

Molly: Hey, everyone. Before we begin today, we want to thank our newest patrons, Carrie and Valentina. Welcome to the team. If you're interested in checking out our new tiers, they include perks like a Discord community, the opportunity to submit study questions, and an exclusive Zoom hang with us, if that sounds like something you might be interested in, check out our Patreon at patreon.com/podandprejudice. And now, enjoy this week's episode covering chapters 49 to 51 of *Emma*.

Becca: Are we going straight into it?

Molly: Yeah, there's too much to talk about.

Becca: Oh, my, God, okay. So, let me just pull up the notes.

[Pod and Prejudice theme]

Becca: And to say, 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: *Emma*.

Becca: Listeners, if you're new here, I, Becca, have read many Jane Austen books before.

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* or *Sense and Sensibility* for the first time, you can listen to Seasons 1 and 2 of this podcast respectively. But [00:01:00] that is not what we're doing here today.

Molly: No, today, we are talking about *Emma*, Volume III, Chapters 13 through 15. Or, if your book isn't broken up into Volumes, that's Chapters 49 through 51.

Becca: Yeah, lots happens. Lots occurs.

Molly: Yeah, this is probably the most eventful of the chapters that we've had yet.

Becca: Oh, yes. So much to talk about here.

Molly: So, should we just talk about it?

Becca: I think we just have to because you're going to explode.

Molly: I'm going to explode. But let's first tell the listeners where we left off.

Becca: So, last time, we were recording, what happened was that Emma was like, "Oh, shit, Harriet's going to be so sad that Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax are engaged." Womp, womp.

Molly: Womp, womp.

Becca: Because in fact, Harriet was like, "Oh, I don't give an ever-loving shit about Frank Churchill. I'm in love with Knightley." And Emma's like, "Oh, my God, I made her way too full of herself, and also, I'm jealous because I'm in love with Mr. Knightley." So, then we have Emma just going on an epic Regency Era mournful Taylor Swift [00:02:00] fueled rant to herself about how she's so stupid, she's misjudged everything. She can't believe she got so close to Harriet, and now Knightley might debase himself. And here we are.

Molly: That's where we left off. Let's dive right into these chapters.

Becca: Ooh.

Molly: Okay. So, whoo, here we go. Oh, my God. So, the weather is really gloomy the next day, and Emma's just wallowing in it.

Becca: Oh, yeah.

Becca: But in the afternoon, it starts clearing up and she's like, "Thank God, I'm going to go outside. I'm going to feel better." So, Mr. Perry comes to hang out with her dad, and Emma's like, "I'm going for a walk." She goes for a walk, and she's just started to feel a little cheered up when she sees Knightley coming towards her, and my eyes are watering.

Becca: Oh, my God, she's already crying, guys. Yeah, and also, this is just one of those moments-- I don't know if anybody ever has the level of self-deprecation to really just panic when their crush shows up, but that has always been my experience. I realize I like someone and then they're there, I'm like, **[00:03:00]** "Oh, God."

Molly: Yeah. No, definitely. It's a stressful environment to be in. Emma had been like, "Wait, I thought he was in London. Mentally, I was prepared for him to not be here. My brain is going, 'I need to compose myself.'" He comes over and their greetings are "quiet and constrained" on both sides. I'm thinking at this point, what's wrong? Emma thinks that maybe he told his brother about his plans with Harriet. It said his plans. I'm assuming his plans for marriage with Harriet as I was thinking, and was not happy about his brother's response, and he's like, "Can I walk with you?" And she's like, "Oh, okay." [giggles] And he's like, "I just want to be outside." So, they're walking together, and she thinks that he keeps looking at her and she's like, "Oh, my God, is he going to try to tell me about his feelings for Harriet?" She thinks that she's convinced.

Becca: Emma is such a dumbass. She is such a lady himbo.

Molly: She's so dumb. This whole time, there are very clear signs and she is just **[00:04:00]** not reading the room.

Becca: Well, to be fair to Emma, she's been humbled within an inch of her life between-

Molly: So true.

Becca: -Box Hill Gate and now. So, now she's like, "I'm not taking anything for granted."

Molly: Yeah, that is a fair point. She brings up the wedding and she's like, "Oh, there's exciting news. There's a wedding." And he's like, "If you're talking about Frank and Jane, I already know." And she's like, "What?" She's really sad that she's not the one to be telling him. She gets a little worried that maybe heard it from Harriet first.

Becca: Then he's like, "Nah, Mr. Weston told me," which I want to point out, consistent with our conversation last week, Mr. Weston was like, "This is a big secret-

Molly: Oh, yeah.

Becca: -no one can know." And Emma's got this anxiety of like, "Oh, God, who can I tell?" But then everyone she talks to is like, "Oh, yeah, Mr. Weston told me."

Molly: Yeah. [laughs]

Becca: God bless him.

Molly: Ah, I love him. Emma says that he must have had his suspicions. She hasn't forgotten that he tried to warn her away from Frank all of those **[00:05:00]** months ago. She wishes that she had listened to him, but "I seem to have been doomed to blindness." My

notes say, in more ways than one, you dummy, because she was blind about Frank and Jane. She's blind about Mr. Knightley being in love with her. She's wrong about everything.

Becca: What are you seeing here from Emma, in her pure, humblest state?

Molly: Self-consciousness.

Becca: Low self-esteem queen.

Molly: Low self-esteem queen. I had a thought here, because at this point in the book, I am thoroughly convinced that Knightley is about to confess his love to her, like, I am prepared for that mentally.

Becca: Yup. [laughs]

Molly: I had this note that later turns out to be true, so I'm just going to throw it out there so everyone can know that I was right about something. I was thinking that maybe he realized he was in love with her when Frank showed up, and he had the same realization that she found out that Harriet was in love with Knightley. He was like, "Wait, someone else likes Emma? Wait, I know I like Emma."

Becca: Yeah. [laughs]

Molly: I [00:06:00] think that he's been holding back and not telling her because he was so convinced that she was in love with Frank.

Becca: Yes, which goes again to, and we'll go into this, but how much Knightley fucking hated Frank. Some of it's on principle, but the vast majority is just like, "Emma likes him."

Molly: Yeah, which is so funny because he seems like such-- [crosstalk]

Becca: No, that's the thing. This is why Knightley is so hot, and people can disagree with me if they want. But my take on why Knightley is so hot is he is like this calm, collected dude, he seems really mature, and he's very proper in society. But underneath all of that, he's a disaster falling in love with his best friend. Just in this moment, as dumb as Emma about himself. In some ways, they both have the same instincts [00:07:00] of like, "Oh, God, fuck. This person who's been my bestie, my platonic bestie forever is actually the love of my life. They'll never feel the same way about me. So, I just have to hold it in and just be grumpy about."

Molly: [gasps]

Becca: Yeah. I love him because he's so smart and he's so stupid. And the chemistry, oh.

Molly: So much chemistry.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: So, speaking of chemistry, so she's just said that she's been doomed to blindness. He's quiet for a moment, and then he takes her arm, and he presses her hand against his heart, which is a far step from about to kiss her hand.

Becca: Yeah, and it's also just one of those really charged moments where there's contact between their skin. He means it as like almost a friendly gesture, but it is so touching that there's something tender and intimate there.

Molly: Yeah. Well, what I'm picturing is pretty intimate, because it says he [00:08:00] threads his arm through hers and then touches it to his heart. So, I'm picturing like, he takes her arm and has her hand like this, I'm doing a visual representation, and then holds it here. That is fucking-- They're close right now.

Becca: Ah-huh. How many times does Jane Austen describe skin-to-skin contact through books?

Molly: Very rarely because it's not something that happens often.

Becca: Not only is it something that doesn't happen often, oftentimes, we're talking about the dancing.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: But here, we have a very specific moment where they are tenderly touching each other. It's hot.

Molly: Really hot.

Becca: Not only are they tenderly touching each other, he is touching her to tell her that she is amazing and Frank Churchill ain't shit.

Molly: Yeah, that's essentially what he says. He's like, "As a friend, I'm really mad at this guy for how he treated you."

Becca: Yeah, what does he call him?

Molly: An abominable scoundrel.

Becca: Yeah. [laughs] [00:09:00]

Molly: He says he feels bad for Jane and she deserves better. Emma gets the butterflies at this and she's like, "No, I'm fine. I just regret behaving so embarrassingly." He's going to be so proud of her.

Molly: Yeah, but in this moment, he's like, "Oh, God, she behaved embarrassingly because she was in love with him."

Molly: Yes, exactly. He's devastated. He does seem happy that she's not too hurt and that she wasn't too attached. But he doesn't really understand what she's saying. He thinks that she's just being reasonable. She's like, "No, I'm fine. I was embarrassing, but it's nothing."

Molly: He's like, "Oh, no, you can open up to me. I know how you feel about him."

