Pride and Prejudice: 
First Impressions©

by

Connor Kerns

Adapted into a play from the novel by Jane Austen
Characters:

**Young Women**
Elizabeth Bennet  
Jane Bennet  
Kitty Bennet/Maria Lucas  
Mary Bennet/Pianist  
Lydia Bennet/Anne de Bourgh  
Caroline Bingley/Servant 1  
Charlotte/Mrs. Hurst

**Mature Women***
Mrs. Bennet/Mrs. Reynolds  
Lady Catherine de Bourgh/Mrs. Gardiner

**Young Men**
Mr. Darcy  
Mr. Bingley  
Colonel Fitzwilliam/Captain Carter  
William Collins/Mr. Hurst  
George Wickham/Servant 2

**Mature Men**
Mr. Bennet  
Edward Gardiner/Sir William Lucas

**Playwright’s Notes:**

Time Period: around 1800.

Transitions: Time changes may be conducted with lighting, music and/or scenic changes but are designed to be fluid.

Etiquette: For the most part, I have not included bows, curtseys, etc. in the stage directions and leave the formality of greetings and partings to the discretion of the director and actors.

Music: Directors will need to find or compose songs and keyboard pieces appropriate to period and mood. The following is an excellent resource into Jane Austen’s own musical library:  
Pianist: The pianist also plays Mary Bennet (for example, by simply putting on a pair of glasses or a hat, etc.). As I have envisioned the play, the pianist would always be on stage and one convention would be to play music as scenes change. If underscoring is used, abrupt transitions of time and place could even be signified by jumping to a different piece of music. If the actresses who are to play piano within scenes are not trained, the pianist can play for them while they simply mime the action of playing; or these can be pieces for four hands.

Singing: Songs should be found for the following:
- Elizabeth singing at Lucas Lodge
- Mary singing at Netherfield

Dancing: A clear distinction should be made between the two dances: the first, an informal country dance at Lucas Lodge; and the second, the more formal private ball at Netherfield.

Letters: Numerous letters appear in the novel and are vital to the story. I have included stage directions suggesting an epistolary convention, which is that the writer of the letter enters and gives the letter to the reader. (Though when I directed the premiere I did not adhere to it!) However they are handled, all letter scenes should be played as non-narratively as possible: as interactive dialogues, with characters reacting to each other. Directors should explore to find what works best. Below I list some possible options.
- The reader stands alongside or behind the writer; the writer hears the reader but can’t look at them.
- The reader can establish the realistic business of reading the letter but then feed focus to the speaker, returning to the letter at the end.
- The reader could start, the writer overlap and then take over speaking.
- The reader could join occasionally on particular words or put small phrases into his/her own point of view.
- Conspiratorial letters could be stage-whispered into reader’s ear.
- Whenever the reader looks at the writer, the writer freezes or becomes neutral in whatever attitude they are presently in.
- Reader and writer can look at each other, but never at the same time.

Acknowledgements: Pemberley.com has proven to be a wonderful resource in preparing this adaptation.

Production History: Pride and Prejudice: First Impressions received its world premiere July/August, 2009, by Quintessence: Language & Imagination Theatre at the Mago Hunt Theatre, Portland, Oregon; it was directed by Connor Kerns. It received a semi-staged reading on 8/1/08, also produced by Quintessence. The director was Colin Murray.
Act I: As Delightful a Creature as Ever Appeared

(Lucas Lodge, 10, November. As lights are coming up a country dance is ending. Elizabeth has been without a partner and is sitting alone; Mr. Darcy stands not far away; Servant 2 may or may not be present. Mary Bennet is at the piano. Jane has been dancing with Mr. Bingley, Lydia or Kitty with Captain Carter. Mrs. Bennet is speaking to Sir William. Mr. and Mrs. Hurst and Caroline sneer. Bingley bows to Jane and goes to Darcy. Elizabeth eavesdrops:)

BINGLEY
Come, Darcy. I must have you dance. I hate to see you standing about by yourself in this stupid manner. You had much better dance.

