

Pride & Prejudice & Assassinations
Darcy Waits

A. Legacy Short Story by
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Chapter 1

Outer doors slammed against the walls and Pemberley entered a storm of activity. Servants rushed throughout the manor making way, collecting supplies, and yelling commands as loud as possible. For all the noise and apparent confusion the activities coalesced into a streamlined set of actions all intended for a specific goal. Through the now open back door came Mr. Darcy and Colonel Fitzwilliam carrying a bloodied and anguishing Elizabeth. She writhed with pain and her clenched teeth produced a seething sound as she was forced to breathe heavily through wide spread lips.

“Make way! Make Way!” yelled Darcy.

“Darcy. We need to get her to the chambers upstairs and into a bed, but I am leery of the stairs.”

Darcy continued to move and paused only long enough to look at his cousin, his bleeding wife, and the current situation. Sizing up the situation and the width of the stairs he nodded to the Colonel.

“Give her to me now!”

The Colonel quickly and carefully relinquished his hold on Elizabeth and when he was certain Darcy was in firm control he helped guide his cousin in the correct direction. The servants made way and Darcy headed directly upstairs; the Colonel followed closely behind at the ready, should Darcy momentarily slip.

Elizabeth pulled into her husband, grabbed his shirt at the neckline, buried her face into his torso, and let out a muffled cry. At the top of the stairs Darcy headed immediately for the master chambers and upon reaching them, he placed his wife on the bed. The covers were already removed, as were any items within several feet of the bed. Gone were the morning flowers, and gone were her doilies upon the bedside tables, the bible, her sketching of her family, and anything else that might distract from the task of the moment. In its place now resided more than one wash basin, bandages, medicine of a wide variety, and anything else the housekeeper, Mrs. Reynolds, deemed might be needed.

“The doctors have already been called for, as well as a man from London.” Mrs. Reynolds said as she rushed to her mistress and began cutting the jacket and shirt around the wounded

area. There was no modesty, no worries about clothing, nothing but efficiency as the clothes were cut into pieces and handed to the servant Anna. Darcy moved in to address his wife and console her, but little could be done. His actions served more to hinder the current actions than to help them.

“Mr. Darcy, Please move!” Mrs. Reynolds barked at him.

“This is my wife and I will tend to her!” he cried in response.

“NO!” yelled Mrs. Reynolds in a voice so loud the very foundations of Pemberley shook. Elizabeth herself was distracted from her pain and the entire room stood in silence.

“This is my Mistress! And at the moment I will attend to her. You can do nothing for her but get in my way and cause more harm than good. Now I will beg you to leave this room and let me do my job!”

Colonel Fitzwilliam turned into Darcy and whispered into his ear.

“Come man, Get a hold of yourself! We must quit this room and let the ladies attend to what is needed.”

Darcy watched his wife writhing on the bed, teeth clenched. The tree limb still protruded from her side as the men had been too fearful to extract such a large foreign object. It was not a long piece but its irregular shape and gnarled nature suggested to Darcy it should not be pulled right away. Instead he had wrapped his wife’s side to slow the bleeding, while word was sent to ready the household staff.

He watched Mrs. Reynolds skillfully cut away the clothing while Anna was rapidly working through the first wash basin, removing the wrapping and applying pressure where needed. Elizabeth stared at him with wide eyes and nodded slightly; giving him the permission he needed to make his exit. Anna also nodded at him as if to say his wife was in very good hands. This would not be the first time Anna had treated Elizabeth for an injury, but it would be the first time life was in the balance.

Darcy and his cousin headed for the hall and upon their exit a servant closed the door. The timing of Anna and Mrs. Reynolds again played out like a well rehearsed dance; for as the door closed Elizabeth arched up, opened her mouth, and the Anna placed a wooden spoon handle therein. Elizabeth bit hard and screamed again in agony.

On the other side of the door Darcy heard the scream and turned to make his way back to the room. Colonel Fitzwilliam, being no fool, had already positioned himself in the path and Darcy could make no headway. The two men stared at each other for a moment.

“She is English!”

Darcy did not respond to his cousin, he only stared; and with resignation he turned his eyes downward, then turned his body around, and headed down the stairs. The colonel watched his cousin for a moment as he trudged down the stairs. Never had he seen his cousin in such emotional pain. He cast his mind back in time and remembered the carriage ride from Rosings Park. They had spent the time in analysis of Elizabeth’s dagger attack upon Darcy. Even in that case the conflict of Darcy’s emotions was not as severe as it was now. Glancing over his shoulder at the now closed door the colonel could only whisper.

