***Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban***

***Chapter 21***

***Summary and analysis***

***Brief Summary:***

* When Harry comes around, he's back in the hospital wing (again).
* He overhears Fudge and Snape talking.
* Fudge says Snape will likely get an Order of Merlin award for his "heroics" in rescuing the kids from an escaped convict and a werewolf and a gang of Dementors.
* Snape modestly says it was nothing. Which is somewhat true, at least – Snape didn't actually do anything at all.
* He then explains that the kids were clearly under the influence of a Confundus charm, which means they were confused into attacking him.
* Harry looks over and sees Hermione awake and listening like he is.
* Ron is still out cold.
* Harry and Hermione try to talk to Madame Pomfrey, but she just tells them to calm down.
* Fudge and Snape come in and agitate Harry and Hermione further since neither man will listen to them.
* Fudge is rather taken aback when Snape up and yells at Hermione.
* Dumbledore finally arrives and shoos them all out so he can talk to Harry and Hermione.
* Dumbledore says that he spoke with Sirius and that he believes him, but there's no proof and no time to prove Sirius's innocence before the Dementors perform the Kiss on him.
* Dumbledore emphasizes the time part and Hermione picks up on something.
* The headmaster then gives them very weird directions: he tells them exactly where Sirius is locked up, notes that they can save more than one innocent life, and warns them that they must not be seen. (Simple.)
* Then he leaves and locks them in the infirmary.
* Hermione whips out a tiny hourglass on a gold chain and throws part of the chain around Harry's neck. She turns it three times and everything blurs.
* "He was standing next to Hermione in the deserted entrance hall and a stream of golden sunlight was falling across the paved floor from the open front doors" (21.96).
* Hermione drags Harry into a storage room and drops a bombshell: they just traveled back in time courtesy of Hermione's Time-Turner, which she's been using to take extra classes all year.
* Harry has hit his quota of startling revelations for the day.
* But Hermione then admits that she doesn't get what Dumbledore wants them to do.
* Harry figures it out, though: they need to rescue Buckbeak and use him to save Sirius.
* So the two make a run for the forest.
* They sneak over to Hagrid's house and watch themselves enter it.
* "This is the weirdest thing we've ever done," Harry says (20.134).
* Dr. Who, Marty McFly, Billy Pilgrim from *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and the casts of *A Wrinkle in Time* and *Lost* fervently agree with you, Harry.
* Harry asks why they don't just run in there and kill Peter in his rat form after they found him in Hagrid's milk jar.
* Writing that was probably the weirdest thing we've ever done.
* Hermione says no way and explains that messing around with time is a bad, bad idea and that if he burst in there and his past self saw him, he's probably attack [...] himself. Our heads hurt.
* Harry also experiences a time travel headache and says he gets the point, they'll let the evening play out like it already did.
* Finally the window of opportunity arrives and Harry and Hermione untie Buckbeak and sneak him into the forest.
* This time they hear what happens (happened?) after their other, past selves leave Hagrid's house.
* Ow, ow, our brains.
* At any rate, the adults are astonished to find Buckbeak gone and the executioner swings his axe into the fence in frustration.
* Hey, that explains the noise the kids heard as they walked away from Hagrid's hut! There seems to be a time loop in play here.
* So the adults all leave and Harry and Hermione then watch the odd spectacle of everyone heading into the passage to the Shrieking Shack.
* They settle down in the woods to wait for everyone (and themselves) to come back out.
* Harry is still upset that they can't rush in there and stop Peter and he tries to rush out, but Hermione grabs his robes and yanks him back just as a drunk Hagrid appears, heading towards the castle.
* Close call there.
* Harry agrees to sit and wait.
* The two friends sit and talk. Harry explains what he saw when they were with the Dementors and confesses that he thinks his dad was the one who cast the Patronus.
* Hermione doesn't see how that's possible, but Harry insists it looks like him.
* Finally everyone emerges from the Shack and Harry wants to do something to stop Peter, but Hermione insists that they should just focus on saving Sirius, and Harry reluctantly agrees.
* But then Harry realizes that werewolf Lupin is about to come rushing into the forest.
* So he and Hermione drag Buckbeak and run to Hagrid's now-empty hut.
* Harry then casually goes back outside to check out the situation.
* He runs over to where the Dementors have gathered so he can hopefully catch his dad.
* And he watches as they surround Hermione, and Sirius, and himself.
* "And then it hit him – he understood. He hadn't seen his father – he has seen *himself* –" (21.295).
* So Harry steps out and confidently casts a super powerful Patronus charm, which takes the form of a stag.
* He rushes back to the hut to find a furious Hermione, but Harry explains what happened.
* She's not sure what to be more shocked about: the fact that Harry saw himself and saved the day, or the fact that Harry cast some seriously advanced magic.
* The two watch some more and then spy McNair the executioner leaving to get the Dementors.
* So the two hop on Buckbeak and fly to the tower where Sirius is being held.
* Hermione doesn't like flying.
* Sirius is stunned to see them hovering outside his window. Hermione unlocks the window and Sirius climbs aboard Buckbeak.
* Buckbeak lands on the castle and lets Harry and Hermione off.
* Sirius tearfully thanks them and then flies off into the night.
* Harry and Hermione watch until they can't see Sirius and Buckbeak anymore.

