

**Molly:** Hey, everyone. Before we begin Season 4 of Pod and Prejudice, we want to thank our newest patrons, Elena, Rachel, Margaret, Rebecca, Heather, Diana and Holly. Welcome to the team. And a huge shoutout to our patrons, Joanna and Charlie, who upgraded their pledges.

If you're interested in hearing Becca's very first thoughts on *Persuasion*, getting the opportunity to submit your own study questions and being a part of our awesome Discord community, check out our Patreon at [patreon.com/podandprejudice](https://patreon.com/podandprejudice). And now, the moment you've all been waiting for, let's dive into Season 4 with this episode of Pod and Prejudice covering Chapters 1 through 3 of *Persuasion*.

[Pod and Prejudice theme]

**Becca:** Oh, my God. It's been so long.

**Molly:** It's been so long. We haven't recorded in over a month.

**Becca:** I think this is the longest we've gone without recording since we started. But it was necessary-

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** -for multiple reasons. You needed to go on vacation. [00:01:00] I needed to read *Persuasion*. Also, I just had a crazy work month, year situation. So, that's how that went. But I feel like we are coming back from summer vacation 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 *Persuasion*. We don't have a fun intro for *Persuasion* yet.

**Becca:** Listeners, if you're new here, I, Becca, have read many Jane Austen novels 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*, *Sense and Sensibility* or *Emma* for the first time, you can listen to Seasons 1, 2 or 3 of this podcast, respectively. But that is not what we're doing here today.

**Molly:** No. Today, we are talking about the first three chapters of *Persuasion*.

**Becca:** Well, let's do a little primer on *Persuasion* first, because this is a fun one for us. First of all, Season 4.

**Molly:** Season 4.

**Becca:** High key. We've been doing this podcast for nearly five years. That's crazy.

**Molly:** Yeah. [00:02:00] In October it'll be five years?

**Becca:** In October, it'll be five years.

**Molly:** We should do something special.

**Becca:** Oh, yeah. We'll have to figure out something fun for you, guys. You guys can tell us what you want for our five-year anniversary. But before that, let's talk about *Persuasion* a little bit, because this one's a little fun for us.

As anyone who's been listening to this podcast knows the dynamic of our podcast always has been that I've read Jane Austen books throughout my life. I've watched many adaptations of Jane Austen's work. And Molly is obviously fresh on everything. This one's a little interesting and different, because I, Becca, read *Persuasion* for you guys for this podcast, like, literally finished a week and a half ago. [chuckles]

**Molly:** Yes. So, this is going to be exciting, because for Becca, it's like fresh off the presses.

**Becca:** Mm-hmm.

**Molly:** She just finished it, and I am obviously still reading it for the first time. But it'll be an interesting dynamic.

**Becca:** I'm actually so excited about this, because I'm right now [00:03:00] at a place where I've finished this book, and I have so many thoughts and feelings. I haven't really had anybody to talk about it with. And so, for me, the vehicle of this podcast has become so much more fun, because now it's like, "Oh, damn, I've just finished this, and I really want to say things about it." But I can't spoil anything for Molly, and not a lot of my friends who've read this. I literally reached out to our Discord, and I'm like, "So, guys, *Persuasion*."

**Molly:** [laughs] I love it. I can't wait. We'll get into the discussion of what I think of the book and everything, but I'm already loving it and I think that it's going to be really fun, because I think from your vibes when you were reading it, I think you really liked it, and I already really like it. So, I think this is going to be an excellent season.

**Becca:** I will neither confirm nor deny how I felt, but I will say that there's a couple things I want to lay on the table about it first. First, as we do with every book, what do you know about this book so far?

**Molly:** So, [00:04:00] I'll do, prior to reading these chapters, what I thought I knew. I did in our finale episode, I made some bonkers predictions. Not bonkers. I stand by my predictions, but I don't stand by the fact that I think I gave someone the name Captain Moreland. I think that's from a different book. I think I said that the main guy is going to be Captain Moreland. Now, I know that's not the case, because I recognize a name that we have heard thus far, which I will get into when we get into the thing.

My prediction in that-- A refresher for anyone who didn't listen to our Season 3 finale was that Anne Elliot, the main character in *Persuasion*, as I see it, or as I think I see it thus far is like a nerd who lives in a cottage by the sea, and meets some handsome man and has to persuade him. I don't remember who I said was going to persuade who, but [00:05:00] right now, I'm going to say he has to persuade her to come out of her shell.

**Becca:** So, we're certainly seeing some persuasion at some point in this book. We'll have to figure out when. We can have like a little persuasion clock.

**Molly:** There's already been-- It's in the title.

**Becca:** Yes. Oh, yes, absolutely. There's much to say. Other things I will note as we walk into this, just to frame this book a little bit. This is one of the last books that was published from Jane Austen. I believe it was published posthumously.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** Jane Austen, I think, wrote this at a later point in her life, which is pretty interesting. Definitely, we're going to have some fun vibes. I have a lot of thoughts, a lot of feelings. I'm already in the fandom on this one, like, "I got things to say." So, let's [Molly giggles] get into it, so I can use this podcast as a vehicle to talk about a book that is now a hyper fixation a little.

**Molly:** Oh, my God, I can't wait. I'm so excited. Let's do it. It's been so long since we've done this. I forget how book episodes go. I guess we [00:06:00] just start.

**Becca:** No, no, you just talk about what happened.

**Molly:** I just talk? All right.

[laughter]

**Molly:** This is a podcast in which we talk.

**Becca:** Not only did we go on hiatus, but we talked about adaptations of *Emma* for a thousand years.

**Molly:** Our *Emma* season was two years long. I don't know if you all realize that. But our podcast has been going on for almost five years, and *Emma* took up two of those years.

**Becca:** Well, *Emma's*, I think it's her longest book, and it's also the one with the most famous adaptations.

**Molly:** Yes. There are so many adaptations. All right, so, I guess we'll just do what we do best and talk about Jane Austen.

**Becca:** Fire away.

**Molly:** Okay. So, in my book, also, I'll note that in previous--

[laughter]

**Molly:** We're never going to start.

**Becca:** We're never going to talk about this book, guys. [chuckles]

**Molly:** That's the joke of the season, is that we're just not actually going to talk about the book. But in previous seasons, I haven't read the footnotes because [00:07:00] I was afraid of spoilers. This time, I am going to read the footnotes where necessary, because they actually have some helpful information that I can't really find by googling without getting spoilers.

So, anyway, there's notes on the text before the text begins, because there's a title page that says, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*. I was like, "What did I buy?" But this was originally published as Volumes III and IV of *Northanger Abbey*.

**Becca:** That's really interesting, because I'm pretty sure that's the other book that Jane Austen published posthumously.

**Molly:** Yes. Someone else must have been like, "Oh, here are these two things. Let's smosh them together."

**Becca:** Oh, like a book in two halves.

**Molly:** Yes. So, let's get into it. Chapter 1, Sir Walter Elliot.

**Becca:** Setting the scene-

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** -immediately.

**Molly:** He is a baronet,-

**Becca:** Yes.

**Molly:** -which is above a knight, but below a baron.

**Becca:** Yes.

**Molly:** He loves to read *The Baronetage*.

**Becca:** I cannot say the word *Baronetage* [00:08:00] to save my life.

**Molly:** We just have to say it like that, *Baronetage*.

**Becca:** *Baronetage*. Yes, which is a book that records the dudes who've been the baronets.

**Molly:** Yeah. That's its sole purpose.

**Becca:** Yes. [chuckles]

**Molly:** And it also lists their families, and when their wives died, for example.

**Becca:** Yes. I don't know if you have any relatives who are really into family history.

**Molly:** No. No, I don't. [giggles]

**Becca:** [chuckles] There are members of one of the sides of my family that are super into recording the family history. Not to this extent, but we have a family tree thing that is on my grandma's wall. There's a lot of recorded stuff about tracing the family history. It's not necessarily my vibe, but it's giving this, but Regency Era England.

