

*The Wickhams – Christmas at Pemberley*

by Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon

Directed by Sarah Lovesy

*The Wickhams – Christmas at Pemberley* is the sequel to *Miss Bennet – Christmas at Pemberley* (WWLT 2024). It's 1815 and we are again at Lizzie and Darcy's Pemberley Estate for Christmas celebrations but in a very fun convention, the action of *The Wickhams* happens at the same time **downstairs** as the action happened with the Bennet family upstairs. . . . and now . . . horror of all horrors George Wickham secretly arrives, totally inebriated, swaggering into the servant's common room.

**Characters - Age range is indicative:**

- **George Wickham – 28 to 35.** He is a deeply flawed character. He is a rakish, elegant Casanova and dazzles women with his charm and charismatic personality. The audience must fall in love with his magnetism and sensual appeal but secretly know they shouldn't as the other side of his personality is that he is a seducer, heartbreaker, cheat, liar, and a cad.
- **Lydia Wickham – 18 to 25.** At the beginning of the play, she is flirtatious, energetic, thoughtless and exuberant. She has a childlike enthusiasm for everything. But there is a great vulnerability about her. Lydia has the biggest arc as by the end of the play she has grown into a more mature woman who although still loves to dance and flirt realises that her marriage is a sham and she must move on. Actor must love to explore physical movement.
- **Mrs Reynolds – 60 to 65.** She is an expert housekeeper and has a soft spot for all of the three men. She is always busy, on the move, and is a no nonsense but kind women. She is somewhat idiosyncratic. A little bit of parody in her characterisation would not go astray! If possible, she should be able to sing if not we can play around with 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> Century English ditties.
- **Brian – 25 to 30.** A footman, in love with 19<sup>th</sup> Century technology and inventions. A tinkerer. He likes factual books and information. He has a youthful exuberance about him, sweet natured, but also a bit arrogant. He has adored Cassie since they were children but does not realise that he is in love with her.
- **Cassie – 18 to 25.** The new housemaid. An orphan who has come from nothing. The opportunity to work at Pemberley means security she has never had. She is a nervous and excited newcomer. She sometimes lacks restraint and says exactly what she thinks. She is sweet natured and has a caring loving side. She has always had a soft spot for Brian.

**There will be no auditions for the two roles listed below as they will be reprised by the actors who played them in 2024.**

- **Elizabeth Darcy (Lizzy) – 28 years.** Married to Mr. Darcy. Played by Lucia Mandile.
- **Fitzwilliam Darcy – 30 years.** Married to Lizzy. Played by Jarrod Rizzardo.

**Audition choices:** We will be playing around with the audition pieces as we must always remember that theatre is within a mystery called the ‘present moment,’ and the ‘present moment’ is astonishing. So, our ‘playing’ with the audition pieces will explore spontaneity and how to release your and your characters’ imaginations!

### **Act 1**

- Brian and Mrs Reynolds. Scene 1 pages 9, 10 and 11.
- Mrs Reynolds and Darcy. Scene 3 pages 22 and 23. To Darcy’s exit.
- Brian and Cassie. Scene 4 pages 24 and 25.
- Brian, Cassie, Wickham and Mrs Reynolds. Scene 4 pages 26 and 27.
- Mrs Reynolds and Lizzy. Scene 6 pages 33 and 34
- Cassie and Wickham. Scene 7 pages 36 and 37.
- Cassie and Lydia. Scene 7 pages 38 and 39.

### **Act 2**

- Wickham and Lydia. Scene 1 pages 45, 46, 47 to Wickham: ‘To. . .Paris. To our new life together.’
- Wickham and Darcy. Scene 1 pages 48, 49, 50 to Wickham: ‘Indeed.’
- Lydia, Wickham, Lizzy and Darcy. Scene 4 page 59 from Wickham and Lydia’s entrance to page 61.

### **NB:**

- Do not worry about accents nor do you have to learn the dialogue.

### **Audition Dates and Times**

- Audition Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2026
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Audition Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2026 - (if needed)
- Registration 7.00pm for a 7.30pm start
- Venue: The Peninsula Theatre (Home of Woy Woy Little Theatre) John Hoare Cl, Woy Woy 2256
- Open auditions. Everyone is welcome, no need to book.

**Rehearsals** start July 21<sup>st</sup> then every Tuesday and Thursday night from 7.00pm. Technical rehearsals 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> October and preview 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2026.

**Performance dates** are 23<sup>rd</sup> October to 8<sup>th</sup> November 2026.

**Contact** Sarah Lovesy for any further information on [sarah.lovesy@bigpond.com](mailto:sarah.lovesy@bigpond.com) or 0407467643.

I look forward to not only braving the Bennet women with you, sir, but also to sharing in a large brandy.

Your friend,  
Fitzwilliam Darcy

MRS. REYNOLDS. To the shopkeeper, Lambton Village  
Dear Sir, What follows is the year-end order for Pemberley Estate.

Please provide:  
Fifty pound flour  
Forty pound sugar  
Five pound each, raisins and figs  
Two pound each, walnuts and almonds  
Cinnamon sticks and clove

LYDIA. And, Lizzy, will you make sure Mrs. Reynolds has loads of those sugary biscuits with the orangey bits on hand? I adore them.

MRS. REYNOLDS. And several bags of oranges.  
Merry Christmas, sir.  
Kindly,

Mrs. Reynolds of Pemberley Estate

CASSIE. Mrs. Reynolds,  
I humbly accept the position of housemaid at Pemberley Estate. It will be an honor to serve you, and Mr. and Mrs. Darcy.  
Cassie

*Out of Cassie's letter the lights widen as Brian enters in real time and space to greet her. They are old friends teasing each other.*

BRIAN. Cassie? My god, is that you? I wasn't told you'd be coming.

CASSIE. Hello then! It has not been so long since we've seen each other, Brian. Is your eyesight failing you, or just your mind?

BRIAN. You still think you're clever.

CASSIE. And you still think you're important enough to be told when someone is coming, but you're not.

BRIAN. I'm just a bit surprised to see you. I was expecting the new housemaid to arrive this morning.

CASSIE. And she has. Hello again.

BRIAN. *You're* the new maid? For Christmas?