***Brief Analysis:***

Harry awakens in the hospital ward to hear Snape boasting about his heroic act of saving the three students from both a werewolf and Sirius Black. Cornelius Fudge's voice sounds, promising Snape an award for his courage. Ron is still unconscious, but Harry and Hermione leap out of bed and begin explaining what they saw and heard, and about Pettigrew's appearance and Black's innocence. Snape waves this away, saying that Black must have confounded their minds. Harry and Hermione are still heatedly defending Black when Dumbledore enters the room and says that he must speak with the two of them alone. Once the others have left, Dumbledore tells Harry and Hermione that he has heard Black's story and that he believes it, but that not one shred of evidence exists to back it up. He says meaningfully that they need more time to save two lives that night, and Hermione nods. When Dumbledore leaves, Hermione turns an hourglass on a chain backwards three times, taking Harry and her into the Forbidden Forest, where they hear themselves and Ron visiting Hagrid. Hermione explains in a whisper how she was given this time- turning device so that she could take more than once class at the same time, and how it is of utmost importance that nobody, especially not their past selves, sees them while the are in the form of their future selves.

The second life to which Dumbledore refers, Harry determines, is Buckbeak's; so Harry and Hermione wait quietly by Hagrid's cabin, untying the hippogriff once the executioners have gone inside the cabin to deal with some paperwork. Harry, Hermione, and Buckbeak hide in the forest as they hear the thud of an axe swung in frustration at having lost the victim, as well as Hagrid's howl of joy at the surprise escape. They wait in the woods, watching themselves go down the Whomping Willow and back up, and while Hermione and Buckbeak hide in Hagrid's empty cabin from the werewolf, Harry slips out to see who conjured the patronus. He watches the Dementors approach and attempt to kiss him, and nothing happens- no patronus is conjured. At this moment, Harry realizes that it was he who had conjured it, not his father, as he had suspected, and so he conjures it again, saving his, Hermione's, and Black's life, and finally understanding that the form of his patronus is a stag, Prongs, his father's animagi form. Father and son regard each other, then the shape disappears. Harry rejoins Hermione, and together they fly on Buckbeak's back up to the tower room where Black is being held, and they send Black and Buckbeak flying away together to their freedom.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part***

***Summary Part 1:***

[**Harry**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/harry-potter) comes to in the hospital wing and listens to [**Snape**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/professor-snape) and [**Fudge**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/cornelius-fudge) in the hallway. Snape tells Fudge that Harry, [**Hermione**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/hermione-granger), and [**Ron**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/ron-weasley) were Confunded, and he suggests that Harry thinks too highly of himself and has been given too much leeway. Fudge asks about the retreating [**dementors**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/symbols/dementors), but Snape doesn't know why they left Harry, Hermione, and [**Black**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/sirius-black) alone. At this, Harry opens his eyes and sees Hermione. [**Madam Pomfrey**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters) comes over with a block of chocolate and as Harry tries to get out of bed, she soothingly says that Black will receive the Kiss any moment. Harry's shout of surprise brings Fudge and Snape in from the hallway.

***Analysis Part 1:***

While Snape is clearly angry and prejudiced, he's also not wrong—Harry does think he's above the law and he gets away with plenty of things at school. This starts to suggest that Snape, while misguided, may still be giving out nuggets of truth. However, because Harry won't listen to Snape, he'll never take anything Snape says in this regard seriously.

***Summary Part 2:***

[**Harry**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/harry-potter) and [**Hermione**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/hermione-granger) try to tell [**Fudge**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/cornelius-fudge) that [**Sirius**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/sirius-black) is innocent and that [**Peter Pettigrew**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/scabbers-peter-pettigrew) is an Animagus, but [**Madam Pomfrey**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters) shoves chocolate in Harry's mouth so he stops speaking. [**Dumbledore**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/albus-dumbledore) arrives and calmly asks to speak with Harry and Hermione. [**Snape**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/professor-snape), incensed, asks if his testimony is worthless and screams at Hermione again when she reminds him that he was knocked out and doesn't have the whole story. Dumbledore ushers everyone out of the room and as Snape leaves, he reminds Dumbledore that Sirius proved capable of murder at age sixteen.

