



PRIDE & PREJUDICE by Jane Austen

Adapted by John-Robert Partridge & Catherine Prout

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CHARACTERS

MR BENNET

MRS BENNET

KITTY

LIZZY

LYDIA

JANE

MARY

MISS BINGLEY

MR BINGLEY

MR DARCY

LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGE

GEORGIANA DARCY

MR COLLINS

CHARLOTTE LUCAS

LIEUTENANT WICKHAM

SIR WILLIAM LUCAS

COLONEL FITZWILLIAM

MR GARDINER

HOUSEKEEPER

SERVANT X2

Pride and Prejudice

SCENE 1 – The Bennet's Parlour

Mrs Bennet

My dear Mr. Bennet, have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last? Do you not want to know who has taken it?

Mr Bennet

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

Mrs Bennet

Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England; Mr Bingley is his name.

Mr Bennet

Is he married or single?

Mrs Bennet

A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!

Mr Bennet

How so? How can it affect them?

Mrs Bennet

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

Mr Bennet

Is that his design in settling here?

Mrs Bennet

Design! Nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he may fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him.

Mr Bennet

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 may like you the best of the party.

Mrs Bennet

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

Mr Bennet

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

Mrs Bennet

But, my dear, you must indeed go and see Mr. Bingley when he comes into the neighbourhood. 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 newcomers. Indeed you must go, for it will be impossible for us to visit him if you do not.

Mr Bennet

You are over-scrupulous, surely. I dare say Mr. Bingley will be very glad to see you.

Mrs Bennet

And how can you be so sure Mr Bennet? Don't keep coughing so, Kitty, for Heaven's sake! Have a little compassion on my nerves. You tear them to pieces

Mr Bennet

Kitty has no discretion in her coughs, she times them ill.

Kitty

I do not cough for my own amusement

Mr Bennet

While Kitty is coughing, let us return to Mr. Bingley.

Mrs Bennet

I am sick of Mr. Bingley

Mr Bennet

I am sorry to hear that; but why did not you tell me that before? 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.

Mrs Bennet

I knew that you would have, I expected it! 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.

Mr Bennet

Now, Kitty, you may cough as much as you choose

Lydia

Oh Papa! How wonderful.

Mrs Bennet

You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion for my poor nerves.

Mr Bennet

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 last twenty years at least. I visited him the day before last, before even Lady Lucas.

Mrs Bennet

What is to be said of him?

Mr Bennet

Well to quote Sir Lucas from his dear wife, he is 'quite young, wonderfully handsome and extremely agreeable'. He has gone up to London to fetch some of his company back.

Lydia

Do you think they will be at the next ball?

Mr Bennet

I should imagine they might just be there.

Lydia

Oh how wonderful! There would be so many handsome young men in the beautiful great house and Mr Bingley could dance with all of us –

Lizzy

We would do well if he chose to dance with any one of us; you have Jane to be married off before you may be in line to choose your partner.

Jane

You too Lizzy and Kitty and Mary, but you should dance as much as you can Lydia!

Lydia

What a great occasion to make new friends. (She dances around the room).

Mrs Bennet

What an excellent father you have, girls! 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 acquaintances every day; but for your sakes, we would do anything. If I can but see one of my daughters happily settled at Netherfield and all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for!

Lydia

When is the next ball Lizzy?

Lizzy

In a fortnight.

Mrs Bennet

We must prepare! Come along girls, we must all look our best to welcome our new neighbour. Especially you Jane my eldest and my beauty, who could not wish to dance the night away with you? And who knows who he might bring along with him? Another handsome young man on five thousand a year? We will have you all married before sunrise!

The girls all select decorative items from a large case to adorn themselves with for the ball as the room becomes the ballroom. Mr Bingley is introduced to everyone by Sir William as the Bingley sisters sneer as they judge everyone in the room, only becoming slightly nicer to Jane as they talk more to her.

Scene 2

The Assembly Rooms

Sir William Lucas

Mr Bingley! Allow me the pleasure of welcoming you to our little assembly.

Bingley

Sir William, I am very glad to see you. There's nothing that I love better than a country dance.

Mrs Bennet

Which of the painted peacocks is our Mr Bingley?

Charlotte Lucas

He's on the right.

Mrs Bennet

The person with the quizzical brow?

Charlotte Lucas

That is his good friend, Mr Darcy.

Mrs Bennet

He looks miserable, poor soul.

