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HYDE and
PREJUDICE

When Matchmaking Becomes Monstrous

A two-act comedy by

Christina Hamlett and Jamie Dare

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Hyde and Prejudice

by Christina Hamlett and Jamie Dare

CHARACTERS

8 W / 8 or 9 M / + EXTRAS

ELIZABETH BENNET: *an eligible bachelorette; smart and quick-witted*

FITZWILLIAM DARCY: *an eligible, but arrogant, bachelor*

JANE BENNET: *Elizabeth's pleasant older sister*

CHARLES BINGLEY: *Darcy's easygoing best friend*

MRS. BENNET: *Elizabeth and Jane's overbearing mum*

DR. HENRY JEKYLL: *a young, handsome doctor (Same actor may play Mr. Hyde)*

MR. EDWARD HYDE: *an unkempt, wild-haired, badly dressed monster*

MR. POOLE: *Dr. Jekyll's faithful butler*

SIR DANVERS CAREW: *an older, fussy Member of Parliament*

EMMA CAREW: *Sir Danvers' lovely young daughter*

HARRIET PEPPERCORN: *a flamboyantly colorful London matchmaker*

CAROLINE BINGLEY: *Charles' snooty sister*

MRS. PERIWINKLE: *Dr. Jekyll's neighbor*

JOHN UTTERSON: *an older, distinguished-looking lawyer*

THE BENNET'S MAID

(2) BOBBIES

EXTRAS: *Other Servants and Bobbies, a Newsboy, Townsfolk*

SETTING AND CIRCA

London in the late 19th century

SET DESCRIPTION: *All action transpires on a stationary set as well as in the center theater aisle and on an "outside" riser upstage of the two windows. Isolated lighting as indicated denotes different locations; a scene not in use will be dark. DSR is the office facade of Dr. Henry Jekyll. Perpendicular to this is a short staircase and door flanked by two sconces. DSL is a second facade which will serve as the exterior of a tea shop. Street lamps are placed outside both facades; entrances to the "street" are from the respective downstage wings. Centerstage is an English parlor with chairs, table and a stage left china cabinet. Upstage is a riser with a velvet couch set between two large windows. Entrance/exits are via the respective upstage wings. An arched doorway is upstage right below the riser; another door is perpendicular to the china cabinet. The decor is rounded out with a potted Ficus and Victorian artwork on the walls.*

Hyde and Prejudice

by Christina Hamlett and Jamie Dare

ACT ONE

AT RISE: An eerie spotlight DSR starts to illuminate the exterior of Jekyll's office as tendrils of dry ice indicate a very foggy night in London.

SFX: A distant clock strikes 8 o'clock.

JOHN UTTERSON and BOBBY 1 come across the DSR corner. UTTERSON wears an Inverness coat.

UTTERSON

Ah, here we are. Your company has been a pleasure, young man.

BOBBY 1

Would you care for me to wait, sir? Tis a night not fit for man nor beast.

UTTERSON

No, no, that's quite all right. The man in question is an old friend and the only beast I'm likely to encounter is his neighbor's unpleasant cat, Fluffy.

BOBBY 1

Very well, sir.

He tips his hat and exits DSR. UTTERSON knocks on door. After a moment, it's opened by JEKYLL wearing a lab coat.

JEKYLL

(Steps out and shakes his hand)

John – you're late! I was afraid you'd gotten yourself lost in this wicked fog. Will you join me for some tea?

UTTERSON

Regretfully, I can't stay. As you know, I've just come from the committee.

JEKYLL

(Excited)

Yes, and I've been on pins and needles all evening. They said "yes," of course?

UTTERSON

(Shakes his head)

I'm afraid they had plentiful pins and needles, too, all of which have deflated your ginormous balloon of optimism.

JEKYLL

But my research—

UTTERSON

Pound sterling these days is wobbly on the world market, Henry. The committee simply can't approve financing such – well, in their own words – "unscientific balderdash."

JEKYLL

(Suspiciously)

Those sound like Lanyon's words. It was him, wasn't it? He never believed in my idea and now he wants to make sure no one else does, either!

UTTERSON

I'm sorry, Henry. I wish I weren't the bearer of bad news.

JEKYLL

And I wish the medical community could see the value of separating goodness and evil and banishing the latter forever. *(Insistent)* I'm getting close, John. Closer than you can imagine. All I need—

UTTERSON

—is more sleep. Maybe a vacation in the Tropics. Seriously. If you keep it up, ol' chap, you'll turn into a mad scientist that no one will ever invite anywhere, anyway, anytime soon.

He exits DSR just as POOLE, the butler, appears in the doorway with a tray of tea things.

POOLE

Will Mr. Utterson be returning, Doctor?

JEKYLL

Probably never. He and the others think I'm sort of kook.

POOLE

Very well, sir.

He turns to go inside.

JEKYLL

Poole?

POOLE

Yes, sir?

JEKYLL

My experiments could change the world. Make it a kinder, gentler, more courteous place if the side of one's personality that was self-centered, snarkily cruel and woefully uncouth and unmannered could be eliminated.

POOLE

Whatever you say, sir.

JEKYLL

I just need to escalate my research. I need to try the potion out on something larger than a lab rat...

POOLE gets an alarmed look and backs up a step.

SFX: A large meow coming from DSR.

A lightbulb comes on in JEKYLL's head. He takes the small pitcher of cream off the tray and starts exiting DSR.

JEKYLL (CONT'D)

Here, Fluffy-Wuffy. It's yummy-nummy cream for the itsy-bitsy puddy-cat.

POOLE retreats inside as the spotlight goes off DSR.

A spotlight comes up DSL. It's majorly foggy here, too, as SIR DANVERS CAREW and his pretty daughter EMMA – both in evening clothes – round the corner of the tea shop.

EMMA

Such a pleasant evening, Papa. It was so good of Parliament to let you out early that we might dine together.

SIR DANVERS

Entirely my pleasure. Now what's this exciting news you've been hinting about? Might your mum and I expect to finally have an empty nest?

EMMA

"Finally," Papa? Do I detect impatience for me to wed?

SIR DANVERS

Well, you are getting on in years, Emma. What are you now - 20? 21?

EMMA

Seventeen just last month—and not nearly as old as Mum was when she married you.

SIR DANVERS

Still, I was hoping to welcome a son-in-law before I enter my dotage.

EMMA

Which is precisely why you'll welcome my decision. (*Beat*) Tomorrow afternoon I plan to meet with a matchmaker.

SIR DANVERS

A what?

EMMA

Not a what, Papa. Who. Harriet Peppercorn is the most successful matchmaker in all of London. Why just last season she introduced Lydia Bennet to George Wickham and now they're happily married. And when Mr. Bennet's cousin, poor Mr. Collins, had his proposal to Lydia's sister Elizabeth rejected, it was Miss Peppercorn that set him up the very next day with Charlotte Lucas who was Elizabeth's sensible best friend.

SIR DANVERS

Good heavens but this is harder to keep up with than the goings-on at Downton Abbey. How did a daughter of mine come into the acquaintance of such a matronly matrimonial meddler?

EMMA

I have my friend Jane Bennet to thank for it.

SIR DANVERS

Another Bennet, you say? Their home at Longbourn sounds like a warren of middle-class rabbits.

EMMA

Be kind, Papa. They're dear people and I have every trust Miss Peppercorn will send someone in my direction.

JEKYLL (O.S.)

Here, Fluffy-Fluffy. Come out, come out, wherever you are!

A harried JEKYLL, now in shirtsleeves, strides on from around the corner.