**Molly:** I said no very confidently, but that was before I remembered the Facebook group that [00:09:00] my distant cousins created and added every single person-- There are hundreds of people in this Facebook group, and they are trying to trace the history of our family. So, I actually lied to you a minute ago. I do have those people in my family.

**Becca:** No, I love that because mine is like older members of my family who are scrolling through tomes, and letters, and diaries and stuff. And yours is like the cyber version.

**Molly:** It is. But it's still the older people. It's like grandma's on Facebook, you know?

**Becca:** Yeah. Maybe the listeners can confirm this, but I feel like this is a peak post 50 activity.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** Like, I don't know anybody in their 30s who's tracing their family heritage. But maybe I'm wrong. I could be corrected.

**Molly:** 23andMe and--

**Becca:** That's true. We just do it in such a millennial way.

**Molly:** Yeah, we really do. So, we get a passage about his family, which is his favorite passage. He always opens to this passage, because he's a little bit conceited or a lot conceited. [00:10:00] We learn that his wife is dead. He has one stillborn son and three daughters named Elizabeth, Anne, and Mary.

**Becca:** This is already so telling, because what do we learn immediately about this family?

**Molly:** Mary is married.

**Becca:** Mm-hmm.

**Molly:** We've got two unmarried daughters living at home with the dad.

**Becca:** And?

**Molly:** No mom.

**Becca:** And?

**Molly:** They're really rich. No, they're not, but they are nobility. And what else?

**Becca:** And there's no heir in the family.

**Molly:** Oh, right. The heir that's listed, we'll learn later, is like a cousin.

**Becca:** Distant cousin, because all-girls-- Economics is dating and Jane Austen, hello, Graham.

**Molly:** The sound effect.

**Becca:** The sound effect, Graham. And also, notably, their dates of birth.

**Molly:** Yes, we have their dates of birth. That really threw me, I'll be honest, because I was like, "I don't know what [00:11:00] year this is. That's backwards math. I don't know how old they're supposed to be at present." Later we learn how old they are at present.

**Becca:** Well, what you learn immediately, immediately, is that Mary, the youngest, is married, but she is significantly younger than her two sisters.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** Her older sisters, neither of whom is married.

**Molly:** Oh, yes. Mary is seven years younger than Elizabeth.

**Becca:** So, you know that her younger sister is of marrying age, which means she is seven years above the bare minimum of marrying age, at least, which in Austen terms is--

**Molly:** 21?

**Becca:** Well, I was going to say old. [chuckles]

**Molly:** Oh, I thought you were asking what the marrying age was. Yes, she's old.

**Becca:** She's old. Because let's say, the earliest people get married in Jane Austen books is like 16.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** That's 23 at the youngest.

**Molly:** Yeah. No, she's old. She's definitely old, and we'll [00:12:00] get into a whole discussion of that in a little bit. But yeah, we do learn that right off the bat. I think it's cute that Sir Walter Elliot adds in the day and month that his wife died, because he misses her, in my opinion, or maybe he's just keeping really good track.

**Becca:** Porque no los dos.

**Molly:** Yes. So true. I liked this one line I put in quotes, "with all the Mary's and Elizabeth they had married." He's talking about other baronets, and their sons, and their sons and how everybody's name is Mary or Elizabeth. I just thought that was funny.

**Becca:** That's true, because Jane Austen knows her audience. [chuckles]

**Molly:** She really does. So, we have that the heir is the great, great grandson of the second Sir William Walter Elliot, Esq. This is the heir. He's going to come in play later. Sir Walter is-- Oh, my God, we need a sound effect for this.

**Becca:** One, two, three.

**Molly and Becca:** Daddy.

**Molly:** I am so excited that we actually have a certifiable [00:13:00] daddy.

**Becca:** We have a canonically hot dad in Jane Austen, I will say, giving off, like unattractive, 55-year-old himbo vibes.

**Molly:** Yeah. God, it's going to make her comeback the Gilderoy Lockhart.

**Becca:** No, it's so true, because actually, in my head I was thinking-- Who would you cast as Sir Walter based on these three chapters alone?

**Molly:** I Would not cast Kenneth Branagh, but he does give those vibes, like very self-absorbed, I'm the best. I wouldn't cast Kenneth Branagh. I think I'm giving him a more polished look.

**Becca:** I have someone in my brain who has not played him, who I think would be like perfect.

**Molly:** All right. Let's hear it.

**Becca:** Hugh Grant. [Molly gasps] Like, canonically.

**Molly:** My heart just stopped.

**Becca:** Yeah, I know.

**Molly:** I'm thrilled with that.

**Becca:** Hugh Grant, I know you don't want to come on this podcast, but if you wanted to come on this podcast, we know he's done Jane Austen before. And this level of [00:14:00] self-sabotage and good-looking superficiality, oh.

**Molly:** Yeah, I'm going to think on it, but I don't think I can do better than that.

**Becca:** Listeners, let me know if you think that's just perfect or not.

**Molly:** Yeah. So, he is super vain. It says exactly, "Few women could think more of their personal appearance than he did, nor could the valet of any new made lord be more delighted with the place he held in society." I wanted to ask, isn't the valet just the guy who dresses the lord?

**Becca:** I think the implication is that he wears really luxurious clothes.

**Molly:** Oh, I see, I see. He is particularly proud of his looks and his rank, because he figures that's how he got his wife, who he thinks is far superior to him in character, which I think is cute. Then we learn a little bit about his late wife. It says that "Her judgement and conduct, if they might be pardoned the youthful infatuation which made her Lady Elliot, had never required indulgence afterwards." [00:15:00] Does this mean that she was a flirt, and then once they got married, he could ignore her?

**Becca:** I think what this means is she fell in love.

**Molly:** Uh-huh.

**Becca:** And the man she fell in love with was a fucking idiot.

**Molly:** [giggles]

**Becca:** And that she's not an idiot, but her one thing she did that wasn't sensible in her life was marry a stupid man.

**Molly:** This is going to come back later, but there's a lot of Jane Austen giving her opinion from *The Rocking Chair* in this first three chapters.

**Becca:** Yeah, there's a ton-- Well, Jane Austen is setting us up, like she is setting a scene in this chapter.

**Molly:** Yes, she really is. We learned that she wasn't the happiest person, but she enjoyed the life that she had. I'm curious about whether she was depressed because of having married a dumb man. But I don't imagine that we're going to learn more about her than this. [giggles]

**Becca:** [00:16:00] I don't know what gives you that impression.

**Molly:** [giggles] She died when the oldest two girls were 14 and 16, and she left them to a conceited, silly father. But she had one friend who came to live nearby and who she relied on to continue to be a role model for the girls. This is Lady Russell.

**Becca:** Lady Russell.

**Molly:** I love Lady Russell. She gives Mrs. Weston vibes.

**Becca:** She's also really giving like "I don't need a man, because I got my fortune through being widowed," energy, which we love.

**Molly:** Yes, it's interesting. Jane Austen in *The Rocking Chair* once again explains that Lady Russell, there's no expectation of her to remarry, because a woman will never remarry. But everyone wonders why Sir Walter never remarried after his wife died, because men are allowed to find love again. [giggles]

**Becca:** Yeah, exactly. But he's kind of got a, "I got my girls enough here" vibe.

**Molly:** Yes, exactly. He says he's [00:17:00] a cool dad.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** it does say that Lady Elliot hoped that Lady Russell and Sir Walter would get together in the end and she would be a mother figure to the kids, but they just remained friends.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Mary had married a Charles Musgrove, who is nothing special. She just gained some, "artificial importance," but not enough for her dad to actually be proud of her. And Anne, I'm just going to read this quote as it is, "Anne, with an elegance of mind and sweetness of character, which must have placed her high with any people of real understanding, was nobody with either father or sister." And why?

