



Book, Music and Lyrics by
Lindsay Warren Baker & Amanda Jacobs

Based on the novel "Pride and Prejudice" by Jane Austen

Orchestrations and Arrangements by Amanda Jacobs
Additional Vocal Arrangements by Lindsay Warren Baker

Cast Size: Women (9+), Men (5+)
Orchestra: TBA

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The New York Musical Theatre Festival's 2011 Next Link Project.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

At Chawton Cottage – Hampshire, England: 1811

JANE AUSTEN: 36. A recently published authoress.

CASSANDRA AUSTEN: 39. Her sister.

The Characters of *First Impressions* – England: 1796/1797

MR. BENNET: A country gentleman of £2000 a year. “An odd mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve and caprice. His principal enjoyments arise from the country-side and books.”

MRS. BENNET: His wife. “Once a young woman of youth, beauty and good humour; now a wife and mother of mean understanding, little information and uncertain temper. When discontented, she fancies herself nervous. The business of her life is to get her daughters married; its solace is visiting and news.”

JANE BENNET: 22. The Bennet’s eldest daughter. “One does not often see any body better looking. It is what every body says ... She never sees a fault in any body. All the world are good and agreeable in her eyes. She has never spoken ill of a human being in her life.”

ELIZABETH BENNET: 20. “Next to Jane in birth and beauty, Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters. She has a lively, playful disposition, which delights in anything ridiculous.”

MARY BENNET: 19. “A young lady of deep reflection, reads great books and makes extracts. 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.”

CATHERINE (KITTY) BENNET: 17. “... weak-spirited, irritable, and completely under Lydia’s guidance, she was ignorant, idle and vain. ... Somewhat silly and fretful, though of a more governing temper than Lydia.”

LYDIA BENNET: 15. “A stout, well-grown girl, with a fine complexion and good-humoured countenance; a favourite with her mother, whose affection had brought her into public at an early age. The tallest and the youngest; self-willed and careless.”

CHARLES BINGLEY: 22. “A single man of large fortune from the north of England. He inherited property to the amount of nearly £100,000 from his father. He was good looking and gentlemanlike; he had a pleasant countenance, and easy, unaffected manners. ... He was sure of being liked wherever he appeared.”

FITZWILLIAM DARCY: 28. A handsome bachelor of £10,000 a year and Bingley’s trusted friend. “A fine, tall person, handsome features, a noble mean. He was at the same time haughty, reserved, and fastidious, and his manners, though well bred, were not inviting. ... He was continually giving offence.”

CAROLINE BINGLEY: Mr. Bingley’s sister. “A handsome woman with an air of decided fashion. A very fine lady, not deficient in good humour when pleased, nor in the power of being agreeable where she chose it; but proud and conceited. ... In every respect entitled to think well of herself, and meanly of others.”

CHARLOTTE LUCAS: 27. “A sensible, intelligent young woman and Elizabeth’s intimate friend.”

WILLIAM COLLINS: 25. The Bennets’ recently ordained cousin. “A tall, heavy looking man. Not a sensible man ... His air was grave and stately, and his manners were very formal. ... a mixture of pride and obsequiousness, self-importance and humility.”

GEORGE WICKHAM: A newly commissioned lieutenant in the militia. “A young man of most gentlemanlike appearance ... all the best part of beauty – a fine countenance, a good figure, and very pleasing address.”

LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH: Mr. Collins’ patroness; Mr. Darcy’s aunt. “A tall, large woman with strongly-marked features, which might once have been handsome. Whatever she said was spoken in so authoritative a tone as marked her self-importance. ... She was not used to have her judgment controverted.”

ANNE DE BOURGH: Her daughter. “Thin and small. Pale and sickly; her features, though not plain, were insignificant; and she spoke very little with a low voice.”

MR. GARDINER: Mrs. Bennet’s brother. “A sensible, gentlemanlike man, greatly superior to his sister, as well by nature as education. His manners were easy and pleasant.”

MRS. GARDINER: His wife. “An amiable, intelligent, elegant woman, and a great favourite with her nieces. Between the two eldest and herself especially, there subsisted a very particular regard.”

MRS. REYNOLDS: The Pemberley housekeeper.

GEORGIANA DARCY: 16. Mr. Darcy’s sister. “She was tall, womanly and graceful. There was sense and good humour in her face, and her manners were perfectly unassuming and gentle.”

COLONEL FORSTER: Leader of the Hertfordshire militia.

MRS. FORSTER: His young wife.

ENSEMBLE of TOWNSPEOPLE, SERVANTS and SOLDIERS

CAST REQUIREMENTS / CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

WOMEN (9+)		
W1	Mezzo-soprano/belt	JANE AUSTEN
W2	Mezzo-soprano/belt	CASSANDRA AUSTEN / CHARLOTTE LUCAS / MRS. GARDINER
W3	Soprano/belt	MRS. BENNET / LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH / As Cast
W4	Soprano	JANE BENNET / As Cast
W5	Soprano/belt	ELIZABETH BENNET
W6	Soprano/belt	KITTY BENNET / GEORGIANA DARCY / As Cast
W7	Soprano/belt	MARY BENNET / ANNE DE BOURGH / As Cast
W8	Soprano/belt	LYDIA BENNET / As Cast
W9	Soprano	CAROLINE BINGLEY / MRS. FORSTER / MRS. REYNOLDS / As Cast
MEN (5+)		
M1	Bass-baritone	MR. BENNET / As Cast
M2	Baritone	FITZWILLIAM DARCY / As Cast
M3	Tenor	CHARLES BINGLEY / MR. GARDINER / As Cast
M4	Tenor	MR. WILLIAM COLLINS / COLONEL FORSTER / As Cast
M5	Bari-Tenor	GEORGE WICKHAM / As Cast

ADDITIONAL CASTING OPTIONS:

Separate out the double casting (with the exception of Cassandra's assignments), and add an ensemble of Townspeople, Soldiers and Servants.

Examples include:

WOMEN

W10	Mezzo-soprano	MRS. REYNOLDS / As Cast
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MEN

M6	Baritone	COLONEL FORSTER / MR. GARDINER / As Cast
M7	Tenor	ENSEMBLE / SOLDIER / As Cast
M8	Bari-Tenor	ENSEMBLE / SOLDIER / As Cast
M9	Bass-baritone	ENSEMBLE / SOLDIER / As Cast

SETTING & TIME

THE WORLD OF JANE AUSTEN

Hampshire, England. July 1812.
Chawton Cottage – Jane Austen’s home.

A small, intimate dining parlour. The floorboards are wide and worn. The walls are papered with a delicate floral pattern on a white background. A fireplace and cupboard fill the stage left wall. One gains entrance to the room from a door upstage right. Central to the parlour is a wooden table that seats four. However, the focus of the room is a small, round, three-legged wooden pedestal table that sits downstage left with a single chair. An inkpot and quill sit atop. If one were to sit at the writing table, there would be a view out of the only window in the room onto the action of the street outside.

NOTE: The world of Jane Austen can be represented simply by Austen’s writing table and chair and a door. The world of *First Impressions* can weave through and around Austen’s world, but should never disturb Austen’s “reality.” (i.e. Characters of *First Impressions* should never go through the door or sit at Austen’s table). Additionally, “Voices” are not required to be offstage. The director may use his/her imagination in deciding how to incorporate the ensemble on or off the stage. Scenes should transition seamlessly from one into the next.

THE WORLD OF ‘FIRST IMPRESSIONS’

England. 1796/1797.
Various estates and villages in the counties of
Hertfordshire, Kent, Derbyshire and London.

NOTE: There are four English Country Dances in the world of “First Impressions”: The Meryton Assembly Dance – #2c and at The Netherfield Ball - #14 (Dancing with Mr. Collins), #15 (Dancing with Mr. Darcy) and #16 (The Bennets Expose Themselves). The choreography of these four dances should adhere to the patterns and style of traditional English Country Dance.

THE PLAY

In *Jane Austen’s PRIDE AND PREJUDICE, A Musical*, the love story of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy comes to life when Jane Austen and her sister Cassandra revisit “First Impressions,” an earlier version of the beloved novel. As Austen makes changes, the Austen sisters must learn to see both the story and each other in a new light.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Since the original manuscript of First Impressions does not exist, we have imagined what a more youthful, simple, version of Pride and Prejudice could have been – why Austen would have been so ready to dismiss it as worth submitting for publication, and why Cassandra would have enjoyed the romance of it. What follows is the plot outline for our version of First Impressions.

Mr. Bingley lets Netherfield Park and brings his sister, Caroline, and his best friend, Fitzwilliam Darcy with him. The entire town is excited because it means potential matches for their eligible daughters -- including the five Bennet girls.

They all meet at the Meryton Assembly.

Bingley and Jane Bennet are instantly attracted to each other. Caroline and Darcy are unimpressed.

Darcy refuses to dance and calls Elizabeth “plain.” Her dislike is instantly founded.

At Netherfield, Bingley tells Darcy how much he likes Jane. At Longbourn, Jane shares her feelings with Elizabeth.

The Bingleys and Bennets meet up at a card party at Lucas Lodge. Charlotte Lucas warns Elizabeth that she isn’t convinced Jane likes Bingley, because she doesn’t express enough emotion. Elizabeth wonders if Charlotte is right? And considers the difference between marrying for love and marrying for convenience. Elizabeth determines that if she ever gets married, she will marry for love. What she wants is to be happy.

Caroline invites Jane to visit her at Netherfield. Mrs. Bennet schemes to keep Jane at Netherfield longer so that she can spend time with Mr. Bingley.

Jane gets sick from riding to Netherfield in the rain. Elizabeth, quite concerned about Jane’s health, walks the three miles to Netherfield to check in on her. Jane has such a bad fever that she stays overnight. Bingley insists that Elizabeth stay as well.

Jane feels better the next morning. Elizabeth writes for the carriage home and they return to Longbourn.

Mr. Collins, the Bennet’s cousin and heir of Longbourn comes for a visit. He cannot say enough about how fortunate he is in his patroness Lady Catherine de Bourgh. He has decided to marry one of the Bennet girls in order to atone for inheriting the estate. His first choice is Jane, but Mrs. Bennet implies that Jane is intended for another (Bingley), so he switches his attentions to Elizabeth. (Mary wishes it was her; Kitty and Lydia can’t be bothered with Mr. Collins).

Everyone quickly grows tired of Mr. Collins (with the exception of Mrs. Bennet who hopes to soon have him as a son-in-law), so they try to escape by taking a walk into the village. They run into Bingley and Darcy who were on their way to Longbourn to issue an invitation to a ball at Netherfield.

At the Netherfield Ball, Elizabeth is hounded by Mr. Collins, and annoyed by having to dance with Mr. Darcy. Kitty and Lydia are out of control, Mary embarrasses the family with her performance at the piano-forte, and Mrs. Bennet makes a spectacle of herself with her bold assumptions of Jane and Bingley’s engagement.

The day after the Netherfield Ball, Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth. Elizabeth rejects him. Mrs. Bennet tries to get Mr. Bennet to make Elizabeth marry Mr. Collins, but Mr. Bennet will not agree.

Bingley is called away to London. Caroline sends a letter to Jane saying that she and Darcy will be following him there and none of them have any intention of returning to Netherfield.

The militia is re-stationed to Brighton.

Jane is depressed. Elizabeth is depressed. Kitty and Lydia are depressed. Mrs. Bennet is depressed.

Elizabeth's Uncle and Aunt Gardiner invite her to take a tour up north and they decide to visit Pemberley. Elizabeth doesn't want to see Darcy but is curious to see the estate, because she has heard so much about it.

Mrs. Reynolds, the Pemberley housekeeper, shows them around and talks about how amazing Darcy is. Elizabeth wonders if she has been mistaken about him.

Darcy arrives at Pemberley, unexpectedly, and welcomes Elizabeth and the Gardiners with "open arms." He introduces Elizabeth to his sister.

Darcy and Elizabeth spend time together at Pemberley and in the neighboring town. They fall in love. He proposes. Bingley returns to Netherfield. He proposes to Jane.

Double Wedding. Happy Endings.

SCENES & MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT ONE

#1 – Overture (Orchestra)

SCENE 1 – “First Impressions” – Chawton Cottage

#2 – Choices: First Impressions (Austen, Cassandra & Chorus of Voices)

#2a – Choices (Part Two) (Austen, Company)

#2b – Choices (Part Three) (Austen, Company)

#2c – Assembly Dance (Dance Music: Instrumental/Underscoring)

#2d – Choices (Finale) (Austen, Company)

SCENE 1A – “Considering ‘First Impressions’” – Chawton Cottage

SCENE 2 – “After the Assembly” – Netherfield Park / Longbourn House

#3 – Isn’t She Wonderful? (Bingley & Jane with Darcy & Elizabeth)

SCENE 3 – “At Lucas Lodge” – A parlour at Lucas Lodge

#4 – When I Fall in Love (Austen, Elizabeth)

SCENE 3A – “Time” – Chawton Cottage

SCENE 4 – “Jane is Invited to Netherfield” – Longbourn House

#5 – My Dearest Jane (First Letter) (Caroline)

#6 – Silly Girls (Mr. Bennet)

#7 – Elizabeth Walks to Netherfield (Underscoring)

SCENE 5 – “At Netherfield (Part One)” – Netherfield Park Exterior

#8 – Jane Recovers (Underscoring)

SCENE 5A – “Change of Plans” – Longbourn House / Chawton Cottage

#8A – Jane Recovers (Part Two) (Underscoring)

SCENE 6 – “At Netherfield (Part Two)” – Netherfield Park Interior (Drawing-room)

#9 – He Thinks / She Thinks (Elizabeth, Darcy, Caroline “plays”)

SCENE 7 – “Meeting Mr. Collins” – Longbourn House

#10 – Meeting Mr. Collins (Underscoring, Austen, Chorus of Voices)

#11 – Lady Catherine de Bourgh (Mr. Collins, The Bennets, Chorus of Voices)

SCENE 8 – “Meeting Mr. Wickham” – Meryton

#12 – Meeting Mr. Wickham (Underscoring, Austen, Elizabeth, Jane, Kitty, Lydia)

#13 – My Dream (Wickham, Chorus of Voices)

#14 – A Very Rational Account (Underscoring)

SCENE 8A – “Considering Mr. Wickham” – Chawton Cottage

SCENE 9 – “The Netherfield Ball” – Netherfield Ballroom

#15 – The Netherfield Ball (Bingley, Austen, Company)

#16 – Dancing with Mr. Collins (Dance Music)

#17 – Dancing with Mr. Darcy (Dance Music: Elizabeth, Instrumental/Underscoring)

#18 – The Bennets Expose Themselves (Dance Music: Instrumental/Underscoring, Mary)

#19 – The Netherfield Ball (Reprise) (Austen, Elizabeth, Darcy, Company)

SCENE 10 – “Mr. Collins is Rejected” – Longbourn House

#20 – My Poor Nerves (Mrs. Bennet)

SCENE 11 – “Mr. Collins is Accepted” – Chawton Cottage / Meryton

#21 – Not Romantic (Cassandra/Charlotte, Austen, Wedding Guests)

SCENE 12 – “Leaving Netherfield” – Longbourn House / Netherfield Park

#22 – My Dearest Jane (Second Letter) (Caroline)

SCENE 13 – “Dismissing Mr. Wickham” – Longbourn House

#23 – Dismissing Mr. Wickham (Underscoring)

SCENE 14 – “At Rosings” – Rosings Park

#24 – Meeting Lady Catherine (Underscoring)

#25 – Piano Music #1 (Elizabeth “plays”)

#26 – Piano Music #2 (Elizabeth “plays”)

SCENE 15 – “Darcy Calls on Elizabeth” – Hunsford Parsonage**SCENE 16 – “The Proposal & The Refusal” – Hunsford Parsonage / Chawton Cottage**

#27 – The Proposal (Darcy)

ACT TWO

#29 – Entr’acte (Orchestra)

SCENE 1 – “Second Chances” – Chawton Cottage

#30 – Choices: Second Chances (Austen, Chorus of Voices)

SCENE 2 – “Darcy’s Letter” – Rosings Park Exterior

#31 – Take a Walk (Austen, Elizabeth, Darcy, Chorus of Voices)

#32 – Darcy’s Letter (Austen, Elizabeth, Darcy, Wickham, Company)

#33 – Had I Been in Love (Austen, Elizabeth, Chorus of Voices)

SCENE 3 – “Dreaming of Brighton” – Longbourn House / Regency Square (Brighton)

#34 – Piano Music #3 (Mary “plays”)

#35 – I Can’t Resist a Redcoat (Lydia, Kitty, Soldiers & Wickham)

SCENE 3A – “Sharing” – Chawton Cottage**SCENE 4 – “Pemberley” – Longbourn House / The Pemberley Estate**

#36 – To Pemberley (Underscoring)

#37 – The Portrait Song (Elizabeth, Darcy)

SCENE 4A – “The Story is not Finished Yet” – Chawton Cottage

#38 – Once Upon a Time (Austen, Chorus of Voices)

SCENE 5 – “Distress at Longbourn” – Lambton Inn / Longbourn House

#39 – Watch Him Go (Chorus of Voices)

SCENE 6 – “Searching for Lydia” – London / Various Locations

#40 – What News! (Company)

SCENE 7 – “More Distress at Longbourn” – Longbourn House

#41 – Let Me Understand It (Underscoring)

SCENE 8 – “Bingley Returns” – Longbourn House

#42 – I Think You’re Wonderful (Bingley, Jane)

SCENE 9 – “Lady Catherine Returns” – Longbourn House**SCENE 10 – “Calling on Darcy” – Darcy’s London House**

#43 – Fine Eyes (Darcy)

#44 – Romantic (Austen, Chorus of Voices)

SCENE 11 – “Happy Endings” – Longbourn House Exterior / Chawton Cottage

#45 – Finale (Darcy, Elizabeth, Austen, Cassandra, Company)

#46 – Bows (Orchestra)

Jane Austen’s PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

A Musical

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ACT ONE

MUSIC #1: OVERTURE

SCENE 1: “FIRST IMPRESSIONS” – Chawton Cottage

AT RISE: Afternoon. CASSANDRA sits in a chair working through a basket of mending. SOUND: A doorbell rings. -- Heralding the arrival of the afternoon post.

AUSTEN

(Calls from offstage)

Cassandra! Cassandra!!!

(CASSANDRA breaks out of her reverie and turns toward the door)

CASSANDRA

Jane?

(AUSTEN bursts into the room)

AUSTEN

(Handing a letter out to CASSANDRA)

Here, dear Sister.

CASSANDRA

What on earth?

AUSTEN

Read!!!

CASSANDRA

“Dear Miss Austen, we are pleased to inform you that all copies of ‘Sense and Sensibility’ have been sold –” Jane!

AUSTEN

(Giddy with excitement)

Keep reading!

CASSANDRA

“... Owing to its success we would like to consider more of your work for publication. Please send a manuscript –” Oh, Jane! I am so proud of you. What are you going to send?

AUSTEN

(Reality sets in)

Oh! -- I haven't thought ...

(SHE runs to a trunk/shelf and starts searching through her manuscripts)

... Sketches? Old children's stories? ...

CASSANDRA

(Getting an idea)

What about 'First Impressions'?

AUSTEN

No.

CASSANDRA

Father thought it was good enough to be published.

AUSTEN

And the publisher refused to read it.

CASSANDRA

Almost fifteen years ago.

(AUSTEN and CASSANDRA stare at each other)

AUSTEN

No.

CASSANDRA

But why not?

AUSTEN

(AUSTEN picks up the 'First Impressions' manuscript out of the trunk. Reading)

"Mr. Bingley was once upon a time coming of age when he was tempted to look at Netherfield House."

(To CASSANDRA)

There. That's why. It doesn't even have a good opening line.

CASSANDRA

But it is a wonderful story.

MUSIC #2: CHOICES: First Impressions (Part One)

AUSTEN

ONCE I WROTE OF LOVE.

ONCE I WROTE THE STORY OF

'FIRST IMPRESSIONS.'

YEARS AGO,
I WROTE WHAT I DID NOT KNOW.
STILL, I WROTE OF LOVE.

CASSANDRA
YOU WERE YOUNG AND UNAFRAID.

AUSTEN
YES! MISTAKES WERE MADE.
I WAS SUCH AN AMATEUR,
SO NAÏVE AND IMMATURE.

CASSANDRA
STILL, YOU WROTE OF LOVE.

AUSTEN
But maybe it's best left on the shelf. Does the world really need another romantic novel by Jane Austen?

(She returns the manuscript to the trunk and begins cleaning up the mess of papers and notebooks)

CASSANDRA
You have an opportunity, Jane.
IF YOU READ THROUGH THE MANUSCRIPT,
COULD THE WRITING PERSUADE YOU
TO GIVE THE STORY A SECOND CHANCE?
AT LEAST LOOK AT THE CHOICES YOU MADE.

AUSTEN
(Surveying all the papers in front of her)
CHOICES ...

CASSANDRA
CHOICES ...
YOUR CHARACTERS LONG TO LIVE AND BE FREE.

AUSTEN
CHOICES ...

CASSANDRA
THERE'S NOTHING TO LOSE BY LOOKING TO SEE.

AUSTEN
I don't know ...

CASSANDRA

Can't you at least consider it?

AUSTEN

(With a sigh)

Alright. But only because you asked me.

(CASSANDRA gestures her happiness and exits)

AUSTEN

(Retrieving the manuscript)

YOU ARE A STORY THAT NEVER RECEIVED ANY GLORY.
REJECTED AND OVER THE YEARS NEGLECTED.

AUSTEN

DO MY CHARACTERS LONG TO LIVE
AND BE FREE?

THE INK ON THE PAPER BECKONS
ME.

CHOICES!

WAS THE REJECTION A REQUIEM?

WHAT WERE THE CHOICES MADE

BACK THEN?

WOULD I STILL AGREE WITH THEM?

VOICES

OOH ...

OOH ...

CHOICES! CHOICES! CHOICES!

REQUIEM!

MADE BACK THEN!

AUSTEN

ARE CHARACTERS LONGING TO LIVE AND BE FREE?
INK ON PAPER BECKONS ME ...

(Sitting at her writing table, reading the title of the manuscript)

“First Impressions.”

(She takes a breath)

MUSIC #2A: CHOICES (Part Two)

VOICES

OOH ...

(AUSTEN turns through the pages)

BINGLEY (Voice)

There is nothing I love more than a country dance!

JANE (Voice)

He is just what a young man ought to be.

ELIZABETH (Voice)

Well, you have liked many a stupider person.