Molly: Yes. He's like, "Based on your behavior, I wasn't sure how much you liked him. I just knew that there was a preference. I'm glad it wasn't too bad." He calls Frank, a disgrace to the name of man.

Becca: Knightley is so dramatic about Frank Churchill. It's my favorite thing.

Molly: These chapters [00:10:00] are just like zinger after zinger from Knightley.

Becca: Ah, no, yeah.

Molly: So good. Emma says, "No, I can't let you go on believing that I was in love with Frank." She says that, since her behavior gave such an impression, she has as much reason to be ashamed of confessing that she never loved Frank as another woman might feel saying that she did love. Basically, she's just so embarrassed that she acted so in love with him when she didn't feel anything.

Becca: Yeah. She's basically like, "I was a loose lady. Sorry."

Molly: Yes. Knightley is silent, and she knows that she has to say more, but she doesn't want to lower herself in his opinion, but she still goes on. She says she was flattered by his attentions, and she allowed his attentions, but she hadn't ever felt, or she hasn't felt for quite some time that they meant anything. And now she understands that he was using her as a

way to conceal his engagement to Jane to blind everyone around them, and Emma was just lucky that she happened not to fall in love with him. Again, he could [00:11:00] not have known that she wouldn't, but that's just my opinion.

Becca: We'll get there.

Molly: We'll get there. Knightley remains silent and then he says, "Maybe I've underrated Frank Churchill."

[laughter]

Becca: I love this so much, because nothing has changed about Frank Churchill's behavior, except for the fact that Emma was not in love with him.

Molly: Yeah. I was like, "Dude."

Becca: Oh, this is Knightley telling on himself a 1000%.

Molly: Yes. And it's like, "Emma, pick up on it, dude."

Becca: Oh, no, they are not picking up on anything with each other. This whole scene is just miscommunication meets miscommunication and Emma is stewing in this, "Oh, my God. He is in love with Harriet." And Knightley's doing in, "Oh, my God, she's in love with Frank Churchill and she's been scorned and the two of them are just fucking idiots." It's amazing.

Molly: It's so good. So, Emma says that Frank and Jane do seem to love each other. And Knightley says he's lucky, Frank is [00:12:00] lucky to have chosen such a good wife at such a young age, someone who is equal in society and manners. She's not a gold digger, because even if she's less in terms of status, she has a pure heart, and he knows that she's not in it for the money. "A man would always wish to give a woman a better home than the one he takes her from." He says Frank is lucky in everything, to have met a woman on vacation who falls for him and still loves him when he neglects her. His aunt is in the way and then his aunt dies. He's lied to everyone and everyone's willing to forgive him.

Becca: I will say this is a very revealing little paragraph from Knightley, because obviously, as we are learning, a lot of what Knightley is feeling towards Frank is just pure jealousy for how much Emma loves Frank. But there is something also here about the ease of Frank's life that clearly Knightley takes issue with, because Knightley clearly works very hard to uphold his own place in society and make sure he is being proper.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: [00:13:00] It's one of those things where it's like, when you're one of those people who does your homework on time and you get really pissed off that there's somebody else who is slacking off in class and doing quite as well as you, that always is really frustrating.

Molly: That would be me and the person who was valedictorian in my high school. I was salutatorian and our GPAs were like 0.002 away from each other. But he didn't show up for class for all of senior year. He just did really well in his first three years.

Becca: That is so aggravating. I'm not going to go into it, but I certainly had a person like that I felt that way about. But it's just one of those things where you're like, "Oh, well, I tried harder at this, but whatever, go for it."

Molly: Yes. Emma says it sounds like Knightley envies Frank. And Knightley says, "Well, I do in one respect." And my notes say, "What respect, Knightley?"

[both scream]

Molly: Emma feels like he's about to bring up Harriet and she's like, "I got to avert the subject." I'm like, "Emma, you fucking idiot."

Becca: You know what's so funny about this as [00:14:00] well is the fact that Knightley literally was just like, "Oh, I thought you were in love with Frank. I envy Frank."

Molly: Yeah, it's pretty obvious.

Becca: Emma.

Molly: Emma. Knightley says, "It's clear you don't want to know why I envy Frank because Emma doesn't say anything," but "I must tell you what you will not ask, though I may wish it unsaid the next moment." And then she says, "Okay, don't say it then. Take some time. Think about it." And I'm like, "Emma, don't tell him not to. Oh, my God."

Becca: And then he's mortified.

Molly: He's mortified, and he says, "Thank you." And then, he just is quiet.

Becca: Then they have a little awkward walk together.

Molly: They're awkward-- I'm like, "Oh, my God, Emma, do you see what's happening?" [crosstalk]

Becca: I wish I could have watched you read this part of the book because I am sure you were just curled up in a ball.

Molly: I was sitting right over. No, I was sitting at the table. I was biting my nails. Oh, my God, and then well, I'll tell you once we get there, but I kept having to take breaks and breathe about it. So, he's quiet and Emma feels [00:15:00] guilty immediately. She's like, "He wants to confide in me. I'm his best friend. I'm going to listen. Maybe I can convince him, away from Harriet," or something. They reach the house and he's like, "Okay, are you going in?" And she says, "No, let's take another turn about the garden." And she says that she's sorry for cutting him off. Then she says, "If you want to talk to me as a friend or ask my opinion about anything as a friend, go for it."

Becca: She's steeling herself up to be like, "This is it. This is where he breaks my heart."

Molly: I wrote down that I have to read all of this.

Becca: You do have to read all of this.

Molly: There's a lot of Knightley lines that I just must read. He says, "As a friend! Emma, Emma, that I fear is a word. No, I have no wish, Stay, yes, why should I hesitate? I have gone too far already for concealment. Emma, I accept your offer. Extraordinary as it may seem, I accept it, and refer myself to you as a friend. Tell me, then, have I no chance of ever succeeding?" [00:16:00] And Emma does not understand what he is asking here.

Becca: And Molly does.

Molly: I understand what he's asking here, but Emma-- Emma, he said that he very clearly is saying it gives him great pain to be referred to as your friend like, dude. So, okay. He goes on, "My dearest Emma," said he, "for dearest you will always be, whatever the event of this hour's conversation, my dearest, most beloved Emma tell me at once. Say `No,' if it is to be said." She could really say nothing. "You are silent," he cried, with great animation; "Absolutely silent! at present I ask no more." And at this point is when Emma is like, "Am I [crosstalk]?"

Becca: Wait, this isn't about Harriet. This is about Emma.

Molly: Is this about Emma? She can't say anything because she's afraid she's going to wake up. And here I go. I have to read it.

Becca: Oh, God, you have to read this part because it is one of the most romantic things Jane Austen [00:17:00] has ever written.

Molly: Yeah. My notes in the margins of my book just say, sobbing over and over again. So, here-- [crosstalk]

Becca: You sent me a picture of you sobbing over this.

Molly: Yeah, I cried. Okay. So, "I cannot make speeches, Emma:" he soon resumed, and in a tone of such sincere, decided, intelligible tenderness as was tolerably convincing. "If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more. But you know what I am. You hear nothing but truth from me. I have blamed you, and lectured you, and you have borne it as no other woman in England would have borne it. Bear with the truths I would tell you now, dearest Emma, as well as you have borne with them. The manner perhaps may have as little to recommend them. God knows, I have been a very indifferent lover. But you understand me. Yes, you see, you understand my feelings and will return them if you can. At present, I ask only to hear, once to hear your voice." [laughs]

Becca: So, this book has been like Jane Austen's funniest book, I think, and it is a very class, commentary type of book, one that's really about an exploration [00:18:00] of a very specific female character. But then you hit this part and you're like, "Right. Jane Austen is one of the most iconic romance writers of all time. This is why. Let's go through that again. I cannot make speeches, Emma." He soon resumed in a tone of such sincere, decided, intelligible tenderness as was tolerably convincing. Oh, and then one of the most famous lines from this book, "If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more."

Molly: Oh, my God, okay, I have to tell you.

Becca: Okay.

Molly: So, I think it was at one point where I was writing and I was like, "Emma, what are you doing? Why don't you believe him? Why don't you understand what he's saying?" I took a break to scroll through Instagram, like a page before this.

Becca: Yup.

Molly: I follow a lot of Jane Austen accounts, and someone was thanking their followers for a year of followership and ended their post with, "If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more." And instantly, [00:19:00] I was like, "That sounds like something Knightley's about to say to Emma." I just knew it. I don't know what lines famous things are from for Jane Austen purposes. I was like, "That has Knightley written all over it. It's just so him."

Becca: Yeah, talk about that. Why is it so him?

Molly: Because he's not necessarily a buttoned-up man in all respects, at least when it comes to Emma, but he is proper and he is a man of his ways, we'll say.

