

– Sorting Sherlock

Music Voiceover:

John Watson: *We don't know a thing about each other. I don't know where we're meeting. I don't even know your name.*

Sherlock Holmes: *I know you're an army doctor recently invalidated home from Afghanistan. I know you've got a brother who's worried about you, but you won't go to him for help because you don't approve of him, possibly because he's an alcoholic. More likely because he recently walked out on his wife. And I know that your therapist thinks your limp is psychosomatic, quite correctly I'm afraid. It's enough to be going on, don't you think?*

Music fades in/out.

Shannon: Hi everyone and welcome to the Sorting Sherlock segment. In this segment, we're going to be sorting Mary Morstan, or Mary Watson. This is Shannon and I'm here with:

Fox: Fox.

Drinkingcocoa: Drinkingcocoa.

Emma: And Emma.

Shannon: Okay so this is the first sorting we've done in a while, and this is first sorting post series three with a new character. So, we're gonna get started with kind of a broad question that we usually like to talk about, and that is: which moment from series three most epitomizes Mary's character to you?

Fox: I'll get into this further when I talk about what house I sort her into and why but I adored her when she was planning the wedding with Sherlock! She was just so on point and Sherlock and her just get along so well. They're just on the same page on the whole thing, and she recruits Sherlock as her insider into all her guests while John is just fiddling on his phone, sitting on the couch, and I just love that moment. I think that really epitomizes her character, and I think that really influences, I think, how I feel about her in His Last Vow.

Shannon: Emma, what about you?

Emma: I think for me, it's the moment in His Last Vow in the moment that she realizes she's just told John everything she didn't want him to know. So I really like this moment because she's threatening Sherlock's life to keep it a secret, essentially, and there's this moment where she has this look of horror on her face, and she turns around and you think of it from her perspective,

she's in a horror movie -- and she turns around and there he is. And the expression on her face is just, "I've just lost everything, I've just lost everything." And it's such a really honest moment, and it really humanized her, for me. You know, she shot Sherlock, she basically hunts Sherlock down, finds him in this house, and probably was prepared to shoot him again if she needed to. But it's such a humanizing moment when she realizes that she's just lost everything. I think it's about the most honesty that we see from her, maybe second to the moment when she gives John the USB drive and begs him not to read it in front of her.

Shannon: Oh, so it's interesting that you zeroed in on her facial expression, because I have to say that I also picked a moment from His Last Vow because of Mary's facial expression. So also what she said, I felt it captured the duality of her nature, this was the moment when she shot Sherlock, I thought that was very telling, because we saw at that moment the calculating steely-eyed killer who's able to shoot her husband's best friend without flinching, who's able to threaten a man on his knees as her plans are going down, to recalculate and replan. She's the assassin who understands human nature, and this relates back to her comment in The Empty Hearse to Sherlock about his inability to do so, but also as the wife of John Watson and the friend of Sherlock Holmes, her face, that moment shows a degree of remorse and regret when she says, "I'm sorry, Sherlock, I truly am." You know? That was not necessary, so I see this calculating part of her, but also a part of her that is also full of passion. What about you, Drinkingcocoa?

Drinkingcocoa: For me, it was the moment in The Sign of Three when she says, "Solve it." And Sherlock is confused, "Because it matters now." That moment makes Sherlock yell at John, "Control your wife." Which, you know, Mary gets this very outraged expression and then John says, "No, she's right." That's a moment when her real self is showing. She's been trying to hide the fact that she is the kind of person that Sherlock is, but this has -- this is an emergency -- her real -- John kissed her and said, "You stay here," you know, at the wedding table when he went off to help Major Sholto and she thought about it and then she came and followed. This is a fantasy that she's having, that she's letting herself have, she has had this fantasy that she could go on with a normal life, married to John Watson, and then when Sherlock comes back, she has this fantasy -- she says that friends are all she has. She has this fantasy that she could have John and Sherlock in her life as a husband and a friend, and she lets that happen in this scene. I think that's when she's revealing her heart. And then Sherlock's response when she says that is to kiss her on the forehead. He does it the right way. She's giving Sherlock, her friend, permission to be himself; he's been not himself for that whole episode, planning a wedding, and not sure that he's wanted, and she's saying, "Yes you are, do your thing, be yourself."

