

Molly: Pod and Prejudice is going live again, this time at The Ripped Bodice in Brooklyn, New York. This is going to be part of a festival celebrating fanfic, fandom and forbidden pleasure, a romance festival being put on by fishmarket theater company. Some genres are relegated to “non-literary status, living as guilty pleasures, frivolous and derivative.” And of course, across the board, most of these his works are written by women. So, this year, we are shamelessly toasting lady literature, fan fiction, smut and everything in between, with play, readings, podcast shows and a bunch of other surprises. So, join us March 7th to 10th for all sorts of fun things, and you can head on over to romfest2024.my.canva.site to see everything that's happening that weekend and buy tickets to all of the events, as well as our live show.

[00:01:00] Plus, we heard you, a lot of you asked for the show to be livestreamed and we are going to be livestreaming the show for \$12. So, head on over to the link in our show notes and get those tickets, either live stream or in person. But if you're going to come in person, get your tickets early because we only have a limited number of seats. And we can't wait to see you there.

And now, enjoy this week's episode covering the first 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 Jane Austen.

Molly: We are here specifically to talk about--

Molly and Becca: *Emma*.

Molly: 1996, starring Kate Beckinsale, the second movie to come out in 1996 based on this book.

Becca: Yes, and a film in quotation marks here. Listeners, if you're new here, I, Becca, have read many Jane Austen novels over the course of my life and watched many adaptations.

Molly: And I, Molly, am doing that **[00:02:00]** 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 *Emma* 1996. We are joined today—

Vanessa: *Emma* 1996, Kate Beckinsale.

Molly: [crosstalk] Kate Beckinsale. Sorry.

Vanessa: Not Gwen.

Becca: Not Gwen.

Molly: Not Gwyneth. And we are also not joined by Kate Beckinsale. We are joined by Vanessa Zoltan from Not Sorry Productions, from Hot & Bothered, from Harry Potter and the Sacred Text. Hello. Welcome.

Vanessa: Thank you so much for having me back, guys. I love chatting with you all.

Molly: We're so excited to have you back-

Becca: Yes.

Molly: -to talk about this made for TV movie.

Vanessa: I'm sorry that I jumped in even before I was introduced. But it's just wild. To me, the 1990s were so Jane Austen film adaptation obsessed. It is fascinating that there were two *Emma* adaptations in 1996. It's really interesting.

Becca: And if you even reach like a year or two before or after, I don't **[00:03:00]** remember exactly when, but *Clueless* is also an *Emma* adaptation-

Vanessa: Yes.

Becca: -and it's the same time period. It's a renaissance. It's also on the heels of Emma Thompson's *Sense and Sensibility*, Colin Firth *Pride and Prejudice*. This was the era where everyone was like, “We just want to watch Jane Austen come to life either on the BBC or on our movie screens in cinema. [laughs]

Vanessa: And Andrew Davies is doing a lot of God's work here.

Molly: Yeah, he's doing the most. I think it's interesting that *Clueless* came out before these. It came out in 1995, right, the year of me being born. [giggles] That's how I remember that. And I think of this movie and the Gwyneth Paltrow movie as being like older films, but they

are riding on the coattails of *Clueless*. Like, they are trying to catch whatever *Clueless* captured so well. And in my opinion, not doing a great [00:04:00] job of it.

Becca: Well, before we get into the movie, I will just say really quickly. I actually remember the marketing campaign around the Gwyneth Paltrow movie being, "If you liked *Clueless*, you'll love *Emma*." And so, they were really trying to gun for that *Clueless* audience and be like, "Look, it's *Clueless*, but with empire waist dresses.

Molly: Wait, before we go any further, I haven't talked about this on the podcast yet, because it was a secret at the time and it's not now because it is opening in London. But KT Tunstall has written the music for *Clueless*, The Musical by Amy Heckerling. Like, Amy Heckerling wrote the book. And I was at Girls Just Wanna Weekend, where I got my three-week-long COVID. And KT Tunstall gets up on the stage and she's like, "So, I've written a musical, and do you all want to hear the song *Clueless* from *Clueless*?" And it was my birthday. I lost my mind.

Vanessa: Can't believe she wrote you that for your birthday.

Molly: I know. I was like, "This is a personal [00:05:00] gift for me."

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: And it is amazing. I need to get to London to see it, but I really do believe that it's going to come to Broadway, so I feel hopeful. But yeah, I just had to talk about that. It's going to be amazing.

Becca: Yeah.

Vanessa: Wild that it's opening in English.

Molly: Yes. Well, I think--

Becca: [laughs] True.

Molly: I think, because KT Tunstall is Scottish.

Vanessa: Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, no, no, it's just always so funny what British things open here in America. It's just interesting.

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: I'm from Los Angeles, so I obviously think it should open in the San Fernando Valley where I'm from.

Molly: Yes.

Vanessa: It is important to me to say that *Clueless* did come out the same year as the Colin Firth BBC adaptation. And so, there is this juggernaut year, and in a very typical 1990s fashion, where two studios either get the same idea or steal the same idea from each other. It's like, the famous one being *Armageddon* and *Deep Impact*, where two [00:06:00] movies by different studios come out at the same time. This is obviously not two movies, the same movies, but it's just fascinating how few ideas there were in the 1990s.

Becca: Absolutely. And I think there must have just been a real hunger in the air for this kind of content.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: And here we are all these years later still talking about this little golden era of Austen content creation.

Vanessa: It's interesting to think what must have been going on in feminism at the time that we wanted this, like, twee, intelligent, manic, pixie, dream girl. There's something interesting that's going on culturally that this is what we were craving. But God bless, and I'm so glad we all were, because I am still craving it 30 years later.

Becca: Exactly. Like, a few years of just lot of production of just what has been comfort watching for the last few decades for many, many people.

Vanessa: Yeah. Millions, I think it is safe to say.

Becca: Yeah.

Becca: So, Vanessa, let's take a little step back from Jane Austen for a second to talk about you. Why don't you [00:07:00] tell our listeners a little bit about your plethora of work in the podcasting community?

Vanessa: So, I am the cohost of three podcasts. One is called Harry Potter and the Sacred Text, where we treat the *Harry Potter* books as sacred. One is called The Real Question. I'm trained as an atheist chaplain, so I talk to people and do chaplaincy sessions on theme of whether or not they should quit things. But most relevantly in my baby is Hot & Bothered, where we talk about romance novels. And so, last season, we talked about *Pride and*

Prejudice in depth for a year and a half, and it was incredible. We are launching our new season, Valentine's Day, and that will be about romcoms. And we're spending the first 10 episodes closely analyzing the 2003 classic, *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*. [laughs]

Molly: Oh, my God.

Vanessa: And just learning about how films are constructed and what a wild movie that is.

