

Molly: Hey, everyone. Before we begin today, we want to thank our newest patrons, Diana, Elizabeth and Kristen. Welcome to the team. As always, if you're interested in hearing Becca's first thoughts on *Persuasion*, hanging out with us on Discord and submitting your very own study questions, check out our Patreon at patreon.com/podandprejudice.

We recently celebrated five whole years of Pod and Prejudice, which is just absolutely insane. We celebrated by doing a live stream Q&A while working on our world of Jane Austen puzzle. And it was so much fun. You can catch the replay of the livestream on YouTube, so go check that out. We had an absolute blast, and we're just so grateful to all of you for hanging out with us for the last five years. And now, enjoy this week's episode covering Volume II, Chapters 4 and 5 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: Listeners, [00:01:00] 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 Molly read through *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility* or *Emma* 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: No. Today, we are talking about *Persuasion*. Volume II, Chapters 4 and 5. Or, if your book is not volumned, Chapters 16 and 17.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: And can you believe it? This is completely unrelated to *Persuasion*, but as you were saying, all of the books that we've read, I'm like, "We're in Season 4 of this podcast."

Becca: Yes.

Molly: That's insane. We're coming up on five years of doing it.

Becca: Yeah, we've firmly talked about *Emma* for two years.

Molly: Oops.

Becca: But we have been going like seasons by this podcast of the books. At this point in time, we are more than halfway through Jane Austen's seminal novel canon, which is crazy. It's a long time to talk about Jane.

Molly: It is. And don't ask us what we're doing after we finish her books, because we'll figure it out in [00:02:00] a couple years-- [crosstalk]

Becca: Yeah. I'm not so worried about that, because *Mansfield Park* is a very long book, and there's about 8,000 different Jane Austen adaptations. So, it's going to take us a

thousand years to get through the rest of Jane Austen.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: But yeah, it is crazy that we've been doing this for so long. For listeners who might not know, we have now come up against our fifth anniversary of releasing these podcasts, which is crazy.

Molly: Insane.

Becca: So fun.

Molly: Anyway, we're here to talk about *Persuasion*. Becca, why don't you tell us where we left off?

Becca: Yes. So, we left Uppercross for Kellynch, and did so when the Musgroves were in a little bit of a state. And then, we found out that Captain Wentworth is no longer in Lyme with the ailing Louisa Musgrove. Meanwhile, Anne goes to Bath, and finds her sister and father much the same, except in slightly better moods, because everyone's very nice to them in Bath, and reconnected with Mr. Elliot, the [00:03:00] heir to Sir Walter's baronet title.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: So, that's where we're at. And Mr. Elliot, William, if you will, is assuredly noticed the prettiness of his cousins.

Molly: I keep forgetting his name is William. Like, I keep calling him Elliot, which is his last name, but it does feel weird to be calling him Elliot when everyone's last name is Elliot.

Becca: Well, yeah, but he's Mr. Elliot. There's Sir Elliot, Sir Walter, Elizabeth, Miss Elliot, Anne Elliot and Mary. [chuckles]

Molly: And Mary.

Becca: [scats]

Molly: So, let's get into it. Chapter 4, or if your book is not volumed, Chapter 16. Now, this is the book talking, not me. The only thing Anne would be happier about than Mr. Elliot being in love with Elizabeth, is her father not being in love with Mrs. Clay. Starting off the bat, I was like, "Hang on, Anne, [00:04:00] are you not clocking the way that he feels about you?" Because he's clearly into her.

Becca: Well, yes, but here's the thing. It is an interesting question, because no question we uppie-downied. No question we got excited when Anne Elliot was in the room. No question we have paid attention to Anne Elliot, if we are Mr. Elliot. But why else would we get in contact with Sir Walter unless you were having second thoughts about attaching to Elizabeth?

Molly: I think that that's totally fair and that's probably why he's there in the first place. But I don't think he's in love with Elizabeth.

Becca: Mm.

Molly: Hmm.

Becca: Mm.

Molly: I just think Anne's being a little daft here.

Becca: I think Anne is thinking of herself as expired in a way she doesn't think about her sister.

Molly: It's so funny, because her sister is older than her. But I understand, her sister is not spurned in love.

Becca: Yeah. Her sister's the eldest, so I guess I don't know if there's like a dowry attached to that that's not attached to Anne. I don't know what it is.

Molly: Oh, yeah. No, I'm sure there is.

Becca: But [00:05:00] part of it is that Sir Walter doesn't treat Elizabeth as off the shelf and Elizabeth doesn't treat Elizabeth as off the shelf, but Anne treats Anne as if she is off the shelf. So, it's hard to say exactly. But in Anne's mind, it seems more reasonable to believe that Elizabeth would be the object of Elliot's attention-

Molly: Yes.

Becca: -rather than her.

Molly: Yes, is reasonable. But anyway, what she doesn't want is for her father to be in love with Mrs. Clay. Essentially, she is just being proven to over and over again that that is probably the case. So, one morning, she comes down for breakfast and she imagines that Mrs. Clay had just said that she's going to leave Bath now that Anne is here. She overhears Elizabeth saying, "Anne is nothing compared to you." And her father saying, "No, no, no, you must stay. You haven't seen all of Bath yet. You haven't even met Mrs. Wallis," who is Colonel Wallis' wife, who's confined, because she's pregnant. [00:06:00] He's like, "She's so pretty. You're going to love her."

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Basically, like just wanting her to stay. Sir Walter at one-point compliments Anne on how she's looking, asking if she's been using this special cream called Gowland's. He says that if she wasn't looking so well, he would recommend Gowland, because she can see how it's helped with Mrs. Clay's freckles. And Anne is like, "Hmm, Mrs. Clay's freckles are exactly the same." [giggles] So, it's clearly just him being into her.

Becca: There's a great description from Sir Walter about how Anne has gotten hot again.

Molly: Let's hear it.

Becca: "He began to compliment her on her improved looks. He thought her "less thin in her person, in her cheeks; her skin, her complexion, greatly improved, clearer, fresher. Had she been using any thing in particular?" "No, nothing." "Merely Gowland," he supposed. "No, nothing at all." "Ha! he was surprised at that."

Molly: He's actually part of a pyramid scheme and he's [00:07:00] trying to sell her this cream.

Becca: We've talked about how Gwyneth Paltrow should play Sir Walter.

Molly: Oh, my God.

Becca: Remember?

Molly: He's like, "Are you using Goop?"

Becca: Yeah. There's this really great new product from Goop that you should be using.

Molly: It's scented like.

Becca: Well, I don't think the skincare products are. It's just the candles.

Molly: Who knows?

Becca: I personally don't, because I do not use Goop products.

Molly: Yeah. If anyone uses goop products, stop. Anyway, Anne thinks that the evil of a marriage between Mrs. Clay and her father would be lessened if Elizabeth were also to marry. And as for herself, she'll go live with Lady Russell when all this happens. So, she's like, "Hmm, as long as Elizabeth and Mr. Elliot get together, maybe it will be fine." This relationship between Mrs. Clay and Sir Walter is stressing Lady Russell out as much as someone who's on vacation in Bath can be stressed.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: However, Mr. Elliot has proven himself to Lady Russell. She believes he's completely changed, like he is a new man. **[00:08:00]** She knows that he had been unhappy in marriage, because Colonel Wallis said so. I don't remember him saying that. I just remember him saying that he was friends with his wife. Do you remember him saying that he was unhappy in marriage?

Becca: Well, getting little snippets from what that marriage was.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: What we know is that she was really in love with him. We don't know if he was really in love with her.

Molly: Okay. So, this is all conjecture.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: All right. But being unhappy in marriage hadn't soured Mr. Elliot's mind or Lady Russell notices, prevented him from thinking of a second choice.

