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Lizzy, Darcy and Jane

A play

Joanna Norland

Samuel French — London
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LIZZY, DARCY AND JANE

Lizzy, Darcy and Jane was developed and was first produced by JaMaM Productions with funding from Arts Council England under the working title J*ane Austen Makes a Match*, 16 September - 4 November 2006, with the following cast:

Jane	Clare Cameron
Elizabeth	Kerry Steed
Mr Bingley/ Harris/ Mr Collins	James Kleinmann
Mr Darcy/ Tom	Simon Balcan
Mrs Austen/ Cassandra	Nicola Borthwick
Madame Lefroy/ Lady Catherine/ Alethea	Suzanne Tooney

Directed and produced by Carol Hall
Costumes: Sue Sherwin
Choreographers: Ellis and Christine Rogers
Dramaturge: Deirdre Strath Clyde
Consulting Historian: John White

It was also produced by C Company at the Tabard Theatre, London, 8 January - 2 February 2008, with the following cast:

Jane	Aileen Gonsalves
Elizabeth	Susan Bracken
Mr Bingley/ Harris/ Mr Collins	Zak Rowlands
Mr Darcy/ Tom	Alex Trippier
Mrs Austen/ Alethea	Sheridan Macdonald
Madame Lefroy/ Lady Catherine/ Cassandra	Jo Nuttall

Directed by Marie McCarthy
Set Design: Mark Simmonds
Costume Design: Libby Lee
Movement Director: Helen Heaslip
Lighting: Tom Nickson
Sound: Daniel Tomlinson

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(See also page ii)

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CHARACTERS

Jane Austen, 20 in Act I and 26 in Act II
Mr Bingley, 25
Mr Darcy, 27 in Act I, 34 and then 27 in Act II
Elizabeth Bennet, 20 in Act I, 26 and then 20 in Act II
Harris Bigg-Wither, 15 in Act I and 21 in Act II
Tom Lefroy, 20
Mrs Austen, 40
Madame Lefroy, Tom's aunt, 50
Mr Collins, 25
Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mr Darcy's aunt, 50
Alethea Bigg-Wither, Harris's sister, 35
Cassandra Austen, Jane's sister, 28

Multiple roles may be played by certain actors to highlight the connections between Jane Austen's life and fiction. For example, the following roles may be played by a single actor:

Mr Darcy and **Tom Lefroy**
Mr Bingley, **Harris** and **Mr Collins**
Madame Lefroy, **Lady Catherine** and **Alethea**
Mrs Austen and **Cassandra**

The staging in the script uses the above multiple role-playing. Other role allocations are possible, or the roles may be assigned to one actor each, with adjustments to the stage directions.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

SCENE 1 January 1796. Evening. The ballroom in the home of the Bigg-Withers
SCENE 2 The following morning. The parlour in the Austens' home

ACT II

December 1802. Evening. The drawing room in the home of the Bigg-Withers

Notes on Staging

Characters in this play include figures from Jane Austen's circle (the real characters) and from *Pride and Prejudice* (the fictional characters). As indicated in the cast list, some of the actors may assume one or more "real" and "fictional" roles, though the actors playing Jane and Elizabeth, respectively, should not play any other roles. The fictional characters (Mr Darcy, Mr Bingley, Elizabeth, Mr Collins and Lady Catherine) can see and hear the real characters, but the real characters (other than Jane and, at the end of Act II, Cassandra) cannot see or hear the fictional characters. Only Jane interacts with both the real and fictional characters.

If actors assume multiple roles, they will often shift between roles while on stage. If an actor playing one role (e.g. Mr Darcy) shifts to a different role (e.g. Tom Lefroy) while on stage, the entrance of the second character is not indicated in the stage directions. If each role is assigned to a different actor (i.e. with a cast of twelve), additional entrances and/or exits will be required.

