

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

AUDITION PACKET



Adapted for the stage by Joseph Hanreddy and J.R. Sullivan.

Directed by Tom Quaintance. This stage adaptation of Jane Austen's most beloved novel will sweep you away with its witty, fast-paced exploration of expectations that has become the template for modern romance. Sparks fly when the charming, vibrant Elizabeth clashes with the aloof, enigmatic Mr. Darcy. Romantic repartee will be best appreciated by ages 10 and older.

First Rehearsal - December 26, 2017

First Performance - January 17, 2018

Final Performance - February 4, 2018

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+++All actors must be capable of doing British dialect work. Dialect preparation not necessary for audition, but is encouraged for principal roles.

+++ All parts are open to both Equity and non-Equity performers 18+. The parts of Kitty and Lydia are open to performers 16+.

Elizabeth Bennet - Female, 20s: Outspoken, witty and strong-willed. Possess "a pair of fine eyes."

Jane Bennet - Female, 20s: The eldest (and prettiest) of the Bennet girls who is reserved and a bit naïve.

Mary Bennet - Female, 18-ish: The middle child. Self-serious and bookish.

Catherine (Kitty) Bennet & Lydia Bennet, 15-17: Young, foolish and impulsive.

Mr. Bennet - Male, 40s-50s: As calm as a man with 5 daughters and a daffy wife can be. Takes refuge in his books.

Mrs. Bennet - Female, 40s-60s: As foolish as a woman with five daughters can be. A flibbertigibbet.

Mr. Darcy - Male, 30s-40s: a "fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien" who is also initially found "proud; to be above his company, and above being pleased."

Mr. Charles Bingley - Male, 20s-30s: "good-looking and gentlemanlike... a pleasant countenance, and easy, unaffected manners."

Miss Caroline Bingley - Female, 20s-30s: Mr. Bingley's judgmental sister. A "fine woman, with an air of decided fashion."

Sir William Lucas - Male, 40s-60s A former businessman who retired upon being knighted by the king, leaving his children financially unstable.

Charlotte Lucas - Female, 20s-30s Elizabeth's practical thinking good friend. Interested in marrying for financial security more than love.

Mr. George Wickham - Male, 20s-30s Dashing rogue in the militia.

Mr. Collins - Male, 20s-40s social climbing clergyman who will inherit the Bennett estate. Funny.

Lady Catherine de Bourgh - Female, 50s+ Mr. Darcy's wealthy, overbearing aunt. Her air is "not conciliating," nor does her manner "make her visitors forget their inferior rank."

Mr. & Mrs. Gardiner - Male, Female Agreeable aunt and uncle of the Bennet girls.

Various and sundry others: Mr. Denny, an officer and friend of Mr. Wickham; Mrs. Reynolds, the housekeeper at Pemberley; Georgiana Darcy, Mr. Darcy's young sister; Miss Anne de Bourgh, The sickly daughter of Lady Catherine; Mr. Fitzwilliam, Mr. Darcy's courteous and very well-spoken cousin; Captain Carter; Ensign Denny; Servants, Party Guests.

Attached Sides:

- 1 - Bingley, Darcy
- 2 - Elizabeth, Darcy
- 3 - Elizabeth, Darcy #2
- 4 - Collins, Lady Lucas
- 5 - Charlotte, Elizabeth
- 6 - Caroline, Darcy
- 7 - Kitty, Lydia #2
- 8 - Mr. Collins, Mrs. Bennett
- 9 - Jane, Elizabeth
- 10 - Elizabeth, Mr. Collins
- 11 - Mrs. Bennett, Mr. Bennett
- 12 - Kitty, Lydia
- 13 - Mrs. Bennett, Mr. Bennett #2
- 14 - Wickham, Darcy
- 15 - Lady Catherine, Elizabeth
- 16 - Elizabeth, Wickham

BINGLEY/DARCY – ACT ONE

BINGLEY approaches DARCY who is standing close to CHARLOTTE and ELIZABETH.

BINGLEY

Come, Darcy! I hate to see you standing about by yourself in this stupid way. You had much better dance.

DARCY

You know how I dislike dancing, unless I am particularly acquainted with my partner. Your sister is engaged, and there is not another woman in the room whom it would not be a punishment to dance with.

BINGLEY

Upon my honor, I never met with so many pleasant girls in my life as I have this evening and several of them are uncommonly pretty.

DARCY

(Looking at JANE) You were dancing with the only handsome girl in the room.

KITTY is close enough to overhear their conversation.

BINGLEY

Miss Jane Bennet! She is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld! But one of her sisters, Miss Elizabeth Bennet is standing just behind you. She is very pretty and, I dare say, very agreeable.

DARCY

(DARCY turns to observe ELIZABETH as she meets his eyes. Then, to BINGLEY) She is tolerable. But she is not handsome enough to tempt me. You had better return to Miss Bennet and enjoy her smiles, for right now you are wasting your time.

