

As My Wimsey Takes Me, Episode 9 transcript

[THEME MUSIC: jaunty Bach-esque piano notes played in counterpoint gradually fading in]

SHARON: Hello, and welcome to "As My Wimsey Takes Me." I'm Sharon Hsu--

CHARIS: --and I'm Charis Ellison. Today we are finally concluding our discussion of THE UNPLEASANTNESS AT THE BELLONA CLUB. We're going to be talking about the last third of the book, starting from Chapter 17 to the end. And we *will* be giving away the final whodunnit. We had a whodunnit that we gave away, but this is the actual close-the-case whodunnit.

SHARON: And with that, let's get into THE UNPLEASANTNESS AT THE BELLONA CLUB one last time.

[single horn plays, reminiscent of TAPS]

SHARON: Charis, I'm excited to talk about this part, because we finally get to meet Ann Dorland. [chuckles]

CHARIS: [chuckling] Finally!

SHARON: After so many pages.

CHARIS: So many pages of having her mentioned and never meeting her at all.

SHARON: No. And it's interesting, right, because we don't see her through Peter's point-of-view right away. Parker actually goes to interview - well, I guess a handful of people at her house, and then finally Miss Dorland herself.

CHARIS: Yes. Because after the last chapter, when the results of the exhumation autopsy are revealed, this becomes a police matter. It's no longer a private inquiry into an inheritance, it is a murder investigation.

SHARON: Mhmm. In the final third of the book. [both laugh]

CHARIS: Finally got there!

SHARON: Yeah. And I think similarly to how poor Bunter gets sent to talk to servants, here we have Parker dispatched--well, not dispatched, I mean he's there in an official capacity, but

talking to the housekeeper, talking to the maid. I love that little bit where one of the maids remarks afterward to the housekeeper that Parker was quite the gentleman. And the housekeeper replies, "No, Nellie. Gentleman-like I will not deny, but a policeman is a *person*, and I will trouble you to remember it." [laughs]

CHARIS: So, the main information that Parker is getting is specifics about the movements of General Fentiman in the house, right? That he came in, he was asked upstairs, he paused on the landing, he spoke privately with his sister, he was given a brandy because he wasn't feeling well -- So like, all of the nuts and bolts of who was where. Who had the tray, who--was the tray set down at any point. Just like all that information that is kind-of crucial for us as readers to know because [cheekily] - at the end of the day - because of the rules.

SHARON: [chuckling] Yeah, yeah.

CHARIS: This isn't one of those mysteries where it's just like "some random person did it." Like, "Oh, the tray was set down and someone wandered through and put poison in it." That possibility is eliminated by having this, like, careful record.

SHARON: Mmhmm. Of the lack of opportunity, yeah. And also we learn from the lady's maid that Miss Dorland had been, quote, "Messing about with bottles and things. Chemists' stuff." So the maid sort-of drops that as, "Oh, you know, that was one of her silly little hobbies." But--

CHARIS: Right. Her art studio had kind-of become a little bit of a lab as her interests shifted.

SHARON: Exactly. So Parker takes that and is like, "Okay, then I really need to know if there was any point that she could have dropped something into the brandy that the General had." Then he meets her. Parker is - not very sympathetic.

CHARIS: No.

SHARON: He thinks, "what an unattractive girl she was, with her sullen manner and gracelessness form and movement." She's very, like, brusque and impatient with him which, Parker being old-fashioned, you know, it says like, "Parker disliked a swearing woman." So they're just kind-of like off on the wrong foot to begin with.

But then he has her take him to her studio, during which we get at length a description of everything he sees, every object that's there, because again the rules. [chuckles] Parker notices that she has a dictionary of medicine, and then, you know, kind-of looks at all the paintings that she's produced. Does not think very highly of - you know. You get the sense Parker is not an

aficionado of, like, abstract art. [both laugh] The clever comment he comes up with for one of her character portraits is like, "It doesn't look very like her." [laughing] So you get the sense that Ann Dorland's been producing, like, Picasso-esque portraits or paintings of people. Nowhere near as accomplished as Picasso, but more that abstract cubist vein and Parker's like, "I don't understand." [both laughing] "It's not realism."

CHARIS: Yeah. And also we understand from Marjorie that whatever Ann Dorland is doing she's not doing it very well.

SHARON: Right. It's not genius. [laughs]

CHARIS: Yeah. It's just like, she's fundamentally not good at art. And not just because she's not a genius, but Marjorie says at one point, she's like, "She doesn't have any color sense!" [SHARON laughing in the background] "She doesn't have an artistic eye at all."

SHARON: Mmhmm. She's attempted, like, a "Madonna and Child." Which, quote, "To Parker's simple evangelical mind seemed an abominable blasphemy." [both laughing]

But it's funny, right, because then like, in the next chapter he says to Peter, "Oh I wish you'd been there to see it. Because you're artistic, the paintings might have conveyed something more or something different to you." So, kind-of going back to that trope of like, "Oh yeah, we knew Denis Cathcart's personality because of his bedside reading." There's, I think, an indicator here that to the enterprising detective or the artistic detective the artwork that a suspect produces would also be very telling of their state of mind, or even indicate, like, guilty or not guilty.

Which, I don't know, is that how art works? [laughs]

CHARIS: [laughs] I don't know! I do think that art--like, any artistic expression tells you something about the person who made it. But whether -- like how much you can draw from that... it really depends.

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: And, you know, terrible people can make wonderful art.

SHARON: Yes! As history has shown. [rueful laughter]

CHARIS: Yes. And wonderful people can make art that is... um....

SHARON: Anemic?

CHARIS: Yeah, yeah. Or saccharine. And people can explore themes in art that are uncomfortable, or that are dark and it not be a reflection of, "Oh, this person must be such a tortured soul." It's just like, "No, I'm fine. [laughs] This was just the direction this art took." You know?

SHARON: Right. Yes, exactly. Like the reading LOLITA problem, right? English 101 students always want to be like, "Oh, this is indicative that Nabokov was like a degenerate." And it's like, eh, no.

CHARIS: Yeah, nope. You've missed the point.

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: Or like -- ugh, I didn't read the article, but I saw a headline that was like, "20 Complex Romances" or something whatever, and someone had been like, "Uh, they cite LOLITA and that's all you need to know about this article."

SHARON: [aghast] Oh!

CHARIS: And I was just like, "Oh no! Someone missed the point."

SHARON: Mmm. Would not call it a romance.

CHARIS: Would not.

SHARON: No.

CHARIS: No.

SHARON: [laughs]

CHARIS: Like, even when I was reading it someone was just like, "Oh, isn't what's-his-name such an interesting hero." And I was just like, "He's not a hero."

SHARON: [expressions of horror]

CHARIS: That's the wrong word!

SHARON: Yeah!

CHARIS: Maybe you meant that in the generic 'main character' sense, but uh, *no*.