JEKYLL (CONT'D)

Pardon me, but have either of you seen a cat?

SIR DANVERS

London is crawling with cats, sir, and nothing to distinguish one from the other in the dark.

JEKYLL

Well if you should see one with orange and black stripes—

SFX: A loud meow comes from DSR.

JEKYLL

Ah! There he is. Never mind.

He quickly strides off in the fog DSR.

SIR DANVERS

Well that was a curious chap, wasn't he, Emma? Emma?

*He waves a hand in front of her face but
EMMA – fondly looking where Jekyll
exited – is blissed with besottedness.*

The spotlight goes out.

SFX: Bird chirping

*A spotlight comes on in the center aisle;
CHARLES BINGLEY and his sister
CAROLINE are out for a morning walk.*

BINGLEY

So tell me, darling sister, how are you enjoying our new manor at Netherfield Park?

CAROLINE

What I like best, Charles, is the view.

BINGLEY

Ah yes, the cheerful meadow, the charming hedgerows, the sparkling stream--

CAROLINE

The view of Mr. Darcy as he passes by each day in his carriage.

BINGLEY

Why must you persist, Caroline? I've told you time and again that my friend Fitzwilliam is a confirmed bachelor.

CAROLINE

But you did mention I have more than a casual interest in changing that?

BINGLEY

Yes, I believe I did.

CAROLINE

And what did he say? His exact words? Leave nothing out.

BINGLEY

His exact words? "Oh joy."

CAROLINE

(Incredulous)

That's it? You're sure you've left nothing out?

BINGLEY

(Raises his hand)

I swear on our father's grave. Oh by the by, we're hosting a ball on Saturday.

CAROLINE

(Excited)

I trust the dashing handsome Mr. Darcy is invited?

BINGLEY

Of course. And the Bennets.

CAROLINE

(Aghast)

The Bennets? Are you totally mad?

BINGLEY

It's the neighborly thing to do. Not to mention that I've heard the two older daughters are rather fetching. What a jolly mixer that will make, don't you think?

CAROLINE

Oh joy.

The spotlight goes out.

Lights come up on the parlor.

ELIZABETH and MRS. BENNET – wearing tea dresses – are on the riser in front of the sunlit windows. ELIZABETH is reading a letter as a MAID takes china cups and saucers from the cabinet, sets them on the table, then exits USL.

ELIZABETH

"Dearest Family. Mr. Wickham and I are happily settled into our new lives as husband and wife. My beloved has just received a new assignment in the North of England and when next I write I shall happily be decorating a cozy cottage which we encourage you to visit at your earliest convenience. Fondly, Lydia." (*Shows letter to MRS. BENNET*) And look, Mama, she's drawn a round little face with a big smile.

MRS. BENNET

Marriage obviously seems to suit her, although I do wish they'd had a proper wedding rather than running off as they did. I hope you and Jane will exhibit much more sense and sensibility. (*Beat*) Now tell me about this Emma person your sister has recently friended. Does she come from a good family?

ELIZABETH

Well, her father, Sir Danvers Carew, is a member of Parliament and her mother throws posh parties and does charitable deeds.

MRS. BENNET

Yet with such a prestigious pedigree the girl is still single?

ELIZABETH

Like Jane and myself, we prefer to call it "discerning."

*JANE and EMMA enter from USR
archway.*

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Oh here they are now.

*Pleasant introductions are ad-libbed as
the MAID returns with a teapot and
proceeds to fill the cups set out.*

JANE

Miss Peppercorn will be in momentarily. She stopped to compliment the gardener on his roses—

EMMA

—and inquire whether he had a wife.

*They both giggle as HARRIET
PEPPERCORN enters. Wildly colorful
and bejeweled, she's clearly well-to-do.
And all business.*

HARRIET

Mrs. Bennet, Elizabeth. We meet again. And how is our dear Lydia?

MRS. BENNET

(Resigned)

Still in love with a man quite woefully unsuitable. Shame.

HARRIET

Now, now. Mr. Wickham may not be the smartest match but neither is he the worst. Somewhere in there is a moral compass. It shall surface eventually.

HARRIET whips out parchment and a quill.

HARRIET

Speaking of husbands. Do tell me the qualities you seek.

JANE

Nothing too extraordinary. Intellect. Wit. Humility.

ELIZABETH

Compassion.

EMMA

A love of cats! *(Off the others' stares)* Animals, I mean. Love of animals.

MRS. BENNET raises her hand to speak.

MRS. BENNET

I rather think appearance is important. And fortune.

HARRIET

Forgive me, Mrs. Bennet, but your marriage to Mr. Bennet makes you ineligible for my services.

MRS. BENNET

Oh, poot.

HARRIET leans in, addressing the YOUNG WOMEN.

HARRIET

As it so happens, there is a newcomer to the area. Charles Bingley, a single man of large fortune. Five thousand a year, at least.

The WOMEN ooh and ahh.

EMMA

Does he have a cat named Fluffy?

Again, all eyes on EMMA.

EMMA

(Covering)

I tease.

MRS. BENNET

Bingley. Bingley, you say? We were invited to a ball hosted by one Charles Bingley. This Saturday night.

The LADIES are a-twitter.

HARRIET

Excellent. Once again the stars align for the Bennet family. Miss Carew, I shall continue searching for a suitable match for you.

EMMA

Thank you ever so, Miss Peppercorn. *(Beat)* To clarify my prior comment. The cat? It should have orange and black stripes.

On HARRIET's confusion, the lights go down over the parlor.

SFX: STRING QUARTET MUSIC

A spotlight comes up center aisle where CHARLES and FITZWILLIAM DARCY are chatting. They're in evening clothes.

BINGLEY

Come, Darcy. I hate to see you standing about in this stupid manner. You must dance.

DARCY

Charles, you know I rarely engage in spontaneous, carefree movement. That said, I have danced tonight. With the second eldest Bennet daughter. Whatever her name is.

BINGLEY

Elizabeth.

DARCY

I'd sooner eat my own horse than repeat that disaster.

BINGLEY

Why? She is quite lovely.

DARCY

She told that herd of sisters I was... odious.

BINGLEY

Ooh. Such a strong word, is it not?

DARCY

Very much so.

BINGLEY

(Chuckles)

Perhaps she meant it as a compliment.

DARCY

How easy it is for you to forgive. You are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room.

BINGLEY

Jane? She is the most beautiful creature I have ever beheld. That smile. Those eyes. She is simply exquisite. *(Noticing DARCY's irritation)* Oh, but Elizabeth is nice, too.

BINGLEY sees someone in the distance.

BINGLEY (CONT'D)

Look, there's Caroline. Come, dance with her. She is my sister, she shall not vex you.

DARCY

Apologies, Charles. The hour is late. I must return home to, erm – *(Thinks)* – wash my hair.

DARCY exits briskly toward the back of the theater. BINGLEY calls after him.

BINGLEY

... Some other time?

SFX: Crickets.

BINGLEY wilts a little and the spotlight goes out center aisle.

The lights come up DSL. ELIZABETH and JANE are having tea at a table outside the tea shop.

ELIZABETH

(Offering)

One lump or two?

JANE

Two, if you please. Mr. Bingley also likes tea, you know. With two lumps of sugar. Have I mentioned that?

ELIZABETH

Only about twenty times. Really, Jane, it might be wise not to rush into circumstances. You two have only just met. And there is something odd about the company he keeps.

JANE

Are you referring to Mr. Darcy? You are not keen on him. Why?

ELIZABETH

The arrogance. The conceit. The pride. The vanity.