BINGLEY laughs and then moves off to re-join JANE.

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ELIZABETH/DARCY – ACT ONE

DARCY

You have rules then, for conversation while dancing?

ELIZABETH

Only that it would look odd to be entirely silent for half an hour together. For the advantage of *some*, conversation ought to be *arranged*, so that they might have the comfort of saying as little as possible.

As the dance continues it is arranged in such a way that ELIZABETH and DARCY are isolated in the center of the room.

DARCY

Are you consulting your own feelings in the present case, or do you imagine that you are gratifying mine?

ELIZABETH

Both, for I have always seen a great similarity in the turn of our minds. We are each of an unsocial, taciturn disposition, unwilling to speak, unless we expect to say something that will amaze the whole room, and be handed down to posterity with all the brilliance of a proverb.

DARCY

This is not a picture of your own character, I am sure. How closely it resembles mine I cannot pretend to say. *You* think it a faithful portrait undoubtedly.

ELIZABETH

I must not decide on my own performance.

As the dance concludes ELIZABETH and DARCY stand looking at one another a moment.

ELIZABETH moves to step away when SIR WILLIAM intervenes.

SIR WILLIAM

Such superior dancing, my dear Sir, is not often seen. I must hope to have this pleasure often repeated, especially when a certain great event concerning a best friend and a dear sister takes place. (*SIR WILLIAM glances at JANE and BINGLEY.*) What congratulations will then flow in!

SIR WILLIAM leaves.

ELIZABETH/DARCY – ACT ONE

DARCY looks at BINGLEY who is in deep conversation with JANE.

ELIZABETH is embarrassed.

DARCY, though distracted, attempts to continue talking to ELIZABETH.

DARCY

Do you and your sisters often walk to the village?

ELIZABETH

Yes, very often. When you saw us there the other day we had just been forming a new acquaintance.

DARCY

Mr. Wickham is blessed with such happy manners as to ensure his *making* friends – whether he may be equally capable of retaining them is less certain.

ELIZABETH

He has been so unlucky as to lose *your* friendship, and in a manner which he is likely to suffer from all his life. (*DARCY does not respond*) I remember hearing you once say, Mr. Darcy, that your resentment, once created, was unappeasable. You are very careful, I suppose, as to the resentments you hold dear?

DARCY

I hope I am.

ELIZABETH

And you never allow yourself to be blinded by prejudice?

DARCY

May I ask to what these questions tend?

ELIZABETH

Merely to the illustration of your character; I am trying to make it out.

DARCY

And what is your success?

ELIZABETH

I do not get on at all.

DARCY/ELIZABETH #2

DARCY

Miss Bennet!

ELIZABETH

Oh!

DARCY

Fitzwilliam told me.... I hope, Miss Bennet that you are feeling better?

ELIZABETH

Yes. Somewhat. Thank you, Mr. Darcy, for your concern.

DARCY, concerned, sits. Then stands. Paces. Stops.

DARCY

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.² *(Pause)* I have waged a great war with these feelings almost from the first moments of our acquaintance. Yet despite all my struggles with these feelings I have been powerless to alter my deep attachment to you. I need hardly say that I should be harshly judged for considering the prospect of allying my family to one of such inferior circumstances. Such an alliance might well lessen my sister Georgiana's prospects and will most certainly be unkindly considered by Lady Catherine de Bourgh, it being a clear rejection of the design to align me with her daughter. But I must abandon all good judgment to the extent that these circumstances mean nothing to me in the face of the admiration I feel for you. I beg you, most fervently, to ease my suffering and accept my hand.

ELIZABETH

It is, I believe, the established manner to express a sense of appreciation and gratitude for such sentiments. But I cannot. No, Mr. Darcy, I will not accept your hand. I am sorry to have caused pain to anyone, but it was most unconsciously done and I trust will be of short duration.

DARCY

Is this all the reply I am to expect? I might ask why I should be rejected with so little effort at civility.

ELIZABETH

And might I inquire why, with so evident a desire of offending and insulting me, *you* chose to tell me that you liked me against your will, against your judgment, and even against your duty as your sister's protector? And if I was uncivil, I have other

provocations. Do you think I could have ever considered marrying the man who has ruined, perhaps forever, the happiness of my beloved sister? You arrogantly and unjustly maneuvered Mr. Bingley away from Jane. Can you deny it?

DARCY

I have no wish to deny that I used my influence to separate my friend from your sister, for that I rejoice in my success. Towards him I have been kinder than towards myself.

ELIZABETH

But it is not merely this affair, on which my dislike is founded. Your character was made clear enough months ago in an account given me by Mr. Wickham.

DARCY

You take an eager interest in that gentleman's concerns.

ELIZABETH

His misfortunes at your hand –

DARCY

His *misfortunes*? / *His* misfortunes, indeed!

