

Pride and Prejudice

By Jane Austen

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CHAPTER ONE

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife. However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighborhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

“My dear Mr. Bennet,” said his lady to him one day, “have you heard that Netherfield Park is **let**?” It is taken by a Mr. Bingley, a young man of large fortune from the north of England. You must visit him.”

“I see no occasion for that,” replied Mr. Bennet.

“But consider your daughters.”

“They have – none of them – much to recommend them,”

“Mr. Bennet, how can you abuse your own children in such a way? You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion on my poor nerves.”

“You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these last twenty years at least.”

Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humor, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three-and-twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. *Her* mind was less difficult to develop. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its **solace** was visiting – and news.

The Bennets were the principal family of the Hatfordshire village of Longbourn, just outside the market town of Meryton. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet had four daughters, more or less grown up. Jane was the eldest, followed by Elizabeth, Lydia, and Katherine. The fifth daughter – Mary – was as yet of insufficient stature to make her mark in society.

Word spread like wildfire that Mr. Bingley meant to be at the next Meryton assembly ball. When his party entered the assembly room, it consisted of Mr. Bingley, his two sisters, the husband of the eldest, and another young man. Mr. Bingley was good-looking and gentlemanlike. His sisters were fine women, with an air of decided fashion. His brother-in-law, Mr. Hurst, merely looked the gentleman. But his friend Mr. Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble **mien**, and the report which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year. He was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud.

Mr. Bingley had soon made himself acquainted with all the principal people in the room; he was lively and unreserved, danced every dance, and talked of giving a ball himself at Netherfield. Mr. Darcy danced only once with Mrs. Hurst and once with Miss Bingley; declined being introduced to any other lady, and spent the rest of the evening in walking about the room,

speaking occasionally to one of his own party. His character was decided. He was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and everybody hoped that he would never come there again.

Elizabeth Bennet had been obliged by the scarcity of gentlemen to sit down for two dances; and during part of that time, Mr. Darcy had been standing near enough for her to overhear a conversation between him and Mr. Bingley. “Come, Darcy,” I hate to see you standing about by yourself in this stupid manner. You had much better dance.”

“I certainly shall not. You know how I detest it, unless I am particularly acquainted with my partner. Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman in the room whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with.”

“I would not be so **fastidious** as you are,” cried Mr. Bingley, “for a kingdom! Upon my honor, I never met with so many pleasant girls in my life as I have this evening.”

“You are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room,” said Mr. Darcy, looking at the eldest Miss Bennet – Jane.

“Oh! She is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld! But there is one of her sisters sitting down just behind you, who is very pretty, and I dare say very agreeable. Do let me ask my partner to introduce you.”

“Which do you mean?” Turning round, Darcy looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till, catching her eye, he withdrew his own and coldly said: “She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me, and I am in no **humor** at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men. You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles, for you are wasting your time with me.”

Mr. Bingley followed his advice. Mr. Darcy walked off, and Elizabeth remained with no very cordial feelings toward him. She told the story, however, with great spirit among her friends, for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous.

When Jane and Elizabeth got home, the former expressed to her sister how very much she admired Mr. Bingley. “He is just what a young man ought to be,” said she, “sensible, good-humored, lively; and I never saw such happy manners – so much ease, with such perfect good breeding!”

“He is also handsome,” replied Elizabeth, “which a young man ought likewise to be, if he possibly can. His character is thereby complete.”

“As for his sisters,” Jane resumed, “they are very pleasing women when you converse with them.”

Elizabeth was not convinced; their behavior at the assembly had not been calculated to please in general; and with more quickness of observation and less pliancy of temper than her sister, she was very little disposed to approve them. They were in fact proud and conceited. They *were* rather handsome, had been educated in one of the first private seminaries in town, had a fortune of twenty thousand pounds, were in the habit of spending more than they ought, and of associating with people of rank, and were therefore in every respect entitled to think well of themselves, and meanly of others.

Mr. Bingley had inherited property to the amount of nearly a hundred thousand **pounds** from his father. Miss Bingley was by no means unwilling to preside at his table; nor was Mrs. Hurst, who had married a man of more fashion than fortune, less disposed to consider his house as her home when it suited her.

Mr. Bingley had not been of age two years, when he was tempted to look at Netherfield House. He was pleased with the situation, and the principal rooms, satisfied with what the owner said in its praise, and took it immediately.

Between him and Darcy there was a very steady friendship in spite of a great opposition of character. In understanding, Darcy was the superior. Bingley was by no means deficient, but Darcy was clever. He was at the same time haughty, reserved, and **fastidious**. And his manners, though well-bred, were not inviting. In that respect his friend had greatly the advantage. Bingley was sure of being liked wherever he appeared, Darcy was continually giving offense.

Within a short walk of Longbourn lived a family with whom the Bennets were particularly intimate. Sir William Lucas was by nature inoffensive, friendly, and obliging. Lady Lucas was a very good kind of woman, and not too clever to be a valuable neighbor to Mrs. Bennet. They had several children. The eldest of them, a sensible, intelligent young woman of about twenty-seven, was Elizabeth's intimate friend.

That the Miss Lucases and the Miss Bennets should meet to talk over a ball was absolutely necessary; and the morning after the assembly brought the former to Longbourn to hear and to communicate. "If I were as rich as Mr. Darcy," cried a young Lucas, who came with his sisters, "I should not care how proud I was. I would keep a pack of foxhounds, and drink a bottle of wine a day."

"And if I were to see you at it, said Mrs. Bennet, "I should take away your bottle directly."

The ladies of Longbourn soon waited on those of Netherfield. The visit was returned in due form. Miss Bennet's pleasing manners grew on the goodwill of Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley; and though the mother was

found to be intolerable, and the younger sisters not worth speaking to, a wish of being better acquainted with them was expressed towards the two eldest.

By Jane, this attention was received with the greatest pleasure, but Elizabeth still saw superciliousness in their treatment of everybody, and could not like them; though their kindness to Jane, such as it was, had a value as arising in all probability from the influence of their brother's admiration. It was generally evident whenever they met, that *he* did admire *her*, and to Elizabeth it was equally evident that Jane was yielding to the preference which she had begun to entertain for him from the first, and was in a way to be very much in love. But she considered with pleasure that it was not likely to be discovered by the world in general, since Jane united, with great strength of feeling, a composure of temper and a uniform cheerfulness of manner which would guard her from the suspicions of the **impertinent**.

Elizabeth mentioned this to her friend, Miss Charlotte Lucas.

“It may perhaps be pleasant,” replied Charlotte, “but it is sometimes a disadvantage to be so very guarded. In nine cases out of ten, a woman had better show more affection than she feels. Bingley likes your sister undoubtedly, but he may never do more than like her, if she does not help him on.”

“But she *does* help him on, as much as her nature will allow. If *I* can perceive her regard for him, he must be a simpleton, indeed, not to discover it too.”

“Remember, Eliza, that he does not know Jane's disposition as you do.”

Occupied in observing Mr. Bingley's attentions to her sister, Elizabeth was far from suspecting that she was becoming, herself, an object of some

interest in the eyes of his friend. Mr. Darcy had at first scarcely allowed her to be pretty; he had looked at her without admiration at the ball; and when they next met, he looked at her only to criticize. But no sooner had he made it clear to himself and his friends that she had hardly a good feature in her face than he began to find it was rendered uncommonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of her fine eyes.

He said as much to Miss Bingley. To this discovery succeeded some others. Though he had detected with a critical eye more than one failure of perfect symmetry in her form, he was forced to acknowledge her figure to be light and pleasing. And in spite of his asserting that her manners were not those of the fashionable world, he was caught by their easy playfulness.

Of *this* she was perfectly unaware. To her, he was only the man who had made himself agreeable *nowhere*, and who had not thought her handsome enough to dance with.

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Mr. Bennet's property consisted in an **estate** of two thousand a year, which, unfortunately for his daughters, was **entailed**, in default of male heirs, on a distant relation; and their mother's fortune, though ample for her situation in life, could but ill supply the deficiency of his. Her father had been an attorney in Meryton, and had left her four thousand pounds. She had a sister married to a Mr. Phillips, who had been a clerk for their father and succeeded him in the business, and a brother – Edward Gardner – settled in London in a respectable line of trade.

The village of Longbourn was only one mile from Meryton; a most convenient distance for the young ladies, who were usually tempted thither three or four times a week, to pay their duty to their aunt. The two younger of the family, Catherine and Lydia, were particularly frequent in these

attentions, and when nothing better offered, a walk to Meryton was necessary to amuse their morning hours and furnish conversation for the evening. At present, indeed, they were well supplied both with news by the recent arrival of a **militia regiment** in the neighborhood.

Their visits to Mrs. Phillips were now productive of the most interesting intelligence. Every day added something to their knowledge of the officers' names and connections. After listening one morning to their **effusions** on this subject, Mr. Bennet observed: "From all that I can collect by your manner of talking, you must be two of the silliest girls in the country."

Mrs. Bennet was prevented replying in their defense by the entrance of the **footman** with a note for Miss Bennet; it came from Netherfield. "It is from Miss Bingley," said Jane, and then read it aloud.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"If you are not so compassionate as to dine today with Louisa and me, we shall be in danger of hating each other for the rest of our lives, for a whole day's tete-a-tete between two women can never end without a quarrel. Come as soon as you can on the receipt of this. My brother and the gentlemen are to dine with the officers.

Yours ever,

Caroline Bingley

Jane accepted the invitation and stayed the night at Netherfield. The following morning, breakfast was scarcely over in the Bennet household when a servant from Netherfield brought the following note for Elizabeth.

MY DEAREST LIZZY,

I find myself very unwell this morning, which, I suppose, is to be imputed to my getting wet through on the ride over yesterday. My kind friends will not hear of my returning home till I am better. They insist also on my seeing Mr. Jones – the apothecary.

Therefore do not be alarmed if you would hear of his having been to me – and, excepting a sore throat and headache, there is not much the matter with me.

Your Loving Sister,

Jane.”

Elizabeth, feeling really anxious, was determined to go to Jane, though the carriage was not to be had; and as she was no horsewoman, walking was her only alternative.

“We will go as far as Meryton with you,” said Catherine and Lydia. Elizabeth accepted their company, and the three young ladies set off together. In Meryton, they parted. The two youngest repaired to the lodgings of one of the officers' wives, and Elizabeth continued her walk alone, crossing field after field at a quick pace.

She was shown into the breakfast-parlor, where all but Jane were assembled. That she should have walked three miles so early in the day, in such dirty weather, and by herself, was almost incredible to Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley. And Elizabeth was convinced that they held her in contempt for it. She was received, however, very politely by them; and in their brother's manners there was something better than politeness; there was good humor and kindness. Mr. Darcy said very little, and Mr. Hurst said nothing at all. The former was divided between admiration of the brilliancy which exercise had given to her complexion, and doubt as to the occasion's justifying her coming so far alone. The latter was thinking only of his breakfast.

Her inquiries after her sister were not very favorably answered. Miss Bennet had slept ill, and though up, was very feverish, and not well enough to leave her room. Elizabeth was glad to be taken to her immediately.

The **apothecary** came, and having examined his patient, said that she had caught a violent cold, advised her to return to bed, and promised her some **draughts**. The advice was followed readily, for the feverish symptoms increased, and her head ached acutely.

When the clock struck three, Elizabeth felt that she must go, but Jane testified such concern in parting with her, that Miss Bingley was obliged to offer an invitation to remain at Netherfield. Elizabeth most thankfully consented, and a servant was dispatched to Longbourn to acquaint the family with her stay and bring back a supply of clothes.

When dinner was over, she returned directly to Jane, and Miss Bingley began abusing her as soon as she was out of the room. Her manners were pronounced to be very bad indeed, a mixture of pride and impertinence; and she had no conversation, no style, no taste, no beauty.

Mrs. Hurst thought the same, and added: “She has nothing, in short, to recommend her, but being an excellent walker. I shall never forget her appearance this morning. She really looked almost wild.”

“She did, indeed, Louisa. I could hardly keep my **countenance**. Very nonsensical to come at all! Why must she be scampering about the country because her sister has a cold? Her hair – so untidy, so blowsy!”

“Yes, and her petticoat; I hope you saw her petticoat – six inches deep in mud, I am absolutely certain; and the gown which had been let down to hide it not doing **its office**.”

“Your picture may be very exact, Louisa,” said Bingley, “but this was all lost upon me. I thought Miss Elizabeth Bennet looked remarkably well when she came into the room this morning. Her dirty petticoat quite escaped my notice.”

“I am afraid, Mr. Darcy,” observed Miss Bingley in a half whisper, “that this adventure has rather affected your admiration of her fine eyes.”