**Becca:** Excellent question. [chuckles]

**Molly:** There could be multiple reasons, but the reason given is that she is not attractive.

**Becca:** I feel like that's a kind of yes.

**Molly:** Well, I have a couple others, but primarily, they talk about how [00:18:00] she's not gotten any prettier with age.

**Becca:** Well, here's what happened. I think it's canonically put out there that Elizabeth is like a fucking babe.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** Like, hot. Elizabeth is superhot. She's keeping it tight. And Anne, when they were both like 20 and 22 or whatever, they were both really hot.

**Molly:** Okay.

**Becca:** Really, really hot. The Elliot's in general are like a hot family. But as Sir Walter and Elizabeth aged, they continue to age like fine wines. What we're learning here is that, Anne, who was like this insane beauty in her youth, is aging quicker than her sister.

**Molly:** Oh, I see.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** I see. That makes sense, because they don't describe her as being ugly.

**Becca:** She's not ugly. She's getting older. Like, she doesn't have the same skincare routine as Elizabeth.

**Molly:** Yeah. Okay, [Becca chuckles] we're going to get into this later, but I'm going to bring it up now. [00:19:00] Actually, Sir Walter would be so susceptible to a cult that promises eternal life.

**Becca:** True. And Elizabeth would go into deep credit card debt just through Korean skincare routines and Sephora products.

**Molly:** Oh, yeah. Yeah, it's good that this family doesn't have credit cards.



**Becca:** Do they not have credit cards?

**Molly:** Well, I guess they have something similar, because they are in debt.

**Becca:** Yeah, I was going to say it's exactly what happened.

**Molly:** You're so right. [laughs] Okay. So, lady Russell loves Anne because she reminds her of her mother. I wonder if that's also partly, like deep down why her father can't look at her.

**Becca:** I think there is something very simpatico about Sir Walter and Elizabeth and their energies.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** They're both giving off some Jenna Maroney vibes, if you've watched *30 Rock*.

**Molly:** I haven't.

**Becca:** Okay.

**Molly:** We've been-- [crosstalk]

**Becca:** This is like a different thing, but you might have to watch some *30 Rock*, if only [00:20:00] because the Jenna Maroney memes that we could create based on Elizabeth and Sir Walter in *Persuasion*.

**Molly:** Which character is Jenna? Like, who plays her?

**Becca:** Jane Krakowski.

**Molly:** Oh.

**Becca:** I'll find some clips that you'll see.

**Molly:** All right. Sounds good.

**Becca:** But Anne being taking after her mother and being a little bit serious and sensible-

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** -is like a stick in the mud,

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** -compared to her father and sister. And she's like, "Well, guys, maybe we shouldn't spend all that money." And they're like, "Oh, Anne."

**Molly:** It's like how everyone is mean to Jerry in *Parks and Rec*.

**Becca:** Yes, kind of.

**Molly:** [laughs] Or Toby in *The Office*?

**Becca:** Yeah, it's much more Toby, because Anne is definitely competent.

**Molly:** Yeah. Oh, sure.

**Becca:** Smart.

**Molly:** Oh, poor Jerry. [giggles]

**Becca:** We love Jerry. Jerry has a good life. His wife loves him, but he's a fucking mess.

**Molly:** Yeah, I guess that's true.

**Becca:** Whereas Anne is like not at all a mess.

**Molly:** She's like, "We got to fill out this paperwork." [giggles] [crosstalk] No.

**Becca:** Yeah. She's surrounded by messes. And Lady Russell understands that and sees that Anne is actually really worth her salt and [00:21:00] adores her. But her father and sister, not so much.

**Molly:** Yes. Her father likes Elizabeth the most, partially because Anne has aged faster and has lost her beauty with age, and he has given up on all hope of her getting married. Mary was not married to nobility, so he's now putting all the pressure on Elizabeth to keep the family name alive. Here's where we learn how old Elizabeth is. She's 29.

**Becca:** Which is your age.

**Molly:** I am 29. Now, I am a young lady, [Becca laughs] but I live in 2024. She's unmarried at 29. She is older than Charlotte Lucas.

**Becca:** Yes, who is the same age as Anne in this.

**Molly:** So, Anne is 27.

**Becca:** No money.

**Molly and Becca:** No prospects.

**Becca:** Already a burden on her parents.

**Molly:** And she's frightened.

**Becca:** Oh, yeah.

**Molly:** But I think that Elizabeth is even more frightened. She's an interesting character. I'm excited to learn more about her, because she is getting hotter and hotter with [00:22:00] age, and that's the only thing that can forgive her father for not realizing that she needs to get out of the house. She's like doesn't like the pressure that's on her quietly, or at least that's the vibe I'm getting. She's sick of always being the unmarried oldest daughter and doing the duties of Emma Woodhouse.

**Becca:** Well, I get the sense. Maybe you can correct me if you're-- I get the sense, and we'll talk about this that Jane Austen wants us to think Elizabeth wants to get married.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** We'll talk about it, but she's given off a different kind of vibe.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** But there is a sense, I think, of like, people who don't want to work unless they're famous. You know what I mean?

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** Like, you want to start at the top and stay at the top.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** Like, Elizabeth wants to marry, but Elizabeth only wants to marry a very specific kind of guy.

**Molly:** Yes, even, one could say a very specific guy.

**Becca:** She's looking for a man in finance.

**Molly:** Trust fund.

**Becca:** 6'5".

**Molly:** Blue eyes.

**Becca:** And [00:23:00] who does she set her sights on?

**Molly:** William Walter Elliot, Esq. Her cousin.

**Becca:** Yes.

**Molly:** I wrote, if this is her goddamn cousin in my book, "Knowing full well it was her goddamn cousin."

**Becca:** It's always her fucking cousin. Are you kidding?

**Molly:** But like for real, ugh. I lost my spot. Okay, here we are. [giggles]

**Becca:** Just too upset about the cousin.

**Molly:** No. Actually, I saw a line that I had written that we didn't get to, but that he thinks Anne is haggard, Mary is coarse, and Lady Russell has crow's feet. He's like, "The women around me are all aging so fast, except for my beautiful, ageless Elizabeth."

**Becca:** Yeah. And Sir Walter does not care about you unless you're hot.

**Molly:** Yes. And eternally youthful, because he's in a cult.

**Becca:** Yes.

**Molly:** Anyway, back to William Walter Esq.

**Becca:** Maybe Gwyneth should play Sir Walter, but let's go on.

**Molly:** Oh, my God. [giggles] Oh, my God, that's too good. [Becca laughs] Wow. So, William Walter Elliot, Esq. has disappointed Elizabeth. How? Well, they've been intended for each other since [00:24:00] birth. And when they met, Elizabeth was like, "Yes, you're the one." She invited him to Kellynch Hall, but he never came.

The next spring, she meets him again in town. Again, she invites him to Kellynch Hall, and again, he never came. The next thing they hear about him is that he's gotten married to a rich woman of inferior birth, thereby purchasing his independence.

**Becca:** Interesting moment.

**Molly:** Yes. I support it.

**Becca:** William?

**Molly:** I do. I support what he did.

**Becca:** Okay.

**Molly:** I think that he has a complicated home life.

**Becca:** Okay.

**Molly:** This is my prediction for him, where he's been intended for this person since birth that he doesn't know, it's going to keep the money in the family, and he doesn't want to beholden to whatever parent of his is trying to get him to marry his cousin. And he was like, "Maybe he married for love, maybe he married for money, maybe it's like a situation where [00:25:00] he was just like the first hot, available, non-noble woman that he could find." I'm hoping it's for love and that he's misunderstood. That's what I think happened. But what I don't approve of is that he then went and talked shit about the entire Elliot family behind their backs and spread shit about them, which is what he did, and I was curious about why he did that, because it didn't seem like they did anything to him.

