Dear God, Mrs. Darcy.

Isn’t it grand, Mr. Darcy? Or perhaps it’s stately. Do you not think it stately? Imagine it with ribbons and lanterns on the boughs. Perhaps we can cut out paper stars to decorate it. Would that not be handsome?

I can make out that it is a tree, Mrs. Darcy. My foremost question is why the tree is inside.

Because it is a Christmas tree. A popular German custom. Mrs. Collins wrote me of it last year during their travels to Hamburg. An evergreen reminds us of life even in the deep midwinter. Isn’t that wonderful?

It would be were we suddenly German.

I’m attempting a new tradition at Pemberley.

Which entails cutting down perfectly healthy trees and humiliating them in the drawing room.

I am far from humiliating my tree. We celebrate its beauty and fortitude against the winter.

Which I fear I shall never convince you should happen outside.

No you shall not. Besides, what fun is a marriage of conviction, when it could be a marriage of surprise?

You manage to surprise me by the hour, Mrs. Darcy.

Which will keep us both young and forever intrigued.
DARCY
You seem quite prepared for such solitary adventures.

MARY
I fear you are making fun of me.

DARCY
Certainly not, Miss Bennet.

MARY
I do not mind being alone, Mr. Darcy, which is why I am likely not so valued a companion to my parents as my sisters when they were at home. I could comfortably go all day without speaking a word to anyone unless there was a good reason, but that is not the way at Longbourn, as you might recall.

DARCY
We are both quiet people, Miss Bennet. I do not value chatter for its own sake. This can come off as unmannerly to some, but I find it refreshing not to speak merely to fill the room.

MARY
Yes, well in a house with four sisters and a mother whose thoughts do not live until they are heard, often at volume, I was scarcely able to get a word in. I have learnt to enjoy my own company.

DARCY
Miss Bennet, if you’ll excuse a spontaneous observation, I find you quite matured this visit. You are a young lady of wit and wisdom; it is a finding that displeases me only in that I fear the conversations I have missed not noticing it before.

MARY
Thank you, Mr. Darcy. I treasure that kind word from you.

DARCY
I mean what I say. And I might even venture far enough to also note that you are starting to remind me in some ways of your elder sister.

MARY
Well, you certainly cannot mean Jane as she is the sunshine to my shade. And Lizzie would, I fear, take insult from her dear husband if she heard him say such things.
DARCY
She would do nothing of the sort. Certainly not if she ceased treating you as the child you once were.

MARY
Yes. If. I don’t mean to sound petulant, but neither she nor Jane have any conception of the invisibility I often feel around them. Around everyone.

DARCY
An invisible woman?

MARY
Who finds her strongest self buried in books and music and other things of the evanescent mind.

DARCY
My understanding was always of yours and your sisters’ great love for each other.

MARY
Oh, indeed. But you see I grew up with the kindest, cleverest, and most beautiful elder sisters in the country; and with the loudest, silliest, and prettiest younger sisters in the country. This left few adjectives for me. I find I still suffer from lack of definition.