

DARCY. Good advice always is. We are almost to a new year, Miss Bennet; the season may bring with it a new beginning. Good night and...enjoy America.

MARY. I will, Mr. Darcy. Good night.

Darcy exits as Mary looks at the world far beyond her.

Transition

In the transition, the house awakens to a new day—December 23rd. Mary and Jane walk and talk looking out the window at the new-fallen snow. Bingley is tasked by Lizzy with helping add decorations to the room: some holly and ivy, a ribbon to the bare tree. Darcy reads newly arrived letters and pulls Bingley away from his decorative duties. Lizzy pulls Jane and Mary away as well, and the room empties.

Scene 3

Morning, the room is empty but for light flickering through the snowfall outside. Lord Arthur de Bourgh enters, carrying a blue-covered book. He was expecting a welcome party. There is none.

ARTHUR. Mr. Darcy? Hello? I'm looking for...well, anyone at this point.

He notices the tree. Then immediately sees the library and heads with relief right to the open map Mary left from last night.

Mary enters.

MARY. Excuse me, sir, but that is not your map.

ARTHUR. Oh. Hello. No. However I am acquainted with the man who I presume is its owner. I am, in fact, mid-search for Mr. Darcy at present. I have only just arrived. If you might be kind enough to orient me in his general direction?

MARY. If you might be kind enough to introduce yourself. Miss Mary Bennet.

ARTHUR. Oh yes, hello. Arthur de Bourgh, I am a cousin of Darcy's, distant cousin. Are you a relation?

MARY. Sister to Mrs. Elizabeth Darcy. And I fear you've lost my continent.

ARTHUR. Your what?

MARY. *(Looking at the book of maps.)* Last night I left off in Australia but you seem to have set me in Brazil and I am quite unprepared for the Amazon.

ARTHUR. Oh. Well. Watch out for the fish. They bite.

MARY. Do they? Have you been to the great river?

ARTHUR. On no. Much like you, I travel on pages and in ink.

MARY. Nonetheless. I shall heed your advice and guard my toes.

ARTHUR. Well. Do pardon me for disrupting your journey.

Mary flips back to the Australia page.

MARY. Fixed.

Awkward pause.

ARTHUR. *(Indicating Mary's book, which has a green cover.)* And were you also reading Mr. Darcy's copy of Lamarck's *Philosophy*? It is quite a stimulation.

He indicates his own book, with the blue cover.

MARY. It is. And it is my copy, actually. Which I did find stimulating, and disorienting, all at once.

ARTHUR. As did I. Exactly that combination.

MARY. It is the talk of life's drive to greater complexity that most interested me.

ARTHUR. And the inheritance of traits. Fascinating.

MARY. Indeed. And the bit about giraffes.

ARTHUR. The giraffes were quite a surprise I thought.

MARY. As did I.

Awkward pause. Followed by an even more awkward sentiment.

Those giraffes.

Awkward pause.

ARTHUR. And. Where is Mr. Darcy then?

MARY. Oh, I have no idea. Something about horses. He left earlier with Mr. Bingley.

ARTHUR. Charles Bingley? I haven't seen him in years. How kind Mr. Darcy is to open his house to friends.

MARY. Especially one who married his wife's sister.

ARTHUR. (*Thinking Bingley married her...*) Is that right?

MARY. Indeed, we are one happy family.

ARTHUR. You are. Well. When did you marry?

Mary laughs at this.

MARY. Oh no, sir. I did not marry Mr. Bingley. No, that would be my other sister, Jane. I am very much unattached.

ARTHUR. Oh I am so sorry. You did say Miss Bennet not Mrs. Bingley. I have a terrible habit with names and not retaining them. Did I offend?

MARY. No no, Mr. de Bourgh. You simply amuse.

ARTHUR. That is the confusion then. I am not used to doing that.

MARY. I should warn you. We are a family that enjoys amusement, especially at such times of year where joy is practically inescapable. My youngest sister, Lydia, for example, can be quite hysterical in her quest to remain amused at all times. She will arrive shortly and she can be quite a beast when she presents herself in full force. Should she attack you—

ARTHUR. Oh my.

MARY. —the best course of action, much like the bear encounters I've read of, is to remain calm, declare peace, and back slowly away.

ARTHUR. Thank you, Miss Bennet. I often find myself quite unprepared for the complexities of...people. I do appreciate the primer.

MARY. (*Amused by his serious reaction.*) I should not misrepresent my sister. Lydia is thought by many to be delightful and deserves as much kindness and patience as anyone, I suppose.

Another commotion from the hall—Lydia has arrived.

Ah. Here we go.

ARTHUR. I'm sorry, where are we going?

Lydia's very loud voice announces her arrival before we even see her.

LYDIA. (*Offstage.*) The entire trip was spent in absolute anguish for my dear Mr. Wickham, who so longed to join me but was detained in Bath.

Lydia Wickham enters with Lizzy and Jane.

LIZZY. Such a shame he will spend the holiday alone. We are nonetheless relieved by your arrival.

LYDIA. A man such as Mr. Wickham is never alone, Lizzy! I thank the Lord every day that I married such a charming, handsome, and clever man. We have want for nothing, you know. Did I show you the absolutely gorgeous bracelet he presented me as an early Christmas gift?

Lydia exhibits her wrist and a silver bracelet with a charm.

LIZZY. You did, actually. Twice already.

LYDIA. It's a little bird! My Wickham said it reminded him of me—light and expressive.

JANE. It's quite lovely, Lydia.

LYDIA. It's a little bird!

LIZZY. And we are so pleased for it. Now Jane, please heed Mary's advice and sit.

LYDIA. Oh yes of course, Jane, you're gigantic. Sit before you fall. Lizzy, you have a tree in your drawing room! And a strange gentleman in your library! Hello.

LIZZY. Oh my goodness, hello!

ARTHUR. I do apologize for arriving unannounced. May I ask who among you is the lady of house, Mrs. Darcy?

LIZZY. Indeed, I am. And you must be Lord de Bourgh.

LYDIA. A lord?

ARTHUR. I suppose I am, though Mr. de Bourgh is sufficiently correct. I am not used to the formalities. And may I thank you for your hospitality in accommodating me, at the last moment no less.