

A Wayne Scott • *LifeHouse* Production

Script By



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Lyrics By

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Music By

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Based on the classic 1813 novel by Jane Austen

Revised Edition

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In Order of Appearance)

- Elizabeth Bennet** Elizabeth has a quick wit and gets along easily with others. Loves to read and spend time outdoors. She is quick to judge, willful and shows herself to be prideful at the beginning, but that changes as the story unfolds. (18-25)
- Jane Bennet** Jane has a very forgiving spirit. She wants to please and be pleased by everyone. She always makes the best of a situation. She is quiet and reserved and well liked by everyone (20-25)
- Mary Bennet** Mary thinks very highly of herself. She's very bookish and likes to tell everyone what she's learned to show off her vast knowledge and self proclaimed wisdom. Her sisters are not fond of her, and she keeps mostly to herself. (16-20)
- Kitty Bennet** Kitty doesn't have a very strong personality. She follows Lydia around and pretty much goes to where the fun is. (15-18)
- Lydia Bennet** Lydia is much like her mother: loud and strong willed. She likes to have fun, and whines when she doesn't get her way. She is very "boy crazy" and especially loves soldiers. (15-18)
- Mr. Bennet** Mr. Bennet loves to tease and is very sarcastic. He plays favorites with his kids and makes fun of his wife alot, but it is evident that he loves them all, despite the front he puts on. (40-50)
- Mrs. Bennet** Mrs. Bennet is a loud, obnoxious, controlling woman who loves to gossip and wants nothing more than to marry off her five daughters. (40-50)
- Charlotte Lucas** Charlotte is Elizabeth's best friend. She has a somewhat cynical and distorted view on how life works. She craves happiness and wants security more than anything else. (25-30)
- Mr. Darcy** Because we see him from Elizabeth's perspective, Mr. Darcy's character changes as the story progresses. We him first as very stuck up and self

important. Later, he starts to grow on us, and in the end, we see him for who he really is: a kind, generous man, wanting to do right by everyone and will go out of his way to accomplish it. (25-35)

Mr. Bingley

Mr. Bingley is kind, enthusiastic and ready to approve of everyone and everything. He is not a leader, and is easily persuaded by those close to him. (20-30)

Caroline Bingley

Miss Bingley is spiteful, sarcastic and mean spirited. Thinks very highly of herself, and very little of others. She chases after Mr. Darcy and is very jealous of Elizabeth. (20-25)

Denny

A charming young soldier. (20-30)

Mr. Wickham

Mr. Wickham seems to be the underdog when we first see him. He's polite and likeable, but somewhat of a pessimist. Later, we see him as a liar, cheat and adulterer. (25-30)

Mr. Collins

Mr. Collins is a ridiculous man who only lives to please his patroness, Lady Catherine. He is very self important, however – and thinks that everyone should be hanging on his every word – and there are a lot of them.

Lady Catherine

Mr. Darcy's aunt, Lady Catherine, is a pompous, stately, and traditional English woman. She is very wealthy and thinks that it gives her just cause to meddle in the affairs of everyone else. No one likes her, but everyone is afraid to stand up to her, or even to ignore her. (50-60)

Anne DeBourgh

Sickly and shy daughter of Lady Catherine. (16-20)

Georgiana Darcy

Mr. Darcy's sister. She is quiet, shy and nervous that people will not like her. She is very devoted to her brother and thinks of him as a second father. (16-20)

Colonel Fitzwilliam

Mr. Darcy's cousin and close friend. He is very loyal and kind. (25-30)

Housekeeper

Employed by Mr. Darcy and thinks very highly of him. (50-60)

Mr. Gardiner

Elizabeth's uncle, and brother of Mrs. Bennet. Polite and kind. (30-40)

Mrs. Gardiner

Wife of Mr. Gardiner. Loving aunt to Elizabeth. (30-40)

“PRIDE AND PREJUDICE”

By Leah Simpson

SYNOPSIS OF SONGS

ACT I

Overture

1. “Mrs. Bennet’s Dream”.....Mrs. Bennet
2. “Somewhere in Between”.....Elizabeth
3. “Take My Hand”.....Ensemble
 “Take My Hand” (Reprise).....Elizabeth, Darcy
4. “I Never Was Intended for a Military Life”.....Wickham
 “Take My Hand” (Reprise).....Ensemble
 “Take My Hand” (Reprise).....Collins, Ensemble
5. “Mr. Collin’s Proposal”.....Collins
6. “Sisters For Life”.....Jane, Elizabeth
7. “The Letter”.....Darcy, Elizabeth

ACT II

Entr’acte

8. “This Could Have Been Mine”.....Elizabeth
9. “My Poor Nerves”.....Mrs. Bennet
10. “Angel of Mercy”.....Jane, Elizabeth
11. “Lydia’s Wedding”.....Lydia, Elizabeth, Jane, Kitty, Mary
12. “This Moment”.....Darcy, Elizabeth
13. Finale.....Ensemble

"Pride and Prejudice"

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ACT I

Overture

SCENE 1: LONGBOURN

(Music transitions from overture to underscore)

(Bennet family enters from top of stairs, first Mr. Bennet, who is bird-watching, followed closely by his wife, who is speaking loudly. They are followed by Lydia and Kitty, who are paying close attention to their mother, then by Mary, carrying a large Bible, and finally by Jane and Elizabeth, who are several steps behind, watching the rest of their family)

Mrs. Bennet My dear Mr. Bennet, have you heard that Netherfield Park has been rented at last?
Mr. Bennet Has it my dear?
Mrs. Bennet Do you not want to know who has taken it?
Mr. Bennet You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it.
Mrs. Bennet I have just been told it is taken by a wealthy young man from the north of England.
Mr. Bennet What is his name?
Mrs. Bennet Bingley
Mr. Bennet Is he married or single?
Mrs. Bennet Oh! Single, to be sure my dear! A single man of large fortune—five thousand pounds a year—what a fine thing for our girls! *(Motioning to them)*
Mr. Bennet How so? How can it affect them?
Mrs. Bennet How can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them.
Elizabeth For you know father, it is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man of good fortune must be in want of a wife.
Jane *(Eyeing Elizabeth with a half smile)* Oh, Lizzy!
Mr. Bennet Your chatter is disturbing my bird watching. Let's go in for tea.
Mrs. Bennet Mr. Bennet! Don't you dare change the subject!

SONG: "MRS. BENNET'S DREAM"

Mrs. Bennet I have had many dreams for my daughters
And with every passing day
I search for opportunity
And now it's come our way!
Mr. Bingley's a gentleman
A fact you can't deny!
He is here now in the finest house that one could ever buy!

Can you blame me for wanting the very best?
Why rob my eyes of their gleam?
Your nonchalant way makes me very stressed!
By and by I shall have my dream!
Yes, by and by I shall have my dream!

Elizabeth *(Spoken)* Uh...Mother...Please...

Mrs. Bennet But it's not for myself that I bemoan

But only for you my dears
For without a match to call your own
You'll be doomed to poverty for years!

Lydia Oh no! Not that!

Mrs. Bennet I have prayed for many a night
For such a man to arrive
Now that he's in our sight
It is time to plan and connive!

To see you in matrimony
Safe and sound and sure
The moment of the ceremony
Your future is certain and secure!

By and by I shall have my dream!
I shall have my dream!

Mrs. Bennet Indeed I will! (*Tugging on Mr. Bennet's sleeve*) And it is very likely that he may fall in love with one of our girls, therefore you must visit him as soon as he moves in!
(*Music segue to "Elizabeth's Song"*)

Mr. Bennet It is more than I intend to take on, I assure you.

Mrs. Bennet Are you mocking me?

Mr. Bennet Certainly not—I'd much rather leave that pleasure to you. (*Exits*)

Mrs. Bennet (*Hurrying to catch up with her husband. Suddenly emotional*) Oh Mr. Bennet!

(*The scene goes on in slow motion. Elizabeth looks around her sadly and starts to sing*)

SONG: "ELIZABETH'S SONG"

Elizabeth

I see my parents quipping
And each quip cuts like a knife
I wonder who persuaded them to join as man and wife
Such differences in temperament
In logic and in purpose
Is it possible affection lies somewhere beneath the surface?

From mother I've been lectured
Since the time that I could crawl
I must wed a man of wealth, if I wed a man at all
Not one word of love was uttered
It's a childish silly dream
Yet the dream will never leave me, it has ever been my theme

I'm persuaded, but the deepest love,
Will bind me to the perfect man
An equal and a partner to respect and understand
That tenderness, and charity,
Mean more than gold and gems to me
I will try to do the wisest thing
But my head and heart must meet me, somewhere in between

Is it vanity to think a man
Would love me for myself,
Not because of my connections, my position, or my wealth?
I've been told such thoughts are folly
I must face the truth I know

I must help my fam-ly, marry well, in spite of love, but oh,

To meet a man of strength and wit
And with character to spare
A kind remark, a warm embrace, has ever been my prayer
For such a man I'll wait and yearn for every day,
Till then...
I will try to do the wisest thing
But my head and heart must meet me, somewhere in between.

Elizabeth I am persuaded that nothing but the very deepest love will induce me into matrimony.

(Elizabeth exits)

SCENE 2: LONGBOURN

(Mr. Bennet is reading a newspaper, Mrs. Bennet is sulking and the girls are all doing some handiwork, except for Mary, who is reading a very large and cumbersome book)

Mrs. Bennet I really wish you would consider your daughters. Think of what it would do for them. You must go, for you know it will be impossible for us to visit if you do not.

Mr. Bennet I dare say Mr. Bingley will be very glad to see you; and I will send my greetings by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying whichever he chooses of the girls; *(Enter Elizabeth, who kisses her father on the top of his head)* though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy.

Mrs. Bennet I desire you will do no such thing. Lizzy is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure she is not half so beautiful as Jane, *(Jane blushes)* nor half so good-humored as Lydia *(Lydia laughs with a snort)*. But you are always giving her the preference.

Mr. Bennet They are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has a little more wit than her sisters.

Mrs. Bennet Mr. Bennet! How can you abuse in such a way? And what about Kitty *(Who nods and grabs Lydia's hand)* or Mary *(Who looks up briefly and then back down)*? You take delight in irritating me! You have no compassion on my poor nerves!

Mr. Bennet You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They have been my old friends these twenty years at least.

Mrs. Bennet You do not know what I suffer!

Mr. Bennet I hope you will live through this and see many young men of five thousand a year come into the neighborhood.

Mrs. Bennet It will be no use if twenty such should come if you will not visit them.

Mr. Bennet Depend upon it my dear, when there are twenty, I'll visit them all. *(Goes back to reading his paper)*

Lydia I wonder if Mr. Bingley is fond of dancing.

Mrs. Bennet I am sick of Mr. Bingley!

Mr. Bennet I am sorry to hear it, if I had known as much this morning, I certainly would not have called on him. But we cannot escape the acquaintance now.

(Mrs. Bennet makes several joyful exclamations, Kitty and Lydia join hands and dance in a circle. Jane and Elizabeth look pleased and amused and Mary looks up for a moment, and goes back to her book)

Jane Do you think he will be at the ball tomorrow, father?

Mr. Bennet I believe he will.

(Elizabeth and Jane move downstage to speak in an aside as others continue to chatter excitedly)

Elizabeth I wonder if Mama's estimation of the famous Mr. Bingley is a little too optimistic.

Jane Lizzy?

