

### AUDITION PIECE 3

#### Scene 10: An unwelcome proposal

*Carriage interior going home from the Christmas party. The carriage will drop Mr Elton off at the vicarage before going on to Hartfield. Emma is displeased at being in a carriage with Mr Elton, fearing that he has drunk too much of Mr Weston's good wine.*

*(Emma, Mr Elton)*

Emma: The snow is not so heavy after all, but there is certainly a chill wind –

Mr Elton: My dear Miss Woodhouse, I must avail myself of this precious opportunity and declare sentiments which must be already well known, hoping – fearing – adoring – ready to die if you refuse me; but flattering myself that my ardent attachment and unequalled love and unexampled passion cannot fail of having some effect, and in short, very much resolve on being seriously accepted as soon as possible.

Emma: *(with a mixture of the serious and the playful)* I am very much astonished, Mr Elton. This to me! You forget yourself – you take me for my friend – any message to Miss Smith I shall be happy to deliver; but no more of this to me, if you please.

Mr Elton: Miss Smith! Message to Miss Smith! What could you possibly mean?

Emma: Mr Elton, this is the most extraordinary conduct! And I can account for it only in one way; you are not yourself, or you could not speak to me in such a manner. Command yourself enough to say no more, and I will endeavour to forget it.

Mr Elton: I perfectly know my own meaning; your suspicion is most injurious. I wonder that Miss Smith should be mentioned at all! I am passionately in love with you, Miss Woodhouse!

Emma: Mr Elton, my astonishment is much beyond anything I can express. After such behaviour as I have witnessed during the last month to Miss Smith – to be addressing me in this manner: this is an unsteadiness of character, indeed, which I had not supposed possible!

Mr Elton: Miss Smith! I never thought of Miss Smith in the whole course of my existence – never paid her any attentions, but as your friend: never cared whether she were dead or alive, but as your friend. Oh! Miss Woodhouse! Who can think of Miss Smith, when Miss Woodhouse is near! No, upon my honour, there is no unsteadiness of character. I have thought only of you. Everything that I have said or done, for many weeks past, has been with the sole view of marking my adoration of yourself. You cannot really, seriously, doubt it. No! I am sure you have seen and understood me.

*Long pause. Emma doesn't know what to say. Mr Elton interprets this silence for encouragement and takes her hand.*

Mr Elton: Charming Miss Woodhouse! Allow me to interpret this interesting silence. It confesses that you have long understood me.

Emma: *(pulling her hand away)* No, sir, it confesses no such thing. So far from having long understood you, I have been in a most complete error with respect to your views, till this moment. As to myself, I am very sorry that you should have been giving way to any feelings.

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Nothing could be farther from my wishes – your attachment to my friend Harriet – your pursuit of her (pursuit, it appeared) gave me great pleasure. Am I to believe that you have never sought to recommend yourself particularly to Miss Smith?

Mr Elton: Never, madam! Never, I assure you. *I think seriously of Miss Smith!* No doubt there are men who might not object to – everybody has their level: but as for myself, I am not, I think, quite so much at a loss. No, madam, my visits to Hartfield have been for yourself only; and the encouragement I received –

Emma: Encouragement! I give you encouragement! Sir, you have been entirely mistaken in supposing it. I have seen you only as the admirer of my friend. I am exceedingly sorry: but it is well that the mistake ends where it does. I trust the disappointment will not be lasting. I have no thoughts of matrimony at present.

*The carriage draws to a halt and Mr Elton gets out.*

Emma: Good night.

*Exit Mr Elton.*

Emma: *(with a groan)* If I had not persuaded Harriet into liking the man, I could have born anything. He might have doubled his presumption to me – but poor Harriet!