CASSIE. Mrs. Reynolds wrote that the house required extra hands and my trial as housemaid was to begin straightaway. So here I am. And eager to get started. Can you tell me where I could find her?

BRIAN. Of course. It'll be so wonderful to have you here.

CASSIE. Just as when we were young.

BRIAN. Except this time I won't let you win all the footraces.

CASSIE. *Let* me win? I won fairly every time and you know it.

BRIAN. I was being a gentleman by losing to you!

CASSIE. The day you're a gentleman is the day I'm the queen.

*This makes Brian laugh.*

BRIAN. It's good to see you Cassie. Welcome to Pemberley.

*Brian takes Cassie's bag for her and escorts her in...*

### Scene 1

*The lower floor of the grand Pemberley Estate, home to Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy and his still-new wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Darcy (née Bennet). The nobility are upstairs enjoying fine food and company. This is downstairs, where live the engineers of this house and all its staff, kitchens, cellars, laundry, and more.*

*Particularly we are in the common room where servants gather and eat. The large kitchen is just offstage, a stairway leads up to the main house, doors to the outside garden entrance, and a hall to servants' quarters and apartments.*

*Early morning. December 22nd.*

*Brian is tinkering with something when Mrs. Reynolds enters, in a hurry, always in a hurry, humming, always humming.*

MRS. REYNOLDS. *Brian.*

BRIAN. (*Snapping to attention, trying to hide his tinkering.*) Good morning, Mrs. Reynolds.

MRS. REYNOLDS. Not a good one if you have so little to do that you can sit idly by three days before Christmas.

BRIAN. I'm not idle, I'm working.

MRS. REYNOLDS. You're trying my patience. Have you been upstairs yet? The breakfast table should be laid.

BRIAN. The table is ready, because it is always ready, because I always ready it.

MRS. REYNOLDS. Look you. This house is going to fill up any moment, and I have no time for disobedience.

BRIAN. Isn't Christmas supposed to make people merry?

MRS. REYNOLDS. It's supposed to make people busy. So none of your inventions today, I don't want you distracted.

BRIAN. (*Putting away his tinkering.*) I'm not distracted. I'm just... considering...

MRS. REYNOLDS. Oh, pray tell, what is so pressing that it deserves your consideration today of all days?

BRIAN. Well, it's about—

MRS. REYNOLDS. I don't actually want to know. I want you to keep your thoughts to yourself.

BRIAN. It's nice to see Cassie again.

MRS. REYNOLDS. To yourself. I said. *To yourself.*

BRIAN. You did not tell me you were hiring her as the new maid.

MRS. REYNOLDS. Am I required to check with you now? Please forgive me. Only I thought I ran this household!

BRIAN. No, I'm glad she's here. She is a good worker, clever, fast in a footrace. I've always admired her for that.

MRS. REYNOLDS. Now, don't you start.

BRIAN. Don't start what? I'm saying I like her!

MRS. REYNOLDS. I don't like *you* liking *her* like *that*.

BRIAN. That is not what I meant.

MRS. REYNOLDS. I'll not have you proposing to her within the hour.

BRIAN. I'm not! She's a friend not a...girl.

MRS. REYNOLDS. Mmhhh. You just keep to yourself and stay out of that girl's way.

BRIAN. Honestly, I have no ideas about Cassie. She is a welcome

addition is all that I was trying to say. I will help her as she finds her way about this maze of a house and you can't tell me otherwise.

MRS. REYNOLDS. I scrubbed you in your bath as a boy, I can tell you whatever I like. Now, if you are quite through, everyone is arriving and we have much to do.

BRIAN. Yes ma'am. And Mrs. Reynolds...be merry.

*Brian hurries up the stairs before Mrs. Reynolds can scold him. Mrs. Reynolds starts singing as she heads out the door to the kitchen.*

## Scene 2

*Later that morning.*

*Mr. and Mrs. Darcy happily come down the stairs, hand in hand.*

*They are looking for Mrs. Reynolds but, finding the hall momentarily empty, they indulge in a moment of privacy before the house is overtaken.*

DARCY. I know it is the holiday, but could we not just hide down here until after the new year?

LIZZY. We cannot and you know we cannot because I know it is *my* family you are hiding from.

DARCY. That's not true.

LIZZY. Of course it's true, but now you're quite stuck with us so it is a very good thing you love me.

DARCY. It is. And I do.

LIZZY. And it will be over soon and we shall return to our quiet lives again.

DARCY. Though it shall not be quiet for much longer, I hope. When our family grows?

LIZZY. With Jane expecting I'd hoped for a reprieve from the endless interrogations about children, but alas I fear quite the opposite.

*Cassie hustles out before she can get in trouble.*

Off you go, Brian.

BRIAN. Yes ma'am. Good day sir.

DARCY. Good day.

*Brian exits. Mrs. Reynolds makes to follow when...*

Mrs. Reynolds, might I have a moment of your time to discuss the gifts for the staff for Boxing Day.

MRS. REYNOLDS. I'm sure anything will be appreciated, sir.

DARCY. Yes, well, Mrs. Darcy found my ideas wanting. Too... practical or some such thing.

MRS. REYNOLDS. Practical is appropriate for the staff: dress cloth for the maids, tools for the men. Very generous. Although...

*She pauses, decides to go there.*

It's not really my place to say, but... Your father would sometimes offer more. There are some gifts that only someone in a position such as yourself can provide. The gift of opportunity. There is Brian, for example. And his—

DARCY. Inventions. Yes.

MRS. REYNOLDS. Yes. They drive me mad but even I know that he has a mind.

DARCY. Brian is an excellent footman.

MRS. REYNOLDS. And with some guidance, who knows what more he could do. When your father saw potential in some of the children of the household on more than one occasion he provided means for advancement.

*Darcy rises to leave.*

DARCY. Thank you for your thoughts, Mrs. Reynolds. I'll return upstairs.

MRS. REYNOLDS. Yes sir and I do hope you'll consider what an opportunity could mean for Brian. He's a good boy.

DARCY. *(Becomes defensive and cold.)* Everyone said the same of young Wickham. After the opportunity that my father provided him was so abused, I am of no mind to repeat that particular mistake.

MRS. REYNOLDS. Brian is not Wickham.

