And So It Goes

by owls

Summary

The four times that William Darcy wants to ask Lizzie Bennet to marry him, and the one time that she technically does it instead.
UPDATE: Epilogue added.

Notes

Heads up - this is fluffy, in case you couldn’t already tell just from the summary. But, let’s face it: never were there a pair of fluffier dorks than Lizzie and Darcy. Also, I wrote this between Episode 98 and 99, and so had a few canon-balls thrown at me. BUT WE MOVE ON THROUGH THESE TIMES OF HARDSHIP.

Disclaimer: Alas, I do not own any of the characters, and credit for the title goes to Billy Joel.
Chapter 1

1.

The thought first occurred to him three months after that first kiss on Lizzie’s birthday. They’d been at a long, arduous corporate dinner that he’d been obligated to attend and that Lizzie insisted upon tagging along to, despite his claims that it’d be dull and full of middle aged senior managers with voices monotonous enough to make one consider just how long it’d take to drown oneself in chardonnay. “Well then, I have to be there.” She’d said with a grin. “Who else is going to save you from death by overpriced alcoholic beverage?”

Darcy never enjoyed these events, namely down to his insufferable social anxiety that made him want to retreat into a corner and never talk to anyone ever again, but the evening itself hadn’t been all that bad. Gigi had brought Fitz, and, as always, they were an infallible source of entertainment. The chardonnay had, in fact, been champagne, and the one glass he’d drunk had left a pleasant, warm feeling in the pit of his stomach.

There’d been the inevitable circulation of the room, of course, and the shaking hands of corporate officials and the “So how is your wife, Mr Jenkins?”’s. But it was remarkable how an event that had once been the bane of his career could be a completely different scenario with the addition of a small, warm arm linked with his.

Lizzie. She’d been radiant; her auburn hair loosely curled and draped over one shoulder, and her skin almost luminescent under the soft lighting. Her witty conversation and dazzling smile had charmed every middle aged senior manager in the building, and Darcy had found himself more than once staring at the woman by his side rather than the person he was supposed to be making small talk with. He would later admit that he remembered how she’d looked laughing at Fitz’s jokes with far more clarity than he remembered the jokes themselves.

As they’d sat at dinner, he spent so much time focusing on the warm hand that Lizzie had placed on his leg and the private smile and stolen glances that she shared only with him that he’d been ignoring the (admittedly overcooked) steak on his plate. When he finally ended up attempting to cut it, the meat had been so rubbery that the knife had gotten stuck – a situation that once would have mortified him. This time, however, as Lizzie broke out into fits of laughter that sounded like the rising and falling of a chorus of bells, he joined in with her, ignoring the stares of the corporate officials. He left the knife wedged in steak, and thought Marry me, Lizzie Bennet.

Later, when they were finally and mercifully alone and within the safe, familiar walls of the Darcy condo, he eased her coat off her shoulders and pressed a gentle kiss to the back of her neck, just where the ridges of her spine began. Her skin smelt like lavender. He placed his hands on her shoulders, and slowly brushed his lips up her neck. She sighed, reaching up to slide her fingers through his, and tilted her head to the side, exposing acres of pale skin.

“You’re beautiful.” Darcy mouthed into the dip just below her ear.

Lizzie laughed softly. “And you’re corny,” she whispered, but she pulled their intertwined hands down from her shoulders and across her stomach, rubbing small circles onto the back on his hand with her thumb.

“Where would I be without you?” This time, his lips were at the underside of her jaw.

“A swollen corpse, drowned in a vat of champagne?” Lizzie’s reply was somewhat breathy as Darcy’s lips continued their migration up her face, kissing along her cheekbone.
“Either that, or engaged to Caroline.” Lizzie continued after a moment, and Darcy snorted.

“I’d take the drowning any day,” he murmured.

Lizzie made a noise of assent, her eyes closing as Darcy’s lips found her temple. “Your children would have been beautiful, though.”

Darcy chuckled lowly into her skin. Her head tilted back, and she captured his lips with her own. It was soft, and achingly sweet, and he pulled her closer to him. The thought surfaced again, bubbling to his lips. *Marry me, Lizzie Bennet.*

Instead, he scooped her up, cradling her in his arms and walking her towards the bedroom, grinning at her shocked laughter.

“I can walk, you know.” Lizzie craned her neck up to look him in the eyes defiantly.

“I know.” He raised an eyebrow. “This is just more fun.”

Lizzie laughed. “William Darcy: purveyor of fun. Never thought I’d see the day.” But she brushed her lips across his neck and nipped very gently at his ear lobe, turning most of his skin to gooseflesh.

And later as he lay beside her as she slept in the bed they so often shared, he toyed with a lock of her hair, letting the silky strands slip between his fingers like water. He sighed, pressing a kiss to the top of her head, and she shifted in her sleep, burrowing into his side and resting a palm over his heart. He wrapped his arms around her warm, sleeping form, allowing his heavy eyelids to fall closed, and he thought to himself *Marry me, Lizzie Bennet.*

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2.

There were times when their relationship was difficult. It was inevitable, really, that they would struggle, given that Darcy was frequently jetting across the country with very little notice, and Lizzie had a ridiculous amount of student debt on her back and refused, *point blank*, to let Darcy lend her any money in any shape or form. Time zones, rent, parents and work all got in the way time and time again, and, on top of this, the arguments that they had, while few and far in between, could escalate into something much more heated very quickly. More than once within the first six months of their relationship, one or the other had suggested that they end it.

After, there would be moments where Lizzie would be lying on the sofa in her tiny, overpriced flat, the smell of the mould she’d tried to paint over thick in her nose, and she would ache: ache with longing, and ache with the knowledge that this relationship that made her *so very happy* looked as though it was doomed to fail.

