



## Transcript

### Episode 4.20

#### Book 4, Chapter 20: The First Task

**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 Twenty: The First Task.

**Lorrie:** The First Task. Harry tells Cedric the first task is dragons. Mad-Eye Moody gives Harry a hint, and Hermione helps him practice. Harry does brilliantly, Summoning his broom and outmaneuvering his dragon. All four Champions succeed, and Ron starts talking to Harry again. Yay! The Triwizard Tournament begins at last.

**JC:** Finally!

**Lorrie:** JC, what did you think of Harry's nerves leading up to the competition?

**JC:** Oh, it was so real. Just so real... Early on in the chapter, there's this comment from Hermione where Harry's concerned about the fact that maybe Karkaroff was a Death Eater who's out to get him and maybe that's who put his name in the cup, and Hermione's like, "Okay, let's just try to keep you alive until Tuesday, and then we'll worry about the next possible threat to your life."

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** This is Harry's life. Yeah.

**Lorrie:** That is quite real.

**JC:** Yep. I can just imagine Hermione's got lists and spreadsheets (or the wizard equivalent of spreadsheets) of, "What are all the things I need to do to help Harry..."

**Lorrie:** "In what order?"

**JC:** "In what order?" Oh, my gosh, with the references.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, and how to be present responding to the immediate dangers and prioritizing, which is a good lesson for all of us.

**JC:** For sure. Oh, my gosh.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. A lot of this chapter is just about anxiety management.

**JC:** That's true.

**Lorrie:** And I found it helpful.

**JC:** Yeah. This is the last bit for this book, I think, where it's just Harry and Hermione. When Ron comes in, he's going to bring in this whole other component of helping Harry out; but of course, Hermione's idea of, "Okay, let's go to work in the library, and we're going to do research..." Hermione is really working hard on thinking through, "What could Sirius have meant by a simple spell?" and they go through everything they can think of, and we learn a lot about dragons in the process and what magic does and doesn't work on dragons. But there's this interesting moment: when Hermione is quiet, Harry's brain is too full of all the anxiety that's banging around that he can't think.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** It's just this pressure and the anxiety building up and... yeah. I was like, 'Oh, yeah, that's very real.' When they were in the library and doing their work, I enjoyed these little bits of humor that kept popping up. For example, the book title... Harry sets aside a book called *Men Who Love Dragons Too Much*, which raises all kinds of really funny possibilities, but just the fact that there's obviously little bits of humor in the beginning that alleviate a bit of this tension... I really appreciate that. That's a lot of fun. Once again, Viktor Krum is in the library. He's always in the library, isn't he?

**Lorrie:** Followed by all these girls that he doesn't seem interested in.

**JC:** Followed by all the giggling girls. Yeah, he's trying very hard. It's unclear... At this point, I can't remember. I feel like there's multiple reasons why he could be here, but at the very least, maybe he's trying to prepare for this task, too, or maybe he's just trying to find a quiet place where he can think, away from his big ship he lives in. Yeah. Anyway, it's interesting that we get another view of Viktor Krum being trailed by fangirls. Another thing that stood out to me here: in the middle of all the things that Harry's experiencing, there's this really interesting line: "Somehow, the knowledge that he would rather be here and facing a dragon than back on Privet Drive with Dudley was good to know." I love the way that this realization brings him some peace and some relief, and it allows him to focus. I thought...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** I think I've had that experience in my life before, too, of having like a lot of bad stuff on the horizon or things, and then thinking, 'Okay, is there anywhere else I'd rather be than here dealing with this? Who better than me to deal with this... Okay, if I've accepted that this is what I have to do, then okay, now I can focus on getting it done.' There's those kinds of emotions, and it's just nice to see Harry kind of go, 'Okay, well, I could be back living with the Dursleys... No, I think I'd rather be here, about to fight a dragon.'

**Lorrie:** Yeah. I love that line. It gives him the option of choice, because it used to drive me so nuts when I was younger and people would say, "No, you always have a choice," and I would say, "No, that's not true. People do not always have a choice." "You always have a choice." "Really? How?" Yeah, actually. Here, Harry chooses this because living with the Dursleys meant not living his life. But this? This is his destiny, no matter how ridiculous and unfair it is. This is the work. He's doing the work, he's living his life; these are the challenges that were in store for him that everybody knew, and he's suited for this. He's much more suited to be a heroic little boy wizard than he is being perfect and abused in the Dursleys' closet under the stairs. Yeah.

**JC:** He does really well under pressure. He's the kind of person... he doesn't fold under pressure, right? He's got a lot of pressure on him now and he's really anxious, but later we see in this book -- and this happens over and over throughout the series -- that when the time comes, he just does it. He doesn't fold under the pressure; he just puts his head down and he powers through. That's such an amazing human characteristic, and this feels like a moment where he's done this before, but this feels like a moment where he becomes aware of it somehow. 'Yeah, I'm going to figure out how I'm going to make this happen, but once I do, it'll be fine.'

