



PERFECTLIZZY®
MEETS HER
MATCH

JACK CALDWELL

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Blurb: Mr. Darcy talks to PerfectLizzy®. Read at you own risk.

A P&P short story.

A CLEARING IN THE WOODS IN SUMMER. TREES ARCH OVER THE SPACE LIKE A CATHEDRAL. A STONE BENCH OVERLOOKS A SMALL, PICTURESQUE VALLEY.

ELIZABETH “LIZZY” BENNET SITS IMPATIENTLY ON THE BENCH. SHE WEARS A YELLOW DRESS AND A WHITE BONNET. SHE REMOVES A SMALL WATCH FROM HER RETICULE.

LIZZY

He is late! My goodness, Mr. Darcy is NEVER late!
I hope no misfortune has occurred,
even though misfortune seems to follow him about.

There is the noise of steps along a leaf-strewn path.

LIZZY

Mr. Darcy, is that you?

FITZWILLIAM DARCY ENTERS. HE IS WEARING A GREEN COAT OVER A WHITE SHIRT AND CRAVAT, AND BUFF TROUSERS TUCKED INTO GLEAMING BLACK BOOTS.

DARCY

(tipping his hat)

Good afternoon, Miss Bennet.

LIZZY

Mr. Darcy, we are an engaged couple. You may call me Lizzy.

DARCY

Are we?

LIZZY

Are we what? Mr. Darcy, I do not know what you mean.

DARCY

Forgive me. I meant to ask, are we an engaged couple?

LIZZY

Why, certainly—

DARCY

(interrupting)

Did you not call it off—again?

LIZZY

Oh, that! A mere formality. Mr. Darcy, you must follow my example
and remember the past as it gives you pleasure.

DARCY

A rather unique ability, madam. I confess I do not possess it.

LIZZY

Mr. Darcy, you should not argue with me if we are
to have the happiest of marriages.

DARCY

A happy marriage is my greatest desire.

LIZZY

It is well we are of like minds about that.

DARCY

We are not of like minds when it comes to remembrance of the past.
Thoughts and memories intrude that ought not—cannot, must not—be forgotten.

LIZZY

Then you must remember that we cannot have the
happiest of marriages until you propose to me.

DARCY

Again.

LIZZY

Mr. Darcy, you are starting to become tiresome!
I would suggest making a lovely proposal very soon,
or I shall be vexed and refuse you until you apologize.

DARCY

What proposal would it be? The sixth? Seventh?

LIZZY

Mr. Darcy, I am waiting.

DARCY

I spoke of memories that intrude.
Those previous proposals, for example.

LIZZY

Your first one—the one at Hunsford—was perfectly dreadful.

DARCY

Yes, you turned me down because of Mr. Wickham's tales.

LIZZY

I must say your memory is rather faulty, Mr. Darcy!
As I recall, you also insulted my family and were instrumental
in separating my dear sister Jane from Mr. Bingley.

DARCY

Yes. By the way, I saw the Bingleys recently.
Jane sends you her love.

LIZZY

Ah, Jane!

So happy with her Bingley!

DARCY

As I recall, I corrected my mistake with Bingley and your sister,
apologized to you for my words about your family,
and bribed Wickham to marry your ruined sister Lydia.

LIZZY

You also improved your manners, sir.

DARCY

Thank you.

I have taken your criticisms to heart and labored to improve myself.

LIZZY

Well, now that that is settled, should you not be getting on with—?

DARCY

And your own improvements, madam?

LIZZY

Improvements?

Do you believe *I* need improvement, sir?

DARCY

None of us are perfect.

LIZZY

(laughing)

But I am! I am PerfectLizzy®!

Nothing happens that is totally my fault!

DARCY

So it seems.

LIZZY

I am waiting for that proposal, Mr. Darcy.

DARCY

I must admit I am curious about something.

I have successfully proposed many times to you,
yet you later find cause to cry off.

LIZZY

There you go again, remembering unpleasant matters.

DARCY

I was wondering if there was a fixed number of proposals in your mind,
or if you are likely to once again change your mind.

LIZZY

Mr. Darcy!

If you recall, I had cause to cry off!

DARCY

I must ask you to recount them for me.

LIZZY

Very well, if you wish.

But I must warn you, sir, that this will not put me
into a good humor to accept your proposal!

DARCY

That I understand.

But I require it of your justice.

LIZZY

Let me see.

I called off our marriage because of your affair with Caroline Bingley.

DARCY

Yes. But I had no affair with Caroline Bingley.

LIZZY

That is why I took you back.

DARCY

Please be so kind as to remind me who told you
of my non-existent affair with Caroline Bingley.

LIZZY

It was Mr. Wickham.

DARCY

My enemy, Mr. Wickham.

LIZZY

But Miss Bingley did not deny it!

DARCY

The same Miss Bingley who would say anything to break
our betrothal so that she might force me to marry her.

LIZZY

Yes, that Miss Bingley.