DARCY (Voice)

Every savage can dance.

(AUSTEN smiles)

MRS. BENNET

(Interrupting the music, enters AUSTEN'S imagination, searching for her husband)

Mr. Bennet! Mr. Bennet!

(MR. BENNET appears)

My dear Mr. Bennet – Have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?

(Underscore continues)

MR. BENNET

Mr. Bennet replied that he had not.

(Pause)

MRS. BENNET

(Impatiently)

Do not you want to know who has taken it?

MR. BENNET

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

MRS. BENNET

Why, my dear, you must know, that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England.

MR. BENNET

What is his name?

MRS. BENNET

Bingley!

(BINGLEY appears)

MR. BENNET

Is he married or single?

MRS. BENNET

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!

MR. BENNET

How so? How can it affect them?

MRS. BENNET

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

THE BENNET DAUGHTERS (Voices)

CHOICES ...

AUSTEN

HE HAS CHOICES ...

THE BENNET DAUGHTERS

(Appearing, overlapping as they primp for BINGLEY)
WILL HE CHOOSE ME? WILL HE CHOOSE ME?
LET HIM CHOOSE ME! LET HIM CHOOSE ME!

AUSTEN

THE BENNETS WERE MARRIED YEARS AGO
AND EXPECTED AN HEIR WITH A SON,
BUT FIVE DAUGHTERS LATER THEIR HOPE WAS GONE.
POOR MRS. BENNET'S UNDONE.

(KITTY coughs)

MRS. BENNET

(Grabbing on to AUSTEN)

They must get married!

(Having been touched by MRS. BENNET, AUSTEN is surprised by the force with which the story is speaking to her)

MR. BENNET

Is that Mr. Bingley's design in settling here?

MRS. BENNET

(Confused)

Design!

ELIZABETH

Oh yes, papa. Mr. Bingley is a single man of large fortune – whatever his own feelings might be, he is the rightful property of someone's daughter.

MR. BENNET

Then Mr. Bingley has my hearty consent to marry whichever he chuses; though I must throw in a good word for you, Lizzy.

(Underscoring continues)

ELIZABETH

Thank you, Papa.

(KITTY coughs)

MRS. BENNET

You are always giving Lizzy the preference! She is not a bit better than the others; I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane ...

JANE

(Protesting)

Mamma!

ELIZABETH

(Laughing)

Jane, compliments always take you by surprise; Me? Never.

MR. BENNET

There! You see? Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters.

MRS. BENNET

(Defiant)

Lizzy is not half so good humoured as Lydia!

LYDIA

(Laughing)

I may be the youngest, but when Mr. Bingley and I are married, he shall wear a blue coat and we will ride away on a white horse.

(Giddy laughter. KITTY continues to cough. Teasing MARY)

What think you, Mary?

MARY

(Crossing to the pianoforte)

Your plan has no charm for me, Dear Sister.

(She begins to play)

(KITTY coughs)

MRS. BENNET

Kitty, don't keep coughing so, for heaven's sake! Have a little compassion on my nerves.

KITTY

(Fretfully)

I do not cough for my own amusement!

MUSIC #2B: CHOICES (Part Three)

AUSTEN

THE BENNET GIRLS NEED TO GET MARRIED –
A PROBLEM BECAUSE THERE ARE FIVE.
THEY ALL WANT MEN TO ROMANCE THEM.

As does every young lady ...

THE MILITIA ARRIVE!

(SOLDIERS march through the town)

KITTY & LYDIA

(To each other)

Soldiers!!!

SOLDIERS

WE AWAIT OUR ORDERS.

(To KITTY and LYDIA)

KEEP US OCCUPIED.

KITTY & LYDIA

(Running to either side of the line)

WE WILL GIVE THE ORDERS

TO KEEP YOU SATISFIED.

(Giggles)

KITTY

ATTENTION!

(SOLDIERS face KITTY)

LYDIA

(Not to be outdone)

ATTENTION!

(SOLDIERS face LYDIA)

(KITTY and LYDIA compete back and forth like a tennis match)

KITTY

ATTENTION!

LYDIA

ATTENTION!

KITTY

ATTENTION!

LYDIA

ATTENTION!

AUSTEN

That will do!

STILL ... READERS FOCUS ON BINGLEY
AND NETHERFIELD WHERE HE WILL RESIDE.

(The line of SOLDIERS march off. KITTY and LYDIA fight as they follow)

(CAROLINE enters to join BINGLEY and they look around “Netherfield”
approvingly)

AUSTEN	VOICES
I MADE CHOICES ...	OOH ... OOH ...
(Surprised)	
INTELLIGENT CHOICES ...	OOH ... OOH ...
THE CHARACTERS FORMED INSIDE	
OF MY HEAD.	
HOW CAN THEY LIVE IF THEY ARE	OOH ...
NOT READ?	

DARCY

(Announcing his arrival at “Netherfield”)
FITZWILLIAM DARCY.

THE BENNET WOMEN

WHO IS HE?

AUSTEN

FITZWILLIAM DARCY!

(DARCY and BINGLEY greet one another as underscoring continues)

DARCY

Between Bingley and Darcy there was a steady friendship.

BINGLEY

On the strength of Darcy’s regard Bingley had the firmest reliance, and of his judgment the highest opinion.

DARCY

In understanding Darcy was the superior.

BINGLEY

(Taken aback)

Bingley was by no means deficient,

DARCY

(Playfully)

But Darcy was clever.

MRS. BENNET

(To MR. BENNET)

Did you hear Mr. Darcy has ten thousand a year?

MR. BENNET

Ten thousand? I say, he’s much handsomer than Mr. Bingley.

MRS. BENNET

Yes, my dear! Yes!

(CAROLINE clears her throat to gain DARCY’S attention)

CAROLINE

(Extending her hand to DARCY)

DON’T FORGET CAROLINE BINGLEY.

AUSTEN

(Reminded of her presence)

AH, YES!

BINGLEY, DARCY, CAROLINE & AUSTEN
SHE MAKES THE PARTY COMPLETE.

BENNETS & TOWNSPEOPLE

(Invading an “Assembly Hall”)

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD WANTS TO GREET THEM,

AUSTEN

SO THEY HAVE AN ASSEMBLY AND MEET.

COMPANY

SO WE HAVE AN ASSEMBLY AND MEET!

(AUSTEN’S reality at Chawton Cottage begins to be overtaken by the world of ‘First Impressions’ as the story and characters become more vivid in her imagination)

(TOWNSPEOPLE find partners to form a country dance in the “Assembly Hall.”
BINGLEY sees JANE and invites her to join the line)

AUSTEN

(Speaking from experience)

To be fond of dancing is a certain step towards falling in love.

BINGLEY

(To JANE)

There is nothing I love more than a country dance!

(JANE shyly accepts. BINGLEY leads her to the floor)

MUSIC #2C: ASSEMBLY DANCE

(ASSEMBLY DANCE: Rousing energy from the DANCERS. DARCY walks about the room to avoid dancing. As he proceeds to snub everyone around him, DARCY’S popularity diminishes, and reports of his disgusting manners spread throughout the assembly)

CAROLINE

What a charming amusement this is, Mr. Darcy.

DARCY

Every savage can dance.

(CAROLINE laughs)

CAROLINE

But pray! You must pay compliment to the place!

DARCY

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

(MRS. BENNET pushes MR. BENNET towards DARCY)

MR. BENNET

(With a nod)

Mr. Darcy.

MRS. BENNET

(Pouncing)

Your friend dances delightfully, Sir!

(Indicating ELIZABETH standing off to the side without a partner to dance with)

Will you honor one of our daughters with a dance?

DARCY

At such an assembly as this?

(He walks away and crosses to CAROLINE. THEY stand apart from the crowd and observe with condescending superiority)

MRS. BENNET

How disagreeable!

MR. BENNET

So you detest the man.

MRS. BENNET

Quite!

AUSTEN

“How do you find our little assembly, Mr. Darcy?”

DARCY

Insupportable.

(The dance ends. Observing DARCY, BINGLEY approaches and pulls him aside leaving CAROLINE to speak with JANE)

BINGLEY

Come, Darcy, I hate to see you standing about in this stupid manner. I must have you dance.

DARCY

Certainly not. You know I detest it,

(Looking at JANE)

and you are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room.

BINGLEY

(A huge grin appears on his face)

Oh! She is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld!

(Pointing out ELIZABETH)

But Darcy, look. There is one of her sisters. Do let me ask my partner to introduce you.

DARCY

(Catching ELIZABETH’S gaze he pulls away, coldly)

Bingley ... you must own she is very plain –

ELIZABETH

(Overhearing and mortified)
Plain?!?

BINGLEY
(Pulling DARCY aside)
I say, Darcy, that's rather hard.

AUSTEN
(Questioning her word choice)
“Plain? ...”

DARCY
(To AUSTEN)
She is plain.

AUSTEN
(She picks up a pen and makes the first change to her manuscript)
Oh no, that will never do. She is ...

DARCY
(To BINGLEY)
She is tolerable ...

ELIZABETH
(Shocked. Turning to AUSTEN)
Tolerable?!?!

DARCY
... but not handsome enough to tempt me.
(ELIZABETH turns back with mortification to DARCY. Continuing, to BINGLEY)
You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles, Bingley.
(BINGLEY tries to protest)
You are wasting your time with me.

(Un-phased, BINGLEY returns to JANE. Gossip of DARCY'S rude behavior quickly circulates throughout the Assembly Hall)

ELIZABETH
(To AUSTEN)
What a horrid, horrid man!

MUSIC #2D: CHOICES (Finale)

AUSTEN
Not all your ten thousand pounds can save you now, Mr. Darcy.

ELIZABETH

HE IS PROUD!

TOWNSPEOPLE

YES!

ELIZABETH

THE MOST DISAGREEABLE MAN IN THE WORLD.

TOWNSPEOPLE

INDEED!

ELIZABETH & TOWNSPEOPLE

EV'RYBODY HOPED HE WOULD NEVER COME THERE AGAIN!

AUSTEN

IN THIS STORY
THAT NEVER RECEIVED ANY
GLORY,
CHARACTERS LONG TO LIVE
AND BE FREE.

COMPANY

STORY.
GLORY.
CHOICES ...

LIVE AND BE FREE!

ONCE I WROTE OF LOVE.
ONCE I WROTE THIS STORY OF
FIRST IMPRESSIONS. YEARS AGO,
I WROTE. BUT WHAT DID I KNOW
WHEN I WROTE OF LOVE?

OOH ...
OOH ...
OOH ...
OOH ... AHH ...

I WAS YOUNG AND UNAFRAID.
AHH ...
I WANT MY STORIES TO ENDURE.
I WANT TO KNOW, TO BE SURE.

WHAT MISTAKES WERE MADE?
AND WANT TO BE SURE.

MY CHARACTERS LONG TO LIVE
AND BE FREE ...

TO BE FREE. CHOICES ... CHOICES ...

REVIEW ...
EXAMINE ...
CONSIDER ...

... CHOICES.
... CHOICES.
... CHOICES.

(The Assembly dissolves, leaving AUSTEN at her table)

SCENE 1A: “CONSIDERING ‘FIRST IMPRESSIONS’” – Chawton Cottage

(CASSANDRA enters)

CASSANDRA
(Bringing a cup of tea over to AUSTEN)

Well? ...

AUSTEN

I don't know ...

CASSANDRA

Why not?

AUSTEN
Because it's another story about sisters. It needs to stand apart from 'Sense and Sensibility.' And I know that I want to write more than just another love story.

CASSANDRA
I like love stories. But who am I? Just your sister. Who likes stories about sisters.

AUSTEN
(Handing CASSANDRA the manuscript)
Then you read it. Start there.

CASSANDRA
“I say, Darcy!” ...

SCENE 2: “AFTER THE ASSEMBLY” – Netherfield Park / Longbourn House

(BINGLEY and DARCY appear at “Netherfield,” having arrived home from the Meryton Assembly)

BINGLEY

I say, Darcy! What a marvelous assembly!

DARCY

Nothing more than a country neighbourhood with little beauty and no fashion.

BINGLEY

Well, I soon felt acquainted with all the room.

DARCY

You were soon acquainted with Miss Jane Bennet.

MUSIC #3: ISN'T SHE WONDERFUL?

BINGLEY

(The grin reappears)

Darcy! I cannot conceive an angel more beautiful!

ISN'T SHE WONDERFUL? ISN'T SHE SWEET?
WHEN I FIRST SAW HER MY HEART DID ENTREAT ME
TO LEAD HER TO THE DANCE FLOOR.

ISN'T SHE BEAUTIFUL? WASN'T IT GRAND?
CLOSING MY EYES, I STILL HOLD HER HAND,
AND MY MEM'RY IS YEARNING FOR MORE.

WASN'T HER LAUGHTER ENCHANTING?

DARCY

What?

BINGLEY

IT WAS ELEGANT, LOVELY AND PURE.

DARCY

Quite.

BINGLEY

WASN'T HER DANCING ENTRANCING
AND HER MANNER DEMURE?

DARCY

She smiles too much.

BINGLEY

NOW THAT I'VE MET HER I SHAN'T BE THE SAME.
A GLORIOUS ANGEL, MY LOVE SHE MAY CLAIM.
SHE ALONE IS THE ONE WHOM MY HEART ADORES.

(JANE and ELIZABETH are seen at “Longbourn”)

ELIZABETH

Jane, you are very quiet. How did you find the assembly?

JANE

Hm?

ELIZABETH

Mr. Bingley thought you quite beautiful.

(JANE blushes)

JANE

(Recomposing herself)

I was very much flattered by his asking me to dance a second time.

ELIZABETH

But how did you find him?

JANE

(Giving in to her happiness)

... Oh, Lizzy! I have never met with anyone I admire so much as Mr. Bingley.

I NEVER DREAMED
I WOULD MEET A MAN AS
WONDERFUL AS HE.

ELIZBETH

Why not? You are perfect.

JANE

AND WHEN WE DANCED IT SEEMED
THERE WAS NO FLOOR; THERE WAS NO CEILING.
WHAT'S THIS FEELING?

ELIZABETH

(Rolling her eyes)

PROOF THAT LOVE IS BLIND ...

JANE
WASN'T HE CHARMING?

ELIZABETH
COMPLETELY.

JANE
HE WAS CLEVER, WELL-BRED AND REFINED.

ELIZABETH
(Teasing)
And handsome!

JANE
SUCH HAPPY MANNERS – HE SPOKE SO SWEETLY ...
AND HE WAS KIND.

AM I FALLING IN LOVE?
OUT OF CONTROL, MY HEART IS SOARING
LIKE IT NEVER HAS BEFORE.
ISN'T HE WONDERFUL?

ELIZABETH
YES, HE IS WONDERFUL.

JANE
I THINK HE'S WONDERFUL.

ELIZABETH
Well, you have liked many a stupider person.

JANE
Dear, Lizzy!

BINGLEY
ISN'T SHE WONDERFUL?

DARCY
Yes, Bingley. You have said. Repeatedly.

(MUSICAL INTERLUDE: At “Longbourn,” JANE and ELIZABETH relive the Meryton Assembly in their bedroom. ELIZABETH pretends to be “Bingley” and invites JANE to dance. Simultaneously, at “Netherfield,” BINGLEY dances around DARCY trying to engage him in his fun. DARCY is outwardly annoyed,

but privately amused by his friend. Time shifts and ALL get ready to gather at an evening card party)

JANE

HE IS SO WONDERFUL!

AM I FALLING IN LOVE?

OUT OF CONTROL,
MY HEART IS SOARING,

AND COULD HE BE THE ONE
WHOM MY HEART ADORES?

BINGLEY

SHE IS SO WONDERFUL!

NOW THAT I'VE MET HER I
SHAN'T BE THE SAME.

GLORIOUS ANGEL,
MY LOVE SHE MAY CLAIM.
SHE ALONE IS THE ONE

WHOM MY HEART ADORES.

SCENE 3: “AT LUCAS LODGE” – A Parlour at Lucas Lodge

(Meeting in public, JANE becomes more reserved – reigns in the effusiveness she shared with her sister in private)

(BINGLEY and CAROLINE approach JANE and ELIZABETH. DARCY lags behind)

BINGLEY

(Approaching JANE)

Good evening, Miss Bennet.

JANE

Mr. Bingley.

BINGLEY

Should you like to play a game of cards?

CAROLINE

Yes, Miss Bennet, won't you be our fourth.

(JANE hesitates)

CASSANDRA

(To AUSTEN)

I don't remember Jane hesitating. I thought she liked Mr. Bingley ...

AUSTEN

She does. She just prefers to keep the world from knowing how much.

BINGLEY

(Offering HIS arm)

May I escort you to the table?

JANE

Thank you.

(BINGLEY, JANE and CAROLINE head to a card table, leaving DARCY and ELIZABETH alone in awkward silence)

DARCY

Miss Bennet.

ELIZABETH

(Icily)

Mr. Darcy.

CAROLINE

(Calling from the card table)

Mr. Darcy! We're waiting ...

(DARCY turns and walks away)

ELIZABETH

(Confused)

What does Mr. Darcy mean by speaking to me?

AUSTEN

Pardon?

CASSANDRA

Mr. Darcy was speaking to Elizabeth.

AUSTEN

Mr. Darcy is all politeness --

ELIZABETH

Oh, yes, all politeness. Walking here ... walking there ...

AUSTEN

-- fancying himself so very great.

CASSANDRA

But Mr. Darcy has every right to think highly of himself.

AUSTEN

You sound like Lizzy's friend Charlotte Lucas.

CASSANDRA

I like Charlotte. I'd make a good Charlotte. I'll be Charlotte.

(To ELIZABETH)

"Elizabeth, consider his fortune, his family. Mr. Darcy has a right to be proud."

ELIZABETH

(To CASSANDRA as "CHARLOTTE")

Well, perhaps I could forgive his pride if he had not mortified mine.

CASSANDRA (as CHARLOTTE)

Poor Elizabeth, to be called plain.

AUSTEN

(To CASSANDRA, correcting for continuity)

No, not "plain." "Tolerable."

CASSANDRA

Tolerable?

AUSTEN

(Taking her pen to the manuscript)

Yes. I changed it.

MRS. BENNET

(To MR. BENNET)

Oh, my dear! I am quite delighted with Mr. Bingley. If I could but see Jane happily settled at Netherfield, I should have nothing to wish for!

MR. BENNET

Except for your other four girls to be married ...

ELIZABETH

(Sharing a secret)

Do you know, Charlotte, I think Jane is falling in love with Mr. Bingley.

CASSANDRA (as CHARLOTTE)

She likes him?

ELIZABETH

Can you not perceive her regard for him?

CASSANDRA (as CHARLOTTE)

(Shaking her head)

Mmm ... no. She ought to show more affection than she feels if she wants to be secure in fixing him.

ELIZABETH

(Laughing at the ridiculous notion)

Fixing him!

CASSANDRA (as CHARLOTTE)

If she does not help him on, he may never do more than like her.

ELIZABETH

But she does help him on as much as her nature will allow.

CASSANDRA (as CHARLOTTE)

If Jane is going to secure Mr. Bingley, she must make the most of every moment in which she can command his attention.

(CASSANDRA hands the manuscript back to AUSTEN having completed the scene)

MUSIC #4: WHEN I FALL IN LOVE

ELIZABETH

(In a quandary)

Secure him? ... Fix him? ...

AUSTEN

(Reflecting on the scene)

So Charlotte thinks ...

HAPPINESS CANNOT BE GUARANTEED.
LOVE DOESN'T ALWAYS ENDURE ...
THAT WHEN A GIRL MARRIES, SHE TAKES A CHANCE.
SHE HOPES TO BE HAPPY;
SHE MAY NOT BE HAPPY.
THERE'S NO WAY OF KNOWING FOR SURE.

ELIZABETH

(To AUSTEN)

THEN WHY SHOULD SHE MARRY AT ALL
IF THE CHANCE TO BE HAPPY IS SMALL?

AUSTEN

(To ELIZABETH)

WITHOUT A CONNECTION
THERE IS NO PROTECTION
WHEN OLD AGE AND TROUBLES BEFALL.

ELIZABETH

MUST WE GAMBLE ON MARRIAGE AND HAPPINESS?

AUSTEN

(Tongue in cheek)

YES, IF THE MAN CAN PROVIDE.

ELIZABETH

IF HAPPINESS CANNOT BE GUARANTEED,
THEN WHEN I GET MARRIED ...
IF I GET MARRIED ...
I WILL LET LOVE BE MY GUIDE.

(Watching JANE and BINGLEY)

WILL I FALL IN LOVE?
WILL I KNOW IT FROM THE START?

LOVE CAN WEAVE A MAGIC SPELL,
SO HOW WILL I BEGIN TO TELL
WHEN I FALL IN LOVE?

IF I FALL IN LOVE,
WHAT WILL LOVE IMPART?
WILL IT CHANGE ME? CAN I BE
BOUND BY LOVE AND STILL BE FREE
IF I FALL IN LOVE?

HE MUST HAVE A SIMILAR MIND TO MINE.
HIS CHARACTER? STRONG AND REFINED.
AND HIS REPUTATION,
WHATEVER HIS STATION,
MUST BE GENEROUS, TRUTHFUL AND KIND.

IF I FALL IN LOVE,
FATE WILL PLAY A PART.
IF LOVE SHOULD BE MY DESTINY,
THEN LET THE MAN BELIEVE IN ME!

WHEN I FALL IN LOVE
I WILL GIVE MY HEART.
WHAT WILL BE? I CANNOT GUESS.
WHAT I WANT IS HAPPINESS
WHEN I FALL –
– IF I FALL –
WHEN I FALL IN LOVE.

SCENE 3A: “TIME” – Chawton Cottage

CASSANDRA

Did it help to hear it?

AUSTEN

Yes, thank you, Cass.

CASSANDRA

You know, Jane, you used to be very much like Elizabeth --

AUSTEN

Yes. Perhaps too much.

CASSANDRA

But you changed.

(Beat)

AUSTEN

Go on.

CASSANDRA

You changed when Tom LeFroy went away.

AUSTEN

And you changed when Thomas Fowle died.

CASSANDRA

(Taken aback)

Well ... you have wrinkles around your eyes!

AUSTEN

So do you!

(Pause)

AUSTEN

At least we have good teeth.

(Surprise. Laughter)

CASSANDRA

(Picking up the empty teacup)

I'll leave you to it then.

