

Critical Introduction – Lauren Willis

This story is a retelling of the first two chapters in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. I chose *Pride and Prejudice* because I am not super comfortable with creative writing, and this is the story that I felt I had interacted with the most. After reading a few different fanfictions and adaptations of the original novel, I felt a bit more confident in writing something involving these characters; at this point in the semester, I feel like I know them! I did change the names to be a bit more modern, but otherwise, they are the same.

In the first chapter of the original text of *Pride and Prejudice*, the reader only gets a glimpse into the conversation going on with Mr. and Mrs. Bennet. We don't meet any other characters until the second chapter, and those are still within the Bennet household. Obviously, Jane Austen knew what she was doing as a writer, but I continually found myself wondering about Mr. Bingley at the beginning of the novel. I break from the Bennet household in chapter one to visit Charles Bingley and his sisters as they are leaving their home to come to "Netherfield Park." Obviously, Bingley is wealthy in the novel, and that is why he chose to come. However, I chose to insert a little backstory to get more depth into the "why" of the Bingley's move. Additionally, in the second chapter, I let the reader in on what Mr. Bennet's visit to Charles' house might have looked like. These scenes give the reader a little more insight to not only Charlie, but also Mr. Bennet.

Overall, I enjoyed this assignment a lot more than I thought. Though it was difficult to imagine things that Austen herself had not written, it made me think outside the box, and it allowed me to create the insight into some characters that I would have liked to get to know better in the original novel. So, please enjoy this retelling of the first two chapters of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Chapter 1

Everyone knows that a young, rich man must want to marry someone. No matter what he feels, no matter where he moves, when a rich young man shows up anywhere, everyone expects him to want a wife, and they immediately start making pairings.

Such was the case of Charlie. He had come to San Francisco to look at the newest mansion for sale, and, being in a new place meant a lot of new gossip.

“Darling – darling! Did you hear that the Park finally sold?”

“No, my dear, I had not. You know I don’t keep up with the celebrity gossip like you do.” Mrs. B insisted, “It *has* sold, for Ms. Long just came by and filled me in!”

Seeing as Mr. B didn’t really care about the Park, he didn’t respond to his wife’s exclams.

“Well,” she said impatiently, “Don’t you *want* to know who *bought* the Park? It’s only one of the nicest houses in the neighborhood. *Surely* that sparks some interest of yours.”

“Honestly, I know you want to tell me, and I don’t really care if I hear about it one way or the other. So, go ahead.”

Charlie was not as excited about being the town’s new prospect as one might think. Both he and his sisters were originally from Los Angeles, and he thought they could use the change of scenery. Moving from the bustle of LA to a slower city like San Fran seemed like a good idea at the time, but now he wasn’t so sure.

“Carrie are you packed yet?” yelled Charlie from the kitchen.

“Almost! Just grabbing my last stack of magazines for the road! And I am going to *have* to go swimsuit shopping when we finally get to the house,” she replied in exasperation.

Why her current clothes weren't enough, Charlie would never know. He just smiled and said, "Okay Carrie. Lou! Are you coming? Is your boyfriend meeting us there or what?"

"He is my *fiancé* Charlie, and yes he is. And yes, I'm coming. Please try to be a little less irritable. This whole thing was your idea you know."

The siblings had not even left their house yet and the girls were already exasperated with the idea of moving eight hours north. Charlie really didn't understand the issue; how had the girls not gotten tired of all the gossip and the drama surrounding LA? Hollywood is bad enough throughout the country, but living in the middle of it was just too much.

Luckily, the girls (and Lou's fiancé) weren't the only ones going with him. Charlie's best friend Fitz was coming. Apparently, his sister had been getting into some junk (as most LA teens do), and Fitz just needed to get away for a while.

So, Charlie, Carrie, Lou, and her fiancé all piled into the Uber on their way to get Fitz. Then it was the drive to the airport and a quick flight up to San Francisco.

"I'm sorry darling. I really am, but I am simply *not* going to visit this new "bachelor" with the intention of setting him up with one of our daughters! Surely that is not his reason for moving to San Francisco in a new home?"

Mrs. B was *highly* irritated with her husband. How could he not see? They *must* pay a visit to the Bing household, or it would all be over! After all, the house that Charlie was renting was only a few homes over, so it would really not be that strange to bump into the newcomers as they were unloading the move-in truck!

"It doesn't matter *what* his reason was in coming here. The fact is, he did. And just because his *intention* may not be to get married, that does not mean that he *won't*. He could fall

in love with any of our girls just as he could fall in love with any of the other 20-somethings around this town. Don't you want at least one of our girls out of our house? We have to meet them."

"Well," Mr. B replied, "why don't you and the girls go, if that's who he's going to fall in love with anyway. Better yet – just send them by themselves. You never know if Charlie would actually like you the best. You never can tell with young men these days."

"Oh nonsense. I know I'm not as pretty as I used to be but thank you dear. But you *must* visit him. Please."

"All right. I'll give him a call and let him know that he can marry whichever daughter of ours he chooses. Might as well be straightforward about the whole deal. But I'll have to put in an extra word for Liz, you know."

Liz was, very clearly, her father's favorite. While her sisters were all thoroughly enamored by Hollywood actors and the newest movies, Liz had a bit more sense in her. Her sisters were ignorant, silly, and shallow according to Mr. B, but Liz was different. She was witty and quick on her feet. She loved to read, and she loved to be outdoors, and her father adored her.

