Admirable

by Ithil

Summary

To be admired, one must first be seen. A moment of distraction for Darcy. One-shot.

Notes

Posted to AO3 on 1-26-2013.

A story for spring. I would like to thank the most esteem'd Jane Austen for writing *Pride and Prejudice*, now in the public domain, because I sure as heck didn't. I would also like to thank her for obsessing over it so that the rest of us don't feel quite so bad about doing the same. The only thing more considerate than a considerate person is a time-travel considerate person. Further disclaimers follow.

I would like to thank David Shapard for his fabulous annotated P&P. Once I got past all the gushing, Mr. Shapard, I had a fabulous time.

I would also like to thank, in chronological order, Terraphim and Niamh for the best of beta-ality.

This post brought to you by Chaos Baked Goods. It's not the apocalypse. It's the cheesecake.

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There is a story about a young Buddhist nun, often repeated as an example of virtue and acceptance. She would stand by the road to do her work - to help the poor or preach the word, I cannot recall. A young Hindu prince would ride by from time to time and admire her.

"I must have those eyes," he would say, but each day she would decline his flirtations, speaking of the spirit's primacy over the flesh.

Still, "I must have those eyes," he would tell her, with all the grace of his princely ways. "I must have those eyes."

And so it continued until the young nun could do nothing but grant his wish. Plucking both eyes from her head, she placed them in his hand, to remind him that beauty is ephemeral and of the way of all flesh.

"Do read something else, Caroline," said Bingley.

Miss Bingley shut the book in agreement, "How ghastly. I must apologize. I only saw that it was about a pair of fine dark eyes. Who was to say it had such a vulgar ending?" she finished, smiling toward Darcy.

"Hardly vulgar," supplied Bingley. "The woman forgoes any design. It is an admirable story. Surely you agree, Darcy, that freedom from artifice is a virtue."

Darcy did not look up from his letter. "I doubt that it is true in any case."

"I certainly hope not," answered Elizabeth. "And I hope that I never become so admirable as that."

"Surely not," echoed Miss Bingley.

"I cannot think that she truly meant to give him both her eyes, not unless he would take them along with all the rest of her."

His pen stilled on the page.

"I do thank you, Mr. Bingley, Miss Bingley. I must see to Jane." Elizabeth said, rising, "Mr. Darcy."

"Miss Elizabeth." He watched her leave and after a moment had passed, made some excuse to follow, though Miss Bingley expressed some hope that he would not be long.

She had walked quickly and was quite nearly to the sickroom when Darcy had caught up to her, her fine eyes brightened by the exercise.

"Mr. Darcy? If you've come to ask after Jane, I must-"

What happened next was quite free of artifice. One hand on her wrist drew her attention and another at the small of her back pulled her closer and turned her back against the wall. Her mouth parted soundlessly, and Darcy had cause to wonder how sharp words could leave soft lips.

He held one of her hands against the wall beside her head at first, smooth knuckles against smooth wood, until her wide eyes closed and she gave back, a sharp tongue turned gentle by whatever it was that she liked about his touch. He let go and she slid her hand to the back of his neck, fingernails sliding lightly. He had other work in any case, hand sliding to cradle her head as her
fingers tightened on his arm.

She drew her breath in, quiet and full, as he pulled away. He could feel the shape inside her dress rub softly against him through his clothes while he ran the pad of his thumb along her cheek.

"Open your eyes." He felt her spine thrum against his arms, soft and hard all at once. "I want you to look at me."

Though a smile played at her lips, she would not look up.

"I /must/ have those eyes." But she would not look up.

He could feel her heart pounding against the insides of his arms. "Can you ever grant my wish?"

"I certainly hope not," answered Elizabeth, but she did not look up from her book. "And I hope that I never become so admirable as that."

"Surely not," echoed Miss Bingley, picking another book from the table. "Do tell your dear sister that I long to see her well. Do you not wish the same, Mr. Darcy?"

Darcy made some answer, pretending to be concerned with a spot of ink that had formed where his pen had rested too long against the page. He pulled out his handkerchief and tried to blot it away, but it had sunk into the fibers between his straight lines, unremovable.

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The anecdote about the Buddhist nun is from a history class I took in college and not my own invention. The simplicity and repetition of the story reminded me of a scene in *Mansfield Park* but seemed to fit better here.

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