

HARRY POTTER AFTER 2020

with LORRIE KIM and JC

Transcript

Episode 2.3

Book 2, Chapter 3: The Burrow

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 Three: The Burrow.

Lorrie: Hello, JC.

JC: Hello.

Lorrie: Are you ready to talk about Chapter Three of *Chamber of Secrets*, The Burrow?

JC: Yes, yes. This chapter makes up for so much of the awfulness of the previous two, so I am indeed looking forward to talking about it.

Lorrie: So this is the chapter, the memorable chapter, where Ron, Fred and George show up with a flying Ford Anglia outside of Harry's prison bars, and they engineer a prison break for him and take him to their home, The Burrow. And what did you notice about this chapter?

JC: I'm really curious about the backstory of how Harry ended up being rescued by Fred and George and Ron. They just appear there from Harry's perspective, but Ron is like, "We were so worried about you." Later on, we find out that Molly and Arthur were worried and they were going to go pick up Harry if they had to. People were talking about this and were worried about Harry, and that was such a relief to Harry, I think. "Oh, someone did care about me after all." But I'm also curious about whose idea was this to go and rescue Harry. Did Ron plant the seed knowing that Fred and George would pick up on it and do something about it? Was it Fred and George's idea? There's a lot of interesting stuff going on behind the scenes there that this makes me curious about.

Lorrie: Huh. I haven't thought of that. We do see other examples in the series where people have a problem and then they figure, "I know what I'll do. I'll go mention it in front of Fred and George and see what happens."

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: So I can imagine Ron might have gone to them and said, "Can you help? What am I going to do? I understand what Harry must be feeling right now. What can we do? We can't just sit around and wait."

JC: That concern that the Weasleys have for him... all of them are happy to see him, right? Everyone's happy that Harry is safe. We haven't quite gotten there yet in this part of the story, but this really establishes that this is a second family for Harry and it's the kind of family he never had, so I love that part of it. But before we go on from the rescue, I love the fact that Fred and George are so good at non-magical shenanigans. They know how to pick locks. Of course they do! What else do they know? They're like, "Oh, yeah, sometimes you have to do it the non-magical way." I love that, that they're just that clever and that they have all these skills.

Lorrie: I know there are many, many fans for whom Fred and George are their favorite characters, or they'll say that Fred and George are the most smart, brilliant characters in the series. I have a response to them that I think is similar to Hermione's: I'm kind of uneasy. "You're breaking a lot of rules. Are you sure that's safe? I'll just be over here, not in the front row of the audience to be called up for one of your pranks."

JC: Yeah, that's true. The whole family dynamic is so interesting, because you've got the oldest... Bill, I guess, is the oldest, right?

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah.

JC: Classic oldest kid, all the way down to Ginny, who's the only girl and the classic sort of baby of the family. But it's every kid... you've got seven kids. Then they all have to find their own niche somehow. Fred and George, they grabbed a niche and ran with it, and they're the only ones in their family who were like that, so it's very interesting.

Lorrie: They are such a family of overachievers. It is a lot of pressure.

JC: To have all those older siblings, it's like, "Okay, you've just got to go the other direction a little bit."

Lorrie: And Ginny, obviously, the most powerful of all of them.

JC: I think, too, when I'm thinking about the escape scene, the mental image that I have of everyone sneaking around inside the Dursleys' house: just at the very end, even though they've pulled the bars off the window -- they've yanked this thing off-- they've made all of this noise, but it's the owl that wakes up Vernon Dursley. He's like, "Aaahhh, that ruddy owl!" and then that image of him holding onto Harry's feet and Harry almost doesn't escape. They get Harry in the car, they make the escape. "Oh, finally," and Harry yells something kind of snarky out the window at them on the way. But then I'm always thinking, "So what happened afterward? Do the Dursleys just think... what did they think?" You can't call the police. They wouldn't call the police in that situation. Do they just think, "Well, guess we'll never see him again." We leave them just gaping out the window, but I'm so curious to know what happened next with them.

Lorrie: I'm guessing the first thing they did was get rid of all the evidence that you could see from the outside. Luckily for them, it happened at a time when their neighbors were asleep. The dangling bars or whatever, they must have cleaned that up. And it always did strike me when Harry says, "We'll see you next summer!" It's a lot to assume that these people will take you back.