ELIZABETH

You are well aware that you have withheld the advantages, which you knew were meant for him, reducing him to a state of near poverty - and yet here, now, you still treat the mention of his misfortune with contempt and ridicule.

DARCY

My faults, according to your calculations, are heavy indeed! Yet I wonder that these offenses might have been overlooked had your pride not been hurt by my honest confession of the scruples which long prevented my speaking to you as I have. These bitter accusations might have been suppressed had I with greater policy concealed my struggles and flattered you more. But disguise of every sort is abhorrent to me. I am not ashamed of the feelings I have confessed to you. They were natural and just. Could you expect me to *celebrate* the inferiority of your connections – to *congratulate* myself on the hope of relations whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?

ELIZABETH

Your manner of declaration merely spares me the concern I might have felt in refusing you. You could not have made the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it. From the very beginning, sir, your manners impressed me as arrogant, conceited, and selfish. You are the last man in the world I could ever be prevailed upon to marry.

DARCY

You have said quite enough, madam. I perfectly comprehend your feelings. I have now only to be ashamed of what my own have been. (*Starting away, and then adding*) Forgive me for having taken up so much of your time, and accept my best wishes for your recovery and good health.

DARCY leaves. ELIZABETH is alone.

3

COLLINS/LADY LUCAS

COLLINS

Lady Lucas (*SIR WILLIAM joins them*) and Sir Lucas, I compliment you on this charming and intimate domicile. Upon my word, I could almost have supposed myself to be in the small summer breakfast parlor at Rosings Park.

LADY LUCAS

(*Feeling a slight*) I see.

COLLINS

Oh! If you perceived that I intended any slight upon your most comfortable arrangements I should be mortified. Mortified! Rosings Park is the great home of my noble patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

LADY LUCAS

(*Now impressed, as is SIR WILLIAM*) Oh, Lady Catherine de Bourgh!

SIR WILLIAM

Yes, indeed!

COLLINS

To merely convey to you the sense of splendor, the chimneypiece in the second drawing room alone cost *eight hundred pounds*.

LADY LUCAS

Eight hundred...! Think of that, Charlotte! (*To COLLINS*) My daughter is quite fond of a good blaze. Would you care to make up our table for whist, Mr Collins?

COLLINS

I confess to scant knowledge of the game, but should be happy to improve myself.

CHARLOTTE/ELIZABETH – ACT ONE

CHARLOTTE

Eliza, do you think that Mr. Darcy will be able to separate himself from the wall when the dancing begins?

ELIZABETH

He will if Miss Bingley holds any sway.

CHARLOTTE

I sense that he would prefer to dance with you.

MRS. BENNET

Well, I would not dance with *him* if I were you, Lizzy. The man is eat up with pride!

ELIZABETH

I may safely promise you *never* to dance with him.

CHARLOTTE

Darcy's pride does not offend *me* so much as pride often does, because there is an excuse for it. Such a fine young man, with family, fortune and everything in his favor, *should* think highly of himself.

ELIZABETH

My dear Charlotte, I could easily forgive *his* pride, had he not mortified *mine*.

MARY

It should be noted that vanity and pride are different things, though the words are often used synonymously. Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves. Vanity to what we would have others think of us.

MARY moves to the pianoforte and waits for a turn to play while BINGLEY draws JANE away in order speak with her. MRS. BENNET hovers close to them.

ELIZABETH

Jane is yielding to love for Mr. Bingley.

CHARLOTTE

Is she?

ELIZABETH

(Smiling) Her manner is simply more discreet.

CHARLOTTE

A woman is better off showing more affection than she feels. If your sister is so discreet as to not help Mr. Bingley on, he may never do more than *like* her. When she is secure of him there will be leisure for falling in love as much as she chooses.

ELIZABETH

Your plan would be a good one were her design to get a rich husband. But Jane is interested in the qualities of Mr. Bingley's character.

DARCY moves towards the center of the room in advance of approaching ELIZABETH.

CHARLOTTE

If she were married to him tomorrow, she would have as good a chance at happiness as if she studied his character for a year. No matter how similar the dispositions of the parties are *beforehand*, they always grow sufficiently unlike *afterwards* to have their share of vexation.

ELIZABETH notes DARCY'S attention.

ELIZABETH

What does Mr. Darcy mean, studying my conversation with you?

CHARLOTTE

Perhaps you should ask Mr. Darcy. Remember my advice, Eliza. (*Leaves*)

CAROLINE/DARCY – ACT ONE

ELIZABETH gives a polite curtsy and moves away to join CHARLOTTE. SIR WILLIAM shakes his head and shrugs, then moves across the room to observe the dancing of the others. CAROLINE BINGLEY joins DARCY.

CAROLINE

I can guess the subject of your reverie. You are considering how insupportable it would be to pass many evenings in such society.

