"But you can't move to California!" Darcy said abruptly, hazel eyes widening slightly. "Excuse me? Pray tell- why?" Lizzy replied coldly. There was a brief pause. "Because I love you!" he blurted out. // two-shot AU modern proposal twist on Darcy's original proposals.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
"But Jane, I don't want to go!" Elizabeth Bennet- a curly haired grad student, dressed in day old sweats, with a large undistinguishable stain on the front of her NYU sweater said, her voice rising an octave with every word she spoke.

"Lizzy, you promised!" Lizzy's older sister pleaded, her blue eyes wide.

"But you never told me it was a double date! Especially with him," the younger girl exclaimed, walking out of their small kitchen in the tiny two bedroom apartment in Brooklyn, and into her bedroom, with Jane trailing behind her.

"It's not! I promise! It was just going to be me, you, and Charles, but then turns out, Will wanted to come, or something- I don't know- but Lizzy, you don't even have to talk to him! " Jane said eagerly, sitting down on the edge of Lizzy's bed.

"I have exams in a couple weeks, Jane," Lizzy responded tiredly, motioning to the stack of textbooks piled hastily on her desk, making it almost impossible to see that there was, in fact, a desk hiding underneath the pile of books, pens, paper, and notebooks.

"Oh, and I suppose you weren't going to curl up on the couch tonight, eating Chinese takeout and watching terrible sitcoms until the early hours of the morning?" Jane asked, arching a blonde brow at her sister, a smile curving the edges of her lips. Lizzy coloured- that was, in fact, her ideal evening, despite the mountain of work awaiting her.

"Sitcoms are not terrible! Friends is a classic!" Lizzy cried, throwing her hands up in exasperation. "Besides, it's me relaxing! I don't need to be stressed for exams, you know."

Earning a reprimanding look from Jane, Lizzy took a deep breath and began to speak.

"Look," she began calmly, picking up an Economics textbook from her unmade bed and tossing it onto the floor- "I had no problem with going out for dinner with my sister and her boyfriend- because as it happens, I actually like her boyfriend- but with Darcy?" Lizzy laughed incredulously.

"He is the most arrogant prick to ever walk this earth, and I have ever had the misfortune of meeting. Why in the world would I subject myself to an evening with a disgustingly happy couple, and a guy who looks as if he's choking on a dozen lemons, while simultaneously having a pole shoved all the way up his ass?" Jane looked on at her sister wryly, knowing that an hour rant about William Darcy was to occur.

Ten minutes later, Lizzy was still ranting, wringing her fingers angrily, punctuating each word with a firm hand gesture. "...and why in the world would he want to go if he knew I was going to be there? After all, he found me 'mildly attractive' but 'nothing special.'" Lizzy finished, a scathing look on her face.

"Lizzy- it's just dinner! Just come- please? And really- just forget that comment- It happened months ago! And I promise you won't have to go out with us anywhere if Will is coming ever again," Jane promised.

"Don't call the enemy by his first name, Jane- that shows acceptance. We don't accept Darcy," Lizzy said childishy, crossing her arms.

Jane rolled her eyes. "You don't accept Will- I, however, think he is a perfectly nice man. Please,
Lizzy- just this once?"

Lizzy glanced up, meeting Jane's eyes to see the pleading emotion in her pale blue eyes, and groaned, burying her head in a pillow.

"Fine. Just this once," Lizzy complied, restraining herself from doing something drastic- such as severely injuring the man in question, whom had made her life unbearable for the past several months.

"Oh thank you, thank you, thank you!" Jane squealed, tackling Lizzy with a hug. Lizzy let out a laugh despite her sour mood, and disentangled Jane's arms from hers.

"What I really don't understand is why a nice man as Charlie is friends with that asshat," Lizzy muttered, before giving Jane an overly sunny smile.

"Now, where are we going? Do I need to change out of these clothes?" Lizzy teased, straggling out of the bed.

"Those, my sweet little sister are not clothes- unless of course, you consider clothes scraps of cloth that look as if they haven't seen laundry detergent for several years and have been pulled out of a dumpster," Jane replied, scrunching her nose in distaste at the ripped sweats Lizzy had been sporting for the past two days.

"What? It's not like I'm going out anywhere- or was," she added, opening her closet doors. "You can borrow something of mine, if you want," Jane offered. Elizabeth snorted.

"Yeah, because clothes for someone who's nearly six feet tall is going to fit me, right? Unless your clothes come with some sort of way to make me taller, I think I'll pass," Lizzy replied, gesturing to her five foot three stature.

"Can I wear jeans?" she asked eagerly, anticipating the answer. "Good one- really, if this Masters in Genetics thing doesn't work out for you, I'm sure everyone in the comedy field will have their fingers crossed for you to join them," Jane said sarcastically. "Worth a try," muttered Lizzy under her breath, looking at her appearance cynically in the full length mirror installed into her closet door.

Her hair was up in a bun, a pencil holding the loose chestnut curls in place, a pair of reading glasses perched on the bridge of her nose, and a pair of familiar green eyes stared back at her.

"I need a shower," declared Lizzy, before grabbing a towel at random moving towards her and Jane's shared washroom in the hallway.

"I know. I can smell you," giggled Jane. "Go ahead and take a shower, I'll take out something for you to wear, yeah?" Jane offered, throwing a disgruntled look at Lizzy's disorganized closet.