“Not at all,” he replied; “they were brightened by the exercise.”

“Eliza Bennet,” said Miss Bingley, “is one of those young ladies who seek to recommend themselves to the other sex by undervaluing their own; and with many men, I dare say, it succeeds. But, in my opinion, it is a paltry device, a very **mean** art.”

“Undoubtedly,” replied Darcy, to whom this remark was chiefly addressed, “there is a **meanness** in all the arts which ladies sometimes **condescend** to employ for captivation. Whatever bears affinity to cunning is despicable.”

Miss Bingley was not so entirely satisfied with this reply as to continue the subject.

The next evening after dinner, Elizabeth ran up to her sister, and seeing her well-guarded from cold, attended her in the **drawing-room**, where she was welcomed with many professions of pleasure.

When tea was over, Mr. Hurst had therefore nothing to do but to stretch himself on one of the sofas and go to sleep. Darcy took up a book; Miss Bingley did the same; and Mrs. Hurst, principally occupied in playing with her bracelets and rings, joined now and then in her brother's conversation with Miss Bennet.

Miss Bingley's attention was quite as much engaged in watching Mr. Darcy's progress through his book, as in reading her own; and she was perpetually either making some inquiry, or looking at his page. She could not win him, however, to any conversation; he merely answered her question, and read on.

Miss Bingley soon afterwards got up and walked about the room. Her figure was elegant, and she walked well; but Darcy, at whom it was all aimed, was still inflexibly studious. In the desperation of her feelings, she resolved on one effort more, and, turning to Elizabeth, said: "Miss Eliza Bennet, let me persuade you to follow my example, and take a turn about the room. I assure you it is very refreshing after sitting so long in one attitude."

Elizabeth was surprised, but agreed to it immediately. Miss Bingley succeeded no less in the *real* object of her civility: Mr. Darcy looked up. He was directly invited to join their party, but he declined it. Said he: "You either choose this method of passing the evening because you have secret affairs to discuss, or because you are conscious that your figures appear to the greatest advantage in walking. If the first, I should be completely in

your way, and if the second, I can admire you much better as I sit by the fire.”

“Oh! shocking!” cried Miss Bingley. “I never heard anything so abominable. How shall we punish him for such a speech?”

“There’s nothing so easy if you have but the inclination,” said Elizabeth. “Tease him, laugh at him. Intimate as you are, you must know how it is to be done.”

“But upon my honor, I do not. My intimacy has yet taught me that Mr. Darcy is no figure of fun.”

“Mr. Darcy is not to be laughed at!” cried Elizabeth. “*That* is an uncommon advantage, and uncommon I hope it will continue, for it would be a great loss to me to have many such acquaintances. I dearly love a laugh.”

“Miss Bingley,” said Darcy, “has given me more credit than can be. The wisest and the best of men – nay, the wisest and best of their actions – may be rendered ridiculous by a person whose first object in life is a joke. But it has been the study of my life to avoid those weaknesses which often expose a strong understanding to ridicule.”

Elizabeth turned away to hide a smile.

“Your examination of Mr. Darcy is over, I presume,” said Miss Bingley; “and pray what is the result?”

“I am perfectly convinced by it that Mr. Darcy has no defect. He owns it himself without disguise.”

“I have made no such pretension” said Darcy. I have faults enough. My temper I dare not vouch for. It is, I believe, too little yielding. I cannot forget the follies and vices of others as soon as I ought, nor their offenses against myself. My feelings are not puffed about with every attempt to move them. My temper would perhaps be called resentful.

“That is a failing indeed!” cried Elizabeth.

“There is, I believe, in every disposition a tendency to some particular evil – a natural defect,” replied Darcy.

“And yours is a propensity to hate everybody?”

“And yours,” he replied with a smile, “is willfully to misunderstand them.”

CHAPTER TWO

On Sunday, Jane's health having sufficiently improved, the Bennet sisters returned to Longbourn. Their father, though very **laconic** in his expressions of pleasure, was really glad to see them. The evening conversation had lost much of its animation, and almost all its sense, by their absence.

"I hope, my dear," said Mr. Bennet to his wife, as they were at breakfast the next morning, "that you have ordered a good dinner today, because I have reason to expect an addition to our family party."

"Who do you mean, my dear?"

"The person of whom I speak is a gentleman and a stranger. About a month ago I received this letter. It is from my cousin Mr. Collins who, when I am dead, may turn you all out of this house as soon as he pleases."

"Oh! my dear," cried his wife, "I cannot bear to hear that mentioned. Pray do not talk of that odious man. I do think it is the hardest thing in the world, that your **estate** should be **entailed** away from your own children."

"It certainly is a most **iniquitous** affair," said Mr. Bennet, "and nothing can clear Mr. Collins from the guilt of inheriting Longbourn. But listen to this letter:"

Hunsford, near Westerham, Kent, 15th October.

“Dear Sir,

The disagreement subsisting between yourself and my late honored father always gave me much uneasiness, and since I have had the misfortune to lose him, I have frequently wished to heal the breach. But for some time I was kept back by my own doubts, fearing lest it might seem disrespectful to his memory for me to be on good terms with anyone with whom it had always pleased him to be at variance.

My mind, however, is now made up on the subject, for having received **ordination** at Easter, I have been so fortunate as to be distinguished by the patronage of the Right Honorable Lady Catherine de Bourgh, widow of Sir Lewis de Bourgh, whose bounty and beneficence has preferred me to the valuable **rectory** of this parish, where it shall be my earnest endeavor to demean myself with grateful respect towards her ladyship.

As a clergyman, moreover, I feel it my duty to promote and establish the blessing of peace in all families within the reach of my influence; and on these grounds I flatter myself that my present overtures of good will are highly commendable, and that the circumstance of my being next in the **entail** of Longbourn estate will be kindly overlooked on your side, and not lead you to reject the offered

olive-branch. I cannot be otherwise than concerned at being the means of injuring your amiable daughters, and beg leave to apologize for it, as well as to assure you of my readiness to make every possible amends - but of this hereafter.

If you should have no objection to receive me into your house, I propose myself the satisfaction of waiting on you and your family, Monday, November 18th, by four o'clock, and shall probably trespass on your hospitality till the Saturday night following. I remain, dear sir, with respectful compliments to your lady and daughters, your well-wisher and friend,

“WILLIAM COLLINS”

“At four o'clock, therefore, we may expect this peace-making gentleman,” said Mr. Bennet.

Mr. Collins was a tall, heavy-looking young man of five-and-twenty. His air was grave and stately, and his manners were very formal. He had not been long seated before he complimented Mrs. Bennet on having so fine a family of daughters; said he had heard much of their beauty, but that in this instance fame had fallen short of the truth.

The dinner too in its turn was highly admired; and he begged to know to which of his fair cousins the excellence of its cookery was owing. But he was set right there by Mrs. Bennet, who assured him with some **asperity**

that they were very well able to keep a good cook, and that her daughters had *nothing* to do in the kitchen. He begged pardon for having displeased her, and continued to apologize for about a quarter of an hour.

Mr. Collins was not a sensible man, and the deficiency of nature had been but little assisted by education or society. Having now a good house and a very sufficient income, he intended to marry; and in seeking a reconciliation with the Longbourn family he had a wife in view, as he meant to choose one of the daughters. His plan did not vary on seeing them. Miss Jane Bennet's lovely face confirmed his views. The next morning, however, made an alteration. Mrs. Bennet felt it incumbent on her to hint that Jane was likely to be very soon engaged. Mr. Collins had only to change from Jane to Elizabeth, and it was soon done – done while Mrs. Bennet was stirring the fire.

That afternoon, Lydia expressed the intention of walking to Meryton. Her sisters agreed to go with her; and Mr. Collins attended them. They entered Meryton, and the attention of every young lady was soon caught by a young man whom they had never seen before, of most gentlemanlike appearance, walking with an officer on the other side of the way. The officer was the very Mr. Denny concerning whose return from London Lydia came to inquire. Mr. Denny addressed them directly, and entreated permission to introduce his friend, Mr. Wickham, who had accepted a commission in their corps.

The whole party were standing and talking together when Darcy and Bingley were seen riding down the street. On distinguishing the ladies of the group, the two gentlemen came directly towards them and began the usual civilities. Mr. Darcy was beginning to determine not to fix his eyes on Elizabeth, when they were suddenly arrested by the sight of Mr. Wickham, and Elizabeth, happening to see the **countenance** of both men as they looked at each other, was all astonishment at the effect of the meeting.

Both changed color: one looked white, the other red. What could be the meaning of it?

In another minute, Mr. Bingley, but without seeming to have noticed what passed, took leave and rode on with his friend. Mr. Denny and Mr. Wickham walked with the young ladies to the door of Mr. Phillips' house, and then took their leave.

Mrs. Phillips was always glad to see her nieces. Some of the party were to dine with the Phillips' the next day, and their aunt promised to make her husband call on Mr. Wickham and give him an invitation also, if the family from Longbourn would come in the evening. This was agreed to, and Mrs. Phillips protested that they would have a nice comfortable noisy game of lottery tickets, and a little bit of hot supper afterwards.

The following afternoon, the coach conveyed Mr. Collins and his cousins to Meryton; and the girls had the pleasure of hearing, as they entered the drawing-room, that Mr. Wickham had accepted their uncle's invitation, and was then in the house.

Mr. Wickham was the happy man towards whom almost every female eye was turned, and Elizabeth was the happy woman by whom he finally seated himself. He inquired how far Netherfield was from Meryton; and, after receiving her answer, asked in a hesitating manner how long Mr. Darcy had been staying there.

"About a month," said Elizabeth. "He is a man of a very large property in Derbyshire, I understand."

"Yes," replied Wickham; "His estate there – Pemberly – is a noble one. A clear ten thousand **per annum**. You could not have met with a person more capable of giving you certain information on that head than myself,

for I have been connected with his family in a particular manner from my infancy.”

Elizabeth could not but look surprised.

“Are you much acquainted with Mr. Darcy?” he went on.

“As much as I ever wish to be,” cried Elizabeth warmly. “I have spent four days in the same house with him, and I think him *very* disagreeable.”

“I cannot pretend to disagree.” said Wickham; but the world is blinded by his fortune and consequence or frightened by his high and imposing manners, and sees him only as he chooses to be seen.” Wickham continued: “His father, the late Mr. Darcy, was one of the best men that ever breathed, and the truest friend I ever had; and I can never be in company with *this* Mr. Darcy without being grieved to the soul by the thousand tender recollections. His behavior to myself has been scandalous, but I verily believe I could forgive him anything and everything rather than his disappointing the hopes and disgracing the memory of his father.”

“In what way?” Elizabeth couldn’t help asking.

“The **church** ought to have been my profession,” Wickham disclosed.

“Indeed!”

“Yes – the late Mr. Darcy bequeathed me the next presentation of the best living in his gift. He was my godfather, and I cannot do justice to his kindness. He meant to provide for me amply, and thought he had done it; but after his death, when the living fell, it was given elsewhere.”

“Good heavens!” cried Elizabeth; “But how could that be? How could his will be disregarded? Why did you not seek **legal redress**?”

“There was such an informality in the terms of the **bequest** as to give me no hope from law, and Mr. Darcy chose to doubt it. Certain it is that the **living** became vacant two years ago, exactly as I was of an age to hold it, and that it was given to another man.

“This is quite shocking! Darcy deserves to be publicly disgraced.”

“Some time or other he will be – but it shall not be by me.

“But what,” Elizabeth said, “can have been his motive?”

“A thorough, determined dislike of me – and jealousy. Had the late Mr. Darcy liked me less, his son might have borne with me better.”

“I had not thought Mr. Darcy so bad as this,” said Elizabeth. “I am astonished at his intimacy with Mr. Bingley. How can Mr. Bingley, who seems good humor itself, and is, I really believe, truly **amiable**, be in friendship with such a man? How can they suit each other? Do you know Mr. Bingley?”

“Not at all,” replied Wickham.

“He is a sweet-tempered, amiable, charming man. He cannot know what Mr. Darcy is.”

“Probably not. But Mr. Darcy can please where he chooses. Among those who are at all his equals in consequence, he is a very different man from what he is to the less prosperous. His pride never deserts him.”

Mr. Wickham's attention was now caught by Mr. Collins' conversation with Mrs. Phillips and his reference to Lady Catherine de Bourgh. He

asked Elizabeth whether her relations very intimately acquainted with the family of de Bourgh.

“Lady Catherine de Bourgh,” she replied, “has very lately given Mr. Collins a living.

“You know of course,” replied Mr. Wickham, “that Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Lady Anne Darcy were sisters; consequently that she is aunt to the present Mr. Darcy.”