“I have envied you your choice of a lady dear cousin, but I do not envy you the position you find yourself in this day.” Turning, he followed his cousin down the stairs.

At the foot of the stairs he encountered the steward, Mr. Seary. The two gentlemen nodded to each other cordially.

“He is in his office. Although I do not believe he will be long, by his demeanor I should imagine he will quickly cause damage to himself or property.”

The colonel nodded. "I will address him and keep his mind occupied."

"It is already being done. There is nothing for him to do but wait; with that in mind, I will ensure the master keeps busy. Look here," he said as he nodded to the back doors. "even now it begins."

The colonel followed Mr. Seary's gaze out the back of the property to witness one of the young stable hands approaching, William, if the colonel remembered the name properly; just a boy of 12 or so. The lad approached and Mr. Seary met him briefly, placing his hand upon the shoulder and whispering in his ear. The colonel could not make out every word but the lad seemed adamant in his assertions that he knew his task.

"Yes, Yes." The lad said. "No matter what will happen. I can handle it."

"Be sure young man. This is no simple job for a boy."

Again the lad confirmed with the steward and was then led away in the direction of the master's office. Colonel Fitzwilliam followed, curious as to the next actions that would occur in this house. At the office the door was knocked upon and opened without waiting for an acknowledgement. A moment later saw the three men and boy in the middle of this marvelous room. The lad stood in awe of the books lining the shelves, the large mahogany desk and matching furniture, and the amazing attention to detail.

Darcy hardly noticed them as he paced about. He picked up a book, glanced at it, only to slam it down on the desk. The lad jumped but Darcy did not notice as he was now examining his writing set.

"William has some business, Mr. Darcy." said Mr. Seary.

"Eh? What is it Thomas?" replied Darcy.

Mr. Seary nudged the reluctant boy forward. It took a moment for William to find his voice and when he did it was with little confidence.

"It's just that..."

"Yes?" barked Darcy.

William backed down a bit, but when he felt the stern presence of the men behind him he stood his ground.

"It's the horse sir. He is still in pain and is still down. I did not know what should be done. My father normally attends to the horses when they are hurt, but he is not yet back from the village. He will come back shortly. I hope." William cast his eyes down.

Darcy took in the information and stopped his movement. His head lifted and he looked out the window. William had never seen this look, but to the other gentleman the look was not unfamiliar. Thomas Seary could almost see the thoughts in his master's head and the calculations being made. When it was done, it was done quickly.

"Richard." said Darcy, as he addressed his cousin with a commanding nod. Colonel Fitzwilliam replied to the command with a nod of his own.

No other words were spoken as Darcy moved across the office, opened a cabinet, and retrieved his pistol. He checked the shot, his powder bag, and grabbing spare slugs he headed out of the office. The men and small boy left behind were able to do nothing but follow as the master headed out the back of the manor in a determined and quick walk.

Several minutes later the men were deep within a wooded area at the outskirts of Pemberley's back lots. The trails here were difficult to follow as they were false natural trails; areas of shrubbery and trees which gave way to open areas leaving many individuals the incorrect feeling of walking a manmade path. Darcy navigated through the woods as if following a maze, turning where needed and barging through shrubbery when a direct path was warranted.

The men following him were spared the mental exercise of choosing a path or contemplating which false turn could be made. Instead they endeavored to keep up with the man in front of them who did not slow his pace, or waiver in his determination to reach his goal.

Coming around a small mound the men stopped and analyzed the area. On the ground near a fallen tree was a large white and grey horse, and attempting to tend to it were two of the gardeners. They were concerned with the well being of the horse and were working to keep the animal calm, but their gardening skills were not enough for the task and the horse was making attempts to stand. The men stroked the horse and calmed it as best they could and then looked up as the quartet of individuals approached.

Darcy separated himself from his companions merely by continuing his determined pace, as the Colonel, Thomas, and William stopped their advance. The anger in Darcy was controlled, but firm and his actions were set.

“Move!” cried Darcy as he approached the horse and pulled his pistol.

The gardeners took only a moment to realize what was about to happen and scattered like frightened cats. The immediate release of the animal gave the horse freedom to gain its standing position and for a second it attempted to rise. As Darcy closed and the pistol aimed at the side of its head the movement stopped.

For a second man and animal stared at each other; locked in that briefest of moments in which there exists the most pure understanding. The horse’s dark eye blinked and the body relaxed. It did not gaze at the pistol now pointed to its temple; it gazed into the eyes of the beast before it.