JANE

Besides that.

ELIZABETH

He said some most unflattering things about Mr. Wickham when he was courting Lydia.

JANE

Then, alas, I must agree. What a terribly unpleasant man. How difficult it is, finding a suitable match these days.

ELIZABETH

Precisely why we need the Harriet Peppercorns of the world.

They clink tea cups.

JANE

Speaking of Miss Peppercorn, I wonder who she might find for Emma.

ELIZABETH

Someone feline-friendly.

JANE

(I know, right?)

Indeed, yes?

ELIZABETH

But there are so few newcomers to Hertfordshire. She has a most challenging task before her.

Just then, JEKYLL enters (in street attire), crossing DSR. JANE and ELIZABETH turn their heads slowly, in unison, as he walks by.

JANE

Well, that was fortuitous timing.

ELIZABETH

Was he wearing a ring?

JANE

Perhaps we shall have a look.

Giggling, they exit DSR in search of JEKYLL. The lights go down DSL.

A spotlight comes up in center aisle. As a few TOWNSPEOPLE mill about, a NEWSBOY hawks the latest edition.

NEWSBOY

Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Monster cat terrorizes London!

The TOWNSPEOPLE buy copies and ad lib astonishment as they read the story.

Meanwhile, a spotlight comes up DSR as JEKYLL is about to put a key in the door. MRS. PERIWINKLE, his fretful neighbor, comes around the DSR corner. The aisle crowd slowly dissipates toward back of theater.

MRS. PERIWINKLE

Oh, Dr. Jekyll - there you are!

JEKYLL

Good morning, Mrs. Periwinkle. *(In concern)* Is something amiss?

MRS. PERIWINKLE

Indeed it is! Fluffy went a-missing last night and hasn't come back. Have you seen him?

JEKYLL

Uh...Fluffy? The – uh – cat? That Fluffy?

MRS. PERIWINKLE

This is no time to be a tease, Doctor. It's not like my Fluffy Boy to wander off.

JEKYLL

Yes, well, I'm quite sure he shall return of his own accord. Most cats do when they've had their fill of moussing.

MRS. PERIWINKLE

Oh but I hope so. London can be a frightening place.

JEKYLL

(Pleasantly)

Then we must all take care to look out for one another, shall we not, Mrs. Periwinkle?

He steps inside. MRS. PERIWINKLE squints at the audience to see if she can find her missing pet. She's about to give up and exit DSR when ELIZABETH and JANE approach her.

ELIZABETH

Excuse me, good lady, but might we have a word?

MRS. PERIWINKLE

And what would the likes of you be wanting with the likes of me?

JANE

Only a brief question—

ELIZABETH

—the answer to which would be enormously helpful.

MRS. PERIWINKLE

(Folds her arms)

Well?

JANE

What do you know of the gentleman who just stepped inside?

MRS. PERIWINKLE

The doctor?

JANE

(Excited)

Doctor who?

ELIZABETH

Oh what a goose you are, Jane. Doctor Who is a fictional Time Lord. Everyone knows that. *(To MRS. PERIWINKLE)* Now about the gentleman—

MRS. PERIWINKLE

You're friends of Dr. Jekyll?

ELIZABETH

Not yet...but it would please us no end if we were.

JANE

Do you happen to know if he's attached?

Attached to what?
MRS. PERIWINKLE

A wife?
ELIZABETH

A fiancée?
JANE

MRS. PERIWINKLE
The only thing our good Dr. Jekyll is attached to is his work. (*Tsks Tsks*) Up all hours of the night, that one. Not my place to say but a sweetheart would brighten his spirits, I think.

She exits DSR.

JANE
(*To ELIZABETH*)
We simply must tell Miss Peppercorn!

The spotlight goes out DSR and comes up DSL where BINGLEY and DARCY are seated and having tea.

DARCY
So there's no talking you out of this latest foolishness?

BINGLEY
How can you call courtship of a lovely woman foolishness?

DARCY
It is if it turns to matrimony and a brood of noisy children in nappies. Besides there are plenty of fish in the sea.

BINGLEY
I'm not getting any younger, Fitzwilliam. One simply cannot expect me to throw out a net forever.

DARCY
(*Puzzled*)
Which one is Annette? I thought you were speaking of Jane.

BINGLEY
I was, I am, and I shall make my call on her this very afternoon. Come with me.

DARCY
Why?

BINGLEY

Because if I show up by myself it will look deliberate. If I'm with you, it can be construed as the natural coincidence of us walking together and one of us suddenly remarking, "Oh look, there's the Bennet house. We should say hello."

DARCY

Honestly, Charles, who writes your dialogue? It's a contrivance if ever I've heard one. Besides, I should loathe it if that Elizabeth person thought I'd come to call on her.

BINGLEY

Ah! So you do like her!

DARCY

Not in the slightest.

BINGLEY

Yes, you do. You certainly like her better than my own sister.

DARCY

That's not a winning argument, Charles. And why do you keep putting extra sugar in your tea?

BINGLEY

(Blissfully)

It's the way my sweet Jane drinks hers.

DARCY rolls his eyes as the spotlight goes out DSL.

A spotlight comes up in the center aisle. POOLE is helping JEKYLL on with his lab coat.

JEKYLL

You know, Poole, I've been thinking.

POOLE

An ambitious and laudable pursuit, sir.

JEKYLL

I know. And you know what I've realized?

POOLE

Not in the slightest, sir.

JEKYLL

Animals do not behave in exactly the same manner as humans.

POOLE

You have an unflinching grasp of the obvious, sir.

JEKYLL

So then I don't have to tell you what this means for my current experiments on the coexisting dichotomy of the human psyche.

POOLE is clueless.

JEKYLL (CONT'D)

All right, I'll tell you but you must be sworn to complete secrecy.

POOLE

It is my middle name, sir.

JEKYLL

In order to separate good from evil and successfully analyze the results, I must try the potion on a sentient being.

As he explains, a wary POOLE backs up the aisle and exits.

JEKYLL (CONT'D)

One that can distinguish the ability to think from the ability to feel. One that accepts the extreme risks but selflessly rises to the potential reward of astonishing acclaim in the academic and scientific world. One that dares to make a difference by boldly traveling where no man has gone before - to plumb the depths of his own complex personality. Do you see where I'm going with this, Poole? Poole? *(Shouts after him)* I didn't mean you! I meant me!

Spotlight goes out.

Lights come up center stage. MRS. BENNET is at the table having tea. The maid escorts in HARRIET from USR archway. The hatless HARRIET is contemplating a much mangled hat missing some of its plumes.

MRS. BENNET

(Goes to greet her)

My dear Miss Peppercorn. What a pleasant surprise. *(Beat)* Goodness but what happened to your chapeau?

HARRIET

A most unsettling encounter with a large, vicious cat. It pounced and made off with one of my birds – can you imagine?

MRS. BENNET

Oh dear. Do come refresh yourself with some tea.

The MAID dutifully fetches the tea pot and a second cup. After, she exits USR.

MRS. BENNET (CONT'D)

And to what do I owe this lovely visit?

HARRIET

I came to inquire how things went at the Bingleys. Did your daughters make a successful impression?

MRS. BENNET

Oh yes. Jane in particular. She was quite taken with Mr. Bingley and vice versa. He's all she talks about.

HARRIET

Well done! He's a smart catch, you know. An annual income of five thousand pounds.

MRS. BENNET

So you mentioned.

Upstage outside the window a MAN-SIZED "CAT" with peacock feathers in its mouth is "climbing" up and peering in.

