

The Wedding Night

In Fanny's room at the Great House Jane and Fanny were talking about the upcoming nuptials of Annabelle Rodgers.

Jane was taken aback when her niece suddenly asked, "Why did you not write about Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy's wedding night, Aunt?"

"One writes what one knows, Fanny and I know nothing of such things."

"Could you not have imagined it?"

"I suppose I could have. Why do you ask?"

"I often wonder about my wedding night. I imagine my groom to be kind and gentle. Do you think it will be like that?"

Jane smiled at her niece, "I am afraid it will depend entirely on your groom."

Later that evening, Jane sat on the wide window sill in her bedroom gazing into the eternity that was the nighttime sky, the new moon barely a sliver. Fanny's question had perched itself squarely in the forefront of her mind. "Could you not have imagined it?"

She chuckled. She had imagined it; however the imagining had been of herself and Fitzwilliam Darcy of Virginia rather than Lizzy and Darcy of Pride and Prejudice. Any number of times in the past three years she had dreamt of him; his arms around her and the sweet taste of his kisses. His kisses were the only ones she would ever know.

She closed her eyes and leaned her head against the glass. She had sensed in the American an underlying passion that she experienced when he touched her, which he did as often as he could, whenever they were alone. He held her hand, he would encircle her waist with his arm and as often as he dared he would hold her in an embrace from which she did not want to be released. He kissed her hand, he kissed her neck; she giggled, he even kissed her nose and nibbled her ear. She shivered at the memories.

Jane had read once that copper salts burned green and it seemed to her the perfect representation of Mr. Darcy's passion. The soft warm color of copper but it burned a cool green. Still hot to the touch, a green fire is precisely how she would describe him. His caress was so tender it was as though an angel had brushed a wing across her skin but the embrace and kiss that followed was slow, gentle and deep; the passion just below the surface, controlled because he was a gentleman. But she could feel him when he held back, when he stopped himself from, what she wasn't sure. He said they had no future together and he did not want to leave her heart broken. It was very thoughtful of him to be so concerned about her welfare but he must have known that he was her only chance to have such an experience. Alas he was gone before she even saw him again. So forever more it was her imagining. She had tried to instill that quiet passion in the Darcy of *Pride and Prejudice*. If she had written the Darcy's wedding night how would she have proceeded?

Elizabeth's admiration and respect grew with every moment Mr. Darcy endured the vulgarity of Aunt Phillips and the fawning, unctuous attention of Mr. Collins. She was grateful, too that her mother's awe of her new son-in-law was keeping her quiet. Sir William couldn't say enough complimentary things about Mr. Darcy and while Elizabeth enjoyed hearing so much praise she excused herself and made her way to her husband's side in an attempt to shield him from further insult. He smiled his appreciation as her aunt and cousin now turned their attentions to Jane and Mr. Bingley.

Darcy brought Elizabeth's hand to his lips and whispered, "Shall we go home?"

Home. She looked around her mother's sitting room; this was no longer her home. Her home was with him now. She looked up at him and smiled, the excitement of the notion tightening her stomach.

She went first to Jane and then to her father. His sad smile hid the despair he felt at losing his second and favorite daughter. His consolation was her happiness. And she was very happy; he had never seen his Lizzy glow with such joy. While she bid farewell to her father, Darcy went to the Gardiners, thanking them once again for taking Elizabeth into Derbyshire the summer before and in appreciation extended an unlimited invitation for them to visit Pemberley. He then slipped quietly into the foyer and waited for his wife. He did not wait long, Elizabeth and her father came through the sitting room door, arm-in-arm as Mrs. Hill handed Mr. Darcy's hat and coat to his valet. Her father helped Elizabeth with her coat and then kissed her cheek.

Mr. Darcy saw the tears welling up in Mr. Bennet's eyes. "I love and respect her, Sir. I will take care of her." Mr. Bennet nodded and walked to the door with the couple but Darcy stopped, "Should we not bid farewell to Mrs. Bennet?"

Mr. Bennet spoke before Elizabeth had the opportunity. "Not if your desire is to leave today." He gave Elizabeth a knowing smile, "Off with you."

The carriage bumped down the drive and on to the main road. Mr. Darcy had taken her hand the moment he sat next to her. She found herself comfortable and nervous at the same time. During the time of their engagement she had grown so comfortable that she had no trouble teasing him but now as his wife she felt herself keeping the playfulness he enjoyed (even though he sometimes acted cross) in check. Mr. Darcy had no such qualms and was greatly pleased that they were finally alone. He turned toward her and caressed her cheek with his hand, gently lifting her chin to meet his kiss; a lingering kiss that made the back of her neck tingle. With as much pleasure she kissed him back. Their lips parted and he held her face in his hands, gently kissing both eyes and her nose. She giggled, a bit of silliness mixed with a bit of nervousness.

