

Molly: Hey, everyone. Before we begin today, we want to thank our newest patron, Anka. Thank you so much, and welcome to the team. Also, a reminder that our next live show is happening this weekend. That's Saturday, March 9th at 07:15 PM at the Ripped Bodice in Brooklyn, New York.

This event is part of Fishmarket Theater Company's first ever romance festival, a weekend dedicated to celebrating writing that hasn't historically fit to the cis male dominated literary canon. Now, there are only a limited number of tickets for our live show, so don't wait until the last minute. It's going to be a really awesome event, and you don't want to miss it. In person and livestream tickets are available at the link in the show notes, and patrons get 15% off. So, if you want a discount, join us at patreon.com/podandprejudice. And now, enjoy this week's episode covering the second half of the 1996 *Emma*, starring Kate Beckinsale, with our guest, Vanessa Zoltan.

[Pod and Prejudice theme]

Becca: This is Becca.

Molly: This is Molly.

Becca: We are here to talk about [00:01:00] Jane Austen.

Molly: We are here specifically to talk about--

Molly and Becca: *Emma*.

Becca: Our final bit on the Kate Beckinsale. Listeners, if you're new here, I, Becca, have read many Jane Austen novels and watched many adaptations in my lifetime.

Molly: And I, Molly, am doing all of that for the first time through this podcast.

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

Molly: No, today, we are talking about the second part of Kate Beckinsale's 1996 made for TV movie, *Emma*. And we are joined again today by Vanessa Zoltan. Hello.

Vanessa: I can't believe you guys had me back. Thank you so much.

Becca: It's been so long since we recorded that first part. [giggles]

Vanessa: Yeah. We were all so much younger then.

Molly: Yeah, we really were.

Becca: [laughs]

Molly: So, if you want to hear all about Vanessa's work and her relationship to Jane Austen and all of that good stuff, you can hop on over to Part 1 of our coverage of the Kate Beckinsale *Emma*. But [00:02:00] we have too much to cover, so we are going to dive right in to Part 2. Where we left off? Mr. Elton had just asked Emma, very rudely, to marry him. And she has said no.

Now, Emma goes to see Harriet, and on her way to see Harriet, she sees Mr. Elton leaving in the square, which is something that happens in the book. I forgot this is the only adaptation that showed that scene.

Vanessa: And it also shows you that he's not wealthy, because he's not in his own carriage, which we already know.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Vanessa: And he can't even afford to sit in the carriage. He's sitting on top of the carriage and wrapping himself in a blanket.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Vanessa: So, it's another interesting class moment.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: I forgot to mention this, but this adaptation makes hay of the carriages.

Vanessa: Yes.

Becca: Like, every single scene that is an exposition scene is them traveling somewhere in the carriage. Like, it's Harriet and Emma's carriage, or the Woodhouses going to Miss Taylor's wedding in the carriage. There's so much that happens in the [00:03:00] carriages, which is interesting, because our love interest famously doesn't really use his carriage.

Vanessa: Except once.

Becca: Except once.

Molly: Except once to send it for Jane. So, Harriet is heartbroken at the news, but she does not blame Emma. And Emma is like, "Okay. Well, if you forgive me, then I forgive me." [giggles]

Vanessa: That's not what she says. She says, "If you're not so heartbroken over it."

Molly: Yes.

Vanessa: But yes.

Molly: She moves on.

Vanessa: She forgives herself very quickly. Absolutely.

Molly: But she does invite Harriet to go with her to Ford's. And on the way, Miss Bates calls down to them to tell them that Jane is there. I did like the way that Kate Beckinsale delivered her, like, "Oh, Lord, miss Bates through her teeth."

Vanessa: Mm-hmm.

Molly: And when Miss Bates is like, "Oh, Jane will be so happy to see you." Emma is smiling and she goes, "I doubt it." As they're going up the stairs into the Bates', Emma is talking shit about which you know that these walls are thin.

Becca: Yeah. It's exposition though because we, as the audience, don't yet know who Jane is.

Molly: Right. But do it outside is all [00:04:00] I'm saying. Like, before you enter her home. Jane is played by Olivia Williams, who is Anna Crowe in *The Sixth Sense*, for anyone who likes horror. I was like, "Why does she look so familiar?"

Vanessa: Such range.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Yes, truly. Though, Jane is a little haunted.

Vanessa: I can't wait to tell you my Jane theory at the end of this.

Molly: Oh, my God, I can't wait.

Becca: Very excited.

Vanessa: It's stolen from my friend, Betsy Allen, but I believe it.

Molly: Wow. This Miss Bates is perfect. I think she is exactly what I imagined for Miss Bates. Emma is really fast to assume the thing about Mr. Dixon. Even before, she hears about the--

Vanessa: "Rescue?"

Molly: Yeah, the rescue. She's like, "Oh. Mr. And Mrs. Dixon will be very disappointed that you're not coming with them to Ireland." She just plants this idea immediately, but her vision of the boating party.

Vanessa: Again, this just feels like it's in a totally different movie than the rest of the movie, this-

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: [00:05:00] -daydream of Emma's.

Molly: Yeah. So, then we cut to Jane at Hartfield. They're having their little gathering at Hartfield. And Jane is playing and singing beautifully, and Knightley is watching her with these misty eyes. I do have to say that if I were Mrs. Weston, I would also assume that Knightley has a crush on Jane, the way that he talks about her, looks at her, treats her. Just saying.

Vanessa: Absolutely. It's so brilliant of Austen, because you absolutely read it like that and then you know, it's that he feels bad that she isn't going to be able to use these gifts, because she is at threat of becoming a governess. And also, that he's frustrated with Emma, that she has so many more resources than Jane and she doesn't put the same practice towards it. So, it is really well done that you totally understand the misunderstanding and that the payoff of it is so smart.

Molly: Yeah. And as Emma is watching, Knightley is like, "Oh, you see in Jane, the [00:06:00] accomplished young lady that you wish you were or that you wish that people would see you as." And Emma's like, "Well, you're making me very ashamed of myself," and she walks away and goes to talk to Jane.

Vanessa: A great performance moment.

Molly: Yes, it is a good performance moment. I'll give her that.

Vanessa: She looks ashamed.

Molly: She does.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: She tries to get Jane to give her some info on Frank. And this Jane is giving nothing away in such a telling way.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: I think she is one of my favorite Janes. I think it's her and the 2008/2009 Jane.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: They're two very, very different takes on Jane, but I think the two strongest takes on Jane, because you can tell that she has a secret, but she's so good at concealing it that if

you didn't know what was coming, you might not know until you see Frank staring at her longingly, and then you get it.

Becca: There's also strength to this Jane, I think. You get the sense that she's had to have a little grit to make her way in life in this adaptation. [00:07:00] I love her. I think she's fantastic in this.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: You can see that exterior that she puts on. You can almost get why Emma doesn't like her, but only just. Because it's not exactly deserved. But you can see the reason Emma thinks it's like talking to a wall.

Vanessa: What's more annoying than someone who won't gossip with you?

Becca: Exactly.

Molly: The worst. Yeah.

Becca: Whereas I think other Janes are a little bit more like victims of their circumstances. This Jane seems like she's become a warrior of her circumstances.

Molly: Yes. So, we skip right over Harriet first running into Mr. Martin and straight to her going to see the Martins at their house. And Emma's like, "You can only stay 15 minutes." She's going to turn her carriage around at the end of the lane and come back and get her.

While she's turning her carriage around, she sees Mr. Martin and she gives him the dirtiest look. He bows his head. I like that this implies, because when she picks up Harriet, she's like, "Oh. And then Mr. Martin [00:08:00] came in at the last minute." This implies that he saw Emma in the carriage by herself and was like, "Oh, my God, is Harriet at my house?" and then turns and runs in to come and try to see her.

Vanessa: Emma seems like an asshole here. It's great character development.

Molly: It really is.

Vanessa: Because he bows really quite deeply to her, and she barely nods her head back. Yeah, it's gross of her.

Molly: Yeah. When she picks up Harriet, Harriet's talking about the measurements on the wall and how, "Oh, and she thinks I've grown." It really makes her seem so young.

Vanessa: Uh-huh. I know, that's my note too.

Molly: Really?

Vanessa: She's still growing.

Molly: Right.

Vanessa: She should not be getting married if she is still growing.

Becca: No. [laughs]

Molly: Right. Like, how old is she supposed to be?

Becca: I think she's 16 years, right?

Vanessa: Yeah. But I was just like, "How was there ever a time in history where we were literally--" Like, "You are still a child. You are not fully grown, and we want you to start procreating." I love--

Molly: Yeah. You can't grow [00:09:00] a human inside you if you're still growing.

Vanessa: It means that your hips haven't fully formed, right?

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: Like, this is actually dangerous, anyway.

Molly: Which is why the mortality rate in childbirth was so high back then.

