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Jane Austen's
PRIDE AND
PREJUDICE

by Andrew Davies

Based on the 1995
TV Adaptation

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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PRIDE AND PREJUDICE was first performed at The Talisman Theatre & Arts Centre, Kenilworth, Warwickshire on Monday 26 June 2023, with the following cast.

CAST

ELIZABETH BENNET Gwen Davis
JANE BENNET Joanna Ryan McGough
MARY BENNET Emily Carleton
LYDIA BENNET Phoebe Dann
KITTY BENNET Katie Newman
MR BENNET Graham Buckingham-Underhill
MRS BENNET Kathy Buckingham-Underhill
MR DARCY Chris Bird
GEORGIANA DARCY/
LADY ANNE DE BOURGH Clara Saunders
MR BINGLEY Adam Turner
MISS CAROLINE BINGLEY Siobhan Twomey
MRS HURST/MRS GARDINER Judy Wellicome
SIR WILLIAM LUCAS/MR GARDINER Rob Jones
CHARLOTTE LUCAS Anna McDonald
MR COLLINS/DANCE PARTNER Simon Moss
LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH/
MRS REYNOLDS Linda Smith-Blain
GEORGE WICKHAM Glen Guyver-Fletcher
DENNY/DANCE PARTNER/HARRY Laurie Weston
MAID Jane Yates
WORKMAN/BUTLER Steve Sanday

CREATIVE

Director and Staging – Corrina Jacob
Set Designer – Jeevan Nangla
Production Co-ordinator – Stephen Duckham
Stage Manager – Wendy Elliott
Assistant Stage Manager – Emi Burrows
Rehearsal Prompt – Susi Walker
Properties – Jane Yates
Properties Assistant – Rosalyn Forbes
Wardrobe – Dee Francis, Barbara Port and Margaret Clifton
Lighting – Nigel Elliott
Sound – Colin Thomas
Projections – Dik Thacker

CHARACTERS

THE BENNET SITUATION: They're doomed by primogeniture. Mr Bennet's house and surrounding land must go to the eldest son when he dies – but there is no son! The property will then pass to Mr Bennet's nearest male relative, a young clergyman called Mr Collins.

ELIZABETH BENNET – (Lizzy to her family) Our heroine, 20, very bright, very lively, with a mischievous sense of humour. In the modern parlance, she takes no shit from anyone.

JANE BENNET – 23, her older sister. Beautiful, gentle, affectionate, tends to think well of everyone.

MARY BENNET – 18, serious, bookish without being particularly bright, earnest and humourless.

LYDIA – 15, high-spirited, sexually precocious, one of those girls who 'just wanna have fun'. Thoughtless, but not a bad bone in her body.

KITTY – 17, very much under Lydia's influence. Excitable and easily led.

MR BENNET – late 40s, slightly older than Mrs Bennet, clever and dryly witty. Twenty-two years ago, in his youth, he got Mrs Bennet pregnant and did the decent thing and married her, and has stoically endured the consequences ever since.

MRS BENNET – early 40s, was probably a Lydia in her youth. She still has a romantic heart, but now all her energies are devoted to securing advantageous marriages for her daughters. Mr Bennet is 'landed gentry', Mrs Bennet is from a class below.

MR DARCY – late 20s, is so grand that no one dares to call him by his Christian name. Enormously rich, he owns a grand house (Pemberley) and a large chunk of Derbyshire. Clever, proud, and reserved. But somewhere inside there beats a loving heart.

GEORGIANA DARCY – 17, his much-loved sister. Very much looks up to her older brother.

MR CHARLES BINGLEY – 25, is a rich young gentleman from the North. Warm, friendly, eager to see the good in everyone. He might have a slight Yorkshire or North-Eastern accent.

MISS CAROLINE BINGLEY – 20s, his sister. Snobbish and judgmental, but desperate for Mr Darcy's approval.

MRS LOUISA HURST – late 20s, another sister. Miss Bingley's wing-woman. (Mr Hurst is only interested in drinking, card games, and country sports, so didn't want to be in this stage version.)

SIR WILLIAM LUCAS – 50ish, did very well in trade in Meryton, very proud of his knighthood. Good-natured, a bit pompous.

