

Molly: Hey, everyone. Before we begin today, we want to give a huge shoutout to our patron, Emily, who upgraded their pledge on Patreon. If you want to be awesome like Emily and get access to exclusive content, like our Discord community, Becca's first thoughts on *Persuasion* and submitting your very own study questions, check out our Patreon at patreon.com/podandprejudice. And now, enjoy this week's episode covering Volume II Chapter 10 of *Persuasion*.

[Pod and Prejudice theme]

Becca: This is Becca.

Molly: This is Molly.

Becca: We are here to talk about Jane Austen.

Molly: We are here specifically to talk about-

Molly and Becca: -*Persuasion*.

Becca: For a little longer at least.

Molly: Yes. Oh, my God, we're so close to the end.

Becca: So close. Listeners, if you're new here, I, Becca, have read many Jane Austen novels throughout my life.

Molly: And I, Molly, am reading her for the first time through this podcast.

Becca: If you want to hear *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility* or *Emma* read by Molly for the first time, you can listen to Seasons 1 through 3 of this podcast. But that is not what we're doing here today.

Molly: [00:01:00] No. Today, we are talking about *Persuasion* Volume II Chapter 10. Or, if your book isn't broken up into volumes, that's Chapter 22.

Becca: I'm really glad I made the decision for us to go chapter by chapter towards the end of this book, because you can see how hefty Jane Austen made her last few chapters of *Persuasion*.

Molly: Yeah. Not even just in terms of plot and packing it in, but also length. These are long chapters.

Becca: Yeah. The beginning of the book, you have these little snippet chapters that need companions. And it moves very quickly. And then, at the end of the book, Jane is like, "All right, chapter by chapter, we're going to dump everything on you."

Molly: Yeah. So, I guess we should get into it. But first, let's tell the listeners where we left off.

Becca: Sure. So, this was the great unveiling of the true Mr. Elliot, the villain of the story. We were at Mrs. Smith's apartment, and she reveals to Anne that Mr. Elliot is a sniveling little weasel, a social climber and someone who has ruined her [00:02:00] life by preventing her from accessing the very last of her husband's assets, which Mr. Elliot helped her husband squander when he was alive, so we hate Mr. Elliot now.

As Anne says at the very beginning of the chapter, "I won't steal Molly's thunder," thank God, because Anne didn't want to marry him anyway, but now, she doesn't have to feel bad about it.

Molly: Yes. It is such a relatable thing here when she's like, "What a relief that I have a reason to hate him."

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: She's like, "I knew there was something wrong, but now I know what it is and I can no longer feel-- I don't have to pity him and I don't have to pity turning down his advances."

Becca: Yeah. Because you and I are both nice people. When you're a nice person, you feel the need to be nice to people who've done nothing wrong, even if they're not your vibe. And then, if they do something very wrong, you're like, "Oh, thank God, you don't have to be in my vicinity anymore."

Molly: Mm-hmm. It's easier to be angry than to be [00:03:00] confused about whatever.

Becca: It's easier to like someone for a discernible reason that they've been bad, but it's--

Molly: To dislike them?

Becca: Yeah, I meant to dislike them. But it's not easy to dislike someone who is perfectly nice and polite. You don't have a reason to dislike them. You just don't. I always feel really guilty about that.

Molly: Right. Because it's like, "Then, we're an asshole."

Becca: Yeah. It's like, "No, then I'm just being mean to a person." But if they're also a mean person, I'm like, "Oh, thank God, I don't have to put energy into being nice to you anymore."

Molly: Yeah. So, Anne feels like that at the beginning of this chapter. But she also feels a little bit bad knowing how disappointed her good friend Lady Russell is going to be in this man that she's been championing. And also, how mortified her father and sister will feel when they find out how he talked about them behind their backs, which they already knew, but not to the extent that he was actually doing it.

Becca: Well, I don't think they knew that he was talking about them behind their backs. I think they heard that he was doing this and were outraged, and then they told Mr. Elliot, and he was like, [00:04:00] "Oh, how dare you accuse me of talking behind your back?" So, they absolved him of something he actually did.

Molly: Yeah, because he's a fucking liar.

Becca: He's a liar.

Molly: And we were swindled by him.

Becca: [laughs] I, for one, am very glad you used the word swindled, because that is exactly what Mr. Elliot did to you. And our listeners came out of the woodworks to express their deepest sympathies for-- [chuckles]

Molly: Yes, they really did. It was so kind. So, thank you all for respecting my privacy during this very difficult time. [Becca laughs] Anne does feel like she's being rewarded for not slighting an old friend like Mrs. Smith, because she hung out with her and therefore, she received this knowledge about this man. She wasn't expecting to be rewarded, but here she is being rewarded for good behavior.

Becca: Yeah. Basically, she's like, "I was taking a risk with society by hanging out with this person who is at a much lower station than myself and taking on my father, who didn't think I

should be hanging out with her. And I get rewarded [00:05:00] with being able to save my family from a very unfortunate circumstance with a very rogue heir." Ooh, I like that term, the rogue heir.

Molly: The rogue heir

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Ooh. I bet there's a book called The Rogue Heir, but if there isn't, keep it in mind.

Becca: That is a historical romance fiction if I've ever heard of it, The Rogue Heir.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Oh. Listeners, if you have any book that is close to that title, let us know. Otherwise, I will be just coining that phrase myself, The Rogue Heir. I guess it could apply to Edward Ferrars as well.

Molly: Yeah, but he is like a good rogue heir.

Becca: Yeah. I mean, neither one is particularly sexy, but I feel like the rogue heir gives a bad boy aura to a rich boy, which is very key to the romance genre in general.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: So, yeah, I'm into this. But I digress. I'm going on a tangent about the rogue heir.

Molly: [giggles] So, Anne wants to immediately go tell everyone, but she knows that she has to consult with Lady Russell first [00:06:00] and await the event with as much composure as possible. I was like, "What's the event?" I went through a couple different things. First, I was like, "Is the event her sister trying to marry Mr. Elliot?" Because that's what was happening before. But then, I was like, "Is the event just telling them?"

Becca: I think the event is just telling Lady Russell. So, I think what she's saying here, is "I have to hold my shit together until I get the chance to talk to Lady Russell about this and we can confer on what to do-

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: -and then I will go tell my father, and my sister and we will rid ourselves of this rake. But until then, I am stuck holding my shit together in front of him and being cool and polite,-

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: -because I'm not going to do that until I've talked to Lady Russell."

Molly: Got it. She also says that her main want of composure is something she can't tell Lady Russell, because she's mostly discomposed because of Wentworth, all the time.

Becca: You know what I love about Anne, is that we're in this high drama circumstance talking about something that has nothing to do with Captain Wentworth.

Molly: And she's still thinking about it. [00:07:00]

Becca: And she's like, "There's so much to work through here. There's so much to go through." Like, "We're going to deal with this and I'm going to have to keep my shit together. But let's be real, the only reason I can't keep my shit together is because of Wentworth."

Molly: Yeah, it's ridiculous.

Becca: Bless her. She is an obsessed woman. Love her.

Molly: Yes. Yes. So, she gets home and she finds that she did, in fact, avoid seeing Mr. Elliot, which was her plan this morning. But unfortunately, he's coming back in the evening. Elizabeth goes like, "Oh, you know, I wasn't going to invite him, but he was dropping all these hints." Or, at least Mrs. Clay says, "He was dropping all these hints. I could never notice when someone was dropping hints for me."

And Mrs. Clay is like, "I've never seen anyone try so hard to get an invite. And your sister Anne--" talking to Anne about Elizabeth, "seems bent on cruelty." Like, she's viewing him as flirting with Elizabeth, and Elizabeth is turning him down, but playing coy.

Becca: This scene is so embarrassing in context.

Molly: Because [00:08:00] they don't know?

Becca: Because we know, and Anne knows what Mr. Elliot actually thinks of Elizabeth.

Molly: Right.

Becca: And Elizabeth's like, "Ah, I don't even know. I mean, Mrs. Clay says he's flirting with me, but who's even to say? I don't even notice really whether or not he's flirting with me. He's just my cousin and the heir to my father's fortune. What do I know he's flirting with me." But it has the air of someone who really does believe she is being flirted with in a specific way.

Again, it's deeply embarrassing, because nothing is more embarrassing than making a big deal about how obviously someone's into you and when they hate you.