Vanessa: Yes.

Becca: That and also because of just hygiene.

Vanessa: Hygiene.

Molly: For sure.

Vanessa: There were so many reasons.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Yeah. I do agree though. I do think it does highlight her as a child. I think it is interesting how much this adaptation feels comfortable playing in that world, because I feel like a lot of more modern adaptations are, let's capture the energy of this time period, the etiquette of this time period, and tug out that stuff that nowadays we know to be really wrong about the Regency Era.

Vanessa: Andrew Davies though. He is like, "Let's play in this mud."

Becca: [laughs]

Molly: Yeah. That line is from the book. Like, it is directly taken. So, it's interesting.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: Emma gets home, and we get our intro to Frank Churchill, who is giving, as we have mentioned, Prince Charming vibes. He is [00:10:00] very pretty.

Becca: Caveat. I would also say giving Jasper Collin vibes.

Molly: Oh, no.

Vanessa: [laughs]

Molly: Unfortunately, you're right. Mel pointed out that he's giving David Hasselhoff vibes.

Vanessa: Oh.

Molly: I just look up a side by side.

Becca: I respectfully disagree though, because I have indeed seen David Hasselhoff star in *Jekyll & Hyde* in the live recording of his Broadway turn as Jekyll and Hyde in *Jekyll and Hyde*, the musical. I cannot personally take the Hoff seriously. Also, I have watched enough *Baywatch* to not take the Hoff very seriously.

Molly: But just aesthetically, like, the way that they both look is similar. But we don't have to do this right now.

Becca: Okay.

Molly: So, Frank and Emma are chatting, and he is flirting with a capital F with Emma. When he calls Mrs. Weston, a pretty young woman. And she's like, "Don't call Mrs. Weston a

pretty young woman.” And he's like, “Well, I know who I can call a pretty young woman.” Wink, wink.

Becca: I actually love this Frank, by the way.

Molly: Oh, me too. I think he's phenomenal.

Vanessa: Do you [00:11:00] guys love-love him or love to hate him?

Molly: Love to hate him.

Vanessa: Okay.

Becca: Love to hate him.

Vanessa: Yes. Right.

Becca: I think he's just bringing more of a deviousness to the character than his usual-- He's kind of sexy with it.

Vanessa: I really hate Frank Churchill in this adaptation. I think that their performance is great. I think it is so smart. But the film is making very clear the extent to which he is using Emma.

Molly: And it's so unfair.

Vanessa: And it's just brutal. It's really brutal. He is doing to Emma what Emma is doing to Harriet, but--

Molly: They both suck. They're actually a great match for each other. [giggles]

Vanessa: I know. It's just really hard to watch in this.

Molly: Yeah, I agree.

Becca: I agree with everything except that it's hard to watch, because I was actually living for his performance. I was like, “Ooh, you are just like a little slime ball, aren't you?” [laughs]

Vanessa: Yeah, fair enough.

Molly: I thought you were going to say you're just a little slut.

Becca: Yes, that too. Like I said, I've been watching a lot of buffy giving spike level slut right now.

Molly: We love it. [00:12:00] He's reclaiming the name. So, he says that he has to go visit the Bates'. But it's not a big deal. It's nothing important. He's like, “Oh, maybe the Barns, whatever their name is.” They, the next day, are walking outside and Emma's like, “Oh, did you go see the Bates'?” And he's like, “Oh, yes. Jane looked very ill. Very ill indeed.” And Emma tries to ask him about it, and you can see the panic in his eyes, but then he gives this flirty smile to cover it up. It's just the subtlety in his performance. He's showing all of it.

Emma defends Jane, which is something that happens in the book as well, that never happens in any of the other adaptations, and she's like, “Oh, she's just her own style of beauty.” And he's like, “Oh, yeah. Maybe you're right about that.”

Vanessa: I thought that is a really important thing to take from the novel, and I'm glad that this adaptation does that.

Molly: Me too. Yeah. Gosh, I really think you should see the 2008-- [crosstalk]

Vanessa: I will. [crosstalk] pulled up.

Becca: [laughs]

Vanessa: I promise. I don't know when I'm **[00:13:00]** going to have time, but, you know, I'm going to make the time real soon.

Becca: Oh.

Molly: Yeah. One day.

Vanessa: By one day, I mean, like this week.

Becca: Oh, yeah.

Vanessa: I'm looking at my calendar for the week, and I'm like, "Oh, crap, [Molly giggles] I have plans with humans."

Becca: [laughs]

Molly: Oh, my God. Well, let us know how you like--

Vanessa: I will fully report back with gratitude.

Molly: Amazing.

Vanessa: I have no doubt.

Molly: So, they walk by Mr. Elton's house, and Frank tells Emma that he heard from Miss Bates that Elton is getting married, which I think is a very interesting way to reveal this to Emma. And she's like, "Oh, I guess I don't know much at all." And he says that the Eltons will be very happy in their snug little house, because how could you want anything more than to share a little home with the person you love, which is a nice glimpse into his sentimentality, I guess. They go to Randalls, and Frank says that Mr. Dixon always preferred Jane's playing to Miss Campbell's playing. And Emma says, "Does he prefer her in other ways too?"

Vanessa: Mm-hmm.

Molly: And then-- [giggles] **[00:14:00]** I loved this part. Frank announces that he has to go to London the next day, and then we cut immediately to Knightley being like, "To get his hair cut?" and then grumbling under his breath about fappery and nonsense and how trifling it is and [grumbles]. "I came here just to meet him. [grumbles]"

Vanessa: I have to say two things here. First of all, one is just embarrassing, which is I have been reading Austen for over 20 years, and this is the first time I realized that Frank is actually going to London to order the pianoforte.

Becca: [laughs]

Vanessa: And I was like, "Oh, my God, duh, he is willing to make himself actually look like--" This is a very lovely quality in Frank. He's like, "I now know that Jane is like-- In this tiny house, I've gotten the measurements. She's not able to practice piano. I know how important this is to her. I'm going to go to London, and back in one day to arrange this and look like an asshole who's getting a haircut." So, I am just embarrassed, and I felt like I had to share that.

And the other thing is that I have a theory that Jane Austen believes that the greatest **[00:15:00]** sign that someone is an asshole is a missed appointment. She just has no tolerance for missed appointments. Like, Catherine Moreland misses an appointment with Henry Tilney and she's losing her mind over. There's nothing worse than canceled plans, right? The Bingleys canceled. This is what Jane Austen thinks is truly evil. And so, the fact that Knightley was like, "I came here just to meet this jerk." If Knightley is standing in representing Austen's morals at all, you know that that is like high treason.

Molly: And you can tell because he is pissed and he's like, "I have stuff to do. I have to go." And he leaves.

Vanessa: "I actually have to take care of tenants, and I came here to meet a guy. He's not here because he had to go to get a haircut."

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: Like, Knightley, same. I would be outraged.

Molly: Same. Yeah. If you live in New York and you take the train somewhere and then your person texts you and is like, "I'm actually not coming." You're like, "I just took the train to meet you and I could have been at my house."

Vanessa: No, [00:16:00] it's awful. It's awful.

Becca: If I leave my apartment and go into Manhattan, and someone has decided halfway through my train ride that actually they're going to be laid or not there at all, I will be furious.

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: Yeah. To be clear, Austen is not wrong on this.

Becca: Oh, yeah.

Vanessa: That is a sign of a weak character.

Molly: Now, I will say that in reading the book, the pianoforte timing is not so obvious.

Vanessa: Thank you. Okay.

Molly: Yeah. It took me a while too, until I saw a movie adaptation where I was like, "He was gone." I might have realized at the end after much discussion like, "He was gone right before the pianoforte arrived." But this one, it's like, he goes to get his haircut, the pianoforte arrives, and you're like, "Oh, okay."

Vanessa: But just to be clear, Molly, not me. Not me. Didn't notice.

Molly: No, that's okay. It's truly, it took me some time to get that.

Vanessa: [laughs]

Becca: Oh, yeah.

Molly: I like the pianoforte arriving and being hoisted up by the straps through the [00:17:00] window, because it just shows how little space they have, like, how narrow their hallway is.

Vanessa: And how committed he was to paying extra for proper delivery, right?

Becca: Oh, yeah. Mm-hmm.

Becca: And also, again, had not recalled that I saw this movie almost until the moment that this moment happened, because as a kid who loved watching Austen adaptations as a little child, this right here was so formative that I was like, "Oh, my God, they have to put the piano through the window?" And now I was watching it, I was like, "I've seen this."

Molly: It's quite similar to the scene in-- This is such a side tangent, and we don't have time for it, but I just have to say that while you were sleeping, she is trying to get her Christmas tree up and through the window by the same method, because she lives by herself and she's like, "How am I going to do this?" And she drops it, and it crashes through her landlord's window. It's a very similar scene.

Vanessa: If you have a narrow stairway, right? This is very typical.

