**Molly:** Hey, everyone. Before we begin today, we want to thank our newest patrons, Vilda, Lauren, Nora, Laura, Katrine, LeAnne, Felicia, Hannah, Rhonda, Suzanne, Katie and Allison. Welcome to the team. And a special shoutout to our patrons, Marina, Stephanie and Diana, who upgraded their pledges.

As always, if you're interested in hearing Becca's first thoughts about *Persuasion*, hanging out with us on discord and submitting your own study questions, check out our Patreon at *patreon.com/podandprejudice*.

I also wanted to flag that we've gotten several messages about Elliot's social status since the season premiere of Pod and Prejudice. But we had already recorded this week's episode when we released Episode 1. So, your comments aren't going to be addressed until next episode, and we may make a few more mistakes in this one, but we promise we're reading your emails and your messages, and we love them, so keep them coming. And now, enjoy this week's episode covering Chapters 4 and 5 of **[00:01:00]** *Persuasion*.

[Pod and Prejudice theme]

**Becca:** Okay. [chuckles]

**Molly:** Okay.

**Becca:** We're doing it. We're persuading.

**Molly:** We are persuading someone.

**Becca:** Who are we persuading?

**Molly:** Let's persuade-- I've only had one sip of coffee.

**Becca:** No. [chuckles]

**Molly:** We're recording very early today, listeners.

**Becca:** Yes. It's an early morning record. So, maybe we're persuading our bodies to revive in time to be entertaining for our masses of fans.

**Molly:** Yeah, exactly. We're persuading our brains to wake the fuck up.

**Becca:** Yes. Oh, well, that hit of coffee really did something for me. So, my problem is that I tend to mumble when I get tired, so I'm trying really hard to note mumble right now.

**Molly:** You sound very bright.

**Becca:** Thank you. I feel not at all bright. [chuckles]

**Molly:** I love it.

**Becca:** Well, all that to say, this is Becca.

**Molly:** This is Molly.

**Becca:** We are here to talk about Jane Austen.

**Molly:** We are here specifically **[00:02:00]** to talk about *Persuasion*.

**Becca:** Ooh. Listeners, if you're new here, I, Becca, have read many Jane Austen novels in my lifetime.

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

**Becca:** If you want to hear Molly read through *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility* or *Emma* for the first time, you can listen to Seasons 1, 2 or 3 of this podcast, respectively. But that is not what we're doing here today.

**Molly:** No. Today, we are talking about *Persuasion*, Chapters 4 and 5 of Volume I.

**Becca:** Yes, we are.

**Molly:** It's starting to heat up.

**Becca:** There's some doozies dropped in these chapters, including the ultimate, it's in the title.

**Molly:** Oh, my gosh. Let's tell the listeners where we left off.

**Becca:** Oh, yes, we have to do that. I've forgotten from the book episodes. So, where we were is that we have our girl, Anne Elliot, our 27-year-old unmarried woman, who is the ultimate middle child stuck in a circumstance with her noble, but poor and vapid father and her sister, who bullies her. And **[00:03:00]** she's got a bestie named Lady Russell, who's a widow.

They're all decided that Sir Walter is going to lease his house to Admiral Croft and his wife, who are from the navy, while Walter and his daughters go to Bath. That caused Anne to blow a gasket over his brother-in-law, Admiral Croft's brother-in-law, who we, at the end of the chapter, didn't have any information about.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm. We were wondering who he is.

**Becca:** Whomst, if you will.

**Molly:** Whomst. He, as we learn at the beginning of Chapter 4, is not Mr. Wentworth, [giggles] but his brother, Captain Frederick Wentworth.

**Becca:** Yes, Captain Wentworth.

**Molly:** Captain Wentworth, which is the one thing that I was missing and I was like, "I know that name."

**Becca:** No, I did the same exact thing where I was like, "It's Mr. Wentworth." And then I was like, "It's actually Captain Wentworth."

**Molly:** Yes. So, Captain Wentworth, I was thinking that if I were Anne, wouldn't it be a bit of a stretch to be like, “Maybe **[00:04:00]** he'll be here when it's his brother's sisters--”?

**Becca:** I don't think so, because the war ended and he doesn't have his own place yet. Listen, who's to say if he'll come to Kellynch Hall.

**Molly:** Right. We don't know.

**Becca:** We don't know. But I don't think it's crazy to think a brother could visit. That's the impetus for a lot of different action in Jane Austen novels, see e.g., *Sense and Sensibility*.

**Molly:** True. Yeah, you're right. So, Freddie, as I'm calling him, had at some time-- This is his background. He had come to Somersetshire, which is where Kellynch Hall is.

**Becca:** Mm-hmm.

**Molly:** In the summer of 1806, when he had been made a commander, immediately before something happened and the war ended, or there was no work for him anymore, so he was promoted, and then was like, "Sorry, we don't have a ship for you." So, he had come to Somersetshire **[00:05:00]** and was there for six months, in which time he and Anne fall in love.

**Becca:** Like, so in love.

**Molly:** Like Ro-Ju.

**Becca:** Like soulmate, like burning passion, like this is the essence of the wet shirt-

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** -and Colin Firth

**Molly:** Oh, my God, yes.

**Becca:** Yes.

**Molly:** This is a quote about their inevitability as a couple, "Half the sum of attraction, on either side, might have been enough, for he had nothing to do, and she had hardly anybody to love, but the encounter of such lavish recommendations could not fail.”

**Becca:** Oh, yeah. There's a bit she has in there-- Hang on, let me pull it up. I think it goes on to say they were rapidly and deeply in love and that, “It would be difficult to say which had seen the highest perfection in the other, or which had been the happiest, she, in receiving his declarations and proposals, or he in having them accepted.”

**Molly:** Oh, yeah, that was the next line.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** And that was really sweet. And so, then I was like, "Oh, they're engaged." But **[00:06:00]** actually she accepts his proposals and then he goes to her father. Her father doesn't say no, exactly, but he's just like, what a degrading alliance and basically gives them every reason to think that he's saying no. But he doesn't actually say no. So, part of me is trying to find the loophole and is like, “Actually, are they secretly engaged this whole time?” Because he doesn't say, “You can't get married.” He says, “That would really suck.”

**Becca:** I think he basically is just revolted by the idea. Like, we just got through this chapter where Sir Walter describes how he feels about naval men.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** And to have his daughter, who he sees as the top commodity go for a guy who is trying to raise his rank in society, and also at this point in time has not done so would be a complete degradation in his eyes.

**Molly** Right. But would he just disown her? Like, would she **[00:07:00]** accept that? I don't know. We'll get to what happens next, which is what I think you mean by the ultimate persuasion in the book. But part of me is like, “But he still never said no.” I guess they did break up. Okay, I'm reaching. I'm reaching. [giggles]

**Becca:** Yeah. I think we can safely assume Sir Walter did not approve this match and did not say yes to it.

**Molly:** Sure, sure, sure, sure.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** So, let's get into the, it's in the title. Lady Russell also thinks it would be an unfortunate match, because Anne, at the time was only 19, and Lady Russell thought she would be throwing herself away for someone who doesn't come from money and is in a, "uncertain profession." Because he hadn't saved up his money. He had, I think it said he quickly spent all that he made, which I'm like, "Yes, I get it."

**Becca:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Molly:** So, he feels like he will soon be rich. He's very confident and plucky. He's like, "Yeah, soon I'm going to have a ship. I'm going to be rich. I'm going to be in the navy. I'm going to work my way up."

**Becca:** I think you **[00:08:00]** can get a sense of this guy if you think about who I'm picturing. Not in this role, particularly, but the essence of this vibe would be Jack Dawson in *Titanic*.

