

Pride and Prejudice - the story

Mrs. Bennet is desperate to see her 5 daughters married for two reasons. Firstly their home is entailed upon Mr. Collins, the nearest male heir so if her husband dies she will lose both her home and her status. Secondly, it is the only way the girls can acquire security without having to resort to working as governesses - again lowering their status.

When Bingley, a rich man, moves into nearby Netherfield, she is determined to make his acquaintance in the hope he will choose one of her girls. He is accompanied by his two sisters (one married) and his great friend Darcy to a local ball where he dances frequently with Jane though his sisters and Darcy seem rather disdainful of the whole affair, being 'people of wealth and fashion'.

Mrs. Bennet will stop at nothing. She sends Jane to visit at Netherfield, refusing to let her use the carriage despite the weather in the hope she will be invited to stay. She arrives but falls ill so Liz goes to nurse her. Liz is a match for Darcy in terms of intelligence and conversation but dislikes his apparent haughty manner and pride. He is rather bemused by her lack of respect - she doesn't flatter him the way Bingley's unmarried sister does.

Meanwhile an army regiment is stationed in the nearby town. Lydia and Kitty, the two youngest daughters like to dance and flirt and invite several of the officers to Longbourn. Liz is attracted to Wickham, one the officers, who tells her that Darcy is a rogue who has treated him badly in the past. Liz believes him and it looks as though romance is in the air until he finds a far wealthier woman to set his cap at.

Mr. Collins arrives at Longbourn, determined to find a wife at the suggestion of his patron Lady Catherine de Burgh, an aunt of Darcy. Finding Jane apparently spoken for, he turns his attentions to Liz and makes a clumsy and insulting proposal. She turns him down much to her father's delight and her mother's fury so he immediately proposes to Charlotte Lucas, Liz's closest friend. Charlotte accepts, not through love but because having a husband is so vitally important that even Collins is better than none.

The Bingleys leave and return to London. Jane is upset but resolves not to make a huge fuss. Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner (Mrs. Bennet's brother and his wife) come to stay. Jane returns to their London home with them in the faint hope of seeing Bingley again. She doesn't and Liz visits her on her way to see the newly married Charlotte. Jane is desperately unhappy but resigns herself to never seeing Bingley again. Liz is introduced to Lady Catherine, an obnoxious snob who imagines that her sickly daughter will one day marry Darcy, her nephew. Liz can't bear her and is certainly not intimidated by her. Darcy and his cousin Colonel Fitzwilliam come to stay with their aunt. Darcy is obviously interested in Liz.

Colonel Fitzwilliam, in a conversation alone with Liz, lets slip that Darcy had persuaded Bingley to give up his attachment to a totally unsuitable young lady, not knowing that the 'unsuitable lady' is Liz's own sister. Liz is absolutely furious and, ironically, Darcy, a few moments later, visits the parsonage and proposes to her. She refuses him very rudely referring to Jane's misery and his vile treatment of Wickham. Darcy leaves.

The following day Liz receives a letter from Darcy in which he says he thought Jane was only being courteous to Bingley and he didn't want his friend to be hurt. He also gives the true story of Wickham - how he had tried to seduce his young sister Georgiana in the hope of getting his hands on Darcy's fortune. Liz is mortified when she reads this and realises how she has misjudged him. Soon after she returns home as does Jane.

The regiment is leaving for Brighton and giddy Lydia desperately wants to go with them. Liz advises her father not to let her go but Mrs. Forster, the wife of the colonel of the regiment invites her as a companion and Mr. Bennet lets her go - anything for a peaceful life.

Liz accompanies the Gardiners to Derbyshire for a short holiday. They visit Darcy's home, Pemberley, having been assured that Darcy is not there at the moment. It is a beautiful place and Darcy's housekeeper tells them how wonderful he is. Of course, much to Liz's acute embarrassment, he turns up. Not only is he civil to her, he wants to introduce her to his sister and he clearly likes the Gardiners. It is during their stay in Derbyshire that they receive news of Liz's elopement. Liz tells Darcy about it before she hurriedly leaves for home.

It seems they are in London and Mr. Gardiner says he will do all he can to ensure they marry to lessen the shame brought on the family. Liz at last recognises her love for Darcy now there is absolutely no hope. They receive news of Lydia and Wickham's marriage and news that Wickham has been transferred to the north - as far away as possible. The couple visit Longbourn on their way, Lydia still delighted by what she's done.

It is shortly after their departure that Liz receives a letter from Mrs. Gardiner outlining Darcy's involvement in settling the affair of Lydia and Wickham. Darcy paid Wickham to marry her to save the Bennet family name.

Bingley and Darcy return to Netherfield and during a visit to Longbourn Bingley proposes to Jane. Mrs. Bennet is ecstatic. Lady Catherine pays a surprise visit to see Liz, having heard rumours that she has an attachment to Darcy. She warns her off very abusively but Liz will make her no promises and she leaves in a huff. Mr. Collins also writes expressing his disapproval of so unsuitable a match.

However, during Darcy's next visit to the house, he again proposes to Liz and, of course, she accepts. The weddings of Jane and Bingley and Liz and Darcy take place on the same day and a year later Jane and Bingley move close to Pemberley and they all live happily ever after.