And after, there would be moments when Darcy would click onto Lizzie’s YouTube channel and watch a few videos, simply to see her face and hear her voice as though she were next to him. Eventually, he would find himself watching Lizzie kiss him for the first time, and he would swallow down the lump that had formed in his throat. *You worked so hard to win her affections,* he would think. *William Darcy. You are not letting Elizabeth Bennet slip through your fingers.*

He’d normally call her up and beg her to take him back, and he’d tell her that they could work
through it somehow, and that they’d try as hard as they damn well could to make sure that this would never happen again. Either that or she’d call him first, saying more or less the same. It was a perpetual cycle, almost a routine.

But this time was the fifth time it had happened, and something needed to be done. He pressed the number 2 on the keypad on his phone, the dial tone initiating immediately.

“William?” The familiar voice sounded in his ear after four rings.

“Lizzie.” Darcy cleared his throat. “Lizzie, I, uh…”

She sighed sadly. “Are we really going to do this again?”

“No, no, you’re absolutely right. We’re not.”

“… We’re not?”

“No... I mean, that is to say…” Darcy blew out a breath, running his hand through his hair. “Look, Lizzie, I’ve been doing some thinking.”

“Me too.”

“Right. Well, I was thinking that maybe we... uh, well, that is, I…”

Marry me, Lizzie Bennet.

“Maybe we should just leave it for a while...” she began, the hesitation clear in her voice. “Like I said, I’ve been doing some thinking, and this has been a pretty intense few months. Maybe we need a cooling off period, or something.”

“No, no, Lizzie, just, let me phrase this properly, I... uh…”

Marry me, Lizzie Bennet.

“William, this is, what, the fifth time this has happened? I’m not saying it’s forever but just for-“

“Move in with me, Lizzie Bennet.”

For an agonising heartbeat, there was silence on the other end of the line. “Move in... with you... in the condo?”

Darcy’s hands were clenched into fists. “Yes.”

“I... uh...”

“I wouldn’t be paying for you, you could pay for your half of everything: the rent, the groceries, any furniture we buy, and it would still be cheaper than you renting that flat on your own. We could get a cat if you wanted, I know how much you love Kitty, and it’s right in the heart of the city - it’s really convenient and the views from the window really are excellent.”

“William.”

“Lydia could come visit whenever you wanted, and I understand completely that you want your own space, and I know that it probably seems too rushed to you, of course, I can completely see why you would think that.”

“William, I-“
“You may not want to live with me anyway, that’s understandable too. We need time apart, I get that. We can’t be together all the time, and-”

“William, stop.”

Darcy’s heart was in his mouth. “My apologies,” He muttered softly.

Lizzie’s sighed, and cleared her throat. “William, look, before you start getting off topic, let’s focus on the real question here, shall we?”

Darcy swallowed thickly.

“What shall we name the cat?”

Darcy released a breath that he hadn’t realised he’d been holding, and he wondered if anyone in the world had ever felt quite as dizzyingly happy as he did in that moment. As he laughed into the receiver, he thought about how utterly, foolishly in love he was, and then he thought Marry me, Lizzie Bennet.

3.

It was a Sunday afternoon, almost a year later. It had started raining half an hour before: the fine kind that didn’t look like much, but clung to your hair like lichen and, within five minutes of walking in it, had the power to soak through your shoes, your coat, and almost everything underneath it. Darcy was watching it from the window by his desk at the condo, absentmindedly twirling a pen around in his fingers. Frodo, their fat, tabby cat, was curled up on top of the filing cabinet, a mug of coffee sat at his elbow, stone cold, and the cursor on the blank word document on the computer screen in front of him blinked steadily. It was the sort of day that lacked anything resembling productivity and motivation. He sighed and put down his pen, rubbing a hand over his eyes, half hoping that when he opened them again, all of his work would be complete. No such luck. The cursor was still blinking, taunting him with its regular pulsing. Sighing, Darcy switched off the monitor and got up, stretching out his arms and pulling his tie loose. As he headed downstairs, he heard the sound of keys in the front door.

“This grapefruit had better be goddamn delicious,” Lizzie said when she noticed him in the doorway to the kitchen, dumping a somewhat soggy cardboard box on the table, shrugging off her coat and draping it over the nearest radiator. She toed off her boots and her socks, placing them next to it, before wringing out her hair. She looked as though she’d been thrown in a lake, and Darcy smiled gently, leaning on the doorframe.


“How many times have I told you, Lizzie Bennet?” He shook his head slowly, his amused eyes locked on hers the entire time. “The hills. They’re unforgiving. I can give you a ride any time you need to.”

Lizzie smiled ruefully as she began to unpack the box. “I like to think that I can carry a box of grapefruit to my boyfriend’s house by myself, thank you very much.”
“It’s your house too,” he reminded her. “And I know you can. I’m just saying that I have a car that you’re more than welcome to use.” He shrugged away from the doorway and walked towards her, catching her hands that were reaching for the fruit in his. He frowned at her icy skin. “And you have hypothermia, apparently.”

“And grapefruit.” Lizzie reminded him.

“And grapefruit.”

Lizzie grinned at him as he rubbed her fingers between his palms, and her smile softened somewhat when he began softly kissing each fingertip. As he began trailing his lips up her palm, she moved her hand to cup his jaw, prompting him to look up at her. She chastely kissed him once on his lips, before turning back to the fruit.

“Alright, sappy. You can help me with these.” She gestured to the swelling carrier bag on the table.

Darcy paused. “Refresh my memory: why exactly do you have a box of grapefruit?”