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: I lived in a [00:18:00] dorm until I was 37 years old, and it was a problem getting a couch up the stairwell and none of the windows opened, because you can't trust college students with windows. It's really hard.

Molly: Yeah. I know Becca has a story about a couch, which, again, we should probably keep going, but--

Vanessa: Pivot.

Molly: Her couch is never going to leave that apartment.

Becca: Unless I cut it in half.

Vanessa: Yeah, I'm going to have to saw it in half.

Molly: So, we get this dinner party at Randalls. Emma and Knightley have their interaction outside about, "Oh, you came in your carriage." It's a nice interaction. He smiles at her for once. And inside, Emma tells Frank about the pianoforte. She says she thinks it came from Mr. Dixon as an offering of love. This is one of my favorite quotes. He says, "An offering of love. I think you're right. It was." Or, something like that.

Becca: That was like a sexy little moment. It's one of those like, Emma's not picking up on it, the audience is. But the look in his eyes when he's like, "Yeah, I think that was an offering of love." I was like, [gasps]

Molly: Yeah. [00:19:00] And we're going to flashback to that later. After dinner, Emma is playing the piano and Frank jumps in to do the most mediocre duet in history.

Vanessa: But it's better that he's not a great singer, because he's just so-

Molly: And that she isn't.

Vanessa: -flipping-- Yeah.

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: But he's just so full of himself.

Molly: Yeah. I think that it's clear that he is trying to set this up of him doing-- He's first trying to flirt with Emma. But then he's also trying to set himself up to be able to do a duet with Jane in a little bit as well.

Vanessa: Sneaky, sneaky.

Molly: Then Knightley asks Jane to play. And as she's playing, Frank is looking sad and Emma's like, "What's wrong?" He just says that Jane's hair looks odd, and he wants to go ask her if it's an. And Emma's like, "No, no, no, don't do it." And he does. But he gets up and instead of asking her, he does a duet with her.

Then Mrs. Weston comes up to Emma to tell her that Mr. Knightley sent his carriage for the Bates', specifically, and he thinks that he and Jane are a match. And Emma is like, "No, Knightley doesn't care for Jane like that." But as [00:20:00] she's telling her that, Knightley is telling Frank to stop making Jane sing, she'll sing herself hoarse, she deserves a rest, blah, blah, blah.

And then Frank asks Emma to dance. I am curious, because this scene in a lot of other adaptations is a bigger party, it's like more of a dance party, do they have dancing at small dinner parties like this often?

Vanessa: Oh, yeah. And just to use Austen as an example, this is a big deal in *Persuasion* because Anne is an excellent piano player, which means she's always playing the piano and never gets to dance.

Molly: Oh. Okay.

Vanessa: And so, you had someone in the family who was good at piano. Like, there wasn't Spotify. These were your choices.

Molly: It's very true.

Becca: Leading to my favorite moment in the entire film.

Molly: Oh, God. Emma has another vision. It's a wedding between Knightley and Jane, and there's this eerie off kilter music playing. And then a spotlight on Emma in the **[00:21:00]** aisle, holding little Henry by the hand, and she just yells, "What about little Henry?"

Vanessa: Which, there is no context to this in the movie.

Becca: Exactly. Zero.

Vanessa: It is infuriating. In the novel, you understand, this is a preoccupation of Emma's, that if Mr. Knightley marries, then her nephew, who thought he was going to inherit, isn't going to inherit. No context. So dumb.

Becca: It's perfect. There's no notes. Because if you're not someone who's read the book, you're just watching this, and there's a child and-

Molly: The haunted child.

Becca: -[crosstalk] goes, "Little Henry," and then just--

Vanessa: I hated it. I hated it so much.

Becca: I think I thought it was exactly as good storytelling as you did, but-- [crosstalk]
[laughs]

Vanessa: No, I know. I love that you have a better attitude about life.

[laughter]

Vanessa: I'm just like, so grumpy. I'm like, "How dare you?"

Molly: It's hilarious though. It's foreshadowing for a future one that I like even more, [Becca laughs] another vision, if you will, that we'll get to. Then Emma and Harriet go to visit Jane. And Frank is already there. And when they enter, Jane and **[00:22:00]** Frank have been sitting on the couch together, and they fly apart.

Vanessa: Yes.

Molly: Nobody notices.

Vanessa: I know.

Molly: Nobody says anything.

Vanessa: This is when the movie, to me, goes over the top with hinting about Frank and Jane.

Molly: It's less than hinting. It's just happening.

Vanessa: Yeah. They're like making out. They are making out when we come in.

Molly: Yeah. And of course, Mrs. Bates is just in the corner asleep, probably. She's awake, but she's noticing these things.

Vanessa: Or, is she?

Molly: Or, is she, but she's just not telling anyone?

Becca: She's not saying anything.

Molly and Becca: Yeah.

Molly: So, he says he's been trying to wedge paper under the pianoforte to stop it from wobbling and he says, "Jane, can you test it out now?" And as she's playing, he mentions that the tune was danced at Weymouth and she's like, "Jesus Christ." She continues to play, and he comments that it's an Irish tune and how like, "Oh, whoever sent the music must have been-- It's very thoughtful of them trying to imply that it was Mr. Dixon," but he sent that music to throw off the scent that it could be from him. And then right in front of Jane, he asks Emma for the first two dances of the ball, and [00:23:00] Jane takes this in and just looks down and looks sad and continues to play.

Hello, it's Molly from the future hopping in to tell you about a new season of one of my absolute favorite podcasts. Hot & Bothered, hosted by returning Pod and Prejudice guest, Vanessa Zoltan, is a podcast that treats romance as sacred. You've probably all already heard of this podcast, because in their fourth season, they covered *Pride and Prejudice*. And now, Hot & Bothered is back with a season that is all about romantic films.

The first 10 episodes of this new season follow Vanessa as she learns how to critically watch movies by looking closely at the classic 2003 romcom, *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*. After 10 episodes, Vanessa will be joined by her cohost, Hannah McGregor, a media studies scholar, author and podcaster. And together, they'll look at romantic films from *Casablanca* to *Love & Basketball* to *When Harry Met Sally...*

The show is already so fun after just listening to one episode, and I cannot wait to listen to the rest of the season. So, subscribe to Hot & Bothered wherever you get your podcasts to [00:24:00] jump into this new season, that's all about romantic films or to enjoy their previous seasons about *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre* and a personal favorite, *Twilight*. Again, that's Hot & Bothered, and it can be found wherever you get your podcasts.

Also, this August, Vanessa is leading a pilgrimage to Bath for a five-day trip dedicated to *Northanger Abbey*. Now, I don't know anything about *Northanger Abbey*, but even I want to go on this trip together. You and 20 other Austenites are delving into the story of Catherine Morland, while immersed in a gorgeous city that features heavily in Austen's life and writing, as you know.

So, if you enjoy contemplative hikes, immersion in a new city, time away from your regular life, and the chance to talk about Austen with fans from all over the world, which I know all of you do, then this trip is for you. So, check out Common Ground Pilgrimages at readingandwalkingwith.com. To claim your spot on the *Northanger Abbey* trip, head to readingandwalkingwith.com/northanger-abbey-2024. And now, back to this [00:25:00] episode.

Then Mr. Elton returns with Mrs. Elton, who is played by Louisa from the 1995 *Pride and Prejudice*. I want to take a minute, and I don't think that I'll have much to say about her throughout, except to comment on her accent. She's phenomenal. But what is her accent? It's like a combination British, Irish, like southern American.

Vanessa: I am just going to believe that it's accurate to some part of England.

Molly: It's got to be.

Vanessa: Accents are like so-- You can tell when someone is from East London versus West London, apparently.

Becca: Yeah.

Vanessa: So, it has to be real.

Molly: I'm sure it is. And I think that part of it is that it's whatever the accent is, she's trying to posh it up-

Vanessa: Yes.

Molly: -which is, why there are moments where she slips into something different. So, it's a combination of things, which I think is brilliant.

Vanessa: I do too. We're too American to understand how smart this is.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Absolutely. [00:26:00] We can just assume it's smart.

Vanessa: Yes.

Molly: And Elton and Mrs. Elton are such a good match in this, like they genuinely work together very well, which I like. She doesn't seem so annoyed at him as she does in other adaptations. They both suck, and they work together because of it.

Becca: Yeah. I really just like Mr. Elton's performance in this, because he's really funny, but he also just feels very real as annoying-

Vanessa: Yeah.

Becca: -if that makes sense. And it is one of the only adaptations where I think Elton is almost as, if not as annoying as Augusta herself. So, it's just interesting that that's what makes them work is that he is also as shitty and not as put upon in this.

Vanessa: I think that Anya Taylor-Joy does a similar job with Elton. The problem with the Gwyneth Paltrow one, if I remember correctly, is that Alan Cumming is playing Elton and-

Molly: Sure, he is.