DARCY
I certainly shall not. You know how I detest it unless I am acquainted with my partner. At such an assembly as this it would be insupportable. Your sisters are engaged with Mr. Hurst, and it would be a punishment to stand up with any of the other women in the room.

BINGLEY
Darcy, I would not be so fastidious as you are for a kingdom! Upon my honor, I never met so many pleasant girls in my life as I have this evening. I do like a country dance!

DARCY
You are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room.

BINGLEY
Oh, Miss Jane Bennet is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld! But Darcy, look, there is one of her sisters.

DARCY
Which do you mean?

BINGLEY
Miss Elizabeth Bennet, she is very pretty, do let my partner introduce you.

DARCY
She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me. I am in no humor to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men. You had better return to your partner, Bingley, you are wasting your time with me.
(Elizabeth gets up and smiling archly walks by Darcy, who notes her. Mrs. Bennet hurries to Elizabeth and the two of them talk while the couples engage in a country dance—a maximum of five couples: Bingley-Jane; Captain Carter-Lydia; Sir William-Kitty; Mr. Hurst-Mrs. Hurst; Caroline-Darcy.)

MRS. BENNET
Lizzy, what do you think, Jane is so admired by Mr. Bingley! So excessively handsome, I am quite charmed with him.

ELIZABETH
Indeed, Mamma, Mr. Bingley is very gentleman-like.

MRS. BENNET
How well would that be, to have my eldest daughter settled not three miles from home, Mistress of Netherfield Hall! Ooo!

ELIZABETH
Jane has known him only a fortnight. This is not quite enough time to make her understand his character.

MRS. BENNET
She knows he has five thousand a year! When she secures him, there will be leisure for understanding his character.

ELIZABETH
Your plan is a good one where nothing is in question but the desire of being well married.

MRS. BENNET
Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance. I say ‘tis better to know as little as possible the defects of a husband. Are not his sisters elegant?

ELIZABETH
Yes, though their expressions betray their small pleasure with our assembly.

MRS. BENNET
Now Lizzy, what do you think of Bingley’s friend there, Mr. Darcy? Sir William Lucas tells me he lives in Derbyshire, and he’s much richer than Bingley: ten thousand a year!
ELIZABETH
Mamma, please speak lower.

MRS. BENNET
I am determined you will dance with him.

ELIZABETH
I am not inclined to dance with a man of such a forbidding, disagreeable countenance. In fact, I may safely promise you *never* to dance with him.

MRS. BENNET
Nonsense, nonsense! You are not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good-humored as Lydia, don't be so tiresome!

*(Dance ends.)*

SIR WILLIAM
Well played, well played Miss Mary!

MRS. BENNET
Ah, Captain Carter, you are very gallant to dance with our Lydia.

CARTER
A pleasure, Ma'am.

MRS. BENNET
I cannot tell you how pleased we are that the regiment is quartered in Meryton.

CARTER
We have appreciated our welcome, Ma'am, I assure you.

LYDIA
Is it true, Mr. Bingley, that you have promised to give a ball at Netherfield?

BINGLEY
I have.

LYDIA
Will you not invite all the officers?

JANE
Lydia . . .

BINGLEY
Of course I will.
CARTER

That is very good of you, Sir.

LYDIA

I long for a ball! So does Kitty!

KITTY

Yes, so do I!

MRS. BENNET

How delightful, Mr. Bingley! Do you not think, Mr. Darcy, that dancing is a charming amusement?

DARCY

Madam.

SIR WILLIAM

Ah, of course, there is nothing like dancing after all. I consider it as one of the first refinements of polished societies, do you not agree, Mr. Darcy?

DARCY

Certainly, Sir William, and it has the advantage also of being in vogue amongst the less polished societies of the world. Every savage can dance.

MRS. BENNET

Well.

ELIZABETH

Captain, I believe Mr. Bingley can instruct your colonel on how to secure the regard of all the ladies in Meryton.