CHARLOTTE LUCAS – early 20s, his daughter. A close friend of Elizabeth's, she has a ruthlessly practical approach to life.

MR COLLINS – 30ish, a rather dim-witted clergyman who has an unjustifiably high opinion of himself. Greatly in awe of Lady Catherine, to whom he owes his living.

LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH – 50s, a wealthy aristocratic widow, aunt to Mr Darcy. Autocratic, unpleasant and fairly stupid.

LADY ANNE DE BOURGH – her daughter, early 20s, pale and sickly, she suffers from various unspecified health problems. Never speaks in this version.

GEORGE WICKHAM – late 20s, a personable young officer. Childhood friend (and now enemy) of Mr Darcy. We need to think he's going to be the hero when we meet him, he's so charming.

DENNY – 20ish, another officer.

MR GARDINER – late 40s, Mrs Bennet's brother. Kind, sensible and practical.

MRS GARDINER – 30s, affectionate, aunt to Elizabeth.

MRS REYNOLDS – 60s, housekeeper at Pemberley.

HANNAH or **HARRY** – late teens, servant at the Lambton inn.

MAID – servant to all locations as required.

BUTLER or **DANCERS** – extras as desired.

SETTING

The action takes place over at least a year at several locations across England. Georgian England.

TIME

At the end of the 1700s during the time that Jane Austen was alive (1775–1817).

NOTES ON SCRIPT

MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS: Link music between scenes and other music and sound effects. A licence to produce *Pride and Prejudice* does not include a performance licence for any third-party or copyrighted music. Licensees should create an original composition or use music in the public domain. For further information, please see the Music and Third-Party Materials Use Note on page iii. Also see list of suggested music at the back of the script.

PORTRAITS: The portraits mentioned are not a requirement of the set design.

PROJECTIONS: Various locations were shown as back projections at various points in the script but are not necessary, as the script does identify where the action is taking place.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

I first adapted Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* in 1995 for BBC television. It was received with great acclaim, particularly for the performances of Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle.

More than a quarter of a century later, I was approached by my local amateur theatre, the Talisman in Kenilworth, asking if I knew of a good stage adaptation of the book. I said I didn't, but I would write one.

This stage version is based on my TV adaptation, even including the famous 'wet shirt' scene, which many people think must be in the book. (It isn't). It needs speedy and flexible staging, and works best with minimal scenery and furniture. It should play in under two hours.

I hope this published version will enable many more enjoyable productions of what is to my mind the best romantic comedy of all time.

Andrew Davies, 2024

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

Scene One – Longbourn
Scene Two – A Provincial Assembly Room
Scene Three – Longbourn
Scene Four – Netherfield
Scene Five – Sir William Lucas' House
Scene Six – Longbourn
Scene Seven – Netherfield Exterior
Scene Eight – Netherfield
Scene Nine – Longbourn
Scene Ten – Netherfield and Longbourn
Scene Eleven – Road to Meryton
Scene Twelve – Longbourn
Scene Thirteen – Netherfield
Scene Fourteen – Longbourn
Scene Fifteen – Letters
Scene Sixteen – Hunsford
Scene Seventeen – Rosings
Scene Eighteen – London
Scene Nineteen – Hunsford
Scene Twenty – Rosings
Scene Twenty One – Hunsford

ACT TWO

Scene One – Rosings and Hunsford
Scene Two – Hunsford Exterior
Scene Three – Longbourn
Scene Four – Inn at Lampton
Scene Five – Pemberley Exterior
Scene Six – Inn at Lambton
Scene Seven – Pemberley
Scene Eight – Inn at Lambton
Scene Nine – Longbourn
Scene Ten – A Room in London
Scene Eleven – Longbourn
Scene Twelve – A Room in London
Scene Thirteen – Longbourn

ACT ONE

Scene One – Longbourn – The Bennet's Drawing Room

(Opening music and lights up as MARY, JANE, LYDIA, KITTY and ELIZABETH enter in turn, from different directions and address the audience:)*

MARY. *(Is pious and humourless.)* It is a truth...

JANE. *(Is all heart.)* ...universally acknowledged...