Molly: Especially because he is actually into her sister.

Becca: Yes, he's into her sister, he hates her and he is playing her.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: And she's like, "Oh, I have him in the bag."

Molly: He's playing her like a lute.

Becca: Like a lute.

Molly: Yeah. Specifically. So, she says that when he said that he wanted to see Sir Walter, she couldn't pass up the opportunity to bring [00:09:00] him and her father together. Oh, my God-- This is also so embarrassing, because he hates her father. She's like, "They're so good when they're next to each other, each behaving so pleasantly. Mr. Elliot looking up with so much respect." It's like, dude.

Becca: Jane Austen is such a good writer.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Because she's juxtapositioned this scene right after the Mrs. Smith chapter, and you're just like, "Ugh."

Molly: Cringe.

Becca: Cringe.

Molly: So, then Mrs. Clay is like, [Becca laughs] “Yes, they're so good together. They're almost like father and son.” Or, Miss Elliot, may I not say father and son? Like, will they soon be father and son?

Becca: And meanwhile, Anne is sitting there clutching herself like, [makes shivering sounds]

Molly: But also, if I were Anne, I would be like-- She's embarrassed, but inside of her brain somewhere, I feel like I would be a little bit vindicated to be like, “How dumb is my sister?”

Becca: Yeah. I don't think this would have been the first time that Anne has been vindicated by the fact that her sister's stupid.

Molly: True. [giggles]

Becca: It would also [00:10:00] probably not be the first time that Anne has beat her sister out for something. There's a lot of reasons why Elizabeth might hate Anne, but this right here, I think Anne is overtaken by the embarrassment of the situation.

Molly: Yes, absolutely. And Elizabeth is like, “Well, say whatever you want. I can't tell if he's actually flirting with me more than any other man is flirting with me.” He he he. And then, Mrs. Clay puts her head in her hands in exasperation and is like, “Okay.”

Becca: I mean, Elizabeth is giving, “Don't make me sing,”

Molly: Exactly.

Becca: Don't make me sing.

Molly: Exactly what's happening. And then, she says, “Well, my dear Penelope,” which is where we learn that Mrs. Clay's first name is Penelope.

Becca: Yeah. Also, famously the name of a character in *Bridgerton* who is less wealthy than her intended and known for being under the radar hot.

Molly: Interesting. Also, famously the name of a character who has a pig nose in a movie starring-

Molly and Becca: Christina Ricci.

Becca: And Reese Witherspoon [00:11:00] and James McAvoy.

Molly: And James McAvoy. I forgot Reese Witherspoon is in that. It's such a good movie. I went through a phase.

Becca: I think it's like an early Reese production.

Molly: I watched that movie religiously like once a week for two years.

Becca: You have a Christina Ricci vibe. Obviously, you don't have the pig nose in that movie, but you do look like her a little bit.

Molly: Well, thank you.

Becca: If anybody wanted to know what Molly looks like off the podcast and you don't follow us on Instagram then, that's what Molly looks like. She looks like a petite, lovely little Christina Ricci.

Molly: Wow. That's so nice. She's so pretty.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: I'm blushing. Okay. Anyway, so Penelope, she says, "Penelope, calm down. I invited him. We're fine." And Anne is impressed through this whole thing with Mrs. Clay's acting, because she also knows that Mrs. Clay hates Elliot, or she's at odds with Mr. Elliot since she's trying to get that bag with Sir Walter.

Becca: Yeah. This is a phenomenal moment, because the perspective shift [00:12:00] from Anne has-- It's always been Anne being like, "Oh, God, I hope she doesn't marry my father, because that would be so embarrassing for our family." And then, Anne's like, "You know what? Go ahead."

Molly: Yeah. She's like, "Actually, this isn't that bad."

Becca: She's like, "Go ahead and fucking disinherit Mr. Elliot. I don't care."

Molly: Yeah, she loves it.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Anyway, Mr. Elliot arrives later. Anne struggles, because before while she had the feeling that he was being insincere about something, she didn't know what. And now, everything that he does-- She's got bitch crackers.

Becca: Oh, boy. Does she? This scene is very reminiscent to me of the scene where Wickham returns to Longbourn-

Molly: Yes.

Becca: -in *Pride and Prejudice* after the letter. And Lizzie's like, "Oh, my God, how did I not see this guy was a piece of shit from the beginning?"

Molly: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. She tries to act normal, so she won't provoke a remonstrance. [00:13:00] Remonstrance, remonstrance from him. Anyway, it means a forcefully reproachful protest. Basically, she doesn't want him to notice that she knows that he's a piece of shit, so she's trying to act cool and she doesn't want to make a scene. Another word that I had to look up, *éclat*, which I think we've done before. A brilliant display or effect. Basically, people notice that something's going on.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: She does want to backtrack on the small amount of intimacy that they have gained together. She wants to go back to just being cousins and not being friends. So, she's like, "Put a wall up though."

Becca: This is such a delicate act. One, that I am personally terrible at, where you have to be around someone you really don't like, but you have to put up an air of politeness where you have to balance it like, "Do not approach me, but also I don't want you to know anything's too wrong."

Elliot reads that she's distant, but he doesn't really read why or the animosity behind it. The vibe she's giving off is [00:14:00] me when I dislike my friend's boyfriend. Like, you have to be nice, because you don't want your friend to be mad at you, but at the same time, you don't want him to think he's earned your approval.

Molly: Right. He needs to work harder. He needs to be better.

Becca: He needs to be better to her. I'm going to make you feel a little bad about that, but also not in a way that makes you get mad at me or shit talk me to her.

Molly: Right. Exactly. Because we all need to be friends here.

Becca: Exactly.

Molly: So, he isn't picking up on this yet and he's like, "Hey, guess again how and where I could have heard you formally praised?" Like, "Who do you think that friend is that I was telling you about?"

Becca: And she's like, "I don't know. Couldn't tell."

Molly: She's like, "Couldn't tell you." Also, he doesn't know that by bringing that up specifically. That's even riling her up even more, because she knows who the friend is now. And it's not a friend.

Becca: Yeah. Imagine this for a second. He's like, "How do I know about you?" How does he know about her? He knows about her through a woman he's been keeping destitute whose life he's ruined.

Molly: He's ruined her.

Becca: What's supposed to be the big surprise here? [00:15:00] He pops out of the box and goes, "Surprise. Look, your old friend who's living in squalor because of things I did."

Molly: But does he not realize that he's a dick? Like, does he not realize that this is a bad thing that he's done?

Becca: He has to.

Molly: But he doesn't care. Does he think that other people won't think that this is dumb? Like, how dumb is he?

Becca: There's so many questions around this portion, because for me, there's no way to not know that it's a bad thing to ruin somebody's life. Especially when she's written him multiple letters and been like, "Please, you've ruined my life. Can you make it a little better?"

Molly: Right. And so, why is he bringing her up? Like, does he not think-- Okay. One, he doesn't know that she's in town, presumably.

Becca: No, he does not.

Molly: So, I suppose he thinks she has no way of telling Anne.

Becca: Yeah. I think there's two options here. One is that he thinks Mrs. Smith is somewhere far away where he doesn't have to cope and he can be like, "Oh, [00:16:00] an old friend we both lost touch with."

Molly: Right.

Becca: Or, on the other hand, he could just reveal it later. Maybe he's not going to care as much about showing his true colors once they're married.

Molly: Oh, right, because he thinks he's going to marry Anne.

Becca: Exactly. So, once she's locked down, does he care as much about coming off well?

Molly: That's so depressing.

Becca: Very depressing. Our girly did definitely dodge a bullet. But it's one of those things where now is hard to even understand what he's thinking she's thinking. But my guess, is that in his brain, he's like, "She's on edge, because I said that thing about maybe marrying her one day."

Molly: Mm-hmm. He's like, "Oh, she's probably all a flutter, because I'm so handsome."

Becca: You were all a flutter, because he is handsome. [chuckles]

Molly: Hey, hey, hey. I was. And I felt swindled afterwards. And hey, I cannot emphasize this enough. He is so hot. So, that's not fair.

Becca: It's okay, Molly. **[00:17:00]** It's all good. [chuckles]

Molly: So, Anne is glad to learn that he is leaving Bath tomorrow morning, and he will be gone for most of Thursday to Saturday. So, tomorrow is Thursday. He'll be on Friday. I don't know about this Saturday business, because I think he was only going away for one night, but I don't know. Let's not think too hard about the timeline here.