(Sir William and Mrs. Bennet move away. Darcy eavesdrops on Elizabeth.)

CARTER

Just so, Ma’am. I have no doubt Colonel Forster will waste no time arranging a ball.

ELIZABETH

That is wise, sir, else my two youngest sisters will give neither of you a moment’s peace.

CARTER

I assure you we officers are eager for any chance of society. A pleasure.

(Carter moves away.)
ELIZABETH
Did you not think, Mr. Darcy, that I expressed myself uncommonly well just now?

DARCY
With great energy; but it is a subject which always makes a lady energetic.

ELIZABETH
You are severe on us.

LYDIA
Lizzy, pray play something, or else Mary will bore everyone with some concerto or other. You always do our family credit with your singing.—Mary! You’ve gone long enough, let Lizzy play.

MARY
Lydia!

ELIZABETH
Very well, if it must be so, it must. Pray excuse me, Mr. Darcy.

(Elizabeth goes to the piano and plays and sings. Darcy watches her.)

LYDIA
I’m tired—did Sir William not think of supper?

KITTY
I’m not tired, I could dance for hours.

CARTER
A table has just been set in the neighbor room, Miss Lydia.

(The characters are gradually exiting in search of the repast.)

LYDIA
Thank you, Captain, Lord, I’m hungry!

CARTER
I have two arms, Miss Catherine, Miss Lydia.

(Lydia, Kitty and Carter go off. Darcy lingers and listens to Elizabeth sing. Later the same evening. The Bennet drawing room is in one area, the drawing room at Netherfield in another. Enter Mr. Bennet,
with a book. He smiles and settles himself. Enter Mrs. Bennet, Jane, Elizabeth, Kitty, Lydia, Mary. Kitty coughs occasionally.)

MRS. BENNET
Oh, my dear Mr. Bennet, we have had a most delightful evening at Lucas Lodge. I wish you had been there. After all, our success is due to your being a good father and making Mr. Bingley’s acquaintance.

MR BENNET
Come, come, ought I to send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying whichever he chooses of the girls? Though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy. Yet I daresay he thought you as handsome as any of the girls, my dear.

MRS. BENNET
You don’t know what I suffer from your nonsense.

(Kitty coughs.)

Don’t keep coughing, Kitty, for Heaven’s sake! Have a little compassion on my nerves. You tear them to pieces.

MR. BENNET
Kitty has no discretion in her coughs, she times them ill.

KITTY
I do not cough for my own amusement.

MRS. BENNET
Lizzy is not a bit better than the others. Mr. Bingley thought Jane quite beautiful. He danced with her more than anyone! He first asked Charlotte Lucas—I was quite vexed!—but then with Jane—the next with Miss King, then Maria Lucas— but the next two with Jane!

MR BENNET
For God’s sake, say no more of his partners. Oh that he had sprained his ankle in the first dance!

MRS. BENNET
Oh my dear, he is so excessively handsome, and his sisters are charming. I dare say the lace upon Mrs. Hurst’s gown—

MR. BENNET
I decline all descriptions of lace!

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MRS. BENNET
But his friend, Mr. Darcy, he is a disagreeable, horrid man, no matter how rich he is. So high and conceited. Mr. Bingley said he would hold a ball, and Sir William and I inquired if Mr. Darcy liked to dance himself, and oh he made the most horrid reply! He walked here, and he walked there, fancying himself so very great! And, do you know Lizzy overheard him say she was not handsome enough to dance with!

MR. BENNET
Rude to my Lizzy? And your father not present to give him a set down? How did you endure such a thing?

ELIZABETH
No one found his manners inviting, Father.

MR. BENNET
Well Mrs. Bennet, if this man care not for Lizzy’s quickness then he’ll surely dislike our other daughters, for they are all silly and ignorant. Should Bingley fail, will you turn next to the militia?

KITTY
I danced with a captain, Papa.

LYDIA
I danced with a captain and a colonel!

MRS. BENNET
Mr. Bennet, how you abuse your own children in such a way! You take delight in vexing 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 are my old friends these twenty years at least.