Becca: And also, I think there's something about the love between Emma and Knightley that makes this line so perfect, because their love is not one of great drama or confession or running through the rain. We're not Marianne here. It is a love built through actions over years. [00:20:00] It's just so natural between the two of them that they would be in love that it sneaks up on them in such an overwhelming way that it's just the state of being. You can't talk about it because it's so present.

Molly: It's so everything.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: There's too much.

Becca: Exactly. It is the undercurrent of the entire book that they have been so stupidly in love with each other the entire time.

Molly: Both of them, just since the beginning.

Becca: Dummies. Best friend dummies.

Molly: Oh, yeah. So, that wrecked me.

Becca: Oh, "If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more." Hot.

Molly: So hot.

Becca: Because you get a lot of-- In *Pride and Prejudice* Proposalgeddon is obviously the source of many of the most famous lines. People say them like as these deeply romantic lines Mr. Darcy says, even the fact that he's nagging her the entire time.

Molly: Yeah, I wouldn't call Proposalgeddon, [00:21:00] romantic, but I see-- [crosstalk]

Becca: Yeah. But people say, "In vain, I have struggled. It will not do."

Molly: My feelings will not be repressed.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: That line is great. It's one of Jane Austen's most iconic lines. I love it. It's shocking to Lizzie when she hears it. It's not shocking to the reader when we hear it.

Molly: Right.

Becca: I do remember getting a screenshot from you just like selfied smiling and being like, "He ardently loves her," before you realize what was about to happen. But I think "If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more" is like moving in a way that Proposalgeddon lines can't be.

Molly: Oh, yeah.

Becca: Because it's just so, as she says said with such sincere, decided, intelligible tenderness.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: He is in a moment of really, truly abandoning Regency Era society and being like, "Listen, I can't bear this anymore. I am so in love with you that I need to [00:22:00] just say it outright and know whether or not you love me too." Oh.

Molly: Mm. Yeah.

Becca: Molly's crying, everybody. [laughs]

Molly: Oh, man, it's so good. It's so good. Oh-- [crosstalk]

Becca: Can you imagine someone like, we all want Mr. Knightley line said to us, but someone saying to you, "If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more."

Molly: He loves her so much it makes him speechless.

Becca: Yeah, he loves her so much that it is, like, his very being. He can't describe it because it's what he is.

Molly: Ooh wee.

Becca: Goddamn, Knightley. Knightley underrated Austen dreamboat, in my opinion.

Molly: Yeah. The Austen dreamboat, I think. So, Emma's mind is whirring as this is happening. She's still listening to every word, but she's also like, "Oh, my God, he never loved Harriet. Oh, my God, all of that stuff that I was saying about Harriet, he was taking his discouragement away from me. I must [00:23:00] fix this."

Becca: [laughs]

Molly: She's thinking-- [crosstalk]

Becca: Wait, I want to read this. "It was all the service she could now render her poor friend, for as to any of that heroism of sentiment which might have prompted her to entreat him to transfer his affection from herself to Harriet, as infinitely the most worthy of the two or even the more simple sublimity of resolving to refuse him at once and for ever, without vouchsafing any motive, because he could not marry them both, Emma had it not."

Molly: [laughs] Yeah. She's like, "I'm not that good a person."

Becca: She's like, "I could get him to be into Harriet here, but why would I do that when I love him?"

Molly: Yeah. She's, "Do something for yourself for once, girl."

Becca: Yeah, and this is one of those moments where it's like, she's not Elinor Dashwood. She's not selfless to the point of masochism. She's like, "No, I love him. I'm a better match for him. Sorry, Harriet."

Molly: Yeah. Of course, why would she at this point--? She was wrong about who he was [00:24:00] in love with. She knew that they were a bad match to begin with and she spent the entire book trying to match other people up like, "If you're in love, be in love."

Becca: I know. Finally, Emma's experiencing real, true love in everything it entails.

Molly: But in this moment, she knows what to do. She tells him he need not to spare and encourages him to continue. She knows the change might seem sudden on her end, since she had just been being like, "Don't talk about it, don't talk about it." But Knightley is more than willing to go with the flow.

Becca: [laughs]

Molly: He's like, "Oh, okay."

Becca: "Great, that was received much better than I thought it would be."

Molly: Yeah. Jane Austen, then in the corner, has this moment where she says, "It's very rare that humans are able to disclose complete truth to each other. But in this case, while their conduct may have been mistaken, their feelings were absolutely true." I think that's how that's supposed to be interpreted anyway.

Becca: Yes. The exact line is, "Seldom, very seldom does complete truth belong to any human disclosure. Seldom can it happen that something [00:25:00] is not a little disguised or a little mistaken, but where, as in this case, though the conduct is mistaken, the feelings are not, it may be very material. Mr. Knightley could not impute to Emma a more relenting heart than she possessed, or a heart more disposed to accept of his." I think what Jane is

saying there, Jane is turning to the audience to be like, "These two motherfuckers were trapped by their own egos, [unintelligible 00:25:29] flaws, and psyches, as well as their society. But when they stripped it all away and they just told each other the truth, it turned out none of that mattered."

Molly: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Becca: Beautiful moment.

Molly: Quick definition, impute means a tribute.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: So, he reveals that he had followed her into the shrubbery to find out if she was okay about Frank's engagement. He hadn't been planning to propose at this moment. And when he learned that she didn't love Frank, he had become hopeful, but he still only wanted her to tell him that he had a chance. He wasn't expecting for her to [00:26:00] be like, "Yeah, I love you too."

Becca: She's like, "Oh, yeah. No, this is totally mutual."

Molly: Yes. Knightley reveals that he's been jealous of Frank and in love with Emma from the very moment that Frank stepped foot in Highbury. One sentiment probably having enlightened him as to the other, which is what I said about him realizing he was in love with Emma when he thought that Emma was in love with Frank.

Becca: Yup, entirely. Every moment of Knightley just despising Frank Churchill comes into Frank light of him just being like-- It's not the principle of this charming, slightly slimy man. It's Emma. He's a dumb-dumb and he didn't realize the entire time all he wanted was to just bicker with Emma until the end of time.

Molly: Oh, that is going to be their whole relationship. It's so cute. He says that his jealousy of Frank literally drove him away from Highbury Box Hill sealing the deal because they were flirting so hard. He left trying to get over Emma, [00:27:00] but unfortunately, he went to her sister's house, where-- [crosstalk]

Becca: Terrible idea.

Molly: Yeah. They're, first of all, very happy in their marriage. Second of all, she reminds him too much of Emma, so he did not get over her.

[laughter]

Becca: Very bad move on his part.

Molly: Yes. And then he finds out about Frank and Jane, and he immediately gets on a horse to see how his sweetest and best of all creatures faultless in spite of all her faults bore the discovery.

Becca: You remember, they said the weather was bad.

Molly: It was raining.

Becca: So, he just rode all night through the rain to make sure that Emma was okay over a guy he fucking hates.

Molly: Yeah, literally he says that he got a letter from Mr. Weston that morning telling him about it, and he hopped on a horse, and galloped through the rain to go see her.

Becca: This is *Dream Boat* material.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: *Dream Boat* material.

Molly: Yes. When she tells him that she never loved Frank's character was no longer desperate to him, which is [00:28:00] that moment of, maybe I underrated him.

Becca: Oh.

Molly: Then by the time they get back to the house, she was his own Emma by hand and word, and it says that when they return to the house, if he could have thought of Frank Churchill, then he might have deemed him a very good sort of fellow.

Becca: Graham, I think we need a proposal sound effect here.

[proposal sound effect]

Becca: Yeah, it's just a perfect moment where he's just like, "You know, I actually think Frank's a good guy."

Molly: Yeah. He's like, "He's fine."

Becca: Which brings us to chapter 14 of Volume III, or Chapter 50.

Molly: Yes. So, they go back inside, and Emma comes back in an exquisite flutter of happiness, and such happiness, moreover, as she believes, must still be greater when the flutter should have passed away, which is so sweet. It's like after the butterflies of the initial love wear off, she knows that she's just going to be [00:29:00] happy forever.

Becca: I know. It's just the feeling of like, "Oh, I'm happy with someone. That's really nice."

Molly: Yeah. Everything looks more beautiful to her now as she's looking around. Mr. Woodhouse has no idea as he's greeting Knightley that the man is plotting against him in his chest to take his daughter away from him.

Becca: Exactly.

Molly: That night, Emma can't sleep and she's thinking over two problems. One, her father, and two, Harriet. She doesn't want to hurt either of them with this news. With regards to her father, she's determined not to leave him. And so, she thinks while he is alive, this can only be an engagement. They can't get married. She'll just wait until he's dead. Though she does think it'll be nice for him to know that she's going to be provided for after he dies, but it is a little bit morbid that they're just going to wait till he's dead.

Becca: Yeah. But there's no way around it. Mr. Woodhouse is like, "He needs Emma."

