

Molly: Hey, everyone. Before we begin today, we have a huge announcement. I can't believe I'm saying this, but we are going to be doing our first ever live show on November 18th at 04:00 PM Eastern time at Caveat NYC. There's going to be live coverage of Austen-related content, games, audience participation, exclusive merch, and more. And we are so excited to finally get to meet some of you in person. Early bird tickets are available for \$18 until November 11th, and then they're going to go up to \$23 presale and \$25 at the door. For those of you not in New York, which I know is a lot of you, don't worry, we've got you covered. We are going to be livestreaming the event for \$10. And the good news is, if you livestream it, you can watch the video for a week after the event.

All of those tickets are available at the link in our show notes, and we are so excited to see you all there. Also, patrons get a 15% discount. So, now is a great time to join our Patreon. **[00:01:00]** Speaking of which, as always, we want to thank our newest patrons, Megan, Soshanna, Alicia, and Lauren. And a huge shoutout to our patrons, Rin and Clau, who upgraded their pledges.

And now, enjoy this week's episode, our final book episode for *Emma*, covering the last two chapters of *Emma*, Chapters 54 and 55.

[Pod and Prejudice theme]

Becca: This is Becca.

Molly: This is Molly.

Becca: We are you're here to talk about Jane Austen.

Molly: We are here specifically to talk about--

Molly and Becca: *Emma*.

Becca: Listeners, if you're new here, I, Becca, have read many Jane Austen novels before.

Molly: And I, Molly, have now read three Jane Austen novels.

Becca: Through this podcast. If you want to hear Molly read through *Pride and Prejudice* or *Sense and Sensibility* for the first time, you can listen to Seasons 1 and 2 of this podcast, respectively. But that is not what we're doing here today.

Molly: No, today, we are talking about the final two chapters of *Emma*. We have done it, listeners. We have finished our third **[00:02:00]** book.

Becca: How you feeling, Molly?

Molly: I loved this book.

Becca: It's fucking good.

Molly: I was so excited to finish it, and now I can't wait to just watch all the movies, because this story, it's really been drawn out. We've obviously spent a lot of time on every little detail. But the story is so good. I can't wait to just dive in and see everything in one sitting.

Becca: Yeah, it's a story that I think in total, it's one of her longest books, for sure. It's the longest one we've read so far. There are chunks of it where she is just writing Emma, being sassy to people for a long time. But the story is so layered, and you get to know Emma so well through those quieter moments, so by the time you get to the plot, it's so earned.

Molly: It's just a great book.

Becca: All that to say, should we just dive right into our final chapters of *Emma*?

Molly: Yeah, I think we should.

Becca: Listeners, are you ready?

Molly: Guys, get your tissues [00:03:00] out. Not that this is a sad ending. I just mean like-- [crosstalk]

Becca: It's like the happiest ending ever, but yeah.

Molly: Yeah. Let's tell them where we left off before we get into it.

Becca: Yes. So, obviously, Emma in love with Knightley. They are in love. They're engaged. He's going to move to Hartfield to be with her and Mr. Woodhouse. Emma is now besties with Jane Fairfax, who gets to snub Mrs. Elton.

Molly: Ah, so good.

Becca: The worst. Augusta.

Molly: Augusta.

Becca: And we have, at this point in time, resolved pretty much all the story, except maybe one tiny loose end, which is Emma's anxiety about Harriet Smith being in love with Mr. Knightley and her having to break her friend's heart.

Molly: Yes. So, I think we should just dive in, because one final prediction that I made has turned out to be true.

Becca: You fucking called it. I feel like I need to buy you a drink for that one because you called it in the last episode [00:04:00] at the very end and I said nothing.

Molly: Yeah, like, we owe each other a drink for that. It really just came to me. I was like, "Oh, my God, wait." So, I'm really proud of that. But we'll get to what it is in a minute.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: So, Emma is nervous about Harriet coming back from London, when one day Knightley comes in and tells her that he has some news. He says, "He doesn't know if it's good or bad news." And she's like, "It must be good news because you're smiling or you're hiding a smile. You're trying really hard not to smile." He composes his face. He's loving this.

Becca: Fucking love Knightley. He's such a little shipper.

Molly: Yeah, he is fucking with her. He's like, "Well, you might not smile when you hear it." And she says, "Well, if it pleases you, it must please me too." And he says, "Well, there's one topic we don't agree on, and that is Miss Harriet Smith." And Emma starts spiraling because of everything. She's like, "Oh, my God, does he know that she's in love with him? What's going on?" But before she can spiral too far, he tells her that Harriet is [00:05:00] getting married to Robert Martin.

Becca: Graham, we're going to need the sound effect. There was a proposal.

[proposal sound effect]

Molly: Oh, Robbie Rob.

Becca: He's back and better than ever.

Becca: Yeah. So, listeners, I didn't think it would be Robert. I had honestly given up hope on him, which was tragic. I should never have given up hope. I stayed hoping for most of this book.

Molly: And then your heart shattered into a million pieces when she was like, "Ah, I know better than to look after Robert Martin."

Molly: Yeah, it's like a weird pivot here for her, but I don't think she meant that before.

