

Chapter 6 ~ Revelations



One day, not long after Fitzwilliam Darcy's engagement to Elizabeth Bennet had been announced, it occurred to Charles Bingley that he was mightily weary of his houseguest. That the friendship had been damaged beyond repair was already a certainty to Charles, but what grated on him incessantly was the fact that he was expected to accompany Darcy to every single household in the neighbourhood to watch his former friend collect well-wishes and smiles.

Unfortunately, it fell to Charles's lot to be looked upon with increasing curiosity, abject bewilderment, and in some cases, open-faced scorn.

Fortunately, for his pride's sake, the families surrounding Meryton had not, it seemed, been informed of his rejection by Jane Bennet. It was quite the contrary; the entire county expected him to offer for Jane everyday, but as each new day dawned, the village gossips had nothing new to report and it now seemed to the entire neighbourhood that the young Master of Netherfield was purposely and shamefully dragging his feet in the matter.

Just the night before, he had avoided answering several rather impertinent questions posed to him by Sir William Lucas. It was bad enough that he had to hear of the continuous and providential good fortune of Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy in carrying off the *brightest jewel in all of Hertfordshire*, but now he had to endure the hints as to when some *fortunate* gentleman (meaning himself) would abscond with the *beautiful belle of Longbourn*?

This type of talk naturally lead to other more probing questions being asked, such as: what *his* future plans entailed, when might *he* want to be in the same happy situation as his friend, and which lady, if any, in the room took *his* fancy?

And it also did not help that Jane now seemed more distant than ever. Since their serious conversation the night of the dinner at Longbourn, she satisfied herself with a hasty handshake at the beginnings of these evenings and only offered him weak smiles from a distance at the end of them. Also unsettling to Bingley was the fact that she now seemed to be the singular object of one William Goulding, the elder son of a local landed gentleman of some fortune.

Mr. Goulding had taken to taking up a post near Jane at every evening party. He made it his personal business to assist her with her shawl, fetch her cups of punch whether she seemed thirsty or not, and pronounced everything that she said or did as *fascinating* and *charming*.

And the most galling thing to him was that Jane seemed to admit most willingly to his company. What could she possibly see in him, though Charles? He was quite sure that that Goulding chap had never looked upon Jane before in his life and now that the Bennet's would be aligned with one of the most illustrious families in the land, William Goulding had made all haste to secure his place in that sphere.

But why could Jane not see that, he asked himself. Moreover, in Charles' opinion, William Goulding was not at all handsome, dressed in an inelegant and foppish sort of way, and was most

assuredly reckless. He had seen this Goulding fellow just two days before in his curricle, peeling down the Watford road, like a madman with his wheels on fire.

“Blighter!”

Fitzwilliam Darcy looked up from his newspaper. He had noticed that Charles had taken to mumbling the oddest words at the oddest times and he could have sworn he heard the word: blighter.

“Sorry?” asked Darcy.

“What,” asked Charles, rather short temperedly?

“Did you say something, Bingley?”

“No, not at all; why, did you *hear* me say something?”

Darcy felt all the tension in his friend’s voice and knew instinctively that he should keep his mouth closed on the subject. Instead he asked, “I am going to Longbourn in a moment. Shall you accompany me?”

Charles could not bring himself to answer and just shrugged his shoulders in a vague sort of way.

Darcy then asked, “Shall I send them your good wishes, then?”

“If you must.”

“If I... Charles, that is rather rude, don’t you think?”

Charles threw down his napkin; he had been spoiling for a fight and here was his chance.

“Darcy, do you really want to know what I think? I think now is the time for you to take your leave.”

Darcy, for the first time in his acquaintance with Charles Bingley, was utterly speechless.

Charles then added, barely looking Darcy in the eye, “You have done your duty and have seen me back onto the road to recovery since my disappointment. Don’t you think it is high time you looked to yourself, because, as I most certainly know, you have looked to my needs rather more oftener than you ought.”

Darcy continued to sit there holding his paper in stunned silence, barely comprehending that what he had heard, he had heard correctly.

“Are you saying...?”

Charles began worrying his fork. “That you should leave; yes!”

“If that is what you wish, then, by all means I shall...”

“The sooner the better, I should think,” he said, turning his head to stare out of the window.

“Would tomorrow morning be...?”

“Perfect, yes.” Charles stood and walked over the Darcy’s seat. “Well, I’m glad that’s over.” He extended his hand which Darcy stood up to take. “No hard feelings, then?” He turned away completely.

“N-no; none at all.”

“Right! Well, I must be off,” he said, his back to Darcy, “I have business with my steward. I expect you shall have dinner with the Bennet family tonight, so we can save our good-byes until the morning.”

