

THE CHARACTERS



Mr Bennet



Mrs Bennet



Jane



Elizabeth



Mary



Kitty



Lydia



Charles Bingley



Darcy



Wickham

Pride and Prejudice

CHAPTER 1

A RICH NEW NEIGHBOUR

There was a lot of **excitement** in the Bennets' house because Mrs Bennet had just heard some important news from the neighbours. "Mr Bennet, have you heard that Netherfield Park has finally been **rented**?" she asked her husband. Netherfield Park was a large **estate** very near the Bennets' house.

"I see that you want to tell me all about it," Mr Bennet replied, without showing much interest.

"Yes. A very rich young man called Charles Bingley has come to live there. And guess what? He's **NOT MARRIED**! How wonderful for our girls!" Mrs Bennet exclaimed.

"Why is it wonderful for them?" Mr Bennet asked, innocently.

"We have got five grown daughters, Mr Bennet," said his wife, impatiently. "I want him to marry one of them. You must visit Mr Bingley as soon as possible. Then the girls and I can meet him officially."

"But I don't want to visit him," said her husband. "Our daughters, Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty and Lydia are poor and uneducated. Charles Bingley would not be interested in them! He must marry a rich, educated lady."

"Mr Bennet, how can you speak like that about your own children!" Mrs Bennet exclaimed. "You're laughing at me and that's not good for my nerves."

Mr Bennet knew that the main objective of his wife's life was to see all their daughters married as soon as possible, and of course to rich men! Therefore, he went to visit Mr Bingley the next day, but didn't tell his family about it immediately.

Mrs Bennet was **upset** and nervous because of her husband's behaviour and went around complaining constantly and getting angry with everyone. Finally, Mr Bennet became tired of this behaviour and told his wife the truth.

"I went to visit Charles Bingley at Netherfield Park as you wished," he said. "Now you are free to invite him."

Mrs Bennet was happy and satisfied, at least for a short time, and the family could relax. But Mr Bennet wouldn't give her any information about Mr Bingley even though she and the girls were very curious.

"Girls, you have got an excellent father," Mrs Bennet said to her daughters. "You have to be very **grateful** to him for making such an effort for your happiness."

According to the social rules of the time, Mrs Bennet could now invite Mr Bingley to dinner to meet all the girls. But, before this could happen, one of the neighbours organised a big party and invited all the people in the neighbourhood. This was a wonderful opportunity to meet Charles Bingley. All the Bennet girls **looked forward to** the party and spent a lot of time preparing themselves for it. Finally, the great day arrived.

Many guests, including Mrs Bennet and her daughters, were already at the party when Mr Bingley arrived. He was accompanied by his sister, Miss Caroline Bingley, a very elegant young lady, and also by his best friend, Mr Darcy.

Charles Bingley made a very good impression on everyone immediately.

"He's so handsome!" the young girls whispered to one another, "and he's **pleasant** and **charming** to everyone he meets. Yes, Mr Bingley is definitely a gentleman."

"And, more important than that, he's very rich," all the mothers thought to themselves. "The girl he chooses to be his wife will be very lucky. She'll have a big house and lots of money to spend. I hope he notices *my* daughter."



Charles Bingley made a very good impression on everyone immediately.

Mr Darcy was more handsome than Mr Bingley and the rumours were that he was richer too. But he didn't behave very nicely. He wasn't friendly to anyone and constantly looked bored. He didn't speak or dance with anyone, except Mr Bingley's sister because he already knew her. He made no effort to be nice to people and he seemed very arrogant.

From the beginning of the party, Charles Bingley paid a lot of attention to Jane, the oldest and prettiest of the Bennet girls. He danced with her many times and it was clear that they were attracted to each other. During the dancing, Elizabeth, the second Bennet daughter, was sitting near Charles and Mr Darcy and heard a conversation between them.

"Darcy, why don't you invite someone to dance?" Mr Bingley asked his friend. "There are so many pretty, pleasant girls here. There's one sitting near us now and she's the sister of the girl I like." As he said this, Mr Bingley looked in Elizabeth's direction.

"You're dancing with the only beautiful girl here," said Darcy. He turned around and looked at Elizabeth. She **pretended** to be interested in the dancing at the other end of the room and Darcy didn't notice that she was listening to their conversation. He turned back to his friend and said, "No, she's not pretty enough for me. I wouldn't waste my time on her."

Elizabeth, who had a very strong character, didn't take this insult seriously and after the party, she laughed when she told her family about it. But, in her heart, she decided that Mr Darcy was a **rude**, unpleasant man and she disliked him extremely.

The party was a success for the Bennet girls. Jane had enjoyed the attention of Mr Bingley and Elizabeth was happy for her favourite sister. Kitty and Lydia had danced a lot with some handsome army officers and were very satisfied. Mary, the quietest of the girls, didn't enjoy dancing, but people had said nice things about her ability to play the piano and sing and so she also came home happy.



Darcy didn't notice that Elizabeth was listening to their conversation.

Mr Bennet was still awake when they arrived home and Mrs Bennet immediately told him about the party. "Everything was wonderful," she told her husband, "except for Mr Darcy's rude behaviour towards Elizabeth. He is a horrible, unpleasant man and I detest him. Elizabeth wouldn't want him anyway. It's a pity you weren't there to say some rude things to him too!"

CHAPTER 2

A VISIT TO NETHERFIELD PARK

The Bennets' house was finally quiet after all the excitement of the big party. Jane and Elizabeth, who were good friends, talked about all that had happened.

"Mr Bingley is perfect!" Jane exclaimed. "He's intelligent, good-humoured, and handsome too. I was surprised that he paid so much attention to me."

"Well, I wasn't surprised," said Elizabeth, immediately. "You were the most beautiful girl there. Why shouldn't he pay attention to you?"

"And his sister is so nice and charming too," continued Jane. "I'm sure we'll all be good friends."

Elizabeth didn't think that Miss Bingley was nice or charming. She thought she was vain and arrogant. Elizabeth was much more critical of others and saw their characters more clearly than Jane. Sometimes she had to warn her sister about people. "Jane, you always think the best of people," said Elizabeth. "I've never heard you say a bad word about anyone. I think you should be careful with Mr Bingley's sister."

Then, a few days later, a servant brought a note for Jane from Netherfield Park. It was from Caroline Bingley.

My dear Jane,

Please come to have dinner with me today.

*My brother and his friend, Darcy, won't be here
and I want your company.*

Your friend,

Caroline Bingley

"Mother, may I have the carriage today?" asked Jane. "Miss Bingley has invited me to go to Netherfield Park for dinner. She sent me a note this morning. Look!"

Mrs Bennet took the note and read it anxiously. "What? Charles Bingley won't be there!" she exclaimed. "I don't like that. Bingley has to see you a lot. It's important for your future."

"But what about the carriage?" asked Jane, impatiently.

"No, Jane," answered her mother, "I'm sure your father needs the carriage today. Anyway, I have got a very good idea. I can see it's going to rain this evening. You'll go on horseback and, because of the rain, you'll have to stay at Netherfield Park for the night. That way, you'll see Charles Bingley, and you'll have an opportunity to impress him."

Jane and Elizabeth knew that they could not argue with their mother once she had decided something and therefore, Jane left on horseback. As her mother had predicted, it started to rain very hard and she couldn't return that evening.

"That was such a good idea of mine," Mrs Bennet repeated many times to the other sisters. "My daughters are lucky they have got such an intelligent mother!"

The next day, a note arrived from Jane.

