



Transcript

Episode 4.11

Book 4, Chapter 11: Aboard the Hogwarts Express

Caroline: You're listening to Harry Potter After 2020, an HP chapter reread podcast wherein two friends who read the books way back in the day as adults revisit the series through a post-2020 lens. Your hosts are Lorrie Kim, author of *Snape: The Definitive Analysis*, and JC, an educator and long-time HP fan. I'm your editor, Caroline. In this episode, Lorrie and JC tackle Book Four, Chapter Eleven: Aboard the Hogwarts Express.

Lorrie: Aboard the Hogwarts Express.

JC: Were we on the train last year? Yes, because that was when the dementors came.

Lorrie: Oh, yeah, the dementor. Yeah.

JC: The dementors were there, okay. Yeah. I was trying to remember... I don't remember what happened last year. Oh, my God. Okay, yes. All right.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: We are back on the train. Will it be a normal train ride? Hmm...

Lorrie: Hmm... Yes. Last year was when Professor R.J. Lupin slept through the entire train ride, except when there was trouble brewing and then he quietly stirred without waking, and Hermione the genius figured out who this person was. In this chapter, the kids head toward another year at school. We get previews of what's in store for them, now that they're fourteen: their world views are expanding, and they have to deal with adolescence.

JC: Yes, they sure do.

Lorrie: Alas.

JC: We get an introduction right at the beginning of this chapter of the wizarding world version of telephone calls, which is sticking your head through the fire.

Lorrie: Floo calling! Yeah.

JC: Yeah. The Floo calling, and I think this is the first time we've seen it.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Because Harry is shocked, so it must be the first time. Okay. But it's really funny, because it's just hilariously awkward that if you're going to talk to a friend, you've got to get down on your hands and knees.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I'm just imagining from the other end what it looks like.

Lorrie: Yeah, you're sticking your butt out.

JC: Your butt is sticking out and you look funny, right?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Anyway, the whole concept of this is just bizarrely funny to me; this is how people communicate. All right.

Lorrie: Okay.

JC: It's great, but also we learn through this call that Mr. Weasley and Mr. Diggory are actually colleagues.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Who are working together pretty closely on this.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And clearly trust each other, so that's also really interesting. We knew they knew each other in the last chapter, but now it's like, 'Oh, they work together,' in that same way that when you're a kid you don't really understand the world with the adults around you, but then you get little glimpses of it. You're like, "You know my teacher?" It's that level of, "Oh, these people do have a life outside of my perception of them." Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, and they conspire in a way that you think, 'Is this okay? I guess you have to.' Anyway, we'll get to that. So yeah, there's Floo calling and there's other world-building in this chapter. We find out about the other schools and how they are bewitched to look like old ruins, and we find out that there's such a thing as making buildings 'unplottable' so they don't show up on Google Maps or whatever.

JC: Which is funny. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. There's a school that excludes Muggle-borns and teaches the Dark Arts. Yeah, this author is really expanding the scope of this universe in this volume, and I thought, okay, she just wrote the phenomenal book that is *Prisoner of Azkaban*. As an author, how do you top that? Where do you go? That was Book Three out of seven. Where do you go next? Well, you go bigger, right? Her readership has expanded internationally a great deal, so that's where she'll go with this. This is her story going international also. More rain.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Inconvenient.