About Jane Austen

Jane Austen was born at Steventon Parsonage in Hampshire on December 16, 1775, to the Reverend George Austen, a clergyman of modest means, and his wife, Cassandra, members of the lesser gentry. The second youngest child in a family of two daughters and six sons, Jane Austen began writing in her youth. At the age of 20, she began *First Impressions*, an early version of *Pride and Prejudice*. In 1801, her parents left Steventon Parsonage for Bath with their two unmarried daughters, Jane, and her beloved older sister, named Cassandra after their mother. The ensuing years were an unsettled time for them all. The family changed quarters repeatedly, and it is believed that for a time, Jane Austen virtually ceased writing.

In 1809, Jane's brother Edward, who had come into wealth, provided a home for his now-widowed mother and two unmarried sisters in Chawton, Hampshire. Jane Austen lived there until her death in 1817, publishing *Sense and Sensibility* in 1811, *Pride and Prejudice* in 1813, *Mansfield Park* in 1814, *Emma* in 1815, and *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* posthumously, in 1818. *Lizzy, Darcy and Jane* draws on key events in Jane Austen's life, including her romance with Tom Lefroy in 1796 and Harris Bigg-Wither's proposal in 1802. As no manuscripts of *First Impressions* or *Pride and Prejudice* have survived, we know almost nothing about how the novel developed and changed between its inception and publication. This aspect of the play is my invention.

J.N.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Arts Council England, South East, for generously supporting the research and development of this play, to various members of the Jane Austen Society (UK) for assisting me with my research, to Peter Thompson and the Player Playwrights theatre group in London, England for enabling me to workshop an early draft of this script, and to my dramaturge, Deirdre Strath Clyde, my mentor, Peter Vincent, and my colleague, Lara Muth, for their invaluable criticism, advice, and encouragement. I am indebted to Ellis Rogers, Christine Rogers, and John White for their guidance on Regency dance and history, as well as to the many actors who workshopped this script, and to JaMaM Productions and C Company for producing it. Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Roslyn Molinoff, for introducing me to *Pride and Prejudice*, my father, Joseph Norland, for reassuring me, during my long dormant spell, that I would find my way back to playwriting, my son, Alistair Duncan McLeod, for napping while I finished the script, and my husband, Alistair Scott McLeod, for loving Elizabeth Bennet — and me.

J.N.

ACT I
Scene 1

The ballroom at the home of the Bigg-Withers, a wealthy landed family. Evening, January 1796

As the play begins, dance music plays in the background. The music fades gradually. There is a game table, UL, *with three chairs. Depending on space available, the stage may also be set* UR *for Scene 2 (currently in darkness), with a writing desk equipped with pens, paper and an inkwell (far right) and three chairs. By the middle chair, there is a pile of garments for mending and a workbasket. When Scene 2 begins, actors may shift the Scene 2 furniture to a more central position. If space is not permitting, actors can remove the furniture and props from Scene 1 when they exit at the end of Scene 1 and bring on the furniture and props for Scene 2*

The actors playing Madame Lefroy, Mr Bingley/Harris/Mr Collins and Mr Darcy/Tom sit at the game table. Each holds a hand of cards

Jane enters

Jane Impossible man. Intolerable man. I have walked by the game table three times tonight, and not once did Mr Lefroy look up from his cards. If I do not please him, why did he invite me to dance twice at the Heartleys' ball last week? And if I do please him, why does he now insist on playing cards? I wish that men at balls behaved more like men in novels. My Mr Bingley always chooses dancing over cards. Is that not so, Mr Bingley? (*Louder*) I said, is that not so, Mr Bingley?

Mr Bingley rises from the game table and approaches Jane

Mr Bingley Most definitely. Particularly with so many lovely ladies assembled.

Jane Thank you, Mr Bingley. You always say the most enchanting things.

Mr Bingley Miss Jane Austen is too kind.

Jane Your charm should not surprise me. The moment I penned your name, I decided that you should be the most charming man in the world. And to settle the matter, I gave you an income of five thousand pounds a year.

Mr Bingley Is that my income? I can never recall the exact figure.

Jane It is in your nature to be affable, not precise.

Mr Bingley It is in my nature to dance. I have been ever so impatient for a ball.

Jane Shame on me! I promised you a ball to welcome you to your new neighbourhood!

