

# **Pride and Prejudice**

**Based on Jane Austen's classic novel**

*Pride and Prejudice*

By

**Joyce Back**

and

**Marilyn Lowney**

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE  
Copyright 2005  
by **Joyce Back and Marilyn Lowney**  
All Rights Reserved

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that **PRIDE AND PREJUDICE** is subject to a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, and the rights of translation into foreign language are strictly reserved.

The amateur live stage performance rights to **PRIDE AND PREJUDICE** are controlled exclusively by Drama Source and royalty arrangements and licenses must be secured well in advance of presentation. PLEASE NOTE that amateur royalty fees are set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. When applying for a royalty quotation and license please give us the number of performances intended and dates of production. Royalties are payable one week before the opening performance of the play to Drama Source Co., 1588 E. 361 N., St. Anthony, Idaho 83445, unless other arrangements are made.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid whether the play is presented for charity or gain, and whether or not admission is charged. For all other rights than those stipulated above, apply to Drama Source Company, 1588 E. 361 N. St. Anthony, Idaho 83445.

Copying from this book in whole or in part is strictly forbidden by law, and the right of performance is not transferable.

Whenever the play is produced, the following notice must appear on all programs, printing and advertising for the play, "Produced by special arrangement with Drama Source Co."

Due authorship credit must be given on all programs, printing and advertising for the play.

**No one shall commit or authorize any act or omission by which the copyright or the rights to copyright of this play may be impaired.**

**No one shall make changes in this play for the purpose of production without written permission.**

**Publication of this play does not imply availability for performance. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised in their own interests to apply to Drama Source Company for written permission before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre.**

**No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, videotaping or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.**

# Cast of Characters

Daisy	‘Daisy’ is a young housemaid in the Bennet household.
Emily	‘Emily’ is a young housemaid in the Bennet household.
Mrs. Hill	‘Mrs. Hill’ is the housekeeper for the Bennet family.
Wareham	‘Wareham’ is the coachman for the Bennet family.
Joshua	‘Joshua’ is a farm worker on the Bennet estate.
Marcus	‘Marcus’ is a farm worker on the Bennet estate.
Mrs. Bennet	‘Mrs. Bennet’ is the mistress of a small estate, Longbourn; age mid-40’s.
Jane Bennet	‘Jane’ is the eldest Bennet daughter; lovely and sweet, age 22.
Elizabeth Bennet	‘Elizabeth’ is the second-eldest Bennet daughter; charming and witty, age 20.
Mary Bennet	‘Mary’ is the third-eldest Bennet daughter; quiet and studious, age 18.
Catherine Bennet	‘Kitty’ is the fourth-eldest Bennet daughter; a bit whiny, age 17.
Lydia Bennett	‘Lydia’ is the youngest Bennet daughter; wild and uncontrollable, age 16.
Mr. Bennet	‘Mr. Bennet’ is the husband of Mrs. Bennet, sarcastic, humorous.
Mr. Collins	‘Mr. Collins’ is Mr. Bennet’s cousin; age 25; pompous and insensitive.
Charlotte Lucas	‘Charlotte’ is Elizabeth’s friend; practical, not romantic, age 27.
Fitzwilliam Darcy	‘Darcy’ is the wealthy master of a large estate, Pemberly. Age 28.
Charles Bingley	‘Bingley’ is wealthy, good-natured, kind, and tolerant, age 26.
Caroline Bingley	‘Caroline’ is the sister of Charles Bingley, age about 22.
George Wickham	‘Wickham’ is a newly commissioned officer; handsome and debonair, age 28.
Xavier Denny	‘Denny’ is an officer and a friend of Wickham.
Lady Catherine	‘Lady Catherine’ is the highborn, wealthy mistress of a large estate, Rosings Park.
Georgiana Darcy	‘Georgiana’ is Mr. Darcy’s sister; sweet, shy, refined, and affectionate, age 18.

# Scenes

## Act One

- Scene 1: The parlor at Longbourn.
- Scene 2: The parlor at Longbourn.
- Scene 3: The parlor at Longbourn.
- Scene 4: The parlor at Longbourn.
- Scene 5: The parlor at Netherfield.
- Scene 6: The parlor at Netherfield.
- Scene 7: The parlor at Netherfield.
- Scene 8: The parlor at Longbourn.
- Scene 9: The parlor at Longbourn.
- Scene 10: The parlor at Longbourn.

## Act Two

- Scene 1: The parlor at Longbourn.
- Scene 2: The parlor at Rosings.
- Scene 3: The parlor at Rosings.
- Scene 4: The parlor at Longbourn.
- Scene 5: The parlor at Longbourn.
- Scene 6: The parlor at Longbourn.
- Scene 7: The parlor at Longbourn.

# Pride and Prejudice

## ACT I

### Scene 1

SETTING: *It is early afternoon in late spring. The setting is the parlor at Longbourn ( an early-19<sup>th</sup> century parlor).*

AT RISE: *DAISY and EMILY are running back and forth, in and out. There is a sense of excitement.*

*[Mrs. Hill enters, wiping her hands on her apron. She looks about to make sure no one's watching, then wearily sits down. WAREHAM enters.]*

**Wareham:** Tired, lassie? Is Mrs. Bennet 'aving her vapors again today?

**Mrs. Hill:** Aye! 'Ow she expects me to cook a dinner for company when I run up and down stairs all day to wait on her, I do not know!

**Wareham:** Company tonight? I 'eard nothing about it.

**Mrs. Hill:** 'Tis Mr. Bennet's cousin, a Mr. Collins. There was a fight of some sort that's now made up, and 'e's coming to call on the whole family.

**Wareham:** Mr. Collins! Ant 'e the bloke what will inherit the estate when the master's dead?

**Mrs. Hill:** The one and the same! And like as not, he'll toss the lot of us out and bring in his own servants!

**Wareham:** Aye! And toss out the mistress and her girls as well!

*[Suddenly a bell offstage rings loudly. MRS. HILL grimaces in disgust.]*

**Mrs. Hill:** Daisy! DAISY!

*[DAISY hurries on stage.]*

**Daisy:** Yes, Mrs. 'ill?

**Mrs. Hill:** Answer that bell, girl. I'm too tired to walk up those stairs again.

**Daisy:** But, Mrs. 'ill, the mistress will tell me to send YOU!

**Mrs. Hill:** Go on with you! 'Twill give me a few minutes rest.

*[DAISY hurries offstage. JOSHUA and MARCUS come in and help themselves to water in a pitcher. EMILY enters, carrying towels or other cleaning supplies. DAISY reenters.]*

**Emily:** A fine lot of work for us to do for a visit from a country parson!

**Joshua:** Aye, true indeed!

**Mrs. Hill:** Mark my words; Mrs. Bennet is looking to marry one of the girls to the Reverend Mr. Collins!

**Wareham:** Oh, aye! She'd marry the girls to any man with a bit o' coin in 'is pocket, eh?

*[They all begin to laugh uproariously. MRS. BENNET enters.]*

**Mrs. Bennet:** Here now! Stop this raucous noise immediately!

**Mrs. Hill:** I beg your pardon, Madam.

**Mrs. Bennet:** Indeed you should! I've been ringing for you this half-hour! My health is very delicate, as you know, and I must not be subjected to...

*[Enter JANE and ELIZABETH.]*

**Jane:** Mama! I am going to fetch your tea.

**Elizabeth:** Mrs. Hill is preparing a company dinner, remember? She must be allowed time to create her exquisite dishes. So come. Jane and I will fetch whatever you need for the rest of the afternoon.

**Mrs. Hill:** Thank you, dear Miss Elizabeth.

**Mrs. Bennet:** Oh, very well. But, you know, Lizzie, Mrs. Hill does have TWO very good housemaids to help her. Lazy girls, I vow, but still...