Vanessa: -he's never annoying. He's sometimes scary, but he is never annoying. [00:27:00] Who has ever been annoyed by Alan Cumming?

Molly: Right.

Becca: Certainly not me. [giggles]

Vanessa: No.

Molly: No. So, Emma and Mrs. Weston are talking about Mrs. Elton and how Jane doesn't deserve all of her attention. And Knightley comes over saying, "Well, she receives attentions from Mrs. Elton that she doesn't receive from anyone else, Emma."

Vanessa: Wink, wink.

Molly: Wink, wink. Cough, cough. Note his little bow on his hat.

Vanessa: [laughs]

Molly: It's very cute.

Becca: I missed the bow.

Molly: Oh, he's got a bow on his hat. It's adorable.

Becca: I'm going to need to go back and see it. I was having existential crises every time he was on the screen, because I truly don't know what they were doing. But I'm glad he had a bow.

Molly: Yes, he had a bow. Emma tries to imply that he might like Jane. Like, she tries to get it out of him. And he doesn't really catch on. He's like, "Well, anybody may know how highly I think of her." Then Frank comes to say goodbye, because he has to go back to Mrs. Churchill. And Mr. Woodhouse is sleeping, so they have to whisper the whole scene, [00:28:00] which is funny if you miss that Mr. Woodhouse is sleeping, like some of our patrons did, because halfway through the scene, they were like, "Why are they whispering?"

Vanessa: And sitting so close to each other.

Molly: Yes. Now, I cannot blame Emma for thinking that he is going to tell her that he loves her, because he is looking at her with so much longing.

Vanessa: Yes.

Molly: And there's no lead up to, maybe you understand that I like Jane. It all seems like, maybe you understand that I like you.

Vanessa: Oh, he's an asshole.

Molly: The worst.

Becca: Absolutely.

Vanessa: Which is why I can't wait to tell you my friend, Betsy's theory.

Molly: I want to hear it so bad. When we would get to--? [crosstalk]

Vanessa: But no, I want to make sure that your podcast, I never have a twist to offer.

Molly: Oh, my God.

Vanessa: So, let me use this to drag everyone along with us.

Becca: So, we will save the twist. But for now, speaking of twists, I really like what they did with Emma's hair in this scene, and I would want to do it to my own hair.

Molly: What was happening with her hair?

Becca: It was like a cute little ribbon headband [00:29:00] situation where she was around the house and her hair was up and I was like, "Oh, that's cute today." But I love it on her. It's so stunning. She looks so beautiful in this scene, which adds to it. They really choose a beautiful man to play Frank, a beautiful woman to play Emma, and set them up in this perfect lighting and have them whispering to each other to really drive home this point of this is like the match that everyone's talking about.

Vanessa: Yes.

Becca: It's really beautifully done. I do have to say, and we'll get to this later, I like the way they do this scene. I agree that Frank makes it seem very much like he's going to propose to Emma in this moment.

Vanessa: He's the worst.

Becca: But also, I would say, and we'll get to this, that the gap between Frank leaving and Frank coming back is so small.

Molly: Is so short.

Vanessa: Yeah. [laughs]

Molly: So, they are like, "We cannot have our ball. It's so sad." Then, Emma and Harriet walk through the field, and Emma tells Harriet that she isn't in love with Frank. Oh, [00:30:00] no, in my notes, I wrote that she isn't in love with Jane. [giggles]

Vanessa: She is.

Becca: Oh.

Vanessa: She is.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: Emma tells Harriet that she isn't in love with Frank. And then we cut to dinner with the Eltons and the Bates', and Jane is saying like, "Oh, I don't want you to get me a job, Mrs. Elton." And then Mr. Weston arrives and says that the Churchills have gotten a house in Richmond, and Frank is coming back, and you can have your ball after all. So, it was, like, all within the span of two.

Vanessa: Yup.

Molly: Then we cut straight to the ball, and we see Emma and Frank dancing and Knightley watching them. And he is looking angsty about it, but then he smiles because Jane and Miss Bates arrive. And then, Mrs. Elton comes up to Mr. Weston and she's like, "Oh, Frank gets my approval." I just have to say, the way that she says, Mr. Weston, again, this is a comment on her accent. She says, "Mr. Weston," feels like she is the Unsinkable Molly Brown on the *Titanic*.

Vanessa: [laughs]

Molly: She's got like a transatlantic accent. [00:31:00] I don't even know how to describe it, but it is so good.

Vanessa: It is such a weird accent.

Molly: It is so weird.

Vanessa: So weird.

Becca: British listeners, can you inform us? Like, can you-

Vanessa: Yes.

Becca: -DM us on Instagram and just give us the lowdown on what's going on with Mrs. Elton's accent in this? Because, Vanessa, for your benefit, I always picture Mrs. Elton in a real Valley Girl kind of accent. Like, Amber from *Clueless* is my ultimate Mrs. Elton.

Vanessa: To be clear, that's a West LA accent, not a Valley Girl accent.

Molly: Uh-oh.

Vanessa: I'm sorry. I am from Van Nuys.

Becca: Sorry.

Vanessa: If there is an accent that I know. But yes, please go.

Molly: [laughs]

Vanessa: I forgive you.

Becca: It's very much like that, like vocal fry all the words go up at the end and like, "Mm," *Mean Girls* sort of like, "Mm."

Vanessa: Totally.

Becca: And that's, I think, what Amber brings to *Clueless* as Mrs. Elton of that adaptation. Really quick tangent, and I will be brief on this. A lot of people have been messaging us and saying like, "Actually, Amber is a combo Jane Fairfax and Mrs. Elton." I don't see it, frankly. [00:32:00] I know some people might think so, but I see her as a pure Miss Elton-

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: -because there's no sense of-- [crosstalk]

Vanessa: There's no Jane Fairfax in *Clueless*.

Becca: Yeah.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: The gay agenda is Jane Fairfax.

Becca: The gay agenda is Jane Fairfax.

Vanessa: Got it. Okay. I have not rewatched *Clueless* in too many years, so I need to.

Becca: We covered *Clueless*, and we talked about Amber being the Mrs. Elton equivalent. She's like Emma's rival. They are frenemies to each other. And then she ends up with Elton in the end.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Becca: But a lot of people basically were like, "No, she's also-- Jane, the adversary to Emma." And I was like, "Yeah, but that's misunderstanding Jane in the book," in my personal opinion, because Jane is like--

Vanessa: Yeah. No, they're not adversaries.

Becca: Yeah. Emma has like a beef with her because she's jealous of her. Cher's not jealous of Amber.

Vanessa: No. And Emma genuinely feels for Jane at two-thirds of the way. And Cher and Amber never have that moment.

Becca: Exactly. So, I hear people say the Jane and Fairfax point as to Amber in *Clueless*. I respectfully disagree, [00:33:00] and we can move on. [laughs]

Molly: Yes. So, two key things happen at this dance. Mr. Elton snubs Harriet, and Knightley comes to save her. And Emma comes up to Knightley and says, "That was well done." And they have their little conversation. And then he says, "Who will you dance with?" And she says, "With you, if you'll ask me." And I do have to say that I think that they did this part very well. Her, with you, if you'll ask me, is so casually thrown out there.

Vanessa: And his reaction when she says, "We're not so much brother and sister. That it would be inappropriate." And he's like, "Brother and sister? No, not at all." Father-daughter, of course. [crosstalk] brother and sister.

Becca: [laughs]

Molly: Yeah. However, this dance, to me, has been so crucial. I wish you guys could have seen the way this conversation went down in our Discord community, because it was like, “Oh, my gosh, I hope we get to see the dance. The dance better redeem this movie, because so far, there's been no chemistry,” and blah, blah, blah. And then [00:34:00] it cuts immediately away from the dance, and we don't get to see the dance, and everyone was like, “Guess not.”

Vanessa: [laughs]

Molly: It was so funny. But it's fine, because this movie isn't attempting to show the steamy dance touching hands. That's just not the vibe.

Becca: It's about the yearning, but not so much here.

Molly: Yeah. Well, it's about the yearning, but the unseen yearning. So, it's fine. Then we get Harriet and her friend walking through the field, and we catch a snippet of their conversation where she's talking about Knightley coming to rescue her. So, we start to see like, “Oh, she thought that was more than it was.”

Vanessa: It is such a swoon moment though.

Molly: It is. It is. He walks past Mr. Elton and Elton's like, “Mr. Knightley.” And he says, “Excuse me.”

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: He doesn't even acknowledge him. And then he asks Harriet to dance, and it's a very sweet dance.

Vanessa: And it shows that he takes little slights seriously. Like, this is a good man who's like, “I will help you harvest your food. I [00:35:00] will move in with you, because I love you.” And also, not asking someone to dance is inappropriate.

Molly and Becca: Yeah.

