

## Transcript

### Episode 4.19

#### Book 4, Chapter 19: The Hungarian Horntail

**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 Nineteen: The Hungarian Horntail.

**Lorrie:** The Hungarian Horntail. Harry gets bad press but doesn't have Ron to help him deal with it. Hagrid secretly shows Harry the dragons for the first task. Sirius shows up for a much-needed fireside chat. Hey, JC. Here we are!

**JC:** Here we go! We are really getting into the Triwizard Tournament now. It's going to get exciting! Also bad for Harry in many ways, but also really exciting! It seemed like it took us forever to get to the point where the real action of the book started happening.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. We're halfway in.

**JC:** Yeah. We're halfway in, and suddenly yeah, now we're... Very interesting.

**Lorrie:** I was very amused by the bad press that Harry got because it's so typical and realistic that the article is all about him. Fleur's and Viktor's names are misspelled; they're in the last paragraph, and Cedric isn't mentioned at all.

**JC:** Oh, so awful.

**Lorrie:** The accuracy of that.

**JC:** Yeah. Just the mortifying nature of that... All this attention is coming to him and he knows that it's... 'Fake' is not quite the right word. 'Manufactured.'

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** For sensationalism. He knows that and there's nothing he can do about it. There's nothing he can say to anybody, because it makes him look ungrateful. He can do nothing right at this point to make it any better, and it just sucks.

**Lorrie:** And anyone who's annoyed by it is not going to want to listen to his explanations anyway.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** But yeah, I have been a journalist and I've also been the subject of articles, and yeah, this is so accurate.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Harry is the one who will get blamed for it. Years ago, I was a subject of a really, really bad... The article itself wasn't necessarily bad but the journalistic take on it was terrible, and it was so awful that I called Judy Blume and I said, "What do I do?" She listened to how terrible it was; she didn't downplay it. She just said, "There is nothing you can do. Nothing." That, combined with caution about how you say yes to things, you can learn for the future, which Harry does. We see Harry doing that in the next chapter, but it actually took a load off of my mind to hear her say that because then, "Okay. Just accept the blame and the bad press and hope that people forget and move on, which they will soon enough."

**JC:** Oh, gosh. Yeah. We have talked before about how a lot of the Rita Skeeter stuff in this book (that you have said) feels like the author is talking about her own experiences, and that really came through in this part.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** They're going to say what they're going to say, and there's nothing you can do but just suffer through it.

**Lorrie:** Right. Absolutely nobody wants to hear, "That's not what I said. What I actually said was..." Nobody wants to hear that.

**JC:** Yeah, exactly. And then the things that were said were inaccurate and painted him in a light he doesn't want to be viewed in...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Like crying over his parents every night. Oh, God... Then everyone -- Of course, he's fourteen, so these are really digs against the way he's trying to present himself to the world, and right at the time he's going to try not to get himself killed. Great.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. He's throwing a tantrum about it when Cho stops him and she accidentally gets the brunt of his tantrum, but that actually kind of comforted me because I felt like it was an awkward moment for him but she saw what he was going through.

**JC:** Yeah. And he also got to see that maybe not everybody in the entire school buys that, or thinks that he is trying to get all this attention here.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** It's hard to know. Could you read that... If you really knew Harry and you read that, wouldn't you be like, 'This doesn't sound like Harry. Something's going on here. Harry wouldn't even want this to sound like him.'

**Lorrie:** Ugh.

**JC:** The other thing, too, is that poor Hermione gets sucked into this as well.

**Lorrie:** Oh, yeah.

**JC:** In the worst possible way. Earlier in the volume, we had the whole thing with her teeth and the curse or the hex that was placed on her. For the article to, first of all, imply that Harry and Hermione are a couple, and then to call Hermione "really pretty" or whatever they called her...

**Lorrie:** Yeah, setting her up for more jealousy.

**JC:** Setting her up for the crap that... Yeah, the crap that came. Yeah. Oh, God. But that also mirrors a lot of... We've talked about this before, but for girls at this age who are excelling in any way -- either academically or physically through whatever sports they play, or I think anyone who's successful -- there's something about the way that society wants girls to develop that excelling. You put your head up and it's going to get chopped off is kind of what it feels like, so you stand out. You can be pretty -- I'm doing the Barbie speech. You can be pretty, but not too pretty. You can be smart, but not too smart. You can be good at sports, but not too good at sports, right? So when you get called out, that's when they're going to come in and chop.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And that's what Hermione is experiencing. It's like, Ugh.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. You have to be compliant, but not threatening.

**JC:** Exactly. That's why that Barbie speech hit home really hard for a lot of us, because it was like, yeah, it's the experience. Here, Hermione's in the middle of it.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, and she's getting whiplash. It's a good thing that her self-image is so sturdy, because between the teeth growing and Snape's insults to her teeth, and then

this wildly exaggerated, inaccurate portrayal in a media article... If her self-image were shaky, like you would expect for somebody at this age, then it would really mess her up.