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Whatever it is he's feeling right now, that seems to make him relax into it a little bit and go, 'Okay, yeah, this is my life. This is better than other options.' I just like that. I like that a lot for Harry.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Then he realizes that Fleur and Viktor Krum probably also know that dragons are coming up and the only champion who doesn't is Cedric, and this strikes Harry as unfair. He manufactures a diversion and tells Cedric, and Cedric looks almost suspicious. "Why are you helping me?" Eventually, Cedric will catch on. Cedric and Harry get to know each other's sense of fair play through this year, but this is, I guess, one of the first times. After Harry does that, Mad-Eye Moody shows up and summons Harry into his office, dismisses Cedric, tells Harry that what he did was 'very decent', and then we get to see, through Harry's eyes, Moody's various Dark detectors, all of these magical gizmos that are meant to figure out if you have enemies around, including a Foe-Glass. I guess it's a variation of the Mirror of Erised. It's a mirror that doesn't

show you your own reflection; it shows you your enemies. Whoo! He has a trunk that has seven keyholes in a row, and he does one of his ominous scary laughs about it and doesn't explain. Okay, Harry is looking around at these, and then Moody says... He's not going to help Harry cheat directly, but he gives Harry some major, major giant capital-letter hints. He says, "Play to your strengths." Then he has to sit there while Harry chugs along, trying to think, 'What could that possibly be?' And when Harry slowly thinks, 'The only strength I have is Quidditch,' Uh-huh, Quidditch. Yes. Yes. "Use a nice, simple spell that will enable you to get what you need." I like that this connects back to the Snape method of defending yourself by using something that's basic and simple, and Sirius says that, too, about the mystery thing that can overpower a dragon. I like how empowering that is for the kid reader of this series.

**JC:** I'm laughing because there's eight things that I want to say. I want to take a couple steps, about five steps, back to Harry talking to Cedric. Harry's like, 'I need a diversion. I need something that will make Cedric stay back.' Then when he does this -- destroys his brand new backpack and ink spills all over his textbooks -- Cedric is so good natured about it. Cedric could have been like, "Oh, God, UGH!" but no. Cedric's like, "Oh, well..." I just thought that actually said a lot about Cedric. The way that he responded to that was just like, "Ugh, alright, one more thing... Yeah, go on without me. I'll be right there."

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** He wasn't mad, and he didn't really even seem to suspect at that moment that Harry was the one who did that -- maybe he'll figure it out later -- but I thought that says a lot about Cedric. But also just the goodness of Harry... This is a moment for me that really just embodies who Harry is and he wants to survive this, but at this point, he's not thinking about winning or glory or anything. He doesn't even really want to be doing this; he has no choice. He wants to survive it, and gosh, it'd be nice if everybody survived, wouldn't it? There's just this goodness about him that really shines through here, and I really like that.

**Lorrie:** Also, he has seen the dragons and how terrifying they are, and that changes his perspective on this. This isn't just a game. This is DRAGONS. This is not funny.

**JC:** Right.

**Lorrie:** Cedric needs to know.

**JC:** It's not Quidditch.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** It's dragons. What would it be like if everybody but Cedric knew?

**Lorrie:** That would be such a betrayal.

**JC:** Right. Cedric is taken aback by the fact that Harry would just tell him this.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** But yeah. Oh, my gosh, yeah. I really like that moment, and the fact that Moody was there and overheard... Well, fake Moody, Barty Crouch Jr. It's interesting because it makes me wonder, 'What was Barty Crouch Jr. thinking there?' He came after Harry because he wants to make sure Harry survives also, but he said "that was a decent thing you did". 'Decent' is such an interesting choice of word there.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Yeah.

**JC:** Why 'decent' and not 'noble' or 'kind'? 'Decent'. Hmm.

**Lorrie:** And it's so unambiguously good. It's such a compliment.

**JC:** Yeah, but I guess it gives Barty Crouch Jr. even more information about Harry. If he's trying to figure out who Harry is so that he can deliver Harry to the Dark Lord, it gives him a little bit more information about what motivates Harry and what kinds of things Moody might be able to do in the future that would manipulate Harry in the way that he wants him to go.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, and what he can tell his boss about this opponent. Yeah, no, this is a really good look into what makes Harry tick.

**JC:** For sure. You've talked a lot about how wherever you don't want Snape to be, that's where he is. In this book, Moody is kind of everywhere you want him to be.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** He's the opposite, and when he shows up, it's almost always good.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** It's a good thing for Harry, right?

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** He's there to turn your enemy into a ferret or to save you from Snape or something, right?

**Lorrie:** Or support the decision you just made.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** He's so the opposite. You've talked a lot about how... I remember back in the second book, we talked about how Lockhart and Snape were visually opposites of each other. Moody and Snape -- the real Moody, I guess, and Snape -- were pretty opposites also. Not in the same ways, but in the way that fake Moody (Barty Crouch Jr.) seems to really be trying to get to know Harry and understand where Harry is coming from in a way that obviously Lockhart never did, but it's still opposite to Snape to me, which is so interesting. Maybe that's a theme that was just standing out to me: the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, whoever they are, they're always somehow opposite Snape in some way.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Well, Moody is like... Snape could never dream of growing up to be as good as Moody at whatever they do. He's so much more of a grown-up. Whether it's the real Mad-Eye Moody or whether it's the person that Barty Crouch Jr. is impersonating, he's just an alpha compared to Snape, who is just the bumbling teenager here. However incompetent or inexperienced or short Harry feels compared to the other Champions, that's similar to Snape being outclassed. Moody showing up the way he does... It's like wish fulfillment.

**JC:** Oh, yeah. It's like, 'Wouldn't it be great if an adult would show up and help me now?' and then one does! Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Yeah. That's really rare for Harry, but he gets a lot of adult support in this book.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Almost for the last time. Sort of.

**Lorrie:** Well, it's more than he wants because Ludo Bagman keeps trying to give him adult support. Fortunately, thank goodness Harry has perfect instincts about backing away quickly from this loser...