DARCY

Fortunately, I was able to prove my innocence to your satisfaction.

LIZZY

But then, you abandoned me for Lady Catherine!

DARCY

Indeed, madam, it was your idea for me to go to Rosings.
I was to “patch up things” with my Aunt Catherine is what I recall you saying.

LIZZY

Disagreements within the family are so disagreeable!

DARCY

That is true.

LIZZY

You were gone a month complete without a word to me.
And then, that announcement in the paper that you were to marry Miss de Bourgh!
Oh, I was devastated!

DARCY

Certainly. Of course, it never occurred to you that Lady Catherine
had intercepted my letters, locked me in the basement of Rosings,
and sent a false report to the London newspapers.

LIZZY

I was so relieved when the truth was revealed.

DARCY

It took me all of that month to dig my way out of Rosings,
using nothing but my bare hands.
I had to take one of my aunt’s horses to make my escape.
By the time I reached my house in London, there was your letter,
ending our engagement.

LIZZY

I could not be engaged to a man engaged to another!
That is bigamy!

DARCY

I was never engaged to Anne de Bourgh.

LIZZY

I did not know it at that time.
I was overjoyed to learn that you were not.

DARCY

Then there was the ball hosted by the Matlocks—

LIZZY

Pray do not mention that night to me again!
It was horrible!

DARCY

I advised you not to pay any attention to Lord Blackmore.

LIZZY

You ordered me not to talk to Lord Blackmore!

DARCY

I stand corrected. I was looking out for you best interests.

LIZZY

You jealously demanded I ignore a charming, handsome, and amusing gentleman.
I could not marry a jealous man.

DARCY

I tried to protect you from a notorious seducer.

LIZZY

I had no idea what he had in mind when he escorted me to the balcony.

DARCY

I tried to tell you, but you would not listen.

LIZZY

There you go again, remembering unpleasant matters.
Besides, why would your uncle the earl invite such a scoundrel to his house?

DARCY

Politics make strange bedfellows.
Lord Blackmore was an ally of Lord Matlock in the House of Lords.

LIZZY

Your assistance was most timely.

DARCY

Thank you.
You should know my uncle has cut all ties with Lord Blackmore.

LIZZY

Pray convey my thanks to his lordship.

DARCY

I shall.
Of course, then there was the matter of you being kidnapped
by that Russian count.

LIZZY

I did not end our engagement over that!

DARCY

No, just almost my life.

LIZZY

Thank goodness you are so skilled with the blade!

DARCY

I have had much time for practice. It helps calm the nerves
when I am under passionate feelings of rejection.

LIZZY

Excuse me, sir, but I did not intend to be kidnapped
by a Russian count!

DARCY

I tried to warn you about him as well.

LIZZY

In my mind, you were being jealous, again.
Besides, I thought he was interested in Miss Bingley.

DARCY

It is apparent that he was not.

LIZZY

I cannot help it if I am so irresistible.
You suffered no lasting harm, did you?

DARCY

I am well. I cannot ever enter Russia, as there is a death warrant against me,
but as I have no desire to travel to Russia, it is of little concern.
Unfortunately, this was not the end of our misunderstandings.

LIZZY

What was I to think when a young woman presented herself at my
Uncle Gardiner's house with a young child she claimed was yours?

DARCY

Mr. Gardiner did not believe her for a moment.

LIZZY

That is because he did not see her with my tender woman's heart!
And when Mr. Wickham verified her claim—!

DARCY

Mr. Wickham, again.

LIZZY

You said yourself that Mr. Wickham was particularly good
at deceiving people.

DARCY

You seem to be particularly vulnerable to his persuasion,
given what you know about the man.

LIZZY

I could not at the time see he had anything to gain
by telling me such a false story!

DARCY

Besides ruining my happiness? If you recall, the young woman wanted thirty thousand pounds for the upbringing of the child.

LIZZY

It is only right for a gentleman provide for all his offspring, legitimate or natural.

DARCY

You did not wish to be married to such a gentleman.

LIZZY

To live forever with a man that had a child outside of marriage!
Every proper feeling revolts!

DARCY

It never occurred to you that the child was actually Wickham's, and the two wanted to pass him off as mine and extort the funds from my soon-to-be wife.

LIZZY

No, never.

DARCY

Even though thirty thousand pounds was exactly the amount of my sister Georgiana's dowry, the dowry Wickham tried to acquire by attempting to elope with my sister.

LIZZY

What a terrible man Mr. Wickham is.

DARCY

Undoubtedly.

LIZZY

My poor sister Lydia.

DARCY

It must comfort you to know that Mrs. Wickham had no idea of the plot.

LIZZY

It does, although she was stupid enough to run off with
Mr. Wickham in the first place.

DARCY

Undoubtedly.

LIZZY

Well, now that Mr. Wickham's latest plot has been exposed
for the wicked lie it was, I am now prepared to take you back,
accept your proposal, and live as the happiest woman alive.