Becca: So, what you are picking up in terms of what Elliot's laying down, I think Lady Russell's in your boat.

Molly: Exactly.

Becca: She agrees. She's like, "Is Anne stupid?"

Molly: Yes. She's like, "Anne's hot."

Becca: And he clearly likes her.

Molly: Yeah. It has been some years, "since Anne noticed that she and Lady Russell think differently on some points." Specifically, it's been **[00:09:00]** eight years. And Anne is suspicious of the fact that Elliot has suddenly showed up wanting to reconcile, whereas Lady Russell is not suspicious of this at all. She thinks that "It's perfectly natural that someone who made mistakes when he was young grows up to be a sensible adult and tries to rectify those mistakes and be on good terms with the head of his family." And Anne is like, "Hmm, I wonder if it's because of Elizabeth." And Lady Russell goes, "Hmm, time will tell," [laughs] because she does not think it's Elizabeth at all.

Anne has to remind herself that he is still in mourning. He's got the crepe around his hat, which is a mourning ribbon. And she's like, "Shit, am I being an asshole by thinking he's ready to move on and go to Elizabeth even though his marriage had not been happy? It just ended and they were married for a while." Like, "I'm an asshole." But all of that aside, he's their most pleasant relation in Bath. He and Anne often hang out and talk of the time that they met. And he says he "looked at her with some earnestness." [00:10:00] He's literally telling her that he thinks she's hot and she's still like, "He must be interested in my sister."

Becca: Yup.

Molly: Anne.

Becca: Well, Elizabeth also thinks he's interested in Elizabeth.

Molly: Yeah, but Elizabeth's opinion doesn't matter.

Becca: Okay. Everyone around them thinks he's interested in Elizabeth. And Anne has to believe that even though he's showing her some attention, that he must be into Elizabeth, which is dumb.

Molly: Well, I guess, like why else would he have come back? I know we've discussed this, but he didn't know that she was going to be there.

Becca: Exactly.

Molly: But they're talking and he's like, "When I looked at you, it was with earnestness."

Becca: Well, she's commenting that he is looking at her with earnestness.

Molly: No, he says.

Becca: Ooh.

Molly: He says. Hang on. Let me find the quote. "They went through the particulars of their first meeting a great many times. He gave her to understand--" Hmm, I see what you're saying. "He gave her to understand that he had looked at her with some earnestness. She knew it well; and she remembered another person's look also." I think he [00:11:00] gave her to understand means that he at least implied that he thought she was hot at the time. And she's like, "You know, who else thought I was hot?"

Becca: Captain Wentworth.

Molly: Yeah. She's got a one-track mind.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: So, I don't know if he's telling her or if he's expressing sentiments that make her think that.

Becca: Yeah. I took that to mean, like, she was thinking about-- Like she was noting it. From Jane Austen's perspective, it's hard to determine.

Molly: Yeah. God, Jane, just say what you mean. [giggles] Just kidding. Then we wouldn't be able to dissect her language.

Becca: Exactly.

Molly: Anyway, she and he do not think alike on everything. For example, he's more concerned with rank and connection than she is. He's got that Elliot pride. Though, at some points during these chapters, Anne's Elliot pride comes out a little bit too, but we'll talk about it.

Becca: Well, yeah, but I do think he's clearly like, this is part of the reason Lady Russell's vibing him. Like, they have something in common there.

Molly: Yes, yes. [00:12:00] Now, the Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple.

Becca: I can't get over this name. There are certain names that stick in your mind, Wentworth, Elliot. The names in this book, they have a certain ring and cadence. Dalrymple.

Molly: Dalrymple.

Becca: Dalrymple.

Molly: I love it.

Becca: It's like an earworm for me. When I was reading this the first time, I could not stop muttering to myself, Dalrymple.

Molly: Dalrymple.

Molly and Becca: Dalrymple. Dalrymple.

Becca: Dalrymple.

Molly: If you say it too many times, she appears.

Becca: [chuckles] She appears and is boring.

Molly: Yes, she's super boring. So, it's the Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple and her daughter, the honorable Miss Carteret? Carteret? Carteret? I think-- [crosstalk]

Becca: Carteret, I think.

Molly: I feel like it's French, no?

Becca: We'll call her Dalrymple Junior.

Molly: Yeah. They're the Dalrymples collectively.

Becca: Yeah. There's Dalrymple and Dalrymple Junior.

Molly: Yes. So, they arrive in Bath, and are unfortunately in Anne's mind, the cousins of the Elliots. So, [00:13:00] they're related. Anne has seen her family interact with nobility before. She is not looking forward to this, because for once, she wishes that they had more pride.

Becca: So, this is interesting, because we've seen the Elliots think themselves top of society and snipe at anybody who they think is below them. But then, they see someone they think is above them, and it gets embarrassing.

Molly: They snivel around at their feet. They're like, "Oh, can we come over? Can we come over? Oh, my God, my cousin the Dalrymples, they're famous."

Becca: Yeah. It's really, really, really weird and disgusting. Like, Collins re-Catherine de Bourgh.

Molly: Yes, exactly. So, Anne is like, "God, can we not." They talk way too much about the Dalrymples.

Becca: The Dalrymples. They talk about the Dalrymple.

Molly: They talk about the Dalrymples. They're like, "Oh, my gosh, the Dalrymples around town are our cousins that we've met once." So, this is the story of the Elliots and the Dalrymples. Sir Walter met the Viscount once, [00:14:00] but then when he died, it happened at a time where Sir Walter himself "was very ill."

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: So, he didn't send a letter of condolence. And then, when Lady Elliot died, the Dalrymples didn't send a letter of condolence. And now, they don't talk, because they're like, "Okay, oops, we fucked up. We didn't send a letter of condolence. Now, they hate us."

Becca: Yeah. I feel like that's a mutual distancing.

Molly: Yes. So, now, Sir Walter wants to rekindle their connection, because family connections are always worth preserving. Sounds familiar.

Becca: Hmm.

Molly: Mm. Lady Russell has heard that the Viscountess is a charming woman, and she has taken a very good house in Bath. Sir Walter writes a letter apologizing profusely for his past behavior, and the Viscountess writes back with three lines saying she is honored and would be happy to make their acquaintance. So, they start visiting back and forth.

Anne is very embarrassed. She would have been embarrassed even if the Dalrymples had been agreeable and good people. But she's [00:15:00] more embarrassed, because the Dalrymples are boring. She knows for a fact that if they were not Viscountess and daughter, then the Elliots would not tolerate them in their house, because they're nothing.

Becca: I think that she specifically is talking about Dalrymple Junior here.

Molly: Okay.

Becca: Okay. So, Lady Dalrymple is dull.

Molly: Well, the way she describes her is that she's labeled a charming woman, because she just smiles and nods and is like, very-- I don't know, she's agreeable, but in a boring way.

Becca: Vacant.

Molly: Yeah, she's vacant.

Becca: And then, Dalrymple Junior is so "plain and awkward,"-

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: -that her presence would not have been physically tolerated in the Elliot house unless she were the daughter of a Viscountess.

Molly: Right. She doesn't have anything going on. She's got no talents. She's got no looks. She's just boring.

Becca: And she can't even make conversation.

Molly: Exactly. [00:16:00] Anyway, so, Anne is very embarrassed by this. Lady Russell admits that she did expect something better from the Dalrymples, but she still thinks it's a good connection to have.

Becca: With the Dalrymples.