Shannon: So the second question asked is whether your sorting of Mary changed from episode to episode, and I think this is based on the assumption that was raised, for example, by one of our

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listeners on tumblr, batik96, who asked how we could possibly sort Mary since we would have to disregard The Empty Hearse and The Sign of Three once we learned that Amanda Abbington hadn't been led to understand what her character was doing until she got the script for His Last Vow. But I think we can still read things from it, and I think we each might have approached this a bit differently. For example, most of what I looked at was for things that she said, not so much the performance of Amanda Abbington, but things that the character herself said, so I could find links. And others may have you may have been a bit different, so I guess I wanted to say that my sorting, you know, my reaction to the character changed, but my sorting really wasn't going to happen until I saw more of her. And I think I drew a lot on His Last Vow, which is okay because we've sorted characters in the past based on one episode, like Irene Adler's character. What about the rest of you? Fox, how about you?

Fox: This goes back into why I picked the scene between Sherlock and Mary, when they were planning the wedding together, and I picked that scene that epitomizes Mary's character to me the most. The reason why I picked that scene is because by The Sign of Three, I was kind of wavering between two houses, and she really really read Ravenclaw to me in that scene. And I think my reading of her doesn't quite shift so much actually, by the time the revelation came of her true nature in His Last Vow because I was already wavering between two houses at that moment. But at that moment when she was planning the wedding, she seemed very much like a Ravenclaw. She was very ordered, very much like Sherlock actually, just very on top of things, very detail oriented, very driven to figure out all these details for a wedding -- which is a lot of work -- and John, just being completely the opposite, just kind of -- almost like Ron, I think. (laughing) His approach to wedding planning. And also, her at the very end, when there was a crisis, when Sherlock was wracking his brain, where does the major, did we put him in the hotel? And he couldn't find the answer, and Mary had the answer, so to me that was such a Ravenclaw thing, just very very detail oriented, very organized. And my sorting of her -- which I will discuss later -- did change, but I was already wavering between two houses at that point.

Shannon: What about you, Drinkingcocoa?

Drinkingcocoa: I looked at each episode separately to see where I sorted her, and it turns out that I sorted her in the same house every episode. I loved finding out the detail that the writers withheld this from Amanda Abbington and I could see the difference, I could see that there was a layer missing in the first two episodes that she added into the third, but when I did the sorting, I felt secure that the writers had all been on board with each other beforehand so it was consistent. Their understanding of the character was consistent.

Shannon: And what about you, Emma?

Emma: I didn't sort her... I didn't sort her. (laughing) I guess that's the best way to say it, until I was like oh, okay, I'll be on this roundtable, I guess I'll think about it. So what I guess I'm trying to say is I look at the whole story arc -- I'm not picking it apart, I guess. I'm not episode per episode, I'm sort of thinking about her character trajectory throughout the whole thing, and I can't consider The Sign of Three without considering His Last Vow. I can't pick them apart that way, so I don't think it did, really. Yeah. So my answer would be no.

Shannon: This is gonna lead me to our big question here, and that's the actual sorting one. What house would you sort her into and why? Fox, do you want to start us?

