

**MISS BENNET: CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY
AUDITION SCENES**

SCENE 1 LIZZY & DARCY

SCENE 2 MARY, LIZZY & JANE

SCENE 3 MARY, LIZZY & JANE

SCENE 4A & B MARY & ARTHUR

SCENE 5 MARY, LIZZY, JANE & LYDIA

SCENE 6 MARY & ARTHUR

SCENE 7 MARY & ARTHUR

SCENE 8 LIZZY, JANE & DARCY

SCENE 9 DARCY & BINGLEY

SCENE 10 ARTHUR, DARCY & BINGLEY

SCENE 11 ARTHUR & LYDIA

SCENE 12 ARTHUR & ANNE

SCENE 13 ARTHUR & BINGLEY

SCENE 14 LIZZY & ANNE

SCENE 15 MARY & LYDIA

SCENE 16 MARY & ARTHUR

SCENE 17 ARTHUR & ANNE

MONOLOGUE 18 MARY

MONOLOGUE 19 ARTHUR

Specific callback scenes will be indicated on each callback posting

AUDITION SCENE 1

(Lizzy & Darcy)

(*Lizzy is admiring her Christmas tree. Darcy enter, shocked to see a tree in his house.*)

DARCY: Dear God, Mrs. Darcy.

LIZZY: Isn't it grand, Mr. Darcy?

DARCY: What is that?

LIZZY: It is a tree! And a large and lovely one too.

DARCY: I can make out that it is a tree, Mrs. Darcy. But, why is the tree *inside*.

LIZZY: Because it is a *Christmas* tree. A popular German custom. An evergreen reminds us of life even in the deep midwinter. Isn't that wonderful?

DARCY: It would be were we suddenly German.

LIZZY: I'm attempting a new tradition at Pemberly.

DARCY: Which entails cutting down perfectly healthy trees and humiliating them in the drawing room.

LIZZY: I am far from humiliating my tree. We celebrate its beauty and fortitude against the winter.

DARCY: Which I fear I shall never persuade you should happen outside.

LIZZY: No you shall not. Besides what fun is a marriage of persuasion, when it could be a marriage of surprise?

DARCY: You manage to surprise me by the hour, Mrs. Darcy.

LIZZY: Which will keep us both young and forever intrigued. Now I know you did not seek me out to discuss foliage. What can I do for you, Mr. Darcy.

DARCY: Yes. Well. You recall the news that my aunt, the Lady Catherine, has died.

LIZZY: (*Fibbing.*) So sad.

DARCY: The Rosings estate shall be inherited by a distant cousin, Arthur de Bourgh.

LIZZY: And who is this gentleman of whom I've never heard, much less met?

DARCY: I knew him as a boy, mostly. He's an Oxford man. A student of . . . everything really. I never knew him when he wasn't studying.

LIZZY: Studying what?

DARCY: Snails, when we last met. I recall the too frequent mention of them over dinner.

LIZZY: Mr. de Bourgh and his snail collection.

DARCY: *Lord* de Bourgh. He inherited the title when his father passed.

LIZZY: What a Christmas it shall be for his lordship.

DARCY: Indeed, a Christmas he shall enjoy . . . here.

LIZZY: Here? What do you mean, "here"?

DARCY: As he has no family to speak of, I have made an offer for Lord De Bourgh to join us. Here. Tomorrow. Thank you.

LIZZY: Mr. Darcy, today it is you who surprise me. Well, the entire family is gathering, why not add one more. I'll let you keep your lord if you grant me my beautiful tree. Are we agreed?

DARCY: Indeed we are my dear. And, you know, I rather . . . like your tree.

LIZZY: You perjure yourself. But I thank you.

AUDITION SCENE 2
(Lizzy, Jane & Mary)

LIZZY: Oh Jane, I'm so excited for you. Now tell me everything. How are you feeling? And how is Mr. Bingley readying himself.

JANE: On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, Mr. Bingley is thrilled with the certainty that it will be a boy. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, he is convinced it is a little girl and couldn't be happier. He can't decide which will bring us more joy, so on Sunday he wishes for twins so he can be doubly happy. It is sweet to watch and nearly makes up for how awfully uncomfortable I am. But you'll know yourself soon enough, dear Lizzy. At least I hope you will.

LIZZY: There is time. Mr. Darcy is somewhat impatient for a family; he is quite enthusiastic in the pursuit. It is amusing, exhausting, and lovely all at the same time. He is just arrogant enough to think he can exercise some kind of control over the process.

MARY: Would you like me to instruct him on the mechanics?

LIZZY: Mary! Absolutely not! Not unless you'd like to embarrass him thoroughly.

MARY: Wouldn't that be fun?