Vanessa: Like, he's just good to his bones. God bless you, Mr. Knightley.

Becca: Ah, dream boat behavior.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Becca: I also want to quickly note, Mrs. Elton in that moment, noticing the slight to her husband and saying, “Look, how generous of Knightley to take pity on Harriet and Miss Smith and dance with her in this moment. How good of heart he is to bolster up the fact that her husband didn't just completely snub her?”

Molly: Mm-hmm. Then we get this very dramatic attack scene, and Harriet's friend ditches her, as happens in the book, and Frank comes and rescues her. When he brings her to Hartfield, she finally just seems rattled. She's crying, but she's not moaning dramatically, which has been something that's really gotten me in every other adaptation.

Vanessa: Yes, I know. She's really scared.

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: Samantha Morton, good job. This was the one moment where I was like, “Okay, we are [00:36:00] seeing something about Harriet.” This is traumatic.

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: It's completely classist and racist, but it's traumatic.

Molly: Yes. Her friend ditched her while they were being like, "I would be pissed and I would be scared as well," but it's never been a good look for Emma, the story.

Becca: So, yeah, we've had conversations about this moment with the Romani people, and obviously, the issues that it brings up. And then we've had a minor debate on the podcast as to Austen's intent with the scene. One of the things we talk about is that like, it's, like sensationalized through *Highbury* that this happened, because it's not actually that big a deal and everyone makes a big stink about it, because nothing ever happens there. This movie takes it more at face value and makes the potential of giving money to Romani children very terrifying and dramatic. I don't know how I feel about that choice. I know I don't like that choice. I don't like this scene and I've been [00:37:00] clear that it continues to be a weird scene in the book and in every adaptation. But there's more tongue in cheek to that scene in a lot of these other adaptations, and this scene plays it very straight.

Vanessa: It also makes clear that it's children that it's not--

Becca: Yeah.

Vanessa: Like, it's hungry children, which--

Becca: Yeah.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah. I think it would better if they didn't show the mom being like, "Go get them."

Vanessa: Go. Totally.

Becca: That shot of the mom being like, "Go," that was like--

Vanessa: Two moms.

Molly: Yeah. Two moms.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: So, progressive. Yeah.

Becca: [laughs]

Vanessa: It's true.

Becca: Yeah, it's not great. This scene irked me for a lot of reasons.

Molly: Yes. But the aftermath is done better than others. And then Emma has a very dramatic vision of Harriet and Frank riding off into the sunset. Then we get a voiceover. This is weird. A voiceover--

Vanessa: Yup. See, again, totally new form for the film, out of nowhere, 90 minutes in.

Molly: New form. Mr. Knightley invites you to taste his strawberries, wink, wink, which are ripening fast, wink, wink. [00:38:00] [giggles] And we go to them at Donwell, and Mrs. Elton saying like, "Oh, you should have left everything to me." And him saying, "Well, I'm only going to ever leave anything to Mrs. Knightley." And then, Mrs. Elton pulls this face that I can't even describe, but it's like, "[unintelligible [00:38:15]." [giggles] She sticks out her tongue. It's so funny.

Vanessa: Yeah. It's so funny.

Molly: I'll put a screenshot on her Instagram. And then they're picking the strawberries, and they focus, Andrew Davies, once again on the servants pulling the cushions in front of each strawberry they want to pick.

Vanessa: And I've never seen this so well done in any other Austen adaptation. They make a lot of it with Mrs. Elton, where Mrs. Elton is like, "Oh, I love to play provincial, and I love to glorify this ancient sense of what poverty would be." And yet, she snaps at a servant to move her knee cushion. It's so well done.

Molly: And one of my favorite line moments is in this when [00:39:00] she says, "Oh, I fancy myself a kind of shepherdess." And then Miss Bates goes, "Oh, do you like sheep then, Mrs. Elton." And Mrs. Elton just like,-

Vanessa: No.

Molly: -looks at her like, "Are you fucking kidding me?"

Vanessa: [giggles]

Molly: Like, she doesn't even know what the word shepherdess means.

Vanessa: It's very Marie Antoinette, who was like a fake shepherdess. I really loved this addition.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Oh, yeah.

Molly: So, Mrs. Weston is worrying about Frank not being there yet, and Mrs. Elton is telling Jane that she's found her a job. They're right on the other side of this archway, and then Jane is like, "I have to go get some air." And she goes into the archway, but Mrs. Elton's still right. This all happens in front of everyone, but to the side. Emma comes over to the archway and asks Jane if she's okay, and Jane says she needs to go, and if Emma could just tell everyone that she had to go home to check on her grandmother, "The comfort of being sometimes alone," is what she says.

Vanessa: [00:40:00] Yeah.

Molly: I think it's well done. It's different than a lot of other adaptations, and I appreciated it.

Vanessa: Yeah. And it's the most faithful to the novel. The thing that was missing to me is a knowing look from Emma being like, "Ah, yes. I would also find it insufferable to live with Miss Bates," which is the-- Like, that's not what's going on, but that's another misunderstanding that's happening here. But no, I really love this. Poor Jane.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah. I wish that we had the line. We all know what it is like to sometimes be weary of spirits, and I must confess, minor fatigued or something like that.

Becca: Minor exhausted.

Molly: Exhausted. Yeah.

Becca: It's one of my favorite scenes.

Molly: Yeah. I think we get the spirit of it, which I like.

Vanessa: Yes, I do.

Molly: This movie also, in a lot of scenes, pushes everything together, like to be closer together physically in proximity. I think that this is something that we get in some miniseries and also, oddly enough in [00:41:00] the 2005 *Pride and Prejudice*, like things being in close proximity, because Jane walks away, and in the entryway to this little area where everyone's hanging out, she bumps into Frank, and they have a silent interaction where he must say

something to her. She leans in as if she's spitting some words out towards him, and then walks away in a huff. I think that it's so lovely and interesting to see that happen right there while everyone else is just oblivious to it.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: Emma comes in to see her dad, and the scene is, it's like such a short little moment, but it is so freaking cute, because she comes in, and he's sitting by the fire with all of his little trinkets and he's like, "Oh, I'm well here by the fire, but I hope you're being careful because this can be a drafty house." Oh, I love that.

Vanessa: That is one of the ways that we always know that Emma is good is that she's so nice to her dad.

Molly: She will always look out for him.

Becca: We haven't talked about it [00:42:00] much in this adaptation, but we always give shine to Mr. Woodhouse as one of our favorite characters. But in this one, they take it to the extreme of him being old and daughtering and anxious. If you compare it to some of the other Mr. Woodhouses out there, he's really like, she needs to take care of him, and someone needs to take care of him at all times.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: He looks like her grandpa for most of the movie.

Vanessa: Yeah, he does.

Molly: I think he's one of my favorite Mr. Woodhouse. I've loved every Mr. Woodhouse in their own way, but there's something about him that is so endearing.

Vanessa: It's just, Mr. Woodhouse is supposed to be comic relief as far as I'm concerned. And he's not funny in this one.

Becca: I agree.

Vanessa: He's scared about transition, but he's not a hypochondriac in the same way, that's a funny. I don't know, I really love Anya Taylor-Joy.

Becca and Vanessa: Bill Nighy.

Vanessa: I enjoy Mr. Woodhouse's comic relief. I respect the choice to have him be more [00:43:00] pathetic than funny.

Molly: Yeah. Well, I think that it's two very different takes on him. I think that, to me, this way is a little bit more what you're getting in the book. And Bill Nighy being so sprightly, he is hilarious.

Vanessa: So funny.

Becca: So good.

Molly: And Bill Nighy can do no wrong in my mind. Like, it's perfect.

Vanessa: Exactly.

Molly: But I think that this Mr. Woodhouse, he breaks my heart in a way that I think is necessary, because-- I think that if they had made a bigger deal about Emma being like, "Oh, wait, I can't move out. I have to stay with my dad," that would have hit home a little bit more because they didn't do that. It just was already decided. But you can really see why she can't move out.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: Now, Frank arrives in a huff. Now, we already know he's already been here, but he finds Emma and he is complaining like, "Oh, the party's already breaking up, and it's hot, and I'm grumpy, and why did I come all this way?" And [00:44:00] he is like, "You know what? I'm being a bear. If I come to Box Hill, I'll promise to be in a better temper," and then he leaves. So, this is a very quick interaction, but he is very grumpy.

Becca: Never gets a snacky snack though.

Molly: He never gets a snacky snack. He just goes home.

Vanessa: And there's so many strawberries.

Molly: So many strawberries. Like, endless strawberries. How did they get that many strawberries out of that tiny patch? But we won't get into the details. Then we get Box Hill. And this is another scene in which the servants are really highlighted.

Vanessa: Yup.

Molly: You see everybody hiking with their little parasols, and then the servants carrying all of this stuff. The chairs fall off, and they're like, "Oh, my God, we have to put the chairs back on the cart." And it's just like, "Oh, they needed to really work their servants to get all of their crap up to the top of this hill."

