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Those giraffes.

*Awkward pause.*

ARTHUR. And. Where is Mr. Darcy then?

MARY. Oh, I have no idea. Something about horses. He left earlier with Mr. Bingley.

ARTHUR. Charles Bingley? I haven't seen him in years. How kind Mr. Darcy is to open his house to friends.

MARY. Especially one who married his wife's sister.

ARTHUR. (*Thinking Bingley married her...*) Is that right?

MARY. Indeed, we are one happy family.

ARTHUR. You are. Well. When did you marry?

*Mary laughs at this.*

MARY. Oh no, sir. I did not marry Mr. Bingley. No, that would be my other sister, Jane. I am very much unattached.

ARTHUR. Oh I am so sorry. You did say Miss Bennet not Mrs. Bingley. I have a terrible habit with names and not retaining them. Did I offend?

MARY. No no, Mr. de Bourgh. You simply amuse.

ARTHUR. That is the confusion then. I am not used to doing that.

MARY. I should warn you. We are a family that enjoys amusement, especially at such times of year where joy is practically inescapable. My youngest sister, Lydia, for example, can be quite hysterical in her quest to remain amused at all times. She will arrive shortly and she can be quite a beast when she presents herself in full force. Should she attack you—

ARTHUR. Oh my.

MARY. —the best course of action, much like the bear encounters I've read of, is to remain calm, declare peace, and back slowly away.

ARTHUR. Thank you, Miss Bennet. I often find myself quite unprepared for the complexities of...people. I do appreciate the primer.

MARY. (*Amused by his serious reaction.*) I should not misrepresent my sister. Lydia is thought by many to be delightful and deserves as much kindness and patience as anyone, I suppose.

*Another commotion from the hall—Lydia has arrived.*

Ah. Here we go.

ARTHUR. I'm sorry, where are we going?

*Lydia's very loud voice announces her arrival before we even see her.*

LYDIA. (*Offstage.*) The entire trip was spent in absolute anguish for my dear Mr. Wickham, who so longed to join me but was detained in Bath.

*Lydia Wickham enters with Lizzy and Jane.*

LIZZY. Such a shame he will spend the holiday alone. We are nonetheless relieved by your arrival.

LYDIA. A man such as Mr. Wickham is never alone, Lizzy! I thank the Lord every day that I married such a charming, handsome, and clever man. We have want for nothing, you know. Did I show you the absolutely gorgeous bracelet he presented me as an early Christmas gift?

*Lydia exhibits her wrist and a silver bracelet with a charm.*

LIZZY. You did, actually. Twice already.

LYDIA. It's a little bird! My Wickham said it reminded him of me—light and expressive.

JANE. It's quite lovely, Lydia.

LYDIA. It's a little bird!

LIZZY. And we are so pleased for it. Now Jane, please heed Mary's advice and sit.

LYDIA. Oh yes of course, Jane, you're gigantic. Sit before you fall. Lizzy, you have a tree in your drawing room! And a strange gentleman in your library! Hello.

LIZZY. Oh my goodness, hello!

ARTHUR. I do apologize for arriving unannounced. May I ask who among you is the lady of house, Mrs. Darcy?

LIZZY. Indeed, I am. And you must be Lord de Bourgh.

LYDIA. A lord?

ARTHUR. I suppose I am, though Mr. de Bourgh is sufficiently correct. I am not used to the formalities. And may I thank you for your hospitality in accommodating me, at the last moment no less.



LIZZY. At any moment we would be delighted to welcome you, Mr. de Bourgh, and a Happy Christmas to you.

ARTHUR. Oh yes. Christmas.

LIZZY. May I present my sisters, Mrs. Jane Bingley and Mrs. Lydia Wickham. I see you've already met Miss Mary Bennet.

ARTHUR. Yes indeed. She was doing a fine job orienting me in your momentary absence.

LYDIA. Well, you needn't be bored by Mary any further, Lord de Bourgh. Did she damper your spirits with tedious facts from stuffy old books?

MARY. Hello, Lydia.

LYDIA. My dear Mary, don't you look...the same.

ARTHUR. Actually I was quite enjoying my brief introduction to Miss Bennet, and our blossoming discussion of...maps.

*Lydia laughs at them both.*

LYDIA. Just don't let her trap you with music.

MARY. And don't let *her* trap you with marriage.

*Darcy and Bingley enter.*

LYDIA. Mr. Darcy!

DARCY. Mrs. Wickham, welcome. De Bourgh! I was only just notified of your arrival. I do apologize for the lack of welcome party. I am so sorry to keep you waiting.

ARTHUR. Not at all. I found the library. Oh, and the ladies also kept me quite in company.

LYDIA. Oh! Lord de Bourgh, we are happily married women, most of us. You must stop this flattery before I alert my husband!

JANE. Lydia, please. You are too kind, Mr. de Bourgh.

BINGLEY. Hello, de Bourgh. What a delight to see you again. It has been many years since we dined together in London.

ARTHUR. Bingley, hello again. How have you been?

BINGLEY. Quite obviously I am the happiest of men. Have you met my beautiful wife? And did you see, de Bourgh? We are to be parents soon! Isn't that extraordinary!

ARTHUR. I did meet Mrs. Bingley, yes, and how wonderful for you. Though events termed "extraordinary" should not technically happen daily, and children are born with regularity around the world, which would make it rather a commonplace occurrence. Were it not, the species would have died out long ago.

BINGLEY. Yes, de Bourgh, but it is an extraordinary event for *us*.

DARCY. Yes, *they* do not have children every day.

ARTHUR. Of course, yes. I only meant that—

MARY. I knew what you meant. Statistically makes perfect sense.

LIZZY. Does it?

ARTHUR. It does.

MARY. It does.

*Lizzy throws Darcy a look, which prompts...*

DARCY. Well then— On a more solemn note, de Bourgh, we should extend our sympathies for the loss of your aunt, the Lady Catherine.

ARTHUR. Thank you. It was a...sorrow to all who knew her.

DARCY. Indeed.

LIZZY. Indeed.

DARCY. Have you had a chance to settle in at Rosings? I imagine your new home is in quite a state with all the recent changes. How did you find Miss de Bourgh, when you saw her?

ARTHUR. Miss...? Oh! Anne, yes. No. I have not yet been to Rosings. I meant to depart Oxford when I received the news, but there was an upcoming lecture about the corals of Eastern Australia that I simply could not miss, which sparked further study into a fascinating book about—

DARCY. If you came directly from Oxford, may I ask, did you alert the staff at Rosings that you would not be coming for Christmas? Or Miss de Bourgh?

ARTHUR. Ah. No. Ought I have done?

DARCY. I fear they may be expecting the imminent arrival of their new master, not to mention planning for the holiday. I am sure Anne will have been eager for your company as well. Perhaps a short note to alert the household?

ARTHUR. Yes. Of course. I am afraid I am still new to the customs