"Yes please!" Lizzy shouted back, her voice coming muffled from the shut washroom door.

Twenty minutes later, Lizzy had blow dried her hair, so it hung in loose waves down her back, and was wrapped up in a frayed pink towel, looking down at the dress Jane had laid out for her.

"I need a shower," declared Lizzy, before grabbing a towel at random moving towards her and Jane's shared washroom in the hallway.

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Two minutes later, Lizzy had blow dried her hair, so it hung in loose waves down her back, and was wrapped up in a frayed pink towel, looking down at the dress Jane had laid out for her.

She picked up the pale, cream-ivory strapless dress, that hit just a few inches shy of the knees, embedded with tiny beads at the tight, loose corset-style bodice, complete with pale silk ribbon lacing at the back, eyeing it critically, wondering when she had ever bought such a monstrosity- she definitely hadn't had anywhere to wear something this fancy to lately.

"It looks like a death trap," she muttered, before dropping the towel and pulling the soft silk over her
head, and laced up the back with ribbon, her fingers moving quickly and deftly.

"Aw, Lizzy Bear, you look gorgeous," Jane said from behind her. Lizzy turned around to see Jane wearing an deep blue dress that gathered at the bust and fell down in layers of chiffon to her knees, and her hair done up in an elaborate braided bun.

Lizzy scoffed, making a face. "Yeah, maybe- if you're five million miles away on a different planet."

Jane rolled her eyes, and tossed a pair of slingback heels onto Lizzy's bed.

"Ter- oh- wait- wait just one second!" she exclaimed before scrambling out of Lizzy's room, and into her own. She returned several minutes later with a pearl necklace clutched between her fingers.

"Jane- really, this isn't necessary. It's just dinner with your boyfriend and his pompous ass of a friend so re-" Jane cut her off.

"Oh hush, Lizzy- I just love dressing you up- you're like a little doll," Jane grinned, and Lizzy shot her a scowl.

"Contrary to popular belief, short people are not actually dolls," Lizzy said sarcastically.

"But come on- you rarely ever go out anymore! What's the harm in a little fun, eh?" Jane asked, while clasping the pearl necklace around Lizzy's neck, just as a sharp knock came at their apartment door.

"Oh- he's here!" Jane squealed loudly, before blushing slightly, and grinning sheepishly at Lizzy.

"Oh come off it- you're allowed to be excited- especially considering you haven't seen him in over a month."

"41 days," Jane responded automatically, before turning a pretty shade of pink again. Lizzy laughed and led her sister out of her bedroom and towards the front door.

"One second!" she shouted in response to the impatient knock that rapped at the door once again.

"How do I look?" Jane asked, giving a little twirl, her dress fluttering out.

Lizzy grinned- "Fabulous, as always. Now let's go, before Charlie thinks you upped and left him."

Lizzy flung open the door, still smiling widely, her eyes bright with mirth.

"Cha-oh," her voice deadpanned, her smile fading quickly, she stepped back, glancing up at the tall, imposing figure. William Darcy had always been tall- and he had a presence. He was at least a foot taller than Lizzy- dark and imposing. He stepped into the two girls' apartment, making the room seem much smaller than its modestly sized proportions.

"Elizabeth," he said, after staring at her for a few seconds. She shot him a malicious look and opened her mouth to make a retort, before being silenced by one of Jane's reprimanding looks.

"William! Nice to see you," Jane said, moving forward to greet Will.

He allowed a small, stiff smile before returning the greeting. "Charles is downstairs- he was going to come get you two, but I offered to do it instead."

"How gallant of you," Lizzy bit out, before receiving a low warning from Jane.
"I mea- whatever. Sorry," she said petulantly, before crossing her arms over her chest. He had always brought out the immature six year old in her, much to her displeasure. Will stared at her, and she met his gaze coldly, the hazel meeting the green.

"You look- well, gor- you look adequate," he voiced suddenly, glancing at Lizzy. "Nice to know I meet your expectations of a physical appearance- adequately, Darcy," Lizzy responded sarcastically, while sliding her shoes onto her bare feet.

"I- mean- I meant that you look nice- you- you look beautiful tonight," he said, his eyebrows relaxing as he got the word out. Lizzy shot him an odd look, glancing at his hand which was shoved deep into his pockets, and the inherent tapping of his foot.

"Nice save," she snorted, rolling her eyes.

"Well- I guess we'll go now, right?" Jane said, laughing lightly, her eyes flitting between the two of them anxiously.

Lizzy nodded shortly, before picking up her white clutch, shoving the apartment keys and her wallet in it, and stalking out of apartment.

She muttered under her breath, with Jane and Will following close behind on her heels, until they approached a dark Lexus that was parked on the side of the curb.

Jane hesitated by the door, her right hand lingering by the handle of the passenger seat, before Charlie swung open the door.

"Jane!" he exclaimed. Without further invitation, Jane's face lit up with a smile and she slid into the front seat, giving Charlie a quick kiss.

Will huffed, his eyes narrowing at the prospect of fitting his six foot four form into the cramped backseat of Charlie's car.

"Sorry, Darcy- but I don't think your royal asswiper is going to be here to help you get into the car- you might have to do it yourself," Lizzy said mockingly, shooting him another scathing look.

"I- err, after you," he said, pulling the back doors open. Lizzy shot him another curious look, before reluctantly muttering a thank you in his general direction, and sliding into Charlie's car.

