

9 August, 1812

My dear aunt de Bourgh,

Now that a long and quiet year has passed, I hope you'll receive my letter and not consign it to the fire in shame of me. I know my attempted elopement was nearly a frightful scandal. I will endeavour never to disappoint you so again. It grieves me that your opinion, which I value so highly, could be lost forever. I see now that my intended union would have brought too much dishonour on my brother's good name, and on your own.

It will please you to know I have heard nothing from Wickham since that dreadful day of our discovery. I am glad that my brother found my letter sooner than I intended, and I know now that the man I thought my beloved was only pursuing my fortune and never my heart. I now

embrace a quiet life of needlework, pianoforte, and, I hope, a suitable match that will please you and Fitzwilliam both.

Enough preamble: I write not to offend you with remembrances of my disobedience, but because I have a bit of social news, which I know you crave and which I hope will entice you to embrace me again. We have just had visitors - the Gardiners, and a young lady called Elizabeth Bennet. Are you acquainted? Her manners would please you, and I believe she would be a credit to the most respectable of families. She was perfectly lovely - witty, kind, and with a pair of eyes that made me long to pick up a paintbrush and capture them. I do believe, though, that there is one more captivated by her eyes than me. My brother could scarcely remove his from her face all the visit. I do believe I glimpsed the high spirits of Mamma,

so dearly missed by you and by us, enliven his face whenever Miss Bennet turned his way.

I am grateful that my good brother and I are restored to the warmth we enjoyed before Wickham's disruption. The frost of his disappointment in me melted sooner than I dared wish, and though he has been travelling the country, through his letters and visits to Pemberley he has carefully acquainted himself with me as a woman, not simply his childish ward and sister. Perhaps you are yet still too angry with me for such a reconciliation, despite my efforts here, and if so I apologize.

To return: Miss Bennet and the Gardiners visited one afternoon and Caroline Bingley - charming, sharp, as ever - asked her, "Pray, Miss Eliza, are not the militia removed from Meryton? They must be a great loss to your

family." Miss Bennet seemed discomposed for but a moment, and I was glad of it, for it meant she might not have registered my silence and downcast eyes at the memory of Wickham. I believe I recovered in time. I do wonder what gave Miss Bennet such a start, and why my brother looked so searchingly at her face until she spoke again. His care for her was palpable. I do believe he is lost to her entirely! I will be glad for her constant company, and I do hope that you will be as well, my dear aunt.

But I leave the strangest part for last, and the reason my mind continues to bring the unwanted memory of Wickham to the fore, and to this letter. Shortly after our visit, everyone departed suddenly. Miss Bennet received a letter of some import regarding her family - I know not the details, but it seems her young sister Lydia has

found herself in some trouble not unlike the kind I sought last year. I heard my brother mutter

"Damned Wickham!" before riding off in a huff. I grieve that my actions of the last year should weigh on him still, such that another young lady's impetuosity should raise my disobedience in his mind. I only hope whatever young man Lydia has set her happiness upon deserves it more than Wickham did.

Other than that visit, so welcome and invigorating, it is quiet here. I paint tables, I play, I read, I stitch. Martha brings the tea, smelling of bread and onion from the kitchen. Our neighbour Mr. Stanhope calls each day to see how I am faring. It is strange - he brings the scent of Christmas, or of the oranges of Spain, but is perfectly at home in our English parlour in August. He brings me wildflowers that he picks along the

way, riots of colour that brighten the room, and he teases me about the muddy shoe that began our closer acquaintance. I dislike that someone whose friendship is so cheering should be ignorant of the scandalous truth that occasioned it. He seemed particularly entranced by Caroline during her visit. It seems his taste in wildflowers may surpass his taste in wives.

I hope to see you soon. While I am grateful for your public discretion, I hope that in private we may soon resume our former intimacy. Know that I shall not mortify you again as I did those months ago; I have not the heart to give to another such mad endeavour. Wickham broke part, and the rest is devoted to deserving my brother's trust and earning yours.

Yours very respectfully,  
Georgiana