JC: It's almost a threat. "I'll see you next summer!" Yeah.

Lorrie: So I guess all of them know that the Dursleys are caught. There is nothing they can do about this.

JC: It is interesting to me still, too, that only Ron, I think at this point, really understands the awfulness that Harry is experiencing living with the Dursleys. No one else really gets it. Ron later says, "Oh, but they were starving him, mum," and Molly gives Harry more food, but I don't think anyone really understands until much later in the series just how awful Harry's life was. But Ron got a good glimpse.

Lorrie: Yeah. So I love the moment when they're settling into their flight. They've just realized, "Yes. Yes, we've done it, we've made it," and Harry says, "Let Hedwig out." She flies out of the cage and she's just flying next to them, behind them or alongside them. She must be so relieved, because she's been so good. Even earlier in the chapter, she understands that she has to keep quiet. She's been really good, and now she's stretching her wings. This is something that this author often does: she uses animals to parallel what the human characters are feeling, and it deepens what they're feeling. One example that always broke my heart was Buckbeak the Hippogriff, just being imprisoned, staying cooped up in a room all day, every day. Obviously, he shouldn't be; he's a hippogriff, and that is exactly the kind of person Sirius should have been, roaming around. Or the Gringotts dragon, breathing fresh air after, who knows, centuries. Fang, Hagrid's dog, howling sometimes, and the phoenix song, singing about grief. That's just a really good trick that this author uses, and it hits home every time to me. So yeah: Hedwig out of the cage, flying with them, happy.

JC: That poor bird. In the cage all summer?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And the cage was locked, so how did Harry clean it without magic? I don't know. I think I focus too much on these details. Hedwig only squawked at the end because she thought Harry was going to forget her, which he kind of was about to. He was so anxious to get out the door, so she squawked, and he was like, "Oh, Hedwig." I don't know that much about the concept of a familiar as it is used in thinking about magical people and their animal companions, but Hedwig certainly seems to be really intelligent and able to understand when Harry talks to her. She understands human language, and obviously owls in this universe are really, really intelligent and they have jobs that they apparently get paid for. It's a really interesting relationship, so that idea of Hedwig also being let out of her cage and getting to stretch her wings is like yes, that's that parallel that you're talking about. It really does make a big emotional impact, Hedwig just going, "Ah, at last, I can stretch my wings out."

Lorrie: Yeah. It's nice reinforcing the bond that is at the center of this story, when people care about someone who's under their protection, and the tug. We may code that as maternal instinct -- the fierceness that you feel when you have to protect someone -- but it's not maternal. It's anybody who's taking care of somebody who's a little bit less powerful and feels responsible for them. So yeah, for Harry to feel that right at the end, oof. Yeah.

JC: It also reminds me: we all went through a long period of time where we were locked down, and that first time that I went out to a restaurant. I went to a place that wasn't a store that I was going to quickly go in and go out of, but I actually went and enjoyed a meal at a place that was

not my house. That feeling of, "Is it okay to enjoy this again? Look, there's other people here. This is strange," all the strangeness. So relief, but also, "Wow, I forgot what this was like." I see Harry in the car with the Weasleys just being overwhelmed by the relief of escaping. "I am going to go back to Hogwarts after all. Someone did care about me enough to come and help me." But also -- this whole chapter, there's so much world building, but they're just talking. They're talking about things that he doesn't really understand what they're saying. They're talking about their dad's job, etc., and it's this overwhelming moment of, "Oh, that's what it's going to be like to go back to Hogwarts and be back in the magical world again." So that locked down thing, really... I was feeling that, too.

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah. So then they show at the Burrow, and as you mentioned, this is a major world-building chapter. There are just so many details packed, and each detail just opens up a whole new window to this world, like, "Oh, wow!" Okay, so Arthur works at the Ministry in a really minor clerical department. He works at the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Office while he misuses Muggle artifacts, and this drives his wife mad. I hate it so much. Oh, my God, I hate their dynamic so much, and that puts me, I think, in the minority.

JC: It's such a strange... ugh.