LYDIA

(Dancing by) La, I once wore a gown with twelve ribbons and a double rosette.

CAROLINE

The insipidity, the noise, the nothingness and yet the self-importance of all these people! What I would give to hear your strictures on them.

DARCY

Your conjecture is totally wrong, I assure you.

CAROLINE

Oh?

DARCY

My mind was more agreeably engaged. I have been meditating on the very great pleasure that a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow.

Mistaking this, CAROLINE steps in front of DARCY and fixes a steady gaze upon him.

CAROLINE

And what lady is it that inspires this?

DARCY

Miss Elizabeth Bennet.

CAROLINE

I am all astonishment! When, pray, am I to wish you joy on your engagement?

DARCY

A lady's imagination is very rapid. It jumps from admiration, to love, to matrimony in a mere moment.

CAROLINE

I shall consider the matter as absolutely settled!

MRS. BENNET

Indeed you are a scamp and a rogue Srr William. *(More laughter)* You will make me laugh. *(And does.)*

CAROLINE

You will have a charming mother-in-law, indeed... *(More laughter)* and you will have the pleasure of her always being at Pemberley with you.

MRS. BENNET approaches CAROLINE and DARCY

MRS BENNET

(Ingratiating herself) Miss Bingley, your brother and my Jane make such a handsome couple that I suspect he shall never wish to leave Netherfield

CAROLINE

Regrettably, my dear Mrs. Bennet, our lease is for these few months only.

MRS BENNET

Oh that is a matter of small consideration surely, when there is now so much reason to extend it?

MRS. BENNET moves away to enjoy BINGLEY'S attentions to JANE.

CAROLINE

That woman is singularly the most insufferable human being I have ever met.

The dance ends.

BINGLEY lingers in JANE'S company

I should like better acquaintance with Miss Jane Bennet.

CAROLINE steps away from DARCY.

KITTY/LYDIA #2

LYDIA

Jane! Dear Lizzy! So much has happened since you've been away! Kitty and I have been to the village nearly every day!

Longbourn. could be interior or exterior.

KITTY

We have bought these bonnets. Do you like them?

MR. BENNET

Your mother and I are parents to two of the most foolish and overdressed girls in the country.

LYDIA

The officers like me in this bonnet, but I do not think it is very pretty.

KITTY

There were two or three much uglier in the shop.

LYDIA

I shall pull it to pieces and see if I can make it any better.

KITTY

It will be a waste. *(To ELIZABETH)* The militia are leaving Meryton.

LYDIA

They are going to Brighton in a fortnight and I do want papa to take us all there! Only think what a miserable summer else we shall have!

MR BENNET

I'm glad you are back, Lizzy. Feel free to talk any sense you can into your siblings.

MR. BENNET leaves.

LYDIA

I have such news about a certain person that we all like. It is about dear Wickham! There is no danger of his marrying Mary King. She is gone to her uncle at Liverpool.

KITTY

Gone to stay!

LYDIA

Wickham is safe.

ELIZABETH

(To *JANE*) As is Mary King!

KITTY

She is a great fool for going away, if she liked him.

JANE

I hope there is no strong attachment on either side.

LYDIA

I am sure there is not on *his*. He never cared three straws about her. Who *could* about such a nasty freckled thing? Let us hear what has happened to you, Lizzy, and to you, Jane, since you went away. I was in great hopes that one of you would have got a husband before you came back. How I should like to be married before any of you. Then I would chaperone you about to all the balls. What fun that would be! I'd ask Mary too, but she wouldn't come.

MARY

Society has claims on us all; but I profess myself one who considers such amusements as desirable intermittenly and not constantly.

MARY leaves.

LYDIA

Come with us to Meryton and see how everybody is getting on! Mr. Wickham will likely be there!

ELIZABETH

I'd rather it not be said that the elder Miss Bennets were home but half a day before they too were in pursuit of the officers.

LYDIA

Suit yourselves. We're off then!

KITTY

Welcome home! Goodbye!

LYDIA and KITTY leave for Meryton.

MR. COLLINS/MRS. BENNET – ACT ONE

MR. COLLINS

Good morning, Mrs. Bennet, allow me to regurgitate my enjoyment of last evening's supper. To which of your fair daughters may I credit the excellence of the cooking?

MRS. BENNET

I assure you, Mr. Collins, that we are able to keep a good cook. My daughters have nothing to do in the kitchen.

MR. COLLINS

My dear madam, if you believe me to have inferred any slight on your circumstances, I am mortified. *Mortified*. The confusion, however, does serve to introduce a topic which I shall light upon with startling directness. Having attained a Godly profession, good house, and sufficient income, I intend to marry. As I am eager to make amends for the awkward nature of the entailment upon this home and being of a generous nature, I propose to choose for my wife one of your daughters.

MRS. BENNET

Which one?

MR. COLLINS

Seniority, I believe, should have its due.