“A gift to you, from my mother.” Lizzie sighed, picking up a fruit and tossing it between her palms. “She sent them in the mail, I just had to go collect them from post office. You should have seen the mail guy’s face.” Lizzie shook her head.

“But why grapefruit...?”

“She’s convinced that you’re working yourself too hard or something.”

“And grapefruit is the tried and tested remedy to an overworked soul?”

“The woman once made green bean and cranberry jello as part of a convoluted plan to marry off Jane and Bing. Why you’re surprised, I have no idea.”

“Point taken.”

Lizzie nodded, and then shivered inadvertently. Darcy paused where he was reaching for a grapefruit, and furrowed his brow.

“You really will get hypothermia if you stay in those clothes.”

Lizzie raised an eyebrow, and then grinned, batting her lashes mockingly and placing a hand on her chest. “Why, Mr Darcy, how forward you are!”

He recognised the accent from when she impersonated her mother on her videos, and he wrinkled his nose. “Funny.”

“Sarcasm is the lowest form of wit.”

“You can quote Oscar Wilde at me all you like, once you’ve gotten changed.”

“Alright, alright, I’m going.” She pecked him on the lips as she passed him on the way to the bedroom. “Don’t eat any of the grapefruit without me, ok? I have plans for them.”

Darcy smirked. “I promise.”

Lizzie flashed a smile at him, and he watched her walk away wistfully. By the time she’d returned, Darcy had secured a place for every last grapefruit: he’d run out of room in the fridge, and had instead found room in various, less obvious grapefruit habitats, such as the cereal
cupboard, and there was even one hiding in the wine rack. There was an observable point here about how a year prior to this point he’d have organised the fruit meticulously: The Lizzie Bennet Effect seemed to have shot his organisational skills to shame.

She padded across the wooden flooring, looking considerably dryer in one of Darcy’s large, soft t-shirts that he wore to sleep in, and a pair of her own plaid pyjama bottoms. Her hair was gathered into a low ponytail, and her face was scrubbed clean of makeup, and Darcy wanted nothing more than to pull her into his arms.

“Lizzie, you appear to be drowning in t-shirt.” He said instead.

“I love it when you compliment me.” She replied, perching on a stool by the breakfast bar.

“Sarcasm is the lowest form of wit.”

Lizzie’s mouth fell open. “You can’t recycle my comeback!”

“Says who?”

“Says me!”

“Well, in that case, I apologise, Lizzie Bennet.” He walked over to her, his face eye-level with her where she sat. “Your word is the only word I live by.” He took her hand and kissed it gently.

Lizzie flushed a soft pink, and she smiled gently. “Glad to hear it,” she said, and they shared a long, drawn out gaze, reminiscent of that during the time when they had awkwardly skirted around one another at Pemberley. Darcy had lived for these looks then, and, right now, he never wanted it to end.

But, inevitably, the moment passed, and Lizzie jumped down from the stool. “Don’t you want to know my amazing plan for the grapefruit?”

“Not really.”

“Yes, you do.”

“No...” Darcy shook his head. “No, I don’t think I do.”

“I really think you do.”

They made five bowls worth of grapefruit jello, and ate about a pint each of the stuff for supper that night on the living room sofa while they watched the fine rain fall. It wasn’t that the jello was particularly tasty, but neither of them wanted to cook, and the more they ate, the sooner the grapefruits were gone. Besides, they’d discovered that if they covered the stuff with sugar, it really wasn’t half bad. And when he kissed Lizzie and tasted the sugary, citrusy twang that he knew coated his lips too, he thought that grapefruit was the best fruit in the world, and then he thought _Marry me, Lizzie Bennet._

4.

The announcement of Jane and Bing’s engagement came two months after Lizzie’s 27th birthday, and was met with wails of joy in the Bennet household. Lizzie had been visiting home for the weekend when the invitations to their engagement party had arrived, and Darcy was in Seattle on
business. It was always infuriating when business forced them apart, but Lizzie had plenty to keep her occupied at home, and thus plenty to report back to Darcy.

To: William Darcy  
From: Lizzie Bennet

Jane and Bing’s invites came. Mom’s passed out with happiness and Lydia’s throwing a house party. Send help.

Darcy smiled at the screen of his phone in the back of the cab that was driving him to his hotel. Bing had turned up on their doorstep about a month ago, looking remarkably haggard, dithering over whether or not he should pop Jane the question. Darcy had taken pity on his old friend, and placed a strong black coffee in front of him.

“Jane’s wonderful, Bing.” Darcy had said to his friend. “I honestly can’t imagine anyone better for you.”

Bing had looked up from the floor. “So I have your approval?” He’d asked, eyebrows raised.

“No.” Bing had said, and then his face broke into the first smile Darcy had seen since he had arrived. “But I’d like it all the same.”

Bing had got the next flight home to New York, and called the condo the next day, asking Darcy to be his best man.

Darcy’s heart warmed at the memory, and he tapped out a reply to Lizzie.

To: Lizzie Bennet  
From: William Darcy

I’ve got Animal Control on the phone right now.

Seconds later, his phone buzzed again.

To: William Darcy  
From: Lizzie Bennet

You’re an A+ boyfriend.

To: Lizzie Bennet  
From: William Darcy

Just doing my job. Also, I am missing you rather a lot.

To: William Darcy  
From: Lizzie Bennet

I miss you, too. Can’t your company create a goddamn teleportation app?

To: Lizzie Bennet  
From: William Darcy

I’ll get my men on it.

To: William Darcy  
From: Lizzie Bennet

You do that. Stat.
Darcy chuckled under his breath, and poised his fingers to reply, when the cab pulled up outside the towering building that was his hotel. He thanked the driver, stowing his phone away and ducking out of the little car with his small suitcase, handing the driver the bills through the open window.

