

SIDE 6 Emma, Knightley and Mrs. Weston

KNIGHTLEY:

Emma, how could you speak to Miss Bates so?!!

EMMA:

I-you must allow, that what is admirable and what is ridiculous are completely blended in Miss Bates! And I was-was provoked, she would not stop prattling on, and is it so-wrong to-just acknowledge-

Unbeknownst to both of them, Mrs. Weston has entered and hears the rest of this; she hangs back-

KNIGHTLEY:

-were Miss Bates prosperous, I could accept this acknowledgement. But she was not born into privilege, as you were! She is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and, if nothing changes, she will sink more. Her situation should secure your compassion, not your contempt!

EMMA:

It/

KNIGHTLEY:

/ She has known you since you were a child; she has given you a thousand attentions; she has flattered you far beyond your merits-and what is her thanks?

EMMA:

Please-

KNIGHTLEY:

To have you grow up to humble her before all the company!! What right do YOU have to judge Miss Bates, for taking in boarding students, running a-a struggling little school? How can you mock her, for-for trying to do something with her life!

What do YOU ever do with your time but-but waste it-on vain nonsense, on flirting with Frank Churchill, on tearing down Miss Fairfax-a superior woman, whom you mostly resent for being more of USE than you are!

EMMA:

What?

Prove me wrong, Emma. Tell me that one single thing that I have said is unmerited!

Emma looks at him-opens her mouth to speak-her eyes fill with tears. She cannot speak. She exits.

Knightley is about to go after her, but stops. Mrs. Weston emerges.

MRS. WESTON:

Are you happy, sir?

KNIGHTLEY:

What?

MRS. WESTON:

Consider, George Knightley-the advantages that YOU were born into.

You and my Emma have grown up together-squabbling and competing and attempting to impress each other all that time – and she has always been your equal. She is capable of all that you are capable of, but she cannot have an occupation, like Mr. Knightley of Donwell Abbey; she cannot own property, nor operate in the courts! She is not to have much utility at all! Indeed, she is scarcely to have any rights at all!

A lady who is not allowed real employment, will grasp like a drowning woman for the lifeline of any minor stimulation whatsoever! She eats too much, she over-primps, she engages in silly dramas, she meddles in her friends' lives! And yes, she takes out her frustrations on others-because she is so desperately bored! Because within that young woman is potential going to waste!

Easy for you to judge her, as she judged Miss Bates! Shame on Emma, yes! But shame on both of you.

She is about to exit, then:

It may be worth considering, sir; why you are so-consumed with trying to guide Emma's character; with why you are consumed by her, in general.