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Mr. Bennet discovers his days are numbered, so he immediately begins to set his affairs — and his five unmarried daughters — in order. Knowing they will fare best should at least one of them find a suitable husband, he cannot refuse any respectable suitors.

The high-spirited Elizabeth suspects something isn't right in the halls of Longbourn, but nothing prepares her for a certain haughty gentleman from Derbyshire. While Mr. Darcy is exceedingly wealthy and handsome, in Elizabeth's eyes, he is also proud, high-handed, and insulting. And unfortunately, desperately in love with her.

Suddenly, Elizabeth is forced to rethink her previous opinions. And accept a choice she never had the chance to make.

Unwilling: A Pride and Prejudice Vagary Details

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From Reader Review Unwilling: A Pride and Prejudice Vagary for online ebook

Carol Perrin says

Unwilling: A Pride and Prejudice Vagary

This was a very excellent story. In 1811, everyone in the Bennet family changed after Mr. Bennet discovers from his doctor friend that his heart was bad. Given maybe two years, he did a 180 degree turn around. He cut back on his wife and daughters' spending money, told his wife that meals were to be simpler, and hired masters to teach all five daughters the pianoforte, French, drawing while he instructed literature crossed with history. Agreeing with his wife that at least the oldest daughters should be married before he died, he decided he would find men approved by him. All but Lydia took this time to learn. Because she threw a fit, she was sent back to the nursery. The more she yelled her meals were sent to the nursery. Porridge was what she ate daily, and when she threw the spoon she was denied silverware. She fought with the masters, and after weeks of disobedience finally decided to change her attitude and was rewarded with being part of the family again. He also her style of dresses and hair were returned to a child's wardrobe and simpler hairstyle. Jane was in London and Elizabeth in Kent when the Bennets picked them up for their seaside adventure. When the family left Longbourn to pick up Jane in London, and Elizabeth in Kent, one part of his wishes were answered. Fitzwilliam Darcy approached him to ask for Elizabeth's hand in marriage. He gave both his consent and blessing. Now came the hard part: convincing Elizabeth. He knows how she feels about him, but convinces her that must. No one in the family knows of his condition, but Elizabeth thinks that something is wrong. She and Darcy are betrothed and hope to learn more about each other through letters until he arrives in Margate. Darcy writes her a very lovely letter, and she responds with a letter filled with no warmth at all. Mad as the Mad Batter in Alice in Wonderland, Darcy writes her a very stern one sentence letter: We will proceed as planned. She realizes, a bit too late, that her letter was inappropriate given he has expressed his deepest love for her over and over. When the family gets to Margate, her father tells her to give the man a chance. When he arrives at Margate, they take pleasant walks and for the most part, happy conversations. After he leaves Margate for London, the family follows shortly after to prepare for the wedding. His Aunt Lady Constance was going to have the breakfast after the wedding since the house was larger than the Gardiners' house. Dinner at Darcy House was stressful since Darcy seemed to dislike the Gardiners. When Elizabeth confronted him, she was seeing red, and he knew it. When giving his explanations as to why he dismissed them, Elizabeth gave every reason his feelings were not true. Again ashamed of himself, he had to make another apology to Elizabeth. The Bennets stayed at the Gardiners and then returned to Margate. Mr Bennet and Mrs Bennet had relaxed so much that each wanted to sleep with each other. Mr Bennet spent time walking further than the day before and walking up and down the steps to build up his strength. Even at fifty years old, his little swimmers did their job. Jane and Bingley made up for the lost time not returning to Netherfield when he should have. Jane was sad that Elizabeth would not be at her wedding, but the Darcys were still on their wedding trip to the Lakes. On the way north, she and Darcy had another misunderstanding with Darcy again apologizing. When they get to the Lakes, everything is going well. A fortnight into their stay, while Elizabeth taking the lead in making love, she blurts out that she loves Darcy. Fast forward, after the death of both parents, Kitty stayed at Longbourn to take care of her brother, Robin. Mr Bennet died in 1817, Mrs Bennet two years later both being given a chance to spoil their son. When back at Longbourn for Kitty's wedding, Elizabeth takes her brother to Oakham Mount. At ten, he is the next Master of Longbourn. Mrs Bennet was correct about Elizabeth. She and Darcy have 5 boys already, is with child again, and both are hoping for a girl. Loved Darcy in this story. He was for the most part so agreeable and so totally in love with Elizabeth that the love came through his pores. Only their misunderstandings angered him beyond thinking straight, but when confronted by Elizabeth he always apologized that she was correct. Elizabeth is

