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(ACOUSTIC GUITAR THEME MUSIC FADES UP)

**JONATHAN ROGERS, HOST:** Welcome to The Habit Podcast: Conversations with Writers about Writing. I’m Jonathan Rogers, your host.

(THEME MUSIC CONTINUES)

**JR:** I’ve known for a long time that C.S. Lewis was friends with Dorothy L. Sayers, the author of a wide range of books and essays including the Lord Peter Wimsey mysteries, *The Mind of the Maker*, and *The Lost Tools of Learning*, but I was never clear on the nature of their friendship.

(THEME MUSIC FADES OUT)

**JR:** Gina Dalfonzo tells the story of that friendship in her new book *Dorothy and Jack*. This is Gina’s first book, but she has another book hot on its heels. *The Gospel in Dickens* releases next month.

Gina Dalfonzo, thank you so much for being on The Habit Podcast with me today.

**GINA DALFONZO:** Thank you so much for having me.

**JR:** So you have written this book *Dorothy and Jack* about Dorothy Sayers and C.S. Lewis and their friendship. Their 15 year friendship, right?

**GD:** Yes.

**JR:** I imagine my listeners are very familiar with C.S. Lewis but maybe less familiar with Dorothy Sayers, so could you just give a quick overview of who Dorothy Sayers was and why we love her so much?

**GD:** Sure. Well, she was a very multifaceted author. I mean, you can’t pigeonhole her. She wrote a wonderful series of mysteries, novels, and short stories that are right up there with Agatha Christie’s… I would even say better than Agatha Christie's! (laughs) Um, so she was one of the Golden Age mystery novelists. She also wrote some great theological essays, she was a playwright, she translated Dante, *The Divine Comedy*. So she did a little of everything, wrote a little of everything. She was just a fascinating person and author.

**JR:** So she was born… Lewis was born in 1898, and she was born about five years before that, right?

**GD:** Right.

**JR:** So she lived… obviously they were contemporaries, so they were not exactly the same age, but close to the same age. And I think she died in the 50s, is that right?

**GD:** Yes, I believe it was 1957.

**JR:** Okay. So how did she and Lewis connect?

**GD:** Well, she became a famous writer before he did, but when Lewis was just starting to get established as a name, she read something that he wrote, and she wrote him a fan letter, which unfortunately we don’t have anymore, it appears to have been lost. But we know from things that they said later that she wrote him this fan letter. And… it was great, he loved it. She was a wonderful letter-writer, as he would later tell her. And so he wrote back, and they got this… they established this connection. She started to quote him in her writing, and they just really were liking and appreciating what each other had to offer, and through this correspondence, eventually they got to meet in person and they got to be friends. But because they lived fairly far apart, they kept writing letters, which is a great boon to us, because now we have the letters to read.

**JR:** Yeah, yeah. I remember somebody — I think Flannery O’Connor, who was also a great letter-writer of course, she used the phrase that somebody’s… all their good stuff went up in talk.

**GD:** (laughs)

**JR:** Because, they were with their friends, all the good stuff went up in talk instead of getting written in letters.

**GD:** Mmhm.

**JR:** I don’t remember if that was Flannery O’Connor, but that sounds like something she’d say.

**GD:** Probably, yes.

**JR:** Yeah. Don’t I remember rom your book that Lewis said something like her letter was the first time he’d gotten a fan letter from a famous person?

**GD:** Right, from a notable name. So it was a big deal for him, and um… yeah, I wish we had the letter! (laughs) But we unfortunately don’t. But it meant a lot to him, which is why he wrote back, and it just went from there.

**JR:** Of course, he wrote back even to people that it didn’t mean a lot to him. He was a very diligent correspondent.

**GD:** Yes.

**JR:** Was she as diligent in her correspondence too? Did she answer all her fan letters the way Lewis did?

**GD:** I don’t know fi she answered them all. She answered a lot of them. I have her collected letters, which are — unfortunately I think some of the volumes are out of print now, but they are worth scrounging around on the Internet to find, because they’re great. And there’s four volumes of them, so she wrote to a lot of people, and a lot of those were responses to fan mail or to people who wrote to argue with her. (laughs) That sort of thing.

