now i'm missing you

by BookPirate

Summary

So, what if Elizabeth had accepted Darcy the first time he told her he loved her? Would it be a shit-show? Or would it work out?

Pride and Prejudice in the modern era with a twist.

Notes

Title from 'Be Like You' by Ed Sheeran

The caveat Elizabeth gave Darcy to going on a date with him was that he talk to Bingley about his interference with Jane.

“If I agree to this,” Elizabeth had said, “will you agree to do something for me?”

“What?” He tried to appear calm, but on the inside he was terrified, both about her possible acceptance and what she would want as a favor.

She bit her lip, thinking, before she looked at him. “I want you to talk to Charlie, about what you did to break Jane and him up. If you do that, I’ll go out with you.”
He clenched his jaw, debating the issue mentally. On the one hand, Darcy had his pride, and was loathe to be parted from it, especially when it required the acknowledgement that he had been wrong. On the other, this was Elizabeth, and he was madly in love with her.

“I’ll call Charles tonight,” he promised, as he fiddled with the phone in his pocket.

“Thank you.” She smiled, a tentative one, but it seemed genuine all the same. Darcy was pleased.

Fast forward six months, and he’s sure their relationship has improved. He’s not a fool, so he knows she didn’t actually like him when she first agreed to go out with him, but he likes to think she’s at least fond of him now. She’s willingly continued to go out with him, and they double-date with Bingley and Jane once a week.

Right now they’re at a dinner with the Fitzwilliam clan, his mother’s side of the family. He doesn’t actually like any of them, save Richard, but he does his duty to them, and meets with them for a dinner once a month. This is the first time he’s brought Elizabeth, however, and he’s terrified of what he usually considers the most boring night of his life.

He can tell she’s nervous, too, though she hides it behind her jokes and sarcasm. She betrays herself by fiddling with the pearl bracelet she inherited from her grandmother.

“You’ll do fine,” he says, reassuring her even though he’s probably more nervous than she is.

She gives him a grin, takes his hand and gives it a squeeze as they step into the fancy restaurant, whose back room the Fitzwilliam family has reserved for dinner. “I know. I have you, don’t I?”

“You do.” He gives her hand a squeeze of his own, before tucking it into the crook of his arm. The Fitzwilliams stand on good breeding above all else, and that requires a certain amount of coldness.

After they reach the room, the proper introductions have been made, and the food has been ordered, his relatives turn on her, just like he thought they would. He is helpless to stop it.

His Aunt Catherine is arguably the worst, talking loudly of what she was like at Rosings, and displaying what she considers Elizabeth’s flaws. Elizabeth deals with it like a champ, he thinks. But it gets worse.

“So, what do you do, dear?” Richard’s mother, Helen, asks.

“I’m an English teacher at the local secondary school.” Elizabeth’s smile is bright, unafraid of their judgement.

Helen’s mouth twists into a frown. “And you’re quite sure that this is what you want to do with your life?”

“Quite.” Elizabeth’s answer is firm.

Catherine shakes her head. “I told the girl at Rosings there simply isn’t any money to be made in teaching, but she’s a stubborn thing.”

Richard catches Darcy’s eyes across the table, and sends a sympathetic frown at his cousin. Darcy was right about this dinner, and he’s regretting bringing Elizabeth. They haven’t even reached dessert yet.

“*She* also thinks there’s more to life than just making money.” She gives them a tight, curt smile, before standing up. “If you will excuse me, I must use the restroom.”
The family waits until she leaves the room before they turn to Fitzwilliam. Richard’s father, James, starts first. “Well, Darcy, I never thought you’d date a girl like that, but she’s quite nice for someone from the middle classes, isn’t she?”

Darcy keeps quiet and takes the longest sip of wine he’s ever taken, just to avoid talking. Richard shoots him a glance, but then Helen steps in. “Yes, pity she’ll be stuck penniless for the rest of her life. Such an unfortunate job.”

“Darcy, I really think you ought to reconsider this whole business,” Catherine says, predictably. “My goddaughter, Anne, is of your class and social standing. This farce is ridiculous. Do you honestly think she’s cut out for the high society life? Or will you degrade yourself to the title ‘husband of a secondary school teacher’?”