Becca: We're going to talk about it.

Molly: Yeah. So, Emma is confused too. She's like, "Hang on. What?" But she can't say anything. She's just speechless. So, he continues and says that Robert was just at his house and he told him everything himself. And then Emma still can't talk, so he's like, "It's clear you're not happy about this, but he knows in time she will be as happy about it as he is." And she says that he is misunderstanding her silence. She's not unhappy. She [00:06:00] just can't believe it. He must just mean that Mr. Martin intends to propose, not that Harriet has already accepted him, because it just seems so impossible that she could have done so much of a reversal of how she was feeling just like a couple weeks ago. Days ago? Weeks ago?

Becca: Weeks ago, at this point. She's been in London for a while. Yeah, Emma's like, "No, I am not mad or sad. I am just confused," because last I heard, Molly's heart shattered into a million pieces when Harriet rejected Robert Martin.

Molly: Exactly. Knightley says, "No, they're definitely engaged." And Emma has to turn away to hide that she's like giggling. Like, she is so relieved and so just delighted about this and she's like, "Okay, tell me everything." And he says that three days ago, Mr. Martin was going to town on business. So, Knightley gave him some papers to bring to John. I have to say that I love [00:07:00] that this implies that Knightley is doing some matchmaking of his own.

Becca: This whole chapter implies that Knightley has been semi-matchmaking this entire fucking book.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: Because he's like, "Yeah, I wanted to get to know Harriet for your sake, but also I wanted to see what Robert Martin was seeing in her." And he's still scouting on Robbie's behalf. What a bro, honestly.

Molly: Best friends. I love how much he loves Robert.

Becca: I know. They love each other so much. It's very cute. And then he's like, "Just take this there. Well, I know Harriet's in London, away from Emma's influence."

Molly: Yes, it's exactly it. She is away from Emma's influence, so she is able to make her own decision because growth.

Becca: Growth.

Molly: So, he is sent Robert to London, where Robert was invited to join the Knightley family and Harriet [00:08:00] to Astley's, which I think is either a restaurant or a theater or something because they have a box that they were in. Maybe it's a horse race. I don't know why I think that.

Becca: Or a club, some sort.

Molly: A club. Yes, a country club. And they all had a great time. So, he gets invited to dine with them again the next day. When he goes over, he gets a chance to speak to Harriet. Knightley says that he does not speak in vain. So, I'm guessing he told her he still loves her. It says, "She made him, by her acceptance, as happy even as he is deserving." He just really thinks that Robbie deserves the best.

Becca: You can just see it too sweet little Robert Martin being like, "Hey, I know you refused me once, but I still love you so much. Do you maybe could change your mind?"

Molly: Yeah, it's very-- "If your feelings are still what they were last April, I will not bother to continue--" [crosstalk]

Becca: Yes.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: [00:09:00] Oh.

Becca: Except Robbie is more teddy bear and less Darcy, but-- [crosstalk]

Molly: Yeah, love him. Knightley says, he's sure that Harriet will give her all the nitty-gritty details when she returns, because women have a knack for collecting all the details, whereas men just tell the broad strokes of the story. But he does try to give more details. He's like, "Yes. When they left Astley's, he was walking with Harriet and Henry, and then they got caught in a crowd, and Harriet was claustrophobic." That's like the extent of the gossip that he's able to give.

Becca: Yeah. This is a true thing that happens. They satirize that on *Friends* briefly, where Ross and Rachel kiss for the first time, and Rachel describes it with wine to the girls, which in hindsight's a little weird because that is Monica's brother. But putting that aside, then Ross is describing it over pizza and Joey just goes, "Tongue? Cool."

Molly: Yeah. That's basically, yeah.

Becca: So, Knightley went, "Tongue? Cool."

Molly: Yeah. Emma doesn't say anything at first. [00:10:00] Again, she's afraid she's going to seem too happy and he's going to think that she's gone mad, because she is giddy from this news. She's just so relieved. He's like, "Oh, I'm afraid I'm giving you pain. It's true that Robert's situation is an evil, but he's enough to satisfy Harriet, and he's sure that when Emma gets to know him, "His good sense and principles would delight you."" He says that Harriet's in good hands, and if he could, he would raise Mr. Martin's rank in society, which is really saying something, because he doesn't say stuff like that often.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Emma composes herself, and she smiles, and she says that she thinks Harriet has done extremely well for herself. For all they know, her connections in society could be worse than his, which is growth on Emma's part, because before she was all about-- [crosstalk]

Becca: She's a gentleman's, obviously.

Molly: Yeah. She could be like a princess. You never know. She says that she was silent because she had a reason to believe that Harriet was more determined against Robert Martin than ever before. [00:11:00] And he says with Harriet's heart and temper, she's unlikely to be determined against any young man who loves her, which is true. She's very easily swayed.

Becca: Yes, very true.

Molly: Emma is like, "Are you absolutely positive?" They were talking about Harriet and not his favorite cow.

Becca: She's such a dick still.