HARRIET

But, of course, his friend Mr. Darcy is worth thrice that amount and has his own estate at Pemberley.

MRS. BENNET

(This is exciting)

Really?

HARRIET

He'd make an excellent match for Elizabeth, I think. Did she fancy him?

MRS. BENNET

Not at all. But thrice you say and an estate at Pemberley?

Outside the window, a BOBBY enters from USR, sees the CAT and chases it. A moment later, the BOBBY is chased by the CAT in the opposite direction.

HARRIET

Exactly. But if Elizabeth's sentiments lay elsewhere—

MRS. BENNET

But they hardly had time to talk! I'm sure that once she gets to know him and sees how very much he has to offer—

HARRIET

I was thinking I might introduce Mr. Darcy to Jane's little friend. Emma, was it?

MRS. BENNET

No, no, Emma would be completely wrong. I think we must endeavor to keep Mr. Darcy in the family. This family.

The MAID returns from USR archway.

MAID

Begging your pardon, mum, but two gentlemen are here. A Mr. Charles Bingley and a Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy.

The two WOMEN exchange a look.

MRS. BENNET

Then by all means, show them in. And do fetch more tea.

Under the following scene, JEKYLL crosses from USR, still looking for Fluffy. He encounters the terrified BOBBY, who points USL before rushing off USR. JEKYLL goes to investigate. A moment later, the BOBBY returns with a SECOND BOBBY. The pair then encounter JEKYLL who's holding the normal-sized Fluffy in his arms. Through pantomime as JEKYLL exits USR, it's clear the SECOND BOBBY thought the first BOBBY was exaggerating about a monster cat.

BINGLEY and DARCY enter. MRS. BENNET greets them.

MRS. BENNET

Elizabeth and Jane are out for a walk but I assure you, they shall return directly.

ELIZABETH and JANE enter from USL.

MRS. BENNET (CONT'D)

See? As they say, punctuality is the lifeblood of any good marriage. Just ask Mr. Bennet. Oh wait, he is not yet here.

BINGLEY crosses to JANE and ELIZABETH.

BINGLEY

Miss Bennet. And Miss Bennet. I hope you're well.

JANE

Much better now than two minutes ago, thank you.

DARCY says nothing to ELIZABETH so BINGLEY elbows him.

DARCY

Miss Bennet. Again we find ourselves occupying the same space.

ELIZABETH

Most unfortunate news indeed. How are we to endure?

MRS. BENNET

Now Lizzy, I am certain Mr. Darcy is exhausted from managing his fortune - ten thousand a year - and his even larger estate. Pemberley, is it? I pay so little mind to such things.

DARCY

Pemberley is correct, madam. As are the references to "little" and "mind."

BINGLEY

(Changing subject)

So! Um ... Miss Bennet. Please do us the honor of introducing your friend.

ELIZABETH

May I present Miss Harriet Peppercorn. She's helping us with some personal business.

THE MEN bow and ad lib hellos.

JANE

Which reminds me. Miss Peppercorn, have you learnt anything about the good doctor?

DARCY

Doctor? Doctor who?

ELIZABETH

Why, the Time Lord, of course. Everyone in Hertfordshire knows that.

DARCY

Ah yes, Hertfordshire. Otherwise known as the country's armpit.

THE MEN chuckle.

BINGLEY

(Realizing)

Come now. I live in Hertfordshire.

DARCY

You, my good sir, are more ... Hertfordshire-adjacent.

BINGLEY

I beg to differ. Netherfield is centrally-located.

DARCY

On what planet?

BINGLEY

This one. My home is prime real estate.

MRS. BENNET

Oh, enough with the geography lesson! Lizzy mentioned a Time Lord! Does he need a Lady?

HARRIET

Everyone needs a Lady. I shall work on it directly, but first the good Dr. Jekyll. I daresay he's a smart match for Elizabeth.

MRS. BENNET

Her? But Jane is twice as handsome.

HARRIET

I was going to say thrice.

ELIZABETH

You do both realize I am here in the room, countenance ablaze, do you not?

HARRIET

See? She has the passion and wit that any doctor would find agreeable.

DARCY

Yes, we understand, he's a doctor. La-dee-dah. *(To HARRIET)* I know you did not seek my good opinion, but I do believe a more suitable match awaits this Jekyll fellow. Mr. Bingley's sister, for example.

BINGLEY

Caroline? Why?

DARCY

To divert her attention from me. I have no wish of denying it.

HARRIET circles BINGLEY, giving him the once-over.

HARRIET

A female version of Mr. Bingley... interesting indeed. I shall introduce her to the doctor at once.

During the following, JANE and BINGLEY exit through the door by the china cabinet. No one notices.

MRS. BENNET

Yes, excellent, now back to us. Lizzy, are you quite certain you will not consider Mr. Darcy? Despite his many, many, many shortcomings, he is a man of great consequence.

DARCY

(To ELIZABETH)

They do speak as if we are not in the room.

ELIZABETH

Please, Mamma. There is more to love than fortune.

MRS. BENNET

(Mortified; to HARRIET)

She didn't mean that.

HARRIET

Mrs. Bennet, your daughter clearly has no interest in Mr. Darcy. In such cases, it is best to move on. I shall match him with someone else. It is settled.

DARCY

Forgive me, Miss Peppercorn, but I am capable of finding my own match. I may not be a kind man, or an eloquent man, or a man who bathes particularly often but I thank you not to trod upon my free spirit. Independence is a most cherished condition. Please allow me to do as I wish.

ELIZABETH

Mr. Darcy, you surprise me. At last we find some common ground.

ELIZABETH and MR. DARCY high-five.

HARRIET

I shall not stay where I am not wanted, then. Good day.

She grabs her hat and exits in a huff. After a beat she re-enters, wearing the shredded hat.

HARRIET

Well, if you insist I return. Perhaps an escort would be wise. (*Indicating hat*) The cat, you know. Mr. Darcy, will you do me the honor?

DARCY

If I must.

DARCY offers his arm. HARRIET clings to him and they exit.

MRS. BENNET

Miss Peppercorn, come back! I have other daughters you've not yet seen and they need rich men, too! Oh, and where has Jane gone off to now? And Mr. Bingley? This is most unsettling. (*Calling*) Here, Bingley, Bingley, Bingley...

MRS. BENNET exits USL. ELIZABETH rubs her temples, as if warding off a headache.

ELIZABETH

Perhaps I should have fought harder to meet that doctor.

A giggling JANE and MR. BINGLEY emerge from hiding.

JANE

Dearest Lizzy, I have the most wonderful announcement!

ELIZABETH

That this is all an unpleasant dream?

JANE

No, my dear, silly sister. Mr. Bingley has asked for my hand! Please do not tell anyone our secret. Isn't it the most jolly news?

ELIZABETH

Oh, joy.

On ELIZABETH's forced smile, the lights go down center stage.

A spotlight comes up center aisle. EMMA is weeping; HER FATHER tries to cheer her.

SIR DANVERS

There, there, Emma. Why so disconsolate? You've nearly wept a bathtub of tears and your eyes are unflatteringly puffy.

EMMA

Oh Father, shall I be destined to always live beneath your roof?

SIR DANVERS

Heavens, I should hope not! Er – what I mean to say, my dear, is that you've barely given your Miss Peppercorn a proper chance.

EMMA

But already there's rumor of true romance between my friend Jane and Mr. Bingley. And now she's gone and arranged an opera date between Caroline Bingley and a doctor.

SIR DANVERS

Doctor? Doctor who?

EMMA

No one you know, I'm sure. It's just so terribly, terribly unfair, don't you think?

