

(LADY CATHERINE *enters.*)

LADY CATHERINE. I have shown myself in.

MRS. BENNET. Well I...I...I...

ELIZABETH. You are very welcome Lady Catherine.

LADY CATHERINE. I hope you are well Miss Bennet. That lady I suppose is your mother?

ELIZABETH. Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet.

LADY CATHERINE. And these I suppose are your sisters?

MRS. BENNET. Yes Madam. My youngest of all is lately married and...

LADY CATHERINE. This must be a most inconvenient sitting room for the evening in summer: the windows are full west.

MRS. BENNET. Indeed we never sit here after dinner and...

LADY CATHERINE. (*To ELIZABETH:*) Miss Bennet, there seems to be a prettyish kind of little wilderness on one side of your lawn. I should be glad to take a turn in it, if you will favour me with your company.

(*Shift begins, striking Longbourn as bushes enter. We are on the grounds of the estate.*)

LADY CATHERINE. You can be at no loss, Miss Bennet, to understand the reason of my journey hither.

ELIZABETH. Indeed you are mistaken, I cannot account for the honour.

LADY CATHERINE. However insincere you may choose to be, you will not find me so. My character has ever been celebrated for

its sincerity and frankness. I was told, that not only your sister was on the point of being most advantageously married, but that you would, in all likelihood be united with my own nephew Mr. Darcy. Though I know it to be a scandalous falsehood I have arrived to make my sentiments known to you.

ELIZABETH. If you believed it untrue, I wonder you took the trouble of coming so far.

LADY CATHERINE. To have the report universally contradicted—can you declare there is no foundation to it?

ELIZABETH. Your ladyship may ask questions which I shall not choose to answer.

LADY CATHERINE. This is not to be borne.

ELIZABETH. Your ladyship has declared it impossible.

LADY CATHERINE. But *your* arts and allurements may, in a moment of infatuation, make him forget what he owes to himself and to all his family. You may have drawn him in.

ELIZABETH. If I have, I shall be the last person to confess it.

LADY CATHERINE. Miss Bennet, I am unaccustomed to such language as this. I am entitled to know all his dearest concerns.

ELIZABETH. But you are not entitled to know mine.

LADY CATHERINE. Mr. Darcy is engaged to my daughter. Now what have you to say?

ELIZABETH. Thus you have no reason to suppose he would make an offer to me.

LADY CATHERINE. From his earliest hours his mother and I planned the union and he is destined for his cousin.

ELIZABETH. But what is that to me? If there is no other objection to my marrying your nephew, I shall certainly not be kept from it by knowing his mother and aunt wished him to marry Miss de Bourgh.

LADY CATHERINE. Honour, decorum, prudence, nay interest, forbid it. Your alliance will be a disgrace; you have neither family,

connections nor fortune. Your name will never even be mentioned by any of us.

ELIZABETH. These are heavy misfortunes, but the wife of Mr. Darcy will have no cause to repine.

LADY CATHERINE. Obstinate, headstrong girl! I have not been in the habit of brooking disappointment.

ELIZABETH. *That* will make your ladyship's situation more pitiable; but it will have no effect on *me*.

LADY CATHERINE. Tell me, once and for all, are you engaged to him?

ELIZABETH. I am not.

LADY CATHERINE. And will you promise me never to enter into such an engagement?

ELIZABETH. I will make no promise of the kind. I must beg, therefore, to be importuned no farther on the subject.

LADY CATHERINE. Not so hasty, if you please. To the objections I have already urged I have another to add. I am no stranger to the particulars of your youngest sister's infamous elopement.

ELIZABETH. Lady Catherine—

LADY CATHERINE. A patched up business at the expense of your father and uncle.

ELIZABETH. I must ask you—

LADY CATHERINE. Is such a girl to be my nephew's sister? Is her husband, who is the son of his late father's steward to be his brother? Heaven and earth! Of what are you thinking? Are the shades of Pemberley to be thus polluted?

ELIZABETH. You have insulted me in every possible method. I must beg to return to the house.

LADY CATHERINE. You are resolved to ruin him in the opinion of all his friends, and make him the contempt of the world against the claims of duty, honour and gratitude?

ELIZABETH. Neither duty, honour nor gratitude has any possible claim on me in the present instance. And with regard to the resentment of his family, or the indignation of the world, if the former *were* excited by his marrying me, it would not give me one moment's concern—and the world in general would have too much sense to join in the scorn.

LADY CATHERINE. Very well. I shall now know how to act. Do not imagine, Miss Bennet, that your ambition will ever be gratified. I take no leave of you Miss Bennet. I send no compliments to your mother. I am most seriously displeased.

*(She exits. MRS. BENNET enters.)*