**JC:** Yeah, and it's going to get worse for her, too, if my memory serves. Yeah. That's something that she seems like she's handling really well.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And part of it -- we've talked about how she's a year older than the boys, so there's just more maturity there, but yeah, she really is. Her sense of self is really solid. We've talked about this so much in the earlier books. We don't see much of Hermione's relationship with her parents. She's an only child. She must have had a really solid relationship with her parents. Whatever her pre-Hogwarts life was like, she's really secure in who she is. Yeah. She's not going out and seeking attention. She's not doing any of the things that say, "I'm insecure," like kids at this age. She seems like she just knows what she wants, and she's just plugging away and doing what she knows she needs to do, what she wants to do, regardless of what other people think. That's a quality that when I see it in teenagers, I'm always relieved for them, because I'm like, 'Oh.'

**Lorrie:** Yes.

**JC:** 'Everything is going to be so much easier for you from here on out. You know where you're headed.' Hermione is in that category, and it's a relief for me as a teacher and as an adult, who was also going through that and did not do as good of a job as Hermione. I wish I could have been like that.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. She was really well prepared somehow.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** But that's the wish fulfillment aspect of this character.

**JC:** Yeah, that's true.

**Lorrie:** That she behaves as a teen the way people wish they could go back in time and behave.

**JC:** Oh, for sure. Yeah, absolutely.

**Lorrie:** So yeah, Hermione... It's fitting that she's the one with the Time-Turner, because that's her function and she functions that way for Snape. She doesn't get tempted by all the power abuses that tempted him, and she functions that way for Lupin, knowing how to handle secrets and how to stand up to your friends. The fact that she turned in the Firebolt knowing that she could lose her only friends... That's a wish fulfillment of what Lupin wished he had a little more strength about as a teen, even though Lupin's

circumstances were worse than Hermione's by far. But yeah, it's just the wish: 'Wow, if I had been more mature, what would it have been like?'

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** And then you watch this girl make all these good choices, although in this chapter, she's making a not-so-good choice in that she's getting sucked into trying to get Ron and Harry to talk to each other. In the previous chapter, she was able to resist that, but no, now she's trying to do it.

**JC:** Yeah, though I can't help but identify with that as well. Her two friends are being so stupid.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** "Come on. Can't you just see how stupid you're being right now? Just use your words. Come on!" Yeah, because she hears it from both sides. She can see the whole picture, and it's like, AAAH!

**Lorrie:** And it really emphasizes that Ron's absence in Harry's life is what makes Harry's life the hardest. In any circumstance, Ron is absolutely crucial to this series. Oh, so I have a friend whose fandom name is Lokifan, and she said this thing that struck me as so clever and correct. She says that in this series, this author writes friendships as romances and she writes romances as mysteries. I thought, 'Oh, this checks out,' because Harry is missing Ron so much and Hermione says "wonky faint" instead of the Wronski Feint; Harry gets a pang because he wishes that he could look at Ron and laugh about this together, and that pang is such a romantic kind of pang. Meanwhile, every time Viktor Krum shows up in the library, Hermione gets really annoyed. She'll say, "What is he even doing here? I don't know why he's bothering." So yeah, the friendships really are the romances here. The pining...

**JC:** I think that's something that people really love about this series in general: the power of friendship, which sounds hokey.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** These three kids find each other in the first book and then really are ride-or-die for each other for the rest of it. There's things that happen obviously, but that idea that Harry could not have done this alone... He needed these two people to lean on, and that their relationship is so solid.... Oh, my gosh. Even when it goes badly, like in the last book when Ron vanishes. Ron instantly regrets vanishing on them and yeah, spends months trying to get back to them. They make mistakes, but they have... Oh, God, they have such a solid foundation, and I think that's something that a lot of people, especially probably young people who read the book -- but even for me as an adult reading this book. I'm not sure that I had that as a kid. I had friends as a kid, but I don't

think I had friends like this, so there's a bit of wish fulfillment there, too. What if I had friends like this? What could I have done in my life? What could I have... What would have been easier for me?

**Lorrie:** Mm-hmm.

**JC:** What could I have survived differently if I had had people like this who had my back all the time? That feels like wish fulfillment, too.

**Lorrie:** Another thing I love is that as an adult, I have found that friendship breakups can be devastating -- worse than romantic ones -- but there's a lot of social support for romantic breakups. The friendship ones... there isn't that much support and there's so much shame around it.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** But the way it can affect every aspect of your life for years and years and the way, like a divorce, you have to divide up your social spaces and your relationships.

**JC:** And it affects a lot of people around you. It affects your friends....

**Lorrie:** Yes.

**JC:** Yeah. It's... yeah. And you're right. There's not any social support.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. It's hard to know how you're supposed to behave.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** What is Hermione supposed to do?