Fox: Well, my answer to this question, well actually two questions, you know and the next question, which is which Harry Potter character does she most remind you of, and when I was watching The Sign of Three and I was looking at her detail orientedness, I was like okay, all right, she could be a Ravenclaw, but she also, very strangely to me at that time, spoke very much to me as a Gryffindor as well, and so when I saw His Last Vow, it all clicked. She is Hermione. She is an older, a little bit more cynical, a little bit more wizened version of Hermione to me. Because she, like Hermione, very detail oriented, very driven, very successful at what she does, very good at what she does. But also very brave. I mean, she was a very brave person for deciding to leave behind her life, you know, whatever prompted that we don't know, but leaving behind her life and and being very successful at being an ordinary person, you know, apparently without these skeletons in the closet. And she was very successful at doing that. And yet she couldn't -- you know, parts of her nature still came out, very subtly, but more -- but enough, that someone like John could pick up on it and really relate to who she is, which is not entirely an ordinary woman but a woman who has a past, who has a bit of danger to her. So I think these are all qualities that speak very very strongly to me as Gryffindor. And this is a little bit of a vaguer impression, but my impression of the way that she dealt with Sherlock, the way she kind of went to his -- you know, after she shot him, the way she went to his hospital room and basically just said, "You don't tell John, you don't tell John." And that was it. And to me, that would be how a Gryffindor would kind of -- I don't know, this is kind of a vaguer impression still, and I need to sort out my own feelings about this, but to me this is not a Slytherin thing to do. Because to me, a Slytherin to me would find another angle, not just trusting Sherlock to not tell John but find another angle to it, possibly manipulating him further to do it or, you know, find another bit of leverage to do that. But instead, she kind of just entrusted him and let him know that, "this is very important to me, don't tell him." Now, he *didn't* tell John, but he found another way to do it. So I don't think she was really -- I don't know if she was expecting that, she might have been expecting that and, you know, thought of how to deal with it further, but this is my sorting of her at the moment. I think we're going to find out more about her in season four, and that might change my opinion.

Shannon: Good, good. Drinkingcocoa, do you want to go next?

Drinkingcocoa: Sure. God, I'm so nervous, and I think my understanding of Mary is gonna change month by month. I feel like it's so recent, I still don't know her that well.

Shannon: Yes.

Drinkingcocoa: She read very beautifully as Slytherin to me from the first moment that Sherlock did his deduction of her. The word "liar" -- I love that, because he doesn't seem to be alarmed by it. He doesn't see it as a negative trait or a reason to be afraid of her or to worry-- maybe he should have worried (laughter) -- but he didn't, it's just a skill. And I also got the sense that when he's looking at her, she knows exactly what she's doing. And I got a strong occlumency sense from her. That she's doing the thing that Snape does when Voldemort does legilimency on him. He gives the absolute emotional truth and he's completely secure that he can hide a certain important part of his heart, even from the world's greatest legilemens. I saw that she's unlike Moriarty and unlike Irene Adler, whom I sort as Ravenclaws, because she has a stronger sense of self preservation. Irene Adler, in my opinion, betrayed her Ravenclaw self because she couldn't help herself playing games when she should have been paying attention to her survival, and that's why Sherlock could undo her. And Moriarty, being a Ravenclaw, once he was bored, the game was over for him and he shot himself. With Mary, her sense of self preservation is so strong she doesn't waver, she never gives herself away. And in that sense, she reminds me of Mycroft, whom I also sort as Slytherin. People who may be brilliant but they have such a sense of self preservation around their hearts that you can't get them to crack that way. I also see that her romantic side is very Slytherin and she's also easily hurt. She doesn't, you know, she tries not to show it, but you know, when she asks, "Who else hates me?" and Sherlock hands over this giant ass list, I think she's hurt. She's very emotional and sentimental in a way that I associate with Slytherins, who no matter how kind of scary they are or how strategic, what they really want is to be loved for themselves.

Emma: Yeah, my initial thought was Slytherin, and then I tried really hard to look at the other houses and to make a case for each of them. I did -- it's the mathematician thing to do (laughing), I went back to the definitions and I looked for evidence that -- could she meet any of those definitions? And I just couldn't, there were things in every definition that I had to reject. There were counterexamples. I'm going to select -- I'm going to sound like a total dork now -- but when I go back to the definition of Slytherin, and this is coming from the HP wiki, which is like, you know, the source, as Drinkingcocoa was saying, this highly developed sense of self preservation. That, I see that so much, and everything that Drinkingcocoa just said, that was in my notes about her sense of self preservation. And something else that stands out there too is that Slytherins tend not to be impulsive like a Gryffindor. They don't make rash decisions. They

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weigh the options and and they stop and they think the outcomes and then they act. And I see her doing that a lot. In particular, you see her doing that when she's standing there and she decides to shoot Sherlock. She makes a decision. And Sherlock takes us, and here's the kicker for me, Sherlock takes us through that. Sherlock thinks she's a Slytherin. Okay? (laughing)

Shannon: Mmm.

