

Becca: Hey, everyone. Before we begin today, as you can hear, Molly is out of the country. So, I, Becca, would like to thank our newest patrons, Kathryn, Renee and Iris. Welcome to the team. Listeners, if you want to be like these lovely individuals, you can support our work at patreon.com/podandprejudice, where you can enjoy perks such as following my journey through *Persuasion* for the first time or submitting questions as your own study questions for us to ask during each episode.

But without further ado, please enjoy our coverage of the final chapter of *Persuasion*, Chapter 24. Or, if you're in a volumed book, Volume II, chapter 12.

[Pod and Prejudice theme]

Molly: Shall we talk about the last chapter of *Persuasion*?

Becca: Yeah, we should. I was thinking about this today. We started reading this book in June this year?

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: This took us no time to finish.

Molly: [00:01:00] I know. Comparatively, this was so quick.

Becca: It took us like a year to read *Emma*, the book, right?

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: And then, we spent a year just watching *Emma* adaptations, right?

Molly: Yeah. It's sad that it was so fast, because I really liked it.

Becca: Well, if you think about it, a lot of our other books, the chapters are in the 30s. This was 24 chapters. Brisk, short, sweet and to the point.

Molly: Yes. Yes.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Despite the characters never talking about their feelings until the last minute, which is, I guess normal for a Jane Austen.

Becca: Yeah. You might not recall, but we don't exactly get insight into Knightley's psyche until the very end of *Emma* either, and that's a much longer book.

Molly: True. Well, shall we?

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, if you're new here, I, Becca, have read many Jane Austen novels through my lifetime.

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* [00:02:00] 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*, Volume II, Chapter 12. Or, if your book is not broken up into volumes, Chapter 24. Or, the final chapter.

Becca: The final chapter of *Persuasion*. Long one. So much happens.

Molly: So much happens. Very long. Not eight minutes on the audiobook at all.

Becca: Listeners, I want you to know that I spent a long time trying to figure out whether or not we were going to do this chapter as one piece with the letter and have us end on the letter. And I decided against it, because I wanted you to have Molly just solely focused on the letter for the entirety of that episode. And instead, I figured, yeah, we'll find a way to talk about this last chapter for a while.

Molly: Yeah, I think that the chapter before this one really needed the space to breathe. Also, we talked about it for two hours and then had to cut it down.

Becca: Don't tell everyone that they're going to want the full cut.

Molly: Anyway, let's talk about the final chapter, I guess.

Becca: Should I [00:03:00] recap what happened last week?

Molly: Oh, yeah. Tell us what happened. Tell us what happened.

Becca: Wentworth got into his feelings and gave Anne a letter that blacked her out for a little while, because he told her she pierced his soul and he was half agony, half hope.

Molly: And that was beautiful.

Becca: Yeah. And then, they basically confessed their love for one another. And Anne was like, "I'm so happy. I don't even trust how happy I am."

Molly: Yeah, it's too good to be true, essentially.

Becca: Do I need to say anything else? I guess the fact that we got the whole book from Wentworth's perspective, kind of.

Molly: That sums it up pretty well. Now they are in love, and so we'll find out what happens next.

Becca: They are in love.

Molly: We have to tie this all up with a neat little bow.

Becca: Yes, we do.

Molly: So, this chapter starts off with Jane Austen in her rocking chair saying, that "When two young people are in love, no matter if they're an imprudent match, they're poor, they've got nothing going on for them, they will persevere to get married." She says, "This may be bad morality to conclude with, [00:04:00] but I believe it to be truth," which I was like, "Whoa," a first-person comment from Jane Austen.

Becca: I love it. She's getting to the end of the book and she's like, "You know what, guys? They're getting married." [chuckles]

Molly: Yeah. She's like, "I'm here to just tell you what happened." She thinks that if people like that can succeed who aren't well matched, how could Wentworth and Anne, who are perfect for each other and also have an independent fortune, one independent fortune between them, fail to overcome all opposition to their match?

Becca: Yeah, basically, she's like, "People are going to fall in love and get married. It might as well be rich, hot people who love each other."

Molly: [giggles] It might as well be. If only who could all be rich and hot.

Becca: That is like the subtitle to every Jane Austen novel. People are going to fall in love. It might as well be rich, hot people who love each other. People will marry. The cousins will marry. Might as well be rich, hot people.

Molly: The cousins will marry.

Becca: Not in this one. They won't.

Molly: No, no. As it happens, Sir Walter and Elizabeth don't object to the match, because Wentworth is no longer nobody.

Becca: Mm-hmm.

Molly: He was [00:05:00] now esteemed quite worthy to address the daughter of a foolish spendthrift baronet who had not principle or sense enough to maintain himself in the situation which providence had placed him.

Becca: Burn.

Molly: Savage.

Becca: Jane Austen. But also very interesting, because as we started this book, we talked about this how Anne's position is somewhat precarious, because her father has demoted them essentially-

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: -by being spend happy, I guess.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: And now, there is a way in which like, yes, Anne has title and Wentworth doesn't. Anne is from a landed gentry family and Wentworth isn't. But in some ways, Wentworth has the upper hand. He's the more eligible match than Anne at this point.

Molly: Yeah. He has an independent fortune, whereas Anne can only get a portion of her inheritance that she'll get when her father dies. Also, he's hot, which is important to Sir Walter.

Becca: Yeah, he is hot. We've stressed the fact that Anne is hot.

Molly: But Wentworth?

Becca: He's hot.

Molly: He's very hot.

Becca: Yeah, we've talked about this, because he did get a revenge [00:06:00] bod-

Molly: [laughs]

Becca: -over the course of eight years, if you recall. She sees him, she's like, "Damn it, he's even more attractive."