Mr Bingley On page seventeen, you mentioned that there was soon to be a gathering at the Assembly Rooms. Only then ——

Jane I set my novel aside for days. My excuse was that the Bigg-Withers had petitioned me to write a winter theatrical. But even that remains unfinished. Instead, I squandered my time flirting with my Irish friend. I am glad that Mr Lefroy leaves for Lincoln's Inn next week — (*mimicking Tom*) "to devote himself to the mysteries of the law."

Mr Bingley He will regret the wasted opportunity to dance when he is forced to burrow in the library.

Jane (*inspired*) I will be avenged yet. That is what novels are for. I will give you a conceited, arrogant friend who always refuses to dance. A failing for which he will be universally derided.

Mr Darcy rises from the game table and approaches Jane and Mr Bingley

You are far too serious to dance, are you not ... Mr ... Mr Darcy?

Mr Darcy Dancing does not suit all tastes or moods.

Jane Mr Darcy has never cared for dancing. (*To Mr Bingley*) Even when you first met ... at Cambridge.

Mr Bingley In my first year. Michaelmas term.

Mr Darcy It was I who first acquainted Bingley with the alarming intelligence that our college possessed a library.

Mr Bingley If it wasn't for Darcy, I should never have known that our college even had a library, let alone that I was meant to be a patron. But he is a capital fellow, I assure you.

Jane I do not think that all of Mr Darcy's acquaintances would agree.

Mr Darcy I consider their censure a relief, given the quality of their judgment on other matters.

Mr Bingley Do not pay Darcy any mind. This is always his manner upon a first meeting.

Jane His manners could not please me more. They accentuate your charm. Jane Bennet will notice the contrast between you when she meets you both at the ball.
Mr Bingley Is it certain that the eldest Miss Bennet will attend?
Mr Darcy I cannot imagine that she has any competing engagements.
Jane Of course my pretty heroine will be there. Accompanied by her three sisters, Mary, Kitty, and Lydia.
Mr Bingley The entire neighbourhood talks of her beauty.
Mr Darcy The entire neighbourhood cannot supply many alternative subjects of conversation.
Jane When you are introduced to Miss Jane Bennet, Mr Bingley, you will not disagree with the report that she is uncommonly handsome. (*She adopts the role of Jane Bennet and curtsies*)
Mr Bingley Good-evening, Miss Bennet.
Jane Good-evening, Mr Bingley.
Mr Bingley (*to Mr Darcy*) Handsome? Why she is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld. (*He holds out his hand to Jane in introduction*) Miss Bennet, I am delighted to form your acquaintance.

Music begins. Mr Bingley and Jane begin to dance

Jane We are honoured that you attend our assembly this evening, sir.
Mr Bingley I am ever so fond of dancing.
Jane (*as herself)* To be fond of dancing is a certain step towards falling in love.
Mr Bingley What an enchanting evening, Miss Bennet! (*Aside to Mr Darcy*) And what an enchanting lady.
Jane (*resuming the role of Jane Bennet*) I hope you will be happy in Hampshire, sir.
Mr Bingley Are balls in Hampshire always this lively?
Mr Darcy And are they always this long, and attended by such tiresome company?

Music ends abruptly

Jane (*as herself, breaking away from Mr Bingley, who joins Mr Darcy*) Tiresome ... Does Mr Lefroy also thinks us tiresome?
Mr 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.
Mr Darcy I certainly shall not. At such an assembly as this it would be insupportable.
Mr Bingley You jest!

Mr Darcy There is not a woman in the room whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with.

Elizabeth enters

Jane I suppose that, like Mr Darcy, Mr Lefroy prefers the fine ladies of London. Of course he does. (*She takes out a handkerchief and begins to cry*) And to make matters worse, young Harris Bigg-Wither ambushed me at the punch bowl and insisted that I save him a dance. If only my sister, Cassandra, were here. Cassandra would know how to advise me.

Elizabeth I hope that she would upbraid you sharply first. Fancy making yourself wretched on account of a young bachelor who plants himself at the game table with his greying elders.