Molly: Yeah. I have to read this bit because they just don't take each other's shit and it's so clear here. He goes, "Do you dare say this? Do you dare to suppose me so great a blockhead as to not know what a man is talking of? What do you deserve?" And she says, "Oh, I always deserve the best treatment because I never put up with any other. And therefore, you must give me a plain, direct answer. Are you quite sure you understand the terms on which Mr. Martin and Harriet now are?" So, they just don't put up with shit from each other, which I just adore.

Becca: Oh, yeah, it's so good. The banter is still there, even though now they're in love.

Molly: Yes. Then he says he is sure and he tells her that Mr. Martin is going to Mrs. Goddard for information of her relations, at which point [00:12:00] I have to ask, one, are we going to find out who her parents are? And two, has Mrs. Goddard known this whole time?

Becca: It seems so. I think you know the answer to that is yes, because now we finished the book.

Molly: Well, yeah, but in my notes, I was like, "Wait, why has she not told her before?"

Becca: Some of it's probably for protection.

Molly: Because of who they are?

Becca: Yeah, but also just like it's not like you pay a certain amount for discretion.

Molly: Yeah. I guess, we'll get there because-- Oh, you mean protection on the man's part.

Becca: There's a lot of different protection.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: All right.

Becca: Reputationally, but also significantly, the dude probably wants the discretion of Mrs. Goddard.

Molly: Right. That's true. So, yeah, we'll get there when we find out who they are, but I was shocked by that. Emma says that she believes him, and she sincerely wishes Harriet and Robert happy. He [00:13:00] is like, "This is a change of heart for you." And she's like, "I was a fool before." And he says, he has changed too, because now he sees Harriet's good qualities, and this is where he says he's gotten to know her for Emma's sake and also for Robert's sake.

Becca: Yeah, that's what I'm saying. He was literally matchmaking the entire book and doing a better job of it than Emma.

Becca: Yeah. Oh, yeah, he was. I wanted to note though that the two of them were very much on the same page with each other because he's like, "I know you noticed there have been times when I've been talking to Harriet, and you thought that I was trying to talk up Robbie." There was that moment where she thought that's what was happening, and he was like, "No, don't worry." But Harriet interpreted that as him being in love with her.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: He then says a lot of nice things about Harriet and says that she probably has Emma to thank for them, which in my notes I wrote, that's a stretch. And then she's to herself, that's a stretch.

Becca: That's a stretch.

Molly: But she lets it slide. She just takes the compliment. And then her dad enters, and he [00:14:00] says that they're getting the horses ready to go to Randalls. And she takes this as an excuse to go be alone because she just wants to dance and sing, and she's not able to compose herself. Now that she doesn't have to worry about Harriet anymore, "What had she to wish for? Nothing, but to grow more worthy of him, whose intentions and judgment had been ever so superior to her own." And she thinks that it'll be a great pleasure to know Robert Martin, which is also growth.

Becca: Yup. She's good to have the farmer in her life now.

Molly: Yeah. Now she feels like she has nothing to hide from Knightley. But I still have to ask, is she ever going to tell him? Like, she's never going to tell him that Harriet loved him?

Becca: I wouldn't if I'm her.

Molly: I guess. As long as Harriet's truly over it.

Molly: Yeah. And also, she's married to his bestie.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: It's more a flight of fancy now in hindsight than true love.

Molly: Yeah, that's true. Now it's fine. But at the time, I still felt like [00:15:00] icky about it.

Becca: I don't know. If one of my friends was in love with a guy I was seeing, I don't think I would tell him. I think that'd be shitty. Granted, that's never happened to me because I don't compete with my friends for men generally, but I feel there's a girl code problem there.

Molly: Yeah. I think it's a complex situation because she was always in love with Knightley, and this wasn't really a competition. Knightley was always in love with her. She is not stealing him from Harriet. Harriet had a little crush on him.

Becca: Yeah. For example, if I found out hypothetically while I was dating Mike that somebody else in my life had a crush on Mike, which would not happen, I don't think for numerous reasons. Not because I don't think he's dreamy, obviously I date him. I think he's dreamy. But like I said, I don't compete with my friends for men. I feel like I wouldn't [00:16:00] tell him because that's not fair to the other person. It's embarrassing.

Molly: Yeah, that's true. That is true.

Becca: It'd be really embarrassing for Harriet, where it's like, he's way out of her league.

Molly: Yeah, that makes sense. I'm thinking about it now, and I agree.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: So, she and her father then head to Randalls, and Emma is just on cloud nine, smiling and nodding to whatever he says. They arrive, and they've only been there a minute before Jank and Frane. [laughs]

Becca: Jank and Frane.

Molly: Before Frank and Jane arrive. And there's a little awkwardness between Emma and Frank. And at first, Emma is worried that maybe their friendship is in a new stage, and it won't persist in the same way. But then once everyone gets occupied by looking at the baby, Frank comes over and he's like, "Thank you so much forgiving me. I hope that you're still willing to do that," because she had written through Mrs. Weston that she was like, "Fine," whatever. And she's like, "I am thrilled to see you again. [00:17:00] Congratulations on your

engagement." They are good. He's relieved that they're on good terms and he thanks her. And then he's like, "Doesn't Jane look well?" And he's just so in love with her.

