

Pride and Prejudice

Adapted from the book by Jane Austen

Adapted by: Shelby Lubow

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Characters

Jane Austen/ Mrs. Hill/ Mrs.Long/ Mr. Denny/ Alfred/ Mrs. Reynolds

Mrs. Bennet

Mr. Bennet

Lydia Bennet

Catherine (Kitty) Bennet

Mary Bennet

Jane Bennet

Elizabeth Bennet

Charlotte Lucas

Mr. Charles Bingley

Miss Caroline Bingley

Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy

Rev. William Collins

George Wickham

Lady Catherine De Bourgh

Colonel Fitzwilliam

Mrs. Gardiner

Mr. Edward Gardiner

Georgiana Darcy

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Scene 1 – Bennet Residence, Longbourn

(A man and woman are sitting at a small table, they are frozen. The man is reading, while the woman sits with an impatient look upon her face. Another woman appears in a blue dress. She grabs an apron that is hung on the side of the stage next to other costume pieces. She sets up a tray for tea, she walks about the room, tidying things up. She speaks.)

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

(Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet un-freeze)

Mrs. Bennet: My dear Mr. Bennet, have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?

(Mr. Bennet sighs blissfully and continues to read his book)

Mrs. Bennet: But it is, for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it.

(Mr. Bennet looks up from his book for a second then continues to read)

Mrs. Bennet: *(impatiently)* Do not you want to know who has taken it?

Mr. Bennet: *(Still looking at his book)* As you wish to tell me my dear, I doubt I have any choice in the matter.

Mrs. Bennet: Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs. Long says that Netherfield Park is taken by a young man of large fortune. She says he came down on Monday, and was so much delighted with it that he agreed immediately that he is to take possession of it. Some of his servants are to be in the house by the end of next week.

(Lydia and Kitty are giggling by the door listening in on their parent's conversation)

Mr. Bennet: What is his name?

Mrs. Bennet: Bingley

(Lydia and Kitty giggle again, and Mary enters reading a book, before she can react her sisters pull her to the door to listen with them)

Mr. Bennet: Is he married or single?

Mrs. Bennet: Oh! Single my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!

Mr. Bennet: How so?

Mrs. Bennet: My dear Mr. Bennet, how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them.

Mr. Bennet: *(Sarcastically)* Is that his design in settling here?

Mrs. Bennet: Design! Nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he *may* fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes.

Mr. Bennet: You and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better, for as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr. Bingley might like you the best of the party.

Mrs. Bennet: My dear you flatter me.

(Mr. Bennet rolls his eyes and shakes his head)

Mrs. Bennet: I certainly *have* had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be anything extraordinary.

(Everyone on stage freezes except for Austen)

Austen: For she really wasn't. The only thing that was extraordinary about her was her ability to talk a man's ear off.

(They un-freeze, and Mrs. Bennet continues)

Mrs. Bennet: When a woman has five grown daughters, as I do, she ought to give over thinking of her own beauty. But my dear you must go and see Mr. Bingley when he comes into the neighbourhood, for it will be impossible for *us* to visit him if you do not.

Mr. Bennet: My dear you are over scrupulous surely. I dare say Mr. Bingley will be very glad to see you; and I will send a few lines to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying whichever of the girls he chooses; though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy.

(The girls giggle again and are shushed by Jane, joined by Elizabeth, they both join their sisters in their snooping)

Mrs. Bennet: You will do no such thing. Lizzy is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good-humoured as Lydia. But you are always giving *her* the preference.

Mr. Bennet: They are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of a quickness than her sisters.

Mrs. Bennet: Mr. Bennet, how you take delight in vexing me! Have you no compassion for my poor nerves?

Mr. Bennet: You mistake me, my dear. I have the highest respect for them. They have been my constant companion these past twenty three years at least.

(The girls fall forward like dominos)

Mr. Bennet: Good heavens! People.

(Everyone on stage freezes except for Austen)

Austen: Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of the twenty-three years of marriage had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. Her mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of

mean understanding, little information, and an uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting people and gossip.

(They un-freeze)

(Everyone scatters about the room doing various tasks, Kitty and Lydia go to a corner to gossip, Mary goes to the piano, Jane begins to read and Elizabeth is putting a new ribbon on her hat)

Mr. Bennet: I hope Mr. Bingley will like your hat, Lizzy.

Mrs. Bennet: We are not in a way to know what Mr. Bingley likes since we are not to visit him.

Jane: But you forget mamma that we shall meet him at the assemblies, and that Mrs. Long promised to introduce him to us.

Mrs. Bennet: I do not believe Mrs. Long will do any such thing. She has two nieces of her own. She is a selfish, hypocritical woman, and I have no opinion of her.

(Kitty coughs)

Mrs. Bennet: Don't keep coughing so, Kitty, for heaven's sake! Have a little compassion for my poor nerves.

Kitty: I do not cough for my own amusement, Mother.

Lydia: Yes, but they are always timed when you want the attention of others.

Kitty: Whatever do you mean?

(Pause)

Kitty: When is the next ball to be?

Elizabeth: *(chuckling)* To-morrow fortnight.

Mrs. Bennet: So it is and Mrs. Long does not come back till the day before; so it will be impossible for her to introduce him, for she will not know him herself.

Mr. Bennet: Then, my dear, you may have the advantage of your friend, and introduce Mr. Bingley to *her*.

Mrs. Bennet: Impossible, Mr. Bennet impossible, when I am not acquainted with him myself; Oh I am sick of Mr. Bingley.

Mr. Bennet: I am sorry to hear that; but why did you not tell me before? If I had known, your feelings toward Mr. Bingley as they are now, I certainly would not have called on him. It is very unlucky; but as I have actually paid the visit, we cannot escape the acquaintance now.

Mrs. Bennet: Oh, my dear Mr. Bennet! What an excellent father you have girls.

(Mrs. Bennet hugs him and kisses him all over his face with delight, all the girls follow and hug him as well; except Lizzy who stays where she is simply amused)

Mrs. Bennet: Lydia, my love, though you are the youngest, I dare say Mr. Bingley will dance with you at the next ball.

(All exit except Austen and Lizzy)

Austen: If Mrs. Bennet could but see one of her daughters happily settled at Netherfield and the others equally well married she should have nothing to wish for. However, one daughter in particular did not concern herself with the matter of marriage, as much as the rest. Oh, Lizzy don't you have any compassion for your mother's poor nerves.

(She chuckles and exits)

Scene 2 – Assembly Room, Meryton

(Austen replaces her apron with gloves and a shawl found on the side of the stage and is now playing Mrs. Long)

Elizabeth: Good evening Mrs. Long

Austen: Good evening, my dear.

Elizabeth: How are you Charlotte?

Charlotte: Quite well, I'm just enjoying the general splendor. That Mr. Bingley is quite handsome.

Austen: And such a gentleman. He has a pleasant countenance and an easy, unaffected manner. And his sister has an air of decided fashion.

Elizabeth: And his friend?

Charlotte: Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy.

Elizabeth: He has a noble manner.

Charlotte: He has ten thousand a year, and owns half of Darbyshire.

Elizabeth: The miserable half?

Charlotte: He is much handsomer than Mr. Bingley.

Caroline: *(to Darcy)* I have never seen a collection of people in whom there was so little beauty.

Austen: *(to Bingley)* Do you like our Meryton, Mr. Bingley? Do you not think there are a great many pretty women in the room? Which do you think is the prettiest? *(Slyly hinting at Jane)*

Mr. Bingley: Oh the eldest Miss Bennet, beyond a doubt; there cannot be two opinions on that point.

(The couples begin to form for Dance 1, they freeze. Mr. Bingley and Jane are easing toward each other, Austen/Long watches as her story unfolds)

Mr. Bingley: *(to Jane)* Miss Bennet. May I have the honor?

Jane: You may.

(They join the dancers. Dance 1)

Austen: What a charming amusement for young people this is, Mr. Darcy! There is nothing like dancing after all. I consider it as one of the first refinements of polished society.

Darcy: Certainly, Ma'am, and it has the advantage also of being in vogue amongst the less polished societies of the world. Every savage can dance.

Austen: Your friend performs delightfully, Mr. Darcy. Do you often dance at St. James's?

Darcy: Never, Ma'am. If I can avoid it.

Austen: How do you find Netherfield, Mr. Darcy?

Darcy: Mr. Bingley is pleased with the situation.

(The dance ends, Bingley joins Darcy, Elizabeth is listening in to their conversation with Charlotte, so is Austen)

Bingley: Why are you standing about in this stupid manner? You must ask a young lady to dance.

Darcy: I am not well acquainted with any one in the room, aside from your sister.

Bingley: Well, I've never seen so many pretty girls in my life.

Darcy: You are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room.

Bingley: Oh, she is the most beautiful creature I have ever beheld, but her sister Elizabeth is very agreeable.

Darcy: Perfectly tolerable, I dare say, but not handsome enough to tempt me. You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles, for you are wasting your time with me.

(Bingley goes to Jane, Caroline takes Darcy's arm and they go to another part of the room)

Caroline: *(to Darcy)* There is quite an indifference to decorum. I can't help feeling that someone is going to produce a piglet and make us chase it.

Elizabeth: *(to Charlotte)* Mr. Darcy is very proud.

Charlotte: Unworthy to be compared with Mr. Bingley.

Elizabeth: I could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified mine.

(Everyone freezes except Austen)

Austen: Pride, is a very common failing, I believe. By all that I have ever read, I am convinced that it is very common indeed; that human nature is particularly prone to it, and that there are very few of us who do not cherish a feeling of self-complacency on the score of some quality or other, real or imaginary. Vanity and pride however, are different things, though the words are often used synonymously. A person may be proud without being vain. Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves; vanity to what we would have others think of us.

(they un-freeze)

Jane: You dance so well, Mr. Bingley.

Bingley: I have never enjoyed a dance so much.

Elizabeth: How do you like it here at Herfordshire?

Bingley: Very much.

Elizabeth: I have heard that the library at Netherfield is one of the finest.

Bingley: Indeed, it fills me with much guilt. I am not much of a reader. I prefer being out of doors.

Jane: I wish I read more, but there seems to be so many other things to do.

Bingley: I completely agree!

Mrs. Bennet: Jane was once courted by a man who was such the lover of poetry. When she was only fifteen the gentleman was so much in love with her that I was sure he would make her an offer of marriage before he went away. But, he did not. However, he wrote some verses on her, and very pretty they were, a little racy, but pretty.

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

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

Elizabeth: Of a fine, stout love it may. But if it be only a slight inclination, I am convinced that one good sonnet will starve it entirely away.

Darcy: So, what do you recommend to encourage affection?

Elizabeth: Dancing. Even if ones partner is barely tolerable.

(Elizabeth bows her head at Darcy and exits with Charlotte, everyone else proceeds to go home as well)

Scene 3 – Longbourn, Same night

(Mr. Bennet is at home asleep in his chair while Jane and Elizabeth are the first to enter returning from the party, they settle in at home while the family follows)

Jane: Mr. Bingley is just what a young man ought to be, sensible, good-humored, lively; and I never saw such happy manners, so much ease, with such perfect good breeding!

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

Jane: I was very much flattered by his asking me to dance a second time. I did not expect such a compliment.

Elizabeth: Did not you? *I* did for you. He danced with you most of the night and stared at you for the rest. Well, he certainly is very agreeable, and I give you leave to like him. You have like many a stupider person.

Jane: Lizzy!

Elizabeth: Oh! You are a great deal too apt, you know, to like people in general. You never see a fault in anybody. All the world is good and agreeable in your eyes.

Jane: I would not wish to be hasty in censuring anyone; but I always speak what I think.

Elizabeth: I know you do. With your good sense, to be so honestly blind to the follies and nonsense of others! And so, do you like this man's sister, too? Her manners are not equal to his.

Jane: Certainly not, at first. But she is a very pleasing woman when you converse with her. Miss Bingley is to live with her brother and keep his house; and I am much mistaken if we shall not find a very charming neighbour in her.

Mrs. Bennet: (*Waking Mr. Bennet*) Oh! My dear Mr. Bennet, we had a most delightful evening, a most excellent ball. I wish you had been there. Jane was so admired by Mr. Bingley, he thought her quite beautiful and danced with her twice. He also danced with Miss Charlotte Lucas, however he did not admire her at all. He danced with Lizzy as well and –

Mr. Bennet: If he had any compassion for me, he would not have danced half so much! For God's sake say no more of his partners. (*dramatically*) O, that he had sprained his ankle in the first dance!

