

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

with Peaches, Biscuit and Mary

Part 1

Jane Austen's Classic

With Modern Pet Commentary

Commentary Featuring:

Peaches the Cat, Biscuit the Corgi, and Mary

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Commentary with Peaches, Biscuit, and Mary

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Commentary with Peaches, Biscuit, and Mary

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Commentary with Peaches, Biscuit, and Mary

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Commentary with Peaches, Biscuit, and Mary

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Commentary with Peaches, Biscuit, and Mary

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Commentary with Peaches, Biscuit, and Mary

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Commentary with Peaches, Biscuit, and Mary

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Commentary with Peaches, Biscuit, and Mary

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Commentary with Peaches, Biscuit, and Mary

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Commentary with Peaches, Biscuit, and Mary

Chapter 1

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

"My dear Mr. Bennet," said his lady to him one day, "have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?"

Mr. Bennet replied that he had not.

"But it is," returned she; "for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it."

Mr. Bennet made no answer.

"Do not you want to know who has taken it?" cried his wife, impatiently.

"_You_ want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it."

This was invitation enough.

"Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs. Long says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England; that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so much delighted with it that he agreed with Mr. Morris immediately; that he is to take possession before Michaelmas, and some of his servants are to be in the house by the end of next week."

"What is his name?"

"Bingley."

"Is he married or single?"

"Oh! single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!"

"How so? how can it affect them?"

"My dear Mr. Bennet," replied his wife, "how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them."

"Is that his design in settling here?"

"Design! nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he _may_ fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes."

"I see no occasion for that. You and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better; for as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr. Bingley might like you the best of the party."

"My dear, you flatter me. I certainly _have_ had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be any thing extraordinary now. When a woman has five grown up daughters, she ought to give over thinking of her own beauty."

"In such cases, a woman has not often much beauty to think of."

"But, my dear, you must indeed go and see Mr. Bingley when he comes into the neighbourhood."

"It is more than I engage for, I assure you."

"But consider your daughters. Only think what an establishment it would be for one of them. Sir William and Lady Lucas are determined to go, merely on that account, for in general, you know they visit no new comers. Indeed you must go, for it will be impossible for _us_ to visit him, if you do not."

"You are over-scrupulous, surely. I dare say Mr. Bingley will be very glad to see you; and I will send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying which ever he chuses of the girls; though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy."

"I desire you will do no such thing. Lizzy is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good humoured as Lydia. But you are always giving _her_ the preference."

"They have none of them much to recommend them," replied he: "they are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters."

"Mr. Bennet, how can you abuse your own children in such a way! You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion on my poor nerves."

"You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years at least."

"Ah! you do not know what I suffer."

"But I hope you will get over it, and live to see many young men of four thousand a year come into the neighbourhood."

"It will be no use to us if twenty such should come, since you will not visit them."

"Depend upon it, my dear, that when there are twenty I will visit them all."

Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three and twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. Her mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married: its solace was visiting and news.



Commentary on Chapter 1

Peaches (The Cat): Mary, close the laptop. We need to talk about Chapter 1. The structural integrity of this neighborhood is deeply compromised. Mrs. Bennet is vibrating at a frequency that is going to throw off my internal nap clock.

Mary: It's a classic, Peaches. She's just trying to secure a future for her daughters because of the estate entailment.

Biscuit (The Corgi): I don't know what an entailment is, Mary, but I saw you looking at the part where the rich guy arrives in a carriage. If I had four thousand a year, I wouldn't buy a carriage. I would hire a guy whose only job is to drop ice cubes on the kitchen floor for me to slide on. Does Mr. Bingley like sliding on ice cubes?

Peaches: Biscuit, please. Focus. Mary, the real issue here is the "rightful property" line. Mrs. Bennet is treating a wealthy bachelor exactly like that giant Amazon box that arrived on our porch yesterday. Nobody knows what's inside, but she's already sprinting to sit on it.

Mary: Well, a single man with a large fortune is a hot commodity in a small town.

Peaches: It's aggressive. She's already picking out wedding cake flavors based on a neighborhood group chat rumor. It's the human equivalent of my 3:00 AM zoomies where I sprint sideways across the living room walls for absolutely no reason. Just pure, chaotic momentum.

Biscuit: But Mary! Why is she yelling about her "nerves"? Are her nerves like the evil ceiling fan when it's on medium speed? Because that thing makes me want to bark until my ears turn inside out. Is Mr. Bingley a ceiling fan?

Mary: No, Biscuit. Mr. Bennet is just teasing her because she gets easily overwhelmed when things don't go her way immediately.

Peaches: Exactly. Mr. Bennet is a total instigator. He handles his wife's dramatic sighs the exact same way I handle a plastic bottle cap on the kitchen counter—just batting at it gently to see how fast he can make it spin before it falls off the edge. It's an elite-tier game. I highly respect his pettiness.

Biscuit: I really like Mr. Bennet, Mary. He seems like the kind of guy who would sit on the couch with you all afternoon, look you dead in the eye, and "accidentally" drop a whole slice of warm deli turkey right into your mouth. Can we read the next chapter now? I want to see if the turkey man goes to visit the ice cube man!

Chapter 2

Mr. Bennet was among the earliest of those who waited on Mr. Bingley. He had always intended to visit him, though to the last always assuring his wife that he should not go; and till the evening after the visit was paid, she had no knowledge of it. It was then disclosed in the following manner. Observing his second daughter employed in trimming a hat, he suddenly addressed her with,

"I hope Mr. Bingley will like it, Lizzy."

"We are not in a way to know _what_ Mr. Bingley likes," said her mother, resentfully, "since we are not to visit."

"But you forget, mama," said Elizabeth, "that we shall meet him at the assemblies, and that Mrs. Long has promised to introduce him."

"I do not believe Mrs. Long will do any such thing. She has two nieces of her own. She is a selfish, hypocritical woman, and I have no opinion of her."

"No more have I," said Mr. Bennet; "and I am glad to find that you do not depend on her serving you."

Mrs. Bennet deigned not to make any reply; but, unable to contain herself, began scolding one of her daughters.

"Don't keep coughing so, Kitty, for heaven's sake! Have a little compassion on my nerves. You tear them to pieces."

"Kitty has no discretion in her coughs," said her father; "she times them ill."

"I do not cough for my own amusement," replied Kitty, fretfully.

"When is your next ball to be, Lizzy?"

"To-morrow fortnight."

"Aye, so it is," cried her mother, "and Mrs. Long does not come back till the day before; so, it will be impossible for her to introduce him, for she will not know him herself."

"Then, my dear, you may have the advantage of your friend, and introduce Mr. Bingley to _her_."

"Impossible, Mr. Bennet, impossible, when I am not acquainted with him myself; how can you be so teasing?"

"I honour your circumspection. A fortnight's acquaintance is certainly very little. One cannot know what a man really is by the end of a fortnight. But if _we_ do not venture, somebody else will; and

after all, Mrs. Long and her nieces must stand their chance; and, therefore, as she will think it an act of kindness if you decline the office, I will take it on myself."

The girls stared at their father. Mrs. Bennet said only, "Nonsense, nonsense!"

"What can be the meaning of that emphatic exclamation?" cried he. "Do you consider the forms of introduction, and the stress that is laid on them, as nonsense? I cannot quite agree with you _there_. What say you, Mary? for you are a young lady of deep reflection, I know, and read great books, and make extracts."

Mary wished to say something very sensible, but knew not how.

"While Mary is adjusting her ideas," he continued, "let us return to Mr. Bingley."

"I am sick of Mr. Bingley," cried his wife.

"I am sorry to hear _that_; but why did not you tell me so before? If I had known as much this morning, I certainly would not have called on him. It is very unlucky; but as I have actually paid the visit, we cannot escape the acquaintance now."

The astonishment of the ladies was just what he wished--that of Mrs. Bennet perhaps surpassing the rest; though when the first tumult of joy was over, she began to declare that it was what she had expected all the while.

"How good it was in you, my dear Mr. Bennet! But I knew I should persuade you at last. I was sure you loved your girls too well to neglect such an acquaintance. Well, how pleased I am! and it is such a good joke, too, that you should have gone this morning, and never said a word about it till now."

"Now, Kitty, you may cough as much as you chuse," said Mr. Bennet; and, as he spoke, he left the room, fatigued with the raptures of his wife.

"What an excellent father you have, girls," said she, when the door was shut. "I do not know how you will ever make him amends for his kindness; or me either, for that matter. At our time of life, it is not so pleasant, I can tell you, to be making new acquaintance every day; but for your sakes we would do any thing. Lydia, my love, though you _are_ the youngest, I dare say Mr. Bingley will dance with you at the next ball."

"Oh!" said Lydia, stoutly, "I am not afraid; for though I _am_ the youngest, I'm the tallest."

The rest of the evening was spent in conjecturing how soon he would return Mr. Bennet's visit, and determining when they should ask him to dinner.



Commentary on Chapter 2

Peaches (The Cat): Mary, look at the text. I was right. Mr. Bennet is officially my spirit animal. He secretly visited Mr. Bingley days ago, but he let his wife suffer through three whole pages of dramatic sighing just to watch her spin in circles like a cat chasing a laser pointer. That is masterful psychological warfare.

Mary: It really is the ultimate dad joke of the 19th century. He let the whole family think they were missing out just to drop the news casually while trimming a lamp wick.

Biscuit (The Corgi): Wait, Mary! He went to the big Netherfield house?! Did he bring back any of the fancy rich-guy sticks from the yard? Or maybe some expensive mud? Tell me there's mud!

Mary: No mud, Biscuit. Just the social confirmation that they are allowed to visit him now. Mrs. Bennet was so relieved she started shouting that he's the best husband in the world.

Peaches: The emotional whiplash in that living room is terrifying. She went from full "my poor nerves" meltdown to pure, unadulterated screaming joy because of a five-word sentence. It's exactly like when you pick up my feather wand, Mary. I lose all dignity and my pupils engulf my entire face. I see myself in her madness, and I don't like it.

Biscuit: Oh, I know that feeling! That's like when you say the word W-A-L-K out loud, Mary! You think it's just a normal Tuesday, and then suddenly—BAM! Everything is loud and exciting and my stubby tail is wagging so fast I might accidentally launch myself into the kitchen cabinets!

Mary: And just like you two after a major burst of energy, Mr. Bennet immediately fled to his library to get away from the noise.

Peaches: Highly relatable. When you and your friends start squealing over your reality TV shows, Mary, I also immediately retreat underneath the guest bed for a tactical three-hour nap. Humans are exhausting.

Biscuit: But Mary! If they go to the party now, do you think Mr. Bingley will let me sniff his shoes? I bet rich human shoes smell amazing. Like expensive leather and fancy puddles. Let's open the next chapter! I need to know if the shoes match the hype!

Chapter 3

Not all that Mrs. Bennet, however, with the assistance of her five daughters, could ask on the subject, was sufficient to draw from her husband any satisfactory description of Mr. Bingley. They attacked him in various ways, with barefaced questions, ingenious suppositions, and distant surmises; but he eluded the skill of them all; and they were at last obliged to accept the second-hand intelligence of their neighbour, Lady Lucas. Her report was highly favourable. Sir William had been delighted with him. He was quite young, wonderfully handsome, extremely agreeable, and, to crown the whole, he meant to be at the next assembly with a large party. Nothing could be more delightful! To be fond of dancing was a certain step towards falling in love; and very lively hopes of Mr. Bingley's heart were entertained.

