

8 April 1817
Rushton Manor

Dearest Kate,

It is dreadfully flat here since you have been gone, and it only makes it worse to imagine all the things I shall be missing. I wish Aunt Elizabeth were not so set against my having a Season this year. She is still annoyed about the incident with the goat, and says that to let the pair of us loose on London would ruin us both for good, and spoil Georgy's chances into the bargain. I think this is quite unjust, but there is no persuading her. (I believe the fact that she would have been obliged to share a house with Aunt Charlotte, should she and I have come to London this year, may have contributed to her decision.) So I rely on you, dearest cousin, to write and tell me everything! If I am not to be allowed to enjoy a Season of my own, I can at least take a vicarious delight in your and Georgina's triumph! I am quite convinced you will take London by storm.

Not that we are without amusement in Essex; quite the contrary! Aunt Elizabeth and I called at the vicarage yesterday and spent a stimulating afternoon listening to the Rev. Fitzwilliam discoursing on the Vanities of Society and the Emptiness of Worldly Pleasures. Aunt Elizabeth hung on every word, and we are to return and take tea on Thursday. I am determined to have the headache Thursday, if I have to hit myself with a rock to do it.

There is, however, a ray of hope. Lady Tarleton is to have a party for her niece next week. The invitation arrived this morning, and Papa says we are to go! And Aunt Elizabeth approves! She thinks it is to be an informal hop, as Lady Tarleton's niece is not yet out, but Patience Everslee told me in the greatest confidence that there is to be waltzing! I only hope Oliver will stay long enough to accompany us. He has been moping around the house like a sick sheep ever since you and Georgy left, and yesterday he asked Papa, very casually, whether Papa did not think it would be a good idea for him to go to Town this year for a week or two. He thinks he is being very sly, but if he puts off making his arrangements for another day or so Papa will have accepted Lady Tarleton's invitation and Oliver will be obliged to stay here until after the party. I have not, of course, pointed this out to him. Oliver has stated many times his dislike of hearing advice from his younger sister, so it is his own fault if he has not got sense enough to see which way the wind is blowing.

Aunt Elizabeth intends for the two of us to pay a call on Lady Tarleton and her niece on Monday, by way of improving our acquaintance before the ball (which is to say, she wants to have a look at the niece). I shall be on my best behavior, even if the niece turns out to be quite odious. There is no point in looking for difficulties the day before a party.

And there may be more excitement to come. Sir Hilary Bedrick has just been named to the Royal College of Wizards; the whole village is buzzing with the news. I suspect he was chosen because of that enormous library of musty old spellbooks at Bedrick Hall. He left yesterday for London, where he will be installed, but all of us expect great things when he returns. Except, of course, for Aunt Elizabeth, who looks at me sideways and says darkly that magic is for heathens and cannibals, not for decent folk. Perhaps that is why she holds Sir Hilary

in such dislike. I would wager my best kid gloves that if it were not for Papa's interest in the historical portions of Sir Hilary's library, Aunt Elizabeth would have cut the connection ages ago.

Do, please, try to find me those silks I asked you about before you left, and if you should happen to see a pair of long gloves that would match my green crape, please, please send them at once! I should so like to look well at Lady Tarleton's party.

Give my love to Georgy and Aunt Charlotte, and do try not to let Aunt Charlotte bully you too much. And do, do write and tell me everything you are doing!

Your loving cousin,
Cecy