***Analysis Part 2:***

When Hermione reminds Snape that he doesn't have the whole story, it shows that she now understands how important it is for a person to have all the information they possibly can before making any important decisions. Snape never saw Pettigrew in his human form, which does mean that he has no reason to believe Lupin and Sirius's tale.

***Summary Part 3:***

As soon as the door closes, [**Harry**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/harry-potter) and [**Hermione**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/hermione-granger) start to tell [**Dumbledore**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/albus-dumbledore) what they know, but he stops them. He reminds them that there's no proof of [**Sirius**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/sirius-black)'s innocence, and [**Lupin**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/professor-lupin)'s testimony will count for little given that he's a werewolf. Dumbledore says that he believes them, but he has no power to make [**Fudge**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/cornelius-fudge) agree. Harry feels as though his last hope is gone as Dumbledore says that they need more time. Hermione's eyes grow round as Dumbledore tells them where to find Sirius and says that they can save two lives if things go well. He reminds Hermione of the law, says he's going to lock them in, and tells Hermione "three turns should do it."

***Analysis Part 3:***

Dumbledore's admission that he doesn't have the power to make Fudge believe their version of events forces Harry to begin to grow up and see the adults in his life as humans, not gods. He also notes that who says something is almost more important than what's said, given that Harry and Hermione aren't believable because they're teenagers and Lupin isn't believable because the wizarding world shuns werewolves.

Summary Part 4:  
 [**Hermione**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/hermione-granger) pulls a thin gold chain with a tiny hourglass on it out of her robes, calls [**Harry**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/harry-potter) to her, and throws it around his neck too. She turns the hourglass and things start to blur. Harry finds himself in the entrance hall with Hermione. She drags him into a broom closet and explains that they've gone back three hours in time. She listens to herself, Harry, and [**Ron**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/ron-weasley) shuffle down to [**Hagrid**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/rubeus-hagrid)'s hut under the Invisibility Cloak and explains that her necklace is a Time-Turner. [**McGonagall**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/professor-mcgonagall) gave it to her so she could attend her classes, but she had to promise not to tell anyone.

Analysis Part 4:

Now that Harry knows the truth about Hermione, many earlier events start to make more sense. In particular, Harry recognizes that while he knew that there was something strange going on, he wasn't especially curious about what was going on with Hermione. This impresses on him that if he wishes to be a good friend going forward, he'll need to be more actively curious about his friends so he can care for them better.

Summary Part 5:

[**Hermione**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/hermione-granger) admits she doesn't understand what [**Dumbledore**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/albus-dumbledore) wants them to do. They puzzle over what happened three hours ago and [**Harry**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/harry-potter) realizes that Dumbledore wants them to save [**Buckbeak**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/buckbeak) so that [**Sirius**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/sirius-black) can escape on him. He and Hermione run into the forest and sneak around to Hagrid's hut. They watch Hagrid let their earlier selves in and hear Hermione find **[Scabbers](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/scabbers-peter-pettigrew)**. Harry suggests that they run in and grab [**Pettigrew**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/scabbers-peter-pettigrew), but Hermione tells Harry that they can't change time—people have killed their past or future selves because they think what they’re seeing is dark magic.

Analysis Part 5:

When Hermione insists on following the rules of time travel so closely, it suggests that even though they are breaking rules (they are "changing time" by saving Buckbeak, at the very least), there are other rules that are far more important. If Harry were to change what he knows happened at this point, he might not be able to complete his tasks as everything would change.

Summary Part 6:

[**Harry**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/harry-potter) and [**Hermione**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/hermione-granger) watch [**Dumbledore**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/albus-dumbledore), [**Fudge**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/cornelius-fudge), **[Macnair](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters)**, and the Committee member leave the castle, and see [**Hagrid**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/rubeus-hagrid) escort the trio out his back door. Hagrid lets in the execution party and Harry watches Macnair look at [**Buckbeak**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/buckbeak) out the window. Fudge explains that he has to read the execution notice and asks Macnair to listen. While Fudge is reading, Harry creeps out and bows to Buckbeak. Buckbeak bows back and Harry starts to drag him towards the forest. Hermione helps Harry drag Buckbeak behind a tree as they hear Hagrid's door open. Macnair is furious and swings his axe into the fence, but Dumbledore sounds amused. Hagrid starts sobbing with happiness.