"If I can but see one of my daughters happily settled at Netherfield," said Mrs. Bennet to her husband, "and all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for."

In a few days Mr. Bingley returned Mr. Bennet's visit, and sat about ten minutes with him in his library. He had entertained hopes of being admitted to a sight of the young ladies, of whose beauty he had heard much; but he saw only the father. The ladies were somewhat more fortunate, for they had the advantage of ascertaining, from an upper window, that he wore a blue coat and rode a black horse.

An invitation to dinner was soon afterwards despatched; and already had Mrs. Bennet planned the courses that were to do credit to her housekeeping, when an answer arrived which deferred it all. Mr. Bingley was obliged to be in town the following day, and consequently unable to accept the honour of their invitation, &c.; Mrs. Bennet was quite disconcerted. She could not imagine what business he could have in town so soon after his arrival in Hertfordshire; and she began to fear that he might always be flying about from one place to another, and never settled at Netherfield as he ought to be. Lady Lucas quieted her fears a little by starting the idea of his being gone to London only to get a large party for the ball; and a report soon followed that Mr. Bingley was to bring twelve ladies and seven gentlemen with him to the assembly. The girls grieved over such a number of ladies; but were comforted the day before the ball by hearing that, instead of twelve, he had brought only six with him from London, his five sisters and a cousin. And when the party entered the assembly-room, it consisted of only five altogether: Mr. Bingley, his two sisters, the husband of the eldest, and another young man.

Mr. Bingley was good looking and gentlemanlike: he had a pleasant countenance, and easy, unaffected manners. His sisters were fine women, with an air of decided fashion. His brother-in-law, Mr. Hurst, merely looked the gentleman; but his friend Mr. Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien, and the report, which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year. The gentlemen

pronounced him to be a fine figure of a man, the ladies declared he was much handsomer than Mr. Bingley, and he was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his friend.

Mr. Bingley had soon made himself acquainted with all the principal people in the room: he was lively and unreserved, danced every dance, was angry that the ball closed so early, and talked of giving one himself at Netherfield. Such amiable qualities must speak for themselves. What a contrast between him and his friend! Mr. Darcy danced only once with Mrs. Hurst and once with Miss Bingley, declined being introduced to any other lady, and spent the rest of the evening in walking about the room, speaking occasionally to one of his own party. His character was decided. He was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and every body hoped that he would never come there again. Amongst the most violent against him was Mrs. Bennet, whose dislike of his general behaviour was sharpened into particular resentment by his having slighted one of her daughters.

Elizabeth Bennet had been obliged, by the scarcity of gentlemen, to sit down for two dances; and during part of that time, Mr. Darcy had been standing near enough for her to overhear a conversation between him and Mr. Bingley, who came from the dance for a few minutes to press his friend to join it.

"Come, Darcy," said he, "I must have you dance. I hate to see you standing about by yourself in this stupid manner. You had much better dance."

"I certainly shall not. You know how I detest it, unless I am particularly acquainted with my partner. At such an assembly as this, it would be insupportable. Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman in the room whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with."

"I would not be so fastidious as you are," cried Bingley, "for a kingdom! Upon my honour, I never met with so many pleasant girls in my life as I have this evening; and there are several of them, you see, uncommonly pretty."

"_You_ are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room," said Mr. Darcy, looking at the eldest Miss Bennet.

"Oh, she is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld! But there is one of her sisters sitting down just behind you, who is very pretty, and I dare say very agreeable. Do let me ask my partner to introduce you."

"Which do you mean?" and turning round, he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own, and coldly said, "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt _me_; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men. You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles, for you are wasting your time with me."

Mr. Bingley followed his advice. Mr. Darcy walked off; and Elizabeth remained with no very cordial feelings towards him. She told the story, however, with great spirit among her friends; for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in any thing ridiculous.

The evening altogether passed off pleasantly to the whole family. Mrs. Bennet had seen her eldest daughter much admired by the Netherfield party. Mr. Bingley had danced with her twice, and she had been distinguished by his sisters. Jane was as much gratified by this as her mother could be, though in a quieter way. Elizabeth felt Jane's pleasure. Mary had heard herself mentioned to Miss Bingley as the most accomplished girl in the neighbourhood; and Catherine and Lydia had been fortunate enough to be never without partners, which was all that they had yet learnt to care for at a ball. They returned, therefore, in good spirits to Longbourn, the village where they lived, and of which they were the principal inhabitants. They found Mr. Bennet still up. With a book, he was regardless of time; and on the present occasion he had a good deal of curiosity as to the event of an evening which had raised such splendid expectations. He had rather hoped that all his wife's views on the stranger would be disappointed; but he soon found that he had a very different story to hear.

"Oh, my dear Mr. Bennet," as she entered the room, "we have had a most delightful evening, a most excellent ball. I wish you had been there. Jane was so admired, nothing could be like it. Every body said how well she looked; and Mr. Bingley thought her quite beautiful, and danced with her twice. Only think of _that_, my dear: he actually danced with her twice; and she was the only creature in the room that he asked a second time! First of all, he asked Miss Lucas. I was so vexed to see him stand up with her; but, however, he did not admire her at all: indeed, nobody can, you know; and he seemed quite struck with Jane as she was going down the dance. So he enquired who she was, and got introduced, and asked her for the two next. Then, the two third he danced with Miss King, and the two fourth with Maria Lucas, and the two fifth with Jane again, and the two sixth with Lizzy, and the _Boulanger_--"

"If he had had any compassion for _me_, " cried her husband impatiently, "he would not have danced half so much! For God's sake, say no more of his partners. O that he had sprained his ankle in the first dance!"

"Oh, my dear," continued Mrs. Bennet, "I am quite delighted with him. He is so excessively handsome! and his sisters are charming women. I never in my life saw any thing more elegant than their dresses. I dare say the lace upon Mrs. Hurst's gown--"

Here she was interrupted again. Mr. Bennet protested against any description of finery. She was therefore obliged to seek another branch of the subject, and related, with much bitterness of spirit, and some exaggeration, the shocking rudeness of Mr. Darcy.

"But I can assure you," she added, "that Lizzy does not lose much by not suiting _his_ fancy; for he is a most disagreeable, horrid man, not at all worth pleasing. So high and so conceited, that there was no enduring him! He walked here, and he walked there, fancying himself so very great! Not handsome enough to dance with! I wish you had been there, my dear, to have given him one of your set-downs. I

quite detest the man."



Commentary on Chapter 3

Peaches (The Cat): Oh wow, the neighborhood ball was an absolute rollercoaster! Mr. Bingley turned out to be the ultimate golden retriever human—just pure, unfiltered good vibes, dancing every single dance and smiling at everyone in the room.

Mary: He really made a fantastic first impression. The whole town of Meryton is already in love with him. But the real drama was his friend, Mr. Darcy.

Biscuit (The Corgi): Hey! Golden retrievers are great! They always share their toys! But wait, what about his fancy friend? The super-rich one? Did he have a cool toy to share?

Peaches: Ugh, Mr. Darcy is the worst, Biscuit. He walked into the assembly room, stood in the corner, and refused to play with anyone. He has ten thousand a year, but his face looked like someone just held a slice of lemon right under his nose. He's that one anti-social cat who sits on top of the refrigerator and judges the entire house party. He even called our girl Elizabeth "tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me." The absolute audacity!

Biscuit: *Gasps!* He didn't want to play with Elizabeth?! But she has the best energy! If someone told me I was only "tolerable," I would drop my favorite ball, curl up in my crate, and cry. How did Elizabeth react, Mary? Did she zoom away to hide?

Mary: Not at all! She actually just laughed and told the story to all her friends. She didn't let him ruin her night at all.

Peaches: Please, Elizabeth is a queen. She handles rejection the exact same way I handle missing a jump onto the kitchen counter—she just pretends she meant to land on the floor, grooms her paw for two seconds, and walks away looking incredibly cool. Meanwhile, Mrs. Bennet is absolutely furious and spent

the whole car ride home trashing Darcy to Mr. Bennet.

Biscuit: I do not like Mr. Darcy. He sounds like a scary statue. I bet if you sat next to him on the couch, he wouldn't even drop a single piece of cheese popcorn on purpose.

Peaches: He definitely wouldn't, Biscuit. He'd probably look at the popcorn, calculate its caloric value, and write a sternly worded letter to the manufacturer about proper floor sanitation. But Jane and Bingley are officially obsessed with each other, so the plot is officially moving!

Mary: It's the perfect setup for everything to come. Ready to head back to Chapter 4 now that we've got the ball covered?

Chapter 4

When Jane and Elizabeth were alone, the former, who had been cautious in her praise of Mr. Bingley before, expressed to her sister how very much she admired him.

"He is just what a young man ought to be," said she, "sensible, good-humoured, lively; and I never saw such happy manners! so much ease, with such perfect good breeding!"

"He is also handsome," replied Elizabeth; "which a young man ought likewise to be, if he possibly can. His character is thereby complete."

"I was very much flattered by his asking me to dance a second time. I did not expect such a compliment."

"Did not you? I did for you. But that is one great difference between us. Compliments always take you by surprise, and me never. What could be more natural than his asking you again? He could not help seeing that you were about five times as pretty as every other woman in the room. No thanks to his gallantry for that. Well, he certainly is very agreeable, and I give you leave to like him. You have liked many a stupider person."

"Dear Lizzy!"

"Oh, you are a great deal too apt, you know, to like people in general. You never see a fault in any body. All the world are good and agreeable in your opinion. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in my life."

"I would wish not to be hasty in censuring any one; but I always speak what I think."

"I know you do: and it is that which makes the wonder. With your good sense, to be so honestly blind to the follies and nonsense of others! Affectation of candour is common enough; one meets it every where. But to be candid without ostentation or design,--to take the good of every body's character and make it still better, and say nothing of the bad,--belongs to you alone. And so, you like this man's sisters, too, do you? Their manners are not equal to his."

"Certainly not, at first; but they are very pleasing women when you converse with them. Miss Bingley is to live with her brother, and keep his house; and I am much mistaken if we shall not find a very charming neighbour in her."

Elizabeth listened in silence, but was not convinced: their behaviour at the assembly had not been calculated to please in general; and with more quickness of observation and less pliancy of temper than her sister, and with a judgment, too, unassailed by any attention to herself, she was very little disposed to approve them. They were, in fact, very fine ladies; not deficient in good-humour when

they were pleased, nor in the power of being agreeable where they chose it; but proud and conceited. They were rather handsome; had been educated in one of the first private seminaries in town; had a fortune of twenty thousand pounds; were in the habit of spending more than they ought, and of associating with people of rank; and were, therefore, in every respect entitled to think well of themselves and meanly of others. They were of a respectable family in the north of England; a circumstance more deeply impressed on their memories than that their brother's fortune and their own had been acquired by trade.

Mr. Bingley inherited property to the amount of nearly a hundred thousand pounds from his father, who had intended to purchase an estate, but did not live to do it. Mr. Bingley intended it likewise, and sometimes made choice of his county; but, as he was now provided with a good house and the liberty of a manor, it was doubtful to many of those who best knew the easiness of his temper, whether he might not spend the remainder of his days at Netherfield, and leave the next generation to purchase.

