



JANE AUSTEN'S PRIDE AND PREJUDICE



**ADAPTED BY
CHRISTOPHER BAKER**

BROADWAY PLAY PUBLISHING INC

Jane Austen's
PRIDE AND
PREJUDICE

adapted by
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PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

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PRIDE AND PREJUDICE was commissioned by Hartford Stage (Michael Wilson, Artistic Director; Michael Stotts, Managing Director). Michael Wilson directed a reading at Hartford Stage in April 2012.

The world premiere of PRIDE AND PREJUDICE was presented by Center Stage in Baltimore, Maryland (Kwame Kwei-Armah, Artistic Director; Stephen Richard, Managing Director) on 11 September 2015, with the following cast and creative contributors:

MRS BENNET	Mary Jo Mecca
MR BENNET	Anthony Newfield
JANE BENNET	Erin Neuffer
LYDIA BENNET	Ali Rose Dachis
ELIZABETH BENNET	Kate Abbruzzese
MARY BENNET	Maya Brettell
MRS HALL	Patricia Hodges
CHARLOTTE LUCAS.....	Kelly McCrann
MR BINGLEY	Josh Salt
CAROLINE BINGLEY	Victoria Frings
MR DARCY	A J Shively
HOPKINS	David Sedgwick
MR COLLINS.....	Chris Bolan
MR. WICKHAM.....	Asher Grodman
LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH	Patricia Hodges
MR GARDINER.....	David Sedgwick
MRS. GARDINER.....	Julia Brandeberry
MRS REYNOLDS.....	Hillary Mazer
SOLDIERS.....	Travis Hudson, Greg Joubert, Ed Klein
PARTY GUESTS.....	Carolyn Kashner, Sarah Rose Kearns
<i>Director</i>	<i>Hana S Sharif</i>
<i>Scenic designer.....</i>	<i>Scott Bradley</i>
<i>Costume designer.....</i>	<i>Ilona Somogyi</i>
<i>Lighting designer</i>	<i>Colin D Young</i>
<i>Original music & sound design.....</i>	<i>Broken Chord</i>

Projections designer Alex Koch
Choreographer Paloma McGregor
Production dramaturg Faedra Carpenter
Stage manager Amber Dickerson
Assistant stage manager Lindsay Eberly

CHARACTERS

The play has eighteen speaking roles, which, with doubling, can be played by as few as fourteen actors.

MR BENNET, *a gentleman, well off, but far from wealthy.*

MRS BENNET, *his wife.*

JANE BENNET, *mid 20s, their daughter.*

ELIZABETH BENNET, *early 20s, their daughter.*

LYDIA BENNET, *late teens, their daughter.*

MARY BENNET, *12 or 13, their daughter.*

MRS HALL, *the BENNET's maid.*

CHARLOTTE LUCAS, *ELIZABETH's close friend.*

MR COLLINS, *MR BENNET's cousin, a clergyman.*

MR BINGLEY, *a young, wealthy gentleman.*

CAROLINE BINGLEY, *his sister.*

HOPKINS, *their servant.*

MR DARCY, *a young, very wealthy gentleman.*

MRS REYNOLDS, *DARCY's housekeeper.*

MR WICKHAM, *a new militiaman*

LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH, *DARCY's wealthy aunt and
MR COLLINS' patroness.*

MR GARDINER, *MRS BENNET's brother, uncle to the
BENNET daughters.*

MRS GARDINER, *his wife, aunt to the BENNET daughters.*

MR DENNY, *a militiaman*

MR BRANDON, *a militiaman*

*Non-speaking roles: militiamen, servants, dancers, and ball
guests*

SETTING

The play begins at Longbourn, the BENNET's home in Hertfordshire, England, around 1797. It moves to public assemblies, a private ball at CHARLOTTE's father's home, the estates of MR. BINGLEY and LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH, a country inn and the grandest estate of all, MR DARCY's Pemberley. The play not only contains several dances, but is intended to exploit the choreography of everyday life, with characters moving through scenes, and the stage elements moving fluidly from one setting to another.

This is not Victorian England—the stereotypes of repression and stuffiness do not apply here. There are many formalities, but the social conventions vary depending on how old-fashioned the people are and how formal the setting. Dances were an integral part of society, especially in the country, at which people made new acquaintances, caught up on news, did business, flirted, and fell in love. They were important opportunities for conversation and physical contact.

Sometimes the script indicates the bowing and curtsying that would accompany meetings and leave-takings, but the most effective use of these conventions can be found for each production.

DEDICATION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

For Michelle, Hero, Raphael and Valentino

Thanks to Hana Sharif and Michael Wilson for giving
this life.

ACT ONE

Scene One

(The BENNET house)

(The usual daily commotion of the Bennet household. MARY plays the pianoforte, occasionally stopping to sneeze. LYDIA enters, throws her hat on a chair and exits. JANE enters, takes off her hat, meets HALL, and gives HALL her hat. As JANE exits, MR BENNET enters, kisses JANE and sits in the chair to read his newspaper. He pulls the hat out from under him and hands it to HALL.)

(MRS BENNET rushes in. MARY stops playing. LYDIA and MARY listen in on her conversation.)

MRS BENNET: Mr Bennet! Mr Bennet! My dear Mr Bennet, have you heard?

MR BENNET: I have not.

MRS BENNET: That beautiful estate, Netherfield Park, is let at last! My prayers are answered!

MR BENNET: Is it?

MRS BENNET: It is! Mrs Long has just been here, and I have all the details.

(JANE joins her eavesdropping sisters.)

LYDIA: Jane!

JANE: What has happened?

MARY: Mama's been praying.

LYDIA: Someone is moving into Netherfield!

JANE: Who?

MRS BENNET: (*To MR BENNET*) Do you want to know who has taken it?

MR BENNET: No.

MRS BENNET: No?!

LYDIA: (*To JANE*) I hear he's rich!

MR BENNET: (*To MRS BENNET*) But I'm certain you will tell me anyway.

JANE: (*To LYDIA*) What is his name?

MRS BENNET: (*To Mr BENNET*) His name is Mr Bingley.

JANE: (*To LYDIA.*) Lydia, is he married or single?

MARY: What does it matter?

MRS BENNET: (*To MR BENNET.*) The servants say he came down to see the place, and was so delighted with it, that he agreed to let it immediately.

MR BENNET: Finally, someone with whom I can discuss literature and play billiards.

MRS BENNET: No, he's not that sort of man. Not like you at all, Mr Bennet. He is young.

(*ELIZABETH enters, joining her sisters.*)

LYDIA: Lizzy! A single young man just moved into Netherfield.

JANE: We don't know that he's single, Lydia.

(*ELIZABETH approaches MRS BENNET.*)

ELIZABETH: Is he single, mama?

MRS BENNET: Who?

ELIZABETH: Netherfield's new tenant.

MR BENNET: Perhaps he's a widower.

ACT ONE

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MRS BENNET: No, I told you. Mr Bingley is young.

MR BENNET: He could still be a widower. He could have unusual luck.

MRS BENNET: He is rich, girls.

MR BENNET: Is that so?

MRS BENNET: A large fortune. Four or five thousand a year.

MR BENNET: That is rich.

LYDIA: Is he *married*?

MRS BENNET: He is single. A single man of large fortune. What a fine thing for our girls!

MR BENNET: What does it have to do with our girls?

MRS BENNET: I am thinking of his marrying one of our girls.

MARY: Is that why he moved here?

MRS BENNET: Why he...? Mary, you talk nonsense! Mr Bennet, you must visit him as soon as he comes. It is very likely that he may fall in love with one of the girls and so it is important that he meet them immediately.

MR BENNET: I don't think I will. You see, we have nothing at all in common. He is young; I am not. He is single; I am blissfully encumbered. He is rich; I have four daughters.

(MARY *sneezes*.)

MRS BENNET: You must go! These poor girls—no inheritance, no home when you die. What will they do? They must dance with him at the next assembly! And they cannot dance with him if they are not introduced and you cannot introduce them if you do not visit him first.

MR BENNET: You are over-scrupulous. You and the girls may go. Or better, send them by themselves.

Mr Bingley may like you the best of all. I will send a few lines to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying whichever daughter he chooses, though they are all silly and ignorant like other girls. Except Lizzie, I think.

MRS BENNET: You have no compassion for my poor nerves.

MR BENNET: I have the highest respect for your nerves. They have been my constant companions for these past twenty years.

MRS BENNET: You do not know what I suffer.

(MARY sneezes.)

ALL: God bless you.

MARY: When *is* the next dance to be, Lizzy?

ELIZABETH: Ten days.

MARY: Can I go?

MRS BENNET:
We'll see.

MR BENNET
Certainly not.

MRS BENNET: I doubt we will be introduced to Mr Bingley by then. Charlotte Lucas, and who knows who else, will have the advantage and Mr Bingley will ask one of them to dance and will certainly marry one of them—

(MARY sneezes again.)

ALL: (*Except for MRS BENNET*) God bless you.

MRS BENNET: Mary! Will you stop that sneezing! It is driving me to distraction.

MR BENNET: Perhaps Mr Bingley—

MRS BENNET: Oh, I am sick already of Mr Bingley.

MR BENNET: Really? If I had known I certainly would not have visited him this morning.

ACT ONE

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MRS BENNET: This morning! This morning! How good you are, my dear! But I was sure you loved your girls too much to neglect such an acquaintance. It is such a good joke, too, that you should have gone and never said a word about it.

MR BENNET: I think you may sneeze, Mary.

JANE: What is he like, Papa?

MR BENNET: Mr Bingley is young, exceedingly handsome—

LYDIA: I told you—

MR BENNET: —extremely agreeable, and, I believe will be at the next assembly. (*He exits.*)

MRS BENNET: What an excellent father you have, girls! I will see one of my daughters happily settled at Netherfield, if I have anything to say about it. Come, girls.

(*All but ELIZABETH and MARY start to exit.*)

MARY: What if Mr Bingley doesn't want a wife?

ELIZABETH: It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.

LYDIA: (*Off.*) Oh I can't wait for the dance!

ELIZABETH: Poor Mr Bingley. He doesn't know that he has already been claimed as a son-in-law. Mama will lose sleep devising strategies.

MRS BENNET: (*Off stage*) Lizzie!

ELIZABETH: No one asks daughters how *they* feel, do they?

MARY: No.

ELIZABETH: But Mr Bingley *is* single. And rich.

MARY: And exceedingly handsome.

MRS BENNET: (*Off stage.*) Lizzie!

ELIZABETH: And he will add some excitement to our ordinary country dance!

(ELIZABETH and MARY exit.)

Scene Two

(*The assembly hall*)

(*The stage fills with dancers; the assembly is in full swing. People gossip, flirt, eat, drink and enjoy themselves. This is the place to have fun with one's neighbors, do business, find a partner and fall in love. Amidst the dancing and visiting, we catch pieces of conversations from different parts of the stage.*)

(JANE and ELIZABETH are looking over the crowd from one part of the room.)

JANE: Not as many men as I hoped. There are just too many ladies.

ELIZABETH: But the men that are here are all yours. You are sure to have a husband by midnight. Maybe even two of them—one rich, the other handsome. A daytime husband and a nighttime one.

(CHARLOTTE joins them.)

CHARLOTTE: Lizzy! Have you heard who is expected?

ELIZABETH: Charlotte, mama has talked of nothing else for the past ten days.

(LYDIA joins them.)

LYDIA: I hear Mr Bingley has been in London to get a large party for the ball—twelve ladies and five gentlemen.

ELIZABETH: More ladies.

(LYDIA exits. BINGLEY, MISS BINGLEY and DARCY enter.)

ACT ONE

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CHARLOTTE: It's him!

JANE: Which is Mr Bingley?

CHARLOTTE: In the blue coat.

ELIZABETH: Seems twelve ladies has become one.
Perhaps Mr Bingley is careless and lost some on the way.

(MRS BENNET *joins them.*)

CHARLOTTE: That's Mr Bingley's sister. Caroline, I think.

ELIZABETH: And the dark haired gentleman?

CHARLOTTE: Mr Bingley's oldest friend, Mr Darcy. He has a mighty fortune and a great estate in Derbyshire and ten thousand a year at least!

MRS BENNET: Don't you think he's the handsomest man you've ever seen, girls?

ELIZABETH: You mean the richest, don't you mama?

(*Another part of the room. MR BENNET is speaking to BINGLEY, MISS BINGLEY and DARCY.*)

BINGLEY: There's nothing I love better than a country dance. I hope to meet your daughters tonight, Mr Bennet.

MR BENNET: They are just over here. If you would allow me to introduce you.

BINGLEY: Of course.

(MR BENNET *goes to retrieve his family.*)

CAROLINE: A country dance.

BINGLEY: Yes!

CAROLINE: In the country. Will we survive it, Mr Darcy?

(*As MR BENNET returns with MRS BENNET, JANE and ELIZABETH:*)

MRS BENNET: Smile, girls! Smile!

DARCY: No, I think not.

MR BENNET: Mr Bingley may I introduce you to my wife, my eldest daughter Jane, my daughter Elizabeth and—

(LYDIA and a partner pass near.)

MR BENNET: —my daughter, Lydia.

(She moves away.)

BINGLEY: I'm delighted to make your acquaintance. May I introduce my sister, Miss Caroline Bingley. And Mr Darcy of Pemberley in Derbyshire.

MRS BENNET: How do you like it here in Hertfordshire?

BINGLEY: Very much.

MRS BENNET: Do you like to dance, Mr Bingley?

BINGLEY: There is nothing I love better. If Miss Bennet is not otherwise engaged, may I be so bold as to claim the next dances?

JANE: I am not engaged, sir.

BINGLEY: Good. Mr Bennet, Mrs Bennet, Miss Bennet.

(JANE and BINGLEY join the dance.)

MRS BENNET: *(Calling after him.)* You do us great honor, sir. *(To DARCY)* Mr Darcy—

I hope you will be here long enough that you and Mr Bingley will come to dinner at our house.

DARCY: It is uncertain how long we will stay.

MRS BENNET: Oh. Well, you've come on a very lively night. Can you think of a more enjoyable way to spend an evening?

DARCY: Yes. *(Pause)* Please excuse me.

ACT ONE

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MRS BENNET: Well!

MR BENNET: (*To MISS BINGLEY*) You came from town just this afternoon?

MISS BINGLEY: Yes. We came from London just for this.

(The dance takes over the stage, with JANE and BINGLEY dancing in part of it.)

(MRS BENNET and ELIZABETH move to another part of the room to watch the dance:)

MRS BENNET: Mr Bingley is such a handsome man, isn't he? So lively and friendly and unreserved. Not at all like his friend there, Mr Darcy.

ELIZABETH: He appears to be just walking about the room, not speaking to anyone.

MRS BENNET: He is a very proud, disagreeable man.

ELIZABETH: Not so very handsome after all.

(LYDIA joins them.)

LYDIA: Mama, have you heard? The regiment is coming! The militia are going to be stationed the whole winter, right here in town.

MRS BENNET: That is wonderful!

LYDIA: (*Enraptured*) Officers!

(The dance continues. In another part of the room, BINGLEY and DARCY talk. ELIZABETH takes a seat nearby.)

BINGLEY: Come, Darcy, I must have you dance. I hate to see you standing by yourself in this stupid manner. Dance! There are several girls here who are uncommonly pretty.

DARCY: You are dancing with the only pretty girl in the room.

BINGLEY: She is the most beautiful creature, isn't she? But there is one of her sisters just behind you, who is very pretty.

DARCY: She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me. I am in no humor to concern myself with young ladies who are slighted by other men. You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles.

(ELIZABETH *moves to find* CHARLOTTE.)

(MR and MRS BENNET, *in another part of the room*:)

MRS BENNET: (To MR BENNET) Mr Bingley danced with her twice. He danced with Charlotte only once, and Maria only once. A delightful evening!

(ELIZABETH and CHARLOTTE, *in another part of the room*:)

ELIZABETH: (*Imitating* DARCY) "...tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me!"

CHARLOTTE: Oh, Lizzy. I'm sorry.

ELIZABETH: No matter. He is certainly proud.

CHARLOTTE: He has wealth and family. It's no wonder he's proud.

ELIZABETH: It is a wonder he has any friends at all.

(*In another part of the room*, MRS BENNET, MR BENNET, LYDIA, JANE, MR BINGLEY, MISS BINGLEY and DARCY.)