Molly: With the Dalrymples.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: And Anne talks to Elliot about it, and he agrees with Anne that they are useless, but he also thinks it's a good connection, because you can be sure that they're going to have the best society in town this season, and wouldn't Anne like to just associate herself with them and not worry about it so much and go along with it. And Anne says, "All right, well, my idea of a good connection is clever, well-informed people with good conversation." And Elliot's like, "That's not good company. That's the best company." You can't be too picky, [giggles] which at least they can agree on that.

And he says, about good company, "It requires only good manners, birth and education." And with regard to education is not very nice, which in this instance, I googled-- because I feel like they use nice a lot. It means like, in particular. [00:17:00] So, you don't actually have to be that educated to be good company. You just have to have good status.

Becca: So, what Elliot is saying here is good company means accomplished, high-ranking company.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: And if that person's fun to actually hang out with and good to talk to-

Molly: That's the best.

Becca: -that's just a bonus.

Molly: Yeah. That's actual friendship and connection, is you can't be too picky about when it happens. But when it happens, it's great.

Becca: Yeah. It's gravy.

Molly: Exactly.

Becca: Like, you don't need it, but it's nice.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: And Anne is like, "No, no, no, that's the underlying meat." [chuckles]

Molly: Yes. So, they disagree on this crucial point of human connection. Anne says that she thinks that her family has gone too much trouble to secure this relationship when it's clear that the Dalrymples couldn't care less. They're like, "Sure, come over." And Elliot says, "Listen, that may be true of you. If your [00:18:00] family was in London, you might not be worth having as a connection. But in Bath, your family is very important and is worth having."

So, Anne says, "Well, I'm too proud to enjoy a welcome that depends entirely on place," which is a pun, according to the footnotes, because place meaning both in society and their physical location.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: And he says, "I love your indignation."

Becca: This exchange is so charged and flirtatious.

Molly: He's so flirty.

Becca: It's insane.

Molly: Ah, he's hot.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: He says that he thinks he's proud too. Like, "You know, you're proud, I'm proud. We have the same kind of pride, though it may not look the same on the surface. But if you dig deeper, we both agree, at least one point, which is that Mrs. Clay is not good enough for your father, and we must dispose of her."

Becca: And Anne's like, "Ugh, an ally." [00:19:00]

Molly: Yes, [Becca chuckles] which brings us to Chapter 5 or chapter 17.

Becca: Yes, it does.

Molly: So, Anne had called on her former governess, which she went to school in Bath, right?

Becca: I think so. I don't know, if it's explicitly stated that Anne went to school in Bath. What it does say is that Anne went to Bath after her mother died and had a terrible time there.

Molly: Right.

Becca: So, I think the implication is that's where she went to school.

Molly: Right. Because I couldn't find it. But we talked about how she hated Bath early on in this book, but I couldn't find where that was.

Becca: It would be in the first chapter or two. Basically, it says that Anne was in Bath after her mother died, and she remembers being grieving there. That is consistent with what we learn in this chapter, which is that she had a friend who was kind to her at the time that her mother died at school.

Molly: Yes. So, I think she went to school in Bath, and these were bad times for her. She went to go visit her governess from that time and learned that her old school friend, Mrs. Smith, is [00:20:00] there right now.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: Former Miss. Hamilton.

Becca: Yup.

Molly: Mrs. Smith was three years older than Anne. And as you said, was took her under her wing during her school years. Now, this is where Mrs. Smith stands. She had married a man of fortune. He died. Left her with nothing. Now, she has no money, rheumatic, rheumatic.

Becca: Rheumatic.

Molly: Rheumatic fever has lost the use of her legs and is alone in Bath trying to heal.

Becca: Yeah, I think rheumatic fever is like a form of chronic pain. Rheumatism is arthritis, as far as I understand it, or something similar. So, she's just in a lot of-- I don't think her legs are paralyzed. I think they're in so much pain that it's difficult for her to use them.

Molly: Yeah. Rheumatic fever is a serious inflammatory disease that can affect the heart, joints, skin and brain. It's an autoimmune disease that occurs when a body's immune system mistakenly **[00:21:00]** attacks healthy tissues in response to streptococcal infection.

Becca: Strep throat.

Molly: Yeah, such as strep throat scarlet fever, or impetigo. So, yeah.

Becca: We love antibiotics.

Molly: We do. But she doesn't have those.

Becca: No, she does not.

Molly: Anne decides to go visit her. She doesn't tell her family where she's going, but she tells Lady Russell, who takes her to where Mrs. Smith is staying, which is not in the best part of town.

Becca: No, it is not.

Molly: At first, they're awkward, because 12 years have passed. Anne has grown from a helpless teenager into a beautiful "without bloom," it says. I don't know--

Becca: Basically, it's saying Anne has every single beauty except that she's not that young.

Molly: Yeah. Oh, right, right, right, right, right. She's elegant, good mannered. While the last 12 years have been less kind to Mrs. Smith. I realize that they've gone through a role reversal, because Anne came to Bath helpless and sad as a kid, and **[00:22:00]** Miss. Hamilton at the time took her under her wing and took care of her. And now, Mrs. Smith is having a terrible time of it, and Anne comes to visit her as a favor.

Becca: She bottomed out in *The Economics of Dating* in Jane Austen plottery.

Molly: Exactly. Yeah.

Becca: Graham, the sound effect, but make it very sad.

Molly: [giggles] But even though Mrs. Smith's situation is terrible, she is still cheerful and agreeable, and her spirits are still high. Mrs. Smith is perfect.

Becca: We love Mrs. Smith.

Molly: We really do. This whole chapter is about how great she is.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: So, Anne goes back a second time and she thinks that while nobody's situation could be worse, she's got a dead husband, she's lost her affluence, she has no children, she never leaves the house except to be taken to the baths. Her lodgings are dark and small, but yet she only has moments of depression to hours of enjoyment and occupation. Anne reflects

that this isn't just like through power of will, but also an elasticity of mind, a disposition [00:23:00] to be comforted to find the good in everything. So, Mrs. Smith, just has a positive outlook on life.

Becca: Yeah. She's someone who will take the situation she is and bring good vibes. I love that her good vibes are knitting and gossiping-

Molly: Yes.

Becca: -because those are my good vibes. [chuckles]

Molly: Exactly. She tells Anne that there was a time when her spirits nearly failed her. When she first arrived in Bath, she caught a cold and was completely confined to her bed. She had no money, but she required constant nursing. Luckily, her landlady sister was a nurse and lived in the house when she was unemployed, and she happened to be at her disposal when she was sick. So, she befriends the nurse. She teaches her to knit. The nurse teaches her to knit. She makes little trinkets, and then she gives them to the poor, which she is poor, and then she gives these trinkets to the poor, because Mrs. Smith is angel.

Becca: Uh-huh.

Molly: But also, Mrs. Rooke, the nurse, takes her creations and goes and sells [00:24:00] them to the rich people in town.

Becca: I know. It's fantastic.

Molly: She's at her little Etsy shop.

Becca: I know she's vibing on Etsy. In some ways, Mrs. Smith's situation is very dire. But sitting around going to the spa and knitting is like, there are worse situations to be in if you are poor.

Molly: Yes. And Nurse Rooke, the nurse, Mrs. Smith, describes her as having an ability to see human nature and to look at her situation and tell her something about humanity. But she's just a gossip, I mean, in the best way.

Becca: Yeah. If I'm sitting around all day in bed and all I can do is knit, and the only person I see a lot is this nurse, I'm going to relish when she comes in and tells me the stories of all the upper echelons of Bath in their most vulnerable moments.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Perfect.

Molly: Yeah. But I also think that Mrs. Smith, while she does enjoy the gossip, probably does take that as her learning about human [00:25:00] society. She's like, "Yeah, I have learned something about humanity through this story about this woman who, I don't know, was cheating on her husband" or whatever.

