

JULIA GRAY

KITTY

&

MARY

IMOGEN RUSSELL WILLIAMS



ANDERSEN PRESS



This edition first published in 2026 by
Andersen Press Limited
6 Coptic Street, London, WC1A 1NH, UK
Vijverlaan 48, 3062 HL Rotterdam, Nederland
www.andersenpress.co.uk

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data available.

ISBN 978 1 83913 864 5

Printed and bound in China.



*For Perry – I'll read it to you one day
when you least expect it. Thank you
for all your enthusiasm dear bird!*
I.R.W.

For J.S.A.G. from J.L.G.



DRAMATIS PERSONAE
– AT THE OUTSET



Longbourn, Hertfordshire

Mr Bennet

Mrs Bennet

Miss Mary Bennet

Netherfield Park, Hertfordshire

Mr Whittaker

Mrs Whittaker

Miss Beaufort

Lucas Lodge, Hertfordshire

Sir Lucas

Lady Lucas

Maria Lucas



PEMBERLEY, DERBYSHIRE

Mr Darcy

Mrs Darcy (née Elizabeth Bennet)

Miss Catherine (Kitty) Bennet, visiting

SOUTHWELL HALL, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Mr Bingley

Mrs Bingley (née Jane Bennet)

ROSINGS PARK, KENT

Lady Catherine de Bourgh

HUNSFORD PARSONAGE, KENT

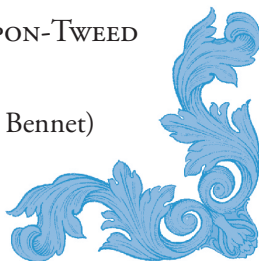
Mr Collins

Mrs Collins (née Charlotte Lucas)

FRIAR STREET, BERWICK-UPON-TWEED

Mr Wickham

Mrs Wickham (née Lydia Bennet)





Mary

Longbourn
14th April 1813

My dear Kitty,

Another ball? *Another* new gown? You are becoming as frivolous as Lydia! Take care you do not follow our youngest sister in *all things* – she and Wickham have just left us after a flying visit, and are as hard-up as ever, though Lydia has wheedled Mamma out of the money set by for the chickens.

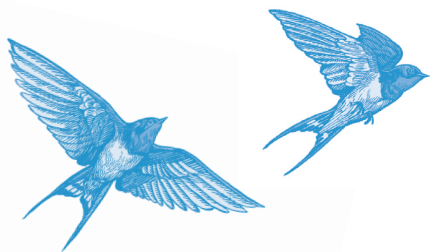
It saddens me to tell you that Mamma is in perfectly wretched health, at least according to Mamma. I have hardly a moment to open my book before she is calling me to sit by her for two hours at a time, handing her smelling salts and listening to her grievances. *Why cannot Jane and Lizzy live closer; why does not Mr Darcy obtain a place at Court for Wickham; why will I not quit my studies, since I will never find a husband by such means?* (Or any means, according to our father, who has exhausted his last thin store of patience both with her and with me.)



If you can tear yourself from your latest diversion, I beg you will pay us a visit. I do not grudge you your entertainments, my dear Kitty – but you are a better nurse than I, not to mention Mamma's favourite unmarried daughter.

I remain your loving sister,

Mary



The Journal of
Mary Bennet

15th April 1813

I believe that I am both a patient person and a dutiful daughter – yet I also believe that if I must hear ONCE MORE, about how inconvenient it is that my sisters are so far away, I shall scream directly into Mamma's face. All day long she halloos my name like the Master of Hounds: 'MaaaaRYYYY!'

And my only possible escape is through marriage! Faint chance of that. Our father may well 'despair' of my ever entering the wedded state, as I heard him say woundingly to Lizzy in parting. I myself despair of being at Fate's mercy – hoping somehow to find a husband who will overlook my plainness in his desperation to win a helpmeet or handmaiden. I do not wish to 'win' a husband! I wish to support myself by my own efforts, as though I were not a girl at all, but a man. I know it is impossible, and yet sometimes I lie awake, revolving mad notions of departure or disguise . . .



It shows a sad lack of sisterly feeling to envy Kitty so much. Yet living far from Longbourn, far from Mamma's invalidish ways and Papa's sardonic eye – the idea of such freedom makes me almost frantic! What would I not give for a little daily peace – or at least a nook where Mamma's 'MaaaaRYYYY!' cannot find me? It is my lot, however, to remain here, at least at present, and so I must continue to endure, dear Journal. There, I can hear Mamma scolding up the stairs.



Kitty

Pemberley
27th April 1813

My dear Mary,

Pray do not think ill of me for neglecting to reply to your letter until now. I am *not* frivolous (you surely know me better than to make such accusations!) but I must confess, I have found much to amuse me here at Pemberley with Lizzy. It is not just the dances, and the pleasure of our dear sister's company, which I am finding all the greater now that I do not have Lydia by my side; it is also the house itself and its grounds, where I lose myself contentedly for hours. (I have not yet been to the library, but I hear that it is extremely well-furnished.)

