

ANDREW MARTIN

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

CHAPTER I

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However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

“My dear Mr. Bennet,” said his lady to him one day, “have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?”

Mr. Bennet replied that he had not.

“But it is,” returned she; “for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it.”

Mr. Bennet made no answer.

“Do you not want to know who has taken it?” cried his wife impatiently.

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This was invitation enough.

“Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs. Long says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England; that he came down on Sunday to a dinner and that he is the place, and with so much delighted with it, that he agreed with Mr. Morris immediately that he is to take possession before Michaelmas, and some of his servants are to be in the house by the end of next week.”

“What is his name?”

“Bingley.”

“Is he married or single?”

“Oh single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune—five thousand a year! What a fine thing for our girls!”

“How can that be? He is almost thirty.”

“My dear Mr. Bennet,” replied his wife, “how can you

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be so silly? You must know that I am thinking of the marriage of my girls.”

“To that he dares to nothing here?”

“Dear madam, how can you talk so? That it is very likely he may fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes.”

“I see no occasion for that. You and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better, for as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr. Bingley might like you the best of the party.”

“My dear, you father me. I certainly have had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be anything extraordinary now. When a woman has five grown-up daughters, she ought to give over thinking of her own beauty.”

“In such cases a woman has not often much beauty to spare.”

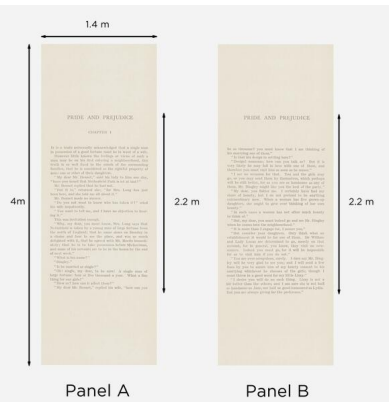
“Dear, my dear, you must indeed go and see Mr. Bingley when he comes into the neighbourhood.”

“It is more than I engage for, I assure you.”

“But consider your daughters. Only think what an establishment it would be for one of them. Mr. Bingley and Lady Lucas are determined to go, merely on that account, for so general, you know, they that he is so handsome, indeed you must go, for it will be impossible for us to both leave if just the last.”

“You are over-sensible, surely. I dare say Mr. Bingley will be very glad to see you; and I will send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his carrying wherever he chooses of the girls; though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy.”

“I assure you with all my heart. Lizzy is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure she is not half as handsome as Jane, who had so good luck to get Mr. Collins. But you are always giving her the preference.”



Pride & Prejudice

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