Molly: Yeah. Again, Frank Churchill, gray area character, for sure.

Becca: Mm-hmm.

Becca: You can't help but be a little endeared to him being like, "Doesn't she look beautiful right now? I'm so obsessed with her."

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: "I love her so much."

Molly: Yeah, it is sweet. It is sweet. It's all just a big misunderstanding.

Becca: Yeah. It's some bad behavior on his part, but you could still be a little charmed by him because it's a very low stakes situation at this point.

Molly: Frank mentions that the Campbells are coming back. When he does this, he mentions the name, Dixon. Emma blushes and she's like, "I can't hear that name without extreme shame." And I'm like, "He should also feel shame." And he says, "Yeah, I should be the one who's ashamed, probably." Not that he is, [00:18:00] but he should be. He asks if she really had no idea about him and Jane, and he was like, "There was one time I almost told her right before I left the first time, and I wish I had told you then." And then that, of course, makes us think back to the time that she was like, "He's about to profess his love to me," but he was really about to tell her that he was in love with Jane.

Becca: Yeah, genuinely in that moment. And if you read it again, you get one more moment of Emma being a completely unreliable narrator, queen of a lack of self-awareness.

Molly: She truly is. She gets a crown for that.

Becca: Mm-hmm.

Molly: He says that he wants to persuade his uncle to come to Randalls and meet her. He tells Emma that it's been very hard being so far away from Jane and he's like, "Don't you pity me?" And she says, she does. And then, "With a sudden accession of gay thought--"

Molly: I's wish.

Molly: I know. "He looks demure and asks if Knightley is well."

Becca: I love that description because he's like, "So, how's Mr. Knightley?"

Molly: And Emma's like, "Oh, my God."

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: He congratulates her, and then is quickly distracted by Jane again. He's like, "Have you ever seen someone with such an interesting complexion? She's delicate and smooth without being fair." And Emma says there was a time when he thought her too pale. And he says, "Well, I was an impudent dog back then," which is true. Emma laughs and says that he must have had a great time tricking everyone. And he's like, "No, it made me miserable." And Emma says, "Well, you had to have been a little bit entertained because I would have been in your situation and we're pretty similar. "If not in our dispositions, there is a likeness in our destiny; the destiny which bids fair to connect us with two characters so much superior to our own", which is very sweet. And he says, "Emma has no superior, but what angel Jane is." Of course, she's his superior.

He says he's going to give her all of Mrs. Churchill's jewels and he's going to make a tiara for her. And Emma's like, "Yes, that's very beautiful." [00:20:00] And they just have a happy little ending. Meanwhile, the others have been talking about baby Anne, who apparently wasn't feeling well. So, Mrs. Weston was like, "Maybe I should call Mrs. Perry. Maybe I should call Mr. Perry." But then the baby felt better, so she didn't call Mr. Perry, and Mr. Woodhouse was disappointed that she didn't call Mr. Perry. And Frank hears the name Perry and tries to catch Jane's eye and ask if Perry has set up his carriage yet. And Emma realizes what he's saying, and so does Jane. I had to look back. And this moment that I totally-- I think I caught on to what was happening at the time.

Becca: You did. You absolutely did.

Molly: He had asked if Mr. Perry was setting up his carriage, and Mrs. Weston is like, "We didn't tell you that." And he says, "I must have dreamt it then." But then Miss Bates says that, Mrs. Perry came and told her that they were setting up a carriage and Jane was there, but Miss Bates must have let it slip, because Jane never lets [00:21:00] slip anything.

Becca: If you recall though, that chapter came from perspective, and Emma didn't catch it, but Knightley did.

Molly: Yup.

Becca: Mm-hmm.

Molly: Mm-hmm. Knightley's so smart.

Becca: So good. So hot.

Molly: So hot. What?

Becca: What?

Molly: What?

Becca: What? Oh, boy.

Molly: Now, he says it was an extraordinary dream that he had. Wink-wink, nudge-nudge. And then he mutters to Emma like, "Jane's remembering how she told me about that carriage thing. Ha-ha-ha." And then Jane comes over and she's like, "Can you not, please? Why are we bringing back memories of this time?" I love that little glimpse into their relationship. And then Emma leaves feeling like, "I'm really happy, I saw Frank, but I'm really glad I ended up with Knightley."

Becca: This is such a relatable feeling. Do you ever have that sense like, when you see an ex and you're like, "I'm happy you're happy, but I'm so much happier without you."

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: So, that brings us to our final [00:22:00] chapter of this book.

Becca: It's a Brief one.

Molly: It's a brief one, but it is the nicest little bow to tie everything up with. So, a few days later, Harriet returns from London, and she and Emma get a chance to talk. Emma is now perfectly convinced that Harriet is totally in love with Mr. Martin. And Harriet admits that in being in love with Knightley before, she had been presumptuous and self-deceived. But she's over it and she has nothing but exultation in the present and future, especially because

Emma approves of the match. She had been really nervous that Emma was going to be mad at her.

Harriet tells her all the details, and every little detail proves that Harriet had always been in love with him, and he had always been in love with her, and that's all it proves to Emma. She still doesn't really get the appeal, but that's fine.