JC: We learn a couple of other things about the Wizarding World here that I think are interesting. There's this line where one of the twins... They're talking about their dad. The line is: "Yeah, well, Dad collects plugs, doesn't he?" in that way of teenagers being embarrassed by how cringy their parents are, but there's also this implication there that the kids know more about the modern world (or the Muggle world) than their parents do. But then not long after that, we see that Molly goes down to use a payphone to call cabs.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And then I'm like, 'Okay, wait, is it just Arthur?' Obviously it's not just Arthur, because we were just at the World Cup and we saw how people were failing left and right to blend in with Muggles, but it is very interesting to me that Molly seems to know more about the Muggle world than Arthur does -- at least in this little snippet -- and the kids do too, and that this is a source of maybe a little bit of embarrassment. "Oh, my God, Dad..." There's always that with teenagers, but I don't know. It just added a little bit of, 'Okay.' Now, while Arthur's off working at the Ministry every day, what is Molly doing? She's a stay-at-home parent. She clearly goes down into the village and goes shopping, right? She must interact with a Muggle village. People must know that there's this weird house up on the hill where this family lives. This, again, is bringing it back to this idea of who's... We're still seeing the men being portrayed as... Oh, my God, there's just so much here to unpack. I'm sorry. I'm starting to go off on a tangent, but Molly quietly knows a lot more than people are giving her credit for.

Lorrie: I'm not sure that's the case here. I think she might have had to look into it really far in advance, because the word used for what she does when she goes to the payphone is that she 'braved' Muggle taxis and the payphone. She explains to Harry later, "Oh, we tried to get cars, but we couldn't." This is something that they had to arrange far in advance, and I can imagine that she might have done research, but yeah, this gave me anxiety thinking about her on the payphone. How did she manage the payment for each of these three cab drivers? Ugh.

JC: Yeah, I contrast that with Arthur needing Harry to help him count money.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Right. A couple chapters back, Molly just seemed like she's a little more competent at this, and what that felt like to me was because she has to be.

Lorrie: They must have planned for the two of them to handle this together, and then suddenly no, he can't; she has to be on her own with this.

JC: Yeah. I don't know. I'm seeing this in a much more gendered way maybe than you are, perhaps because I'm --

Lorrie: No. I think --

JC: I'm just thinking of people that I know who have these kinds of struggles with their male partners that are/could be incompetent at things that you're like, 'Oh, my God, why can't you just do this thing that I do every day?'

Lorrie: I think there is definitely supposed to be some of that coming through, but yeah, after spending the summer in another country taking cabs, I agree that Molly Weasley was brave to do this.

JC: And she also had to go out in the rain. Oh, my God.

Lorrie: So much can go wrong.

JC: That doesn't sound like fun, either.

Lorrie: No.

JC: Ugh. Also, before we get to the train station, we hear about Aurors for the first time here.

Lorrie: Yes! Oh.

JC: Yeah, and that's kind of interesting, too.

Lorrie: Love.

JC: We're expanding the world of... What do adult wizards do other than work for the Ministry? There's another thing here that they do other than driving the Knight Bus and running shops in Diagon Alley. What did they do?

Lorrie: Right.

JC: There's another potential job that's very mysterious.

Lorrie: They explain that Aurors are Dark wizard catchers, and that Mad-Eye Moody is one. His reputation precedes him; there's this whole long discussion of, "Oh, Mad-Eye Moody, there was trouble with him," and he has such a reputation that we see this long discussion between Amos Diggory and Arthur Weasley about how they have to do this run-around and scheme and conspire to protect him against what might happen if the Improper Use of Magic officials get a hold of him. It's implied that they would crack down on him pretty hard, because Mad-Eye Moody has a record. Well, should they be intervening to try to make up some excuse to get him off very, very lightly? It sounds like yes, actually, they should be, because the people who might come down really hard on Mad-Eye Moody would do it for political motivations maybe not commensurate with whatever he did. Yeah. Anyway, it's a very uneasy look into all sorts of considerations that are being taken around somebody that isn't being explained clearly to the kids. They're overhearing the parents talk about this extremely complicated person with a huge reputation.

JC: Right, yeah, that we have to like... Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. He's an unpredictable asset and he has to be managed, because they say, "Oh, Moody, being the way he is, I bet he did this and that." Okay. Is he worth it? Apparently he is.

JC: But we're also hearing about an incident that's going to be really important later on...