**JC:** Yeah. I feel for Hermione here in so many ways, too.

**Lorrie:** I know.

**JC:** All these characters are suffering. They're all suffering and I hate it for them, but I'm also excited that we're finally moving forward with this Triwizard Tournament. One thing I really appreciate is that at the beginning of this chapter, Harry's life feels like it's on hold until this first task happens and he can't see ahead of it. He thinks, 'It might as well be that I'm just going to die in the first task, because I can't envision any life beyond it,' and I thought, 'Wow, that's such a real feeling.'

**Lorrie:** Yes, it is.

**JC:** If you have some big looming thing coming and you're just like, 'Nothing else matters, I can't imagine my life past that...'

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** I know I was that way with the 2024 election for a while. I was like, 'I can't even imagine. I can't think ahead of that. Who knows, right? I can't.'

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** So that felt very real to me.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. So Hermione and Harry go off to the Three Broomsticks with Harry under his Invisibility Cloak, and here was one of those moments that I started thinking about transphobia again. Harry likes the Three Broomsticks because it was packed "with a variety of magical people Harry rarely saw anywhere else. Harry supposed that as Hogsmeade was the only all-wizard village in Britain, it was a bit of a haven for creatures like hags, who were not as adept as wizards at disguising themselves." And that feeling of a safe haven is so familiar to me from queer spaces or queer neighborhoods in queer-friendly cities, where there are people who can pass and then there are people who absolutely cannot pass and have to make constant decisions about where to be and where to live in safety. Yeah, that haven feeling... Hags don't have the same options as somebody like Barty Crouch Sr., who looks like a banker. One of the unexpected results of the 2024 election for me, and the heightened transphobia that's immediately beginning now, is that the importance of J.K Rowling as a figure in the transphobia movement has diminished for me...

**JC:** Oh.

**Lorrie:** Because there's more immediate legal threats happening right now. What I mean by that... It's not that she's gotten any better, and of course she did do quite a lot of work to pave the way, but the immediate way in which this appeared to me was last weekend, I went to a Harry Potter convention and I just didn't have the energy to worry about whether it was ethical or not of me to talk about the series. The whole argument about if you even engage with Harry Potter content, then you're giving more power to this TERF... I was so worried about things like whatever they're trying to do in Congress about somehow policing people to only go to the bathroom according to their birth certificates or maybe their genetic testing. They have no idea how they're going to enforce this, but they're making a whole lot of noise about this, and I just didn't have the energy to worry that much about whether I was talking about Harry Potter or not. I just... Ugh. It just signaled to me a new era in her and this transphobia worsening that's been happening since 2020.

**JC:** Yeah. Ugh... I can't help but think ahead, past this book to the next one, and think about how, when we get to the fifth book and everything that happens in that, how that might be paralleling things that we might be experiencing in the real world. I'm...

**Lorrie:** Yeah, we'll see. We'll see.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** But yeah.

**JC:** I think also the Invisibility Cloak, along similar lines in this chapter, felt like such a symbol of escape and safety in this way that Harry was able to put it on and briefly escape from all the awfulness that's coming his way.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And it was such a relief for me as a reader, too. You can think of it as being able to go into a safe space or a place where you know that, "Here, I can do whatever I want," and the idea that he's got this tool that lets him go out into public spaces where he wouldn't necessarily be able to go for a variety of reasons right now, and he can just be there and be safe. The only people who can see him are people that he really trusts.

**Lorrie:** And Mad-Eye Moody.

**JC:** Who, at this point, he seems to trust and all that, but yeah.

**Lorrie:** He doesn't have a choice about it, though.

**JC:** He doesn't have a choice about that, but that idea that he can do that as a relief...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And then there's this sentence in there, when he looks around the room and he... The quote is, "What wouldn't he have given to be one of these people, sitting around laughing and talking, with nothing to worry about but homework?" That sums up Harry Potter's life right there. What would it be like to just be a normal kid for once? What would that be like?

**Lorrie:** Yeah, and that's such a good summation of how privilege and lack of privilege can feel. I've seen this especially in high schools, where there's a whole mix of kids and there are some kids struggling with things that other kids never even have to think about; once in a while, the only possible response is, "WOW, must be nice," because the gulf in experience is hard to even talk about.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** But it really emphasizes the need. No wonder Harry is so looking forward to talking to Sirius, because Sirius is even more of an outcast than Harry is, but he's older and is parental and has perspective. How fortunate for Harry that he would never have to explain to Sirius how terrible it feels to be hunted! Well, Sirius knows.