Elizabeth after finally accepting her fate, becomes the teasing, impertinent woman he fell in love with. Lydia and Mary were not mentioned towards the end. It would have been nice to know what happened with them since all the sisters became very close after their father put his foot down on just about everything.

Lit Reader says

In this alternate version of P&P Mr. Bennet learns his health is fragile after the Netherfield ball, which prompts him to change about his entire household: restricts his younger daughter's liberties, hires teachers and instructors of music, languages and art for his daughters and strategizes to have the older two marry soon. Also, takes in hand his estate's finances and his wife's exuberance, becoming a man worthy of Lady Catherine's praise (sooo weird). Reading about all that was strangely pleasurable and startling as well... Almost disturbing.

Mr. Darcy can have no objection to the connection, so he proposes to Mr. Bennet, who accepts and instructs his dutiful Lizzy to go with it for the benefit of the entire family. Elizabeth does not feel anything for Mr. Darcy and goes on a journey of slowly getting to know her future husband and caring for him. Mr. Darcy courts his betrothed, and later his wife, in a clueless, sad and romantic fashion, with many misunderstandings, meanwhile Lizzy is reluctant (yet obedient) and committed to respect her new husband. This Elizabeth is so passive and subdued which was very out of character. The storytelling in general was slow paced, draggings, and not very comforting, because of the most part, there was only feeling on his side and I could imagine Elizabeth feeling trapped and self sacrificing (not very romantic). Still, well written for the most part. Not very exciting. It had its moments here and there...

Dung says

I received this ebook in a giveaway.

I enjoyed the premise of this story and the change in the Bennett household. The story center mostly on Darcy and Elizabeth but does mention the other sisters. I like that Jane through her transformation learns to think rationally of people and their intentions.

Suzan Lauder says

POV, punctuation issues diverted attention from enjoyment. Light and fluffy. About ten seconds of conflict. Nice premise well executed with few tropes. Good writing quality if better edited.

Teresita says

Engaging and different

Mr. Bennett is forced to confront the probable consequences of his neglect and a different, but really interesting story develops that retains your attention and me you wondering if things can ever have a happily ever after.

A very worthy tale.

Sheila Majczan says

There are several reviews which provide an excellent overview of this variation: Nissa's, Claudine A. Pepe's and J. W. Garrett's. As I don't want to be redundant I will not repeat the complete outline.

Most of us have expressed how we love compromise situations or others in which ODC find one or both being forced into a marriage they did not want or in which one wants this pairing and the other does not have any desire to be with, much less married to, the other. This is a situation in which Darcy has won the agreement of Mr. Bennet for the hand of Elizabeth in marriage. "If I may give you a piece of advice," Mr. Bennet said. "Go slowly with Elizabeth. My daughter does not tell me everything, but I believe I am correct when I say her feelings are not equal to yours."

Darcy, as in canon, has no idea that Elizabeth holds several grudges against him (and we all know those from canon). Elizabeth has accepted this arrangement but as the title tells us UNWILLINGLY. The author does a very fine job of building the love from Elizabeth's side while also having Darcy address faults that he is unaware of...until Elizabeth tells him. I did so love the part where he tells her that he will do anything for her in trade for her kisses.

The main premise here as the book description and other reviews tell us is the change in Mr. Bennet. He finally becomes the father and the husband we all want him to be. I absolutely loved the way the author has him "persuading" his wife to fall into line with his plans. ("A little sea bathing would set me up just fine.") And I also adored the way he handles Lydia's rebellion against any and all changes. Then there is the scene, after OCD's wedding, in which the four sisters meet in one bedroom and speculate about Darcy and Elizabeth and what is happening now that they are married. Girly giggles and bouncing on their beds and hugs galore!

