

Mr Wickham

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ELIZABETH. I could not help noticing, sir, a certain coolness of regard passing between yourself and Mr. Darcy.

WICKHAM. You have a keen eye Miss Bennet.

ELIZABETH. And a curious one, sir.

WICKHAM. Might you tell me how far Netherfield is from Meryton?

ELIZABETH. Three miles perhaps.

WICKHAM. Indeed? How long has Mr. Darcy been staying there?

ELIZABETH. About a month. He is a man of very large property in Derbyshire, I understand.

WICKHAM. His estate there is a noble one. In fact I have been connected with his family from my infancy. Are you much acquainted with him?

ELIZABETH. I have spent four days in the same house with him, and I think him very disagreeable.

WICKHAM. I believe your opinion of him would in general astonish.

ELIZABETH. Really? He is not at all liked in Hertfordshire.

WICKHAM. May I express surprise? The world is perhaps blinded by his fortune and consequence and sees him only as he chooses to be seen.

ELIZABETH. I should take him even on my slight acquaintance to be an ill-tempered man.

WICKHAM. I fear I have considerable knowledge of him. The late Mr. Darcy, his father, was excessively attached to me. I cannot do justice to his kindness. His son and I were born in the same parish, sharing the same amusements. My father was his father's estate manager. The elder Mr. Darcy knew the church ought to be my profession and he promised me the family parish when it came available or, if not, a voluntary promise of providing for me. Both were countermanded by young Darcy after his father's death.

ELIZABETH. On what grounds?

WICKHAM. Had the late Mr. Darcy liked me less, his son might have borne with me better; but his father's uncommon attachment to me irritated him. He had not a temper to bear the sort of competition in which we stood. In short, his behaviour to me has been scandalous. But I do not trust myself on the subject, I can hardly be fair to him now.

ELIZABETH. I had not thought Mr. Darcy as bad as this.

WICKHAM. I do feel that almost all his actions may be traced to his considerable pride.

ELIZABETH. But can such abominable pride as his have ever done him good?

(A park bench is brought on.)

WICKHAM. I must own him to be liberal and generous, display hospitality, assist his tenants and relieve the poor. Family pride and

filial pride have done this. His father's preference for me has pricked that pride and made him my enemy.

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(Mainly mimed)

ELIZABETH. *(Reading:)* "Last summer he again, most painfully obtruded on my notice. My sister Georgiana...

(She appears.)

for whom Mr. Fitzwilliam and myself were mutual guardians, was taken from school at her wish and established in London. Mr. Wickham by connivance recommended himself to her.

(WICKHAM approaches GEORGIANA.)

WICKHAM. Ah, Miss Darcy, it is my pleasure to renew your acquaintance.

ELIZABETH. "She was then but fifteen and was persuaded to believe herself in love and consented to an elopement."

(GEORGIANA and WICKHAM kiss.)

DARCY. Fortunately, regarding me as almost a second father, she confessed her plans.

ELIZABETH. "You may imagine what I felt and how I acted."

DARCY. I wrote to Mr. Wickham in undisguised heat and he left London immediately and alone.

(WICKHAM and GEORGIANA exit in different directions.)