(She exits)

SCENE 4: “JANE IS INVITED TO NETHERFIELD” – Longbourn House

(CAROLINE appears as JANE – holding a letter – joins THE BENNETS at “Longbourn”)

MUSIC #5: MY DEAREST JANE (FIRST LETTER)

CAROLINE

MY DEAREST JANE,
I WISH TO ENTERTAIN.
PLEASE, WON'T YOU COME AND DINE TODAY?
I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU RIGHT AWAY.
I DO NOT KNOW WHAT I'M ABOUT;
THE GENTLEMAN ARE DINING OUT.
YOURS EVER –
CAROLINE BINGLEY.

MRS. BENNET

Dining out! Mr. Bingley will not be at Netherfield? That is very unlucky.

LYDIA

I wonder if he is to dine with the officers. Kitty – Did you know they are to stay all winter?

KITTY

Did you know a private was flogged?

LYDIA

Did you know Colonel Forster is going to be married?

KITTY

What?!?

MR. BENNET

You must be two of the silliest girls in the country.

MRS. BENNET

I am astonished, my dear, that you should be so ready to think your own children silly. I remember the time when I liked a red coat myself very well ...

(SOUND: Distant, rumbling thunder)

JANE

Papa, may I have the carriage?

MRS. BENNET

(Before MR. BENNET has a chance to answer)

No, my dear, no.

JANE

(Confused)

May I not go to Netherfield?

MRS. BENNET

Of course, my dear, of course! But you will go on horseback because it seems likely to rain;

(SOUND: Closer, rumbling thunder)

JANE

But –

MRS. BENNET

– and then you must stay all night.

(She shoos JANE away to get ready)

ELIZABETH

Mamma!

(MR. BENNET watches in silence as the girls run offstage in a flutter)

MUSIC #6: SILLY GIRLS

MR. BENNET

I LIVE AMONG SIX WOMEN.
I'M A STRANGER IN MY HOME.
I CANNOT FLEE THE FEMININE.
I COULD WRITE A TOME
ABOUT THE QUIRKS AND FOLLIES OF THE FEMALE MIND
FROM MY DAILY OBSERVATIONS OF THE GENUS: WOMAN-KIND.

(JANE enters in traveling clothes, followed by her mother and sisters. THEY all chatter about their excitement as MR. BENNET sings)

SILLY GIRLS – THEY ARE ALL AROUND ME.
SILLY GIRLS – THEY ASTOUND ME.
TO BE WED IS THEIR SOLE AMBITION,
SO THEY PLOT NIGHT AND DAY
MAKING USE OF THEIR INTUITION.
MEN ARE PREY IN THE GAMES THEY PLAY.

SHAKESPEARE PENNED SO MANY WORDS ABOUT HUMANITY, ...

(JANE kisses Mr. Bennet goodbye)

BUT I DON'T THINK THE BARD ENDURED AS MUCH INSANITY!

HE SAID THAT “ALL THE WORLD’S A STAGE” WHERE MEN AND WOMEN
PLAY,
BUT I’M CONVINCED THAT WOMEN WRITE THE WORDS WE MEN MUST
SAY.

AUSTEN

“Mrs. Bennet’s hopes were answered. Jane had not been gone long before it rained ...
(SOUND: A spring shower. AUSTEN decides to raise the stakes)
... hard.”

(SOUND: Thunderstorm)

MRS. BENNET

(Clapping her hands with giddy excitement)
Jane certainly cannot come back now!

MR. BENNET

SILLY WIFE, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
WHAT CONCOCTIONS ARE YOU BREWING?
ALL THIS SCHEMING, COURTING, WOOING,
WILL BE THE CAUSE OF OUR UNDOING!

(Again, the remaining BENNET WOMEN gossip and chatter about everything in
their lives. Making predictions about Jane, talking about clothes, soldiers,
anything and everything ...)

MR. BENNET

SILLY GIRLS! – THEY ARE ALL AROUND ME.
SILLY GIRLS! – THEY CONFOUND ME.
BUYING RIBBONS FOR THEIR HAIR AND BONNETS.
FLIRTING SHAMELESSLY, WHILE READING SONNETS!
BALLGOWNS TWIRLING, LOVERS’ HEARTS ARE STIRRING,
AND MY WORLD IS WHIRLING WITH SILLY GIRLS!

(SOUND: Thunder & rain. Coughing becomes distinguishable as JANE is
revealed at “Netherfield” wearing a shawl and nightcap and clutching a
handkerchief)

JANE

My dearest Lizzy,

(Cough)

I find myself very unwell this morning.

(Cough)

My kind friends will not hear of my returning home till I am better. Yours &c. –

(Sneeze)

Jane.

MR. BENNET

(To MRS. BENNET)

Well, my dear, if your daughter should die, it would be a comfort to know that it was all in pursuit of Mr. Bingley.

MRS. BENNET

Oh! People do not die of little trifling colds.

ELIZABETH

I must go to her.

MR. BENNET

The carriage is engaged, Lizzy.

ELIZABETH

I will walk.

MRS. BENNET

In all this dirt? You will not be fit to be seen.

ELIZABETH

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

(She exits)

MUSIC #7: ELIZABETH WALKS TO NETHERFIELD

AUSTEN

"Resolved, she walked alone, crossing field after field at a quick pace, jumping over stiles and springing over puddles, and found herself at last within view of the house, with weary ankles, dirty stockings and a face glowing with the warmth of exercise."

SCENE 5: “AT NETHERFIELD (PART ONE)” – Netherfield Park Exterior

(ELIZABETH arrives at “Netherfield,” out of breath, stumbling upon DARCY and CAROLINE who are taking a walk on the grounds)

Miss Bennet! DARCY

Good morning. ELIZABETH

CAROLINE
(Sizing ELIZABETH up)
You ... walked here?

ELIZABETH
(Nodding)
Three miles.

... You came alone? DARCY

ELIZABETH
Yes.
(Silence. BINGLEY enters looking for CAROLINE)
Mr. Bingley! How is Jane?

BINGLEY
I am afraid she is a great deal too ill to be moved.

ELIZABETH
Oh no!

BINGLEY
You must stay! It will be a great comfort to her.

ELIZABETH
May I see her?

BINGLEY
Yes, of course!

CAROLINE
Must she always scamper about the countryside? Because her sister has a cold! She really looked almost wild.
(DARCY makes no response)

Do you know, Mr. Darcy, I once heard Miss Elizabeth Bennet spoken of as a reputed beauty, but I must confess, I cannot see any beauty in her.

(Pause)

I can guess the subject of your reverie.

DARCY

I should imagine not.

CAROLINE

You are considering how insupportable it is to have to spend time with such ... society.

DARCY

My mind was more agreeably engaged.

CAROLINE

Oh?

DARCY

I was contemplating the great pleasure a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow.

CAROLINE

(Flattered)

“Fine eyes?”

DARCY

Hm.

CAROLINE

In the face of a pretty woman?

DARCY

Yes.

CAROLINE

(Blushing)

And, pray, what lady inspires such reflections?

DARCY

(Without fear)

Miss Elizabeth Bennet.

CAROLINE

(Flushing)

Miss Elizabeth Ben! – I am all astonishment. How long has she been such a favourite? Pray, when am I to wish you joy?

(DARCY ignores her)

AUSTEN

A lady's imagination is very rapid; it jumps from admiration to love and from love to matrimony in a moment.

CAROLINE

Really, Mr. Darcy! Miss Elizabeth Bennet? What does she have to recommend her besides being an excellent walker? Such an exhibition! Does this adventure not affect your admiration of her 'fine eyes'?

DARCY

Not at all. They were brightened by the exercise.

AUSTEN

"They were brightened by the exercise." Excellent.

MUSIC #8: JANE RECOVERS

AUSTEN

(Continues)

"Elizabeth spent the night with her sister, and in the morning Jane was much recovered. ... Elizabeth wrote to ask for the carriage home."

SCENE 5A: “CHANGE OF PLANS” – Longbourn House / Chawton Cottage

(Lights up on MR. and MRS. BENNET at Longbourn. MRS. BENNET reads the letter from Elizabeth. MR. BENNET reads his morning paper)

MRS. BENNET

Oh no, no, no. This will never do. Jane should stay there.

AUSTEN

Should Jane be forced to remain at Netherfield?

MRS. BENNET

It would give her more time with Mr. Bingley.

AUSTEN

Time can do a great deal.

(Liking the idea, she adds new material)

“Dear Elizabeth,

MUSIC #8A: JANE RECOVERS (Part Two)

AUSTEN

(Continues)

I am afraid you cannot possibly have the carriage before Tuesday –”

MRS. BENNET

(Finishing the letter)

And if Mr. Bingley and his sister press you to stay longer, I can spare you very well.

(MR. BENNET shrugs his shoulders as if to say “I give up.” Lights up on Netherfield as AUSTEN writes a new scene)

SCENE 6: “AT NETHERFIELD (PART TWO)” – Netherfield Park Interior (Drawing-room)

(BINGLEY reads a book. DARCY writes a letter; CAROLINE walks about the room)

CAROLINE

(Mid-rant)

... Elizabeth Bennet has no conversation, no style, and no beauty. After four days together, I must say I find her manners to be very bad indeed.

BINGLEY

Caroline!

CAROLINE

What can she mean by having come here so far alone? It seems to me to show an abominable sort of conceited independence!

BINGLEY

It shows an affection for her sister.

CAROLINE

I have an excessive regard for Miss Jane Bennet, Charles; I do wish she liked you more --

BINGLEY

What do you mean? We get on very well.

DARCY

Has she ever shown you any particular sign of regard?

BINGLEY

(Not knowing what to say)

But -- well --

CAROLINE

She's a very sweet girl, Charles. And I wish with all my heart she was well settled. But with such a family,

(Secretively, as though she were talking about an unspeakable disease)

an uncle in trade ...

BINGLEY

Having an uncle in trade does not make the Miss Bennets one jot less agreeable.

DARCY

But it does lessen their chance of marrying men of any consideration in the world.

CAROLINE

Indeed.

(ELIZABETH and JANE enter, BINGLEY and DARCY rise)

BINGLEY

Miss Bennet! I am so happy you are feeling better! -- You are recovering? On the mend?

JANE

Yes, thank you, Mr. Bingley.

BINGLEY

Are you warm enough? You are cold. Come! You must sit by the fire.

JANE

I am very well, thank you.

(THEY sit. ELIZABETH looks for a book to read)

(DARCY returns to his letter; CAROLINE hovers and seizes any opportunity to bring her “fine eyes” to Darcy’s attention)

CAROLINE

How delighted your sister will be to receive your letter, Mr. Darcy!

(No response)

Pray tell Georgiana that I am delighted to hear of her improvement on the piano-forte.

(To ELIZABETH)

Miss Darcy is so delightful. Isn’t she, Charles?

BINGLEY

What? Oh -- Yes. Delightful.

CAROLINE

And so extremely accomplished for her age!

DARCY

(With pride)

She practices very constantly.

BINGLEY

It is amazing to me how all young ladies are so very accomplished.

CAROLINE

All!?!?

BINGLEY

Yes! Every young lady I have ever met has been introduced to me as “very accomplished.”

DARCY

Too true. But I cannot boast of knowing more than half a dozen young ladies that are really accomplished.

CAROLINE

Nor I, I am sure. A really accomplished woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, drawing and dancing ... she must possess something ...

DARCY

-- more substantial. She must improve her mind with extensive reading.

ELIZABETH

(Closes her book)

I wonder at your knowing any.

DARCY

You doubt the possibility of all this?

ELIZABETH

I never saw such a woman.

DARCY

Are you so severe upon your own sex?

CAROLINE

Miss Elizabeth Bennet, might I persuade you to take a turn about the room?

ELIZABETH

(Surprised)

Very well.

(DARCY watches)

CAROLINE

Will you join us, Mr. Darcy?

DARCY

(Caught)

I think not. My joining you would interfere.

CAROLINE

What could you mean?

DARCY

You either have secret affairs to discuss, or you are conscious that your figures appear to the

greatest advantage in walking.

CAROLINE

Oh! Shocking!

DARCY

– If the first, I should be completely in your way; – and if the second, I can admire you much better from here.

CAROLINE

How shall we punish him for such a speech?

ELIZABETH

Teaze him.

CAROLINE

Teaze?

ELIZABETH

Laugh at him!

CAROLINE

No, no.

ELIZABETH

Why? Is Mr. Darcy not to be laughed at?

(Crossing to DARCY)

How unfortunate. I dearly love a laugh.

CAROLINE

(Grabbing hold of ELIZABETH'S arm)

Do let us have a little music.

(She crosses to the pianoforte with ELIZABETH in tow, sits, opens a score and begins to play)

MUSIC #9: HE THINKS / SHE THINKS

(ELIZABETH looks through sheet music. After a moment, DARCY joins them – facing ELIZABETH on the other side of the pianoforte. Caught between them, CAROLINE observes as she plays)

DARCY

Miss Bingley gives me too much credit. Even a wise man can be made ridiculous by a person whose first object in life is a joke.

ELIZABETH

HE THINKS I'M A SILLY FEMALE.

I THINK HE'S A BOORISH MAN.

I hope I never ridicule what is wise or good. Follies and nonsense do divert me, but these are precisely what you are without?

DARCY

No one is without failing, but my object in life has been to avoid those weaknesses which expose one to ridicule.

SHE THINKS I HAVE NO SENSE OF HUMOUR.

I THINK I FIND HUMOUR WHERE I CAN.

ELIZABETH

Weaknesses ... such as vanity and pride?

DARCY

Vanity is a weakness indeed. But pride – where there is real superiority, pride will always be acceptable.

(ELIZABETH turns away with a smile)

SHE THINKS I AM VERY CLEVER.

ELIZABETH

HE HAS LOGIC FULL OF CHINKS.

Mr. Darcy –

CAROLINE

(Stops playing, cutting ELIZABETH off)

Mr. Darcy, will you turn my pages?

(DARCY turns the page, CAROLINE resumes playing)

ELIZABETH

I CAN'T ABIDE HIS COMPANY.

HE IS FULL OF PRIDE AND VANITY.

WHY SHOULD I CARE WHAT HE THINKS?

DARCY

I THINK SHE HAS BEEN TEASING ME.

WHY SHOULD I CARE WHAT SHE THINKS?

A person may be proud without being vain –

CAROLINE

Mr. Darcy?! ...

(DARCY turns another page, CAROLINE resumes playing)

ELIZABETH

I CAN'T ABIDE HIS COMPANY.
HE IS FULL OF PRIDE AND VANITY.

DARCY

I THINK SHE HAS BEEN
TEASING ME.

I DO NOT CARE WHAT
HE THINKS.

WHY SHOULD I CARE WHAT
SHE THINKS?

CAROLINE

(Stops playing)

Your examination of Mr. Darcy is over, I presume. – And pray, what is the result?

ELIZABETH

He has no defects. He says so himself.

DARCY

I have faults.

ELIZABETH

Such as?

DARCY

My good opinion once lost is lost forever.

(ELIZABETH thinking he is referring back to her “tolerable-ness” becomes cold)

ELIZABETH

(Icily)

You have chosen your fault well. – I really cannot laugh at it.

DARCY

No character is without defect.

ELIZABETH

And your defect is a propensity to hate everybody.

DARCY

And yours is willfully to misunderstand them.

CAROLINE

Mr. Darcy, what should you like to hear next?

DARCY

(Regaining his composure)

Miss Bennet ... will you play for us?

ELIZABETH

Oh! (Taken aback)
(She smiles but makes no response)

DARCY
(Surprised by her silence)
You will play for us, Miss Bennet?

(The scene freezes)

AUSTEN
(Pondering)
And then Mr. Darcy asks Elizabeth to play ... But why? ...

ELIZABETH
(Suspiciously)
He wants me to say, “Yes” so that he can criticize my ability.

AUSTEN
Then, my dear, I would not play if I were you.

(The scene replays)

CAROLINE
Mr. Darcy, what should you like to hear next?

DARCY
(Repeating the first question)
Miss Bennet ... will you play for us?

ELIZABETH
(Without fear)
Oh! ... I’d rather not. Your good opinion once lost, is lost forever.

(DARCY concedes. ELIZABETH exits)

AUSTEN
(Writing)
“And Mr. Darcy begins to feel the danger of paying Elizabeth too much attention.”

DARCY
(To AUSTEN)
Elizabeth Bennet has been at Netherfield long enough.

SCENE 7: “MEETING MR. COLLINS” – Longbourn House

MRS. BENNET

(To JANE and ELIZABETH, back at “Longbourn”)

But surely Mr. Bingley didn’t want you to go!

JANE

Mamma –

MRS. BENNET

You should have stayed at least two more days. Poor Mr. Bingley.

MR. BENNET

(Entering with a letter)

My dear, I hope you have planned a good dinner today. I have reason to expect an addition to our family party.

MRS. BENNET

Mr. Bingley!

AUSTEN

(With a sense of foreboding)

It is not Mr. Bingley.

MUSIC #10: MEETING MR. COLLINS

MR. BENNET

It is not Mr. Bingley. It is a person whom I never saw in the whole course of my life.

THE BENNET WOMEN

(Ad libs)

What do you mean, Papa? Who is it? Who is coming to dinner? Etc.

MR. BENNET

This letter is from my cousin, Mr. Collins, who, when I am dead, may turn you all out of this house as soon as he pleases.

MRS. BENNET

Oh! My dear, I cannot bear to hear that mentioned.

AUSTEN

THE BENNETS FACE REALITY.

THEY DO NOT HAVE A SON.

A DISTANT COUSIN WILL SEIZE THEIR HOME;

-- IT IS WHY MRS. BENNET’S UNDONE.

MRS. BENNET

Do not talk of that odious man! It is the hardest thing in the world, that this estate should be entailed away;

AUSTEN

OFTEN HER FAMILY HAS TRIED
EXPLAINING ENTAILMENT,
BUT SHE REMAINS MYSTIFIED.

MRS. BENNET

– and I am sure if I had been you, I should have tried long ago to do something about it.

AUSTEN

SHE FEELS THE SUSPENSE OF IT –
CANNOT MAKE SENSE OF IT.
REASON IS NEVER APPLIED.

MRS. BENNET

It is cruel to allow a man to inherit an estate away from a family of five daughters!

AUSTEN

LAWS OF ENTAILMENT MAY NEVER CHANGE;
DAUGHTERS CANNOT BE SONS.
OLD MAIDS AND WIDOWS ARE FORCED TO BECOME
A TROUBLE SOCIETY SHUNS.

VOICES

SHUNS ...

AUSTEN
CHOICES.

VOICES
CHOICES ... CHOICES ...

AUSTEN

VERY FEW CHOICES.

MR. BENNET

Nothing can clear Mr. Collins from the guilt of inheriting our home. But if you will listen to his letter, you may be a little softened by his manner of expressing himself.

(A form begins to emerge)

MR. COLLINS

“Dear Sir, I wish to extend an olive branch and heal the breach between our families. As a clergyman, it is my duty to establish peace, and I flatter myself that even though I am to inherit all of your worldly possessions, you will kindly overlook this fault, and receive me into your home to wait on you and your family. I beg leave to apologize for being the means of injuring

your amiable daughters. I am ready to make them every possible amends.”

MR. BENNET

(Folding up the letter)

Well Mrs. Bennet?

MRS. BENNET

I suppose if he is to make the girls any amends, I shall not be the one to discourage him.

MARY

The idea of the olive branch is not wholly new, yet I think it is well expressed.

MR. BENNET

Thank you, Mary.

(MR. COLLINS, now fully formed – a tall, stout clergyman – steps forward pompously and bows to the family)

ELIZABETH

(Aside to MR. BENNET)

Can he be a sensible man, sir?

MR. BENNET

My dear, I have great hopes of finding him quite the reverse.

AUSTEN

(With a smile)

“Mr. Collins was punctual and was not long arrived before he complimented Mrs. Bennet on having –

MR. COLLINS

So fine a family of daughters,

AUSTEN

Said he had –

MR. COLLINS

Heard much of their beauty,

AUSTEN

But that, in this instance,”

MR. COLLINS

Fame falls short of the truth; I do not doubt of your seeing them all in due time well disposed of in marriage.

MRS. BENNET

(Testing his intentions)

I wish with all my heart it may prove so, Mr. Collins; for else they will be destitute.

MR. COLLINS

(Knowingly)

But I can assure you that I come prepared to admire the young ladies ...

(The BENNET GIRLS, with the exception of MARY, try to avoid MR. COLLINS' gaze)

And my very noble patroness –

(With great solemnity)

– The Right Honourable Lady Catherine de Bourgh – who has so generously provided me with a congregation of my own -- has recommended that I marry as soon as I can ... so long as my choice meets with her approval.

MUSIC #11: LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH

MR. BENNET

Lady Catherine is most attentive.

MR. COLLINS

Oh, yes!

VOICES

(Imitating a pipe organ – or an angel chorus)

LU LU LU LU ...

MR. COLLINS

(Chanting)

*I HAVE NEVER IN MY LIFE WITNESSED SUCH AFFABILITY AND
CONDESCENSION*

AS I HAVE MYSELF EXPERIENCED FROM LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH ...

LADY CATHERINE IS THE SORT OF
WOMAN WHOM ONE MUST REVERE.
LADY CATHERINE IS DIVINE;
SHE'S UNSURPASSED WITHIN HER SPHERE!
AND FOR THOSE WHO STAND BEFORE HER –
HOW THEY TREMBLE. THEY ADORE HER!
WHO COULD HELP BUT THANK THE LORD FOR
LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH?

MR. BENNET

(Amused)

You are very fortunate to have such a patroness.

MR. COLLINS
TRUER WORDS WERE NEVER SPOKEN,
LADY CATHERINE IS SUBLIME.
I RELY ON HER OPINION
AND OBEY HER EVERY TIME.
I REJOICE AS SHE DETERMINES
EVERY DETAIL OF MY SERMONS.
I AM BLESSED AND THANK THE LORD FOR
LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH.

MRS. BENNET
Has Lady Catherine any family?

MR. COLLINS
LADY CATHERINE IS A WIDOW
WITH ONE DAUGHTER – ANNE.
THEY TAKE SOLACE IN EACH OTHER
BEARING GRIEF AS BEST THEY CAN.
(Chanting)
*GRANT SIR LEWIS DE BOURGH ETERNAL REST, O LORD,
AND MAY LIGHT PERPETUAL SHINE UPON HIM.*

VOICES
HMM ... AHH ...
BEARING GRIEF ...

OOH ...
AHH ...

(Stunned silence)

ELIZABETH
(Eyeing MR. BENNET)
What sort of young lady is Miss de Bourgh?

