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Crazy Cowgirls of Pemberley Ranch

By
JON JORY

Freely adapted from *Pride and Prejudice* by
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JON JORY

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(CRAZY COWGIRLS OF PEMBERLEY RANCH)

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Crazy Cowgirls of Pemberley Ranch

CHARACTERS

Mr. Bennet
Mrs. Bennet
Lydia
Jane
Kitty
Lizzie
Mr. Bingley
Miss Bingley
Mr. Darcy
Charlotte
Preacher Collins
Lieutenant Wickham
Lady Bird Bullroar
Mrs. Gardiner
Colonel Fitzwilliam
Housekeeper

NOTE: For a larger cast, as many square dancers as useful may be added.

SETTING

The set could take several forms from a series of levels to being played flat on the floor with place being simply defined by furniture brought on and off as needed. As far as the costumes go the play could be set anywhere from the 1850s to the 1930s. With a couple of period lines deleted it could be set now.

Crazy Cowgirls of Pemberley Ranch

ACT I

AT RISE: MR. BENNET is seated and reading a newspaper. Also present are three of his four daughters, JANE, the eldest, and LYDIA and KITTY, the youngest. JANE is knitting. LYDIA looks out over the audience through an imaginary window, and KITTY cuts her toenails with a pocket knife. NOTE: All furniture is moved by cast members. There should be no more than one chair in each new location.)

LYDIA. Daddy, Daddy!

MR. BENNET (*not looking up*). What is it, honey lamb?

LYDIA. Lizzie is out there shootin' bottles again.

MR. BENNET. Hittin' 'em too, I'd wager.

LYDIA. What if somebody should ride by and see?!

JANE. Nobody rides by at mid-day, Lydia.

LYDIA. Wells Fargo wagon is due. Bunch of strangers see a Bennet girl in pants, shootin' a six gun like a gunslinger. It just embarrasses the life off me!

KITTY. We're gonna be the laughin' stock of Calico, Texas.

LYDIA. Daddy you go to go out there and call her in.

LYDIA & KITTY. It's embarrassin'!

MRS. BENNET (*entering*). My goodness gracious, polliwogs alive! I am just happier than a pig in a cornfield.

MR. BENNET. What's happenin', Mama?

MRS. BENNET. I tell you, it's the biggest news since ol' miss Daisy sat on the bear trap.

MR. BENNET (*still reading*). Big as that huh?

MRS. BENNET. Put that paper down, sir. Put it down!

(*MR. BENNET does.*)

MRS. BENNET (*cont'd*). The Netherfield Ranch is let at last.

MR. BENNET (*putting his paper back up*). Well, that's good.

MRS. BENNET (*calling out the window*). Lizzie! Lizzie!

Get in here where the world can't see ya!

LYDIA. Mama, Kitty and I need new dresses. We might as well be paradin' around in a burlap sack.

(*LIZZIE enters. She is in full cowhand gear down to the boots.*)

LIZZIE. So, what's on your mind, Mama?

LYDIA. Ugh.

KITTY. Ugh.

LYDIA. She shouldn't be dressed out like some smelly cowhand.

KITTY. Smelly cowhand!

MRS. BENNET. The Netherfield Ranch has been bought out by a young fella with a great big fortune!

KITTY. Really?

LYDIA. Well that is just sweet as pie!

MRS. BENNET. They say he'll take it over lock, stock and barrel for Christmas.

LYDIA. Hot cross buns!

KITTY. Is he married or single?

MR. BENNET. Might wanna know the gent's name first, Lydia.

MRS. BENNET. Single as a polecat. Come from back east where his daddy builds railroads. An it's sure as shootin' a single man with a large fortune, dang well needs a wife.

LYDIA. Me.

KITTY. No me.

LYDIA. Me!

MR. BENNET. Quiet down!

LIZZIE. Ain't even settled and everybody thinks he's just rightful property of their daughters.

MR. BENNET. Truer words were never spoken.

LIZZIE. Well, he better marry one of us, is all I can say.

MRS. BENNET. Indeed he must, or you girls will be beggin' on the main street. His name is Bingley.

JANE. Well, that's a right nice name.

LIZZIE. Jane gets him as she's eldest.

MRS. BENNET. Now Mr. Bennet, you got to get in the wagon, visit that fella first day he sets foot in Calico.

MR. BENNET. Get yourself over there, Miz Bennet, you're as handsome as any woman in the territory.

MRS. BENNET. Why, Mr. Bennet, you flirty-gerty. I got my share of the beauty, but we got to get these girls off our hands.

LIZZIE. I'll git my own dang self off your hands, thanks jest the same.

MRS. BENNET. John Bennet, you got to meet him or we never will.

MR. BENNET. I'll just send over a note sayin' he's got my consent for the pick of the litter.

LYDIA. You are just a mean ol' tease!