Darcy still doesn’t say anything, but Richard does. “For Heaven’s sake, leave the girl alone. She’s extremely intelligent and kind, isn’t that enough for you bloody sharks?”

“Richard!” his mother says, scandalized. “What on earth would your brothers say if they heard you?”

“They would probably agree with me, because thankfully we all seemed to have developed souls,” he grumbles, loosening his tie, before taking another drink from his wine glass, glaring at Darcy, who avoids his gaze.

Elizabeth returns then, which spares her from further ridicule, but Darcy can’t stop thinking about the points his family has raised. Does he dislike them? Yes. Are they completely wrong? No.

The fact of the matter is that Darcy had said all of these things to Elizabeth when he first asked her out. She was rather hurt, but didn’t deny that they were untrue. Her social standing, her career, even her manners were beneath him. He loves her, yes, but that doesn’t make the difficulties they face as they progress in their relationship any easier.

On the way home, he’s still thinking it over, sitting silently as Elizabeth laughs about the night. She’s texted her father about it, and he’s apparently delighted. She follows him into the bedroom, where she begins to take her jewelry off. “I mean, even the idea that I’m not equals with you simply because I’m not from a rich family is absolutely ridiculous.” She laughs, looking at him.

He’s still quiet, though, and focuses on removing his cufflinks. He carefully puts them on his dresser, in the place they’ve always gone after dinners like this, where they probably will always go.

“Will? You don’t actually agree, do you?” Elizabeth asks, and suddenly it’s like all the air has been sucked out of the room. So he just stares down at the cufflinks, in their proper place, on his dresser. He doesn’t really know what to say. She walks over, and grips his chin so he has to look her in the eyes. “William, please tell me you don’t think that.”

He looks into her expressive brown eyes, how they’re pleading with him to laugh it off and agree with her. He can’t lie to her, has never been able to lie to her, though. “Elizabeth -”

“Oh, my God.” She presses her hand to her mouth, and backs up, away from him, as if he’s suddenly broken out in hives. “You do, don’t you?” She drops her hand, and looks at him incredulously. “I thought, well, I hoped you had seen how ridiculous your claims were, back in March, when you first asked me out. I was willing to give you the benefit of the doubt that day, because you obviously didn’t know how to talk to anybody, least of all a woman you’re interested in.” He’s horrified to see the tears welling up in her eyes. “Clearly, I was wrong.” She sniffs, and presses her fingers to her eyes. “I really, especially after I -” she stops herself, “well, it doesn’t
matter now. Don’t worry about having to deal with dating someone of a lower standing than you. I won’t bother with you again.” She snatches up her earrings and her purse before all but running out the door.

He stands gaping after her, before things connect in his head. He runs after her, shouting, “Elizabeth, wait!” but she’s out the door and in a taxi in record time, so all he can do is watch the taxi carrying her speed far, far away.

The next month is actual hell for Darcy. He hadn’t realized just how thoroughly Elizabeth had inserted herself in his life before she left. He’s grumpy at board meetings, snaps at his employees, and gets drunk more frequently than he knows he should. Everything is just so empty without her, and he hates her for it.

It doesn’t help that everyone is on her side. Charles refuses to spend time with him, telling him, “You’re a bastard, Darcy. What a horrible thing to do to Elizabeth.” Richard also is very sour and short with him, judging him for listening to his parents and their aunt when they’ve always made fun of them for being the stupidest people they know.

It hurts the most when Georgiana cries, though. He tells her Elizabeth won’t be with him when he picks her up from the airport when she flies in from Paris after another summer spent studying music with her tutors in France.

“Why?” she asks softly, at the other end of the phone. “Is she busy?”

He sighs, runs a hand over his face. “The truth of it is, Georgiana, that we’ve broken up. She won’t be coming around anymore.” It’s quiet on the line, before he hears the sniffles. “Are you crying?”

“I’m sorry, brother,” she sniffles again, “I know it must be hard on you. I’m very sorry, but, well, it was just like having a sister around with her. I’m sure it’s for the best, though, if you think it is.”

“Don’t worry about it, Georgie,” he says with a sigh into the phone. “It’ll be okay. We’ll figure something out.”