This story has little angst but provides another variation of how our dear couple overcomes misunderstandings, pride and prejudices. But it is in the way that is done that this author provides a story which rates an overwhelming endorsement from many as well as from me. This is another one which I will reread in the future.

Nissa | Of Pens and Pages Book Blog says

Pride, Prejudice, and Stories

I had a delightful time reading this book! The story starts with Mr. Bennet finding out his days are numbered, prompting him to seriously consider his children and wife's prospects upon his demise. Instead of locking himself in his bookroom, he takes charge in making sure his daughters are marriageable, if not through their dowries, at least through their talents. He hires masters for music, French, and he himself teaches the girls literature and history. Kitty and Lydia are no longer out, and Lydia is moved back to the nursery.

Mr. Bennet then decides to bring his family to Margate to enjoy the seaside, but before they all go, Jane is to go to London to visit the Gardiners, and Elizabeth is to go to Kent to visit Charlotte. Of course, Elizabeth

meets Mr. Darcy in Kent. And Mr. Darcy. Dear, sweet Mr. Darcy. He is such a sweetheart. He is so obviously enamored with Elizabeth; I almost felt bad reading the part where he was "courting" her because Elizabeth had no idea of his feelings and intentions. Zero. Nada.

By the time the Bennets have arrived in Kent to pick up Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy has made up his mind to ask for Elizabeth's hand in marriage. Instead of immediately proposing to her, he goes to Mr. Bennet to ask permission. Mr. Bennet, knowing he could not possibly reject a respectable suitor, gives his permission and blessing. The next day, Mr. Darcy proposes, and Elizabeth had no choice but to say yes.

The rest of the story revolves around their engagement, with Mr. Darcy waxing poetic declarations of love in his first letter to Elizabeth, and with Elizabeth coming to terms with her impending marriage to a man she once abhorred. Mr. Darcy finds out she doesn't feel as strongly as he does, but he tries his best to warm her up to the idea of spending the rest of her life with him. Slowly but surely, the two learn more about each other, and Elizabeth learns to see Mr. Darcy in an unbiased light. I loved that she did not fall in love with him immediately.

What I also liked about this book was that Jane learned to be more discerning. She still tried to see the good in people, but she wasn't as naive as she was. She questions Mr. Bingley's character and intentions, and if she's better off with her steadier suitor.

Without major conflicts like Wickham, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, and Caroline Bingley, this was a fairly light read. Seeing Mr. Darcy have free reign in expressing his love and affection made me grin and feel butterflies in my stomach.

Leslie says

This is an interesting P&P version that I really liked until the final 10% when I felt like it lost the narrative or had too many POVs or something...

We begin a few weeks after the Netherfield ball, the Bingleys have left and Mr. Collins is engaged to Miss Lucas. Mr. Bennet is told that his heart is failing and he has not long to get his affairs in order. As opposed to being his normal dilatory self he instead rises to this challenge and begins to fix his family. There is much detail to this... so it is a somewhat different Lizzy who arrives at Rosings and whose answers to Lady Catherine are completely different. When the Bennets swing by Rosings on their way to Margate Mr. Darcy first asks Mr. Bennet for Lizzy's hand and as that he is not far from the Great Book Room in the Sky (my joke) he agrees then while concealing his health concerns he convinces Lizzy to acquiesce to Mr. Darcy.

This is one of the weaker parts of the book, I found both Lizzy and Darcy to be unreasonable and unrealistic about their expectations. Despite ability to write and later talk they are constantly at logger heads. Lizzy seems incapable of believing that Darcy loves her.

