

A romantic scene set on a dark wooden desk. In the background, a window is partially visible with a large pink rose in a vase. On the desk, there is a stack of several folded letters or envelopes. To the left, a small, ornate brass cup sits on a matching saucer. In the foreground, a stack of papers is spread out, featuring a floral pattern with red and green flowers. A single pink rose petal lies on the desk near the papers. The lighting is warm and soft, creating a cozy and intimate atmosphere.

A
Valentine
for Mr. Darcy

Amelia Westerly

A Valentine for Mr Darcy

It is a truth all too seldom acknowledged that romance does not end when one exits the church doors as man and wife. Nor should it. If much care and attention is given to the winning of a heart, then how much more ought to be given to showing one's spouse one's enduring love and admiration, even as the years go by?

It was on such matters that Elizabeth Darcy was musing on a grey morning in early February, though only months had passed since her own marriage. Her first Christmas as a married woman and mistress of Pemberley had come and gone; the changing of the year had followed it as swiftly as was its custom, and each day still left her breathless with gratitude at the miracle of love.

She had thought she loved Mr Darcy upon first learning of his true worth; she had known she loved him when she accepted his proposals, yet how much deeper was love fed upon a diet of daily conversations and whispered nothings, of deeper knowledge of his characters and the warmth of his heart?

Several people in their social circles, Caroline Bingley chief among them, had always made it clear that Elizabeth Darcy, nee

Bennet, ought to consider herself a very lucky woman. And so Elizabeth did. Yet if that lady had known how much of the sentiment was founded upon Mr Darcy's person and his mind, and how vanishingly little upon his fortune and his connexions, she would have been quite astonished.

However much a man loves his wife, there is still business he must attend to, and Mr Darcy's duty to his tenants had left Elizabeth quite alone that morning. After breakfast, she had taken herself off to the library. The halls of Pemberley were hushed, with the crackling of a good fire in the hearth the loudest noise to be heard. The warm, pleasantly dusty odour of old books and fine leather filled the room, and though Elizabeth sat in a well-stuffed chair before the hearth with a book open on her lap, her attention was elsewhere.

A soft knock came upon the door. "Come in," Elizabeth called out, not sorry for the interruption.

Georgiana peered in from the doorway. "I should like to join you, if you would not mind," she said, a little bashfully. Though Georgiana had liked and accepted her from the first, it was too much to expect of nature that she could lose her shyness all at once. All the same, Elizabeth intended to see to it that her sister-in-law's shyness with her was done away before a year was through.

“Indeed I would not mind,” Elizabeth therefore said promptly. “On the contrary, you would be doing me a great kindness, for I cannot attend to my book at all.”

Georgiana sat in the chair opposite her and peered at it. “Ah! No wonder,” she said with a little giggle. “It is terribly dry. I ought to know, for my brother bade me read it too, and write a report for him. I am sure the early history of England is a very important topic, but I found it rather a struggle all the same.”

Elizabeth laughed. “It is on your brother’s behest that I am reading it, although I am happy to report he has not requested a book report from me. I shall read it, of course, for I entirely agree with his view that one ought to continually improve one’s mind, but on this dreary morning, I cannot seem to hold my concentration. My mind is continually elsewhere.”

“Are you thinking of anything in particular, then?” Georgiana inquired.

“Yes — I am thinking of Valentine’s Day, and whether I ought to make your brother a valentine. I should greatly like to, but I do not quite know what he would think of it.”

“He would surely like anything you made,” Georgiana replied, “for I had never seen him as happy as you have made him. Surely

any little picture or verse in token of your affection would be delightful to him.”

“You do not think he would find it silly, then? I should not like to have him think me foolish, or to feel any awkwardness because of it.”

“No, not silly,” Georgiana replied after a small hesitation. “He might be surprised. I daresay he would, for I do not think he has ever received a valentine before. But surely he would enjoy any expression of your regard for him, whatever the form. I certainly do not think he would find you foolish for doing such a thing.”

“You are a very sensible young lady, Georgiana, and I thank you,” Elizabeth replied. “I believe you are right, and I shall make him a valentine. My only trouble now is what it ought to look like, and how I can possibly fit everything in my heart on one small piece of paper.”

On the evening of the same day, Georgiana had said her adieus to the others and gone to her room a little early. Though she had given the excuse of tiredness, it was really more a case of wishing to think. Evenings with her brother and Elizabeth were lively, full of conversation and music. If she stayed with them, she would be too

much engaged with all that was passing to attend her own thoughts. Besides this, however much a newly married couple may love their sister and sister-in-law, Georgiana rather suspected that an evening alone from time to time would not go amiss.

Georgiana therefore settled comfortably in for a little day-dreaming. For a time, it had been too painful to have girlish dreams of marriage. She had seen all too clearly how men could lie, and to what ends a selfish heart could use her love. Yet gradually, much of the pain had passed away. Time had given her the gift of forgetfulness, and her youthful spirit of romance reasserted itself. Then her brother had introduced her to Elizabeth, and in their love, Georgiana had seen what romance ought to be. The happiness of their marriage had only deepened the impression. The love she saw between them each day was beautiful, and provided daily food for her daydreams of the true-hearted lover she hoped one day to meet.