MR. COLLINS
HANDSOME BOTH IN BIRTH AND BEAUTY,
ELEVATED BY HER WEALTH,
SADLY SHE IS SOMEWHAT SICKLY;
MISS DE BOURGH HAS FAILING HEALTH.
BUT ONE DAY SHE WILL INHERIT
AND IT WILL INCREASE HER MERIT.
'TIL THAT DAY I'LL THANK THE LORD FOR
LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH.

MR. BENNET
You have an extraordinary deference for your patroness.

MR. COLLINS
IT IS RIGHT THAT ONE SHOULD
PRAISE
LADY CATH –

MARY
LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH.

(MR. COLLINS is surprised by the interruption, then delighted!)

MR. COLLINS
WE SHOULD ALL REPEAT THE PHRASE:

ALL
LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH.

MR. COLLINS	MARY	VOICES
‘TIS A PRIVILEGE TO SHOW DEFERENCE; SHE DESERVES THE GREATEST REVERENCE!	LADY CATHERINE ... AHH!	OOH ... AHH ... OOH ... AHH ...

MR. COLLINS
VOICES RAISED WE THANK THE LORD FOR LADY CATHERINE,
(He prompts THE BENNETS to sing again)

THE BENNETS
LADY CATHERINE –

MR. COLLINS	THE BENNETS	VOICES
LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH! AMEN.	DE BOURGH!	LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH! AMEN.

MR. BENNET
(Aside, to ELIZABETH)
He is as absurd as I had hoped!

AUSTEN
“A fortunate chance recommended Mr. Collins to Lady Catherine –”

MR. COLLINS
(Interrupting AUSTEN, pulling MRS. BENNET aside)
And having now a good house and very sufficient income, I mean to chuse one of your daughters
as my wife!

MRS. BENNET
Ooh, Mr. Collins!

MR. COLLINS
Lady Catherine did say to me, ‘Mr. Collins, you must get married.’

AUSTEN

“At first, Jane was his settled choice.”

MRS. BENNET

My eldest daughter, I feel I must mention ... is very soon to be engaged.

MR. COLLINS

Oh.

MRS. BENNET

As to my younger daughters ...

(As MR. COLLINS surveys the girls, he fixes his eyes on ELIZABETH)

AUSTEN

“Mr. Collins had only to change from Jane to ...”

MR. COLLINS

(Puffing up like a peacock)

Elizabeth.

(ELIZABETH forces a smile)

LYDIA

(Wanting to get away from MR. COLLINS)

Do you know, mamma, I think I shall walk into the village. Who shall come with me?

KITTY, JANE & ELIZABETH

(Relieved at the idea)

I will!!!

(LYDIA and KITTY run off, ELIZABETH and JANE follow)

JANE

(Turning back)

Mary, will you join us?

MARY

(Dismissive, making eyes at MR. COLLINS)

I should infinitely prefer a book.

(JANE smiles and exits)

MR. BENNET

Mr. Collins? ...

(MR. COLLINS looks confused)

AUSTEN

“Mr. Collins was to attend them!”

MR. COLLINS

Ah! Yes! Delighted! Miss Elizabeth!!!

(He chases off after ELIZABETH)

(MARY deflates. MRS. BENNET is thrilled with the new courtship of MR. COLLINS and ELIZABETH. AUSTEN reviews the next scene)

SCENE 8: “MEETING MR. WICKHAM” – Meryton

MUSIC #12: MEETING MR. WICKHAM

(LYDIA, KITTY, JANE, ELIZABETH and MR. COLLINS enter “Meryton”)

AUSTEN

“Time passed and they entered the town.

MR. COLLINS

(Escorting ELIZABETH, he drones on, trying to impress HER)

... My humble abode is separated only by a lane from Rosings Park.

AUSTEN

Kitty and Lydia immediately went in quest of officers.”

(WICKHAM, a handsome soldier, enters)

MR. COLLINS

Rosings Park is Lady Catherine de Bourgh’s residence.

(ELIZABETH nods with polite disinterest)

Of all the views which the garden, or the kingdom can boast, none can be compared with the prospect of --

LYDIA

(Cutting off MR. COLLINS)

Kitty, look!!!

WHO IS HE?

KITTY

WHO CAN HE BE?

ELIZABETH & JANE

YES, WHO IS HE?

AUSTEN

YES, WHO IS HE?

WICKHAM

(Bowing to make the introduction)

Mr. Wickham.

(As WICKHAM rises, he makes eye contact with ELIZABETH. The CHARACTERS freeze. AUSTEN circles WICKHAM, wondering about this sudden inspiration)

AUSTEN

(Letting the new name roll off of her tongue)
Mr. Wickham ... well, well, well ... Well, this is a surprise.
(Assessing the possibilities)
(*Music: "Choices" motive*)
(She lets the scene play out in her imagination)

KITTY

His appearance is greatly in his favour.

AUSTEN

DON'T LET THIS THOUGHT SLIP AWAY.

ELIZABETH

(In awe)
He has a fine countenance –

AUSTEN

IS HE A LOVER I BRING INTO PLAY?

LYDIA

A good figure!

WICKHAM

And very pleasing address.

AUSTEN

... NEW CHOICES?

(WICKHAM smiles and the GIRLS excitedly swarm to him, engaging his attention. All talk together very agreeably. BINGLEY and DARCY enter on the opposite side)

BINGLEY

Miss Bennet!

JANE

Mr. Bingley!

BINGLEY

We were just on our way to inquire after you.

JANE

That is most kind of you ... and Mr. Darcy.

LYDIA

(Interrupting, having been in conference with KITTY)
Mr. Bingley! It would be the most shameful thing in the world if you did not give a ball at Netherfield.

BINGLEY
I am perfectly ready, I assure you, Miss Lydia to give the grandest ball at Netherfield.

(LYDIA and KITTY squeal with delight)

MR. COLLINS
Lady Catherine de Bourgh would delight in my accepting –

AUSTEN
Oh, Mr. Collins, do be quiet.

(MR. COLLINS hushes)

LYDIA
And say you will invite the officers!

KITTY
Oh, yes, do!

BINGLEY
Of course. Every one!

LYDIA
Mr. Wickham! We shall be dancing together at Netherfield!

(WICKHAM bows to BINGLEY, seeing DARCY, he pales)

WICKHAM
(Recovering, he nods)
Darcy.

(DARCY flushes with anger at the sight of WICKHAM and exits without acknowledgment. The group disperses leaving AUSTEN, ELIZABETH and WICKHAM alone)

ELIZABETH
WHY DID THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER THAT WAY?

AUSTEN
CHOICES ...

ELIZABETH

I LONG FOR AN ANSWER.

AUSTEN

(Pulling out a clean sheet of paper)

WHAT WILL HE SAY?

WHAT SHOULD I SAY?

ELIZABETH

WHY DID THEY LOOK AT EACH
OTHER THAT WAY?

AUSTEN

THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER –
WHAT WILL THEY SAY?

AUSTEN

How is Mr. Wickham acquainted with Mr. Darcy?

ELIZABETH

(Testing for information)

Do you know Mr. Darcy?

WICKHAM

We grew up together.

AUSTEN

They grew up together!

(SHE continues to write)

WICKHAM

My father managed Pemberley, the Darcy estate. Mr. Darcy was like a brother to me, and his father was my godfather.

(ELIZABETH is speechless)

– Are you much acquainted with Mr. Darcy?

ELIZABETH

As much as I ever wish to be.

WICKHAM

I wonder if Mr. Darcy is to be in the neighbourhood much longer?

AUSTEN

I do not know ...

ELIZABETH

I know nothing of his going away.

(Flirting)

I hope your plans will not be affected by his being in the neighbourhood.

WICKHAM

It is not for me to be driven away by Mr. Darcy. While we are not on friendly terms, I must have employment and society. Circumstances have brought me here...

(Flattering her vanity with his “mesmerizing eyes” trick)

... where I find most pleasing society.

MUSIC #13: MY DREAM

ELIZABETH

(Blushing)

And your employment?

WICKHAM

Most agreeable.

AUSTEN

Although a military life is not what he was intended for.

WICKHAM

I was brought up for the church.

I WAS RAISED BY A MAN WHO WAS GOOD TO ME.
HE LOVED ME LIKE HIS OWN SON.
HE GUIDED ME, PROVIDED FOR ME,
AND TOLD ME I SHOULD DREAM.

MY GODFATHER’S FAITH AND BELIEF IN ME
ASSURED ME I COULD SUCCEED.
SO I STUDIED WITH CARE,
WORKED HARD TO PREPARE
FOR THE LIFE THAT WAS MY DREAM.

VOICES

OOH ...

THE PARISH I WAS PROMISED
IS A MOST DELIGHTFUL PLACE
THE CHURCH, THE HOUSE AND
GARDENS THERE
ARE FULL OF CHARM AND GRACE.

THE PEOPLE OF THE VILLAGE
WORK HARD TO MAKE A LIFE.
I SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE ONE
TO EASE THEIR STRIFE,

OH ...
WORK HARD TO MAKE A LIFE.
AAH ... / SHOULD HAVE BEEN
THE ONE ...

BUT THE LIFE I WAS MEANT TO HAVE
NEVER CAME TO PASS.
I TRY TO MAKE MY WAY AMONG
THE MEN WITHIN MY CLASS.

I WILL FOLLOW THE ROAD
HOPING TO REDEEM
A LIFE WORTHY AND GOOD,
SO ONE DAY A WIFE,
WHOM I CAN ESTEEM,
CAN STAND BY MY SIDE AND
SHARE IN MY DREAM.
TO LIVE A GOOD LIFE
IS MY DREAM.

AAH ... VOICES

MUSIC #14: A VERY RATIONAL ACCOUNT

ELIZABETH

(Completely won over)

I don't understand. What happened?

WICKHAM

After my godfather died, Mr. Darcy gave the position to someone else.

ELIZABETH

Good heavens! He deserves to be publicly disgraced.

WICKHAM

Sometime or other he will be, but till I can forget his father's goodness, I can never expose him.

(WICKHAM takes leave, kissing ELIZABETH'S hand)

SCENE 8A: “CONSIDERING MR. WICKHAM” – Longbourn House

AUSTEN

(Dreamily)

Oh, Mr. Wickham.

(Taking pause)

But what a disgraceful light this places Mr. Darcy in ... One does not know what to think.

ELIZABETH

I beg your pardon; – one knows exactly what to think.

AUSTEN

Is it possible that we are deceived?

ELIZABETH

I cannot believe that Mr. Wickham could invent such a history of himself.

AUSTEN

If it be not so, Mr. Darcy will contradict it.

SCENE 9: “THE NETHERFIELD BALL” – Netherfield Ballroom

(CAROLINE appears)

CAROLINE

Bye the bye, Charles, are you really serious in meditating a dance at Netherfield? – I would advise you, before you determine on it, to consult the wishes of the present party.

(DARCY and BINGLEY appear by her side)

BINGLEY

If you mean Darcy, he may go to bed before it begins, but as for the ball, it is quite a settled thing.

CAROLINE

(To DARCY)

Wouldn't a ball be much more rational if conversation instead of dancing made the order of the day?

MUSIC #15: THE NETHERFIELD BALL

BINGLEY

Much more rational, my dear Caroline, but not near so much like a ball.

WHAT IS A BALL WITHOUT DANCING?
DANCING CAN BE ITS OWN CONVERSATION.
THERE IS NO SWEETER SENSATION
THAN DANCING A SET AT A BALL.

CAROLINE

(Dismissing him)

Oh, Charles.

BINGLEY

(Grabbing CAROLINE'S hand)

WHAT IS A BALL WITHOUT MUSIC? –
MELODY BINDING TWO BODIES IN DIALOGUE.
(He spins her into DARCY)

DARCY

(Warning)

Bingley.

BINGLEY

TALKING IS MERELY A PROLOGUE
TO DANCING A SET AT A BALL.
(To DARCY)

WHY STAND ALONE BY THE DANCE FLOOR?
YOU MUST DANCE! THERE IS NOTHING TO LOSE.
IF YOU SPY A LADY WHO CATCHES YOUR EYE,
ASK HER! SHE'LL NOT REFUSE YOU!

READY YOURSELVES FOR THE DANCING!
PIN UP YOUR TRAIN AND WELCOME OUR GUESTS.
I WILL HEAR NONE OF YOUR PROTESTS.
WE'RE DANCING AT NETHERFIELD!

CAROLINE & DARCY
DANCING AT NETHERFIELD.

BINGLEY
WE ARE GIVING A BALL!

COMPANY
(Entering the Ballroom)
DANCING AT NETHERFIELD,
DANCING AT NETHERFIELD,
THEY ARE GIVING A BALL!

(As THEY are greeted by THE BINGLEYS)
WHAT IS A BALL WITHOUT DANCING?
WHAT IS MORE THRILLING THAN THIS CELEBRATION?
DELIGHTED BY YOUR INVITATION
TO DANCE AT THE NETHERFIELD BALL!
DANCE AT THE NETHERFIELD,
DANCE AT THE NETHERFIELD BALL!

AUSTEN
(Watching BINGLEY and JANE)
HOW HE LONGS TO TAKE HER HAND.
DOES SHE LONG FOR IT, TOO?

BINGLEY
(To JANE)
WILL YOU DANCE WITH ME?

JANE
YES, I WILL DANCE WITH YOU.

AUSTEN
READY YOURSELVES FOR THE DANCING.
THE CHAPTER BEGINS WITH ORCHESTRA WAITING
AND ALL ARE ANTICIPATING

THE DANCING!

(DANCERS find their partners and line up for the first dance)

WOMEN	COMPANY MEN	BINGLEY, CAROLINE & DARCY
WHAT IS A BALL WITHOUT DANCING?	DANCE AND CELEBRATE!	DANCE AND CELEBRATE!
WHAT IS MORE THRILLING THAN THIS CELEBRATION?	WE ARE THRILLED AND DELIGHTED	WE ARE DELIGHTED
DELIGHTED BY YOUR INVITATION	TO BE HERE.	THAT YOU ARE HERE
TO DANCE AT THE NETHERFIELD BALL!		TO DANCE AT THE NETHERFIELD BALL!
DANCE AT THE NETHERFIELD BALL!	DANCE AT THE NETHERFIELD BALL!	DANCE AT THE NETHERFIELD BALL!

(with AUSTEN)		
WHAT IS A BALL WITHOUT DANCING?	DANCE AND CELEBRATE!	DANCE AND CELEBRATE!
WHAT IS MORE THRILLING THAN THIS CELEBRATION?	WE ARE THRILLED AND DELIGHTED	WE ARE DELIGHTED
DELIGHTED BY YOUR INVITATION	TO BE HERE.	THAT YOU ARE HERE.
TO DANCE AT THE NETHERFIELD,		TO DANCE AT THE NETHERFIELD,
DANCE AT THE NETHERFIELD,	DANCE AT THE NETHERFIELD,	DANCE AT THE NETHERFIELD,
DANCE AT THE NETHERFIELD BALL!	DANCE AT THE NETHERFIELD BALL!	DANCE AT THE NETHERFIELD BALL!

ELIZABETH

(Having scanned the room for WICKHAM)

Where is Mr. Wickham?

AUSTEN

(Surprised)

Mr. Wickham?

(Looking around the Ballroom)

A very good question.

ELIZABETH

He should be here.

AUSTEN

(Trying to decide where to insert WICKHAM into the story)

Hmm.

(Spying DARCY who is determining whether or not to ask ELIZABETH to dance)

Perhaps Mr. Wickham wishes to avoid Mr. Darcy.

(Deciding, she writes)

“Mr. Wickham was obliged to go to town and is not yet back.”

(Just as DARCY is about to step forward)

MR. COLLINS

My dear Miss Elizabeth, will you do me the honour?

ELIZABETH

(Turning to AUSTEN)

Mr. Collins!!!

(AUSTEN shrugs “Sorry! That’s the way the story goes!”)

(ELIZABETH reluctantly joins MR. COLLINS on the floor. Thwarted, DARCY takes CAROLINE’S hand and observes ELIZABETH’S embarrassment as she dances with MR. COLLINS)

MUSIC #16: DANCING WITH MR. COLLINS

AUSTEN

“For Elizabeth, the first dance was a dance of mortification. Mr. Collins gave her all the shame and misery a disagreeable partner can give.”

(Giggling)

The moment of release will be ecstasy!

(MR. COLLINS is an awkward and solemn dancer – often moving wrong without being aware of it. He gives great pain to the feet of the other dancers, occasionally knocking people over and causing exclamations of “Ow!” Anytime an incident occurs on the dance floor, he casts a blaming look to the other dancer)

(The dance ends)

MR. COLLINS

My dear cousin, you danced delightfully.

ELIZABETH

Did I?

MR. COLLINS

Oh, yes Miss Elizabeth! And when I have the honour of seeing Lady Catherine de Bourgh again I shall speak in the highest terms of your modesty, manifold attractions and other amiable qualifications.

(DARCY musters up the courage to approach ELIZABETH again)

MUSIC #17: DANCING WITH MR. DARCY

(The introduction to the next dance begins)

DARCY

(Before MR. COLLINS can ask ELIZABETH again)

Miss Bennet, will you dance with me.

ELIZABETH

(Turning towards the voice, not knowing who it belongs to)

Yes!

(Realizing that she's just accepted a dance with DARCY)

Yes?

(Horried, ELIZABETH takes DARCY'S hand and he leads her to the dance)

(The dance begins. ELIZABETH notices the attention of the other DANCERS and ONLOOKERS who are amazed at DARCY and ELIZABETH'S dancing together)

GUESTS

(Ad lib)

Is Elizabeth Bennet dancing with Mr. Darcy?

I thought he thought she was plain!

No, he said she was tolerable.

I thought he detested dancing.

He's quite good though, isn't he?

What do you think it means?

Etc.

(Subtle gossip continues throughout the dance)

ELIZABETH

ONCE AGAIN ON THE DANCE FLOOR

WITH A PARTNER I DIDN'T CHOOSE.

CAUGHT BY SURPRISE, THERE WAS NO TIME FOR

FINDING A WAY TO REFUSE.

I've always found this particular dance to be quite charming.

(Pause)

It is your turn to say something now, Mr. Darcy.

DARCY

What do you wish me to say?

ELIZABETH

I talked about the dance, so you ought to make some remark.

(They dance in silence, partly because DARCY is trying to think of something to say, and partly because the dance demands it)

DARCY

(Selecting a subject)

Do you and your sisters walk into the village very often?

ELIZABETH

Yes. We met Mr. Wickham there the other day. He is very agreeable.

(The effect on DARCY is immediate. He becomes cold and haughty)

ELIZABETH

OH! WHAT A HORRIBLE BALL!
WILL THERE BE ANY ENJOYMENT AT ALL?
WHY AM I MADE TO SUFFER THE FATE
OF DANCING WITH ONE I'M DETERMINED TO HATE?

DARCY

(Constrained)

Mr. Wickham is blessed with manners that make him friends – whether or not he is able to retain them is another matter.

ELIZABETH

And, unfortunately, he has lost your friendship?

MRS. BENNET

(To MR. BENNET)

Do not Bingley and Jane look well next to one another?

(Having overheard, DARCY turns to observe JANE and BINGLEY)

ELIZABETH

WHY IS DARCY STARING?
WHY DOES HE LOOK AT HIS FRIEND?
WONDER HOW JANE IS FARING ...
I WISH THIS DANCE WOULD END!

(TWO SOLDIERS chase KITTY and LYDIA through the dance line, interrupting the flow. After a moment ...)

DARCY

Forgive me, the interruption has made me forget what we were talking of.

ELIZABETH

Were we speaking? I do not think any two people in the room could have less to say to each other.

(THEY come back together to finish the dance. After dancing in awkward silence)

DARCY

(Smiling)

What think you of books?

ELIZABETH

Books – Oh! No. – I never talk about books in a ballroom.

(Pause. Suddenly)

Mr. Darcy, you once said you hardly ever forgave.

(DARCY looks at her quizzically)

I suppose you never allow yourself to be blinded by prejudice?

(The dance ends around THEM)

DARCY

I hope not. Why do you ask?

ELIZABETH

I am studying your character.

DARCY

(Steps in, earnestly)

Miss Bennet, I wish that you would not.

ELIZABETH

But I may never have another opportunity.

DARCY

Then I will not suspend any pleasure of yours.

(HE stands bravely in front of HER)

MUSIC #18: THE BENNETS EXPOSE THEMSELVES

(Another dance begins)

MRS. BENNET

(Approaching ELIZABETH, laughing loudly)

To think that Jane could one day be mistress of this place!

(DARCY sharply turns and looks towards MRS. BENNET, recognizing the inappropriateness of her behaviour. ELIZABETH notices and pulls MRS. BENNET away)

ELIZABETH

Mamma!

LYDIA

My dress was openly admired by several of the officers.

KITTY

But that was my dress!

LYDIA

And it looks much better on me!

KITTY

Mamma!

MRS. BENNET

Mr. Bingley is such a charming young man! And so rich!

ELIZABETH

(Mortified for JANE)

For heaven's sake, speak lower.

MRS. BENNET

(Ignoring her)

And such a promising thing for you other girls. Jane's marrying so greatly will throw you in the way of other rich men.

ELIZABETH

(Mortified)

Please! Mamma! Mr. Darcy can hear you.

MRS. BENNET

So?! Why should I be afraid of Mr. Darcy?

(The dance ends)

BINGLEY

(Clapping his hands)

May I have your attention! It is time to open the instrument! Ladies! Who shall sing for us?

(MARY dashes to the pianoforte)

MARY

I shall, Mr. Bingley!

ELIZABETH

(Mortified, to AUSTEN)

You will let her play?

(AUSTEN affirms)

Oh no.

MARY

IN MUSIC THERE IS SWEET ART
THAT KILLS CARE AND GRIEF OF HEART.
HANG YOUR HEAD AND CLOSE YOUR EYE
AND HEAR ITS BEAUTY BY AND BY.
THE MEM'RY WILL NEVER DIE.

(She continues to play)

(The scene grows and builds into a frenzy. DARCY'S focus is pulled between JANE'S reserved behaviour with BINGLEY and the spectacle created by the BENNETS)

(The TWO SOLDIERS resume their chasing of KITTY and LYDIA around the room; the tables turn and KITTY and LYDIA chase the OFFICERS with their swords. MR. COLLINS hovers over ELIZABETH and MRS. BENNET continues to go on and on about JANE and BINGLEY to anyone who will listen)

ELIZABETH

That's enough, Mary! ... Kitty! ... Lydia! You must stop! ... Papa! Please!!!

