

BINGLEY #1

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"Miss Elizabeth," "Miss Lydia." As he names them Darcy comes down c. Bingley stands at foot of steps.) Have you some tea left for us, Mrs. Bennet?

Mrs. Bennet. I'm all of a tremble— Lydia, ring for Hill, my love! So charmed, my dear sirs!

Darcy. Your servant, ma'am! (Lydia rings for Hill; stays upstage, bored with the proceedings. Darcy crosses to chair below R. fireplace and stands in front of it.)

Bennet. (After a pause) I was riding to Netherfield to call on these gentlemen and actually met them en route to the village— (Crosses to fireplace L.; warms hands. Girls laugh.) But—what's so funny about that? (As the girls laugh—even their mother.)

Mrs. Bennet. (Gushing, to Bingley) Never mind! It is so nice to have some eligible young men in the neighborhood at last, Mr. Bingley. (Bingley takes a step to L. of table c.) I hope we shall see you often this winter?

Bingley. (Eyes on Jane) I think I can promise that, ma'am. (Bingley crosses to sofa. Hill enters R.C. from L. with fresh tea. Replaces other teapot. Mrs. Bennet sends him off R.C. to L. with a gesture.)

Elizabeth. (Who has been watching her mother, crosses to Darcy) I hope you are finding our part of the country to your liking, Mr. Darcy.

Darcy. (Turning to her with a stiff bow) I do not care for the country, Miss Bennet.

Elizabeth. What a pity! Then it must irk you to be compelled to live in it. Lady Lucas was telling us of your estate at Pemberly. (Bennet takes small chair from L. fireplace, moves it to L.C. and sits.)

Mrs. Bennet. What? Not care for the country, sir? Surely you don't prefer London to Derbyshire? (Jane crosses to tea table.)

Darcy. One moves in such a confined circle outside big cities.

Mrs. Bennet. Indeed! Well, I for one don't agree

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with you. The only advantages big cities have over us is their shops. It's true we can't buy anything we really want in the High Street at Meryton—it certainly upsets me at times—

Darcy. Does it? (He bows to her with the sort of attention that would insult an intelligent person. Elizabeth crosses to back of sofa. Lydia exits R.C. to L.)

Mrs. Bennet. (To Bingley) I hear from Mrs. Long that your drawing-room has such a charming prospect over the gravel walk. I really don't know a place in the county to equal Netherfield for its view. You'll not think of leaving us in a hurry, I hope, even though you have only such a short lease?

Bennet. I see you've not been idle, Mrs. Bennet.

Bingley. (Jane takes tea from table; serves Bingley.) Everything I do is done in a hurry. (Laughs) When I fall in love I expect it will be the same. (Looks at Jane, who drops her eyes, embarrassed. She moves away from him and serves Darcy.)

Darcy. (Crosses to sofa; sits) That isn't anything to boast of, my dear fellow. (Darcy half rises as he takes tea from Jane. Jane hands him tea.) Thank you, Miss Bennet. It's a sign of a far from solid character.

Elizabeth. (Cuttingly to Darcy) Thank goodness for that. Mr. Bingley seems far too charming for solidity.

Bingley. (Looking at her with pleasure) You begin to understand me, Miss Bennet?

Elizabeth. Perfectly.

Darcy. Is that a compliment— (Elizabeth looks at him questioningly, her eyebrows slightly raised.) —to be so transparent?

Elizabeth. In this case—yes. It is not always the deep people who are the charming ones. (Jane serves Bennet; stays at his chair.)

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BENNET. Charming ones often cause the most trouble, though.

DARCY. So—you are a student of character, Miss Bennet?

ELIZABETH. (*Very quietly*) At times. DARCY. But you must have little opportunity to exercise your gift here?

ELIZABETH. On the contrary, sir. DARCY. I am of the opinion that those who live in the country—belong to the country.

BINGLEY. Well, as for me, I like 'em both. City or country, wherever I am I'm happy. Give me a horse, a long road, a whiff of hay— (*JANE takes plate of sandwiches from table; serves BINGLEY just as he says:*) —and a country rose! (*JANE meets his eyes.*)

MRS. BENNET. That is because you have a nice disposition, Mr. Bingley. (*Unmistakable emphasis on the "you"*) That gentleman seems to think that green fields are beneath him. (*Indicates DARCY.*)

JANE. (*Hastily*) Indeed, Mama, you misunderstand Mr. Darcy. He only means that city people are different from us. May I give you some more tea, Mr. Darcy? (*Takes two steps toward DARCY. He rises.*) I am sure yours has grown cold.