Mrs. Bennet: My dear, I am quite delighted with him. He is so exceedingly handsome! And his sister is a charming woman. I never in my life saw anything more elegant than her dress. I dare say the lace upon Miss Bingley's gown –

Mr. Bennet: I protest against any more description of finery.

Mrs. Bennet: Oh hush! You ought to get me a nice gown. For just the other day Mrs. Long showed me a gown Mr. Long had given her. It was quite lovely although –

Mr. Bennet: (*dramatically*) Oh cruelty, thy name is woman.

Mrs. Bennet: Oh!

Lydia: I danced with Captain Carter twice: I hope to see him in the course of the week.

Kitty: And I danced with Mr. Denny. Meryton is to be the militia headquarters for the whole winter. I know all of the officers' names and connections.

Mr. Bennet: From all I can collect by your manner of talking, you must be two of the silliest girls in the country. I have suspected it for some time, but now I am convinced.

(*Everyone is leaving for bed*)

Mrs. Bennet: I am astonished Mr. Bennet, that you should be so ready to think your own daughters' silly.

Mr. Bennet: If my children are silly, I must hope to always be sensible of it.

Scene 4 – Longbourn, Afternoon

(*Austen sets up tea as she did in the beginning of the play. The family begins to trickle in this is Jane, Elizabeth, Lydia, Kitty, Mary, Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet*)

Austen: (*to Jane*) A letter addressed to Miss Bennet, Ma'am. From Netherfield Hall.

Mrs. Bennet: Well, Jane, who is it from? What is it about? What does it say? Make haste and tell us; make haste, my love.

Jane: It is from Miss Caroline Bingley. She has asked to dine with me. May I have the carriage?

Mrs. Bennet: I wonder...

Elizabeth: Mamma, the carriage for Jane?

Mrs. Bennet: Certainly not, you'll go on horseback.

Jane: Horseback?

Mrs. Bennet: Well, it seems likely to rain and then you must stay the night.

(Jane exits, Thunder is heard rolling in the background and the family freezes)

Austen: Jane has not been gone for long and it is still raining hard. She is very likely to get a cold and will have to stay the night. Mrs. Bennet will be delighted!

Scene 5- Longbourn, Morning

Austen: Good morning Miss Elizabeth, a letter from Netherfield.

Elizabeth: Thank you, Mrs. Hill. *(she reads)* 'My dearest Lizzy, I find myself very unwell this morning, which I suppose, is to be imputed to my getting wet through yesterday. The Bingley's will not hear of my returning till I am better. And with the exception of a sore throat and a headache, there is nothing much wrong with me. Yours, Jane.'

Mr. Bennet: Well, my dear, if your daughter does die it will be a comfort to know it was all in pursuit of Mr. Bingley.

Mrs. Bennet: Oh! I am not afraid of her dying. People do not die of little trifling colds. I would go and see her if -

Elizabeth: No, I will go to see her, I am no horsewoman, but I may walk.

Mrs. Bennet: Walk!

Scene 6 - Netherfield, Later that morning

(Mr. Darcy and Miss Caroline Bingley are sitting in the drawing room, Darcy is reading while Caroline pretends to read only really paying attention to Darcy, Mr. Bingley is staring out the window, Austen enters and takes a mustache from the costume pieces on the side of the stage)

Austen: Mr. Bingley had not been of age two years when he was tempted, by a recommendation, to look at Netherfield House. He looked at it for half an hour; was pleased with the rooms, and took it immediately. His sister Miss Caroline Bingley resides with him.

(Austen puts on the mustache, she is now Alfred)

Austen: A Miss Elizabeth Bennet!

(Darcy abruptly stands from his seat looking astonished, and quickly recovers himself, he then bows his head, Elizabeth, Caroline and Bingley do the same)

Caroline: Thank you Alfred.

(Austen leaves)

Elizabeth: Good morning.

Caroline: My word, Miss Bennet, did you walk here?

Elizabeth: I did. May I inquire about my sister?

Caroline: Miss Bennet slept ill, and though up, is very feverish, and not well enough to leave her room.

Mr. Bingley: You will want to be taken to your sister immediately. Alfred?

(Austen enters as Alfred, mustache and all)

Austen: Sir?

Mr. Bingley: Alfred, please show Miss Bennet to her sister's room.

Austen: Of course.

(Austen and Elizabeth exit)

Caroline: *(to Darcy)* My goodness, did you see her hem, six inches deep in mud, she must have walked three or four miles.

Darcy: It quite escaped my notice.

Caroline: It seems to me to show an abominable sort of conceited independence, a most country-town indifference to decorum. I am sure, Mr. Darcy that this adventure has affected your admiration of her fine eyes.

Darcy: Not at all, they were brightened by the exercise. It shows an affection for her sister that is very pleasing.

Austen: Upon Lizzy's arrival to Jane's bedside, she discovered that Jane was still very unwell. Lizzy would not quit her at all, till later that evening, when she had the comfort of seeing her asleep, and when it appeared that she should go down stairs. On entering the drawing-room, she found the whole party occupied, Bingley sipped his tea, while Darcy wrote a letter. Caroline however, seemed to be occupying herself with the object of being noticed by Mr. Darcy.

Scene 7 – Netherfield, Later that evening

(Elizabeth joins them and begins to read a book, Darcy is writing a letter, and Caroline is observing him. Mr. Bingley sits across from Elizabeth sipping his tea.)

Caroline: You write uncommonly fast, Mr. Darcy.

Mr. Darcy: You are mistaken. I write rather slowly.

Caroline: How many letters you must have occasion to write in the course of a year. Letters of business too. How odious I should think them.

Darcy: It is fortunate, then, that they fall to my lot instead of yours.

Caroline: Pray tell your sister that I long to see her.

Darcy: I have already told her so once, by your desire.

Caroline: I do dote over her. Is Miss Darcy much grown since the spring?

Darcy: She is now about Miss Elizabeth Bennet's height, or rather taller.

Caroline: How I long to see her again! I never met with anybody who delighted me so much. Such a countenance, such manners. And her performance on the pianoforte is quite exquisite.

Bingley: It is amazing how you young ladies can have the patience to be so very accomplished as you are.

Caroline: What ever do you mean Charles?

Bingley: You all paint tables, net purses and embroider cushions. I have never heard a young lady spoken of for the first time, without being informed that she was very accomplished.

Darcy: I cannot boast of knowing more than half-a-dozen women, in the whole range of my acquaintance who are really accomplished.

Caroline: Nor I to be sure.

Elizabeth: Then you must comprehend a great deal in your idea of an accomplished woman.

Darcy: I do.

Caroline: Oh certainly, a woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved.

Darcy: She must also improve her mind by extensive reading.

(Elizabeth slams her book shut)

Elizabeth: I am surprised at your knowing only six accomplished women. I rather wonder now at your knowing any.

Darcy: Are you so severe upon your own sex?

Elizabeth: I never heard of such a woman. She would certainly be a fearsome thing to behold.

Caroline: Miss Elizabeth Bennet, may I persuade you to take a turn about the room. I assure you it is quite refreshing after sitting so long in one attitude. *(Elizabeth gets up and Caroline links her arm in hers, they walk about the room)* Would you join us, Mr. Darcy?

Darcy: You can only have two motives Caroline, and I would only interfere with either.

Caroline: What can he mean?

Elizabeth: Our surest way of disappointing him will be to ask nothing about it.

Caroline: Oh do tell us, Mr. Darcy.

Darcy: Well, you are either in each other's confidence, and have secret affairs to discuss, or you are conscious of your figures, appear to the greatest advantage in walking; if the first, I would only be in your way, and if the second, I can admire you much better from here.

Caroline: Oh, shocking! How ever shall we punish him for such a speech?

Elizabeth: We could laugh at him.

Caroline: Oh, no. Mr. Darcy is not to be teased.

Elizabeth: Are you too proud Mr. Darcy? And do you consider pride a fault or a virtue?

Darcy: I couldn't say.

Elizabeth: Because we are trying our best to find a fault in you.

Darcy: I cannot forget the follies and vices of others, nor their offenses against me. My good opinion, once lost, is lost forever.

Elizabeth: Oh dear, I cannot tease you about that. What a shame, for I dearly love to laugh.

Caroline: A family trait I think.

(Austen enters as Alfred)

Austen: A Mrs. Bennet, a Miss Bennet, a Miss Bennet and, a- a Miss Bennet, sir.

Mr. Bingley: Thank you, Alfred.

Caroline: Good heavens! Are we to receive every Bennet in the country?

(Mrs. Bennet, Kitty, Lydia, and Mary enter)

Mrs. Bennet: What a lovely room you have here, Mr. Bingley. I do not know a place in the country that is equal to Netherfield. You will not think of leaving it in a hurry, I hope, though you have but a short lease.

Bingley: At present, I consider myself as quite fixed here.

Mrs. Bennet: Wonderful!

Elizabeth: Has Charlotte Lucas been at Longbourn since my going away?

Mrs. Bennet: Yes, she was yesterday with her father. What an agreeable man Sir William Lucas is, Mr. Bingley. It is a pity his daughter is not more handsome. And so very plain.

Bingley: She seems like a very pleasant young woman.

Mrs. Bennet: Oh dear, yes; but you must own she is very plain. Lady Lucas herself has often said so, and envied me Jane's beauty. I do not like to boast of my own child, but one does not often see anybody better looking.

Lydia: Mr. Bingley is it true that you are to hold a ball here at Netherfield?

Bingley: A ball?

Lydia: It would be an excellent way to meet new people.

Kitty: Oh, do hold a ball!

Elizabeth: Kitty.

Bingley: When your sister recovers, you shall name the day.

Mary: I think a ball is an irrational way to gain new acquaintance. It would be better if conversation, then dancing, on the order of the day.

Caroline: Indeed, much more rational, but rather less like a ball.

Elizabeth: Thank you, Mary.

Caroline: Alfred, would you order the Bennet's coach?

Austen: Right away.

(Everyone gets up and begins to leave, Darcy gives Elizabeth his hand and helps her up from her seat)

Darcy: Miss Elizabeth

Elizabeth: Mr. Darcy

(They exit)

Scene 8 – Longbourn, Evening

(The family is sitting doing their usual tasks, however now there is a Mr. Collins joining them)

Austen: Elizabeth begged her mother to send the carriage for Jane, for she seemed to be feeling better, however Mrs. Bennet insisted on her staying until at least Tuesday. But, upon Jane feeling better she was brought home by Elizabeth. They were not welcomed home very cordially by Mrs.

Bennet, but their father was glad to see them. Mr. Bennet's property consisted almost entirely in an estate of two thousand a year, which, unfortunately for his daughters, demanded in default of a male heir, and their mothers fortune, though ample for her situation in life, could not supply the girls in the absence of their fathers. Therefore, the only solution in the mind of Mrs. Bennet was for one of her daughters to marry his heir, Mr. Collins, the girls' cousin.

(Austen walks about the room distributing tea to everyone)

Mr. Collins: Mrs. Bennet may I compliment you on having so fine a family of daughters; I have heard much of their beauty, but in this instance fame has fallen short of the truth. I do not doubt but you will see them all disposed of in marriage in due time.

Mrs. Bennet: You are very kind, I am sure; and I wish with all my heart it may prove so, for else they will be destitute enough.

Collins: You refer, I assume, to the entail of this estate.

Mrs. Bennet: I do indeed.

Collins: I am very sensible, madam, of the hardship to my fair cousins, and could say much on the subject, but I am cautious of appearing forward. But I can assure the young ladies that I come prepared to admire them. At present I will not say more; but perhaps, I shall when we are better acquainted. The dinner was most excellent; which of my fair cousins is owning the excellence of its cooking?

Mrs. Bennet: Mr. Collins, I assure you we are very well able to keep a cook.

Collins: I beg your pardon for having displeased you. I am happy the estate can afford such a living.

Mary: Lady Catherine de Bourgh, your patroness, I think you said she was a widow? Has she any family?

Collins: She has only one daughter. I have often expressed to Lady Catherine that her daughter seemed born to be a duchess, for she has all the superior graces of elevated rank. These kinds of compliments are always acceptable to the ladies, and which I consider myself particularly bound to pay.

Jane: How happy for you Mr. Collins, to possess the talent for flattering with such delicacy.

Elizabeth: Do these attentions proceed from the impulse of the moment or are they the result of previous study?

Collins: They arise from what is passing at the time. And though I sometimes amuse myself with arranging such little compliments, I always try to give them as unstudied an air as possible.

Elizabeth: Oh believe me no one would suspect your manners to be rehearsed. *(Elizabeth chuckles, and so follows the rest of the girls except Mary who is looking back at Mr. Collins like he is the most attractive human being on the planet)*

Jane: Thank you, Mr. Collins for your stimulating company, but I'm afraid my sisters and I must turn in.