The walk from Pemberley to this spot was marked with mental anguish for Darcy and those thoughts now raced through his mind. “This Damn Horse!”

Darcy was not a man to use expletives in any great amount and rarer still was the use of them in any audible manner, but the previous few minutes conjured to his mind words and phrases he did not realize he possessed. More frightening to his loved ones, should they ever become aware of the knowledge, would be the ease for which his anger brought forth those thoughts and words. Never before; never, had Darcy experienced such primal rage, and if he had been asked prior to today, he would not have believed it possible for him to be so consumed; and certainly not for an animal.

As Darcy glared at the animal William cried out. “Sir!”

Mr. Seary pulled in William and stared at him. It was an emotionless stare; from a gentleman to young boy. William understood it quickly enough, and held his tongue. He turned away unable to watch the proceedings. Thomas looked at the Colonel as if to ask silently “Should I turn him back?” The colonel only shook his head lightly; he knew the boy had grown up enough today.

Horse to Darcy, and Darcy to horse; the anger still in possession. This was his wife’s favorite horse; only 3 years old and a resident of Pemberley with higher seniority than Elizabeth. Her fondness for this beast was so quickly acquired, and her smile so great when the animal nuzzled her, that Darcy was left with no option but to proclaim the horse to be hers.

It was that very smile which had turned Darcy’s heart today, and he allowed her to train on a horse not yet ready for the task at hand. Through the woods Elizabeth had moved efficiently, pistol in hand. Both the horse and his wife performed well and Darcy enjoyed baiting her through the woods as she followed in pursuit. It had honestly astonished him when she came upon him with an obviously clear and clean kill shot. The pistol was loaded with powder only, no shot, but that did not matter to the untrained horse; it had bolted at the sound. So unnecessary

he now thought. Out of safety Elizabeth had not even pointed the pistol at him; just in the air to make the point that the shot was clean and the game over.

Breathing heavily Darcy let the images of the day run through his mind, a mind that now began to remember its discipline. The pistol began to waiver. The horse stayed still and did not move until Darcy's arm slowly lowered to his side. This seemed to be a signal and the horse attempted to rise. It was caught amongst the fallen trees and more than one part of the animal was pierced and bleeding. No one moved for a few seconds and the horse made its attempts alone.

The world snapped back into place for Darcy, and realizing the current situation he made rapid and clear decisions. He threw his pistol out of the way and dispatched William to retrieve his father. The gardeners were called to return and hold the beast, while Darcy and his cousin began to clear the branches. Wherever the horse was pierced the men looked closely, and then broke the branches away as needed.

Darcy was already missing his outer jacket, but he now removed his shirt, ripped it, and pressed it into bleeding areas. Colonel Fitzwilliam did the same when it became apparent more bandages would be needed. More than an hour passed and the men worked to free the horse from the foliage around it. Mr. Seary kept in tabs with runners who traversed the distance to and from the house every 15 minutes with updates of Mrs. Darcy. No change.

William arrived with his father and when he was certain the horse was in good hands, Darcy returned to the house with his cousin and Thomas in tow. At the manor the news of the doctor's arrival was well received and Darcy headed up to his master chambers as servants handed him a new shirt. At his bed chambers he brooked no opposition and entered the room. It was not a pleasant site.

Elizabeth herself was alert and determined. Around the room were bloodied towels and wash basins which were then being rotated so fresh water was always available. The former protuberance had been removed and now lay on a towel out of the way. Darcy marveled at how small it appeared now that it no longer was imbedded in his wife; such a small piece of nature to cause so much trouble. The doctor appeared non-plussed as he worked at Elizabeth's side, but the man's focus on work did not alleviate Darcy's angst.

"My horse?"

Darcy looked up at his wife and could see her obvious pain. After all this she still cared for that damn horse; but Darcy's anger turned to immediate contemplation of what he had almost done not much more than an hour before. The rapidity of his emotional change could not be seen by his wife as she had still not learned to read all of his mannerisms. To her, he appeared his normal stoic self.

"Being tended to." was his reply.

Elizabeth caught a minor hitch to his voice and she cocked her head. She could not fully understand what might be amiss, but she was learning to trust her training, and there was something not quite right with her husband's reply. Her movement began to frustrate the doctor and he made his frustrations known. Mrs. Reynolds took it upon herself to once again force Mr. Darcy out to the room. He then left most unwillingly, but it was now the housekeepers turn to brook no opposition. She had abided the master's small intrusion, but now he must vacate the room.