Bingley swiftly exited the room as Darcy simply nodded; he was too stunned to speak at that moment.



Elizabeth sat mystified as to her fiancé’s pre-occupation. She was in the midst of telling him an amusing account about herself as a child and when it came time for the laugh, (where the laugh generally came at that point of the story) Fitzwilliam stared stone-faced off into the distance.

Elizabeth eyed Jane who was acting as chaperone for the couple; but Jane could only raise her eyebrow quizzically; she had heard this story as it was told several times and she knew perfectly well that it generally caused a great deal of amusement amongst their acquaintance. Elizabeth gave her sister a certain look that between them meant that it was high time for some sort of mischievous intervention.

“And then, Jane, last night,” said Elizabeth, all seriousness, “I told William Goulding that I would be happy to marry him since for some strange reason, Mr. Darcy has lost all interest in me. As a matter of fact, I was on the verge of breaking our engagement anyway.”

Something in the back of Darcy’s mind screamed at him to attend. Something disquieting about William Goulding and marriages and broken engagements; all succeeded in forcing him out of his reverie.

“What? Sorry? Pardon?”

“So, you do approve then?”

“Approve?”

“Yes, you agree that our engagement must be broken in favour of my recent and very strong attachment to Mr. Goulding? You must admit that we have seen a great deal of Mr. Goulding recently. It is only natural that I would become so very fond of him.”

Jane tried to remain as invisible as she could and giggle in as ladylike a fashion as possible.

Darcy's face contorted into several highly diverting expressions until he realized how utterly ridiculous Elizabeth's statement was. "Forgive me," he said, contritely, "my mind, it would appear, refuses to attend today. I promise to be more attentive in future."

"I am glad to hear it, sir, but, I must admit that I did so look forward to being driven out everyday in Mr. Goulding's curriculae."

"Is that what you wish, to be driven about in a curriculae? Say one word and I can have several brought down from Pemberley for you to choose from."

"Did you hear that, Jane? *Several* curriculae at my disposal; and there is one in every colour to match every gown in my wardrobe, I dare say."

Fitzwilliam smiled to be so teased, "Not one for *every* gown you own; rather, one for every gown you *and* Jane own together." Elizabeth's ringing laughter filled the room. He so loved this kind of playful banter between them; he could not wait to marry her, that is, if she would only fix upon a date.

They were having such pleasure, that he hated to turn the conversation to more solemn matters. "Elizabeth," he said, seriously, changing the tone of his voice when she finished laughing, "We need to speak on a grave subject." Jane made to remove herself from the room, but Darcy stayed her with a raise of the hand. "No, Jane, please stay; this is something you may hear." Jane sat down again and was all attention when Mr. Darcy said, "It would seem that I must away to London."

"London?" Elizabeth became instantly alarmed reaching for his hands. "Is there something wrong with Georgiana or your family?"

"No, no, calm yourself, dearest, it is nothing like that at all, it's just..." Darcy didn't know how to broach such a topic, however since disguise of every sort was his abhorrence; he knew that Elizabeth and Jane ought to know how things stood. He pressed her hands gently. "It would seem that Bingley and I are... not quite on such friendly terms as we once were, so much so that my stay at Netherfield, I fear, must come to an end tomorrow morning."

Elizabeth could not believe what she was hearing. That Mr. Bingley would turn his friend from his house was incredible. "But surely," she replied, her face all concern, "he did not mean for you to leave so soon. Perhaps he means for you to have a few days to take your leave from your friends and then depart."

"No, Elizabeth, he means for me to be gone first thing in the morning."

"Fitzwilliam, that can not be so; tell me, what did he say, exactly?"

"Darcy, I want you gone first thing in the morning."

"But... we have only just become engaged; perhaps if you tell him that I can not endure to be separated from you for more than a few hours, he will come round."

He smiled at her comment and patted her hand gently, “Elizabeth, we will only be separated for a few weeks at most; there is some business that I must see to as it is. I’ll even write again to Georgiana and have her come to London in a few weeks. I made mention in my last letter that you and your mother will be coming to London shortly for the shopping and I know she will like to be included. It will give Georgiana the opportunity to spend some time with you. You will see that it will not be as bad as you think. And even when you do return to Longbourn, I’ll come to Meryton for short visits and stay at the inn.”

The idea of the Master of Pemberley staying at the modest local inn seemed strange to Elizabeth for some reason. She could not reconcile it in her mind’s eye: Darcy sitting on the shabby furniture, eating his dinner in the common room, or going to sleep in a lumpy bed: Impossible!