(Exit or freeze Bennets. Netherfield that same night: Caroline Bingley, Mrs. Hurst, Mr. Hurst, Bingley, Darcy, Servant 2.)

BINGLEY
Well, what a delightful evening. I never met with pleasanter people or prettier girls in my life. I favor Hertfordshire—everyone is kind and attentive. No formality or stiffness.

CAROLINE
Dear brother, are you certain this is the kind of society you’d seek for your estate? I believe you leased Netherfield on a careless whim and now seek to justify your
choice. I am happy to preside at your table here, but I have never seen a collection
of people with so little beauty.

Or fashion.

The insipidity—

And yet the noise—

The nothingness—

And yet the self-importance!

What?

Yes my dear?

Mr. Hurst?

Is there no wine here?

(Servant 2 fetches wine for Mr. Hurst.)

What do you say, Mr. Darcy, about the little gathering at Sir William Lucas’ Lodge?

I found small interest in most of those people.

Come now, Darcy: Miss Bennet is a beautiful angel.

She is pretty, but she smiles too much.

Miss Jane Bennet is a sweet girl.
CAROLINE
Yes, sister, she is the only one of those people I should consider inviting to dine with us. Her sister’s singing was by no means capital, was it.

MRS. HURST
Not at all.

CAROLINE
Sir, what would I give to hear your strictures on Miss Elizabeth Bennet! But I can guess your thoughts.

DARCY
I should imagine not.

CAROLINE
You are considering how insupportable it would be to pass many evenings in this manner.

DARCY
My mind was more agreeably engaged. I was remembering the very great pleasure which a pair of eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow.

CAROLINE
I am all astonishment. Pray, when am I to wish you joy?

DARCY
A lady’s imagination is very rapid, it jumps from admiration to love, from love to matrimony in a moment.

CAROLINE
You will have a charming mother-in-law, indeed. And of course she will be always at Pemberley with you.

(Longbourn, 10, November. Jane is speaking to Elizabeth. Mr. Bennet is reading. Lydia and Kitty are idling. Mary practices at the piano.)

JANE
Lizzy, Mr. Bingley is just what a young man ought to be, sensible, good-humored, lively; and I never saw such happy manners!—so much ease, with such perfect good-breeding! I was very much flattered by his asking me to dance a second time. I did not expect such a compliment.
ELIZABETH
Jane, he could not help seeing that you were about five times as pretty as every other woman in the room. Well, I give you leave to like him. You have liked many a stupider person.

JANE
Dear Lizzy!

ELIZABETH
Oh! you never see fault in anybody. So you like this man’s sisters, too, do you? Their manners, and Mr. Darcy’s, are not equal to his.

JANE
Certainly not—at first. But they are very pleasing women when you converse with them. And Miss Bingley told me that Mr. Darcy never speaks much, unless among his intimate acquaintance. With them he is remarkably agreeable.

ELIZABETH
I could easily forgive his pride if he had not mortified mine.

(Mrs. Bennet rushes in with a letter.)

MRS. BENNET
Jane! Jane! A note has come for you from Netherfield! From Miss Caroline Bingley!

(Enter Caroline who takes the letter from Mrs. Bennet and hands it to Jane.)

What is it about?

CAROLINE
“Dear Miss Bennet--"

MRS. BENNET
Make haste and tell us; make haste, my love.

JANE
I . . . am invited to dine with Caroline Bingley and her sister.

CAROLINE
“My brother and the gentlemen are to dine with the officers. Come as soon as you can. If you are not so compassionate as to dine today with Louisa and me, we shall be in danger of hating each other for the rest of our lives, for a whole day’s tête-à-tête between two women can never end without a quarrel.”
(Exit Caroline.)

LYDIA
How I should like to dine with the officers!

KITTY
So should I!

MRS. BENNET
Dining out—that is very unlucky.

MARY
I prefer a book.

LYDIA
Lord, Mary!

JANE
Can I have the carriage, Papa?