JANE: Some knowledge is better left within the pages of books, Mary.

LIZZY: Yes, let us *please* turn our thoughts toward being here, *together* again, and what better state is there in the world.

MARY: I have not yet had the privilege of experiencing many other states, so I will refrain from comment.

AUDITION SCENE 3

(Mary, Lizzy, Jane)

JANE: Mary, you've been out of sorts the whole journey. If you're not picking on Lydia you're making cryptic comments. What on earth is the matter?

LIZZY: Indeed. I thought you were happy at Longbourn with your books and your pianoforte and your . . . self.

MARY: For a time I was. I relished the unrestricted access to Father's library and not being scolded for practicing the piano whenever I liked. But I lately struggle to find solace in either piano or books. It's a curious discontent. I cannot place its origin and therefore I cannot solve it.

LIZZY: I don't understand.

MARY: I know I am meant to be the dutiful middle sister, and everyone expects that I shall care for Mother and Father until they die and Mr. Collins takes possession of Longbourn and I end up in someone's attic.

LIZZY: It's not as bleak as that, is it Mary?

MARY: Isn't it? It is not a life *you* would have chosen. Either of you.

JANE: Well, no, but . .

MARY: I never chose this life either. I don't recall ever being asked.

JANE: Asked what exactly?

MARY: If I longed for something of my own.

JANE: But you have us. We love you.

LIZZY: Yes and Mother and Father, who need you. And . . . your music and . . .

JANE: You could always be a governess—

MARY: And teach young sticky things about the glories of a world I'll never see.

LIZZY: I think you're being unnecessarily dour, Mary. We all must make the most of the situation we are in; one cannot know what the future will bring.

MARY: Yes. (*Sighing.*) That would break a rather fundamental law of the universe.

AUDITION SCENE 4A

(Mary & Arthur)

(Arthur enters alone, carrying a blue-covered book.)

ARTHUR: Mr. Darcy? Hello? I'm looking for . . . well, anyone at this point.

(He sees the library and heads with relief to the open map on the desk. Mary enters.)

MARY: Excuse me, sir, but that is not your map.

ARTHUR: Oh. Hello. No. However I am acquainted with the man who I presume is its owner. I am, in fact, mid-search for Mr. Darcy at present. I have only just arrived. If you might be kind enough to orient me in his general direction?

MARY: If you might be kind enough to introduce yourself. Miss Mary Bennet.

ARTHUR: Oh yes, hello. Arthur de Bourgh, I am a cousin of Darcy's, distant cousin. Are you a relation?

MARY: Sister to Mrs. Elizabeth Darcy. And I fear you've lost my continent.

ARTHUR: Your what?

MARY: *(Looking at the book of maps.)* Last night I left off in Australia but you seem to have set me in Brazil and I am quite unprepared for the Amazon.

ARTHUR: Oh. Well. Watch out for the fish. They bite.

MARY: Do they? Have you been to the great river?

ARTHUR: Oh no. Much like you, I travel on pages and in ink.

MARY: Nonetheless. I shall heed your advice and guard my toes.

ARTHUR: Well. Do pardon me for disrupting your journey.

(Mary flips back to the Australia page.)

MARY: Fixed.

(Awkward pause.)

ARTHUR: *(Indicating Mary's book, which has a green cover.)* And were you also reading Mr. Darcy's copy of Lamarck's *Philosophy*? It is quite a stimulation.

(He indicates his own book with the blue cover.)

MARY: It is. And it is my copy, actually. Which I did find stimulating, and disorienting, all at once.

ARTHUR: As did I. Exactly that combination.

MARY: It is the talk of life's drive to greater complexity that most interested me.

ARTHUR: And the inheritance of traits. Fascinating.

MARY: Indeed. And the bit about the giraffes.

ARTHUR: The giraffes were quite a surprise I thought.

MARY: As did I.

(Awkward pause.)

Those giraffes.

(Awkward pause.)

AUDITION SCENE 4B

(Mary & Arthur)

(Arthur enters alone, carrying a blue-covered book.)

ARTHUR: Mr. Darcy? Hello? I'm looking for . . . well, anyone at this point.

(He sees the library and heads with relief to the open map on the desk. Mary enters.)

MARY: Excuse me, sir, but that is not your map.

ARTHUR: Oh. Hello. No. However I am acquainted with the man who I presume is its owner. I am, in fact, mid-search for Mr. Darcy at present. I have only just arrived. If you might be kind enough to orient me in his general direction?

MARY: If you might be kind enough to introduce yourself. Miss Mary Bennet.

ARTHUR: Oh yes, hello. Arthur de Bourgh, I am a cousin of Darcy's, distant cousin. Are you a relation?