MRS. BENNET. Mr. Bennet, you are just a rotten ol' crabapple. If we got twenty rich men into Calico it wouldn't help a slice 'cause you won't visit 'em.

MR. BENNET. We get twenty, I'll visit them all.

(The stage clears and reforms. Lights change. LYDIA trims a bonnet. MR. BENNET shines his boots. KITTY practices square dancing. LIZZIE cleans her six gun. MRS. BENNET takes snuff.)

MRS. BENNET. Well Lydia— *(Explosive sneeze.)* Mr. Bingley gonna think yer cuter than a bug in a rug.

LYDIA. He won't think nuthin' at all as Papa won't visit!

LIZZIE. Shush now. You'll meet his highness down to the square dance at the school.

KITTY. I dance like the wind!

LYDIA. You just dance to show yer ankles.

KITTY. Better than the tree trunks you got.

LIZZIE. I'll whup the two of you!

MR. BENNET. Sposin' we git back to this Bingley.

MRS. BENNET. I swear I'm sick of Mr. Bingley. Bingley, Bingley, Bingley, with no results!

MR. BENNET. Sick of him? Shoot, I wouldn't have rode over this mornin'.

MRS. BENNET. You rode over, said howdy?

MR. BENNET. Jes for an hour or two!

KITTY. No kiddin'?

LYDIA. Big daddy!

MRS. BENNET. See there, you got a father slicker than a wet snake!

MR. BENNET. Welllll—now I drank hard liquor with the man, there ain't no way to escape his acquaintance.

(Lights change. The square dance begins. As the dialogue begins, the dance changes to slow motion.)

BINGLEY. Come along, Darcy. No use leaning on the wall, man, get out and hotfoot it.

DARCY. I prefer to be introduced to the lady I dance with. Your sister, Mr. Bingley, has a partner and no one else holds a candle to her.

BINGLEY. Well, it looks like a bouquet of roses to me.

DARCY. That Jane Bennet has a shine I think.

BINGLEY. Shine indeed. How about her sister there?

DARCY. Elizabeth Bennet? Tolerable, but she's got a mouth on her. Family doesn't have two nickles to rub together.

BINGLEY. Seems to me you have your toe in your mousetrap, Darcy. My feet are calling me.

(BINGLEY dances with JANE.)

LIZZIE. You lookin' for a partner, Mr. Darcy?

DARCY. Not just at the moment.

(DARCY moves away.)

LIZZIE. How about a rattlesnake in your carriage?

(LIZZIE goes the other way.)

MRS. BENNET. I dare not characterize the shocking rudeness of that uppity Darcy.

MR. BENNET. Wise of you not to try, my dove.

(They move away. LIZZIE talks with JANE.)

JANE. He is just what a young fella ought to be, sensible, good humored, easy talker and city manners.

LIZZIE. A mite handsome which a neighbor should be if he possibly can.

JANE. Bingley danced with me twice already. I never saw that comin'.

LIZZIE. Cowgirl, you never see the flirt comin', and I'm gone before one gets there.

(They move away. MR. BENNET and MRS. BENNET pass by.)

MRS. BENNET. Lizzie don't lose a straw by not suiting Mr. Darcy's fancy. He is a disagreeable horrid man.

MR. BENNET. Wearin' real nice boots though.

MRS. BENNET. Our Lizzie not good enough to dance with? Darcy the detestable, is what I say.

(CHARLOTTE talks to LIZZIE.)

CHARLOTTE. Evenin', Elizabeth.

LIZZIE. Evenin', Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE. You just pretty as a picture.

LIZZIE. Just 'cause you paint a pig gold, don't mean it's money.

CHARLOTTE. Well it's gold to me to see my particular friend. Listen here, you got your eye on Bingley and Jane, so you don't cotton to the one got his eye on you.

LIZZIE. Who?

CHARLOTTE. Mr. Snooty Darcy behind you. No, don't look. He stared any harder his eyeballs would fall out.

LIZZIE. I wouldn't give him the satisfaction of turnin' around.

CHARLOTTE. Well, he's comin' over like he was riding on train tracks.

LIZZIE. No?

CHARLOTTE. Oh yes. I tell you girl, that man makes me sweat.

(CHARLOTTE moves off as DARCY approaches.)

DARCY. Miss Bennet.

LIZZIE. Yeah, what?

DARCY. Might I have the honor of the next dance?

LIZZIE. That is real nice, mister, but I think I'll deny myself the pleasure.

DARCY. Oh.

(LIZZIE leaves. MISS BINGLEY comes up to DARCY.)

DARCY *(cont'd)*. Miss Bingley.

MISS BINGLEY. Bet I can guess what you're thinkin'.

DARCY. If you please.

MISS BINGLEY. You got yourself livin' in a town full of self-important hicks.

DARCY. No ma'am, that was not what I was thinkin'.

MISS BINGLEY. That they hop when they dance?

