

SCENE 7 - PARLOR - HUNSFORD – Night – Thursday, April 9, 1812

(Elizabeth is reading Jane's letter. The doorbell rings. Mr. Darcy enters.)

MR. DARCY:

In vain I have struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you. *(Pause)* In spite of all my endeavors, I have found it impossible to conquer my feelings for you. I have had the highest regard for you almost from the first moment. In declaring my feelings for you I am going against the wishes of my family, my friends, and my own better judgment. The situation of your mother's family, though objectionable, is nothing in comparison to the total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed by herself, by your three younger sister, occasionally even by your father. I know your family is inferior—our social situations are vastly different. I am well aware of the family obstacles; they have always opposed my inclination to you. I am so much in love as to wish to marry you in spite of all my objections. I hope that now I will be rewarded by your acceptance on my hand. Please, consent to be my wife.

ELIZABETH:

I have never desired your good opinion, and you have certainly bestowed it most unwillingly. I am sorry to have occasioned pain to anyone.

MR. DARCY:

And this is all the reply, which I am to have the honor of expecting! I might, perhaps, wish to be informed why, with so little endeavor at civility, I am thus rejected.

ELIZABETH:

I might as well inquire, why with so evident a desire of offending and insulting me, you chose to tell me that you liked me against your will, against your reason, and even against your character?

Was not this some excuse for incivility, if I was uncivil? But I have other provocations. Do you think that any consideration would tempt me to accept the man who has been the means of ruining, perhaps forever, the happiness of a most beloved sister? You dare not, you cannot deny that you have been the principal if not the only means of dividing them from each other—of exposing one to the censure of the world for caprice and instability, and the other to its derision for disappointed hopes, and involving them both in misery of the acutest kind. Can you deny that you have done it?

MR. DARCY:

I have no wish of denying that I did everything in my power to separate my friend from your sister, or that I rejoice in my success. Towards him I have been kinder than towards myself.

ELIZABETH:

But it is not merely this affair on which my dislike is founded. Long before it had taken place my opinion of you was decided. Your character was unfolded in the recital, which I received many months ago from Mr. Wickham. On this subject, what can you have to say? In what imaginary act of friendship can you here defend yourself?

MR. DARCY:

You take an eager interest in that gentleman's concerns.

ELIZABETH:

Who that knows what his misfortunes have been, can help feeling an interest in him?

MR. DARCY:

Yes, his misfortunes have been great indeed.

ELIZABETH:

And of your infliction.

MR. DARCY:

And this is your opinion of me! This is the estimation in which you hold me! I thank you for explaining it so fully. My faults, according to this calculation, are heavy indeed! But perhaps, these offenses might have been overlooked, had not your pride been hurt by my honest confession of the scruples that had long prevented my forming any serious design. But disguise of every sort is my abhorrence. Could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your connections—to congratulate myself on the hope of relations, whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?

ELIZABETH:

You are mistaken, Mr. Darcy, if you suppose that the mode of your declaration affected me in any other way, than as it spared me the concern which I might have felt in refusing you, had you behaved in a more gentlemanlike manner. You could not have made the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it. I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry.

MR. DARCY:

You have said quite enough, madam. I perfectly comprehend your feelings, and have now only to be ashamed of what my own have been. Forgive me for having taken up so much of your time, and accept my best wishes for your health and happiness. (*He leaves.*)