Vanessa: And it shows first Mrs. Elton struggling getting up the hill with nothing but a parasol and the help of Mr. Elton. And then it shows the servants carrying everything up. [00:45:00] And I just love this. One of my pet peeves in the history of the world is the way that we talk about people who've climbed Mount Everest. And what we mean by that is white people who have climbed Mount Everest, because there are Sherpas who are doing this and carrying all the shit?

Becca: Yup.

Vanessa: And so, I love that this movie addresses the Mount Everest problem.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: Yes. That is such a good point. I like this little moment where they're at the bottom of the hill and Mrs. Elton goes, "Oh, that's Box Hill. Well, I'm very glad to see it." I like to imagine that she didn't realize they'd be walking-- [crosstalk]

Vanessa: They were going to hike-- Totally. And so, she's like, "What the fuck? We have to climb up it?"

Molly: [giggles] Yeah. We get the Perry carriage comment from Frank where he's like, "Oh, what happened to Mr. Perry getting a carriage?" And Jane is like--

Vanessa: Shoot some daggers, man.

Molly: She's like, "Can you shut up?" And he's like, "Oh, right." That must have been a dream."

Vanessa: [laughs]

Molly: We've seen some dreams in this movie, so it could have been, I guess.

Vanessa: [laughs]

Becca: Yeah. People in this [00:46:00] universe just have really weird, out of context dreams about other people in Highbury. That's just what happens.

Molly: Yeah. So, this is the first time I have ever understood the alphabet game that they play. Because in the book and in every other adaptation, instead of handing a handful of letters and having them mix them up, it's impossible to do so in a book because you have to spell out what letters they are. But in the book, it's "blunred" and "dixno". And it's like, those are obviously blunder and Dixon, because you didn't mix up the letters enough.

But when you're getting handed a pile of letters, I understand how you could not understand what the word is. So, I think that this is the first time I've ever understood the alphabet game, and I want to thank this movie for giving me that. Jane obviously gets upset at the Dixon-

Vanessa: And blunder.

Molly: -and blunder.

Vanessa: She's like, "You can't apologize to me by handing me an acronym."

Molly: Right.

Vanessa: Like, "I understand." Yeah, she's just so annoyed with him.

Molly: Yeah. She's like, "Can you just stop [00:47:00] trying to talk to me in front of people?" Like, "Just don't do it."

Vanessa: Right. Just behave.

Molly: And Knightley notices this and he's like, "Hey, what's going on? Why are you being this way?" And also, "Do you understand the extent of the relationship between Frank and Jane?" And Emma's like, "No, there's nothing there. Don't worry." Now, everyone is picnicking in pairs, which makes this make so much more sense [Becca giggles] than everyone sitting in a circle, and Frank and Emma just flirting loudly in front of everyone because everyone's coupled off. So, of course, they're chatting together.

Vanessa: Yup.

Molly: So, I like how this is laid out. But then we get, of course, the three very dull indeed comments and Emma saying, "Well, you'd be limited to just three, so you might have a problem." And Miss Bates immediately starts crying.

Vanessa: It's my favorite thing about Emma that the big, tense moment is that Emma says something rude. And that's it. That's what the whole plot hinges on, [00:48:00] is Emma says something rude. I flipping love it, because that is devastating. Those are the things that, at 41 years, I remember from 30 years ago and wake me in the middle of the night and make me shudder, even when, if I was the rude one or if I was the person publicly insulted. So, I'm like, "Austen gets it."

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: She gets it. And what she gets the most is that it's okay when someone says something about themselves jokingly, but if you say it back and you mean it, then you need to sit down.

Vanessa: Yeah. And she also knows that I was kidding was the last resort of assholes, because Emma being like, "It was a joke." It's like, "Fuck you. It wasn't a joke. You just suck."

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: I also think there's something to this, because the whole book is built around the banter of Knightley and Emma lovingly insulting each other back and forth in gentle, fun kind of ways. And then you have the want to Miss Bates. What makes it different and [00:49:00]

makes it strong and real is like, how badly Miss Bates needs Emma to like her, the power imbalance.

Vanessa: She doesn't want to be a charity case.

Becca: Exactly. There's this great line that I really liked the Box Hill fight between Knightley and Emma in this one. I think it's quite well done. It's not badly done, indeed. [giggles] And when he says to her like, "When you were born, it was an honor for you to be noticed by Miss Bates. Now, it's the opposite. Now, she is poor. She has fallen to a less comfortable station." That, it's a gut punch.

Vanessa: Yeah. You can't punch down.

Becca: Exactly.

Vanessa: Like, you are punching down now.

Becca: Exactly.

Molly: I like how his scolding of Emma is also done in hush tones.

Vanessa: Yeah. He's not publicly embarrassing her.

Molly: Right. He's like, "You did wrong," and it hits home. She cries. But it's not overdramatic crying. It's like, she turns around and there's tears on her face and she's like, "Oh, my God, there's tears on my face."

Vanessa: And another [00:50:00] Emma flaw. I'm so sorry. It's just that she never apologizes to Miss Bates. She just tries to make it up, but she never apologizes.

Molly: That's especially clear in this one, because the visit that she makes right after this is so fast.

Vanessa: Right.

Molly: And all we hear is Miss Bates talking, but we don't hear Emma say anything in return. And that's when we find out that Jane has taken a job and she's leaving forever, and Miss Bates seems so sad.

Vanessa: This is something that adaptations tend to just skip the governess of it all.

Molly: Yeah. Now, we did skip over one thing that I'm going to note, which is, the comment that Frank makes about people making a match after a short acquaintance and regretting it forever. And Jane saying, "Well, only a weak character would allow themselves to be trapped forever." I've never understood why he says it. I know he's mad at Jane for leaving the day before, but why would he be so mean in such a way that she is the only one who's going to know he's talking about her. And it's just [00:51:00] so hurtful.

Vanessa: She's told him that she's considering the governance job.

Molly: Oh.

Vanessa: Like, he's really mad. He's like, "You're blowing it all up." And then maybe this is when I tell you my theory.

Molly: Yes, tell us your theory.

Becca: Yes.

Vanessa: Because he has just told her that he's planning on murdering his aunt.

Molly: [laughs]

Vanessa: And he's like, "I figured out the solution, lady." And she's like, "No."

Molly: She's like, "Don't become a murderer for me."

Vanessa: Well, she's like, "I don't want to be complicit, so don't flip and do it. I'm going to take a governess job." And he's like, "No, but I just figured it out."

Becca: So, is your friend's theory that he does murder his aunt?

Vanessa: Like, he murders his aunt-

Becca: [gasps]

Vanessa: -and that Jane knows. And because she says no to him and therefore isn't truly complicit in the murder, she can forgive him and be happy at the end. But that the mistake he makes is in telling Jane he's going to murder his aunt.

Molly: I am obsessed. I think that there is a spinoff movie book, something [00:52:00] that needs to happen about that.

Vanessa: To be clear, my friend Betsy is like, "This is not a fan theory. This is canon." She is just like, "This is in the fucking book. Just pay attention."

Becca: You know, you could read that, because we spend a lot of the book talking about Frank's relationship, how bogged down he is by his aunt. And a lot of the book where people openly are like, "She's not actually sick."

Vanessa: She's not actually sick. She's a hypochondriac. And he's like, "Do you know what? She wants to be sick? Fine, I'll kill her." And that he makes it home in time for her to die with him, even though he's been away so much. It's absolutely Betsy Allen, attorney at law in Detroit, Michigan, everybody. She's a genius.

Becca: Genius.

Molly: Wow. I'm obsessed.

Becca: One last thing I will say about the Frank and Jane thing, and then you can move on, Molly, I promise, is that what this movie does correct about the Frank and Jane plot is that it is a simmering rage onto the surface the whole time. They are tense, because they are in tension the entire time. So, when he says that, it's after months and months [00:53:00] of fighting and being hurt by each other. The most sympathetic tank on Frank is that he is sick and tired of having to try to pretend he's not in love with Jane all the time, and he just wants to deal with it.

Vanessa: He also just wants to have sex.

Becca: Exactly.

Molly: And plot murder.

Becca: And plot murder.

Vanessa: Well, he doesn't want to plot murder, but that's where we are.

Molly: Yeah, you're right.

Vanessa: She's going to take a governess job, and he's got to do what he's got to do.

Molly: He's got to do something, and fast.

Vanessa: And we have seen that he is capable of being sociopathic when necessary.

