I guess nobody wants you home for Christmas." Kids, looking for buttons to push on people, and that's Malfoy's M.O. at this point, is pushing Harry's buttons.

Lorrie: Yeah. And if Harry's staying at Christmas, maybe this is the place to be.

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

Lorrie: When your frenemy crush is staying...

JC: But then we go to Potions class.

Lorrie: Yeah, and this Potions class is set up so that you can tell that it's business as usual for Snape to just be really playing favorites. It's not just a matter of perception; he actually is always extending favoritism to the Slytherins. This is, I think, the only time that the word 'bully' is used to just flat out describe the way Snape treats Neville. Snape makes fun of Harry's watery potion, and then he turns and walks off to bully Neville. There's no debate about it; that's how he treats him. "Snape prowled through the fumes, making waspish remarks about the Gryffindors' work, while this Slytherins snickered appreciatively." Draco is flicking pufferfish eyes at Ron and Harry, knowing that Snape is never going to catch him for this.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: This really sets up the pattern that the default is favoritism. When Snape eventually doesn't show favoritism, that's going to be a deliberate break in pattern.

JC: One of the things that Harry is able to do -- that always stands out to me because it was never a thing I could do -- is that when he is focused on a thing, he is able to tune out people being shitty to him.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Snape comes by and criticizes his potion, and Harry's like, "Yeah, whatever. I'm on a mission." I'm too much of a people-pleaser, and I have never been able to do that; the idea that he can just do that at this age is fascinating to me, and he does it all the time. Maybe that's just a skill that people have that I'm just so unaware of. It would be really hard for me in that situation to not crumple a little bit under this criticism of a teacher. He's just like, "Eh."

Lorrie: Although, maybe because Snape is always so mean to him, he's just had to develop a crust about it.

JC: Yeah, maybe.

Lorrie: It's not variable. It's not like McGonagall said something negative to him, and then he would be devastated. It's like, "Ugh, Snape again."

JC: I guess. The people he expects to be mean to him...

Lorrie: Like the Dursleys.

JC: Yeah. Or the Dursleys, or Malfoy and his little gang of Slytherins. He expects it, and that's probably why later in the chapter, it hits him differently when other kids are being mean and critical.

Lorrie: Yeah, because their opinion matters.

JC: Yeah. Maybe that's it, yeah. He's that kid who's able to think, "If I don't respect you, your opinion doesn't matter." Good God, that's a superpower.

Lorrie: Or when there are people who are so mean that absolutely nothing you do can affect it, so you just have to block it out. Because if he had taken every Dursley insult to heart, he would have... Yeah.

JC: Oh, sure.

Lorrie: And Snape is the same. Snape makes up reasons to be mean to him. He can't really care. So, yeah. Now, if I had had to throw a firecracker into another kid's cauldron, I would have missed. Fortunately, Harry is an athlete that has good aim, and this is a really dangerous, risky thing he does. He throws a firecracker and the cauldron explodes; kids get Swelling Solution all over their faces, and it's half the class, which we realize is the Slytherin half that all gets injured. Then, Harry sees that Hermione's slipping into Snape's office to do the theft. And yeah, here's another example of Hermione taking cold advantage of the ways Snape always studiously ignores her. "He's never looking at me; I can do anything I want."

JC: Right.

Lorrie: And then when Snape goes to the cauldron and scoops out "the twisted black remains of the firework, there was a sudden hush. 'If I ever find out who threw this,' Snape whispered, 'I shall make sure that person is expelled.' Harry arranged his face into what he hoped was a puzzled expression. Snape was looking right at him." If you can just imagine how terrible that innocent face must have been...

JC: It reminds me of in the movie *A Christmas Story*, when the kids abandoned their friend with his tongue stuck to the flagpole and they go back inside, and the teacher says, "Who did this?" The looks on their faces are all like, "Oh, what?" It made me think of that scene, Harry trying to look innocent. Of course, Snape basically has the teacher superpower of being able to basically read his mind, so Snape knows what happened here. I think that was what felt different on this reading: the idea that Snape knew that it was Harry at that point. That's my read, anyway, and it's interesting that instead of calling Harry out in that moment, my read is that he realized shit was about to get out of hand and that he had to do something. If it had gotten to this point, this animosity that he had to take matters into his own hands and do something about it, that's my read of it. And that's all because of you, honestly; I would never have felt that before. I was just like, 'Ah, Snape's being a dick, as usual.' Also, at this point, the first time I'd read this book, I did not understand Legilimency at all. I just thought, 'Well, Snape just looks at Harry because, of course, he thinks it's Harry because...' But it's like, 'Oh, no, he's looking at Harry for a reason.'