**Becca:** Well, why would he?

**Molly:** I don't know. It was truly one of my biggest questions coming out of these three chapters. I was like, "Why did he talk shit?"

**Becca:** Well, I think--

**Molly:** Oh, well, maybe he was saying that they were vain and conceited.

**Becca:** I mean, that's a thought.

**Molly:** I hadn't thought of that.

**Becca:** Well, you know what I'm going to do?

**Molly:** Neither confirm nor deny. Oh, we also learn in this little section about Sir William Walter Elliot, Esq-- Is he a lawyer? Esquire?

**Becca:** Yes, esquire means lawyer.

**Molly:** Is that his wife dies [00:26:00] in 1814, which is the present. And Elizabeth is currently wearing mourning ribbons for him or for her rather. So devastating for him. She would have forgiven him the disgrace of his first marriage, because he doesn't have kids, there's nothing to perpetuate the marriage. They can all forget it happened, except for the shit talking about her family. They haven't spoken to him since the snobbery. They've ceased all communications. So, that's where we stand with William Walter, Esq. William Walter Elliot, Esq.

**Becca:** You can just say William.

**Molly:** All right. William.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Great. I'm going to confuse William and Walter.

**Becca:** So, the way I've been doing it is William and Sir Walter.

**Molly:** Okay. William, Sir Walter and Shep, who we'll meet soon.

**Becca:** Oh, Shep.

**Molly:** So, Elizabeth is at home, sitting in the house, bored, as that old video from early pandemic days said. She's also stressed because as we [00:27:00] briefly mentioned earlier, they are running low on money.

**Becca:** Someone did give them credit cards.

**Molly:** And they maxed them out big time.

**Becca:** Sure did.

**Molly:** Lady Elliot had been the person keeping Sir Walter within his means. When she died, all sense died with her, and he just went on a spending spree.

**Becca:** Yes, he did.

**Molly:** He thinks that he's not to be blamed, because it's simply impossible for him to be as hot as he is and spend less. He has to upkeep his appearances.

**Becca:** Yeah. The appearance goes to more than just his literal aesthetics.

**Molly:** Yeah. It's his house. It's his grounds. It's his rank.

**Becca:** Yes. His nobility.

**Molly:** Yes. But it's gotten really bad, and he can no longer conceal it from Elizabeth. So, he starts asking how they can reach French, which means to reduce costs or spending in response to economic difficulty.

**Becca:** I mean, who among us?

**Molly:** We all are retrenching all the time. [00:28:00] Now, Elizabeth is a woman, and therefore, she gets right on the case. This is what Jane Austen says. She's like, "She'd uses her womanly tacked or whatever, and she starts making a plan." She's like, "Okay, we'll stop giving to unnecessary charities," which is like, is that really the first thing that you-- Like, you're one of the wealthy families, that's what you do in this time. You give to charity.

**Becca:** Yeah, literally, half of Emma is her walking to go feed the poor. It's not a very big cost. Not to get political, but it's like when governments are like, "Yeah, let's cut spending," and then they cut the arts program, and I'm like, "That didn't do anything."

**Molly:** Right.

**Becca:** You just ruined everybody's good time. [chuckles]

**Molly:** Yeah. She says, "We'll stop that. We'll stop refurnishing the drawing room, and we won't bring a present to Anne," which I was like, "What present?" And then I realized they're on their yearly trip to London. They go to London every year, and they don't bring Anne.

**Becca:** Yeah, they're really fucking mean to Anne.

**Molly:** Anne is the ultimate middle child.

**Becca:** Yes.

**Molly:** [00:29:00] I was describing the book to Mel after I finished the first chapter, and she was like, "Can you give me the five sentence spark notes." And I was like, "This is about the ultimate middle child."

**Becca:** [chuckles] Anne Elliot, ultimate middle child.

**Molly:** Yeah. They literally just forget about her. So, this year, they're just like, "We're not going to bring her back anything from London." He's like, "I can't sell my land. There's only a small part of the estate that's not entailed in any way." Like, "I'll mortgage, but I will not stoop to sell." So, they call in Mr. Shepherd, who I'm calling Shep, who is their agent/lawyer/friend?

**Becca:** Lawyer/friend.

**Molly:** Okay.

**Becca:** And Lady Russell, who is friend/wife-friend, platonic wife.

**Molly:** Yeah. Mama.

**Becca:** Yeah, mama bear.

**Molly:** And that brings us to Chapter 2.

Pod and Prejudice is sponsored this week by the Ballarat National Theatre in Australia. If you're reading along with us, wouldn't you just love to listen to an audiobook version of *Persuasion*, where a full cast of actors tells the story alongside original music and sound design? [00:30:00] Well, the Ballarat National Theatre has created a 13-episode audiobook podcast version of *Persuasion*.

You may remember them from back in 2020, when they released a *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation in the same style. This audiobook is made entirely by volunteers at a not-for-profit theater company with a cast of 20 actors voicing the whole thing. It's true to the text without omissions, additions or any changes, and they've added an original music score to match Austen's words and set the scene.

The audiobook is available for free on all major podcast platforms, and you can head to [www.bnt.org.au](http://www.bnt.org.au) for all streaming links. They've just released Episode 7, so they're a little ahead of us, which means you can listen to their podcast alongside ours. It's basically a match made in heaven. Again, that's Ballarat National Theatre's production of *Persuasion*, which you can find at [www.bnt.org.au](http://www.bnt.org.au). And now, back to the show.

**Molly:** So, Shep doesn't [00:31:00] want to disappoint Sir Walter. He's basically like, "Uh, I refer to Lady Russell.

**Becca:** Okay. It's important to think about this in this circumstance. Mr. Shepherd is not of Sir Walter's rank.

**Molly:** No.

**Becca:** And Lady Russell is. She's a lady, so she is of nobility. So, she has a little bit more pull here to talk. But they're also very sensitive to the fact that Sir Walter is a delicate boy.

**Molly:** Yes. He is a delicate boy. Lady Russell is slower at decision making, and particularly in this case, because she's got dueling interests, because she wants to-- on one hand,

protect Sir Walter's feelings and not blow him up. But on the other hand, she is also smart and needs to make a good financial decision for them. She is prejudiced on their behalf because of their ancestry, and she's a little bit--

**Becca:** We are identifying a flaw in our girl, Lady Russell, right now.

**Molly:** Who's otherwise, perfect. [giggles]

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** But she's a little classist-

**Becca:** Yes, indeed.

**Molly:** -as they all are.

**Becca:** [00:32:00] Indeed. I forgot about this. She's the widow of a knight.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** So, she does have some noble stuff going on, because I think knights are just a step below like a baronet.

**Molly:** Yeah. It's literally knight, baronet, baron. So, he's got a little seniority on her, or whatever you would call that. But they're still in the same class, basically.

**Becca:** Yeah. They both have the noble blood-

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** -which protects people from things like poor financial decisions a lot of the time in this time period.

**Molly:** Right. So, she consults Anne, because nobody else thought to ask Anne what she thinks. And Anne is like, "Yeah, we have to go in 100%. Let's get out of debt as quickly as possible, cut spending wherever we can." And Lady Russell is like, "Yeah, we have to just be able to convince your dad. And if we can follow your plan, we'll be out of debt in seven years."

**Becca:** I can relate to the Elliot's here because I, too, understand that I should stop ordering takeout and buying coffee, and yet--

**Molly:** But [00:33:00] in the grand scheme of things, ordering takeout and buying coffee are very similar to bringing bread to the poor in this.

**Becca:** No, they're not.

**Molly:** In terms of what the amount you're spending-- That's not your rent. You're not in an exorbitantly priced high rise apartment building.