**Molly:** Exactly.

**Becca:** That vim and vigor of a young, brash man who's talented and smart and comes from nothing, but is passionate about making his way in the world. You can see that being intoxicating to a young woman like Anne Elliot, who finds complete kinship with this guy, who just sees her when no one else does in her family and makes her completely enamored with his ambition and his passions and his brilliant mind.

**Molly:** Yeah, it's exactly like Jack Dawson in *Titanic*. She's a little bit like Rose. I saw *The Notebook* last night on Broadway.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** It's not exactly like that, because Noah Calhoun doesn't really have those ambitions. But **[00:09:00]** the story tell us all of those time of a poor guy and a rich lady who are in different statuses in society whose parents don't approve.

**Becca:** Oh, you mean Jane Austen established a romantic comedy trope, or a romantic trope, I should say here, really in the Regency Era?

**Molly:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Becca:** Yeah. Seems so.

**Molly:** Yes. So, anyway, he's plucky, he's confident, he's bewitching. And to Anne, this is very hot, as you said. But to Lady Russell, it shows him as being headstrong and a dangerous match. Now, Anne could have ignored her father and her sister's disapproval, but Lady Russell, she's like, "Fuck.” I really admire Lady Russell, and she's also her only friend. So, she listens to her and is persuaded.

**Becca:** That's in the title.

**Molly:** That is in the title.

**Becca:** That is very much in the title.

**Molly:** She's persuaded that the match **[00:10:00]** would be a bad thing. She convinces even herself that this is right for him, that for some reason, marrying her would be bad for him as well. She consoles herself that this is all for his advantage, but he's completely unconvinced and he's so hurt that he just leaves Somersetshire. What possibly could she have told herself to convince herself that it was best for him?

**Becca:** Well, he's in the navy.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** So, he's away a lot, especially trying to establish himself and having a wife at home or on board would maybe hold him back in her mind.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** It's delulu. She's clearly reaching for something to justify the end to this affair, but it is clearly something that she's trying to make sense of. For me, more than anything, it just shows how badly she doesn't want to hurt him-

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** -and then she really does.

**Molly:** Yeah. He is devastated.

**Becca:** Mm-hmm.

**Molly:** It broke my heart. She's devastated too. It takes her **[00:11:00]** youth away.

**Becca:** Yeah. She's so devastated. This is like eight years ago, and we've just learned that the rest of the Elliot clan is aging like fine wine. And for some reason, Anne is aging quicker.

**Molly:** Like, cheese.

**Becca:** Oh, poor Anne.

**Molly:** [giggles]

**Becca:** Poor cheesy Anne. You get the sense that she feels she's so drawn in by her regrets and her lost love that it is physically taking a toll on her body, which, like the drama of luxuriating in the pain of a breakup could never.

**Molly:** I love this for her, because when you think about it, she is so upset about this that she has not found anyone else in the intervening seven to eight years.

**Becca:** Yeah. Remember, Anne Elliot is like, when she's a young woman, a stunner. She's still pretty. She's just drawn and aging through pain.

**Molly:** She's got bags under her eyes now.

**Becca: [00:12:00]** Yeah. I think you get the sense-- I don't want to spoil things, but I get the sense, part of it is that she has wasted away a little.

**Molly:** Oh, yeah.

**Becca:** She's gotten thinner.

**Molly:** Yeah. And in this time period, we loved a curvy lady, and so let's bring that back. [giggles]

**Becca:** Yeah. [crosstalk] Those empire waist dresses needed some bosom filling.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** Yeah. Basically, I think she was this beautiful woman who was of noble birth and at the time, money. And so, she was extremely eligible. She was also, as we've learned, very good in society, people liked her, but she never made any efforts to court after Captain Wentworth, because no one could measure up to him.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** Ooh. Girl, that is being hung up on an ex.

**Molly:** Yes. But if it's your one true love, I get it.

**Becca:** It's stunning, it's beautiful and it hurts my heart.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** It's really an interesting story. We'll get into this. But there is so much to say about what Jane Austen is telling us through this story about-- **[00:13:00]** And we'll get into it in the study questions, The Economics of Dating in Jane Austen. Graham, the sound effect. We can talk about it now, or we can save it for later.

**Molly:** Let's save it for later, because I'm sure we'll talk about this-

**Becca:** Oh, yeah.

**Molly:** -in the questions. So, we learn that in the seven years since, Anne has been too dependent on time alone. As you said, she hasn't done anything except for once going to Bath for a short time, which is why she was so depressed in Bath and why she hates Bath.

**Becca:** Mm-hmm.

**Molly:** So, that's one mystery solved. At one point, actually, Charles Musgrove proposed to her.

**Becca:** Yes.

**Molly:** I was like, “That name sounds familiar.” When she said no, he went to Mary.

**Becca:** So, that's where you knew the name.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** Yes, indeed.

**Molly:** Her dear brother-in-law. Charles Musgrove was "the eldest son of a man whose landed property and general importance were second in that country only to Sir Walters." So, here's my question. Why isn't Sir Walter proud of Mary for marrying him, ultimately?

**Becca:** That's a great question. **[00:14:00]** And the very simple answer is that he might be landed gentry, but he is not noble.

**Molly:** Hmm.

**Becca:** Sir Walter thinks extremely highly of the family and very much clings to their nobility.

**Molly:** And bloodline.

**Becca:** And bloodline. Mary married someone very rich and landed gentry with-- like, who is going to inherit a plump estate in Somersetshire, but she didn't marry somebody noble.

**Molly:** Gotcha.

**Becca:** So, it's a good match by any other measure, and that's why Lady Russell was pushing Anne to take it. [chuckles]

**Molly:** Yes. When Charles Musgrove proposed, Lady Russell was like, "Wait a minute--" This is when Anne's 27.

**Becca:** No, 22.

**Molly:** 22. Lady Russell was like, "You could be picky at 19. But at 22, you should probably start accepting some matches."

**Becca:** This is where Lady Russell, her errors start to show, because at 19, she's like, "You have so many options ahead of you." And then she thought Anne would just pick a very reasonable match. And then **[00:15:00]** when Anne turns down one of the most reasonable matches in the neighborhood, she is perplexed and she's like, "Okay, well, what are you going to do?" Anne just doesn't court, she doesn't try, she doesn't find herself a suitor.

**Molly:** Yeah. And Lady Russell is stressed on her behalf.

**Becca:** Mm-hmm.

**Molly:** She and Lady Russell never talk about Wentworth and what happened when she was 19. But Anne has started to think differently as she aged about the whole situation. She doesn't blame Lady Russell for what she did, but she thinks that if a young lady who was in her position had come to her now knowing what she knows, she wouldn't do what Lady Russell had done. She is persuaded.

**Becca:** It's very much in the title.

**Molly:** That even if everyone disapproves, she should yet have been a happier woman in maintaining the engagement than she had been in the sacrifice of it.

**Becca:** Fascinating, right?

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** First of all, do you blame Lady Russell?

**Molly:** Do I blame Lady Russell? **[00:16:00]** No. A little bit, because Lady Russell has shown some classism that is very common in this time period and particularly in this book so far. So, that's the norm. But I think that Anne was young at the time, and that she trusted Lady Russell, and so she had a very malleable mind and was very willing to go along with it. I don't blame her for going along with it, and I don't necessarily blame Lady Russell for doing it. But I think that if Anne had been a little bit stronger of willpower at the time, maybe-- Well, her dad had already said no. Do I blame Lady Russell? I don't know. I think it's an unfortunate situation, a little bit.