DARCY. Wickham wasn't Wickham when he was a boy, and yet his behavior has come to plague us all and I'll thank you to judge him as harshly as I do.

MRS. REYNOLDS. I do judge him.

DARCY. First the corruption of my father's generosity, then the near corruption of my sister to get his greedy hands on her fortune. And the mess he nearly made of poor Lydia's reputation until I forced his hand. You have always held a softness in your heart for him and it has made you blind.

MRS. REYNOLDS. That's not true, sir.

DARCY. You could never see him for what he was, *never*.

MRS. REYNOLDS. *(Exploding at him.)* I saw that his life was harder than yours, much harder, every day it was harder. Always in your shadow, watching you enjoy every opportunity while he drifted, wanting the life you had and it turning him desperate. I don't approve of his actions but I do understand where they came from.

*Pause. Darcy is pissed. His silence betrays this. Lydia enters.*

LYDIA. Oh hello! I was looking for my dress? There was a maid mending it and...sorry. Did I interrupt?

MRS. REYNOLDS. I apologize, sir. If there is anything else I can do—

DARCY. No. That will be all.

*Mr. Darcy leaves.*

LYDIA. Mr. Darcy can be a bit flinty, can he not? Are you all right Mrs. Reynolds?

MRS. REYNOLDS. *(Flustered by that interaction.)* Perfectly fine, thank you for asking, dear. *(Getting it together.)* Now, what can I do for you?

LYDIA. My dress?

MRS. REYNOLDS. Your dress. Of course. I'll inquire with Cassie and send it up straightaway.

LYDIA. Actually, I'm happy to wait. Down here.

MRS. REYNOLDS. *(Taken aback.)* Down here?

LYDIA. I simply cannot go back up there. With all of the Happy Christmases and the happy couples.

MRS. REYNOLDS. It is that time of year.

LYDIA. How it all makes me long for my dear Wickham. Though I am the only one. My family does not care for my husband, you see. They may not say it directly, but the way they steal glances when I speak of him. They think him coarse and think us ridiculous.

MRS. REYNOLDS. Now, now, no one is thinking that.

LYDIA. (*The real reason she came down.*) Of course they are, they always are. But you know my Wickham. You practically raised him at Pemberley, and now he is as welcome here as a flood. But no one will tell me why: Why is Mr. Darcy made so angry by him? Why will my husband never come here? What is wrong with everyone?

MRS. REYNOLDS. It is not my place to say, dear. Mr. Darcy and Mr. Wickham have a history that is marred by years of affection and anger. The holidays are already complicated enough and their history is not your history.

LYDIA. But, I'd still like to—

MRS. REYNOLDS. Do not trouble yourself with it, dear. Have a biscuit and let's find your dress.

*Appeased by the biscuit, Lydia follows Mrs. Reynolds out.*

#### Scene 4

*That evening. The only one in the hall at the moment is Cassie. She's reading. She loves reading.*

*Brian enters. Cassie doesn't stop reading.*

BRIAN. You're up late.

CASSIE. Mmhmm.

BRIAN. Reading?

CASSIE. Mmhmm.

BRIAN. A book?

CASSIE. Mmhmm.

*He comes in close, reading over her shoulder. He is hovering, just to bug her.*

BRIAN. Shall I keep asking you questions so you can't concentrate?

CASSIE. I know that is what you are doing. That is why I am ignoring you.

BRIAN. Not if you're talking to me, you're not. What book is it?

CASSIE. (*Giving up in exasperation.*) Just a novel. Romance. Courtship. Love. It's good. You may borrow it when I am finished.

BRIAN. Oh, I prefer to study *real* things, not made up romances, but thank you for thinking of me.

CASSIE. I'm not thinking *of* you, I'm thinking *around* you. And romance *is* a real thing, between real people.

BRIAN. I am not interested in that sort of thing.

CASSIE. Which is why you could learn more from a book like this than you think.

BRIAN. What could I possibly learn from a novel? I'm trying to better my life, not escape it. Better my life and the world with innovation. Not fussing about with...people.

CASSIE. *People* are the way to better this world, and you'll not learn much about people by sitting alone at Pemberley tinkering away. Now, if you'll let me return to my reading, without further comment, I'd be grateful.

BRIAN. Just don't let Mrs. Reynolds catch you reading on the job.

CASSIE. I would never.

BRIAN. She's hard on you because she sees your potential. But I told Mrs. Reynolds how perfect you are.

CASSIE. You did *what*?

BRIAN. For the job I mean.

CASSIE. Are you mad! Do not praise me in front of Mrs. Reynolds. She'll think *you* think I need your help. And I don't!

BRIAN. No, that's not it, only I know how hard it is for you; I lost my parents too.

CASSIE. Your parents worked at Pemberley, you had a home here when they died.

BRIAN. I know, but I'm saying I understand—

CASSIE. You don't. I wish to earn my place here on my own. I'm not here for charity.

BRIAN. I'm only trying to look out for you. You might want to find someone with a good job, someone to take care of you.

CASSIE. I did not come here looking for someone to take care of me. I don't need that and I don't *want it*.

BRIAN. What is it you want, then?

CASSIE. I want books and tea and time to enjoy them. I want my own room and my own bed. I want to live without worry, for once in my life, with security that lasts beyond an odd job for a week. I want to start every day knowing I have tasks ahead and end every day knowing I did a good job.

BRIAN. That sounds like a wife to me.

*Cassie is aghast at this thoughtless comment.*

CASSIE. I've just got the job I've always dreamed of and a chance to take care of myself. I won't give that up, not for a husband or anyone else.

BRIAN. But you were the one talking of romance and love!

CASSIE. Love is about knowing another person and letting them be exactly who they are. If you can't understand that, you either do not listen, or *you do not care*.

BRIAN. Cassie, wait—

CASSIE. Perhaps you should borrow this after all. You are clearly in need of instruction.

*She shoves the book at him and starts to storm out.*

BRIAN. Cassie.

*The back door slams open as a man suddenly enters.  
He's hurt, limping, bloody lip, jacket torn.*

My god!

WICKHAM. Help me.

CASSIE. *Good lord*. Who is that?

WICKHAM. *Help me*.

BRIAN. What do you think you're doing coming in here?

WICKHAM. I need to sit, I need water—no. Ale is better.