Molly: He was working hard in the navy.

Becca: Yeah, exactly. Listen, I don't want to clock myself too hard, but we've all broken up with someone and then taken pains to look extra hot on Instagram.

Molly: Yes. You're acting like this is the first time you've clocked yourself for wanting to look hot in front of your exes.

Becca: Oh, yeah, yeah. No, it's basically been me talking about this book, like we're all Wentworth, we're all Anne, we're all panicking and we're all trying to impress our exes. Maybe I'm wrong or maybe I'm petty, but my experience is, no matter how good the terms are with your ex, you always want to be doing a little better.

Molly: Yeah, of course. So, Sir Walter ends up putting their marriage into the marriage book, which is a nice little way to bookend the story. It starts with him opening up the book and ends with him closing the book.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: Anne was really only worried about one person's opinion, and that's Lady Russell. [00:07:00] Lady Russell had a real come to Jesus' moment.

Becca: Yeah. She's basically like, "Well, I don't like him, but fuck, I was wrong before about Mr. Elliot and I just have to accept that I was wrong. So, maybe I was wrong about him."

Molly: Yeah. She accepts that she is totally and completely in the wrong. She admits that she had been unfairly influenced by appearances. So, when Wentworth's manners didn't match her own ideas of propriety, she assumed that he had a character of "dangerous impetuosity." And Elliot was very smooth. And so, she assumed that he had all correct opinions and a well-regulated mind and was perfect.

But ultimately, her primary objective is Anne's happiness. And it always has been. I thought this was a really sweet way to throw things into perspective while she might have her flaws, and she's uppity and she's classist more than any of that. She cares more about Anne than any of that.

Becca: We've come full circle on Lady Russell. [00:08:00] We start the book, we love her immediately. At least, this was my experience. And then, you find out she broke up Anne and Wentworth, and you hate her. And at the end of the book, I had the feeling that she was misguided but not ill meaning.

Molly: No. And that's how I felt for a lot of it. I think how Anne has felt as well, which is that she can't blame Lady Russell for doing what she did, because she thought she was doing the right thing.

Becca: It's almost like sometimes people break up because of circumstances outside of their control.

Molly: Mm. Yeah.

Becca: Mm.

Molly: Mm.

Becca: Mm.

Molly: And in the end, Lady Russell “found little hardship in attaching herself as a mother to the man who was securing the happiness of her other child.” She’s her mama.

Becca: She is her mama.

Molly: I mean, she has her mama, but her mama is dead. Lady Russell took on that role when she died.

Becca: That’s the undercurrent of the entire book. It’s not that Lady Russell’s just her prestigious friend who advised her one way or another. Lady Russell explicitly stepped into her mother’s role in her life-

Molly: [00:09:00] Yeah.

Becca: -and wants to see her well situated. She is now well situated, because Wentworth made good on his own ambitions.

Molly: Mm-hmm. We love a success story.

Becca: We love a man who makes good on his own ambitions.

Molly: Mary, iconically, is taking credit for the match.

Becca: So, I was going through how everybody’s story wraps up here. I love that Mary just ends. Starts a legend, ends a legend.

Molly: And honestly, throughout legendary.

Becca: No character development, [Molly laughs] no self-awareness. Just pure icon status, this entire book.

Molly: We love a growth arc, and we also love the complete lack of one.

Becca: Yeah. I feel like she’s the opposite of a growth arc. Not even a descent into madness either, just a pure resounding note of-- Oh, what’s the right word here? Maryness. Oh, God, everything she does, [00:10:00] not a touch of self-awareness-

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: -not a touch of reflection, no realizations about who she is as a person, no desires to change, no conflicts met through the book. Just pure Mary. And you know what? Thank you, Jane Austen.

Molly: Thank you for Mary.

Becca: Thank you for Mary.

Molly: Yeah. So, she’s like, “Oh, Anne stayed with me and that’s where she met Wentworth. So, I take credit.” I don’t know still if Mary knows about their past. Like, is that ever going to be revealed to her? I mean, there’s no more books, so it’s not.

Becca: I presumed at some point, it would probably be revealed.

Molly: But right now, she's like, "They got back together or got together in my presence, so thanks to me."

Becca: Or, if someone's told her, she's like, "Ah, you know, I reunited the lovers."

Molly: Yes. Yes.

Becca: "You're welcome."

Molly: What can I say except you're welcome?

Becca: Meanwhile, if you recall this portion of the book, Mary was leaving [chuckles] Anne to take care of her [00:11:00] sick child, so she could go hang out with Wentworth.

Molly: Yup. Yup. Literally, no self-awareness at all.

Becca: God bless her.

Molly: Mary needs her own sister to better than her sisters in law. So, she is very happy that Wentworth is richer and hotter than Benwick and Charles Hayter. But she is a little bit bummed that Anne now has seniority over her again, because Anne's older.

Becca: Anne is more accomplished than Mary. Anne is prettier than Mary. Anne is older than Mary. Anne is better liked than Mary. So, Anne has beat Mary at everything throughout life. And that undercurrent of jealousy has played out through many of their interactions in this book, despite the fact that Mary is very obviously the most loving towards Anne of her family. But that's pretty low as far as bars go.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: But what she had over Anne was that she was married and had kids, which women in society, that's like social capital. Even today is annoyingly relevant. But social capital for a woman in this time of being a married woman [00:12:00] versus being an unmarried woman, that is a really stark difference between Mary and Anne at the beginning of this book, like, Anne was the sad spinster aunt at the beginning of this book. Now, she is this hot young thing. It cannot be stressed enough how unbelievably hot Anne is.