(Jane and the girls exit)

Collins: As you know I have a very particular and fortunate relationship with Lady Catherine de Bourgh. I value her advice above all else. Well, Lady Catherine has advised me to marry as soon as I can, provided I choose with discretion. Having now a good house and a very sufficient income, I intend to marry; and in seeking a reconciliation with your family, I mean to choose one of your daughters, to atone for inheriting the estate. I have a wife in view. Miss Jane Bennet.

Mrs. Bennet: I must caution against choosing my eldest daughter. Jane, I must mention, is very likely to be very soon engaged.

Collins: Engaged?

Mrs. Bennet: Yes.

Collins: Ah, but I only have to change from Jane to Elizabeth. Elizabeth is next to Jane in seniority and is equal in beauty.

Mrs. Bennet: Yes. I quite agree.

Collins: Good evening, Mrs. Bennet.

Mrs. Bennet: Good evening, Mr. Collins

(He exits, Mrs. Bennet stays frozen and in enter Austen)

Austen: Mrs. Bennet might have two daughters married. Won't Lizzy be surprised of this arrangement! And doesn't Mrs. Bennet think it rude how quickly he went from the object of marrying one daughter to the next. Mr. Bennet is most anxious to get rid of Mr. Collins, and have his library to himself. Mr. Collins followed Mr. Bennet into the study after breakfast the next morning. Mr. Collins talks, with little knowing if he will ever stop, about his house or his garden. This agitates Mr. Bennet exceedingly. In an attempt to get Mr. Collins out of the house, Mr. Bennet suggested that he might want to chaperone the girls on their way into town. Though I can very well tell you that it is Mr. Collins who is being chaperoned.

Scene 9 - Walking from Longbourn to Meryton, Morning

(The girls and Mr. Collins are outdoors walking to town, the scenery is green, with a field. There is a bench and some white flowers)

Kitty: I am going to find out about Captain Carter and inquire when Mr. Denny will be returning from town.

(Austen appears dressed in what she was before only with a militia coat on top of it, she is now Mr. Denny, Mr. Wickham is with her)

Lydia: Kitty, its Mr. Denny! Who is that young man?

Kitty: I have never seen him before.

Lydia: Good day Mr. Denny!

Kitty: Welcome back from town Mr. Denny; did you have a successful trip?

Austen: I did indeed, Miss Bennet. May I have permission to introduce my friend, Mr. Wickham. Mr. Wickham here, has just entered the corps of our militia. Mr. Wickham, this is Miss Jane Bennet, Miss Elizabeth Bennet, Miss Catherine Bennet, Miss Lydia Bennet, and Miss Mary Bennet.

Wickham: Ladies. It was the prospect of good society that was my chief inducement to enter the corps. I knew it to be a most respectable, agreeable job, and my friend Denny tempted me further by the excellent society Meryton had to offer. I can see now that Mr. Denny did not exaggerate.

(Enter Darcy and Bingley in their own conversation Bingley sees the girls and Collins, but he specifically sees Jane of course, however Darcy is fixed on Wickham.)

Bingley: Good afternoon, ladies. Miss Bennet I was just on my way to Longbourn to inquire after your health and to give my personal invitation to you, and your entire family, for the ball at Netherfield, which has been fixed for the following Tuesday night.

Kitty and Lydia: Mr. Bingley!

(Mary is not pleased)

Jane: Thank you, Mr. Bingley. I am certain we will accept your kind invitation. Mr. Bingley, Mr. Darcy, I believe you know Mr. Denny.

Austen: Good Morning.

(Bingley nods his head in acknowledgement, Darcy does not he is too distracted by Mr. Wickham. Darcy and Wickham look at each other)

Austen: Mr. Wickham has just come from London; he is to have a lieutenant's commission.

Bingley: Welcome to Meryton, Mr. Wickham.

(Bingley touches his hat in salutation, Wickham returns the exchange and offers one to Darcy, but he does not return it. He only looks at him coldly)

Bingley: Well, good day. I look forward to seeing you on Tuesday.

Jane: Thank you, Mr. Bingley.

Elizabeth: Good day.

Lydia: Good day!

Kitty: Yes, good day!

Lydia: Lizzy lend me some money so I can buy some ribbon for the ball.

Elizabeth: You already owe me a fortune Lydia.

Wickham: Allow me.

Elizabeth: No, Mr. Wickham please...

(Mr. Wickham pulls one pound from Lydia's ear, Lydia giggles)

Lydia: We should all look for some ribbon together.

(Lydia goes to Kitty and they giggle)

Wickham: I shan't even browse.

Elizabeth: Why not?

Wickham: I can't be trusted. I have poor taste in ribbons.

Elizabeth: Really?

Wickham: No, it's true. And buckles, when it comes to buckles I am lost.

Elizabeth: You must be a shame to the regiment.

Wickham: A laughing stock.

Elizabeth: What do your superiors do with you?

(they laugh)

Elizabeth: Do you plan to go to the Netherfield ball Mr. Wickham?

Wickham: Perhaps. How long has Mr. Darcy been staying at Netherfield, do you know?

Elizabeth: About a month. Forgive me but, are you acquainted with him. With Mr. Darcy, I mean.

Wickham: Indeed, I have been connected with his family since infancy. You may well be surprised given our cold greeting.

Elizabeth: I hope your plans in favour of Meryton will not be affected by your relations with him.

Wickham: It is not for me to be driven away. If he wishes to avoid seeing me, he must go, not I.

Elizabeth: I must ask, what is the manner of your disapproval of Mr. Darcy?

Wickham: Well, my father managed his estate. We grew up together, Darcy and I. His father treated me like a second son, loved me like a son. We were both with him the day he died. With his last breath, his father bequeathed me the rectory of his estate. He knew I had my heart set on joining the church, but Darcy ignored his wishes and gave the living to another man.

Elizabeth: But why?

Wickham: Jealousy. His father, well, he loved me better and Darcy couldn't stand it.

Elizabeth: How cruel.

Wickham: So now I am a poor foot soldier, too lowly even to be noticed.

(They exit)

Scene 10 – Longbourn, Evening

(Jane and Elizabeth are getting ready for the ball at Netherfield, Jane is doing Elizabeth's hair, Lydia and Kitty are giggling in the corner, probably talking about the handsome men in the militia. Austen is off to the side un-noticed)

Austen: As the girls get ready for the Netherfield ball, Elizabeth is quite un- aware of the secret plot of engagement her mother and Mr. Collins have invented. Each evening he has increased his civilities towards Miss Elizabeth. Personally I think Miss Elizabeth chooses not to take the hint.

Jane: They have both been deceived, I dare say, in some way or other, of which we can form no idea. Laugh as much as you choose, you will not laugh me out of my opinion. My dearest Lizzy, do you but consider in what a disgraceful light it places Mr. Darcy, to be treating his father's favorite in such a manor, one whom his father promised to provide for. It is impossible. No man of common humanity, no man who had any value for his character, could be capable of it. Can his most intimate friends be so excessively deceived in him?

Elizabeth: I can much more easily believe Mr. Bingley's being imposed on, then that Mr. Wickham should invent such a history of himself as he gave me. If it be not so, let Mr. Darcy contradict it.

(Enter Mary with Mr. Collins)

Mary: I think it no sacrifice to join occasionally in evening engagements. Society has claims on us all; and I profess myself one of those who consider intervals of recreation and amusement as desirable for everybody.

Mr. Collins: I am by no means of the opinion, I assure you, that a ball of this kind, given by a young man of character, to respectable people, can have any evil tendency. In fact, I am so far from objecting to dancing myself, that I shall hope to be honored with the hands of all my fair cousins in the course of the evening; and I take this opportunity of soliciting yours, Miss Elizabeth, for the two first dances especially, a preference which I trust my cousin Jane will attribute to the right cause, and not to any disrespect for her.

Jane: Not at all, sir.

Lydia: Well, I am going to dance with Mr. Wickham for half of the evening.

Kitty: And I will dance with him for the other half of the evening.

(They exit to go to the dance)

Scene 11 – Ballroom, Netherfield, Same evening

(The ball is in full swing. (Dance 2) Jane and Bingley are dancing together of course, Lydia and Kitty are dancing with two officers, and Mary is dancing with Mr. Collins)

Charlotte: Bingley likes your sister undoubtedly; but he may never do more than like her if she does not help him on.

Elizabeth: But she does help him on, as much as her nature will allow.

Charlotte: Remember, Lizzy, that he does not know Jane's character as we do. And though Bingley and Jane meet tolerably often, it is never for many hours together; and, as they always see each other in large mixed parties, Jane should therefore make the most of every half hour in which she can command his attention. When she is secure for him, there will be more leisure for falling in love as much as she chooses.

Elizabeth: Your plan is a good one where nothing is in question, but the desire of being well married, and if I were determined to get a rich

husband, or any husband, I dare say I should adopt it. But these are not Jane's feelings.

Charlotte: I wish Jane success with all my heart; and if she were married to him now, I should think she had as good a chance of happiness as if she were to be studying his character for a year.

Elizabeth: You make me laugh, Charlotte; but it is not sound. You know it is not sound, and that you would never act in this way yourself.

(The dance ends. Lydia and Kitty run up to Mr. Denny who is Austen)

Lydia: Mr. Denny. I have looked in vain for Mr. Wickham among the cluster of red coats here assembled, but I fear he is not there to be found.

Kitty: Lydia is going to dance with him for half of the evening, and me for the other.

Austen: I see. Well, Mr. Wickham was obliged to go to town on business the day before, and has not yet returned.

Kitty: Did Mr. Bingley purposely omit an invitation to Mr. Wickham because of Mr. Darcy?

Austen: No, but I do not imagine his business would have called him away just now, if he had not wanted to avoid a certain gentleman here. Miss Lydia, may I have the next dance?

Lydia: Why of course!

(Lydia glances back at Kitty while she takes Austen/Mr. Denny's hand almost mocking her, Kitty has a face of jealousy)

Mr. Collins: *(to Elizabeth)* It is my intention; if I may be so bold, to remain close to you throughout the evening, Miss Elizab--

Mr. Darcy: May I have the next dance, Miss Elizabeth?

Elizabeth: *(She replies without even knowing to whom)* You may.

(She turns around and is shocked to find Mr. Darcy. He walks away awkwardly)

Elizabeth: Did I just agree to dance with Mr. Darcy?

Charlotte: I dare say you will find him very amiable.

Elizabeth: It would be most inconvenient since I am to loathe him for all eternity.

(The music begins for Dance 3, Darcy collects Elizabeth and everyone gets into place for the dance. When they are in place for the dance the music fades out. The others melt away and it is as if Elizabeth and Darcy are the only couple in the room)

Elizabeth: I love this dance.

Darcy: Indeed. Most invigorating.

Elizabeth: It is your turn to say something, Mr. Darcy. I talked about the dance, now you ought to remark on the size of the room or the number of couples.

Darcy: I am perfectly happy to oblige, please advise me of what you would like most to hear.

Elizabeth: Perhaps by and by I may observe that private balls are much pleasanter than public ones. But now we may be silent.

(A pause, they are concentrating on the dance)

Darcy: Do you talk by rule, then while you are dancing?

Elizabeth: No. No I prefer to be unsociable and taciturn. Makes it all so much more enjoyable don't you think?

Darcy: Tell me, do you and your sisters often walk to Meryton?

Elizabeth: Yes, we often walk to Meryton. It's a great opportunity to meet new people. When you met us, we had just had the pleasure of forming a new acquaintance.

Darcy: Mr. Wickham is blessed with such happy manners, he's sure of making friends. Whether he is capable of retaining them is less so.

Elizabeth: He has been so unfortunate as to lose your friendship. Is that irreversible?

Darcy: It is. *(They stop dancing; they are looking at each other)* Why do you ask such a question?

Elizabeth: To make out your character, Mr. Darcy.

Darcy: And what have you discovered?

Elizabeth: Very little. I hear such different accounts of you that puzzle me exceedingly.

Darcy: I hope to afford you more clarity in the future.

(The other couples melt back into the scene and the music slowly rises in volume and then stops. The dance has ended. Everyone disperses.)

Collins: *(to Elizabeth)* Is that Mr. Darcy of Pemberley?

Elizabeth: I believe so.

Collins: I must make myself known to him.

Elizabeth: Mr. Collins, he will consider it an impertinence.

Collins: Mr. Darcy?... Mr. Darcy? Mr. Darcy what interesting relatives you have. I must tell you I am in very good acquaintance with your aunt...

Elizabeth: What have you learnt about Mr. Wickham?