MRS. BENNET

Jane?

MR. COLLINS

A lovely face and most amiable.

MRS. BENNET²

Mr. Collins, I feel obliged to mention that my eldest daughter –

MR. COLLINS

Jane.

MRS. BENNET

- is likely very soon to be engaged.

MR. COLLINS

(Beat) My best wishes for her felicity.

MRS. BENNET

As to my *younger* daughters, I do not know of any prepossession.

MR. COLLINS

Next is...?

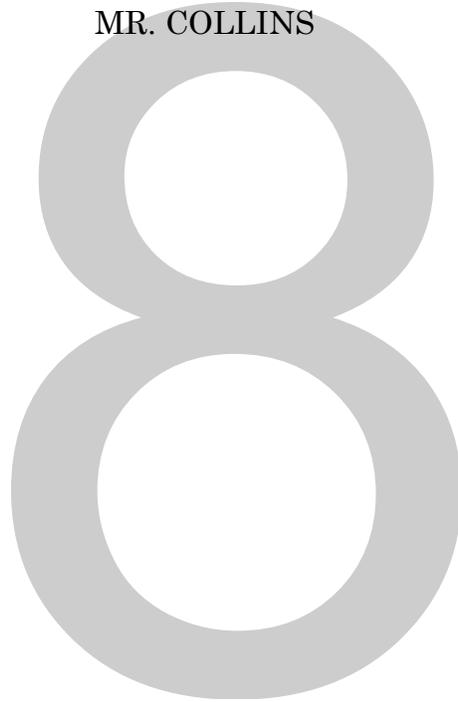
MRS. BENNET

Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH enters, followed by JANE, LYDIA, and then, KITTY and MARY. All are dressed for a walk. COLLINS stands.

MR. COLLINS

Quite right.



JANE/ELIZABETH – ACT ONE

JANE

I take it you refused Mr. Collins?

ELIZABETH

I am afraid our dear mother's best hopes for one of her daughters must remain with you. (*JANE steps away from ELIZABETH*) Jane? What is it?

JANE

This has just arrived from Caroline Bingley. She tells me they will have left Netherfield by now – with no intention of returning.

JANE hands a letter to ELIZABETH.

Upstage CAROLINE, BINGLEY, and DARCY are seen leaving Netherfield.

ELIZABETH

But *why*?

JANE

Mr. Darcy is eager to see his sister.

DARCY and BINGLEY put on coats for the journey as CAROLINE voices her letter to JANE.

CAROLINE

And I dare say my brother is scarcely less eager to meet her again. Charles admires Georgiana Darcy so very much and now he will have frequent opportunity to see her on the most intimate footing. Mr. Darcy, and indeed, *all* his relations, wish the connection as much as ours.

JANE

'Am I wrong, my dearest Jane, in indulging the hope of an event which will secure the happiness of so many?'

The BINGLEYS and DARCY leave.

JANE looks to ELIZABETH.

ELIZABETH

Oh, Jane! I think Caroline Bingley sees all too plainly that her brother adores you, intends to propose to you, and *she* wants him to marry Georgiana Darcy.

JANE/ELIZABETH – ACT ONE

JANE

Surely, a sister wishes only for a brother's happiness?

ELIZABETH

Miss Bingley may wish for *many* things besides Charles' happiness! And can there be a doubt that she 'indulges a hope' and schemes to achieve her own alliance with Mr. Darcy!

JANE

Rather than to suppose such selfish motives, I much prefer to take it in the best light, that it has been an error of fancy on my side and has done no harm to anyone but myself.

JANE leaves.

CHARLOTTE and MR COLLINS enter.

ELIZABETH, apart, is at Longbourn. COLLINS and CHARLOTTE are at the Lucas's.

MR. COLLINS

'Find such a woman as soon as you can, bring her to Hunsford,' were Lady Catherine de Bourgh's *exact* words. And now, my dearest Miss Lucas, allow me to assure you of the violence of my affection. *(He kisses her hand)*

CHARLOTTE

I know your feelings about Mr. Collins, Eliza.

COLLINS moves to a seat at what will become Hunsford Parsonage.

CHARLOTTE is with ELIZABETH.

I am not romantic, I never was. I bring but small fortune to a marriage and I possess unexceptional beauty. I am convinced that my chance of happiness with Mr. Collins is as much as most women can expect upon entering the marriage state. *(Pause)* I hope you will be satisfied with what I have decided and find it in your heart to come to see us at Hunsford Parsonage. I should be heart-broken if this business posed a risk to our friendship.

CHARLOTTE kisses ELIZABETH and then goes to COLLINS.

MR. BENNET enters.

