

## Not Sorry Works

Hot & Bothered: Live from Pemberley

Chapters 17-18: An Agreement to Expose Themselves

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**Vanessa** [00:00:01] Chapter 17, in which Elizabeth resolves to hate Darcy forever. [intro music fades in]

Lizzy is so moved by Wickham - his handsomeness, his charm, his clarity when he speaks, his *handsomeness* - that she believes the story that Wickham told her about Darcy completely. She believes that Darcy deprived Wickham of a living, simply because Darcy was jealous. Lizzy, whose pride was wounded by Darcy months ago, has now found a death knell into her contempt for Darcy. It's not just that he's quiet and confusing and hurt her feelings. He's *bad*. Lizzy tries to convince Jane of this, but Jane won't have it. No way is Bingley friends with *this* big of an asshole. Jane doesn't think that Wickham is lying, but she says that she doesn't have enough information to form an opinion. And Lizzy teases Jane that she just doesn't want to have to think ill of anyone.

Then the Bingleys arrive, all of them, and they come with an invitation for a ball at Netherfield. There is now enough white soup, so the ball is on and the Bennet girls can't wait. Jane wants to dance with Bingley. Mary is up for it as long as she has her mornings to herself. And Mr. Collins is ready to dance with Lizzy.

Chapter 18 is the ball, the main ball, the central ball, *the* ball of *Pride and Prejudice*. And Wickham is not there! Lizzy is furious. Not at Wickham though, but at Darcy. She knows that it is Darcy's fault that Wickham isn't there. Jane says that she will go and get the intel as to what's going on from Bingley himself. While information is being collected and shared, Collins comes to collect his dances with Lizzy. They are painfully awkward and Lizzy hates every second of it. And then a shocking thing happens: Mr. Darcy asks Lizzy to dance. Lizzy is so shocked that she says yes without thinking. Here is Roxanne Eberle on Darcy's portrayal.

**Roxanne Eberle** [00:03:24] Well, I think we might want to go back to *Jane Eyre*, right? That Darcy, like Rochester, attracts Elizabeth in the way in which he is unavailable and mysterious. So I think very often - like, now we approach *Pride and Prejudice* so much through Colin Firth's portrayal in which his interest in Elizabeth is so evident. And readers of the text also have that intimacy with Darcy. So I think it's that weird doubling where we know everyone else thinks of him as distant and arrogant, especially as we're guided by Mrs. Bennet. But then *we* know that he really *is* becoming bewitched by Elizabeth.

And isn't this kind of a romantic fantasy, that the woman who desires the unavailable male is actually the object of his gaze *and* he's willing to change for her. I think this is a romantic myth, a desire paradigm, that we're taught to feel. So I really think in some ways it's a dangerous attraction that we have towards Darcy. And *Pride and Prejudice* rewards it.

**Vanessa** [00:04:47] The idea that a guy hates everyone, but likes you, is so compelling. Who doesn't want to be so wonderful that they are the exception? But it's also a deeply pernicious

idea. The haughty, unavailable guy who's a jerk in front of his friends but is actually really nice when it's just the two of you, is more than a bad vibe. It's the ingredient for a bad relationship.

And one can see why Darcy is often read this way: as unavailable, removed and haughty. But part of what is so interesting in this chapter is that Darcy is trying to show Lizzy a different side of himself, and not just in front of her. It is in front of all of the guests at Netherfield that he asks Lizzy to dance. He also wants to be known to Lizzy. He keeps coming up with topics that he wants to discuss with her, most notably books. And Lizzy keeps shutting him down. She says, "Books? Oh, no. I'm sure we never read the same thing, or not with the same feeling." And Darcy gives the best argument for the enemies to lovers trope that I've ever heard when he answers, "If that be the case, there can at least be no want of subject. We may compare our different opinions."

After Darcy and Lizzy's dance, Caroline Bingley comes up to Lizzy and says: your sister mentioned you have the hots for Wickham. Don't. He's bad news. I don't have proof, but Darcy says he's bad news and I believe Darcy. Lizzy sends Caroline away. Jane comes up to Lizzy with the same assessment. Jane is now willing to come down on a side, and Lizzy again refuses. Not enough detail. Plus, Wickham looked like he really meant it when he said that Darcy sucked. So Lizzy believes Wickham.

The end of the chapter wraps with Lizzy's family - everyone but Jane - humiliating themselves and her. Mary plays the piano and sings too badly and for too long. Lydia and Kitty are flirting with everyone. Mrs. Bennet is talking too loudly about Jane and Bingley's impending engagement. Collins is introducing himself to Darcy without the right decorum. Mr. Bennett is sitting around and laughing at it all. In this moment you can feel Lizzy's pain, and it is palpable. Here is Claudia Johnson on the brilliance of how Austen depicts these small but deeply felt moments. [music ends]

**Claudia Johnson** [00:07:28] Oh, Jane Austen is amazing because she gives us our ordinary lives - of meeting people, talking about people, having a meal and going to a dance. Not that I do that [laughter], but my students do. And then gossiping and trying to judge or assess people's true feelings or what are they thinking? You know, this is the stuff of our lives. And she gave that a kind of artistic dignity, I think, and a kind of moral dignity. This is not, it's not war and peace, but it's just as good as war and peace! Because it obliges us to take our life seriously.