Elizabeth I find that most men in his situation are arrogant and self absorbed.

Jane This may be true, but you yourself said "most." Most doesn't mean all, dearest.

Elizabeth *(Smiling)* You are right as usual. Well, then I will reserve my judgment until tomorrow night.

Jane Only make sure you are careful in forming that judgment, Lizzy.

(Elizabeth starts to say something but Mrs. Bennet runs to Jane)

Mrs. Bennet Jane dear, you must wear your blue gown for Mr. Bingley. You look so well in it!
(*There are more joyous exclamations as the curtain closes*)

SCENE 3: OUTDOOR BALL

(*Townspeople and Bennet family are all gathered together in a town assembly hall—in front of closed curtain. Most of the young people are dancing, with the exception of Mary, who is sitting in a chair watching. The older women are standing off to the side gossiping, and the older men are standing to the other side drinking or smoking cigars*)

SONG: “TAKE MY HAND”

All Bow—rise—take my hand
A request, not a demand!
The room will glow, don’t you know—
As we dance away the night!

Everything’s a sight to behold—
Reserve a dance before the night’s old—
The strings harmonize—
Catch a glimpse of a lady’s eyes—

With every turn converse
Please be cordial, not terse
Is this the beginning of something new?
As I dance, dance with you?

(*Mr. and Miss Bingley and Mr. Darcy enter, and stand staring at the scene. Everyone stops what they are doing to stare back. The Bingley’s and Darcy walk across to the other side of the stage in a very stately manner, as all eyes remain on them. They begin to whisper to themselves, and the song and dance resumes*)

(*A variety of music and dancing continues throughout the rest of the scene*)

(*Bingley starts to mingle. Caroline smiles and nods at people. Darcy just stands and stares. He speaks to no one*)

Elizabeth So which is our much awaited Mr. Bingley?

Charlotte The one with the blue coat and the smile.

Jane And the others?

Charlotte The woman is Caroline Bingley—Mr. Bingley’s sister. And the man is his closest friend, Mr. Darcy. He is rather good looking, is he not? And rumor has it that he has 10 thousand a year—at least!

Elizabeth I doubt you would think him quite so handsome if he were not quite so rich.

(*All laugh. Mrs. Bennet runs up to them*)

Mrs. Bennet Lizzy, Jane, you must come meet Mr. Bingley!

(*She grabs Jane by the hand, Jane grabs Lizzy and Lizzy grabs Charlotte. They stop short of them and Mrs. Bennet begins fanning herself conspicuously, trying to get Bingley to take notice of them and come to introduce himself. Caroline and Darcy gawk at her presentation of herself, and Bingley continues talking, not noticing. Mr. Bennet, however, takes notice of her and approaches Mr. Bingley*)

Mr. Bennet I’ve seen that look many a time—you’d best answer it.

Bingley Sir?

(*Turns to look at Mrs. Bennet, who has doubled her efforts, and does a double take*)

Mr. Bennet That woman is my wife, and two of the girls are my daughters. That, I believe, means you are to take action, exert yourself and introduce yourself to them.
(Bingley looks confused, but excuses himself with a bow and Mr. Bennet escorts him to the ladies. The rest of his party follows slowly)

Mr. Bennet Mr. Bingley, may I present my wife, my...
Mrs. Bennet Our eldest daughter Jane and our next, Elizabeth. *(They curtsey)*
Mr. Bennet *(Giving his wife a look to tell her that he noticed that she left Charlotte out of the introductions)* And Miss Charlotte Lucas.
(During the following dialogue, a young man approaches Mary, who refuses to dance with him and pulls a small book out of her handbag. Kitty and Lydia sneak up behind a servant with a tray and steal food off of it, stuffing it in their mouths, then each grab the arm of an officer and drag them to the dance floor)

Mrs. Bennet *(Waving him off)* Yes, yes. Our Mary is sitting there in the chair, and our two youngest... our two youngest are dancing.

Bingley *(Looking at Jane)* I love dancing.
(Mrs. Bennet coughs and nods toward Caroline and Darcy. Bingley looks at them with a start)

Bingley Oh! How rude of me! Allow me to introduce my sister, Caroline Bingley, and my friend Mr. Darcy. *(All bow or curtsey)* Uh, Miss Bennet, may I have the honor of the next dance—if you are not otherwise occupied?

Jane I am not, sir.
(She takes his arm as they walk toward the other dancers and begin dancing. Mrs. Bennet rejoins the older women, positioning herself to watch Bingley and Jane. Charlotte and Caroline also excuse themselves. Elizabeth stands and waits for Darcy to ask her to dance, and when he doesn't, sits down next to Mary, but within earshot of where Darcy is standing. Bingley approaches Darcy when the dance is over)

Bingley Come Darcy, I must have you dance. I hate to see you standing about in such a stupid manner.
Darcy I certainly shall not. You know how I detest it unless I am particularly acquainted with my partner. Your sister is occupied, and there is not another woman in the room whom it would not be a punishment to dance with.

Bingley I would not be so particular as you are for a kingdom! I never met with so many pleasant girls—And there are several that are uncommonly pretty.

Darcy You are dancing with the only attractive girl in the room.
Bingley She is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld! But there is one of her sisters. She is very pretty too, and very agreeable, I dare say.

Darcy *(Glancing at Elizabeth)* She is tolerable, but not attractive enough to tempt me.
(Elizabeth coughs loudly and very pointedly gets up and goes to Jane and Charlotte making it very obvious that she is relating the story to them. Soon after, Charlotte is called away, leaving Jane and Elizabeth alone to talk)

Darcy I am in no humor at present to give attention to young ladies who are snubbed by other men. You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles. You are wasting your time with me.

Jane Oh, Lizzy! He is just what a young man ought to be—sensible, good-humored, lively; and I never saw such happy manners!

Elizabeth He is also handsome, which a young man ought to be if he possibly can. I give you leave to like him. You have liked many a stupider person. Though you are a great deal too apt, you know, to like people in general. You never see fault in anybody. I have never heard you speak ill of a human being in my life.

Jane I would wish not to be quick to find fault with anyone, but I speak what I think.
Elizabeth I know you do; and that is the wonder. With your good sense, to be so honestly blind to the follies of others! To take the good of everybody's character and make it still better, and say nothing of the bad—this belongs to you alone. I wish I had your faith in the human race.

(Bingley approaches Jane and takes her to the dance floor. Elizabeth backs away from the couple, bumping into Mr. Darcy. They politely curtsey/bow to each other as the following Voice Over is heard:)

Darcy V.O. She is tolerable.

Elizabeth V.O. Tolerable indeed. If you were a glass of water and I was walking through the desert, you would not be enough to tempt me!

SONG: “TAKE MY HAND” (Reprise)

Elizabeth Since my presence is something you must tolerate,
I won't berate, I'll leave the floor
Darcy I'm sorry my looks are such a bore!
Bow—and rise—what a joke!
Look at that pitiful bloke
The ladies swarm—like a storm
He's lost his head—blushing red!
Elizabeth Every man seems to be enthralled
Darcy Am I the only man who is appalled?
Elizabeth Heaven forbid that we should socialize!
Darcy Is it time for our goodbyes?
Elizabeth A woman wants to know what's behind that stoic look!
Darcy A woman tries to read every gesture like a book!
Elizabeth A man should take the lead, and tell a girl how he feels!
Darcy A man only wishes she would stop stepping on his heels...
Bow—and rise—and assert
So foreign to an introvert!
Elizabeth It seems that two, overburdens you
I'll leave you to your silent reverie...
Darcy It seems I am the only one...
Who understands me...

SCENE 4: LONGBOURN

(The Bennet family is sitting in their usual places with the exception of Jane and Elizabeth)

Mrs. Bennet I never had as delightful a time as I did last night! Do you not think so, my dears?
Lydia/Kitty Oh yes! I do so love a ball! Etc.
(Mary looks up, shakes her head, and looks back down at her book)
Mrs. Bennet And Mr. Bingley! What a charming young man! I think he took quite a fancy to our dear Jane! He paid her quite a compliment by dancing with her...
Mr. Bennet Yes, my dear. We were all there.
Mrs. Bennet And his sister! So well bred, so polite! And did you see the lace on her gown? It was so...
Mr. Bennet No lace, Mrs. Bennet! I beg of you! No lace!
(Kitty and Lydia giggle, Mary rolls her eyes as Jane and Elizabeth enter. Jane is dressed as if for an outing)
Mr. Bennet Well, my dear, where are you off to this afternoon?
Jane I have been invited to dine at Netherfield with Miss Bingley.
Mrs. Bennet *(Standing and running to her)* Oh, Jane! Dinner with the Bingleys! You'll be married in no time at all! But it's just too bad you'll be subjected to that odious Mr. Darcy. How I hate that man!
Jane Mama! The men will be dining with the officers this evening. I doubt I will see them...
Kitty & Lydia Officers! *(They hold hands and begin dancing in a circle)*
Mrs. Bennet This is bad news indeed—not that having the officers in Meryton is a bad thing! But go all the way to Netherfield without a glimpse of Mr. Bingley! Dreadful!
Jane May I borrow the carriage, father?
Mrs. Bennet *(Cutting off her husband)* No you must go on horseback!
Elizabeth But mama, it is threatening rain! She will be wet through before she reaches their gate!
Mrs. Bennet Exactly! Then she will have to stay the night!
Jane Mother!
Mrs. Bennet I will not have you going all the way to Netherfield without seeing Mr. Bingley! You will take Nellie.
(All look at Mr. Bennet)
Mr. Bennet What have I to do with it? It seems your mother has made up her mind.

(He hides behind his newspaper. Kitty and Lydia dance around Jane, then the three of them exit. The rest walk down stage and the curtain closes while the set is changed to Netherfield Hall)

Mr. Bennet What is it, my dear, that you do not like about Mr. Darcy? He is far richer than your Mr. Bingley, after all.

Mrs. Bennet Do not even speak of that odious man. He has made it very clear what he thinks of himself. Not to mention that he snubbed our Lizzy.

Mr. Bennet Snubbed our Lizzy did he?

Elizabeth I didn't care much for him either, father.

Mrs. Bennet Another time, Lizzy, I would not dance with him, if I were you.

Elizabeth I believe Ma'am, I may safely promise you never to dance with Mr. Darcy. I couldn't cater to his pride.

Mary Pride, is a very common failing, I believe.

Elizabeth Yes, Mary.

Mary I am convinced that it is very common indeed that human nature is particularly prone to it.

Elizabeth Uh, yes...

Mary Vanity and pride 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.

Elizabeth Thank you, Mary. That was helpful.
(Mary looks pleased with herself. All exit with the sound of thunder and heavy rain in the background. Elizabeth enters alone with a heavy shawl or coat on with a letter in her hands. Voice over of Jane as Elizabeth reads the letter.)

Jane V.O. My dearest Lizzy, I find myself very unwell which, I suppose, is to be imputed to my getting wet clear through. My kind friends will not hear of my returning home till I am better. They insist on my seeing their physician—therefore do not be alarmed if you should hear of his having visited me—and excepting a sore throat and a headache there is not much the matter with me.

Elizabeth Oh, Jane!

(Exit)

SCENE 5: NETHERFIELD

(Curtain opens to reveal a sitting room at Netherfield. Its decorations are much nicer than that of Longbourne, and Miss Bingley is sitting idle and Darcy is writing a letter. Mr. Bingley stands and paces the floor)

Bingley I wonder if I should go and see how Miss Bennet is this morning.