SHARON: No, no. And I mean like, the whole point - I mean, not the whole point, but certainly part of the point of the book is that Humbert Humbert thinks of himself as the hero, tries to figure himself as the hero, and that's the whole problem, right? Is that he's so selfish and solipsistic that he can't imagine the story being some other way--he can't accurately read the story or tell it as, like, the horror story that it is.

CHARIS: Right! He paints himself as this artistic soul who's magnetically drawn to this certain type of girl because he's enchanted by them and isn't this romantic? And it's like, "No, it's not, it's bad and weird."

SHARON: Yeah, yeah. Somehow those types of men can never be magnetically drawn to, you know, *age appropriate* women.

CHARIS: Right. He views it as a great love story and, just--

SHARON: It's not.

CHARIS: It's not. And, just the idea of anyone reading it and thinking that we're supposed to sympathise with him, just because he's the point-of-view character, and--oh, a *bad* misreading of what literature's supposed to be.

SHARON: [sadly] Yeah.

CHARIS: But this isn't a podcast about LOLITA. [laughs]

SHARON: No, this isn't that kind of podcast. [laughs]

CHARIS: We could go off on a whole thing about that cause, you know, I didn't enjoy reading it. I, like, on a technical level I found it very interesting to read--

SHARON: Yes.

CHARIS: --but I didn't like it.

SHARON: Right, yeah, no. And that's the whole -- that's the whole seduction for the reader, right? It's so beautifully written.

CHARIS: Yes.

SHARON: It's very beautiful writing for like, very horrific plot points. And that's--that's what it is. Yeah.

CHARIS: Yeah. And so stuff like that can be written by people who are perfectly sane and reasonable and who know exactly what they're doing.

SHARON: [laughs] That's true. Yes, yes.

CHARIS: What you can tell about someone, I think, from the art they produce is a little bit, maybe, about what questions they were asking the universe when they were making it?

SHARON: Mmm, yeah.

CHARIS: And I kind-of--and I think like, that is the direction that Peter is kind-of going for. Like, he wants to get an emotional read on Ann Dorland? And I think that that's something that he thinks that those paintings would show him and that's why he's so interested to see them.

SHARON: Right, yeah. I mean, Parker even sort-of notices that--you know, cause she shows him some portraits, some landscapes, and Parker at least knows enough to sort-of comment, mentally, on the fact that the landscapes seem to be a newer development for her. That at some point she got sick of painting portraits and kind-of gave them up. So in that sense, like, the questions she's asking, or the subject matter that she's interested in, is traceable through looking at the whole collection of her paintings together.

CHARIS: Right.

SHARON: But yeah, certainly none of them are recognizable people. [both laugh]

CHARIS: Yeah, not to Parker, in this moment.

SHARON: No.

CHARIS: Peter is going to recognize someone later on that's going to give him more insight.

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: Speaking of Peter, we get back to him in the next chapter. You know, like after Parker has--we get a whole chapter of Parker being on the job, essentially. And then we come back to--he's relating what he learned to Peter and Peter is saying that he wished he'd seen the paintings.

SHARON: Yes.

CHARIS: Peter is doing the thing he's done before, where he goes, "Who cares about this case? Why does this case matter? Why am I doing this?"

SHARON: [laughs] Yeah. I mean, again, the mirroring of UNNATURAL DEATH, right, where he's -- I think he's confronting--cause they're talking about, like, both Fentiman brothers had motive. Now that Parker has sort-of essentially ruled out that Ann Dorland might have slipped the General something, we're kind-of back to Robert and George, and Peter is thinking about the fact that they're his friends, you know. And they're comrades in arms and -- "Ah, why--what does it matter if old Fentiman was pushed painlessly off a bit before his time? He was simply indecently ancient." To which Parker replies, "We'll see if you say that in sixty years time." [laughs] And then Peter says, "By that time we shall, I hope, be moving in different circles. I shall be in the one devoted to murderers, and you in the much lower and hotter one devoted for others who tempt others to murder them." [both laugh heartily] Which I love, just a little rewriting of Dante.

CHARIS: Yes.

SHARON: But yeah, similar to UNNATURAL DEATH, where, you know--Peter has a very strongly developed moral sense. But I think there is this grey area he's willing to acknowledge of--especially when an inheritance is involved. Like, it was kind-of better for everybody for the General, or for Miss Dawson from the previous book, to pass on and to, like, you know, for their money to be split up in a way that would benefit people. And he's feeling a little bit sick of this case because it's like once again, okay, you know, he might have to put somebody away and this time it might be one of his friends, right?

CHARIS: Right.

SHARON: But I don't think he has--I mean, it's certainly not a very serious crisis of conscience, I think he's just--

CHARIS: Right. The narrative refers to the case as "irritating and unsatisfactory."

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: So Peter is--he's just... annoyed. [both laugh] He's like, "This case is stupid. And I don't like it."

SHARON: I'd be very curious if any of our listeners share that feeling about this case. [both laugh]

CHARIS: It's just a lot, it really is.

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: It is a nest--a rat's nest.

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: So Peter threatens to wash his hands of the case, but the narrative says that, "Like Pontius Pilot, he found society irrationally determined to connect him with an irritating and unsatisfactory case."

SHARON: [laughing] Which is an interesting commentary on Pontius Pilot.

CHARIS: [chuckles] Right.

SHARON: And, like, the crucifixion of Jesus was irritating and unsatisfactory? [laughs] Anyway.

CHARIS: [laughing] I'm sure Pontius Pilot felt that way. [SHARON bursts out laughing] He's just like, "What is all of this religious stuff? I'm just trying to be a minor government official and run things. And I don't need this. I didn't ask for this."

SHARON: "Leave me out of it." Yeah.

CHARIS: Yes.

SHARON: Didn't ask to be marked down in history as such.

CHARIS: Like, "I'm just trying to do my job, I don't even know what's going on."

SHARON: Mmm. Good old, "Just trying to do my job."

CHARIS: Yeah. I mean, his job did involve being an occupier. So.

SHARON: Yeah. So.

CHARIS: Can't have too much sympathy for him. But also it's just like, "I didn't ask to be a part of this religious narrative." [SHARON laughing in the background]

But yes. That night things take a turn for the even more dramatic.

SHARON: Yeah! So George Fentiman goes missing and it's made very clear that this is, like, part of his -- part of the way that his trauma and his PTSD manifest, right? When Wimsey goes down to see Sheila, you know, he finds out, "The trouble, it seems, had begun at breakfast. Ever since the story of the murder had come out George had been very nervy and jumpy, and to Sheila's horror had started muttering again. Muttering, Wimsey remembered, had formerly been the prelude to one of George's queer fits. These had been a form of shellshock and they had generally ended in his going off and wandering about in a distraught manner for several days. Sometimes with partial and occasionally with complete temporary loss of memory."