Becca: Yeah, you do. Like, the people who know a lot about the world and the way the world works is the people who are in sensitive and confidential situations.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Like, nurses. [chuckles]

Molly: Exactly. She describes Nurse Rooke as someone who's superior to thousands of those who having only received the best education in the world know nothing worth

attending to. So, she's got the learning of the real world.

Becca: Street smarts.

Molly: Street smarts.

Molly and Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Anne doesn't want to cavil at Mrs. Smith's pleasure in the gossip, or rather make petty or unnecessary objections to, because she's trying to be like, "I'm above that." But she doesn't want to say that she's above that, so she just agrees that women of that class have prime opportunities to learn things about human nature, since they're in the company of so many different kinds of people, like you said.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: Not just human follies, but also "Heroism, fortitude, patience and resignation [00:26:00] as a sick chamber may often furnish the worth of volumes."

Becca: Oh, Anne.

Molly: -is so positive. And Mrs. Smith's like, "More often sick chambers reveal selfishness and impatience." There's so little real friendship in the world, which is very sad.

Becca: Also pretty interesting, given-- We've been in a sick chamber in this book so far, and there have been some follies in the sick chamber, but hero-- [crosstalk] Yeah, but heroism coming off of others.

Molly: Right. Oh, so, Anne is like, "Ah, yes. Well, sometimes these [Becca chuckles] people run across town to get help," and blah, blah, blah, blah.

Becca: And then, perhaps some very dashing captain will rush to a woman's home to tell her parents that something's happened to her.

Molly: Yes, perhaps. Mrs. Smith is like, "But perhaps someone will make it all about them when it's not," and will be like, "Oh, no, my vacation [00:27:00] is ruined."

Becca: No, Mary's vacation ended up fine. [laughs]

Molly: Mary's vacation. She says that many people don't think seriously about things until it is almost too late, which I believe is her referencing her own experience with her husband. And Anne thinks the same. Meaning, that her husband wasn't what he should have been to her and didn't try to make amends for that until he was about to die, and then he left Mrs. Smith thinking worse of humanity because of that. So, Mrs. Smith shows that she's not always seeing the best in everything.

Becca: And you can't really blame her.

Molly: No. She has a tough life. It's very realistic that while she does have a positive outlook on life and makes the best of her situation, she can also see that there is a lot of bad in the world. But Mrs. Smith shakes this off and says, "She doesn't think Mrs. Rooke will have much to share with her now, because she's only nursing Mrs. Wallis, the Colonel's wife, who is [00:28:00] silly, expensive, fashionable, pretty. Nothing to report on, but lace and finery."

Becca: Yes.

Molly: Which I think is interesting, because we've only heard about her-- Well, we've heard about her through Sir Walter who loves all those things.

Becca: Yes. Sir Walter only cares about appearance, and she's very beautiful and everything. So, the fact that she's silly and superficial is like-- I mean, for Sir Walter, it's the same thing.

Molly: Yeah. It makes perfect sense. I do love that Mrs. Smith intends to sell her all of her most expensive stuff that she's created.

Becca: It's perfect.

Molly: Iconic. At some point, Anne finally has to tell her family about Mrs. Smith, because they're invited to the--

Becca: Dalrymples.

Molly: But Anne already has plans [Becca laughs] with Mrs. Smith. She thinks that they're only being invited over, because Lady Dalrymple has caught a cold and can't go out, and so she says, "Sure, you can come over." Elizabeth and Sir Walter do not approve of Mrs. Smith, because she's staying at the Westgate houses, which is, [00:29:00] like I said, not in the best part of town. Sir Walter says that she's only 1 of 5,000 Mrs. Smith's whose names are to be met with everywhere, which I thought was funny because one, Smith is a very common name. But two, Jane Austen names all of her characters the same thing. So, it's like a funny little nod at like everyone has the same name.

Becca: Oh, yeah.

Molly: She's nothing special.

Becca: Unlike Dalrymple.

Molly: Unlike Dalrymple. Very special.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Sir Walter says that Anne has weird taste, because she likes people that would disgust anyone else. He calls Mrs. Smith old and sickly. And in my mind, I was doing the math, I was like, "Anne's 27. She's like 30, 31."

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: He tells Anne, "Put it off. Come to the Dalrymples, because Mrs. Smith isn't so old that she won't make it till tomorrow, is she?" He's like, "How old is she? 40?" And Anne's like, "No, she's 31." [Becca laughs] And Anne says, "I can't. We have plans the rest of the week. This is the only day I can go." Elizabeth then asks, "Well, what does Lady Russell think [00:30:00] of this acquaintance?" And Anne says "She approves. She drives me over there every day or whenever she goes."

Sir Walter says, "Well, the people of Westgate buildings must be surprised to see the Russell carriage pulling up." It's way fancier than anything they're used to. At this point, Mrs. Clay decides to leave the room.

Becca: Lol-lol-lol.

Molly: Anne is holding herself back from comparing Mrs. Smith to Mrs. Clay. It says, "She left it to himself to recollect, that Mrs. Smith was not the only widow in Bath between 30 and 40, with little to live on, and no surname of dignity."

Becca: Which once again gets to what point from Jane Austen.

Molly: Hypocritical upper classes choosing.

Becca: The vapid aristocracy or wannabe aristocracies essentially picking and choosing the poor that they like and then using class as a barrier against those they don't want in.

Molly: [00:31:00] Exactly. So, it's fake and based on nothing.

Becca: Yeah, it's all arbitrary.

Molly: I wanted to check that surname was spelled S-I-R name, like name of her father. Is that where surname, S-U-R-N-A-M-E comes from?

Becca: I have no idea, actually.

Molly: I feel like it must.

Becca: Yeah. It would make sense.

Molly: What's the word for etymology?

Becca: Here, I'll look it up. It looks like it comes from Latin. If you look at the Romance languages-

Molly: Oh, yeah. I guess that came first, huh?

Becca: But it's okay. I like surname. We can live in that world.

Molly: Yeah. So, Anne hears the next day that they had a delightful evening at the Dalrymples.

Becca: Who couldn't have a delightful evening at the Dalrymples?

Molly: [giggles] Lady Russell and Mr. Elliot were also there. They both had to rearrange their plans to be there, which I felt like at first was them trying to make Anne feel bad for not rearranging her plans. But then, [00:32:00] I wasn't sure if Lady Russell was the one telling her about their evening or not. I assume that it was her family being like, "Yeah."

Becca: It's her family being bitchy.

Molly: Yeah. Then, she talks to Lady Russell about it and she hears that she was quite missed, particularly by Mr. Elliot, as in, "Her kind, compassionate visits to this old schoolfellow, sick and reduced, seemed to have quite delighted Mr. Elliot." And then, he and Lady Russell spent the night talking about how great Anne is.

Lady Russell is now completely convinced that he's going for Anne, and she approves of this match. She's just calculating how long it will be until he can actually go for her since he's still in mourning. It's only been, seven months, and you're supposed to wait a year, I think, before dating someone else.

Becca: Yeah. I think so. Yesh.

Molly: But to Anne, she only drops hints, because she's not going to be sly about it. She drops hints about this connection, and Anne doesn't protest. Just smiles, blushes and shakes her head. Lady Russell says, "I am no matchmaker, as you well know." [Becca chuckles] You can say that [00:33:00] again, Lady Russell. But she says, "If he were to propose and you were to accept, I think you should be happy together." And Anne says, "Well, I don't think we would suit each other." Lady Russell points out that she would then be

the mistress of Kellynch Hall, and it would bring her so much joy to see her in her mother's place.

Becca: Which is very meaningful.

Molly: Yes. And also, the first time I realized, "Oh, that's one way to get them to stay in possession of Kellynch Hall."

