Forms of Address

by hl (hele)

Summary

Short Pride and Prejudice interstitial fluff.

Notes

Dedicated to Elizabeth, because she insisted. Much thanks to: Elizabeth, Lin, Julie and tree for commenting it with me until it was done.

During their walk, it was resolved that Mr. Bennet's consent should be asked in the course of the evening. Elizabeth reserved to herself the application for her mother's. She could not determine how her mother would take it; sometimes doubting whether all his wealth and grandeur would be enough to overcome her abhorrence of the man. But whether she were violently set against the match, or violently delighted with it, it was certain that her manner would be equally ill adapted to do credit to her sense; and she could no more bear that Mr. Darcy should hear the first raptures of her joy, than the first vehemence of her disapprobation.

Once they had lost the house behind them, the couples easily fell into different steps, and separated in a way that could not have been more harmonious if it had been concerted.
Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy spoke, at first, in the same easy vein their last conversation had followed. However, even talk of connubial felicity is exhausted after half an hour of continual exploitation, particularly when the interlocutors are in so perfect an agreement of how it would come about. To both their alarms, they soon found themselves silent. In the path behind them, they could hear their friends, a murmur of perfect contentment, and their steps, crunching the fallen leaves.

But no, neither would let themselves be defeated by awkwardness--

'Mr. Darcy...'

'Miss Bennet,' he answered, his smile fleeting but marvellous all the same.

They looked at each other through the luminous morning's air for a moment, until Elizabeth began again. 'Mr. Darcy... Fitzwilliam,' she said, tentative, 'how should I call you?'

'How would you like to call me?'

'Well--I can very well picture myself, old and wrinkled, impertinently arguing with a Mr. Darcy.'

'Old, wrinkled and impertinent.'

'Naturally.'

'And calling me Mr. Darcy?'

'I could.'

'It is not very impertinent, is it? Rather formal,' he said, looking ahead.

'Darcy, then,' she said, entertained at the idea of them deciding on her address by its degree of impertinence. 'If one cannot be impertinent to the Mister, it must be taken out.'
'Bingley uses Darcy,' said Darcy, now looking at her, with a smile--such a smile that she was just now getting used to recognize in his face. She had been, she mused, rather blind. 'He is rarely impertinent.'

'No, he is a delightful friend,' she said, thinking that perhaps it would not be so difficult to teach him to be laughed at.

'He is,' Darcy agreed, still looking at her. 'But we must not stray from this most important topic. You cannot use Darcy, if you want to be perfectly impertinent.'

'Fitzwilliam, then,' she said, colouring, but incapable of looking away. His eyes, she found, were even more distracting than his smile.

'Indeed,' he said.

They had stopped walking, Elizabeth thought, vaguely.

'It is only just,' she said; it was strange to sound out of breath when not moving. 'You do call me Elizabeth.'

'Is that not your preference?' he asked. Elizabeth blushed again, and thought she should laugh at herself for being so silly, even if she could hardly avoid it.

'As you like,' she answered, ridiculously demure. She had been, she knew, looking into his eyes for too long a time to be--or pretend to be--demure.

Had he taken a step towards her?

'I like... Elizabeth,' he said. And then, 'I already called you so yesterday.' He lowered his voice, and she closed the small space between them. 'I think I very much prefer it.'

She held her breath, and looked down. Her spencer brushed the lapels of his greatcoat. She was not two inches from him.
He did not speak another word, but instead took her hand in his. It was warm through the gloves; she threaded their fingers, but could not raise her eyes.

'Elizabeth.'

She looked up. The space between them, which just a moment before had seemed impossibly small, now lay vast in its emptiness.

She stepped to close it, and his arms went about her. His body was warm; she felt daring and silly at once, but she reached up with her hand and brought his face down to hers. Warm, chapped lips just brushed at first, and she hesitated. There was a gust of cold wind, and she pressed closer. His lips were now fully against hers; she, flush against him.

There was nothing else. His mouth against her mouth, her neck. Her hand, losing his hand, and finding his chest through his coat and linen shirt. His hands finding her cheeks, and the frustration of gloves discovered anew.

Then, a suspiciously loud conversation from somewhere beyond them intruded, widening that space between them again. He was smiling when they separated, and she could not look away from him.

'I do not think it wise... I could hardly be impertinent after you call me so,' she said, dazed and truthful.

He laughed, gently, and his eyes barely left her face. 'I would not want to check you.'

She would have been won by him, if she had not been so already. She could not merely smile; she laughed. 'I will endeavour to make a particular effort.'

Her sister's figure reminded her then that there was something to be spoken about before returning to the house. 'Fitzwilliam,' she said, tasting the name for the first time in serious conversation, 'we should speak--we should arrange... I think it would be best if I spoke with my mother.'
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