"You find this amusing?" He feigned distress.

She gave him a sweet smile, "I'm sorry. No one has ever kissed my nose."

He raised an eyebrow, "I am grateful to hear it but be assured it will happen with some frequency now." He kissed her nose again, then slipping an arm around her waist, bringing her even closer to him, he kissed her again; a long, ardent kiss. Elizabeth untied her bonnet and tossed it across the carriage on to the other seat, laid her head on his shoulder and closed her eyes. She took a deep breath. His coat smelled of lavender; his laundress must rinse his clothes in lavender water she thought, how nice. He breathed in her essence and wrapped his other arm around her in an embrace he had no desire to release.

His mind was still reeling from his good fortune; Elizabeth was his wife and she was as happy as he. Unable to control the desire to touch her, he ran his hand from her waist to her thigh, bringing it back to rest at her waist. A small whimper escaped from her and she looked up at him. Taking him by surprise she reached up, encircling his neck with her arms and kissed him with an abandon that left him breathless. He smiled, his bride was not shy or retiring, nor did he sense any fear. Tears of joy filled his eyes and he smiled at the world; she was his, body and soul... and he was hers. What had he done in his life that had made it possible for him to experience so much bliss?

The carriage stopped at the inn so the horses could be watered and rested. Elizabeth sat up and reached for her bonnet.

"We do not have to alight if you would prefer staying here," he offered.

"How long will it be?"

"An hour, perhaps less. Would you like to get some refreshment?"

Teasingly she reached up and gave him a quick kiss. "That's all the refreshment I need."

He gathered her to him crushing her bonnet between them. He kissed her thoroughly, this time leaving her breathless. "I required a bit more refreshment than did you."

They talked while waiting for the horses. She was animated as she told the story of a cousin on a shared trip to Bath. He loved to watch her and the sound of her voice was, to him, like an angel song. He could listen to it forever. He took delight in everything about her.

Once the horses were rested they continued their journey and in a short time had reached their destination; his London house. He wanted their first night together to be at home, not in some roadside inn or guest room at the house of a friend. No, he wanted it to be their home. In truth he wanted to take her to Pemberley but it was almost two hundred miles away and would take several days of travel. London however was only 24 miles from Longbourn which required only a few hours. He handed her down from the carriage, her bonnet in her hand. The housekeeper and butler were waiting. It was customary for the entire staff to greet the master and his new wife but Mr. Darcy specifically requested they not. He wanted Elizabeth to feel comfortable and not overwhelmed by people she did not yet know.

The housekeeper curtsied and the butler bowed, "Master Darcy. Mrs. Darcy."

A radiant smile brightened Elizabeth's beautiful face when she heard it. She looked up at him still beaming from the compliment. She was Mrs. Darcy, her delight knew no bounds.

The butler stepped out, "I will see to the trunks, sir."

"Fine, Willoughby. Thank you."

Darcy took Lizzy's hand and led her into the house, the housekeeper and butler following behind. They stood in the entry and Elizabeth looked around. There was a small tightening of her stomach. She had never seen this house but Jane had. Her sister had come here to pay a call on Bingley's sisters and was treated very ill by them. Mr. Darcy had stood on the second floor landing and watched it all happen. Knowing that Bingley would have wanted to see Jane had he known she was in town, Darcy had purposely not relayed the information. After Lizzy's reproof of his actions he apologized, several times, for his officious interference; to Mr. Bingley and herself. Still, knowing this was the place of her sister's humiliation and hurt took some of the joy

out of the fact that this house was now her home. The joy she saw on his face when he looked at her drove all other thoughts away.

As Mrs. Thatcher helped the bridal couple with their coats and hats Darcy offered to show the house to his new bride.

“I can do that Mr. Darcy,” insisted his housekeeper.

“Thank you Mrs. Thatcher, but I want to show my wife her new home.” He couldn’t tell the woman that he did not want to leave his wife even for a short time. This was their day and they would spend it together with no interruptions. Taking her hand he made his way through the entire first floor.

The house was beautiful and very old; Elizabeth wondered just how long it had been in the family. The furnishings were even more impressive than the house for they were modern; obviously not left over from his mother which meant he must have done it himself. There was no pretension, no extravagance, not overdone as were many wealthy homes she visited. Through these thoughts she heard him say that she could redecorate anyway she liked.

“I very much like it the way it is.”

“Truly?”

“It is in extremely good taste.” Playfully adding, “If virtue and taste had a correlation you would be a saint.” He smiled at her little joke that was also a supreme compliment.

