Downpour

by armsoftheocean

Summary

The way life took its course for Elizabeth Bennet and William Darcy- from the playground in kindergarten, to a walk down the aisle. modern AU one shot

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.

i'll keep you warm / dancing in the downpour

She was five, and he was six, when they first met.

She was sitting in front of him during story time while their kindergarten teacher, Miss Hale, read them a book about smelly socks, and a girl who just couldn't get enough of them. Her curly brown hair was pulled back into two pigtails, little curls sticking out from the messily tied knots.

She was leaning back on her hands- her fingers crusted with the remnants of primary coloured paints that hadn't been washed off properly, with the bottom of her hair skimming the carpet, and occasionally tickling the firmly clasped palms in his lap.

And so, he did the only thing little boys do when they like someone. Before he had known what he had done, he grabbed a fistful of her soft brown hair, and yanked hard, a sinfully happy smile gracing his features.

A shrill shriek emanated from her mouth, and she twisted her head around, with a quick fist flying into his face, and his happy smile crumpled quickly, with a flood of red blood spilling out of his
Their teacher- a relatively young blonde haired woman- got up from her chair, the book slipping from her fingers, her eyes expanding quickly in surprise. "Elizabeth Bennet! Fitzwilliam Darcy! Come with me, right now," she said, her two hands clutching the tiny hands of the shamefaced children, and led them out of the classroom and into the hallway.

It was her tenth birthday.

A quick ringing of a childish laugh. The smell of sweet icing and warm chocolate. The flicker of ten birthday candles atop of a large cake, with Happy Birthday, Lizzy! written in loopy cursive.

A doorbell rang, and she ran up, her pale blue dress floating behind her as she ran to greet her first guest. Instead, there was a fidgety little boy, with dark messy hair and bright blue eyes staring back at her, a wrapped present clutched in his hands.

He'd said a quick happy birthday, after gentle urging from his mother, and she gave him a slight smile, wringing her fingers nervously, as he handed her the present, and she placed it neatly by the foot of the stairs.

Three hours later, after the cake had been cut, games played, and it had been time to open presents, she picked up a brightly wrapped pink box, with the words from, Will, written in unsteady writing. Slowly peeling off the gift wrap, she opened the box, and out popped a Jack in the Box, its head hitting her squarely in her mouth. Her smile wavered and her bright green eyes that were clouded over with unshed tears landed on his smirking face. She got up from her place at the table, with her friends eyes following her every move, and she made her way to his chair.

"Fitzwilliam Darcy," she began, her voice menacing- as menacing a ten year old girl could make it out to be.

"I hate you," she declared. "Leave, now. Or I'm telling on you," she said to a grinning William.

"Oh come on, Lizzy," he said, before being quickly cut off.

"Lizzy is only what my friends and people I like call me. You can call me Elizabeth," she said primly, glaring at him.

"It was just a joke!" he said insistently.

"Get out! I didn't even want you at my birthday party but Mummy made me invite you!" she hissed, grabbing him by the arm and leading him to the door, and pushing him firmly out onto the porch.

"Lizzy, it was just a joke!" he protested, suddenly feeling a sense or remorse over what he had done, as she shut the door on him- a slam that would be the first of many to come.

It was their first year in high school.

Her head was buried in her schedule as she attempted to maneuver through the cramped halls of Longbourne Prepatory- a sea of identically dressed teenagers in perfectly pressed uniforms, greeting each other loudly after a summer apart.

"Hey, Lizzy," a familiar voice said, and she turned around to see his smirking face. His hair was tousled, in his typically messy manner- she was convinced he spent at least two hours on it every
morning- his dark blue eyes bright. She could all ready feel the scoping looks from the girls in the surrounding hallway, assessing him, and categorizing him. She shifted uncomfortably, before tilting her head up.

"How much time did you spend on that hairdo, Darcy? Must've been up from the crack of dawn," she said cynically, scrunching her nose in distaste.

"Hey- no need to be hostile- just trying to be friendly," he'd responded, raising his arms up in mock surrender.

"I'm sure that's what had you in mind last week, right?" she said with a slight scowl, thinking of what she had dubbed The Pool Incident. His face took on a pinkish tinge, but it disappeared as quickly as it had appeared.

"Just a prank, Lizzy- didn't think you were such a stick in the mud- don't get so motherly on me," he said with a lilting smile.