Jane Obviously, Mr Lefroy sees little else to tempt him.

Elizabeth Are you surprised? A woman weeping into her handkerchief cannot hope to inspire admiration in the opposite sex — let alone good sense in her own.

Jane I am utterly ridiculous. Spurned by my would-be partner, I stand here alone and dream up suitors for my heroine. I wish that I had never taken up novel writing. There is nothing more ridiculous.

Elizabeth That is a rather insulting thing to say to a character from a novel.

Jane Oh. I beg your pardon. (*Pause*) Which character are you? And from which novel?

Elizabeth I have not yet made up my mind. For now, kindly cease your snivelling so that we may follow the exchange between these two gentlemen.

Jane Very well. I have no competing engagements.

Mr Bingley I would not be so fastidious as you for a kingdom, Darcy! Upon my honour, I never met with such pleasant company, or so many agreeable ladies. And accomplished, too.

Mr Darcy Accomplished?

Mr Bingley It is amazing to me how young ladies have the patience to be so very accomplished as they all are.

Mr Darcy All ladies accomplished?

Mr Bingley They all seem accomplished to me.

Mr Darcy I cannot boast of knowing more than half a dozen such women in the whole range of my acquaintance.

Elizabeth (*unheard by the gentlemen*) That man must comprehend a great deal in his idea of an accomplished woman. I suppose that a lady must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages to deserve the word.

Mr Darcy To deserve the word, a lady must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages.

Jane Does Mr Lefroy also seek such a woman?

Elizabeth If he does, then he deserves to find her, for she is certain to be insufferable.

Mr Darcy And to all this she must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading.

Elizabeth All these attributes united? In that case, I am no longer surprised at his knowing only six accomplished women. I rather wonder now at his knowing any.

Jane Miss, your tongue is quick. But you would not be so gay if you were slighted by a gentleman of consequence.

Elizabeth Is that so?

Jane Suppose my Mr Darcy were to put you to the test.

Elizabeth I should like to see him try.

Mr Bingley Well, whether the ladies at this ball are accomplished or not, you cannot deny that they are uncommonly pretty. (*He indicates Elizabeth*) Look! Here stands a lady in want of a partner. She is very pretty and, I dare say, very agreeable.

Jane Mr Darcy, do your worst.

Mr Darcy Which lady do you mean? (*He turns a critical eye to Elizabeth*) Oh. She is tolerable.

Elizabeth Tolerable?

Mr Darcy But not handsome enough to tempt me. I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men.

Elizabeth Is that so?

Jane You see. It is not so pleasant to be snubbed.

Elizabeth As Mr Darcy is about to discover. (*She approaches Mr Darcy*) Dear sir, pray do not admit that I am tolerable. Make no such concession.

Jane Oh!

Mr Bingley Oh dear.

Elizabeth Were I to believe myself worthy of being tolerated by a Mr Darcy, the compliment would turn my head. I might even begin to aspire to dancing with the first valet to Mr Darcy's second footman. And what an insult that would be to the house of ... the house of ...?

Jane (*constructing the story as she speaks*) Pemberley. The house of Pemberley, in Derbyshire. Mr Darcy is the master of Pemberley, with an income of nine . . . no, ten thousand pounds a year.

Elizabeth Perhaps he should invest some of his prodigious income in lessons on manners.

Mr Darcy You expect me to be mortified, and to stammer a retraction. But why should I apologize to you for remarks spoken in confidence to another?

Elizabeth Why do you make confidential remarks where you are bound to be overheard?

Mr Darcy My meaning was that I never dance unless I am particularly acquainted with my partner.

Mr Bingley I can vouch for that. I have known Darcy to sit out dozens of dances because no lady of his acquaintance was present.

Elizabeth And of course, no one can ever become acquainted at a ball.

Mr Darcy Acquainted, perhaps, if to be acquainted is to ascertain that we agree that the weather is uncommonly seasonable for this time of year, or to talk entertainingly of Kent and Hertfordshire, of travelling and staying at home. For my part, I cannot consider myself to be properly acquainted with a lady unless we have thoroughly exchanged our views on books ——

Elizabeth I am sure we never read the same, or not with the same feelings.