MR. COLLINS

First, that I think it a right thing for every clergyman to set the example of matrimony in his parish. *Secondly*, that I am convinced it will add very greatly to my happiness, and *thirdly* (which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier) that it is the particular recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honor of calling my patroness, the *Lady Catherine de Bourgh*. It was the very Saturday night before I left Hunsford – while I was arranging Miss de Bourgh's footstool that she said -

ELIZABETH

Mr. Collins –

MR. COLLINS

'It is time that you marry. Choose properly; let her be an active, useful sort of person, not brought up too high. Find such a woman as soon as you can, bring her to Hunsford, and I will visit her.'

ELIZABETH

If I may -

MR. COLLINS

One moment. It remains for me to enunciate why my energies are directed towards your person. As I am to inherit this estate after the death of your honored father, 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 after the melancholy demise takes place, which I hasten to add, I hope may not be for several years.

ELIZABETH

Most generous.

MR. COLLINS

I could not be otherwise. To fortune I am perfectly indifferent; and since I am well aware that it could not be complied with, on that head I shall make no demand on your father. And now nothing remains for me but to assure you in the most animated language of the violence of my affection –

ELIZABETH

Sir! You are too hasty. You forget that I have made no answer. Let me do so now. Accept my thanks for the compliment you are paying me, but it is impossible for me to accept your proposals.

MR. COLLINS/ELIZABETH – ACT ONE

MR. COLLINS

I understand.

ELIZABETH

I thank you for that.

MR. COLLINS

But am in no way discouraged. It is, I believe, usual with young ladies to reject, at first, the addresses of the man whom they secretly mean to accept.²

ELIZABETH

I assure you that I am not one of those ladies. You could not make me happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who could make you so.

MR. COLLINS

You are uniformly charming! And I am in full hope that when sanctioned by the express authority of both of your excellent parents, my proposals will not fail of being acceptable.

ELIZABETH

Your hope is an extraordinary one in light of my declaration. Why do you insist on disbelieving me?

MR. COLLINS

First, I cannot believe that my hand is unworthy of your acceptance and *secondly*, I observe your financial situation to be so unhappy as to discourage any romantic rivals. I therefore conclude that you are not serious in your rejection and choose to increase my love by suspense, according to the usual practice of elegant females.

ELIZABETH

Really, Mr. Collins, if what I have said can appear to you as encouragement, I know not how to express my refusal in such a way as might convince you of its being one. My feelings in every respect forbid an alliance with you. I cannot speak more plainly.

ELIZABETH leaves the room.

COLLINS is left alone for a moment.

ACT ONE

Longbourn. Autumn.

Prelude that might include: ELIZABETH entering from the out-of-doors, carrying a book in one hand and a handful of autumn flowers in the other. The flowers are placed in a vase and then upon a pianoforte in the Bennet's drawing room.

ELIZABETH greets sister JANE BENNET, who is working on a needlepoint tapestry.

MARY BENNET, enters and then sits at the pianoforte and begins to play, followed by KITTY and LYDIA BENNET. KITTY is trimming a bonnet.

MRS BENNET enters.

MRS. BENNET
Mr. Bennet! My dear, Mr. Bennet!

MR. BENNET enters from the library.

Netherfield Park² is to be let at last!

MR. BENNET
Is it, my dear?

MRS. BENNET
I've heard it just now, from Lady Lucas. *(No response from MR BENNET)*
Do you not want to know who has taken it?

MR. BENNET
You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it.

MRS. BENNET
Netherfield is taken by a young man from the north, a young man of large fortune!

KITTY
A *single* man?

MRS. BENNET/MR. BENNET – ACT ONE

MRS. BENNET

Of large fortune! He came down a fortnight ago in a carriage drawn by four horses. He saw the house and the land and was so delighted that he took it immediately!

LYDIA

What is his name, mamma?

MRS. BENNET

It is a Mr. Bingley.

ELIZABETH

(Smiling) A single man in possession of a good fortune.

MRS. BENNET

Four or five thousand a year at the least! *(to MR. BENNET)* What a fine thing for our girls!

MR. BENNET

How so? How can it affect them?

MRS. BENNET

Mr. Bennet! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them!

MR. BENNET

Is Mr. Bingley informed of the fact that you consider him the rightful property of one of our daughters? Well then, *Jane*, you are the eldest and deserve the very first consideration. Do you consent to marry Mr. Bingley?

JANE

I know nothing about him, Papa.

MR. BENNET

The shortcomings of your life's partner will become apparent soon enough after the wedding ceremony.

MRS. BENNET

Sir William and Lady Lucas plan to see Mr. Bingley without delay. You must call upon him first! Think what an establishment it would mean for Jane, or Lizzy, or Kitty, Lydia, even Mary.

MARY

Though such pleasures are doubtless congenial with the generality of female minds, I infinitely prefer the satisfactions of a substantial book.

KITTY/LYDIA - ACT ONE

MRS. BENNET

My dear Mr. Bennet! We have had a most excellent evening. Mr. Bingley danced *four* dances with our Jane. First, he danced with Charlotte Lucas but, however, he did not admire her at all!