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

**Lorrie:** Who's not even good at trying to be greasy about this.

**JC:** That's true. When they walk into -- I just keep calling him fake Moody -- into fake Moody's office, all the Dark detectors going wild is so interesting. The Sneakoscope is going off, and it's so interesting that Barty Crouch Jr. is so good in this role and so confident in this role that there's no reason to --

**Lorrie:** It totally all makes sense.

**JC:** It all makes sense. Right, right. "Yeah, yeah, I have a Sneakoscope going off in a school... Jeez. Yeah, I might as well just turn it off." There's all this stuff and he points

out all the Dark detectors he's got, and he gives Harry a lot of information really quickly. "Here's this, here's that. Here's that." On the one hand, we're getting a sense of 'here's the kind of equipment an Auror might use to do their work.' On the other hand also, he shows Harry the Foe-Glass, he points out the trunk, all this stuff... He makes an interesting statement: "Well, if things get really bad, that's when I'm going to open the trunk," but we know what's in the trunk...

**Lorrie:** Right. Yikes!

**JC:** Later after this read, so it's interesting that that scene just reads on several different levels to me now.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** It's so interesting.

**Lorrie:** Barty Crouch Jr. is so competent because he does do everything that the real Mad-Eye Moody would do if he were there to help Harry Potter, but he's also getting in his own amusement. Yeah, he's brilliant and scary.

**JC:** And the fact that he can do that and never raise any suspicion...

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** That's what's interesting to me, because okay, you can be a caricature. He could be a caricature of Moody for a couple of weeks, but we're a good chunk of the way into the school year and he's got to convince everybody, including people who know Moody well, but that's who he is. That's incredible, that he can pull that off, really.

**Lorrie:** So shall we move on to Harry figuring out what he needs to learn?

**JC:** Hell, I really like the scene that you mentioned where Moody's laying out, "Okay, so what are you really good at?"

**Lorrie:** Uh-huh.

**JC:** "What might you need to get?" He's like, "I'm not going to tell you directly, but I'm going to give you some big hints." He's like, "Come on. You can do it! We'll do it together!" It's just really funny.

**Lorrie:** Oh, God...

**JC:** And then it comes together quickly in Harry's head, and the first thing he says is, "Hermione!"

**Lorrie:** Yes!

**JC:** "I need Hermione!" I just find that really funny, because it's like... yeah. It's like, "Come on. You can do it!"

**Lorrie:** It's also very affirming in that the thing that Harry doesn't think he deserves academic credit for -- the thing he does just for fun, that comes to him naturally -- turns out to be really useful and that you are supposed to include that on your resume to yourself, because he's about to dismiss it. "Well, all I'm good at is Quidditch, which can't possibly --" "Yes. Yes. And..." If you think about people who don't study well because they're spending all their time following their hobbies, which are supposed to be a waste of time, like the Weasley twins... If you legitimize that and the genuine interest that people have in it and their real accomplishments, or if you take the incredible efforts people put forth for fandom instead of for a paid job and how much you can learn from doing that and how those things can save your life, this is a really good model for that.

**JC:** For sure.

**Lorrie:** Yes, you are supposed to count your ability to play Quidditch, Harry.

**JC:** Yeah. That's actually a really good point, because Hermione says it way back in the first book that books and cleverness... Not all of your strengths have to be in being academic, right, and that's really true for Harry. He's got a lot of things that he's good at, but that idea of playing to your strengths and having someone remind you, "What are you good at?"

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** When you're like, "I can't possibly do this thing, I'm up against all these odds, the other people are smarter than me or more educated than me, or better than me," and to be reminded, "What are you good at?"

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** "What are you bringing to this that no one else is?"

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** Oh, my God, that's powerful, right?

**Lorrie:** Yeah. "Why don't you be yourself instead of being a bad version of somebody else?"

**JC:** Yeah, yeah. So I love that.

**Lorrie:** And that's beautiful in that he finally is motivated to master the Summoning Charm that he's been failing to learn, because he didn't have any motivation to learn it. That's such a common phenomenon: people who can't learn anything unless they're interested, but when they have a reason to be interested, then suddenly it all falls into



place. But when you're learning just for the sake of learning, then why? The pointlessness can be really... drudgery.

**JC:** Absolutely. It's such a great example of... We talk a lot in schools about, "God, I hope kids learn the things that we think are important," so every field has a set of skills and ideas and concepts that are important, that we would really like kids to be able to do this stuff or to think about the stuff or understand. How do you find ways to get kids to be interested in that and do it? For example, my background is in mathematics, which is a famously hated field.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** It's very rare for me to say, "Hey, I'm a math teacher," and have people go... Most of the time, they go, "Uuggghhh." That one time out of twenty, someone will go, "Oh, I love math," and I'm like, "Oh, thank you."

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** It almost never happens, but that idea of what can you do to take something that you're passionate about and make it palatable and interesting to other people... Yeah. It's a really interesting phenomenon here, too, that once he gets it -- because he has to, it's really important -- he does such a great job that he can Summon his broom halfway across the grounds. I'm assuming it was in a trunk in the tower.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Wow! Not only does he do it, he does it really well. Amazing.

**Lorrie:** So masterfully.

**JC:** So yeah, that's Harry.

**Lorrie:** And this particular spell has been teased since the beginning of this book, because Mrs. Weasley uses it to Summon the candies that the twins had been hiding in their jeans

**JC:** Yup. There have been Summoning spells all over this book, and then finally we see why it was important.

**Lorrie:** Right, and just reminding us that the Weasley twins inventing trick candy is their version of Harry being a good Quidditch player: the thing that doesn't get you any academic credit, but it's still going to be your thing.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** He learns *Accio*.