**JR:** Now, you can correct me if I’m wrong, because everything I know about this relationship I know through your book, so you would know better than I would here. For C.S. Lewis, what he is most excited about that she wrote were the plays. Can you remind me what those plays were called? The Man Who Would Be King?

**GD:** *The Man Born to be King*, yes. She actually wrote these plays for radio. Uh, it was in the 40s, the War was still going on at the time, if I remember correctly. And she was commissioned to write this series of plays on the life of Christ for BBC radio. And they were a big hit, she did a wonderful job. You can read them in book form still. They’re available out there. But yeah, she had these plays on the radio, and Lewis listened to them, loved them, and would keep reading them over and over for the rest of his life. They were some favorite Lenten reading of his. He would read them during Holy Week.

**JR:** And you make the case that those plays by Sayers possibly influenced the way Lewis portrayed Aslan. Am I getting that right?

**GD:** Yeah, I will be upfront and concede that that’s speculation on my part, but I think you can make a strong case for it, because her depiction of Jesus is… for that day and age, it’s a very well fleshed out, well-rounded depiction, because there had been a lot of restrictions prior to that on how you would portray Jesus on stage or on the radio. You had to be extremely careful about it. But the restrictions were lifted a little bit, and she was able to really make a fully human person in addition, of course, to being the Son of God. And she did such a great job. Her Jesus is very strong, very bracing — I think that’s the word she used herself — but very compassionate, all the things we know Jesus is, but she really brings this out in her plays. And I think you could argue that Lewis was very influenced by that depiction, because his Aslan, the lion who depicts Jesus, who IS Jesus (laughs) — I never know quite how to put that. Some Lewis aficionado somewhere will correct me but you know what I’m saying. He has all of those qualities, the sternness and the love and the compassion. And I just think that you could hardly read this depiction fo Jesus over and over again every year and fail to be influenced by it.

**JR:** Yeah, yeah. Um, you say at one point that C.S. Lewis saw in Dorothy Sayers a gift that she didn’t see in herself, and I think this was with respect to apologetics maybe.

**GD:** Yeah, um… Sayers (laughs) It’s really fascinating to study her apologetics, her work in that area. You could say she was dragged into it kicking and screaming almost. (laughs) She was a very strong believer, and as we would put it today, staying in your lane and only doing the thing you feel called to do. And she didn’t feel particularly called to do that. She sort of got pulled into it, and Lewis was right there urging it along, because he saw her as a wonderfully lucid and logical explainer of the Christian faith, and he thought, you know, she ought to be out there doing this. And she would sort of fight with him over it, but she would… and yet she kept doing it.

I have a quote here from the book — from one of her letters that I absolutely love, and she’s talking to Lewis here about an atheist that she’s corresponding with, and she’s not enjoying it at all.

**JR:** (laughs)

**GD:** And she says to Lewis, “You like souls. I don’t. God is simply taking advantage of the fact that I can’t stand intellectual chaos and it isn’t fair.” So I mean, she was so reluctant about this, and yet at the end of the day, she had to acknowledge, you know… God is trying to get at me to get me to do something here, and Lewis was right there sort of saying yes, you’re good at this, you should do this. even when she snapped at him, even when she didn’t enjoy it, even when she was saying, “Get me out of this!” I think because Lewis was her friend that knew she should do it and thought she should do it.

**JR:** Yeah, that’s so important. Having people in your life who kind of say, as you said, you can do this! It is hard to get enough distance rom your own self to see where your gifts lie sometimes.

**GD:** Yeah.

**JR:** By the way, when she said, “You like souls. I don’t.” Surely she was exaggerating. Or is that true that she didn’t like people?

**GD:** (laughs) That’s a good question, and there are all kinds of ways you can take that. I tend to think she was referring to the whole process of evangelism and winning people over and the rest of it, and there was a lot of that process that she just didn’t feel suited for, she had a hard time with it. And yet, at the same time, when a soul came to Christ, she was glad about it.