*[JANE, ELIZABETH, and MRS. BENNET exit, with MRS. BENNET still talking.]*

**Mrs. Hill:** Angels, those two girls. 'Ow they could be, I do not know, with such a mother!

## Scene 2

*It is a few hours later in the parlor at Longbourn. MARY is reading, and ELIZABETH is bending over her, as though pointing out something in the book to her. LYDIA, JANE, AND KITTY are sitting or standing nearby. MRS. BENNET is lounging on a sofa, perhaps popping chocolates into her mouth.*

**Mary:** *[reading a poem, but not reading it well]* She walks in beauty like the night...

**Lydia:** Mary, I have heard quite enough of Lord Byron! When you read aloud, you sound like a piglet calling for its sow!

**Jane:** Lydia, please!

**Kitty:** 'Tis quite true! Mary, you will never recite poetry as well as Lizzie! And Lizzie has the poems of Byron memorized so she does not recite them with her nose buried in the book!

**Mary:** Perhaps I could memorize them also if I were not constantly interrupted by your noise!

**Mrs. Bennet:** Girls, please...your father is bringing Mr. Collins to dinner. Do conduct yourselves like ladies!

**Lydia:** Lizzie, since we are on the subject of poetry, I wish you would recite the poem called Destiny – the one that tells the story [*looking meaningfully at her mother*] of the maiden who would NOT marry the man chosen for her!

**Mrs. Bennet:** Oh, my dear, your papa does not approve of that poem!

**Mary:** And I agree with him! Mama, tell Lydia to hold her tongue!

**Lydia:** Oh, nonsense! Papa is not here, so why should we concern ourselves with his opinion? Please Lizzie! We will recite the refrain, won't we Kitty?

**Kitty:** Yes, indeed!

**Mary:** Oh, go ahead, Lizzie. You can teach me another time when SHE is not about.

**Jane:** Oh, do, Lizzie. I confess the poem is a favorite of mine also.

**Elizabeth:** [*laughing*] Very well, but no one had better tell Papa. [*She recites the following poem dramatically, with movement and gestures.*]

Once there lived a pretty maid

Far off, so people say

She was a willful lass, indeed

And liked to have her way

A gentleman fell deep in love

And made a bold demand

To marry her and be her love

And give his heart and hand

Alas alas, the maid did fly

And he heard her cry

**Kitty, Lydia, Jane** [*reciting the refrain*]:

Destiny, destiny

Will bring the perfect man to me

Never will I marry thee

So ride away and set me free

Gallop away over the hills

Gallop over the hills

**Elizabeth:** [*reciting next stanza*]

Time went on its merry way  
But she would not accede  
The gentleman rode by each day  
To grovel and to plead...

**Mrs. Bennet:** *[interrupting ELIZABETH and reciting meaningfully]*

Her mama cried, 'Think not of love  
Stop gazing at the moon  
Once you're wed, you'll fall in love  
And sing a different tune'

**Elizabeth:** *[reciting]*

Alas alas, the maid did fly  
And he heard her cry

**Lydia, Kitty, Jane:** *[reciting the refrain]*

Destiny, destiny  
Will bring the perfect man to me  
Never will I marry thee  
So ride away and set me free  
Gallop away over the hills  
Gallop over the hills

*[Enter MR. BENNET and MR. COLLINS. MR. COLLINS surveys the scene, and his face registers his shock at such merriment. MR. BENNET claps his hands to demand attention, and the merriment stops abruptly. MRS. BENNET glances toward her husband and his guest and begins shushing the girls and straightening her attire and hair.]*

**Mr. Bennet:** *[dryly; he is not really angry]* I thought I was entering my own parlor, but it seems we've stumbled into a theater-show instead.

**Elizabeth:** I beg pardon, Papa, but we were simply practicing our...reading...

**Mrs. Bennet:** 'Tis true, my dear.

**Mr. Bennet:** *[to MR. COLLINS]* Come, cousin, and meet the rest of the family while a modicum of quiet reigns. My dear, may I introduce my cousin, the Reverend Mr. Collins.

**Mrs. Bennet:** Delighted, Mr. Collins.

*[Mr. COLLINS bows very formally.]*

**Mr. Collins:** The honor is mine, dear lady.

**Mr. Bennet:** And these are my daughters. My eldest, Jane - an angel amidst the chaos. My second eldest, Elizabeth, who, I must add, is the cleverest of all my girls. And here is Mary - very accomplished, I assure you. And Catherine - otherwise known as Kitty because she hisses and scratches when angry. And my youngest, the irrepressible Miss Lydia.

*[Each daughter curtsies as she is introduced.]*

**Mr. Collins:** My dear sir! Your daughters' reputation for beauty falls very short of reality! I congratulate you! And you, my dear Mrs. Bennet!

*[MR.. BENNET rolls his eyes, but MRS. BENNET is delighted with the remark.]*

**Mrs. Bennet:** Thank you, sir. Thank you indeed. Mr. Bennet mentioned that your patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, is in favor of your marrying. *[conspiratorially]* I hope you do not forget us when you choose a wife!

**Mr. Collins:** Indeed, madam. Her ladyship has declared on several occasions that she will VISIT my wife when I bring her home to Rosings Parsonage. Such a boon to offer the woman which I choose to share my life! To be visited by the Right Honorable Lady Catherine de Bourgh!

*[He pauses in rapture. The girls raise their eyes, and MR. BENNET coughs to stifle laughter.]*

**Mrs. Bennet:** You are very fortunate indeed in your situation in life, Mr. Collins!

**Mr. Collins:** That is very true, madam. Lady Catherine de Bourgh herself remarked something similar. Mr. Collins, she declared, you have every advantage of air, appearance, respectability, and residence. So pray do not throw yourself away on an inferior young lady.

**Mrs. Bennet:** Well, I do declare that any of my daughters would have the good sense to appreciate such a situation as you can offer, Mr. Collins.

**Mr. Collins:** Indeed, madam, I come prepared to admire your daughters. In order to begin the delightful process of endearing myself to the Miss Bennets, I have brought a book with me and intend to read to them.

**Mrs. Bennet:** A novel? Mr. Collins, I am quite shocked!

**Mr. Collins:** A novel! No indeed! I would not insult them with such words and descriptions as are found in novels. I have with me a copy of Fordyce's Lectures.

*[The girls look at each other in dismay. LYDIA steps quickly forward.]*

**Lydia:** Mama, I have just recalled that I promised Maria Lucas to dine with her. I must go

now or she will be worried quite out of her mind.

**Mrs. Bennet:** What! I do not remember your speaking of such an invitation!

**Lydia:** Well! I was so excited by the prospect of meeting Mr. Collins...*[she curtsies flirtatiously]*...that it went quite out of my head. But now I really must run. There are officers from Colonel Forster's regiment dining with the Lucases, also, and I would not wish to insult them by being late.

**Mrs. Bennet:** *[suddenly interested]* Officers! Oh, no indeed! Go along then, and give my regards to Lady Lucas.

**Kitty:** Lydia, you forget that I was included in the invitation!

**Lydia:** Oh, how silly of me! Of course! Come, Kitty, we must hurry!

*[LYDIA and KITTY run out of the room before their parents can object.]*

**Mr. Bennet:** Officers! That is all we hear of since the regiment quartered in Meryton. I declare, my dear, our two youngest are the silliest girls in the country!

**Mrs. Bennet:** My dear! Do not call your own children silly! What will Mr. Collins think?

**Mr. Collins:** *[closing his book]* Oh, I assure you, I find them very delightful. A little discipline, perhaps, will make them quite perfect.

**Mrs. Bennet:** *[full of her own ideas of whom he should marry]* Mr. Collins, I have one daughter who needs no such discipline. Mary, come sit here by Mr. Collins and recite to him the scriptures you have memorized.