They were in the east sitting room when Mrs. Thatcher announced that dinner was served. The small talk at dinner was mostly about the rooms in the house she had yet to see and a discussion as to how much time they would spend here.

“As you must know, I am a country girl at heart. I have always found the city to be dirty, crowded and generally unpleasant. I only enjoy coming here to visit with my Aunt and Uncle Gardiner.”

“So you would prefer Pemberley be our home.”

“I can imagine no better. But I know you prefer the city.”

His delighted smile lit up his whole face. They had never discussed where they would live but he was exceedingly happy that she felt as he did. The city was a necessary evil as far as he was concerned and he was unsure why she thought he liked it and said as much.

“You told my mother that the country was confined and unvarying.”

“Ah. You have a selective memory. My comment was to you as regarded your proclamation that you are a studier of character and particularly intricate characters. Hence my comment that a country setting could not allow the variety that the city would.”

“It is to my disadvantage that you have such a good memory, Mr. Darcy.”

And so it was decided with a playful squabble that Pemberley would be their home.

He walked around to her side of the table and offered his hand. She stood. He lifted her chin and kissed her. “Come, I will show you the rest of your house.”

“My house?”

“Yes, Mrs. Darcy. What is mine is yours.”

Leaving off the servant’s quarters and kitchen Mr. Darcy took Elizabeth to the only rooms on the second floor that his bride had yet to see.

“This is your dressing room,” he said as they walked through the door. “I asked Mrs. Thatcher to make it more suitable for a woman than it was. As I said before you can make it to your liking.”

“It certainly looks functional and that is really all I require. In time I may want to do something with it but at present it suits me.” On tip toe she kissed him. “Thank you.” He loved that she wanted to kiss him and did, that she acted on her desires without concern to propriety.

The next door, or rather two doors as the room had large double doors was their bed chamber and once again he said she could change anything in it. She looked around a bit more closely than she had to any of the other rooms. It too was decorated with exceptionally good

taste. Sitting in front of a window that overlooked Belgrave Square was a small table with chairs on either side. At the fireplace were two small but elegantly upholstered chairs, a sofa as well as another table. The bed was nothing like she expected, not that she had given it much thought but she assumed a bachelor would have had a large, heavy extravagantly carved bed. But like the rest of the house this was an understated, stylish piece with turned posts that rose a few feet above the bed. There was no canopy or heavy draperies and the lovely damask bed cover appeared to be made of silk.

“Does our room meet with your satisfaction, Mrs. Darcy?”

“It is lovely. You do have exceptional taste.”

“Of course I do; I married you, did I not?” He took her in his arms and they kissed. He followed the contours of her body with his hands and drew her to him. She leaned into him and wrapped her arms around his neck. Their lips parted and she laid her head on his chest. He leaned his chin on the top of her head and thanked God for his happiness at this moment.

“Would you like me to ring for tea?”

Without raising her head she nodded, “Yes, that would be very nice.”

“I have chocolate every evening before retiring. Would you like chocolate rather than tea?”

“I have only had chocolate once and found it quite bitter.”

The knock came on the door and Darcy bade the maid to enter.

“Please have cook fix a tray of chocolate for both of us and tea as well.” The maid curtsied and left.

“Chocolate and tea, Mr. Darcy; is that not extravagant?”

“A bit, I suppose. I want you to have tea should you not like the chocolate.” He paused, “Shall we ready ourselves for bed while we wait?”

A pretty pink blush rose in her cheeks. “As you wish.”

“You do not wish?”

“Yes.”

“Yes, you do not?”

She gave him a quick kiss, took a step back and curtsied. Giving him a radiant smile she said, “I will return post haste.”

She turned and slipped into her dressing room, pulling the bell to summon her maid. She sat down on the upholstered stool at the dressing table and began to take down her hair.

Mary came in, “Miss Elizabeth,” she said as she curtsied. Her face went bright red, “I’m so sorry. Mrs. Darcy.”

She smiled at the young woman, “Fear not. I am not yet accustomed to it either. Miss Elizabeth is fine when we are alone.” She turned her back to the maid, “Will you help me out of this please.” With Mary’s help Elizabeth slipped on a pale pink handkerchief linen nightgown, embroidered on the yoke and at the hem. She sat once again at the dressing table as Mary brushed her hair tying it at the back of her neck with a single pink ribbon. Mary smiled at her reflection in the mirror, stepped back and curtsied. Elizabeth took a deep breath and went into the bedchamber.

Her gown brushed the tops of her bare feet as she glided toward him. He was taken with her beauty. He had many times dreamt of how she would look at this moment but the reality was far superior to any dream. Back lit by the fire in the fireplace the outline and contours of her body were clearly defined, her figure perfect under the gossamer fabric of her gown.