Becca: You might call it The Economics of Dating in Jane Austen. This is a very advantageous match for Anne on that front. She could reclaim her beloved home as the mistress-

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: -and be in the place of her beloved mother before her.

Molly: Yeah. This idea bewitches Anne.

Becca: Yeah. She pictures herself for a second in her mother's place as mistress of Kellynch Hall.

Molly: Yeah. It's really sweet.

Becca: Yeah. It breaks your heart.

Molly: I did want to ask, Lady Russell says that Anne would be only superior to her mother in being more highly valued? [00:34:00] What does that mean?

Becca: More money.

Molly: That Anne would come with more money?

Becca: I think happier marriage.

Molly: Aah. Wait. Was she unhappy with Sir Walter?

Becca: Sir Walter loved her, but I think the implication is that he was exhausting for her.

Molly: Oh. Yeah. Anyway, when Anne imagines Mr. Elliot actually proposing and professing his love, the spell is broken, and she's like, "No, no, I can't love any man but Wentworth. I can't picture myself saying yes to him." But also, she thinks she barely knows Mr. Elliot. And even though he appears to be sensible and agreeable and a man of principle, she distrusts the past. He has some skeletons in his closet in her mind.

There are some former practices and pursuits that are sketchy to her. There's something called Sunday traveling, which I googled. And all of the things were related to *Persuasion*, so I didn't click on any of them, but what does that mean?

Becca: [00:35:00] It's just he's not going to church on Sunday.

Molly: Oh, very sketchy.

Becca: Yeah, exactly. Blaspheme.

Molly: Blaspheme. She also knows that there was a period of his life when he was careless on all serious matters. I don't know how she knows this.

Becca: I think it's when he shirked Sir Walter and Elizabeth.

Molly: Oh, right. [Becca chuckles] Because that was the second thing that I was like, “And he was mean to her family.” But you're right. That's what she's talking about.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah. So, he was also an asshole to her family, and she hasn't fully forgiven him yet, even though she's flirting with him. She also thinks that he's too polished. He never has a random burst of emotion. She prefers people who are frank, open hearted, and eager. “she could so much more depend upon the sincerity of those who sometimes looked or said a careless or a hasty thing.” He's too buttoned up.

Becca: Too clean.

Molly: Too clean. But also, too careless at times. So, Anne, I don't know, I feel like she's reaching, but I understand what she's saying. She thinks that he's too generally agreeable, [00:36:00] as in fake. The way he's described is similar to how Frank Churchill was described, as in, he can talk shit about someone, but then be nice to their face and just be a chameleon and you never know when he's being for real.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: For example, he talks shit about Mrs. Clay, but Mrs. Clay likes him just as much as everyone else, and he's never given her a reason to think that he would be talking shit about her. Lady Russell either sees less or more than Anne, as in, she either sees beyond this facade to see who he really is, or she isn't realizing it's a facade. She doesn't distrust him at all. She thinks he's perfect for Anne, and she hopes they'll be married next fall, and that's the end of that chapter.

Becca: Yes, it is. And that brings us to the study questions, starting with our patron study questions. Listeners, if you would like to ask us study questions and have us answer them on the air, you can join our Patreon at the \$15 tier, at which point Molly will post a Google Doc before each record session. We will ask the questions that you post in the Google Doc, and we will answer them on the air. [00:37:00] So, that's what we're going to do.

Starting with Zamzam. “Now that we've seen Anne interact with both her sisters and have a deeper understanding of those relationships, how do you think Anne's dynamic with her household affects her ability to be persuaded? And what does it mean that she is accepting the attentions of someone who has desired to be her sister's match?” That's a good question.

Molly: That is a good question. Let's take it in parts. So, we've seen Anne interact with both her sisters. With Mary, she is a little bit walked over by Mary, like she will do whatever Mary wants.

Becca: I think that's true, but I also think Anne is a force of good in Mary's life generally.

Molly: Yes, I think that Anne and Mary have a good relationship.

Becca: Good relationship's a stretch.

Molly: Good relationship in comparison to her relationship with Elizabeth.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: But I do think that Anne, when in that setting, is she's not persuaded, per se, but she just is a sounding bored for them, like you've [00:38:00] said, doing the emotional labor. I don't think she minds. I think she likes being of use to them. They all love her in the

Musgrove family, but I think that they definitely just-- They are happy that she's there because she's someone to bounce their own individual things off of.

Becca: Yeah, she's the nurturer very much and not really cared for, if that makes sense. They love her, obviously, but she's not getting her emotional labor back from them. I think Mary's petty. I think she's self-involved and I think she's neurotic and it makes her very unpleasant.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: But she's not cruel. She's not vicious. She doesn't despise Anne. In fact, she loves Anne. And Anne is a stabilizing force in her life. She helps her take care of her children better.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: She calms her down and stops her spells so much from occurring.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: She mediates between Mary and her in laws quite a bit. So, in general, Mary is appreciative of when Anne is there and is happy when Anne is there, because she makes **[00:39:00]** Mary's life better.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Elizabeth wishes Anne didn't exist.

Molly: Yeah. I'm completely opposite end of the spectrum. She's like, "Anne is nothing to me." Like, "Anne means absolutely nothing to me compared to you, Mrs. Clay."

Becca: It's so interesting as to why-- We've learned Elizabeth is a cruel person.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: She's a terrible human being. But she's horrible to Anne. I think there's a lot of different things one could read into it, both of Anne's sisters are clearly a bit jealous of her.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: Mary, it comes out in these little petty spurts.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Elizabeth, it comes out in outward disdain.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Obviously, there's a way in which Anne feels like a stick in the mud to Elizabeth and her father, because they have really bad spending habits.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: I think that generally, Elizabeth in particular finds Anne embarrassing because of her relationship with Captain Wentworth, initially.

Molly: Yeah. So, in terms of **[00:40:00]** that, I feel like this is something that comes up over and over again, and I keep forgetting. Did Elizabeth and Sir Walter know,-

Becca: Yes.

Molly: -but they don't talk about it?

Becca: No.

Molly: So, they know and Lady Russell knows.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: So, it wasn't a secret relationship.

Becca: No.

Molly: Because he applied to Sir Walter for her hand and Sir Walter said no.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: Or, he said--

Becca: He asked for her hand and Sir Walter said no.

Molly: Okay. I feel like I remember that he was like, "Well, then she just will be disowned."

Becca: Well, I think what it is is you need the blessing of the father.

Molly: And he didn't give his blessing.

Becca: Yeah. You legally might need the blessing of the father, and so you can still get married in a way that's not approved by a father.

Molly: Yeah. I think that's what it was, is that he was like, "I don't give my blessing." And Anne was like, "Well, then, I'm not going to marry you."

Becca: What happened was this, I think, and our listeners, who know the story better than I do, can **[00:41:00]** correct me if I'm wrong.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: The three players who persuaded Anne away from Captain Wentworth were Sir Walter, Elizabeth and Lady Russell. Now, Captain Wentworth and Anne were in love. Captain Wentworth goes to Sir Walter and says, "I would like your daughter's hand." Sir Walter says, "How dare you even deign to talk to me about my daughter's hand?" Captain Wentworth, deeply offended, asks Anne anyway. Anne is torn, because she has not gotten her family's permission, but she knows her father's a piece of shit. And Elizabeth is observing basically all of this at the time, and it's not a secret.

So, she is in a tough spot, because I think there are limitations on what you can get economically if your father says no. And Lady Russell then says, "This isn't a good match anyway. Your father's essentially right." And in that difficult circumstance, Anne turns **[00:42:00]** down Wentworth, who is heartbroken, and then they spend eight years angsty about it.