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: So it's played off as oh, he's just so paranoid that he's booby-trapped his trash can. Okay, well, his booby traps went off. Hmm.

Lorrie: Again.

JC: I wonder what happened!

Lorrie: But then we hear, "Well, he's paranoid now, but it came from someplace real." They say: "Half the cells in Azkaban are full because of him." Okay, wow. "He made himself loads of enemies, though... the families of people he caught, mainly... and I heard he's been getting really paranoid in his old age." Okay, Mad-Eye Moody is the face of hypervigilance in this series.

JC: Oh, I forgot about the all-caps.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That's coming, isn't it?

Lorrie: But yeah, his jumpiness... It might be inappropriate to the current situation, but it was formed under real pressure. So yeah, we don't know it, but we have heard mention of the eventual career that our hero Harry is going to enter as an adult. It's his future profession, and it's a beautiful coined word, 'Auror'. What do you think when you see the word? What associations does that word give to you?

JC: I don't know, because it's been a word that I've known for so long that it just feels like a word now.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: So I forget that it's a word. Funnily enough, it's a word that my phone uses. When I'm making notes -- my first draft of my notes when I read these chapters -- I'm speaking them into my phone, it's a word that my phone recognizes.

Lorrie: Wow!

JC: Along with many other words, like 'Hogwarts' and 'Durmstrang', and many of the characters. It recognizes 'Trelawney'... It recognizes a lot of these folks' names, which I think is very interesting.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: With the weird exception of Ron. It always autocorrects Ron to something that is not Ron, and I don't know why.

Lorrie: Oh, that's so typical. That would happen to him.

JC: Yeah. Poor Ron, right? It's very weird. Anyway, Aurors... I don't know. Just a word. Now I know what it means.

Lorrie: Right. Yeah. You have to cast your mind back to what's it like to reread the word 'auror'. What was it like the first time? Because to me, I thought, well, 'aurora' like 'dawn', but also gold, the whole 'au' prefix. This word links us to gold magic, one of the recurring themes in this series, partly because alchemy is gold magic; it's using magic to turn things into gold, and the thing that makes alchemy work is connection between people or between the wizard and the base metal. The color of the magic that comes from people in this series -- if it's about yourself and who you are, who you are meant to be, your soul -- it's silver. But when it's about the connection that your soul makes with other people, then that turns the magic into gold. There's something about being an Auror and catching a Dark wizard that has to do with having to know what that Dark wizard really is -- who they really are on the inside, learning how they think, being able to find them, their true selves, where they hide -- and then overpowering them and stopping them from

their aims. You do have to know how to duel... Yeah, there's some way that you have to connect with their essential self, and we're going to see in this volume -- the epic climactic scene in this volume -- we're going to see how this process works, the process of gold magic. I'm super excited about that.

JC: Ooh, okay!

Lorrie: Yeah. We'll see. Whatever it is that Mad-Eye Moody does -- and that Harry is eventually going to do -- we're going to see how it works. So Molly gets them on the train.

JC: They get to the train station. I love the contrast of this entry into the platform compared to the first book.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: They're just casually leaning against the barrier. It's such a cool little moment of growth.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I don't know. There's something about it, like the first time you drop your kid off at a middle school or a high school and they're nervous, they don't know what to do. Then two years later, they're totally, "Yeah, it's whatever." I love that. I just thought that was a nice little touch.

Lorrie: Yeah, they're going to be constantly compared badly to the 17-year-olds in this volume, but they're not babies either.

JC: True.

Lorrie: In his first year, Harry would have seen people this age and thought how God-like they were.

JC: For sure. And we're getting more hints about something really cool that's going to happen at Hogwarts this year. Another thing that happens here is that that was a bit of world-building -- like, 'Ugh, finally!' -- to me: as the train is leaving, they look back and they see that Molly and Bill and Charlie Disapparate from the train platform, and I was like, oh, my God, that answers a question --

Lorrie: Thank goodness.