It's bad enough for Anne that Mrs. Clay is there all the time. At least Mrs. Clark Clay isn't so conniving. She's pretty upfront about her what she's trying to do, at least in Anne's mind, comparatively.

Becca: She's also not spending all of her downtime shitting on Anne's family or ruining other women.

Molly: Right.

Becca: Like, she just wants her back.

Molly: Yeah. She's not trying to cover up anything. She's not pretending to be something she's not per se, and she's not an. So, Anne would much rather have her father marry Mrs. Clay, if it meant Mr. Elliot would go away.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: So, Friday morning-- Oh, I guess that was Thursday. So, she was going to see him Thursday, **[00:18:00]** and then the rest of Thursday, she was going to have off from Mr. Elliot, then she was going to be not seeing him all of Friday and not until Saturday night would she see him. All right, timeline sorted. You know, I would get hung up on that.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: So, Friday morning, Anne plans to go early to see Lady Russell to tell her everything. But after breakfast, Mrs. Clay is going town. Anne doesn't want to end up on a walk with Mrs. Clay, so she hangs back. And then, once Mrs. Clay is gone for a while, Anne says, "I might go see Lady Russell."

Elizabeth asks her to bring a book back that she lent her and say she read it even though she didn't. And then, she comments on how hideous Lady Russell's dress was the other night, but send all her love. This was my funniest quote, so I'll save it. But she's just like, "Oh, yes, go send my love. Isn't she so ugly?"

Becca: Yeah, basically. And then, Sir Walter is basically in return is like, "Ah, yes. I couldn't

go see her yet, because she hasn't put on makeup.”

Molly: Yeah, “She's [00:19:00] too old to put on makeup this early, so I won't go see her, but send all my love,” because he needs to have pretty things on the eyes. Then, there's a knock on the door, and Mary and Charles enter. What?

Becca: Thank God.

Molly: [laughs]

Becca: Too much of this book without our girl, Mary Musgrove.

Molly: We love Mary Musgrove.

Becca: I missed her so much in this stretch.

Molly: Me too. And so, did Anne. [Becca laughs] Believe it or not, they come in. Anne is happy to see them. Once her family learns that they aren't looking to stay with them, they have their own lodgings, they're also happy to see them. They were worried they were going to be like, “Can we stay with you?”

Becca: Nothing drives home how terrible a father Sir Walter is more than when Mary comes, because let's be real, he's terrible to Anne. Elizabeth is also terrible to Anne. But they forget Mary exists. It's crazy.

Molly: Yeah. He's like, “How many [00:20:00] daughters do I have? Oh, right.” So, they reveal that they're in Bath with Mrs. Musgrove and they're staying at the White Hart, which is a hotel. Elizabeth and Sir Walter take Mary into the other room to show her around, and Anne gets the full story from Charles. So, their party consists of the two of them, Mrs. Musgrove, Henrietta and Captain Harville. The reason why they're here is Harville had wanted to come, and Charles had wanted to go with him, but Mary couldn't bear to be left alone.

Becca: Not to be left alone with her own children.

Molly: Oh, yes. How could she? [Becca laughs] Then, Mrs. Musgrove wanted to go and visit some friends, and Henrietta was like, “Oh, well, I'll come shop for wedding clothes for myself and Louisa.”

Becca: Record scratch.

Molly: I was like, “Wedding clothes for herself?” And then, I was like, “Oh, right, Charles Hayter. But what's going on there?”

Becca: Well, what is going on there?

Molly: It is revealed that Charles Hayter got a job.

Becca: Yes, he did. And a good one at that.

Molly: And a good one at that.

Becca: Good for our boy, Charles Hayter [00:21:00] The Hater.

Molly: We're so happy for him. So, what happened was there's a kid, I think, who inherited a living, but he's too young to take it over. So, Charles Hayter is holding it for him while he grows up. And in the stretch of time between now and whenever that kid is old enough to take over the living, he will have gotten something more permanent. So, the family is

consented to the marriage, because they have money now.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: -So, we're very happy for them.

Becca: Yes. And they're set for life,-

Molly: Yes.

Becca: -Charles Hayter and his beloved Henrietta. So, we do have a proposal?

Molly: We have a proposal.

Becca: Graham, the sound effect.

Molly: We hear that they're likely to get married as soon as Louisa. And so, I wrote double wedding.

Becca: Our girlies, Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove, both finding love at the same time.

Molly: And we know that Jane Austen loves a double wedding.

Becca: Jane Austen loves two sisters finding love at the exact same moment in time.

Molly: Yeah. It's beautiful.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: So, Anne is thrilled that the pleasant prospects of one sister should not **[00:22:00]** be dimming those of the other and that they should be so equal in their prosperity and comfort, which is just really sweet. She's just like, "Look at this, they're both so happy at the same time."

Becca: And neither one of them is happy with Captain Wentworth.

Molly: And that's thrilling for our girl.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: She asks how the parents like the match, and Charles says that his father will be pinched for money having to do two dowries at once. But other than that, he is pleased. Mary doesn't like Charles Hayter, but she never has. But he likes Charles Hayter. And Anne says, "They're all lucky to have such wonderful parents who are happy for their children finding love." "Your father and mother seem so totally free from all those ambitious feelings which have led to so much misconduct and misery."

Becca: Cough, cough.

Molly: Unlike her own family.

Becca: No. We'll get into it in the study questions, but the Musgrove's really offering a foil to the cruelty that Anne got from her father and her sister when she fell in love.

Molly: Yeah. So, she **[00:23:00]** knows that there's some good in the world.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: Hey, guys. It's Molly from the future, popping in here to talk about The Economics of Podcasting about Jane Austen. A little segment where we tell you about our sponsors.

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So, she asks then about Louisa. And Charles says that she's recovered, which, by the way, Louisa is at home with Mrs. Harville, Captain Benwick, Mr. Musgrove and the kids.

Becca: Yes, all the kids which Mary did not bring with her to Bath.

Molly: Absolutely not. So, she's recovered, but she's changed. There's no more running around and playing, laughing and dancing. She's very jumpy. Benwick sits by her side and reads to her all day [00:25:00] long. I started planning our But Make It Scary in my head at this moment.

Becca: Yeah, there definitely is room and *Persuasion* for a really good But Make It Scary. Shouts to Sequoia. We're very excited for when you bring us on for that adaptation.

Molly: Yeah. I was just picturing Benwick reading to her and slowly draining the life from her as he does, because he's like a vampire or something. So, we'll get there.

Becca: From a more rom-comy perspective, from a more realistic perspective, this scene makes me simultaneously both sad, and warm as my heart.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: it's a very melancholy sentence that you get about Louisa, who you knew was this wild child. And then, you get this head scratcher moment where you're like, "Huh, she's with Benwick." And then, when you hear that, you're like, "Oh, she's with Benwick." You know what I mean?

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: He's a bit of a morose fellow and she clearly has access to some darkness that she didn't have before. I'm writing so much based [00:26:00] on this sentence in my head. But to me, it strikes me that a guy like Benwick, a poet, has the right thing to offer to comfort a girl who's been through a lot.

Molly: Yeah. I think that she had a brush with death, and that can definitely change a person.

Becca: A head trauma can change a person.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: [laughs]

Molly: Yeah. It is sad, but it's sweet to just like picture them sitting together and figuring it out.

Becca: Quite frankly, it endears me a little bit more to Benwick in a way, because it doesn't strike me exploitative or anything. What I think of when I hear this line, is that I think of Benwick having a lot of pain and sadness in his own heart, and not knowing what to do with it and seeing a girl with fresh pain and sadness in her own heart and helping her grapple with the new sadness.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: And that makes sense to me as a love story.

Molly: Yeah, it's sweet.

Becca: Sad, but sweet.

Molly: Bittersweet, as they say. So, Anne says that Benwick is an excellent young man. And Charles agrees, even though he's a reader. He says he [00:27:00] might read books, but he was also in the navy. They went rat hunting the other day, and so, Charles is endeared to him for that.