Emma: He takes us through the thought process and says you considered this, you considered that. If the second most observant person in Britain thinks you're a Slytherin, you're probably a Slytherin. That's kind of -- maybe. But other than that, there are more things there. There's this idea that Slytherins are clever and they're resourceful and they have a lot of determination and they act with a certain disregard for the rules. And I think that that captures her so much there. She *is* determined, and she's found -- whatever she's left behind her, she's found something that she wants in her life with John and she's going to have a family. She's not just protecting her relationship with John, she's protecting her family. She has a baby on the way. I mean, she will do anything to preserve this family. She's probably a person who never thought she would have something like that, and now, she's pregnant and this dream is about to be -- this dream of having this normal life, which is kind of what John wanted to, is going to be ripped out from under her unless she takes care of Magnussen. And shooting Sherlock? Yeah, she'll do it if she has to. So I think I just see her as knowing exactly what she wants and knowing how to get it, the weighing all the options to get there, that just seems like a very Slytherin thing to me.

Drinkingcocoa: I think Emma picked up on some of the same things I was. When I see her reaction, she does take a moment to weigh. The moment that I picked out at the wedding when John kisses her and runs out to deal with Major Sholto, you see her hesitate and think about it. And then, okay, she's going to be the bride that runs out at her wedding to deal with a possible suicide or murder. And I see the same thing when Sherlock gets John and Mary back to Baker Street to talk about the thing that Mary has just inadvertently revealed to John. And John is kicking chairs, they are shouting, they're arguing, and she's just standing there. She's just watching. She's so prepared to react. I mean, I'm sure her adrenaline is killing her. But she's *still*. So I get some Slytherin energy from her.

Shannon: Well, I'm going to have to jump in here, because I have to admit, I'm torn. So, many folks on our twitter actually identified her as Slytherin, for some of the points that you guys have raised. They talked about her cunning but also her willingness to use whatever means to achieve her end, and that's kind of directly from a sorting song from the sorting hat. So she shoots Sherlock, she threatens Sherlock to keep her secret from John, going back to the empty house, she is going after Magnussen. Others have sorted her into Gryffindor though. You know, like, this is something that stood out to me, I know there was this article on, was it Hypable or what

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newspaper it was, I think they sorted her into Gryffindor. We'll link to it, but one of the things I was thinking is that Mary utters key phrases that really stand out for me, and I'm thinking well, okay, she's an assassin. That's not -- that's not about self preservation if you're running around with guns and threatening people. There's a lot of risk involved. But I was also thinking about her comments in 221B, that Magnussen is the reason why there are people like her. And that really stood out for me, because she's, in a sense, justifying her life choices. And it suggests a mindset of really strong conviction, and that reminds me very much of Gryffindors and, I mean, think about Hermione, people who have a strong sense of, "This is right and I'm going to do it because that's right" and that be why she became an assassin or a gun for hire. But at the same time, we also see a disregard for the rules, if she again left the beaten path and went freelance. Going back to Slytherin -- see, I'm wavering here -- Slytherins are ambitious, and we definitely see her ambition, and we see her single minded determination to protect her relationship with John, her husband, or her family and the means to which to go to do that. I mean, it's not just Slytherins who are very protective about family, we've seen Gryffindors do that as well, but whereas Narcissa Malfoy lied to the Dark Lord to save Draco, Molly Weasley did not prevent Fred from dying even though she would've wanted to. You know, she lost her son, so we could see different responses. But I wonder what drove her before John? What was her motivation? What was her -- really, was her guiding motivation in life was to be married to a guy she'd only met recently? So, I'm kind of stuck there. And then there was a quote that goes back to this idea of love and Mary's love that we heard Sherlock, who admits to not knowing much about human nature, utter to us in A Study in Pink about bitterness being a paralytic and love is a much more vicious motivator, so I wonder to what degree Mary's response for love is changing her and different from how she normally is? And we've seen other characters die or kill or be willing to do really horrid things for love, who aren't necessarily Slytherins. Xenophilius Lovegood stands out. He was a Ravenclaw who was willing to sell out Harry, Ron, and Hermione to the Death Eaters to get his daughter back, to protect his family. That wasn't very noble of him; he was desperate. So I'm not sure when I see Mary's behavior whether that's indicative of how she always is or if it's a sign of really great desperation. So it brings me back to motivation. I'm not really sure. I've said this before in the consolation roundtable: I have a blindspot with Mary and I'm not really sure if she's driven to kill because of a great sense of justice, kind of like how John killed for Sherlock. I'm not sure she killed because she's got some other motivation and she went freelance because -- I don't know. I don't know what's going on there. So I'm not sure what drove her to her prior career and I'm not sure why she went rogue and I'm not sure why she's with John Watson. And there are a lot of theories out there. So I don't know, and I think we'll find out in series four, possibly five, and for this reason, I'm going to conclude in the words of Albus Dumbledore, which he uttered to Severus Snape in Goblet of Fire, "you know, I think sometimes we sort too soon." And for this reason, I'm not going to sort her.

