

11 November, 1812

Dearest Elizabeth,

I wonder - might I call you Lizzy? We are, after all, sisters at last! You had to wring "Elizabeth" out of me like water from a washrag, but now that you have cured me of "Miss Bennet" (and nearly fainted at the suggestion of "Mrs. Darcy"), I beg further familiarity. I have so longed for a sister and a companion these many years, and to have both in one such delightful figure as yourself overwhelms my propriety!

I do hope you are enjoying your honeymoon, and that my good brother is a livelier companion to you than he ever was when we traveled as a family in our younger days. I daresay I saw more smiles from him at your wedding alone than in the whole of my life combined. You bring out a lightness in him that no other could animate, and all of us

who love him so dearly are grateful that you have revealed the joy we long believed was lurking under his serious veneer.

All is well here. My aunt continues to sulk, but even her conspicuous absence could not dampen the joy of your wedding day nor the days that followed knowing you will be a fixture in our lives. I have been wild on occasion, but even I could not imagine standing up to the formidable Lady Catherine de Bourgh. And yet you did, when you claimed your right to marry my brother if you and he wished it. At the first glare of her eye, I turn swiftly to dust and blow away, and yet you remain, flesh and bone, on Fitzwilliam's happy arm. It has shaken her mighty foundations. Well, good. They were due for a settling.

Your sisters have been absolutely charming. It is wonderful that they have stayed on at Pemberley

while you enjoy the Lake District! This enormous house had seemed almost a tomb, first from silence, then from heartbreak, then from care taken not to offend. To hear voices, doors opening and closing, teacups clinking, at any moment of the day is to feel alive again. Jane and Charles are positively aglow. They returned home swiftly and I hope I do not presume too far to yearn for news from Netherfield soon of a particularly delightful sort. Mary spends much of her day in the library making extracts, then favours us with a nighty recitation of some length. Your mother has complained of illness now and again, but please do not fret. It must be a fleeting condition, as she recovers in time for supper or cards. Kitty, I must say, is my most treasured companion of an entirely lovely group. She has sparked to life in

your youngest sister's absence - her conversation is witty, her taste exquisite, her painting beautiful.

I do hope Lydia and Wickham's remaining in Newcastle did not cause you too much pain. While I am grateful that you have kept my confidence on that matter, I am sorry that my past indiscretions deprived you of your sister's company. While my brother will continue to help them out of his devotion to you, he has closed Pemberley's doors to Wickham out of affection for me. For myself, I was rather pleased at how little I felt hearing his name, these 18 months after our break. By your mother's many reports, he looks well, your sister is the picture of happiness, and I think nothing more of him once the conversation turns to other topics. I cannot help but worry for Lydia, but I hope with all sincerity

he brings your sister the joy she richly deserves.

And she, alone, is always welcome here.

I must thank you again for extending an invitation to Mr. Stanhope despite the whispers of the village. Though his father's gambling has threatened scandal, the son bears none of the sins of the father, and I was so pleased to share such a joyful occasion with my very favourite neighbour.

I must say that I have never encountered a man who listens quite so intently as Mr. Stanhope. Whatever topic we discuss in one of his frequent visits, he is sure to return to it in some way at the next. We read together - Phillis Wheatley, Amelia Opie, Claudah Equiano, and Elizabeth Inchbald, most recently. We have been trading poets too; he is working hard to make me

love William Cooper and I have brought him round on Anna Barbauld.

He talks too of his travels, those he has completed and those still to come. I do believe he longs to see more of the world as soon as possible, but feels he must remain, though I could not say why. I also could not say that I wish him the travel he desires. His visits are always the sunniest hour of my afternoon, and I have grown so accustomed to them that I should not recover if he were to be away for even a week. Caroline Bingley agrees with me, I do believe, and the only thing that should grieve me more than his removal from the village would be for the occasion to be his marriage to such a woman. I do not believe she would appreciate the clutches of wildflowers, nor the unmistakable scent of citrus, nor the way his eyes widen when one teaches him a new bit of

information and he exclaims "No!" when what he truly means is "Tell me more."

My apologies - this letter has run its own course, unguided by my good sense. Though I delight in writing you, I must end, both to preserve your good opinion of me and to dress for tonight's assembly. This is a rare treat for me, and I am so looking forward to sharing the occasion with your family. I hear it is to be a major event - unmarried sons and cousins from all the families of the country are rumoured to be attending, many of whom we have never met. I am certain my aunt will want me to make an honourable connection from among them. It would be the prudent course, I know, and so I will endeavour to keep an open mind in my dancing partners. I will have much competition, however, as I do believe your mother has designs on a few of the

attendees. With three daughters married off in such short order, she is anxious for the other two!

Write when you are able, but only when it would suit you. I long to hear about the places you have visited and the people you have seen, and I hope every day has brought you (and my newly lighthearted brother) every happiness. Please give him my love, and take much of it for yourself as well.

Your affectionate sister,  
Georgiana