
Extract from Pride and Prejudice

Jane Austen



MR COLLINS: My dear Cousin Miss Elizabeth Bennet: my noble patroness Lady Catherine herself has ordered me to find a bride. And from the very first moment I heard that your older and more beautiful sister was practically engaged, I settled upon *you* as the companion of my future life! Rest assured that no word of reproach will ever pass my lips concerning your lack of dowry once we are married –

LIZZY [*in one breath*]: Mr-Collins-you-do-me-great-honour-but-my-feelings-make-it-impossible-for-me-

to-accept.

MR COLLINS [*laughing gleefully*]: Ah, what bashful modesty! See how she seeks to magnify my love by suspense, according to the usual practice of elegant females!

LIZZY: Aaaaahhhh!

MR COLLINS: After all, it's not as if you'll ever get another proposal, what with no money, and that vulgar mother –

LIZZY: How chivalrous... Oh, thank God, my sensible best friend Charlotte is at the door! Charlotte, do SOMETHING to get this irksome fellow out of my hair!

MRS BENNET [*dragging LIZZY into the next room and shrieking*]: You realise the second your father drops dead Mr Collins will take over and throw me out onto the streets to starve!

MR BENNET: Let us flatter ourselves that I may outlive you, my dear.

MRS BENNET: Oh, you have no compassion on my poor nerves!

MR BENNET: You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years at least.

MRS BENNET: Mr Bennet, order Lizzy to marry Mr Collins or I will never speak to her again!

MR BENNET: An unhappy prospect lies ahead of you, Lizzy. Henceforth you must be a stranger to one of your parents. Your mother will never speak to you again if you do not marry Mr Collins and *I* will never speak to you again if you *do* marry Mr Collins.

MRS BENNET: Aaaaaah! Lizzy, if you don't change your mind I'll –

CHARLOTTE: Too late, I'm afraid – Mr Collins has just done me the honour of proposing matrimony. And I've accepted!

MRS BENNET: He's WHAT!

MR BENNET, JANE, LIZZY, MARY, KITTY and LYDIA: You've WHAT!

CHARLOTTE: I'm twenty-seven. I'm plain. I'm poor. I'm on the shelf. And being a middle-class, eighteenth-century female I'm utterly unable to earn my own living. I'm prepared to put up with Collins the creep in exchange for a roof over my head.

MRS BENNET: Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. Well, at least my oldest and most beautiful daughter Jane will soon be safely married to that nice-but-weak-but-rather-rich Mr Bingley...

JANE: Alas, Mr Bingley has just sent me a polite note to say he's returning to London. And not planning on coming back. Ever.

LIZZY: It's all that snobbish control-freak Darcy's doing! I know it! Bingley was madly in love with you only yesterday!

MRS BENNET: Aaaaaaaah! [*faints*]

MR BENNET: Well, girls, it is a comfort to know that, whatever your misfortunes, you have an affectionate mother who will make the most of them...