And it goes on to say, like, the different situations that he'd been found in, like dancing naked among a flock of sheep, wandering into a bonfire -- and it's really... [sighs] I don't know, I couldn't help feeling when I was reading this bit, really contrasting it to, like, how much care Peter is given when he has his PTSD episodes? You know, his whole family rallies around; he gets taken to the country; Bunter's there. There's just, like, all of this apparatus around him, whereas George, every time he has an episode he loses his job, right? And it just, like, pushes him and Sheila more and more towards the brink of desperation. And it's--I mean, it's just one of those places where I think the book is really clear-eyed about like, "Yeah, if you don't have money, if you don't have a support system, your outcomes are just so much worse." And that's just terrible.

I don't know that I have anything other, you know, otherwise to say [laughing] than just like, "Ahhh, capitalism is bad." [CHARIS laughs]

CHARIS: I like--I really like the interaction that Wimsey has with Sheila here. Because like, she calls at midnight with this urgent message that, you know, George has gone and she can't get a hold of Robert and she doesn't know what to do and she's scared. Wimsey has just gone to bed,

but he gets dressed again and goes over. And Wimsey is trying to "manage" Sheila? You know like, she's in a panic and he's just like, "Oh, you need to eat something. You need a hot drink."

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: Like, "You sit down and I'll make this." And she's trying to tell him stuff and he's kind-of talking over her.

SHARON: [laughs] Yeah.

CHARIS: So there's a part where she's like, "But I must tell you about George!" And it says, "He looked at her and decided that she really must tell him about George. And he says, 'I'm sorry, I didn't mean to bully. One has an ancestral idea that women must be treated like imbeciles in a crisis. Centuries of the women and children first idea I suppose. Poor devils.'" And Sheila says, "Who, the women?" [SHARON chuckles] "Yes. No wonder they sometimes lose their heads. Pushed into corners, told nothing of what's happening and made to sit quiet and do nothing. Strong men would go dotty in those circs. I suppose that's why we've always grabbed the privilege of dashing about and doing the heroic bits."

SHARON: Mmm.

CHARIS: And I appreciate that self-awareness.

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: You know, that, like, "Oh, I'm in this situation. I'm gonna do all these things, and you sit quietly there! I'm gonna do these, you know--" He's like, "Wait, no, you need occupation as well. Like, you need to do something other than sit still while I handle this."

SHARON: Yeah. [tongue in cheek] Peter's starting to see women as people!

CHARIS: Yeah! And like, Sheila says, "Give me the kettle," and he says, "No, no, I'll do that. You sit down and -- I'm sorry, I mean *take* the kettle." [both laughing] "*You* do it."

So Sheila's recounting to Peter all what happened earlier in the day. Someone had been coming up to the house and Sheila said, "Who are these? They look like plain clothes policemen." And George panics, and he goes into the bedroom and gets something and goes out to the yard and is doing something--

SHARON: And smashes it up, yeah.

CHARIS: --And it turns out that, you know, Sheila has--takes a heart medication with digitalin in it. Which is what the General overdosed on. And so George was getting rid of the bottle of that medication. Which does not look very good for George.

SHARON: No.

CHARIS: Especially now that he has gone off the rails and disappeared.

SHARON: Yeah. And Sheila and George's-- their landlords show up to kind-of rub it in. Which is really not very kind of them.

CHARIS: Right, these deeply unpleasant people, Mr. and Mrs. Munns.

SHARON: Mmhmm, yeah. They're almost Dickensian in how, like, overly horrible they are. And to Peter's credit, like, here, you know, there's this one point Peter says, "'Shut up, you fools,' said Wimsey savagely." And I think it's like when Mr. Munns was like, going on and on with great relish about somebody else who'd gone mad and you know--I think it might be the most savage that we've seen Peter with a bystander so far. And it's really, you know--I think there's a lot here about class? Where like how he can't just, you know, give George and Sheila money because they'd have too much pride to take it and it would be inappropriate, but he's really really trying to help these poor people out in whatever way he can, including trying to solve the case.

But yeah, I don't know, it's interesting to me how much we get of that sort-of class difference specifically in this novel and how--how Sayers has it, you know, sort-of intersect with the war and with trauma. And it's interesting that this event causes a little bit of a--it's not even an argument between Peter and Parker, but when Peter's like reporting all of this to Parker, the narrative says, "Parker was aware of a thin veil of hostility drawn between himself and the friend he valued. He knew that for the first time Wimsey was seeing him as the police. Wimsey was ashamed, and his shame made Parker ashamed too." And the thing that Peter's specifically ashamed of, I think, is that he gets into a little bit of a scuffle with Robert Fentiman.

But, I mean, yeah, it's interesting that we are now four books in and this is like the first time that Peter sees Parker as the police? At least in Parker's estimation.

CHARIS: Yeah. Well, and it's because Robert Fentiman is just like, "You can't go to the police. They're going to blame George, they're going to pin things on George." Robert Fentiman is all about protecting his brother.

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: He basically accuses Wimsey of not having any honor because Wimsey is just like, "The police need to know what's going on."

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: Yeah, so it's kind-of that--that sticky place, between the professional interest that Parker has to take and Wimsey's kind-of moral sense, you know. Like his playing fields of Eton attitude.

SHARON: It's interesting because I think it gives us a slight indication that, like, you know maybe in the past when he thinks about Charles, the scales always tip into, "Oh Charles my friend, who happens to be a policeman." But that this case is making him think of Parker as, "Oh Charles the policeman, who happens to be my friend." Right? And I think in that sense it's not a coincidence that this is a book that holds Parker at length--at kind-of arms' length until he needs to enter in that capacity of his professional role? Like, we don't see Wimsey inviting him over to smoke cigars early on and like, puzzle over the conundrum, right? We've talked about how he only kind-of comes in once Peter needs him in a professional capacity. And then we see him do detective work, but they're in many ways kind-of more separated relationally in this book than they have been in the past.

CHARIS: Yeah. And I think it's interesting that we stick with Charles a little bit. You know, like we stick with Parker after that kind-of awkward scene. And it says that, "The atmosphere of his own office was bracing to Parker when he got down there." You know it's like, he gets to step into his professional role and it's not the more complicated emotional tension.

SHARON: Yeah. Someone in his office congratulates him for his role in this case, right? That it's going to get him a promotion. But meanwhile he knows that his friend Peter is being--is having a lot of, like, emotional difficulty.

CHARIS: Yes.

SHARON: And even the moment when Peter leaves Parker's house. You know, they're trying to sort-of get right-footed of like, "Oh yes, right-ho, cheerio, buh-bye." And then I love this bit: it

just says, "And then the bedroom door shut, the flat door shut, the front door shut." So it's like all of these barriers going up between them. Yeah. [mournfully] Which makes me sad. But it's not a permanent rift!

CHARIS: Later on in the day, like the actual day, Peter calls Parker, and it says that, "It was Wimsey - interminably brisk and cheerful Wimsey this time."

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: And so what happens is that, Wimsey says that he wants to see Miss Dorland, but Parker has just gotten word that Miss Dorland left Lady Dormer's house.

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: So, like, a detective was watching the house and saw a young woman come and pick her up and they left with a suitcase. And so Wimsey says, "Well, what I really want is to see her studio."