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Emma's talked the whole book about how she can't get married because of her father. Even [00:30:00] now, when she's found true love, she's like, "I cannot leave my father." So, you know, it's not just like a flirty little, "Oh, I can't get married until someone comes along."

Molly: I know.

Becca: It's a conviction of like, "Oh, I must take care of my father."

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: What's excellent and we'll get there later is that Knightley knows that too.

Becca: Oh, we will get there.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: *Dream Boat* behavior. Go on.

Molly: In terms of Harriet, she can't decide what to do. She decides that she's just going to keep avoiding her, and she wants to tell her this by a letter like a text breakup, basically, and she decides that it would best for Harriet to leave Highbury, and she's going to get Isabella to invite her to Brunswick Square, essentially kicking Harriet out of the town.

Becca: Yes. But if I'm being more generous to Emma, putting her in London society to find husband.

Molly: Yeah, that's fair. And also, it would hurt Harriet to see them together at this point.

Becca: Precisely. Yeah.

Molly: Yes. The next morning, Emma writes the letter and it makes her sad to write. So, she is really happy when Knightley arrives and [00:31:00] they go out and walk around and talk over their love for each other and blah, blah, blah, blah.

Becca: Do you know the day after you say "I love you" for the first time? It's just like the loveiest, doveiest, stupidest day of all time. They're there. They're making eggs together just being like, "Mm, I love you."

Molly: [giggles] So, you say it again. "I love you."

Becca: "I love you."

[laughter]

Molly: When Knightley leaves, a letter arrives for Emma from Mrs. Weston. She immediately knows what it is, and she doesn't want to read it. It says that she deprecates the necessity of reading it. And deprecate meaning express disapproval, disparage, or belittle. So, she's like, "I don't really. I'm just going to push this down on my to do list, but I know I have to." She doesn't want to hear his excuses. Same. She won't be able to comprehend what he says anyway. Same. But she knows she has to read it for Mrs. Weston. It starts with a note from Mrs. Weston saying this letter is going to fix everything, and here is the letter.

He starts by saying that he sent a few of these applications of pardon [00:32:00] and he's been forgiven by many people, but he doesn't want to get cocky. He doesn't want to expect that Mrs. Weston will forgive him. He came to Randalls with a secret, and he won't talk about his right to have had entered into the engagement in the first place, which I don't know why he won't talk about his right to have blah, blah, blah entered into the engagement in the first place, but he doesn't want to talk about it here. As for his temptation, he says, "Look to--" I'm guessing, Jane's house. He says, "Oh, look at Jane. Of course, I was tempted."

Becca: Yeah, he's like, "How could I avoid it?" And this comes to another very crucial thing, which is a piece of the puzzle that wasn't together quite yet. Frank Churchill, for the first Volume of this book, just wasn't showing up to Highbury.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: He finally does make it to "congratulate his father" on his "new marriage." But it just so happens to conveniently be immediately after Jane Fairfax shows up in town.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: So, why was Frank in Highbury in the first place?

Molly: [00:33:00] Yeah, not to congratulate his father, for sure.

Becca: Oh, certainly not to see his father in Highbury for the first time in his life since he was a tiny child.

Molly: Right. So, we're jumping around a little bit in the letter, but that's okay. He says that he knows that he should have come sooner, and he acknowledges that he came for Jane when she arrived. But before his father got married-- And he's saying that he should have come to congratulate his father. There was also the 23 years of his life before that.

Becca: Well, that was different because his father would go see him. First of all, he was a kid for a lot of that.

Molly: Sure.

Becca: But his father would go see him elsewhere. A single man is much more mobile in this time period than setting up a family in an estate in a home. I'm not saying Frank's amazing, but it's completely unforgivable to not come to your father's wedding or congratulate him after, whereas, if your dad is a tradesman and he's in and out of London all the time and you see him and he comes to visit you,-

Molly: Sure.

Becca: -that's different than like, "Oh, my father got married! I should go meet his new wife."

Molly: Right.

Becca: But Frank Churchill has been procrastinating coming to Highbury for 23 years. What does it take for him to come to Highbury?

Molly: A girl.

Becca: A lady with a bod.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: As we learned at the very beginning in this book.

Molly: Jane, hot.

Becca: Jane Fairfax, hot.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Perfect. No notes.

Molly: Yeah. So, he admits to that, and he apologizes. He talks about how they got together. They knew when they met that there was no chance of them being together as long as his aunt was around, so he got her to agree to his secret engagement. He says, if she hadn't agreed, he would have gotten mad. He says, "But you will be ready to say what was your hope in doing this? What did you look forward to anything, everything, to time, chance, circumstance, slow effects, sudden births, [00:35:00] perseverance, and weariness, health and sickness?" Again, Jane Austen is the best romance writer of all time.

Becca: This is not a romance we know very well. We get it from an outside perspective, which doesn't look ideal, but unquestionably, when you read this letter, you can tell Frank really does love Jane.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: He's just a fucking idiot.

Molly: Yeah, he's just bad at it.

Becca: Yeah, he's really bad at being in love. This is something I talk about with Mike all the time because I'll be like, "Oh, you're so nice to me." And he's like, "Yeah, well, I love you." And I'm like, "Yeah, but people who are in love with each other can be shitty to each other."

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Yes. And Frank is ground zero for that.

Molly: He really is. So, now we get to the meat of the letter, Miss Woodhouse. He is humiliated. My behavior to Miss Woodhouse indicated more than it ought." Yes, it did.

Becca: No shit, sir.

Molly: He admits that he flirted to aid in the secrecy of his actual engagement, but he insists that he would not have done it if he had not been absolutely convinced of Emma's [00:36:00] indifference. He says that she gave him every indication that she would not become attached to him. She received his flirtations with a playful, joking manner, and they understood each other.

Becca: Did they though?

Molly: Well, this is what's interesting to me. All of that time that Emma was like, "We're just vibing." He also was like, "We're just vibing." And I think they do understand each other more than even they knew.

Becca: Well, yes, Emma will go into this, but Emma is not great at knowing herself much like our dear heroine, Lizzie Bennet.

Molly: Sure.

Becca: So, if this engagement had been revealed right after Frank's first trip to Highbury, what would that have done to Emma? We don't know, because at the time, Emma was like, "Oh, yeah, I'm in love with Frank. Isn't it funny that I'm in love with Frank?"

Molly: Oh, yeah.

Becca: She's like, "She's faking love." So, there is the possibility that she would have found out, been embarrassed, and been like, "You know what though? I actually wasn't in love with him."

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: [00:37:00] Which is, I think, what Frank is gambling on. There's also the possibility that Emma would not think that deeply about it and would just be fucking scorned.

Molly: Right. She would be hurt. Even now, everyone's assuming that she is scorned, so it's still bad.

Becca: We'll go into this in the study questions. You can interpret this letter a lot of different ways. You can interpret this as Frank earnestly understanding Emma more than she even understood herself at this point in time. I think that's a fair interpretation of this letter. Also, you can see the Monday morning quarterbacking from Frank Churchill here and basically being like, "How do I justify all this? How do I say all of this correctly? I have to be super debasing to myself and also be like, 'Oh, but I knew Emma Woodhouse didn't love me.'"

Molly: What is Monday morning quarterbacking?

Becca: Sorry, I just showed how straight I was for a second.

Molly: [laughs]

Becca: So, Sunday night football is when people watch football.

Molly: Except for in *Friday Night Lights*. [00:38:00]

Becca: Well, yeah, but Sunday is when the NFL-

Molly: Understood.

Becca: -airs a lot of games.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: So, football is a very strategic game. Quarterback does a lot of the strategy and basically directs the plays. When you Monday morning quarterback, it's like, "Oh, man, I should have made this play."

Molly: Oh, I see.

Becca: So, you're coaching from the back end.

Molly: I see.

Becca: So, basically, what Frank is doing is-- You could read this one of two ways. Either he is like a very astute human being who understands enough about the people around him that he knew he was not going to cause great harm, or he has been really shitty and he is really what Knightley called him at the first instance, a politician, and good at figuring out the right things to say to people. It's interesting because we actually don't know.

Molly: Yeah, I find it hard to believe that he's bad astute after [00:39:00] how he treated Jane.

Becca: It's hard to say one way or another. We'll get into this more. But Frank is a controversial figure, and I find him a very interesting figure. He's not precisely your Wickham or your Willoughby, but he's also not your Edward Ferrars or your Charles Bingley. He's something in between. He's a little gray as a character and I think he's interesting for those reasons. We'll come back to it because I want to finish up the letter, but I think that there's a lot to be gleaned from this letter, and there's a lot that's left up to the reader's interpretation of Frank Churchill.