Lorrie: In the fandom, there's a really comfortable view of the Weasleys as sort of an ideal family or some people who are relatable, and of Molly and Arthur as having a good supportive marriage. Meanwhile, I'm just thinking, "Send them to couples counseling. Holy shit."

JC: Yeah, there is so much to say about them. The idea of Molly as the one who is running everything, all of her kids are terrified of her. She's got that threatening parent persona thing where you don't want to piss her off; when Ron sees her, the text says that he turns green when he sees her. Even Fred and George; they're all taller than her, but yet they're terrified, right? And she does the whole 'wait 'til your father gets home,' but when the father comes home, we see that he's just kind of ineffectual. He's another child in this house that she has to manage.

Lorrie: That really upsets me.

JC: She's got eight children, and one of them is the one who has to go out and earn all the gold that keeps them alive. It's just like, "Oh my God." Yeah. 'Are the hets okay?' It's that level of...

Lorrie: It really is. My sympathy is all with Molly when the kids show up and she's yelling at them about the night of worries she just had. That's serious. For three of them to be gone and they didn't text?

JC: Yeah. "No note!"

Lorrie: I would have lost it.

JC: I think, too, she understands that they did it for a good reason, but also they worried her. They caused her all this worry. They did something that was dangerous. Then she's very over-the-top about, "I'm not mad at you, Harry. It's not your fault."

Lorrie: Oh, I love that. That's some A-plus parenting because it's really easy as a parent, if you don't do that, for kids to team up and exploit that. Or sometimes there are parents with several children -- there are some children that you tend to punish more than others. It's unconscious bias -- you can't help it, it's human -- and that can create all sorts of weird dynamics among siblings. For her to show that she's super conscientious about this -- even when she's in the

middle of raging -- that she can keep track of who she's mad at? That is reassuring. But yeah, I guess my sympathy for Molly here is that none of them are considering how shredded her nerves are, because that's the thing that upsets me about Arthur breaking the law in his own home, breaking the law that he wrote.

JC: Yeah, and wrote himself a little loophole.

Lorrie: Yeah, and the kids doing illegal stuff with the car that Arthur illegally souped up. Who pays the price for this? Molly's nerves pay the price. And the things that she yells at the kids about, she says, "You could have died. You could have been seen. You could have lost your father his job." Those are the things she worries about. Dying, that's a personal tragedy; being seen, that's a whole community-wide kind of stress. Losing their father his job: that is the most complicated of all, because Arthur jeopardizes his own job more than any of them. And yet, it's not even a good job. It does not make enough money, but he and Molly have this domestic deal where he makes the money and Molly does the homeschooling, which, we know, is a major economic sap on Wizarding households with children. Somebody has to do the homeschooling. So they've split it this way, and she also does all of the home management. I don't feel like Arthur keeps up his end of the deal.

JC: It reminds me a lot of -- it's not really a great comparison, but those very religious people who have seven kids because the Bible somewhere says you're supposed to have a quiver full. They homeschool all of them, and the dad is absolutely the patriarch and the mom's doing all the work behind the scenes and also has a blog apparently. Those kinds of families, it reminds me a bit of that. I don't know if the intention was to cast the Weasleys in that kind of a light, but it's hard for me not to associate this particular family with this very traditional parent breakdown of duties and the seven kids. It's hard for me not to think, "Hmm, what else is going on here?"

Lorrie: Well, I think I just automatically read them as Irish Catholic because of the hair color.

JC: Interesting. Yeah.

Lorrie: Even though the genders are reversed, I'm more used to patriarchal families or families who follow patriarchal tradition as wanting a zillion daughters until they get the longed-for son, so those genders are reversed. But yeah, the infinitely expandable duties of the wife and the expectation that one patriarchal salary is just going to have to do: how is she going to stretch that? By magic, apparently.

JC: Right. It is very interesting to me, too, though, that the fact that everyone in this world has access to magic. They have these spells that can do just about anything. You have these spells that can make the inside of your bag basically a TARDIS. You can put anything in it, right? Or they have the tents; it's a little tiny tent on the outside, you go in... She does a lot of magic to keep her household going, but somehow there are still economic differences between families. You've got the Malfoys, who the first mention of the Malfoys living in a manor house comes up in this chapter, and they're wealthy enough that they have slaves, essentially. Then you have the Weasleys, who live in a house that's barely held together. It clearly was built up on a pigsty originally, and so this idea of you think you could do anything with magic yet we still have a class system, that's really interesting.