Much to Lizzy's surprise, Will had actually been pleasant in the car, making conversation with her, and actually making her laugh several times- of course, she would have if she hadn't restrained herself. Lizzy puzzled over this as they stepped out of the car, and into the restaurant.

"Right this way, Mr Bingley." The host- a man in his mid-twenties- led the four of them to a table near the corner of the restaurant, lit by the low, dim lights that hung from the ceiling. Lizzy's heels sank into the lush carpet, and she glanced around, glad that Jane had made her dress up, considering a twenty five year old in college sweats would most certainly not fit in at this restaurant- hell, she probably wouldn't even have been allowed out of the car by the valets if they had seen her in ripped clothing, she thought wryly.

A smile played at the edges of her lips, as she pictured the scenario of her bedraggled self trying to get into an exclusive restaurant such as the Marché with greasy hair and ripped sweat pants. Oh- that would definitely have gone well.

The host led them to a table for four, with Will pulling out a chair. Lizzy stood behind him, waiting for him to sit down. After about ten seconds, she snapped in irritation. "Well? Are you planning on
sitting down or not?"

"The chair's for you," he responded, giving her an odd look, making her flush slightly.

*Of course! Stupid Lizzy. He's an asshat, but he's still a gentlemen with manners,* she scolded herself mentally, feeling somewhat embarrassed as Charlie and Jane shot the two sly looks.

"Oh, right. Uh, thanks," she murmured, while sitting down, suddenly confused by his change of attitude. He nodded curtly, before seating himself across her, and picked up the menu, shielding his face. She peeked from the top of her own menu to examine him—just think of him as a specimen in the bio lab at NYU—figure out what the hell is wrong with him, and how I can rectify him.

He met her eyes from over top the menu with a stone cold look in his hazel eyes, a challenge awaiting in the dark pools.

"Right- I guess we can start with soups? Or any appetizer, really. They have good clams- and well-everything's just really good," Charlie said laughing slightly, glancing at the three of them.

Lizzy scanned the appetizers, her stomach rolling in anticipation—she hadn't had a decent meal—or any meal, really—that hadn't consisted of ramen noodles out of a packet or takeout Chinese for quite a few weeks.

"I'll have the broiled scallops, please," she said, turning to face the waiter. He nodded, taking orders from the others.

"And what wine would you like to start?" he asked, and Will quickly made the selection for the group—something ridiculously fancy that she wouldn't be able to pronounce without sounding like a complete idiot and had probably cost half her month's rent for the apartment—in one of the most overpriced cities on the planet, as well.

The waiter poured the deep burgundy drink into their wine glasses, the rich liquid tickling the brim, and she curled her hand around the stem, lifting it to take a sip.

The conversation carried lightly, with Will staying quiet throughout the majority of it, content with staring at Lizzy, much to her displeasure.

"So- Lizzy, Jane tells me you're almost done with school!" Charlie said, as their appetizers were brought to the table.

"Oh yeah! My last two exams are next Monday. And then, I'm done— for good," she said with a quick grin.

"And Lizzy scored an internship for this major cancer research centre for the summer!" Jane added enthusiastically from her place next to Lizzy.

"Oh- really, it's nothing," she said abashedly, her face pinking slightly at the attention, though it was the quite opposite of nothing—the weeks she had spent slaving over her application for one of the few, exclusive internship spots was enough to make her cringe and shudder with horror.

"I doubt it was nothing. At Ludwig Institute, right?" Lizzy turned over from Charlie and Jane to see that Will had actually *contributed* to the conversation. Lizzy nodded in response, confused again by his behaviour.

"Then obviously, it was most definitely not nothing- I remember having friends in university applying a few years ago- I don't think any of them got in," he said, lifting his wine glass.
"Well, it was quite difficult, yes. I think I worked on the application for several weeks," Lizzy said with a nervous laugh, disgruntled by the fact that William Darcy was making conversation for once. Jane gave Lizzy an encouraging nod, delighted over the fact that Lizzy wasn't ripping his head off. Yet.

Lizzy felt his leg brush her bare one underneath the table, and a jolt of heat traveled up her body. She yanked her leg away quickly and tucking it underneath her own chair, her eyes flashing over his face.

"Well, you deserve it. It's one of the best in the country," he said with approval, filling Lizzy with annoyance over the fact he seemed to think she needed his approval, the warm feeling fading quickly.

"Glad to see it cuts to your standards," she said curtly, thinking of the earlier incident with the dress and him in her apartment.

"Oh- no- I didn't mean it like that," he assured her, sitting up straighter in his chair - maybe that stick just got lodged up a bit higher Lizzy thought, smiling inwardly to herself.

"I'm just glad you got it- Jane would tell us the reason you couldn't make it to any dinners or movies because you were busy with school," he said. Lizzy felt a smile twitch at the edge of her lips, knowing that she probably had not been busy with school those nights, but it was simply an excuse to not spend time with the sickeningly happy couple and the stoic Will.

"Well, you know- last year at NYU and all. It gets kinda busy," she said just as the waiter set down the main courses.

"Do you have a job lined up yet?" He asked her, as he picked up a fork.

"I'm looking into a few research centers I'd love to work at- I've been looking at the requirements for a couple places in New York, one in Boston, and there's one that I'm definitely vying for the most in California, and of course the internship at Ludw-" Lizzy began animatedly, completely forgetting she was actually making conversation with someone she despised.