“No, indeed, I did not.

“Lady Catherine’s daughter, Miss de Bourgh, will have a very large fortune, and it is believed that she and her cousin Darcy will unite the two estates.”

This information made Elizabeth smile, as she thought of poor Miss Bingley. Vain indeed must be all her attentions, if Mr. Darcy were already destined for another.

CHAPTER THREE

The next day after breakfast, Mr. Collins made his declaration to Elizabeth. “Believe me, my dear Miss Elizabeth, that I have your respected mother's permission for this address. You can hardly doubt the purport of my discourse, however much your natural delicacy may lead you to **dissemble**; my attentions have been too marked to be mistaken. Almost as soon as I entered the house, I singled *you* out as the companion of my future life. But before I am run away with by my feelings in this subject, perhaps it would be advisable for me to state my reasons for marrying, and moreover for coming into Hertfordshire with the design of selecting a wife, as I certainly did.”

The idea of Mr. Collins, with all his solemn composure, being “run away with” by his feelings, made Elizabeth so near laughing, that she could not use the short pause he allowed in any attempt to stop him further, and he continued: “My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it is a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances like myself to set the example of matrimony in his **parish**; secondly, that I am convinced that it will add very greatly to my happiness; and thirdly – which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier – that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honor of calling **patroness**.

“Thus much for my general intention in favor of matrimony; it remains to be told *why* my views were directed toward Longbourn instead of my own neighborhood, where I can assure you there are many amiable young women. The fact is, that being, as I am, to inherit this estate after the death of your honored father (who, however, may live many years longer), I

could not satisfy myself without resolving to choose a wife from among his daughters, that the loss to them might be as little as possible when the melancholy event takes place. This has been my motive, my fair cousin, and I flatter myself it will not sink me in your esteem. And now nothing remains for me but to assure you in the most animated language of the violence of my affection. To fortune I am perfectly indifferent, and shall make no demand of that nature on your father, since I am well aware that it could not be complied with.”

It was absolutely necessary to interrupt him now. “You are too hasty, sir. You forget that I have made no answer. Let me do it without further loss of time. Accept my thanks for the compliment you are paying me. I am very sensible of the honor of your proposals, but it is impossible for me to do otherwise than decline them.”

“You must give me leave to flatter myself, my dear cousin, that your refusal of my addresses is merely words of course. My reasons for believing it are briefly these: It does not appear to me that my hand is unworthy of your acceptance, or that the establishment I can offer would be any other than highly desirable. My situation in life, my connections with the family of de Bourgh, and my relationship to your own, are circumstances highly in my favor; and you should take it into further consideration, that in spite of your manifold attractions, it is by no means certain that another offer of marriage may ever be made you. Your **portion** is unhappily so small that it will in all likelihood undo the effects of your loveliness and amiable qualifications. As I must therefore conclude that you are not serious in your rejection of me, I shall choose to attribute it to your wish of increasing my love by suspense, according to the usual practice of elegant females.”

To such perseverance in willful self-deception Elizabeth could make no reply, and immediately and in silence withdrew; determined, if he persisted in considering her repeated refusals as flattering encouragement,

to apply to her father, whose negative might be uttered in such a manner as must be decisive, and whose behavior at least could not be mistaken for the affection and coquetry of an elegant female.

Later in the morning, Elizabeth's friend Charlotte Lucas arrived to spend the day. She was met in the **vestibule** by Lydia, who, cried in a half whisper, "I am glad you are come, for there is much fun here! What do you think has happened this morning? Mr. Collins has made an offer to Lizzy, and she will not have him."

Charlotte had hardly had time to answer before they were joined by Kitty, who came to tell the same news; and no sooner had they entered the breakfast-room, where Mrs. Bennet was alone, than she likewise began on the subject, calling on Miss Lucas for her compassion, and entreating her to persuade her friend Lizzy to comply with the wishes of all her family.

Charlotte's reply was spared by the entrance of Jane and Elizabeth.

"Aye, there she comes," continued Mrs. Bennet, "looking as unconcerned as may be, and caring no more for us than if we were at York, provided she can have her own way. But I tell you what, Miss Lizzy, if you take it into your head to go on refusing every offer of marriage in this way, you will never get a husband at all.

Her daughters listened in silence to this **effusion**, sensible that any attempt to reason with her or soothe her would only increase the irritation. She talked on, therefore, without interruption from any of them, till they were joined by Mr. Collins

"Oh! Mr. Collins!" Mrs. Bennet began again –

"My dear madam," said he, "let us be forever silent on this point. My object has been to secure an amiable companion for myself, with due

consideration for the advantage of all your family, and if my manner has been at all reprehensible, I here beg leave to apologize.” And with that he left.

.....

The next day, a letter was delivered to Miss Bennet; it came from Netherfield. Elizabeth saw her sister's **countenance** change as she read it, and saw her dwelling intently on some particular passages. Jane recollected herself soon, and putting the letter away, tried to join with her usual cheerfulness in the general conversation. Soon after, however, a glance from Jane invited Elizabeth to follow her upstairs. When they had gained their own room, Jane, taking out the letter, said: “This is from Caroline Bingley; what it contains has surprised me a good deal. The whole party have left Netherfield by this time, and are on their way back to town – and without any intention of coming back again. Listen to this:

Dear Jane,

“When my brother left us yesterday, he imagined that the business which took him to London might be concluded in three or four days; but as we are certain it cannot be so, and are convinced that when Charles gets to town he will be in no hurry to leave it again, we have determined on following him.”

“It is evident by this,” added Jane, “that he comes back no more this winter.”

“It is only evident that Miss Bingley does not mean that he should, suggested Elizabeth.”

I will read you the passage which particularly hurts me:

“Mr. Darcy is impatient to see his sister, who is residing in London, and to confess the truth, we are scarcely less eager. I really do not think Georgiana Darcy has her equal for beauty, elegance, and accomplishments. My brother admires her greatly and he will have frequent opportunity now of seeing her on the most intimate footing. Her relations all wish the connection as much as his.”

“What do you think of this, my dear Lizzy?” said Jane as she finished reading. “Does it not expressly declare that Caroline neither expects nor wishes me to be her sister; that she is perfectly convinced of her brother's indifference; and that if she suspects the nature of my feelings for him, she means most kindly to put me on my guard? Can there be any other opinion on the subject?”

“Yes, there can; for mine is totally different. Will you hear it?”

“Most willingly.”

“You shall have it in a few words: Miss Bingley sees that her brother is in love with you, and wants him to marry Miss Darcy. She follows him to town in the hope of keeping him there, and tries to persuade you that he does not care about you.”

Jane shook her head.

Elizabeth continued: “We are not rich enough or grand enough for them; and she is the more anxious to get Miss Darcy for her brother, from the notion that when there has been one intermarriage, she may have less trouble in achieving a second.”

.....

The Bennets were engaged to dine with the Lucases, and during the chief of the day Miss Lucas kind to Mr. Collins. She even listened to him. Elizabeth took an opportunity of thanking her. Charlotte assured her friend of her satisfaction in being useful, but her kindness extended farther than Elizabeth had any conception of; its object was to secure Mr. Collins's **addresses**. Her success in this field led Mr. Collins the next morning to hasten to Lucas Lodge to throw himself at her feet. His reception was of the most flattering kind. And in as short a time as Mr. Collins's long speeches would allow, everything was settled between them to the satisfaction of both. Sir William and Lady Lucas were speedily applied to for their consent; and it was bestowed with a most joyful **alacrity**.

Mr. Collins returned to Longbourn, where he made no mention of what had developed. As he was to begin his journey home too early on the morrow to see any of the family, the ceremony of leave-taking was performed when the ladies moved for the night; and Mrs. Bennet, with great politeness and cordiality, said how happy they should be to see him at Longbourn again, whenever his other engagements might allow him to visit them.

Miss Lucas called the next day, and in a private conference with Elizabeth related the event of the day before.

“Engaged to Mr. Collins! My dear Charlotte – impossible!”

“I see what you are feeling,” replied Charlotte. “You must be surprised, very much surprised – so lately as Mr. Collins was wishing to marry *you*. I

hope you will be satisfied with what I have done. I'm not romantic, you know; I never was. I ask only a comfortable home. And considering Mr. Collins's character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast on entering the marriage state."

Mrs. Bennet was overpowered by the news. Nothing could console and nothing could appease her. Nor did that day wear out her resentment. A week elapsed before she could see Elizabeth without scolding her; a month passed away before she could speak to Sir William or Lady Lucas without being rude; and many months were gone before she could at all forgive their daughter.

Jane Bennet had sent Caroline Bingley an early answer to her letter, and was counting the days till she might reasonably hope to hear again. Miss Bingley's letter arrived, and offered her no comfort. The very first sentence conveyed the assurance of their being all settled in London for the winter, and concluded with her brother's regret at not having had time to pay his respects to his friends in Hertfordshire before he left the country. From this time, Mr. Bingley's name was scarcely ever mentioned.

Mr. Wickham's society was of material service in dispelling the gloom which the late perverse occurrences had thrown on many of the Longbourn family. They saw him often, and to his other recommendations was now added that of general unreserve. The whole of what Elizabeth had already heard, his claims on Mr. Darcy, and all that he had suffered from him, was now openly acknowledged and publicly canvassed; and everybody was pleased to think how much they had always disliked Mr. Darcy before they had known anything of the matter.

.....

It was upon a Monday that Mrs. Bennet had the pleasure of receiving her brother and his wife, who came as usual from London to spend Christmas at Longbourn. Mr. Gardiner was a sensible, gentlemanlike man. The Netherfield ladies would have had difficulty in believing that a man who lived by trade, and within view of his own warehouse, could have been so well-bred and agreeable. Mrs. Gardiner, who was several years younger than Mrs. Bennet and Mrs. Phillips, was an amiable, intelligent, elegant woman, and a great favorite with all her Longbourn nieces

The Gardiners stayed a week; and what with the Phillipses, the Lucases, and the officers, there was not a day without its engagement. Mr. Wickham was sure be one of the party; and on these occasions, Mrs. Gardiner, rendered suspicious by Elizabeth's warm commendations of him, narrowly observed them both. Without supposing them, from what she saw, to be very seriously in love, their preference of each other was plain enough.

When the Gardiners returned to London, they took Jane Bennet with them. She was to stay several weeks. When she accepted the invitation, the Bingleys were hardly in her thoughts. However, knowing that Caroline did not live in the same house with her brother, she hoped she might occasionally spend a morning with her without any danger of seeing him.

Mr. Collins returned to Hertfordshire soon after it had been quitted by the Gardiners and Jane. The wedding between him and Charlotte Lucas took place; the bride and bridegroom set off for Kent, and everybody had much to say on the subject.

Elizabeth soon heard from her friend Charlotte:

Dear Elizabeth,

*“My father and Maria are to come to me in March,
and I hope you will consent to be one of the party.”*

Yours ,

Charlotte

Jane had already written a few lines to her sister to announce their safe arrival in London; and when she wrote again it was clear she could no longer be blind to Miss Bingley’s inner tension. The latter did eventually call upon her, but the shortness of her stay and yet more the alteration of her manner would have allowed Jane to deceive herself no longer, had she been prone to such a weakness, which she was not. Nevertheless, it was hardly a pleasant experience.

In reply, Elizabeth informed her that Wickham’s partiality for herself had subsided. His attentions were over. He was the admirer of someone else. The sudden acquisition of ten thousand pounds was the most remarkable charm of the young lady to whom he was now rendering himself agreeable.

March was to take Elizabeth to Huntsford, to stay with Charlotte and Mr. Collins. She was to travel with Sir William Lucas and his daughter Maria – a good humored girl, but as empty headed as himself. The journey took the best part of two days, which the travelers agreed was quite long enough.

At length, Huntsford **Parsonage** was discernible. The garden sloped to the road, with the house standing in it behind green pales and a laurel hedge. Mr. Collins and Charlotte appeared at the door, and in a moment they were all out of the **chaise**, rejoicing at the sight of each other. They

were taken into the house where Mr. Collins welcomed them a second time with ostentatious formality to his humble abode, and punctually repeated all his wife's offers of refreshment.

“Mr. Collins observed: “You will have the honor of seeing Lady Catherine de Bourgh on Sunday at church, and I need not say that you will be delighted with her. I have scarcely any hesitation in saying she will include you and Maria in every invitation with which she honors us during your stay here. Her behavior to my dear Charlotte is charming. We dine at Rosings – her residence – twice a week, and are never allowed to walk home. Her ladyship's carriage is regularly ordered for us. I should say, *one* of her ladyship's carriages, for she has several.”