His hotel room was large, with an enormous, king sized bed directly in the centre. It was a beautiful room, with unfolding doors leading to a balcony with views right across the city, high enough up that the air seemed almost clean. Thick, white towelling robes hung on the door, and a bottle of complimentary wine sat in a cooler on the dresser. One of the many perks of being a C.E.O was that the hotels were always absolutely divine. Darcy saw none of the luxuries, however, intent as he was on finally getting some well deserved rest, and he changed into his pyjamas: notably including the grey t-shirt that Lizzie continually attempted to covet – so much so that it still smelled of her. He brushed his teeth as quickly as possible whilst still managing to be thorough, and then collapsed onto his mattress that was actually far more solid than soft. He was climbing between the sheets when he heard his phone vibrate from where he’d left it on his night stand.

To: William Darcy  
From: Lizzie Bennet  
I love you. Now get some rest, you fool.

Darcy smiled softly, imagining her whispering the words into the shell of his ear, and he laid the phone on the pillow by his head, inhaling the florally smell of the t-shirt. It was a poor replacement for the real thing, but better than nothing, he presumed, and as he drifted off to sleep, he thought 
Marry me, Lizzie Bennet.

5.

The ceremony was beautiful, not that anyone had expected any less: Jane had organised the entire thing, and it is a widely acknowledged fact that everything that Jane touches practically turns to gold. It was in a stately old house, not dissimilar to Netherfield, with leaded windows and ornamental gardens. An old, beautiful place to begin a new, beautiful life together. It was cheesy, but it was a wedding. Cheesy is practically necessity at a wedding.

Jane had stunned the guests into silence when she appeared, so exquisite had she looked, but more significant was the expression on Jane’s face as she walked down the aisle on the arm of her father – it had been one of complete and incandescent happiness. Bing turned to Darcy, who stood beside him, to grin at him ecstatically, and Darcy clapped his friend on the arm.

Lizzie was carrying the train of Jane’s dress with Lydia and Mary either side of her, and Darcy’s heart skipped a little when he saw her. As maid of honour, she’d been with Jane since the rehearsal dinner the day before, and she was an utter vision in a simple white dress. Her hair looked redder than usual, soft and gently waving around her shoulders with the fringe pulled back from her face with tiny, diamond flowers. Darcy swallowed, unable to look away from her, and she glanced up, catching him staring. She smiled at him gently, and kept her eyes on him the entire rest of the way up the aisle.

After Darcy had handed the groom the ring, he and the bridesmaids took their seats on their respective sides of the aisle: Darcy on the left, beside Gigi, and Lizzie, Lydia and Mary on the right. Gigi’s hand crept down and clasped his own, and he looked down at her, surprised to see that there were already tears streaming down her face. She rested her head on his shoulder, and he petted her hand softly. He snuck a glance across the aisle, and watched Lizzie dab her eyes as
Jane said “I do”, while her mother sobbed into a floral napkin.

He didn’t think he’d ever properly understand happy tears.

After the ceremony was over, the guests spilled out of the large doors at the back of the room, leading out onto a large patio surrounded by intricate balustrade, with steps leading down onto the expansive lawn and gardens. Darcy felt a small hand slip into his, and he looked down at Lizzie affectionately. Her eyes were still moderately watery.

“Hay fever?” He inquired politely.

She shoved his arm. “Shut up. Everyone cries at weddings.”

“If you say so,” and he slipped his hand out of Lizzie’s, instead winding his arm around her waist and pressing a kiss to her hair.

They walked a little further in the late afternoon sunshine, Lizzie smiling at various relatives that they passed, before murmuring to him, “Remarkable ring holding on your part, might I say.”

“Thank you,” he whispered into her ear. “Your train holding was particularly exceptional.”

“And you really do look excellent in that bow tie. You should wear them more often.”

“If you like.”

“I do like.”

Charlotte caught up to them then, holding a box of confetti. “Alright, quit groping each other, we have confetti to throw and a bouquet to catch.”

“Ugh, that goddamn bouquet tradition,” Lizzie sighed, taking a handful of confetti and considering it in her palm. “Why must it still exist? It’s practically medieval.”

“Actually, it is.” Charlotte began. “It originates in 13th Century Europe, where people believed that parts of the wedding dress were good luck charms. The guests would often tear the bride’s dress to shreds, and so they started throwing the bouquet to distract everyone.”

“Thank you for the History lesson, Charlotte.” The three of them began walking down the steps onto the lawn, following the rest of the guests. “Regardless. It’s a royal pain in my ass.”

And, of course, as luck would have it, Lizzie caught Jane’s bouquet.

Now, this wasn’t some sappy romantic comedy movie, and so there was no twist of fate, or destiny, or whatever you want to call it that meant that, as it had once before at the Gibson wedding, the lacy garter sailed directly into Darcy’s palms. No, Ricky Collins had caught it, much to his (still) fiancée’s chagrin.

Darcy was standing with Charlotte, who had her hand over her mouth to muffle the laughter that was threatening to bubble out, as Ricky led Lizzie onto the dance floor that had been set up on the lawn under a wooden gazebo, twined with fairy lights. Already, Collins was animatedly talking to her about something or another. The music was fairly slow, and as they spun so that Collins had his back to Darcy and Charlotte, Lizzie looked desperately at the pair of them, mouthing something that looked like help me. Charlotte shook her head slowly, shrugging, while Darcy winked at her. Lizzie rolled her eyes, her mouth in a firm grimace.

“She’s such a baby,” Charlotte said. “He’s not half as bad as she makes him out to be.”
“That’s Lizzie, I suppose.”

“She’s always been blinded by some prejudgement or another.”

Darcy snorted. “I know.”