After two months of the grave he has dug himself in to, he starts trying to see how she’s doing. If she’s miserable, maybe it’ll give him some comfort. So he subtly tries to ask Charles, who has started talking to him again. Jane never comes out to dinner with them anymore, but he expected that.

“So, how’s Jane, Charles?” he asks as they drink whiskey in his study one night.

His friend raises an eyebrow. “Fine. Why do you ask?”

Darcy shrugs, swirls the whisky in his glass. “Can’t I ask how your girlfriend is doing?”

“Of course you can,” Bingley says with a frown. “I’m just not used to it.”

It’s quiet for a bit, while Darcy kicks himself mentally for being such a shit friend. After a moment or two, he bites the bullet. “How’s her family?”

Bingley snorts, downing the contents of his glass. “Of course,” he says as he sets it on top of the small table between them, “I should’ve known. I refuse to get in the middle of this, Darcy.” He stands up with a sigh. “You know how I feel about the whole ordeal, and I won’t help you. You’ve made this mess, so you have to fix it.”

Darcy watches him go with a scowl, determined to never bring Elizabeth up again.
It doesn’t work, though, and two weeks later he brings her up to Bingley again. “I just want to know how she’s doing, Charles.”

Bingley eyes him warily during the commercial break of the US vs UK rugby game. “I really don’t want to talk to you about this.”

“I don’t even know what to do, Charles, okay? I can’t just show up to her work or home.” He runs his hand over his face in frustration. “Can you please just tell me?”

“I don’t think I’ve ever heard you say ‘please’ before,” Bingley says quietly. He thinks for a moment or two, before he sighs. “I think she’s pretty miserable. She’s always got a smile for us, but she seems, I don’t know, dimmer, than usual. She’s lost some weight, and looks like she hasn’t had a proper night’s sleep in ages.” He sighs again, reaches for the six pack that sits between them on the couch. “Don’t make me regret telling you that.”

Darcy sits with this information for another few weeks, unsure of what to do. He misses Elizabeth, misses everything about her, and thinks about how he’s treated her. He’s a little ashamed of himself, but no one makes him feel more ashamed than Charlotte Lucas.

It’s a complete accident, of course, because he’s forgotten she now works for his aunt Catherine, in a way, and he runs into her as he’s walking through her office building, trying to finish some project their companies have been doing together. He’s headed for the elevator when someone yanks him into an empty conference room.

“What the bloody hell,” he starts to snarl, but stops, when he sees who it is. “Oh. Ms. Lucas.”

She scowls at him fiercely. “Mr. Darcy.”

“To what do I owe the pleasure?” he asks, rather lamely.

She looks unimpressed. “I think you know why.”

He sighs and fidgets with the cuffs of his sleeves. “Shout at me and get it over with.”

“I’m not going to shout at you,” she says. When he gives her a look, she rolls her eyes, and continues, “I mean, I was going to hit you a couple of times, but then I figured that would probably be more trouble than it’s worth. If I go to jail for assault, I’d rather it not be over you.”

“I don’t know if that’s a compliment or not,” he admits.

She snorts. “It’s not. Anyway, I just wanted to let you know that I dislike you a great deal, and that honestly? I’m glad you’ve broken up, because she deserves better, which is someone who cares about her, deeply and truly.”

He flushes red with anger. “I do care.”

“Yeah, sure,” she says sarcastically, “and that’s why you think she’s beneath you.”

“I don’t,” he scrubs at his face, “I don’t think that, okay? I was an ass, and I hate myself for it. She’s,” he sighs, “you’re right. She deserves better than someone who makes her think she’s inferior. She deserves happiness, and I screwed up.”

Charlotte looks at him, mulling his words over. Finally, she sighs. “As long as you’re aware. Goodbye, Mr. Darcy.” She then exits, and leaves him alone with his thoughts, and the awful realization that she’s probably better off without him, because she’s too good for him, not the other way around. It’s probably the fourth worst day of his life, after the deaths of his parents, and the
day she left him.

He gets stupidly drunk after that, at home, after Georgie goes to bed. He gets so drunk, in fact, that he calls Elizabeth.