About the middle of the next day, Elizabeth observed Mr. Collins and Charlotte in earnest conversation with two ladies who had stopped in a low **phaeton** at the garden gates. Mr. Collins explained that Miss de Bourgh had come with an invitation to dine at Rosings the next day.

As the weather was fine, they had a pleasant walk across the park to Rosings, a handsome modern building on rising ground. From the entrance-hall, they followed the servants through an **antechamber**, to the room where Lady Catherine and her daughter were sitting. Her ladyship, with great condescension, arose to receive them; and as Mrs. Collins had settled it with her husband that the **office** of introduction should be hers, it was performed in a proper manner, without any of those apologies and thanks which *he* would have thought necessary.

Lady Catherine was a tall, large woman, with strongly-marked features, which might once have been handsome. Her air was not **conciliating**, nor was her manner of receiving them such as to make her visitors forget their inferior rank. Her daughter Miss de Bourgh was pale and sickly; her features were insignificant; and she spoke very little.

The dinner was exceedingly handsome, and Lady Catherine seemed gratified by their excessive admiration, and gave most gracious smiles. Elizabeth found that nothing was beneath this great lady's attention. She addressed a variety of questions to Elizabeth: how many sisters she had, whether they were older or younger than herself, whether any of them were likely to be married, whether they were handsome, where they had been educated, what carriage her father kept, and what had been her mother's maiden name? Elizabeth felt all the impertinence of her questions but answered them very composedly.

When Lady Catherine and her daughter had played cards as long as they chose, the tables were broken up, the carriage was offered to Mrs. Collins, gratefully accepted and immediately ordered. The party then gathered round the fire to hear Lady Catherine determine what weather they were to have on the morrow. From these instructions they were summoned by the arrival of the coach; and with many speeches of thankfulness on Mr. Collins's side, they departed.

The first **fortnight** of Elizabeth's visit soon passed away. Easter was approaching, and the week preceding it was to bring an addition to the family at Rosings. Elizabeth had heard soon after her arrival that Mr. Darcy was expected there in the course of a few weeks, and though there were not many of her acquaintances whom she did not prefer, *his* coming would furnish one comparatively new to look at in their Rosings parties.

His arrival was soon known at the Parsonage; and the fact that he had brought with him a Colonel Fitzwilliam, the younger son of his uncle. Colonel Fitzwilliam's manners were very much admired at the Parsonage, but it was Mr. Darcy who was the more frequent visitor, so frequent that Mrs. Collins once or twice suggested to Elizabeth the possibility of his being partial to her, but Elizabeth always laughed at the idea.

CHAPTER FOUR

More than once did Elizabeth ramble within the park. She so was engaged one day when she saw Colonel Fitzwilliam was meeting her. “I did not know before that you ever walked this way,” she said.

“I have been making the tour of the park,” he replied

“Do you certainly leave Kent on Saturday?” said she.

“Yes—if Darcy does not put it off again. But I am at his disposal. He arranges the business just as he pleases.”

“I do not know anybody who seems more to enjoy the power of doing what he likes than Mr. Darcy.”

“He likes to have his own way very well,” replied Colonel Fitzwilliam. “But so we all do.”

“I imagine your cousin brought you down with him chiefly for the sake of having someone at his disposal. I wonder he does not marry, to secure a lasting convenience of that kind. But, perhaps, his sister does as well for the present, and, as she is under his sole care, he may do what he likes with her.”

“No,” said Colonel Fitzwilliam, “that is an advantage which he must divide with me. I am joined with him in the guardianship of Miss Darcy.”

“Are you indeed?” said Elizabeth. She went on: “She is a very great favorite with some ladies of my acquaintance, Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley. I think I have heard you say that you know them.”

“I know them a little. Their brother is a pleasant gentlemanlike man – he is a great friend of Darcy's.”

“Oh! yes,” said Elizabeth drily; “Mr. Darcy is uncommonly kind to Mr. Bingley, and takes a prodigious deal of care of him.”

“Yes,” agreed the colonel. I have reason to think Bingley is very much indebted to him.”

“What is it you mean?”

“It is a circumstance which Darcy of course would not wish to be generally known, to get round to the lady's family, it would be an unpleasant thing.”

“You may depend upon *my* not mentioning it.”

“What he told me was merely this: that he congratulated himself on having lately saved a friend from the inconveniences of a most imprudent marriage.”

“Did Mr. Darcy give you reasons for this interference?”

“I understood that there were some very strong objections against the lady.”

Elizabeth made no answer, and walked on, her heart swelling with indignation. The agitation and tears which the subject occasioned brought on a headache; and it grew so much worse towards the evening, that it determined her not to accompany her cousins to Rosings, where they were engaged to drink tea.

Some time after they were gone, Elizabeth, chose for her employment the examination of all the letters which Jane had written to her since her

being in Kent. She was suddenly roused by the sound of the doorbell. To her utter amazement, she saw Mr. Darcy walk into the room. In a hurried manner he immediately began an inquiry after her health, imputing his visit to a wish of hearing that she were better. She answered him with cold civility. He sat down for a few moments, and then getting up, walked about the room. Elizabeth was surprised, but said not a word. After a silence of several minutes, he came towards her in an agitated manner, and thus began:

“In vain I have struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you.”

Elizabeth stared, and was silent.

This he considered sufficient encouragement; and the avowal of all that he felt, and had long felt for her, immediately followed. He added that his love was sufficient to overcome the family obstacle which Elizabeth’s vastly inferior social position represented. He concluded by asking her to accept his hand in marriage.

Elizabeth could not be insensible to the compliment of such a man’s affection, but roused to resentment by his subsequent language, she lost all compassion in anger. The color rose into her cheeks, and she said: “It is, I believe, the established mode to express a sense of obligation for the sentiments avowed, but I cannot – I have never desired your good opinion, and you have certainly bestowed it most unwillingly.

Mr. Darcy became pale with anger. “And *this* is all the reply which I am to have the honor of expecting! I might, perhaps, wish to be informed *why*, with so little endeavor at civility, I am thus rejected.”

“Had not my feelings decided against you, do you think that any consideration would tempt me to accept the man who has been the means

of ruining the happiness of a most beloved sister? Can you deny that you have done it?" she asked.

He replied, "I have no wish of denying that I did everything in my power to separate my friend from your sister."

"But it is not merely this affair," she continued, "on which my dislike is founded. Your character was unfolded in the recital which I received many months ago from Mr. Wickham."

"You take an eager interest in that gentleman's concerns," said Darcy.

"Who that knows what his misfortunes have been, can help feeling an interest in him?"

"His misfortunes!" repeated Darcy contemptuously.

"And of your infliction," cried Elizabeth with energy. "You have reduced him to his present state of poverty. You have deprived the best years of his life of that independence which was no less his due than his desert."

"And *this*," cried Darcy, "is your opinion of me! But perhaps," he added, "these offenses might have been overlooked, had not your pride been hurt by my honest confession of the social scruples that had long prevented my forming any serious design toward yourself."

"You are mistaken, Mr. Darcy! You could not have made me the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it."

His astonishment was obvious, and he looked at her with an expression of mingled **incredulity** and **mortification**.

She went on: "From the beginning of my acquaintance with you, your manners, impressed me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others. I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry."

"You have said quite enough, madam. I perfectly comprehend your feelings. Forgive me for having taken up so much of your time, and accept my best wishes for your health and happiness." And with these words he hastily left the room.

Elizabeth woke the next morning to the same tumultuous thoughts and meditations which had at length closed her eyes the night before. Her astonishment as she reflected on what had passed was increased by every review of it. That *she* should receive an offer of marriage from Mr. Darcy! That he should have been in love with her for so many months!

She resolved, soon after breakfast, to indulge herself in air and exercise. She was proceeding directly to her favorite walk when the recollection of Mr. Darcy's sometimes coming there stopped her; and instead of entering the park, she turned up the lane, which led her farther from the turnpike-road. After walking two or three times along that part of the lane, she was tempted, to stop at the gates and look into the park. She was on the point of continuing her walk when she caught a glimpse of a gentleman within the sort of grove which edged the park; he was moving that way; fearful of its being Mr. Darcy, she was directly retreating, but the person advanced, and stepping forward, pronounced her name. On hearing herself called, though in a voice which proved it to be Mr. Darcy, she moved again towards the gate. He had by that time reached it also, and, holding out a letter, and said, "I have been walking in the grove some time in the hope of meeting you. Will you do me the honor of reading this letter?" And then, with a slight bow, turned again to the plantation, and was soon out of sight.

The letter was dated from Rosings, at eight o'clock in the morning, and was as follows:

Dear Miss Bennet

Be not alarmed, madam, on receiving this letter. I write without any intention of paining you, or humbling myself, by dwelling on wishes which cannot be too soon forgotten. You must, therefore, pardon the freedom with which I demand your attention; but I demand it of your justice.

“Two offenses of a very different nature, and by no means of equal magnitude, you last night laid to my charge. The first mentioned that, regardless of the sentiments of either, I had detached Mr. Bingley from your sister.

I had not been long in Hertfordshire, before I saw, in common with others, that Bingley preferred your elder sister to any other young woman in the country. Your sister I also watched. Her look and manners were open, cheerful, and engaging as ever, but without any symptom of peculiar regard, and I remained convinced that though she received his attentions with pleasure, she did not invite them by any participation of sentiment. If you have not been mistaken here, I must have been in error. Your superior knowledge of your sister must make the latter probable. If it be so, if I have been misled by such error to inflict pain on her, your resentment has not been unreasonable. But I shall not scruple to assert, that the serenity of your sister's countenance and air was such as might have given the most acute observer a conviction that, however amiable her temper, her heart was not likely to be easily touched. In addition, every social principle encouraged me to preserve my friend from what I

deemed a most unsuitable connection. Pardon me for returning to this aspect of the matter. It pains me to offend you.

There is one part of my conduct in the affair on which I do not reflect with satisfaction; it was to conceal from him your sister's being in town. I knew it myself, as did Miss Bingley; but her brother is even yet ignorant of it.

“With respect to that other, more weighty accusation, of having injured Mr. George Wickham, I can only refute it by laying before you the whole of his connection with my family. “Mr. Wickham is the son of a very respectable man, who had for many years the management of all the Pemberley estates, and whose good conduct in the discharge of his trust naturally inclined my father to be of service to him, and to George Wickham, who was his godson.

My father supported young Wickham at school, and afterwards at Cambridge, and hoping the church would be his profession, intended to provide for him in it. My excellent father died about five years ago; and in his will he particularly recommended to me that a valuable family living might be Wickham's as soon as it became vacant. There was also a legacy of one thousand pounds.

Mr. Wickham wrote to inform me that, having finally resolved against taking orders, he hoped I should not think it unreasonable for him to expect some more immediate **pecuniary** advantage, in lieu of the preferment. He had some intention of studying the law, he added. He resigned all claim to assistance in the church, and accepted in return three thousand pounds.

For about three years I heard little of him; but on the decease of the incumbent of the living which had been designed for him, he applied to me again by letter for the presentation. His circumstances were exceedingly bad. He had found the law a most unprofitable study, and was now absolutely resolved on being ordained. He trusted that I could not have forgotten my revered father's intentions. You will hardly blame me for refusing to comply with this entreaty. His resentment was in proportion to the distress of his circumstances. How he lived I know not, but last summer he was again most painfully obtruded on my notice.

I must now mention a circumstance which I could wish to forget myself, but I feel no doubt of your secrecy. My sister Georgiana was left to the guardianship of my mother's nephew, Colonel Fitzwilliam, and myself. About a year ago, an establishment was formed for her in London; and she went with Mrs. Young, a lady who presided over it, to Ramsgate. Thither also went Mr. Wickham. There proved to have been a prior acquaintance between him and Mrs. Young, in whose character we were most unhappily deceived. Georgiana was persuaded to consent to an elopement. I am happy to add that I owed the knowledge of it to herself. I joined them unexpectedly a day or two before the intended elopement, and Georgiana, unable to support the idea of grieving a brother whom she looked up to as a father, revealed all. Regard for my sister's credit and feelings prevented any public exposure. Regard for my sister's credit and feelings prevented any public exposure of Mr. Wickham. His chief object was unquestionably my sister's fortune, which is thirty thousand pounds; but I cannot help supposing that the hope of revenging himself on me was a strong inducement.

“This, madam, is a faithful narrative of every event in which we have been concerned together. For the truth of everything here related, I can appeal more particularly to the testimony of Colonel Fitzwilliam. I will only add, God bless you.