SIR DANVERS

Cheer up now and stay positive, Emma. As they say, there's a lid for every pot.

EMMA

Yes but what if I'm to remain woefully lidless forever?!

The spotlight goes down.

SFX: sound of an opera orchestra tuning up.

DSL, JANE and CAROLINE are dressed in finery. Bingley - also dressed for the evening - happily comes around the corner with tickets.

BINGLEY

First balcony, as promised!

JANE

Oh Charles, how brilliant of you!

BINGLEY

(To CAROLINE)

So where's your escort? He did know to meet us here, didn't he?

CAROLINE

Well, of course, he did. Miss Peppercorn was most specific that he'd be coming directly from his place of work. *(Smugly)* I did mention he's a doctor, didn't I?

JANE

Only a squillion times.

BINGLEY

(Looks up)

It's due to rain at any moment. We should get inside. Besides, it would be disrespectful of us to miss the overture.

JANE

But then how is the doctor to get his ticket?

CAROLINE grabs a pair from CHARLES.

CAROLINE

I'll wait for him myself. He shouldn't be much longer.

BINGLEY

But you've never met. Are you sure this is a smart idea, Caroline?

CAROLINE

Miss Peppercorn described him to the letter. I'm certain I shall know him on sight and be completely charmed.

JANE

Oh leave her be, Charles. I so would not want to catch a sniffle on this dark and stormy night.

The spotlight goes out as BINGLEY and JANE exit DSL.

A spotlight comes up in the center aisle on JEKYLL who's contemplating a large test tube of brightly colored liquid.

JEKYLL

If my dosage calculations of the potion are correct based on my previous experimentation with Fluffy, the transformation should last but a few minutes at most, certainly long enough for me to meet Miss Bingley at the opera house. Should something go awry - no, best not to court failure by embracing a negative mindset.

He takes a deep breath, then proceeds to down the entire potion. There's a loud crash of thunder followed by flickers of lightning. The spotlight immediately goes out on JEKYLL but the thunder and lightning continue with a spotlight DSR, now coupled with dry ice. The door opens and his monstrous alter ego, HYDE,

emerges with a malevolent expression. He glances about furtively, then quickly skulks off DSR as the spotlight goes out.

We hear the overture to Verdi's Rigoletto as a spotlight comes up DSL on an increasingly impatient CAROLINE in her own little patch of fog.

CAROLINE

I so abhor tardiness, especially in a potential husband who seeks to impress me. Tardiness is a sign of disrespect, disregard, distraction, dishonor, disaffection, disconnection, distrustworthiness and distinct dawdling. Certainly Mr. Darcy would never stoop to such shoddy behavior.

HYDE is now creeping up from DSR with clawed hands ready to pounce.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

When next I see Miss Peppercorn, I shall give her a piece of my mind and declare in no uncertain terms that I have not found this experience at all amusing.

She turns, sees HYDE and screams. HYDE roars. Caroline runs off DSL with HYDE in pursuit as the spotlight goes out.

Spotlight comes up in center aisle. As a few townspeople mill about, the newsboy hawks the latest edition.

NEWSBOY

Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Monster terrorizes London!

The CROWD ad libs concerns as they buy COPIES.

The spotlight goes down and comes up on the parlor where ELIZABETH is reading a book while MRS. BENNET sews.

As this scene unfolds, a frantic CAROLINE runs past the upstage window with HYDE chasing her. She then runs past in the opposite direction, encounters a BOBBY and points behind her.

The BOBBY gives chase as CAROLINE escapes; HYDE then chases the BOBBY. Neither of the BENNET WOMEN, however, even notices this.

MRS. BENNET

Your sister Jane seems quite happy of late.

ELIZABETH

Yes. Quite.

MRS. BENNET

You don't suppose she has a secret?

ELIZABETH

I really wouldn't know.

MRS. BENNET

I had so hoped one of you would attract Mr. Darcy. He's such a rich – err, a fine man – don't you think?

ELIZABETH

Only if one finds his sort of pompous superficiality endearing. Which I, for one, don't.

MRS. BENNET

Then what about Henry Jekyll? Have you given him a thought?

ELIZABETH

No, not at all. I understand he's at the opera this very evening with Miss Bingley.

A wild-haired, hyperventilating CAROLINE in a drenched dress and missing her shoes suddenly bursts in from USR archway.

MRS. BENNET

If Miss Bingley is at the opera, then what is she doing here?

ELIZABETH

(Casually)

Heavens, Miss Bingley. You look like something the cat dragged in.

CAROLINE

Not only is your observation unkind, Miss Bennet, but I was nearly dragged off by a hideous monster! Had I not jumped in the Thames to swim for my life—

MRS. BENNET

I'll have my maid bring you a towel.

She rings a bell.

ELIZABETH

What about Jane? And your brother?

MRS. BENNET

Excellent question, my dear. *(To CAROLINE)* Are they in the Thames as well?

The MAID dutifully appears.

MRS. BENNET (CONT'D)

A towel for Miss Bingley, please. And do be quick. She's dripping rather excessively.

The MAID exits.

During this exchange HYDE skulks past the upstage windows, notices THE WOMEN, and tries (Unsuccessfully) to figure out how to get in.

CAROLINE

They left me outside to await the man with whom Miss Peppercorn felt I was so splendidly well suited.

ELIZABETH

Oh yes. How did that go?

CAROLINE

Though I lingered with the utmost of patience, he never arrived.

MRS. BENNET

How terribly unmannered of him!

ELIZABETH

Perhaps he met with some dire misfortune.

The MAID returns to drape a towel over CAROLINE's shoulders.

CAROLINE

His misfortune is that he shall never ever be given a second chance to woo me!

The lights go down onstage. A spotlight comes up in the center aisle where a peeved MISS PEPPERCORN is talking with JEKYLL.

HARRIET

Her exact words, Dr. Jekyll, were "I wait for no one." She was quite clear about that.

JEKYLL

But couldn't you explain that something came over me? Got into me? That I wasn't quite myself? By the time I got back to – uh – got to the opera house, I assumed she had gone inside. And not having a ticket to join her—

HARRIET

I'm sorry, sir, but no excuse will redeem you in Miss Bingley's eyes, especially in light of her horrible misadventure.

JEKYLL

Excuse me? What misadventure?

HARRIET

You mean you hadn't heard about the monster? It's all over town.

The spotlight goes down on the center aisle with JEKYLL looking aghast.

Lights come up centerstage; BINGLEY and JANE sit on the loveseat upstage.

JANE

Is Caroline doing well? We've not seen much of her.

BINGLEY

I didn't mention it? She's writing a book.

JANE

Caroline? Seriously?

BINGLEY

Quite. She's taking a page of inspiration from Mary Shelley and writing her own monster story. I daresay the task of composition keeps her cheerfully occupied from dawn to dusk.

JANE

I shudder at the very thought of monsters.

BINGLEY

Ah, but you will always have me to protect you from them.

He leans in for a kiss.

MRS. BENNET (O.S.)

Jane!

*They quickly break apart as MRS.
BENNET enters from USL.*

MRS. BENNET (CONT'D)

Jane, have you—Oh. Mr. Bingley. I thought you were in the garden with Mr. Darcy.

BINGLEY

I only stepped in just now, Mrs. Bennet. He'll be along momentarily.

MRS. BENNET

And not a moment too soon. Jane, I need you to go find your sister. Miss Peppercorn is on her way over with news so doubly exciting I can barely contain myself.

JANE

What sort of news, Mamma?

