A Man Violently in Love

by FemmeMalheureuse

Summary

Jane Austen only hinted at Darcy's reaction to Elizabeth's acceptance of his second proposal:

"Elizabeth, feeling all the more than common awkwardness and anxiety of his situation, now forced herself to speak; and immediately, though not very fluently, gave him to understand that her sentiments had undergone so material a change, since the period to which he alluded, as to make her receive with gratitude and pleasure his present assurances. The happiness which this reply produced, was such as he had probably never felt before; and he expressed himself on the occasion as sensibly and as warmly as a man violently in love can be supposed to do."

What really did happen in the moment after he asked for her hand again? This elaboration riffs directly off Austen's dialog.

This is an excerpt from my soon-to-be-published P&P-based anthology.

[Image: Paolo and Francesca by Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres (sketch, cropped and modded; original image is in public domain)]

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
...The second morning after Darcy finished reviewing his and Bingley’s marriage settlement contracts was bright and crisp; the colors of the neighborhood trees glinted gold and copper.

Kitty, whom he hoped to soon call sister, trailed off ahead toward Lucas Lodge. She was bored with the idle chatter of frustrated lovers and embarrassed by the whispers of the engaged. As soon as he could no longer hear Kitty’s gown brushing along the dried grass along the path, Darcy stopped to look at Elizabeth. She stood beside him, wishing to seize this moment.

"Mr. Darcy, I am a very selfish creature; and, for the sake of giving relief to my own feelings, care not how much I may be wounding yours. I can no longer help thanking you for your unexampled kindness to my poor sister. Ever since I have known it, I have been most anxious to acknowledge to you how gratefully I feel it. Were it known to the rest of my family, I should not have merely my own gratitude to express." She could not look him in the eyes at first, feeling not only deep appreciation for his assistance, but shame for her family’s failings.

"I am sorry, exceedingly sorry that you have ever been informed of what may, in a mistaken light, have given you uneasiness. I did not think Mrs. Gardiner was so little to be trusted." Darcy’s brows lifted with surprise.

She shook her head."You must not blame my aunt. Lydia's thoughtlessness first betrayed to me that you had been concerned in the matter; and, of course, I could not rest till I knew the particulars. Let me thank you again and again, in the name of all my family, for that generous compassion which induced you to take so much trouble, and bear so many mortifications, for the sake of discovering them."

"If you will thank me, let it be for yourself alone. That the wish of giving happiness to you might add force to the other inducements which led me on, I shall not attempt to deny. But your family owe me nothing.”

His voice tapered off to a whisper, his eyes locked on hers. “Much as I respect them, I believe I thought only of you.”

Her cheeks flushed; she could not choke out a single word. Her eyes said everything, limpid and liquid, her approbation limned along her lashes.

Darcy took a breath and held it. This was his chance, his time, his moment. He dared not wait; he clutched at it.
"You are too generous to trifle with me. If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once. My affections and wishes are unchanged, but one word from you will silence me on this subject for ever."

Elizabeth reached up, cupping his cheek, lost for a reasoned reply. She could only gaze into his eyes until a torrent of words welled and flooded along with tears.

“Yes. I mean, my feelings are not the same. They — oh dear — I am — they are so very changed —”

He took her chin in his right hand as he pulled her closer to him with his left. He leaned forward and brushed her lips softly with his. Her eyes closed, her senses overwhelmed with the nearness of him. Darcy kissed her eyelids, her lashes tickling his lips before he moved to kiss her lips again. This time he could not hold back his desire to feel her mouth yield to his, to taste her; she opened to his gentle, insistent pressure as his tongue flickered along her lips.

She started with the surprise of his warm tongue, but melted into him. Darcy pulled her even tighter into his embrace; she reached up and wrapped her arms around his neck as her mouth opened like a flower to his exploration. For some moments they were utterly absorbed in each other, lost to everything around them.

Darcy wanted so much more, but knowing he was her tutor in the demonstration of love, he pulled back a bit. Elizabeth’s eyes were glazed, her lids drooping as if she had been drinking deeply of wine. He couldn’t help but chuckle at her puffy lips, knowing his must betray him as well. Once more he pulled her closer into a hug, the top of her head nestled below his chin. His face stretched into the widest of smiles, his delight unseen by his beloved, though she felt his heart hammering beneath her cheek.

“Elizabeth, I am so thankful you will allow me to be yours. I have wished for nothing since I saw you this summer but for the chance to please you, to make you happy. I will be honored to spend the rest of my days to that end. I love you as I have loved no one and nothing else. You mean everything to me.”

It was her turn to pull back, this time to look into his eyes and communicate all the feeling welling up within her. “Mr. Darcy—”

“Fitzwilliam, love. Or you may call me William, or Will, as Georgiana does. I will be so happy to answer both of the women I love if they call me William or Will.”

“Will.” She smiled after tasting his name on her lips, savoring the sound and his joyful response, another smile changing his countenance entirely into that of a gleeful overgrown boy. Her hand moved of its own volition, bringing her fingertips to his cheek and then his lips.

“I love you, Will. You are a wonderful brother, a protective friend, the best of men. I only hope I can be as much to you as you are already to me. I look forward to spending the rest of my days at your side.” She stood on her toes and pressed her lips to his softly, wrapping her arms around his neck once again.

After losing themselves in a kiss as before, they parted with the greatest reluctance.

They walked on, without knowing in what direction. There was too much to be thought, and felt, and said, for attention to any other objects.
End Notes

Thanks again to my pre-reader/beta team Andrew and Nathan, who continue to slog faithfully through my work-in-progress.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!