Lorrie: Yeah. We will see later that the Weasleys are all really sensitive about Arthur's principles that keep him in a low-paying job, and the hardship that this puts on all of the family.

Considering that the family has bought into this agreement, I wish that he would be a little bit more considerate about the risks that he takes when he indulges in his law-breaking. If he really can't resist it, I wish he would be a grown-up about it and own up and say, "This is what it is. This is what makes my life worth living. I really care about this, but I know the toll that takes on you and I know the consequences if I get caught. What can we work out to make this functional?" as opposed to the current system, where he just sneaks around and acts like a kid when he gets caught. That seems to be asking for trouble.

JC: That is all played for comic effect, and we're clearly supposed to find this funny. It's all played up. It's a classic mom and dad situation, and it's supposed to be cute and funny.

Lorrie: Or relatable or recognizable. Yeah, I guess I'm not from that culture because I hate it so much and I find it so dysfunctional. What hurts me most, and I'm not sure we see that much of it in this chapter, but we will see it more and more: when he winks at the kids and says, "Don't tell your mother." Conspiring with the children against the other parent, that sets me off. That's not okay.

JC: Right, right.

Lorrie: And she is portrayed as somebody that they all fear, but they just want her to shut up. They just have to wait her out. They don't actually stop doing what they want.

JC: True.

Lorrie: They just sneak around her, including the dad.

JC: Right. So no one's listening to her. Yeah.

Lorrie: No. She is fairly powerless and screaming and not respected, even though her nerves have been shredded. Really, the person that they listen to is Arthur in the family, and that's a fandom discussion that I've disagreed with for a long time, where people assume, "Oh, Molly has all the power in the family." We see this especially in *Order of the Phoenix*, when Molly and Arthur have the disagreement about how much Harry should be told. Molly, she's pulling out everything she's got to try to argue that he's a child and has to be protected, and Arthur just says, "No, he's got to be told," and she loses. He is the one they listen to. She doesn't actually have a lot of power. That's why she's screaming all the time. But what she does have to do, reinforced by Arthur sneaking around instead of coming clean about the illegal stuff he's doing, is she has to perform emotional labor for all of them. She has to be the conscience, trying to keep them all from sabotaging themselves instead of all of them taking responsibility for their own judgment, which is appropriate when they are children but not when one of them is her husband. So, yeah. Anyway, there's a fandom party celebrating the Weasleys and their family dynamic. I've always stood outside that party. I can't quite come in.

JC: And I think about the clock. The clock with all the... I'm not sure. I think later on, we see a clear image of it, and maybe the image of it that I have is too close to what's in the film version. But the clock hands have everyone's faces on it, and then she has to be the one to make sure that they're not in mortal peril. You get the sense that she's the one who's watching that clock. If it was a Muggle clock, Arthur would care about it more, but the things that Molly does to keep the house running, she's balancing so many things. The image of her yelling at the boys for scaring the crap out of her; also, making breakfast at the same time. No one's helping her cook. She's doing this all by herself. Making sure Harry gets food, she flicks her wand to get the

dishes going. She's managing so many things at once. It's this image of the housewife who is taking care of everything, taking care of everyone. With seven children, why is no one helping? Come on. Yeah. Ugh, I feel for Molly. I really do. Oh, and then we get she's getting a little bit "oooh" over this picture of Gilderoy Lockhart and she gets mocked for it.

Lorrie: Oh, gosh, yeah. Well, she's entitled to a little fantasy. There is actually this latency view of romance in this chapter. Obviously, Harry and Ron are not old enough at this point to have feelings like this, so we see them looking like, "Oh, Percy's acting weird lately," and we find out later at the end of the book, "Oh, he has a girlfriend, that's what it is." But to Ron and Harry and people their age, it just looks weird. Oh, poor Ginny sees Harry and squeals and disappears. And then there's Molly, and they say she fancies him, and she, yeah, is embarrassed about this. But this is also super world-buildy, this whole chapter. The labor-saving spells at home, Celestina Warbeck we get, and then there's this weird thing about the garden gnomes.

JC: Oh, my God, the garden gnomes.