“I suppose you do.” Charlotte looked up at him inquisitively. “How’s the cat?”

“The cat?” He looked down at her, and she raised an eyebrow. Oh. “The cat’s great. Really, really great. Fat, as well.” He added, smirking a little.

“How long have you had it now?”

“Almost two years.”

Charlotte grinned. “I love that cat. Make sure you look after it.”

“I will.” Darcy replied sincerely. “Although the cat looks after me for the majority of the time.”

“I’m not surprised.”

“Me neither.”

The song finally ended, and Lizzie came rushing over to them, picking up a glass of champagne on her way.

“And there you have it, ladies and gentleman: Exhibit A why the Bouquet Tradition needs to end ASAP.”

“You’re overreacting,” sighed Charlotte.

“I’m sorry, did you just have to dance with Ricky Collins?”

“It was a three minute song!”

“Three minutes too long, in my opinion.”

“Well, it’s over now, regardless,” Darcy chimed in.

“Thank God.” Lizzie sighed, taking a long sip of champagne.

The three of them spent a few moments in silence: Lizzie spent most of her time watching Jane and Bing dancing in each other’s arms, and trying to ignore her mother, who was sat on a table, absolutely buzzed. Charlotte was watching Lydia concernedly: she was attempting to catch the eye of one of Bing’s cousins by dancing outrageously in his line of sight. And Darcy was watching Lizzie out of the corner of his eye, thinking Marry me, Lizzie Bennet.

“Would you like to dance, Lizzie?” He eventually asked instead, offering her his hand.

Lizzie smiled. “I thought you’d never ask,” she said, taking it, while Charlotte rolled her eyes, muttering something about “lovesick idiots ignoring their best friends”.

Lizzie shot Charlotte an apologetic look, before leading Darcy onto the dance floor. The music had slowed down considerably, and Darcy spun her into the frame of his arms.

“We’re dancing at a wedding. This situation feels familiar,” Lizzie said with a grin as they began to sway.
“Really?” Darcy raised an eyebrow. “You and I must remember that first dance very differently, then.”

“How so?”

“Well,” the corner of Darcy’s mouth lifted slightly. “The last time, I was so crippling nervous about being in your company that I said approximately three words, and spent the entire time internally despising myself.”

“Now that you mention it, I do remember something about that...”

“Mmm.” Darcy pulled her closer, and Lizzie moved a hand from his shoulder to rest on his chest. He pressed his lips just below her ear. “Also, I don’t remember any of this.” He kissed the words into her skin.

Lizzie laughed. “Yeah, that’s definitely new.”

“I do like to think that my dancing finesse has improved somewhat in three years, too.”

“That’s right, keep the dream alive.”

“Oh, and, of course, last time, I didn’t have to share you with Ricky Collins over there.” He inclined his head to where Ricky Collins sat with his stony faced fiancée.

Lizzie snorted, and then groaned. “When we get married, there will be no bouquet tossing. Screw tradition.”

They continued to sway for a moment, and then Darcy’s internal organs seemed to turn to lead. When we get married. We. Married. He felt as though his brain was going to implode.

“William?” Lizzie looked up at him, her brow furrowed. “You ok?”

Darcy cleared his throat. He was torn between the fierce hope that was blooming fast in his chest, and the crushing knowledge that it was probably just a slip of the tongue.

Lizzie put her hands on his face, forcing him to look at her. “Hey.”

Darcy looked her in the eyes, and took a deep breath. “You... you said... when we get married.” He finally choked out.

Lizzie’s face fell, a look of horror in her eyes, her palms frozen on his cheeks. “I... I uh...”

“Do you... do you want to get married?” Darcy said after a moment, dimly aware that they had stopped moving all together.

“I... No! I mean, not if you don’t want to! We don’t even need to think about this now, I mean... I...” Lizzie looked down, taking a deep breath, letting her hands fall from his face and worriedly picking at her nails. “Just... just forget I said anything, ok?” She looked up then, a bitter smile on her face.

Darcy looked at her for a moment, and then cupped her face in his hands. He rubbed his thumbs over her cheekbones, and then pressed his lips to her forehead. He then did the same on her nose, and on one cheek, and then the other cheek. He then pressed his lips to the corner of her mouth, and rested his forehead against hers.

“Marry me, Lizzie Bennet.” He said lowly, his eyes shut and his heart pounding.
Lizzie pulled back from him to look into his eyes. “Are you... are you serious?” Her lips were slowly stretching into a small smile.

Darcy reached over, pushing a stray lock of hair back behind her ear. He quirked the corner of his mouth upward. “Entirely,” he said.

Lizzie let out a short, incredulous laugh, and then threw herself at him, looping hers around his neck. He wrapped his arms tight around her middle, and she pulled back ever so slightly to draw him into a searing kiss, threading her fingers into his hair. Her lips curved upward into a smile, and she broke away after a moment to rest their foreheads together again.

“That was a ‘Yes’,” she said breathlessly. “In case you couldn’t tell.”

Darcy couldn’t suppress his smile. “I do have a habit of misinterpretation.”

Lizzie laughed, her hands caressing the side of his face, and Darcy noticed tears on her cheeks. Lizzie saw him looking and said, “Happy tears, don’t worry.”

Darcy frowned, and kissed them away gently, and then Lizzie recaptured his lips, salty with tears, with her own. This kiss was much slower than the first, much less desperate, but building. It started off as a press of lips, and then Lizzie sucked his lower lip between hers, and Darcy groaned, pulling her tighter against him and knotting his fists in the fabric of her skirt. Her fingers mapped his face as the kiss grew deeper, and she nipped his lips with her teeth until-

“GET A ROOM!” Lydia yelled from across the dance floor, and they broke apart, Darcy laughing softly and Lizzie turning to scowl at her sister, who winked at her.