"Just be glad I'm not your mother- otherwise I would have killed you- and be grateful that I didn't tell Anne either- she would have killed you for sure," she muttered, glaring at him.

"Hey- come on, can't you take a joke?" he had asked wryly, his mouth curving in a wicked smile.

"Not when it involves snakes to be dropped into a pool I'm in!" she replied, glaring at him in outrage, trying to figure out how on earth he had found a snake in the first place. "Now leave- I'm going to be late," she snapped, making to turn away.

"Hey- Darcy!" A voice had called out to him from a large group of guys.

"Duty calls- I bid you good day, your highness" he said dramatically with a low bow. She narrowed her eyes in distaste. He backed away slowly, a slight smile gracing his features, and she had scowled at his retreating form- shame such an arrogant ass can be so attractive- she had thought wryly, before shaking those thoughts out of her head hastily. She had just begun to walk away when she heard him beginning to speak to his friends.

"She your girlfriend or something?" One of his friends had teased.

"No- god no! She's not even that pretty," he had said with a slight laugh. And with that one sentence ringing in her ears, a heavy dead weight feeling settled down upon her, and her chest constricted. Taking a deep breath, she titled her head up, and walked down to her first class, annoyed with herself for even caring about what he thought about her physical appearance.

She was seventeen and broken, and he was there.

Her hands were buried in her hair, slowly- so very agonizingly slowly, pulling at her hair, wishing to feel something. Broken sobs had emanated from her hollowed chest, and echoed silently in the empty neighbourhood park, miles and miles from when she had left the hospital.

"Shit- shit- Lizzy- oh goddamn," his all too familiar voice had come, with a slight groan as his foot stubbed into the corner of the bench, before he slid down beside her, wrapping an arm around her waist and pulling her into his warmth.

"It's all right, come on," he had whispered reassuringly, his heart beating frantically at the close contact, knowing that despite the fact that it was a terrible situation- just downright unbearable and just complete and utter shit, for something so terrible to happen to someone so good- he couldn't help but feel a thrill of having her wrapped around him, depending on him, trusting him for once.
"It'll be okay," he had said, pulling her in close, feeling the dampness of her face against his neck, her soft hair fanning out slightly as the breeze blew, the soft lavender scent of her hair surrounding him. He closed his eyes, letting his chin rest on her head, while rubbing a soothing hand down her back. It hurt so much to see her could touch her, feel her, smell her, goddammit, but only for a night. Only when she was so hurt and broken and alone that she had no one but him- someone who she had grown up hating because of the idiocy on his part- well, that hurt so much more.

"It's hard- I know-I know that more than anyone," he had whispered, his throat closing up, short flickers of brief memories flashing quickly. His sister's laugh. Her smile. Her first time riding a bike, which he had taught her himself, his parents standing on the porch, grinning and taking pictures.

She quieted down, lifting her head from his chest, and reddened slightly in the most endearing manner- his heart quickened up a couple beats, and he hated himself for that, for being happy to be around her when her father had just died.

"I know- she was a great kid- she didn't deserve it. She was so young. She was supposed to find grow up properly, and become successful and find love-" her voice died quickly. His heart tightened, filled with an indescribable amount of love for the girl next to him- god he loved her so much that it hurt. It was just so... her, to be thinking of him, and wondering what it would like be for him, after her dad had just died.

"Neither did Dad. I- I don't know what I'll do without him. It's not fair. Why him?" she had asked quietly, leaning back into the bench, utterly defeated and spent.

A few minutes in silence had passed between the two, before he had tentatively laced his fingers through hers, and pulled her in close, tilting his head down to press his lips against hers briefly, and a feeling of pure, unadulterated euphoria filled him, knowing that now she was with him, and in his arms, he was never letting go. She let him kiss her, the worry melting away, and sighed, dried tear tracks glistening on her cheeks, before she pulled him in closer.

He was twenty-three, when they first met again after the night in the park.

He had smiled up at the large, basilica style architecture of his Oxford- the new university he had transferred to- a slightly bitter smile playing at the edges of his lips. Though there was no connection of her to this place, he couldn't help but notice everything and anything she may have liked, or thought of, or even criticized for the past six years.