Becca: It is a wild movie, one that I [00:08:00] profoundly enjoy watching no matter what every time.

Vanessa: It's like, you find it on TNT, and you can't help but watch the whole thing and yet feel like you need a shower after. It's really interesting.

Becca: That is precisely correct.

Vanessa: [laughs]

Becca: I cannot wait to listen to your coverage.

Becca: It's candy corn, right? Like, you can't help but keep eating it. And then afterwards, you're like, "Why does my stomach hurt?"

Becca: Because of Matthew McConaughey's behavior through the entire movie.

Vanessa: Yes.

Becca: [laughs] Anyway, going back to *Pride and Prejudice* and our girl, Jane Austen, we have our returning guest questions, and they have a little tweak this time.

Vanessa: Ooh.

Becca: So, first question is, what is your current relationship to Jane Austen? How is she feeling to you, like, today?

Vanessa: So, I have recently reread all six novels and *Lady Susan* in the last year and a half. So, she and I are really in the throes of a love affair. I am passionately feeling inadequate in the [00:09:00] face of her genius. I am 41 years, the age she was when she passed away and I am like, "Do you know what I didn't do? Reinvent the narrative voice."

Becca: [giggles]

Vanessa: I have not done that in my 41 years on earth. And the novels in conversation with each other really, just blow my mind. And yeah, I could go on and on about it forever. So, I would say that I'm in the worship phase of my relationship with Jane Austen. We're doing a *Northanger Abbey* pilgrimage. That is how obsessed I currently am. We are going to Bath in August to treat *Northanger Abbey* as sacred for a week, because man, I flipping love *Northanger Abbey*, man. It is like a me too novel. And Henry Tilney is definitely the best Austen hero. He is Lizzie Bennet in pants. It is such a good book, and I think it's underappreciated. Yeah, I'm deep in my reverence. So, you caught me at a great Austen [00:10:00] moment in my life.

Molly: Amazing.

Becca: Oh, this is so fantastic. First of all, holding yourself to the Austen standard by 41 years is quite whole for yourself. [laughs]

Vanessa: I don't. It's arrogant to even compare myself. Being her age, I remember feeling this at 38 years, when I was the age that Charlotte Brontë died, I was just like, "I feel young." I do. I feel like I have a lot of my life ahead of me and just thinking about these geniuses who we lost so young just sort of. It's weird. It's just weird to be that age.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: I'm so sorry. This is a side tangent, but I relate to this from the-- I've been on a new music kick, and I've always been a sad girl music kind of person.

Vanessa: Sure.

Becca: I've been getting back into my sad girl feelings and listening to a lot of sad girl music, but all the songs are like-- And I'm 22 years and I'm like, "You're a brilliant poet and you're 22." I feel so old because at this point in time, I'm like, "Yeah, I remember being 22 years and feeling things that intensely." And now I'm 30 years, [00:11:00] and I still feel things quite a bit, like, I'm still a young person and feel things.

Vanessa: Oh, we all have all these [crosstalk] that deeply.

Molly: Yeah. I peripherally watch *The Bachelor*, because my girlfriend watches *The Bachelor*, so I'll be in there watching while she watches. And everyone on the show is now younger than me and being like, "I must find my life partner now."

Becca: [laughs]

Molly: And everything is so intense, and I remember watching this as a kid and being like,

“These people are totally ready to get married.”

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: And now, I'm 29 years and I'm like, “What do you mean? You need to settle down and buy a house.”

Vanessa: Fascinating. The *Bachelor* is Jane Austen, right?

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: It's like they are washed-up Charlotte Lucas at 27 years.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: Yeah.

Vanessa: Like, it is the Austen age. It's like 19 years. Got to get shit going.

Molly: Right.

Vanessa: It's wild. I hadn't thought of that that the standards of Jane Austen's [00:12:00] period actually still apply on the set of *The Bachelor*.

Becca: Yes. Everything happens at a party, and it's all talking and a lot less physical interaction to get to know each other. It's a bit of a meat market in the way that a lot of these parties were in Jane Austen novels when it was like the season and people were looking for their partners.

Vanessa: Fascinating. Somebody has definitely written this article, and I just haven't read it.

Molly: 100%.

Becca: Yes. And listeners, give us your best bachelorette Jane Austen content. We want to see it.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Becca: So, to our second question, what is your current favorite piece of Jane Austen's work? I think you may have answered it, but please feel free to elaborate. It doesn't have to be one of her books, but it can be, obviously.

Vanessa: Yeah. Just because I've already talked about how much I love *Northanger*, I will put in a strong defense of *Mansfield Park*, which I just reread for the first time since I was 20 years. It is not my favorite Austen. It is my [00:13:00] least favorite Austen. [Becca laughs] But saying it's my least favorite Austen is being like, “This is my least favorite delicious chocolate cake.”

Molly: [laughs]

Vanessa: It's just still so good. I think people think of it as skippable. It's coming off of her writing *Pride and Prejudice*, where she has written like, someone who she says is the most delightful creature who she's ever met in Lizzie Bennet. And so, trying to take on writing Fanny Brice, this profoundly shy person, I just think is such an interesting writing challenge for herself, and then also trying to take on colonialism, and trust and power.

I hate Edmund, which I think is why *Mansfield Park* is actually so hard for me. I think it is the least happy ending of all of the happy endings. But I was shocked by how much I liked it. And so, I think because it is everyone's least favorite Austen, we don't [00:14:00] go back and reread it. But it's still better than anything else you'll read.

Becca: I totally agree. Without spoiling anything for Molly at this point on *Mansfield*, I think even if it's not her most enjoyable read, I think it is one of her more interesting reads to figure out where she's at and what she's thinking about. It brings in more than a lot of her other books in terms of like, what's going on in the UK at that time. So, in that ways, I read it for the first time, actually, that one in college, and it was in the context of talking about what was going on in Britain, and how did it feel to people who lived in Britain. From that perspective, it's a very interesting book.

Vanessa: Yeah, absolutely.

Molly: So, my girlfriend and I love to go do tasting menus.

Vanessa: Ooh.

Molly: And every time we do a tasting menu at the end of the menu, we will rank everything that we've eaten, and usually, it's all delicious. So, we start with the caveat that the worst of seven really delicious things was.

Vanessa: [00:15:00] Exactly.

Becca: Yeah.

Vanessa: That is *Mansfield*. I just really do love thinking about it as Austen setting a writing challenge for herself. And the other thing that's so great about *Mansfield Park* is that it's the

closest that Austen comes to being a character, because the narrative voice is so strong and really is a character in, because Fanny is so silent of a character. And so, you do feel like you're spending time with Jane Austen, although we shouldn't say that because obviously, it's always a narrative voice and she's so brilliant. But anyway, it's not my favorite but I want to put in a hard plug for *Mansfield Park*, everyone.