**JC:** I love that they stay up half the night.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** It's 2 A.M. when he's finally got it, right?

**Lorrie:** Okay.

**JC:** It's the worst example of having to cram for a test, when you're hitting a point where you're like, 'Okay, I know I need to sleep, but also I need to figure this thing out.'

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And in this case, his life depends on it, right? He needs to figure it out.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** They're up at 2 A.M. and he's finally got it, and then the next morning he has to go to class?

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** That one, too. I'm like, you had to go to class all morning before the first half. You'd think that the Champions would have been excused from class (but no, apparently not) to prepare or something.

**Lorrie:** Well, if he had been a little older, he wouldn't have needed to stay up until 2 A.M. to learn a charm that you were supposed to learn as a fourth year. He is at a disadvantage. I like the sentence, "Harry had been focusing so hard on learning this Summoning Charm that evening that some of his blind panic had left him," because that's another clue on how to handle anxiety that we get in this chapter. All of this chapter reminds me, as many things often do, of all the stuff I learned when I was in figure skating fandom, because I learned a lot from sports psychologists within figure skating that dealing with the nerves that come up before competing... That's a huge issue that experience really helps with. The statistic that I heard is that, depending on your personality, competition nerves tend to make people either ten percent worse or ten percent better than how they perform when they're at rest, like in practice when there's no pressure under neutral conditions. What you're supposed to do is find out which one you are, and then there are strategies for both of those personality types; the more you do it, the more you know what to expect of yourself and the more you can adjust for that. One of the tactics I heard sports psychologists use a lot is they tell people, 'Anxiety coming up before something is exactly the same thing as excitement.' It's not exactly... They're almost the same thing, but for this purpose, it really works well to realize no, they are the same thing. You feel it because it matters; you feel it because you care, and you do want what you can get out of competing and finding out what you're made of and seeing what you can do with all your skills, and having other people witness it. You want that, so how do you manage it? Use that knowledge to help

manage your nerves, and then practice. Commit a lot of things you have to do to muscle memory.

**JC:** This is also making me think about the fact that it's a very ADHD characteristic. ADHD people are known for being really calm under pressure, because the ability to hyper-focus is like a superpower in that circumstance. All of that... Suddenly, the only thing that matters is getting through this thing, and that's what it made me think. Harry's experience of the task, when we get to that point, was, 'Okay, that's hyper-focus.'

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** I've seen that multiple times. I felt that in my own life a lot. I've seen that in my kid, and other folks that I know with ADHD, that when it comes down to it... It could be in the context of a performance, like you're saying, or it could be in an emergency or other situations where you can hyper-focus on 'what is the thing I have to do' and then nothing else gets in there until the thing is done, and then it's like, 'What happened?'

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** 'Did I do it? Am I alive?'

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** Yeah, so I feel like that's happening in here, too.

**Lorrie:** Right. If you're somebody who's built that way, then there are a lot of circumstances in which that might work against you, but this is what calls for that kind of mindset. Okay, now you're functioning. It also goes with the ADHD trait of what I was talking about earlier, where if you're learning something but there's no point to it, then you cannot make yourself be interested. But once you see why you should care, then oh, it makes sense now.

**JC:** Yeah. 'Now I'm going to master the thing.'

**Lorrie:** 'I'll get it now.'

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** For sure.

**Lorrie:** I'm in a marriage... I'm in a Ravenclaw/Gryffindor marriage. Also, an OCD/ADHD marriage. I remember one time, my husband and I were with our two small children and we witnessed a car accident right in front of us. And while I was standing there, horrified, my husband immediately called 911, talked to people about what to do; I was standing there going, 'Oh, no! Oh, no! What do the kids feel?' Once the emergency

was taken care of, then I started talking to the kids and processing what had happened, and I thought this is the perfect Ravenclaw/Gryffindor breakdown of how to respond. Moody is helping, Hermione is helping. Poor McGonagall just comes by and gives really realistic advice. "Just do your best with dignity."

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Because sometimes, that's all you can do.

**JC:** Oh, my gosh. Yeah. I love that all the adults are clearly terrified for Harry.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And like...

**Lorrie:** This is so wrong.

**JC:** It is. Both of us have -- you have an adult child and a teenager and I have a teenager, and that idea of watching your teenager go into a situation where they just have to pull it out and do it...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And all you can do is hope for the best. Oh, I can imagine what McGonagall and what some of the other adults are feeling here. "Oh, come on, Harry. Don't die today."

**Lorrie:** Ugh. Yeah.

**JC:** And there's nothing they can do either. Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Oh, gosh. Then when they're backstage and they have to listen to the other competitors but they don't get the whole picture... They don't hear the scores; they just hear the crowd reactions. That's another thing that's such a big part of what I learned about from sports psychologists dealing with figure skaters, because you take turns and you don't necessarily hear -- Well, you can hear the scores, which can screw with your mind, but also you can hear the applause; you can hear the gasps. Oh, it's agony!

**JC:** I was thinking about, when I was reading this scene, when Harry is listening and can just hear... Poor Harry. He draws the worst dragon and then he draws the fourth place, so he has to sit there and listen to all these people go through, and it made me think about figure skating...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And all the times that you've talked about what skaters go through and similar athletes, I think.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Certainly for skaters, that idea of being back there and you have your earbuds in so you can't hear or whatever, right?

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Harry did not have earbuds in.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. I know there are people who go into the bathroom and keep flushing the toilet so they can't hear anything.