“FITZWILLIAM DARCY”

His belief in her sister's insensibility Elizabeth instantly resolved to be false; and his account of the real – the worst – objections to the match, made her too angry to have any wish of doing him justice. It was all pride and insolence. But when this subject was succeeded by his account of Mr. Wickham, her feelings were yet more acutely painful and more difficult of definition. The account of his connection with the Pemberley family was exactly what he had related himself. It was impossible not to feel that there was gross duplicity on one side or the other.

She perfectly remembered everything that had passed in conversation between Wickham and herself in their first evening at Mr. Phillips'. Many of his expressions were still fresh in her memory. She was now struck with the impropriety of such communications to a stranger, and wondered it had escaped her before. She grew absolutely ashamed of herself. Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think without feeling she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, and absurd.

“How despicably I have acted!” she cried; “I, who have prided myself on my discernment! I, who have valued myself on my abilities – who have often disdained the generous candor of my sister, and gratified my vanity in useless or blameable mistrust! How humiliating is this discovery! Yet, how just a humiliation! Had I been in love I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly.

CHAPTER FIVE

In the second week in May, Elizabeth Bennet and Mariah Lucas left the parsonage. They went first to the Gardiners' house in Gracechurch Street in London, and then, with Jane Bennet added to the party, continued on to Hertforshire. In Meryton, Mr. bennet's coach awaited them, with Kittie and Lydia Bennet on board. After greetings had been exchanged, Lydia announced in the most desolate of tones that the regiment was leaving Meryton in a fortnight.

“Indeed!” cried Elizabeth, with the greatest satisfaction, for she was not looking forward to renewing her acquaintance with Mr. George Wickham.

“They are going to be encamped near Brighton, Lydia confided, and I *do so* want papa to take us all there for the summer!

Their reception at Longbourn was most kind. Mr. Bennet rejoiced to see Jane in undiminished beauty; and more than once during dinner did he say to Elizabeth, “I am glad you are come back, Lizzy.”

The next morning, Elizabeth related to Jane the chief of the scene between Darcy and herself. She then spoke of the letter, repeating the whole of its contents as far as they concerned George Wickham.

“I do not know when I have been more shocked,” said Jane. “Wickham so very bad! It is almost past belief. And poor Mr. Darcy! Dear Lizzy, only consider what he must have suffered. Such a disappointment! and with the

knowledge of *your* ill opinion too! And having to relate such a thing of his sister! It is really too distressing. I am sure you must feel it so.”

“Certainly,” said Elizabeth. There is one point on which I want your advice. I want to know whether I ought, or ought not, to make our acquaintances in general understand Wickham's character.”

Jane paused a little, and then replied, “Surely there can be no occasion for exposing him so dreadfully. What is your opinion?”

“That it ought not to be attempted. Mr. Darcy has not authorized me to make his communication public. Wickham will soon be gone; at present I will say nothing about it.”

“You are quite right. To have his errors made public might ruin him forever. He is now, perhaps, sorry for what he has done, and anxious to reestablish a character. We must not make him desperate.”

Elizabeth dared not relate the *other half* of Mr. Darcy's letter, nor explain to her sister how sincerely she had been valued by Mr. Bingley. She was now, on being settled at home, at leisure to observe the real state of her sister's spirits. Jane was not happy. She still cherished a very tender affection for Bingley.

The first week of their return was soon gone. The second began. It was the last of the regiment's stay in Meryton, and all the young ladies in the neighborhood were drooping apace.

“Good Heaven! what is to become of us?” cried Lydia”

But for *her* the gloom was shortly cleared away; for she received an invitation from Mrs. Forster, the wife of the colonel of the regiment, to accompany them to Brighton.

The rapture of Lydia on this occasion, the delight of Mrs. Bennet, and the **mortification** of Kitty, are scarcely to be described. Wholly inattentive to her sister's feelings, Lydia flew about the house in restless ecstasy.

Elizabeth was now to see Mr. Wickham for the last time. On the very last day of the regiment's remaining at Meryton, he dined, with other of the officers, at Longbourn; and so little was Elizabeth disposed to part from him in good humor, that on his making some inquiry as to the manner in which her time had passed at Huntsford, she mentioned Colonel Fitzwilliam's and Mr. Darcy's having both spent three weeks nearby at Rosings. I think Mr. Darcy improves upon acquaintance," she said.

"Indeed!" cried Mr. Wickham with a look which did not escape her. They parted at last with mutual civility, and possibly a mutual desire of *never* meeting again.

When Elizabeth had stayed briefly with Aunt and Uncle Gardiner earlier that year, she had been invited to accompany them on their tour to the lakes. She had accepted, and the time fixed for the beginning of the tour was now fast approaching. A **fortnight** only was wanting of it, when a letter arrived from Mrs. Gardiner. Mr. Gardiner must be in London again within a month, so they were obliged to give up the Lakes, and they were to go no farther northward than Derbyshire.

In due course, her uncle and aunt arrived in Longbourn, where they stayed one night. They set off next morning with Elizabeth for Derbyshire, and made their way to the little town of Lampton, the scene of Mrs. Gardiner's former residence. Elizabeth found from her aunt that Pemberley – Mr. Darcy's estate – was situated within five miles of Lambton.

“My love, should not you like to see a place of which you have heard so much?” said her aunt; “a place, too, with which so many of your acquaintances are connected?”

Elizabeth was distressed. She felt that she had no business at Pemberley, and was obliged to assume a disinclination for seeing it. The possibility of meeting Mr. Darcy, while viewing the place, would be dreadful!

When she retired at night, she asked the chambermaid whether Pemberley were not a fine place? And whether the family were down for the summer? A most welcome negative followed the last question – and her alarms were removed. When the subject was revived the next morning, could readily answer that she had not really any dislike to the scheme. To Pemberley, therefore, they were to go.

Pemberley House was a large, handsome stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills. They were all of them warm in their admiration, and at that moment Elizabeth felt that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something.

On applying to see the place, they were admitted into the hall. The housekeeper, Mrs. Reynolds, a respectful looking elderly woman, led them through the handsome rooms, and Elizabeth longed to inquire of the housekeeper whether her master was really absent, but had not the courage for it. At length however, the question was asked by her uncle;

Mrs. Reynolds replied that he *was*, adding, “But we expect him tomorrow, with a large party of friends.”

On entering the drawing room, her aunt called her to look at a picture. She approached and saw the likeness of Mr. Wickham amongst several miniatures.

The housekeeper came forward, and told them it was a picture of a young gentleman, the son of her late master's **steward**, who had been brought up by him at his own expense. "He is now gone into the army," she added, "but I am afraid he has turned out *very* wild."

"And that," said Mrs. Reynolds, pointing to another of the miniatures, "is my master – and very like him. "He is the best landlord, and the best master that ever lived; not like the wild young men nowadays, who think of nothing but themselves. There is not one of his tenants or servants but what will give him a good name. Some people call him proud, but I am sure I never saw anything of it. To my fancy, it's only because he does not rattle away like other young men."

"In what an amiable light does this place him!" thought Elizabeth.

On reaching the spacious lobby above, they were shown into a very pretty sitting-room, lately fitted up with greater elegance and lightness than the apartments below; and were informed that it was but just done to give pleasure to Miss Darcy.

"He is certainly a good brother," said Elizabeth, as she walked towards one of the windows.

"Whatever can give his sister any pleasure is sure to be done in a moment. There is *nothing* he would not do for her," said Mrs. Reynolds.

When all of the house that was open to general inspection had been seen, they returned downstairs, and, taking leave of the housekeeper, were consigned over to the gardener, who met them at the hall-door.

As they walked across the lawn towards the river, Elizabeth turned back to look again; her uncle and aunt stopped also, and while the former

was conjecturing as to the date of the building, Mr. Darcy himself suddenly came forward from the road which led behind the house to the stables.

When he saw Elizabeth, he stopped. Their eyes instantly met, and the cheeks of each were overspread with the deepest blush. Recovering himself, Mr. Darcy advanced towards the group, and spoke to Elizabeth, if not in terms of perfect composure, at least of perfect civility.

His resemblance to the picture they had just been examining was sufficient to assure Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner that they now saw Mr. Darcy. They stood a little aloof while he was talking to their niece Elizabeth, who, astonished and confused, scarcely dared lift her eyes to his face, and knew not what answer she returned to his civil inquiries after her family.

After a few more moments of awkward conversation, he asked Elizabeth if she would do him the honor of introducing him to her friends. This was a stroke of civility for which she was quite unprepared; and she could hardly suppress a smile at his being now seeking the acquaintance of some of those very people against whom his pride had revolted in his offer of marriage to herself. "What will be his surprise," she thought, "when he knows who they are? He takes them now for people of fashion."

The introduction was immediately made; and as she named their relationship to herself, she stole a sly look at him, to see how he bore it, and was not without the expectation of his decamping as fast as he could from such disgraceful companions. He sustained it, however, with fortitude, and so far from going away, entered into conversation with Mr. Gardiner. Elizabeth could not but be pleased that he should know she had some relations for whom there was no need to blush.

After walking some time through the grounds, Mrs. Gardiner, fatigued by the exercise of the morning, found Elizabeth's arm inadequate to her support, and consequently preferred her husband's. Mr. Darcy took her

place by her niece, and they walked on together. Elizabeth observed that his arrival had been very unexpected – “for your housekeeper,” she added, “informed us that you would certainly not be here till tomorrow.”

He acknowledged the truth of it. “The rest of the party will join me early tomorrow,” he said, “among them Mr. Bingley and his sisters. He was silent for a moment, and then added, “Will you allow me – or do I ask too much – to introduce my sister to your acquaintance during your stay at Lampton?”

On the very next morning, Mr. Darcy brought his sister to visit, and the introduction took place. Miss Darcy was tall, and on a larger scale than Elizabeth; and, though little more than sixteen, her figure was formed, and her appearance womanly and graceful. There was sense and good humor in her face, and her manners were perfectly unassuming and gentle.

They had not long been together long when a quick step was heard on the stairs, and in a moment Bingley entered the room. He inquired in a friendly, though general way, after Elizabeth’s family, and looked and spoke with the same good-humored ease that he had ever done. In seeing Bingley, Elizabeth’s thoughts naturally flew to her sister; and, oh! how ardently did she long to know whether any of *his* were directed in a like manner. To this he offered no clue. However, she could not be deceived as to his behavior to Miss Darcy, who had been set up as a rival to Jane. On this point she was soon satisfied; absolutely nothing passed between them that suggested any particular regard beyond warm friendship.

During the visit, it was not often that she could turn her eyes on Mr. Darcy himself; but, whenever she did, she saw an expression of general politeness. Never had she seen him so desirous to please, so free from self-consequence or unbending reserve as now.

Their visitors stayed with them above half-an-hour; and when they arose to depart, Mr. Darcy called on his sister to join him in expressing their wish of seeing Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, and Miss Elizabeth Bennet, to dinner at Pemberley. Miss Darcy readily obeyed. Mrs. Gardiner saw in her husband a perfect willingness to accept, and the day after the next was fixed on.

It was settled in the evening between the aunt and the niece that such a striking civility as Miss Darcy's in coming to them on the very day of her arrival at Pemberley ought to be imitated. Consequently, they waited for her at Pemberley the following morning.

On reaching the house, they were shown through the hall into the **saloon**, where they were received by Miss Darcy, who was sitting there with Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley. Georgiana's reception of them was very civil, but attended with shyness and the fear of doing wrong. By Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley, they were noticed only by a curtsey, but Elizabeth soon saw that she was herself closely watched by Miss Bingley, and that she could not speak a word, especially to Miss Darcy, without calling her attention. After sitting in this manner for a quarter of an hour without hearing Miss Bingley's voice, Elizabeth received from her a cold inquiry after the health of her family. She answered with equal indifference and brevity, and the other said no more.

When Mr. Darcy entered the room, Elizabeth saw that he was anxious for his sister and herself to get acquainted, and forwarded as much as possible, every attempt at conversation on either side.

Miss Bingley saw all this likewise; and, in the imprudence of anger, took the first opportunity of saying, with sneering civility: "Pray, Miss Eliza, are not the militia removed from Meryton? They must be a great loss to your family." In Darcy's presence she dared not mention Wickham's

name; but Elizabeth instantly comprehended that he was uppermost in her thoughts.

Their visit did not continue long; and while Mr. Darcy was attending them to their carriage, Miss Bingley was venting her feelings in criticisms on Elizabeth's person, behavior, and dress. But Georgiana Darcy would not join her.

When Darcy returned to the saloon, Miss Bingley resumed the onslaught. "I remember, when we first knew her in Hertfordshire, how amazed we all were to find that she was a reputed beauty; and I particularly recollect your saying one night, after they had been dining at Netherfield, 'She a beauty! – I should as soon call her mother a wit.' But afterwards she seemed to improve on you, and I believe you thought her rather pretty at one time."