**Becca:** Yeah. I think we're led to believe that if Anne had pushed for this, this would have happened even if she'd lost her family, she would have been okay with that.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** I don't think she would have lost Lady **[00:17:00]** Russell. I think it's an interesting question of whether or not to blame Lady Russell, because on one hand, you're correct that there is a, "You're too young to make this decision" element to her advice. But in the Economics of Dating in Jane Austen, this, to me is the most quintessential-- Again, we'll talk about this more in the study questions. The most quintessential boiling down of Jane Austen asking the question of whether to marry as an economic proposition or whether to marry for love. Because never in her other books are any of heroines really meant to choose between the two.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** Anne chooses to be more practical in her youth, and then spends eight years profoundly regretting that decision.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** I wonder what that means, Jane Austen is saying about the Economics of Dating in her society.

**Molly:** That's a very interesting point. I also **[00:18:00]** will add, because we're about to learn that he does turn his life around shortly after they break up.

**Becca:** This is the worst. [chuckles]

**Molly:** This is the worst. So, she turns him down because of money reasons. Shortly after he gets a job, he gets a ship, he gets promoted and he makes a handsome fortune, or at least she thinks he does based on her newspaper stalking.

**Becca:** First of all, iconic Instagram stalking of the ex-behavior from our girl, Anne Elliot.

**Molly:** Yes, she's been saving clippings.

**Becca:** No. What she is doing is she is taking screenshots of his life on Insta and being like, "Why is he so much happier than me?" Second of all, there is nothing worse than an ex that is doing better than you.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** Like, even if you have a good relationship with your ex's-- This is not meant to say be petty, hate your ex's. Even if you have a good relationship with your ex's, they cannot do better than you. That's the golden rule of keeping a sound mind about your **[00:19:00]** ex's who factor into your life in any way.

**Molly:** Yes. And to Anne, she does note that she has no reason to think that he has found a wife. Like, he is not married to her knowledge, and she's been keeping tabs on that. But what I'll say is that I wonder if some of her-- This is maybe not fair to Anne, but she does live in this time period. If some of her regret is exacerbated because he is doing so well and because it turns out that her family was wrong. If her family had been right, would she still be as sad about it?

**Becca:** I think that's one of the key questions of the book. I think, generally, the answer is probably, if he hadn't made anything of himself, she wouldn't feel this way necessarily, because it's not really discussed. But if he hadn't made anything of himself, she would not have lived a very good life. But I think the point being, if you met this guy, how could you possibly **[00:20:00]** think he wouldn't make anything of himself,-

**Molly:** Sure.

**Becca:**-if that makes sense.

**Molly:** Yes. He was always going to make something of himself.

**Becca:** Like,if she met him and she just knew he was going to be Captain Wentworth, not just Freddie, then she should have trusted that instinct, because it was correct. This is the big debate of *Persuasion*, like, "Was Anne right to do this, or was Anne wrong to do this?" Jane Austen is making us grapple really directly with that question, like, going to the heart of the Economics of Dating in Jane Austen proposition. I'm so sorry for all the sound effects, Graham, but we will work through them.

**Molly:** [laughs]

**Becca:** Going to the heart of marrying for stability and security and a place in society, or marrying because someone makes your soul sing, like that is the proposition that is placed at Anne's feet. Obviously, because it's a Jane Austen novel, he obviously makes his money, but she's asking these questions about like, "Do you trust yourself? Do you trust that the **[00:21:00]** man who you have fallen for will take care of you, is that worth the trust?"

**Molly:** Yeah. And another question that it asks is, who is-- You asked me this, but who is at fault for this persuasion? Is it the person doing the persuading, or does it have to fall more on the person who is persuaded?

**Becca:** Who should be regretting this more?

**Molly:** Right.

**Becca:** Yeah, that's a really great question.

**Molly:** Hmm. Now, Anne, over the last seven years, has become a romantic. She had been forced into prudence in her youth. She learned romance as she grew older, the natural sequel of an unnatural beginning.

**Becca:** This is also, again, iconic ex behavior, where you're really spending a lot of time romanticizing the one that got away.

**Molly:** Yes. She's a dreamer now. She has big dreams for herself. She should have big dreams for herself if she turned down the love of her life, like, maybe she thinks there's something else out there, but she doesn't. She thinks he's out there **[00:22:00]** somewhere. Her heart hurts knowing that his sister will be at Kellynch. Many a stroll and many a sigh were necessary to calm her down.

**Becca:** This is where we learn that Anne Elliot is a relatable queen.

**Molly:** Yes. She just goes on her hot girl walks and sighs.

**Becca:** I too need to calm down sometimes.

**Molly:** Oh, yes. Same.

**Becca:** Obviously, this is less of a factor in my life now than it used to be. But do you remember yearning and having to cope with that over someone-

**Molly:** Oh, yes.

**Becca:** -who was in the past were unavailable?

**Molly:** You know I do.

**Becca:** yeah. So, the needing to stroll and sigh is the most universal thing. This is why Jane Austen is timeless work.

**Molly:** Yes, exactly. She tells herself that she's being silly, that it's really no big deal. And to help her believe that, the only three people who knew about it, which would be Lady Russell, Elizabeth and Sir Walter **[00:23:00]** have all been acting like it never happened for the last seven years. But this does explain why her dad, or maybe it explains-- A lot of things explain why her dad. But he was like "Wentworth? You're saying he's a gentleman? No, no, no."

**Becca:** We could also read into a part of the reason why Walter and Elizabeth think so low of Anne.

**Molly**: Hmm. Because she was going to run off with someone in the navy.

**Becca:** Yeah, she's this reckless idiot.

**Molly:** Yeah. Hmm. True. She is glad that they're the only three people that know. And obviously, Mr. Wentworth, who had long since left the country, but he was single at the time and he was living with Freddie Wentworth, so he knew. But he was single at the time, he didn't tell the wife, and he's probably forgotten about it too. So, nobody's going to talk about it. She thinks that because of this, the Crofts can come live at Kellynch without any awkwardness.

**Becca:** She hopes there will be very little awkwardness.

**Molly:** Yes, she has her fingers crossed.

**Becca:** Yes.

**Molly:** But of course, **[00:24:00]** there would be no book if there was going to be no awkwardness.

**Becca:** That's a great point.

**Molly:** So, that brings us to Chapter 5. On the day the Crofts are coming to see Kellynch Hall, Anne goes to Lady Russell's to hide. The meeting goes great. Everyone likes each other, partially because the ladies, Mrs. Croft and Elizabeth were predisposed to each other. They were like, “This is going to go great.” And partly because Mr. Shepherd flattered Sir Walter that the admiral thinks very highly of him, so everything is agreed to on their terms. It says that there were no modifications to "this indenture sheweth" and I looked in the back and that does just mean that all of the terms of the contract were agreed to with no negotiations.

**Becca:** Yes. I also love this portion because it notes that Sir Walter is like, "Oh, you know what? He is pretty good looking for a naval man."

**Molly:** Yeah, he's like, “He’s the best-looking naval officer I've seen. He's fine.” The admiral says to his wife, “I thought we should soon come to a deal, in spite of what they told us at Taunton,” **[00:25:00]** which I thought was funny because it said that those two compliments were equal, and I'm like, "Wait. What did they tell him at Taunton?" And then I was like, "Wait, in spite of what they told us at Taunton, did--" What's his fucking face?

**Becca:** Shep?

**Molly:** No. Well, yes, but I don't know what Shep said, but he seems like he's heard shit. So, I'm like, "What about Sir William Walter Elliot III Esq.?”

**Becca:** I think it's just that Sir Walter has a certain reputation in the [crosstalk] world.

**Molly:** He says, “The Baronet will never set the Thames on fire, but there seems to be no harm in him.” What does it mean, he will never set the Thames on fire?