Lorrie: What the heck?

JC: I don't even remember. I'd forgotten about the garden gnomes, and the whole thing about... I went and looked them up because I was so disturbed by this whole thing, and they even... The way it's written, it's like, "No, you just have to get them really dizzy and fling them out," and they're yelling at you the entire time. They're little sentient creatures who live under the ground, and you're just flinging them. I don't know. I don't know about that.

Lorrie: I don't know.

JC: Oh, and the way they're described, too, as being brown-skinned and looking a little bit like potatoes.

Lorrie: And they bite.

JC: And they bite you with their little sharp teeth, but they also yell at you and you can teach them things. Later on, doesn't one of them... somebody's taught one of them to swear creatively? Oh, my God.

Lorrie: Yeah, the twins teach them curse words. But also, I'm not sure what it is that they do that's bad. Why do you want to get rid of them, and why is it useless? Because by the end of the chapter, they're all coming back.

JC: They're all coming back anyway. What I've read is that they're like groundhogs in the sense that they just dig up your yard and leave holes everywhere, and that's annoying, I guess, if you care. Other than that, they're just little magical creatures.

Lorrie: You just put up with them.

JC: I guess, and they have natural predators. Cats will chase them and stuff, so I don't know. I don't understand that part at all, but it seemed more just giving the boys an unpleasant chore to do as punishment, is what the scene came across as. Also, it feels like some important world building here again, that Wizards are looking down on other sentient, non-human, magical beings and treating them, literally, like dirt in this case.

Lorrie: They're harmless, mildly irritating, and permanent. Like Peeves. I just have to take them at face value as they're presented, that no, it doesn't hurt them to be made dizzy and flung. They just accept it as part of their lot, because I don't know what else to do with them.

JC: Oh, my God. Yeah.

Lorrie: So yeah, gnomes. Then, as you mentioned, Harry is brought to breakfast and Ron says that they have been literally starving him, and what Harry gets for breakfast is eight or nine sausages, three fried eggs and bread and butter. That sounds so nice.

JC: Yeah. Think about what he was eating in the last chapter. It was cold vegetable soup. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. So yeah, that was my long, long rant about the communication counseling that I wish that Molly and Arthur would get. But then we get to go up to see Ron's room at the very top of the house, and I love that Ron's character has a color scheme. Everything about him is really orange or else maroon, which he hates, and I find that very charming.

JC: It's just really cute. It's such a stereotypical boy room. Everything is covered with posters of his favorite sports team, and he's got a tank of frog spawn and comic books. He is the most stereotypical boy despite being a wizard, and Harry looks around and goes, "Yeah, I know this. I identify. I get it."

Lorrie: It's so comfortable.

JC: Yeah. It's exactly what you would expect from Ron Weasley.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's not so messy that it's gross, and there's nothing about it that would make you feel too polite to sit down. No, just grab a stack of comic books. Sit down any place there's a space, talk whenever you want. There's a ghoul; you don't have to worry about making too much noise, because the ghoul will always be making noise anyway.

JC: True. True.

Lorrie: And there's one of those little Easter eggs that fans can do anything with: the comic book is 'The Adventures of Martin Miggs, the Mad Muggle'. Anybody who wants can just write that whole comic themselves.

JC: That's funny.

Lorrie: And we find out later that Crabbe and Goyle read the same comic.

JC: That's funny. It's whatever the Avengers-verse is in the Harry Potter magical world. It's cute, too, that Ron is kind of embarrassed to show Harry his room because from Ron's perspective, it isn't much, he knows. But Harry, this is his first glimpse of a magical home; he's never been in one before, and it's everything. It's everything he didn't have. It's so different from the Dursleys that it's automatically going to be something he loves. Harry's sheer, wide-eyed wonder at all of this is fun to go along with as the reader, because we've also never seen a magical home at this point, so it's really fun. I think in the film version of this, that was one of my favorite scenes in that whole film is that when you first walk into the Burrow, they did a great job of trying to recreate what Harry experienced there. I'm imagining all the things that are happening there. It's really fun.

Lorrie: Yeah, the image I always get is a wooden spoon stirring soup on its own. I don't even know if we see that in the movie. I'm assuming we do, just because it's something that, in my mind, represents how you would feel at home. Like the witch who lives in the forest: if you get lured into her kitchen, what are you going to see? "Oh, come sit down, I'm making soup," and it's making itself.

