

Transition

*In the library, Arthur tries to summon the words to do as Darcy advised and write down his feelings for Mary. This is harder than he thought it'd be. Arthur begins to write a letter to Mary.*

*Entering to sit at the piano, Mary is doing exactly what Arthur is trying to do: write her feelings for him... which is harder than she thought it'd be.*

ARTHUR. To a new friend,

MARY. To my curious acquaintance,

ARTHUR. Though I have known you only but a day, I must confess it is enough to recognize your uncommon heart and mind.

MARY. After examining my growing fondness of time spent with you, I feel compelled to exhibit a thought: that you are the first person I have come to know who shares my interests.

ARTHUR. I have no skill for words but I hope nonetheless to convey my regard for you. And your...fine hair.

MARY. I find myself at ease in your company.

ARTHUR. And I also admire your laugh. And the sparkle of your...eyes. And the...pinkness of your...cheek?

MARY. I am sincerely glad to share a friendship of such similar...passions?

*Arthur gives up. So does Mary.*

ARTHUR. Oh god, this is exhausting.

MARY. This is insensible. I don't think I've ever writ the word "passions" in all my life.

ARTHUR. The pinkness of her cheek?

MARY. I mock myself with this.

Perhaps I have not  
the stomach for...

ARTHUR. Perhaps I have  
not the stomach for...

*Mary crumples the pages of the letter she was writing and exits.*

Scene 8

*As Arthur pours over his letter-in-progress Lydia enters quietly, holding mistletoe. She sneaks up on him.*

LYDIA. Surprise!

ARTHUR. Dear god, what is the meaning of this?

LYDIA. Just a little reminder that you shall not escape my company for long.

ARTHUR. I'm so sorry but you shocked me with your...flora.

LYDIA. It is often remarked upon, my shocking character. Were you writing someone a letter? A private letter?

ARTHUR. *(Stuffing his letter to Mary in his book.)* No, no I wasn't. Just taking notes.

LYDIA. About what?

ARTHUR. *(Lying.)* Giraffes.

If you will pardon me, Mrs. Wickham, I was just leaving the library for the night.

LYDIA. Leaving! Oh dear! I had hoped we might continue our discussion of the natural world. Perhaps you could tell me more about this?

*She presents the mistletoe.*

ARTHUR. Oh. Mistletoe. Yes, it is a parasitic plant, interesting actually in that it is quite a poisonous evergreen that causes terrible gastrointestinal distress if consumed.

LYDIA. And yet...it manages to inspire such an affectionate holiday tradition.

ARTHUR. Yes, I've always found that rather odd. One is encouraged to embrace under the bough, but don't get too close or romance will turn to...vomit.

LYDIA. You are ever so funny, Lord Arthur. I could listen to you all night.

ARTHUR. I don't know why you would bother. Mrs. Wickham, I believe I shall, yes... I will bid you a good night.

LYDIA. Perhaps I could borrow a book to read, even this one you carry with you so often.

*Lydia hints at Arthur's book.*

ARTHUR. This book? Oh. Well. You are welcome to it if you like. The early chapters are quite compelling, if I do say so. Though perhaps Erasmus Darwin's *Zoonomia* might be a better introduction.

LYDIA. Nono, this one seems just fine for me.

*Lydia snatches his book.*

ARTHUR. Enjoy your reading then. I really must rest. It has turned into a rather eventful day.

LYDIA. Of course it has. Good night, Lord Arthur.

ARTHUR. Please do call me Mr. de Bourgh. And good night.

*Arthur leaves.*

*Lydia opens the book and reads the letter tucked within, thinking that Arthur's letter to Mary is for herself. She knew he adored her! She reads.*

LYDIA. He even mentioned my laugh!

*Arthur runs back in.*

ARTHUR. Excuse me Mrs. Wickham but I believe I left my notes in that book and must retrieve them immediately—

LYDIA. You darling man! I knew you felt the very same as me!

ARTHUR. As what? As who?

*Mary has come in unnoticed by Arthur and Lydia, the letter that she found in her book in hand, her smile drops as she witnesses...*

LYDIA. You said what I was desperate to hear and more.

ARTHUR. You? No. Oh no.

LYDIA. And you mention my laugh, and my hair, and my cheeks are the very definition of pink.

ARTHUR. Mrs. Wickham, you mistake me. That letter was—

LYDIA. I knew if I might only encourage you with the small note I left in your book—

ARTHUR. Your note? I never read a note. What note?

MARY. This one.

*Lydia and Arthur turn to Mary, who is holding Lydia's original letter.*

ARTHUR. Miss Bennet. Thank goodness, there has been a terrible mistake.

LYDIA. We're quite occupied at the moment, Mary, if you don't mind.

ARTHUR. We're not occupied at all, I assure you—

MARY. Lydia, your letter found its way into the wrong book, it seems. Though I am so very glad to return it to its rightful owner.

*Mary smacks the letter on a table near Arthur.*

ARTHUR. Miss Bennet, wait—

LYDIA. *(To Mary.)* Good night!

ARTHUR. Mrs. Wickham, that letter was not yours to read, it was for Miss Bennet.

*That stops both Mary and Lydia in their tracks.*

MARY. This letter was...for me?

*Mary holds up Lydia's letter to Arthur.*

LYDIA. For you? No, that one was for Lord Arthur. From me.

MARY. From *you*?

*Arthur holds up his letter to Mary.*

ARTHUR. But *this* is from me.

MARY. Oh, I have always detested farce.

ARTHUR. Miss Bennet, please. If you'll let me speak my mind instead of the rather idiotic words I scratched down in an attempt to convey my fond impression of you.

LYDIA. *(Exiting in a huff.)* Well, how was I to know the letter was for Mary? *Her cheeks are not the definition of pink.*

*A moment between Arthur and Mary.*

MARY. You wish to speak your mind, Mr. de Bourgh?

ARTHUR. I do. Yes I do, Miss Bennet. I...have much to say and suddenly so little breath to carry it... Miss Bennet, I—

*Right before he can tell her a thing...Anne de Bourgh enters in a lush coat and hat, with Lizzy and Darcy one step behind*