BINGLEY: This puts me in a mind to have a ball at Netherfield.

LYDIA: Oh, you must! Lizzy! (*Running to get* ELIZABETH) You'll never guess!

MRS BENNET: I do not know a place in the country that is equal to Netherfield. You will not think of quitting it in a hurry, I hope.

BINGLEY: Whatever I do is done in a hurry. If I should quit Netherfield, I would be off in five minutes.

ACT ONE

11

(ELIZABETH and LYDIA *join them.*)

MRS BENNET: You will be at some more balls and assemblies, I hope? And Sir William Lucas's party the week after next? It will not be as grand a ball as I know we will see at Netherfield, of course, but still very enjoyable.

MISS BINGLEY: I should like balls infinitely better, if they were carried on in a different manner. There is something insufferably tedious in the usual process of such a meeting. It would surely be much more rational if conversation instead of dancing were the order of the day.

DARCY: Much more rational...

ELIZABETH: ...but it would not be so very much like a ball, would it Miss Bingley?

(ELIZABETH and DARCY *exchange a glance.*)

ELIZABETH: Besides, a ball is a stage for people to show off their taste, their clothes, their manners. For instance your dress, Miss Bingley, is certainly the most elegant here and has made my evening just a little bit more enjoyable to see it. Oh, I see Charles Kemble—he means to ask me to dance and I am not in the humor at the moment to dance with young men who have been slighted by other ladies. I'm sure you understand, Miss Bingley. Please excuse me.

(ELIZABETH *leaves*, DARCY *looking after her.*)

(*The dancing ends, the assembly breaks up. In one part of the room:*)

MRS BENNET: His sister is a charming woman. But that man! 'Mr Darcy', as he calls himself. The richest man in Derbyshire. The *proudest* man, the most horrid man. He slighted poor Lizzy, and flatly refused to dance with her.

MR BENNET: Slighted my Lizzy, did he?

MRS BENNET: She does not lose much He walked here and he walked there, fancying himself so very great! I quite detest the man. I am sure everybody hopes that he will never come here again.

(Another part of the room:)

JANE: I like him, Lizzie. I really do.

ELIZABETH: I give you permission to "like" him. You have liked many a stupider person.

JANE: He is just what a young man ought to be: sensible, good-humored...

ELIZABETH: Good-looking and rich. A perfect man.

JANE: He is perfect!

ELIZABETH: Jane, you have fallen in love.

JANE: No, Lizzie. It's too soon!

ELIZABETH: "Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?"

(ELIZABETH and JANE laugh. DARCY, crossing, comes upon them.)

ELIZABETH: Mr Darcy.

DARCY: Miss Bennet. Miss Elizabeth. You are enjoying yourselves this evening.

ELIZABETH: We were just discussing Shakespeare. You are a lover of Shakespeare, I assume, Mr Darcy?

DARCY: Of course.

(Pause)

ELIZABETH: Of course.

DARCY: Excuse me. Miss Bennet. Miss Elizabeth.

(DARCY leaves, but turns to look at ELIZABETH. The sisters laugh conspiratorially.)

ACT ONE

13

ELIZABETH: Is he still looking?

JANE: No, he's gone.

ELIZABETH: He danced only two dances both with Miss Bingley, and he barely spoke to anyone except to say "yes" or "no."

JANE: Miss Bingley said that he is uncomfortable around strangers.

ELIZABETH: Mr Bingley is sure of being liked wherever he is, Mr Darcy, I wager, constantly offends.

(Another part of the room:)

BINGLEY: I have never met with more pleasant people or prettier girls in my life. Everybody was kind and attentive; no formality, no stiffness.

MISS BINGLEY: And Miss Bennet?

BINGLEY: I cannot conceive an angel more beautiful.

MISS BINGLEY: Mr Darcy? We know you are a harsh judge. What is your verdict?

DARCY: I'm afraid I found little beauty, no fashion, and, for me, no pleasure.

BINGLEY: Darcy, you are too hard to please.

DARCY: Miss Bennet, I'll acknowledge, is pretty.

MISS BINGLEY: Yes, she is. And though her mother is intolerable, she is a sweet girl. I would not be averse to knowing more of her. Brother?

BINGLEY: Perhaps you will.

(BINGLEY, MISS BINGLEY and DARCY exit.)

(Another part of the stage. The assembly has cleared now. It is only JANE and ELIZABETH.)

JANE: I am so very happy. But I dare not think...

ELIZABETH: What? That Mr Bingley likes you as much as you like him? I'm sure of it. Just promise to

take in your spinster sister when you are mistress of Netherfield.

JANE: I cannot understand Mr Darcy. He is very proud, isn't he?

ELIZABETH: I could more easily forgive his pride, if he had not injured mine. It's no matter, I don't care for him at all. And I will probably have little cause to see him any time soon. Except for your wedding of course!

JANE: (*Laughing*) And dinner at the Long's and at Sir William Lucas's ball and how many dances after that? You are sure to see him many more times before he leaves Netherfield.

MRS BENNET: (*Off stage*) Jane! Lizzy!

ELIZABETH: You marry Mr Bingley. One less for Mama to worry over. (*As the lights are extinguished.*) To bed. Tomorrow we rest and then prepare for another ball! Country life is so exhausting.

Scene Three

(*Sir Lucas's house*)

(*The stage fills again for a ball—this time it includes MR DENNY, MR BRANDON and other red-coated militiamen. It is less formal than the previous one, a bit more raucous.*)

(*JANE and BINGLEY are together, clearly more familiar with each other. DARCY stands near ELIZABETH as she talks to MR BRANDON. She then joins CHARLOTTE in another part of the room. LYDIA is in her element.*)

(*MRS BENNET, MR BENNET and LYDIA are watching the dancers line up.*)

LYDIA: Oh mama! Officers!

(*MR DENNY asks LYDIA to dance.*)

ACT ONE

15

BINGLEY: I wish you knew how happy I have been these past two weeks. How happy to come to Hertfordshire...

JANE: Mr Bingley, you've told me almost every day since we first danced.

BINGLEY: Have I?

JANE: Yes. I am happy as well.

BINGLEY: You've reserved every dance for me, I hope?

JANE: All for you.

(JANE and BINGLEY exit.)

(CHARLOTTE talking to WICKHAM)

CHARLOTTE: Mr Wickham, I understand you are new to the regiment?

WICKHAM: Yes, very new.

(LYDIA joins them)

Oh—this is Miss Lydia Bennet. Lydia, this is Mr Wickham

WICKHAM: I am delighted to make your acquaintance, Miss Lydia.

LYDIA: I hope you enjoy dancing, Mr Wickham.

(WICKHAM spies DARCY in another part of the room.

DARCY does not see WICKHAM)

WICKHAM: I do, but I am afraid I cannot stay. I must take my leave.

LYDIA: But you just got here! You haven't danced!

WICKHAM: I am expected elsewhere and I am late already. Until we meet again. Miss Lucas, I am grateful to your family for inviting the regiment. Miss Lydia.

(LYDIA and CHARLOTTE watch him exit.)

LYDIA: Isn't he perfect?

(ELIZABETH *joins them.*)

LYDIA: (*Leaving them*) I'm going to dance.

CHARLOTTE: Are you enjoying yourself?

ELIZABETH: Very much. Though I wish I knew what Mr Darcy meant by listening in on my conversation with Colonel Forster? He's always next to me. At the Long's he actually startled me so that I spilled my punch on Mrs Price.

CHARLOTTE: Perhaps he is interested.

ELIZABETH: Interested? No. He has a very judgmental eye.

CHARLOTTE: He's looking at you.

ELIZABETH: Again? He's like a fox stalking a rabbit. I need to start being impertinent myself. I don't like being a rabbit.

CHARLOTTE: Mr Bingley certainly admires Jane.

ELIZABETH: Yes, doesn't he? And she is in love.

CHARLOTTE: Is she?

ELIZABETH: Oh yes.

CHARLOTTE: It's hard to tell.

ELIZABETH: Jane is careful with her emotions and always cheerful. And she likes everyone. But she is in love.

CHARLOTTE: In nine cases out of ten a woman had better show more affection than she feels if she wants to secure a husband. Bingley likes your sister, but she has to help him on. She should make the most of every hour, every minute.

ELIZABETH: Jane is not trying to secure a husband. She's falling in love.

ACT ONE

17

CHARLOTTE: After she has acquired him, there will be plenty of time for falling in love.

ELIZABETH: She doesn't even really know him. She has seen him only seven evenings.

CHARLOTTE: Seven evenings is enough. If she marries him tomorrow, she has as good a chance of happiness as if she knew him a year. Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance.

ELIZABETH: You make me laugh, Charlotte. You would never act in this way yourself.

(DARCY appears.)

DARCY: Miss Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: (*Startled*) Mr Darcy!

DARCY: Miss Lucas.

(*In another part of the room, MRS BENNET has the ear of BINGLEY. They walk toward DARCY and ELIZABETH, MISS BINGLEY and JANE following.*)

MRS BENNET: I do not like to boast of my own child, but, Jane—one does not often see anybody better looking. It is what everybody says. When she was only fifteen, there was a man in town so much in love with her that we were sure he would propose. But, he did not. Perhaps he thought her too young. He did write some very pretty verses for her.

ELIZABETH: And so ended his affection. I wonder who first discovered the efficacy of poetry in driving away love!

DARCY: I have been used to consider poetry as the food of love.

ELIZABETH: Of a fine, stout, healthy love. Everything nourishes what is strong already. But if it be only a slight, thin sort of love, I am convinced that one good sonnet will starve it entirely away.

(DARCY *smiles at her and then breaks his gaze.* MR BENNET *enters with a drink for his wife.*)

MR BENNET: There is nothing like dancing is there Mr Darcy? (*Giving drink to his wife.*) Here you are my dear. (*To DARCY*) They say dancing is one of the first refinements of polished society.

DARCY: Yes. It is also in vogue amongst the least polished societies.

MR BENNET: (*He is struck with an idea for a good jest.*)

Mr Darcy, I saw you dancing at the assembly with Miss Bingley—you are very accomplished. And my Elizabeth loves to dance. You cannot refuse to dance when a beautiful young girl is before you.

ELIZABETH: Father, I have not the least intention of dancing.

DARCY: May I have the honor of your hand, Miss Elizabeth?

MR BENNET: You see, Lizzy? Though Mr Darcy dislikes the amusement in general, you have persuaded him to the dance floor.

ELIZABETH: Mr Darcy is all politeness. Excuse me. (*She exits.*)

MR BENNET: I think I shall locate Lydia amongst all the red coats. Mrs Bennet?

(MR and MRS BENNET *exit, leaving JANE and BINGLEY to themselves and DARCY and MISS BINGLEY watching the ball.*)

MISS BINGLEY: I can guess the subject of your reverie.

DARCY: I should imagine not.

MISS BINGLEY: You are considering the insipidity, the noise, the self-importance and the nothingness of all these people.

ACT ONE

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DARCY: No, I have been meditating on the very great pleasure which a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow.

MISS BINGLEY: What lady has inspired these reflections?

DARCY: Miss Elizabeth Bennet.

MISS BINGLEY: Miss Elizabeth Bennet! I am all astonishment. How long has she been such a favorite? When am I to congratulate you on your wedding?

(In the background we hear MRS BENNET calling:)

MRS BENNET: Lydia! Pardon me, lieutenant. Lydia!

MISS BINGLEY: You will have a most charming mother-in-law.

Scene Four

(The BENNET house)

(MRS BENNET, MR BENNET adding up accounts, MARY reading)

MRS BENNET: I am sure that Mr Bingley and Jane are meant for each other. At every party for these past three weeks they have been together, engaged in such intimate conversation.

MARY: I wish I could go to a ball.

MRS BENNET: Miss Bingley has been so gracious toward her. They shall be married soon and then we can work to find husbands for the other girls.

MARY: I never get to do anything.

MRS BENNET: I am sure Lydia will have no trouble, she has a certain manner that makes men notice her. I worry about Lizzy, though. She has so many opinions.

MR BENNET: I would be surprised if we were able to marry any of them off.

MRS BENNET: Mr Bennet, do not say such a thing! Not even in jest! You know very well they must be married. Everything we have—the entire estate—entailed away from this family, from these girls, to that loathsome cousin, a man we hardly even know...

MR BENNET: Mr Collins.

MRS BENNET: Just because he's...

MR BENNET: Because he's a man, yes.

MRS BENNET: It is so unfair to your own girls

MR BENNET: It is completely out of my power to change. It is how the estate came to me and how it must be passed on. You know I would change it if I could.

MRS BENNET: You are powerless, but I am not. I will not rest until these girls are secure. Poverty may be just around the corner. At any moment you might die and leave us destitute.

MR BENNET: Really?

MRS BENNET: You are not so young anymore.

(LYDIA enters.)

LYDIA: It is a fact—the regiment is staying on through the winter.

MRS BENNET: We are lucky. The regiment here. Mr Bingley moving into Netherfield.

LYDIA: Mr Bingley is good enough, but he has no uniform. He's nothing next to Captain Carter. *He* is a fine man..

(HALL brings in a note.)

MRS BENNET: What is it, Hall?

HALL: A note for Miss Jane.

MRS BENNET: Jane! Jane! It is a note from Netherfield!

ACT ONE

21

LYDIA: Did you hear? On Wednesday, four officers dined with Mr Phillips, and one let slip the rumor that Colonel Forster is going to be married!

MR BENNET: Poor man.

(JANE and ELIZABETH enter)

MRS BENNET: A note for you. Who is it from? What is it about? Well, tell us, tell us.

JANE: It is from Miss Bingley. Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy are dining with the officers and have left her alone. She invites me to dine with her today!

MRS BENNET: It is a shame Mr Bingley will not be there, but we'll have to make do.

JANE: Father, can I have the carriage?

MRS BENNET: You had better go on horseback. It is likely to rain.

JANE: But if it rains—

MRS BENNET: Then you must stay all night.

JANE: Father?

MRS BENNET: Your father cannot spare more than one horse. They are wanted on the farm.

MR BENNET: The horses are, in fact, engaged.

ELIZABETH: (*Exiting*) Surely something can be done—

MRS BENNET: It's no use, Lizzy! Now hurry along Jane, you mustn't keep Miss Bingley waiting. Yes, it looks like rain. You will certainly have to spend the night.

A downpour, I think. If Mr Bingley will not be there for dinner, *you* will just have to be there when he returns.

MARY: What if Jane gets caught in the rain? What if she gets sick?

MRS BENNET: Then she'll have to stay even longer.

JANE: I will not get sick.

MRS BENNET: See, there! She will not get sick. And if she does, so much the better.

MARY: What if she gets a fever?

MR BENNET: If she dies, you will be comforted to know it was in pursuit of a husband.

MRS BENNET: People do not die of colds!

JANE: I will not get sick! I will not get sick!

(Thunder and rain)

Scene Five

(Netherfield, the next day)

BINGLEY: I'm afraid Miss Bennet is quite sick. The apothecary says she will have to stay at least another day or two.

(Netherfield is a grand country estate; perfect for a rich young man whose grandfather made a fortune in trade and who is now a member of the gentry.)

MISS BINGLEY: That is too bad. Poor girl.

(HOPKINS, a servant, enters.)

HOPKINS: Miss Elizabeth Bennet.

(ELIZABETH enters. DARCY and BINGLEY stand and bow and she curtseys. She is a spectacle—socks and petticoat soaked in mud.)

ELIZABETH: I understand my sister is not well.

MISS BINGLEY: How good of you to have walked all that way to see her, Miss Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: May I see her now?

BINGLEY: Yes, of course! She had a thorough soaking coming here. Mr Jones, the apothecary, is with her right now. Hopkins will show you to her room.

ACT ONE

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ELIZABETH: Thank you for the kindness you have shown my sister.

BINGLEY: Not at all, Miss Elizabeth. It is a pleasure. To have her here.

ELIZABETH: It is a kindness, Mr Bingley. If you will excuse me.

(ELIZABETH *exits with* HOPKINS.)

MISS BINGLEY: She is a wild one. Imagine, walking three miles, so early in the day, in such dirty weather, by herself. Nonsensical to come at all—scampering about the country because her sister has a cold? Her hair so untidy and her petticoat six inches deep in mud. I could hardly keep a straight face.

BINGLEY: I thought she looked remarkably well. Her petticoat escaped my notice.

