

# HARRY POTTER AFTER 2020

with LORRIE KIM and JC

## Transcript

### Episode 4.13

#### Book 4, Chapter 13: Mad-Eye Moody

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 Thirteen: Mad-Eye Moody.

Lorrie: Mad-Eye Moody! It's the first day of Harry's fourth year, which would be ninth grade in the U.S., and the whole chapter is about uncontrollable bodily changes. In class, the kids study bubotuber pus and Blast-Ended Skrewts. Outside class, we have the infamous ferret incident: Mad-Eye Moody sees Draco attacking Harry, turns Draco into a ferret, and drops him repeatedly from more than ten feet in the air. It's that incident!

JC: Man, I forgot that incident was in this chapter. It was such a surprise when it happened, because I guess, again, I haven't read this book in a long time.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I have the movie in my head. I forgot that the first time we actually really meet Mad-Eye Moody is when he turns Draco into a ferret. Wow!

Lorrie: Yeah. It's the first day of class!

JC: Something else is interesting about the title of this chapter being Mad-Eye Moody, and the first thing I thought was it's so strange that this is a character that I think the fandom loves.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He's a beloved character for a lot of reasons, but we know we're not meeting him. This isn't him! It's so weird that this whole book establishes a lot of the things about Mad-Eye Moody that, it turns out, are pretty accurate and part of the reasons that we love him, but yet it's not even him and that's very strange. But that also fits into your theme.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's a performance of him.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: It's the person that an extraordinarily talented imposter is constructing to convince people that it's him, because the stakes are bigger than life and death for this imposter. There's a reason why what we learn about him in this volume turns out to be more or less accurate, but there's something at the core deep down inside that's so uneasy. Yeah, crazy stuff. So here we are in fourth year, and the language in this chapter I noticed... First of all, the 14-year-olds are cursing more, and the author continues to be clever about how she handles it. Well, Ron says "Damn it" in this chapter, so I guess that is allowed.

JC: It's in the PG, PG-13, kind of... yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. What I *love* is she does this completely clever thing that is dirty talk except on the page. When Ron says that old joke, "Oh, Lavender, can I look at Uranus?" When you're only dealing with print, there is nothing wrong with this; it is not objectionable at all. It's only when you say it aloud or in your head that it's like, 'Oh, that's a joke, huh?' Just the cleverness of how that points out the hypocrisy or the impossible standards of trying to be censored... I thought that was amazing.

JC: That is a lot of fun, because that's also very much like high school freshmen. Oh, my God.

Lorrie: It's the age. Yes.

JC: Yeah. It's like when I taught high school. One of the very first lessons that I learned was you never ask a class of 14-year-olds to give you a number.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: You never say, "Give me a random number." No, don't do it.

Lorrie: Why would you do that to yourself? Yeah.

JC: You only make that mistake once, and then you're like, "Shit."

Lorrie: Oi, yai, yai.

JC: 'Why did I even think that was a good idea?' Yeah.

Lorrie: This -- Ron asking if he can look at Lavender's anus -- reminded me of the single meanest thing I ever did as a parent about this kind of thing. When my kid was (I think) in seventh grade, for class they had to do presentations and they had to say the word 'homo erectus'. The mean thing I did was when my kid said it, I just had a completely stony face like I had no idea why that was funny. She almost was able to get that out without laughing, but she failed. She made it through 'homo ere-' and then she broke, and I just pretended like, 'What?' Meanwhile, I'm like, 'This is hilarious.' But seriously, why?! You cannot ask children of this age to say 'homo erectus'. You *can't*. It's just too mean.

JC: Oh, that's so funny. So in my job as a teacher educator, I was helping lead a seminar -- actually, just last night -- about adolescent brain development and the reason that adolescents are the way they are, so it is really funny that we're talking about this chapter today because all of this stuff is just... I have to tip my invisible hat to the author for getting the child development right in these books. There's something that she does over and over.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: She gets it right.

Lorrie: Meanwhile, the teen humor, and this is a little bit laughing at them as well as with them: the whole repetition of bubotuber pus and the way that Professor Sprout mercilessly says it over and over again, knowing that every single time she says that they're all gagging.

JC: They're all going, 'BOOOB--'

Lorrie: "PUUUUUS," and these 14-year-olds can't believe that they're having to live through this.

JC: Right. It's so interesting, too, because it's the most disgusting thing you can imagine having to do in a classroom. They're having to squeeze these, and then there's the comment that it's also oddly satisfying, so it's connected to popping pimples.

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: But also, it reminds me that this is the age (at least in the United States, in ninth grade) most kids take biology, and this (for a lot of kids) is the first time they've ever had to dissect something.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It kind of reminded me of that, too. This is the age where you start having to do gross things in science and then just deal with it. You're expected to be mature enough to deal with it. Yeah.

Lorrie: Right. Meanwhile, your own body is doing gross things that are humiliating and out of your control and nobody enjoys this. If adults are being polite, they pretend not to notice, but somebody who teaches this age group year in and year out... there's just no coyness left. We have Professor Sprout saying, "You will squeeze them, I say..."

JC: Right. There's also the connection to one of the students when she brings up that this is good for acne.

Lorrie: Eloise Midgen.

JC: And a student says, "Oh, poor Eloise Midgen." They talk about how Eloise tried to curse off her own acne, and Professor Sprout's response to that is just, "Oh, silly girl. I don't know why... Well, her nose got put back on again." It's completely dismissive. This is, again, thinking about what's important to adolescents and how they're viewing the world, and how their brains are interpreting things. What their brains are focusing on and what they're not is so completely different than what adults are, and adults do this to kids all the time: completely diminish the things that they're worried about. This idea that Eloise would try to curse off her acne... As an adult, you're like, 'That could only go badly. Why would you do that?'