His sisters were very anxious for his having an estate of his own; but though he was now established only as a tenant, Miss Bingley was by no means unwilling to preside at his table; nor was Mrs. Hurst, who had married a man of more fashion than fortune, less disposed to consider his house as her home when it suited her. Mr. Bingley had not been of age two years when he was tempted, by an accidental recommendation, to look at Netherfield House. He did look at it, and into it, for half an hour; was pleased with the situation and the principal rooms, satisfied with what the owner said in its praise, and took it immediately.

Between him and Darcy there was a very steady friendship, in spite of a great opposition of character. Bingley was endeared to Darcy by the easiness, openness, ductility of his temper, though no disposition could offer a greater contrast to his own, and though with his own he never appeared dissatisfied. On the strength of Darcy's regard, Bingley had the firmest reliance, and of his judgment the highest opinion. In understanding, Darcy was the superior. Bingley was by no means deficient; but Darcy was clever. He was at the same time haughty, reserved, and fastidious; and his manners, though well bred, were not inviting. In that respect his friend had greatly the advantage. Bingley was sure of being liked wherever he appeared; Darcy was continually giving offence.

The manner in which they spoke of the Meryton assembly was sufficiently characteristic. Bingley had never met with pleasanter people or prettier girls in his life; every body had been most kind and attentive to him; there had been no formality, no stiffness; he had soon felt acquainted with all the room; and as to Miss Bennet, he could not conceive an angel more beautiful. Darcy, on the contrary, had seen a collection of people in whom there was little beauty and no fashion, for none of whom he had felt the smallest interest, and from none received the smallest attention or pleasure. Miss Bennet he acknowledged to be pretty; but she smiled too much.

Mrs. Hurst and her sister allowed it to be so; but still they admired her and liked her, and pronounced her to be a sweet girl, and one whom they should not object to know more of. Miss Bennet was therefore established as a sweet girl; and their brother felt authorized by such commendation to think of her as he chose.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)



Commentary on Chapter 4

Peaches (The Cat): Okay, I actually really like the vibe of Chapter 4. Jane and Elizabeth are finally alone in their bedroom gossiping, which is the ultimate form of human bonding. Jane is basically a giant soft marshmallow. She genuinely thinks everyone in the world is an angel, including Bingley's sisters.

Mary: It's true, Jane always looks for the absolute best in people. Elizabeth is the cynical, realistic one who can actually see that the Bingley sisters are incredibly stuck-up and fake.

Biscuit (The Corgi): I agree with Jane! Everyone **is** an angel! Especially the guy who dropped the turkey on the rug! But wait, Mary, the sisters are mean? Like the neighbor's fancy poodle who won't look at me through the fence?

Peaches: Worse, Biscuit. The Bingley sisters are the human equivalent of a high-society cat who only eats premium wet food out of a crystal bowl and hisses if you step on her shadow. They are only nice to Jane because she's pretty and sweet, but they totally look down on the rest of the Bennet family. Elizabeth sees right through their little designer-handbag smiles.

Mary: Elizabeth knows they have money, but they lack actual class. They were educated at a fine school, but their fortune came from trade, so they are overcompensating by being snobs.

Biscuit: Ooh, trade! Does that mean they traded a ball for a stick? Because that is a very good deal. I would trade my favorite tennis ball for a really crunchy piece of cardboard right now.

Peaches: Not that kind of trade, Biscuit. It means their family actually had to **work** for their money instead of just inheriting an ancient castle. But my favorite insight from Elizabeth in this chapter is about Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy's friendship. She basically points out that Bingley is a total pushover who lets Darcy make all his decisions because Darcy has a stronger personality.

Biscuit: Wait, so Mr. Bingley is a good boy who listens to his big, grumpy brother? That's like when I let you eat out of my bowl because you give me that scary, unblinking cat stare, Peaches!

Peaches: Exactly, Biscuit. Darcy is the apex predator of that friendship. He dictates the vibe, and Bingley just smiles and tags along. It's a classic dynamic. I highly respect Darcy's ability to control a room just by being completely miserable.

Mary: It sets up a great contrast for the rest of the book. Ready to see how the neighborhood starts reacting to them in Chapter 5?

Chapter 5

Within a short walk of Longbourn lived a family with whom the Bennets were particularly intimate. Sir William Lucas had been formerly in trade in Meryton, where he had made a tolerable fortune, and risen to the honour of knighthood by an address to the King during his mayoralty. The distinction had, perhaps, been felt too strongly. It had given him a disgust to his business and to his residence in a small market town; and quitting them both, he had removed with his family to a house about a mile from Meryton, denominated from that period Lucas Lodge, where he could think with pleasure of his own importance, and, unshackled by business, occupy himself solely in being civil to all the world. For, though elated by his rank, it did not render him supercilious; on the contrary, he was all attention to every body. By nature inoffensive, friendly, and obliging, his presentation at St. James's had made him courteous.

Lady Lucas was a very good kind of woman, not too clever to be a valuable neighbour to Mrs. Bennet. They had several children. The eldest of them, a sensible, intelligent young woman, about twenty-seven, was Elizabeth's intimate friend.

That the Miss Lucases and the Miss Bennets should meet to talk over a ball was absolutely necessary; and the morning after the assembly brought the former to Longbourn to hear and to communicate.

"_You_ began the evening well, Charlotte," said Mrs. Bennet, with civil self-command, to Miss Lucas. "_You_ were Mr. Bingley's first choice."

"Yes; but he seemed to like his second better."

"Oh, you mean Jane, I suppose, because he danced with her twice. To be sure, that _did_ seem as if he admired her--indeed, I rather believe he _did_--I heard something about it--but I hardly know what--something about Mr. Robinson."

"Perhaps you mean what I overheard between him and Mr. Robinson: did not I mention it to you? Mr. Robinson's asking him how he liked our Meryton assemblies, and whether he did not think there were a great many pretty women in the room, and _which_ he thought the prettiest? and his answering immediately to the last question, 'Oh, the eldest Miss Bennet, beyond a doubt: there cannot be two opinions on that point.'"

"Upon my word! Well, that was very decided, indeed--that does seem as if--but, however, it may all come to nothing, you know."

"_My_ overhearings were more to the purpose than _yours_, Eliza," said Charlotte. "Mr. Darcy is not so well worth listening to as his friend, is he? Poor Eliza! to be only just _tolerable_."

"I beg you will not put it into Lizzy's head to be vexed by his ill-treatment; for he is such a disagreeable man that it would be quite a misfortune to be liked by him. Mrs. Long told me last night that he sat close to her for half an hour without once opening his lips."

"Are you quite sure, ma'am? Is not there a little mistake?" said Jane. "I certainly saw Mr. Darcy speaking to her."

"Ay, because she asked him at last how he liked Netherfield, and he could not help answering her; but she said he seemed very angry at being spoke to."

"Miss Bingley told me," said Jane, "that he never speaks much unless among his intimate acquaintance. With them he is remarkably agreeable."

"I do not believe a word of it, my dear. If he had been so very agreeable, he would have talked to Mrs. Long. But I can guess how it was; every body says that he is eat up with pride, and I dare say he had heard somehow that Mrs. Long does not keep a carriage, and had come to the ball in a hack chaise."

"I do not mind his not talking to Mrs. Long," said Miss Lucas, "but I wish he had danced with Eliza."

"Another time, Lizzy," said her mother, "I would not dance with him, if I were you."

"I believe, ma'am, I may safely promise you never to dance with him."

"His pride," said Miss Lucas, "does not offend me so much as pride often does, because there is an excuse for it. One cannot wonder that so very fine a young man, with family, fortune, every thing in his favour, should think highly of himself. If I may so express it, he has a right to be proud."

"That is very true," replied Elizabeth, "and I could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified mine."

"Pride," observed Mary, who piqued herself upon the solidity of her reflections, "is a very common failing, I believe. By all that I have ever read, I am convinced that it is very common indeed; that human nature is particularly prone to it, and that there are very few of us who do not cherish a feeling of self-complacency on the score of some quality or other, real or imaginary. Vanity and pride are different things, though the words are often used synonymously. A person may be proud without being vain. Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves; vanity to what we would have others think of us."

"If I were as rich as Mr. Darcy," cried a young Lucas, who came with his sisters, "I should not care how proud I was. I would keep a pack of foxhounds, and drink a bottle of wine every day."

"Then you would drink a great deal more than you ought," said Mrs. Bennet; "and if I were to see you at it, I should take away your bottle directly."

The boy protested that she should not; she continued to declare that she would; and the argument ended only with the visit.



Commentary on Chapter 5

Peaches (The Cat): Okay, I really like Chapter 5 because we get introduced to the neighborhood gossip squad at the Lucas estate. Charlotte Lucas is officially my favorite human so far. She actually talks sense. She pointed out that since Darcy is incredibly rich and comes from a fancy family, he has a right to be a little bit proud. It's a very pragmatic cat perspective.

Mary: It's true. Charlotte views marriage and high society like a business transaction. But Elizabeth completely disagrees. She says she could easily forgive his pride if he hadn't mortified *her* pride at the ball.

Biscuit (The Corgi): What does mortified mean, Mary? Is that when you accidentally step on your own ear when you're trying to sprint after a squirrel? Because that is very embarrassing.

Mary: No, Biscuit! It means he hurt her feelings and made her feel self-conscious in front of everyone by saying she wasn't pretty enough to dance with.

Biscuit: *Glares at the book* Wow. Mr. Darcy is officially banned from my side of the couch. If anyone said that to Mary, I would bark at them until my voice went completely squeaky. You are very pretty, Mary! And you always smell like vanilla and shampoo!

Peaches: Relax, Biscuit, Elizabeth doesn't need a tiny bodyguard. She's already plotting her revenge by being witty. But the real highlight of this chapter is Mary Bennet—not you, our Mary, but the book Mary. She tries to make this super deep, philosophical speech about human nature and the difference between pride and vanity. She sounded exactly like a Wikipedia article that was read out loud at a party where everyone just wanted to eat chips.

Mary: Hey! Leave book Mary alone, she's just trying to be the intellectual of the family. She basically says pride is what we think of ourselves, while vanity is what we want *other* people to think of us.

Peaches: Yeah, well, nobody was listening to her. The neighborhood kids, Lydia and Kitty, completely ignored her and started talking about the militia soldiers arriving in town instead. It's the 19th-century equivalent of someone trying to explain a complex podcast topic while the rest of the room is trying to watch funny cat videos on their phones.

Biscuit: Soldiers?! Does that mean they have marching music? And shiny buttons? Mary, can we go outside and see the soldiers? I bet they have excellent snacks in their pockets!

Mary: We will see plenty of the militia soon enough, Biscuit. Let's see how things develop in Chapter 6!

Chapter 6

The ladies of Longbourn soon waited on those of Netherfield. The visit was returned in due form. Miss Bennet's pleasing manners grew on the good-will of Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley; and though the mother was found to be intolerable, and the younger sisters not worth speaking to, a wish of being better acquainted with them was expressed towards the two eldest. By Jane this attention was received with the greatest pleasure; but Elizabeth still saw superciliousness in their treatment of every body, hardly excepting even her sister, and could not like them; though their kindness to Jane, such as it was, had a value, as arising, in all probability, from the influence of their brother's admiration. It was generally evident, whenever they met, that he did admire her; and to her it was equally evident that Jane was yielding to the preference which she had begun to entertain for him from the first, and was in a way to be very much in love; but she considered with pleasure that it was not likely to be discovered by the world in general, since Jane united with great strength of feeling a composure of temper and an uniform cheerfulness of manner, which would guard her from the suspicions of the impertinent. She mentioned this to her friend, Miss Lucas.