**Becca:** I don't know.

**Molly:** In my mind, he's not going to do anything big in the world, but he's fine. But why never set the Thames on fire. Listeners, if you know, hit me up, because there wasn't a footnote on this one and it was a weird thing to **[00:26:00]** say. Lady Russell thinks that Anne won't be allowed by her dad and sister to be of any use in their first journey to Bath. So, she's like, “Maybe Anne can stay with me, and I'll bring her to Bath after Christmas.” But she has plans that are going to take her away from Kellynch Hall, or lodge or-- I guess she lives in Kellynch Lodge.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Yeah. Okay. So, they'll take you away from Kellynch for several weeks, so she can't make the full offer to Anne. Anne, meanwhile, decides that as much as she doesn't want to go to Bath, she would rather go with them to Bath than stay and suffer near the Crofts. Because, she's going to be like, “Is he here? Is he here? Is he here? Is he here?” But then Mary decides that she is unwell and she needs her sister.

**Becca:** Is that the final Elliot coming in for the sweep?

**Molly:** Finally. I really like Mary, and I'll explain why when we get to more.

**Becca:** Yeah. We'll see what happens.

**Molly:** So, she's like, "I must have Anne." And Elizabeth says, "Then I am **[00:27:00]** sure Anne had better stay for nobody will want her in Bath."

**Becca:** Because Elizabeth is-- Hmm, I don't want to use a rude word here, but--

**Molly:** She sucks.

**Becca:** Fuck, Elizabeth.

**Molly:** Our patrons in the Discord were laughing about some compost jokes.

**Becca:** Oh, my God. Yes, because they were like our guy, Eddie, is compost, which I still believe.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** He's getting better in the world.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** I think we can safely say Sir Walter and Elizabeth are pure gar-bage.

**Molly:** Yeah. They are hot gar-bage.

**Becca:** Literally, hot gar-bage.

**Molly:** They are sexy gar-bage.

**Becca:** Like, Daddy gar-bage.

**Molly:** Daddy--

**Becca:** Daddy. I love that daddy gar-bage.

**Molly:** The Daddy gar-bage. I love it. So, Anne, poor Anne, would rather be claimed as good, even if it's in an improper way of being like, I must have Anne with me than to be outright rejected by her family. So, this works out for Lady Russell. Now Anne can split her time between Uppercross cottage, where Mary lives **[00:28:00]** and Kellynch Lodge, where Lady Russell lives. This is all well and good until they learn that Mrs. Clay is going to Bath, that's Shep's daughter, which is rude, because they were like, "Anne can be no use to us, but we must have Mrs. Clay."

**Becca:** Why are they bringing Mrs. Clay?

**Molly:** Why are they bringing Mrs. Clay?

**Becca:** We have our podcast interpretation potentially of why they're bringing Mrs. Clay.

**Molly:** Gay.

**Becca:** Gay. Elizabeth cannot go to Bath without her lover.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** There is another explanation, and we'll get into it as we talk.

**Molly:** Yeah, we'll get into it. I can't think of a reason, but I can think of a reason for Mrs. Clay to want to go, Mrs. Clay. But I might be misinterpreting. Anne doesn't let this offend her, but she is aware of the dangers this friendship poses.

**Becca:** To whom?

**Molly:** To Elizabeth. To herself.

**Becca:** Why the focus **[00:29:00]** on Mrs. Clay's looks?

**Molly:** Well, she has freckles and a buck tooth.

**Becca:** We'll leave it there for now.

**Molly:** Yeah. Okay, so she's got freckles, she's got a buck tooth, she's got a clumsy wrist, which I assume means bad handwriting. And Anne thinks she's a nice-looking person with an acute mind and good manners. She thinks that her acute mind and good manners are more dangerous attractions than if she had been hot. Why is this dangerous? Well, I'm not sure. [laughs]

**Becca:** We'll make our way there.

**Molly:** Yes, we'll make our way there. Let's talk through it. Anne tries to warn Elizabeth, if only to say she tried. She's like, “I have to do something, even if it doesn't work.” So, she goes to Elizabeth. Elizabeth could not conceive how such an absurd suspicion could occur to Anne. I wrote same in my notes because I'm like, "What is wrong with Mrs. Clay? I still don't know." But my guess is that she thinks **[00:30:00]** that Mrs. Clay will distract attention from Elizabeth and steal potential suitors, maybe. Elizabeth says Mrs. Clay never forgets her place in society, and she reprobates or disapproves of inequality of condition and rank in a match. So, Elizabeth bringing that up is what makes me think that Anne thinks that Mrs. Clay will steal suitors, and Elizabeth is like, "No, she wouldn't do that." She knows our society's too high for her.

**Becca:** Do you want me to tell you or no?

**Molly:** No.

**Becca:** Okay.

**Molly:** Let's get there, because I'm sure there is a better reason. But let's get there at the end.

**Becca:** We can leave this a little neither confirm or deny.

**Molly:** Yeah, let's leave it a little confirm or deny.

**Becca:** Okay.

**Molly:** I think the mystery of Mrs. Clay let's keep it alive.

**Becca:** Hmm. Some spice in the book. Some Clay-laced spice.

**Molly:** Yes. So, Elizabeth says, "Our father has kept himself single for so long for our sakes, and he need not be suspected now." Another **[00:31:00]** question. Suspected of what? I don't understand. [giggles] You could tell me that,-

**Becca:** Well--

**Molly:** -unless it's connected. Does she think that they're going to-- No, she doesn't--

**Becca:** What does she think?

**Molly:** She doesn't think that Mrs. Clay and her dad are going to run off together, does she?

**Becca:** That is precisely what she thinks.

**Molly:** No.

**Becca:** Yeah. She is worried that this hot widowed lady, who is beneath her father by quite a bit, will tempt him. And the focus on the looks is, is she hot enough to tempt Sir Walter?

**Molly:** [giggles] That was my reach thought. I was like, “That would be crazy.”

**Becca:** No.

**Molly:** So, I didn't even write it down.

**Becca:** No, no. No, that's precisely correct. That's why I was like-- I could tell her because it's pretty spelled out here.

**Molly:** I thought I was like, "No way." So, that's why I didn't even write it down, because I was like, “I must be reading that wrong.” **[00:32:00]**

**Becca:** No, no, no, no, no. No, no. Precisely that. If you recalls-- Yeah.

**Molly**: She's his daughter's age.

**Becca:** And you've never known a rich man to take a second wife who is the same age as his daughter?

**Molly:** No, I have, I have. It's just weird because they're best friends.

**Becca:** It raises the question, why are they best friends?

**Molly:** Why does her dad let her hang out with this girl?

**Becca:** Why does this girl hang out with her?

**Molly:** [gasps]

**Becca:** Gay, but--

**Molly:** But also looking for daddy?

**Becca:** Daddy garbage.

**Molly:** Ahh. What? Oh, my God.

**Becca:** That was a beautiful thing to catch on, Mike. I'm really, really pleased.

**Molly:** Wow. I'm shook. I'm shooketh.

**Becca:** [laughs] Well, think about it this way. She could be like the wife of a baronet.

**Molly:** Did she say this to Eliz-- Did Anne go, "Do you worry **[00:33:00]** that Mrs. Clay is going to try to get with your father?"

**Becca:** Yes. And Elizabeth basically responded, "No, I love her to bits, but she's too ugly for dad. Don't worry."

**Molly:** Yeah. Anne thinks too highly of her father if she thinks that he can get past her looks to her sparkling brain.

**Becca:** What Anne is saying is like, “Well, she might not be like the most stunning woman ever, but she is pretty and she's good at holding herself in a way.” I don't know if you've ever interacted with shallow people intensely, but the truth is that they actually are only so shallow. We've already seen this happen with Sir Walter where he was like, "The men in the navy are ugly."

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** And then he met Admiral Croft who flattered him, and he was like, "This man in the Navy is not ugly." He is susceptible in these ways. But we don't know how this is going to play out. We don't know how this will fudge. It is true that Mrs. Clay does not precisely match the description that some guy **[00:34:00]** as vain as Sir Walter would want for himself.