Becca: Incredible. I love that. So, our third question is, which Austen character would you want to be, either best friends and or enemies with?

Vanessa: Ah, okay. This is so hard. This is so hard. I just feel so basic. But I want to best friends with Elinor Dashwood. [00:16:00] She is just kind and responsible, and she can keep a secret, and she loves very deeply without being like a big hugger. I think she has so much integrity. and I also think she's 20-ish years. She is like a child when we meet her. And so, I would love to live my life alongside her and see who she turns into.

Becca: Yeah. To be Elinor Dashwood's support system would be an honor. [laughs]

Vanessa: She's so supportive, and I feel like I could be supportive of her. But yeah, my enemy, there's no one I hate more than Mrs. Elton. So, I'm excited that we're talking about *Emma* because I hate her so much. I hate her so much.

Becca: Queen Augusta. What I--? [crosstalk]

Molly: Specifically Miss Augusta.

Becca: Yeah.

Becca: I got to say, that is so fun. Because [00:17:00] the thing is like, in terms of villainy in Austen, Mrs. Elton, Augusta, if you will, is not most evil-

Vanessa: She's not a villain.

Becca: -character.

Vanessa: She doesn't do anything evil.

Molly: She's just annoying.

Vanessa: No evil machination.

Becca: [laughs]

Vanessa: She's just so profoundly obnoxious.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: It so is.

Vanessa: She's just so high on her own horse for no reason. Lady Catherine de Bourgh, you're like, "Okay." Like, you're obnoxious. Anyway, it's not even worth getting into. I just hate Augusta [Molly laughs] so much. And I think the reason that she's so insufferable is that she has Mr. Elton propping her up all the time. Whereas Lady Catherine-- Lady Catherine has Collins, obviously. But darcy condemns her. Like, other people are like, "Screw you, Lady Catherine." And you actually see people rebel against other villains in Austen.

Willoughby gets his just desserts to some extent. To some extent, he marries well. Wickham definitely gets his just desserts. But Mrs. Elton, nothing bad happens to her. [00:18:00] She's just annoying forever.

Becca: The only thing that happens that's bad to her is that she can't patronize Jane anymore or condescend to her, because Jane is above her by the end of the novel, which is very satisfying.

Molly: But you know, she's just going to find someone new to condescend to.

Vanessa: And nobody mocks her. I feel like I'm hearing your listeners yell at me being like, "But Collins doesn't get his just desserts." But we get to see Mr. Bennet laugh at Collins." There is no emotional ha-ha. There's no humiliation for Mrs. Elton, and it drives me crazy.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: All right. Our final question, and you may have answered this one already as well is-

Vanessa: Sorry.

Molly: -what is your hottest-- No, you can give us another. What is your hottest Austen take?

Vanessa: Oh, God, I just don't feel like there are a ton of Austen hot takes. But my favorite one to think about is that Charlotte Lucas is in love with Lizzie. I just think [00:19:00] Lizzie and Charlotte are actually in love, that they're both little-- Lizzie is bi and Charlotte is gay. And unfortunately, the times. And so, that is my favorite head canon.

Molly: We just released an entire episode discussing that.

Vanessa: Okay. Yeah.

[laughter]

Vanessa: So, this is like not a hot take. This is a stone-cold take, but I'm just very passionate about it.

Molly: It's a steamy take.

Vanessa: That's true.

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: It's not a hot take, but it is a steamy take. There it is. My glasses are fogging up.

Molly: [laughs]

Becca: Oh, yes. My head canon for Charlotte Lucas is that, ultimately, she and Anne de Bourgh come up with a really close gal-pal situation that ends up being a love affair, while Colin's gardens for the rest of their lives.

Vanessa: Yeah. No, I love that. I love that.

Molly: Living the dream.

Vanessa: That feels important to me.

Molly and Becca: Yeah.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Becca: It's crucial. Okay. I think that leads us into talking about our adaptation today, which is a made for television film of [00:20:00] *Emma* starring Kate Beckinsale--

Vanessa: Before she fixed her teeth.

Becca: Yes.

Vanessa: Important to say.

Molly: Yeas.

Vanessa: And a Mark Strong, who clearly pissed off several costumers. [laughs]

Molly: Should we start by giving our overall impression opinion of this movie?

Becca: Absolutely.

Molly: Vanessa?

Vanessa: This is like a solid B *Emma* adaptation. It has a point of view which I think is really important. To me, you can measure an *Emma* adaptation by a few things that I think that this misses. I really think the emotional through line of *Emma* is Harriet Smith. You have to feel as though *Emma* starts by treating Harriet as a doll and ends by respecting Harriet as a person. That is what this film is really missing to me is like Harriet is a non-person, non-character.

Yeah, so you just don't get the emotional punch of the brutality of *Emma*. [00:21:00] But no, like, Kate Beckinsale is adorable. Her face is doing great work. I find Knightley very sexy and condescending in a hot way. Mrs. Elton is perfectly obnoxious, Mr. Elton is the right amount of sinister. It does a lot of things well. The Harriet is the big mistake to me.

Molly: Yeah. I think that it does certain plot points very well that other *Emma* adaptations do not do well like Frank and Jane.

Vanessa: You don't think it overly tips its hand to Frank and Jane?

Molly: I think it does.

Vanessa: But it does do more than most.

Molly: It honors them in a way that most other adaptations didn't find necessary, because-

Vanessa: Totally.

Molly: -they were focusing on other storylines. And this one didn't focus on those other storylines. Like, there is no chemistry for me between *Emma* and Knightley. And obviously, Harriet is unimportant in this one. So, I was watching it with our Discord [00:22:00] chat and someone said it really well. They said that, "This movie really took the plot, and they hit all the major plot points, but it was just lacking some heart." And I think for me, that is the case. It did grow on me on my second watch through, but it's definitely not my favorite. That's what the 2008 does so well with Harriet and *Emma*. Like, their relationship from the beginning of the miniseries to the end of the miniseries.

Vanessa: I haven't seen that one.

Becca: It's quite good.

Vanessa: Okay.

Becca: It's quite good.

Vanessa: Thank you.

Molly: Not to be that person that's like, "You must watch this thing."

Vanessa: No.

Molly: But I love-- but it's so good.

Vanessa: I absolutely adore Romola Garai. So, I'm very excited about that. She's a fellow Hungarian.

Becca: Ah.

Molly: She's so good.

Becca: She is, I think from my perspective, my favorite Emma. She gives Emma a lot more sweetness than some of the other Emma's. As far as this adaptation goes, I want to start by saying, I do actually [00:23:00] think Kate Beckinsale does a pretty good job playing Emma. I like her performance. I think it's fun and sort of girlish, if that makes sense.

Vanessa: Yup.