"It may, perhaps, be pleasant," replied Charlotte, "to be able to impose on the public in such a case; but it is sometimes a disadvantage to be so very guarded. If a woman conceals her affection with the same skill from the object of it, she may lose the opportunity of fixing him; and it will then be but poor consolidation to believe the world equally in the dark. There is so much of gratitude or vanity in almost every attachment, that it is not safe to leave any to itself. We can all begin freely--a slight preference is natural enough; but there are very few of us who have heart enough to be really in love without encouragement. In nine cases out of ten, a woman had better show more affection than she feels. Bingley likes your sister undoubtedly; but he may never do more than like her, if she does not help him on."

"But she does help him on, as much as her nature will allow. If I can perceive her regard for him, he must be a simpleton, indeed, not to discover it too."

"Remember, Eliza, that he does not know Jane's disposition as you do."

"But if a woman is partial to a man, and does not endeavour to conceal it, he must find it out."

"Perhaps he must, if he sees enough of her. But, though Bingley and Jane meet tolerably often, it is never for many hours together; and as they always see each other in large mixed parties, it is impossible that every moment should be employed in conversing together. Jane should therefore make the most of every half hour in which she can command his attention. When she is secure of him, there will be leisure for falling in love as much as she chuses."

"Your plan is a good one," replied Elizabeth, "where nothing is in question but the desire of being well married; and if I were determined to get a rich husband, or any husband, I dare say I should adopt it. But these are not Jane's feelings; she is not acting by design. As yet she cannot even be certain of the degree of her own regard, nor of its reasonableness. She has known him only a fortnight. She danced four dances with him at Meryton; she saw him one morning at his own house, and has since dined in company with him four times. This is not quite enough to make her understand his character."

"Not as you represent it. Had she merely dined with him, she might only have discovered whether he had a good appetite; but you must remember that four evenings have been also spent together--and four evenings may do a great deal."

"Yes: these four evenings have enabled them to ascertain that they both like Vingt-un better than Commerce, but with respect to any other leading characteristic, I do not imagine that much has been unfolded."

"Well," said Charlotte, "I wish Jane success with all my heart; and if she were married to him to-morrow, I should think she had as good a chance of happiness as if she were to be studying his character for a twelvemonth. Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance. If the dispositions of the parties are ever so well known to each other, or ever so similar beforehand, it does not advance their felicity in the least. They always continue to grow sufficiently unlike afterwards to have their share of vexation; and it is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life."

"You make me laugh, Charlotte; but it is not sound. You know it is not sound, and that you would never act in this way yourself."

Occupied in observing Mr. Bingley's attentions to her sister, Elizabeth was far from suspecting that she was herself becoming an object of some interest in the eyes of his friend. Mr. Darcy had at first scarcely allowed her to be pretty: he had looked at her without admiration at the ball; and when they next met, he looked at her only to criticise. But no sooner had he made it clear to himself and his friends that she had hardly a good feature in her face, than he began to find it was rendered uncommonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes. To this discovery succeeded some others equally mortifying. Though he had detected with a critical eye more than one failure of perfect symmetry in her form, he was forced to acknowledge her figure to be light and pleasing; and in spite of his asserting that her manners were not those of the fashionable world, he was caught by their easy playfulness. Of this she was perfectly unaware: to her he was only the man who made himself agreeable nowhere, and who had not thought her handsome enough to dance with.

He began to wish to know more of her; and, as a step towards conversing with her himself, attended to her conversation with others. His doing so drew her notice. It was at Sir William Lucas's, where a large party were assembled.

"What does Mr. Darcy mean," said she to Charlotte, "by listening to my conversation with Colonel Forster?"

"That is a question which Mr. Darcy only can answer."

"But if he does it any more, I shall certainly let him know that I see what he is about. He has a very satirical eye, and if I do not begin by being impertinent myself, I shall soon grow afraid of him."

On his approaching them soon afterwards, though without seeming to have any intention of speaking, Miss Lucas defied her friend to mention such a subject to him, which immediately provoking Elizabeth to do it, she turned to him and said,

"Did not you think, Mr. Darcy, that I expressed myself uncommonly well just now, when I was teasing Colonel Forster to give us a ball at Meryton?"

"With great energy; but it is a subject which always makes a lady energetic."

"You are severe on us."

"It will be her turn soon to be teased," said Miss Lucas. "I am going to open the instrument, Eliza, and you know what follows."

"You are a very strange creature by way of a friend!--always wanting me to play and sing before any body and every body! If my vanity had taken a musical turn, you would have been invaluable; but as it is, I would really rather not sit down before those who must be in the habit of hearing the very best performers." On Miss Lucas's persevering, however, she added, "Very well; if it must be so, it must." And gravely glancing at Mr. Darcy, "There is a very fine old saying, which every body here is of course familiar with--'Keep your breath to cool your porridge,'--and I shall keep mine to swell my song."

Her performance was pleasing, though by no means capital. After a song or two, and before she could reply to the entreaties of several that she would sing again, she was eagerly succeeded at the instrument by her sister Mary, who having, in consequence of being the only plain one in the family, worked hard for knowledge and accomplishments, was always impatient for display.

Mary had neither genius nor taste; and though vanity had given her application, it had given her likewise a pedantic air and conceited manner, which would have injured a higher degree of excellence than she had reached. Elizabeth, easy and unaffected, had been listened to with much more pleasure, though not playing half so well; and Mary, at the end of a long concerto, was glad to purchase praise and gratitude by Scotch and Irish airs, at the request of her younger sisters, who with some of the Lucases, and two or three officers, joined eagerly in dancing at one end of the room.

Mr. Darcy stood near them in silent indignation at such a mode of passing the evening, to the exclusion of all conversation, and was too much engrossed by his own thoughts to perceive that Sir William Lucas was his neighbour, till Sir William thus began:

"What a charming amusement for young people this is, Mr. Darcy! There is nothing like dancing, after all. I consider it as one of the first refinements of polished societies."

"Certainly, sir; and it has the advantage also of being in vogue amongst the less polished societies of the world: every savage can dance."

Sir William only smiled. "Your friend performs delightfully," he continued, after a pause, on seeing Bingley join the group; "and I doubt not that you are an adept in the science yourself, Mr. Darcy."

"You saw me dance at Meryton, I believe, sir."

"Yes, indeed, and received no inconsiderable pleasure from the sight. Do you often dance at St. James's?"

"Never, sir."

"Do you not think it would be a proper compliment to the place?"

"It is a compliment which I never pay to any place if I can avoid it."

"You have a house in town, I conclude?"

Mr. Darcy bowed.

"I had once some thoughts of fixing in town myself, for I am fond of superior society; but I did not feel quite certain that the air of London would agree with Lady Lucas."

He paused in hopes of an answer: but his companion was not disposed to make any; and Elizabeth at that instant moving towards them, he was struck with the notion of doing a very gallant thing, and called out to her,

"My dear Miss Eliza, why are you not dancing? Mr. Darcy, you must allow me to present this young lady to you as a very desirable partner. You cannot refuse to dance, I am sure, when so much beauty is before you." And, taking her hand, he would have given it to Mr. Darcy, who, though extremely surprised, was not unwilling to receive it, when she instantly drew back, and said with some discomposure to Sir William,

"Indeed, sir, I have not the least intention of dancing. I entreat you not to suppose that I moved this way in order to beg for a partner."

Mr. Darcy, with grave propriety, requested to be allowed the honour of her hand, but in vain. Elizabeth was determined; nor did Sir William at all shake her purpose by his attempt at persuasion.

"You excel so much in the dance, Miss Eliza, that it is cruel to deny me the happiness of seeing you; and though this gentleman dislikes the amusement in general, he can have no objection, I am sure, to oblige us for one half hour."

"Mr. Darcy is all politeness," said Elizabeth, smiling.

"He is, indeed; but considering the inducement, my dear Miss Eliza, we cannot wonder at his complaisance; for who would object to such a partner?"

Elizabeth looked archly, and turned away. Her resistance had not injured her with the gentleman, and he was thinking of her with some complacency, when thus accosted by Miss Bingley:

"I can guess the subject of your reverie."

"I should imagine not."

"You are considering how insupportable it would be to pass many evenings in this manner,--in such society; and, indeed, I am quite of your opinion. I was never more annoyed! The insipidity, and yet the noise--the nothingness, and yet the self-importance, of all these people! What would I give to hear your strictures on them!"

"Your conjecture is totally wrong, I assure you. My mind was more agreeably engaged. I have been meditating on the very great pleasure which a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow."

Miss Bingley immediately fixed her eyes on his face, and desired he would tell her what lady had the credit of inspiring such reflections. Mr. Darcy replied, with great intrepidity,

"Miss Elizabeth Bennet."

"Miss Elizabeth Bennet!" repeated Miss Bingley. "I am all astonishment. How long has she been such a favourite? and pray when am I to wish you joy?"

"That is exactly the question which I expected you to ask. A lady's imagination is very rapid: it jumps from admiration to love, from love to matrimony, in a moment. I knew you would be wishing me joy."

"Nay, if you are so serious about it, I shall consider the matter as absolutely settled. You will have a charming mother-in-law, indeed, and of course she will be always at Pemberley with you."

He listened to her with perfect indifference, while she chose to entertain herself in this manner; and as his composure convinced her that all was safe, her wit flowed along.



Commentary on Chapter 6

Peaches (The Cat): Okay, Chapter 6 is where the psychological thriller aspects of this book really start kicking in. Mr. Darcy spent the whole chapter staring at Elizabeth like a cat stalking a reflection on the ceiling. He went from "she's not pretty enough to dance with" to "oh wait, her dark eyes are actually kind of mesmerizing." The hypocrisy is delicious.

Mary: It's the classic romance trope—he tried to be aloof, but he's secretly completely intrigued by her quick wit. Meanwhile, Elizabeth is totally oblivious and assumes he's just lurking around to judge her.

Biscuit (The Corgi): Wait, Mary, why is he staring? Is he doing the scary, unblinking eye thing that Rusty does right before he pounces on my tail? Because if someone looked at me like that for a whole party, I would hide under the couch cushions immediately.

Peaches: It's exactly like that, Biscuit. Pure tactical observation. But the real voice of wisdom in this chapter is Charlotte Lucas again. She gives Elizabeth some solid relationship advice about Jane and Bingley. She basically says Jane needs to stop being so shy and actually show Bingley how much she likes him, otherwise he might lose interest. Charlotte says you should secure a guy first, and then you can take all the time you want to fall in love later.

Mary: Charlotte is definitely a realist. She knows that in their world, financial security has to come before romance. Elizabeth thinks that's way too clinical, though. She believes Jane should just let things happen naturally.

Biscuit: I agree with Charlotte! If you like someone, you have to show them immediately! Like how when the delivery guy comes, I lean my whole body against his legs so he knows we are best friends! If Jane doesn't lean on Mr. Bingley, how will he know she wants to share his treats?

Peaches: Because humans have complicated rules, Biscuit. They can't just sniff each other's ears and call it a day. But the absolute highlight of the chapter is at the end of the party. Sir William Lucas tries to force Elizabeth and Darcy to dance together, and Elizabeth straight up tells him no. She looked Darcy right in the eyes and basically said, "I'd rather walk on hot coals."