Caroline Oh Charles, don't be ridiculous! It is merely a cold. I daresay she will be quite well enough that we can send her on her way by this afternoon!

Bingley This afternoon? Caroline! We couldn't possibly send her home so soon!

Caroline One can only hope...

Bingley I think I might just press my ear to her door to see if she's up. *(Exits)*

Caroline *(After a short pause)* Who are you writing to, Mr. Darcy?

Darcy My sister.

Caroline Dear Georgiana! Please tell her that I long to see her. *(He nods but makes no reply)* You write uncommonly fast, Mr. Darcy.

Darcy You are mistaken, I write rather slowly.

Caroline How many letters you have occasion to write... 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 *(Pause)* Pray... tell your sister that I long to see her.

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

Caroline Then tell her that I am quite in raptures with her beautiful little design for a table, and think it far more superior than...

Darcy Will you give me leave to defer your raptures until I write again? At present I have not room to do them justice.

Caroline Of course... Do you always write such charming long letters to your sister, Mr. Darcy?

Darcy They are generally long; but whether they are always charming, it is not for me to determine.

(*A servant enters*)

Servant A Miss Elizabeth Bennet to see you ma'am.

Caroline Thank you. Send her in.
(*Elizabeth enters with mud on the bottom of her skirt. Caroline and Darcy just stare at her*)

Elizabeth (*After an awkward pause*) I have come to inquire after my sister.

Caroline Did you walk here?

Elizabeth I did.

Caroline But it must be three miles!

Elizabeth It is.

Caroline In all that dirt?

Darcy Your sister is upstairs. Our man will take you to her.

Elizabeth Thank you. (*She curtseys and exits*)

Caroline What does she mean by scampering about the countryside all because her sister has a cold? Did you see her? Her hem must have been six inches deep in mud. And her hair!

Darcy I thought her complexion showed added brilliancy and her eyes were brightened by the exercise.
(*Caroline is obviously surprised by this statement, and then angry. Darcy looks pleased with himself, and also a little embarrassed as if accidentally divulging a secret. Bingley enters*)

Bingley I just saw Miss Elizabeth Bennet in the hall! Have you seen her this morning?
(*Caroline looks angry*)

Darcy We have. She is here to inquire after her sister.

Bingley Yes. I told her she must stay as long as Miss Bennet is feeling poorly.

Caroline Oh, poor Miss Bennet. I am excessively fond of her. She is really a very sweet girl, and I wish with all my heart that she were well settled, but with such low connections, I am afraid there is no chance of it.

Darcy You say that their uncle is an attorney in Meryton?

Caroline (*Laughing*) Yes. And they have another who lives somewhere outside of London.

Bingley If they had uncles enough to fill all London, it would not make them one jot less agreeable.

Darcy But it must lessen their chance of marrying men of any respectability in the world.

Caroline Really Charles, you can't be serious. Jane Bennet is...

Bingley (*Firmly*) She's an angel.

Caroline Angelic she may be, but think of our family! A connection as the Bennet family? They have no money, no title, no respectability!

Bingley Caroline! I refuse to listen...

Darcy She's right, Bingley. You have a responsibility to your family name...

Bingley I don't care...
(*Bingley begins to reply, but Elizabeth enters in fresh clothing, but still looking uncomfortable*)

Elizabeth Thank you, Mr. Bingley, for your kindness to my sister. I believe she is a little better.

Bingley I am exceedingly glad to hear it. Shall we have the card tables brought out?

Elizabeth If you don't mind, I would love to borrow one of your books. (*Picks one up from a side table*)

Caroline Of course. Miss Eliza Bennet despises cards. She is a great reader and has no pleasure in anything else.

Elizabeth I deserve neither such praise nor such criticism. I'm not a great reader; I take pleasure in many things.

Bingley It is amazing to me how young ladies can have patience to be so very accomplished!

Caroline (*Turning her attention away from Elizabeth*) All young ladies accomplished! My dear Charles, whatever do you mean?

Bingley Yes, all of them. They paint tables, both sing and play piano, and net purses.

Darcy The word accomplished is applied to many a woman who deserves it for nothing more than netting a purse, or painting a table. I am very far from agreeing with you in your opinion of ladies in general. I cannot boast of knowing more than half a dozen, in all of my acquaintance, that are really accomplished.

Caroline Nor I, I am sure.

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

Darcy Yes, I do calculate a great deal in it.

Caroline Certainly! No one can be really esteemed accomplished who does not have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and all the modern languages to deserve the title; and beside all this, she must possess a certain 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 Indeed she must possess all this, and still add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading.

Elizabeth I am no longer surprised at your knowing only half a dozen accomplished women. I wonder at your knowing any.

Darcy Would you be so severe upon your own sex as to doubt the possibility of all this?

Elizabeth I never met such a woman—with such capacity, and taste, and application, and elegance, as you describe united.
(*Seeing that Darcy is giving too much attention to Elizabeth, Caroline rises and walks over to Elizabeth*)

Caroline Miss Eliza Bennet, let me persuade you to take a turn about the room with me. I assure you it is very refreshing. (*Elizabeth joins her*) Mr. Darcy, won't you join us?

Darcy Miss Bingley, I can imagine but two motives for your walking the room, in either case my joining you would interfere.

Caroline What could he mean? I am dying to know what he means!

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

Caroline Come now! I must have an answer!

Darcy You either choose this method of passing the evening because you have secret affairs to discuss, or because you are conscious that your figures appear to the greatest advantage in walking. If the first, I should be completely in your way, and if the second, I can admire you much better from here.

Caroline Shocking! Abominable reply! How shall we punish him?

Elizabeth Nothing so easy. Tease him—laugh at him.

Caroline Laugh at Mr. Darcy? Tease calmness of temper and presence of mind! No, no! I feel he may defy us there. And as to laughter, we must not attempt to laugh without a subject.

Elizabeth Mr. Darcy is not to be laughed at? Do you imagine yourself to be a man without fault?

Darcy That is not possible for any one. But it has been my study to avoid weaknesses which expose one to ridicule.

Elizabeth Such as vanity and pride.

Darcy Yes, vanity is a weakness indeed. But pride—

Caroline (*Interrupting*) Your examination of Mr. Darcy must be over. Pray, what is the result?

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

Darcy I have made no such statement. I have faults enough. My temper is, I believe, too little yielding. It could perhaps be called resentful. My good opinion once lost is lost forever.

Elizabeth *That* is a failing indeed! Relentless resentment *is* a shade in a character. But you have chosen your fault well. I really cannot *laugh* at it. You are safe from me.

Darcy Every disposition has some natural defect...

Elizabeth (*Interrupting*) And *your* defect is a tendency to hate everybody.

Darcy And yours is to willfully misunderstand them.

Caroline Oh, my...I believe it's time for tea!

Elizabeth I don't care for tea... I should go and check on my sister, thank you. (*She exits*)
(*The Bingley's look nervously at each other. Curtain closes*)
(*Jane and Elizabeth enter in front of closed curtain. Jane is wearing a nightgown and mob cap*)

Jane Oh, Lizzy! Are not the Bingley's the picture of graciousness?

Elizabeth Mr. Bingley is very kind, but his sister and friend leave much to be desired... I suppose he cannot help being related to Caroline, but I cannot understand why anyone would choose to be friends with Mr. Darcy!

Jane Can Mr. Darcy really be so bad, Lizzy?

Elizabeth Jane, I assure you that I am not exaggerating when I say that he is the most arrogant, self-absorbed, aggravating man that I have ever met in my life. I hope you are soon feeling better, for I do not know that I can stay many more days under the same roof as him.

Jane I am feeling much better. Truth be told, even though I have been dreadfully ill, my spirits have never been higher. I believe I prefer Mr. Bingley to every man that I have ever met.

Elizabeth Oh, dear.

Jane What is it, dearest?

Elizabeth (*Smiling*) It's just that if Mr. Bingley is to be my brother-in-law, I shall have to figure out some way to get along with the odious Mr. Darcy!

Jane Oh, Lizzy!
(*They exit, arm in arm*)

SCENE 6: LONGBOURN

(Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Mary, Kitty and Lydia are sitting in the sitting room at Longbourn)

- Lydia** When I get married, it'll be to someone rich enough that I'll not have to wear the same gown twice!
- Mary** You should be more concerned about the depth of his character than the depth of his pocketbook!
(Kitty and Lydia laugh)
- Kitty** It's a good thing her name is Mary! For with a sense of humor like hers, she never will.
- Mr. Bennet** Girls, girls...
(Jane and Elizabeth enter. Elizabeth sits on the floor next to her father's chair.)
- Mr. Bennet** Jane, Lizzy I am glad you are home. There have not been two words of sense spoken in this house since you left!
- Lydia** Had you any officers visit while you were at Netherfield? We met ever so many in Meryton...
- Kitty** *(Interrupting)* Yes! And all so handsome! I thought...
- Lydia** Save your breath to cool your porridge, Kitty! I will tell them!
- Mr. Bennet** Actually, I have a bit of news. I hope, my dear, that you have ordered a good dinner today, because I have reason to expect an addition to our family party.
- Mrs. Bennet** Mr. Bingley! Why Jane, you never dropped a word! *(Gasp)* There is not a bit of fish to be got today. Lydia, my love, ring the bell. I must speak to the housekeeper this moment.
- Mr. Bennet** It is not Mr. Bingley.
(Everyone begins asking questions and talking at once. Mr. Bennet looks amused)
- Mr. Bennet** About a month ago, I received this letter. It is from my nephew, Mr. Collins, who, when I am dead, may turn you all out of this house as soon as he pleases.
- Mrs. Bennet** Oh! My dear! I cannot bear to hear that odious name mentioned. I think it the hardest thing in the world that your estate should be stolen away because you have no male heirs.
- Mr. Bennet** It certainly is an evil affair, and nothing can clear Mr. Collins, from the guilt of inheriting Longbourn. But if you will listen to his letter, you may perhaps change your mind in regard to him.
- Mrs. Bennet** No, I shall not; and I think it was brazen of him to write to you at all. Why could he not keep quarreling with you as his father did before him?
- Mr. Bennet** He seems to feel badly about that, as you soon will hear: "Dear Sir, the disagreement subsisting between yourself and my late honored father always gave me much uneasiness, and since I have had the misfortune to lose him, I have frequently wished to heal the breach." There, Mrs. Bennet.
(She gives him a look, and turns away)
(Voice Over By Mr. Collins as girls work on sewing and Mrs. Bennet continues huffing and puffing)
- Mr. Collins V.O.** Recently having been ordained, I have been so fortunate as to be distinguished by the right honorable Lady Catherine De Bourgh. As a clergyman, I strive to promote peace wherever I can and on these grounds, I flatter myself that my present overtures of goodwill are highly commendable and that my being next in inheriting the Longbourn estate will be kindly overlooked and not lead you to reject the offered olive branch. I would by no means wish to injure your daughters and mean to assure you of making them every possible amends. *(Mrs. Bennet perks up)* I remain, sir, with respectful compliments to your wife and daughters, William Collins.
- Mrs. Bennet** There is some sense in what he says about the girls, and if he wishes to make them any amends, I shall not be the person to discourage him.
- Elizabeth** He must be an oddity, I think. Can he be a sensible man, sir?
- Mr. Bennet** No, my dear; I think not. In fact, I have great hopes of finding him quite the reverse.
- Mary** In point of composition, his letter does not seem defective. The idea of the olive branch although not wholly new, is very well expressed.
(Lydia and Kitty roll their eyes and laugh at Mary's statement. There is a knocking sound or they can hear a carriage driving up)
- Mr. Bennet** That will be the man now.
(Mr. Collins is escorted in by the housekeeper. All bow or curtsy)
- Mrs. Bennet** Mr. Collins! How glad we are that you have come to us! Do be...