Later in her life, she became friend with Barbara Reynolds, who would eventually become her biographer. And Sayers’ writing and her work helped Reynolds come to Christ, and when that happened, Sayers was pretty pleased about it, and she ended up standing as Reynold’s godmother when she was baptized. So, yeah! (laughs) She could be pretty happy about that, but yeah, she could also be — you know, when se was feeling dragged into work she didn’t want to do, she could be flippant and misanthropic about it. So you know, we all have multiple sides and multiple feelings about things.

**JR:** Yeah, and that whole debate between Sayers and Lewis on this topic… you put in terms of… you used the phrase they had different ideas with regard to their “artistic conscience.” What do you mean when you say that? About these two artistic consciences?

**GD:** Yeah, Sayers had very clear ideas bout what that should mean and what that should look like, and she believed you should do the thing that you felt called to do and stick to it, because she believed that call came from God and that (clears throat) that God gave you the gift and ability to do it. And she had a lot of problems with what happens when Christians think oh, I can talk about that or I could talk about this… I could talk about whatever I want to from the Christian point of view because I’m a Christian and that naturally equips me to do it, and she had real problems with that. And there’s something to be said on her side, because she talked about bad Christian art, for example. and there’s a wonderful quote from one of her letters, which I don’t have in front of me — but she talks about how for every person who feels comforted by a piece of bad Christian art or literature or whatever, there are more who are just sickened by it and think, if Christianity can produce something that bad ti must have a lie in its soul. And so she saw a real danger there. I mean, she wasn’t just being self-indulgent. She saw harm being done when Christians produced shoddy work and saying it was for the sake of the gospel.

Lewis, um… now you have to take into account that Lewis was good at a LOT of things. (laughs)

**JR:** That’s right!

**GD:** Just like Sayers did herself. And Sayers would complain sometimes that Lewis was all over the place. He was talking about this subject and that subject, and she was not a big fan of that way of working. So Lewis would argue with her that… if you’re a Christian and you’re a writer, and somebody asks you to write on this particular subject, well, you should probably just put aside your artistic conscience and do it. And she would argue with him that you can’t just do that with everything somebody asks you to do, because you’re not always equipped in that area, so you might come up with something really bad or really wrong and damaging.

So they went back and forth over this, and in a lot of ways, he sort of acknowledged that she had a good point, and later on in some of his works, you’d see him echoing what she said. He would say things like, you know… I quote one of his essays somewhere where he says about Narnia, I didn’t just want to write a useful, Christian children's book. I wanted to write a good book for children, and this is the shape it took. So he’s sort of echoing her, and he’s sort of seeing her point. but it’s a very complex topic, and there’s a lot to go back and forth over, and they did that.

**JR:** Yeah. Yeah. I love the way that you portray in this book the way these two friends disagreed… they went at it a good bit. And how much they appreciated that there was somebody in their life that was thoughtful enough to really disagree with. And of course Lewis had that. The Inklings would really go hammer and tongs at each other, and I don’t know if Sayers had anybody else in her life to do that with or not. but I love the way that this was iron sharpening iron, these two people who didn’t’ see everything the say way and yet seemed to love each tore all the more for that disagreement.

**GD:** Yeah, Sayers had as many kinds of friends as she had gifts. Like, with some of her mysteries she worked very closely with her friend Muriel St. Clare Byrne. Their friendship went all the way back to their college days.

**JR:** That sounds like somebody who said make up the most British sounding name you possibly can.

**GD:** Doesn’t it though! Muriel St. Clare Byrne.

**JR:** (laughs) I love it.

**GD:** So she was a close friend that worked with Sayers on her mysteries. So she had friends that she could do that sort of things with, and she had friends that she worked on other projects with, but as I mentioned somewhere in the book, she didn’t have a lot of friends who were directly involved with apologetics. And strangely enough, Lewis didn’t either. We tend to think of oh, Lewis had the Inklings and they were all in all to each other, but Tolkien didn’t really do apologetics, umm, most of the other men in that group didn’t do apologetics. They were just sort of sharing creative work for the main part. So here he was, a creative writer who also did apologetics, and Sayers was sort of in the same boat, so each of them found themselves uniquely positioned among their respective friend groups, so that’s what made it so nice that they had each other, and they could reach out to each other and run things past each other, and maybe bellyache about the difficulties and just really help each other to grow in that respect.

