

ACT TWO

Scene 1

The sitting room at Hunsford Parsonage. The room is small, but comfortable, and the furnishings, whilst slightly sombre, are lightened by signs of CHARLOTTE's touch.

At the rise of the curtain, ELIZABETH is alone in the room. She has a letter in her hand, which she finishes reading, then moves thoughtfully towards the window. After a moment, CHARLOTTE enters. She looks around the room, then:

CHARLOTTE Ah, Lizzie, there you are.

ELIZABETH I was admiring Rosings through the trees.

CHARLOTTE It is very convenient for William, her Ladyship being such a near neighbour. Five minutes across the field, and he is there.

ELIZABETH Or she here.

CHARLOTTE Oh, she very seldom comes in. She just likes to talk to us at the gate.

She begins work on some curtains she is sewing.

ELIZABETH So I have noticed. I am bound to say I think it is very inconsiderate of her. Keeping you standing out there in the cold, while she sits back in the comfort of her carriage.

CHARLOTTE Oh, William and I count it a great honour.

ELIZABETH Dear Charlotte - you really have become the perfect wife. William is very fortunate.

CHARLOTTE So long as he believes so !

ELIZABETH He does - he told me so the day that I arrived. And most days since as well.

CHARLOTTE A strange coincidence that Mr. Darcy should have come to stay with his Aunt de Bourgh so soon after you arrived here.

ELIZABETH His cousin Colonel Fitzwilliam is staying there; what more natural than that Darcy should visit her as well ?

CHARLOTTE What indeed ? And does that also explain why he comes round here such a lot ?

- ELIZABETH You are a romantic, Charlotte. He detests me. In any case, I thought it was settled he should marry his cousin, Miss de Bourgh? You see - another reason for visiting Rosings.
- CHARLOTTE Lady Catherine is set on it. But I am not so sure Darcy is anxious to comply. When you met him yesterday, what did he say to you?
- ELIZABETH He asked me, as usual, my opinion of the weather.
- CHARLOTTE He might be bolder if you encouraged him a little.
- ELIZABETH My dear practical friend!
- CHARLOTTE Should one not be practical?
- ELIZABETH Not if it means going against one's feelings. (She is near the window, and now glances out) Your husband is at the gate - Lady Catherine's coach has just drawn up.
- CHARLOTTE I must go out to her. Perhaps you will come with me.
- ELIZABETH Thank you, no. There is someone else in the coach - probably Mr. Darcy, I expect.
- CHARLOTTE Or Colonel Fitzwilliam. He visited you yesterday too, did he not?
- ELIZABETH And let something slip that confirmed my feelings for Darcy.
- CHARLOTTE I will just finish this hem. (Then, to ELIZABETH) What was it that he said?
- ELIZABETH He was telling me how good Darcy was to his friends. Knowing nothing of the circumstances, he told me that Darcy had lately saved a friend from a most inconvenient marriage. It was all conjecture, but he obviously meant Bingley, and he obviously meant Jane.
- COLLINS enters. He is in a state of great excitement.
- COLLINS Charlotte, my dear - Elizabeth! Who do you think has come to the gate in her carriage?
- ELIZABETH Lady Catherine de Bourgh.
- COLLINS Oh, you guessed!
- ELIZABETH I saw.