Thomas was waiting in the hall and immediately assailed Darcy with more important matters. More important to him, but as Darcy listened to his steward talk of business, dispatches to doctors, and many other various topics, the voice trailed off and it was several minutes before

he realized Thomas was no longer at his side. In fact Darcy was now somewhere else in the house.

Mr. Seary had watched his friend walk away from him and he forgave the insult. He was much more curious than angry. Darcy's eyes had just unfocused and the man walked away. Through the house the steward maintained a distance as Darcy ambled from one room to the next. He could not believe his friend had even the slightest inclination what he was doing or where he was going. More than once he startled a servant by his quiet approach. The servants made way and watched their master pass. It reminded Thomas of people watching a barge pass on a river; peaceful contemplation of a slow moving mass. When Darcy entered and exited the kitchen without a sign of comprehension, Thomas knew his friend and employer was truly in a world of his own; Darcy never entered the kitchen.

Thomas sought out Richard for aid and found him in Darcy's office.

"I am at a loss. I need to keep him focused but my last attempt failed."

The colonel nodded in agreement, but he himself was at a loss and could offer little in the way of a suggestion.

"Perhaps I could help."

The men turned to the door and the colonel smiled as he spied the new arrival.

"Miss Dache. It is good to see you."

Marianne smiled in return and nodded.

"I only wish it was under more pleasant circumstances."

Both men agreed, and the three of them then spent several minutes informing each other of the current situation. When Marianne was fully briefed on Elizabeth, Colonel Fitzwilliam asked for reciprocity. Miss Dache as it turned out, was up from town and had arrived early that morning in Lampton. She had housed at the inn and it was her intention to make her presence known the next day. When news of Elizabeth's injury had reached town she hastened her arrival.

"Now let us see what can be done with Mr. Darcy." She said as she turned to leave the office. The men followed and the three began a search of the house. It did not take long and they found him just outside the double doors leading to the rear of the manor. He seemed to be watching the landscape or some other phenomenon. Marianne paused as she caught his demeanor. His back was turned to her and as she approached she could make out more of his countenance. Her heart fluttered for this man; even now she still cared.

'Damn.' She thought to herself. 'Why him?'

No other man had ever affected her in any way as much as this man, and now with his wife, and her best friend, lying injured, she could feel his pain and it moved her. She stood resolute as they made their approach but they were to be bested for his attention. Following his gaze she could see a young boy heading in their direction. Darcy was fixated on him.

"Sir" cried William as he approached. "My father has a concern. I was to fetch Mr. Seary or the Colonel."

"What is it?"

William shied away by the direct address of the imposing man before him, but Darcy did not ask again and the boy eventually stammered something about the horse. Darcy thought for a moment and looked at the men, whose presence was now known to him. When he spotted Marianne he did not appear surprised, he just nodded and she returned in kind.

Marianne watched as the trio of men and the boy headed off. When they were well on their way she turned back to the house and headed to her friend. Elizabeth may not want her husband

to witness her in pain, but she would certainly welcome Marianne. Those two ladies seemed to have a knack for witnessing each other in pain, and it was more than once while Sparring that injury occurred. Marianne smiled for a moment; for as gentle and kind as Elizabeth's heart allowed her to be, she could certainly lay out an opponent when needed.

Several minutes later the men were once again at the site of the horse. It was not in the same position and by its new location, and the extremely trod upon ground, it was obvious the horse had made several attempts to stand. The men on site were now trying to keep it calm. Darcy was approached by his stable master, William's father. The man shook his head as he approached.

"It's a break sir, and a bad one. It was not immediately noticeable and when the beast bore weight upon it we could hear it snap. It is low, away from circulation, and the animal cannot stand. I also suspect there is a high fracture on one of the other legs." The man paused as he turned away from the master and looked at the horse. "There is nothing to be done."

Darcy now stood and watched the animal laying before him; just a few short hours before he was intent on killing this animal. Now, with his rage subsided, he felt pity. He pictured his wife's face in pain, but with concern as she had spoken.

"My horse?"

With no movement from anyone else the stable master made a decision and moved to the horse. He had a pistol in his hand and Darcy realized it was his. He must have left it the last time he was here. Calling out, he stopped the movement of his groom. Darcy approached and relieved the man of the pistol.

"I will do it."

With the pistol in his hand he felt the weight and considered his options. He knew there was nothing for the horse. If it could not stand it would not live, and even if it could stand in its current state, infection was certain to set in and cause a very slow death.