Molly: Yeah. So, he mentions that when he said goodbye to Emma, he almost told her the truth, and he suspected that she already understood. He thinks that she often hinted at to. I don't know how much digging I want to do, but I don't know that the moments [00:40:00] like, there might be a lot more misunderstanding than we were picking up on. We're like, "Oh, Harriet and Emma are talking about different people when they're talking about being in love." I wonder if there are moments that sprinkled throughout. He says-- [crosstalk]

Becca: We're going to find one right now. Give me a minute.

Molly: One, he mentions is that, at the ball, she said that he owed Mrs. Elton for her attentions to Miss Fairfax, and he took that to mean that she understood that they were in love, but let's see.

Becca: So, this is when he says goodbye to Emma, the first time. He's saying goodbye to her, and she says, "And you must be off this very morning?" He says, "Yes, my father is to join me here we shall walk back together, and I must be off immediately. I am almost afraid

that every moment will bring him." And she says, "Not five minutes to spare even for your friends Miss Fairfax and Miss Bates? How unlucky! Miss Bates's powerful, argumentative mind might have strengthened yours." And he says, "Yes, [00:41:00] I have called there, passing the door, I thought it better. It was a right thing to do. I went in for three minutes, and was detained by Miss Bates being absent. She was out, and I felt it impossible not to wait till she came in. She is a woman that one may, that one must laugh at, but that one would not wish to slight. It was better to pay my visit, then"-- He hesitated, got up, walked to a window.

"In short," he said, "perhaps, Miss Woodhouse-- I think you can hardly be quite without suspicion"-- He looked at her, as if wanting to read her thoughts. She hardly knew what to say. It seemed like the forerunner of something absolutely serious, which she did not wish. Forcing herself to speak, therefore, in the hope of putting it by, she calmly said, "You are quite in the right, it was most natural to pay your visit, then"-- He was silent. She believed he was looking at her; probably reflecting on what she had said, and trying to understand the manner. She heard him sigh. It was natural for him to feel that he had cause to sigh. He could not believe her to be [00:42:00] encouraging him.

A few awkward moments passed, and he sat down again, and in a more determined manner said, "It was something to feel that all the rest of my time might be given to Hartfield. My regard for Hartfield is most warm"-- He stopt again, rose again, and seemed quite embarrassed. He was more in love with her than Emma had supposed; and who can say how it might have ended, if his father had not made his appearance? Now you read that back in context, you can see how Frank interpreted that to be Emma being a little in the know about him and Jane.

Molly: Mm-hmm. So, all those times that they were joking about Jane, he thought that she was poking fun at him.

Becca: You could interpret it that way.

Molly: So, he's not really that astute.

Becca: No, but there is something astute to knowing Emma was-

Molly: Discour-- yeah.

Becca: -maybe not that into him.

Molly: Yes, there is. Oh, [00:43:00] interesting.

Becca: Yeah, it goes again to Emma being a completely unreliable narrator.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Completely.

Molly: But also, had he told her the truth, then he thinks that she would have been like, "Yeah, cool." But I think she would have still been embarrassed and knowing at the time that she was still thinking like, "Do I love him? I don't think I love." She would have been embarrassed.

Becca: She would have been. Do we think Frank knows that though?

Molly: No.

Becca: That's what's interesting.

Molly: Yeah. Just goes to show that he couldn't have possibly been 100% sure she wasn't falling in love with him.

Becca: It just goes to show that Frank was careless and reckless with everyone, but was he, in his core, doing something shitty? It's hard to say. People feel very, very strongly about this in the Austen fandom.

Molly: In favor of him or against him?

Becca: Controversial.

Molly: It's like, "Oh, which Mr. Darcy is [00:44:00] your Darcy?"

Becca: Yeah, except it's much more centered around like, "Do we buy Frank Churchill as a character or is he just the villain of this book?" [crosstalk] I think it's an open question.

Molly: One they'll have to think on.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: So, he begs Mrs. Weston's forgiveness for his behavior towards Emma, "Whom I love with so much brotherly affection as to long to have her as deeply and as happily in love as myself."

Becca: Do you buy it?

Molly: I buy that he loves Emma as a friend.

Becca: Yeah, that's what he's saying.

Molly: Yeah, sure, I buy that.

Becca: Yeah. How do you think he'll feel when he finds issues with Knightley?

Molly: Probably thrilled.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Like, great. Yeah, but that doesn't make what he did any less bad.

Becca: That's what's complicated and cool about Frank as a character. He's very gray. He's a very controversial figure for a reason.

Molly: Well, anyway, the pianoforte, he sent it, which I think I said at some point, I was like-- [crosstalk]

Becca: You absolutely guessed.

Molly: I guessed because he left for [00:45:00] London and then the pianoforte appeared.

Becca: Yeah. And everyone thought he was leaving for a haircut, but he was actually leaving to get Jane a piano. Do you remember how pissed off Knightley was about him going to London for the haircut?

Molly: Yeah, he was like, "What the fuck? Our hairdressers aren't good enough?"

Becca: Richie rich boy.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: No, he was actually picking up a piano for Jane.

Molly: Yeah. He says that Jane never would have allowed him to send it if she knew, so he had to do it in secret. And then he pauses to say he got a letter from Jane, and she says she is well, but you know that she will never admit to being unwell, so he asked Mrs. Weston to go and check on her. He says he's so happy, but he's also so miserable because he knows

how much pain he's caused Jane. He wants to explain why everything was revealed so suddenly when his aunt died. He says, he wouldn't normally have done something so rash. He brings up the job that Jane took for Mrs. Elton, and then he's like, "Sorry, I have to take a lap." He walks around, comes back to his letter. He is mortified at having behaved so shamefully. [00:46:00] "My manners to Miss Woodhouse in being unpleasant to Miss Fairfax were highly blamable."

Becca: Box Hill Gate for Frank.

Molly: Mm-hmm. He says that Jane was upset with him for his behavior. She didn't think that he was really just trying to hide the truth, and he thought that she was being over cautious. He thought often she was too cautious and too cold to him, and he was just being cautious in return, but he's like, "She was always right. I know I should have listened to her. She's smart. I'm dumb." So, they fight about it, his flirting. When he ran into her leaving Donwell, and he wanted to walk with her, she says, "No, you can't walk with me. People will see." And at the time, he thought it was unreasonable, but now he sees it's consistent with her previous levels of discretion.

Becca: This whole interaction is also very revealing, because it tells you a little bit about the other reasons Frank might have been flirting with Emma.

Molly: Because he was angry? [00:47:00]

Becca: You get the sense of Frank as this very outgoing guy who loves people, and he's got the love of his life standing right there, and she's like, "You absolutely cannot show me an ounce of affection."

Molly: Oh, he's horny.

Becca: And also hurt.

Molly: Oh, yeah.

Becca: And an idiot.

Molly: Yeah, he's big dumb.

Becca: A fucking idiot.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: But you get the sense that in this moment, he's starved for attention and love and feeling like, he's not getting it from where he really wants it, so he's seeking it in other places, which is shitty behavior.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: In fact, driving his true love farther away from him, but you get the sense of him being Mr. Weston's son and liking social interaction, and that going a step farther to him really genuinely being hurt that Jane won't interact with him properly in Highbury and taking that out on her by flirting with Emma.

Molly: Right.

Becca: Shitty behavior.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Understandable, but shitty behavior.

Molly: Right. She's saying, "Why are [00:48:00] you doing that?" And he's like, "Well, I'm just being as cautious as you are. I'm trying to hide our relationship." And she's like, "Fuck you, dude."

Becca: Now you're seeing, like, it's coming out a little in the letter as it's written. You can see Frank's feelings this entire time.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: So, maybe this is a controversial take. I love Frank Churchill, not because I think he's a good person, but I think he's a fun character to dissect.

Molly: Sure.

Becca: I think he's interesting, because he is very formed by a combination of utter privilege and complete constraint. I think he is formed by a combination of real passionate love and complete selfishness.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: So, you see, these things interact together in his interactions with Jane, with Emma, with the town of Highbury. He's engaging and charming, and so no one questions it. But if you look at it firmly, like you're, Mr. Knightley, you're like, "Wait a minute, this is not great behavior." If you take an even further step into his [00:49:00] psyche, you can at least get it, because he's going through it.

Molly: Right.

Becca: The combination makes for a character that I would not say is a character worth rooting for, necessarily. Certainly, one who I think Knightley's correct gets a lot more happiness than he deserves in the end, but one that certainly gives us a lot to chew on. And that's why I like Frank as a character. I think he's not a great dude, but he's also someone who definitely makes this book significantly more interesting.

Molly: Totally.

Becca: So, yeah, that's my take on Frank Churchill. Definitely doesn't deserve Jane Fairfax.

Molly: No.

Becca: But certainly, it gives us a lot to talk about in this book.

Molly: Yeah. It's interesting at this point, he's going back and talking about Donwell and Box Hill, and to think back on those times and his behavior, like, when he got to Donwell, he was angry.