**JR:** Yeah. By the way, do you know how often they saw each other in person? I mean, I know a lot of what you did was with their letters, but how often did they actually sit in the same room together?

**GD:** I don’t think it was a lot. We don’t have record… our records may not show every meeting they had. We have a lot of letters saying, oh, I’d love to see you again, we haven’t met in a long time. And then you have a few letters saying let’s meet at this time and place, and then oh, it was nice seeing you again… all that sort of thing. So we know they met sometimes. But it wasn’t as often as they would have liked. Lewis was very busy in Oxford and then later at Cambridge. Sayers was very busy. Her husband was… he had some illnesses he was dealing with, he became more and more of an invalid over the years, so he needed a lot of care, and she was also very busy with her own work and projects. So they didn’t get together very often, but when they did, it sounds like they had a great time.

**JR:** Yeah. Where did Sayers live?

**GD:** Uh… she was more out in the countryside?

**JR:** Not London though.

**GD:** No, she wouldn’t have lived in London. She had friends in London, and she would be there sometimes, and she would… she had to travel a bit for work sometimes. But um, I believe… okay, I think she lived in Essex. So, yeah. It’s more countryside.

**JR:** Gotcha. yeah, yeah. You know, there’s that passage in *The Four Loves* where Lewis is talking about friendship, and he remarks… I think he’s talking about, I’ve got these various friends, and each friend brings something out in another friend that other friends can’t bring out. What did Lewis and Sayers bring out in each other that maybe other friends didn’t bring out?

**GD:** That’s a great question, and I think it maybe sort of changed over time as they got to know each other better. Um… (pause) They… I mean, theirs was a very intellectual friendship, so they started on a purely intellectual / theological footing, but as they got to know each other, their personalities sort of came out more. Lewis said her personality was like a high wind, and he loved that. He loved somebody who was very boisterous and enthusiastic and in love with life and could bowl you over, and Sayers was very much that way. And he had a very similar personality, so you know, they could really let that go with each other. But over time… and it’s interesting, you see their friendship grow more personal, and both of them tended to — and they would write about friendship as an affair fo the mind.

And Lewis would go so far as to write you don’t have to know all the personal things about your friend. (laughs) It doesn’t matter. You’re just like two minds together. And they both liked that sort of friendship, and yet they both started to bring out the personal and emotional aspects of each other. When Lewis married Joy Davidman and when she was ill and when he was going through all this big emotional upheaval, he wrote to Sayers about it. And people often quote some of the beautiful things he wrote about Joy, and most of those things he wrote to Sayers. He wrote, “My heart is breaking and I’ve never been so happy before.” He wrote all these beautiful things about marriage, and he told them to this friend of his whom he had known for so many years now, and she was very sympathetic and encouraging.

Not a lot of Lewis’ friends were very hung ho about his marriage, but she was very positive and encouraging, and she met Joy and they got along really well. And so he had this friendship supporting him in this, which I think he really needed. And she was able to tell him some personal things about herself too, some of the things she had gone through that were hard. So this friendship developed so much over time, and it’s just really interesting to follow.

**JR:** He had so few women friends in the first place, it seemed like. At least, that’s the impression I get, unless there’s friends I don’t know about.

**GD:** Well, he did develop some female friendships over time, and he learned a lot from them too. His friend Ruth Pitter, and Sister Penelope was the Anglican nun he got to be friends with. And the great thing about these friendships was that Lewis… I mean, he could be a very boisterous and argumentative personality, but he could also be very humble and willing to listen. And his female friends, including Sayers, would sometimes tell him things about what it was like to be a woman that he didn’t know. And he would say to Sayers, you know, what you told me about this, I never thought of it that way before but yes, you’ve got a good point. So he would listen, he would absorb, he would learn, and she did a lot for him in that respect.

**JR:** Yeah, that’s neat. Cause he went from being a motherless boy to going to all boy boarding schools to the military… to being a bachelor.