MR. BENNET

(Having had enough of the spectacle caused by KITTY and LYDIA, he cuts through the chaos)

That will do!!!

(All action stops. In the silence)

MRS. BENNET

'Jane Bingley – Mistress of Netherfield!'

(ALL gasp)

CAROLINE

(Aside, to AUSTEN)
What a charming mother-in-law she will be.

MUSIC #19: THE NETHERFIELD BALL (REPRISE)

AUSTEN

(Celebrating the chaos)
WHAT IS A BALL WITHOUT DRAMA?
WHAT IS A BALL WITHOUT GOSSIP AND LAUGHTER,
AND WHAT IS A BALL WITHOUT SCANDAL?

COMPANY

WONDERFUL!

ELIZABETH and DARCY (and MARY)

HORRIBLE!

COMPANY

MARVELOUS!

AUSTEN

IT'S ALL AT THE NETHERFIELD BALL!

COMPANY

ALL AT THE NETHERFIELD BALL!

ELIZABETH

(To AUSTEN)
AWFUL DANCING,
DISAPPOINTMENT,

DARCY

LACK OF PROPRIETY!

(ELIZABETH and DARCY notice each other and turn away)

AUSTEN, ELIZABETH and DARCY

IT'S ALL AT THE NETHERFIELD BALL.

(AUSTEN dances with her characters at the Ball)

WOMEN

MEN

AUSTEN, ELIZABETH &
DARCY

WHAT IS A BALL
WITHOUT DANCING?
WHAT IS MORE
THRILLING THAN
THIS CELEBRATION?
WE'RE FILLED WITH
EXHILARATION!

DANCE AND
CELEBRATE!
WE ARE THRILLED AND
DELIGHTED –
EXHILARATED.

AWFUL DANCING,
DISAPPOINTMENT,
LACK OF PROPRIETY!

AUSTEN

ALL AT THE NETHERFIELD –

COMPANY (with DARCY)

ALL AT THE NETHERFIELD –

ELIZABETH

I HATE THE NETHERFIELD –

ALL

BALL!

(The COMPANY dances off)

AUSTEN

(Left alone, dancing around Chawton)

Yes, that will do extremely well. They could not have exposed themselves or played their parts with more spirit or finer success.

SCENE 10: “MR. COLLINS IS REJECTED” – Longbourn House

MRS. BENNET

(Offstage)

Mr. Bennet!!!

(Lights reveal MR. BENNET quietly reading at “Longbourn.” MRS. BENNET runs to him)

Oh! Mr. Bennet, you are wanted immediately. You must come and make Lizzy marry Mr. Collins, for she vows she will not have him, and if you do not make haste he will change his mind and not have her.

MR. BENNET

(With calm un-concern)

I have not the pleasure of understanding you. Of what are you talking?

MRS. BENNET

Of Mr. Collins and Lizzy. Lizzy declares she will not have Mr. Collins, and Mr. Collins begins to say he will not have Lizzy.

MR. BENNET

What am I to do?

MRS. BENNET

Speak to Lizzy. Tell her that you insist upon her marrying him.

MR. BENNET

Lizzy, come here, child.

(ELIZABETH enters nervously)

I understand that Mr. Collins has made you an offer of marriage. Is it true?

ELIZABETH

It is.

MR. BENNET

And this offer of marriage you have refused?

ELIZABETH

(Defiantly)

I have, Sir.

MR. BENNET

Very well. We now come to the point. Your mother insists upon your accepting. Is it not so, Mrs. Bennet?

MRS. BENNET

Yes, or I will never see her again.

MR. BENNET

An unhappy alternative is before you, Elizabeth. From this day you must be a stranger to one of your parents. – Your mother will never see you again if you do not marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you again if you do.

(ELIZABETH smiles with relief)

MRS. BENNET

What do you mean, Mr. Bennet?

(Enter MR. COLLINS)

MRS. BENNET

Oh! Mr. Collins!

MR. COLLINS

My dear Madam, far be it from me to resent the behaviour of your daughter. My only object has been to secure an amiable companion for myself, with due consideration for your family. I certainly meant well.

(HE exits with a stiff upper lip in resentful silence)

MRS. BENNET

Oh! Mr. Collins!

(SHE turns on ELIZABETH)

MUSIC #20: MY POOR NERVES

MRS. BENNET

(Continues)

I tell you what, Miss Lizzy, if you take it into your head to go on refusing every offer of marriage, you will never get a husband at all!

I DON'T UNDERSTAND
WHAT GOES THROUGH YOUR HEAD.
IT TEARS ME TO PIECES THAT YOU WILL NOT WED
THIS UPSTANDING MAN
WHO WILL OWN THIS LAND ONE DAY.

WHAT IF YOUR FATHER SUDDENLY DIED?
HOW WILL WE LIVE? WHERE WILL WE RESIDE?
THIS IS A TRAGEDY!
YOU NEVER THINK OF ME.
WHY MUST YOU ACT SO SELFISHLY???

MY HUSBAND IGNORES ME;
MY CHILDREN DON'T CARE.
IT BRINGS ON DEPRESSION
AND FITS OF DESPAIR
WHEN THEY VEX ME SO.
MY ADVICE THEY THROW AWAY.

I FEEL MY HEART POUNDING; I'VE PAINS IN MY HEAD;
VERY GOOD REASONS TO TAKE TO MY BED,
AND I KNOW I OUGHT
WHEN I AM SO DISTRAUGHT.
NOBODY KNOWS HOW I SUFFER
WITH MY POOR NERVES!

(MRS. BENNET experiences a musical panic attack)

AH! AH! AH! AH!
AH! AH! AH! AH!

(Gasping)

I – I – I SAY TO MYSELF,
'DON'T WORRY YOUR HEAD,'
BUT SOMETIMES I THINK
I'D BE BETTER OFF DEAD.
NO! I DON'T DESERVE
THE ABUSE THEY SERVE.
HOW I SUFFER AND WORRY
WITH MY POOR NERVES!

(She exits sobbing)

SCENE 11: “MR. COLLINS IS ACCEPTED” – Chawton Cottage / Meryton

(CASSANDRA peeks her head in)

CASSANDRA

Jane, are you alright? I thought I heard you wailing.

AUSTEN

Elizabeth has disappointed her mother.

CASSANDRA

(Knowingly, entering the room with a small basket of needlework)

Oh ... But you know, I always thought Mr. Collins was an eligible match.

AUSTEN

Cassandra! No well-educated woman would disgrace themselves by marrying a “Mr. Collins.”

CASSANDRA

No?

AUSTEN

No.

CASSANDRA

What about Harris?

AUSTEN

Harris Bigg-Wither? What about him?

CASSANDRA

His hand was worthy of accepting. But then, he did not propose to me.

AUSTEN

... You still think I should have gone through with the engagement?

(Silence)

I couldn't. It was a mistake even to accept him in the first place.

CASSANDRA

Why?

AUSTEN

For the same reason it would have been a mistake for Elizabeth to accept Mr. Collins. He could never have made her happy, and she was the last woman in the world who could have made him so.

CASSANDRA

But Jane, we cannot all afford to be like Elizabeth Bennet.

AUSTEN

How can you say that when you were in love with Thomas Fowle?!

CASSANDRA

Because he died.

(Beat)

But I still wanted a family. And a home of my own. And -- Harris, well -- Harris would have provided that. He would have been a suitable husband for me.

AUSTEN

Now you sound like Charlotte Lucas again.

CASSANDRA

Yes. Well. Maybe I do. Don't you think that given the chance, a woman like Charlotte -- like me -- would have felt all the good luck of a proposal from a man like Mr. Collins.

(Imagining the possibility, AUSTEN'S mind returns to the world of *First Impressions*. SHE envisions CASSANDRA as CHARLOTTE. ELIZABETH appears)

AUSTEN

Charlotte! Engaged to such a man!

ELIZABETH

Impossible!

CASSANDRA (as CHARLOTTE)

Why do you think it incredible? Because he was not so happy as to succeed with you?

ELIZABETH

(Protesting)

Charlotte!

MUSIC #21: NOT ROMANTIC

CASSANDRA (as CHARLOTTE)

My chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people who marry.

I AM NOT ROMANTIC AND NEVER WAS.

I AM NOT ROMANTIC AND ALL BECAUSE

THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT LOVE WILL BE

LIKE POETRY AND SONG.

UNSENTIMENTAL ABOUT MY LIFE,

HE WILL BE THE HUSBAND. I'LL BE THE WIFE,

AND WE’LL BE COMFORTABLE AND HUMBLE.
WHY SHOULD WANTING THAT BE WRONG?

(MR. COLLINS and CHARLOTTE (CASSANDRA) come together for their wedding. ELIZABETH, the BENNETS and other GUESTS attend)

AUSTEN

EVERYONE WANTS A HAPPY ENDING.
EVERYONE WANTS THEIR DREAMS TO COME TRUE.
EVERYONE HAS A CHOICE.
THIS IS WHAT SHE WANTED TO DO.

(To ELIZABETH)

YOU ARE ROMANTIC, YOU’LL ALWAYS BE
A TRUE ROMANTIC WHO CANNOT SEE
HOW SOME WILL CHOOSE TO LIVE LIFE PRUDENTLY.
THEY WON’T WAIT FOR LOVE TO CALL.

(Watching CHARLOTTE / CASSANDRA marry MR. COLLINS / HARRIS
BIGG-WITHER)

SHE IS NOT ROMANTIC. SHE WON’T DENY
THAT WHAT HE OFFERS CAN SATISFY.
WHEN I THINK IT OVER, I KNOW THAT I
WAS ONCE ROMANTIC,
BUT NOW I UNDERSTAND WHY OTHERS NEVER FALL IN LOVE AT ALL.

(The wedding disperses and CASSANDRA quietly returns to her
needlework)

SCENE 12: “LEAVING NETHERFIELD” – Longbourn House / Netherfield Park

(JANE joins ELIZABETH at “Longbourn” with a letter)

MUSIC #22: MY DEAREST JANE (SECOND LETTER)

(BINGLEY leaves “Netherfield.” CAROLINE appears with DARCY)

CAROLINE

MY DEAREST JANE,
THIS NOTE WILL EXPLAIN
CHARLES HAS GONE TO LONDON
AND THERE HE WILL REMAIN.
(Pause, a big sigh of relief)
I MUST SAY, ‘ADIEU.’
WE ARE LEAVING TOO.
THE SERVANTS HAVE SO MUCH TO PACK,
FOR NONE OF US ARE COMING BACK.

Your Friend,

CAROLINE BINGLEY.

(She and DARCY leave)

(Having shared the news with ELIZABETH, JANE folds up her letter despondently)

JANE

It appears that Mr. Bingley will not be returning.

ELIZABETH

(With concern)

Oh! My dear Jane – Shall you hear my opinion?

JANE

Most willingly.

ELIZABETH

Miss Bingley sees that her brother is in love with you and follows him to town in the hope of keeping him there.

JANE

No Elizabeth, if Caroline believed her brother attached to me, she would not try to part us.

ELIZABETH

Oh, Jane, you are too good. But you ought to believe me.

JANE

Miss Bingley has often mentioned that her brother is partial to Mr. Darcy's sister, Georgiana.

ELIZABETH

No! -- No one who has ever seen you together, can doubt his affection for you.

JANE

Elizabeth, Mr. Bingley's regard for me was nothing more than an error of fancy on my side.

(Determined)

Mr. Bingley will be forgot.

(She exits)

SCENE 13: “DISMISSING MR. WICKHAM” – Longbourn House

MUSIC #23: DISMISSING MR. WICKHAM

AUSTEN

So Jane is crossed in love.
(To ELIZABETH)
Should it happen to you? ...

(Before ELIZABETH can answer, WICKHAM is seen at tea with the BENNETS)

WICKHAM

... And I found as the time drew near, that I had better not meet Mr. Darcy at the Netherfield Ball; – that to be in the same room with him, might be more than I could bear.

AUSTEN

And should Wickham be the man?

ELIZABETH

Mr. Wickham is beyond all comparison, the most agreeable man I ever saw.

AUSTEN

... if only he had the fortune ...

ELIZABETH

Oh! That abominable Mr. Darcy!

AUSTEN

Is such affection wise? Perhaps it would be best if you did not see Mr. Wickham so very often.

ELIZABETH

But it is on your account that I see him at all!

AUSTEN

(She has made up her mind)
I am sorry, my dear, the day has come on which you are to flirt your last with George Wickham.

ELIZABETH

What?!?!

WICKHAM

(Taking leave of the BENNETS)
The militia are to be encamped near Brighton.
(HE exits)

LYDIA

The militia are leaving!?!?

KITTY

To be encamped near Brighton!!!

MRS. BENNET

Oh! Mr. Bennet! First Mr. Bingley! Then Mr. Collins! And now the militia are leaving?!? Who will marry our girls now?

LYDIA

How miserable we shall be!

KITTY

We shall be miserable!

MRS. BENNET

I do not blame you, Jane. You would have got Mr. Bingley if you could. But, Lizzy! --

(Looking squarely at ELIZABETH)

To think that Charlotte Lucas should one day be mistress of this place!

(She storms off)

ELIZABETH

(To AUSTEN)

The more I see of the world, the more I am dissatisfied with it. It seems that happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance. Men. I am sick of them all!

AUSTEN

Perhaps stupid men are the only ones worth knowing.

(MR. COLLINS appears over CASSANDRA'S shoulder)

MR. COLLINS

My dear cousin!

AUSTEN

Cassandra!

(CASSANDRA looks up from her needlework)

Do you think Charlotte would enjoy a visit from Elizabeth?

CASSANDRA

Yes, of course she would.

AUSTEN

Very well, then. The spring takes Elizabeth to visit the newly-wed Mr. and Mrs. Collins.

(CASSANDRA returns to her needlework, listening as AUSTEN creates a new

scene)

SCENE 14: “AT ROSINGS” – Rosings Park

MUSIC #24: MEETING LADY CATHERINE

MR. COLLINS

(Continues to ELIZABETH)

My dear cousin! Lady Catherine de Bourgh has invited us to dine at Rosings Park! Who could have foreseen such an attention!

(LADY CATHERINE makes a grand entrance with a retinue of SERVANTS and her sickly daughter, ANNE DE BOURGH)

LADY CATHERINE

(Holding court, eyeing ELIZABETH)

Welcome to Rosings Park.

ELIZABETH

Thank you, your Ladyship.

LADY CATHERINE

(Pleased)

Well, Miss Bennet ... You seem a genteel, pretty kind of girl. Although, I am not familiar with your connections. What was your mother's maiden name, Miss Bennet?

ELIZABETH

Gardiner, ma'am.

LADY CATHERINE

Gardiner? Hmph ... How many sisters do you have?

ELIZABETH

Four.

LADY CATHERINE

(Aghast)

Four! ... are any of them out in society?

ELIZABETH

Yes, Ma'am, all.

LADY CATHERINE

All! – Before the elder are married!

ELIZABETH

My younger sisters should not be denied society simply because Jane and I are not married.

LADY CATHERINE

(Disapproving)

Upon my word, you give your opinion very decidedly, Miss Bennet. ... How were you educated? Do you draw?

ELIZABETH

Not at all.

LADY CATHERINE

(Exasperated)

Do you play and sing?

ELIZABETH

A little.

LADY CATHERINE

Oh! Let us hear you.

(She looks expectantly at ELIZABETH who reluctantly approaches the pianoforte. LADY CATHERINE continues)

There are few people in England who have more enjoyment of music than myself. If I had ever learnt to play, I should have been a great proficient. And so would my daughter Anne, if her health had allowed her to apply.

(ANNE smiles weakly. ELIZABETH begins to play from memory)

MUSIC #25: PIANO MUSIC #1 (Elizabeth “plays”)

(DARCY enters)

LADY CATHERINE

Ah! Darcy!

(Surprised at DARCY’S appearance, ELIZABETH hits a sour note and pauses her playing)

AUSTEN

(Surprised)

Mr. Darcy!

LADY CATHERINE

(Irritated)

Miss Bennet! You will never play well unless you practice more.

CASSANDRA

Mr. Darcy?

LADY CATHERINE

(Introducing, as ALL stand)

This is Fitzwilliam Darcy, my nephew.

(ALL bow)

AUSTEN

(To CASSANDRA)

Mr. Darcy is Lady Catherine's nephew.

CASSANDRA

(Considering)

Nephew ...

MR. COLLINS

(Gaspng with delight)

The nephew of my patroness?!? How wonderfully these sort of things occur!

(DARCY nods his head to MR. COLLINS)

DARCY

(Turning to LADY CATHERINE)

We met when I was at Netherfield Park.

LADY CATHERINE

(Sourly)

Ah.

(Turning to ELIZABETH)

Miss Bennet!

(ELIZABETH sits back down at the pianoforte and continues to play, badly.
DARCY crosses to ELIZABETH)

ELIZABETH

(With an arch smile)

You mean to frighten me, Mr. Darcy? ... By coming to hear me play? I fear I do not practice as "constantly" as your sister Georgiana.

DARCY

(Playfully)

Miss Bennet, you could not really believe I mean to alarm you. No one admitted to the privilege of hearing you can think anything wanting.

ELIZABETH

(Laughs)

Indeed, Mr. Darcy, you are provoking me to retaliate.

DARCY

I am not afraid of you.

ELIZABETH

Very well. The first time I ever saw you was at a ball –
(Resumes playing)
and though gentlemen were scarce, you would not dance!

LADY CATHERINE

What is that you are saying over there?

DARCY

(Caught off guard)
We are speaking of music, Madam.

LADY CATHERINE

Of music! Ah.

DARCY

(To ELIZABETH)
At that time, I had not the honour of knowing any lady beyond my own party.

ELIZABETH

And nobody can ever be introduced in a ballroom?
(She finishes the song)

DARCY

(Wanting ELIZABETH to understand, he confesses)
I do not have the talent of conversing easily with those I have never met before.

ELIZABETH

And I do not have the talent of playing this instrument in a masterly manner.
(Standing, into his face)
But it is my own fault ... I do not take the trouble to practice ...

DARCY

(Smiles)
You are perfectly right.

(ANNE DE BOURGH is overtaken by a coughing fit)

LADY CATHERINE

Darcy! Come see to your cousin! Now! Hurry! She is coughing!
(DARCY is pulled away from the tension of his interaction with ELIZABETH to attend to ANNE. Once ANNE has his attention, she magically recovers)

Miss Bennet, no excellence in music is to be acquired without constant practice.

ELIZABETH

(With an icy smile and polite nod)

Yes, Lady Catherine.

(ELIZABETH reluctantly sits back down at the pianoforte. AUSTEN joins her and they begin to play together. Time passes as the scene shifts to “Hunsford”)

MUSIC #26: PIANO MUSIC #2 (Elizabeth “plays”)

AUSTEN

The entertainment at Rosings is repeated about twice a week, and upon the whole, Elizabeth spends her time comfortably enough with Mr. and Mrs. Collins at the parsonage.

CASSANDRA

And will Mr. Darcy call?

SCENE 15: “DARCY CALLS ON ELIZABETH” – Hunsford Parsonage

(SOUND: Bell. Startled, ELIZABETH looks up. DARCY enters)

Miss Bennet.
(He looks around)

DARCY

Yes.

AUSTEN

You are alone?

DARCY

Yes.

ELIZABETH

(Surprised, DARCY determines whether or not to leave. Awkwardly, ELIZABETH invites him to sit. HE does, and BOTH are uncomfortable -- aware of the impropriety of a single man and woman together, unchaperoned)

Mr. Darcy is being rather familiar ...

AUSTEN

What? How?

CASSANDRA

Shh ...

AUSTEN

Is all well?

ELIZABETH

Yes, thank you.
(Pause)
The weather is pleasant.

DARCY

Yes.

ELIZABETH

(Pause)

So very fine for this time of year ... the spring.

DARCY

ELIZABETH

Yes.

(Pause)

How very suddenly you all quitted Netherfield last November, Mr. Darcy.

DARCY

Yes.

(Pause)

ELIZABETH

Mr. Bingley and his sister are well in London?

DARCY

Yes.

ELIZABETH

Mr. Bingley has not much idea of ever returning to Netherfield again?

DARCY

No. ... I have never heard him say so; but I should not be surprised if he were to give it up.

(Pause)

This seems a very comfortable house. Lady Catherine did a great deal to it when Mr. Collins first came here.

ELIZABETH

I believe she did – and I am sure she could not have bestowed her kindness on a more grateful object.

DARCY

(Intimately)

Mr. Collins appears very fortunate in his choice of a wife.

(ELIZABETH is taken aback)

Miss Bennet, you must allow --

AUSTEN

(Shocked)

Mr. Darcy!

(DARCY loses his nerve)

DARCY

(Rising)

I apologize. I must be going. Good morning.

(THEY take leave. DARCY exits)

ELIZABETH
What can be the meaning of this?

AUSTEN
I am not sure.

ELIZABETH
He hardly spoke a word.

AUSTEN
Mr. Darcy looks at Elizabeth a great deal --

ELIZABETH
Only to criticize.

CASSANDRA
With a steadfast gaze?
(AUSTEN nods)

ELIZABETH
Absence of mind.

CASSANDRA
He must be in love.

AUSTEN
Mr. Darcy in love ...

ELIZABETH
Don't be absurd!

AUSTEN
... He calls almost every day.

ELIZABETH
No! He must have something else to do.

AUSTEN
(Surprised herself)
I am at Mr. Darcy's disposal. He arranges the business as he pleases.

ELIZABETH
He certainly enjoys the power of doing what he likes.

AUSTEN

Mr. Darcy possesses good judgment. It's actually one of his more amiable qualities. -- Oh no!

ELIZABETH and CASSANDRA

What?

AUSTEN

In the past, Darcy's good judgment has saved his friend Bingley from many an imprudent match. What if Darcy saved Bingley from ... Jane.

ELIZABETH

(Astounded)

Saved him!?

CASSANDRA

(Shocked)

What?

AUSTEN

He did have some very strong objections.

CASSANDRA

Objections!?

ELIZABETH

Against Jane?!? But she is the most affectionate, generous heart in the world! What right has Mr. Darcy to determine another's happiness?!?!

(Beside herself, she paces, greatly agitated over this news)

(AUSTEN describes the next scene to CASSANDRA)

SCENE 16: “THE PROPOSAL & THE REFUSAL” – Hunsford Parsonage

DARCY

(Hurriedly)

Miss Bennet ...

(ELIZABETH whirls around and is shocked to see DARCY enter)

ELIZABETH

(With cold civility)

Mr. Darcy.