But then Will cut her off- of course, what else? Lizzy thought scathingly.

"California?" he asked incredulously.

"Uh huh- the research facility at Stanford is amazing- pretty hard for someone my age to be considered but then again, this internship should help loads an-" he cut her off again. "But it's just- well, it's just so far!"

Lizzy made a non-committal sound, as she chewed, the taste barely registering in her mouth.

"Yeah- it is, but I don't really have any permanent ties here- mum and dad are never going to leave Michigan, and I only moved to New York for school, and really- Jane's the only one here- but then of course that's what holidays, cellphones and the internet is for," she replied, and the fact that she was having a civil conversation with William Darcy of all people, hit her.

"So you'd move there?" he asked, his gaze unwavering.

"To California? Oh yeah- warm weather year round? No snow? Sign me up," she replied with a slight laugh.

Will's eyes filled with something akin to emotion- but as quickly as it had come, it was gone. Lizzy
stared at him curiously, confused by his sudden interest in her living arrangements.

"But you can't move to California!" Will said abruptly, hazel eyes widening slightly, after a moment of silence in which he had proceeded to stare at Lizzy. Jane and Charlie broke off from their private conversation, after Will's loud exclamation, both pairs of eyes locked onto Lizzy and Will.

"Excuse me?" Lizzy replied coldly, sitting up straighter, leaning back in her chair slightly, taking a sip from her glass of wine.

"I didn't realise I had to have your permission. Pray tell, Darcy," she spat out his name, pausing slightly, infuriated that he was telling her what she could and could not do. "Why can I not move to California?"

There was a brief pause.

"Because I love you!" he blurted out. Jane choked on her wine, and she heard Charlie coughing, the sound of a knife clattering against the fine china plates, and Lizzy sat there, her mouth dropping open in shock.

It took a few seconds for what Will had said to sink in on the four of them.

"Oh- oh shi- oh god- Lizzy-" he began, his words spilling out quickly and tripping over each other.

"I-" her mouth gaped open, not exactly knowing what to say.

She stood up suddenly, and swayed slightly, her body feeling oddly light.

"Outside. Now," she hissed. Will got up quickly, his eyes flashing with anxiety, and followed behind her, his arm occasionally brushing hers. Lizzy sped up everytime this occurred, her heart hammering harder with each step.

"You have five minutes," she said flatly, turning to face him, as they stepped out of the restaurant and into the brisk air of the early April night.

His hair was slightly windswept- the dark locks curling at his collar, looking absolutely, well, handsome in his charcoal suit, Lizzy had to admit— much to her displeasure. The valets at the front of the restaurant were discreetly staring at the pair. She shuffled back in forth, and shivered slightly as the light spring bit her bare arms.

"Well? Time isn't going to slow down for you," she snapped, tapping her heeled foot impatiently on the sidewalk.

"I- well, I apologize, firstly. I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable," he said hastily, beginning to pace back and forth on the small sidewalk.

"Lost cause that was," she muttered in reply, tilting her chin defiantly, meeting his eyes.

"I do though- I don't regret what I said, however," he replied, stopping in front of her.

"I do love you- I didn't realise I did until... well, actually I'm not quite sure," he said with a slight laugh.

"Is this a joke?" she demanded angrily, suddenly frustrated. How could he? After insulting her on countless occasions, he had the crass gall to say something as ridiculous as he loved her?
"No! I wouldn't joke about this! I really- I really didn't want to- trust me, I tried to talk myself out of, well- whatever this is, because it just isn't proper, for a man of my stance and position to be with a grad student,

"Oh- a grad student, right? I'm sorry, would you prefer that I dropped any sort of aspirations I may have, and become a mindless bimbo for you to cart around on your arm? That's not how it works, Darcy. If you want an airhead, please, allow me to give you Caroline Bingley's number- I'm sure she'll be happy to oblige you," Lizzy replied sarcastically, a bitter laugh escaping her.

"Wait! No- that's not wh-" Lizzy interrupted him again.

"And what 'stance and position' may you be referring to? One where the only requirement is to be an utter douchebag," she snapped. "I cannot believe the gall! How dare you say something like that in front of other people? You don't even know me, Darcy, let alone love me!" A stab of pain went through her body as she said those last few words, knowing that it was absolutely impossible for Will to love her, and she became irritated with herself, for even feeling that sort of emotion towards him.

Her bright green eyes were alight with fury, and his own hazel were pleading with her. Feeling defeated for a strange reason, she shook her head before continuing. "I'm sorry, Darcy. But I don't know what on earth could have possessed you to say something like that. We- we don't have the slightest-" she sighed, stopping mid sentence, her thoughts becoming a jumbled mess.

"I know you think I'm not being serious- but I am, I love you, and I want to be in a relationship with you, forever," he said, his gaze penetrating her.

"I'm one hundred percent serious, Elizabeth. I- I love you. You are loud, sarcastic, and your family. You do not hesitate to voice your thoughts- something that would usually immensely displease me. But I love the way your eyes light up, and I love how, well, fiery, you look when you're debating. but despite these faults, I still do admire and love you," he said earnestly, closing the small bit of distance that remained between the two.

"You've infected my thoughts. I want to take you to dinner and I want to have a real, solid future with you. I want a forever with you. And- well, I love- I love you."