Molly: So hot.

Becca: She has snagged one of the most eligible bachelors in Bath through nothing, but being hot and awesome. So, all this to say, the one advantage Mary had over Anne through the entire book was being married. And now, she no longer has that.

Molly: Right.

Becca: But what she does say, is that even though Anne snatches is super wealthy, the fact that she's not marrying into the landed gentry or the aristocracy makes this acceptable, because Mary still has title over her.

Molly: Right. She doesn't have an estate.

Becca: Exactly.

Molly: And there's no possibility of Wentworth getting--

Becca: You can purchase land.

Molly: [00:13:00] But what I'm saying is they specifically said, as long as he doesn't become a baronet, there's no way that would ever happen. In terms of inheriting from her father, that has to go through Elliot still.

Becca: That's a good question, because I think if Anne had a son, it might complicate things. No. Yeah, yeah.

Molly: No, because it wouldn't be her heir that-- I think that no matter what Elliot is going to get the estate as long as her father doesn't have a son, because it would have to be her father's son.

Becca: You mean it's patrilineal?

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: I don't know if that's true or not, but I think it might be true. I don't recall whether or not you can inherit if you're the grandson through a daughter. But that being said--

Molly: Either way, it wouldn't be Wentworth no matter what.

Becca: No, I don't think it would be. But I also think what she meant is he can't buy his baronetcy.

Molly: Right.

Becca: Well, which he could, but he won't.

Molly: But he won't. And also-- Yeah-

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: -that's what Mary hopes anyway.

Becca: Yeah. And Wentworth could buy land still.

Molly: [00:14:00] Yes.

Becca: It's hard to get one of these estates, because as you saw, they're all entailed and all this stuff to people like Mr. Elliot. But sometimes they do actually go up for sale. When they do, people like Wentworth swoop in and take them.

Molly: Okay. Well, Mary hopes that doesn't happen, so she still has that leg up.

Becca: Yeah. Well, she hopes that he doesn't get the aristocracy, because I think her thing is like, "Oh, yeah, you might be richer now and people might like you better, but I'm still part of the landed gentry. You're not there yet." I don't think him buying into it is as good as me having someone who inherited, and therefore, the only way he could raise up is through baronetcy.

Molly: He could get knighted.

Becca: I guess he could.

Molly: But Mary is not really thinking about that. Mary's thinking about Mary.

Becca: Well, Mary-- Yeah, the long and the short of it is he's a perfect match for Anne, for

Mary's purposes, because he's better than her sisters in law did. [00:15:00] But he's in her own little mechanism, not necessarily quite as good as Charlie Musgrove in terms of the Economics of Dating in Jane Austen, although by some measures, he's better because I think he's richer.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: But you understand.

Molly: I understand.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: So, Elizabeth, however, has no consolation in this match.

Becca: Dark.

Molly: Dark. She was mortified when Elliot left after Anne and Wentworth got engaged. Now, Elliot.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: Elliot finds out about Anne's engagement, and his best hope of keeping Sir Walter single goes down the tubes, because he had been planning on keeping a close eye on him as a son in law. But soon after, he leaves Bath, so does Mrs. Clay.

Becca: What?

Molly: And the next they hear of her, she is under his protection in London. Called it.

Becca: Sure did.

Molly: I called that.

Becca: Yes, you did. Almost makes up for you [00:16:00] being like, "Why am I stanning Mr. Elliot so hard?" You know, it comes in multitudes. Sometimes you're like right on the target.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: And here you are.

Molly: And here I was. So, basically, Mrs. Clay and Mr. Elliot have a thing. Mrs. Clay's affections for Mr. Elliot overpowered her interest in Sir Walter since Mr. Elliot is young and hot, and she stops scheming and runs off with him.

Becca: Mm-hmm.

Molly: So, here's what I think is going on here. Elliot still makes sure in this way that Sir Walter can't have an heir, because he steals his girl.

Becca: Yup. Exactly.

Molly: So, therefore, he will still inherit the estate, and he and Mrs. Clay both still win-

Becca: Yup.

Molly: -at their own individual games.

Becca: Yeah. Except they both lose, because they have to be married to each other.

Molly: Right. Mrs. Clay, I didn't hate.

Becca: Austen gives her a harsh punishment here.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: A bit of a Lydia Bennet situation where you're like, "You weren't so bad that you deserved Mr. Wickham."

Molly: Right.

Becca: But it [00:17:00] is certainly like a punishment Jane Austen has doled out to this character.

Molly: Yeah. And especially because I highly doubt that Elliot actually likes her. I mean, he might like her, but I doubt that he actually would have chosen her for himself, because it's so clearly just a pull to get Sir Walter's girl.

Becca: Yeah. It's a blatant protection of his own interests.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: As we've seen with him, he does that a lot, and he's not necessarily the nicest.

Molly: No, he sucks.

Becca: Yeah. To his spouses. So, it's a sad fate.

Molly: Yeah. Sir Walter and Elizabeth, however, still have the Dalrymples.

Becca: The who?

Molly: The Dowager Viscountess Lady Dalrymple and Baby Dalrymple.

Becca: Yes, they do.

Molly: But to flatter and follow others without being flattered and followed in turn is a state of half enjoyment.

Becca: Tell that to Mr. Collins.

Molly: [laughs] He loves to flatter.

Becca: Pure bliss with Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

Molly: [giggles] Anne's only qualm [00:18:00] in this whole situation is not having a family that can receive Wentworth with the same warmth, goodwill, respectability, etc., like his family did for her, because obviously, his family is the Crofts who rock.

Becca: The best.

