The Pirate Effect

by Shem

Summary

*How Lydia got her man despite being a very bad influence.*

Notes

Okay this was written as a Halloween Challenge for the Derbyshire Writers Guild.

So it's even LESS serious than my normal work (and I think entirely unedited) And is kind of an Alternative Universe because with these challenge it's a thing to torture the characters (particularly Darcy) and there is usually a challenge involved each year - which I cannot remember what it was for this year?! Pirates? Killing a character? No clue.

But either way the point is that while the Lydia plotline is kind of how I think they get together, the Darcy plotline here is definitely Alternative Universe ;)

The Pirate Effect

Lydia cast a critical eye at the paintings. Despite Yeates' assurances, she knew none of them were Dukes. She should be annoyed with him, but instead she found herself gratified by the fact he practiced such deception in order to spend more time with her.

She would be happier if he had capitulated to her demands to paint her in a similar style to a
painting she’d caught a glimpse of; a painting which Yeates had apparently not meant her to see. Lydia had thought it was a picture of a particular friend of Yeates, but he’d assured her it was a particular friend of his brother. Until that moment Lydia had not known Yeates had a brother, but she found it more odd that Yeates would paint such a woman but Yeates explained she was a particular friend of many people (though not, of course, himself!) and as such she did not mind people seeing her in the altogether.

Yeates was a very good painter, he captured his subjects very well, but it seemed they were not being bought.

“You would do better not to give away your paintings,” It was very stupid but apparently Yeates felt it demeaned his art to have it on sale and nobody would dream of buying a painting from a painter whose work one could get for free if one asked! Lydia stopped considering Yeates’ strange sentiments and turned to a more amusing subject: “Are you sure you will not paint me?”

“I am afraid Miss Bennet, we should have to be married for such a thing to occur and you would have to be satisfied with no one but myself seeing the painting.”

“My sisters may see it surely?” What was the point of having such a glorious painting if one’s sisters who were growing quite stout (one or other of them was always to be increasing it seemed) could not see it.

Yeates seemed thrown by such a question, “I ... I ... I am not sure that is proper.”

Lydia shrugged, “They have been privy to such a scene in person!”

“Well, yes, perhaps your sisters would be able to see it, but you have forgotten the important part which is that we would have to be married.”

This Lydia had been thinking about; Yeates was surely not a Duke, but the dukes she had seen were old and decrepit. Yeates was not decrepit although she must admit he was a little old. Particularly since he had spent time in India painting the Taj Mahal – apparently a most magnificent structure – the sun had aged him she thought critically. But this did not matter a jot because Yeates was magnificently handsome and very masculine despite not ever having worn a red coat.

When she thought of being married to him she found her heart skipping a beat, and this did not ever happen to Lydia Bennet who found the maxim ‘one man good, many men better’ underscored her life so far. She did not even want to elope with Yeates, she wanted to stand in front of all her friends in Church and clutch his arm to show everyone he was hers.

“So I have thought about that, Yeates. If there is really no way that you are a Duke – “

Yeates started at that and looked a little hunted. Poor man it was not his fault he was a penniless artist who was too noble to charge for his work. Lydia blamed his father who apparently been lazy and not thought that his son might wish to marry a young gentlewoman and thus would require an income.

“ – then you must find some other way to get rich enough to keep a wife.”

“But what would you have me do? The only thing I ever learned to do was paint, and you know my feelings upon that score. I was never trained for the law or the church…”

“The church! La! Do you have any idea how long it would take for you to earn enough money in the church to keep a wife in the style she has been growing accustomed to, now that her sisters have made good marriages? Besides I could not stand a husband who liked to give sermons, it
would make me think of Mr Collins.”

Yeates blinked at her, apparently growing aware of the fact Lydia did not seem to be talking about "a wife", but a specific young lady, to be more specific herself.

“How then?” he croaked.

“Well, I suppose you could try highway robbery, but then you would have to work during the night-time and would not be available to accompany your wife to fashionable parties and balls, no I suppose piracy is your only option.”

Yeates’ jaw fell open. “But I get seasick!”

Lydia stamped her foot, “Do you wish to marry me?”

Yeates fell to the floor at her feet, “It is my dearest wish.”