SHARON: Mmhmm. So they go off together. And Peter takes a looksey at all her books--

CHARIS: [gleefully] Yes.

SHARON: And, you know, very tellingly, she's read some Conan Doyle. -- Wait, no, no, no, *Parker's* read Conan Doyle. And Hardy. And "when he's not too tired he has a go at Henry James." Which is *hilarious*.

Meanwhile, Ann Dorland reads a lot of modernist female writers. So, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, etc. So -- and "dear me, quite a row of D.H. Lawrence." [CHARIS laughing in the background] So, yeah, she's very much on the kind-of cutting edge of the literary world in that sense. There's no Wells, there's no Bennett, she's very much reading the modernists; the experimental writers of the time. And she's got a *bunch* of medical textbooks.

CHARIS: Yes. And this chapter has one of the -- one of my favorite Sayers quotes. And Peter says, "It's the books and paintings I want to look at. Books, you know Charles, are like lobster shells. We surround ourselves with them and then we grow out of them and leave them behind as evidence of our earlier stages of development." [SHARON chuckling in the background]

SHARON: It's a lovely way to think of books.

CHARIS: Yes.

SHARON: We also see that she's been reading some detective fiction of the more sensationalist variety, I think. Peter says, "The girl's been indulging in an orgy of crime!" [both laugh appreciatively]

CHARIS: Which, you know, and those are the most recent kind-of lobster shells, as Peter puts it. And I think that that is interesting because, as we kind-of learn going on, these other picked up and abandoned interests mostly stemmed from Ann Dorland looking for romance.

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: There's all the art, and that was kind-of--there was an artist she was interested in and possibly--you know, she was interested in being included in that set. You know, she was looking for a place to belong. And she kind-of dropped that, and then she's reading all these, you know, advanced modernist writers, but that's a little bit in her past now and she's moved on to this chemistry and science and kind-of like human development. One of the titles that's mentioned is WHY WE BEHAVE LIKE HUMAN BEINGS. But then the most recent thing are these, you know, just sensational crime thrillers. Which looks bad for her in an investigative sense, you know. It's just like, "Why are you reading all these books about crime? You looking for some inspiration maybe?" [SHARON laughing in the background] But then also knowing what the other books represented...

Starting to give things away now. But we're so close to the end of the book that hopefully our listeners are caught up with us. But, there isn't a romantic interest attached to these crime thrillers, right?

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: And so it feels to me like maybe these are books that she actually likes herself.

SHARON: Yeah!

CHARIS: She tried reading artistic advanced things, and she tried reading science, and you know, she tried these different things, and she kind-of reached a point where she just stopped doing that and was reading what she enjoyed.

SHARON: Mmhmm, yeah.

CHARIS: So it's just like, did Ann Dorland finally find her actual personality?

SHARON: [laughs] Yeah. Well, and it's--to sort-of preview without spoilers - the next book that we're gonna read, *STRONG POISON*, features a female detective fiction writer who is also--who's standing trial for murder. And so, again with the kind-of rhymed or parallel characters. Not that I necessarily think Ann Dorland is an early version of Harriet Vane, but I think that there are ways in which again the concerns of this book get picked up, right? I mean, Wimsey later on says, "Even if Ann Dorland is cleared, if it's not like an absolute--if it's not very, very clear in the public's mind it's always going to hang over her, it's always going to follow her." And that is certainly going to be a concern in the next case.

CHARIS: Yeah. But then--so like, having talked about the books, Peter also examines the paintings. What Peter observes is that all the paintings are attempts to mimic other people's art.

SHARON: Mmhmm. Or style, yeah.

CHARIS: Uh-huh. But then there's one portrait that--Wimsey, like it catches his attention. He's like, "It's not good." [SHARON laughing in the background] "It's very bad. But this one is an effort to imitate nature." So like it's an actual portrait of a person. And he says, "It's been worked on a lot. Now what was it made her do that." And I think that this is what -- it really starts the wheels spinning for Peter.

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: He tells Marjorie earlier, he's like, "I want Ann Dorland to be guilty, but I know that I'm biased." And then there's this incident with George and like that does not look good for George at all. And so, Peter's just like, "Do I suspect my friend? I don't want to. I would much rather suspect this person that I don't know." But now he's gotten to know Ann Dorland through her books, through her artistic efforts, and I think he's starting to go like, "I don't want this person to be guilty either."

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: Like in *WHOSE BODY?*, when Peter has that conversation with Parker and when they're talking about the railway baron, whose name I have completely forgotten--

SHARON: Milligan.

CHARIS: Milligan! Yes. Because I kept calling him Mulligan. [SHARON chuckles in the background] But yes, when they're talking about Milligan, and Peter's just like, "I don't *think* he did it; I don't have a *reason* to think he didn't, but I don't think he did it. And you're allowed to take your intuition into account." And this reminds me of that, where Peter is going like, "I don't think that she did it, even though she had the motive, even though she potentially had the means."

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: So I just think that my impression of this scene - which, we don't get a lot of interiority from Peter in this scene, you know?

SHARON: Right, he straight up refuses to offer it when Charles asks.

CHARIS: Yeah. If anything were in Parker's head - although we're pretty detached from both of them, I feel like, in this scene, but we're closer to Parker's perspective.

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: But my impression is that Wimsey is having that same experience where he's just like, "I think something about this person, and I have to adjust, like, everything else to fit around it. But it's what feels right to me."

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: And - I don't know. I didn't have--this is one of those things. I didn't have a clear through-line, I've been figuring this out while I said it. [SHARON laughs] And I will edit it down to sound more intelligent later. [laughs]

SHARON: No, but I think there's certainly--honestly, that to me is why Peter is such a compelling character, right? Because it's not just cold logic, it's not just like, "I have gone into my mind palace" [CHARIS bursts out laughing] "and, you know, have all the facts." Like he's--he's willing to bring up all the ways that he might be biased. Right? He's willing to bring up that liking a suspect makes things more difficult for him and clouds his judgment. But I think he also has a really good intuition about people. Like, that there are ways in which, yeah, he can look at the paintings and the books and understand something about another human being's character that's not--it's not based on, like, numbers or rationality. It's based off of studying human nature and I think--I think we increasingly see that as the series goes on. I mean, there's a part

in GAUDY NIGHT where he says to Harriet, like, you know, "If you just think about human nature for a bit you'll see, like, you've gone off the rails a bit because you're letting a general sense - or, like, a societal sense of people, of a stereotype, cloud your actual observation of human nature."

And so, I don't know, I like that this is kind-of being brought forward. And I think bringing it up in conjunction to that scene in WHOSE BODY? really works because just a few pages later -- it's after they've gone to the nurse to see if, you know, there's *any* chance Miss Dorland could have slipped something into the brandy and she says, "Absolutely not. With that large of a dose he would have already been feeling it before he left the house. So, you know, you can kind of get that idea out of your head."