Collins Mrs. Bennet, I must take this opportunity to compliment you on such a fine family of daughters! I have heard much of their beauty, but fame, in this instance, has fallen short of truth. I do not doubt your seeing them all well disposed of in marriage in no time at all.
(*Elizabeth and Mr. Bennet look at each other, Jane looks taken aback, and Kitty and Lydia cover their mouths, trying to stifle laughter, but are not quite successful. Mary sits quietly, staring intently at Mr. Collins*)

Mrs. Bennet You are very kind, sir.

Collins And your home is very fine indeed. The furniture and decorations are all just the way they should be for a house of this size. It is, of course, much smaller than Rosings Park, the home of my noble patroness, Lady Catherine De Bourgh.
(*Elizabeth looks again at her father, who just smiles. Mr. Collins sits down.*)

Mr. Bennet You are, it seems, very fortunate in your patroness.

Collins I have never in my life witnessed such behavior in a person of rank—such consideration and condescension as I have experienced from Lady Catherine. Not only has she graciously approved of both of the sermons, which I have already had the honor of preaching before her, but she has already asked me twice to dine at Rosings. She has even condescended to advise me to marry as soon as possible, provided, of course, I choose with discretion.

Mrs. Bennet Has she any children?

Collins She has but one daughter, Miss Anne De Bourgh, whose unfortunate state of health unhappily prevents her being in town; and because of that, as I told Lady Catherine myself one day, the British court has been deprived of its brightest ornament. Her ladyship seemed pleased. I am always happy to offer those little delicate compliments which are always acceptable to ladies.

Mr. Bennet It is happy for you that you possess the talent of flattering with delicacy. May I ask whether these pleasing attentions proceed from the impulse of the moment, or are the result of previous study?

Collins They arise chiefly from what is passing at the time, although I sometimes amuse myself with arranging little elegant compliments as may be adapted to ordinary occasions, wishing to give them as unrehearsed an air as possible.

Elizabeth (Smiling) Believe me, Mr. Collins, no one would accuse your manners of having been rehearsed.

Collins I thought that this evening, if you all do not mind, I would read to you from a book of sermons I have here with me.

Elizabeth (*Grabbing Jane's hand and standing up*) Um, excuse us sir, but we have some business to attend to upstairs.

Kitty and Lydia We'll help you!

(All four curtsy and exit. Mr. Bennet just rises from his chair and leaves)

Collins (*Looking at Mrs. Bennet and then at Mary, who still has her eyes fixed on him*) Maybe another time then. I wonder ma'am, if I might speak with you alone.

Mrs. Bennet Of course. Mary, go help your sisters with whatever business it is they have upstairs. (*Mary rises unhappily, and exits*)

Collins I think, madam, the reason for my visit is by now quite clear. It is my design to make your family some amends, not to mention pleasing my noble patroness, by choosing a wife from among your daughters. I have even now, in this short interview with them set my attentions upon the eldest.
Now...

Mrs. Bennet Oh, Mr. Collins, I feel it necessary to warn you that my Jane is likely to be very soon engaged.

Collins (*Disappointed*) Engaged?

Mrs. Bennet But as to my younger daughters, I do not know of any prior attachments. May I suggest that Elizabeth, second to Jane in age and in beauty would make any man an excellent wife.

Collins (*Looking thoughtful*) Yes, I do believe you are right Mrs. Bennet. Thank you.
(*Both exit*)

SCENE 7: MERYTON

(Jane, Kitty, Lydia and Elizabeth walk in from the floor to Meryton where there are soldiers and townspeople milling about talking, buying and selling.)

Kitty I love our walks to town. I wonder if we'll see anyone we know.

Lydia I have some money and want to buy ribbons for my new bonnet...look! Soldiers!
(*Kitty and Lydia shriek*)

Elizabeth Lydia, Kitty!

(They stop, but smile smugly at each other, while the soldier and his friend make their way to join them)

- Kitty** Oh, Lydia, I don't know if I can bear it! Denny's friend is very good looking! I might faint dead away if he speaks to me!
- Lydia** He's tolerable, to be sure, but he'd look better in uniform. I think a man looks nothing without one.
- Jane** Girls! They will hear you!
- Collins** *(Mr. Collins runs in out of breath)*
I finally caught up with you! You must have left when I was rehearsing my sermon with your mother.
- Mary** I'm sorry we left without you, Mr. Collins. We didn't realize...
- Lydia** *(Interrupting)* Denny! Denny! Come say hello!
- Jane** Lydia! How do you know that man?
- Lydia** He was my favorite dance partner at the ball!
- (The men reach them and bow. The ladies curtsey and Mr. Collins, standing very close to Elizabeth, bows. Elizabeth tries to move away from Mr. Collins, but he moves with her. This continues throughout the scene until Mr. Collins exits)*
- Denny** May I introduce my friend, Mr. Wickham. He is new to the regiment and will be quartered here in Meryton for some months. I was just showing him around.
- Kitty** See, Lydia, he will be dressed in uniform.
- (Elizabeth elbows her)*
- Denny** *(Not noticing the comment)* This is Miss Jane Bennet, Miss Elizabeth Bennet, Miss Mary Bennet, Miss Katherine Bennet, and Miss Lydia Bennet.
- Jane** And our cousin, Mr. Collins.
- Wickham** *(Looking at Elizabeth)* I am pleased to meet you. I hope we shall all be good friends.
- Elizabeth** I'm sure we will.
- (Music segues to "I Never Was Intended for a Military Life" as Bingley and Darcy enter from the opposite side of the stage. Both look pleased to see the girls, but Darcy's countenance changes when he sees Wickham. The two stare at each other while Bingley remains unconscious of the tension and begins talking to Jane. Wickham touches his hat, then Darcy does the same)*
- Bingley** How fortunate! We were just on our way to Longbourn to inquire after your health.
- Jane** *(Smiling)* I am well, sir, as you see.
- Bingley** Excellent! And the rest of your family, how are they?
- Jane** They are all in good health. We have our cousin, Mr. Collins visiting with us also.
- (Darcy can bear the sight of Wickham no more and exits the way he came. Bingley can't help but notice this, looks torn, but turns and takes a few steps to follow his friend)*
- Bingley** I am sorry—I had better go. Oh! Let me have the pleasure before I leave to personally invite the Bennet family, along with Mr. Collins, of course, to a ball at Netherfield one week from today.
- Jane** Thank you sir, we are honored.
- Lydia** You must also invite Mr. Wickham to your party, Mr. Bingley!
- Bingley** *(Turning to leave)* Of course! All of the officers are invited! *(Exit)*
- Kitty** Oh, you must come, you must!
- Lydia** Never mind that just now, let us go down to the milliner's shop! Denny, will accompany us. *(Each takes one of his arms and exit)*
- Jane** Mr. Collins, will you escort me to one of the shops just down the lane to fetch some things for my mother? It will not take long.
- Collins** Only if my fair cousin will allow it.
- Elizabeth** With all my heart.
- (Elizabeth and Wickham walk to the side of the stage and Elizabeth sits, while Wickham stands beside her)*
- Elizabeth** Do you plan to go to the Netherfield Ball?
- Wickham** Perhaps. How long has Mr. Darcy been a guest there?
- Elizabeth** About a month. Are you acquainted with him?
- Wickham** Yes. I have been connected with his family from my infancy. *(Pause as Elizabeth looks surprised)* You may well be surprised after seeing the cold manner of our meeting. Are you much acquainted with Mr. Darcy?
- Elizabeth** As much as I ever wish to be. I believe I speak for everyone in Meryton when I say he is very disagreeable. We are all disgusted with his pride.

Wickham I wonder then, if he will be very long in the neighborhood.
Elizabeth I do not know, but I hope your plans will not be affected if he does.
Wickham Oh, no! It is not for me to be driven away by Mr. Darcy! If he wishes to avoid me, it is he who must go! I have no reason for avoiding him.
Elizabeth I don't mean to sound rude, sir, but won't you tell me what he has done to you to cause you such pain?

SONG: "I NEVER WAS INTENDED FOR A MILITARY LIFE"

Wickham My Father was a steward on the Pemberly estate
That I was treated more like heir than servant was to be my fate
I grew up side by side with Darcy
Educated, loved, and spoiled, see?
I never was intended for a military life

Darcy's father was a kind man, the best man who ever breathed
Truest friend I ever had so when he died I was aggrieved
Before he died he promised me
To provide for me most amply
I never was intended for a military life

My calling was to be the church
A parson in society
I never was a man to endure solitude
There was a church I should have had
To live my life in piety
After all, his father promised me that livelihood

But Darcy is a jealous man; he coveted his father's love
And disregarded all my claims and made no mention of
The living that was owed to me
A position in society
I never was intended for a military life

He all but threw me on the streets and said I brought it on myself
That imprudence and extravagance had forfeited my wealth
So here is now my present state
An Officer, but second rate
I never was intended for this censure,
I'm lamented,
For I never was intended for a military life

(Music continues to the end of the scene)

Wickham So now you see why I dislike him so much.
Elizabeth I am not surprised! But I am astonished at his friendship with Mr. Bingley. How can Mr. Bingley be in friendship with such a man? He cannot know what Mr. Darcy is.
Wickham Probably not. But Darcy can be a pleasing companion if he thinks it worth his while. Among those who are his equals in wealth and rank, he is a very different man from what he is to the less prosperous. His pride never deserts him; but with the rich, he is liberal minded, sincere, honorable, and perhaps agreeable.

(The others start coming back)

Wickham Maybe we ought to continue this conversation another day.
Lydia What conversation, Lizzy?
Elizabeth Nothing important, Lydia, nothing important.
Collins That's the trouble with today's youth! Conversations that lack substance and import!
Lydia And he wonders why we left him at home!

(Collins continues while the girls leave him behind. After a sentence or two, Mary comes back to get him)

Collins I think that every conversation one has should be direct and to the point. You should never chatter on for the sake of merely hearing your own voice...
(All exit)

SCENE 8: NETHERFIELD BALL

(Music starts as Caroline and Bingley stand at the foot of the staircase. She inspects a tray of food a servant is holding, then straightens Bingley's collar. Another servant begins announcing people as they arrive and come down the stairs: Charlotte and her parents, soldiers and then the others. The Bingleys are briefly greeting each person as they come in. Dancers gather for the start of the song. The Bennets and Mr. Collins should enter by mid-song)

SONG: "TAKE MY HAND" (Reprise)

All Bow—and rise—take my hand
A request, not a demand!
The room will glow, don't you know—
As we dance away the night!

Everything's a sight to behold—
Reserve a dance before the night's old—
The strings harmonize—
Catch a glimpse of a lady's eyes—

With every turn converse
Please be cordial, not terse
Is this the beginning of something new?
As I dance, dance with you?