LYDIA. ...that a single man... *(The very phrase 'single man' excites her.)*

KITTY. ...in possession of a good fortune...

ELIZABETH. ...*must* be in want of a wife!

(ELIZABETH's sense of humour inclines to the satirical. MRS BENNET marches on left.)

MRS BENNET. Why, of course he must – and why not one of you?

(That sends LYDIA and KITTY into fits of giggles.)

Go away, now girls, I want to talk to your father. Mr Bennet!

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(MARY, JANE, LYDIA, KITTY *and* ELIZABETH
go off, MR BENNET comes on left.)

MR BENNET. My dear?

MRS BENNET. Have you heard that Netherfield Hall is let?

MR BENNET. I have.

MRS BENNET. To a young man of large fortune from the north of England – a Mr Bingley – a single man of large fortune! What a fine thing for our girls!

MR BENNET. How so?

MRS BENNET. Oh, Mr Bennet! How can you be so tiresome? You must know I am thinking of his marrying one of them.

MR BENNET. Is that his design in settling here?

MRS BENNET. Design! Nonsense! How can you talk so? But it's very likely he *may* fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him, and then you see he can return the visit, and invite the girls to Netherfield, and fall in love with one of them, and marry her!

MR BENNET. But have you not considered, my dear, *you* are as handsome as any of them? Mr Bingley might fall in love with you!

MRS BENNET. Oh, don't talk nonsense! I certainly *have* had my share of beauty... (*And she dwells in it for a moment* –) but now I think only of our daughters – and so should you!

MR BENNET. Perhaps I should, though they have none of them much to recommend them; they are all silly and ignorant like other girls...though Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters.

MRS BENNET. Mr Bennet! (*Slaps MR BENNET on the arm.*) How can you abuse your own children so? You take

delight in vexing me! You have no compassion for my nerves!

MR BENNET. My dear, you mistake me. I have every respect for your nerves. They have been my old friends these twenty-odd years. Let me put your mind at rest. I called on Mr Bingley yesterday, and he has engaged himself to bring a party to the next ball in Meryton.

MRS BENNET. Oh, Mr Bennet! You were teasing me all the time! How very good you are!

(MRS BENNET embraces MR BENNET fervently.)

MR BENNET. Yes, yes, very well, very well... *(He makes his escape and exits left.)*

MRS BENNET. Girls! Girls! What an excellent father you have! Wonderful news!

(MARY, JANE, LYDIA, KITTY and ELIZABETH reappear, from different directions: KITTY and LYDIA together, JANE and ELIZABETH together, MARY on her own with a book.)

JANE. What is it, Mamma?

MRS BENNET. Mr Bingley, who has *five thousand a year*, has taken Netherfield Hall – and he's bringing a party to the ball at Meryton!

LYDIA. Ooh, Mamma! Will there be officers?

MRS BENNET. How should I know, Lydia. But you should all make sure you look your very best!

(MRS BENNET, LYDIA, KITTY and MARY exit left. ELIZABETH and JANE move across right with a little music. JANE at her dressing table, combing her hair, ELIZABETH standing.)

ELIZABETH. If I could find a man who loved me and would take me for only fifty pounds a year, I should be very well pleased.

JANE. Yes.

ELIZABETH. But such a man could hardly be sensible, and I could never love a man who was out of his wits!

JANE. (*Thoughtful.*) I think...that a marriage where one partner couldn't love or respect the other...could not be agreeable to either party.

ELIZABETH. As we see every day. (*Brightly.*) But beggars cannot be choosers!

JANE. We are not so *very* poor, Lizzy.

ELIZABETH. With Papa's estate entailed away from the female line, we have very little but our charms to recommend us! One of us at least will have to marry very well indeed! And since you are at least five times as pretty as the rest of us, I fear it'll have to be you!

(This causes JANE to turn to the mirror to check her assets before she turns back anxiously to ELIZABETH.)

JANE. But I should like... I do so wish to marry for love.

ELIZABETH. And so you shall, I'm sure. But take care you fall in love with a man of good fortune!

JANE. And what about you?

ELIZABETH. Oh, I'm too difficult to please – I shall end up an old maid!

