Instinct

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Summary

In the days leading up to their respective weddings Bingley seeks guidance from Darcy.

Notes

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“Darcy old chap I was wondering, well, That is to say, well, hmmm....” Bingley sighed, slouching back in his chair. “Never mind.”

It was the third time that evening that Bingley had started to speak only to stop. Between times he sat glumly, as he was now, and was uncharacteristically silent. Darcy was becoming equal measures irritated and concerned. No doubt it was something to do with Miss Bennet. The wedding was mere days away and Bingley had been quite unable to keep a sensible thought in his head for weeks. However, where he had been annoyingly cheerful throughout this period, in the past few days he had become increasingly withdrawn. Nerves, no doubt, were to blame but that understanding did not stop his behaviour from being maddeningly vexatious.

“Bingley.” Darcy stated, folding the letter he had been reading and slipping it into his pocket. “I do wish you would just tell me what the problem is and stop acting in this idiotic manner.”

Bingley looked up at Darcy with a startled expression, opened his mouth to speak before, all of a sudden, deflating all over again. Darcy made an irritated sound in his throat.
“Come out with it man!"

“Well, uh, you see...” Bingley attempted, sitting up, only to trail off again.

“I see??” Darcy prompted, fixing Bingley with his most unflinching glare. Bingley squirmed under its intensity.

“I've never kissed anyone and I'm afraid I'll upset Jane,” Bingley said all at once. Darcy could not follow him although a small, petty part of him was pleased to find that his supposition that Miss Bennett was the root of Bingley’s worry was correct.

“Bingley. Slower.”

Bingley sighed, slouching back in his chair once more. In a quiet voice he said: “I have never kissed anyone before and I do not wish to disappoint My Jane.”

“Indeed.” Darcy stated, wondering what Bingley would have him do. “What would you have me do?”

“I don't know. I just thought that you might, I don't know, have some tips.”

“And what is it that makes you believe I would be of any help in this manner?” Darcy asked, his face a cool mask of indifference, masking his confusion at the queer turn the conversation had taken.

“I... you were never as sheltered as I as a boy. Nor as shy. I cannot imagine that you did not take the opportunities given to you to try nor that you did not have boyhood friends that did not prompt you to such behaviour.”

“You mean Wickham.” Darcy said coldly.

Bingley looked uncomfortable but did not deny it. “Yes. So have you kissed a woman?”

“I have.”

“And do you have tips.”

“I would have no idea what I could advise that would be of benefit. It is not the kind of activity that lends itself easily to advice. I have found it be quite... instinctual,” Darcy mused.

Bingley looked confused. “Instinct? Is that your advice?”

“Yes. I suppose it it. Go with your gut,” Darcy confirmed with a determined nod of his head.

“That's not very helpful. What if I don't have the right instincts? I do not wish to be inept?” Bingley frowned, slouching back on the chair.

“Miss Bennett will be as inexperienced as you. You shall learn together.”

“Men are supposed to be more experienced as their wives. Would you be as blasé if you were entering into your life with Miss Eliza with no idea what you were doing?” Bingley complained.

Darcy chuckled. “I am quite aware that, when it comes to Elizabeth, I am quite out of my depth in a great many ways. She is... a magnificent and infuriating creature.”

“Hmm,” Bingley vocalised non-committally, slouching back on the chair. Darcy looked at him for a moment but, seeing no further indication of him furthering the conversation, took the letter back
out if his pocket. He had just unfolded it and was seeking the point at which he had stopped when Bingley suddenly sat up, leaning towards him. “Darcy!” he exclaimed. “I have a brilliant idea!”

Darcy regarded him coolly. “Yes?”

“We should practice!”

“And how would you have us do that? Shall we ride down to London tomorrow, find a quean to practice with us?” Darcy asked him, his lack of impress at this idea clear in his voice.

“Indeed not! I would not sully my union with Miss Bennett by cavorting with such sinful company,” Bingley was horrified at the suggestion. Darcy was almost amused at Bingley's attempt at a censorious glare; his sisters were much his superior at the act.

“Then how do you imagine we could practice? With a servant? Shall I call one?” Darcy asked, truly confused and unable to determine Bingley's thinking, a situation which was quite outside of his experience with his friend.

“With each other,” Bingley told him blandly.

“Pardon!?” Darcy exclaimed, standing. “You are suggesting what? That we embrace each other?”