BRIAN. You are not getting ale, sir. You are getting out of here now.

WICKHAM. Does she still keep it in the cellar there? Of course she does.

BRIAN. You are already drunk and you're not staying here. Get out and get gone man.

CASSIE. You know this man?

WICKHAM. Brian and I have known each other since he was a boy, miss, and if he would recall that, he might be more inclined to help me.

BRIAN. You cannot be here.

CASSIE. Brian, he's hurt.

BRIAN. Cassie, he's drunk. Back outside.

*Mrs. Reynolds hurries on.*

MRS. REYNOLDS. What on earth is going on?

WICKHAM. Good evening.

BRIAN. He just showed up, Mrs. Reynolds, he just barged in.

WICKHAM. I did, but to my credit I have just weathered a brawl so I might not be thinking straight as an arrow.

BRIAN. I told him to go.

WICKHAM. You cannot turn me away.

MRS. REYNOLDS. Yes I can.

WICKHAM. But you won't. Because you're a better person than most. Because you taught me to read, to fasten my shoes. You know me better than anyone, Mrs. Reynolds.

MRS. REYNOLDS. That I do, George Wickham.

*A beat for Mrs. Reynolds to decide...*

*(To Brian.)* Fetch some water.

*Blackout.*

know—if you can make her laugh, convince her to help you, while making her think she is acting of her own free will, she will be yours forever. Or as long as you want her.

*Cassie enters and clears her throat, which makes Wickham instantly shift his attention to greet her.*

Brian, lovely talk. Cathy, always a pleasure.

BRIAN and CASSIE. It's Cassie.

WICKHAM. I don't care. Good night.

*Wickham exits.*

CASSIE. Good night indeed.

BRIAN. I'm sorry about that. He could spoil milk.

CASSIE. I've seen worse. Brian. I need to find Mrs. Reynolds. Do you know where she is?

BRIAN. Are you all right? What is it?

CASSIE. I just... (*Producing a letter.*) I found this in that man's jacket. I didn't mean to find it, I was getting it ready to send to the wash and I found it and it was already opened.

BRIAN. I'll give it back to him.

CASSIE. I don't think we should.

BRIAN. It's his correspondence, of course we should.

CASSIE. I read it. Accidentally I did and I'm saying that it is not good. Or *he* is not. At least according to this.

*Brian reads the letter. Pause.*

I think we should show someone.

BRIAN. Mrs. Darcy.

CASSIE. But Mrs. Darcy doesn't even know he is here. If she finds out Mrs. Reynolds let him in she might be cross, and Mrs. Reynolds might blame *me* and once again it will be *your* fault that everything's *my* fault!

*Mrs. Reynolds enters.*

MRS. REYNOLDS. And I'm sure there is a very good reason why the two of you are just standing here like well-fed cats.

BRIAN. Cassie found something.

CASSIE. But I didn't mean to—I wasn't snooping, ma'am.

BRIAN. You need to see it. Mrs. Darcy does too.

*Mrs. Reynolds gestures for the letter, which Cassie hands to her. She opens it.*

## Scene 6

*Late that night. The house is silent. Lizzy and Mrs. Reynolds are in their nightclothes. They are seated at the table.*

LIZZY. But what is he even doing here?

MRS. REYNOLDS. He arrived several hours ago, came directly to the servants' hall drunk and bleeding, demanding to see Mrs. Wickham.

LIZZY. Good lord. Mr. Darcy cannot know he is here. He cannot.

MRS. REYNOLDS. I don't see how we can hide him for long.

LIZZY. Things are already in such a state upstairs with my sisters at one another, my mother to appear at any moment, an endless parade of unexpected guests! And then Wickham descends!

MRS. REYNOLDS. There is more ma'am. A letter you must read, though I hesitate.

LIZZY. What is it? What letter?

MRS. REYNOLDS. Oh, Mrs. Darcy, it is dreadful.

LIZZY. Then you must show it to me, at once!

*Mrs. Reynolds hands over Wickham's letter. Lizzy reads.*

How came this letter to be in your possession?

MRS. REYNOLDS. Cassie found it while emptying Mr. Wickham's pockets. She should not have read it, but when she did she immediately came to me.

LIZZY. She was right to do so. Do you believe the contents of this letter could be true?

MRS. REYNOLDS. I do not know why one would put such things in writing were they not true.

LIZZY. (*Reading.*) To Mr. George Wickham. Sir, you must instantly realize why I write to you—

MRS. REYNOLDS. Trust me, ma'am, it is worse read aloud.

LIZZY. It's scandalous! It's absolutely...

*A thought pops into Mrs. Darcy's mind.*

Oh my. What if...oh my.

MRS. REYNOLDS. What now?

LIZZY. Perhaps...nothing. But perhaps... Mrs. Reynolds, I must go to the village first thing tomorrow morning. This letter could mean...everything. I must find this man, immediately.

MRS. REYNOLDS. On Christmas Eve morning? At the very least, take Brian with you.

LIZZY. If you can spare him. In the meantime, Mr. Wickham must not be discovered. Lydia cannot know he is here and for all that is holy, neither can Mr. Darcy. May I rely on you?

MRS. REYNOLDS. I am, as always, at your service.

LIZZY. Thank you, and thank Cassie, too. She did right by coming to you.

MRS. REYNOLDS. Let us reserve our praise until we see how this ends.

LIZZY. Until the morning, Mrs. Reynolds. I wish you a good night.

*Lizzy turns to leave, runs straight into Wickham, who stumbles slightly before regaining whatever small composure he can muster.*

WICKHAM. Elizabeth! Good evening.

LIZZY. Mr. Wickham, you're here.

MRS. REYNOLDS. He is here, and he will not be so informal to the lady of this house, regardless of our surroundings.

WICKHAM. Excuse me, Mrs. Darcy. I did not mean to offend. How wonderful to see you again.

LIZZY. Would I could say the same of you; you look as though you have run into some misfortune.

WICKHAM. This? It is but a scratch, a badge of honor for those who must contend with the sufferings of lesser men.

LIZZY. Honor, you say? And what was the substance of this honorable disagreement?

WICKHAM. Honestly I cannot recall.

LIZZY. Mr. Darcy has an excellent memory. (*Pointedly.*) It is a trait we share.