**Molly:** Yes. But Anne thinks that, "there is hardly any personal defect which an agreeable manner might not gradually reconcile one to."

**Becca:** Which Elizabeth does not agree with.

**Molly:** No. Elizabeth is like, “An agreeable manner can't make an ugly person pretty. Leave me alone.” And Anne is like, “Okay, I tried.” Anne walks away. I wondered if Elizabeth heard her a little bit, because she does mention that she has more at stake than Anne in this whole thing, so she should just leave the decision to her.

**Becca:** I think it's more of a way to dismiss Anne, but it is true, Elizabeth would have a greater stake in this. She's currently the lady of Kellynch Hall. Well, they let it, but she is the Emma Woodhouse to her father, Mr. Woodhouse, in terms of taking care of the house.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** So, she would lose more.

**Molly:** Yes. So, Sir Walter, Elizabeth and Mrs. Clay, all leave in good spirits. Wait a minute, but hang on. Before we get there, does Lady Russell not notice any of this?

**Becca:** Lady Russell agrees with Anne on this.

**Molly:** Okay. Because **[00:35:00]** so far, it's just been like, why is she choosing this girl over her sister?

**Becca:** There's multiple reasons why Lady Russell is angry about the Mrs. Clay thing. Anne doesn't give a shit about Elizabeth. She doesn't like Elizabeth. Elizabeth doesn't like her. But she does care if her father gets married to Mrs. Clay. Lady Russell thinks that Elizabeth and Anne should be buddies and knows that Mrs. Clay is a social climber.

**Molly:** I guess there's a little bit of why is Sir Walter choosing Mrs. Clay over his own daughter.

**Becca:** Yes.

**Molly:** So, there's a lot. Anyway, the three of them leave, and Anne walks alone to the lodge feeling sorry for herself and sighing. Lady Russell already misses friends, and they're like, "You know what? Let's just go and get out of the way for when the Crofts arrive." So, Lady Russell drops Anne off at Uppercross on her way to wherever she's going, these mysterious plans of hers.

Uppercross, the area **[00:36:00]** has two superior houses. There's the mansion of the squire, which is short for esquire, or one of our patrons also mentioned that esquire itself didn't necessarily mean lawyer, but was more of like a title for a person.

**Becca:** It's like a gentry title.

**Molly:** Yeah. So, there's the mansion of esquire, and Uppercross cottage is what I think I'm getting. It's either that or that there's a mansion that has a parsonage, and there's a great house that has Uppercross cottage.

**Becca:** So, there's a great house in Uppercross.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** That is the great manor. Then there is Uppercross cottage-

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** -which is near the manor. And then there is also a parsonage, that's pretty nice.

**Molly:** The parsonage being part of the mansion.

**Becca:** It's the--

**Molly:** It's like the parsonage of the town.

**Becca:** Yeah. It's the Mr. Collins to Lady Catherine de Bourgh situation, or the Mr. Elton hookup in Highbury. It's a nice house. Not as nice as the great mansion in town though.

**Molly:** But Uppercross **[00:37:00]** cottage itself is one of the main houses of the town.

**Becca:** Yes.

**Molly:** Okay. So, that's where Mary lives, and her parents in law live at the great house.

**Becca:** You might understand why, like, at this point.

**Molly:** Why they live in the two houses?

**Becca:** Mr. Musgrove is the gentry, the gentleman who owns Uppercross, the big manor.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** His son, Charles Musgrove is going to inherit it, but is also married and has his own kids as you quickly learn.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** And they want their own house. So, the uppercross cottage is where they live until he retires from being head of the house essentially, and then Charles takes over. So, until then, Charles lives in his own house with his wife.

**Molly:** Yes. When Anne gets there, she is surprised to find Mary alone. Because she's alone, she's very unwell and she's very out of spirits. Mary, we learn, is better endowed than Elizabeth. Meaning, **[00:38:00]** I think more she's better brain wise. She's got something going on upstairs, but she doesn't have Anne's understanding or temper and she gets very depressed.

**Becca:** So, my understanding of Mary, who is an icon and a fucking legend.

**Molly:** I fucking love Mary.

**Becca:** She's so funny, is that she is somewhere between her two sisters. Anne is like basically a saint.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** She thinks very deeply, and keeps it all very proper on the outside, but she's also got a very specific understanding of people and souls. Anne is a special person. Elizabeth is vapid and cruel and rude.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** Mary is kind of a basic bitch and a little bit self-important, but not unfeeling or unloving. So, she's totally fine when she's in a good mood, and she becomes genuinely impossible if she's a little cranky. [chuckles]

**Molly:** She's a little cranky. When she's cranky, she becomes the center of her own universe. She's **[00:39:00]** like, "Why is nobody paying attention to me?"

**Becca:** This is an interesting psychological experiment Jane Austen has going on, because you also learned that Mary is not as pretty as her sisters, and therefore developed some deep complex [Molly laughs] about it and has this desperate need for attention, apparently always, that manifests in hypochondria that would make Mr. Woodhouse blush.

**Molly:** Yes. When you think about it, she's the youngest child, and she needs the eyes to go on her, because otherwise no eyes will be on her. So, it makes total sense. She's like, "Guys, guys, guys, over here. I'm sick. I'm sad."

**Becca:** You're so right about the Elliot sisters, really encapsulating, oldest child, middle child and baby.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** No shade to eldest. We love you. You're not all Elizabeths, but Elizabeth is the parent's favorite, the head of the house.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm. The perfect **[00:40:00]** one.

**Becca:** Not the perfect one.

**Molly:** Butshe thinks she's the perfect one.

**Becca:** She thinks she's the perfect one. And then you have Anne, who's overlooked.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** And then you have Mary, who's desperate for attention.

**Molly:** Yes. She's just loud about it.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Anne finds her lying on the faded sofa, faded because of all of the children, whining about how she's so ill she can hardly speak, and she's been alone all morning. She's fully in melodramatic mode. And Anne is like, "Oh, well, you sent me a very cheerful account of yourself on Thursday." And Mary's like, "Well, yeah, I make a do, I act like I'm okay." And then she says, "Lady Russell couldn't deign to come in. She hasn't seen her in years." Rude.

**Becca:** I love Mary. She is an unhinged character. I love her so much.

**Molly:** I love her so much. Anne is like, "Where's Charles?" And Mary says, "He's out shooting. He left at 08:00. He hasn't been back. It's 1 o'clock. He said that he would only be gone for a little while. Where is he?" The kids were with her, but they were bothering her.- **[00:41:00]**

**Becca:** [chuckles]

**Molly:** -so, she sent them away.

**Becca:** Iconic. But we do learn she has two little boys.

**Molly:** Two little boys whose names are also Charles and Walter.

**Becca:** Yeah, name one after the dad and one after the grandpa.

**Molly:** There's a lot of the same names going on in this book.

**Becca:** Yes.

**Molly:** Yes. As there were a lot of John's in *Sense and Sensibility*.

**Becca:** Mm-hmm.

**Molly:** Anne is like, "Well, good thing I'm here. I always cure you when I come." I like this about their relationship, Mary is like, "I need Anne. She will cure me." And Anne is like, "I will cure you. Sure."

**Becca:** Literally, Anne just comes and she's like, "I will give you a little attention-

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** -and then you'll feel better."

**Molly:** She does. She always feels better after a little attention. She asks about the Musgrove's. And Mary says, "Mr. Musgrove stopped by, but he stayed on his horse and talked to her through the window, and the Mrs. Musgrove's couldn't even stoop to come by." Anne tries to comfort her, saying, "The morning is young, they could still come," which is interesting because it is 1 o'clock. It is not morning anymore. And Mary's like, "I don't want them here anyway." **[00:42:00]** And then she chides Anne for not coming to see her on Thursday. And Anne is like, "But again, in your letter to me on Thursday, you said you were fine."