**GD:** Yeah, and Sayers would say to her other friends, you know, he has lived in such a male-oriented world he doesn’t get women at all! And yet she was very patient with him, and she looked at his good side, and she encouraged him to learn, and he was willing to learn. And that’s a great thing in a friendship. But when people have things where they have blind spots and your friend is just willing to walk alongside you and help you see things you hadn’t seen before.

**JR:** Yeah. I wanna talk briefly about the distinction you made between influence and encouragement.

**GD:** Mmhm.

**JR:** I think you were quoting Diana Glyer, who was a guest earlier on this podcast, when she was — I guess the way Tolkien talked about their literary friendship was it wasn’t a matter of influence, it was a matter of encouragement, and then either Glyer and/or you pointed out that he didn’t necessarily say those were mutually exclusive, that encouragement is a kind of influence.

**GD:** Right. I think it is, because all of these people — sayers and Lewis and also Tolkien and the other Inklings — they all had such strong and distinctive personalities and voices. And so… you know, Lewis famously said you couldn’t influence Tolkien, you might as well try to influence a bandersnatch. And I don’t think any of them really saw themselves rubbing off on each other or anything like that. But encouragement, yes, is a kind of influence, because we’ve already seen how Lewis’ encouragement maybe helped Sayers develop her voice in apologetics, and she helped him become aware of some things that he hadn’t been aware of before. And so… the presence fo somebody who sees your good points and who pushes you to develop yourself more and more… that really can be a strong kind of influence.

**JR:** Yeah. Alright, this is a shot in the dark. There may not be a good answer to this question, but I’m gonna ask the question anyway. Is there a Sayers work that you think wouldn’t have existed if it weren’t for lewis’ influence?

**GD:** Mmm! That’s…

**JR:** I’m sorry, not influence. Encouragement is the word I meant to use.

**GD:** (muttering) A Sayers work that wouldn’t have…

**JR:** And then we’ll flip flop it.

**GD:** Ahh! That’s a really good question. Um… (pause) I’m thinking through her essays and so forth… uh… I don’t know about that. Because as I’ve already said, she was a very driven writer who sort of knew exactly what she wanted to write and wrote it, so I don’t know that I can say that there was something that wouldn’t have existed without him. What we can say is there were works that she was working that he helped her to keep going.

**JR:** Mmhm.

GD: With her Dante translation, she was really counting on support from Charles Williams who died, and so she was without that support, but Lewis really supported and encouraged and praised her with that… and also sometimes argued with her translation, but also kept praising and encouraging. And her translation of The Song of Roland, a French poem… he gave her a lot of encouragement and praise with that, and she appreciated that a lot.

So, um… yeah. There were… (pause) Perhaps there were works that… well, I don’t even know that I can say there were works she wouldn’t have finished without him, because she had so much drive. But I do know that there are works that he hoped her with that she was very very appreciative of.

**JR:** Yeah. So, the other way around… were there works that Lewis might not have finished or wouldn’t have been as good if it hadn’t been for her encouragement.

**GD:** Well, I think the seed for the book that became *Miracles* came from her. She said, you really oughta write a book on miracles! (laughs) In so many words, she just said it! And so he wrote back and told her he was working on one. It’s not quite clear whether he started working on it because she said that or whether he had already started it, but in any event, he took her encouragement and ran with it. So there is that one.

**JR:** Yeah, good. Love it. You know, friendship is such an incredibly powerful creative force. These things we’ve been talking about… sometimes people talk about literary friendships, but even friendships that aren’t specifically literary… I think they’re so generative of creativity.

**GD:** Yeah.

**JR:** I love the way you point that out and draw that out in *Dorothy and Jack*. Um… (pause) You told me something right before we started that I didn’t know, and that’s that you have another book coming out! So this book is coming out in August. We’re recording this in July, but by the time this airs, the book *Dorothy and Jack* will be out. Tell me about the book you have coming out in September.

**GD:** Well, that book is called *The Gospel in Dickens*, and it’s coming out September 22nd from Plough Publishing. And they have this series called The Gospel in Great Writers, so it includes… Sayers actually has an entry there, *The Gospel and Dorothy L. Sayers*.