MRS. REYNOLDS. As it is very late, I'd suggest we all return to bed.

WICKHAM. I am yours to command, Mrs. Reynolds. Mrs. Darcy, a good evening.

*He starts to leave.*

LIZZY. Mr. Wickham.

*He stops.*

You are my sister's husband and it is only to protect her that I do not disclose your whereabouts to my husband and the rest of this house. I will not have you upset the holiday.

WICKHAM. (*Talking about the past as well as the present.*) It was never my intention to upset you, Mrs. Darcy.

*A slight moment between them as Wickham leaves.*

MRS. REYNOLDS. I am sorry, ma'am.

LIZZY. That man! I must to bed, if I am to be off early in the morning.

MRS. REYNOLDS. Good night to you, ma'am.

*Lizzy leaves. Then returns instantly.*

LIZZY. I'm a fool to think I'll have any sleep after this. Might I trouble you for more of those delicious biscuits?

MRS. REYNOLDS. Of course ma'am.

*Mrs. Reynolds hands her a tin of biscuits and Lizzy leaves with them. She sits alone for a moment before Brian peers around the corner and enters.*

BRIAN. Did Mrs. Darcy say I'm to the village tomorrow with her?

MRS. REYNOLDS. You know full well what she said, I heard you listening.

BRIAN. How do you *hear* someone *listening*? That doesn't make sense.

MRS. REYNOLDS. Don't question me.

BRIAN. I cannot believe I used to think Wickham so fine a man.

MRS. REYNOLDS. Take care how you judge others, Brian. At any moment, you might catch a man at either his best or at his worst. Be ready to depart with Mrs. Darcy first thing in the morning. Good night.  
*She dismisses Brian, and is left alone with her thoughts.*

### Scene 7

*The next day, morning, December 24th. It is quiet in the servants' hall until Mr. Wickham shuffles in, searching for his letter, clearly sore and deeply hungover.*

*Cassie enters with a dress to mend, speaking very loudly to annoy Wickham.*

CASSIE. Good morning, sir, how is your headache?!

WICKHAM. (*Wincing at the noise.*) Better, thank you.

CASSIE. Very good, sir.

*She slams something down on the table nearby, making him wince again.*

WICKHAM. Cassie, is it?

CASSIE. The same name I had yesterday.

WICKHAM. I have a rather urgent request of you. I have misplaced a letter. It was in my pocket and I am wondering if you came across it when you took my things for washing last night. I must recover it.

CASSIE. A letter? I don't recall a letter.

WICKHAM. You didn't see it? A letter? Addressed to me.

CASSIE. I do know how letters work. And no, I have not seen it.

WICKHAM. I would be grateful if you would alert me immediately should you find it. It is correspondence of the utmost importance.

CASSIE. Certainly, sir.

WICKHAM. Thank you, and please call me George. I am the son of a steward, I know life downstairs. And I feel we are friends, now that we have agreed to help each other.

CASSIE. Have we?

WICKHAM. Well, perhaps after you find my letter I can help you in return.

*Brian starts to enter the hall, but stops, listening.*

CASSIE. And how would you help me?

WICKHAM. (*Sizing her up.*) You're new, aren't you. I can tell. New and not yet recognized for your entire worth.

CASSIE. That is none of your business, sir.

WICKHAM. (*Continuing to read her like a book.*) You are a village girl, spent your whole life looking to this grand house as the height of importance. Admiring this fine estate, and all the people in it.

CASSIE. You assume to know quite a lot about someone you've only just met.

WICKHAM. You're clever, strong, you can take care of yourself. And like me I bet you thought this place would provide everything you could dream of if you could truly belong here. But let me tell you, it will not, and people like us will never truly belong in a place like this. Now I know there is a world beyond Pemberley. I could show you things far better than this.

CASSIE. And why would you do that for me?

WICKHAM. Because friends do favors for each other. We are so alike, you and I. We could be each other's friend in this world... If you could peek your head into Mrs. Reynolds' sitting room and check her desk for my letter? My dear—

*Wickham gets close to touch her shoulder or back or flips a ribbon on her dress just enough for Brian to see and instantly flinch, turning and hurrying away betrayed and shocked.*

*He leaves too fast, not in time to hear Cassie, as her head snaps up, a look of rage. She is inches from Wickham's face.*

CASSIE. Not. Your. Dear.

My friendship, my confidence and my favor is only given to those who are of better stuff than you.

WICKHAM. Find me that letter, girl. And watch your tongue around your betters.

CASSIE. Oh... I do.

*Mr. Wickham takes his now throbbing headache and exits. Cassie is shaking she is so mad. Also worried she has just yelled at someone above her station and she might be fired. She takes deep breaths.*

Just get the man some tea! Make sure he doesn't leave the hall! How hard can that be? Two days! You cannot last two days before—

*In the middle of Cassie's tirade, Lydia enters.*

LYDIA. Oh! I'm sorry! I didn't mean to interrupt. But you don't seem to be speaking to an actual person.

*Lydia looks around, as if she might have missed something.*

*Cassie quickly checks to make sure Mr. Wickham has completely gone and stands, fumbling with the dress she was mending.*

CASSIE. I was just mending your dress, Mrs. Wickham. I am nearly done in fact.

LYDIA. Oh, well, that's lovely! I wondered if that split in the lace could even be fixed.

CASSIE. Just took a steady hand. Shall I bring it up to you when I've finished.

LYDIA. I'd honestly rather wait. It is intolerable upstairs.

CASSIE. Is it?

*Lydia nibbles on biscuits as Cassie sews.*

LYDIA. And it is nice to talk to...a friend. May I call you a friend?

CASSIE. Of course ma'am.

LYDIA. Oh good. I have need of one. I don't know why but the holiday seems to make everyone just a little bit more so than they already are. And how it all makes me long for my dear Wickham. Without my dear husband, especially at Christmas—well, nothing makes you feel more lonely than being in a room filled with people.

CASSIE. I am very sorry to hear that ma'am.

LYDIA. I should be used to it by now. My husband is so often away on business, you see. But oh, when he is home and we are together, that is what makes all the rest worth it.

CASSIE. Are you sure?

LYDIA. Sure of what?

CASSIE. That the rest is worth it?

LYDIA. Of course it is. Consider the alternative—no man at all!