Becca: Listen, nothing is better than approving of your friend's significant other from afar being like, "I don't find that person attractive [00:23:00] at all. But if they're a nice person, they treat you well and they make you happy, and you think they're great," that is perfect.

Molly: Yeah. And Harriet gets to find out who her parents are like we were talking about. She is the daughter of a tradesman who is rich enough to have always been sending her money and decent enough to have always wished for concealment. Does that mean that she was born to a prostitute or--?

Becca: Maybe, but doubtful.

Molly: So, is it just because she was born out of wedlock?

Becca: Yeah. So, like the likeliest case scenario, and this is not confirmed in the book is that, he had a rough and tumble with somebody else and he knocked her up. And that woman, to protect her reputation, had to go live at a nunnery or some shit for a little while and pretend she was all well and good. He was kind enough to take the illegitimate daughter and make sure she was always cared for, but far away [00:24:00] as to protect everyone's reputation.

Molly: I see. So, it wasn't like they were in a relationship or anything. It was just a one-night stand or something.

Becca: Or, maybe not. It's premarital sex, no matter what.

Molly: And that's always bad.

Becca: Yeah, that's always bad, no matter how long you've been with the person, no matter how long you've known them. But if you have a foray and it results in a pregnancy, you're fucked unless you're married.

Molly: I see.

Becca: So, you hide the person away and then birth happens. You put the child up somewhere else, no one talks to the child, so that the child does not ruin anybody's reputation. Like Eliza in *Sense and Sensibility*.

Molly: Right.

Becca: Except Willoughby was not going to provide money to that child. So, this guy, Harriet's dad, is a nicer person. So, I don't know if it is a prostitute or someone lowly like. It is not clear what her mother's status is. Obviously, her mother's not very high status, because if she were, then he would have been [00:25:00] forced to wed her.

Molly: Right. He could have just married her, but he wasn't planning on doing that.

Becca: But whoever it is, he cared enough to make sure the child was taken care so.

Becca: Okay. Gotcha. Emma is relieved that he's rich or rich enough because "The stain of illegitimacy, unbleached by nobility or wealth, would have been a stain indeed." And at least now Harriet still has some positive lineage a little bit, because he has money.

Becca: Yeah. She basically says, "It's nice that he has money. She'll be taken care of. But also, it would have been a disaster for a lot of the guys I'd set her up with if they'd married her."

Molly: Yeah. So, good thing, none of that worked out.

Becca: Yup.

Molly: And then they had to ask the father's permission for Harriet to marry Mr. Martin, even though he is literally not in her life at all, except for giving her some money every now and then.

Becca: [00:26:00] Graham, I will need The Economics of Dating in Jane Austen sound effect.

[The Economics of Dating in Jane Austen sound effect]

Molly: Argh.

Becca: There are dowries. I don't know if Harriet has one or not, but marriage is an economic proposition. And in this time period, lest we forget, women are property, even illegitimate children who are women.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: So, he is basically negotiating with the father for Harriet.

Molly: Yeah. I guess he does get a dowry because it says that Mr. Martin was treated liberally.

Becca: Yeah. That basically means that the Martins are about to get a nice influx of cash to support their lifestyle.

Molly: Well, good for them. I hate it, but fine.

Becca: Yeah. Again, The Economics of Dating in Jane Austen, Graham, the sound effect-

[The Economics of Dating in Jane Austen sound effect]

Becca: -pulling aside the love there. Mr. Martin is a "respectable farmer who's marrying an illegitimate daughter of a tradesman." The farmer, while [00:27:00] not a high rank in society, is a "respectable rank." He's not high class or whatever, but he's not a scandal.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: And then on the other side of that, you have Harriet, who is a scandal, but comes with money. So, she can uplift the Martins' lifestyle a little bit and they can live comfortably in addition to him being a farmer.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: So, that is a good match in some ways. Like, an economically good match.

Molly: Yes. Additionally, Emma gets to know him a little bit better and realizes that he's actually a really great guy and perfect for Harriet. I love this whole paragraph, actually. It's just a really sweet showing how far Emma has come and how much she respects Robert. So, I'm just going to read it. So, she acknowledges him to be a perfect match.

"She had no doubt of Harriet's happiness with any good-tempered man, but with him, and in the home he offered, there would be the hope of more, of security, stability, and improvement. [00:28:00] She would be placed in the midst of those who loved her, and who had better sense than herself, retired enough for safety, and occupied enough for

cheerfulness. She would be never led into temptation, nor left for it to find her out. She would be respectable and happy; and Emma admitted her to be the luckiest creature in the world, to have created so steady and persevering an affection in such a man, or, if not quite the luckiest, to yield only to herself."

Becca: It's a lovely paragraph, and it just describes the modest bliss that Harriet will have if she does not want for more in life.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Harriet starts coming to Hartfield less and less, because she's more occupied with the Martins. And Emma thinks this is the necessary and natural winding down of their friendship into something a little bit less. They just both have other lives now. Before the end of September, Harriet and Robert are married by Mr. Elton at the church.