My dear family,

*I am ill and I have got a fever! Maybe it's because
I got so wet in the rain yesterday. I can't come home yet.
The Bingleys have called the doctor. But please
don't worry.*

Yours,

Jane

Mrs Bennet wasn't worried at all. She was happy that Jane was staying longer at Charles Bingley's home. But Elizabeth was worried about her sister and, because the carriage wasn't available, she decided to walk to Netherfield Park, which wasn't easy after all the rain. When she arrived, she found that Jane was

really very ill and couldn't leave her bed. Elizabeth stayed with her all day.

"Jane, I'll have to go now, it'll be dark soon," Elizabeth said as evening was approaching.

"Oh, please don't go. Stay here with me," Jane cried. "I feel better with you here."



"Oh, please don't go. Stay here with me," Jane cried.

Caroline Bingley was in the room and heard this. She immediately invited Elizabeth to stay as long as she wanted to. Elizabeth had the impression that Caroline didn't like her or want her there, but she agreed to stay for Jane. She sent a message to her family to explain her decision.

That evening, Elizabeth had dinner with Caroline, Charles, and Darcy, while Jane was in bed in her room. Elizabeth was impressed by Charles' sincere worry about her sister's health and was certain that he had deep feelings for Jane. She also saw clearly that Caroline sat close to Darcy and wanted his attention all the time.

Elizabeth finished her dinner and quickly returned to Jane.

As soon as she left the room, Caroline began to criticise her.

"Did you see Elizabeth's red face after her long walk?" Caroline asked Darcy and Charles. "Her skirt was full of mud. She didn't look like a lady at all!"

"I think she showed great devotion to her sister," said Charles. "It was probably very difficult to walk all that way through the mud and that shows she has a good character."

"I agree," said Darcy. "And I thought the walk made her look prettier." He was beginning to see Elizabeth in a different way than he had at the party.

Caroline was not pleased by these reactions. "Well, Jane and Elizabeth Bennet are quite sweet and pleasant," she said, "but we all saw their mother at the party and she is a horrible woman. And two of the younger sisters were **flirting** with army officers. The family hasn't got much money or any rich relatives, so the girls won't find rich, important men to marry."

Charles and Darcy said nothing after these observations.

Jane's health improved very slowly and she and Elizabeth stayed in Netherfield Park for another few days. Elizabeth was surprised that Darcy looked at her a lot and paid attention to everything she said, but she made no effort to be nice to him.

"I am starting to like Elizabeth," Darcy thought to himself. "I have never felt like this about another woman. But her family hasn't got connections or money, so of course I can never think of a future with her."

Finally, Jane was well and the sisters were taken home in Bingley's carriage. On the way, Elizabeth thought of the things she had learned during their stay in Netherfield Park. She was certain that Charles was falling in love with Jane, and that made her happy. She was also certain that Caroline wanted Darcy for herself. Elizabeth hadn't changed her opinion of Darcy except when he spoke about his younger sister, Georgiana. He was her guardian and it was clear that he **cared** for her very much. In those moments, Elizabeth saw that he had some good in him and wasn't always arrogant and cold.

CHAPTER 3

A MARRIAGE PROPOSAL

Jane and Elizabeth were happy to be home again with their family. The day after they arrived home, Mr Bennet said to his wife, "I hope you've prepared a delicious dinner for tonight. A guest is coming this evening."

"Oh, is it Mr Bingley?" Mrs Bennet exclaimed. "Is he missing Jane?"

"No, it's not Mr Bingley," said Mr Bennet, "it's someone we've never met before. It's my cousin, Mr Collins. He'll inherit this house and all my property when I die."

"It's ridiculous that your cousin can take everything we've got because he's your **closest** male relative and we've got only daughters," Mrs Bennet said, angrily. "I don't want him to come here. I detest him already."

"We can't tell him not to come," Mr Bennet explained. "I received his letter yesterday and he's already on his way. By the way, he's now a pastor on the estate of Lady Catherine de Bourgh. She's a very rich woman and she's the aunt of Mr Darcy."

Mr Collins arrived that afternoon and the family received him politely. He wasn't a handsome man, and he was serious and arrogant. He admired everything he saw in the house, but his many **compliments** irritated the sisters.

At the dinner table, Mr Collins looked around him and said, "You've got five beautiful daughters, Mr and Mrs Bennet. They will certainly all be married soon."

"Well, I hope so," said Mrs Bennet. She was always happy to talk about her favourite subject. "But you know they'll be poor because *you* will receive all our property when Mr Bennet dies. You're not responsible for this, of course. But it means my girls will have to find rich husbands to **support** them."

"Don't worry, Mrs Bennet. I've come here with good intentions towards your family," Mr Collins declared. He then told them that he owned a very nice house and that he earned a

good salary. He considered himself a successful man. He talked for a long time about Lady Catherine and her young daughter, who would inherit all her money and property.

The girls were bored by his stories and they were happy when dinner was finally over.



The girls were bored by Mr Collins' stories.

The next morning, Mr Collins asked to speak to Mrs Bennet alone. "Mrs Bennet," he said, "I said I came here with good intentions, and it's true. The time has come for me to marry and Lady Catherine agrees with this. I want to do something positive for your family and I've decided that I want to marry Jane."

"Mr Collins, it's a wonderful idea to marry one of my daughters," said Mrs Bennet, happily, "but it can't be Jane. She's going to be **engaged** soon."

Mrs Bennet believed that Jane and Mr Bingley were almost married.

"That's unfortunate," said Mr Collins. "Then what about Elizabeth? Is she free?"

"Yes, she is!" exclaimed Mrs Bennet, quickly. In her imagination, she now had two married daughters. Each would live in her own house and would not cause any more worry or expense for her parents.

Mr Collins immediately asked to speak to Elizabeth privately. He wanted to make sure that he'd soon have a wife.

"My dear Elizabeth," Mr Collins said when they were alone in the room. "I've decided to marry you. I'm offering you a good life as the wife of a pastor. Lady Catherine will like you, I'm sure. You're *sensible* and intelligent. You'll enjoy visiting her beautiful house. She invites me there often. I don't expect any money from your parents because I know that they haven't got anything to give you."

Elizabeth was shocked. She hadn't expected such a declaration from Mr Collins. "Thank you for this great compliment," she said politely, "but I can't marry you."

Mr Collins didn't believe her. "I know that it's normal for a young lady to say 'no' in the beginning even when she means 'yes'," he answered. "I'm not depressed. Please think about it and I'll ask you again tomorrow."

"Believe me, I'm serious about my answer," Elizabeth said. "Please don't ask me again." Then she left the room.

Mrs Bennet had been waiting outside the room. She now entered and began to congratulate Mr Collins. He thanked her because he was certain that Elizabeth would agree to marry him. With a smile, he told Mrs Bennet exactly what Elizabeth had said.

Mrs Bennet wasn't happy to hear this. "Elizabeth doesn't say things she doesn't mean," Mrs Bennet said to herself. "I'll go to her father immediately. Together, we'll force her to marry Mr Collins. She may never receive another offer of marriage. She must agree, he's very rich."

Mrs Bennet found her husband and told him what had happened. He called Elizabeth into the room. "Elizabeth, I understand that you have refused to marry Mr Collins,"

Mr Bennet said in a serious voice.

"If you don't marry him, I'll never speak to you again," Mrs Bennet said angrily.

"And if you *do* marry him, I'll never speak to you again!" Mr Bennet said with a smile. Elizabeth was his favourite daughter and he understood very well why she didn't want to marry his boring, arrogant cousin. Elizabeth was happy with her father's decision and she left the room with a smile on her face.

Mrs Bennet was very disappointed. Without her husband's help, she couldn't force Elizabeth to marry his cousin. She and Mr Collins had to accept Elizabeth's decision. Mr Collins would have to find someone else to marry.