“Hello?” She sounds tired over the phone, but drunk Darcy doesn’t care.

“Lizzie!” He’s earnest, trying to make sure she doesn’t hang up on him. “I have to tell you something.”

“Darcy?” she asks, bewildered. “Are you drunk?”

“Maybe,” he slurs, looking guiltily at the bottle of bourbon he’s been downing. “’S not important. I need to tell you something.”

There’s some silence, and he’s really afraid she’s hung up, but she finally says, “Well?”

“I need you to know that I think you’re better than me. You’re so nice, and bright, and, and, you’re like the sun, okay? And I’m not. I’m like a black hole, and you’re better than me. Does that make sense?” He takes another swig from the bourbon bottle.

“No.” She sighs. “Darcy, go to sleep. You’re drunk.” Then, she hangs up on him.

He frowns at the phone, but does go to sleep, right at his desk.

In the morning, he only remembers bits and pieces of the night before, curses himself while he tries to stretch out his now-painful back. It’s then that he notices the phone he was using for a pillow. He picks it up and turns it on, swipes to the most recent calls.

“Shit.” He thumps his head on the desk. He hasn’t drunk dialed anyone in, well, ever. He groans long and loud, prompting Mrs. Reynolds to come in.

“Are you alright, Mr. Darcy?” she asks, peeking her head around the door.

He waves her in. “I’m fine. Can you please put the kettle on? I need some tea. Badly.”

Three months after that disaster of a dinner, he’s completely given up. The most he can do now is make sure Georgiana has a nice Christmas. He’s probably going to die a depressed old man, but at least he can make sure his sister has fun. First though, she has to play a concerto for her senior project at the musical academy she attends.

She comes down the stairs in an elegant dress the color of a twilight sky. He smiles at his sister, remembers how happy she had been when he bought it. “You look beautiful.”

“Thank you, Will,” she says as she twirls.

He watches her fondly for a moment before stopping here. “Are you ready to go?”

“Oh, yes!” She’s quiet in the car, but that isn’t unusual. He chalks it up to nerves.

After she disappears backstage Darcy manages to snag a pretty good seat. Richard had scheduling conflicts, so he’ll be the only person in the audience for her. He wonders if she minds.

A couple of students go before her, but he feels like none of them are half as good as his sister. Georgiana then finally takes the stage. It’s quiet, and then she puts her fingers to the keys, and it’s poetry in motion. His heart swells with emotion, and then almost bursts when he spies Elizabeth a few seats in front and to the left of him.
She looks enthralled with the music, eyes sparkling and a bright smile on her face. He can’t help but let his eyes roam over her figure, can’t help but remember what it felt like to hold her to him in the middle of the night. He still loves her, and will probably never stop.

Georgiana’s piece comes to an end, and Elizabeth is one of the first people to stand up and applaud. His sister flushes with pleasure, and drops into a brief curtsy before leaving the stage. She was the showpiece, so there’s no one after her. He sees Elizabeth heading towards the exit, and rushes to get to her, jumping over a couple of people who get in the way.

“Elizabeth!” he shouts, but she doesn’t seem to hear him over the noisy din of the room. So he lunges forward, and manages to grasp her wrist. “Elizabeth!”

She turns, alarmed, until she sees that it’s him. She then freezes, and seems to curl in on herself. “Darcy.”

“You came,” he says, a statement rather than a question.

She nods. “Yes. I promised Georgie I would go back in August, last time we talked, and I didn’t want to disappoint her. She was lovely.”

“And you won’t stay? To congratulate her?” he asks, almost desperate to get her to stay.

She smiles, and it’s sad and small. “I had some flowers delivered to her dressing room. I should go.”

“Don’t,” he grips her wrist a little bit, “please.”

Her expression becomes guarded. “Darcy, don’t start.”

“I miss you.” He can’t afford to pretend he doesn’t, not now.

She snatches her wrist back. “Don’t say things like that.” She turns to go, but he darts around her.

“I do. I won’t lie, Elizabeth, I miss you everyday. I want to fix this,” he pleads. “Just tell me what to do.”

She presses fingers to her eyes, gives a watery laugh. “I don’t think you can, Darcy.”