Lorrie: Her whole nose.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But adolescent brains are primed to do this. The risk-reward ratio is way off and they will take risks, especially when it's risks related to how other kids view them in the social sphere. They will take risks that ten years later, they'd be like, 'Why the hell did I do that?' But the reward is potentially huge, and they want that reward.

Lorrie: At that age, you don't know if it's ever going to get better. From the adult perspective, you think, 'Well, give it seven or eight years, your acne may clear up,' which is...

JC: A huge percentage of your life.

Lorrie: The most unhelpful thing to say.

JC: Exactly.

Lorrie: That's not perspective. That's just depressing.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: And for Professor Sprout, this is the thousandth student she has met who's tried to do something about acne. For Eloise Midgen, it's the first time that she's had to deal with this.

JC: And it's bad enough that she was taking desperate measures, which kids do.

Lorrie: Ugh.

JC: It's very much how kids are. It's the kid who does something stupid and borderline illegal because they want to impress a friend group. It's right in that vein of what adolescents do.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: And they're primed to do that by evolution. It's not a fault in them. Actually, there's evolutionary advantage, and teenagers are cross-culturally like this; this is not just Western kids. The ancient Greeks complained about teenagers. Everybody that ever lived has complained about teenagers because they're just like this, but the evolutionary advantage of it is that it pushes them out into the world to go out and to create their own life. Humans, we infest everywhere we go. We're an invasive species, so it encourages us to go be an invasive species and be annoying and take over this other thing. We wouldn't do that as a species if our adolescents didn't have this ability and the drive to do it.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's part of our species. We all experience it, and here it is in this book, too. It's amazing.

Lorrie: Oh, my!

JC: This is why I love being a teacher!

Lorrie: Yeah. Well, this is part of the package that the author signed on for in writing a series that spans all these years. 'All right, when it comes to this point, this is what I'm going to write about.' So the Blast-Ended Skrewts...

JC: Oh, my God.

Lorrie: There we have 14-year-old body horror. They're monstrous, they have no shells, they are smelly. Instead of penises and vaginas, they have stings and suckers.

JC: And they fart constantly.

Lorrie: And the farts go on fire and propel them, and they're just loathsome! I love the humor in Hermione trying to tell Draco, "Oh, there might be some good in them," and then later admitting, "As a matter of fact, I think he's right. The best thing to do would be to stamp on the lot of them before they start attacking us all."

JC: Right.

Lorrie: The whole tone of the chapter is quite confidently funny, I find.

JC: And even Hermione in that moment came across as just so much more mature, dramatically mature.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: It was such a mature thing to do. 'Okay, I'm just going to stay this to shut Malfoy up,' and she does; it does shut him up, but then she's just like, "Yeah, yeah. I just said that." That's not first-year Hermione.

Lorrie: No.

JC: First-year Hermione would have had a very different approach to that, but also the thing that I find funny about it is that it very much feels like... In every Star Wars ever, there's a moment where a character says, "I've got a bad feeling about this," and that's what it feels like here. Hermione's saying, "I've got a bad feeling about these Blast-Ended Skrewts."

Lorrie: Yes, and so does everybody else.

JC: Except for Hagrid.

Lorrie: I like that this whole volume shows so successfully that Hermione is a full year or more mature than the boys. Whatever they're going through now, she's already been through.

JC: If we go back to the beginning... There's this scene in the beginning where they're all going through their schedules, and it's so interesting because, thinking about Hermione and her maturity, the boys are complaining about, "Oh, we have double Divination" or something. Hermione's basically like, "Haha, I dropped it. You should have dropped it, too. Your life sucks." It's so funny. This is the person who wanted to learn every single thing.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: I love that she's hit a point where she's like, 'Some things are just not worth --'

Lorrie: They're not worth it.

JC: 'They're not worth it, and I found that thing.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That is also really mature, especially for someone like Hermione. When you hit a point... If you're one of those kids who you soak up everything and you're good at all these school subjects...

Lorrie: Right.

JC: You finally hit one where you're like, 'You know what? I don't have to be good at everything.'

Lorrie: No.

JC: 'And I am going to not take the AP version of that or whatever.'

Lorrie: Right. Right.

JC: That's a good move in your life. That's great, so I'm happy for Hermione.

Lorrie: And she is different from the characters who go for perfect scores or full rosters. Percy would never have dropped a class.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: This is an area in which she's not a completist. Content matters to her.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: Which is nice.

JC: She's not trying to get into magical Harvard or whatever. Sorry, I have a kid who's at this age, where we're starting to look at college. It's going to be really interesting to look back on these episodes in a few years because this is capturing an interesting time of in my life, but that thing where it's like, "What are all the boxes that you have to check to get into the college that you want to get into?" is where we're at in our life.

Lorrie: Yep.

JC: And I like that Hermione is like... She's obviously got a plan and she's thinking ahead, but she's like, 'I don't have to do that.'

Lorrie: No.

JC: 'I hated that. I don't think that's worth anything. Therefore, I will not.' Oh, that's so great.

Lorrie: Yeah, and nothing she wants to do in life is going to require this skill.

JC: True.

Lorrie: She's not actually closing off any avenues for herself.

JC: True. But just being able to know that about... I love it. I love it. I don't know why that makes me irrationally happy; it just does. Oh, Hermione.

Lorrie: Well, she has the confidence and the know-how to take charge. She's not going to be gullibly taken in by, "You should do this, you should do that."

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Also, she knows darn well that anything she does want to do, she's going to be qualified.

JC: True.

Lorrie: So you can't tell her anything. She actually knows what she's doing.

JC: It also tells me that she's not a people-pleaser.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: And boy, that's powerful for a girl, for a young woman...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: To be freed of the burden of having to please other people.

Lorrie: And that's part of how Hermione is a fantasy.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Hermione is, in so many instances, the embodiment of what we would do if we could go back and do better.

JC: True.