I think the implication, is that Elizabeth and Sir Walter knew what Wentworth meant to Anne, and they have immense contempt for those feelings, and think it's disgusting, essentially. And so, that is a big portion of why they have a poor relationship with Anne. There are obviously other reasons, but that definitely lies near the heart of it.

Now, as far as letting a guy court her, who is clearly someone her sister is interested in, I think it redounds to a couple things. One, I think Anne has made clear that she is not intending to accept those courtship rituals at this point.

Molly: But she's not shutting him down in terms of flirting with her.

Becca: She's not.

Molly: I want to believe that it's a little bit an act of defiance and rebellion on her part, but I [00:43:00] think more likely it's that it feels good to be thought of as hot.

Becca: I also think there's just like, she's in a miserable circumstance of living with her father and her sister, and like he is someone she enjoys talking to.

Molly: Yes. And like, who listens to her and is interested in hearing her. Poor Anne. Nobody ever listens to her. So, he's actually interested in hearing her talk. It's exciting to her. And also, just like it's a friend, I think that she's like, "Oh, someone to talk to."

Also, in terms of her ability to be persuaded, I think that it just shows she leans that much more on Lady Russell being what her relationships with her sisters are. She takes Lady Russell's opinion more into account than anyone else.

And also, it seems like other people do too. Even Elizabeth, who doesn't get along with Lady Russell, was like, "Well, what does Lady Russell think of your relationship with Mrs. Smith?" And Anne was like, "Well, she approves of my relationship with Mrs. Smith." [00:44:00] So, they turn more to Lady Russell as their--

Becca: Yeah. We didn't talk about it in the chapter, but the chapter notes specifically that Lady Russell is pissed at Elizabeth and Sir Walter for their treatment of Anne.

Molly: Yes. Oh, yes.

Becca: I think that's a common refrain. So, the interesting thing is that pretty much everyone except Sir Walter and Elizabeth adore Anne, but they hate her and they make her life miserable. It's crazy.

Molly: They suck.

Becca: They do. Fuck those two characters. Anyway, let's move on. From Emily, we have a transition chapter. "In PNP, Lizzie went to see Charlotte in Kent. And in S and S, Elinor heads off to London. What are you expecting/hoping for Anne's time in Bath?"

Molly: Hmm. Well, let's think about in relation to those other books that they mentioned. Lizzie goes to see Charlotte in Kent. While she's there, Darcy shows up and confesses his love to her. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Elinor goes to London [00:45:00] and is-- What happens when Elinor is in London?

Becca: Oh, everything. They run into Willoughby again and he blows off Marianne.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: We learn about Brandon and his history with Willoughby.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: We are confronted once again with Edward Ferrars, but in the context of his horrible family and also in the context of Lucy Steele giving him a panic attack.

Molly: Right.

Becca: There's a lot that happens. I think Jane Austen uses the change of setting as a shift in story.

Molly: Yeah. And a catalyst for things to happen.

Becca: Exactly. A change in circumstances.

Molly: I'm hoping for Anne's time in Bath, it would be nice for Wentworth to show up in some way to see him in a different light, like, to see him in a different-

Becca: Context.

Molly: -context, exactly, if he shows up. I also think that we're getting more of Mr. Elliot, and I think that [00:46:00] something needs to be revealed about him, because he seems too perfect to me. But to Anne, she doesn't trust him fully, but she loves talking to him. I want something to happen where his true character is revealed, because I'm getting Frank Churchill vibes. So, I just want to know what's up with him.

Becca: You're getting a secret.

Molly: Yeah, I think he has a secret.

Becca: Something is afoot.

Molly: Yeah. He has skeletons in his closet. Something's afoot. So, I want to know what that's all about, and I think that we'll probably get that.

Becca: Yeah. So, I would also just flag that we haven't talked about it much in this book, but this is a very atmospheric book for Jane Austen compared to some of her others. So, when we were in Lyme, we were really in a seaside tale. It was very, very much like we are in a seashore town. We are in the environment. The sea is lovely. When we were at Uppercross, it was the fall foliage and the beauty of the hills and the countryside. Bath is borderline [00:47:00] its own character in this book.

Molly: Yeah. We're in a city.

Becca: Yeah. And it is such a prevalent character. So, from the first chapter, we hear about Bath and how awful Bath is. Bath is this thing that just hangs in the background for the first part of the book. And now, we're there, and all of this could only happen in Bath. Mrs. Smith is here because of her rheumatism that needs to be treated in the Bath. This is the society that Sir Walter can keep that allows him to feel like he's at the very top. This is the society that allows Dalrymple to hang out with him.

Molly: The Dowager Viscountess.

Becca: Yes, the Dowager Viscountess. So, Bath itself is very-- The dynamics are really setting into place around this particular town. It's the most I felt Jane Austen really sink into a setting in her books.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: So, it's really interesting to read.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Okay. Avi asks, "In these chapters, we have three very striking examples of women from different [00:48:00] classes, Lady Dalrymple and Dalrymple Junior, Mrs. Clay and Mrs. Smith. What do Anne's reactions to each of them say about Anne's views of class?" I like this question a lot.

Molly: Yeah. This is a super interesting question, because Anne-- I was thinking during these chapters that Anne was contradicting herself a little bit in a couple different moments, but not necessarily with relation to these characters. But her reaction to Mrs. Smith, she really likes Mrs. Smith. She likes hanging out with her and she doesn't care that her status is lower. I feel like she goes a little bit as a favor to her friend, but also--

Becca: Enjoys herself.

Molly: -she enjoys her company. She compares her to Mrs. Clay, who she looks down on and thinks that her father shouldn't marry, because that would be a dip in status for him. There are certain moments where she's like, "I wish my father had more pride," [00:49:00] which she thinks, "Oh, I never thought I would think this, but why is he stooping?" So, she's contradicting herself a little bit there. But also, I feel like she's able to be a little bit like, "You can't look down on me for Mrs. Smith when you're flirting with Mrs. Clay." And then, her response to Lady Dalrymple is like, "This is a boring, fucking person and I hate her. And status is fake, because we would never hang out with her if she wasn't of status."

I feel like I'm rambling, but I think that her opinions on class are so weird, because I don't think that Anne puts a ton of stock in class. I think she puts a lot of stock in character. So, maybe it's not weird, per se, but more just like-- I don't know what I'm trying to say.

Becca: No, no, it's fair. I have a lot of thoughts on this question. There's a lot to unpack as well.

Molly: Be eloquent [00:50:00] for me.

Becca: I'll try my best. So, first off, I think this book is the one in which Jane Austen, as far as I have read, is the most critical of her society's classism. Clearly, our hero, Captain Wentworth, is somebody upwardly mobile from a lower class who has ascended and gotten a lot of money. That is seen as a good thing in her eyes, which is a very interesting wrinkle on this story.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: And that, for me, colors the entire way I see the story, in particular how I see Anne, because Anne is the one who fell in love with the poor guy, and she was persuaded against him and regrets it every day.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: So, with these three women-- I think just to add a little wrinkle to the Mrs. Clay thing, like, you hear it come forth a little bit in this chapter, that part of it, and we're going to go with The Economics of Dating in Jane Austen and The Economics of Inheritance in Jane Austen. Graham, we're doing a lot of sound effects this episode. Sorry about it. There's a way in which Mrs. Clay is a threat to Anne and Elizabeth's livelihood. So, Anne cares about it from that perspective, [00:51:00] not only from the embarrassment of her father stooping, as you put it. So, that's one thing.

Another thing that I think is important as we look at Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Clay and Lady Dalrymple, is that I have said before, I think Austen has placed some of herself into Anne, and I'm interpreting that doesn't necessarily mean it's true. But we've talked about Jane's interesting relationship to her classist society, the way in which she is aware of some of its follies and is viciously critical of those follies and at the same time a product of that society.

