**Chapter One A Young Man of Fortune**

It is well known throughout the world that a single man wants to marry a wife, especially if he is rich and successful.

Certainly, a mother of five daughters who are old enough to marry also thinks a lot about marriage. When she hears that a wealthy man has moved into her neighborhood, she will surely think of him as a future husband for one of her daughters. **This was the view of** Mrs. Bennet of Longbourn House, which is near Meryton in Hertfordshire.

Mrs. Bennet had heard the news in February 1810 that a single, wealthy man was moving near them. Excited by the opportunity, she decided to tell her husband.

"My dear Mr. Bennet," she said to her husband," do you know that someone **is finally renting** Netherfield Park?"

Mr. Bennet was silent and did not answer her.

"Don't you want to know who is there?" cried his wife, **impatiently**.

"Well, I’m sure you want to tell me."

"Well," Mrs. Bennet said excitedly, "Netherfield is being rented by Mr. Bingley. He is a young, wealthy man from the north. "

"You don't say?" Mr. Bennet replied. “ls he married or single?"

"Oh, single, my dear!" cried Mrs. Bennet excitedly. "What a good fortune for our daughters!"

"What do you mean by that? What does this have to do with their fortune?"

"Oh, don't be so difficult, my dear Mr. Bennet!” replied his wife. "I'm just thinking that perhaps Mr. Bingley might marry one of our daughters."

“ Is this why he has rented the house?" her husband asked, jokingly.

"**What nonsense!** Still, it's likely that if he meets one of our girls, he'll fall in love. So, you must go and pay him a visit soon. It's the only respectable way for an introduction,"

Mr. Bennet stood up and looked at his wife. "I do not want to do that, and you cannot make me, I promise you."

"But what about the future of your daughters?" cried his wife, shocked.

"I don't see why I must visit him." said Mr. Bennet.

"How difficult you are!" she cried. "I cannot take the girls to visit him unless you have already met him. It's the only correct way. "

“That's not true at all," said Mr. Bennet **calmly**. "I will write this young man a letter. I will tell him he has my permission to marry whichever of our daughters he chooses. And I’ll make sure that I say something very good about my little Lizzy."

"You will not do such a thing!" cried his wife angrily. "Anyway, Elizabeth is no better than our other daughters."

"Our daughters," replied Mr. Bennet, "haven't much in way of praise or recommendation. They don't know very much and are often silly, like other girls. But Lizzy is more clever and smarter than her sisters."

"Mr. Bennet, how you make me worry! Sometimes I feel you even enjoy it! You don't care about my poor nerves. "

Mr. Bennet walked over to the door of his library. ''You are wrong, my dear," he said. "I do have feelings for your nerves. After all, they are like old friends. I have lived with them for twenty years. "

"Oh!" said Mrs. Bennet. She was beginning to cry. "How you enjoy making me worry!"

"You will have many other chances to see rich young men move into our neighborhood, my dear. So I hope you can forget this.

"You have no thought for your daughters. Five of them— five! — and Jane in her twenty-third year! Are they all to be old maids and never get married?"

"I'm sure you won't let this happen," he said, and the library door closed behind him.

The Bennet family met together in the **drawing room** after dinner that evening. Four of Mr. Bennet's daughters were quite pretty. Jane was the most beautiful of them but Elizabeth, who was twenty, had more spirit. Also, Elizabeth's fine dark eyes seemed full of light. Kitty was their seventeen-year-old daughter. She was pretty in a thin way. Lydia was almost sixteen and she was tall with healthy, red-colored cheeks. Nineteen-year old Mary was the only plain member of the family. She was thin, round-shouldered, and near-sighted. Because she read too many books, she had to wear glasses.

Elizabeth was busy working on a hat when Mr. Bennet said to her: “I hope our new neighbor Mr. Bingley will like it. "

"And how are we to know whether Mr. Bingley likes it or not," asked her mother, "if we cannot visit him?"

"Don't worry, Mama, you forget that we shall see him at the town meeting," Elizabeth said.

"Lady Lucas will introduce us to Mr. Bingley if you ask her. " said Jane.

"Lady Lucas," said Mrs. Bennet, without any hope, "has her own daughter. She'll want him to meet her."

"That's not a very nice thing to **say about** her, Mama," said Elizabeth.

Mrs. Bennet threw up her arms and turned angrily to Elizabeth. "Do not speak back to me, Elizabeth," she cried. "My nerves will not stand it. A friendly introduction at a public meeting will not be as good as your papa introducing himself. He has no thought for your future at all."

She looked angrily across the room at her husband.

"How can we convince you to visit Mr. Bingley, Papa?" asked Elizabeth, nicely. She hoped to change her father's mind.

"Please do,” said Jane.

"Oh yes, sir, I beg you!" requested Lydia,

"Leave me out of this request, Papa," said Mary, coldly. "I don't wish to **go chasing** after Mr. Bingley. "

Mr. Bennet looked from one daughter to the other. "I've already told you — I'm not going to call on Mr. Bingley," he said.

"You see!" cried Mrs. Bennet. "He doesn't care! Oh, my poor head!” But Mrs. Bennet's complaining had no effect on her husband. Since she was still upset, she began to **yell at** one of her daughters. "**By heavens**, stop coughing, Kitty! You will tear my poor nerves apart."

"Do you think I cough because I like to, Mama?" said Kitty.

"Please Kitty, your mother's being difficult," remarked Mr. Bennet, "Let us talk a little more about Mr. Bingley — "

"No, no," cried his wife. "No more about Mr. Bingley!"

"I’m quite sorry to hear that, my dear," said her husband. He was enjoying himself very much. "Why didn't you tell me this before?" Mr. Bennet said, jokingly. "If I had known, I wouldn't have gone to visit him yesterday morning."

"What!" cried Mrs. Bennet 4'You went to visit him?"

"Oh. Papa!" exclaimed Jane, Elizabeth, Kitty and Lydia, all at the same time.

"But my dear — you said so strongly that you would not go!" said his wife.

“ That's because I had already done so, you see."

"Oh, how good of you, my dear! I knew you loved your daughters too much to miss the opportunity to meet with such a man of good fortune. What a good joke to play on us! Oh, my dear Mr. Bennet, how very happy I am!"

"Now, Kitty, you may cough as much as you need to," said Mr. Bennet as he left the room. He was very tired after dealing with his wife.

"What a fine, thoughtful father you have, girls," said Mrs. Bennet after the door was shut.

For the rest of the evening, the girls and their mother wondered how soon it would be before Mr. Bingley returned their father's visit.