CASSIE. That does not sound so bad to me.

LYDIA. You sound just like Lizzy! Or, rather, how Lizzy used to sound before she said yes to Mr. Darcy. Do you know Mr. Collins?

CASSIE. No.

LYDIA. Good for you. He's got the charm of a housefly but he's too big to swat. She said no to his proposal, thank goodness. Did you know my sister even said no to Mr. Darcy himself once.

CASSIE. I cannot imagine anyone saying no to Mr. Darcy.

LYDIA. Well she did. She turned him down insisting that she'd rather be alone than with a man she did not care for.

CASSIE. As I said, no man at all does not sound so bad.

LYDIA. Oh come now. I think you must be fretting over a particular man or else you would not say such a thing. Who is he? What can he offer? How tall is he in riding boots?

CASSIE. All men are the same. A man sees only what he wishes to in a woman—someone to take care of him, there to do his bidding, one who is already a servant so why not a servant for him? They assume that marriage is all a woman could ever want.

LYDIA. It is all I ever wanted. Is it not what you want?

CASSIE. I want my own life. It is more precious than anything a man could ever offer me.

LYDIA. You are unlike anyone I have ever known. I so wish I could lure you away from Pemberley to work for Mr. Wickham and me.

*Cassie blanches at the thought of working for Wickham. Lydia does not notice.*

CASSIE. I have only just started here at Pemberley, ma'am.

LYDIA. Yes of course. And life at our little house is not nearly so grand as the life you'd have here.

CASSIE. *(Smiling.)* I doubt my life will ever be grand, ma'am.

LYDIA. Perhaps neither will mine.

*Lydia has a rare introspective moment.*

*Darcy is instantly betrayed.*

LYDIA. *(From upstairs.)* Where on earth has everyone gone?

CASSIE. Mrs. Reynolds!

LYDIA. Mrs. Reynolds?

MRS. REYNOLDS. Lydia.

LIZZY. Lydia, don't. Stop her.

DARCY. Mrs. Wickham do not descend those stairs.

LYDIA. Oh hello, Mr. Darcy! Cassie, after all that I have forgotten my dress—

LIZZY. LYDIA!

LYDIA. WHAT?

*Lydia sees Wickham. Freezes.*

WICKHAM. Hello, darling. Happy Christmas.

*Everyone stops. Lydia screams for joy at the sight of her Wickham. Blackout.*

### End of Act One

## ACT TWO

### Scene 1

*Christmas morning. Dawn.*

*Lydia sneaks downstairs and Wickham sneaks out of his room. They embrace.*

WICKHAM. My darling.

LYDIA. Finally!

WICKHAM. At last.

LYDIA. Together!

WICKHAM. At last!

LYDIA. Oh my dear husband. You've been here this whole time?

WICKHAM. And fighting every minute to see you. They wouldn't let me see you.

LYDIA. I knew you'd come for me.

WICKHAM. Of course I would. I always do.

LYDIA. It's so hard when you're away, George. Sometimes I think you've forgotten me.

WICKHAM. How could I? My perfect little—

LYDIA. ...bird.

WICKHAM. bird!

*She pulls away from him. Toying with her bracelet.*

LYDIA. George this is not what I want for us. Meeting in secret, kept apart, always unsure of where we stand, always waiting! You have been gone so long.

WICKHAM. I know and I am sorry. You know that I leave you only because I must. It is for you I work so hard and travel so far. For us.

LYDIA. For us.

WICKHAM. It's always for us. To make a better fortune. You know this.

LYDIA. I do but... None of my sisters' husbands leave them so long and so often, better fortune or no.

WICKHAM. Your sisters and their husbands do not understand us. But it is they who are wrong. We are alone in this life. It is you and I together against the world. That's why I came here to find you. Fought my way through attackers and rogues—

LYDIA. Attackers?

WICKHAM. And rogues to be by your side, knowing full well that I would be turned away, but nonetheless I came.

LYDIA. But why, George? Why are you turned away from this house? Why do they keep us apart at every turn?

WICKHAM. All you need to know is that I am here, despite the constant hostility I have weathered since my arrival. Spend another Christmas without my beloved? Unthinkable. I'm lost without you.

LYDIA. It does not always feel that way, George. It feels—

WICKHAM. I know how it feels—

LYDIA. No, George, you don't. When you are away you have friends and engagements while I am alone, with no one to talk to and nothing to do. We have no money, the shops won't give me credit, we cannot entertain, and even if we could I haven't had a dress made since we wed, we must move house so often it is exhausting. I hate it! I had to travel alone, George. I was afraid and spent more money than I should have.

WICKHAM. How much did you spend?

LYDIA. All that I had.

WICKHAM. How much did you have? Lydia, we need that money.

LYDIA. I had no choice! Don't be cross with me. Father will give me more. And Lizzy too.

WICKHAM. Did they give you this bracelet too?

LYDIA. This? It is a cheap token I have been pretending is a gift from my adoring husband.

WICKHAM. Please don't be angry, darling. I have plans for us. Great plans.

LYDIA. What plans?

WICKHAM. My dear, we are to go...abroad. Just after the new year.

LYDIA. Abroad?

WICKHAM. Yes. A new life far away from here, away from all this stuffy boredom, we will go where we can be together and free and—

LYDIA. ARE WE GOING TO PARIS!?!?

WICKHAM. (*Of course lying.*) ...yes!

LYDIA. *Oh my darling, I knew it! A life of balls and gowns and dancing and French people!*

WICKHAM. All the French people we could ever desire!

LYDIA. Oh, George! You're terrible! Keeping this from me, when you know exactly how happy it would make me.

WICKHAM. Because your happiness is the only thing that matters! And it will be of only moderate cost that I'm sure we can procure from your father. Though of course as long as you are with me, I have all that I need. But if you could ask your father. I'll lay out the amounts.

LYDIA. He and Mother arrive later this morning.

WICKHAM. (*He knew this, that's why he's here.*) Perfect. I'll find the letter, you get the money. Meet me here after dinner, ready to depart.

LYDIA. To Paris.

WICKHAM. To...Paris. To our new life together.