CHAPTER 4

MR WICKHAM

It didn't take Mr Collins a long time to find someone else to marry after Elizabeth refused him. Elizabeth's good friend, Charlotte, lived near the Bennets and the two families met very often. The day after Elizabeth refused Mr Collins, the two families had dinner together. Elizabeth noticed that Mr Collins paid a lot of attention to Charlotte but she was sure her friend would find him stupid and boring. But she was wrong about this.

The day after the dinner, Mr Collins went to Charlotte's home and proposed marriage to her. Charlotte accepted him immediately. Then she came to tell Elizabeth about her decision. "Oh, Charlotte!" Elizabeth exclaimed. "How can you marry Mr Collins! I know you don't love him."

"Elizabeth, I'm not a romantic person like you," Charlotte explained. "I want a comfortable home and independence from my parents. I'm already twenty-seven! Perhaps this is my last opportunity to get a husband and be secure for the rest of my life."

Elizabeth was sad to hear this. She believed her friend would never be happy after her marriage. Elizabeth knew that she would only marry someone she really loved. She would not

marry for convenience, or for money, like Charlotte and many other women she knew.



The Bennets lived near a town called Meryton. At this time, a group of army officers was **stationed** there. The two youngest Bennet girls, Lydia and Kitty, spent much of their time visiting this town. They knew many of the officers, who gave them a lot of attention. Lydia and Kitty loved male attention!

One day, Lydia and Kitty **persuaded** Jane and Elizabeth to go with them on their walk to Meryton. Mary preferred to stay at home with her books and piano. As the four girls walked down the main street, they met an officer they knew and he introduced them to Mr Wickham, another officer who had just arrived. Mr Wickham was handsome and pleasant and he impressed all the girls.



Mr Wickham was handsome and pleasant and he impressed all the girls.

While they were all standing together and talking, Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy rode by on their horses. They stopped to talk to the girls. Mr Bingley was very happy to see Jane. "I was just on my way to your home to see how you were feeling," he told her.

Mr Darcy looked at Mr Wickham and his face suddenly changed completely. "That's strange," Elizabeth thought, "they both look shocked. Why?"

But she couldn't ask Mr Darcy about it because he quickly rode away without saying anything, and Mr Bingley followed him. Elizabeth told Jane what she had seen, but neither could think of an explanation for this strange reaction.

The next evening, the girls and Mr Collins were invited to a neighbour's house. Mr Wickham was there too and he sat next to Elizabeth. "I hope he explains why he and Darcy had such a strange reaction to each other," Elizabeth thought. She didn't have to wait long. A few minutes later, Mr Wickham turned to Elizabeth. "Why is Mr Darcy in this area?" he asked.

"He's staying with his friend, Mr Bingley," Elizabeth answered. "I understand that he has got a large house and a lot of property in another part of the country."

"That's true," said Wickham, "he's very rich. I've been connected to his family since I was born."

Elizabeth was surprised by this and asked to hear more.

"Do you know Darcy well?" Wickham asked her.

"I know him quite well and I think he's unpleasant in every way," Elizabeth answered firmly. "All our neighbours think he is arrogant and vain, and no one likes him."

"I'm happy that you feel this way," said Wickham, "because now I can tell you my story. Mr Darcy's father was my father's employer. He was always very good to me. He loved me just like his own son. Before he died, he told me he would leave me money and property so I would never have to worry. But, when he died, Darcy went against his father's promise because he detests me and **was jealous** of me, and he didn't give me

anything. That's why I had to join this regiment and become a soldier."

Elizabeth was shocked. "Mr Darcy is a horrible man!" she said angrily. "He's much worse than I thought. You must tell everybody what he did to you."

"No," Wickham said quietly, "I can't do that because I've got good memories of his father."

At that moment, Mr Collins, who was sitting near Elizabeth and Wickham, mentioned the name of Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Mr Wickham heard him and turned to Elizabeth again.

"You know, of course, that Lady Catherine is Darcy's aunt. Her daughter is expected to marry Mr Darcy," he explained. "She's also very rich, and when they marry, all the money and property will remain in the family."

Elizabeth smiled when she heard this. "Poor Caroline Bingley," she thought with a little malice. "She pays a lot of attention to Mr Darcy and tries to make him like her. But that won't help her. He'll certainly marry his rich cousin and not Caroline."

The next day, Elizabeth told Jane everything she had learned from Mr Wickham. Jane was very surprised. "There must be some explanation for Darcy's behaviour," she said. "I can't believe that Mr Bingley has got such a bad friend."

"Jane, you always want to believe that everyone is good," Elizabeth said, "but it's clear that Mr Wickham is telling the truth. He's very attractive and has made a good impression on me. I never want to see Mr Darcy again. But, for now, let's not share this information with anyone else."

CHAPTER 5

SAD NEWS FOR JANE

Time passed quietly in the Bennets' house. Then, one morning, Jane received an unexpected letter from Caroline Bingley. She opened it and her face went pale. She and Elizabeth went upstairs to their room together. Jane gave Elizabeth the letter and she read the shocking news.

My dear Jane,

Charles and I have decided to leave Netherfield Park and return to London with Mr Darcy. When you receive this letter, we will already be gone. Charles has got some business in London and we will remain there with him. We will not return for at least six months, or maybe not at all.

We have got another reason for leaving: Mr Darcy misses his sister, Georgiana. He is her guardian because their parents are dead. She is beautiful, elegant and talented in many ways. Charles has admired her for a long time. Now, he will get a chance to see her frequently and I hope that they'll marry one day, and she'll be a sister to me.

I will miss you, my dear Jane. We became good friends during my time in Netherfield Park. I wish you luck. You have got many friends, so I'm sure you won't miss us!

*Your friend,
Caroline Bingley*

Jane sat on her bed and cried. "I love Charles and I thought he loved me," she said through her tears. "But Caroline makes it clear that Charles never loved me and doesn't want me to be his wife."

"I don't believe that. I saw how Charles looked at you and behaved with you. I believe, without a doubt, that he loves you," Elizabeth said, angrily. "But Caroline doesn't want him to marry you. You're not rich enough, in her opinion. Also, if her brother marries Darcy's sister, Caroline thinks she'll have a better chance to marry Darcy. That's what she wants. But, you'll see, Charles will return to you. Caroline won't be able to change his mind about his love for you."

After Elizabeth spoke to her, Jane became less sad. She hoped that Elizabeth was right. The two sisters decided not to tell Mrs Bennet the entire truth. They only told her that Caroline and Darcy wouldn't return. But they let her think that Charles would soon be in Netherfield Park again. Mrs Bennet immediately began planning a dinner party for him, and she was busy with that for a while.

A week passed and Jane didn't hear anything from Charles. Then, another letter arrived from Caroline. In the letter she wrote that they were all enjoying themselves in London. Now it was clear to both Jane and Elizabeth that Charles Bingley was not coming back. "I'm very sad about Charles," Jane said to Elizabeth, "but I'll be strong and I'll try to forget him. He's a wonderful man and I don't feel angry with him. I also don't believe that Caroline can influence him against me."

"Jane, you're such a good person," Elizabeth said to her, "and you always think everyone else is good too. I admire that, but I don't always agree with you."

During this time, the Bennet family often saw Mr Wickham. Elizabeth enjoyed his company and liked to talk to him. By now, he had told the story of his relationship with Darcy to many people. "We didn't like Darcy," the neighbours said, "but now we detest him."

Soon, the Bennets received a visit from Mr and Mrs Gardiner, an aunt and uncle who lived in London. They heard that Jane was unhappy and they invited her to come and stay with them. "The best thing for a broken heart is a change of scene," Mrs Gardiner said to Jane. "I know that Charles Bingley is in London too. But we live in a different part of the city and our friends are not the same. You won't have to see him."

Before Mr and Mrs Gardiner left with Jane, Mrs Gardiner asked to speak to Elizabeth alone. "Elizabeth, I see that you spend a lot of time with Mr Wickham," she said. "I hope you won't have any illusions. I know his story. He's looking for a rich wife because he hasn't got any money of his own."