“Then you need to find a boat, an eye patch and a parrot and take up plundering the high seas. It’s the only way.”

Darcy looked at his steward and then down at the stack of papers in front of him and then back at his steward, “How?”

The steward coughed, “You have been inattentive recently, sir. I have tried to call this to your attention before now.”

It was true. His steward was very able, and meticulous. Darcy always received a detail report; weekly in both written and oral form when he was at Pemberley and twice weekly (purely written) when he was not. The problem was Darcy did not have the capacity to know what was in an unopened letter.

Darcy had always sworn he would not be the type of man to fuss about his wife. She would be well bred and an ornament to his home, but she would not be a distraction. She would speak pearls of wisdom at the dinner table and charm his friends, but she would not be the reason he kept forgetting to read his letters.

She also would not have four very troublesome sisters! Although Jane, Darcy was sure, did not mean to be a troublesome sister. Unfortunately Jane did not have the capacity to be firm with her husband, or at least not yet for Elizabeth assured Darcy that where Jane felt she was right she could be firm. Clearly she was still settling into being Mrs Bingley because she had not checked Bingley’s exploits. Darcy had had to do that and on multiple occasions literally pull Bingley out of the mud.

The other sisters, however, meant to be troublesome. Catherine kept throwing dinner parties that she insisted Darcy attend, Mary had run off with a rake (who Darcy had to now admit actually did at least have a feather to fly with but still was a rake) and Lydia, after almost eloping with Wickham, now kept company with penniless artists.

It was hardly to be wondered that Darcy did not read his mail.

Although that was unfair, the majority of the times he had not read his mail it was because he was more delightfully occupied.

By his wife.
“Is it not to be recovered at all?” said Darcy after a while.

“I believe it could have been recovered.” The steward looked annoyed. He had every right to do so, despite making an unwise choice.

The wise choice would have to have pretended, perhaps by the method of forgery, that he have been granted powers by Mr Darcy to act as he chose. The steward had chosen the unwise choice of coming to London to talk to Darcy directly.

Particularly unwise as Darcy had kept him waiting for three days before he would see him. Darcy had not meant to do so, but one thing after another had come up.

"You wish to borrow my yacht?" Winsford looked confused. "Whatever for? You get sea sick!"

"I will explain it all at some other times, Winny."

The childhood nickname made Winsford give Yeates permission straight away, he could not abide Yeates hanging about and calling him Winny.

He then spent a good afternoon doing things to the yacht that would make Winsford faint if he ever saw. The yacht was then presentable.

"It does not look like much," said Lydia staring, "It's quite dirty."

Yeates was very proud of thinking of such a thing.

"I think that other boats would let you closer if you were not so dirty and the yacht looked more modern. You should spend the afternoon cleaning it and removing those barnacles."

It was lucky Yeates loved Lydia and that she was correct. The way the yacht looked now no self respecting boatman would come near. "The element of surprise." Yeates wondered if he could bribe some urchins to clean the yacht off again.

"Exactly, you should be disguised, not the yacht!"

Yeates rather thought that with a stuffed parrot, an eye patch and a frockcoat (that seemed to have been liberated from some overzealous French officer who loved braid) no one would recognise him. He had no idea where Lydia had found them, or how she'd explained their purchase to her sister, Elizabeth.

Lydia instructed him that he should be good with a cutlass, so after ensuring she was safely back at the Darcy townhouse Yeates took himself off to practice. Surely it did not matter if he did not know how to hold a cutlass as long as he understood the general principles of fencing.

Yeates had, of course, been instructed in all of the gentlemanly arts, but it had always been merely for exercise. He swung the sabre around experimentally.

"Looking for a sparring partner?" Yeates turned to see Lord Ashbourne looking at him.

"Of course my lord." It seemed a wise idea if he was going to harass people for their money to practice with an expert swordsman.

One clash of the swords and Lord Ashbourne seemed more interested in interrogating him regarding Lydia Bennet.
"Fitzwilliam you seem very tense," Elizabeth had her hands on his shoulders, while Darcy pretended to read the newspaper.

"I fear I slept ill."

"Indeed you did, I do not think you slept at all."