JC: That I've had forever. How do that many people get through to the platform from King's Cross without Muggles noticing? That's a lot... They had to coordinate people traveling to the World Cup, and granted, it was a lot more people. There's a lot of kids at Hogwarts -- there's a lot of families who would want to come to see them off, they've all got a lot of stuff -- and then I realized oh, wait, a lot of people can just Apparate their kids straight there. Oh, my God.

Lorrie: When I went from being a childless person to somebody who had a newborn, I was indignant. 'What do you mean I can't just take my car, put on my flashers, run out, run an errand, and get right back in my car?' No! I have to find a legal parking spot. I have to bring out the stroller base. I have to unlatch the car seat bucket. Then I have to hook it onto the base and make sure that all the -- Oh, my God. Then I have to fight with the parking meter. No! That goes on for years, right?

JC: For sure. Yeah. I have this memory very similarly... A friend came to visit. We went out to do something, and we were gone long enough that my breasts started hurting.

Lorrie: Ouch. Yes.

JC: And I realized I don't have a way to pump. I don't have a way to get rid of this. Oh, shit. There was milk at home for the baby, but I was like, 'Oh, no,' and it hadn't occurred to me that no, I can't be away from the house. I cannot be away from my baby this long without having a way to express milk. It was the first moment of, 'Oh, shit!' Yeah. Anyway...

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Did that never happen to you again? Did you learn forever from that?

JC: It never happened again. I learned from that.

Lorrie: Yes. Me, too.

JC: I had a little emergency travel pump situation that I could pull out when I needed to. Yes.

Lorrie: Yes. That happened to me once.

JC: 'One time.'

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: Exactly. We're talking about the Apparating. Yeah. If you've got a lot of kids and a lot of stuff, then good Lord, why would you... Yeah. But if you've got one kid like the Malfoys...

Lorrie: Hmm, true.

JC: You'll just Apparate your kids straight to the station, right? You wouldn't have to deal with all these Muggles that are beneath you in the station.

Lorrie: Oof.

JC: But anyway, that just answered a question for me. How the heck does this happen? Because not every single one of them goes to the platform barrier.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: And then those parents aren't pouring out afterwards into the train station with all their wizarding gear on.

Lorrie: And not only does Molly have all of her zillion children; she's even taken on other people's kids.

JC: For sure. Yeah.

Lorrie: And it's like, 'Well, I'm already taking so many children anyway. Sure. What's another couple?'

JC: Also, for Harry and crew, it's the portal they have to go through to get from this world into that one. It's important for that, but also from a world-building perspective, I was like yes, I finally understand this. This is great.

Lorrie: And I have been so happy for Molly ever since the beginning of Book Two, when she finally gets all of her kids at school or graduated and she finally gets a moment to herself.

JC: As a parent of one, I don't know if I understand what that would feel like. I don't think I'd get... I don't know what it would be like to have seven kids and to finally have them all out the door, to find that relief instead of abject terror about what my life is about now.

Lorrie: Oh, God.

JC: I don't know if I can wrap my head around that as a parent of one.

Lorrie: Well, speaking of parents of one, we get to eavesdrop on Malfoy.

JC: Yeah, that's true. Apparently, the walls of the carriage are not that thick.

Lorrie: They have their one child, and Draco is talking about how dad knows the Durmstrang headmaster -- Ooh! -- and then says that Lucius had considered sending Draco there, "but Mother didn't like the idea of me going to school so far away." All right. I don't know if this is an unpopular opinion or not, but I think that Lucius and Narcissa have by far the most functional marriage in this whole series.

JC: I can't think of a couple that seems to be more of a team.