Elizabeth still did not look convinced, so Darcy turned to the other person in the room. “Jane, help me to persuade her.”

Jane could see the reasonableness of his plan and said as much to her sister. From what Mr. Bingley had told her several days ago concerning his now broken friendship with Mr. Darcy, this did not come as any sort of surprise to her, but she remained silent. Mr. Bingley’s actions were not her concern and she endeavoured to concentrate upon her work.



The following morning as Darcy waited to take his leave in the front hall; Fossett approached from the stairs and addressed him.

“Mr. Bingley sends his regrets, but he will not be able to see you off this morning, sir. He is... indisposed.” Fossett was terribly uncomfortable making the communication. Mr. Darcy’s disappointed and pained expression showed clearly on his face, so much so that Fossett felt compelled to make up for his master’s rudeness by adding, “It has been a pleasure having you at Netherfield, sir. Have a safe and pleasant journey.” It wasn’t exactly proper for one in service to say so much, but Mr. Darcy had always been exceptionally kind and generous to the servants of the house, and to see him sent off without so much as a by-your-leave by his master was more than the butler could endure.

Perhaps, Fossett thought, that opening at Baron Rosemont’s was worth looking into.



London was an extremely easy distance from Longbourn and barely a quarter of a day’s journey, so when Darcy arrived at his home in Mayfair, there was hardly any need to rest. He immediately sent for his housekeeper to join him in the library.

“Good afternoon, Mrs. Blandings.”

“Welcome home, Mr. Darcy. I trust you had a *pleasant* stay in the country.”

“Yes, a very pleasant stay, thank you.”

He noticed that his housekeeper beamed up at him in a manner quite unusual for one known to go about her business in such a stately and rational manner.

“Everything is in order, I trust,” said Darcy. A little unnerved with the woman’s broad smile, he turned to his desk to peruse the collection of mail.

“Oh yes, indeed, very much in order, sir; we only received your express announcing your arrival a few hours ago, but as you know, I run a tight ship.”

Darcy nodded distractedly as he took up his mail, instantly noticing that the one on top was from his aunt, Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Then recollecting himself added, “I’d like a tray brought up to my rooms for dinner; no use in opening the dining room with only me in the house. As it happens, I will be in and out most days, so simple meals will suffice until further notice. Choose what you will, you know I am not particular.”

“Begging your pardon, sir, but Miss Georgiana has directed me otherwise.”

“Miss Georgiana is at Pemberley, Blandings.”

“Begging your pardon again, sir, but Miss Georgiana is here in London, even as we speak. She is out with Mrs. Annesley at the moment.”

“Did Colonel Fitzwilliam bring her here today?”

“No, sir; she arrived quite unawares yesterday with his Lordship.”

Darcy was just about to ask which “his Lordship” she was speaking of when the man himself poked his head round the open door and entered the room. Darcy nodded to his housekeeper that she could leave and she slipped away.

As the two men reached to shake hands, his cousin said, “Hello Darcy, I heard you were coming just this morning.”

Lawrence anxiously looked in several different directions, not quite sure of Darcy’s reception of him in his home; the last time they had spoken they had had a heated discussion--some nonsense he hardly recalled concerning duty and family honour--with Lawrence storming from the room and Darcy leaving his uncle’s home in frustration.

“Lawrence? Hello; this is indeed a surprise.”

“Yes, I suppose it is. Have you seen Georgiana, yet?”

“No, I have only just now been informed of your arrival.”

Darcy stared hard at his cousin, trying to make him out. Doing *him* a favour was very much out of character for one so cosseted away with his books and experiments. But one thing he did

know about his aloof cousin was the fact that he could never say no to a lady. This had the feel of Adele's handwork or even possibly his own sister.

"I hope you forgive the intrusion," Lawrence rushed to explain, "Georgiana wanted to surprise you and John had already promised to see Adele down to Rosings; I hope you don't mind my bringing your sister to London. She seemed very keen on the idea. I guess I should have written, but it was all so quick..."

Darcy could see his cousin's discomfort and even though he and Lawrence were never particularly close, due to Charles Bingley's recent treatment of him, Darcy knew very well that he would never make anyone ever feel unwelcome in his own home. In fact, it comforted him somewhat to have some family around him at present.

"No, no, think no more on it; I do not mind in the least; you are most welcome, cousin." Darcy stepped forward eagerly, more eagerly and grasped his cousin's shoulders as a sign of his affection.

Lord Whitfield was taken aback, he himself was not one for demonstrative signs of outward expression, but he was very much delighted by his greeting and hesitantly embraced his cousin back. When they separated, he said, "I understand that congratulations are in order; Fitzwilliam; best wishes and all.

