



Pride and Prejudice  
by  
Jane Austen

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**A Short Story for ESOL & Functional  
Skills Learners**



**M**r. and Mrs. Bennet live with their five daughters in a small village in England. Their daughters are Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty and Lydia. The family is comfortable, but they are not very rich.



Mrs. Bennet worries about her daughters' future and wants them to marry rich men. She believes that good marriages will give them a safe and comfortable life.



One day, a rich young man called Mr. Bingley moves into a large house nearby. He is kind, friendly and cheerful. When he meets Jane, the eldest Bennet daughter, he likes her very much.



Mr. Bingley introduces the Bennet family to his friend, Mr. Darcy. Mr. Darcy is very rich and handsome, but he seems proud, quiet and unfriendly.

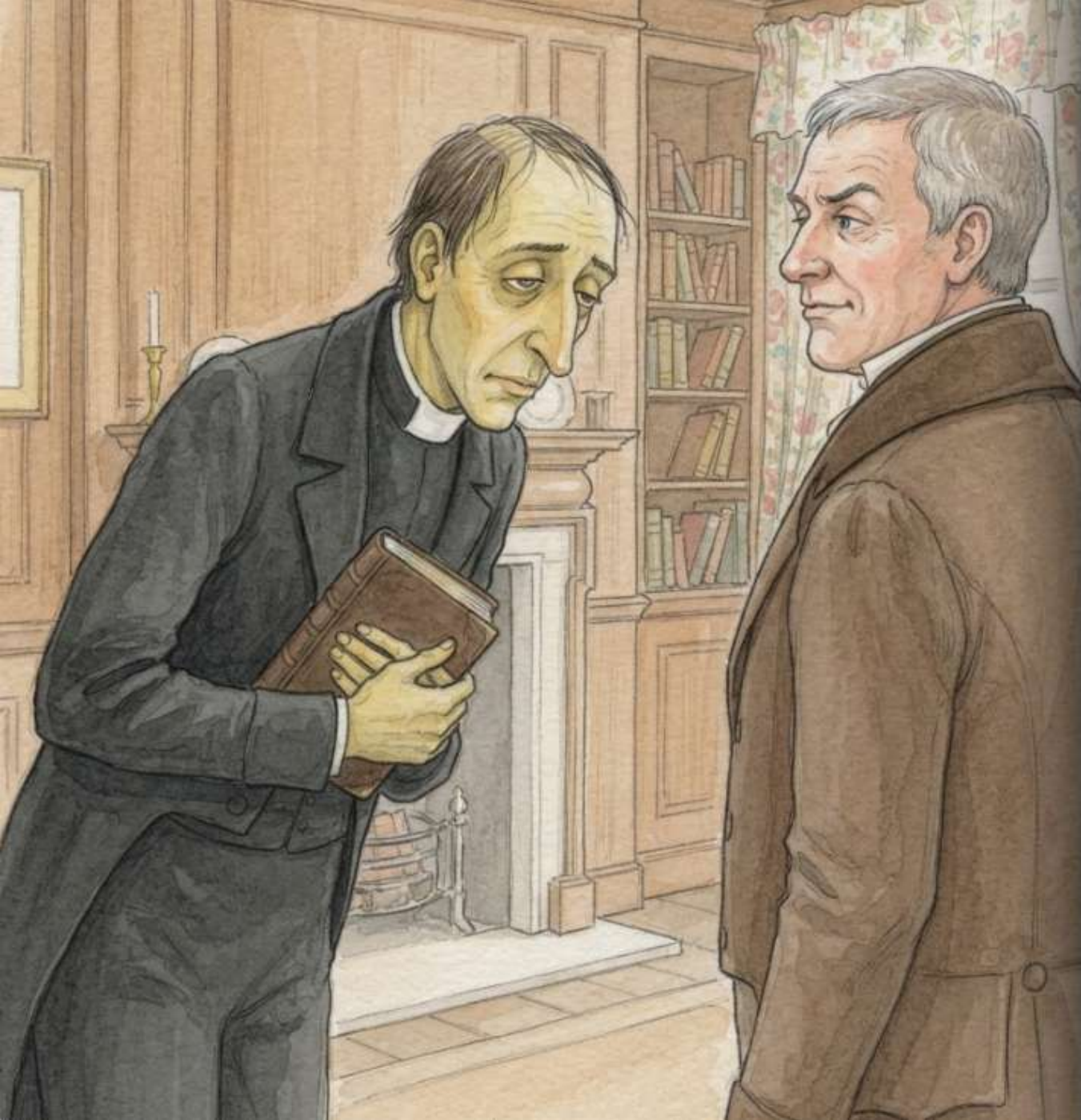


At a dance, Mr. Darcy refuses to dance with Elizabeth, saying, “She’s not handsome enough to tempt me.”

Elizabeth hears his comment and feels insulted. She thinks Mr. Darcy is proud and rude, and decides that she does not like him.



Meanwhile, Mr. Bingley and Jane spend more time together and clearly enjoy each other's company. Mrs. Bennet is delighted and hopes that they will soon get married.



Mr. Collins, a cousin of the Bennet family, comes to visit them. He will inherit the Bennet family home one day, and he decides that he would like to marry one of the Bennet daughters.



Mr. Collins asks Elizabeth to marry him, believing that she will happily accept. Elizabeth refuses because she does not love him and knows that she would not be happy as his wife.



Soon afterwards, Mr. Collins asks Elizabeth's friend Charlotte Lucas to marry him. Charlotte accepts because she wants a secure home and future. Elizabeth is surprised by her decision but wishes her friend well.



A handsome young soldier called Mr. Wickham arrives in the village and becomes friendly with Elizabeth. He tells her that Mr. Darcy treated him very badly in the past and prevented him from receiving money that was promised to him.