**Mary:** Yes, Mama, but I do not have them quite memorized yet. Perhaps we could go into the library, where I might have the advantage of Papa's bible...if I forget a line...

**Mrs. Bennet:** Yes, indeed! Come, Mr. Collins!

*[MR. COLLINS, MRS. BENNET, MR. BENNET, AND MARY exit. MR. COLLINS looks wistfully back at ELIZABETH and JANE, for he is much more willing to admire them than to hear MARY recite.]*

**Elizabeth:** Oh, dear, what an odious man is Mr. Collins! He ought not to be a clergyman, for he appears to have no notion of Christian humility.

**Jane:** Oh, Lizzie, I am sure he is a very good man. We cannot all have the...personal charm that you yourself possess.

**Elizabeth:** You speak so because you are not the one who is expected to marry him – poor Mary! But what if you were? How would you feel if that were the case?

**Jane:** Oh dear. How concisely you state the matter. Perhaps... perhaps I would not be able

to love him...but...that does not mean...

**Elizabeth:** I am afraid, dear sister, that love has little to do with our fates. We will be sold to the highest bidder.

**Jane:** Lizzie!

**Elizabeth:** 'Tis true. We have no dowry. Most men cannot afford to marry us.

**Jane:** No. I cannot believe that is true. I feel certain that someday I will fall in love. And I will not care if he is rich or poor.

**Elizabeth:** Perhaps not. But he will care if you are.

**Jane:** No. If he were such a type, I would not fall in love with him in the first place.

**Elizabeth:** Oh Jane. You are such a romantic!

**Jane:** Yes, I suppose I am. But in your own way, you are every bit as romantic as I am.

**Elizabeth:** No indeed!

**Jane:** 'Tis true. You would not marry without love, any more than I.

**Elizabeth:** Quite right. But I do not believe that I shall ever have the opportunity to marry FOR love. There lies the difference between us.

**Jane:** No, I will not admit such a difference. I see you in the evening gazing into the fire...walking to a window to look at the stars...and you've been known to read some very romantic poetry...especially when Mama is not watching!

**Elizabeth:** Perhaps I have a little dream of romance...but I know it is just a dream.

*[MRS. HILL enters, looking about cautiously.]*

**Jane:** Come in, Mrs. Hill. Mama has taken Mr. Collins to the library to listen to Mary recite scripture.

**Mrs. Hill:** Oh my! Does this mean that Miss Mary...?

**Elizabeth:** Is the chosen one to become the wife of Mr. Collins? I am afraid so.

*[WAREHAM, DAISY, EMILY, MARCUS, AND JOSHUA enter.]*

**Jane:** It is important to remember that Mr. Collins is a very respectable man...and Mary would not marry him without affection, I am sure.

**Wareham:** 'E's a persnickety man, Miss Jane, mark my words.

**Joshua:** Aye, 'e's got 'is nose in the air! Miss Mary be too good for 'im!

**Emily:** I wouldn't marry 'im if 'e should beg me!

**Marcus:** 'E's a toff, girl! 'E wouldn't be weddin' the like of you!

**Daisy:** I wouldn't marry 'im neither!

**Jane:** Pray keep your voices down! He will hear you!

**Elizabeth:** *[laughing]* I do believe there is one point upon which we can all agree...

**Everyone together:** Poor Mary!

*[MRS. HILL, WAREHAM, DAISY, EMILY, MARCUS, JOSHUA, JANE, and ELIZABETH all exit.]*

*[LYDIA and KITTY enter.]*

**Kitty:** Are they quite gone, Lydia?

**Lydia:** Yes! Come, Kitty! We can stay in the parlor until we hear Mama returning.

**Kitty:** *[giggling]* If Jane and Lizzie had thought as quickly as we did, they might have escaped too. But we're going to get very hungry, Lydia, hiding in the garden until bedtime!

**Lydia:** No indeed. We shall sneak up to the kitchen door, and Mrs. Hill will give us bread and cheese. And wine!

**Kitty:** Wine! No! Mrs. Hill will tell Mama!

**Lydia:** No, she will not. I am her pet; she told me so herself. She said, 'Miss Lydia, you're the only girl 'ere what's got any spunk!'

**Kitty:** Well, I have spunk too! And I certainly do not want to listen to Mr. Collins. I did not like the way he looked at us!

**Lydia:** I did not either! But...there are other men who may admire me if they choose...

**Kitty:** Mr. Denny! And Mr. Wickham!

**Lydia:** Yes! *[they giggle]*

**Kitty:** Lydia, what do you think it would be like...to be kissed by a man like Mr. Wickham?

**Lydia:** I hope I find out before I'm too old to care!

**Kitty:** That's wicked! If you kiss a man, you could be disgraced!

**Lydia:** Nonsense! I wish to have some pleasure in life before I'm married off to a Mr. Collins! If I must be sold like a hog at market, I can at least have a little amusement first!

**Kitty:** Lydia!

*[Suddenly LYDIA and KITTY hear the sound of voices. They quickly exit.]*

## Scene 3

*It is the next morning. MRS. BENNET is in the parlor at Longbourn. MR. COLLINS enters.*

**Mrs. Bennet:** Good morning, Mr. Collins. I trust you slept well?

**Mr. Collins:** I must confess that my sleep was interrupted by a most delightful insomnia! My dear madam, I hope I will not procure your disfavor if I prevail upon you to allow me a private conference this morning with your fair daughter...

**Mrs. Bennet:** *[interrupting him]* Oh! Yes indeed! I will call Mary at once...!

**Mr. Collins:** ...Elizabeth.

**Mrs. Bennet:** Elizabeth?

**Mr. Collins:** Yes, Miss Elizabeth! I am determined to make an offer to her which, I trust, will be entirely acceptable to her delicate sensibilities. And to yours, madam.

**Mrs. Bennet:** Oh dear. Miss Elizabeth! Well! I will call her at once. DAISY!

*[DAISY enters.]*

**Mrs. Bennet:** Summon Miss Elizabeth to the parlor.

**Daisy:** Yes madam. *[She exits.]*

*[ELIZABETH enters.]*

**Elizabeth:** Yes, Mama?

**Mrs. Bennet:** My dear, Mr. Collins wishes to speak with you on a very important matter. *[She begins to exit.]*

**Elizabeth:** Mama! Please do not go away. Mr. Collins would have nothing to say to me that you must not hear, I am sure.

**Mrs. Bennet:** Do not be foolish, Lizzie.

**Elizabeth:** Pray excuse me, Mr. Collins. I must leave you. I have an engagement with a friend...

**Mr. Collins:** Miss Elizabeth, your modesty...

**Mrs. Bennet:** Lizzie! You will stay and hear Mr. Collins! *[She exits.]*

*[ELIZABETH walks to a chair and sits very straight, with an air of waiting. MRS.*

*HILL, WAREHAM, DAISY, EMILY, MARCUS and JOSHUA appear on the sides of the stage. They watch the action and react to it.]*

**Mr. Collins:** Miss Elizabeth, you can hardly be in doubt as to my intentions. I have decided to make you my wife, and lest your modesty cause you to dissemble, I will spell out the assets that I trust will incite your gratitude for this opportunity.

*[ELIZABETH tries to stifle her laughter and has no opportunity to stop him.]*

**Mr. Collins:** First and foremost, I am a very respectable clergyman...

**Elizabeth:** Mr. Collins...

**Mr. Collins:** Silence, if you please. Secondly, my face and figure are considered to be superb by all who know me...

**Elizabeth:** Sir, I am not...

**Mr. Collins:** *[loudly]* And thirdly, perhaps indeed the most wondrous of my assets, I have been blessed in life with the patronage of the Right Honorable Lady Catherine de Bourgh!

*[ELIZABETH rises.]*

**Elizabeth:** Mr. Collins, I thank you for the honor of your proposal, but I fear that I have no choice but to decline...