Mary: And the funny thing is, her turning him down just made Darcy want her even more. When Miss Bingley walked over to tease Darcy about how miserable the party was, he shocked her by saying he was actually having a great time thinking about Elizabeth's "fine eyes."

Biscuit: Ooh! Fine eyes! That's a very nice compliment. Mary, do I have fine eyes? Or are they just regular eyes that look at cheese?

Mary: You have the finest eyes in the world, Biscuit. Let's see what happens next in Chapter 7!

Chapter 7

Mr. Bennet's property consisted almost entirely in an estate of two thousand a year, which, unfortunately for his daughters, was entailed, in default of heirs male, on a distant relation; and their mother's fortune, though ample for her situation in life, could but ill supply the deficiency of his. Her father had been an attorney in Meryton, and had left her four thousand pounds.

She had a sister married to a Mr. Philips, who had been a clerk to their father and succeeded him in the business, and a brother settled in London in a respectable line of trade.

The village of Longbourn was only one mile from Meryton; a most convenient distance for the young ladies, who were usually tempted thither three or four times a week, to pay their duty to their aunt, and to a milliner's shop just over the way. The two youngest of the family, Catherine and Lydia, were particularly frequent in these attentions: their minds were more vacant than their sisters', and when nothing better offered, a walk to Meryton was necessary to amuse their morning hours and furnish conversation for the evening; and, however bare of news the country in general might be, they always contrived to learn some from their aunt. At present, indeed, they were well supplied both with news and happiness by the recent arrival of a militia regiment in the neighbourhood; it was to remain the whole winter, and Meryton was the head-quarters.

Their visits to Mrs. Philips were now productive of the most interesting intelligence. Every day added something to their knowledge of the officers' names and connections. Their lodgings were not long a secret, and at length they began to know the officers themselves. Mr. Philips visited them all, and this opened to his nieces a source of felicity unknown before. They could talk of nothing but officers; and Mr. Bingley's large fortune, the mention of which gave animation to their mother, was worthless in their eyes when opposed to the regimentals of an ensign.

After listening one morning to their effusions on this subject, Mr. Bennet coolly observed,

"From all that I can collect by your manner of talking, you must be two of the silliest girls in the country. I have suspected it some time, but I am now convinced."

Catherine was disconcerted, and made no answer; but Lydia, with perfect indifference, continued to express her admiration of Captain Carter, and her hope of seeing him in the course of the day, as he was going the next morning to London.

"I am astonished, my dear," said Mrs. Bennet, "that you should be so ready to think your own children silly. If I wished to think slightly of any body's children, it should not be of my own, however."

"If my children are silly, I must hope to be always sensible of it."

"Yes; but as it happens, they are all of them very clever."

"This is the only point, I flatter myself, on which we do not agree. I had hoped that our sentiments coincided in every particular, but I must so far differ from you as to think our two youngest daughters uncommonly foolish."

"My dear Mr. Bennet, you must not expect such girls to have the sense of their father and mother. When they get to our age, I dare say they will not think about officers any more than we do. I remember the time when I liked a red coat myself very well--and, indeed, so I do still at my heart; and if a smart young colonel, with five or six thousand a year, should want one of my girls, I shall not say nay to him; and I thought Colonel Forster looked very becoming the other night at Sir William's in his regimentals."

"Mama," cried Lydia, "my aunt says that Colonel Forster and Captain Carter do not go so often to Miss Watson's as they did when they first came; she sees them now very often standing in Clarke's library."

Mrs. Bennet was prevented from replying by the entrance of the footman with a note for Miss Bennet; it came from Netherfield, and the servant waited for an answer. Mrs. Bennet's eyes sparkled with pleasure, and she was eagerly calling out, while her daughter read,

"Well, Jane, who is it from? What is it about? What does he say? Well, Jane, make haste and tell us; make haste, my love."

"It is from Miss Bingley," said Jane, and then read it aloud.

"MY DEAR FRIEND, "If you are not so compassionate as to dine to-day with Louisa and me, we shall be in danger of hating each other for the rest of our lives; for a whole day's *tête-à-tête* between two women can never end without a quarrel. Come as soon as you can on the receipt of this. My brother and the gentlemen are to dine with the officers. Yours ever, "CAROLINE BINGLEY."

"With the officers!" cried Lydia: "I wonder my aunt did not tell us of *that*."

"Dining out," said Mrs. Bennet; "that is very unlucky."

"Can I have the carriage?" said Jane.

"No, my dear, you had better go on horseback, because it seems likely to rain; and then you must stay all night."

"That would be a good scheme," said Elizabeth, "if you were sure that they would not offer to send her home."

"Oh, but the gentlemen will have Mr. Bingley's chaise to go to Meryton; and the Hursts have no horses to theirs."

"I had much rather go in the coach."

"But, my dear, your father cannot spare the horses, I am sure. They are wanted in the farm, Mr. Bennet, are not they?"

"They are wanted in the farm much oftener than I can get them."

"But if you have got them to-day," said Elizabeth, "my mother's purpose will be answered."

She did at last extort from her father an acknowledgment that the horses were engaged; Jane was therefore obliged to go on horseback, and her mother attended her to the door with many cheerful prognostics of a bad day. Her hopes were answered; Jane had not been gone long before it rained hard. Her sisters were uneasy for her, but her mother was delighted. The rain continued the whole evening without intermission; Jane certainly could not come back.

"This was a lucky idea of mine, indeed!" said Mrs. Bennet, more than once, as if the credit of making it rain were all her own. Till the next morning, however, she was not aware of all the felicity of her contrivance. Breakfast was scarcely over, when a servant from Netherfield brought the following note for Elizabeth:

"MY DEAREST LIZZIE, "I find myself very unwell this morning, which, I suppose, is to be imputed to my getting wet through yesterday. My kind friends will not hear of my returning home till I am better. They insist also on my seeing Mr. Jones--therefore do not be alarmed if you should hear of his having been to me--and, excepting a sore throat and a headache, there is not much the matter with me. Yours, &c.;"

"Well, my dear," said Mr. Bennet, when Elizabeth had read the note aloud, "if your daughter should have a dangerous fit of illness--if she should die--it would be a comfort to know that it was all in pursuit of Mr. Bingley, and under your orders."

"Oh, I am not at all afraid of her dying. People do not die of little trifling colds. She will be taken good care of. As long as she stays there, it is all very well. I would go and see her if I could have the carriage."

Elizabeth, feeling really anxious, was determined to go to her, though the carriage was not to be had: and as she was no horsewoman, walking was her only alternative. She declared her resolution.

"How can you be so silly," cried her mother, "as to think of such a thing, in all this dirt! You will not be fit to be seen when you get there."

"I shall be very fit to see Jane--which is all I want."

"Is this a hint to me, Lizzy," said her father, "to send for the horses?"

"No, indeed. I do not wish to avoid the walk. The distance is nothing, when one has a motive; only three miles. I shall be back by dinner."

"I admire the activity of your benevolence," observed Mary, "but every impulse of feeling should be guided by reason; and, in my opinion, exertion should always be in proportion to what is required."

"We will go as far as Meryton with you," said Catherine and Lydia. Elizabeth accepted their company, and the three young ladies set off together.

"If we make haste," said Lydia, as they walked along, "perhaps we may see something of Captain Carter, before he goes."

In Meryton they parted: the two youngest repaired to the lodgings of one of the officers' wives, and Elizabeth continued her walk alone, crossing field after field at a quick pace, jumping over stiles and springing over puddles, with impatient activity, and finding herself at last within view of the house, with weary ancles, dirty stockings, and a face glowing with the warmth of exercise.

She was shown into the breakfast parlour, where all but Jane were assembled, and where her appearance created a great deal of surprise. That she should have walked three miles so early in the day, in such dirty weather, and by herself, was almost incredible to Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley; and Elizabeth was convinced that they held her in contempt for it. She was received, however, very politely by them; and in their brother's manners there was something better than politeness: there was good-humour and kindness. Mr. Darcy said very little, and Mr. Hurst nothing at all. The former was divided between admiration of the brilliancy which exercise had given to her complexion, and doubt as to the occasion's justifying her coming so far alone. The latter was thinking only of his breakfast.

Her inquiries after her sister were not very favourably answered. Miss Bennet had slept ill, and though up, was very feverish, and not well enough to leave her room. Elizabeth was glad to be taken to her immediately; and Jane, who had only been withheld by the fear of giving alarm or inconvenience, from expressing in her note how much she longed for such a visit, was delighted at her entrance. She was not equal, however, to much conversation; and when Miss Bingley left them together, could attempt little beside expressions of gratitude for the extraordinary kindness she was treated with. Elizabeth silently attended her.

When breakfast was over, they were joined by the sisters; and Elizabeth began to like them herself, when she saw how much affection and solicitude they showed for Jane. The apothecary came; and having examined his patient, said, as might be supposed, that she had caught a violent cold, and that they must endeavour to get the better of it; advised her to return to bed, and promised her some draughts. The advice was followed readily, for the feverish symptoms increased, and her head ached acutely. Elizabeth did not quit her room for a moment, nor were the other ladies often absent; the gentlemen being out, they had in fact nothing to do elsewhere.

When the clock struck three, Elizabeth felt that she must go, and very unwillingly said so. Miss Bingley offered her the carriage, and she only wanted a little pressing to accept it, when Jane testified such concern at parting with her that Miss Bingley was obliged to convert the offer of the chaise into an invitation to remain at Netherfield for the present. Elizabeth most thankfully consented, and a

servant was despatched to Longbourn, to acquaint the family with her stay, and bring back a supply of clothes.



Commentary on Chapter 7

Peaches (The Cat): Okay, Chapter 7 is pure chaos. Mrs. Bennet has officially weaponized the British weather. She forced Jane to ride a horseback to Netherfield in a literal downpour just so she'd get sick and be forced to sleep over at Mr. Bingley's house. That is diabolical. I respect the hustle, but as a cat, the concept of being forced into the rain for a guy is a federal crime.

Mary: It really is wild. Mrs. Bennet was actually thrilled when the letter arrived saying Jane had a massive cold and couldn't leave. Meanwhile, Elizabeth is so worried that she decides to walk three miles through the mud alone just to check on her sister.

Biscuit (The Corgi): Three miles of mud?! Mary, that sounds like the greatest walk in human history! Think of the smells! Think of the squishy paws! Elizabeth is a hero! Did she get to shake the mud all over the rich guy's fancy carpets? Tell me she shook the mud!

Peaches: Oh, she did better than that, Biscuit. She walked straight into the Netherfield breakfast room looking like a swamp monster, with her petticoats six inches deep in mud and her face glowing from the exercise. The Bingley sisters looked like they were going to faint from the pure horror of a girl walking outside without a carriage. They are so fragile.

Mary: Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst definitely judged her for it, but Mr. Darcy was secretly super impressed by how bright her eyes looked after the walk.

Biscuit: Yay! Mud eyes! But Mary, is Jane going to be okay? When my nose gets cold, you wrap me in the fuzzy blanket and give me a spoonful of pumpkin puree. Is Mr. Bingley giving her pumpkin?

Mary: Jane is tucked away safely in a nice room upstairs, and Bingley is making sure she has the best doctors. Elizabeth stays behind to nurse her, which means she is now officially trapped in the same house

as Mr. Darcy and the snobby sisters.