"Don't worry, my dear aunt," Elizabeth said with a smile, "I think Wickham is very nice. But I'm not in love with him and I don't think he's in love with me. I don't want to marry him!"

Jane left for London with her aunt and uncle. After some time, Elizabeth received this letter from her.

Dear Elizabeth,

I wrote to Caroline when I arrived in London. I still thought that she was my friend. After two weeks, she finally came to see me, alone, without Charles. She was very cold and stayed only a few minutes. She said that Charles was very busy. He knows that I'm in London but he chooses not to see me. She mentioned that he might never return to Netherfield Park. I now understand that you were right about her. She's not a good person.

I will now try to forget Charles and Caroline and only think about the good things in my life.

Your loving sister,

Jane

Elizabeth was sad to read this letter. "Now Jane knows the truth and she won't have any more illusions about Charles," she thought. "She can continue with her life. I hope Charles will marry Miss Darcy. Wickham says she's not a pleasant or good person. I want Charles to suffer and be sorry that he left Jane."

Then another letter arrived from Mrs Gardiner, who was still worried that Elizabeth was involved with Wickham. Elizabeth answered the letter immediately.

Dear Aunt,

Please don't worry about me. Mr Wickham is now paying attention to a rich young lady and not to me. I'm not suffering at all and this proves that I was never in love with him. I'm making plans to visit my friend, Charlotte, who is now married to Mr Collins.

Yours,
Elizabeth

CHAPTER 6

A SURPRISING PROPOSAL

Charlotte was living with her new husband, Mr Collins, on Lady Catherine de Bourgh's estate.

"I don't want to see Mr Collins," Elizabeth thought to herself. "But Charlotte has been my good friend for many years and she wants me to come. Things are not very interesting at home now. Mr Wickham is busy with his new lady friend and I don't see him any more. Jane is in London and at least I can visit her on my way to Charlotte's house."

Elizabeth travelled to London in a carriage. She left early in the morning and at noon she was already at the Gardiners' home. She and Jane were delighted to see each other, but Elizabeth saw that her sister wasn't happy. It was clear that she still thought about Charles Bingley, and this made Elizabeth sad.

The next day, Elizabeth continued her trip and finally arrived at Charlotte's house. Charlotte was happy to see her old friend. Mr Collins hadn't changed since his marriage, and Elizabeth was sad that her friend had married such an unpleasant, boring man.



Elizabeth finally arrived at Charlotte's house.

On the morning of the second day, Lady Catherine's daughter, Miss de Bourgh, came to visit. She invited Mr and Mrs Collins and Elizabeth to come to dinner at her mother's home. Mr Collins was delighted and couldn't stop talking about the invitation. Elizabeth had other thoughts. "Miss de Bourgh is thin, sickly and arrogant," she said to herself. "I hope Darcy marries her and that he'll be unhappy with her!"

The next evening, Elizabeth accompanied Mr Collins and Charlotte to Lady Catherine's impressive house. Lady Catherine, a tall, **formidable** woman, never stopped talking from the moment they arrived. She spoke with authority about every

subject and tried to make everyone feel inferior. She asked Elizabeth many insulting questions about herself and her family, which the young lady answered with courage and spirit, but she was happy when the evening was over.



Lady Catherine asked Elizabeth many insulting questions about herself and her family.

Then, Elizabeth heard that Mr Darcy was visiting his aunt. She didn't want to see him and was sure that he felt the same way. But, one morning, Darcy arrived at the Collins' home with his cousin, Colonel Fitzwilliam. Elizabeth hadn't met the Colonel before but found him very pleasant. Darcy however, was distant and reserved, as always. He asked Elizabeth about her family.

"My sister Jane has been in London for three months now," Elizabeth said. "Have you seen her?"

Darcy looked a little confused and said, "No, I haven't seen your sister." Elizabeth didn't ask him any more questions.

Darcy and Colonel Fitzwilliam began to visit the Collins' home every day.

"I think that Mr Darcy admires you, Elizabeth," Charlotte said one day.

"No, that's not possible," Elizabeth said firmly. "He has nothing to say to me when he sees me. I think he only comes to visit because he's bored with his aunt and her daughter." But it was certainly true that Darcy was visiting them very frequently.

Colonel Fitzwilliam spoke to Elizabeth each time he saw her and seemed to enjoy her company. One day they were walking together in the nearby park. "I want to tell you, Elizabeth, that I'm the younger son in the family and, therefore, I haven't got a lot of money," Fitzwilliam said. "I'll have to marry someone rich. I'm not like my cousin, Darcy, who can do anything he wants."

"He's warning me to have no expectations of marrying him," Elizabeth said to herself, "but fortunately, I'm not in love with him, just as I wasn't with Wickham." They continued walking and talking. Then, Elizabeth mentioned Charles and Caroline Bingley.

"Oh yes, I know them," Fitzwilliam said, "Charles is Darcy's closest friend and Darcy did something important for him. He saved him from marrying a woman who was not **suitable**."

"He's speaking about Jane," Elizabeth thought. She was shocked. "I thought it was Caroline who influenced her brother to leave Jane. Now I understand that it was *Darcy* who did that terrible thing."

"But why was the young lady not suitable?" Elizabeth asked, innocently.

"I don't know the details," replied the Colonel. "I only know there were strong objections against her."

Elizabeth was so angry that she left Fitzwilliam immediately. That evening she didn't go to Lady Catherine's for dinner. She didn't want to see Darcy, who was still at his aunt's. "How could there be objections to Jane?" she thought as she sat in the

Collins' home. "She's beautiful, intelligent, and the best person I know."

Suddenly, the doorbell rang and, a minute later Mr Darcy came into the room. He was very agitated. He stood in front of Elizabeth, and said with emotion, "I have **struggled against** my feelings for you but I can't fight them any more. I don't care that you haven't got any money or connections. I love you and have done so for a long time. I want to marry you."

Elizabeth was **astounded**. "I suppose that I should thank you for this compliment," she said in a cold voice. "But I certainly will *not* marry you, Mr Darcy. I don't love you and I've got a very bad opinion of you. First of all, I detest the way you treated Mr Wickham. But even worse than that, I now know that you ruined my sister Jane's chance for happiness with Charles Bingley, and I can *never* forgive you for that!"



"I don't love you and I've got a very bad opinion of you," Elizabeth said.

CHAPTER 7

A LETTER FROM DARCY

Elizabeth and Darcy stood in the room and looked at each other after she had said her angry words to him. They were both pale and trembling with emotion.

"From the moment I met you, I thought you were arrogant and vain," Elizabeth said, angrily. "I saw that you didn't care about the feelings of other people. You are the *last* man in the world that I would marry!"

"I see you have got a very bad opinion of me," Darcy said. "I'm sorry that I told you about my love for you. I **won't bother** you any more. I hope you have good health and happiness in the future." With these words, Darcy left the room.

Elizabeth was very agitated and cried for a long time after he left. "I can't believe that Darcy told Charles not to marry Jane because she wasn't 'suitable' for him," Elizabeth thought. "There is no difference between Jane and I. We aren't rich and we haven't got any important connections. Our family doesn't always act well in society. Yet, he wants to marry me. Why am I 'suitable' for him?"

Elizabeth soon heard Charlotte and Mr Collins arriving home, and she quickly went to her room. She didn't want to talk to anyone that night.

The next morning, Elizabeth woke up feeling very confused. She decided to go for a walk after breakfast to clear her head. She had just left the house when she heard someone call her name. Darcy was standing near the house.

"I waited for you to come out of the house," he said. "I've written you a letter. Please read it." Elizabeth took the letter and Darcy left without saying anything else. She opened the **envelope** and saw that the letter was very long. The date at the top showed that Darcy had written it that morning. Elizabeth began to read the letter.