So softly Georgiana almost thought she had imagined it, there was a knock on the door. "You may come in," she called out, rather expecting it to be Mrs Reynolds, offering a cup of warm milk or something of the like.

Instead, it was her brother who entered, gently closing the door behind him. "I am glad you are still awake, Georgiana, for I would like to speak with you."

“Indeed? What about?” Georgiana asked. She swung her feet down from the chaise lounge upon which she had been woolgathering and gestured an invitation. Mr Darcy sat down next to her.

“I should rather like your advice,” he said, astonishing her.

“My advice! I would gladly give it, but I cannot think of anything in the world upon which *I* am qualified to advise *you*. Unless you intend to begin playing the piano, and in that case, I shall simply suggest that you hire a master from Town.”

Mr Darcy laughed a little, making Georgiana smile. Each reminder of how her brother had gained in liveliness and lightheartedness since marrying Elizabeth was a fresh joy to her. “No, indeed I do not wish to play the piano,” he said quickly. “I should like to ask your advice because you are a young lady now, Georgiana, and I think you have some insights into what women like that I have not.”

Georgiana tilted her head and looked at him. “Brother, please do come to the point.”

Mr Darcy sighed. “What I have to ask you is this: would I make myself look ridiculous if I were to give Elizabeth a valentine?” Quite misunderstanding Georgiana’s giggle of surprise, he quickly went

on. “Yes, perhaps I ought to have known it would be silly. That is something for young, headstrong gentlemen, not a married man of nearly thirty —”

“Brother!” Georgiana said, shocking herself by interrupting him. It was really too rude of her, but she could not bear to let him continue in the misapprehension another moment. “I was not agreeing that it would be unsuitable. I was merely surprised. On the contrary, I do think that you ought to give Elizabeth a valentine. And in any case, what has my opinion to do with it? Surely you ought to take any opportunity to give your wife joy.”

“I had not thought of it like that,” Mr Darcy admitted. He smiled at her. “You are growing quite wise, little sister.”

Georgiana made a little bow of acknowledgement. “Have you given any thought to what you might give her?”

“More than I would like to admit,” Mr Darcy confessed ruefully. “There is a certain poetic verse I should like to share with her, and I have purchased a necklace that I believe will go remarkably well with her eyes. But those are all things made by others. I should rather like to give her something I have done myself.”

“Perhaps a little drawing,” Georgiana suggested. “I know you do not often share them, but surely that would make it all the better, as a show of your confidence and love.”

“I suppose you are right,” Mr Darcy said slowly. “That would be something of my own, truly enough. The results may not be very decorative, but I suppose I can always add some ribbon or some such.”

“Well, if you run short of lace with which to adorn it, you know that I have plenty in my workbag,” Georgiana said with a giggle. Indeed, her workbag was rather over-full of fine lace and lush silk ribbons, for Georgiana neglected her sewing in favour of more time at the pianoforte as much as her guardians would allow.

Mr Darcy laughed. “Thank you, I shall remember that,” he said, and turned at the door. “Good night, little sister.”

“Good night, brother,” Georgiana replied fondly, thinking of what a pleasant surprise he and Elizabeth would have come Valentine’s Day.

Valentine’s Day itself proved to be grey and dreary, with sullen clouds pulled low over the horizon — no surprising turn of events, for a February day in Derbyshire. As though by mutual agreement,

though nothing of the kind had been discussed, Mr Darcy and Elizabeth did no more to honour the day in the morning than wishing each other a “happy Valentine’s day.” Several times that day, Mr Darcy noticed Georgiana looking at them in seeming expectation, and wondered what she was about. Elizabeth even spoke to her.

“Georgiana, am I doing something odd? Have I spilled something on my gown? You are looking at me in the most peculiar way,” Elizabeth remarked gently.

Georgiana flushed and looked away. “Oh, no, not in the least. Nothing is the matter. I suppose I was only woolgathering. I am sorry.”

“All is well, then,” Elizabeth replied lightly, though looking at her sister-in-law narrowly.

Georgiana might have saved herself all her impatience, for her curiosity as to what the two had selected for their valentines was not to be satisfied that day. It was not until they retired in the evening that Elizabeth broached the subject.

“My dear Fitzwilliam,” she said. “I must confess I have been rather silly. I made you a valentine.” With no more delay, she

handed him a delicate little envelope and watched in suspense as he opened it.

Being at the disadvantage of not drawing or painting, Elizabeth had relied on words and simplicity to create her effect. The envelope held a little rectangle of card paper in a soft pink, surrounded with a fine row of lace. Though the effect was neat and pretty, Mr Darcy's attention was all for the words written upon it in a fine hand.