**Mr. Collins:** *[He is utterly shocked.]* Decline! My dear Miss Elizabeth! You can have no possible reason to decline an offer of marriage from one in my position in life. Therefore, I...I must conclude that you are attempting to increase my love by suspense, as is often the practice of elegant females.

**Elizabeth:** The practice of elegant females...? Sir, I make no pretense to the sort of elegance that consists of tormenting a respectable man. Please pay me the compliment of believing me sincere.

**Mr. Collins:** Certainly not. There is nothing in my proposal to give you cause to refuse me, and therefore I hope and trust that after I have consulted with your mother and father, I will find you ready to accede to all of our wishes in the matter. Have you forgotten that Lady Catherine de Bourgh has promised to visit my wife? Will you throw away such an advantage?

**Elizabeth:** *[becoming angry]* Mr. Collins, let me make myself perfectly clear. I do not care a whit for Lady Catherine de Bourgh!

**Mr. Collins:** *[highly offended]* Miss Elizabeth, I will importune you no longer on the subject of matrimony. I will consult with your esteemed parents, who, I am sure, will be pleased to interpose their authority in favor of my suit.

*[MR. COLLINS exits. MRS. HILL, WAREHAM, DAISY, EMILY, JOSHUA, AND*

*MARCUS quietly enter.]*

**Wareham:** That's tellin' 'im, Miss Elizabeth!

**Elizabeth:** I fear, Wareham, that I have won the skirmish but the war is not yet over!

*[ELIZABETH, MRS. HILL, WAREHAM, DAISY, EMILY, JOSHUA, AND MARCUS exit.]*

*[MRS BENNET enters. She looks around and is about to leave again when MR. COLLINS enters.]*

**Mrs. Bennet:** Oh, Mr. Collins! I do congratulate you! I know Lizzie will make a very fine wife!

**Mr. Collins:** Yes. Well...we shall see...

**Mrs. Bennet:** Mr. Collins! Do not say that she refused you!

**Mr. Collins:** I...I do not know whether she did or did not. Perhaps this strange behavior sprang from her maidenly modesty...?

**Mrs. Bennet:** Maidenly modesty? Oh! Quite! I will speak to her immediately and settle the matter!

**Mr. Collins:** No, I think not, my dear Mrs. Bennet. I have reconsidered my request for the honor of your daughter's hand. For it appeared...I beg your pardon...I perceived some faults of temper on the part of Miss Elizabeth, and these would not add greatly to my happiness.

*[MR. COLLINS bows and exits.]*

**Mrs. Bennet:** Oh dear! Daisy!

*[DAISY enters.]*

**Daisy:** Yes, madam?

**Mrs. Bennet:** Summon Miss Elizabeth to the parlor! And Daisy, call Mr. Bennet as well!

*[DAISY exits and soon ELIZABETH enters.]*

**Mrs. Bennet:** So, Miss Elizabeth, I find that you have disgraced your entire family by insulting Mr. Collins and refusing a perfectly good offer of marriage!

**Elizabeth:** Mama...

*[MR. BENNET enters.]*

**Mrs. Bennet:** There you are, Mr. Bennet!

**Mr. Bennet:** Yes, my dear, what you say is perfectly true. Here I am.

**Mrs. Bennet:** Well, do not stand there! Inform Elizabeth that she must marry Mr. Collins!

**Mr. Bennet:** I do not have the pleasure of understanding you. Will you be so kind as to explain why I should inform Elizabeth that she...

**Mrs. Bennet:** My dear, do not make sport of my poor nerves! Mr. Collins proposed to Elizabeth in this very room and she refused him. Now he is saying he will not have her!

**Mr. Bennet:** And what am I to do? It seems a hopeless business.

**Mrs. Bennet:** You must make her marry him! Or...or I shall never see her again!

**Mr. Bennet:** Lizzie, my love. From this point on 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 shall never see you again if you do!

**Mrs. Bennet:** Aaaauggghh!

## Scene 4

*It is four hours later. The setting is the parlor at Longbourn. MARY is reading a book, and ELIZABETH and JANE are speaking quietly. LYDIA and KITTY enter, followed by CHARLOTTE.*

**Lydia:** Lizzie! What fun! I was just telling Charlotte that Mr. Collins proposed to you and you will not have him! And now Mary is in a pout because she thought he would marry her!

**Elizabeth:** Lydia, please...!

**Mary:** That is not true! I will never marry! I do not have the time for such nonsense!

**Jane:** Mary, do not upset yourself. Lydia, pray have some consideration for your sister's feelings...

**Charlotte:** I am sorry that Mr. Collins has been rejected, but if Lizzie does not wish to marry him, it is for the best.

**Elizabeth:** Wish to marry him! Charlotte, how could any woman...?

**Charlotte:** How could any woman want to marry him? We are not all the same, you know. Some women are not romantic and require only a comfortable home. Considering Mr. Collins' character and reputation, I think that he might make a very suitable husband.

**Mary:** Indeed he would! He is very serious and dignified, and if I were inclined to marry, I would not exclude him from consideration. However, my intellectual pursuits...

*[Enter MR. and MRS. BENNET.]*

**Mrs. Bennet:** Oh, Miss Lucas! Speak with your stubborn friend Elizabeth. She does not

know her own interest. And she cares nothing for me! My poor nerves! I suffer quite cruelly.

**Charlotte:** Perhaps, ma'am, it would be helpful if Elizabeth and Mr. Collins were apart for a short time. I come bearing a dinner invitation for Mr. Collins from my mother. He is walking in the garden and, with your permission, I will deliver it.

**Mrs. Bennet:** Perhaps it would be best. Oh dear! How will I ever get my daughters married if they toss away suitors like old parasols!

**Charlotte:** I have your permission, then, to invite him to dine with us?

**Mrs. Bennet:** Yes indeed! What was the foolish man thinking of? He should have proposed to Mary!

**Charlotte:** Then I bid you good day.

*[CHARLOTTE exits hastily, straightening her hair, obviously in pursuit of MR. COLLINS.]*

*[MRS. HILL enters and hands a letter to MRS. BENNET.]*

**Mrs. Bennet:** Oh, what is this? 'Tis from Netherfield! From the new resident gentleman, Mr. Bingley! *[glances at her husband]* With whom we are not acquainted, thanks to your dislike of visiting, Mr. Bennet.

**Kitty:** Open it, Mama! What does it say?

**Mrs. Bennet:** Oh, how delightful! We are invited to Netherfield next week! Mr. Bingley writes that he hopes the Miss Bennets will not object to taking part in a small, informal dance!

*[The girls are all rapturous except MARY.]*

**Kitty:** Who do you think the other guests will be, Mama? I do hope Lieutenant Denny will be among them! And the new officer, Ensign Wickham!

**Lydia:** Oh, indeed! Mr. Wickham is ever so handsome!

**Mr. Bennet:** It may amuse you to know, Mrs. Bennet, that I did indeed call upon Mr. Bingley, and he told me to expect his invitation to this dance.

*[There is a joyful outcry at this news. The girls – except MARY – and their mother are full of questions about BINGLEY, and they gather about MR. BENNET's chair, all talking at once.]*

**Mr. Bennet:** I can tell you this much: He is single and quite rich, and his sister will play the part of hostess at this ball. As to whether he is handsome and charming, I leave it to you to decide. Oh, one other bit of news that may interest you. Mr. Bingley mentioned that a

close acquaintance of his – a Mr. Darcy from Derbyshire – will be staying with him for some time. There, Mrs. Bennet! Two single gentlemen for you to set your cap at!

**Mrs. Bennet:** Indeed! And everyone knows that a single gentleman in possession of a good fortune MUST be in want of a wife!

**Mr. Bennet:** *[aside to ELIZABETH]* Well, Lizzie, it appears that Mr. Collins has been forgotten already!

**Elizabeth:** Indeed, Papa. I am grateful to Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy, and I do not even know them!