MISS BINGLEY: Mr Darcy observed it, I am sure. To walk four miles or whatever it is, above her ankles in dirt, and alone! What could she mean by it? It shows an abominable sort of country-town indifference.

BINGLEY: It shows an affection for her sister.

MISS BINGLEY: I am afraid, Mr Darcy, that this adventure has rather affected your admiration of her fine eyes.

DARCY: Not at all. They were brightened by the exercise.

(ELIZABETH *enters*.)

ELIZABETH: She is sleeping. The apothecary says she must stay in bed. I hate to leave her, but I know she is receiving the best of care here.

BINGLEY: Leave her? You just arrived! You needn't leave her.

ELIZABETH: Oh, but I must. It is getting late.

BINGLEY: Nonsense! You must stay here with your sister, until she is well again, mustn't she Caroline?

MISS BINGLEY: Of course. Do not think of parting from your sister. I will send a servant to Longbourn to bring back some clothes.

DARCY: I do hope your sister recovers soon, Miss Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: Thank you. Excuse me, I will go back up to be with her.

(ELIZABETH *exits.*)

MISS BINGLEY: There Mr Darcy. I know you shall be amused. Two Miss Bennets and one set of fine eyes. Hopkins! Please send to Longbourn for Miss Elizabeth Bennet's things. She needs new clothes...immediately.

Scene Six

(*The BENNET home, Netherfield*)

(MRS BENNET and LYDIA *with a note.*)

MRS BENNET: Yes, yes all is well. (*Reading*) "... been in bed this whole time, but thanks to the kindness of Mr Bingley and his sister, I am quite strong again."

(MR BENNET and MARY *with a letter.*)

MR BENNET: Mary, listen to this. It is from Mr Collins, my cousin.

MRS BENNET: Mr Collins! Oh...

LYDIA: (*Holding up the bows she is making*) Mama, look what I've done. Isn't it lovely?

MR BENNET: When I am dead, Mary, he may turn you out of this house along with your sisters.

MARY: What does he look like?

ACT ONE

25

MR BENNET: What does he look like? I don't know.
He's a parson. (*Reading*)

LYDIA: How dull.

MR BENNET: (*Reading*) "I have been distinguished by the patronage of the Right Honorable Lady Catherine de Bourgh, whose beneficence has given me the valuable rectory of this parish. Since ordination, I feel it my duty to promote the blessing of peace in *all* families." He has underlined *all*.

MRS BENNET: Odious man.

(ELIZABETH, in her room at Netherfield.)

ELIZABETH: (*Writing.*) "My dearest Charlotte. It is now over two days I have been at Netherfield. Mr Bingley absolutely dotes on Jane. Miss Bingley, too, has shown her every courtesy. Perhaps I have been too harsh on her. Though she acts rather stupidly around Mr Darcy."

MR BENNET: "I am aware that my inheritance of the estate may be the means of injuring your daughters, and I beg leave to apologize for it."

MARY: Why does he apologize for inheriting the estate?

MRS BENNET: (*Reading*) "I am fortunate to have Lizzy here, for she has made my recovery very quick." I knew Lizzy shouldn't have gone. (*She gives the letter to LYDIA*)

ELIZABETH: "Mr Darcy is still proud and disagreeable. To Mr Bingley, though, he is a solid friend."

MR BENNET: "If you should have no objection to receive me into your house, I should wait on you and your family, Monday the 18th" so on and so on. Next Monday, Mary, we may expect this peace-making gentleman.

MRS BENNET: Next Monday?

ELIZABETH: "Of all people, it is strange that I should be confined with Mr Darcy.

LYDIA: "Mr Bingley is the most amiable man I have known and Netherfield is grand."

MRS BENNET: I knew it would rain!

MARY: Is Mr Collins foolish, Papa?

MR BENNET: I think so, Mary. I do hope so.

ELIZABETH: "Jane has written mama to send the carriage, so soon I shall tell you all in person."

LYDIA: "I long to be home, mama. Please send a carriage for us as soon as convenient."

MRS BENNET: Well, it is not so convenient just yet.

LYDIA: Oh, mama, can I go to bring Jane home? I want to see Netherfield.

MRS BENNET: She has recovered too quickly.

MR BENNET: Too bad she didn't catch pneumonia.

MRS BENNET: We'll give her two more days and then we'll all go. As long as Jane is with Mr Bingley, all is well.

Scene Seven

(Netherfield)

(DARCY is writing a letter. BINGLEY is trying to balance objects on a parlor table. MISS BINGLEY is walking about the room.)

(ELIZABETH enters with a letter.)

BINGLEY: Are you sure Jane is strong enough to go home? Perhaps she should wait.

ACT ONE

27

MISS BINGLEY: I'm not sure I trust Mr Jones. He is after all only a country apothecary. I should send an express to London for a physician.

ELIZABETH: No, no. It is not necessary. She will come down shortly. (*Indicating letter*) My mother and sisters will be here later to bring us back to Longbourn.

BINGLEY: Splendid! Then you must all stay for dinner, mustn't they Caroline?

MISS BINGLEY: Of course. Hopkins. We will have more guests for dinner. Two?

ELIZABETH: Three, I believe, but it is not necessary—

MISS BINGLEY: Nonsense. (*To HOPKINS*) Three.

BINGLEY: Will you join us, Miss Elizabeth?

MISS BINGLEY: Yes, do join us while we wait for your sister.

(*ELIZABETH sits. BINGLEY balances. DARCY writes. MISS BINGLEY continues her walking.*)

(*As no one speaks, ELIZABETH picks up a book.*)

MISS BINGLEY: Do you always write such charming long letters to your sister, Mr Darcy?

DARCY: They are generally long, but whether charming it is not for me to determine.

MISS BINGLEY: A person who can compose a long letter with ease, must be a superb writer.

BINGLEY: Ha! That's not Darcy. He does not write with ease. He searches too much for words of four syllables. Eh, Darcy?

DARCY: My style of writing is very different from yours.

BINGLEY: My ideas flow so rapidly that I cannot catch them to write them down. Sometimes my letters end

up conveying no ideas at all. Would you like to play cards Miss Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH: No, I will amuse myself with a book.

MISS BINGLEY: Miss Eliza Bennet despises cards. She is a great reader, and takes no pleasure in anything else.

ELIZABETH: I am not a great reader, and I take pleasure in many things.

MISS BINGLEY: Let me persuade you to take a turn about the room. It is very refreshing.

(After a hesitation, ELIZABETH joins her.)

MISS BINGLEY: Will you join us Mr Darcy?

DARCY: I can imagine but two motives for walking up and down the room together. My joining you would interfere with either of them.

MISS BINGLEY: What does he mean? Can you understand him at all?

ELIZABETH: Not at all. But he means to be severe on us. Ignore him.

MISS BINGLEY: I must know what you mean.

DARCY: Either you have secret affairs to discuss, or you believe your figures appear best while walking. If the first, I would be in your way. If the second, I can admire your figures much better from here.

MISS BINGLEY: Oh! Shocking! How shall we punish him?

ELIZABETH: Tease him—laugh at him. You must know how it is to be done.

MISS BINGLEY: I do not. Tease Mr Darcy? No, he would defy us.

ELIZABETH: Mr Darcy is not to be laughed at? I would not like to have many such acquaintances. I dearly love a laugh.

ACT ONE

29

DARCY: The best of men may be rendered ridiculous by a person whose first object in life is a joke.

ELIZABETH: I only laugh at follies and nonsense. But I suppose you are without either.

DARCY: My goal is always to avoid the weaknesses which expose me to ridicule.

ELIZABETH: Such as vanity?

DARCY: Such as vanity.

ELIZABETH: And pride?

DARCY: Where there is superiority of mind, pride will be regulated.

(ELIZABETH *turns away to hide a smile.*)

MISS BINGLEY: Your examination is over, I presume. What is the result?

ELIZABETH: I am perfectly convinced that he has no defect. He has said so himself.

DARCY: I did not. I have faults enough. My temper is resentful. I cannot forget the vices of others, nor their offenses against me. My good opinion once lost, is lost forever.

ELIZABETH: That is a failing! But you have chosen your fault well. I really cannot laugh at it. You are safe from me.

DARCY: There is, I believe, in everyone a natural defect, which not even the best education can overcome.

ELIZABETH: And your defect is to hate everybody.

DARCY: And yours is willfully to misunderstand them.

MISS BINGLEY: Shall we have music? I do wish I had someone with whom to play duets.

(*No one responds.*)

ELIZABETH: Will you excuse me? I must see to Jane.

(ELIZABETH *exits*. DARCY *resumes writing*.)

BINGLEY: Darcy.

MISS BINGLEY: Tell your sister I am delighted to hear of her improvement on the harp; and that I am quite in raptures with her beautiful little design for a table.

DARCY: May I defer your raptures? I have not room to do them justice.

(HOPKINS *enters*.)

HOPKINS: Mrs Bennet, Miss Lydia Bennet, Miss Mary Bennet.

(MRS BENNET, LYDIA, *and* MARY *enter*.)

BINGLEY: How wonderful you have all come to bring Miss Bennet home.

MRS BENNET: You have been most gracious in caring for Jane. I know she must have been very ill to have imposed on you. My Jane is rarely ill, and rarely complains of anything. She is Patience herself.

(JANE *and* ELIZABETH *enter*.)

Jane, there you are. You do look well.

BINGLEY: Are you sure you are enough recovered?

JANE: Yes, yes, I am fine.

MRS BENNET: What did I say? Patience.

BINGLEY: You must stay for dinner. It is all arranged.

MRS BENNET: Of course we will stay.

LYDIA: Do you remember you promised that you would have a ball, Mr Bingley? It would be the most shameful thing if you did not keep your promise.

BINGLEY: As soon as your sister is fully recovered, you may name the day. Come, let us go in to dinner.

(*All but* DARCY *and* MISS BINGLEY *exit*.)

ACT ONE

31

MRS BENNET: (*Exiting*) What a sweet room, Mr Bingley. What a view!

MISS BINGLEY: Do fine eyes truly run in the family? I can imagine the gallery at Pemberley. The portrait of your great uncle the judge moved to make room for Mrs Bennet's brother the—I forget, what kind of merchant is he? As for your Elizabeth's picture, what painter could do justice to those beautiful eyes?

DARCY: It would not be easy, indeed, to catch their expression, but their color and shape, and the eyelashes, so remarkably fine, might be copied, I think.

(DARCY follows the others to dinner.)

Scene Eight

(*The BENNET house*)

HALL: Mr Collins.

(MR COLLINS at the door)

MR BENNET: Mr Collins, do come in.

COLLINS: May I say that it is my pleasure to meet you, finally, sir, and also to say how kind of you it is to let me impose upon you.

MR BENNET: Not at all. It is our pleasure to have you in our home.

COLLINS: Lady Catherine de Bourgh, my patroness, not only allowed me to take this leave of my parish, she encouraged it.

MR BENNET: You seem very fortunate in your patroness.

COLLINS: Never in my life have I witnessed such behavior in a person of rank—such affability.

MR BENNET: It is a pity that great ladies in general are not more like her.

(MRS BENNET, ELIZABETH, JANE, LYDIA, MARY and CHARLOTTE *enter*.)

MR BENNET: This is Mrs Bennet, and my daughters, Jane, Elizabeth, Lydia and Mary, and Lizzy's friend, Miss Charlotte Lucas.

COLLINS: I compliment you on your daughters. I heard much of their beauty, but fame has fallen short of the truth. I know you will see them all married soon.

MRS BENNET: I wish with all my heart it may prove so. Otherwise they will be destitute. Things are settled so oddly.

COLLINS: You allude, perhaps, to the entail of this estate?

MRS BENNET: I do. It is a grievous affair to my poor girls. Not that I find fault with you, for such things I know are all chance in this world.

COLLINS: I know of the hardship of my fair cousins, but I can assure the young ladies that I come prepared to admire them.

MR BENNET: Yes, well. Hall? Is dinner almost ready?

HALL: Yes, sir. (*He exits*.)

COLLINS: What lovely furniture. Mrs Bennet, I admire your taste. What an elegant settee. And this room. How airy, how cozily proportioned.

MRS BENNET: He is taking inventory already.

COLLINS: I have a new admiration of things of beauty since spending time at Rosings.

MRS BENNET: Rosings?

COLLINS: The estate of my patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh. The garden of my parsonage is separated

ACT ONE

33

only by a lane from Rosings Park. Lady Catherine lives there with her daughter, Miss Anne de Bourgh, the heiress of Rosings. Miss de Bourgh is very shy and of a sickly constitution, and is rarely in company, so I told Lady Catherine how unfortunate it is that society has been deprived of one of its brightest ornaments. Her ladyship seemed pleased with the phrase. I am happy on every occasion to offer those little delicate compliments which are always acceptable to ladies.

MR BENNET: It is happy for you that you possess the talent of flattery.

COLLINS: I sometimes prepare in advance such little elegant compliments that may be adapted to different occasions. I always try, however, to give them as unstudied an air as possible.

(MR COLLINS *takes MR and MRS BENNET aside.*)

MR COLLINS: (*Speaking only to MR and MRS BENNET.*) I hoped for a reconciliation with your family and that if your daughters were as handsome and amiable as is reported, as a kind of amends for inheriting their father's estate, I should find a wife here.

MRS BENNET: I understand you Mr Collins—

MR COLLINS: As Miss Jane Bennet is the eldest, I will follow custom and ask—

MRS BENNET: I must mention that Jane is likely to be very soon engaged.

MR COLLINS: Oh—

MRS BENNET: But my younger daughters have no attachments at all. Elizabeth, for example...

MR COLLINS: Is very lovely as well.

(MR COLLINS *and MRS BENNET rejoin the others.*)

MRS BENNET: Won't you sit down in the south parlor with my daughters? Dinner will be served soon.

COLLINS: Will you be joining us for dinner, Miss Lucas?

CHARLOTTE: No, Mr Collins. My mother expects me.

COLLINS: I hope you will at least sit with us in the other room. I thought I could read to the young ladies while we wait.

LYDIA: Read?

ELIZABETH: What would you read, Mr Collins?

COLLINS: Fordyce's *Sermons*, perhaps?

LYDIA: Sermons?

COLLINS: I carry it with me.

ELIZABETH: How lucky for us.

(COLLINS, LYDIA, MARY, JANE, MR BENNET and MRS BENNET move to another part of the house.)

CHARLOTTE: Who is he? I've never heard you speak of him.

ELIZABETH: A parson. He's to inherit our entire estate when father dies. He feels bad about turning us out, so as an apology he means to marry one of us.

CHARLOTTE: Really?

ELIZABETH: Mama will consent. She likes the idea of keeping the furniture in the family.

CHARLOTTE: There are worse things than being a parson's wife.

ELIZABETH: Stay awhile and listen to some sermons.

(HALL enters.)

HALL: (To MR BENNET) Three gentlemen here, sir. Militia men.

LYDIA: Militia?! (She runs to see who it is.)

ELIZABETH: Lydia!

MR BENNET: What do they want?

ACT ONE

35

MR BRANDON: (*Off*) Miss Lydia!

MR DENNY: (*Off*) Of course we had to stop!

MR BRANDON: (*Off*) Where are your sisters?

HALL: I'm sure I can't guess what they want, sir.

(*LYDIA brings in MR BRANDON, MR DENNY and WICKHAM.*)

LYDIA: Papa, it's Mr Denny and Mr Brandon and they brought a friend!

MR BENNET: Excuse me, Mr Collins. Do carry on without me.

(*MR BENNET and ELIZABETH cross to greet the new arrivals.*)

LYDIA: This is Mr Wickham.

WICKHAM: How do you do?

MR BENNET: My daughter Lydia you seem to have met already. This is my second daughter Elizabeth and Miss Charlotte Lucas.

WICKHAM: Miss Lucas and I have met. Miss Elizabeth, a pleasure.

ELIZABETH: Mr Wickham.

LYDIA: Mama! It's Denny and Brandon! And Mr Wickham. You haven't met him.

(*MRS BENNET joins them.*)

MRS BENNET: Always happy to see men in uniform.

LYDIA: They were coming back from town and had to stop in!

WICKHAM: We are intruding.

MRS BENNET: No, no. Stay for dinner. Hall! Intruding? In my younger days I sometimes dined with young men in uniform.

(HALL *enters.*)

HALL: Yes ma'am?

MRS BENNET: There will be three more for dinner

HALL: Three? Well, I'm sure we can make do...