"No! Darcy- stop. I'm serious. This is ridiculous. We're not even dating- hell, we aren't even friends and can't hold up a conversation that lasts more than a minute without breaking out into a fight!" Lizzy exclaimed, flattening her palms against his chest and pushing him away from her. A light jolt traveled through her arms at the physical contact.

"I… I'm flattered- I think- but how on earth do you expect me to spend "forever" with you?" she said, shaking her head slightly, a slightly hysterical laugh escaping her.

"But why?" he demanded arrogantly, and Lizzy raised a brow in shock.

"Oh please, Darcy!" she exclaimed, a sudden fury building up inside her. "We don't know each other. I don't love you. We can't have a conversation without biting each other's head off! There's absolutely no compatibility whatsoever. Don't you think those might be considering factors of you suggesting we even attempt to begin a relationship?" she questioned him.

"I- er, suppose I acted a bit- impulsively, but I assure you- "He opened his mouth to speak, but Lizzy began to speak again, her voice getting shriller with each syllable.

"And how on earth could you declare some ridiculous notion of loving me, after insulting every part of my character? You are pompous, and- and arrogant, and you have no respect for others- and
you're rude! Ever since you've been here, all you've done is look down upon the company you were surrounded by, acting as if you were better than everyone else, just because of your upbringing and wealth. And the things George Wickham has told me about you- how dare you do that to a respectable man like him? Someone who had every right to what he was entitled to! Just because you're rich, Darcy, or well-known, or have a most noble lineage doesn't mean that you can stomp on whoever's in your way!" she said angrily, punctuating her words with a pointed finger at his chest.

Will's body went stiff, and he leaned away from Lizzy. His eyes hardened. "Oh- poor Wickham must have told you quite the story," he said quietly, his voice deadly.

"Oh he did- the despicable act of cheating a well deserving man out of his inheritance out of spite and jealousy? That's childish, Darcy. You'd think a grown man would have better sense than doing something as petty as that," she responded coolly.

"And you believe that Wickham is a good person?" he asked, a rage entirely different from Lizzy's built up inside his body over the fact that the women he loved- for heaven's sake!- had fallen victim to Wickham's deceitful lies.

"I do. You- however, are definitely the last man on earth I would ever even consider getting into a relationship, or falling in love with, or spend another moment with, as a matter of fact," she finished, her chest heaving, and her cheeks flushed from the cold.

"I see," he said quietly after a slight pause. "And that is your final say?" Lizzy gave him a final, curt nod.

"Well- then I apologize for wasting your time. I won't be a nuisance to you again," he said with a tone of finality, his eyes dark and remorseful. A sudden sense of dredge and regret tugged at Lizzy, but she pushed the feeling down, as Will turned quickly on the heel of his foot, hailed a cab, and got in, giving a short, almost rueful wave to her, before getting into the bright yellow cab.

Lizzy leaned against the brick wall, and tilted her head up to the dark sky, taking in a deep breath before walking inside the restaurant.

"Lizzy- hey! So uh, how was everyth-" Jane had asked nervously, upon seeing Lizzy approaching the table.

"Just fantastic. I'm going back home," she replied darkly, snatching her clutch up with her hands, and storming out of the restaurant, to follow Will's example, in hailing a cab to go back home, leaving an appalled Charlie and Jane behind.

"83rd Street East- building eighteen," she told the cabbie quickly, shutting the door behind her.

Her head fell back onto the back of the seat, and a low groan emanated from the back of her throat, and she pushed a hand through her hair which had now become undone, as she ran over the last twenty minutes in her head.

Nearly an hour later, after being stuck in the typical New York traffic, the cab finally pulled up in front of her apartment building. She handed the driver a bill while getting out, and walked into the building, her eyes bleary, with the events of the night taking a toll on her body.

"A nice hot bath and some ice cream is definitely what I need," Lizzy muttered to herself as the elevator rose to the tenth floor, already anticipating the thought of curling up on the couch with a book.

She jangled the keys in the lock, and slipped inside, and took off her shoes, nearly chucking them
across the living room in frustration. A familiar ring tone came from her purse, and she picked out her phone, seeing Jane's name on the caller ID. Pressing ignore, she walked towards the washroom, his words still running through her mind.

After a hot bath, she promptly picked up a worn sweater and bright pink pajama pants featuring smiley faces- the complete opposite of what she was feeling- before settling down onto the sunk in couch. A few minutes had passed, before there was a rapping knock at the door, and Lizzy got up to open it, thinking Jane had returned from the dinner with Charlie.

She opened the door to be greeted by Will- for the second time that night. Her jaw slackened, as she eyed him. He had taken off his suit jacket, and his dress shirt had been unbuttoned at the collar, revealing the slightest expanse of his chest, and his shirt cuffs pushed up on his forearms.

"Uh wha-" Lizzy said, after the two had stared at each other for several moments, but to be cut off by Will.

"Here- just- just read this," he said gruffly, before forcing a sealed envelope into her hands. "I promise they're not anymore... unwelcome advances. But just read it," he repeated again, before quickly turning away, and taking the emergency fire exit stairs down to the main lobby.

Lizzy clutched the envelope in her hands, eyeing it with trepidation, and silently shut the door behind her, moving towards the couch again.

She sat there for the next hour, the unopened letter clutched tightly in her hands, and the mug of hot chocolate laying long forgotten on the coffee table.