## Scene 5

*The setting is the parlor at Netherfield. BINGLEY, CAROLINE, and DARCY, dressed for a soiree, are awaiting the guests of the ball.*

**Darcy:** Cheers, Bingley! We may as well drink while we can, for in a few moments this room will be crawling with people, all demanding our attention.

**Bingley:** Oh, come, Darcy! If the idea of a ball is so disagreeable to you, pray go to bed. You have my permission.

**Caroline:** But he does not have mine. I am engaged to dance with him and do not intend to let him renege on his promise. Speaking of dancing, I had better visit the ballroom and ensure that the orchestra is ready. Pray excuse me.

*[CAROLINE exits.]*

**Bingley:** Did I tell you, Darcy, that Mr. and Mrs. Bennet of Longbourn have accepted my invitation and are bringing all their daughters? I have heard much of the beauty and charm of these young ladies.

**Darcy:** Have you? Country-town beauties are seldom worth seeing, in my opinion.

**Bingley:** You croaking fellow! You have never set eyes on these girls, yet you are so sure they are not worth seeing?

**Darcy:** I can hardly expect that they would be sophisticated...or amusing...or that they would possess a grain of intelligence or wit.

**Bingley:** Say what you will, but I have a great desire to meet them. I always feel...when I meet young ladies...that perhaps NOW I will find my true love. You think me quite foolish, I am sure.

**Darcy:** Aye, foolish and romantic. Take care, Bingley. These notions can lead a man into a disastrous marriage!

**Bingley:** *[laughing]* Perhaps you are right, but a romantic nature cannot be changed, I fear. However, I have often observed that doubters such as yourself always fall in love the most deeply. You have not yet seen the woman who can inspire you, but when you do...

*[CAROLINE enters and begins greeting the guests. First come MR. COLLINS and CHARLOTTE. CAROLINE greets them, then they move away and engage DARCY in conversation, so DARCY does not see the next arrival.]*

*[WICKHAM and DENNY enter and bow to CAROLINE and BINGLEY. WICKHAM goes to a part of the stage where DARCY does not see him.]*

*[MR. and MRS. BENNET and all five Bennet daughters enter. BINGLEY immediately notices JANE. He moves toward her, followed by DARCY.]*

**Mr. Bennet:** Mr. Bingley, delighted to see you again. Good evening, Miss Bingley.

**Bingley:** May I present my friend Mr. Darcy.

**Mr. Bennet:** Delighted, sir! Allow me to introduce my family. Mrs. Bennet, Miss Lydia, Miss Catherine, Miss Mary, Miss Elizabeth, and my eldest, Miss Jane Bennet.

**Mrs. Bennet:** Oh, my dear sirs! At last we meet! A woman with five daughters, you know, likes to be acquainted with every young man in the neighborhood!

*[The Bennet daughters glance at each other in discomfort, and CAROLINE turns in amazement. The gentlemen bow and the ladies quickly curtsy.]*

*[BINGLEY approaches JANE.]*

**Bingley:** I hope, Miss Bennet, that you are not engaged for the first dance. Will you honor me, if you are not?

**Jane:** Thank you, sir. I would be delighted.

*[BINGLEY bows to JANE and leaves her to approach DARCY.]*

**Bingley:** My dear Darcy! Why are you standing about in this manner? The first dance will start soon. Have you a partner?

**Darcy:** No, I have not. Your sister is engaged for the first dance, and I do not know any other woman in the room.

**Bingley:** What! You were introduced to several, including the Miss Bennets. The eldest is an angel! I am sure her sister is charming also. Pray ask her to dance.

**Darcy:** Which sister? Whom do you mean?

**Bingley:** Miss Elizabeth. She is just there.

**Darcy:** This is the great beauty of whom I have heard so much? I would as soon call her

mother a wit! But very well. I will do my duty and dance with her.

*[ELIZABETH was situated just near enough to DARCY to overhear his words. At first she is mortified, then recovers her sense of humor and laughingly relates the tale to CHARLOTTE. The audience knows what she is saying by her gestures and glances and the shock and laughter of CHARLOTTE. Just as their merriment is at its height, DARCY approaches and bows.]*

**Darcy:** Miss Bennet, when the dancing begins, may I have the honor of the first dance?

**Elizabeth:** *[taken by surprise]* Oh...! *[recovering her composure and smiling archly]* Mr. Darcy, I fear you are making a grave error in asking me to dance, but it is important for all of us to do our duty. Therefore I accept.

*[DARCY bows and moves away.]*

**Charlotte:** Lizzie, take care! He is a wealthy and eligible bachelor! And very handsome, I might add.

**Elizabeth:** *[laughing]* Wealthy...yes...but handsome? I would as soon call Mr. Collins a wit!

**Charlotte:** Lizzie, I wish you would not speak so of your cousin. I confess that...I rather like him...

**Elizabeth:** Charlotte! Do not be absurd! He is a pompous little rooster who could make no woman happy!

*[CHARLOTTE turns sadly away, and ELIZABETH does not notice her expression.]*

*[The various groups of people continue chatting, and DARCY and CAROLINE move to center front stage.]*

**Caroline:** *[flirtatiously]* I know what you are thinking.

**Darcy:** Do you indeed? That is singular.

**Caroline:** You are thinking of how odious these country folk are. How entirely without sophistication or wit.

**Darcy:** Not I. My mind was much more happily occupied.

**Caroline:** Was it indeed? And how so, pray tell.

**Darcy:** I was thinking how beautiful are a certain lady's eyes.

**Caroline:** *[thinking he is referring to her eyes]* And what lady has the honor of this compliment, may I ask?

**Darcy:** Miss Elizabeth Bennet.

**Caroline:** Miss Elizabeth Bennet! *[recovering herself]* She is hardly the beauty she is reputed to be.

**Darcy:** No. But when one looks at her face, one is soon lost in those beautiful eyes. They are lively, but they also have a look of intelligence that is quite extraordinary.

*[Meanwhile, MARY has approached BINGLEY and spoken to him. Before CAROLINE can reply to DARCY's remark, BINGLEY takes the center of the room and speaks to the assembly.]*

**Bingley:** Ladies and gentlemen! Er, Miss Mary Bennet has graciously agreed to honor the company with the recitation of a poem of her own composition.

*[To the horror of her sisters, MARY takes center stage and begins to recite, constantly referring to her notes.]*

**Mary:** *[reciting awkwardly]*

Alas, the spring has come, you see

'Tis time to go a-Maying

Though Papa may well disagree

And say 'tis time for haying

The birdies tweet up in the sky

And flowers are a-growing

But Papa says that by and by

We'll surely be a-mowing

**Lydia:** Mary, cease your noise! I want to dance!

**Mrs. Bennet:** Yes, Mary, that will be quite enough. *[She turns toward CHARLOTTE and speaks too loudly.]* With all these eligible bachelors about, the girls must not waste their time reciting poetry!

**Mr. Bennet:** Come, child, you have delighted us long enough. *[He leads MARY away from the center.]*

**Bingley:** *[trying to salvage the situation]* Thank you, Miss Mary Bennet! *[He applauds, forcing his guests to join him.]* And now, do let us have some dancing!