We have subplots of Mr. Bennet's health / Mr and Mrs. Bennet's relationship and the relationship Jane and Bingley. The parts that happen after Lizzy's marriage seem to be a bit distracting.

wosedwew says

Discipline weighs ounces; regret weighs tons -- author unknown

Loved Mr. Bennet in this story -- finally taking control of his family. Instilled discipline so he wouldn't have regrets. Took care of Mrs. B's future by requiring Collins to provide a cottage for her and a livable allowance (although in the end it wasn't needed).

Great story that is very well written. Grammar, spelling and word usage errors are at a minimum.

The author was one of the few who didn't include Lady C's rant at EB -- obstinate, headstrong girl, I'm ashamed of you! -- she is only mentioned as being a non-attender at the wedding. I've read that excerpt so many times it was refreshing to miss it.

Meredith (Austen-esque Reviews) says

4.5 stars! What If Mr. Bennet Was 'Willing' to Manage His Family?

TYPE OF AUSTENESQUE NOVEL: Pride and Prejudice Variation

TIME FRAME: A couple days after the Netherfield Ball

MAIN CHARACTERS: The Bennet family, Mr. Darcy, and Mr. Bingley

SYNOPSIS: After learning that he might not live beyond a year or so more, Mr. Bennet decides to do what he didn't do all along – manage his daughters, take responsibility for their futures, and economize. His new plans include masters, hours of study, budgets, and not rejecting any marriage proposals from “respectable and solvent” suitors. This includes Mr. Darcy, who – you guessed it – proposes to Elizabeth while she is in Kent!

WHAT I LOVED:

- A Different Mr. Bennet: I really enjoyed seeing Mr. Bennet in action! He was decisive, firm, and clever. I loved seeing how he convinced Mrs. Bennet to join him on his plans and how he handled Lydia's disobedience (we all know she had it coming!) In this story Mr. Bennet is a much more prominent figure and very much in the center of the story's conflict since he faces some guilt and uncertainty about Elizabeth's marriage to Mr. Darcy. I loved spending more time with Mr. Bennet and witnessing how he can effect such a change in his family if he takes the trouble. Especially with Mrs. Bennet!

- Jane Bennet: This story is mostly Darcy and Elizabeth centric (you won't see much of Wickham, Lady Catherine, or Caroline), with some spotlight on Jane Bennet as her father tries to open her eyes to the unpleasant but realistic aspects of human nature. I loved how important it was to Mr. Bennet to give Jane this education and I enjoyed how it made her look at her suitors differently.

- An Enamored Darcy: Who doesn't love to see Darcy so besotted and ardently in love? It's too adorable! I loved seeing his joy in being betrothed to Elizabeth, how he was so ready to give his heart to her, and his

patience with her while he waited for her to return some of the affection and love he has for her. I loved the scenes with the letters and when Darcy would steal some kisses (especially the 'man full grown' kind!) Be ready to fall in love again, readers!

- Gently and Awkwardly: I would describe this tale as low-angst and low-drama. Darcy's and Elizabeth's relationship is not one fraught with tension, high emotion, or turbulence. Darcy is endearingly sweet as he tries to win Elizabeth's heart, and Elizabeth – while wary and uncertain about her future with Darcy – spends her time trying to learn more about him and understand his character instead of focusing on her discontent. I enjoyed how awkward it felt – they are on different pages and their feelings for each other are not equal. But the course of the relationship did change, not swiftly and dramatically, more gentle and gradual. I thought this was a beautiful and realistic portrayal of how our beloved couple would act in such a situation.

WHAT I WASN'T TOO FOND OF:

- Elizabeth on Repeat: Just a minor quibble really. In this story Elizabeth frequently needed to know the plan and receive explanations of the future – what is the plan for marriage, what is the plan for the wedding trip, what kind of marriage does Darcy envision them having, etc. I don't mind Elizabeth wanting to learn more about her future and having some uncertainties, but it started to feel a little bit repetitious at some points.

WHAT'S UNIQUE ABOUT THIS STORY: Mr. Bennet has left the sanctuary of his library and is a man of decision, action, and force.