Mr Darcy As well as music ——

Elizabeth I do not lay claim to any superior technique at my keyboard.

Mr Darcy And we must also have discussed ——

Elizabeth Yes?

Mr Darcy In truth, what is of primary importance is not the subject matter, but rather, the manner in which it is discussed. There is a certain sort of lady who will treat every subject as an object of mockery or derision.

Elizabeth A certain sort of lady?

Mr Darcy A certain sort of unmarried lady. Unmarried and, I dare say, unmarriageable to any serious man.

Jane Oh!

Elizabeth Unmarried and, I dare say, determined to remain in that state until she finds a man who warrants her serious attention. Until then, she makes no apology for laughing at follies and nonsense whenever she can.

Jane Bravo! Bravo!

Mr Bingley I so dislike arguments. If you would conclude yours, I shall be very thankful.

Elizabeth What you ask is no sacrifice on my side. The moon is full, the music is lively, and the night is short. Miss Austen, if your Mr Darcy will not dance, I have no further use for him.

Mr Bingley We had better join the game table, Darcy.

Mr Darcy bows and repairs to the game table with Mr Bingley

Elizabeth Impossible man! Intolerable man!

Jane But he could not humble you, while I allowed Mr Lefroy to reduce me to tears. Bravo to you! From now on, I will make you my model, Miss — Miss — But who are you? You could be one of my heroine's neighbours. Or one of her sisters. But which? You are too sensible to be Lydia, and you are no peevish Kitty or bookish Mary.

Elizabeth Lydia, Kitty, and Mary. Are any of them proper companions for your heroine?

Jane The Bennet sisters provide comedy, not companionship. They are a rather silly trio.

Elizabeth How lonely your heroine must be.

Jane I had not thought of that. A woman experiencing her first love ought to have a dependable sister for confidences by candlelight. Do you volunteer for the role?

Elizabeth If I am to be a sister, I must be a younger sister. Too much is expected of the eldest.

Jane Jane Bennet will be your senior by a year. I am delighted to form your acquaintance, Miss ——

Elizabeth Elizabeth.

Jane Miss Elizabeth Bennet.

Elizabeth You may call me Lizzy.

Jane And you must call me Jane. So there are five Bennet sisters. . . Five unprovided-for Bennet sisters at that. The whole lot of you are doomed to poverty and want unless you find suitable husbands. Your father's estate will be entailed away to a distant cousin upon his death, you see.

Elizabeth You might have warned me of my incipient ruin before I agreed to join the Bennet family.

Jane We have that in common, you and I, the threat of a destitute and miserable old age. Never mind. What fun we will have in the meantime. My sweet heroine requires a sister with spirit.

Elizabeth I shall enjoy being a heroine's confidante.

Jane You do not begrudge your sister her leading role?

Elizabeth It is such a terrible responsibility to be a heroine, always setting an example. A heroine's sister can make an appearance when a scene wants enlivening. But no one misses her if she disappears on a solitary ramble on a rainy afternoon and returns three chapters later, her petticoats splattered with mud.

Jane Petticoats splattered with mud — I must make a note of that. (*She retrieves a small notebook and pencil from her reticule and jots down a note)*

Music begins. Harris approaches

Jane Oh dear.
Elizabeth What is it?
Jane The heir to this fine house. Hide me!
Elizabeth Is a lad of fourteen such a menace?
Jane Harris Bigg-Wither is fifteen to be precise, and most determined.
Harris Miss Austen!
Jane Master Bigg-Wither.
Harris You promised me a dance.
Jane Well remembered, sir.