Molly: She only has two friends to offer him, Lady Russell and Mrs. Smith. Wentworth forgives Lady Russell. He still doesn't think she was right, but he loves everything else about her, so he's willing to accept her as his mama. And Mrs. Smith, he loves Mrs. Smith. He helps Mrs. Smith regain her husband's property in the West Indies, bada boom, which required the services which she had rendered or ever meant to render to his wife. The

services being--

Becca: Getting that-- That's what she wanted out of Anne in the first place when she found out Anne was potentially going to marry Mr. Elliot.

Molly: Right. But I thought this was saying that he's paying her back for some service that she did for Anne.

Becca: I think she--

Molly: The friendship? [00:19:00]

Becca: Potentially, the exposure to Mr. Elliot.

Molly: Oh, that's where I was thinking. Like, I think that he is assuming-- because she told Anne that Elliot was bad news, that's how he's repaying her for that. But I've felt like that brushes over some of the complexities of the situation.

Becca: Sure does. But at the same time, it's a fun and witty line from Jane Austen.

Molly: Yes. Oh, this next bit is so fun. "Mrs. Smith's enjoyments were not spoiled by this improvement of income, with some improvement of health, and the acquisition of such friends to be often with, for her cheerfulness and mental alacrity did not fail her, and while these prime supplies of good remained, she might have bid defiance even to greater accessions of worldly prosperity. She might have been absolutely rich and perfectly healthy, and yet be happy." I thought that was very funny from Jane Austen.

Becca: Oh, yeah. She's given us a little [00:20:00] Chong & Cheech about Mrs. Smith's capacity to be joyful in her little horrible apartment in Bath.

Molly: Yeah. And also, people with money being grumpy and having less of that alacrity of mind.

Becca: Yes, exactly. I will say, also, we talked about this earlier. You'd said a couple times like, "Oh, she needs Mr. Elliot." She needed a man.

Molly: She just needed a man.

Becca: She just needed a man, because-- and a wealthy man at that.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: But she found one-

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: -and he was more than willing to help.

Molly: She will be perfectly happy going forward without a man, which I love for her.

Becca: Yeah. Oh. To be in the Jane Austen times and just be crocheting and gossiping. I mean, it wasn't great because of the whole, you have no rights situation.

Molly: Yeah, that situation.

Becca: I know. But it does seem like appealing to be wandering around your own estate and knitting. It's why we [00:21:00] all love these books, right?

Molly: Yeah, absolutely.

Becca: We want to feel cozy and happy in our own little walks and our own little painting and our own little enjoying the English countryside.

Molly: Yeah, totally. These books are cozy as heck.

Becca: Yeah. I pictured Mrs. Smith in a nice little parlor doing nothing, but knitting her little booties. But now she doesn't need to do it for income. She just does it for fun.

Molly: Yeah. Oh, we love her.

Becca: Oh, love it.

Molly: As for Anne, she is tenderness itself and has the full worth of it in Wentworth's affection. An odd note to end on, but the only thing that makes her wish she loved him less, or her friends wish that she loved him less is his profession, because there's always this dread of a future war that could dim her sunshine.

Becca: Dun-dun-duuun.

Molly: Dark.

Becca: Yeah, it's true. But at the same time--

Molly: She lives in constant fear of him dying.

Becca: Well, yeah, but I mean, it's more like him going away.

Molly: Sure.

Becca: Because at this point, he's managing the naval troops, not like you know **[00:22:00]** he's not a foot soldier.

Molly: I see. So, it's a constant fear of him being called away for several months at a time.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah. But she's perfectly happy being a sailor's wife, and so she loves it.

Becca: Yeah. In my brain, you get the sense that they're going to be Admiral and Mrs. Croft in their own right, and Anne might have the capacity. It's hinted at a couple times in the story, Anne has never seen the world and has never really traveled outside of England. Anne is going to Lyme, and Lyme is beautiful and she likes the sea there. It's the first thing she's ever seen outside of Somersetshire. You just get this picture of Anne living a life of warmth, happiness and adventure with Wentworth.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: I was like, "Oh, I love that for you."

Molly: Happy ending.

Becca: Happy ending to our fourth finished Jane Austen novel.

Molly: Aah, wow.

Becca: Oh, my gosh.

Molly: We did it.

Becca: Yes. Which brings us to the study questions. [00:23:00] I'm going to remind you guys one last time as we finish this book that you can ask study questions if you are a \$15 patron on our Patreon. Molly will post a Google Doc, and you will be able to post whatever questions you want, and we'll ask them on the air.

It just so happens that our patron study questions overlap pretty heavily with my study questions, which happen sometimes on this podcast. So, I'm going to do them in tandem and just ask you some study questions. I will give credit when the question comes from one of our dear patrons, so know that if you have a patron study question that overlaps with mine, we are on the same wavelength as we finish this novel. [Molly giggles]

All right. Question one. "Why did Austin put Mrs. Clay and Mr. Elliott together as a form of punishment?"

Molly: I have trouble thinking of it as a form of punishment. I guess in a way, it could be considered punishment to Mrs. Clay or punishment for Mrs. Clay [00:24:00] for being a little bit scheming and conniving. Like, yeah, she got what she wanted, which was she will eventually inherit this estate, but she had to be with Mr. Elliot who sucks to get it.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: So, I guess it's a form of punishment for her. For him, I'm a little frustrated, because he still gets what he wants.

Becca: Yeah. But that's why I think Mr. Elliot's an interesting character, because what do we read into him? If you recall our discussion about Mr. Elliot when it was revealed that he was a snake, I read one line over and over again about his incapacity to feel happiness and purpose. He sought money his whole life, all he wanted was money and then he had an endless supply of money, and then he was like, "What do I want now? What do I want now? I want my title. I want to be a baronet," and he [00:25:00] relentlessly pursues that.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: Now, he's secured it again.