The Swelling potions splattering all over the Slytherins: it's humorous -- the effects are humorous -- but the teacher in me is like, 'Why weren't they wearing safety goggles?' Goyle, in particular, his eyes got it. It went in his eyes. This is a big deal in the science classroom. You do not let kids mess with things without putting goggles on, and it's just like God.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And I know we're in a different world, but the idea that it's a potion that could hurt you and no one's wearing gloves, no one's wearing lab coats, no one's wearing goggles, I'm just like, 'Ugh.' Anyway, I got that out of my system. There, that's good. But the idea of a teacher who can read your mind is both exhilarating and terrifying for me as a teacher; to have that kind of superpower -- especially if you've got, in this case, a seventh-grade science class -- to be able to look at the rowdy kids in the room and to know what's happening in their head would be helpful, and also probably horrifying. But I think that what's fascinating about this for me is that the first time I read this book, obviously, I didn't know about Legilimency. I hadn't really thought that much about Snape as I have in the last five or six years from reading your book and just talking to you about it. This idea that Snape at this point knows it's Harry, but also he can see that the conflict between Harry and Draco or the Gryffindors and Slytherins has escalated to the point that it's actually dangerous, means that he's going to take a different approach.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: He decides not to call Harry out in the moment, because I think he realizes it's not going to do any good. Me sending him off to the Headmaster's office or threatening to expel him again... he's not going to get expelled. He's going to send Harry to Dumbledore and nothing's going to happen, so it's not going to help. It feels like, even though he knows exactly what happened, he's making a different choice: to do something to help the kids do this better instead of continue to potentially actually harm each other.

Lorrie: Yeah, it's an intervention. Because tensions have been so high, people have been nearly killed, and the issue of blood purity is at the core, these two Houses are the biggest opponents; for Goyle to be targeted, okay. Obviously, we know who's been really stressed out against each other. Half the class has been targeted by the other half of the class, so he's going to do something. Ron says to Harry, "'Snape can't prove it was you. What can he do?' 'Knowing Snape, something foul,' said Harry as the Polyjuice potion frothed and bubbled." And this is one of my favorite tricks in this whole series. I love this so much: there's a line break -- an extra line break between paragraphs -- indicating a change of scene, but there are no other words. There's Ron and Harry wondering what Snape could possibly do, and then the next words are: "A week later, Harry, Ron, and Hermione were walking across the entrance hall when they saw a small amount of people gathered around the notice board, reading a piece of parchment that had just been pinned up." The next thing is about this Dueling Club that's just introduced out of nowhere, with no sign of whose idea this was or why it's appearing all of a sudden. This reminds me of one of my favorite pieces of writing I've read in the past 10 years, which is a *New York Times* deep-dive article into glitter. This was published in 2018 (I'll put a link in the show notes) and it's about this one glitter factory that is one of two producers of glitter, the biggest producers in the US. So the journalist is asking the tour guide which industry is the biggest market for glitter, and the tour guide won't say. The tour guide says she absolutely knows that she can't tell you. "I asked if she would tell me off the record. She would not. I asked if she would tell me off the record after this piece was published. She would not. I told her I couldn't die without

knowing. She guided me to the automotive grade pigments." And that's the paragraph. Okay. So with that trick, the journalist doesn't tell us, and now we know who is the biggest market for glitter in this country and why they won't let you know.

JC: That's interesting.

Lorrie: It's so terrible for their image. They won't let you know that this is what they depend on.

JC: That's really fun. And yeah, that's a great bit of writing, for sure. Oh.

Lorrie: Yeah, the whole article is brilliantly done, but that just... oh. I just saluted when I read that, just how funny it is and how big the stakes are.

JC: Oh, wow.

Lorrie: So yeah, when I read that, that bit of proximity without any indication and the need for secrecy, it made me think about how Ron and Harry say, "What is Snape going to do?" And then the next thing we know, this notice comes up. When I was working with fifth-graders on reading the first three books, I asked them whose idea was it to start the Dueling Club, because we have Lockhart saying: "Now, Professor Dumbledore has granted me permission to start this little Dueling Club to train you all in case you ever need to defend yourselves, as I myself have done on countless occasions. For full details, see my published works. Let me introduce my assistant, Professor Snape," said Lockhart, flashing a wide smile." Of course, as a child, you're reading this going, "Wait, since when is Snape ever an assistant to Lockhart?" "He tells me he knows a tiny little bit about dueling himself, and has sportingly agreed to help me with a short demonstration before we begin." So as you're trying to wrap your brain around Snape saying that he knows a *tiny* bit about anything...