MARY: Sister to Mrs. Elizabeth Darcy. And I fear you've lost my continent.

ARTHUR: Your what?

MARY: *(Looking at the book of maps.)* Last night I left off in Australia but you seem to have set me in Brazil and I am quite unprepared for the Amazon.

ARTHUR: Oh. Well. Watch out for the fish. They bite.

MARY: Do they? Have you been to the great river?

ARTHUR: Oh no. Much like you, I travel on pages and in ink.

MARY: Nonetheless. I shall heed your advice and guard my toes.

ARTHUR: Well. Do pardon me for disrupting your journey.

(Mary flips back to the Australia page.)

MARY: Fixed.

(Awkward pause.)

ARTHUR: *(Indicating Mary's book, which has a green cover.)* And were you also reading Mr. Darcy's copy of Lamarck's *Philosophy*? It is quite a stimulation.

(He indicates his own book with the blue cover.)

MARY: It is. And it is my copy, actually. Which I did find stimulating, and disorienting, all at once.

ARTHUR: As did I. Exactly that combination.

MARY: It is the talk of life's drive to greater complexity that most interested me.

ARTHUR: And the inheritance of traits. Fascinating.

MARY: Indeed. And the bit about the giraffes.

ARTHUR: The giraffes were quite a surprise I thought.

MARY: As did I.

(Awkward pause.)

Those giraffes.

(Awkward pause.)

ARTHUR: And where is Mr. Darcy then?

MARY: Oh, I have no idea. Something about horses. He left earlier with Mr. Bingley.

AUDITION SCENE 4B (Continued)

ARTHUR: Charles Bingley? I haven't seen him in years. How kind Mr. Darcy is to open his home to friends.

MARY: Especially one who married his wife's sister.

ARTHUR: *(Thinking BINGLEY married her.)* Is that right?

MARY: Indeed, we are one happy family.

ARTHUR: You are. Well. When did you marry?

(MARY laughs at this.)

MARY: Oh no, sir. *I* did not marry Mr. Bingley. No, that would be my other sister, Jane. I am very much unattached.

ARTHUR: Oh I am sorry. You did say Miss Bennet not Mrs. Bingley. I have a terrible habit with names and not retaining them. Did I offend?

MARY: No no, Mr. de Bourgh. You simply amuse.

ARTHUR: This is the confusion then. I am not used to doing that.

AUDITION SCENE 5
(Lydia, Mary, Lizzy & Jane)

MARY: And how is your Mr. Wickham, Lydia? A prince in soldier's clothes?

JANE: Mary, let's not.

LYDIA: My Wickham is a perfect dream, so I'm sure I must have mentioned.

LIZZY: You did of course.

MARY: Though your letters indicate you have spent much time apart this past year.

JANE: Ought we worry, Lydia?

LYDIA: Worry about me? No! I am happier than any other woman who has ever lived. And those letters were not written to you, they were written to our mother.

MARY: Who read every letter aloud. Trust that I did not invite news of the tenuousness of your affairs.

LYDIA: I'm not tenuous! Mr. Wickham is a busy man . . . I know better than to get in the way of his business. Or with his gentlemen friends in the regiments. Or with the social visits he must make.

LIZZY: But if he is behaving in an ungentlemanly manner—

LYDIA: He is a perfect gentleman and we are terribly, horribly, miserably happy. Your concern should be poor, lonely Mary, not me. She exasperates everyone with her labored lectures and plunking piano recitals. She'll drive Lord Arthur home to Rosings with his fingers in his ears and we shall never recover from the embarrassment!

(With this Mary has had enough and lashes out.)

MARY: You do not know me. Not anymore, and probably not ever. I am no longer a child and I am no longer at the wicked whim of your judgment. And if you think I am incapable of living fully or playing the piano forte with skill, that proves how little you know and care. I am not weak-hearted.

AUDITION SCENE 6

(Mary & Arthur)

ARTHUR: *(Clearly an excuse to enter the room where Mary is.)* Ah. There it is. My book.

MARY: Oh yes. My copy has the green cover, yours the blue. I think.

ARTHUR: The dangers of . . . similar . . . reading habits.

MARY: Rare are the moments in the life of a library that evoke danger.

ARTHUR: Books harbor ideas and ideas provoke change and a changing mind is a dangerous thing indeed.

MARY: Quite true. I suppose our only safe recourse is to abandon the practice of reading altogether.

ARTHUR: Oh, Miss Bennet, no, that's absurd.

MARY: *(Trying to correct him.)* I agree Mr. de—

ARTHUR: *(Not hearing her.)* What worlds open up to one in a book! In fact I gain nearly all my pleasure from books—

MARY: As do I, I was merely—

ARTHUR: I can lose myself in their pages entirely—

MARY: Mr. de Bourgh! I was making a joke. A sorry attempt at one, apparently. Perhaps my sister Lydia is more accurate than I give her credit for, at least when it comes to how dull of a wit I can be.

