The Prideful Mr Darcy and The Present-Time Lady

by esm3rald

Summary

Kate Bennet is a normal 20 years old English Lit. student at the University of Hertfordshire until she wakes up one day suddenly ten years younger and in 1801. She has not simply ended up 200 years in the past though, she has become one of the characters of 'Pride and Prejudice', 10 years before the story begins. How her presence will be able to change the story as we all know it?

Notes

This is my new story. A P&P Regency one. I wanted to write for some time a 'Pride and Prejudice' story and I first thought about writing an Elizabeth/Darcy one, but there are so many of them and surely much better written than what I could have ever been able to do, so I thought why not write about an OC? - it seems to be my specialty since most of my stories are about OC characters -, an OC that comes from the present-time? So here I am.

Like I said, the story will not be Darcy/Elizabeth, but it also is kind of a Kitty/Darcy story since my OC will kind of replace Kitty Bennet(I thought about replacing Elizabeth but where's the fun in that?). In fact my OC will be called Katherine Bennet. Since I think though that Kitty is a little too young for Mr Darcy, my OC will be the third Bennet sister - instead of Mary - and she'll be 20 years old while Lizzie will be 21 and Jane 22. Mary will therefore be the fourth Bennet sister and she will be 18 years old with Lydia still as the youngest at 15. I hope you like it. I know that this is really short but it's just the Prologue, to better introduce the story. The other characters will be much, much longer.
"I declare after all there is no enjoyment like reading! How much sooner one tires of anything than of a book!"

(Caroline Bingley, Pride and Prejudice - Chapter 11)

May 2001 - University of Hertfordshire (England)

Kate was lying on her bed, reading once again. It was Saturday night and she was alone in her room. Her roommate had gone to a party but Kate was not exactly in the mood for it that evening. Not that she did not love to socialize because she did, it was that sometimes she liked to have a little time for herself, like tonight. She loved to read and that was one of the reasons she was an English Literature student at the University of Hertfordshire. It was her first year there and she could never be more happy with her choice. She knew her aunt and uncle didn't approve - they wanted her to study law like her parents did - but she knew that that was the best choice for her.
She had always loved literature since she was little, browsing through the shelves of her uncle's study, immersing herself in the pages that told of different times and places. But her favorite book had always been 'Pride and Prejudice'. There were so many things she liked about it, and not just the plot of the story or its characters, it was also the language used and the manners of the time, 'the gentleman like behavior' of the men, the amazing dresses the women used to wear. Of course the main thing she loved about the novel was the love story between Mr Darcy and Elizabeth. Everything, from their inauspicious beginning, to their numerous misunderstandings, to their many flaws - Darcy's pride and Elizabeth's prejudices against him most of all -, to how they were able to become better people thanks to the influence of the other. Of course there were also characters present in the story who were so very entertaining simply because they were so ridiculous like Mr Collins, Mrs Bennet or Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

Unfortunately there was also one character she didn't care much about one way or another, simply because there was so little information about her, and that was Kitty Bennet, the character with whom she shared her name. Of the others members of the family it was easy to sketch their characters and understand their motives but of Kitty Bennet there was so very little. The only thing mentioned about her was that she could be intelligent if only she could stop herself from following Lydia's every move. And that was it. Not a description of her actual personality, or her likes or dislikes, her hobbies, not even of her physical appearance.

