

Mr Collins Finds a Wife

The next day, Mr Collins decided to propose⁴⁸ to Elizabeth. After breakfast, he found Mrs Bennet, Elizabeth and Kitty sitting together.

'May I speak to your daughter Elizabeth alone, madam?' Mr Collins asked Mrs Bennet politely.

'Oh, my dear sir! Yes, of course,' Mrs Bennet said. 'I am sure Elizabeth will be pleased. Come along, Kitty, I want to speak to you upstairs.'

'Please do not go!' Elizabeth cried as she stood up. 'I am sure Mr Collins has nothing important to say.'

'Lizzy, I want you to stay here!' Mrs Bennet said. 'Lizzy, you must stay and listen to Mr Collins!'

Elizabeth sighed and sat down again. As soon as they were alone, Mr Collins began speaking.

'My dear Miss Elizabeth, I am sure that you know of my feelings. As soon as I saw you, I chose you to be my wife. I have made a good choice, I am sure.'

'Let me explain why I wish to marry,' he went on. 'Firstly, I think that all clergymen should be married. Secondly, marriage will make me happier. And thirdly – and most importantly – I have been told to marry by my patron, Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Lady Catherine has promised to visit my wife often. With Lady Catherine as our patron, we will be very happy.'

'As you know, I will inherit this estate when your father dies. So, if I marry one of his daughters, I will be helping you all. You have very little money, but that is not important. My own income is good. In fact, our marriage will please everyone.'

'Please stop a minute!' Elizabeth cried. 'Marriage to you will not please me. I am grateful for your proposal, but I must refuse.'

Mr Collins laughed and shook his head.

'I understand,' he said. 'Young ladies always refuse proposals of marriage at first. They begin by saying no, but they mean yes!'

'I am not one of those young ladies,' Elizabeth said. 'You could never make me happy. Also, I am sure I could never please you – or Lady Catherine!'

'Lady Catherine will enjoy your clever conversation,' Mr Collins said. 'But I am sure you will show her respect. When I next see her, I will tell Lady Catherine that you will be an excellent wife for me.'

'You do not need to tell her this,' Elizabeth replied, 'because I do not want to be your wife.'

'I cannot believe that,' Mr Collins said, smiling. 'I have a good house and a good income. You are not rich – you may never receive another proposal. You cannot refuse mine.'

'You are wrong, sir,' Elizabeth said, as she turned to leave the room. 'I am refusing your proposal of marriage.'

'You are delightful!' Mr Collins cried. 'But I know your parents will want you to accept my proposal. You will not be allowed to say no!'