Lorrie: If you look back on 'Oh, my goodness, I was so young and ignorant, I can't believe I made this choice that seemed okay at the time and then ruined my life for seven years,' she's doing all this stuff that isn't that easy to know how to do at that age.

JC: Yeah. You've said a long time ago -- I can't remember what season of our podcast it would be -- that Hermione is a bit of a self-insert for the author, and that the author was doing what you just said, which is, 'I wish I could have been like this.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This feels like another place where... She's not a Mary Sue by any stretch, if the listeners know what that means. An idealized version of the author as an insert: she still makes mistakes, but she's so competent in ways that I think a lot of us wish we could have been at that age. And self-confident.

Lorrie: Yeah. Certainly she has been through enough trials to have learned some of these things from experience.

JC: Before we jump back into the big meat of this chapter, there's a couple of other things that were standing out to me about the very beginning. One is that Harry is still worried that we haven't heard from Sirius. The owl post comes in, so there's still this mystery of, 'Where is Sirius? What's he up to? How is he?' Harry's worried, so that was brought back for us a little bit. The other thing is this little tiny thing: Draco's mother sending him a care package full of sweets. I remember saying a couple of times that one of the things I like about Narcissa is that it's just so clear that she loves Draco so much. Draco is loved.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: His parents love him, his mother *loves* him.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's this interesting mirror for me of what Harry didn't get to have for the same length of time, but if Harry's parents had survived, we wouldn't have the series. Okay, let's have the fantasy fanfic where Harry's parents have survived, and somehow we're still fighting Voldemort. Harry and Draco would be kind of similar in a lot of ways -- assuming Harry isn't going to be an only kid in this scenario -- having this mother who's just completely devoted to making sure that her son doesn't get sent too far away to some other school, sends him care packages because she's thinking of him, and goes to talk to his teachers to make sure he doesn't get bound by an awful curse to murder someone. Those kinds of things that Narcissa does throughout the books... I guess I'm happy that Draco is loved. He's an evil little shit because that's who he is, but not because he was neglected at any point.

Lorrie: Well, the subplot going on here is that she wants to keep reminding him, 'Whatever goes on at that school -- however badly you get treated because you're a Slytherin -- at home, we know you're valued,' because that's the whole thing. She traded whatever being at home he might have had at Durmstrang for her desire to keep him close, so anything bad that happens to

him because he's a Slytherin, she's going to feel some guilt. As we're about to see in this chapter, there are bad things that...

JC: Oh, well, yeah. We're going [to see] bad things for Draco. Yeah.

Lorrie: But that's something that you do as a parent, if your kid is going through it at school, is saying, "I understand that there's hard stuff happening, but once you walk in through these doors at home, we love you." She's trying to say, "At home, we think about you all the time." The other other thing I think is oh, I cannot believe that Narcissa's in the kitchen. I think they do have... Dobby wasn't their only house-elf, or at least they got another one.

JC: That there's a house-elf baking all these things to send out to Draco.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That makes sense.

Lorrie: Because the first time we see him get sweets from home is in *Sorcerer's Stone*, and I remember the first time as a re-reader, I thought, 'Who made those? Oh, my God, it was Dobby.'

JC: But yeah, so I like that. I know that mothers are a big theme of the series, but I think that Narcissa is a character that I have a soft spot for for a lot of reasons. But also, she loves Draco so much and she's trying really hard to remind him that he's loved, and that's great.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Because I do that, too, as a mother. I think that's part of it.

Lorrie: I'm currently feeling so much identification with that guilt, because I think she continues to believe it was the right choice. She did want to keep him at home, and there would have been bad things about sending him to Durmstrang, too. It's not even his language, but yeah, how bad she must have felt every time he suffered at Hogwarts. I also love that, of course, double Divination is right after lunch.

JC: The worst time.

Lorrie: Because you've just eaten, you're on a full stomach, and then you go into this overheated perfume-y room with all... Just try.

JC: Which is so difficult. Why is this room so difficult to access?

Lorrie: Right.

JC: That still blows my mind. I have these recurring nightmares where I'm in -- couldn't be my own house, but I'm in a house. There's a room like my bedroom and this place like our bathroom I have to get to, and it's incredibly hard to get to it. You have to go through these little narrow passageways or climb and jump up leaps that are just inexplicably high. This is what it's reminding me of: this dream that I have a lot about places being hard to get to. And the fact that it's a trap door, and you have to haul out a step ladder to it...

Lorrie: A trap door, right. Yeah.

JC: Any kid who breaks a leg is not going to be able to go to this class, or is in a wheelchair or whatever.

Lorrie: Hogwarts and access issues... Yes.



JC: Yeah, so inaccessible.

Lorrie: Well, the thing is my older kid actually had a class... sort of. Not this bad. When she went to high school, she had a physics class that was on the fourth floor and there's no elevators. You needed a signed note to use the elevator. With the thousands of kids trooping in and out all day... They all had to take the stairs, but you could only access it through this one staircase. But you couldn't get to it from the first floor; from the first to the third floor, you had to go up these other staircases and then you had to cross to this one staircase that only got... Right?

JC: That's so crazy.

Lorrie: And then you finally go up to this little hallway that has a few classrooms up on the fourth floor, and one of those is the physics class.

JC: Wow. Yeah.

Lorrie: I only had to deal with that a couple times for parent-teacher conferences, but if you are running in the few minutes between classes from a class on the other end of the school on the first floor and then you have to go to physics, it's just...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Actually, I was thinking of that high school anyway because what Narcissa has to probably go through -- thinking, 'Was that the right choice? Did I cause discomfort?' -- I wanted my kids to go to public schools for a bunch of reasons, including that the classmates they would have would be people that I wanted them to know. But there are always reasons to think, 'Wow, if I had gone with the whole private school option, they wouldn't have to live through this,' like the year that the Pennsylvania state government cut the Philadelphia budget so that there were no school librarians and no school nurses. Yeah. Anyway...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: So yeah, there's Draco. The third thing, I think, is there's enough sweets at Hogwarts. What's he getting? He doesn't need more. So yes, but anyway...