DARCY. Thank you very much. It is to my liking. I rarely drink it warmer. (*He crosses to chair down R.; sits.*) JANE places plate on table above fireplace.

BINGLEY looks after her as she comes back to sofa. ELIZABETH suggests by gesture she sit on sofa. JANE then sits on R. end of sofa.)

MRS. BENNET. You know Sir William Lucas, I believe, Mr. Bingley?

BINGLEY. (*Sitting on sofa*) Yes, ma'am. He was one of the first gentlemen of the county to honor me with a visit.

MRS. BENNET. What an agreeable man! So much the man of fashion—so genteel and easy—always

something to say to everybody. That, Mr. Bingley, is my idea of breeding. So unlike those people who fancy themselves too important to open their mouths except to criticize. (*ELIZABETH crosses and sits on bench R.*)

BENNET. It might be well to give them less cause, Mrs. Bennet. (*Mrs. BENNET turns to look at him.*)

ELIZABETH. I'm sorry you were not here earlier, Mr. Bingley. My friend, Charlotte Lucas, was here— Mrs. BENNET. (*To BINGLEY*) Mr. Bingley, it is really tragic that poor Charlotte is so plain.

BINGLEY. She seems a very pleasant young woman. Mrs. BENNET. (*With sad sweetness*) Oh, yes, very. But her face—

BENNET. (*Rising. DARCY and BINGLEY rise. GIRLS also rise. JANE takes cup from DARCY.*) Mrs. Bennet, what about releasing the gentlemen to come to the library for a glass of Madeira wine? (*To Mrs. BENNET*) That homicidal feeling is creeping over me that invariably attacks me at tea parties.

BINGLEY. (*Hands teacup to JANE; takes step to BENNET*) That is very good in you, sir, but we must be getting back to Netherfield. My sister is alone.

Mrs. BENNET. (*Rises*) You mustn't believe that Mr. Bennet really wishes to murder my guests, sir. He is not such a bear as he pretends. (*Turning to BENNET and shaking her finger at him*) If you continue to say things like that the gentlemen will begin to pity me.

DARCY. (*Who has crossed to bow before her*) Indeed, ma'am, we should never dream of pitying you. (*DARCY crosses up behind BINGLEY; turns; bows to GIRLS. They curtsey.*)

BINGLEY. Your servant, ma'am! I trust we may look forward to your visit to Netherfield very soon— (*ELIZABETH whispers to JANE. Mrs. BENNET curtseys*) —with your daughters. My sister is impatient to receive you. *J end*

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Mr. Wickham? Very attractive, isn't he? (MUSIC stops.)

CHARLOTTE. (Feeling one of her slippers feet tenderly) That delectable Collins trod all over me. ELIZABETH. But are you trying to evade my question, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE. About Wickham? I noticed Miss Bingley refused to stand up with him. ELIZABETH. (Mocking the proper Darcy) I expect she models herself on Darcy and only stands up with members of the peerage.

CHARLOTTE. (Laughs) To be quite sincere—I feel there's something not "right" about this Wickham. (Looks searchingly at ELIZABETH) Don't waste your time, dear. Concentrate on Darcy—rich, aristocratic—

ELIZABETH. (Rises) —priggish and snobbish— CHARLOTTE. Well, we must take what offers, my dear. When do we ever meet the knights of our dreams? Men were put into the world to teach women the law of compromise.

ELIZABETH. (Laughs; rises) Don't be ridiculous, Charlotte. (Come, we must speed the few remaining guests. (CHARLOTTE rises; goes to ELIZABETH. MUSIC starts.)

AMANDA. (Entering R.C. from L with Young Man) Oh, Miss Elizabeth! ELIZABETH. I'm vastly sorry you are leaving, Amanda.

AMANDA. (Crosses to CHARLOTTE) It has been a truly delightful evening. Shall I see you tomorrow, Charlotte?

YOUNG MAN. We can go out this way. The carriage is near this door.

ELIZABETH. Oh, we'll see you out.

AMANDA. It was a most excellent ball.

CHARLOTTE. I saw you going down the dance hall. All the gentlemen were struck with you. (Ad lib. as

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they exit. As they go out into conservatory, DARCY comes on R.C. from L., followed by BINGLEY. DARCY crosses to up L.C.)

BINGLEY. (Enters; crosses to punch bowl; takes goblet of punch) Darcy! What are you thinking of? The evening is nearly over. You must dance. Come, be a good fellow.