Charles is then called away to admire the China. Anne rejoices in the happiness of Uppercross with no ill will of envy. She would love to have risen to their blessings if she could, but she didn't want to lessen theirs with her jealousy. So, sweet sad. Mary is in a great mood this whole trip since she rode up in a carriage with four horses. The superiority of Camden Place increases her own consequence to just enough. So, she is like, "Look at how beautiful your home is. I'm so happy to be associated with it."

Becca: This is a fascinating window into Mary Musgrove, because we actually haven't seen Mary interact with Elizabeth or Sir Walter yet. What we have seen is Mary in a very comfortable, wealthy home with her children and her husband and a large extended family of people that her husband is connected to. And there is a [00:28:00] hint of dissatisfaction with the level of her connections in all that happiness.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: And then, you see her with her cruel father and her cruel sister in their Bath town home, and she's like, "Glorious, amazing. Oh, my God, the connections I'll have here, I'm so thrilled." It's so revealing, because the tragedy of Mary Musgrove as a character, is that she's got quite a good life set up for herself, and she just wants the approval of her father and her sister who will never give it to her.

Molly: Not me feeling bad for Mary Musgrove.

Becca: It's okay. She is a perfect character who has no flaws. No, she's a mess of a character, but one where the ego and the id of the character right at the forefront, so you can feel everything Mary's feeling. You can go forward in the chapter, we'll get to it, because I'm [00:29:00] getting ahead of myself on the Mary Musgrove stuff.

But the way she is in Bath, the obsession she has with her sister and her father and pleasing them tells you so much about why she is so opposed to the Hayters, why she's so mad that

the Musgrove's don't dine out enough with fancy people, why she's a little bit abandoned feeling in her place at Uppercross, when in reality, it's actually a pretty good spot.

Molly: Yeah, it's depressing.

Becca: Absolutely.

Molly: So, Elizabeth, during this whole visit, is suffering because she feels like she should invite Mrs. Musgrove and the rest of their party to dinner. But she can't, because she's ashamed of how a dinner would reveal the reduction in lifestyle, and servants and whatever that they have gone through since being at Kellynch.

Becca: Used to go to Nobu. Can't take them to Olive Garden.

Molly: Exactly. So, she decides, "It's fine. We never give dinners. Nobody else in Bath gives dinners. It would be [00:30:00] out of their way to come to dinner. They probably want to eat at home anyway. Why don't we invite them to an evening party tomorrow night? It will be small, but elegant." And Mary is thrilled, as she is particularly asked to meet Mr. Elliot and the Dalrymples--

Becca: Sorry, you said it wrong. It's--

Molly: Sorry.

Becca and Molly: The Dowager Viscountess Lady Dalrymple and Baby Dalrymple.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Yes, yes.

Molly: They had conveniently already been invited tomorrow.

Becca: It's just so pathetic. Elizabeth being like, "I don't want to invite them to dinner, because then they'll know we're poor now. So, why don't I invite them over for the evening? What I'm really going to do is I'm not going to invite them over the evening. I'm going to tag them on to already having plans with somebody else."

Molly: Yeah, exactly. She's doing the least. So, Elizabeth is going to go call on Mrs. Musgrove later, but Anne goes now to see her and Henrietta, so she goes with Mary and Charles back. And she figures, "Okay, I'll have to see Lady Russell tomorrow instead, but a day's delay of the intended communication could [00:31:00] be of no consequence," which I think is famous last words. Something's going to happen in the next 24 hours. I can feel it.

Henrietta and Mrs. Musgrove are so happy to see her. I quoted this, "It was a heartiness and a warmth and a sincerity which Anne delighted in the more from the sad want of such blessings at home." Sad. They invite her to come every day, claim her as a part of the family, and in return, she falls back into her old ways of attention and assistance. She listens to them tell her about themselves, about Louisa. She gives them recommendations of what to do in town. She helps Mary with various things and tries to convince her she isn't being ill used by anyone, [Becca laughs] which Mary tends to just think.

Becca: She is being ill used by her father and her sister, but [unintelligible [00:31:48] people, she's like, "No, no, they're not. They're great."

Molly: Yeah. Mary is looking out the window at the pump room, which I was like, "Is this where they go to pump their milk?" But no.

Becca: [00:32:00] No. No. No, no.

Molly: [giggles] It is where the medicinal waters of the Bath are raised up out of the water. And I was like, "Wait, are they literally staying next to the Bath?" Because that's fancy, right?

Becca: I do think the Musgroves are probably staying somewhere fancy, because they're pretty wealthy. But I don't know if there's only one pump room in Bath.

Molly: There's probably a couple pump rooms in Bath.

Becca: Yeah. I'm no bath expert, and we are welcome to Bath experts weighing in here. To me, it's like when you go to a town with medicinal waters, those waters are like the main draw. That's clearly what Bath is. So, I assume it's like an industry there, a tourism industry.

Molly: Yeah. I went once a long time ago, and I recall there being one main Bath center which had a lot of different pools in it for people to sit in, but it was all part of the same complex, so I wonder if the pump room [00:33:00] was-- If I recall, we went on a tour of the Baths, and there was one area where there was a bunch of machinery. Not machinery, but stuff.

Becca: Okay. Well, if anybody is an expert in Regency Era Bath, please weigh in here. But I do think that they are near the Baths. They are in the center of town.

Molly: Mm-hmm. So, the morning wears on, and there's all sorts of hustle and bustle. People coming in and out of the hotel. And then, Charles returns with Captain Harville and Captain Wentworth.

Becca: Who?

Molly: Captain Wentworth.

Becca: [laughs]

Molly: Ey.

Becca: Ey, it's our boy, Freddie.

Molly: Anne had figured that the arrival of their mutual friends in town would bring them together again. Even though she was formally convinced that he loved her from his current vibe, she can tell that he's still under the unfortunate persuasion-

Becca: It's in the title.

Molly: -that caused him to run away from her at the concert, i.e., thinking [00:34:00] that she is in love with Mr. Elliot. She thinks that surely if they both have feelings for each other, they will be revealed soon enough. They're not kids anymore. They're not going to mess about with their happiness. But the minutes pass, and she worries that them hanging out will lead to more misunderstandings than not, [giggles] because they're not talking about their feelings.

Becca: So, we have regression here, because we are back with the Musgroves hanging out with Captain Wentworth, where no one knows you two are in love. And Anne is just quietly sitting in a corner, panicking about whether or not Captain Wentworth still loves her.

Molly: Yes. Then, Mary yells out that Mrs. Clay is outside with Mr. Elliot.

Becca: What?

Molly: I wrote in my notes here, I called it, because something's going on with the two of

them. At some point, I did say that there was something going on with the two of them. Anne is like, "It's not Mr. Elliot. He left this morning." She says that very quickly, and then she feels [00:35:00] Captain Wentworth looking at her, and she's like, "Fuck. Shut up, Anne. Don't comment on Mr. Elliot." Then, Mary is like, "No, no, no, for real. Come, look." And Anne doesn't want to look, but she sees these two or three lady visitors, which I was like, "Whomst? Are these like those girls that were with Captain Wentworth earlier?"

Becca: Well, I was focused on Mary in this moment, because Mary is so funny. She's like, "How dare you think I wouldn't know my own cousin? I saw him out a window in Lyme, months ago, and you do not think I know my own cousin?"

Molly: Yeah, that was really funny. I was more focused on these two ladies who I don't know who they are, but they're giggling at Anne, not listening to Mary, because Mary's like, "Come on, come, look." And Anne is sitting there like, "I'm not going to come look. I'm going to sit over here." And the ladies are giggling, and she's like, "Fuck. Has everyone heard that me and Mr. Elliot are getting married?"

Becca: Everyone's like, "Ooh."

Molly: There's a lot going on in this moment. And Anne, [00:36:00] after Mary, whines for a little while longer. Anne is like, "Fine, I'll come, look." So, she comes. In fact, it is Mr. Elliot. She sees them shake hands and part ways. Anne feels surprised, obviously, to see such an appearance of friendly conference between two persons of totally opposite interests.

So, there's a couple things that could be happening here. They're together, dating, going to marry, or working together to bring down Mr. Sir Walter or both. Anne says, "Oh, well, would you look at that? I was wrong," and then goes back to sit down. Then it says, the visitors leave and Charles starts making fun of them. Now, are we talking about the ladies that were giggling, or are we talking about Elliot and Mrs. Clay?