“Lydia’s right, Lizzie,” Darcy murmured into her ear. He ran a hand down her arm, linking her fingers with his own. “Come on.” And he walked her off of the dance floor and down a winding path leading them into the rose gardens, lit by the orange glow of the setting July sun. And they stayed there until the sound of cicadas chirruping in the undergrowth had subsided into a deep silence, and the soft summer breeze caused the roses bleached colourless under the soft moonlight to sway gently on their stalks.
So I didn't think I could write anything fluffier than And So It Goes, but then this epilogue happened.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Darcy had woken up, alone, in his unnervingly empty bed, to the combined sounds of his phone trilling indignantly on his bedside cabinet and raindrops beating a tattoo against the windows. The fluorescent numbers on the little digital clock read that it was 1.39 a.m, and he rubbed the heel of his hand over his eyes, pressing into each socket until he saw stars. He reached for his phone with the other hand, not even checking the caller I.D. before bringing it to his ear.

“William Darcy.” He answered, his voice gravelly with sleep.

“I am freaking out.” The voice on the other end of the line was instantly familiar.

“Relax, Lizzie.”

“We should have eloped.”

“It’s a little late for that now, don’t you think?”

“People in Las Vegas do not care about the weather.”

Darcy smiled in spite of himself. “So this is about the weather, then?”

“Of course it's about the weather.”

“You’re absolutely positive?”

“...Ok, fine, it isn’t about the weather.”

Dimly, he heard a distinctly Lydia sounding voice yelling from Lizzie’s end. “Oh my god, Lizzie, GO TO SLEEP.”

“This is my wedding day, Lydia, and, so help me, I will do what I want.”

“You have woken me up three times in the last hour and I am not opposed to killing the bride.”

Jane’s voice joined the throng then. “Lydia! That’s not nice!”

“Do you know what else isn’t nice? DARK CIRCLES UNDER MY EYES.”

“Would you guys please just shut up?” said Charlotte’s voice warily.

“Seconded,” chimed in Gigi.

“Oh, for the love of-” Lizzie huffed, and there came the sound of rustling, and then a door slamming, the sounds of bickering voices cutting off suddenly.
“The slumber party isn’t going quite so well then?” Darcy said softly.

Lizzie sighed. “Not especially. I can’t sleep.”

“And why is that?”

“Not sure. It might have something to do with the fact that we’re getting married in twelve hours, but I’m working on it.”

“Lizzie.” Her name rolled off his tongue like a caress. “It’s going to be fine.”

“I know.” Lizzie was quiet for a moment. “I know it will. I just can’t help but worry, you know?”

“Of course.”

“Like, what if I trip on the dress and it rips? Or if I forget to say ‘I do’? Or if I fall asleep standing up because I’m so goddamn tired? Or if you realise, just after you’ve said your vows, what a horrible mistake you’ve made and how completely undeserving I am of your affection, and we’re forced to either get divorced immediately, leaving us both lonely and my mother distraught, or we must live out a lie for the rest of our days?”

Darcy choked on air, sitting up suddenly in bed. “What was that last one?”

“Oh, shh, I’m just teasing you.”

“That’s not funny.”

“Neither is the fact that I’ve been awake for 20 hours.”

Darcy hummed softly, swinging his legs out of bed and settling his feet into the worn slippers that Gigi had bought him for Christmas when he was seventeen. She’d been so proud of them that he hadn’t had the heart to throw them away.

There was a soft, rhythmic banging from the other end of the line, and Darcy frowned as he stood up, stretching out his back. “Lizzie? What are you doing?”

“I’m banging my head against the window to try and knock myself out.”

“Please stop. I’d quite like my bride to have her skull intact tomorrow.”

“But your bride is going to look like a corpse anyway, so I doubt it’ll make a difference.” But the banging ceased mercifully. Lizzie sighed. “I just wish you were here. You make sleeping so much easier.”

Darcy smiled. “I wish I was there too. The bed is far too empty.”

“Mmm. I’ll bet it is. Poor William, all alone in his big, empty condo. Maybe you can hug the cat.”

Darcy could hear the smile in her voice.

“You’re mean when you’re tired.”

“I know.”

Darcy heard a door open and close on Lizzie’s end, and then he heard the soft tones of Jane’s voice carrying down the line.

“I’ve made you some tea, Lizzie.”
“Of course you have.”

“It’ll help you sleep.”

“Why? Did you add some sort of magic sleeping potion to it?”

“...”

“Jane?”

“Look, just drink the tea, ok, I promise it’ll help.”

Lizzie laughed. “Ok, whatever you say.”

The door opened and closed again, and Lizzie chuckled softly. “Looks like I’ve got a spiked cup of tea to drink.”

“You better get to it, Lizzie Bennet.”

“Anxious to get rid of me, are you?”

“You know I’d talk to you all night, but I’m pretty sure sleeping is something you want to do.”

“Mmm, very true.” She sighed. “I guess I’ll see you tomorrow, then?”

“I guess you will.”

“Awesome.” She paused. “I love you, William.”

“Glad to hear it.” He didn’t think he’d ever tire of hearing her say that. “I love you, too.”

After he’d hung up the phone, he walked over to the window, pushing back the heavy curtain and watching the raindrops slowly slide down the cold glass. He thought to himself, I’m marrying Lizzie Bennet, and the excited bounding of his heart didn’t settle for almost an entire hour.

They’d chosen a day in early April – there was something about April that had the air of new beginnings. Neither of them could put their finger on why, but it was a convenient month to start their life together in, regardless.