JC: I feel that as a parent. Our kiddo knows that he is incredibly privileged, and he knows that anything that he even hints that he wants, he's probably going to get. That's the kind of life that he lives and he's very aware of it, so it reminded me of that, too. I was like, 'Yeah, yeah, I'm kind of Narcissa in this scenario.' I'm not married to a Death Eater, but I have this kid who is pretty freaking privileged and I continue to want to give him everything because... Yeah.

Lorrie: So in Divination, when Trelawney picks on Harry in this class, this line always gets me: when she picks on him for his 'mean stature'.

JC: I don't even know what that means.

Lorrie: He's short or small, but the wording is so belittling. It's just so awful.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: Yeah, just the awfulness that you sometimes have to put up with from a teacher.

JC: And then when she comes up behind him and she says, "That thing you dread will soon come to pass," and I'm like, 'Well, that narrows it down.'

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah.

JC: How many things is he dreading at this point in his life? All of them. What? Okay.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's like reading your horoscope in the paper and it's like, "You're going to struggle with an issue today." Okay.

Lorrie: Yes. 'Okay.'

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: And then the way he shuts her up when she's like, "You were born in mid-winter." "No, I was born in July."

JC: The exact opposite of what you just said. Oh. So funny.

Lorrie: Then there's the article that Draco is taunting Ron about.

JC: Yeah. Rita Skeeter is definitely not endearing herself to the reader here by going after Arthur Weasley like this, especially because we saw this earlier.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's really clever. We know what happened there. We read it, and now we're seeing how it's being twisted by this particular journalist.

Lorrie: Arnold. Arnold Weasley.

JC: Arnold Weasley.

Lorrie: And Draco saying, "Imagine them not even getting his name right... It's almost as though he's a complete nonentity..." And I thought, oh, this is an author who now has had a lot of experience of being written about inaccurately. That's not a detail that you would have read in the first or second books, but this author now knows, yeah, some people get fact-checked, some people get respected, and others... These embarrassing mistakes keep coming up because they don't actually care. But yeah, I think I'm also betraying my background in journalism. So shall we talk about the boys trading 'your mama' insults?

JC: Yeah, yeah. That's fun.

Lorrie: It's so awful.

JC: It's a classic... it's very middle school, actually.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: In my experience, "Your mama's so... whatever." "Don't talk about my mother!" Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: There's a lot of that. It's fun. It's fun because yeah, this is exactly how kids would do this at this point. "You're going to talk about my parents, I'm going to talk about yours."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's interesting to me too, though, that Draco was waiting. He was so clearly waiting; he had found a button that he could push...

Lorrie: Oh, yes.

JC: And it's aimed at Ron.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It has nothing to do with Harry, but of course they're a package, so if you insult one you've got the other.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: But Draco had read this article and was just waiting...

Lorrie: He was so happy.

JC: To stick it to Ron. He was gleeful about it, which is very much Draco at this age. He's a little shit.

Lorrie: Couldn't wait. But it's also notable that Draco is super sensitive about his mom. Wow! What Harry said to him wasn't even that bad of a blow, but Draco... he's more sensitive about his mom than Ron is about his. No, Narcissa is obviously... You can't tease Draco about his mom. Okay, something's happening there.

JC: It's weird to think that you would go after someone else's mother and not expect them to do the same in return.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This is how it works.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: You just have to know you're opening yourself up to that. Draco, how sheltered are you here? Wow.

Lorrie: So this is what it feels like to dish it out and then take it, huh?

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Okay.

JC: Yeah. 'I'm sowing, I'm sowing. Wait, I'm reaping. This sucks!'

Lorrie: Yeah. So then we get the spell from the back that just misses Harry, and then we get the incident that I don't even know how to start talking about because it's a pretty big deal.

JC: First of all, it was some kind of hex that Draco shot at Harry just missed him, right?

Lorrie: Right.

JC: So it's probably one of these stupid hexes that the kids have been doing to each other all along, like the leg-locker or whatever. It was probably something pretty innocuous and it's more for humiliation than anything else, but it's interesting that Moody... Here's my take on this. This fake Moody seizes an opportunity to get on Harry's good side. That seems to be the whole point of this (and also to establish who Mad-Eye Moody is), but to jump in like this as a chance to get

Harry's trust -- knowing the relationship or even just observing the relationship right there between Harry and Draco, to just jump in and go so over the top taking Draco out of the equation -- it's interesting that that's the choice. It also is absolutely the best thing that he could have done to get Harry and Ron to like him.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I can't even think of anything. In that situation, to grab Draco and to punish him in a really bizarre, humiliating kind of way... Even Ron at the end is like, "Don't ruin this for me. I want to keep this memory in my head for as long as possible." Yeah.

Lorrie: The fascinating thing to me is that I didn't even think about how this would have raised fake Moody in Harry's eyes. You were saying, obviously, that's the whole point of it, and I think you're correct, but I didn't even think of that.

JC: Oh, that's interesting.

Lorrie: Because I was only thinking about the rage in Barty Crouch, Jr./Mad-Eye Moody when he watched Lucius Malfoy's kid be a little sneak, and that was what I was thinking this was about.

JC: Oh, interesting.

Lorrie: But you are right, of course. I did think, despite my general absolute horror at the terrible thing this adult is doing to this 14-year-old child -- despite my real recoiling -- I did, especially on first reading, find it so satisfying. Somebody finally is pushing back against Draco's uncontrolled bullying. Until this point, the kids have been able to treat each other any which way and nobody stops them, and sometimes it's really bad.

JC: Right.

Lorrie: And it just felt so satisfying. Somebody... You know when kids try to get off on a technicality, saying, "Well, what did I do? I didn't do anything," and you get a really intimidating adult saying, "Don't give me that. You know exactly what you did." That's exactly what's happening here: nobody's wondering why Mad-Eye Moody is mad at Draco. Draco did have to be stopped; meanwhile, what he's actually doing is unspeakably awful.