Becca: He was angry because he was hurt. Jane was leaving before he got there. He was upset. He needed a little snacky snack [00:50:00] because he's a baby.

Molly: Yeah. He only comes to Hartfield to Highbury in general to hang out with her.

Becca: She doesn't want to hang out with him because she's like, "We can't."

Molly: Because she entered into a secret engagement that he asked for.

Becca: Exactly. They're constrained because Mrs. Churchill will disinherit Frank.

Molly: Right. She cares about him, obviously. She loves him, so she doesn't want him to be disinherited.

Becca: Also, they'd be destitute.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Not destitute, because they do have Mr. Weston's inheritance. But this, once again, goes to The Economics of Dating in Jane Austen. They're constrained by their circumstances, but Frank is a romantic. He doesn't want to be constrained by his circumstances. He wants to be with Jane. Jane is practical, and she says, "No, we entered into this engagement secretly because we have these constraints on us." And Frank says, "Well, fuck you. I don't want to have constraints. I am in love with you. I want to be with you all the time."

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: So, he's lashing out at her through Emma.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Interesting stuff.

Molly: Very interesting stuff. So, the next day, after Donwell, he says [00:51:00] he doubted her affection. He started to think that she didn't love him anymore when "Provoked by such conduction on my side, such shameful, insolent neglect of her, and such apparent devotion to Miss Woodhouse as it would have been impossible for any woman of sense to endure, she spoke her resentment in a form of words perfectly intelligible to me. When she yells at him at Box Hill, the scene that we went back and read-

Becca: Yes, we did.

Molly: -he was like, "You don't love me anymore." But now he understands.

Becca: He's like, "Wait a minute. No, of course, she was pissed at me. I was awful."

Molly: Yeah, I was being a dick.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: So, he was so angry, he left immediately for Richmond, even though he didn't need to, so he could brood and be as angry as possible. But he notes that he never was foolish enough to intend not to make up with her. He never thought that they were breaking up.

Becca: Yeah, that's the undercurrent of this entire thing. The truth is that as shitty as Frank is, he does truly, with all his heart, love Jane, and he will do anything not to lose her, as we see in this moment.

Molly: Yeah. [00:52:00] Apparently, as soon as Jane found out he left, she takes the offer from Mrs. Elton. So, I'm assuming, first of all, he knew about the offer, but he thought they both were like, "Well, that's not happening." He knew that Mrs. Elton offered that job.

Becca: He knew that Mrs. Elton was pushing for this, and this is why he despised Mrs. Elton.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Because we've talked about Augusta. She has not made an appearance in the podcast for a while, but the way she talks to Jane pisses Frank off as someone who loves Jane.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Because for her, she's like, "Oh, you poor little thing. Mm, let me take care of you poor little poor thing."

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Like, "Mm, what if I made you the servant to my friends and then we could hang out together? But of course, you'd be a step down from me because you'd be the help. But that would be so fun, because you're so poor. But you're cute as a button." Frank sees who Jane is and [00:53:00] knows her stature and thinks this is just completely disrespectful to her, and classist fuck. Because this new money Augusta bullshit is just like-- Augusta's done a terrible read on the situation and Frank realizes this. Basically, the reason he doesn't like her calling her Jane is because he sees the truth of Mrs. Elton looking down on Jane and using her to feel like she's being charitable.

Molly: Yeah. He says he doesn't even call her Jane.

Becca: Yeah. So, I personally, as someone who obviously despises Augusta, love this bit where Frank is like, "That fucker. The way she treated my Miss Fairfax, fuck her, fuck her husband, fuck her everything, fuck what's its face, the fucking Sucklings," and whatever.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: It's great.

Molly: Yeah. He goes on a little mini Mrs. [00:54:00] Elton rant. He says that after Jane took the job, she wrote to him. He doesn't know that she's taken the job at this point. She writes to him telling him that she never wants to see him again and she wants to dissolve their engagement. He receives this letter on the morning of his aunt's death. So, everything's a little chaotic. He immediately writes her back being like, "No, don't worry. My aunt's dead. We're going to work it out." But in the Hubhub, he accidentally puts the letter in his desk, and it gets locked away, and doesn't get sent out with the other mail. I can understand that. When you're grieving-- Not that he's grieving his aunt necessarily, but there's a lot. All of a sudden, he's planning a funeral. He's doing everything. He's busy.

Becca: Mm-hmm.

Molly: He doesn't hear from Jane for a few days, but he's too busy. He's also feeling honestly pretty happy about his aunt's death because he's like, "There's hope."

Becca: He's like, "I can marry Jane now."

Molly: Yeah. So, he's like, "Okay, everything's fine." He's feeling good. But then he gets a parcel from Jane with all his letters to her returned, and a letter saying that she was [00:55:00] surprised he didn't say anything to her last message, and she's like just, "Send back my letters. If you can't get them to me in the next week--"

Molly and Becca: "Send them to--"

Becca: Mr. Smallridge's address.

Molly: Yes. And he's like, "What? You did what now?" And that's how he learns that she took the job.

Becca: And then he's in damage control mode.

Molly: Yeah. He's like, "Fuck." He immediately goes to his uncle and tells him everything. First of all, he realizes that he never sent the letter and he's like, "Shit, I'm a big dumb idiot."

Becca: As shitty as this is, I'm like, "I can relate to this because I have often forgotten to send a very important text," because I'm just like, "I didn't think too or I've drafted it and it's not been actually sent."

Molly: Yeah. Or an email that's just sitting in your drafts and you're like, "I swear I sent this," but you just didn't.

Becca: Yeah, that shit gives me so much anxiety.

Molly: Yes. But he can't even think about that. He goes to his uncle and he's like, "I have to marry this girl." And his uncle, "Wishes I might find as much happiness in the marriage state as he had done." His uncle's all soft, all of a sudden.

Becca: [00:56:00] Well, his uncle was never the problem. It was really his aunt.

Molly: Yes, his uncle was always a softie. He just was soft enough to get walked all over.

Becca: Because if you recall, Mrs. Churchill, not very rich.

Molly: Right.

Becca: So, Frank is doing exactly what Mr. Churchill did.

Molly: So true. So true. He then writes that if Mrs. Weston will pity him, it should be for when he arrives to Highbury and sees how sick Jane is and how sick he's made her, because that was devastating for him. But now they're made-up and they're happier than ever, and he says, "If you think me in a way to be happier than I deserve, I am quite of your opinion." And I agree with that. Where is he now, by the way? He's at his-- [crosstalk]

Becca: I think he's in Yorkshire with his uncle.

Molly: His uncle. Okay.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Which brings us to Chapter 15 or 51. Listeners, thank you for sticking with us.

Becca: This is a long episode.

Molly: But these chapters go so well together. We just have to.

Becca: Yeah, absolutely.

Molly: So, Emma finishes reading the letter and it does return some of her former regard for Frank. Plus, being in love herself, she is a big softie right now and any picture of [00:57:00] love has a strong attraction for her. However, she does still feel like he had been wrong, just less wrong than before, and she's like, "Well, he's sorry and he's in love and I'm in love. So, it's fine. It's good." She's convinced. I'm not necessarily convinced, but I see where she's coming from and being convinced. She is so pleased with the letter that she brings it to Knightley and she's like, "You must read this." And he's like, "It looks a little long. Can I take it home with me and read it tonight?" And Emma's like, "No, I have to give it back to Mr. Weston." So, he says, "Fine, but I'd rather be talking to you," which is cute.

Becca: It's very cute. I also love this part, because first of all, the vibes of a couple gossiping together, it's so specific.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Do you know what I mean?

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: The two of them are like, now that this drama no longer involves them and they're just happy in their own world, Knightley is just sassing to Emma about the whole letter.

Molly: Yes. So, this chapter, listeners, is a rehashing of the letter that we just described, but through Knightley's [00:58:00] perspective, because he starts reading and he's like, "I have to talk out loud while I'm reading it just so I'm going to comment on everything." He says that it makes him feel like he's near her, which is sweet.

Becca: I love that. The moment Knightley went from grumpy old Mr. Knightley never getting married to like, "Oh, I just want to be near you and talk out loud, so I know I'm still talking to you." He's such a fucking sap. He's literally Luke Danes and she is literally Lorelai Gilmore.

Molly: They really are.

Becca: It's so on point. It's creepy.

Molly: Oh. So, he's reading out loud. He says that it's a very complimentary, simpering opening, whatever. Some of his comments are hilarious. He is reading, he says, "It's true that Frank didn't come to Highbury until Jane came to Highbury." And Emma says, "I have not forgotten how sure you were that he might have come sooner if he would. You pass over it very handsomely, but you were perfectly right." I thought this was cute because she used to [00:59:00] hate when Knightley was right, and now she's trying to remind him when he was right.

Becca: I know.

