

ARTHUR. Ah. Well, this engagement was unexpected to all, including myself.

LIZZY. That is a rather unusual circumstance, Mr. de Bourgh. Though I do hope you and Miss de Bourgh are as happy and well suited as Mr. Darcy and I. A house with love and understanding as its foundation can weather any storm, I find. I hope Rosings will be so fortified.

ARTHUR. Yes. Well. So do I.

LIZZY. My best wishes to you, though we shall miss you at future family gatherings.

JANE. I know Mary in particular will miss your conversations.

ARTHUR. (*Standing at this—ready to go—can't stand to hear about Mary.*) Please do excuse me, Mrs. Darcy, Mrs. Bingley.

LIZZY. Mr. de Bourgh—

ARTHUR. I am so sorry to leave so suddenly but there seems to be no option. If you would please tell Miss Bennet...that I will miss our conversations as well and that...I am sorry.

JANE. Mr. de Bourgh. At least tell her yourself.

*He bows and exits suddenly. It's all too much for him.*

LIZZY. And with that small encouragement you might have very well saved his happiness.

JANE. Everyone needs some kind of encouragement.

LIZZY. Or rescue.

*Jane crosses to Lydia and sits as Lizzy listens.*

JANE. Lydia, I'd wonder if you'd permit me to make a request of you?

LYDIA. What is it? What have I done?

JANE. Nothing, save but to inspire me to ask you to come stay with us when the baby arrives. I would be so grateful for your company and...energy.

LYDIA. Come...live with you?

JANE. I would not ask to take you away from your home in Bath and your dear Wickham if it were not of such great importance, but I—

LYDIA. Mary is entirely wrong about me, you know. We have such happiness, Wickham and I. Such happiness.

JANE. I know you do, of course. But Lizzy will be so busy, and Kitty is in London, and we do not yet know what is to come for Mary. I look to you, dear sister, to help me in this most special time.

LYDIA. Perhaps Wickham could manage my temporary absence. It would be a great struggle for him without me but a sister's duty is foremost. Who are we if we do not help our family in time of need.

JANE. My thought exactly. Thank you, sister.

*Lydia is overcome with gratitude and relief and almost tackles Jane in a hug. The hug lasts a while. She does not let go.*

*Anne enters. Searching for Arthur. She looks annoyed that she can't find him. Lizzy walks over to Anne with a tray of decorations.*

ANNE. Arthur! Oh my, here I am again. In the tree room.

LIZZY. Miss de Bourgh.

ANNE. Mrs...Darcy.

LIZZY. I did not know your journey was imminent or we should have been more prepared. Please forgive me.

ANNE. If the matter was not so pressing I would not have had the necessity to intrude on your little festivity.

LIZZY. Certainly it is not an intrusion. You are always welcome at Pemberley.

ANNE. How kind. To be welcomed to a place one spent so many hours of one's youth by someone so recently positioned here. I ought to have come earlier to help you get oriented, dear.

LIZZY. Oriented?

ANNE. A sooner intervention might have prevented your more...eccentric style from rooting. Though it is understandable, coming from such inferior conditions as you did.

LIZZY. (*Barely keeping her composure.*) I am surprised at your offer of help, Miss de Bourgh. I had always thought the residents of Rosings to be rather against my marriage to Mr. Darcy. At the least, I'm certain that was the belief held by Lady Catherine. She did seem unable to contain her opinion on the matter.

ANNE. (*Sharply emotional.*) I would ask you to kindly not speak of my mother. I feel her loss quite deeply.

You could not possibly understand. If she objected, it was with good reason, I'm sure.

LIZZY. I certainly did not intend to offend.

ANNE. Yes. No one in this house intends to.

LIZZY. Excuse me, Miss de Bourgh. Mr. Darcy requires me.

*Lizzy exits as Anne moves to the piano. Mary enters, sees Anne at the piano.*

MARY. Were you going to entertain us, Miss de Bourgh? Or do you not play?

ANNE. No I do not, though Mother always said I would have been a great proficient, had I ever learnt.

MARY. I do find most people expect they are exceedingly good at things they have yet to try.

*Mary plays a virtuoso piece on the pianoforte that puts Anne in her place.*

ANNE. Must be a comfort to be able to entertain yourself, so as to not get lonely. You are another Bennet, yes? The unmarried middle one?

MARY. So it would seem.

ANNE. My goodness, there are *plenty* of you. Mother always said more than three daughters was excessive.

MARY. I'd rather agree with her. If you are looking for Mr. de Bourgh, he is not here.

ANNE. Obviously. He was looking for Mr. Darcy to discuss the details of—oh, I don't know, the conversations men have that we women are properly absent for.

MARY. A pity how one can miss out on things when they choose not to participate, don't you find?

ANNE. I find certain people would be better off if they were reminded of their place and did not make a nuisance of themselves.

MARY. Some people find a nuisance every now and then a bit of an entertainment.

ANNE. Some people *would*.

*Lydia darts over, saving Mary from Anne with this—*

LYDIA. Dear Mary! I was wondering when next you would regale

us with your marvelous playing, or a captivating reading, or— (*To Anne.*) My goodness, she has so many talents I lose track. Oh! Miss de Bourgh, congratulations on your engagement. Though, you have been engaged before, have you not? You were meant to marry Mr. Darcy at one point, and isn't it odd that *that* did not happen.

*Darcy enters; Darcy quickly crosses over.*

DARCY. Excuse me, ladies.

ANNE. Thank goodness you're here. Have you come to fetch me, Mr. Darcy? I am quite at my leisure and would enjoy the opportunity for refined company. It has been so long since—

DARCY. In fact, I desire to speak with Miss Bennet at the moment. It is rather urgent.

ANNE. Well. I am quite busy at the moment as well. Retrieving my fiancé and returning to our home is also rather urgent.

DARCY. Then we shall endeavor not to keep you. Excuse me.

ANNE. I can excuse myself, thank you. Mr. Darcy. Mrs. Wickham. Miss Bennet.

*Anne leaves in a huff. Darcy pulls Mary aside, leaving Lydia to wander over to Jane and Bingley.*

MARY. Whatever can be urgent *and* require my attention, Mr. Darcy?

DARCY. Mr. de Bourgh.

*Small beat. Mary proceeds with caution.*

*Lydia overhears this nearby...*

MARY. What...of him?

DARCY. He plans to make a rather abrupt departure and I was curious as to whether you had any thoughts on the matter.

MARY. I am sorry to hear it but it seems wise. What with his engagement.

DARCY. Yes. Though I wonder, were he *not* engaged to be married—

MARY. But he is.

DARCY. But were he not...

MARY. I do not see the point in entertaining hypotheticals if nothing is to be done. Mr. de Bourgh will go to Rosings and I shall go back to my piano and that is that.