Her fingers shaking, she slid a nail under the seal, and opened it- two heavy pieces of paper with crisp block lettered writing adorning it front and back- and took a deep breath, as she read the first sentence, not quite sure of what to expect.
Jane and Charlie looked disgustingly happy. Absolutely, completely, and revoltingly happy. But Lizzy was happy for her- if anyone deserved someone as good as her own self, it was Jane. She smiled, while watching the couple dance on the floor in pre-marital bliss. Well, at least someone was going to be happy, she thought, quickly scanning the crowd for maybe for hundredth time for him. She'd been dying to apologize- or something for the past two months- in which she'd gone without seeing Will at all. How on earth could I have been so stupid? And to think I used to pride myself upon being a good judge of character, she thought cynically to herself, amazed at how George had duped her so quickly with an easy smile and charm.

"Come on, Lizzy- you've been standing around all night- why don't you dance?" Jane appeared in front of her, her cheeks flushed and a bright smile gracing her features. "Hey- your engagement party. Shouldn't you be the one dancing?" Lizzy retorted, falling into step next to her sister.

"Because I just wasn't doing that, right?" Jane teased, picking up two champagne glasses from a passing waiter, handing one to Lizzy. "It's just..." Lizzy sighed, taking a sip from the glass. "Nothing- just nothing," she said brightly, not wanting to ruin Jane's night. "Oh please, Lizzy- we practically shared a womb. I can tell when something's wrong," Jane said wisely, grabbing Lizzy's wrist and pulling her to an empty table.

Lizzy let out a bark of laughter, before collapsing down into the chair. "First off, we didn't practically share a womb- if I remember correctly, you were born a good three years before me." To this, Jane waved a hand in the air and huffed slightly. "Details, details."

"And secondly," Lizzy continued, before taking another dredge of wine, "Nothing is wrong- I swear. Seriously- go dance with your fiancé- whom, if I may add seems to be giving me death glares for taking away his precious little angel."

Jane laughed, shaking her head, before her smile slipped off her face. "It's because of Will, isn't it?" Jane questioned quietly, her eyes scanning the ballroom of Netherfield for the man in question. "Jane... just-" Lizzy sighed, and let out a frustrated groan. "I've been so stupid and blind. And I can't help but feel so guilty for being so ignorant after reading that letter, and I just..." she trailed off, her fingers tapping impatiently against the table.

"Look, just pretend I didn't say anything, okay? It's your engagement party, and you're supposed to be having fun. Not listening to your little sister's stupid mistakes," Lizzy replied.

Jane scowled at this. "Lizzy- your problems are not stupid- besides, Charlie can last a few minutes without me, and I know that you've been beating yourself up about this whole Will situation, and really, the best solution would be to just talk it out with him!"

"That's just it, Jane- I can't. I feel so embarrassed about being so taken in by Wickham's charming façade, I can't look at Darcy without feeling like my five year old self- getting scolded by Mom for taking cookies from the cookie jar before dinner!" Lizzy exclaimed.
"Well- I think you've got your chance now- Will's just walked in," Jane informed her quickly, before shooting Lizzy a quick grin. "Good luck!" She whispered gleefully, before dashing back to Charlie's waiting form.

"Wait- Jane!" Lizzy hissed, rapidly glancing around the ballroom, a pit of worry forming in the bottom of her stomach. Her eyes flicked over the entrance, and froze as she saw him walking in. His hair was messy as usual, his tall figure clad in a dark suit.

Lizzy had known she'd run into him- of course, it was bound to happen. He was the best man, and she was the maid of honour, and both of their best friends were getting married. But after not seeing him the entire summer, she'd assumed he'd been avoiding her. Or something like that.

"Shit- shit shit shit, a little voice inside Lizzy's head began to panic as he began to near. "Idiot girl- stop being a coward and talk to him," she muttered to herself, before plastering a huge, forced smile on her face. She opened her mouth to greet him, before freezing.

"Hello!" she said, forgoing his name entirely, and quickly cutting off her rambling thoughts. "How are you?" she continued, tapping her fingers on the sides of her thighs.

He paused in front of her, his brows wrinkling in slight confusing, before a bemused smile appeared on his face. "I'm... fine- and you?"

"Great! Been busy, you know- with the internship at Ludwig- took up a lot of my time!" she said with a slightly nervous laugh. "And you? I haven't seen you around the past couple months," she added curiously.

"Oh, well, I've been out visiting the other offices in London, California and Italy... making sure everything was working," he said, almost apologetically, before taking a seat in the empty chair next to her.

"Oh- right," Lizzy responded, an awkward pause falling between the pair. Just apologize, you idiot! a voice shouted to her inside her head.

"This is a good song," Will said suddenly, breaking the silence, as an old Frank Sinatra song began to play. Lizzy nodded noncommittally in response.

"I haven't heard it for quite a while," he added on, almost conversationally. "Nice tune to it."

"It's got a nice dance beat, don't you think?" he questioned, before scratching the side of his head.

"Definitely," she responded, confused. It was a slow jazz number- there was no dance beat. Will mumbled something in response, a questioning gaze in his eyes.

"Pardon?"

He cleared his throat. "I wanted to know if you wanted to dance. To this song. With me- I mean," he finished hastily with an embarrassed smile.

Lizzy stared at him, wondering if she had heard correctly. "Oh, sure!" she said, slightly baffled, before smiling at him in response.
The pair of them got up, and made their way to the dance floor, Will's had placed at the small of her back. A shiver of anticipation ran up Lizzy's spine, as he placed his hands at her waist, her arms wrapped around the back of his neck, as they began to sway.