Dear Elizabeth,

I won't repeat the things I said to you yesterday. I will never propose marriage to you again. I now understand you detest me, and I want to forget what happened. But you accused me of two things and I think you should know the truth about them.

First, you said I convinced Charles to leave Jane. That's true, but I want to explain why. Like everyone, I saw that Charles preferred Jane to any other girl. I observed him carefully and I saw he was in love with her. I heard rumours that your family was expecting a marriage between them.

Then, I began to observe Jane. She was always pleasant to Charles, but I didn't see that he touched her heart. I was certain that she didn't love him the way he loved her. When Charles left for London, his sister Caroline and I discussed it. She agreed there were many reasons why the marriage would not be a good idea. One reason was the poor financial situation of your family. Another reason was the behaviour of your parents and of your younger sisters, although there was never anything wrong with your behaviour or Jane's.

But what really convinced me against the marriage was the indifference I saw in Jane's behaviour to Charles. I am Charles' closest friend and I only want his happiness. Caroline and I told him we didn't believe Jane loved him. He is a modest man and was convinced by what we said. We didn't tell him Jane was in London, and that's why he never came to see her.

I understand from what you said last night, I was wrong about Jane's feelings for Charles. I'm sorry I hurt her and also you. But I really believed something different. This is my answer to your first accusation.

Now, I want to reply to your second accusation. You said I had treated Wickham badly. I don't know what he told you, but I will now tell you the truth about this man.

Mr Wickham's father *managed* my father's estate for many years. He was a good man and my father loved him and his son. My father paid for the boy's education. It was decided that Wickham would become a pastor and my father would look for a good place for him to live and work. We were about the same age and I knew Wickham's behaviour was not good or moral. But I didn't want to tell my father this because he would be disappointed, and so he continued to have a good opinion of Wickham, even though it was not justified.

My father died five years ago. In his will, he wrote that I should help Wickham in his church career and give him money every month. After my father's death, Wickham informed me he didn't want to be a pastor. He asked me to give him all the money my father had left him immediately and not every month. I did this, and then heard he was spending the money very fast. We didn't see each other any more during this time.

After three years, he wrote to say that he had spent all my father's money. Now he wanted me to look for a position for him on my estate, the same position which he had refused before. I didn't agree because I knew he had a bad character. After that, he did something terrible.

You know I've been the guardian of my sister, Georgiana, since our parents died. She is ten years younger than me and a very sensitive, innocent girl.

A year ago, I sent her to London to live with an older woman who would take care of all her needs and education.

Suddenly, Wickham appeared at the house and persuaded Georgiana that he loved her and wanted to marry her. My sister was only 15 years old and she believed Wickham's promises. Luckily, I arrived before the planned marriage. Georgiana told me the entire story and I immediately ordered Wickham to leave and never see her again. I knew why Wickham wanted to marry Georgiana and it was certainly not because he loved her! She owns a large fortune and he wanted it. He also wanted to revenge himself on me. He knows I love my sister and he wanted to hurt both of us. Last night, I was too hurt and upset to explain this to you. But I want you to know the truth.

Goodbye, and God bless you.
Darcy

Elizabeth read the letter again and again. "It can't be true!" she thought to herself at first. Then she remembered many things that Wickham had said which made Darcy seem like a bad person. She also remembered that Wickham had lost interest in her when he found another woman who was very rich.

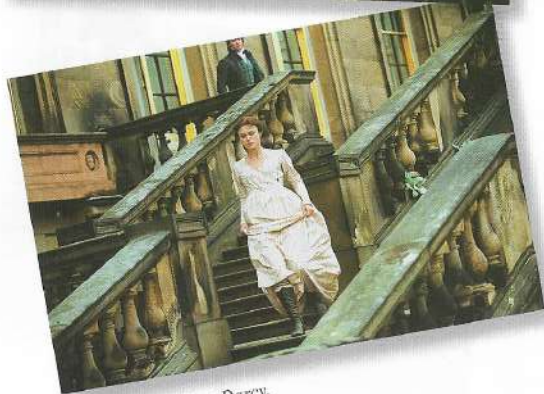
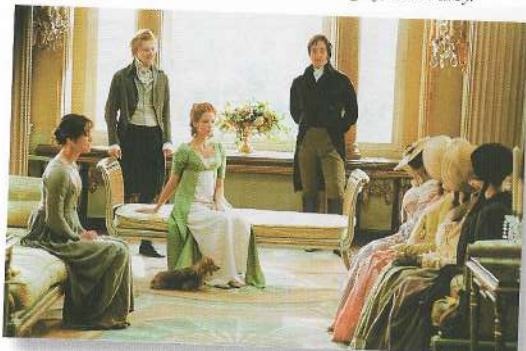


Elizabeth read the letter again and again.



Elizabeth Bennet

The Bennets meet Charles and Caroline Bingley, and Darcy.



Elizabeth runs from Darcy.

AT DARCY'S HOUSE

Elizabeth thought about what Darcy had said about Jane. She realised that Jane could seem indifferent because she didn't show her emotions easily. Only Elizabeth knew about her sister's deep feelings for Charles. Elizabeth **didn't blame** Darcy any more for what he had done. She saw that he had good qualities, but she had no romantic feelings for him and was satisfied that she had refused his proposal.

Later that day, Elizabeth heard that Darcy and his cousin had left the area, and she wasn't sorry.

CHAPTER 8

AT DARCY'S HOUSE

Elizabeth stayed with Charlotte and Mr Collins for another week, but she **wasn't in good spirits**. Her thoughts returned again and again to Darcy's letter. Finally, it was time to leave and Elizabeth travelled by carriage to London. There, she met Jane, who was still at the house of Mr and Mrs Gardiner. Together, the two sisters returned to their own home. Elizabeth had so much to tell her sister but she couldn't discuss anything on the way home because there were other people in the carriage.

For the first time in months, the entire Bennet family was together for dinner and it was a noisy meal. Elizabeth waited until she and Jane were alone in their room to talk to her sister. She had decided not to tell Jane anything about the reasons for Charles Bingley's behaviour. The truth would not change anything. It would only hurt her feelings more because it was clear that Jane still loved Bingley.

Instead, Elizabeth told Jane about Darcy's proposal and about her own reaction to it.

"I'm sorry for Mr Darcy," Jane said after she had heard the story. "He must be very disappointed that you don't want to marry him."

"Yes, I'm sorry for him too," Elizabeth agreed, "but I

can't marry someone that I don't love. Now, I've got another surprising thing to tell you. We were very wrong to believe all the things Mr Wickham told us."

She then explained to Jane what had really happened between Wickham and Darcy. Jane was shocked by the story. "Wickham acted very badly," she said sadly. "We thought that he was such a good, honest man, and that Darcy wasn't good. But now we know it's really the opposite."

"Yes, Jane," Elizabeth said quietly. "I had only prejudice against Mr Darcy. I never had a good thought about him. But now, we have to decide something important. Should we tell our family and friends the truth about Wickham?"

"No. I don't think it's necessary," Jane said. "Wickham's regiment is soon moving from Meryton to Brighton. That's far away. No one in the neighbourhood will see him any more. So, there's really no reason to tell people the truth about him. Perhaps he will change one day and become a better person."

The next week was very busy at the Bennets' house. Lydia was depressed that the army officers were moving away. She loved to flirt with them. Mrs Bennet wanted to keep Lydia happy and she tried to convince Mr Bennet to take the family for a holiday to Brighton. He didn't agree to this and they continued to complain and make the atmosphere unpleasant.

Then, one day, Lydia came home with a happy face. "Mrs Foster, the wife of one of the officers, has invited me to go to Brighton with her. She's my friend. It's going to be wonderful! Can I go?"