The image now presented almost an identical look as just a few hours before, but the feel was oddly different. Darcy had a tough time of it and he waivered as he raised the pistol. The horse once again looked at him, in pain, anguish, and fear. The stoic expression on Darcy's face belied his emotional turmoil. The world closed in and he could see only the horse and his pistol. The horse calmed and between man and beast a simple expression could be felt.

I'm Sorry.

Darcy could feel it, but he could not swear whether the emotion came from the horse, the man, or the combination of the two.

In the master chambers Anna was washing a towel at the window wash station. Her mistress was now resting more comfortably, but a fever was setting in and she was becoming worried; she did not care to see Mrs. Darcy in such a manner. The gunshot caught her attention and she looked up and out the window. She could see nothing but those wonderful grounds of Pemberley. She listened again as the report of the gun echoed slightly across the landscape. There was no other sound and for all appearances the world was at peace. Finishing her washing she returned to her mistress.

The walk back to the manor was done with Darcy in the lead, his stern expression now giving way to eyes which began to tear. His royal duties called for him to perform many tasks and over the years he had taken human life rarely. Every time was either self defense or the last resort of a carefully contemplated strategy. Never, had he felt this remorse. It boggled him and as he thought on the matter he could not help but sob slightly into his hand. The colonel and Thomas backed away and gave the man his room. They would not intrude upon this moment.

"For a horse!" Darcy cried to himself quietly. "A damn horse."

If his wife had been with him this moment she would have immediately known his dilemma and the solution to his logical query would have been easily revealed. She understood this man more than he did when it came to matters of his own conscience. The horse, her horse, was an innocent. If Darcy could kill so indiscriminately, if he could be tasked with his duties and give so little thought as to their implementation, then the very core of his family's assignment would be meaningless. The Darcy family was tasked with upholding honour, not betraying it.

His composure was regained by the time he entered the house and he was allowed a quick visit with his wife. She was asleep, but the fever was now upon her. The doctor attended her and the ladies kept her brow wiped. Darcy was once again told to do the one thing he found most difficult. Wait.

In his office he encountered Marianne. She was perusing papers upon the desk and nodded at his entry.

'Something is wrong.' She thought to herself. She had not heard the shot and even if she had, and had pieced together the scenario, she would have been hard pressed to understand the emotional turmoil. The man which stood before her was much more a mystery to her than he was to his wife. It was not for lack of trying that she misunderstood his conscience, but because of a disparity within their very beings. Marianne just could not understand something which was very foreign to her; Elizabeth could have easily revealed to Marianne that it was that misunderstanding which fueled the feelings for Darcy.

She inquired into Elizabeth and Darcy replied that she was sleeping.

"That is good. If you have a moment then we must address something of more import."

"I do not have any inclination to attend to business at the moment."

Marianne turned cold, as was her habit in serious situations.

"Do not play me as you do your steward. I do not bring you business of rent, or plantings, or property purchase. You know full well that my arrival upon your door was not for social reasons and your wife will not benefit by your selfish contemplations. Nor will she be hindered by your attending to other matters. So I suggest we deal with these matters at hand."

Marianne lacked Elizabeth's finesse and grace to put Darcy's mind at ease, but she could get him focused using the serious nature of their family's relationship. She revealed to him the papers she had brought with her. Their office in London had discovered a possible French assassin and more than one member of the English military were suspected of falling prey to this man. The trouble was determining who the assassin was, and why he targeted the individuals he did. All of the men killed were of little importance other than perhaps a captain. But that man had been serving a more inactive role, and had no real military importance.

It took Marianne almost half an hour to get Darcy focused. His thoughts were scattered at first and he moved slowly. As the ideas coalesced and he reached for papers in a faster method she did what she always did; she backed away and watched. She would of course rejoin him when the time was right, but she found it amazing and enjoyable to watch his movements and his determination. She could almost tell when all thoughts of Elizabeth were gone and only the thoughts of tracking a killer were upon his mind. The papers were assorted in a way that made sense only to him. He tacked some upon the wall, others upon his book cases, and others he left in piles so they could be grabbed and read as he walked about the room.

It had not been her intent to use these papers for such a distraction; far from it. It was her intent to present a news update from the London office, and to ask for his quick input on the situation he was now considering. She believed the staff in London would find the man responsible and then deal with him accordingly, but opportunities present at odd times and she

was glad she could calm his mind. Perhaps not as easily and with the peace Elizabeth could achieve, but at least he was not walking the house and startling the cooking staff.