(Pause. DARCY walks about the room. ELIZABETH watches, surprised. Suddenly, DARCY walks towards HER in an agitated manner)

DARCY

In vain have I 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.

(ELIZABETH, astonished, stares and colours in silence)

MUSIC #27: THE PROPOSAL

ALMOST FROM THE MOMENT I MET YOU,
MY ONE DESIRE WAS TO FORGET YOU.
FIRST I FOUND YOU RATHER PLAIN AND FLAWED ...

BUT WHATEVER THE REASON, I MUST CONFIDE,
IT SEEMS WE WERE DESTINED TO MEET
AT PARTIES, ASSEMBLIES AND ON THE STREET.
I COULD NOT AVOID YOU. I TRIED.

SURPRISINGLY WITTY AND SMART,
YOUR INTELLIGENCE SET YOU APART.
CONTENT TO WALK MILES
AND TO JUMP OVER STILES,
HOW YOUR PLAYFULNESS CAPTURED MY HEART.

STILL, I CAN'T OVERLOOK THE DIFFERENCE IN STATION.
CONNECTIONS LIKE YOURS ... DEGRADATION.

IT'S CLEAR MY HEAD AND HEART DO NOT AGREE.
MY FEELINGS GIVE MY VOICE COMMAND.
FREE ME NOW FROM ALL MY AGONY.

(Spoken)

GRANT ME THE ACCEPTANCE OF YOUR HAND.

(Very long awkward pause)

ELIZABETH

(Trying to maintain her composure)

I suppose I ought to feel grateful for your proposal. But I do not. I have never desired your good opinion, and you have bestowed it most unwillingly.

(Pause)

DARCY

(With forced calmness)

And this is all the reply which I am to have the honour of expecting? I might, perhaps, wish to be informed why, with so little endeavor at civility, I am thus rejected.

ELIZABETH

I might as well enquire why with so evident a design of insulting me, you chose to tell me that you like me against your will? I have every reason in the world to think ill of you. You cannot deny that you have been the means of ruining the happiness of my sister Jane, perhaps forever – that you divided Mr. Bingley from her!

DARCY

I did everything in my power to separate my friend from your sister. I have been kinder to him than to myself.

(Stunned silence)

ELIZABETH

But my opinion of you was decided long before this affair; your character was revealed to me many months ago by Mr. Wickham.

DARCY

(In a less tranquil tone, and with heightened colour)

You take an eager interest in that gentleman's concerns.

CASSANDRA

Who is Mr. Wickham?

ELIZABETH

Who can help but take an interest? You have reduced him to his present state of poverty. You have denied him what had been promised by your father.

DARCY

(As he walks with quick steps across the room)

And this is your opinion of me! Thank you for explaining it so fully.

(Stops and turns)

Perhaps my ‘offenses’ might have been overlooked had I concealed my struggles and your pride not been hurt by my honest confession. You could not expect me to congratulate myself on the hope of relations, whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?

ELIZABETH

(Attempting to maintain composure)

You are mistaken, Mr. Darcy. The mode of your declaration merely spared me the concern which I might have felt in refusing you, had you behaved in a more gentleman-like manner.

(DARCY starts but says nothing)

You are arrogant; you are conceited; you have no regard for the feelings of others. You are the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry.

CASSANDRA

(Interrupting AUSTEN’S storytelling, horrified)

Jane! You’ve ruined it!

AUSTEN

I have not.

CASSANDRA

They hate each other!

AUSTEN

Exactly!

CASSANDRA

Put it back!!!

AUSTEN

Don’t tell me what to do.

CASSANDRA

Have you no heart?!?!

AUSTEN

Heart! You just said you would have married Harris Bigg-Wither for his money. Tell me, Cassandra, did you really love Thomas?

(Gasp)

DARCY

You have said quite enough madam.

AUSTEN

Cass -- I --

(CASSANDRA runs out in tears. DARCY exits. AUSTEN and ELIZABETH are left in stunned silence)

(Blackout)

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOMUSIC #29: ENTR'ACTESCENE 1: **“SECOND CHANCES” – Chawton Cottage**

AT RISE: Three days later. AUSTEN paces. The ‘First Impressions’ manuscript sits untouched on the writing table -- taunting her.

MUSIC #30: CHOICES: Second Chances

AUSTEN

(To the manuscript)

... It is your fault!!

NOTHING GOOD HAS HAPPENED SINCE I TOOK YOU OFF THE SHELF.
THE WORDS I WROTE SURPRISED ME AND I RECOGNIZED MYSELF
IN EVERY PHRASE AND IN EVERY WORD.
NOW THE LINES ARE BLURRED.
I AM LOSING PERSPECTIVE
AND MY OBJECTIVE.

THE LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER ASKED ME TO SUBMIT
A STORY, BUT I KNOW ‘FIRST IMPRESSIONS’ IS UNFIT!
DOES IT ALL END HERE? OR IS THERE MORE?
WHO IS THIS STORY FOR?

THE WAY IT WAS ... IS NO MORE,
SHOULD I PRESS ON?
OR SHOULD I --

(CASSANDRA enters the room. Seeing AUSTEN, she immediately turns back
around to leave)

Stop! Cassandra! Wait!

(CASSANDRA pauses)

This will not do!

(CASSANDRA turns back around to face AUSTEN. Silence)

AUSTEN

Really, Cassandra, it is too distressing. These last three days have been horrible ... You won't speak to me and I begin to hate myself.

(CASSANDRA says nothing)

AUSTEN

What I said -- I was stubborn and vain and nonsensical, and I cannot bear it -- If you do not speak to me I am sure I shall break my heart.

CASSANDRA

What do you want me to say, Jane?

(AUSTEN breaks into tears)

CASSANDRA

(With a sigh)

Oh, Jane.

(SHE embraces HER)

AUSTEN

(Through the tears)

You're right. I don't have a heart.

CASSANDRA

Jane! Don't be silly. You were upset because I over-reacted. I just love the story so much ...

AUSTEN

(Sobbing into CASSANDRA'S shoulder)

How ill have I written! I don't know what to do ...

CASSANDRA

Yes, you do. Let other pens dwell on misery. Yours is meant for better things.

AUSTEN

You think so?

CASSANDRA

Yes. But the only way that is going to happen is if you get back to it.

(CASSANDRA exits)

VOICES

OOH ...

AUSTEN

THE STORY THAT WAS IS NO MORE --
TIME TO PRESS ON.
THERE ARE SO MANY CHOICES!

I MUST FOCUS TO ADVANCE
THE STORY TOWARDS A SECOND CHANCE ...

VOICES

A SECOND CHANCE.

A SECOND CHANCE.

AUSTEN
A SECOND CHANCE!

IF I FOLLOW THE LOGIC --
WORK IT OUT --
TRUST THE MUSE WITHOUT MY
DOUBT --
EVERYTHING OLD WILL MERGE
WITH NEW.
I'LL NEED MORE INK,
AND PAPER TOO ...
I HAVE WORK TO DO!

I WILL MAKE A CHOICE, LET IT
FLOW,
CONSIDER WHAT THE CHARACTERS
KNOW ...

HE PROPOSED AND SHE EXPOSED
THE TRUTH OF WHAT SHE KNEW.
SHE THOUGHT SHE KNEW ...
THOUGHT SHE KNEW ...
“TAKE A WALK ...”

VOICES
SECOND CHANCES.

CHOICES ...

CHOICES ...

CHOICES ...

(Inspired, AUSTEN picks up the quill and writes a new scene in order to begin reconciling the story)

SCENE 2: “DARCY’S LETTER” – Rosings Park Exterior**MUSIC #31: TAKE A WALK**

(DARCY and ELIZABETH each walk separate parts of the grounds of “Rosings Park.” DARCY holds a letter)

ELIZABETH

TAKE A WALK.
BREATHE THE AIR.
SUCH A PLEASANT MORNING
AND YET I DON’T CARE.

DARCY

TAKE A WALK.
ONCE YOU’RE THERE,
SHOW HER WHAT YOU’VE WRITTEN
THUS CLEARING THE AIR.

ELIZABETH

YESTERDAY,
WHAT HE SAID ...
WHY WON’T HIS WORDS LEAVE
MY HEAD?

DARCY

YESTERDAY,
WHAT SHE SAID ...
WHY WON’T HER WORDS LEAVE
MY HEAD?

HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SO
UNAWARE?

HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SO
UNAWARE?

ELIZABETH

HOW ASTONISHING THAT HE SHOULD CARE!
HOW COULD THE MAN DARE TO SUPPOSE
I’D ACCEPT ANY OFFER PROPOSED?

DARCY

WALK.

ELIZABETH

WALK.

DARCY

BREATHE.

ELIZABETH

BREATHE.

VOICES

OOH ...

ELIZABETH
TAKE A TURN UP THE LANE,
HOPING TO AVOID A CHANCE
MEETING AGAIN.

DARCY
TAKE A TURN UP THE LANE
HOPING TO MEET HER AGAIN.

LOOK AROUND. SPRING ABOUNDS.
BEAUTIFUL AND LOVELY ...

VOICES
OOH ...

EXACTLY LIKE JANE.
HOW UNFAIR!
HE ENDED A TRUE LOVE AFFAIR
AND RUINED SO MANY
DREAMS ...

BEAUTIFUL
JANE.
AHH ...
RUINED DREAMS.
OOH ...

TAKE A WALK.

DARCY

BREATHE THE AIR.

TAKE A WALK.

RECOVER YOURSELF AND
FORGET THE DESPAIR.

BREATHE.
RECOVER YOURSELF AND
FORGET THE DESPAIR.

ELIZABETH & DARCY
THROUGH THE GATE, TO THE PARK ...
(THEY come face to face)

DARCY
Miss Bennet!
(Beat)

MUSIC #32: DARCY'S LETTER

DARCY
(Continues)
I have been walking for some time in the hope of meeting you. I am leaving Rosings.
(He offers ELIZABETH the letter. SHE takes it)
Will you do me the honour of reading that letter?

(DARCY bows and exits)

ELIZABETH
(Looking at the letter in her hand)

WHAT DOES IT CONTAIN?
THERE'S NOTHING TO EXPLAIN.
WOULD HE PROPOSE A SECOND TIME?

AUSTEN

Open it!

(ELIZABETH opens the letter and begins to read)

DARCY

(Appears)

“Be not alarmed, Madam, of this letter containing any repetition of those offers, which were last night so disgusting to you. Two offences you laid to my charge: that I detached Mr. Bingley from your sister, and that I ruined Mr. Wickham.

ELIZABETH

WHAT ELSE IS THERE LEFT FOR HIM TO SAY
THAT WASN'T SAID BETWEEN US YESTERDAY?

DARCY

My friend Bingley has an easy, open temper, and I have often seen him in love; but shortly after we came to Netherfield, I saw that he preferred your eldest sister to any other young woman ...

BINGLEY

(Appearing)

Darcy! I cannot conceive an angel more beautiful!
ISN'T SHE WONDERFUL?

(JANE appears)

DARCY

His admiration was beyond what I had ever witnessed in him. Your sister I also watched. She received his attentions, but did not invite them. This convinced me – she was not in love with him.

ELIZABETH

NO! IT'S NOT TRUE!
JANE IS IN LOVE ...

AUSTEN

Mr. Bingley does not know Jane as you do, Elizabeth. ... She was too guarded.

(ELIZABETH returns to the letter)

DARCY

If you have not been mistaken here, I must have been in error. But there were other causes of repugnance ...

(A scene reminiscent of the Netherfield Ball ensues. THE BENNETS expose themselves – repeating their actions and lines of dialogue from the Netherfield Ball, ending with MR. BENNET ...)

MR. BENNET

That will do!

MRS. BENNET

Jane Bingley, Mistress of Netherfield!

(Gasp)

DARCY

From what passed at the Netherfield Ball, my opinion was confirmed and led me to preserve my friend from what I esteemed a most unhappy connection. On this subject I have nothing more to say.

(AUSTEN pulls out a fresh piece of paper to write a new part of the letter.
ELIZABETH flips the page of the letter she is reading)

DARCY

With respect to having injured Mr. Wickham ...

(WICKHAM appears)

DARCY

MY FATHER WAS KIND, A
BENEVOLENT MAN,
A FRIEND TO EVERYONE.

HE HELD GEORGE WICKHAM IN
HIGH ESTEEM.

FATHER WANTED WICKHAM TO
ENTER THE CHURCH
AND STATED SO IN HIS WILL,

BUT WICKHAM DECLINED.

WICKHAM

HE LOVED ME LIKE HIS OWN SON.

HE TOLD ME I SHOULD DREAM.

I STUDIED WITH CARE,

WORKED HARD TO PREPARE ...

DARCY

HE REJECTED WHAT FATHER DESIGNED

AND ASKED FOR THREE THOUSAND POUNDS INSTEAD.

ELIZABETH

Three thousand pounds!

DARCY

I complied. Mr. Wickham gave up his claim to the church, but then he squandered his inheritance on a life of idleness and gambling.

AUSTEN

(Taking a pause in the writing)
A SIMILAR TALE, WILL IT AVAIL
THE TRUTH? WILL SHE PERCEIVE
// ONE OF THEM HAS LIED?

ELIZABETH

// ONE OF THEM HAS LIED TO ME.
WHOM SHOULD I BELIEVE?

DARCY

(As AUSTEN resumes writing and ELIZABETH returns to the letter)
I must now mention a circumstance I wish to forget and feel no doubt of your secrecy.

(As DARCY remembers the past, GEORGIANA appears)
A YEAR AGO MY SISTER SPENT
A SUMMER BY THE SEA.
(GEORGIANA runs to WICKHAM)
MISTER WICKHAM FOLLOWED HER
AND CLAIMED HE LOVED HER DEARLY.

(WICKHAM pulls GEORGIANA to him)

HIS SKILLFUL GUISE AND CLEVER LIES
CAPTURED MY SISTER'S HEART ...
MESMERIZED,
SHE COULD NOT SEE HIM CLEARLY.

HE ASKED HER TO ELOPE WITH HIM --
ADVISED HER NOT TO TELL ME,
BUT SHE CHOSE TO DISCLOSE HIS PLAN,
AND THEN I KNEW!
SHE'D BEEN SEDUCED FOR HER MONEY.
(DARCY reaches out to GEORGIANA)

I MADE THEM PART
AND FELT THE STING
OF SEEING INNOCENCE SHATTERED.

(WICKHAM leaves)
IT BROKE HER HEART,
BUT THE TRUTH WAS WHAT MATTERED.
(GEORGIANA exits)

Georgiana was then but fifteen years old, and had Mr. Wickham succeeded, her fortune of thirty-thousand pounds would have been his ...

SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO BELIEVE WHAT IS WRITTEN HERE
AND NOT REJECT IT AS FALSE,
I HOPE YOU WILL FREE ME OF CRUELTY.
HE'S NOT WHAT HE SEEMS; I RUINED NO DREAMS.
I WILL ONLY ADD ...

God bless you,
– FITZWILLIAM DARCY.”
(He disappears)

AUSTEN

God bless you, Fitzwilliam Darcy ...

ELIZABETH

It cannot be ... This must be false! Why was this not told me before?

AUSTEN

Because I was not yet master enough to know myself.

(ELIZABETH looks over the letter again. AUSTEN flips through earlier chapters of the manuscript)

ELIZABETH

Is this letter true?

AUSTEN

Is Mr. Darcy blameless?

ELIZABETH

What reason would Mr. Darcy have to make up such a scandal about his sister?

AUSTEN

Mr. Darcy has never betrayed himself to be unprincipled or immoral ...

ELIZABETH

But is Mr. Wickham so very bad?

AUSTEN

What is known of Mr. Wickham's former way of life except for what he said himself?

ELIZABETH

There was such truth in his looks.

AUSTEN

It appears between the two gentlemen, Mr. Darcy has got all the goodness and Mr. Wickham only the appearance of it.

ELIZABETH

Mr. Darcy is blameless.

MUSIC #33: HAD I BEEN IN LOVE

ELIZABETH

(Stunned)

How despicably have I acted!

AUSTEN

CHOOSE EACH WORD WITH CARE.
LET THE TRUTH LAY CONSCIENCE BARE.

ELIZABETH

I WHO THOUGHT I KNEW MY MIND,
I COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE
BLIND
HAD I BEEN IN LOVE.

HMM ...
OOH ...

AUSTEN

AUSTEN

HOW SHOULD SHE RESPOND?
WHY DO WE NOT SEE BEYOND
OUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS?

ELIZABETH

NOW I FIND
I COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE BLIND,
HAD I BEEN IN LOVE.

AUSTEN

(Lines blurring between HERSELF and ELIZABETH)

VANITY HAS BEEN MY FOLLY;
VANITY, NOT LOVE.
AND I NEVER KNEW MYSELF
UNTIL THIS MOMENT.

ELIZABETH

OH! I'M SO ASHAMED.

AND I'VE ONLY PRIDE TO BLAME.
 WOUNDED, I BECAME UNKIND.
 I COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE BLIND,
 HAD I BEEN IN LOVE.

VANITY HAS BEEN MY FOLLY;
 VANITY NOT LOVE.
 AND I NEVER KNEW MYSELF
 UNTIL THIS MOMENT.

AUSTEN
 AT LAST I KNOW
 HOW THE STORY
 HAS TO GO.
 SECOND CHANCES SET
 US FREE
 AS WE LEARN
 WHAT LOVE CAN BE.
 AND YOU'LL FALL –
 HOW YOU'LL FALL –
 IN LOVE!

ELIZABETH
 I NEVER
 KNEW MYSELF UNTIL
 THIS MOMENT.
 I NEVER KNEW!
 COULD I HAVE BEEN
 MORE BLIND
 HAD I BEEN
 IN LOVE?

VOICES
 AHH ...
 AND YOU'LL FALL ...
 AHH ...

**SCENE 3: “DREAMING OF BRIGHTON” – Longbourn House / Regency Square
(Brighton)**

(ELIZABETH returns to “Longbourn.” MARY practices on the pianoforte)

MUSIC #34: PIANO MUSIC #3 (Mary “plays”)

JANE

Mary, can you please play a little more quietly?

LYDIA

What is to become of us?

KITTY

The militia are leaving!!!

MRS. BENNET

There is no talk of Mr. Bingley ever coming to Netherfield again.

KITTY

Stupid! Stupid Brighton!

MRS. BENNET

(To MR. BENNET)

What do you intend to do about this sad business of Jane’s?

JANE

Mamma!

MRS. BENNET

I do not suppose there is the least chance in the world of Jane’s ever getting Mr. Bingley now.

LYDIA

(Forlorn)

If one could but go to Brighton.

KITTY

Oh, yes! – if one could but go to Brighton!

AUSTEN

(Writing MARY out)

Mary!!!

(MARY stops playing and ALL take a moment of pause)

MR. BENNET

I am glad you are come back, Lizzy.

MRS. BENNET

(To MR. BENNET)

You are always giving Lizzy the preference.

KITTY

Papa! What about the militia?

ELIZABETH

(Pulling JANE aside)

Jane, how are you?

MRS. BENNET

And so Mr. Bennet! What are you going to do about Mr. Bingley?!?!

JANE

(To ELIZABETH)

I do wish she would stop.

MRS. BENNET

You must invite him hunting.

LYDIA

No! Invite him to join us in Brighton!

KITTY

He knows all the officers!

AUSTEN and MR. BENNET

Enough!!!

(Pause)

AUSTEN

... An invitation to Brighton ... Well, why not?

ELIZABETH

(Turning to AUSTEN)

You cannot be serious.

AUSTEN

I don't have to send the entire family. Maybe just one of you ...

ELIZABETH

No.

AUSTEN

Not you. I just got rid of Wickham. But Mary, Kitty, Lydia? ...

ELIZABETH

At the seaside?!? With soldiers?!?!

AUSTEN

(Inspired)

Lydia!

(AUSTEN laughs joyfully, entering the world of the new scene. LYDIA squeals, jumping up and down, clapping her hands)

MRS. BENNET

You are very lucky to have been invited to go to Brighton, Lydia! And by the colonel's wife!

ELIZABETH

(Horrified)

Papa – You will let her go?

MR. BENNET

Lydia will never be easy till she has exposed herself in some public place or other.

(He pats ELIZABETH on the hand and exits)

MRS. BENNET

(Running off after him)

Mr. Bennet! Mr. Bennet! Shan't we all go to Brighton? It would be such a delicious scheme!

KITTY

(Utterly distraught)

I cannot see why Mrs. Forster should not ask me as well as Lydia. I am two years older!!!

LYDIA

Kitty, do not go on so! It would be ever so much pleasanter if you were to congratulate my good fortune.

(KITTY cries)

JANE

Lydia! Try to be a little less exuberant ... for Kitty's sake.

(JANE and ELIZABETH exit)

LYDIA

(Protesting)

But think of the fun I shall have!
(Begging MARY's sympathy)
Mary? ...

MARY
Far be it from me, dear sister, to deny you your pleasure, but your scheme has no charm for me.
Come, Kitty.
(SHE takes KITTY'S hand to exit)

LYDIA
(Grabbing KITTY'S other hand, pulling her away from MARY)
Come, Kitty.

MARY
(Pulling KITTY)
Leave off, Lydia!

LYDIA
(Ripping KITTY away from MARY)
You leave off, Mary!

MARY
Lydia!!!

LYDIA
Oh -- Go read a book.
(SHE sticks out her tongue)
(MARY rolls her eyes and exits)

LYDIA
Now, now, Kitty. You know it's not so bad as all that. Would you have me refuse Mrs. Forster's invitation?

KITTY
Yes.

(Beat)

LYDIA
La! You are so strange. If you were to go to Brighton instead of me, I would want you to write to me about every wondrous detail.
(Arm around KITTY's shoulders, painting a picture)
Just imagine it, Kitty ...

MUSIC #35: I CAN'T RESIST A REDCOAT

LYDIA

Brighton! And a whole camp full of soldiers!
 I CAN'T RESIST A REDCOAT!
 I CAN'T RESIST A MAN
 IN REGIMENTAL UNIFORM
 WHOSE SHOULDERS WIDELY SPAN
 A SCARLET COAT. OH! HOW I DOTE
 ON SHARP SALUTES AND POLISHED BOOTS.
 I CAN'T RESIST A REDCOAT!
 (Laughter)

KITTY

NO ONE EVER STOPS TO THINK OF ME.
(LYDIA chatters on about how excited she is about her upcoming trip)
 SHE HAS THE FUN; I CRY INTO MY TEA.
(LYDIA chatters)
 SHE DOESN'T CARE. IT ISN'T FAIR!!!
 I WANT TO GO TO BRIGHTON. OH!
 I CAN'T RESIST A REDCOAT!