"Yes," replied Darcy, who could contain himself no longer, "but that was only when I first knew her, for it is many months since I have considered her as one of the handsomest women of my acquaintance."

CHAPTER SIX

On the third morning of the visit; Elizabeth received two letters at once, one of which was marked that it had been missent elsewhere. Both were from her sister Jane. The one that was missent had been written five days ago. The beginning contained an account of all their little parties and engagements, but the latter half gave more important intelligence.

Dear Elizabeth,

“Since writing the above, dearest Lizzy, something has occurred of a most unexpected and serious nature. An express came at twelve last night, just as we were all gone to bed, from Colonel Forster, to inform us that Lydia was gone off to Scotland with Wickham! Imagine our surprise. To Kitty, however, it does not seem so wholly unexpected. I am very very sorry. Our poor mother is sadly grieved. My father bears it better. Lydia left a few lines for Mrs. Forster, informing her of their intention. I must conclude, for I cannot be long from my poor mother.”

Love - Jane

Elizabeth seized the other letter, and opening it with the utmost impatience read as follows:

Dear Elizabeth,

“By this time, my dearest sister, you have received my hurried letter; I but I have bad news for you. Imprudent as the marriage between Mr. Wickham and our poor Lydia would be, we are now anxious to be assured it has taken place, for there is but too much reason to fear they are NOT gone to Scotland. Though Lydia's short letter to Mrs. Forster gave them to understand that they were going to Gretna Green, it is now believed that Wickham never intended to go there, or to marry Lydia at all. All that is known is that they were seen to take the London road. Our distress, my dear Lizzy, is very great. My father and mother believe the worst! I grieve to find, however, that Colonel Forster is not disposed to depend upon their marriage; he shook his head when I expressed my hopes, and said he feared Wickham was not a man to be trusted. Dearest Lizzy, I long for your return! My father is going to London with Colonel Forster instantly to try to discover her. What he means to do I am sure I know

not; but his excessive distress will not allow him to pursue any measure in the best and safest way. In such an exigence, my uncle's advice and assistance would be everything in the world.

Yours, Jane

“Oh! where, where is my uncle?” cried Elizabeth, darting from her seat but as she reached the door it was opened by a servant, and Mr. Darcy appeared. Her pale face and **impetuous** manner made him start, and before he could recover himself enough to speak, she, in whose mind every idea was superseded by Lydia's situation, hastily exclaimed, “I beg your pardon, but I must leave you. I must find my uncle this moment, on business that cannot be delayed.”

“Good God! what is the matter?” Let me, or let the servant go after Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner. You are not well enough; you cannot go yourself.”

Calling back the servant, therefore, she commissioned him to fetch Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, who'd gone for a walk; and then sat down, unable to support herself.

Darcy could not refrain from saying, in a tone of gentleness and **commiseration**, “Let me call your maid.”

“No, I thank you. There is nothing the matter with me. I am quite well; I am only distressed by some dreadful news which I have just received from Longbourn.” She burst into tears, and for a few minutes could not speak another word. Darcy, in wretched suspense, could only observe her in compassionate silence.

At length she spoke again. “I have just had a letter from Jane, with such dreadful news. My younger sister has thrown herself into the power of ... of Mr. Wickham. They are gone off together from Brighton. She is lost for ever.”

“I am grieved indeed,” cried Darcy; “grieved – shocked. But is it certain – absolutely certain?”

“Oh, yes! They left Brighton together on Sunday night, and were traced almost to London, but not beyond. My father is gone to London, and Jane has written to beg my uncle's immediate assistance; But nothing can be done – I know very well that nothing can be done.”

Darcy shook his head in silent acquiescence. His brow contracted, his air gloomy. Elizabeth soon observed, and instantly understood it. Her power was sinking; everything must sink under such a proof of family weakness, such an assurance of the deepest disgrace. She would neither wonder nor condemn. Never had she loved him, even slightly, until now; and now that change of heart seemed all in vain.

A pause of several minutes was broken by her companion who said, “Would to Heaven that anything could be either said or done on my part that might offer consolation to such distress! This unfortunate affair will, I fear, prevent my sister's having the pleasure of seeing you at Pemberley today.”

“Oh, yes. Be so kind as to apologize for us to Miss Darcy. Say that urgent business calls us home immediately. Conceal the unhappy truth as long as it is possible.”

He readily assured her of his secrecy; again expressed his sorrow for her distress, and leaving his compliments for her relations, went away.

Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner hurried in, supposing by the servant's account that their niece was taken suddenly ill. Satisfying them instantly on that head, she eagerly communicated the cause of their summons. Mr. Gardiner promised every assistance in his power.

Elizabeth, after all the misery of the morning, found herself, in a shorter space of time than she could have supposed, seated in the carriage, and on the road to Longbourn. They travelled as **expeditiously** as possible, and, sleeping one night on the road, reached Longbourn by dinner time the next day. When the carriage drove up to the door, Elizabeth jumped out and hurried into the **vestibule**, where Jane met her. She lost not a moment in asking whether anything had been heard of the fugitives.

“Not yet,” replied Jane. “But now that my dear uncle is come, I hope everything will be well.”

“Is my father in town?”

“Yes, he went on Tuesday. We have heard only once to say that he arrived in safety.”

“And my mother – how is she?”

“Her spirits are greatly shaken,” said Jane. “She does not yet leave her dressing room.”

“But *you!* – How are *you?*” cried Elizabeth. “You look pale. How much you must have gone through!”

Her sister, however, assured her of her being perfectly well.

Mrs. Bennet, to whose apartment they all repaired, received them with tears and lamentations. “Do not give way to useless alarm,” said Mr.

Gardiner. "As soon as I get to town I shall go to my brother-in-law and make him come home with me to Gracechurch Street; and then we may consult together as to what is to be done."

In the afternoon, the two eldest Miss Bennets were able to be, for half-an-hour, by themselves. "Tell me all about it," requested Elizabeth. "What did Colonel Forster say? Had they no apprehension of anything before the elopement took place?"

"Colonel Forster did own that he had often suspected some partiality, especially on Lydia's side, but nothing to give him any alarm."

"Did Mr. Denny know of their intending to go off?"

"Mr. Denny would not give his real opinion about it, but Kitty then owned that in Lydia's last letter she had prepared her for such a step. She had known, it seems, of their being in love for many weeks."

"And did Colonel Forster appear to think ill of Wickham himself? Does he know his real character?"

"I must confess that he did not speak as well of Wickham as he formerly did. He believed him to be imprudent and extravagant. And it is now said that he left Meryton greatly in debt.

.....

The next morning Mr. Gardiner set off, promised to prevail on Mr. Bennet to return to Longbourn as soon as he could.

Mrs. Gardiner and the children were to remain in Hertfordshire a few days longer, as the former thought her presence might be serviceable to her nieces. Their other aunt also visited them frequently, always, as she said,

with the design of cheering and heartening them up – though, as she never came without reporting some fresh instance of Wickham's extravagance or irregularity, she seldom went away without leaving them more **dispirited** than she found them.

All Meryton seemed striving to blacken the man who, but three months before, had been an angel of light. He was declared to be in debt to every tradesman in the place, and his intrigues, all honored with the title of seduction, had been extended into every tradesman's family. Elizabeth, though she did not credit half of what was said, believed enough to make her former assurance of her sister's ruin still more certain; and even Jane became almost hopeless.

Mr. Gardiner had left Longbourn on Sunday. On Tuesday, his wife received a letter from him; it told them that, on his arrival, he had immediately found out his brother, and persuaded him to come to Gracechurch Street. There was also a **postscript** to this effect:

“I have written to Colonel Forster to desire him to find out whether Wickham has any relations or connections who would be likely to know in what part of town he has now concealed himself.

Every day at Longbourn was now a day of anxiety; but the most anxious part of each was when the post was expected. Before they heard again from Mr. Gardiner, a letter arrived for Mr. Bennet, from a different quarter – from Mr. Collins. In accordance with her father's instructions, Jane opened and read it:

“MY DEAR SIR, MR. BENNET,

“I feel myself called upon, by our relationship, and my situation in life, to condole with you on the grievous affliction you are now suffering under. Be assured, my dear sir, that Mrs. Collins and myself sincerely sympathize with you and all your respectable family, in your present distress.

The death of your daughter would have been a blessing in comparison of this. And it is the more to be lamented, because there is reason to suppose that this licentiousness of behavior in your daughter has proceeded from a faulty degree of indulgence; though, at the same time, for the consolation of yourself and Mrs. Bennet, I am inclined to think that her own disposition must be naturally bad, or she could not be guilty of such an enormity, at so early an age.

Lady Catherine and her daughter agree with me in apprehending that this false step in one daughter will be injurious to the fortunes of all the others; for who, as Lady Catherine herself condescendingly says, will connect themselves with such a family? Let me then advise you, then, my dear sir, to console yourself as much as possible, to throw off your unworthy

child from your affection forever, and leave her to reap the fruits of her own heinous offense.

“I am, dear sir, Collins.”

Mr. Gardiner did not write again till he had received an answer from Colonel Forster, and then he had nothing of a pleasant nature to send. Wickham had left gaming debts behind him to a very considerable amount. Colonel Forster believed that more than a thousand pounds would be necessary to clear his expenses at Brighton. He owed a good deal in the town, but his debts of honor were still more formidable.

Mr. Gardiner added that they might expect to see their father at home on the following day, which was Saturday. And as Mrs. Gardiner began to wish to be at home, it was settled that she should go to London at the same time he should arrive from it.

When Mr. Bennet arrived, he had all the appearance of his usual philosophic composure. At tea, Elizabeth ventured to introduce the subject of Lydia. On her briefly expressing her sorrow for what he must have endured, he replied, “Say nothing of that. Who should suffer but myself? It has been my own doing, and I ought to feel it.”

“You must not be too severe upon yourself,” replied Elizabeth.

“No, Lizzy, let me once in my life feel how much I have been to blame.”

Two days after Mr. Bennet's return, an express came from Mr. Gardiner

“Gracechurch Street, Monday, August 2.

“MY DEAR BROTHER,

“At last I am able to send you some tidings of my niece. Soon after you left me on Saturday, I was fortunate enough to find out in what part of London Lydia and Mr. Wickham were. I have seen them both. They are not married, nor can I find there was any intention of being so; but if you are willing to perform the engagements which I have ventured to make on your side, I hope it will not be long before they are. All that is required of you is to assure to your daughter, by settlement, her equal share of the five thousand pounds secured among your children after the decease of yourself and my sister; and, moreover, to allow her, during your life, one hundred pounds per annum You will easily comprehend, from these particulars, that Mr. Wickham's circumstances are not so hopeless as they are generally believed to be. I am happy to say there will be some little money, even when all his debts are discharged, to settle on my niece, in addition to her own fortune. We have judged it best that my niece should be married from this house, of which I hope you will approve. She comes to us today. I shall write again as soon as anything more is determined on. Yours, etc.,

“EDWARD. GARDINER.”

“The terms, I suppose, must be complied with, said Elizabeth.”

“Complied with! I am only ashamed of his asking so little, replied her father.”

“And they must marry! Yet he is such a man!” exclaimed Jane.

“Yes, yes, they must marry. There is nothing else to be done. But there are two things that I want very much to know; one is, how much money your uncle has laid down to bring it about; and the other, how am I ever to pay him.”

“Money! My uncle!” cried Jane, “what do you mean, sir?”

“I mean, that no man in his senses would marry Lydia on so slight a temptation as one hundred a year during my life, and fifty after I am gone.”

“That is very true,” said Elizabeth; “It must be my uncle's doings! Generous, good man. A small sum could not do all this.”

“No,” said her father; “Wickham's a fool if he takes her with a farthing less than ten thousand pounds.”

“Ten thousand pounds! Heaven forbid! How is half such a sum to be repaid? Jane asked”

Mr. Bennet made no answer,

The girls went upstairs together. The letter was read aloud. Mrs. Bennet could hardly contain herself. As soon as Jane had read Mr. Gardiner's hope of Lydia's being soon married, her joy burst forth, and every following sentence added to its exuberance. To know that her daughter would be

married was enough. She was disturbed by no fear for her felicity, nor humbled by any remembrance of her misconduct.

In terms of grateful acknowledgment for the kindness of his brother-in-law, Mr. Bennet then delivered on paper his perfect approbation of the present arrangement. Mrs. Bennet found, however, with amazement and horror, that her husband would not advance a guinea to buy clothes for his daughter. He protested that she should receive from him no mark of affection whatever. Mrs. Bennet could hardly comprehend it. She was more alive to the disgrace which her want of new clothes must reflect on her daughter's nuptials, than to any sense of shame at her eloping and living with Wickham a fortnight before they took place.