Becca: I think what this adaptation does, right, I enjoyed. I think I agree that I think Harriet was lacking, and that's a huge issue. I think Knightley was lacking, that's a huge issue. I really enjoyed certain aspects. It's a little unhinged. I wish it were a miniseries, because I think it would have had room to breathe a little better, because I was thrown by all the ways it was cut so quickly, and then simultaneously a little boring.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Becca: But the things that were chosen to focus on were weird-- One thing I did like, and I think this goes to the Frank and Jane plot, which I thought was quite good. I think it also goes to some of the framing of the story. It is the first *Emma* adaptation that I've watched that doesn't have as much interest in showing up the story from Emma's perspective.

[00:24:00]

Like, we are getting the story of Emma, but we're catching the things that she doesn't catch. There's a lot of focus on the servants, there's a lot of focus on the social cues she's missing. We see immediately what happens to Miss Bates after Box Hill. So, the story is not as interested in giving us the same whiplash that Emma's getting throughout the story, because it's showing us the entire time that Emma's ignorant.

Vanessa: Yeah. Andrew Davies really is focused on the class stuff of it all in ways that I find interesting and then in ways that I find difficult. But we can talk about that when it comes up.

Molly: Great.

Becca: Agreed. But overall, I think I would put this one at, I think, a B minus-ish as well. I think the F parts of it are evened out by some A parts of it. And then the other thing I will say about this is, I thought I hadn't seen this adaptation before, and I straight up have.

Molly: You just locked it out of your memory.

Becca: [00:25:00] It's actually really funny, because I think I've seen this maybe once. I'd seen the Gwyneth Paltrow a few times, and I don't particularly care for that adaptation. But when I was watching it again, this rewatch, I was like, "There's things I remember happening in this movie that didn't happen." And when they happened in this one, I was like, "Oh, my God, I've seen this." There's a moment where Kay Beckinsale just goes, "You are wrong, Mr. Knightley. You are wrong, and you shall see it." I was like, "That I remember," the pianoforte being risen through the air to be put in the Bates apartment is like a core moment in my memory from childhood.

Molly: That's so interesting.

Becca: I must have seen this once or twice when I was a little, little kid and just forgotten it. But I did not remember most of it. I also remembered definitely the look of the guy who played Frank Churchill, because he's very distinct looking, and I was like, "Oh, I know that Frank." So, overall, it's just wild, and it tells you everything you need to know about the movie [00:26:00] that I conflated it entirely [Vanessa laughs] with Gwyneth Paltrow and did not remember that I'd seen it.

Becca: [giggles]

Molly: 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 *Pride and Prejudice* guest, Vanessa Zoltan, is a podcast that treats romance as sacred. You've probably 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.

[00:27:00]

[00:28:00]

Molly: So, let's start talking about it. We start out with the chicken thieves, which I am very glad made their way into **[00:29:00]** this movie, not once, but twice.

Vanessa: It's so weird because-- I'm sure we'll talk about this more later. But Andrew Davies does a really good job of showing the hypocrisy of the upper class, because there are these scenes where they're picnicking and doing "natural things," but the servants are actually doing all of the work, and they're right there. And so, they show the hypocrisy of the rich. But they also make all poor people seem like thieves.

Molly: Yeah. Because the only introduction we get to any poor people in this, aside from the Bates' who, have fallen from grace, are the chicken thieves and the Roma people who attack Harriet.

Vanessa: Exactly.

Becca: Oh, yeah.

Vanessa: And so, I'm just like, "Why are all--?" This should be an indictment of Hertfordshire, that you have such class stratospheres that people are hungry. But instead, it's like, all poor people are dirty and thieves. And it's a weird way to start and end the movie.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: I have no idea why that was the framing device picked. Like, you never know what people **[00:30:00]** are going to latch onto, but the idea that they-- I have to think that Andrew Davies was like, "Oh, the chicken thief is the reason Emma and Knightley could end up together, because Mr. Woodhouse allowed it because of the chicken thief." That can be our framing device. [laughs]

Vanessa: Yeah. It totally unnecessary, and so minimizing to the way that Austen thought about class. And so, it is very confusing to me. Andrew Davies, you nearly perfect man. What were you doing here?

Molly: Yeah, this whole thing is kind of that question. So, after the chicken thieves, we get the Woodhouses in the carriage on the way to Miss Taylor's wedding. And Mr. Woodhouse saying that Miss Taylor should not be getting married, and Emma and Miss Taylor have this almost kiss moment where they kiss, but just on the cheek, but I was like, "Whoa. Flirty." And the wedding between Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston-- Again, Mr. Weston is always the sexiest **[00:31:00]** man in any *Emma* adaptation.

[laughter]

Vanessa: I liked that this one made him look old.

Molly: It did make him look old, but with a very handsome face.

Vanessa: Oh, my God, he's so handsome and so lovely. But I was just like, "Yes, he is an old man." I do like that this actually acknowledged that.

Molly: And Miss Taylor was a little bit older too than she has been in other adaptations.

Vanessa: One of my favorite lines about Austen is, and I don't remember who said this, but one academic said, "There is no sex in Austen." And another academic answered, "That's not true. Miss Taylor ends up as Mrs. Weston and she ends up pregnant at the end of the novel. Of course, there's sex in Austen."

Molly: Yes.

Vanessa: And I'm just like, "There was no baby." But yes, I like that they make them all older. And Mrs. West and Miss Taylor was this like mother figure to Emma. It's very well done.

Molly: That's a good point for us to note for our live show in March, because we're going to be discussing sex and steaminess in Austen, and where it's **[00:32:00]** implied.

Vanessa: And where it is absolutely not. It's definitely implied between Mrs. And Mr. Weston.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Vanessa: There's a baby.

Molly: Yeah.

Becca: Not to mention the Palmers and all that bickering that happens in *Sense and Sensibility*.

Molly: John and Isabella have like 12 kids.

Vanessa: John and Isabella get it on all the time.

Molly: All the time.

Vanessa: They are definitely one of the sexier couples.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Sometimes neurotic people need to let off steam, and Isabella's extremely neurotic in the novel. I can see it. I can see it.

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: Oh, my God, absolutely. She has a lot of kink in her.

Molly and Becca: Yeah.

Becca: Exactly. [laughs]

Molly: So, then we get this montage of Mr. Woodhouse being sad around the house that Miss Taylor is gone. And enter Mr. Knightley.

Becca: Okay.

Molly: Who I did appreciate, he greeted the servant on his way in. He was like, "Thomas, how are you?" And he's the only person who ever acknowledges any servants.

Vanessa: Yes.

Molly: So, Mr. Knightley, Becca visibly sighed [00:33:00] when I said he entered, and not in a good way.