Molly: True. So, after the Bates', Emma comes home, and Knightley is leaving to go to John and Isabella's. When she hears that she's been to the Bates', he takes her hand and he looks at it. It's not quite a near kiss, but it's maybe as close as we're going to get.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: Harriet says she's never going to marry because there's someone she likes and she can never have him. And Emma's like, "Well, stranger things have--" And then she cuts herself off and she's like, "You know what? Never mind, I'm not going to interfere," which I like, because in a lot of adaptations, she does [00:54:00] meddle. She's like, "I'm not going to interfere, but stranger things have happened." In this, she's like, "You know what? I'm starting over." Then Miss Bates pokes her head out to say that Jane hasn't left her room for three days, and we cut straight to Jane walking through the field and sobbing. Robert Martin sees her, and they both are just heartbroken. And it's-- Ah.

Becca: Earnestly, that is actually probably my favorite scene in this adaptation that's added. I love giving these two people, who are put upon by their circumstances and separated from the people they love, this moment of connection. [giggles]

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah. Now, I like how they did this next scene. A messenger comes in the night, and we have a voiceover of Frank saying, "Dear father, Mrs. Churchill has died. My future is uncertain." She has--

Vanessa: Fallen backwards onto a knife.

Becca: Oh, no.

Molly: Yeah. Or, she drank some mysterious liquid. And who knows?

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: Then Emma and Harriet are getting their hair done together and wondering how much money Frank Churchill was left. And also, who will he marry [00:55:00] now he has his choice. And they both seem to be wondering, will he marry the other person, which I think is very cute.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: Then we get Emma reading outside and Mr. Weston comes by and he's like, "Oh, my God, Mrs. Weston needs to talk to you. It's an emergency." And Emma's like, "Oh, my God, what's going on?" So, they go, and Mrs. Weston tells her that Frank is engaged to Jane and he sent the pianoforte. We get flashbacks to all the moments between Frank and Jane. And Mrs. Weston's like, "He had to conceal it because he feared his aunt's disapproval." And Emma's like, "Or, that she would disinherit him," which is a good point.

Then Emma's like, "Oh, my God, what am I going to tell Harriet?" And then we cut to Harriet being like, "What are you going to tell me? Why do you care? I don't care about him." And Emma's like, "Uh-oh." And when Harriet realizes that Emma has misunderstood her, she reveals that she meant Mr. Knightley, which I like, because in a lot of adaptations, Emma's like, "Wait a minute. Do you mean Mr. Knightley," which is like, of course she meant Mr. Knightley, but she needs to be the one to tell you that.

Emma says, "If I had [00:56:00] known you met Mr. Knightley, I would never in a million years have encouraged you," which is so rude. And Harriet's like, "Well, I never would have thought of him if you hadn't encouraged me." And then we cut to Emma storming away and being like, "Oh, I wish I had never met her," which is so harsh. It's always harsh. It's way harsh.

Becca: Way harsh, [unintelligible [00:56:19]

Molly: We get flashbacks to a bunch of moments between Harriet and Knightley. And then this is my favorite part. The music goes into a minor key, and it's Knightley [Vanessa laughs] and Harriet's wedding. And as he's putting the ring on her finger, Harriet looks over with this cursed smile, like her eyes look up and she's in a horror movie. And Emma's standing in the aisle by herself and she goes, "No." I just a moment for that, [Becca laughs] chef's kiss.

Becca: It's cinema. What can we say? [laughs]

Molly: Then Mr. Woodhouse wakes up and asks Emma if she said anything. So, that implies that she has yelled no out loud. We hear Knightley's voice saying, "You and I shall never be enemies. [00:57:00] Never be enemies. Never be enemies."

Vanessa: Again, introducing a totally new [Molly laughs] conceit. We're at the last moment of the film.

Molly and Becca: Yeah.

Vanessa: Why are we still introducing new motifs?

Molly: Yeah, totally. And Emma is looking out at the rain and she's crying, and she goes, "I love him. I have always loved him." And Mr. Woodhouse, by the way, is still sitting there.

Becca: Yeah.

[laughter]

Molly: Then Emma is sitting by the fountain and Knightley comes. She starts looking around for somewhere to hide, but there's nowhere to hide. So, she pulls it together and she's like, "Oh, you must have had a wet ride," [giggles] which I thought was just a hilarious thing to say to someone.

Vanessa: [laughs] That is the one thing I remember from the Gwyneth adaptation that I love is that when Knightley says to her like, "I rode all night," and then he goes, "I rode through the rain," as if that makes him brave. [crosstalk] I love that moment.

Molly: And in this one, she's just like, "Well, you must have had a wet ride."

Vanessa: Wet ride. Yeah. He does something very differently here.

Becca: And they say there's no sex in Austen.

Vanessa: Exactly.

Becca: [laughs]

Molly: So [00:58:00] true. So, he is trying to comfort her so intensely. And Emma's like, "No, I'm fine." And then he starts yelling about how Frank gets everything he wants. And Emma's like, "Well, you seem like you're envious of him." And he's like, "I am envious of him." But she won't ask him, and she stops him from talking. And then immediately, without any shift happening, she says, "Well, listen, you can tell me as a friend." His proposal speech is good. I will give him that up until a point, it is very good.

Becca: And then--

Molly: And then, [Vanessa laughs] as soon as he-- So, he says, "If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more. But you know what I am," blah, blah, blah. And she's like, "I do return your feelings." And he says, "Then you consent. Now I'm glad we've gotten consent, because we're all adults that can consent. Then you consent?" And she says, "Yes, I do." And he says, "I held you in my arms when you were three weeks old."

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: Why?

Vanessa: And that, I think because Andrew Davies is like, "We are not shying away from this."

Becca: I wish she would. [giggles]

Vanessa: The weird thing [00:59:00] is, is that it's not even the last time he's going to say something creepy to her.

Molly: I know.

Vanessa: Here's the thing. It's only creepy because of the age difference, because I was three and a half and held my baby brother in my arms. You can be a child who holds a child.

Becca: Yes.

Vanessa: And so, if he was three years when he did this-- What he's trying to say is like, "I've known your whole life."

Molly: Yes. And [crosstalk] send that.

Vanessa: There is something beautiful about that, right?

Becca: Totally.

Vanessa: You used to be a baby. Yeah. So, I think about that with my little brother. Like, he's married and buying a house and he has a kid on the way, and I'm like, "I held you in my arms when you were a newborn and look at you." But yes, because he's almost 20 years older than she is, it's weird.

Molly: Yeah. And my grandpa was 20 years older than my step grandma. When you're both adults, it's different than he was an adult holding her as a baby.

Vanessa: Exactly. No, totally.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Yeah.

Vanessa: My husband [01:00:00] is 12 years older than I am. I have no problem with big age differences. It's the combination of the two.

Becca: I think that's completely correct. [giggles]

Molly: It's the, I changed your diapers.

Vanessa: Yes.

Molly: And it's her response too.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: "Do you like me as well now as you did then?"

Vanessa: I know.

Molly: But he loved you in a different way back then or it would be weird.

Vanessa: I will say it is my favorite thing to do to my husband though, when he'll be like, "Oh, my God, I was 15 years when I saw that." And I'll be like, "I was 3 years."

[laughter]

Vanessa: I do love it.

Molly: I love it.

Becca: Yes, I am very supportive of age differences in relationships where there's, A, no power imbalance and B, none of this like, "Oh, I'm your father."

Vanessa: Right. No. And we were 32 years and 44 years. We were both consenting adults, very much.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Yes, absolutely. But it's just very much one of those like-- I think you're right. It's the combo that's just like it's so intense.

Vanessa: Andrew Davies, just like, "This is it. Austen was fucking weird. Let's talk about it."

Molly: Yeah, I guess [01:01:00] it's true. It's also like the age difference is so apparent in appearances.

Vanessa: Yes.

Molly: They just look like daddy-daughter. And so, to me, it can't be sexy when you're saying I held you-- I mean, it's never going to be sexy to say I held you as a baby.

Vanessa: I don't think it's meant to be sexy. I think it's meant to be like,-

Molly: Loving.

Vanessa: -it's beautiful. I've known your whole life. This is a different kind of love than other kinds of love. It's also being juxtaposed with Jane and Frank, who had this short engagement and barely knew each other. It's like the opposite. Anyway, okay, I'll stop.

Becca: No.

Vanessa: Because I'm very excited to make one more point later, so I have to save my words.

Molly: So, Emma realizes she has to tell Harriet, and she goes running to find her. And Harriet's running to find Emma, and they both think the other is going to be angry at them, which is very beautiful, because Harriet goes first, and she has accepted Robert Martin's proposal.

Vanessa: Yay.

Molly: And Emma's like, "This is the best news ever, because now I don't have to break your heart." Then we cut to Mr. Woodhouse, of course, being devastated. But Emma's like, "Well, listen, [01:02:00] don't you want Mr. Knightley to keep the chicken thieves away?"

Vanessa: [laughs]

Becca: Back with the chicken thieves.

Vanessa: By the chicken thieves, I mean, Frank Churchill.