**JC:** Yeah. 'I just need no psyching out.' It is interesting when they draw the dragons. That little moment when Harry looks at the faces of the other competitors and is like, yeah, everybody knew exactly what was going to come. Everyone came into this with a plan, and it kind of reinforces or confirms to him that he was really good that he told Cedric what was coming.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Also, that these magnificent older students are not that much more confident than he is. Everyone looks green.

**JC:** Everyone looks like they're about to puke and they're terrified, they're shaking. Yeah. Also, that everyone's cheating. That's something that Moody said in his office. "Oh, there's a great history of cheating."

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** It's very clear.

**Lorrie:** All right. Harry's learning.

**JC:** Yeah. He's learning this is how the world works.

**Lorrie:** So JC, what is it that you have on your desk right now?

**JC:** I have the little dragons! I bought these probably at the Wizarding World. Is it the Wizarding World, or one of the many Harry Potter shops that exist in the world? I'm holding them up like people who are listening can see, but I have the little four models of the dragons and they came in a little bag, and you can draw them out. They live on a shelf normally. I had a few Harry Potter things that I couldn't let go of...

**Lorrie:** Uh-huh.

**JC:** A few years back when everything happened with the author. I got rid of some stuff and some stuff I tucked back in my office, but I really wanted to keep the dragons, so they sit on a shelf. I got them out for today, so they're cute. I love that idea that there's little miniature models of dragons that are like the ones on my desk, but they move around and they breathe fire and snarl. It's such a cute little image. Oh, the little dragons!

**Lorrie:** It really is. So yeah, they draw their dragons. I love this description of how he's feeling as he waits: "He felt much more aware of his body than usual; very aware of the way his heart was pumping fast, and his fingers tingling with fear... yet at the same time, he seemed to be outside himself, seeing the walls of the tent, and hearing the crowd, as though from far away." This is incredible experience; this is going to help him later. If you're a kid or a teenager and you go through competition or anything like this, even just going through it once sets you up so well for doing it again as an adult. It reminded me of the morning of my wedding. I had only been able to sleep one hour the night before; even though we went to bed really, really early, I was so nervous. It was not even fun how nervous I was. One of my guests was a competitive skater, and when he showed up, I said, "How do you put yourself through this over and over again? This is horrible!" He laughed in my face and he said, "You get used to it." Oh, that makes sense! He says, "Yeah, it is like that, and every time you go through it, you know what to expect; you understand how much adrenaline you get, you can prepare." It made me think the author has had a lot of very large-scale public appearances, because by this time she is a global best-seller, so she must have had this feeling of huge crowds just waiting and waiting for her and knowing that she's expected to go out there and deliver something life-changing.

**JC:** Yeah. I have some experience with this, too. Back in the early 90s, I spent a year with a group that kind of no longer exists called *Up With People*, which was a performing group that traveled around the world; we would live with host families, do community service, and we'd perform this show. I was a singer in the show and I was used to singing for big crowds, but when we were in Europe, one of the songs I sang had this long intro that I would speak, talking about why we're singing the song and why it's important. In Europe, it would be translated into the local language, and for some reason they decided, instead of having a native speaker come and say this, that I would just memorize this speech phonetically. I could give it in German, I could give it in French, I could give it in Norwegian, I could give it in Dutch...

**Lorrie:** Oh, my God!

**JC:** And then once for a joke, I memorized it in Japanese because I just thought that people -- and then I did it for the cast, and they thought it's funny. But I have this memory of being in... We were in Belgium and we were in this incredible, huge palace of a hall, and the king and queen of Belgium were in the audience.

**Lorrie:** Geez.

**JC:** And I remember standing backstage and I had my head pressed against the wall, and I was just reciting the Dutch -- which I had learned phonetically -- in my head over and over -- and thinking, 'I'm going to walk out on this stage in front of all these people, including the king and queen of Belgium, and I'm going to pretend I speak Dutch, and

then I'm going to sing this song where I have to hit a bunch of high notes.' That part I was terrified of. It was like, 'Can I get through the Dutch?' It was the first time I've ever done it in Dutch, but it came together and I went out there and I did it, and then people came to me afterward and they thought I actually spoke Dutch.

**Lorrie:** Oh, no...

**JC:** I was like, "Oh, no, I don't speak Dutch." So yeah, that feeling is something I'm familiar with, this idea of just being nervous as hell and thinking, 'I'm going to throw up, I'm going to throw up, I'm going to -- oh, it's time. Let's go. Let's do it,' and then you're just on, like that. Yeah, that's something I'm very familiar with.

**Lorrie:** And then once you do it, then when you do it again, you know what your body is in for and it's an advantage to have done it before.

**JC:** For sure. Yeah. I think anybody who's ever been a performer or an athlete has had that experience before, and that's kind of what Harry is learning here, that you can do it.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Oh, we didn't talk about Bagman. Well, we kind of did talk about Bagman, but you mentioned him.

**Lorrie:** Oh, God. Yeah, I dislike him so much, and he's so... I don't even want to pay attention to him. He's so sleazy and such a loser.

**JC:** The fact that he's still wearing his Quidditch uniform...

**Lorrie:** Yeah...

**JC:** Why would you put on this bad... Oh, my God. That's it, that's his glory. That's the only thing he's got. He's out there and he pulls Harry aside -- doesn't even bother to take Harry far enough away from the other competitors. He's going to help Harry cheat, too. "Come on, Harry, I've got some ideas." Harry's like, "Nope. Nope, I got it. I got it."

**Lorrie:** "No. I know about being exploited. Goodbye."

**JC:** Yeah, for sure. But it is interesting that again, it's another adult who's really worried about Harry's survival here.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. I can dismiss him because I know that it turns out to be not that important, because at this point he certainly is in the running to be one of the big villains.