She had never seen a man in such a relaxed state of dress (except her father in his dressing gown). His shirt was unbuttoned and no longer tucked into his britches, Elizabeth thought him the most handsome man she had ever seen. Within only a few inches of each other they were startled by a knock at the door.

“Enter.”

“Where would you like it Mr. Darcy?” the maid asked.

“At the fireplace, please.”

“Yes, sir.”

Slightly embarrassed Elizabeth stood behind him as the maid deposited the tray on the table near the fireplace, curtsied and left. Darcy turned to her as the latch on the door caught.

“I am anxious to know if you like the chocolate. Come,” he said taking her hand.

Elizabeth sipped the hot chocolate and looked at him over the edge of the cup, her eyes seductive through the veil of her eyelashes, she smiled. This chocolate was sweet and creamy and it occurred to her that it would make very good ice cream and said as much. He was pleased that he had introduced her to something she enjoyed so much and blushed slightly at the thought that he hoped it would not be the only thing she enjoyed tonight.

The talk was small and for the most part comfortable although as time passed Elizabeth became a bit nervous, she felt no fear but the excitement of what was to come made her stomach nervous.

Darcy too was a bit anxious, unsure what her reactions might be. He watched as she stirred the froth on the chocolate then gently drew her cocoa covered finger through her teeth and across her tongue. Her innocent act spread heat through his body; a heat he hoped to ignite in his wife. In spite of the passion and desire that made him want to take her without preamble, his first concern was her comfort; he did not want to frighten her. He had heard men discuss their wedding nights and even as a young man wondered why the men seemed to have no concern for the feelings of their brides. He resolved then that he would not be so presumptuous.

She rose and Darcy grabbed her hand as she set her empty cup on the table between them and pulled her on to his lap. Startled, her stomach jumped, but his deep and passionate kiss turned the start to an intense tingle. He held her tightly around the waist, her arms around his

neck. Their lips parted and a small smile curved his lips, he released his embrace but she was wont to move, she loved being so close to him.

Gently he forced her to her feet. He saw the question in her eyes when she looked up at him but he said nothing. He stood up and removed the ribbon from her hair, allowing it to float to the floor. His gaze never leaving her face, he slowly began to unbutton the tiny pearls that closed the neck of her nightgown. Elizabeth sighed deeply and using every bit of courage she reached for the buttons on his britches. He sucked in a breath and stood straighter. She immediately withdrew her hand, embarrassed. They both blushed red. Elizabeth's head dropped as she stared at the floor.

She had startled him, in all the wedding night stories he had heard, a bride had never done such a thing. He quickly gathered himself, with a finger under her chin he gently lifted her face to him and saw a tear escape her eye. With his thumb he brushed it from her cheek, then cupping her face in his hands he kissed each of her eyes, her nose and kissed her mouth so thoroughly that all mortification fled and when their lips parted she leaned against him. He took her hand in his and together they unbuttoned his britches.

Elizabeth looked up into his eyes and he saw the same longing that he felt, gently he pushed the fine linen gown from her shoulders and they watched as it fluttered to the floor at their feet. He pushed his britches and drawers down to meet her gown and she helped him shrug off his shirt. In a single smooth motion he lifted her into his arms and carried her to the bed.

She was extraordinarily beautiful laying there, her dark hair against the white linen, her body limned by the firelight, she was breathtaking and he was thrilled that she made no effort to cover herself or turn away from him. He lay down next to her and rolled on to his side, propping himself on his elbow. The heat he felt came not from the fire but his desire and he wanted nothing more than to ignite that same desire in his dearest, loveliest Elizabeth. The spark he saw in her eyes as she smiled up at him was the promise he longed for.

With a feather soft touch he caressed her face. She sighed as his hand slowly moved down the length of her body coming to rest on her abdomen. He leaned down and kissed her, a small whimper escaped her throat as his hand cupped her breast. She wrapped her arms around his neck, extending the kiss. He slipped his arms around her and rolled onto his back, his beloved laying lightly on top of him. She sighed deeply as his hands began a slow, deliberate exploration of her lithe body. The slow burn that had been held in check by both of them ignited into a bonfire. And so it was, their life together had begun.

After taking a very deep breath Jane chuckled. Could she not have imagined the Darcy's wedding night? Oh, yes she had imagined it, many times. It was easy to imagine, she simply remembered the American's gentle touch and kisses.

She had no regrets; the twenty first century was no place for her. No, her place was here with kith and kin. Except for some of the societal changes, there was little in the future that beckoned her sensibilities. Mr. Darcy, of course and for that she would always harbor a bit of envy of Miss Knight for she had the opportunity to experience the Virginian... maybe even have her own wedding night with Mr. Darcy.

Turning away from the window Jane sighed. And so it was.