JC: True. From the perspective of animal abuse, even...

Lorrie: Oh, my God.

JC: Yeah. Going back to this body horror thing...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: What's Draco's biggest fear? Perhaps that, for all his bluster and bluffing, people are going to find out that on the inside, he's actually this little tiny scared rodent or something like this, that he's actually kind of helpless and small.

Lorrie: A little squirt. Yeah.

JC: And he's trying to be bigger than he is, so turning him into this little vulnerable, cute, fuzzy animal...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But also the ferret part of it. We use ferret as a verb to think about someone who's sneaky and trying to get away with stuff and behind the scenes, but the ferret is never the hero of the animal adventure story. That's usually like a rabbit or a deer or something. Ferrets are a little bit...

Lorrie: Yeah. It's a step up from Wormtail...

JC: True.

Lorrie: But it's not dignified.

JC: So yeah, that part of it is fun, and also fun that in the Harry Potter fandom the ferret became this symbol.

Lorrie: Oh, yeah.

JC: The ferret... This scene, which is so formative.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: We never see Draco produce a Patronus during this entire series, so in most fanfic, when he finally does, it's a ferret.

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah. After he goes through all of that, he has to purify his soul and master Potter's signature spell -- woo woo woo -- and he finally manages. Another problem with what Mad-Eye Moody has done here: when you overstep like this and endanger a student, other people pay for it later. When Lupin had Neville mock Snape's boggart, Neville was the one who got suffering for it later when Snape was mad at him; now Hermione, in a couple chapters, is going to suffer the consequences of Moody/Crouch coming down on Draco this way.

JC: Okay, I will look for that because I can't remember what that is.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: So we have the incredible bouncing ferret.

Lorrie: Well, he's not bouncing yet.

JC: Oh, he's not bouncing yet. We haven't gotten to that point.

Lorrie: He's still just a ferret, and then when he tries to run away, that's when Moody pulls him back and starts the bouncing. Bouncing, I have to say, is a much too kind word for what he's actually doing. I'm not sure there's any resilience here. I think he's just slamming the kid.

JC: Yeah. That visual that you get from the book -- where he's just slamming him into the ground and lifting him up and slamming into the ground -- that's not what we saw in the movie version.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: In the movie version, they did not have that; they just had the ferret going up and down in the air, but not slamming into the ground.

Lorrie: I don't remember that.

JC: They smoothed that out a little bit, so it wasn't quite as cruel.

Lorrie: Because he's ten feet into the air. That's quite high up. Then he smacks on the floor and then he keeps bouncing him higher and higher, so it's even more and he's squealing in pain. This is... it's shocking.

JC: Yeah. It's very violent, actually.

Lorrie: Yeah, and it's kind of a fantasy. I know that there have been times when I fantasize, 'Oh, you know what I'd love to do to that person. I'd just slam them on the ground,' like someone who cuts me off in traffic or something. I'm not actually going to do it, but here he is actually doing it. Oh, my God. His complaint is: "'I don't like people who attack when their opponent's back's turned,' growled Moody as the ferret bounced higher and higher, squealing in pain. 'Stinking, cowardly, scummy thing to do...'" Wow. Okay. What is this? Is this what he thinks Mad-Eye Moody would feel? Is this Death Eater ethics? Is this Barty Crouch, Jr.'s own values? Is this a place where Mad-Eye Moody and Barty Crouch, Jr., from their opposite ends of the ideological spectrum, converge and have the same opinion? Is this a class thing about, 'That's not how you duel'? Dueling is an honorable sport, maybe, and it has its own etiquette, and you don't do this dishonorable thing. Which reminds me, well, the kids don't get taught dueling etiquette. They had that one lesson in second year; otherwise, they have not been taught to duel, so where is it coming from that there's something dishonorable about attacking when your opponent's back is turned? Actually, in a war, when your opponent's back is turned is the greatest time to attack.

JC: For sure. Yeah.

Lorrie: So what is this? At this point, as first-time readers, we have no idea. We have to take it on face value that this is what Moody actually thinks, but when we go back, what is motivating Barty Crouch, Jr. to attack this kid and then give this as his reason and be quite convincing about how passionate he is about it? There's so much going on here. What do you think? How did that strike you?

JC: I don't actually remember all that much about Barty Crouch, Jr.'s story, so I'm going to have to find out when we get there. Yeah. I know that there's a lot of complexity here, especially in a bit when we get to the part where Draco says, "My father," and Crouch just cuts him off and he's like, "Yeah, well, I have some things to say about your father." Okay, there's some history there that is both Moody's history but also Barty Crouch, Jr.'s history, so it's interesting. Yeah, there's a lot happening here, but I don't have the end of it in my head to be able to analyze it here at this point.

Lorrie: Well, when we started this volume, and I said to you that out of all of them, this is the one that I think was most rushed. This was the last volume where the author stuck to a publisher deadline, because starting with Book Five, she said, "You know what? You'll get the book when you get it." But this one, I said, "To me, it reads like it needed one more draft, but she was hurrying." The fact that you don't remember that much about Barty Crouch, Jr.'s backstory... I think that's one of the casualties of the rush, because that is a huge reveal and it feels to me like that was a part of the story that, given enough time, the author could have given it enough weight. It's one of those things where I imagine writers will say, "Okay, I'm going to put this down for now and I'm going to come back later and make this more prominent," but she didn't have time. That's my read on it.

JC: I remember you saying that, that this book is... There's places where you can see where it was rushed. I'm having not that great of a memory of this book. I was like, 'I wonder where those are going to pop up,' but that makes sense.