**JC:** Yeah.



**Lorrie:** So Moody at the Three Broomsticks, the part about how he told all the students in Defense Against the Dark Arts that he preferred to prepare his own food and drink at all times as it was so easy for Dark wizards to poison an unattended cup: that is such a clever plot point. It explains everything and it underscores why Snape might have been teaching about antidotes. Oh, so here is something that I didn't even have time to think during our last episode, when we were talking about the last chapter where Snape makes fun of Hermione's teeth. There was so much to deal with with Snape's horribleness that I got distracted as a reader the same way that the students get distracted by having Snape as their teacher. He's so horrible that I didn't notice oh, he might be trying... There's that moment when he says, "I'm going to poison one of you, and then we'll see if your antidotes work," and then he makes eye contact with Harry; Harry knows for sure it's going to be him, and I'm sure Harry's correct. He's only saved by this because Colin Creevey comes and gets him for his photo shoot. Yeah, I didn't even catch until this time: as much as Snape was skeptical during the 'Harry, did you put your name in the Goblet of Fire' scene -- as much as Snape thought this is just Potter being self-centered again -- maybe he did give enough credence to the possibility that Karkaroff being there would do some Death Eater-y thing and maybe poison Harry. So yeah, maybe it's time to make sure that Harry Potter knows how to brew an antidote.

**JC:** Yeah. I think that's a really interesting point, that sometimes when Snape is being cruel to Harry and singling Harry out, you can also interpret it as he knows Harry is going to have battles to face that the rest of these kids will not, so he's going to prepare him for that.

**Lorrie:** You can also tell that he doesn't care about Harry or want to be doing this because there's no sense of protectiveness, but it is on the curriculum. Is this a conversation he's had with Dumbledore? Because it's certainly not that he's worried about Harry Potter the person, but this is a concern that may need to come up. Anyway, Karkaroff is somebody that he's nervous about, and this was just such a good example of how Snape can be so horrible that everyone -- including the reader, including me -- can be distracted and not see what he might be doing, since every action that Snape takes can be interpreted in at least two different opposing ways. He could be planning to poison Harry just because he wants to poison Harry, and he could be doing this because he's trying to protect Harry, despite having no warm feelings.

**JC:** Yeah. I want to circle back around to the fake Moody, or the fact that Moody's magical eye can see through the Invisibility Cloak. My assumption is that that's the first moment when Barty Crouch Jr. realizes that Harry has an Invisibility Cloak. The fact that, 'oh, I can perceive this...' There's some world-building stuff in there about how does the magical eye... How are you possessing a body? How does the magical eye work under all these circumstances? But it's very interesting that this is something that Barty Crouch Jr. now knows about Harry, and I cannot remember if he does anything

with this information, but I tucked it away. 'Oh, wait a minute.' But also, that raises the question of, 'What can Moody's magical eye do?'

**Lorrie:** Mm-hmm. And does Moody have any experience with Invisibility Cloaks? This is, in fact... you're correct. This is going to become an important plot point later.

**JC:** I can't remember, so I'm looking forward to learning more about that. The fact that he leans into Hagrid and tells Hagrid, and then they come over and they're very casually talking to Hermione and looking at Hermione's notes, but actually talking to Harry. That was a really fun scene. It's funny that they're being super sneaky about it, but also these two adults immediately understand why Harry's there under the Invisibility Cloak and that they're going to protect him. They don't blow his cover; they're being really cautious, and I thought that's so great for Harry. Whoever is on your side at this point! I really liked that they honored... 'Honored', is that the right word? They respected the fact that Harry needs to be under that cloak, and they knew exactly why. Yeah.

**Lorrie:** And Moody saying to Hagrid, 'Oh, here's Potter under his cloak.' If he wondered, then he just got confirmation that yes, Hagrid knows all about it and that Harry does this quite a lot. Moody has Hagrid's ear, which is going to turn out to be important. So there they are at the Three Broomsticks, and Hagrid invites Harry to visit him at midnight under the cloak and he won't say why.

**JC:** Ooh! This butts up against Harry's meeting with Sirius, so it's going to be an exciting night.

**Lorrie:** Yes. Midnight is when he has to meet Hagrid, and then one AM is when he's supposed to have the fireside chat, so he's got to run!

**JC:** The fireside chat. Actually, I love the detail earlier in the book that Hermione and Harry were scheming together about how to clean out the common room, and the idea of releasing the stink bomb or whatever came up.

**Lorrie:** Yeah!

**JC:** The fact that Hermione is like, "Okay, we'll get in trouble with Filch, but this is what we got to do." That was great. Before he goes to Hagrid's hut, there's that scene where he comes down to the common room and the Creevey brothers are over in the corner, trying to work on the POTTER STINKS buttons. I love how those two are just steadfastly loyal to Harry.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** They don't waver. They're like, "Nope, Harry's our guy."

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** He finds it annoying because he's like, 'Oh, God, they're little kids who are following me around,' but they're steadfastly loyal and together as brothers, they're like... yeah. I just love that detail, even though they don't really accomplish much at this point.

