

ARTHUR. Yes. Miss de Bourgh rather insists we leave immediately.

MARY. And what else of your future does she insist upon?

*He wants to tell her but...*

ARTHUR. If you will permit me, I would give you this small gift before I depart.

*He hands her a gift. It's a small box with a red ribbon. He starts off and then turns back to her.*

I am so sorry... that I must bid you good evening.

MARY. Is it not *goodbye*? If you leave right now, isn't that what you're really saying.

ARTHUR. Perhaps it is.

MARY. Arthur.

*He stops. This is the first time she has called him Arthur.*

Is this what you want?

I ask not out of any impudence, but out of wonder. You see, you have a rare thing in this world. A choice. The most liberating possession of all.

ARTHUR. That is the falsity in your perception of my situation. I do not have a choice, Miss Bennet.

MARY. Of course you do.

ARTHUR. I do not. I fear I do not.

MARY. And yet you are a man of means and property, a man I know to be good and curious and kind, a man who does not deserve a life un-lived, does not deserve a life caught and compromised but a life free to explore the world with someone who appreciates it... and you.

*He cannot answer—he can only look at her, love her from afar.*

ARTHUR. It is cruel to imagine a life different than the one you may attain.

MARY. Unless that life is more attainable than you know. Yes, you do have a choice. But if you are too afraid of to use it, then you do not deserve it. Good day sir. I mean *goodbye*.

*She starts to leave him.*

ARTHUR. What would you have me do? I cannot abandon her.

MARY. Nor would I ask you to. I only ask you to consider for a moment that the act you think will "save her" might in fact stand in the way of true happiness and true understanding and true love for you both. There must be a way to secure her future and your own.

*Arthur hears that, really hears it.*

*Anne bursts in.*

ANNE. *Arthur*. We must leave immediately. I am ready to be away from this place and these people!

ARTHUR. I...

*He looks at Mary, looks back to Anne.*

No. No, I don't wish to leave.

ANNE. You don't... what? We have an estate to run, we have a wedding to plan.

Arthur. Come.

ARTHUR. No.

ANNE. *Arthur*:

ARTHUR. Miss de Bourgh. I... Foremost I do not wish you any pain or displeasure. But I cannot marry you.

ANNE. Excuse me? You cannot be serious, Arthur.

ARTHUR. I do not love you.

ANNE. Oh, of course you do. And I you. Since we were children. Now can we please—

ARTHUR. I do not love you. It is as simple as that. I do not wish you any harm, but you must acknowledge that this is an *arrangement* and not a match of hearts.

ANNE. A match of—? What are you even talking about? You require a wife and I a husband.

ARTHUR. I cannot, I *will not* marry without happiness.

ANNE. Everyone marries without happiness.

ARTHUR. But they do not have to. We do not have to.

ANNE. You might not have to, but I do. I have to marry *you* or I lose everything, Arthur, don't you see? Rosings has always been my

home, and it was Mother's wish for my future, and what will happen to me if I have nothing? I will be nothing, I will be lost, and I will not be ignored or slighted or *thrown aside any longer*.

ARTHUR. Neither will I. And I will not let you suffer, I promise you on my honor, you may continue to live at Rosings your entire life if you wish. You will have whatever you need. But I will not deny what I know is true. Love is...attainable. And we are *both* deserving of it. Of something finer and more free than either of us thought possible, something that is a complement rather than a command. Human hearts are built for stronger stuff.

ANNE. For pity's sake, the kind of love you speak of is fiction. It is the stuff of novels and operas...the ones where everyone dies in the end.

ARTHUR. It is not fiction. It is very real.

*Turns to Mary.*

I know it is. Now I do know it.

MARY. Do you?

*Arthur and Mary know now that they're in love...Anne doesn't.*

ANNE. Does he *what*? And what are you even—What is she even doing here? This is not your concern, Miss Bennet. Though your family does excel at *placing themselves where they do not belong*.

ARTHUR. Miss de Bourgh—

ANNE. It really is atrocious. The whole lot of them are just—

MARY. Are what? What are we exactly?

ANNE. You know quite well that your family is full of...*meddlesome women*.

ARTHUR. Miss de Bourgh, that is not fair.