But, Peter and Parker run into Sal Hardy, and then - side note, "who was, in fact, due to meet Waffles Newton at the Falstaff," and I just circled that and wrote, "Too much" in my book. [both laughing] Because yeah, maybe my new favorite name, after Sir Impey Biggs. But anyway!

There's this part where Parker and Sal are talking about the case and kind-of going back and forth, and Sal just sort-of throws out like, "Oh, you know, my theory is blah-blah-blah." And "Peter blurts out, 'But you ass, she's--' and then he shut his mouth again with a snap. 'No, I won't. Fish it out for yourselves.'" And it goes on to say, "Illumination was flooding in on him in great waves. Each point of light touched off a myriad of others. Now a date was lit up and now a sentence. The relief in his mind would have been overwhelming had it not been for that nagging central uncertainty. It was the portrait that worried him most. Painted as a record, painted to record beloved features, thrust face to the wall and covered in dust."

And that bit about "illumination flooding in on him in great waves," really reminds me of when he solves the case in WHOSE BODY?, right? Where it's like all the pieces fall together in place for him all at once. Thankfully this time he doesn't have a breakdown in response to it. But, yeah.

CHARIS: Yeah. Well, let's kind-of talk about that in more detail. And this is going to be us giving away the final whodunnit.

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: You know at the end of the visit to the studio where Peter has been looking at the paintings, and specifically has seen the portrait that was obviously done from life and where a lot of care was put into it. Parker - and this is kind-of sad, but - "'A penny for your thoughts then,' said Parker trying desperately to keep the conversation on a jocular footing. 'Not even

thirty pieces of silver,' replied Wimsey mournfully." (Thirty pieces of silver is a reference to Judas in the New Testament betraying Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.) Just before that Wimsey had said that, "I was hoping this room would tell me the same thing that it told you, but it hasn't. It's told me different." Wimsey says, "I told you about the George business this morning because glass bottles are facts and one musn't conceal facts, but I'm not obliged to tell you what I think." And Parker says, "You don't think then that Ann Dorland did the murder." And Wimsey says, "I don't know about that."

I think that Wimsey thinks that Ann Dorland might be a party to the murder, and the idea of that worries him. Because I think on some level it feels wrong to him, but he doesn't see another solution. Other than the possibility that George did it, which I think is a possibility that he also doesn't care for at all.

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: But then there's this conversation with Sal Hardy where he's just like, "Oh, obviously the girl's in league with the doctor, isn't it obvious." And Parker's talking about, "But that's a hard thing to prove. We know of course that they both sometimes went to Miss Rushworth's house, but there's no evidence that they knew each other well." And that's when Peter has his moment of illumination. And what he's realized is that Ann Dorland and Dr. Penberthy had a relationship, because the portrait was of Penberthy; which Peter recognized and Parker didn't.

SHARON: Yeah. And it explains the medical interest; it explains, in hindsight, why she didn't come to the Rushworths house that night, because Penberthy had just gone and engaged himself to -

CHARIS: Someone else.

SHARON: Someone else, yeah. It explains why she dropped the interest in chemistry.

CHARIS: Yeah. It explains why Marjorie had gotten the idea that Ann Dorland was interested in sick nursing and wellness.

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: Because obviously she would have gotten interested in that because that was his interest--

SHARON: [laughs] Yeah.

CHARIS: --and that's how Ann Dorland is: just like, "This is how you love someone, right? By doing what they're interested in."

SHARON: Right! Which is--I--you know--[sighs] She reminds me - like, not in personality but in terms of the "you love someone by subsuming yourself to their interest" - so much of Vera Findlater from UNNATURAL DEATH.

CHARIS: Mmm, yeah.

SHARON: And, similarly to Vera, spends part of this book shielding someone that she loves. Because Ann Dorland very much has a sense that Dr. Penberthy did the deed. We find out later that when he broke up with her he did it in a really cruel way, where he basically said, "You've been imagining things. You've been imagining I'm interested in you because you're so obsessed with sex." And it's so humiliating to her that she can't--she's not, like, going to go to the police with it because what a horrible thing for someone you were in love with to say about you. Right?

CHARIS: Yeah, yeah. And that's something that some of the rumors Marjorie Phelps has heard is. Like, Naomi Rushworth, the person that Penberthy ran off and got himself engaged to, was saying stuff to Marjorie about like, "Oh, you know, there's always been something weird about Ann Dorland."

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: "Oh, she's always had a little bit of a complex."

SHARON: Yeah. [theatrically] That's very much Penberthy's doing.

CHARIS: [sassily] Mmhmm.

SHARON: Yeah. So it's another one of those things where, maybe the first time you read the book you're a little bit like, "Whaa? Who? She loves--huh?!" But, like, all the clues really are there. And it's so interesting because, like, we meet Penberthy so early on, right? I mean, he's actually the person at the club. It's like, "Oh, it's so lucky we have a doctor here to know time of death."

CHARIS: Yeah.

SHARON: And if it were, like, a one hour TV procedural, Penberthy would be played by, like, the most famous guest actor and that's how you would know that he did it. [both crack up laughing]

CHARIS: Yes. Well, and like when Peter went and tried to see Ann Dorland and she snubs him with this rude little note [laughs], and then he goes to her lawyer and also gets snubbed. And he's just like, "Murbles must have been talking." Because they knew immediately why he was there. And, in retrospect, he had already talked to Dr. Penberthy and Dr. Penberthy knew that he was looking into it.

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: And Dr. Penberthy, obviously, told Ann Dorland. And Dr. Penberthy fed Ann Dorland a bunch of stuff about like, "They're trying to get one over on you so, like, don't agree to a settlement. Don't talk to them because they're being greedy and they're out for all they can get."

SHARON: Yeah. Yeah. And then he breaks up with her -- so basically the reason that she agrees to settle before the exhumation happens is because when Penberthy hears there's gonna be an exhumation, that's when he drops her, right?

CHARIS: Well, no, I don't think so.

SHARON: No?

CHARIS: I believe--no, if I'm remembering the timeline correctly [pages can be heard flipping in the background] he tells her to agree to offer to settle--

SHARON: Oh, because he knows the exhumation's happening.

CHARIS: Right, and he knows that the exhumation is gonna find something.

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: And I think that is the point where she realizes that he's involved.

SHARON: Yeah, you're right.

CHARIS: I'm just like -- I forgot where that is -- like, where Ann Dorland has gone, is that she has gone to stay with Marjorie Phelps.

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: And Wimsey goes to Marjorie's studio--

SHARON: And meets her there.

CHARIS: --and meets her there without knowing at first who she is, I think.

SHARON: Mmhmm, yeah.

CHARIS: Because he doesn't go there--

SHARON: And he doesn't know that Marjorie's the person who took her away.

CHARIS: Right. Because Charles didn't know. So he goes there because -- he says, "My spirit needs soothing. Feminine society is indicated. Virtuous, feminine society." [SHARON laughing in the background] "No emotions! I'll go and have tea with Marjorie Phelps."