Lorrie: Right, because you can't forget the ferret scene, but you don't remember that much detail about the big reveal. Oh. Somewhere, Moody and/or Crouch really hate sneaky dueling and thinks that this is a bad enough violation that it deserves this kind of beating. Then we have to think: what sets off the person who we later learn is Barty Crouch, Jr.? Here's the child of a former Death Eater, fighting dirty, that possibly set him off. What set him off at the World Cup was his former Death Eater colleagues being self-indulgent and going around tormenting Muggles, being self-congratulatory about all the rule-breaking they do as such bad boys, in their own opinion, without having earned it. If these two things are related, then that's something that matters to Barty Crouch, Jr.: that he has resentment at traitors in his own community and, as far as I can tell, that resentment is greater than whatever animosity he feels toward Aurors or Dumbledore, and that happens in every subculture and in every community. There are people who don't go after their real enemies as much as their supposed allies who are ideologically impure.

JC: Yeah, that's true. I hadn't thought about it from that angle. But yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: That's really familiar.

Lorrie: Yeah. They aren't being Death Eaters the right way, according to him.

JC: Therefore, they deserve punishment and so do their children...

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Who learned it from them.

Lorrie: And you don't even see him feeling the same way about people who were supposed to be his enemies. Of course, his greatest resentment is toward his father, somebody within your own home, someone who was supposed to be on your team that is not living up to what you think they should be. Then I thought, well, what is that? What is this standing in judgment of other Death Eaters? Because unlike many of the characters in this book, Barty Crouch, Jr. does not seem to have Dumbledore issues; he has Voldemort issues and he has Barty Crouch, Sr. issues. So then I thought, oh, then I guess how he feels about the other Death Eaters is sibling rivalry.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: Because that's the dynamic that Voldemort encourages among his followers: he wants them to compete for his favor, and I have to say Barty Crouch, Jr. is completely correct in staking his claim as the best Death Eater. He's absolutely right.

JC: He's going to great lengths here to prove it. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: When he's dragging Draco off to Snape, he also makes a comment about Snape being in this category of an old friend that's kind of sarcastic. That also sets up a really interesting --

From the perspective of the first-time reader, you're like, 'Oh, boy, Moody's got Snape's number,' and then it's like, 'Okay, fake Moody also has Snape's number. Maybe? I don't know.'

Lorrie: Yeah, yeah. Wait, what does he have on Snape?

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: We know why an Auror would hate Lucius Malfoy. Why does an Auror hate Snape? Um, what don't we know? What don't we know? There's obviously some filthy backstory there. Oh, and about the sibling rivalry issues, though, with wanting a substitute for your father that you don't like: that makes Percy, Weasley sort of the dark twin to Barty Crouch, Jr.

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: Percy Weasley would love to upgrade from Arthur to a rule stickler like Barty Crouch, Sr.

JC: Who also can't remember his name.

Lorrie: Right, but this whole fantasy of addressing your unhappiness around your father by wanting a different story, a different relationship...

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Because Percy's hostility is not a small thing. So yeah, Moody is yelling at Draco, "Never - do - that - again," and if he's only trying to convince everybody that he's the real Mad-Eye Moody, this is going kind of far for it to be only that, don't you think?

JC: We don't know Moody yet.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: All we know is that he's batshit, right?

Lorrie: Right.

JC: That's kind of what we know about him.

Lorrie: Yeah, he's hypervigilant.

JC: And I guess in the next chapter -- looking at the title of the next chapter anyway -- I think this is where we really get to see him in action more, but the fact that this is our introduction to him, we just don't... What we know about him before is that, oh, he's really paranoid.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He's kind of messed up because of all the work that he's done. It feels really extreme and it is really extreme, but it also really sets up this character in a...

Lorrie: Right.

JC: We have no idea what to expect. And then we get the Weasley twins coming in afterwards and Lee Jordan, like, "Oh, man, his class was so great!"

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: "He's been there, man. He knows!" Oh, okay.



Lorrie: Bona fides. Yeah. Is he calculating correctly that this is what people think of Moody? Do his feelings align with Moody's, or is he (Barty Crouch, Jr.) taking this opportunity to express contempt for the family of a Death Eater? Because it's not even Lucius Malfoy; it's Lucius's kid that he doesn't even know. He's taking out his opinion of Lucius on a 14-year-old.

JC: Right. This is part of what made me think he's taking advantage of an opportunity to endear himself to Harry. 'Endear' is the wrong word, but that's where --

Lorrie: No, maybe it's not.

JC: Yeah, but that idea of this is a chance to gain Harry's trust... If it had been another kid, I don't know if he would have reacted this way.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: If Draco had shot off a curse at Neville, eh. At Harry? I don't know. I feel like that's a factor.

Lorrie: Right, although Harry was not, as far as he knew, involved when he shot the Dark Mark at the World Cup. That was just the Death Eaters pissing him off. As far as I can tell, it's so hard to tell what Barty Crouch, Jr. is actually thinking and feeling, but I'm guessing he seems to be enjoying that he gets to embody Mad-Eye Moody in order to intimidate the people that he personally despises. If these people have been burning you for a while and then you get to be somebody that is known to intimidate them, that's kind of fun.

JC: And without consequences for yourself, really. He can ruin Mad-Eye Moody's reputation all he wants, and at the end of the day he can drop that identity and move on. So yeah.

Lorrie: So does he (Barty Crouch, Jr.) also hate Moody, or do you think he respects Moody?

JC: Ooh, that's a good question. It occurs to me that he's using him like a sock puppet. Remember how we used to talk about sock puppets on the internet -- and I don't know if this term is even still around -- but that idea that you would take on an identity just to do a thing that you wouldn't do with your own identity, or to advance an agenda?

Lorrie: Or just escape responsibility.

JC: Yeah. That feels like what he's doing here, too, is he's sock-puppeting Moody. But I don't know what... Yeah.