JC: Oh, my God.

Lorrie: Lockhart says that Snape "knows a tiny little bit about dueling," and by this point, we know how much people have to know about something for Lockhart to be threatened enough to minimize it like that. "And has sportingly agreed to help me"; we can just picture Snape being 'sporting' about anything, and how much he must enjoy being the assistant to Gilderoy Lockhart.

JC: Oh, God. You can almost see the smoke coming out of his ears, drifting out.

Lorrie: It's really enjoyable.

JC: I really want to know, behind the scenes, what happened. Can you picture the scene of Snape going to Dumbledore and saying, "This is something that I think we need," and explaining why, and Dumbledore saying, "Okay, but it can't just be you."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It has to be like this cross-house thing. It's got to be more than one teacher; it cannot just be you, because we all know what will happen. Somehow, Lockhart talking his way into... that's what I imagine is Lockhart... "Oh, well, I know a thing or two about dueling," and Snape going, "Oh, fuuuuuuck." In my head, during this entire scene, Snape has got that eyes half-closed, "Oh, my God" expression on his face constantly. Holding it inside, but...

Lorrie: "I can barely tolerate living on the same planet as this moron."

JC: "As this moron who's calling me his assistant, and oh, my God." Then, of course, actions speak louder than words, and Snape does get a lovely little moment.

Lorrie: It's such a snapshot of being the competent person who can't get credit, and seeing the incompetent person just come in and take all the credit. When I was working with the fifth graders, I had them at this point look up all the other instances of Lockhart when he butts in and takes credit for other people's ideas. So they read them out loud, they found the pages, and then I said to them, "Suppose you were the real Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, but you couldn't say that you were because of the curse and you don't want people to know that's what you're doing, but you have to somehow teach real defense without anyone catching on. What would you do?" The kids at that point realize, "Oh, I would mention my plan in front of Gilderoy Lockhart and wait." And I said, "What are the chances that Lockhart would claim your idea as his own?" And the kids are like, "A hundred percent."

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: This is the moment that Lockhart is being the decoy for Snape being the real Defense teacher, and then Ron and Harry whisper to each other, "Wouldn't it be good if they finished each other off?" And at this point, Lockhart and Snape are equally abhorrent; that balance will shift later, but as usual, they're being portrayed as exact opposites. So we have the set-up: Snape is the sporting assistant, Lockhart is talking about how very, very much he knows, and this is the set-up for introducing Harry's signature spell.

JC: Yes, yes.

Lorrie: This is where it all happens.

JC: Lockhart and Snape do their little duel. They face off against each other, and that's when Snape says *Expelliarmus* for the first time.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This time reading it, I had a "'Oh!' I sat back in my chair' moment of, "Holy crap, there it is."

Lorrie: This is where it happened.

JC: Wow, and that changes everything. I guess I had forgotten that Snape taught Harry that spell. Wow.

Lorrie: People forget this. Yes.

JC: Everyone thinks it's Dumbledore, and it's not, so that was incredible. But even better is that it hits Lockhart, he slams into the wall, and then in an almost cartoon-like way, he slides down the wall and ends in a heap on the floor. Even for people who don't like Snape, that's a beautiful moment.

Lorrie: It's satisfying.

JC: To see Lockhart so humiliated, it's just beautiful. Of course, he pops up like, "Oh, yeah, I could have dodged that if I'd really wanted to." Oh, my God, and everyone in the room sees through that, but that's such a fantastic moment to watch him just slam rock-hard into the wall. You know he felt good inside.

Lorrie: Yeah, and it didn't even take a lot.

JC: Right. It was just FLOONK.

Lorrie: Because this is Snape's M.O.: if you want to teach Defense to the greatest number of people, you go for something really simple. Something so simple that a child could do it, that you can just call on. You don't do something super-complicated like a Patronus, which even adults can't do. This is basic. This is in everyone's toolbox, and it's so simple that a child could take out Lockhart because he's really not very good.

JC: That's great.