Drinkingcocoa: Okay.

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(laughter)

Emma: I mean, I think that there's a lot of interesting thing at this point. I mean, what you just said is kind of a metaphor for what we're doing right now, are we sorting her too soon? We don't know enough. But I mean, I don't know how we're going to get more information. People have written a lot of incredible meta and I've read a lot of it and I've thought a lot about it as I'm moving into writing a fanfic, and it's hard to know what to do with her because there are still so many possibilities. We just don't have enough information about this character. And it's fascinating to me that the actress didn't have all the information (laughing) for two thirds of the series, right? I mean, that's kind of fascinating to me. So I don't think, so I think that in a way, we're sorting her obviously, we're picking a place to put her, but we're grasping at straws a little bit, and a lot of what we're using as evidence to sort her into one house or another, it comes down to moments that stood out to us. It's all very very subjective at this point.

Shannon: Mm hmm.

Emma: It's hard to know right now what's important and what isn't and what's coming, and we just don't know what's coming.

Shannon: Right, I just feel like there's so much -- a key point of her character was deception, so she deceived John, she deceived Sherlock for a while, but the writers also deceived us, and so I'm suspicious. In particular, I think that there are directions that her character could go in. I mean, she's not gone; she's still around. Unlike Magnussen or, well, Moriarty maybe isn't dead, but unlike Magnussen she's still here. So, I really feel that it depends on what happens. It really does for me to sort her. All right, time to move on to the final question, and this is just a wrap up with a general Harry Potter question, and that is which Harry Potter character does Mary remind you of most and why?

Fox: Well, I already said that she is, you know, most like Hermione to me and it's just everything so far in how I'm reading her. This is the Hermione who obliviated her parents, with the plan that if she doesn't make it back alive her parents would never know, would never remember her and never know her and lead perfectly normal lives in Australia. So this is the Mary that I am thinking of, that she is this woman who went to do -- and she was probably very good and probably proud of what she did, just as I believe Shannon pointed out, she was an intelligence agent and there is a reason for why there are people like her, and she took on this role probably with moral convictions, probably for other reasons, but I'm strongly leaning towards the moral conviction part, of doing the right thing. And maybe she was, and for some reason she had to leave that profession, probably because of where her heart was leading her. So

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I think she is most like Hermione. And there were points where I thought she was very much like Narcissa Malfoy as well, but given my current reading of her, she is definitely falling into Hermione for me.

Shannon: She reminds me most of Severus Snape. Not because of how she behaves necessarily but because of how the fandom is responding to *her*. And this is making me think about how much the Harry Potter fandom was in a big debate about whether Snape was good or evil after he up and kills Dumbledore at the end of book six. Sorry if I spoiled people.

(laughter)

But the debates were really fast and furious, and those who had a certain reading of Snape -- and granted, he'd been around a lot longer than Mary's been with us in the Sherlock Holmes series -- but there were people who were very convinced that he was working for Dumbledore and that his behavior was justified so even though he killed Dumbledore and ran off with the Death eaters there was a reason for it. There were other people who were less certain and they thought, look at what he did, he cast an unforgivable, so he was himself unforgivable. And the discourse around Mary really gets to that idea of unforgivable. And I'm seeing a lot of terms coming up too that reflect a lot of how people still feel about Snape and his love toward Lily and how it was an unhealthy love, it was a selfish love, and how he -- it allowed him to do certain things and okay he was fighting on the right side but he was still a rotten human being. So that kind of fervor in debate and meta and analysis in trying to figure out what's going on here makes me think of Snape.

