

“But what,” said she, after a pause, “can have been his motive? What can have induced him to behave so cruelly?”

“A thorough, determined dislike of me—a dislike which I cannot but attribute in some measure to jealousy. Had the late Mr. Darcy liked me less, his son might have borne with me better; but his father’s uncommon attachment to me irritated him, I believe, very early in life. He had not a temper to bear the sort of competition in which we stood—the sort of preference which was often given me.”

“I had not thought Mr. Darcy so bad as this—though I have never liked him. I had not thought so very ill of him. I had supposed him to be despising his fellow-creatures in general, but did not suspect him of descending to such malicious revenge, such injustice, such inhumanity as this.”

After a few minutes’ reflection, however, she continued, “I *do* remember his boasting one day, at Netherfield, of the implacability of his resentments, of his having an unforgiving temper. His disposition must be dreadful.”

“I will not trust myself on the subject,” replied Wickham; “*I* can hardly be just to him.”

Elizabeth was again deep in thought, and after a time exclaimed, “To treat in such a manner the godson, the friend, the favourite of his father!” She could have added, “A young man, too, like *you*, whose very countenance may vouch for your being amiable”—but she contented herself with, “and one, too, who had probably been his companion from childhood, connected together, as I think you said, in the closest manner!”

“We were born in the same parish, within the same park; the greatest part of our youth was passed together; inmates of the same house, sharing the same amusements, objects of the same parental care. *My* father began life in the profession which your uncle, Mr. Phillips, appears to do so much credit to—but he gave up everything to be of use to the late Mr. Darcy and devoted all his time to the care of the Pemberley property. He was most highly esteemed by Mr. Darcy, a most intimate, confidential friend. Mr. Darcy often acknowledged himself to be under the greatest obligations to my father’s active superintendence, and when, immediately before my father’s death, Mr. Darcy gave him a voluntary promise of providing for me, I am convinced that he felt it to be as much a debt of gratitude to *him*, as of his affection to myself.”

“How strange!” cried Elizabeth. “How abominable! I wonder that the very pride of this Mr. Darcy has not made him just to you! If from no better motive, that he should not have been too proud to be dishonest—for dishonesty I must