LYDIA

Oh, Kitty! Can't you see it! The streets filled with officers and dazzling with scarlet!

LYDIA

THE MEN IN THE MILITIA,
 ALL STRAPPING, TOUGH AND TALL,
 WILL GATHER BY THE SEASIDE
 AND INTO RANK THEY'LL FALL.
 A GRAND AFFAIR.

WHAT SHALL I WEAR?

OFF I GO TO BRIGHTON. OH!
 I CAN'T RESIST A REDCOAT!

KITTY

(Crying)
 OH!
 I SEE IT SO ...
 OH!
 I WANT TO GO!

IT ISN'T FAIR.

WHY DON'T YOU CARE?
 I WANT TO GO TO BRIGHTON. OH!
 I CAN'T RESIST A REDCOAT!

LYDIA

A HOLIDAY IN BRIGHTON –

KITTY

– A SUMMER BY THE SEA –

LYDIA

WHERE TENS TO SCORES OF SOLDIERS
 ALL BEG A KISS FROM ME!

KITTY
YOU SHOULD SAY, “NO”.
(LYDIA looks coy. Shocked)
WOULD YOU SAY, “YES”?!?!

LYDIA
(Splitting the difference)
I COULD ... MAKE THEM GUESS!

(THEY laugh)

COLONEL FORSTER (Offstage Voice)
ATTENTION, REDCOATS!
FORWARD! MARCH!

(Field drum solo -- A line of SOLDIERS, including WICKHAM, marches across the stage as they leave Meryton. The BENNETS enter to bid adieu to LYDIA, dressing HER in spencer, bonnet and parasol)

KITTY
Oh! Lydia, you will write to me very often, won't you?

LYDIA
As often as I can. But you know I may not have much time for writing. You may write to me -- you will have nothing else to do.

KITTY
Lydia!

MRS. BENNET
(As the BENNETS wave goodbye)
Oh! my dear Lydia, have as much fun as you can!

*(LYDIA joins COLONEL & MRS. FORSTER and follows the SOLDIERS off)
(SOLDIERS re-enter in Regency Square in Brighton to practice maneuvers.
LYDIA and MRS. FORSTER watch from the side)*

SOLDIERS
(Marching in)
LEFT! (RIGHT!) LEFT! (RIGHT!)
LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT! (RIGHT!)
LEFT! (RIGHT!) LEFT! (RIGHT!)
LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT!

COMMANDED, WE WILL OBEY.

(COLONEL FORSTER issues a command)
WE'RE PREPARING TO JOIN THE FRAY.

(COLONEL FORSTER issues a command)
SWIFT AND BOLD TO FACE THE FOE
FOR ENGLAND. DUTY-BOUND WE GO.
GOD SAVE THE KING!

READY FOR A SKIRMISH,
WE MARCH TO DRUM AND FIFE.
GUNS ARE PREP'D AND LOADED.
MY COUNTRY OR MY LIFE!

(Dance break as the SOLDIERS practice a skirmish. WICKHAM leads his men to victory)

LYDIA

(Clapping, jumping up and down with giddy enthusiasm)
Well done, Mr. Wickham!!!

(WICKHAM makes a slight bow)

LYDIA
THE CAPTAINS AND LEF-TENANTS
I'M ALWAYS DREAMING OF
ARE PRACTICING MANEUVERS
ON THE BATTLEFIELD OF LOVE.
INFANTRY OR CAVALRY,
IT MATTERS NOT A WHIT TO ME
AS LONG AS HE'S A REDCOAT!

SOLDIERS
HMM – HMM – (or OOH)
HMM – HMM
HMM – HMM –
HMM – LOVE!

(The SOLDIERS march off. WICKHAM offers LYDIA his arm and escorts her out)

AUSTEN

(Giddy with laughter)
Yes, yes! This may prove useful.
(Calling out, impulsively)
Cassandra! Cassandra!

SCENE 3A: “SHARING” – Chawton Cottage

(CASSANDRA runs into the room, wearing an apron, flour on her hands – caught mid-work in the kitchen)

CASSANDRA

Jane? Are you alright?

(Awkward stare between the two)

AUSTEN

Yes! Yes ... I just wanted to share something with you ...

(Pause)

CASSANDRA

Go on.

AUSTEN

(Tip-toeing)

Pemberley?

CASSANDRA

You’re keeping the Pemberley scene? How is that possible?

AUSTEN

Elizabeth received a letter from Darcy explaining everything.

CASSANDRA

So you resolved it?

AUSTEN

Yes.

CASSANDRA

And what of that new character, Mr. Wickham?

AUSTEN

You will be pleased to know he turned out very wild. So I sent him away. And Elizabeth will go to Pemberley.

CASSANDRA

Ah! Pemberley.

AUSTEN

If it still works. Will you read it with me?

CASSANDRA

Yes!

AUSTEN

(Reading as she hands the manuscript to CASSANDRA)

“Mrs. Bennet has a brother, Mr. Gardiner, who is a gentlemanlike man who lives by trade in London with his wife, Mrs. Gardiner –”

(CASSANDRA takes over ...)

SCENE 4: “PEMBERLEY” – Longbourn House / The Pemberley Estate

(The GARDINERS arrive at “Longbourn.” ELIZABETH rushes to them)

CASSANDRA (as MRS. GARDINER)

(Greeting her niece)

My dear niece, how should you like to join your uncle and I on a tour of pleasure?

ELIZABETH

Very much, Aunt Gardiner.

MR. GARDINER

Wonderful! We will be traveling through the countryside to visit some of the great houses in the north.

CASSANDRA (as MRS. GARDINER)

How should you like to see Pemberley?

ELIZABETH

Mr. Darcy’s estate?!

CASSANDRA (as MRS. GARDINER)

(Delighted)

Yes. So lovely.

ELIZABETH

(To AUSTEN)

I have no business being at Pemberley.

AUSTEN

Should not you like to see a place of which you have heard so much?

CASSANDRA (as MRS. GARDINER)

If it were merely a fine house richly furnished, I should not care about it myself; but the grounds are delightful.

ELIZABETH

(Almost convinced, but ... to AUSTEN)

But what if Mr. Darcy were there? It would be dreadful!

MR. GARDINER

I have heard that Pemberley has some of the finest woods in the country.

CASSANDRA (as MRS. GARDINER)

(Agreeing)

-- so many magnificent views of the hills and valleys!

AUSTEN

(Dismissing ELIZABETH'S fears)

See? What are men to rocks and mountains?

MR. GARDINER

(To his wife)

To Pemberley, therefore, we shall go!

MUSIC #36: TO PEMBERLEY

(The scene shifts to “The Pemberley Estate”)

CASSANDRA

(Reading the scene)

“The park was very large, and contained great variety. They entered it in one of its lowest points, and drove for some time through a beautiful wood, stretching over a wide extent. Elizabeth saw and admired every remarkable spot and point of view. They then found themselves at the top of a considerable eminence, where the wood ceased, and the eye was instantly caught by –”

(CASSANDRA -- as MRS. GARDINER -- points out the location of Pemberley House)

ELIZABETH

(In awe and disbelief at the magnitude of Darcy's home)

Pemberley House ...

CASSANDRA

“It was a large, handsome, stone building standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills.”

ELIZABETH

I might have been the mistress of this place?

AUSTEN

(Slyly)

She admires the owner's taste.

(MRS. REYNOLDS, the Pemberley housekeeper, invites the GARDINERS and ELIZABETH into Pemberley. AUSTEN joins them, keen to observe ELIZABETH'S reaction)

MRS. REYNOLDS

Mr. Darcy and his sister are not expected until tomorrow. This is the portrait gallery.

MR. GARDINER

(Pointing out a portrait of Darcy)

Is that Mr. Darcy?

MRS. REYNOLDS

Yes, and very like him.

CASSANDRA (as MRS. GARDINER)

It is a handsome face.

AUSTEN

Lizzy? ...

ELIZABETH

(As if seeing him for the first time)

Yes. Very handsome.

MR. GARDINER

Is he much at Pemberley in the course of the year, Mrs. Reynolds?

MRS. REYNOLDS

I daresay he may spend half his time here.

CASSANDRA (as MRS. GARDINER)

If he were to marry, he might spend more.

MRS. REYNOLDS

Yes, Ma'am; but I do not know when that will be. I do not know who is good enough for him.

ELIZABETH

(Taken aback)

It is very much to his credit that you should think so.

MRS. REYNOLDS

I say no more than the truth. Some people call him proud; but I am sure I never saw anything of it. I have never had a cross word from him in my life, and I have been in service here since he was a child.

CASSANDRA (as MRS. GARDINER)

His father was an excellent man.

MRS. REYNOLDS

Yes, Ma'am, and his son will be just like him. – Already he is just as generous to the poor.

AUSTEN

What is more reliable than the praise of a valuable servant?

MR. GARDINER

You are lucky to have such a master.

MRS. REYNOLDS

Yes, sir, I know I am. There is not one of his tenants or servants but what will give him a good name.

AUSTEN

There are very few people of whom so much can be said.

ELIZABETH

(Aside)

Can this be Mr. Darcy?

(The GARDINERS continue on their tour with MRS. REYNOLDS, leaving ELIZABETH transfixed by DARCY'S portrait)

MUSIC #37: THE PORTRAIT SONG

ELIZABETH

WHO ARE YOU?
I THOUGHT I KNEW THE MAN IN THE PORTRAIT.
YOU APPEAR AND SEEM TO BE
ALL THE THINGS THAT I REFUSED TO SEE.
AND YOU SAID YOU LOVED ME?

WHO ARE YOU?
IS IT TRUE THE MAN IN THE PORTRAIT
IS THOUGHTFUL AND GOOD?

IF I KNEW THEN WHAT I KNOW NOW,
I MIGHT HAVE UNDERSTOOD.
BUT THAT WAS THEN.

NOW I'M FACE TO FACE
WITH YOU, THE MAN IN THE PORTRAIT.
IN YOUR GAZE, I CAN SEE
THE WAY YOU USED TO SMILE AT ME,
AND IT SAYS ... YOU LOVED ME.

(DARCY enters in traveling clothes and is arrested by the sight of ELIZABETH)

DARCY

Miss Bennet?

(ELIZABETH turns to meet his gaze)

ELIZABETH

Mr. Darcy!

(DARCY turns his head to the portrait she was staring at; she looks back at it nervously. They meet each other's eyes again and then look away. They stand in awkward silence)

DARCY

Is all well? Your family ... are they in health?

ELIZABETH

Yes ... thank you.

(Pause)

The weather is pleasant.

DARCY

Yes.

(Pause)

ELIZABETH

So very fine for this time of year ... the summer.

DARCY

(Smiles)

Yes. You have been traveling?

ELIZABETH

Yes -- we would never have intruded in this manner -- we were told you would not be here -- I have been traveling.

DARCY

(Alleviating her awkwardness)

How do you find Pemberley, Miss Bennet?

ELIZABETH

(Takes a moment to realize his graciousness)

It is beautiful.

DARCY

I am glad you think so.

(The GARDINERS return in search of ELIZABETH)

Will you do me the honour of introducing me to your friends?

ELIZABETH

Yes, of course, this is my mother's brother and his wife – Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner.

DARCY

(Surprised but cordial)

Ah! Yes, I believe you live and work in London, Sir?

MR. GARDINER

(Surprised)

Why yes, Mr. Darcy.

DARCY

It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance.

MR. GARDINER

Likewise. We have been admiring your fine estate.

CASSANDRA (as MRS. GARDINER)

The grounds are just as I remember them.

DARCY

You are familiar with the area?

CASSANDRA (as MRS. GARDINER)

I grew up in these parts. Your father was a well-liked man, Mr. Darcy.

DARCY

(Touched)

Thank you, Ma'am. You are kind to say so. Would you care for some refreshment?

MR. GARDINER

Thank you, Mr. Darcy, but we must be going.

(GEORGIANA enters in search of DARCY)

DARCY

Of course, but before you do –

(Waving GEORGIANA over)

Miss Elizabeth Bennet, may I introduce my sister, Georgiana.

GEORGIANA

(Excitedly)

Oh! I've heard so much about you, Miss Bennet.

ELIZABETH

(Blushing)

Have you?

GEORGIANA

My brother speaks often of his time at Netherfield.

ELIZABETH

(Tongue in cheek)

And here I had hoped to pass myself off with some degree of credit.

GEORGIANA

No! Indeed, he speaks very highly of you.

(ELIZABETH looks at DARCY, meeting his gaze)

DARCY

(Embarrassed)

I hope ... that is – we hope you will dine with us before you leave the area.

GEORGIANA

Oh yes, do join us to dinner.

CASSANDRA (as MRS. GARDINER)

We would be honoured, Miss Darcy.

DARCY

(Pleased)

Excellent.

(GEORGIANA shows THE GARDINERS around and discusses dinner plans while DARCY and ELIZABETH follow, each secretly watching the other)

ELIZABETH

WHO ARE YOU?

THE MAN IN THE PORTRAIT
IS STANDING HERE.

WHAT IS THIS CHANGE IN ME?

HAS HE FORGIVEN ME?

IT'S SHAMEFUL THE WAY I
BEHAVED –

– WHEN I CHOSE

DARCY

YOU'RE HERE, AND NOW
WHAT CAN I DO?

WILL SHE SEE
HOW VERY DEAR SHE IS TO ME?
COULD SHE EVER LOVE ME?

HAS SHE FORGIVEN ME?
IT'S SHAMEFUL THE WAY I
BEHAVED
WHEN I PROPOSED.

TO SAY SUCH HURTFUL THINGS.
SO MUCH PAIN.
SHALL WE START AGAIN?

THE MAN IN THE PORTRAIT
LOOKS AT ME.
DO I HAVE THE POWER TO
PLEASE?

AND COULD HE –
COULD HE STILL LOVE ME?

I SAID SUCH HURTFUL THINGS.
SO MUCH PAIN.
SHALL WE START AGAIN?
YOU'RE HERE!

IN YOUR EYES I STILL SEE
A WOMAN WHOM I WANT TO
PLEASE.
AND COULD SHE –

COULD SHE EVER LOVE ME?

(DARCY offers his arm to ELIZABETH to escort her to the carriage. They follow GEORGIANA and the others off)

SCENE 4A: “THE STORY IS NOT FINISHED YET” – Chawton Cottage

CASSANDRA

That is a wonderful scene, Jane. No matter what you decide. That is a wonderful scene.

(Embrace)

Oh! The Bread!

(CASSANDRA runs out. AUSTEN laughs)

AUSTEN

A wonderful scene ...

MUSIC #38: ONCE UPON A TIME

AUSTEN

(Spoken over underscoring)

IS THIS HOW THE STORY ENDS?

THEY RECONCILE, BECOME MAN AND WIFE?

(Sung)

“ONCE UPON A TIME” ...

“HAPPILY EVER AFTER” ...

IS THIS TRUE TO LIFE?

DARCY IS THE HANDSOME PRINCE

AND PEMBERLEY HIS CAMELOT.

ELIZABETH, THE FAIR AND LOVELY LADY.

BUT A DAMSEL IN DISTRESS? ...

(Spoken)

SHE IS NOT.

He is rich, to be sure -- But what has Prince Darcy done to deserve Lady Elizabeth?

(Sung)

“ONCE UPON A TIME” ...

“HAPPILY EVER AFTER” ...

He certainly cares for her, but he cannot abide her family. And since he objects to them ...

THE STORY IS NOT FINISHED YET.

THERE HAS TO BE A TEST.

FOR A PRINCE TO BE A HERO,

HE MUST JOURNEY ON A QUEST.

VOICES

THERE HASN'T BEEN A QUEST.

HE MUST PASS A TEST.

HE MUST MAKE CHOICES ...

AUSTEN

CHOICES ...

CHOICES ...

AUSTEN

WHAT IF DARCY SLAYS A DRAGON;
I COULD NAME THE DRAGON, “PRIDE.”
THAT WOULD BE HIS GREATEST CHALLENGE.
DARCY, WHAT WILL YOU DECIDE?
PROVE THAT YOU ARE WORTHY!
IN THE FACE OF SCANDAL AND DISGRACE,
WILL YOU STAND BY HER SIDE?
CHOICES ...

VOICES

CHOICES. CHOICES.
CHOICES. CHOICES.

(ELIZABETH enters. She paces back and forth, reading a letter from Jane)
(AUSTEN gets out a fresh sheet of paper to write a new scene)

SCENE 5: “DISTRESS AT LONGBOURN” – Lambton Inn / Longbourn House

(DARCY enters, joining ELIZABETH at “The Lambton Inn”)

DARCY

Miss Bennet? Good god! What is the matter?

(Stunned, ELIZABETH offers the letter to DARCY. He takes the letter and begins to read)

(*SOUND: A bell at the door. Lights up on the middle of the night at “Longbourn.” MR. BENNET enters, half-dressed with a letter in hand.*)

MR. BENNET

(*Calling*)

Mrs. Bennet! Mrs. Bennet!

(*MRS. BENNET rushes in, dressed in her nightclothes*)

MRS. BENNET

My dear, Mr. Bennet! What –

MR. BENNET

(*Cutting HER off*)

We are ruined.

MRS. BENNET

Ruined?

MR. BENNET

Lydia has run away –

MRS. BENNET

(*Gasps*)

Lydia!!!

(*She starts to hyperventilate*)

JANE, KITTY & MARY

(*Enter, ad-libbing*)

Mamma! – Mamma, what is it? Papa, what is wrong? Etc.

MR. BENNET

(Putting his hand up to silence them)

I have just received word ... Your sister, Lydia, has run away with // Mr. Wickham.

DARCY

(Looking up from the letter)

// Mr. Wickham?

(MARY, KITTY and JANE gasp, MRS. BENNET wails)

ELIZABETH

(Ashen)

I beg your pardon, but I must leave you. I must find my uncle –

DARCY

You cannot go; – you are not well enough.

(ELIZABETH hesitates, but her knees begin to buckle and DARCY assists her to a seat)

MARY

What will you do, papa?

MR. BENNET

I must go to London – to see what can be done. Jane, write Elizabeth at once. Ask for your Uncle Gardiner to meet me there as soon as he is able.

JANE

Of course, papa.

MRS. BENNET

(Wailing)

My poor, poor Lydia!

ELIZABETH

Lydia has no money, no connections, nothing that can tempt him to – She is only fifteen! Fifteen. He cannot possibly mean to marry her.

DARCY

Wickham will never marry a woman without money. He cannot afford it.

MR. BENNET

(Referring to the letter)

It appears he left behind many debts.

MRS. BENNET

That villainous Mr. Wickham. He is the wickedest man in the world!

ELIZABETH

I might have prevented this! You opened my eyes to his real character. And had I but explained some part of it – made his character known ...

DARCY

(Looking over the letter)

They were traced as far as London ...

ELIZABETH

How are they to be discovered? What might he persuade her to do? ... We are ruined.

(DARCY shakes his head in silent acquiescence. He begins to pace in earnest meditation; brow contracted, air gloomy)

(Uncomfortable Pause)

DARCY

(Restrained, almost cold)

I am afraid this unfortunate affair will prevent my sister's having the pleasure of seeing you at Pemberley.

ELIZABETH

(Shocked by the feeling of rejection)

Oh! ... Yes.

(Pulling HERSELF together)

Please, be so kind as to apologize for us.

DARCY

Of course ...

(Beat)

I am sorry for your distress.

(With one serious, parting look, he goes away)

MUSIC #39: WATCH HIM GO

AUSTEN

(Writing)

“... and never had Elizabeth so honestly felt that she could love him, as now, when all love must be in vain.”

VOICES

WATCH HIM ...

WATCH HIM GO.

OOH ... OOH ... GONE.

(ELIZABETH exits)

SCENE 6: “SEARCHING FOR LYDIA” – London / Various Locations

(The search for LYDIA begins)

MUSIC #40: WHAT NEWS!

VOICES

LYDIA BENNET RAN AWAY WITH MISTER WICKHAM!

SILLY GIRL, SUCH A SILLY, SILLY GIRL.

SILLY GIRL, SUCH A SILLY, SILLY GIRL.

SILLY GIRL! WHAT NEWS!

SILLY GIRL. SILLY GIRL. WHAT SCANDALOUS NEWS!

WHAT NEWS! WHAT NEWS!

WHAT NEWS!

(MR. BENNET and MR. GARDINER meet in “London”)

MR. GARDINER

Brother! What news?

MR. BENNET

I have no good intelligence to give.

MR. GARDINER

Nothing at the hotels?

MR. BENNET

No, but I have not yet enquired at the boarding houses.

MR. GARDINER

Come, we’ll search together.

VOICES

WHAT NEWS? WHAT NEWS?

WHAT NEWS? WHAT NEWS?

WHAT SCANDALOUS NEWS!

(At “Longbourn” -- JANE attempts to console MRS. BENNET)

MRS. BENNET

(Crying and wailing)

Oh! My poor, poor Lydia! My darling little baby girl! -- Jane! Write to your father again. Tell him he must find that villainous Mr. Wickham before it is too late! Ohhhh!!!

VOICES

WHAT NEWS?

*LYDIA BENNET RAN AWAY WITH MR. WICKHAM! OOH!
LYDIA BENNET RAN AWAY WITH MR. WICKHAM! OOH!
WITH MR. WICKHAM! OOH!*

(On the streets of “London”)

MR. GARDINER

Does Wickham have any connections who might know where he has concealed himself?

MR. BENNET

We have nothing to guide us.

(THEY exit)

VOICES

WHAT NEWS?

WHAT NEWS? WHAT NEWS? SILLY GIRL!

LYDIA RAN AWAY! WHAT A SILLY, SILLY GIRL.

SILLY GIRL, SUCH A SILLY, SILLY GIRL! SILLY GIRL.

SCANDALOUS NEWS! DO YOU HAVE ANY NEWS?

WHAT A SILLY, SILLY GIRL. SUCH NEWS!

SILLY GIRL, SUCH A SILLY, SILLY GIRL! SCANDALOUS NEWS!

DO YOU HAVE ANY NEWS?

SILLY GIRL. OOH.

SILLY GIRL! SILLY GIRL!

SCANDALOUS NEWS!

SILLY GIRL!

IT'S SCANDALOUS NEWS!

(DARCY traveling to “London”)

DARCY

I COULD HAVE KEPT THIS ALL FROM HAPPENING.

I AM THE ONE TO BLAME.

I KNEW WICKHAM WAS A SCOUNDREL

WITH NO HONOUR, WITH NO SHAME.