(Bennets enter with Mr. Collins and are greeted enthusiastically by Mr. Bingley. Jane and Bingley immediately walk to one side of the room together. Elizabeth looks around distractedly, trying to spot Wickham. Charlotte approaches, takes her arm and they disappear into the crowd. Mr. Collins turns around to say something to Elizabeth, but seeing that she is gone, goes to look for her)

Elizabeth Charlotte, have you seen Mr. Wickham?
Charlotte No...*(Looking around)* I haven't.
Jane *(Seeing her sister)* Lizzy, Wickham is not here...he said he had some business in town, but Mr. Bingley thinks he stayed away because of something to do with Mr. Darcy.
Elizabeth *(Looking upset)* But he wouldn't...
Collins *(Catching up to the girls)* Cousin Elizabeth, I wonder if I might take this opportunity to request the pleasure of dancing with you this evening.
Elizabeth I did not think you danced, Mr. Collins.
Collins Dancing at a ball of this kind, given by a man of character, can have no evil tendency. Lady Catherine herself has commented favorably on my talents.

(He leads her out to center stage. Bingley and Jane follow, along with Charlotte and one of the soldiers. Several other couples join, including Kitty and Lydia with partners. Everyone else continues to mingle, eat or drink. Darcy watches and smiles at Elizabeth as she struggles through the dance with Mr. Collins, who does not dance very well)

SONG: "TAKE MY HAND" (Reprise)

Chorus Before you say "yes," it's always wise to be discreet
You might be dancing with two left feet...
You are at the mercy of style and technique

Collins Some people's styles are simply unique!

Elizabeth *(Spoken)* Yes, very.

Chorus Bow—and rise—then take flight!
We will glide through the night
One false move will surely prove
That your skills are unrefined!

What bliss, what joy when you've found
A partner who abounds
With grace and tranquility
Their ability becomes known with every stance!

What pain, what shock when you trod
On someone's foot like a clod!
But never mind, if you find
They could be something more...
Someone you could adore!

(Elizabeth is relieved when the dance is finally over. She and Charlotte again hide themselves from Collins' view, and he wanders around looking for them, then exits still looking)

Charlotte It's alright, Lizzy. There will be other balls, other times to see Mr. Wickham.

Elizabeth It's not just that, Charlotte. I add this to the other injuries that Mr. Darcy has caused him, it is just too much.

Charlotte But you cannot be certain of his story's truth.

Elizabeth How can I not be? There was truth in all of his looks, beside the facts that we already know about Mr. Darcy's character.

Charlotte All you know is that you do not like him.

Elizabeth No, he boasted himself of his resentful temper, and...

Charlotte Lizzy... *(Charlotte quiets her friend as Mr. Darcy approaches them)*

Darcy Miss Elizabeth, I wonder if I might have the pleasure of your hand for the next dance.

Elizabeth I...uh...you may. *(Darcy bows and walks away quickly)* Did I just agree to dance with Mr. Darcy?

Charlotte I dare say you will find him quite agreeable.

Elizabeth Heaven forbid! I have vowed to despise him forever! Do not wish such an evil on me! *(Both laugh)*

Charlotte Take heed, Lizzy, that you do not let your regard for Wickham cause you to ignore a man of ten times his consequence.

(Before Elizabeth can reply, Darcy comes to escort her to the dance. Several other couples join them. This is a slower dance allowing for some conversation between its participants)

Elizabeth I love this dance. *(She pauses for him to say something, but he does not)* It is your turn to say something now, Mr. Darcy. I talked about the dance, and you ought to make some remark on the size of the room, or the number of couples.

Darcy *(Smiling)* Please advise me as to what you would most like to hear.

Elizabeth Very well. That reply will do for present. Perhaps by and by I may observe that private balls are much pleasanter than public ones. But now we may be silent.

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

Elizabeth I think it is best, so that we may have the trouble of saying as little as possible.

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

Elizabeth Both, for I have always seen a great similarity in the turn of our minds. We are each of an unsocial disposition, unwilling to speak unless we expect to amaze the whole room.

Darcy This is no striking resemblance of your own character, I am sure. How near it may be to mine, I cannot say. You think it a faithful portrait undoubtedly.

Elizabeth I must not decide on my own performance.

Darcy Do you and your sisters often walk to Meryton?

Elizabeth Yes. When you met us there the other day, we had just been forming a new acquaintance.

Darcy (*Agitated*) Mr. Wickham is blessed with such happy manners as may insure his making friends where ever he goes—whether he may be equally capable of keeping them is less certain.

Elizabeth He has been so unlucky as to lose your friendship in a manner which he is likely to suffer from all his life. I remember hearing you once say that you hardly ever forgave, that your resentment once created was unappeasable. You are very cautious, I suppose, as to its being created?

Darcy I am.

Elizabeth And never allow yourself to be blinded by prejudice?

Darcy I hope not. May I ask to what these questions tend?

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

Darcy And what is your success?

Elizabeth I do not get on at all. I hear such different accounts of you as puzzle me exceedingly.

Darcy I wish, Miss Bennet, that you would not sketch my character at the present moment, as there is reason to fear that the performance would reflect no credit on either of us.

Elizabeth But if I do not take your likeness now, I may never have another opportunity.

Darcy I would by no means suspend any pleasure of yours.
(*They are silent until the dance is over, then Elizabeth quickly curtseys and walks away. Darcy watches her walk away looking concerned and almost grieved. Elizabeth stands and watches the rest of the scene with growing horror and impatience. She can hear her mother talking about Jane's relationship with Bingley, and can see her younger sisters running about the room making spectacles of themselves. Mary is playing the piano forte and singing very poorly as several people stare and whisper to each other. Mr. Collins approaches her*)

Mrs. Bennet Oh yes, we are expecting a very advantageous marriage! Five thousand a year! AND it is such a promising thing for my younger daughters for it will throw them into the path of other rich men!

Mr. Bennet Mary, that will do extremely well, my child. You have delighted us long enough. Let the other young ladies have time to exhibit.

Collins Cousin Elizabeth! I have just discovered a near relation of my patroness. I heard him mention the name of Lady Catherine as his aunt. How wonderfully these things occur!
(*Ball guests begin exiting*)

Caroline Finally, everyone is gone! I thought they would never leave!

Bingley Well, I had a splendid time, and am sorry it is over.

Caroline Really Charles, I don't know what you are about these days! For I know you cannot possibly have formed any real attachment to anything here in the country, and yet you behave as if you wish to stay.

Bingley I do... I never wish to leave the country.

Caroline Mr. Darcy, I wish you would talk some sense into my brother!

Bingley No. You shall not. I have made up my mind about Miss Bennet.

Darcy Do you really think that wise, Charles?

Bingley What do you mean?

Darcy Simply that I think you care more for her than she does for you.

Bingley That's impossible!

Darcy I have been watching the two of you for some time and it is quite evident that while she enjoys the attention you show her, there are no deep feelings associated with it.

Bingley Do you really think that's the case?

Caroline Charles, we just want to protect you. You have been fooled by pretty girls before.

Bingley Well, I suppose...

Caroline (*Interrupting*) It's settled then. We'll leave this terrible place and start for London within the week!
(*Blackout. Exit all*)

SCENE 9: LONGBOURN GARDEN

(*The Bennets are in the garden. Mrs. Bennet is sitting on the bench, Mary on a step, and Kitty and Lydia propping each other up as they sit on the ground. Jane and Elizabeth enter last with baskets of flowers. All are tired from the ball*)

Jane Dinner will be ready in about an hour, mama.

Mrs. Bennet Come have some lemonade. We are all so tired after the ball last evening—especially you, Jane, with all the attention from Mr. Bingley...
(*Mr. Collins enters*)
(*Music begins*)

Collins Ahem. Mrs. Bennet, I wonder if I might request a private audience with Miss Elizabeth.
Mrs. Bennet Oh dear! Yes, certainly! Elizabeth will be very happy—I am sure she can have no objection. Come girls, I want you inside.
Elizabeth No—I pray you would not go. Mr. Collins will excuse me, he has nothing to say to me that everyone could not hear. I was just going myself.
Mrs. Bennet No, no nonsense Lizzy. I desire you stay where you are. I insist upon you staying and hearing Mr. Collins!
(They all leave as Elizabeth begs each one to stay)

SONG: “MR. COLLINS’ PROPOSAL”

Collins I’ve been granted this permission
 By your Mother to address you
 My advances are too plain to be mistaken

I’m enchanted by your modesty
 Your ready wit and honesty
 And with your eloquence I am quite taken

‘Though I thought to woo your sister
 I was too late and I missed her
 But you clearly are of equal birth and beauty

Since I at your father’s death
 Inherit Longbourn and its wealth
 To marry you, my dearest cousin is my duty

I know--- that there are others who are amiable as you
 So many others who would seek my love, ‘tis true
 But before my feelings run away
 I’ve three more things I’d like to say
 The reasons I would have you say, “I do”

(Spoken) One.

Marriage is a very good thing
 For a clergyman to model
 So his parish will not dawdle at the alter

(Spoken) Two.

I believe you’ll make me happy
 Yes, of course, you’ll make me happy
 By your diligence, I know you will not falter

(Spoken) Three.

Lady Catherine has urged me
 Find a wife; useful and thrifty
 Let her nature be respectful and quite silent

And so with her condescension
 I suppose I too, should mention
 My affections and my passion is most violent

Elizabeth You are too hasty sir! You forget that I have made no answer! I thank you for the compliment, but my answer is no.

Collins Oh I know that it is normal
 For your answer to be formal
 And reject the first proposal I would offer

But perhaps the second time, dear
You will choose not to decline, dear
And so once again, my hand to you I proffer

(Collins holds out hand and Elizabeth looks at it suspiciously)

Elizabeth Upon my word, sir. I am perfectly serious in my refusal. You could not make me happy and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who could make you so.

Collins You will find I am persistent
Yes, indeed, I am insistent
You are uniformly charming
Your refusal is disarming
And I'm sure, my dear, I cannot love another

(spoken) So... I'll go and ask permission from your mother

(She rises to leave)

Collins I am persuaded that when sanctioned by the express authority of your excellent parents, my proposals will not fail being acceptable.

(Music continues as underscore through the rest of the scene)

(Elizabeth exits. Mr. Collins stands there in shock for a moment, then leaves. Elizabeth enters at the floor with Mrs. Bennet yelling at her for refusing to marry Mr. Collins. She follows her still yelling out the curtain on the other side, backstage and up to the Bennet sitting room where Mr. Bennet is seated with a book)

Mrs. Bennet Mr. Bennet! You are wanted this instant! You must make Lizzy marry Mr. Collins, for she vows she will not, and if you do not hurry he will change his mind!

Mr. Bennet Pardon me, of what are you talking?

Mrs. Bennet Of Mr. Collins and Lizzy. Lizzy declares she will not have Mr. Collins and Mr. Collins begins to say he will not have Lizzy.

Mr. Bennet What am I to do? It seems a hopeless business.

Mrs. Bennet Speak to Lizzy! Tell her that you insist upon her marrying Mr. Collins!

Mr. Bennet Um, Lizzy, come here child. I understand Mr. Collins has made you an offer of marriage. Is this true? *(She nods)* Very well. And this offer you have refused?

Elizabeth I have sir.

Mr. Bennet Very well, shall we come to the point? Your mother insists upon your accepting it. Is it not so, Mrs. Bennet?

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

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

Elizabeth Thank you papa.

(Elizabeth exits and Mrs. Bennet starts yelling at Mr. Bennet as the curtain closes. Kitty and Lydia enter from the floor stage left as Charlotte enters from the floor stage right)

Lydia Charlotte! I am glad you are come, for there is such fun here!