Becca: So, first of all, I do want to note, I do agree that there is a real effort to show Knightley as very kind to people of the lower classes in this, and that's nice and everything. I love Mark Strong, who plays Mr. Knightley in this. I think he's talented. I think he's fun. I think he's handsome as hell. Nowadays, he is daddy. He's rocking the strong brow, bald head, glasses look like, especially in *Kingsman* as Merlin.

But someone doesn't like him who costumed him in this movie, because they give him that side part that just does not look perfect on his head. He is layered to hell with this ass caught. Every time he got a glance of emotion in his beautiful green eyes, I was like, "Mark Strong, you're so handsome. who did this to you? What's happening?"

Vanessa: I totally disagree. Mr. [00:34:00] Knightley-

Molly: Oh, my God, really?

Vanessa: -totally does it for me in this. I love like Mr. Knightley. Henry Tilney and Mr. Knightley are obviously the two best-

Becca: Oh, yeah.

Vanessa: -Australian heroes to me on the page. So, I'm predisposed to liking him, but I thought that the way that he scolds Emma in this movie is very interesting and threads the needle to me of like, "I am in love with you. Please be the person who I know you are." He is rooting for her. And so, I don't know. Yeah, he totally did it for me in this movie.

Molly: Interesting. See, when he scolds her in this movie for me-- And again, I'll quote one of our patrons on this. They said, "He's giving less daddy and more dad." To me, there wasn't a lot of chemistry there, and it wasn't, "I am kind of into you be the person I want you to be." It was like, "Your dad's not scolding you, [00:35:00] so I'm going to." He's so hot, and I wish that he was just less angry in this movie. There are moments where he softens and then you see it.

Vanessa: But he hates Frank Churchill in this movie.

Molly: He does.

Vanessa: The frame of this movie is the chicken thieves, but it's also Frank Churchill, which maybe that's what Andrew Davies was up to, that Frank Churchill is essentially a chicken thief.

Molly: [laughs]

Vanessa: The frame of this movie, it begins and ends with Frank Churchill, and coming town and leaving town or with his ending. And he hates Frank. He hates Frank. And so, of course, he's angry, the whole time, "This Scoundrel, this chicken thief has come into his coop."

Becca: I love that.

Vanessa: I know. I don't think that's what Davies was up to. But let's say it was.

Becca: Art can be interpreted by the audience, as ever it must be. I fall somewhere between the two of you on this, because I think that Mark Strong has some really strong moments as Knightley in this, and I think he has some weak moments as Knightley in this. [00:36:00] I

just take issue with the way he was styled. I think he's a very handsome man and that they did him dirty in the costume department.

Molly: But his eyes are doing a lot.

Vanessa: His eyes are doing so much.

Becca: Gorgeous eyes and a strong face. And that feels great. But the way they style his hair, just like, it feels so cruel. I know it's probably Regency Era accurate, but there are a lot of liberties taken with the way that Austen heroes wear their hair. And I also, Vanessa, agree, Mr. Knightley is one of Jane Austen's most crushable men,-

Molly: The pinnacle.

Becca: -for sure. Yeah.

Vanessa: Absolutely.

Becca: But I'm like, "Why would they do this?" especially because Frank Churchill is really pretty boy in this one.

Vanessa: But that's why you have to do it.

Becca: [laughs]

Vanessa: Because Mr. Knightley is jealous of Frank Churchill.

Molly: True.

Becca: I know. I'm partial to, and we'll have to get [00:37:00] you into the 2009 BBC miniseries.

Vanessa: I can't wait.

Becca: But Jonny Lee Miller plays Knightley, and he's got the short hair and it's so like straightforward, no nonsense. He looks great. And I'm like, "I know it's probably not period accurate, but I'm fine with that."

Molly: I'm hesitant to call anything period accurate or not period accurate, because we're always wrong. Our listeners always [Vanessa laughs] email us and they're like, "Wait a minute, this movie is actually the most period accurate and this one's not."

Becca: Oh, we got absolutely creamed for saying the *Emma* 2020 costumes took liberties. They were like, "Actually, those are vintage pieces from Regency Era." [laughs]

Vanessa: Wow.

Molly: So, good for them.

Vanessa: Yes.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: So, Emma starts hatching a plan to marry off Mr. Elton. She's in church, and her eyes land upon Harriet because the light is streaming in on this angelic figure. We hear Harriet's background from Mrs. Goddard, where they're talking and watching Harriet with the young girls. [00:38:00] And we see Harriet talking to Robert Martin. And I have a fun fact about Robert Martin.

Vanessa: Ooh.

Becca: I know exactly what your fun fact is, and it's so cool.

Molly: So good. Now, in the 2020 *Emma*, the Robert Martin is in *Sex Education*.

Vanessa: Yes.

Molly: This Robert Martin is also in *Sex Education* as that Robert Martin's dad.

Vanessa: Oh, my God. So, I am obsessed with the casting of-- I like want to call my husband over, because [Molly laughs] he watched *Sex Education*, and we're like, "These two men are actually related. These two men are actually related, and they're not." I cannot wait to tell him this, guys.

Molly: They're related in such a--

Vanessa: An important way. More important than biology.

Molly and Becca: Yes.

Becca: Yeah. He's Adam's dad in *Sex Education*. This is really good.

Vanessa: This is incredible. And then Adam plays-- Thank you. I just can't thank you enough for this information.

Becca: Yes.

Vanessa: I will remember it on my deathbed, seriously.

Molly: Yeah. Because they look the same too. Like, this one's just a [00:39:00] blonde version of that one.

Vanessa: Yeah. No, they are perfectly class on-- Okay, I'm sorry, I'm going to stop.

Molly: [laughs]

Vanessa: You've blown my mind, and I'm so happy.

Becca: Quite honestly. I'm sad because I know that the reason Molly knows this is that Mel pointed it out.

Molly: No, no. No, one of our listeners pointed it out, and I pointed it out to Mel and she was shocked.

Becca: Okay. Well, I was going to say I hoped you had come to that conclusion on your own like, "I did."

Molly: But I don't watch that show.

Becca: I know, but we'll get there. It'll be fun.

Molly: I will, I will. I'll watch it just for them.

Vanessa: They are fantastic in it, and their relationship has the most interesting arc over the seasons.

Becca: I, 100%, agree. It's like, they are one of the highlights of that show.

Vanessa: Robert Martin and Robert Martin have a very interesting relationship in *Sex Education*.

Molly: [laughs]

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: So, we get a scene of tea at Hartfield with Harriet the Bates', Mr. Perry. And there's a conversation about Knightley giving all of his eggs to the Bates' [00:40:00] which is a conversation that happens in the book later on with apples.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: I thought it was foreshadowing, and then the apple conversation never happened.

Vanessa: But eggs. It's interesting. I'm actually thinking Andrew Davies did this, like, Frank Churchill chicken thief thing on purpose, because Knightley gives eggs. Whereas Frank Churchill metaphorically steals chickens.