MRS. BENNET
No, my dear, you had better go on horseback, because it seems likely to rain, and then you must stay all night. And, my dear, your father cannot spare the horses.

MR. BENNET
They are wanted in the farm much oftener than I can get them--

MRS. BENNET
There it is settled.

MR. BENNET
But for Jane—

MRS. BENNET
Go on, Jane, make yourself ready.

(Exit Jane.)

MR. BENNET
Well my dear, if your daughter should get soaked and then fall into a dangerous fit of illness and die, it would be a comfort to know that it was all in pursuit of Mr. Bingley and under your orders.

(Exit all. Netherfield, 13, November. Rain. Bingley, Darcy, Mr. Hurst, Servant 2 are
present. Enter Caroline talking to Mrs. Hurst.)

CAROLINE

. . . and I am of course grieved Jane Bennet has a cold, and I am sure I dislike being ill myself, but—scampering about the country--!

BINGLEY

Pardon me Caroline, how did you find Miss Bennet?

CAROLINE

If you mean to hope, Charles, that her sister’s indecorous arrival has worked some miraculous cure on her sore throat and headache, I am afraid you will be disappointed.

MRS. HURST

What can she mean by tramping three or four or five miles or whatever it is?

CAROLINE

Above her ankles in dirt, and alone, quite alone!

MRS. HURST

Elizabeth Bennet has nothing to recommend her but being an excellent walker.

CAROLINE

I shall never forget her appearance this morning. She really looked wild: her hair so untidy, so blowsy.

BINGLEY

I thought she looked remarkably well.

CAROLINE

You observed it, Mr. Darcy, I am sure. And I am inclined to think that you would not wish to see your sister make such an exhibition.

DARCY

Certainly not.

CAROLINE

It shows a conceited independence, and indifference to decorum. Pride and impertinence!

BINGLEY

It shows an affection for her sister that is very pleasing.
CAROLINE
I am afraid, Mr. Darcy, that this adventure has rather affected your admiration for her fine eyes.

DARCY
Not at all, they were brightened by the exercise.

MRS. HURST
I have an excessive regard for Jane Bennet, she is really a very sweet girl, and I wish with all my heart she were well settled. But with such a father and mother, and such low connections, I am afraid there is no chance of it.

CAROLINE
I am told one uncle is an attorney in Meryton, and the other lives somewhere in Cheapside.

MRS. HURST
That is capital.

MR. HURST
Are we ever to play cards?

(The four sit down to play loo.)

BINGLEY
If they had uncles enough to fill all Cheapside it would not make them one jot less agreeable.

DARCY
But it must very materially lessen their chance of marrying men of any consideration in the world.

CAROLINE
True, with such vulgar relations--

(Enter Elizabeth.)

BINGLEY
Miss Elizabeth, how is your sister, pray?

ELIZABETH
I thank you, sir, she is asleep, but I am afraid the fever is worse.

BINGLEY
I will send for Mr. Jones directly—no I insist, and of course you must stay until she is recovered. I will have your clothing brought from Longbourn.
ELIZABETH
That is very kind of you indeed, Sir.

BINGLEY
Not at all. Excuse me. Come here, man.

(He speaks to Servant 2. Darcy sits to write.)

MR. HURST
Cards?

ELIZABETH
I . . . I thank you, no. I . . . will amuse myself with a book from Mr. Bingley’s collection.

MR. HURST
Do you prefer reading to cards? That is rather singular.

CAROLINE
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 censure. I am not a great reader, and I have pleasure in many things.

(Exit Servant 2.)

BINGLEY
And in nursing your sister I am sure you have pleasure, and I hope it will soon be increased by seeing her quite well.

ELIZABETH
I hope so too, Sir.

DARCY
Miss Bennet is in want of a book, Bingley.

BINGLEY
I wish my collection were larger for your benefit and my own credit, but I am an idle fellow, and though I have not many, I have more than I ever look into.

ELIZABETH
This book will suit me, Sir.
MR. HURST

Come, Bingley, cards.