Kitty Mr. Collins has made an offer of marriage to Lizzy, and she will not have him!

Charlotte I am very sorry for him, though I am not surprised. I wonder—should I invite him to dine with us this evening?

Lydia Yes, do! Take him away and feed him, for he has been in a wretched mood all morning!
(Exit)

SCENE 10: OUT OF DOORS

(Elizabeth is sitting outside reading. Charlotte enters and approaches her friend. Elizabeth smiles when she sees her and puts the book down)

Elizabeth Charlotte, I heard you came to visit yesterday. I'm sorry I missed you.
Charlotte It's quite alright. I only came to gossip about the ball.
Elizabeth (*Smiling*) What about the ball?
Charlotte Well, I did notice that Mr. Bingley has been paying a great deal of attention to Jane. Is she in love with him?
Elizabeth I think that she likes him very much.
Charlotte She should show it then, even more than she feels if she is to secure him.
Elizabeth Secure him? Before we are sure of his character?
Charlotte (*Looking uncomfortable*) Well, I wish your sister success with all my heart. But happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance, you know. She could study his character for years but there will always be grief, so perhaps it is far better to be as ignorant as possible to the defects of your partner.
Elizabeth You make me laugh, Charlotte. You know this advice is not sound, and you would never act that way yourself. (*Charlotte, looks down at her hands, turns around and takes a step or two away from Elizabeth*) So much for the reason for your visit yesterday. To what do I owe the honor of it today?
Charlotte (*Turning to face Elizabeth*) I...I came to tell you the news.
Elizabeth What news?
Charlotte The news that Mr. Collins and I are engaged.
Elizabeth Engaged? You are engaged to Mr. Collins? My dear Charlotte—how is that possible?
Charlotte (*Sounding hurt by Elizabeth's disbelief and reproach*) Please don't look at me like that, Lizzy. Please don't judge me.
Elizabeth Charlotte, I...
Charlotte I am not romantic, I never was. I only ask for a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins' character and connections, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as good as most.
Elizabeth I just think that...
Charlotte You cannot understand, Lizzy. You're young, and beautiful. I am plain and already considered a spinster. (*Starting to cry*) I'm doing what I have to. I hope you will be willing to make the trip to visit my new home.
(Charlotte turns and leaves. Elizabeth stands up to follow her, then sits down again with her head in her hands. Underscore begins. Jane enters with a letter from Caroline Bingley)
Jane Lizzy, I just received this letter from Caroline Bingley... Oh! Are you alright, dearest?
Elizabeth Yes...I am just constantly reminded of the weaknesses in my character these days.
Jane Oh, Lizzy, don't be so hard on yourself... no one is without fault. And you are one of the dearest people I have ever known.
Elizabeth Thank you, Jane... What did your letter from Caroline say?
Jane Oh...Some bad news. It seems the Bingleys and Mr. Darcy are to go back to London...and have no intention of returning.
Elizabeth Oh, Jane! I am so sorry...but I know that he cares deeply for you...surely...
Jane I think we were perhaps mistaken in that hope. His sister says...
Elizabeth His sister is trying to get him away from here! Who knows what she said to him...
Jane It's alright, Lizzy! He will be forgotten, and we shall all be as we were before. You may doubt me, but you have no reason. He may live in my memory as the most amiable man in my acquaintance, but that is all. I will trust God, therefore, and with time, it will get better.
Elizabeth I fear I have far to go in becoming as good as you...

SONG: "SISTERS FOR LIFE"

Elizabeth My sweet Jane
You're a treasure of worth beyond measure
And I wish, I confess
I'd one ounce of your goodness
Your standard is so high above me

Jane Lizzy dear, don't you see
You're a model for me
True and loyal and never self-serving

You're intelligent, witty
Your courage astounds me
In love, you're the one most deserving

Elizabeth Quite simply the problem lies with the male gender
If their heads are not empty, they're riddled with pride
I'll not lose my wits to some handsome pretender
Nor surrender my dignity to be dressed as a bride

Jane
Elizabeth Lizzy dear, you always make me laugh
And you, my sweet Jane, diffuse my wrath

Both You often challenge the path which I travel
My eyes match your gaze to find them fixed above
They look toward the cross to define perfect love
With such a sister and friend my life sha'n't unravel

Elizabeth Though I love many fiercely, sweet Jane, it is true
Both In my heart I hold no one who's dearer than you
And if God never grant we be mother or wife
We've been blessed with each other as sisters for life
And what 'ere comes tomorrow in joy and in sorrow
We'll uphold one another

And if God never grant we be mother or wife
We've been blessed with each other as sisters for life

SCENE 11: PARSONAGE AND ROSINGS PARK

(Charlotte enters followed by an informally dressed servant carrying a tea tray. The servant sets out the tea things on a table in the garden under Charlotte's supervision)

Charlotte Oh, and will you bring out some of those little tea cakes from the pantry?

Servant Yes, ma'am. Anything else, ma'am?

Charlotte Do you know if Miss Bennet is settled in her room?

Servant Last I checked, ma'am, she said she would just freshen up a bit before coming down to tea. Shall I check on her again?

Charlotte No... she's had a long journey, we should let her take her time. Just make sure she's comfortable.

Servant *(Curtseys)* Yes, ma'am. *(Exits, while Charlotte fusses over tea tray, making sure everything is perfect. Elizabeth enters. They sit)*

Charlotte Oh there you are! I thought you could use some refreshment after so long a journey. *(Serving tea to Elizabeth)* I am so happy that you have come to me, Lizzy.

Elizabeth Thank you for inviting me. With Jane gone to visit family; and Mr. Wickham's engagement to Mary King with her ten-thousand pounds, I was feeling lonely myself.

Charlotte I find that I can bear solitude well enough. Mr. Collins spends much of each day in his book room, which has a window overlooking the road so he may observe Lady Catherine's carriage should it pass in front of our house.

Elizabeth I see. Quite nice.

Charlotte When he is not there, I encourage him to spend much time tending to his garden or walking to Rosings which he makes habit to do once a day.

Elizabeth Walking is very beneficial exercise.

Charlotte So there is many a day that we spend but a few minutes in each other's company. *(There is a short pause)* How is dear Jane? Is she much affected by Bingley's departure?

Elizabeth I'm afraid she was quite heartbroken. According to Caroline Bingley, they have no intention of coming back to Netherfield.

Collins *(Running in)* My dear Charlotte, Cousin Elizabeth! Lady Catherine has condescended even now to request our immediate presence! But do not make yourself uneasy, my dear, about your apparel. Lady Catherine will not think the worse of you for being simply dressed. She likes to preserve the distinction of rank.

(All exit. The curtain is opened to reveal a sitting room at Rosings, with much finer decorations than either Longbourn or Netherfield. Lady Catherine is sitting in a chair. Mr. Collins, Charlotte and Elizabeth enter and bow or curtsy. Lady Catherine does not rise from her chair. She motions to the couch and the Collins' hurry to sit. Elizabeth also sits, but is determined not to be intimidated. As soon as all are seated, Mr. Darcy enters with Col. Fitzwilliam. All stand again)

Collins Mr. Darcy.
Elizabeth Mr. Darcy—I...did not expect to see you here.
Darcy Miss Bennet, I am a guest here.
Catherine You know my nephew, Miss Bennet?
Elizabeth We are a little acquainted, ma'am.
Fitzwilliam Col. Fitzwilliam. How do you do? *(All bow or curtsy then sit except Darcy who remains standing)*
Catherine Do you play and sing, Miss Bennet?
Elizabeth A little.
Catherine Do you draw?
Elizabeth No, not at all.
Catherine Do your sisters draw?
Elizabeth Not one.
Catherine That is very strange. But I suppose you had no opportunity. Your mother should have taken you to town every spring for the benefit of the masters.
Elizabeth My mother had no objection, but my father hates London.
Catherine Has your governess left you?
Elizabeth We never had a governess.
Catherine What! No governess? How is that possible? Five daughters brought up at home without a governess! Your mother must have been quite a slave to your education.
Elizabeth Not at all Lady Catherine.
Catherine Are any of your younger sisters out, Miss Bennet?
Elizabeth Yes ma'am, all.
Catherine All five out at once? The younger out before the older are married? Your younger sisters must be very young?
Elizabeth The youngest is not sixteen. But really ma'am, I think it would be very hard upon younger sisters that they should not have their share of society and amusement because the elder may not have married early. I think it would not be very likely to promote sisterly affection.
Catherine Upon my word, you give your opinion very decidedly for so young a person. *(Pause)* I'm going to give you a tremendous opportunity for someone of your station. Over there, Miss Bennet, is my piano forte. You'll never touch a finer instrument. Why don't you play and sing...or at least practice "a little."
Elizabeth Oh, no...Lady Catherine, I...
Collins Lady Catherine wishes it, cousin Elizabeth.
(At this Elizabeth sits at the piano and begins to play, and sings a verse, while Darcy watches. Her playing should not be perfect, but should not distract from the rest of the scene. Everyone else starts to feel free to talk among themselves and move about the room. Fitzwilliam and Elizabeth enter into conversation, then Darcy joins them)
Elizabeth Do you mean to frighten me by coming to join us, Mr. Darcy? I shall have you know that my courage always rises with every attempt to intimidate me.
Darcy You can't really believe that I entertain any design of alarming you; and I have had the pleasure of your acquaintance long enough to know that you find great enjoyment in occasionally professing opinions which are in fact not your own.
Elizabeth *(Laughing)* Your cousin will convince you not to believe a word I say. I am at a disadvantage meeting with a person so well able to expose my real character in a part of the world where I had hoped to pass myself off with some degree of credit. Indeed, Mr. Darcy, it is very ungenerous of you to mention all of my faults, and very unwise too, for it is provoking me to retaliate. I am not afraid of you.
Darcy How did you find my friend in Meryton? I should like to know how he behaves among strangers.
Fitzwilliam

Elizabeth Prepare yourself for something dreadful. The first time I ever saw him was at a ball. He danced only four dances, though gentlemen were scarce and more than one young lady was in want of a partner.

Darcy I hadn't the honor of knowing any lady in the gathering beyond my own party.

Elizabeth True, (*with sarcasm*) and one can ever be introduced in a ball room.

Darcy Perhaps I should have sought introduction, but I am ill qualified to recommend myself to strangers.

Elizabeth Shall we ask your cousin why a man of sense and education, is ill qualified to recommend himself to strangers?

Fitzwilliam I can answer your question. It is because he will not cause himself the trouble.

Darcy Unlike others, I have not the talent of conversing easily with those I have never seen before.

Elizabeth Maybe you should take the advice your aunt gave to me in regard to the piano forte, and practice.

Catherine What are you talking about so secretly? I must have my share in the conversation.

Fitzwilliam Music, just now, ma'am.

Catherine Practice, Miss Bennet! That is what you need! Darcy, I must speak with you. (*He goes to her*)

Fitzwilliam Miss Bennet, my cousin is much better behaved within the circle of his friends.

Elizabeth Well, that is a comfort indeed.

Fitzwilliam In fact, he was just telling me that he has recently saved a good friend of his from a very imprudent marriage.

Elizabeth Who is the friend?

Fitzwilliam I'm afraid he gave no names or particulars.

Elizabeth Did Mr. Darcy give you his reasons for this interference?

Fitzwilliam There were some very strong objections, but not as much against the lady as with her family.