Charlotte Lucas

Miserable he may be, but poor he is not

Mrs Bennet

Oh, Lizzy! They're coming over. Smile, girls! Smile!

Sir William Lucas

Mrs Bennet, Mr Bingley would want to become acquainted with you and your daughters.

Mrs Bennet

Sir, that is very good of you. This is Jane, my eldest. And Elizabeth. And Mary sits over there. And Kitty and Lydia, my youngest, you see there dancing.

Jane

Do you like to dance yourself?

Bingley

There is nothing I love better, madam. In fact, if Miss Bennet is not otherwise engaged, may I be so bold as to claim the next dance?

Jane

I am not engaged, sir.

Bingley

Good

Mrs Bennet

And you, sir? Are you fond of dancing, too?

Bingley

Oh, I beg your pardon. Mrs Bennet, may I present my friend, Mr Darcy?

Mrs Bennet

You are very welcome to Hertfordshire I am sure, sir. I hope you have come here eager to dance, as your friend has?

Darcy

Thank you, madam. I rarely dance.

Mrs Bennet

Let this be one of the occasions, sir, for I wager you'll not easily find such lively music or such pretty partners.

Darcy

Pray, excuse me, ma'am.

Mrs Bennet

Well! Did you ever meet such a proud disagreeable man!

Lizzy

Sssh! He will hear you

Mrs Bennet

I don't care if he does. We need not care for his good opinion. He's Quite ill-favoured. Certainly nothing at all to Mr Bingley!

Charlotte Lucas

Lizzy! How lovely to see you.

Lizzy

My dear Charlotte, are you enjoying the dance?

Charlotte Lucas

As I enjoy any dance Lizzy. I see your sister is enjoying his company.

Lizzy

As are my younger siblings too; they are quite unruly when they are at play. Perhaps a little more so than they should be.

Charlotte Lucas

If she does take a liking to him she should encourage him. She has a much chance of happiness in marriage by catching him now as she would in catching him in twelve months.

Lizzy

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.

Charlotte Lucas

Remember, Elizabeth, that he does not know Jane's disposition as you do. He may mistake her coyness for indifference.

Lizzy

Her coyness is her nature and if he cannot see past it maybe he does not deserve her.

Charlotte Lucas

Maybe he is simply a man. Come on Lizzy, will you not join us?

Lizzy

There is an excess of women in the room. If one of us is to sit out I am more than happy for it to be me.

Charlotte leaves her to continue dancing. Lizzy sat close enough to hear conversation between the two men. Charlotte catches some of the conversation whilst dancing, particularly Darcy's comment about Lizzy and amongst the hub-bub in the room she is quizzed by Mrs Bennet about it.

Bingley

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

Darcy

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 sister is engaged, and there is not another woman in the room whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with.

Bingley

I would not be so fastidious as you are, 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.

Darcy

You are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room.

Bingley

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.

Darcy

Which do you mean? She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me; I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men. You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles, for you are wasting your time with me.

Mr Bingley goes towards Jane but is caught up in conversation by one of his sisters. Awkward silence between Darcy and Lizzy.

Lizzy

Forgive me Sir, I do not believe we have been introduced, please do not think it too bold of me to approach you myself, only you seem a little distanced from new acquaintances.

Darcy

Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy, I am an acquaintance of Mr Bingley and his family.

Lizzy

I had perceived as much. My name is Elizabeth Bennet, younger sister to the most handsome lady in the room. How do you like Netherfield Mr Darcy?

Darcy

I like it as well as I like any place.

Lizzy

That is quite well then.

Darcy

Indeed.

Lizzy

Mr Darcy. (She courtesies.)

Darcy

Miss Bennett. (He bows. They go to part but are prevented from doing so by Sir William.)

Sir William

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 society.

Darcy

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

Your friend performs delightfully, and I doubt not that you are an adept in the science yourself, Mr. Darcy.

Darcy

You saw me dance earlier, I believe, Sir William.

Sir William

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

Darcy

Never, sir.

Sir William

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

Darcy

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

Sir William

You have a house in town, I conclude? I had once had some thought 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 or my sweet little Charlotte in fact. My dear Miss Lizzy, 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

Lizzy

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.

Sir William

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.

Lizzy

Mr. Darcy is all politeness.

Miss Bingley

Darcy, will you not introduce me to this lady?

Darcy

Miss Elizabeth Bennet

Miss Bingley

Miss Elizabeth Bennet!