Lorrie: They discussed their disagreement and they compromised. Oh, my God.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And Lucius has had so very, very many reasons since then to regret this decision and to think, 'Oh, it was a terrible idea to send Draco to Hogwarts,' starting with the Slytherins losing the House Cup in the first year and then all of his conflicts with Dumbledore after that, and wondering, 'Would Draco have been happier at Durmstrang?' That's a good question, right? But he and Narcissa talked about it and this is the decision they came to, so okay, he'll do this thing that he doesn't really want. He'll join the school board until he gets kicked off. I just really love that Lucius' concerns -- and Narcissa's -- are both really important.

JC: Yeah. I also really have a soft spot for Narcissa. We saw her introduced in the last chapter and she reminded Harry a bit of Aunt Petunia, the way she was introduced. But as we talked about before, Aunt Petunia fiercely loves Dudley. Fiercely. We find out that this is true about Narcissa, too. It's this little moment of, "My mom didn't want me to be that far away." Oh, my God, yeah, and Narcissa knows as well as anybody what can happen to young boys in a place like Durmstrang, so she doesn't want her son to go down that path. He has a better chance at Hogwarts. I'm reading a lot into Narcissa here, but that's my take on it. It's not just, "I wanted my baby to be closer to me"; it's "I know my kid, and I am worried about what would happen if he had unfettered access to right-wing groups on the internet" kind of a feeling. "I think he'd be better off at Hogwarts where he's a little closer to home, where we can keep a better eye on him."

Lorrie: Yeah. We don't have evidence that she thought that. We don't have canon; nothing in canon that I can think of --

JC: Oh, no, there's nothing in canon. This is *me* reading into this.

Lorrie: Right, but it doesn't contradict it either.

JC: True. It's my headcanon for Narcissa.

Lorrie: What we do have, although we don't know it yet, is the evidence that Narcissa never became a Death Eater, and we aren't quite sure what she thinks of Lucius putting on bed sheets and marching out all the time and getting involved in this terrorist group that ends up with the Dark Lord moving into their manor home.

JC: Yeah, she's not exactly out there leading the Wizarding World version of Moms for Liberty.

Lorrie: No. No.

JC: She's staying in her lane, she's demure... whatever the kids say.

Lorrie: Yeah. Her sister is out there doing it all, but she's not.

JC: Yeah. True.

Lorrie: So we don't actually know what she thinks of Lucius' politics, but we know that she's not joining him. Also, I don't think it's causing a rift in their marriage, either. There's no evidence that she's stressed about his choices or that she has asked him to stop or be safer or anything. We do see all the time Molly Weasley asking Arthur, "Could you be safer? You're putting us at risk," and we know that he goes against her wishes and just does his own thing anyway. We see no evidence of that between Narcissa and Lucius. We will eventually see that Narcissa -- when she loses Lucius, because he's in prison -- doesn't want to hear any criticism of him. But yeah, she's quite enigmatic. She's portrayed, on purpose, as somebody who doesn't reveal her inner life as much as Lucius does, but we do know that she wants her kid closer, even though she doesn't get to see him that often. But it does feel different having them...

JC: Yeah. Oh, my God. Yeah. As the parent of a junior in high school, yeah, thinking about two years from now -- we'll probably be recording the fifth book at that point. Two years from now, my kiddo's... Here's a thing for listeners. We're recording this over such a long period of time that you're going to hear about our kids growing up as we go, but yeah, two years from now, my kid is going to be God knows where. Not in Texas, if he can help it. A long way away... There are a couple of colleges that are within driving distance that he's thinking of, so the idea of the difference between being a drive away and being a plane flight away is like, 'I get it, Narcissa, I get it.' Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah. Even if you don't see them any more or less frequently, just the feeling of it...

JC: Knowing you could drive there and get to them if you needed to. Yeah. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, which is a thing that became real during COVID, during pandemic lockdown.

JC: Oh, yeah, for sure.

Lorrie: Because you couldn't fly home. Colleges shut down and people had to drive wherever their kids were to drive them home.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: So if that meant five hours or ten hours, that's what it meant.

JC: In the middle of that pandemic here in Texas, we had this horrific ice storm that shut everything down for a week.