Peaches: The tension is going to be magnificent. A house full of wealthy snobs, an angry Elizabeth, a lurking Darcy, and Jane coughing upstairs. It's like being locked in a house with three other alpha cats and only one sunny spot on the rug.

Mary: It really is the ultimate pressure cooker dynamic. Ready to see the drama unfold in Chapter 8?

Chapter 8

At five o'clock the two ladies retired to dress, and at half-past six Elizabeth was summoned to dinner. To the civil inquiries which then poured in, and amongst which she had the pleasure of distinguishing the much superior solicitude of Mr. Bingley, she could not make a very favourable answer. Jane was by no means better. The sisters, on hearing this, repeated three or four times how much they were grieved, how shocking it was to have a bad cold, and how excessively they disliked being ill themselves; and then thought no more of the matter: and their indifference towards Jane, when not immediately before them, restored Elizabeth to the enjoyment of all her original dislike.

Their brother, indeed, was the only one of the party whom she could regard with any complacency. His anxiety for Jane was evident, and his attentions to herself most pleasing; and they prevented her feeling herself so much an intruder as she believed she was considered by the others. She had very little notice from any but him. Miss Bingley was engrossed by Mr. Darcy, her sister scarcely less so; and as for Mr. Hurst, by whom Elizabeth sat, he was an indolent man, who lived only to eat, drink, and play at cards, who, when he found her prefer a plain dish to a ragout, had nothing to say to her.

When dinner was over, she returned directly to Jane, and Miss Bingley began abusing her as soon as she was out of the room. Her manners were pronounced to be very bad indeed,--a mixture of pride and impertinence: she had no conversation, no style, no taste, no beauty. Mrs. Hurst thought the same, and added,

"She has nothing, in short, to recommend her, but being an excellent walker. I shall never forget her appearance this morning. She really looked almost wild."

"She did, indeed, Louisa. I could hardly keep my countenance. Very nonsensical to come at all! Why must she be scampering about the country, because her sister had a cold? Her hair so untidy, so blowzy!"

"Yes, and her petticoat; I hope you saw her petticoat, six inches deep in mud, I am absolutely certain, and the gown which had been let down, to hide it, not doing its office."

"Your picture may be very exact, Louisa," said Bingley; "but this was all lost upon me. I thought Miss Elizabeth Bennet looked remarkably well when she came into the room this morning. Her dirty petticoat quite escaped my notice."

"You observed it, Mr. Darcy, I am sure," said Miss Bingley; "and I am inclined to think that you would not wish to see your sister make such an exhibition."

"Certainly not."

"To walk three miles, or four miles, or five miles, or whatever it is, above her ankles in dirt, and alone, quite alone! What could she mean by it? It seems to me to show an abominable sort of conceited independence, a most country-town indifference to decorum."

"It shows an affection for her sister that is very pleasing," said Bingley.

"I am afraid, Mr. Darcy," observed Miss Bingley, in a half whisper, "that this adventure has rather affected your admiration of her fine eyes."

"Not at all," he replied: "they were brightened by the exercise."

A short pause followed this speech, and Mrs. Hurst began again.

"I have an excessive regard for Jane Bennet,--she is really a very sweet girl,--and I wish with all my heart she were well settled. But with such a father and mother, and such low connections, I am afraid there is no chance of it."

"I think I have heard you say that their uncle is an attorney in Meryton?"

"Yes; and they have another, who lives somewhere near Cheapside."

"That is capital," added her sister; and they both laughed heartily.

"If they had uncles enough to fill all Cheapside," cried Bingley, "it would not make them one jot less agreeable."

"But it must very materially lessen their chance of marrying men of any consideration in the world," replied Darcy.

To this speech Bingley made no answer; but his sisters gave it their hearty assent, and indulged their mirth for some time at the expense of their dear friend's vulgar relations.

With a renewal of tenderness, however, they repaired to her room on leaving the dining-parlour, and sat with her till summoned to coffee. She was still very poorly, and Elizabeth would not quit her at all, till late in the evening, when she had the comfort of seeing her asleep, and when it appeared to her rather right than pleasant that she should go down stairs herself. On entering the drawing-room, she found the whole party at loo, and was immediately invited to join them; but suspecting them to be playing high, she declined it, and making her sister the excuse, said she would amuse herself, for the short time she could stay below, with a book. Mr. Hurst looked at her with astonishment.

"Do you prefer reading to cards?" said he; "that is rather singular."

"Miss Eliza Bennet," said Miss Bingley, "despises cards. She is a great reader, and has no pleasure in anything else."

"I deserve neither such praise nor such censure," cried Elizabeth: "I am not a great reader, and I have pleasure in many things."

"In nursing your sister I am sure you have pleasure," said Bingley; "and I hope it will soon be increased by seeing her quite well."

Elizabeth thanked him from her heart, and then walked towards a table where a few books were lying. He immediately offered to fetch her others; all that his library afforded.

"And I wish my collection were larger for your benefit and my own credit; but I am an idle fellow; and though I have not many, I have more than I ever look into."

Elizabeth assured him that she could suit herself perfectly with those in the room.

"I am astonished," said Miss Bingley, "that my father should have left so small a collection of books. What a delightful library you have at Pemberley, Mr. Darcy!"

"It ought to be good," he replied: "it has been the work of many generations."

"And then you have added so much to it yourself--you are always buying books."

"I cannot comprehend the neglect of a family library in such days as these."

"Neglect! I am sure you neglect nothing that can add to the beauties of that noble place. Charles, when you build your house, I wish it may be half as delightful as Pemberley."

"I wish it may."

"But I would really advise you to make your purchase in that neighbourhood, and take Pemberley for a kind of model. There is not a finer county in England than Derbyshire."

"With all my heart: I will buy Pemberley itself, if Darcy will sell it."

"I am talking of possibilities, Charles."

"Upon my word, Caroline, I should think it more possible to get Pemberley by purchase than by imitation."

Elizabeth was so much caught by what passed, as to leave her very little attention for her book; and, soon laying it wholly aside, she drew near the card-table, and stationed herself between Mr. Bingley and his eldest sister, to observe the game.

"Is Miss Darcy much grown since the spring?" said Miss Bingley: "will she be as tall as I am?"

"I think she will. She is now about Miss Elizabeth Bennet's height, or rather taller."

"How I long to see her again! I never met with anybody who delighted me so much. Such a countenance, such manners, and so extremely accomplished for her age! Her performance on the pianoforte is exquisite."

"It is amazing to me," said Bingley, "how young ladies can have patience to be so very accomplished as they all are."

"All young ladies accomplished! My dear Charles, what do you mean?"

"Yes, all of them, I think. They all paint tables, cover screens, and net purses. I scarcely know any one who cannot do all this; and I am sure I never heard a young lady spoken of for the first time, without being informed that she was very accomplished."

"Your list of the common extent of accomplishments," said Darcy, "has too much truth. The word is applied to many a woman who deserves it no otherwise than by netting a purse or covering a screen; but I am very far from agreeing with you in your estimation of ladies in general. I cannot boast of knowing more than half a dozen in the whole range of my acquaintance that are really accomplished."

"Nor I, I am sure," said Miss Bingley.

"Then," observed Elizabeth, "you must comprehend a great deal in your idea of an accomplished woman."

"Yes; I do comprehend a great deal in it."

"Oh, certainly," cried his faithful assistant, "no one can be really esteemed accomplished who does not greatly surpass what is usually met with. A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and, besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved."

"All this she must possess," added Darcy; "and to all she must yet add something more substantial in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading."

"I am no longer surprised at your knowing only six accomplished women. I rather wonder now at your knowing any."

"Are you so severe upon your own sex as to doubt the possibility of all this?"

"I never saw such a woman. I never saw such capacity, and taste, and application, and elegance, as you describe, united."

Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley both cried out against the injustice of her implied doubt, and were both protesting that they knew many women who answered this description, when Mr. Hurst called them to order, with bitter complaints of their inattention to what was going forward. As all conversation was thereby at an end, Elizabeth soon afterwards left the room.

"Eliza Bennet," said Miss Bingley, when the door was shut on her, "is one of those young ladies who seek to recommend themselves to the other sex by undervaluing their own; and with many men, I dare say, it succeeds; but, in my opinion, it is a paltry device, a very mean art."

"Undoubtedly," replied Darcy, to whom this remark was chiefly addressed, "there is meanness in all the arts which ladies sometimes condescend to employ for captivation. Whatever bears affinity to cunning is despicable."

Miss Bingley was not so entirely satisfied with this reply as to continue the subject.

Elizabeth joined them again only to say that her sister was worse, and that she could not leave her. Bingley urged Mr. Jones's being sent for immediately; while his sisters, convinced that no country advice could be of any service, recommended an express to town for one of the most eminent physicians. This she would not hear of; but she was not so unwilling to comply with their brother's proposal; and it was settled that Mr. Jones should be sent for early in the morning, if Miss Bennet were not decidedly better. Bingley was quite uncomfortable; his sisters declared that they were miserable. They solaced their wretchedness, however, by duets after supper; while he could find no better relief to his feelings than by giving his housekeeper directions that every possible attention might be paid to the sick lady and her sister.



Commentary on Chapter 8

Peaches (The Cat): Okay, Chapter 8 is the absolute peak of high-society catty behavior. The second Elizabeth leaves the room to check on Jane, the Bingley sisters immediately start ripping her apart. They are like a couple of indoor cats who wait for the stray to leave the kitchen just so they can hiss at her scent. They called her manners poor, said she had no conversation, and styleless.

Mary: It's pure jealousy. Caroline Bingley is especially desperate to make Elizabeth look bad because she can tell Mr. Darcy is paying way too much attention to her. She even tried to trash Elizabeth for having uncles who work in trade.

Biscuit (The Corgi): Wait, Mary, they're talking bad about her when she's upstairs? That is not good pack behavior! If someone leaves the living room, you're supposed to wait by the door until they come back, not talk about their petticoats! And what did Mr. Darcy say? Did he defend her?

Mary: He actually did! He said her walk in the mud showed an affectionate regard for her sister, which was great. But then the conversation shifted to what makes a woman truly "accomplished," and Darcy's list was so long it was ridiculous.

Peaches: Ugh, Darcy's standards are exhausting. He basically said a woman needs to draw, paint, dance, speak four languages, play music, and constantly improve her mind by extensive reading. If a human had that many expectations for me, I would literally claw their drapes down. I sleep twenty hours a day and eat crunchies off the floor. I am the only accomplishment this house needs.

Biscuit: Yeah! And I can spin in three circles before I sit down! That is very accomplished! Did Elizabeth tell him off, Mary?

Mary: She sure did. She straight up told Darcy that she doesn't know a single woman in the world who could meet his ridiculous standards, and basically called him out for being completely unrealistic.

Peaches: Boom. Roasted. She basically swatted him right across the nose, and the best part is that Darcy just took it because he likes the spark in her personality. Miss Bingley was absolutely seething in the corner. It's magnificent television.

Mary: It really shows how out of her depth Caroline Bingley is. Let's see what happens when Mrs. Bennet shows up to check on Jane in Chapter 9!