**JR:** Yeah.

**GD:** They also have Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, a number of other great writers. And so I got in touch with them and said — because I’ve had a longstanding interest in Charles Dickens, and I got in touch with them and said, “Would you like The Gospel in Dickens?” And they were very enthusiastic. So yes, that comes out in September! But yeah, it’s um… it’s largely made up of some excerpts from his work that just sort of show how he engaged with faith and the big questions, and it’s got some commentary and some notes by me. And the foreword is by Karen Swallow Prior, who I think you’re familiar with, who is an amazing writer and scholar and was so wonderful to take the time to do that for me. She’s also a big Dickens fan, so she wrote this great foreword. So ti just came about — these are my three favorite writers, Sayers, Lewis, and Dickens, and it just came about that I got to publish books about all three of them in the same year!

**JR:** In a month, yeah.

**GD:** So that was interesting!

**JR:** So here’s a question for ya: what’s so great about Dickens?

**GD:** Ohhhhh where to start! (laughs)

**JR:** (laughs)

**GD:** One thing… a thing I really love about him is just that he loves words, he plays with words, he has fun with words, and we’re not always equipped for that in this day and age. A lot of readers say, you know, they struggle because he’s so worthy, they have difficulty, they say, “Why does he have to be this way?” But I think if you can just really try him and get into him, you can often just find yourself getting swept away, because I mean… he obviously has these really great, memorable characters, he has these fantastic, convoluted plots. But at bottom, he just has so much fun with words. And I’ve always loved words. It’s always been a thing for me, ever since I was little. So I guess I was just in the right mental place when I discovered him.

**JR:** There’s so much abundance in Dickens.

**GD:** That’s a great word for it!

**JR:** And I feel like you’ve sort of got to surrender to it and say, you know what? I’m just… I wouldn’t want to assign a Dickens book to a class to read. Because when you’re in a hurry, it’s just frustrating. But when you have time to just kind of surrender to it and say, you know what? Wherever you go, I’ll go.

**GD:** That’s right. You just have to sort of jump on and go along for the ride. (laughs)

**JR:** Yeah. And I’m sure you’ve heard this little formulation before, but somebody — I don’t know who it was — said in the world we live in, there’s a bunch of animals and very few giraffes, and in Dickens, everybody's a giraffe.

**GD:** (laughs) Yeah, well put.

**JR:** Everybody’s that extreme.

**GD:** That’s very well put, because… it’s just the way he saw the world. His um… (pause) He saw these characters, and he exaggerated them, and he did all kinds of crazy things with them, and he made them so interesting and memorable. To tie this back to the other book, both Sayers and Lewis were very fond of Dickens. Um, they enjoyed reading him. Sayers had some critiques of some of his characterizations, but she also just enjoyed him and quotes from him a lot in her own writing, and I believe Lewis did the same.

**JR:** When somebody’s wanting to get started in Dickens, where do you direct them? What’s a good place for somebody who either hasn’t read Dickens or hasn’t learned to love Dickens? What’s a good place for them to start?

**GD:** Well… probably either *Great Expectations* or *A Christmas Carol*? I mean, it helps that they’re among the shorter works, because some of his novels are very long. And they are just… I think they’re probably the easiest to get into, in a lot of ways. Sometimes you hear kids in high school say, “I was forced to read *Great Expectations* and I hated it!” But I was the opposite. I was made to read *Great Expectations* in ninth grade and I loved it, so I’ve always found that hard to relate to!

**JR:** (laughs)

**GD:** But I think if you um… like, if you’re at the point where you feel mentally ready for a little bit of a challenge and you’re like, okay, I think I’m ready to try this, and if you’re willing to jump in and surrender yourself to the style, you can end up with a lifelong love of Dickens. Now, if you wanna start with one of the great big books, probably *David Copperfield* is the one to get into, because it’s just… it’s such a great coming of age story. It has things in it that are timeless, that lots of people can relate to. You feel for him, you root for him, and I think that’s one of the easier ones to get sucked into.