SHARON: [laughing] Oh, Peter!

CHARIS: But he goes to Marjorie's studio and encounters Ann Dorland and realizes, after a little while, who she is. And he has this conversation with her. And you know, it kind-of all comes out, and she explains how she had realized that Penberthy was involved but she was in love with him and so she was shielding him. But when he realized that the investigation was going south for him, he dropped her and tried to distance himself from her as much as possible. While dropping her in such a way as to make her too embarrassed to tell anyone what had happened.

SHARON: Right. They had a quarrel when he tried to persuade her to settle. And it's funny, because he didn't actually know that she was going to have 12,000 pounds come to her anyway, so.

CHARIS: Going back a little bit to talking about Peter's intuition--

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: You know, he has this conversation with Charles before he goes to Marjorie's, before he meets Ann Dorland, he's talking to Charles and he's like, "Look here, Charles. This is all wrong. You may have got the right solution but the working of the sums' all wrong. Same as mine used to be in school when I'd look up my answer in the crib and had to fudge in the middle part." Which -- [both start chuckling, CHARIS is mock horrified] Wimsey cheated on his maths homework!

What he's telling Charles is wrong is that, Charles is just like, "Okay, she got Penberthy involved in the murder and bribed him to do it."

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: And Peter is just like, "I know that that's wrong!"

SHARON: Yeah. Like, "I know Penberthy did it now, but I don't, like--"

CHARIS: Yeah, it doesn't fit. "It doesn't fit the portrait, or the books, or the way Nurse Armstrong described Ann Dorland, or your description of her. It's a mechanically perfect explanation, but I swear it's all wrong." And that is interesting to me because I feel like that's a precursor of STRONG POISON.

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: And it also really shows Peter relying on his intuition. He's just like, "I can tell that this -- the pieces fit together but the puzzle's not right."

SHARON: Well, and that's what makes him a detective and not a lawyer. Right? That's why he's Peter and not Sir Impey. I think it's like, hand-in-hand with his moral sense of -- the sense of right and wrong, the sense of, "Once I am on the trail, I can't leave it." But it's also -- like, Peter would never be satisfied with simply solving a case because, "Okay, here are all the clues! And here's the answer that makes the clues work." He always has to factor human nature into it.

CHARIS: Well, and Parker's just like, "You've got that portrait on the brain. It's because you're artistic, I suppose." [both chuckle] And he's like, "Artistic be damned! It's because I'm an ordinary person and have met women and talked to them like an ordinary human being." [SHARON laughing hysterically in the background]

SHARON: Which is wonderful! Because, like, at this point, you know, Charles Parker has been in love with Mary Wimsey for *how* long? [laughs]

CHARIS: [laughing] It's so long!

SHARON: Yeah, maybe just loving her from afar. [laughing]

CHARIS: Yeah, and it kind-of ends in an argument.

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: That's where things stand when he actually meets Ann Dorland, is that he knows in his heart that she didn't do it. Or that if she was involved it was kind-of as a pawn.

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: He knows that Penberthy was the mastermind, but he doesn't have any evidence and he doesn't have any proof. And he also knows that the police line of investigation is that Ann Dorland masterminded it and bribed Penberthy to help.

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: He's in this unfortunate situation of knowing too much for his own good.

SHARON: Mmhmm. Do you think that's why -- I've been trying to come up with a grand unified theory of, like, why Peter turns certain criminals into the police and why he lets certain criminals politely off themselves.

CHARIS: I do think that, in those situations, you and I have talked a bit about this and whether it's a class thing, and I think that it certainly is. Or, I certainly think that that's an element of it. And I do think that there is an element of compassion toward the people left behind.

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: So, I don't think it's *solely* a class thing--

SHARON: [thoughtfully] No.

CHARIS: --and I don't think it's *solely* out of consideration, but I do think that it is a combination of those two elements that lead him to kind-of... offer that.

SHARON: Offer that, yeah. Well, and like, when you were talking, it sort-of occurred to me for the very first time that Peter is also trying to save her the embarrassment, right? Of having this go to a public trial and having it all get dragged out.

CHARIS: Yeah.

SHARON: Which is interesting, because he was--you know, he was willing to try and avoid that with his own brother and with Mrs. Grimethorpe, but he was like, "I will absolutely bring Mrs. Grimethorpe out and like, [starts laughing] you know, air *all* the dirty laundry if I have to." Whereas here he's--or I wonder also if he worries that, like, it wouldn't be an airtight enough case? Because it would devolve into a he-said/she-said about what their relationship was. Yeah. So.

CHARIS: Yeah, I think Peter was very motivated by a desire to spare Ann Dorland from more--

SHARON: From publicity, yeah.

CHARIS: Yeah, from more public humiliation. In future books -- that we will get to in time [SHARON chuckles] -- I think that that's definitely a consideration that comes up. That this is what's going to be least painful. The guilty party is going to be punished, and the remaining--like, the survivors, are going to experience the least pain.

SHARON: Mmhmm, yeah. And, you know, whether we find that he--he only trusts the guilty party to quote-unquote "do the right thing" if they're of a certain class we'll see, but yeah.

I also--I love the bit where he, you know, he takes Ann Dorland out to dinner. Cause that's what Peter does. [laughs] He takes her out to a splendid dinner and, you know, is like, "Okay, order whatever you want." And she asks if there's something, like, the restaurant does especially well. And he's just--he's like very admiring of her, in that moment? And he says, "May I be impertinent? Not an artist, not a bohemian, not a professional man, a man of the world." And she's like, "What do you mean?" And he says, "For you. This is the kind of man who is going to like you very much. The wine I've sent away, it's no good for lobster or--for a champagne and lobster sort-of person, nor for very young people. It's too big and rough, but it's got the essential gut. And so have you. It takes a very experienced palate to appreciate it. But you and it will come into your own one day."

So I don't know. I think it's kind-of sweet of him. You know, maybe it's a bit condescending too. [laughs] But to say, you know, "You've kind-of been looking for the wrong kind of guy. There is someone who's really going to appreciate you and he will appreciate your brains." Right? "You

will find yours will be the leading brain of the two. He will take great pride in that fact." Which is funny, because we know Robert Fentiman asks her out at the end of the book. And it's like, "Hmm, is--would we say that Robert is, uh, an experienced palate?"[both laughing heartily]

CHARIS: We haven't spoken very flatteringly of Robert Fentiman [SHARON chuckling in the background] but he's, you know, he's not a bad person.

SHARON: [emphatically] No.

CHARIS: He's an acquired taste, potentially. [SHARON bursts out laughing] He does fit in with what Peter is saying to Ann Dorland about like, "You need someone who will *let* you be the brains, who will be comfortable with that." And Robert Fentiman is just kind-of like--he knows he's not a mastermind. [both laugh] You know, like when Peter kind-of uncovers the whole plot, Robert Fentiman's just like, "Oh well, I gave it a shot. It was fun. I should have known that you'd see through me."