Jane: Mr. Bingley does not know the whole of his history, and is quite ignorant of the circumstances which have principally offended Mr. Darcy; but he will vouch for the good conduct, the probity, and honor of his

friend, and is perfectly convinced that Mr. Wickham has deserved much less attention from Mr. Darcy than he has received; and I am sorry to say by his account as well as his sister's, Mr. Wickham is by no means a respectable young man. I am afraid he has been very imprudent, and has deserved to lose Mr. Darcy's respect.

Elizabeth: Mr. Bingley does not know Mr. Wickham himself?

Jane: He never saw him till the other morning at Meryton.

Elizabeth: Mr. Bingley's defense of his friend was a very able one, I dare say; but is unacquainted with several parts of the story, and has learnt the rest from that of his friend, I still have the same opinion of both gentlemen.

Scene 12 – Longbourn, Next morning

Austen: The next day opened a new scene at Longbourn. Mr. Collins was prepared to make his declaration of engagement to Miss Elizabeth. Having resolved to do it without the loss of time, as his leave of absence extended only to the following Saturday, he set about it in a very orderly manner, with all the observances which he supposed a regular part of the business. On finding Mrs. Bennet, Elizabeth and the girls together soon after breakfast, he addressed the mother in these words.

(The family is engaged in their usual employment at home, enter Mr. Collins)

Collins: Mrs. Bennet, I was hoping, if it would not trouble you, that I might solicit for the honour of a private audience with Miss Elizabeth?

Mrs. Bennet: Oh dear! Yes, certainly. I am sure Lizzy will be very happy, I am sure she can have no objection. Come girls, I want you upstairs.

Elizabeth: Mr. Collins can have nothing to say to me that anybody need not hear. I am going away myself.

Mrs. Bennet: No, no, nonsense, Lizzy. I desire you to stay where you are. Lizzy, I insist upon your staying and hearing Mr. Collins.

(They leave the room and are all listening by the door, Mr. Collins proceeds to take a letter out of his pocket and begins to read it)

Collins: Dear Miss Elizabeth. My attentions have been too marked to be mistaken. Almost as soon as I entered the house, I singled you out as the companion of my future life. But before I am run away with my feelings, perhaps I may state my reasons for marrying. *(Elizabeth gets up to say something, but he puts his finger up and she sits back down)* Firstly, that it is the duty of a clergyman to set the example of matrimony in his parish. Secondly, I am convinced it will add greatly to my happiness. And thirdly, that it is at the urging of my esteemed patroness, Lady Catherine, that I select a wife. My object in coming to Longbourn was to choose such a one from among Mr. Bennet's daughters, for I am to inherit the estate and such an alliance will surely suit everyone. And now nothing remains but for me to assure you in the most animated language of the violence of my affections.

Elizabeth: Mr. Collins!

Collins: And no reproach on the subject of fortune will cross my lips once we're married.

(Collins pockets the letter)

Elizabeth: You are too hasty, sir. You forget that I have given no answer.

Collins: Lady Catherine will thoroughly approve when I speak to her of your modesty, economy, and other amiable qualities.

Elizabeth: Sir, I am honoured by your proposal, but I am afraid I must decline it.

Collins: I know young ladies do not seek to seem too eager --

Elizabeth: Mr. Collins, I am perfectly serious. You could not make me happy and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who could make you happy.

Collins: I flatter myself that your refusal is merely a natural delicacy. Besides, despite manifold attractions, it is by no means certain another offer of marriage will ever be made to you. I must conclude that you simply seek to increase my love by suspense, according to the usual practice of elegant females.

Elizabeth: I am not the sort of female to torment a respectable man. Please understand me, I cannot accept you.

(Exit Elizabeth, Mrs. Bennet intervenes, she and the girls were listening the whole time)

Mrs. Bennet: Foolish child! Don't worry Mr. Collins, I shall bring Lizzy to reason immediately.

Collins: Oh, good.

(Exit Mrs. Bennet and Collins, Elizabeth re-enters, following her is Mrs. Bennet dragging along Mr. Bennet)

Mrs. Bennet: Elizabeth Austen Bennet!

(Mrs. Bennet gestures to her husband to talk to Lizzy)

Mr. Bennet: Your mother has informed me that Mr. Collins has made you an offer of marriage. Is this true?

Elizabeth: It is true.

Mr. Bennet: Very well, and this offer of marriage, you have refused?

Elizabeth: I have, sir.

Mr. Bennet: Very well. We now come to the point. Your mother insists upon your accepting it.

Mrs. Bennet: Yes, or I will never see her again.

Mr. Bennet: An unhappy alternative is before you, Elizabeth. From this day forward 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.

Elizabeth: Thank you Papa!

(Lizzy hugs her father and exits, Mrs. Bennet runs after her and Mr. Bennet remains, frozen, Austen enters)

Austen: Mr. Bennet could only smile at his daughter's decision on this matter. He also was in dire need of having the library to himself as soon as possible, and that could not be accomplished until Mr. Collins left, and the sooner the better.

(Mr. Bennet exits)

(Mrs. Bennet, Mr. Collins, Elizabeth, Jane and Mary begin to act out Austen's next narration)

Austen: Not yet, however, in spite of her disappointment in her husband, did Mrs. Bennet give up the point of Mr. Collins' proposal. She talked to Elizabeth again and again; coaxed and threatened her by turns. She endeavored to secure Jane in her interest, but Jane with a possible mildness declined interfering. The only person who was happy with this little quarrel was Mary. She was glad that Mr. Collins was still a single gentleman, for who knows what reason. Mr. Collins, meanwhile, was meditating in solitude on what had passed. He thought too well of himself to comprehend on what motive his cousin could refuse him; and though his pride was hurt, he suffered in no other way. His regard for her was quite imaginary; and the possibility of her deserving her mother's disapproval prevented his feeling any regret.

Scene 13 - Longbourn, Afternoon

(Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, and Charlotte are sitting in the drawing room)

Jane: The whole party has left Netherfield by this time, and are on their way to town, and without any intention of coming back again. Caroline decidedly says that none of the party will return to Hertfordshire this winter.

Elizabeth: It is only evident that Miss Bingley does not mean that he should.

Jane: Why do you think so? It must be his own doing. He is his own master. But you do not know all. You shall hear what Caroline Bingley writes. I will read you the passage which particularly hurts me.

Caroline appears on the apron of the stage holding the letter and reading)

Caroline: ‘Mr. Darcy is impatient to see his sister; and, to confess the truth, we are scarcely less eager to meet her again. I really do not think Georgiana Darcy has the equal beauty, elegance, and accomplishments; and affection she inspires in myself, from the hope we dare entertain of her being hereafter our sister.’

Jane: Does it not expressly declare that Caroline neither expects nor wishes me to be her sister; that she is perfectly convinced of her brother’s indifference; and that she suspects that Georgiana Darcy is soon to be Georgiana Bingley.

Elizabeth: Will you hear me? Miss Bingley sees that her brother is in love with you, and wants him to marry Miss Darcy.

Charlotte: No one who has ever seen you together can doubt his affection.

Elizabeth: Could Miss Bingley have seen half as much love in Mr. Darcy for herself, she would have ordered her wedding clothes. But the case is this: We are not rich enough or grand enough for her.

Mary: She is the more anxious to get Miss Darcy for her brother, from the notion that when there has been one intermarriage, she may have less trouble in achieving a second.

Elizabeth: My dearest Jane, you cannot seriously imagine that because Miss Bingley tells you her brother greatly admires Miss Darcy that it is true, or that it will be in her power to persuade him that instead of being in love with you, he is very much in love with Miss Darcy.

Jane: Caroline is incapable of willfully deceiving anyone; and all that I can hope in this case is that she is deceiving herself.

Elizabeth: Go to our aunt and uncle's in London. Let it be known you are there and I am sure he will come to you.

Charlotte: I have news. This morning I became engaged to Mr. Collins.

Elizabeth: To be married?

Charlotte: Yes, Lizzy, what other kind of engaged is there.

Mary: No.

Elizabeth: Engaged to Mr. Collins!

Charlotte: Why should you be so surprised, my dear Lizzy? Do you think it incredible that Mr. Collins should be able to procure any woman's good opinion, because he was not so happy as to succeed with you? I am not romantic; you know; I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, connection, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast on entering the marriage state.

Elizabeth: But he's ridiculous

Charlotte: Oh hush.

Mary: I think he is a very agreeable companion.

Charlotte: Will you come to see me? I am not likely to leave Kent for some time. Promise me, therefore, to come to Hunsford.

Elizabeth: I promise.

(Charlotte exits, Mrs. Bennet, Lydia and Kitty enter.)

Mrs. Bennet: *(holding a letter)* Oh, Jane. Mrs. Gardiner has invited you to town this winter.

Jane: I will accept Aunt Gardiner's invitation with pleasure. I might occasionally spend a morning with Caroline, without any danger of seeing her brother.

Mrs. Bennet: Lydia, tell Lizzy that her aunt also invites her to accompany her uncle and aunt in a tour of pleasure which they propose on taking in the summer.

Elizabeth: Lydia, tell mother I accept.

Mary: Who do you think Mr. Collins proposed to just this morning, Mother? Charlotte Lucas.

Mrs. Bennet: Charlotte Lucas! This is your doing Elizabeth. It is very hard to think that Charlotte Lucas should ever be mistress of this house, that I should be forced to make way for her, and live to see her take my place in it!

Elizabeth: I thought you weren't speaking to me, mother.

(The stage goes black and the curtain closes for intermission)

ACT TWO

Scene 1 - Writing

(Jane sits at a desk; Austen appears)

Austen: Did you enjoy your little break? Life seems but a quick succession of busy nothings, doesn't it? Anyway...,the wedding of Charlotte Lucas to Mr. Collins took place and the bride and groom set off for Kent from the church door. Meanwhile, Mr. Wickham's apparent partiality to Miss Elizabeth has subsided; he is now the admirer of someone else. A Miss King and her sudden acquisition of ten thousand pounds. I am glad Lizzy did not involve herself with such an imprudent man. Of course, Lizzy has too much sense.

(Jane is writing)

Jane: My dearest Lizzy, the weather in London continues to be pleasant. Aunt Gardiner went into town today and I took the opportunity to call for Miss Bingley. I did not think Caroline in good spirits, but she was very glad to see me, and reproached me for giving her no notice of my coming to London. I was right; my last letter had never reached her. I inquired after their brother, of course. He was well, but so much engaged with Mr. Denny that they scarcely ever saw him. I found that Miss Darcy was expected to dinner. I wish I could see her. My visit was not long, as Caroline was going out. I dare say I shall soon see them here. Yours, Jane.

Scene 2 - Hunsford, Afternoon

Austen: Lizzy left Longbourn to visit Charlotte as she promised in her new home at Hunsford with Mr. Collins. At length it was discernable. The carriage stopped at a small gate and Mr. and Mrs. Collins appeared at the front door.

Collins: We know how little there is to tempt any one to our humble abode. Our plain manner of living, our small rooms and few domestics, must take Hunsford extremely dull to a young lady like yourself.

Elizabeth: Not at all.

Charlotte: The house is rather small but well-built and convenient but everything is fitted up and arranged with neatness and consistency.

Collins: Mrs. Collins deserves all the credit.

Charlotte: The garden is large and well laid out.

Collins: The cultivation of which I attend myself.

Charlotte: To work in his garden is one of Mr. Collins most respectable pleasures. I encourage him as much as possible.

Collins: Miss Elizabeth, you will have the honor of seeing Lady Catherine this evening. I confess that I should not have been surprised by her Ladyship's asking us on Sunday to tea. But who could have foreseen such an attention as this? Who could have imagined that we should receive an invitation to dine there, so immediately after your arrival! But do not make yourself uneasy my dear cousin, about your apparel. Lady Catherine has never been averse to the truly humble.

(They exit, enter Austen)

Austen: Elizabeth's courage did not fail her. She had heard nothing of Lady Catherine that hinted about her character. She is in for a treat indeed.

Scene 3 - Rosings, The same evening

Charlotte: Your Ladyship. Miss de Bourgh. My friend and Mr. Collins's cousin, Miss Elizabeth Bennet.

Elizabeth: Your ladyship.

Charlotte: It is very kind of you to ask us to dine, Lady Catherine.

(Enter Mr. Darcy and Colonel Fitzwilliam)

Collins: Mr. Darcy! What an honour, Sir.

Elizabeth: Mr. Darcy?

Darcy: Miss Elizabeth?

Lady Catherine: You know my nephew?

Darcy: I had the pleasure of meeting Miss Bennet in Hertfordshire while staying at Netherfield. Miss Bennet, allow me to introduce my cousin.