"You will **absolutely** not. Liz is not any better than any of her sisters. She is certainly not as pretty as Jen, nor is she as good-natured as Lidia. I cannot for the life of me understand why you insist that Liz is any better than her sisters."

At this, Mrs. B stormed out of her husband's library and onto the porch. What an idiot! How on earth can he be so inconsiderate of someone's feelings? Visiting Charlie and whoever he brings with him would really not be a big deal. In fact, it's simply the nice thing to do. But no, her husband had to be difficult. Really, why did he prefer Liz so much? It bothered her to no end. If anything, Liz was the most vexing of her daughters. She was determined to stay single if only

out of spite, and she wanted to move to New York. New York! Of all the places, why would she choose somewhere so far away? Mrs. B could never understand it.

The ride to Fitz's house almost did Charlie in. He was absolutely over the gossip, the celebrities, and the movies. Did his sisters have nothing else to talk about? Oh wait – they did. How little they wanted to leave LA. How could two people be so ungrateful in the span of 15 minutes. He truly did not understand the problem. But as Fitz loaded his luggage and hopped in the back seat next to Charlie, everything calmed down. His sisters got quiet and seemed to mind their own business, and Fitz began to ask him some questions about the new house. Maybe, thought Charlie, this move would turn out okay.

Chapter 2

Of course, Mr. B had every intention of visiting Charlie and his friends. Ever since he had heard the Park had sold, it was on his top priority list. He didn't really care about all the details and the expectations with "meeting the new neighbors," but Mr. B took every advantage to annoy his wife. So that is why, at the current moment, Mr. B was standing outside the large house with even larger windows staring at the door. He knocked. And he waited... and waited... and waited.

"Charlie!" he heard, "I swear someone knocked! Aren't you going to answer it?"

"My hands are full Carrie! Can't you do it?"

"No! I'm in the middle of my magazine article! Lou! Lou?"

"I'M BUSY!"

"You girls are impossible!" shouted Charlie as he opened the door. "I'm sorry. My sisters seem to be busy at the moment, and I didn't hear the door."

Mr. Bennet replied, “Oh that’s quite alright. I’m sure you’re crazy busy. I can come back later if that’s better.”

“Oh no you’re fine. I was just about to take a break anyway. Come on in! I’m Charlie. Would you like a drink?”

“A beer would be great if you have it. You can just call me Bennet. I had just heard this place had finally sold, and I was curious to meet the man who decided to buy it.”

Charlie laughed, “Oh well, that’s me! Honestly my sisters and I just needed a change of scenery. We grew up in LA, and we’ve literally never moved. As the girls have gotten older, they provide enough drama for me, so all the extra dramatics in LA became *very* unnecessary. Where do you live?”

“I’m just a few houses over – with my wife and five girls,” replied Mr. B, “So I definitely understand the drama your two sisters provide.”

“WOW five? I’m sure you do,” said Charlie unbelievably. “How on earth do you do it?”

“Honestly,” replied Mr. B, “I still haven’t figured that one out myself.”

“That new dress is cute Liz! It’s too bad we can’t know if Charlie will like it, since we can’t visit him,” said Mrs. B with disdain.

“Oh, Mom just calm down,” Elizabeth said out of exasperation. “We’ll meet him at the next neighborhood barbecue. Mrs. Long promised to introduce us – remember?”

“I have no faith that Mrs. Long will *actually* introduce us. She’s all talk. On top of that, she has two single friends! She is selfish and hypocritical, and I think so little of her.”

“Well,” said Mr. B, “That’s good to hear you say. It’s about time you realized that she won’t actually offer you anything.”

Mrs. B hated it when her husband made a good point. She had to be right, and she had to be in control of her situation. If someone – anyone – said something that threw her off, she became flustered. This was especially true with her husband. So, to change the subject she began scolding a different daughter.

“Kat! Stop with the coughing. It’s giving me a massive headache.”

“Um okay, Mom,” Kat rolled her eyes. “It’s not like I *enjoy* having a cough. Liz, when is the next barbecue anyway?”

“I think it’s the day after tomorrow,” replied Liz.

“Wait, you’re right!” exclaimed Mrs. B, “And Mrs. Long doesn’t get back from Atlanta until tomorrow! So of *course*, she won’t be able to introduce us. She won’t have time to meet him and get to know him herself! I’m sick of this. I’m sick of Charlie and his sisters or *whoever* it is that moved in. Sick of it all!”

“I wish I had known that before I went to see him this morning,” said Mr. B casually.

The shocked faces of Jen, Liz, Macy, Lidia, and Kat were exactly what Mr. B was hoping for. However, his wife’s face had them all beat. It had been harder to keep it to himself than he had thought it would be, but this made it all worth it.

“Oh, I knew you would do it!” exclaimed Mrs. B. “I knew you loved the girls too much to let it go! And how funny is it that you waited until now to tell us!”

Mr. B laughed and said, “Now Kat, your mother will let you cough as much as you’d like.”

Dinner that night consisted of plans for the barbecue two days from now and musings about Charlie. What was he like? When would he come visit? Now that Mr. B had met him, the possibilities were endless.