Molly: Yes, true. She does have a moment where she's like, "Well, we'll live here with you as long as you wish it. Not wanting to be like, until you die," because that's so morbid.

Vanessa: Until you die, and then we're going to Donwell Abbey.

Molly: Yeah. And then we see Knightley saying goodbye to the abbey and seeing all of the people working in his fields or in their fields, the fields of his tenants.

Vanessa: Right.

Molly: And then we get maybe the wedding or maybe a harvest party.

Vanessa: I think it's a harvest and rents party. I think this is when everybody pays the rent.

Molly: Oh.

Vanessa: I love this scene. This is an addition. First of all, one of the reasons, this is my final thing that I feel like I have to say. So, Emma, one of the reasons I love Emma so much is that you get kind of an epilogue. You get an after, the happily ever after. You see Emma and Knightley together and what a great couple they are.

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: It's adorable. [01:03:00]

Molly: With love-- [crosstalk]

Vanessa: I love watching them together. And so, you get to see that here. It doesn't end just with them getting engaged and announcing it to Mr. Woodhouse. It's this very cross class moment. You literally watch Emma cross a room in order to talk to Harriet. And this thing that Emma said at the beginning, which is like, "I could never visit you if you were Mrs. Martin." Like, she is showing growth. She's like, "That's not true. I will. I will literally come visit you in this room."

Molly: Yeah. And she says, "You guys should come over to Hartfield."

Vanessa: Right.

Becca: Yeah.

Vanessa: Exactly. So, I love that it's establishing Knightley as a good landowner and this cross-class thing with Emma. And then it has this very classical ending of the three couples together, which is just very Shakespearean and Greek.

Becca: Oh, yeah.

Vanessa: The more couples the better.

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: And the fact that it ends with these three couples dancing, it's like, "No, this isn't just a happy ending. It's a happy, happy, happy ending."

Molly: Yes.

Vanessa: And I love it.

Becca: Agreed.

Molly: Yes. It's so lovely. And we get a dog [01:04:00] in the last scene as well.

Vanessa: Yeah, I thank God.

Becca: Oh, not enough dogs in this one.

Molly: There's a speech happening, and the dog is just playing with a stick in the middle of the room, I was like, "Oh, I'm happy now."

Becca: That's how I live my life.

Vanessa: You also to see Emma be nice to a dog in this movie, which--

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: You're like, "Okay, I guess she's not."

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Unfortunately, then we do end with another chicken thieves moment.

Vanessa: It's so weird.

Molly: It's so weird. But bookending it, I guess.

Vanessa: Yeah. I can't make this about Frank Churchill. The other thing that I like about the ending is that it makes clear that Jane is really in love with Frank.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Yeah.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: Yes. And we get Frank. He comes over and tries to talk to Emma and be like, "Are we friends again?" And she's like, "Whatever, dude."

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: Like, "Fine." She's so over it that it's like--

Vanessa: She's like, "You're a fucking liar, but I'm happy."

Molly: She's like, "If she forgives you, then I forgive you, but go be with her now." And he's just so smitten that he doesn't notice that she's over him. And we, of course, get one more, you and I are not so much brother and sister as to make it [01:05:00] improper brother and sister. No, indeed, which is funny in this context.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: No father-daughter.

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: Okay. What do we make of the chickens at the end?

Molly: I think it's purely just a framing device. I don't think that he thought too hard about it, to be honest.

Vanessa: What a strange framing device.

Becca: I think maybe the most generous way I can think about it is that it's a sort of a comic. Like, Andrew Davies thought the chicken thieves were really funny. But it's like a very jarring note to end on, because the entire vibe of the movie isn't generally pretty light and frothy and fun and like Jane Austen.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: It's weird, because it's very intense and strange. You feel for the chickens and it's almost like scary. The chickens seem--

Vanessa: I'm really upset about it.

Molly: Yeah, of course. They're been-

Becca: I'm upset.

Molly: -kidnapped.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Becca: They look sad. Those poor chickens. I don't have answers for what this framing [01:06:00] chicken device is. I think it is a jarring note to start the film on, a jarring note to end the film on. And honestly, them dancing at the end of that renter's party is honestly, like, all I needed for the ending.

Vanessa: I know. All of them holding hands, and these three different classes and three different courtships and three different marriages.

Becca: Exactly.

Molly: So, should we rapid fire Becca's study questions?

Becca: We shall. That puts a pin on Kate Beckinsale starring in *Emma*, the second, 1996 *Emma*. So, we're just going to do some rapid-fire questions. First one is, funniest line delivery?

Vanessa: It just has to be Mrs. Elton sticking out her tongue.

Molly: Yeah. [laughs]

Becca: Perfect.

Molly: Sticking out her tongue.

Vanessa: That couldn't have been scripted. That was an acting choice and I loved it.

Molly: Yeah, it's so good to bounce off the Mrs. Elton stuff. I'm going with, "I fancy myself a kind of shepherdess, you know? Oh, are you fond of sheep, then, Mrs. Elton?"

Vanessa: Yes.

Molly: So good.

Becca: I'm going to give it, actually to Mr. Elton in the carriage [01:07:00] scene, which is a plot twist. But the way he says, "Allow me to interpret this interesting silence."

Molly: Yeah, it's pretty good.

Becca: So, then we're going to do notable adaptations from the book.

Vanessa: Definitely the portrait coming to life and kissing Emma's hand.

Molly: Yeah, that's a good-- This might be what wins for me as well, but I think the Frank and Jane plotline being so present is a notable difference, for sure.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: And the chickens.

Vanessa: And the chickens. [laughs]

Becca: I think pulling out of Emma's perspective and highlighting the servants and others, for better or for worse, is a very notable change from the book, which is, in its own right, a borderline stream of consciousness novel from Emma's perspective.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Worst part of the movie? [laughs]

Vanessa: Oh. I feel like I just keep complaining about this. But when you can see Jane [01:08:00] saved by Mr. Dixon-- Really, the worst part is, "What about Henry?"

Becca: [laughs]

Vanessa: The totally unexplained, what about Henry?

Molly: Yeah. For me, it's going to be the constant reminders [Vanessa laughs] of Knightley holding Emma as a baby, and changing her diapers and being her father figure.

Vanessa: [laughs]

Becca: I will round out the holy trinity and call it a tie between-- So, I guess the quadrity. I don't know what that is, but call it a tie between Knightley's styling in the film and also, the lack of Harriet Smith, just like the absence of the female friendships from the film.

Vanessa: Absolutely.

Becca: Best thing about the film?

Vanessa: Kate Beckinsale's teeth.

Molly: Her teeth are really great.

Vanessa: Why did she "fix them"? They look great.

Molly: They're adorable.

Vanessa: She's so cute in this movie.

Molly: She is really cute.

Becca: Agreed.

Molly: I think as weird as this is to say, because I've spent the entire [01:09:00] time bashing on it. But Mrs. Elton and her accent is so good.

Vanessa: It's so good. We don't understand it, but that doesn't mean we can't appreciate it.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: I'm going to give it to the performance of Frank Churchill in this. I think he brings a different energy to Frank than I have seen on screen in a way that made him incredibly entertaining to watch.

Molly: Totally.

Becca: Who wins this movie?

Vanessa: Jane Fairfax. She doesn't have to be complicit in the murder, but she gets everything she wanted.

Molly: [laughs]

Becca: Jane Fairfax is the ultimate winner. I actually do think it's fair to give it to this actress playing Jane Fairfax [crosstalk]-

Vanessa: So good.

Becca: -for a truly excellent performance. All right, listeners, this concludes this coverage of Kate Beckinsale in *Emma*, the Andrew Davies version came out in 1996. I'll find a more clean way to refer to it some other time in my life. But for next time, we're actually going to be covering *Emma Approved*. Very exciting, very fun for those who love *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. A lot of overlapping creators there. But in the meantime, Vanessa, thank you so much for joining **[01:10:00]** us. Do you want to tell the people where they can find you?

Vanessa: Yes. I recommend that you follow our pilgrimage account, which is, Common Ground Pilgrimages, because we do one Austen pilgrimage a year. This year, we're doing *Northanger Abbey* in Bath, and *Persuasion* in Lyme Regis. And so, if you want to come with us and travel and talk about Austen, that is where to follow us.

Molly: That's amazing. And people should also go listen to your new season of Hot & Bothered.

Vanessa: Yes, they should go listen. Thank you. You guys are so sweet.

Becca: [laughs]

Vanessa: Go listen to our new season of Hot & Bothered. We will no doubt be talking about an Austen adaptation sooner rather than later.

Molly: Amazing.

Becca: Fantastic. All right. Well then, until next time, stay proper-

Molly: -And don't be complicit in the murder of your aunt.

Vanessa: Don't do it.

Molly: Or, of your boyfriend's aunt, I guess.

Becca: Don't do it.

Vanessa: You heard it here first, then.

[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. **[01:11:00]** 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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