**JC:** That's true.

**Lorrie:** On a first read, it's important you're taking note of this. 'Why is this person doing this?'

**JC:** Yeah. 'Was he the one who put the name in the cup?' Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, yeah. He doesn't seem to have it together enough to be the person, but then again, that's what we thought about Quirrell, and we know how that turned out. That was just a really good act.

**JC:** Right. Right. Yeah, I haven't thought of that before, because it's been, again, so long since I read this book the first time. Bagman just seems kind of like a clown to me...

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** But yeah, you're right. He is a suspicious character the first time through, because we learned from Gilderoy Lockhart to be suspicious of good-looking famous people who are full of themselves.

**Lorrie:** Right, and we learned from Quirrell to be suspicious of people who are performing ineptitude.

**JC:** So basically we're suspicious of everyone, except people who are just downright mean. If they're mean, they're straight up mean, that's probably what you see is what you get. Maybe.

**Lorrie:** Maybe. Maybe...

**JC:** That's so funny. It is funny. Oh, my gosh, so then we have all this and he's sitting there and he's hearing all the crowd cheering and everything, and then he hears the other three people get through, and then it's his turn.

**Lorrie:** Oh, my God. What killed me about him listening to the other three is the poor Chinese Fireball. When Krum is competing, he hears the Chinese Fireball "emit a horrible, roaring shriek, while the crowd drew its collective breath." When we find out later why the Chinese Fireball is upset, I'm upset. I'm not okay about it.

**JC:** I know.

**Lorrie:** But the writing in this is really beautiful in this whole scene. There's the sentence, "Applause shattered the wintry air like breaking glass," and then there's a description: "...the panic rising into a crescendo inside him." This is good stuff. "He saw everything in front of him as though it were a very highly colored dream." It's portraying the feelings really well, and this walk toward his turn... It's the very center of the center volume. It's the middle of the series, and it foreshadows the walk he's going to do at the end of the series when he walks into the forest to sacrifice himself at the end of *Deathly Hallows*.

**JC:** Ooh, yeah.



**Lorrie:** So yeah, by the time he does that, he knows how this feels.

**JC:** Oh, I hadn't made that connection before. That's really interesting.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. His awareness of his body, that tingling in his fingers -- which I also get when I'm really extremely nervous -- yeah. Okay, this is it.

**JC:** Yeah. Ooh, yeah. It's not the last time, certainly, that he's walking towards what could be certain death. It's not really the first time, but I don't know. It feels like it.

**Lorrie:** Everybody's assembled.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Everybody's going to watch. Yeah, there's nothing going on anywhere, except people waiting to see if Harry Potter is going to survive this.

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

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Classes have been canceled for this.

**JC:** There's media. There's... Oh, yeah.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Oh. Yeah. Then he walks out there and he does the Summoning Charm.

**Lorrie:** It's a miracle! This is how miracles feel, right? For him to say it, to pray, and then it comes. The Firebolt itself is a miracle. It's the thing that Sirius gave him to enable him to fly and to be his truest best self, so the miracle works.

**JC:** And the crowd gasps when they realize what he's done.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. It must have been impressive.

**JC:** And I love that moment when he gets on the broom and then Quidditch brain turns on.

**Lorrie:** Yes!

**JC:** It's like what you were saying before about muscle memory.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Once he is on the broom, it's like a Quidditch game; he's going after the Golden Snitch, except it's a big, golden egg, and then it becomes clear what he has to do and he just focuses in on it. It's like, "Yes!"

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Yeah. It's really, really cool.

**Lorrie:** "These are skills I have."

**JC:** "I can do this."

**Lorrie:** "These are experiences I understand." Yeah. And I love this sentence: "...He had left not only the ground behind, but also his fear." Oh, he's so confident. He's in control, knowing that yeah, he has experience that he can use. The way he understands how to maneuver everything... It is really impressive, and then he's in the zone and he doesn't even hear the distractions. He's completely in his own head in a good way.

**JC:** It's such a good feeling. I've definitely felt that in my life many times, when you don't know how a thing is going to go and then it starts going and then you go, 'Oh.'

**Lorrie:** 'Oh.' Yeah.

**JC:** 'Yes, I know what I'm doing. I'm in my zone. I can do this.' That moment of, 'I can do this.' That happens a little -- it's not on a life or death level, but I think about... The story that I could tell with this is when I'm teaching, sometimes a student will ask a question or will make a comment that opens up this whole direction that we could go where a lot of really cool learning is going to happen, and then I'm like, 'Ah, okay.' Now I just have to light the way and invite people to follow me, and I'm good at that. I can do that. I feel like that's something that is similar to me, because then I just get this feeling of, 'Oh, this is going to be good.'

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Now, getting people to ask that question is a whole other... that's chance, but then when they do, the feeling of, 'Yes, I got this from here. Yeah, it's going to be good.' So yeah, on a tiny little level, I understand that feeling a lot. 'I've got this now. I know what's happening.'

**Lorrie:** Right. That's one of the ways this chapter is so good and useful. By the time you're a child old enough to be reading this, there are things you have proven to yourself you know how to do. Also, when you're in that zone where you think, 'Oh, I know how to do this,' there's also a pace that you know. It'll go at this pace, and you just know you're not going to rush it, it's not going to be too fast or too slow, but okay. Anyway...