A solid minute of silence passed between the pair of them, before Lizzy broke the silence.

"I just wanted to say... that- that I'm sorry. I made so many terrible assumptions, and I just can't believe how blind and stupid I've been, and I just wanted to say I am really, really really sorry and I just wish that-" Lizzy began, her words speeding up, before Will cut her off.

"There's nothing to apologize for," he said, with a slight smile. "You were told certain things by someone who you thought you could trust, and Wickham always has been a very persuasive person," he said with a slight scowl. "And I don't blame you for your mistrust of me- I hadn't exactly made the best first impression- or second," he finished with a slight laugh.

It was nice- his laugh. Deep and throaty, Lizzy observed. She hadn't ever heard him laugh before. Or come to think of it, she hadn't seen him smile this much either.

"I just feel terrible for judging you... how I did- and saying all those terrible things when we were- er, at the restaurant," she finished, her face turning a deep shade of red, as she remembered the certain things Will had said on that night.

And the thing was, she despised herself for judging him so quickly, for making such assumptions about his entire person, simply because her pride and ego had been damaged upon their first meeting. And the self-loathing had been eating away at her very core ever since she opened the letter he had dropped off the same night, because she had been so very wrong. If there was one thing Lizzy hated, it was to admit that she was in the wrong. And to think, maybe the pair of them would have had a chance at a real relationship, if she hadn't been so callous with her judgement.

The swayed silently to the soft, strumming sound of the guitar for a few minutes, her skin burned feverishly where Will had placed his hands, and a slow ache built inside her body, her heart hammering. She took a deep breath, attempting to calm her racing heart, wondering if he could hear it beating, closing her eyes, and inhaling deeply, only to inhale the smell of Will- it was citrusy, clean, and just purely Will- causing her head to spin even more. Lizzy saw Charlotte shoot her an anxious glance, her eyes sparkling with mirth at her friend's obvious confusion with her conflicting feelings.

"I think that we should perhaps start over," Will said promptly, as the song ended. Lizzy disentangled her arms, feeling oddly empty from not having him near her.

"Start over?" she questioned, cocking her head to the side.

"Yes. I'm William Darcy. And you are?" he asked with a huge grin slipping onto his face, causing Lizzy to smile hugely back in response, her heart fluttering from the change a smile on his face could do. He'd been handsome before, even with his features sullen and cross- he had the whole tall, dark hair, and imposing figure down to an art. But with a smile? Her heart jumped a mile- he looked younger than his thirty years, the boyish charm melting away the harsh lines.

"Are you sure your name is William? I swear I've heard people call you Fitzwilliam. Maybe I should call you that too?" she said with a teasing glint in her eyes. He laughed again, and the sound of it made her stomach flip.

"Whatever you want to call me," he said lightly. "Now, your name?"
"Elizabeth Bennet," she continued, playing along. "But you can call me Lizzy- all my friends do," she added.

"So, Lizzy," he began, testing out her name out- it slipped from his lips effortlessly, and caused a delicious feeling to travel up Lizzy's spine because of how her name sounded coming out of his mouth. "Would you like to go out for dinner tomorrow night?"

"Like... a date?" she asked, her smile threatening to get even wider.

"Whatever you want it to be," he said with a slight shrug, his face portraying much more emotion than Lizzy was used to. It seemed as if his solemn and arrogant mask had simply melted away.

"I suppose I can free up some time for you," she said, before grinning hugely. He beamed back at her, and they stood in the middle of the dance floor, staring at each other like complete idiots for a whole minute, before Charlie and Jane walked by.

"About time, you idiots," Charlie whispered loudly, smacking Will on the back, causing the two of them to turn beet red. Jane gave Lizzy a huge grin, and a thumbs up. Charlie and Jane rushed away, grabbing Richard and Charlotte on their way. Lizzy stared in confusion, before she saw the four of them bending their heads together, wallets being pulled out, and money being exchanged.

Realization dawned on Lizzy as Charlotte, looking grim, shoved a green bill into Richard's hands. "I can't believe it! They made a bet on us!" exclaimed Lizzy, her mouth gaping open in shock. Will laughed in response, before grinning down at her, and threading his fingers through Lizzy's slim ones.

"Well, at least they had more hope in us?" he offered. Lizzy chuckled in response

"I forgot to ask. Did you um, take the job at Stanford?" Will asked, the smile slipping off his face slightly.

"Oh- no, I didn't. I think...there might be something worth staying in New York for," she responded, glancing down at their intertwined hands, a smile playing at her lips.

Seven months later

It was safe to say, the last seven months of both Lizzy and Will's lives had been, well, amazing. They'd quickly fallen into an easy relationship of a couple who had known each other for their entire life. There had, of course, been the fights, in which they'd get into a heated debate, both with opposing opinions, resulting in not speaking to each other for several days, before one or the other would rush over to the other's apartment, and apologize profusely, which resulted in a rather... passionate reconciliation, in which Jane would evacuate the apartment for the next twenty-four hours and hide over at Charlie's. Which is why they found themselves at a wedding, seven months later. Not exactly their own wedding, but the wedding of their two best friends.

"This is nice," said Lizzy, throwing a grin over at the tall man in a tuxedo sitting next to her.