Elizabeth And why was he to judge?

Fitzwilliam I believe you would call his interference intrusive.

Elizabeth I do not see what right Mr. Darcy had to decide this, but as we know none of the particulars it is not fair to condemn him. Perhaps there was not much affection in the case.

Fitzwilliam True, but that would greatly lessen the honor of my cousin's success.

Collins Cousin Elizabeth, I am sorry to tear you away from your comrade so soon, but Lady Catherine grows tired. It is time we went home.

Elizabeth Not at all Mr. Collins. I am ready. Thank you Lady Catherine for your hospitality. (*All bow or curtsy, except for Lady Catherine, who still has not left her chair. Curtain closes*)

SCENE 12: PARSONAGE

(*Voice over begins as Elizabeth enters to write a letter to her sister, Jane*)

Elizabeth V.O. Dearest Jane, I hope I do not sound too negative, but I must share with you some of the events of my visit here. The threat of Mr. Collins putting us all out of the house upon father's death may not be as much of a fear as previously believed. My visit has all but proven to me that Mr. Collins loses the ability to breathe if he is more than 100 paces away from his noble "patroness," Lady Catherine. How could he possibly live at Longbourn? Even now the little crow sits perched at the window in his study, watching for her...

(*Mr. Darcy enters. Elizabeth looks surprised*)

Elizabeth Mr. Darcy. This is a surprise. Won't you sit down.

Darcy (*Sitting for a second, then standing again*) In vain I have struggled. It will not do.

Elizabeth (*Watching in surprise as he paces the room*) Sir?

Darcy You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you. (*Pause as he looks at Elizabeth, who makes no reply*) I have fought against my better judgment, my family's expectations, the inferiority of your birth, my rank and circumstance. Despite all of this, I beg you end my suffering and to do me the honor of becoming my wife.

Elizabeth In such cases as this, it is, I believe, the established mode to express a sense of obligation for the sentiments expressed, however unequally they may be returned. But I cannot. I have never sought your good opinion, and you have certainly bestowed it most unwillingly.

Darcy Miss Bennet...

Elizabeth (*Interrupting*) I am sorry to have occasioned pain to anyone. It has been most unconsciously done, however, and I hope it will be of short duration. The feelings which, you tell me, have long prevented the acknowledgement of your regard for me will, I trust, be quickly overcome in light of your explained reservations.

Darcy And this is all the reply I am to expect? I might, perhaps, wish to be informed why, with so little endeavor at civility, I am thus rejected.

Elizabeth I might as well inquire why with so evident a design of offending, you chose to tell me you liked me against your will, against your reason, and even against your character? Would all that not be some excuse for incivility, if I was uncivil?

Darcy But I...

Elizabeth But I have other reasons. Had not my own feelings been decided against you, had they been indifferent, or had they even been favorable, do you think that any consideration would tempt me to accept the man who ruined, perhaps forever, the happiness of a most beloved sister? I have every reason in the world to think ill of you.

Darcy What reasons...

Elizabeth You dare not, you cannot deny that you have been the principal means of dividing my sister and Mr. Bingley, causing them both misery of the acutest kind.

Darcy I have no wish of denying that I did everything in my power to separate them, or that I rejoice in my success. Towards him I have been kinder than towards myself.

Elizabeth But it is not merely this affair on which my dislike is founded. Long before it had taken place, my opinion of you was decided. Your character was unfolded in the narrative which I received many months ago from Mr. Wickham concerning the misfortunes you inflicted upon him.

Darcy Misfortunes, which I have inflicted?

Elizabeth Indeed. You have reduced him to his present state of poverty, and have withheld the advantages which were promised to him.

Darcy And this is your opinion of me. This is the estimation in which you hold me! I thank you for explaining it so fully. My faults, according to this calculation, are heavy indeed! But perhaps these offences might have been overlooked, had not your pride been hurt by my honest confession of the scruples that had long prevented my forming any serious design.

Elizabeth My pride!

Darcy These bitter accusations might have been lessened, had I, with greater design, concealed my struggles, and flattered you into the belief of my being driven by partiality. But disguise of every sort is my abomination. Nor am I ashamed of the fears I related. They were natural and just.

Elizabeth Oh, really?

Darcy Could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your connections? To congratulate myself on the hope of relations, whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?

Elizabeth You are mistaken, Mr. Darcy, if you suppose that the mode of your declaration affected me in any other way than sparing me the concern which I might have felt in refusing you, had you behaved in a more gentlemanlike manner. You could not have made me the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it.

Darcy I see.

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

Darcy You have said quite enough, madam. I perfectly comprehend your feelings, and have now only to be ashamed of what my own have been. Forgive me for having taken up your time, and accept my best wishes for your health and happiness.

(Darcy exits and Elizabeth puts her head down on the table to cry as the lights dim. Voice over: Sometime during the Voice over, Elizabeth exits)

Elizabeth V.O. Oh Jane, I can now scarcely finish the letter I have begun. Dearest sister, I desperately need the comfort of home and the consolation of your company. I know when I share the most recent turn of events with you, you shall set my heart back on things above with your prayerful council. This is why I so cherish you, dearest Jane. I should be leaving for home before weeks end and I look forward to the routine of our beloved Longbourn. P.S. Do you remember me recently saying that I might like to begin lessons in drawing and you were most encouraging? I have decided instead to take up archery. I have the image of the perfect target emblazoned in my mind's eye.

SCENE 13: OUT OF DOORS

(Elizabeth is taking a walk outside when she happens on Mr. Darcy. He does not see her, but as she turns to leave he notices and calls out to her. She stops, turns around and he comes to meet her)

Darcy I have been walking here for some time with the hope of meeting you. Will you do me the honor of reading this letter? *(He pulls a thick letter out of his coat pocket and hands it to her; bows and exits. She quickly opens the letter and begins to read it)* Be not alarmed Madam, I assure you it contains no repeat of my sentiments from last night, nor any renewal of the offer you found so disgusting. For the sake of both our happiness I am certain that it is best quickly forgotten.

Elizabeth Yes.

Darcy Then may I hope you will at least afford me the attention of reading this letter.

Elizabeth Yes, of course. Good day, sir.

SONG: "THE LETTER"

(Darcy remains where they had their conversation while Lizzy makes her way back across the stage opposite him)

Darcy She couldn't even bare to look me in the eyes.
I will forever be the man that she will forever despise
How I longed for just that one last gaze
Each moment without her feels like days

Elizabeth Be swift my feet and cause no more delays
There is no uncertainty, sir, despite what my face portrays
You simply caught me in a moment unprotected
I'll not give in as you may have hoped or expected
Did you think I could be bought with your position and your treasure

Darcy You have judged me Madam, but by the wrong measure
Unfair accusations are now laid at my door

Elizabeth First his visit, now this letter, good heavens what more
I shall endeavor to read this with civility

Darcy Might you consider another possibility?
Social encounters bore little fruit so we sought new space
Although you and your dear sister were the picture of grace
I was convinced your sister's smile simply platonic

Elizabeth This man has made himself love's judge simply ironic
I am caught somewhere between indiff'rence and rage

Darcy I'm caught in my own story and I need to close the page

Both Take my will and make it Thine
I pray dear Lord, Your thoughts not mine
Calm this storm, comfort Your son (this one)
Always only, Your will be done
(Music continues beneath the following voice over)

Darcy V.O. As to your second charge, let it be known that my father did in fact lovingly see that Wickham was afforded all the education necessary to eventually take post at a church. Wickham refused it, and asked instead for a large sum of money for further education. I had hoped him sincere, but time proved that he only squandered the money on immoral living. Once he was penniless, he returned and begged for more. When I refused to enable his further recklessness, he took the worst revenge. He persuaded my sister to believe she was in love with him and she consented to elope. She was then but fifteen years old. Thankfully, I learned of it in time. He was not motivated by love—but by spite and greed.

Elizabeth Who would do such a cruel thing – and to a child!

(Song resumes)

Darcy Take my will and make it Thine
I pray dear Lord, Your thoughts not mine
Calm this storm, comfort Your son
Always only Your will be done

(Darcy exits when the song is through)

Elizabeth *(Dropping the letter)* Oh, God, what have I done?

(Black out)

End of ACT I

ACT II

Entr'acte

SCENE 1: LONGBOURN GARDEN

(Jane and Elizabeth are home, and sitting in garden at Longbourn)

Jane Mr. Darcy proposed? I do not believe it.

Elizabeth He did indeed, and after I rejected him, he gave me this letter. It contains some of the reasons for his behavior—including his behavior toward Mr. Wickham.

Jane I knew there had to be some explanation—what does he say in his defense? Why would he not want Mr. Wickham to have the position in the church that his father, their father, had prepared for him?

Elizabeth It seems Wickham wore only the façade of piety before Mr. Darcy's father while he was alive. But, when the time came, Mr. Wickham chose money over the living his godfather left to him. He quickly gambled the money away, and when he went back to Mr. Darcy for more money, his request was denied.

Jane That is a shame.

Elizabeth I wish that were the end of it. After Mr. Darcy refused to give him more money, Wickham convinced Darcy's younger sister to elope so he could have her inheritance.

Jane Shocking! Poor Miss Darcy!

Elizabeth Mr. Darcy was able to break it up in time, but his poor sister was left broken hearted.

Jane But are you sure?

Elizabeth Mr. Darcy is too proud a man to make up such a story in his defense. The details are far too painful and embarrassing to use them as an excuse.

Jane I believe you are right, Lizzy.

(Mr. Bennet and Mary enter and sit)

Mr. Bennet Jane and Lizzy, I am thankful you are home.

Mary As am I. The regiment are leaving for Brighton and we have heard nothing but talk of that for a week.

Elizabeth *(With satisfaction)* Indeed?

Mary Yes. Kitty and Lydia would have papa take us all to Brighton, but he refused—I must say am glad. The pleasures of Brighton would have no chance for me.

Mr. Bennet Here's some more news for you, Lizzy. It seems your Mr. Wickham is not to marry Miss King after all.

Elizabeth All the better for her...