"I wonder what it would be like, if Kitty was different, if she had an actual personality of her own instead of being Lydia's shadow. In what way the story would change? Would it change at all?" Kate wondered aloud. And then she continued, thinking aloud of random things. "It certainly must have been nice living in that time period. At least for the riches and the nobles. Of course the women were not exactly free to do the things they are able to do now. And of course there was no electricity or gas or running water at the time. But the gentlemen were so nice, helping the ladies to descend carriages and escorting them to the various rooms and standing up when a lady entered a room. What it would be like living in that time period, or even being a character in one of Austen's novels?" She paused a moment and then said. "Well, I personally would love to meet Mr Darcy, I'd bear everything not exactly pleasant about that time period just to meet him. Of course I would need to stay there a lot of years to learn everything I could about living in the regency period or run the risk of appearing ridiculous and unlady-like in his eyes." She smiled at her silliness and then checked the clock. It was past twelve and she was starting to get tired. She put her book on her nightstand, she turned off the light and she went to sleep. She had no idea that starting from tomorrow, her life would never be the same again.
Absolutely short chapter, I know, but it's not a real chapter, it's kind of a transitional one before the real story begins. This 'Interlude' introduces Kate into the past and the world of Pride and Prejudice, but in the next chapter, it will skip directly to 10 years later, with the arrival of Bingley and Darcy at Netherfield, and that's when the real fun begins. At that point the chapters will be longer because they will be actual chapters.

BTW, I'm so sorry for the wait, but I have to say, I was kind of stuck in this chapter, I hope I'll be able to update soon. This story is not abandoned however, I promise.
"Do not give way to useless alarm; though it is right to be prepared for the worst, there is no occasion to look on it as certain."

(Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*)

**January 1801 - Longbourn (Bennet Residence), Hertfordshire**

Kate woke up at the sound of someone calling her name. Well, not really her name since the last time she had been called Kitty was when she was five years old. She opened her eyes groggily and came face to face with a girl of about ten years of age, with dark brown hair and intelligent brown eyes.

"Kitty come on, wake up. You promised you would have come with me to Oakham Mount this morning." Kate looked at her confused but nodded her head at her anyway. 'Oakham Mount?' where had she heard that name before? Then she stood up in a sudden movement when she realized why exactly she knew that name. She looked around her with her mouth open, from the canopy bed to the basin filled with water over the dresser, to the long dress - but at least four size smaller than what her size should be - already prepared for her and hanged to the mirror. She looked at her hands then, and like she was expecting they were smaller, like those of a child. 'Oh, it's fine. I must be dreaming. I wished to end up in the world of Pride and Prejudice but years before the beginning of the story so now I'm just dreaming about it. No problem. Better live it while it lasts.' The girl to her left who was calling her name again had to be Elizabeth, a 10 year old Elizabeth.

"Yes Lizzie, I'm perfectly fine. I'm still not completely awake but I'll come walking with you this morning like I promised I would do. However I need time to get ready first." She answered, hoping that her language was on par with the time period.

"Very well. I'll call Sarah to help you get ready. But please, don't take too long. It's already 8." With that said, Elizabeth left the room and Kate breathed a sigh of relief. A moment later a young girl of no more than 18 years of age came into the room. Her dress was simple, much different from the one ready for her to wear.

"Good morning Miss Kitty." Sarah said with a sunny smile.

She greeted the maid in return before getting up from her bed, unsure on her feet because of her now small legs and came to stand in front of her. The bath was already ready for her and she took off her clothes quickly before laying down into the warm water. She closed her eyes to relax and think. Everything seemed so real, but it had to be a dream right? She couldn't be a little girl again and especially 200 years into the past. It just wasn't possible. Things like that didn't happen in real life.

She spent a few minutes doing her bath with Sarah helping her wash herself, before going out of the water. Sarah helped her put her dress on and then did her hair in a simple but nice braid. In all of this Kate hadn't looked at herself once in the mirror, she didn't have the courage. In the end, because she knew she couldn't avoid it anymore since her maid was asking if her appearance was okay, she looked at herself in the mirror and winced a little. Like she thought, she looked like she had looked when she was 9 years old so that was probably her age now. Blonde and slightly curly hair, light blue eyes and fair skin. At least, except for her age, her appearance hadn't changed. She took a final deep breath before leaving her bedroom and she reached the hallway. She looked around in confusion, having no idea where she was supposed to go now. She turned left in search of stairs and hoped that that was the right direction. She descended the stairs and after more time that she had hope she would take, she finally found Lizzie and together they left the house for Elizabeth's usual rumbling to the Country side. Lizzie was energetic and witty like Kate imagined she would be, even at ten years of age. It was difficult at first to keep up with her but she had the
energy of a child in her small body so soon she was at her side and smiling happily, feeling free for the first time in who knew how long. They talked about this and that - Lizzie already complaining about her mother and younger sisters - and Kate found herself having fun and be interested in the conversation even if Lizzie was still so young.