ARTHUR: *(Gathers himself before . . .)* Oh. No. I do not mean to be so bold as to contradict your sister, but she is entirely wrong. I would be the duller one by far. And. That is to say . . . I do hope to hear more from you. You are so very full of song.

MARY: Sometimes I am. And sometimes I am full of things much less pretty.

ARTHUR: You seem to me . . . enough of . . . prettiness.

MARY: I mean my temper. I know I have one and I have yet to learn how to manage it.

ARTHUR: The Beethoven's a good start.

(She smiles)

MARY: You are wittier than you think, Mr. de Bourgh.

ARTHUR: I don't know if one can take credit for unconscious with.

MARY: And yet people take credit for things far less compelling.

(Did she say compelling? Oh dear . . .)

AUDITION SCENE 7

(Mary & Arthur)

MARY: What must it have been like growing up in a home with *no* older sisters. And *no* younger sisters either. They're the squeaky ones. It must have been so peaceful.

ARTHUR: I suppose it was. I certainly have no knowledge of sisters. Or the . . . female species on the whole. When my parents died, I was just of age to enter Oxford—which is quite filled with men—where I have been ever since. And then the letter from Rosings arrived. And now my life is . . . strange . . . and tethered.

MARY: *Tethered?* Please forgive the presumption but . . . you seem like a man with a mind, and curiosity, and now an estate, all of which seem to encourage a kind of freedom to do anything and be anyone you like. Is that not true?

ARTHUR: I cannot confirm its universal truth, but I can tell you that it does not feel free. An estate is a large empty place. I am now a master of a great house, an owner of emptiness. I am a man of twenty-five and confined by circumstance.

MARY: But you're more free than any man I've ever known. You have no family and great fortune.

ARTHUR: And I woke up yesterday in a library in Oxford, which is where I want to be. In a few days time I will be at Rosings. I didn't ask for this, and yet here I sit with rules and traditions and every manner of formality to suddenly uphold. This is not the life of my own choosing, and I cannot conceive of how best to get the one I long for back.

MARY: But at the very least you are offered a choice. You have possibility, do you not?

ARTHUR: Possibility of what?

MARY: Possibility of living a large life, Mr. de Bourgh.

ARTHUR: But I don't live a large life.

MARY: *Well what are you waiting for? (Realizing she's spoken out of turn.)* I don't mean to offend but . . . you seem to me to have a vast opportunity at your very fingertips. You, sir, can do anything you want. And you must see how devastating it is for someone like me to hear what you say. I long for the world and here you can have it! Some are not so fortunate to have a choice at all; how dare you not employ the choice you have?

(Mary rises to go, Arthur rises too but is unsure of what to say.)

Please excuse me.

AUDITION SCENE 8
(Lizzy, Jane & Darcy)

LIZZY: Do you know, Jane, a thought has lingered with me since your arrival: I like Mary. Is it terrible to admit that I didn't know I did?

JANE: I feel ashamed of myself but . . . neither did I. She is changed, is she not?

LIZZY: Yes, for the better I think. She is remarkable observant; I'd never realized how much she sees. What she said yesterday about feeling . . . uncomfortable with her arrangement. It actually reminded me of . . . myself.

JANE: Did it?

LIZZY: In the way that sometimes I feel that the very fine "Mrs. Darcy" who is mistress of the very fine Pemberley Estate is someone altogether different from the woman that stands before you.

JANE: Oh Lizzy, you are being silly.

LIZZY: Exactly. And I cannot imagine it is appropriate for Mrs. Darcy to be so.

JANE: You are allowed to be just who you are! You make your mark, silly and serious, on this house and this family and on your dear Mr. Darcy who adores you.

LIZZY: He does, an impossibility I shall never take for granted. And how Mr. Bingley has grown positively consumed with devotion for you.

JANE: We are rightly matched I think.

LIZZY: Unlike poor Lydia, who appears more insistent on being precocious than she was at fifteen. Is this how she is always in the world, or does she simply become more . . . *Lydia* when she is with us. Is Mary right? Is Lydia's happiness a lie? What do we do?

JANE: I do so wish it were possible to change her circumstance but there are not real options.

LIZZY: I suppose she could leave him . . . ?

JANE: Lizzy, there are not grounds. He is not an adulterer, he is not cruel to her. Besides, Wickham would never release her and lose what little money she has. They must live with the consequences of their actions.

LIZZY: But she's so young. I know she's a fool but even fools marry better than this.