Lorrie: So yeah, this is when Snape introduces the spell that's going to become Harry's signature. And when they have to pair up students, before anything can happen, Snape goes straight for Harry, won't let him pair with Ron; he calls Harry and Ron "The Dream Team," so you can feel the sarcasm.

JC: Right, right.

Lorrie: And he calls over Draco specifically, and he's smiling coldly. Harry tries to team up with Hermione; he sees Hermione at this point and he pairs Hermione with Millicent Bulstrode, also very clever of him. And that is the moment that sets the rest of the series into motion. He doesn't want this to be a gentleman's sport, where you courteously bow to your opponent and you observe the formalities and you cast spells in an organized manner. That's not it. He's getting people who hate each other so that they have heightened hostility. They hate each other so much, they can't follow the rules; they're supposed to just disarm, but they just go after each other. Great. That's what Snape wants. When you feel this way about somebody, it's totally a different experience from just going through a lesson politely, not neutral. He is indoctrinating the students, which sounds bad, but that is what teaching is when you take students and you show them things, you expose them to things, and those are the things that they're going to take in and do whether they wanted to or not because they've been exposed to them. He's indoctrinating students with disarmament as a first-line response. Yeah, you can work on trying to address hatred and prejudice. That's a nice long-term goal. What are you going to do when they're fighting and they're blowing each other up and something loose in the castle is trying to kill people, and the purebloods versus the Muggle-borns are actually saying genocidal things? He's indoctrinating them with this response. He is subverting Lucius Malfoy's ambition for Draco right under everyone's noses. He's under the radar.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: On the surface, Draco is his teacher's pet; of course, Lucius and Draco expect him to be fawning all over Draco, and he does actually like Draco. But underneath, he's training. This secret disarmament: it's his secret agenda, because Draco has been, until this point, echoing the bigotry that he's gotten from his father. He is showing his indoctrination, and Snape is replacing it or competing with it with immediate disarmament. The lasting consequences from this act, now that he has Harry and Draco practice *Expelliarmus* against each other -- the people that they hate the most -- those boys are going to eventually go on to use this spell to bring down, each of them, one of the most powerful wizards of the century.

JC: True, very true. Yes.

Lorrie: And they're both going to do it using Draco's wand.

JC: Oh, that's true. Wow.

Lorrie: In both cases, it's going to be Draco's wand against the Elder Wand.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: And both of those wands are going to recognize both Harry and Draco as their owners, because as we see elsewhere in this series, Dumbledore says about Voldemort, "I taught Tom Riddle. I recognize his spells, I recognize his traces." Both Harry and Draco have been taught by the same person; they've both been taught by Snape, and the wands consider their magic to be interchangeable. They both have this instinct that's been indoctrinated into them during this one lesson that when you're faced with somebody that you really hate and you really wish ill on them and you want to hurt them, the first thing you do is *Expelliarmus* and it's going to work. They have the same signature magic, both these boys, the same teacher; they also have the same capacity for evil. Both of the boys end up using Draco's wand to cast two of the three Unforgivables, and they both have to know that power to experience it and to know what it takes to overcome having committed that kind of crime. This is what Snape has contributed to their essence. As I've said several times, this is Harry's signature spell, and it's the one thing that anybody learns in Defense Against the Dark Arts this year.

JC: Yeah. Yeah, that's true. It's true. It comes back to that thing that you said a lot, that Snape is always the real Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, and that's a theme that I'm really interested in continuing to look for for the next few books: what is it that they learn from Snape that they don't learn from whoever is officially the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher.

Lorrie: Well, when there's a competent Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, then Snape is not it.

JC: Oh, okay.

Lorrie: So he's not it when Lupin is there, except for when Lupin is having a lycanthropy week.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: And he's not the Defense teacher when fake Mad-Eye Moody is there, but Lockhart is basically just holding an empty position here.

JC: True. Yeah, basically that class is about reading Lockhart's books and writing poems about it, apparently. I think this whole idea of Snape's recognition of the rising tensions and the solution, and then has to teach the kids a very particular spell, and the fact that he makes sure that he puts together kids who he knows are going to have some animosity: it's like, Okay, I know that you're going to be hurling hexes at each other, so let's do it in a controlled environment. Obviously, he wants everyone to use *Expelliarmus*, and then no one does. It becomes just chaos, but you're in a controlled environment and he can come along and *Finite Incantatem*, so that's really brilliant.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This idea of... it's like that classic, "I don't know if you're going to fight; go! Let's do it right here, where there's someone who can pull you apart when you need to be pulled apart. Go."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That's amazing.