**Vanessa** [00:08:18] The chapter ends with a vignette of the Bennetts being the last to leave the ball. Mrs. Bennett has contrived these extra few moments for Jane and Bingley to have together, but the fact of them is backfiring with Darcy, Mrs. Hurst and Caroline, who just want the Bennetts to go home and be gone.

[theme music begins]

But here's the thing. Jane and Bingley are still happily chatting away. I'm Vanessa Zoltan.

**Lauren Sandler** [00:08:47] And I'm Lauren Sandler.

**Vanessa** [00:08:48] And this is Live from Pemberley from Hot and Bothered.

[theme music ends]

Lauren, we finally made it to the ball. *The ball, the Pride and Prejudice ball, the Netherfield Ball.*

**Lauren** [00:09:15] [laughter] And I had a ball at the ball. Did you have a ball at the ball?

**Vanessa** [00:09:18] I had a ball at the ball. I mean, I was with you and Lizzy. How could I not have a ball at the ball? [laughter] So what do we need to know before we go to the ball?

**Lauren** [00:09:29] Okay. Before we go to the ball, we need to know what to do at a ball. [laughter] Part of that, of course, is etiquette and decorum and how we dress, all these different things. But on top of that, we need to know how to dance. And not only do we need to know, just, how to move our bodies to music, but we need to know how to do a Scotch reel. So, how would you learn how to do all of these incredibly elaborate steps? And they were elaborate.

It's interesting to read some of the criticism of adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* and its ilk. The dance steps are much slower and more relaxed and easy to do, often with couple dancing, with someone leading, in the films. But in reality, in Austen's era, the balls that *she* went to and that her characters would attend, this is no partner dancing. So you're really on your own, facing off in these two lines against each other. There are these sets and it's very quick-footed, light-footed, jaunty, energetic, extremely elaborate choreography.

And so how would you learn to do that? Well, if you were very wealthy, you could have a dance master come and tutor you from a very young age. You would start learning as a child how to dance, and you would have to have a really extensive repertoire because you wouldn't know what dance was going to be called. And there were many dances and new ones being developed all the time. If you lived in the countryside, say, and you were a little less wealthy, you might go to a dancing school where a dance master set something up for classes, and then you would go home and practice, practice, practice.

And if you couldn't afford to do that, then you'd probably have a manual. So with the advent of the printed word came not just the Bible, but a legion of dance literature - of booklets and extensive manuals that would have descriptions of dances and around this era, notations in the French style of how you would move your arms and your feet. And you would study that as closely as you could and practice with your family in your parlor extensively. But of course, you're going to be much better at this if you've had a private tutor from childhood than if you're trying to follow a diagram with your sister in your living room.

And so even within ball choreography, you would have a class system where of course Darcy is surprisingly good at dancing and can choose whether or not to chat while he's doing it because he's likely been taught all of these steps from a young age. If you're someone like Collins, however, and you're just trying to figure it out on the sly right now because you've suddenly class-jumped and here you are at Netherfield, of course he's as awkward at doing this as he is at being in society. He has no idea what he's doing. He's falling over his feet.

And so the pressure and the stakes and what all of this represents, this is part of the systematizing and maintenance of this incredibly rigorous class system that then perpetuates itself by having this be the courting ritual, essentially. This is what would happen before someone would technically court, but this is obviously where one would show up to fall in love or not.

**Vanessa** [00:12:57] How did you know which dance was next? Was there an announcement board? And could you be like, "I actually don't know this one. Can we dance for the next- can we do the next one?"

**Lauren** [00:13:08] [sigh] Well, this also was something that was highly regulated. Every couple would be given a number and the first couple could determine the dance. And if a couple didn't know the dance, then they would go to the bottom of the set and be the bottom couple. So [cuts off]

**Vanessa** [00:13:24] So that you could watch it and learn by the time it was your turn?

**Lauren** [00:13:28] Or just so you could be publicly denigrated. I don't know. [laughter] It's literally going to the bottom of the class. Maybe that was the idea? Maybe the idea was, watch and learn. But it definitely wasn't "Wow the suitors."

**Vanessa** [00:13:43] That is so stressful! And this does explain simultaneously how these class structures were so firm and also why it's such a big deal to marry outside of your class. You wouldn't even know how to socialize together. It's not that you wouldn't be in the same ballrooms. It's that you could be in the same room and not know how to act with one another. But Austen is also really interested in the moments in which these different classed people could, in theory, meet. And it's just so interesting because the classes are - all upper class, but different kinds of upper class - are intermingling in this ballroom, in these chapters. But if they are to intermingle, it is always the higher class that has to reach out to the lower class. Darcy can come up and ask Lizzy to dance. But we watch Mr. Collins go up and try to talk to Darcy, and he just utterly humiliates himself.

**Lauren** [00:14:43] And at a ball you couldn't speak to someone without an introduction. [affirmation] Someone would need to be managing and regulating whether they thought even just speech between two people was appropriate. And the fact that Darcy is so clearly horrified when Collins disregards that because of his own perception of clergy as being the highest class of all. We see how real this is, it's difficult to even be *polite* in these situations.

**Vanessa** [00:15:14] Yeah, Lauren, that moment where Collins goes up to Darcy. The moment before is especially interesting to me. So he says to Lizzy: Oh my God, I've heard that my patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who I'm in love with, I've heard that her nephew is here and it's Mr. Darcy. I *obviously* have to go introduce myself. And Lizzy is like, Oh, my God, please don't. He would find it really rude and you shouldn't do it.