CONCLUSION:

Unwilling is a beautifully charming Pride and Prejudice variation that examines the potential of the Bennet family to improve themselves and the effect of such improvements. Readers who want to see Mr. Bennet as an active father and husband and Mr. Darcy as an ardent and understanding suitor should definitely give this lovely book a try!

Austen-esque Reviews

J. W. Garrett says

Delightful, charming, low angst, life changing events, excellent epilogue, OMG surprises

Oh my goodness, I simply loved this book. It is a...sit by the fire on a rainy day with your favorite drink and a comforter across your legs... type of book. The writing was well done, the characterizations were spot on, and I will definitely read this again. I am so glad I bought it. It is most excellent.

This is a story about a man who is facing his own mortality. Mr. Bennet has been given a death sentence by his doctor and good friend. Now what is he to do? He swears his friend to secrecy and determines to not tell his family of his weakened heart and declining health.

In looking back over his life, Mr. Bennet is not happy with what he sees. Longbourn is entailed away from the female line and he worries what will become of his wife and daughters. There is an old saying about putting your house in order and that is exactly what Mr. Bennet decides to do. He has neglected his duty to his family for far too long.

A general could not have implemented a more strategic plan. Everything at Longbourn must change and he sequesters himself in his study as he works out a plan of action. First, he needs to start with his wife; she has to be on board in order for his plan to work. He calls her into his study for a conference and with a promise of a summer at the seaside, tells her of his plans. She is hesitant; however, a summer at the seaside is worthy of a few changes.

Next, the girls are called and his plans are laid out before them. There will be changes within the Bennet household starting immediately. Various masters will be called on to work with each of the girls in French, drawing, singing, and music.

Mr. Bennet will discuss literature, history and various reading materials [non-religious, directed at Mary] with each of the girls. Those who are not working with a master will spend time in practice on the pianoforte.

Mrs. Bennet will work with the girls on how to run an estate, manage the household budget and ledgers, and time will be spent in the kitchen learning how to cook and run an efficient kitchen.

Social functions are out. And speaking of out... it was announced that Kitty and Lydia were no longer out. Lydia did not take well to this pronouncement, or to the fact she couldn't walk to Meryton, or visit the officers, or have them visit her, or dance at assemblies, or see Mr. Wickham [note: yeah, he's still there; however, with Lydia out of commission, he no longer has access to the family].

I will not spoil what happened when Lydia goes head to head with her father. You must read this to believe it. We are given a detailed explanation as to why Lydia is who and what she is... it is an excellent psychological profile.

Note: remember when Elizabeth visited Rosings and Lady Catherine asked all those personal questions regarding her sisters and their accomplishments? Well, this time the answers are completely different, point for the Bennet family.

Now that Mr. Bennet has his house under control and good regulation, he next needs to get advantageous marriages for the older girls. The workings of this are poignant and sad at the same time as Mr. Bennet hates losing his two favorite daughters. However, he needs to know they will be provided for and will be able to help his other daughters and wife after he is gone.

Darcy and Elizabeth: There are tears when Mr. Bennet brings about the marriage of Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. This is the best part of the book as they adjust to married life. They are coming to the marriage from two different worlds and those worlds often clash. Misunderstandings galore keep our couple on their toes as they try to adjust to life together. There is laughter, tears, minimal angst and all the adjustments of married life. The evolution is slow and methodical as we see the strategies ODC uses on each other as they each attempt to get their own way. It is so cute to watch them learn about each other. There are no graphic sex scenes; however, there is a sensuality regarding ODC that is tastefully done and a bit steamy.

Jane, Bingley and another suitor: This was so interesting as Jane viewed Bingley's actions from a different perspective, thanks to her discussions with her father. There is also another suitor that puts a wrinkle in Bingley's fight for happiness.

Mr. and Mrs. Bennet: seaside view, ocean walks, and sunsets over the water... changes come also to the Bennet seniors. Aaaaah, it is so cute. Hey, older couples can smolder too.

Epilogue: OMG!!! I did not see THEM coming even though there were clues; however, our dear author was sneaky with how she disguised her clues. Got me good, she did, hit me right between the eyes. I gasped out loud when I read them. I couldn't decide if I wanted to stand up and shout or weep with joy. EXCELLENT!