MARY. Oh I rather like it actually. "Meddlesome" would indicate a curiosity that I do harbor. Yes I do. About the world's wonders and how I—a lowly, meddlesome girl—may one day see them for myself. As for the lot of us Bennets, I think we are honest, and firm in the belief that happiness cannot be forced and cannot be bought. Perhaps if you had such meddlesome sisters they would have taught you this as mine have taught me.

ANNE. Well. Mother was right about your family.

MARY. Was she right about you? The only mention I ever heard tell of you is a weak, sickly girl who does whatever her mother says, speaks to no one, and has no thoughts of her own. That is not who I see before me. Perhaps your mother was wrong about the both of us.

*Anne does not want to hear this right now...*

ANNE. I have never...I refuse to...I am most seriously displeased with...*everyone*.

*She exits in a huff.*

*Arthur and Mary are alone.*

MARY. You have given me a gift. And now I hope you will accept one from me.

*She offers him a box, which he opens to reveal a crumpled-up paper ball.*

ARTHUR. Yours is a gift, it would seem, I must decipher.

*She comes very close to him, looking at the crumpled letter.*

MARY. This appears to be a note, in the handwriting of a young woman of some modest means and education. She seems unable to articulate her feelings to, what appears to be, a man who impresses and confounds her greatly.

ARTHUR. Does he?

MARY. Yes, and this line would imply that her positive impression of him stems from a mutual understanding...of the world's wide and intricate beauty.

ARTHUR. Yes it does seem to imply that.

MARY. And I deduce that the crumpled state of the paper would indicate the young woman's frustration. Perhaps she is not accustomed to articulating such things to anyone, let alone someone so new to her. Perhaps she experiences fear at admitting she feels anything at all.

ARTHUR. It is a rather terrifying endeavor. To admit something like that.

MARY. Isn't it?

ARTHUR. Quite.

MARY. I wrote this the night after we met.

ARTHUR. I wrote one exactly like it.

Please open yours.

*Mary opens her present and reveals a folded paper...unfolding it reveals a larger and larger...map of the world.*

MARY. The world!

ARTHUR. I would be so very happy if you shared it with me. Miss Bennet. How you have shaken me. Irrepressibly. And if I may dare say it, I hope you will continue to do so for as long as I live.

MARY. Then I hope you are prepared to live a very long time. For I have reviewed the evidence and it seems that I...love you, Mr. de Bourgh. Most ardently I do.

ARTHUR. I am not certain how this is properly done, but I hope you will permit me to discuss this with your father upon his arrival tomorrow?

MARY. I do not permit, dear Mr. de Bourgh. I insist. Tomorrow then.

ARTHUR. Tomorrow.

*Mary and Arthur remain looking at each other until...*

### Transition

*The great room brightens into Christmas Day.*

*The candles on the tree are lit, snow falls.*

### Scene 4

*All but Mary and Anne enter in Christmas finery.*

LIZZY. Happy Christmas, Mr. Darcy.

DARCY. Happy Christmas, Mrs. Darcy.

LIZZY. Happy Christmas, tree!

DARCY. Oh, are we talking to it as well as dressing it?

JANE. And to think next Christmas we will have an entirely new person with whom to celebrate.

LYDIA. But it is not too early to celebrate this new addition, is it? Happy Christmas, Jane. I am intent on being the very best aunt in all of England and I shall start now.

*Jane unwraps a christening gown for the baby.*

JANE. Oh, it is beautiful, Lydia. Thank you.

BINGLEY. Thank you very much.

LYDIA. I should certainly be thanking you for your hospitality to me. Living with you and dear Jane will make my tenure as favorite aunt most unrelenting.

BINGLEY. Living with what?

*Jane had not told Mr. Bingley about Lydia just yet.*

JANE. Might I have a word, Mr. Bingley?

BINGLEY. She is living with what?

*Jane pulls Bingley aside as...Anne enters wearing a coat and hat. She is furious and in a hurry.*

ANNE. Mr. Darcy. I have come to inform you of my immediate departure. I require my carriage and a *very fast horse*.

DARCY. Miss de Bourgh, I don't understand. You wish to depart this morning?

ANNE. Yes.

LIZZY. And alone?