MRS BENNET: Oh, boil another chicken.

HALL: Yes, ma'am. (*He exits.*)

LYDIA: Mama, Denny says that Colonel Forster is sure to give a ball when he returns. Is it so, Mr Wickham?

WICKHAM: If he does, I hope you will save a pair of dances for me and not spend your entire evening with Denny here.

LYDIA: I would never dance the whole night with only one soldier.

WICKHAM: Will you be at the ball as well, Mrs Bennet? My guess is that you are an excellent dancer.

MRS BENNET: It is true, if I say so myself. Would you come in and join us?

LYDIA: Yes please come and sit so Mr Collins will stop reading.

MRS BENNET: Mr Denny, how long have you been in the militia? It can't be very long...

(MRS BENNET, LYDIA, *and militiamen exit.*)

WICKHAM: Denny told me the Bennet girls were the loveliest in Hertfordshire.

ELIZABETH: And?

WICKHAM: His report is very accurate.

(MARY *leaves* COLLINS *and the rest and crosses past* ELIZABETH *and* WICKHAM.)

MARY: I'll go to my room then!

ACT ONE

37

ELIZABETH: Mary. Mr Wickham, may I introduce my sister, Mary.

WICKHAM: How do you do?

ELIZABETH: Whatever is the matter, Mary?

MARY: Mr Collins was reading but no one was paying attention so I suggested we play a game. Now Lydia is making everyone play cards and I hate card games.

WICKHAM: I sympathize. I dislike cards as well.

MARY: Playing a game was my idea. It isn't fair.

WICKHAM: No, I quite agree. Miss Mary, I am guessing that you are very accomplished at the pianoforte?

MARY: Yes.

WICKHAM: Will you do me the honor of playing for me?

MARY: I could play Dibdins *The Soldier's Adieu*.

WICKHAM: I love Dibdins!

(ELIZABETH and WICKHAM exchange a smile.)

WICKHAM: Lead on!

(ELIZABETH and WICKHAM exit, passing JANE.)

JANE: Mr Denny and Mr Brandon are lively guests.

ELIZABETH: Lydia is so happy to have soldiers in the house she could burst.

JANE: That was Mr Wickham?

ELIZABETH: Yes.

JANE: Your opinion?

ELIZABETH: Humorous. Good-natured. Handsome.

JANE: Careful, the parson might get jealous.

(HALL enters, crossing to MRS BENNET.)

HALL: Ma'am. Mr Bingley and another gentleman are here.

MRS BENNET: Mr Bingley? Show them in! Jane! Two more for dinner. Hall? Boil another chicken.

(HALL *exits.*)

MRS BENNET: Though I wish that Mr Bingley came alone.

(BINGLEY *and* DARCY *enter.*)

MRS BENNET: Mr Bingley! Mr Darcy.

BINGLEY: Mrs Bennet. I hope we are not intruding.

MRS BENNET: Intruding? Not at all, not at all. You honor us.

BINGLEY: (*To JANE*) I came to see if you were well.

JANE: You are kind.

BINGLEY: So...are you well?

JANE: Yes, very.

MRS BENNET: Jane is the picture of health, thanks to you. Isn't that so, Jane? If you'll excuse me a moment, Mr Bingley. (*As she exits.*) Mary! That is enough playing. That song will ruin my nerves.

BINGLEY: We were riding, and I said to Darcy, we must visit Jane. Miss Bennet. Didn't I say that Darcy?

DARCY: Those very words.

(DARCY *catches* ELIZABETH's *glance, then looks away.*

MARY *enters, obviously upset her playing has been stopped.*

WICKHAM *follows.*)

JANE: Will you come in to the next room?

WICKHAM: Mary's musicianship was not appreciated.

(DARCY *stares at* WICKHAM, *who turns white, and stares back. After a moment, WICKHAM bows slightly, which DARCY barely returns.*)

ACT ONE

39

DARCY: I'm afraid we cannot stay, Miss Bennet. Good day. Miss Elizabeth.

(DARCY *exits.*)

BINGLEY: Darcy seems to want to get back to Netherfield. If you are truly well, Miss Bennet, then I shall keep my promise to your sister and have that ball.

JANE: Oh yes! I am well. A ball at Netherfield would be splendid.

BINGLEY: Good. In five days. I expect all the Bennets to be there. And bring guests.

(BINGLEY *and* DARCY *exit*. MRS BENNET *enters.*)

MRS BENNET: Where is Mr Bingley?

JANE: He had to leave.

ELIZABETH: Immediately.

MRS BENNET: But I just told Hall to set two more places! Hall! Two less at dinner!

JANE: He's going to throw a ball, mother. In five days.

MRS BENNET: A ball? Especially for my Jane? Mr Bennet! (*She crosses to him.*)

LYDIA: (*To MRS BENNET*) Oh! I knew he would throw a ball!

WICKHAM: How lovely to have a ball thrown in your honor.

JANE: It is not in my honor, Mr Wickham.

WICKHAM: It seems that it is.

JANE: I'm going to see about Mary. We can't have her sulking. (*She exits.*)

WICKHAM: Is Netherfield near here?

ELIZABETH: Only several miles.

WICKHAM: How long has Darcy been staying there?

ELIZABETH: About a month.

WICKHAM: Do you know him well?

ELIZABETH: As much as I wish to. He is not at all liked here. He is a man of very large property in Derbyshire.

WICKHAM: Yes. A very large, noble estate. Brings in ten thousand per year.

ELIZABETH: You know him?

WICKHAM: I have been connected with Darcy since birth.

ELIZABETH: But—

WICKHAM: He has a thorough, determined dislike of me. My father was steward to Darcy's father. When my father died, Darcy's father treated me as his own son. In his will he provided me with a position as rector on the estate and left me the rectory. When he died, though, Darcy gave it to someone else.

ELIZABETH: But why?

WICKHAM: Jealousy. Had his father liked me less, Darcy might have treated me better. So I was forced to join the militia. It is very little money, but I live...

ELIZABETH: How could this be? He deserves to be publicly disgraced.

WICKHAM: Some time or other he will be, but not be by me. I wonder if he is going to be here much longer.

ELIZABETH: I hope your plans of staying will not be affected by his being here.

WICKHAM: Oh no. I will not be driven away by Darcy. I'm not afraid of him. Besides, I am looking forward to all your assemblies and balls. I hope you will do me the honor of at least one dance, Miss Elizabeth?

(ELIZABETH and WICKHAM are joined by MR COLLINS.)

COLLINS: There you are, cousin.

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ELIZABETH: Mr Collins, have you met Mr Wickham? Mr Wickham, my cousin.

WICKHAM: How do you do?

COLLINS: Mr Brandon is very humorous. He has been telling stories of the regiment.

WICKHAM: Not too many, I hope.

COLLINS: Nothing untoward, I assure you. I hope, Miss Elizabeth, you will be joining us for cards. I am not one who believes that a man in the clerical profession cannot enjoy a game of cards. In fact, as there are no large sums involved, it is beneficial, as it allows one to maneuver in good society. I often am called by Lady Catherine de Bourgh to fill out her whist table.

ELIZABETH: I'll join you shortly, Mr Collins.

COLLINS: Good. Good. Mr Wickham

WICKHAM: Mr Collins.

(COLLINS *exits.*)

WICKHAM: Lady Catherine de Bourgh?

ELIZABETH: His patroness. He lives next to her estate.

WICKHAM: And does Mr Collins know Darcy?

ELIZABETH: I don't believe so.

WICKHAM: What a coincidence. Lady Catherine de Bourgh is Darcy's aunt.

ELIZABETH: Is she really? Mr Collins seems to dote on her.

WICKHAM: She's very rich. Not as rich as Darcy, but nearly. Darcy's meant to marry her daughter. Consolidate the family fortune.

ELIZABETH: You don't say! (*Laughs*) Poor Caroline Bingley. She will lose out being mistress of Pemberley to the shy Miss de Bourgh with the unfortunate health.

(*We hear MR BRANDON, MR DENNY and WICKHAM taking their leave. As they cross to exit, LYDIA follows:*)

LYDIA: Oh no, but you can't leave just yet! There's no fun if you leave!

(*MR DENNY whispers into WICKHAM's ear.*)

LYDIA: Stay and play another game. Wickham, you will stay, won't you?

WICKHAM: No, we really must go.

LYDIA: Well, you will all come to Mr Bingley's ball, won't you?

(*JANE enters.*)

WICKHAM: If we are invited, of course we'll be there

LYDIA: Jane, make Mr Bingley invite them—the whole regiment!

(*The men bow and begin to exit as MRS BENNET enters.*)

MRS BENNET: Dinner is just about served. Just a few minutes more.

WICKHAM: My apologies, Mrs Bennet, but we lost track of time. We must get back to the regiment. Miss Bennet. Miss Elizabeth. Miss Lydia. (*He bows and exits.*)

MRS BENNET: Now there's *five* less for dinner. Hall!

(*MR COLLINS and CHARLOTTE enter.*)

MRS BENNET: Mr Collins. We are just about to go in to dinner.

COLLINS: I hope you will forgive me, Mrs Bennet. I am not feeling very well. The long carriage ride and the excitement of cards. I must retire to my room...Good night Miss Lucas.

(*COLLINS exits as MR BENNET enters, as does HALL.*)

HALL: Dinner is served, ma'am.

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MRS BENNET: Oh, what does it matter, now, there's no one left to eat it. Charlotte, are you sure you can't stay? There is more than enough.

CHARLOTTE: No, I must go. Thank you, Mrs Bennet. Good bye Lizzy. We'll talk soon.

ELIZABETH: Good bye Charlotte.

MR BENNET: I am starved. Let's see about those chickens, shall we?

(MR BENNET, MRS BENNET *and* LYDIA *exit*.)

ELIZABETH: A ball at Netherfield! For you!

JANE: And you? Will you be dancing with Mr Wickham?

ELIZABETH: It is very strange. He told me a story about Mr Darcy, about how the two of them grew up together. Mr Wickham was to have been provided a living, but Mr Darcy prevented it.

JANE: Prevented it?

ELIZABETH: Gave it to someone else. Out of spite. Jealousy, according to Mr Wickham.

JANE: I find it hard to believe that Mr Darcy did it maliciously.

ELIZABETH: How else could it be done?

JANE: I know you dislike Mr Darcy, but there may be another explanation.

ELIZABETH: I don't think Mr Wickham is lying.

JANE: No, but, I can't imagine Mr Bingley being so friendly with someone who did such a thing, and I can't imagine him being so deceived in Mr Darcy.

ELIZABETH: Jane, you think well of everyone. Let's eat. There's plenty, I hear.

JANE: Poor Mr Collins. I hope he is not too ill.

ELIZABETH: Poor Mr Collins? We are reprieved for a night! I am certain he will not leave Longbourn without proposing to one of us. You are taken, Mary is too young and Lydia is far too silly to be a parson's wife. That leaves me! I vow never be alone with him, Jane. He'll never get the chance to propose.

Scene Nine

(The BENNET house)

(MR COLLINS discovers ELIZABETH.)

COLLINS: Good morning, Miss Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: Mr Collins! You surprised me.

COLLINS: Miss Elizabeth...As soon as I entered this house, I singled you out as the companion of my future life. Allow me to state the reasons for my marrying. First, a clergyman should set a right example of matrimony. Second, I am convinced it will add greatly to my happiness. Third, it is the advice of my patroness Lady Catherine de Bourgh. I looked here instead of my own neighborhood, because, as I am to inherit this estate after the death of your honored father—who may live many years longer—I could not satisfy myself without choosing a wife from among his daughters, that their loss might be as little as possible. This has been my motive. Now all that remains is for me to assure you of the violence of my affection.

ELIZABETH: Mr Collins. Before you go any further. Please accept my thanks for the compliment, but I must decline your generous offer.

COLLINS: I know that it is usual for young ladies to reject the first proposal of the man they secretly mean to accept. Therefore I am not discouraged.

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ELIZABETH: I am not one who would risk her happiness on the chance of being asked a second time. You could not make me happy and I am sure that I am the last woman in the world who would make you happy.

COLLINS: I know what you say is meant to encourage my suit.

ELIZABETH: If this appears to you as encouragement, I don't know how to express my refusal so you will understand that I am, in fact, refusing.

COLLINS: Despite your manifold attractions, it is by no means certain that another offer will ever be made to you. I must conclude then, that you are not serious in your rejection.

ELIZABETH: Can I speak plainer? To accept you is absolutely impossible.

COLLINS: You are charming! I am sure that when sanctioned by the authority of your parents, my proposals will not fail to be acceptable.

(COLLINS leaves, hurriedly, nearly tripping over MRS BENNET, MARY, CHARLOTTE and LYDIA who have been listening at the door. As he quickly exits:)

COLLINS: Mrs Bennet, Miss Bennet, Miss Lucas, Miss Bennet.

MRS BENNET: Mr Collins! Are you going? Lizzy!

LYDIA: *(Laughing as she exits)* Oh, he really did propose!

(LYDIA, MARY and CHARLOTTE exit.)

MRS BENNET: What do you mean by refusing him?

MRS BENNET: You must change your answer!

ELIZABETH: My feelings forbid it.

MRS BENNET: Your feelings? What do you mean? You think you can easily throw this opportunity aside, that you can wait for a Mr Wickham —

ELIZABETH: Mother—

MRS BENNET: Oh, yes, I see and hear. Surely Mr Wickham is good mannered and looks fine in officer's pants—

ELIZABETH: Mother!

MRS BENNET: —but I hear he is involved with a Miss King who has at least a thousand a year. So do not be so selfish. You must find him and tell him you have changed your mind. Go now! This may be your last chance.

(MR BENNET *enters*.)

MRS BENNET: Mr Bennet. You must make Lizzy marry Mr Collins. She vows she will not have him and I am afraid he will change his mind!

MR BENNET: Lizzy, is this true? Has Mr Collins made you an offer of marriage?

ELIZABETH: He has.

MR BENNET: And you have refused?

ELIZABETH: I have.

MR BENNET: And your mother insists upon your accepting it?

MRS BENNET: Yes, or I will never speak to her again.

MR BENNET: An unhappy alternative is before you Elizabeth. Either your mother will never speak to you again if you do not marry Mr Collins, or I will never speak to you again if you do. (*He exits*.)

MRS BENNET: You must insist on her marrying him! (*To ELIZABETH*) Smile if you like, without a care for anyone else. You may never get a husband at all! Your father might be dead tomorrow or the next day, and then what will you do? No house, no money! I shall not be able to keep you. I said I will not speak to you and I

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will be good to my word. I have no pleasure in talking to ungrateful children. Rejecting him because of your feelings! On Wednesday, at the ball, you dance with Mr Collins, and make him propose again!

Scene Ten

(Netherfield)

(The ball. Netherfield is filled with ladies, gentlemen, children, officers, servants, musicians and food and drink. It is larger and grander than the previous assemblies, and the scene begins with dancing. The BENNET family arrives, including MR COLLINS. All are greeted by MISS BINGLEY. LYDIA looks for DENNY, JANE finds MR BINGLEY, MARY looks for the pianoforte, MR and MRS BENNET talk with friends, ELIZABETH looks for Wickham)

LYDIA: If you're looking for Wickham, Lizzy, it's no use. No one can find him. Brandon said he went to town on business. That's no fun! *(Running to DENNY)* Denny! Have you seen Wickham?

MR COLLINS: Miss Elizabeth. I hope to be honored with the hands of all my cousins this evening. I hope you will reserve two dances for me?

ELIZABETH: Yes, yes, of course.

(MR COLLINS turns to watch the dance and ELIZABETH slips away. DARCY comes up next to her. They do not speak. Eventually, a guest comes between them and she slips away. CHARLOTTE finds her.)

ELIZABETH: Thank goodness. Let's escape.

CHARLOTTE: Whatever are you up to? Who are you looking for?

ELIZABETH: Mr Wickham. I think Mr Darcy has kept him away, after all. And again, every time I turn around, Mr Darcy is standing there.

CHARLOTTE: He likes you.

ELIZABETH: Why would he like me? I despise him!

CHARLOTTE: Many people are adored by someone they despise or are despised by someone they adore.

ELIZABETH: Adore? How inconvenient to be liked by the one person you are determined to dislike more than anyone else in the world!

CHARLOTTE: Without Wickham here you'll need a dance partner.

