

AUDITION PIECE 8, Box Hill part 2

Mr Knightley: (*looking around to check no-one is in earshot*) Emma, I cannot see you acting wrong, without a remonstrance. How could you be so unfeeling to Miss Bates? How could you be so insolent in your wit to a woman of her character, age and situation?

Emma: (*trying to laugh it off*) Nay, how could I help saying what I did? Nobody could have helped it. It was not so very bad. I daresay she did not understand me.

Mr Knightley: I assure you she did. She felt your full meaning. She has talked of it since. I wish you could have heard how she talked of it – with what candour and generosity. I wish you could have heard her honouring your forbearance in being able to pay her such attentions, when her society must be so irksome.

Emma: Oh! I know there is not a better creature in the world: but you must allow, that what is good and what is ridiculous are most unfortunately blended in her.

Mr Knightley: They are blended, I acknowledge; and, were she your equal in situation – but, Emma, consider how far this is from being the case. She is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and, if she lives to old age, must probably sink more. Her situation should secure your compassion. You, whom she has known from an infant, whom she has seen grow up from a period when her notice was an honour, to have you now, in thoughtless spirits, and the pride of the moment, laugh at her, humble her – and before her niece, too – and before others, many of whom would be entirely guided by your treatment of her. It was badly done, indeed! (*Pause*) This is not pleasant to you, Emma – and it is very far from pleasant to me; but I must, I will – I will tell you truths while I can, satisfied with proving myself your friend by faithful counsel.

*Exit Mr Knightley, leaving Emma alone and ashamed.*