Becca: I honestly don't remember these ladies. Sorry. [chuckles]

Molly: It says, "The visitors took their leave; and Charles, having civilly seen them off, and [00:37:00] then made a face at them, and abused them for coming, began with--" and then started talking about something else. And I was like, "Why did he abuse who for coming?"

And then, the ladies earlier, she said, "Her distress returned, however, on perceiving smiles and intelligent glances pass between two or three of the lady visitors, as if they believed themselves quite in the secret. It was evident that the report concerning her had spread, and a short pause succeeded, which seemed to ensure that it would now spread farther." So, I think that it was like those ladies that had been with Captain Wentworth at the store in that other chapter, maybe.

Becca: You know what? The Musgroves are super popular, and they're just getting a bunch of guests.

Molly: Yeah. So, it's just some other guests.

Becca: Yeah. They're just like, "It's a whole big party in there."

Molly: Yeah. So, they all leave. Charles then goes to tell his mom that he got them all tickets-- He got them a box at a play. And he says, "Ain't I good, boy, mama? Have I not done well?"

Becca: Very, very weird moment for Charles [00:38:00] Musgrove.

Molly: Yeah. He was like, "Look, mother, look what I've done for you. Have I not done well? Am I not a good boy?"

Becca: But then--

Molly: But then, Mary goes, "How could you? You got us box seats for the same night we're supposed to go to Camden Place to meet Lady Dalrymple, and Baby Dalrymple and Mr. Elliot."

Becca: And Charles is like, "They don't even want us there," which is correct.

Molly: Yes. He's like, "If they really wanted to see us, they would have invited us to dinner."

Becca: And Mary's like, "No, this is perfect. They love me, and they want to see me and they want to give me highfalutin connections as well."

Molly: Yeah. And Charles is like, "I'm going to the play. You can do whatever you want." And Mary's like, "You promised." And Charles says, "I never promised. I just smiled and nodded." And Mary says, "You must go. They're family, and it would be offensive not to meet our father's heir." And he says, "He doesn't care about heirs." He says, "I'm not one who neglects the reigning power to bow to the rising sun. I don't care about [00:39:00] Mr. Elliot." And then, Anne sees Captain Wentworth watching her attentively and when Charles-- Well, he's watching the scene attentively, and then when Charles says, "What is Mr. Elliot to me?" he looks at Anne. Ooh.

Becca: His eyes just go snap right to her.

Molly: Just to see what she's thinking.

Becca: This is a perfect Anne Elliot moment, because I'm sure it came out totally fine out loud. But internally, she's having an entire meltdown as she's delivering it. She's like, "This is really important, so that he knows I'm not in love with Mr. Elliot."

Molly: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. She says, she would much rather attend the play. She doesn't like an evening party, but perhaps, it had better not be attempted. So, she's like, "I don't care about Mr. Elliot or the evening party. I would much rather hang out with you guys."

Becca: Yeah, hang on, there's a great bit. "If it depended only on my inclination, ma'am, the party at home (excepting on Mary's [00:40:00] account), would not be the smallest impediment. I have no pleasure in the sort of meeting, and should be too happy to change it for a play, and with you. But, it had better not be attempted, perhaps." She had spoken it; but she trembled when it was done, conscious that her words were listened to, and daring not even to try to observe their effect."

Molly: Right. It's such a casual thing to say, but she's like, "Is he picking up my meaning?"

Becca: Our girl and Elliot having quiet game here, but absolutely wrecking herself. It's like, when I was in law school, I used to like-- If I did well in a test, I would absolutely wreck myself while I was doing it and I would be super stressed, overly prepared, and then I'd walk out and be like, "Okay, it happened. I did it," and then I'd get a good grade or something. But the process of doing it would be horrendous. I feel like that's Anne trying to communicate to Wentworth that it's not a thing between her and Mr. Elliot. [00:41:00]

Molly: Yeah. Yeah. They all turn to her and they're like, "Anne, we can't go to the play without you, and you would have to go to the party." And Anne's like, "No, no, I would much rather go to the play with you, not with them."

Becca: It's like, "Oh, there's nobody there I'm particularly interested in seeing."

Molly: Yeah, this is a great scene. So, they decide that they'll change the tickets for

Tuesday, because there was a cute moment when Mrs. Musgrove says, "It wouldn't be a party if Anne Elliot is not there, so we can't go without Anne Elliot." So, they changed the tickets for Tuesday. And then, Wentworth gets up and goes to the fireplace and then comes to sit by Anne, presumably to make it look like he wasn't just trying to go sit by Anne.

Becca: So, Wentworth sidles over to the side of the room and is like, "Oh, that's a nice fireplace. Cool log." And then is like, "Oh." And then, there happens to be, "Anne Elliot, oh, I guess I should go say hi to her too."

Molly: Cool log. [00:42:00]

Becca: Cool log.

Molly: [laughs] I love that. Okay. Now, it starts getting spicy. So, he sits by Anne and he says, "You haven't been in Bath long enough to attend many evening parties." And she says, "No, I'm no card player." And he says, "You did not used to like cards, but time makes many changes."

Becca: Ooh, ooh, ooh. Oh, it is so live. It is so live. It's happening. Everybody stay calm. Stay fucking calm.

Molly: It's happening. Oh, my God, it's like Michael Scott. I was just like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, suddenly, we are talking about the past?"

Becca: "We are mentioning that you know her well enough from eight years ago to recall that she is not a card player?"

Molly: And Anne says, "I am not yet so much changed." And then, she stops herself and then he says, "It is a period. Eight years and a half is a period." But who's counting, Wentworth?

Becca: You could feel Jade Austen writing the [00:43:00] charge into this scene.

Molly: Yes. The way I'm screaming it is not very subtle or hot, but it's like, "You did not used to like cards, but time makes many changes." "I am not yet so much changed." "It is a period. Eight years is a period."

Becca: Can you imagine being in that circumstance? The man you love has not acknowledged the relationship you had eight years ago, and he comes over and he says, "You never liked cards."

Molly: Eight years and a half is a period.

Becca: The feeling that he is acknowledging how he knows her.

Molly: He's like, "The last time I saw you was 8 years, 4 months and 16 days, and it was a Tuesday and--"

Becca: "30 seconds." [chuckles]

Molly: Yeah. He says, "I've been counting the seconds." [giggles] He doesn't say that I'm fantasizing. But yes, it's intense.

Becca: Yes, it's a moment. The charge is very, very intense there. You can also hear like when he says, "You haven't really attended many evening parties," [00:44:00] he's really saying, it's like, "I guess your objection isn't to the idea of an evening party as much as it might be to the company."

Molly: Mm-hmm. It also is like, I haven't seen you around. So, he's looking. Anyway, at this moment, they're interrupted by Henrietta trying to make the most of their time with no visitors to get out of the house. And as they're about to go, they are unfortunately accosted by Sir Walter and Elizabeth.

An immediate chill falls over the room, and Anne is ashamed that that's the effect her family has on people. But the room was full of joy and laughter, and then they enter and everyone's like, "Ugh."

Becca: "Hi, guys."

Molly: Yeah. The good thing is they both acknowledge Captain Wentworth.

Becca: Yeah, they do.

Molly: And Elizabeth invites them all to the party tomorrow, and she leaves cards for each of them. I was wondering, before moving on, are these her personal calling cards or are these invitations to the party?

Becca: I don't think it's like a set stock card. I do think it's like an invitation to the party. **[00:45:00]** But I think it's like letters.

Molly: But they called them Elizabeth at home, or Miss Elliot at home.

Becca: I guess. Yeah, they're formal invites to the party.

Molly: Okay. So, she pointedly gives one to Captain Wentworth. And Anne realizes in that moment that the past is nothing, because Elizabeth understands that here, Wentworth has status, and she knows that he would belong in her drawing room. Like, he would be just as of status as everyone else that she would be inviting.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: So, she's finally gotten with the fucking program.

Becca: Yes. She does not have a lot of room to not invite him here either.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: And that's great for Anne, because if propriety dictates, he has to be there, it tells you where he is in the world.

Molly: And it also tells you what she thinks of him in the world.

Becca: Yup.

Molly: So, everyone goes back to normal after they leave, except for Anne, because she is thinking of how Wentworth had **[00:46:00]** received his invitation, doubtful, surprised. He was all polite acknowledgement rather than acceptance. Basically, she's worried that even though he was invited, he won't come.