Lorrie: Oh, I remember that ice storm.

JC: Yeah. For about a week, everything was shut down, and I got on Zoom calls with students who talked about the fact that they had no power and, because they were college students, they had no food; they couldn't get out and get any. They were terrified and talking about how their parents -- even their parents who were just a few hours away by car -- couldn't get to them. As a parent, I was like, 'Oh, God.'

Lorrie: I know. So scary.

JC: That sounds terrifying. So okay, yeah. Wow, I identify with the parents in this book -- in the series -- so much more now than I did the first time I read this twenty years ago when I was not a parent yet.

Lorrie: Wasn't that the ice storm where Ted Cruz was going to go on a tropical vacation?

JC: That's where Ted Cruz tried to go to Cancun, yeah, and left his dog at home, I don't know, or something. Yeah. Yeah, Ted Cruz.

Lorrie: Eventually, people hated him for it so much that he had to turn around and come back.

JC: Yeah, they called him 'Cancún Cruz' for a while. Yeah.

Lorrie: Oh, my God!

JC: They occasionally still do. Yeah. When the weather forecasts get bad, they're like, "Oh, Ted Cruz, you going to head out of the country again?"

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It was a... yeah.

Lorrie: A memorable, indelible ice storm.

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: Yeah. My current college junior ended up going to college a drive away, partly in response to how much driving panic there was during COVID. What if you do go to school across the country? What are you going to do if you need to be called home if something happens? Because things had happened. Well, Draco at Durmstrang... One thing that would have happened is he wouldn't have been always a distant, distant second to Harry Potter.

JC: True.

Lorrie: In everything.

JC: Probably.

Lorrie: I don't know what his social standing would have been as an exchange student, but it wouldn't have been, "I should be owning the school, and yet I'm not because of this upstart."

JC: Do you think he and Viktor Krum would have gotten along, though?

Lorrie: No. No.

JC: Yeah, that's the thing. There was a Viktor Krum there. You were never going to be the Golden Boy of that school either.

Lorrie: Well, we find out later more about Viktor Krum. He would not have gotten along with Draco at all. He would have *hated* Draco.

JC: Very exciting to get to that point in this book. We have all of this conversation and we overhear Malfoy talking about Durmstrang, and there's this interesting bit of world-building about the magical schools and how they're very secretive about their curriculum. Even with all of the things that Hermione knows, there's only a vague idea of where Durmstrang might be in the world. That's really wild to me. Yeah.

Lorrie: The name implies Germany, but the weather implies Russia and the politics.

JC: So that's really interesting.

Lorrie: Oh, that's a bit of wordplay. I'm so used to it now, but the first time that I heard that the school was called Durmstrang, I thought, 'Well, that's a little bit obvious, but it's very funny.'

JC: Okay, so tell us what that word may mean to you.

Lorrie: I thought it was like 'sturm' -- I can't --

JC: Like 'sturm' and 'drang'?

Lorrie: Yeah. I do not speak German, I can't pronounce it, but I thought, 'Okay, that's clever.' All sorts of really heavy emotional stuff happens there.

JC: Do we hear about Beauxbatons at this point? Beauxbatons?

Lorrie: No.

JC: No, not yet. Okay.

Lorrie: No. We only hear about the school that Draco *almost* went to.

JC: We heard about Beauxbatons a couple of chapters back. We only hear about Durmstrang here. Okay.

Lorrie: Yeah. Then we get Draco visiting Ron's carriage on the train and seeing the dress robes.

JC: Oh. "What is that?" Yeah.

Lorrie: And this is a very *Chamber of Secrets* kind of scene to me -- Schadenfreude, where your enjoyment of the humiliation of your enemy is the thing that gives you life -- because not only are Ron's dress robes out because he's using them to cover Pigwidgeon's cage, but the sleeves with the moldy lace on the cuffs are swaying with the motion of the train.