*Lydia and Wickham are close, and he caresses her hand, her cheek. Lydia is being courted again and is falling for it. She dives in for another kiss.*

*Mrs. Reynolds enters.*

MRS. REYNOLDS. ABSOLUTELY NOT.

WICKHAM. Good morning.

MRS. REYNOLDS. No. You, upstairs. You, to your room.

LYDIA. Mrs. Reynolds, really.

WICKHAM. Brian is in my room.

MRS. REYNOLDS. Because it is Brian's room and you should be grateful to be there at all.

WICKHAM. We are man and wife and have every right to speak as we wish.

MRS. REYNOLDS. This is Pemberley, you have no rights here. Back to your rooms, both of you.

LYDIA. To spare my husband the embarrassment of further reprimand, I will go. I love you.

*Lydia starts to go, then Wickham sweeps her into a passionate kiss—purposefully showing off and securing Lydia's swooning affection for him.*

WICKHAM. Remember to ask your father.

*Lydia nods and is turning toward the stairs when someone is heard coming down the stairs.*

DARCY. (Offstage.) Mrs. Reynolds! Mrs. Reynolds.

*Those downstairs panic, Lydia cannot be caught with Wickham.*

MRS. REYNOLDS. Oh my, not that way. Down this hall, child.

LYDIA. What?

WICKHAM. Go out the back door, Lydia.

LYDIA. What?

MRS. REYNOLDS. Good lord, she will not. Lydia, go.

*Mrs. Reynolds gives Lydia a shove down the hallway and turns back into the room in time to see Darcy enter and head right for Wickham. It is just on the edge of getting physical.*

Mr. Darcy, may I help?

DARCY. This matter is not your concern and I will have your interference on this man's behalf no longer.

MRS. REYNOLDS. But sir—

DARCY. That will be all.

*Mrs. Reynolds storms out, dismissed from her own kitchen, as Darcy rounds on Wickham.*

Wickham. You will leave this instant. I have told you, repeatedly and in no uncertain terms, that you are not welcome here.

WICKHAM. First, I am confined downstairs, then I am thrown out into the snow? And this is the behavior of a gentleman.

DARCY. If you were a gentleman you would go and never come back here again.

WICKHAM. I will stay where I am until I have what is mine.

DARCY. *Nothing here is yours.*

WICKHAM. I *am* a part of this family, Darcy.

DARCY. Yes I know. It was something I rather *insisted* upon.

WICKHAM. And never cease to remind me of, at every turn.

DARCY. Because you never change! You would have abandoned poor Lydia with nothing but a ruined reputation until I paid you to marry. I all but walked you down the aisle myself.

WICKHAM. To control me, once again.

DARCY. To legitimize you both. I gave you decency and here you come to take further advantage.

WICKHAM. Of course I have to take advantage! When was I ever given advantage in this world?

DARCY. Why must you always be given? Why can you never earn?

WICKHAM. How dare you speak of earning anything? You had everything handed to you. You watched me wither in your shadow and did nothing.

DARCY. I trusted you! My father trusted you! That is everything!

WICKHAM. I loved your father. But in the end, I was no better off than I would have been as any other son of a steward. Educated well but always just out of reach from the finest society, the most beautiful women, the wealth and riches that I would never attain. Your father's generosity brought me nothing but disappointment.

DARCY. Because you used my father. You betrayed him and I would not let you do that to me nor to my sister.

WICKHAM. How is your dear sister? Will she be joining us for Christmas?

DARCY. (Full brother rage at her very mention.) She will never spend a moment in the same room as you ever again. If you are not gone before she arrives I will add to your list of injuries and it will be my pleasure.

*Fierce full pause.*

WICKHAM. All my life, I have lived under your scrutiny. All my life you have been there, impeding me, waiting for me to fail. But now, I plan to go where the influence of Fitzwilliam Darcy means nothing and I will live free of you.

DARCY. And where is that?

WICKHAM. Abroad. As soon as the new year turns.

DARCY. Abroad.

WICKHAM. Indeed.

DARCY. Make no mistake, in any country, in any language, you will be seen as you are, recognized as a liar and a cheat. You can run away like a child, but like a child you will not get far on your own.

WICKHAM. I will not be on my own. Lydia will be coming as she is my most beloved wife. Thanks to you. I certainly wouldn't have married that silly girl any other way. But now she *is* lawfully mine, as is her meager fortune, as is her entire future.

*Silence.*

DARCY. I will not allow you to take her.

WICKHAM. You do not have to allow anything. My wife. My life.

DARCY. There are no words for how...despicable a man you are.

WICKHAM. The word you struggle to find is *practical*. I will get what I want.

DARCY. That you will not.

WICKHAM. I have so far. Except your sister. I shall always think of her as the dove that got away.

*Wickham has officially crossed the line.*

*Darcy hauls off and hits him, beautifully, in the face.*

*He exits, leaving Wickham on the floor. Mrs. Reynolds enters.*

MRS. REYNOLDS. You just cannot stop getting hit, can you?

*Mrs. Reynolds helps Wickham offstage.*

*Lydia emerges having heard it all. She is shocked, like ice water down her back. Everything about her husband's debauchery is confirmed.*

*Her love is a lie.*

*At first she seems lost, helpless, scared at this news.*

*Then rage overcomes her in an instant and she grabs whatever is nearby and throws it on the ground.*

*As soon as the thing hits or shatters she changes to sheepishness and tries to clean it up rapidly and quietly.*

*Cassie runs in having heard the noise. Cassie sees the mess and starts helping Lydia clean. They clean together. In silent acknowledgement of what's happened.*

*Perhaps they share a glance and a supportive smile. Mrs. Reynolds returns, stands in the doorway, observing this moment. Lights dim.*

## Scene 2

*It is later that morning. The household is very busy preparing for Christmas Day dinner and the ebb and flow of houseguests, but for a moment the hall is quiet as Cassie distractedly busies herself with a task.*

*Brian enters, carrying all of Anne de Bourgh's belongings.*

BRIAN. Cassie.

CASSIE. No.

BRIAN. Please Cassie, please listen to me.

CASSIE. Listen to what? What could you possibly say?

BRIAN. I am trying to apologize, trying to say I'm sorry.

CASSIE. Would you please put down Miss de Bourgh's luggage. You'll ruin it.

BRIAN. It's not my fault she arrives late, then decides to leave early, and then decides to stay again.