As for Darcy – I always thought him tiresome and ill-tempered, but our brother-in-law is much improved by marriage! Why, just yesterday we engaged in a lively discussion about the Marquess of Wellington, and I could see that he was most impressed by my contributions.



It pains me to hear these tales of Mamma's ill-health, but I fear, Mary, that you have indulged her too greatly. You know perfectly well that she will seize every chance to complain; do not, therefore, allow her the opportunity!

I do hope that I will be able to return soon to Longbourn, but in the meantime, dear sister, I have every confidence that you are the best of all possible nurses. After all, you are far more intelligent than I am and will therefore surely be able to divine from Mamma's manner exactly what ministrations to give.

Your loving sister,

Kitty



The Journal of
Kitty Bennet

28th April 1813

I did not confess this to Mary (just think of her satisfaction!) but yesterday I overheard an exchange between Darcy and Lizzy that caused me some disquiet. Lizzy was at the pianoforte, and Darcy – as he so loves to do – was sitting beside her, listening to her play. They could not know that I was at the window-seat, hidden by the curtain.

‘How pleasing it is to see Kitty away from Lydia at last,’ said Lizzy, pausing in the middle of her march. ‘I had often felt that Lydia’s tendency to over-excitement affected our sister a great deal. Kitty is easily led, you see, and always has been. Here, I feel she has a chance to acquire a greater sensibility.’

‘But with Lydia settled in the north of England,’ Darcy murmured, ‘would Kitty not have that happy chance no matter her situation?’

‘What are you suggesting?’ said Lizzy, with a hint of sharpness.



‘Simply that I am a selfish fellow who would like his wife to himself,’ said Darcy. ‘Let her go back to Southwell Hall, and enjoy becoming *Jane*’s little shadow for a time! She does follow you about so, Eliza.’

‘Does she?’

‘Or, indeed, she might return home to Longbourn, since Lydia is no longer there.’ (Darcy will not say aloud the name of Lydia’s husband, but that, of course, is another story.)

‘You are indeed a selfish fellow,’ said Lizzy. At that came the sound of rolled-up sheet music being used as a weapon, and then the sounds of merriment and affection. I felt, suddenly, terribly lonely. It was galling to be referred to as a ‘little shadow’, when I am trying so hard to develop my own opinions. (I did exaggerate to Mary just a little about the Marquess of Wellington, I must admit, for I know nothing about the war other than what Papa sometimes tells me.) I had thought that Darcy valued my company, but I see now that he has merely become better able to disguise his contempt!

But I do not want to go home, as Mary suggests. Here, at Pemberley, I feel quite free! There is no Mamma to fret and fuss and criticise; there is no Papa to raise an amused eyebrow every time I say something foolish. As for Lydia – I miss her terribly, but perhaps Lizzy is right. Without Lydia, I have the chance to become a better person: more sensible, more accomplished . . . and more marriageable.



If I go home, the risk of becoming my former self again is great indeed.

No: I cannot bear the thought of returning to Longbourn. How will I ever find a husband there?

K.B.



Mary

Longbourn
2nd May 1813

My dear Kitty,

Of course you have not yet found your way to the library at Pemberley. In your shoes, I would . . . but there. I have at least the curious fruits of the circulating library to occupy me, and Mamma's three-volume novels (by which she is promptly put to sleep, ten minutes after settling herself where 'the light is best for a great reader').

The Marquess of Wellington! What do you know about England's Hero, pray? I hope you were not merely parroting the opinions of your newest beau. Mr Darcy may seem less acerbic now that he is married, but he will still think you a pretty pea-goose if you do not strive to develop your own opinions!

There, I am sorry to scold so – each day resembles the last here so closely that I find I have a touch of the megrims. Indeed you are right, I have allowed Mamma to



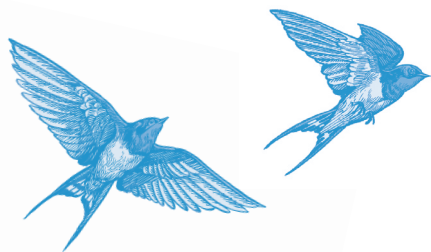
coddle her ills and make pets of them. Tell Lizzy that she wears the Norwich shawl every evening, and boasts of the favourite daughter who sent it to her at Christmas! What shocking inconsistency in a parent!

I have not told you that Netherfield is to have a new tenant. We hear of little else in the village – apparently he has a *handsome fortune* . . .

Your affectionate sister,

Mary

P.S. Did you hear of Mrs Collins' friend? She thinks of accepting a post as a governess, and travelling to America on a ship. *America!* As well say the Moon!