ELIZABETH: Unfortunately I already have a partner.

CHARLOTTE: I have something to tell you, Lizzy—
(*COLLINS has appeared.*)

COLLINS: Miss Lucas, may I have your hand for the next dance?

CHARLOTTE: Yes, thank you, Mr Collins

COLLINS: It might interest you, that I have just heard that a relation of my patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, is a guest of this house.

CHARLOTTE: Really?

COLLINS: Mr Darcy is her nephew. I must assure him of his aunt's good health.

ELIZABETH: Mr Collins, no, you haven't been introduced. Mr Darcy won't take—

(*COLLINS crosses to DARCY and bows.*)

ELIZABETH: This evening is turning out to be a torture!

CHARLOTTE: He is funny, Lizzy.

(*CHARLOTTE moves toward COLLINS. Near ELIZABETH, MRS BENNET speaks to a guest.*)

MRS BENNET: He is so charming and rich, of course. His sister is very fond of Jane.

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ELIZABETH: (*Seeing MISS BINGLEY approaching*) Mama!—

(ELIZABETH goes to MRS BENNET just as MISS BINGLEY joins them.)

MRS BENNET: Miss Bingley! What a magnificent ball!

(LYDIA hurries past with MR BRANDON.)

LYDIA: Mama! I've persuaded Colonel Forster to give a ball. Isn't that wonderful!

MISS BINGLEY: Your daughters are enjoying themselves Mrs Bennet?

MRS BENNET: Oh, yes. We all are. Thank you.

MISS BINGLEY: I am glad to know it.

(MISS BINGLEY leaves them and crosses to DARCY.)

MRS BENNET: She is so gracious. I am sure we will see Jane settled at Netherfield in four months at most...

ELIZABETH: Mama, you are very loud—

MRS BENNET: Why should I care who hears me?

ELIZABETH: Well, now that Mr Collins has finished annoying him, Mr Darcy is looking over here.

MRS BENNET: I should be afraid of Mr Darcy? Ha! What is Mr Darcy to me?

(*We hear, from another part of the room:*)

MR COLLINS: Who shall play?

MR DENNY: What lady has a song?

(MARY, who has been keeping out of the way and observing her first real ball, steps out.)

MARY: I have songs. (*She goes to the pianoforte.*)

ELIZABETH: Oh Mary. Father?

(ELIZABETH crosses to MR BENNET. MARY begins playing and singing—poorly.)

ELIZABETH: Father!

(MR BENNET *interrupts* MARY's *playing*)

MR BENNET: Mary, dear. That's quite enough. Let other young ladies have time to exhibit.

(MARY is *ushered away from the pianoforte* by MR BENNET. She *cries in the corner, consoled by him.*)

(While JANE and BINGLEY are *engrossed in each other* and MRS BENNET is *laying out wedding plans, in another part of the room:*)

MISS BINGLEY: (To DARCY) How I look forward to including the Bennets in our family gatherings. Mrs Bennet, the model of discretion and restraint. I wonder if she has chosen the bed linens for the married couple yet. The talented youngest—a prodigy! —who can entertain us with her playing. And the energetic Miss Lydia, for whom we will never have to worry about a dance partner. Oh, and your Miss Elizabeth too, of course.

(DARCY and MISS BINGLEY *catch ELIZABETH's eye, who has been watching them. They all look away. DARCY leaves MISS BINGLEY, who is accosted by MR COLLINS. CHARLOTTE jolts ELIZABETH out of her thoughts.*)

CHARLOTTE: Lizzy. I have news. I tried to tell you. I want you to know first.

ELIZABETH: What is it?

CHARLOTTE: Mr Collins and I are engaged.

ELIZABETH: Engaged to Mr Collins? Charlotte! Impossible!

CHARLOTTE: Do you think it incredible that Mr Collins should be able to procure any woman's good opinion, because he did not succeed with you?

ELIZABETH: No, Charlotte, no...

CHARLOTTE: I know you are surprised, as Mr Collins just proposed to you.

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ELIZABETH: I wish you every imaginable happiness.

CHARLOTTE: When you have had time to think it all over, I hope you will understand. I have never been a romantic, you know. All I ask for is a comfortable home. I think my chance of happiness with him is as good as anyone's.

ELIZABETH: Undoubtedly.

CHARLOTTE: You must visit. You must. We're to be married in one month. You will come visit me right away?

ELIZABETH: Yes, yes. As soon as you are settled.

CHARLOTTE: I have to go. I made Mr Collins promise not to tell anyone until I told you.

(CHARLOTTE *and* ELIZABETH *hug*.)

ELIZABETH: I really am very happy for you.

(CHARLOTTE *joins* COLLINS *who is talking to* MISS BINGLEY *and others*.)

COLLINS: I can sing. A clergyman, though, must not devote too much time to music.

MISS BINGLEY: Absolutely fascinating. Excuse me, Mr Collins

(MISS BINGLEY *exits*. LYDIA, *who appears to be drunk, tries to dance with a militiaman*.)

LYDIA: What fun! It is so late and the dance isn't over!

COLLINS: A rector has so much to do: write sermons, take care of his dwelling...

MRS BENNET: (*To several guests*) I look forward to visiting them in London. Not immediately after the wedding, they must have a few days to themselves...

(ELIZABETH *discovers* MARY.)

ELIZABETH: Come on out of hiding, Mary. It appears our family has made an agreement to embarrass themselves as much as possible this evening. I hope love makes Mr Bingley both blind and deaf to our family's display tonight.

MARY: Is it true about Charlotte and Mr Collins?

ELIZABETH: Yes.

MARY: It's strange Mr Collins proposing to two different people in one week.

ELIZABETH: Even stranger that one of them accepted.

MARY: Mr Collins and Charlotte will move into our house when father dies?

ELIZABETH: Probably, yes.

MARY: Mr Collins will own everything?

ELIZABETH: Yes.

MARY: Even the pianoforte?

ELIZABETH: Even the bench.

MARY: I'd be sad to leave our home. I hope Papa lives for a long time.

ELIZABETH: We all do. We all do.

(DARCY appears, unnoticed at first.)

DARCY: Miss Mary. I've been looking for you. Here. *(He gives her sheets of music.)* I thought you might like to play some of these on your own pianoforte. They're better with you than lying un-played in Bingley's study.

MARY: Thank you Mr Darcy.

ELIZABETH: Thank you Mr Darcy that is very kind.

DARCY: Miss Elizabeth, may I have the next dance?

ELIZABETH: Of course.

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(DARCY bows and exits.)

ELIZABETH: (To MARY) What has happened?

MARY: Mr Darcy seems nice.

(ELIZABETH joins DARCY for the dance. They do not talk at first. They occasionally look at each other, as if to speak, or rather, as if the other was going to speak, but neither does. Finally:)

ELIZABETH: I do like this dance.

DARCY: Yes?

ELIZABETH: Yes.

(Silence again while DARCY and ELIZABETH dance.)

ELIZABETH: It is your turn. I talked about the dance. You ought to remark on the size of the room or the number of couples.

DARCY: Do you talk according to some rules while dancing?

ELIZABETH: Sometimes. One must speak a little, you know. It would be odd to be entirely silent for half an hour together. For some, it is good that the conversation be arranged so they have to say as little as possible.

DARCY: Are you thinking of my feelings or your own?

ELIZABETH: Both. I see a similarity in our minds. We are each unsociable, taciturn and unwilling to speak anything unless it amazes the room with its brilliance.

(DARCY and ELIZABETH dance some more.)

DARCY: Many in the regiment came tonight.

ELIZABETH: Yes. Except for one. An officer. In fact, when you and Mr Bingley came to call on Jane, we'd just had the pleasure of making friends with him.

DARCY: Mr Wickham is sure of making friends wherever he goes.

ELIZABETH: He lost your friendship. You said that you hardly ever forgave. It is very important that those who never change their opinion are sure of judging properly at first.

DARCY: Of course.

ELIZABETH: And you never allow yourself to be blinded by prejudice?

DARCY: I hope not. What is the purpose of these questions?

ELIZABETH: I am trying to make out your character. But the different accounts of you puzzle me.

DARCY: Reports may vary widely with respect to me.

(The dance ends. Couples bow to each other.)

DARCY: I wish that you would not sketch my character at the present moment.

ELIZABETH: But this may be my last opportunity.

DARCY: I sincerely hope not.

(DARCY and ELIZABETH look at each other a moment, then:)

LYDIA: *(Off)* Lizzie! Lizzie!

DARCY: Miss Elizabeth.

(DARCY exits. ELIZABETH watches him go, a bit confused.)

LYDIA: Oh, Denny!

MRS BENNET: *(To a guest)* It is a great thing for my younger daughters, Jane marrying so greatly. It will surely throw them in the way of other rich men.

(The assembly swirls round ELIZABETH)

LYDIA: Denny, tell them to play one more dance!

COLLINS: Miss Bingley! Miss Bingley!

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LYDIA: Just one more dance!

COLLINS: Miss Bingley!

MRS BENNET: Mary, what were you thinking embarrassing the entire family?

MARY: (*Starts to cry*) Papa!

MR BENNET: The carriage is here.

MRS BENNET: I told him to wait! Jane!

MR BENNET: Lydia! Lydia, where have you gone off to?

MRS BENNET: Lizzie—find Lydia!

(LYDIA *passes through with* MR DENNY, *laughing.*)

LYDIA: Have you ever seen such a night? What a dream!

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Scene One

(The Parsonage)

(The simple parsonage of MR COLLINS and CHARLOTTE.)

COLLINS: Mrs Collins! I have some news! Where is Miss Elizabeth, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE: In the gardens.

COLLINS: On her very first day here! Lady Catherine has condescended to invite us all to tea. Very fortunate news, isn't it Charlotte?

(ELIZABETH enters.)

ELIZABETH: The parsonage is lovely, just lovely! And those magnificent gardens are so very well kept. Your passion, Mr Collins?

COLLINS: You are correct, cousin. I laid them out myself, with advice from my patroness, of course. Which brings me to a little surprise. We—meaning the three of us—have been invited to tea tomorrow at Rosings with Lady Catherine!

ELIZABETH: After your stories, I'm eager to compare my imagination to the real Rosings and its inhabitants.

COLLINS: I know you will not be disappointed. And do not worry. I shall take it upon myself to acquaint you

with Lady Catherine's manners, before we arrive. (*He begins to exit.*) How is your family? They are all well?

ELIZABETH: Jane is in London with my aunt and uncle hoping to see Mr Bingley, Lydia spends all her time with Colonel Forster and his new wife and Mary is writing a novel about an orphan girl. Otherwise, all is the same.

COLLINS: Good. Good. To the gardens. Miss Elizabeth. (*He exits*)

CHARLOTTE: His gardens keep him occupied outside for four or even five hours a day. I encourage it as much as possible. Some days I hardly see him at all!

(CHARLOTTE *and* ELIZABETH *laugh.*)

I can't tell you how happy I am that you will be here a whole month. I could hardly wait for you to arrive.

ELIZABETH: It is lovely here. And Rosings looks very grand, quite beautiful.

CHARLOTTE: We are sometimes invited, mostly to play cards. Lady Catherine is always stopping by to give advice about the house or the chickens or other things.

ELIZABETH: Do you mind it?

CHARLOTTE: Oh no...no... Sometimes her daughter, Miss de Bourgh, stops by as well. Though she rarely gets out of her carriage.

ELIZABETH: I remember Mr Collins saying she was somewhat frail.

CHARLOTTE: Yes, sickly really. She barely says anything at all. She's pale and sickly.

ELIZABETH: I like her then. She will make him a proper wife.

CHARLOTTE: Who?

ELIZABETH: Don't you know who she is intended for?

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CHARLOTTE: No, who?

ELIZABETH: Her cousin, Mr Darcy!

CHARLOTTE: Mr Darcy! (*Laughing*) No, really, Lizzy? Well, you lost your chance.

ELIZABETH: My chance? He wouldn't even dance with me.

CHARLOTTE: You danced at Netherfield.

ELIZABETH: Well, the ball at Netherfield was a strange night, indeed.

CHARLOTTE: It's the last time Jane saw Mr Bingley, isn't it?

ELIZABETH: Last time any of us saw him. He left for London so suddenly.

CHARLOTTE: But why?

ELIZABETH: On business, supposedly. But it makes no sense.

CHARLOTTE: How long has Jane been in London?

ELIZABETH: She's been staying with my aunt and uncle Gardiner there for four weeks now. She's visited Caroline Bingley once. She told Jane they may never go back to Netherfield.

CHARLOTTE: She hasn't seen Mr Bingley?

ELIZABETH: Not at all. He could do nothing but look at Jane every time they were together. He loves her, I know it. But something has happened. I'm worried that her heart will be broken. I expect a letter from her any day...Come, help me unpack. And tell me all about married life!

(CHARLOTTE *and* ELIZABETH *exit*.)

Scene Two

(Rosings)

(An elegant, fussy manor, the home of Lady Catherine de Bourgh. It has an enormous staff of servants. MR COLLINS, CHARLOTTE and ELIZABETH.)

COLLINS: Do not be intimidated. Though Rosings is impressive, Lady Catherine is most charming. Charlotte herself was overwhelmed at first, and now she feels very comfortable in her presence. Isn't that so, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE: Yes, quite.

COLLINS: Don't make yourself uneasy, cousin, about your apparel this evening. Lady Catherine will not think the worse of you for being simply dressed.

(LADY CATHERINE enters, accompanied by a servant. They bow to her.)

COLLINS: Lady Catherine

LADY CATHERINE: Mr Collins. Mrs Collins. Miss Elizabeth Bennet?

ELIZABETH: Yes, your ladyship.

(DARCY enters.)

LADY CATHERINE: Ah! Here is my nephew. Mr Darcy.

ELIZABETH: Mr Darcy?!

DARCY: Miss Elizabeth.

LADY CATHERINE: I know that you all met in Hertfordshire. Darcy tells me he has a particular acquaintance with you, Miss Elizabeth.

DARCY: It is good to see you again.

(LADY CATHERINE sits, indicates for ELIZABETH and CHARLOTTE to sit as well.)

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LADY CATHERINE: Miss Elizabeth. Your father's estate is entailed, is it not, to Mr Collins?

ELIZABETH: It is.

LADY CATHERINE: (*To CHARLOTTE*) For your sake I am glad of it, but I see no reason for entailing estates away from the female line. It was not done in my late husband's family. (*To ELIZABETH*) Do you play, Miss Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH: A little.

LADY CATHERINE: Then you must play for us.

ELIZABETH: Oh, no—

LADY CATHERINE: I'm sure you will find my pianoforte a superior one. Perhaps the best you've ever played upon. Do you practice, Miss Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH: Not often enough.

LADY CATHERINE: Excellence in music is acquired with constant practice. There are few people in England who have a more true enjoyment of music than myself. If I had learnt, I should have been a great player. How does your sister play, Darcy?

DARCY: Beautifully.

LADY CATHERINE: I am very glad to hear it. Tell Georgiana that she will not excel if she does not practice a great deal.

DARCY: She does not need such advice, madam. She practices constantly.

LADY CATHERINE: It cannot be done too much. When next I write her I will tell her not to neglect it on any account. Miss Elizabeth, how many sisters have you?

ELIZABETH: Three. Jane is the eldest. The other two are younger.

LADY CATHERINE: Do your sisters play?

ELIZABETH: One of them does.

LADY CATHERINE: Only one? Why did not you all learn? Do you draw?

ELIZABETH: No, not at all. None of us.

LADY CATHERINE: I suppose you had no opportunity. Has your governess left you?

ELIZABETH: We never had any governess.

LADY CATHERINE: No governess! A house full of daughters and no governess. Your mother must have been quite a slave to your education.

ELIZABETH: I can assure you she was not.

LADY CATHERINE: How many of you are out in society?

ELIZABETH: Jane, Lydia and myself. Mary is only twelve.

LADY CATHERINE: Your elder sister is not married?

ELIZABETH: No ma'am.

LADY CATHERINE: How odd that the younger sisters are out and the eldest not married.

ELIZABETH: It would be very hard upon younger sisters to be kept from society because the elder does not marry early. It would not promote sisterly affection.

LADY CATHERINE: You give your opinion very decidedly for such a young person.

(The servants bring in tea.)

LADY CATHERINE: Ah, at last. Miss Elizabeth, please play for us.

ELIZABETH: No, your ladyship—

COLLINS: Oh, you really must, cousin.