Darcy had been unable to sleep at all, thinking about his problem. How could everything but his non-cash capital have vanished? How could he not properly heeded the risks of the scheme brought to him by Sir Thomas Barrow? Why had he not read his man's letters?

"Would you have married me if I were not possessed of a great fortune?"

Elizabeth stopped massaging his shoulders and came to sit next to him on the chaise. "Considering that I refused your first offer you must ask? I married you for your goodness."

"So if I had brought nothing but debts, and a cold empty house?"

For that was the situation Darcy found himself in; his estate was entailed. He was unable to sell any of the land to pay his debts, for it was worse than just losing his money. At least not until little Charles was of age and could break the entail. He could of course sell the many treasures of Pemberley, but the Darcys were not an adventurous family. He knew of a young man who had recently returned from a long visit and had brought back sculptures and such. The Darcys were more interested in books, which could be sold for just as much now that Darcy thought about it.

"Well, you did not bring nothing but debts and a cold empty house! But, no, it would not have been prudent for me to marry a penniless man no matter how much I cared for him. You would not want little Janey to dispose of herself thusly?"

Darcy shook his head, "Of course, I should wish her to esteem her husband and behave sensibly."

But that made his life more difficult, he could not now sell Pemberley's contents and thus expose his stupidity to his wife and children.

Lydia was very proud of her costume. Yeates seemed to quite like it until he realised she intended to come on the yacht with him.

"No you cannot come aboard with me."

"Every pirate needs a wench," said Lydia, "Now help me aboard."

Yeates made a very excellent looking pirate, albeit a little green. He had clearly not been feigning the sick sickness as an excuse. She was glad they – she – had decided to stick to the Thames, what would have Yeates been like on the actual open seas?

She was not sure they would actually do any pirating today, after all their goal was enough money to marry and she doubted someone with that amount of wealth on them would fall into their lap!

No today’s exercise was to allow Yeates to become familiar with the avasts and the ahoy there’s that were entirely necessary to a piratical life.
This was going quite well, except Lydia found that Yeates was not as enthusiastic as herself at hoisting the cutlass. When Lydia hoisted a cutlass (apparently Darcy’s forebears used to be pirates, although Yeates kept telling her that it only meant Darcy had naval forebears most likely of the official kind) the surrounding bargemen cheered her. Clearly this was because she was superior, but Yeates thought it was because her dress was not designed to accommodate hoisting a cutlass.

They would have fallen into an argument except Lydia espied a very clean looking yacht ahead, with a vacant popinjay lazing about on deck.

“There Yeates! There! You should begin your piracy with him. It would not do to take the yacht for what would we do with it? But he must have a watch or banknotes on him.”

Yeates got a very determined look about him, but then he saw the interested bargemen waiting for more cutlass hoisting. “I cannot! They shall call for the watch!”

Lydia rolled her eyes, “Then we shall practice escaping. AHoy There Ye Land Lubber!”

The popinjay startled as their yachts came together. “Er? Hello?”

Yeates pointed his cutlass at the well-dressed fop “Prepare to be boarded! “

“I say, I am just a pleasantly rich fellow going for a pleasure cruise! Please do not board me!”

“Your pleas are meaningless to me!” cried Yeates, dashing his cutlass about before stepping aboard the other man’s yacht. Lydia clapped her hands. She had been right Yeates was good at this.

“Make him Kneel!” she cried.

“Kneel peasant!”

“Steady on!” cried the fop. Then the fop hissed “These are new trousers.”

“KNEEL!”

The fop muttered and did as he was commanded, before also raising his hands in the air, “You should have asked me to put my hands in the air, I could have had a knife in my boot.”

“Unlikely,” dismissed Yeates kicking the boots of the kneeling man.

“Hey! Wench! Is this part of the show?” cried a bargeman.

“Do not call her wench!” Yeates was distracted and almost sliced his captive (who had the foresight to duck) when he swung round to remonstrate with his audience.

“Pay attention to your pirating!” admonished Lydia. “Yes, and it's sixpence!” Lydia found the basket that she had had packed with sandwiches (or rather Lizzy's cook had packed) and emptied them out upon the deck in order to pass the basket around. The bargemen all pulled in closer to watch the unfolding show.

“Hand over your valuables!” said Yeates in a tone of voice that made Lydia's legs a little weak.

