

3 October, 1820

My dear Kitty,

How wonderful to hear such cheering tidings of your first weeks in this new life! America and your husband clearly agree with you, no matter the doubts and fears you left behind in those English hearts that love you so well. I have loved seeing you blossom in the eight years since we became sisters, and it is England's true loss that New York will enjoy your full bloom.

Your sister Lizzy sends her regards, though I am certain you will hear from her and Jane so regularly as to hardly miss them. She has been so kind at letting my little school take over this wing of the house, and she even takes the children on expeditions in rain and sun alike to fill their lungs with fresher air than even the grandest Pemberley room can offer. I must confess that I have never

seen Mary happier than when we invite her to instruct us on the pianoforte; where we might hear a jarring note, she hears only the opportunity for correction, which she relishes above all else.

I am sorry to know that you have heard little from Lydia. She just departed from another lengthy stay with Jane, her purse replenished. I do not say so to be cruel, only to wish that she would follow her happiness rather than her pride and remove herself permanently from her unfortunate arrangement. If she would not find it so distasteful and unfashionable, I might ask if she would accompany me to America.

Ah! The surprise is out, then: I have decided to accept your gracious offer. I will grieve to leave you - I presume to say "our" - sisters, and to cause my gentle brother to retrieve the scowl he put away upon wedding Lizzy. I will despair at

saying goodbye to our pupils, but I am certain I leave them in capable hands. But you know I have longed to see new horizons for some time, and your invitation is the occasion of that new sight.

Some years ago a young man broke my heart. Upon his return from visiting family in Bath, I confessed something to Henry Stanhope (yes, you all saw through me), believing our love stronger than my past indiscretions. But at our next meeting he said little, then pressed a letter into my hands, held them tightly for a moment, and left abruptly. In this letter he assured me that our connection could not be. I can only surmise that he could not bear the possibility of my confession adding to the scandal his family was already facing. All our potential, snuffed out like an old candle.

But I do not hate him for his choice: Soon after, the Stanhope patriarch's gambling lost both the family home and the family name. I doubt that the girl I was then could have borne putting my good brother through a second scandalous attachment, and so I let Henry go without a word. Propriety over potential, yet again. Your sister Jane and her Mr. Bingley purchased the Stanhope estate, and Henry left England to explore points unknown. I now have the chance to do the same.

I tell you this in order to impress upon you how sure I am of what many will see as a mad excursion. The first time I lost a love, it was a blessing. The second time, though painful, was as well, for I see now that my life was meant for something other than what a marriage could offer me. This third opportunity to follow my heart shall not hit amiss. I have been happy, with good work

and cherished friendships, but the world is wider than Derbyshire, and there is much I can yet see. A headmistress at a New York school may not be as dangerous a charge as an explorer charting unknown mountain ranges, but as an accomplished daughter of an English gentleman, I may as well be going to the stars. I long to dare it!

I cannot say this is the first time I have thought of Henry, nor can I pretend it to be the last. It is, however, the first time I have spoken or written of him in quite some time. I do hope he is well and safe, wherever he may be.

I am, of course, rapturously awaiting our reunion, my dear friend. Lizzy brought many things to our home - vitality, laughter, my brother's sunny disposition - but what I am most

thankful for are the sisters she gave me and the certitude that happiness can be fought for. I will fight for mine each day, and will feel it more acutely the closer I come to you and to this frightening and exhilarating new life.

My fondest regards,
Georgiana