(Mr. Bingley returns to the table. Elizabeth reads.)

CAROLINE

I am astonished that my father should have left so small a collection of books. What a delightful library you have at Pemberley, Mr. Darcy!

DARCY

It has been the work of many generations.

MR. HURST

Are we not playing cards?

CAROLINE

Charles, when you build your house, I wish it may be half so delightful as Pemberley.

BINGLEY

I’d buy Pemberley itself if Darcy would sell it.

CAROLINE

How many letters you must have occasion to write in the course of the year, Mr. Darcy! Letters of business too! How odious I should think them!

DARCY

I am writing to my sister.

CAROLINE

Ah, is Miss Darcy much grown since the spring? Will she be as tall as I am?

DARCY

She is now about Miss Elizabeth Bennet’s height, or rather taller.

CAROLINE

How I long to see her again! Such manners and accomplishments! Her performance on the pianoforte is exquisite.

BINGLEY

It is amazing to me how young ladies can have patience to be so very accomplished as they all are. I am sure I could never play, and as for my defects in writing and leaving all manner of necessary business undone . . .
CAROLINE
My dear Charles, what do you mean?

BINGLEY
All ladies, I think.

DARCY
I dare say that may be a careless opinion.

BINGLEY
I scarcely know any who cannot paint tables, cover screens, and net purses.

DARCY
I for one cannot boast of knowing more than half-a-dozen in my acquaintance that are really accomplished.

CAROLINE
Nor I, I am sure.

ELIZABETH
Then, you must comprehend a great deal in your idea of an accomplished woman.

DARCY
Yes, I do.

CAROLINE
Oh, certainly, no lady can be really accomplished without thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages. And besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air, and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expression.

DARCY
All this she must possess, and to all this she must yet add something more substantial: in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading.

ELIZABETH
I am no longer surprised at your knowing only six accomplished women. I rather wonder now at your knowing any.

CAROLINE
Now that is unjust!

MRS. HURST
I know many who answer this description!
CAROLINE
In my acquaintance—

MR. HURST
Will you, or will you not, attend to the game?!

CAROLINE
Pray tell your sister I am in raptures with her beautiful little design for a table.

DARCY
Will you give me leave to defer your raptures till I write again? I have not room to do them justice.

CAROLINE
Oh it is of no consequence. I shall see her in January.

MR. HURST
I’d rather sleep in bed than at the card table.

CAROLINE
Mr. Hurst!

MRS. HURST
My dear Mr. Hurst . . .

MR. HURST
Shall we shoot tomorrow? Good.

(Re-enter Servant 2; exit Mr. Hurst. Darcy finishes his letter. The card game is put away.)

CAROLINE
By the bye, Charles, are you really serious in meditating a dance at Netherfield? I would advise you consult the wishes of the present party.

BINGLEY
If you mean Darcy, he may go to bed, if he chooses, before it begins.

(Darcy picks up a book and reads.)

CAROLINE
I should like balls infinitely better if conversation instead of dancing were made the order of the day.
BINGLEY
Much more rational, my dear Caroline, I dare say, but it would not be near so much like a ball.

CAROLINE
Miss Eliza Bennet, let me persuade you to follow my example, and take a turn about the room. I assure you it is very refreshing.

(They walk.)

Mr. Darcy, will you join our party?

DARCY
That would interfere with either of your two motives.

CAROLINE
What could he mean? I am dying to know what could be his meaning, Miss Eliza?

ELIZABETH
Depend upon it, he means to be severe on us, and our surest way of disappointing him will be to ask nothing about it.

CAROLINE
On the contrary, I must know. Sir, what two motives? Do you object to explaining yourself?

DARCY
You are either in each other's confidence with secret affairs to discuss, or you are conscious your figures appear to the greatest advantage walking. If the first, I should be completely in your way; if the second, I can admire you much better as I sit.

CAROLINE
Oh! shocking! I never heard anything so abominable. How shall we punish him?