**Lorrie:** No, they make it worse, but that would be me, too, if I were trying to program something.

**JC:** And then Harry third-wheels on a date that Hagrid and Madame Maxime go on, which is funny.

**Lorrie:** So they see the dragons...

**JC:** The dragons... From a world-building perspective, I love this scene when we first see the dragons, because we've heard...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** We saw Norbert way back, but Norbert...

**Lorrie:** Was a baby, yeah. A hatchling.

**JC:** Exactly. But to see full-grown dragons and different kinds...

**Lorrie:** Yes, yes.

**JC:** And also the wizards who are there... The sheer number of wizards it takes to calm them down and to keep them there.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, drugged.

**JC:** Yeah, exactly. There must be some kind of muffling spell around them, because the idea that they're really close to the castle and nobody else knows... I just love the world-building of, "Look at how many wizards it takes." That means that this is a job; people who come out of Care Of Magical Creatures are like, "Hey, I really like this. I want to go be a dragon tamer," and that's something you could just do. That's really cool.

**Lorrie:** So dangerous!

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** What I love, because we get the different ethnicities of the dragons: The Chinese Fireball breathes "mushroom-shaped fire clouds"... That I found so charming. Yes! There's a certain way that clouds are depicted in East Asian art that westerners just don't do, and here in this world, it's because that's literally how this dragon's fire clouds look.

**JC:** Uh-huh. Ohhh...

**Lorrie:** Okay, that's adorable. Oh... We get that detail from Charlie that they wanted nesting mothers -- he doesn't know why -- and I have a bunch of feelings about that, primarily that I feel terrible for these dragons.

**JC:** For sure.

**Lorrie:** Ah! My palms are sweating thinking about it, like you don't have enough to worry about without these busy-body wizards drugging you and putting you in danger. Oh, this is so annoying!

**JC:** And that image that they bring the eggs carefully back over and set them next to them.

**Lorrie:** Yes!

**JC:** Your babies are still --

**Lorrie:** Right. No, but they're going to exploit that.

**JC:** Yeah, and then they're going to exploit that.

**Lorrie:** Why... Nesting mothers, there will be this instinctive response that's so stressful -- so life or death, more important than your own life -- and it's just not enjoyable at all when your babies or your eggs are under threat; you can't help that response, and they're just going to exploit it. Oh, it just feels so awful to me. Okay, obviously this task is going to be in the larger story about what it was that Voldemort encountered when he faced off with Lily Evans, so we're going to get a closer look into how that feels. But the other thing that it made me think of was looking forward to *Cursed Child*. Do you remember this? When *Cursed Child* was first being produced and you were seeing it on the West End before it had come to Broadway... I had read the script, and I wanted you to find out when you went to see the show in London.

**JC:** Oh, yeah, yeah.

**Lorrie:** And I said, "Please tell me if in the show, they say what it says in the script, where the Ludo Bagman of *Cursed Child* -- not the Ludo Bagman in this timeline -- calls the dragons 'Mr. Dragon', because in this book, it's perfectly clear that all of these dragons are female." So if that's not a misprint or something, if that was really intentional, then that was a tiny but very loud hint that *Cursed Child* changes the story to be about fathers and father issues, and that this volume of this series was firmly in mother issue territory.

**JC:** Yeah, I remember that now.

**Lorrie:** And yeah, you came back and said, "Oh, yes, they said 'Mr. Dragon'," and then in the same email to me you said, "Ohhhhhhhh," with a lot of H's and exclamations.

**JC:** Just as an aside -- and we'll get to *Cursed Child* several years down the road -- I was going to see that in the West End, and I went by myself and I went both nights, and it was just an incredible experience to be there and to be seeing it in that place with the original cast. Then I saw it again later in New York with my whole family, but yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. This is the moment that *Cursed Child* is harkening back to: this era in Harry's life.

**JC:** Oh, and then we see Charlie, which it's always nice to see Charlie.

**Lorrie:** I know, and Charlie's so awesome. This is a very daring job that he has. I imagine him as just full of muscles.

**JC:** I've seen him depicted in fan art, for sure.

**Lorrie:** Yes. Yes. We all have.

**JC:** Yeah. But I like that Charlie tells Hagrid a little bit about what he's doing. He's a little upset that Hagrid has brought Madame Maxime, but he also understands that Hagrid brought her because he was like, "Yeah, great romantic date, huh?" He understands that and that's kind of fun, but then he asks about Harry and it's like, 'Ohhhh...' The way he asks about Harry feels very much like he's this big brother who is concerned about somebody he regards as being like a little brother to him. "Is he okay?" He's aware that the newspaper article was crap, but then his mom bought it and all of that stuff. I don't know. It's just nice because it reminded me that Harry has this second family in the Weasleys, and those people genuinely care about him.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Again, there are more people who are on his side at this time when it doesn't feel like it to him. It feels like the whole world is out to get him, but no, there are people who are out there, who are thinking about him and concerned about him and loyal to him.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. I guess Charlie's perspective is that Harry's just a kid who got sucked into this for nefarious reasons that nobody understands yet, which is so opposite of Snape thinking, 'Oh, he's just getting his own name in the paper for attention.' No, he really is not in control of this. Yeah, it's nice to feel like somebody knows that you're actually blameless.