**Mr. Bennet:** Come, my dear. I am too old for dancing. Jane, we will send the carriage back for you at midnight.

**Jane:** Thank you, Papa.

*[MR. and MRS. BENNET exit. Everyone begins to assemble into square-dance-like groups. As DARCY moves toward ELIZABETH to claim his dance, he suddenly nearly runs into WICKHAM.]*

**Darcy:** Wickham!

*[WICKHAM quickly bows and moves away. DARCY stares after him.]*

*[BINGLEY suddenly leaves his group and hurries to ELIZABETH.]*

**Bingley:** I do not wish to alarm you, but your sister feels unwell. She asked me to fetch you.

*[ELIZABETH hurries to JANE. Just as ELIZABETH reaches her, JANE faints. BINGLEY catches JANE and conveys her to a sofa. CHARLOTTE feels JANE's temples and administers smelling salts.]*

**Charlotte:** 'Tis a fever! We must put her to bed immediately. She must not be allowed to go home in the night air!

**Jane:** Lizzie...Lizzie...do not leave me.

**Elizabeth:** I will not leave you, my darling! I am here.

**Bingley:** Caroline! Have two rooms prepared for the Miss Bennets!

**Caroline:** But Charles...!

**Bingley:** Hurry! There is not a moment to lose!

*[BINGLEY and ELIZABETH support JANE as they lead her offstage.]*

## Scene 6

*[It is the next day. The setting is the parlor at Netherfield. MR. and MRS. BENNET enter.]*

**Mrs. Bennet:** *[calling to an unseen servant]* You there! Inform Miss Bingley that Mr. and Mrs. Bennet are here to call upon her! *[to MR. BENNET]* Here is what Lizzie said in her note, my dear. 'Pray do not be alarmed. The physician was here very early and said that Jane will mend nicely if she remains in bed. He absolutely forbade her being moved for several days, perhaps a week. She is being given every attention, and I do not leave her side.'

**Mr. Bennet:** My dear, this is distressing indeed!

**Mrs. Bennet:** Distressing? I am delighted at this event!

**Mr. Bennet:** Delighted!

**Mrs. Bennet:** Of course! She is in no danger from a trifling little fever! And she is right where I want her to be...

**Mr. Bennet:** How so?

**Mrs. Bennet:** Oh, how tiresome you are! Surely you saw that Mr. Bingley was captivated by Jane!

**Mr. Bennet:** I believe he asked her to dance, but I noticed nothing more...

*[MR. COLLINS enters and bows deeply.]*

**Mr. Collins:** My dear cousin! I am delighted to find you here. It was of course my duty to call upon Miss Bingley to ascertain the health of Miss Bennet, but I have another reason for being delighted to see you!

**Mr. Bennet:** And what is that, Mr. Collins?

**Mr. Collins:** My news is of a very happy nature. It gives me great pleasure to announce my engagement to...Miss Charlotte Lucas!

**Mrs. Bennet:** Charlotte Lucas! Are you mad?

**Mr. Collins:** Quite the contrary! By proposing to your daughter Elizabeth I fulfilled my self-imposed obligation to make amends to your daughters for being the heir to their father's estate. I was refused and thus freed to choose a wife according to my wishes.

**Mr. Bennet:** *[speaking before his wife can say something she'll regret]* You are quite right. Pray accept our congratulations!

**Mr. Collins:** Thank you, cousin. And now I must take leave of you and return to Rosings Parsonage. But do not despair! I will come again in a month's time and take advantage of your hospitality once again...adieu.

*[MR. COLLINS bows himself out, leaving MR. and MRS. BENNET staring after him.]*

**Mr. Bennet:** Well! I had always believed that Charlotte Lucas had a great deal of sense! But now I know otherwise.

## Scene 7

*It is a week later. The setting is the parlor at Netherfield. BINGLEY and DARCY are standing together. CAROLINE enters.*

**Caroline:** At last! Miss Bennet is well enough to leave her room! After a week of having two extra people in the house, my nerves are exhausted!

**Bingley:** She is leaving her room this morning? Are you certain she is recovered?

**Caroline:** Indeed! She is quite well enough to return home, although I doubt if dear Elizabeth will allow it. Jane is a sweet girl, but her shrewish sister is more than I can bear! The airs she puts on! She thinks of herself as quite the intellectual!

**Bingley:** Caroline!

**Caroline:** Charles, I know you like them, and I do myself like Jane immensely. I heartily wish she could be well married, but with such a family and no dowry, there is not a chance of it.

**Bingley:** If they were as poor as beggars, they would not be one whit less agreeable!

**Darcy:** But your sister is correct, Bingley. Their mother's impropriety of behavior will disgust most men of means, and their lack of a dowry will frighten off the rest.

*[ELIZABETH enters, carrying a satchel. BINGLEY immediately approaches her.]*

**Bingley:** Miss Elizabeth, my sister has told me that Miss Jane feels well enough to join us this morning.

**Elizabeth:** Yes. And I hope that we will be able to return home today. May I beg you for the use of your carriage so that we can avoid any delay?

**Bingley:** Most certainly. But pray wait another day or two...

**Elizabeth:** Thank you, sir. You are very kind. But I believe Jane will be quite able to travel home.

*[JANE enters. BINGLEY and ELIZABETH immediately go to her and conduct her to a seat. BINGLEY sits next to her and engages her in conversation. ELIZABETH takes up a book. DARCY watches her.]*

**Caroline:** *[looking pointedly at BINGLEY]* Charles, would you like me to order the carriage?

**Bingley:** Very well. *[to JANE]* If you are determined to leave us, Miss Bennet.

**Jane:** I am quite recovered, Mr. Bingley, thanks to the care and hospitality I have received from you and your sister.

*[CAROLINE exits.]*

*[DARCY approaches ELIZABETH.]*

**Darcy:** What are you reading, Miss Bennet?

**Elizabeth:** Dante's Inferno. 'Tis a favorite of mine. I only wish I were a good enough Italian scholar to read the original.

**Darcy:** A rather strange book to be the favorite of a young lady!

**Elizabeth:** Perhaps...but I am struck by the author's finding evil as the other side of the coin to good. Dante appears to be saying that when one strives to be good, one inevitably becomes evil.

**Darcy:** And the reverse is true?

**Elizabeth:** Is it? Are you asking me because you have not read the work or because you wish to despise my opinion?

**Darcy:** Neither. I have read the work, but I desire to know your opinion of the author's meaning, as I would desire to know the opinion of any intelligent reader.

*[ELIZABETH looks at him surprised; their eyes meet.]*

**Elizabeth:** I cannot answer your question for I do not understand Dante's implications quite thoroughly enough. What is your opinion?

*[CAROLINE enters.]*

**Caroline:** The carriage is ready, Jane dear.

**Jane:** Thank you, Miss Bingley. Thank you for all your kindness and care.

*[ELIZABETH picks up the satchel, and she, JANE, CAROLINE, and BINGLEY begin to exit. JANE is leaning on BINGLEY's arm.]*

**Darcy:** Wait! Let me carry your satchel for you.

**Elizabeth:** Oh, no, I am quite able. Goodbye.

*[Everyone except DARCY exits. DARCY stares after them.]*

**Darcy:** What is wrong with me? I feel...empty...sad...happy...am I ill? Ill! Yes, indeed, I am ill. I believe poets call this strange malady love. I am in love with her! How did this happen? When did it happen? More importantly...is there a cure?

## Scene 8

*It is a week later. The setting is the parlor at Longbourn. MRS. HILL and WAREHAM enter.*

**Mrs. Hill:** 'Ere's a letter from Netherfield to Miss Jane! That will brighten 'er eye, eh, Wareham? *[She places the letter on a table.]*

**Wareham:** Will it, then? Old Bill, the 'ostler at Netherfield, told me that the whole lot of 'em 'ave gone off to London!

**Mrs. Hill:** What! Gone off to London? Mr. Bingley? Why, 'twill break Miss Jane's 'eart!

*[DAISY, EMILY, MARCUS, and JOSHUA enter.]*

**Joshua:** Have ye 'eard the news? Mr. Bingley 'as gone off to London!

**Marcus:** 'E took 'is leave this morning! Took 'is snooty sister with 'im!

**Emily:** And 'is gentleman friend – that tall, proud man!

**Daisy:** Well, it doesn't matter a fig because Miss Jane 'erself is going to London to stay with 'er aunt and uncle.

**Mrs. Hill:** The Gardiners? They do not live in a part of town that a wealthy toff like Mr. Bingley is likely to visit.