Molly: He says, he wasn't impartial when he said that initially, but he probably still would have distrusted Frank even if he hadn't been in love with Emma. He gets the whole Emma section, and he reads it all out loud, concluding by saying that Frank was playing a dangerous game, and he is just incredulous that he thought Emma knew his secret, because how could she? He says, "Mystery, finesse, how they prevent the understanding? My Emma, does not everything serve to prove more and more the beauty of truth and sincerity in all our dealings with each other?" And Emma's like, "Uh- huh. Yeah, totally." But then she's thinking about how Harriet's in love with him and how she's keeping that a secret from him.

Becca: Which is a good move on her part.

Molly: It is a good move on her part. But she's also thinking how they're being secretive and not telling Harriet. She just feels guilty, but there's not really much else to be done at this point. He keeps reading, and he gets to the pianoforte part, and he is [01:00:00] shocked that a man would get a woman a gift that he knows that she would rather not have.

Becca: I agree with this.

Molly: Yeah. She lives in a tiny apartment.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: She does not need a pianoforte. Why did you do that?

Becca: Well, she loves to play music. He just wants her life to be grander than it is.

Molly: He loves her so much.

Becca: He does.

Molly: I hate him and I love him at the same time.

Becca: Frank is an interesting character. He's a man of many layers.

Molly: He's an ogre.

Becca: He's an ogre. They have onions.

Molly: [laughs] Yeah.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: So, when he gets to Frank saying that his own behavior was shameful, he says, "I perfectly agree with you, sir," which I think was funny.

[laughter]

Molly: He gets to the part about Frank's relationship with Jane and the secret engagement, and Emma knows that they're getting close to Box Hill, and so she starts getting nervous because that's a sore subject for the two of them.

Becca: Box Hill Gate. Yeah.

Molly: Box Hill Gate. But he skims right over it and doesn't comment on it, because he loves her now. They go on **[01:01:00]** and he finds out that Jane is dissolving the engagement, and he reads about forwarding the mail to Mr. Smallridge and he's like, "What's this?"

Becca: [laughs]

Molly: I didn't realize that he didn't know about that whole thing, like, Jane taking the job and stuff.

Becca: Yeah, because he went to London and he was moping in John and Isabella's place, which, by the way, we didn't talk about this, but how fucking funny is that image of just Knightley being at John and Isabella's. The perfect combination of him just like sulking in the corner around his nieces and nephews.

Molly: They're running around and pulling out his ears and stuff.

Becca: John and Isabella are like the two worst people to be around if you're upset, because Isabella is one of those people who would amp up anxiety a lot, because she'd get right in there with you and just get more stressed than you, then you end up consoling her. And John Knightley would be like, "Why? Get it together." [laughs]

Molly: Yeah, he'll hand you a box of tissues and be like, "I don't know what else you need."

Becca: He's like, "I've done this."

Molly: **[01:02:00]** Yeah.

Becca: "You're welcome." Walks away.

Molly: [laughs] Yeah. Emma tells him everything about that and he keeps reading. He is impressed with how much Frank suffers and how much he loves Jane. And then he agrees that Frank is, in fact, happier than he deserves. Frank, in the end of the letter, had said, "Miss Woodhouse calls me a child of good fortune." And he goes, "Child of good fortune? Was that your name for him?" I think it's cute having a little bit of his jealousy popping out.

Becca: Oh, yeah.

Molly: Emma says that she hopes that he thinks better of Frank now than he did before. And Knightley says, "Meh--" I hope that being with Jane will improve him because Jane's good.

Becca: Oh, yeah.

Molly: He says that he can't think about Frank Churchill anymore because he's preoccupied thinking about something else. So, they put the letter aside and he asks how he can ask to marry her without hurting her father.

Becca: This part is *Dream Boat* behavior.

Molly: *Dream Boat* behavior. Emma tells him they can't get married while her father is alive because she can't leave him. He agrees that she can't leave him, but he doesn't agree that they can't get married. [01:03:00] He says he thought of asking Mr. Woodhouse to move to Donwell with them, but he knows that Mr. Woodhouse could never leave Hartfield. His next idea was that he will come to live at Hartfield, "That is, so long as her father's happiness, in other words, his life required Hartfield to continue her home. It should be his, likewise." And Emma's like, "I didn't think of that."

Becca: Mr. Knightley is a feminist icon.

Molly: He really is. He's like, "You don't have to leave your house. I'll leave mine."

Becca: He's like, "No, I will change my life for you."

Molly: For you. She knows that he would be giving up a lot of his independence, and he'd have to constantly put up with her father. It's just a lot. So, she's like, "Think on it a little longer." And he's like, "No, I've decided." And she's like, "Well, what about William Larkins? You have to get his permission." But she's basically decided at this point as well, even though she says she's going to think on like this would be the dream, actually. In all of this, she thinks to herself that it's interesting that she's never considered little [01:04:00] Henry in her thoughts about Donwell, because she's also considered like, "Oh, do I have to go to Donwell?" Whatever. She realizes that she never actually cared whether little Henry inherited Donwell.

"She only gave herself a saucy conscious smile about it and found amusement in detecting the real cause of that violent dislike of Mr. Knightley's marrying Jane Fairfax, or anybody else, which at the time she had wholly imputed to the amiable solicitude of the sister and the aunt." All of those times, she was talking about Henry, I was like, "You don't actually care about Henry."

Becca: No, it's all about Knightley.

Molly: It's all about Knightley. She never wanted him to get married because she wanted to marry him-

Becca: Exactly.

Molly: -and she finally understands that. The more she thinks about him coming to live at Hartfield, the more it appeals to her. She's like, "I'm going to have a companion, a partner." The only downer is that Harriet won't be able to be a part of the future that she is currently imagining for herself. She knows that eventually Harriet will forget about Knightley, but unlike Elton, Knightley's not going to be doing anything terrible to make himself less lovable to her, but I have to read this quote, which will actually bring [01:05:00] us to our funniest quote. Though I have a couple options, but this one was potentially going to take the cake. "Mr. Knightley, always so kind, so feeling, so truly considerate for everybody, would never deserve to be less worshipped than now; and it really was too much to hope even of Harriet, that she could be in love with more than three men in one year."

Becca: Oh, poor Harriet.

Molly: Poor Harriet.

Becca: Currently taking a lot of L's.

Molly: She just keeps falling in love and then unfalling in love again.

Becca: Yeah, she just keeps getting rejected.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: All right, so that brings us to Becca's study questions. I'm going to rapid fire through these because this is actually a long episode.

Molly: It sure is.

Becca: So, let's just go for it. Do you buy Frank's redemption? We talked about this a little bit.

Molly: Yeah. I buy why Emma is forgiving him, or at least thinking better of him than she did. I think it's a little bit deus ex machina.

Becca: Do you think he is actually sorry though?

Molly: I do think he's sorry. I do think he's sorry. I don't think [01:06:00] that makes it better, but I'll be impressed when he and Jane have been together for 20 years, and are doing great, and he's doing charitable acts, and I don't know.

Becca: Sorry, I think you could read it that he's not that sorry.

Molly: Really?

Becca: Knightley said it himself, "Frank is a politician."

Molly: Sure. Yeah. I guess, there's--

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: There's room to question it. I think he is sorry. I think he's sincere and I think he will improve, honestly, as a character.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: But I also think one could read it as Frank is just incredibly manipulative.

Molly: Yeah, I think that Knightley would be one to think that, but I prefer to read Frank as a bumbling dumb-dumb who made a bunch of stupid mistakes and acted like an asshole. He is kind of an asshole but doesn't realize that he's stomping all over everyone's hearts and is sorry about that. But [01:07:00] also, Frank is the epitome of doing bad things, apologizing for them, and then thinking that just makes it go away like he doesn't have to examine that behavior that caused him to do that.

Becca: Precisely.

Molly: So, I don't know how manipulative I think he is, but I think he's really just mean.

Becca: You think he's just selfish and privileged?

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Yeah, I think that's a fair reading too. All right. Do you think he's more Churchill or Weston? We've had this conversation a lot.

Molly: He brings up a lot in the letter that he's like Mr. Weston in his constant optimism and his social bones, I guess.

Becca: Social bones?

Molly: I don't know. He loves a party.

Becca: Social bones.

Molly: He loves a part. Well, he seems like maybe he's more like his father, Churchill wise, like, a hopeless romantic [01:08:00] who is also kind of a sponge for whatever is around him. There's more Weston in him than Churchill. I don't think that he's evil.

Becca: He's definitely not class obsessed the way his aunt is.

Molly: Right. Because he's in love with Jane.

Becca: Yes. I think there are two wolves inside each of us, as we've all learned. He's just both.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: I think you're completely right. I think that there is a sense of optimism, chattiness, and desperation for connection, and human interaction that Mr. Weston has, and that Frank has. I think they're both romantics in a big way, hugely.