Molly: And he's going to probably stop being happy.

Becca: What's next?

Molly: He didn't find love, so-

Becca: Surely not.

Molly: -now he's going to be with a woman that he doesn't love, and he's going to wish that he was with someone else.

Becca: I do think that Mrs. Clay gets the rougher end of that stick,-

Molly: Absolutely.

Becca: -because he sucks. Also, she's not going to be a baronetess. She's not going to be the Mistress of Kellynch for years.

Molly: Right.

Becca: When she was close to being that if she just sucked it up and married Sir Walter. Oh, that's a weird question. "Who do you think would be less pleasant to be married to, Sir Walter or Mr. Elliot?"

Molly: Man.

Becca: It's a tough call.

Molly: You know that I was really into Mr. Elliot for a lot of this book. Sir Walter fucking sucks. So does Mr. Elliot because of what he did to Mrs. Smith. But in terms of pleasantness to be married to--

Becca: [00:26:00] I am going to say I would rather be married to Sir Walter than Mr. Elliot for two reasons.

Molly: Sir Walter is daddy.

Becca: Well, Sir Walter is supposed to be hot-

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: -but he's also ugh because of everything about his personality.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: But Mr. Elliot is also supposed to be hot. So, that's not really factoring into my decision here.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: One, I would say, in this book, both of them have been cruel and awful. Both of them have done terrible things to women they have power over. I think that Sir Walter would be more influenced by good influences around him than Mr. Elliot. I think that his association with Lady Russell, for example, would be something that would rescue you slightly, because you'd spend a lot of time with people who would stop him from being cruel to you.

Molly: Right. I also think that he would probably not mind [00:27:00] me just like going off and doing my own thing.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Like, "Get me some paint. Get me some writing utensils."

Becca: It's Charlotte sending Mr. Collins out to gardens.

Molly: Exactly.

Becca: Like, you find your ways to avoid talking to him. Whereas Mr. Elliot seems like a bully to the women he doesn't care for who he marries.

Molly: Yeah. He would just be miserable to be with.

Becca: Yeah. I think on the surface, Mr. Elliott's the obvious one you'd rather, because he's flirtatious, he's fun, people like him in society. He has a decent reputation amongst most.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: And he's out there partying. He's vivacious. There's a lot of reasons why you think a

Mrs. Clay, who's not thinking too hard about this would go off with him.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: But I think at the end of the day, as embarrassing as Sir Walter is, as cruel as he is to Anne, better than Mr. Elliot, because he is-- You can stay away from him and you can have him-- You have a stopgap, a buffer, if you will, with the [00:28:00] sensible women in his life-

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: -like Anne-

Molly: Totally.

Becca: -and Lady Russell.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Okay. Question number two. "What does it do to this book to have a particularly happy ending? How does that form the story?" I think Jane Austen's first line touches on this.

Molly: Jane Austen's first line of the book?

Becca: With the chapter.

Molly: The chapter. That line is, "Who can be in doubt of what followed? When any two young people take it into their heads to marry, they are pretty sure by perseverance to carry their point, be they ever so poor, or ever so imprudent, or ever so little likely to be necessary to each other's ultimate comfort." How does it form the story in retrospect?

Becca: Yeah, I think spoiler alert for *Sex and the City*. [Molly giggles] So, if you don't want to get this show from 20 years ago spoiled for you, skip this part. But *Sex and the City* is like an anti rom-com in a lot of ways. It is a critique on what women need in terms of love, because the television series centers [00:29:00] the female friendships. And for all of its other flaws, it's message is crystallized in its fourth season when Charlotte leans over to all of her best girlfriends and says, "Maybe we could be each other's soul mates and guys can just be these people who come and give us a really good time in our lives." And that's the point of that story.

So, there is an argument that *Sex and the City's* message is devalued by the fact that, one, all of the women end up married at the end. And two, specifically Carrie ends up with Big. There's a lot of debate online. It's leaned heavily anti Big in recent years, but there is a question of whether or not that's the show betrayed what it was about in the first place by having these women end up, like the happy ending being finding love with men.

What I'm asking is in this story where Jane Austen, a writer who famously says, "All of my heroines get what they want eventually at the end of the book," not that quote exactly, but verbatim, that's what she said. [00:30:00] "What does it do to this particular story that they end up together?"

Molly: So, I guess up until this point-- I mean, we've talked a lot about Anne having been persuaded away from Wentworth, and who was right and who was wrong. A lot of the themes have been getting over someone moving on whether it's okay to move on, whether you should move on, but primarily whether Anne was right to be persuaded by Lady Russell and whether Lady Russell was right to stop the marriage from happening. There were eight years of consequence, but then they still ended up together. What am I trying to say? I'm just rambling.

Becca: Yeah, I threw that one at you.

Molly: Let me think. Let me think. It is a very happy ending for a book that spent so much time with the main character being [00:31:00] depressed and panicking.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: But I don't think that it contradicts the moral of the story, so to speak, because even though Lady Russell was wrong to persuade Anne away from him, she was also right, because she was doing what she thought was best. And even though Anne spent eight years regretting it, she ultimately comes to the conclusion that she was also right to do what she did.

I guess it a little bit is like, well, they still got what they wanted even though they made these big mistakes or even though they made the right decision by breaking up, they still ended up together. But I don't think that's a bad thing.

