

of keeping him there, and tries to persuade you that he does not care about you.”

Jane shook her head.

“Indeed, Jane, you ought to believe me. No one who has ever seen you together can doubt his affection. Miss Bingley, I am sure, cannot. She is not such a simpleton. Could she have seen half as much love in Mr. Darcy for herself, she would have ordered her wedding clothes. But the case is this: We are not rich enough or grand enough for them; and she is the more anxious to get Miss Darcy for her brother, from the notion that when there has been *one* intermarriage, she may have less trouble in achieving a second; in which there is certainly some ingenuity, and I dare say it would succeed, if Miss de Bourgh were out of the way. But, my dearest Jane, you cannot seriously imagine that because Miss Bingley tells you her brother greatly admires Miss Darcy, he is in the smallest degree less sensible of *your* merit than when he took leave of you on Tuesday, or that it will be in her power to persuade him that, instead of being in love with you, he is very much in love with her friend.”

“If we thought alike of Miss Bingley,” replied Jane, “your representation of all this might make me quite easy. But I know the foundation is unjust. Caroline is incapable of wilfully deceiving anyone; and all that I can hope in this case is that she is deceiving herself.”

“That is right. You could not have started a more happy idea, since you will not take comfort in mine. Believe her to be deceived, by all means. You have now done your duty by her, and must fret no longer.”

“But, my dear sister, can I be happy, even supposing the best, in accepting a man whose sisters and friends are all wishing him to marry elsewhere?”

“You must decide for yourself,” said Elizabeth; “and if, upon mature deliberation, you find that the misery of disobliging his two sisters is more than equivalent to the happiness of being his wife, I advise you by all means to refuse him.”

“How can you talk so?” said Jane, faintly smiling. “You must know that though I should be exceedingly grieved at their disapprobation, I could not hesitate.”

“I did not think you would; and that being the case, I cannot consider your situation with much compassion.”

“But if he returns no more this winter, my choice will never be required. A thousand things may arise in six months!”

The idea of his returning no more Elizabeth treated with the utmost contempt.