**Becca:** No, that's true. I get what you're saying. I think charity is a better expenditure than coffee.

**Molly:** Yes. No, I was saying in terms of the debt that that'll make-

**Becca:** Yes.

**Molly:** -in cutting it out. Elizabeth was like, "Let's take the easiest thing for us to cut out," which is bringing a basket of bread to the poor, "and that'll save us."

**Becca:** Elizabeth is cutting out the things she doesn't care about.

**Molly:** Oh, sure.

**Becca:** Like, that's the difference, is that Elizabeth wants to keep going to London. Elizabeth wants to keep fine dining, and going to balls and buying fancy silks. She doesn't care about bringing bread to the poor. It's not like the easiest expenditure to cut out. It's the least painful [00:34:00] one for her to cut out.

**Molly:** Sure. And cutting out coffee would be very painful.

**Becca:** Exactly. Well, I wouldn't cut out coffee. I just should it at home more often than I do. [chuckles] Anne's like, "Okay, so we have to start with cutting the trip to Miami, and then we're going to sell one of the cars, and we're going to also maybe set a budget for where you can order food from and maybe you don't order from Nobu anymore." And Lady Russell's like, "Ooh, that's going to be a lot for them to take in." And so, Lady Russell's like, "How about we just cut it down to one trip to Miami, and will also trade in one of the cars for something a little bit more modest and maybe Nobu once a month instead of once a week?"

**Molly:** Yes, that's a very good way of putting it.

**Becca:** And still Walter and Elizabeth are like, "Absolutely not."

**Molly:** Yeah. He says that he would rather leave than stay at Kellynch Hall on such disgraceful terms, [00:35:00] because he is a weenie. And Shep is like, "Wait, that's an idea. What if you leave?" He becomes persuaded and there is a footnote that says, "It's in the title."

**Becca:** Oh, amazing. What's the actual footnote?

**Molly:** "Perfectly persuaded. Entirely convinced. The firsts of many diverse uses of the concept of persuasion in the book."

**Becca:** Indeed.

**Molly:** So, he becomes persuaded that nothing can be done about their budget without a change of abode. He thinks that Sir Walter is trying to live up to the ancient dignity of Kellynch Hall and upkeeping this rank and status. If he's in a smaller house, maybe he could live within his means.

Sir Walter is convinced, and so we are going to go on an adventure. The next question is where. Anne wants to stay in the country to be near Lady Russell and Mary, but in classic Elliot fashion, Anne is ignored and they decide to go to Bath instead. Sir Walter, "Had at first thought more of London, but Mr. shepherd [00:36:00] felt he could not be trusted in London and had been skillful enough to dissuade him from it."

**Becca:** [laughs] It's perfect.

**Molly:** Yeah, it's amazing. But ultimately, he was like, "We need a big fish, small pond mentality. You can't be a small fish in a big pond, because then you're going to be trying to be a big fish in a big pond and you're going to spend money."

**Becca:** Yeah. It's a cheap place to live luxuriously.



**Molly:** Yes, exactly. Anne had wanted to stay in the country, as I said, and Lady Russell had opposed this idea because she thought it would be embarrassing for Sir Walter to move from a big house to a small one with all the same neighbors. People would talk. We know that Jane Austen time is gossip town. Now, Anne hates Bath.

**Becca:** Oh, she-- Anne hates Bath.

**Molly:** Yeah. She went to school there after her mother's death for three years, but that's not all. She visited once afterwards and was "Not in perfectly good spirits then." I wrote in my notes, "What [00:37:00] the fuck happened in Bath?" But we don't know yet.

Now, Lady Russell thinks that Anne needs to get out there and expand her society. She thinks that'll be good for her. It mentions that danger will be avoided by her passing all the warm months with her at Kellynch Lodge. Does that mean that Anne is going to go back and forth between Bath and Kellynch Hall?

**Becca:** Yeah, basically spent her summers with Lady Russell.

**Molly:** Okay. And Lady Russell doesn't live at Kellynch Hall, but she's there all the time, or--?

**Becca:** I think Kellynch Lodge is near Lady Russell.

**Molly:** Okay. So, she'd still be in the area.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Now, I have a word to define that I didn't know, engrafted, which is a verb.

**Becca:** And how was it used?

**Molly:** "The undesirableness of any other house in the same neighborhood for Sir Walter was certainly much strengthened by one part, and a very material part of the scheme, which had been happily engrafted on the beginning," which means incorporated in a firm or permanent way. So, part of the plan is that they're going to leave and they're going to let Kellynch Hall. [00:38:00] And Sir Walter is like, "This fucking sucks. I do not want to rent my house out."

**Becca:** But it is a pretty easy way to make some money to rent out your massive manor.

**Molly:** Yes. Exactly.

**Becca:** Now, you might recall Netherfield Park is let at last.

**Molly:** Oh, yes, I remember.

**Becca:** Yes.

**Molly:** Yes. I was very excited to see that. The fact that they're going to have to let Kellynch Hall is going to be kept a secret. And Sir Walter even refuses to advertise the house. He says, "I just want someone to spontaneously ask to live here."

I wrote down that I'm really praying that the person who rents the house is our handsome young man, whoever that may be in this book. Another good reason for them to move out, in Lady Russell's opinion, is that "Elizabeth had been lately forming an intimacy, which she wished to see interrupted."

**Becca and Molly:** Gay.

**Molly:** "It's Mr. Shepherd's daughter who has just returned from an unprosperous marriage," but with two kids. Now [00:39:00] I need to know, husband dead or divorced?

**Becca:** Husband dead, I think.

**Molly:** Okay. Because unprosperous like normally—Or, earlier in the book, they used that to mean no children.

**Becca:** Yes, but here, she does have children.

**Molly:** She just didn't get any money from his death.

**Becca:** Yeah. It's one of those circumstances where your husband leaves you with not a lot, so you move back in with your dad

**Molly:** And your two kids.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Unfortunate for her. Her name is Lady-

**Becca:** Mrs.

**Molly:** Mrs.

**Becca and Molly:** Clay.

**Molly:** And she has befriended "Elizabeth."

**Becca:** I had the same exact reaction. Like, our patrons are going to hear that in my reaction where I'm like, "This is a gay couple." [chuckles]

**Molly:** Yes, absolutely. Like, why else would we be trying to separate them? [giggles] I can think of some reasons, but I just-- Yup, gay.

**Becca:** Yeah. I think that Jane Austen is getting at the fact that Elizabeth is aristocratic and Mrs. Clay is a connection beneath her-

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** -but at the same time gay.

**Molly:** [00:40:00] Yes, exactly. Now, Lady Russell is not really one who is able to influence Elizabeth. They don't have a very good relationship. Not like it's a bad relationship, but it says, "She seemed to love her, rather because she would love her, than because Elizabeth deserved it."

So, basically, she's just trying her best to help out, but Elizabeth doesn't really want to hear it. Lady Russell had at times tried to get Elizabeth and her dad to bring Anne to London. She's tried to give Elizabeth advice, but she has just never been listened to, particularly when it comes to Mrs. Clay. In her opinion, Elizabeth is choosing Mrs. Clay over her own sister, Anne. Lady Russell thinks that removing the Elliot's to Bath is going to be great for everyone involved, which brings us to Chapter 3. We learn that the navy is coming. The officer's, the officer.

**Becca:** Oh boy. The navy.

**Molly:** And Mr. Shepherd says they will all be wanting a home. So, I think our tenant is going to [00:41:00] be one of the navy. Sir Walter thinks that any admiral would be lucky to live at Kellynch Hall. Shep thinks that naval officers are very desirable tenants. He hints that since Sir Walter is of so much consequence, word might get out of his trying to let the house, and then the officers might apply to live there.