**Becca:** I love this scene, because as an intro scene, it tells you exactly the dynamic between these two sisters. You can see Anne being the master of the emotional labor for Mary.

**Molly:** Yeah, she's so used to this. She says that she had also been really busy, so she couldn't have come before now anyway. And Mary is like, "What could you possibly have to do?" And Anne is like, "Ah, well--" and she lists all of the things that she had to do. She had to go through all the plants with their gardener and tell him which ones are for Lady Russell, which I guess she's going to take care of some.

**Becca:** Basically, I think the idea is that she moved-

**Molly:** Right. She was moving.

**Becca:** -like, she was moving.

**Molly:** Yes. She had to divide up all her books and music. There was something that she said she had to pack and repack because she had misunderstood what was happening with the wagons. I just have this headcanon, and then that means that she thought that she was going **[00:43:00]** to be able to send some stuff with her dad and her sister, but then Mrs. Clay was coming, and there wasn't room for her stuff, so she had to repack her stuff and take stuff out because she's going to have to bring it later. That was just really devastating to me.

**Becca:** Molly is tearing up over this like imagined circumstance. It very well could have happened.

**Molly:** Yeah. I don't know, it's just--. And she's just like, "Oh, and there was something with the wagons."

**Becca:** Very sad.

**Molly:** She's just so used to being walked all over. She also had to go to every house in the parish to take her leave. She was told they wished it. Who told her that? Who said Anne go say goodbye to everyone for us? Do you think that was her father? Do you think that he was just sending her on a fool's errand, or do you think that's actually proper?

**Becca:** I think it's probably proper. I think that Anne probably did all of the work for the move, and her father and sister did absolutely nothing.

**Molly:** That's devastating.

**Becca:** Anne's life sucks.

**Molly:** Poor Anne.

**Becca:** But it's okay. Because as we've learned, Mary, while not a perfect sister by **[00:44:00]** any stretch of the imagination is at least a person who tolerates Anne's presence and at least enjoys her company.

**Molly:** She even requests Anne's presence.

**Becca:** Exactly.

**Molly:** So, that's nice. We love Mary for that.

**Becca:** Yes. [chuckles] Bare minimum sister.

**Molly:** [giggles] Yes. Mary says, "You never asked about my dinner with the pools last night." And Anne is like, "Well, I assumed you canceled it because you're so unwell."

**Becca:** She's like, "No, I was feeling better last night."

**Molly:** Yeah. She said, "No, I was fine." Anne says, "Well, I hope it was a pleasant evening." And Mary is like, "Well, it was unremarkable." [giggles] The carriage was crowded because the Musgrove's are so large, and that's why she thinks she's sick today.

**Becca:** Well, I think what she's saying is specifically that Mrs. Musgrove is large and that she had to squeeze between the two Musgrove sisters.

**Molly:** Yes, exactly. Well, poor Mary, your life is so hard.

**Becca:** [chuckles]

**Molly:** After talking for a while, Mary is basically cured. She's forgotten all about her illness. She gets up to fix the nosegay, which is a bunch of flowers I looked up.

**Becca:** I love this, because what happens is she starts **[00:45:00]** high drama, “I'm so sick,” and then as she talks to Anne, she just literally forgets to keep up the ruse.

**Molly:** Exactly. She pops up, walks across the room and then she's like, "Oh, I guess I'm feeling better." And so, she proposes, they go for a little walk and she says, "I assume you will not want to go to the great house until the Mrs. Musgrove's call on you." And Anne is like, "No, I don't stand on ceremony with people I know so well as them. Like, it doesn't matter." And Mary is like, "Well, they should still come first. They should know what's due to you as my sister." But she agrees to go see them. That's Mary's Elliot self-importance coming out.

**Becca:** Yes, exactly. So, Anne obviously has very little of this, and Mary has some of it. Not nearly as much as her father and her sister, and she has a heart underneath it.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** But she is certainly less pleasant and proper than her sister and stands more on ceremony of her father's rank.

**Molly:** Yes, exactly. They go to the great house. I think what's going on here is that Anne doesn't like the interior design of it. She talks about how there's pianos and flower stands and little tables **[00:46:00]** facing every which way in direction.

**Becca:** I don't take that from this section. Maybe I'm reading too far into it. But I take an affectionate love of the little mess around.

**Molly:** Hmm. Okay. Because I was thinking that she was like, “It's chaotic in here.”

**Becca:** I think she's enjoying the homeliness of it.

**Molly:** Hmm.She wishes she had something a little bit cozier in life.

**Becca:** Yeah. I think she wishes that she had-- Her family stands on a lot of ceremony and she loves Kellynch Hall, but there's no warmth in her household. And very clearly, right away, you see the chaos and joy of the Musgrove household.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** I like that. I like that.

**Molly:** The Musgrove's are friendly, good-natured people, but not very educated. My response to that was like, and they have a problem with Mrs. Croft.

**Becca:** Where's their problem with Mrs. Croft here?

**Molly:** Sorry, what's her name, Mrs. Clay?

**Becca** Oh, yes.

**Molly:** If the Musgrove's are uneducated-- **[00:47:00]**. I understand they're landed gentry, they're not nobility, and neither is Mrs. Clay, and that's where a lot of people's problems with Mrs. Clay come. But why is it okay for Mary? Maybe I wrote this note before I understood about the daddy issues that she's going through.

**Becca:** Yeah, I think that's exactly what happened is that the problem with Mrs. Clay is not her existence.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** It's her wish to make a connection with the Elliot family. Just as by a note of comparison, the Musgrove's may not be educated, but they are wealthy, and landed gentry wealthy.

**Molly:** And Mrs. Clay is educated. She has a lot of good points in their conversations. She's always bringing stuff up.

**Becca:** Mrs. Clay is smart, but not well bred, and she's the daughter of a lowly lawyer and she is a widow with children already.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** She is not a good connection. She doesn't have many good connections outside of Elizabeth.

**Molly: [00:48:00]** I see.

**Becca:** Whereas the Musgrove's are wealthy.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** Have a lot of children. Their children are very well bred.

**Molly:** Yes. Yes, yes, yes. The children have modern minds and manners.

**Becca:** Yeah. They are newer money. The Musgroves are a somewhat newer class of money than the Elliots, but they are not necessarily a poor connection to make in society. But the fact that you're confused by this is Jane Austen's point-

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** -is that Sir Walter is so snotty about the navy, and yet travels with Mrs. Clay is the point.

**Molly:** Got it. Okay.

**Becca:** This is all made up.

**Molly:** Yes, exactly. So, there are a lot of kids in the Musgrove family. The adult ones are Charles, Henrietta and Louisa. And the girls, who are 19 and 20 respectively, I think, just came back from school at Exeter. They're accomplished, fashionable, happy, merry of consequence at home and favorites abroad, the happiest people Anne knows. But Anne still feels some superiority over them, because **[00:49:00]** she would not have given up her own elegant and cultivated mind for all their enjoyments in life.

**Becca:** Not like other girls.

**Molly:** Not like other girls.

[laughter]

**Molly:** But she does envy one thing about them, and that is their sisterly bond, which she doesn't have with her sisters. They're friends with each other, and she wishes that she had friends and her sisters like that. At the end of their half hour visit, Mary invites the Mrs. Musgrove's to join them on the rest of their walk, and that is the end of Chapter 5.

**Becca:** What a substantive set of chapters.

**Molly:** It really is. Lot's happening.

**Becca:** Let's go to the study questions, starting with our patron study questions. Once again, patrons, if you are at the $15 tier on our Patreon, you can wait until Molly submits a Google Doc before we record, and we will take up your questions in the Google Doc and use them during the episode.