Becca: He is doing all the fucking marriages, which is so funny. It goes to show, never get into a messy romantic entanglement with the only [00:29:00] priest in town or the only vicar in town or whatever.

Molly: I think it's hilarious just trying to picture him performing these ceremonies. Like, grumpy about. It just so funny.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: And also, awkward for Harriet, but she's fine.

Becca: She's too busy being happy with Robert Martin, who's a much better pick than Mr. Fucking Elton.

Molly: Yeah. Emma can't be bothered about Mr. Elton being there because now she only sees him as the clergyman who will probably marry her off next, which will also, again, be hilarious. Jane left Highbury already and is with the Campbells in London. For some reason, all this time, I thought the Campbells were coming to Highbury, but that wouldn't have made any sense, so I understand now the whole timeline of events there. The Churchills are also in London. Jane and Frank are getting married in November, which leaves October open for Emma and Knightley to get married. They want to also get married in October because John and Isabella are at Hartfield [00:30:00] that month, and that'll give them the kind of freedom to go on their honeymoon for two weeks.

Becca: Yes, because somebody else can watch Mr. Woodhouse.

Molly: Yes. But Mr. Woodhouse is very anti-wedding. He's like, "Uh, I know it's going to happen, but I'm not happy about it." Emma almost calls it off because she doesn't want to upset him. But then at the last minute, Mrs. Weston's poultry house is robbed and someone steals all her turkeys.

Becca: Suddenly, Mr. Woodhouse is so excited to have Mr. Knightley move in.

Molly: Yeah. He's like, "I need at least one of the Knightleys here at all times to protect me from the turkey robberies of 17, 18, or whatever. 18, 17.

Becca: The grand turkey robberies of Highbury.

Molly: The great turkey robbery of 1812 or whenever.

Becca: The real War of 1812.

Molly: He's like, "Okay, go. I'll have John here while you're gone. When you get back, you'll protect me." So, they're all **[00:31:00]** set to get married in October. Mrs. Elton hears about the wedding from Mr. Elton, because obviously she wasn't invited, and she thinks that it was shabby. There wasn't enough satin and lace, even though throughout the entire book, she's like, "I don't like dressing up, but look at my pearls. Ha-ha-ha."

Becca: "I just feel like this wedding is not very elegance. It's like, they never even made a Pinterest page. Do you think they even had a planner?"

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Molly and Becca: Mm.

Molly: But "in spite of these deficiencies, the wishes, the hopes, the confidence, the predictions of the small band of true friends who witnessed the ceremony, were fully answered in the perfect happiness of the union."

Becca: The end.

Molly: Wow.

Becca: They all literally lived--

Molly and Becca: Happily ever after.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: As they always do.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Which brings us to Becca's final *Emma* study questions. These are kind of brief because these are brief chapters **[00:32:00]** and we're at the end of the book. But what do you think of the match between Robbie and Harriet? We talked about this a little bit.

Molly: Of course, I've been rooting for it the entire book, until the last couple of episodes, I was like, every week, "Is Robert going to come back? Will Harriet get back together with Robert? Please bring Robert back." And then I gave up when Harriet became a little snooty about it. But I think that that was really just Emma's influence. And as soon as she was able to get away from Emma's influence and think for herself, she was like, "Wait a minute, this man would actually make me happy. He loves me, he is a good person, and he's probably much closer to my status. So, I'm proud of her and I'm really happy for them. And I am so glad that Robert was persistent."

Becca: Yeah. I agree with everything you just said. But going to my second question of whether Harriet did settle, there is another interesting interpretation one could put on the story, and I want to bring it up just **[00:33:00]** as a thing to marinate on. I don't think this is what happened, but I'm giving you an alternate plot. Harriet sees how Emma reacts to her and Knightley getting together. And without knowing that Emma's in love with Knightley, notices instead the problem with the rank and becomes keenly aware of the fact that Knightley is above her, and feels bad about herself, and is in London consistently reminded of her class and rank.

Then Robert Martin shows up and shows her unconditional love. And she recalls that she didn't want for more in life before Emma, and that maybe, just maybe, having a sturdy young man who will take care of her will be enough. So, Emma's reaction to her crushing on Knightley acts as a wakeup call for Harriet to settle down back into her class where she belongs.

Molly: I think that's totally accurate and fair. I think that might be exactly it, but I don't think that's [00:34:00] settling. I think that's growth, because she's understanding the social constructs that she is in at the time. I'm not saying that I think it should be that way, but I'm saying that's how it is. And I think that she absolutely was like, "Well, you thought it was fine for me to raise my thoughts to Frank Churchill." And Emma's like, "But not to Mr. Knightley." And she's like, "What's the difference?" And then she starts to think about it, and I think that's totally possible. So, it's settling down as in like, take a breath, be who you are, be happy. I don't think that also raising your thoughts to-- Robert Martin is a better person than Frank Churchill.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Like, raising your thoughts to a different status is like, it's not the same as looking at someone who's better than you.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: She's settling in with someone who is a great [00:35:00] person and who is more close to her social status.

Becca: I like that. Next question related to this. The conclusion of the story, how it deals with Emma and Harriet's friendship, what do you think of that?