JC: Ugh.

Lorrie: That swaying... it reminds me of Peeves doing a song and dance to his songs humiliating people.

JC: Oh, my gosh.

Lorrie: Draco sees these dress robes that Ron tries to hide and fails, and he holds up the sleeves in ecstasy.

JC: Oh, yeah. He's thinking, 'I'm going to get so much mileage out of this.' Ugh.

Lorrie: And he's right, and there's nothing to be done about this.

JC: Ron can see a little glimpse of his horrible future, and he's in a really bad mood for that. I love the fact, too, that -- is it before Malfoy comes? -- that Hermione is looking through the textbooks as she often does, but we get the mention that she's trying to learn a summoning charm.

Lorrie: Yes!

JC: There's another mention of this very important spell.

Lorrie: Yes. Well, no matter how thrilled Draco is to see Ron's dress robes, there's a limit to how happy his life can be, because guess who lives rent-free in his head when he says, "Oh, you know what's happening. Are you going to enter? I suppose *you* will, Potter?" In his head, Harry has already entered and been the hero, and Harry's like, 'What? What's going on?'

JC: Right. Also, yeah, once again, Malfoy has inside information that our heroes don't. It's interesting to me, again, this example of privilege...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Where some kids have early access to information that other kids (their families) have decided not to give them access to, even though everybody has the information. Those choices around, 'If you have this information, then it's going to benefit you in ways that we think are going to be good, so we're going to give you this information you're not supposed to have.'

Lorrie: Right. Yeah. The kids who find out where babies come from much earlier than all the classmates do, and they show up at school with the latest model of some gadget that you've never heard of.

JC: Yeah. Right, exactly. It's very interesting that everyone wants to preserve the surprise of what's going to happen this year. "We want it to be a surprise for you." Yeah, and then spoilers.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Malfoy says. Yeah.

Lorrie: I admire -- I respect the challenge that this author has taken on. She's writing... She's in the midst of writing this seven-year series and she started with prepubescent kids, and she's committing to taking them through adolescence. Here she is doing it, and it's a bumpy ride the whole way.

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: It's just as bumpy and horrible as it should be. She's really committing. Oh, Ron's bad mood in this chapter... Being strapped for resources this way is really unsexy. Poor kid. Yeah.

JC: For sure. So at the very end, though, they take the horseless carriages up to the castle.

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: Is this the first time we've seen the horseless carriages?

Lorrie: That's a good question...

JC: Because obviously not the first year, obviously not the second year. I don't remember if we saw them last year. I don't remember how they got from the train to the castle.

Lorrie: Oh, okay. No, no, no. We first see them in *Prisoner of Azkaban*.

JC: Okay. Okay.

Lorrie: It says, "At least a hundred stagecoaches awaited the remaining students, each pulled, Harry could only assume, by an invisible horse..."

JC: Oh, okay. Well, that's interesting.

Lorrie: Right. So yeah.

JC: He assumed they're invisible horses there. This year they're horseless.

Lorrie: Right. So yeah, there's the mention of the horseless carriages.

JC: And the rain is still coming down.

Lorrie: Yeah, and there's not that much energy to think about the carriages and how they are horseless or however they're moving, because the torrents of freezing rain are just filling everything.

JC: And poor Crookshanks. They all get scratched up by Crookshanks, and part of me is like, 'Why isn't Crookshanks in a carrier? Who's crazy enough to take a cat without a carrier--'

Lorrie: I know, I know.

JC: 'On this long journey?!'

Lorrie: Yeah, and the cab driver who had to... Ugh.

JC: Oh, my God, but yeah.

Lorrie: So yeah, they're almost there at school, and the next chapter is called The Triwizard Tournament.

JC: Oh, boy, we finally are going to learn...

Lorrie: The big secret.

JC: The *big* secret. Finally.

Lorrie: Okay, talk to you then.

JC: All right!

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.