Chapter 9

Elizabeth passed the chief of the night in her sister's room, and in the morning had the pleasure of being able to send a tolerable answer to the inquiries which she very early received from Mr. Bingley by a housemaid, and some time afterwards from the two elegant ladies who waited on his sisters. In spite of this amendment, however, she requested to have a note sent to Longbourn, desiring her mother to visit Jane, and form her own judgment of her situation. The note was immediately despatched, and its contents as quickly complied with. Mrs. Bennet, accompanied by her two youngest girls, reached Netherfield soon after the family breakfast.

Had she found Jane in any apparent danger, Mrs. Bennet would have been very miserable; but being satisfied on seeing her that her illness was not alarming, she had no wish of her recovering immediately, as her restoration to health would probably remove her from Netherfield. She would not listen, therefore, to her daughter's proposal of being carried home; neither did the apothecary, who arrived about the same time, think it at all advisable. After sitting a little while with Jane, on Miss Bingley's appearance and invitation, the mother and three daughters all attended her into the breakfast parlour. Bingley met them with hopes that Mrs. Bennet had not found Miss Bennet worse than she expected.

"Indeed I have, sir," was her answer. "She is a great deal too ill to be moved. Mr. Jones says we must not think of moving her. We must trespass a little longer on your kindness."

"Removed!" cried Bingley. "It must not be thought of. My sister, I am sure, will not hear of her removal."

"You may depend upon it, madam," said Miss Bingley, with cold civility, "that Miss Bennet shall receive every possible attention while she remains with us."

Mrs. Bennet was profuse in her acknowledgments.

"I am sure," she added, "if it was not for such good friends, I do not know what would become of her, for she is very ill indeed, and suffers a vast deal, though with the greatest patience in the world, which is always the way with her, for she has, without exception, the sweetest temper I ever met with. I often tell my other girls they are nothing to _her_. You have a sweet room here, Mr. Bingley, and a charming prospect over that gravel walk. I do not know a place in the country that is equal to Netherfield. You will not think of quitting it in a hurry, I hope, though you have but a short lease."

"Whatever I do is done in a hurry," replied he; "and therefore if I should resolve to quit Netherfield, I should probably be off in five minutes. At present, however, I consider myself as quite fixed here."

"That is exactly what I should have supposed of you," said Elizabeth.

"You begin to comprehend me, do you?" cried he, turning towards her.

"Oh yes--I understand you perfectly."

"I wish I might take this for a compliment; but to be so easily seen through, I am afraid, is pitiful."

"That is as it happens. It does not necessarily follow that a deep, intricate character is more or less estimable than such a one as yours."

"Lizzy," cried her mother, "remember where you are, and do not run on in the wild manner that you are suffered to do at home."

"I did not know before," continued Bingley, immediately, "that you were a studier of character. It must be an amusing study."

"Yes; but intricate characters are the most amusing. They have at least that advantage."

"The country," said Darcy, "can in general supply but few subjects for such a study. In a country neighbourhood you move in a very confined and unvarying society."

"But people themselves alter so much, that there is something new to be observed in them for ever."

"Yes, indeed," cried Mrs. Bennet, offended by his manner of mentioning a country neighbourhood. "I assure you there is quite as much of that going on in the country as in town."

Every body was surprised; and Darcy, after looking at her for a moment, turned silently away. Mrs. Bennet, who fancied she had gained a complete victory over him, continued her triumph:--

"I cannot see that London has any great advantage over the country, for my part, except the shops and public places. The country is a vast deal pleasanter, is not it, Mr. Bingley?"

"When I am in the country," he replied, "I never wish to leave it; and when I am in town, it is pretty much the same. They have each their advantages, and I can be equally happy in either."

"Aye, that is because you have the right disposition. But that gentleman," looking at Darcy, "seemed to think the country was nothing at all."

"Indeed, mama, you are mistaken," said Elizabeth, blushing for her mother. "You quite mistook Mr. Darcy. He only meant that there was not such a variety of people to be met with in the country as in town, which you must acknowledge to be true."

"Certainly, my dear, nobody said there were; but as to not meeting with many people in this neighbourhood, I believe there are few neighbourhoods larger. I know we dine with four-and-twenty families."

Nothing but concern for Elizabeth could enable Bingley to keep his countenance. His sister was less delicate, and directed her eye towards Mr. Darcy with a very expressive smile. Elizabeth, for the sake

of saying something that might turn her mother's thoughts, now asked her if Charlotte Lucas had been at Longbourn since her coming away.

"Yes, she called yesterday with her father. What an agreeable man Sir William is, Mr. Bingley--is not he? so much the man of fashion! so genteel and so easy! He has always something to say to every body. That is my idea of good breeding; and those persons who fancy themselves very important and never open their mouths quite mistake the matter."

"Did Charlotte dine with you?"

"No, she would go home. I fancy she was wanted about the mince pies. For my part, Mr. Bingley, I always keep servants that can do their own work; my daughters are brought up differently. But every body is to judge for themselves, and the Lucases are very good sort of girls, I assure you. It is a pity they are not handsome! Not that I think Charlotte so very plain; but then she is our particular friend."

"She seems a very pleasant young woman," said Bingley.

"Oh dear, yes; but you must own she is very plain. Lady Lucas herself has often said so, and envied me Jane's beauty. I do not like to boast of my own child; but to be sure, Jane--one does not often see any body better looking. It is what everybody says. I do not trust my own partiality. When she was only fifteen there was a gentleman at my brother Gardiner's in town so much in love with her, that my sister-in-law was sure he would make her an offer before we came away. But, however, he did not. Perhaps he thought her too young. However, he wrote some verses on her, and very pretty they were."

"And so ended his affection," said Elizabeth, impatiently. "There has been many a one, I fancy, overcome in the same way. I wonder who first discovered the efficacy of poetry in driving away love!"

"I have been used to consider poetry as the food of love," said Darcy.

"Of a fine, stout, healthy love it may. Every thing nourishes what is strong already. But if it be only a slight, thin sort of inclination, I am convinced that one good sonnet will starve it entirely away."

Darcy only smiled; and the general pause which ensued made Elizabeth tremble lest her mother should be exposing herself again. She longed to speak, but could think of nothing to say; and after a short silence Mrs. Bennet began repeating her thanks to Mr. Bingley for his kindness to Jane, with an apology for troubling him also with Lizzy. Mr. Bingley was unaffectedly civil in his answer, and forced his younger sister to be civil also, and say what the occasion required. She performed her part, indeed, without much graciousness, but Mrs. Bennet was satisfied, and soon afterwards ordered her carriage. Upon this signal, the youngest of her daughters put herself forward. The two girls had been whispering to each other during the whole visit; and the result of it was, that the youngest should tax Mr. Bingley with having promised on his first coming into the country to give a ball at Netherfield.

Lydia was a stout, well-grown girl of fifteen, with a fine complexion and good-humoured countenance; a favourite with her mother, whose affection had brought her into public at an early age.

She had high animal spirits, and a sort of natural self-consequence, which the attentions of the officers, to whom her uncle's good dinners and her own easy manners recommended her, had increased into assurance. She was very equal, therefore, to address Mr. Bingley on the subject of the ball, and abruptly reminded him of his promise; adding, that it would be the most shameful thing in the world if he did not keep it. His answer to this sudden attack was delightful to her mother's ear.

"I am perfectly ready, I assure you, to keep my engagement; and, when your sister is recovered, you shall, if you please, name the very day of the ball. But you would not wish to be dancing while she is ill?"

Lydia declared herself satisfied. "Oh yes--it would be much better to wait till Jane was well; and by that time, most likely, Captain Carter would be at Meryton again. And when you have given your ball," she added, "I shall insist on their giving one also. I shall tell Colonel Forster it will be quite a shame if he does not."

Mrs. Bennet and her daughters then departed, and Elizabeth returned instantly to Jane, leaving her own and her relations' behaviour to the remarks of the two ladies and Mr. Darcy; the latter of whom, however, could not be prevailed on to join in their censure of her, in spite of all Miss Bingley's witticisms on fine eyes.



Commentary on Chapter 9

Peaches (The Cat): Oh, wow. Chapter 9 is a complete secondhand-embarrassment disaster zone. Mrs. Bennet arrives at Netherfield with the younger sisters, and she basically opens her mouth and lets a dumpster fire roll out. She started bragging about how great the country is compared to the city, totally insulting Darcy's intelligence, and acting like her family is the greatest thing to ever happen to England.

Mary: It's so painful to read. She's completely unaware of how tacky she's being. She even publicly argues with Darcy about country life vs. city life, thinking she's winning the debate, when really she's just proving how narrow-minded she is.

Biscuit (The Corgi): Wait, Mary! Why is she barking at Mr. Darcy? Is she trying to protect Jane? Because when the delivery guy comes too close to the front door, I also make myself look very big and loud! Maybe she's just a good guard mom?

Peaches: No, Biscuit, she's not a guard mom; she's an absolute loose cannon. She is trying to secure Bingley for Jane, but her method is the human equivalent of running headfirst into a screen door. It's loud, messy, and leaves a mark. The Bingley sisters were smirking behind their fans the entire time, and Darcy looked like he wanted to evaporate through the floorboards.

Mary: Elizabeth was absolutely mortified. She tried to change the subject, but then Lydia chimed in and started loudly demanding that Mr. Bingley keep his promise to throw a ball at Netherfield.

Biscuit: Ooh! A ball! I love balls! Did Mr. Bingley throw it right then? Did he throw a tennis ball across the fancy rug for Lydia to chase?! Because Mr. Bingley is a very good boy and I bet he has a great throwing arm!

Peaches: It's a dance ball, Biscuit, not a fetch ball. But Bingley, being the total pushover golden retriever that he is, immediately smiled and said he'd absolutely keep his promise and throw the party as soon as Jane is fully recovered.

Mary: He really is incredibly good-natured. Once Mrs. Bennet finally takes her loud crew home, Elizabeth is left behind to deal with the social aftermath.

Peaches: If I were Elizabeth, I would have climbed up the curtains and refused to come down until 2027. The sheer mental toll of having a mom that loud in a house full of billionaires is staggering. I need a nap just thinking about it.

Mary: It only gets more complicated from here. Ready to see the fallout in Chapter 10?

Chapter 10

The day passed much as the day before had done. Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley had spent some hours of the morning with the invalid, who continued, though slowly, to mend; and, in the evening, Elizabeth joined their party in the drawing-room. The loo table, however, did not appear. Mr. Darcy was writing, and Miss Bingley, seated near him, was watching the progress of his letter, and repeatedly calling off his attention by messages to his sister. Mr. Hurst and Mr. Bingley were at piquet, and Mrs. Hurst was observing their game.

Elizabeth took up some needlework, and was sufficiently amused in attending to what passed between Darcy and his companion. The perpetual commendations of the lady either on his hand-writing, or on the evenness of his lines, or on the length of his letter, with the perfect unconcern with which her praises were received, formed a curious dialogue, and was exactly in unison with her opinion of each.

"How delighted Miss Darcy will be to receive such a letter!"

He made no answer.

"You write uncommonly fast."

"You are mistaken. I write rather slowly."

"How many letters you must have occasion to write in the course of a year! Letters of business, too! How odious I should think them!"

"It is fortunate, then, that they fall to my lot instead of to yours."

"Pray tell your sister that I long to see her."

"I have already told her so once, by your desire."

"I am afraid you do not like your pen. Let me mend it for you. I mend pens remarkably well."

"Thank you--but I always mend my own."

"How can you contrive to write so even?"

He was silent.

"Tell your sister I am delighted to hear of her improvement on the harp, and pray let her know that I am quite in raptures with her beautiful little design for a table, and I think it infinitely superior to Miss Grantley's."

"Will you give me leave to defer your raptures till I write again? At present I have not room to do them justice."

"Oh, it is of no consequence. I shall see her in January. But do you always write such charming long letters to her, Mr. Darcy?"

"They are generally long; but whether always charming, it is not for me to determine."

"It is a rule with me, that a person who can write a long letter with ease cannot write ill."

"That will not do for a compliment to Darcy, Caroline," cried her brother, "because he does not write with ease. He studies too much for words of four syllables. Do not you, Darcy?"

"My style of writing is very different from yours."

"Oh," cried Miss Bingley, "Charles writes in the most careless way imaginable. He leaves out half his words, and blots the rest."

"My ideas flow so rapidly that I have not time to express them; by which means my letters sometimes convey no ideas at all to my correspondents."

"Your humility, Mr. Bingley," said Elizabeth, "must disarm reproof."

"Nothing is more deceitful," said Darcy, "than the appearance of humility. It is often only carelessness of opinion, and sometimes an indirect boast."

"And which of the two do you call my little recent piece of modesty?"

"The indirect boast; for you are really proud of your defects in writing, because you consider them as proceeding from a rapidity of thought and carelessness of execution, which, if not estimable, you think at least highly interesting. The power of doing any thing with quickness is always much prized by the possessor, and often without any attention to the imperfection of the performance. When you told Mrs. Bennet this morning, that if you ever resolved on quitting Netherfield you should be gone in five minutes, you meant it to be a sort of panegyric, of compliment to yourself; and yet what is there so very laudable in a precipitance which must leave very necessary business undone, and can be of no real advantage to yourself or any one else?"

"Nay," cried Bingley, "this is too much, to remember at night all the foolish things that were said in the morning. And yet, upon my honour, I believed what I said of myself to be true, and I believe it at this moment. At least, therefore, I did not assume the character of needless precipitance merely to show off before the ladies."

"I dare say you believed it; but I am by no means convinced that you would be gone with such celerity. Your conduct would be quite as dependent on chance as that of any man I know; and if, as you were mounting your horse, a friend were to say, 'Bingley, you had better stay till next week,' you would probably do it--you would probably not go--and, at another word, might stay a month."

"You have only proved by this," cried Elizabeth, "that Mr. Bingley did not do justice to his own disposition. You have shown him off now much more than he did himself."

"I am exceedingly gratified," said Bingley, "by your converting what my friend says into a compliment on the sweetness of my temper. But I am afraid you are giving it a turn which that gentleman did by no means intend; for he would certainly think the better of me if, under such a circumstance, I were to give a flat denial, and ride off as fast as I could."

"Would Mr. Darcy then consider the rashness of your original intention as atoned for by your obstinacy in adhering to it?"

"Upon my word, I cannot exactly explain the matter--Darcy must speak for himself."

"You expect me to account for opinions which you chuse to call mine, but which I have never acknowledged. Allowing the case, however, to stand according to your representation, you must remember, Miss Bennet, that the friend who is supposed to desire his return to the house, and the delay of his plan, has merely desired it, asked it without offering one argument in favour of its propriety."

"To yield readily--easily--to the persuasion of a friend is no merit with you."

"To yield without conviction is no compliment to the understanding of either."

"You appear to me, Mr. Darcy, to allow nothing for the influence of friendship and affection. A regard for the requester would often make one readily yield to a request, without waiting for arguments to reason one into it. I am not particularly speaking of such a case as you have supposed about Mr. Bingley. We may as well wait, perhaps, till the circumstance occurs, before we discuss the discretion of his behaviour thereupon. But in general and ordinary cases, between friend and friend, where one of them is desired by the other to change a resolution of no very great moment, should you think ill of that person for complying with the desire, without waiting to be argued into it?"

"Will it not be advisable, before we proceed on this subject, to arrange with rather more precision the degree of importance which is to appertain to this request, as well as the degree of intimacy subsisting between the parties?"

"By all means," cried Bingley; "let us hear all the particulars, not forgetting their comparative height and size, for that will have more weight in the argument, Miss Bennet, than you may be aware of. I assure you that if Darcy were not such a great tall fellow, in comparison with myself, I should not pay him half so much deference. I declare I do not know a more awful object than Darcy, on particular occasions, and in particular places; at his own house especially, and of a Sunday evening, when he has nothing to do."

Mr. Darcy smiled; but Elizabeth thought she could perceive that he was rather offended, and therefore checked her laugh. Miss Bingley warmly resented the indignity he had received, in an expostulation with her brother for talking such nonsense.

"I see your design, Bingley," said his friend. "You dislike an argument, and want to silence this."

"Perhaps I do. Arguments are too much like disputes. If you and Miss Bennet will defer yours till I am out of the room, I shall be very thankful; and then you may say whatever you like of me."

"What you ask," said Elizabeth, "is no sacrifice on my side; and Mr. Darcy had much better finish his letter."

Mr. Darcy took her advice, and did finish his letter.

When that business was over, he applied to Miss Bingley and Elizabeth for the indulgence of some music. Miss Bingley moved with alacrity to the pianoforte, and after a polite request that Elizabeth would lead the way, which the other as politely and more earnestly negatived, she seated herself.

Mrs. Hurst sang with her sister; and while they were thus employed, Elizabeth could not help observing, as she turned over some music-books that lay on the instrument, how frequently Mr. Darcy's eyes were fixed on her. She hardly knew how to suppose that she could be an object of admiration to so great a man, and yet that he should look at her because he disliked her was still more strange. She could only imagine, however, at last, that she drew his notice because there was a something about her more wrong and reprehensible, according to his ideas of right, than in any other person present. The supposition did not pain her. She liked him too little to care for his approbation.

After playing some Italian songs, Miss Bingley varied the charm by a lively Scotch air; and soon afterwards Mr. Darcy, drawing near Elizabeth, said to her,

"Do not you feel a great inclination, Miss Bennet, to seize such an opportunity of dancing a reel?"

She smiled, but made no answer. He repeated the question, with some surprise at her silence.

"Oh," said she, "I heard you before; but I could not immediately determine what to say in reply. You wanted me, I know, to say 'Yes,' that you might have the pleasure of despising my taste; but I always delight in overthrowing those kind of schemes, and cheating a person of their premeditated contempt. I have, therefore, made up my mind to tell you that I do not want to dance a reel at all; and now despise me if you dare."

"Indeed I do not dare."

Elizabeth, having rather expected to affront him, was amazed at his gallantry; but there was a mixture of sweetness and archness in her manner which made it difficult for her to affront anybody, and Darcy had never been so bewitched by any woman as he was by her. He really believed that, were it not for the inferiority of her connections, he should be in some danger.

Miss Bingley saw, or suspected, enough to be jealous; and her great anxiety for the recovery of her dear friend Jane received some assistance from her desire of getting rid of Elizabeth.

She often tried to provoke Darcy into disliking her guest, by talking of their supposed marriage, and planning his happiness in such an alliance.

"I hope," said she, as they were walking together in the shrubbery the next day, "you will give your mother-in-law a few hints, when this desirable event takes place, as to the advantage of holding her tongue; and if you can compass it, to cure the younger girls of running after the officers. And if I may mention so delicate a subject, endeavour to check that little something, bordering on conceit and impertinence, which your lady possesses."

"Have you any thing else to propose for my domestic felicity?"

"Oh yes. Do let the portraits of your uncle and aunt Philips be placed in the gallery at Pemberley. Put them next to your great-uncle the judge. They are in the same profession, you know, only in different lines. As for your Elizabeth's picture, you must not attempt to have it taken, for what painter could do justice to those beautiful eyes?"

"It would not be easy, indeed, to catch their expression; but their colour and shape, and the eye-lashes, so remarkably fine, might be copied."

At that moment they were met from another walk by Mrs. Hurst and Elizabeth herself.

"I did not know that you intended to walk," said Miss Bingley, in some confusion, lest they had been overheard.

"You used us abominably ill," answered Mrs. Hurst, "in running away without telling us that you were coming out."

Then taking the disengaged arm of Mr. Darcy, she left Elizabeth to walk by herself. The path just admitted three. Mr. Darcy felt their rudeness, and immediately said,

"This walk is not wide enough for our party. We had better go into the avenue."

But Elizabeth, who had not the least inclination to remain with them, laughingly answered,

"No, no; stay where you are. You are charmingly grouped, and appear to uncommon advantage. The picturesque would be spoilt by admitting a fourth. Good-bye."

She then ran gaily off, rejoicing, as she rambled about, in the hope of being at home again in a day or two. Jane was already so much recovered as to intend leaving her room for a couple of hours that evening.



Commentary on Chapter 10

Peaches (The Cat): Okay, Chapter 10 is the ultimate lesson in human thirst. Caroline Bingley is doing absolute backflips trying to get Mr. Darcy's attention while he's sitting at the table trying to write a letter to his sister. She's literally pacing around the room, complimenting his handwriting, and begging him to write faster. It is the most desperate thing I've ever seen. It's like me staring intensely at Mary's face at 5:00 AM hoping she'll wake up and feed me, except I actually have dignity.

Mary: It really is a masterclass in how *not* to flirt. Caroline is trying so hard, but Darcy is completely tuned out and just giving her short, blunt answers. Meanwhile, he keeps looking over his letter to see what Elizabeth is doing.

Biscuit (The Corgi): Wait, Mary! Why is he writing so fast? Is he writing a list of all the toys he's going to buy? Or a letter to the mail carrier telling them they are a very good boy? Because I would like to write a letter to the mail carrier. I have many thoughts about the way they walk up the driveway.

Peaches: He's writing to his sister, Georgiana, Biscuit. But the best part of the evening happens when Caroline realizes she's losing Darcy's attention, so she asks Elizabeth to walk around the room with her. She thinks showing off her posture is going to seal the deal. But Darcy's response is elite. He looks up and basically says, "You two look great walking, but if I join you, I'll ruin the aesthetic. Plus, I can admire your figures much better from right here on the couch."

Mary: It's a total trap! He's teasing Caroline, but he's secretly inviting Elizabeth to banter with him. Elizabeth immediately calls him out on his pride again, and they get into this big, witty argument about whether it's okay to laugh at people's defects. Darcy says his real defect is that his good opinion, once lost, is lost forever.

Biscuit: *Glares* Lost forever?! Wow. That is a very mean rule. If Mary forgets to give me a piece of cheese, I forgive her the very next second because she is my best friend! Why is Mr. Darcy so stubborn? Does his tail not wag?

Peaches: He doesn't have a tail to wag, Biscuit, because he's an emotional brick wall. But Elizabeth's response to him is perfect. She looks him dead in the eyes and says, "Your defect is a propensity to hate everybody." And instead of getting mad, Darcy just smiles because he is completely infatuated with how spicy she is.

Mary: Miss Bingley noticed the sparks flying too, so she immediately jumped to the piano to play a lively tune to break up the tension. She is officially terrified of Elizabeth's influence.

Peaches: Good. Caroline Bingley deserves to sweat in her fancy silk shoes. Elizabeth is running circles around her without even trying.

Mary: It's setting up the domestic tension perfectly. Ready to see the famous rain-soaked walk fallout continue in Chapter 11?