

# No Tomorrow: A WWII Pride and Prejudice Variation by Anne Morris

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Some mornings, they talked during the shared walk and portion of their ride. Some days, they let the clatter of the rails fill their head. On others, they listened to the discussions around them. But that morning, Jane felt like talking and began as soon as they were outside. Elizabeth hadn't felt inclined and tried in subtle ways to discourage discussing Aunt Eleanor's situation.

"I can't imagine how Aunt Nora copes with four children and running a business," said Jane.

"There are other people who help. It isn't as if she's the only employee," Elizabeth observed. "Uncle Ned had a good team in place."

"I will skip lunch and go out," her sister declared.

"You have a half-day tomorrow," Lizzy interrupted. "Don't push yourself for others—though that is exactly the sort of thing you *would* do," she said, softening her stance.

"It's just...*poor Dolly!* I wish we could do more for her," Jane lamented.

"I wish we could do more for all our cousins, but our work for the war effort is crucial."

"You sound so determined," said Jane. "It doesn't get to you? All the typing?"

"No," Elizabeth answered.

"What department *do* you work in?" Jane asked.

"Loose lips sink ships. We're about to get on the Tube, for god's sake," she lowered her voice. Jane blushed, probably because of Lizzy's slight use of profanity. They didn't speak again until they stepped on the train.

"I know we have to face things, but I wish we hadn't come of age at a time when there was this atrocious war. When I was Lydia's age, all I wanted to do was get married and have babies."

Jane looked tearful. "I am twenty-four years old, and I feel like an old maid!"

"Twenty-four isn't old!" Elizabeth insisted. "What about that nice young man from the office?"

"Corporal Smith?" Lizzy could immediately tell from the lack of response that Jane had no interest. Burgeoning emotions prevented Jane from saying something polite and kind about the young man. "I think all he does is run errands and make cocktails when all I do is type and make tea."

"Don't beat yourself down too much," encouraged her sister as they hung on. The car slowed to a stop, and Elizabeth said goodbye, exiting with others into the Baker Street Station.

Elizabeth considered her mother's remark about their trip to Longbourn. Their family had some property, but after the last war, Thomas Bennet had chosen to work in London. He had moved his growing family there, leaving the Hertfordshire property in the hands of others.

She wondered if there was some reason for his going to Longbourn or if it was just to check on things since he hadn't visited since the previous summer. But it would mean a weekend without either parent as they would drag Lydia with them. It was pleasant to have the rare weekend when it was just Jane and Elizabeth in the house pretending to be working girls like so many others were—supporting the war effort—while the men were off fighting and dying.

Elizabeth entered her building, nodded at a few people, and made her way to the first floor. The smell of stale cigarettes hit her—one of the ever-present scents in the office. The scent of metal lingered on her taste buds, as well as an odd chemical smell as Lieutenant Colonel Forster had a serious stockpile of explosives (despite regulations against such things). If you came later in the day, there would likely be the scent of alcohol as there was often a fair amount of booze hidden in cupboards. Gin was usually served, but the Brigadier liked his cognac.

Smack dab in the middle of all an ordinary office block was their Special Operations Executive branch. They weren't the spy school dealing in intelligence with its glamorous allure as portrayed in films. Her team dealt in sabotage or guerilla warfare and fueling resistance in occupied territories. Elizabeth was still dumbfounded some mornings when she arrived at the office to wonder how she had stumbled into this job.