A Thing Impossible

Have pity, Dearest, when you see

My poor and idle verse,

For, without the Love you bring to me,

It would have been still worse.

I should have liked to write you words

Brave and beautiful and true,

*And yet, whatever verse I wrote
Would not be half so fine as You.*

*I could not call such muses forth,
A thing impossible to do,
And yet I'll try, for all I'm worth
To write out my love for you.*

*P.S. Forgive my foolish and idle verse, love – I only wish I could
convey how very deeply I love you.*

He lowered the page and clasped her hand. It was necessary to clear his throat before speaking. “You do, my love. Indeed you do, each day of our lives.”

Elizabeth looked down, a small smile curving her lips. “I am very glad to hear it.”

“Now,” Mr Darcy went on briskly, “for my valentine to you.” He handed Elizabeth a jewellery box of plush velvet the light purple of

wisteria flowers, and a small piece of paper, folded in half and sealed with wax.

With a brief caress of its lush texture, Elizabeth placed the box on a nearby table. Slowly, she broke the wax seal and unfolded the little slip of paper.

Upon seeing what was inside, Elizabeth gasped in shocked pleasure. It was a little ink drawing of two hands, their fingers interwoven. The image was simple, done only in black ink and few strokes. Yet the artist's cunning had made it recognisable at a glance as their hands, hers and Mr Darcy's. The daintier hand bore the little golden ring with a design of leaves that Mr Darcy had given her, and the larger wore the broad ring that never left his hand and had been handed down from his father and his grandfather before him.

The simple words below the drawing touched Elizabeth no less. *To my darling Elizabeth, my wife, my love, they said, may our hearts and hands be ever intertwined. Yours always, Fitzwilliam Darcy.*

“Oh, my love,” Elizabeth murmured. “It is beautiful. Always.” She held out her hand to him, and he took it. They looked down at

their hands, fingers intertwined as Mr Darcy had drawn them, and Elizabeth felt almost weak with love.

It was a long moment before they drew apart. At last, Elizabeth reached for the velvet box. “I have not forgotten this, love,” she remarked. “I am all aflutter to discover what it contains, for even the box is loveliness itself.”

“I hope you will like it,” Mr Darcy replied.

When the latch was undone, Elizabeth gasped in pleasure. The box contained a delicate necklace of amethysts, the oval stones held in a golden clasp. The simple design and littleness of the stones was a perfect complement to their deep, rich colour and vivid sparkle.

“They are magnificent,” Elizabeth breathed.

Mr Darcy smiled. “Then they are perfect for you.” With that, he lifted them from the box, and fastened them around Elizabeth’s neck. She hurried to the glass to observe her appearance.

“Oh, Fitzwilliam,” Elizabeth sighed. “I adore them.” Then, feeling rather daring, she leaned close to her husband and stole a kiss. It is perhaps worthy of note that, whatever Mr Darcy’s feelings on daring in women might be in more general cases, it certainly did not occur to him to object.

Some little time later, Mr Darcy cleared his throat. “I did have one more thing I wished to share with you, my dear,” he said, a little hesitantly. Elizabeth looked up at him in surprise, her eyes shining as brightly as the amethysts around her neck. Mr Darcy gestured a suggestion that she sit down, and Elizabeth did so, still looking at him a little curiously. Mr Darcy sat next to her on the settee and put a little book into her hands.

“*The Collected Works of John Donne*,” Elizabeth read from the cover. She looked a little puzzled, though she smiled gamely at her husband. “Was it not he who wrote, ‘no man is an island’?”

“It was indeed,” Mr Darcy confirmed. “Knowing you for a reader, I am not surprised to find you familiar with his poems about the soul and man’s duty to mankind. But he also wrote about love, and these works I rather think you will not have read before. I have marked one that particularly came to mind for this day, and for you, my love.”

Elizabeth found a silk ribbon marking a page and turned to it. “An Epithalamion, or Marriage Song on the Lady Elizabeth and Count Palatine Being Married on St. Valentine’s Day’ — a very pretty title,” she said. “And for the Lady Elizabeth! Perhaps I should have read this before we wed.”

“Not before, love, but any time after,” Mr Darcy said with a smile. “Read on.”

“Gladly,” Elizabeth returned. The language was elegant, almost musical, and the first verse highly romantic. Yet as Elizabeth read one stanza after another, a blush crept over her face, and her husband’s last remark was explained to her. By the time she had finished, Elizabeth was sure she was blushing as hotly as she had ever done in her life. Yet when she looked up at her husband and saw the look of love in his eyes, her embarrassment was suddenly quite forgot. He caught her up in his arms, and her lips met his. It was some time before either spoke, for words seemed rather unnecessary.

“Happy Valentine’s Day, husband,” Elizabeth whispered at last. “I love you. I know not how I can love you more deeply with each day we are together, but so it is.”

“My Elizabeth, my darling,” Mr Darcy murmured in reply, “I love you with all my heart, and I always shall.”

The End