DARCY. I meditate on the very great pleasure which a pair of fine eyes in a pretty face may bestow.

MISS BINGLEY. Well, just what face did you meditate on?

DARCY. Miss Elizabeth Bennet's ...

MISS BINGLEY. You kiddin' me? You're not kiddin' me, huh? You got a parson picked out, Mr. Darcy?

DARCY. I have to say, a ladies imagination is pretty rapid. You jump from admiration, to love, to matrimony in a race track minute.

MISS BINGLEY. You mention matrimony. I do hope my brother and I will be invited.

(They exit. CHARLOTTE and LIZZIE talk.)

CHARLOTTE. Now I'd say Jane was sweet on that Mr. Bingley.

LIZZIE. Uh-huh. She got the sweet tooth for sure, poor Jane.

CHARLOTTE. He's a nice fella, livin' on a nice spread, eatin' canned beans. You got to throw some wood on that fire, girl. He likes her undoubtedly, but he may never do more unless you get in there and push.

LIZZIE. She pushes just as much as her nature allows. She's a quiet one.

CHARLOTTE. Ain't too many dances in Calico. You tell Jane to make the most of the one she's got.

LIZZIE. That girl won't chase a rich husband. She'll figure on a man's character before she jumps.

CHARLOTTE. It's all a horse race, Lizzie. It's better to know as little as possible about a man's defects before you cook his dinner.

LIZZIE. You make me laugh, Charlotte, but I know sure as shootin' you're no conniver.

CHARLOTTE. That Darcy is eyeballin' you again.

(The lights change. We are back in the Bennet home place again.)

LIZZIE. Mama, you got to stop puttin' garlic in the coffee.

MRS. BENNET. I like to spice that plainness up.

LYDIA. Remember the time she put salt in?

JANE *(entering)*. My goodness, listen to this.

LIZZIE. You're bright red, Jane.

JANE. Dear friend Jane—that's to me.

LIZZIE. You mean because your name's Jane?

JANE. Lizzie!

LIZZIE. Well read out, girl.

JANE. “Dear friend”—it’s from Bingley’s sister—“Dear friend, if you don’t come on by for the midday meal, we’re just likely to hate each other right through Christmas. My brother will be right there at the table as well as sundry calvary officers.”

LYDIA. Calvary officers?

KITTY. We should like to meet sundry officers!

JANE. “Yours ever, Caroline Bingley.”

LYDIA. Come on, Daddy!

MR. BENNETT. I believe there was only one name on that there invitation.

JANE. Can I ride over, Daddy?

MR. BENNETT. Sure as shootin’.

MRS. BENNETT. Looks like rain, so you get lucky you’ll get soaked through an hafta stay over.

JANE. Mama!

(Lights change. MRS. BENNETT, MR. BENNETT and LIZZIE are onstage. KITTY enters.)

KITTY. Rider brought a letter, Lizzie. Over from the Bingley’s he said.

MRS. BENNETT. Lizzie, you read it out this minute!

LIZZIE. From Jane.

MRS. BENNETT. Crossin’ my fingers she’s good an sick.

LIZZIE *(reading)*. “Feelin’ kinda down this mornin’. Got a sore throat from getting soaked on the ride.”

MRS. BENNETT. Goody, goody!

LIZZIE. “Bingley’s put me right to bed. Not bad off though. Jane.”

MR. BENNETT. Well, Mrs. Bennet, if Jane dies of pneumonia it’ll be a comfort to know it was on your orders.

MRS. BENNETT. You just shush up.

LIZZIE. I'm walkin' over there.

MRS. BENNETT. Now Lizzie, you can't be climbin' through barbed wire an show up with cow pies on your boots.

LIZZIE. Jane's poorly, Mama. It ain't but three miles an I'm goin', cowpies or no cowpies.

(Exit.)

MRS. BENNETT. Oooo. That girl just pains my backside!

(Lights change. We are at the Bingley's. Present are BINGLEY, MISS BINGLY, DARCY and LIZZIE.)

MISS BINGLEY *(plays the guitar and sings)*.

HOME, HOME ON THE RANGE
WHERE THE DEER AND THE ANTELOPE PLAY.
WHERE SELDOM IS HEARD A DISCOURAGING
WORD,
AN THE SKIES ARE NOT CLOUDY ALL DAY.

(Applause.)

MISS BINGLEY *(cont'd)*. Thank y'all. Now don't you worry, Lizzie, Jane's all cuddled up with the three dogs. She'll be right as rain.

LIZZIE. Jane gets the sneezes it goes right down to her chest.

MISS BINGLEY. We're just precautionary. You can take that gal on home after lunch. *(She sniffs.)* Darlin', you don't have cowpie on your shoes, do you?

LIZZIE. Scraped it off real good.

MISS BINGLEY. Well, that's just fine. I'm longin' to see your little sisters again. Cute as bugs in a rug and real accomplished.