She would have liked it- he had thought suddenly, remembering the few glimpses he had gotten into her bedroom included clippings and photographs of architecture from all over the world-places she wanted to see, places he had wanted to show her.

And he'd never get that chance now, would he? After her sudden disappearance a mere three days later after her father's death. He had only found out after his mother told him that they needed to escape, to leave, because of the memories.

He had glanced down at his watch for a brief second, to see if it was time for his appointment at administration, and maybe- just maybe, that one second he had looked down, had changed everything. That one second had changed his entire world- had turned it from shades of black and white and everything in between, to colours extending further than the rainbow. Because that's when his tall frame had tripped over the sidewalk, colliding into a tiny body- and of course, as fate would have it, it was her. A scowl had prematurely etched its self onto his face, before he could even see who he had bumped into.
"Watch it," the petite brunette had snapped, picking up fallen notebooks and textbooks. Of course, in any other given situation, he would have shot a cool remark back, and stalked off, intent on believing it wasn't his fault, and was the fault of the clumsy brunette.

But something- something had pulled him to her, something so familiar and old, and so potent and just there, like a strong magnetic pull and before he knew it, he was on his hands and knees, picking up a textbook about the history of Roman architecture.

"Sorry," he had murmured , much to his surprise, lifting his eyes to meet hers warily, before his jaw slackened slightly in astonishment and disbelief.

"Elizabeth?" Her eyes widened in surprise and confusion- perhaps more confusion- before recognition dawned brighter than the sun.

"William?" she had asked, her voice disbelieving. And he felt like jumping, yelling, just doing something because she was here. And she was with him- maybe not in the sense he wanted her to be, but it was close enough for him, after six desolate years.

And so, that second- that one second he had taken to check his watch, and him tripping over a dip in the sidewalk had changed everything. The dreary English sky didn't look as gray anymore- in fact, it looked brighter than it had in years. The grass was no longer a dull shade, but a vibrant, bright green. And all these colours and all these shades was what he had to look forward to in the future, because now, with her back in his life, he knew- oh he had always known- that sometimes, it was just worth waiting for.

She was twenty-five when she said 'yes.'

They were sitting in his flat, her feet up on his lap, her head titled back on the arm rest of the couch, and a pencil in her hand while she sketched on her pad of paper, occasionally glancing up to meet his blue eyes, which were focused intently on her.

"What? Something on my face?" She asked, swiping at her mouth. He shifted up, a smile lingering at the edges of his lips.

"Not exactly," he had said softly, before grasping her waist and pulling her into him, his lips connecting with hers. Her arms curled around his neck, the charcoal pencil slipping from her fingers and landing soundly on the hardwood floors, long forgotten.

She let out a groan as her head hit the back of the arms of the sofa, wincing slightly, his body weight pressing down on her in the most wonderful way. "I think we should probably move some place more... comfortable," he had said with a grin.

"Why, Mr Darcy- you're just full of great ideas, aren't you? And to think you graduated from Oxford with that brain of yours!" She had replied playfully, standing up from the couch and offering him her hand.

"But before we do that Miss Bennet, I'd like to ask you something," he said, with just the slightest bit of hesitation. She arched a dark brow at him, folding two bare arms across her chest, her stomach level with his eyes.

"Elizabeth... you've... you've changed me. I've always known that you were the one I wanted to be with- you were the one worth waiting for," he had began, struggling slightly with his words, knowing that despite the hundreds of times he had run through it, he just couldn't put his love for this amazing, amazing woman into a few simple sentences.
"It's just... when we were seventeen and in the park, it was that moment- that singular moment in which I knew I had fallen in love with you- and I thought that it would have... faded, or disappeared after you left so quickly- but it didn't. And I swear- oh god, I swear to god, bumping into you eighteen months ago at Oxford was the best thing that has ever happened to me. Us, Lizzy? We are eternal- I want everything- I want forever with you, and I don't a dime less than that," he finished, his voice fading to a quiet murmur. Her eyes had begun to glass over, and her body trembled in so many different emotions- just a swirl of so many different feelings at one time; fear, apprehension, excitement- of what was to come next.

"Elizabeth Marie Bennet- I love you- and you know that, and I know that, and everyone around us knows that- but I want the world to know that. Will you marry me?" He finished, his eyes alight with something- something so pure and undeniable, she felt a tear slip down her cheeks, and a smile grow on her face.