Colonel Fitzwilliam: Colonel Fitzwilliam, how do you do?

Darcy: Your family is in good health I trust?

Elizabeth: They are, thank you. My eldest sister is currently in London; did you happen to see her there?

Darcy: Unfortunately, no.

Lady Catherine: Do you play the pianoforte, Miss Bennet?

Elizabeth: A little Ma'am and very poorly.

Lady Catherine: Some time or other we shall be happy to hear you. Do you draw?

Elizabeth: Not at all.

Lady Catherine: I suppose you had no opportunity. Your mother should have taken you to London every spring for the benefit of the masters.

Elizabeth: My mother would have had no objection, but my father hates town.

Lady Catherine: Has your governess left you?

Elizabeth: We never had a governess.

Lady Catherine: No governess! Five daughters brought up at home without a governess! I never heard of such a thing. Your mother must have been quite a slave to your education.

Elizabeth: We were always encouraged to read, and had all the masters that were necessary.

Lady Catherine: But without a governess to prevent idleness! I always say that nothing is to be done in education without steady and regular

instruction, and nobody but a governess can give that. It is wonderful how I have been the means of supplying many families in that way. I am always glad to get a young person well placed out. Are any of your younger sisters out, Miss Bennet?

Elizabeth: Yes, Ma'am, all.

Lady Catherine: All! What, all five out at once? Very odd. And you only the second. The younger ones out before the elder ones are married! Your younger sisters must be very young?

Elizabeth: Yes, my youngest is not sixteen. But I feel it would be hard on younger sisters to not have their amusement because their elder sisters are unmarried. It would hardly encourage sisterly affection.

Lady Catherine: Upon my word, you give your opinion very decidedly for so young a person. Pray, what is your age?

Elizabeth: With three younger sisters grown up, your ladyship can hardly expect me to own to it.

Lady Catherine: You cannot be more than twenty, I am sure; therefore, you need not conceal your age.

Elizabeth: I am not twenty one.

(Mr. Darcy shares a smile with Colonel Fitzwilliam, there is silence for a moment)

Lady Catherine: I believe you promised to play the pianoforte for us, Miss Bennet.

Elizabeth: No, I beg you.

Collins: Come, come Lizzy. Her Ladyship demands it.

(Elizabeth reluctantly sits down at the piano and starts to play. Lady Catherine takes no notice and talks loudly over the music)

Lady Catherine: How does Georgiana get on, Darcy?

Darcy: Georgiana plays very well.

Lady Catherine: I am very glad to hear such a good account of her and pray tell her from me that she cannot excel if she does not practice a good deal. Mrs. Collins you are very welcome to come to Rosings every day and play on the pianoforte in the housekeeper's room. You would be in nobody's way, you know, in that part of the house.

Charlotte: I thank you Lady Catherine.

(Darcy walks over to Elizabeth at the pianoforte)

Elizabeth: You mean to frighten me, Mr. Darcy, by coming in on your state to hear me? I will not be alarmed even if your sister does play so well.

Darcy: Miss Elizabeth I know that I cannot alarm you even should I wish it.

(Fitzwilliam has made his way to the pianoforte)

Fitzwilliam: What was my friend like in Hertfordshire?

(Elizabeth stops playing)

Elizabeth: You really care to know? Prepare yourself for something very dreadful. The first time I saw him, he danced with nobody, though gentlemen were scarce and there was more than one lady without a partner.

Darcy: I knew no one beyond my own party.

Elizabeth: *(sarcastic)* True, and nobody can ever be introduced in a ballroom.

Lady Catherine: Fitzwilliam I need you!

Darcy: *(he whispers to Elizabeth)* I do not have the talent of conversing easily with people I have never met before.

Elizabeth: Perhaps you should take your aunt's advice and practice.

Austen: Dinner is served, your Ladyship.

(They exit, but Austen remains)

Austen: Through the course of the dinner, the conversation was mostly commanded by Lady Catherine. Nothing ever fatigues one but doing what one does not like, and I can tell you that most everyone at the dinner table, aside from Lady Catherine, were very tired by the end of the night. After dinner Charlotte asked Colonel Fitzwilliam if he would join her at Hunsford for tea the following morning. An invitation which if he had not accepted we can assume the following progressions would not have taken place.

Scene 4 – Writing

Jane: My dearest Lizzy, four weeks have passed, and I have seen nothing of him. I do not regret it; but I can no longer be blind to Mr. Bingley's distraction.

Scene 5 – Hunsford, Morning

(Charlotte and Colonel Fitzwilliam enter; Elizabeth is already sitting reading)

Fitzwilliam: I have been making the tour of the park, as I generally do every year, and intend to close it with a call at the Parsonage.

Charlotte: Do you certainly leave Kent on Saturday?

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

Elizabeth: I imagine your cousin brought you down with him chiefly for the sake of having someone at his disposal.

Charlotte: I wonder he does not marry, to secure a lasting convenience of that kind.

Elizabeth: Perhaps his sister does as well for the present, and as she is under his sole care, he may do what he likes with her.

Fitzwilliam: No. That is an advantage, which he must divide with me. I am joined with him in the guardianship of Miss Darcy. As for marrying, it is the dearest wish of Lady Catherine that Rosings and Pemberley be united in marriage.

Elizabeth: Miss de Bourgh? Poor Miss Bingley.

Charlotte: Miss Bingley is a member of our acquaintance. I think I have heard you say you know her.

Fitzwilliam: I know her a little. Her brother is a pleasant, gentlemanlike man, he is a great friend of Darcy's. From something that he told me, I have reason to think Bingley very much indebted to him. It is a circumstance which Darcy could not wish to be generally known, because if it were to get round to the lady's family, it would be an unpleasant thing.

Charlotte: You may depend upon our not mentioning it.

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

Elizabeth: Did Mr. Darcy give you reason for this interference?

Fitzwilliam: I understood that there were some very strong objections against the lady.

Elizabeth: I do not see what right Mr. Darcy had to decide on the propriety of his friend's inclination.

Charlotte: But as we know none of the particulars, it is not fair to condemn him. It is not to be supposed that there was much affection in the case.

Fitzwilliam: It certainly lessens the honour of my cousin's triumph very sadly. Thank you, Mrs. Collins for the tea. I hope I will have the pleasure of seeing you both at dinner at Rosings this evening?

Charlotte: You may count on it, Colonel Fitzwilliam.

(Fitzwilliam exits)

Elizabeth: Charlotte, please convey my apologies, I have a headache; I cannot attend the party at Rosings this evening.

(Elizabeth exits)

Scene 6 – Writing

Jane: My dearest Lizzy, I confess myself to have been entirely deceived in Miss Bingley's regard for me. But, though the event has proved you right, do not think me obstinate if I still assert that, considering what her behavior was, my confidence was as natural as our suspicion. Caroline did not return my visit till yesterday; and not a note, not a line, did I receive in the meantime. When she did come, it was very evident that she had no pleasure in it; she made a slight, formal apology for not calling before, said not a word of wishing to see me again, and was in every respect so altered a creature, that when she went away I was perfectly resolved to continue the acquaintance no longer. I cannot but wonder, however, at her having any fears now, because, if he had at all cared about me, he would have come to see me by now. He knows of my being in town, I am certain, from something she said herself; and yet it would seem, by her manner of talking, as if she wanted to persuade herself that he really does favor Miss Darcy. If I were not afraid of judging harshly, I should be almost tempted to say that there is a strong appearance of deception in all this. Let me hear from you very soon. Yours, Jane.

Scene 7 – Hunsford, Night

(Elizabeth is reading Jane's letter, the doorbell rings and Darcy enters)

Darcy: Miss Bennet, I have struggled in vain, but I can bear it no longer. These past months have been a torment. I came to Rosings with the single object of seeing you, I had to see you. *(beat)* I've fought against my better judgement, my family's expectation, the inferiority of your birth, my rank and circumstance all those things, but I'm willing to put them aside and ask you to end my agony--

Elizabeth: I don't understand-

Darcy: I love you. Most ardently. Please do me the honour of accepting my hand.

Elizabeth: Sir, I appreciate the struggle you have been through, and I am very sorry to have caused you pain. Believe me, it was unconsciously done.

Darcy: Is this your reply?

Elizabeth: Yes, sir.

Darcy: Are... are you laughing at me?

Elizabeth: No?

Darcy: Are you rejecting me?

Elizabeth: I'm sure that the feelings which, as you've told me, have hindered your regard, will help you in overcoming it.

Darcy: Might I ask why, with so little endeavour at civility, I am thus repulsed?

Elizabeth: And I might as well enquire why, with so evident a design of insulting me, you chose to tell me that you liked me against your better judgement. If I was uncivil, that was some excuse--

Darcy: Believe me, I didn't mean--

Elizabeth: But I have other reasons, you know I have!

Darcy: What reasons?

Elizabeth: Do you think that anything might tempt me to accept the man who has ruined, perhaps forever, the happiness of a most beloved sister? Do you deny it, Mr. Darcy? That you separated a young couple who love each other, exposing your friend to the censure of the world for caprice, and my sister to its derision for disappointed hopes, and involving them both in misery of the acutest kind?

Darcy: I do not deny it.

Elizabeth: How could you do it?

Darcy: Because I believed your sister indifferent to him.

Elizabeth: Indifferent?

Darcy: I watched them most carefully, and realized his attachment was much deeper than hers.

Elizabeth: That's because she's shy!

Darcy: Bingley too is modest, and was persuaded that she didn't feel strongly for him.

Elizabeth: Because you suggested it!

Darcy: I did it for his own good.

Elizabeth: My sister hardly shows her true feelings to me! I suppose you suspect that his fortune had some bearing on the matter?

Darcy: No! I wouldn't do your sister the dishonor. Though it was suggested—

Elizabeth: What was?

Darcy: It was made perfectly clear that an advantageous marriage—

Elizabeth: Did my sister give that impression?

Darcy: No, there was, however, I have to admit... the matter of your family—

Elizabeth: Our want of connection? Mr. Bingley didn't vex himself about that!

Darcy: No, it was more than that.

Elizabeth: How, sir?

Darcy: It pains me to say this, but it was the lack of propriety shown by your mother, your three younger sisters, even on occasion your father. *(beat)* Forgive me. You and your sister, I must exclude from this.

Elizabeth: And what about Mr. Wickham?

Darcy: Mr. Wickham?

Elizabeth: What excuse can you give for your behavior towards him?

Darcy: You take an eager interest in that gentleman's concerns!

Elizabeth: He told me of his misfortunes.

Darcy: *(sarcastically)* Oh yes, his misfortunes have been very great indeed.

Elizabeth: You have ruined his chances, and yet you treat him with sarcasm?

Darcy: So this is your opinion of me. Thank you for explaining it so fully. Perhaps these offenses might have been overlooked if your pride had not been hurt—

Elizabeth: My pride?

Darcy: -- by my honesty in admitting scruples about our relationship. Could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your circumstances?

Elizabeth: And those are the words of a gentleman? From the first moment I met you, your arrogance and conceit, your selfish disdain for

the feelings of others, made me realize that you were the last man in the world I could ever be prevailed upon to marry.

(At this point it is kiss or kill)

Darcy: Forgive me, madam for taking up so much of your time.

(Exit Mr. Darcy)

Scene 8 – Hunsford, Morning

Austen: It is always incomprehensible to a man that a woman should ever refuse an offer of marriage. Elizabeth has managed to do this twice. However, for very valid and respectable reasons. The next morning Elizabeth awoke to the same thoughts and meditations which had at length closed her eyes. She could not yet recover from the surprise of what had happened; it was impossible to think of anything else and she was completely unable to have any sort of employment. When suddenly she was yet again surprised by Mr. Darcy.

(Enter Darcy with a letter in his hand for a moment all you hear are his boots banging against the floor as he slowly crosses the stage.)

Darcy: I will not renew the sentiments which were so disgusting to you. But if I may, I will address the two offences you've laid against me.

(He places the letter on the ground and exits, Elizabeth goes to pick it up)

Austen: In the letter she read.

Darcy V.O.: My father loved Mr. Wickham as a son. He left him a generous living. But upon my father's death, Mr. Wickham announced he had no intention of taking orders. He demanded the value of the living, which he'd gambled away within weeks. He then wrote, demanding more money, which I refused. After which, he severed all acquaintance. He came back to see us last summer, and declared passionate love for my sister, whom he tried to persuade to elope with him. She is to inherit thirty thousand pounds. When it was made clear he would never receive a

penny of it, he disappeared. I will not attempt to convey the depth of Georgiana's despair. She was 15 years old. As to the other matter, of your sister and Mr. Bingley, though the motives which governed me may appear insufficient, they were in the service of a friend.

