

Handout #3
Pride and Prejudice

Pages 55- 58

(On the phrase "worst kind of pride," a chair enters for Elizabeth. She is now back at the parsonage. DARCY enters.)

DARCY. Miss Bennet.

ELIZABETH. Mr. Darcy.

DARCY. May I...would it be suitable if I...enquired of your health.

ELIZABETH. My health?

DARCY. As I've not...encountered you these past days I thought...I come to...enquire of your health.

ELIZABETH. My health, Mr. Darcy, meets all the usual standards.

DARCY. Ah.

ELIZABETH. Yes.

DARCY. Ah.

(A silence.)

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, startled, looks down.)

DARCY. I see I dismay you. I am slow, even dilatory. I should have declared myself at an earlier date. But there were, of course, the family obstacles which judgment always opposed to inclination. The general sense of your social inferiority, of it being a degradation of the line. I could not forget my responsibility to an estate, a way of life, a pride of place which might given your circumstances disinclude you and thus the very ardency I described took place against my will and reason, or rather in opposition to my character and inclination, but the very strength of my attachment has made it impossible for me to conquer my feelings and I can only express the hope that these feelings will now be rewarded by your acceptance of my hand. There.

(She doesn't speak.)

DARCY. I have spoken ill but mean well, Miss Bennet.

ELIZABETH. In such cases as this, it is, I believe, the established mode to express a sense of obligation for the sentiments avowed however unequally they may be returned. It is natural that obligation should be felt, and if I could feel gratitude I would now thank you. But I cannot—I have never desired your good opinion, and you have certainly bestowed it most unwillingly. The feelings which you tell me have long prevented the acknowledgment of your regard can have little difficulty in overcoming it after this explanation.

DARCY. 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 endeavour at civility, I am thus rejected?

ELIZABETH. I might as well enquire, why, with so evident a design of offending and insulting me you chose to tell me that you

liked me against your will, against your reason and even against your character? Was not this some excuse for incivility, if I *was* uncivil? But I have other provocations. You know I have. Do you think that any consideration would tempt me to accept the man who has been the means of ruining, perhaps forever, the happiness of a beloved sister? You divided Mr. Bingley and Jane from each other, or at the very least yours was the principal means, involving them both in misery of the acutest kind. Can you deny that you have done it?

DARCY. I have no wish to deny that I did everything in my power to separate my friend from your sister, or that I rejoice in my success. Towards him I have been kinder than towards myself.

ELIZABETH. Quite clearly said. But it is not merely this affair on which my dislike is founded. Your character was unfolded in the recital which I received many months ago from Mr. Wickham.

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

ELIZABETH. Knowing his misfortunes who would not feel an interest in him?

DARCY. His misfortunes!

ELIZABETH. And of your infliction. You have withheld the advantages which you must know to have been designed for him and yet you treat the mention of his misfortunes with contempt.

DARCY. And this is your opinion of me! I thank you for explaining it so fully. These bitter accusations might have been suppressed had I, with greater policy flattered you into the belief of my being impelled by unqualified, unalloyed inclination. But disguise of every sort is my abhorrence.

ELIZABETH. The mode of your declaration has not affected me Mr. Darcy. You could not have made me the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it. From the very beginning your arrogance and selfish disdain for the feelings of others have built an immovable dislike. You are Mr. Darcy the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry.

DARCY. You have said quite enough, Madam. I perfectly comprehend your feelings. Forgive me for having taken up so much of your time, and accept my best wishes for your health and happiness.

(He exits. ELIZABETH moves downstage as the lights fade.)

End of Act I