"Who'd have known you were such a romantic, Fit,?" she teased shakily, using the childhood name he had so despised.

"Is that a ye-"

"Of course it's a 'yes' you idiot! I love you!" she said impatiently, yanking him up from the couch, and pulling his face to hers, the ring laying long forgotten until the next afternoon.

It was a bright sunny morning in the midst of July, and she was twenty-six when she walked down the aisle.

And so, on her wedding day- it all went by so fast. Something she had been planning for over a year was done in a day. Not even a full twenty four hours. It had been less than a few hours, and thinking back, it had happened in the blink of an eye. A little speck in the entirety of the universe, quick, fleeting, but lasting.

It had been done by the Darcys family lake house, the sky clear and sunny as any other, the soft summer breeze blowing gently on the grass, the smell of sea salt drifting through the air. The wedding had been small- just a few close family members and friends, but it was the best day of her life, and his life. She'd walked down the length of the makeshift aisle, her pale ivory dress blowing gently in the breeze, and hair coiled up to rest at the curve of her neck. His heart had honest to god stopped, when he'd seen her walking. It was everything- she was his forever, and she was there and they were going to be together in every possible way after this day. And after the ceremony, they'd had a reception outside, in a pearl coloured tent, and it had rained, causing the mass of people to make their way inside to the reception hall. And she'd stood there, thinking about how everything could be so different just because of one word, or one action. He'd appeared behind her, an arm wrapping around her waist, just as the rain stopped to a drizzle.

Pulling her out of the security of the tent with him, he grinned, letting out a light laugh.

"I've dreamed of this forever," he had said, his forehead resting against hers.

"Well, you know what they say. Dreams do come true," she had said teasingly, a slight smile gracing lighting up her face. Her hair was damp and loose from the humidity, and there was a soft glow emanating from her and he had never seen anything more beautiful in his entire life.

So, he did the one thing that he'd been dying to do all day throughout the entire ceremony, without the watchful eyes of their families. He pulled her in close, and kissed her, so softly, so sweetly, as if he was kissing her with his mind, body and soul, that both their hearts began to beat erratically to the same beat.
After several minutes, they had pulled away, her cheeks flushed, and her green eyes shining brighter than ever, and they stood there, in the soft drizzle- her in her long white dress, him in his black tux, just happy- finally happy, that they had gotten to where they had wished to be for many, many years.

It was perfect, she would say, whenever someone asked about her wedding. Of course, there was that one tiny factor- that one thing that hadn't sunk in until the night before- her father wouldn't be there. And that hurt. And it hurt to remember how suddenly he had died when she was seventeen. How she wasn't ready for him to leave- not just yet. So she had cried until her eyes were red, and she was out of breath. He'd come home to seeing her sitting on the floor of their flat, an array of pictures of her father surrounding her, from her birth to his last days.

"It's not fair, Will- it's not fair. Dad won't be here and it's just fucking not fair," she had cried, knowing that her father had silently been rooting for him- the man she was marrying now, for gods sake- throughout her teenage years- through every crappy boyfriend, and every crappy date she had gone on.

"He loved you too, you know?" she had said finally, stacking the pictures back into the flowery box. He looked up in surprise, meeting her green eyes. "Maybe more than me," she said, a teasing tone creeping into her voice.

"He'd always try pushing you and I together- did you ever notice?" she asked with a slight smile. He smiled down at her, and smoothed her hair back, pulling her in close. "I don't think I realised his scheming until I was sixteen," she said with a slight laugh. "I'd always thought it'd be Mum to force me to date someone," she said, her voice drifting.

"I wish he was here to see you walk down the aisle," he had whispered, kissing the top of her head. "But you know what, Lizzy? He's there. He may not be here physically, but knowing the kind of man your father was, I don't think anything- not even death- could keep him apart from going to his favourite daughter's wedding," he said, pulling her into his body.

She nodded, a sad smile etching its way onto her face, and finally- finally coming to terms with his death, and curling up further into his arms, lulled into a deep sleep by the gentle beat of his heart, and for the first time in years, content and at last, happy with the path life had taken her on, and she knew she had him to thank for the huge weight being lifted off her chest, making her feel lighter than she had ever felt in the past ten years.

End Notes

*Fic title and the two lines in the beginning are from a song by The Fray, titled Rainy Zurich

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