(Lights go down right on ELIZABETH and JANE as they freeze.)

Transition...

(Lights come up on MR DARCY and MR BINGLEY left.)

MR DARCY. A *ball*? In a provincial assembly room?

MR BINGLEY. Why ever not, Mr Darcy?

MR DARCY. You don't think the company would be somewhat uncouth?

MR BINGLEY. Not at all – and what if they were? I'm very fond of dancing, and I'm ready to stand up with anyone. Are you refusing to come?

MR DARCY. No, that would be ill-mannered. I will come with you, Bingley, and dance with your sisters. I make no further undertaking than that.

Scene Two – A Provincial Assembly Room in Meryton

*(The ball. Country dance music begins.)**

(JANE and ELIZABETH cross to join the scene. MISS BINGLEY, MRS HURST enter right and MR DARCY and MR BINGLEY join them. MRS BENNET, LYDIA, KITTY, MARY all enter together left. SIR WILLIAM and CHARLOTTE LUCAS enter upstage plus any DANCERS or extras for the scene.)

(MR BINGLEY asks JANE to dance and they start the dance with a bow and curtsy. There might be room for six or eight DANCERS. ELIZABETH, JANE, LYDIA and KITTY or maybe all five sisters, with one or two girls standing in for men. Or other OFFICERS available as dance partners.)

(MISS BINGLEY and MRS HURST stand aloof, sneering. The ladies stand out for their elaborate headgear and expensive looking dresses. MISS BINGLEY whispers snide comments to MRS HURST about the local clodhoppers.)

(In the dance, MR BINGLEY is making good eye contact with JANE, who is blushingly delighted. MRS BENNET looking on, beaming, and clapping in time to the music.)

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(The dance ends, and MR BINGLEY goes over to MR DARCY. ELIZABETH and JANE are centre to hear what MR DARCY says.)

MR BINGLEY. Come, Mr Darcy, I must have you dance!

MR DARCY. Your sisters are disinclined, and I see nothing else to tempt me here.

MR BINGLEY. I wouldn't be as fastidious as you for a kingdom! The room is full of pretty girls!

MR DARCY. *You* are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room.

MR BINGLEY. Oh, she's the loveliest, sweetest – but look, there's one of her sisters who's not engaged, and she's very pretty, to my eye, and looks very agreeable, too.

(He means ELIZABETH, who is amused by this exchange, as MR DARCY turns and looks her up and down, and their eyes meet before MR DARCY turns away again.)

MR DARCY. She is *tolerable*, but not handsome enough to tempt *me*. You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles, for you're wasting your time with me.

MR BINGLEY. Very well! I shall!

(Music starts again. MR BINGLEY goes and takes JANE's hand and draws her aside to chat and to enjoy each other's company. ELIZABETH and MR DARCY lock eyes again, briefly, then they both turn their backs and walk away from each other. Everyone exits. Lights down.)*

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Scene Three – Longbourn

(Lights up, scene change, link music.

MR BENNET *enters and sits centre with a book. MRS BENNET is very animated.*

ELIZABETH, JANE, LYDIA, KITTY and MARY *stand around MR BENNET who all enter into scene from left.)*

MRS BENNET. Oh, Mr Bennet, what a time we have had! Jane was so admired, there was nothing like it!

LYDIA. Oh, Lord, I'm so fagged!

KITTY. Lydia and I danced every dance!

LYDIA. And Mary none, ha, ha.

(MARY scowls.)

MRS BENNET. But Mr Bingley favoured Jane above every other girl – he danced the first two with her, and then the next with Charlotte Lucas, which vexed me greatly, then the next two with Jane again, and then he danced with Lizzy, and then – what do you think?

MR BENNET. Enough of his partners! Would he had sprained his ankle in the first dance!

MRS BENNET. Oh, Mr Bennet! But his sisters, if you had seen them! So elegant and refined! But that man he brought with him, Mr Darcy as he calls himself – proud, horrid, and disobliging! For all he may be the richest man in Derbyshire – do you know, he slighted our Lizzy, and wouldn't stand up with her!

MR BENNET. *(Looking at ELIZABETH.)* Slighted my Lizzy, did he?