(Kitty runs in and throws herself down crying. Lydia follows her looking smug, and Mrs. Bennet enters behind them)

- Kitty** It isn't fair! Mama, tell them it isn't fair.
- Mrs. Bennet** Oh, Kitty, why can't you just be happy for your sister?
- Lydia** I don't know why you're so upset. Just because the colonel's wife asked me to be her traveling companion.
- Kitty** I cannot see why Mrs. Forster should not ask me. I have just as much right and I am two years older. *(Gets up and leaves the room)*
- Lydia** What fun I shall have!
- Elizabeth** Be careful not to crow too loud over your sister, Lydia. Father has not given you his permission, and is not likely to.
- Lydia** Father would not have me disappoint the wife of the colonel of the regiment, would you papa?
- Mr. Bennet** I should think not. *(Exit Lydia and Mrs. Bennet)*
- Jane** I shall go and try to be of some comfort to Kitty.
- Mary** As will I. *(Exit Jane and Mary)*
- Elizabeth** Father, do you really think it prudent that Lydia should go with the regiment on such an excursion?
- Mr. Bennet** Lydia will never be under control until she has embarrassed herself in some public place, and we can never expect her to do it with so little expense or inconvenience to her family as under the present circumstances.
- Elizabeth** Are you not aware of the very great disadvantage to us all which arises from the public notice of Lydia's unguarded and reckless manner; nay, which has already arisen from it?
- Mr. Bennet** Already arisen! What, has she frightened away some of your lovers? Poor little Lizzy!
- Elizabeth** No papa. I have no such injuries to resent. It is not of particular, but general evils, which I am now complaining. Our respectability in the world must be affected by the wildness which marks Lydia's character.
- Mr. Bennet** Now Lizzy...
- Elizabeth** Father, I must speak plainly. If you do not take the trouble of checking her, she will soon be beyond reach. Her character will be fixed, and she will be known as the most determined of flirts. And Kitty will follow wherever Lydia leads. Oh! My dear father, can you suppose it possible that they will not be a celebrated topic of gossips and that our entire family will be involved in the disgrace?
- Mr. Bennet** My love, wherever you and Jane are known, you will be respected; and you will not appear to less advantage for having a couple of—or may I say three very silly sisters. *(Rising from his chair)* We shall have no peace at Longbourn if Lydia does not go. Colonel Forster is a sensible man, and will keep her out of any real mischief; and she is too poor to be an object of prey to anybody. *(Exit Mr. Bennet. Elizabeth walks to front of stage as curtain closes. Wickham meets her at outdoor set. Elizabeth's manner toward Wickham should be much less friendly than before, making him very uncomfortable)*
- Elizabeth** It has been some time since we have seen you, Mr. Wickham.
- Wickham** Much too long. I understand you made a trip to visit Mr. Collins and his new wife. How did you like it?
- Elizabeth** Very much. I saw Mr. Darcy and Colonel Fitzwilliam there as well. Do you know the colonel?
- Wickham** *(Looking uncomfortable)* I used to see him often. He is a very gentlemanlike man—how did you like him?
- Elizabeth** I liked him very much.
- Wickham** Did you find his manners very different from his cousin's?
- Elizabeth** Yes, very different. But I think Mr. Darcy improves on acquaintance.
- Wickham** Indeed! Quite interesting.
- Elizabeth** I believe my knowing him better has made his disposition better understood.
- Wickham** I see. Well, I... *(The rest of the family enters. Kitty is still crying)*
- Lydia** Good bye to you all. I hope you shall all get along well while I am gone.
- Mrs. Bennet** We shall miss you!
- Lydia** Well, I shan't miss any of you! I shall be having much too much fun. Come Mr. Wickham, they shall be waiting for us!
- Wickham** *(To Elizabeth)* Duty calls. *(Exit Wickham and Lydia while her family waves and calls out their goodbyes. Kitty runs out first and the rest follow)*
- Elizabeth** Lydia and a whole camp full of soldiers...God, help her! God help them!

(Elizabeth exits during the following Voice over)

Jane V.O. My dearest Elizabeth, Longbourn is not the same without you. Although the visual remains unchanged, there is a certain inconsolable absence inside these walls when you are away. The days pass as usual; Mary reads, mother naps and I keep company with Kitty, hoping to encourage her to count it all joy. You mustn't worry about Lydia. Let's both remember our pledge to pray for her whenever she comes to mind. I am so glad our dear aunt and uncle have taken you to the countryside...

SCENE 2: PEMBERLEY

(Elizabeth, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner enter from the floor, and go to center stage with curtain closed)

Mrs. Gardiner That tree there in the distance. It bordered the two properties and my brothers and I practically lived our entire summers in its branches.

Mr. Gardiner What a sight that must have been. I wish I could have seen it with my own eyes.

Elizabeth Thank you, Aunt and Uncle Gardiner for bringing me with you on your trip. This is such beautiful country.

Mrs. Gardiner It is, isn't it? I grew up right here, you know.

Elizabeth All the stories you tell me make me wish I had. Do you mean to say, Aunt Gardiner, that your family estate was so close to the Darcy family?

Mrs. Gardiner I was just telling your uncle that our properties bordered. Although I never got to know the family, except in passing. And we left the area when I was quite young.

Mr. Gardiner What do you say to visiting Pemberley? We're practically in the neighborhood. I have heard it's a grand old house, and that the grounds are delightful.

Elizabeth Oh, I don't know...it would feel so strange poking about someone's house like that.

Mrs. Gardiner You mean Mr. Darcy's house. Don't worry about that, my dear! I heard just this morning that the family is in London just now, and won't be back for a fortnight.

Elizabeth In that case, maybe we could visit Pemberley after all.

(Exit all. Voice over continues as they exit and then enter Pemberley. Curtain opens to reveal Pemberley, which is the finest house we have seen. There is a large painting of Darcy and smaller ones of Wickham and Georgiana on the wall. A housekeeper enters, giving a tour to the Gardiners and to Elizabeth, who all look around in astonishment at the general splendor)

Jane V.O. I am so glad our dear aunt and uncle have taken you away to the countryside. New sights I pray, will afford you vision and renewed hope! I trust you will enjoy all the delights of the visit but, hope you are still able to find time to rest. Get lost in the beauty around you and write when you can. Your adoring sister, Jane.

Elizabeth Oh Jane, I daresay I am being afforded visions beyond my wildest imaginings.

Mr. Gardiner And is your master to be very long away from home?

Housekeeper No, sir. We expect him home tomorrow, and with a large party.

Mrs. Gardiner Elizabeth, come look at this picture. I believe it is of someone we know.

Housekeeper *(Joining them)* That is the son of the late Mr. Darcy's steward. He is now gone into the army, but I am afraid he has turned out very wild indeed. And that, *(pointing to another picture)* is my master —and very like him.

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 a true likeness or not.

Housekeeper Does this young lady know the master?

Elizabeth Only a little.

Housekeeper And do you not think him a very handsome man, miss?

Elizabeth Yes. Very handsome.

Housekeeper I am sure I know none so handsome—or so kind. This was my late master’s favorite room, and these pictures are just as he kept them. He was very fond of them.

Mr. Gardiner Does your present master spend much time here at Pemberley?

Housekeeper Not so much as I wish, sir.

Mr. Gardiner If he would marry, you might see more of him.

Housekeeper Yes, sir; but I don’t know when that will be. I do not know who is good enough for him.

Elizabeth It is very much to his credit that you should think so.

Housekeeper I say no more than the truth, and what anybody will say that knows him. I never had a cross word from him in my life, and I have known him since he was four years old.

Mrs. Gardiner His father was an excellent man.
(Music begins)

Housekeeper Yes ma’am, that he was indeed; and his son is just like him—kind to the poor, the best landlord and the finest master that ever lived. Not like the wild young men now-a-days. Some people call him proud; but I never saw any of it. To my fancy, it is only because he does not rattle away like other young men. *(Leading the Gardiners on to the next room, and forgetting about Elizabeth, who stays behind)*

Elizabeth And to think—of all this, I might have been mistress.

SONG: “THIS COULD HAVE BEEN MINE”

Elizabeth Don’t just stand here and sigh Lizzy.
Don’t you just want to cry Lizzy?
There’s no way to deny Lizzy what’s true...
Oh you foolish girl—

This could have been mine—
Home here at Pem-ber-ly
Mistress of all I see
Basking in beauty and grace.
Each room with a view—
Woodlands and winding stream
Ever to wake and dream
In so delightful a place!
Hang my pride-ful heart,
Pre-ju-dice swayed my mind.
Oh, wicked tongue de-part!
Instead of holding him,
There I stood, scolding him!
(Short fermata)

And now it’s too late!
Drowned in regret I must
Try to forget him, this
Man I would wish to adore!
This could have been mine—and more!

(Mr. Darcy enters. Both look startled)

Darcy Miss Bennet...I...how are you?

Elizabeth I...am...well, sir.

Darcy And...your family? How are they?

Elizabeth They are all well, thank you. I am on a visit here with my uncle and aunt. *(Awkward pause)* Mr. Darcy—your housekeeper told us that you would not be home until tomorrow. We would not have dreamed of trespassing upon your privacy.

Darcy I had some business and rode home a day early. Tomorrow—tomorrow some of your acquaintances will join me. Mr. Bingley and his sister.

Elizabeth Indeed?

Darcy Yes—and my own sister is with them. I wonder... would it be too much to ask... I mean, she would dearly love... to meet you, Miss Elizabeth.

Elizabeth Sir?

Darcy Would you give me the honor of introducing you to her tomorrow?

Elizabeth I... certainly.

Darcy And your uncle must come and fish in my trout stream. (*Placing her arm in his, and walking her out*) And of course, they must both dine with us tomorrow when you meet Georgiana. (*Exit*)

SCENE 3: PEMBERLEY

(*Georgiana, Caroline, Bingley and Gardiners are sitting in the Pemberley sitting room*)

Mrs. Gardiner This is a beautiful house, Miss Darcy.

Georgiana I thank you, ma'am.

Mr. Gardiner And the grounds are magnificent!

Caroline I think Pemberley is the grandest house in all of England. Don't you agree, Charles?

Bingley Uh... yes. Yes of course. Where did you say Darcy and Miss Bennet were?

Mrs. Gardiner The library. He said he had a book she might like to borrow.
(*Darcy and Elizabeth enter*)

Caroline Ah, there you are! We thought you might have gotten lost, Mr. Darcy. I imagine it would be easy in a house this grand...

Darcy (*Ignoring her*) Miss Bennet, allow me to introduce my sister, Georgiana.

Elizabeth It is a pleasure to meet you, Miss Darcy. I have heard many good things about you.

Georgiana As have I about you, Miss Bennet.

Bingley Miss Bennet, it has been ages since we last met. How are you?

Elizabeth I am well, sir; and you?

Bingley Capital. And your family, are they well?

Elizabeth They are all well, thank you.

Bingley Are your sisters all still at home?

Elizabeth All but one, sir. (*Bingley looks worried*) My youngest sister is at Brighton, staying with the family of the colonel of the militia. (*All sit down*) Miss Darcy, I hear you sing and play the piano forte very well.

Georgiana Oh! Not very well, but I like to try.

Darcy She provides much enjoyment to all who hear her.

Georgiana My brother is too kind. I am convinced he is the best brother in the world. He dotes on me and spoils me much more than he should.

Darcy But not more than you deserve, I'm afraid.

Caroline Miss Elizabeth, I thought I heard you say that the militia have left Meryton. That must be a great loss to your family.

Elizabeth Indeed, Miss Bingley. But I assure you, we are bearing it the best we can.

Mr. Gardiner I am afraid, Lizzy, that we must go. Your aunt has an errand which cannot be put off any longer.
(*All rise from their seats*)

Darcy I hope Miss Bennet, that we will have the opportunity to see you again before you leave this part of the country.

Elizabeth It would be my pleasure, Mr. Darcy. (*Exit Elizabeth and Gardiners*)

Caroline How very ill Miss Bennet looks, Mr. Darcy! I never in my life saw anyone so much altered as she is since we saw her last. She is grown so brown and coarse! I should not have known her again!

Darcy She has grown a little tan, perhaps. But that is merely a result of traveling in the summer, I think.

Caroline For my own part, I must confess that I could never see any beauty in her. Her face is too thin, her complexion has no brilliancy; and her features are not at all handsome. Her teeth are tolerable, but not out of the common way; and as for her eyes, which I have heard admired, I never could perceive anything extraordinary in them. (*Darcy begins to look angry*) I remember when we first knew her how amazed we all were to find her a reputed beauty. But she seemed to improve on you, I think, Mr. Darcy? I believe you thought her rather pretty at one time.

Darcy Yes, but that was only when I first knew her, for it is many months since I have considered her as one of the most beautiful women of my acquaintance.