So, again, if you join our patron at the $15 tier, you can submit study questions through Molly's posted Google Doc before our record sessions. And on that note, our patron study questions include one from Joanna. **[00:50:00]** “Lady Russell, villain, friend or both?”

**Molly:** Both. I'm leaning towards friend, because again, I think that she did think that what she was doing for Anne was what's best. Am I still mad at her? Yes. Like, it goes back to the question I asked before which is, whose fault is the persuasion, Lady Russell's or Anne's for being persuaded? They both had to partake in that. She can't absolve herself of all responsibility even if she changed her mind later on. So, I think that Lady Russell tries to do what's right by Anne. She just might have a different idea of what's right by Anne than what Anne thinks is right for her. So, both in a way.

**Becca:** I think both is totally correct. I will admit I get furious at Lady Russell reading these chapters.

**Molly:** Totally.

**Becca:** It's just so blind to really ignore **[00:51:00]** how deeply Anne was feeling about this and act like it didn't matter.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** I think thinking it an imprudent match is understandable. She's a woman driven by class, which I think is something that Jane Austen is critiquing here. But I also think the greater sin of Lady Russell is not just persuading Anne away from a match that clearly would have made her quite happy, but it is the inability and incapacity to understand what that would do to Anne, that for me is still troublesome about Lady Russell. The not talking about it with her when clearly it is something that has plagued her mind for eight years, is for me, the thing that makes me really upset with Lady Russell on these friends.

**Molly:** Yeah. I think it's also especially devastating, because Anne doesn't have any other friends.

**Becca:** She has no one to talk about Captain Wentworth with.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** That's why she has to do all this sighing and strolling.

**Molly: [00:52:00]** Yeah. She should really get a journal. But also, it's just that the one friend that she has didn't actually act in her best interests and didn't actually think about what she wanted.

**Becca:** She was blinded by class in this circumstance. I think she did think she was doing right by Anne. Not only Anne, but Anne's late mother-

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** -when she dissuaded her away. But in doing so was blinded by the constraints of their society, but also more importantly, wrote off what to Anne has been the most seminal, important decision she made in her life and wants her to just move on from it, which is not how you deal with your friends when they go through a breakup, frankly.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** Second question is from Janae. “What are your feelings about the family dynamic of the Elliot family compared to the ones we've seen in previous novels?”

**Molly:** Mm. It's interesting because every book that we've read so far, except for *Emma*, has been a sister story. *Emma* is its own **[00:53:00]** special beast because it's Emma and her dad, and they have this really beautiful thing going on. And honestly, potentially, my favorite family dynamic that we have because it's so sweet. They love each other so much and they take care of each other.

**Becca:** Emma's such a flawed character that she only works if she's got this incredibly sweet and important relationship with her father.

**Molly:** Yeah. And if that's the driving force behind so many of her decisions.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** So, they're the one thing. And then we've got all of these sister tales. In all of these sister tales, some of the sisters love each other-- The sisters all love each other. We've had issues like Kitty and Lydia.

**Becca:** Kydia.

**Molly:** Kydia is clicky, Mary is lonely and nerdy. But ultimately, Jane and Elizabeth, who are best friends, also love all their sisters. So, that's that dynamic. Then we have the three Dashwood sisters, who are all very close. **[00:54:00]** This is different because we've got sisters who don't seem to understand each other. We see here that Mary and Elizabeth--Oh, my gosh, it's going to be so hard for me to not call Anne Elizabeth because I'm used to calling Elizabeth, like Elizabeth being our main character from *Pride and Prejudice.* But we see that Anne and Mary have a friendly relationship. But I don't think that Mary knows Anne the way that Anne-- Like Anne doesn't have anyone who gets her.

**Becca:** You might understand why she would have carried such a torch for Captain Wentworth if he did.

**Molly:** Yes. Yes, I do. So, this family dynamic is different, because we don't have that sisterly bond and that friendship, and we don't have a father who understands his kids. There's no Mrs. Dashwood, Mrs. Bennet.

**Becca:** Yeah. I think the word that immediately popped in my brain to describe the **[00:55:00]** Elliot family dynamic is cold.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** The other three books we've read so far, the main families have been very warm, even the Bennet's who have their issues, there's a lot of tenderness there, and there's certainly the kindred spirit for each person, except probably Mary in *Pride and Prejudice*, but she's fine.

I think that there is a chill in the Elliot family that forms Anne as a person in a big way, because she is so internal and quiet and shy as a character. She is so used to doing the emotional labor of those around her and no one doing anything for her. That character is forged in the fire of this bad family dynamic. And it also makes you ache for the fact that Anne's mother is not there to take care of her as well. It's really sad.

**Molly:** It's really sad. That explains why she walks into the Musgrove's house and is like, "I love the warmth here."

**Becca:** Yeah. It's like dropped in there when she says, "I don't need **[00:55:59]** to stand on ceremony with people like the Musgrove's,"-

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** -where there's a friendliness to this dynamic and a warmth to the Musgrove family that even if it's not as prim and proper as some others in society is already setting us up for a more pleasant environment for the next few chapters at least.

**Molly:** And it makes you think that she has to stand on ceremony, or that it feels like she has to stand on ceremony in her own house.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Usually.

**Becca:** And even just the way that Mary wants her to stand on ceremony with the Musgrove's and she's like, "Nah." It shows you that Mary still has a little bit of that as well. Even in the scene, we joked about it a lot, but Anne does a lot of emotional label for Mary. Mary's doing nothing for Anne.

**Molly:** Oh, yeah.

**Becca:** So, even if there is affection there for sisters, there's not much care taken of Anne. So, someone needs to take care of Anne.

**Molly:** Yeah. Come on. Well, thank you, Joanna and Janae.

**Becca:** Great questions. Once again, one more time patrons, if you want to leave study questions, you can do so through our **[00:57:00]** patron Google Doc that Molly will post before each recording.

Okay. So, now Becca's study questions. We've run through some of these, but we'll hit the points that we haven't hit yet. We've finally got our big bona fide persuasion. We've talked a little bit about persuader versus persuadee, but the role persuasion has in this book, what does it do to the story?

**Molly:** I don't want to say it takes away a character's agency, because Anne still made her choice, but it a little bit makes it, so like whose choice was it really. So, I think that it puts the plot of the story on a decision that wasn't even Anne's necessarily. It also implies that one could be persuaded either way, and that maybe she could be persuaded [giggles] back and maybe there's still hope.

**Becca:** Who's to say?

**Molly:** Hmm.

**Becca:** I would also ask, what you think the *Persuasion* itself says about **[00:58:00]** Anne as a character?

**Molly:** Hmm. I think she puts stock in the opinions of others, particularly ones she trusts. That's also what might piss one off about Lady Russell, is that Anne trusted her and she persuaded her to do something that wasn't actually best for her. So, I think it shows that she's not a pushover, but she's not bold enough to stand up for what she really wants because of the family that she grew up in and the coldness of that house. She's not one of our feisty, fiery main characters. She's quieter, and she's not bold enough.

**Becca:** Yes. I think it tells us that she's not the independent **[00:59:00]** thinker of Emma Woodhouse, or Elizabeth Bennet or Marianne Dashwood. She has of all the heroines we've covered so far, by far the most in common with Elinor Dashwood, I think.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** But it does give you this impression that she is someone whose mind is malleable-

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** -and can be formed by the thoughts of others. There's a question of whether or not that's a character flaw though.

**Molly:** Yeah. I don't know if it's a flaw. I think she's a product of her circumstances and a product of her environment. And so, I don't think that it can be considered a flaw. What I would say could-- I guess partially a flaw because I want everyone to be able to stand up for themselves, but it's not always safe to. And so, I don't think it's a flaw. I think it's something she needs to grow through.