There were minimal errors; I suppose you can't catch them all.

Carole (in Canada) says

First, I wish this book was longer! Second, I wish this book was longer!

This book captured my imagination and wouldn't let go. The premise alone was interesting but to see it play out throughout the pages was magical. What would the Bennet family be like if Mr. Bennet took the time to not only be kind to his wife but respectful of her as well. To take his daughters in hand and set age appropriate guidelines of the time. To insist that Elizabeth accept Mr. Darcy as a husband when she really was unwilling. To teach Jane that all people are not good and kind and to put herself first. Then to tame the beast of a child that was Lydia. But at the core of this story, is the depth of love that Darcy has for Elizabeth. The letters they wrote to each and his attempt to win her love after they married was a joy to read. Yes, he is still proud and high-handed, but he is willing to change. Oh I just didn't want the story to end where it did but the epilogue was beautiful, if bittersweet.

Sheryl Gordon says

Bravo. This One Rings True.

A rare five star from me. Maybe it was just the right day for the right book, but maybe it was more than that. I've read quite a few in the past couple of weeks and though some were good, they left me ... wanting. I think the difference here is that this author, carefully, thoroughly, filled out her characters and made convincing explanations for their attraction to each other, assumed on his part, reticent on hers. The premise ploy is quickly put forth, and plausible. There was the expected 'back-and-forth' emotionally, but it seemed more grounded in the era and the atmosphere of the story. I never felt there was scene stretching or pointless dithering. When the misunderstandings arose, they were explained, explored, and dealt with in a realistic manner, rather than prolonged and misconstrued as, sadly, is the case with so many stories that utilize Regency etiquette as a tool for convenience and convoluted. This excellent author has written a believable romantic version of a situational trope that has been done countless times before, but this one rings true. Very satisfying.

Elizabeth Bennet says

I took some key points under advisement after reading the reviews and felt this book would suit me. So many times I did the eye roll thing at Elizabeth's need to paint Darcy the villain. This poor bloke we all know and have love excels at trying to please the woman he loves. In a world with so many books where the Hero runs from showing his feelings this handsome fellow lays it at Lizzy's feet but ever the headstrong stubborn woman she twists his intentions in such a way the man is at a loss. There were times I felt the title should

read Bipolar Lizzy, catchy aye? I digress the author did a wonderful job at making you see things from Lizzy's pov and it helped you to be a bit easier with her behavior. I was bothered that after Darcy's first gift, a set of combs, Lizzy treated the whole occurrence in such a rude manner. It was never brought up leaving Darcy thinking, "I can't believe she's not going to say anything?" There was also the fact he never did tell her his age. Lastly, her behavior when she is dealing with her courses. I felt so bad for poor Fitzwilliam and somehow it turned into him being painted a beast and brute. This is coming from a woman's perspective that even I thought her unreasonable. So many times had she just said her thoughts the arguments would not have happened. We all know the primary one at Wickhams tale of woe and when she learns the truth I thought now she will see Darcy as he is. Alas, she still continues to look upon him with indifference. She willfully just would not allow herself to open her heart to him. When you read Darcy he is trying to twist himself in all directions to please her, apologizing at every turn. He was such a good man and when he gives her her birthday gift oh my geood I was tearing up. Lord in the words of Mrs. Bennet oh palpitations! So thoughtful, romantic you name it the man was walking on water at that point. And so around the point when Lizzy confides to FD that she is indisposed he keeps his distance it is at this point she starts to learn something about herself. Even though he is with her she finds herself missing him, his normal closeness that made her feel suffocated in the beginning has been constant and without the little shows of affection she confesses that she misses him to Darcy. This is what made Darcy a great man he goes within himself and thinks, "if I become more lighthearted and jovial it is going to draw her in. If I tease her more as she does me she will feel more comfortable and in our private moments show more of her personality." What Darcy missed at this point was Lizzy did not show her liveliness in the bedroom and he felt she repressed herself too much but instead of holding that in as Lizzy so much he tries to change his approach. Stole my heart this Darcy. When they go out in the boat was another great part of the book oh you'll love seeing the playful pair. The last scene of them together was another playful side you get to enjoy. The epilogue was nice but wish it would have been D/E at some point with their prodigy. Don't worry they have their family, their very large family which was a humorous turn of events but we miss out on that interaction. Overall though a very entertaining book with a beautiful supportive Mrs. Bennet at the right time and a strong Mr. Bennet that I loved. Very well done, enjoy!