So, I feel like what I see from Anne is simultaneously the contradiction of understanding how stupid all of this is and how character is the most important thing, but also being very cognizant of the realities of the classism in the world and how important it is to uphold [00:52:00] certain things for her father.

Molly: Right.

Becca: So, that's how I read all of that. That was a very complicated, long answer to the question, I should say.

Molly: No. I think it made more sense that Anne is existing in a society that she doesn't want to exist in, but is very aware of the constraints of it and knows that she needs to be able to live in it. So, she's going to follow those rules, especially, because she was forced to, years ago, follow the rules of her family's society. And now, her father is willing to break those rules, and why is he allowed to and she's not allowed to.

Becca: Yeah. I think it's also just some of it's like inherent. You can simultaneously be a critic of a bad system, and also be a product of that system. It happens to all of us. [chuckles]

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Okay. So, that concludes our patron study questions. Listeners, again, if you want to ask us study questions, go ahead and join us at the \$15 patron tier, and then you can drop those questions into Molly's Google Doc [00:53:00] that she posts before our record sessions.

Now, we're going to my study questions, the Becca study questions. "The little flirtation that Elliot and Anne have about society." I'm curious as to how you think that frames the larger story. I find it a fascinating exchange.

Molly: Should we read it?

Becca: Yes.

Molly: "Anne ventured to speak her opinion of them to Mr. Elliot, he agreed to their being nothing in themselves, but still maintained that as a family connexion, as good company, as those who would collect good company around them, they had their value. Anne smiled and said, "My idea of good company, Mr. Elliot, is the company of clever, well-informed people, who have a great deal of conversation; that is what I call good company."

Becca: "You are mistaken," said he gently, "that is not good company, that is the best. Good company requires only birth, education, and manners, and with regard to education is not very nice. Birth and good manners are essential; but a little learning is by no means a dangerous thing in good company; on the contrary, it will do very well.

[00:54:00] My cousin Anne shakes her head. She is not satisfied. She is fastidious. My dear cousin" (sitting down by her), "you have a better right to be fastidious than almost any other woman I know; but will it answer? Will it make you happy? Will it not be wiser to accept the society of those good ladies in Laura Place, and enjoy all the advantages of the connexion as far as possible? You may depend upon it, that they will move in the first set in Bath this winter, and as rank is rank, your being known to be related to them will have its use in fixing your family (our family let me say) in that degree of consideration which we must all wish for."

Molly: "Yes," sighed Anne, "we shall, indeed, be known to be related to them!" then recollecting herself, and not wishing to be answered, she added, "I certainly do think there has been by far too much trouble taken to procure the acquaintance. I suppose" (smiling) "I

have more pride than any of you, but I confess it does vex me, that we should be so solicitous to have the relationship acknowledged, which we may be very sure is a matter of perfect indifference to them.”

Becca: I think we can stop there.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: But what I find really fascinating about this exchange, first of all, I think the flirtation [00:55:00] around it is very interesting.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: But it's the whole book, isn't it?

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: Because think back to what Anne's whole life has been defined by, which is the persuasion away from the man she loved. What was she valuing in Captain Wentworth?

Molly: His good conversation and his--

Becca: Warmth of character?

Molly: Yeah. Like, his excitement about life and his drive. She mentions at some point that she prefers people who are-- What is it? That are frank, open hearted and eager. That's what she sees in Wentworth.

Becca: Yes, I think that's all very true. But I think in this particular moment, the way he says this is like, “Yeah, but that's a gravy you put on top. That's not necessary, nor is it sufficient. What is actually necessary is you make the good connection. Why not make the good connection?”

Molly: Right.

Becca: And that's what he is. He's the good connection. [00:56:00]

Molly: Mm-hmm. He's like, “Why don't you just go along with the society that you're in and follow the rules?”

Becca: I don't think that he's talking about himself in this moment necessarily, because I don't think he knows her past with Wentworth. But it's a meta commentary in my brain of like, “Why not?”

Molly: Right.

Becca: “Why not just do the thing that makes sense?”

Molly: Well, yeah, and I was thinking that too. Honestly, when she was talking about being bewitched by the idea of getting Kellynch Hall back and being able to call it her home forever and taking her beloved mother's place as Lady Elliot of Kellynch Hall, I was like, “Why not?”

Becca: Yeah, you were going to preempt my follow up, which is that it ties to the end of the next chapter, the way that she talks about Elliot versus Wentworth and what she wants. This is the argument Jane is making for love, because as far as The Economics of Dating in Jane Austen goes, Elliot's a great match. He's rich.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: And he's going to inherit a title.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: [00:57:00] And he's not only going to inherit a title, he's going to inherit the estate that Anne grew up in and adores.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: It is, by all measures, the correct match.

Molly: So, why not love?

Becca: Why not? Because she's been preoccupied by the same sailor for eight years.

Molly: Fucking sailors, man.

Becca: Yeah, the fucking navy. This is something we talked about a little bit with *Sense and Sensibility*, and we've talked about it in other books as well. Jane Austen has these conveniences in her book, where it just so happens that her heroines fall in love with the most convenient person to fall in love with.

Mr. Darcy is the best match Elizabeth could hope for. Mr. Knightley makes extraordinary sense for Emma. Obviously, Colonel Brandon for Marianne, very good match for her in a dire circumstance. And then, you have only Elinor amongst our heroines, who is the one-- Again, we keep comparing to Anne in an interesting way. [00:58:00] She's the only one who makes a match that has any issues, but the match is still very pragmatic for her in a lot of ways. She comes from nothing and he has a living.

Molly: Well, he has a living, but he also could get disowned by his mom.

Becca: For the wrong lady.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Even when he does get disowned, he gets a living on his own, married and--

Molly: Because he's compost.

Becca: Exactly.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Our boy. So, when they do marry, it's a step up for Elinor in society.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: So, Wentworth is by no stretch of the imagination the most convenient match for our girl, Anne Elliot, to take.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: He's not even pursuing her right now. But here, she is being confronted with interest from a handsome, well-mannered man who can offer her *THE* best life imaginable and she's saying, "Mm-hmm, I'm not sure."

Molly: Yeah. He'll probably marry her sister, and she'll become Lady Elliot, become

insufferable, and [00:59:00] Anne will probably hang around for a little while and then go live with Lady Russell or continue to live in that house and be like Cinderella, and it'll probably suck. She could change that by dating him instead, but she's going to continue to be hung up on Wentworth, which is the very romantic option, but not the very pragmatic option.

Becca: Yeah. All right. "What do you make of Mr. Elliot's intentions?" We've talked about it in terms of Elizabeth, in terms of Anne. I think you're in the Lady Russell camp of it's all about Anne.

Molly: It's all about Anne. I don't know why he came back. I don't know if he was intending himself for Elizabeth, because again, he is in mourning. I don't know if he was actually intending himself for anyone. I feel like there's another reason why he came back at the time that he did. But as soon as he found out that Anne was an Elliot, I think he made it all about Anne.

Becca: Yes. #allaboutanne.

Molly: #allaboutanne

Becca: It's Anne supremacy from here on out.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Yeah, I think that's all right and I'm not going to comment any further on what you said at all, [01:00:01] because I neither confirm nor deny. Okay. So, next, we're going to turn to the next chapter, and our girl, Mrs. Smith, a very unusual character to get in an Austen novel and not a Dickens novel.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: She's not exactly prototypical. "What do you make of her presence in the story and her past?"