Emma: Yeah, this is all really fascinating and I love this idea that this is like the way this is how the Harry Potter fandom was looking at Snape. That's really amazing. I think that the character that I associate with her most, the first one that comes to mind is Narcissa Malfoy, because she's a character that we had almost zero backstory on until the very end. And she became this character that became this very rich character, but what I loved about Narcissa that it became very clear in the last couple of the Harry Potter books that Narcissa's loyalty was to her son. Not really even to her husband, she would've thrown Lucius under a fuckin' bus to save Draco --

(laughter)

like, she didn't care -- she was beyond done with her husband and his ass-licking to Voldemort, right? She was just like, "I'm done with this shit" right? I really think if she could have left Lucius she would have. I think I wrote a fanfic where that happened, where she left and started her own boutique and it was wildly successful and Lucius was homeless and shit -- I think I wrote that.

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(laughter)

Anyway, yeah, when I think about Narcissa's behavior in the last book and she defied the Dark Lord to his face to save her son's life, and she, at that point, it didn't matter what side -- she was like, Draco's alive and I'm going with that side. And I love that. I just think that that reminds me so much of Mary because she will do anything to protect this little family that she has with John. Anything, including throwing John's best friend under the bus if she has to. And I think that just screams -- and then the blonde hair also helps.

Drinkingcocoa: Yeah, my answer is not Narcissa Malfoy but I did love the parallel when Bellatrix is sure that Narcissa wouldn't hex her -- this is at the beginning of the Half Blood Prince --

(oohs)

and Narcissa says there's nothing I wouldn't do anymore and she's about to hex Bellatrix, and Bellatrix is *shocked*. And that reminded me of Sherlock's thing about, "You wouldn't shoot me." And she looks at him pityingly before she shoots him with, "Oh yeah, sorry honey, I do love you." (laughing)

Emma: Yes.

Drinkingcocoa: You know, my answer surprised me. She reminds me most of Lupin.

Shannon: Wow.

Drinkingcocoa: That's a theme that a lot of characters in Harry Potter have. That you can get to a point where you would do anything, whether this means hurting other people or this means letting yourself be bossed around, you know, offering your servitude. And Lupin is like that, Lupin is hired in book three by Dumbledore to help figure out a whole bunch of stuff and to help protect somebody, and he throws it all away because has his own agenda around Sirius Black. It's his love -- his motivation in life is to find love, to find friends. And he knows he shouldn't, and he knows it's dangerous, and he knows *he* endangers other people, and he does it anyway. And he is never quite okay with it either way. So he knows he shouldn't marry Tonks. He knows this will make her an outcast. He knows he didn't mean to get her pregnant. He's really sorry that he's going to bring somebody into the world that has all this discrimination, but he does it all *anyway*. And then he realizes, "Oh my god, what have I done?" That's what I see in Mary. She knows that she's a dangerous person, but she really is compatible with John and she really wants

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this life. She has a fantasy of this life. And she knows that CAM is on her trail. She knows he's even tracked her down at her wedding. But she kind of goes ahead with it anyway; this is what she really wants. And even Lupin accepting Sirius' friendship even though Sirius almost turned him into a murderer with Snape, there's all these parallels about all this kind of maybe should be unforgivable by other normal people standards but these are not normal people.

Emma: Ooh, this is really interesting.

Shannon: This is fascinating, yeah.

Emma: If you carry that parallel forward, there's a lot of interesting predictions you could make about Mary's future.

Fox: Mm.

Shannon: Oh dear.

Drinkingcocoa: I have no idea about her future. (laughing) I don't know how we can get out of that one.

(laughter)

Shannon: Well, I like that -- I'm happy because we didn't all agree, and there was some really good points raised here for different things. So I think that's it. Thank you, guys.

Drinkingcocoa: Thank you!

Emma: Thanks, bye!

Fox: Bye!

Emma: Bye!

Music fades in/out.