Molly: Wow.

Vanessa: You guys, I really think we've cracked a code on this.

Molly and Vanessa: We've cracked an egg.

Vanessa: -and open then. Yes.

Molly: So, Emma is telling Harriet that she couldn't care less about the Martins, and Harriet should be careful who she befriends. This has very much the energy of, "I think I can tell the wrong thought for myself. Thanks." But Harriet doesn't say that, of course, because it's Harriet Smith.

Becca: I will say, one of the big framing devices that varies with this adaptation and is, I think, a very bad choice is that, usually, you get Harriet Smith as an introduction after Emma's feeling lonely with the loss of Miss Taylor.

Vanessa: Yup.

Becca: Here, [00:41:00] it's because she's come off the triumph of setting up Mr. and Mrs. Weston and is looking to set up Mr. Elton and sees Harriet as a viable option for that specific goal, I like it better when she's like, "I'm lonely. Who can I have in my life?" And she comes up with Harriet Smith and is like, "Ooh, let's make her a companion worthy of me."

Becca: Right.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah. So, that made me sad a little bit in this adaptation.

Molly: Yeah. I think that they underplay the relationship between Emma and Harriet as well as Emma and Mrs. Taylor/Mrs. Weston. Like, that isn't given enough weight.

Vanessa: Yeah, it's not interested in what I think is the most character defining thing about Emma. Like, the three big things that we are led to judge Emma on is how she treats Miss Bates, how she treats Jane Fairfax, and how she treats Harriet Smith. Like, how she treats her "lessers." And this film is not interested in that. [00:42:00] And I don't know who Emma is without us watching her figure out that she has actually treated all three of these women incorrectly, and that she therefore needs to try to be a better person.

We'll talk about the ending. I think the ending does some work to repair that. But Samantha Morton doing the most with so little in this movie, and I think it totally misses the point of Emma's character development.

Molly: Absolutely.

Becca: I was going to say, I think the thing is, it's clear from a writing and directing standpoint, that's the flaw, because I think if you look at Kate Beckinsale, Mark Strong and Samantha Morton, top tier actors, actually doing, I think, a great job to give justice to these characters, but not working with enough to really punch home. I like Kate Beckinsale's take on Emma. I find her less grating than Gwyneth Paltrow's Emma. But you're right. You don't get that internal monologue, and that sense of whimsy and blunder that you get with some other Emma's.

Molly: [00:43:00] I have to disagree. I don't like Kate Beckinsale in this movie.

Vanessa: How dare you?

Molly: I know. [Becca laughs] I'm so sorry. But she, to me, isn't doing a whole lot. Like, her reactions to things are all very similar. Like, she furrows her brow.

Vanessa: I totally disagree.

Molly: That's my take on it. I know.

Vanessa: There's a dance scene where depending on who she is currently holding hands with, her face is totally different.

Molly: That's like a good thing.

Vanessa: [crosstalk] I'm happy to see you. I'm annoyed to see you. Her face is doing the most.

Molly: It's subtle. It's subtle, which is impressive.

Vanessa: I think Kate Beckinsale is fantastic in this. I am hot off of watching her in *Love & Friendship*, where she is perfect as Lady Susan. So, I think I am positively predisposed to liking Kate Beckinsale in Austen adaptations. But I think she is like 12 in this movie. And her forehead, there's never been anything you could flip a quarter on her forehead in this movie.

Molly: [laughs]

Becca: [00:44:00] Yeah.

Vanessa: I think she's fantastic in it. I really do. I think Emma is poorly written as a character in this,-

Molly: Yes.

Vanessa: -but I think that she is doing the most with very little.

Molly: I think I'm probably biased coming off of the 2008 *Emma*.

Vanessa: Reasonable people can disagree about where the fault lies.

Molly: Yes. Absolutely.

Becca: I agree. And I think that we have been blessed in the last decade, 15 years, with really, really excellent performances of Emma. I think Anya Taylor-Joy is also very good as Emma.

Vanessa: Totally.

Becca: But I do think that Kate Beckinsale was bringing something fun and cool to the role. So, hmm, reasonable minds disagree.

Molly: Mm-hmm.

Becca: The only Emma I really take issue with is Gwyneth. I really don't like Gwyneth's performance. [giggles]

Vanessa: I haven't rewatched that in so long. I need to. I was delighted by it when I saw it at the time.

Molly: Yeah, I liked it. It's not my favorite, but it's a perfectly serviceable adaptation of *Emma*, in my opinion. I wouldn't watch it again, but I also wouldn't watch this one again. I would just watch the 2008-

Vanessa: Right.

Molly: -over and over [00:45:00] again and then sprinkle in the 2020 there at some points.

Becca: 2009, by the way.

Vanessa: It's 2009-- It's 2008 in England, and 2009 in the US.

Becca: [laughs]

Vanessa: You're both right.

Molly: [laughs]

Vanessa: I have the Wikipedia article up.

Molly: Oh, my God, thank God. I was like, "I've been saying this for about half an hour."

Becca: Yeah. [laughs]

Vanessa: No, you're both right.

Molly: Few.

Becca: Okay.

Molly: So, Elton brings Harriet some apple tart, and Emma has a slow-motion vision of them at their wedding, and they both turn and stare directly into the camera, thanking Emma profusely for matching them up, and Emma's like, "Hmm, stranger things have happened."

Vanessa: So, this, to me, is like the hardest part of any Austen adaptation is, how are you going to get across the narrative voice? And my complaint about this Emma is that it does it in too many different ways. It does it through Emma's dreams. Emma has these declarations sometimes, "Oh, no, poor Harriet." And then in this moment, [00:46:00] she has this fantasy. And it needs to pick a device for that. The Felicity Jones *Northanger Abbey*, which I think is a fantastic adaptation, like, it's just Felicity Jones has these daydreams and that's it. They're half daydreams, half dreams.

But I understand that it is so hard because Austen's narrative voice, with the free and direct discourse, is a character in all of the novels and you need to figure out how to represent it. But I do not think that this movie does that. well at all.

Becca: Agreed. This was the moment when my fiancée turned to me and went, "Did David Lynch do this?"

Vanessa: Yeah. No, it's weird. It's not well done.

Becca: Yeah.

Molly: Yeah. That was also my problem with the Gwyneth Emma is that there was no consistency with how they were transitioning from scene to scene, how she was determining how she felt.

Vanessa: Interesting.

Molly: Yeah. So, Emma and Harriet are now walking in the woods, and Emma tells Harriet that she plans never to marry, she's never going to fall in love. [00:47:00] And at this moment, they see Robert Martin. And Emma snubs him as she does, she's like, "I'll wait for you," and she walks past him without saying hello.

Vanessa: But they don't give her the best line about Robert Martin, which is he's just as much above my notice as he is beneath my notice.