He keeps holding the card and staring at it after they're gone. Mary makes a snarky comment about everyone being invited. She's like, "Wow, everyone was invited. Look how Captain Wentworth is--" Like, no wonder he's so happy, and looking at his card in so much awe, they stooped to invite everyone.

Becca: I don't think she thinks they're stooping with Captain Wentworth.

Molly: What does she think?

Becca: I read it differently. I read it as, oh, I thought this was like me and my family.

Molly: Oh. Oh, no. [laughs] So, it's not snarky. It's more hurt.

Becca: That's how I read it.

Molly: No, that makes total sense, because Mary's never been anti-Captain Wentworth.

Becca: She's very pro Captain Wentworth.

Molly: You're so right. I forgot. Oh, so, she's like, [00:47:00] "Oh.

Becca: I thought this was my special time to meet Mr. Elliot and The Dowager Viscountess Lady Dalrymple and Baby Dalrymple, that I thought dad wanted to see me.

Molly: Yeah. Oh, sad. You're so right. I love Mary.

Becca: [chuckles] Mary is my favorite character in this book. She's a terrible human being, but she is simultaneously the funniest character in this book by a lot, and also kind of a tragic figure.

Molly: She really is. What an interesting character Jane Austen has written.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: So, everyone splits up at that point, and Anne is like, "I'm going to go home." She's socially drained, so she goes home. When she gets home, she listens to Elizabeth go on about how this is going to be the most elegant evening party Bath has ever seen. I was like, "Wait a minute--" When she was handing out the invites, she said something about no formal party. At first, I thought that she meant, like--

Well, I was torn as to whether she meant, "You know, it's not formal. [00:48:00] Whoever wants to come can come." But then, I was like, "Wait, is she pulling illegally blonde and saying that it's formal?"

Becca: I think it's just not a ball.

Molly: Okay.

Becca: I also think that what's happening is it's more the opposite, which is that she's invited a few people over and she's like, "Oh, I am a hostess."

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Like "Oh, my party is going to be glorious, and it's like people coming over to play cards."

Molly: And have cheese. It's more like 10 things I hate about you with the cheese tray.

Becca: Exactly. It's a cheese plate dinner party. Well, it's not a dinner party, but a little cocktail hour.

Molly: Yeah. Anne, meanwhile, is quietly harassing herself [Becca laughs] over whether or not Wentworth will come. It's just that that's what Jane Austen wrote. She said, she's quietly harassing herself.

Becca: Anne.

Molly: She's just beating herself up. She's like, "Is he going to come? Is he not going to come?" And then, she decides, "You know what? I'm going to cause a little drama," and she comments to Mrs. Clay that they [00:49:00] saw her with Mr. Elliot hours after he was supposed to have left. She thinks she sees a semblance of guilt pass over Mrs. Clay's face, but then get quickly covered up. Anne thinks maybe he had been lecturing her about her designs on Sir Walter.

Mrs. Clay says, "She was surprised to bump into him and have him walk her back to the pump yard. He had been prevented in leaving, but she was too distracted and she was in a hurry, she didn't catch by what he had been prevented in leaving, but she said that he was determined not to be delayed in his return, and she knows that he is really excited about the party tomorrow night."

Becca: Ooh, what to leave on. There's two chapters and a party coming up.

Molly: Just two chapters left?

Becca: There are two chapters left in this book.

Molly: Whew. All right.

Becca: Yes. That brings us to Becca's study questions. Actually, before we go to my study questions, let's head over to our patron study questions. Listeners, if you want to ask us questions on the air, you can join our Patreon at the \$15 tier. Molly will post a Google Doc [00:50:00] a few days before we record or the day before we record. You can put your questions in, and we will ask and answer them on the air.

So, the use questions were from last week's episode. They got submitted after the deadline, but they were great questions. So, we are going to ask them on the air now. But know that they are about Chapter 21 or Volume I Chapter 9. I mean, Volume II Chapter 9. Okay.

So, Diana asks, "How do Mrs. Smith's actions in this chapter compare to Colonel Brandon's in *Sense and Sensibility* when he didn't reveal Willoughby's behavior, because he thought he and Marianne were engaged? What did he say about their society and "living in the world?"

Molly: Mm. I forgot that Colonel Brandon did that. The thing is that with Colonel Brandon, he just wants Marianne to be happy.

Becca: I also think there's another stake in it with Colonel Brandon, where he has a ward who he has obligations to, and he's trying to protect her reputation.

Molly: Right. [00:51:00] Oh, that's true.

Becca: So, it's a little less selfish, I guess.

Molly: Yeah. Actually, that's very true, because-- Well, I don't think Mrs. Smith is being selfish, per se. She's literally desperate. But I think that she was willing to sacrifice her friend's happiness for her own way out, which is hard. So, I think you're right that Colonel Brandon is definitely less selfish in this way.

Becca: I want to take into account what Diana says here about their society and "living in the world." I do actually think it is more difficult to openly insult someone who's your fiancé in the Jane Austen world than it would be in our world. Like, warning someone against a person who they're attached to might carry different societal etiquette in this time period than otherwise.

I don't know, I think we've been lucky enough to engage with our listeners in a lot of debate on this. [00:52:00] It is an interesting gray moment to discuss, because I really do fall on the class side of it, which is that Mrs. Smith was in a bad circumstance and didn't have a lot of options, and she's destitute and very ill. I don't necessarily think that her actions are perfect, but I think they are understandable given her circumstances.

Molly: Yeah, I agree.

Becca: Question number two is from Leigh, "What do you think of Mrs. Smith only telling Anne the truth about Mr. Elliot after she learns they won't be getting married? What does this say about her friendship with Anne?"

That goes exactly to what we were saying is, it is difficult to know, first of all, because being almost over 200 years after the fact, I don't know what the etiquette on that would have been. Could she tell Anne? She certainly didn't need to encourage Anne to marry him, which she was trying to do. But as we said, [00:53:00] I think it's difficult to judge her too harshly given her circumstance, because she didn't have a lot of options. So, I feel torn on it, honestly.

Molly: I think a lot of our listeners are harsher on Mrs. Smith than I'm willing to be. Like, I totally understand where we're coming from. I don't think I can villainize her. She's not the villain of this story. I think she is a tragic character in this story, and I do think that she was willing to sacrifice her friendship with Anne and she was willing to sacrifice Anne's happiness to get herself out of a really, really, really tough situation.

Becca: I do think that Mrs. Smith convinced herself that Anne would be in a happier circumstance than Mr. Elliot's prior wife, Mrs. Elliot. But I do think that she didn't see Anne as in personal danger. I think she thought Anne would be in a loveless marriage with a bad man, but would have an endless supply of money and a title and an estate to herself. So, it's difficult to know.

I really do think that it's hard for us to sit on a high horse 200 years later when a woman is as trapped, clearly, as Mrs. Smith is in this story by her bad circumstances. I'm very down with critiquing Mrs. Smith on this. I think it's an interesting thing to talk about. I just don't think she's the villain. I think she's a victim, and maybe a victim who didn't act perfectly.

Molly: Yeah. No, these are all great questions, and I want to keep talking about her forever.

Becca: Yeah. No, I find it really interesting. Mrs. Smith and the Mr. Elliot plotline are a little controversial in the fandom for being out of left wing, and the structures and the motivations being a little questionable. But I like that. I think it adds ambiguity to the story in a way that's fun and offbeat for an Austen novel. So, I've really enjoyed [00:55:00] talking about the morality of Mrs. Smith, and the depravity of Mr. Elliot and how those two intersect.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: All right. Now, let's go to the study questions for this week. This chapter marks the first time Wentworth directly alludes to his earlier relationship with Anne.

[upbeat music]

Becca: Party music, Graham. Party music, Graham. We're talking about the past. When he says to her, "Eight years and a half is a period," "What do you think is happening with Wentworth, and why now?"

Molly: Why now? I was just like, "Wait, what are we doing? We're talking about the past, but why are we talking about the past?" It's a good question, Avi. Well, we know for a fact that he's jealous and he thinks that Anne likes Mr. Elliot. So, perhaps, he's trying to gauge

whether she moved on in that time by commenting on it, because [00:56:00] he's like, "Oh, things change. People change in the course of eight years, don't they?" And Anne is like, "I'm not so much changed."