Molly: I am glad that they ended up friends. I think that it is natural for a friendship to grow a little bit less all the time, to be less present when both people are in happy relationships, because they're going to have their own lives now. I think that Harriet is also just becoming a little bit less of a puppy dog who's going to follow Emma around, like, she is building her own life. So, I'm into this drifting that's happening while still obviously loving each other, just being less obsessed with each other. Emma doesn't have the time now or the desire to match [00:36:00] Harriet with anyone or to make Harriet into an image of herself.

She doesn't need to do that because Harriet has found her own way, and Harriet is in love, and doesn't need to get that affirmation from Emma anymore. So, I think that they're ending exactly where they should and where they need to.

Becca: I'm going to add one more layer to this, because I think everything you said is correct. There is The Economics of Friendship in Jane Austen to talk about.

Molly: Yeah, I didn't want to, but we can.

Becca: We have to because it's part of the book.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Definitely part of the book. You are correct. In a lot of ways, Emma and Harriet love each other but are bad for each other. Harriet brings out all of Emma's vanities, and Emma pushes Harriet into situations that are not proper for her.

Molly: Totally.

Becca: Or, good for her and carelessly [00:37:00] so. There is also the truth that when Harriet's parentage comes out and also when Emma realizes how much forward she has pushed Harriet in society, there is a realization that maybe this friendship needs to be less close because it's separated by class.

Molly: Yeah. So, I wish that weren't true.

Becca: But Jane Austen wrote it clearly.

Molly: Yeah. I know. I know. I was avoiding it, because I was like, "I just wish that."

Becca: You didn't think it would make it into the study question?

Molly: No, I knew it would. I knew it would. I wish that people were able to become friends with people outside of their class status and not have it be a problem, but I understand why it is.

Becca: The question I have for you is, does Jane Austen think it's a problem? [00:38:00]

Molly: No. I think Jane Austen is showing us a world she wishes was possible and why it wasn't possible.

Becca: Some people interpret this ending as Jane Austen approving of the class statuses separating Harriet and Emma. I don't particularly read it that way, but I don't think I read it as a total class critique either. I think she's showcasing a very real and maybe not great part of society for these people.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Not approving of it, but simply showing that it exists and showing that Emma has fucked with it to everyone's detriment through this book.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Yeah. I think this whole book has been, through Emma's perspective, trying to mold Harriet into the friend that she is supposed to be, but that's not who Harriet is. Harriet is [00:39:00] in a different world than Emma.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Emma pulled her up into a place where she didn't belong in high society as her own vanity project, which is something Knightley critiqued her for. It ended up putting Harriet in a position to wildly overestimate what she could accomplish in society. And then ultimately, she ended up exactly where she would have six months ago had she never met Emma, once Emma learned her lessons and let things write themselves.

Molly: Has it only been six months?

Becca: Maybe it's been a year. Yeah, because Mrs. Weston had her baby.

Molly: Oh, right. Yeah.

Becca: But all that being said, it's been a good amount of time, but she just basically came to the same place she would have been otherwise.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: I love this book, and this part in the ending is something that I think about a lot because it raises a lot of questions about what Jane Austen thought of Harriet's place in [00:40:00] society and whether or not she did deserve Emma's friendship. I don't think Jane Austen necessarily is saying she rightfully put her back where she belonged, because that's what the class system demands.

It's more, I think that Jane Austen is saying, this woman was clearly not in Emma's class, but Emma was so blinded by her own desire for her to be in her class that she basically made her a member of the higher classes until she was struck by realization of how you cannot break free of these confines of society and put her back where she was before, whether or not that was damaging to Harriet, whether or not that was good for anyone other than Emma's character development that she has to live with now is an open question. I think Austen writes this open ended in an uncomfortable way to make us grapple with what that [00:41:00] means. Does that make sense?

Molly: Yeah, totally.

Becca: Yeah. So, we can read this book and love our girl, Emma, and also understand that this is a shitty society that really does place people by where they were born at station. I don't know, it serves as like this little reminder that for all the love and fun and romance that we get in this book, and this is one of the most fun novels ever written. This society is still not one we want to emulate,

Molly: Totally.

Becca: -because of these class dynamics.

Molly: Yeah, absolutely.

Becca: Yeah. Okay. Is Frank the villain?

Molly: I don't think so. I don't know if this book has a villain aside from the Eltons.

Becca: The Eltons are villains, but they're not important enough to be like villain-villains. They're ancillary to the plot.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: I think the villain is somewhat Emma.

Molly: [00:42:00] Yeah, Emma is the villain and the hero of this story.

Becca: She's the antihero in her own rights.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: But I think also, the villain is a lack of self-awareness.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: It's everyone's own character flaws.

Molly: Yeah. I don't think Frank is the villain because I think he really did have the best intentions at heart. He just fucked up. He just doesn't have any tact.

Becca: I think Frank serves to remind us how great Knightley is, and I think he serves as a male foil to Emma.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: I think this last interaction really showcases how she found someone who is pretty much exactly like her, similar in so many ways. They both fuck around a lot and are self-centered enough to hurt a lot of people around them.

Molly: Yeah, they fucked around and found out.