Basically, one, flattering him and being like, "Oh, you're so important, like people are going to hear." And two, I think that he's out there telling people and trying to cover up for himself. Sir Walter thinks that the men in the navy would be surprised to find themselves there. He's like, "This place is too good for them, basically." And Mrs. Clay is like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, but they'd be really good tenants because they're very neat and careful, and they would take care of the gardens."

Then Sir Walter says, "Well, if I do let the house, I would restrict their use of the pleasure grounds." I had to ask, do you know what the difference between the park and the pleasure grounds is?

**Becca:** I do not.

**Molly:** Cool. Because he seems like he's going to be like, "Well, they can stay here, but they can't touch this, this and this."

**Becca:** [00:42:00] Yeah, that's exactly right.

**Molly:** Yeah. Mr. Shepherd's response to this interaction confused me a little bit, but I think what he's saying is he'd be around to keep an eye on things, so nobody would break anything.

**Becca:** What page are you looking at for that?

**Molly:** Page 20 in my copy. He says, "In all these cases, there are established usages which make everything plain and easy between landlord and tenant. Your interest, Sir Walter, is in pretty safe hands. Depend upon me for taking care that no tenant has more than his just rights. I venture to hint, that Sir Walter Elliot cannot be half so jealous for his own, as John Shepherd will be for him." So, basically, he's saying, "I'm going to keep track of things."

**Becca:** Yeah, and make sure that the people don't overstep that. Like, "It is still your house, they're staying in it."

**Molly:** They're not throwing parties.

**Becca:** Exactly. I think there's some really interesting stuff here that Sir Walter says about navy. He says he finds the Navy offensive, essentially. One of the points he says, "As being the means of bringing persons [00:43:00] of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honors which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of." And then he combines that with the fact that guys in the navy are ugly.

**Molly:** Because they're weather worn.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** They're weather beaten, their skin has gotten tan and leathery and wrinkles faster. He tells a story about someone named Admiral Baldwin. He was hanging out with his friend, Sir Basil Morley. Basil turns to him and asks, "How old he thinks Admiral Baldwin is?" And he's like, "I don't know, 60." And Basil's like, "He's 40." He never forgot that. [Becca laughs] Again, eternal life cult.

**Becca:** Okay. I said Hugh Grant, but now I'm becoming more and more convinced that Gwyneth Paltrow should play Sir Walter.

**Molly:** It's uncanny actually.

**Becca:** I think we should have a poll on our Instagram when this episode premieres.

**Molly:** Yeah. So, Mrs. Clay then goes on to say that not everyone is meant to be handsome. Everyone who works at Hall, even if they're a lawyer or a shoemaker, [00:44:00] they're all exerting themselves in some way, and therefore, age faster than those like them who can just relax and repose all day. basically, we should all retire or be born rich.

Very shortly after this conversation, one, Admiral Croft applies for the house. He had met Shep at the quarter sessions at Taunton, which are local courts that are traditionally held at four set times each year in the Kingdom of England. And he had accidentally heard that Kellynch Hall was to be let. He knew that Mr. Shepherd was friends with Sir Walter, and so he introduced himself to him on purpose. I think that Shep had already-- This all happened. He let slip about the house and then he breached the conversation about the navy because of that.

**Becca:** Well, there's some telling stuff in here about why a naval officer is such a good tenant. One thing, they are rich [00:45:00] and rich without an estate of their own, generally, unless you're Colonel Brandon, obviously. But the other thing being, given the timing of this book, there's a telling line here where they talk about how Admiral Croft was a real admiral who had been involved in the Trafalgar action, which I believe is the Napoleonic wars.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** So, the war is over and the boys coming home.

**Molly:** Right.

**Becca:** So, there's a lot of guys flooding the market-

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** -looking for big houses to basically set their mark on the world and get this fancy, little lifestyle going, now that they've made all this money at the war and now that they've raised their social status through war to come home and or let houses from nobility that is desperately in need of the funds.

**Molly:** Yeah. I'm wondering now what happened to the previous owners of Netherfield?

**Becca:** Great question. Well, it says let at last.

**Molly:** So, it's been sitting empty. Maybe they're dead.

**Becca:** No. [00:46:00] The way that it works-- It might just be someone who has a bigger estate elsewhere or it could be someone who's poor. There's a lot of reasons to let an estate.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** You can't sell it.

**Molly:** Right. Oh, right because of the end, the fee tale the entail?

**Becca:** Yes.

**Molly:** But what I'm saying is that Mr. Shepherd had already gone to the naval officers and been like, "Guess what?" And they were like, "Yes, please." And then he came back and he was like, "So, naval officers would be a good tenant."

**Becca:** That's exactly correct. He knows all these guys are flooding into the country and he's like, "Ooh, there's definitely a good opportunity for a tenant here." He finds Admiral Croft, who's a rich boy, and he's like, "Hey, so what if we did a naval officer?" And Sir Walter's like, "Oh, they're ugly and poor."

**Molly:** [giggles] So, Admiral Croft is from a gentleman's family, supposedly. And Anne, somehow knows exactly who he is, what his rank is, where he's been deployed, she just blurts it out.

**Becca:** So interesting. How you know that, Anne?

**Molly:** I was like, "Anne, how do you know that?" This is only the first [00:47:00] time she said something about him. Sir Walter's response is, "I take it for granted that his face is as orange as the cuffs and capes of my livery," if that was hilarious. And then Mr. Shepherd says, "Yeah, well, he's weather beaten, but he's attractive and he's very like a gentleman in manners."

He says that Admiral Croft knows there will be limitations on the land. He would be glad of the deputation, which means the opportunity to shoot game. But he doesn't need to, because he never shoots anything. He sometimes holds a gun, but he's never killed. I don't know if that means he's a bad shot or he just doesn't do it. He's more of an indoor boy.

**Becca:** I think he's more of a sea boy.

**Molly:** Oh, yeah, a sea boy.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** He's married, but has no children, which we like because a woman will keep the house in order and children are messy, so, this is the perfect situation. Also, the lady is lovely, and she knows more about terms and taxes than Admiral Croft, and she even has some connections in the area we learn. She's the sister to a gentleman.

**Becca:** Oh, does she?

**Molly:** [00:48:00] Yes. Who used to live at Monkford, but we can't remember his name. Mr. Shepherd's like, "I know a story about a farmer's man breaking onto his property and stealing apples, but I can't remember his name."

**Becca:** And then suddenly, Anne, just from out of-- "I think you're talking about Mr. Wentworth."

**Molly:** And then I wrote "Fuck, yes."

**Becca:** Yeah. Record scratch from us. I think both of us at the same time being like, "We know that name."

**Molly:** Yes, because we are on Jane Austen and Instagram. We know that name. But how does Anne know?

**Becca:** That's a great question.

**Molly:** Again, where are you getting your information from? Sir Walter's like, "Oh, you misled me by calling him a gentleman. He's a nobody. Quite unconnected."

**Becca:** He's such an asshole.

**Molly:** He sucks.

**Becca:** You love him.

**Molly:** Yes, I do. [giggles]

**Becca:** Problematic daddy for the win.

**Molly:** Yes, he's hot and annoying.

**Becca:** [chuckles] Which makes him hotter. When someone's a little annoying and hot at the same time-- No, that's actually completely untrue. [Molly laughs] Sometimes people are so annoying that [00:49:00] even if they're hot, they're just not hot at all.

**Molly:** Well, we'll see. We'll see how this progresses. I'm not going to fully be like, "Yes, he can do no wrong," because he can do a lot of wrong. He's so mean.