**JR:** Yeah, I’ve recently listened to that one again. It’s one of the first Dickens I read a long time ago, and I listened to it on audiobook and I just cried and cried. It’s such a beautiful book. I love Dickens, so I’m glad you’re doing that.

**GD:** Well, thanks.

**JR:** And I love *Pickwick Papers*. That’s not one of the more, you know, popular ones, but I was recently re-reading *Pickwick Papers*, and I kept seeing things that had trickled into my own storytelling in the books I’ve written. It’s the sort of “leaf-mould of the mind” as Tolkien said, these things that were going in and I didn’t even know they were going in there, and then they came out again.

**GD:** Mmm. Yeah.

**JR:** When I wrote my swampy fiction stories, I hadn’t read… it had been 15 years since I read *Pickwick Papers*, but it was all there somehow. Alright! So the last question I always end with is who are the writers who make you want to write, Gina?

**GD:** Well, I just named my three favorites! (laughs)

**JR:** Okay.

**GD:** So where to go from there? Of course they make me want to write. And somebody else — and this is funny, because this is actually a name that came up when we were talking before we started is Dorothy Parker.

**JR:** Mmhm.

**GD:** Who I was telling you I discovered around the same time as Dorothy L. Sayers in college, and she is sooo witty and soooo… just so funny, so open, so vulnerable. I mean, we think of her so often as this woman with the barbed quill in her hand, writing these poison pen types of essays. And she could be very sarcastic and very cutting, but she could also, if she loved something, she could get really gushy about it, which is fun.

**JR:** That’s funny, because what usually gets anthologized is the barby stuff. The sweet stuff doesn’t make it into the anthologies.

**GD:** Yeah, but there are lots of sides to her, and she’s just very vulnerable and she can be very open. When I first discovered her in college, I tried writing an essay for a class in imitation of her short piece “The Waltz,” which you may remember. I don’t remember my essay very well. It was probably terrible, but it was just such fun to try to do that. And I keep coming back to her just as someone who, um… (pause) Who could…s he could really put herself out there. That’s something not everybody remembers about her, but she can just say, you know… this… she wrote a lot of reviews. Stage reviews and book reviews and so forth, and she could say, this just really affected me personally because of this, or this just you know hit my sweet spot, or this made me laugh because of that. She could put herself in her writing, and yet not in an obnoxious way? That’s a difficult trick to learn. You don’t want… I mean, you do not want to make ti all about you, and yet if you can put just enough of yourself in it, you can establish this real bond with your readers that keeps them coming back. So that’s a good trick to learn, and I’ve been trying to learn it for a long time.

**JR:** I’m glad you pointed that out, cause I really do think of her as being sarcastic. Hilarious, but sarcastic and a little mean all the time.

**GD:** Yeah, she could be.

**JR:** She hated *Winnie-the-Pooh* for crying out loud! Who hates *Winnie-the-Pooh*?

**GD:** (laughs)

**JR:** Well great. Gina, thank you so much! I loved your book, and there’s so many interesting things we didn’t get into because I was trying to stay on the writerly side of things.

(THEME MUSIC FADES UP)

**JR:** But so many interesting details about the personal lives of Dorothy L. Sayers and C.S. Lewis. So, um… thank you for writing it, and I hope a lot of people read it!

**GD:** Thank you so much.

**DREW MILLER:** The Rabbit Room is partnered with Lipscomb University to make this podcast possible. Lipscomb has graciously given us access to their recording studio in the Center for Entertainment and Arts Building. We’re so grateful for their sponsorship, their encouragement, and the good work they do in Nashville.

Special shout-out as well to Jess Ray for letting us use her song “Too Good” as part of this podcast. Visit jessraymusic.com to hear more of her beautiful songs.

**JR:** The Habit Membership is a library of resources for writers by me, Jonathan Rogers. More importantly, The Habit is a hub of community where like-minded writers gather to discuss their work and give each other a little more courage. Find out more at TheHabit.co.

**DM:** This podcast was produced by The Rabbit Room, where art nourishes community and community nourishes art. All our podcasts are made possible by the generous support of our members. To learn more about us, visit rabbitroom.com, and to become a member, rabbitroom.com/donate.

(THEME MUSIC OUT)

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