Elizabeth was worried about this invitation, and she went to speak to her father about it. "Lydia is only 16," she said. "She isn't very intelligent and she often acts stupidly, without thinking. She flirts with all the officers and any man who looks at her. I'm afraid she'll get into trouble and something bad will happen. Please don't allow her to go to Brighton!"

"You and Jane are very serious and respectable," Mr Bennet

said, "Your younger sisters are not like you, but for some reason your mother supports their behaviour. If I don't allow Lydia to go, she and your mother will not give me any peace. I want peace and quiet in the house, so I'm allowing her to go."

Elizabeth was not happy with this response but she couldn't change her father's opinion, and Lydia left for Brighton with Mrs Foster.

Now, Elizabeth prepared herself for a trip which Mr and Mrs Gardiner had promised her. She would travel with her uncle and aunt for three weeks through a part of England called Derbyshire. Elizabeth knew that Darcy's estate, Pemberley, was in that area.

"Derbyshire is a big area, with many estates," Elizabeth said to herself. "There's no chance we'll meet Darcy. I don't want to be in an uncomfortable position."

On the first day of their journey, they arrived at a small hotel to spend the night. "Tomorrow, we'll visit Pemberley," Mrs Gardiner said to Elizabeth. "It's the closest estate to this town. I'm sure it will interest you because you know Mr Darcy and Mr Wickham, who both grew up there."

Elizabeth hadn't told her aunt and uncle about Darcy's proposal and her refusal. She also hadn't told them what she knew about Wickham. Therefore, she had no logical reason to refuse to visit Pemberley. "I only hope that Darcy isn't there right now," Elizabeth thought, anxiously.

The next morning, the Gardiners and Elizabeth drove to Pemberley in a carriage. Elizabeth looked at Darcy's elegant house, the beautiful gardens and the forest which surrounded it. The beauty of everything surprised her. The housekeeper quickly opened the door and invited them to come in. "Mr Darcy isn't here now," she said, "but he'll return tomorrow with Georgiana and some friends. Come, I'll show you the house."

Elizabeth breathed more easily when she heard this.

"Mr Darcy is the best master anyone could have," the

housekeeper said as they walked through all the beautiful rooms. "I have known him since he was four years old and I've never heard a bad word from him. Here, look at this piano. Mr Darcy bought it as a surprise for his sister. He does everything he can to make her happy."



"Mr Darcy bought it as a surprise for his sister," the housekeeper said.

Elizabeth's respect for Darcy grew with every word she heard from the housekeeper. His character was really much better than she had thought. "The woman who accepts Darcy's proposal will be mistress of this beautiful house," Elizabeth

thought to herself. "I don't regret my decision, but I have got a better opinion of him now. I was wrong about him."

The Gardiners and Elizabeth finished their tour of the house and went out into the garden. And then, the most unexpected thing happened – Darcy suddenly appeared. He was walking towards the house!

CHAPTER 9

ANOTHER VISIT TO PEMBERLEY

"The housekeeper said that Darcy was coming *tomorrow*!" Elizabeth thought, in a panic. "I haven't seen him since his marriage proposal. He must be very angry with me. He will certainly be unpleasant to us now."

Just then, her eyes met Darcy's eyes. His face became red and so did hers. But he controlled his **embarrassment** and said hello to them politely. He asked Elizabeth about her family in a sincere voice. Elizabeth had never been so uncomfortable in her life. "It was a mistake to come here," she said to herself. "He'll think that I wanted to see him. It's strange that he's being so pleasant to me and to my aunt and uncle. They aren't people who belong to his level of society or have got much money or property." Darcy now accompanied Elizabeth to her carriage. On the way, she explained that she had been told that he was arriving at Pemberley the next day and that she hadn't expected to see him.

"My housekeeper was right," Darcy said. "That was my original plan. But then, I decided to come today. Tomorrow, Charles Bingley and his sister are arriving. My sister, Georgiana, is coming with them. I would like you to meet her. Will you agree to that?" Elizabeth was surprised by Darcy's request and, of course, agreed to meet Georgiana the next day.

The next morning, Darcy's sister arrived. Elizabeth had expected her to be an arrogant, vain young woman. But she was a shy young girl and Elizabeth liked her immediately.

A few minutes later, Charles Bingley walked into the room. Elizabeth watched him closely to see how he acted towards Georgiana. Charles' sister, Caroline, said in her letter to Jane that her brother was interested in Georgiana and wanted to marry her. But Elizabeth saw no sign of this. Then Charles asked about Jane. "How is she? I haven't seen your sister for a long time," he said, and Elizabeth heard regret in his voice. This pleased her and gave her hope that Jane and Charles might still have a future together.

"I haven't got any bad feelings towards Charles," Elizabeth thought. "Now I know that he left Jane only because he believed she didn't love him. How **blind** people are!"

Darcy invited Elizabeth and her aunt and uncle to stay and have dinner at Pemberley. The evening passed very pleasantly and soon it was time for them to return to their hotel. It was clear to the Gardiners that Darcy had special feelings for Elizabeth but they were very discreet and didn't ask her any questions about it. They had changed their opinion about Darcy – he was not at all arrogant, but a kind, generous man.

The next day, the Gardiners met some friends in a small town near Pemberley. Their friends told them that Darcy had a good name and was very respected in the area. But, from them, they learned that Wickham had not acted with integrity at Pemberley. When he left, he **owed** money to a lot of people and Darcy paid Wickham's **debts** for him. This surprised the Gardiners. Like most people, they had thought that Wickham was a charming man who was only looking for a rich wife because he had no money of his own. Now, they understood that he was not a good person and they were happy that Elizabeth was not involved with him.

The next morning, Darcy invited Mr Gardiner to go fishing with him on his estate. Mrs Gardiner and Elizabeth decided to return to Pemberley to visit Georgiana while the men were out. But when they entered Pemberley, they found Charles' sister, Caroline, sitting with Georgiana. Caroline wasn't happy to see

Elizabeth and made this very clear during the visit.

Elizabeth was very confused. She couldn't decide if she wanted to see Darcy or not. Her feelings about him were constantly changing. One thing was very clear to her: she was certainly not indifferent to him.

Finally, Darcy walked into the room. From that moment, Caroline's eyes moved from him to Elizabeth all the time. She was trying to discover what their relationship was. "Caroline is jealous of anyone that Darcy looks at or pays attention to," Elizabeth thought to herself. "She wants Darcy for herself. If she knew he had proposed marriage to me, she would be shocked and angry."

"I've heard that the army regiment has left Meryton," Caroline said **nastily**. "That must be depressing for your family, especially your sisters." She didn't mention Wickham, but everyone in the room knew she was referring to him.

"Caroline is trying to hurt me," Elizabeth thought. "She knows that I was friendly with Wickham. But she doesn't know that she's hurting Darcy and Georgiana when she speaks about him. She doesn't know that Wickham tried to marry Georgiana and that Darcy detests him for that."

Georgiana had become pale and **didn't lift** her head after Caroline's words. "She remembers her bad experience with Wickham," Elizabeth thought, with compassion.

Soon after this, Elizabeth and the Gardiners said goodbye, and left for the hotel. As soon as they left the room, Caroline began saying unpleasant things about Elizabeth. "I think that Elizabeth has become uglier," Caroline said to Darcy. "What do you think?"

"I think she's the most beautiful woman I know," Darcy said, angrily. He left the room and Caroline was left alone, thinking about the mistake she had just made.

CHAPTER 10

TERRIBLE NEWS

When Elizabeth and the Gardiners returned from Pemberley, there were two letters waiting there from Jane. Elizabeth opened the first one. It had been sent five days previously.

