**EMMA BY JANE AUSTEN**

***CHAPTER IX***

It was by no means his daughter's wish that the intellects of Highbury in general should be put under requisition. Mr. Elton was the only one whose assistance she asked. He was invited to contribute any really good enigmas, charades, or conundrums that he might recollect. … They owed to him their two or three politest puzzles; and the joy and exultation with which at last he recalled, and rather sentimentally recited, that well-known charade -

My first doth affliction denote,

Which my second is destin'd to feel

And my whole is the best antidote

That affliction to soften and heal.

made her quite sorry to acknowledge that they had transcribed it some pages ago already.

"Why will not you write one yourself for us, Mr. Elton? said she; "that is the only security for its freshness; and nothing could be easier to you."

"Oh, no! he had never written, hardly ever, anything of the kind in his life.” The stupidest fellow! “He was afraid not even Miss Woodhouse" he stopped a moment "or Miss Smith could inspire him."

The very next day however produced some proof of inspiration. He called for a few moments, just to leave a piece of paper on the table containing, as he said, a charade, which a friend of his had addressed to a young lady, the object of his admiration, but which, from his manner, Emma was immediately convinced must be his own.

"I do not offer it for Miss Smith's collection," said he. "Being my friend's, I have no right to expose it in any degree to the public eye, but perhaps you may not dislike looking at it."

The speech was more to Emma than to Harriet, which Emma could understand. There was deep consciousness about him, and he found it easier to meet her eye than her friend's. He was gone the next moment. After another moment's pause:

"Take it," said Emma, smiling, and pushing the paper towards Harriet. "It is for you. Take your own."

But Harriet was in a tremor, and could not touch it; and Emma, never loth to be first, was obliged to examine it herself.

To Miss ………………. .

CHARADE

My first displays the wealth and pomp of kings,

Lords of the earth! their luxury and ease.

Another view of man, my second brings,

Behold him there, the monarch of the seas!

But, ah! united, what reverse we have!

Man's boasted power and freedom, all are flown;

Lord of the earth and sea, he bends a slave,

And woman, lovely woman, reigns alone.

Thy ready wit the word will soon supply,

May its approval beam in that soft eye!

She cast her eye over it, pondered, caught the meaning, read it through again to be quite certain, and quite mistress of the lines, and then passing it to Harriet, sat happily smiling, and saying to herself, while Harriet was puzzling over the paper in all the confusion of hope and dulness, "Very well, Mr. Elton, very well, indeed. I have read worse charades. Courtship - a very good hint. I give you credit for it. This is feeling your way. This is saying very plainly: 'Pray, Miss Smith, give me leave to pay my addresses to you. Approve my charade and my intentions in the same glance.'

May its approval beam in that soft eye!

Harriet exactly. Soft, is the very word for her eye; of all epithets, the justest that could be given.

*Thy ready wit the word will soon supply*

Humph!... Harriet's ready wit! All the better. A man must be very much in love indeed, to describe her so. Ah! Mr. Knightley, I wish you had the benefit of this; I think this would convince you. For once in your life you would be obliged to be, yourself, mistaken. An excellent charade indeed and very much to the purpose. Things must come to a crisis soon, now."

She was obliged to break off from these very pleasant observations, which were otherwise of a sort to run into great length, by the eagerness of Harriet's wondering questions.

"What can it be, Miss Woodhouse? what can it be? I have not an idea. I cannot guess it in the least. What can it possibly be? Do try to find it out, Miss Woodhouse. Do help me. I never saw anything so hard. Is it kingdom? I wonder who the friend was and who could be the young lady! Do you think it is a good one? Can it be woman?

And woman, lovely woman, reigns alone.

Can it be Neptune?

Behold him there, the monarch of the seas!

Or a trident? or a mermaid? or a shark? Oh, no! shark is only one syllable. It must be very clever, or he would not have brought it. Oh! Miss Woodhouse, do you think we shall ever find it out?"

"Mermaids and sharks! Nonsense! My dear Harriet, what are you thinking of? Where would be the use of his bringing us a charade made by a friend upon a mermaid or a shark? Give me the paper and listen.

*<For Miss…….,>* read Miss Smith.

My first displays the wealth and pomp of kings,

Lords of the earth! their luxury and ease.

That is….. court.

Another view of man, my second brings;

Behold him there, the monarch of the seas!

That is ….. ship; plain as can be. Now for the cream.

But ah! united, (courtship, you know,) what reverse we have!

Man's boasted power and freedom, all are flown.

Lord of the earth and sea, he bends a slave,

And woman, lovely woman, reigns alone.

A very proper compliment! and then follows the application, which I think, my dear Harriet, you cannot find much difficulty in comprehending. Read it in comfort to yourself. There can be no doubt of its being written for you and to you."

Harriet could not long resist so delightful a persuasion. She read the concluding lines, and was all flutter and happiness. She could not speak. But she was not wanted to speak. It was enough for her to feel. Emma spoke for her.

"There is so pointed, and so particular a meaning in this compliment," said she, "that I cannot have a moment's doubt as to Mr. Elton's intentions. You are his object and you will soon receive the completest proof of it. I thought it must be so. I thought I could not be so deceived; but now, it is clear; the state of his mind is as clear and decided, as my wishes on the subject have been ever since I knew you…This is an attachment which a woman may well feel pride in creating. ….. This, Harriet, is an alliance which can never raise a blush in either of us."