JANE: She needs support, and love. She has her sisters, who will not judge her so harshly as would the world. If only there were something we could do for her.

(DARCY enters.)

DARCY: Hello ladies. And what are you two discussing?

LIZZY: Lydia and her terrible marriage.

DARCY: Very good then.

(Darcy turns immediately around and exits, not wanting to have anything at all to do with this discussion)

AUDITION SCENE 9

(Darcy & Bingley)

(Darcy reads. Bingley is uneasy. Silence. Finally.)

BINGLEY: Darcy.

DARCY: Yes, Mr. Bingley.

BINGLEY: Ought we not to be presently occupied in some useful manner?

DARCY: I don't think so.

BINGLEY: Are we not meant to be . . . ?

DARCY: What?

BINGLEY: I don't know. Hunting?

DARCY: No.

BINGLEY: At business?

DARCY: It is a holiday.

BINGLEY: Walking . . . briskly?

DARCY: We are gentlemen, Bingley. We sit. And we wait for the excitement to come to us.

(Pause. Bingley continues to be unsettled.)

BINGLEY: The anticipation of fatherhood consumes me entirely.

DARCY: Understandably. Have you decided what sort of father you plan to be?

BINGLEY: The good sort, I hope. Although how does one come to decide such a thing? Do you know what sort of father you'd be?

DARCY: The good sort, though I'm not sure my decision matters much. So little is actually in the rearing when it comes down to it.

BINGLEY: How do you mean?

DARCY: Well, look at the Miss Bennets, for example. Same mother and father throughout, same house, same upbringing. And yet each is so different. Their father likely had uneven influence if any at all. No, Bingley, though I have decided to be the good sort of father, the best I can do is pray.

BINGLEY: If you don't mind, can we go back to just sitting?

DARCY: As you wish.

(Darcy goes back to reading, and Bingley just stared, consumed with thoughts of a baby in the house. Darcy notices Bingley's distress and offers him brandy.)

AUDITION SCENE 10
(Arthur, Darcy & Bingley)

ARTHUR: (*Rushing in in an agitated state.*) I think I need some guidance. Of a masculine order.

DARCY: I will endeavor to help you, sir, though I know not if I belong to that religion.

BINGLEY: What do you need, de Bourgh? Is something wrong?

ARTHUR: Yes. No. I don't know. I'm rather overcome with a strange perplexity of which I know not precisely its origin, yet I can surmise its provenance in part is . . . Miss Bennet.

BINGLEY and DARCY: Miss Bennet!?

ARTHUR: I find myself worried for her. I worry that she will think me unkind or ungrateful. I worry that she is unhappy or lonely, or does she prefer to be alone and my presence is what is making her unhappy? Or perhaps that her sister's loudness is aggravating her or that I am aggravating her, or that every time I try to speak I worry that the sound might be too loud when in fact I think there is no sound at all. Is she well? Is she well right now? How am I to know?! You see? It's worrying.

DARCY: De Bourgh, I do believe that what you call worry is, for most people, called love.

BINGLEY: I would have to agree. Definitely love.

ARTHUR: Is that what it is? It's a rather uncomfortable feeling isn't it?

DARCY: Deeply—

BINGLEY: I rather like it actually.

DARCY: --yet it can resolve rather nicely if you let it.

BINGLEY: Once you get beyond the difficulties of courting.

ARTHUR: Wait now, gentlemen, wait. Suppose I might in fact, admire Miss Bennet in some extreme. How do I . . . proceed? We have only just met; do I not need years or decades to study and then formalize this feeling?

BINGLEY: Decades? Good lord, man. I knew the moment I saw Mrs. Bingley that I loved her.

ARTHUR: And you also knew right away?

DARCY: Oh, there were early stumbles, but yes, rather quickly.

ARTHUR: And. How does one confirm that the something one might feel is also felt by such a someone else?

DARCY: I find that, if you are worried there might be any confusion, a letter can be useful in clearly expressing your feelings.

BINGLEY: Or you could ask her sisters.

(Arthur begins to take notes.)

DARCY: Write her. Write her the truth of your affection for her. Write her of . . . hope. Hope that you may one day meet as partners. Say the very words you long to hear from her.

BINGLEY: I would still recommend asking her sisters.

DARCY: De Bourgh, I am likewise impressed with Miss Mary Bennet, and what I know of her is a young woman of growing confidence and clarity of mind. I see a potential in this match. Have faith in yourself and be honest.

BINGLEY: And ask her sisters.

ARTHUR: This is an unexplored area of which I know so little.

BINGLEY: You know how you feel and you are of excellent skill when it comes to spelling. That is all you need at present.

DARCY: Good evening, de Bourgh.

ARTHUR: Yes. Good evening, gentlemen. And thank you.