KITTY

And then he danced with Jane!

LYDIA

Followed by nearly every girl in the room.

KITTY

He didn't dance with me.

LYDIA

There was Charlotte's sister -

KITTY

Then, Mary King -

LYDIA

And then -

KITTY

With Jane again!

LYDIA

And again, and again -

MR. BENNET

If Mr. Bingley had any compassion for me he would not have danced so much.

LYDIA

He would have danced with me but I was otherwise engaged!

KITTY

With Captain Carter *and* Ensign Denny!

MR. BENNET/MRS. BENNET #2

MRS. BENNET

Mr. Bennet, we are in uproar! You must make Lizzy marry Mr. Collins, for she vows she will not have him!

MR. BENNET

I have not the pleasure of understanding you.

MRS. BENNET

He - (*Turns to reference COLLINS but finds him gone*) Oh! Where has he gone? And now Mr. Collins has begun to say that he will not have Lizzy! (*Calling*) Elizabeth Bennet, your father wishes to see you!!

MR. BENNET

And, pray, what am I to do on the occasion?

MRS. BENNET

Insist upon Lizzy marrying Mr Collins!

ELIZABETH enters.

MR. BENNET

Come here, child. I understand that Mr. Collins has made you an offer of marriage. Is it true?

ELIZABETH

Yes, father.

MR. BENNET

Very well. And this offer you have refused?

ELIZABETH

I have, sir.

MR. BENNET

Your mother insists upon your accepting it. Is it not so, Mrs. Bennet?

MRS. BENNET

Yes, or I will never see her again.

MR. BENNET

Child, an unhappy alternative is before you. From this day you must be a stranger to one of your parents. Your mother will never see you again if you do not marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you again if you do.

MRS. BENNET

Oh, Mr. Bennet!

MR. BENNET

I shall be at my desk while you ponder your decision.

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WICKHAM/DARCY – ACT TWO

WICKHAM enters.

DARCY

May we move to the more weighty accusation of my having injured Mr. Wickham? (*Elizabeth nods*)

WICKHAM

(*To ELIZABETH*) My father's affection and loyalty to the Darcy family led him to dedicate himself exclusively to their affairs.

DARCY

My father wished to be of assistance to George Wickham. He was as grateful for the late Mr. Wickham's service to our family, as he was taken with his son's engaging manners. It was his intention to provide a legacy of £1000 to allow Wickham to pursue a vocation in the church.

WICKHAM

(*To ELIZABETH*) But the son straight-out refused to honor his father's wishes.

DARCY

After my father died, Wickham wrote me that he had resolved against a church living, and instead wished to study the law, for which an additional—

WICKHAM

(*To DARCY*) £3000.

DARCY

—would be required. I acquiesced. But studying the law was mere pretence, and within a matter of months, deeply in debt and having gained a reputation for idleness, dissipation and worse, Wickham applied to me again, returning to his original wish to be ordained and requiring yet more funds. Certain that George Wickham ought not to be a clergyman, I refused to comply.

WICKHAM

(*To ELIZABETH*) Had the father liked me less, the son might have borne me better.

ELIZABETH

These are quite different circumstances than those related to me by Mr. Wickham.

LADY CATHERINE/ELIZABETH – ACT TWO

LADY CATHERINE

You can be at no loss, Miss Bennet, to understand the reason of my journey hither.

ELIZABETH

I am not at all able to account for it.

LADY CATHERINE

However insincere *you* may choose to be, you shall not find me so. My character has ever been celebrated for its sincerity and frankness. I was told that your sister was not the only Bennet on the point of being most advantageously married, but that you, that Miss Elizabeth Bennet, would, in all likelihood, be soon united to my nephew. Though I knew it must be a scandalous falsehood, I instantly resolved on setting off for this place, that I might make my sentiments known to you.

ELIZABETH

If you believed it impossible to be true, I wonder why you have taken the trouble of coming so far and to call upon my family in the middle of the night?

LADY CATHERINE

To insist upon having you declare that there is no foundation for it. Has my nephew, made you an offer of marriage?

ELIZABETH

Your ladyship has declared it to be impossible.

LADY CATHERINE

It ought to be so; it must be so, if he retains the use of his reason. But your arts and allurements may, in a moment of infatuation, make him forget what he owes to himself and to all his family.

ELIZABETH

If I have, I should be the last person to confess it.

LADY CATHERINE

Miss Bennet, I am almost Darcy's nearest relation and am entitled to know all his concerns.

ELIZABETH

But you are not entitled to know *mine*.

LADY CATHERINE

LADY CATHERINE/ELIZABETH – ACT TWO

Let me be rightly understood. This match to which you have the presumption to aspire can never take place. Mr. Darcy is engaged to my daughter.