Lorrie: I used to work with this organization in Philadelphia called Conflict Resolution Theatre. My job for them was to make quilts and to make dream pillows, but they would bring the skit around to the Philadelphia public schools where they would teach what to do in times of conflict -- we're talking conflict like guns -- the first thing you do is walk away, de-escalate, and that gets drilled into you first before anything else. Even Lockhart recognizes that he has not been doing a great job. He says, "Oh, maybe I should teach you how to *block* unfriendly spells." This is when Snape pairs up Harry and Draco again and whispers something to Draco, which I've never been able to figure out. As far as I can tell, is it like he's telling Draco, "Oh, do that Slytherin trick that all the Slytherins know about making a snake appear?" I don't know. But Draco is smirking and Snape is also smirking. That's when Draco makes a snake appear, and Snape is about to say, "Don't worry, I'll get it." Then Harry discovers that when he can speak to snakes, everyone freaks out.

JC: Yeah. That moment is so interesting because first, the snake appears and Snape's like, "Okay, don't worry about it, I'll get it," because all the kids are freaked out, and then Lockhart actually agitates the snake.

Lorrie: Yes. Thank you, Gilderoy.

JC: Right, it's Lockhart's fault.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Right, and then the snake looks like it's going after Justin. This is the part that I always find really interesting: the snake looks like it's going after Justin; Harry steps in and talks to the snake -- little does he know what's about to happen -- and then the snake backs off. But that's not what everyone remembers. Everyone was in that room. They all saw what happened, and this baffles Harry, too. No one remembers it correctly, because they were so freaked out by hearing the Parseltongue.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And that's really an interesting comment about how mob mentality works, or just how human beings work.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Everybody saw it.

Lorrie: Or how fear works.

JC: Yeah, or how fear works. Everybody saw it. Everyone remembers it the wrong way.

Lorrie: Because what we've been seeing now is that this child of destiny has this power that's so commonplace to him that he doesn't even know it's a big deal, but nobody has seen this in decades, and that just overrides the sequence of events. All they know is that nobody in this room can talk to snakes except this little kid, and the little kid just said something to the snake and the snake listened to him. "Oh, okay." It makes even the teachers lose it, and Harry has no idea what he just did that makes everybody look at him this way. That was so relatable to me:

that phenomenon where you think you're a normal person and you just go around doing your normal things, and then there's something you do that makes everybody freak out and you don't even know which of the ten things you just did it is. 'Wait, so what about me is not normal? But I've always been like that.' Usually in life, you go around thinking you're the only one who has a certain flaw; then, through confession and sharing you find that 'no, everyone has that feeling. You're normal,' and this is the opposite. Oh, God. If that's been something he's had in his whole life, how does he know? How's he supposed to know what's normal and what isn't?

JC: Right, exactly. And the idea that he had filed the ability to talk to snakes under all the other weird magical things that he could do before he knew he was a wizard.

Lorrie: He can make his hair grow back, right?

JC: Yeah, yeah. Seems normal for wizards, so why wouldn't this one be? He's just shocked that everybody else...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. It's also something fundamental about his identity, too, because he thinks he knows who he is. But this is his first hint that he's connected to Voldemort in ways that probably no one but maybe even Dumbledore suspects at this point, and that's a shock. That'd be a pretty foundational shock to learn that maybe you aren't who you thought you were.

Lorrie: Yeah, and here's this incredibly strange world where they accept everything, and now there's something in him that freaks them out? Oh. Now, you have to feel for Ginny, too. This is what Ginny must have been feeling, like, "I can't go to anyone. It's going to be worse if I tell anyone. What if nobody knows what to do about this?" Then we have Snape "looking at Harry in an unexpected way: It was a shrewd and calculating look, and Harry didn't like it." Snape not having foreseen this -- Snape looking at Harry -- you don't ever want to be the thing that Snape is looking at and trying to figure out.

JC: Yeah, really. It's interesting, too, that it was a surprise for everyone in the room, but Snape more than anyone else knows what that means.

Lorrie: This is significant. Yeah. Oy.