Harris leads Jane downstage. They dance awkwardly during the ensuing interchange

Harris I shall marry you when I am twenty-one. See if I shan't.
Jane Sir, you speak with great authority on the subject.
Harris I told my sister that I shall marry you, and she said that it was a very good idea.
Jane (*amused*) Did she?
Harris "I am sure that Parson Austen's daughter never dreamed of becoming the mistress of such a house as this." That is what Alethea said.
Jane (*somewhat dismayed*) Did she?
Harris Then she said, "It would be such a relief for all of us to see Miss Jane Austen well settled."
Jane It is your turn to lead down the middle.
Harris Oh bother. (*He hastily executes the move*) And I said to Alethea that when you become my wife, you will fetch my slippers for me every night.
Jane To be sure, you deserve no less. But here, I have a confession to make. I have a dreadful habit of misplacing slippers and that sort of thing.
Harris I will keep my slippers under my bed, and you will always know where to find them.

The music ends

Since we are to be married, we must dance the next set.

Tom rises

Elizabeth Look! Mr Lefroy! Like Lazarus.

Tom approaches the others

Jane I shall not be the first to speak.

Tom makes a move to speak to Jane. She makes herself unapproachable. He changes tack, and addresses Harris

Tom Master Bigg-Wither, does Miss Austen monopolize your attention, causing you to neglect your other guests?
Harris No. I ——
Tom I know how difficult it is to tear oneself away from a fine pair of eyes in the face of a pretty woman. And so, to assist you, I volunteer to escort Miss Austen in the next set. That is, if the lady does not object.
Jane If you insist, sir. For Master Bigg-Wither's sake.
Harris Miss Austen was to dance with me!
Jane Be consoled, Harris. I may dance with others, but I shall always remember where you keep your bedroom slippers.
Harris We should never have invited strangers to our ball. I told Alethea as much.

Harris retreats to the card table

Tom (*with mock seriousness*) Miss Austen, I must inform you that a report of a most serious and alarming nature is circulating. A report with you as its subject.
Jane (*disorientated*) What sort of report, Mr Lefroy?
Tom A report so scandalous that I must have it contradicted at once.
Jane I cannot think ——
Tom I am told that you are writing a theatrical to be performed next week.
Jane Only a short sketch.
Tom I could not believe that you would engage in such frivolity ——
Jane A wintertime lark. Our custom at this time of year.
Tom I could not believe that you would engage in such unseemly frivolity . . . without offering me a role.
Jane I should have guessed what you were after!
Tom Now tell me. Who am I to play?
Jane Judging by your performance this evening, you will play the rheumatic grandfather hunched over the game table.
Tom Judging by my plight this evening, I should play the wounded swain who consoles himself with victories at cards for losses on the dance floor. I did not realize that I had a rival in young Master Bigg-Wither.
Elizabeth Many things escape a gentleman's attention when he fixes it to the game table.

Jane Indeed!
Tom (*playfully*) This is not to be endured. I must challenge Master Bigg-Wither to a duel.
Jane The swain would slaughter his rival?
Tom Does he have a choice?
Jane Is there no other way to appease his pride?
Tom None that I can think of . . . unless . . . unless the lady were to tender evidence that the swain is her preferred contender.
Jane What evidence would suffice?
Tom Were the swain less of a gentleman, he might suggest such means as would make a lady blush.
Jane But the swain is a gentleman.
Tom And as he is a gentleman, the lady would have no reason to deny him ——

Tom and Jane are about to kiss, then break away

— a lock of her hair.

Mrs Austen enters

Mrs Austen What a chill there is in the ballroom this evening.
Jane Is there, Mamma? I had not noticed.
Mrs Austen With the party thinning out, there is. I had no business going out at all tonight, let alone staying up until all hours. Mr Landers said so. "With joints like yours," he said, "the only thing to do is to stay at home with a cup of nettle tea."
Jane How could you think of staying at home on a night like this?
Mrs Austen I think it a very dull party.
Jane After the next dance, I will sit with you.
Mrs Austen It is time for us to go.
Jane But guests are still arriving.
Mrs Austen Have you no consideration for my joints?
Jane What will Miss Alethea think?
Mrs Austen I will make our excuses.
Jane Mamma!
Mrs Austen Now, Jane.
Jane Mamma, I am engaged to Mr Lefroy!
Mrs Austen (*all attention*) Engaged?
Jane Engaged to dance with Mr Lefroy, Mamma!
Mrs Austen Oh. Engaged to dance yet again with Mr Lefroy.
Elizabeth If invitations to dance are issued, the recipient is not to blame.