"Thank you Lawrence. If my Elizabeth makes me only half as happy as your Julia made you, I shall consider myself a very fortunate man."

Lawrence started at the mention of Julia and Darcy immediately felt dreadful for bringing up the subject so he turned the conversation. "How are Edward and little Philadelphia?"

"Edward is as always, getting himself into trouble and Delphie is... well, Delphie."

Darcy nodded and asked, "So, what stratagems did my sister use to coerce you away from your work?"

"No, no it was nothing like that at all; she wrote to mother telling her how happy she was for you and how she could not wait to meet you all in town. I was of a mind to get away from Grimsby for a little peace and quiet anyway so I volunteered and naturally brought Georgiana down with me to save you the trouble. I hope you forgive the presumption."

"That was very kind of you, Lawrence and I am in your debt. Actually, I was going to write to her today to have her down as it is. I must admit that I am all eagerness to see my sister. You have been very thoughtful. I thank you."

A momentary silence now descended down between the cousins. The fact that so many pleasantries had been exchanged between them in the last few moments did not go unnoticed by either of them.

"Brandy?" asked Darcy, playing the host.

“No, no thank you,” said Lord Whitfield as he tugged at his cuff while Darcy twisted his signet ring.

“And how was everyone at Grimsby when you left?”

“Very well, I thank you for asking. They all send their love and congratulations.” He paused momentarily then added, “I must go, I can see that you have correspondence to attend to and I believe you will find several letters there from the family offering you good wishes. And since you are now home to look to your sister, I shall take my leave and go to my parent’s townhouse.”

The master of the house would not hear of it. “No, Lawrence, please stay,” said Darcy, abruptly, so abruptly in fact that he startled even himself. “I would welcome your company! There is no need to open that house when my home is always open to you.” Darcy went over to pull the bell. “I am sure Georgiana will be delighted as well; we hardly see you enough as it is.”

Lawrence was touched, but felt the need to protest. “I’d only to be in the way. I had intended to work the entire time that I am here and would not be very good company. There are several exhibits I wanted to view while I am in London and I’m in the middle of cataloguing some plant samples that I brought along...”

“Well then you must stay, Lawrence, it is the least I can do to repay you for your kindness. As it is, I will be out on business most days and no doubt Georgiana will be busy herself with music lessons and such.” Darcy then smiled, saying, “And once my fiancée comes to town I fear Georgiana will not know either of us and we will both soon become superfluous.”

“But...”

“No, I insist. We will hardly be in each others way. My cook is an excellent one and she would never forgive me if I sent you away without her having the opportunity to fatten you up a bit. Besides, you may stay in the north wing to do your work, if you prefer; nobody will bother you in that part of the house.”

Before the Viscount could answer, the housekeeper entered. “Ah, Mrs. Blandings, I want you to arrange to have my cousins belongings moved to the Red Room. Also, have the Carlisle sitting room prepared so that Lord Whitfield may use it as his study while he stays here. He has important matters to attend to, so please make sure that the servants know that he is not disturbed.”

“Darcy, you are very kind.”

“Kindness has nothing to do with it, cousin; I know that we have never been particularly close, but you are family after all and don’t you agree that it is high time started behaving in such a way?”



...and if I had not seen the information conveyed to me by your own hand, I would have thought it a scandalous falsehood and I can assure you I would have set off immediately for

Hertfordshire myself and made that obstinate girl admit to her deception. But since you say it is so, it must be true. I can only come to the conclusion that you have been taken in by her arts and allurements in a moment of infatuation which has made you forget what you owe to yourself and all the family.

I am quite certain that the entire family shares my feelings on the matter and all will see that an alliance with that woman and her family would be a disgrace. If you insist upon polluting the shades of Pemberley, you will be the contempt of the world and be censured and pitied by all good society.

Darcy had read enough; he could see that it went on and on with such abuses of his intended that he could not bear to read it anymore. He tossed the letter aside and rubbed at his temples. He knew perfectly well that his aunt would be made unhappy with the news of his engagement but he never expected that the insults of Elizabeth would be so violent. He reached over to look at the letter again and his aunt's distasteful language just leapt off the page:

*...and I send no compliments to Miss Bennet...
...she should never presume to quit the sphere...
...a family in trade...
...her sister's infamous elopement...
...patched up business...
...an unfeeling, selfish...*

He angrily wadded up the pages and stepped toward the fire to burn them just as the doors to the library flew open.

"Fitzwilliam!" Georgiana ran instantly into her brother's arms; her joy showing in every feature, so much so that it could not be contained. "Oh, Fitzwilliam, I am so happy to see you!"