**JC:** Yeah. For sure. But also, then the sheer terror of, 'Okay, whatever this task is going to be, I'm going to have to get past a dragon.'

**Lorrie:** Oh, good.

**JC:** Great. Okay, now you can start to see how your own death is going to unfurl apparently. Ugh.

**Lorrie:** So he makes it back to the common room just in time!

**JC:** First, he runs into Karkaroff on the way.

**Lorrie:** Oh, my God. He literally runs into Karkaroff.

**JC:** Yeah. And then there's this moment when he realized the only person who's not going to know about this is Cedric.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Fortunately, Karkaroff thinks that he just ran into a dog or something. "What was that? Oh, nothing."

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** "Nothing possibly could be going wrong in this magical world." So yeah, he makes it back and sees Sirius with his head in the fireplace and jumps because it's just so startling.

**JC:** Just saw a disembodied head in the fire. Who came up with this idea?

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Who invented this spell?

**Lorrie:** Ah, that's not usually there.

**JC:** Yeah. Why would this be a way... Who decided, 'Oh, here's a great way to travel. We're just going to jump into the fire.' Who decided, 'Oh you could just stick your head in and then you could talk to people.' Who invented this?

**Lorrie:** 'You don't have to put your whole self in.'

**JC:** Who is the first wizard who tried this out, and then why did it catch on?

**Lorrie:** Was it on purpose?

**JC:** Oh, my gosh. Yeah.

**Lorrie:** But Sirius looks better now.

**JC:** Yeah, I love that detail.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. He's not so skinny, he's gotten a haircut. He looks younger. Oh... Then they have that conversation. This is heartbreaking. It's not; it's healing that Harry opens his mouth, and then suddenly he can't stop talking. That... Oh.

**JC:** And Sirius just listens and lets him get it all out, and doesn't stop him or interject. Just lets him... just listens. He has so few adults in his life who will just listen like that.

**Lorrie:** And this is the opposite of when the letters come unstoppably in the first book and Harry can't get them. No, all of his feelings are pouring out and he can't stop them, but there's actually a place for them to go. This is amazing, and it's also really touching that Sirius, when he's listening, his eyes are "full of concern, eyes that had not yet lost the look that Azkaban had given them -- that deadened, haunted look." That is so real. This is amazing parenting and Harry gets it.

**JC:** It's interesting, too, because it made me think being that kind of listener is something that I strive to be, both as a parent and as a teacher. Sometimes, when a student comes to me with all these things going on, they just need to say it all. I've been in the room when I've heard colleagues, or even had another adult with me, who wants to interject, and it's like, "No, just stop. Stop. They need to say what they need to say. Let them say all the things." That's happened to me actually -- sign of the times -- three times in the last week at work with students, and they just needed to say it, and to see the other adults getting frustrated... I wanted to pause time and then pull this adult aside and go, "Do you see what's happening here? Just let them talk. They need someone to listen to them. That's all they really need. We're not going to fix it; we're just going to listen." Then with my own kid, that happens a lot, too, so this scene just brought back to me, 'Yes.' Yes, that's exactly what Harry needs, and I'm just grateful he's got an adult in his life who understands that sometimes you just need to listen to people and then really take all their words in, and then work together with them to move forward rather than to take over. Harry doesn't want an adult to take over so much as he needs support.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. The thing that he was missing by not having parents, because sometimes when there's nobody in that role for him, he longs for Dumbledore, which Snape also does. He longs to have Dumbledore on his side, but the remote big boss can't be that. If you're like Draco, then you have a dad at home who's going to listen; Harry not having that, there's this big missing piece, and that's part of what this series is about. Dumbledore had that missing, too, (that he grew up without a father) and when he was looking with worry at Tom Riddle not having parents this way, that was part of what he had his eye on, and Snape did not have the guidance that he needed. We see it later at the end of this book, and then in the next book we see Snape looking at Crabbe and Goyle the same way. When their fathers get caught because of Death Eater activities, then Snape immediately looks at them like, 'Oh, they're going to need extra.' So yeah, here we see Harry getting that extra that he usually doesn't get, and I'm understanding on this reread more about why Sirius was so beloved by so many readers because this I somehow missed. When I was bingeing the first five books the first time I read them, I went straight from this to disaster for Sirius in the next book, and I think I just didn't get to really enjoy the nourishing aspect of what's happening here.

**JC:** There's lots of space for -- and I know that they exist -- fanfics where Harry and Sirius do get to have this kind of parent-child relationship, and Harry continues to have Sirius in his life after the next book. You can go off into the alternate universe realm, and just the healing power of that...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** That doesn't advance the story, I know, but sometimes we just want the things we want.