JC: There's, too, also this sense of they're poor, but they have so much love. We can compare this with the house that Harry grew up in, we can compare this with... later on, we'll see the house that Draco Malfoy grew up in. This one, it's got so much going on. It's cluttered and everything has been reused and repurposed, and there's a lot of people in there. But yet, it's clearly a well-loved space and a space where all these people -- all these kids -- have thrived growing up. I love that image of all of this clutter being something that's just part of life. It's just such a contrast with what Harry grew up with. I don't think the Dursleys had plastic covers on their furniture, but you get the sense that maybe they do. I love how lived in the Burrow is, I guess.

Lorrie: Yeah. Petunia's always cleaning. We know -- especially from the twins but from the productive way that all of the Weasley kids live -- there's creativity happening here, so in that sense it's really lived in. There are human bonds happening, and there isn't this stifling sense that you have to... nobody is judging in this house.

JC: Yeah, there you go.

Lorrie: And then Ron has a little worry, because now that he's bringing a new friend in: "Oh. Oh, how does this house look from the outside?" Then there's that iconic line where Harry says, "This is the best house I've ever been in," and then the response is: "Ron's ears went pink." There's just that moment of judgment and then it passes, and then they don't judge anymore again. They don't have to worry about that, whereas at the Dursleys, they're always internally judging even if nobody's actually in the house looking.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: They're always afraid of what the neighbors are going to think.

JC: Oh, yeah, yeah. It's also interesting to me that there's the garden, I guess. We talked about the de-gnoming already, but when Harry first looks at the garden, the thing that he thinks is that the Dursleys would hate this because it was the opposite of the perfect little suburban lawn. He was like, "This is what a garden should look like," and it just made me smile. They just have this wild growing, little backyard garden. Things have not been weeded, stuff's growing how it wants to. There's gnarly old tree roots, and I just had such a great vision of that. I love how the Weasleys' house is just the opposite of the Dursleys' house in almost every way.

Lorrie: I guess, yeah, that's the message that we're getting: be so busy living that you don't have time to worry about what an imagined judge might think of how you're keeping house.

JC: I like that.

Lorrie: They do all have projects going on. That I do identify with.

JC: Mr. Weasley apparently has the garage full of projects, that is.

Lorrie: Oh, boy. Yeah.

JC: It also ties back into that really stereotypical heterosexual marriage thing. I think about my father-in-law who's always had a garage with a workshop, and he would just go out and do his thing and my mother-in-law would just say, "Oh, yeah, whatever he's doing off in his garage." That was his space, and it just reminds me of that. My partner doesn't have a space. What do I know? The idea that men have to have a man space where they keep all their manly tools and they draw the manly things, and the rest of the house belongs to the wife. That's so bizarre to me, that division of the space, even. Anyway...

Lorrie: Well, he has to have a place to keep his secrets.

JC: Yeah. That he does.

Lorrie: But yeah, she has her own culture going on between the romance cover Lockhart books and Celestina Warbeck. If she were a Muggle housewife, we know the kind of romances she would read. She's obviously a big reader; she always has books going on. So yeah, I do think that we're seeing all of them as having rich inner lives, even if she's so overworked. I don't know when she gets in the time, but...

JC: Yeah, really. Well, Ginny's about to go to Hogwarts. She's going to have a lot more time. She's going to have an empty nest. Aww.

Lorrie: And I think I might have mentioned this before, that this is what I always want: the missing scene fic I always want is the year that it was just Molly and Ginny at home. After having seven, to go to a household that's just like Petunia and Dudley? What is it like to be that quiet? And especially since Ginny has grown up keeping secrets and relying on not getting caught, on there being so much commotion that she can break rules and nobody will ever suspect her, what's it like when she has all of her mom's attention to herself? Is that maybe not fully comfortable?

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: Yeah. Because we do know that she continues to keep secrets from Molly forever, and she does put up a front. She puts up a front to Molly of being more virtuous than she actually is.

JC: Yeah. As being the only daughter out of all those boys, I think that I can see how Molly would have expectations about her relationship with Ginny, whether Ginny wants that or not.