AUDITION SCENE 11

(Lydia & Arthur)

(Arthur is writing a letter. Lydia enters quietly, holding mistletoe. She sneaks up on him.)

LYDIA: Surprise!

ARTHUR: Dear god, what is the meaning of this?

LYDIA: Just a little reminder that you shall not escape my company for long.

ARTHUR: I'm so sorry but you shocked me with your . . . flora.

LYDIA: It is often remarked upon, my shocking character. Were you writing someone a letter A private letter?

ARTHUR: *(Stuffing his letter into his book.)* No, no I wasn't. Just taking notes.

LYDIA: About what?

ARTHUR: *(Lying.)* Giraffes. If you will pardon me, Mrs. Wickham, I was just leaving the library for the night.

LYDIA: Leaving! Oh dear! I had hoped we might continue our discussion of the natural world. Perhaps you could tell me more about this?

(She presents the mistletoe.)

ARTHUR: Oh. Mistletoe. Yes, it is a parasitic plant, interesting actually in that it is quite a poisonous evergreen that causes terrible gastrointestinal distress if consumed.

LYDIA: And yet . . . it manages to inspire such an affectionate holiday tradition.

ARTHUR: Yes, I've always found that rather odd. One is encouraged to embrace under the bough, but don't get too close or romance will turn to . . . vomit.

LYDIA: you are ever so funny, Lord Arthur. I could listen to you all night.

ARTHUR: I don't know why you would bother. Mrs. Wickham, I believe I shall, yes . . . I will bid you a good night. I really must rest. It has turned into a rather eventful day.

LYDIA: Of course it has. Good night, Lord Arthur.

ARTHUR: Please do call me Mr. de Bourgh. And good night.

AUDITION SCENE 12

(Arthur & Anne)

ANNE: My goodness, Arthur, there you are! I am shocked at how easy it is to get lost in this house. And the rooms—they are somewhat more open than I remember; there is a brightness I find unappealing, do you not agree?

(He doesn't respond.)

Arthur. Arthur!

ARTHUR: *(Lost in thought.)* Sorry? Yes. What?

ANNE: Brightness. You'll be relieved to know there is scarcely a thing that will need doing at Rosings after you arrive, save for the wedding preparations and making room for some of your things. I cannot imagine you have much, perhaps a dusty book or two, which we can easily tuck out of sight.

ARTHUR: Out of sight?

ANNE: You are to be married, Arthur. I will tell you what is of interest and what is not. My mother was of great help in that regard to my father. I shall be so for you.

ARTHUR: I—I'm sorry, Miss de Boergh, I am inexperienced with engagement, especially as ours seems to have caught me unawares, but—

ANNE: Our marriage was my mother's wish. To keep the estate intact, of course.

ARTHUR: Yes, but . . .

ANNE: And to continue the de Boergh line.

ARTHUR: Oh my goodness.

ANNE: And your father would have wanted it as well. With the fortune left to me and the estate to you, you cannot possibly object.

ARTHUR: Objection is really at the direction of the objector, but—

ANNE: *Arthur.* It isn't as though you are otherwise attached, and your life as a student is rather complete, and bachelors make people uncomfortable. We have always been fond of each other. Don't you recall, Arthur, how fond we are of each other?

(She takes a moment.)

Rosings is my home. I will not be made to leave my home. It is all I have of my mother. Where would you have me go?

ARTHUR: Well I don't really—

ANNE: So it is settled.

ARTHUR: I just think that—

ANNE: It's settled.

AUDITION SCENE 13
(Arthur & Bingley)

ARTHUR: Can one be engaged without one's own knowledge? Apparently one can.

BINGLEY: (*Smiling slightly.*) Did you propose to Anne and forget?

ARTHUR: No, I don't think so. I fear it is quite time to leave before I cause any further disruption or embarrassment. (*Beginning to breathe heavily.*)

BINGLEY: Arthur. Stop. Breathe. And explain.

ARTHUR: it was her mother's wish, who is so recently departed. And I am required to marry her to maintain the estate and preserve the line and oh dear go I need some air.

DARCY: De Bourgh, you needn't leave and you needn't marry Anne.

ARTHUR: I . . . what?

DARCY: The inheritance is deemed yours by law, not by Lady Catherine.

BINGLEY: Do you want to marry Miss de Bourgh?

ARTHUR: Well . . . she says we are fond of each other, and she wishes to remain at Rosings. It is her home after all and what kind of man would I be if I set her away from it.

BINGLEY: You do not need to marry to ensure Anne remains at Rosings, de Bourgh, it is quite enough house for the both of you, is it not? And if love is not at the root, the tree will not be strong enough to grow.

