

Charlotte dances with him, instead, as: Mrs. Bennet stands on a chair at the front of the room. Lizzy and Darcy just reach the floor when:

MRS. BENNET

*(very bad French) Attention, madames et Monsieurs!* Now, you are all familiar with the charms of most of my girls - *(to Bingley)* especially you, sir - but ONE of my young ladies is more - diffident. Oh! *(Mary Shock)* Mary-

MARY

Full MANY a FLOWER is born to BLUSH UNSEEN -

MRS. BENNET

Not THAT, dear, nobody likes an actress. Miss Mary Bennet has graciously consented to share a most unspeakable gift with us, far better than wit or style or charm or beauty or personality: The GIFT of MUSIC (she will be available to dance after.) Miss Bingley! Caroline! We have so much to discuss.

She **waylays Miss Bingley** at the side of the room. She confides certain unwise expectations to her, while looking at Jane and Bingley. Mary plays, poorly. It's unbelievably painful.

**START**

LIZZY

Behold the painful exertions of a lady attempting to be thought "accomplished."

DARCY

You are... joking.

LIZZY

I must start out by being impertinent, Mr. Darcy, or I will be afraid of you.

He still doesn't laugh. So she does, ruefully.

DARCY

Is something amusing, Miss Bennet?

LIZZY

Oh, nothing. Everything. Us, I suppose.

DARCY

You are *laughing at me?*

LIZZY

At myself, sir!

DARCY

What about you is so amusing?

LIZZY

Where to begin? My flaws and follies and inconsistencies. (*Mary hits a bad note*) The whole range of life which is out of my control, really. One cannot always cry over it, so I laugh whenever I can.

DARCY

How interesting.

LIZZY

I suppose you never laugh at yourself, Mr. Darcy.

DARCY

It is the study of my life to avoid those weaknesses which expose character to ridicule.

LIZZY

Such as vanity and pride?

DARCY

Vanity is indeed a weakness. But pride - where there is real superiority of mind, pride may be justified. (*she smiles*) You ARE laughing at me.

LIZZY

Only because the contrast between us is so extreme. I am fundamentally flawed and thus hopelessly unserious - but you have such perfect understanding that you seem to possess no defects whatsoever.

DARCY

... Miss Bennet, I think you do not mean that.

LIZZY

I talk a lot of nonsense.

(*beat*) Can you concede that OTHERS may laugh to see us standing up together?

DARCY

Why?

LIZZY

Because it is such an unlikely pairing.

DARCY

If I thought it laughable, I never should have asked you.