**Becca:** Okay. So, we're going to skip around a little bit because we've already addressed some of our study questions, but I want to talk through tropes,- **[01:00:00]**

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** -a little bit. We've talked a little about certain tropes that have popped up in this chapter, and I think we have some dynamics immediately set up for what we can expect this story to tell based on those tropes. So, let's talk through some of the tropes we've talked about-

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** -and if you have any others that jump to mind.

**Molly:** Status. Like, love across different statuses, statusi.

**Becca:** *The Rich Girl and the Poor Boy*?

**Molly:** *The Rich Girl, the Poor Boy* trope.

**Becca:** *The Princess and the Stable Boy?*

**Molly:** *The Princess and the Frog*. And yeah, so we've got the *Titanic* trope. We've got pining, yearning. We've got a breakup where neither person wants the breakup, but they've convinced themselves that that's what's best for each other.

**Becca:** I feel like for me, the one that really jumps out to me is the one that got away trope.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** The idea of this like, for whatever reason, we lost each other here, what does it mean if we're thrown together later?

**Molly:** Yeah. I just read a book that is the same trope, and it's like **[01:01:00]** after 10 years or whatever, they come back and they've hated each other since they left each other. Both of them are operating under the impression that the other person didn't like them anymore because-- I hate a misunderstanding trope, but it's similar in that Anne broke up with him because she convinced herself that that would best for him too. I think that if she hadn't convinced herself of that, she might have not ended up listening to Lady Russell, but she did convince herself of that.

Anyway, this is best for you, and now we're going to be apart. When they come back together, it's like, "Oh, you hate me." And they're going to both think the other person is over them.

**Becca:** There's also just the question of time, what did time change about these two people? The question of like, you breakup with someone and **[01:02:00]** you are left wondering the what if for the rest of time, because no one has made you feel the way that person made you feel. It's an incredible romcom trope. It's an incredible romance trope.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** Like, this is where I got really excited about this book when I was reading it because I was like, “This is not something I've seen Jane Austen really pursue at this point.” It makes for a really interesting and unique read in her books, I think.

**Molly:** Yeah. I'm also excited about it, because Anne-- to put it more concisely than my ramblings before, Anne did not want to break up with him. She was persuaded to break up with him.

**Becca:** Yup.

**Molly:** So, the longing and the pining is still there on both sides, but there's an external force making her think that they can't be together. So, that's exciting.

**Becca:** Yes. What does this chapter tell us about how Jane Austen is thinking about love? Remember, **[01:03:00]** this book was written later in her life.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm. Thinking about it as being later in her life, it's a little bit more like, at this point in the book, that love is a force that can be stopped, or not that it can be stopped, but that there are other things that can override love in her society, but love itself cannot be stopped, because Anne is going to keep on loving Captain Wentworth for the rest of her life, whether she can meet with him or not. But sometimes in Jane Austen's mind or in the society, sometimes that's not enough to still be with someone.

**Becca:** Yeah. I also think you could read it the flip side way as well, which is we've read three of her novels so far, and we've talked a lot about the Economics of Dating in Jane Austen, and we've talked a lot about love and Jane Austen exploring this idea that you marry for love and how important **[01:04:00]** that can be. But conveniently, in every single book we've read, the guy she falls in love with is super rich.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** And so, we don't actually have to grapple with what happens at that middle point where it's like, you have to choose between your stability and love. This weirdly to me is like, almost Jane Austen poo-pooing the idea of marrying someone for comfort over marrying someone for love. Because what you have here is Anne had opportunities to secure herself a place in society through-- honestly could be a pleasant enough marriage-

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** She chose against it because she could not shake what her soul, what her heart was truly feeling. The long-standing adoration of a man who she rejected when she was 19 years old prevents her from evening considering **[01:05:00]** any other man.

**Molly:** That's beautiful.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** So, it is the most romantic shit Jane's written. It's crazy.

**Molly:** Yeah. That's why this book is so steamy.

**Becca:** Yeah. And it makes for an actual critique of the idea of marrying someone just because of your place in society that I don't think Jane has really actually dealt with in any of the books we've read so far.

**Molly:** Yeah. There is the argument to be made that even if they do end up together, he has now theoretically made his fortune. So, she still will be comfortable, [giggles] but we don't know that he's made a fortune actually. She said that she thinks he's made a fortune because she saw that he got promoted from the newspaper clippings. But in her father's eyes, he's still so far beneath her that it's not worth thinking about. So, yes, **[01:06:00]** fully agree with what you're saying.

**Becca:** Well, this is actually one of those things you could like-- It's an interesting and we'll get farther into it as we get farther into the book. But now, we can observe this choice from a comfortable distance because this isn't the story. The story isn't what the decision Anne made when she was 19 years old. The story is what is happening to Anne when she's 27 years old, what the difference is there?

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** And so, now it's an academic exercise for Jane, but it is regardless a different academic exercise than she has put us through in the past.

**Molly:** Yeah, totally.

**Becca:** Okay. So, that would lead us to our standby study questions. Funniest quote?

**Molly:** Okay. This is a conversation. I'm going to play both rules. This is between Mary and Anne. "But you have never asked me one word about our dinner with the pools yesterday." "Did you go then? I have made no inquiries because I concluded you must have been obliged to give up the party." "Oh, yes, I went. I was very well yesterday. Nothing at all the matter with me until this morning. It would have been strange if I had not gone." "I am very glad you were well enough **[01:07:00]** and I hope you had a pleasant party." "Nothing remarkable." I think I loved it.

**Becca:** Our queen, our iconic drama queen, Mary Musgrove, I should say, her last name is now. Questions moving forward.

**Molly:** Well, now I just can't stop thinking about Mrs. Clay and Sir Walter. Is that going to happen? Because that's a prediction now that I have is that they're going to get married, and then Mrs. Clay is going to become the lady of the house and then he's going to have participated in social climbing, which he abhors. So, hypocritical much. So, that's a question/prediction that I have now.

When Anne goes back to Kellynch lodge, will Captain Wentworth be there, and will he have made a fortune and will he have gotten married? Probably not. I hope not. Oh, my God. Yeah, those are my **[01:08:00]** questions.

**Becca:** Who wins the chapter?

**Molly:** Mary.

**Becca:** I love that we read one of the iconic reveals in Jane Austen's work. But it is so true that if you read the next chapter, your mind is preoccupied by what an icon and a legend Mary Musgrove is.

**Molly**: Yes.

**Becca:** Because we stan a drama queen. We stan a self-centered, vain little bitch who cannot get off the couch.

**Molly:** [giggles] She just needs her smelling salts in her sister.

**Becca:** She is truly giving all the other hypochondriacs in the series a run for their money. It is beautiful.

**Molly:** I love it.

**Becca:** Iconic. Like, no notes.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** Listeners, that concludes this recording of Pod and Prejudice. For next time, you're going to read Chapters 7 and 7 of *Persuasion*. Molly, how are we feeling?

**Molly:** I can't wait. I'm going to read it later today.

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

**Molly:** And take a stroll in a sigh.

**Becca:** Oh.

**Molly:** Oh.

[music] **[01:09:00]**

**Molly:** Pod and Prejudice is edited by Molly Burdick and audio produced by Graham Cook. Our show art is designed by Torrance Browne. Our show is transcribed by SpeechDocs Podcast Transcription. For transcripts and to learn more about our team, check out our website at *podandprejudice.com*. To keep up with the show, you can follow us on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, *@podandprejudice*. If you love what you hear, check out our Patreon at *patreon.com/podandprejudice* to see how you can support us or just drop us a rating and a review wherever you listen to podcasts.Thanks for listening.

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