(ELIZABETH traveling to “Longbourn”)

ELIZABETH

LYDIA, WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?

DON'T YOU KNOW HE'S RUINED YOU?

SUCH DISGRACEFUL CIRCUMSTANCES

AND THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO!

BOTH

I SHOULD HAVE SPOKEN OUT ABOUT HIM,
BUT, INSTEAD, I CHOSE TO HIDE
THE TRUTH OF WHAT I KNEW ABOUT HIM.
ONCE AGAIN ... MISTAKEN PRIDE!

ELIZABETH

(Returning home)

Jane!

JANE

Elizabeth!

(THEY embrace affectionately, tears filling the eyes of both)

ELIZABETH

Is there any news?

JANE

Not yet.

ELIZABETH

And Mamma -- how is she?

MRS. BENNET

(Wailing)

Ohhh!!! Girls! What a dreadful state I am in with your father gone away to London. He must find Wickham and make him marry her!

MARY

Kitty, let this be a lesson to you. The loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable, and one false step involves her in endless ruin.

KITTY

Well, I certainly would have behaved better than Lydia.

MARY

I should hope so, Kitty.

MRS. BENNET

Or else he must fight Wickham -- but then I am sure he will be killed, and then before your father is dead in his grave Mr. Collins will turn us out of our house ...

(MR. COLLINS is seen reading a letter with news of Lydia's elopement)

MR. COLLINS

From the very day I met Miss Lydia, I could tell she was untamed and wild!

(HE continues reading)

VOICES

TALKING TO SOLDIERS!

SILLY GIRL, SUCH A SILLY, SILLY GIRL.

HE IS SO MUCH OLDER!

SILLY GIRL, SUCH A SILLY, SILLY GIRL.

SO YOUNG! SO YOUNG!

HE IS SO MUCH OLDER!

SILLY GIRL, SUCH A SILLY, SILLY GIRL.

SILLY GIRL, SUCH A SILLY, SILLY GIRL.

(Back at “Longbourn” -- ELIZABETH and JANE alone)

ELIZABETH

Oh! Jane, is there anyone who does not know the whole unfortunate affair?

JANE

I do not think so. It has been much talked of already.

MR. COLLINS

(Folding up the letter)

No one will want to marry any of the Bennet girls now. -- What will Lady Catherine say?

(HE runs off to tell her)

VOICES

SHE WAS ALWAYS FLIRTING.

TALKING TO SOLDIERS!

SHE WAS ALWAYS FLIRTING.

TALKING TO SOLDIERS! TALKING TO SOLDIERS!

SHE WAS ALWAYS FLIRTING.

IT WAS WHAT WE EXPECTED. IT WAS WHAT WE SUSPECTED.

RAT-A-TAT. RAT-A-TAT. RAT-A-TAT. RAT-A-TAT.

(Lodgings in “seedy London”)

(WICKHAM, half-drunk and half-dressed slowly undresses LYDIA)

LYDIA

(Timidly)

I CAN’T RESIST A REDCOAT!

I CAN’T RESIST A MAN

IN REGIMENTAL UNIFORM

WHOSE SHOULDERS WIDELY SPAN

A SCARLET COAT --

WICKHAM

(Seductively)

SILLY GIRL.

PRETTY GIRL.

(WICKHAM kisses LYDIA'S neck, pulling away nervously)

LYDIA

-- My dear Mr. Wickham! I love London!

WICKHAM

I love you in London.

LYDIA

Oh! Mr. Wickham.

WICKHAM

And I know where else I would love you.

LYDIA

(Pulling away)

Mr. Wickham!

YOU PROMISED WE'D GO SHOPPING;
I DON'T HAVE MANY CLOTHES.
YOU PROMISED ME A WEDDING DRESS --

WICKHAM

WILL YOU BE A GOOD WIFE?

LYDIA

MY SISTERS ALL MUST ENVY ME
AND I WILL BE IN ECSTASY
WHEN WE MARRY --

WICKHAM

(Bored)

Maybe I should go. You're not ready.

LYDIA

Mr. Wickham! --

WICKHAM

I thought you wanted me as much as I want you.

LYDIA

But I do! I do.

WICKHAM

Then why won't you let me love you?
(HE holds out HIS hand)
Like a husband loves his wife?

(SHE takes HIS hand. HE pulls HER in for a kiss)
COMMAND ME, I WILL OBEY.
LET ME SERVE YOU IN EVERY WAY.

LYDIA
PLEASE, PROMISE ME THAT YOU WILL STAY.
I'LL BE A GOOD WIFE ...

WICKHAM
BE A GOOD WIFE ...

LYDIA
I CAN'T RESIST ...

(HE carries HER off to bed)

(At "Rosings")

LADY CATHERINE
That girl's disposition must be naturally bad to exhibit such licentious behaviour at such an early age!

MR. COLLINS
Her death would have been a blessing in comparison to this.

LADY CATHERINE
Consider yourself lucky, Mr. Collins. Who will connect themselves with such a family now?

MR. COLLINS
Who indeed, Lady Catherine!

VOICES
WHAT NEWS? WHAT NEWS?
WHAT NEWS? WHAT NEWS?
WHAT SCANDALOUS NEWS!

(Back in "London" -- MR. GARDINER'S study)

DARCY
And so, we are agreed?

MR. GARDINER
We are, Mr. Darcy. But I wish you would allow me --

DARCY
Not another word. The matter is settled. They are never to know.

(THEY shake hands. DARCY exits)

VOICES

SCANDALOUS! OOH. WHAT A SILLY GIRL!

OOH. SCANDALOUS! SILLY GIRL, SUCH A SILLY, SILLY GIRL!

WHAT HAVE YOU HEARD?

OOH. WHAT NEWS!

WHAT HAVE YOU HEARD?

OH NO! REALLY?

SCANDALOUS!

SCENE 7: “MORE DISTRESS AT LONGBOURN” – Longbourn House

(MR. BENNET returns home)

THE BENNET DAUGHTERS

Oh! Papa! You are home! I am so glad you are returned. What news? Etc.

MR. BENNET

Where is your mother?

(A cry is heard from MRS. BENNET, offstage)

MRS. BENNET (Offstage)

Oh! I have never in my life been so ill-used!

JANE

She does not yet leave her dressing room.

MRS. BENNET (Offstage)

No one can know how much I suffer.

JANE

I was about to fetch her tea.

MR. BENNET

Oh! Do. It gives such an elegance to misfortune!

(SOUND: An offstage wail from MRS. BENNET)

Another day I will do the same. I will sit in my library, in my night cap and powdering gown, and give as much trouble as I can, – or, perhaps, I will wait until Kitty runs away.

KITTY

(Fretfully)

I am not going to run away, Papa. If I should ever go to Brighton –

MR. BENNET

You go to Brighton! – No, Kitty, I have at last learnt to be cautious, and you will feel the effects of it.

(KITTY begins to cry)

MARY

(Escorting KITTY off)

Kitty dear, let us pour into the wounded bosoms of each other, the balm of sisterly consolation.

KITTY

Mary!!!!

(KITTY cries louder and runs offstage. MARY follows)

ELIZABETH

But Papa, what news?

MR. BENNET

Lydia and Wickham have been found.

JANE

Thank goodness!

ELIZABETH

And?

MR. BENNET

There will be a wedding if Lydia is given a yearly allowance of one hundred pounds.

JANE

They will marry?

MR. BENNET

Yes. They must marry.

ELIZABETH

And yet he is such a man.

(Sighing)

Oh, Lydia.

JANE

Shall we tell mamma the news?

MR. BENNET

Just as you please.

(JANE exits. To ELIZABETH)

Oh, Lizzy, I only wish I knew how much your uncle Gardiner laid down to bring this about.

ELIZABETH

What do you mean, papa?

MR. BENNET

No man in his senses would marry Lydia on so slight a temptation as one hundred pounds a year. And with all of his debts, Wickham's a fool if he marries for less than ten thousand pounds.

ELIZABETH

Ten thousand!

MRS. BENNET

(Runs on, screaming with delight)

Oh! Mr. Bennet! Our first married daughter. Lydia Wickham! How well it sounds. The wedding clothes! They must be ordered directly.

MR. BENNET

Let us come to a right understanding. I will not encourage the indecency of this episode by advancing Lydia a single guinea to buy clothes.

(He exits)

MRS. BENNET

But Mr. Bennet! ...

(No response. Running off)

Mr. Bennet!

AUSTEN

(Pondering)

Shall I give an account of the wedding?

ELIZABETH

No! Really, it is too sordid. There cannot be too little said on the subject. Oh! How I wish I had not made Mr. Darcy acquainted with the affair.

AUSTEN

But why? Aren't you curious to know how he got Mr. Wickham to the church?

ELIZABETH

Mr. Darcy?!? ... At Lydia and Wickham's wedding?

AUSTEN

... but perhaps I ought not to say another word about it.

ELIZABETH

No! Pray, write instantly! Let me understand it.

MUSIC #41: LET ME UNDERSTAND IT

AUSTEN

(Writing)

“Darcy paid off Wickham's debts ... He arranged for their marriage ...”

ELIZABETH

(Overwhelmed)

Can he have done this for me?

AUSTEN

My dear, what does your heart say?

(ELIZABETH smiles with hope. AUSTEN revisits the first happy ending)

SCENE 8: “BINGLEY RETURNS” – Longbourn House

(SOUND: A bell rings at the door)

JANE

(Enters, rushing to ELIZABETH)

Lizzy! It is Mr. Bingley.

ELIZABETH

(Surprised, to AUSTEN)

Mr. Bingley!

(Teasing)

Oh, Jane, take care.

JANE

My dear Lizzy, you cannot think me in any danger now.

ELIZABETH

(Seeing BINGLEY enter, with a wink)

I think you are in very great danger of making him as much in love with you as ever.

(SHE squeezes JANE’S hand and exits)

(JANE and BINGLEY are left alone)

MUSIC #42: I THINK YOU’RE WONDERFUL

BINGLEY

Miss Bennet?

JANE

(Composing herself)

Mr. Bingley.

BINGLEY

I loved you last November and I love you still.

(JANE gasps with happy delight)

I THINK YOU’RE WONDERFUL, LOVELY AND SWEET.

WHEN YOU ARE NEAR ME MY WORLD IS COMPLETE.

LET ME PROMISE TO LOVE YOU FOREVER.

Marry me.

JANE

Mr. Bingley!

BINGLEY

Charles.

JANE

Charles –

I AM SO HAPPY. I AM SO BLESSED.
HOW DO I ANSWER YOUR LOVELY REQUEST?
YES, I PROMISE TO LOVE YOU FOREVER.

BINGLEY

YOU ARE SO WONDERFUL.

JANE

YOU ARE SO WONDERFUL.

BINGLEY

YOU ARE SO WONDERFUL.

JANE

I HAVE FALLEN IN LOVE.
OUT OF CONTROL, MY HEART IS SOARING
LIKE IT NEVER HAS BEFORE.
YOU ARE SO WONDERFUL!

BINGLEY

YOU ARE SO WONDERFUL!

JANE

YOU ARE SO WONDERFUL!

BINGLEY

ISN'T LOVE WONDERFUL?

JANE

YES, IT IS WONDERFUL!

JANE

I HAVE FALLEN IN LOVE,
OUT OF CONTROL,
MY HEART IS SOARING.

YOU ALONE ARE THE ONE
WHOM MY HEART –

WHOM MY HEART ADORES.

BINGLEY

WHEN I FIRST MET YOU
I WAS NOT THE SAME.
GLORIOUS ANGEL,
MY LOVE YOU HAVE CLAIMED.
YOU ALONE ARE THE ONE –

WHOM MY HEART –
WHOM MY HEART ADORES.

AUSTEN

(As JANE and BINGLEY exit arm in arm. ELIZABETH reappears)

Oh! My dear, dear Jane, I am so happy! I knew I could not have made you so beautiful for nothing!

(To ELIZABETH)

Will you be as happy?

ELIZABETH

(Looking after JANE)

Till I have Jane's goodness, I can never have her happiness ... though, perhaps, if I have very good luck, I may meet another Mr. Collins.

(ELIZABETH laughs at herself)

AUSTEN

(Looking at her character thoughtfully)

Oh! Elizabeth! You are delightful. I shall never be able to tolerate anyone who does not think so.

SCENE 9: “LADY CATHERINE RETURNS” – Longbourn House

(SOUND: A bell rings. LADY CATHERINE enters abruptly with a highly ungracious air)

ELIZABETH

(Shocked)

Lady Catherine!

LADY CATHERINE

You know why I am here, Miss Bennet.

ELIZABETH

Indeed, I do not.

LADY CATHERINE

Miss Bennet, I am not to be trifled with. I have been informed of what I know must be a scandalous falsehood. Two days ago Mr. and Mrs. Collins told me that not only was your elder sister to be advantageously married, but that you, that Miss Elizabeth Bennet, is very soon to be united to my nephew Mr. Darcy.

(ELIZABETH stares in shocked silence)

Miss Bennet, has my nephew made you an offer of marriage?

ELIZABETH

Your ladyship has declared it to be a falsehood.

LADY CATHERINE

Let me be rightly understood, Miss Bennet. This match, to which you have the presumption to aspire, can never take place. Never. It was the express wish of Mr. Darcy’s mother and I that our children marry to unite our two estates.

ELIZABETH

Is Mr. Darcy only bound to his cousin because you wish it? If so, then he is free to make another choice. And if I am that choice, why may I not accept him?

LADY CATHERINE

Because honour forbids it! If you marry him, your alliance will be a disgrace. You will be despised by everyone. If you were sensible of your own good, Miss Bennet, you would not wish to quit the sphere in which you have been brought up.

ELIZABETH

My father is a gentleman, madam.

LADY CATHERINE

Your father may be a gentleman, but what of your mother’s family?

ELIZABETH

Whatever my connections may be, if your nephew does not object to them, they can be nothing to you.

LADY CATHERINE

Tell me once and for all, are you engaged to him?

ELIZABETH

(Reluctant to admit the truth)

I am not.

LADY CATHERINE

(Relieved)

And now you must promise me never to enter into such an engagement.

ELIZABETH

I will make no promise of the kind. You have no right to concern yourself in my affairs.

LADY CATHERINE

Are you then resolved to have him?

ELIZABETH

I am only resolved to be happy without reference to you.

LADY CATHERINE

Very well. I shall know how to act. I take no leave of you, Miss Bennet. I send no compliments to your mother.

(ELIZABETH exits)

LADY CATHERINE

Darcy!!!

SCENE 10: “CALLING ON DARCY” – Darcy’s London House

(DARCY enters)

DARCY

Aunt Catherine?

LADY CATHERINE

(Pacing)

Unfeeling, selfish girl! I had hoped to find her reasonable, but Miss Bennet refuses to reject an engagement to you!

DARCY

Pardon me?

LADY CATHERINE

(Ranting)

She is determined to ruin you in the opinion of all your friends and make you the contempt of the world.

DARCY

Elizabeth Bennet refuses to reject me?

LADY CATHERINE

I shall not go away till you promise me that you will not marry her.

DARCY

I shall make no promise of the kind.

LADY CATHERINE

Heaven and earth! – of what are you thinking? Are the shades of Pemberley to be thus polluted?!?!

AUSTEN

(Passionately)

Lady Catherine! Everybody has a right to marry once in their lives for love if they can.

LADY CATHERINE

(Gasping at the affronts)

I am most seriously displeased.

AUSTEN

(Recovering)

You have been of infinite use.

(She exits in a huff)

DARCY

(Working it out, to AUSTEN)

... If Elizabeth were absolutely set against me, she would have openly acknowledged it to Lady Catherine ...

AUSTEN

Yes.

DARCY

What did she ever say that I did not deserve? I came to her without a doubt of my reception and was properly humbled.

AUSTEN

Yes.

DARCY

What do I not owe her? She showed me how insufficient all my pretensions were to please a woman worthy of being pleased.

AUSTEN

When did such abiding love begin?

DARCY

I cannot fix on the hour, or the spot or the look ...

MUSIC #43: FINE EYES

DARCY

(Continues)

... I was in the middle before I knew that I had begun.

FINE EYES,
SHE HAS FINE EYES
FULL OF MYSTICAL CHARMS.
THE KIND OF FINE EYES
THAT ILLUMINE HER FACE.

AND A FIGURE,
LIGHT AND PLEASING,
FULL OF FEMININE GRACE
THAT BEGS ME TO EMBRACE
AND KEEP HER SAFE IN MY ARMS.

I LONG TO KNOW WHAT SHE'S FEELING.
I WANT A PLACE IN HER HEART.

WHAT MIGHT THEY BE CONCEALING –
THOSE FINE EYES THAT TAUNT ME AND SET HER APART?

YES, HER FINE EYES,
CLEVER DARK EYES,
HAVE A WILL OF THEIR OWN.
THEY CAN HYPNOTIZE,
SURPRISE OR TURN ME TO STONE.

EYES THAT HAVE LOOKED AT ME WITH HONESTY,
EYES THAT HAVE ALWAYS SEEMED TO KNOW,
CHALLENGE YET EMBOLDEN ME.
THEY CAPTURE AND THEN SET ME FREE.

FINE EYES IN A BEAUTIFUL FACE ...
WHAT WILL HER ANSWER BE?
WHAT IS AWAITING ME
IN HER FINE EYES?

AUSTEN

Darcy, there you are ...

MUSIC #44: ROMANTIC

AUSTEN

(About DARCY and about HERSELF)

YOU. ARE. ROMANTIC,
AND NOW YOU KNOW THAT
LOVE IS THE SWORD THAT SLAYS THE DRAGON.
LOVE IS THE COMPASS. LOVE IS THE GUIDE.
LOVE GIVES US CHOICES! --
TO BE ROMANTIC, OR NOT AT ALL ...
IF YOU'RE ROMANTIC, YOU HEAR LOVE CALL.
LOVE IS WONDERFUL. IT'S GLORIOUS!
IT'S NEVER EVER WRONG.

VOICES
CHOICES. CHOICES.
CHOICES. CHOICES.

OH.

WHEN WE'RE ROMANTIC, WE FALL IN LOVE.

VOICES

WE FALL IN LOVE.

AUSTEN

WE DARE TO GO ON A JOURNEY OF THE HEART,
AND WITH THAT CHOICE WE TAKE A CHANCE
TO FIND WHERE WE BELONG!

VOICES

YOU BELONG!

AUSTEN

I AM ROMANTIC. I CHOOSE TO BE
A TRUE ROMANTIC WHO LONGS TO SEE
THE MIRACLE OF LOVE BEAUTIFUL AND FREE!

VOICES

AHH ...

AHH ...

I AM ROMANTIC!
I BELIEVE IN LOVE!

VOICES

BELIEVE IN LOVE!

SCENE 11: “HAPPY ENDINGS” – Longbourn House Exterior / Chawton Cottage

(On the grounds of “Longbourn.” JANE and BINGLEY enter with ELIZABETH in tow)

BINGLEY

(With a twinkle in his eye)

Darcy! There you are. We are in search of a lane in which we might lose our way. Will you join us?

(He and JANE continue off, arm in arm)

DARCY

Miss Bennet.

ELIZABETH

Mr. Darcy.

(They stare at each other in silence. He bows. She curtseys. Pause)

ELIZABETH

(Summoning her courage)

Mr. Darcy, I must thank you for your unexampled kindness to my sister, Lydia. Ever since I found out what you did –

DARCY

(Extremely surprised, tries to formulate his thoughts)

You were never to know. Your uncle was to take the credit ...

ELIZABETH

No! Please. Let me thank you again and again, in the name of all my family, for that generous compassion which induced you to take so much trouble.

DARCY

If you will thank me, let it be for yourself alone. I thought only of you.

(ELIZABETH, much embarrassed, says nothing)

MUSIC #45: FINALE

DARCY

(Continues)

You are too generous to trifle with me. If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once. My affections and wishes are unchanged, but one word from you will silence me on this subject forever.

(ELIZABETH, feeling all the more than common awkwardness and anxiety of his situation, now forces herself to speak immediately, though not very fluently)

ELIZABETH

HOW CAN IT BE
THE MAN IN THE PORTRAIT
IS STANDING HERE WITH OPEN HEART?
WHERE DO I BEGIN? WHERE DO I START?

Mr. Darcy my feelings are changed entirely.

DARCY

Yes?

ELIZABETH

Yes!

BOTH

I LOVE YOU!

DARCY

My dearest, loveliest Elizabeth!

(THEY embrace)

COMPANY

(Gathering for the double wedding of BINGLEY & JANE and DARCY &
ELIZABETH)

OOH ... OOH ...

AUSTEN

COMPANY

(Calling out)

Cassandra! Cassandra!

OOH ... OOH ...

CASSANDRA

(Entering)

Jane?

OOH ...

AUSTEN

THIS IS THE STORY I WILL SEND.
IT IS SO MUCH MORE THAN I EVER
KNEW!

OOH ...

OOH ...

CASSANDRA

JANE, THIS IS WONDERFUL!

WHAT NEWS!

GOOD NEWS! GOOD NEWS!

AUSTEN

YES, IT IS WONDERFUL!

WHAT WONDERFUL NEWS!

(AUSTEN and CASSANDRA witness the wedding of the happy couples)

AUSTEN
EVERYONE WANTS A HAPPY
ENDING.
EVERYONE WANTS THEIR DREAMS
TO COME TRUE.

ELIZABETH / DARCY & JANE / BINGLEY
YOU ARE SO WONDERFUL!

AUSTEN
I KNOW IN MY HEART
WHAT LOVE CAN DO!
SO ... I WILL WRITE OF LOVE.
I WILL WRITE THE STORIES OF
LEARNING FROM A PAST MISTAKE,
OF SELFLESS LOVE,
OF RISKS WE TAKE!

COMPANY
WHAT NEWS!
GOOD NEWS! GOOD NEWS!
CHOICES. CHOICES. CHOICES.
AHH ...

FULL COMPANY + CASSANDRA
AHH ...
AHH ...

AUSTEN
I WILL WRITE ...

COMPANY + CASSANDRA
“FIRST IMPRESSIONS” ...

AUSTEN
I WILL WRITE ...

COMPANY + CASSANDRA
SECOND CHANCES ...

AUSTEN
(Embracing her manuscript)
I WILL WRITE ...

COMPANY + CASSANDRA
ISN'T LOVE WONDERFUL?
YES, IT IS WONDERFUL!
LOVE IS SO WONDERFUL!

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

FULL COMPANY
OF LOVE!

(Blackout)

FINIS

MUSIC #46: BOWS