ELIZABETH. I didn't care for him either, Papa, so it's of little matter.

MRS BENNET. Horrid man. If he asks you next time, I hope you will refuse him to teach him a lesson.

ELIZABETH. I believe I can safely promise you *never* to dance with Mr Darcy!

(Lights down on them left as they all exit, taking chair off with them. We then find ourselves in Netherfield right.)

Scene Four – Netherfield

(Lights up, link music. MR BINGLEY, MR DARCY, MISS BINGLEY and MRS HURST enter right.)

MISS BINGLEY. *(As she enters.)* And so none of the Hertfordshire ladies could please you, Mr Darcy?

(MR DARCY gazing into the middle distance.)

MRS HURST. Not even the famous Miss Bennets?

(MISS BINGLEY and MRS HURST share a little disparaging laugh and sit.)

MR BINGLEY. Well, I never met with pleasanter people or prettier girls in my life!

MR DARCY. I saw little beauty and no breeding at all. The, ah, eldest Miss Bennet is very pretty, I grant you.

MR BINGLEY. Admit it, man, she's an angel!

MR DARCY. She smiles too much.

MISS BINGLEY. *(Laughing meanly.)* Oh, Mr Darcy! Too cruel! And now we are invited to a party at Sir William Lucas's, who I understand kept a very good *shop* before he became a gentleman – *must* we go?

MR BINGLEY. Of course we must! It would be very rude not to!

MISS BINGLEY. And no doubt your inamorata Miss Bennet will be there?

MR BINGLEY. I certainly hope so!

MISS BINGLEY. *And* her mother – and *all* her sisters! Shall you be able to bear it, Mr Darcy?

MR DARCY. It seems I must.

(Lights down right with link music.)

Scene Five – Sir William Lucas' Home

(Piano and stool set left. MARY sitting at the piano as the scene opens there is the sound of a piano being played not very well. Various characters appear for Sir William Lucas's party. MISS BINGLEY, MRS HURST, MR DARCY and MR BINGLEY all move into scene from right. LYDIA, KITTY, JANE, ELIZABETH, MARY, MRS BENNET enter left, CHARLOTTE and SIR WILLIAM enter left and cross to MR DARCY, MR BINGLEY, MISS BINGLEY and MRS HURST. Any extras or dancers join the scene.)*

SIR WILLIAM. Mr Bingley, Mr Darcy, Miss Bingley, Mrs Hurst, you are very welcome, it is very good of you to grace our modest gathering!

(MISS BINGLEY and MRS HURST looking snooty as before, ditto MR DARCY, MR BINGLEY is looking eagerly about for JANE – and there she is, and he goes to greet her. Both very pleased to see each other. MR DARCY observes them sardonically. LYDIA and KITTY are looking frisky, as MARY continues to play her sombre chords.)

LYDIA. *(Standing behind MARY at the piano.)* Oh, Mary! Stop playing that gloomy stuff, play something jolly, we want to dance!

(MARY sighs.)

MRS BENNET. Oh, play us a jig, Mary, no one wants your concertos here!

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MARY. (*Scowling.*) Very well.

(And she does. LYDIA and KITTY grab a couple of young OFFICERS/DANCERS and start dancing, So does JANE and MR BINGLEY. SIR WILLIAM and MRS BENNET look on with pleasure, the Mr Darcy party look aloof. CHARLOTTE LUCAS approaches ELIZABETH and moves downstage. MR DARCY is looking across at ELIZABETH from afar.)

CHARLOTTE. Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH. Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE. I see Mr Bingley continues his attentions to Jane.

ELIZABETH. I think if it goes on as it has been, she is in a fair way to be very much in love with him!

CHARLOTTE. Then she should leave him in no doubt of her feelings, if she means to secure him!

ELIZABETH. Secure him?

CHARLOTTE. Yes, of course, she must do that as soon as she can.

ELIZABETH. Before she is sure of his character? Before she is sure even of her own feelings?

CHARLOTTE. Yes, of course! Happiness in marriage is always a matter of chance, you know! It's best if she knows nothing of his defects in advance – once they are married she will find out all too soon! She should encourage him as much as she can – he will get very little encouragement from his sisters I think.