After about an hour of walking about, they returned back home, only to be greeted with the plump figure of what Kate presumed was Mrs Bennett. "Lizzie, Kitty" She said in an overly-dramatic and a little shrill tone. "What have you done to yourself? Oh, look at those dresses. Six inches deep in mud. Oh, my poor nerves." Kitty was hard-pressed to keep from laughing at those words and looked at Lizzie, who seemed she was having the same problem. The three of them went to sit for breakfast - or as they used to say in that time period 'break their fast -, with Mrs Bennett all the while complaining about 'her poor nerves' and her 'wild daughters'.

At that point Kate finally met the rest of the family: sweet, calm Jane - that at eleven looked already like a beautiful angel -, bookish Mary, bratty Lydia, and of course Mr Bennet. "Good Morning Lizzie, Kitty" Mr Bennet greeted them. "Good Morning father!" Replied immediately Elizabeth and Kitty hastened to do the same before greeting the rest of the family. It felt weird, calling Mr Bennet 'father' and Mrs Bennet 'mother' but since she was in this wonderful dream, she needed to play her role, didn't she?

Mr Bennett was as sarcastic and intelligent as Kate had always imagined he would be, a striking contrast against Mrs Bennet who was as theatrical as one could imagine, even ten years before the beginning of Pride and Prejudice.

Kate couldn't remember having as much fun as she was having in that moment and hoped with all her might that her dream would last as long as possible.

After most of the morning spent learning how to trim bonnets and organize table centerpieces, she was starting to change her mind about it. Fortunately she was able to escape Mrs Bennett's clutches after lunch and she started to play the piano. She wasn't a proficient by any means, but she knew how to play, her aunt and uncle having paid for a teacher for her to learn since she was 7 years old. Unfortunately, she had not taken into account the fact that she didn't know if Kitty knew how to play or not. "I didn't know you had become this good at playing the piano, Kitty."

Jane commented, attracting - unfortunately for her - the attention of the rest of the room. "Your sister is right Kitty, when did you learn to play so well?" Kate didn't know how to answer that, but was strangely saved by Lizzie, who answered for her. "Oh, she practiced a lot this last few weeks. I wished I had the same patience."

Mr Bennet looked at her surprised, probably not used to 'Kitty Bennet' paying attention to anything but gossip and other idle things.

After leaving the piano to Mary for her to practice, she decided to search for a book to read. When Mr Bennet caught her browsing through the library, he looked even more astonished than before. "Are my eyes deceiving me or are you actually searching for a book to read?" Mr Bennet asked with an amused grin, his tone slightly teasing. Kate straightened her shoulders without realizing it before answering his question. "Yes, father."

Mr Bennet raised an eyebrow before asking "And you had something particular in mind?"

"I was hoping to read the Bard's sonnets, sir." Kate answered in all seriousness. Mr Bennet didn't say anything else before passing her the book she was looking for. Kate thanked him and fled the library as fast as she could.

The rest of the day passed slowly and when Kate found herself once again inside Kitty Bennet's
room, she realized that the hours had passed too slowly for that to be a dream. She had lived everything, every minute of every hour of that day and that was not how a dream worked. A dream was confusing and often fast-forwarding from a certain time and place to another without apparent connection between the two situations. What she had just lived was exactly like what she imagined a normal day in the Regency England period felt like. And that was the moment when she really started to panic. She couldn't really be 200 years in the past, could she? She continued to read the book of sonnets Mr Bennet had lent to her, trying to ignore the problem but she was once again struck by the impossibility of the situation when she realized that, or she could really remember every single poem ever written by Shakespeare by heart, or that she was really back in the past, and, if that was not enough, she had just become a character in the book Pride and Prejudice.

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