Molly: Right.

Vanessa: It's such a perfect line. Why not give that? Like, Austen did that for you, Davies.

Molly: Yeah. There's a lot of things that Austen did that they were like, "Meh."

Vanessa: I know. I think I can write it better.

[laughter]

Vanessa: What are you doing?

Molly: I will say I am happy, and we'll get to this, but I am happy they did not mess with if I love you less, I might be able to talk about it more.

Vanessa: You can't. Well, obviously, it's not in the Gwyneth version. I know.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: [laughs]

Vanessa: Even though I haven't seen the Gwyneth version in forever-

[laughter]

Vanessa: -I feel like that is just in the ether. I just like, "I know that.

Becca: Yeah.

Vanessa: But yes, Andrew Davies, not a monster.

Molly: Yes. So, Emma tells Harriet that she should think of real gentlemen and starts to plant the idea of Mr. Elton. She's like, "Think of Mr. Elton." And as they walk away, [00:48:00] it dawns on me that they're wearing the same outfit. They're wearing this green dress with the lace collar thing coming out of it. I think that most *Emma* adaptations start doing that closer towards the end with Emma and Harriet wearing similar outfits, but it starts out with them wearing similar outfits in this one, which I thought was interesting.

Then we get Emma taking Harriet's likeness. This is the only adaptation where Harriet is not posed in some ridiculous Greek statue holding a vase thing. She's just sitting reading a book, which I think is lovely. Emma's drawings look like the Pixar animation studios drawings. Like, she's drawing a Disney princess. It is very out of keeping with what I imagine Regency Era drawings to look like. They just don't look like what I've seen-- People draw however they draw always. But this looks like a Disney princess.

Vanessa: [00:49:00] It's interesting in a film what you're going to try to show with the drawing, right?

Molly: Yes.

Vanessa: Because you want to simultaneously show Emma's lack of skill. You want to show that Emma had the best teachers, but no determination and no will to practice. And so, she is technically sound but not inspired. But she also has an agenda, which is to make Harriet look as good as possible for Mr. Elton. And so, this is a prop that has a lot of responsibility in it.

Molly: Yeah, that's true. When Mrs. Weston and Mr. Knightley see it, they are both giving her shit for it. Mrs. Weston is like, "Doesn't really look like her eyebrows?" And Mr. Knightley famously says, "You've made her too tall." And Mr. Elton is just loving it. And as he's gassing Emma up, there's this moment where Mrs. Weston and Mr. Knightley look at each other, like, they're noticing what's happening here, and Emma is just not at all noticing.

Becca: [00:50:00] We've talked about before how Elton's obvious in loving Emma. But I think in this one, there's so many determined choices to make us know that everybody else sees that Elton wants Emma. And so, you really are not living in the same world as Emma, where she thinks, "Oh, he and Harriet are a good match." You are seeing that he wants Emma, immediately.

Vanessa: Yes. I love whenever a film matches up Mr. Knightley and Mrs. Weston, because it speaks to the creepiness that Mr. Knightley is a father figure to Emma, because Mrs. Weston is obviously a mother figure. Mr. Woodhouse is useless as the father. He's actually a child. And so, anytime, it can be pointed out that Emma's actual parents are Mr. Knightley and Mrs. Weston, I think it's apt.

Molly: The way that this movie-- We'll get there. We'll get there--

Becca: Yeah. [giggles]

Molly: -but there's a lot.

Vanessa: But this is the first sign of it, right?

Molly: Yes, absolutely.

Vanessa: This is the first two of them--

Molly: Yes.

Vanessa: Yes.

Molly: So, as Elton rides off to London, [00:51:00] Harriet comes running up with her proposal from Robert Martin. I wanted to give a quick shoutout to Emma's very cool sleeves in this scene. They're like cross hatch, hap sleeve situation that I love. And Harriet looks absolutely devastated when Emma implies that she should say no to the proposal. And in my opinion, Emma looks very put out by this whole thing. She looks very fed up. She's like, "I cannot believe that you are entertaining the idea of saying yes to this."

Vanessa: Imagine you're working on a project for weeks, and somebody comes in and is like, "Do you know what? I totally did this other thing?" Well, you would also be annoyed.

Molly: Fair enough. That's fair. [giggles]

Vanessa: Nobody gave Emma this assignment. It is the wrong assignment that she is working on. But from her point of view, she's been working on something, and Harriet's--

Molly: That's true.

Vanessa: -coming in, and not appreciating all the work Emma has been doing.

Becca: Mm-hmm.

Molly: That's true. And Emma says, "Well, I'm very relieved--" When Harriet decides that she's going to say no, Emma's like, "I'm very relieved, I could not have visited Mrs. Martin of Abbeymill farm." [00:52:00] And Harriet, as they're walking away and Emma looks so smug, Harriet just looks absolutely devastated.

Becca: Yeah. I miss some of the precocious bubbly, fun, ditzy energy that a lot of Harriet's bring to the role. And that's not Samantha Morton's fault. She's just playing it very straightforward and almost sad. And it takes some of the comedy out, some of the zing and pop.

Molly: Yeah. But I do think it's very true to Harriet and the book.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: I think that she takes what Emma dishes out to heart. I can really see, like, the gears turning in her head and see her internalizing everything that Emma is saying to her.

Vanessa: And imagine you are so lonely. Like, the Martins are the only people who've ever really taken her in and been nice to her. And the coolest girl in town suddenly wants to be your best friend, and she essentially has to choose between the only two groups of people [00:53:00] who have ever treated her as an individual rather than as a student. This is heartbreaking for Harriet.

Molly: Yeah. So, Knightley finds out, and he is pissed.

Vanessa: Rightly so.

Molly: Rightly so.

Vanessa: [crosstalk] Knightley in this moment.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: I like that they end his spiel with him telling her it was badly done, because we get that-

Vanessa: I know. Whoo.

Molly: -good foreshadow of badly done indeed. Then we get the arrival of John and Isabella. Winter. It's wintertime. John is so hot.

Becca: Hot.

Molly: Okay. But I have to tell you guys something that I discovered. I don't know if you're into *Star Wars* at all, but he plays Governor Tarkin in *Rogue One*.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: To me, that's a [Vanessa laughs] revelation.

Becca: Oh. No, no, I figured that out.

Vanessa: You're like, "That's it. Guys, that's it," and it's everything.

Molly: [giggles] He also plays Thicknesse in *Harry Potter*.

Becca: Not so hot there. [laughs]

Molly: Governor Tarkin-- Anyway, I won't get into it, [00:54:00] but I was just like, "Whoa. Whoa." Because I thought Governor Tarkin was CGI generated in *Rogue One*, because he looks so much like Governor Tarkin in Episode 4 of *Star Wars*, but he--

Becca: He is, but he's mixed,

Molly: Oh, okay.