DARCY: And your marrying Anne would also seem counter to your position at the precipice of a truly wonderful match in Miss Bennet.

ARTHUR: Miss Bennet . . . wants nothing to do with me any longer and I cannot blame her.

BINGLEY: Did you mention the bit about her eyes?

ARTHUR: I did not get the chance to mention her eyes before my fiancée arrived and with great declaration sent Miss Bennet out of the room with haste. She made it quite clear that I was as welcome in her presence as a cone snail.

BINGLEY: A what?

ARTHUR: They're poisonous. Miss Bennet is decided about me, and Miss de Bourgh is abandoned without me. So. Why not marry her and make someone happy?

DARCY: Arthur, please.

ARTHUR: Thank you both for your counsel but . . . the course is set, gentlemen. I am so sorry to ruin the holiday. Good day, sirs. (*He leaves.*)

DARCY: Oh, dear.

BINGLEY: Poor man.

DARCY: Are we going to intervene?

BINGLEY: Recall, Darcy, how past intervention has not always helped matters along in the way we'd hoped.

DARCY: True. But in this case, surely . . .

BINGLEY: Right. Find the women.

(*Darcy and Bingley hurry off.*)

AUDITION SCENE 14
(Lizzy & Anne)

(Anne enters searching for Arthur.)

ANNE: Arthur! Oh my, here I am again. In the tree room.

LIZZY: Miss de Bourgh.

ANNE: Mrs. . . . Darcy.

LIZZY: I did not know your journey was imminent or we should have more prepared. Please forgive me.

ANNE: If the matter was not so pressing I would not have had the necessity to intrude on your little festivity.

LIZZY: Certainly it is not an intrusion. You are always welcome at Pemberley.

ANNE: How kind. To be welcomed to a place one spent so many hours of one's youth by someone so recently positioned here. I ought to have come earlier to help you get oriented, dear.

LIZZY: Oriented?

ANNE: A sooner intervention might have prevented your more . . . eccentric style from rooting. Though it is understandable, coming from such inferior conditions as you did.

LIZZY: *(Barely keeping her composure.)* I am surprised at your offer of help, Miss de Boergh. I had always thought the residents of Rosings to be rather against my marriage to Mr. Darcy. At the least, I'm certain that was the belief held by Lady Catherine. She did seem unable to contain her opinion on the matter.

ANNE: *(Sharply emotional.)* I would ask you to kindly not speak of my mother. I feel her loss quite deeply. You could not possibly understand. If she objected, it was with good reason, I'm sure.

LIZZY: I certainly did not intend to offend.

ANNE: Yes. No one in this house *intends* to.

LIZZY: Excuse me, Miss de Bourgh. Mr. Darcy requires me.

AUDITION SCENE 15
(LYDIA & MARY)

LYDIA: Mary. Would you permit me a moment? Please?

MARY: I'm trying to think, Lydia, which I can never manage in your company.

LYDIA: If I could only have a moment. I . . . I behaved like an absolute fool writing to Mr. de Bourgh. I know I did. I am trying to apologize.

MARY: I did not know you knew the meaning of the word.

LYDIA: Please don't be too harsh with me. I am so lonely in Bath. Mr. Wickham is always away and I have not made friends. My behavior to Mr. de Bourgh was an attempt—albeit a sorry one—to escape the utter emptiness I feel.

MARY: But I thought . . . your little bird?

(LYDIA rips the bracelet off of her wrist, trying not to cry.)

LYDIA: A cheap trinket I bought for myself.

MARY: Lydia, I am sorry you are unhappy. And I am sorry for the mean spirits I flung at you.

LYDIA: Please believe me that I honestly did not recognize your feelings for Mr. de Bourgh. You who have never flirted, never winked in the way of a gentleman. From your behavior, I thought you indifferent to men entirely!

MARY: Not indifferent, but perhaps I express my interest differently than you. I did not realize myself that I was . . . not indifferent.

LYDIA: Well, I shall now recognize your manner more artfully in the future.

MARY: And I shall attempt to keep my savage tongue. Sisters should be better friends.

LYDIA: We should.

AUDITION SCENE 16

(Mary & Arthur)

ARTHUR: Miss Bennet.

MARY: Mr. de Bourgh. I am sorry to hear of your imminent departure.

ARTHUR: You . . . are? Oh. Well I came here to express my acute discomposure over the events of last evening. I was most erring, even if my culpability was entirely born from my own confusion.

MARY: So much error is. It often seems the world would be a better place were we all to say what we mean. *(Trying to think of a way to keep him here.)* Which is that . . . you shouldn't travel in the snow.

ARTHUR: Oh.

MARY: And it will be dark soon.

ARTHUR: That is true.

MARY: And it is Christmas Eve.