SHARON: Mmhmm. Yeah, he's not, like, intellectually offended that he's been bested. He was like, "I kind-of thought it was gonna happen all along."

[both laughing]

CHARIS: "I thought, why not give it a go, but whatever."

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: And Robert Fentiman, he's kind-of like a brash, rough, slightly abrasive personality. But he also does give Peter that whole speech about, like, "You should be polite to women all the time. And caring." Poor Ann Dorland could use some of that.

SHARON: Yeah. Even though Robert says, "She had to take up that art business to give her an interest, poor child, but she's really cut out for an ordinary sensible, feminine life." I was like [hesitant "ooo"].

[both laugh]

CHARIS: It was like, "Ooo, yeah---oh--okay." [laughs]

SHARON: But I think it's, you know, he respects her. He thinks that she went through something really harrowing, and he's, you know, he appreciates her intelligence. Like, so, yeah, maybe they'll rub along together well.

CHARIS: Yeah. But, just to tie up the loose ends--

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: --we should go back to George. Because it's after this that George is found.

SHARON: Yes. Well, poor George thinks that he's killed his grandfather and writes a confession. And it's really sad, because he's -- I mean it's -- [sighs] I don't know if you'd call it split-personality? Like, I don't know enough about that diagnosis, but George writes a confession of, basically, he thinks someone else is occupying his body and *that* person killed his grandfather. And he's like, "I have to make this statement quickly because *he's* asleep and if *he* wakes up, you know, he'll stop me." And you get this sense, like, that's--he's in his own head.

CHARIS: [sadly] Yeah. And I think what's interesting is that Peter gets there to the police station where George has turned himself in, and Sheila is there looking after him, and a couple doctors have come. The police surgeon is there, and Dr. Penberthy is there. And Parker asks Dr. Penberthy, he's like, "What do you think about this delusion? Did he do this insane act?" And Penberthy says, "He certainly thinks he did it. I couldn't possibly say for certain whether he has any foundation for the belief." And I think--I think that's what settles things for Wimsey?

SHARON: Mmm, mmhmm.

CHARIS: The willingness that Penberthy has -- like he's not outright being like, "Yes, he did it."

SHARON: [emphatically] Yeah.

CHARIS: The willingness that Penberthy has to, like, first throw Ann Dorland to the wolves, and now George.

SHARON: Mmhmm. That's when he's like, "Let's go to the club!" [laughs]

CHARIS: Yeah, he's just like, "Come 'round to the club with me for a moment, Penberthy. I want to have a word with you."

SHARON: Mmhmm. Because you are a bad person.

CHARIS: We go back to the Bellona Club -- which is a nice circle to where things began -- and you mentioned that most of the chapter titles are card related--

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: --and this one is called "Cards on the Table." [SHARON laughs] Peter takes Penberthy to the library of the club. Which, I want to go back to that first description of the library, where Peter had his first interview with Penberthy. We've really come full circle to: we're back at the Bellona Club, we're back in the library, we're back with Dr. Penberthy and Wimsey.

And in Chapter Five, which is when the first interview takes place, the description of the library, it says, "It was a large, quiet, pleasant room with the bookshelves arranged in bays, each of which contained a writing table and three or four chairs. Sitting in the farthest bay, and mirrored by books and silence, confidential conversation could be carried on with all the privacy of the confessional." Which, like, this is so long before we have even a hint of Penberthy being involved at all, right? But we have that line just slipped in there. And now we're back at the confessional.

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: We've known all along that after leaving Lady Dormer's house the General went to Dr. Penberthy because he wasn't feeling well. Penberthy tells Wimsey that he had been secretly engaged to Ann Dorland for the money that he expected her to get from Lady Dormer all along.

SHARON: Mmhmm. And he wanted the money because he wanted to open up his glands clinic.

CHARIS: He tells Peter, he was just like, "I would have been a good husband to her." [SHARON scoffs] And it's like, that doesn't make it better that you wanted to marry her for money.

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: Especially after the way you treated her.

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: So, Dr. Penberthy has that plan in motion, where he's just like, "I'm going to marry this girl and get all this money and open my clinic." But then his patient General Fentiman comes to him, and the General innocently tells him the whole thing about the circumstances of Lady

Dormer's will. He's just like, "You know, she's probably going to die tonight and I'm going to inherit this money unexpectedly." And, you know, he's kind-of worrying aloud about how much to leave to George and how much to leave to Robert, and can George be trusted with this money or should he give it just to Sheila. And Penberthy just sees all this money that he expected to get, like, running away; slipping through his fingers.

So, he makes up a pill with an overdose in it and gives it to the General. He's just like, you know, "Take this in a little bit to perk you up." And sends the General on his way.

SHARON: [sighs] Yeah. Going back to how terrifyingly easy it is to murder people. [horrified chuckling]

CHARIS: [laughing] Right! I don't like how easy it is to kill people.

SHARON: Never tell your doctor how much money you have! [laughs]

CHARIS: Never! Never tell anyone how much money you have. Especially not your relatives, or, anyone. Just keep it under your hat.

But, then, things just continue to get more and more complicated. You know, it would have been simple if Robert hadn't moved the body. The General would have dropped dead before Lady Dormer died and the money would have gone to Ann Dorland. And Dr. Penberthy would have gotten everything he wanted.

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: But that's not how things happened.

SHARON: [laughs] No, indeed.

CHARIS: No.

SHARON: Basically, Wimsey's like, "You need to write down this confession." And he leaves Penberthy to do it, and then he finds Colonel Marchbanks and asks Colonel Marchbanks to give him his revolver.

CHARIS: He kind-of asks the Colonel to be a witness as well? Like, not to the suicide.

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: Like, he doesn't just say, "Hey, Marchbanks can I borrow your revolver."

SHARON: No.

CHARIS: He explains to him the situation--

SHARON: Yeah, and Marchbanks says, "You've done the best thing to my mind. Make a clean job of it." And then Peter and the Colonel go back in together. And actually the Colonel puts the gun into the table drawer.

CHARIS: You know, it's kind-of like having a duel and having the doctor turn around so that he can't say what happened. That he has plausible deniability.

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: Wimsey takes the confession and reads it and Colonel Marchbanks witnesses the confession. And then it says that, "This was done. Wimsey gathered the sheets together and put them in his breast pocket. Then he turned silently to the Colonel as though passing the word to him. 'Dr. Penberthy,' said the old man, 'Now that that paper is in Lord Peter's hands, you understand that he can only take the course of communicating with the police. But as that would cause a great deal of unpleasantness to yourself and to other people, you may wish to take another way out of this situation. As a doctor, you will perhaps prefer to make your own arrangements. If not,' he drew out from his jacket pocket the thing which he had fetched. 'If not, I happen to have brought this with me from my private locker. I am placing it here in the table drawer, preparatory to taking it down into the country tomorrow. It is loaded.'"