ELIZABETH: *(After a slight pause.)* Oh, then, for you Mr Collins.

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COLLINS: Not for me, surely. (*He involuntarily indicates Lady Catherine.*)

(ELIZABETH takes a seat at the pianoforte, looks through the music, selects one and begins to play. LADY CATHERINE converses with COLLINS, and the attention of all but DARCY shifts to tea. HE moves toward ELIZABETH.)

ELIZABETH: I know what you are doing, Mr Darcy.

DARCY: What is that?

ELIZABETH: You mean to frighten me. But I am not scared. My courage rises with each attempt to intimidate me.

DARCY: I know you don't believe I've come to frighten you. I've had the pleasure of your acquaintance long enough to know that you find enjoyment in expressing opinions which you do not actually hold.

ELIZABETH: (*Laughing*) How unlucky to meet someone who can expose my real character. Beware—it is provoking me to retaliate and I may relate things about you that will shock your relations.

DARCY: (*Smiling*) I am not afraid of you.

LADY CATHERINE: What are you speaking of?
Hertfordshire?

ELIZABETH: Yes ma'am. I've threatened to expose your nephew's dreadful behavior.

LADY CATHERINE: Dreadful behavior?

ELIZABETH: The first time I met Mr Darcy was at a ball. And at this ball, he danced only two dances, though gentlemen were scarce and many young ladies were sitting down without partners. Mr Darcy, you cannot deny it.

DARCY: I did not know any lady in the assembly outside of my own party.

ELIZABETH: (*She stops playing.*) And nobody can ever be introduced in a ball room.

DARCY: I have not the talent of conversing easily with those I do not know. I cannot enter into conversations as well as some people do.

ELIZABETH: I do not play the pianoforte as well as some people do, but I have always supposed it to be my own fault—for lack of practice.

(*After a slight pause, DARCY smiles and begins to speak, but is interrupted—*)

LADY CATHERINE: Darcy! What are you speaking of? Darcy?

DARCY: Of practicing, madam.

LADY CATHERINE: Very good. Come into the Rose Room for cards. Miss Elizabeth, you are welcome to continue to play. We can hear you well enough in the next room. I will not discourage you from practicing.

(*The party moves into the next room but DARCY stays with ELIZABETH.*)

ELIZABETH: I remember from Netherfield, you are no lover of cards.

DARCY: I prefer music.

ELIZABETH: How suddenly you all left Netherfield. Mr Bingley and his sister were well, I hope, when you left London?

DARCY: Perfectly so.

ELIZABETH: Jane has been in London almost a month. Have you seen her there?

DARCY: I have not, I am sorry to say. Our paths did not cross.

(*ELIZABETH turns to the music, but DARCY interrupts.*)

DARCY: How long will you be here, Miss Elizabeth?

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ELIZABETH: For five weeks. And you? How long will you be at Rosings?

DARCY: Three weeks... Possibly more.

LADY CATHERINE: (*From offstage*) I am certain you will find a suitable piece, Miss Elizabeth. Do not be afraid to try something new. Do not be afraid of a challenge!

(ELIZABETH *smiles, turns to pianoforte, and plays as DARCY watches.*)

Darcy! Darcy, I need you here at cards.

DARCY: (*bowing*) Miss Elizabeth.

(DARCY *exits. ELIZABETH stops playing, looks to where he has exited.*)

LADY CATHERINE: Miss Elizabeth!

(ELIZABETH *crosses to where the rest are playing cards.*)

Scene Three

(*The Parsonage*)

(DARCY *and a servant. Silence. After an awkward moment, ELIZABETH enters, reading a letter.*)

ELIZABETH: Mr Darcy!

ELIZABETH:

What are—

DARCY:

I expected Mrs Collins
and Lady Catherine to be
here...

DARCY: My apologies if I am—

ELIZABETH: No, no. (*to servant*) Thank you.

(SERVANT *exits. Pause*)

ELIZABETH: Won't you sit down?

(ELIZABETH *sits. DARCY sits.*)

DARCY: I hope you are well today.

ELIZABETH: Yes, I am well. And you?

DARCY: Well...I was out walking when I thought to stop by the parsonage. I thought Mrs Collins and Lady Catherine were to be here.

ELIZABETH: No. Perhaps you would want to come back later today?

DARCY: No, no. (*Pause*) It is a very fine day for a walk.

ELIZABETH: I imagine it is, yes...I just received a letter from Jane. She hasn't seen Mr Bingley at all in London.

DARCY: Oh—

ELIZABETH: And it seems he is giving up Netherfield.

DARCY: I have never heard him say so, but I should not be surprised. (*He searches for something to say.*) This is a very comfortable parsonage.

ELIZABETH: It is.

DARCY: You've known Mrs Collins for a long time, I believe.

ELIZABETH: Since girlhood.

DARCY: Mr Collins is very fortunate in his choice of a wife.

ELIZABETH: He has met one of the few sensible women who would accept him.

DARCY: It must be agreeable to be so close to family and friends.

ELIZABETH: It is nearly fifty miles. Mr Collins cannot afford to hire carriages whenever he likes. (*Pause*) Your aunt has been kind to invite me so often to dinner these five weeks.

DARCY: Yes.

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ELIZABETH: I thought you were only staying three weeks at Rosings? You have stayed longer than expected I think?

DARCY: Yes...a little longer.

(Pause)

ELIZABETH: Your book, Mr Darcy. Thank you for lending it to me.

(ELIZABETH finds the book and gives it to DARCY.)

DARCY: I hope you enjoyed it.

ELIZABETH: I did. I found it very moving.

DARCY: So did I. If you'll allow me, I will bring you another one.

ELIZABETH: I would like that

(CHARLOTTE enters.)

CHARLOTTE: Mr Darcy!

DARCY: Mrs Collins. I was walking and I believed that you and Lady Catherine and Miss Elizabeth were here and so I stopped to visit and surprised Miss Elizabeth alone because Lady Catherine and you...

CHARLOTTE: Weren't here.

DARCY: Yes.

CHARLOTTE: You are always welcome Mr Darcy. It is an honor to have you visit.

(Pause)

DARCY: This parsonage, Mrs Collins...is very comfortable.

CHARLOTTE: Thank you.

DARCY: I must take my leave. Mrs Collins. Miss Elizabeth. *(He exits,)*

CHARLOTTE: Lizzy, Lizzy, Lizzy! Mr Darcy visiting our home. To see you! He is in love with you!

ELIZABETH: What?!

CHARLOTTE: Why else would he be calling here in such a familiar way?

ELIZABETH: No! He is bored of billiards and has no love of cards. He said almost nothing: "This parsonage is very comfortable". "It is a fine day for a walk". It is painful for him to converse with me.

(DARCY *re-enters.*)

DARCY: Excuse me. I left my...my book. (*He picks up his book.*) Mrs Collins. Miss Elizabeth. (*He exits.*)

CHARLOTTE: That only proves me right.

ELIZABETH: No. You are wrong Charlotte. I know you are. (*She exits.*)

COLLINS: (*Offstage.*) Charlotte! I just saw Mr Darcy passing through our gate!

CHARLOTTE: Mr Darcy is in love.

Scene Four

(*The Parsonage*)

(ELIZABETH *reads Jane's letter.* COLLINS *enters.*)

COLLINS: We certainly don't want to keep Lady Catherine waiting. Oh, Miss Elizabeth, good. You, at least, are ready. I believe tonight, I shall offer to expand on last week's sermon, with additional commentary. For the amusement of the group. If it pleases her ladyship, of course.

ELIZABETH: (*Putting letter away.*) Of course.

(CHARLOTTE *enters.*)

ACT TWO

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COLLINS: It takes eight minutes to walk to Rosings, so we should set out in two. We mustn't be late, but I also think being too early is a mistake as well.

ELIZABETH: I understand Mr Darcy is to leave this Saturday.

CHARLOTTE: I think so. Though he does seem to keep putting off his departure.

ELIZABETH: He does as he pleases, Mr Darcy.

COLLINS: Mr Darcy is such the model of what a gentleman of good breeding should be. Dignified, courteous...and loyal. He is very loyal to his friends.

ELIZABETH: Yes, he is.

COLLINS: I heard...I must admit, I overheard, but not through any intentions of my own...I overheard Lady Catherine discussing an incident in which Mr Darcy very recently rescued a friend from disaster.

ELIZABETH: Rescued?

COLLINS: Oh yes! It seems he saved a close friend from a most unfortunate marriage.

ELIZABETH: Who was it?

COLLINS: I don't know. But it was a most imprudent match apparently. Mr Darcy was able to separate his friend from the lady and keep her from seeing him.

ELIZABETH: And what were the reasons?

CHARLOTTE: Lizzy—

ELIZABETH: What were the reasons for separating them?

COLLINS: There were some very strong objections to the lady's family and her...intentions.

ELIZABETH: I see.

COLLINS: Well, it is time to go. Charlotte. Miss Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: I am sorry. I am suddenly out of sorts. I cannot visit Rosings tonight.

COLLINS: Oh, Miss Elizabeth. Lady Catherine will be very disappointed.

ELIZABETH: Please give my apologies to her ladyship. Tell her I am not well.

CHARLOTTE: Lizzy—

ELIZABETH: I prefer to be alone this evening.

COLLINS: I hope you feel better, Miss Elizabeth. Charlotte. We mustn't be late. *(He exits.)*

ELIZABETH: Darcy has ruined every hope of happiness for the most affectionate, generous heart in the world.

CHARLOTTE: Lizzy, you don't know that they were talking about—

ELIZABETH: Yes, yes, I know. Of course that is what happened. "Very strong objections against the lady's family!" My family. Having one uncle who is a country attorney, and another who is a merchant.

COLLINS: *(Off)* Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE: There may be another explanation. *(She exits.)*

ELIZABETH: Jane does not deserve this treatment. The more I see of the world the more I am dissatisfied with it.

(Suddenly, DARCY enters. ELIZABETH is surprised. For a moment neither speaks.)

DARCY: Miss Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: Mr Darcy.

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DARCY: I just passed Mr Collins. He told me you are not well.

ELIZABETH: No, I am well, Mr Darcy.

DARCY: I am glad to be mistaken. I'm glad to find you alone. *(Pause)* Miss Elizabeth. *(He begins to pace. Then stops.)* In vain I have struggled. But it cannot continue any longer. My feelings will not be repressed. I must tell you how ardently I admire you. And how I love you. Ardently.

(ELIZABETH is stunned.)

DARCY: From the first time I experienced your wit and charm and intelligence and saw your...bright eyes, I have been enthralled. Enchanted, I think. I have tried, with all my will, to conquer these feelings, but it has been impossible. I am not unaware of the obstacles. Reason tells me that the inferiority of your family, whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own, should squelch my love for you. But, I love you, against my better judgment. And I hope you will accept my hand in marriage.

ELIZABETH: I believe I am now supposed to express gratitude. But I cannot. I have never desired your good opinion, and you have certainly given it most unwillingly.

(Pause. DARCY expects ELIZABETH to say more.)

DARCY: I might wonder why, with so little effort at civility, I am rejected.

ELIZABETH: I might wonder why, with so evident a desire to offend me, you told me that you love me against your will, your reason and your better judgment!

DARCY: Miss Elizabeth—

ELIZABETH: Did you really think I could marry the man who has ruined the happiness of my beloved sister? Can you deny that you did it?

DARCY: No. Towards my friend I have been kinder than towards myself.

ELIZABETH: My dislike for you began long ago, Mr Darcy. Your character was unfolded to me by Mr Wickham—

DARCY: You take an eager interest in that gentleman.

ELIZABETH: Who could help feeling an interest in his misfortunes?

DARCY: His misfortunes! Yes, his misfortunes have been great indeed!

ELIZABETH: You reduce him to poverty and yet you treat him with ridicule!

DARCY: Perhaps these concerns might have been suppressed, had I not hurt your pride! Did you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your family?

ELIZABETH: You wish to marry me in spite of the very things which made you separate Jane and Mr Bingley? From the beginning, your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain for the feelings of others made me realize you were the last man in the world whom I could ever marry!

DARCY: I understand you perfectly madam. Please forgive me for having taken up so much of your time.

(DARCY *exits*. ELIZABETH *stares after him*.)

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Scene Five

(Outside the Parsonage, the next morning. LADY CATHERINE, MR COLLINS)

LADY CATHERINE: Everyone is departing. Darcy is due to leave this very hour. He may have already ready set off.

COLLINS: It must be a great disappointment to your Ladyship.

LADY CATHERINE: No one feels the loss of friends so much as I do. I am particularly attached to that young man. He seemed especially reluctant to leave this year.

COLLINS: Any departure from your ladyship must be the cause of melancholy.

(ELIZABETH enters.)

LADY CATHERINE: And tomorrow I am to lose your company, Miss Elizabeth. It is unbearable.

ELIZABETH: Thank you for all your generosity. It has been a far more interesting visit than I could have imagined.

LADY CATHERINE: You must write to your mother and beg that you may stay a little longer. Mrs Bennet could certainly spare you for another fortnight.

ELIZABETH: But my father cannot. He wrote last week to hurry my return.

LADY CATHERINE: Your father of course may spare you, if your mother can. Daughters are never of so much consequence to a father.

ELIZABETH: I must follow my original plan. I can't be persuaded.

LADY CATHERINE: You are stubborn, Miss Elizabeth. I hope you packed correctly. Few people take care to pack with any logic, and such negligence can ruin

one's travel. Have a good journey. I expect to see you again next year, Miss Elizabeth. Do not disappoint me. (*She exits.*)

COLLINS: You will, I hope, carry a favorable report of us back to Hertfordshire. Lady Catherine's attentions to Charlotte you've seen, and I trust you do not think that she has made an unfortunate....Charlotte and I have but one mind and one way of thinking. We seem to have been designed for each other.

ELIZABETH: It is a great happiness where that is true.

(*COLLINS exits. ELIZABETH sees someone and freezes.*)

DARCY: (*Offstage.*) Miss Elizabeth!

(*ELIZABETH turns to go into the house.*)

DARCY: (*Entering.*) Miss Elizabeth.

(*ELIZABETH is stopped.*)

DARCY: Do not be alarmed. I will not repeat any of those sentiments or renew those offers which were last night so disgusting to you. I hope you will do me the honor of listening to me.

ELIZABETH: I thought you had gone.

DARCY: I've been walking in the grove, waiting until you were alone. Will you listen? You charged me with two offences last night. The first was that I had detached Mr Bingley from your sister.

ELIZABETH: You rejoiced in separating two young people in love.

DARCY: Was she in love? Bingley's feelings for your sister were beyond what I had ever witnessed in him. She is open, cheerful, and engaging, but she is that way to everyone. She does not seem to feel the same as does Bingley.

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ELIZABETH: If only Jane were indifferent or sullen or disliked people more we might be able to discern more clearly when she was in love. She is unfortunate to be so cheerful.

DARCY: I thought she was not in love. There were other concerns, of course. Your mother's family, though objectionable, was nothing compared to the total lack of propriety so frequently displayed by herself, your younger sister, and occasionally even by your father.

ELIZABETH: It's a wonder you could even speak to me.

DARCY: I vowed to save my friend from an unhappy connection. I convinced him your sister did not share his feelings. And I...concealed from him your sister's being in London. His feelings did not seem extinguished enough for him to see her without some danger. As to Wickham. He is the son of my father's steward. We grew up together. My father was fond of him, supported him at school. When my father died, his will gave Wickham one thousand pounds, a secure position and a valuable parish, if Wickham joined the clergy. Wickham most certainly did not want to be a clergyman. Instead, he asked for *three* thousand pounds. I sent the money and did not hear from him for three years. Then he returned and asked for the parish. His money was gone, his circumstances were bad. The position had been given to someone else, so I refused him. He disappeared. But last summer...I am telling you this in confidence.

ELIZABETH: Yes, of course.

DARCY: Last summer, my young sister, Georgiana, traveled with her chaperone to visit the seaside. Wickham followed. He ingratiated himself to her, who remembered his kindness to her as a child. She was persuaded she was in love, and agreed to elope. She was fifteen. I stopped them just as they were to run

away. You may imagine how I acted. His chief object was my sister's fortune, but I am sure that he hoped to revenge himself on me. I hope you will believe that what I say is true. I did not tell you last night because I was not myself. I did not know what could or ought to be said. (*Silence. He studies her.*) I hope you have a safe journey home, Miss Elizabeth.