"There are so many people here though, for Christ's sake- how on earth do Jane and Charlie even know these many people?" Will mused, shaking his head, his eyes flicking across the outdoor garden where the reception was taking place, which seemed to be almost bursting with hundreds of people.

"Come on- you're the best man, I'm sure you know some people," Lizzy said with a roll of her eyes.
"Hmm, let's see," Will said, his eyes skimming quickly over the clustered crowd of Jane and Charlie's wedding reception.

"There's you, Georgie, Charlie, Jane, oh, and Charlotte over there- and unfortunately, Caroline- that I know. I think that sums it up," he said, counting off the names on one hand.

Lizzy laughed in response, before shaking her head. "I'll bet that half these people were invited by my Mom, and the other half by Caroline."

"Sounds about right," Will replied dryly.

"When we get married, we're not having these many people here," retorted Lizzy, before continuing without even processing what she had said, "I'd like probably about, oh, I don't know three people at ours?" And then it clicked inside her head.

Will looked slightly alarmed, his eyes bugging out slightly.

"I- oh. I just meant, you know- at my wedding. If that ever happened," Lizzy said, slightly mortified. You had to open your big mouth, didn't you, Lizzy?

"Was that a proposal, Lizzy Bennet?" Will asked, the corners of his lips twitching.

"I just- no!" Lizzy replied, a dark blush building up in her cheeks. "You're the one who's been carrying around a ring box!" she blurted out.

The smile slipped off Will's face. "That's not for you. Besides, how'd you even know that?" he demanded.

Lizzy scoffed, the mortification from several seconds ago fading. "Please. The only other females in your life in any sort of way is Georgie, Lucy- your secretary who is ten years older than you, Mrs. Reynolds and Jane. I doubt you're holding out for your sister, and I think Jane's been called for," Lizzy said drily, leaning back in her chair, a satisfied grin on her face. "Oh, and Caroline. Unless you want to get married to the spawn of Satan, don't let me stand in your way." Will flinched in horror at the comment about Caroline.

"And I found it in a suit jacket you left in my laundry hamper two weeks ago, genius."

Will's cheeks coloured slightly, remembering those eight days when he couldn't find the ring, but didn't think much of it- he'd probably left it at work. He mumbled something under his breath, before digging into his pocket and pulling out a small velvet box. Lizzy's jaw slackened.

"Well, I've been carrying this around for five months now. I didn't want to... scare you or anything. But I assume since you haven't run away screaming when you first found it..." he trailed off.

"Was that a proposal, William Darcy?" Lizzy said in a mocking tone, her voice wavering a bit.

And she could see it. It was effortless- being in a relationship with Will was perhaps one of the easiest things in life. Everything was so natural for the two of them, everything they did fell into sync unknowingly, and it was just so simple to see the two of them getting married, living together, sharing anniversaries and birthdays, buying a house, cooking dinner together, having kids- it all seemed so natural.

A smile played at her lips. "It didn't really sound like one. Try again," she said, her heart hammering inside her chest.
Will cleared his throat, before getting out of his chair, and sinking down on one knee. "Oh god- I didn't mean like that. Everyone's staring, Will!" Lizzy hissed, as the majority of the reception crowd turned towards them, a silence falling over the crowd.

Jane and Charlie were staring, the pair of them grinning back at them. Mrs. Bennet looked absolutely over the moon, and was already tugging at Mrs. Lucas' arm. "Not exactly the most charming fellow, but so rich!" Lizzy heard her mom say, before gritting her teeth in annoyance.

"Lizzy Bennet, I love you, probably since the moment I met you. I want a white picket fence with all the fixings. I want to spend every minute of the rest of my life with you. I want to wake up with you next to me, and I want everyone to know that we're together. Will you marry me?" he asked, just as he opened the small velvet box.

When Lizzy had first found the tiny box in his suit jacket, her head had begun to spin, and she felt a bit sick. But she hadn't opened it, despite the strong urge to do so, and had simply placed it back into the folds of his pocket. And now, she was glad that she hadn't opened it.

A slim ring, with a silver band stared back at her, a modestly sized diamond in the centre, surrounded by a small cluster of green emeralds. She knew it was Anne Darcy's old ring- she'd seen it on her finger when Will had showed her pictures of his parents before.

A smile broke out on her face. "Technically, I proposed first, so will you marry me?" she asked, grabbing his hands and pulling him up. Will rolled his eyes and smiled widely. "You can't beat me at everything, Lizzy. Let me win at proposing," he said, before wrapping his arms around her waist.

Lizzy laughed, tears pricking her eyes. "Fine," she said with a laugh. "Of course I'll marry you," she said, a smile breaking out, right before Will pulled her in and kissed her on the mouth, the ring still clutched tightly in Will's hands. The crowd started clapping, and several hoots which were most definitely coming from the direction of Richard and Charlotte.

The two of them pulled back, a bit breathless, and Will ducked his head, a bit embarrassed to have gotten so carried away in public. He slipped the ring onto Lizzy's finger, his chest threatening to burst open from joy- he hadn't been this happy in years.

"I think we might have stole Jane and Charlie's thunder," Lizzy commented, as several of their friends and family began to walk towards them.

Will laughed in response, wrapping an arm around her waist and pulling her into his side. "I think it was worth it."

*Fin.*

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**End Notes**

*Marché is a restaurant in downtown Toronto I'm quite fond of. It doesn't actually exist in NY. I think. Oh well.

*Ludwig Institute is a research centre in NY.*
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