Becca: Yeah. So, just to clarify, I love a good rom-com. I don't think it's a bad thing to have happy ending. I think for me, it falls into two buckets. It's just an interesting thing to think about. [00:32:00] On one hand, I think you're totally right. The meditations on love that this book has, this is a perfect payoff, because this book is asking real questions about how long love can persist without hope and what it means to truly love someone beyond all logic and reason and what it means to be sort of physically unable to be persuaded away from another person. That is a really powerful story, and I think it's told pretty powerfully through Anne and Wentworth.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: Very beautiful. Very sad.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: On the other hand, the questions that come up in the class narrative in this are really some of the boldest that I've seen Jane Austen take on. There's another thing popping up that I will not spoil but might deal with class in an interesting way as well, in a different way. But Jane Austen asks the question of like, "What happens if love is inconvenient in this book, and what happens if you can't get over an inconvenient love?" And she answers it very [00:33:00] conveniently.

Molly: Yeah, because he becomes convenient.

Becca: He becomes extremely convenient in the story. But there's a different question of what if Wentworth hadn't become convenient? What if Anne was still hung up on this man and he was still not right for her in a society sense? And this, it's uncomplicated that he's unequivocally a good match at this point. He's wealthy independently, and he's sturdy and eligible. But that's very convenient for our narrative [chuckles] here, which--

On the other hand, I will say, like, you get the sense that part of what Anne loved about him was his ambition and his drive that did cause him to pull himself up in class rank. But there are unanswered questions about what happens if someone's an inconvenient person you can't stop loving. There are other books that explore that really beautifully, but this is the closest I think I've seen Jane Austen get to exploring what it means to [00:34:00] not be able to stop loving someone no matter what society says.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: And then, it's like, "Oh, well, don't worry about that, because society is fine with him."

[chuckles]

Molly: Yeah. On the one hand, it's super satisfying that he gets to have such an I told you so to the Elliots. On the other hand, just for a thought experiment, imagine Anne might love his ambition, and she does. He stays ambitious those eight years, and fails and fails and continues to strive for to win-

Becca: [unintelligible 00:34:33] yeah.

Molly: -and he continues to fail and then they meet each other again and they're still in love. He still loves her and she still loves him, even though-- And then, what happens when they're thrown together again and again, which maybe they wouldn't have been if he hadn't gone to the navy and he hadn't-- But say they're thrown together for some other reason.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: What happens when they can't let go of it? It would be a really interesting story [00:35:00] that maybe Jane Austen-- Well, it's not the story she wanted to tell, so she didn't, but I'm interested.

Becca: Perhaps, some other author from 19th century England has told the story in an interesting and different frame. Perhaps, we'll read that one day. I don't know.

Molly: *Wuthering Heights*?

Becca: I don't know what you're talking about.

Molly: [laughs] That was funny.

Becca: [laughs] Okay. So, this next question is the first that is really on point with one of our patron study questions. So, this is from Katrine. "Aside from Anne and Wentworth, do the other people in the novel get a happy ending? Think of Mrs. Clay and Louisa. Will they be happy in life or have they potentially made a mistake in choosing a partner? Similarly with Elizabeth and Sir Walter, is happiness in their future?" This goes perfectly with my question of do we find the endings fitting for Elizabeth and Sir Walter, Lady Russell and Mrs. Smith?

Molly: Okay. Let's go through I guess person by person. We've already talked about Mrs. Clay.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: I think I feel bad for her.

Becca: Yeah. [chuckles]

Molly: Louisa? [00:36:00] I mean, I love Benwick.

Becca: Benwick is fantastic. I do think Louisa's story is a morose one, because it is sad to have a woman have to become serious in her youth because of a head injury.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: I'm happy she has a partner who takes care of her and can match her in that melancholy. But I do think there is-- Her happy ending is not as clean as, say, for example, her sister's happy ending.

Molly: Yeah. I find it hard to judge the relationship since we didn't really get to see them together, aside from just hearing that he was reading to her in bed and obviously at that

time, she was still very much recovering. So, we don't get to know how they're going to flourish together.

Becca: Yeah. I take a lot from that sentence from Mrs. Musgrove talking about how her daughter's now jumpy and not as vivacious as she used to be. That makes me sad for her.

Molly: Yeah. And I feel sad for her, especially because it all came out of a [00:37:00] moment of her vivaciousness.

Becca: Yeah. She's this headstrong, vivacious girl who suffers really bad consequences for having fun.

Molly: Yeah. And she knows that. I think she's learned that that was a direct result of her fucking around.

Becca: And also, just like, that's just not something she's ever going to forget. It's going to inform the rest of her life and that is very sad.

Molly: Yeah. So, that's sad. But I don't think that in terms of-- She doesn't have a happy ending in terms of herself, but I think that Benwick will help make her ending better.

Becca: I think if you're going to suffer a head injury of that caliber in a book, that is about as happy an ending as you can hope for,-

Molly: Yes, absolutely.

Becca: Which is recovering healthily, being a little bit more of a somber person than you used to be and ending up with someone who can match your newfound melancholy. I think that's pretty okay.

Molly: Yeah. Yeah.

Becca: Sir Walter and Elizabeth are purely punished.

Molly: Sir Walter and Elizabeth, yeah, whatever. They [00:38:00] can suffer. Also, Elizabeth punished doesn't get a happy ending, will never have a happy ending. Happy for me, because I want her to end up alone. Sir Walter also ends up alone, but he doesn't seem like-- He's embarrassed, but I feel like he's not heartbroken, per se.

Becca: I think the doom spelled out for those two at the end of this novel is they haven't learned from their mistakes, so they will continue to make those mistakes.

Molly: And they're going to continue to be hot and lonely.

Becca: Hot and lonely, I think, is the doom that these two face together.

Molly: Yes, which is great for them.

Becca: And potentially poor, except for the fact that now they have two married off daughters who are in good circumstance.