(DARCY exits. ELIZABETH watches after him, still slightly stunned.)

ELIZABETH: I have been blind and prejudiced and vain and silly and ignorant. And Wickham has been mercenary and a liar. Had I been in love, I could not have been more blind!

CHARLOTTE: (*From inside*) Lizzy!

ELIZABETH: My poor family! Your ridiculousness has cost Jane and me much.

CHARLOTTE: (*From inside*) Lizzy!

(ELIZABETH stands wondering, alone outside the parsonage, as the setting becomes:)

Scene Six

(*The BENNET house*)

(ELIZABETH has just arrived home.)

JANE: (*From off*) Lizzy!

(JANE, MARY, MR and MRS GARDINER enter and embrace ELIZABETH.)

ELIZABETH: Jane!

JANE: Oh, I missed you!

ELIZABETH: I have so much to tell you.

MARY: Lizzy! Finally everyone at home!

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ELIZABETH: Aunt Gardiner! Uncle!

(ELIZABETH *embraces* MRS GARDINER *and then* MR GARDINER.)

MRS GARDINER: Lizzie, my dear!

MR GARDINER: Hello Lizzie.

ELIZABETH: How long have you been home?

MR GARDINER: Just a few hours.

JANE: I haven't even seen mama yet.

(LYDIA *enters*.)

MARY: (*To the GARDINERS*) Come listen.

(MARY, MR GARDINER *and* MRS GARDINER *go to another room where* MARY *briefly plays*.)

LYDIA: Lizzy! I'm so glad you're both home. Can you imagine it's just been me and Mary all these weeks?

ELIZABETH: (*Hugging* LYDIA) Lydia.

LYDIA: I have some news about a certain person we all like! There is no danger of Wickham's marrying that King girl. She's been sent to her uncle in Liverpool. Wickham is safe.

ELIZABETH: You mean Miss King is safe.

JANE: I hope there is no strong attachment on either side.

LYDIA: He never cared three straws about her. Who could about such a nasty little freckled thing? Wickham is *so* handsome. Too bad you lost out on him, Lizzy. Mama says you should have taken Mr Collins, but I don't think there would have been any fun in it. I thought one of you would have a husband when you came back. I hope *I* am married before I'm twenty-three! Oh, you'll never guess! The militia are leaving Meryton! They are going to be encamped near Brighton and I plan to go there for the summer! It's

such a delicious scheme. Mamma would like to go too, of all things!

ELIZABETH: Wonderful. Lydia, Brighton and a camp full of soldiers.

(MRS BENNET *enters*.)

MRS BENNET: You are back! Jane, I see your beauty is undiminished. He is a very undeserving young man—and I do not suppose there's a chance in the world of ever getting him now. There is no talk of his coming back to Netherfield and I have inquired of everybody who is likely to know.

JANE: I do not believe he will ever live at Netherfield again.

MRS BENNET: Nobody wants him to come. I shall always say he used my daughter extremely ill. If you die of a broken heart, then he will be sorry for what he has done.

(MR GARDINER, MRS GARDINER *and* MARY *re-enter*.)

MRS BENNET: Brother, Mrs Gardiner, you are so kind to let Jane stay with you for so long.

MRS GARDINER: It was a pleasure.

MR GARDINER: Any of the Bennet girls are welcome, anytime.

MRS BENNET: Welcome home, Lizzy. We have invited the Lucases to dinner. I am sure they will want to hear all about Charlotte and Mr Collins. I suppose, they often talk of having Longbourn when your father is dead.

ELIZABETH: They never talked of it in front of me.

MRS BENNET: No. I am sure they talk of it between themselves.

ACT TWO

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LYDIA: Let's all walk to Meryton and see what is happening with everyone. The militia leaves soon, remember.

ELIZABETH: Let it not be said that the Miss Bennets could not be at home half a day before they were in pursuit of officers.

MRS BENNET: There will be militiamen enough when you visit Brighton.

(MR BENNET *enters*.)

ELIZABETH: Father!

(MR BENNET *kisses* ELIZABETH.)

ELIZABETH: We're not really going to Brighton?

LYDIA: No, just me! Papa says I can go if Colonel and Mrs Forster invite me to stay with them and it is more than certain they will.

ELIZABETH: That is not a good idea.

MARY: It's a disaster.

ELIZABETH: Father, she is reckless here, under your watch. Imagine how she will be in Brighton with an entire regiment of militia at her disposal!

MR BENNET: Lydia will not rest until she has made an exhibition of herself. This will let her do that with the least expense and inconvenience. Colonel Forster will keep her out of mischief. She is too poor to be an object of prey to anybody.

MRS BENNET: How I wish we all could go! Tea? Hall! Tea! Have you ever been to Brighton?

(MRS BENNET, MRS GARDINER, MR GARDINER, MARY and LYDIA *exit*.)

ELIZABETH: Father, it would be better that you paid less attention to your books and jests and more to preserving the reputation of your daughters.

MR BENNET: Lizzy—

ELIZABETH: If you knew of the great disadvantage to us all as a result of Lydia's careless, flirtatious manner—

MR BENNET: What? Has she frightened away potential husbands? Do not worry. You and Jane are respected and valued and will not appear less so for having a very silly sister. I am very glad to have you both back home. (*He exits.*)

ELIZABETH: Oh, Jane—

(ELIZABETH *hugs* JANE.)

JANE: What is it?—Lizzy? What is it?

ELIZABETH: —Oh, I missed you, Jane. All I wanted to do was return home, but now that I'm here, I wish I could escape this very instant and leave all talk of Brighton and Wickham and husbands behind!

JANE: This should cheer you, then. Aunt and Uncle Gardiner mean to ask you to join them when they leave.

ELIZABETH: To London?

JANE: No. To join them touring the countryside. To see mountains and manor houses.

ELIZABETH: It sounds wonderful. But we've been separated for too long. I'll stay if you---

JANE: No, no. I will miss you, but you must go. There will be plenty of time for sisters when you return.

ELIZABETH: A change of scenery, a change in everything! What are men compared to rocks and mountains?

JANE: Indeed.

(MR GARDINER *and* MRS GARDINER *enter.*)

MRS GARDINER: Lizzy—your uncle and I have something to ask you.

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JANE: Excuse me.

MRS GARDINER: Jane, you may stay.

JANE: I'm going to rest after the carriage ride. (*She exits.*)

MRS GARDINER: I hope she is not too sad for too long. Mr Bingley would have been a desirable match. But these things happen. A young man easily falls in love with a pretty girl for a few weeks and then, they're separated, and he forgets her.

ELIZABETH: But he was fiercely in love with her.

MRS GARDINER: (*Laughs gently*) How "fierce" was his love?

ELIZABETH: His feelings, I thought could not be... extinguished.

MRS GARDINER: With her disposition, she will not get over it soon. She's not like you. You would have laughed yourself out of it.

MR GARDINER: Lizzy. We are only staying a few days and then we are off on a leisurely "tour of pleasure."

ELIZABETH: Yes, Jane just told me.

MRS GARDINER: We hope you will join us. We just asked your father and he said he could spare you.

ELIZABETH: He did, did he?

MR GARDINER: We've not determined how far we will go, but we are eager to visit Derbyshire. Your aunt spent many years as a young woman there.

ELIZABETH: Derbyshire. Mr Darcy's part of the world.

MRS GARDINER: Yes. And I thought we could even tour Pemberley while we were there.

ELIZABETH: Pemberley?

MRS GARDINER: Mr Darcy's estate

ELIZABETH: Yes, yes, I know.

MRS GARDINER: I would be a shame to be in Derbyshire and not see Pemberley. It is a marvel. The house, the grounds, the woods. It is the finest estate you are ever likely to see.

ELIZABETH: It's only—I just left Mr Darcy at Rosings and I— (*She tries to joke.*) —I wouldn't want him to think I am following him across the country.

MR GARDINER: It's likely Mr Darcy won't even be at Pemberley when we are there. Lizzy. Derbyshire has some excellent lakes for fishing, and I am counting on you to keep your aunt busy visiting as many manor houses as possible while I try every one of those lakes.

ELIZABETH: Yes. Well, I suppose if it is the finest estate I'll ever see, I shouldn't miss it.

MRS GARDINER: So you will join us then?

ELIZABETH: Then I will join you.

MRS GARDINER: Splendid!

ELIZABETH: A tour of pleasure! To Pemberley!

Scene Eight

(*Pemberley*)

MRS REYNOLDS: Welcome to Pemberley.

(*We are now at Pemberley, in the house of the DARCY family.*)

(*ELIZABETH and MRS GARDINER take in the extraordinary manor, neither subtle nor ostentatious in its display of long-held fortunes. MRS REYNOLDS, the housekeeper, is used to touring people through this celebrated house.*)

MRS GARDINER: It's magnificent isn't it Lizzy?

ELIZABETH: Yes.

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MRS GARDINER: The Darcy family certainly has exquisite taste.

ELIZABETH: Mr Darcy is away at present?

MRS REYNOLDS: He does not return until tomorrow. In this room are some of the family portraits. Here is my master.

MRS GARDINER: Is it a very good likeness, Lizzy?

MRS REYNOLDS: Do you know Mr Darcy?

ELIZABETH: A little, yes.

MRS REYNOLDS: Don't you think him very handsome?

ELIZABETH: Yes, very handsome.

MRS REYNOLDS: Here is his sister, Miss Darcy. The prettiest young lady. And she sings and plays. Just last week a new pianoforte arrived for her from Mr Darcy.

MRS GARDINER: He is a good brother.

MRS REYNOLDS: There is nothing he will not do for her.

ELIZABETH: Is Mr Darcy often at Pemberley?

MRS REYNOLDS: Not as often as I wish. If he would marry, I would see more of him. But I don't know who is good enough for him. As long as I've known him, he has the sweetest temper, the most generous heart in the world.

ELIZABETH: Yes...I always thought so as well.

MRS REYNOLDS: If you will follow me.

(MRS REYNOLDS *leads* MRS GARDINER *to another room*,
ELIZABETH *lags behind*.)

MRS REYNOLDS: (*Off stage*) Now this is the dining parlor...

ELIZABETH: And of this place, I might have been...very well acquainted.....

(ELIZABETH turns to catch up with the others and she is suddenly face to face with DARCY. He starts.)

ELIZABETH: Mr Darcy!

DARCY: Miss Elizabeth! I—it seems we are always startling each other. How do you do? ...I am very happy to see you again...I trust you are well?

ELIZABETH: Very well thank you...I am here with my aunt and uncle, touring... My aunt is in the dining... Pemberley is beautiful.

DARCY: Thank you. I am pleased that you like it. I am very happy to see you again.

ELIZABETH: Thank you. Your housekeeper said you were away. That you weren't coming back until tomorrow.

DARCY: I wasn't. But, I did. Come back early. I had business. With my steward. Bingley is coming tomorrow. And his sister.

ELIZABETH: Oh? And how are Mr Bingley and Miss Bingley?

DARCY: They are well. I came ahead of them.

ELIZABETH: Yes.

(MRS REYNOLDS and MRS GARDINER enter.)

MRS REYNOLDS: Mr Darcy! You are back early!

DARCY: Miss Elizabeth, will you do me the honor of introducing me to your aunt?

ELIZABETH: Mr Darcy, allow me to introduce Mrs Gardiner. My aunt.

(DARCY and MRS GARDINER bow to each other.)

MRS GARDINER: It is an honor to meet you, Mr Darcy. And to see Pemberley again. It has been many years since I toured it last.

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DARCY: You are from this county?

MRS GARDINER: From Lambton, yes.

DARCY: I hope you find it in as good condition as when you last saw it. Miss Elizabeth, I wonder. Will you allow me to introduce my sister to you?

ELIZABETH: Your sister? Why yes, I should be delighted.

DARCY: Mrs Reynolds. Would you please find Georgiana for me?

MRS REYNOLDS: Yes, Mr Darcy.

DARCY: You are staying in Derbyshire?

ELIZABETH: In Lambton. At the inn. *(Pause)* Mrs Reynolds says you have given your sister a pianoforte.

DARCY: Yes.

ELIZABETH: Mr Darcy—

(REYNOLDS returns with MR GARDINER following.)

MRS REYNOLDS: Mr Darcy—

MRS GARDINER:

ELIZABETH:

Mr Gardiner—

Uncle!

MR GARDINER: *(To DARCY)* Excuse me, sir. *(To MRS GARDINER)* My dear—

ELIZABETH: Mr Darcy, allow me to introduce my uncle, Mr Gardiner.

MR GARDINER: It is an honor, sir. I am sorry to come in in such a manner, but I must speak to my niece.

DARCY: Of course. Please excuse me.

(DARCY and MR GARDINER bow to each other. DARCY and REYNOLDS exit.)

ELIZABETH: What is it?

(He gives ELIZABETH a letter).

MR GARDINER: This came just after you left Lizzy.

MRS GARDINER: What has happened? Why couldn't it wait until we returned?

ELIZABETH: (*Reading*) No! We have to leave at once!

MR GARDINER: Yes, yes. Everything is packed. We can leave directly from here.

ELIZABETH: It cannot be!

MRS GARDINER: Whatever is the matter?

(DARCY enters.)

DARCY: Miss Elizabeth...forgive me... can I be of some help?

ELIZABETH: I just received some distressing news. From Jane.

DARCY: What—

ELIZABETH: Lydia has run off.

MRS GARDINER: Oh!

ELIZABETH: With Wickham. Lydia is in his power. They're gone off together from Brighton. You know him too well, Mr Darcy to doubt the rest. They have disappeared.

MRS GARDINER: Can this be true?

MR GARDINER: Jane believes they will marry.

ELIZABETH: No, that's not Wickham's intention. He has enormous debts and she has no money, nothing that could tempt him to marry her. He may have already left her. She's ruined. I could have warned them—I could have protected my own sister.

DARCY: Miss Elizabeth, I'm sorry. This is...I don't know what to say. Is it certain?

MR GARDINER: (*Nodding*) They were traced as far as London.

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ELIZABETH: Father has gone there. But nothing can be done.

MRS GARDINER: Oh, Lydia.

ELIZABETH: What a wretched mistake I have made. Mr Darcy, we must leave at once. I am sorry I did not meet your sister. You will not tell her of this?

DARCY: No. Of course not. Mr Gardiner, if there is anything I can do, I am at your service.

MR GARDINER: Thank you, Mr Darcy.

ELIZABETH: Goodbye...

DARCY: Goodbye, Miss Elizabeth.

(They all bow.)

ELIZABETH: What's to be done? There's nothing to be done.

MRS GARDINER: There's always something to be done, my dear. Always something.

(ELIZABETH and the GARDINERS exit.)

(DARCY begins to exit and then stops.)

DARCY: Mrs Reynolds. I will need the carriage again. At once. *(He exits)*

MRS REYNOLDS: Yes, Mr Darcy.

Scene Nine

(The Assembly Hall, three weeks later)

(Music. The Assembly. A ball very much like the opening. It is only beginning. As the scene goes on it becomes more and more lively. The most boisterous activity is going on in an adjacent room and the party flows from there to the onstage room and back.)

(MR BENNET and JANE are off to one side.)

MR BENNET: Eleven thousand pounds! That is how much I estimate your uncle has paid Wickham in exchange for marrying Lydia. Ten thousand at least! It would take me ten years to earn that much money. Who could blame Wickham? He'd be a fool to take anything less!

JANE: But Uncle Gardiner said three thousand.

MR BENNET: He lied. He lied to protect me and get Lydia back and expedite the whole sordid affair. He paid it and lied. Wickham's quit the militia for the regular army. He has a commission as an ensign. Who paid for that? I'll never be able to repay your uncle. I am to blame for it all.

JANE: Father, you can't blame yourself.

MR BENNET: You ask Lizzy if I'm to blame. Let me have my misery, Jane.

(MRS BENNET *and* ELIZABETH *join them.*)

MRS BENNET: They're coming! I didn't think they would, but they are! Can you believe it? Lydia married before all the others. And to an officer! How sorry I am not to have seen the wedding! Mrs Wickham. How good it sounds. Where will they live? I must look for a suitable house. Purvis Lodge might do, but the attics are dreadful.

ELIZABETH: On an ensign's salary the attics might be all they can afford.