Becca: Yeah. I won't disclose too much here, because obviously I can neither confirm nor deny anything. But the only thing I will posit is that we have been living in Anne Elliot's internal monologue for months now, almost this whole book. And Wentworth isn't privy to that. From his perspective, he sees a put together woman-

Molly: Right.

Becca: -who has been polite to him for the entirety of their reacquaintance. But I don't think he has a great idea of where she is.

Molly: Right. He doesn't know that she's been pining over him for the last eight years.

Becca: We have been living in Anne's internal panic, but Anne has not displayed that [00:57:00] openly much. So, the question is, whether or not Wentworth knows her well enough to pick up on those things or if he can't read it because she's trying to hide it.

Molly: But I just remembered that at the beginning of this book, he said that she let herself go. He saw her and he saw that she was a mess.

Becca: Yes, but shall we remember that after the uppy downy at Lyme, it was established that Anne is once again, and I cannot stress this enough, it is crucial, hot.

Molly: Yes. No, she's so hot.

Becca: She's so hot.

Molly: But he didn't notice until someone else noticed.

Becca: Yeah, that's how that works.

Molly: So, do we think that he loved her the whole time? Because he was so mean to her when he first saw her.

Becca: Well, I am neither going to confirm nor deny anything about Wentworth state of mind right now.

Molly: Fine. Moving on.

[laughter]

Becca: Fine.

Molly: [laughs]

Becca: Mary Musgrove. [laughs]

Molly: Oh, my God. Wait. While Mary Musgrove was whining in this chapter, [00:58:00] for some reason, I was just hearing her in 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* Lydia's voice.

Becca: Oh, that's pretty good. Without giving too much away, I have watched one *Persuasion* adaptation. One of the most positive things I will say about it is I love the performance of the actor who plays Mary in that.

Molly: Nice.

Becca: Okay. Next, we have Ghenet, who asked two questions. "What does it say about the state of her relationship with Lady Russell that Anne doesn't hesitate to delay revealing the duplicity of Mr. Elliot to her? After all that happened, does Anne trust Lady R's judgment?"

Molly: You know, it's interesting, because her first thought was, I have to go to Lady Russell first.

Becca: I think she does trust Lady Russell's judgment.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Because she wants to confer with Lady Russell on what to do.

Molly: Yeah, which is just wild to me, because Anne, this woman has been so wrong about so many things.

Becca: Lady R o for two in terms of judging character. [00:59:00]

Molly: But I think that Anne, she trusts Lady Russell, maybe not-- I don't think that she's sitting there thinking, Lady Russell, my confidant, is wrong about so many things. She's thinking my friend is going to be upset when she finds out. She doesn't blame Lady Russell for any of this, which is tough.

Becca: Yeah, it is tough. I do think it's fair for Lady Russell to not have entirely denounced Mr. Elliot, because certain among us can't talk on that.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: But I do think there is something woven into this book about Lady Russell's judge of character, because she totally latches on to the circumstance each man would put Anne in without really taking enough time to evaluate the character of each man. Because she writes off Wentworth because of the situation he could have put [01:00:00] Anne in, and she immediately latches onto Elliot because of the situation that he would have put Anne in, aka making her the mistress of Kellynch. And in both circumstances, she overlooks Wentworth's courage, his ambition, his tenacity and his commitment to Anne and protecting her and providing for her.

For Elliot, she looks over the fakeness, the duplicity, the seedy behavior of his past, all because he would make Anne, Mistress of Kellynch Hall. I don't think it speaks to a lack of care for Anne, but it certainly does speak to weird priorities for Lady Russell.

Molly: Yeah. It's interesting. Not weird priorities. The thing is it's the priorities of the time.

Becca: The Economics of Dating in Jane Austen. Graham, the sound effect. But Jane Austen is saying like, "Look how wrong that can go."

Molly: Right. It's interesting why you were just saying all of that. I actually felt an affection for Lady Russell, [01:01:00] which I haven't necessarily felt over the course of this book. But she was tasked when Anne's mother died with taking care of Anne and making sure that she ended up in a sustainable situation.

Becca: Absolutely.

Molly: So, that's all she's been trying to do. She's just not great at necessarily-- With Wentworth, I think if Wentworth had been in a better situation and hadn't just been like, "I will be in a better situation," she wouldn't have done what she did.

Becca: That's entirely correct. There is no question reading this book that Lady Russell loves Anne, and Lady Russell cares that Anne's happy. The problem has been that Lady Russell is blinded by her own shortcomings and is adamant about protecting Anne in circumstances where she picks the wrong thing for her.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: So, that's the tragedy for Lady Russell. She does care about Anne. The question is really about her own personal judgment rather than her selfishness.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: So, interesting question. Second question from Ghenet. **[01:02:00]** "Do you think Anne is ever envious of the relationship Louisa and Henrietta have based on her little speech about sisters?" Yes.

Molly: Yes. I think that her more showed to me how envious she was of their parents.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: She was like, "Oh, they're so happy, because their parents care about them."

Becca: Yeah. The Musgroves really do serve as a dark side of the moon to the Elliots. Or, rather the Elliots are the dark side of the moon to the Musgroves.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Because the Elliots are this cold, class focused family that embarrasses themselves with their obsession with rank. And the Musgroves are this wealthy, down to earth family. They're not perfect by any stretch of the imagination. They can be very self-involved, but they are not so focused on the stupid, like arbitrary rankings in society. They're focused on their children being well cared for and happy.

Molly: Totally.

Becca: Good for the Musgroves.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: This one is our third from Ghenet. "What do you think Mr. Elliot and **[01:03:00]** Mrs. Clay were up to? What were they talking about?"

Molly: Okay. Here is my prediction. Elliot and Mrs. Clay are working together. How? I don't know. But somehow, they are working together to oust Sir Walter. I don't know how this is possible. Maybe I'm overthinking it. But Elliot wants the baronetcy, and Mrs. Clay wants the baronet's wifecy.

Becca: [laughs]

Molly: [giggles] She wants to be a lady, he wants to be a sir. Somehow, they're working together to get what they both want. That's what I think.

Becca: What am I going to do?

Molly: Neither confirm nor deny.

Becca: I will neither confirm nor deny. Okay. So, From Emily, **[01:04:00]** we have, "Anne is clearly trying to get a message to Wentworth about her feelings. How can you tell?" [laughs]

Molly: [giggles]

Becca: I'm kidding. "How much of the difficulty she is experiencing is down to the time periods, restrictions on single people conversing, and how much it is down to Anne's own feelings/the awkwardness of it all?" Are those two things separable?

Molly: Well, it's interesting. I hadn't thought about the time periods, restrictions on single people conversing. They haven't conversed alone. They're always just in groups. They haven't been alone together, have they, at all?

Becca: No, although they have conversed one-on-one in a group setting at the concert.

Molly: Yes. But they haven't been without others around, like when Mr. Darcy burst in on Lizzie and proposes.

Becca: No. But if she had wanted to, she would have had the capacity, I guess, to find a way to talk to him. It would have been difficult for her to walk over to Wentworth and be like, "Hey, by the way, nothing happening between me and Elliot," because the Musgroves would have been like, "What?" [chuckles]

Molly: Yeah, [01:05:00] I think I'm mostly reading it through the lens of Anne's own feelings and the awkwardness of it all.

Becca: I think most of this book is an ode to how difficult it is to talk about a love that hasn't died.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: It's really hard for these two people to get over the hurt that lies between them to the love that's underneath it. That's the whole ball game.

Molly: Totally.

Becca: And so, they're just so quick in both circumstances to believe the other person's going to walk away.

Molly: But at the same time, it is true that were they to converse and flirt at all or show any semblance of their former feelings, that would draw eyebrows.

Becca: Yeah, it would. They [01:06:00] can't just walk up to each other and be like, "Hey, we used to be engaged."

Molly: Right.

Becca: I think a part of it is like the propriety of it, but a lot of it is the hurt and pain drawn up in all that.

Molly: Absolutely.

Becca: Yeah. How will they find a way?

Molly: How will they.

Becca: That brings us to the end of our patron study questions, listeners. If you want to ask questions of us through our last few chapters, you can join our Patreon at the \$15 tier and you can submit questions for Molly through the Google Doc, she will post before our record sessions.