Dear Elizabeth,

Something terrible has happened. Lydia has run away to Scotland with Mr Wickham! They have decided to get married and it's easy to do that in Scotland. Wickham must really love her. He knows that our family can't give Lydia much money and, still, he has decided to marry her. It's fortunate that we didn't tell anyone about Wickham's bad behaviour in the past.

Jane

Elizabeth couldn't believe it! She opened the second letter quickly. It said:

My dear sister,

The situation is much worse than we understood at first. Wickham and Lydia didn't go to Scotland. Nobody knows exactly where they are. There are rumours that they went to London. One of Wickham's friends told us that Wickham doesn't intend to marry Lydia and that we can't trust him

Mother has become ill because of this and doesn't want to leave her room all day. Father is going to London to look for Lydia. We think that he shouldn't be alone there. He needs Mr Gardiner to help him and to keep him calm.

I need you, Elizabeth! Please come home immediately.

Jane

Elizabeth ran to the hotel entrance. She asked a servant to go and call Mr and Mrs Gardiner, who had gone for a walk. At that moment, Darcy entered the hotel. He looked at Elizabeth and his face became very concerned. "Elizabeth, what happened?" he asked in a worried voice. "You look ill."



"Elizabeth, what happened?" Darcy asked in a worried voice.

"I've just had some terrible news," Elizabeth replied. Tears were running down her face. "My sister Lydia has run away with Wickham and nobody knows where they are. If I had told everybody the truth about Wickham after I heard it from you, this wouldn't have happened."

Darcy listened to Elizabeth in silence. At that moment, Elizabeth understood everything very clearly. "My feelings for Darcy have changed completely. I could certainly love him," she thought to herself, sadly. "But, now Lydia has dishonoured the family. He wouldn't want to marry me any more. He has too much pride for that."

Elizabeth told Darcy that she was leaving immediately and went to her room to prepare for the journey. Mr and Mrs Gardiner soon arrived and she explained the situation to them. Within an hour, the three of them were in a carriage on their way to the Bennets' house and they spoke about the situation.

"Elizabeth, perhaps it's not as bad as you think," Mr Gardiner said. "Wickham knows that he'll destroy his reputation and his career in the army if he doesn't marry Lydia. They can't just live together."

"But Wickham will never marry a woman who hasn't got any money," Elizabeth said with certainty. "Lydia is a young, stupid girl who only wants to have a good time. She doesn't think about her future or her reputation. Wickham has no honour or integrity. Jane and I knew this but we didn't warn Lydia to stay away from him. I'll always be sorry that we didn't do that."

The carriage finally arrived and Jane was happy that they had returned so quickly. "Father is still in London, but he has no news to report," she explained. "Mother is afraid that if he finds Wickham, there will be a fight and terrible things will happen."

"I'll go to London immediately," said Mr Gardiner. "Your father can stay with me in my house and we'll look for Lydia and Wickham together."

The days passed slowly and everyone was anxious. They all waited for news. Some neighbours came to visit and said that Wickham owed money to many people in Meryton. Then, a letter arrived from an officer in Wickham's regiment. He said that Wickham had also left debts in Brighton. Now, everyone knew what sort of person Wickham really was, and that they could expect only bad behaviour from him.

Two days later, Mr Bennet returned home. "I'm sorry, Elizabeth," he said to his daughter. "You tried to persuade me not to let Lydia go to Brighton alone. Why didn't I listen to you? I made a mistake."

The next day, a letter arrived from Mr Gardiner, who had continued to look for Lydia and Wickham in London. He wrote:

My dear family,

I have finally found Lydia and Wickham! They are living together although they are not married. But Wickham is willing to marry her on one condition: You must agree to give him a certain amount of money immediately and another sum of money every month. To my surprise, the amount of money he requests is not too much. I'm sure you can give him what he wants.

I have already agreed that Lydia can get married in our house. I'm sure that you will approve of my decision.

Mr Gardiner

"Of course I agree," Mr Bennet said to Elizabeth and Jane after he had read the letter, "but I'm positive that Wickham wants much more money than Mr Gardiner writes. He owes money to many people. I suspect Mr Gardiner is also giving Wickham money, too. Your uncle is a good man and he wants to help us. He doesn't want me to feel bad that I can't pay more."

"I know Wickham, and I agree with you about the money," Elizabeth said.

"Let's hope that Lydia and Wickham will be happy after they are married, and we'll all forget that there were so many problems in the beginning," said Jane. As always, she tried to find something good in every situation.

CHAPTER 11

THE TRUTH ABOUT DARCY

Mr Bennet wrote to Mr Gardiner that he agreed to all of Wickham's conditions. It was now certain that Lydia and Wickham would soon be married in London. Jane and Elizabeth went to tell their mother the news. Mrs Bennet was delighted! She didn't care that they had to pay Wickham to marry her daughter. She forgot that Lydia and Wickham had lived together before marriage and that this was a dishonour for the family.

"Finally, one of my daughters is getting married," she exclaimed, happily. "My objective in life is to see *all* of you married. This is a wonderful beginning."

Then a letter arrived from Mr Gardiner. In it, he explained that Wickham would not go back to his old regiment. Someone had offered him a different army job. He and Lydia would live in the north, far from the Bennets' house. On their way to their new home, the young couple wanted to visit Lydia's family. At first, Mr Bennet didn't agree. "Wickham and Lydia behaved very badly and I don't want to see them," he said, angrily. But Mrs Bennet begged him to let them visit. Jane and Elizabeth were sorry for Lydia and finally convinced their father to agree to the visit.

"Lydia must feel horrible," Jane said to Elizabeth, when they were alone. "She has caused so much trouble for herself, and for the family."

"I don't understand why Wickham wants to come," Elizabeth said. "Isn't he embarrassed to see the family after his terrible behaviour? How can he **demand** money to marry Lydia?"

But, when the young couple arrived, it was clear that Lydia didn't feel bad about her situation at all. She was as noisy and wild as always. She talked all the time and didn't notice that her father and her two older sisters were very quiet. Wickham was, as usual, charming and also acted as if nothing had happened.

The next morning, Lydia sat with Elizabeth. "I haven't told you about my wedding yet," she said. "You weren't in the room



Lydia was as noisy and wild as always.

when I told the rest of the family. It was a wonderful wedding. Our uncle and aunt, the Gardiners, came to church with me. And Mr Darcy was so helpful and kind."

"Mr Darcy?" exclaimed Elizabeth, with astonishment.

"Oh, he came to the church with Wickham," said Lydia. Then she put her hand over her mouth. "I forgot! I promised not to say anything about Mr Darcy."

Elizabeth controlled her feelings and said, "If it's a secret, I won't ask you anything more." But when Lydia went out of the room, Elizabeth immediately wrote a letter to Mrs Gardiner.

My dear aunt,

Please explain something to me. Why was Mr Darcy at Lydia's wedding? He's not part of our family, and he does not like Wickham. I don't understand his actions.

Elizabeth

Mrs Gardiner's answer arrived a day later. Elizabeth read it with great interest.

My dear niece,

I'm very surprised that YOU need an explanation! We promised Darcy not to reveal anything, but I was certain that you knew what he had done. Mr Darcy came to London immediately after he heard about Lydia and Wickham from you. He was the one who found them. He first spoke to Lydia and tried to convince her to leave Wickham and return to her family. She didn't agree to this. She said that she loved Wickham and would stay with him even if he didn't marry her.

Darcy spoke to Wickham and they decided together how much money Wickham would receive to marry Lydia.

Darcy then came to Mr Gardiner to tell him the conditions.

Mr Gardiner wanted to pay some of the money but Darcy insisted that he would take care of everything. He would pay all of Wickham's debts and also a large amount every year. He would also find him a new position in the army. He agreed that Mr Gardiner would tell your father to pay a small sum so that he would suspect nothing.