JC: Before we move on, there's one thing to just step back a little bit that I thought was funny: after the first round, when all the kids have thrown hexes at each other, there's the funny moment where Millicent actually has Hermione in a headlock; they're not even using their wands anymore. Lockhart walks around the room and just drops this commentary, and it's a perfect way of describing the chaos without actually describing it. It's that showing and not telling thing again, but that line where he says to someone, we don't even know to whom: "Pinch it hard, it'll stop bleeding in a second." That's so funny. It's just casually, "Oh, yeah, you'll stop bleeding." You can imagine the chaos of the situation just from that little bit of commentary.

Lorrie: I love Hermione whimpering. With wands, she is more than Millicent Bulstrode's equal. But no, this is real hostility. You're going to have to know more. You're going to have to think harder than that. Then we get the beautiful, beautiful moment where Harry tries to say something in Parseltongue, and he discovers the words won't come when he wants to; he has to be face-to-face with a snake to do it. Oh, I love that. There's a certain situation, a certain emotional setup, that has to be present in his mood for this to engage, and we're going to see

more of that later. There's a fandom controversy, and I fall on, I think, an unpopular side of it: eventually in Book Seven, Ron speaks Parseltongue.

JC: Oh. Right, right.

Lorrie: He opens the Chamber, and when Harry says, "How did you do it?" Ron says, "Oh, I just listened to you and I just imitated the sounds you made." People were saying, "Well, you can't just do that. That makes no sense. Parseltongue is not like French. You can't just make meaning by imitating it." The thing that is different about Ron -- the reason why I think that was not a mistake and Ron really was able at that point to speak Parseltongue -- this comes in the point of the story after Ron has been possessed by a bit of Voldemort's soul.

JC: Right. That is true.

Lorrie: There's a thing he can feel now that he wasn't able to feel before, and that's the thing that enables Harry here to speak Parseltongue: he has a piece of Voldemort's soul in him.

JC: Right. Oh, my God. That's... whoa. That's really cool.

Lorrie: And when Harry is being fully himself, when the piece of Voldemort's soul in him isn't activated, Harry himself cannot speak Parseltongue. But when there's this situation that engages all of this conflict and this survival urge in him, then he can access that.

JC: So this is the first real... Well, it's not really the first one, but it's a significant clue about Harry himself being a Horcrux, then.

Lorrie: Yeah, what is different about Harry. Then... this is the last huge thing for me in this chapter because so many huge things happen in this chapter: Hermione playing the 'good girl' card is the first one that I love so much. Snape pulling off an incredible subversive move as the true Defense teacher without violating his facade as pro-Slytherin favoritist, that's a huge thing. Harry learning his signature spell, the whole Elder Wand plot line being set forth in this one, innocent little chapter; all these things are huge. But another huge thing is this is where Harry starts to have horrible doubts about his identity. "What if I am a Slytherin? No, I reject that." At this point -- developmentally, appropriately -- he rejects every hint that anything in him could be Slytherin. He's giving that fear a lot of power, and he's thinking, "I'm in Gryffindor. The Sorting Hat wouldn't have done that if I had Slytherin blood in me, but then it wanted it to put me in." This is a years-long inner conflict that Harry has: "What about me is me? What can I own, and what is my trauma?"

JC: Ooh.

Lorrie: "What about me is me, and what was put into me by my enemy, my would-be murderer? And how much power does that have over me? Whatever he did to me, has it been formative? Is it changing me to be fundamentally not myself? Am I turning into him? If there's something about me that is part of me because of him, can I claim it, or am I poisoning myself by letting that happen? Am I supposed to be vigilant against myself and not let myself enjoy my gifts? I thought that was my gift; apparently it's not. Have I just been mindlessly letting myself be corrupted by this the whole time? How am I supposed to know? How can I trust anything?" Much to Harry's credit, by the seventh book he is able to identify parts of himself that are very Slytherin, some of which are truly his and would have been in him no matter what; some of which he only learned because he has Voldemort's soul in him, or because Snape taught him,

or because of circumstance, but he learns to be less afraid of it. But as a 12-year-old right now, this is really scary, and this leads to the horrendous chest monster conflicts of later years. For a person, to be afraid of yourself is so immobilizing. That's real fear.

JC: Well, it's so very relatable, and I think this is part of adolescence, too, that you've been a child and you've been protected by adults; the idea that you could have power that threatens the adults around you.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That's terrifying, when the adults look at you with horror because of something that you've done or said.

Lorrie: Yeah, and you're like, "I'm just a kid!"

JC: Yeah. It's a common adolescent experience to different degrees, obviously.

Lorrie: Yes, it is.

JC: That idea of realizing that you have that kind of power.