“Ugh, I hate that phrase,” Lizzie had sighed when they were discussing it, her head in Darcy’s lap on the couch. “As if the last two years in which we have been quite literally living together count for nothing.”

“I’m fairly positive your mother will disagree with you on that front.” Darcy said softly, continuing to run his fingers through her hair rhythmically. It was loose, fanned out around her head like an auburn halo.

Lizzie scoffed. “My mother has been disagreeing with me since I left the womb. Why stop now?”

Darcy disagreed with Lizzie too: while living with her had been the best two years of his life, it
wasn’t enough. He wanted nothing more than to know, for sure, that he was Lizzie’s and Lizzie was his, and that they were not just together, but together – a unit, a single driving force. Lizzie-and-Darcy. Darcy-and-Lizzie. And he wanted a ring on each of their left hands and a signed certificate to prove it. But he knew better than to side with Mrs Bennet against her – his experience as a Three Year Scholar of the Many Moods of Lizzie Bennet had taught him otherwise. Instead, he had hummed in assent, continuing his steady combing of her silken strands of hair.

“So. April, then?”

“April.”

The day of the wedding dawned mercifully brightly, the ground sparkling from the night’s rain beneath the soft, spring sunshine. A host of fluffy clouds were littered across the watery blue of the morning sky, and a gentle breeze sighed every so often, breathing cool air through the branches of the trees and down the back of Darcy’s neck as he leant out of the window. There were less than four hours until the ceremony now, and his stomach was flipping every ten seconds. He couldn’t remember the last time he’d been this excited. Or nervous.

It was a feeling similar to one he’d had on Christmas Eve as a small child, before his parents had died. There was that knowledge that, very soon, he’d get everything he ever wanted. Of course, the major difference was that rather than a stack of gaudily wrapped gifts and a roasted goose, he was going to marry the woman of his dreams. Lizzie-and-Darcy. Darcy-and-Lizzie. It was infinitely better. And infinitely more terrifying

There was a loud knock on his door, and then Bing poked his head around the corner, looking slightly more rumpled than usual.

“You up, Darcy?”

Darcy shrugged away from the window. “It would seem so.”

“Great. We need to be at the place by nine, so we’d better get cracking.” He flashed Darcy a smile, noting how his fingers knotted together. “Nervous?”

“You’re hardly one to talk.” Darcy raised an eyebrow. “I seem to remember you nearly throwing up when you were in my position last year.”

Bing’s smile widened. “It’s all a part of the experience.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

Bing chuckled once, and then clapped his hands together. “Right. Here we go.”

Here we go, indeed, Darcy thought to himself. I’m marrying Lizzie Bennet. Here we go.
There was less than an hour until the ceremony, and William Darcy was hiding.

He’d crept past Bing and headed down a corridor off the expansive entrance hall, trying every door until one finally opened. The room he’d chosen was, Darcy assumed, a living area, and there was a mahogany writing desk in the corner, as well as a couch and two armchairs huddled around a fireplace. There was a blanket draped over the couch, and it reminded Darcy of the one that he’d taken when he and Lizzie had driven up into the headlands one evening just after she’d moved in with him. The driver had parked the car and they’d walked a little way, and spread the blanket onto the grass. Lizzie had stretched out on top of it, leaning on her elbows, and she’d sighed contentedly at the view. Darcy remembered how the blood orange light of the sunset was just breaking through the mist on the water that almost entirely enveloped the Golden Gate Bridge, the peaks of the mountains in the distance dark silhouettes.

“Isn’t it beautiful, William?” She’d whispered, the corners of her lips curled up into a small smile.

He’d agreed, but found himself quite distracted by the way the golden light played in her hair, turning it to what looked liquid amber, shimmering like the most precious of treasures. He’d kissed her bare shoulder and, into her skin, murmured, “You, however, are far superior to any view I’ve ever seen.”

Lizzie had snorted. “Yeah, well, you’re biased.”

“But it’s true.”

“Oh, it’s true is it?”

“Absolutely.”

Lizzie had looked at him then; a searching, slightly amused look, one eyebrow quirked. “You are the sappiest man I’ve ever had the pleasure to meet.”

“Yes, well.” Darcy had winked at her. “You’re biased.” She’d kissed him then, and her lips had tasted like strawberry wine and sugary grapefruit and sunsets.

“William?”

Darcy spun around, snapping out of his reverie, finding himself face to face with a concerned-looking Gigi.

“What are you doing in here? Bing’s been going mad looking for you!”

Darcy ran a hand through his hair. “I just needed a moment.”

Gigi quirked an eyebrow. “You’re not having second thoughts, are you? Because, I swear to God, William, I will throttle you if you are.”

“No!” Darcy’s eyebrows shot up in surprise. “No, of course not!”

“Well, what are you doing in here then?”

“I just... needed a minute.”

Gigi pursed her lips and cocked her head to the side. “You ok?”

“Yes, I think so. There’s just a lot of people. You know how weird I can get.” Darcy flashed a
“Yes, I think so. There’s just a lot of people. You know how weird I can get.” Darcy flashed a smile at her. “You look beautiful.” And she did, the soft cream fabric of her bridesmaid dress falling elegantly over her delicate frame. There was a pink rose in her hair and light makeup on her face, and pride welled up in Darcy’s chest.

Gigi’s face softened, and she walked towards him, brushing lint off of his shoulders and straightening his tie.

“It’s going to be fine, you know,” she said as she smoothed down his jacket.

“I know.”

“Everyone out there wants the best for you. Even Caroline, believe it or not.”

Darcy chuckled, and looked up at the ceiling. “I suppose so.”

“And if you muck up your vows, who cares?” Gigi grinned up at him. “I know Lizzie won’t.”

He grinned back at her. “No, I’d wager that she wouldn’t.”