The Journal of
Mary Bennet

2nd May 1813

When I received Kitty's letter, I was obliged to say some uncharitable things into my pillow, and to play the second movement of my sonata *fortissimo*, rather than *mezzo-forte* – but I am resigned to Kitty's heedlessness. Oh! What I would not give to be turned loose in a great library! I cannot deny I take pleasure in Mamma's novels, yet I have a thirst which novels cannot quench . . . but I have never known Kitty to seek out a book since at the age of five she pursued me everywhere with *The Tales of Mother Goose*, beseeching me to read aloud her best-loved stories.

I struggled to go on calmly today, discussing the crowning of the May Queen (Sally Baker, as if it were ever in doubt – that girl is as handsome as she is impudent) and the coming of the new tenant. The maids' chatter, and even Hill's gentle flow of talk about Netherfield, fretted my nerves quite past enduring. Hark at me, I am becoming as irritable as Mamma! Besides, if any news might bring Kitty



back to Longbourn post-haste, it is tidings of an eligible bachelor . . .

My disquiet is increased by this friend of Charlotte's, Miss Marling. I have no cause to envy her, indeed – to go out and earn one's wages as a governess is not at all my idea of winning a civilised independence, even if I were qualified to do so. But America! To cross the great ocean in search of a new world – a new Mary . . .

Now see, I have smudged this page and the ink has made a great blot on my nightgown. There is something to be said, after all, for a solitary bedchamber.



Kitty

Pemberley

7th May 1813

My dear Mary,

You make me laugh with your tale of Mamma making pets of her ailments! Reading your letter, I could see her quite clearly – her round, expressive face and those volatile brows! – and it did not, at first, fill me with the desire to hurry back to her bedside. And yet I do feel for you, dear Mary, in spite of your calling me a pea-goose – a term I do not much care for. I must assure you that my mind is improving with each passing day; I might not yet have visited the library, but every evening Lizzy reads a little from *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and I am only too delighted to listen. (Darcy claims to have too lofty an intelligence to tolerate such easy fare – and yet more often than not I glimpse him at the edge of our gathering, pointedly studying some worthier tome of his own, and yet – I am sure of it – hanging upon her every word.)



But there, you must not trouble yourself with picturing Pemberley scenes when you are plainly in need of *assistance*. You may often have accused me and Lydia of being thoughtless in word and deed, but I am full of thoughts, dear Mary, and you are very much in them. I know as well as anyone that Mamma's whims and follies can sometimes be too much to bear; and for all that he is as dear a father as a daughter could wish for, Papa is not always able to offer much by way of meaningful support.

It pains me to part from Lizzy, but it would be unfair of me to disregard your wishes any longer. I will make arrangements and return to Longbourn within the fortnight.

Your affectionate sister,

Kitty



The Journal of
Kitty Bennet

7th May 1813

Really, I think that Mary has *taken leave of her senses*. Perhaps when there were five of us hurtling about the house in a flurry of boots and bonnets I simply didn't remark as much upon her ability to dwell on matters of no consequence at all (ships to America!), while neglecting to mention matters of *genuine import*.

Why did she not tell me earlier that a new tenant is to come to Netherfield? Why, I would have made the journey back in a heartbeat!

Netherfield Park holds such a place in my heart that I can imagine it lit from within by a golden glow, as though enchanted by fairies. I never admitted this to a soul, but when Jane met Bingley, I felt deeply the injustice of being younger, and less pretty, and less interesting and intelligent than our eldest sister. I cherished a rosy dream of one day being mistress of Netherfield – and now that Mary has revealed her news, I wonder if perhaps that dream might,



one day, become a reality . . . Oh, I do hope that among those who have settled at Netherfield there might be *a single man who is hoping to find a suitable wife!*

And thus home I shall go; but I shall take care *not* to give Mary the satisfaction of thinking it is for any reason other than daughterly duty.

K.B.



Mary

Longbourn
12th May 1813

Dear Kitty,

Something so strange has happened that I hardly know how to put it into words. Lady Catherine de Bourgh has honoured us with a visit!

I say ‘honoured’, but truly, she was not as she has been in the past. She seemed at first as stately and splendid as ever, but as her tale unfolded she became – well, somewhat *sheepish* . . . But I am getting ahead of myself.

Having cast Mamma into palpitations by arriving unannounced and demanding a glass of Madeira wine, Lady Catherine summarily dismissed her hostess. ‘You, gel,’ she said, fixing me with a most uncomfortable stare, ‘are the one I need.’

And indeed, she does. I tell you this in the strictest confidence – no gossiping below stairs, Kitty! – but it seems Lady Catherine’s young cousin Helena Fitzwilliam has



formed an unfortunate attachment, and they wish her to have *a complete change of scene*. In fact, they are sending her away to India to be married! Such a distance – and to marry a man sight unseen! But I digress again.

Miss Fitzwilliam needs a travelling companion – ‘a serious-minded gel, not given to flightiness’ – and if I am willing to accept the position they will pay my passage, a wage, and my return fare – if I should wish to return. Oh, what am I saying? I have barely begun to think if I will go at all! I do not know if I am on my head or my heels. Hurry home, Kitty, for I must talk to you!

Yours, dazed and tottering,

Mary