CASSIE. Don't touch it. I have packed and unpacked her so many times the past two days, I know how it all goes together.

BRIAN. Let me help. I can help.

CASSIE. No. You. Can't.

*Cassie turns to go.*

CASSIE. You are never, will never be a wanton wretch.

LYDIA. (*Dramatically.*) And yet here I sit before you. A foolish girl who married the first man who proposed, thinking it was romantic. And oh, it was romantic! But I did not see beyond the moment to what our lives would be. And do you know the worst of it? I still love him. After everything, after the truth, I still do. And he says he loves me. If love is the problem, what is the solution?

*Mrs. Reynolds is about to say something but is cut off by Cassie.*

CASSIE. My mother believed a man who said he loved her. Over and over he said it, and over and over she believed him. But when he decided we were of no more use to him he abandoned us with nothing. I wonder what might have been had she realized he was not honest. You are young and beautiful, you have a family that cares for you, and now you have the truth. What will you choose to do with it?

*Lydia sits with this notion. It stops her. After a moment, she reaches for Cassie's hand. Mrs. Reynolds watches impressed.*

#### Scene 4

*It is late on Christmas evening. The house upstairs is quiet, but downstairs is still stirring.*

*Brian is seated at the hall table, empty save for a project with which he is tinkering. Cassie enters and sits next to him.*

CASSIE. What are you making?

BRIAN. (*Startled.*) Oh. It is just something I've been working on. It was meant to be a gift for Boxing Day.

CASSIE. For who?

BRIAN. (*Of course it's her.*) For someone very important, whom I terribly misjudged.

CASSIE. Ah.

BRIAN. I think I may have ruined a very valuable friendship in my haste and arrogance.

CASSIE. And jealousy.

BRIAN. And jealousy. Though I did not even know that is what it was.

CASSIE. Thank you for saying that.

*Pause.*

BRIAN. It was obvious I was talking about you?

CASSIE. Yes it was.

BRIAN. I would do anything if it could make up for my mistake.

CASSIE. I don't need you to do anything for me. You just need to listen to me. You are important to me, too, but what I truly want is to know that I can take care of myself.

BRIAN. So, I am important to you?

CASSIE. (*Eyeroll.*) And that is the only thing you hear.

BRIAN. That was the best bit! (*Smiles.*) You are the wisest, strongest person I have ever known.

CASSIE. And the fastest.

BRIAN. And the fastest.

*They finally smile with one another again.*

*Wickham enters from the hallway dressed for travel. He is pulling Lydia with him by the hand.*

LYDIA. George, please.

WICKHAM. Bring your things, darling. We shall start our great adventure together. Do you have the money?

LYDIA. George, stop. I will not run from my family. Why can we not simply go upstairs, together, and—

WICKHAM. No.

LYDIA. I am so tired of this, George. They can help us!

WICKHAM. I said no. Do you have the money?

*She produces a purse.*

LYDIA. Yes, but George—

*Mrs. Reynolds enters.*

WICKHAM. Good. (*To Cassie.*) You, girl. Take Mrs. Wickham's things to a carriage at once.

MRS. REYNOLDS. Cassie does not answer to you, George.

WICKHAM. (*Losing his patience.*) Then *you* tell the impertinent girl to do as I command, and to pay for my ruined coat out of her wages.

LYDIA. Don't speak to her like that!

MRS. REYNOLDS. I recall your coat being in shreds when you arrived.

WICKHAM. Lydia, we are leaving this instant! Bring your purse and let us go before we are no longer able.

LYDIA. Is it me, you so long for George, or my purse?

WICKHAM. I'm sorry, darling. I am not myself. This place does bring out the worst in me. Please. I must go, we must. Because it is you and I, together, against the whole world. As it has been. As it will always be.

*Wickham takes her hand, kisses her. Lizzy and Darcy enter. Lizzy immediately goes to Lydia.*

LIZZY. Lydia, come upstairs with me.

LYDIA. I am in the middle of a conversation with my husband at the moment.

LIZZY. Lydia, talk to me.

WICKHAM. There are some conversations that are best kept between a man and his wife. We are trying to decide where to go on our adventure together.

LIZZY. What?

LYDIA. Paris, we already said Paris, are we not going to Paris?

WICKHAM. Of course we are.

LIZZY. Absolutely not!

LYDIA. Lizzy, I... I know it seems impulsive. But perhaps a trip is just what we need.

LIZZY. Lydia, he is deceiving you!

WICKHAM. You accuse me, based on what information?

DARCY. Based on decades of knowing your true character.

LIZZY. Based on a recent conversation I had with a Mr. Charles Worthing.

LYDIA. Who is Charles Worthing?

WICKHAM. Darling—

LIZZY. (*To Wickham.*) I held my tongue once before about your behavior and have lived to regret it. I will not do it again.

WICKHAM. Don't listen to this darling—

LIZZY. Mr. Worthing confided to me how you were run out of Bath, chased by creditors. You must go abroad because you are so heavily in debt there is no place in England left to go. Shall I spare Lydia from knowing the rest?

LYDIA. What does everyone seem to know that I don't? Lizzy, please stop discussing my business as though it were yours to manage.

WICKHAM. Exactly! Do you see now, my love, how they conspire against us?

LIZZY. We are not conspiring, we are trying to help you, sister.

LYDIA. I will not let you protect me from the truth anymore.

WICKHAM. The truth is that I am the only one who loves you and understands you and wants to take you away from this place immediately.

DARCY. Do not even think of it.

WICKHAM. Lydia.

LIZZY. Lydia, come to me.

WICKHAM. Lydia now.

LYDIA. Will all of you never cease giving me orders! This is my life and I'll have a say in it! (*Turns to Darcy, maturing in an instant.*) Mr. Darcy, I trust that you will tell me the truth. Sir.

DARCY. (*Deciding.*) There is a woman. She is with child.

WICKHAM. Lydia—

LYDIA. A woman?

LIZZY. There is also a letter. Which proves the child is his.

*Wickham's face falls as Lizzy pulls out the letter, handing it to Lydia to read. Before she can read it, Wickham grabs the letter.*

WICKHAM. That letter proves nothing except a young woman is determined to spread shameful lies because of her own immodest behavior.