And what Collins says is, "Pardon me for neglecting to profit by your advice, which on every other subject shall be my constant guide. Though in the case before us, I consider myself more fitted by education and habitual study to decide on what is right than a young lady like yourself." And it is a really pompous little speech in many ways. He is saying: I'm more

educated than you and therefore I know better. It's also got this real kiss ass-y opening, which we know Collins has a real predilection for [laughter] and we know that he's planning on proposing to Lizzy and so maybe that's why he's giving this compliment.

But I often find generous readings of Collins sort of hard to grasp, and I think that this is a low-hanging generous reading of Collins, which is he's saying: actually, because I'm clergy, I don't need to abide by traditional class standards. I'm sort of outside of the normal class standards. And Lizzy, because you weren't educated in seminary, that's not something that you have an understanding of. And I understand that logic. I find his argument compelling.

**Lauren** [00:16:55] I don't. [laughter] I can't stand it. I think that he's saying "education and habitual study." Well, we know that he didn't *actually study* at university. [Vanessa laughs] He just got his connections and got out of there.

And also, it's one thing to study books, we see this in Mary. Mary understands people by how she reads the conduct literature. It's another thing to study people. And Lizzy is just this absolute master at studying most people. [laughter] I mean, we're seeing in this chapter the limits to that study. But she's someone who actually observes social dynamics and talks about what people think and what people do and what it all means. And that's a type of study that we never quite rank. And yet that is exactly how you read the room. And she's basically saying: Collins read the room, dude. See where we're at here. And he can't see himself within any sort of social dynamic. And has this combination of thick headedness and absolute certainty that he's right about things. It's just, I don't know, it's part of what makes him so awful. Right? And this is him just completely stepping in it.

And so I actually think that it's incredibly patronizing. And I think that it is Austen showing us that Lizzy's way of understanding things, as we heard in the introduction, that this is the stuff of life. This isn't war and peace, but it is also war, right? [laughter] And this is Lizzy's battlefield in many ways.

**Vanessa** [00:18:33] Yes. You've totally convinced me about Collins. I would just say, though, this is the chapter in which it becomes clear to me that Lizzy is not as good at reading the room as she thinks she is.

**Lauren** [00:18:43] Totally.

**Vanessa** [00:18:44] She has decided that she is going to dig her heels in about Wickham. Darcy tells her not to. Jane tells her not to. Caroline tells her not to. And she's like, 'No, no, no. He is handsome. And you couldn't possibly express yourself so well if you were lying.' And that's it. She will not hear anything else.

I think Jane in this chapter shows us a different version of herself than the one that Lizzy shows us of Jane. Lizzy says in the previous chapter, 'Oh, Jane, you just never want to have a bad opinion about anyone.' And Jane in this chapter goes up to Lizzy and is like, 'Nope, I've decided my bad opinion is of Wickham, I believe Bingley and Darcy.' And so again, we're shown that Lizzy's perception is not correct.

And then the biggest one is she is like, 'Darcy is haughty and is an asshole,' and it's like, well, dude, he asked you to dance. Which is not haughty because he previously thought that he would never dance with you, so that is a lack of commitment to previous stubbornness. You're saying that he's so stubborn, he sticks to everything. He doesn't. Also he is bending over backwards to please you. She's like, are we going to talk? And he is like, Great. You want to talk? What do you want to talk about? I will talk about anything you want to talk about. And Lizzy is just willfully putting blinders on. To this Darcy thing, but also to all of these other dynamics.

And so I just think it's really interesting. I've always read this book as if.. *almost* as if the narrator and Lizzy are the same person. That Lizzy's point of view is almost omniscient in my heart. And in this chapter, I was like: oh, no, I'm just falling for her prejudices.

**Lauren** [00:20:28] You know, it's the first use of the word prejudice in the book, I believe, which I think is interesting. We've spent a lot of time on pride and here we get prejudice and we really see Lizzy as owning it.

One of my favorite lines in this reading is: "That would be the greatest misfortune of all, to find a man agreeable whom one is determined to hate." I am totally charmed by that line and I relate to it completely. [laughter, affirmation] But also, yes, absolutely! She determined from the second that she met Darcy, like, 'this guy's a jerk.' Her mom determined it, too. They both were like, 'No way.' And that was that.

And no matter how much he seems to be matching wits with her, no matter how much he seems to be warming up to her, I mean, in this dialog he even says, 'do you want to talk about books? [laughter] Do you want to disagree about books?' How much catnip is that to whoever is reading this book? It's like Austen knew just what line to put in there to seduce us. But none of it is wearing Lizzy down because of her absolute commitment to what she determined about him in the beginning.

And honestly, like you, I read this so often from Lizzy's perspective, where it's like: I'm feeling that deliciousness and that frustration and that obstinacy in the exact same way. So I think that so many of us relate to Lizzy's prejudice, and because of that it's hard to see it being revealed in here, even though she's signaling it with that word. Even though Lizzy is telling us herself, 'I am totally prejudiced,' and then basically accuses Darcy of being totally prejudiced [laughter] and he's like, 'Mmm, I know that's what you think of me, but I don't think that we are quite the same in how you are determining this.'