DARCY

I see. I believe there is someone here you should meet.

LIZZY

Mr. Darcy! You brought an audience for your proposal?

DARCY

A moment and all will be made clear to you.

(He calls out into the woods)

My dear, will you come here?

TWO PEOPLE ENTER: A PRETTY YOUNG WOMAN, WEARING A FASHIONABLE WIFE'S CAP, AND A
HANDSOME GENTLEMAN. DARCY TAKES THE LADY'S HAND.

DARCY

Miss Bennet, may I introduce to you my wife,
the former Elinor Dashwood?

My dear, Miss Bennet.

MRS. DARCY

How do you do, Miss Bennet. My husband has spoken of you.

LIZZY

Mr. Darcy, I do not like your jokes.

DARCY

Miss Bennet, this is no joke. After our last...misunderstanding,
it became clear to me that not only do you not trust me,
you will never fully trust me.

LIZZY

Mr. Darcy, what do you mean? A woman's heart is fragile.
It is always in danger of something intruding on the owner's happiness!
You cannot expect me not to take the threats to my future seriously!

DARCY

In each one of these...intrusions on your happiness,
you could have talked to me.

LIZZY

Talk to you? Impossible! It is too mortifying!

DARCY

As I surmised. Miss Bennet, all my life I desired a kind and intelligent
lady to share my thoughts, secrets, and cares.

Someone to love and to love me.

She would put all her trust in me, as I would in her.

She would be the mistress of my house, mother to my children,
and most importantly, my deepest friend and confidant.

We would live in peace and quiet, far from the madding crowd.

Since our last incident, I was happy enough in town to meet a lady that
not only filled those requirements but desired the same with me.

Elinor and I were married not two days ago by special license
and are now headed for Pemberley.

Our stay there will be of some duration.

LIZZY

Mr. Darcy, you are serious? You are married to this lady?

MRS. DARCY

Indeed we are, Miss Bennet.

Ours was a whirlwind courtship, but I have no fears of the future.

Our two souls are so alike I have no doubt as to our forthcoming happiness.

I wish you to find the same happiness for yourself.

LIZZY

How can I? Mr. Darcy, if you go, where shall I go? What shall I do?

DARCY

I would be lying if I denied a part of me wishes to say,
“Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn.”

MRS. DARCY
Fitzwilliam!

DARCY

Sorry, my dear.

In any case, Miss Bennet, I have here a solution to your dilemma.
Here with us is an upstanding young man, moral and learned.
However, he owns not the willful pride I have.
In fact, he is not willful at all.
Allow me to introduce to your acquaintance Mr. Ferrars.

MR. FERRARS

How do you do, Miss Bennet?

DARCY

I hope you will believe me that Mr. Ferrars would make you a capital husband.
True he is not rich, but you yourself said my fortune meant nothing to you.
He enjoys the countryside and long walks, is very well read, and is incredibly loyal.
Once he gives his word, it is unbreakable.

Mr. Ferrars plans to take orders.

I know how close you are to your father, Miss Bennet.
Allow me to make a different sort of proposal than you were expecting,
but one you might find as agreeable.

I can use my influence with the Archbishop
to have the rector of Meryton provided with another situation,
so that he may give up his place here in favor of Mr. Ferrars.
That way, should you marry you will live comfortably near all your friends.
If Meryton is too close to certain of your...acquaintances,
another parish can be found that would suit your requirements.

LIZZY

But...I do not know Mr. Ferrars.

DARCY

That is understandable. Please know that my offer is open-ended.

I do, at the bottom of my heart, wish you all happiness.

(DARCY lowers his voice)

There is one last thing you should know, Miss Bennet.

Mr. Ferrars is as fine a man as can be found, but he is far more...tractable than I. In this, he is more like Bingley. He is not subject to willful demands of his family, never fear. But I think he would do just about anything to ensure the happiness of his wife.

Give the man a chance, will you?

LIZZY

I...I suppose so...

DARCY

Excellent! Let us shake hands and call it a bargain, eh?

(They shake hands)

DARCY

Well, Elinor, let us be off! Pemberley awaits!

MRS. DARCY

Goodbye, Miss Bennet! Goodbye, Edward!

DARCY AND MRS. DARCY LEAVE. LIZZY AND MR. FERRARS LOOK AT ONE ANOTHER.

LIZZY

Well...that was certainly unexpected!

MR. FERRARS

Indeed. By the way, my name is Edward.

LIZZY

Edward Ferrars.

(She smiles.)

My uncle's name is Edward.

MR. FERRARS

May I take it you find it an agreeable name, Miss Bennet?

LIZZY

I do. How like you the name of Elizabeth?

MR. FERRARS

I believe I can learn to like it very well.

LIZZY

Indeed. And what is your opinion of dancing?

MR. FERRARS

I like it of all things, as long as you do.

LIZZY

Edward, I believe this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

THE END



Jack Caldwell is the author of nine novels, all available from your favorite bookseller:

