

Elizabeth: At the Hunsford Parsonage

Dear Elizabeth,

I have wonderful news. I am going to be married! We plan to marry in London. The first reading of the banns will be Sunday. I didn't write you before because I wanted to get Papa's permission. Mr. Wright thought it important to lay out the financial situation before we made it public. He doesn't need any money from Papa, but he thinks it unlikely that we can afford to give any help to our family when Papa dies.

From her letter, Mama has mixed feelings. She is delighted I'm getting married, but she always thought I would marry someone who was able to help the family when Papa dies. Am I being selfish to marry for love? I hope not. At least I'm not going to be a burden to the family.

Mama is also not pleased that I'm marrying in London. I hope you will be able to be here. Papa will be here, and the Gardiners will host a simple wedding breakfast.

I am so happy!

Mr. Giles Wright's parents are friends of the Gardiners. Mr. Wright works in the business of transporting crops to London. He said most farmers don't have the time to bring their harvest into town and need to hire it done. The same wagons are used to ship goods out for the farmers to buy. Also, many things go by canals and Giles works with those as well. We may never have much money, but I find I don't care. All I care about is Giles. Isn't that shocking? I thought I loved Mr. Bingley, but now I realize he was a nice man, but he didn't do anything. Giles makes England better and I want to be at his side, helping him.

Elizabeth remembered mentions of Mr. Wright from earlier letters but hadn't dreamed it had gone this far. The letter continued with Jane's enthusiastic description of Mr. Wright's character, person, and prospects. But it concluded on a different topic.

I talked with Giles about Mr. Wickham and Giles suggested that Aunt Gardiner write some of the people she knew in Lambton about him. After all, she grew up near where Mr. Wickham and Mr. Darcy grew up. She wrote two people she knew. They both reported essentially the same thing: Mr. Wickham was supposed to have the living, but voluntarily gave it up for three thousand pounds. It was well known when it happened. Also, Mr. Wickham left quite a few debts in Lambton, which Mr. Darcy paid. As to Mr. Darcy character, he is very generous to the poor, a good landlord, and well respected by everyone in the area.

I had trouble believing it, but upon getting this information, Uncle Gardiner asked a few people in London about Mr. Darcy. They said he gives large amounts to charities in London but tries to keep in the background. This is so much at odds with my impression of Mr. Wickham that I had trouble believing it. I wrote Aunt Phillips about it, suspecting if there was gossip about Mr. Wickham, she would have heard it. She hadn't heard anything, but she inquired and found Mr. Wickham is in debt to many merchants in Meryton and has gambling debts as well. Word has gotten out, and he is no longer given credit. I am sorry that my curiosity exposed him, but I am not sorry that Mr. Wickham can't get credit. I don't want Meryton merchants to lose money.

Love,
Jane

Elizabeth was stunned by the letter. It was not only that Jane had recovered from her sadness about being deserted by Mr. Bingley enough to fall in love with someone else, but that her fiancé was not really in their world. Could Jane adjust to that world? She apparently thought she could. Elizabeth could easily see Jane as the mistress of Netherfield Park if she had married Mr. Bingley. She could not see her coping with a household with only two or three servants. Or would there be any servants? How poor would they be?

Jane asked if she was selfish. Was she? Elizabeth wasn't certain. Jane's beauty and disposition made it likely that she could marry someone wealthy enough to help their family. Did Jane owe it to their family to hold out for such a marriage? Elizabeth never thought she or Jane did, but now she wondered.

Even more shocking than that were the revelations about Mr. Wickham and Mr. Darcy. Elizabeth had been so certain about the good character of her favorite and the bad character of the man who insulted her. When she analyzed it, she realized there were inconsistencies in Mr. Wickham's story.

"You've been staring into space for a long time," Mrs. Collins said to her. "Was that an interesting letter?"

Elizabeth explained what Jane wrote about her marriage.

"That is surprising," her friend said. "I always thought Jane would marry well. It will be a disappointment to your mother."

Charlotte skirted on the issue that struck Elizabeth. Her mother and sisters' best hope of avoiding poverty when their father died was gone. Mrs. Bennet had a legitimate worry. Would it be up to Elizabeth to marry someone who would keep their family from becoming poor?

"Yes, it will be." Elizabeth stood up and realized she had a headache. "I'm not feeling all that well. Would you mind if I stayed here rather than go to Rosings? I need to lie down."

"Not go to Rosings?" Mr. Collins said. "Lady Catherine expects you. You must go to Rosings."

"I might be coming down with something," Elizabeth said. "I wouldn't want to infect Miss de Bourgh."

That was sufficient excuse. Elizabeth went up to her room and lay down, but sleep didn't come. As the others went to Rosings, Elizabeth thought about Jane's upcoming marriage. What kind of life would she have? How would gentle, honest Jane handle bargaining with merchants and dealing with all the things that she had been shielded from?

When she stopped thinking about Jane, her thoughts flew to Mr. Darcy and Mr. Wickham. She was ashamed of her bad judgement about those two men. Mr. Darcy called her "not handsome enough to tempt" him. It was wrong of him to do so, but that didn't make him a bad man, merely an impolite man. Mr. Wickham had paid her flattering attention. She realized she was not justified in judging the two men by their behavior toward her.

Elizabeth got up and looked over Jane's letters from the time she had gone to London. It was now April 9. Jane's first letter from her visit to London was coincidentally dated January 9. She mentioned meeting a Mr. Wright. She had known him for three months. That was twice the time she knew Mr. Bingley.

The tone of the letters gradually changed. There was a lack of Jane's usually cheerfulness in the first few letters. But the more recent letters were enthusiastic about many things. Mr. Wright was in the same parish as the Gardiners and they often invited him over after church. Her aunt and uncle must have been aware of the courtship and approved. All the outings she spoke of with enjoyment involved Mr. Wright. How could Elizabeth have missed it?

Her headache gone, she wanted to be moving. She would have liked to take a walk, but she knew that having pleaded illness, taking a walk would be offensive to her hosts. She went downstairs and walked back and forth a few times in the parlor. The doorbell indicated a caller, causing her to sit down with Jane's most recent letter in her hand to pretend that had been her occupation.

Mr. Darcy was announced. After inquiring about her health, he said, "In vain I have struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you."

She was too stunned to speak. Elizabeth had too many shocks that day to handle this one well. Mr. Darcy talked about all the reasons he shouldn't marry her and how his family would object to the marriage. It was an insulting proposal. A day ago, she would have been angry, but a certain amount of amusement overtook her. Here was a man, a good man by all reports, who undermined his proposal by explaining why he shouldn't make it. His objections were to her family and to her relative position to him. A day ago, she would have rejected him immediately.

But did she have that right? She didn't like Mr. Darcy, but her dislike was based on one insult before they had been introduced and on the slander by Mr. Wickham. She realized she enjoyed her interactions with him. He was interesting. He was also attractive. Neither of these things were enough for her to want to marry him, but were financial considerations enough? Jane's marriage would not support her family if her father died. Mary's accomplishments would not buy her a husband since her manners didn't attract. Her younger sisters' beauty might attract a wealthy husband, but they were sufficiently silly for them not to be clever enough to take advantage of it.

Was it up to her?

Mr. Darcy was liked and respected by the people who knew him better than she did. Did she have the right to refuse him? Her father was a dozen years older than her mother and likely to die first. When he died, Mr. Collins would inherit their source of income and they would be poor since her father never saved. Would Mr. Darcy take care of her family? Well, she could ask.

When he finished and waited for her reply, she could see that he expected an immediate positive response. Well, if she did marry him, she would have to accept his high opinion of himself.

"Mr. Darcy, it may come as a surprise to you, but this proposal is a surprise to me. I never considered it possible that you would propose." She could see by his expression she shocked him. "The difference in our stations explains that." That should please him. "My behavior toward you was based on my own whims with no goals in mind. Before I answer, I would like clarification on one, no two points."

"What?"

"My family is important to me. I would not like to be estranged from them. Will I be allowed to visit them?"

"Yes, of course. And if your second point is, will I take care of them financially if it is needed, the answer is also yes."

"Then my answer is also yes."

What have I done, she asked herself.

Darcy: Family Reactions

Darcy was surprised that Elizabeth hadn't expected his proposal. He assumed she had been flirting with him. He supposed it was better this way. The Miss Bingley's of the world modified their behavior to what they thought he would like. If Elizabeth was behaving naturally, she was worthier to be his wife than he anticipated. He was not fond of the idea of a wife who pretended. He was also aware that many women who behaved one way in courtship behaved very differently after marriage.

He had kissed her on parting. He had been surprised that her verbal forwardness hadn't corresponded to a physical forwardness. She was clearly hesitant. Yet after several seconds, she relaxed and even responded. That was a good sign.

It was also a good sign that she wanted to keep in touch with her family. Much as he would have liked to ignore them, women of breeding didn't reject their families. He had assumed... No. He shouldn't have assumed that she would leave her family behind. He had picked well. His family would object to her, but she was his choice. They would have to live with it or not be in his life. He would never accept insults to his wife.

He entered the drawing room at Rosings to find Mr. and Mrs. Collins still there. One announcement would do for all. It would make Elizabeth's life simpler if Mr. Collins knew exactly where she stood. His sycophantic behavior toward his aunt, Lady Catherine, might cause him to be impolite to Elizabeth if she told him about the engagement. It was his duty to protect her.

"Darcy, where have you been," Lady Catherine asked before he even sat down.

He decided to remain standing. This could be unpleasant, and he wanted to show everyone he was in charge. "Miss Bennet has done me the honor of consenting to be my wife."

"You were supposed to marry me!" Anne said. This was the longest sentence Anne spoke that didn't relate to her own health or comfort since his arrival at Rosings more than two weeks ago.

"I don't remember proposing."

"Mama," she turned to her mother, pleading.

"Darcy, this is unacceptable," Lady Catherine said commandingly. "Surely, you can buy her off."

"Congratulations, Darcy," Colonel Fitzwilliam said. "She's lovely."

"Thank you." Darcy appreciated his cousin taking his position so quickly.

Mr. Collins stood up. "Mrs. Collins, we are returning to the parsonage." He was tall, but not as tall as Darcy, allowing Darcy to look down at him, putting the menace he felt into his face and posture.

As Mrs. Collins stood up, Darcy said with steel in his words, "If the slightest lack of respect is shown to Miss Bennet, I will take her to London with me. The journey, especially taken this late, will compromise her. Therefore, I will obtain a special license and marry her immediately."

"Darcy! You can't do that!"

"Yes, I can."

"She isn't twenty-one," Lady Catherine said.

"Well, if that is the only impediment, I will write a will entirely in her favor and contact her father. I doubt permission will be denied."

"You would let Pemberley go to that conniving hussy!"

"I would let Pemberley go to the woman I plan to spend the rest of my life with. I can live with whatever ire you pile on me, but if you don't treat my wife with the respect she deserves as my wife, all contact between us will cease."

The room was silent for almost a minute.

"I will not bow to an ultimatum," Lady Catherine said belatedly.

"That is your choice." Darcy turned to Colonel Fitzwilliam. "Will you be joining us on our journey? I would like to get started so we can take advantage of what light remains. There is no moon, so we may have to stop at an inn before we reach London."

"Yes, I'll join you. I'll tell my valet to pack." Colonel Fitzwilliam stood up.

"Darcy," Lady Catherine said, "I will be polite to her at least for a day if you leave tomorrow and take a maid."

"Will Mr. and Mrs. Collins be polite to Elizabeth?" Darcy asked looking at his aunt, knowing Mr. Collins would follow Lady Catherine's wishes.

"They will also be polite."

"What about me?" Anne asked plaintively.

"When it is known you are available, my servants will be beating back the suitors," Lady Catherine said. "If you don't find someone you want to marry before then, we will spend winters in London or Bath until you do."

Darcy left.

Elizabeth: Meeting future in-laws

They left early in the morning. There was little meaningful conversation in Darcy's carriage due to the maid. Mr. Darcy's comment about her was, "Her presence bought Mr. Collins's politeness to you."

"He was polite," she said, "but nervous. Mrs. Collins gave me best wishes, but I believe Mr. Collins wanted me out of the house as fast as possible."

"Probably. There is no need for you to put up with him or Lady Catherine not treating you with respect. Let me know if they aren't doing so."

She nodded. It was a reasonable requirement. Yet it was the first order she received from her husband-to-be. She would have to get used to it.

They dropped off Colonel Fitzwilliam and went to the Gardiners. Elizabeth wondered about Mr. Darcy's reaction to them. She knew her aunt and uncle would be polite, but would they welcome the match?

Jane certainly welcomed Elizabeth, initiating a hug, and hardly noticing Mr. Darcy. "Elizabeth! You are here! How did you arrive so quickly?"

Elizabeth's father was there and also hugged her, saying he missed her.

"Mr. Darcy brought me here." Introductions were made and Mr. Darcy joined the Gardiners in their parlor. The maid who accompanied them was sent to the kitchen.

"Bringing Elizabeth was kind of you," Mr. Bennet said to Mr. Darcy.

"Not really. I have a selfish interest and your presence is fortuitous. Miss Elizabeth has done me the honor of consenting to be my wife and I would like your permission to marry her."

"Is this true?" Mr. Bennet asked Elizabeth.

"Yes, sir. It is." Elizabeth glanced at her fiancé. She saw he had stiffened slightly and then relaxed. She held her head up and looked steadily at her father. If he had saved, this would not be necessary. She would never tell him that, but she would not be cowed by his stare. She was doing the right thing because he hadn't.

"Mr. Darcy, then you have my permission." Mr. Bennet also must have noticed Mr. Darcy's reaction because he said, "I had to ask."

"Indeed, you did," Mr. Darcy replied.

The conversation shifted to Jane's wedding.

The following day, Elizabeth met Mr. Giles Wright at dinner. He was almost thirty and was pleasant looking, but not particularly handsome. His real redeeming feature was the way he looked at Jane, no, the way they looked at each other.

When the gentlemen returned to the parlor from their port, Mr. Darcy and Mr. Wright continued a conversation about roads in Derbyshire.

"Don't get me wrong," Mr. Wright said, "I'm delighted that the roads near Pemberley are so well maintained. But don't the local people object?"

"They did at first, or at least two innkeepers and one farmer objected," Mr. Darcy replied.

"Why did the farmer object?"

"There was a patch of road that would flood, and carriages would get stuck. He made a fair amount of money by using his team to help pull them out."

Mr. Wright frowned thoughtfully. "Was this about three years ago? Did you raise the road?"

"Yes."

"I've traveled on that road," Mr. Wright commented.

"What do you..." Mr. Darcy started to speak but he saw Mr. Wright catch the eye of Jane. With a shrug, Mr. Darcy sat near Elizabeth. She wondered if he wanted Mr. Wright's opinion of his road. Or did he simply want Mr. Wright's approval of the road?

In the brief silence that followed, Mr. Bennet asked, "Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth. Jane and Mr. Wright said they would rather have any money that we would spend on a wedding be spent on Jane's trousseau. Considering Mr. Wright's financial situation, I agreed. However, I suspect Mr. Darcy will not be interested

in Elizabeth having the quality of clothing I can afford to supply.” He glanced at Mr. Darcy, who nodded. “Mrs. Bennet will be upset that she cannot show off the marriages of her two older daughters. Therefore, I suggest a double wedding to allow my wife the opportunity to spend the money she considers necessary to make a marriage legal.”

What? Elizabeth thought angrily. Here I am selling myself for my family’s security and my father wants to spend money?

“That is an odd way of putting it,” Mr. Darcy said. “I consider the marriage as the important thing, not the wedding. Do whatever will make your family happy.” He turned to Elizabeth. “What do you want?”

“What my father suggests is fine.” No. It wasn’t. But to say she wanted either an extravagant wedding or a cheap wedding would undercut her father. And Jane, for that matter.

Darcy: A conversation

Darcy managed to get Bingley alone under the pretext of going on a ride with him early on a somewhat misty morning. After a brisk trot, taking the edge off their horses, they settled for a walk.

“All right, what did you want to talk to me about that you didn’t want my sisters or the servants to hear?” Bingley asked

Darcy never thought Bingley was stupid. “In tomorrow’s newspaper, an announcement of my engagement will appear...”

“Congratulations!” Bingley interrupted.

“...to Miss Elizabeth Bennet.”

“What! After all you told me about how the Bennet family would be a burden for anyone who married into it?” Bingley was clearly both baffled and hurt.

“That is true, but they will become my family,” Darcy said with a hint of steel in his voice. He stared at Bingley, glad their horses had the sense to stick to the trail. “But, if you remember, my major objection to the marriage was that I didn’t think she loved you.”

“And you are certain Miss Elizabeth loves you?”

Darcy gave it some thought. If she really loved him, she would have at least considered marriage with him, even if she were certain it was hopeless. Maybe she wouldn’t have interpreted his behavior as courtship, but she would have at least thought about it. “No. I’m not certain she loves me. But I love her enough so that I will gamble that our marriage will be a good one.”

Some riders came from the other direction, causing them to drop to single file to pass. When the other party passed, Bingley spurred his horse to a gallop, which was highly inappropriate for the venue. Darcy fleetingly debated continuing at a quieter pace, but there was no certainty as to what path Bingley would take.

Darcy’s horse was faster. When he was next to Bingley, he shouted angrily, “Slow down or I’ll grab your reins.” Bingley didn’t and Darcy did. It was trickier than Darcy thought it would be, but he managed to do so without harm to themselves, their horses, or other riders.

“I don’t want to talk to you,” Bingley said after they came to a halt.

“I have two more sentences to say and then you may go your way without further conversation. Will you listen?”

“Yes.”

Darcy dropped Bingley’s reins. “Miss Bennet, that is Miss Jane Bennet, is getting married in a double ceremony with Miss Elizabeth. Miss Bennet wasn’t in love with you or she would not be marrying someone else so quickly.”

Darcy turned his horse around and headed back. He refrained from galloping, but Bingley didn’t follow him.

Bingley visited later that day and issued an apology. "And thank you for telling me about Miss Bennet. I can hardly complain since I left her. I still think she was at least a little in love with me."

"Possibly, but it was obviously not a lifelong passion."

"I'm not sure those exist," Bingley said.

After Bingley left, Darcy wondered whether his feelings for Elizabeth were a lifelong passion. It felt like it.

Elizabeth: Weddings

"No, Mama. The shoes you want to buy are very impractical," Jane said with a firmness Elizabeth didn't know Jane possessed.

"But you can't wear old shoes at the wedding," Mrs. Bennet said with exasperation.

"Yes, we can," Elizabeth said.

"You can't need practical shoes," Mrs. Bennet said angrily to her second daughter.

"What I don't want to do is be dressed in new finery while Jane isn't," Elizabeth said, looking at her sister whose beauty was enhanced by being in love. No matter how they both dressed, Elizabeth could not outshine her sister and didn't have the slightest desire to do so. It was Jane's day as much as hers. More so, since Jane was eagerly anticipating the marriage. Both their fiancés were gone. Mr. Wright would return only for the wedding since he had to work, and Mr. Darcy said he would stay with them at Longbourn after he attended to some business.

"Next thing you know, you're going to tell me you want to be married in boots," Mrs. Bennet said.

"I don't care what I'm married in," Jane replied, "but I'd rather have new boots than shoes that would wear out quickly. I wouldn't mind being married barefoot."

Mr. Bennet, who had not appeared to be paying attention to the conversation, said, "Let Jane wear old shoes."

"Me too," Elizabeth said.

"Certainly. If I sent my daughters barefoot to the wedding, there would be talk. No one will notice your shoes aren't new." Mr. Bennet pointed looked at Jane's feet. "I think a wedding present of a trip to the cobbler with the understanding he make Jane some very sturdy boots would not be out of order."

"That's outrageous," Mrs. Bennet said. "Boots don't belong in a trousseau."

"It is what she wants, and presumably what she needs," Mr. Bennet said.

"Thank you," Jane said with sincerity.

A week before the wedding, Mr. Darcy arrived with his sister, Georgiana. It made for a crowded house. Elizabeth saw an affirmation of Mr. Wickham's duplicity after she met Miss Darcy. Mr. Wickham described her as proud, but she was only shy. It was only when Miss Darcy and Mary got into a discussion about music that Miss Darcy started to relax. The second day, the two of them spent several hours at the pianoforte. Over the next several days, Mary's playing improved and Miss Darcy's confidence did as well.

But to Elizabeth, the startling change was in Mr. Darcy. He complimented her mother on the veal dish they had.

"You realize, you will be served veal every time you visit here," Elizabeth told him when they had a few minutes alone.

"Surely, not in January," Mr. Darcy replied with a smile.

"Well, every time it is available." Elizabeth wasn't certain how to bring up a subject. She wasn't even sure she wanted to do so, but her curiosity overcame her misgivings. "You've been very nice to my family." She paused, not sure of how to go on.

"Our family."

"I guess that answers my question," she said. "If I had known you better, I might not have had to ask you if I could see my family after we are married. They sometimes embarrass me, and I thought... no, I believed you would not tolerate them."

"I have a harder time tolerating Lady Catherine."

She wanted to laugh, but realized he wasn't joking. "Because you care about her," she said softly.

"Yes."

Elizabeth thought the night before her wedding would be about her marriage, but instead they were about her father. He kept her mother from overspending enough to go into debt, but not enough to save. He had other faults as well, but he was her father and she loved him. She did not want to go from her father's household to her husband's out of anger.

When her father gave her the last hug before she left with her new husband, Elizabeth recognized she could love someone despite their imperfections. She could love them, warts and all. She loved her father, even though she recognized his flaws. She hoped that would help her in her marriage.

It did.

Elizabeth: Eleven Months Later at Pemberley

Elizabeth looked up from nursing her daughter to see her husband watching her. They exchanged smiles.

"I never get tired of watching you, both of you," he said.

"You have the advantage of me," Elizabeth said looking back at their child. "You can look in one direction, but I have to divide my view." When did she fall in love with him? It didn't happen all at once, but when she realized she was in love, she also realized she had been in that state for weeks.

"I received a letter from Wright," Darcy said. "I don't think I've ever met a man so proud and so stubborn."

"Have you tried looking in the mirror," Elizabeth teased.

"A telling blow," Darcy countered with a smile. "He won't accept money."

"Are you surprised? Would you have accepted it if your positions had been reversed?"

"Probably not, but he gave me valuable advice and put me in touch with the right people. He is owed money for that."

"Would you have paid Lady Catherine if she had given you the advice?"

"She is not in a position... Yes, that's evading the issue," Darcy said, anticipating her objections to the specious argument he planned to make.

"No," Elizabeth said dryly. "I doubt Lady Catherine could put you in touch with someone who knows how to build better roads."

"The new sections held up with unusually high spring flooding," Darcy said. "When we finish the whole road, Wright thinks that traffic will be diverted from the road to the east. We already see a little of that in bad weather. That should make the local innkeepers happy."

"And, of course, we want to make the local innkeepers happy," Elizabeth said. She knew there was truth in her statement, but it wasn't the whole truth. She changed her tone. "What is it that bothers you about Mr. Wright?"

Darcy walked over to the window and looked out for a few seconds. Without turning around, he said, "When I married you, I thought I was giving everything to you and would only receive you in return. However valuable to me you are, I thought your family had nothing to offer me."

"Except for some good tasting veal?"

“Right. But not only is your father excellent company, Jane’s husband has been of real value to me. I’m used to paying for that kind of value, but he won’t let me.” He came over to her and kissed her gently. “Your sister Mary has helped Georgiana become more comfortable in company.”

“The friendship has benefited both of them,” Elizabeth said.

“Agreed.”

As he said it, Georgiana knocked on the door, saying, “It’s me.” Elizabeth detached her daughter, who was nearly asleep and covered up before Darcy admitted her.

“I received a letter from Miss Bingley,” Georgiana said, waving it. “Her brother is engaged. Miss Bingley is unhappy. I bet she’s sorry she sent me this letter.”

“Why?” Darcy asked.

“She should be ashamed of it. She was angry when she wrote it, and it shows. She’s furious Mr. Bingley is marrying a second cousin whose father is in trade. Mr. Bingley’s wife-to-be has a dowry larger than Miss Bingley’s and no interest in meeting titled people. Mr. Bingley is on good terms with her family and planning to buy a house in Leeds.”

“Leeds?” Elizabeth asked.

“Yes, isn’t that delicious. Miss Bingley will have a brother in Leeds, hobnobbing with people in trade.”

The next day, Bingley’s letter arrived, full of enthusiasm for the woman he was marrying. While Darcy was talking about it with Elizabeth, Lady Catherine was announced.

“Lady Catherine,” Elizabeth said with a puzzled tone and a glance at her husband. “Welcome to Pemberley.”

“No, I didn’t invite her,” Darcy said dryly to Elizabeth.

“Why not?” When there was no immediate response, Lady Catherine continued, “Why wasn’t I invited?”

“It didn’t occur to me that you would want to come,” Darcy said. “Elizabeth is still recovering from her lying in.”

“We always meet at Easter. With Anne married, she’s having Easter with her husband’s family, as is appropriate,” Lady Catherine said.

“Just as plans changed with Anne, I assumed plans changed with us,” Darcy said.

“Never let it be said that I am not a reasonable person. I understand your not coming to Rosings. Therefore, I came to you,” Lady Catherine said.

Without an invitation? “I just didn’t want to take a three-week-old baby on such a long trip,” Elizabeth said.

“Humph,” Lady Catherine said. “If you had a wet nurse it wouldn’t be a problem.”

“A new baby warrants at least a month’s seclusion for the mother,” Darcy said.

“You wrote me the midwife said it was an easy delivery,” Lady Catherine countered.

“Welcome, Lady Catherine,” Elizabeth said. “Do you have a favorite bedroom at Pemberley?”

Later, when Darcy and Elizabeth were alone, Elizabeth said, “I do understand that we can love people that aren’t perfect.” Elizabeth’s thoughts flew to her own family as she said that.

“I’m glad we have that cleared up. If I weren’t so proud and stubborn, I wouldn’t be offending Wright with offers of money.”

“Yours is a generous impulse, but his business is doing well. Jane wrote that they are planning to buy a curricle.”

“They are moving up in the world,” Darcy said. “I’m glad to see that.”

“Well, I’m glad to see Lady Catherine. She’s your aunt, you care about her, and thus, she is welcome here.”

Elizabeth loved a man who wasn’t perfect. If she could accept Lady Catherine with all her imperfections, she would accept her father with his. That’s what love was about.

->The end<-