ELIZABETH

If he is so, you can have no reason to suppose he would make an offer to me.

LADY CATHERINE

(Small hesitation) The engagement is of a special kind. It is a union planned while they were in their cradles.

ELIZABETH

If there is no other objection to my marrying your nephew, I shall certainly not be kept from it by knowing that his mother and aunt were planning a marriage between him and his cousin well before either of them were capable of forming words of their own.

LADY CATHERINE

Honor, decorum, and prudence shall keep you from it. You will be censured, slighted, and despised by everyone connected with him.

ELIZABETH

These are heavy misfortunes. But the wife of Mr. Darcy must have such extraordinary sources of happiness that she should have little cause for distress.

LADY CATHERINE

Obstinate, headstrong girl! Tell me once and for all, are you engaged to him!?

ELIZABETH

(Short pause) I am not.

LADY CATHERINE

And will you promise me, never to enter into such an engagement?

ELIZABETH

I will make no such promise. I must beg to be importuned no further on the subject.

LADY CATHERINE

I have by no means done. To the objections I have already voiced there is yet another to add. I am no stranger to the particulars of your youngest sister's infamous elopement.

LADY CATHERINE/ELIZABETH – ACT TWO

ELIZABETH

That bears no –

LADY CATHERINE

A patched-up business at the expense of your father and uncle.

ELIZABETH

Lady Catherine –

LADY CATHERINE

Is such a girl to be my nephew's sister? Is her husband, the son of a steward, to be his brother? Heaven and earth! Are the shades of Pemberley to be thus polluted?

ELIZABETH

You have insulted me in every possible way -

LADY CATHERINE

You are an unfeeling, selfish girl!

ELIZABETH

- and I have nothing further to say!

LADY CATHERINE

You are resolved then to have him?

ELIZABETH

I am only resolved to act in that manner which will, in my own opinion, constitute my happiness, without reference to *you*, or to any person so wholly unconnected with me.

LADY CATHERINE

Very well, I shall now know how to act. Do not imagine, Miss Bennet, that your ambition will ever be gratified. I take no leave of you, I send no compliments to your mother. You deserve no such attention. I am most seriously displeased.

LADY CATHERINE leaves.

Day.

Exterior at Longbourn.

ELIZABETH/WICKHAM

WICKHAM

Miss Bennet.

ELIZABETH

Mr. Wickham. I hope our modest gathering has not given you cause for despair?

WICKHAM

I have every cause for cheer.

ELIZABETH

Do you?

WICKHAM

Pleasant society and good employment, I own, are necessary to me. Had it pleased the gentleman we were speaking of this afternoon I might now be in possession of a parish.²

ELIZABETH

You contemplated a life in the church, Mr. Wickham?

WICKHAM

I had every expectation of being in that good living. The late Mr. Darcy was my godfather. He meant to amply provide for me, and thought he had done so.

ELIZABETH

Why was his bequest not honored?

WICKHAM

It is difficult still for me to comprehend the son's refusal to carry out his father's wishes. I can hardly trust myself on the subject. Darcy and I were raised at Pemberley together and I dare say thought of as brothers. You see, Miss Bennet, my father had been an attorney, and one most highly esteemed by Darcy's father. My father gave up his entire practice and devoted himself exclusively to the affairs of the Darcy estate. When he died, Darcy's father looked after me as though I were his own son. But later, when that good man passed on, I found myself without my bequest or legal redress.

ELIZABETH

How was that possible?

WICKHAM

There was such informality in the terms of the will that it gave me no hope from the law. And for reasons kept unto himself, Darcy chose to look upon his father's wishes as a mere recommendation.

ELIZABETH

But what could have been his motive?

WICKHAM

Jealousy? Had the late Mr. Darcy liked me less, his son may have borne me better.

ELIZABETH

This is shocking. He deserves to be publicly disgraced!

WICKHAM

Perhaps sometime he will be. But not by me. Out of respect for his kind father, I could never discredit the son.

ELIZABETH

I had not thought Mr. Darcy so bad as this. Such malicious spite! Can such malicious pride have ever done him good?

WICKHAM

He is very able to pretend otherwise. And indeed, some see him as generous and liberal - assisting his tenants and even relieving the poor. He will never appear to disgrace the good family name.

ELIZABETH

His intimacy with Mr. Bingley puzzles me. Do you know Mr. Bingley?

WICKHAM

Not at all.

ELIZABETH

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

Servants bring coats and wraps to guests.

COLLINS looks at ELIZABETH as "Good Nights" and "Good Byes" and expressions of gratitude are made by departing guests.

WICKHAM

Miss Bennet, I have tyrannized your entire evening with the drama of my personal misfortunes. You must think my manners atrocious and hope to avoid me forevermore.

ELIZABETH

You are wrong on both counts, Mr. Wickham. I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you with the other officers at the ball Mr. Bingley is giving at Netherfield.

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