Elizabeth believes Wickham's story because she already dislikes Mr. Darcy. Her opinion of Darcy becomes even worse, and she thinks that Wickham has been treated unfairly.



Some time later, Mr. Darcy surprises Elizabeth by telling her that he loves her and asking her to marry him. Elizabeth refuses. She accuses him of being proud, treating Wickham badly and separating Jane from Mr. Bingley.



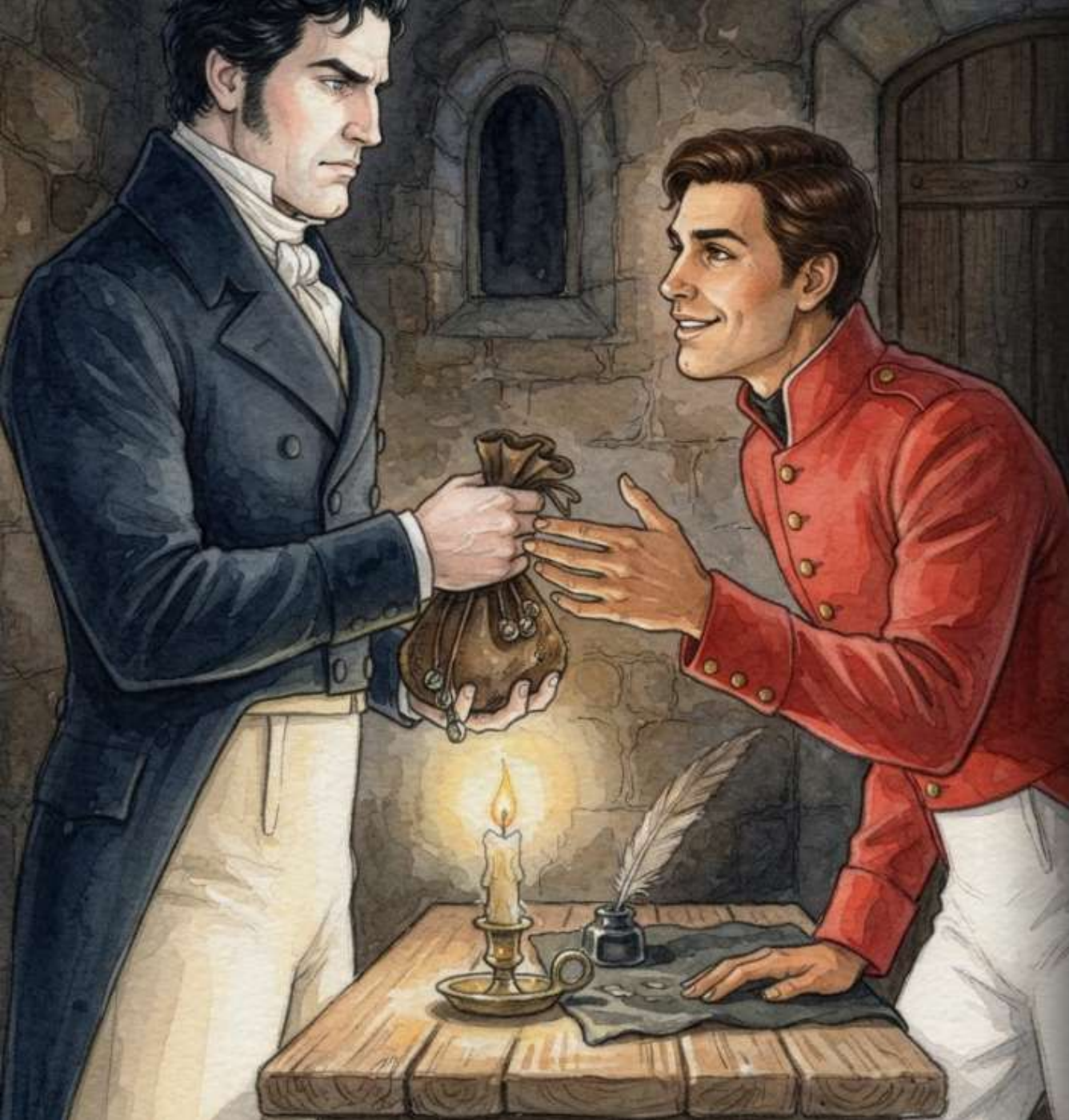
The next day, Elizabeth receives a long letter from Mr. Darcy. He explains that Wickham had lied about their past. He also admits that he encouraged Bingley to leave Jane because he wrongly believed that Jane did not truly love him.



Elizabeth begins to realise that she has judged both men too quickly. She understands that Wickham is not as good as she thought and that Darcy is not as bad. She starts to question her own pride and prejudice.



Soon, the Bennet family receives terrible news. Elizabeth's youngest sister, Lydia, has run away with Wickham without getting married. The family is shocked because this could damage Lydia's reputation and bring shame to the whole family.



Mr. Darcy secretly searches for Lydia and Wickham and finally finds them. He pays Wickham's debts and arranges for him to marry Lydia, protecting the Bennet family from further scandal.



Elizabeth later discovers what Mr. Darcy has done for her family. She is deeply grateful and sees that he is generous, caring and very different from the man she first believed him to be.



Mr. Bingley returns to the village and visits the Bennet family again. He asks Jane to marry him, and she happily accepts because she has always loved him.



Mr. Darcy asks Elizabeth to marry him for a second time. Elizabeth's feelings have completely changed. She now understands him better, loves him and happily accepts his proposal.



Jane marries Mr. Bingley, and Elizabeth marries Mr. Darcy. Elizabeth and Darcy have both learned not to judge people too quickly. In the end, the two sisters find love and happiness.