MRS. BENNET

(Drawing her aside)

She has arranged for a certain young doctor to call on Elizabeth.

JANE

Doctor who?

MRS. BENNET

Dr. Henry Jekyll.

JANE

Jekyll? Isn't he the thoughtless bounder who stood up Miss Bingley the night of the opera?

MRS. BENNET

Purely a misunderstanding. He wasn't himself that night. But since Miss Bingley no longer has an interest, it would appear the doctor is back on the marriage market.

*A puzzled JANE exits USL to go find
ELIZABETH at the same moment DARCY
enters from USR archway.*

MRS. BENNET (CONT'D)

Mr. Darcy. Your timing is perfect.

DARCY

Perfect for what?

MRS. BENNET

Miss Peppercorn is on her way over even as we speak.

DARCY

Then it coincides perfectly with my leaving. Ready to go, Bingley?

MRS. BENNET

But you haven't even heard the news. She's spoken to Sir Danvers Carew who has given his blessing for you to call on his daughter, Emma, tomorrow evening.

DARCY

Respectfully, Mrs. Bennet, I have no desire for Miss Peppercorn's services. I thought I made that unmistakably clear.

MRS. BENNET

The date with Miss Carew has already been set, Mr. Darcy. And a proper gentleman does not renege on his social obligations.

Before he can respond, she exits through the USR archway.

BINGLEY

(Amused)

I would not have seen that coming.

DARCY

Nor shall I stay and watch its arrival. Get your coat. We're leaving.

BINGLEY

I can't possibly leave until I say goodbye to Jane.

DARCY

Fine. But be quick about it.

BINGLEY exits USL as DARCY paces.

ELIZABETH (O.S.)

You can't be serious!

JANE (O.S.)

She told me just now.

At the sound of their voices, DARCY decides to hide and exits through the door by the china cabinet. ELIZABETH and JANE enter from USR, pausing at the loveseat.

ELIZABETH

Honestly, Jane, that's almost possibly the stupidest thing I've ever heard. The man behaved monstrously toward Miss Bingley. How do we know history won't repeat itself?

JANE

(Looks out window)

Oh dear. Miss Peppercorn's carriage just drew up and Mamma's gone out to meet her.

ELIZABETH

Well, neither one can do anything if they can't find me.

She steps off the riser and looks around. At that moment, BINGLEY reappears from USL; he and JANE happily rush to embrace. Oblivious to this, ELIZABETH goes to the door by the china cabinet and steps inside. A moment later she steps out, followed by DARCY.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

(Not amused)

Fancy meeting you here.

DARCY

Desperate times call for desperate measures. We have a situation, Miss Bennet.

ELIZABETH

(Rolls her eyes)

Tell me about it.

DARCY

It seems your Miss Peppercorn plans to push me into the eager arms of Miss Carew.

ELIZABETH

I was referring to my situation, Mr. Darcy. She hopes to marry me off to Dr. Jekyll.

DARCY

And you're opposed?

ELIZABETH

With every fibre of my being.

MRS. BENNET (O.S.)

They'll be so excited about this!

HARRIET (O.S.)

I do love happy endings, don't you?

MRS. BENNET (O.S.)

As much as I love proper weddings! Perhaps they'll have a double ceremony!

DARCY suddenly takes ELIZABETH by the shoulders.

DARCY

Kiss me. Now.

ELIZABETH

What?

DARCY

Kiss me as if you mean it.

He proceeds to kiss her as if he means it just a split second before MRS. BENNET and MISS PEPPERCORN enter from USR archway. Even JANE and BINGLEY notice.

JANE/BINGLEY/MRS.
BENNET/HARRIET

Oh my!

DARCY and ELIZABETH continue kissing.

HARRIET

Well, this certainly changes everything...

The lights go down.

End ACT ONE.

ACT TWO

SETTING: *Same.*

AT RISE: *No one has moved from where they were previously. DARCY and ELIZABETH are still in kiss mode.*

BINGLEY

(Off the kissers)

Do you suppose they'll stay that way forever?

JANE

(Pouts)

You've never kissed me like that.

BINGLEY

(Grins)

Is that a challenge, Miss Bennet?

He goes to kiss her but MRS. BENNET clears her throat, loudly. DARCY and ELIZABETH feign startlement.

ELIZABETH

Mamma! Miss Peppercorn! We didn't hear you come in.

HARRIET

Apparently not.

MRS. BENNET

(Stern)

Mr. Darcy. *(Then, excited)* Welcome to the family. Ten thousand a year!

She rushes to embrace him. Alarmed, DARCY backpedals.

DARCY

It was just a kiss, that is all. There's no need to attach serious meaning to something that meant nothing.

MRS. BENNET

Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

Just as he said, Mamma. It meant nothing. Seriously. Nothing at all.

MRS. BENNET

(Weeping; melodramatic)

Oh, what are you doing to your dear mother? You think I like the pressure of marrying off all these daughters?

BINGLEY

It may be less work than you realize...

JANE shushes him.

HARRIET

Mrs. Bennet, I do not wish to be unkind but I advise taking a break from the matchmaking. Miss Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are most ill-suited as marriage partners.

JANE

For each other?

HARRIET

For anyone.

BINGLEY

(To JANE)

What must it be like when she is unkind?

HARRIET

I meant only that both are so indifferent to romance. I simply cannot have that tarnishing my good reputation. Regrettably, I must terminate my services.

DARCY

I, for one, never hired you at all.

HARRIET

Then it shall be a smooth transition. *(Beat)* After you meet with your dates tomorrow evening.

DARCY

And why is that, ma'am?

HARRIET

To inform them of the dumping. I certainly cannot shoulder such responsibility. A lady and a gentleman must fulfill their own obligations.

ELIZABETH

Clearly, she's made us an offer we cannot refuse.

DARCY

Indeed. Come, Bingley, before she sets me up with a potted plant.

BINGLEY and DARCY prepare to leave.

ELIZABETH

Mr. Darcy, if I may have a word. *(Pulling him aside)* The moment we shared. Please do not suppose it held any meaning for me. I can assure you, it did not.

DARCY

Nor did it mean anything to me.

ELIZABETH

I see. It is settled, then.

DARCY

Good.

ELIZABETH

Good.

DARCY

Better.

BINGLEY

(Trying to help)

Best! There, we are all in agreement. Come, Darcy, matters to attend.

DARCY and BINGLEY bow and exit, leaving ELIZABETH to gaze after them as the lights go down.

A spotlight comes up center aisle. EMMA is reading as SIR DANVERS paces, trying to conceal his excitement.

EMMA

Something on your mind, Papa?

SIR DANVERS

No, not at all. Read on.

He circles her until he can contain himself no longer.

SIR DANVERS

I hear a certain wealthy gentleman will be calling on you tomorrow evening.

EMMA

Oh, that. Indeed.

SIR DANVERS

Should you be getting ready?

EMMA

It does not take me four and twenty hours to get dressed.

SIR DANVERS

Ah. It only seems that way.

EMMA closes her book.

EMMA

In truth, Papa, I never should have agreed to the matchmaker. Mr. Darcy is most disagreeable. Everyone says so. And he has no affinity at all for cats.

SIR DANVERS

But his fortune. And the size of that estate. You could house a colony of cats and he would never know.

EMMA

You are well-versed in his finances, I see.

SIR DANVERS

People talk. I listen. And I would be most eager to welcome Mr. Darcy as a son-in-law.

EMMA

Because you do not have to live with him. True love cannot be forced, Papa. It happens most unexpectedly.

SIR DANVERS

And it can vanish if one waits too long. *(Then)* Have I mentioned he owns three lakes?