**Becca:** He's so mean to Anne. [chuckles]

**Molly:** But he is hot. Because he's a certifiable daddy, we have to stand.

**Becca:** He is canonically daddy.

**Molly and Becca:** Daddy.

**Molly:** Well, okay, I'm not going to talk about his nobility anymore, because whatever. But eventually, Sir Walter is persuaded to let the Croft see the estate. He decides that letting the house to Admiral Croft would be good, because an admiral's situation in life is high enough, but not too high. He's not a mister. He's an admiral. And an admiral speaks his own consequence and at the same time, never makes a baronet look small. So, he's doing charity by letting someone who's below him let the house, but also--

**Becca:** No, it's very specific because he's like, "He's enough of a rank to be impressive, but not enough of a rank to be competition for me."

**Molly:** Exactly.

**Becca:** [00:50:00] It's a very mean girl thing to do.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Elizabeth is like, "Yes, this is a great idea." And so, Mr. Shepherd goes off to tell him to come see the place. "No sooner had such an end been reached, than Anne, who had been a most attentive listener to the whole, left the room, to seek the comfort of cool air for her flushed cheeks, and as she walked along a favorite grove, said, with a gentle sigh, "A few months more, and he perhaps may be walking here.'"

**Becca:** End of chapter.

**Molly:** What?

**Becca:** First of all, I wrote in my book, "OMFG, this is so hot. What's the history?"

**Molly:** I was like, "Did they have a steamy affair?"

**Becca:** Who's to say?

**Molly:** Who's to say? Whomst even?

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Lots of predictions about that.

**Becca:** That brings us to Becca's study questions. And before we get into Becca's study questions, we have patron study questions.

**Molly:** Oh-oh.

**Becca:** Listeners, just as a reminder, if you want to subscribe to our Patreon at the \$15 tier, you can submit a question, which you can do through a Google Doc that Molly will [00:51:00] post every week that we have an episode airing. We might miss your questions. Otherwise, make sure that you submit through the Google Doc, and we will ask your questions on the air. So, with that in mind, we have a couple questions. Joanna asks, "In the opening paragraphs, Austen focuses the reader's attention on the fragment of the book, *Baronetage*. Why?"

**Molly:** *Baronetage*.

**Becca:** *Baronetage*

**Molly:** So, we talked about this a lot at the beginning of our episode, but it gives us the rundown of the family history. We know who's in the family, who's married, who's not, who's dead and also who our cousin is, who's the heir? It shows our-- like, we are part of the family too, our rank in society. We're in the baronetage.

**Becca:** Yes. I think immediately it sets a scene that we're in a noble family, which we actually haven't been in one of our books yet.

**Molly:** No, we've just been in [00:52:00] landed gentry.

**Becca:** We've been in a lot of landed gentry. Obviously, we are in and out of discussing the nobility. Obviously, you have Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** You have Lord Middleton. John Middleton, he's a lord, right?

**Molly:** Yeah, because Lady Middleton.

**Becca:** Yeah, Lord Middleton. I don't think anybody in *Emma* is noble, but you take my point that they get sprinkled in. So, it's interesting that in our current story, we start with like, immediately we are dealing with a noble family. And then almost immediately after that, we are dealing with an impoverished noble family.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** And setting the scene with who Sir Walter and Elizabeth are immediately shown to be, you get Jane Austen already doing her damndest to shit on the noble class,-

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** -which she has done in a couple of her books so far, but this one is pretty explicit [00:53:00] and immediate.

**Molly:** Yeah. It's fun that we're making fun of this class and chitting on them, but also, we're getting a little bit of Jane Austen in there with hating Bath, but living there. Did she hate it? I know that she lived there and was unhappy.

**Becca:** Yeah. We'll get into this a little bit further, but I have some real questions about how much of Anne is Austen. Obviously, she's very close to her sister, Cassandra, but otherwise, an unmarried woman in Bath of great beauty and a sound mind and a spendthrift father.

**Molly:** Mm.

**Becca:** I have questions about how much of this is Jane Austen projecting herself and her story. That's from the four books we've read so far. This one is the one where I've really been like, "Hmm."

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** "Hmm."

**Molly and Becca:** Hmm.

**Becca:** "Interesting."

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** Hmm. [00:54:00] Okay, study question number two. Megan R asks, "The first three chapters of *Persuasion* is the longest Austen has done using just narrative voice. Could you tell the difference, and what did you think of this change?"

**Molly:** When you say narrative voice, does that mean like we're not having conversations between people, it's like, this is just narrator?

**Becca:** Yes. I think it's the Jane Austen in *The Rocking Chair*.

**Molly:** Yes. Oh, yes. So, yes, I noticed. It gives us more of an idea of what you were just saying of what Jane Austen's opinion is on these people and what we're supposed to think of these people. So, we know who we're supporting right away, because we love an underdog and we know who we're annoyed by right away, because we're getting-- That could also be that these are getting easier to read with time, but I feel like I have a better idea of who's going to be the hero and who's not.

Now, I'm not saying that I'm not going to fall [00:55:00] in love with Elizabeth and Mr. Sir Walter, but I think that I don't like that they're mean to our girl. We're getting everything from a third person perspective.

**Becca:** Yeah. I would only add to that. We have a lot of delulu going on in the book right now. One thing I think that's captured by these first few chapters, I don't think this is a spoiler to say, is that Anne is quiet and introspective.

**Molly:** And people don't listen to her when she talks.

**Becca:** And people don't listen to her when she does talk. So, we need the narrator to give us an impression of who we're dealing with, because Anne's not going to give it to us.



**Molly:** Right. So, it's interesting, like, does Anne feel the way about her family that we are meant to feel about them from the narrator? Like, is Anne the narrator also, or is that Jane Austen?

**Becca:** Who's to say?

**Molly:** I guess we'll find out.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** Mm.

**Molly:** Mm.

**Becca:** Mm. Last patron [00:56:00] study question. Emily asks, "Best guess so far on who the villain of the story is/will be?"

**Molly:** I feel like William Walter Elliot, Esq. is going to be a "villain," just because he went around talking shit about them for like-- Well, I guess for the reason that they're conceded and vain. Honestly, again, I support [giggles] him in thinking that because they are, but don't talk shit about our friends. I don't know if they're our friends yet. So, then the question is, are the Elliot's going to be villains? So, right now, I'm a little bit torn between Sir Walter and William Walter, Esq., Elliot Esq, the senior third.

**Becca:** I love that you give him like eight different names every time you say his name.

**Molly:** Yeah. [giggles] That's going to be a running joke. I can tell because-

**Becca:** Incredible.

**Molly:** -I can't get it right.

**Becca:** Yeah. So, Shirley Temple, William Elliot.

**Molly:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Becca:** All right. So, now, Becca's study questions. [00:57:00]

**Molly:** And a huge thank you to our patrons who submitted study questions for this week.

**Becca:** So, what do we immediately learn about the main characters in the story, and what does it tell us about Anne?

**Molly:** So, we learn that they are-- well, that her family, her older family, is hot and conceited and vain. We learn that Anne is aging like a normal human being, as is her sister, Mary, who's married. Mary is married. I think that the big personalities we have going on with her dad and her sister shrink her and she doesn't get listened to. Because she doesn't get listened to, she doesn't talk much or doesn't pipe up, but she's very pragmatic and practical. I know that Lady Russell listens to her, and values her opinion and thinks that she and Elizabeth should be friends.

**Becca:** I think you hit the nail on the head. I think, first of all, we're in a family [00:58:00] where they come from greatness and are falling, devolving and clearly started at a different place at the start of her life and then devolved downwards through her life, through no fault of her own. I think you get the sense that she's in a house where she's profoundly misunderstood, and lonely, and quiet and sad as a result.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** So, you get this from the perspective of her father and sister, who are cruel in a lot of ways to her. But they're so ridiculous in these chapters and they're such a caricature of the excesses of nobility that you immediately get a sense of what Anne's up against to be herself in these moments.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** So, it makes you already endeared to poor. Poor sweet Anne.