Molly: Yeah. The thing is, if Mary and Anne weren't-- Well, if Anne wasn't such a good daughter and if Mary wasn't so clueless, they wouldn't help them.

Becca: Clueless, huh?

Molly: Hmm. But they're going to help them probably, because they're good people.

Becca: Yeah. Well, at the end of the novel, I think it seems obvious it would fall to Anne, [00:39:00] which sucks for Wentworth, because he hates them. But that's Anne's lot in life is to take care of these two idiots.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Which is not something I love to think about, but maybe she'll just get lucky and be like, "Oh, sorry, I'm at sea. Mary has to do it." [Molly giggles] Maybe Anne starts prioritizing Anne after this.

Molly: Yeah. Lady Russell has a real growth arc.

Becca: Yeah. One of the clearest actual A to Bs like, I was wrong.

Molly: Yeah, and admits she was wrong and then rectifies the situation.

Becca: Yeah. We love growth.

Molly: We do. So happy for her. I think that she has a happy ending, because she gets to see Anne happy and that's all she's ever wanted.

Becca: Yeah. I think just like coming to terms with the fact that like no matter what happened back in the day, she's reconciled with this man and he actually is good for Anne. These are good things.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Mrs. Smith, thriving,

Molly: Thriving. Living life.

Becca: And God bless Mary. Not a shred different from when this book started. Not a shred of difference, like exactly where she was. Hates [00:40:00]-her kids-

Molly: Hates her kids.

Becca: -faking sick, wanting attention, looking down on her sister in laws. Like living, laughing, loving. Oh, [unintelligible 00:40:08] Mary.

Molly: We love Mary.

Becca: Yes. Yes. [laughs]

Molly: And happy for her. Happy for her. Happy for Mrs. Smith. I think that perhaps some of our listeners might say that Mrs. Smith didn't have enough comeuppance at her for [crosstalk]

Becca: I feel like the years of being stuck in poverty and rheumatic are probably enough suffering for one person.

Molly: I agree. I think Mrs. Smith had a very happy ending, and I love that for her.

Becca: Yeah. No, no, good that she's no longer impoverished.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: She's never going to be as wealthy as Anne now is with Captain Wentworth, but she is no longer living in a boarding house.

Molly: And she's rich in friends.

Becca: Yeah. And she gets to hang out with Anne and Wentworth, who are much better friends than Mr. Elliot ever was.

Molly: Oh, absolutely.

Becca: Yeah. Megan asks, "What are three songs that are definitely on Anne's breakup playlist?" I assume this is breakup [00:41:00] at the beginning of the book with when she was persuaded away.

Molly: Hang on, let me pull up her sad girl playlist-

Becca: Oh, yeah.

Molly: -and choose the three that we like the most. For those of you who don't know, our patrons lovingly made us Anne-Elliot sad girl playlist. Okay. Okay, we've got *I Will Always Love You* by Whitney Houston is a big one, because she will. I also feel strongly about *Happier* by Olivia Rodrigo.

Becca: I am not in love with this song, but the one that jumps to mind is on point is *The One That Got Away* by Katy Perry.

Molly: Hmm.

Becca: *In another life. I would be your girl.*

Molly: Yeah. Not knowing that song myself based on the title alone, I agree.

Becca: I'll play it for you after. I think also we got to talk a Taylor song in the mix as well.

Molly: *I Can Do It with a Broken Heart?*

Becca: Yes.

Molly: She says, "I will continue on even [00:42:00] if I'm wasting away."

Becca: Truly. She literally was.

Molly: There's also *Cornelia Street*.

Becca: I feel like a female version of *When I Was Your Man* from Bruno Mars or *Back to December* by Taylor Swift would be a good one, actually.

Molly: That's a good one. That is on the list. Okay. Should we pick three?

Becca: Yes.

Molly: Okay. We've got *I Can Do It with a Broken Heart* by Taylor Swift. Our lord and savior.

Becca: Mm-hmm. *Happier* by Olivia Rodrigo.

Molly: *Happier* by Olivia Rodrigo. And *The One That Got Away* by Katy Perry.

Becca: It's not my favorite song, but it is on point.

Molly: We can pick a different one.

Becca: No, no, no. No, I'll live with it. I think it's good.

Molly: But if you want the full playlist, check it out on Spotify.

Becca: Yeah, surely do. God bless. Okay. And then, we have one final question from me and Avi as well. These are similar, so I'm going to ask them in tandem. **[00:43:00]** Avi asks "Who changed more in the course of the novel, Anne or Wentworth?" and I asked whose character development is centered in the book?

Molly: Okay. I think that Wentworth changed more in the course of the novel. We only learned about it in the end, but he went from being so mad at Anne to trying to hate Anne, trying to get over Anne, realizing he's still in love with Anne, and then accepting that he's still in love with Anne and going for it. Anne, meanwhile, went from being in love with Wentworth and being depressed about it to panicking that she's in the same room as Wentworth, to being in to getting together.

Becca: So, I tend to agree that Anne's arc is more formed by circumstances surrounding her than any internal changes more so than Wentworth, who spent eight years trying to get over a woman and spent the course of this novel realizing **[00:44:00]** he can't get over her.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: So beautiful.

Molly: Very beautiful.

Becca: But I'll play devil's advocate and vouch for Anne's character growth in the novel as well. I think this story is one of confidence for Anne, one of becoming so sure in herself that she is able to resist pressure to go for Elliot and is ultimately rewarded by getting what she's always wanted and actively pursues it by dropping hints like, "Oh, yeah, I don't care if Mr. Elliot's going to be at that party tonight."

Molly: That's a good point.