Becca: Exactly. They bring out the worst in each other. They both [00:43:00] end up with people who bring out the best in each other.

Molly: That is so true. I think that having that male foil and having someone who is so much like her that she can watch from the outside and realize, "Wait a minute, I don't like this that much." It helps with her character development a lot.

Becca: Yes. So, Frank is useful for the growth and also useful to show how great Knightley is by comparison.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Hot. What do you think Jane Austen is telling us with the character of Emma by featuring her as the narrator, lead character, hero, villain of this story?

Molly: I do think that it is a critique of the society that she's living in and a critique of that class, because Emma has a lot of flaws and a lot of things that make her not that likable. And [00:44:00] also, we root for her a little bit because she's our narrator, and she's a person, and we love her, and we hate her. I think that Jane Austen is showing us that like, the society that Jane Austen is living in has these constraints on it that good people can still succumb to and do bad things. Yeah.

Becca: Yeah, I think that's all right. And I also think there's another side of it that might be a little bit nicer to Emma, because I think you're right. I think she's great. Emma's a great character to showcase just how fickle the higher classes are about who is in and who is out and how it's all made up. Harriet's a good example of that. Jane Fairfax, Frank, Elton, all these people that Emma pulls in and out of her circle when she feels like it, that shows how much power people have [00:45:00] over this thing that's fake, this construct that governs their whole society and how they decide it on their personal whims.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: But on the other hand, I think Emma is one of the true, brilliant pieces of literature and one of the first true female antiheroes.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: She's an exploration of a woman's mind, and what would be on a woman's mind in this time period without having to go through all the pain and suffering that a lot of women were facing in the Regency Era, because Emma, by nature of her position, has very little pain and suffering in her life. So, I'm kind of just see what the musings of a woman who has the freedom to muse would be and how she wouldn't be a perfect person, she'd be a flawed person, and she'd fuck up a lot. But you're learning along with her and she learns through this book and she becomes better.

Molly: Yeah, I agree with that.

Becca: Yeah. On [00:46:00] whole through this book, what do you think of Emma?

Molly: By the end, I do love her. I think that everything that you just said is accurate and everything that we've said about her throughout the book is accurate. I think she is absolutely a product of the society that she grew up in and the time that she's living in, and she might not be that way. She would not have turned out that way if she was plopped in a different life. So, I think she's doing the best she can. I think that she is antihero. She's someone that we root for, but we're also like, "Why are you doing the things that you do? You are so dumb." like, read the room. But I love it.

Becca: Also, counterbalance. She is very clever in some ways.

Molly: Yes, she is dumb and clever.

Becca: Her cleverness is clearly pent up and bored by her lack [00:47:00] of preoccupation in this time period.

Molly: Better to have no sense than to misapply it as you do, "Mr. Knightley."

Becca: Exactly. And so, part of this is Emma's greater qualities being run out of whack, because she doesn't have anything to do with them. So, hopefully, future Emma, later down the line, after this book, gets the opportunity to apply her senses to something much more suitable than matchmaking.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Funniest quote?

Molly: So, this is after Knightley says that he has a lot of things that he likes about Harriet. He says, "Much of this, no doubt. She may. Much of this, I have no doubt, she may thank you for." "Me!" cried Emma, shaking her head. "Ah! poor Harriet!" She checked herself, however, and submitted quietly to a little more praise than she deserved."

Becca: Yes. Questions for the movies?

Molly: So, this is a long book, and I'm curious what each movie chooses to focus [00:48:00] on and what they choose to let fade into the background a little bit. I'm wondering if any characters will get cut. I'm really just excited to see which one I like the most.

Becca: Who wins the book?

Molly: Oh, man. Everyone ended up happy. So, they all win in their own way. I think I am the happiest. Oh, God, I'm happy for everyone. I think Emma and Harriet went through the most growth, and I am the happiest for them. I think that Harriet escaped the clutches of something that was growing sinister in her. Like, she could have turned out snooty and above it all, but she instead went and had herself a time in London and was like, "Wait a minute, I want to be with the man that I love."

So, Harriet wins, but Emma also wins because she got her head out of her own ass and [00:49:00] allowed herself to fall in love with someone who she's been falling in love with for the past 10 years. And yeah, Emma and Harriet both win for me.

Becca: Great choices. Okay, listeners, we have finished *Emma*. It is done. We have finished the book--

Molly and Becca: *Emma*.

Becca: But don't you worry, our coverage of *Emma* is not over because there are about 8,000 adaptations of this book to screen. We're going to be covering all of them. We're going to start next episode with the 1996 version of *Emma* starring Gwyneth Paltrow, which we are going to record very shortly. Molly, how are you feeling?

Molly: I cannot wait to see what Goop does for this story.

Becca: Yes, it's the most gooped 1996 adaptation of *Emma* one could think of.

Molly: Yeah, I'm just really excited.

Becca: Okay. Well, then, until next time, [00:50:00] stay proper-

Molly: -and find yourself a husband like these ladies did.

Becca: Yeah. Probably not Frank Churchill though.

Molly: Yeah. Don't marry Frank Churchill.

[music]

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