

AUDITION PIECE 2

Scene 2: Encounter on a walk

Sounds of birdsong. Enter Emma and Harriet Smith in outdoor clothes.

Harriet Smith: Oh, Miss Woodhouse, how I love our walks! Do you know, this path takes us very close to Abbey-Mill Farm, where I spent the summer! With the Martins?

Emma: Yes, Harriet, I recollect.

Harriet Smith: Did I tell you that one night Mr Martin had his shepherd's son into the parlour on purpose to sing to me! He knew how fond I am of singing! He has a very fine flock, too; while I was with them, he was bid more for his wool than anybody in the country.

Emma: Mr Martin, I suppose, is not a man of information beyond the line of his own business. He does not read?

Harriet Smith: Oh, yes! That is, no – I do not know. He reads the Agricultural Reports...and I know he has read 'The Vicar of Wakefield'. He never read 'The Romance of the Forest', nor 'The Children of the Abbey'. He had never heard of such books before I mentioned them, but he is determined to get them now as soon as ever he can.

Emma: What sort of looking man is Mr Martin?

Harriet Smith: I thought him very plain at first, but I do not think him so plain now. But did you never see him?

Enter Mr Martin behind the ladies. He looks surprised to see them.

Harriet Smith: *(continuing her thought)* He is in Highbury every now and then –

Mr Martin: Miss Smith! And...Miss Woodhouse.

They turn around. Harriet Smith looks at Emma excitedly and with meaning. After everyone has made the appropriate greetings, Harriet Smith goes over to Mr Martin and they speak affectionately in hushed tones. Emma remains at a distance, glancing at them every now and then, appraisingly.

Exit Mr Martin after taking leave.

Harriet Smith: *(excitedly)* Only think of our happening to meet him! He did not think we ever walked this road. He has not been able to get 'The Romance of the Forest' yet. He was so busy the last time he was at Kingston that he quite forgot it, but he goes again tomorrow. Well, Miss Woodhouse, is he like what you expected? What do you think of him?

Emma: He is very plain, undoubtedly – remarkably plain – but that is nothing compared with his entire want of gentility. I did not expect much, but I had no idea that he could be so very clownish, so totally without air. I had imagined him, I confess, a degree or two nearer gentility.

Harriet Smith: *(mortified)* To be sure, he is not so genteel as real gentlemen.

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Emma: I think, Harriet, since your acquaintance with us, you have been repeatedly in the company of some, such very real gentlemen, that you must yourself be struck with the difference in Mr Martin. At Hartfield you have had very good specimens of well-educated, well-bred men. I should be surprised if, after seeing them, you could be in company with Mr Martin again without perceiving him to be a very inferior creature.

Harriet Smith: Certainly, he is not like Mr Knightley. But Mr Knightley is so very fine a man!

Emma: Mr Knightley's air is so remarkably good, that it is not fair to compare Mr Martin with him. What say you to Mr Weston and Mr Elton? Compare Mr Martin with either of them. Compare their manner of carrying themselves; of walking; of speaking; of being silent. You must see the difference.

Harriet Smith: Oh, yes! There is a great difference. But Mr Weston is almost an old man. He must be between forty and fifty.

Emma: Which makes his good manners the more valuable. What is passable in youth, is detestable in later age. Mr Martin is now awkward and abrupt; what will he be at Mr Weston's time of life?

Harriet Smith: There is no saying, indeed!

Emma: But there may be pretty good guessing. He will be a completely gross, vulgar farmer – totally inattentive to appearances, and thinking of nothing but profit and loss.

Harriet Smith: Will he, indeed, that will be very bad.

Emma: How much his business engrosses him already is very plain from the circumstance of his forgetting to inquire for the book you recommended.

Harriet Smith: I wonder he did not remember the book.

Emma: I think a young man might be safely recommended to take Mr Elton as a model. Mr Elton is good humoured, cheerful, obliging and gentle. He seems to me, to be grown particularly gentle of late. If he means anything, I believe it must be to please you. Did I not tell you what he said of you the other day?

Emma and Harriet Smith exit, talking animatedly.