Mr. Gardiner soon wrote again to his brother, Mr. Bennet. The principal purport of his letter was to inform them that Mr. Wickham had resolved on quitting the militia.

Dear Brother,

"It is Mr. Wickham's intention to go into the regulars; and among his former friends, there are still some who are able and willing to assist him in the army. He has the promise of a commission in a regiment, now quartered in the North. I have written to Colonel Forster, to inform him of our present arrangements, and to request that he will satisfy the various creditors of Mr. Wickham in and near Brighton, with assurances of speedy payment, for which I have pledged myself. Will you give yourself the trouble of carrying similar assurances to his creditors in Meryton? I understand from Mrs. Gardiner, that my niece is very desirous of seeing you all before she leaves the

South. She is well, and begs to be dutifully remembered to you and her mother.—Yours,

“E. GARDINER.”

His daughter's request, for such it might be considered, of being admitted into her family again before she set off for the North, received at first an absolute negative from Mr. Bennet. But Jane and Elizabeth urged him so earnestly yet so rationally and so mildly, to receive her and her husband at Longbourn, as soon as they were married, and when Mr. Bennet wrote again to his brother, therefore, he sent his permission for them to come.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Their sister's wedding day arrived; at dinner time, the family were assembled in the breakfast room to receive them. Smiles decked the face of Mrs. Bennet as the carriage drove up to the door; her husband looked impenetrably grave; her daughters, alarmed, anxious, uneasy.

Lydia ran into the room. Her mother stepped forwards, embraced her, and welcomed her with rapture; gave her hand, with an affectionate smile to Wickham, who followed his lady; and wished them both joy with an alacrity which shewed no doubt of their happiness.

Their reception from Mr. Bennet was not quite so cordial. The easy assurance of the young couple was enough to provoke him. They seemed - each of them - to have the happiest memories; and Lydia led voluntarily to subjects which her sisters would not have alluded to for the world. "Only think of its being three months," she cried, "since I went away; I am sure I had no more idea of being married till I came back again! though I thought it would be very good fun if I was."

One morning, soon after their arrival, as she was sitting with her two elder sisters, she said to Elizabeth: "Lizzy, I never gave you an account of my wedding, I believe. Are not you curious to hear how it was managed?"

"No really," replied Elizabeth; "I think there cannot be too little said on the subject."

“La! You are so strange! But I must tell you how it went off. We were married, you know, at St. Clement's, because Wickham's lodgings were in that parish. And it was settled that we should all be there by eleven o'clock. Well, Monday morning came, and I was in such a fuss! I was so afraid, you know, that something would happen to put it off, and then I should have gone quite distracted. And there was my aunt, all the time I was dressing, preaching and talking away just as if she was reading a sermon.

“We breakfasted at ten and just as the carriage came to the door, my uncle was called away upon business to that horrid man Mr. Stone. And then, you know, when once they get together, there is no end of it. Well, I was so frightened I did not know what to do, for my uncle was to give me away; and if we were beyond the hour, we could not be married all day. But, luckily, he came back again in ten minutes' time, and then we all set out. However, I recollected afterwards that if he had been prevented going, the wedding need not be put off, for Mr. Darcy might have done as well.”

“Mr. Darcy!” repeated Elizabeth, in utter amazement.

“Oh, yes! — he was to come there with Wickham, you know. But gracious me! I quite forgot! I ought not to have said a word about it. It was to be such a secret!”

“If it was to be secret,” said Jane, “say not another word on the subject. You may depend upon my seeking no further.”

Elizabeth echoed the sentiment. But to live in ignorance on such a point was impossible; or at least it was impossible not to try for information. Hastily seizing a sheet of paper, she wrote a short letter to her aunt, to request an explanation of what Lydia had dropped, if it were compatible with the secrecy which had been intended.

The reply was not long in coming. Hurrying into a little copse, Elizabeth sat down on one of the benches to read.

Gracechurch Street, Sept. 6.

MY DEAR NIECE,

I have just received your letter, and hasten to answer. On the very day of my coming home from Longbourn, your uncle had a most unexpected visitor. Mr. Darcy called, and was shut up with him several hours. He came to tell Mr. Gardiner that he had found out where your sister and Mr. Wickham were, and that he had seen and talked with them both. The motive Mr. Darcy professed was his conviction of its being his fault that Wickham's worthlessness had not been so well known as to make it impossible for any young woman to confide in him. Darcy generously imputed the whole to his mistaken pride, that he had before thought it beneath him to lay his private actions open to the world. He had been some days in town, before he was able to discover them; but he had something to direct his search.

There is a lady, it seems, a Mrs. Young, who was some time ago governess to Miss Darcy, and was dismissed. She then took a large house in Edward-street, and has since maintained herself by letting lodgings. This Mrs. Young was, he knew, intimately acquainted with Wickham; and he went to her for intelligence of him. Wickham indeed had gone to her on their first arrival in London, and had she been able to receive them into her house, they would have taken up their abode with her. At length, however, our kind friend procured the wished-for direction. He saw Wickham, and afterwards insisted on seeing Lydia. His first object was to persuade her to quit her present disgraceful situation, but he found Lydia absolutely resolved on remaining where she was. She would not hear of leaving Wickham. She was sure they should be married some time or other, and it did not much signify when. Since such were her feelings, it only remained, he thought, to secure and expedite a marriage, which, in his very first conversation with Wickham, he easily learnt had *never* been his design. He confessed himself obliged to leave the regiment on account of debts of honor. He meant to resign his commission immediately,

and had nothing to live on. Under such circumstances, however, he was not likely to be proof against the temptation of immediate relief.

They met several times, for there was much to be discussed. Wickham of course wanted more than he could get; but at length was reduced to be reasonable.

Everything being settled between them, Mr. Darcy called at Gracechurch street and he and your uncle had a great deal of talk together. At last your uncle was forced to yield, and instead of being allowed to be of use to his niece, was forced to put up with only having the credit of it.

But, Lizzy, this must go no farther than yourself, or Jane at the most. You know pretty well, I suppose, what has been done for the young people. Wickham's debts are to be paid, amounting, I believe, to considerably more than a thousand pounds, another thousand in addition to her own settled upon her, and his commission purchased. The reason why all this was to be done by Mr. Darcy alone, was that it was owing to him, to his reserve and want of proper consideration, that Wickham's character had been so

misunderstood, and consequently that he had been received and noticed as he was.

After all was arranged, Mr. Darcy, as Lydia informed you, attended the wedding. He dined with us the next day, and was to leave town again on Wednesday or Thursday.

Will you be very angry with me, my dear Lizzy, if I take this opportunity of saying how much I like him. His behavior to us has, in every respect, been as pleasing as when we were in Derbyshire.

Yours, very sincerely,

M. GARDINER.”

The contents of this letter threw Elizabeth into a flutter of spirits. They owed the restoration of Lydia, her character, everything, to Mr. Darcy. Oh! how heartily did she grieve over every ungracious sensation she had ever encouraged, every saucy speech she had ever directed towards him. For herself, she was humbled. Of him, she was proud of him - proud that in a cause of compassion and honor, he had been able to get the better of himself. She read over her aunt's commendation again and again.

Lydia's departure soon came. The loss of her daughter made Mrs. Bennet very dull for several days. But the spiritless condition was shortly relieved by an article of news which then began to be in circulation. The housekeeper at Netherfield had received orders to prepare for the arrival of

Mr. Bingley, who was coming down to shoot there for several weeks. The subject which had been so warmly canvassed about a twelvemonth ago, was now brought forward again.

“As soon as Mr. Bingley comes, my dear,” said Mrs. Bennet, “you will wait on him of course.”

“No, no. You forced me into visiting him last year, and promised he should marry one of my daughters. But it ended in nothing; I will not be sent on a fool's errand again.”

“Well, that shan't prevent *my* asking him to dine here,” replied

Mr. Bingley arrived. Mrs. Bennet counted the days that must intervene before their invitation could be sent, hopeless of seeing him before. But on the third morning after his arrival in Hertfordshire, she saw him, from her dressing-room window, enter the paddock and ride towards the house.

“There is a gentleman with him, mamma,” said Kitty. “It looks like that man that used to be with him before. Mr. what's-his-name. That tall, proud man.”

“Good gracious! Mr. Darcy! — Well, any friend of Mr. Bingley's will always be welcome here, to be sure; but else I must say that I hate the very sight of him.”

Jane looked a little paler than usual, but more sedate than Elizabeth had expected. On the gentlemen's appearing, her color increased; and she received them with tolerable ease.

Elizabeth said as little to either as civility would allow. She had ventured only one glance at Darcy. He looked as serious as usual; and, she thought, more as he had been used to look in Hertfordshire, than as she had

seen him at Pemberley. But perhaps he could not in her mother's presence be what he was before her uncle and aunt. It was a painful, but not an improbable, conjecture.

Bingley looked both pleased and embarrassed. He was received by Mrs. Bennet with a degree of civility which made her two daughters ashamed, especially when contrasted with the cold and ceremonious politeness of her curtsey and address to his friend.

Darcy said scarcely anything. When Elizabeth raised her eyes to his face, she as often found him looking at Jane as at herself. "Could I expect it to be otherwise!" she said to herself. "Yet why did he come?"

"It is a long time, Mr. Bingley, since you went away," said Mrs. Bennet. A great many changes have happened in the neighborhood, since you went away. Miss Lucas is married and settled. And one of my own daughters - indeed, you must have seen it in the papers - it was in The Times and The Courier, I know. Did you see it?"

Bingley replied that he did, and made his congratulations.

"When you have killed all your own birds, Mr. Bingley," said Mrs. Bennet, "I beg you will come here, and shoot as many as you please on Mr. Bennet's manor. I am sure he will be vastly happy to oblige you, and will save all the best of the **covies** for you."

Elizabeth's misery increased, at such unnecessary, such officious attention!

As soon as they were gone, Elizabeth walked out to recover her spirits. Mr. Darcy's behavior astonished and vexed her. "Why, if he came only to be silent, grave, and indifferent," said she, "did he come at all? Teasing, teasing, man! I will think no more about him."

Her resolution was for a short time involuntarily kept by the approach of her sister, who joined her with a cheerful look, which showed her better satisfied with their visitors than Elizabeth.

“Now,” said she, “that this first meeting is over, I feel perfectly easy. I shall never be embarrassed again by his coming.

“Oh, Jane, take care.”

“My dear Lizzy, you cannot think me so weak, as to be in danger now?”

“I think you are in very great danger of making him as much in love with you as ever.”

On the following Tuesday there was a large party assembled at Longbourn; and the two who were most anxiously expected were in very good time. When they repaired to the dining-room, Elizabeth eagerly watched to see whether Bingley would take the place, which, in all their former parties, had belonged to him, by her sister. On entering the room, he seemed to hesitate; but Jane happened to look round, and happened to smile: it was decided. He placed himself by her.

His behavior to her sister was such, during dinner time, as showed an admiration of her, which persuaded Elizabeth, that if left wholly to himself, Jane's happiness, and his own, would be speedily secured.

Mr. Darcy was on one side of her mother. She knew how little such a situation would give pleasure to either, or make either appear to advantage. She could see how seldom they spoke to each other, and how formal and cold was their manner

After dinner, Darcy had walked away to another part of the room. Elizabeth followed him with her eyes, envied everyone to whom he spoke, and then was enraged against herself for being so silly! “A man who has once been refused! How could I ever be foolish enough to expect a renewal of his love?”

A few days after this visit, Mr. Bingley called again, and alone. His friend had left him that morning for London, but was to return in ten days time. Mrs. Bennet invited him to dine with them the next day, and as he had no engagement, her invitation was accepted with alacrity.

He came in such very good time that the ladies were none of them dressed. In ran Mrs. Bennet to her daughter's room, in her dressing gown: “My dear Jane, make haste and hurry down. He is come — Mr. Bingley is come.”

But much to Mrs. Bennet's annoyance, Jane would not be prevailed on to go downstairs without one of her sisters. The same anxiety to get them by themselves was visible again in the evening. After tea, Mr. Bennet retired to the library, as was his custom. Mrs. Bennet sat looking and winking at Elizabeth and Catherine for a considerable time, without making any impression on them. At last Kitty said, “What is the matter mamma? What do you keep winking at me for? What am I to do?”

“Nothing child, nothing. I did not wink at you.”

Bingley scarcely needed an invitation to stay to supper; and before he went away, an engagement was formed, chiefly through his own and Mrs. Bennet's means, for his coming next morning to shoot with her husband. So Bingley and Mr. Bennet spent the morning together, and Bingley of course returned with him to dinner; and in the evening Mrs. Bennet's invention was again at work to get everybody away from him and her daughter.