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** Harry completely owns this. The fact that he is doing this... He's flying with the dragon so impressively, using skills that are completely his, honestly his, that came to him because of his own interest and aptitude by being himself; nothing is ever going to take that away. There are some things that make Harry think, 'Oh, no, that wasn't just me, okay.' The fact that he has an expensive broom, okay, that was chance. The fact

that somebody else put his name in the Goblet, whatever; that wasn't him at all. But he knows how to fly; he taught himself, and that competence is going to form part of his core identity forever. This is one of his achievements where, when people congratulate him and they're impressed by what he did, he will believe them. There's no asterisk next to this part of the achievement. What he did to work with this dragon, that was him. That was all him.

**JC:** I think the other thing that I love about this scene, too, building on that, is that everyone gets to see the entirety of this task. The other two tasks no one sees really what happens. This one? Everyone sees it. Yes, he's got this competence, and he's able to go out there and show, 'Yeah, I can handle this.' No one can question that he belongs there after this. The flying that he does... Even Bagman when he's announcing is like, "Wow, he can fly. Viktor Krum, did you see that?" The whole school, even the people who've been making fun of him and giving them shit, see it.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And it's like, okay.

**Lorrie:** That's purely validating because out of jealousy, people could say, "There's nothing even special about him. He's not that good at anything."

**JC:** And then you see this, and you have to eat your words.

**Lorrie:** You have to think, 'Well, I couldn't have done that.'

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** "That's impressive."

**JC:** Yeah. I love that Harry gets to have this moment where he's... 'Vindicated' is not the right word, but okay. He didn't put his name in the cup, obviously, but he's not a fake Champion. He's the real deal. He gets the fastest time on the egg...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** And he's definitely done it in a way that's surprised everybody, caught everybody off guard. Yeah. Then he goes to the end, and all the adults are just so happy and relieved...

**Lorrie:** Relieved...

**JC:** They're like, "Oh, my God," but also there's a little bit of awe. They're all in awe of him, and that moment where as a parent (I know you've had this moment, too) you realize that your kid is capable. You're like, 'I had hoped that my kid was capable of that, but holy shit, my kid was capable of that?' They pull off something that you're like, 'Oh,

damn,' and it's just a little bit of shock and awe and pride and happiness for them. Oh, man.

**Lorrie:** It's humility. As the parent, it's humility. For me, I feel like I can do everything possible to try to enable or support, but when it comes to it, I didn't do that. The kid did that.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** And what did I do? I don't know. I just should get out of the way and be thankful.

**JC:** But also the fact that they're all so happy...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** \*exhales sharply\* "You're alive!" Then Hagrid starts to say, "I told you that dragon or whatever --"

**Lorrie:** "Thank you, Hagrid!"

**JC:** "Thank you, Hagrid!" Everybody there knows at that point. I think it's not a big deal, but it's funny that...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Oh, and then Ron and Hermione come in. I cried when Ron came in. I was reading this and I was like \*wails\*, which is funny because I knew Ron was going to come in. I knew everything was going to happen, and still the emotion of it hit me.

**Lorrie:** I had a specific parenting response to this, so I guess the first time I read this, I wasn't thinking this way. This is one of those things where I always thought, 'Someday when I have kids, I'm not going to do it that bad way. I'm going to do it a better way,' and people will laugh and say, "Oh, yeah, you just wait when you have kids. You're going to do just as bad as all other parents." But no, actually. I stuck to my guns on this one, where, as a child, I remembered being forced to apologize and I just didn't see the benefit in that at all. There's apologizing right away: 'Oh, I'm taking my child, the child will apologize, and then we're going to go away and I'll deal with my child later.' You do have to politely say to the offended party, "I recognize what happened and I'm sorry," but to force the child to go and say, "I'm sorry I did this to you" when the child isn't sorry at all... I just always thought, 'Don't force that.' Then it becomes a battle of wills between the parent who's forcing the child, and the child who is really emotionally wrought and has needs, and this is just a separate demand. I would tell my kids, "When you are ready, go and apologize," because I wanted to give them space to come to it on their own, because when that moment comes -- when you're safe and away from the conflict and it really settles -- then it really comes, and you're ashamed and embarrassed, too. Then when you're really sorry, then you go and you say it, and this might be the next

day. It's not going to be two seconds after the incident, but when you're really sorry, everybody can tell. There is no mistaking it when it's genuine, and that to me... When I was a kid, I thought this, and then when I became a parent and I did this, I saw it working. The real apology, even if you wait for it a little while, is worth a million times more than the forced one, where you know the kid inside is thinking, 'Fuck you! I'm not apologizing. I hate you. You deserved that. I would do it again!' Yeah.

**JC:** Yeah. It's more about... yeah. I might have seen parents in this situation. It's more about -- the parent is thinking about themselves and not about any of the kids involved. It's like, 'I'm embarrassed that this happened and my kid did this thing.' It's not about empathy for the injured party, or whatever happened to someone else. I imagine a kid throws a thing and another kid gets hurt out on the playground because that's a thing that happens. I think that, like you, I always hated being forced to say 'thank you' or being forced to say 'I'm sorry,' so I was really focused as a parent on 'let's find the genuine in there' and doing that through, 'Let's turn our attention to the person who was hurt. Let's make sure they're okay.' That's the first thing that should be on our minds.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** 'Is that person okay?' It was hard. That didn't go well many times, because when you have a kid who's overwhelmed by shame... My kid just froze up.

**Lorrie:** Right, and it's not going to untangle right on the spot. It's not even going to untangle in the next half hour. It's going to take quite a while; it takes as long as it takes.

**JC:** Exactly.

**Lorrie:** So yeah, Ron comes to apologize, and it's so genuine that Harry accepts the apology before Ron even has to say it.