“I do not have any valuables!”

“You lie!”

“I don’t lie!”
“I will search you!”

“Wait, wait, I do that this!” The foppish man pulled a wad of parchment out of his coat, and Lydia sighed. They were not bank notes!

“What is that?” said Yeates dramatically, placing one leg onto a barrel and striking a pose. He was very fine thought Lydia, if only he was not a poor penniless artist. Perhaps Lydia would like being destitute, surely Kitty would let them live with her. If only Yeates was not the type of man to be too proud to take his brother-in-laws charity.

“It is the deeds to a very small, but prosperous estate, it is worth perhaps one thousand or one thousand five hundred a year. I just happened to be carrying with me because that is a completely sensible course of action. But surely you – a dangerous pirate – would not wish for such a thing.”

“No, that is just the thing,” said Yeates snatching the parchment out of his captive’s hands. “Now we may be – “

He could not finished because Lydia had flung herself from their yacht and into his arms, kissing him soundly. The bargemen cheered. Apparently bargemen liked a good romance.

“Now may I be on my way?” asked their victim who seemed strangely complacent.

“Of course,” said Yeates, politely carrying Lydia back across to their own yacht.

"This ring was his mother's," said Lydia loudly. Lydia did everything loudly and it hurt Darcy's head.

Mrs Bingley was the only occupant of the room who dutifully examined Lydia's finger, then she frowned. "It is very fine."

"It is probably paste," said Lydia blithely.

"You should not wear a token from a young man," said Elizabeth, "even one as polite as Mr Yeates."

"Mr Yeates has asked me to marry him and I have accepted him," announced Lydia.

Mrs Bingley had a dismayed look on her face, "Papa is not likely to accept him, Lydia, he is a very good young man but he must be able to support you. You cannot rely upon...assistance."

The way Mrs Bingley dropped her voice on that last word made Darcy think that Lydia had been committing her brother-in-laws to monetary assistance.

"He is now the owner of a small estate, it is only 1000 pounds a year, but we shall raise pigs and chickens and be very happy."

"Did he inherit? Oh how lovely."

Lydia shook her head.

"Do not tell me he won it at cards!" said Elizabeth looking scandalised.

Lydia smiled, "No it was piracy. We held at swords point, this idiotic young man on the Thames and he had the deed on him! Oh and I earned two whole pounds charging the bargemen to
"Lydia!" said Jane sounding outraged, but Elizabeth shushed her.

"Do not regard her, Jane, she is funning. Mr Yeates must have inherited the estate if it indeed exists."

"It does indeed exist and he will be showing it to me next week!" said Lydia.

"I believe you need to ask somebody for permission first," said Elizabeth.

"Oh, Darcy would not care if I should go, for he wants me out of his house!" Lydia was dismissive but she was not wrong.

"If you would take one of your sisters as a chaperone I have no objection to you going to look at an estate."

Darcy wished it was that easy to earn an estate by piracy!

One of his footmen brought over a card. Ash it appeared waited for him in his study.

"You did not wish to join the party?"

Ash shook his head, "I am on my way home from Whites and do not wish to delay any more than necessary - You do seem very ill Darcy are you sure there is nothing wrong?"

Darcy shook his head, "Nothing at all, but there must be something wrong with you if you did not go straight home." Ash's devotion to his wife caused much amusement amongst his acquaintance.

"Yes, I wished to know if Lydia has announced her engagement, and whether you have made a fuss."

"She has and I see no reason to object if this Yeates really did inherit."

Ash looked at him strangely and then laughed, "No, he held up a boat on the Thames and his plunder was a deed to a comfortable little estate."

Darcy stared at Ash. Ash clapped him on the arm, "Well now I shall return to Kitty. Lydia should not be discouraged in this. Yeates loves her and she loves him, she's loved worse, much worse."

Ash departed but Darcy did not rejoin the ladies. Instead he stared at the closed door. Piracy? Was Piracy really an option?

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Lydia had thought Mary would be a good chaperone, and indeed she was a good chaperone. Mary paid no attention to what Lydia was doing with Yeates in the carriage, but it was because she was too busy doing the same thing with her husband.