Okay. So, I only have a couple of Becca study questions, because our listeners really had a lot this time. So, first one is, "Austen allows us to close the loop on both Henrietta's and Louisa's love stories. What purposes do these love stories serve in the grander narrative?"

Molly: I think we've talked about it a little bit in that they have their happiness not at the expense of the other sister is something that Anne hasn't had a chance to experience herself, [01:07:00] so it's like a golden standard. In that way with Henrietta, we get to see her marry someone who may have been below her, but who worked his way up and got that bag and now is acceptable to her family.

Becca: Yeah. It shows patience with an ambitious young man who has potential can pay off.

Molly: Mm-hmm. And then, with Louisa, it shows that opposites can attract and--

Becca: Shared trauma trope.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: I think the Louisa and Benwick story is a really interesting sort of underlying thing in the narrative. You don't get a lot of detail on it, but it's something that Jane Austen tells you a lot about what's happening without actually talking about what's happening.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: And in some ways, I find it a very sad story, because I want Louisa to have been cheerful and chipper and carefree forever.

Molly: She had to grow up too fast.

Becca: And suffer [01:08:00] horrible traumas. I really feel for Louisa in this story. I don't think she has the happiest of endings, but I am comforted by the fact that, like you get the sense she has a very caring man taking care of her.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Not that any girl needs a man, but it's nice to have comfort in your life, especially when your economic situation is tied to finding a man, and the man you find is a good man.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Correcting. You don't need a man unless you are in the Jane Austen time period and you are financially destitute without one.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Okay. "How does the return of the Musgrove clan shape the book? How is Anne different from the last time she saw them?"

Molly: Oh, interesting. So, in terms of how Anne is different, she has gone back to her-- So, she's got two different sides of herself. One where she makes herself quiet and makes herself small in the presence of her family, and one where she is of use [01:09:00] to people with the Musgroves where she's beloved. But she hasn't really shrunk back, per se, so much with her family now.

Becca: Yeah, I agree. I think that we have seen Anne in a lot of different circumstances through the book. You have her with her family at the beginning, which is rock bottom for Anne. And then, you see her build her way up a little bit with the care of the Musgroves, and

making herself useful to the Musgroves and finding warmth in that environment. That makes her hot again, obviously.

And then, when she's in Bath, she is a little bit protected from that good time at the Musgroves to be with her shitty father and sister, but she also has her other connections there, and then she's had the opportunity to hang out with Wentworth and the Crofts without the Musgroves there as well.

So, what we're seeing now is like, Anne coming into her own, being hot, Anne having established [01:10:00] herself a little better in the Bath society, and Anne returning to what she loves the most about the Musgroves, which is that they enjoy her company-

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: -and that they make her feel desirable as a companion and that they make her happy. It doesn't seem that she minds being the caretaker to this family.

Molly: Yeah. It's also interesting in terms of how it shapes the book. It's interesting to see her family around the Musgroves, Elizabeth and Sir Walter. Because in some ways, they're like excited to show off for Mary and they're like, "Look at our beautiful home." But at the same time, these are people who knew them when they were at Kellynch, and they don't want to show them how much they've-

Becca: Fallen.

Molly: -fallen. Yeah.

Becca: Yeah. And I will say it's everyone converging in that, everyone we've met in the books.

Molly: Which we said was going to happen.

Becca: Yes, we did. Obviously, not everyone's there, but I think the large chunk of the population of the [01:11:00] main characters have now made their way to Bath.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Finally, last question. "How does the dynamic between Wentworth and Anne's family change in this chapter?"

Molly: They are finally coming to terms with the fact that he has risen in society, and they know that they can't treat him like he is not a captain.

Becca: Yeah. I think having the Musgroves there also helps, because they are a joint connection between Wentworth and the Elliots.

Molly: And they're Team Freddie.

Becca: And they're very Team Freddie. So, Wentworth is now an unavoidable reality of their inner circle. I think you start to see hints of this chapters ago, when The Dowager Viscountess Lady Dalrymple admired Wentworth.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: They knew he was a little different.

Molly: Yeah. And they were like, "Oh, yeah, he's a handsome young man, isn't he?"

Becca: Yeah. Sir Walter was like, "Oh, yeah, he's the brother of my tenant's [01:12:00] wife." He was like, "I am connected to this man."

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: He and I have a shared connection, so you should think of me as more impressive." They don't have the same stature over him they used to. They don't have the capacity to look down on him, because now, he is in their ranks. He is amongst the society. He's made it. So, it changes how they can treat him. I think you get a sense from Wentworth, he remembers what it was like when he wasn't-

Molly: Yes.

Becca: -that you can feel the bitterness emanating off of him with Elizabeth and Sir Walter.

Molly: Yeah. As he's holding onto that card and he's looking at it and he's like, "Are you for real?"

Becca: He's like, "Well, I have her family's approval now."

Molly: Too little, too late.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Funniest quote?

Molly: Okay. So, this is Elizabeth after Anne says that she's going to visit Lady Russell. "You need not tell her so, but I thought her dress hideous the other night. I used to think she had some taste in [01:13:00] dress, but I was ashamed of her at the concert. Something so formal and arrangé in her air! and she sits so upright! My best love, of course."

Becca: Oh, Elizabeth, she's so awful. I love it.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Questions moving forward. Only two chapters left.

Molly: Oh, my God, I can't believe there's only two chapters left. "What are Mrs. Clay and Mr. Elliot up to?" I will second to Ghenet's question. And then, how will-- I don't want to just be like how will it wrap up between Anne and Wentworth? But will Elliot be exposed? Will Anne expose him for who he is? Will it cause any change in her family, or will they be like, "Oh, well." Where is it going to go with Anne and Wentworth? Because the tension there, it hasn't had anywhere to go in the last however many chapters. They've just been-

Becca: Stewing.

Molly: -stewing. And so, I really want it to [01:14:00] amp up and I'm glad that they're going to have a party where hopefully they're in the same room again. Because when they're not in the same room, I'm like, "Okay, I get it. You love him. You think he loves you, but you guys are not going to talk about it."

Becca: Excuse me, I'm going to obsess a little bit. [chuckles]

Molly: Yeah, I need some subtext. I need you to talk and I need there to be more subtext underneath in the three sentences that you said to each other this chapter, because that's what I want. So, I want more of that, and I want them to fall in love.

Becca: Who wins the chapters?

Molly: Oh, God.

Becca: Chapter.

Molly: Who wins the chapter? I want to say Wentworth for “Eight and a half years is a period.”

Becca: I'll give it to Wentworth. I'll say honorable mention for the Musgroves for letting their daughters marry who they like. But I think Wentworth having established that Anne and Elliot are not a thing, having acknowledged the former love and getting an invitation to the Elliot's for an evening party. **[01:15:00]** Big wins for Wentworth all around.

Molly: So, do we think that he understands now? Do we think that he caught on to what Anne was saying?

Becca: I think he caught on.

Molly: Okay.

Becca: Because he approached her after she said it.

Molly: He did, didn't he?

Becca: And did not before.

Molly: I didn't think about that. Did we talk about that?

Becca: I think maybe a little. He was being all pissy and like, “He-he-he, you're not going to talk to Anne. Going to cold shoulder Anne.” And then, Anne was like, “Oh, I don't have any interest in being at this evening party.” And then, he went to go look at a log and then he went up to Anne and he was like, “So, no interest in that party, huh?”

Molly: I'll be honest, I did not put two and two together. [Becca laughs] You're so right. He got it. He got the message.

Becca: Yeah. That's what I took away is he's like, “Oh, she really didn't want to see Mr. Elliot. Okay.”

Molly: Yeah. No, you're so right. I feel like we were getting there in terms of conversation, but for some reason, I didn't-- Anyway, understood. Love **[01:16:00]** that. Let's freaking go. Let's continue the book.

Becca: Let's fucking go.

Molly: Yeah. [laughs]

Becca: Two chapters, guys. All right. Listeners, for next week, we're going to read the next chapter, obviously. So, if you're in a volume book, that's Volume II Chapter 11. And if you're in a non-volumed book, that's Chapter 23, the penultimate chapter of *Persuasion*.

Molly: Ahh.

Becca: Molly, are you ready?

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Okay. Well, until next time, stay proper.

Molly: And go look at a log. They're so pretty when they're burning.

Becca: Yeah. And then, use the log to get to your former love.

Molly: Yes, of course.

[music]

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