Lizzy

Indeed, Miss Bingley. I have not had the pleasure. As I can see that I am trespassing upon your time with more pleasing acquaintances I will leave you in peace Mr Darcy. Miss Bingley.

Lizzy bows a courtesy and leaves.

Miss Bingley

I am all astonishment. How long has she been such a favourite; all of the five minutes since you met her I suppose?—and pray, when am I to wish you joy?

Darcy

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.

Miss Bingley

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

There is a short break in dancing but music continues. Lizzy goes to Jane who is admiring Mr Bingley.

Jane

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

Lizzy

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

Jane

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

Lizzy

Did you not? 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. Well, he certainly is very agreeable, and I give you leave to like him. You have liked many a stupider person.

Jane

Dear Lizzy!

Lizzy

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

Jane

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

Charlotte comes over to them.

Charlotte

(To Jane, sincerely) I am glad Mr Bingley finds his second partner most admirable.

Jane

Charlotte, how lovely to see you. We have hardly had a minute to breathe this evening.

Mrs Bennet

Upon my word! Well, it is very decided indeed that my Jane is certainly the most admired of Mr Bingley the evening - but, however, it may all come to nothing, you know, I shall not risk upsetting my nerves.

Charlotte

Mr. Darcy is not so well worth listening to as his friend, is he?—poor Lizzy!—

Lizzy

Am I to take it you heard him speak of me as only just tolerable?

Mrs Bennet

I beg you would 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.

Jane

Are you quite sure, ma'am?—is not there a little mistake? I certainly saw you speaking with Mr Darcy Lizzy.

Lizzy

That is because I asked him at last how he liked Netherfield, and he could not help answering.

Jane

Do not let it trouble you. Miss Bingley told me, that he never speaks much, unless among his intimate acquaintances. With them he is remarkably agreeable.

Mrs Bennet

I do not believe a word of it, my dear. If he had been so very agreeable, he would have talked to Mrs. Long.

Charlotte

I do not mind his not talking to Mrs. Long, but I wish he had danced with Lizzy

Mrs Bennet

Lizzy, I would not dance with him, if I were you. He is all full of pride!

Lizzy

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

Charlotte

His pride, 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, a fortune of ten thousand a year, everything in his favour, should think highly of himself. If I may so express it, he has a right to be proud.

Lizzy

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

Bingley

May I have your hand for the last dance Miss Bennet?

Jane

I would be delighted Mr Bingley.

They dance. The music ends and everyone bids each other good night as they leave.

Scene 3 – The Bennet's Parlour

Mrs Bennet

Oh! my dear Mr. Bennet, we have had a most delightful evening, a most excellent ball. I wish you had been there. Jane was so admired. Mr. Bingley thought her quite beautiful, and danced with her twice! 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! Then Jane for the next, then Miss King, and Maria Lucas, and then with Jane again, and with Lizzy, and the Boulanger—

Mr Bennet

If he had had any compassion for me, he would not have danced half so much! For God's sake, say no more of his partners. Oh that he had sprained his ankle in the first dance!

Mrs Bennet

Oh! my dear, I am quite delighted with him. He is so excessively handsome! And his sister is a charming woman. I never in my life saw anything more elegant than their dresses

Mr Bennet

Will you desist in descriptions of finery!

Lydia

Mamma, the red coats are in town again, Kitty and I saw them this morning when Jane took us into the village. How long are they staying this time? May I make their acquaintance? I saw a lady across the street drop her handkerchief and a red coat stopped and picked it up and so they were introduced; I should like to try such things with the officers!

Mr Bennet

Why do you think so much about officers?

Mrs Bennet

When they get to our age, I dare say they will not think about officers any more than we do. But 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

Servant

Excuse me sir, a letter for Miss Bennet

Mrs Bennet

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.

Jane

It is from Miss Bingley, she wants me to dine with her this evening! — Her brother is to dine with the officers.

Lydia

With the officers!

Mrs Bennet

Dining out, that is very unlucky.

Jane

Can I have the carriage?

Mrs Bennet

No, my dear, you had better go on horseback

Jane

I had much rather go in the coach.

Mrs Bennet

But, my dear, your father cannot spare the horses, I am sure.

Lizzy

Mama!

Jane leaves. As she exits it begins to rain.

Tableau ensues of Jane walking in the rain and getting to the house and collapsing in Mr Bingleys arms. Breakfast the next morning. The girls, Mrs Bennet, Mr Bennet.