

**Act 1 Scene 4 Mary, Arthur - pages 30, 31, 32, 33  
to when Mary exits.**

**Scene 4**

*With Mary at the piano, Arthur enters searching for his book.*

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 wit.

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

*Did she say compelling? Oh dear...*

ARTHUR. Shall we find the group, Miss Bennet?

MARY. No. I find myself with no appetite at present, for food or company.

ARTHUR. Oh. I'm sorry. I'll leave you to your—

MARY. No, I meant specifically the company of my family. They tire me, you see. When I am around them, I find myself struggling to recall who I am, or perhaps I struggle against whom they expect me to be. Or perhaps I am just an intolerant and unkind person who does not deserve companions.

ARTHUR. I don't believe that. Perhaps I can serve as your companion. For the hour. Or so.

MARY. Certainly.

ARTHUR. I am also not one for boisterous gatherings.

MARY. You may choose to avoid this family entirely then. You would be forgiven if you took off running now.

ARTHUR. I am rather intrigued by a family such as yours. I was the only child to my parents. My father was immensely fond of his brother, Sir Lewis de Bourgh, but if you'll forgive me for speaking ill of one so recently departed, he did not much care for Lady Catherine, so we did not visit often.

MARY. It seems she was...

ARTHUR. She was wretched.

*They share a smile.*

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.

ARTHUR. No, I...I simply have never before had that perspective brought to my attention.

MARY. I tend to do that, even with people I've only just met. Enjoy the afternoon.

*Mary exits and Arthur sits, thinking about what she said. He is smitten with her.*

LYDIA. *(Offstage.)* Lord Arthur!

ARTHUR. Oh dear.

*Lydia enters.*

LYDIA. Lord Arthur, I had wondered if you'd fallen asleep. We have so much to discuss. And Mr. Darcy wanted a word. Come, come, come.

ARTHUR. Certainly, but I wonder if—

LYDIA. Go, go, go! Now now now!

*Lydia pushes him out of the room and hurriedly finds the green copy of Lamarck and slips the note she wrote into the book for Arthur to find later. Lydia leaves giggling, just as Mary reenters.*

*Mary goes right to the copy of Lamarck, which is actually her copy and takes it with her. As she exits, the note falls out. Mary reads it and smiles, thinking it might be for her...*

MARY. *(Reading aloud.)* "You will laugh to realize how, upon meeting you, I felt as though we had already known each other a great while though we'd only just met. I am certain you felt it too. I only ask that we devise a scheme to continue the conversation we began today. Please do me the honor of seeking out my company, and I shall do the same."

*Mary clutches the letter, tucks it back in her book, and leaves smiling.*