Becca: Yeah. So, it's like how Darth Vader was played by James Earl Jones, but obviously somebody else as well.

Molly: I see.

Becca: So, he's Governor Tarkin, but it's not just his face as Governor Tarkin.

Molly: Okay. Well, he's hot in this.

Becca: Yes.

Molly: I guess we can admit.

Vanessa: He's just confusing in this. John is an asshole in the novel. And in this, he starts out adorable and fun and then becomes an asshole.

Molly: Yeah, they needed to pick--

Vanessa: Yeah, pick a lane on John.

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: He's throwing the kids around and kissing them, and it's very involved dad. And then he's grumpy and is like, "I can't believe we're going out in this weather." I don't know. I agree with you. John, muah, beautiful man, whoever is acting. But I found-

Becca: Agreed. [00:55:00]

Vanessa: -this portrayal confusing at best.

Molly: Yes. I think they need to pick a lane. I think that each adaptation has picked a different lane, and each one is lovely in its own way. So, Emma is holding baby Emma, and Knightley comes over and says that he remembers holding her like that once.

Becca: Okay. [laughs] Once again.

Molly: Father.

Becca: Yeah. They really want you to know how much Knightley was involved in Emma's childhood, which just seems like an odd thing to highlight for a modern adaptation.

Vanessa: Including it's the last line of the movie, right? We'll get there-- [crosstalk]

Molly: Oh. I was cringing, and I don't want to be cringing during that scene.

Vanessa: But he must be doing it on purpose, right?

Molly: He was changing her diapers.

Vanessa: I know. But you just got to think that there's something smart about Austen's understanding of people. Again, Emma essentially was parentless, [00:56:00] and so, of course, she wants to marry "her dad." It's interesting that-

Molly: That's true.

Vanessa: -the movie doesn't shy away from it. It ruins the hotness of it,-

Becca: Yeah. [laughs]

Vanessa: -but it is interesting, and it's absolutely in the novel.

Molly: Yeah. No, it is. So, Christmas Eve, it's time for the party at the Weston's house. And John is complaining the whole way about the snow. They pick up Mr. Elton and he is like, "This is the best thing ever," which is a very fun contrast. We learn that Harriet's unable to come because she has a sore throat, and Frank is unable to come for undisclosed reasons. And then Mr. Weston tells the story of Frank. During the story of Frank, Elton is staring at Emma, and she notices him staring at her and looks a little put out by it.

Becca: I actually think this Elton is fucking serving. I think he's so funny. [laughs]

Vanessa: I do too.

Molly: He's hilarious. I love him.

Vanessa: He's hilarious, and then in the carriage, he's scary.

Molly: Disgusting.

Vanessa: It's perfect.

Becca: Oh, [00:57:00] yeah.

Molly: Yeah. They show Emma a painting of Frank Churchill, and she loudly announces to the entire room that, if she were ever to marry, it would probably be to Frank Churchill. And Knightley is salty immediately is like, "Well, if he wanted to come, he would come." And they start arguing about him.

Vanessa: But then the Frank Churchill portraits comes to life-

Molly: Yes.

Vanessa: -like, a *Harry Potter* character,

Molly: Oh, it-- [crosstalk]

Vanessa: -and he winks at Emma. And again, I'm just like, "Pick a lane on this shit, guys."

Molly: Right.

Vanessa: "You can't have it all."

Molly: He comes out, kisses her hand.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: It's just very odd.

Becca: It's like, the whole scene is geared to show us that Emma's into Frank Churchill, including the line where Knightley says, the line to Mrs. Weston, I going to butcher the quote, but it's like, "I would like to see her out of love, and in love and unsure of its return." That's obviously a quoting line. But where they put it in context of the story tells me how much they're focused on [00:58:00] the Frank Churchill plot in this movie.

Molly: But I've always thought that was an odd thing to say. Where they placed it is even more odd, because he's so obviously grumpy about Emma and Frank. And it's just like, "If you're going to be so obvious about it, then you also should know at that point how you feel."

Vanessa: I think that the film is arguing that he knows the whole time. I think in this version, he is in love with her the whole time.

Molly: I'd like to watch it again. If I were to watch it again, I'd watch it again looking for that.

Vanessa: Yeah. I don't think it is well handled, but I agree. In this scene, you see it in particular-- And then just how much he hates Frank, right?

Molly: Yeah.

Vanessa: Like, the more Emma shows interest in Frank, the more he hates Frank.

Molly: So, unfortunately, now we're at the carriage scene. And Emma and Elton get in their carriage, and he grabs her hands, he tries to kiss them, and she pulls away. He comes over and says, "Forgive me, I can't [00:59:00] help myself," which is horrendous.

Becca: Oh.

Molly: He even tries to kiss her, and she moves out of the way. When she says that she has no thoughts of matrimony at present, he scoffs like, he goes, "[coughs]". So, the whole thing is just very uncomfortable and dangerous. Though I will say they don't go to the extent that some of the adaptations go to, he at least finishes out the carriage drive like he does in the

book, and gets out and says, "Good night," and then that's the end of it. Still holding himself to some of the standards of society at the time.

Vanessa: I will say he, in this scene, says, I think the actual snobbiest thing that gets said in the whole film, which is, like, "Harriet Smith, like, she is completely beneath me. I would think that I would know higher opinion of myself than to marry Harriet Smith." This is a novel and a film about snobbishness and how wrong it is. And so, I think that Mr. **[01:00:00]** Elton-- This is, to a large extent, Austen's only novel without a villain. And so, this, I think, posits Mr. Elton as a villain. We can talk about whether or not Frank Churchill is a villain later.

Molly: Yes.

Becca: Oh, it's my favorite conversation to have.

Vanessa: [laughs]

Becca: It is such an interesting question. [laughs]

Vanessa: Yeah.

Molly: So, that brings us to the end of this episode of Pod and Prejudice. Vanessa, thank you so much for joining us.

Vanessa: This is the most fun. Thank you so much for having me. I just can't even contain my thoughts. I'm sorry, I'm talking too much, but I am just delighted.

Molly: No, we love it.

Becca: No such thing. [laughs] But do you want to tell the people where they can find you real quick?

Vanessa: Yes. You can find us on Instagram at all of the things. But follow me, and then you'll be able to follow everything we do. [@vanessamzoltan](#) on Instagram.

Molly: Amazing.

Becca: Incredible. Listeners, for next week, as you can assume, we're going to finish up our coverage of this Kate Beckinsale TV **[01:01:00]** movie version of *Emma*. So, prep for that.

Molly: So, until next time, stay proper--

Becca: --and remind your crush that you held her as a baby.

Molly: Oh my God. Or don't. I don't know.

Becca: [laughs]

Vanessa: Do it. It's hot, apparently.

Molly: [laughs] It apparently works.

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

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