Lorrie: If I were Ginny trying to escape the maternal gaze and there are no brothers to hide behind, I guess that last year I would have thrown myself into studies. That's what you do when you want to be seen as a good girl and you don't want people to know all the crime that's going on in your head.

JC: And poor Ginny is about to have a really rough year.

Lorrie: Oh, yes, she is.

JC: This is going back a little ways in the narrative of this chapter, but during the car ride, I think for the first time we learn about Lucius Malfoy's history with Voldemort.

Lorrie: That's right. Yeah.

JC: And this is a really interesting bit of backstory, too, and it plants the idea immediately that oh, what if the Malfoy family was behind, somehow, the house elf being sent to ruin Harry's life?

It's on the right track, but it's the wrong thing, which seems to happen a lot where Malfoy's concerned. It's on the right track, but it's not exactly correct, whatever Harry's thinking. But it is interesting that we saw in the first book that -- I think it was Hagrid that mentioned, "Oh, there were lots of Wizarding families, after Voldemort died, that came out and said, 'Oh, we were under like the Imperius curse.'"

Lorrie: They pretended. Yeah.

JC: Yeah. And now we found out that Lucius is one of those, and maybe even in Voldemort's inner circle, is how it's phrased. I think that's a really interesting bit of Malfoy's backstory that we get here, too.

Lorrie: Yeah, and the Malfoys being set up in this chapter to be the opposite household of the Burrow.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: I like that we get this foreshadowing that whatever Dobby's flaws, Harry was right to believe that Dobby's emotions were genuine. Because the question does come up: Oh, was Dobby putting on a big act? Was he trying to fool Harry? Was Harry wrong and crazy for believing Dobby's emotion? No, it's good to trust your instincts. Dobby was clearly sincere. Misguided all over the place, but sincere.

JC: One more thing that stood out to me is that we get this little glimpse of Gilderoy Lockhart, like the cover of the book, and the idea that not only is he this really handsome guy but we're set up with this idea of, okay, he wrote a book about household pests, and Fred and George are like, "Oh, God." We already are understanding that this is the person who's controversial in the Wizarding world, and that Molly is like, "Oh, I'm going to see what Gilderoy Lockhart has to say about getting rid of garden gnomes," and Fred and George are like, "Oh, we don't need to read the book. He doesn't know what he's talking about." We're already set up to see this coming, so when we see his name again shortly, we're set up for that, which is fun. It's a fun little bit of writing, that all these things are introduced in this chapter. So many things are introduced in this chapter.

Lorrie: It's really packed. Oh, Mundungus Fletcher gets mentioned.

JC: Yeah, that's right. That's right. Uh-huh.

Lorrie: And Perkins, the warlock who lends them the tent that we will see again and again.

JC: Yeah, yes. We'll spend a lot of time in that tent, actually.

Lorrie: Yes, we will. It will smell of cats the whole time.

JC: Yeah. Oh, there's one other thing that stood out to me, and this is probably me reading too much into it, but the joke about Percy polishing his prefect badge. He's locked in his room for hours at a time. There's only so many times you can polish your prefect badge. That read as innuendo to me that would be going over the heads of younger kids, but yeah.

Lorrie: No, I don't think you're reading too much into it. I think the word 'polishing' gets used deliberately on purpose by the author in that way many, many times.

JC: But it flew over Harry's head at that point. Harry doesn't ping it as being unusual at all, but Fred and George are like, "Yeah, yeah."

Lorrie: "What's he doing in there?" Yes.

JC: And we're going to spend some more time in the Burrow, I think, in the next chapter, right?

Lorrie: I did not even look ahead. Let me see what's coming next. Flourish and Blotts. Oh, so we get the standoff between the two different Wizarding pureblood families very soon, including something that I find so disgraceful it makes me laugh every time. But we'll talk about that later next week. All right. Well, I'm looking forward to this clash, this ideological clash.

JC: All right, and we get to meet Gilderoy Lockhart at last, after seeing his picture on the front of a book.

Lorrie: I'm not looking forward to that. I'll talk to you then.

JC: Okay. Yay!

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 by Lorrie Kim and Caroline Rinaldy. Original music was composed by C.L. Smith. Thank you for listening.