

“To oblige you, I would try to believe almost anything, but no one else could be benefited by such a belief as this; for were I persuaded that Charlotte had any regard for him, I should only think worse of her understanding than I now do of her heart. My dear Jane, Mr. Collins is a conceited, pompous, narrow-minded, silly man; you know he is, as well as I do; and you must feel, as well as I do, that the woman who married him cannot have a proper way of thinking. You shall not defend her, though it is Charlotte Lucas. You shall not, for the sake of one individual, change the meaning of principle and integrity, nor endeavour to persuade yourself or me, that selfishness is prudence, and insensibility of danger security for happiness.”

“I must think your language too strong in speaking of both,” replied Jane; “and I hope you will be convinced of it by seeing them happy together. But enough of this. You alluded to something else. You mentioned *two* instances. I cannot misunderstand you, but I entreat you, dear Lizzy, not to pain me by thinking *that person* to blame, and saying your opinion of him is sunk. We must not be so ready to fancy ourselves intentionally injured. We must not expect a lively young man to be always so guarded and circumspect. It is very often nothing but our own vanity that deceives us. Women fancy admiration means more than it does.”

“And men take care that they should.”

“If it is designedly done, they cannot be justified; but I have no idea of there being so much design in the world as some persons imagine.”

“I am far from attributing any part of Mr. Bingley’s conduct to design,” said Elizabeth; “but without scheming to do wrong, or to make others unhappy, there may be error, and there may be misery. Thoughtlessness, want of attention to other people’s feelings, and want of resolution, will do the business.”

“And do you impute it to either of those?”

“Yes; to the last. But if I go on, I shall displease you by saying what I think of persons you esteem. Stop me whilst you can.”

“You persist, then, in supposing his sisters influence him?”

“Yes, in conjunction with his friend.”

“I cannot believe it. Why should they try to influence him? They can only wish his happiness; and if he is attached to me, no other woman can secure it.”

“Your first position is false. They may wish many things besides his happiness; they may wish his increase of wealth and consequence; they may wish him to marry a girl who has all the importance of money, great connections,