**Lorrie:** It's nice to have fiction that sets us up to explore what it is that we wish humans could have. Wouldn't it be great if Harry could go to somebody who cared and just sit down for an afternoon? Meanwhile, the stuff Sirius is saying to Harry is brilliant, and I really see how Sirius was the smartest kid in his year, because he knows how to put things together in a way that we generally usually only see with Dumbledore. He confirms for Harry yes, Karkaroff was a Death Eater and it was Moody who put Karkaroff away, therefore Sirius has concluded (correctly) that that's why Dumbledore must have hired Moody. Just knowing that his brain has put that together... A lot of people might know the same things and not see instantly why it all lines up that way. The background that Sirius can give Harry -- that Karkaroff sold out the other Death Eaters, and he's not very popular in Azkaban... I kind of laughed, because this is almost a pun. Sirius has inside information (he was on the inside), but nobody else can tell Harry these things. Who could possibly tell Harry what the inmate culture is like, and what the social standing of various former Death Eaters is like, except Sirius? He knows it's so valuable, what he has to say. Then he says that, reading between the lines of Rita Skeeter's bad journalism, Sirius is guessing that Moody was really attacked. That's a level up, too, because Harry is approaching this on the level of not trusting Rita Skeeter, who's obviously a bad journalist. Sirius is saying, "No, no. I can sense that there's actually something there. Maybe not what she says, but something." He's so literate, Sirius; he's an excellent reader. He can put together the clues about Bertha Jorkins having disappeared, plus his own skepticism about Karkaroff as a person. He doesn't think that Karkaroff is reliable enough to be Voldemort's secret agent here, because he says, "I knew Bertha Jorkins," and he knew Karkaroff, so he's demonstrating to Harry how you bring your knowledge of people's individuality into the clues that you piece together. I just thought, 'Oh, God, no wonder people...' This is what I was missing when I used to wonder, 'Why do people love Sirius?' In Book Five, his instability made it so difficult for Harry to rely on him the way they both wanted, and that was so shaky and so prominent to me. But here, he's really showing just how solid he is.

**JC:** I also love that Sirius says Voldemort's name.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.



**JC:** And there's so few adults in Harry's life... Well, you can name them on the fingers of one hand who will say the word, right, and Sirius is one of them. I really like that.

**Lorrie:** The way that Sirius knows that Bertha Jorkins was the kind of person that you could trap and fool, and he knows that Karkaroff is not a stable enough person to be the scariest of opponents... That is the opposite of what happens with Albus Severus and Scorpius in *Cursed Child* necessarily: they are making up stories about what might have happened when their fathers were in school based on people that they've never met. That's why it's possible for them to believe that perhaps Cedric could have been a Death Eater. That wrongness is a huge clue to the reader what's going on here: that these are stories being invented by these teenage boys who have never met these people, because we the readers have met Cedric. If you are going to make a list of characters in Harry Potter who were the least likely to ever become Death Eaters, Cedric would be number one. There's nothing.

**JC:** They'd be like, "Colin Creevey, Cedric Diggory..."

**Lorrie:** Yeah. There's nothing in Cedric's personality that could possibly have turned him -- been tempting at all to him, so what does that tell you? It tells you that knowing somebody makes all the difference. This shows why having elders and having continuity of knowledge and culture is so important, because Harry is sitting there as a 14-year-old with very little support, and then this person who's twenty years older comes in and fills him in on all this stuff that does make sense to him. What Sirius has to say about Karkaroff fits completely with what Harry has observed of Karkaroff. For example, in teaching professions such as Defense Against the Dark Arts or in critical race theory learning about resistance history, when you have continuity, then you get mentoring, you get understanding, you get context. When you have access to elders who can illuminate for you what you've been experiencing in the present and connect it back to precedent, that makes you so much more powerful. That helps you learn how to read the situation and how to read other people. A time when I really saw that happening was during pandemic lockdown, when the actual individuals who led the medical response to the AIDS pandemic came back into the news to lead the response against the coronavirus. This was Dr. Fauci at the CDC who, during the AIDS epidemic, was a huge villain, and through the AIDS epidemic converted into somebody who understood the major issues that he had resisted at first. Dr. David Ho is the medical researcher who was Time Magazine's Person of the Year in 1996, and he was the most obscure pick for that. He's just a scientist, right? But he worked on HIV and then he came back to work on coronavirus. Gregg Gonsalves, who's an activist who was with ACT UP and then emerged as one of the leading thinkers about how to combat coronavirus... Hearing these actual individual names come back from something that had been twenty-five years earlier gave me the sense of continuity that reminded me of how the AIDS activists got the same mentoring from the people who had marched in the 1960s, who

had gotten their training from Gandhi. This resistance that we need now to the growing homophobia and transphobia can benefit greatly from the same kind of continuity and mentoring from elders, people who were activists during the ACT UP and Queer Nation movements in the 1990s. This is why Voldemort put a hex on the Defense Against the Dark Arts position, and this is why there's so much opposition to some kinds of books that are being banned or some kinds of departments that are being axed.