His heart freezes. “Did you ever care, at all?”

She laughs louder at that. “Did I care? You bloody bastard, of course I cared. I cared more than I should’ve.” She softens, and tears begin to leak out. “I loved you.”

He might’ve died. “Loved? Past tense?”

“It doesn’t matter,” she says, wiping the tears away. “I can’t be with someone who doesn’t respect me, or treat me as his equal.”

If he’s died, he’s definitely gone to hell. “I respect you, Elizabeth, more than anyone I know.”

She smiles again, still small and sad. “You said I was too good for you, when you called.”

“I was drunk,” he pauses, “but I was right.”

She smooths the front of her dress. “Maybe,” she allows, “but I won’t believe you. Not in my heart of hearts. Maybe we would’ve worked in another lifetime, but, for now, Darcy,” she looks
up, meets his gaze, “for now, this is goodbye.” She turns and walks away.


“I have to go catch her, Georgie, wait here,” he says as he races forward. He’ll be damned if he lets Elizabeth get away again.

“Go get her, Will!” his sister cheers after him.

The problem is that he can’t find her in the antechamber. There are too many people trying to get out at once, and it’s gridlocked. Desperate times call for desperate measures, so he jumps up on one of the tables that held the programs for the event. “Elizabeth Bennet!” he shouts at the top of his lungs.

Everyone in the room looks at him. “Is that William Darcy?” he hears a couple of people ask.

He ignores them, and shouts, “Elizabeth Bennet!” again.

She wades through the mass of people to get to him. Once people notice she’s trying to get to him, they flatten themselves so she can get by. It’s like some bizarre romantic comedy, and he hates those, but he does it for her.

“What are you doing?” she hisses as she gets closer. “Get down.” She tugs on the leg of his pants.

He’s high on adrenaline. “No. Not until you listen to what I have to say.”

“Oh, my God,” she says, clapping her hands to her mouth. She turns white, but she’s not running.

“I love you, Elizabeth. I don’t think I’m capable of stopping at this point, really. I’m a complete ass, I know. Charles wouldn’t talk to me, and Richard reminded me at every turn how much of an idiot I was to let you walk away after you did.” He takes a deep breath. “You make me better. You make me laugh. You make me feel like I’m a good man. If you don’t want to be with me because you don’t feel the same way, fine. But if you’re worried I don’t respect you, why else would I do something this crazy, in front of all these people, just to get you to listen to me?”

She crying openly now, and when she tugs on his pants leg again, he comes down. “You’re a bloody fool, you know that?” she asks, and then, without waiting for an answer, kisses him.

He presses her to him as much as he can, kissing her like he’ll never get another chance, like she’s his salvation, because she is. His mouth slides over hers, and she makes a needy sound in the back of her throat.

They jump apart when someone clears their throat next to them. Darcy feels himself turn red as he notes the headmaster of the academy is looking at them with a half-amused, half-disgusted look. “Now, I am very happy this has worked out for you, Mr. Darcy,” he says, “but perhaps you could celebrate in private?”

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“Of course, sir. Sorry.” He grabs Elizabeth’s hand and leads her outside. Georgiana joins them pretty quickly.

“Does that mean you take him back, Lizzie?” she asks, breathless and wide-eyed.

She laughs, hugs Georgiana with her free arm. “I guess so. I mean, that’s how the movies end, right?”

“Am I forgiven?” he asks, soft and hopeful.
She smiles at him and squeezes his hand. “Oh no, not at all. But you could be, after a few more of those public declarations.” She looks thoughtful, but he doesn’t miss the twinkle in her eyes. “One at the school, one at your offices, one at my parents’ home, one at Charlotte’s…”

“If I must.” He’s serious, wants her to know how much he’s willing to do.

She softens. “How about we start with dinner?”

“Can we go to Benedict’s?” Georgiana asks excitedly. “I haven’t been there in ages.”

“Of course,” Darcy says, happy for the first time in months. “Anything you two want.”

Elizabeth holds his hand the entire ride to the restaurant, while she talks to Georgiana in the back seat. He feels whole, and is ever grateful for Elizabeth Bennet, and he’ll spend every day letting her know, whether he has to or not.

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