Lorrie: The fact that he is accusing Draco of being cowardly -- and the fact that he resents the Death Eaters for sneaking around and torturing people but not standing up for Voldemort -- makes me think that Barty Crouch, Jr. genuinely thinks other Death Eaters should have been more brave and/or more loyal. It makes me wonder if he actually respects Moody more than somebody like Lucius Malfoy...

JC: Interesting.

Lorrie: Even though Lucius is his enemy, because what it does is make Moody a worthy adversary.

JC: Ooh. Uh-huh.

Lorrie: And that's something that we're going to see come up again in the next chapter: whatever Barty Crouch, Jr.'s feelings about Harry, he treats Harry as a worthy adversary and trains him up to be even more of a worthy adversary instead of trying to cut him down. It makes

me feel like there's a bit of character -- It's very hard to get at the character of Barty Crouch, Jr., but I'm wondering if there's some respect for Moody and that's part of it.

JC: Makes sense.

Lorrie: Surely if I were the number one follower of the greatest Dark Lord ever, it would feel insulting to me, too, if he only had a bunch of cowardly buffoons as his followers. "Come on! You've got the Dark Mark. Live up to it!"

JC: "You're all just minions! Come on."

Lorrie: Raise the tone a little.

JC: Oh. That's taking me to a whole other place. There was a time when followers of Trump were trying to outdo each other with their awfulness, and there was no bottom to it.

Lorrie: No.

JC: It just kept getting worse and worse. We can think about that a little bit, and the kind of crazy things that people would do and would get arrested for and taken out for at some point, and Trump would be like, "Oh, I have nothing to do with it." But yet... I think about all the January 6th people.

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah.

JC: Right? A lot of those people... it felt like they were just trying to out-Trump each other, and it wasn't until consequences started coming down that, "But, but..."

Lorrie: "That was a joke."

JC: Yeah. "I didn't mean it. Didn't mean to threaten to hang the vice president."

Lorrie: "That was metaphorical." Yeah.

JC: "That was metaphorical." Oh, my God.

Lorrie: And that's the element of this horrific abuse that is so welcome: however wrong it was, somebody stopped Draco. "You can't do that. What you did is wrong. You can't just get away with anything."

JC: "Here's a limit."

Lorrie: Yeah. Well, thank goodness, then we get a real grown-up. We get Professor McGonagall showing up.

JC: Yes. It's always a relief when Professor McGonagall shows up, for sure.

Lorrie: She is shocked. "Moody, we never use Transfiguration as a punishment!" Duh. Yes! How horrible that somebody has to actually say that.

JC: What's wild about that to me is that she says, "Surely Dumbledore mentioned this," and he's like, "Yeah, he might have said something." That means that there is a rule book that has a rule in it -- "Transfiguration is not to be used as a punishment" -- and that Dumbledore felt that this needed to be said to Moody in particular. Wow. Okay.

Lorrie: Well, actually, the wording is really good here. When she said, "Surely Professor Dumbledore told you that?" 'He might have mentioned it, yeah,' said Moody", and that is totally

wiggling out of it. That's a technicality; he didn't admit yes or no. He might have. Also, it brings up that what Hagrid did to Dudley in the first book was really, really bad.

JC: Right. Yeah, I was thinking about that, too, actually. The Schadenfreude that you feel as a reader (that Ron truly experiences here) is similar to what we and Harry felt in Book One with Dudley getting a pig tail, and it's very much...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah, so you get the idea that perhaps this is something that was used a lot in the past. I can imagine really horrific ways that teachers could've used Transfiguration to humiliate and punish students...

Lorrie: Yeah. Yeah.

JC: Until there was a point at which it was banned as a practice.

Lorrie: "We don't do that."

JC: Yeah. "We don't hit kids in school anymore. We don't do that anymore." Occasionally, you hear about a kid getting hit in school and people are like, "Oh, my God, that's so horrible. We don't do that anymore." It feels kind of like that.

Lorrie: Yeah. Apollyon Pringle used to do that, but not us. Yeah. Here we have Moody bluffing, hoping he's doing a good enough job of impersonating Moody and gambling that yeah, maybe Dumbledore said it, maybe he didn't, "but I thought a good sharp shock --" That's a good gamble and he gets away with it, and McGonagall says, "We give detentions, Moody! Or speak to the offender's Head of House!" That's when we get Draco going, "My father..." and that's when Moody says, "Oh, you tell your father Moody's keeping a close eye on his son," so he gets to enjoy that threat. That's when he says, "Oh, Snape," and then we're like, oh, does this have anything to do with all the rumors about Snape being so big on the Dark Arts? Hmm. And here's one of those off-screen moments that I would dearly love to have been there for: he then marches Draco off to Snape's office to have this three-person chat.

JC: Yeah. What happened?!

Lorrie: Can you imagine what that was like?

JC: In the room where it happens... What?! I want to be in the room!

Lorrie: Oh, my God! Oh, and how infuriating that must have been for both the Slytherins, because how can a teacher abuse a student the way that Moody just has and yet be the one who's in charge in this three-person meeting? Oof. The intimidation is wild.

JC: Yeah. I'm also thinking about the fact that Draco gets this care package from his mom at the beginning and we know how his mom feels about him. Whatever, Lucius, whatever; I'm wondering what Draco's mom thought when she found out about this, and how furious she was.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: We don't know this yet, but this is setting up that Moody scares Snape; that Snape -- as the head of Slytherin with a long, long history -- would have been anguished that Moody came in and mistreated one of his students and that Snape can't do a thing about it, and that Moody is

making Snape look weak in front of Draco, unable to stand up for his own student. We know -- Snape knows -- Moody was hand-selected by Dumbledore to be this teacher this year and the whole dynamic that Snape is supposed to want to be the Defense instructor, but how other years he has been secretly the de facto Defense instructor at least some of the time. This is one year that doesn't happen at all, because Moody is -- by every standard -- totally way more qualified for this position than Snape. Moody is the personification of Defense Against the Dark Arts.