Elizabeth went into the breakfast room and wrote a letter. But on returning to the drawing-room she perceived her sister and Bingley alone, standing together over the hearth, as if engaged in earnest conversation. On Elizabeth's entrance, Bingley whispered a few words to her sister, and left the room.

Jane could have no reserves from Elizabeth. Embracing her, acknowledged, with the liveliest emotion, that she was the happiest creature in the world. "I must go instantly to my mother;" she cried. "I would not on any account trifle with her affectionate solicitude; or allow her to hear it from anyone but myself. He is gone to my father already. Oh! Lizzy, to know that what I have to relate will give such pleasure to all my dear family! How shall I bear so much happiness!" She then hastened away.

In a few minutes she was joined by Bingley. He then shut the door, and, coming up to her, claimed the good wishes and affection of a sister. Elizabeth honestly and heartily expressed her delight in the prospect of their relationship. They shook hands with great cordiality; and then she had to listen to all he had to say of his own happiness, and of Jane's perfections.

CHAPTER EIGHT

One morning, about a week after Bingley's engagement with Jane had been formed, Elizabeth was sitting with her mother and Kitty when their attention was suddenly drawn to the window by the sound of a carriage. Neither the carriage, nor the livery of the servant who preceded it, were familiar to them. In a few minutes, the door was thrown open and their visitor entered. It was Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

She entered the room with an air more than usually ungracious, made no other reply to Elizabeth's salutation than a slight inclination of the head, and sat down. After sitting for a moment in silence, she said very stiffly to Elizabeth, "I hope you are well, Miss Bennet. That lady, I suppose, is your mother."

Elizabeth replied very concisely that she was.

"Miss Bennet, there seemed to be a kind of a little wilderness on one side of your lawn. I should be glad to take a turn in it, if you will favor me with your company."

As soon as they entered the copse, Lady Catherine began in the following manner: "You can be at no loss, Miss Bennet, to understand the reason of my journey hither. Your own conscience must tell you why I come."

"Indeed, you are mistaken, Madam. I have not been at all able to account for the honor of seeing you here."

"Miss Bennet," replied her ladyship, in an angry tone, "you ought to know, that I am not to be trifled with. A report of a most alarming nature

reached me two days ago. I was told that not only your sister was on the point of being most advantageously married, but that you, Miss Elizabeth Bennet, would, in all likelihood, be soon afterwards united to my nephew, Mr. Darcy. Do you not know that such a report is spread abroad?"

"I never heard that it was."

"And can you likewise declare, that there is no foundation for it?"

"I do not pretend to possess equal frankness with your ladyship. You may ask questions which I shall not choose to answer."

"This is not to be borne! Miss Bennet, I insist on being satisfied. Has he, my nephew, made you an offer of marriage?"

I am almost the nearest relation he has in the world, and am entitled to know all his dearest concerns."

"But you are not entitled to know mine;

This match can never take place. Mr. Darcy is engaged to my daughter. Now what have you to say?"

"Only this: that if he is so, you can have no reason to suppose he will make an offer to me."

Lady Catherine hesitated for a moment, and then replied, "The engagement between them is of a peculiar kind. It was the favorite wish of his mother, as well as of mine, while in their cradles, we planned the union."

"But what is that to me? I shall certainly not be kept from it by knowing that his mother and aunt wished him to marry Miss de Bourgh."

“You are to understand, Miss Bennet, that I came here with the determined resolution of carrying my purpose; nor will I be dissuaded from it. I have not been used to submit to any person's whims. I have not been in the habit of brooking disappointment.”

“That will have no effect on me.”

“I will not be interrupted. My daughter and my nephew are formed for each other. If you were sensible of your own good, you would not wish to quit the sphere in which you have been brought up.”

“In marrying your nephew, I should not consider myself as quitting that sphere. He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman's daughter.”

“True. You are a gentleman's daughter. But who was your mother? Who are your uncles and aunts?”

“Whatever my connections may be,” said Elizabeth, “if your nephew does not object to them, they can be nothing to you.”

“Tell me once for all, are you engaged to him?”

Elizabeth she could not but say, after a moment's deliberation, “I am not.”

Lady Catherine seemed pleased. “And will you promise me, never to enter into such an engagement?”

“I will make no promise of the kind.”

“Miss Bennet I am shocked and astonished. I shall not go away till you have given me the assurance I require.”

“And I certainly never shall give it. I must beg, therefore, to be importuned no farther on the subject.”

“Not so hasty, if you please. What of your youngest sister's infamous elopement? I know it all; that the young man's marrying her was a patched-up business at the expense of your father and uncles. Is such a girl to be my nephew's sister? Are the shades of Pemberley to be thus polluted?”

“You can now have nothing further to say,” Elizabeth answered. “You have insulted me in every possible method. I must beg to return to the house.”

Her ladyship was highly incensed. Unfeeling, selfish girl! I take no leave of you, Miss Bennet. I send no compliments to your mother. You deserve no such attention. I am most seriously displeased.”

Elizabeth made no answer; and returned to the house. She heard the carriage drive away as she proceeded upstairs. Her mother met her to ask why Lady Catherine would not come in again.

“She did not choose it,” said her daughter. “She would go.”

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Mr. Bingley was able to bring Darcy with him to Longbourn before many days had passed after Lady Catherine's visit. Bingley, who wanted to be alone with Jane, proposed a walk. He and Jane soon lagged behind. Elizabeth, Kitty, and Darcy walked towards the Lucases, because Kitty wished to call upon Mariah. As Elizabeth saw no occasion for making it a general concern, when Kitty left them she went on with Darcy. While her courage was high, she immediately said, “Mr. Darcy, I can no longer help thanking you for your unexampled kindness to my poor sister. Were it

known to the rest of the family, I should not have merely my own gratitude to express.”

“I am sorry, exceedingly sorry,” replied Darcy, in a tone of surprise and emotion, “that you have ever been informed of it. I did not think Mrs. Gardiner was so little to be trusted.”

“You must not blame my aunt. Lydia's thoughtlessness first betrayed to me that you had been concerned in the matter. Let me thank you again and again, in the name of all my family.

“If you will thank me,” he replied, “let it be for yourself alone. Your family owe me nothing. Much as I respect them, I believe I thought only of you.”

Elizabeth was too much embarrassed to say a word. After a short pause, her companion added, “You are too generous to trifle with me. If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once. My affections and wishes are unchanged; but one word from you will silence me on this subject forever.”

Elizabeth, forced herself to speak; and immediately – though not very fluently – gave him to understand that her sentiments had undergone so material a change as to make her receive with gratitude and pleasure his present assurances. The happiness which this reply produced was such as Darcy had never felt before; and he expressed himself on the occasion as sensibly and as warmly as only a man violently in love can be supposed to do.

Elizabeth learned that they were indebted for their present good understanding to the efforts of Lady Catherine DeBough. She called on him on her return through London, and there relate her journey to Longbourn, its motive, and the substance of her conversation with Elizabeth. Unluckily

for her ladyship, its effect had been exactly contrariwise. "It taught me to hope," said Darcy, "as I had scarcely ever allowed myself to hope before. I knew that, had you been irrevocably decided against me, you would have acknowledged it to Lady Catherine, frankly and openly."

Elizabeth colored and laughed as she replied, "Yes, you know enough of my frankness to believe me capable of that. After abusing you so abominably to your face, I could have no scruple in abusing you to all your relations."

"What did you say of me that I did not deserve?"

Since then, we have both, I hope, improved in civility," said Elizabeth.

As a child I was taught to be selfish and overbearing; to think meanly of all the rest of the world. And such I might still have been but for you, dearest, loveliest Elizabeth! You showed me how insufficient were all my pretensions to please a woman worthy of being pleased."

"I am almost afraid of asking what you thought of me," said Elizabeth, "when we met at Pemberley. You blamed me for coming?"

"No indeed; I felt nothing but surprise."

"Your surprise could not have been greater than mine. My conscience told me that I deserved no extraordinary politeness."

"My object then," replied Darcy, "was to show you, by every civility in my power, that I hoped to obtain your forgiveness, to lessen your ill opinion, by letting you see that your reproofs had been attended to.

After walking several miles in a leisurely manner, they found at last, on examining their watches, that it was time to go home.

“What could become of Mr. Bingley and Jane!” was a wonder which introduced the discussion of their affairs.

“On the evening before my going to London,” said Darcy, “I made a confession to him, which I believe I ought to have made long ago. I told him of all that had occurred to make my former interference in his affairs absurd and impertinent. I told him, moreover, that I believed myself mistaken in supposing, as I had done, that your sister was indifferent to him. Furthermore, I could not allow myself to conceal that your sister had been in town three months last winter; that I had known it, and purposely kept it from him. He was angry. But he has heartily forgiven me now.”

That night, Elizabeth opened her heart to Jane.

“You are joking, Lizzy. This cannot be! – engaged to Mr. Darcy! No, no, you shall not deceive me. I know it to be impossible.”

“Indeed, I am in earnest. I speak nothing but the truth. He still loves me, and we are engaged.”

Jane looked at her doubtingly. “Oh, Lizzy! it cannot be. I know how much you dislike him.”

“You know nothing of the matter. That is all to be forgot. Perhaps I did not always love him so well as I do now. But in such cases as these, a good memory is unpardonable. This is the last time I shall ever remember it myself.”

The following evening, soon after Mr. Bennet withdrew to the library, she saw Mr. Darcy rise also and followed him. When Mr. Darcy appeared again, he approached the table where she was sitting with Kitty; and, while pretending to admire her work said in a whisper, “Go to your father, he wants you in the library.”

Her father was walking about the room, looking grave and anxious. “Lizzy,” said he, “what are you doing? Are you out of your senses, to be accepting this man? Have not you always hated him?”

“I love him,” she replied with tears in her eyes.

“Lizzy,” said her father, I know your disposition, Lizzy. I know that you could be neither happy nor respectable, unless you truly esteemed your husband.”

Elizabeth, still more affected, was earnest and solemn in her reply; and at length, by repeated assurances that Mr. Darcy was really the object of her choice, by explaining the gradual change which her estimation of him had undergone, and enumerating with energy all his good qualities, she did conquer her father's incredulity, and reconciled him to the match.

“Well, my dear,” said he, when she ceased speaking, “I have no more to say. If this be the case, he deserves you.”

To complete the favorable impression, she then told him what Mr. Darcy had voluntarily done for Lydia.

“This is an evening of wonders, indeed! And so, Darcy did everything; made up the match, gave the money, paid the fellow's debts, and got him his commission! I shall offer to pay him tomorrow; he will rant and storm about his love for you, and there will be an end of the matter.”

When her mother went up to her dressing-room at night, Elizabeth followed her, and made the important communication. On first hearing it, Mrs. Bennet sat quite still, and unable to utter a syllable. She began at length to recover, to fidget about in her chair, get up, sit down again, wonder, and bless herself.

“Good gracious! Lord bless me! Only think! Dear me! Mr. Darcy! Who would have thought it! And is it really true? Oh! my dear Lizzy! I am so pleased – so happy. Oh, Lord! What will become of me! I shall go distracted! Ten thousand a year! And very likely more! Tis as good as a Lord!

Happy was the day on which Mrs. Bennet got rid of her two most deserving daughters. With what delighted pride she afterwards visited Mrs. Bingley, and talked of Mrs. Darcy, may be guessed.

Mr. Bennet missed his second daughter exceedingly; his affection for her drew him often to Pemberley, especially when he was least expected.

Mr. Bingley and Jane remained at Netherfield only a twelvemonth. He bought an estate in a neighboring county to Derbyshire, and Jane and Elizabeth, in addition to every other source of happiness, were within thirty miles of each other.

Miss Bingley was very deeply mortified by Darcy's marriage; but as she thought it advisable to retain the right of visiting at Pemberley, she dropped all her resentment; was, almost as attentive to Darcy as heretofore, and paid off every arrear of civility to Elizabeth.

Lady Catherine was extremely indignant on the marriage of her nephew; and as she gave way to all the genuine frankness of her character, for some time all intercourse was at an end. But at length, her resentment gave way, either to her affection for him, or her curiosity to see how his wife conducted herself; and she condescended to wait on them at Pemberley in spite of that pollution which its woods had received, not merely from the presence of such a mistress, but the visits of her uncle and aunt from the city.

With Mr. and Mrs. Gardiners the couple were always on the most intimate terms. Darcy, as well as Elizabeth, really loved them; and they

were both ever sensible of the warmest gratitude towards the persons who, by bringing her into Derbyshire, had been the means of uniting them.

The End