Jane (*to Elizabeth*) Yes!
Mrs Austen Everyone talks of how you behaved together at the Heartleys'.
Elizabeth Then your mamma's coming here to disrupt the dance will confirm their most scandalous conjectures.
Jane (*to Elizabeth*) If only I dared say that to Mamma!
Mrs Austen That fellow from Dublin is barely known to the neighbourhood.
Jane He is Madame Lefroy's nephew. And her guest. What more is required?
Mrs Austen Only that which you, yourself, lack.
Jane Fortune. (*With a touch of melodrama*) Our shared penury facilitates our mutual understanding. And so, I would not exchange my situation for an estate of forty thousand pounds.
Mrs Austen Some men might consider forty thousand pounds a most happy alternative to mutual understanding.
Jane You need not worry about money, Mamma. Mr Lefroy is the favourite of his relatives. They will see to everything.
Mrs Austen Provided that he remains their favourite. What do you think Madame Lefroy makes of your friendship?
Jane Why should she not be pleased? A woman in such easy circumstances as Madame Lefroy must be indifferent to wealth.
Mrs Austen A woman does not attain Madame Lefroy's easy circumstances unless she is highly partial to wealth. Jane, fetch your cloak.
Jane Now?
Mrs Austen Now.
Jane (*to Elizabeth*) How infuriating, to be ordered home by one's mother.
Elizabeth How humiliating to submit to such orders.
Jane What alternative do I have?
Elizabeth What alternative have you the spirit to devise?

Madame Lefroy rises from the game table and approaches

Jane (*inspired*) Of course! Look, Mamma! Madame Lefroy! Good-evening, Madame Lefroy!
Madame Lefroy Mrs Austen! Jane!
Jane Madame Lefroy, tell us! Have you decided to engage the young parson who visited you last week?
Madame Lefroy I certainly have. I was entirely delighted with our first interview. What a deferential young clergyman, and so eager to please! He is just the sort of respectful, humble young man that one never encounters anymore.

Elizabeth If one is lucky.
Mrs Austen (*pointedly*) There are entirely too many of the other sort about.
Jane The dance is about to begin, but I know that Mamma will insist on knowing all.
Mrs Austen We dine with you tomorrow. We can discuss your meeting at dinner.
Jane Impossible! You must relate all the particulars to Mamma tonight, so that she can give me a faithful account of them on our way home.
Madame Lefroy We matrons will find a breezy corner in which to confer while you young people dance. It is far too warm here.
Mrs Austen Of course. (*To Jane*) Your sister would never behave like this.

Mrs Austen and Madame Lefroy separate from the others and seat themselves by the game table, UL

Tom Do not suppose, Miss Austen, that your mother's interruption has distracted the swain from his suit. (*Touching Jane's hair*) Unless the lady tenders her evidence, the duel must be fought.
Jane How dreadful ... (*To Elizabeth*) Lizzy, have you a pair of scissors?
Elizabeth Perhaps.
Jane I must have them.
Elizabeth Have you so many curls that one may be dispatched?
Jane It has been summoned to prevent a tragedy. Lizzy, please.

Elizabeth retrieves a small pair of scissors that was tucked into her sash, and hands them to Jane. Jane cuts a lock of her hair and a piece of ribbon from her costume. She tucks the scissors ino her sash and ties the ribbon around the lock of hair. Elizabeth assists so that the actions are fluid and rapid

Elizabeth And now that I have assisted you in every possible way, I suppose I am to be dismissed.
Jane Poor Lizzy, are you feeling deserted?
Elizabeth Never mind about me, Miss Austen. Now that I can be of no further use, you may leave me to entertain myself.
Jane Out of the question . . . I have the very partner for you!
Elizabeth You do?
Jane Oh yes. A young parson, in fact. Mr . . . Collins. Mr William Collins. (*She leads Harris downstage and transforms him into Mr Collins*) And he is just the sort of respectful, humble young man

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