And like, it's just like, a very formal, solemn sort-of scene. The Colonel "closed the drawer slowly, stepped back a couple of paces and bowed gravely. Wimsey put his hand on Penberthy's shoulder for a moment, then took the Colonel's arm. Their shadows moved, lengthened, shortened, doubled and crossed as they passed the seven lights in the seven bays of the library. The door shut after them."

SHARON: Yeah. It's very formal. It's very--it feels a bit antiquated, I think. It's very of, like, the previous generation, right? In this book where we're talking about intergenerational conflict.

CHARIS: Yeah. And I think we talked about the end of UNNATURAL DEATH and the way it ends with the eclipse.

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: And I think it's interesting, this description of them passing through the light. The way shadows flicker when you move between light sources, right?

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: And I feel like that's another echo of UNNATURAL DEATH as well, this visual cue of shadows kind-of like, moving and not being stable, and the light changing.

SHARON: Mmhmm. It's also interesting to me that in the final chapter--like, the final chapter is told pretty much all in untagged dialogue. And, you know, you can from, like, context clues, infer that it's Peter's conversations with a bunch of people. But, that we--we're almost shut out of Peter's emotional state. Like, we have the image of the shadows, but it's not like UNNATURAL DEATH where he asks Charles if the world is ending because the light is so eerie.

CHARIS: Right.

SHARON: It's not like CLOUDS OF WITNESS where he gets drunk from relief. It's not like WHOSE BODY? So it's--like, I'm never entirely sure where Peter is emotionally after having solved this case and very deliberately causing the suspect's death, right?

CHARIS: Right.

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: I think, before the kind-of epilogue chapter, there's a shot heard in the club and people are running around and there's a commotion. And Wetheridge [laughs] - our old friend from the first couple of chapters, who is the very special club member who's always got a complaint - "Here's another unpleasantness! Penberthy's shot himself in the library. People ought to have more consideration for the members."

You know like, once it's happened, once the news is out, it says that Wimsey goes out to the entrance hall and there, "as he had expected, he found the plain clothes detective who had been told to shadow Penberthy." And he says, "Send for Inspector Parker. I have a paper to give him. Your job's over; it's the end of the case." And, you know, that applies to him as well.

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: That has a huge sense of finality--

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: --and more of a sense of closure than we had in UNNATURAL DEATH, for sure. Possibly even more of a sense of a closure than we had in CLOUDS OF WITNESS. Like, CLOUDS OF WITNESS kind-of ends a couple of different times. So it lacks this firm finality.

SHARON: Yeah.

CHARIS: Post-Mortem - which doesn't, in my edition, have a chapter number, so I don't know if other editions are different.

SHARON: Um, let me see. [pause] Mine does. But I don't know if that was added as, like, an extra kind-of thing.

CHARIS: In my edition it just says "Post-Mortem" with no...

SHARON: Hm. Did you have other chapter titles? Or, chapter numbers, though?

CHARIS: Yes, my other chapters are numbered.

SHARON: Oh! Interesting. Huh.

CHARIS: Yeah. They're all numbered with Roman numerals, which [starts laughing] is a nightmare for me [SHARON bursts out laughing] because I can never interpret Roman numerals. I learned them but I didn't retain them.

SHARON: Mmhmm. Yeah. So, it could be that we are seeing Peter mature in his understanding of what it means to be a private detective, right? That it means taking on the responsibility to see things through, but then also not -- like I wouldn't necessarily say "not take it personally," but being able to like occupy that role of justice and not have it wreck his sense of self.

CHARIS: Right.

SHARON: Like it seems like he is now integrating more of that detective self into a whole and complete self.

CHARIS: Right. But I think also, in this instance, he knows for a fact that he got the guilty party, right? He has a confession. And I think that he doesn't have doubt about where, like, the weight of justice needs to rest, you know?

SHARON: Yeah, yeah that's true.

CHARIS: And there's an element of compassion that goes into making the choice to allow Penberthy to take matters into his own hands, as it were. And it's not just compassion towards Penberthy, you know. Like, as we were saying, it's compassion for Ann Dorland and for the Fentimans.

SHARON: Mmhmm.

CHARIS: With all those factors together I feel like Peter really does have confidence in the choice that he made this time. As opposed to -- especially UNNATURAL DEATH, where he was not confident at all once he got embroiled into the case.

SHARON: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. Hmm.

CHARIS: And I do -- like, I like this, the Post-Mortem. Like I know some people find untagged dialogue very frustrating, but it's actually something that I really like. It has to be done well, and Sayers does it really well.

SHARON: Right, because all the voices are distinctive.

CHARIS: Yeah. And I kind-of like that we're finding out that things are okay for the remaining characters and how they ended up. But it's happening very quickly; it's not a belabored epilogue. It's just kind-of nice. Like George is going to be fine, Sheila's going to be fine, Ann Dorland is pairing up with Robert Fentiman and they're both going to be fine.

SHARON: Mmhmm. Marjorie Phelps definitively -- like, Peter tries to shoot a shot a little bit with her [laughs] and she's like, "Uhhhh, no. A relationship with me would not satisfy you, Peter. Forget it." [laughs]

CHARIS: Yeah. And Wetheridge is still unhappy about everything all the time.

SHARON: [laughs] Because some things have to stay the same.

CHARIS: Yup.

SHARON: Yeah. Someone has to uphold tradition. [laughs]

It's interesting to me, in all our conversation about, like, "What book would you start people with?" And more and more I'm just convinced that they should start at WHOSE BODY? [laughs] and work their way through.

CHARIS: Yeah, that's the conclusion I'm coming to, too.

SHARON: Yeah. 'Cause I love the mystery in this one: I think it's so clever. But, I think we just don't get a lot of Peter's interior life the way we do in other books - earlier ones.

CHARIS: Yeah.

SHARON: Okay, so I think we've covered pretty much everything except my favorite line, which explains part of my forever love for Mr. Murbles. [laughs] It comes in Chapter 11, and it's just very brief.

"About 4 o'clock a messenger arrived panting from Mr. Murbles." And then in parentheses, "Mr. Murbles refused to have his chambers desecrated by a telephone." It's just so delightful. I love it so much.

Yeah, so listeners thank you so much for joining us for these three episodes about THE UNPLEASANTNESS AT THE BELLONA CLUB. And we will be back in two weeks to start talking about STRONG POISON and to introduce those of you who have not read the series yet to Harriet Vane!

CHARIS: In the meantime, you can find us on Twitter and Instagram as @wimseypod - that's Wimsey, W-I-M-S-E-Y -, and you can find transcripts and show notes of our episodes on our website at asmywimseytakesme.com.

SHARON: Our logo is by Gabi Vicioso and our theme music was composed and recorded by Sarah Meholick. If you've enjoyed this episode of As My Wimsey Takes Me, we'd love for you to give us a rating and a review on Apple podcast or on your podcatcher of choice. And we also hope that you'll tell all your friends who love Dorothy L. Sayers as much as we do.

CHARIS: Join us next time for more talking piffle.

[THEME MUSIC: jaunty Bach-esque piano notes played in counterpoint begins and gradually fades out.]