**Marcus:** 'Twill be right quiet 'ere, what with Miss Elizabeth going off to stay with Charlotte Lucas for a month!

**Daisy:** That's Mrs. Collins now, the poor lass!

**Mrs. Hill:** Aye, the poor lass. *[They all take off their caps and have a moment of silence for CHARLOTTE.]*

**Joshua:** 'Oo's gonna protect us from the madam with Miss Elizabeth gone away?

**Emily:** Not Miss Lydia, for she's going off to Brighton with Colonel Forster's wife.

**Wareham:** And the master not too 'appy about 'is youngest girl staying in a seaside village crawlin' with officers!

**Marcus:** Well, then, 'e oughter stand up to 'is wife!

**All servants:** Aye, 'e should.

*[MRS. HILL, WAREHAM, DAISY, EMILY, MARCUS, and JOSHUA exit.]*

*[JANE enters and picks up the letter. Her face expresses her distress as she reads it.]*

*[ELIZABETH enters.]*

**Elizabeth:** Jane, what is it? You look distressed. Are you ill...?

**Jane:** No, Lizzie, dear, I am not ill. I have received some rather disturbing news, that is all...

**Elizabeth:** What is it? Pray, do not keep me in suspense!

**Jane:** 'Tis a letter from Caroline Bingley. She writes to say goodbye.

**Elizabeth:** This is what has upset you? It affects me as a bit of luck. Forgive me, I know you like her, but...

**Jane:** Lizzie, wait! You do not know all. Caroline says that they are all going to London this morning, without any intention of returning to Netherfield.

**Elizabeth:** They are all going...no, I do not believe her. She is misled by her wishes. She sees that you and Mr. Bingley are in love, and she is intent on parting you.

**Jane:** Lizzie, why should she wish to part us? If her brother is in love with me, only I can secure his happiness. And she must wish his happiness.

**Elizabeth:** I disagree. She may wish him to marry more grandly, or for material gain.

**Jane:** She does say...

**Elizabeth:** What?

**Jane:** I will read it. 'When once in town, we will have many opportunities of meeting with Mr. Darcy's sister, Georgiana. My friendship with her is heightened into something more interesting by my hope that Charles will eventually be her husband. He admires her greatly already, and now that she is of age, I believe they will soon come to an understanding.'

**Elizabeth:** I see nothing in that to distress you. Miss Bingley wishes her brother to marry Miss Darcy because the marriage may make it easier for her to capture Mr. Darcy for herself. But Charles Bingley is in love with you!

**Jane:** No, my dear sister. Caroline Bingley is my friend, and as a friend, she is putting me on my guard. I do not regret that I cared for him. It was a mistake on my part, but I have this comfort...it has hurt no one but myself.

**Elizabeth:** [*feelingly*] Dear Jane...if there is a woman in the world who deserves happiness, it is you.

*[KITTY and LYDIA enter, followed more slowly by MARY.]*

**Lydia:** Oh, there you are, Jane! Mama told me to seek you. Mrs. Hill told Mama that Mr. Bingley has run away to London, and Mama was afraid you might expire of a broken heart when you read Miss Bingley's letter! [*she giggles*]

**Elizabeth:** Lydia, mind your tongue!

**Kitty:** But Lizzie, Mama did say exactly those words...!

**Mary:** And must you repeat everything that is said to you? You have pained our dear sister!

**Jane:** No, Lizzie...Mary. It is quite all right. I am not ashamed of having loved in vain. I am in good company, for such a circumstance has befallen many a woman.

*[ELIZABETH hugs and kisses JANE, then JANE exits, along with MARY, LYDIA, and KITTY, who are now attending her compassionately. ELIZABETH strolls toward the front of the stage, obviously deep in thought.]*

**Elizabeth:** So! Miss Caroline Bingley and her supercilious friend Mr. Darcy have parted Jane from the man she loves! Oh! How I detest both of them!

*[Enter LYDIA.]*

**Lydia:** Lizzie! Come quickly! Mr. Denny and Mr. Wickham have come to call!

*[DENNY and WICKHAM enter.]*

**Denny:** There you are, Miss Lydia. We thought you were running away from us. Gads, Wickham! Have we become so unattractive that young ladies bolt in terror?

*[ELIZABETH and LYDIA laugh, although ELIZABETH is obviously making an effort to be merry. WICKHAM approaches her.]*

**Wickham:** I am delighted to see you again, Miss Bennet. *[He offers his arm.]* Will you stroll with me?

**Elizabeth:** Yes, certainly.

*[Elizabeth takes his arm and they walk a few steps. Lydia and Denny stand at one side of the stage talking, but their words are not heard.]*

**Wickham:** I have received a delightful invitation to dine with Sir William Lucas and his family tomorrow. That is, it will be delightful if you and your sisters will also be there.

**Elizabeth:** Yes, we will. *[She hesitates, her mind preoccupied.]* Mr. Wickham, have you heard that Mr. Bingley and his party have returned to London?

**Wickham:** Yes, I heard the news this morning.

**Elizabeth:** A very hasty departure! Do you know the reason?

**Wickham:** *[hesitantly]* Mr. Bingley is rather under the control of his overbearing friend Darcy. And HE had a decided reason to return to town.

**Elizabeth:** Did he...?

**Wickham:** Yes, he wishes to avoid ME. He did me a great wrong, and he does not know how to face me.

**Elizabeth:** A great wrong? Of what are you speaking?

**Wickham:** As you know, Mr. Darcy inherited a fine estate – Pemberley – from his father. Until my parents' untimely death, my father was his steward, and we lived on the estate. Darcy and I grew up together, and his father wished to provide for me. The terms of his will,

however, left the matter to the discretion of his son. When old Mr. Darcy died five years ago, his son turned me out with scarcely a penny!

**Elizabeth:** That is dreadful! Had you no recourse from the law?

**Wickham:** None. The intent of the will was clear, but the terms were such that Mr. Darcy was able to interpret it as he chose.

**Elizabeth:** How reprehensible! He deserves to be publicly disgraced!

**Wickham:** Someday he will be. But until I can forget his father, I can never defy or embarrass him.

**Elizabeth:** I honor you for your feelings. And I do hope there will be some redress for you.

*[WICKHAM kisses her hand. Then DENNY breaks away from LYDIA and approaches them.]*

**Denny:** Come, my good fellow. It is time to bid these fair ladies adieu!

**Lydia:** Walk us out to the garden. My mother is there, and she will be devastated if you do not say farewell!

*[They all exit.]*

## Scene 9

*It is a week later. The setting is the parlor at Longbourn. ELIZABETH enters, reading a letter and looking rather sad.*

**Elizabeth:** Oh, Jane! You try to write cheerfully, but I can read your sadness in every line. My dearest sister! They have succeeded in breaking your heart. The kindest, sweetest, most generous heart in the world...

*[ELIZABETH dabs at her eyes with a handkerchief and puts the letter slowly back into its envelope. Just as she does so, DARCY enters.]*

**Elizabeth:** Mr. Darcy!

**Darcy:** *[with gravity]* Good morning, Miss Bennet.

**Elizabeth:** I am surprised to see you. I...I thought you were in London!

**Darcy:** Yes...I was in London... I rode over this afternoon...I've only just arrived. *[He paces back and forth as she watches him curiously. Finally he stands still and turns to her. He speaks emotionally.]* In vain have I struggled. It will not do. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I...I love you. *[ELIZABETH is too shocked to say a word. She stares at him. Receiving no answer, he continues.]* I have fought against this emotion, knowing it was beneath me, knowing that our respective situations were so unequal that a marriage

between us would be next to impossible, but...but...it is useless. I love you, and I ask now that my love be rewarded by your acceptance of my hand.