“Yes.”

Darcy paced to the window, looking away from Bingley, his countenance stormy. “You do not wish to cavort with some wench in London because it is sinful and yet you suggest a course of action just as sinful, if not more so?”

“Darcy, you are being frightfully obtuse. It is only a kiss. I am not suggesting anything more carnal than that,” Bingley said, coming over to stand by his friend, positioning himself so that Darcy could not avoid looking at him. Darcy shot him a look, resisting the urge to step away from the window when he found just how close Bingley was to him lest it look like an act of retreat.

“It could be said that your kiss with Miss Bennett would be “only a kiss” and thus is not an occasion that should warrant this... fuss.”

“Darcy,” Bingley sounded almost amused and Darcy had to fight to stop his displeasure at being the object of someone's jest manifesting on his features. “You know quite well that is a silly argument. Between us it would be a mere trifle. Between myself and dear Jane it is the beginning of our life together. You do not wish my marital life to begin on a sour note do you?”

Darcy made no response; he looked out of the window and leaned as far from Bingley as their current configuration would allow. Bingley allowed him a moment of silence, watching his face, before insinuating his head between Darcy's and the window. Darcy did not look pleased and stepped back from the window, retreating a few feet away.

“You are aware that the instincts would be wrong between us. We are both men,” Darcy told Bingley, in a controlled and even tone, levelling one arched eyebrow at him.

“Indeed, but I only wish to learn from your experience not... cavort with you,” Bingley said, smiling, sensing that the argument was almost won. “It will be like when you helped me work out how to propose to Miss Bennett, an act of friendship.”

“I do not think you would find many men of good standing willing to behave in such a way for the sake of friendship nor do not think that the outcome will be of benefit to you. But I suppose, if it will stop you being so infuriatingly glum, one quick example can do no harm,” Darcy submitted,
wondering what possible reason he had for not storming out on Bingley and his outlandish idea. And yet he was unwilling to do so.

“Jolly good!” Bingley exclaimed, walking over to him. “So... how do we do this?” He worried at his bottom lip with his teeth and Darcy found his eyes drawn to the red of it. He was silent, contemplative, and Bingley started to fidget in front of him, expressive blue eyes concerned. “Darcy?”

Darcy looked up, met his eyes, and then smiled slightly at the plea for guidance writ so clearly in them. He breathed in deeply, stepping forward into Bingley's space, his heart hammering in his chest at the sin he was about to commit. At least he presumed that was the reason, there could be no other. Cupping Bingley's cheek in his right palm Darcy leaned forward quickly, capturing Bingley's lips with his own before his nerve failed him. He expected it to be awkward, empty, flat—a kiss in appearance only with none of the physical symptoms that one expected with a partner one desired. He was wrong.

Bingley's lips were soft and warm beneath his; Darcy's lips tingled pleasantly at the sensation. At first his friend was hesitant, unsure in his movements, but then his hand came up to rest on Darcy's hip as the other pressed on the small of Darcy's back, pulling him closer so that their bodies pressed against each other. Darcy unwittingly moaned as the sensation intensified, burning; Bingley took the opportunity to deepen the kiss, lips parted, tongues battling for dominance. Darcy's hand slipped into Bingley's hair, fingers entwined in the strands. Despite their bodies being flush against one and other, Darcy wished they could be closer still. He could feel the heat of Bingley's flesh through the barriers of their clothes and Darcy's hand longed to delve below, to feel the skin itself.

His eyes snapped open, his body stiffening in Bingley's arms as he pulled away. Bingley's eyes opened, dark and confused. Bingley's face was flushed, his lips swollen; Darcy wanted to kiss him again. Darcy could not kiss him again. “I,” Darcy started, his voice weak, gravelly. He cleared his throat and pulled fully away from Bingley. “I believe you will do fine.” He bowed slightly, turning away from Bingley. A leaden weight had formed in his stomach, a sense of ill-ease and uncertainty, of lines crossed and actions that may not be taken back, of sin.

“Darcy,” Bingley breathed, his hand reaching out and taking hold of Darcy's; Darcy snatched it away, looking back furiously at Bingley. He tried not to notice the hurt in Bingley's eyes, wondered at how guileless he could still appear and whether it was merely himself that had been thus affected from what was, after all, just a kiss.

“I must go. Excuse me,” he bowed politely at his friend before walking stiffly from the room.

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