**Molly:** Yeah. I really like her.

**Becca:** Our quintessential middle child. What is Jane Austen doing showing a man of nobility in this state?

**Molly:** By in this state, do you mean in his fallen state or--?

**Becca:** In his fallen state.

**Molly:** [00:59:00] I think it heightens the fact that he is so oblivious to what actual people go through and what the people in lower classes than him experience in their day-to-day life that he's like-- It also heightens his need for superficial status symbols, because he can't afford them anymore. Yeah. And just that he gets put in a position where he has to move out and let his apartment, his estate and he is still like, "I would rather leave than give up both of my horses."

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** Joanna, her question got at this as well, but we open with him obsessing over his *Baronetage*, his *Baronetage*.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** And so, you see him cling to this status he has, really hard, and let the world around him burn because [01:00:00] of where he is in society, class wise and nothing else. Not monetary considerations, not practical considerations, not family considerations, just his status and frankly his looks.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** That gives you an idea right away. Jane is clearly, like I said, taking a massive dump on the noble class here and capturing something very real that was happening in England, which is noble people living in excess and losing their money because of it. These estates draining them, because they're expensive and you can't sell them.

**Molly:** Mm-hmm.

**Becca:** So, it's interesting. We're going to skip around a little bit, because my questions later relate to this. We hear a lot about the navy in this chapter. What is the navy compared to this Sir Walter and his story?

**Molly:** Lower. They're like new money, right?

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** The reason he hates them is because it allows for social mobility. He does not think that people should be allowed [01:01:00] to move between classes. He wants people to be born into their status and stay there. With the navy, you can elevate your own rank when, in his words like, "Your dad would never be caught dead with his dad, and now you're of the same rank."

**Becca:** Yes, that's true. It waters down the noble class to have guys be able to rise up. Jane Austen already is juxtaposing the noblemen with the men who work for their money here, which is really interesting, because Jane Austen's not usually so ready to talk about moving social classes. But these guys are in the navy.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** There's some outside stuff here. Like, it mentions of the East Indies, where I want to go on a whole rant about how, when you were an Englishman in this time period, you could use colonialism to pull yourself up in your local society by going abroad and being British abroad, and therefore higher up than everybody [01:02:00] else. It's a whole classist, imperialist bullshit thing that I think Austen touches on, but does so, and without spoiling anything a little bit more effectively later than in this book. But she's clearly already setting up a difference between the nobleman and a navy man, a sailor and how they come into wealth and what they do with wealth already.

**Molly:** Yeah, definitely.

**Becca:** So, going back, one question. We are starring an unmarried 27-year-old woman and her unmarried 29-year-old sister.

**Molly:** Unreal.

**Becca:** How does this immediately make this book different than all the other books that we read?

**Molly:** Well, these people are our age.

**Becca:** Yes.

**Molly:** At long last, someone we can actually relate to. But on the other hand, in all of the other books, everyone's 21, 22, 23 and talking about how old they are and how they have to get married. And in this book, that doesn't seem to be at the forefront of these [01:03:00] people's minds, not in an *Emma* way.

I think that Elizabeth really does want to get married and she wants to get married to a person of high status like herself, like you said. I don't know how Anne feels about marriage, but these two women are saving themselves-- Sir Walter doesn't think that Anne's ever going to get married, and he's not pressed about it. All of his pressure is on Elizabeth to marry the right person. Because she is hot, he thinks that she still has a shot.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** But she is elderly compared to our other heroines.

**Becca:** Yeah. I want to note a couple of things here. One, obviously, because Mary is married, Mary is married, the pressure of like unmarried girls is off in this book in a certain way where they at least have somewhere to go if their father died.

**Molly:** Sure. I guess Mary is like what, 23, [01:04:00] 21?

**Becca:** Yeah. [crosstalk]

**Molly:** She's seven years younger, so she's 20.

**Becca:** 20.

**Molly:** She's seven years younger than Elizabeth.

**Becca:** Oh, so 22.

**Molly:** Yeah. So, she is 22. I guess what I'm thinking of Lady Catherine de Bourgh being so shocked that Lydia's already married. Or, no, that she's out. "All five out at once."

**Becca:** The reason that Catherine de Bourgh was shocked was not that she was out at such a young age, necessarily, but because all five were out at once, it's much easier to marry your daughters off one at a time.

**Molly:** I see, I see.

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** I see. Okay. But in any event, the youngest sister being the first one to get married seems odd, because normally, I feel like you would do it in order of age. It's interesting. I'm curious like, how big a part of this story marriage is going to be. This is going to drive my mom crazy. All of her saying, Mary is married because I say those two words exactly the same.

**Becca:** Because it's Mary, marry and merry?

**Molly:** Yeah. So, [01:05:00] Mary is married.

**Becca:** And she's very merry about it.

**Molly:** Yes, exactly. I'm excited to get to know Mary though, because-- Anyway, sorry, mom. But I'm curious, I can only picture our nerd girl, Mary. So, I'm curious about this Mary.

**Becca:** We'll have to see.

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Becca:** I would also just add on the fact, you're right. The stakes are different because they're so old, because the prospects for marriage are much, much lower at this point. Elizabeth lives in delulu world, but Anne is living in this world of like, "I know this is my life now."

**Molly:** Yeah. I'm curious, because it does say her dad literally doesn't think she's going to get married and isn't trying to push her out there, does she--? I guess we'll find out later, but does she go to Balls, and is she in society, and is she trying to get married and does she want to? If she doesn't, is she going to become a [01:06:00] Miss Bates who's just alone and unmarried and living with her dad?

**Becca:** Again, because her sister's married, she can't become Miss Bates.

**Molly:** Because she could go live with her sister?

**Becca:** Yeah.

**Molly:** All right. When I say Miss Bates, I mean not becoming destitute. I just mean being--

**Becca:** Chatty and lonely?

**Molly:** Chatty and lonely, kind of ridiculed. I think that she doesn't deserve that. [giggles] So, we'll find out.

**Becca:** We'll find out. Last question. Who is he?

**Molly:** I have no idea, but here are my theories.

**Becca:** Okay, give them to me.

**Molly:** He, meaning Mr. Wentworth, I think because that's the-- Well, okay, I have heard the name Wentworth, as had you before you read this book. So, I am assuming he is going to be important. He's not the one letting the house. His sister and her husband are. But because she knows so much about him and was [01:07:00] pointing out, "Oh, well, he was in this area when he was on duty." I think that he is he.

Who is he to her? My theories are thus. One, they had a steamy affair many years ago. Two, they're having an ongoing affair and they need a reason for him to come visit. Three, she's had a crush on him her whole life, but he doesn't know who she is.

**Becca:** What am I going to do?

**Molly:** Neither confirm nor deny.

**Becca:** Going to do neither of those things, but I'm glad we have them on the record.

**Molly:** Yes.

**Becca:** That leads us to our standbys. Funniest quote?

**Molly:** I said two of them already, so I will say this last one. We're talking about Admiral Croft's wife, "A lady, without a family, was the very best preserver of furniture in the world."

**Becca:** That should be without dogs as well from my experience.

**Molly:** [laughs] Oh, yeah.

**Becca:** Questions moving forward.

**Molly:** Why does Anne hate Bath? Is that where she had a steamy affair with Mr. Wentworth? Who knows? [01:08:00] Why was William Walter, Esq. Admiral III the worst, what was he saying about them, and what's wrong with Mrs. Clay?

**Becca:** I think just beneath Elizabeth-- Well, we'll get there. We'll get there.

**Molly:** And gay.

**Becca:** Gay. All right, listeners, we clearly got really excited to talk about this book again. For next week, we're going to be reading Chapters 4 and 5 of *Persuasion*. And by next week, I mean next episode are two weeks from now. So, until next time, stay proper.

**Molly:** And don't max out your credit card.

**Becca:** It's good advice.

[music]

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](http://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.

[Transcript provided by [SpeechDocs Podcast Transcription](#)]