Darcy's fingers swiftly sought out his aunt's letter and stuffed it in his pocket. He then lifted his sister and twirled her about; his heart full as well. He set her down and touched her cheek.

"Dearest sister!"

Georgiana bobbed up and down with excitement. "Well, is she here; is she in London? Oh, where is she?"

Darcy seized his sister's hands to calm her. "Who could you possibly mean?"

"Oh, Fitzwilliam, don't tease me so; you know I mean Miss Bennet."

"Miss Bennet is at Longbourn with her family."

Georgiana instantly frowned and scolded. "How could you be so cruel; why did you not bring her to see me?"

"How could I bring her to see you when I did not know I would be seeing you myself?"

"But you must have known that I would want to offer her my congratulations in person."

“As to that, remind me to punish you for pulling Lawrence away from his work. I hope you have thanked your cousin for bringing you down, although, with that smile, I doubt if anyone could resist any request of yours.”

“I hope he has not gone away just yet; he spoke of removing to his parent’s house once you were home. I have invited him to stay—he has been so kind—but he said that he would not.”

“Not to worry, my love, I have seen to his comfort and here he shall remain.”

Georgiana threw her arms around her brother. “Oh, thank you; you are so good.”

“Tell me,” he said, when she released him, “where have you been today? I was quite surprised to find you home, yet not at home.”

“I was out shopping for a gift for Miss Bennet; I do hope that you will approve, it is simply perfect.” Georgiana left her brother, ran out into the hall, and returned with a small package. Her excitement was palpable and Fitzwilliam smiled to see his shy little sister so animated. She removed the packages wrapping to reveal a small inlaid box.

“Well, what do you think?”

“It is a very lovely box; I am sure Elizabeth will have many uses for it.”

“No silly, it’s not just a box; open it!”

Fitzwilliam did as he was bid and when he released the catch and lifted the lid a charming melody emanated from it. He listened for a moment trying to place the tune and was immediately struck by its notes, for it was the exact same piece of music that Elizabeth had played on the piano-forte at Pemberley.

“Oh, Georgiana, how lovely,” he said as he kissed his beaming sister on the forehead. “She will be overjoyed.”

“I hoped you would think so, I came upon it quite by chance.”

“Yes, a happy stroke of luck.”

Georgiana glanced at the clock on the mantle. “Oh dear, I must see to your dinner. I hope you are hungry for I have had cook prepare you a celebratory feast. She ran to the library door, but when she reached it she turned round again. “Everyone in the house is so happy for you!” she exclaimed, excitedly. Then, suddenly remembering something, Georgiana’s hand instantly flew to her mouth. She felt awful and rushed forward to explain. “Oh dear, I am so sorry, Fitzwilliam, please forgive me, forgive me! I told Mrs. Blandings of your engagement and I also may have mentioned it to my maid and when I came down this morning all the servants seemed to know everything--but they were so happy for you—and you know that they would never gossip about it around town...”

Darcy stopped her with an embrace, “Then I must thank you, sister; it would seem that you have spared me the trouble of telling so many. I must admit, I had wondered why Mrs. Blandings kept smiling at me all day.”

“Are you very angry?”

“Now Georgiana, when have you ever known me to be angry with you?”

“Never,” she said, her face now buried in his chest. “Truly, I am sorry.”

“No more of that, dear one, off with you, then.”

She stood on her tip-toes to kiss her brother upon the cheek and then hurried off for her conference with the housekeeper.

Darcy’s eyes returned to the music box and he lifted the lid and listened to the melody several times until it was time to dress for dinner.



The next morning, when Darcy returned from fencing to work off his excellent meal from the night before, he was surprised to discover a note waiting for him. The note brought much pleasure for it was from his future aunt, Mrs. Edward Gardiner and he was more than happy to read her kind words especially since his own aunt’s letter from the day before had been so cruel.

...and so, my dear Mr. Darcy, you must promise to dine with us at least one evening whilst you are in town. Edward says that he would be extremely pleased to have you as our guest at any time and we are both eager to meet with Miss Darcy again.

Darcy made a mental note to check with Georgiana as to her schedule so that she might call with him in the morning.

Additionally, I am bid by Elizabeth to make sure that you are well taken care of and I insist upon seeing that you are with my own eyes...

Just then, his attention was drawn away by a loud commotion in the hall. He could have sworn he heard a familiar voice and he immediately left his room to investigate. He threw open the door, only to have a woman fling herself upon him as soon as he stepped from the room.

“Oh, Fitzwilliam, what are we to do? It is all so awful!”