**JC:** Yeah. He's like, "No, no, we're good. I know what you're going to say."

**Lorrie:** "I understand." Yeah.

**JC:** Yep.

**Lorrie:** And poor Hermione loses it after all that stress.

**JC:** After all that drama and stress.

**Lorrie:** Poor thing.

**JC:** She's been between them this whole time.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** She can't even be there. She has to go off and cry.

**Lorrie:** 'Okay, they're fine now.'

**JC:** Yeah. And then immediately, I love that they just click right back to where they were, and Ron's like, "Okay, let me fill you in on everything that happened." Tells him all the stuff.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, that's exactly what Harry needs.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** It uses all of Ron's fan skills, as a Quidditch fan, to give the blow-by-blow.

**JC:** Oh, yeah. Ron is obviously Harry's biggest fan here, but also basically says, "Yeah, your plan was the best one."

**Lorrie:** It was good.

**JC:** Very clearly. Everyone knows. The idea that everybody knows... And then when the judges give their scores, this made me think about the Olympic skating...

**Lorrie:** Figure skating, totally. It's pure figure skating.

**JC:** For sure. I thought about all the stories you have about all the judging scandals in the Olympics or in the world.

**Lorrie:** Oh, it's from Ron's account that we find out the Chinese Fireball squashed half the real eggs.

**JC:** Ohh.

**Lorrie:** I grieve over that.

**JC:** That's so awful.

**Lorrie:** Why? Just for the human sport? What a careless waste of someone else's lives. Ugh.

**JC:** Also, thinking about the fact that these dragons are endangered.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Right? I'm just thinking about the repercussions of that through the dragon breeding/human protection community. There's some environmental group that protects dragons and you have all these people who work to make sure they're protected, and you brought these precious eggs for the dang competition, and then half of them for this one rare dragon. Yeah.

**Lorrie:** And the poor moms... The poor moms are drugged and transported and tormented.

**JC:** Right. This is not how we treat endangered species. This is terrible! But yeah, from the maternal perspective, it's horrific; from the environmental protection...

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** Yeah, but this is what we would do, right?

**Lorrie:** Yes, it is. This is a very human thing.

**JC:** This is like the Super Bowl or the Olympics. You're going to blow -- you're going to plow through your city's slums and displace a bunch of people just to build this Olympic stadium, right?

**Lorrie:** Right.

**JC:** Yeah, okay. This is what people do.

**Lorrie:** And then when it happens, it's amazing. It's awe-inspiring. Yes. One of my friends is Sonia Bianchetti, who was the greatest Olympic figure skating judge of the 20th century, and I line-edited her book on the ways she fought corruption in figure skating judging at the Olympic level. This scoring is pure figure skating. There are three judges from Britain, and only one each from Beauxbatons and Durmstrang, so the panel is rigged. Everyone has a competitor in the race. Madame Maxime gives an eight, which is probably the most objective and neutral score here for Harry. An eight out of ten. The more fair Brits, who are Dumbledore and Barty Crouch Sr., give Harry a nine, so there's a little bit of home country inflation. Bagman gives a ten for obvious home country inflation, and then Karkaroff gives a four because he's the Russian judge. The fact that three of the panelists are from the same country is what happened in figure skating once the Soviet Union broke up. There used to be one Soviet judge, but then afterward there'd be all these countries of former Soviets. The people in power wouldn't be native Belarusian or native Turkmenistan; they would be former Soviets that were placed there and they would all have to vote the same. Yeah. Anyway, I did enjoy how accurate that was.

**JC:** Yeah. But it's interesting that after all that happens, Harry doesn't care about the score or his rank for a lot of reasons. He's still here, but also because Ron is mad about it... Ron's indignance on his behalf is enough. I've totally felt that way in my life, where there's something really unjust that happens to you, but just having people stand up and say, "No, this isn't right," and being angry on your behalf goes such a long way to help. It helps.

**Lorrie:** Yeah. Human connection is the important thing, and also it helps you keep in perspective: there is nothing you can do to control what other people say or think about you, because even though Harry's not the one who gave these weird inflated scores, he's the one who's going to be disliked for them. It wasn't his choice; he didn't put his

name in, he's not the one who gave himself a ten, but people are going to say, "Eh." They're going to have things to say about it, and it doesn't matter. You can't control it. It just matters what the people who are important to you think, and that also carries him through when they walk right past Rita Skeeter at the end of the chapter. She tries to waylay him again and he just says, "Goodbye."

**JC:** "Yeah, I've got a word for you," and you're imagining it with two middle fingers up.

**Lorrie:** Yeah.

**JC:** In his head, on the inside, which is fun.

**Lorrie:** He now knows how to put up boundaries. He's never going to be taken in by her again, the way that he was.

**JC:** Right, which is really cool. And the egg has the next clue.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, and it sounds really terrible, which is a wonderful detail.

**JC:** So yeah, at the end of this chapter, Harry and Ron are friends again and they're talking and Harry got through this task. Okay, Harry's going to get a little bit of a respite from all the awfulness that he's been going through.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, and now he's always going to be somebody who, at a very young age, out-flew a dragon.

**JC:** Even thought to out-fly a dragon.

**Lorrie:** Yeah, and then did it so well.

**JC:** Yeah.

**Lorrie:** So yeah, he's grown. The next chapter is called The House Elf Liberation Front.

**JC:** Back to another plot that I had forgotten about in the excitement of all of this.

**Lorrie:** Well, yeah, and we are at the exact center of the book.

**JC:** Wow! 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.