**Elizabeth:** *[totally shocked]* You are asking me to be your wife?

**Darcy:** I am. Your astonishment is natural, of course. You are surely as aware as I of the unsuitableness of our union, but I trust you will...

**Elizabeth:** The unsuitableness of our union! Yes, it is unsuitable indeed! *[trying to calm herself]* I believe that courtesy demands that I thank you for your proposal, and if I could feel gratitude, I would. But you have bestowed your love very unwillingly, and I have received it even more unwillingly! I am certain that your disappointment will be short-lived!

**Darcy:** You are refusing me? Perhaps I might ask the courtesy of a fuller explanation of why I am so quickly rejected!

**Elizabeth:** Very well! Ever since the first moment of our acquaintance, your selfish disdain for the feelings of others, your pride, your insolence have disgusted me! If for no other reason, your treatment of Mr. Wickham would turn me from you!

**Darcy:** *[jealously]* You take an eager interest in his affairs!

**Elizabeth:** Who would not? HE is a gentleman!

**Darcy:** *[sarcastically]* Ah yes! A gentleman indeed! But perhaps you might have overcome your disgust of me if I had flattered you instead of expressing my feelings honestly. But I despise dishonesty! Would you expect me to rejoice that the woman I love is so decidedly beneath me in society? And further, that the behavior of her mother is so flagrantly improper?

**Elizabeth:** There you are wrong, Mr. Darcy. You could not have proposed to me in any manner that would have tempted me to accept you! Do you imagine that any sort of flattery would make me wish to marry a man who has been the means of ruining the happiness of a most beloved sister? Can you deny that you and Caroline Bingley have parted Mr. Bingley from Jane?

**Darcy:** I do not deny my part in separating Mr. Bingley from your sister! To him I have been kinder than to myself!

*[ELIZABETH starts to march past him to leave the garden, but he seizes her arm. She shakes his hand off angrily.]*

**Elizabeth:** Release me! I have nothing more to say to you!

*[He starts to move away, but suddenly seizes her shoulders and kisses her. She pulls away, whacks him smartly across the face, and exits.]*

**Darcy:** *[to himself]* Fool! You have lost her forever!

*[DARCY exits.]*

## Scene 10

*It is the next morning. The setting is the parlor at Longbourn. MRS. HILL and EMILY are dusting.*

**Mrs. Hill:** When you're done here, Emily, be so kind as to go upstairs and dust Miss Elizabeth's chamber. I recall asking you to do it yesterday.

**Emily:** But Mrs. 'ill, I dusted upstairs yesterday, just as you told me.

**Mrs. Hill:** Indeed? Well, just to be sure, I writ my X in the dust on Miss Elizabeth's dressing table. And sure as rain, 'twas there this morning!

**Emily:** But Mrs. 'ill, Miss Elizabeth was sitting at her dressing table, she was, and crying as if 'er 'art would break!

**Mrs. Hill:** Crying, was she? Oh, the poor lassie. Some bounder has jilted her, I declare. Let that be a lesson to you, Emily. Stay away from the men, especially young Joshua!

**Emily:** But, Mrs. 'ill...

*[ELIZABETH enters.]*

**Elizabeth:** Mrs. Hill, my mother is calling for her breakfast tray.

**Mrs. Hill:** Daisy is just fetching it, Miss Elizabeth.

**Elizabeth:** Thank you.

*[Sounds of voices are heard from offstage. Enter DARCY, followed by DAISY, who is carrying a tray.]*

**Darcy:** Miss Bennet, I must speak with you. *[ELIZABETH starts to exit.]* Miss Bennet, I beseech you...stay. I will take only a moment of your time. Do not be alarmed that I will renew the...subject...that yesterday so distressed you.

*[The servants are watching them. ELIZABETH turns to MRS. HILL.]*

**Elizabeth:** You may both go. I will call you if I need you.

*[MRS. HILL, DAISY, and EMILY exit.]*

**Darcy:** I intended to give you this letter, but if you will spare me a few moments, I will speak to you in person.

**Elizabeth:** Very well.

**Darcy:** I came here to clear my name from the accusations you hurled at me. You declared

me guilty of two offenses: the mistreatment of Mr. Wickham; and the separation of your sister and Mr. Bingley. I know not what Wickham has told you, but if it concerns my father's will, the terms stated that he should be given a cash settlement, and this was done. But Mr. Wickham has a gaming habit that soon depleted his funds...

**Elizabeth:** A gaming habit! I do not believe you!

**Darcy:** I am sorry if this pains you, but if my words...protect you from him...at some future time...your anger now is a small price for me to pay.

**Elizabeth:** Pray continue...

**Darcy:** When I refused to give him additional funds, he found a more insidious manner of attempting to replenish himself. My sister, who was then 15, was staying in London with a friend. Wickham sought her out and managed to convince her that she was in love with him.

**Elizabeth:** [*sarcastically*] And you of course broke up this relationship.

**Darcy:** Most certainly. He was after nothing but her fortune. Believe me, he is not capable of love! They planned an elopement, but thankfully I arrived the day before it was to take place. I love Georgiana dearly, and if she had fallen into his hands, I would never have forgiven myself!

**Elizabeth:** I...sympathize with your feelings, Mr. Darcy, although I can hardly believe that Mr. Wickham is as evil as you portray him to be. But now what have you to say regarding Jane and Mr. Bingley? Surely you are not going to tell me that my sister has a gaming habit and you had to protect your friend from her!

**Darcy:** Certainly not. And if my actions caused Miss Bennet pain, I can understand your anger. Caroline Bingley, who was your sister's friend, assured Bingley that Miss Bennet's affections were engaged elsewhere. Once he became convinced of that, I suggested to him that he leave Netherfield.

**Elizabeth:** This is your explanation? Did it not occur to you or Mr. Bingley that Caroline might be mistaken?

**Darcy:** Bingley is modest to a fault and found it easy to believe that your sister did not care for him. I will attempt in some discreet manner to inform him that Caroline was mistaken; the rest must be up to him.

**Elizabeth:** How easily you manage everyone's affairs, Mr. Darcy!

**Darcy:** I am sorry that you see these circumstances in that light. But I have explained my actions as well as I can and will now bid you goodbye. Please accept my best wishes for your health and happiness.

[*DARCY bows and exits.*]

**Elizabeth:** [*talking to herself*] Mr. Wickham an evil man! A gamester! A seducer! No, it

cannot be! And yet, what do I really know of him...? But Jane! There Mr. Darcy's excuses are thin indeed, for anyone could see that she was in love with Mr. Bingley! And yet, Charlotte commented that SHE would not have known if I had not told her... I do not know what to believe. Have I been prejudiced and blind? Have I misjudged Mr. Darcy? I...I...am afraid that I have.

*[ELIZABETH ends her monologue standing on one side of the stage. DARCY enters on the other side. They are not interacting; it is as if they were in two different areas.]*

**Darcy:** *[talking to himself]* There. That is done. She despises me, but I have done my duty. I deserve her disgust. My pride! My abominable pride! She could not detest me more at this moment than I detest myself!

**Elizabeth:** This is a lesson for me! It is wrong, very wrong to...to prejudge people...and to make assumptions concerning situations when one has incomplete knowledge of the facts.

**Darcy:** I have been a blind fool, walking about with my nose in the air! I have committed one of the worst of sins – pride!

**Elizabeth:** I hereby take a vow never to be prejudiced again! And furthermore, from this day forward I will practice some of the generous candor I have always admired in my sister!

**Darcy:** I hereby take a vow to become a better man! My foolish pride lost me the woman I love, and now my duty in life is to mend my ways – even if I never see her again.

**Darcy and Elizabeth:** As God is my witness – I take this vow!

# To Read The Rest, Please Purchase The Script