“I’ve never seen two people better suited for one another than you two.” Gigi continued after a moment. “And you know how much I love her.”

“Of course.”

Gigi paused, staring at the rose in his lapel. “Mom and dad would have adored her too, William.”

Darcy looked down at her, and brushed a strand of her hair behind her ear. “I know they would have.”

They stood that way for a moment, her focused on the flower, him with his hand cupped around her ear, until Gigi sighed and patted his chest, moving away.

“I’d better get back to Lizzie.”

“Of course.” Darcy let go of her, clearing his throat as he brushed down his jacket. He paused, and looked up at his sister. “How is sh-”

“She’s fine.” Gigi was smiling knowingly at him. “She’s very relaxed, especially considering that Lydia’s practically bouncing off the walls with excitement.”

Darcy smirked and shook his head slowly.

“Just you wait ‘til you see her, William.” Gigi added as she headed towards the door, and she grinned at him over her shoulder. “You’ll be speechless.”

“Please.” Darcy held up a hand. “No spoilers.”

“Alright, alright. I just wanted to build the anticipation.” Gigi swung upon the door. “Now, stop moping and go and find Bing.”

“Yes, ma’am,” he said, while his stomach somersaulted as he thought to himself, *I’m marrying Lizzie Bennet.*
Darcy didn’t forget his vows. In fact, looking back on the ceremony itself, Darcy scarcely remembered even saying them. He did remember, however, how his heart had started beating in double, or maybe even triple, time the minute Lizzie had started walking up the aisle. He remembered thinking that she was radiant, utterly transcendent, and then thinking that he was the luckiest person on the planet. He remembered how, when he’d carefully pushed the veil back from her face, she’d winked at him and he’d wanted to scoop her into his arms right then and there, and he remembered listening to her saying “I do” and wondering what he’d been so nervous about in the first place. He remembered the wetness that had appeared on Lizzie’s cheeks and her lips forming the words “happy tears.” And he remembered, more than anything, the look in her eyes when she’d slid the ring onto his finger, and thinking to himself, Finally.

He’d twined the fingers of her left hand into his right at the end of the ceremony and didn’t let go for the rest of the day. The steady warmth of her small hand felt like a tether to the earth, something stopping him from floating off in a cloud of ecstasy, and as she’d thanked their guests and shaken their hands and agreed that yes, her dress was stunning, he’d stroked the gold band on her finger over and over, as if to remind himself that this was real: he’d married Lizzie Bennet.

And after he’d spun her onto the dance floor upon which they’d done far more kissing that dancing; after they’d cut the monster of a cake and Lydia had caught the bouquet and Mrs Bennet had almost collapsed with happiness; and after Mr Bennet had clapped Darcy on the shoulder and told him that, come Christmas time, he was more than welcome to help with the train set, Darcy was helping Lizzie into the limo which had been packed for their honeymoon the night before. Confetti was showering down upon them like paper snow, building little drifts on the pavement. The last image Darcy saw before the driver shut the door was of Jane, leaning back on Bing, with her hand pressed over her mouth and tears in her eyes, while Gigi and Lydia, having poured the majority of their confetti on the couple before they’d even got out of the building, were waving their empty boxes in the air. It was one of immense happiness, and he couldn’t have wiped the smile off his face even if he’d tried.

Once Darcy and Lizzie had waved off the crowd, despite the fact that they both knew the windows were tinted and that nobody could see in, they’d sat back on the low, leather seats, and Darcy had pulled Lizzie into the frame of his arms. Lizzie had toed off her shoes and curled her legs up beneath her, pressing her face into Darcy’s chest. He nosed her curls gently, and whispered into her ear, “I feel like I’m dreaming.”

“Mmm. Me too,” she replied. “Maybe they put something in the cake…”

Darcy sighed. “One day, we will have a conversation that will not involve you teasing me.”

“Indeed. However, today is not that day.”

Darcy wrapped his arms tighter around her body. “Not to worry. It’s all a part of your charm.”

Lizzie craned her neck up so that she could grin at him. “Look at you, loving me in spite of all my imperfections. You’re a top notch husband already.”

“Just doing my job.”

“Now who’s teasing?”

“You’ve had a bad influence on me.”

“So sue me.”

“Maybe I will. Really successful business men sue people. A lot. Or so I’m told.”
Lizzie was laughing now. “I love it when you quote me.”

Darcy brushed his nose against hers. “I love you.”

Lizzie cupped his jaw in her hand and whispered, “I love you too, you great, mushball of a man.”

And then she stretched up and captured his lips with her own. It was a slow sort of kiss, gentle and heartfelt, filled with promises both spoken and unspoken. Lizzie’s fingers curled where they were cradling Darcy’s face, tracing patterns into his skin, and Darcy’s hands travelled up Lizzie’s arms, turning her soft skin to gooseflesh. He then softly brushed across her collarbone as he lightly nipped at her lower lip, issuing a soft sigh from her. When the kiss ended, they scarcely moved, their lips lingering inches from each other and their foreheads pressed together.

“I don’t think it’s the cake that’s made me feel like this.” Darcy said after a moment.

“No.” Lizzie was slightly breathless, and there was a smile in her voice. “No, I daresay it isn’t.”

And then Darcy thought the words radiant and ardently and grapefruit, and then he thought I married Lizzie Bennet. And it was quite the best thought he’d ever had.

Chapter End Notes

I’m 900% not over LBD. I don’t know if you can tell.

Thank you so much for reading all of that, you lovely little human. Once again, this is entirely unbeta-ed, so if you have any feedback, or spelling mistakes, or general concrit, or you want to ask me how long to leave a cup of tea to brew, just put it in the comments. Comments are like food to me. Really good food.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!