Lorrie: Or that it's being put on you when you're just going about your business, and that you'll be blamed for it.

JC: For sure. Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: And that adults will project their fears on you, adults and your peers. Okay, Ernie McMillan is possibly my favorite minor character. I love him. He's so well written. Just from his dialogue, you can totally picture this whole kid. He's this pompous and formal person who's making a lot of assumptions in this chapter about how evil Harry is, but he's also essentially sweet-natured. Ernie is the one who's making up this conspiracy theory that, "Oh, well, Harry probably is a Dark Lord. Who knows what other magical Dark powers he has." Then he says, "That's probably why You-Know-Who wanted to kill him in the first place. Didn't want another Dark Lord competing with him." While Ernie is wrong, he's on to something. That is the wish that Voldemort had that he was projecting onto this baby: the wish for somebody to be his equal, or someone who can limit him, or at least be a worthy opponent. Somebody whose opposition can help Voldemort learn more about himself somehow, because Voldemort has just been so alone, his powers have been so alien and greater than everybody else's; then he hears that there's this child being born who can bring him down. "Oh, can I learn something from this?" He's projecting all of that hope onto baby Harry. So no, Harry James Potter is not another Dark Lord, and is not so powerful that he needs to be killed, but that's what Voldemort wishes and that's what he has put into Harry by putting a piece of his own soul into Harry's scar. That's the change that Harry never asked for that has in fact changed him -- mostly damaged him -- but has also created changes that are not negative. But how is he supposed to know which one is which? He didn't ask for any of this, but that's what he has to grapple with. And while Harry is thinking these things, then oh, poor Harry comes across Justin Finch-Fletchley.

JC: Oh, my God. It couldn't be worse.

Lorrie: No, it really couldn't.

JC: At all. That whole scene, it's a particular kind of... attention's not the word. My kiddo experiences this level of anxiety in a much more intense way than I do, but I experience it, too: this moment of, "I just want to close this book and walk away, because it's worse and then it gets worse, and it gets worse," and the worst possible thing you can imagine at this moment happens.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: And it's like, "Aaahhh!" Yeah, it's really hard to read. I think I really scanned that paragraph because I couldn't read every word because it's so awful. Then, I guess, there's five more books, so it's going to be fine. These generally end in a happy place.

Lorrie: Ai, yi, yi.

JC: We're going to survive it, but oh, my gosh.

Lorrie: So this is the most rotten luck, and then on top of that, there's Nearly Headless Nick, which is just funny. Then on top of that, just when this is the worst that can happen, that's when Peeves shows up and starts singing loud rhyming songs about your predicament to call everybody's attention to this. Yeah, Peeves is a menace.

JC: And then everyone comes running, and Ernie's like, "See, I told you!"

Lorrie: Yeah, and McGonagall's like, "That's enough." Even in the middle of all this, this is such a character moment for Harry. Even though he would love to do a hit-and-run... He would love to just leave and pretend he hadn't seen it, but he thinks, "I can't just leave Justin here," and not everybody would have thought that. Some people would have just run. So yeah...

JC: That's true. That's true.

Lorrie: And while he's wondering what to do about that, that's when he gets discovered and it's too darn late anyway.

JC: Yeah. And McGonagall taking him to Dumbledore, and then saying, "It's out of my hands."

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Harry's like, "But, but... I swear I didn't do it," and McGonagall's like, "It's out of my hands now."

Lorrie: I love that, though. I love that, because this is when you see, okay, the grown-ups have been talking. Yeah. We've been wondering, 'Well, where are the grown-ups? What are they doing?' Well, Snape has set up this conflict resolution theater thing; McGonagall knows that when she looks for certain things happening, then it's time to take it to Dumbledore. Okay, they haven't been doing nothing. And it's kind of exciting to be summoned to Dumbledore's office. Oh, the plot thickens; it's been bumped up a level. Then there's that spiral staircase that goes up and up and up in so many circles that Harry gets dizzy, and it's funny because in future years, Harry is going to know this office so well, he's just going to barge right in.

JC: Yeah, true.

Lorrie: I forget that you can't just barge right in, that you have to take this staircase that takes forever to get up there and you get vertigo.

JC: And you have to know the password.

Lorrie: Yeah. So in this first instance, when Harry enters this imposing place, we really see how relatively tiny Harry is, and how relatively huge this space is, how imposing it is.

JC: I love how this chapter ends on kind of a "dun dun DUN."