Debbie Brown says

I enjoyed this unusual premise and especially appreciated the changes in the Bennet family. Mr. Bennet is motivated to take full charge of his family instead of hiding in his bookroom. This occurs after Mr. Bingley and the rest of his household, including Mr. Darcy, have left Netherfield. Masters come to Longbourn to teach art, music and French, with Mr. Bennet himself teaching his daughters literature, history and geography while Mrs. Bennet directs them in the duties of mistress of the house. They even spend time learning some basic cooking skills. Kitty and Lydia are no longer out, and discipline for disobedience is severe and consistent. "Unwilling" perfectly describes the initial reaction, especially by Lydia, but Mr. Bennet's efforts result in a less chaotic household. Mrs. Bennet's nerves calm considerably once he takes a more active role in managing the girls and exerts himself to be kinder and less dismissive of her.

Mr. Bennet also becomes as concerned as his wife about finding suitable husbands for his older daughters although, naturally, he takes a much different approach. Jane is off to the Gardiners for a London season. Elizabeth goes to Kent to visit her friend Charlotte Collins and finds Mr. Darcy there at Lady de Bourgh's estate. Mr. Bennet joins her there briefly before bringing her and the rest of the Bennet family to Margate. While he's at Hunsford, Darcy approaches him for permission to marry Elizabeth prior to proposing to her. With Mr. Bennet's strong encouragement, she reluctantly agrees.

The rest of the book focuses primarily on Elizabeth trying to adapt to her engagement and then her marriage to Darcy, who is a complete mystery to her at first. Again, "unwilling" aptly describes her feelings about it all.

My favorite segment by far is when Darcy and Elizabeth exchange letters during their engagement. His first to her is a beautiful love letter, but she's uncomfortable because she doesn't share those feelings. She writes a wooden reply, and Darcy responds in kind. With each sentence or two they write, their thoughts of insecurity and how lame and boring their words must sound create a comical juxtaposition. The missives slowly improve once Elizabeth opens up more.

That's a perfect example of a pattern that recurs throughout the book, with Darcy reaching out with the best intentions and Elizabeth reacting negatively. Then he feels rejected and retreats, and eventually they communicate and she becomes more satisfied with him.

One of the secondary stories features Jane's changing attitudes under her father's influence as she comes to understand that all the world isn't as good as she would prefer to believe. She struggles with her feelings when Mr. Bingley reenters her life, especially in contrast to a steadier potential suitor whose family's sincerely warm manners don't resemble Caroline Bingley's in the least.

Unfortunately, I felt that the book ran out of steam around the time Darcy and Elizabeth marry. The first half of the story interested me much more than the second half. It turns into a chronology. As their marriage begins, she still doesn't love him or really understand him at all, while he is desperately in love with her. Their relationship gradually grows despite some comparatively minor setbacks and miscommunication similar to the example I gave above. But a character study still requires something driving the action. Neither Caroline Bingley nor Mr. Wickham nor Lady Catherine creates a serious obstacle. With no antagonist, no major conflict, and no single pivotal turning point, it's a good reflection of real life, but it doesn't make for compelling reading.

After such a promising beginning, I was disappointed that the rest of the story felt so flat. I was especially surprised because it was easy to give 5 stars to this same author's *The Houseguest: A Pride and Prejudice Vagary and Green Card*.

Other reviewers have mentioned the epilogue, and I agree that it provides a very satisfying account of the fates of all the Bennet offspring and their families.