ELIZABETH. Or his friend.

CHARLOTTE. Mr Darcy looks at *you* a great deal.

ELIZABETH. I cannot think why – unless he means to frighten me with his contempt.

(**SIR WILLIAM** accosts **MR DARCY** right.)

SIR WILLIAM. What a charming activity this is for young people, sir! I consider dancing to be one of the refinements of every polished society!

MR DARCY. Yes, and every *unpolished* one.

SIR WILLIAM. Sir?

MR DARCY. Every savage can dance.

SIR WILLIAM. (*Baffled.*) What? Oh! Yes! Ha ha! Very witty, sir! Excellent!

(**SIR WILLIAM** is a bit taken aback, but perseveres. Dance ends and they all bow and curtsy. **JANE** crosses to meet up with **ELIZABETH**.)

Mr Darcy, allow me to present this young lady to you. You cannot refuse, when there is so much beauty before you!

MR DARCY. (*Polite but distant.*) Would you do me the honour, Miss Bennet?

ELIZABETH. Thank you – but I beg you would excuse me.

(*She walks away with JANE. MR DARCY looks after her.*)

SIR WILLIAM. Well, well – what's to be done?

(**SIR WILLIAM** goes over to talk to **MRS BENNET** and **CHARLOTTE**. **MISS BINGLEY** goes closer to **MR DARCY**.)

MISS BINGLEY. I think I can guess your thoughts at this moment.

MR DARCY. I would imagine not.

MISS BINGLEY. You are thinking how unbearable it would be to spend many evenings in such tedious company.

MR DARCY. No indeed – I was meditating on the pleasure a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow.

MISS BINGLEY. And may one ask whose are the eyes that inspired such reflections?

(MISS BINGLEY flutters her eyelashes at MR DARCY. He looks directly at MISS BINGLEY.)

MR DARCY. Miss Elizabeth Bennet.

MISS BINGLEY. Oh! I am all astonishment. *(She strides off right.)*

(MISS BINGLEY, MRS HURST, MR DARCY and MR BINGLEY exit right. SIR WILLIAM and CHARLOTTE exit upstage. DANCERS and EXTRAS all exit. LYDIA, KITTY, MARY and MRS BENNET exit left. Link music while piano is taken off to leave JANE and ELIZABETH onstage.)

Scene Six – Longbourn

(MAID enters with a letter for JANE. She opens it as MRS BENNET enters left to find out who the letter is from.)

MRS BENNET. *(Very excited.)* From Netherfield! Well? What does he say?

JANE. It is from *Miss Bingley*.

MRS BENNET. Oh. Oh, well, that is good too. Let me see, Jane! *(She takes the letter from JANE.)* “My dear friend!” That’s very good! La di da, la di da, la di da...” beg you would dine with Louisa and me today” that’s good!

“as the gentlemen are to dine with Colonel Forster and his officers in Meryton.” Oh, well. You must go, of course, and make of it what you can.

JANE. May I have the carriage, Mamma?

(We hear clap of thunder and lightning flash.)

MRS BENNET. Certainly not! You must go on horseback, for it looks like rain, and then you will have to stay the night, and Mr Bingley will see you in the morning! Well, hurry up! And tell the boy to saddle up Nellie!

(JANE and ELIZABETH exit left. Lights go down and up again. We start to hear rainfall as MRS BENNET – looking out the window – joins MR BENNET reading in his library right and speaks to him.)

There you see, Mr Bennet, what a good idea it was of mine to send her on Nellie!

MR BENNET. Were you planning to have her struck by lightning?

MRS BENNET. No, of course not, what a silly idea, why should I want her to be struck by lightning? It was so that she would have to stay the night!

MR BENNET. And why would you desire that outcome, my dear?

MRS BENNET. Oh, Mr Bennet!

(She's interrupted by ELIZABETH running in left.)

ELIZABETH. A note's just come from Netherfield – Jane is very unwell, confined to bed with a fever!

MRS BENNET. Oh! The poor girl!

MR BENNET. Well, my dear, if she should die, you may take comfort in knowing it was all in pursuit of Mr Bingley, and under your orders.

MRS BENNET. Oh, Mr Bennet! People don't die of little trifling colds!