**JC:** Or policing of language that teachers aren't allowed to use in schools, which is on the horizon again.

**Lorrie:** Yep, because it directly empowers people to have this continuity of knowledge. Yeah, having Sirius there explaining to Harry what kind of person Bertha Jorkins was and what kind of person Karkaroff still is... It's a great education in one fireside chat.

**JC:** Yeah. There's so many things just going forward in these books. Especially, I'm thinking about Book Five and how that is going to be a really interesting experience for me.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. The feeling of dread... When we have Harry feeling dread about the dragons coming and how he's probably going to die or something, or somebody's trying to kill him... Whether or not he survives, who can say, but Trelawney is on firm ground predicting doom for him all the time. Yeah, that feeling is a little relatable at the moment.

**JC:** It really is. Yeah. I think that's kind of the theme of this chapter: we know something big is coming, and in this case, it's literal fire-breathing dragons.

**Lorrie:** Something really big.

**JC:** How are we going to survive this? What are we going to do? Oh, and then we get this lovely little tried and true trope of, "The only thing you need to know is --" and then we get cut off.

**Lorrie:** Oh, God. Yeah. I do love -- The thing that Sirius doesn't get to tell him also reminded me of a self-defense lesson. If you've ever been in a self-defense class for women or for people who aren't necessarily as big or strong as somebody who might mug you, that's the tactic. You're not going to overpower your attacker, but there are things you can do, even if you're five feet tall and your attacker is a foot taller than you. Sirius saying, "There is a way, and a simple spell's all you need": this also is Snape's approach to defense. The Patronus charm, which is great and a wonderful thing to have, is so difficult, but Expelliarmus anyone can do. Sirius and Snape... This is one of the things they have in common, because Sirius and Snape together are a great pairing of people who thoroughly hate each other and also have some things in common. Yeah. There's strength in simplicity, or there would be if Ron hadn't shown up.

**JC:** Oh... Yeah.

**Lorrie:** That was perfect.

**JC:** Yeah. It's a great trope. I've said this before, but I think one of the most perfect movies of all time is *Ocean's Eleven*. I said this a lot.

**Lorrie:** I have to watch this. Yeah.

**JC:** And there's this beautiful moment where one character is kind of winding up another one about how challenging the task is going to be, and he says something... He tells them all these things. "Here's what you've got to do. Do this, do that, and whatever you do, DO NOT, under ANY circumstances --" and then his phone rings and he goes, "Yeah?" and then he walks away and leaves the guy standing there, like, "What was it?!" We never learn what was the thing, and it reminds me of this. I was like, 'Oh, it's just like that scene from *Ocean's Eleven*.' We quote that movie a lot in my house.

**Lorrie:** Oh, that's maddening.

**JC:** And then, of course, Harry's anger at Ron.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And he hits him right where he knew it would hurt. That's how angry he is.

**Lorrie:** Oh, my God, literally.

**JC:** How angry he is at Ron not being there for him.

**Lorrie:** Literally, he hits him in the forehead where Harry has his scar and says, "Oh, now you might get one, too."

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** "Like you obviously want."

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** And I love how Ron's interruption of this crucial moment is so completely nobody's fault.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** And actually even hints that Ron's worried about Harry. And those badges, they're not very big for Harry to hit Ron in the forehead with one. He must have thrown it *really* hard.

**JC:** And with great aim.

**Lorrie:** Yes. And then there's this 'so true' feeling that he wishes Ron would fight back, and Ron just stands there. I'm thinking Ron probably felt like, 'Oh, I deserved that.'

**JC:** Yeah. Ron seems subdued there.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, and I actually just got tears in my eyes. The realness of Harry seeing Ron's pajamas being several inches too short and even hating that about him... Yes, this is just a constant issue. Yes. Just... Life sucks.

**JC:** Mm-hmm.

**Lorrie:** And yeah, there they are being all tall and awkward and in circumstances out of their control. But yeah, this is one of the worst fights Ron and Harry ever have. Fortunately, even though that's the end of this chapter, there is going to be another one coming right up as soon as you turn the page.

**JC:** Yes, for sure. I think that the Harry and Ron fight is short-lived. As I recall, it resolves soon.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, because how much further... How much more of this could we take? This is so painful.

**JC:** Exactly.

**Lorrie:** Next chapter is called The First Task. Finally!

**JC:** The First Task! The First Task! And Harry's got a lot to learn in the next however few days.

**Lorrie:** Yes, he does.

**JC:** Less than a week.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Oh. 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](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.