As was his normal working habit, food was eaten and water drunk with little consideration. Darcy was most likely not even conscious of the actions. It was not until well into the next morning in which his mind snapped into focus. He looked up and found Marianne across the room, sound asleep. How long she had been in that state he could not say and he was surprised, as he often was when in this situation, at the hour of day. It was well past 8 am.

He nudged Marianne and she roused herself awake. Apologizing for her condition she rose and joined him at the desk. The papers were still scattered and Marianne glanced briefly at his arrangement. The suspected targets and their personal information were all tacked upon the book cases behind the desk. Financials were upon the desk, and possible French suspects were lying across two or more chairs.

“It’s personal.” He said simply.

Marianne looked confused for a moment.

“A French assassin with a personal motive?” she asked in slight disbelief.

Darcy did not flinch in his resolve. Instead he headed to the book case and removed one of the profiles.

“This man has nothing to do with this situation. His death, while tragic, is not tied to this case. Perhaps it was his wife or mistress, but it was not our assassin.”

“So there definitely is an assassin?”

“Oh yes, and it is personal. Your assumption that the French were sending someone for military reasons is what caused you the confusion. As you analyzed these movements, the people, and their importance, you tended to look forward in time. What would the French gain by their termination? The answer is simple when you realize the military advantages were nothing. Looking into these men’s backgrounds, rather than the men’s import, you will see they most likely all served for a brief time in the same unit. And here, see this.”

Darcy showed Marianne a coded communiqué and the accompanying document. It was not much, but it was attached to one of the men’s files. It meant little to Marianne.

“These men made landfall in France.”

Marianne seemed astonished for a moment. The war with Napoleon was still subtle and may always be that way. A landfall excursion directly on French soil, this idea seemed odd.

“What did they do?”

“Unknown, but they are linked, and whatever they did, they are paying for it now. I not have all the documents here, but I will suggest a course of action.”

Marianne listened intently as he gave her orders to locate any other men from that unit. Military files would have to be opened and more than one Admiral may have to be called upon. Darcy efficiently pieced together the unit’s information, and even suggested which ship captains might have landed the men. It always amazed Marianne how he pieced together his intelligence, and when he revealed how he did it, she always felt the fool for not seeing the solution before. Looking at a past connection to the men and the possibility of a personal motive had not occurred to her or anyone else in the newly formed London office. This could be something as simple as revenge. French or no French, she could understand that motive.

With the matter settled for the moment he left his office. Just outside the door he saw Anna with a serving tray as she headed upstairs.

“Is she well?”

Anna turned and blushed. This imposing man always seemed to catch her off guard, although she could not really believe she would ever be comfortable around him.

“She is awake and her fever has broken. The doctor believes she is through the worst of it. I was just bringing her some tea.”

Darcy nodded and then followed Anna up the stairs.

The master chambers were well lit as the sun seemed to be bright and cheery today. Richard was conversing with Elizabeth who seemed to be rested and feeling in better spirits. She did look rustled and could use a bath after her feverish night, but Darcy smiled and believed her to be as beautiful as ever.

Upon his entry she turned away from the colonel and brought her attention to him. Anna set the tray down and left the room quietly, with Richard close behind. The door closed and the two of them were alone.

‘He looks so tired and weary.’ she thought to herself and she immediately knew he did not sleep the entire night.

“You appear to be well on the mend.” He stated

Elizabeth arched a smile and teased her husband, as was her habit. “Of course, I have only just taken the post as your wife and I am not so keen to vacate it before I truly know my way around the grounds of Pemberley. And you do tend to amuse me from time to time, so I am determined to stay my place until I tire of you.”

Darcy took the jest in good humour, as he had learned to do, and only replied with his customary raised eyes and slight nod.

“You did not overly worry on my health did you? I would be distressed to learn that you were in angst.” Her half smile tugged again at his good nature and he was able to affect a small smile of his own.

“Not at all.” He replied in a very convincing offhand manner. “I took the time to attend to business and inspect the grounds. My training had led me to believe your wound was minor and my knowledge of your constitution assured me you would recover.”

‘Liar!’ she thought to herself, but she let him play his ruse as he closed to her position. Carefully taking his place beside her he put his arm around her head and shoulders, pulling her in close while being wary of her wound he nuzzled her face. She enjoyed the nuzzling as she always did. Closing her eyes she pulled in tight as he whispered to her.

“Welcome back. You were missed.”