(Enter Charlotte)

Charlotte: Lizzy are you all right?

Elizabeth: I hardly know.

(Enter Collins)

Mr. Collins: There you are, Miss Elizabeth. It gives me the greatest pleasure to hear that you have passed your time with us not disagreeably. The favour of your company has been much felt, I assure you by both Mrs. Collins and myself. Only let me assure you, my dear Miss Elizabeth, that I can from my heart most cordially wish you equal felicity in marriage. My dear Charlotte and I have but one mind and one way of thinking. We seem to have been designed for each other.

Charlotte: Promise you will visit again this time next year.

Elizabeth: I promise. Thank you both for your hospitality. It has been wonderful seeing you.

Scene 9 – Longbourn, Afternoon

Austen: Mr. and Mrs. Bennet have been in frequent discussion about Miss Lydia's scheme for the family to go to Brighton this summer to visit the Foresters and the regiment. Lydia has a great friend in Mrs. Forester; whether Mrs. Forester is a great influence has yet to be seen. But it is the last two weeks of the regiments stay in Meryton and I have heard Miss Lydia often exclaim that her heart will break due to their leaving. Mr. Bennet rejoiced on having Miss Elizabeth and Miss Jane home. Although he has not seen much of Jane since she spends most days in her room.

Lydia: I have got some news for you. Its excellent news, capital news, and about a certain person we all like! There is no danger of Wickham's marrying Miss King. She is gone down to her uncle in Liverpool: gone to stay. Wickham is safe.

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

Lydia: I am sure there is not on his part. I will answer for it he never cared three straws about her, who could about such a nasty little freckled thing? I was in great hopes that one of you would have got a husband before you came back. Jane will be quite an old maid soon, I declare. She is almost twenty-three! Aunt Gardiner wants you so to get husbands. She says Lizzy had better have taken Mr. Collins; but I do not think there would have been any fun in it. Lord, how I should like to be married before any of you; and then I would chaperon you about to all the balls.

Mrs. Bennet: Well, Lizzy, so the Collins' they live very comfortable, do they? And what sort of table to they keep? Charlotte is an excellent manager, I dare say. If she is half as sharp as her mother. There is nothing extravagant in her housekeeping, I dare say.

Elizabeth: No, nothing at all.

Mrs. Bennet: Yes, yes. They will take care not to outrun their income. They will never be distressed for money. And so, I suppose, they often talk of having Longbourn when your father has passed. If one could but go to Brighton for the summer.

Lydia: Oh, if one could but go to Brighton! But papa is so unpleasant about it.

(Austen as Mrs. Hill brings in a letter to Lydia)

Mrs. Bennet: Well, Lizzy, what is your opinion now of this sad business of Jane's? For my part, I am determined never to speak of it again to anybody. There is no talk of his coming to Netherfield again in the summer; and I have inquired of everybody, too, who is likely to know.

Elizabeth: I do not believe he will live at Netherfield any more.

Mrs. Bennet: Well, my comfort is, I am sure Jane will die of a broken heart; and then he will be sorry for what he has done

(Enter Mr. Bennet)

Lydia: Mother! Mother! Mrs. Forester has invited to take me to Brighton.

Kitty: Why didn't she ask me as well?

Lydia: Because I'm better company.

Kitty: I cannot see why Mrs. Forester should not ask me as well as Lydia. Though I am not her particular friend. I have just as much right to be asked as she has, and more too, for I am two years older.

Lydia skips out and is tauntingly singing "I am going to Brighton", Kitty then exits opposite Lydia followed by Mrs. Bennet trying to comfort Kitty)

Mary: Father, I would advise against this. I feel the necessity to point out all the improprieties of Lydia's general behavior; she can derive little advantage from the friendship of such a woman as Mrs. Forster. In all probability Lydia will be more imprudent with such a companion at Brighton, where the temptations must be greater than here at home.

Elizabeth: If you do not check her, she'll be fixed as the silliest flirt who ever made her family ridiculous. And Kitty will follow as always.

Mr. Bennet: Lydia will never be easy until she has exposed herself in some public place or other, and we can never expect her to do it with so little expense or inconvenience to her family as under the present circumstances. We shall have no peace at Longbourn if Lydia does not go to Brighton. Let her go.

Elizabeth: Is that really all you care about?

Mr. Bennet: Colonel Forester is a sensible man. He will keep her out of any real mischief. And she is too poor to be an object of prey to anyone.

Scene 10 – Pemberley, Afternoon

Austen: The next morning Elizabeth's Aunt and Uncle Gardener had arrived for their visit for the summer. As promised they spent the day together. However, Elizabeth was very distressed. Mrs. Gardiner wanted to visit Pemberley, the home of Mr. Darcy. Apparently she enjoyed the architecture and no matter how hard she tried, Elizabeth could not change her mind. She felt that she had no business at Pemberley, and was obliged to adopt a reluctance for seeing it. She must own that she was tired of great houses; after going over to so many, she really had no pleasure in fine carpets or satin curtains.

Mrs. Gardiner: If it were merely a fine house richly furnished I should not care about Pemberley myself but the grounds are delightful. They have some of the finest woods in the country.

Elizabeth: We are certain the family is not in residence for the summer?

Mr. Gardiner: I was told by the proprietor of our inn that the family is not in residence.

(Austen appears and replaces Mrs. Hill's apron with a nicer one, complete with ruffles as well as a maid's cap, she is now Mrs. Reynolds, a servant who works at Pemberley)

Austen: Welcome to Pemberley. I am Mrs. Reynolds, the housekeeper here at Pemberley. Are you here to tour the grounds?

Mrs. Gardiner: We are!

Austen: Please come this way. This room was my late master's favorite room, and these miniatures are just as they used to be then. He was very fond of them.

Mrs. Gardiner: *(She whispers to Elizabeth)* You might have been mistress of this place, Lizzy.

Mr. Gardiner: Is your master absent at present?

Austen: He is. But we expect him tomorrow, with a large party of friends.

Mrs. Gardiner: Lizzy, come look at these pictures. How do you like this one?

Austen: This is a picture of the son of my late master's steward, Mr. Wickham. He was brought up by the late Mr. Darcy at some considerable expense. He is now gone into the army but I am afraid he has turned out very wild. And that is my master, Mr. Darcy. It was drawn at the same time as the other, about eight years ago.

Mrs. Gardiner: I have heard much of your master's fine person. It is a handsome face. But, Lizzy, you can tell us whether it is like or not.

Austen: Does the young lady know Mr. Darcy?

Elizabeth: Only a little.

Austen: And do not you think him a very handsome man, Miss?

Elizabeth: Yes, yes I dare say he is.

Austen: I am sure I know none so handsome; but in the gallery upstairs you will see finer, larger picture of him than this.

Mrs. Gardiner: And is Miss Darcy as handsome as her brother?

Austen: Oh, yes, the handsomest lady that ever was seen; and so accomplished! She plays and sings all day long. In the next room is a new instrument that just came down for her, it was a present from Mr. Darcy; she comes here tomorrow with him.

Mr. Gardiner: Is your master much at Pemberley in the course of the year?

Austen: Not so much as I could wish, sir; but I dare say he may spend half his time here; and Miss Darcy is always down for the summer months.

Mrs. Gardiner: If your master would marry, you might see more of him.

Austen: Yes, Ma'am, but I do not know when that will be. I do not know who is good enough for him.

Mrs. Gardiner: It is very much to his credit, I am sure, that you should think so.

Austen: I say no more than the truth, and everybody will say that knows him. I have never heard a cross word from him in my life, and I have known him ever since he was four years old.

Mr. Gardiner: There are very few people of whom so much can be said. You are lucky in having such a master.

Austen: Yes, sir, I know I am. If I were to go through the world, I could not meet with a better. But I have always observed, that they who are good-natured when children, are good-natured when they are grown; and he was always the sweetest, most generous boy in the world.

Mrs. Gardiner: His father was an excellent man.

Austen: Yes, Ma'am, that he was indeed; and his son is just like him, just as hospitable to the poor. He is the best landlord; not like the wild young men nowadays, who think of nothing but themselves. There is not one of his tenants or servants but will give him a good name. Some people call him proud; but I am sure I never saw anything of it. To my fancy, it is only because he does not rattle away like other young men.

(Enter Mr. Darcy)

Darcy: Miss Elizabeth!

Elizabeth: Mr. Darcy! I was told you were in London.

Darcy: I was. Now I am not.

Elizabeth: Oh.

Darcy: Would you do me the honour of introducing me to your friends?

Elizabeth: Mr. Gardiner, Mrs. Gardiner, this is Mr. Darcy, the master of Pemberley.

Darcy: Your aunt and uncle, I believe. I am pleased to meet you.

Mr. Gardiner: We are on a tour of the area and were told that Pemberley had some of the finest woods in the country.

Darcy: Have you had the opportunity to view the grounds? I would be honoured if you would allow me to show you around. Mrs. Reynolds, how nice to see you, will you please let the steward know I will be with him in a short while, please convey to him my apologies.

Austen: Very good, sir. Welcome home.

Darcy: Please come right this way.

Mr. Gardiner: Thank you, Mr. Darcy

Darcy: Are you fond of fishing, Mr. Gardiner?

Mr. Gardiner: I am, Mr. Darcy.

Darcy: While you are in Lambton please come and fish here as often as you choose. We can supply you with fishing tackle. You will find that the lake is fully stocked.

Mr. Gardiner: Thank you, Mr. Darcy. I would be delighted.

Mrs. Gardiner: Gentleman, I apologize, but I find myself fatigued by the morning exercise. Mr. Gardiner, may I have your arm for support?

Mr. Gardiner: Oh course, my dear. You will excuse us, Mr. Darcy.

Darcy: Of course. There is a short cut back to the house just here, Mrs. Gardiner. We will get you back soon.

Mrs. Gardiner: Thank you, Mr. Darcy.

(Darcy offers Elizabeth his arm. She takes it.)

Darcy: May I inquire after the health of your family, Miss Elizabeth?

Elizabeth: They are quite well, thank you.

(Georgiana enters, Mr. Gardiner leads Mrs. Gardiner to a chair, she sits)

Georgiana: Brother! Oh how I so enjoy my new pianoforte!

Darcy: Miss Bennet this is my sister Georgiana.

Elizabeth: How do you do Miss Darcy.

Georgiana: Call me Georgiana, Miss Bennet. My brother has talked of you so often these last months that I feel as if we are friends already.

Elizabeth: Your brother has been diverting you with stories about me? Please do not take only his account. Allow me to give you mine as well. I would be honoured to call you Georgiana if you would return the courtesy and call me Elizabeth.

(Enter Caroline)

Caroline: Yes, there are so many Miss Bennet's that it must be confusing for you. Miss Elizabeth has four other sisters, all of whom are out in society at present. *(Silence)*

Georgiana: My pianoforte is the most beautiful gift I have ever received. I fear I have spent the entire day engrossed in music.

Caroline: Pray, Miss Elizabeth, are not the Militia removed from Meryton? They must be a great loss to your family.

(Enter Mr. Bingley)

Elizabeth: Thank you for asking after the welfare of my family, Miss Bingley. They are all quite well.

Bingley: Afternoon. I thought I would intrude upon your gathering for just a moment.

Darcy: Mrs. Gardiner, Mr. Gardiner, may I introduce Mr. Bingley?

Mr. Gardiner: Good afternoon. Pleased to make your acquaintance.

Caroline: Do you reside in Lambton, Mr. Gardiner?

Mr. Gardiner: Unhappily we do not. My niece is touring with us this summer. By her association we are very fortunate indeed to be the recipient of Mr. Darcy's hospitality while we are in the area.

Bingley: May I inquire after your sister, Miss Bennet?

Elizabeth: Jane is quite well.

Bingley: It is a very long time since I have had the pleasure of seeing her. It is above eight months. We have not met since the 26th of November, when we were all dancing together at Netherfield.

Elizabeth: Yes, I believe it has been eight months.

Bingley: Will you please tell her I asked after her?

Caroline: Tell her we all asked after her. Your sister was a particular favorite of mine. It is such a shame that we will not be going to Netherfield this summer.

Darcy: Mr. Gardiner, will you be able to join Mr. Bingley and myself again at noon tomorrow for some fishing?

Mr. Gardiner: I will, Mr. Darcy. I thank you for the opportunity.

Mrs. Gardiner: The Spanish chestnuts scattered over the lawn are lovely, Mr. Darcy.

Caroline: Oh yes, Pemberley is the most beautiful place. Mr. Darcy takes special care of Pemberley and of all those who reside here.