Becca: Yeah. I do think Anne gaining her confidence and learning to prioritize what she wants is definitely part of this novel. It's a subtle portion. But if you go back and read the beginning, when we started this book, I had just finished the novel. When we got back to the beginning with Anne, I was like, "Jesus, she's so sad." And then, by the time you get to the end, she's still sad, but not nearly in the same way she used to be. She's made friends, she's developed more community, **[00:45:00]** she's come up a little in society and gained confidence.

So, she does change through the course of the novel, but I think it's more that she is placed in better circumstances and able to thrive, whereas I think Wentworth is forced to reckon with his own broken heart in a real way that Anne has already reckoned with before the novel begins.

Molly: Yeah, that's a good point. Also, *I Can Do it with A Broken Heart* would be on his playlist as well.

Becca: Yeah. For him, I feel like it's a lot of like, I don't need you. I'm like, I got this like I'm going to get back at you like revenge song playlist stuff, like *Irreplaceable* by Beyoncé.

Molly: Mm. Yeah, he does have a lot of Beyoncé.

Becca: Yeah. I was thinking, Beyoncé, like, self-love, I'm improving, I'm the best.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: Like, I got this covered sort of situation. There's another song. I'm totally blanking on music right now. *Guy On A Horse* by Maisie Peters- [00:46:00]

Molly: Sure.

Becca: -where she says, "Might be hard, but I'm Joan of Arc and you're just a guy on a horse."

Molly: [giggles]

Becca: *The Good Witch* is a good one for Anne. Actually, *The Good Witch* by Maisie Peters is going to be my pick to replace *The One That Got Away* by Katy Perry.

Molly: Okay. Great.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Love it.

Becca: Funniest quote?

Molly: Okay. So, I already read the one about Mrs. Smith being happy even though she's got money now, which I thought was pretty funny. I love this. "Of all the family, Mary was probably the one most immediately gratified by the circumstance. It was creditable to have a sister married, and she might flatter herself with having been greatly instrumental to the connexion, by keeping Anne with her in the autumn." I couldn't help myself.

Becca: I know. She's not going to win the book, but Mary, I love that we are just like, "Yeah, Mary Musgrove, queen and legend."

Molly: We love her.

Becca: Yeah. Ironically and then we unironically, deeply love Mrs. Croft.

Molly: Yes, of course.

Becca: Those are my two icons of the book, is that Mrs. Croft is channeling goals-

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: -the entire time, because [00:47:00] she's in this super happy marriage, and living her best life, and traveling the world and being a badass and a feminist and all that shit-

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: -calling men on their crap. Then, Mary Musgrove is just, from beginning to end, just perfect. [Molly giggles] No notes.

Molly: No notes.

Becca: No notes. Question moving forward about the adaptations or anything?

Molly: I'm excited about the adaptations. I'm mostly wondering if I'm going to hate the 2019 or 2021.

Becca: I haven't watched that one, so it's going to be really fun. We should definitely do

some recording of us watching it.

Molly: Oh, absolutely. Or, a watch party or something.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah. As always, I'm wondering which is going to be my favorite. I haven't heard anything about any of the other ones, so that'll be really fun. I'm going in totally blind. And yeah.

Becca: And for our listeners, I have watched the one that came out in the mid-1990s and no others at this point. Who wins the book?

Molly: Anne Elliott has to win the book. **[00:48:00]**

Becca: She's pretty good. She's a pretty great heroine.

Molly: She's got her love. She got her guy.

Becca: She did. She got her bag. She got her guy. She was proven right in every way possible. She is unspeakably and we cannot stress this enough like it must be remarked upon that she is so-

Molly and Becca: Hot.

Becca: -even at age 28.

Molly: Even at age 28.

Becca: Ancient spinster that she is.

Molly: Yeah.

[laughter]

Becca: Oh, boy. Oh, boy. And she's just a legend. Yeah.

Molly: We love her.

Becca: Love her. I'll give special shouts to a couple. I already gave to Mrs. Croft and Mary.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: We'll have to give to Captain Wentworth for the best love letter ever written.

Molly: Oh. You pierce my soul.

Becca: I am half agony, half hope.

Molly: You pierce my soul.

Becca: Just so you guys know, I played that song by Amanda Fagan. Shouts out to **[00:49:00]** you, Amanda, for giving us that album. I played that song for Molly as soon as we finished the letter episode, and Molly has been just like had it on loop since.

Molly: Even Mel has it stuck in her head.

Becca: It's a huge bop.

Molly: It really is. Everyone should go listen to it.

Becca: Yeah, it's a fantastic song. The whole album is great. But *Half Agony, Half Hope*, the *Persuasion* song really, really gets into the feeling of reading the letter. It's so cool.

Molly: Yeah. Well, I guess that's the end of the book.

Becca: It is the end of the book. We've done it, Graham. It's time for the party music.

[upbeat part music]

Becca: We always do the party music when we end the book. End the book. Yay.

For next time, listeners, we're actually going to take a peek at Jane Austen's alternate ending in a little special episode before we get into any movie watching. So, we're going to read through the alternate ending of *Persuasion* and tell you our thoughts. It'll be like a little bite sized treat of an episode.

We're going on slight-ish hiatus, but don't worry, listeners, it's only **[00:50:00]** going to be a few weeks and we do have some content lined up for you to enjoy in the meantime, and then we'll be back to discuss some of the movie adaptations. So, until next time, stay proper.

Molly: And find yourself a husband.

Becca: Find yourself a Wentworth.

Molly: Find yourself a Wentworth. Do not find yourself a Mr. Elliot.

Becca: No. No.

Molly: The end.

[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 you listen to podcasts. Thanks for listening.

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