"Oh!" Lydia found herself staring at the pretty house. It was a very comfortable looking home. It was not as large as Longbourn but it would be perfectly suitable, even if Lydia and Yeates had twelve children - though they might have to share a bedroom in which case Lydia thought it would be better if the children took after Yeates, Lydias did not like sharing rooms.

"Do you like?" Yeates looked proud.
Lydia ignored him and ran inside. The woman she took to be the housekeeper curtseyed, and started to welcome her before she suddenly scowled. "I mean, you are the young lady who has cursed my former master and stolen his home!"

"Well he shouldn't have been so stupid as to bring the deed to his property with him on a pleasure cruise."

"Indeed you are very correct." The housekeeper seemed in possession of a vastly changeable nature. Her obliging natures continued until Lydia tried a door and found it was locked.

"It sticks."

"Well we must open it,"

"I do not think Mr Yeates would like it!"

"He will not know what is in here either, so he will want the door broken down too."

"Oh ...oh...yes...no..."

Lydia ignored the housekeeper and practiced her lock picking.

Yeates stared up at a sky and smiled. Today was a perfect day, particularly if you did not look behind the hedge and discover Lady Montgomery and Sir Christian.

"Sir! Sir! She's ....she's picked the lock!" Mrs Southerby dashed out of the house looking frantic.

Yeates ran indoors but it was too late.

Lydia was staring at his family portrait.

"Lydia, my love."

"Do not Lydia my love me! You are the son of an earl. This was your estate all along! We robbed your brother!" She vigorously pointed at the portrait of the Yeates family; the fourth earl of Wettenhall along with his heir, Lord Winsford, his two younger sons Henry and Oliver, his two daughters Lady Grace and Lady Belinda, his wife, and his two dogs.

Yeates could only nod.

"With some persuasion you could be an earl!" she sounded bloodthirsty.

"We would have to dispose of my father, two of my brothers and two very adorable nephews. I am afraid you will have to be happy with a pirate."

Lydia's face softened at the words adorable nephews, "I think I'd be happier being a pirate's wife than an earl's anyway. Now may we do what my sister is doing?"

Yeates took her into his arms but made it clear that only when they were married might they roll about under the hedges. Since he was kissing her between utterances. Lydia did not seem to mind.

"So you see!" Lydia finished with a flourish and Lizzy smiled at her.
"I am very happy for you Lydia. Darcy will be very pleased to learn that Mr Yeates is from a respectable family and has the ability to provide for you. We might possibly not tell him that your story about the piracy was correct though. Even if Mr Yeates did only 'rob' his brother."

Lydia had lost interest after the first sentence and was dancing about the room watching her ring catch in the light. Lizzy had no idea what Mr Yeates saw in her sister but she did seem very happy with him.

"You did not say when Darcy would be back from his business?" Kitty was pretending to embroider. Lydia and Lizzy had come to keep Kitty company in her confinement.

"He did not say. He said he was required to look at some property near the coast. Somewhere near Dover. " Lizzy put down her own embroidery, "He was not specific about the time either. It is very unlike him but I should imagine his business could not take more than a week, which means we should see him back very shortly. "

"No doubt he saw the possibility of being called upon to plan a wedding with a piratical theme and is staying away on purpose. I know Lydia has begged Ash to stand up with Mr Yeates wearing an eye-patch. I have it on good authority from his valet that Ash was trying to discover if he looked dashingly roguish. I dare say he does so he will wear it."

Lizzy could not keep her countenance and burst into laughter.

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Piracy it turned out wasn't the answer.

"Blackbeard McCutlass?" The magistrate looked over at the unkempt and rattly dressed man.

"Yes."

"You are charged with piracy upon a vessel of his majesties navy. If you are found guilty you will hang. Do you understand this?"

"Yes."

"Do you have anything else to say for yourself. Perhaps the revelation of your real name. Or your real profession since you are undoubtedly the worst pirate I've ever seen. "

"That is my real name," said the woeful creature who had indeed been a terrible pirate. His only good decision was to disguise himself and not blurt out his true identity on being captured.

At least this way the Darcy name would not be tainted by piracy as well as poverty.

The poverty was his own doing and he was heartily ashamed of it and that he could not save his family from that shame.

The piracy he could conceal and he would….all the way to the gallows.

The End

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