Molly: Romantics to a fault.

Becca: Yeah, to a fault. And I think they're both optimistic to a fault. I think he's also spoiled privileged in a way his father isn't, because I think [01:09:00] the not coming to visit his father in Highbury until Jane was there, that speaks to a selfishness.

Molly: Yeah, that's not-- He says that Mrs. Weston is just going to forgive him automatically because he knows her, and he knows he needs to work more on getting his father's forgiveness. But that's really not cool.

Becca: No. I think Frank's got a lot of good qualities, I think he's got a lot of bad qualities. You can assign them to Churchill or Weston, as it goes, but I think it's clear that he is someone by nature born to this kind, bumbling, extroverted man, but he is also, by nurture, raised by people who demanded that he desire a certain lifestyle for himself. So, he's a both. He's a both.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: All right, enough about Frank. Let's go to Knightley.

Molly: Yay.

Becca: I'm going to give you a moment to just luxuriate [01:10:00] the *Dream Boat* that is Knightley in these chapters.

Molly: I wept. I weep. He's so hot.

Becca: We just have to post that photo I took of this text you sent me your face.

Molly: Yeah, we'll post the reaction. I think that was the most perfect way of him revealing his feelings to her that there could have been the several pages leading up to it of misunderstanding each other was delicious.

Becca: How does he compare to Austen's other heartthrobs?

Molly: Ooh.

Becca: We have a couple now.

Molly: We do. Something they all have in common is an initial inability to express themselves. But he has this determination, I think, this complete-- He's going to love her no matter what she says. As he [01:11:00] said, "Dearest, you will always be, no matter how this afternoon plays out."

Becca: Yeah. I also think of all of our heroes, our heartthrobs in Jane Austen, he is the least vulnerable for most of the book. He doesn't have to raise any conflict within himself or towards the woman he's in love with until the very end. It's all pent up the entire time. Darcy clearly has a confrontation with Lizzie halfway through the book. Bingley has to release the love of his life and get all depressed about it. Edward, disaster. Compost.

Molly: Oh, compost.

Becca: Brandon, obviously, a deeply tragic figure in so many ways. Knightley just gets to skate by and not examine himself until the very end. In that moment when we are let into what he's been going through internally and not externally, it's all the more satisfying.

Molly: Yeah. It's like this big release. [01:12:00] Also, he's the first love interest that we're not introduced to in the course of the book.

Becca: He's just there already.

Molly: He's in the first scene.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: They're already bickering best friends. He doesn't have to prove himself to her. She doesn't have to get to know him because she's known him her entire life.

Becca: They have been falling in love well before this book started.

Molly: Yeah. [giggles] Oh, my God, it was so good.

Becca: Which, speaking of, what's the love story being told here?

Molly: Best friends.

Becca: Friends to lovers' trope. Done perfectly.

Molly: The original friends to lovers' trope.

Becca: Is it the original friends to lovers' trope?

Molly: I don't know.

Becca: It's an iconic one, for sure.

Molly: Yeah, Shakespeare might have done something first, but--

Becca: Yeah. Just seriously, a romance built off of a strong foundation of trust and honesty.

Molly: And truth.

Becca: Trust and honesty and truth.

Molly: Yeah. He said all along, he has been telling her the truth about herself [01:13:00] and berating her for stuff and bickering with her and being like, "You can better." She bore it all because she trusts him completely.

Becca: There's trust, there's candor, there's familiarity in this. It's no less passionate than any of our other love stories so far.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Great shit. And this is one of those moments where you compare it to *Pride and Prejudice*, which is enemies to lovers, one of the most iconic ones. I think sometimes people underrate Emma and Knightley compared to Lizzie and Darcy, because enemies to lovers, it

draws you in. But there's something to the fact that Knightley and Emma have always known each other and it's always been there that is so powerful in this story.

Molly: Yeah, friends to lovers.

Becca: It's so good.

Molly: Friends to lovers-- [crosstalk]

Becca: I told you that we can do a good friends to lovers. Elinor and Brandon were not that. Knightley and Emma.

Molly: Oh, yeah, I forgot I was really rooting for Elinor and Brandon at that time.

Becca: Love.

Molly: [laughs] Yeah, Knightley and Emma, friends to lovers.

Becca: [01:14:00] Different kettle of fish.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: All right, last question before we go to the standbys. Significance of the Hartfield move?

Molly: Well, it's unlike anything we've seen before. Usually, when people get married in this time, the woman gives up her entire life to go be with the man. Emma has always said she's not going to do. She's always planned on staying with her father until the very end. Knightley knows that, respects that. Never thought to ask her to leave Hartfield. He was like, "I'll come to you." That's-

Becca: Hot.

Molly: -hot, *Dream Boat* behavior.

Becca: Yeah, it's serious *Dream Boat* behavior, but I also want to say, revolutionary in the time, we've talked about the fact that obviously Emma has the privilege to not marry, but now that she is marrying, she is getting to marry on her own terms. This is almost like a dream for Austen. It has relevance to today, I even want to say, because there are a lot of people out there who will really lose themselves [01:15:00] in love.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: It's really hard, especially when you're a woman to hold on to everything about your life and not get subsumed. If you're a straight woman by a man, and Emma is answer to that 200 years ago of saying, "No, if you stick to your guns and find the person who is right for you, you don't actually have to compromise your life."

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: That's almost impossible in Emma's time period and is to this day, still something difficult to do.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: But Jane Austen in this moment, she's really saying, "No, women can do this. Women can find a man who will cater to their old father."

Molly: Yeah. What's special about it is that it's not one sided. He is not following her around [01:16:00] being like, "I'll do anything for you."

Becca: No, this is a partnership.

Molly: It's a partnership, and that's what she thinks to herself. She's like, "I'm going to have a partner in taking care of my dad as he gets older."

Becca: Yeah. Really quick side note. We haven't really talked about the age difference between Emma and Knightley, which is significant.

Molly: How old is Knightley?

Becca: He's in his 30s.

Molly: But she's 21?

Becca: 21, 22. Yeah.

Molly: 22? Mm-hmm. Yeah, we haven't really talked about it.

Becca: I would say generally, obviously, age differences obviously change a power dynamic. There are ways in which Knightley is dominant over Emma in terms of intellect, having known her for a very long time.

Molly: Taking care of her as a baby.

Becca: Yeah, very awkward stuff there, but we're going to sidestep that because it's hot, anyway.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: I think because this scene is a really good indication of-- The reason I don't concern myself so much with the power dynamics in this relationship, because Knightley does, again, seed power to Emma. When we're talking about age dynamics and age differences between in a couple, I think that's really [01:17:00] what we're talking about. I think we're talking about imbalances of power, especially when it comes to men and women because of the patriarchy.

Molly: Right.

Becca: I think that this is a good scene to show that even though there is an age difference between them, they are entering this partnership as equals, and that is so important. Again, Emma only gets that because she's super rich.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Just going to say.

Molly: So true.

Becca: Funniest quote?

Molly: All right. So, the one that I read is one of them, but I have a couple, mostly all Knightley. So, he's reading the letter and he says, "He trifles here, as to the temptation He knows he is wrong, and has nothing rational to urge. Bad." [laughs] And then another one is Emma says, "Keep reading. You will find how very much he suffers." And he goes, "I hope he does." [laughs]

Becca: Oh, great stuff. Questions moving forward.

Molly: At this point, a lot of things have been resolved, so I think the main thing outstanding is Harriet and what's going to happen [01:18:00] in their friendship. How is this going to be revealed to Harriet? Because eventually, it has to. I think it's good that Emma didn't tell Knightley that Harriet's in love with him because I think that would just embarrass Harriet.

Becca: Yeah, it'd be a dick move to tell.

Molly: It also is a little bit like, "Mm, I wish he knew everything because I feel like it still makes it something that she's doing against her friend." But of course, she's going to do it. She's been in love with Knightley her whole life.

Becca: Yeah. Harriet's crush is not going to get in the way of this epic love story.

Molly: Right. There's still just a little remaining ick, but of course, it's not going to. But I just wish I want them to talk about it.

Becca: It's an icky feeling.

Molly: Yeah. I want to know what's going to happen in their friendship.

Becca: Who wins the chapters?

Molly: Knighthouse.

Becca: Knighthouse.

Molly: Knighthouse.

Becca: Yesm, it's canon.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Oh, all right. Listeners, that concludes this episode of Pod and Prejudice. For **[01:19:00]** next time, we're going to read Chapters 16 and 17, if you're in a Vomed book. Or, if you're not, Chapters 52 and 53. Molly, how are you feeling?

Molly: I cannot wait to finish this book. We're so close.

Becca: We are. So, until next time, stay proper.

Molly: And-- [crosstalk]

Becca: If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more.

Molly: Yeah, talk about it more.

[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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