JC: Right, in appearance, in everything. Yeah. This is what it takes.

Lorrie: Yeah. Quirrell was nervous and young and Lockhart was just a conman, and Lupin was a peer of Snape's whom he despised. But next to Moody, Snape is a child. He's an amateur; it's a little bit like how Harry feels next to Cedric, except way worse. Snape is really low in status, and Moody is really pushing on that in this scene that we don't get to see. Probably. I just imagine Snape and Draco paying off the author to not let us see how that meeting went. But yeah, there's a gamble that Barty Crouch, Jr./Moody is taking that is paying off, and we see this throughout this book. It's like, 'Okay, where's Dumbledore?' Did McGonagall not go to Dumbledore and say, "By the way, your new hire just Transfigured a student and then nearly broke all his bones?" No, she apparently didn't. We know Snape didn't go to Dumbledore, because Snape would have been highly aware that Moody outranked him in every way. Moody is betting and exploiting this unavailability of Dumbledore's by taking on the actual Mad-Eye Moody's good favor with Dumbledore and using it as a free pass. It's a risk.

JC: I don't remember so much of this book, but I don't know what to expect.

Lorrie: Right.

JC: All the answers to all of these questions are now mysterious to me. What is the fallout of this? I don't actually remember. I guess I'm going to find out.

Lorrie: Well, I'll give you a hint. What usually happens when a Slytherin is the victim in this school? Does the person who tortured the Slytherin ever get punished?

JC: Ah. It's going to be the Muggle-born kids who are going to bear the brunt of it or something like that.

Lorrie: Yeah, and the person who actually -- quite wrongly -- slammed Draco to the floor repeatedly from ten feet in the air is never going to see any consequences. Snape is going to have to deal not only with Draco's trauma from this and the follow-up humiliation that both of them endured, but he's just never going to see any justice. Why? I don't know, Slytherin. We don't, of course, know what house Mad-Eye Moody was in.

JC: Oh, okay. It's not a thing that's ever even revealed years later.

Lorrie: It seems quite plausible that he would have been a Gryffindor, but we don't know, and we don't actually know what house either of the Crouches was in.

JC: Oh, interesting. Okay.

Lorrie: Although the amount of maneuvering that it required of Barty Crouch, Jr. to pull this off for a year... it would have helped him a lot to be a Slytherin.

JC: Yeah, it feels very Slytherin, that's for sure.

Lorrie: Not that this is a difficult question, but Moody should have been fired for this, right?

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Oh, God.

JC: But no one ever gets fired in Hogwarts for this kind of thing.

Lorrie: But we talk about Snape getting fired for forcing Neville to endanger his own pet, which seems abusive, and this seems to me quite a bit worse.

JC: Yeah, and just knowing what's coming... I remember we've had that conversation. Yeah, yeah. I don't know. Right now, I'm kind of like, 'It's Hogwarts.' Ugh.

Lorrie: So in the real world, if --

JC: In a couple of years, they're going to be using the Cruciatus curse as punishment, so we're just going downhill at this point. It's only going to get worse.

Lorrie: But just to follow through: in the real world, if it's the first day of class and your new hire has caught a sneaky bully in the hall and then physically slammed them around --

JC: Assaulted them.

Lorrie: What would happen?

JC: Yeah, that'd be fire -- that'd be an arrest. They'd get arrested. You would lose your job.

Lorrie: Press charges, right?

JC: At minimum. You would get arrested for child endangerment. You would never be a teacher again.

Lorrie: Right, and that kid's family would sue you, probably, right?

JC: Yeah. They would probably even sue the school district for hiring that person in the first place without a thorough background check or whatever. Yeah, there's a lot of...

Lorrie: Right.

JC: Background checks seem not to happen at Hogwarts.

Lorrie: Well, we already know that background check is an issue with Moody, because we had the conversation between Arthur Weasley and Amos Diggory when they had the report about the moving dust bins, and they said, "Oh, what can we get him off that won't go into a background check?" Because with his history, he would not have survived a background check.

JC: True.

Lorrie: So yeah. Anyway, just checking. Meanwhile, yeah, Fred, George and Lee Jordan are all raving about this fascinating, gripping new teacher.

JC: It's still interesting to me that it's not Moody, and I have to keep that in my head going forward.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This isn't Moody; this is Barty Crouch, Jr.

Lorrie: This is a continuation and an escalation of the tactic developed in *Prisoner of Azkaban*, of writing scenes that will later demand that the reader go back and reread from different perspectives. Definitely, to me, it feels like upping the stakes that happens to authors when you think, 'Okay, you've just had this wild success with *Prisoner of Azkaban*. How are you going to follow up?' I think she's taken it further, and the thing about *Prisoner of Azkaban* is (with the exception of Wormtail) all these characters that had shady secret agendas were basically in good faith, even if they were mistaken. Snape was wrong about what Lupin and Sirius were doing, but when he was following what he believed was happening, he was more or less in good faith; all of them were. Then when we learn what people were really feeling, that's reassuring. Here in this novel, Barty Crouch, Jr.'s secret agenda is in coldly, terrifying bad faith. This is scary. The second read -- more than *Prisoner of Azkaban* -- is radically different and way more dangerous and more threatening. Wormtail was cringing and despicable; this undercover Death Eater is not. Formidable stuff.

JC: And we're going to see even more of him, I think, in the next chapter. I'm excited about this chapter. Yes!

Lorrie: Yeah. Going forward from this point in the book, the question I'm going to keep in my mind is: what does it mean that an extreme Death Eater has so much ideological overlap with an extreme Auror?

JC: Ooh, yeah.

Lorrie: Because he's not having very much trouble impersonating Mad-Eye Moody, is he?

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: All right. Next up, Unforgivable Curses!

JC: Ooh...

Lorrie: Ooh!

JC: Looking forward to it.

Lorrie: Yeah. Talk to you then!

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](http://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.