

Scandalous Falsehood

W/W

Lady Catherine

ELIZABETH

ELIZABETH
Lady Catherine!

Lady Catherine does not acknowledge her, but comes in uninvited, inspecting the assembled company of aghast Bennets.

LADY CATHERINE
(to Mrs Bennet)
And these are your daughters, I suppose.

MRS BENNET
All but one, the youngest has been lately married your ladyship. And my eldest was only proposed to yesterday afternoon.

LADY CATHERINE
You have a very small garden, madam.

MRS BENNET
I am sure it is nothing compared to Rosings, but it is larger than Sir William Lucas's, I can assure you.

MR BENNET
(tentatively)
Could I offer you a cup of tea, perhaps?

LADY CATHERINE
Absolutely not! I must speak to Miss Elizabeth alone, as a matter of complete urgency.

The Bennets all look at each other, bewildered by this strange turn of events.

125

INT. DRAWING ROOM - LONGBOURN - NIGHT.

125

Elizabeth leads the way into the drawing room - lights an oil lamp. Lady Catherine walks in. The door closes behind them.

LADY CATHERINE
You can be at no loss, Miss Bennet, to understand why I am here.

Lit only by the oil lamp Lady Catherine resembles a flickering ghoul.

ELIZABETH
Indeed you are mistaken. I can not account for this honour at all.

1/3

"Pride + Prejudice"

LADY CATHERINE

Miss Bennet, I warn you, I am not to be trifled with. A report of a most alarming nature has reached me that you intend to be united with my nephew, Mr Darcy.

Elizabeth stares at her, amazed.

LADY CATHERINE (CONT'D)

I know this to be a scandalous falsehood, though not wishing to injure him by supposing it possible, I instantly set off to make my sentiments known.

ELIZABETH

If you believed it impossible, I wonder you took the trouble of coming so far.

LADY CATHERINE

To hear it contradicted, Miss Bennet.

ELIZABETH

(coolly)

Your coming here will be rather a confirmation, surely, if indeed such a report exists.

LADY CATHERINE

If? Do you then pretend to be ignorant of it? Has it not been industriously circulated by yourself?

ELIZABETH

I have never heard of it.

LADY CATHERINE

And can you declare there is no foundation for it?

ELIZABETH

I do not pretend to possess equal frankness with your ladyship. You may ask the questions, which I may not choose to answer.

LADY CATHERINE

This is not to be borne. Has my nephew made you an offer of marriage?

ELIZABETH

Your Ladyship declared it to be impossible.

LADY CATHERINE

Let me be understood. Mr Darcy is engaged to my daughter. Now what have you to say?

ELIZABETH

Only this - if that is the case you can have no reason to suppose he will make an offer to me.

LADY CATHERINE

Oh obstinate girl! This union has been planned since their infancy. Do you think it can be prevented by a young woman of inferior birth, of no importance in the world and wholly unallied to his family? Whose own sister's elopement resulted in the scandalously patched-up marriage, only achieved at the expense of your uncle? Heaven and earth, are the shades of Pemberly to be thus polluted? Now tell me once and for all, are you engaged to him?

ELIZABETH

I am not.

LADY CATHERINE

And will you promise never to enter into such an engagement?

ELIZABETH

I will not. And I certainly never shall. Allow me to say, the arguments which you have supported this extraordinary application have been as frivolous as the application was ill-judged. You have insulted me in every possible method and can now have nothing further to say. I must ask you to leave immediately. Good night.

Elizabeth throws open the door, revealing the family outside.

LADY CATHERINE

I have never been thus treated in my entire life.

~~Lady Catherine storms past the family and out into the night. Elizabeth is standing shaking with the excitement of having stood so firmly up for herself.~~

~~MR BENNET~~

~~Lizzie, what on earth is going on?~~