Molly: I think that it's interesting the way that she and Anne, like I said, have swapped roles, which I think one way to show Anne's growth in the story is that she has changed from the person who needed to be taken care of to the person taking care of someone.

But in general, I just really, I like Mrs. Smith. I think that she shows that in bad circumstances and poor circumstances, you can actually be happier or some people can be happier than they might be in wealth and health and stuff. I think that Mrs. Smith is a [01:01:00] happier person than Elizabeth Elliot.

Becca: Yeah. I have a completely different reaction to Mrs. Smith. I don't think she's that happy.

Molly: Okay.

Becca: Obviously, she's super pleasant and a joy to be around.

Molly: Yeah, I guess she's not happy.

Becca: I think she's a cautionary tale. Like, we've talked a lot about the need to secure a match in this story, Anne has turned down a lot of men at this point.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: She's not pleased with her life choices. But you get the sense Mrs. Smith was very focused on finding a husband early in her life. Found one, ruined her life when he died. It just

shows you the precarity of the circumstances of women and how much you have to rely on your senses to pick the right match. Otherwise, you're fucked. [chuckles]

Molly: Yeah. Okay, you're right. Yes, let's focus on this aspect. She married a man [01:02:00] for his money, but didn't choose a good person.

Becca: No, she actually fell in love.

Molly: But he wasn't good to her.

Becca: You can fall in love with someone who's bad to you.

Molly: So, she fell in love.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: She married for love, but she didn't see every aspect of this man. He turned out to be a bad egg. Probably, gambled away all his money. His affairs were not in order when he died, and he was not kind necessarily to her until it was too late, and he was dying and he was like, "Oh, no, I've ruined my life." This is what I'm taking from what she's saying about sick beds and whatever.

Becca: I think all we know is that when she married him, he was a good match, because she loved him and he appeared, by all accounts, to be very wealthy.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: It just goes to show you have no guarantees when you pick a match.

Molly: Right.

Becca: It's not an imprudent match when she makes it, but you put yourself at the mercy of a man-

Molly: Right.

Becca: [01:03:00] -in this society.

Molly: So, she's a cautionary tale in that aspect. I suppose you're right that she's not happy necessarily, because she does see the world as being generally unkind. But she has such a positive outlook on life. Well, she's just nice and is able to make the best of her situation. I think that that's something that Anne has not done over the last eight years. She's wallowed. So, maybe she's considering taking up knitting now.

Becca: [chuckles] She should.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: There's a lot to unpack with Mrs. Smith. Obviously, she is a character that will return in later parts of the book. So, we'll have a lot more to talk about, I suppose, Mrs. Smith as the story goes on. But yeah, also just let's take a moment for an actually poor character in a Jane Austen novel. I think our first character, who is genuinely made uncomfortable by poverty.

Molly: Well, the Bateses.

Becca: Yes, [01:04:00] that's true, but they still have a servant.

Molly: They do. It was weird, because she can't afford a servant, Mrs. Smith. But the house that she's staying in and does have one, but it's like, for everyone in the house.

Becca: Yeah. It's like a--

Molly: Housekeeper.

Becca: Yeah. It's like an apartment building.

Molly: It's like a super.

Becca: Well, yeah, essentially. Or, someone who cooks for everyone, I guess.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: But she's relying a lot on the charity of Nurse Rooke.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Pretty heavily.

Molly: And her little Etsy shop.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: She's making that bank. Okay. So, my next question is, "How do you compare Anne's friendship to Mrs. Smith with the Dalrymple saga of the Elliots?"

Molly: With the Dalrymples, the Elliot's are lowering themselves. They're sniveling, like I said, being like, "Oh, my God, someone's above us. They're our cousin. We have to have everyone know that they're our cousin and we're going to befriend them." Anne is going to Mrs. Smith's house one as a little bit of charity and two, because she likes her company. And Mrs. Smith is such a [01:05:00] more pleasant person to be around than the Dalrymples. Like, she's just so much more interesting.

Becca: Yeah. It shows Anne's capacity for genuine human connection beyond her father's.

Molly: Yeah. Versus the Dalrymples, who, they literally are just going there because they're rich, but they're actually so boring.

Becca: Yeah. As we're talking about more about Mrs. Smith, I realize I say every book, this is a genuinely poor character. No, they get poorer every book, because Mrs. Smith is poorer than the Bateses, who are poorer than the Dashwoods, who's poorer than the Bennets. You know what I mean? Like, it just goes down the line.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Mrs. Smith is quite poor, but I will give it to you about the Mrs. Bates' also being poor. It's just like, I think, "Oh, man, there's just so many books where women are fucked when their husbands die."

Molly: Yup.

Becca: That's what we're learning. Just don't let them die, ladies.

Molly: Yeah. Keep them alive forever. Sell your soul.

Becca: Exactly. Unless they're really, really, really rich in which case-- If they're rich, let them die. [chuckles]

Molly: Yeah. As long as their affairs are in order.

Becca: Exactly.

Molly: And [01:06:00] you're written into the will.

Becca: Well, if you're the wife, you're in the will.

Molly: You better be in the will.

Becca: Yeah, that's how it works.

Molly: Well, yeah. You know, just make sure.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Read it first.

Becca: Yeah. And finally, my last question and this takes us full circle, is Anne's feelings on Mr. Elliot. "What do you think they are? Like, do you think she genuinely like-- How storied do you think she is in her feelings?"

Molly: I think that she genuinely likes talking to him. I think she sees him as a friend who she can have real conversations with. However, I also think that she's aware of his failings as a person. She's not going to let that affect the fact that she needs a pal. But I do think that she's not going to open herself up too much to him, that makes sense, like she's going to be a little cautious?

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: [01:07:00] I'm not going to comment on it, actually.

Molly: All right.

Becca: Funniest quote?

Molly: I think I have to give it to, "I am no matchmaker, as you well know."

Becca: I'm going to give it to Dalrymple. Just the name.

Molly: Just the name.

Becca: Just the name, Dalrymple. Questions moving forward.

Molly: What will Mrs. Smith's purpose in this story be? Will Anne just continue to go visit her, or will there be some plot point having to do with her? Similarly, with the Dalrymples, I want to know like, what's going on there plot wise? Because these chapters, not a lot of plot happened, but we were introduced to a lot of new characters.

Becca: Yeah. It's really like a scene setting set of chapters.

Molly: Yeah. So, I'm just curious, like, "What is going to happen with all these characters?"

Will they all meet? Will there be a ball?" Yeah.

Becca: Interesting. Who wins the chapters?

Molly: Mrs. Smith.

Becca: Yes. Great choice.

Molly: She's such a queen.

Becca: Our chipper little knitting queen.

Molly: Our little Etsy shop. Sad girl.

Becca: Princess.

Molly: Princess.

Becca: Yeah. May she kill it.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Absolutely **[01:08:00]** forever. All right, listeners, that concludes this episode of Pod and Prejudice. For next time, you're going to read the next two chapters of the book, which will be Chapters 6 and 7 of Volume II. Or, if you're in an un-volumed book, it's Chapters 18 and 19. So, listeners, until next time, stay proper.

Molly: And join coven, sell your soul and don't let your husband die.

Becca: And also, Dalrymple.

Molly: Oh, and Dalrymple. Yeah.

Becca: Yes. Yes.

Molly: Stay proper and Dalrymple.

Becca: Dal that Rymple.

[music]

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](https://www.instagram.com/podandprejudice). If you love what you hear, check out our Patreon at [patreon.com/podandprejudice](https://www.patreon.com/podandprejudice) to see how you can support us or just drop us a rating and a review wherever **[01:09:00]** you listen to podcasts. Thanks for listening.

[Transcript provided by [SpeechDocs Podcast Transcription](https://www.speechdocs.com)]