DARCY. (Crosses to fireplace L.; leans on mantel) I realize that I am not contributing much to the gaiety of the assembly. But it is difficult to "be a good fellow" on such an occasion.

BINGLEY. (Crosses to R. of Darcy) But aren't any of the young ladies to your taste?

DARCY. I should call them all uncommonly pretty.

(ELIZABETH and CHARLOTTE appear in conservatory.)

BINGLEY. And Miss Jane is the prettiest of all. Really, Darcy, you're notoriously lacking in appreciation, but did you ever behold anyone more exquisitely lovely?

DARCY. If you wish me to agree with you, I shall be glad to do so.

BINGLEY. And what of her sister? She's quite pretty, too.

DARCY. Miss Elizabeth?

BINGLEY. Yes.

DARCY. She is the one above all others that I prefer to avoid.

BINGLEY. But, really—she is most agreeable.

DARCY. On the contrary, she is one of the most disagreeable young women I have ever had the ill-luck to encounter.

BINGLEY. Shame on you, Darcy. (Takes him by the arm) She is a delightful girl. Find out for yourself.

DARCY. (Submitting and going toward R.C. door with BINGLEY. BINGLEY places empty glass on table



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CHARLOTTE. And yet he declined to meet you? There usually is some reason for a gentleman to refuse to meet a fellow guest.

up r.) Oh, very well—for your sake. But I'll only stand up with her once. (The Girls get out of view as they pass them on way to door.)

ELIZABETH. A gentleman would have more consideration for his hostess.

BINGLEY. You may change your mind. (DARCY and BINGLEY exit R.C. to L.)

WICKHAM. I am not qualified to form any opinion of Mr. Darcy. I have known him too long—and too well—to be a fair judge.

ELIZABETH. (Enters with CHARLOTTE indignantly through French windows) Why do we tolerate that man? (CHARLOTTE L. of ELIZABETH. ELIZABETH crosses above C. table.)

ELIZABETH. But, Mr. Wickham, why did he offer you such an affront?

CHARLOTTE. (Crosses to table c.) No doubt because he is of the very rich. Those who do not envy the tribe, adore it.

WICKHAM. Please do not ask me, Miss Bennet. I do not wish to injure him in your eyes. If you will permit me I shall say goodnight. (Crosses to ELIZABETH and bows) He might come in. I would not subject you to a repetition of the disgraceful scene in the ballroom.

ELIZABETH. (Crosses to large fireplace) Well, I shall see that he does not come here again. CHARLOTTE. You forget, dear, that he is the bosom friend of Bingley and may influence him against Jane.

ELIZABETH. Indeed he would never dare.

(ELIZABETH is about to reply when they BOTH turn toward R.C. door as WICKHAM enters agitatedly.)

CHARLOTTE. But may I ask why you are so anxious to avoid him, Mr. Wickham?

WICKHAM. (Enters R.C. from L.; comes down in front of sofa) Oh, Miss Elizabeth, I was looking for you to bid you goodnight. I am leaving at once.

WICKHAM. (Turning to CHARLOTTE) I have no reason except a sense of very great injustice. I wish to spare him the embarrassment of meeting me.

(Girls look at each other in surprise.) You'll excuse me, something very unpleasant—

ELIZABETH. (Sits on bench) Injustice! I am full of sympathy.

ELIZABETH. (Rather stiffly) Unpleasant? Here? WICKHAM. I would rather not talk about it.

WICKHAM. (Sits on sofa) You are so kind, Miss Elizabeth—

WICKHAM. But, Mr. Wickham, I insist!

ELIZABETH. Tell me, where did you know him?

WICKHAM. Just now in the ballroom, Mr. Darcy—

WICKHAM. My father was manager of the Darcy estate in Derbyshire.

ELIZABETH. Mr. Darcy? What has he done?

ELIZABETH. Oh!

WICKHAM. Your mother wished to present me to Miss Bingley. Mr. Darcy was with her at the moment. They declined to be introduced and walked away.

WICKHAM. When the elder Darcy died he left instruction that his son should bestow upon me a sum of money.

WICKHAM. We knew each other only too well—

CHARLOTTE. May one ask why, Mr. Wickham?

ELIZABETH. This is beyond bearing— But why—

WICKHAM. I was his godson—he was very fond of me. I was also to receive the clerical living in his gift at Pemberly.

I was not aware that you had even met before?

WICKHAM. I was also to receive the clerical living in his gift at Pemberly.

WICKHAM. We knew each other only too well—