Darcy said that he was doing everything because he felt responsible that people didn't know Wickham's true character and that, because of this, he had been accepted in society, and had met Lydia.

Mr Gardiner and I think he has got another interest in the matter. That's why I was certain that you already knew everything.

Let me add that we admire Mr Darcy very much. We hope you'll invite us to Pemberley when you're mistress there!

Your loving aunt

The letter shocked Elizabeth. Darcy had done difficult things to find a solution to the problem. Had he done them for her? She now felt honoured that such a man had wanted to marry her. But she had rejected him. How stupid she had been! What would happen now?

Soon, Lydia and Wickham departed for the north and the Bennets' house was quiet again. Then, a few days later, astonishing news reached the family. Charles Bingley was returning to Netherfield Park!

Jane felt confused. She said to Elizabeth, "I don't know how to react to this news. I think I'm indifferent to Charles Bingley. I don't feel **pain** or happiness when I think about him now. I hope I won't see him often and I hope that Mother won't talk about him all the time."

But, three days later, Mr Bingley arrived at the Bennets'

house and Mr Darcy came with him. Now, Elizabeth was confused too! Mrs Bennet received Mr Bingley warmly but she was not friendly to Mr Darcy. She didn't know what Darcy had done for the family. She thought he was still the arrogant man who had insulted Elizabeth when they first met and who had treated Wickham badly. Elizabeth was embarrassed by her mother's behaviour but she couldn't do anything about it. It was impossible to explain the truth to her mother.

Jane and Bingley only spoke a few words to each other in the beginning. But soon, their eyes were shining and it was clear to everyone that the love between them had not disappeared.

CHAPTER 12

MRS BENNET IS DELIGHTED

Jane and Charles Bingley were clearly delighted to see each other and spoke together for a long time. But to Elizabeth's surprise, Darcy didn't speak to her at all.

"Why is he so cold and indifferent towards me?" Elizabeth thought, sadly. "He has done so much for my family and I want to tell him that I am grateful to him. My father and mother don't know the truth and they aren't behaving well towards him. My aunt and uncle were certain that he did it all to please me. Maybe in my heart, I hoped that he *could* still love me. But it's clear that it isn't so. I rejected him stupidly and now he dislikes me. That's why he doesn't come near me."

The next day, Charles Bingley came to visit alone. "Darcy has gone to London for a few days," he told the family.

Elizabeth was disappointed. "I want to see Darcy," she said to herself. "But, perhaps, it's better that he's not here. Now he can't interfere between Jane and Charles if he still thinks she's not suitable for him."

That evening, Charles Bingley asked Jane to marry him and she accepted immediately. The whole family was happy. Mrs Bennet was delighted because her dreams of another married daughter were coming true. Even Mr Bennet had only good things



That evening, Charles Bingley asked Jane to marry him.

to say to the couple and Kitty and Mary were already planning how they would enjoy going to Netherfield Park. Jane's face was even more beautiful than usual. "I'm the happiest person in the world," she said **over and over**. And to Elizabeth she whispered, "I only hope *you* will also be so happy one day."

Mrs Bennet went to tell all the neighbours the good news. After Lydia's bad behaviour, everyone had thought, "The poor Bennets! What a misfortune has happened to them." Now everyone thought, "The *lucky* Bennets, their daughter is marrying a rich and wonderful man."

A week after Jane's engagement to Charles, a very unexpected visitor arrived at the Bennets' house. Elizabeth was sitting in the main room reading a book, when an elegant carriage arrived at the house. After a moment, a servant came in and behind her was Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Darcy's aunt. The old lady had an unpleasant look on her face and sat down without saying a word to Elizabeth.

Then, after a few minutes, she turned to Elizabeth. "I have

something to tell you," she said in an aggressive voice. "I'm certain you know why I've come to see you."

"No, I don't know," said Elizabeth, in surprise. "I thought you were bringing me news of Mr and Mrs Collins."

"I've heard some alarming news about you," Lady Catherine said angrily. "It seems you intend to marry my nephew, Mr Darcy. I don't believe it's true. I'm telling you now that I will *never* agree to such a thing!"

"If you don't believe this story then why have you come?" Elizabeth asked in an angry voice.

"I want to hear the truth from you now, young lady," Lady Catherine said with a **menacing** voice. "Are you, or are you not, engaged to Mr Darcy?"

"No, I'm not," Elizabeth answered, sadly. To herself she added, "And it's all my **fault** that I'm not. I'm sad that I can't give a different answer to this horrible woman."

"I won't leave here until you promise me that you will *never* become engaged to him," Lady Catherine said in a hostile voice.

"No, Lady Catherine! I will never promise that!" Elizabeth said strongly. "I'll do whatever I can to be happy in my life and you can't tell me what to do."

"I won't allow my nephew to marry you!" Lady Catherine shouted. "He must marry my daughter. It was decided when they were small children that they would marry each other. They belong together. They come from the same noble family and they both have large fortunes. *You* have nothing to offer him. You have no money, no connections and your family's behaviour is terrible. If Darcy **dares** marry you, his family will not see him any more."

"I don't know how your nephew will react to your interference," Elizabeth said angrily, "but I've had enough of it. You have insulted my family and me. Please leave now!"

Lady Catherine finally got into her carriage and left. Elizabeth felt very upset and sad. "I hope that Darcy still loves

me," she thought to herself, "but even if he does, he won't do anything to turn his entire family against him. I have to forget about him. He won't return to Netherfield Park and I will never see him again."

But, to Elizabeth's astonishment, Darcy arrived at her house a few days later. He asked Elizabeth to walk in the garden with him. Elizabeth accepted immediately. Finally, she could tell him the things she'd wanted to say for a long time. "Thank you so much for helping Lydia and my whole family," Elizabeth said. "I forced my aunt to tell me the truth about it, even though you wanted to keep it a secret."

"I did it all for you," Darcy said and his voice was full of emotion. "Please tell me the truth now. Are your feelings towards me the same as when you rejected my proposal last time? My feelings towards you haven't changed at all!"



"My feelings towards you haven't changed at all!" Darcy said.

At first, Elizabeth couldn't speak. But, finally, she managed to tell him that her feelings had changed completely and that she loved him and wanted to marry him.

"I had lost hope that you could love me," Darcy said, and his face shone with happiness. "But then, Lady Catherine told me about your hostile reaction to her ultimatum. From that, I understood that your feelings for me had changed and *that* gave me the courage to speak to you again. I want to marry you and I don't care what my family thinks about it. Their prejudice against you is unjustified."

Elizabeth and Darcy walked and talked together for a long time. Darcy **apologised** for insulting Elizabeth when they first met. Elizabeth apologised for **judging** him to be a bad person when she didn't know the whole truth. They finally went into the house to announce to Mr and Mrs Bennet and the girls that they were engaged!

At first, there was only surprise on everyone's face. Elizabeth had told no one, not even Jane, that her feelings for Darcy had changed from dislike to love. But, when it became clear how happy Elizabeth and Darcy were, everyone in the family became happy too. Mrs Bennet could not believe her good luck ... Three daughters engaged in one month!

The two weddings took place very soon. Elizabeth and Darcy went to live at Pemberley. Darcy's sister, Georgiana, lived with them and she and Elizabeth soon became good friends.

Jane and Charles Bingley bought an estate very near Pemberley and the two sisters, who were such good friends, saw each other every day. The four of them got on very well, with Charles and Darcy being best friends as well as brothers-in-law. The Bennet family also visited them often. Even Lydia was invited to visit her sisters, but without Wickham!

Kitty and Mary still needed to marry. But, with three married daughters, two of them very rich, Mrs Bennet had nothing to complain about any more. Life was very good for the Bennet family now.



The four of them got on very well.