

LYDIA #1

begin 30

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE ACT I

Amelia! Oh, my dear Captain Denny! Did you ever in your lives have such an utterly delightful time?
CAPTAIN DENNY. Never, Miss Lydia! 'Pon my honor!

AMELIA. It has been charming.

LYDIA. Oh, I know my own mama and papa are giving the ball and I shouldn't run on about it so. But I can't help it. I really can't.

CAPTAIN DENNY. And why shouldn't you? Some shrub, Miss Lydia?

LYDIA. (*Glancing off R.C. to L.*) N—no— Papa says I mustn't. He says it's too strong. *He thinks I'm a child.*

AMELIA. Papas are all like that. Shall we return to the ballroom, Captain Denny?

CAPTAIN DENNY. By all means! (*He and AMELIA go out R.C. to L. Alone, LYDIA glances off R.C. to L., then goes to the punch bowl and snatches a quick one.*)
WICKHAM comes in from the conservatory; sees her; pauses on the steps. *She puts the glass down hastily.*

LYDIA. Mr. Wickham!

WICKHAM. Your servant! (*He comes down*) But there's something most grievously wrong here.

LYDIA. Wrong?

WICKHAM. That you should be alone for an instant! It is a reflection on the intelligence of every gentleman present that one so young and so surpassing fair should lack an escort.

LYDIA. Ah, Mr. Wickham! You officers talk as beautifully as you look.

WICKHAM. Our lives of grim duty make us doubly appreciative, Miss Lydia. (*He looks about*) After the rigors of camp life, it is sheer delight to find oneself in such elegant company in so fine a house.

LYDIA. You must see many houses that are finer.
WICKHAM. There are not many that bespeak so

ACT I PRIDE AND PREJUDICE 31

much of quiet gentility. A perfect setting for so exquisite an ornament as—

LYDIA. As what, Mr. Wickham?

WICKHAM. Need I say it, Miss Lydia?

LYDIA. Why—yes—I think you might—

WICKHAM. Your father is a wealthy man, Miss Bennet. But I should say that his greatest treasure is his youngest daughter.

Mrs. BENNET. (*Enters R.C. from L. with LADY LUCAS*) My dear Lydia—and my dear Mr. Wickham.

WICKHAM. Your servant, ma'am. (*LYDIA curtsies to LADY LUCAS.*)

Mrs. BENNET. Have you seen our conservatory, Mr. Wickham?

WICKHAM. Yes, ma'am—I have just been admiring—

Mrs. BENNET. (*Paying no attention*) Do take Mr. Wickham to see our conservatory. We have some—some tropical things of some kind—I can never remember those dreadful Latin names—but they're peculiarly fine specimens.

LYDIA. Do come, Mr. Wickham. (*MUSIC stops.*)
WICKHAM. With the utmost pleasure. (*They exit into conservatory.*)

Mrs. BENNET. Think of it! My youngest daughter, and virtually at the marriageable age! Isn't it incredible?

LADY LUCAS. With three daughters, you must find yourself in a permanent state of incredibility.

Mrs. BENNET. (*Beaming. MUSIC starts.*) I know! It makes life so entertaining, doesn't it? Will you have some shrub, Lady Lucas? Mr. Bennet promised me it would be most harmless. (*AGATHA and TWO YOUNG MEN come in from conservatory with greetings.*) Ah, my dears, do go in and dance. The musicians become so discouraged if everyone stays in the conservatory. (*They go out R.C. to L. Comes down C.*)

end

LYDIA #2

WICKHAM. Have you seen any of our friends in Meryton, Miss Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH. I have not, Mr. Wickham.

WICKHAM. Now—I—may be less formal—Lizzie.

ELIZABETH. That is hardly necessary.

LYDIA. (Crosses to ELIZABETH) Lizzie, my child (Kisses her.)

ELIZABETH. Lydia!

LYDIA. (To BENNET, who has ignored her) Did you have a nice journey back from London, Papa? We left quite soon after you—there was plenty of room in our chaise for you, wasn't there, Mr. Wickham?

WICKHAM. We should have been honored—(BENNET merely regards her gravely. Crosses up c.)

LYDIA. Only think—it's three whole months since I went away—(Looks around) Just the same old place— Good gracious, I certainly had no idea of being married when I left. (Crosses to L. of table c.; leans over the table c.; to Mrs. BENNET) Oh, Mama, do the people hereabouts know I'm married? (Giggles.)

WICKHAM. (Smugly) Of course, my dear, everyone knows it.

LYDIA. Do you know what happened on our way down? Our chaise overtook William Goulding in his curriole. I was determined he should know—I mean about my being married. So what do you think I did? (Chuckles) As our coach passed his, I let down the window—the one next to him—and rested my hand on the window frame—like this—(Holds ring hand out affectedly) —so that he'd see my wedding ring! The whole of Meryton will know it by now. Then I bowed and smiled—like this—(Does it to show them. Crosses to JANE) Ah, my lady, you can still be the prettiest if you like, but I'm the one who got married first. (BENNET stares at LYDIA; stalks out of the room R.C. to R. in disgust. LYDIA,

giving a gamin grin at her father's disappearing back, walks over to WICKHAM; takes his arm. They BOTH take a step c.) And what do you all think of my new husband? I'm sure you two girls must envy me. Isn't he charming?

WICKHAM. You embarrass me, Mrs. Wickham! LYDIA. I only hope they have half my good luck! They must both go to Brighton, That's the place to find husbands. (ELIZABETH crosses to L.C.)

Mrs. BENNET. (Also oblivious of the atmosphere. Plaintively) But, Lydia, darling, must you and Mr. Wickham live so far away?

LYDIA. (Airily) Why not? I'm going to love it. (And patronisingly. ELIZABETH crosses back of LYDIA and WICKHAM and toward library.) You and Papa and Sisters must come visit me. We shall be at New Castle all next winter, and I daresay there will be some balls. I'll see that the girls get some good partners, you leave it to me. I'll find husbands for them before the winter's over.

ELIZABETH. Thank you for your kind intentions. But I don't particularly care for your way of getting husbands. (Exits into library R.)

LYDIA. (With a scornful laugh) La! Jealousy is a dreadful feeling. Poor Lizzie! (Crosses to JANE) I'm glad, Jane, that you at any rate are not cross at me at my getting a husband before you. (JANE is silent. There is another uncomfortable silence which even Mrs. BENNET notices.)

WICKHAM. Ah, but perhaps your sister Jane will be able to follow your example very soon. (BINGLEY rises; crosses to fireplace.)

LYDIA. I was the first, at any rate. *J end*

Mrs. BENNET. (Crosses to WICKHAM) Lydia, my love, take Mr. Wickham upstairs. You'll both need to prepare for luncheon—you can't leave before that— (Crosses with them to door R.C.)