ELIZABETH
Nothing so easy. Tease him—laugh at him. Intimate as you are, you must know how it is to be done.

CAROLINE
But upon my honor I do not. Tease calmness of temper and presence of mind?! And as to laughter, we will not expose ourselves by attempting to laugh without a subject.

ELIZABETH
Mr. Darcy is not to be laughed at!
DARCY
Miss Bingley has given me credit for more than can be.

ELIZABETH
I dearly love a laugh, though I hope I never ridicule what is wise or good.

DARCY
It has been my study to avoid weaknesses which often expose a strong understanding to ridicule.

ELIZABETH
Such as vanity and pride.

DARCY
Yes, vanity is a weakness indeed. But pride—where there’s a real superiority of mind--pride will always be under good regulation.

CAROLINE
Pray, what is the result of your examination?

ELIZABETH
Mr. Darcy owns he has no defect.

DARCY
No, I have faults enough, but they are not, I hope of understanding. My temper I dare not vouch for. It is, I believe, resentful. My good opinion, once lost, is lost for ever.

ELIZABETH
That is a failing indeed. But I really cannot laugh at it. You are safe from me.

DARCY
There is, I believe, in every disposition a tendency to some particular evil—a natural defect, which not even the best education can overcome.

ELIZABETH
And your defect is a propensity to hate everybody.

DARCY
And yours is willfully to misunderstand them.

CAROLINE
Shall we have some music? Louisa?

(Mrs. Hurst goes to the piano.)
ELIZABETH
If you will excuse me, I believe I should look in on my sister.

BINGLEY
By all means. I shall send up your clothing to your room directly it comes.

ELIZABETH
Thank you, Sir.

BINGLEY
And Jones will be here within the hour, I’d wager on it. I shall go watch for his approach.

(Exit Elizabeth and Bingley.)

CAROLINE
Well, Mr. Darcy. I hope you will give your proposed mother-in-law a few hints, when this desirable event takes place, as to the advantage of holding her tongue; and, do cure the younger girls of running after the officers. And if I may mention so delicate a subject, endeavor to check that little something bordering on conceit and impertinence which your lady possesses.

DARCY
Have you anything else to propose for my domestic felicity?

CAROLINE
Oh, yes. For our Elizabeth’s portrait, you must not attempt to have it taken, for what painter could do justice to those eyes?

DARCY
It would not be easy, indeed, to teach their expression.

(Exit all. Longbourn, 18, November. Enter Mr. Bennet from his library, meeting Mrs. Bennet, Jane, Elizabeth, Kitty, Lydia.)

MR. BENNET
Mrs. Bennet? 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
Who do you mean, my dear? Charlotte Lucas? I hope my dinners are better than what she sees at ‘Lucas Lodge’.
MR. BENNET
The person of whom I speak is a gentleman, and a stranger.

MRS. BENNET
Mr. Bingley! Why, Jane, you never dropped a word of this, you sly thing! But, good Lord! How unlucky! There is not a bit of fish to be got today. Lydia, my love, ring the bell, I must speak to Hill this moment.

MR. BENNET
It is not Mr. Bingley. It is a person whom I never saw in the whole course of my life.

KITTY
One of the officers?

LYDIA
Is it Captain Carter?

MARY
One of Uncle Phillips’ clerks?

MR. BENNET
Jane, Lizzy, you have three very silly sisters. About a month ago I received a letter, and about a fortnight ago I answered it, for I thought it a case of some delicacy and requiring immediate attention.

(Lydia and Kitty giggle.)

It is from my cousin, 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! Pray do not talk of that odious man. I do think it the hardest thing in the world that your estate should be entailed away from your own children.

MR. BENNET
It certainly is a most iniquitous affair and nothing can clear Mr. Collins from the guilt of inheriting Longbourn. But if you will listen to his letter, you may perhaps be a little softened by his manner of expressing himself.

MRS. BENNET
No, that I am sure I shall not. Why could not he keep on quarreling with you, as his father did before him?

(Enter Mr. Collins, hands Mr. Bennet the letter.)