Georgiana: We were talking about the pianoforte; my brother gave me. He spoils me.

Darcy: I do not. You are an accomplished musician, Georgiana. You deserve an instrument to match your abilities.

Georgiana: It is a lovely gift.

Darcy: I am glad you are pleased with it.

Elizabeth: I hope to have the honour of hearing you play. Your brother had the misfortune of hearing me play for a whole evening.

Georgiana: But he says you play so very well.

Elizabeth: Then he has perjured himself.

(Darcy and Elizabeth laugh)

Darcy: I said "Quite well"

Elizabeth: "Quite well" is not "Very well". I am satisfied.

Mrs. Gardiner: Thank you for the invitation to fish, Mr. Darcy.

Mr. Gardiner: And for your hospitality, Mr. Darcy.

Darcy: Miss Elizabeth, would you and Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner dine with us this evening?

Elizabeth: We would be honoured.

Georgiana: After dinner we could play a duet. Do you play duets, Miss Elizabeth?

Elizabeth: Only when forced.

Georgiana: Brother, you must force her.

Darcy: Very well.

Bingley: Why don't I show you all the library. I know how fond of books you are Miss Bennet.

Elizabeth: That would be lovely.

Georgiana: I am going to practice.

(Exit Georgiana, Darcy begins to walk in the direction that Elizabeth exited, but is stopped.)

Caroline: How very ill Miss Elizabeth looks, Mr. Darcy, I never in my life saw anyone so much altered as she is since the winter. For my own part, I must confess that I never could see any beauty in her. Her face is too thin; and her features are not at all handsome. Her nose wants character, there is nothing marked in its lines. Her teeth are tolerable, but not out of the common way; and as for her eyes, which have sometimes been called so fine, I could never see anything extraordinary in them. They have a sharp, shrewish look, which I do not like at all; and in her altogether there is a self-sufficiency without fashion, which is intolerable.

Austen: Those who do not complain are never pitied. And if Darcy didn't pity Caroline as much as he did, she might have had a greater chance with him.

Darcy: I consider her to be one of the handsomest women of my acquaintance.

(Exit Caroline, Darcy joins Georgiana at the piano)

Georgiana: She's quite lovely you know.

Darcy: I know.

Georgiana: You get on so well. Why ever did she refuse you?

Darcy: It was regarding Charles and her sister Jane.

Georgiana: That couldn't have been all.

Darcy: She was also introduced to Wickham.

Georgiana: Oh.

Darcy: Yes.

Georgiana: You must tell her the truth of the matter, that --

Darcy: I have. I wrote her a letter explaining everything.

Georgiana: And so.

Darcy: I believe our friendship has been mended, but you cannot force someone to love you, Georgiana. Marriage may be business, but love is not.

Georgiana: I still think you should talk with her. She may feel different now that she knows the truth.

Darcy: I plan to tonight.

(Enter Elizabeth, and Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner escorted by Bingley, Austen enters as Reynolds with a letter)

Elizabeth: Thank you Mr. Bingley, the library was beautiful.

Bingley: I am glad you liked it.

Darcy: You may come and borrow any book you like, if you wish, my library is at your disposal.

Elizabeth: Thank you.

Austen: A letter for you, Miss Bennet.

Elizabeth: Thank you, Mrs. Reynolds. It's from Jane.

(She reads it to herself)

Elizabeth: Oh, it is the most dreadful news. Lydia has run away... with Mr. Wickham. They are gone to Lord knows where. She has no money, no connections --

Darcy: This is my fault. If only I had exposed Wickham when I should.

Elizabeth: No this is my fault. I may have prevented all this by being open with my sisters.

Mr. Gardiner: Has anything been done to recover her?

Elizabeth: My father is gone to London. But nothing can be done. I know very well that nothing can be done. I have not the smallest hope.

Darcy: Would that I could help you.

Elizabeth: Sir, I think it is too late.

Darcy: This is grave indeed. I will have my carriage take you home immediately. Mrs. Reynolds will you call for the carriage.

Austen: Right away sir.

Mr. Gardiner: Come, Lizzy. Thank you for your hospitality, Mr. Darcy.

(Exit Elizabeth and Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner)

Georgiana: Wickham ruins everything.

Scene 11 – Longbourn, Afternoon

(Elizabeth, Jane, Mary, Kitty, and Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner are all seated)

Austen: It had seemed Mr. Wickham was in debt to every tradesman in Meryton, and he was in need of money. In his mind the best way to secure that was to seduce the poor little Lydia into marrying him, and collect a commission in exchange for her hand.

Elizabeth: Where is mama?

Jane: In the dressing room complaining of her own suffering and nervous system.

Elizabeth: Has father gone to London?

Jane: Yes, he went on Tuesday.

Mrs. Gardiner: Have you heard from him?

Mary: He wrote a few lines on Wednesday to say that he had arrived in safely and that he should not write again till he had something of importance to mention.

Mrs. Gardiner: What measures does your father intend to pursue, while in town, to recover his daughter?

Jane: He means to go to Epsom, the place where they last changed horses.

Mr. Gardiner: Had Colonel Forester no apprehension of anything before the elopement took place?

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

Mrs. Gardiner: And did Colonel Forester appear to think well of Wickham himself? Does he know his real character?

Jane: I must confess that he did not speak so well of Wickham as he formerly did. He believed him to be imprudent and extravagant. And since this sad affair has taken place, it is said that he left Meryton greatly in debt; but I hope this may be false.

Mary: Lydia left a note for Mrs. Forester. It is quite long but the essential part is 'I am going to Gretna Green, and if you cannot guess with who, I shall think you a simpleton, for there is but one man in the world I love, and he is an angel. I should never be happy without him, so think it no harm to be off.'

Mr. Gardiner: And your mother, how is she?

Jane: My mother is tolerably well; I trust; though her spirits are greatly shaken.

(Enter Mrs. Bennet)

Mrs. Bennet: Oh! My dear brother! Why did the Foresters ever let her go out of their sight? I am sure there was some great neglect or other on their side, for she is not the kind of girl to do such a thing if she had been well looked after. And now Mr. Bennet's gone away, and I know he will fight Wickham, wherever he meets him and then he will be killed. The Collins' will turn us out before he is cold in his grave. Lydia must know

what this is doing to my nerves. Such fluttering spasms all over me! My baby Lydia, my baby! How could she do such a thing to her poor mama?

(Mr. Gardiner helps Mrs. Bennet to the couch)

Mr. Gardiner: I will do what I can but I must recommend moderation to you. In your hopes as well as in your fears. I am off. Look for word of me as soon as I get there. Come my dear.

Mrs. Gardiner: God bless.

(Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner exit)

Scene 12 - Longbourn, Afternoon

(Mr. Bennet enters and the girls are sitting)

Mr. Bennet: No post yet?

Austen: Not yet.

Mr. Bennet: Where is Mrs. Bennet?

Austen: Upstairs. She will not leave her dressing room, sir.

(Austen exits)

Mr. Bennet: Mary, what are you reading?

Mary: Mr. Collins letter, father. It arrived yesterday.

Mr. Bennet: Yes, I remember. All right, don't read it all; sum it up.

Mary: That is difficult with Mr. Collins father. He sends his condolences and Lady Catherine's. I believe. His advice, and Lady Catherine agrees, is 'to throw your unworthy child from your affection forever, and leave her to reap the fruits of her own heinous offence. Otherwise, this one false step in one daughter, will be injurious to the fortunes of all the others.'

Jane: Do you suppose them to be in London?

Mr. Bennet: Yes, where else can they be so well concealed?

Kitty: And Lydia used to want to go to London.

Mr. Bennet: She is happy then and her residence there will probably be of some duration.

Kitty: If I should ever go to Brighton, I would behave better than Lydia.

Mr. Bennet: No, Kitty, I have at last learnt to be cautious, and you will feel the effects of it. No officer is ever to enter into my house again, nor even to pass through the village. And you are never to stir out of doors till you can prove that you have spent ten minutes of every day in a rational manner.

Austen: A letter for the master.

Mr. Bennet: A letter by express.

(Mr. Gardiner appears on the apron of the stage holding the letter and reading)

Mr. Gardiner: ‘My Dear Brother, soon after you left me on Saturday, I was fortunate enough to find out in what part of London they were. I will reserve the particulars till we meet; it is enough to know they are discovered. They are not married, nor can I find there was any intention of being so; but if you are willing to perform the engagements that I have ventured to make on your side, I hope it will not be long before they are. All that is required of you is, to assure your daughter, by settlement, her equal share of the five thousand pounds secured among your children after the decease of yourself and my sister; and, moreover, to enter into an engagement of allowing her, during your life, one hundred pounds annually. These are conditions which, considering everything, I had no hesitation in complying with. Send back your answer as fast as you can, and be careful to write explicitly. Yours, Edward Gardiner’

Mary: My dear father, I congratulate you.

Mr. Bennet: There are two things which I want very much to know; one is, how much money your uncle has laid down to bring it about; and the other, how am I ever to repay him.

Jane: What do you mean?

Mr. Bennet: I mean that no man in his senses would marry Lydia on so slight a temptation as one hundred a year during my life, and fifty after I am gone. Wickham's a fool if he takes her with a farthing less than ten thousand pounds. How is half such a sum to be repaid? I will answer the letter.

(Mr. Bennet exits)

Mary: Unhappy as the event must be for Lydia, we may draw from it this useful lesson: that loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable; that one false step involves her in endless ruin; that her reputation is no less brittle than it is beautiful; and that she cannot be too much guarded in her behavior towards the undeserving of the other sex.

Kitty: I hope and trust they will yet be happy.

(Mrs. Bennet enters)

Mrs. Bennet: Lydia, married! And at 15 too. I must put on my things and tell Lady Lucas. Oh, to see her face. Tell the servants they are to have a bowl of punch. We should thank your uncle, he is far richer than us and has no children. Lydia, married!

Elizabeth: Is that really all you think about?

Mrs. Bennet: When you have five daughters, tell me what else will occupy your thoughts. Then perhaps you will understand.

Scene 13 – Longbourn, Early afternoon

Austen: When first Mr. Bennet had married, like all hopeful couples they believed they would have a son. And as soon as he should be of age Mrs. Bennet and the girls would be provided for, but this event never occurred.

Mr. Bennet wishes that he had made better provisions for his daughters, especially now that he is indebted to Mr. Gardiner for rescuing Lydia but, families are always so sure that they will be gifted with a son, however this common assumption can be costly if one does not prepare for its failure. Luckily for the Bennets someone had softened the blow.

Mr. Bennet: Tell me, Mrs. Hill, why did I agree to receive Lydia and her horrible husband?

Austen: I believe it was for the sake of propriety, sir. It would not look right if Miss Lydia, pardon, Mrs. Wickham, were not noticed on her marriage by her parents. And if you do not admit her into the family again it might hurt the other girls, sir.

Mr. Bennet: Hmmm. Thank you. When he comes, show him into my library; we have business to attend to.

Austen: Very good sir. *(to audience)* Poor man, he has paid all of Wickham's creditors here and in Brighton. Oh, I hear the carriage pulling into the yard.

(Austen exits, Enter Mrs. Bennet)

Mrs. Bennet: Girls, Lydia is here!

(Enter Lydia and Wickham, Jane, Elizabeth, Mary and Kitty, Austen shows Wickham to Mr. Bennet)

Lydia: Only think it has been three months since I went away but it seems but a fortnight. Good gracious! When I went away, I am sure I had no more idea of being married when I came back again! Though I thought it would be very good fun if I was. Well, mamma, what do you think of my husband! Is not he a charming man? I am sure my sisters must all envy me. I only hope they may have half my good luck. They must all go to Brighton. For that is the place to get husbands. What a pity it is, mamma, we did not all go.

Mrs. Bennet: Very true; and if I had my will, we should. But my dear Lydia, I don't at all like you're going such a way off. Must it be so?

Lydia: We shall be at Newcastle all the winter. You and papa, and my sisters, must come down and see us. I dare say there will be a ball, and I will take care to get good partners for them all.

Mrs. Bennet: I should like it beyond anything!

Lydia: And then when you go away, you may leave one or two of my sisters behind you; and I dare say I shall get husbands for them before winter is over.

Elizabeth: I thank you for my share of the favour, but I do not particularly like your way of getting husbands.

Mrs. Bennet: Oh, I must go see what is keeping your father and Mr. Wickham.

(Mrs. Bennet exits)

Lydia: Do the people here know I am married? I never gave you an account of my wedding, I believe. Are not you curious to hear how it was managed?