**Vanessa** [00:22:28] I think that this is a great moment to look at this sentence that we want to look at closely, because it's amazing. Lizzy says this to Darcy. She says, "It is particularly incumbent on those who never change their opinion to be secure of judging properly at first." And she is throwing Darcy's words back at him. She said, 'you said your good opinion once lost is lost forever. And I happen to know that your good opinion about Wickham was lost. And are you sure that you are *very* careful before you form a bad opinion, because it is incumbent on people like you to make sure that you are correct!'

And this line without a doubt could be said from Darcy to Lizzy of, it is particularly incumbent on *you* to make sure that you are judging correctly. Because her opinion will not change on

Darcy and she judged him wrong at first. And we are getting evidence upon evidence of that in this chapter.

**Lauren** [00:23:32] And it's interesting to think about the different stakes there, just in terms of class and money. If Darcy misjudges, that can leave someone destitute, that can ruin a life. If Lizzy misjudges, maybe they don't fall in love. And honestly, [affirmation] some would say that would be the worst punishment of all. But I don't know if Jane Austen would say that.

And I do love that tension in the book. You know - how do these things get prioritized and where is that prejudice most dangerous? And I think in this sentence, not only is Jane Austen a master of irony, she also deeply understands something that was later named projection. [laughter, affirmation] Lizzy is *projecting* herself onto Darcy, which is often what we do with people who we have very strong feelings for.

**Vanessa** [00:24:25] Yeah, and Darcy accuses her of it, right? Darcy sees it. He asks her, 'what do you make of my character?' And she says, sarcastically, 'Oh, we have so much in common. We are both taciturn and will only speak if it's going to be the most charming thing in the world.' And he's like, 'Well, obviously that's not what you think about yourself. But I also don't think it's a fair interpretation of me.'

And it *is* kind of what she is! It is what she is with Darcy. She only wants to talk if it's really witty and is going to cut him down to size. She literally decides - she is thinking, 'I am not going to talk to him during this dance because that is punishing him. Wait, no, I *will* talk to him during this dance because that will punish him more.' She is exactly what she is accusing him of being, and he gently prods her towards that realization. And she's just like coming up nothing. She's like, 'Nope. Wickham told me his lies. Very well. I love him. Thank you.'

**Lauren** [00:25:32] And then even Caroline Bingley is coming to her and saying, 'Honey, you've got to look out.' And it's so perplexing because we've been given this version of Caroline who, as you know, no fan of Caroline. But so much of what we've seen of Caroline is either her jockeying for Darcy's attention in a very understandable way, or Lizzy deciding that she's just the absolute worst. And even though Caroline is clearly no big fan of Lizzy's, there's still this sort of sisterly "I got to look out for you" here. And the way that Caroline talks to Lizzy, it's like a totally different tone and voice than we've seen from her before. There's something that feels warm and concerned, even when Lizzy snaps back at her. And Lizzy, of course, is too prejudiced against Caroline to believe that there is anything that isn't devious coming out of her mouth.

Which then makes me wonder: is there another element of prejudice here, which is that sort of class prejudice that one has against very rich people if you're not very rich. Caroline is very rich. Darcy is very, very rich. And Lizzy and Wickham, there's real class solidarity there. They've been screwed by wealthier people. They are in this incredibly unstable place, both of them. Wickham has clearly fallen. And I think that there's just this impulse to distrust someone outside of your own background, your own experience. Which feels so typical.

**Vanessa** [00:27:11] Yeah. I love this nuance of Caroline. There is just no entirely selfish motivation that can be ascribed to her going up to Lizzy in this moment. Right? She has heard from Jane that Lizzy is interested in the story behind Wickham. I guarantee you, Jane didn't

say, 'Lizzy's super into Wickham,' right? Jane has more discretion than that. But Jane was like, 'Hey, Lizzy was wondering why Wickham isn't at the ball.' And Caroline has done the mental math and is like, 'Oh, I've heard about this Wickham guy. He is bad news. Darcy hasn't told me the details, but I know and trust Darcy, and I don't want Lizzy to get into trouble with this guy.' There's just, there really isn't another read on it. Why else would Caroline go up to Lizzy?

And I just think that there's something lovely about this pause that Austen is giving us of this moment with Caroline and Jane and Lizzy and Charlotte. These are four women who are all really going to hurt each other, and maybe with the exception of Lizzy and Jane. But even they are going to keep secrets from one another, and Charlotte is going to marry the guy that proposed to Lizzy. And Caroline is trying to prevent Lizzy from getting Darcy, and Lizzy is going to steal Darcy from Caroline. There are going to be a lot of betrayals amongst these four women. And yet in *this* scene, there is the opposite of cattiness. There is genuine sisterhood and well-wishing. Lizzy is *thrilled* that Jane is so happy. It is as if it is her own happiness she's so happy. Caroline is *genuinely* concerned about Lizzy.

And there's this great moment with Charlotte when Darcy comes up to ask Lizzy to dance. Charlotte is like, 'Behave yourself. You might enjoy it. Just open yourself up to the possibility that this could work out.' Because I think Charlotte is quite clear-eyed about what's going on. Right? Darcy isn't going up and asking other women to dance. He is only asking Lizzy to dance. And Charlotte sees that.

And I just love this depiction of women as, even when there's a scarcity of good men, even when the world is teaching them a scarcity mindset, they in the end are kind of really rooting for one another.

**Lauren** [00:29:38] Except Lizzy cannot accept Caroline's love. [affirmation] And I think that's also from a place of scarcity. [affirmation] Because I think that one thing that we're seeing here is that the accumulation and protection of capital keeps people from seeing and loving each other. And I think that there are good reasons to dislike Caroline, but the fact that Lizzy just snaps back at her angrily when she shows up to do something good, I think that that is us seeing Lizzy as a frankly unlikable character for the first time. And there's a lot about Lizzy in this chapter which is incredibly unlikable. She's still verbally so effective and reacts in ways that I think so many of us can relate to. We find ourselves in her so that it's harder to judge her, I think. But you're right, looking at all of this evidence that's swirling around her, that there's a problem here.

**Vanessa** [00:30:39] Yeah. The one thing she does seem clear-eyed on, though, is how ridiculous and humiliating her family is.

**Lauren** [00:30:48] Oh, yes. [laughing]

**Vanessa** [00:30:49] That she sees clearly. And I think what she does is see clearly through the eyes of others. Like, it doesn't bother *her* that Mary can't really play the piano or sing and it doesn't bother her at home that her father just wants to laugh about Collins, or that Kitty and Lydia are silly and that her mom is ridiculous. These are all things in the privacy of their home that she can live with. And I'm not even sure she super judges it at home. But she can see clearly that the rest of the room is responding poorly to it. And she knows that objectively,



within the social world, that this is poor behavior. That Mary is sitting at the piano publicly too long, given her level of talent. That Mrs. Bennett is talking *too* loudly, *too* early on about the presumption that Jane and Bingley are going to get married. And so this is a moment where she could be prejudiced to see her family in a good light, and instead she is willing and humiliated by seeing them the way that she assumes other people are seeing them, and is probably right in her read of that.

**Lauren** [00:32:07] And of course, what feels more akin to a coming of age tale than utter humiliation by one's family, right? This is totally where she is developmentally. This is the moment in life when one rolls their eyes and groans and wants to hide under the table when their mother speaks too loudly about something that should be private. In Austen's words, "Elizabeth blushed and blushed again with shame and vexation" when her mom is speaking. Or the only thing that seems to be almost more embarrassing than Mary playing and playing some more is her father standing up and being like, 'Yo, cut it out, kid. This isn't working.' That's watching her father humiliate her humiliating sister. I mean, it's *painful* to witness this, but it also feels like this is our internalized experience of an embarrassed young adult whose family feels like the worst.

Unfortunately, we're going to learn later on that it's not just within her own perception, but that Darcy and all of the Bingleys, etc. also think that her family is the worst, that they all have been embarrassed by this behavior. And that's just so painful and also so relatable.

**Vanessa** [00:33:24] Someone who I think Lizzy is proud of, though, is Charlotte. I think Charlotte shines in this chapter. She's definitely rooting for Lizzy's success. She's definitely rooting for Jane's success. But I'm wondering what you think of this new theory that I have, again, only upon reading this book this time: I think Charlotte is already going for Mr. Collins. They have this conversation, however many chapters ago, where Charlotte is like, 'Look, you got to go for a guy, right? Jane's got to set her cap for Bingley. There is strategy in getting yourself married.'

And I think Charlotte can tell by the fact that Collins requested the first two dances from Lizzy and the fact that Collins is following Lizzy around all night, that he is going to make a move for Lizzy. And she knows that her friend is going to say no. Or she's pretty sure her friend is going to say no. And she's not going to make a move on Collins *before* Lizzy has the chance to say no. But I do think she's insinuating herself to Collins. Lizzy, in one of her other not seeing what's going on moments is like, 'Oh, my God, thank God for Charlotte. She is so generously willing to talk to Collins when I don't want to talk to him anymore.' Do you think that this is Charlotte playing five dimensional chess?

**Lauren** [00:34:46] Totally. When I read that line that "Miss Lucas often joined them and good naturedly engaged Mr. Collins's conversation to herself," I was like, 'Look at that, Charlotte. Look at that.' [laughter]

**Vanessa** [00:35:00] Way to go, Char.

**Lauren** [00:35:02] But do you think that that's problematic? Do you feel like: oh, what is this maneuvering and strategy? What is this best friend doing who ostensibly tells Lizzy about everything and somehow isn't letting Lizzy in on this plan?

**Vanessa** [00:35:19] Oh, my God I have no qualms with it. Am I a bad friend? I think I would have qualms with it if she said something to Lizzy or if she flirted enough that Collins wasn't going to propose to Lizzy anyway. But she isn't, right? She's letting it all play out. She does not discourage Lizzy from marrying him. I think she just knows her friend and she's like, 'Lizzy is going to say no and one woman's trash can be my husband. And I got to let the trash know to blow this way when Lizzy throws him out.' I think that this is brilliant tactics and completely above board morally as far as a friendship. Am I being a jerk?

**Lauren** [00:36:01] No. And she obviously knows that Darcy has the hots for Lizzy, and he's handsome and rich as Croesus. And there's Charlotte feeling like I'm 27 and utterly unlovable. What am I going to do? [laughter] So I think that she feels like: listen, Lizzy is going to get the prize in the end. Do I end up with nothing? And that she'll be happy for Lizzy to get the prize, as long as Lizzy can be happy for her necessary choices, which we'll find is complicated later.

**Vanessa** [00:36:33] But we see that Charlotte is legitimately happy for her later. Right? I just think Charlotte is made of goodness and sees the world as it is and wants everybody to end up in as good of a situation as they possibly can, given not how the world should be, or how it could be. But this is a brutal social structure. Let's be honest. I'm on the shelf even though I have 15 childbearing years in front of me and, right - let's just call this what it is. And no, I'm proud of her. Mary should be making the same move.

**Lauren** [00:37:08] Totally.

**Vanessa** [00:37:09] Lauren, while we're diving into all the specificities of these friendships, I've really been paying attention on this reading - actually by accident, something that's been jumping up to me on this reading - is the way that Lizzy doesn't see Jane clearly.

Lizzy constantly says to Jane, 'oh, heaven forbid you ever think badly of anyone. Heaven forbid you ever have an opinion.' And we got a taste of this a few chapters ago when Jane was ready to leave Netherfield when she was sick. And there's the sentence that says something along the lines of, 'Jane held fast to her opinions when she felt herself to be right.' And then again in this chapter, we're seeing Jane, who Lizzy is like, you never want to judge anyone. Jane is like, 'I choose. I judge Wickham. I believe Bingley and Darcy and I judge Wickham.'

And Lizzy just constantly has this story about Jane that Jane is so good and so pure, and therefore she doesn't listen to her sister and she doesn't see her sister. And I think that is just something that I can totally see myself doing, where I love someone so much that I actually diminish the fullness and complexities of who they are. I'm like, 'no, you're just good. You're always good.' And someone being like, 'No, I'm trying to tell you I did something bad.' And I'm like, 'No, but you're always good.' And this is like that other kind of prejudice, right? The prejudice of only seeing someone in the best light.

**Lauren** [00:38:42] And I think we especially do this in families, whether they're families of origin or chosen families, where we have narratives about people. We cast them in roles, and then we sort of select things that support that. And so you'll have the brother who's the bad brother, and you'll have the brother who's the responsible brother, and you'll have the sister who's the party girl. And we definitely have a family of tropes in this situation, although Kitty

and Lydia meld together a little bit. But we have the nerd and we have the wit and we have the good soul and we have the flirt. It's the old sort of Sex and the City like - 'I'm a Samantha or I'm a Carrie'. This way of reducing people that I think that we do it in caricatures in fiction, but I think we also do it in our own lives. And I think that you pointing this out then leads me to think, oh, is Austen actually doing this for us with this family, or is she just showing us more about how Lizzy's prejudice colors all of these relationships in ways that we don't see?

**Vanessa:** Yeah.

[theme music plays]

**Lauren** [00:40:12] Vanessa, there's this moment, getting back to the humiliating spectacle of the Bennetts in front of all of the gathered people at the ball, that - it's a very quick moment that I think is going to haunt us for the rest of the book in many ways, where right after Elizabeth 'blushes and blushes again with shame and vexation,' because her mother is just mouthing off to everyone about planning the wedding nuptials, the dress, the carriage and so on, running away with this. Mr. Darcy is clearly standing, listening to the whole thing. Lizzy says, "she's convinced that his attention was invariably fixed by Mrs. Bennett in this moment." And Austen writes, "the expression of his face changed gradually from indignant contempt to a composed and steady gravity." This is the moment in which I think he is feeling (a) the real possibility of Bingley and Jane marrying, Mrs. Bennett isn't wrong, and also simultaneously what he believes a crisis that would be for Bingley, because of how outrageously embarrassing this family is. Mrs. Bennett most of all, but all of them have just been this spectacle of ridicule.

We mentioned that in this podcast we were going to talk about the ridiculousness that Austen is so intent on drawing out. And this is perhaps the chapter with the most ridiculous moments and the most damningly ridiculous moments. And in thinking about the high stakes of that sort of embarrassment, this is the moment when actually, this is going to determine multiple fates. Darcy is going to see how absurd, and how dangerously absurd in his mind, this family might be. And he's going to choose in this moment to do something about it. This isn't just contempt. It is a composed and steady gravity.

**Vanessa** [00:42:19] Yeah. And I just think, I know that Darcy is being a jerk in this separating two people who like each other, but I think that there's something lovely about the fact that he's more worried about his friend than himself. I think he sees himself as more firmly in his own class, so it's fine if he marries Lizzy, whereas Bingley will take a bigger hit if he marries Jane. I think he's worried about Jane not actually being as interested in Bingley as Bingley is in Jane. But it's always interesting when it's, right, do as I say, not as I do. You could say one read is that Darcy doesn't take Bingley's affections for Jane as seriously as Darcy takes his own towards Lizzy. But I also think he's like, 'But I want better for you than this Bingley. I don't want a conniving mother who's trying to win you for her daughter. I want something else for you.' Whereas he's fine putting up with humiliating family himself.

**Lauren** [00:43:19] To me it's a lot about sort of policing class and the establishment and maintenance of an upper class. Where Bingley just got his foot in. He's there now and Darcy wants him up there all the way. And I think that he has this fear that Jane's family can drag

Bingley out of class in a way that - this is where class separates from money. You need money to have that class, obviously. But this is always that sort of amorphous space where class and money are not the same thing, where class is something that is also determined by mores and behaviors. And when you think of someone being a low class in that sense, this is the moment in which Darcy sees the Bennetts as low class in a way that could never be rehabilitated, and that in absorbing Bingley into their family, he could lose Bingley as a class-mate.

**Vanessa** [00:44:21] I think that that is totally reasonable. And what I'm going to posit is not that it's the families and manners that bother him. It is the fact that Mrs. Bennett is *angling* for Bingley, that bothers Darcy. He's like, 'My friend is not a prize to be won.' Whereas Mrs. Bennett is the opposite of angling Darcy for Lizzy. Right? She's not fishing for Darcy. And I can imagine overhearing that and being like, well, 'Jane's just a part of her scheme. Jane doesn't really like him. He really likes her.' And being like, 'We got to get you out of there.' And I don't know which of those two things it is. And it might really possibly be a little bit of both. But what Mrs. Bennett says is really distasteful. She is counting the money.

**Lauren** [00:45:07] Yeah. And in this whole tableau of embarrassment, it is the moment with Mrs. Bennett where his face changes like this. [affirmation] It's not while Mary's playing music or Mary's dad is telling her to shut the hell up. Or Lydia and Kitty are just yawning rudely and flirting with everyone. It's not even the moment with Collins, where this cousin misreads the situation. So clearly it is really this moment with Mrs. Bennett. So I give you the point.

**Vanessa** [00:45:35] I mean, maybe. And what do I know?

**Lauren** [00:45:37] I mean, we're both right.

**Vanessa** [00:45:39] [laughter] As always.

Well, Lauren, what are you looking forward to coming up?

**Lauren** [00:45:45] Oh, I am so anxious about our next reading. [laughing]

**Vanessa** [00:45:48] I know. I know.

**Lauren** [00:45:50] I'm bracing myself. I'm almost dreading it because we know, everyone knows, Collins is going to propose to Lizzy, and it's going to suck. But it will be so much fun to talk to you about it.

**Vanessa** [00:46:00] I mean, I can't wait to talk about it. I can't wait to talk about it. It is amazing. You just feel like it is something that could happen today. So everyone, chapters 19 and 20 next time, and I'm really excited to talk about it.

[transition music plays]

**Lauren** [00:46:29] So thinking about this Enemies to Lovers Trope really has me thinking about whether you can actually have a loving, functional relationship that has begun in such a place of contempt. And what is the impact of prejudice on a relationship, or of being so rejected and then accepted? And we wanted to think about this in terms of the dialogue

between Lizzy and Darcy at the ball with a psychiatrist who could really help us see inside it. And I happen to know this incredible woman named Amanda Calhoun, who is a psychiatrist at Yale and whose public writings really consider the cost of prejudice. So let's get her on the phone.

[phone ringing]

**Lauren** [00:47:21] Hi, Amanda.

**Amanda Calhoun** [00:47:22] Hi, Lauren. How are you?

**Lauren** [00:47:24] Great. Thank you so much for joining us. So tell me: do you think that the way that Lizzy and Darcy are communicating at the Netherfield Ball could possibly set them up for the life of true love that this book suggests they might end up in?

**Amanda** [00:47:43] You know, it's interesting because there's so many intricacies in this dialogue, even in the sense of: there are clearly a lot of unanswered questions that Lizzy has. And so I think because there's so many unanswered questions about him, I do think there's still room for a successful relationship because it seems that she's trying her very best to hate him. Almost to the point where I'm wondering, 'why are you so focused on Mr. Darcy if you don't like him?'

And I think about that a lot when I do therapy sessions, and some of my patients will focus a lot on someone that they say that they dislike or someone they say, 'oh I don't care about their opinion. I don't care what they think about me.' And I'm like, 'Hmmm, do you really not care? Is that true?' 'Yeah, it's true, Dr. Calhoun.' Hm, Okay. And in my mind, I'm thinking, 'yeah, you really care about their opinion.' And so I got that feel about her and that throughout the whole scene, dialogue or not, she's so interested in whether he- what he's going to think of her or what he's going to think of her family. And to me, she was trying so hard to dislike him, but she clearly is drawn to him in a way that she doesn't want to admit.

**Lauren** [00:48:59] So it almost sounds like the recipe for a bad relationship is indifference, not contempt.

**Amanda** [00:49:07] Yes, that's what I think. That being said, though, there is the caveat that I do think you can be *drawn* to someone and care deeply about them, and it can be unhealthy for your relationship. And so at the beginning of this dialogue, what I love about it is you're sort of left hanging. Is it healthy and productive for them to be in the same space? Clearly they're drawn to each other, but is this a healthy relationship for them and should they really end up together? And how is this going to be in the future?

So I think there are so many nuances to it, but clearly they care deeply about each other. But the question is, is this going to be a functional, healthy, good relationship or is this going to be a tumultuous relationship forever?

**Lauren** [00:49:51] Do you think that the trope of enemies to lovers has led people into very bad relationships? That we sort of romanticize the notion of that line between love and hate

or the feeling 'oh, if he hates everyone in the world except you, that must mean something really significant.'

**Amanda** [00:50:10] Yes, I do think that that trope can get people into trouble. Because the thing about their relationship is: the reasons why she dislikes, not all, but the big reasons why she dislikes him are not based on fact. Like, she doesn't know all the information about what went down between him and Mr. Wickham yet. And she kind of doesn't want to know, because there's parts of it where she's talking about how she's feeling *relieved* that people are talking highly of Mr. Wickham and it's like, why are you relieved? Clearly there's a part of you that's wondering what happened between them? And am I really right to completely and 100% side with Mr. Wickham so fiercely when I don't even have all the information?

So I do think there are instances in which people hate someone or they dislike someone at the beginning, but they actually got the complete wrong idea about that person. And actually the person is a person that they actually do like and they are aligned with similar values. They just, we got the wrong impression so that very much can happen.

But on the other hand, sometimes a person actually is someone who values-wise, demeanor-wise you dislike, but you're still drawn to them for whatever reason. And that can be the recipe for disaster because it's like that phrase, I'm paraphrasing, but "people show you who they are, that's who they are" or something like that. So once you truly get to know someone and they tell you something like, 'I think women are second class citizens,' let's say, and then you grow to like that person or move beyond it, but you're very against that value. That's a recipe for disaster because that person just told you what they think about women and you decided you were going to move along with it or you like some other part about them or you guys still have fun. And I'm like, Wait, but let's go back to this value. How are you guys going to be able to get over that?

I do see that with couples where they fall in love, they have a lot of positive things about their relationship, but there's some big glaring negatives that were always there at the beginning and they kind of look past them. So I think both things can happen for sure.

**Lauren** [00:52:15] And I think so often we do have cultural differences with people. [affirmation] And that may be something that happens along national lines or racial lines. And in this case, I think it's definitely something that is happening around class lines. [affirmation] Darcy is presenting himself as he has been raised to present himself within the culture of the upper class. And that isn't quite where Lizzy has been. Obviously we see that her family's in a very different position, and I wonder how much class prejudice is coming into this dynamic and if that's something that's pretty hard to overcome.

**Amanda** [00:52:53] Yeah, I think that's a really good question. I thought about that a lot in the way Darcy presents himself as not likable. I love the way he's presented though, because you don't necessarily like him, but you also don't necessarily fully dislike him either, because you're like, well, he's acting how he's been taught to act, but then she is acting how she's taught to act, right? And she's kind of picking at him throughout the dialogue, trying to, in my mind, get a rise out of him.

And I can imagine that class differences, during that time and also today, they do play a huge role in the impression you get from the person. Because I think you get this feeling that there is more that they have in common than different, even though in society they're treated so much differently. And I think that kind of conflict, that class prejudice, that pressure that she has to get married, that aloofness that he has the luxury of having because he has all this money and it's just like, well, whatever, I'm going to be fine. All of that plays a role in this and of her wanting to dislike him [laughter] and sort of take a stand to say, I don't like this person who all these other people like. And I love how throughout the dialogue people come in trying to - either showering Mr. Darcy with praise or even her friend telling her, 'no, you need to get in his good graces.' Which further riles her up, of course, which I think is just, it's a brilliant part of the dialogue.

**Lauren** [00:54:22] And reflecting on it there is such an extensive history of people developing romance narratives across an imbalance of privilege. As though that adds heat to the possibility of a romantic connection. And I just wonder what you think about that. Do you think that working on different sides of a divide like that, or an imagined divide, which I think is more often the case, that an imbalance of privilege is something that can actually amplify what feels good in a relationship instead of just make you feel resentful all the time? [laughter]

**Amanda** [00:55:02] I don't know. You know, I really don't. I kind of feel like part of it is very romanticized because you have two people but like I said before, your relationship ends up being bigger than the two of you. And so what I always think about in those situations is how is the family, usually the family of the person of higher socioeconomic status, how are they treating her or him? What are all the other conversations that happen as a result of prejudice? Because there's so much that happens with families becoming married to each other. Children, customs. And to me, I feel like all of that would cause a lot of resentment. And more often than not, it makes me feel like probably the easiest and most convenient thing is going to be to fall in love with someone in your same, of your same background. And I think that's what most people probably do.

But, I do think we're drawn to, at least as readers, as onlookers, to those people that sort of defy odds and are going against families who hate their union but they still make it through. And I do think those people exist. They exist all the time. It does make me think about, you know, my husband and - my husband is white and I'm Black - and just thinking about we had and have a lot to navigate and the fact that we would go places and people would stare at us. Family stuff, his family saying things that very much rub me the wrong way as a Black woman and just different worlds. Almost like, and not my husband, obviously that's why we got married, but people of different backgrounds can live in different worlds. It's like, do we live in the same America? And we think about that a lot, amongst political differences, differences about gender roles. And it's really hard, I think, to overcome all the external pressure that goes into your relationships.

When I think about Lizzy and Mr. Darcy, I do think their union is possible, but they don't live in a vacuum. If it was the two of them and they were in a vacuum together, then okay. But they have to deal with all this pressure that's coming from society. And I do think about how realistic that Lizzy would want to deal with that for the rest of her life. And maybe she would but that takes a lot of strength from both people and honestly, a lot of boundaries being set

of, we're not going to tolerate this behavior, okay? We're not going to be in this area where you're being talked down to. And I think about all those things that have to happen. I do wonder: is that a little bit more romanticized, but at the same time I do think it can happen.

**Lauren** [00:57:52] Well, it's such a treat to get your perspective on this. And I could talk to you about it for ages. But as they say in your field, our time is up. [laughter]

**Amanda** [00:58:00] I know, I'm so sad. We'll have to do some future ones, I would love it.

**Lauren** [00:58:05] Thank you so much for joining us.

**Amanda** [00:58:07] Thank you for having me.

[theme music plays]

**Vanessa** [00:58:14] You've been listening to Live From Pemberley. We're a small show, so we need your support to run. If you can, please consider supporting us on Patreon at [Patreon.com/HotAndBotheredRomPod](https://www.patreon.com/HotAndBotheredRomPod) where we have all sorts of amazing perks. If you love the show, please share that information with a friend or leave us a review wherever you are listening.

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[theme music ends]

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