ARTHUR: Yes. Miss de Bourgh rather insists we leave immediately.

MARY: And what else of your future does she insist upon?

(He wants to tell her but . . .)

ARTHUR: I am so sorry that I must bid you good evening.

MARY: Is it not *goodbye*? If you leave right now, isn't that what you're really saying.

ARTHUR: Perhaps it is. *(Starting to leave.)*

MARY: Arthur.

(He stops. This is the first time she has called him Arthur.)

Is that what you want? I ask not out of any impudence, but out of wonder. You see, you have a rare thing in this world. A choice. The most liberating possession of all.

ARTHUR: That is the falsity in your perception of my situation. I do not have a choice, Miss Bennet.

MARY: Of course you do.

ARTHUR: I do not. I fear I do not.

MARY: And yet you are a man of means and property, a man I know to be good and curious and kind, a man who does not deserve a life unlived, does not deserve a life caught and compromised but a life free to explore the world with someone who appreciates it . . . and you.

(He cannot answer—he can only look at her, love her from afar.)

ARTHUR: It is cruel to imagine a life different than the one you may attain.

MARY: Unless that life is more attainable than you know. Yes, you do have a choice. But if you are too afraid to use it, then you do not deserve it. Good day, sir. I mean *goodbye*.

(She starts to leave.)

ARTHUR: What would you have me do? I cannot abandon her.

MARY: Nor would I ask you to. I only ask you to consider for a moment that the act you think will "save her" might in fact stand in the way of true happiness and true understanding and true love for you both. There must be a way to secure her future and your own.

AUDITION SCENE 17
(Arthur & Anne)

ANNE: Arthur, we must leave immediately. I am ready to be away from this place and these people!

ARTHUR: I . . . *(Pause.)* No, no, I don't wish to leave.

ANNE: You don't . . . what? We have an estate to run, we have a wedding to plan. Arthur come.

ARTHUR: No.

ANNE: *Arthur.*

ARTHUR: Miss de Bourgh. I . . . Foremost I do not wish you any pain or displeasure. But I cannot marry you.

ANNE: Excuse me? You cannot be serious, Arthur.

ARTHUR: I do not love you.

ANNE: Oh, of course you do. And I you. Since we were children. Now can we please—

ARTHUR: I do not love you. It is as simple as that. I do not wish you any harm, but you must acknowledge that this is an *arrangement* and not a match of hearts.

ANNE: A match of--? What are you talking about? You require a wife and I a husband.

ARTHUR: I cannot, I *will not* marry without happiness.

ANNE: Everyone marries without happiness.

ARTHUR: But they do not have to. We do not have to.

ANNE: You might not have to, but I do. I have to marry *you* or I lose everything. Arthur, don't you see? Rosings has always been my home, and it was Mother's wish for my future, and what will happen to me if I have nothing? I will be nothing, I will be lost, and I will not be ignored or slighted or *thrown aside any longer*.

ARTHUR: Neither will I. And I will not let you suffer, I promise you on my honor, and you may continue to live at Rosings your entire life if you wish. You will have whatever you need. But I will not deny what I know is true. Love is . . . attainable. And we are *both* deserving of it. Of something finer and more free than either of us thought possible, something that is a complement rather than a command. Human hearts are built for stronger stuff.

ANNE: For pity's sake, the kind of love you speak of is fiction. It is the stuff of novels and operas . . . the ones where everyone dies in the end.

ARTHUR: It is not fiction. It is very real.

MONOLOGUE 18

(MARY)

I don't know what's the matter with me. I thought I was happy at Longbourn with my books and my piano and my . . .self. For a time I relished the unrestricted access to Father's library and not being scolded for practicing the piano whenever I liked. But I lately struggle to find solace in either piano or books. It's a curious discontent. I cannot place its origin and therefore I cannot solve it.

I know I am meant to be the dutiful middle sister, and everyone expects that I shall care for Mother and Father until they die and I end up in someone's attic. It's not a life you would have chosen. Either of you. But, I never chose this life either. I don't recall ever being asked if I longed for something of my own.

MONOLOGUE 19

(Arthur)

I think . . . yes, I think I need some guidance. Of a masculine order.

You see, I'm rather overcome with a terrible confusion, and I can surmise its cause in part is . . . Miss Bennet. I believe it is entirely her fault.

I find myself worried for her. . . . I worry that she will think me unkind or ungrateful. I worry that she is unhappy or lonely, or does she prefer to be alone and my presence is what is making her unhappy? Or perhaps that her sister's loudness is aggravating her, or that I am aggravating her, or that every time I try to speak I worry that the sound might be too loud when in fact I think there is no sound at all. Is she well? Is she well right now? How am I to know?! You see? It's worrying.