SIR DANVERS holds up three fingers and mouths "three."

EMMA

(Not listening)

I could turn a corner tomorrow and the man of my dreams will be there.

SIR DANVERS

Upon my word, Emma, that pretty head is always in the clouds. Mr. Darcy owns half of England. No matter where you travel, you would always be close to home.

EMMA

Distance is not a concern, Papa. Were I to find the right man, I would gladly follow him across time and space. And we would never look back.

A face-palm from SIR DANVERS as the spotlight goes out center aisle.

Lights come up in the parlor. ELIZABETH is reading a book as MRS. BENNET paces.

MRS. BENNET

I do so hope it's true what they say.

ELIZABETH

(Without looking up)

What who says about what?

MRS. BENNET

That the third time is the charm.

ELIZABETH

In what context, Mamma?

MRS. BENNET

Why the context of matrimony, of course. Firstly, you failed to attract the attention of Mr. Bingley. Secondly, you've shown no interest in Mr. Darcy beyond a lingering and most inappropriate kiss. And now with Dr. Jekyll due to arrive at any moment—

ELIZABETH

—and likely departing with equal haste when he learns of my indifference...

Before MRS. BENNET can respond, the MAID appears.

MAID

Begging your pardon, mum, but there's a gentleman to see Miss Bennet.

MRS. BENNET

Yes, yes, show him in.

As the MAID goes out, MRS. BENNET grabs away Elizabeth's book, snaps it shut and gives her a stern look. MR. BINGLEY enters.

ELIZABETH

Mr. Bingley!

MRS. BENNET

Mr. Bingley?

ELIZABETH

What a surprise.

MRS. BENNET

Indeed it is. I thought you were Dr. Jekyll.

BINGLEY

I can't imagine why. I'm told we look nothing alike.

MRS. BENNET

What I mean to say is that he's coming to court Elizabeth.

BINGLEY

Why?

ELIZABETH

You said that rather harshly, Mr. Bingley.

BINGLEY

My apology, Miss Bennet. I intended only to express surprise. I thought it was Mr. Darcy you fancied.

ELIZABETH

Mr. Darcy? Seriously? What a silly idea.

MRS. BENNET

Your arrival, Mr. Bingley, is most awkward.

BINGLEY

Then I shall keep it brief. Might I speak to Miss Bennet?

MRS. BENNET

Isn't that what you've been doing?

BINGLEY

I meant the other Miss Bennet.

MRS. BENNET

I see. Elizabeth. Go fetch your sister and be quick about it. We do not want to keep Dr. Jekyll waiting.

ELIZABETH smirks and exits USL.

MRS. BENNET (CONT'D)

(To BINGLEY)

Might I inquire as to the urgency of your speaking with Jane?

BINGLEY

It isn't just your daughter, Mrs. Bennet. I shall also desire an important word with your husband.

MRS. BENNET

Mr. Bennet? Goodness but I should wish you luck with that.

BINGLEY

How so? Is he possessed of a dark temper?

MRS. BENNET

No, no, nothing of the sort. He's just possessed of wanderlust and disappearing for long stretches. Come to think of it, I don't know that any of us have even seen him for this entire play...

BINGLEY

If I meet speak boldly, Mrs. Bennet?

MRS. BENNET

About my husband?

BINGLEY

About that Jekyll chap. From my own sister's experience, he does not ascribe to the manners of a gentleman. I would hope Elizabeth proceeds with caution.

MRS. BENNET

It is more likely, Mr. Bingley, she will retreat with celerity. *(Beat)* I should find out what's keeping Jane.

She exits USL.

As BINGLEY waits, the MAID returns.

MAID

Begging your pardon—

Puzzled, she notices BINGLEY is the only one there.

BINGLEY

May I help you?

MAID

Dr. Jekyll is here, sir.

She awaits his instruction.

BINGLEY

(Dismissive)

Whatever.

The MAID exits. JEKYLL enters, sees BINGLEY.

JEKYLL

(Awkwardly)

Hello. Henry Jekyll.

BINGLEY

Charles Bingley.

JEKYLL

Bingley? That name rings a bell.

BINGLEY

(Coolly)

We were supposed to have met the night of the opera. More specifically, you were to have met my sister, Caroline.

JEKYLL

Oh yes. Right. Sorry about that.

JANE suddenly enters from USR and rushes to BINGLEY.

JANE

Charles! I saw your carriage in the drive.

They rush together for an embrace. She notices JEKYLL.

JANE

Who's this?

BINGLEY

No one you need concern yourself with, darling. Unless, of course, by some cruel trick of fate he becomes your brother-in-law and you shall have to suffer his company over Sunday dinners and holidays for the rest of your natural life.

JANE

What?

MRS. BENNET (O.S.)

Jane!

BINGLEY

(To JANE)

We must talk. Quickly. Before she returns.

BINGLEY hurries into the same door by the china cabinet just as a flustered MRS. BENNET emerges from USL.

MRS. BENNET

Elizabeth!

She notices JEKYLL and immediately composes herself. She steps down to greet him.

MRS. BENNET (CONT'D)

Well, you must be our Dr. Jekyll.

JEKYLL

Uh – yes, I suppose I must. And you're...?

MRS. BENNET

Mrs. Bennet. Such a pleasure. I simply can't tell you how much.

JEKYLL

I was invited to call on your daughter?

MRS. BENNET

Yes well, I seem to have misplaced her at the moment. She went looking for her sister, you see and—

ELIZABETH emerges from USL.

ELIZABETH

I give up, Mamma. I can't find her anywhere.

MRS. BENNET

Come, come, it's all right. Look who I've found instead. *(Ta-da!)* It's Dr. Jekyll!

ELIZABETH

So it is.

During the following exchange, JEKYLL starts noticeably scratching his ears like a dog.

MRS. BENNET

(Looks around)

Oh dear. Have we now lost Mr. Bingley? He seemed most insistent to speak to your father.

ELIZABETH

(Surprised)

Papa's at home? That's rather unusual.

MRS. BENNET

Perhaps Mr. Bingley stepped out to the garden. Why don't you entertain Dr. Jekyll while I go look?

MRS. BENNETT exits through USR arch.

ELIZABETH

So. Here we are.

JEKYLL

Yes. So it would seem.

ELIZABETH

I really must confess before this goes any farther—excuse me, but are you quite all right?

JEKYLL

Beg your pardon?

ELIZABETH

You seem to be scratching and panting a bit excessively.

JEKYLL

Um...er...the heat. It's a bit warm, isn't it?

ELIZABETH

Not really. But perhaps if I opened a window?

JEKYLL

Yes, of course. If it's not too much trouble...?

As she goes up to the riser to open a window, a panic-stricken JEKYLL looks at the backs of his hands, then starts feeling his face.

JEKYLL (CONT'D)

(To himself)

Oh no! The potion! It's working without my having taken any. I must return to the lab for the antidote!

JEKYLL starts crossing toward the arch.

ELIZABETH

The window's stuck, I'm afraid. Would you mind helping?

JEKYLL

Certainly. Although – uh – might I first trouble you for a glass of water?

ELIZABETH

I'll ring the maid—

JEKYLL

(Quickly)

It would actually mean ever so much more, Miss Bennet, if you fetched it for me yourself. *(Finds this odd; shrugs)* I'll be back in a moment.

As ELIZABETH crosses to enter the door by the china cabinet, JEKYLL furiously tries to open the window without success. ELIZABETH exits but emerges a moment later with a sheepish BINGLEY and JANE behind her. Desperate, JEKYLL rushes off USL.