ELIZABETH. I think I should go and see her, Mamma.

MRS BENNET. And how will you do that when the horses are wanted on the farm?

ELIZABETH. It's only three miles – I'll walk.

MRS BENNET. In all this dirt and mud? You will not be fit to be seen when you get there!

ELIZABETH. I shall be fit to be seen by Jane, which is all I want. And I shall be back by dinner time.

(ELIZABETH exits right first. Lights down with link music as MR BENNET and MRS BENNET exit right.)

Scene Seven – Netherfield – Exterior

(Birdsong/countryside sounds. MR DARCY enters left and he is out with his gun. MR DARCY raises it to fire, then lowers it when ELIZABETH marches on, a little out of breath and she is liberally splashed with mud. Muddy bottom of coat, dress and shoes.)

MR DARCY. *(Startled.)* Miss Bennet!

ELIZABETH. Mr Darcy! *(She's embarrassed. He's aroused.)*

I – I am here to see my sister.

MR DARCY. Of course you are.

(Neither moves. They stand there looking at each other till –)

ELIZABETH. Would you be so kind as to take me to her?

MR DARCY. *(Recovering.)* Of course. Follow me. *(And he leads the way exiting right.)*

(Lights down, link music and set two chairs left.)

Scene Eight – Netherfield Hall

(On one side of the stage, right, JANE lies in bed with ELIZABETH tending to her but not moving too much. On the other side of stage, MISS BINGLEY, MRS HURST enter and we find MR BINGLEY standing. MR DARCY is standing looking offstage/out of a window. Lights up left with two chairs and table.)

MRS HURST. *(As she enters with MISS BINGLEY.)* Well, we must allow her to be an excellent walker, I suppose. But her appearance this morning! She looked quite wild!

MISS BINGLEY. What does she mean by this scampering about the country? Just because her sister has a cold! Her hair, Louisa!

MRS HURST. Her petticoats! I hope you saw her petticoats, brother! Six inches deep in mud!

MR BINGLEY. I thought she looked uncommonly well.

MISS BINGLEY. *You* observed it, I am sure, Mr Darcy.

MR DARCY. *(Without turning.)* I did.

MISS BINGLEY. I'm inclined to think you wouldn't wish *your* sister to make such an exhibition of herself.

MR DARCY. I would not.

MISS BINGLEY. I am afraid that this may have affected your admiration for her 'fine eyes'!

MR DARCY. *(Now he turns.)* Not at all. They were brightened by the exercise. *(Turns away.)*

(An awkward pause. MRS HURST comes to the rescue.)

MRS HURST. But Jane Bennet is a sweet girl! It's very sad she should have such an unfortunate family, such low connections!

MISS BINGLEY. Their uncle, she told us, is in trade, and has a shop in Cheapside!

MRS HURST. Perhaps we should visit, when we are next in town!

(JANE and ELIZABETH laugh at this.)

MR BINGLEY. They would be just as agreeable to me if they had uncles enough to fill all Cheapside!

(MR DARCY turns back.)

MR DARCY. But with such connections they can have little chance of marrying well, Mr Bingley. *That* is the material point.

(There's a touch of anger in his voice, because he also fancies a girl who is beyond the pale. At this point, ELIZABETH joins them from Jane's bedside.)

MR BINGLEY. How does your sister do, Miss Bennet? Is she any better?

ELIZABETH. I'm sorry to say she is very unwell.

MR BINGLEY. Let me send for Dr Jones at once. And, of course you must stay the night here.

(JANE and ELIZABETH roll their eyes.)

ELIZABETH. Oh – I wouldn't wish to inconvenience you.

MR BINGLEY. Nonsense – I'll send to Longbourn directly for your clothes.

ELIZABETH. Thank you – you are very kind.

*(Lights down, link music. **ELIZABETH** goes back to **JANE** in bed. **MAID** enters to help **ELIZABETH** take off her muddy coat/dress and shoes. Then **ELIZABETH** continues to tend to **JANE** and freezes. **MISS BINGLEY**, **MRS HURST** are seated, **MR DARCY** and **MR BINGLEY** are standing but freeze during the next scene.)*