Mary: I think there cannot be too much said on the subject.

Lydia: Monday morning came and I was in such a fuss.

Elizabeth: I don't want to hear.

Lydia: There was my aunt preaching away as if reading a sermon. She was horrid unpleasant.

Elizabeth: Can't you understand why?

Lydia: But I didn't hear a word because I was thinking of my dear Wickham. I longed to know if he'd be married in his bluecoat. And our uncle was called away to Churchill for business. So I thought, who is to be

our best man if he doesn't come back? Lucky, he did, or I would've had to ask Mr. Darcy.

Elizabeth: Mr. Darcy!

Lydia: I forgot! But I shouldn't have said a word.

Elizabeth: Mr. Darcy was at your wedding?

Lydia: He was the one that discovered us. He paid for the wedding, Wickham's commission, everything. But he told me not to tell.

Elizabeth: Mr. Darcy?

Lydia: Stop it, Lizzie. Mr. Darcy's not half as high and mighty as you sometimes.

(Austen enters)

Austen: Congratulations, Mrs. Wickham, on your nuptial.

Lydia: Thank you Mrs. Hill.

(Austen exits, Mr. Bennet and Mr. Wickham enter along with Mrs. Bennet)

Wickham: I received my commission before we left London, and I am to join my regiment at the end of the week. We will be quartered up North in Newcastle. We must leave shortly so we can arrive in good time.

Mary: The north of England, I believe, boasts some spectacular scenery.

Wickham: So I have heard. *(to Elizabeth)* I find, from Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, that you have actually seen Pemberley.

Elizabeth: Yes.

Wickham: I almost envy you the pleasure, and yet I believe it would be too much for me, or else I could take it in on my way to Newcastle. And you saw the old housekeeper, I suppose? Poor Reynolds, she was always very fond of me. But of course she did not mention my name to you.

Elizabeth: Yes, she did.

Wickham: And what did she say?

Elizabeth: That you were gone into the army, but she was afraid had not turned out well.

Wickham: Did you see Mr. Darcy while you were at Lambton? I thought I understood from the Gardiners that you had.

Elizabeth: Yes, he introduced me to his sister.

Wickham: And do you like her?

Elizabeth: Very much.

Wickham: I have heard, indeed, that she is uncommonly improved with this year or two. When I last saw her, she was not very promising. I am very glad you liked her. I hope she will turn out well.

Elizabeth: I dare say she will; she has got over the most trying age.

Wickham: Did you go by the village of Kympton? I mention it, because it is the living that I ought to have had. An excellent Parsonage House. It would have suited me in every respect.

Elizabeth: I hear that you actually declared your resolution of never taking orders, and that you were compensated accordingly with a great sum.

Wickham: You did? That was not entirely without foundation.

Elizabeth: Come, Mr. Wickham, we are brother and sister, you know. Do not let us quarrel about the past. In future, I hope we shall be always of one mind.

(Mr. Wickham nods in agreement)

Wickham: Thank you for your hospitality. We should be going.

Mrs. Bennet: Oh, my dear Lydia, when shall we meet again?

Lydia: Oh, lord! I don't know. Not these two or three years perhaps.

Mrs. Bennet: Write to me very often, my dear.

Lydia: As often as I can. But you know married women have never much time for writing. But my sisters may write to me, for they will have nothing else to do.

(Wickham exits with Lydia on his arm)

Mrs. Bennet: There is nothing so sad as parting with one's children. One seems so lonely without them.

Scene 14 – Longbourn, Morning

(Enter Austen as Mrs. Hill)

Austen: The housekeeper at Netherfield has received orders to prepare for the arrival of her master, Mr. Bingley, who will be coming down in a day or two, to shoot there for several weeks.

Mrs. Bennet: Is it quite certain that Mr. Bingley is coming?

Austen: Yes, Ma'am, he comes down on Thursday at the latest, very likely on Wednesday. His sister will not be coming with him.

(Austen Exits)

Mrs. Bennet: Thank you, Mrs. Hill. Did you hear that, Jane? Not that I care about it, though. He is nothing to us, you know, and I am sure I never want to see him again. But, however, he is very welcome to come to Netherfield, if he likes it. And who knows what may happen?

Jane: I assure you that the news does not affect me either with pleasure or pain. I am glad he comes alone because we shall see less of him.

(Enter Kitty, almost running)

Kitty: I just saw him, from my dressing-room window; he entered the paddock; he is riding towards the house.

Mrs. Bennet: For pity sake, Kitty, who?

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

Elizabeth: Mr. Darcy!

(Austen enters followed by Darcy and Bingley)

Austen: Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy.

(Austen exits)

Mrs. Bennet: It is a long time, Mr. Bingley, since you went away. A great many changes have happened. Miss Lydia is married and settled with Mr.

Wickham. You must have seen it in the papers. Though it was not put in as it ought to have been. Very short. Nothing about her family.

Bingley: I did hear of it, and offer my congratulations.

Mrs. Bennet: Mr. Wickham has been transferred to Newcastle, wherever that is. Will you be staying long in the country?

Bingley: Just a few weeks. For the shooting.

Mrs. Bennet: When you've killed all your own birds, I beg you will come here and shoot as many as you please. Mr. Bennet will be vastly happy to oblige.

Bingley: Excellent.

Elizabeth: Are you well, Mr. Darcy?

Darcy: Quite well, thank you.

Mrs. Bennet: My Jane looks well, does she not?

Bingley: She does indeed. Well, we must be going, I think. Darcy. It's been very pleasant to see you all again. Miss Elizabeth. Miss Bennet.

Mrs. Bennet: You must come again. Last winter, you promised to have a family dinner with us. I've not forgot, you see. At least three courses.

Bingley: Excuse me.

Mrs. Bennet: Most extraordinary.

(Mr. Bingley leaves with Darcy, Bingley is now passing back and forth outside the house)

Jane: I'm glad that's over. Now we can meet as indifferent acquaintances.

Elizabeth: Oh, yes.

Jane: You cannot think me so weak as to be in danger now.

Elizabeth: You are in great danger of making him as much in love with you as ever.

Jane: I'm sorry he came with Mr. Darcy.

Elizabeth: Don't say that.

Jane: Why ever not?

Elizabeth: Jane, I've been so blind.

Jane: What do you mean?

Kitty: Look, it's him. He's back. He's come again.

(Bingley re-enters)

Bingley: I know this is all very untoward, but I would like to request the privilege of speaking to Miss Bennet... Alone.

Mrs. Bennet: Everybody to the kitchen immediately. Except you, Jane, dear, of course.

(They are alone, but of course we all know that everybody is listening in)

Bingley: First, I must tell you I have been the most unmitigated and comprehensive ass. Miss Bennet, Jane, for some time now Jane, I have...
(he gets down on one knee) would you do me the honour--

Jane: Yes, yes, a thousand times yes.

(He stands up and they hug tightly, Mrs. Bennet and the girls enter)

Mrs. Bennet: Thank the lord for that I thought it would never happen!

Scene 15 – Longbourn, Morning

Austen: It has been just one week since Miss Jane was engaged to Mr. Bingley. The whole of Meryton has pronounced the Bennet's the luckiest family in the world. Only a few weeks before, when Miss Lydia had first left Brighton, the family was marked out for misfortune.

(Enter Mrs. Bennet, Elizabeth, Mary and Kitty)

Austen: Ah, morning Ma'am, Miss Elizabeth, Miss Kitty. Pardon me a moment; I believe I hear a carriage. Are we expecting anyone?

Mrs. Bennet: No

Austen: Where are Miss Jane and Mr. Bingley? Do they want tea?

Mrs. Bennet: They are out walking in the fresh air.

(Enter Lady Catherine)

Lady Catherine: *(to Elizabeth)* This lady, I suppose is your mother.

Austen: Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Ma'am.

Mrs. Bennet: Lady Catherine de Bourgh! What an honor—

Lady Catherine: And that, I suppose is one of your sisters.

Elizabeth: It is Ma'am.

Lady Catherine: Very well then. Miss Bennet I shall like a private audience with you in that room there.

(Mrs. Bennet and Kitty exit)

Lady Catherine: You can be at no loss, Miss Bennet, as to why I have come.

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

Lady Catherine: I am not to be trifled with. However insincere you may choose to be, you shall not find me so. My character has always been celebrated for its sincerity and frankness. A report of a most alarming nature reached me two days ago. I was told that not only your sister was on the point of being in a most advantageous marriage, but that you, Miss Elizabeth Bennet, would, in all likelihood, be soon afterwards united to my nephew, my own nephew, Mr. Darcy. Though I know it must be a scandalous falsehood, I instantly resolved on setting off for this place so that I might make my sentiments known to you.

Elizabeth: If you believed it impossible to be true, I wonder you took the trouble of coming so far.

Lady Catherine: If! Do you then pretend to be ignorant of it? Has it not been industriously circulated by yourselves? Can you declare that there is no foundation for it?

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

Lady Catherine: This is not to be borne. Miss Bennet, I insist on being satisfied. Has he, 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, while he retains the use of his reason. But your arts and allurements may, in a moment of infatuation, have made him forget what he owes to himself and to all his family.

Elizabeth: If I have, I shall be the last person to confess it.

Lady Catherine: I am the nearest relation he has in the world, and am entitled to know all his dearest concerns.

Elizabeth: But you are not entitled to know mine.

Lady Catherine: Mr. Darcy is engaged to my daughter. Now what have you to say?

Elizabeth: If that is the case you cannot suppose he would make an offer to me.

Lady Catherine: Selfish girl. This union has been planned since their infancy. Do you think it can be prevented by a woman of inferior birth, whose own sister's elopement resulted in a scandalously patched-up marriage, only achieved at the expense of your uncle? Heaven and Earth! Are the shades of Pemberley to be thus polluted? Tell me once and for all, are you engaged to him?

Elizabeth: I am not.

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

Elizabeth: I will not and I certainly never shall. You have insulted me in every possible way and can now have nothing further to say. I must ask you to leave immediately. Goodnight!

Lady Catherine: I have never been thusly treated in my entire life!

(Lady Catherine exits, Mrs. Bennet and Kitty enter)

Mrs. Bennet: What is going on?

Elizabeth: I am going for a walk.

Mrs. Bennet: Lizzy, dear—

Elizabeth: Oh for once in your life, leave me alone!

Scene 16 – Outside Longbourn, Same day

(Elizabeth is walking by herself, when suddenly sees Mr. Darcy)

Elizabeth: Mr. Darcy—

Darcy: My aunt—

Elizabeth: Yes, she was here.

Darcy: How can I ever make amends for such behaviour?

Elizabeth: After what you've done for Lydia and, I suspect, for Jane, it is I who should be making amends.

Darcy: You must know. Surely you must know it was all for you. You are too generous to trifle with me. You spoke with my aunt and it has taught me to hope as I'd scarcely allowed myself before. If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once. My affections and wishes have not changed. But one word from you will silence me forever. If, however, your feelings have changed --

Elizabeth: They have.

Darcy: Then you will?

Elizabeth: I will.

(She raises her hand and rests it on his cheek and he removes it and kisses the inside of her hand)

Darcy: Have I, your consent to go and speak with your father.

Elizabeth: You do; I will take you to him now.

Darcy: Elizabeth.

Elizabeth: Yes?

Darcy: I love you.

Elizabeth: I love you too.

Scene 17 – Longbourn, Same day.

(Elizabeth and Darcy enter the house, Darcy goes to speak with Mr. Bennet and Lizzy waits in the next room, Mr. Bennet then goes to Lizzy)

Mr. Bennet: Lizzy, what are you doing? Are you out of your senses, to be accepting this man? Have not you always hated him? He is rich, to be sure, and you may have more fine clothes and fine carriages than Jane. But will they make you happy?

Elizabeth: Have you any other objection, then your belief of my indifference?

Mr. Bennet: None at all. We all know him to be a proud, unpleasant sort of fellow; but this would be nothing if you really liked him.

Elizabeth: I do like him. I love him. I was wrong, he not proud. He is perfectly amiable. You do not know him for what he really is.

Mr. Bennet: You really do love him don't you?

Elizabeth: Very much.

Mr. Bennet: I cannot believe that anyone can deserve you. But it seems I am overruled. So I hardly give my consent. I could not have parted with you my Lizzy, to anyone less worthy.

(Elizabeth hugs her father and runs into Darcy's arms and they hug, he then tenderly kisses her on the forehead)

Mr. Bennet: If any more, young men come for Mary or Kitty, for heaven's sake send them in for I am quite at leisure.

(A spot appears on Austen on the apron of the stage, she is writing in a bound book, she puts down her quill and closes her book and winks and smiles at the audience)

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