BINGLEY

There's a perfectly plain explanation, Miss Bennet.

JANE

(Excitedly)

Charles and I are plotting an elopement!

As they talk downstage, HYDE in all of his monstrous appearance emerges from USL and starts to make his way toward the arch entrance.

ELIZABETH

That's absurd. For one thing, Mamma has yet to forgive our sister Lydia and Mr. Wickham. Secondly, you know perfectly well it's the 19th century and Mr. Bingley must ask Papa's permission.

BINGLEY

I would gladly do that, Miss Bennet, but neither of us has seen your father for the entire play.

ELIZABETH

Then in his absence you must put the question to Mamma. She certainly speaks for him often enough.

JANE

Fine. But where is she?

MRS. BENNET (O.S.)

Elizabeth! Jane!

At the sound of her voice, HYDE looks around and quickly hides behind the USR potted palm. MRS. BENNET enters.

ELIZABETH

Ah. Right on cue. You can ask her now.

MRS. BENNET

Ask me what?

BINGLEY

(Suddenly tongue-tied)

Um, er, uh—

MRS. BENNET

(Looks about)

Where's Dr. Jekyll? *(Sternly to ELIZABETH)* You haven't frightened him off already, have you?

ELIZABETH

He was here just a moment ago.

HYDE attempts a second stealthy escape.

BINGLEY

Perhaps he came to his senses and realized he was unworthy.

JANE

(Incredulous)

Of Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

You do know I'm still in the room, don't you?

HYDE hears someone coming. He dashes up the riser and exits USR. The MAID enters.

MAID

Begging your pardon, mum, but Mr. Bennet's carriage has just turned into the drive.

She exits.

JANE

(To BINGLEY)

Oh Charles! Isn't that wonderful? You can ask him directly.

MRS. BENNET

Ask him what?

BINGLEY

Um...er...uh. Why how he's been, of course. We've not seen much of him, have we?

MRS. BENNET

I should go greet his carriage.

She exits through the arch.

JANE

(Brightly)

I should go powder my nose.

She giggles and exits USL.

BINGLEY

(To ELIZABETH)

If it's any consolation, Miss Bennet, you could do a lot worse than that Jekyll chap.

ELIZABETH

(Sarcastically)

Yes, I know. I could marry Mr. Darcy.

BINGLEY

(Laughs)

Oh come, come. You've quite a bit in common, you know.

ELIZABETH

Really?

BINGLEY

Both stubborn as a donkey! I'd give a relationship some thought, at least. *(Deep sigh; glances toward arch)* I suppose I should pay my respects to your father. Always best to make a good impression.

ELIZABETH

Yes. Good luck with that.

BINGLEY exits through the arch. HYDE returns and immediately retrieves the window. This time he's successful and he jumps out.

SFX: A man's guttural cry of pain.

Puzzled, ELIZABETH turns and notices the window is open just as JANE returns from USL. JANE looks out the window.

JANE

Oh dear!

ELIZABETH

What is it?

JANE

A large furry monster just fell on Papa and ran off.

ELIZABETH

How very unsettling.

ELIZABETH hurries to the window as the lights go down on the parlor.

A spotlight center aisle where DANVERS and a bored DARCY are facing each other. DANVERS is rattling on.

SIR DANVERS

No doubt a man of your consequence has a keen interest in capital. If I may be so bold, I have quite the investment portfolio. *(Then)* Have I mentioned I'm a member of Parliament?

DARCY

Oh, yes. Fourteen times, to be precise.

SIR DANVERS

Of course a tidy sum of thirty thousand pounds shall be yours, should you and Emma choose to wed. You would have my blessing.

DARCY

Excuse me, sir?

SIR DANVERS

Yes, Mr. Darcy? Or may I call you Fitzwilliam now that we are nearly related?

DARCY

I should prefer Mr. Darcy.

SIR DANVERS

Of course! Yes. Forgive my rush to familiarity. As I was saying. The wedding. I insist it happen at Pemberley. I would not have it any other way.

DARCY

Do you not find this talk premature? I have yet to even meet your daughter.

SIR DANVERS

She is nothing at which to sneeze, I can assure you.

DARCY

I am certain she's lovely but the truth is that I have already committed to someone else.

SIR DANVERS

(Fake smile)

Indeed?

DARCY

I am sorry if that busybody has led you astray. What is her name again? Pepperpot?

SIR DANVERS

I thought it was "Cornbread." Either way, congratulations are in order. Well done. *(Beat)*
So have you a bachelor brother, Mr. Darcy?

DARCY

No.

SIR DANVERS

Male cousin?

DARCY

No.

SIR DANVERS

Second cousin once removed?

DARCY

No, and I shall not impose upon your time any longer, sir.

DARCY bows and exits up the center aisle.

SIR DANVERS

(Calling)

A widowed father perhaps...? *(Off silence)* Perhaps not.

On Sir Danvers' disappointment, the spotlight goes out.

The lights come up DSR and DSL where there is quite a bit of dry ice.

SFX: Police whistles

HYDE enters and runs from DSL to DSR. He exits into his building just as the TWO BOBBIES enter, in pursuit. Pleased, they pound on the door.

BOBBY 1

Open the door!

BOBBY 2

Gendarme! (*Off BOBBY 1's reaction*) What? It sounds so much better than yelling "Bobby!"

JEKYLL opens the door.

JEKYLL

Gentlemen. To what do I owe the pleasure?

BOBBY 1

Dr. Jekyll, we must search the premises. The monster, he is inside.

JEKYLL

One might say that about all of mankind...

BOBBY 2

Please, sir. It is not safe.

JEKYLL

As you wish.

JEKYLL steps aside and the BOBBIES rush in. POOLE rounds the corner.

JEKYLL (CONT'D)

Bless me, Poole, what brings you here?

POOLE

An extraordinary sense of timing, sir. Also, I live here.

JEKYLL

Not for much longer, I'm afraid. I shall be leaving soon...for good. Your services are no longer required.

POOLE

And the lab, sir?

JEKYLL

It shall be dismantled immediately. I have outgrown my experiments and shall focus all efforts on my first love— (*Gestures to the heavens*) —exploring the universe! Someday, scientists will call this field "Astrobiology."

POOLE

Whatever you say, sir.

JEKYLL

No sense in delaying. You may collect your belongings now. Inside is an envelope with the appropriate severance.

POOLE nods and steps inside. The BOBBIES emerge, scratching their heads.

BOBBY 1

I know I saw him. Didn't you?

BOBBY 2

Ay, all hunched over and wicked-looking.

JEKYLL

Peril's over then, I take it?

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

Continue to next page for
PRODUCTION NOTES

PRODUCTION NOTES

Costumes: Victorian costumes for each of the upper-crust characters. Jekyll sometimes wears a white lab coat. When out in public, the ladies wear stylish hats and gloves. Harriet Peppercorn favors bright colors, feathers and lots of jewelry. Hyde wears a dirty, moth-eaten cape, badly patched clothes and boots resembling furry feet. The London Bobbies wear police uniforms; servants are attired per their station; the townsfolk dress like peasants. Orange and black stripe catsuit.

Props: Tea tray, china, letter, teapot, paper & a quill pen, newspapers, loose colorful hat plumes, striped cat toy, opera tickets, large test tube of color liquid, bell, towel, parasol, hatbox, suitcase, stuffed cat, cardboard cutout of Mr. Bennet (optional).

Furniture: Tables, chairs, couch, china cabinet

Lighting and Sound: As indicated in script

Special effects: Dry ice for evening scenes