MR BENNET: Doesn't it trouble you, even a little, to know how this marriage came about? For days we thought the worst, that Wickham had lied to our daughter, taken advantage of her and left her in London. Discarded and unmarriageable. It is a sordid affair that only your brother's money prevented.

MRS BENNET: But it *was* prevented. And now she is married. What more can I wish for my girls? They have

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little hope else in this world, little hope else. *No one's path is easy. However she got to the altar, I rejoice.*

(LYDIA and WICKHAM enter the ballroom.)

MRS BENNET: There they are! Lydia! Mrs Wickham! Oh how wonderful she looks! I hope Lady Lucas is here to see them.

(LYDIA and WICKHAM join them.)

MRS BENNET: Lydia! Oh my darling girl! *(She embraces LYDIA.)* I am so happy! And, Mr Wickham. I wish you both joy.

WICKHAM: Thank you, Mrs Bennet. *(He holds out his hand to MR BENNET)* Mr Bennet.

(After a pause MR BENNET shakes WICKHAM's hand.)

MRS BENNET: We don't need to stay in here. Why don't we go in where they are dancing?

(MARY enters, eating.)

MR BENNET: I am going to find something to eat. Then some fresh air. *(He exits)*

(As MRS BENNET, WICKHAM, and JANE are exiting:)

MRS BENNET: Mr Wickham your new commission is in Newcastle! That's very far, isn't it?

(MRS BENNET, WICKHAM, and JANE exit.)

LYDIA: Lizzy, isn't he wonderful? You should have gone with me to Brighton. That is the place to get husbands.

MARY: Obviously.

LYDIA: The wedding was such a fuss. Aunt Gardiner went on as if she were reading a sermon. All I could think about was whether Wickham would wear his blue coat. Everyone was so distracted. Uncle disappeared just as we were going to the church. I thought Mr Darcy might have to give me away.

ELIZABETH: Mr Darcy?! Was Mr Darcy at your wedding?

LYDIA: Oh yes. He came there with Wickham. Oh! It is supposed to be a secret.

ELIZABETH: But what was he doing there?

LYDIA: I told you, he was with Wickham. Though from something uncle said, it sounded as if Mr Darcy arranged most of it.

ELIZABETH: Arranged? How do you mean?

LYDIA: I think he helped Wickham get some money that was due him. But don't tell anyone. Wickham will be very angry. You won't tell?

ELIZABETH: No, no.

LYDIA: We're leaving right away. Wickham said we didn't have time to stop, but I insisted. I just had to show off my ring! Don't worry, Lizzie. You'll find a husband one day, (*As she exits.*) Mrs Wickham. (*She exits.*)

ELIZABETH: He did it. He used his own money and his influence to save Lydia. But why? Our family owes him such a debt, and apparently it is to be kept completely secret.

MARY: Who?

ELIZABETH: Mr Darcy.

MARY: (*Studying her.*) Do you like him? Mr Darcy?

ELIZABETH: (*Laughing*) Yes, we are very much alike.

MARY: You didn't like him before.

ELIZABETH: He's not so disagreeable after all. I see that now, when it's least likely I should ever see him again.

MARY: Mr Darcy is here.

ELIZABETH: Here?

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MARY: Yes.

ELIZABETH: Here in Hertfordshire?

MARY: Here at the assembly.

ELIZABETH: What is he doing here?

MARY: He's here with Mr Bingley. I saw them come in.

ELIZABETH: He brought Bingley. Why did he do this? For me? (*Laughing*) Oh yes, he thought my answer to his proposal was very encouraging. And he proved his love by making Wickham my brother-in-law! Mary, run and get mother. Tell her I need her right away.

(MARY *exits*.)

ELIZABETH: If my family was an obstacle before this, Mr Darcy most certainly will shrink from any connection now.

(MRS BENNET *enters with* MARY.)

MRS BENNET: They've gone! Just like that! Mr and Mrs Wickham. Only stopped for a moment. (*She starts to cry*.) It is so hard to lose a daughter.

ELIZABETH: It's good they are gone.

MRS BENNET: How can you talk so about your own sister?

ELIZABETH: Mr Darcy is here.

MRS BENNET: What do I care—

ELIZABETH: With Mr Bingley.

MRS BENNET: Mr Bingley? You must be mistaken.

MARY: I saw them.

MRS BENNET: He's come to see Jane! I knew he would! Mary—run and fetch Jane! Go!

(MARY *rolls her eyes and exits to find* JANE.)

MRS BENNET: I knew he would return. I am going to have two daughters married before the month is out, mark my words.

(BINGLEY and DARCY enter.)

ELIZABETH: There they are.

MRS BENNET: I wish Mr Darcy had stayed at home. Most unlikeable man I've ever met.

(BINGLEY and DARCY approach.)

MRS BENNET: Mr Bingley. Mr Darcy.

BINGLEY: Mrs Bennet, Miss Elizabeth.

DARCY: (*Catches ELIZABETH's eye. Quietly*) Miss Elizabeth.

MRS BENNET: I am so happy to see you Mr Bingley. Have you been back long?

BINGLEY: I only just arrived.

(JANE and MARY enter.)

MRS BENNET: We are glad you have come. It is a long time since you went away.

BINGLEY: Yes, it has been.

MRS BENNET: Jane! Look who has returned!

JANE: Mr Bingley.

MRS BENNET: Doesn't Jane look beautiful this evening?

BINGLEY: She does indeed. As beautiful as I remember her.

MRS BENNET: A great many changes have happened since you went away. One of my other daughters is married. You just missed her.

BINGLEY: My congratulations to you.

MRS BENNET: It is a delightful thing to have a daughter well married, but hard to have her taken away from

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me. They are off to Newcastle, which is North, I believe. I hope we will see you many times while you are at Netherfield. You are always welcome.

BINGLEY: (*Looks to DARCY*) Yes, you will see me again. Miss Bennet, may I have the next dance? If you have not promised it to someone else?

JANE: It is not promised to someone else. I would like to very much.

(*BINGLEY offers JANE his arm and they exit.*)

MRS BENNET: I knew he would return!

ELIZABETH: Mr Darcy...How is your sister? Is she well?

DARCY: Quite well, thank you. You must excuse me. Miss Elizabeth. Mrs Bennet. Miss Mary.

(*They all bow and DARCY exits.*)

MRS BENNET: I don't know what is the matter with that man—

ELIZABETH: Oh, mama—

MRS BENNET: But Mr Bingley is as in love with Jane as ever. He's been drawn back. He means to marry Jane. You must see it, you know I'm correct.

ELIZABETH: Yes, mama. I believe you are.

MARY: Look. Who is that?

(*A commotion in the ballroom as LADY CATHERINE enters.*)

(*LADY CATHERINE scans the room, sees ELIZABETH, and plows through the guests who bow as she passes.*)

ELIZABETH: Lady Catherine. I am surprised to see you in Hertfordshire.

LADY CATHERINE: I hope you are well, Miss Elizabeth. This lady, I suppose, is your mother.

ELIZABETH: Yes, it is.

LADY CATHERINE: And this is your youngest sister.

ELIZABETH: Yes. Mary. *(Pause.)* Your nephew is just in the other room, Lady Catherine.

LADY CATHERINE: I must speak with you, first. On a matter of some importance.

(ELIZABETH looks at MRS BENNET.)

MRS BENNET: Please excuse us, your ladyship. We are very honored to have you here at our assembly. It is only a country dance, but I am sure you will find the company very pleasant.

(MRS BENNET and MARY curtsy and exit.)

LADY CATHERINE: You can be at no loss, Miss Bennet, to understand why I am here.

ELIZABETH: You are mistaken, Madam. I am not able to account for it at all.

LADY CATHERINE: A report of a most alarming nature has reached me. I was told that you would in all likelihood be united to my nephew, Mr Darcy. Though I know it must be a scandalous falsehood, I instantly resolved to see you.

ELIZABETH: If you knew it to be false, I wonder you took the trouble of coming so far.

LADY CATHERINE: I insist upon having such a report universally contradicted.

ELIZABETH: Your coming here will be rather a confirmation of it, if such a report exists.

LADY CATHERINE: If? Has it not been industriously circulated by your family? Has my nephew made you an offer of marriage?

ELIZABETH: Your ladyship has declared it to be impossible.

LADY CATHERINE: He is engaged to my daughter. From their infancy, they have been intended for each other. It

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was the wish of his mother, and of hers, and it is not to be prevented by a young woman of inferior birth, of no importance in the world.

ELIZABETH: Mr Darcy is a gentleman. I am a gentleman's daughter. So far we are equal.

LADY CATHERINE: Equal? Who is your mother, your uncles, your aunts?

ELIZABETH: If your nephew does not object to them, they can be nothing to you.

LADY CATHERINE: Tell me once for all, are you engaged to him?

ELIZABETH: I am not.

LADY CATHERINE: And will you promise me, never to enter into such an engagement?

ELIZABETH: I will not.

LADY CATHERINE: I shall not go away till you have given me the assurance I require.

ELIZABETH: I certainly never shall give it. I am not to be intimidated, Lady Catherine. You have insulted me in every possible way. Neither of us can have anything further to say.

LADY CATHERINE: Well. I am most seriously displeased. Most seriously displeased! I will speak to my nephew.

(LADY CATHERINE exits quickly into the next room, as MRS BENNET and MARY, who have been spying on the interview, join ELIZABETH.)

MRS BENNET: She is a very fine-looking woman. I suppose she had nothing particular to say to you? Was she looking for the Collinses? I hear they are visiting.

(JANE enters.)

JANE: Oh Lizzy! Mary! Mama!

MRS BENNET: What is it?

JANE: I am so happy! I am the happiest creature on earth!

MRS BENNET: Whatever—

ELIZABETH: He asked! Did he ask?

JANE: Yes, yes.

MRS BENNET: Ask?

JANE: He's gone to find papa to get his permission!

(ELIZABETH and JANE hug.)

ELIZABETH: Oh, Jane!

MRS BENNET: He asked! Jane, oh, Jane! This is the most wonderful day I ever saw. I shan't get a wink of sleep all night. He is so handsome!

JANE: Would you believe that when he went to London last December he really loved me, but was persuaded that *I* was indifferent?

ELIZABETH: No! Is that so?

(MR BENNET *enters, followed by* BINGLEY.)

MR BENNET: Jane, I congratulate you. I know you will be happy and will do well together. Your tempers are alike, you are each so complying that nothing will ever be resolved, so easy that every servant will cheat you, and so generous that you will always exceed your income.

MRS BENNET: Exceed their income? Why he has four or five thousand a year, likely more!

BINGLEY: (*To JANE*) May I have the next dance?

JANE: All of the dances, Mr Bingley.

MRS BENNET: (*To JANE, as they exit*) I always said it must be so. I was sure she could not be so beautiful for nothing!

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(JANE, BINGLEY, MR *and* MRS BENNET *exit*. ELIZABETH *is lost in thought*. MR DARCY *enters*.)

MARY: Mr Darcy is over there.

ELIZABETH: Is he?

MARY: (*Nods*) He stares at you a lot. Did Mr Darcy really propose to you?

ELIZABETH: Yes, he did. But, now, I think the defects of our family are too great for such a one as Mr Darcy to overlook. I'm sure it was Darcy who brought Bingley back to Jane, though. I know that's why he returned.

(MR DARCY *approaches them*.)

ELIZABETH: Mary, why don't you join the others?

(MARY *exits*)

ELIZABETH: Wonderful news. Mr Bingley proposed to Jane. But, of course, you knew.

DARCY: Yes. I am very happy for them.

ELIZABETH: I must thank you for your kindness to Lydia. I am very grateful.

DARCY: I did not want you to know. I did not want you to feel.... How did you find out?

ELIZABETH: Lydia, of course. Let me thank you again and again, for all my family.

DARCY: Thank me for yourself. Of all the reasons I did it, the thought of giving you happiness was the strongest. I did it for you.

ELIZABETH: Your aunt was here—

DARCY: Oh yes. I spoke to her just a moment ago. Briefly.

ELIZABETH: She was convinced that we were engaged. It took me by surprise.

DARCY: She asked me to promise that we would never be engaged. It was a promise, she said, that you stubbornly refused to give. I know you well enough to know that if you were absolutely decided against me, you would have said so to my aunt. It gave me hope.

ELIZABETH: Her visit gave me hope as well.

DARCY: If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so. But, my feelings are unchanged.

ELIZABETH: My feelings are not what they were, not at all, Mr Darcy.

DARCY: Miss Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: Why did you come tonight? Was it just for Mr Bingley?

DARCY: To see you. To see... To see if you could ever love me.

ELIZABETH: I could. I can. I do. Mr Darcy, are you proposing to me again?

DARCY: Yes, I believe I am Miss Elizabeth. Elizabeth. I am.

(DARCY and ELIZABETH are about to kiss. Enter MRS BENNET)

MRS BENNET: Why are you in here? Jane and Mr Bingley are about to dance and everyone will be watching.

DARCY: Mrs Bennet. Where is Mr Bennet? I should like to speak with him.

MRS BENNET: He is in with the dancers, I should think.

(DARCY pauses a moment and then bows, and exits.)

MRS BENNET: How odd he is. I don't care how many acres he has, I will take Mr Bingley over Mr Proud and Grim Darcy any day. You will have many opportunities to meet Mr Bingley's acquaintances—

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amiable, cheerful fellows who have a good income and are not Mr Darcy.

(JANE and BINGLEY *appear.*)

MRS BENNET: I thought you were dancing! I didn't miss your dance, did I?

BINGLEY: Where has Darcy gone off to?

ELIZABETH: He's gone to discuss an important matter with father.

MRS BENNET: An important matter? What could it be?

ELIZABETH: He's asking for my hand.

MRS BENNET: Your hand? Whatever for?

ELIZABETH: Mr Darcy has proposed to me.

JANE: This can't be! You are joking!

MRS BENNET: But you don't like him at all!

JANE: Were you very harsh in refusing him?

ELIZABETH: I didn't refuse him. This time.

BINGLEY: Ha! Darcy!

MRS BENNET: But, but, but...

JANE: (*Embracing ELIZABETH*) Good Heavens! Lizzy!

(MR BENNET *and* DARCY *enter.*)

MR BENNET: Lizzy! I must speak with you.

(MR BENNET *pulls ELIZABETH away from the others.*)

BINGLEY: I can't believe it! Let me be there when you tell Lady Catherine!

MR BENNET: Are you out of your senses? You hate Darcy!

ELIZABETH: I am quite in control of my senses. I don't hate him anymore. I don't think I ever hated him.

MR BENNET: But will he make you happy? Can you respect him? We all know him to be proud and unpleasant, but it wouldn't matter if you really liked him. Do you?

ELIZABETH: I do, I do like him. I love him. He is proud, yes, but he is thoughtful and generous and I love him and I can think of no man I could respect more. Please, papa, give your consent.

MR BENNET: I have no more to say, then. If this is true, Lizzie, then he deserves you. I could not have parted with you to any one less worthy.

ELIZABETH: (*Quietly*) It was Mr Darcy that settled the affair with Lydia and Wickham. It was all him.

MR BENNET: Oh. I see. Well, I will offer to repay him, he will rant about his love for you, and that will be the end of the matter. All the more economical for me.

(ELIZABETH and MR BENNET *embrace*.)

MR BENNET: Mr Darcy! (*Shaking DARCY's hand*) Congratulations!

MRS BENNET: Who would have thought it! How rich and great you will be. And he is so handsome! So tall! Mr Darcy! I apologize for having disliked you so much before. I pray you will overlook it.

BINGLEY: Congratulations, Miss Elizabeth. There is nothing that could give me more delight than to see you and Darcy married.

JANE: I am pleased to have you now as a brother.

DARCY: (*He takes her hand.*) Miss Bennet.

ELIZABETH: Mr Darcy, can I tempt you now to dance?

MRS BENNET: Are we not the luckiest family for miles and miles?

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MR BENNET: Of my three son-in laws, I think I like Wickham best. But these two will do.

(The two couples join the dance.)

MRS BENNET: It is sad to see daughters go. Now there's only Mary. But she is young and we have plenty of time to find her a husband.

MR BENNET: Yes. And then I can die without guilt.

MRS BENNET: Oh, Mr Bennet! Hasn't everything turned out for the best? Hasn't everything turned out as it should?

MR BENNET: Yes, my dear.

MRS BENNET: I knew it would. I knew it would.

(They join the dance, which takes over the stage.)

END OF PLAY