Lorrie: Yeah. That's where the chapter ends. It's like, "Okay. New level. What happens?"

JC: This was actually really hard for me to stop reading at this point. I flipped the page, and I was like, "No, no, I'm going to make myself wait. I'm going to make myself wait!"

Lorrie: Yeah, this is the chapter where the whole series gets set up. Snape is so skilled at being under the radar. He's such a good double agent that readers don't even catch it, but no, this was all him.

JC: It's really, really cool.

Lorrie: This is him saying in front of Lockhart the whole lesson plan and then letting nature take its course; and this is him treating Draco Malfoy, the son of buddy-buddy Lucius, the same way that he treats Harry Potter, whom he can't stand. "Look, you two: whoever I like and don't like, you two... I cannot let you kill each other. This is what you're going to do, and if your dad found out I was doing this, he would be really mad. But you're not going to know it was my idea. Draco, you're not going to know it's my idea, because that would blow my cover in front of you. Harry, you're not going to know, because if you know it's coming from me, you won't learn it."

JC: You won't learn -- Yeah.

Lorrie: And obviously he cooked it up with Dumbledore, but Dumbledore's fingerprints are not on this at all. And the blonde wig guy somehow thinks he has something to do with it, and if we can get a couple of laughs in at his expense, well, that's just bonus pay for Snape. He surely deserves some bonus pay after this. So Snape: not a nice guy, but he got a lot of hard work done in this chapter.

JC: Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: It's going to work. It works better than Dumbledore expects. Later on in the King's Cross chapter of *Deathly Hallows*, when Harry says to Dumbledore, "You planned the Elder Wand to end up with Snape, didn't you?" And Dumbledore says yes and Harry says, "But that didn't work out the way you expected," and Dumbledore says, "No, it didn't." He didn't expect that the *Expelliarmus* lesson that Snape taught Draco would be so effective against the indoctrination from Lucius and the Death Eaters and Voldemort that it would catch on and hold, even at the top of the tower when Draco is almost seventeen. He wasn't foreseeing. That's really a lot to hope for as a teacher. You would love to be the teacher who changes the trajectory of a doomed student's life. You look at a student, thinking, "Is it even worth it to try to save this student? Aren't they just going to go on to be evil, just like their whole family? How can struggle and good and fighting indoctrination possibly have any pull on a teenager, compared to the easy seduction and riches and instant reward of this other path? I don't know. Should I even try? I'm going to try." But you don't do it assuming that it's going to work. A lot of times, it doesn't work. And who are you? You're just one teacher, right? It worked better than they expected, and that is a real gift because you don't do it expecting to be effective. You just do it in case you might somehow get a message in there somewhere.

JC: Yeah. It's really interesting to think about how the ramifications of things that happen in this one chapter really do echo through the rest of the book and impact the ending.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Wow, that's cool. Very cool.

Lorrie: So this is me –

JC: When we get to Dumbledore's Army, this is the first thing Harry teaches everybody: *Expelliarmus*.

Lorrie: Yeah, and he gets criticized by the fandom for having this one spell, like Ginny and the Bat-Bogey Hex. "Don't you know any other hexes?" Lupin criticizes him for it. Nope, the thing he learned from Snape is the thing he's going to stick with. It does get mentioned later in this volume and in other volumes that Snape is the one that Harry learned this from. Just a little mention, just the tiniest of hints. No, that was not an accident.

JC: Yeah. The one standing out to me is at the end -- and we're getting ahead of ourselves here -- but the end of *Half-Blood Prince*, when Harry tries to hex Snape, and Snape says, "No, no hexes from you. That's not what I taught you."

Lorrie: "I taught you better than that."

JC: "I taught you better than that, kid." Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

Lorrie: "I know exactly how your mind works, I know exactly how fast you learn, I know what your talents are. Don't even." Yeah, teacher-student. Well, the next chapter is The Polyjuice Potion.

JC: Oh, my goodness.

Lorrie: It's kind of hard to think about moving on after this, because my mind is still all caught up in all the things that just happened in this chapter.

JC: Oh, my gosh, I'm just peeking ahead. Yes. Ooh, and then Chapter 13 is The Very Secret Diary. We're moving. We're heading places.

Lorrie: Oh, boy. Yeah.

JC: Things are rolling.

Lorrie: Yep, the cauldron is bubbling. Well, I'll talk to you then.

JC: All right, looking forward to it!

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.