Analysis Part 6:

Because Harry is able to successfully bow to Buckbeak and handle the hippogriff, it suggests that at the very least Hagrid's first class was a success—he successfully taught one student to deal with hippogriffs. This offers some hope for the future that, if Hagrid is able to regain his confidence, he'll be able to become a much better Care of Magical Creatures teacher.

Summary Part 7:

[**Hermione**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/hermione-granger) says that now they'll need to hide until they can fly [**Buckbeak**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/buckbeak) up to [**Sirius**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/sirius-black)'s window in a few hours. They creep around the edge of the forest until the Whomping Willow is in sight. They watch [**Ron**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/ron-weasley) fight with **[Scabbers](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/scabbers-peter-pettigrew)** and watch Sirius drag Ron through the roots. [**Dumbledore**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/albus-dumbledore) walks **[Macnair](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters)**, [**Fudge**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/cornelius-fudge), and the Committee member back to the castle and minutes later, [**Lupin**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/professor-lupin) lets himself into the tree. Harry suggests that he could go grab the Invisibility Cloak from where they left it, but Hermione stops him just as [**Hagrid**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/rubeus-hagrid) starts walking up to the castle. Minutes later, [**Snape**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/professor-snape) bursts out of the castle, grabs the Cloak, and vanishes under the tree.

Analysis Part 7:

Again, Hermione's insistence on following the rules shows why she was given the Time-Turner in the first place: she still respects rules above all else. She also understands that she and Harry aren't just bound by the rules of time travel; they also have to follow Dumbledore's rules and do only what he asked them to do. Hermione's warning here also saves them from messing up what they know happened in the Shrieking Shack.

Summary Part 8:

As they wait, [**Hermione**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/hermione-granger) asks why the [**dementors**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/symbols/dementors) didn't get [**Sirius**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/sirius-black). Harry explains what he saw and says that he knows someone conjured a real, powerful Patronus. Slowly and hesitantly, Harry says that it looked like [**James**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/james-potter). Hermione looks worried and Harry turns away. About an hour later, Hermione and Harry watch themselves climb out of the Whomping Willow's roots. Harry grudgingly agrees that they can't go looking for [**Pettigrew**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/scabbers-peter-pettigrew) as the cloud reveals the moon. Suddenly, Harry realizes that they have to move in order to avoid the werewolf Lupin. They race back to [**Hagrid**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/rubeus-hagrid)'s.

Analysis Part 8:

Harry's willingness to tell Hermione the truth about what he saw in regards to the Patronus speaks to the strength of their friendship and the trust between them. This then suggests that they've made up fully and, going forward, they will continue to move towards maturity and engage with each other more like adults than children.

Summary Part 9:

[**Harry**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/harry-potter) promises not to interfere but goes back outside to keep tabs on events. He hears the [**dementors**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/symbols/dementors) swarming himself, [**Hermione**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/hermione-granger), and [**Sirius**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/sirius-black), and decides that he needs to see if [**James**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/james-potter) is going to appear. Harry hides behind a bush and watches his feeble Patronus across the lake. Nobody appears and suddenly, Harry understands that he saw himself. He steps from behind the bush and conjures a huge stag Patronus. When it returns to him, Harry whispers "Prongs." A second after it disappears, Hermione and [**Buckbeak**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/buckbeak) appear behind him. Hermione is distraught, but Harry explains that it's okay since he didn't realize he saw himself. They watch [**Snape**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/professor-snape) put their past selves on stretchers and take them up to the castle.

Analysis Part 9:

When Harry realizes that he actually conjured the Patronus, he learns that there are exceptions to the rules of time travel—but that they can only look like exceptions from the time-traveler's point of view. The fact that Harry was able to mistake himself for James also speaks to the connection that Harry shares with his father, as he's finally able to see what others have been telling him for three years now (that he looks shockingly like his father).

Summary Part 9:

[**Hermione**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/hermione-granger) checks her watch and when they see **[Macnair](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters)** leave the castle, presumably to get the [**dementors**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/symbols/dementors), she and [**Harry**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/harry-potter) get on [**Buckbeak**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/buckbeak) and fly to the appropriate window. [**Sirius**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-prisoner-of-azkaban/characters/sirius-black) looks surprised to see them as Hermione unlocks the window. He climbs on behind them and they fly to the top of the West Tower. Harry assures Sirius that they're all going to be fine, and Harry and Hermione yell at him to go.

Analysis Part 9:

Successfully saving Sirius means that Hermione and Harry were able to take justice into their own hands and make it happen on a much smaller scale than the Ministry is capable of. This completes their journey towards learning that they can't trust the Ministry to do the right thing.